

HRVI



YOUR GATEWAY TO THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY

Hudson River Valley Institute

The Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge

During the year-span of 1868 to 1873, the city of Poughkeepsie experienced a boom in the railroad industry. Harvey Eastman, upon his election to the mayoral office vowed to make the city a major railroad crossing point. Eastman's goal consisted of a bridge linking the Pennsylvania and Virginia railway lines with those of New England. Following a struggle with the Albany legislature, the city secured a charter of \$2 million to begin construction.

The project started in December of 1873.

Engineers made sure the structure was high enough so as not to obstruct the passage of large vessels. After fifteen years of work, the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge opened for business in December 1888, spanning an impressive 6,767 feet with a height of 212 feet above the Hudson's waters. To accomplish such a length and height, architects fashioned the bridge to be a cantilever.

Throughout most of its operational life, the Central New

England Railroad Company owned the Poughkeepsie Bridge. During the late nineteenth and middle twentieth centuries, the bridge as Eastman envisioned served as a major connector to New England and the Mid-West. Throughout both World Wars, the bridge's security

porated the structure. The combination of New York Central and New Haven made up Penn Central. The company economically struggled to stay alive, and as a result cut the maintenance staff to the bridge. In the winter of 1973-1974, Penn Central removed the crew entirely. That same winter the



water pipes to the structure cracked. This proved to be problematic when it caught on fire May 8, 1974. The fire burned a 700-foot section of the bridge, twisting the steel tracks as well girders. Repairs to the assemblage were sought to be enacted quickly, but months turned into years. Shortly after the fire, Penn Central

was tightened, as vital shipments of fuels and munitions made their way across the Hudson. Even in the beginning years of the Cold War (through the early 1960s) it remained under close supervision. This structure also helped to transform the town of Maybrook into a major railroad hub as it intercepted Poughkeepsie trains.

After 1960, the railroad bridge fell into disrepair, and in 1968 Penn Central incor-

porated the structure. The combination of New York Central and New Haven made up Penn Central. The company economically struggled to stay alive, and as a result cut the maintenance staff to the bridge. In the winter of 1973-1974, Penn Central removed the crew entirely. That same winter the

itself collapsed and Conrail assumed ownership the bridge in 1976. Falling debris became a primary concern and as a result Conrail stripped sections of it down to bare steel. Throughout the late 1970s and early New York officials were split over whether or not to restore the bridge. During this time, the Mid-Hudson Bridge witnessed an increase in automobile traffic, thus drawing support away from re-opening up the Pough-

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- *See what's new on our Digital Library on page 4*

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keepsie Bridge as a rail line. Debate continued over the structure's fate, prompting Conrail to rid itself of it. On November 1, 1984, Conrail sold the railroad bridge as well as ten miles of track to Gordon Schreiber Miller for \$1. In turn, Miller sold it to Vito Moreno for the same price.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s the Coast Guard looked to demolish the bridge, arguing it to be hazardous for ships. This threat prompted a few citizens, such as Bill Sepe, to preserve the bridge and convert it into a walkway. Since 1992 Walkway Over the Hudson has tried to elicit the appropriate funding. It assumed partial (1993) then full ownership of the railroad bridge (1998). For a short time in 1995, the Walkway organization allowed people to walk on the structure. At that time, they estimated the cost of converting the railway at \$21.5 million. Today it is priced at about \$25 million.

The desire to make the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge accessible to the public has recently picked up momentum. In January 2008 New York Governor, Eliot

Spitzer, allocated \$16 million towards transforming the bridge into a place for walkers, hikers, and joggers. This amount, however, will have to be approved by the state legislature. The goal of both Spitzer and [Walkway Over The Hudson](#) is to have the bridge completed

\$21 million as hundreds of thousands come to visit.

For additional information surrounding the history of the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge please consult Carleton Mabee's *Bridging the Hudson: The Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge and Its Connecting Rail*

Lines

For more information about Walkway Over the Hudson please visit www.walkway.org.

To view online archival material about the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge please visit www.catskillarchive.com.

Paul Contarino



by September 2009 in time of the quadricentennial celebration of Hudson's voyage. Walkway contends the renovated bridge will generate annual revenue of

Featured Historian— Dutchess County Historical Society

The Dutchess County Historical Society (DCHS) is the repository for all facets of Dutchess County's 324-year-long history. Those who find themselves unable to visit its headquarters or its two historic sites, the Glebe House and Clinton House, can discover more about this educational organization at the [DCHS website](#).

