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The Economics of American Greatness

Chancellor Henry Mitchell MacCracken of New York University established the Hall of Fame of Great Americans in 1900. This was a peculiar name for the first Hall of Fame formed in the United States. MacCracken tended to conflate "greatness" with "fame." It had been more forgivable to confuse the terms in his youth since the United States had possessed an ample supply of great men, mostly famous patriots and statesmen, and there was nothing anyone else engaged in another profession could do to manufacture similar quantities of fame. MacCracken had come of age in Antebellum America, an epoch marked by an impulse to valorize the founders of the Republic who had died a generation earlier.[1] The very same spirit washed over men of letters. That "Great Man" fascination, for instance, occupied the writings of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Ralph Waldo Emerson. "Lives of great men all remind us," wrote Longfellow, "we can make our lives sublime." Emerson wrote a book on Representative Men on the presumption that it was "natural to believe in great men."[2]

As a young man in Oxford, Ohio, Henry MacCracken was raised in this creed of Great Men; Longfellow's prose made an indelible impression on MacCracken as a small child. His father, John Steele MacCracken,

[1] See Douglas Adair, *Fame and the Founding Fathers*, ed. Trevor Colbourn (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), 3–26; Drew R. McCoy, *The Last of the Fathers: James Madison and the Republican Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 171–216. See also Harlow Giles Unger, *The Last Founding Father: James Monroe and the Nation's Call to Greatness* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2010).

[2] Peter H. Gibbon, *A Call to Heroism: Renewing America's Vision of Greatness* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2022), 18–28.

was a proud Presbyterian minister blessed with the "spirit of the pioneer." Reverend MacCracken liked to tell his son about his namesake, Henry MacCracken of Sunbury, Pennsylvania. The elder MacCracken died defending his young nation in the Revolutionary War.[3] Henry appreciated his father's stories of his patriotic great-grandfather and other "great" martyrs who had furnished his United States. In his youth, young Henry liked to line up the chairs in his mother's modest kitchen, pretending each was another "great man of his time." The boy made a case for each candidate, explaining to no one in particular the merits of the nominee to warrant a sacred place in nascent American history.[4]

As an older man and in charge of a university, MacCracken evolved his boyhood fantasy into the NYU Hall of Fame of Great Americans. As the name of the august institution suggests, MacCracken wished to honor the famous and the greatest as if these were interchangeable terms to describe the very best stock of American life. But these notions were no longer all that aligned. By the close of the nineteenth century, the United States possessed, in sociologist Orrin Klapp's terms, an "oversupply" or "inflation" of fame.[5] The inflation of fame – another useful term, one preferred by the British, was "status" – had to do with visibility. By 1890, 35 percent of Americans lived in cities; that figure was 5 percent of the population one hundred years prior. Americans had increased access to dignitaries, politicians, and entertainers. If they did not see them in theaters or in other public spaces, the common folk could ogle at famous people in newspapers. This resulted in the acquisition of more fame by more people.

The initial fanfare around the Hall of Fame project seemed to confirm all this. Newspapers conducted popular polls to maintain the public's high interest in MacCracken's grand contest. America was apparently home to many famous people. A Brooklyn daily received 776 mock ballots and tallied 938 proposed candidates. One observer made much amusement, comparing the New York newspaper's results with a vote conducted in Minneapolis. He reasoned that the variances highlighted geographic biases and was encouraged that the newspapers' polls shared forty great men in common.[6]

[3] *Henry Mitchell MacCracken: In Memoriam* (New York: New York University Press, 1923), 3.

[4] Diana A. Farkas and Robert N. Farkas, "Henry Mitchell MacCracken and the Hall of Fame at New York University," *Bronx County Historical Society* 8 (July 1971): 51.

[5] Orrin E. Klapp, *Inflation of Symbols: Loss of Values in American Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 84.

[6] Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Guesses at Fame," *Independent*, August 16, 1900, 1964–66.

MacCracken intended for his Hall of Fame to combat this – to "deflate" fame – and developed a much more discerning process to limit fame to women and men who were irreproachably great people.[7] He assembled a slate of a hundred highly educated, geographically varied judges to gatekeep the NYU Hall of Fame. MacCracken anticipated that just a few individuals would pass the panel's scrutiny since, by rule, candidates needed to appear on more than half of the ballots for successful election.

Henry MacCracken's attempt to reset the market of American culture was an impossible task, however. He didn't stand much of a chance to control the run on fame. No one could repair the damage wrought by technology and new forms of media that had so irrevocably depreciated its value. Newspapers had by this time mastered new print technologies that permitted publishers to insert photographs directly into wordy columns.[8] The newspapermen recognized that all this had piqued a curious interest and became invested in helping famous people acquire more fame. Journalists indulged in filling the society columns with salacious rumors and fancy illustrations. Readers happily welcomed Albert Nelson Marquis's *Who's Who* biographical dictionaries, the first edition appearing in 1898 and containing 8,500 entries of "distinguished Americans."[9]

In time, MacCracken learned that fame and greatness were two separate commodities. What's worse, he learned that the voters for the NYU Hall of Fame of Great Americans privileged fame over greatness, insofar as they permitted the former to mediate the latter. No better examples were Robert E. Lee and Edgar Allan Poe, two individuals whose greatness was self-evident. Yet many discounted their personal virtue; that either man possessed requisite levels of fame to then be considered for greatness. MacCracken's institution served as an important forum, particularly in the case of Poe, to question whether infamy – the darker side of fame – could disqualify the otherwise unimpeachable cases of American greatness. The answer, to MacCracken's chagrin, was that fame and greatness often informed one another – but they were not the same thing.

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[7] "Hall of Fame Eligibles," *New York Sun*, October 12, 1900, 2.

[8] Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 508.

[9] Susan J. Douglas and Andrea McDonnell, *Celebrity: A History of Fame* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 28–29.

The heiress Helen Gould financed MacCracken's Hall of Fame of Great Americans. She sponsored the project to recast America's image of her father, Jay Gould (Figure 1.1). The elder Gould had never paid attention to things like "fame." It did not matter to Gould whether others considered him a "great man." He did not have much use for these commodities. To the contrary, Gould cultivated wealth through a canny style that produced a rather infamous reputation. He was the most despised member of the robber barons: those tycoons who dominated America's marketplaces during the latter half of the nineteenth century. It was a somewhat unfair reputation of the shrewd businessman, but Wall Street never did forgive Gould for his failed attempt in 1869 to leverage his relationship with President Ulysses S. Grant to control the nation's gold supply. The newspapers reviled Gould, once designating him the "worst man on earth since the beginning of the Christian era."[10]

FIGURE 1.1 A political cartoon from the 1880s by J. A. Wales depicting Jay Gould's political corruption for his own financial gain was symbolic of the uphill climbs his supporters faced to refurbish his reputation as one of America's great men. Courtesy of Bettmann/Getty Images.

[10] Richard O'Conner, *Gould's Millions* (New York: Doubleday, 1962), 191.

Gould was a short man, and the diminution projected a Napoleonic spirit that increased the fierce and unyielding characterizations. In most situations, Gould embraced his ignominy, believing that the darkened reputation afforded him a competitive advantage in boardrooms and on trading floors. He made significant efforts to maintain that reputation. He gave reporters quotes that betokened his hardened humanity. There was a kindness inside Gould, but the wealthy man could not afford to let it show. Much of his philanthropic efforts were handled anonymously to perpetuate the tough persona. No one was permitted to share the stories of Gould strolling beside the railroads to inquire about the wellbeing of the station agents and repairmen under his employ. The omissions meant that Jay Gould suffered a status far below the charitable ranks of the magnanimous Rockefellers and Carnegies.

But Helen Gould cared, and she was determined to campaign on behalf of her father's legacy. No one was more sympathetic to this mission than NYU's MacCracken. MacCracken had been a member of Jay Gould's inner circle, one of the few who was neither a business associate nor a family member. Gould held an affinity for MacCracken's school. His support of higher education was personal. As a young man, Gould had been too busy bookkeeping for his father to enroll in a university. "I intended as soon as my finances would permit to take a course through college," Gould once confessed, "but as my father requires a share of my time here it seems wrong to do otherwise."[11] His friendship with MacCracken made amends for that missing experience and was further sparked by Gould's fascination with Samuel Morse's telegraph. Gould owned controlling interest in the Western Union Telegraph Company. The magnate liked that Morse had served as an art professor at NYU, back when it was known as the University of the City of New York. Gould knew that NYU played an even more pivotal role in the creation of his favorite invention. Another scholar there, Leonard Gale, was most useful in correcting a circuitry problem that led to Morse's great breakthrough. Both MacCracken and Gould believed that there was more good fortune in store for the university.

They were on the surface an odd pair. MacCracken looked like Gould's physical opposite. The former was tall and sported white hair that flowed behind his ears to the top of his neck. In middle age,

[11] Robert Irving Warshow, *Jay Gould: The Story of a Fortune* (New York: Greenberg, 1928), 34.

MacCracken allowed his beard to sprawl so much that parts of his unkempt mane covered the shoulder pads of his suit. Upon assuming the helm of NYU, MacCracken took better care of his appearance. He combed and tucked his beard to provide a significant buffer for his chin. Jay Gould's hair never fully greyed and, like everything else in his life, he was very intentional about how he used his presence to his advantage. He wore his substantial beard around his entire face and trimmed it where it reached his throat. The color and intensity of Gould's facial hair correctly suggested that he was a person of significant power.

