

THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

A Journal of Regional Studies

MARIST



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HUDSON RIVER VALLEY INSTITUTE

KEY TO THE
NORTHERN COUNTRY



THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY
IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Edited by James M. Johnson, Christopher Pryslopski & Andrew Villani

KEY TO THE NORTHERN COUNTRY
The Hudson River Valley in the American Revolution

Edited by James M. Johnson, Christopher Pryslopski, & Andrew Villani

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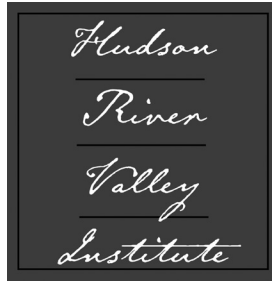
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From the Editors

This eye-opening issue reminds us how much has changed in the last century: D. W. Griffith's propagandist *Birth of a Nation* was released to commercial success in 1915; that same year, women lost their second attempt to win the right to vote in New York, and while not without their benefits, industrialization and urbanization were upsetting traditional rural livelihood and communities. However, our region has long been home to social reformers and freedom seekers. Two women who divided their time between Dutchess County and New York City sought to affect positive change in both locations. Our cover article recounts the role Eleanor Roosevelt tried to play in improving the lives of young farmers via the establishment of Val-Kill Industries. The next may introduce readers to Margaret Chanler Aldrich and her commitment to achieving women's suffrage. Also inside you'll find intriguing stories that shed welcome light on Catskill's role in the Great Migration, the enduring legacy of Troy's Great Fire of 1862, and the remains of a Revolutionary-era warship, along with book reviews and even a poem.



The Hudson River Valley Institute

The Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College is the academic arm of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. Its mission is to study and to 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 publication of *The Hudson River Valley Review* and the management of a dynamic digital library and leading regional portal site.

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The Stone Cottage at Val-Kill,
photograph by Bill Urbin,
courtesy of The Roosevelt-Vanderbilt
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Eleanor Roosevelt observing Emilio in the Val-Kill Industries workshop.
Photograph courtesy of the Richard Cain

Eleanor Roosevelt's "Unexpected Pleasure" in Business Ownership: Her Role in Val-Kill Industries

Cynthia Krom

It began with a picnic and ended with a charming retreat where one of the foremost women of the twentieth century entertained world leaders such as King George and Winston Churchill. In 1926, with a gift of land and partial financing from her husband, Eleanor Roosevelt entered into business with her friends Marion Dickerman, Nancy Cook, and Caroline O'Day in a small stone cottage on the Roosevelts' estate in Hyde Park, New York. This business, Val-Kill Industries, was "a furniture factory with a purpose."¹ Eleanor mentioned the company frequently in her "My Day" columns, used many of the factory's products in her own homes, and was one of Val-Kill Industries' best customers. Perhaps most remarkable is her singular experience with concurrent roles as both a small business owner and the wife of a sitting president.

The Val-Kill project was primarily intended to teach local farm youth a trade that could generate income in the off-season to induce them to stay in the community rather than succumbing to the enticing opportunities in New York City and other urban meccas. By the time she was forty, Eleanor had observed the evolution of the country from an agrarian population to an urban industrial economy. Commercial juggernauts dominated, and could throw their weight around to the benefit or harm of their employees, their customers, and their competitors. Eleanor was aware of the deplorable working and living conditions for low-wage factory employees, particularly the plight of working children, and concerned about the rise of big business. These quality-of-life issues—combined with what Eleanor learned about her Uncle Theodore Roosevelt's concerns over constrained natural resources and firsthand observations she made at her Hyde Park home—turned her attention to the decline of rural America and the flight of farm youth to urban living. The popular Country Life Movement, which advocated the re-energizing of rural society, and Eleanor's close personal and political ties to the Progressive Movement, helped shape her devotion to advocacy for the less fortunate and a desire to cultivate a rural community that offered happiness and fulfillment to the new generations. As a means to those ends, Val-Kill Industries was a social experiment that served as both a harbinger and an exemplar of the First Lady's interest in the FDR administration's subsistence homestead projects.

Additionally, Eleanor and her partners wanted to make quality reproductions of “Early American” furniture using traditional craftsmanship. The first few decades of the twentieth century saw a revival of interest in both the home fashion and ideology of the Colonial period, particularly through the popularity of the works of Wallace Nutting. At Val-Kill Industries, farm youth wouldn’t just be taught to make furniture; they would be trained in traditional cabinetry skills. Handcrafting furniture would provide meaningful work and a way to earn a wage beyond farming. Both the design and techniques would venerate the refinement and dignity of the past while facilitating the local economy’s transition to an uncertain future. Having gained much of her early understanding of the practical side of politics from the skilled tradesmen in labor unions, Val-Kill Industries served as a natural marriage of Eleanor Roosevelt’s love of craftsmanship and principles of economic opportunity. This combination was reflected again and again in her public service, most notably as she exerted influence over the Federal Arts Projects and handicraft projects of the New Deal.²

Born into a distinguished New York family of wealth and privilege, Anna Eleanor Roosevelt (called by her middle name) nonetheless had a childhood marked by anguish and tragedy. Her family life was one of “disappointment, alcoholism, and betrayal,”³ and the first volume of her autobiography dealt at length with her recollections of her childhood. In numerous speeches, articles, and broadcasts, Eleanor Roosevelt referred to her early experiences, and it would be difficult to underestimate the importance of her difficult childhood in shaping her into the formidable woman who became “Mother to a Generation” in addition to her own six offspring.

As a young adult, Eleanor committed herself to social reform. She volunteered as a teacher of calisthenics and “fancy dancing” to children at the College Settlement in New York’s Lower East Side, choosing to walk home through the Bowery observing men and women ravaged by alcohol abuse. She joined the Consumer’s League in 1903, and helped investigate and expose the dreadful conditions in which young girls and women worked in garment factories and department stores. With both a modest trust fund and, later, her own earnings from lectures, magazine articles, and appearances, Eleanor Roosevelt had the financial independence that enabled her to pursue her interests in social causes.

During her husband’s convalescence following his contraction of polio, Eleanor remained active in the women’s division of the Democratic State Committee in an effort to cultivate her husband’s return to politics. It was through those efforts that Eleanor cultivated her friendships with Caroline O’Day, Marion Dickerman, and Nancy Cook, who became frequent guests at the Springwood mansion in Hyde Park.

Across Route 9 from Springwood lay a large wooded property traversed by the Val-Kill brook. Eleanor and Franklin picnicked there in the early years of his paralysis, and Eleanor, Caroline, Marion, and Nancy envisioned a stone cottage near the stream. They talked often and vaguely about starting some kind of industry on the location, until finally FDR offered to “start the ball rolling.”⁴ He gave the women the plot of

land, had a road built up to the desired location, and assisted the architect with the traditional design of local stone. Franklin served as the contractor for the little Dutch colonial home, which came to be known as Val-Kill Cottage, and for an adjacent swimming pool in which he could exercise. Franklin was proud of this work, and especially proud that he "...took the contract myself and did it for \$12,000 and some odd dollars," a savings of \$3,000 over the lowest bid he had received from contractors.⁵

The Roosevelts were concerned that the farmers in Hyde Park were having difficulty holding onto their farms, and that their sons were leaving for the city because the strenuous farm work provided a meager return. Franklin and Eleanor had heard of a farming community in Vermont where woodworking supplemented farm income, and in 1926 Eleanor, Caroline, Marion, and Nancy decided their newly formed Val-Kill Industries would have a similar focus.

Nancy Cook was the creative force behind the project. She had been trained as a woodworker making artificial limbs during World War I. Eleanor described Cook as able "to do almost anything with her hands." Indeed, she was a talented potter, jeweler, photographer, and all-around craftswoman. It was Cook who suggested the manufacture of reproduction Early American furniture, and it was she who did the detailed technical drawings to be followed by the woodworkers.⁶ Not satisfied to "reproduce worm-eaten antiques," the women agreed to employ cabinetmaking techniques contemporary to the Early American period. Though the first part of the process would be done by machinery, the furniture would be largely handmade and hand-finished. In addition to the design work, Cook handled the day-to-day operations of the business, including pricing, recordkeeping, and managing the shop and workers.

Marion Dickerman and Caroline O'Day were not very active in the business. While it seems clear that both women contributed funds commensurate with their abilities and provided moral support, there are no records indicating any hands-on involvement. In many contemporaneous accounts of the business, Caroline O'Day is omitted from the tale, but is included in enough of the documents and photographs to make clear she was one of the owners.⁷ Marion was omnipresent at Val-Kill, but that is most likely reflective of her close personal relationship with Nancy Cook. Eleanor, Marion, and Nancy all lived at the cottage on a regular basis, and much of the furniture, crystal, pewter, and linens still at Val-Kill bear the initials E.M.N. for the three women.

Eleanor Roosevelt contributed a substantial amount of capital to the enterprise, but served in other roles as well. It was she who commandeered extensive advice and assistance from experts in the field, including Charles Cornelius, curator of furniture at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Morris Schwartz, noted expert in American furniture; and authorities from museums in Hartford and Chicago.⁸ She obtained permission to take detailed measurements to reproduce furniture in the collections of the Metropolitan and other museums, as well as items at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello.

Of course, it was Eleanor Roosevelt's name that generated considerable publicity for the project. Particularly after Franklin was elected governor of New York in

1928, newspapers, magazines, and industry journals featured articles about Val-Kill Industries. Large pieces were published in *Your Home*, the *Women's City Club of New York Quarterly*, *The Home Craftsman*, and the *Syracuse University Alumni News*. After FDR was elected president in 1933, the media floodgates opened. The *Kansas City Star* lauded the “constructive generosity” of Val-Kill Industries, a story picked up by more than a dozen other newspapers. That same year, major articles appeared in *House & Garden Magazine* and *Leisure*. Many of these articles were accompanied by photographs of Eleanor, in a smock, watching over a workman doing his job as though she were a floor supervisor on a project.⁹

Eleanor Roosevelt contributed more than her name to the project. She was in charge of promotion and sales. Eleanor wrote dozens of letters to her personal contacts—some of which were on Executive Mansion and White House stationery—suggesting they consider purchasing items from Val-Kill Industries. In at least one case, the personal letter was not met with a warm welcome. On May 5, 1930, Eleanor wrote to Mr. D.D. Streeter of Brooklyn on New York State Executive Mansion letterhead, inviting him to visit an exhibit of Val-Kill furniture pieces. Streeter was clearly offended, dashing back a letter excoriating her for “drag[ging] this state into a money grubbing scheme to sell furniture.” He went on to suggest, since the governor could not support her financially she should “divorce him and [find herself] another husband.” In a final burst of vitriol, Streeter pointed out that “Martha Washington never advertised any ‘furniture sales’ at Mount Vernon.” Eleanor responded immediately in a two-page letter, apparently in a bit of pique, pointing out that the furniture exhibit and sale was to be held in her personal residence in New York City and not at the Executive Mansion. She concluded her letter: “I do not see the slightest reason why you should criticize either my husband or myself for undertaking to carry on work which is open to any American citizen.”¹⁰

Streeter was not the only one who failed to appreciate Eleanor’s efforts to market furniture. While Val-Kill furniture could be seen at both the company’s Hyde Park headquarters and the New York City showroom of interior decorator Elsie de Wolfe, the majority of sales were made from the Roosevelts’ personal townhouse on East 65th Street in Manhattan. This home, only a few blocks from Central Park, was the base from which FDR worked as a partner in two law firms and as a vice-president with the Fidelity and Deposit Company of Maryland. The large second-floor dining room was used for the periodic furniture sales, with samples of an assortment of tables, chairs, and cabinets, as well as photographs and drawings of the full product line.¹¹

The *World Telegram* pointed out that during one exhibit and sale, the “President-Elect will have to stay in [his] mother’s house while his study is used as a showroom,” and that even portions of the mother’s home had been pressed into service as showroom space. Likewise, *The New Yorker* irascibly noted that the semi-annual Val-Kill furniture sale was “not terribly interesting,” and the furniture itself “seemed all right.” They scoffed at the idea of making the heirloom furniture, since “when you’re dead, you’re dead” and people are “not so keen about being remembered by their great-great-grandchildren.” The

majority of *The New Yorker* coverage was on the non-Val-Kill furnishings of the home, particularly a mounted deer head that appeared “as if he had been shot while smoking a cigar.”¹²

Eleanor Roosevelt was subjected to personal abuse for her business activities. During the campaign of 1934, Minnesota Senator Thomas Schall ridiculed her as “a price-gouging publicity hound,” complaining that her signature on the Val-Kill pieces drove the price to five times that of comparable items.

While Val-Kill Industries was initially conceived to teach rural youth a trade that could keep them home on the farm, it quickly became obvious that expert help would be needed. The factory started with one Italian master craftsman, Frank Landolfi, whom Eleanor met in New York. Following initial success, expert cabinetmakers from Italy and Norway who had settled in the area were recruited, and local apprentices eventually began to learn furniture making and finishing. With Nancy Cook serving as the designer and general manager, a wide variety of Early American furnishings emerged from the shop, occasionally marked with the names of Otto, Karl, Frank, or other craftsmen. Despite Senator Schall’s testy remarks, there were very few pieces stamped with Eleanor Roosevelt’s signature and date.¹³

The furniture made at Val-Kill was, as planned, created using traditional tools and techniques. Electric machinery was used for the initial rough cuts, but then the pieces were turned by hand, joined with mortise and tenon or hand-carved dovetails, and carefully hand-finished. Most items were made of hardwoods such as cherry, mahogany, and walnut. The Val-Kill catalog¹⁴ includes elaborate bedroom furnishings such as chests of drawers (priced at \$175 to \$250), bed frames (\$65 to \$110), nightstands (\$50), and even a stunning bonnet-top high boy (no price given). There are several pages of dining room tables (\$125 to \$160) and hutches, and many small tables and plant stands (priced under \$100 and marketed as wedding gifts).

In a move that would have surely raised the additional ire of letter-writer D.D. Streeter, Val-Kill Industries obtained wood from a part of the White House roof that



The Roosevelt’s home on East 65th Street in New York City, used periodically as a showroom for Val-Kill Industries’ furniture.

Photograph by author



Letter opener made by Val-Kill Industries from wood reclaimed from the roof of the White House. Photograph courtesy of the National Park Service

had been removed in 1927. They used that wood to produce “useful souvenirs” such as picture frames and letter openers, shamelessly marketing them with a brass tag detailing their lofty provenance.¹⁵

Conversely, items built by Val-Kill Industries were used to furnish the White House, though it is not entirely clear whether government funds were spent for those items. FDR himself designed a bookcase for use in his private quarters, and Eleanor ordered an extra-long four-poster bed for Franklin’s room in the White House. Frank Landolfa, Val-Kill’s master craftsman, made a Presidential Desk for FDR that was in use either at the White House or the Little White House in Warm Springs, Georgia. Val-Kill products also furnished the “old school room” at the Roosevelts’ Campobello retreat in New Brunswick, Canada. Furniture crafted by Val-Kill could be found at Henry Ford’s Dearborn Inn, and was purchased by the wives of notables such as Robert W. DeForest (President of the Metropolitan Museum of Art), William K. Vanderbilt (*de facto* head of the Vanderbilt family), and Frederick H. Osborn (eugenics advocate and future FDR appointee).¹⁶

Val-Kill Industries expanded its efforts in 1934, with the establishment of The Forge. Arnold Berge, one of the apprentice woodworkers, transitioned into metalsmithing. The Forge specialized in pewter reproductions of early American kitchenware such as tankards, porringers, and plates, but also manufactured with steel, brass, copper, and wrought iron. Wholesale prices ranged from \$1.35 for a hand-wrought pewter cup for cigarettes to a large pewter pitcher selling for \$16.50. A great many of the items were tobacco-related, including various cigarette boxes, ashtrays, matchboxes, a tobacco jar, and a copper “pipe-knocker” in addition to the cigarette cups. As with the furniture, the pewter goods were exhibited for sale at the Roosevelt townhouse in New York City. Merchandise from The Forge also was sold in a shop on Fifth Avenue, and Eleanor Roosevelt kept an eye on the merchandise to see that it was “well arranged and it looks very nice.”¹⁷

Mrs. Roosevelt purchased many of the products created at The Forge as gifts, including a number that were official White House presidential gifts. In particular,

on May 10, 1939, Eleanor ordered six matchboxes and eight other bowls and plates for “The Royalty.” “The Royalty” were England’s King George VI and his wife Queen Elizabeth. With Europe on the brink of war, the couple’s important visit marked the first time a reigning British Monarch had ever set foot on American soil. Other official orders placed with The Forge were for items marked with FDR’s profile and with the Presidential Seal, to be given as holiday gifts.¹⁸ In her autobiography, Eleanor observed; “I think I was one of the best customers the [furniture] shop had, because I bought various pieces of furniture as wedding presents and as gifts for other occasions.”¹⁹ Clearly, she was also one of the best customers of the metalworking shop.

During the early years of the Great Depression, Val-Kill’s investors became concerned about the problems of rural women. Eleanor had long been an advocate for “factory girls,” and sought better working conditions and opportunities for women workers. She was active with the Women’s Trade Union League and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, and sought creative ways to address unemployment. One summer Eleanor visited Biltmore, in Asheville, North Carolina, where she was given a tour of Biltmore Industries’ weaving plant. Originally started by the Roosevelts’ Hyde Park neighbors, George and Edith Vanderbilt, the weaving plant had been sold to Frank Seely



Val-Kill Industries’ pewter decorated with the Presidential Seal. Photograph courtesy of the National Park Service

in 1917 with the promise that it would continue the Vanderbilts’ educational features and support of the local economy.²⁰ Seeing Seely’s success at keeping twenty weavers busy for eleven months of the year, Eleanor initiated a homespun weaving program for rural women as part of the Val-Kill enterprise. Nellie Jo Johannessen (aka Johanson) was recruited to teach weaving, rug braiding, and rug hooking in an old “filling station” nearby that also had rooms being used as a supplemental guest house for the Springwood mansion.²¹

Other than a single bolt of fabric used to make FDR a three-piece suit, no formal records exist of the number of women involved with this project or the products produced. However, following a drizzly open-car visit to Dubuque, Iowa, Eleanor noted with pride her “homespun coat, woven in our Val-Kill shop, on which rain can fall a long while without making any impression.” By the spring of 1937, Eleanor felt that the quality of the homespun her shop produced was comparable to fine goods purchased in Ireland, Scotland, or Canada, and that the cottage industry would be able to produce a sufficient quantity to satisfy a steady market. She suggested that women should produce the fabric on farms during the winter months, but that inspection must be done in a central place. This way overhead could be kept low and more of the income would go

into paying the weavers. Remarkably, Eleanor seemed to think the only downside of this product was its durability, observing “at least two people should get good wear out of a piece of homespun before it is discarded!” This is particularly amusing because she noted that her grandmother made over her aunts’ garments for Eleanor to wear, and “I hated it!”²²

Despite the focus of the homespun business on providing employment for women, Eleanor approached the work as something available to both sexes. As with other projects she advocated during the Depression, such as the Arthurdale planned community in West Virginia, both boys and girls were encouraged to learn similar skills. Eleanor personally gave an educational tour of the Hyde Park weaving business to a group of young men from a National Youth Administration camp interested in making homespun.²³

In 1938, in the depths of the Great Depression, Val-Kill Industries opened a small showroom on Main Street in Hyde Park to display furniture, pewter, and woven articles. By that time, economic hardship had already taken its toll on the business. The faithful reproductions of museum pieces turned out by Val-Kill were consistent with the demands of the high-end market for furniture. In that sense, Val-Kill Industries’ goals were realized. However, the pieces were both elegant and expensive, which did not bode success in the era of massive unemployment and belt-tightening. Eleanor recognized that if craftsmen were honored with a living wage, handcrafted goods could never compete with new, factory-made items; they had to be thought of as works of art. While several articles covering the furniture factory mention that none of the workmen had been laid off, and both the craftsmen and the apprentices were being paid, the articles also note that the prices have been “lowered about one-third from the usual charge” and that many items would be offered at cost.²⁴

However, the primary purpose of the Val-Kill project as an experiment to teach the local rural youth a trade to impede urban flight was not achieved. The factory did provide employment for up to twenty-two men and boys at a time, paying them as much as fifteen dollars per week while they learned the trade, a good wage during the Depression. But this training backfired. In her autobiography, Eleanor Roosevelt observed:

We found in our shop that as soon as a young man learned a trade in which he could make more money than he could on a farm he did not care enough about farm life to want to give up for the summer the good wages and regular hours he enjoyed in his trade.... [A]s soon as work in a factory or at a trade was available, the young men sought the easier life with larger financial return. In this they were usually urged on by their wives.... [G]ood wages still take ambitious boys to the cities.²⁵

While both the Roosevelts and the master craftsmen took pride in the number of young men trained at Val-Kill who were able to land positions in furniture factories, the objective of keeping youth in the rural community clearly was not accomplished, and the factory workforce contracted to only the master craftsmen. As Frank Landolf noted, “Teaching boys a trade didn’t work out, so we just made furniture.” In the payroll

records for 1938, only six employees remained, all of whom were skilled craftsmen.²⁶

From a financial standpoint, the investment in Val-Kill was fruitless. In her biography, Eleanor observed: "I never made any money out of this furniture-making venture." In a defense of her Val-Kill activities she also claimed, "We have never... had one cent of interest on our investment." A study of her individual income tax returns during the relevant time period support that claim.²⁷ Marion Dickerman, who lived at Val-Kill with her partner Nancy Cook, concurred with this lack of financial success, noting in her journal; "No one received any salary and whatever profit was made went in to further development." Ultimately, the profitability of the Val-Kill Factory must remain a matter of speculation, since Nancy Cook burned nearly all the records prior to her death.

The furniture factory was transferred to the ownership of one of the master woodworkers, Otto Berg, in May 1938. The Forge continued in operation until at least 1941 under the supervision of Arnold Berge. When and whether it formally transferred ownership to Berge is unknown, though both personal and business-related invoices were addressed to his name at The Forge. The weaving loom and materials were given to Nellie Johannessen in January 1939, and it is believed the weaving operations had rested with her individually before that.²⁸

Various statements from the principals and their associates differ in the rationale for the dissolution of Val-Kill Industries. Whether due to generosity to the craftsmen, lack of business success, or health and time factors, the dissolution of the furniture business appears to have been somewhat acrimonious. A flurry of telegrams to Eleanor Roosevelt from Harry Hooker, a family friend and attorney, points to tense negotiations. A lengthy agreement regarding the Cook/Dickerman tenancy at the Val-Kill property and the dissolution of the partnership was signed on November 9, 1938,²⁹ following which Cook sent a letter to Eleanor apologizing for acting "like a box of dynamite" and saying unkind things "as a defense to cover up my real feelings."³⁰

Eleanor Roosevelt's involvement in the Val-Kill Industries project is significant in that it illuminates her perspective on the economic organization and structure of society. She believed strongly in home industry as an important part of rural life, and believed that Americans should embrace the "more simple ideals and more simple ways of living" that were virtues of the early pioneers. She voiced concern about machines and mass production, and asked, "are we happier and better off today because of them?" She wanted workers to have a sense of having made "something beautiful." These expressions are consistent with her unwavering support of the Arthurdale experimental community, her encouragement of a "back to the land" vision through the Subsistence Homestead Division of the National Recovery Act (Section 208, Title II), and her particular interests in the WPA arts and handicrafts projects. Eleanor noted Franklin's disappointment in the rural small industry experiment, both at Val-Kill and on a larger national scale. She commented that he "felt regret" that the idea was proven impractical, but that he "hoped that some day it might work out."³¹

Today, the National Park Service operates Eleanor Roosevelt's home, Val-Kill,

and it is still filled with furniture from Val-Kill Industries and objets d'art from The Forge. Val-Kill Industries illustrates Eleanor as a Progressivist, a philanthropist, an optimist, and a woman greatly concerned about the welfare of others. Her role in the development and running of this small business, particularly when combined with the influence she bore as the wife of both a governor and president, positioned Eleanor as “the pivotal figure in transforming a national aesthetic movement into effective government programs.”³²

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Endnotes

1. “A Famous Furniture Factory,” *Milk Producers Review* (April 1934): 9-11. While the formal name of the company was Val-Kill Industries, in various citations you see it referred to as the Val-Kill Shop, the Hyde Park Village Craftsman, or Roosevelt Industries.
2. For a wonderful, detailed history of Val-Kill Industries, see the article by Frank Futral, “Val-Kill Industries: A History,” *The Hudson River Valley Review* 26 (2009): 21-39. For an overview of Eleanor’s interest in the homestead projects, see James R. Kearney’s book *Anna Eleanor Roosevelt: The Evolution of a Reformer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968). Brigid O’Farrell provides background material on Eleanor’s exposure to trade unions in *She Was One of Us: Eleanor Roosevelt and the American Worker* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).
3. Blanche Wiesen Cook’s masterful biographies *Eleanor Roosevelt: Volume One 1884-1933* (New York: Viking, 1992) and *Eleanor Roosevelt: Volume Two 1933-1938* (New York: Viking, 1999) provided information for this article, including quotes extracted from pages 38 and 135 of Vol. I, and 147 and xxx of Vol. II. Eleanor Roosevelt’s first autobiography *This is My Story* (New York: Garden City Publishing Co, 1939) is also a source for details contained herein.
4. Frieda Wyandt, “A Governor’s Wife at Work,” *Your Home* (September, 1929), 11-13, 68-69.
5. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *Memorandum for M.L.S.* Personal correspondence dated February 23, 1942. Folder 60, Financial Matters; Papers pertaining to family, business, and personal affairs, 1882-1945, Franklin D. Roosevelt; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
6. Nancy Cook’s *Technical Drawings for Val-Kill Industries Products*, undated but probably 1926 and 1927, may be found at Folder: Dickerman, Marion; Papers of Marion Dickerman, 1918-1975 and undated, Box 12: Val-Kill Furniture (Scrapbook); Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York. Marion Dickerman’s personal correspondence/journal (undated) describing *The Val-Kill Industries: Furniture—Pewter—Homespun* is available at Folder: Dickerman, Marion; Papers of Marion Dickerman, 1918-1975 and undated, container 6; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York. Page 2.
7. For instance, in an article written for *Motordom* magazine in March 1929, entitled “Bringing Back Artistic Furniture of the 17th Century.”
8. A. Eleanor Roosevelt, “Adventures with Early American Furniture,” *House & Garden Magazine* (February, 1934), 21-23.
9. Wyandt, “A Governor’s Wife at Work.” Mrs. Daniel (Caroline) O’Day, “Copying Old Furniture,” *Women’s City Club of New York Quarterly*, October 1928, 17-19. “A Governor’s Wife and Her Workshop,” *The Home Craftsman*, July-August 1932, 82-93. “The Art of Creating Heirlooms,” *Syracuse University Alumni News*, September 1930, 5-7. A. B. MacDonald, “Constructive Generosity Endears the Roosevelts to Hyde Park Neighbors,” *The Kansas City Star*, August 19, 1934; Sydney Greenbie, “Whither, Eleanor Roosevelt? A refuge from speed and monotony—Val-Kill,” *Leisure: The Magazine of a Thousand Diversions*, May 1934, 6-9.
10. This exchange may be found in personal correspondence between Eleanor and D.D. Streeter from May 5-12, 1930, located at: Folder 60, Financial Matters; Papers pertaining to family, business, and personal affairs, 1882-1945, Franklin D. Roosevelt; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

11. Elsie de Wolfe's showroom is mentioned by Joseph B. Platt in *Delineator Magazine*, November 1933. Deborah S. Gardner provides an historical context for the townhouse in *Roosevelt House at Hunter College: the story of Franklin and Eleanor's New York City Home* (New York: Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History and Hunter College, 2009).
12. "Furniture Exhibit Crowds Roosevelt Out of His Home, *World Telegram*, December 6, 1932, page unknown. "Just Furniture," *The New Yorker*, December 17, 1932, 18.
13. Richard R. Cain, last modified 2008, <http://val-kill.com/history>.
14. Val-Kill Furniture, Merchandise catalog, undated. Microfilm collection, Box 0, Val-Kill Furniture Catalog; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
15. Richard R. Cain, *Images of America: Eleanor Roosevelt's Valkill* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2002).
16. Personal correspondence from FDR's personal secretary Missy LeHand to Nancy Cook at Val-Kill Industries ordering a bookcase for the White House dated March 3, 1934, may be found in: Folder 60, Financial Matters; Papers pertaining to family, business, and personal affairs, 1882-1945, Franklin D. Roosevelt; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York. Information about the bed for the White House was obtained from Marion Dickerman's personal journal. The story of the Presidential desk was related by LaClaire Wood in an undated article from *The Poughkeepsie Journal*, "In his hands, beauty speaks," 2A-2B. Eleanor wrote about the furnishings for Campobello in *My Day* (July 24, 1936). This and all other *My Day* columns are available at The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project at The George Washington University, Washington, D.C. Notable customers were identified in "Roosevelt home to show furniture," *New York Times*, November 15, 1931, N4.
17. A Merchandise catalog (undated) for The Forge is at Folder 60, Financial Matters; Papers pertaining to family, business, and personal affairs, 1882-1945, Franklin D. Roosevelt; and a Wholesale Price List F.O.B. Hyde Park (July 1938) is at Folder: Dickerman, Marion; Papers of Marion Dickerman, 1918-1975 and undated, Box 12, both located in Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York. Eleanor wrote about the metal goods in *My Day* (December 7, 1937).
18. Documentation for these gifts may be found in The Forge, Shipping forms, (February 24, 1938; May 31, 1939; and December 7, 1939). Folder 60, Financial Matters; Papers pertaining to family, business, and personal affairs, 1882-1945, Franklin D. Roosevelt; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
19. A. E. Roosevelt. *This is My Story*, 35.
20. *History of Biltmore Industries and Grovewood Gallery*. <http://www.grovewood.com/about-us/history>.
21. In her personal journal (p. 4), Dickerman described Eleanor's experience at Biltmore. Bess Furman related the story of the homespun project in "Home is Where Hyde Park Is," *The Democratic Digest*, July 1938.
22. Quotes are extracted from *My Day* (October 10, 1936 and April 5, 1937).
23. *My Day* (September 3, 1940).
24. "Roosevelt home to show furniture," *New York Times*, November 15, 1931, N4. Also "Val Kill furniture shown: Copies of American antiques on sale at Roosevelt town house," *New York Times*, November 17, 1931, 15.
25. A.E. Roosevelt, *This is My Story*, 34-35.
26. Pay and employment information were obtained from A. B. MacDonald, "Constructive Generosity Endears the Roosevelts to Hyde Park Neighbors," *The Kansas City Star*, August 19, 1934, 9; and Val-Kill Industries, Pay records and checkbook (March 1938). Folder 60, Financial Matters; Papers pertaining to family, business, and personal affairs, 1882-1945, Franklin D. Roosevelt; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York. The Landolfi quote is from Wood, "In his hands, beauty speaks."
27. A. Eleanor Roosevelt, Individual income tax returns (1926-1945). Folder 54, Income Tax Returns; Papers pertaining to family, business, and personal affairs, 1882-1945, Franklin D. Roosevelt; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
28. The settlement of the furniture factory is documented in a press release regarding the transfer of ownership of Val-Kill Furniture to Otto Berg (May 14, 1938). Folder: Dickerman, Marion; Papers of Marion Dickerman, 1918-1975 and undated, Box 12. Berge's continued involvement with The Forge

is supported by invoices received from local merchants (August 1940-November 1941). Folder: Berge, Arnold—Craftsman at Val-Kill Industries, Box 1. Memos, without attribution, regarding inventory “at Nellie’s,” dated January, 1939, and undated, suggest the outcome of the weaving operation. Folder 60, Financial Matters; Papers pertaining to family, business, and personal affairs, 1882-1945, Franklin D. Roosevelt. All at Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

29. “Agreement between Nancy Cook, Marion Dickerman and Anna Eleanor Roosevelt” (November 9, 1938). Folder: Roosevelt, Franklin D.: Estate: Val-Kill Property Leases, Collection: O’Connor and Farber Box 13; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
30. Western Union telegrams from Harry Hooker to Eleanor Roosevelt (October 26 & 27, 1938), and to President Roosevelt (November 12, 1938). The intercourse between Nancy Cook and the Roosevelts may be found at “Agreement between Nancy Cook, Marion Dickerman and Anna Eleanor Roosevelt” (November 9, 1938). Folder: Roosevelt, Franklin D.: Estate: Val-Kill Property Leases, Collection: O’Connor and Farber Box 13; and Nancy Cook, Personal correspondence to Eleanor Roosevelt (November 14, 1938). Folder 60, Financial Matters; Papers pertaining to family, business, and personal affairs, 1882-1945, Franklin D. Roosevelt; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
31. Quotes from Eleanor Roosevelt from “Economic Readjustments Necessary,” *Democratic Bulletin*, VII, August 1932, 3-5; “Mrs. Roosevelt plans furniture exhibit,” *New York Times*, November 28, 1929, 4; and *This is My Story*.
32. Futral, “Val-Kill Industries: A History,” 36.

