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VALLEY  
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## From the Editors

Our spring 2020 issue spans Hudson River Valley history from the American Revolution through the First World War—and even a bit beyond. In his article “Fluid Loyalism at the Forge: The Sterling Ironworks and The American Revolution,” Charles Dewey challenges long-held beliefs about what it meant to be a “patriot” or “loyalist” in the contested territories of the lower Hudson Valley. The Blooming Grove church stands today much as it did when rebuilt in 1823 on a 1759 foundation in that same contested region. In “The Veterans’ Church: A History of Community in the Blooming Grove Church,” Michael Matsler uses this structure to illustrate the surrounding settlement’s transition from the Colonial to the Revolutionary and into the modern era.

On a lighter note, in “Thomas Pym Cope and Charles Brockden Brown: Diarists on the Hudson,” James Ryan explores the implications of musings jotted down by two friends journeying up the Hudson River together in 1801, as the Age of Reason gave way to Romanticism here and around the world. Alex Prizgintas celebrates Orange County’s place in the development of a national railroad system and the birth of America’s dairy industry in “When Steel Rails, Glass Bottles, and Fresh Cream Ruled the Country: Orange County’s Role in the Birth of Transporting and Marketing Milk.” Finally, in “FDR’s First Political Mentor,” Laurence Hauptman introduces readers to publisher, orator, and one-term Congressman Richard E. Connell. Born in Poughkeepsie to immigrant parents—truly a self-made man—Connell helped to shape the political future of a young and inexperienced Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

As always, the issue is rounded out with book reviews and a listing of New and Noteworthy titles about our region.



***On the cover: The Hudson Highlands, Currier & Ives, c. 1871. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division <https://www.loc.gov/resource/pgs.09132/>***

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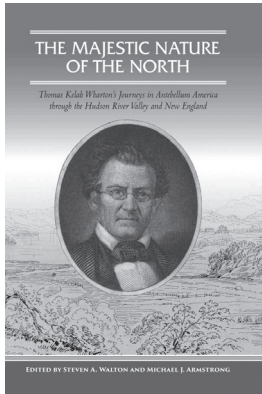
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# Book Reviews



*The Majestic Nature of the North: Thomas Kelah Wharton's Journeys in Antebellum America through the Hudson River Valley and New England*, eds. Steven A. Walton and Michael J. Armstrong (Albany: SUNY Press, 2019), 353 pp.

Scholars of Antebellum America have no shortage of travelogues and other primary works offering sweeping adjudications of a young nation awkwardly grasping for democracy and industry while tripping over a recurring failure to master its own sprawling geography, social inelegance, and philosophical contradictions.

This unique offering from SUNY Press does something different.

The journal of Thomas Kelah Wharton provides subtle observations on life in the 1830s and 1850s from the perspective not of an analyst, but of someone simply experiencing Antebellum life. Wharton's artistic sensibilities add an element of beauty to his writings, while his appreciation for the natural world reminds readers of the close connection between Americans and their environment as well as of the centrality of the American landscape to the young nation's cultural self-definition. This interesting volume, generously illustrated with Wharton's own renderings of his travels, will be of use to historians of Antebellum America, while its second chapter will be of special interest to scholars of the Hudson River Valley.

Thomas Kelah Wharton was a young English immigrant with a gift for art when, in 1833, he designed a Greek revival chapel overlooking the Hudson in Cold Spring, New York. The chapel would be lauded upon its opening for its "classical" beauty, but the artist behind this "elegant little building" remained unacknowledged (xiii). This was to be Wharton's fate in much of his creative life, and for a time his contributions would be lost to history. Fortunately, Michael J. Armstrong, former president of the Chapel Restoration, and Steven A. Walton, a historian from Michigan Technological University's Industrial Archaeology program, were directed by Putnam County historians to Wharton's journal, which had endured over a century of obscurity at the New York Public Library. Upon investigation, Walton and Armstrong discovered "a fascinating picture of social and intellectual life in antebellum America" (2), and it is in this regard that the journal makes its greatest contribution. Indeed, as the editors acknowledge, Wharton has almost nothing to say on most of the major controversies of his day: there are no insights into slavery and abolition, sectionalism, or politics more broadly, while views of industrialization are at best

impressionistic and superficial. Part of this may be self-censorship: Walton notes in his introduction that Wharton *may* have been a slaveholder in New Orleans in the 1850s, that he attacked the “Black Republican Party” in 1860 and supported the Confederacy during the Civil War; yet his diary, as revised in 1853, “was filtered for his toddler son’s later eyes” and may have simply expunged such materials (18). It is just as likely that in the early 1850s these were simply not Wharton’s primary concerns—something that may shock historians looking back at the great events of the moment but which makes Wharton fairly representative. Indeed, while Wharton’s perspective is one of privilege (he was well-educated, artistic, connected, bourgeois), his focus throughout the journal on the immediate and the mundane is what gives this book its special value.