In 1892, MacCracken was one of the few "close advisors" permitted to visit with the aged and unwell Gould at his summer estate in Irvington, New York.[12] There, MacCracken convinced Gould that NYU's future resided uptown in University Heights because downtown Washington Square had become far too congested with shops and general loudness. MacCracken theorized that his students required something much more serene to succeed in their studies. The idea resonated with Gould, who had spent his childhood in the rural environs of upstate New York and, fondly recalling his youth, retreated to his bucolic estate in Irvington for holidays. Gould assented and wrote a very large check, rendering him the most substantive supporter of MacCracken's "up-town movement." Gould died several months later. MacCracken participated in the funeral, reading before Gould's grieving family members the committal service of the Episcopal Church.[13]

Helen Gould maintained her father's connection to Henry MacCracken. NYU's head man saw much of Jay Gould within Helen and became her partner in preserving his memory. Her physical qualities served as a metaphor for what few others could see that linked the daughter with her late father. Jay Gould's imposing black beard hid the resemblance he shared with Helen. Both had dark brown hair. Their common rounded noses were framed by puffy cheeks. On Helen, the fullish sides to her face ingratiated her with other socialites and complemented the smile she adorned in public appearances. That disposition did not do much for her father and might explain why he hid his face under a stern beard.

All told, Helen Gould donated more than $2 million to NYU, "speaking always of her father's intentions, of his strongly expressed confidence

[12] Edward J. Renehan Jr., *Dark Genius of Wall Street: The Misunderstood Life of Jay Gould, King of the Robber Barons* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 294.

[13] Murat Halstead, *Life of Jay Gould: How He Made His Millions* (Philadelphia: Edgewood Publishing Co., 1892), 154.

in Chancellor MacCracken."[14] In 1897, Helen sponsored the construction of the Gould Memorial Library. Her relative once relayed that the idea was Helen's. "I am thinking of donating a library to New York University," she remarked to a cousin. "My thought is to have it as a memorial to father. You know about his gift to the Heights moving fund, and how he had been looking forward to assisting the university in a large way. I have written to Chancellor MacCracken already on the subject."[15] Made in the likeness of the Roman Pantheon, the edifice was in its time the most prominent building on NYU's Bronx campus.

Three years later, MacCracken pitched another idea to the heiress. He conjured a vision of a Hall of Fame of Great Americans (Figure 1.2). No shrine of this kind had ever existed in the United States, although hundreds more, dedicated to narrower fields such as sports, music, and recreational vehicles, would later pattern themselves after MacCracken's concoction. He described it to Gould as a "Westminster Abbey of the United States," comparable to the Ruhmeshalle in Munich containing busts of important Bavarian dignitaries. Their earlier efforts to reconstruct an American Pantheon on NYU's campus, the Gould Memorial Library, that is, had an implicit goal to celebrate indigenous greatness but had been far too understated. Marcus Agrippa had constructed the Pantheon with statues honoring the Roman gods. The replica that doubled as NYU's uptown library required space for bookcases and tables, so no room remained for busts of American statesmen and heroes. MacCracken persuaded Gould that a 500-foot-long colonnade could house a museum dedicated to American greatness and feature exhibits of the women and men most responsible for founding and developing their beloved nation. She was "quick to perceive the enormous patriotic and educational value inherent in the idea" and "promptly made available something over $100,000 to start the work."[16]

An unfounded rumor circulated that Helen Gould's gift bought her father a mantle among America's greatest, that his "candidacy for fame is prescribed in advance by the founder."[17] However, Helen Gould had conducted her social affairs with altruism and was above fixing the contest to suit her self-interests. Still, she did confess her hope that the small fortune she had donated to the Hall of Fame would ingratiate

[14] Alice Northrop Snow, *The Story of Helen Gould: Daughter of Jay Gould, Great American* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1943), 238.
[15] Ibid., 237.
[16] Ibid., 264.
[17] Higginson, "Guesses at Fame," 1964.

FIGURE 1.2 The heiress Helen Gould financed the NYU Hall of Fame of Great Americans enterprise, admitting that it was her hope that her father, the polarizing robber baron Jay Gould, would be enshrined there (he wasn't). Courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs.

her father's nomination to the judges. "I do not deny that the name of my father, the late Jay Gould," she confirmed to reporters, "is to be among the distinguished dead inscribed in the walls of this Hall of Fame."[18] But Helen Gould underestimated the degree to which businessmen in general gave Americans pause when it came to determining greatness among its ranks. No one denied a correlation between skill and wealth. They usually used this as the basic formula to rank semi-tangible notions such as "success," "achievement," and, most importantly, "fame."[19] But a growing number of critics had raised the possibility that America's increased focus on material wealth had rerouted many young people's professional trajectories from literature

[18] "Helen Gould Gave $100,000," *Evening World*, March 7, 1900, 2.
[19] Richard Weiss, *The American Myth of Success: From Horatio Alger to Norman Vincent Peale* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 48–63.

and the arts to the stock market. The result, they argued, was a pipeline shortage in fields that made more direct impact on American life. The robber barons countered that their largesse bankrolled concert halls, supported the publication of books, and endowed universities.

That line of argument was not persuasive. Jay Gould and the other robber barons were famous men, probably better known than many of the earliest inductees to MacCracken's Hall of Fame. Yet, none of these rich men had managed to accrue the commodities that redounded to greatness. During its seven decades of activity, the Hall of Fame of Great Americans inducted just two businessmen: George Peabody was included among the very first class (1900) and Andrew Carnegie was enshrined in the very last cohort (1976) selected. On the paucity of businessmen (or -women) from the Hall of Fame, its longtime director surmised that Americans "have considered achievement in material things, however useful, as inferior to intellectual and uncommercial success."[20] It was a referendum on fame. Famous men such as Jay Gould and John D. Rockefeller and Cornelius Vanderbilt were just as poor as the rank and file when audited for assets measured in greatness.

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What is greatness and how is it measured? During the first half of the twentieth century, Americans by and large reserved applications of greatness to discussions that centered on change. George Washington was the nation's first changemaker, even though his reserved disposition did not always suit that moniker. The people looked to him as an aspirational figure. The descriptions of Washington blurred the boundaries between "fame" and "greatness." In his lifetime, Washington rose to a transcendent figure because he was the very model of change; his "greatness" was much more than the sum of his achievements. Americans, once they elevated Washington to the central symbol of the Revolution, liked to juxtapose him with England's King George III. "God save great Washington," sang Americans, "God damn the King!" they chorused, mocking the well-known British refrain. The jeers were not merely about overthrowing England. Americans recognized that with Washington they had a new model of leadership that contained within his growing reputation important virtues such as "liberty" and "honor." Everything about "great Washington" contrasted with

[20] Robert Underwood Johnson, *Your Hall of Fame* (New York: New York University Press, 1935), 65.

his European counterparts. He was envisaged as a self-made man and flourished because he had earned that station rather than claimed it by birthright. "I presume that no man in his sober senses," wrote Thomas Paine, "will compare the character of any of the kings of Europe with that of General Washington."[21]

Americans understood at this early period that their expectations of greatness were tied to "change," even if they didn't always use that word. Sometimes they wrote about it as the "spirit of innovation gone forth," lauded the "powers of invention," or described their situation as "favorable for great reformations."[22] These writers had in mind the change wrought by the Revolution that forced Americans to reconsider its forms of government, education, range of religious tolerance, and rights offered to those who were not "white, male, property owners." The Revolution did not resolve these matters, but it set in motion the debates and discussions that animated reconsideration of these critical issues. Change presented hope for an improved future rather than other measures of greatness that peered backward into a self-aggrandized past. Henceforth, Americans would measure the curve of greatness by an individual's ability to augur change whereas Europeans, much more invested in entrenched legacies and established traditions – or convinced that Karl Marx was correct that economic determinism and social forces render the great man less crucial – defined it based on a person's linear achievements and fame.

Helen Gould did not have this perspective in mind when she evaluated her father's legacy. "Change," that is, was not a factor in her calculations. Jay Gould, his daughter reckoned, was a great man because he had led a Bible-bound life and, without fanfare, distributed his wealth to other noble causes. She had assessed his worth based on a little-known legacy of doing good work rather than making aspirational change. This might have sold in Europe. But along American lines, this fine work could purchase fame, not greatness. The heiress might have come to understand the disconnect a little better after learning something about her own recognition as a public figure. One report in 1901 concluded that she and George Washington held the highest

[21] For a deeper discussion and these quotations, see Paul K. Longmore, *The Invention of George Washington* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1999), 184–211, esp. 201 and 207.

[22] See Pauline Maier, "Revolution and Change in America," in *The American Revolution: A Heritage of Change*, eds. John Parker and Carol Urness (Minneapolis, MN: Association of the James Ford Bell Library, 1965), 114.

status among American schoolgirls. This, however, was how the tabulations were presented: "The greatness of Washington and the wealth of Miss Gould come first."[23]

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Henry MacCracken's Hall of Fame was meant to be distinctively American. He found the European models very "faulty." By this, MacCracken suggested that none was very democratic or broadminded about who ought to be enshrined as a "Great Man." England's Westminster Abbey dwelled too much in the past and "chiefly magnifies kings and a church that was king-ridden for many centuries." His research of the London site suggested that the British provided minimal space to saints and that a "Statesmen's Corner" and "Poets' Corner" in the north and south transepts were insufficient to honor nonregal English citizens.[24]

MacCracken held misgivings about the other European shrines. He determined that the French Panthéon was too unstable, usurped by various governments and uneven in its contents. In Germany, the Ruhmeshalle in Munich and the Walhalla in Regensburg were well-conceived ideas but ended up unfinished and "too monarchical and also too militaristic."[25] MacCracken also disapproved of an earlier American institution. In 1864, the Capitol in Washington, DC, repurposed a vacant space to serve as a Statuary Hall. No one was of one mind on how to go about this project. Politicians fought over who ought to be included. Snobbish observers marveled over the ensuing hodgepodge of variously sized and unrelated figures in the undignified shrine known to its critics as the "Chamber of Horrors."