City and Country: Margaret Chanler Aldrich and the Space In-Between

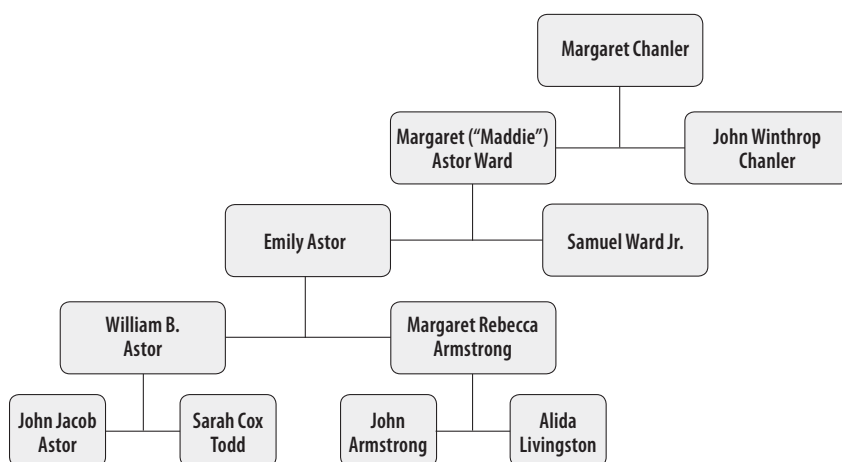
Lauren C. Santangelo

Only by grafting an urban/rural split onto the Astor family genealogy could the *New York Post* make sense of Rokeby's twenty-first century condition. The once-gleaming Astor estate in Barrytown (Red Hook), New York, cherished by William B. Astor's great-granddaughter, Margaret Chanler Aldrich (née Livingston Chanler), had deteriorated severely: chipping paint, leaks, and water damage stood side-by-side with the Astor china and grand pianos. A nineteenth-century divide between Astors in the city and those in the country trickled down to the twenty-first century, according to the *Post*, and explained Rokeby's present state. While those in the "city branch" (including Brooke Astor) thrived, Margaret Chanler Aldrich's heirs in the "country" struggled, the newspaper concluded.¹ In its drive to understand the family's changing fortune at Rokeby, the *Post* reified a popular trope.

William Cronon's work on Chicago and its hinterlands has done much to problematize the stark urban/rural divide presented in the newspaper's report, a divide that also permeates much of the scholarly literature.² In his germinal *Nature's Metropolis*, Cronon astutely illuminated the "elaborate and intimate linkages between city and country" by analyzing commodity flows.³ Margaret Chanler Aldrich's experiences in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era demonstrate how individuals, too, were responsible for bringing together rural and urban landscapes, while shifting our attention from Chicago to the Hudson River Valley.

Both landscapes influenced the Astor heir. At Rokeby, the young Margaret experienced a degree of freedom outside the stifling regime of social etiquette and rituals that defined elite living in New York City. However, as she grew older the pressure to participate in New York City's social world increased and she gracefully learned to navigate its sometimes-treacherous waters. By century's end, she began to channel both her country confidence and burgeoning city poise into a reform agenda, immersing herself in Gotham's vibrant activist community. Her wealth helped her build a symbiotic relationship between reform campaigns in Manhattan and in the Hudson River Valley, most clearly in terms of the suffrage movement. While only one woman's experience, studying Margaret Chanler Aldrich's life illuminates the dynamic intersections of space, gender, class, and political culture at the turn of the century.⁴

Born in the family's Madison Avenue home in 1870, Margaret Chanler was welcomed by a world of wealth and luxury.⁵ Her paternal grandfather was part of the South Carolina clergy; John C. Calhoun attended his church. Her father, John Winthrop Chanler, went to Columbia College, participated in the Civil War, and served in Congress. Her mother, Margaret ("Maddie") Astor Ward Chanler, was a scion of the Astor family: her great-grandfather was John Jacob Astor and her grandfather William B. Astor. Together, John and Maddie made an impressive couple. And thanks to their combined family trees, their ten children could claim family connections with the Delanos, Beekmans, Livingstons, and even the Winthrops of Massachusetts.⁶ This lineage made Margaret and her siblings virtually American royalty.



A Selection of Margaret Chanler's Ancestors⁷

In addition to their Madison Avenue home, Margaret's parents possessed an estate in the Hudson River Valley. Such properties served as places for elite families, like the Goulds and Rockefellers as well as the Astors, "to escape from [Manhattan's] pressure and stress" and enjoy nature. A "velvet ribbon of estates," one scholar has written, dotted the Hudson's shores by the turn of the century.⁸ Margaret's great-great-grandfather, John Armstrong, started constructing the country home in Barrytown in the early 1810s, and later sold it to the Astors, his son-in-law's family. Margaret's mother inherited Rokeby from William B. Astor. However, she did not have much time to enjoy it. Only weeks after taking control of the property, Maddie died at age thirty-seven.⁹

Maddie bequeathed Rokeby to her children, so at the age of five Margaret became a partial owner of a Hudson River Valley estate. John quickly moved his mourning family to Rokeby after his wife's untimely death. However, the stability he might have hoped to find there for his children proved elusive. Two years after they lost their mother, Margaret and her siblings devastatingly lost their father. Rather than caus-



Margaret and a young niece at Rokeby. Courtesy of Rokeby Collection

ing further disruption in the family, the children's guardians and trustees, including William Waldorf Astor and Laura Astor Delano, allowed the young orphans to remain at Rokeby. A cousin agreed to come from South Carolina to raise the children, including seven-year-old Margaret.¹⁰

Rokeby then remained in the foreground during Margaret's childhood; New York City sat securely in the background. In fact, her memoirs feature one full page and four half-page photographs of the estate, as she fondly remembered the music, discussion, and literature shared there. Tellingly, they contain no photographs of her Manhattan residences. Margaret spent most of her childhood winters at Rokeby, embracing the lively atmosphere and romping around with her beloved pets.¹¹ The staff responsible for Rokeby's daily functioning influenced young Margaret. A nurse, a formerly enslaved woman, reportedly instructed her how to walk like a member of an elite family. On another occasion, a Rokeby butler borrowed money from the siblings and never repaid it, resulting in Margaret's "lifelong mistrust of male servants."¹² Despite this, she seemed fond of Rokeby's employees. Before her marriage, Margaret made sure to introduce her fiancé to the estate's servants and even purchased silk dresses for all the female servants.¹³

Life at Rokeby helped liberate Margaret from some of the pressure and judgment her urban, female peers experienced. Since social norms demanded that women highlight their husbands' and/or fathers' wealth through their behavior, this scrutiny could be

both intense and consequential. Etiquette books outlined how proper ladies should do everything from call on one another to interact on the streets, while informal gossip channels within the elite world quickly spread rumors about a woman thought to have violated these codes. If that was not enough, news of socialites' doings and misdoings fascinated New Yorkers. Some even waited outside fashionable venues to catch sight of the elite world, while others devoured newspaper columns detailing haute scandals.¹⁴ At Rokeby, in contrast, the animals roaming through the house and fierce fights between siblings made decorum difficult to maintain.¹⁵ This freedom shocked some guests. When the granddaughters of Maria Louisa Kissam Vanderbilt visited, a discussion about the price of a horse left them stunned. Their grandmother had "forbidden" them from conversing about such *déclassé* topics as money.¹⁶

Rokeby sheltered Margaret, but in so doing it failed to provide her with experience in navigating New York City's highbrow culture. In one case, she remembered dining with an uncle in Manhattan and relishing the splendor that surrounded her. Aping the etiquette she saw, Margaret ended the night by insisting that the footmen bow as she left in her carriage. When her nurse relayed this behavior to her siblings at Rokeby, they "suffered agonies of mortification," Margaret recalled as an adult, and even began teasing her by bowing as she passed. Life at the estate, she wrote in her memoirs, "did not go for showing off."¹⁷ Her young age likely made this behavior seem more innocent than ignorant, but as she grew older the cost of violating New York's latest social customs increased. In another case, she recalled attending a ball at the Vanderbilts' Fifth Avenue mansion with her family—who she self-deprecatingly referred to as "rustics" in her retelling. Her discomfort must have deepened when one attendee meanly announced that Margaret's outfit would make for a nice chair fabric!¹⁸ On one hand, Rokeby freed the young woman from the daily onslaught of rituals demanded of socialites. On the other, her distance from social customs and fads could make her appear provincial.

As she aged, New York City's gravitational force grew stronger and the expectations on her to represent the family's status increased. Margaret readily accepted this. Her great aunt, Caroline Astor, society's reigning and self-appointed matriarch, worked to eliminate the "countrified" ways of Margaret and her sisters.¹⁹ Her *début* in 1891 underscores New York's growing importance in her life. "The *début*," scholar Maureen E. Montgomery explains, "constituted the first formal appearance in public of a young woman and denoted her sexual maturity and availability for marriage."²⁰ With the family's reputation at stake, it is no surprise that Margaret (along with her sister, Alida) debuted in Manhattan, not at Rokeby. The Chanlers could not expect the sort of individuals they hoped would attend the unveiling to travel up to Barrytown; close friends sometimes even found it difficult to make that trip.²¹ The decision paid off: 500 guests, including Caroline Astor and Bradley Martin, crowded the Chanlers' Murray Hill residence.²² Margaret was acclimating to the rigid codes of class and gender she confronted in Manhattan as a young woman, after years of experiencing greater

freedom and building confidence at Rokeby. She was beginning “to feel at home in the city.”²³ Six years later, Margaret moved to the Upper West Side, escaping Fifth Avenue just as it shifted from an elite residential area to a commercial district.²⁴

Even with her new Upper West Side home and her social responsibilities in Manhattan, Margaret frequently returned to Rokeby.²⁵ Her wealth made it possible to travel between New York and Red Hook, but it was her love of the estate that actually convinced her to make the trip. In the early 1890s, she and her two sisters willingly surrendered Manhattan properties to their brothers in return for ownership of Rokeby.²⁶ Margaret then convinced her sisters to give up their shares, leaving her the estate’s sole owner by century’s end.²⁷

Manhattan offered less privacy and relaxation than Rokeby, but it also introduced Margaret to new ideas and crusades. Exposés like Jacob Riis’s *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) made the corruption, suffering, and crime in the metropolis particularly visible at the turn of the century. And progressive men and women mobilized to combat the devastation wrought by industrial capitalism.²⁸ For an elite woman, New York City then was more than a stifling space brimming with social-etiquette demands—ones that Margaret gracefully learned to manage as she became older. Life in Progressive Era Manhattan also intimately exposed her to issues and concerns she would battle for the rest of her life and provided her with a platform from which to do so. It was in Gotham that she developed her identity as a political and social reformer in the waning years of the nineteenth century.²⁹ She would bring these lessons back with her to Rokeby in the early twentieth century. The socialite first substantially participated in reform work in 1894, combining her country confidence and city poise to join in what one newspaper labeled a “suffrage tidal wave.”³⁰

The woman’s rights movement was not new to Gotham. The New York City League for Woman Suffrage had organized in 1870 and spent the succeeding decades unsuccessfully demanding enfranchisement by holding meetings, drafting arguments, and soliciting signatures for petitions. Suffragists discovered deep-seated apathy among most New Yorkers. Only infrequently did activists receive detailed newspaper coverage, in one case after holding a protest at the Statue of Liberty during its unveiling in 1886. Despite these difficulties, leaders considered the 1894 New York State Constitutional Convention a potential opportunity to drive forward their campaign and convince delegates to amend the state Constitution. These long-time advocates gained unprecedented momentum from the conversion to the cause of affluent Manhattan women like Margaret, Laura Spelman Rockefeller, and Margaret Olivia Sage. Suddenly, the press willingly provided daily accounts of suffrage gatherings.³¹

New York City suffragists could not take much credit for Margaret’s conversion—in fact, she considered them “poor organizers.”³² Her friends and family (although she readily admitted that her father would have opposed the vote for women) were largely responsible.³³ Visiting London in 1893 for her brother’s wedding, she became friendly with Millicent Fawcett, an advocate of enfranchisement.³⁴ Meanwhile, back home the

Chanler family developed a relationship with an outspoken woman's rights supporter, Dr. W. S. Rainsford. Members of the Chanler clan even went on a hunting trip with him and attended his church in Stuyvesant Square.³⁵ Margaret also was close with the eminent Choates. While having dinner with the family one night, Joseph H. Choate, president of the upcoming state convention, asked what she thought of suffrage. "I replied," Margaret remembered saying, "that being a taxpayer it [the ballot] seemed to me reasonable."³⁶

Choate, Rainsford, and Fawcett might have made Margaret more aware of gender injustices, but it was her great-aunt, Julia Ward Howe, who helped her translate this awareness into action. Sister of Margaret's maternal grandfather, this celebrated reformer and author (best known for her "Battle Hymn of the Republic") was active in both the woman's club movement and suffrage crusade.³⁷ By 1897, the Boston-based, wealthy Howe had become so prominent that one newspaper explained, "Of Mrs. Howe, nothing need be said. Whether viewed as a woman of refinement, a broad student of the world's progress, a scholar, a gracious and charming society woman, her life and history are known to all."³⁸ Even with her own five children, Howe exercised a maternal influence over Margaret.³⁹ While traveling in South Asia, the niece detailed her adventures to her aunt. "I have thought of you very constantly," the young woman wrote, adding that she tried to view some of the sights through the eyes of her "darling Aunt Julia."⁴⁰

After her dinner with the Choates, Margaret naturally turned for support to her Aunt Julia. Following Howe's advice, the socialite attended the suffrage convention scheduled for Washington, D.C., later that year, and even talked with women who opposed the ballot to hear their side of the controversial issue. None of these anti-suffragists persuaded her. And Margaret quickly became involved with the society suffrage scene, speaking in parlors and drawing rooms across the city.⁴¹ She even wrote an internal memorandum for the campaign, explaining how long-term activists and newly converted socialites should collaborate.⁴² In Dutchess County, her wealth would have made her conspicuous amongst a tiny cohort of suffragists.⁴³ In New York City, she could join a reform community that included other elite activists, helping to shield her from individual scrutiny.

When the delegates at the New York State Constitutional Convention allowed Manhattan suffragists to address them in the summer of 1894, Margaret was one of four chosen to represent the campaign. From the limited records available, her speech was well received. In it, she explained that she could not properly influence the world around her without the ballot and claimed that her disfranchised position demoted her to a mere lobbyist.⁴⁴ Even with the participation of elite women like Margaret, the Constitutional Convention's Suffrage Committee ultimately reported adversely on the proposal. When the general convention discussed the committee's negative report in mid-August, ninety-seven delegates voted in agreement with it, while only fifty-eight voted in favor of suffrage.⁴⁵ Regardless of these dismal results, Margaret struck an optimistic tone. For her, the convention signaled "enormous progress" since women

had converted some of the delegates.⁴⁶ The convention also marked the first milestone in her reform journey, one initially set securely in the city, where she was surrounded by other elite women who made Manhattan their home.

Margaret remained involved in the movement in the following years, but the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898 led her to a new purpose and temporarily pulled her away from the Empire State. The United States became entangled in the conflict between Spain and Cuba after the American battleship, the *Maine*, exploded in Havana Harbor. Congress declared war on Spain, men mobilized to fight, and some women, including Margaret, joined the Red Cross.⁴⁷ In doing so, she tapped into women's traditional responsibility to nurture and care for others at the precise moment that professionalization of nursing was raising questions about volunteers' skills. With the exception of a brief hospital initiation with the Red Cross, the elite reformer had no formal training in nursing; Margaret would not have possessed the necessary credentials to become a registered nurse when New York State established that designation in 1903.⁴⁸ As a result, her official position upon arriving in the Caribbean remained amorphous. *The New York Press* called Margaret a "nurses' assistant" and spent more time describing her clothing than her actual duties.⁴⁹ Another woman in a similar position reported being told that her role would be "menial in nature," limited to cooking and cleaning.⁵⁰ Margaret keenly felt the impact of professionalization. Alluding to the degrees of college-educated women, she noted sarcastically that a "lifetime of experience is rated nothing in comparison with some sacred initial letters."⁵¹

Despite her ambivalent relationship to professionalization, Margaret became a leader in the successful charge to create an Army Nurse Corps. To refute the claim that nurses traveled to the Philippines for pleasure, and not to provide medical aid, during the Philippine-American War (1899-1902), Margaret visited Manila in the early twentieth century and afterward sailed to Nagasaki and Peking to try to provide help during the Boxer Rebellion.⁵² A letter Margaret sent to U.S. Secretary of War Elihu Root criticizing the quality of hospitals in the Philippines found its way into newspapers. It created a scandal, with some questioning her propriety.⁵³ *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* editorialized that due to her affluence, Margaret had no idea military hospitals were for "cure, not coddling" and that there was no need for "fine linen sheets, and flowers on the table." Apparently ignoring all of the Red Cross volunteer's earlier work in the Caribbean, the journalist wrote, "A woman born to wealth, accustomed to ease and luxury, ignorant of the seamy side of life is naturally perturbed at the sight of suffering. It makes her nervous and she exaggerates its intensity."⁵⁴ At the same time that Margaret's elite status helped open doors and provided a means for her to assist others financially, it made her especially vulnerable to criticism and accusations of class-based ignorance.

Throughout this intense work, Rokeby remained on Margaret's mind. Even in the midst of the Boxer Rebellion, she still found time to acquire a bronze fountain for the estate.⁵⁵ Her sister joked to Rokeby's staff that while she might not know Margaret's exact whereabouts, she thought it "probable that she is sitting on the wall at Peking,

telling Mr. Conger and General Waldersee how far superior the view of the Hudson and Catskills from Barrytown is to anything she has seen on her travels.”⁵⁶

Margaret returned from these wartime experiences with new confidence and management skills, on which she capitalized. She became even more involved in the urban reform campaigns that continued to dominate New York’s political and social landscapes. Privately, she sent money to individuals in economic distress.⁵⁷ Publicly, she took charge of the Woman’s Municipal League. The league traced itself back to 1894, when Josephine Shaw Lowell mobilized women to rid the city of corruption by turning out the Tammany Hall political machine. Margaret replaced Lowell as president by 1903.⁵⁸ In that year, she and the Municipal League unsuccessfully campaigned for reform mayoral candidate Seth Low, while her own brother actively supported Tammany Hall’s candidate. *The New York Herald*, always desperate for gossip, entitled a column “Chanlers Paired Off.” “Miss Chanler, who is her brother’s equal in ability,” the column commented, “will work, speak and spend money to elect Mr. Low. Her brother can vote; she cannot. Otherwise the Chanler family seems to be paired off evenly.”⁵⁹ Municipal housekeeping, the doctrine that instructed women to apply their domestic skills to the world outside their homes, fueled Margaret’s approach. Mobilizing this rhetoric, she reminded women that there was nothing untoward in learning about and trying to influence city politics; their interest stemmed from concern for their families.⁶⁰

Exposure to and participation in Gotham’s various crusades helped shape Margaret’s reform identity, but she was a reformer entrenched in a particular class milieu. In one case, she celebrated her brother’s “chivalry” when he told a stenographer that he “could not be accountable for the men” who came to county headquarters during his campaign for sheriff. Robert Chanler had warned the employee that she was “too young and too pretty” to work there.⁶¹ It never seemed to cross Margaret’s mind that it might be difficult for the stenographer to find another job and that she should protest the discrimination that her brother perpetuated. In another instance, she pushed for the Finch Bill to help regulate employment agencies and prevent unscrupulous men from opening them to take advantage of young women.⁶² While Margaret did make the case that this bill would protect naïve women, she also worried about families who might hire help from these questionable agencies. The vulnerable women needing jobs were in just as much danger as the well-off families seeking domestic servants from employment agencies, she suggested.⁶³ As a woman with three servants in her Manhattan residence alone, she viewed this debate from a particular angle.⁶⁴

At other moments, Caroline Astor’s great-niece directly attacked the class privilege that occasionally made itself visible in her own arguments. A few days before Christmas in 1911, Margaret’s poignant poem “The Week Before Christmas” appeared in the *New York Times*. In it, an “angry old” Santa Claus comes down a socialite’s chimney to chastise her for the terrible working conditions in department stores that her purchases enable. Challenging her ilk’s superficial concern for working-class women, she wrote: “[Y]our mean little checks—\$5 here and \$10 there / For the sweated you doom

to a hospital's care / Are the devil's own credit, it's he alone knows / The lives that are ruined by shops that won't close." Besides describing the exploitation of women in the department stores, Margaret alluded to the temptations to which salesclerks succumbed when they left work late at night—the women might accept a “treat” from men, a reference to men buying women a desired item with the expectation of sexual return. “Then you open a Rescue and think it's all right,” she criticized. “I tell you conditions don't change for committees— / It will take every woman in each of your cities; / Good hours! good wages! a small dividend / To the octopus owner.”⁶⁵ Like many elite reformers in New York City, Margaret fought the very class systems and exploitations from which she also benefited.

While participating in the urban reform movement, she frequently returned to Rokeby. It was there that she married the forty-three-year-old *New York Times* music critic, Richard Aldrich, in October 1906.⁶⁶ Whereas Manhattan served as the scene for the opening ceremony in her “coming-out process,” Rokeby acted as the setting for the closing one.⁶⁷ This decision created logistical complications. The attendance of distinguished individuals at a society wedding was critical to reinforcing a family's social standing.⁶⁸ Thus, Margaret had to make Red Hook easily accessible to all those elite New Yorkers she hoped would attend. To that end, a special train from New York brought guests to Barrytown. Then carriages carried families like the Astors,



Photograph taken for Lewis Chanler's campaign. Courtesy of Rokeby Collection

Livingstons, Vanderbilts, and Macys from the train station to the church in Red Hook and later the reception at Rokeby. “She loves ‘Rokeby,’” a journalist noted, explaining that the newly married couple would stay in Barrytown rather than go on a wedding tour.⁶⁹ A marked departure from her 1891 Manhattan debut, the nuptials at Rokeby reveal Margaret’s deep attachment to her estate and growing self-confidence. Franklin D. and Eleanor Roosevelt married on the Upper East Side, not Springwood; Beatrice Mills married the Earl of Granard at the family’s home on Fifth Avenue, not Mills Mansion; even Margaret’s own mother and father married in lower Manhattan.⁷⁰ She and Richard, though, wed at Rokeby, despite the difficulties it might create for guests.

As a country estate owner and an urban reformer, Margaret lived in two worlds, but she found ways to create a symbiotic relationship between them. Her dairy farm is a case in point. One of the major battles in Progressive Era New York City involved ensuring milk quality. Since New Yorkers rarely owned cows by the end of the century, as Kendra Smith-Howard explains, milk had to follow a sometimes-byzantine route to a metropolitan household, risking spoilage and contamination at each step. The cows themselves also created problems—as some carried disease—and dirty milking containers could spread germs. Poor and rich New Yorkers alike worried their milk could expose them to everything from typhoid to bovine tuberculosis. Public health officials worked to improve dairy quality, testing cows for diseases and pushing for pasteurization.⁷¹

The quality of milk in the Empire State concerned Margaret as well, but unlike many other women, she had the ability to do something about it: She began a dairy farm at Rokeby in 1905. In so doing, she connected the estate to John Armstrong’s initial agricultural purpose, likely a motivating factor for a woman deeply concerned with protecting and staying true to her family’s lineage.⁷² As one newspaper pointed out, she did not need the money the farm might net (she had an estimated \$30,000 annual income). Instead, she was committed to improving the milk in New York and planned to use her farm as an “experiment,” following the New York City Board of Health’s sanitary regulations.⁷³ With some three dozen cows by 1919, the dairy had become part of Rokeby’s mission. Photographs of it even featured in the 1908 gubernatorial campaign of her brother, Lewis Chanler.⁷⁴

Margaret likewise connected the Hudson River Valley suffrage movement to its Gotham counterpart, applying urban strategies to rural districts while also leveraging her limited right to vote at Rokeby to convince Manhattan women to endorse the ballot. Even though she frequently spent time outside of New York City, Margaret remained an important leader there following her participation in the 1894 Constitutional Convention campaign. When Manhattan activists formed an Equal Suffrage League in the early years of the twentieth century, they unanimously voted Margaret president. One reassured her that “living away from New York will be no obstacle” as “the other officers will do the work.”⁷⁵ In the early 1910s, she was not only treasurer of the Woman Suffrage Party, but served as acting president of the Equal Franchise Society, succeeding Katherine Mackay in that exclusive club.⁷⁶ When churchwomen organized

the Protestant Episcopal Suffrage Association a few years later, Margaret served as its president.⁷⁷ Clearly, money was not the only resource she could donate to the cause—she contributed her management skills as well.

Significantly, Margaret's residence at Rokeby gave her something her urban peers did not necessarily have—a limited vote. In the late nineteenth century, Empire State suffragists won the right for women in “villages and country districts” to vote at school meetings. In 1901, taxpaying women in villages and towns gained the additional right to vote on proposals dealing with “special tax assessments.” For many activists, these partial victories counted as no victories at all.⁷⁸ However, they did grant some women a political voice. Margaret Chanler Aldrich was one such woman who used her limited suffrage. Not only did she cast her ballot, she capitalized on her experience doing so to prove to others there was nothing untoward about going to the polling place. Speaking at the haute Colony Club, in New York City, she nonchalantly told an audience that she voted twice annually in Dutchess County and found “it no ordeal.” Her argument, a potentially powerful one, made it into the *New York Times's* coverage of the event, but an opponent's accusation that an “alliance” existed between suffrage and socialism ultimately eclipsed it.⁷⁹ Margaret was drawing regional connections, even if the press did not always focus on it.

The fight for enfranchisement was slower to gain traction in Dutchess County than in Manhattan. Much of the early suffrage movement outside of the city had originated from religious reform crusades, something relatively absent in this area when compared with places like Rochester. Within the Hudson River Valley, Poughkeepsie shined as a particular bright spot. An Equal Suffrage League developed there in 1909, becoming the Poughkeepsie Woman Suffrage Party in 1915.⁸⁰ One scholar has argued that despite Poughkeepsie's “proximity to New York, the impetus behind the” creation of an effective campaign organization “was largely local,” stemming from Vassar College and the professional networks of women surrounding it.⁸¹ This was only partially true: Women like Margaret Chanler Aldrich bridged the distance, putting New York City strategies to work in the Hudson River Valley.

Open-air meetings were one such tactic. Radical Manhattan suffragette Maud Malone introduced this strategy to New Yorkers, holding the first open-air suffrage meeting in Madison Square on New Year's Eve in 1907.⁸² Having spent decades sheltered in the safety of private homes or rented halls, organizers drew immediate notice with this protest. In a letter to the *New York Times*, Malone explained the goal: to gain public attention and to gather signatures for a petition demanding an amendment to the state Constitution.⁸³ Many suffragists expressed horror about these tactics. One leader opposed women “go[ing] out to the street corners and shriek[ing].”⁸⁴ Harriot Stanton Blatch, daughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, disagreed. Along with Malone she engaged in a “trolley car campaign” of upstate New York in spring 1908. Poughkeepsie was their last stop. Because of opposition from the president of Vassar College, the women held the open-air meeting in a nearby cemetery—a decision one reporter celebrated as

“consummately clever.”⁸⁵ By the early 1910s, more conservative suffragists had come to realize the benefits of the open-air strategy and shook off their initial hesitancy.

Open-air meetings worked best in congested urban areas that guaranteed pedestrian traffic. While Poughkeepsie was a city in its own right (with a population of 25,000), Red Hook claimed less than 1,000 residents in the early twentieth century.⁸⁶ At least once, Margaret’s commitment to proselytizing seems to have overcome any doubts she might have had about the strategy’s effectiveness in such a sparsely populated area. In mid-June 1912, she led an open-air meeting before the Town Clerk’s office.⁸⁷

A few months later, Margaret mobilized support for “General” Rosalie Jones and her suffrage “Pilgrim Army” during their march from New York City to Albany. This “army,” as the *New York Times* explained, included a “colonel,” a “Chief War Correspondent,” a “Surgeon General” (whose first aid kit announced “First Aid is All Right for Bruises, but Nothing Will Save Us but Votes for All”) and a “private.” It made stops everywhere—from Yonkers to Fishkill to Poughkeepsie to Hudson.⁸⁸ The marchers felt they especially needed to “educate the up-State people” because they could not “get votes for women in New York City,” a common assumption shaped by a belief that immigrants clung to patriarchal customs.⁸⁹ Despite the potential for dismal weather, they considered midwinter a more effective time for the march because farm families, rather than summer tourists, would be home.⁹⁰ The owner of Rokeby provided support when these troops, overwhelmed by winter’s wrath, limped from Rhinebeck to Red Hook. Driving up to the suffrage cavalry, Margaret informed the “army” that its audience, including the mayor, awaited it at the “village watering trough.” Reports differ about whether she agreed to join the march into town or went ahead to notify the crowd, but in either case Margaret brought the downstate travelers into her rural village and introduced the townspeople to “General Jones,” using her position in both New York City and Red Hook to unite the campaigns.⁹¹

Margaret even mobilized Manhattan norms to convince those in Poughkeepsie that voting would not threaten women’s femininity. This was a real concern as polling sites were very much masculine spaces. Not only did the act of voting mark these places as men’s terrain; their location in smoke-filled saloons and barbershops reinforced the connection between the ballot and masculinity.⁹² In the public imagination, polling sites were dangerous and dirty, filled with corruption. Certainly, they were not an appropriate venue for “respectable” women; indeed, they were barely appropriate for “respectable” men, and only because they had a civic responsibility to fulfill within them. While political violence dwindled by the end of the nineteenth century, the threat of violence at the polls remained real in popular consciousness.⁹³ Speaking to a crowd of 1,500 attending a 1911 suffrage meeting in Poughkeepsie’s Collingwood Opera House, Margaret countered such notions with a Manhattan-inflected argument. Placing a ballot in a ballot box, she told the audience, was no different than placing a subway ticket in a subway box.⁹⁴ Neither would change female citizens. At such moments, she physically connected the city and rural movements, as she had when introducing the



A 1913 Poughkeepsie newspaper drawing of Margaret Chanler Aldrich converting Grange members. Cartoon courtesy Rokeby Collection

suffrage “army” to Red Hook. At other times, she drew rhetorical links.

