

HRVI February Newsletter

HRVI



YOUR GATEWAY TO THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY

Hudson River Valley Institute

HRVI Celebrates African History Month on Website

During Black History Month, it is important to note that those in the Hudson River Valley have access rich culture of African-American history. [On the Hudson River Valley Institute's website](#), you can find valuable information about these prominent African-Americans who resided in the Hudson River Valley. The celebration of African History month on the Hudson River doesn't just stop online, as there are all sorts of events that have happened here in the Hudson River Valley. The Hudson River Museum

held a family day where there were leather-making workshops, gallery storytelling, and an African style dance company performing dances from the continent. Historic Huguenot Street is holding a lecture on the lives and working condition of African-Americans in the Hudson Valley region during colonial times. In addition to these events, the Hall of Governors of New York State [website](#) has a fantastic online exhibit of African-Americans who have changed the nation, all of whom hailed from New York State.

In our [Hall of Fame](#) section, you can find many short biographies on great African-Americans who have resided in the Hudson River Valley and contributed to the art community. Read up on the interesting life of [Clayton "Peg Leg" Bates](#), who an extremely accomplished tap dancer, having appeared on "The Ed Sullivan Show" twenty-one times despite having only one real leg. Bates lost his leg in a cotton gin accident at age 12 in his hometown of Fountain Inn, South Carolina. He was given a wooden leg to replace it. After

Continued on page 4

Inside this Issue:

A Presidential Week in the Hudson Valley	2
Interview with Kathryn Silberger	3
Interview, continued	4
Black History Month, continued	4
Mid Hudson Anti Slavery Project hosts talk	5
<i>Freedom's Gardener: A Preview</i>	6
Meet the Intern	6
Contact Us/ Staff Listing	7

Special points of interest:

- *Interview with Kathryn Silberger*
- *Black History Month*
- *Freedom's Garden by Myra Young Armstead: A Preview*
- *Meet the Intern*



Presidential New York: A Focus on the Valley

In honor of what would be George Washington's 280th birthday, the Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site in Newburgh hosted a three-day celebration from February 18-20.

The event included field reenactments from Lamb's Artillery Company, the 5th New York Regiment, and the 5th Connecticut Regiment, as well as live music from Thaddeus MacGregor.

Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site

84 Liberty St.
Newburgh, NY 12551
Phone: (845) 562-1195

During the regular viewing season, visitors of the site are given the opportunity to tour the location where some of our nation's earliest military decisions were made, including Washington's creation of the Badge of Military Merit, the precursor to the Purple Heart.



Photo courtesy: Library of Congress

To commemorate the establishment of the Badge, as well as Washington's birthday, the Purple Heart Hall of Honor in Vails Gate hosted an event on February 22, displaying Purple Heart related items and a presentation focusing on the significance of the medal.

The Hall of Honor is open to visitors and scheduled group tours, allowing guests to experience the stories of America's veterans and appreciate the sacrifices made by those who have served in the

The National Purple Heart Hall of Honor

374 Temple Hill Road
Vails Gate, NY 12584
Phone: (845) 561-1765
(877) 28HONOR

United States Armed Forces.

New York has enjoyed a long affiliation with the United States Presidency, with a number of Presidents and Vice Presidents getting their start here. Having been born in New York State, Martin van Buren, Millard Fillmore, Theodore Roosevelt, and Franklin D. Roosevelt all rose to the highest office in the nation. Franklin and Van Buren even hailed directly from the Hudson River Valley. The homes of both

Home of Franklin Delano Roosevelt National Historic Site

4097 Albany Post Road
Hyde Park, NY 12538
Phone: (845) 486-1966

Presidents are National Historic Sites, open to the public for tours and events.

Though not born in New York, President Grover Cleveland served first as Mayor of Buffalo before becoming the 28th Governor of New York State. The Vice Presidency also has its roots in New York, with George Clinton, Daniel D. Tompkins, Levi Morton and Nelson Rockefeller all having served as governors.

The presidential legacy of New York, namely the Hudson River Valley, was illustrated through the President's Day events at local sites, and can be experienced year round at the homes and



Photos courtesy: Library of Congress

An Interview with Kathryn Silberger

Katy Silberger is a surviving descendent of a Daniel Francis Kemp, Civil War soldier who kept an interesting diary, which is now available online. One of our interns had the chance to sit down with Katy and get her impression of her great ancestor.

