

Regional History Forum

Each issue of *The Hudson River Valley Review* includes the *Regional History Forum* section. This section will highlight historic sites in the Valley, exploring their historical significance as well as information for visitors today. Although due attention will be paid to sites of national visibility, HRVR will also highlight sites of regional significance. Please write us with suggestions for future Forum sections.

Editor's note: This is the first installment in what is planned to be a regular feature between now and 2009—the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson navigating the river that bears his name and of Samuel de Champlain discovering the lake upstate that bears his. Following the precedent set in 1909, we will also be exploring the 200th anniversary of Robert Fulton's successful development of the steamboat as a means of cargo and passenger transportation.

The Replica Ship *The Half Moon*

Christopher Pryslopski

The directions were simple: drive north on The New York State Thruway to Albany, exit onto Route 787 toward the Empire State Plaza, and then take exit 4. Drive north along the Hudson until you see the Mayan temples; turn right into the courtyard. As I drove slowly across the cobbled yard, I got my first glimpse of the *De Halve Maen*, the rigging at least. Captain William “Chip” Reynolds and crew member Steve Weiss appeared a short time later to welcome me aboard.

Built in 1989 by Dr. Andrew Hendricks, The Replica Ship *The Half Moon* is a working, full-scale model of the vessel that brought Henry Hudson to North America nearly 400 years ago—with a small engine and other amenities hidden deep in what would have been its historic hold. Dr. Hendricks envisioned it as a physical tool for interpreting the history and legacy of the New Netherlands, and its captain and crew today are doing just that. As the New Netherland Museum (NNM), they divide their time between Albany, New York City, and excursions on the Hudson and other historic waters of New Netherland—from the Connecticut to the Delaware Rivers.

The New Netherland Museum interprets its history using a combination of techniques—tours; sails; living history reenactments; classroom visits; teacher workshops; and “history kits,” which teachers may borrow. They even plan on con-



Rigging on the Replica Ship *The Half Moon*

structing a “ship’s boat” as a hands-on teachers’ workshop. Their annual Voyage of Discovery is a weeklong expedition from Manhattan to Albany manned by a crew of seventh and eighth graders. The lesson plans they’ve developed in this and other exercises are currently available for purchase on their Web site.

They have important allies in this work, too. The New Netherland Project, housed and sponsored by the New York State Museum, has steadily contributed to the understanding of New York’s Dutch Heritage since the 1980s. Together, they dream of a waterfront facility in Albany that could host living history reenactments, as well as house archives, research facilities, and *The Half Moon* itself. Such a facility could also further the crew’s efforts to convey the history of the Albany area—the Dutch Fort Orange and Beverwyck. Such a facility would be an alternative to Sturbridge Village and Jamestown, celebrating a different and contemporary history that is specific to our region.

But today I am visiting them at the Albany Water Treatment Plant; the “Mayan temples” conceal the works in their novel architecture. This has been the New Netherland Museum’s temporary home in the capital while they plan their permanent port. A crew of two volunteers is painting the new beak, which was rebuilt in 2003. Maintenance such as this is a constant necessity with the ship, and more major work takes place in dry dock over the winter.

Steve Weiss is a wonderful example of the power of the ship and its programming. After his daughter first sailed on it on a field trip, his wife began volunteering, and finally he became a volunteer educator on board and occasionally in the classroom.

There is no question you can ask Steve or any of the crew that doesn’t lead to a dozen more (and their answers, of course). We climb into the hold to escape a short shower and look at some of the replicas onboard, which include cooking pots and utensils, rhinish ware, a cannon (known as a falcon, which shoots a twenty-one pound ball about the size of a baseball), and more.

By the time we are done inspecting their traveling kits and cannon, my eyes had adjusted to the gloom of the “between decks,” or orlop deck. We stand above the hold, bent over to keep our heads from hitting the bottom of the deck above. The captain points aft. “This would have been the top deck in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.” But when the voyages began getting longer—rounding Cape Horn and exploring the Arctic—and the trade networks grew to include new territories in these remote locations, the ships required more storage. So they added the deck above, leaving the orlop deck with no more than five feet of headroom. Sailors would have bunked here or slept on deck; everything below was cargo space. It was during this same time that the fore and stern castles were added to

the top deck—each raised another five feet at either end of the ship.

These were where the armed crew would have assembled to ward off pirates, or alternately, would have assembled a boarding party as privateers—state-endorsed piracy practiced on vessels belonging to countries with which Holland was not on favorable terms. The galley of *De Haelve Maen* is in the forecastle, and the pilot house, with the captain's quarters behind, is located in the stern castle, below the poop deck.

