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THE  
HUDSON  
RIVER  
VALLEY  
REVIEW

*A Journal of Regional Studies*

**MARIST**



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by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

## From the Editors

The journal you hold in your hands is published by The Hudson River Valley Institute (HRVI). It is with good reason, and some relief, that we are proud to present a report in this issue on HRVI's ongoing success over the last twenty years. As this article argues, the importance of regional history transcends the local as well as the specific. It offers an examination of how an organization can create the programs and networks that will sustain its mission to encourage and share the study of local history.

Major General Daniel Webb may not be a household name, but history enthusiasts, as well as fans of *The Last of the Mohicans*, will recall how the British lost Fort William Henry during the French and Indian War, and a certain officer (Webb) who took the blame for its capitulation. An analysis re-examines the case and offers a more nuanced conclusion. From the eighteenth century, we leap into the twentieth to examine the victories and legacies of the Liberal Party outside of New York City. Our Notes and Documents section includes a history of the Ellenville Glassworks, a forgotten nineteenth-century industry that once had a nationwide impact.

Finally, in addition to book reviews, we occasionally feature commentary on art exhibits of regional interest. In this issue, we present a synopsis of one recent exhibit that involved the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, the Olana State Historic Site, and the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. While the exhibit has ended, portions of the material remain available online as well as in an accompanying catalog.



*On the cover:* Don Nice's predella *Hudson*, 2002, watercolor on paper, 31 x 60 inches, courtesy of the Estate of Don Nice ©

# THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

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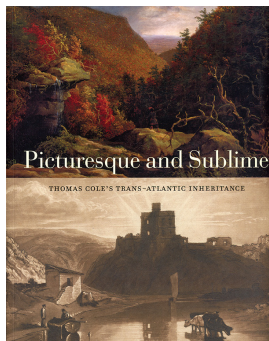
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# Book Reviews



***Picturesque and Sublime: Thomas Cole's Trans-Atlantic Inheritance.* Tim Barringer, Gillian Forrester, Sophie Lynford, Jennifer Raab, and Nicholas Robbins. (New Haven, Yale University Press. 2018), 192 pp.**

Following the Napoleonic wars, the British economy fell into the grips of a depression. Among the hardest hit were those working in the textile industry, like James and Mary Cole, who moved their family from Bolton le Moors in Lancashire, England, to Philadelphia in 1818. Their son, Thomas, then seventeen, had previously been apprenticed to an engraver, worked as a wallpaper printer, and developed an appetite for rural rambles. The Coles arrived in America only to find its economy in a shambles. Thomas knocked around, looking for any kind of foothold, before moving to New York City in 1825. Exploring picturesque subjects throughout the Hudson Valley, Cole produced artworks that would inspire future generations of American painters.

Marking the bicentennial of Cole's departure from England, Thomas Cole National Historic Site in Catskill, New York, presented the exhibition *Picturesque and Sublime: Thomas Cole's Trans-Atlantic Inheritance*, from May 1 to November 4, 2018. Bearing the same title, a richly illustrated companion book with texts by Tim Barringer, Jennifer Raab, Nicholas Robbins, Sophie Lynford, and Gillian Forrester was published by the host venue in association with Yale University Press, with support from The Willow Springs Charitable Trust and Furthermore, a program of the J.M. Kaplan Fund. The show was organized as a complement to the concurrent *Thomas Cole's Journey: Atlantic Crossings*, organized at the Metropolitan Museum of Art by Elizabeth Kornhauser, Alice Brown Pratt Curator of American Art; with Tim Barringer, Paul Mellon Professor of the History of Art at Yale University; and Chris Riopelle, Curator of Post-1800 Art at the National Gallery in London. Following its run in New York, the Met show traveled to London, marking the first time many of Cole's paintings had been seen firsthand by the British public. The similar titles and contributor overlap might lead one to confabulate these two exhibitions. Or one might approach them as a singular experience, separated by 125 miles. Both were landmark exhibitions, accompanied by stunning catalogues. This review will focus on the volume published by the Thomas Cole National Historic Site.