The Hall of Fame of Great Americans (Figure 1.3) became an altogether grand spatial project. Seeing as it was her own philanthropic investment, Helen Gould desired an open granite structure supported by columns instead of walls so that visitors would keep the Gould Memorial Library in clear view. The original plan for the colonnade measured 500 feet. Owing to MacCracken's ambition and the potential slate of future inductees, the length was extended another 130 feet. The extra spacing was due to a recalculation, to ensure that a total of 150 bronze busts of great Americans could comfortably fit in the hall.

[23] Catherine L. Dodd, "The Ideals of the American School-Girl," *Living Age*, August 10, 1901, 340.
[24] Johnson, *Your Hall of Fame*, 1–2.
[25] Ibid., 2.

FIGURE 1.3 The stately Hall of Fame of Great Americans was meant to be a testament to American greatness. Courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs.

MacCracken established several other rules to help along his uniquely American experiment. He encouraged anyone to submit candidates for the first enshrinement class. MacCracken placed three qualifications on nominees. First, only the deceased were eligible, and had to have been dead for at least ten years since "no man should be counted surely great until his life is ended."[26] The decade-since-death statute was also a very helpful device to shield NYU from engaging with the precariousness of Jay Gould's candidacy on the pilot election. Second, each entrant had to be American born. Interested parties immediately understood that this disqualified the Caribbean-born Alexander Hamilton, an adopted son of New York. One frustrated Manhattanite described that rule as an unbecoming "littleness" of NYU's election system.[27] Third, a candidate needed to fall within one of the following broad categories, including a final catch-all type:

[26] MacCracken, *The Hall of Fame*, 21.
[27] Edward Saunders, "A Statue of Alexander Hamilton," *The Sun*, August 17, 1900, 6.

Authors and editors; businessmen; educators, inventors, missionaries and explorers; philanthropists and reformers; preachers and theologians; scientists; engineers and architects; lawyers and judges; musicians, painters and sculptors; physicians and surgeons; rulers and statemen; soldiers and sailors; distinguished men and women outside the above classes.

MacCracken stipulated no further parameters on how to measure "greatness" apart from "fame." His advisors encouraged the Hall of Fame's founder to establish a rubric to guide voters on how to decide on the merits of prospective candidates, but MacCracken eschewed that pressure to apply pseudo-quantitative metrics. He judged that the impulse to impose a set of standards on greatness had doomed the prior European incarnations. It's what rendered the British far too rigid, believed MacCracken, about casting all writers in a Shakespearean shadow. It narrowed much too much how the French rated their statesmen and generals based on their levels of anticlericalism. MacCracken savored an openmindedness that he liked to frame around America's founders and earliest writers. These were iconoclasts who had a knack for redefining the molds of greatness, whether established in the United States or abroad. Rather than dictate the terms of qualifications and reduce greatness into a rigid formula, MacCracken left the matter in the hands of his election system since he defined fame as the "opinion of the wise in regard to great men accepted and held by the multitude of the people."[28] Critics charged that MacCracken had missed an opportunity to define greatness on behalf of Americans. MacCracken countered that what he had done was in the spirit of American democracy and left it as an open-ended experiment. The people, then, would be the most helpful resource in both honoring and disrupting past conceptions of greatness in America's Hall of Fame. Today, the NYU Hall of Fame of Great Americans is a mostly abandoned shrine but MacCracken's decision to keep "greatness" malleable has informed American culture for more than a hundred years.

Those multitudes and their opinions required a scrupulous vetting process. In toto, NYU's governing senate received about a thousand unique submissions. A candidate advanced to the next round by virtue of a nomination and a second by a member of that body. Much ado was made over the nomination card submitted by Caroline Frye, the wife of a longtime senator from Maine. Frye furnished a roster of fifty respectable people to grace MacCracken's so-called "Temple of Fame." Her first

[28] MacCracken, *Hall of Fame*, 292.

choices were Martha and George Washington, the God-fearing, in her estimation, founders of the United States. She excluded – and urged others to follow her lead – anyone associated with Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, or the other "heretics" of the Civil War. The outspoken Frye explained her rationale on this was also theological, again in her view: "I would say that no man or woman should be given a niche in this worthy temple whose work has tended to destroy faith and trust in the higher life held out by religion."[29]

However, Frye did not convince NYU's senate. It advanced 234 candidates for a final round, the Washingtons and General Lee among that esteemed group. The decisive decision was placed at the discretion of one hundred electors. Each of the then-forty-five states had a representative on the panel. Almost half were university presidents or historians.

The terms at this juncture of the election were straightforward: any nominee included on at least half of the ballots made it into the Hall of Fame. If there was too much agreement on the ballots, then priority for the inaugural list would be reserved for the top fifty vote-getters. Some complained that the system was a fix. A writer in North Carolina alleged that MacCracken's slate of judges was "strictly northern," even though twenty electors hailed from Southern states. Nonetheless, complained this journalist, most of the appointed judges have "never heard a word perhaps of the truly great men of southern birth."[30]

In October 1900, MacCracken announced that the discriminating electors had elevated just twenty-nine great men to the Hall of Fame. To those who might have been discouraged by the small number (the judges were permitted to elect fifty great people), MacCracken announced that "no harm has resulted from this, but rather great gain."[31] Withal, journalists attested that "public interest in the matter has been keen."[32] Most of this group predeceased the Civil War, owing to NYU's rule that candidates must have died ten years prior as well as the premium placed on the Revolution's heroes. George Washington was the only unanimous decision; Abraham Lincoln, Daniel Webster, and Benjamin Franklin trailed just behind. A Louisiana chief justice, Francis Nicholls, was the lone elector who withheld a vote from Lincoln and Webster.

[29] "Mrs. Frye Picks Immortals," *Chicago Tribune*, April 9, 1900, 8.
[30] "The New York Education Standard," *Wilmington Messenger*, August 19, 1900, 2.
[31] Henry Mitchell MacCracken, *The Hall of Fame* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1901), 23.
[32] "The Hall of Fame," *Youth's Companion*, November 15, 1900, 74.

The class included other statesmen and generals like Jefferson and Grant. It was comprised of authors such as Emerson, Hawthorne, and Longfellow. It was graced by preachers including Jonathan Edwards and Henry Ward Beecher. The group made room for inventors such as Eli Whitney as well as Jay Gould's favorite, Samuel Morse. "It is doubtful if any period but ours," praised New York Senator Chauncy Depew, "the great statesman, writer or artist ranked with the soldier."[33] Depew sat on the dais alongside Henry MacCracken and Helen Gould at the Hall of Fame induction ceremony on Memorial Day of 1901.

On the whole, observers celebrated the inaugural cohort, believing that it kept to a high standard and rebuffed claims from Europe that "we are a vainglorious people, unduly puffed up by our achievements."[34] Some were not fully satisfied. Women's organizations were disappointed that Martha Washington, appearing on just 14 percent of ballots, underperformed in the vote, and she led all other worthy women candidates.

Many more were indignant that the electors had chosen Robert E. Lee. The Confederate hero owed the victory to the fact that eighteen of twenty Southern judges selected him, as did two-thirds of electors based in the so-called "middle" and "western" states. That tally compensated for a poor showing for Lee among the twenty-two judges settled throughout New England. Many pundits above the Mason–Dixon Line were "disgusted." In line with columns of letters to the *New York Times*, one writer posited that Lee's election upended the whole attempt to identify "great Americans" since the Confederate general "did his utmost to destroy American nationality."[35]

The inclusion of General Lee brought to bear MacCracken's fraught equating of fame and greatness. Northerners might admit that Lee was a great military tactician; Lee, however, possessed no fame; he was infamous. The North's outcry against Lee was more than just about lingering hostilities concerning the Civil War. What was at stake in his candidacy to the Hall of Fame was central to the American conception of greatness. No one disputed that Lee was a decorated soldier and a standout tactician during the Mexican–American War. Lee also enjoyed familial status, hailing from the Lees who were at one point the largest landholders in Virginia. Lee, then, held an outstanding pedigree

[33] "Hall of Fame Dedicated," *New York Times*, May 31, 1901, 3.
[34] "Names for the Hall of Fame," *Brooklyn Eagle*, October 11, 1900, 4.
[35] R. J. H., "That Hall of Fame," *New York Times*, October 21, 1900, 21.

and a noble profession. In Europe, they sculpted statues of Lee's type and arranged for them to stand beside many others just like him in Westminster Abbey. To Northerners who measured greatness by way of "change," however, Robert E. Lee was the antithesis of a great change-maker. He was a champion of the status quo.