On the website, you describe receiving the folder of documents. What did it feel like when you were first reading them?

Started reading them, got so into it, and I thought, "I have to share this with my family."

I felt like, "y'know, I know this man." I knew my father really admired him, but I had no sense of him other than my father's information.

Do you have a favorite letter? Or, since that is probably fairly difficult to answer, a favorite memory with one of the letters, or just one that comes to mind?

My favorite is I guess how he turned the war experience into something he shared with the children. I'm reminded of how people deal with PTSD now. ... What he did was he turned this into a story that he could relive and relive until it stopped traumatizing him and he could teach his grandchildren about the good qualities.

My first experience was my father telling me these stories when I was a kid. He'd lived it and come to terms with it.

I like the letter he wrote from St. Louis where he'd come back... and he was able to kinda reflect on things, and it was nice to see how he'd changed and reflected on it. Daniel never swore, wouldn't say anything if he couldn't say something nice, which is a value that was passed down in my family, keep it to yourself and find something nice, keep looking for the good in people.

The most heartbreaking one was where he asked his mother to go tell the parents of a child, because the navy didn't have a system, and it was a kindness but I can't imagine what that was like.

Has this project - the reading of the letters, their organization, figuring out the cast of characters, etc. - sparked any interests? In the Civil War, in the past, in more family history, in general?

What it ended up doing was getting me in contact with many people in the family. I was actually trying to find... in one of the letters that a cousin had written that an uncle had a lot of letters from when he was traveling in the hardware trade. I ended up meeting a bunch of family that I really enjoy and I never found the letters but I got to know them and talk to them and everyone knew Daniel. Everyone had heard about him. One of my second cousins is a physician, and I wrote to him about Daniel's suspicion that he had yellow fever and he said, "oh yes, he had yellow fever."

Can you describe at all what it's like to connect with an ancestor that you never really knew, even though you really know them now?

The other thing Daniel did was make sure that all of his grandchildren had money to go to college. Not all of them radiated, but they were all able to go, like 80% graduated.

I'm really so thrilled that I found those letters and read them because it's nice when you can have someone like that speak to you through generations. You kinda listen more because you can't talk to them directly but they can talk to you so it's like a gift that you really notice and you don't want to take it lightly.

I actually named my son after him to honor my father. And now that I know this, my son has read these letters and has a better understanding of his namesake. And so many of his siblings named a child after him.

What experiences have come out of these letters and their website? I'm thinking encounters with historians, related stories, random connections with people, etc.

I did have a really cool thing happen! When I first put the website up, I agonized about putting up my email address. (because of spam) I've only gotten one email, but it was really worth getting. The great granddaughter

Katy Silberger Interview, cont.

of one of Daniel's really close friends contacted me and they had been doing research about him and found all these descriptions. He'd had a wonderful hand and lost it in a saw mill and had avoided military service. So good!

What do you hope will come out of the [letters and the website](#) in the future?

I would like for it to be used for further understanding, however that's come about. I have it licensed for creative commons because of that. I love it when a high school uses it. I love thinking that someone will connect with their family better. I'm just glad about what's happened. They're up

there, and I can say to Daniel in my mind, "we did it, it got published!"

What do you think others can learn from these letters? About war experience, the Civil War, relationships in the 19th century, race issues, etc.

He was trained initially as a shipbuilder, his father was a shipwright, and his descriptions of the boats and he'll describe it and he really knows it. So his descriptions of the boats and the boatyards are interesting because they've all been destroyed.

Vicksburg was also a very significant event in the war and

we don't think of that because of the eloquence of the Gettysburg address and because it was the only battle in the north. You'd never had boats like that before, the flat bottomed river boats, and if we were going to do it again that's what you need.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

He died one day after the anniversary of the sinking of the boat. And they wrote about him in the Buffalo paper that day, a front page obituary. He was the last surviving naval/Civil War veteran from Buffalo.