The opening essay, "An Inheritance in Print: Thomas Cole and the Aesthetics of Landscape," by Tim Barringer and Jennifer Raab, Associate Professor of Art History at Yale University, debunks the image of Cole as a protean genius who materialized suddenly, like Athena bursting from the head of Zeus, to reshape the American wilderness into

an iconic national image. Instead, Cole is firmly located within a lineage that nurtured artistic refinement through connoisseur tourism and popular demand for scenic prints.

Lacking access to museums and public collections, most artists were dependent on etchings and mezzotint engravings for their knowledge of both historic and contemporary paintings. Inspired perhaps by Paul Sandby's *Scenographia Americana*, published in 1768, British artists William Birch, Joshua Shaw, and William Guy Wall immigrated to the United States, where their depictions of North American scenery were published as affordable prints produced by other expatriate Britons like master printer John Hill. Building on their successes, Thomas Cole was able to transform a British tradition into an American vision.

Aesthetic considerations governed what travelers on the European Grand Tour were meant to experience, as much as these concepts guided artists in their creative practices. With the rise of tourism in the United States, the same principles applied. Returning to England after eleven years, Cole embarked on his own tour of the continent. For the first time, he was able to study firsthand paintings he had only encountered through prints or scenic transfer-prints on earthenware. Widening his knowledge of art through his interactions with collectors and other artists, including Turner and Constable, Cole was made aware of foundational concepts such as the "picturesque" (scenery resembling a picture that delights the viewer) and the "sublime" (the awesome power of nature that inspires terror or euphoria). Berringer and Raab skillfully weave the education of Thomas Cole into a broader narrative that addresses the aesthetics that also informed garden design, landscape architecture, poetry, travel writing, and nascent environmentalism. This fare is far richer and more informative than the book's catchy title implies.

The second essay, "Working Papers: Thomas Cole's Early Drawings and Notebooks," by Dr. Nicholas Robbins, Lecturer in British Art at University College London, concerns "rethinking art history's reflexive hierarchies that privilege painting over other objects." The eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century print culture was central to Cole's artistic development. Not only did he first encounter works by great artists in the form of illustrated books and intaglio prints, but at age fourteen he had been apprenticed to an engraver in Chorley, not far from where he grew up in Lancashire. After the Cole family moved to Ohio, Thomas worked with his father in the artisanal production of printed wallpapers and floor cloths. In Cole's early drawings of trees, Robbins calls attention to the influence of decorative conventions that would have been employed in the creation of printed botanical designs for wallpaper. As Robbins observes, "Perhaps the "wrong path" of artisanship and the "right path" of Romantic artistry are interwoven."

Enabling Cole to make the leap from artisan to artist was his voracious curiosity, which led him to writings on landscape painting by de Fresnoy, Bardwell, Oram, Gilpin, and others. These books exposed him not only to lofty principles of art but also deeply influenced his fieldwork. Apart from mimetic oil sketches, inspired perhaps by his encounter with John Constable, Cole produced copious notes, filling journals and sketchbooks in

which pictures and diagrams share the page with texts written in longhand. Drawing and writing interchangeably allowed Cole to organize data through a fluid sensory-cognitive-tactile process much like what later would be termed a “stream of consciousness.” Robbins calls attention to “paper’s role as a technology of memory and its map-like admission of drawing and writing into the same visual cognitive field.”

In her essay, “Idyllic and Industrial Visions: Thomas Cole, William Guy Wall and the Hudson River,” Sophie Lynford, Curatorial Fellow in European Art at Harvard Art Museums, explores the relationship between Cole and Dublin-born William Guy Wall, whose *Hudson River Portfolio* helped stir Cole’s ambition to mine the Hudson Valley for subject matter. The two were acquainted, and may have painted together in the field. Both employed Old World aesthetics, as they strived to envision a distinctively American species of landscape painting. Lynford’s thoughtful analysis compares and contrasts their depictions of the same motifs. Cole shuns any trace of progress, which Wall seems to embrace. A pictorial convention accessorizes landscape images with small groups of figures, both human and animal, providing the viewer with a sense of distance and scale. Lynford points out that in their nearly identical views of Kaaterskill Falls from within its cavern, Wall placed a cluster of tourists in modern dress, whereas Cole populated the scene with Indigenous people, hearkening back to a pre-industrial wilderness. We now know the degree to which Cole recoiled with horror from the depredations of ravenous industrialism. Settling in Catskill, he consciously redacted from his viewshed the dozens of fuming mills and tanneries that poisoned his beloved waterways. Wall uncluttered his vistas for aesthetic reasons, to emphasize features of topography, including the occasional smokestack, mill, or clear-cut field peppered with tree stumps. Cole’s environmentalist leanings, Lynford argues, propelled him to greater artistic achievements and a more durable legacy.