Americans also disagreed whether Lee could be construed as a symbolic exemplar. "No man," warned the detractors, "should be held up as a pattern or model for the young to follow who was not true to his country in her direst distress."[36] His supporters, some among the Unionists, pleaded that Lee had "acted on his honest conviction" and then dutifully abided by the terms of the Confederate's surrender.[37] He was a sincere and honorable man. In Baltimore, the *Sun*'s editorial board evaluated Lee's life and compared him to the nation's most aspirational and "Ideal American":

> In some of his personal characteristics, in his unselfish patriotism and self-sacrificing devotion to his cause, in his qualities as a military commander, Lee perhaps approaches more nearly to the august character of Washington than any other American. As a military commander he was Washington's superior. Whether he would have measured up to him as a statesman can never be known, because in this he was never tested. But these two great and good men seem always associated together.[38]

No one seceded.[39] Most Americans reportedly "settled down" and "adjusted" to the "list adopted," even if they found it preposterous to compare Lee with Washington.[40] The brief text that accompanied Lee's enshrinement did not hide his generalship of the South in Civil War, but focused on his scholarly contributions as a "superintendent of the West Point Military Academy" and later as "president of Washington College, now called Washington and Lee University."[41] Surely, these biographical points, implicitly linking the legacies of Lee and Washington, were more forward-thinking and aspirational; items that Americans at a university-sponsored Hall of Fame could get behind. Despite a late appeal by the Association of Survivors of the Sixth Army Corps to change its decision, the NYU Senate ruled on merit, that Lee advanced soldiering and battle strategies. Those who suggested that it

[36] Henry S. Allen, "Lee and the Hall of Fame," *New York Times*, October 21, 1900, 21.
[37] G. M., "Lee's Claim to Fame," *New York Times*, October 28, 1900, 19.
[38] "An Ideal American," *Baltimore Sun*, January 19, 1901, 4.
[39] "The Thrusting of Greatness," *Life*, November 15, 1900, 383.
[40] "Precedence in the Hall of Fame," *New York Times*, November 17, 1900, 787.
[41] Johnson, *Your Hall of Fame*, 175.

was treason rather than conviction and independent thinking that motivated Lee's decision to resign from the Union had missed the point, implied NYU, of American greatness.[42] Journalists detected a "gradual change of feeling" among "those whose attitude toward it was more or less scornful."[43] The catalog of the men enshrined embossed a renewed self-confidence in American greatness, even if the commentary around the Hall of Fame had failed, albeit intentionally, to pinpoint exactly how to define that greatness, its compatibility with fame, or how it compared with the attributes of Europe's leading wise men.

***

The results of the Hall of Fame vote alerted some to the currency of greatness. Americans had anticipated that their statesmen – Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson – could rival the legacies of England's and France's ruling classes. They were unsure whether their New England writers could rise, as well. The snobbiest Europeans regarded the work of the so-called Fireside Poets as too simple, relying on ordinary conventions of meter and rhyme. This style made it easier for young children to memorize. The Fireside Poets were America's most well-known Transcendentalists, part of a movement that sought out the goodness in people and the world around them. Boston was the hub of it all. New England had raised Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Europeans were not the only critics of the Fireside Poets. A new generation of American writers detached from New England wondered whether this group merited so much attention. These women and men lived in cities and witnessed squalid conditions and unfair treatment of immigrant people who could not trace their heritage back to the Boston Brahmins. They questioned their forebears' grasp of the realities of American life. Yet, the novelist Ellen Glasgow recalled how she and other young writers understood the Fireside Poets' formative place in America at the close of the nineteenth century. The new age of women and men of letters no longer wrote in the same style, nor did the up-and-comers share the "ever-green optimism" of Emerson or Hawthorne. Yet, there was no denying the Fireside Poets' contributions: "They were important, and they knew it, but they were also as affable as royalty; and no one who valued manners could help liking them. Life had been easy for them,

[42] "Robert E. Lee's Name to Remain," *Washington Post*, December 14, 1900, 1.
[43] "The Hall of Fame," *Home Journal*, October 18, 1900, 3.

and literature had been easier. They had created both the literature of America and the literary renown that embalmed it."[44]

It was not just reverence that furnished these men into Hall of Famers. The Fireside Poets emerged just after the Founding Fathers had departed and transformed that patriotic heritage into memorable verse. Hence, Longfellow's famous poem opens: "Listen my children, and you shall hear,/Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere."[45] Walt Whitman, who rarely agreed with the Fireside Poets, neither in form nor perspective, was still very grateful for their efforts to transition "greatness" from statesmen to writers: "Of all nations the United States with veins full of poetical stuff most needs poets and will doubtless have the greatest and use them the greatest. Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so much as their poets shall."[46]

The Hall of Fame's addition of the Manhattan-native Washington Irving, of *Rip Van Winkle* renown, to this group convinced Americans that their kind fared much better than Europe's ranks, so much so that "its members do not seem natural products of an American environment."[47] To the contrary, even as American poets departed from the earlier stylings, they recognized that the Fireside Poets had created a new genre of verse that had come to represent an era of patriotism. It was through a simpler form that their writings conveyed a passionate spirit of American domestic life, romanticized the tranquility of the indigenous landscape, unencumbered by the messiness of layers of past civilizations. The type is captured in Longfellow's ode, "To The River Charles." He wrote: "Thou hast taught me, Silent River!/Many a lesson, deep and long;/Thou hast been a generous giver;/I can give thee but a song."

This was Henry MacCracken's goal. His Hall of Fame of Great Americans was meant to "represent the wisdom of the American people."[48] What that wisdom taught MacCracken, through trial and error, was that fame was not the same as greatness. The Hall of Fame's judges elevated individuals who made something of themselves due to

[44] Ellen Glasgow, *The Woman Within: An Autobiography*, ed. Pamela R. Matthews (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1954), 139.

[45] On the reception of Longfellow's "Paul Revere's Ride," see David Hackett Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 331–33.

[46] Leo Marx, *The Americanness of Walt Whitman* (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1960), 51.

[47] "Precedence in the Hall of Fame," 787.

[48] Henry Mitchell MacCracken, "The Hall of Fame," *American Monthly Review of Reviews* 22 (November 1900): 563.

an acquired and learned genius that was not inherently bequeathed to them by their parents or grandparents. They parlayed their talents to make change, not merely to accrue fame. Helen Gould figured that it was enough that her father had obtained status and fame – his rivals called it infamy – rather than inherit it. Yet, Jay Gould never received the requisite number of votes to enter the Hall of Fame. Few aspired to be like Gould because he wasn't enough of a changemaker.

***

Sir Francis Galton (Figure 1.4) held the opposite view of American greatness. He doubted whether there was any sort of greatness, a term he associated with "genius," residing in the United States. Galton much preferred to seek out greatness in the more formalized and stable arena of status, a term that the British favored over the Americans' "fame." The English-born Galton was Charles Darwin's distant cousin and, as the pioneering proponent of eugenics, took his relative's ideas about evolution to a rather pernicious extreme. Galton's research on heredity did much to advance statistics as a formal academic discipline. In time, his

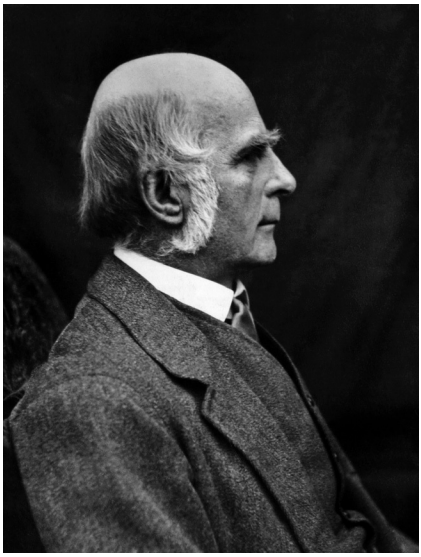

FIGURE 1.4 A profile image of Sir Francis Galton from 1886. Galton was the inspiration for the eugenics movement that flourished in Europe and, to a certain extent in the United States. American opposition to Galton's theories spurred deeper thinking about "changemakers" and "greatness." Courtesy of Bettmann/Getty Images.

efforts on behalf of eugenics informed Nazism. Galton wrote about a "utopian" world – at least, in his view – in which world leaders prevented people with undesirable features (Galton called them "idiots and imbeciles") from procreating.

Many of Galton's theories were packed into his book, *Hereditary Genius*. In it, Galton shared his research of hundreds of biographies and family histories of "illustrious men," judges and statesmen who had flourished from 1660 to 1868. These were individuals of an esteemed pedigree and status who Galton deemed had achieved significant "eminence." The author showed that most of these men held lineal connection to other eminent men – "men of Literature and of Science, Poets, Painters, and Musicians" – and were therefore predisposed to acquire most of Europe's greatness. Or in Galton's words, a "high reputation," that is social class, "is a pretty accurate test of high ability."[49]

Galton's tome received mixed reviews when it first appeared, but it earned high praise from Galton's most famous relation. "I do not think I ever in all my life read anything more original," wrote Darwin to Galton. "And how well and clearly you put every point!"[50] By the 1880s, Galton's research had become mainstream. In 1886, the Royal Society awarded him a gold medal for his work on biological statistics. Upon accepting the prize, Galton, ever consistent in his thinking, told the audience that his personal contribution to the field was predictable from a scientific vantage point. "On my father's side I know of many most striking, some truly comic, instances of statistical proclivity." On his maternal side of the genetic ledger, Galton opined that "there is a similarity between the form of the bent of my mind and that of my mother's father, Dr. Erasmus Darwin."[51]

More adoration from his British climes followed. Toward the end of Galton's life, into the first decade of the twentieth century, George Bernard Shaw resolved that "nothing but a eugenic religion can save our civilisation." The chemist Alice Vickery also took Galton at full depth, although the women's rights activist prayed that "in the future the question of population will, I hope, be considered very much from the feminine point of view."[52]

[49] See Francis Galton, *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into Its Laws and Consequences* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1869), 2–3.

[50] Karl Pearson, *The Life, Letters and Labours of Francis Galton*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 6.

[51] See Martin Brookes, *Extreme Measures: The Dark Visions and Bright Ideas of Francis Galton* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2004), 236.

[52] Ibid., 272–73.