*Interview and Transcription by
Mary Kaltreider*

Black History Month, cont.

becoming an accomplished and successful tap dancer, he became the owner of the Peg Leg Bates Country Club and Resort in Catskills Mountain, Kerhonkson, Ulster County New York. Take the time to read up on the great heavyweight boxer, [Floyd Patterson](#). He grew up in Brooklyn, New York working as a thief. By age ten he was sent to the Wiltwyck School for Boys, in Esopus, New York. Only seven years later, Floyd Patterson won the Olympic gold medal in 1952 as a middleweight. At the end of his career he slugged out fifty-five wins, eight losses, and one draw. Patterson later retired to New Paltz, New York. Other notable African-American Hall of Famers on our website include New Rochelle High School graduate and

Baltimore Ravens running back [Ray Rice](#), heavyweight boxer and actor [Mike Tyson](#), Major League Baseball player and former Newburgh resident [Dee Brown](#), and one of the greatest electric guitarists of all time, [Jimi Hendrix](#).

After perusing our [Hall of Fame](#) page, explore the great African-American culture available in our [Guidebooks](#) and [Articles & Essays](#) sections. In the [Guidebooks](#) section you will find information about the [Philipsburg Manor](#). Opening in April, the Philipsburg Manor is located in Sleepy Hollow, New York. At a time when most families in the Hudson River Valley had one or two slaves, the Philipsburg Manor contained between 20 to 40 slaves. These slaves did everything from working around the estate, to

tending the fields, and even working at the gristmill. In our [Articles & Essays](#) section, read about the [struggles](#) that African-Americans in the Hudson Valley endured from 1785-1827. In this article you will learn about the multiple attempts at creating a slave free New York State. Another great article to read on our website is [John Addison's speech](#) on the abolition of the slavery bill introduced in 1796. As you can see, many great African Americans have come from the Hudson River Valley and you can learn a great deal about them and what they had to endure by visiting <http://www.hudsonrivervalley.org/>.

By Andrew Mikolajczyk

Talk on the Mid-Hudson Slavery Project

With Black History month drawing to a close, many organizations are taking time to wrap February by hosting a final event or gathering. One such event, held right here in Poughkeepsie, was a talk hosted by the [Mid Hudson Antislavery History Project](#).

On February 25, members of the group congregated at the Mid-Hudson Heritage center in downtown Poughkeepsie to attend a [lecture](#) by Fergus Bordewich, a noted writer. Over the course of his life, Bordewich has had articles published in the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Harper's*.

The focus on the lecture is that of the presence of the Underground Railroad within the Hudson Valley, a topic with a rich history.

Bordewich, as an independent historian, has accrued a large amount of information on the subject, which he later published in his 2005 book, *Bound for Canaan*. The book received excellent reviews, one of the American Booksellers Association's 'ten best nonfiction works' in 2005.

A light breakfast was available to all participants, offset by a suggested donation of five dollars at the door.

For those who wish to obtain further information about the Underground Railroad movement in the Mid-Hudson Valley, HRVI now hosts a complete report of such activities within the town of Poughkeepsie. [This report](#), along with [other anti-slavery resources](#), is now available on the Institute's website.

To those who wish to join the Mid-Hudson Antislavery Project, membership is free to all, and interested volunteers can [email](#) the foundation for more information. The Project was founded as a non-profit organization in 2006, and is currently funded by the Community Foundation of Dutchess County.

By Brian Rees

THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

A Journal of Regional Studies

Coming Spring 2012, a new issue of HRVR that focuses on a wide range of topics inside the Valley. Save this space for coming attractions and further details from inside the Institute.

Freedom's Gardener by Dr. Myra Young Armstead

Earlier this month, Bard College professor Dr. Myra Young Armstead released her third book, *Freedom's Gardener: James F. Brown, Horticulture, and the Hudson Valley in Antebellum America*.

The book focuses on the life of James F. Brown following his escape from slavery in Maryland in the Hudson Valley where he was employed as a gardener.

According to NYU Press' release on the book, it is built primarily from journal entries that Brown kept until two years before his death.

Thus, Armstead paints a portrait of life in the Hudson Valley during the antebellum period, as well as providing insight on life of an escaped slave in the North.

Ultimately Armstead's book "utilizes Brown's life to more deeply illuminate the concept of

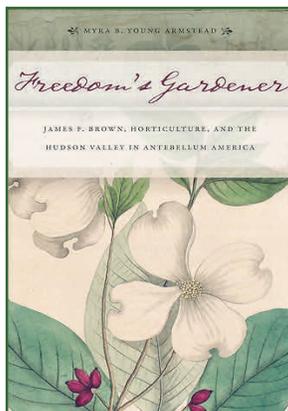


Photo courtesy: amazon.com

freedom as it developed in the United States in the early national and antebellum years."