The profusely illustrated catalogue section of the book discusses in detail the works featured in the exhibition. The texts are lucidly written and accessible to a broad readership. Produced in royal quarto size, the handsomely designed volume pays homage to the fine press and printing trade in which Cole first discovered an artistic calling. By examining Cole’s life and work beyond a conventional monographic treatment, the contributors to this book have expanded and refined the familiar narrative surrounding the genesis of American landscape art.

*James Lancel McElhinney is a visual artist and author of Sketchbook Traveler: Hudson Valley*

## Exhibition Review

### ***Cross Pollination: Heade, Cole, Church, and Our Contemporary Moment*, an exhibition created by The Thomas Cole Historical Site, The Olana Partnership at Olana State Historic Site, and the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art**



Fig. 1.

Martin Johnson Heade, *Amethyst Woodstar*, ca. 1863–64,  
Oil on canvas, 12 1/4 x 10 in. Framed: 18 1/2 x 16 1/2 in.  
Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art,  
Bentonville, Arkansas; 2006.84.  
Photograph by Dwight Primiano

In recent years, an interest in conservation, sustainability, and environmentalism has fueled an enlivened awareness of nature and ecology. Exhibitions, such as “Alexander von Humboldt and the United States: Art, Nature, and Culture” at the Smithsonian American Art Museum (2021) and “Nature’s Nation: American Art and Environment” at the Princeton University Art Museum (2018–19), have addressed how historical art can shape our understanding of today’s climate challenges.<sup>1</sup> Within this context, the exhibition “Cross Pollination: Heade, Cole, Church, and Our Contemporary Moment,” presented simultaneously at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site in Catskill and

The Olana State Historic Site near Hudson, is a timely collaboration between two museums focused on the legacies of Thomas Cole and Frederic Church, prominent landscape painters of the nineteenth-century Hudson River School.

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1 *Cross Pollination* is a collaborative effort, involving the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, The Olana Partnership at Olana State Historic Site, and the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. Curated by Kate Menconeri (Cole site), Julia B. Rosenbaum (Bard College), William L. Coleman (Olana), and Mindy N. Besaw (Crystal Bridges), this touring exhibition was at the Cole House and Olana from June 12 through October 31, 2021.



Fig. 2  
Emily Cole, *Untitled (Ladyslipper)*, n.d.,  
Watercolor and pencil on paper,  
10 5/8 x 7 7/16 in.  
Thomas Cole National Historic Site;  
Gift of Edith Cole Silberstein,  
TC.2002.2.19.15

The exhibition centers on another nineteenth-century artist, Martin Johnson Heade, and his paintings of South American hummingbirds (*The Gems of Brazil*, as Heade called them), but also features Cole, Church, Emily Cole, Isabel Charlotte Church, as well as several contemporary artists interacting with the legacy of these earlier artists directly and indirectly. Sixteen of the more than forty paintings Heade created in 1863–64 for an unrealized book on Brazilian hummingbirds anchor the exhibition, split evenly between the two sites. *The Gems of Brazil* are small—about twelve by ten inches each—but overflow with details of both the colorful birds and their tropical habitat, often including the distant landscape, evident in *Amethyst Woodstar*, ca. 1863–64 (Fig. 1). The second American artist to travel to South America after Church, Heade captured the amazement one feels when encountering these tiny, swift birds. Because of their speed,

hummingbirds are easy to miss, but through his art Heade slows the world down so that we can gaze endlessly at the little pollinators.