The volume begins with a fine introduction by Professor Walton, which narrates Wharton’s life and contextualizes his journal within Antebellum American history. The journal itself follows Wharton’s adventures in different periods. Chapter one summarizes the twenty-year gap between his detailed diaries, from 1834 to 1853, including travels from New York to Ohio, his 1844 marriage in Cincinnati, and his relocation to New Orleans, where in the late 1840s he supervised construction of the Custom House (34–36). The second chapter presents Wharton’s diary from his years in New York, traveling between his duties teaching at the Flushing Institute on Long Island and his adventures in the lower Hudson Valley. The third chapter picks up Wharton’s adventures twenty years later, as he traces his journey from New Orleans to Boston and back again.

Of greatest interest to readers of this journal will be the second chapter, “New York and the Hudson Valley, 1832–1834.” After his arrival in New York, Wharton quickly fled northward in the summer of 1832, escaping the city’s cholera outbreak, and his entries from this period provide useful insights into the terror contemporaries must have felt at this creeping epidemic. On Sunday, June 17, Wharton overlooked his customary analysis of sabbath observances (a central theme throughout the journal), to announce that “More terrible than the landing of the fierce Dane, the dreaded cholera has crossed the Atlantic and the journals of today contain fearful accounts of its first ravages of Canada.” He notes the “universal” fear in New York, the desperation “for the latest intelligence” and an unprecedented “general and wide-spread excitement” (43). Wharton chronicled the city’s “preparation . . . for the expected pestilence”; by Independence Day municipal authorities had “dispensed” with “much of the uproar and parade which distinguish this day . . . so that there was far less excitement than usual” (43–44). After this initial alarmism, the slow-moving disease is juxtaposed with Wharton’s standard priorities, including weather and theology, to show a very practical and human view of the epidemic: “July 6: Beautiful weather with a refreshing breeze. The Cholera Report of today gives 37 cases, 20 deaths, in various parts of the city” (45). Later, he notes that “the Cholera is now at Poughkeepsie, 7 miles below here” (55).

Wharton's trembling references to cholera, peppered throughout his daily entries in the summer of 1832, evoke the terror of the moment, but also remind historians that for most contemporaries, life went on in the midst of such looming catastrophe. Wharton continues his keen interest in art and church life, in his professional acquaintances, and, in particular, on his Hudson Valley environs. The scintillating passages on the region's natural splendor will be especially welcomed by readers of this journal. A representative reflection from July 10—"Heavy rains, with a pleasant interval at noon which I spent rambling over the ground. In the afternoon, the sun broke thro' suddenly and the clouds rolled away from the Catskills, revealing to me for the first time their grand, shadowy outlines. Thin silvery mists still crept around their base giving additional majesty to the peaks above, the whole forming a background to the scene up The Hudson"—reads like a narration of one of the works of Thomas Cole (whom Wharton would meet that December) (47, 86). Such observations demonstrate Wharton's artistic eye for the Hudson Valley, but also reveal the intimate connection between Americans of his period and the natural elements—which could mean joy over a "fine mild day" (64) or gloom over "dreary rainy weather . . . so cold that we had to call in the aid of anthracite" (66). Indeed, as a teaching tool, Wharton's vacillating between beautiful, grateful praise of pleasant nature—"soft dreamy Indian summer weather"—and concerns over basic comforts in the face of nature's capricious wrath—"a fierce northern blast swept over the plain but the Colonel's famous Lehigh fires . . . made it very pleasant within doors"—may help modern readers better appreciate the quotidian concerns of Antebellum New Yorkers (71, 72).