Galton, then, was a very influential person and his dim view of American greatness on a scientific basis was an indicator of larger trends of thinking. In his research of hereditary genius, Galton had ruled out including Americans in his sample. The prospects of their achievements were limited by biology. "The North American people has been bred from the most restless and combative class of Europe," determined Galton. "Whenever, during the last ten or twelve generations, a political or religious party has suffered defeat, its prominent members, whether they were the best, or only the noisiest, have been apt to emigrate to America, as a refuge from persecution."[53] The American stock were a genetically restless group of iconoclasts who had, in Galton's view, happily removed themselves from the possibility of crossbreeding with the upper classes of Europe. The departure of these women and men had helped preserve the most eminent strands of European genetics. This also explained the American Revolution as a byproduct of this high concentration of rabble-rousers rather than any noble cause for change set in motion by wise or creative people:

> Every head of an emigrant family brought with him a restless character, and a spirit apt to rebel. If we estimate the moral nature of Americans from their present social state, we shall find it to be just what we might have expected from such a parentage. They are enterprising, defiant, and touchy; impatient of authority; furious politicians; very tolerant of fraud and violence; possessing much high and generous spirit, and some true religious feeling, but strongly addicted to cant.[54]

Galton repeated this theory in *Hereditary Genius*. Compared with his evolutionarily enhanced Britain, averred Galton, "America most certainly does not beat us in first-class works of literature, philosophy, or art." Galton could never take Longfellow and the Fireside Poets, the artistic exemplars of MacCracken's first Hall of Fame class, very seriously. Galton was predisposed to think less of these American men of letters because they were made of lesser stuff. Without genetic material to advance the life of the mind, the American people could not, no matter how hard they worked at it, produce men of eminence. This meant that Americans were surprisingly wise to import art and literature from Europe. Galton, who never did travel to the United States, suggested that America was a cultural backwater, still very much an intellectual vassal state of England. He therefore offered a supportive

[53] Francis Galton, "Hereditary Talent and Character," *Macmillan's Magazine* 12 (August 1865): 325.
[54] Ibid.

half-truth: "The higher kind of books, even of the most modern date, read in America, are principally the work of Englishmen."[55]

Some historians write about a cross-continental "Eugenic Atlantic."[56] However, Galton was initially far better received in England and Germany: these were nations that boasted deep traditions and fixed elite classes. Perhaps the very best example of this synergy was Galton's best student and the longtime holder of the Galton Chair of Eugenics at University College London, Carl Pearson. Pearson, who had studied math at the University of Heidelberg, so embraced German culture that he changed the spelling of his first name to "Karl." He had followers in the United States, but Americans by and large rejected Galton's deep belief in the lineal transmission of greatness. Instead, Americans preferred the "Great Man Theory" put forward by so-called liberals such as the British-born James Froude and Scot Thomas Carlyle. Both men wrote histories that, in Froude's words, appealed to those who tended to "an extravagant worship of great men."[57] Both historians allowed for the contingencies of history to shape their heroes – "the outward shape of whom," wrote Carlyle, "will depend on the time and the environment he finds himself in."[58]

The "Great Man" fascination found deep roots among American writers, inspiring a spate of consideration on how their indigenous environment, rather than a prodigious bloodline, begot eminence. This idea occupied, for instance, the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman.[59] William James was perhaps the last in that generation of nineteenth-century American commentators who took up a pen to argue in favor of the acquisition of greatness over an innate disposition for it. In 1880, James – a Harvard man who laid significant groundwork in the fields on philosophy, religion, and psychology – defended American ingenuity against Herbert Spencer and other British Darwinists who had refused to believe that greatness might "spring from the soil, like a Mahomet or Franklin." Spencer had coined the phrase "survival of

[55] Ibid., 40.

[56] See David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, "The Eugenic Atlantic: Race, Disability, and the Making of an International Eugenic Science, 1800–1945," *Disability and Society* 18 (December 2003): 843–64.

[57] J. A. Froude, "Introduction," in *The Hundred Greatest Men*, vol. 7 (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1880), v.

[58] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1840), 137.

[59] See, for example, Gay Wilson Allen, *A Reader's Guide to Walt Whitman* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1970), 120.

the fittest" and whose writings convinced Charles Darwin to accept the tenets of Social Darwinism.[60] James could not accept that certain classes of people were fated for fame and greatness while most others were marked for mere mediocrity:

> The mutations of societies, then, from generation to generation, are in the main due directly or indirectly to the acts or the example of individuals whose genius was so adapted to the receptivities of the moment, or whose accidental position of authority was so critical, that they became ferments, initiators of movement, setters of precedent or fashion, centres of corruption, or destroyers of other persons … Societies of men are just like individuals, in that both at any given moment offer ambiguous potentialities of development. Whether a young man enters business or the ministry may depend on a decision which has to be made before a certain day.[61]

James was right to fear the migration of Galton's and Spencer's ideas to the United States. In 1882, Spencer, unwell at the time, traveled to America to vacation on the advice of physicians. He salubriously tried to keep a low profile, but the press and others hounded him. To mollify his public, Spencer shared a thought, a backhanded compliment of sorts, with them: that because of America's "heterogeneity" – that is, the mixing of classes – it would likely be a "long time in evolving its ultimate form." Still, Spencer had full confidence that society would stratify to help form an "Aryan race" and that "America may reasonably look forward to a time when they will have produced a civilization grander than any the world has known."[62]

That view was far more positive than anything Galton had previously advised. That warmed Spencer to America's social upper crust – men desirous of "status." Andrew Carnegie "became his intimate friend." Fellow robber barons, John D. Rockefeller and James J. Hill, routinely justified their wealth and power on the grounds that they were proof of Spencer's logic, namely, "survival of the fittest."[63] None of these men, each of whom was raised in humble means, recognized that according to Spencer (himself, ironically, derived from an unremarkable stock) cast significant doubt that people born into their non-elite predicaments

[60] Carl N. Degler, *In Search of Human Nature: The Decline and Revival of Darwinism in American Social Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 11.

[61] William James, "Great Men, Great Thoughts, and the Environment," *Atlantic Monthly* 46 (October 1880): 446.

[62] Herbert Spencer, "The Americans," *Contemporary Review* 43 (January 1883): 7.

[63] See Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), 44–45.

could rise up to a very high social station. This, however, was not lost on William Graham Sumner of Yale who, according to historian Richard Hofstadter, spent a career in the social sciences writing and teaching that the "principles of social evolution negated the traditional American ideology of equality and natural rights."[64] Sumner chose Galton over American Whiggism. Others did, as well. By 1915, reported Hofstadter, eugenics in the US had "reached the dimensions of a fad."[65]

Sumner had likeminded colleagues at America's other leading universities. In 1913 at Columbia, President Nicholas Murray Butler dispatched Edward Thorndike to tell a large audience in Morningside Heights that "there are hereditary bonds by which one kind of intellect or character rather than another is produced. Selective breeding can alter a man's capacity to learn to keep sane, to cherish justice or to be happy."[66] A psychologist at Harvard, unmoved by his colleague, William James's warnings, allowed that "we have good evidence that different races possess it in widely different degrees; that races differ in intellectual stature, just as they differ in physical stature."[67] Nearby, an MIT professor, Frederick Adams Woods, declared that "History is really but a branch of biology" – and hoped aloud that mathematics and the "other sciences" could soon make similar important contributions to the study of eugenics.[68] That banter had severe consequences. It tended to fuel talk and political action toward immigration restrictions and, what was the world's first sterilization legislation, served as the intellectual scaffolding behind a law passed by the governor of Indiana in 1907 that banned procreation for the "confirmed criminals, idiots, imbeciles and rapists."[69]

Probably most of America's leading minds were not in accord and preferred a competing school that Brown University's Lester Ward described as "Intellectual Egalitarianism." Ward had Francis Galton and Herbert Spencer in mind when he defended the "lower classes

[64] Ibid., 59.
[65] Ibid., 161.
[66] Edward L. Thorndike, "Eugenics: With Special Refence to Intellect and Character," *Popular Science Monthly* 83 (August 1913): 130.
[67] See Degler, *In Search of Human Nature*, 50.
[68] Frederick Adams Woods, *Mental and Moral Hereditary in Royalty: A Statistical Study in History and Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1906), iv.
[69] See Mark H. Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1963), 40–57. See also Wendy Klein, "Eugenics in the United States," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, eds. Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 511–22.

of society" who were the "intellectual equals of the upper classes."[70] A goodly number called William Graham Sumner's circle to task, for a lifelong attempt to "fit the facts" of their elitist theories.[71] Perhaps the most outspoken was William James, that nemesis of Herbert Spencer, who regretted that a stream of Social Darwinism had gained a foothold in the New World, as well as the "entire modern deification of survival *per se*." James surmised that the language recycled so much by the Wall Street elites was "surely the strangest intellectual stopping-place ever proposed by one man to another."[72]

Henry MacCracken's Hall of Fame of Great Americans (Figure 1.5) positioned itself in James's camp. In a souvenir volume that honored the Hall of Fame's founding, MacCracken republished a remark by journalist Talcott Williams that expressed awe that among the first class "only six or seven had any advantages of life." Williams happily

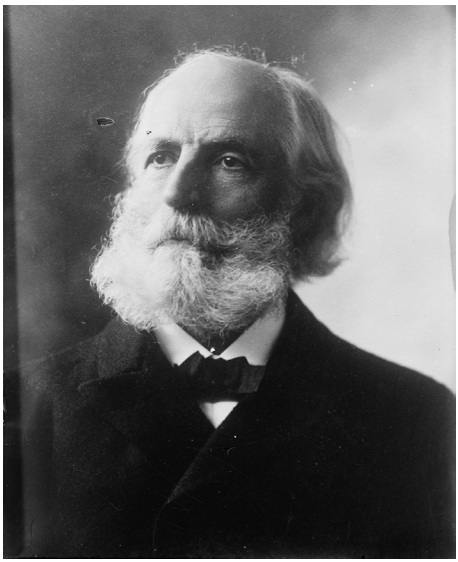

FIGURE 1.5 Henry Mitchell MacCracken, chancellor of New York University and founder of NYU's Hall of Fame of Great Americans. Courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