And way back in the gloom to the aft of the between decks is the “whipstaff.” At the original height, in the 1400s sailors would have stood here “manning” the helm, but once the upper decks were added, this original position was buried below. The “staff” was added as a simple modification that allowed the helmsman to steer from above—still 100 years before the use of block and tackle that allowed the “ship’s wheel.” Captain Reynolds’ eyes gleamed as he finished the lesson, and he grinned as he reminded me once again that the entire ship was a working replica and a teaching tool.

During the New Netherland Museum’s Voyage of Discovery, the students work with adults as the full crew of the ship—manning the watch, etc. In addition to performing scientific experiments and learning how the ship works, they use replica equipment to navigate the river, including a cross-staff and a quadrangle, chip line, lead line, and Travers Board. The New Netherland Museum’s curriculum also brings this experience into the schools. The Voyage of Discovery began keeping an online ship’s log in 2005. This allows children in classrooms—and adults—to follow the adventure. There are also travel trunks full of replicas that teachers may borrow.

It is difficult to convey the experience of stepping aboard *The Half Moon* in a few pages, but suffice it to say that any opportunity to do so is well worth it. In addition to participants in their formal programming, they welcome visitors and volunteers. And work is underway to ensure that they can come to you, even if you are unable to come to them.

—Christopher Pryslopski

*For more info on the New Netherland Museum, visit them online at www.halfmoon.mus.ny.us/index.html, or in person during May, June, and October in Albany. (It’s advisable to check their web site or call ahead before making the trip.) Additional information and samples of their curriculum is available at www.halfmoon.mus.ny.us/curriculum.htm, while the 2005 Voyage of Discover is online at www.halfmoon.mus.ny.us/2005sepvod/2005sepvodhome.htm. For information on the New Netherland Project (whose work the crew of *The Half Moon* shares with the public), visit www.nnp.org/index.shtml.*

Book Review

Alf Evers. *Kingston: City on the Hudson*. The Overlook Press: Woodstock and New York (2005). 447 pp.; 40 pp. bibliography and source notes.



This book represents a twelve-year undertaking that consumed all of the author's ninth decade and with which he was still tinkering when he passed away in December 2004—a month shy of his 100th birthday. Certainly it is a flawed book, yet *Kingston: City on the Hudson* is also a remarkable tour de force and something that will stand for years as Evers' last, typically comprehensive testament to his life's interest in local history.

On one level, *Kingston* is a straightforward, narrative history of Evers' county seat, from the first Native Americans to modern City Hall; much of this material has not been available in narrative form before. On the other hand, this book is not a history at all. It is a prime document, the last work of one of our best regional historians who never lost his touch.

One discovers the difference between this historian and others early on in his explanation for the violence that gave rise to the First Esopus War (1658-59). He reaches deeply into nineteenth-century scholarship (even including an illustration) to demonstrate the correlation of the *katsbaan*—the Native American ball field near the Strand—with Munsee Delaware mythos, and how the intrusion of the Dutch and English settlers into that scene prompted the first attack. Only Alf Evers could have done that.

Evers had the intention of writing a history of Kingston ever since the appearance of his first fine history, *The Catskills: From Wilderness to Woodstock*, in 1972. The *Catskills* was thirteen years in the making. He then wrote a history of Woodstock (1987) and produced a collection of essays, and even as he wrote the *Kingston* story, he planned a follow-up book about Ralph Whitehead, the founder of the Byrdcliffe arts colony in Woodstock.

In his thirties and forties, Evers co-authored children's books with his wife before turning to regional history for the first time with *The Catskills*. He had a background as an insurance investigator, and a childhood on an Ulster County farm that charmed him for life. *The Catskills* was, in its time, a breakthrough treatment of regional history that showed it could be done in a friendly, and documented, way.

Kingston was not written without support. These are all his words, of course, scrupulously recorded, all of it entered, dictated, scrawled, rewritten, and told over the years to an amanuensis, Edward Sanders, author of a rigorous investigative work himself (*The Family: The Story of Charles Manson's Dune Buggy Attack Battalion*, 1971) and a noted beatnik poet. A noble supporting cast helped keep Evers' home and his health going along the way.

Evers did rely on some outside sources—friends tracked down what he needed after he could not leave the house himself—but this tapestry was largely fashioned from bits and pieces right at hand. (A library that Evers collected in his small home in Shady has since gone to Byrdcliffe, where it will one day be available to scholars.) The book does suffer as history in the choice of sources, since much of the scholarship of the last thirty years was not plumbed, but the reader is compensated for any lapses in Evers' style and, to some extent, in the old choices he makes. (And Evers was ahead of his time thirty years ago, anyway.)

