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## Dorr Rebellion Project Selected Bibliography

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In writing [The Dorr Rebellion](#) short documentary the authors drew from Christian Fritz and Ronald Formisano's engaging and thoroughly researched chapters on the Dorr Rebellion in their most recent works. See Fritz, *American Sovereigns: The People and America's Constitutional Tradition Before the Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2008) and Formisano, *For the People: American Populist Movements from the Revolution through the 1850s* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007). Also helpful in elucidating Dorr's constitutional world is Christian Fritz, "America's Unknown Constitutional World," October 2008 (to read the article [click here](#)).

Since the Dorr Rebellion was the most illustrated event in the antebellum world, the images compiled by Daniel Schofield and Russell DeSimone in *The Broadsides of the Dorr Rebellion* (Rhode Island Supreme Court Historical Society Publications, 1992) proved indispensable.

The most thorough analysis of the origins of the Dorr Rebellion remains Patrick T. Conley's magisterial *Democracy in Decline: Rhode Island Constitutional Development, 1776-1841* (Rhode Island Historical Society Publications, 1977) and Erik J. Chaput's *The People's Martyr – Thomas Wilson Dorr and His 1842 Rhode Island Rebellion* (University Press of Kansas, 2013). For those interested in the Dorr Rebellion and national politics, consult these two articles by Conley: "No Tempest in a Teapot: The Dorr Rebellion in National Perspective." *Rhode Island History* 50 (1992): 67-100 and "Popular Sovereignty or Public Anarchy: America Debates the Dorr Rebellion" *Rhode Island History* 60 (2002): 71-91. Both articles are available for download at the Rhode Island History Society website. ([1](#), [2](#)) Mark Schantz's discussion of the rebellion in his insightful work, *Piety in Providence: Class Dimensions of Religious Experience in Antebellum Providence* (Cornell University Press, 2000) should also be consulted.

The influence of race at the 1841 People's Convention is detailed in Erik Chaput's and Russell DeSimone's "Strange Bedfellows: The Politics of Race in Antebellum Rhode Island," January 2010 (to read the article [click here](#)). For an older but still valuable discussion see, J. Stanley Lemons and Michael McKenna, "Re-enfranchisement of Rhode Island Negroes," *Rhode Island History* 30 (1971): 2-13. This article is also available for download at the [RIHS website](#).

For issues of gender during the rebellion see Ronald P. Formisano, "The Role of Women in the Dorr Rebellion," *Rhode Island History* 51 (1993): 89-104 (read [here](#)). See also Susan H. Graham, "'Call Me a Female Politician, I Glory in the Name!': Women Dorrites and Rhode Island's 1842 Suffrage Crisis" (Ph.D., diss., University of Minnesota, 2006).

Dorr's life both before and after the rebellion has been thoroughly chronicled in Erik J. Chaput's 2011 doctoral dissertation, directed by historian James Roger Sharp, at Syracuse University: "Thomas Wilson Dorr and the Rhode Island Question: The Competing Politics of the People's Sovereignty in Jacksonian America." Chaput's

dissertation expands upon earlier examinations of the Dorr Rebellion written in the 1970s by historians Marvin Gettleman and George Dennison.

The reference to Providence resident Susan Backus in the documentary comes from a letter written by Backus to her cousin Almira White on May 30, 1842. The letter is contained in the James W. Ely Family Papers at the Rhode Island Historical Society Library. For specific information on other primary source material used in the film please email Dr. Erik Chaput at [echaput@providence.edu](mailto:echaput@providence.edu).

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