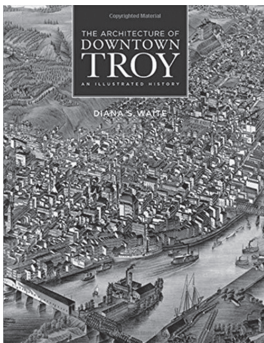
During his time in the Hudson Valley in 1832 to 1834, Wharton interacted, usually fleetingly, with better-known Antebellum artists, including Cole, S.F.B. Morse, Thomas Sully, and Robert Weir (106, 116). Readers will likely be frustrated that there is no real insight provided into such cultural icons. The exception is Washington Irving, whom Wharton met in August 1834. Wharton repeatedly reflected on the author's "manly gentleness . . . unaffected simplicity that is perfectly charming" and his "universally agreeable" disposition (117, 122). We meet a cheerful Irving who "plays with the little ones on the grass-plots and enters into their amusements with the same ease and perfect adaptation that marks his intercourse with all around him," but who also offers trenchant critiques of contemporary literature as "far too hasty and negligent" (117, 118).

Along with notable public figures, the diary provides glimpses, usually frustrating in their brevity, of some of the major technological and economic trends of the period. For instance, there is a passage exploring several manufacturing concerns in Saugerties, with brief descriptions of the machinery and water wheel of a paper mill and foundry (110). There is more satisfying and consistent discussion of the ongoing transportation revolution. At times this is subtle—as when readers begin simply taking for granted that the writer

can travel with ease between Hyde Park or West Point and New York, or when Wharton describes the vibrant commercial competition between Hudson steamboat lines (115). Indeed, while the third chapter, “Return to the Northeast,” which charts Wharton’s 1853 travels from New Orleans, up the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers and across the Northeast to Boston, is of less specific appeal to Hudson Valley scholars, it does provide excellent insights into the nation’s increasingly sophisticated and integrated infrastructure—complete with reliable steamboats, railroads, and telegraphs. This section, which leaps ahead in time two decades and abandons the Hudson Valley focus of the earlier chapters, presents a United States that is more modern, confident, perhaps a bit more refined, but still elementally connected with nature. Some of Wharton’s praise of the American transportation system (e.g., 141) reads almost like an antidote to the more critical analyses of writers like Charles Dickens (1842).

Walton and Armstrong freely admit that as an analysis of Antebellum life, this work is not of the caliber of Tocqueville, Trollope, or Dickens. But that is not the point. The great contribution of *The Majestic Nature of the North* is that it presents a nuanced and human perspective on the more mundane concerns of life in this period. The ways in which grander themes mingle with daily tasks—filtered through the author’s priorities like art and theology—provides a uniquely insightful understanding of ordinary experiences in this period. Scholars of Antebellum America will enjoy mining the diary for anecdotes to deploy in lectures; and longer passages on cholera and on transportation networks offer valuable opportunities for primary document analysis by undergraduates. Finally, those interested in the Hudson River Valley will appreciate Wharton’s stunning descriptive passages as well as the many beautiful sketches included in this volume.

*Robert Chiles, University of Maryland, College Park*



***The Architecture of Downtown Troy: An Illustrated History,***  
**Diana S. Waite (Albany: State University of New York**  
**Press, 2019), 211 pp.**

Diana S. Waite has created a meticulously researched and clearly presented history of an architecturally significant section of one of the Hudson Valley’s great cities. Troy flourished as an industrial and commercial center in the nineteenth century, and Waite devotes seven of the book’s nine chapters to a chronological survey of the city’s downtown in that century, with an introductory chapter on the “Eighteenth-Century Village” and a concluding

chapter, “Highlights from the Early Twentieth Century.” While the book is not organized as a guidebook for walkers exploring downtown Troy (unlike *Albany Architecture: A Guide to the City* [1993], edited by Waite), an easily readable map locating extant buildings discussed in the text encourages such walks. However, many important buildings are absent from the map; sadly, they have been lost to fire (the downtown suffered four widespread, disastrous fires between 1820 and 1862) or demolition, including misguided urban renewal in the mid-twentieth century. Still, the *New York Times*’ 2006 assessment that Troy has “one of the most perfectly preserved nineteenth-century downtowns in the United States” remains true, given the evidence provided by Waite’s book.

Waite brings to light the architects responsible for the high quality of downtown buildings. Some were local men, including Marcus F. Cummings (originally from Utica) and his son, Frederick M. Cummings. Together, they had “the greatest sustained impact on the physical development of the city of Troy” between the 1860s and 1900. Marcus Cummings’ prominently sited, French mansard-roofed Troy Hospital (1868–1871) adhered to the pavilion plan type promoted by Florence Nightingale. Altered and enlarged, the building serves today as Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute’s West Hall. Also notable is Marcus Cummings’ publication of three architectural pattern books between 1865 and 1873. The first, *Architecture: Designs for Street Fronts, Suburban Houses, and Cottages*, was published in eight editions and attracted architects, carpenters, and builders across the United States. In 1890, Marcus Cummings formed a partnership with his son Frederick, trained at RPI as a civil engineer. Designs by the new partnership, including three buildings for the Troy Female Seminary (now Russell Sage College), clearly exhibit the influence of weighty Romanesque Revival structures by the great Boston architect Henry Hobson Richardson.