The craft of the writer is clearly at work in some convoluted sentence structures in the early sections, where one sees the historian Evers consciously choosing his path through the maze of information to provide clarity for the reader. The writing becomes more self-assured as the conventional history unfolds, and one senses that, had he time, he might have edited the early sections more closely—but not the facts they related. Evers had a mature grasp of the material that allowed for variations and discordant themes in the story, and you can see that in the writing itself.

The documentation is also limited, much of it put together by Sanders in conversations with Evers as the project came to a conclusion. After all, he was eighty-nine when he started and ninety-nine and eleven months old when he finished. (The day Evers died he reminded Sanders of a change he wanted to make in the text.) The endnotes are in fact a kind of personal coda, an almost relaxed peregrination into the byways of the author's mind; there are not enough of them.

Kingston is neither mawkish nor sentimental, but it is a tribute to the city at the center of Evers' county. Some of the section titles—one runs fifty-five words in length—hearken to a nineteenth-century style, and at times Evers waxes overelocquent in characterizing how the people who lived it experienced their history. Yet this is all part of a piece, as much a story of Alf Evers as of the city of his special interest—a prime document, again.

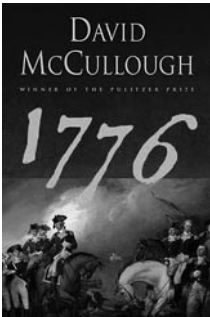
Kingston Mayor James Sottile hosted Peter Mayer of Overlook Press for the debut of the work at City Hall. Some press attended, as did several of those who helped Evers along the way, yet this was not a gala sendoff for the author. He had been there, done that already: three years earlier, the Senate House hosted a reti-

nue of local history glitterati in recognizing Evers' contributions over the years.

Fittingly, that event ended with Evers—I think he was ninety-six at the time—trumping the entire tent-full of friends in a clever trompe-l'oeil effect. A video of his life ended with the camera on Evers himself sitting in the front row. He was the first and only person in the crowded tent to see that the video had now become live. He waved to everybody and the crowd roared.

—Vernon Benjamin, *Bard College*

David McCullough. 1776. New York: Simon & Schuster (2005). 386 pp.



The Hudson River Valley is the place to live and visit to understand the American Revolution. Because of New York State's curriculum and the teacher institutes, map/brochures, and programs of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area and the Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College, teachers, students, and an increasing number of residents and heritage tourists are discovering how complex that civil and imperial war was, particularly in New York.

When I met author David McCullough in Newport, Rhode Island, last July, during the celebration of the 225th anniversary of the arrival of the French *expedition particulière*, I thanked him for returning the subject of America's War for Independence back to the public discourse with his biography of John Adams and his newest book, *1776*. When McCullough decided to explore the American Revolution, he brought to bear a heavyweight reputation built on two Pulitzer Prizes (for *Truman* and *John Adams*) and two National Book Awards (for *The Path Between the Seas* and *Mornings on Horseback*). After weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list, *1776* has carved out its niche in popular literature as spectacularly as the events of 1776 set the tone for the colonies' struggle against their mother country, Great Britain.

McCullough chose as the topic of his book the year of the American Revolution to which even the casual student of American history could relate. Although the Declaration of Independence and the battle of Trenton, in New Jersey, were triumphs that year, McCullough found that 1776 "was for those who carried the fight for independence forward a year of all-to-few victories, of sustained suffering, disease, hunger, desertion, cowardice, disillusionment, defeat, terrible discouragement, and fear, that they would never forget, but also of phenomenal courage, and bedrock devotion to country, and that too, they would never forget." As McCullough has related in an interview, his approach allowed

him “to tell the military story of 1776, not the political.” And he tells the story of George Washington, Nathanael Greene, Henry Knox, the Continental Army, and the battles of New York and New Jersey as only he can. The glue for the war—and the book—is Washington, without whose “leadership and unrelenting perseverance, the revolution almost certainly would have failed.”

While 1776 is a national story, New York takes center stage on some 135 of the book’s 294 narrative pages. McCullough found that “The importance of New York was beyond question,” and he quotes John Adams’ assessment that New York was “a kind of key to the whole continent.” General Washington and his British counterparts also understood that the Hudson River was the nexus of population, industry, agriculture, commerce, communications, and logistics. As strategists, they recognized that the Hudson was at once an avenue and a barrier, particularly in the Hudson Highlands. It was an invasion route to and from Canada at the one end and the city of New York on the other. Command of the Hudson influenced the economy and affected the movement of manpower and supplies. Against this strategic backdrop, McCullough relates his tales of triumph and tragedy at or near the Hudson River.