The vast differences between the rural and urban landscapes did frequently require tailoring strategies, however. Canvassing proved difficult in cities since urban residents had a deep-rooted suspicion of strangers, but it was harder logistically in rural areas to cover so many people as quickly. Club life and social activities certainly existed in both areas, but they took different forms. The Grange—a late-nineteenth-century organization promoting cooperation among farmers and their families—was critical to rural areas, but unnecessary in city life.⁹⁵ Margaret was keenly aware of both the Grange’s power and the obstacles it created. The Grange could create a distraction, drawing women’s

attention elsewhere, but it also fostered a hetero-social arena of relative equality for women on which suffragists could capitalize.⁹⁶ In 1913, she even held a luncheon for Grange members to promote enfranchisement. One Poughkeepsie newspaper published an illustration of “Mrs. Aldrich” pinning a “Votes for Women” button on the Pomona Grange, suggesting her success. That Margaret republished the illustration in her memoirs provides evidence of the pride she felt in converting farmers.⁹⁷

In November 1915, New York State voters had their chance to weigh in officially on a Constitutional amendment granting female suffrage. Suffrage spectacles, open-air meetings, and lectures filled Gotham’s streets and echoed throughout its halls and homes in the preceding months. Meanwhile, Margaret spent time toiling to gain support in the Hudson River Valley. Her presence at one of Columbia County’s last meetings before the 1915 referendum helped signal to a local reporter the importance of that particular rally.⁹⁸ She used election eve to address activists in Poughkeepsie preparing to get out the pro-suffrage vote the following day. Margaret then went to the intersection of Market and Main streets to speak to a 200-person audience.⁹⁹ After more than two decades fighting for the vote, she doubtlessly awaited the results of the referendum filled with anticipation, anxiety, and perhaps some optimism.

She would be disappointed: New York men readily defeated enfranchisement. Statewide, approximately 514,000 supported the Constitutional amendment, but more than 700,000 opposed it. In Dutchess County, 9,300 men voted against it, only 5,904 for it. A mere thirty-seven percent of voters in Poughkeepsie backed the amendment.¹⁰⁰

Margaret once more mobilized for the cause in preparation for a second, 1917 suffrage referendum. Again, she understood the importance of the Grange. As a member of the Red Hook Grange, she put forth a resolution declaring, “Patrons of Husbandry as an organization does exemplify the full equality of man and woman,” and urged it to support woman’s right to vote. The Dutchess County Pomona Grange unanimously endorsed her resolution.¹⁰¹ The Grange’s backing likely helped convert some farmers, but Margaret could not be sure that suffragists had done enough to change the state’s position in the two years since their 1915 defeat. She spent election day in Poughkeepsie, not at the movement’s state or national headquarters in Manhattan, waiting to find out.¹⁰²

As in 1915, Dutchess County did not reward Margaret’s labors. The *New York Times* reported that 5,590 Dutchess County men supported the amendment, but 6,209 opposed it—a real improvement from the previous referendum but not a victory. New York City was responsible for the enfranchisement of Empire State women, with the votes from Gotham compensating for an upstate deficit.¹⁰³ Regardless, Margaret Chanler Aldrich had a right to celebrate. Whether it was New York City or Dutchess County that carried the vote, she had been influential in both, an important bridge connecting the two movements.

Her participation in the Hudson River Valley’s political community continued after suffragists’ 1917 victory. At the County Woman Voters’ Conference in Poughkeepsie the following year, she spoke on “The Moral Issues of the War” and urged women to

buy liberty loans, lecturing that they did not have the right to spend fifty dollars on a fur when that money could purchase a war bond. Woman's rights were not far from her mind. "If the women had the vote ten, twenty, or fifty years ago," she reflected, "the financial condition of the country would have been in better shape than it was at the out-break of the war."¹⁰⁴ Her reputation as "one of the best speakers in the state" continued as well.¹⁰⁵ In 1918, there was even a rumor that she might be the Democratic candidate for the state Assembly in Dutchess County's first district.¹⁰⁶ If she had run and won the election, Margaret would have joined Mary M. Lilly and Ida B. Sammis as the first women elected to the Assembly.¹⁰⁷ Her reform activities might have begun in the city, but they matured in the country.

The U.S. Census provides clues into the life of Margaret Chanler Aldrich. The 1870 census listed a one-year-old Margaret as a resident of Madison Avenue in New York City.¹⁰⁸ Ten years later, it had her living in Red Hook, along with her nine siblings, her cousin, a tutor, and twelve servants.¹⁰⁹ In 1900, the government placed then thirty-year-old Margaret back in Manhattan, at the head of a household on 74th Street.¹¹⁰ Two decades later, her primary residence once again shifted to Red Hook.¹¹¹ The census records, much like the *Post's* column, suggest that these places were mutually exclusive: Margaret either lived in Manhattan or Red Hook.

Studying her activism in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era serves as a corrective, revealing an integrated and nuanced relationship between these locales. Her wealth made it possible and comfortable for Margaret to shift back and forth from New York to Red Hook; her love of the estate motivated her to keep coming back, even as Manhattan's social world beckoned. Ultimately, the reform crusade in New York State benefitted. Whether drawing parallels between subway riding and ballot casting at a Poughkeepsie opera house or leveraging her limited suffrage in Red Hook to conscript socialites in Manhattan, Margaret understood the relationship between city and country as symbiotic, not antagonistic. Not solely a metropolitan denizen or a rural landholder, her life existed in the space in-between.

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Endnotes

1. Susannah Cahalan, "Life Inside Astor's Crumbling Country Manor," 14 April 2013, *New York Post* online edition.
2. For a classic example that largely pits the country against the city see Samuel P. Hays, *The Response to Industrialism, 1885-1914*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), chapter 6. Much of the scholarship on suffrage in New York State focuses on the city. See, for example, Pamela Cobrin, *From Winning the Vote to Directing on Broadway: The Emergence of Women on the New York Stage, 1880-1927* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009). David Kevin McDonald's dissertation does provide a statewide view of the suffrage campaign, but his individual treatment of communities obscures potential connections between them. See David Kevin McDonald, "Organizing Womanhood: Women's Culture and the Politics of Suffrage in New York State, 1865-1917" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1987).

3. William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), preface. In terms of woman's history, Robyn Rosen has thought about the influence (or lack thereof) of New York City birth control activists on those in the Hudson River Valley. See Robyn Rosen, "The Shifting Battleground for Birth Control: Lessons from New York's Hudson Valley in the Interwar Years," *New York History* 90.3 (Summer 2009), 187-215.
4. Of course, many rural women did have strikingly different experiences from city women. Grey Osterud, for one, has shown that the lives of metropolitan women were "defined by their difference from men," while rural women's were "defined through their relationships with men" in nineteenth-century New York State. Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Woman in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), introduction.
5. Lately Thomas, *The Astor Orphans: A Pride of Lions, The Chanler Chronicle* (New York: William Morrow & Company Inc., 1971), 19.
6. Margaret Chanler Aldrich, *Family Vista: The Memoirs of Margaret Chanler Aldrich* (New York: The William-Frederick Press, 1958), 5-10, 18; Thomas, *Astor Orphans*, Chapter 1.
7. Drawn from Thomas, *Astor Orphans*, Chapter 1.
8. Frances F. Dunwell, *The Hudson: America's River* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), chapter 10.
9. Thomas, *Astor Orphans*, chapter 1.
10. Thomas, *Astor Orphans*, 19-33.
11. There is an additional fifth photograph of Lewis Chanler campaigning from the house's porch. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 11, 82-83.
12. Thomas, *Astor Orphans*, 37-38.
13. "Miss Chanler Happy Bride," *The Poughkeepsie News-Telegram*, Undated Newspaper Clipping, Rokeby Archives, Barrytown, New York.
14. See Eric Homberger, *Mrs. Astor's New York: Money and Social Power in a Gilded Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Maureen E. Montgomery, *Displaying Women: Spectacles of Leisure in Edith Wharton's New York* (New York: Routledge, 1998).
15. Her mother had a very different childhood experience at Rokeby, where her grandparents raised her after her own mother's death. One scholar has written that Maddie "grew up in a world where social gradations, good manners, reserve, and decorum were enforced with an unblinking severity." Thomas, *Astor Orphans*, 35, 40. For the quote see Homberger, *Mrs. Astor's New York*, 246-247.
16. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 75.
17. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 14-17.
18. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 43.
19. Uncited quote in Thomas, *Astor Orphans*, 51.
20. Montgomery, *Displaying Women*, 41, 47-49.
21. See, for instance, Letter from Florence Lockwood to Margaret Chanler, 15 October, Rokeby Archives.
22. "The Misses Chanler's Debut," *The Sun*, 17 December 1891.
23. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 68.
24. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 77, 103.
25. See, for example, Letters, Margaret Chanler to Julia Ward Howe, Howe Family Papers, 1819-1910 (MS Am 2219), Folder: Aldrich, Margaret Livingston Letters, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
26. Thomas, *Astor Orphans*, 190.
27. Thomas, *Astor Orphans*, 238.
28. For an account of Progressive Era reform see Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).
29. She was far from the only elite woman involved in reform work. Many contributed to the Charity Organization Society and Children's Aid Society. Margaret's dear friend, Josephine Shaw Lowell, was even president of the New York City Consumer League, an organization committed to promoting better working conditions for industrial laborers. *Children's Aid Society Annual Report, 1897* (New York: The

- Society), New-York Historical Society, New York, New York; *Charity Organization Society of the City of New York's Annual Report, 1892* (New York: Central Office), New-York Historical Society; Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley & the Nation's Work: The Rise of Women's Political Culture, 1830-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 144-151.
30. "Parlor Suffrage Tidal Wave," *Herald*, 11 April 1894, Reel 1, National American Woman Suffrage Association (hereafter NAWSA) Records. Manuscripts and Archives Division. The New York Public Library (hereafter NYPL). Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.
 31. For a more detailed account see Lauren C. Santangelo, "The 'Feminized' City: New York and Suffrage, 1870-1917," Ph.D. diss. (City University of New York's Graduate Center, 2014), chapter 1.
 32. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 70.
 33. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 35.
 34. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 87-88.
 35. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 69; Thomas, *Astor Orphans*, 114; "Not Room for All Who Came," *New York Times*, 4 May 1894; Mary Putnam-Jacobi Report to Jean Brooks Greenleaf, 1894: *Constitutional Amendment Campaign Year, Report of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association* (Rochester, New York: New York State Woman Suffrage Association, 1895), 217-220.
 36. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 70.
 37. Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Homes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1980), 32, 52; Kathryn Cullen-DuPoint, "Howe, Julia Ward" in *Encyclopedia of Women's History in America*, 2nd ed. (New York: Facts on File, 2000), 118-119, accessed via Google Books on 24 June 2015; Thomas, *Astor Orphans*, 12.
 38. Quoted in Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist*, 53.
 39. "Julia Ward Howe Dead at 91," *New York Times*, 18 October 1910.
 40. Letter, Margaret Chanler to Julia Ward Howe, 21 February 1894?, Howe Family Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
 41. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 70.
 42. Margaret L. Chanler, "The Equal Suffrage Campaign in New York, An Informal Report and Some Suggestions," Reel 1, NAWSA Records, NYPL.
 43. McDonald, "Organizing Womanhood," 235.
 44. 1894, 8-10; Letter, Mary Putnam Jacobi to Margaret Chanler, 1 June 1894, Suffrage File, Rokeby Archives; "Fight Nearing the End," *New York Herald*, 1 June 1894.
 45. "Talking for Woman Suffrage," *New York Times*, 9 August 1894; "Woman Suffrage Defeated," *New York Times*, 16 August 1894.
 46. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 71.
 47. For the role of gender in shaping this conflict see Karen L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
 48. "Two Society Beauties Saving Sick Soldiers," *The World*, 4 September 1898; "The Noble Society Women Who Volunteered as Nurses," *The New York Press*, 24 June 1898; "Good Angel of Porto Rico," *Elmira Telegram*, 18 September 1898; Virginia A. Alta, "New York State, The Leader in Nurse Registration: 1898-1908," *Journal of the New York State Nurses Association* 25.1 (March 1994): 4-7.
 49. "Nurses Hurried to Seat of War," *The New York Press*, 3 July 1898.
 50. "Would-Be Nurse's Story," *New York Times*, 13 August 1898.
 51. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 68.
 52. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 122-143.
 53. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 148.
 54. "A Familiar Outcry," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 8 August 1900.
 55. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 138.
 56. Quoted in Thomas, *Astor Orphans*, 280.
 57. Letters, Florence B. Lockwood to Margaret, February 12, June 18, June 27, October 25, No Years, Rokeby Archives.

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60. "Housekeeper and City," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 16 July 1904.
61. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 34-35.
62. "A Bill that Should be Passed," *New York Times*, 12 April 1904.
63. "Protection from Unfit Servants," *New York Herald*, 25 March 1904; "Evil Health Agencies Scored," *New York Times*, 25 March 1904.
64. 1900 United States Federal Census, New York, New York, Margaret Chanler, Roll: 1103, Page: 3A, Enumeration District: 0469, FHL microfilm: 1241103; accessed 19 June 2015, www.ancestry.com.
65. Margaret Chanler Aldrich, "The Week Before Christmas," *New York Times*, 20 December 1911.
66. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 161.
67. Montgomery, *Displaying Women*, 41.
68. Montgomery, *Displaying Women*, 57.
69. "Miss Chanler Happy Bride," *Poughkeepsie News-Telegram*, Undated Newspaper Clipping, Rokeby Archives.
70. Thomas, *Astor Orphans*, 16; "Wedding of Roosevelts," *New York Times*, 17 March 1905; "Earl of Granard Weds Miss Mills," *New York Times*, 15 January 1909.
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76. Aldrich, *Family Vista*, 165; "Mrs. Mackay Quits as Suffrage Head," *New York Times*, 13 April 1911.
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80. McDonald, "Organizing Womanhood," 235-244.
81. McDonald, "Organizing Womanhood," 280.
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83. Maud Malone, "The Woman's Suffrage Movement," *New York Times*, 29 December 1907.
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Vallie Mae Ruff in front of her Windsor Street home when she first came from Warrenton to Catskill in 1944 at age seventeen. Photo provided by Darren Ruff

Warrenton to Catskill: A Story of The Great Migration

Ted Hilscher

In recent years, the *Catskill Daily Mail* published the obituaries of the following, all with names recognizable as those of black families for whom Catskill has been home for at least two generations, all born in the same small town in Georgia:

NELLIE HALL, of Catskill, died March 4, 2006.
Born in Warrenton, Georgia, on October 3, 1922.

PATSY IVERY CODY, of Catskill, died June 23, 2006.
Born in Warrenton, Georgia, on December 12, 1919.

DOROTHY SHELDON IVERY, of Albany, “former long-time Catskill resident,”
died August 12, 2006. Born in Warrenton, Georgia, on July 28, 1924.

VALLIE MAE RUFF, of Schenectady, “former Catskillian,”
died March 15, 2008. Born in Warrenton, Georgia, on July 14, 1927.

ELNORA TARVER SMITH, of Catskill, died January 15, 2011.
Born in Warrenton, Georgia, on October 16, 1931.

RALPH IVERY, of Catskill, died February 7, 2012.
Born in Warrenton, Georgia, on April 30, 1926.
(Mrs. Cody had been his sister and Mrs. Ivery his sister-in-law,
according to the obituaries.)

WILLIE B. WATSON, of Catskill, died July 17, 2013.
Born in Warrenton, Georgia, on March 14, 1934.

BARBARA JEAN RIDDLE, of Albany, died November 12, 2013.
Born in Warrenton, Georgia, on December 16, 1944.
Services held at the Second Baptist Church, Catskill. Interment in Catskill.

Between 1915 and 1970, more than six million blacks migrated from their birth-places and homes in the South to the North. This article examines one part of that story, the movement of blacks from Warrenton, Georgia, to the Village of Catskill in the Hudson River Valley.¹ While historians generally speak of the Great Migration as beginning around World War I, Catskill was attracting Southern blacks well before that.

A good estimate for the arrival of the first Warrenton natives in Catskill would be between 1895 and 1897. From the 1900 census, we learn that Jeremiah M. (Jerry) Walker was living in Catskill with his wife and four children.² He had been born in

Warrenton in 1865, the last year of the Civil War, and he and Isabella Shocklin were married there. Joseph, their third-oldest child, was born in Georgia in 1894; Robert, the youngest, was born in New York State in October 1897. Also living in Catskill in 1900 were William Smith and his wife, both of whom reported Georgia as their place of birth, and their son Luke, born in New York in October 1897.³

Jerry Walker was one of five heads of household in Catskill in 1900 who were black and born in Georgia. All but one of the men who lived in these households, several of them listed as boarders, worked in the brickyards. Several of the boarders living with William Smith had the surname English, which we will see is a Warrenton name. The brickyards operated only in warm weather; Walker indicated he was unemployed six months of the year. At thirty-five he was the second-oldest of the black Georgia natives in the brickyards. Most of the rest were twenty-four or younger. Jerry Walker could read and write; Isabella could not. Two of the six children she gave birth to had died.⁴ Walker was the only one of the five heads of household who indicated to the census taker that he owned his house, located on West Bridge Street among farmers' fields at the far western end of the village. Most of the blacks in Catskill lived on Water Street, just feet from the tracks of the Catskill Mountain Railroad and across Catskill Creek from the Washburn and the Ferrier and Golden brickyards. Upper Water Street between Canal and Church Streets, near the gashouse and coal docks, was solidly a black neighborhood. On Lower Water Street and Hill Street, south of Bridge, black residences were interspersed among Italians and Irish.⁵

Of the blacks working in Catskill's brickyards in 1900, more had been born in Virginia than Georgia. By far, the great percentage of men these blacks worked next to were born in Italy. It was among a cluster of Italian homes on Upper Water Street, between Church and Union streets, that Catskill's two black churches were located in

the twentieth century. Apparently this was an area of the village where blacks felt welcome, even though the 1900 census recorded just one black residence on Upper Water Street north of Church Street. The Second Baptists purchased "the school house and grounds heretofore occupied as a colored school" in 1892 and built a proper church in 1925.⁶ Just a few doors south was Mt. Tabor A.M.E. Zion. A stone marker on the front elevation of Mt. Tabor reads 1897, which may indicate the date the church was established and not the date of building construction. Mt. Tabor purchased its lot in 1901, and a church was standing by 1903.⁷

According to oral tradition that survived through Charles B. Swain, the former Greene



Mt. Tabor A.M.E. Zion, Water Street, Catskill. Photo by author

County Minorities Historian and son of a Warrenton native, the brickyards had an “agent” in Catskill who “recruited” among blacks in Warrenton. This may have been Herman Latimer, who was in Catskill by about 1920 but sent money and gifts back home and visited Warrenton often.⁸

Because people traveled back and forth between Catskill and Warrenton, and all of those who journeyed North had close relatives who remained in the South, the life left behind was never far from the thoughts of those who made the move. Events in Warrenton also help explain the reasons for the migration.

Before and during the migration: Warrenton, Georgia

Located about 110 miles east of Atlanta, Warrenton is a crossroads town and the county seat of tiny Warren County. The vice president of the Confederate States of America, Alexander Stephens, came from neighboring Taliaferro County. During Sherman’s March to the Sea, a few squads of the invading army came within three or four miles of Warrenton and “robbed and plundered indiscriminately,” reported the Atlanta paper. The alabaster statue of a Confederate soldier, a look of defiance frozen on his face, was erected high upon a tall pedestal on the courthouse square in 1907. The twenty-one-year-old who fought at Gettysburg turned sixty-five in that year.⁹

To this day, older blacks in Warrenton are reticent to talk about “secrets,” information widely understood as true but not to be found in newspapers, official documents at the county clerk’s office, the official bicentennial history, the WPA guide, or otherwise in the public record. All history does not make the history books. Where no written record exists of particular events, it becomes necessary to rely on oral history as best as possible to fill the void. Oral history may consist of the recollections of witnesses to past events or the recital of understandings passed down from older to younger generations, meaning the teller is not necessarily a witness to the events described.¹⁰

There are those who may not want to talk about why blacks and whites have the same names. Among Warren County residents who served in the American Revolution were Heaths, Iverys, and Jacksons. These surnames are also those of black Catskill families. Many Heaths and Iverys from Warren County served in the Confederate Army.¹¹ Today, Heath, Ivery, and Johnson are among the most common white and black names in Warren County.¹² Sometimes, black slaves simply took or were given the last names of their white owners, but there could be deeper reasons for this sharing. According to the oral history of two Catskill families with roots in Warrenton, the Heaths and Latimers, there are white great-grandfathers in the family tree. John Henry Felts produced two sons, John Henry Heath and Felts Heath, through a union with his slave Elizabeth. It is through Felts Heath that the Catskill Heaths are descended. “Colonel” Latimer (or Latimore) had a son with a black woman which he named John Fletcher Kinsey Latimer. John Fletcher had blue eyes, as does his grandson Maurice.¹³ For much of the twentieth century in Warrenton, when custom mandated that a black person step off the sidewalk into the street to let a white person pass, the two could

very well have been cousins.¹⁴

The names of the perpetrators of unprosecuted, community-sanctioned violence, of which there was a long history in Warren County, are a second category of secrets. Warren County was a hotbed of Ku Klux Klan activity in 1866, when a black man and five members of his family were killed after he announced he would vote for Grant for president. Dr. George Darden and white State Senator Joseph Adkins were lynched in 1869 after speaking out against the Klan.¹⁵

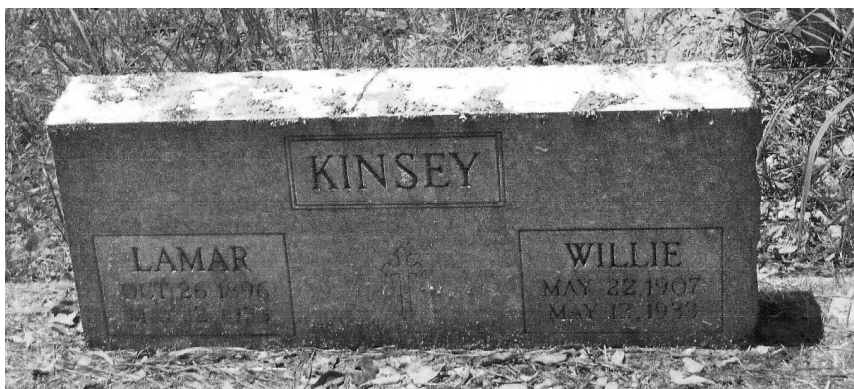
Warren County mobs lynched blacks Charles Jones and John Veazey on February 25, 1911, and Benny Richards, another black man, on May 1, 1919. This brought the number of reported lynchings in Warren County to eleven in fifty years.¹⁶

Some students of violence toward blacks in the Jim Crow South believe the number of incidents were greater where the concentration of blacks were greater, as in Warren County. In 1930, there were a little over 11,000 people in Warren County; about two-thirds of them were black. Warrenton had a population of about 1,200, over 700 black.¹⁷

On May 11, 1933, a black man named Willie Kinsey, while working the farm of the white English family, was in the field with a “horse”—“We called them horses, but they were mules,” recalled Kinsey’s second cousin and namesake, Willie, in a 2012 interview. Willie was five years old in 1933 and was raised with the family lore of that day’s events. Kinsey was approached by one of the Englishes, some kind of an argument took place, and Kinsey shook his fist at the white man, who then went away. That evening, English went to the Kinsey place on Mitchell Road—Kinsey also farmed his own land—with other whites, bearing firearms. Sensing danger, Kinsey had others with him as well, ready with weapons. There was a shootout. Charlie English and Lamar Kinsey, Willie’s brother, were killed. Willie Kinsey and several others were wounded.¹⁸

That evening’s events then became a tale of two white doctors.

Willie Kinsey was brought by relatives to the office of Dr. Alton W. Davis. Davis had been a long-time member of the Warrenton City Council and was a member of the American Legion and Kiwanis in Warrenton.¹⁹ Davis treated Kinsey and then



Gravestone of Willie and Lamar Kinsey, Warrenton, Georgia. Photo by author



Former office of Dr. N.B. Cason, Warrenton, Georgia. All patients entered through the center entrance way. Whites were then treated on the left side of the building, blacks on the right. Photo by author

left his office, leaving Kinsey in the care of a deputy sheriff. A short time later, a mob entered Davis's office and abducted Kinsey. Kinsey's body was found the next morning on the Gibson highway, about forty feet off the road. According to oral history, he had been hanged from a tree and shot many times.

Sheriff George P. Hogan told a reporter for the Associated Press wire service "he could not say how the negro died but was pushing an inquiry." The sheriff's investigation thus far had revealed that Lamar Kinsey had fired the first shot in the shootout.

A relative of Willie Kinsey who had been wounded in the shootout was treated that night by Dr. H.T. Kennedy, a newcomer to town. Born in Tatnall County, Georgia, he had received some of his education and served in public health in Virginia. He moved to Warrenton in 1929. Having decided to direct events instead of letting events direct him, Dr. Kennedy armed himself. Through his words and his weapon, he persuaded the mob when it came to his office to go away. The man he was treating recovered from his wounds and went on to live a long life.²⁰

Mrs. Geneva Ivery Jackson was twenty-one years old the night of the lynching. Lying in bed, she heard steps on the front porch and then a knock on the front door. She later learned it was a Masonic brother of her father's. Her father dressed and left, joining a group of men who helped the other Kinsey brothers evade capture.²¹

Lamar and Willie Kinsey were buried in the Kinsey family cemetery. Some of the others previously interred there were white, including a Latimer. Willie Kinsey was killed ten days short of his twenty-sixth birthday. His brother Lamar was thirty-six.²²

These events went unreported in *The Warrenton Clipper*. The bare facts were reported on the wire services and appeared in the *New York Times* and the dailies of other large cities.

Shortly afterward, young Willie Kinsey's aunt, Cora Pitts, and her husband Robert moved to Catskill.²³

In September 1937, the national news media reported that blacks in Warren County were being forced by armed guards to pick cotton for thirty to forty cents a hundred pounds, after some pickers had left to go to other places in Georgia where they were being paid sixty to seventy-five cents for a comparable amount.

A report published by American Civil Liberties Union in March 1938 reported on the events of September 13, 1937:

The (Warrenton) city fathers and the obliging officers of the law apparently knew what was going to happen and while some of them may have entertained some doubts as to the wisdom of depriving the community of its tranquility, nevertheless they raised not a protest. In fact it is alleged that the vigilantes had received the sanction of the town's "peace officers".

The city fathers felt that there was little that they could do anyway. They were local business men who depended upon the planting interests for their daily bread. A protest or an unkindly act toward the vigilantes and a good business could be ruined. The interest of the planters were paramount and the city fathers bowed their heads.

The members of the mob made a systematic visit to each and every store. Wherever they found a Negro they told him to go to the fields and pick cotton. The bootblack in a barber shop showed some hesitancy about following the command and was given a clout over the head. The mob went to the local Chevrolet shop where the manager promptly refused to allow them to approach his Negro helper. They went to the blacksmith's shop and the blacksmith laid two powerful hands on a sledgehammer and dared them to come in.

Being rebuffed here the mob descended upon the Negro district, now thoroughly terrified. They forced open the doors of private homes and delivered their ultimatum—"We want you to pick cotton" and departed. Shots were fired into the air and into some of the homes—at least one received several shots—completely terrorizing the people.

Many of the Negro women who were employed as maids, nurses, and cooks in the homes of the white people, rushed frantically to them for protection. Some were locked in closets and shut in garages to protect them from the fury of the mob. It is reliably reported that so terrorized were the Negro children that they sought sanctuary in the local cemetery where they thought they would be safe from the mob.

The local Negro Methodist minister was forced to leave town for fear of death. He, with as many as could secure means, left the county. Others had not the means and went to the cotton fields.²⁴

According to the ACLU report, "the center of power (in Warren County) seems to be lodged in the English family." At the time, two of the seven directors of Citizens Bank, the county's only bank, were members of that family.²⁵

The ACLU report went on:

Warren County in general and the English family in particular have a notorious reputation throughout the surrounding territory for exceptional cruelty and brutality to Negroes. It is stated quite openly that the horse whipping of tenants, particularly Negro tenants, is a common and accepted practice on the large plantations.

The Warrenton Clipper reported on page two on September 17, 1937:

Much publicity has been given to Warrenton this week in the daily papers because of the action of a large group of farmers of this county early Monday morning in preventing several cotton pickers from going on a truck to Glascock County where it is said a higher price was offered for picking. Shots were fired in the air and it is said hands were told to stay and work in this county. It is also rumored that those not having employment were advised to go to work in the cotton fields. Sheriff Geo. Hogan has been quoted in the daily papers as saying that "all is quiet here", that farmers are on the lookout for any trucks coming from outside the county to get cotton pickers, and that if "anything happens we are ready to handle it in a peaceful way."

On September 24, the *Clipper* reported the meddling of the ACLU—"a northern organization reported to be communistic." That same paper reported the nationwide backlash against President Roosevelt's Supreme Court nomination of Alabama Senator Hugo Black, a Ku Klux Klan member.

The events of September 1937 in Warren County were referred to FDR's Attorney General, Homer Cummings of Connecticut, who ordered a "careful investigation" but took no action. Cummings is remembered, if at all, for his role in preventing a formal denouncement of the Ku Klux Klan at the 1924 Democratic Presidential Convention.²⁶

Time continued to stand still in Warrenton. On January 8, 1958, Warren County School Superintendent Pierce DeBeaugrine reported to the Board of Education that it would not be in the best interest of the children of either race to integrate the schools. The Board of Education later unanimously endorsed his defiance of *Brown v. Board of Education*, and there remained separate schools for whites and blacks in Warren County.²⁷

Drs. Davis and Kennedy, who had taken such different courses of action in the aftermath of the English/Kinsey shootout, practiced medicine in Warrenton for decades.