While not diminishing the role of designers from Troy and the Capital Region, the author places some emphasis on “out of town architects,” usually highly regarded practitioners from New York City, apparently to demonstrate that Troy attracted major talents and so should not be dismissed as a provincial backwater. We live in an era when skyscraper developers and museum officials seek out “starchitects”—architects who have attained celebrity status—and the germ of the concept was clearly present in the nineteenth century.

Cannon Place, a block of stores, was designed by the well-known New York firm of Town, Davis and Dakin about 1832. Waite’s thorough research leads her to conclude “this may be the first Troy building that can be firmly connected to an out-of-town architect.” While no document names Ithiel Town as architect of Troy’s St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Waite has found that the construction contract (1826) specifies that the design was to follow closely Town’s Trinity Episcopal Church (1814–1816) on the New Haven Green. Waite also believes the Rensselaer County Courthouse (1828–1831; demolished), similar



to Town's Connecticut Statehouse also on the New Haven Green, may have been planned by the architect.

Town's sometime partner, Alexander Jackson Davis, today better known than Town thanks to his Gothic Revival residences (including the grand Lyndhurst in Tarrytown), designed hilltop Ida Cottage (1838–1840) overlooking Troy. The cottage was brought down by storm and fire when owned by the city in the early twentieth century, but its abundant Gothic details are known from Davis' charming watercolor, reproduced in the book.

While not designed by New York City architects, Washington Park, a private residential square planned in the 1830s with row houses constructed in subsequent decades, was hailed by New York modernist and celebrity architect Philip Johnson as "one of the finest squares in North America." Waite points to St. John's Park and Gramercy Park in Manhattan, Louisburg Square in Boston, as well as private parks in English cities as precedents likely known by the Troy investors behind Washington Park.

George B. Post, a leading New York architect after the Civil War, designed two of Troy's best-known and happily surviving landmarks, the polychrome Gothic-style Hall (or Rice) Building (1870–1872), featured in Martin Scorsese's 1992 film *The Age of Innocence*, and the classically inspired Troy Savings Bank (1871–1875), whose music hall was hailed by New York Times music critic Harold C. Schonberg as "the best acoustic installation in America and possibly in the world."

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company, the New York firm renowned for its stained glass, convinced the leaders of St. Paul's Episcopal Church to carry out a thorough redesign of its interior. The golden radiance of the sanctuary, captured in a recent photo, is a rare example of a well-preserved ecclesiastical interior by the firm. Hart Memorial Library (1894–1897, now Troy Public Library) by New York architects Barney and Chapman following the lead of McKim, Mead and White's Boston Public Library, is another example of successful preservation of an architectural landmark.

The book's subtitle is well-chosen, as those who (mistakenly) merely flip through its pages will be delighted by some 225 illustrations, excellently reproduced (and many in color) from vintage and recent photos, historic prints and postcards, as well as architectural drawings and renderings. It is in fact a beautiful book, handsomely designed and well-printed.

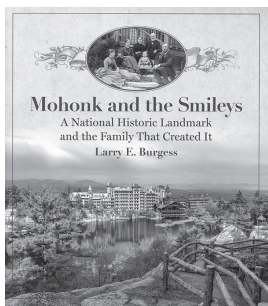
But do not mistake this for a coffee table book without scholarly apparatus. It appears that every one of the countless statements of fact can be verified by consulting the endnotes—more than fifteen pages of small type. (Historian Gertrude Himmelfarb believed those who skimmed on footnotes or endnotes were guilty of "a moral lapse." [*New York Times*, Jan. 1, 2020] No such charge can be brought against Diana Waite.) In addition to original archival documents and other traditional sources, Waite has made good use of digitized newspapers, which, as she points out, have allowed her to record the names of

not only clients and architects, but also contractors, tradespeople, artisans, and suppliers of building materials, who often are not acknowledged by architectural historians. She regrets not being able to discover any women among the architects active in Troy in this period, although women were significant as clients.