For over 93 years, DCHS has dedicated itself to the preservation and interpretation of Dutchess County history. DCHS has made a name for itself by providing an educational experience for the greater community. DCHS provides publications, educational outreach to the Dutchess County community, and a collection of archival material, photographs and dimensional objects, inclusive to Dutchess County, as well as 14 books. Those who are interested can browse DCHS's publications and order them

online on their [publication site](#). The society has also produced a yearbook of articles on local history annually since 1914 and is the oldest continuously published annual in the state. In addition, it also offers a [newsletter](#) that provides information regarding DCHS's involvement in the community and brief local history articles.

The DCHS webpage also provides information on the [Glebe House](#) and [Clinton House](#) which they own and operate. Through the Glebe House, the Society offers tours for organizational groups and school children and, also, holds open house days during the year. In addition, DCHS provides history trunks based on the local history curriculum for the use in 4th and 7th grades and provides a school program at the Glebe House.

At the Clinton House DCHS maintains and operates its headquarters, the [Franklin A. Butts Library](#) and collection storage space.

The library is open to the public and is the non-circulating section of the DCHS collections. There is a minimal fee for non-members to use the library. However, [members](#) can freely use the library during their hours of operation. The Clinton House is open to the public Tuesdays thru Fridays 10am to 3pm.

The main page of the DCHS website also provides links to become a [member](#), to become a [volunteer](#), an informational link on [genealogy](#) as well as other helpful [outside links](#). The Dutchess County Historical Society is dedicated to preserving our local history. For more information about DCHS you can contact them at 845-471-1630 or visit them at one of their historic locations: the Glebe House or Clinton House.

Robert J. Harvey

Featured Historic Website — Walkway.org

The Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge has had a commanding presence of the landscape of the Hudson Valley since its completion in 1888. Walkway Over the Hudson is a non-profit organization founded in 1992 that has assumed ownership of the bridge. Since then, their mission has been the stewardship, preservation, and commitment to transforming the bridge into public space. Their website, www.walkway.org, features recent news, brief history, photos, FAQ's and membership and donations opportunities. Governor Spitzer's State of the State address, which is featured on the website, announced the pledge to fund the project and have it completed for the 400th Anniversary of Henry Hudson's voyage in the Fall of 2009.

Visitors to the Walkway's website are encouraged to visit their membership and volunteer pages. It is the public that will be central in making this dream become a reality. Becoming a member entitles one to the organiza-

tion's newsletter, invitations to meetings, and special events. Anyone interested can sign up online through the membership page. Walkway Over the Hudson also invites the public to step up and volunteer to help the bridge become a centerpiece of



Image from Bergmann Associates and McLaren Engineering Group

their community. To volunteer contact Bill Keating at 845-677-4180 or by email at bill.keating@walkway.org.

On their news page, Walkway Over the Hudson allows the public to keep up-to-date on recent news about the bridge. In a January 7, 2008 press release the organiza-

tion announced the finding of two major studies. The first was an engineering study conducted by the firm Bergmann Associates that looked at the structural integrity of the bridge. It performed a meticulous "hands-on" inspection of the bridge by following the Department of Transportation guidelines. Its conclusion was that the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge is structurally sound and would require only minor repairs.

A Saratoga Springs based firm, Camoin Associates, conducted an economic impact study of the bridge project. It determined that the new public park would create about 258 new jobs for Dutchess and Ulster counties. The venture would also generate \$1.3 million in local and state tax revenues. It is the hope of many that the Poughkeepsie Bridge will be given a new lease on life and help the public experience the Hudson Valley from a higher perspective.

Jason Jacondin

Historic Town — Poughkeepsie

Poughkeepsie is remarkable for its natural beauty on the eastern bank of the Hudson River. The name, Poughkeepsie, is of Native-American origin meaning "reed-covered lodge by the little water place." The Dutch were among the first to settle in Poughkeepsie in the late 17th century and it is believed Baltus van Kleeck built the first house in 1702.

During the Revolutionary War, the British burned Kingston, New York's capital, as a result of the damage, Poughkeepsie was chosen to serve as the State's temporary capital from 1777 to 1783.

In the summer of 1788, the Ratification Convention was held in Poughkeepsie. The debate over the ratification of the Constitution brought many important leaders of the time such as Alexander Hamilton, John Jay and George Clinton

into Poughkeepsie. New York announced that it would become the eleventh state to ratify the Constitution at the Poughkeepsie courthouse. Along with the ratification of the Constitution, New York State also included its own version



of amendments to the document that would later be included in the Bill of Rights.

Poughkeepsie's growth was slow at first. It was not officially chartered until 1799,

almost a century after the first settlers arrived. The village did not become a city until 1854 when the population had reached over 10,000. During this time period, Poughkeepsie served as a major shipbuilding port and transportation center.