Catskill, New York

Many blacks from Warrenton, Georgia, escaped the conditions in the South by moving to Catskill. Macon, Georgia, was another point of origin for a number of blacks who ended up in Catskill. Whatever prejudice they faced in their new hometown, "it was better than where we were from," remembered Charles Hawshaw, who moved to Catskill in the 1950s from a part of Macon called "River Bottoms."²⁸

During the Great Migration, it was not unusual for migrants from the same Southern town to relocate to the same place in the North. A large percentage of blacks who moved to Poughkeepsie came from Charlottesville, Virginia, or Rocky Mount, North Carolina. Many blacks migrated from the small town of Shubuta, Mississippi, to Albany, and from Uniontown, Alabama, to South Fallsburg in Sullivan County.²⁹ Migration patterns like this tended to take place because of "kinship and friendship contacts as migration facilitators." A study of the migration to Poughkeepsie found "a majority of questionnaire respondents indicated that they had received the impetus to migrate because of

a relative or friends who were already living in or had lived in Poughkeepsie.” Where “prospective migrants learn of opportunities... and have initial accommodation and employment arranged by means of primary social relationships with previous migrants” this is called “chain migration.” This is what happened in Catskill.³⁰

The 1920 census lists Georgia natives John Shacklin and Albert Shacklin as residing in Willard’s Alley, a dead-end hollow off Catskill’s Main Street. They were undoubtedly related to Isabella Shocklin Walker. Georgia natives John and Beula Pitts, forerunners in Catskill to Robert and Cora Pitts, lived on Windsor Street, an alley where the horse sheds of the Reformed Church were located. John was a porter in a hotel, Beula a cook.³¹

Nettie Heath arrived in Catskill in the 1920s and ran a small boarding house for brickyard workers on West Main Street. Her brothers, Wyman and Moses, came after her. Wyman, the younger brother, came no later than 1932; his oldest son, Wyman, Jr., was born that year in Catskill. Wyman was named after the white doctor who delivered him in Warrenton, Dr. Wyman Pilcher. According to family lore, Wyman took “the midnight train” out of Warrenton after striking a white man. Moses came to Catskill around 1941, when he was about forty-one years old. His son Moses, Jr., who has lived in Warrenton his whole life, was thirteen years old when his father came North. “Maybe they were running,” is all Moses, Jr., could say years later about why so many left Warrenton for Catskill.³²

Wyman Heath worked in Coxsackie at the foundry American Valve, where he eventually became a foreman. In 1960, after being injured at work, he retired and opened a “chippie joint” on West Bridge Street in Catskill. The business operated out of the basement level of a three-story building owned by Heath. He and his family lived on the second floor and rented out the third.³³

A chippie is a young woman. Where chippies go, young men will follow.³⁴ The joint was open only Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. On those days, Heath rose at four in the morning to start a slow barbeque in the concrete-block pit on the hill behind his house for the ribs, pork shoulder, and fish he would serve that evening. His place had a jukebox and sold cheap beer and homemade liquor. An evening out might begin with a stop at Heath’s and continue from there to Jackson’s Bar on Bronson Street.³⁵

Heath taught his children some of the folkways of the South, such as how to barbeque. They learned how dirty silverware was cleaned and made to sparkle by inserting each piece down to the handle in dirt, moving it back and forth, removing and finally rinsing it.³⁶

Heath became treasurer of the Second Baptist Church in 1963, succeeding Herman Latimer.³⁷ Some of Latimer’s siblings, including his brother Randolph, came to Catskill, worked in the brickyards in warm weather and harvested ice in the winter, but returned in between to Warrenton. Herman’s sisters Carol and Hertha attended school at times in Catskill and at other times in Warrenton.³⁸

Warrenton native John Henry “Jack” Jackson came to Catskill to visit his aunt



**Jackson's Bar, Bronson Street, Catskill; date and patrons unknown.
From the collection of the author**

and ended up staying. In 1952, he bought a tavern on Bronson Street, a black hangout run for a long time by a very large man named "Slim" Thomas. Jackson's became, with the churches, one of the social centers of Catskill's black community.

Every weekend there were small bands that played at the bar and people would get dressed up and dance the night away. In the 1950s the bands would primarily play jazz music...by Miles Davis and Dave Brubeck... [In the] summers when the dance floor would be so packed with folks dancing that they would literally spill right out

the side and front screen doors and onto the street [where] they would continue to dance and drink until the band stopped playing for the night... Stanley would go to the back window of the bar and peek in to see all the grownups dancing. He remembered that they had a single blue light bulb hanging over the place where the bands would play...the dance room was always smoky and the smoke had a bluish hue to it from the lighting...he always loved how the light would bounce off the guitar player's strings "like moon beams" whenever he moved...³⁹

Jack married Lorraine Latimer of Warrenton and brought her to Catskill. She was followed to Catskill by her mother Margaret. Jack and Lorraine lived on the second floor over the bar, and Margaret and her husband Roy Clark lived on the third floor. Lorraine's brother Maurice came to visit in 1962 and stayed. He had grown up a short walk from Main Street in Warrenton. As a boy, he collected wash from whites to take to blacks to be laundered. Until he arrived in Catskill, Maurice did not know most of the Warrenton families who migrated to the village because they were from the countryside. (In most cases, "born in Warrenton" should probably read "born near Warrenton.") Maurice did not learn of the Kinsey lynching as a boy growing up in Warrenton.⁴⁰

Maurice's brother Randy came to Catskill in 1978, probably the last Warrenton native to migrate there.⁴¹

Vallie Mae Ruff came to Catskill as a sixteen- or seventeen-year-old in 1944, joining three sisters. She lived at first in the same building on Windsor Street where John and Beula Pitts lived in 1920, a location which at some point had become a boarding house. Vallie worked at American Valve for a short time and then became a domestic for many years for Jack Guterman and his family in Catskill. (American Valve was owned for several generations by the Gutermans.) In her obituary, members of the Guterman family were noted as "special friends." Ted Guterman has said Vallie was "like a second mother" to him. The two spent many hours together listening to baseball on the radio, Vallie being a big Brooklyn Dodger fan. Guterman says she never talked about the South.⁴²

Vallie's cousin, Gladys "Dib" Ruff, left Warrenton in 1947 at age nineteen to live first with her sister in Washington, D.C., and then her brother in Philadelphia. In February 1950, Ossie Ruff Thomas (Vallie's sister) came to Philadelphia and brought her back to Catskill because "there were jobs here." She lived at first with Ossie in Willard's Alley, then with Ossie and Vallie on Windsor Street. Gladys worked at American Valve making sand molds, then at a dressmaking plant and a textile mill. She retired from cleaning homes at age eighty-one.⁴³

Gladys "chopped a lot of cotton" as a young woman outside of Warrenton. Her father Robert was a sharecropper who worked other people's land—"plantations," Gladys called them. She said her mother's father had been lynched after he killed a man in self-defense.⁴⁴

Between 1952 and 1959, the entire Tarver family came to Catskill. George Henry came in 1954 and his wife Mattie Will in 1957, their sons Willie B. Watson and Milton Watson and daughter Elnora in 1952, and daughter Annie Pearl with her baby daughter

Suzette in 1959. Mattie Will's brothers, Joseph and James Hill, had migrated earlier. Both worked at American Valve.

In Warrenton, the Tarvers lived on Earl Smith's plantation, where beans, peanuts, and "mostly" cotton was raised. George Henry was a field hand. "You hope you make some money for the family to live on next year," Annie Pearl Tarver said of her father. "[He] wanted to do better," and so he came north to work in American Valve. He learned car repair on the side. In 1960, George Henry and his wife and Annie Pearl moved to Duncan Avenue in Albany, where he opened an automotive garage.

Annie Pearl was never told by her parents about the Kinsey lynching. When Suzette visited Warrenton as a young girl in the 1960s, her grandmother cautioned her about walking home from town after dark because "they will hang you down here."

In 1958, an eighty-unit federally funded housing project called Hop-O-Nose was built between Hill Street and Catskill Creek. The buildings in Willard's Alley were torn down and replaced by a parking lot, which business owners hoped would be used by shoppers in the village's small business district. Many of the blacks in Catskill moved to Hop-O-Nose, including Vallie Ruff and her family and Gladys Ruff Lee and her family. Wyman Heath and his family eventually lived there as well.⁴⁵

Ultimately, the greatest beneficiaries of the migration have been the Catskill-born children of Warrenton natives. Wyman's son Eugene became the manager of Catskill's largest Main Street retail store. Eugene's brother Philip retired as the assistant deputy commissioner of the New York State Department of Corrections. Vallie's son Darren is a state trooper.

The most prominent of the migration's second generation was Edsall Walker, the son of Jerry and Isabella. He reached the apex of the Negro Baseball Leagues just before the integration of professional baseball. He played alongside all-time greats Josh Gibson and Cool Papa Bell on the Homestead Grays, which won nine league titles and two Negro League Championships during the time Walker pitched for them. The highlight of Walker's career was outdueling Satchel Paige before a large crowd at Griffith Park, then home of the white major league's Washington Senators.⁴⁶

Charles Swain wrote of Walker's Catskill childhood:

When he was five his father died, leaving Edsall to live with his mother, his Uncle Elias, his brother John and a married brother and sister-in-law. Everyone worked so they were not poor. His mother did laundry for most of the West side, his uncle worked in the brickyards, one brother drove a truck... and Edsall picked up and delivered laundry each day. In the summer he used his wagon, in the winter, his sled. But there was always time left for games and sports.

Edsall and the Reilly brothers, Doug and Eddie, were the best of friends. They played at one another's houses and at the Gallt's [house] down on Grandview. Mr. Reilly even built the boys a basketball hoop and put it up in his harness shop so they could play indoors in winter.⁴⁷

It is difficult to believe Walker would have received the same encouragement from whites had he grown up in Warrenton instead of Catskill.

Afterward: Warrenton

A History of Warren County, Georgia, 1793-1974 was published in time for the national bicentennial. It was written by Mrs. W. F. Wilhoit. According to the preface, she “is remembered for her work in [the] United Daughters of the Confederacy.” There is no mention in the book of lynching or the events of the 1937 cotton-picking season. A long discussion is proudly included on the non-compliance with *Brown v. Board of Education*. In 1970, under order from the federal court, Warrenton’s public schools were desegregated. At the same time, a private school, Briarwood Academy, opened.⁴⁸

One of the chapters of the book is titled “Negroes.” It opens:

The Negroes of Warren County are a peace-loving, quiet, respectful race. They are industrious and thrifty. Many of them have acquired homes and lands, and only the aged and infirm ask or expect aid from their white friends.

On very rare occasions do troubles arise, and then the Negroes, as well as the whites, are willing and eager for justice to be meted.

There has always been a very close tie between the whites and blacks of Warren County. It began in slavery time when the masters and mistresses loved and cared for their slaves...⁴⁹

This mention of “love” is the closest Mrs. Wilhoit comes to the mention of black men with blue eyes.

In the twenty-first century, Warren County is much the same as in years past. The interstate bypasses Warrenton by many miles. The nearest urban place, Augusta, is forty miles away. Blacks live on the far side of the tracks from Main Street. In 2012, Willie Kinsey was mowing the grass at the Kinsey family cemetery, deep in the woods off a red dirt road, where his cousins Willie and Lamar are buried next to their white ancestors.

The population of Warren County has fallen from over 11,000 in 1930 to under 7,000 today. This is due in part to the outmigration of blacks.⁵⁰

Echoes of the Confederacy linger.

In recent years, five large, all-weather display boards have been set in a perimeter around the Confederate statue on Warrenton’s courthouse square. One recounts the history of Warren County. Three list soldiers from the county who served in the Confederate Army. The fifth board presents a detailed account of the evolution of the Confederate flag.

A highway sign announces that Main Street is on the Jefferson Davis Heritage Trail, the Confederate president’s route of escape after Grant captured Richmond.⁵¹

On November 6, 2013, George Ivey was elected Warrenton’s first black mayor. In a three-way race against two whites, he received forty percent of the 461 votes cast.⁵²

Today the private Briarwood Academy has a 100-percent white enrollment, while the public schools are ninety-six percent black, as if *Brown v. Board of Education* never happened.⁵³

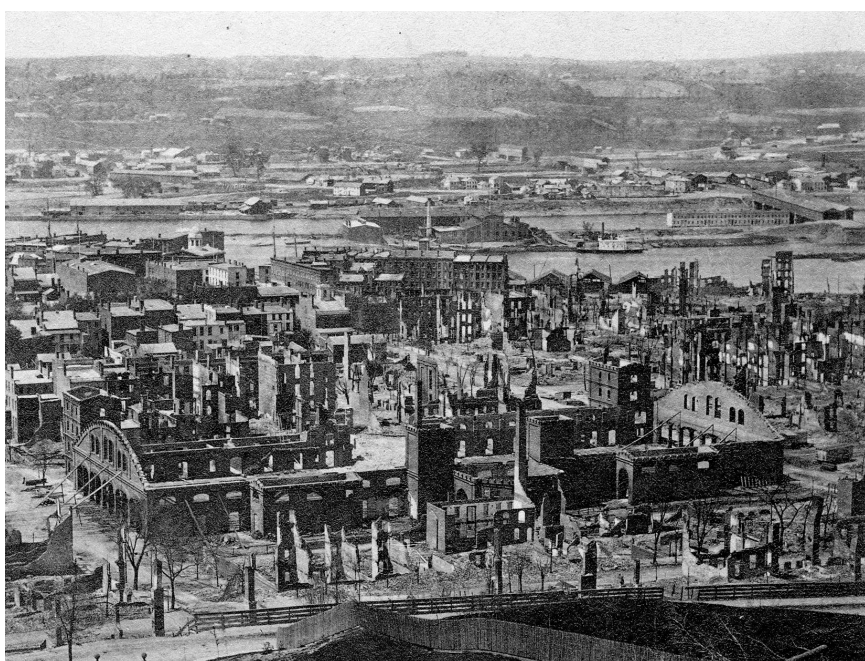
Ted Hilscher is an Associate Professor of History and Political Science at Columbia Greene Community College and practices law with his wife Nancy in Catskill. Clara Roberts of Warrenton has contributed greatly to the preservation of Warrenton history and to this article through her kindness and help afforded the author.

Endnotes

1. It is almost universally believed today that “the concept of race has not genetic or scientific basis” but is “a social concept.” (See *Racecraft* by Karen E. Fields and Barbara J. Fields, Verso, 2012.) With this in mind, we use the terms “black” and “white.” For an introduction to the Black Migration, see Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns* (New York: Random House, 2010), 8-15, 36-46.
2. Only the special schedules for the 1890 Federal census exist today. The New York census from 1892 does not list place of birth other than United States of America, so we cannot know if there were any blacks in Catskill who had been born in Georgia prior to those enumerated in the 1900 census.
3. The handwriting of the census taker is often illegible. We cannot be sure of many names, including “Luke” Smith. Walker’s obituary in the *Catskill Recorder* from February 19, 1916, reported Warrenton as his place of birth.
4. According to Book of Deeds 244, page 46, at the Greene County Clerk’s Office, Isabella and her children were deeded real property in 1926, ten years after Jerry’s death, and there are no previous deeds on which Jerry Walker is named. The fact that his children—his heirs—are named in the 1926 deed indicates there may have been a previous unrecorded deed giving him ownership, of which the 1926 deed was formal recognition. The 1910 census indicates Isabella had seven children, six of whom were living, which is inconsistent with the 1900 census.
5. In 1900, there are also clusters of black residences on West Main Street and Upper Main Street. Single black and Irish women lived and worked as domestics in all neighborhoods; Italian women are never found as domestics. The Catskill Mountain Railroad ran along Water Street until 1918. See William Helmer, *Rip Van Winkle Railroads* (Hensonville: Black Dome Press, 1999).
6. 1925 is the date on the church cornerstone. The deed to the former school, on a lot only twenty-one feet wide, can be found at Liber 126, page 335, at the Greene County Clerk’s office. Neighboring parcels were purchased on the north and south in 1893 (Liber 130, 260) and 1897 (Liber 145, 100). Italians, along with blacks, were considered non-whites in some places in the Hudson Valley in the early twentieth century. Persons of Italian descent recall today how the older families in Athens would not let their children bring home friends with Italian surnames for lunch.
7. The Mt. Tabor deed is at Liber 161, 174. The church can be found on the 1903 Sanborn map.
8. Swain was interviewed in Catskill on June 26, 2013, and said the agent’s name was Latimer. According to Maurice Latimer, interviewed June 22, 2011, in Catskill, his uncle Herman was the first Latimer in Catskill from Warrenton.
9. *New York Times*, December 13, 1864. 1907 is also the year the Confederate statue was placed on the Lafayette County courthouse square in William Faulkner’s Oxford, Mississippi.
10. The author visited Warrenton, Georgia, July 5-6, 2012, and conducted interviews with many people there.
11. The names of Revolutionary War and Civil War veterans of Warren County are listed on tablets on the courthouse lawn.
12. Interview with Clara Roberts in Warrenton on July 5-6, 2012. Mrs. Roberts taught in the Warren County schools for several decades and served as a census taker.
13. Latimer interview and interview with Philip Heath in Coxsackie, New York, June 28, 2012.
14. This custom was related by Mrs. Roberts. It was told to her by blacks who had grown up in Warrenton. Mrs. Roberts moved to Warrenton from south Georgia in 1965.
15. Donald L. Grant, *The Way it Was in the South* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 117-119.
16. W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993)*, 276, 278.

17. The evidence that "Substantial increases in rates [of lynching] occur only when blacks comprise a large percentage of the population" is found in Jay Corzine, James Creech and Lin Corzine, "Black Concentrations and Lynching in the South: Testing Blalock's Power Threat Hypothesis," *Social Forces*, vol. 61:3 March, 1983. Population figures are from Virginia Wilhoit, *History of Warren County* (Washington, Georgia: Wilkes Publishing Company, 1976), 162.
18. Certain details about the events of May 11-12, 1933, as recited in an interview with Willie Kinsey in Warrenton on July 5-6, 2012, supplement the version reported in the *Atlanta Constitution* May 14, 1933, and *New York Times* May 13, 1933. The identical A.P. wire story appeared in both papers.
19. Davis's biographical sketch is at Wilhoit, 237. The members of the Warrenton City Counsel are at Wilhoit, 64-65; American Legion at Wilhoit, 200; and Kiwanis Wilhoit, 211.
20. The doctor who saved the man from the mob was recalled by Mrs. Jackson. Dr. Kennedy's biographical sketch is at Wilhoit, 239. Kennedy's stand is based on oral history known to both Willie Kinsey and Mrs. Jackson. Dr. Kennedy's heroics are described in print here for the first time.
21. Mrs. Jackson was interviewed by Mrs. Roberts in Warrenton on July 26, 2012.
22. The dates of birth and death for Lamar and Willie Kinsey are on their gravestones in the family cemetery. Mrs. M. Dawson in Warrenton (born 1922) told Mrs. Roberts the early graves in the Kinsey cemetery were of whites. Neither the Davis nor Kennedy offices are extant. One doctor's office from this era still standing is that of Dr. N.B. Cason, one block from the courthouse square. Dr. Cason's office was simple, brick, one-story, and an example of what can only be called segregationist architecture. The main entranceway (through which all patients entered) was in the center of the building. On either side of the entranceway was a small wing: whites were treated on the left side, blacks on the right. The way in which Dr. Cason's office was utilized was related by Willie Kinsey.
23. See the *Warrenton Clipper*, May 19, 1933, for the absence of any mention of the lynching. However, news about the snap bean and peach crops was reported. Willie Kinsey placed his aunt and uncle's migration after the lynching. For a discussion of the connection between violence against blacks and black migration, see Stewart E. Tolnay and E. M. Beck "Rethinking the Role of Racial Violence in the Great Migration," found in Alferdteen Harrison (editor), *Black Exodus: The Great Migration from the American South* (Jackson and London: University Press of Mississippi, 1991).
24. American Civil Liberties Union, *Peonage in Georgia* (New York: American Civil Liberties Union, 1938).
25. Wilhoit, 219.
26. The third thread of this story runs through Hyde Park. Ira Katznelson argues convincingly in *Fear Itself* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2013) that Roosevelt accommodated the "traditions" of the Southern segregationists in Congress because he needed their support for his New Deal programs. It is of note that FDR first worked in Washington, D. C., as Assistant Secretary of the Navy in 1913-1920, when the the Wilson Administration was institutionalizing (and thereby normalizing) segregation in the federal government. Roosevelt's then-boss, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, had been one of the architects of the implementation of Jim Crow in North Carolina and of the 1898 Wilmington massacre. Rachel Marie-Crane Williams, "A War in Black and White: The Cartoons of Norman Ethre Jennett and the North Carolina Election of 1898," *Southern Cultures*, volume 19, issue 2, Summer 2013. On Cummings at the 1924 convention, see Robert K. Murray, *The 103rd Ballot* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).
27. Wilhoit, 152.
28. Interview with Charles Hawshaw in Catskill, July 20, 2004.
29. *Southern Life, Northern City* by Jennifer A. Lemak (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008) is about the Shubuta-to-Albany migration. "Black Neighborhood Formation in Poughkeepsie during the Great Migration, 1950-1970" by Denise Love Johnson is found in *Mighty Change, Tall Within*, edited by Myra B. Young Armstead (State University of New York Press: Albany, 2003). See also Myra B. Young Armstead, *Seeking Our Fortune in the North* (South Fallsburg: Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, Sullivan County Chapter, 1998)
30. Johnson, 165-166.
31. For more on Willard's Alley, see my article "The Parking Lots of Main Street Catskill" in *The Hudson River Valley Review*, Spring, 2008.

32. Interview with Philip Heath; interview with Moses Heath, Jr., in Warrenton, July 5, 2012.
33. Interview with Philip Heath; Wyman and his wife Rebecca bought their house on West Bridge Street on August 15, 1941. See the deed recorded at Liber 285, p. 513, at the Greene County Clerk's Office.
34. This is a paraphrase of remarks by Wyman Heath's son Gene.
35. Interview with Philip Heath.
36. Interview with Philip Heath.
37. Affidavit, Greene County Clerk's Office, Miscellaneous Book F, p. 187.
38. Interview with Maurice Latimer.
39. Interview with Maurice Latimer; Karen A. Edelman *Jackson's Bar and Grill*, unpublished manuscript, 1997, Vedder Memorial Library, Cossackie, N.Y.; John H. Jackson bought the Bronson Street property on September 30, 1952. See the deed recorded at Liber 330, 14-20, at Greene County Clerk's Office.
40. Interview with Maurice Latimer.
41. Interview with Randy Latimer in Catskill, February 8, 2015.
42. Interview with Darren Ruff by telephone, July 20, 2012; interview with Gladys Ruff Lee in Catskill, August 2, 2013; interview with Ted Guterman by telephone, August 5, and August 6, 2013. Charles Swain said that, within his memory, Frederick Walker owned the boarding house on Windsor Street and ran a bus between Catskill and American Valve in Cossackie.
43. Interview with Gladys Ruff Lee. Ossie is pronounced with a long "O."
44. Interview with Gladys Ruff Lee. The surname of her mother's father was Johnson. Her father's family had apparently also suffered from lynching. Ralph Ginzburg in *One Hundred Years of Lynching* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1988) reports Joshua Ruff was lynched November 18, 1897, in Gibson, the county seat of Glascock County, neighbor to Warren County.
45. Interview with Annie Pearl Tarver and her daughter Suzette Turpin in Catskill February 8, 2015. The remaining buildings associated with black community life in twentieth-century Catskill are the two churches, the Hop-O-Nose housing complex, and two buildings in which black bars were once located: Smalley's on Upper Water Street and the White Horse at 354 Main Street. Jackson's Bar, Wyman Heath's chippie joint, the boarding house on Windsor Street, and all of Willard's Alley have been demolished. The 1925 Baptist church on Water Street is now an apartment house. The congregation has moved into the former Methodist church on Upper Main Street. Mt. Tabor is an active congregation in its Water Street location.
46. James A. Riley, *The Biographical Encyclopedia of The Negro Baseball Leagues* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2002).
47. *Catskill Daily Mail*, February 20, 2013. According to his obituary in the Recorder, Jerry Walker died of Bright's disease at age fifty.
48. Wilhoit, 152, 155.
49. Wilhoit, 157.
50. Wilhoit, 162.
51. www.civilwarheritagetrails.org
52. Online reports from numerous Georgia television stations.
53. For demographics of the Warren County public schools and Briarwood Academy, www.greatschools.org. After her retirement from teaching, Mrs. Roberts was elected to the Warren County Board of Education. A vocal critic of what she believed to be inadequate funding for Warren County public schools, she was removed from the board by Gov. Sonny Perdue along with two fellow board members. The courts later reversed the removals, declaring the governor had no authority, although by that time her term had expired. Georgia Supreme Court decision, March 19, 2012, Roberts et al. v. Deal, Governor et al.



Top: (detail of) Charles Himes stereoview from before the fire—Union station in foreground, Green Island bridge at middle right. Bottom: (detail of) Charles Himes stereoview from after the fire—ruins of Union Station in foreground, remains of Green Island Bridge at middle right. All images courtesy of the Rensselaer County Historical Society

Notes & Documents

One of the most formative events in the history of Troy, New York, happened on May 10, 1862, in the midst of the Civil War, when within just a few hours a major bridge over the Hudson River and more than 500 buildings in the heart of the city were destroyed in a huge conflagration. Closer examination of this event, known even today as the Great Fire, and the resources that document it reveal how a variety of perspectives gleaned from these sources help to reclaim the context of the long ago past and illuminate its continued impact. The story of “The Air Was Full Of Smoke And Cinders”—Troy’s Great Fire of 1862 can serve as a model for examining community history and how connections can be made between the past and the present.¹

“The Air was Full of Smoke and Cinders”

Troy’s Great Fire of 1862

Stacy Pomeroy Draper

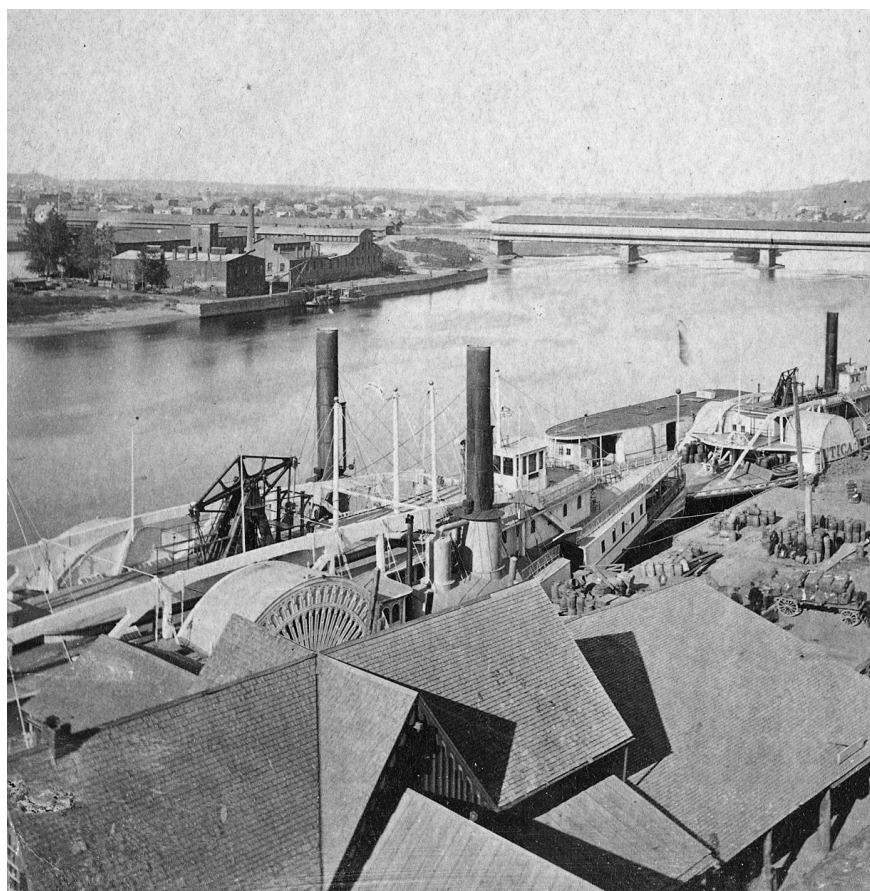
What was the immediate impact of the fire on the city and its residents? What did “recovery” look like in the mid-nineteenth century? How does a community-wide event like this affect the “psyche” of that community, helping to create meaning and identity long after normalcy returns and all physical evidence of the disaster has disappeared? And finally, how can a better understanding of the Great Fire create a model for others to follow as they examine key events in their own history with the goal of better understanding how historical events impact the present, not just locally but globally?