It is a truism that no two authors will approach a topic with the same goals or list of questions to be answered. Waite focuses on when, how, and by whom downtown Troy's architecturally significant buildings were designed and constructed, and she carefully describes their appearance (both exterior and interior), as well as the role of clients and the use of the finished buildings. While she is alert to matters of architectural style, she is hesitant to consider the possibility that a building's style may have been intended to express particular ideas or beliefs. In the nineteenth century, the pointed arch of Gothic architecture was widely held to be an appropriate expression of Christianity. New York architect Richard Upjohn, described by Waite as "an English-born architect and high churchman," went further and considered Episcopal churches most worthy of Gothic designs, while other Protestant denominations should be satisfied with styles less distinctly allied with his favored branch of Christianity. Upjohn designed the spacious Gothic chancel of Troy's Episcopal Church of the Holy Cross, 1847–1848. Other Protestant churches, including Presbyterian and Baptist, with simpler forms of worship than the Episcopal, commonly adopted the round-arched Romanesque style as an alternative to the Gothic. This reviewer missed an analysis of the towered façades of Troy's churches with round Romanesque arches (e.g., Second Presbyterian Church, 1864–1865, and Fifth Street Baptist Church, 1862–1863, both by Marcus Cummings) and the downtown synagogue also with Romanesque arches but lacking a tower (Congregation Berith Sholom, 1870, also by Cummings with partner Thomas Birt) as expressions of their congregations' faith and practice, in contrast to those of Episcopalians.

After a decade serving as executive director of the Preservation League of New York State in the 1970s, Diana Waite has continued with a distinguished career as author, editor, and publisher of works on historic architecture and its preservation. Her research for this book began decades ago, culminating in more intense work since 2007. Clearly the time and thought given this magnificent study of downtown Troy represents a profound commitment to educating the public, both in Troy and more broadly, about that city's architectural landmarks—treasures that must be preserved as a vital part of the city in the twenty-first-century.

*William B. Rhoads, State University at New Paltz*



***Mohonk and the Smileys: A National Historic Landmark and the Family that Created It*, Larry E. Burgess, (Catskill: Black Dome Press, 2019), 222pp.**

Mohonk and the family that created it is a great, visionary story and this book, filled with pictures from the past, tells of the succession of family members to carry forward the founding vision of living simply and with the land. Last year marked the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mohonk Mountain House, under the stewardship of five generations of the Smiley family. An expanded edition of an earlier account, *Mohonk and the Smileys* brings this visionary story up to date and includes additional images, which make up about a third of the book.

Though the update contains good information, the most inspiring part of the story remains the earliest history—that of identical twins Albert and Alfred Smiley, who at age forty-one shifted their careers from school teachers to embark in a business for which, Alfred said, “above all things in the world, I had a distaste, and no experience.”

At the time, Alfred was living on a farm in Poughkeepsie with his wife and six children. The family often took long walks and picnics on weekends; one outing led them to Pfalz Point (now Sky Top). What lay before them: Mohonk Lake, the Wallkill Valley, the Rondout Valley, and the Catskills. Alfred understood this was a place he needed to preserve. He sent word for his brother to come and see the land. Lucky for them, the owner of the tavern by Lake Mohonk was in financial trouble. Alfred and Albert were able to buy it and 300 surrounding acres for \$28,000.

By June 1, 1870, they had remodeled the tavern for forty guests and, following their Quaker beliefs of a simple life, gotten rid of the alcohol (which did not return to Mohonk until 2005). Guests could enjoy boating, hikes, horseback riding, bowling (a bowling hall was built in 1876), but not card playing or dancing. From the start, the hotel appealed to upper-class families of shared values; this created a sense of privacy and of extended family. Through word of mouth, people started to come.

The early years saw a lot of development and growth, both of buildings and of lands, including construction of one of the great features of the Mohonk property—the carriage roads that lace through miles of the forest. Workers from local communities used dynamite and steam-powered drills, picks, shovels, and wheelbarrows to construct the roads. If I had one wish, it would be to learn more about the labor behind such an effort.

The two brothers extended the acreage of their resort out to what is now Lake Minnewaska (then named Coxing Pond). On the site, Alfred opened the Minnewaska Mountain House in 1879. Guests would travel from Mohonk to Minnewaska on horseback or in carriages. Why the Minnewaska resort fell on hard times and Mohonk did not

isn't clear, but the family sold it in 1956. In 1971, New York State purchased the land and created a state park now covering 22,275 acres.

As part of expanding the Mohonk property, over 100 local farms were purchased, adding to the acreage until it reached 7,500 acres at mid-twentieth century. In 1963, the Smiley family formed the Mohonk Trust, now the Mohonk Preserve. The preserve now has its own history of land preservation, stewardship, and education and remains a mecca for East Coast rock climbers.