The city was also vital to the lumber, locomotive and whaling industries.

Today, the population of the city has risen to over 30,000. It has become increasingly popular due to its central location between New York City and Albany. Although Poughkeepsie has become more modern, the city still prides itself on its historical features.

Kimberly Maschak

Historic Site — Future of the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge

The Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge, at one time the longest railroad bridge in the world, is being revived as the longest pedestrian bridge in the world.

In his State of the State Address, Governor Elliott Spitzer announced his plans to make the walkway the first major park investment for the upcoming 400-year anniversary of Henry Hudson's exploration of the Hudson River. Governor Spitzer stated, "I am announcing the state's commitment to transform the dormant Poughkeepsie Rail Bridge into an awe-inspiring historic park".

Since the 1974 fire that ended transportation over the bridge, there have been several proposed ideas for the future of the bridge, ranging from knocking it down to creating a shopping center. However, after Governor Spitzer's speech, Walkway Over the Hudson, a non-profit organization, released a structural study and design plans to show the public its plan to convert the bridge into a walk and bikeway.

This organization was founded in 1992 to preserve the railroad bridge and transform it into a park and walkway that would provide people with access to the Hudson River's breathtaking views. As the chairman for Walkway Over the Hudson, Fred Schaeffer stated, "Spitzer's acknowledgement of the bridge and promise of state

people have a hard time visualizing the potential for."

The revitalization project features a thirty-five foot wide span for hiking, jogging and biking, as well as benches and lights and elevator services. The Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge will be run as a state park and will be the longest pedestrian bridge in the world. Governor Spitzer's top environmental advisor, Judith Enck, states that The Walkway Over the Hudson project will cost 25 million dollars, of which the governor will allot 16 million dollars in state aid.

As New York State's deputy parks commissioner for open space protection stated "it's going to be a great state park. This is a great idea whose time has come." The future looks bright for the historic Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge.

Elizabeth Veilkind



support for the project was just what Walkway Over the Hudson needed. It's a huge step, because it's been something

Digital Library —

The Hudson Fulton Champlain Quadracentennial Commission was created by the bipartisan legislation and signed into a law by the Governor of New York, George E. Pataki in 2002. The legislation was an independent commission with a board of twenty-one voting members, which included local and state government representatives, historians and many community leaders to plan and develop the 400th anniversary commemoration of Hudson's and Champlain's historic voyages and the 200th anniversary of Fulton's steamship voyage. The legislation continues the tradition established in 1909 with the 300th Anniversary of Hudson and the centennial of Fulton.

The Hudson River Valley Institute will add its variety of pamphlets, journals, and newsletters about the Quadracentennial from an ever growing digital library. There are ten new titles being added to the library this semester that will interest you.

[Flag Genealogy, The Dutch Tricolor](#)

[The Discovery of the Hudson 1601 by Hendrick Hudson, His Sail Up and Down the River Between September 3rd and October 4th, 1609](#)

[Henry Hudson Discoverer of the Hudson River 1609,](#)

[The North-West Passage, Light on the murder of Henry Hudson from Unpublished Depositions,](#)

[Henry Hudson and the Dutch in New York,](#)

[Historical Pageant, Hudson-Fulton Celebration, September 25 to October 9, 1909\(7by10\).](#)

[Historical Pageant Hudson-Fulton Celebration, September 25 to October 9, 1909 \(9by12\)](#)

[Hudson-Fulton Celebration, Ossining —on Hudson](#)

[Dutch East Indiaman "Amsterdam"](#)

The Hudson River Valley Institute will digitize and upload these documents to their collection on Hudson River Valley Heritage. You can browse the collections of the Hudson River Valley Institute from the Hudson River Valley Heritage website by just clicking this [link](#).

Andrew Buccitelli

Meet the Intern — John Skaretka

Throughout my years of service in the United States Air Force and U.S. Air National Guard, people have accused me of many things. Greenland has accused me of destroying sovereign property; Panama has accused me of destroying government buildings; Hawaii has accused me of reigning golf balls down upon Honolulu from ten miles away; and Spain, I would rather not talk about because I am probably still wanted by the authorities. Be that as it may, today, people are accusing me of being a historian of sorts.

As early as I can remember, history was not a primary focus in my life. It sort of chose me before I chose it. Never the less, today I can look back upon my past adventures and draw upon those experiences to educate, inform, and amuse the general public. Upon my

retirement from the United States Air Force, U.S. Air National Guard, and the Department of Defense in 2002, I began a new career at Marist College as a full-time student studying history and adolescent education. It was not an easy task returning to school after so many years; however, I managed to get decent grades and on one occasion made Dean's List.