One of the great triumphs of the whole war was the feat by Colonel Henry Knox—one which many observers thought impossible, writes McCullough—of floating and dragging the “noble train of artillery” of fifty-nine cannons, mortars, and howitzers from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston in the dead of winter. Once emplaced on Dorchester Heights and commanding the city and harbor, they added weight to General William Howe’s decision to abandon Boston for Halifax, Nova Scotia. Knox’s reputation was made: the former bookseller was named Washington’s artillery chief. His guns influenced the victory at Trenton, which was the climax of the year and is the climax of the book.

Howe’s next stop was Manhattan, where he and his troops landed in July 1776. Thereafter, New York was the key seat of the war until November 1783. Near-fatal tragedies took place in the battles around New York City. McCullough concludes that the battle of Brooklyn (also known as the battle of Long Island) on August 27, 1776, “had been a fiasco. Washington had proven indecisive and inept. In his first command on a large-scale field of battle, he and his general officers had not only failed, they had been made to look like fools.” Providence and John Glover’s Massachusetts sailors and fishermen saved the army on the night of August 29–30 by ferrying 9,000 men across the East River to Manhattan. After checking General Howe at Harlem Heights and White Plains, Washington and Greene once again exhibited poor judgment by trying to maintain Fort Mifflin (near the present-day George Washington Bridge). When it fell to British and Hessian

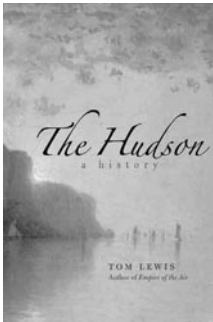
troops on November 16, the American army lost almost 3,000 men, who would be sorely missed in the coming days. The fall of Fort Lee and the retreat across the Jerseys set up Washington's first victory since Boston—at Trenton on Christmas Day. That triumph—and another at Princeton on January 3, 1777—saved the bid for liberty and blotted away some of the stains of previous failures. McCullough quotes Abigail Adams in a letter to her friend Mercy Otis Warren: "I am apt to think that our later misfortunes have called out the hidden excellencies of our commander-in-chief." Those "hidden excellencies" would sustain the cause—and the Continental Army—through the remaining six years of war, until the Treaty of Paris made the United States of America a reality.

In 1776, McCullough has written a book that proves the idea that well-written history rivals fiction. He is a master storyteller, and the popularity of his latest book is an encouraging sign that his readers understand that the power of historical drama and the trials of men and women struggling to be free transcend the ages. When they have turned the last page of 1776, they will have gained a greater perspective on the bids for democracy ongoing in Iraq and Afghanistan, and a heightened appreciation for the difficulties faced by the fledgling armies upon which those bids depend. As McCullough ends his tale, then as now the outcome may prove to be "little short of a miracle."

—James M. Johnson, *Marist College*

Tom Lewis *The Hudson: A History*

Yale University Press, London and New Haven (2005). 340 pp.



Tom Lewis' "personal history," *The Hudson: A History*, is an elegantly written and accessible entry point to the larger and more famous episodes of the Hudson River's history and culture. The book is not an attempt to provide a synthetic, textbook account of the region, nor a new synthesis of recent scholarship. It is, however, a useful introduction for those who are new to the subject, and for those who live here and know a bit about the subject, it will provide new insights to a familiar story.

Much of Lewis' attention is devoted to the early period of the Valley's history. (Indeed, the first half of the book is focused on the pre-Revolutionary period.) There is one full chapter on the American Revolution. The twentieth century receives much less attention—only one chapter, the last—although this chapter evocatively tells the story of the "Storm King case" and the emerging environ-

mental movement. Chapter 7, “Definers of the Landscape,” takes an interesting approach to the “landscape that defined America.” It provides a nice introduction for those interested in the artistic rendering of the region, and the emergence of the Hudson River landscape painters and the authors who have forever shaped readers’ understanding of the Valley (Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, among others). The chapter weaves this story into the larger economic and technological developments that were forever transforming this landscape that authors and painters were now attempting to immortalize.

The last chapter, “Twentieth Century Waters,” is Lewis’ best. His account of the now famous battle between Consolidated Edison and a small group of preservationists over the plan to construct a storage reservoir at Storm King Mountain on the Hudson is thoughtful and moving. “A huge swath would have to be carved out of the northern portion of Storm King to make room for an eight hundred foot long generator plant,” he writes. A small group of Valley residents played, in Lewis’ telling, the proverbial “David v Goliath” role, and in the process of stopping the construction of the storage plant, also ushered in the modern environmental movement in the United States.