Though the Mohonk House catered to the privileged, the Smiley brothers had a commitment to those less privileged. This led to a series of conferences held at the Mountain House, the first being the Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indians, which brought together hundreds to discuss Native American policy. In 1890, they held the First Mohonk Conference on the Negro Question. It also attracted more than 100 religious, educational, political and philanthropic leaders. From 1895 to 1916, the Smileys also held an annual conference on International Arbitration: Seeking a Peaceful World, a forerunner to American foreign policy think tanks.

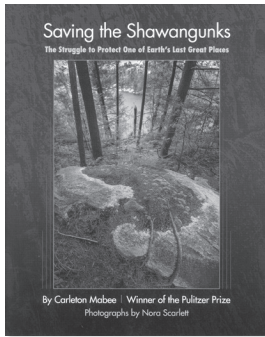
The desire to create a haven, a beautiful place where people can focus on the problems of the world, at a remove, is a great gift and continues in the present with Mohonk Consultations, which offers a range of organizations a way to come together to brainstorm on issues, both human and natural, with a sustainable focus.

Mohonk itself was wonderfully self-sufficient, particularly during times when there was financial need—during the '30s, nearly forty men worked in the more than 1,000 acres of cultivated fields on Mohonk land and harvested ice, which started in 1870 and continued until 1965! At one point, 2,000 cords of wood were used to heat the house each winter.

This is an unabashedly positive history, filled with many general statements, such as “He [Gerow Smiley] pitched in wherever needed as family members always had, bringing his problem-solving abilities and elbow grease to the operation.” This might lead readers to see the story as one of a big, happy family enjoying luxury and success with ease. Aware of this, the author writes: “For those who might have the impression that owning Mohonk was, or is, all sweetness and joy, an enclave apart from life’s grueling realities, they need only peruse Bert’s correspondence files to correct such misimpressions.”

In the end, what we have here is not a complicated history. But that is not the purpose of this book, which is to celebrate a family and a place. For that, we can be grateful, as we are for the family who has protected one of the great natural landscapes on the East Coast.

*Susan Fox Rogers, Bard College*



***Saving the Shawangunks: The Struggle to Protect One of Earth's Last Great Places*, Carleton Mabee, photographs by Nora Scarlett (Catskill, NY: Black Dome Press, 2017), 110 pp.**

In this, his final book, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Carleton Mabee (1914–2014) presents a less well-known episode of environmental activism in the Hudson Valley during the late twentieth century. The Shawangunk Mountain Range lies in the southern tier of New York State to the east of the Hudson River and at the foot of the Catskill Mountains. A favorite stop of rock climbers and hikers, the Shawangunks once featured grand Victorian-era resorts that drew intrepid urbanites out of New York City to experience recreation-based nature. But by the 1950s these resorts had fallen into decline. As the valleys surrounding the range experienced rapid suburbanization in the late twentieth century, new residents re-envisioned the Shawangunk landscape as one in need of preservation. When the Marriott Hotel chain sought to develop a new resort and condos on 350 acres surrounding picturesque Lake Minnewaska, atop the ridge, in 1978, it awakened an environmental activist movement.

The incident polarized local communities. Town boards and rural residents enthusiastically supported Marriott, while suburbanites—many from New Paltz—banded into the Gardiner Environmental Commission and Citizens to Save Minnewaska. These advocacy groups attacked Marriott's tax abatements, low-income jobs, and potential to increase traffic. They feared that the new resort would damage scenic views and pollute groundwater. Bolstered with the support of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, activists successfully argued that Marriott's water plans would overdraw Peterskill Creek. When Marriott abandoned the project, the Phillips family—owners of the tract—sought an Arizona developer to build a health spa in 1985. With the help of the Sierra Club, the Friends of the Shawangunks initiated lawsuits to delay development. Tired of battle, the Phillips family sold its land to New York State, which promptly established Minnewaska State Park Preserve.

The second half of Mabee's book looks at activist crusades in lands adjacent to the Shawangunks. In 1989, the Wallkill Valley Land Trust experienced resistance from the Town of Gardiner to build and maintain a recreational rail trail. As suburbanization swallowed up fallow fields and farmland, activists sought to repurpose abandoned railroads into scenic pathways. Unlike the Shawangunks, this movement lacked legal injunctions and instead relied on non-profit land trusts. By the 2000s, these groups realized that promoting local produce and creating open space bond funds would help prevent the

closure of farms. No activists targeted suburban development, by far the greatest threat to the environment. Instead, they directed their frustrations against corporate developers.