At the Cole House's New Studio, the Heade paintings are surrounded by works of art by other nineteenth-century artists. Here the theme of cross pollination expands from the realm of nature and enters the New York world of social and professional interactions. The works of art in the gallery reveal the inner workings of the relationship between the Cole and Church families. As a young artist, Church had studied with Cole in Catskill and later built his own home, Olana, directly across the river, where Cole's son Theodore eventually became the farm manager. Cole's daughter Emily Cole and Church's daughter Isabel Charlotte Church were friends, and Church himself dialogued with Emily Cole when she was an art student. Pencil and watercolor drawings, such as Emily Cole's *Untitled Ladyslipper*, n.d. (Fig. 2), share the gallery wall with the botanical studies Heade made in preparation for his oil paintings. Across the gallery, completed landscapes by Heade, Church, and Cole demonstrate the "cross pollination" of nineteenth-century ideas of nature and science.



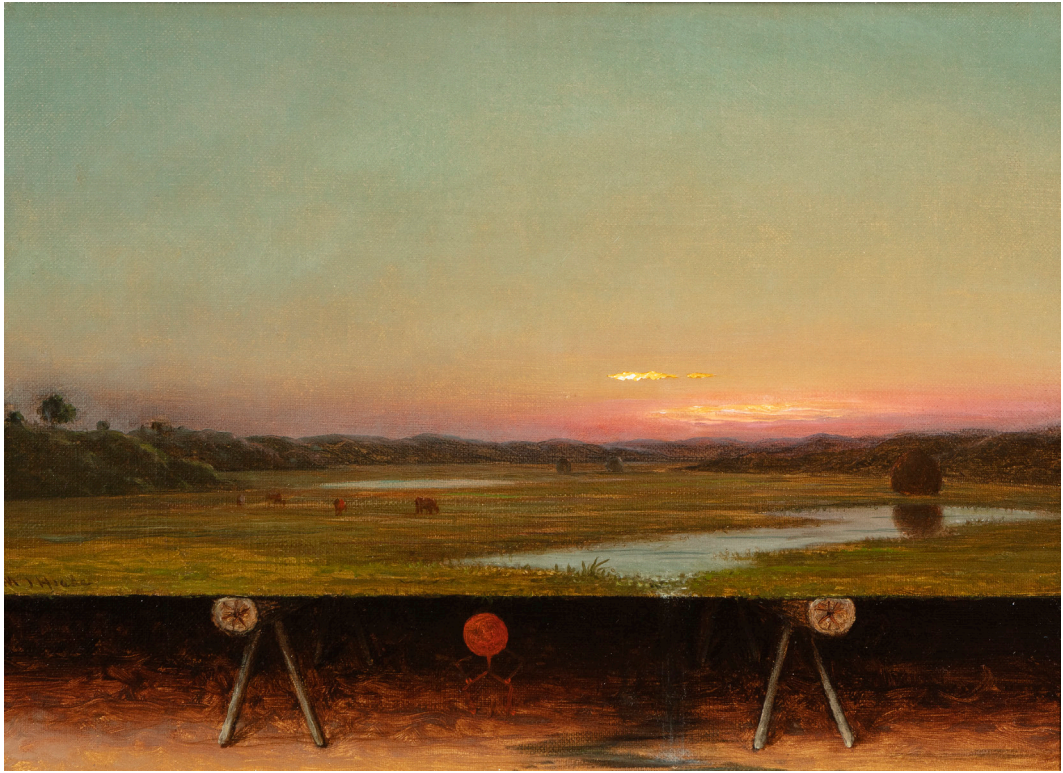


Fig. 3  
Martin Johnson Heade, *Gremlin in the Studio, I*, ca. 1871–75,  
Oil on canvas, 9 7/8 x 13 3/4 in.  
Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Harold Krug

At Olana, Heade's *Gems of Brazil* paintings occupy a wall in an upstairs gallery, juxtaposed with landscape paintings by Cole and Church. A second gallery examines intersections between art and science and features Heade's playful *Gremlin in the Studio, I*, ca. 1871–5 (Fig. 3), painted in the Tenth Street Studio Building in New York City, where both Heade and Church had studios. The upper portion of the painting is a typical Heade salt marsh, but the lower portion reveals that the marsh is a painting propped up by supports in an art studio, with a curious creature lurking below the dripping water. Another highlight in the gallery is the Church family's collection of birds' eggs, carefully displayed in a wooden tray analogous to Thomas Cole's box of minerals and artifacts on view at the Cole site.

