

THE YEAR IN REVIEW: **2009**

The past year has (once again) been one of the busiest yet here at the Hudson River Valley Institute. The Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Commemoration was an opportunity to gather many disparate aspects of our region's history under one umbrella and in one conference, book, and commemorative issue of the *Hudson River Valley Review*. We were challenged early in the planning process to cover all three of these historic figures as well as their legacies in everything we had a hand in planning. And we did.

But the best part for our readers and viewers may be that the conference is available online via our website and should remain a resource for educators, students, and anyone with an interest in these aspects of our history. The commemorative issue of the *Review* was widely distributed to libraries and historic organizations and is still available for purchase from our offices. Finally, as you will read more about below, we collected some of the best articles from the past twenty-five years of the *Review* and have made them available in *America's First River: The History and Culture of the Hudson River Valley*.

And that is still just a portion of what the Institute undertook in the past twelve months. Please read on to learn more about what we've been up to – and, as always, thank you once again for your ongoing interest and support!

QUADRICENTENNIAL CONFERENCE & PLAY

HRVI, in partnership with the [Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area](#), the [Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute](#), the [FDR Presidential Library](#), the [New York State Quadricentennial Office and Commission](#) and the [National Park Service](#), hosted “[New York's 400 Years](#)” Quadricentennial Conference on September 25-27. All panels presented the key dimensions of the Hudson River Valley's rich culture and history. Conference participants attended sessions which discussed topics ranging from Henry Hudson's voyage and Native Americans of the region to art and architecture throughout the valley.

The conference convened at the Henry A. Wallace Center in Hyde Park; Friday's highlights included the debut and discussion of the new book, [Four Centuries of Dutch-American](#)

[Relations](#), and a keynote lecture about Samuel De Champlain delivered by Pulitzer Prize winner, David Hackett Fischer. Saturday included panels on art, literature, landscapes and architecture of the Hudson River Valley capped with a reception and book signing.

On Sunday, September 27, HRVI hosted “The River of Tides: A Play about Henry Hudson’s Journey on the River That Came to Bear his Name” by Joseph Bruchac. The play told the story of Henry’s travels along the Hudson River through the eyes of the local Native Americans as well as Hudson and his crew. It was produced by [Pace University](#), [Marist College](#) and the [Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian](#).

These activities would not have been possible without the generous Federal funding provided through the National Park Service by Congressman Maurice Hinchey, the New York State support from Director Tara Sullivan and the Quadricentennial Office, and the gift from Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation.

WEBCAST OF THE CONFERENCE AND PLAY

We worked with [Total Webcasting, Inc.](#) to webcast the conference live, allowing for global participation. After having spent so much time to assemble a comprehensive list of speakers, we wanted to ensure that it could be a part of the legacy of the Quadricentennial. Furthermore, we have been able to upload and archive every session onto our website, permitting users continuous access to this historic conference. During September and October we received nearly 300 “visits” or views, from the Netherlands, France and throughout the United States.

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY INSTITUTES

The Hudson River Valley Institute finished three years of programming for our last TAH grant in 2008, and we were lucky to have funds left over to provide a few more institutes this past summer. We offered three day-long institutes that incorporated field trips with the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area’s three key themes: “Corridor of Commerce,” “Nature and Culture,” and “Freedom and Dignity.”

The first fieldtrip took place on July 14, 2009, covering the topic of industrialization. The participants, most local teachers, learned what life would have been like for an American in

1800-1890. At [Mohonk Preserve's Trapps Mountain Hamlet](#) and the Eli Van Heuven Cabin, participants saw the resourcefulness, as well as the hardships and isolation felt by people of the time, and thus, the importance of strong community bonds. The trip also included a visit to the D&H Canal, where participants saw how the advancement of technology and industrialization would have changed the lives of those living in the Trapps Hamlet and throughout the region.

The July 15 fieldtrip celebrated the natural beauty of the Hudson River Valley and its influence on art and architecture. The trip included visits to the Samuel Morse's home, [Locust Grove](#), [Matthew Vassar's Springside](#) – designed by Andrew Jackson Downing, the [Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery](#), and Vassar College's [Francis Lehman Loeb Art Center](#). The goal of this fieldtrip was to discuss and identify the characteristics of paintings and architecture which were influenced by the landscape and beauty of our region. Both trips were led by Marist Professor [Steve Mercier](#), who provided attendees with information packets and materials to take back to their classrooms.

The final fieldtrip led by our own Dr. Johnson, on July 16, went to the [United States Military Academy at West Point](#), the [New Windsor Cantonment and National Purple Heart Hall of Honor](#), and [Washington's Headquarters](#). Each site played a vital role in the American Revolution. These historic sites are excellent examples of the leadership of George Washington, George Clinton, and other military leaders, and the locations also provide a clear illustration as to the geographic importance of the region.

The Teaching American History Institutes were coordinated by Dutchess, Orange, and Ulster BOCES and the Hudson River Valley Institute to educate American History teachers, and by extension their students, on the importance of the Hudson River Valley in industrialization, art, and military history. While we presently do not have funding for future TAH programs, we are re-applying for grants and looking for alternative avenues to continue this valued project.

WALKWAY OVER THE HUDSON ORAL HISTORY

We worked with the [Walkway Over the Hudson](#) and [Dyson Foundation](#) on an oral history of the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge. Over the course of the last academic year, we

conducted forty interviews with many of the multi-faceted characters, professionals, and personalities associated with the bridge historically and the effort underway. The [Marist College Media Center](#) assisted our effort by taping the interviews and producing a short documentary with the footage. The documentary also included additional shots of the Walkway and surroundings, and historic as well as contemporary images that were procured throughout the project. One of our interns prepared an index of Walkway materials which will allow users to easily find photos, maps, correspondences and other materials found in the Poughkeepsie Public Library's local history collection, as well as at the Clinton Historical Society, where Carleton Mabee archived the records he used in writing his history of the bridge. Look for all of this on our website in the upcoming months.

HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

Publication of the [Spring 2009](#) Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial commemorative issue of *Hudson River Valley Review* coincided with the kick-off of the many Quadricentennial summer events. Containing 14 articles and an introduction by Tara Sullivan, Executive Director of the Quadricentennial Commission, and Sarah Olson Superintendent of Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites, it included articles on Hudson, Champlain, Fulton, the Native Americans at Ticonderoga, Dutch culture in New Netherland, a transcription of a journal belonging to a member aboard the *Half Moon* during Hudson's voyage, and the 1909 celebration. The Regional History Forum included articles on the current Quadricentennial commemoration and the Walkway over the Hudson project.

The [Autumn 2009](#) issue of *The Hudson River Valley Review* was guest-edited by Professor JoAnne Myers, professor of Political Science and Women's Studies at Marist College and Chair of the Board of the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill, and dedicated to the life and legacy of Eleanor Roosevelt on the 125th anniversary of her birth and the 60th year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which she was the chief writer. It includes a brief biographical overview, articles on life with Eleanor at Val-Kill, Val-Kill Industries, the planned community at Arthurdale, the impact of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and a memo to President Obama on its importance. The symposia for this issue features a photo essay, excerpts from the unpublished autobiography of Lorena Hickok, and a forum on the Val-Kill historic site. In addition, several books on Eleanor Roosevelt are reviewed, including one written by Eleanor on her own life lessons. This special edition of the *Hudson River Valley Review* offers readers a comprehensive view of "The First Lady of the World" and her lasting legacy.

AMERICA'S FIRST RIVER: THE HISTORY AND CULTURE OF THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY; INTRODUCTION BY THOMAS S. WERMUTH, JAMES M. JOHNSON, AND CHRISTOPHER PRYSLOPSKI

This [collection of 18 essays](#) represents just a portion of those articles published in the *Hudson Valley Regional Review* and the *Hudson River Valley Review* since 1984. They encompass our region's prehistory, colonial beginnings, our war for independence, and the social and economic impacts of the industrial revolution as well the emergence of the Hudson River School of art and regional writers. [SUNY Press](#) is distributing the book widely.

HUDSONRIVERVALLEY.ORG UPGRADE

HRVI finished redesigning its website this past summer in collaboration with Marist College's Information Technology Department and "soft launched" it in August. Besides a new look, the improved Digital Library is now maintained by HRVI staff and will allow us to make additions and changes more quickly than before – adding and updating pages, content, images, and more.

HUDSON RIVER VALLEY HALL OF FAME

The Institute was asked by Marist President Dennis Murray to create a [Hall of Fame](#) highlighting notable individuals from throughout the region. We have begun creating this online resource with help from our interns, and it is now available in the Library section of our website. It will continue to grow each semester as new people and topics are added, highlighting the many diverse contributions our region has made to the nation and the world.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES: DIGITAL PATHFINDER GRANT

The [National Endowment for the Humanities](#) recently awarded a grant of nearly \$50,000 to Marist College and HRVI for the “Digital Pathfinder” Project. The project is collaboration of resources from the Hudson River Valley Institute, [Marist's School of Computer Science](#), and the [Staatsburgh State Historic Site](#) to develop an innovative new model for historic tours. The Digital Pathfinder Project will give visitors at Staatsburgh the opportunity to use GPS enabled PDAs to explore interactive media and customizable tours at the site. The PDAs will be

programmed with open source software and use “plug and play” technology allowing content to be created and updated cheaply, frequently and efficiently.

This technology will allow visitors to take customized tours of the site by selecting desired paths, durations, topics and level of detail. Previously unavailable archival material will be used to enhance the tour of the estate that was once the country home of Ogden and Ruth Livingston Mills. Its Beaux Arts architecture depicts the elegant lifestyle of industrial leaders during the Gilded Age. At this time, the landscape tour is available by appointment only. However, the estate’s grounds are used by 60,000 people each year, many of whom have never toured the site. The Digital Pathfinder Project will enable these visitors to take self-guided tours and thus open up the estate to a larger public.

The digital tours will explore the four main areas of the Staatsburgh estate; the mansion, waterfront, gardener’s cottage, and greenhouses. The tours will emphasize historic themes such as Beaux Arts architecture, labor, agriculture, and leisure activities of the time period. In addition to interactive maps, the presentation will include images, correspondence, journals, oral histories, and videos. Once this pilot program is up and running at Staatsburgh, additional tours can be developed to include the estate’s riverfront trails and the surrounding hamlet. The ultimate goal of all partners and the NEH is to provide the Digital Pathfinder technology to other Great Estates in the Hudson Valley and eventually historic locations nationwide.

HUDSON RIVER VALLEY LITERATURE (ALAN PRICE ON EDITH WHARTON).

On campus, HRVI assisted in bringing Dr. Alan Price to lecture on Edith Wharton in the Hudson River Valley. This is the third year in a row that HRVI has co-sponsored a lecture with the [Marist College Honors Program](#), the [School of Liberal Arts](#), and the [Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel](#), serving to highlight our literary heritage. Past events include poetry and fiction readings by authors included in [*Riverine, An Anthology of Hudson Valley Authors*](#), and other literary works. Working with other entities allows HRVI to play an interdisciplinary role within the college and the region.