[70] Lester F. Ward, *Applied Sociology: A Treatise on the Conscious Improvement of Society by Society* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1906), 95.
[71] See Haller, *Eugenics*, 70.
[72] William James, "Clifford's Lectures and Essays," *The Nation*, November 6, 1879, 313.

explained that MacCracken's shrine countered Francis Galton's theories and suggested that, based on the early voting results, in the United States "average ability finds its path more open, its opportunity easier, and its career more visible from the start."[73]

MacCracken and his circle celebrated the contingencies of history and the opportunities afforded to free people to do great things. In essence, MacCracken's novel institution was proof that America provided freedom to make change. In all probability, MacCracken was either amused or bemused if he had read a paper published by Frederick Adams Woods that studied the lineage of members of NYU's Hall of Fame (as of 1910) to show that a "careful analysis of our own history speaks no less strongly for the inherited nature of exceptional ability."[74] Woods documented familial networks of elites in the United States that involved members of the Hall of Fame of Great Americans. Encouraged by Spencer's hope for American-style Aryanism, Wood's research was meant to correct Galton's dismissiveness of homegrown greatness in the United States. It was frankly shoddy research that stretched the limits of biology to make a case for eugenics. The findings would have horrified William James. To most observers, the Hall of Fame of Great Americans had demonstrated just the opposite.

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The litmus test for MacCracken's Hall of Fame experiment was Edgar Allan Poe. Poe operated in a literary arena dominated by the Fireside Poets. Through the output of this New England group, the canon of American poetry centered on the freedoms and liberties offered to the common man. Poe challenged that presentation with shades of darkness and experiences with death – themes later associated with a "Gothic" tone. He anticipated literary figures such as Walt Whitman and later Robert Frost, who adopted a much more sober – far "lonelier" – stance to the American experience. In challenging the status quo, Poe emerged as a renegade and, to some people's estimation, an un-American writer. His detractors used his muddled biography to deepen the argument against Poe, assigning to him all the wrong kinds of fame – infamy, that is – rather than singling him out for signaling a new epoch of literary originality.

[73] MacCracken, *The Hall of Fame*, 287–88.

[74] Frederick Adams Woods, "Heredity and the Hall of Fame," *Popular Science Monthly* 82 (May 1913): 446.

The result was an understandable tension. Poe stood out as a genius and bona fide changemaker. His best work was full of pessimism. His rhythm was both hypnotic and uneven. Poe offered America a very different sound. Later writers, eager to pull away from the conventional and patriotic prose of the Fireside Poets, looked to Poe as a lodestar counterexample. The sea change started ten years before MacCracken's Hall of Fame invention. Much aware of the state of affairs, a sufficient number of Hall of Fame judges blocked Poe, believing that his complicated personal life – or what was said about it – was far too pernicious and unwholesome for entry into the sacred place of "Great Americans." Unlike Robert E. Lee, Poe lacked the European-type lineal pedigree and Washington-like generalship to instantly overcome his other "failings."

The ban on Poe suggested an interesting relationship between fame and greatness. Henry MacCracken had instructed his judges to stingily pluck the great people from the larger pool of famous individuals. The decision to block Edgar Allan Poe indicated that fame, no matter its depreciated value at the dawn of the modern era, was a discrete nonnegotiable prerequisite for greatness. Fame wasn't the same as greatness, though, as MacCracken had hoped his Hall of Fame would prove. Poe could be otherwise great. Yet, his candidacy for NYU's Hall of Fame was just a nonstarter due to the infamy that had supposedly surrounded his personal life. A historical figure required at least a modicum of fame to prove themselves admirable, if not aspirational. Men such as Poe who could not manufacture fame had no business vying for a more precious commodity like greatness.

The ballots were a referendum on this point. Poe accumulated just thirty-eight votes in the inaugural Hall of Fame election. He collected affirmative nods from thirteen of twenty electors based in the South and seven of thirteen among those settled in the western sections of the United States. The regionalism seemed to confirm a "sectional" prejudice that had haunted MacCracken's Hall of Fame project. Skeptics wondered aloud whether Poe had been a casualty of bias that strongly favored the New England school of writers who had preferred a conventional meter and rhyming scheme that tended to solidly nurture American ideas. Of course, the Fireside Poets – Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, William Cullen Bryant, John Greenleaf Whittier, and James Russell Lowell – held strong ties to New England and wrote in a very accessible manner, often to mythologize America's founding, glorify its scenery, and rail against the wickedness of Southern slavery.

Poe was none of that. While he was Boston-born, Poe was a nonconformist and eschewed the indigenous impulse to romanticize the

American experience. Stately men such as Longfellow and Lowell adorned their faces with sagacious beards. Poe's portraits evoked a more troubled person, displaying the "ravage made by a vexed spirit within."[75] His choice of a mustache rather than a beard betokened his rejection of conventions. The supposed experts swept up with the reasonings of phrenology – that is, the association of the cranium with mental abilities – pointed out the "pronounced irregular" halves of Poe's face and the "inordinate expansion above the regions of the temple."[76]

Neither form nor style united Poe with the New Englanders. In 1827, Poe published his first collection of poems under the pseudonymous authorship of "a Bostonian." No one believed that the work read anything like someone from that New England tradition. Poe centered his work too much on death and a "broken heart" rather than love. He was an iconoclast, much preferring the company of scientists and free-thinking heretics than the typical American scholar that abided by the wholesome transcendentalist order of Unitarianism.[77] His comportment and social calendar placed him outside of the Puritan-bred elites. For all these reasons, Poe was better identified as a Baltimore-native, and therefore a Southerner.

Hence the assumptions that undergirded his failed first candidacy for MacCracken's Hall of Fame. Poe's most ardent defenders couldn't understand it. By 1900, more than a third of Americans lived in urban areas and had little use for Emerson's (eighty-seven votes) or Hawthorne's (seventy-three votes) idyllic descriptions of America's green landscapes.[78] The popular writers at the turn of the century pointed their interest to the wonders of technology and the social challenges of city dwelling. Poe was a forerunner to their work. But just eighteen of forty-six Yankee electors backed him. Still, the exclusion of Poe in the vote for the first NYU Hall of Fame class was deemed less egregious than other snubs. Most angry pundits reserved their rancor to protest the ineligibility of Alexander Hamilton or the dearth of female representation.[79] Some still spoke out. For instance, Poe's rejection

[75] E. C. Stedman, "Edgar Allan Poe," *Scribner's Monthly* 2 (May 1880): 108.
[76] Oliver Leigh, *Edgar Allan Poe: The Man, the Master, the Martyr* (Chicago: The Frank M. Morris Co., 1906), 4, 14.
[77] See John Tresch, *The Reason for the Darkness of the Night: Edgar Allan Poe and the Forging of American Science* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021).
[78] See Larzer Ziff, *The American 1890s: Life and Times of a Lost Generation* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 3–23.
[79] "The First Thirty," *The Sun*, October 14, 1900, 6.

infuriated a woman in San Francisco who decried America's "failure to appreciate him extraordinary, sinister, and disastrous."[80]

That he merited consideration should have been beyond question. Five and a half decades prior, Poe had published "The Raven," setting off a wave of interest in the poet and his verse. "The Raven" was a narrative poem, telling of a talking bird and a rhythmic adventure into the decline of a distraught lover's fragile psyche. The appearance of "The Raven" prompted publications of collections of Poe's works, earning him a very high station among America's literary class. It was perhaps an even greater smash among the British, likely to the chagrin of eugenicists such as Francis Galton. "Your 'Raven' has produced a sensation, a 'fit of horror,' here in England," reported the English poet Elizabeth Barrett to Poe. "Some of my friends are taken by the fear of it and some by the music. I hear of persons haunted by the 'Nevermore.'"[81] His raised reputation in England earned Poe significant European-style status but it did not translate into an American type of fame.

Edgar Allan Poe's fallout from American fame has a significant backstory. Poe's life was tragic. He was born in 1809 to a pair of middling actors. His father abandoned his mother when Edgar was an infant. Poe's mother died shortly thereafter, and the child was taken in by a wealthy foster family that sometimes indulged their charge and at other times abused him. Poe remained markedly unstable. First, he dropped out of the University of Virginia. Then, he abandoned his studies at West Point. Poe had little prospects. He was estranged from his foster family. He was a submediocre and indebted gambler. He was driven to alcohol, an addiction that made Poe an unreliable magazine writer and undependable romantic suitor. By twenty-two, Edgar Allan Poe moved to Baltimore to live with his aunt, Maria Clemm, his cousin, and brother Henry. Some six months later, Henry died – the result of ill health due to alcoholism. Some likely thought Henry Poe's troubles foretold a similar fate in store for his beleaguered brother.

Poe's personal life languished but he gained a following as a poet and prose writer. Never successful with romance, Poe married his cousin, Virginia Eliza Clemm, in 1836, when she was just thirteen years old. Poe's reputation rose but was again derailed by personal anguish (Figure 1.6). Virginia contracted tuberculosis and suffered through a

[80] Kate W. Beaver, "Poe and the Hall of Fame," *Dial*, January 1, 1901, 8.
[81] See Dale H. West, "Poe's Early Reception in England" (MA Thesis, University of Southern California, 1955), 17–18.