In keeping with traditional college student etiquette, the need for a summer job became more than apparent. And I was lucky enough to find employment as an education assistant at Staatsburg State Historic Site, Mills Mansion. In this position my duties range from interpretation or tours to educational outreach programs, children's summer camps, and historical research. In the summer of 2007, I obtained an internship with the Hudson River Valley Institute

(HRVI). As part of my internship and in combination with HRVI, Mills Mansion, and Teaching American History Conference, I was tasked to create a lesson plan on women suffrage, utilizing the assets at Mills Mansion. It was a daunting task, but after several months of research the project was finished.

However, this story still is not over, there is still much more work ahead such as more students to corrupt, more havoc to be sown, more destruction to be unleashed and more burgers to be flipped? Summer jobs and college, gotta love them.

John Skaretka

Meet the Intern — Jess M. Boyle

Jess M. Boyle is a History major and Catholic Studies minor at Marist College. He is now in his Junior year and is very active in and out of the classroom. Jess is the Senior Sacristan of Marist College's Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Chapel. Jess is also active as a member of the Marist College Catholic Students Association Planning Team as well as the coordinator of "The Lantern", a weekly student-run prayer, reflection, and discussion group. In addition, Jess is an active member of the Marist Men's Group and Campus Ministry.

Outside of the campus environment, Jess is a Nationally Registered and New York State Certified Emergency Medical Technician. With experience in several paid and volunteer positions, Jess looks forward to returning to his summer job with the Suffolk County Department of Parks as a Beach Rescue and Park Rescue EMT.

When not working on the beach or in the park, Jess volunteers his time with the Marist Brothers, serving various student groups and gatherings as an Encounter Leader, Retreat Leader, Young Adult Staff Member, and EMT. In addition, Jess is a First Degree member of the Knights of Columbus.

A graduate of Archbishop Molloy High School, a Marist Brothers high school in Queens, NY, Jess recognizes the value of hard work and commitment to a dream. As an only child, he holds his family, as well as his Irish and Slovak heritage, near to him. Jess realizes that it is his family who continues to encourage him and guide him along his journey. Because of these values, Jess believes that his Catholic faith, good moral character, and devotion to the progress of oneself and those around him are the cornerstones of a successful life. As a

young gentleman, Jess does not forget his commitment to charity.

Jess looks forward to this semester and his time as an intern with the Hudson River Valley Institute.

He will be working in and out of the office on the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge Project "Walkway over the Hudson," as well as, serving a research assistant at the Mill's Mansion State Historic Site in Staatsburg, NY.



Jess M. Boyle

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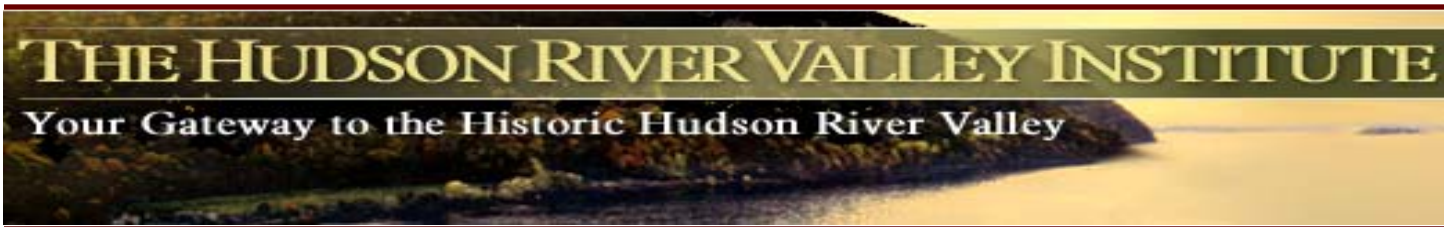
*The Hudson River Valley:
"The Landscape that Defined America"*

The Hudson River Valley is one of only 37 congressionally designated National Heritage Areas in the United States. As one of the most important regions in the United States, it is the fountainhead of a truly American identity. Recognizing the area's national value, Congress formed the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area in 1996 to recognize, preserve, protect, and interpret the nationally-significant history and resources of the valley for the benefit of the nation.

The Hudson River Valley Institute (HRVI) is the academic arm of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. Its mission is to study and promote the Hudson River Valley and to provide educational resources for heritage tourists, scholars, elementary school educators, environmental organizations, the business community, and the general public. Its many projects include the publication of *The Hudson River Valley Review* and the management of a dynamic digital library and leading regional portal site.

As the center for the study of the Hudson River Valley, the Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College is the central hub for information about the region that Congress called "the Landscape that defined America."

www.hudsonrivervalley.org



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