Contemporary art is displayed throughout both historic houses and grounds as a part of the exhibition. There are three especially noteworthy pieces. Mark Dion and Dana Sherwood's *Pollinator Pavilion*, 2020 (Fig. 4), an interactive sculpture, first appeared on the lawn in front of the Thomas Cole House in 2020, even before the *Cross Pollination* exhibition opened.<sup>2</sup> The colorful pavilion, hung with flowers and feeders to attract

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<sup>2</sup> The 2020 opening of the exhibition was delayed because of the pandemic.



Fig. 4

Mark Dion and Dana Sherwood, *The Pollinator Pavilion*, 2020, Interactive wood and metal sculpture with acrylic on panel, plants, feeders, and seating, 21 1/2 ft. H x 12 ft. D.

Site-specific public artwork created on the occasion of *Cross Pollination*.

Photo by Peter Aaron/OTTO

pollinators, resembles a Victorian gazebo and allows the viewer to enter the space and interact with pollinators as they buzz in and out of the openings. At Olana, Jean Shin’s spectacular *Fallen*, 2021 (Fig. 5) dialogues with the past in a profound manner. In the nineteenth century, hemlock trees fell victim to deforestation because the tannins in their bark were valuable to the leather industry. Shin and a team at Olana took a fallen hemlock tree, planted by Church in a reforestation project around 1871, and placed it horizontally on the lawn in front of the historic house. After removing the bark and assembling it below the tree, Shin replaced the bark with a “second skin” of discarded leather from the fashion industry, creating a poignant reminder of the impact of industry on the natural environment of the Catskills. Finally, at the end of an enfilade in Olana, Nick Cave’s *Soundsuit*, 2006–12 (Fig. 6) is a showstopper in its dramatic siting within Olana’s

colorful walls. *Soundsuit* draws attention to both botanical beauty, with its beaded flowers, and our contemporary moment of racial violence, dating back to the Los Angeles Police’s 1992 beating of Rodney King, the event that inspired Cave’s series of *Soundsuits*.

A beautifully designed and informative catalogue (Fig. 7), featuring essays by curators Kate Menconeri, Julia B. Rosenbaum, William L. Coleman, and Mindy N. Besaw, accompanies the exhibition and explicates the theme of cross pollination. In the essay, “A Reflex of the Whole;: Thinking About Cross Pollination Through Art and Science,” Menconeri and Rosenbaum note that Heade’s lifelong fascination with hummingbirds “engaged both a scientific curiosity and a sense of wonder.”<sup>3</sup> Perhaps a sense of nature’s

3 Kate Menconeri and Julia B. Rosenbaum, “A Reflex of the Whole;: Thinking About Cross Pollination Through Art and Science,” in *Cross Pollination: Heade, Cole, Church, and Our Contemporary Moment*, edited by Kate Menconeri and William L. Coleman (Catskill, NY: Thomas Cole National Historic Site and Hudson, NY: Olana Partnership, 2020), 27.



Fig. 5

Jean Shin, *Fallen*, 2021, Hemlock tree and leather. Photo by Peter Aaron/OTTO

wonder is an essential human trait; it certainly has become a central feature of modern life. In her book, *The Sense of Wonder: A Celebration of Nature for Parents and Children* (1956), the twentieth-century environmentalist Rachel Carson relates an experience of stargazing on a moonless night by the ocean; as she views “the misty river of the Milky Way flowing across the sky,” it occurs to her that if such a sight were only visible once a century or even generation, throngs of spectators would line the shore. But, she observes of her fellow human beings, “because they could see it almost any night perhaps they will never see it.”<sup>4</sup> As precursors to Carson, Heade and his nineteenth-century colleagues take the time to see nature’s wonders and invite viewers into this world. The contemporary artists included in “Cross Pollination” relate the nineteenth-century themes of art and science to our own time in a worthy interaction between past and present.

