



Telling Our Stories

250 Years of United Methodism
in the New York Area

1766-2016 www.nyac.com/250years



First Woman Licensed to Preach in the Methodist Episcopal Church

1830-1914



Image from the collection of Sylvia Hasenkopf,
Hudson River Valley Historian

Maggie Newton Van Cott

A woman of enormous personal energy, Maggie Newton Van Cott was born an Episcopalian in New York City. Married at 18, she frequently acted on behalf of her ill husband in his business ventures.

One day as she walked along John Street on a business errand, she heard a voice calling her to turn over her life to the Lord:

“That moment she stood on the pavement in front of old John Street Methodist Episcopal Church, and from heaven light streamed in upon her soul. She was soundly, powerfully converted.”

Van Cott began enthusiastically attending Methodist class meetings. When her husband and class leader questioned her activities, she famously responded:

“I believe my tongue is my own, John, and I will use it when I please, where I please, and as I please.”

Van Cott moved to Greene County, NY in 1868 to devote her life to revival work. Her 1869 licensing was controversial, but her lively preaching was popular throughout the Northeast and later on tours to the West. It was said that at her 1878 revival in Poughkeepsie between 500 and 600 were converted!

For Discussion

- What do you think of Maggie Newton Van Cott’s personal conversion experience? What does it mean to experience such a “new birth”?
- What was a Methodist revival meeting like in America in the 1800s? How does it compare to current forms of worship?
- Van Cott’s license to preach was controversial. How did she pave the way for women who came after her? How have women influenced your spiritual journey?

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