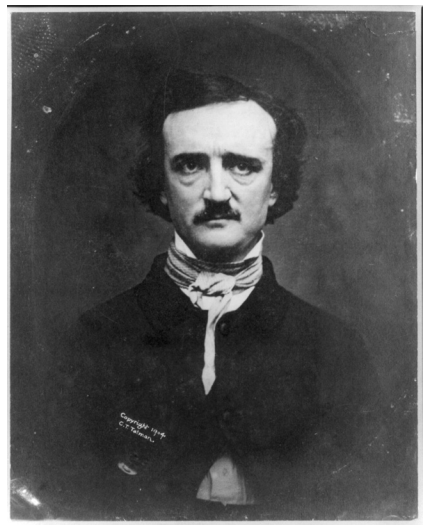

FIGURE 1.6 This daguerreotype rendering of Edgar Allan Poe by W. S. Hartshorn in 1848 is representative of the misanthropic depictions of Poe at the end of the poet's life and afterward. Courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

protracted period of illness during the couple's eleven years of marriage. Their ordeal inspired well-received work, including "The Raven," published in 1845. "No single poem," wrote one British literary figure, "ever had greater success in America."[82] Poe recognized that he had struck on something with that poem, and that it was "generally [the] most known" in his portfolio.[83] Poe also distinguished himself as an incisive critic.[84] No less a figure than James Russell Lowell envied Poe's "analytic power." Lowell, who admitted that he often found Poe's reviews of New England's Fireside Poets far too acerbic, still had to admit that "Mr. Poe is at once the most discriminating, philosophical, and fearless critic upon imaginative works who has written in America."[85]

That should have made Poe into a Hall of Famer. He was a recognized great writer and challenged America's men of letters to change. Yet, he never acquired the prerequisite levels of fame. To the contrary, infamy

[82] James Hannay, *The Poetical Works of Edgar Allan Poe, of America* (London: Addey & Co., 1856), 48.
[83] Edgar A. Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition," *Graham's Magazine* 28 (April 1846): 163.
[84] See Killis Campbell, "Contemporary Opinion of Poe," *Publications of Modern Language Association* 36 (June 1921): 142–66.
[85] James Russell Lowell, "Edgar Allan Poe," *Graham's Magazine* 27 (February 1845): 49.

buried him as an insincere misanthrope. This had much to do with his first biographer: the poet and anthologist, Rufus Griswold. Griswold had first entangled himself with Poe's American legacy in 1841. He had solicited Poe to submit several poems for a volume that desired to canonize a "national literature." Poe had happily submitted "The Coliseum," "The Haunted Palace," and "The Sleeper" for inclusion into Griswold's *Poets and Poetry of America*. In print, Poe had feted Griswold's book, expressing full agreement that the publication refuted accusations that Americans had "been forced to make rail-roads" and that the distraction with that busyness "deemed [it] impossible that we should make verse."[86] Privately, however, Poe had told women and men in his circle that he had despised Griswold's project and took umbrage with a number of the anthologist's selections that Poe believed misrepresented the very best of American literature.

Griswold learned of Poe's sharp criticism and wrongly assumed that Poe was the author of an unsigned review printed in a Philadelphia journal that prayed the anthology would become "forgotten" and that its editor might "sink into oblivion." Poe no doubt influenced the opinion of the true author, an acquaintance of his. Enraged and emboldened to mangle America's memory of Poe, Griswold took vengeance, a mission made possible because Griswold was appointed Poe's literary executor. "Poe was not my friend—I was not his—and he had no right to devolve upon me this duty of editing his works," complained Griswold about this odd responsibility.[87] Griswold nonetheless accepted the role. He recognized that control of Poe's estate provided him with a stranglehold on Poe's posthumous chances to accrue fame.[88]

Poe's mysterious death on October 7, 1849, enabled his foe to go to work. Griswold committed his first assault on Poe's reputation under the protection of an alias. Writing pseudonymously as "Ludwig," Griswold announced Poe's demise in the pages of a well-circulated New York newspaper. He heartlessly predicted that, regarding Poe's death, the "announcement will startle many, but few will be grieved by it." Poe, alleged Griswold, "had few or no friends," and was far better received abroad ("had readers in England, and in several of the

[86] Edgar A. Poe, "Griswold's American Poetry," *Boston Miscellany of Literature and Fashion* 2 (November 1842): 218.

[87] See Jeffrey A. Savoye, "The Works of the Late Edgar Allan Poe: Poe's Legacy and Griswold's Authority," *Edgar Allan Poe Review* 20 (Spring 2019): 5.

[88] See Burton R. Pollin, "A Posthumous Assessment: The 1849–1850 Periodical Press Response to Edgar Allan Poe," *American Periodicals* 2 (Fall 1992): 6–50.

states in Continental Europe").[89] In his lifetime, rumors had circulated about Poe's penchant for drinking and erratic courtship of leading ladies of letters such as Sarah Helen Whitman and Frances Sargent Osgood. Griswold had also pursued a romantic relationship with Osgood and this likely contributed to his antipathy for Poe. Griswold made no mention or substantiations of Poe's bad behavior but also refrained from suggesting anything very positive about his personal traits. This contrasted with the reports from Poe's native Baltimore. There, newspapermen wrote that "Mr. Poe is said to have been a man of polished manners, fine colloquial powers, warm and amiable impulses, and of a high and sometimes haughty spirit."[90]

Rufus Griswold did much more damage in the "Memoir of the Author" chapter he included in a collection of Poe's literary criticisms, a chance afforded to him by the rather unwise decision to make him the executor of Poe's oeuvre. He seized his chance to embellish the rumors that had for a while surrounded Poe and elevate them to "facts." In this and a series of other biographical entries, Griswold "tampered with the correspondence entrusted to him" and committed "forgeries" to annihilate Poe's status among American readers.[91] He maliciously altered letters from Poe's friends and published the doctored versions to suggest that Poe liked to "drink till [his] senses are lost."[92] Griswold attested to personal conversations with the dead poet that purported confessions that Poe had plagiarized from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and forged quotations from Poe that let on a fervent desire to "be successful with the mob," "create a monthly sensation," and "play havoc."[93]

Griswold's influence was immediate. Poe's meager fame was transformed into a surfeit of infamy. Northerners compared him to General Lee, a pair that no school children should aspire to become. Those closest to Poe were unsure how to respond. His mother-in-law was "nearly sunk" by Griswold's portrayal. Griswold, after all, purportedly provided documentary evidence to support the character assassination. She and others spent their lives "bewildered" and silent on the scandal.[94]

[89] Ludwig, "Death of Edgar A. Poe," *New York Tribune*, October 9, 1849, 2.
[90] "Death of Edgar A. Poe," *Baltimore Patriot*, October 9, 1849, 2.
[91] Arthur Hobson Quinn, *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1942), viii.
[92] Ibid., 229, n.14.
[93] Ibid., 282.
[94] See James M. Hutchisson, *Poe* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2005), 252–53.

It became hard to detach Poe from his work. Griswold had linked Poe's tragic personal circumstances with the dreariness of his writings that stood out against the backdrop of other American writers such as, say, Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose works supplied ample measures of happiness and hopefulness.[95]

The few literary men who remained Poe's champions sought to decouple his sad life from his impassioned writing: "And we would wish to shut him up in the tomb, as he is, and think alone of his books."[96] Another supporter offered much of the same, explaining that a division between Poe's life and letters would make it plain that the man had "evinced far more originality than any of his contemporaries."[97] Theirs was an attempt to argue for great men, regardless of their attainment of fame or fitness of their personal dealings. Yet, the dissonance between Poe's work and his image appeared inauthentic to most observers involved in weighing the dead poet's greatness.

Just a sparse number sought to outright defend Poe from the harshness of Griswold's biographical descriptions. These people understood that redeeming Poe's personal life was key to remediating his aspirational form of greatness. The most important was Sarah Helen Whitman, who published a tract to vindicate Poe against Griswold and refuted some of the more sensational accusations that involved her own relationship with the deceased. Whitman resented that so many histories of Poe had been "based on the narrative of Dr. Griswold, a narrative notoriously deficient in the great essentials of candor and authenticity."[98] Yet, Whitman's defense of Poe and work to restore the personal notoriety he had achieved with "The Raven" did not stymie the opposition.

The dominant position on Poe in the 1850s was that his was a "melancholy history, but it is not without its lessons, which rightfully regarded, may prove salutary to the young, the impulsive, and the gifted."[99] In other words, Poe held something to impart to future generations. The pessimism and reminders of Poe's critiques of Fireside Poets such as Longfellow and other "acknowledged chiefs of poetry and fiction," revised the impression of Poe's impact, leaving some to misremember the facts and state that "in the Eastern States, his personal qualities,

[95] Eugene Benson, "Poe and Hawthorne," *Galaxy* 6 (December 1868): 742.
[96] "Edgar Allan Poe," *United States Magazine and Democrat Review* 28 (February 1851): 162.
[97] "The Life and Poetry of Edgar Poe," *Littell's Living Age* 37 (April 16, 1853): 157.
[98] Sarah Helen Whitman, *Edgar Poe and His Critics* (New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1860), 14.
[99] "Literary Notices," *Knickerbocker* 36 (October 1850): 372.

carried into his literary productions, have hitherto limited the number both of his friends and admirers."[100] Others piled on further, supposing, based on Griswold's uncharitable characterizations, that Poe might have desired to send his young wife to a "premature grave" to gain inspiration and write his poems about a forlorn widower.[101]

Poe's American infamy dropped him even deeper from the ranks of greatness. Some suggested the very worst in Poe, claiming that Griswold had done Poe a favor by excising some of his worst traits. "A truthful delineation of his career," wrote another biographer without supporting facts or details, "would give a darker hue to his character than it has received from any of his biographers."[102] Others dubbed him a "Mad Man of Letters."[103] Another dared to describe "The Raven" as the "weird fancies of a brain distempered by wild fits of drinking."[104] This was the lowest point in the American reception of Poe. His biography had overtaken his oeuvre, demoting his most well-known writing to a rant of scribbles. Griswold and his caustic descendants had dropped Poe to the ranks of a madman.