Lewis writes engagingly, and easily brings his reader into the larger unfolding story. From the historian’s perspectives, there are some drawbacks. Although Lewis uses recent published work on art and architecture, he relies very little on the enormous amount of recent scholarship on the social and political history of the region. The work of Martin Bruegel, Reeve Huston, and Thomas Humphrey, among many others, is simply not included in these pages. The last ten to fifteen years have witnessed a virtual renaissance in the historical study of the region, and save for Russell Shorto’s *Island at the Center of the World*, the works of these authors are not to be found in Lewis’ footnotes, nor are their important new insights on the American Revolution, social life, and the nineteenth-century tenant riots woven into his analysis. These authors have had great impact on refocusing many of the debates in New York history and would certainly have added a further layer of complexity to Lewis’ story.

Nevertheless, these concerns do not detract from what is a readable, engaging, and illuminating history of the Hudson River and the surrounding Valley. Lewis’ fine prose and keen insights offer his readers the richness of the Hudson River.

—Thomas S. Wermuth, *Hudson River Valley Institute, Marist College*

New & Noteworthy Books Received

Hudson Valley Waterfall Guide

Russell Dunn (Hensonville, N.Y.: Black Dome Press Corp., 2006).

344 pp. \$17.95 (paperback). www.blackdomepress.com

A guide to 100 waterfalls in the Hudson River Valley; contains directions, maps, historical information, and illustrations.

The \$64 Tomato

By William Alexander (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2006). Pp. 254. \$22.95 (paperback). www.algonquin.com

The oft-hilarious story of one Hudson Valley resident's quest to grow the perfect garden. Alexander weaves a story about the trials as well as the triumphs of gardening and teaches valuable lessons—about agriculture and life—along the way.

Selected Letters of John Jay and Sarah Livingston Jay

Compiled and edited by Landa M. Freeman, Louise V. North, and Janet M. Wedge (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005).

311 pp. \$75.00 (hardcover). www.mcfarlandpub.com

Correspondence between John Jay and his wife, Sarah Livingston Jay, during and after the American Revolution. Also includes essays on the Jay and Livingston families, a timeline of John Jay's life, and family trees.

Catskill Mountain House Trail Guide:

In the Footsteps of the Hudson River School

Robert A. Gildersleeve (Hensonville, N.Y.: Black Dome Press Corp., 2005). 224 pp. \$16.95 (paperback). www.blackdomepress.com

A hiking guide to destinations in the Catskill Mountains that inspired the artists of the Hudson River School of art and were popular with trekkers in the nineteenth century. Includes GPS locations, maps, and modern trail descriptions, as well as reprints from two earlier guidebooks.

Historic Hudson: An Architectural Portrait

By Byrne Fone (Hensonville, N.Y.: Black Dome Press Corp., 2005).

206 pp. \$24.95 (paperback). www.blackdomepress.com

Examines the city of Hudson—its rise as a shipping and manufacturing center in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and its ultimate decline. Also discusses the current revitalization of the city and its architecture. Includes the never-before-published Historic Hudson/Rowles Studio Collection of historic photographs, which chronicle the city from the 1850s to the 1920s.

Shawangunk Place Names: Indian, Dutch, and English Geographical Names of the Shawangunk Mountain Region: Their Origin, Interpretation, and Historical Evolution

By Marc B. Fried (Gardiner, N.Y.: self-published, 2005).
187 pp. \$18.95 (hardcover).

The history, geography, and culture of the Shawangunks region as told through its geographical names.

Different Views In Hudson River School Painting

By Judith Hansen O'Toole (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2005). 160 pp. \$35.00 (hardcover).

A brilliant overview of the art of the Hudson River School. The book includes myriad color illustrations in addition to descriptions of the artists and their philosophies.

The Other New York

Edited by Joseph S. Tiedemann and Eugene R. Fingerhut (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2005). 246 pp. \$60.00 (hardcover).
www.sunypress.edu

A county-by-county study of the rural areas of New York State during the American Revolution. The book also provides an in-depth look at the social conditions in each county prior to the war and examines the effects the conflict had afterward.

Civil War Women: Their Roles and Legacies

By Trish Chambers (Bloomington, I.N.: Author House, 2005)
113pp. \$12.95 (paperback) www.authorhouse.com

A two-part book which offers insight into the roles that women played both socially and economically during the Civil War. The first part describes their contributions and talks about the changing roles of women when the men were away. The second portion of the book offers 50 profiles of women who made an impact in that time period.