In looking at the Great Fire, we have been lucky to find a wide variety of resources, both in Rensselaer County Historical Society (RCHS) collections and other repositories: newspaper articles, a few photographic and print images, personal letters describing the event written within days of the fire, and published reminiscences looking back many years later. Several maps exist that show the area of the “burnt district.” Earlier maps and atlases reveal what buildings existed before the fire. The event has even provided artistic inspiration over the years.²

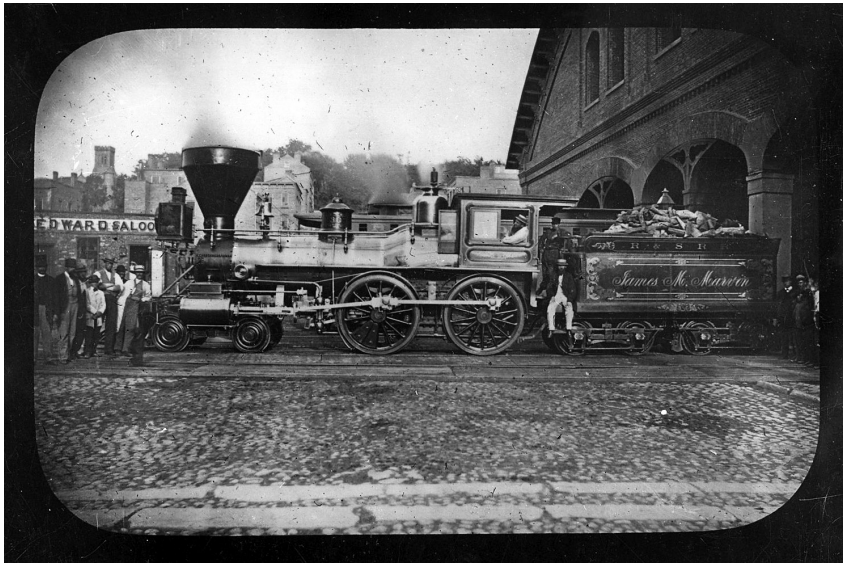
Sometimes one has to approach an event like this from a somewhat roundabout route—for instance, looking in the editor’s notes in the 1862 city directory published after a month’s delay to allow residents and businesses to resettle after the fire.³ Another source has been official government documents like the Common Council reports that note what kind of expenditures were paid for “Relief to sufferers by fire, 10th May.”⁴ Legal and governmental documents also have been of help in building a picture of the impact of this disaster—Rensselaer County Surrogate Court records exist for at least

one of the casualties of the fire (and there were only half a dozen confirmed human deaths, a truly remarkable circumstance), helping to shed a bit of light on the personal impact of the fire.⁵ Ironically, it was another, smaller fire in Troy's City Hall in 1938 that destroyed what might have been a valuable source of greater detail than the published City Chamberlain's Report that has come down to us.⁶

Troy in the 1850s was rapidly becoming an industrial giant as iron and steel foundries and the relatively new collar and cuff factories geared up for production that would send Troy-made goods around the globe. The 1858 map of Troy by William Barton gives some idea of the city just a few years prior to the fire.⁷ Troy's population just before the Civil War approached 40,000 and included a growing number of Irish and other smaller immigrant groups.⁸ The city had expanded out of the valley where it had started at the end of the eighteenth century and up onto the hills to the east as well as along the Hudson River both north and south of the city center. The 1848



Stereoview showing Troy Steamboat Docks in foreground
and Green Island Bridge in distance, c. 1860



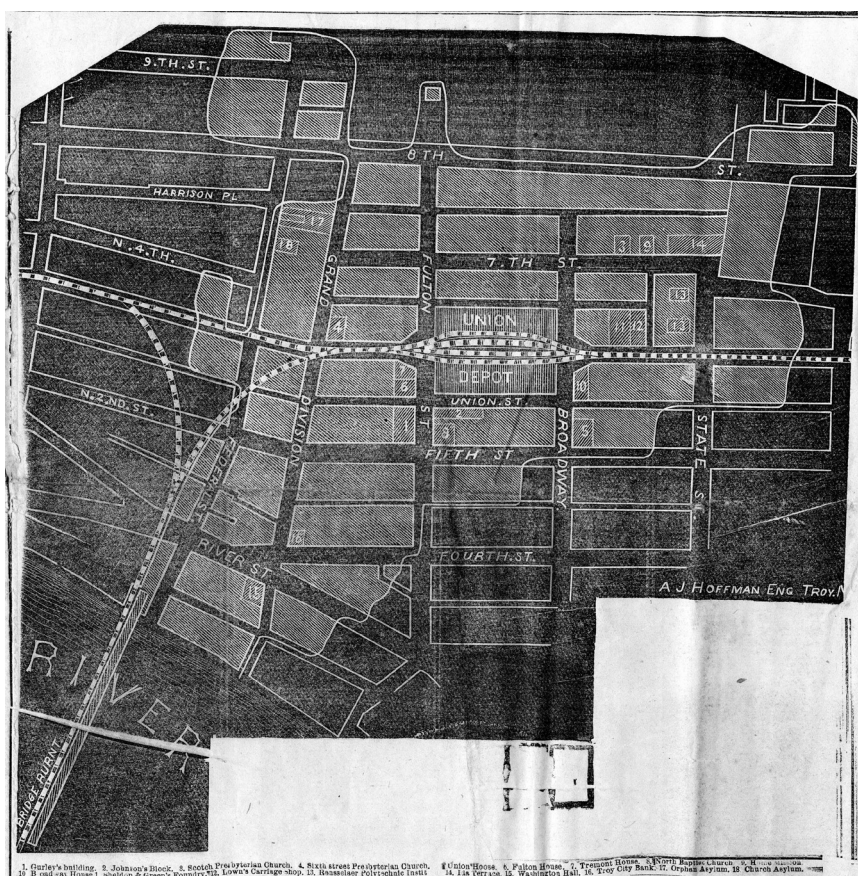
Locomotive similar to the one that started the fire on the Green Island Bridge. This view is near the north end of the rebuilt Union Station train shed (at right) looking east

bird's-eye view of Troy looking west by H & DP Barringer and several early photographic views of the Troy waterfront and the bridge that played a key role in the conflagration provide us with some visual context.

Like most urban centers in the nineteenth century, Troy had dealt with large fires before, notably one in 1820 that caused extensive damage to the River Street business district between Congress Street and Broadway and another in 1854 in the growing industrial area to the south of the city center. In his seventy-fifth anniversary reminiscence of the 1862 fire, Charles King noted that at the time of this blaze

The city was closely built. There were many frame houses while the alleys were lined with wooden barns, and the back yards filled with sheds and out-buildings, offering every opportunity for a small blaze to grow rapidly into a conflagration.⁹

On a copy of the 1858 Barton map in the Rensselaer County Historical Society's collection, the field of fire has been overlaid in a faint pink wash. The extent of the fire is clearer in the map from *Troy's One Hundred Years* (Weise, 1891), a published history of the city's first century that also quotes extensively from newspapers published the day of the disaster. It is possible to see that the fire started on the railroad bridge that crossed the Hudson River at approximately the same location as today's Troy-Green Island Bridge.¹⁰ Sparks from a locomotive heading west across the covered bridge caught the dry wood of the roof on fire. A strong westerly wind blew burning embers into the city, where flames moved quickly in a northwest to southeast direction. Over 500 buildings were destroyed in less than six hours.



Field of fire map done by AJ Hoffman for the May 11th Troy Times newspaper

RCHS collections hold several issues of the *Troy Daily Whig* and the *Troy Daily Times* that give accounts, some of them almost minute-by-minute, of the fire's progress through the city and its aftermath. A number of newspaper articles also have been preserved in scrapbooks now in the RCHS collections. From the newspaper accounts, it is possible to get a sense of the “fog of war” effect of being in the midst of an emergency—of getting all kinds of information, accurate and inaccurate, and in the rush of the moment not being able to distinguish clearly between what is really happening and wild rumors. In the age of the telegraph, the story was quickly transmitted around the country; newspapers ran stories about the fire based on articles in the Troy papers until their own reporters could arrive on scene, some just hours after the fire ended. Rumors that Troy was completely destroyed continued to run rife and were consciously debunked by all sources in the days after the disaster.¹¹

More personal accounts have come down to us as well and can be compared to the second-hand information. RCHS is fortunate to have four firsthand accounts, from two

days after the fire through the following two months. Other accounts can be gleaned from some of the published resources like *The Firemen* and the *Fire Departments of Troy, N.Y.* by Arthur J. Weise (1895). In his 1937 reminiscence, Charles King recounts his experience of the fire as a boy of about eight years old.¹²

King and his family lived at 1834 Seventh Avenue, where “the family consisted of my father, mother, a baby sister, Aunt Sarah, my mother’s sister, dog Jack and myself.”¹³ He had started his day downtown, waiting for a chance to deliver a message to his father, who worked at Quackenbush’s, a large general merchandise store at Third Street and Broadway. People at first did not realize the danger they were in and moved down along the riverfront to observe the burning bridge.

From where I stood I could see people running up Fourth Street and I heard someone shout “The bridge is burning.”

A few minutes later father came out and we followed the throng up Fourth Street to near the corner of River and Federal Streets. The covered wooden bridge with its shingled roof was a roaring mass of flame mounting a hundred feet in the air, and sweeping towards shore like a blast from a furnace. High above our heads thousands of sparks, mingled with burning embers, planks, and shingles were flying before the gale and falling on the city like rain.

The crowd was strangely silent awed by the spectacle, and only where the heat became uncomfortable did it move slowly back, hardly realizing that the fire was beyond control.¹⁴



Entrance to the Green Island Bridge, Troy side of Hudson River. This copy of a now-missing original image is the only extant view of the bridge entrance

The loss of the Troy-Green Island Bridge meant that railroad traffic both from and to the west would be stopped along with a key pedestrian/horse-drawn vehicle crossing point of the Hudson. At the time, the closest remaining span was in Waterford, just over four miles to the north. There were no bridges to the south all the way to New York City. (The first bridge at Albany, something Trojans had fought against since the early nineteenth century, was still four years away.) The Troy-Green Island Bridge also carried telegraph lines that were destroyed in the blaze. Until a new bridge, made of iron with an iron roof, was completed, a temporary structure, also of iron, served the community. It was first used on July 4, 1862, an event duly noted in the *Troy Daily Times* and other newspapers.¹⁵

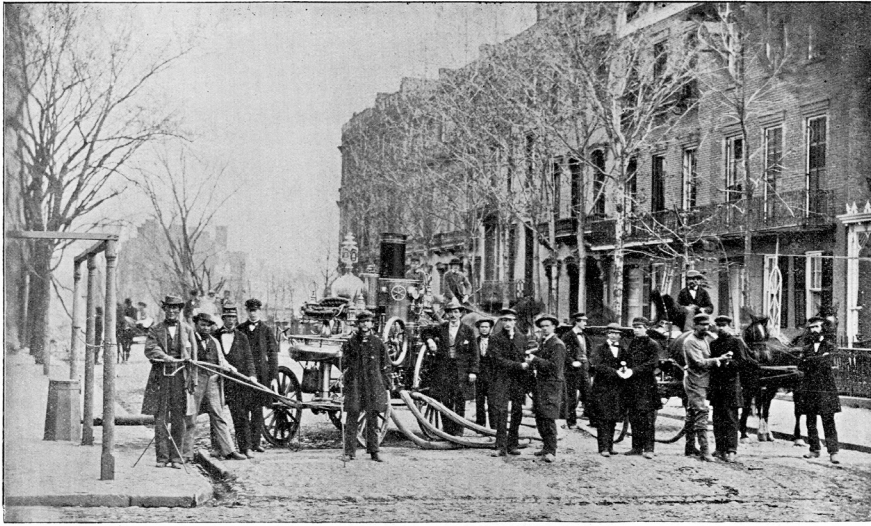
As the conflagration grew exponentially, people began to grasp its real threat. Many tried to save their homes and businesses, but any headway made against the flames could disappear in an instant because of the windblown embers. Troy's fire companies and companies from around the area came on scene, some travelling by railroad, ferry, or steamboat to get to the fire. They did their best to create a fire break—at one point, on the orders of Mayor James Thorn, a team from the Watervliet Arsenal (located just across the river) planned to blow up buildings to prevent the flames' spread.¹⁶

Troy was unusual in that the city had three steam fire engines. Without them, there would have been no way at all to fight a fire like this. A fourth steamer was sent down from Waterford from the well-known Button & Blake Fire-Engine Works to assist. The letter to "Cousin Allie," written by her "Cousin Aurora" Parker Jones just two days after the fire, gives some idea of the pandemonium and panic that began to spread through the city shortly after noon.

At 12 1/2 o'clk I had been at the steam-boat landing witnessing the magnificent spectacle of the burning bridge and returning heard that the fire had communicated to River St. I hastened up; at Fulton St. heard that 6th St. Presbly[terian] Ch[urch] was on fire, saw people hurrying with valuables away from Washington Hall and turning into the street contents of the stores north of W.H. I turned up Grand Division St. and at the Troy City B(an)k saw the belfry of 6th St. Ch blazing. *The air was full of smoke and cinders.* I went in to Mrs. Pecks. All were working with pails putting out the cinders that lit on the roofs of the houses, barns and sheds of that block. I took off my hat and coat & worked 1/2 an hour with the others until an unguarded barn blazed up when we saw that all efforts to save the block were hopeless. The steeple of 6th St. Ch had fallen and the fire was raging in 7th St. It was coming on rapidly from River. I went through the alley (between 6th & 5th St) into Grand D[ivision]. A woman hailed me & said a poor widow could save nothing she had if she could not get help then. I went in her house asked her to point out her most valuable trunk—& the woman—Miss Clark—& I carried it to North 2d St by way of the RR from Grand D. [see map] until she was exhausted then I shouldered it a little way until we got to the Methodist Ch[urch]...

She ends her long, harrowing description with the following heartfelt comment:

Yesterday my limbs were so stiff that I walked as if I had lost about four blocks worth of property and weighed about 250 lbs.¹⁷



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

HUGH RANKEN STEAMER AT THE CORNER OF BROADWAY AND FIFTH STREET.

1 HUGH RANKEN, 7 IRVING ROSE,	2 A. L. HOTHKIN, 8 WILLIAM BAILEY,	3 GEORGE W. SHEPARD, 9 MARTIN R. HARRIS,	4 DAVID M. RANKEN, 10 A. H. ATWOOD,	5 CHARLES F. GREEN, 11 JOHN C. GREEN,	6 THOMAS H. BAILEY, 12 CHARLES COGGER,
13 THERON RICHARDS,	14 JOSEPH A. RICHARDS,	15 SAMUEL K. BRIGGS,	16 JOSEPH MOORE,	17 NATHAN F. HODGMAN,	

Photo of Hugh Ranken Steamer Company the day after the Great Fire at Broadway and Fifth Avenue

Charles King's experience was just as dramatic as he and his family tried to escape from their home to safer ground. His memories of the day were honed and refined over the years. Then in his eighties, he provided reminiscences of the fire not in the language of childhood but as an adult who had revisited and retold the story many times. After racing back home from downtown with his father, King notes:

The struggle to save the barn and house soon proved hopeless and then came a desperate effort to save some of the things from the house. I think that salvage crew was pretty well demoralized for I saw one of them throw the parlor lamp out of the window and carefully carry the sofa pillows out on the sidewalk, while another heroically rescued a couple of kitchen chairs.

Our most treasured piece of furniture, a heavy mahogany table, father carried out on his back down the street for nearly a block where he caught a wagon and hired the driver to take care of it—I guess he did, for we never saw it again.

Looking from the upper window of our house the scene was now appalling. It looked as though the whole world were on fire...¹⁸

Once the fire had abated in the late afternoon, the immediate need was to take care of those who had been left homeless. The *New York Times* of May 12 describes the "Provisions for the Destitute" as follows:

As night drew near on Saturday, it was evident there were thousands in the streets who knew not where they were to sleep or obtain anything to eat. Hundreds of citizens threw open their houses, and invited in all they could accommodate.

The announcement was made as public as possible, that the chapel of St. Paul's church on State St., had been thrown open, and 40 women and children spent the night there. In the evening and again in the morning, baskets of sandwiches, meats, and large quantities of hot coffee were furnished.¹⁹

By the next day, the *Albany Evening Journal* noted that sightseers complicated the recovery effort:

Every thing in the shape of horse and vehicle was yesterday brought into requisition, to convey our citizens to Troy. The omnibuses were almost broken down with the loads they carried, and the steamers *Tracey* and *Corning* carried hundreds up every trip they made, in fact it was actually hazardous to attempt to get on board of the [boats] so great was the rush. Hundreds of persons walked to Troy during the day, being unable to procure any conveyance. We should judge that at least ten thousand persons from this city [Albany] visited the burnt district during the day.²⁰

A letter written by Mrs. Amelia Meacham on May 18 to her niece, "Georgie" Meacham in Taunton, Massachusetts, describes the scene just a week after the fire as smoke still rose from the remains of buildings. The experience still fresh (although she did not lose property), she writes about her sightseeing carriage ride.

...This afternoon Charles took a Carriage, and carried me around the burnt district, to take a look at the Ruins. And Oh, it was a terrible sight. It did not seem as if it could be Troy, and a portion too of the very center of the City. The smoke was rising from the ruins in every direction. The Fire took place a week ago yesterday (Saturday) and I tell you Georgie, I was never so alarmed at a fire in my life.²¹

A letter also in the RCHS Collections from JH Kellogg to his "Cousin Sarah" was written over a month after the fire on June 18 and shows how the immediacy of the experience he describes has begun to be put into perspective. It is clearly a "self-edited" version, something we all do when processing events that impact our lives in a dramatic way, creating a narrative that helps us cope with a new reality. Trying to make sense out of the chaos and also writing after steps had been taken to deal with the fire's aftermath, Kellogg's letter shows that things had moved into the next phase—that of rebuilding. The stunned disbelief he notes on the faces of Trojans in 1862 is all too familiar to New Yorkers 150 years later, yet resiliency of spirit clearly triumphs.

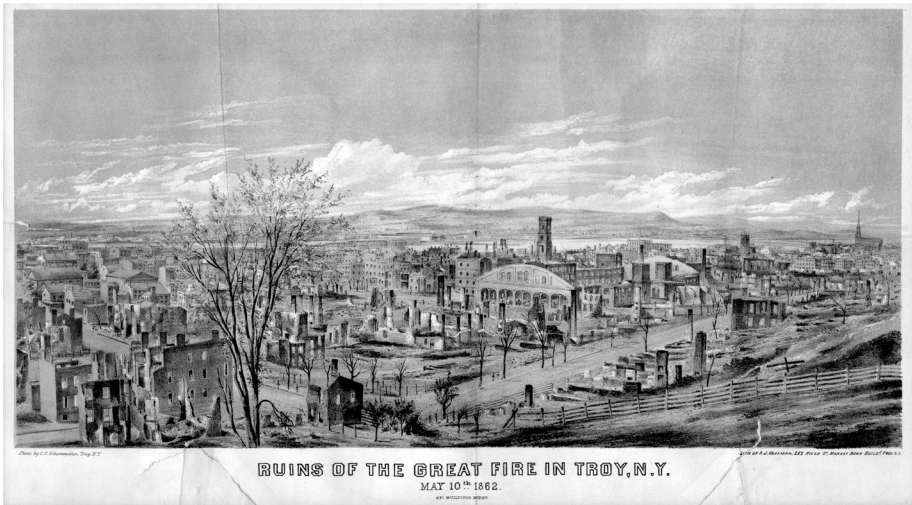
I have never before had any adequate idea of the tremendous power of this element under favoring circumstances. What in ordinary times would be considered a disastrous conflagration would seem but as a single spark to the great sea of flame that was spread through our city. Seven or eight hundred buildings were consumed in half a dozen hours and hundreds of families left homeless—numbers of them penniless. Our church was burned and about one third of the whole number of families in the congregation were injured in some way directly by the fire.—I never saw so desolate a spot as was the burnt district the day after the conflagration, nor have I ever seen such white faces, such looks of anguish, almost of despair as met my gaze often during the afternoon of that sad day.—As for work—it seems as though manual labor had been before almost unknown to me—I worked as did almost everyone, incessantly all the afternoon and evening

& became so fully exhausted as scarcely to be able to sleep or rest at all until the next day, so great was my fatigue.—Of our Engine Company [the Arba Read Steam No. 1] we could hardly raise a half dozen members fit for any sort of duty the next (Sunday) morning... As to the city at large—there is an excellent spirit of energy and enterprise manifested—already most of the stores are in process of re-construction—also the Union depot & some dwellings—a large foundry &c.—There is no disposition to be discouraged but a great deal of cheerfulness.²²

Almost two months after the fire, on July 8, 1862, William Cluett wrote an account of the disaster to his daughter Emily Cluett Cadby in England. In the letter he describes the family's experience more succinctly, perhaps due to the increased distance from the event itself. He provides great detail and also focuses on the family's determination to rebuild and the progress made toward that goal.

I did not see the letter your Mamma sent, but I suppose she gave some particulars of the fire. O what a terrible desolation in the short space of about 3 hours! I left the dinner table about ½ past 12 o'clock, & the fire spread with such fearful rapidity, that I was cut off from all approaches to Eighth St. till about 4 o'clock, & then I found the nice house I had so recently left, a heap of ruins. I had 300 or 400 Dollars in the drawer in my bed room, most of it in gold & silver, & the boys broke the lock, & carried the drawer & its contents to the beautiful Mansion of a neighbor opposite, supposing it would be perfectly safe there. But that house was burnt too, & the money with it. We thought it was all lost, but a week or so afterwards, we were so fortunate as to dig out of the ruins about 220 Dollars in gold & Silver. We were tolerably well insured, or our loss would have been very great. As it is, we may safely set it down at 1500 Dollars, at least, or £300 sterling. This you seem to think, is a terrible loss, & it really is a large sum to lose, & cost a great deal of labor to get together; but we were so thankful that the whole family had escaped uninjured, & that our business was spared to us, that we have given ourselves but little concern about what we have lost. If you would have seen us on the evening of the fire, when gathered in the cottage that was providentially open for us, you would not have supposed, from our merriment, &c., that we had lost House, Furniture, Apparel, & almost everything. The children said, 'Never mind it Father, we are all young, healthy, & industrious. We will put our shoulders to the wheel, & soon recover all we have lost.' Although so many hundreds were placed in precisely the same circumstances as ourselves, yet we found numerous kind friends, who urged us to accept their hospitalities. We were, in fact, overloaded with kindness.²³

Of course "a picture is worth a thousand words," and 1862 was the age of photography. While the first image of the event was the map of the field of fire that A.J. Hoffman produced for the special edition of the *Troy Daily Times* published May 11, within a week ads were placed by photographers saying, for example, that "PHOTOGRAPHS of the ruins of the late fire, have been taken by J.M. Herron & Co., opposite the Mansion House. Copies for sale at low prices." ²⁴ A graphic version of Troy photographer Christopher C. Schoonmaker's view of the "Ruins of the Great Fire" was made by Hoffman as well. Even the national press, including *Harper's Weekly*, published print images of the devastation.²⁵ The recent discovery and purchase of a number of stereoviews by amateur photographer Charles Himes showing Troy before and after the fire have enhanced



View based on the photograph taken by Christopher C. Schoonmaker
and engraved by A.J. Hoffman



View of ruins of the Great Fire looking east into the city from the Green Island Bridge. The arch of one end of Union Station train shed is seen middle right, Troy University is the large building with towers at the top of the hillside; just below it is the remains of the church tower of the Second Presbyterian Church

significantly the visual record of the event. Because these images were from glass plate negatives, they can be enlarged to reveal many details that add to the story.²⁶

Not just photography was used to capture the event. One of the RCHS's recent research "ah ha" moments occurred with the *View of Poestenkill* by well-known American folk artist (and Poestenkill resident) Joseph Hidley (1830-1872), now in the collections of the New York State Historical Association in Cooperstown. The painting shows a large, dark cloud in the background, traditionally identified as a storm cloud. Several years ago, RCHS staff were looking at a reproduction of the painting and noticed the inscription at the bottom, "May the 10, 1862," completely changing our understanding of the image. Clearly, Hidley was taking note of an event that blew burning material as far east of Troy as the hills near Poestenkill—the cloud was smoke from the Great Fire visible ten miles away. Grandma Moses, another well-known name in the folk art world and a resident of Rensselaer County, also did a painting, *The Burning of Troy 1862*, in 1943. It takes a bit more artistic license than the Hidley view, but also shows that the event lived on in local memory. The artist was just two years old at the time

of the Great Fire but apparently worked in Troy for a time before her marriage and likely heard stories about it that inspired the artwork.

On Monday, May 12, the *Troy Daily Whig* had a detailed article on the fire that noted in the editorial:

The sentiment among our citizens is that we shall recover from the fire all in good time. Many portions swept over will soon be built up better than ever. There is not the slightest inclination anywhere to 'say die,' or to lie down under the disaster.²⁷

The writer goes on to say:

The portion of the town destroyed is so desirable in all respects for residences and business, that it will command immediate rebuilding. Many of the losses will be relieved at on[c]e by the Insurance Companies.²⁸

In our own time, with the fifteenth anniversary of 9/11 not far off and images of the recent flood damage from Tropical Storm Irene and Hurricane Sandy in mind, it is possible to get some idea of what it must have been like in Troy in the days and weeks immediately after the fire. The several photos that survive of the fire's aftermath tell their own story about what residents were facing. Local historian and author Arthur J. Weise notes in his book, *The Firemen and Fire Departments of Troy,*



Betsey A Hart challenged the community to match a \$10,000 donation for relief for those affected by the fire. Her home at 59 Second Street, now a historic house museum operated by the Rensselaer County Historical Society, was not in the "burnt district"

NY, written many years after the fact, that only about half of the properties destroyed had insurance, making their quick rebuilding even more of an accomplishment.²⁹ Much of the insurance money was paid out within a week or two of the disaster, making it possible to start rebuilding quickly. The Gurley Mathematical Instrument Company, the largest business loss in the fire, was one of the first new construction projects. The firm is still in business in Troy at the same post-fire location.

Human interest stories continued to be published months after the event. Particular emphasis was placed on acknowledging the many donations that came both from local residents and from around the nation. Betsey Hart, at the time the owner of RCHS's historic house, now known as the Hart-Cluett House, pledged \$10,000 to rebuild the Troy Orphan Asylum. New York City, which had benefited from generous donations from Troy after its own disastrous fire in 1835, recip-

located with more than \$25,000. For the longer haul, relief committees that formed around the country (often including former Troy residents) worked hard raising funds to help overcome the serious challenge of providing food, clothing, and shelter for the thousands displaced by the fire. It was, after all, an age before widespread government-sponsored disaster aid. While it was a source of pride that the city was being rebuilt “better” than before, some of the work did take longer than expected. It was a number of months later when melting snow alerted people to the still-smoldering remains of several buildings on River Street. Even a full year out, “embers of the 10th of May” were discovered in a red-hot brick. It was duly carried to the Arba Read engine house, presumably to be “extinguished” and become a souvenir.³⁰

There are many more aspects of this event than can be dealt with in a short article. Despite some inaccuracies, it was the newspapers that did the most to help define the community’s sense of the disaster and communicate its impact to local residents and a wider audience. The clear goal was to return to normalcy as soon as possible. There was added incentive since the Civil War was raging and Troy was providing much-needed war materiel and soldiers. As with today’s coverage of disasters, putting the human interest story first helped to both personalize and create a narrative for a traumatic community event. The years after the Great Fire saw many changes that can be related directly to that event. While the buildings that were destroyed were replaced quickly, most within six months, city building codes were changed to reflect use of more fire-resistant materials like cast iron for window lintels and whole storefronts—products that Troy’s iron industry was able to manufacture.

Subsequent analysis of how the fire was handled, along with firefighting technology and procedural improvements, helped to prevent a similar catastrophe from occurring again.³¹ The fire department evolved from volunteer firefighters to a professional, paid department by 1895, and fire equipment—from engines to hose, to ladders and firefighting procedures—evolved as well into the twentieth century. The science of firefighting also developed and led to a range of fire-retardant chemicals and resistant materials from clothing to building products. Fire safety and fire prevention education, virtually non-existent in 1862, has become commonplace in schools, with the goal of a better-prepared community response to fire emergencies. However, it is sobering to note that even today a conflagration like the Great Fire—with multiple fire locations created by wind and flash-overs—would be difficult, if not impossible, to stop from causing massive damage.

Twenty years after the Great Fire, an 1881 bird’s-eye view of Troy shows that the city’s recovery and growth continued. Perhaps not surprisingly, 100 years later much of the field of fire had succumbed to Troy’s urban renewal process.³² Urban environments are impacted by many things. Today, much of that same land has been rebuilt again, but rebuilding on those lands has been slower and created an entirely different building stock and streetscape for contemporary Troy.

So how is this disaster a model for understanding the past? Perspective remains

a critical element. The key is to find “impartial” sources of information and compare them with more personal and biased accounts to recreate the context surrounding an event in a community. The *more* detailed and nuanced the results of research are, and the *closer* we can get to connecting to that moment in the past, the *greater* is our understanding of our own present day. The fact that disasters like the Great Fire of 1862 generally have a rich documentary heritage as well as a universal interest allows us to see through that particular window into the past and make history real again.

Stacy Pomeroy Draper is Curator and Archivist at the Rensselaer County Historical Society.

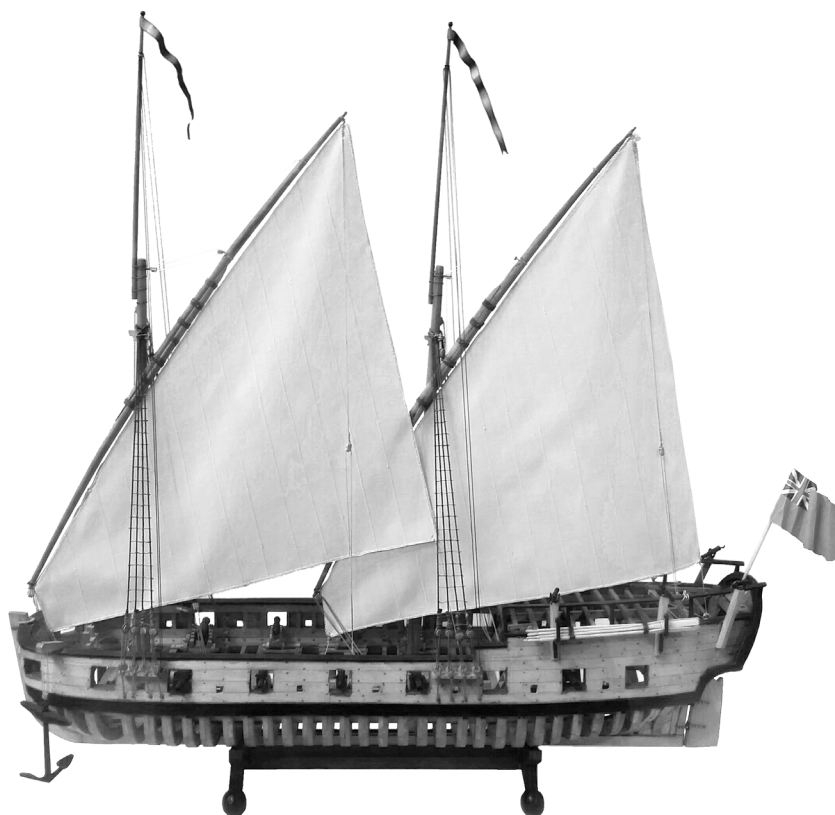
Endnotes

1. The quote in the title of this paper is taken from the May 12, 1862, letter of *Cousin Aurora to Cousin Allie* (1964).²¹ Gift of Mrs. William H. Boughton, Rensselaer County Historical Society Collection), which uses these words to describe the firestorm during the Great Fire from which she was escaping. See Note 17 for more information about the letter and its writer. I should also note here my thanks and appreciation to several fellow researchers—independent scholar and fire safety/security expert Paul Schneider and to Chuck Porter, Bill Skerritt, and former Troy Assistant Fire Chief Craig Leroy who have written the most complete history to date of the disaster, *Great Fire: Troy, NY* (2012). Each assisted me in finding new information and in analyzing this event from their different perspectives and areas of expertise. I also thank my RCHS colleagues Kathy Sheehan and Ilene Frank and volunteer researchers extraordinaire Barbara Urban, Chris Kelly, and Elsa Prigozy for adding many bits and pieces to the history of this major community event. The RCHS collections have many resources for the study of this fire and its impact, a project that has been of both great personal and institutional interest over the last decade.
2. Both Joseph Hidley (1830-1872) and Anna Mary Robertson “Grandma” Moses (1860-1961) created paintings that showed the Great Fire.
3. Troy City Directory, 1862. The Preface notes “...At the time of the fire we had made but little progress toward collecting and compiling the information for this work, and in consequence of which we delayed operations for several weeks, that we might be able to ascertain and record the new locations of those who unfortunately had their residence or place of business destroyed. Thus we excuse ourselves for the delay in completing the work...”
4. *Thirty-Eighth Annual Report of the Chamberlain of the City of Troy to the Common Council... For the Fiscal Year ending March 2d, 1863*, from the Steam Presses of the Troy Daily Times, CCXI River-St. 1863.
5. A Rensselaer County Surrogate Court file exists for one of the people killed in the fire, Dr. Zenas Carey, an elderly physician. His wife, Betsey Carey, also was badly burned in the fire trying to rescue her husband. Names of other fire victims are listed in Arthur J. Weise, *The Firemen and Fire Departments of Troy* (1895) as Ransom S. Haight, Thomas O'Donnell, Mary Dunlop, Catherine Murray, and George R. Crane. Other sources also list a child, daughter of a John Kennedy. A week after the fire, William W. Hagan died from his injuries. No complete accounting exists of those injured in the blaze.
6. Troy's City Hall fire in 1938 destroyed many public records, creating a void in the resources that might have been available to researchers looking at this event and many others up until that time. Troy's governmental functions were spread out in a number of offices and buildings around the city until 1974, when a new purpose-built building was constructed on River Street at Monument Square. It has since been demolished.
7. *City of Troy N.Y. From Actual Surveys By William Barton, City Surveyor & Civil Engineer*. Published by W. Barton & J. Chace, Jr., No. 205 River St. 1858. The copy of this map owned by the RCHS has additional labels as follows “*Re-arranged in Book Form For Insurance Purposes By SE Babcock, Civil Engineer, Troy, April 10, 1859.*” Babcock is quoted in the *Albany Evening Journal* of May 13 (just three days after the Great Fire) regarding the payment of insurance claims after the fire. As his ad in the 1861 *Troy City Directory* notes, he was agent for about a dozen different insurance companies.