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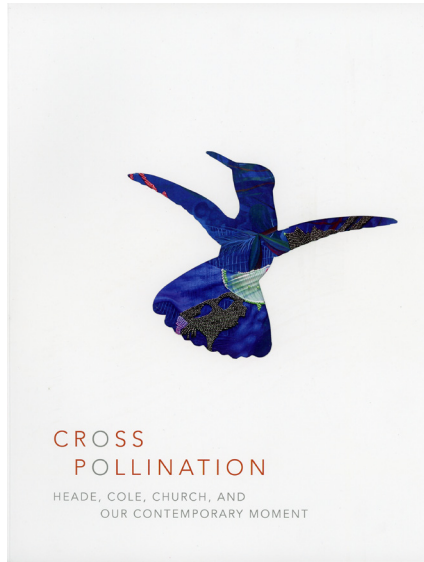
4 Rachel Carson, Nick Kelsh, and Linda J Lear. *The Sense of Wonder: A Celebration of Nature for Parents and Children* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2017), 60–63.



Fig. 6

Nick Cave, *Soundsuit*, 2006–12, Found sequined and beaded materials, hand-sewn, mannequin, and armature, 72 x 30 x 30 in. Collection of Carol McCranie and Javier Magri, © Nick Cave. Photograph courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. Photo by Peter Aaron/OTTO

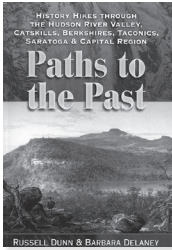
*Kerry Dean Carso is Professor of Art History at the University of New York at New Paltz and author of Follies in America: A History of Garden and Park Architecture*



**Fig. 7**

*The catalog, Cross Pollination: Heade, Cole, Church, and Our Contemporary Moment, was published by the Thomas Cole National Historic Site and The Olana Partnership in 2020. It is available through the Olana Museum Shop <https://shop.olana.org/>. You may see additional images from the exhibition, and hear curators and artists talking about their work, at <https://www.hudsonriverskywalk.org/crosspollination>.*

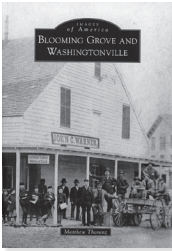
# New & Noteworthy Books



## **Paths to the Past: History Hikes through the Hudson River Valley, Catskills, Berkshires, Taconics, Saratoga & Capital Region**

By Russell Dunn and Barbara Delaney (Catskill, NY: Black Dome Press, 2021) 288 pp. \$22.95 (softcover) [www.blackdomepress.com](http://www.blackdomepress.com)

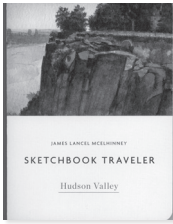
A collection of thirty-one hikes, *Paths to the Past* is equal parts history and travel guide. The hikes are located in and around the Hudson River Valley, and most are appropriate for amateur hikers seeking scenic and historically significant outings that do not require scaling a mountain. All the necessary details, such as directions, park hours, and accessibility, are included, and are supplemented by an extensive selection of color photographs and historic postcard images. Whether the intention is to get out into nature or learn about the history of treasures hidden within the landscape, Dunn and Delaney offer something for everyone.



## **Blooming Grove and Washingtonville (Images of America Series)**

By Matthew Thorenz (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2021) 128 pp. \$21.95 (softcover) [www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)

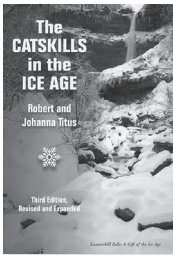
In this latest addition to the Images of America series featuring towns in the Hudson River Valley, Matthew Thorenz captures not only the people and places of Blooming Grove and Washingtonville, but also the essence of what life was like for residents during the period spanning the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Railroads, the dairy industry, and its proximity to Moodna Creek (and later the Moodna Viaduct) made this area an important component of transportation and commerce in Orange County. Mixed among the photographs of homes, businesses, churches, and schools are images of shopkeepers, firefighters, schoolchildren, and families who made Blooming Grove and Washingtonville the bustling hub of activity that it came to be during this era.