Overseas was different. The spokesman for the British publisher Routledge revealed that his company sold 29,000 copies of Poe's volumes in 1887, at least threefold more than any other American writer on its book roster.[105] Europeans lamented "poor Edgar" when asked about the sorry state of appreciation he had garnered among Americans.[106] That he was valued in Europe only helped prove Poe's utter unworthiness in the United States.

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Two more members of the Fireside Poets entered the Hall of Fame in 1905. The electors cast fifty-nine votes for James Russell Lowell and fifty-three for John Greenleaf Whittier. Edgar Allan Poe received forty-two votes in that second election. He was still rated more infamous

[100] "Edgar Allan Poe," *North American Review* 83 (October 1856): 427, 442.
[101] See Alice L. Cooke, "The Popular Conception of Edgar Allan Poe from 1850 to 1890," *Studies in English* 22 (1942): 147–48.
[102] "Memoir of Edgar Allan Poe," in *The Poetical Works of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: W. J. Widdleton, 1866), xiii.
[103] "A Mad Man of Letters," *Scribner's Monthly* 10 (October 1875): 690–99.
[104] William Minto, "Edgar Allan Poe," *Fortnightly Review*, July 1, 1880, 69.
[105] Thomas Nelson Page, "Authorship in the South before the War," *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* 44 (July 1889): 113.
[106] James Hannay, "Life and Genius of Edgar Allan Poe," in *The Poetical Works of Edgar Allan Poe, of America*, xxv.

than famous among a sizable portion of the judges. George Washburn of Robert College admitted that he could not countenance Poe and his "madness."[107] Arthur Hadley of Yale canvassed his colleagues and found that those who had rejected Poe were among the cluster of "practical" men who placed reputation above an appreciation for literature.[108] Hadley's survey revealed that fame was still a prerequisite to greatness. Current events did not help Poe find new sources of fame. The Temperance Movement was on the rise and therefore an inopportune moment for Poe, owing to his work's inextricable association with his personal proclivities.[109] The literary-minded judges such as the poet, Edmund Clarence Stedman, were "quite taken aback" that his fellow electors had once again rejected Poe.[110]

Henry MacCracken interpreted the Poe affair as a blemish on his Hall of Fame experiment. The discussion around Poe's nomination invested too much capital in a depreciated commodity like fame and, in effect, separated it from that scarce commodity known as greatness. MacCracken sought to fix that. His aim was to show that fame and greatness were still one and the same. Poe had failed to gain admission into the Hall of Fame because he was deficient as a great man. He told the newspapers that the majority decision to withhold Poe "should not be ascribed to the defects of the poet's moral nature, but to the lack of sincerity in his poetry."[111] As MacCracken had pitched it, Poe's unworthiness for entry into the Hall of Fame of Great Americans was due to a dearth of greatness, not fame. MacCracken did not elaborate on what he meant by "sincere," but it no doubt had something to do with Poe's lack of devotion to the presentation of America that was so evidently punctuated in the Fireside Poets' letters.

The Baltimore-area press took umbrage at MacCracken's assessment. The *Baltimore Sun* called it "colossal stupidity" and, to let the writing speak for itself, pledged to published instances of Poe's poetry for a full week.[112] "In saying this," offered the editor of the *Washington Post*

[107] "Electors of the Hall of Fame Give their Estimates of Poe," *New York Times*, January 17, 1909, SM1.

[108] Ibid.

[109] See W. G. "Five Years More May See Edgar Allan Poe Elected," *New York Times*, October 22, 1905, SM5; and "The Holy Willies," *Nashville American*, September 19, 1907, 6.

[110] Edmund Clarence Stedman, "Poe, Copper and the Hall of Fame," *North American Review*, August 16, 1907, 804.

[111] "'Nevermore' for Poe," *Boston Globe*, October 10, 1905, 2.

[112] See "Gems from Edgar Allan Poe," *Baltimore Sun*, October 16, 1905, 4; and "Poe's Rejection Scored," *Baltimore Sun*, October 11, 1905, 7.

about MacCracken's screed, "the Chancellor has, it is to be feared, written himself down an ass, as well as a malicious and biased critic unacquainted with the first principles of literary criticism."[113] MacCracken doubled down on his evaluation, believing that a fuller explanation for his criticism of Poe would mollify the opposition:

> The American people has not yet come to the stage when it prefers form to substance, and many are inclined to believe that Poe is attitudinizing in regard to "Annabel Lee." Judged by Milton's criterion, that poetry should be simple, sensuous and passionate, Poe's poetry has the first two qualities, but it is lacking in the third. Poe's poetry possesses the necessary simplicity of form to be easily understood, and the rhythm and picture-making qualities meant by Milton's "sensuous," but it does not suggest the wide range of feelings, nor does it give one the impression that Poe felt any very deeply. This is my idea why he has not been elected.[114]

That backfired. Poe's defenders read MacCracken's reasoning as a rehearsal of the "stock criticism of the poet's New England detractors."[115] MacCracken had conflated "greatness" and "fame" and made a mess of the deliberations. Others agreed that MacCracken gave voice to the Hall of Fame's supposed regionalism, paying no mind to the other side who liked to point out Robert E. Lee's membership to the pantheon of "Great Americans." Poe supporters described the ordeal as the "venom of sectional prejudice" and denounced the culprits as "stuck-up New England pettifoggers."[116] They described this group as fully out of touch with Poe's reputation abroad, which therefore tended to tarnish the Hall of Fame, they surmised, much more than Poe's reputation. "He is our only world-writer," cried one pundit, "and everybody outside of America knows it."[117] The message was clear: fame could no longer be a prerequisite for greatness if America wished to avoid becoming a cultural laughing stock.

Poe was finally inducted in 1910. His better fortune was due principally to the significant turnover among the judges. NYU replaced sixteen electors, including Grover Cleveland and other Poe detractors. A journalist polled the new voters and found that "several of them are great admirers of Poe."[118] He had now acquired the intangible amount of

[113] "Excluded from the Hall of Fame," *Washington Post*, October 11, 1905, 6.
[114] "Edgar Allan Poe and the Hall of Fame," *Current Literature* 39 (December 1905): 613.
[115] "Poe's Critic," *Baltimore Sun*, October 11, 1905, 4.
[116] See "Edgar Allan Poe and the Hall of Fame," *Current Literature* 39 (December 1905): 613; and Douglas Anderson, "Information Wanted," *New York Sun*, October 22, 1905, 8.
[117] Sydney C. Haley, "Poe Again," *New York Sun*, January 20, 1906, 6.
[118] "Poe Favorite Now for Hall of Fame," *New York Times*, February 12, 1910, 8.

fame to move forward. Poe dominated the press coverage, a situation that accrued him even higher levels of fame. A letter-writer in the pages of the *New York Times* lobbied for Poe based on European status: France and England admire Poe, so should America.[119] Another newspaper conducted a popular vote for the "purpose of aiding the electors of the Hall of Fame." Among the rank and file, Poe received more votes than the next two candidates – William Cullen Bryant and Patrick Henry – combined.[120] It was by now the general feeling that MacCracken's testament to American greatness would be a "vulgarian Hall of Fame" without Edgar Allan Poe.[121]

The Hall of Fame elected Poe, but not with a fervor that equaled the popular vote. The newly eligible Harriet Beecher Stowe topped all candidates with seventy-four votes. Poe came in second, tied at 69 votes with Oliver Wendell Holmes.[122] What is more, Poe scored lowest among the judges sorted as "publicists, editors and authors."

The episode proved to Poe's supporters that MacCracken's Hall of Fame had overvalued "fame" at the expense of "greatness." The men who had blocked Poe desired a great individual to have lived an aspirational fame-fit life. His defenders flouted that formulation. The *Washington Post* greeted the Hall of Fame's decision with a headline: "Poe Is Now Famous."[123] The *Baltimore Sun* took the jest a step farther: "Poe Is Famous at Last."[124] The fallout of the Poe affair sharpened Americans' attention to the relationship between "fame" and "greatness." It was apparent that these were not interchangeable terms, nor did these cultural commodities need correlation. At times, as with Edgar Allan Poe, the two qualities had nothing to do with one another. It was possible to be a great person but possess meager traces of fame. Likewise, an individual could have accumulated much fame but possessed no claim whatsoever to greatness. In its early history, the Hall of Fame of Great Americans of New York University reinforced the need to invest much more in the changemakers whose achievements were most often measured in something described as "greatness."

[119] Malcolm French, "Poe for the Hall of Fame," *New York Times*, August 6, 1910, BR9.
[120] See coverage of the *New York World* poll in "The Hall of Fame," *Washington Post*, May 23, 1910, 6.
[121] "Books and Men: Some Reminiscences of Richard Watson Gilder," *The Forum* 43 (January 1910): 73.
[122] "Poe Gets a Place in Hall of Fame," *New York Times*, October 22, 1910, 1.
[123] "Poe Is Now Famous," *Washington Post*, October 22, 1910, 1.
[124] "Poe Is Famous at Last," *Baltimore Sun*, October 22, 1910, 2.