8. Weise, Arthur J., *Troy's One Hundred Years*, p.374. Population of Troy table. Today's population is just over 50,000.
9. Troy Public Library Scrapbooks, Roll 25, 1937, 267-268. "Great Blaze Razing Most Of Troy In '62 Recalled By Trojan." *Troy Record*, May 10, 1937.
10. *Troy Times Extra*, April (May) 11, 1862.
11. 1862 Troy City Directory. The Preface notes "It is true, on the 10th of May last, we witnessed the greatest fire that ever visited the City of Troy, and which burned a large portion of the most thickly populated part of the town; yet to say that Troy is ruined, is not the fact; for with its peculiar location at the head of navigation on the Hudson, its Railroad and Canal advantages, together with its immense trade and manufacturing establishments, it must and will within a short time, fully recover from this great calamity."
12. Troy Public Library Scrapbooks, Roll 25, 1937, 267-268. "Great Blaze Razing Most Of Troy In '62 Recalled By Trojan." *Troy Record*, May 10, 1937. Working Saturday half-days was common at the time. Checking newspapers and other similar resources on anniversary dates can prove to be very productive, particularly when people who lived through an event provide first-hand accounts. We are still finding new information on the fire in this way. Use of newspaper websites like www.fultonhistory.com have made this kind of research much easier.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. *Troy Daily Times*, July 5, 1862. "First Train Over.—The first train over the temporary railroad bridge was run yesterday. Engine No. 17 of the Central Railroad crossed first, and finding every thing all right, a very heavily loaded train drawn by two engines was run over with perfect success. During the afternoon a large number of trains passed on the new structure, which is declared perfectly safe and reliable."
16. *Troy Daily Times*, May 10, 1862. Also Parker, Amasa J., *Landmarks of Albany County, New York*, (1897), 249. Also, *Albany Argus*, May 12, 1862. "COMPANIES FROM ABROAD.—The firemen of West Troy, Albany, Cohoes and Lansingburgh responded very promptly to our call for aid, and rendered noble service.—Among the companies that we noticed from abroad were Rip Van Winkle, Protection 2, Bresline Hose and the U. S. Arsenal engine, from West Troy; No.'s 8, 10, 11, 12 and Tivoli Hose, of Albany; Mohawk 2, of Cohoes, and Lafayette of Lansingburgh. Others may have been here. Our own companies—hand and steam—worked heroically and successfully. Button's steamer, from Waterford, was on hand and did good service."
17. *Letter from Cousin Aurora to Cousin Allie*, May 12, 1862. 1964.21 Gift of Mrs. William H. Boughton, RCHS Collection. The title for this paper comes from words (italicized) in this passage. I am indebted to Dennis Marr for doing some genealogical sleuthing to identify the writer of this letter as Aurora Parker Jones (1822-1909). In 1862, she is listed in the *Troy City Directory* as a nurse living at Hiram Worden's Hotel in the Second Ward. Some of her descriptions of the condition of the people she encounters during the fire seem to indicate some medical knowledge. Mrs. Jones may have been writing to her cousin, Almira Baldwin, although it has not been possible to locate Almira's mother (mentioned in the letter) in Troy in 1862. The envelope for the letter has not survived. Further research may clarify this connection. Mrs. Jones died in Rockton, Illinois, in 1909, having moved there with her husband Henry at least by 1870, when they are listed in the U.S. census; he is listed as a Justice of the Peace and she is keeping house.
18. Troy Public Library Scrapbooks, Roll 25, 1937, 267-268. "Great Blaze Razing Most Of Troy In '62 Recalled By Trojan." *Troy Record*, May 10, 1937.
19. *New York Times*, May 11, 1862.
20. *Albany Evening Journal*, May 12, 1862.
21. Letter to "Georgie" Meacham from her aunt, Mrs. Amelia Meacham, May 18, 1862. RCHS Collection.
22. *Letter from JH Kellogg to Cousin Sarah Draper*, June 18, 1862. 2001.66 RCHS Purchase, RCHS Collection. The church Kellogg mentions is the Sixth Street (or Second) Presbyterian Church, also mentioned in Cousin Allie's letter. He was at the time a member of the Arba Read Engine Company, which had a steam fire engine.
23. William Cluett to Emily Cluett Cadby, July 8, 1862. Cluett Family Papers, RCHS Collection. One of

the “children” he mentions was his son, George B. Cluett, who had already founded what became one of Troy’s largest collar businesses that grew into Cluett, Peabody & Co., Inc., in the twentieth century. In today’s money, the value of the \$1,500 loss the Cluetts sustained would be about \$35,000.

24. *Troy Daily Whig*, May 17, 1862. No example of these images has been identified to date.
25. *Harper’s Weekly*, May 24, 1862.
26. Stereoviews by Charles F. Himes, 1861, 1862. These images show the central part of Troy just prior to and after the Great Fire. The double image would appear three-dimensional when looked at through a viewer. Himes was a professor of mathematics between 1860 and 1863 at the Troy University prominently located on the hillside above Eighth Street overlooking the city. He was an amateur photographer and member of the Amateur Photographic Exchange Club. Members of this national club exchanged photographs on a regular basis. Himes left Troy with the closure of the University the year after the fire and after study abroad began a long academic career at Dickinson College, where he continued his photographic endeavors.
27. *Troy Daily Whig*, May 12, 1862.
28. Ibid.
29. Weise, Arthur James, *The Firemen and Fire Departments of Troy, N.Y.*, Weed-Parsons Printing Company, Albany, N.Y. 1895. For almost six months, the local newspapers provided details on insurance and rebuilding efforts, listing building owners and progress on reconstruction block-by-block.
30. *Troy Daily Times*, May 9, 1863.
31. *The Firemen and Fire Department of Troy, N.Y.*, Weise, Arthur James, M.A. Albany, NY, Weed-Parsons Printing Company. 1895. Weise’s history has a large section on the Great Fire, 208-264.
32. An overlay of Weise’s *Field of Fire* map, done for me by my colleague and historic preservationist, the late Peter D. Shaver, shows that the losses from urban renewal efforts in Troy in the 1960s were almost equivalent to the property losses from the Great Fire.



Model of the row galley *Washington*, a comparable vessel to the *Lady Washington*.
U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Eric Lockwood.
Use of released U.S. Navy imagery does not constitute product
or organizational endorsement of any kind by the U.S. Navy

Finding the Remains of the Lady Washington:
**A Continental Army Warship
Lost in the Hudson**

Alexander S. Ryan

In the late spring of 1776 it became apparent to the powers in Great Britain that the rebellion for American independence would intensify. Each of the thirteen colonies had declared themselves independent from the mother country and had made moves to construct defensive fortifications, raise an army, and build naval forces.

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FIRST PICTURE OF THE “LADY WASHINGTON”!



Rough sketch of rebel American galley LADY WASHINGTON, command-vessel of upper Hudson fleet during the Revolution, sunk by her own crew in Rondout Creek at Eddyville Falls, to avoid capture by British at burning of Kingston. Below, powderhorn owned by Robert Winne, of Kingston, which bears original etching. (Story on page 3)

Cover of the Ulster County Gazette showing the powderhorn as well as the etching of the Lady Washington on it. Image courtesy of the Ulster County Historical Society, Kingston, N.Y.

Although the Hudson River Valley was a vital conduit for communication and travel for the American military forces, its importance is often neglected by scholars of the American Revolution. If the British military forces had taken control of the traffic along the Hudson River, they could have effectively split the American military force in half.

In a joint letter, several Continental Army generals voiced the importance of the Hudson Valley region to General Washington, stating: “The communication between the Eastern and Western States is so essential to the Continent, & the advantages we shall have over the Enemy by the communication, and by having Command of the River, warrant every expense to secure an object of such great magnitude.”¹

The Continental Army’s determination to secure the Hudson River militarily, and to maintain control over this strategic waterway throughout the war, was critical to the overall American strategy and final victory. Washington sought to develop a security zone throughout the valley using all of his military assets that could be made available.

One American military asset, in particular, was the galley *Lady Washington* and her volunteer crew. This relatively small warship performed spectacularly throughout the initial naval conflicts on the Hudson River. The *Lady Washington* participated in clashes against the British warships HMS *Phoenix* and HMS *Rose* and was an active participant in the Battle of Fort Montgomery, the Burning of Kingston, and in “Mad” Anthony Wayne’s assault upon and capture of Stony Point. As an active participant in these skirmishes, the ship performed an important role in the defense of the Hudson River Valley.

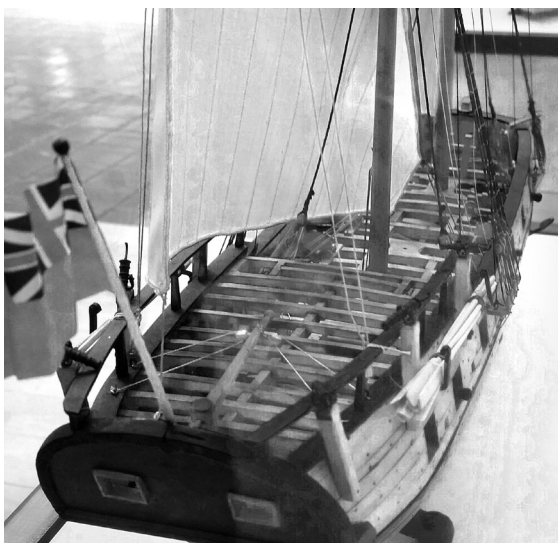
Construction of the “Lady”

The Continental Congress ordered construction of the *Lady Washington* in the spring of 1776. According to a “Memorial to the Continental Congress” by Benjamin Eyre—the shipwright tasked with construction of the *Lady Washington* and two sister vessels—the ship was built to the specifications of “60 feet in length, 18 feet wide, and 68 tons.”²

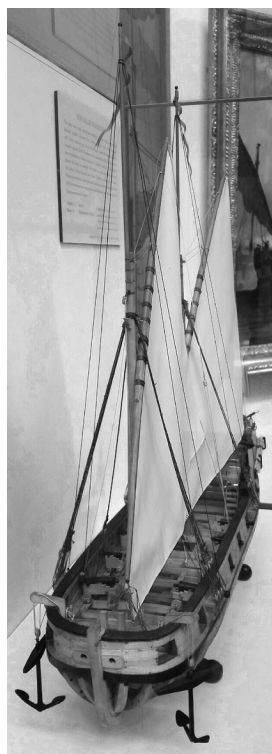
Although the lines and specifications for the *Lady Washington* have not been located, an image of the *Lady Washington* is etched onto a Hudson Valley militiamen’s powder horn (see illustration on page 68). Beside a date of 1777, a crude drawing depicts the *Lady Washington* as a two-masted vessel rigged like a Virginia schooner with traditional fore-and-aft sails and small topgallant sails.³ The “sketch” shows a raised deck in the aft of the vessel. It would have accommodated a thirty-two-pound cannon.

The ship was built on the shores of Manhattan Island. Eyre notes in his “Memorial” that he was requested to leave Philadelphia and set himself up in New York (in concurrence with General Washington moving his army from Boston to New York), and later records the expenses he incurred because of his move.

Eyre had clearly requested payments from the Continental Congress; regrettably, at that time Congress had no funding—except what was donated by each of the independent states. Funding for construction of the *Lady Washington* most likely came from



A model of the *Washington*, the *Lady Washington*'s sister ship. It was 72 feet long and 20 feet wide. U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Eric Lockwood. Use of released U.S. Navy imagery does not constitute product or organizational endorsement of any kind by the U.S. Navy



New York State's funds for the defense of the Hudson⁴. Though the hull of the *Lady Washington* was constructed in New York (Manhattan), the ship was not "properly fitted and armed" until it was moved to Peekskill, a river town fifty miles north of the city. Brigadier General Alexander McDougall's letter of May 16, 1776, sent from his Peekskill headquarters to the Marine Committee in Philadelphia, requests direct aide in the "fitting and arming" of the *Lady Washington*.

McDougall wrote: "I entreat you to give all the Assistance in your Power to the Speedy Arming of the new vessels... it's far from being improbable but the Enemy may direct their Movement up [the Hudson] River. If they do, the want of the use of those Gallies may be extremely injurious to our bleeding Country."⁵ General McDougall planned to use the galleys to offer further resistance to English shipping in addition to the chain strung across the Hudson at Fort Montgomery.⁶

McDougall's words are almost prophetic: Two months later, the British warships HMS *Phoenix* and HMS *Rose* sailed up the Hudson to harass American encampments and fortifications. The *Lady Washington* would see her first action against these well-armed frigates with their seasoned crews.

HMS *Phoenix* and HMS *Rose*

The *Phoenix* and the *Rose* were two fairly large British vessels; the *Rose* mounted twenty guns, the *Phoenix* forty-four.⁷ They forced their way past the American fortifications of Manhattan in mid-July and traveled up the Hudson River as far as Fort Montgomery, just north of Peekskill Bay. There they met heavy resistance from the Continental Army's guns. Both frigates managed to creep close to the fort. One came too close; it received a thirty-two-pound artillery round from the fort's battery and beat a hasty retreat.⁸ The ships then patrolled the bay to disrupt rebel operations and harass American military movement. By early August, American forces decided that the two "pirate" vessels must be dealt with. During the afternoon of August 3, an American flotilla of six row galleys approached the two British vessels near Tarrytown.⁹ Colonel Benjamin Tupper, aboard the *Washington* (sister ship of the *Lady Washington*), commanded this tiny fleet.¹⁰

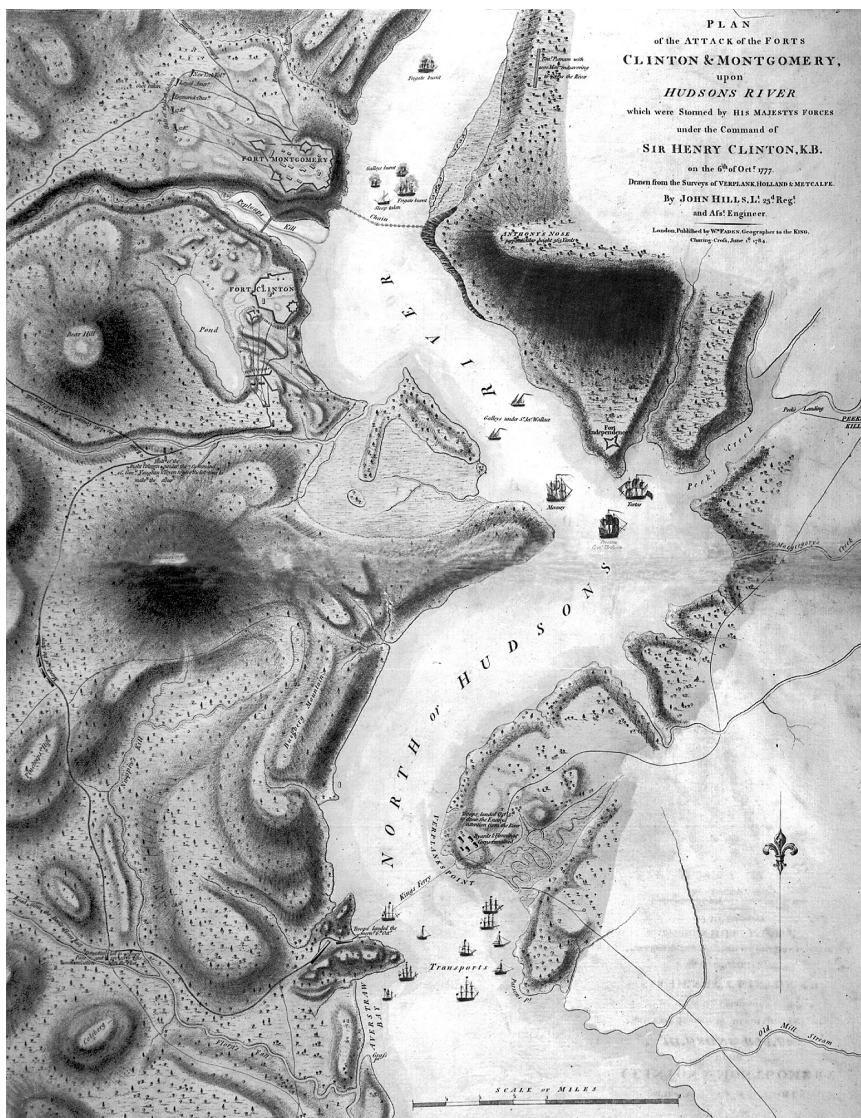
Gunners on the *Phoenix* fired the initial shot of the first naval battle on the Hudson River.¹¹ The first American vessel to return fire was the *Lady Washington*—with her thirty-two-pounder at close range.¹² The *Phoenix* then turned and for the better part of an hour engaged in a naval duel with Colonel Tupper and his crew on the *Washington*. The rest of the American flotilla came in line with the *Washington* to lend their firepower. The cannonade was so intense and drawn out that the powerful thirty-two-pounder onboard the *Lady Washington* "split seven inches, her gun tackles and breechings carried away."¹³ This effectively rendered the gun useless for the remainder of the fight; however, it had already managed to hull the *Phoenix* at least six times.¹⁴

Tupper's flagship sustained thirteen shots to her hull, but miraculously only four men onboard were wounded.¹⁵ In fact, the small American flotilla sustained substantial damage throughout but suffered only two men killed and fourteen wounded.¹⁶ The *Lady Washington* received no damage except for the cracked cannon.¹⁷

At this point, with many of his guns out of action, Colonel Tupper made the decision to withdraw "after manfully fighting a much superior force for close to two hours."¹⁸ Colonel Tupper and his flotilla retired to Spuyten Duyvil Creek, just north of Manhattan, to prepare for another attack.¹⁹ It would not come from the *Rose* or the *Phoenix*; these two ships had been ordered to return downriver to New York by August 18 to rejoin the British fleet anchored in the Upper Bay.²⁰ After participating in the first naval action of the water-borne war in the valley, sustaining minimum casualties but significantly disrupting enemy operations, the *Lady Washington* would not see action again until October 1777, in the Battle of Fort Montgomery.

The Battle of Fort Montgomery

The Battle of Fort Montgomery involved a two-pronged attack by the British forces, on Fort Clinton and Fort Montgomery. These two American strongholds were located on opposite banks of the mouth of Popolopen Creek, which flows into the Hudson River from the west. Taking place on October 6 and 7, the battle resulted in a victory for



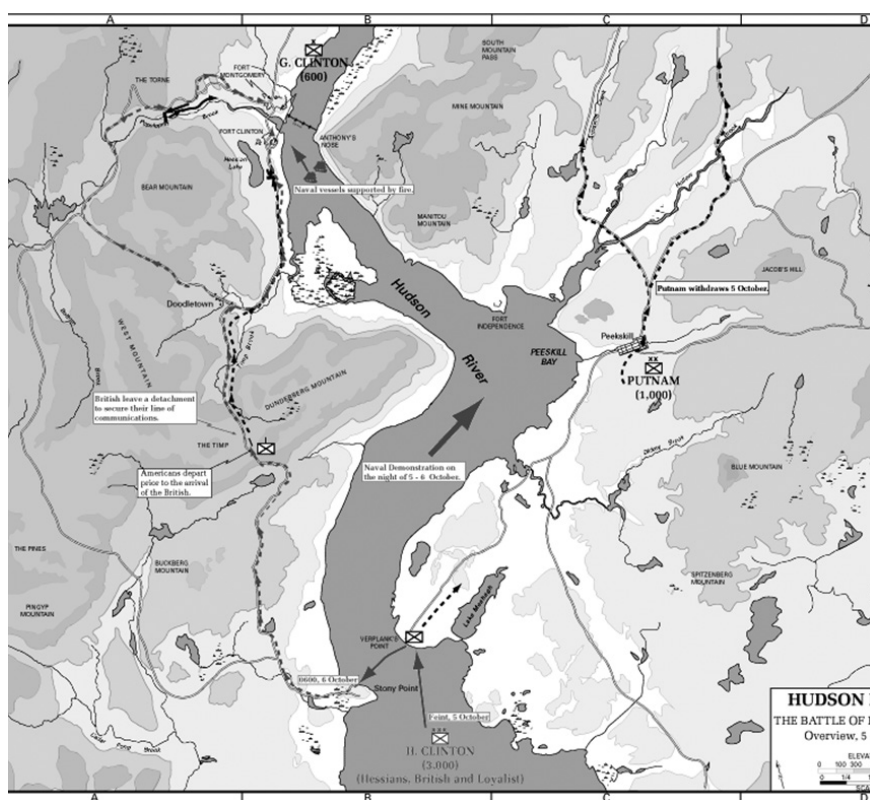
“Plan of the Attack of the Forts Clinton and Montgomery,” drawn from the surveys of Verplank, Holland, and Metcalfe by John Hills, 1784

British forces, which captured several American forts on both sides of the river as well as a large store of military supplies. The *Lady Washington* and a number of other vessels were tasked with protecting the massive chain the American forces strung across the river from Fort Montgomery to Anthony's Nose.

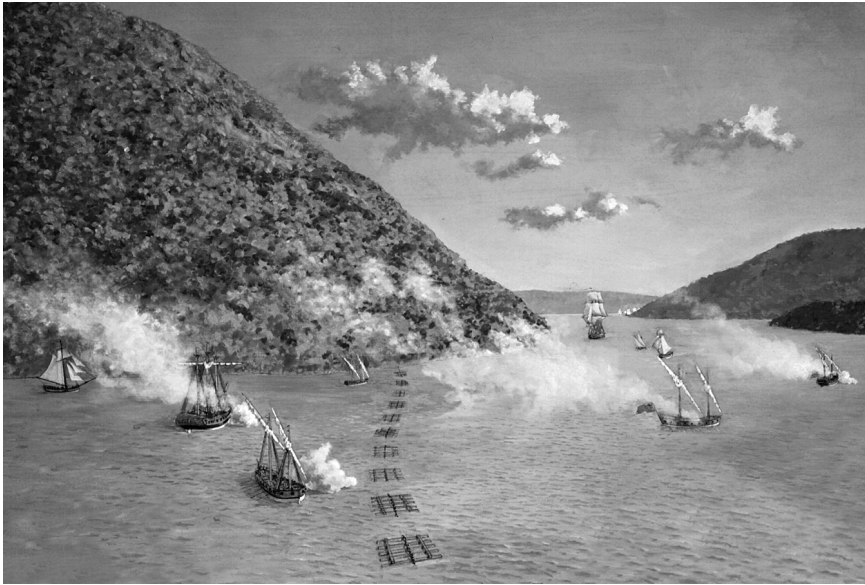
Crewed by twenty men and commanded by Abraham Lewis²¹, the *Lady Washington* was armed with a new thirty-two-pound cannon (replacing the weapon cracked during

the skirmish with the *Phoenix* and the *Rose*) as well as eight three-pound guns.²² This battle was a futile one for the American defenders because there were only 700 soldiers working the guns at these twin forts. General Israel Putnam, commander of American forces at Peekskill, was fooled by a British feint towards Verplanck's Point, on the east side of the Hudson, and the numerous maneuvers of the British fleet in Peekskill Bay. Retaining his troops on the river's east side, Putnam was unable to provide assistance to the American defense of the forts.²³

The small American flotilla fared badly as well. Two American frigates built in Poughkeepsie, the *Congress* and *Montgomery*, were burned by their own crews to prevent their capture.²⁴ The other American vessels were either captured or also purposely burned by their crews. Thanks to the actions and orders of Captain Lewis, the only American warship to escape this naval clash unscathed was the *Lady Washington*.²⁵ The flotilla commander, Captain John Hodge, ordered the *Lady Washington* rowed up the Hudson to Kingston. The British fleet would find her there just a few weeks later.²⁶



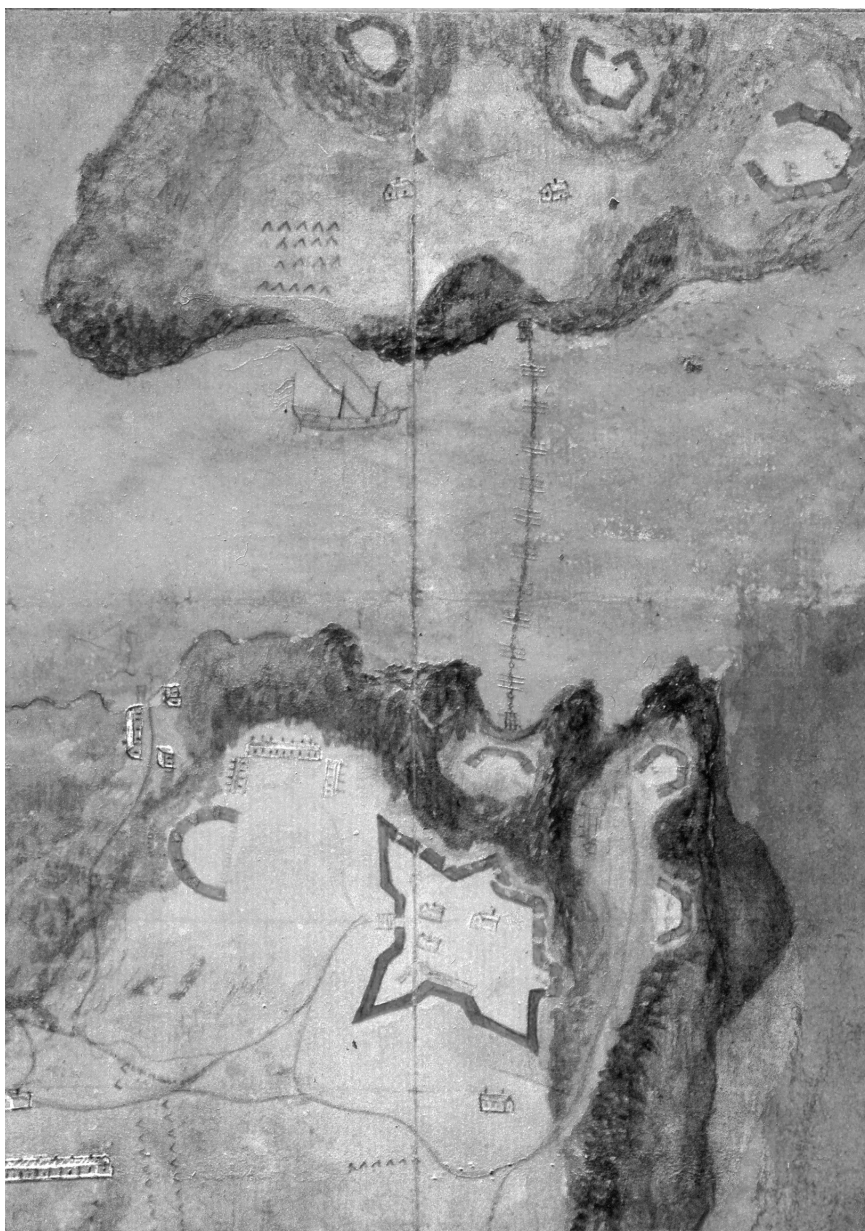
Detail of map: The Battle of Fort Montgomery; Overview, 5-6 October 1777.
Courtesy of the Department of History, United States Military Academy



The naval battle during the attack on Forts Montgomery and Clinton. Painting by Dahl Taylor; courtesy of NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation



The Battle of Fort Montgomery. Painting by Dahl Taylor. Courtesy of New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation



Detail of A Plan of West Point, 1779, by Moses Greenleaf, showing a ship which may have been the *Lady Washington* guarding the chain.
Image from the Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society

The Burning of Kingston

On October 11, 1777, Sir James Wallace (formerly captain of the HMS *Rose*) was ordered to take command of the British fleet of thirty vessels transporting 1,600 seasoned troops led by Major General John Vaughan.²⁷ The fleet sailed upriver to Kingston, on the western shore, 100 miles north of New York City. The *Lady Washington* lay at anchor near the mouth of the Rondout (then called Esopus) Creek at Kingston when the British fleet arrived on October 16.

On the orders of General Vaughn, Kingston was attacked and burned. The only impediment to a further British advance up the Hudson was a need for more troops in Pennsylvania and the defeat of British General John Burgoyne at Saratoga. The main objective of the British naval campaign north was to relieve Burgoyne. As this was no longer relevant, the British forces withdrew from the Hudson.

Making good use of her lone thirty-two-pounder, the *Lady Washington* vigorously attempted to deny the British advance up the Hudson, but with little effect.²⁸ Curiously, the British store-ship *Defender* exploded in a massive fireball, causing considerable disruption amongst the British fleet. The *Lady Washington* used the confusion to make her escape up Rondout Creek.²⁹ She was rowed upstream to a spot near the small village of Eddyville.

In a letter dated October 18, Sir James Wallace noted that because of the encroaching darkness and the lack of sufficient navigable water in the creek, as well as other limitations, he was unable to ascertain the whereabouts of the “arm’d Rebel Galley.”³⁰ A reading of the correspondence of Governor George Clinton to General Israel Putnam makes it clear that the *Lady Washington* was scuttled in Rondout Creek to prevent the ship’s capture. On October 20, Clinton wrote:

...she is sunk about two miles from the landing place. There will be some difficulty in raising the cannon, especially the 32-pounder, for which we have no carriage... However if you can send me a traveling carriage and ammunition I will endeavor to bring her on shore.³¹

Based on this evidence, it seems that the rebels purposefully scuttled the *Lady Washington* and then began making plans for salvaging her after the British withdrawal. Since the British had effectively destroyed most other American shipping in the Hudson at the Battle of Fort Montgomery, it makes sense that the Americans would wish to preserve their remaining warships and maintain some naval capacity on the river.