In 2002, the Shawangunks saw the return of another resort proposal on 2,500 acres sandwiched between Minnewaska State Park and lands owned by the Open Space Institute. Awosting Reserve would cater to elite homeowners by providing multi-story luxury houses and a golf course. The plan quickly drew the ire of activists, who bemoaned the ruination of scenic views. A new organization, called Save the Ridge, sought to win support by using town hall meetings, road signs, and the media to sway local opinion. Led by teacher Patty Lee Parmalee, the publicity campaign successfully elected a new Town of Gardiner administration that halted the Awosting Preserve proposal. Landowner John Bradley blamed his developer for the negative press and eventually sold his holdings to the Trust for Public Land to be added to Minnewaska State Park. Mabee concludes with a fear that environmental activism will decline due to political polarization and a growing lack of interest.

We see that tactics and methods differed between the three environmental campaigns to save the Shawangunks. Nevertheless, they were united by their suburban demographics and grassroots support. Each movement led to the creation of new advocacy groups rather than a unified activist base. Despite occasional collaboration between those groups, Saving the Shawangunks shows us the continual fracturing of the environmental movement into numerous niche-focused non-profit organizations. It demonstrates the divisions between rural and suburban residents and the ways in which they define and interact with nature. Finally, we see that scenery, rather than ecology, offered a far more powerful unifier to draw public support for advocacy groups.

The book includes a series of outstanding color photographs by Nora Scarlett. Taken from 2010 to 2017, these images highlight the stunning ecology and geology that inspired the preservation of the Shawangunks. Salamanders, ferns, waterfalls, mushrooms, and moss-covered rocks show the dynamism of nature. We see park visitors engaging in rock climbing and hiking while avoiding the parking lots and roadways that permit their entrance. The photographs capture crumbling rock cliffs abraded by the elements and the roots of pitch pines. Overall, Scarlett captures a world in a constant cycle of life, death, and rebirth throughout various seasons. Hardly static, they depict an environment that appears untouched by human hands.

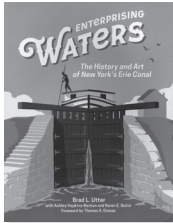
Some notions of the work and environmental movement are perplexing. Mabee suggests that the Victorian-era hotels, such as the Botsford Mountain House or Minnewaska Resort, “were seen as devoted to protecting the mountains for the sake of their guests, in effect practicing environmentalism” during the early twentieth century. Yet later he presents the Marriott Hotel as a conservation threat. One might argue that Marriott was merely continuing an older form of environmental recreation. Local activists, largely

new homeowners from the urban metropolis, had redefined recreational lodges as a form of environmental degradation, something unknown in the early twentieth century. It is important to note that the Shawangunks, despite their preservation, still enable the tourist-based recreation that made them famous during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. What shifted, then, was the type and duration of that visit.

One might question, too, if the Shawangunks truly resemble “wilderness,” as Mabee posits. By starting the book’s narrative in the 1970s with environmental activism, the reader loses the longer history of the mountains, one that enabled extractive, recreational, and hospitality industries to thrive for over a century. Thus, the real environmental victory is not so much the preservation of a primordial wilderness but the re-colonization and resurrection of local forest ecology and the creation of a day-use-only state park.

*Michael Conrad, Clarkson University’s Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries*

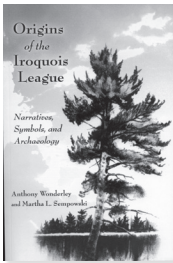
# New & Noteworthy Books



## **Enterprising Waters: The History and Art of New York's Erie Canal**

By Brad L. Utter with Ashley Hopkins-Benton and Karen E. Quinn  
(Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2020)  
432 pp. \$39.95 (softcover) [www.sunypress.edu](http://www.sunypress.edu)

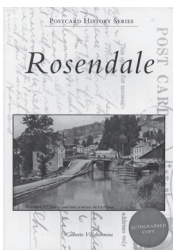
At the time of its completion in 1825, the Erie Canal was the most impressive engineering feat in United States history. As a companion to exhibitions at the New York State Museum, *Enterprising Waters* packs an impressive amount of history into its 400-plus pages filled with images of artifacts and documents as well as photographs and paintings. Beginning with the history of the canal route prior to construction, the book highlights each major expansion of the waterway, and continues up to the present. The authors provide a captioned visual history covering the full range of the canal's impact and importance—from culture to commerce and everything in between.