Dr. Leslie M. Harris of Emory University states the book: "Brings to life James Brown, a self-possessed African American citizen of the pre-Civil War United States, [and] gives us a new understanding of the meaning of freedom in antebellum America."

Dr. James Grossman of the University of Chicago describes

the book as "far more than a book about a gardener" instead it: "Tells us about the opportunities and limits that framed the lives of African Americans in places like New York's Hudson Valley."

Professor Armstead has been a Professor of Historical Studies at Bard College since 1985. She holds a B.A from Cornell University, and her M.A. and Ph.D from University of Chicago where she specialized in U.S. social history, within emphasis on urban and African American history. She has released two other books, "Lord, Please Don't Take Me in August": African Americans in Newport and Saratoga Springs, 1870-1930, and *Mighty Change, Black Identity in the Hudson Valley*.

By Sean Vitti

Meet the Intern: Jennifer DeLisle

My name is Jenn DeLisle and I am currently a junior at Marist College. I'm from Windsor Locks, a small town located in the northern part of Connecticut. Here at Marist I am focusing my studies on accounting. Upon graduation I would love to work in an area of accounting called forensic accounting with the FBI.

At Marist I am involved with various clubs including the Student Programming Council, Beta Alpha Psi, and the Republicans club. I am also a member of the women's crew team here at Marist. When I'm not doing schoolwork or

practicing I love to take advantage of the Hudson River Valley and go for walks. I also enjoy a good workout at the gym.

As a member of HRVI I am working on various presentations. In the past, students have written papers about various topics. My job is to take those papers and create PowerPoint presentations that can be used by teachers. I am also working on brief biographies of successful businessmen and women from the area. Finally, I am working on a paper that

focuses on the business aspects of the construction of the USS Monitor, a ship that was used in the Civil War.



Contact Us

**The Hudson River Valley Institute
Marist College
3399 North Road
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601-1387**

Phone: 845-575-3052
Fax: 845-575-3176
E-mail: hvi@marist.edu

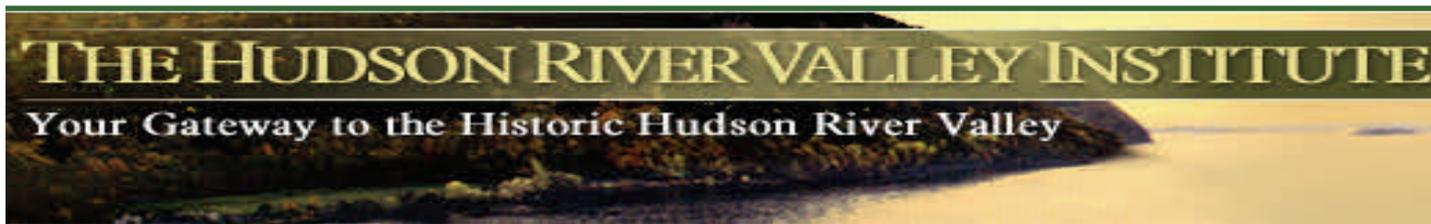
***The Hudson River Valley:
"The Landscape that Defined America"***

The Hudson River Valley is one of only 49 congressionally designated National Heritage Areas in the United States. As one of the most important regions in the United States, it is the fountainhead of a truly American identity. Recognizing the area's national value, Congress formed the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area in 1996 to recognize, preserve, protect, and interpret the nationally-significant history and resources of the valley for the benefit of the nation.

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

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

| www.hudsonrivervalley.org |



Staff

Dr. Thomas Wermuth, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty, Director, Hudson River Valley Institute
Dr. Colonel James M. Johnson (U.S. Army, ret.), Executive Director, Hudson River Valley Institute
Christopher Pryslopski, Program Director
Jason Schaaf, Educational Supervisor
Andy Villani, Coordinator

Contributors to the Issue:

Brian Rees, Editor/Intern

Sean Vitti, Intern

Andrew Mikolajczyk, Intern

Jason Schaaf, Staff Editor

Mary Kaltreider, Intern

Christina Ritter, Intern

Christopher Pryslopski, Staff

Jenn DeLisle, Intern

Andy Villani, Staff