### **Sketchbook Traveler: Hudson Valley**

By James Lancel McElhinney (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 2020) 128 pp. \$24.99 (hardcover) [www.schifferbooks.com](http://www.schifferbooks.com)

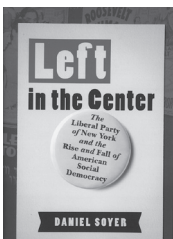
The landscapes of the Hudson River Valley have provided subject matter for artists and authors for centuries, inspiring both compelling images and thoughtful prose. *Sketchbook Traveler: Hudson Valley* combines the two, presenting works that “topohistorical pictoriographer” James Lancel McElhinney created on-site while traversing the region’s varied terrain. More than just a collection of sketches, it encourages readers to become artists themselves by offering a combination of technical and practical instructions, as well as blank pages to create new art. This book is ready-made to motivate and inspire creativity through discoveries of the natural landscape.



### **The Catskills in the Ice Age**

By Robert and Johanna Titus (Catskill, NY: Black Dome Press, 2019) 200 pp. \$19.95 (softcover) [www.blackdomepress.com](http://www.blackdomepress.com)

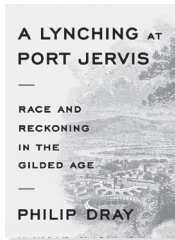
Though the last Ice Age ended over 10,000 years ago, in and around the Catskill Mountains evidence of its impact can still be found. Striking a balance between technical and readable, *The Catskills in the Ice Age* takes readers through the major events of the period that shaped the region and paints a picture of how ice gradually came to engulf the area before eventually melting away and creating the landscape of today. Enhanced by photographs and an assortment of maps and sketches, the book offers details about glacial movement as well as the countless lakes, escarpments, ledges, and valleys left behind.



### **Left in the Center: The Liberal Party of New York and the Rise and Fall of American Social Democracy**

By Daniel Soyer (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022) 432 pp. \$46.95 (hardcover) [www.cornellpress.cornell.edu](http://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu)

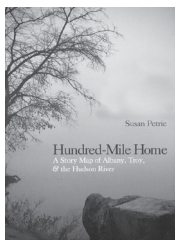
As an influential third political party in New York, the Liberal Party played a major role in both shaping elections and the evolution of political ideologies in the second half of the twentieth century. Established in 1944 to promote social democracy ideals, the Liberal Party derived its influence through strong support from labor unions and by offering an alternative to the country’s two major political parties. In *Left in the Center*, Daniel Soyer offers an extensively sourced and detailed history of the party’s founding, growth, shifting ideologies, and eventual demise in the early 2000s.



### **A Lynching at Port Jervis: Race and Reckoning in the Gilded Age**

By Philip Dray (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2022) 272 pp.  
\$29.00 (hardcover) [www.us.macmillan.com/fsg/](http://www.us.macmillan.com/fsg/)

The 1892 mob lynching of Robert Lewis, a Black resident of Port Jervis, brought national attention to the Orange County town. Despite investigations and even a trial, not to mention the headlines, most questions about the event long went unanswered. More than a century later, Philip Dray, working with local historians and activists, delves deeply into how and why a town would kill one of its own in this way, and then deny the justice that its leaders insisted would be served. Dray's investigative work is commendable, as are his speculative conclusions, but it is his attention to the paradoxes of the case that are most timely: a "Southern crime" in a Northern town, an investigation thwarted by the very community that promised justice, and finally the community's recent attempts to acknowledge, investigate, and memorialize the atrocity after generations of silence.



### **Hundred-Mile Home: A Story Map of Albany, Troy, & the Hudson River**

By Susan Petrie (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2021) 115 pp. \$19.95 (softcover)  
[www.sunypress.edu](http://www.sunypress.edu)

A slim volume classified "poetry," *Hundred-Mile Home* includes numerous photos, drawings, and a map as well as free verse and micro-essays all focused on the exploration of the upper Hudson River Valley and Capitol District. Troy native Susan Petrie guides the reader on repeated trips across her home's terrain, sharing her eye for details, whether they be architectural ornaments, half-buried ruins, or forgotten history. Regarding that history, she has folded enough of it into the text that she has included both footnotes and endnotes. The result is a book that is both facsimile and artifact of the author's experience of history and place.

*Andrew Villani, Marist College*



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