## **Origins of the Iroquois League: Narratives, Symbols, and Archaeology**

By Anthony Wonderly and Martha L. Sempowski  
(Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2019)  
288 pp. \$29.95 (softcover) [press.syr.edu](http://press.syr.edu)

Before there was any recorded history of the Hudson River Valley, Native Americans maintained an oral tradition that provides clues to the various allegiances and alliances that existed between tribes. In *Origins of the Iroquois League*, Wonderly and Sempowski, both anthropological archaeologists, combine this oral tradition with their own individual work to trace various steps in the formation of the League of the Iroquois. The authors study a wide variety of artifacts and demographics while also incorporating an extensive list of existing works to draw new conclusions about how and when the five-nation confederation began.



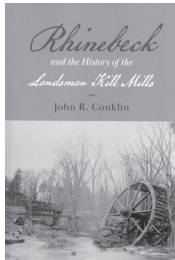
## **Rosendale (Postcard History Series)**

By Gilberto Villahermosa  
(Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2019)  
127 pp. \$21.99 (softcover) [www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)

The Town of Rosendale, in Ulster County, has a varied history of industry, commerce, and tourism. The discovery of natural cement, combined with the construction of the D & H Canal, gave the picturesque town both a desired product and a way to ship it. Part of Arcadia's Postcard History



Series, the book offers an excellent format for presenting the impressive visual juxtaposition of Rosendale's quaint village of churches and businesses with the mines, canal boats, and nearby trains. It also highlights the natural beauty of the town, which attracted many tourists from its early days until construction of the New York State Thruway. While the legacy of Rosendale's cement lives on in projects like the Brooklyn Bridge and Statue of Liberty, the book's many images also shed light on the local people behind that legacy.



### **Rhinebeck and the History of the Landsman Kill Mills**

By John R. Conklin

(Rhinebeck, NY: Epigraph Books, 2019)

90 pp. \$12.95 (softcover) [www.epigraphbooks.com](http://www.epigraphbooks.com)

The Landsman Kill and the many mills that existed on it served as the lifeblood of Rhinebeck, in Dutchess County, during the 1700s. With construction supported by wealthy investors with significant local names like Beekman and Livingston, the Landsman Kill supported over a dozen different mills in industries such as paper, textiles, and grain. Through modern photographs and historic documents, Conklin profiles each industry along the creek as well as their owners and operators who made up much of Rhinebeck's working population in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Susceptible to fire, little remains of Rhinebeck's mills, but millstones continue to be an important part of local culture and a visible reminder of the town's past.



### **The Color of the Moon: Lunar Painting in American Art**

By The Hudson River Museum, James A. Michener Art Museum

(New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2019)

200 pp. \$44.95 (softcover) [www.fordhampress.com](http://www.fordhampress.com)

Regardless of the style of painting, one feature of the landscape—the moon—can reliably be counted on to evoke a certain feeling. This companion to an exhibition held at the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers and the James A. Michener Art Museum in Pennsylvania captures the ways in which artists from various eras, including the Hudson River School, incorporated the moon into their works. Complete with color photographs and written descriptions of each painting in the exhibition, *The Color of the Moon* offers a new perspective, fifty years after man's first visit.

*Andrew Villani, Marist College*

## Call for Essays

*The Hudson River Valley Review* will consider essays on all aspects of the Hudson River Valley—its intellectual, political, economic, social, and cultural history, its prehistory, architecture, literature, art, and music—as well as essays on the ideas and ideologies of regionalism itself. All articles in *The Hudson River Valley Review* undergo peer review.

## Submission of Essays and Other Materials

HRVR prefers that essays and other written materials be submitted as a double-spaced manuscript, generally no more than thirty pages long with endnotes, as an electronic file in Microsoft Word, Rich Text format (.rtf), or a compatible file type. Submissions should be sent to HRVI@Marist.edu.

Illustrations or photographs that are germane to the writing should accompany the hard copy. Illustrations and photographs are the responsibility of the authors. Scanned photos or digital art must be 300 pixels per inch (or greater) at 8 in. x 10 in. (between 7 and 20 mb). No responsibility is assumed for the loss of materials. An e-mail address should be included whenever possible.

Since HRVR is interdisciplinary in its approach to the region and to regionalism, it will honor the forms of citation appropriate to a particular discipline, provided these are applied consistently and supply full information. Footnotes rather than endnotes are preferred. In matters of style and form, HRVR follows *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

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