Raising the *Lady Washington*

The next time the *Lady Washington* is formally discussed by the American military is during a meeting of the New York Council of Safety. Colonel Levi Pawling brought up the matter. The Council Minutes of November 11 state:

His Excellency [Governor Clinton] desires Colonel Pawling and Colonel Snyder to furnish out of their regiments, twenty men to assist in raising the Continental row galley which lies sunk in the Rondout Creek. Colonels Pawling and Snyder

informed the Council that the militiamen by them ordered out for the purpose; complain of the service as being not proper militia duty, unless they be allowed extra pay for their services.³²

The council resolved that the militiamen be “allowed eight shillings per day” for the perceived extra duty.

The salvage operation came to naught, and as winter began to impinge on the efforts, Captain Abraham Lewis reported to the Council of Safety on December 1 that “he had used his utmost endeavors to raise the Continental galley... and that his attempts had proved unsuccessful.”

Salvaging the *Lady Washington* would have to wait until the following spring.

Salvaging the Ship

In 1778, Lieutenant Thomas Machin was the Continental Army engineer (and son of an English mathematician) entrusted by direct order of General Washington with the construction of new American defenses in the Hudson Highlands.³³ Machin had been present during the Battle of Fort Montgomery and barely escaped with his life. He was then was put in charge of constructing a chain across the Hudson at West Point. In 1778, Machin was sent to Kingston to oversee the salvaging of the *Lady Washington*. He completed the task, raising the ship in just twenty days, for which he was awarded “nine pounds, ten schillings, and six.” The newly recommissioned *Lady Washington* served the Continental Army along the Hudson until mid-July 1779.

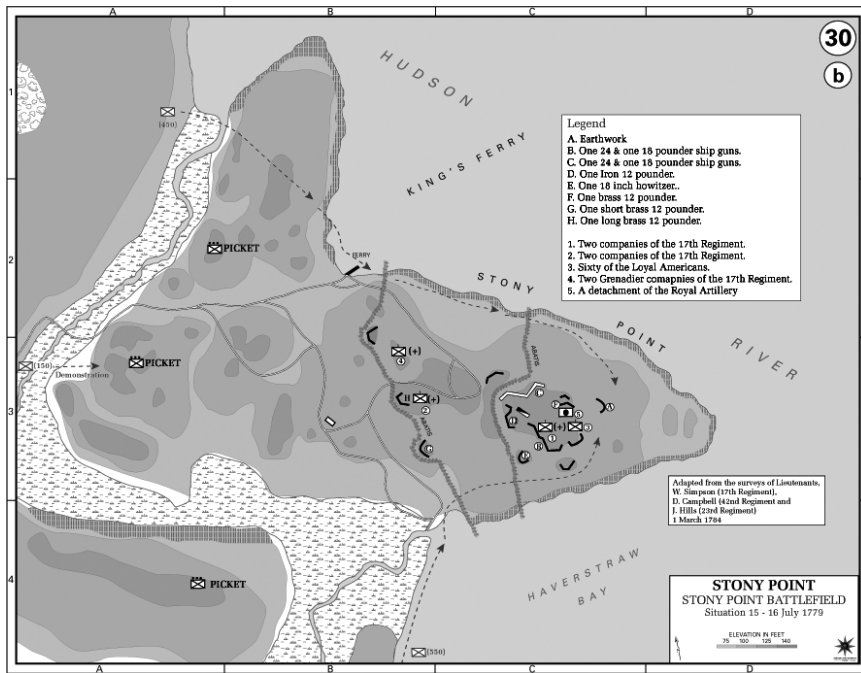
The Battle of Stony Point

In the late summer of 1779, Continental General “Mad” Anthony Wayne and his men had executed a nighttime commando raid on the British outpost at Stony Point, on the western side of the Hudson south of Peekskill Bay. The raid was a success, resulting in the retreat of British forces and the American capture of the fortification at the point. However, the British managed to maintain control of Verplanck’s Point, just across the river, and brought up ships (including the HMS *Vulture*) to assist in recapturing Stony Point.

The Continental forces decided they would not be able to hold Stony Point for long, so after destroying the fortifications and removing everything worth taking, they abandoned the position. In conjunction with this, several captured artillery pieces were in need of fast transport to West Point, a task consigned to the *Lady Washington*.³⁴

Final Voyage

After loading the captured cannons, the crew of the *Lady Washington* attempted to sail upriver toward West Point, but the ship immediately began taking fire from British batteries at Verplanck’s Point as well as from British ships, including the HMS *Vulture*, HMS *Philadelphia*, and HMS *Cornwallis*. The *Vulture*’s logbook states that the ferocity of this combined cannonade forced the *Lady Washington* to return to Stony Point.³⁵



Detail of map: Stony Point Battlefield; Situation 15-16 July 1779.
Courtesy of the Department of History, United States Military Academy

The logbook also notes that the British ships were ordered to attempt to capture the *Lady Washington*, but prevailing winds and the river's current prevented them from approaching the vessel.³⁶ Contrary to later retellings, the *Vulture's* logbook further states that the *Lady Washington* was unable to make any progress sailing upriver and that the ship was burned near Stony Point.³⁷

Conversely, according to an account of the *Lady Washington's* final moments written by Benson Lossing more than seventy years later, the ship received a heavy shot from the *Vulture* below it's waterline (possibly much higher due to the load of cannons onboard) and began to founder.³⁸ Lossing recounts that the galley was sunk near what is now known as Jones Point, off the eastern slope of Dunderberg Mountain.³⁹ Most accounts agree that after abandoning the ship, the crew set it alight to avoid capture.

The *Lady Washington* rested undisturbed where she burned and sank. For nearly sixty-five years, until her location became the center of a scandal that shook the Hudson Valley. In 1852, Benson Lossing was the first to make the connection between the wreck of the *Lady Washington* and the activities of the Kidd Salvage Company.⁴⁰

The Kidd Salvage Company

A pamphlet called *Wilson's Illustrated Guide to the Hudson River*, published in 1848, makes mention of the Kidd Salvage Company under the section "Caldwells," presumably referring to Caldwell's Landing, today's Jones Point. It describes this area as the scene of the operations of the "Kidd Salvage Company, which was set on foot by some sharpers, who pretended to have discovered the spot at which the pirate Kidd abandoned and set fire to his vessel, after being chased up the river."⁴¹

The geographic position of the supposed resting place of the *Lady Washington* and the site of the Kidd Salvage Company's activities are quite possibly two different locations; however, the proximity of the two is too close to be ignored. *Wilson's Illustrated Guide* expounds several details: how the group "pretended to raise an antiquated ship's cannon" and "brought up some grains of silver." Using this "evidence," the con artists managed to secure financial backers for a phony expedition to recover "Kidd's treasure." A cofferdam was erected and a steam-driven pump put into operation to remove water around the wreck "for several months."

A *New York Times* article, published on May 24, 1874, confirms many of these details and adds additional information. Two men, a clothing salesman and a lawyer, were ensnared by one of the lawyer's clients, who claimed to have information surrounding the location of Captain Kidd's ship. The client convinced both men to invest in his company. After purchasing the rights to salvage the wreck from another party, they formed a joint stock company, named it the Kidd Salvage Company, and issued 1,000 shares for \$100 apiece.⁴²

In order to build further interest, a diver was sent down. He recovered a brass howitzer and several fragments of charred wood. All the stock was sold and the clothing salesman invested a further \$15,000; he would later claim the scheme left him impoverished.⁴³ The conspiracy began on or about June 20, 1844, and continued for more than a year, during which the cofferdam was constructed around the supposed "Kidd" wreck. In reality, it could possibly have been the remains of the *Lady Washington*, on which no treasure except a few old cannons might be found.

The perpetrators of the fraud apparently recognized the lack of interest and the growing ire of their shareholders and decided upon a new ruse to stir up interest from prospective investors. They called upon a "clairvoyant" who proceeded to make grand predictions and had visions of the massive treasure lying on the Hudson's bottom. This was an exercise designed to glean more money from new and already defrauded investors. The entire affair resulted in an 1851 legal suit by the aforementioned salesman, Charles H. Carpenter, against Kidd Salvage Company's ringleader, Henry Shelden. According to the court record, Carpenter began investigating the company in June and July of 1846. Carpenter apparently discovered that a man who worked for the company in 1844 deliberately sank the bronze howitzer off Caldwell's Landing at the direction of Shelden. This was done so the company could dive down, retrieve it the next day, and claim it as part of Kidd's ship.

In addition, it was revealed that the gold and silver brought up by the company's drills had actually been purchased in New York City and placed in tubes into which drills were bored. Precious metals "found" during these specious operations were exhibited to the public.

Realizing that Carpenter was aware of the fraud, Sheldon and his co-conspirators began harassing him with a multitude of false claims, not the least of which was attempted murder. Their intent was to have Carpenter imprisoned, so they could complete their scam. Carpenter managed to rebuff all of their false claims and won a civil suit against his accusers. Following several more suits against the Kidd Salvage Company, investors realized there was no treasure to be found, and the influx of money to the operation ceased. The cofferdam was simply allowed to fill in and crumble away; the author of the 1874 *New York Times* article believed that "the ruins could still be visible at low water."⁴⁴ It is unclear if the 1844 cofferdam was erected around the *Lady Washington*, another wreck, or perhaps nothing at all. Archaeological confirmation might determine the warship's true location.

On the other hand, if it was the *Lady Washington* that was uncovered in the 1840s, it is altogether possible that the Kidd Salvage Company's activity may have damaged, destroyed, or removed portions of the wreck. Whatever lay there on the bottom of the Hudson near Jones Point is still there today, surrounded by the remains of the nineteenth-century cofferdam.

Expectations and Significance

When the *Lady Washington* burned and sank in 1779, she was heavily laden with cannons captured by the Americans when they overran the British fortification at Stony Point. The extra burden would have forced her lower in the water, making it feasible she may have grounded a short distance from the shoreline at Stony Point, as related by the HMS *Vulture*'s logbook, rather than the later claims of being sunk near Jones Point. Nonetheless, there is ample evidence that she was put to the torch to avoid capture. A higher-than-normal waterline means there was less ship to burn—and hence more material could possibly be left of the ship.

Furthermore, there must be a large concentration of cannons at the wreck site, including perhaps many of the field pieces captured from Stony Point and the *Lady Washington*'s trademark thirty-two-pound cannon. The historical significance of this wreck cannot be underestimated. Much of the action of note in the defense of the Hudson River was directly or indirectly affected by the activity of this vessel and her crew. The *Lady Washington* and those who served on her deserve recognition for exemplary service in securing our independence.

Alexander S. Ryan, SUNY Maritime College. The author would like to thank Professor David Allen for his assistance in completing this article.

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Regional History Forum

Each issue of The Hudson River Valley Review includes the Regional History Forum. This section highlights historic sites in the Valley, exploring their historical significance as well as information for visitors today. Although due attention is paid to sites of national visibility, HRVR also highlights sites of regional significance.



All images courtesy of Boscobel House and Gardens,
Garrison, New York

Rescuing Boscobel

Emily Hope Lombardo, Marist '15

Many visitors who drive through the gates of Boscobel for the first time may not be aware of the 210 years of storied history behind this exceptional restoration. The house, built during the first years of the nineteenth century by an American Loyalist, was originally located in Montrose, about fifteen miles south of its present location. For more than eighty years, the mansion housed four generations of a prominent New



May 25, 1925 view of Boscobel probably was taken at the opening of
Cruger's Park in 1925

York family before it was left abandoned and empty for an additional sixty years. It may come as a shock to learn that Boscobel was saved from the wrecking ball at the eleventh hour, then disassembled piece by piece and driven up to Garrison on flatbed trucks. Even more stunning, the mansion remained scattered in the barns and sheds of local residents for years before it was reconstructed on the banks of the Hudson River across from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

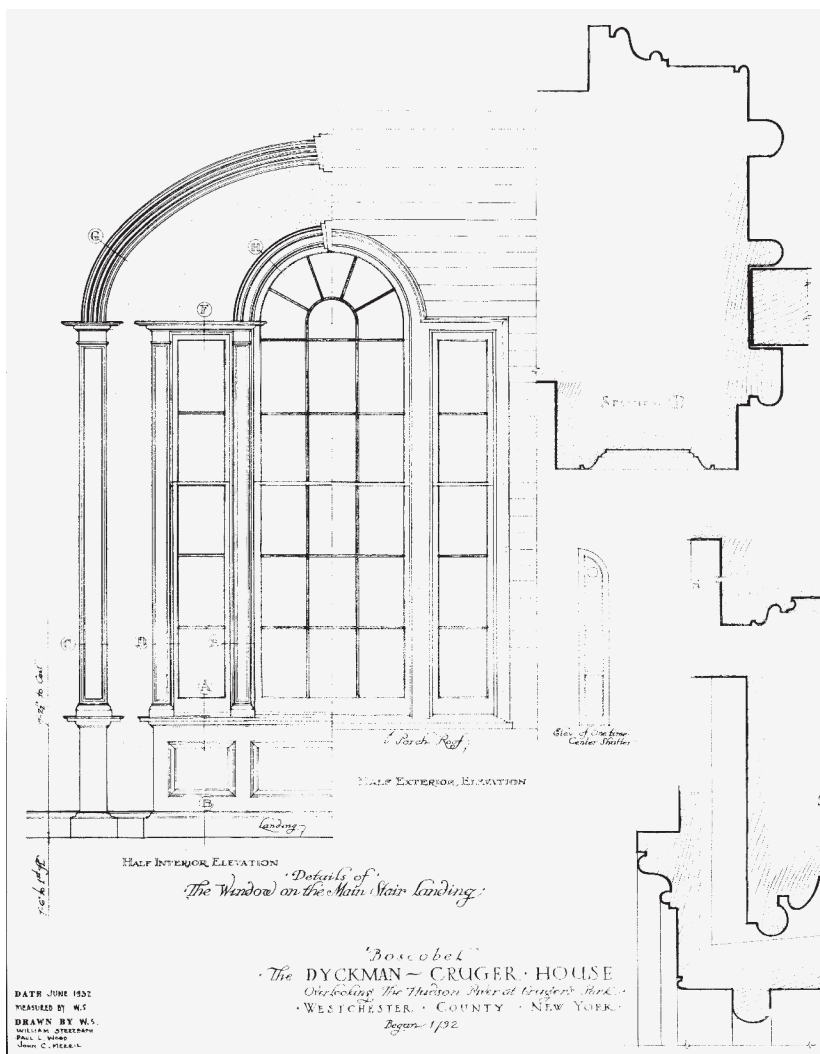
To fully appreciate the preservation and restoration of this cultural landmark, one must begin with the initial conception of the estate. States Morris Dyckman dreamed of a life as a gentleman farmer, a goal that became a reality after the American Revolution. Born in 1755, the descendant of a Dutch-German family who arrived in New York in 1662, States Dyckman split from his family during the Revolution and became a Loyalist. Working as a clerk for the British Quartermasters, with access to their financial records, Dyckman was ideally situated to aid his employers when they were charged with profiteering during the war.¹ In 1779, he accompanied his superiors to England, and for the next decade rebutted government allegations against them. (As keeper of the department's ledgers, Dyckman well knew how the quartermasters had fattened their purses.)² As a result of his informed testimony, the officers were eventually cleared of any wrongdoing, and Dyckman was rewarded by them with a generous annuity. He



**Boscobel house as it looked in 1942 while owned by the
Westchester County Parks Commission**

returned to America in 1789, after a general amnesty of Loyalists had been declared. Five years later, he married Elizabeth Corne, a member of a distinguished New York family, who was twenty-one years his junior. In 1800 Dyckman left behind his wife and three-year-old son Peter Corne Dyckman to return to England alone on what was intended to be a six-month visit to settle problems with the payment of his annuity. The trip proved to be a success, but wound up lasting three years.

When he returned, Dyckman was a wealthy man worth the equivalent of seven million of today's dollars. He began building his house in Montrose in 1804.³ He decided to name it Boscobel, a tribute to his dedication to the British crown. Boscobel was the name of a hunting lodge in England where the Royal Oak was located.⁴ To commemorate his visit to this landmark, Dyckman returned to America with a snuff box bearing a piece of the tree in its lid. In 1806, two years after construction of the house began, Dyckman died following a period of declining health. His wife oversaw completion of the house under the supervision of master builder William Vermilyea. At the same time, she raised Peter, ran the 250-acre farm surrounding Boscobel, and managed the family bank account. Peter inherited the house when his mother (who never remarried) died in 1823, but he died one year later, leaving Boscobel to his wife Susan and subsequently their daughter Eliza Letitia Corne Dyckman Cruger.⁵ Eliza



The 1932 measured drawings record both the interior and exterior features of Boscobel house

maintained possession of the house until 1888, when the family abandoned the property, taking their belongings and leaving the house empty.

Thirty-five years later, in 1923, Boscobel laid dormant and deteriorating when Westchester County Parks purchased the 250-acre riverfront property and opened it to the public. The house was only periodically visited by the occasional Boy Scout troop or caretakers checking in. In 1932, a team of architects from the Westchester County Emergency Works Bureau was so enthralled by the “superb workmanship and materials” of Boscobel that they documented the detailed interior and exterior features of

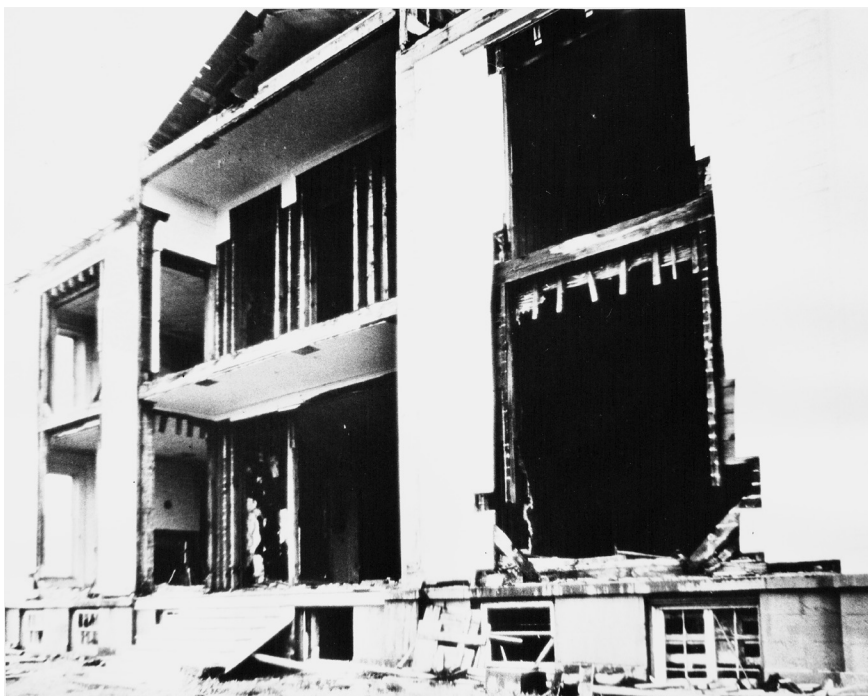
the building as well as the surrounding landscape.⁶ Their drawings would become the basis for the authentic restoration of key elements during Boscobel's reconstruction in the 1950s. But the mansion's fate looked bleak in 1941, when County Parks Chairman Evan Ward threatened to demolish Boscobel unless someone came forth and provided the necessary funds to repair and maintain it.⁷

In 1942, local architect Harvey Stevenson attempted to save the house by creating an organization he called Boscobel Inc. The organization negotiated to lease the house and five acres of land around it for five years, paying an annual rent of one dollar. The group hoped to raise funds to finance necessary repairs and eventually the house's complete restoration. With the country in the midst of World War Two, Boscobel Inc. eventually decided to postpone its fundraising campaign, having completed just a few repairs. In 1945, the property was acquired by the Veterans Administration to construct the new Franklin Delano Roosevelt Veterans Administration Hospital. Boscobel Inc. disbanded two years later. While Harvey Stevenson recognized there was no chance of saving the house on its original site, he could at least save some of the woodwork and incorporate it into a residence he was designing for Mrs. Henry P. Davidson in Locust Valley, New York. In 1955, the government declared Boscobel "excess to the needs of the Veterans Administration" and auctioned off the building to a demolition company for thirty-five dollars.⁸ Ironically, this seemingly grim fate turned out to be Boscobel's saving grace.

Benjamin West Frazier, a resident of Garrison, was then president of the Putnam County Historical Society. He was a modest man with an obsession for old houses and had already saved quite a few. His success at preservation was the result of many family car rides; Frazier often stopped during his travels to inspect old houses and barns and



A view of Boscobel house before it was dismantled



Front façade Boscobel house, Cortlandt, New York

groan about the fact that they were falling down.⁹ Hearing about the sale of Boscobel to a wrecker, he promised himself he would not let it be demolished. The wrecking ball was set to swing on Monday morning, May 16, 1955. On the Saturday before, Frazier called a judge to seek an injunction; the judge said he could not help because the wrecker had done nothing illegal. However, Frazier discovered some information off the record that changed the fate of the house. The wrecker had a police record and would not want any new trouble with the law.

Frazier's plan was to surround the house with "plug uglies," a group of intimidating men with bats and clubs, in a last-ditch effort to save it.¹⁰ With the help of a friend, John McNally, he hired just such a crew to meet at Boscobel house that Monday morning. As predicted, the wrecker would not risk a confrontation with the men, and Frazier was able to negotiate the purchase. In the end, the wrecker agreed to sell the structure to the newly incorporated Boscobel Restoration Inc. for \$10,000. Preservationists along with community members managed to raise the necessary funds to complete the transaction.

This next phase of Boscobel's history was even more challenging, since it was necessary to remove the house from the Montrose property. Frazier knew, as many others began to realize, that Boscobel was "One of the great architectural treasures of the country," and he was determined to do whatever was necessary to save it.¹¹ John McNally led a group of Garrison residents who helped to disassemble and move the house. Frazier



The flatbed truck, heavily laden with the missing pieces of Boscobel, completes the journey from Locust Valley, Long Island, to Garrison. The Hudson Highlands are visible in the background

made arrangements with several generous members of the Garrison community to store pieces of it in their barns, sheds, and homes for what was an undetermined amount of time—since no property had been purchased to relocate the house.

Constance Dennis Stearns and her husband Charles were proprietors of Garrison's Bird & Bottle Inn, an eighteenth-century tavern that had previously undergone a historic restoration. Constance Stearns and Frazier took responsibility for most of the daily activities of Boscobel's preservation, which included organizing the storage operation. Each piece of the house was labeled as it was taken from Montrose and recorded to track its location.

The property where Boscobel currently sits was previously owned by a family named deRham, who sold it in 1957 to a developer with plans to build a housing subdivision. The developer got so far as marking individual parcels where the houses would be constructed before discovering that the cost of drilling a well to the required depth would be too great to make the project profitable.¹² The property went back on the market, ushering in the involvement of Lila Acheson Wallace, co-founder of *Reader's Digest* with her husband DeWitt. Hearing about the work that had already gone into saving and preserving Boscobel, she purchased the sixteen-acre parcel for \$144,273.60.¹³

The project broke ground in 1958 with local contractors Fair-Chester Builders, Inc., and The Builders Millwork Co., Inc., hired to erect the house's frame.¹⁴ Wallace was promised that construction would continue through the winter, ensuring the building's swift completion, so she simultaneously purchased furnishings for the mansion. Meanwhile, Mrs. Davidson agreed to return original architectural elements as long as reproductions were made for the house she was planning to build.¹⁵ Work on Boscobel's interior did not begin until 1959, when Lila Wallace hired William C. Kennedy, an interior designer and consultant for the Reader's Digest Association, to oversee the restoration with assistance from Ben F. Garber.¹⁶ The interior was decorated in the English style, based on the assumption the Dyckman family would have owned English furniture. Wallace's attention to design and style, as well as her funding of the project, had a profound influence on Boscobel's restoration. It was her "attraction to fine things, her association with art collectors and dealers, and an innate domestic sense that attracted her to the challenge of Boscobel's restoration."¹⁷ After approximately two years of rapid reconstruction and development, the project was completed in 1960.

Benjamin Frazier's wife Helen would later say:

After Mrs. Wallace began to provide the money for the restoration, Ben was absolutely flabbergasted watching the work as it progressed. Ben had gone to St. Paul's and Harvard, he was amazed to see the example of what real money can do. The beautiful maple trees in front of the house came fully grown on trucks. The entire apple orchard came in fully grown on trucks. He stood here in absolute awe looking at these things arriving.¹⁸

Wallace did not concern herself with cost at any point of the project, including the property's landscaping. While not an accurate representation of the grounds of the

May 26, 1960 from a story in the *North Westchester Times* which gave public recognition to the support Lila Acheson Wallace proved for the restoration effort.



Five members of the Boscobel Restoration Inc. are shown as they gathered before a parlor fireplace as Boscobel house was being reconstructed at Garrison. From left are Henry Wilcox, secretary-treasurer and director; Mrs. Charles Stearns, vice president and director; Benjamin Frazier, chairman of building committee; Lila Acheson Wallace, vice president and director; and Lt. Col. M. Campbell Lorini, director, who is in charge of the restoration

original nineteenth-century estate in Montrose, the Garrison property continues to epitomize landscapes of the 1950s according to Wallace's interpretation.

The house was dedicated on May 21, 1961, with all those involved in the restoration attending a public ceremony to celebrate Boscobel's opening. The event also drew many of New York's elite, including publisher Bennett Cerf, U.S. Senator Jacob K. Javits, and David Rockefeller. New York Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller delivered the dedication speech, saying: "The rebuilding of Boscobel restores to our Hudson River Valley one of the most beautiful homes ever built in America. Now this magnificent mansion may be enjoyed by all our citizens. Set high above spectacular vistas of the Hudson River, Boscobel offers us and future generations a link with the gracious and historically significant past of our great state."¹⁹ Coinciding with the opening, Lila Wallace also announced a pledge of \$500,000 as an endowment for Boscobel Restoration on behalf of the Reader's Digest Foundation. She noted that "The rightful heirs of Boscobel



Boscobel Restoration, Inc., Garrison, New York opens to the public in 1961

are the American people who treasure all that is good and enduring in their history, architecture and art.”²⁰ Wallace’s pledge served to increase the project’s visibility in newspapers in New York City as well as throughout the Hudson River Valley.²¹

Since opening, Boscobel has become a focal point in the valley and attracted many important individuals, including then-First Lady “Lady Bird” Johnson. Her visit was part of an officially sponsored tour of the region in 1968 to address regional concerns about industrial and commercial development and pollution.²²

The 1970s marked a period of improved historical accuracy for Boscobel. The site received an archival collection that detailed the life of the Dyckman family and how they had furnished their home. Records from Dyckman’s time working with the British Quartermasters, letters between the family and colleagues, and numerous receipts and inventories helped to create a better understanding of how the house looked originally. Information derived from these documents contradicted the interpretation done by Kennedy and Garber in the 1960s and resulted in significant changes to both the interior and exterior of the house.

Boscobel was closed throughout 1976 for a reinterpretation, once again funded by Lila Wallace. She hired Berry B. Tracey, curator of the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, to purchase the finest early-nineteenth-century American furniture he could find. Tracey carefully researched the Hudson River Valley during the Federal Period as well as Dyckman family inventories to redecorate the house with historical accuracy. He outfitted it with furniture from leading New York cabinetmakers such as Duncan Phyfe. Period wallpaper was hung in the front entrance hall and two upstairs bedrooms. Tracey’s goal was to make Boscobel’s rooms “appear as they would have been when sparkling and new, not muted, and faded as historic house interiors

often were.”²³ Even Boscobel’s exterior also underwent a change—repainted from blue to its original yellow ocher.

Frazier would later write that “The actual rescue of Boscobel was dramatic and hectic beyond the wildest imagination of anyone of us connected with the project. Now



Painting trim elements with handmade pigmented linseed oil paint is conservation technician, Nicole Sequin during 2014 historical upgrade of the entrance hall



Boscobel’s historically upgraded entrance hall in 2014



Boscobel's guided house tour begins outside with a discussion of classical architectural features

that this phase has happily passed, we wonder how we ever did it and certainly would never do it again, not if all the treasures of the western world were at stake.”²⁴ The process of saving the house was so complex that it is only appropriate that as Boscobel lives on, it continues to inspire further preservation and improvement. In the winter of 2013-2014, its front entrance hall received a historical upgrade, including new wallpaper in a period pattern that was reproduced with block printing and hung in strips. A floor cloth painted to resemble marble tiles was installed and the trim was repainted with the original color (identified after a paint analysis of an original door frame).

No doubt the rescuers of Boscobel would be pleased to witness a typical day in and around the mansion now. They might see a group of excited second-graders stepping off a school bus on what could be their very first field trip, or perhaps a Boy Scout troop heading out for a hike on the property's woodland trail. They might walk past chairs set up for a wedding with panoramic views of the Hudson River as its backdrop. They could stroll through the meticulously tended flower gardens or explore an exhibit in the historical art gallery.

One thing that has not changed is the traditional guided mansion tours that excite the interest of art, history, and architecture lovers alike. Without those who saw the value in saving, restoring, and preserving this house, Boscobel would not be the wonderful site of education, entertainment, and culture that it is today.

The author would like to thank Julia Frazier, Judith Pavelock, and the staff of Boscobel for their assistance in preparing this article.



View of the Hudson River from the front lawn of Boscobel looking south

Endnotes

1. Kelly, Richard, and Reed Sparling. "History." *Boscobel Restoration Inc.* (Boscobel Restoration, 2005). 9.
2. Kelly, Richard, and Reed Sparling. "History." *Boscobel Restoration Inc.* (Boscobel Restoration, 2005). 11.
3. States Dyckman letter written to bank in England in 1804
4. Boscobel was the name of the hunting lodge in Shropshire, England, where Charles II went into hiding after being defeated by Oliver Cromwell at the Battle of Worcester in 1651. The story of the day Charles II spent hiding in a tree in the forest spread, and the Royal Oak became a popular symbol of the British monarchy, House of Windsor.
5. She was named in honor of Peter's mother (Eliza being short for Elizabeth) and his younger sister, who died in infancy.
6. Charles T. Lyle, "Docent Training Manual for Boscobel Restoration" (Boscobel Restoration, Inc., February 1997).
7. *New York Times*, January 2, 1942.
8. Charles T. Lyle, "Docent Training Manual for Boscobel Restoration" (Boscobel Restoration, Inc., February 1997), 6.
9. Email interview with Julia Fraizer, October 12, 2014.
10. Margery O. Erikson, *A Few Citizens of Philipstown* (Capriole Press Garrison New York, 1990), 107-122.
11. Benjamin West Frazier, "The History of Boscobel," mss, Boscobel Restoration, Inc. Archives.
12. Margery O. Erikson, *A Few Citizens of Philipstown* (Capriole Press Garrison New York, 1990), 107-122.
13. Board of trustees meeting minutes, November 18, 1961.
14. Invoices and estimates from the contractors are included in Keith Ray, *Fabric Analysis*, Boscobel Restoration, Inc., unpublished (March, 1978), 2.
15. Neil Larson, *Boscobel Restoration: A Preservation Project of national Significance. A History Written for a National History Landmark Nomination* (April 2003), 26.

16. John Heidenry, *Theirs Was the Kingdom: Lila and DeWitt Wallace and the Story of the Readers Digest* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1993), 383.
17. Neil Larson, *Boscobel Restoration: A Preservation Project of national Significance. A History Written for a National History Landmark Nomination* (April 2003), 21.
18. Mrs. Benjamin West Frazier interview with Charles T. Lyle 1997
19. Greg MacGregor, "1804 Mansion Dedicated; Governor Rockefeller Speaks at Boscobel- It Was Slated for Razing," *The New York Times*, May 21, 1961, 1.
20. "Open House Reception Marks Opening of Boscobel Here on Sunday, August 21st," *Putnam County News*, August 25, 1961.
21. Example of an article in the Hudson River Valley, "Mrs. Wallace Gives \$500,000 To Restore Historic Boscobel," *Peekskill Evening Star*, May 21, 1960.
22. Mike Risinit "Lady Bird Memory" *LoHud News*, July 13, 2007
23. Larson, 29.
24. Benjamin West Frazier, "The History of Boscobel," mss, Boscobel Restoration, Inc. Archives.

Lomontville, Early Spring

Tractors pass at the intersection, one hauling
a load of manure from the Brooks family dairy
to spread it on a field up Mill Dam Road,
two others pulling nothing, father and

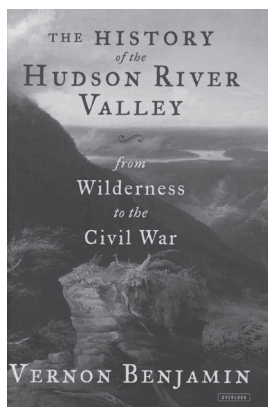
grown son driving, turning on Tongore Road
and heading for Joe Hasbrouck's farm
where they've begun plowing. Nothing's
getting planted yet, frost still possible at night,

but the ground is dry after a mostly
snowless winter, and tractors have been
going back and forth for days as the fields
are prepared for planting. Soon they'll be

working in earnest, planting mostly corn
from dawn to dusk, a field or two of soybeans
on Hasbrouck's farm. Like today, farmers and
help will raise a hand from the wheel in passing.

Matthew J. Spireng

Book Reviews



The History of the Hudson River Valley From Wilderness to the Civil War, Vernon Benjamin. New York, NY: Overlook Press, 2014 (560 pp.)

The Hudson River has attracted the interest of artists, historians, and writers for four centuries. It spawned an American landscape school of painting that informed emerging notions of national identity. Many find the roots of the modern environmental movement in the battles over Storm King Mountain. Indeed, the frequently used designation as America's River represents the canonization of the Hudson as a central element in our national story.

One of the byproducts of this river-centric view is the marginalization of the history of the Hudson River Valley as a distinct entity and its problematic relationship to the River. While their interdependence is an a priori assumption, the operational details of that connection are more elusive and imprecise. The terms Hudson River Valley and Hudson River have become permeable, allowing one to flow easily into another and further blurring the distinction. Indeed one may argue this is as it should be and that any distinction represents a false dichotomy, for they are inextricably linked and their functional relationship is generally understood.

The term watershed, increasingly used to embrace the symbiotic relationship between River and Valley and the region that drains into the river, while widening the scope of our general understanding is a not a term synonymous with valley.

But help is on the way. Vernon Benjamin has tackled this problem head on in *The History of the Hudson River Valley from Wilderness to the Civil War*, a well-researched and engagingly written work in the tradition of the grand historical narrative. In spite of its scope, the work has a compelling quality that holds the reader and draws you into a series of local stories populated with individuals and ideas that had regional and national consequence. I think of myself as a close student of the River and the Valley and was pleasantly surprised by sparks of new knowledge that testifies to the breadth and depth of the research. I do not use these words lightly, but given the span of time and place, the level of research, and the felicity of the writing, this is a tour de force.

In 500 pages Benjamin provides the reader with dozens of portraits, indeed more like landscape paintings, of key moments in the history of the River Valley. They are compact and efficient and yet with a sense of immediacy that insures they will become the standard reference source. Benjamin's work will serve as a narrative encyclopedia of the Valley—the starting point for reading and thinking about the region.

The issue of framing the Hudson River Valley occupies the first section of the book,

and Benjamin, who is not insensitive to the intellectual conundrum of the term river valley, concedes “the dilemma in fixing on a hard and fast definition of the Hudson River Valley” and “the parameters of the Hudson River Valley are elusive to pin down.” (9-11) Nelson Greene dealt with the issue directly in the title of his 1931 four-volume work, *History of the Valley of the Hudson River*, and reinforced that approach early on with a map of the Hudson River counties. Greene’s history is a river-centric frame from which Benjamin hopes to liberate us, and whatever ever the quarrels one has with his indeterminate approach, this work is a critical first step in parsing the two domains.

He also recognizes the place of New York City in the narrative of the Valley and returns to this connection in small ways throughout the text. I continue to argue for the centrality of the City to the history of the region. But this work is not about that, for like all new history it establishes a base line of understanding filled with interpretative teases and new questions.

The exclusion of footnotes is a real disappointment given the richness of the narrative, which opens so many new lines of inquiry—I want to follow Benjamin’s intellectual journey and explore his impressive research effort. This was a doubly unfortunate decision for it compels the author to explain this omission and to elaborate on the canons of research he adhered to as a way of justifying the book’s scholarly credentials. This put me on my guard for no good reason. Quickly one senses the author’s skill and professional handling of source materials and all uncertainty dissipates. He talks about “the company he hopes to keep” and his debt to Alf Evers. This work can stand alone on an equal footing with the work of not only Evers and Carl Carmer but also the long list of academic historians who have been mining this vein. A note to the publisher—restore the footnotes, increase the meager selection of faded maps, and provide the visual support this first rate text calls for.

The chronological frame move us from the geologic age to the archaeological and to the coming of the *Wilden* and the encounter with Henry Hudson. Benjamin’s discussion of New Netherland and especially the treatment of Rensselaerswijck is representative of his approach to each of these key events—detailed yet concise, descriptive and not labored, set in a narrative that has momentum and captures the sense of a historical unfolding. Many of these narrative landscapes are constructed from primary sources that are animated by the author’s energetic and accessible language. I found this approach one of the most compelling elements in the work, and in spite of its length, it holds the promise of a broad readership from scholars to students.

Among the best sections is Benjamin’s discussion of Revolution and Federalism, where he lucidly unpacks the political philosophy and machination of New Yorkers. These chapters underscore not only their singular contributions but instills a renewed appreciation for the way the Hudson River Valley served as an incubator for so much of our early political life. Here Benjamin’s description stays within his narrative frame but leaves the reader wondering about the nexus of ideas and place. In what ways did the Hudson River Valley cultivate this critical mass of political movers? Throughout

the text, one is compelled to reflect on these personalities and their work and the ways the regional environment fostered such an effort. The implication of Benjamin's history, like any good work, opens the door to not only new questions but ones that begin to grapple with a more self-conscious examination of what makes this place special. This is an important byproduct that underscores the importance of footnotes as lead lines for further research.

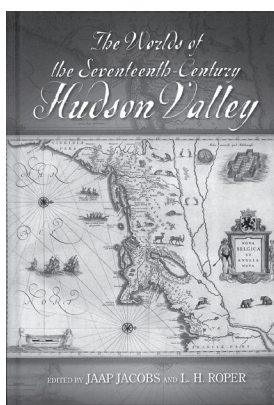
In a detailed chapter entitled "By Water and Rail" the author provides a succinct review of the role of sail and steam in creating local transportation networks. The discussion of Robert Fulton is a dynamic rendering of his character and ambitions. But again the narrative challenges us to go further—what is the underlying relationship between time and space that is developed here and how do these innovations shape the Valley's history and especially the powerful connection to New York City? Indeed, was the spirit of innovation in the air, and if so why in this place?

This sixth section of the book is dedicated "The Romantics" and provides a solid grounding in the basic literature of the subject. From Irving to Cole, we are given full renderings of the key players. The treatment of Poe is taut and filled with pathos. These are among the strongest and most richly documented chapters. One can intuit the emerging sense of national identity being forged by these writers and painters. Again we are compelled to reflect on the implications of what Benjamin writes and we recall David Schuyler's *Sanctified Landscape*, which organizes these ideas into a powerful argument about the national import of the Hudson River Valley and engages with the sense of place in a direct way. This comparison is helpful because it delineates Benjamin's commitment to the narrative—recounting the stuff of history in a disciplined and coherent manner which I think is a prerequisite to any new interpretive examination of the Valley. He has given us a trustworthy foundation that will serve as a lodestone for all students of the region.

Later chapters examine the regional economy, the political struggles of the 1840s, and the rent battles of the Calico warriors. He leads us through the "Rising Fury" and into the abyss of the Civil War and leaves me eager for the next volume.

This work will make its way not only to library bookshelves but into our classrooms and research centers, and will instigate new scholarship. Benjamin has remarkably bridged the gap between reference work and historical narrative in providing us with the first scholarly treatment of the Hudson River Valley.

Roger Panetta, Fordham University



***The Worlds of the Seventeenth-Century Hudson Valley*, edited by Jaap Jacobs and L.H. Roper. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014. (265 pp.)**

This book is one of several that have been published following the 2009 commemoration marking the beginning of Dutch colonization of what is now New York State in 1609. Unlike *Dutch New York: The Roots of Hudson Valley Culture*, edited by Roger Panetta (Fordham University Press, 2009), which examined the impact of the Dutch on the region during four centuries, this collection of essays concentrates exclusively on the seventeenth century. Additionally, *The Worlds of the Seventeenth-Century Hudson Valley* does not

limit itself to Dutch colonization but also focuses on the role of the English, French, and several indigenous peoples who played roles in the region's transformation. All of the twelve essays are written by established scholars who originally presented their papers at a symposium held at the State University of New York at New Paltz. The collection's main objective is to provide "teachers and others interested in this period of the region's past to give an in depth introduction and ready reference to the issues involved in the expansion of European interests to the Hudson River and the colonization of its environs" (ix).

The book is divided into four sections of three essays each, which the editors admit are loosely organized. The first section examines European backgrounds. In the opening essay, Jaap Jacobs gives a concise overview of the rise of the Dutch empire in the seventeenth century. His essay also gives useful insight into the colonial administration of New Netherland. Jacobs convincingly demonstrates that Petrus Stuyvesant was not an autocratic governor but functioned as the chair of a council in which all members had voting power in making decisions. The second essay, by L.H. Roper, provides an excellent overview of the English empire in the Americas from the reign of Elizabeth until the mid-seventeenth century. Because the English state remained fairly weak, most of its North American colonies developed autonomously. Although this is an important insight, Roper's essay does not clarify how it relates to the development of the Hudson Valley. The third essay is by Kees Zandvliet, a specialist in mapping and cartography during the Dutch Golden Age. Like Roper's essay, Zandvliet's contribution is very interesting but also very wide-ranging. It is unfortunate that one of the maps pictured in Zandvliet's essay (51) is an early seventeenth-century Dutch map of the Indonesian Spice Islands and not one of New Netherland in 1616 as the caption suggests.

The second section, entitled "American Worlds," examines developments throughout the Hudson Valley. Timothy Shannon's contribution is one of the few essays that truly concentrate on the region. He surveys Dutch and English colonization of the valley through the era of the American Revolution, emphasizing the tendency of the Dutch to stay close to the valley in order to trade with visiting Native Americans.

This was in marked contrast to the French, who moved into the Great Lakes region to obtain beaver furs from their Indian allies. Shannon also notes how one characteristic feature of Dutch colonization on the Hudson Valley, the patroonship system, was greatly expanded after the English takeover of New Netherland in 1664. The expansion of large estates along the Hudson River made New York unattractive for poor European migrants, in comparison to Pennsylvania. Surprisingly, Shannon does not discuss Leisler's Rebellion, surely a significant event in the seventeenth-century Hudson Valley. The other two essays in this section cover Native American perspectives. Paul Otto examines how the Munsee groups of the lower Hudson Valley were drawn into the Atlantic world through their manufacturing of wampum, the polished cylindrical seashells that functioned as an important commodity in the fur trade. In the third essay, Jon Parmenter discusses Iroquois attempts to convince their Dutch neighbors to abide by Iroquois conceptions of alliance. Parmenter demonstrates how the Mohawks used the Iroquois concept of *kashwenta*, the idea of a relationship based on equality, to maintain close relations with the Dutch in the upper Hudson Valley. Unfortunately for the Mohawks, the Dutch were often unwilling to abide by the *kashwenta* principles. Instead, most viewed their relationship with the Iroquois as one of trade.

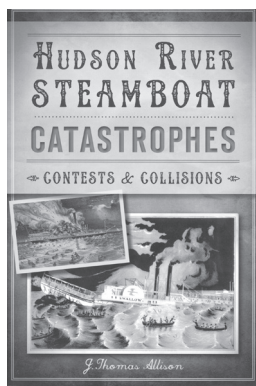
The next three essays are organized under the theme of "Colonial Worlds." Leslie Choquette discusses the population growth of seventeenth-century New France, Jaap Jacobs European migration to New Netherland, and Lauric Henneon Anglo-Dutch rivalries in the Connecticut Valley. Choquette's essay contextualizes Shannon's earlier observation that the French were more willing than the Dutch to venture inland. According to Choquette, the French were forced inland to obtain furs after Iroquois attacks had destroyed the Huron confederacy, which had previously supplied beaver pelts to the colony. Jacobs argues that, in comparison to other Dutch colonies, New Netherland was the most successful settler-colony. Henneon examines the rivalries between New Netherland and the New England colonies over control of the strategic Connecticut Valley. Henneon's essay is a reminder that studies of small locales are as revealing as trans-Atlantic perspectives.

The fourth and final section looks at the Hudson Valley from an Atlantic perspective. It includes a strong contribution by Willem Frijhoff on the complicated role of religion and toleration in the Dutch Republic and New Netherland. Echoing recent work by Evan Haefeli, he argues that real toleration in Dutch New York did not begin until after the English takeover, when the Dutch Reformed Church lost its privileged position. In a very brief essay, Claudia Schnurmann repeats some of the themes already explored by Otto, Shannon, and Henneon. She argues that some of the Indian groups who controlled wampum production were able to retain considerable leverage in relations with European colonies. Finally, Joyce Goodfriend suggests that historians should treat Africans as migrants rather than as slaves, her rationale being that Africans were not just nameless slaves but people who adapted to colonial society in many of the same ways as European settlers. Although this is an important point, historians should be careful not to erase the

distinction between enslaved Africans who were brought to New Netherland against their will and European settlers who migrated to North America for economic opportunity.

While most of the essays are strong, an introductory or concluding essay would have been useful in reminding readers about critical issues in the future study of the Dutch colony in North America. Additionally, reference is made in the preface to the fact that contributors have “provided primary source materials from the workshops that supplement their papers and provide further accessibility to the seventeenth century history of the Hudson Valley” (ix). However, these sources are not included in the book’s hardcover edition. Nonetheless, this collection is a welcome addition to the field of New Netherland studies and the larger field of Atlantic World history.

Mark Meuwese, *University of Winnipeg*



***Hudson River Steamboat Catastrophes: Contests and Collisions*, J. Thomas Allison. Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2013. (139 pp.)**

Anyone who has spent time along the banks of the Hudson River understands the attraction of its beauty. Scenes along the river, particularly in autumn as the leaves brighten with fall foliage, inspire many to photograph and paint the landscape. Instead of oils and paintbrushes, J. Thomas Allison expresses his own affinity for the Hudson and its majesty through a new study of the steamboats that traveled the river over a century ago. In his *Hudson River Steamboat Catastrophes: Contests and Collisions*, the Albany native argues that while competition in steamboat travel along the Hudson River in the nineteenth century caused an increase in luxury for passengers, it led to a corresponding increase in danger. In his work, Allison relates the stories of many opulent steamboats that crashed and sank, causing hundreds of deaths as the ships went to the river’s bottom.

Hudson River Steamboat Catastrophes is a very short book—139 pages divided into twelve chapters that detail the levels of luxury and performance that developed because of competition for business. In the early days of steamboat travel, passengers were exposed regularly to bedbugs, wood smoke, and seating available only on crates and bushels being transported. By the end of the steamboat era, however, passengers were afforded the opportunity to have their own rooms, dine and dance in opulent ballrooms, and spend their time in fully outfitted libraries or casinos. Allison demonstrates how the desire to attract passengers drove owners and designers to outdo their competitors’ boats. On some, such as the *S.S. Oregon*, no expense was spared to create a travel experience that became something comparable to a social status: To be a passenger on these extremely luxurious vessels, people had to have the requisite money.

Throughout *Hudson River Steamboat Catastrophes*, Allison relates how early designs,

business competition, and bravado often led to fatal calamities. He uses oral histories to support the contention that most steam engine explosions resulted from captains and engineers overworking their machines. In earlier years, this was compounded by the lack of metallurgical knowledge. Allison explains that early steam engine designers were not engineers but came from all professions. However, Allison does not excuse the captains and engineers who decades later destroyed their vessels and killed their passengers in attempts to gain glory through racing competitors' steamboats.

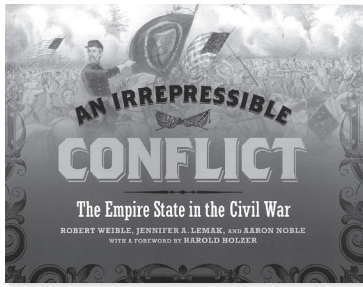
Cornelius Vanderbilt is used by Allison as the prime example of competitive hubris among steamboat owners. "Commodore" Vanderbilt appears in many places in the book and is usually used to depict the owners' callousness and arrogance. Allison relates the story of the 1847 race between George Law's S.S. *Oregon* and Vanderbilt's C. *Vanderbilt*. In their attempts to outperform one another and claim title to the Hudson's fastest steamboat, the two "financial titans" spared no asset. In the last quarter-mile of their race, the S.S. *Oregon* pulled ahead after Law ordered all stateroom doors to be added to the boiler's fire. Allison explains the danger of the heat caused by burning these heavily shellacked Honduran mahogany doors. Although this episode ended without loss of life, it supports Allison's contention that no expense, neither monetary nor safety-related, was spared in Law's quest to beat Vanderbilt.

Hudson River Steamboat Catastrophes has many weaknesses in its construction and organization. The short chapters are easily read in different sittings but lack an overarching, strategic connection. Often the reader is jostled between boats and times that seem to have no relationship. At its worst, the disorganization leads the reader to believe that considerable editing resulted in the deletion of parts of the story that would have helped string together the larger narrative. This weakness is somewhat explained and excused because the book is the first publication of a steamboat enthusiast and not the work of an academic historian.

It is easy to imagine an editor culling the stories to something manageable based on the book's greatest strength: its detail. The book also offers a wealth of knowledge about everyday life aboard a steamboat as both a passenger and employee. Using a plethora of newspaper articles, advertisements, and other primary sources, Allison describes the accommodations aboard steamboats across the decades as well as levels of luxury. It is easy for readers to picture themselves on a steamboat traveling the Hudson in the most opulent accommodations.

Hudson River Steamboat Catastrophes will not win any American Historical Association awards for its contribution to the historiography of steamboat travel. However, it will entrance its readers with the detailed description of life in the nineteenth century. Allison is able to bring the lives of wealthy and commoners alike to life. *Hudson River Steamboat Catastrophes* will make its greatest contributions in the high school or undergraduate classroom. As an instructor of American History, I have already used it to enhance my teaching of the Market Revolution.

Maj. Erik M. Davis, United States Military Academy



An Irrepressible Conflict: The Empire State in the Civil War, Robert Weible, Jennifer A. Lemak, and Aaron Noble; foreword by Harold Holzer. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2014. (268 pp.)

An Irrepressible Conflict is a triumph of public history, both a beautiful rendering of the rich collection displayed by the New York State Museum

to mark the Civil War sesquicentennial and an effective piece of historical narrative. Like the wonderful exhibition of 2012-2013 that it catalogues, the book “interprets the Civil War in its entirety—from the early nineteenth century (when New York was the largest slave state in the North), through the war years themselves (when New York State supplied more men, money, and materiel to the war effort than any other state), and up to the memory of the war today” (xvii). In the process, readers are treated to hundreds of full-color photographs and illustrations that invoke both the tension and the turnover of those turbulent times.

In his introduction, New York State Historian Robert Weible remarks candidly that *An Irrepressible Conflict* was a purposeful exercise in memory: “For years, historians and officials in other states—particularly in the South—insisted . . . that the Civil War was caused by Northern aggression and fought to settle a dispute over states’ rights. . . . Others, however, knew differently. They understood, as New York’s William H. Seward did in 1858, that the Civil War was always an ‘irrepressible conflict.’ Two different societies—one free and the other slave—could never have co-existed harmoniously. Most New Yorkers (and many others) know this now” (xvii). To remind the public both of the centrality of slavery and the accuracy of Seward’s declaration, the museum took a holistic approach to New York society before, during, and after the war.

Jennifer Lemak’s section on antebellum New York brilliantly outlines the state’s nineteenth-century social and economic dynamism while also demonstrating slavery’s deep and enduring roots there. New York’s slave heritage is on full display with disturbing relics, including a slave collar and a runaway slave ad as well as artifacts of challenges to slavery like manumission certificates and abolitionist tracts (2, 4, 7, 22-23). While the centrality of slavery is never questioned here, it is equally clear that antebellum New York, unlike the Cotton South, was a dynamic society. Lemak explores the transportation revolution both in its technological achievements and its influence on agriculture and commerce (10-19). Via the Erie Canal, this presentation flows seamlessly into the revivals of the Second Great Awakening and the rise of reform movements, including abolitionism (20-37), temperance (44-45), and women’s suffrage (38). Throughout this section, Lemak consistently reminds readers of New York’s deep social cleavages—over abolition (24-25); John Brown (36-37); immigration (46); and electoral politics (39, 43, 47-51). This setting of the stage for the Civil War is highly effective—it is appropriately

broad in scope and provides not only a parade of oil paintings, photographs, banners, sculptures, and other interesting items, but also a firm grounding in the diverse dynamics that made the coming conflagration irrepressible in the first place.

In the section on the Civil War itself, Aaron Noble ably continues this narrative, reminding readers from the outset that “while united in battle to preserve the nation, New Yorkers were torn over the same issues that had divided them before the war” (53). Though political and social divisions remained rife (for example, the secessionist schemes of New York’s treacherous Mayor Fernando Wood are acknowledged), as Southern disunion began to snowball and President Lincoln issued calls for troops, Noble suggests that “New Yorkers from all political parties and economic classes rallied to the federal cause,” with “the national flag as a symbol of unity” (61). Here readers are treated to Frederic Church’s famous *Our Banner in the Sky* (1861) and a series of patriotic broadsides, sketches of pro-union rallies, mementos on the death of New York’s Colonel Elmer Ellsworth (the first Union officer lost in the war), and documentation of immigrant enthusiasm for the national cause (61-71; 75-79).

Military history aficionados will not be disappointed by the Civil War section. The actions of New York troops at the First Battle of Bull Run (80-84), Antietam (110-115), Fredericksburg (126-129), Gettysburg (134-139), the Battle of the Wilderness (177-179), Sherman’s March to the Sea (183-185; 188-189), and Petersburg (190-195) are considered with specificity and generous illustrations. The troubling topic of military prisons, including the famous Elmira camp, is presented as well (162-167). There are plenty of guns and other weaponry (88-89; 100-101, 110, 115, 144, 182, 185, 190, 195, 196). Simultaneously, Noble takes an appropriately complex view of the rudiments of war, displaying not only armaments but also diverse and sometimes brilliantly colored uniforms (70, 84, 87), accoutrements (95, 129, 131, 137, 144, 160, 196), and medical equipment (154). Moreover, in this exploration of materiel, readers are repeatedly reminded of the need not only for soldiers but for production, and so the centrality of “New York’s industrial might” is woven into the story—arsenals (94-95) and shipyards (102-103), textile mills (86) and foundries (96-99).

Further, Noble never loses sight of the social and cultural controversies swirling about the war effort in the Empire State. Disappointing Union performances early in the war (85), the gubernatorial victory of Democrat Horatio Seymour (a virulent Lincoln critic) in 1862 (123), and the implementation of the draft with its attendant class injustice and racial animosities (140-144) are all covered; although perhaps the infamous New York Draft Riots of 1863 merited more consideration. The Civil War’s place as a focus of charitable enterprises (145-153), a cultural experience (156), and a human tragedy (157-159) is also explored. The chapter concludes with an extensive look at the assassination of President Lincoln and the public reaction to this “national calamity,” including an especially poignant drawing of the president’s funeral parade passing through Albany sketched by a nine-year-old boy (212-213).

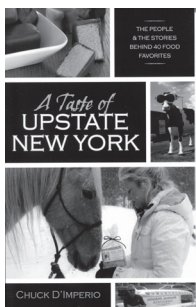
Nor does this section lose sight of the centrality of slavery to the entire ordeal. Noble is in accord with the prevailing scholarly narrative: “Initially, President Lincoln insisted that restoring the Union was the war’s only purpose and made no immediate move to end slavery. . . . As the war dragged on, however, Lincoln decided the time had come to initiate an emancipation policy” (109). Thus, the origins and implications of Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation are explored and illustrated (109; 116-122; 130-133). Notably, this section includes the New York State Library’s four-page draft of Lincoln’s proclamation, which was the heart of a traveling exhibit that evolved into *An Irrepressible Conflict* (xv-xvii).

In the book’s final section, Lemak and Weible follow these themes into postbellum America. The authors explore the memorialization of the conflict through tombs, monuments, and Grand Army of the Republic parades; but they also investigate the complex legacies of the war—from the tribulations of Reconstruction and the rise of Jim Crow to the twentieth-century revival of the Ku Klux Klan and sustained racial violence. To avoid a depressing conclusion, the post-World War II Civil Rights era becomes an important facet of the story, rightly presented in its full breadth as infusing law, sports, labor, and political life with the spirit of a “second Reconstruction” (250). There is also a brief, David Blight-like look at the relationship between the Civil Rights revolution and the Civil War centenary (259-261).

While *An Irrepressible Conflict* is not an interpretive historical monograph, it nevertheless delivers a series of important insights into how New Yorkers have answered—and how they ought to answer—questions about the nature of the Civil War, its causes, and its legacies. Beyond the thoughtful narrative, this visually attractive book presents an abounding cornucopia of alluring artworks, demonstrative documents, and artifacts both spectacular and mundane. The book will be a joyful adventure for anyone interested in New York history or in the history of the Civil War; it should find a place on the coffee tables of many historically minded New Yorkers. Further, I sincerely believe a copy of this approachably profound look at New York in the Civil War should be available in every public school in the Empire State.

Robert Chiles, University of Maryland

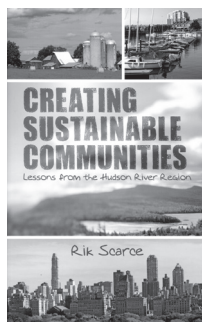
New & Noteworthy Books Received



A Taste of Upstate New York

By Chuck D'Imperio (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2015)
288 pp. \$29.95 (softcover) www.syracuseuniversitypress.syr.edu

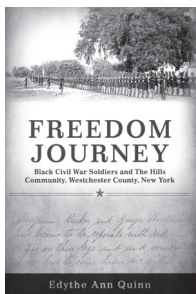
New York is home to a multitude of famous and not-so-famous culinary classics (think bagels and Buffalo wings). *A Taste of Upstate New York* compiles forty notable combinations of local ingenuity and ingredients—from chicken riggies in Rome to candy canes in Kingston. Complete with color photos displaying both the food and the chefs responsible for creating it, D'Imperio's book allows road trip enthusiasts to take a bite out of the best New York has to offer.



Creating Sustainable Communities: Lessons from the Hudson River Region

By Rik Scarce (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2015)
257 pp. \$24.95 (softcover) www.sunypress.edu

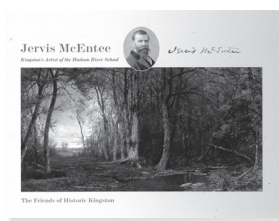
The path to sustainability is complicated and varied, with different entities and individuals having different priorities and goals. Through sixty-two interviews with Hudson River Valley farmers, scientists, business owners, planners, and environmentalists Scarce has created a comprehensive description of past events, current challenges, and future needs to achieve regional sustainability. Throughout the book, he stresses the importance of interconnectedness and localism in addressing the problems that lie ahead.



Freedom Journey: Black Civil War Soldiers and The Hills Community, Westchester County, New York

By Edythe Ann Quinn (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2015)
221 pp. \$24.95 (softcover) www.sunypress.edu

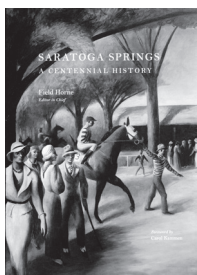
The African-American Hills Community in Westchester County began in the late 1700s as northern religious groups freed slaves, and it continued to grow into the 1860s. *Freedom Journey* tells the story of the thirty-six Hills Community residents who fought for the Union in the Civil War. Using a variety of primary sources (including company rosters, pension records, and personal letters), Quinn sheds light on what life was like in the Hills, as well as the soldiers' wartime experiences. Faced with many challenges, the men persevered to destroy slavery, secure their civil rights, and preserve the Union—stories integral both to Hudson River Valley and U.S. history.



Jervis McEntee: Kingston's Artist of the Hudson River School

By Friends of Historic Kingston
(Delmar, NY: Black Dome Press, 2015)
64 pp. \$18.50 (softcover) www.blackdomepress.com

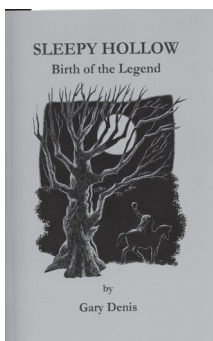
Hudson River School painter Jervis McEntee remains relatively unknown. A resident of Kingston, New York, he had a robust life as painter, writer, family man, and traveler. With a studio-cottage designed by renowned architect (and brother-in-law) Calvert Vaux and the proximity of the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains, McEntee had no shortage of inspiration. Complete with many photographs and color reproductions of his paintings, this companion book to a Friends of Historic Kingston exhibit sheds new and welcome light on the artist.



Saratoga Springs: A Centennial History

By Field Horne [Editor in Chief]
(Saratoga Springs, NY: Kiskatom Publishing, 2015)
404 pp. \$49.95 (hardcover) www.northshire.com

With over a dozen contributing authors and countless images and photographs, this book offers a truly comprehensive look at the upstate city. Divided chronologically as well as by topic, it focuses on the people, economy, community, schools, and neighborhoods that have contributed to Saratoga's character from pre-colonial days to the present.



Sleepy Hollow: Birth of the Legend

By Gary Denis (Patuxent River, MD: Gary Denis, 2015)
330 pp. \$15.99 (softcover) www.garydenis.com

Denis explores the longstanding question: Is Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" fact, fiction, or a combination of both? Relying on Irving's stories and other writings, as well as a number of nineteenth-century and more recent sources, Denis strives to correlate the people and places in the story with real-life counterparts. Ultimately, he reaches some convincing conclusions that either put the mystery of the Headless Horseman to rest...or simply add to the lore.

Andrew Villani, The Hudson River Valley Institute

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