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THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

A Journal of Regional Studies

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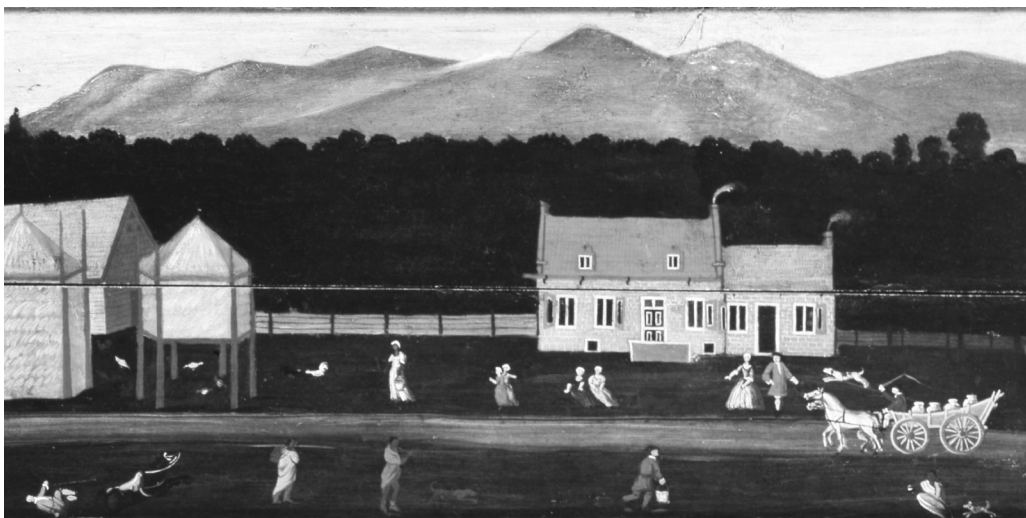
From the Editors

Welcome to our bigger, and more expansive, issue of *The Hudson River Valley Review*. As well as the enlarged format, we've widened the publication's scope to accommodate more than 300 years of history. And while the topics covered in this issue might be broadly familiar, each essay offers details that reveal refreshing new insight.

While the origins and evolution of Pinkster may be debatable, its celebration in seventeenth-century New Netherland offered an opportunity for residents—including enslaved African Americans—to relax, enjoy and express themselves. In the years leading up to the American Revolution, a French emigrant farmer drafted chapters of a book describing his new home in Orange County. These now-classic recollections would not be published until after he had been accused of disloyalty and chased out of the country. His eventual return—and the story of his trials and travels—is the stuff of cinema. In the early nineteenth century, another globetrotting writer, Washington Irving, helped to mold the young nation with his fiction and biographies. But the story of Irving's own life is best conveyed at Sunnyside, his Westchester home, now preserved as a museum.

Jumping to the twentieth century, Orange County's David Wright Hudson enlisted and shipped out to Europe during World War I. Fortunately for us, he recorded his experiences in letters that vividly recount his life in the trenches. Around this same time, New York City was becoming a global powerhouse, but it sorely lacked water. Successive mayors waged war to gain that pure necessity from the Catskills, eventually winning a costly victory that continues to shape upstate-downstate relations. More recently, the Hudson River Valley Greenway and Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area have played critical roles in fostering a regional identity. Barnabas McHenry has been a part of these efforts since the 1980s. In this issue, he completes his "Personal Reflection" on the evolution and influence of these organizations, offering his trademark insights and perceptive asides.

We hope you enjoy what we consider one of our biggest and best collections of century-spanning articles.



On the cover:

Detail of the *Van Bergen Overmantel*, c.1733, attributed to John Heaten, Oil on cherry wood boards, H: 16¼ x W: 88¾ in. Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York, Museum Purchase, N0366.1954. Photograph by Richard Walker. This is one of only three known images that portray slaves in early New York; the second of the three, also attributed to John Heaten, appears on page 5.

THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

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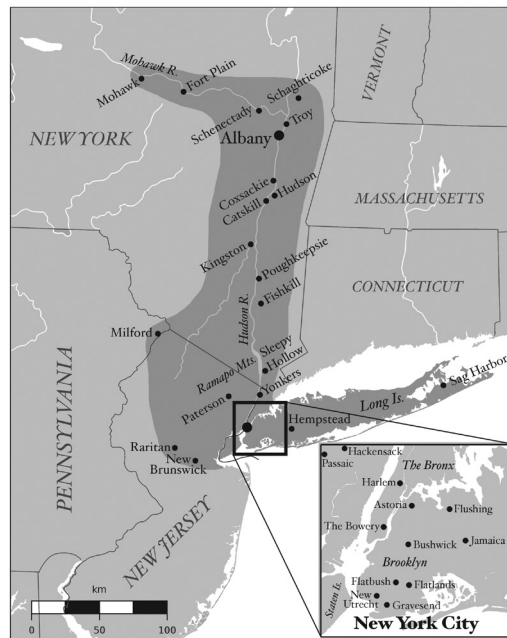
This issue of *The Hudson River Valley Review* is dedicated to the memory of

Richard C. Wiles,

founding editor of *The Hudson Valley Regional Review*,
predecessor of this publication, in 1984.

Rediscovering a Hudson Valley Folkloric Tradition: Traces of the “Pinkster” Feast in Forgotten Books

Jeroen Dewulf



Shading denotes areas with recorded Pinkster celebrations.

Pinkster Celebration in Early America, c.1800

Map made by Flynn Walsh

“Pinkster” is the Dutch term for the Christian holiday known in English as Pentecost, or Whitsuntide, that takes place on the fiftieth day after Easter (the name Pentecost comes from the ancient Greek *Πεντηκοστή* (Pentēkostē), meaning “fiftieth”). In the Netherlands, there were two very different types of Pinkster celebrations. One commemorated the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Christ’s disciples, but this holiday coincided with much older May festivities rooted in pre-Christian fertility rituals relating to the arrival of summer. May festivities in the Netherlands typically included the erection of the *meiboom* (maypole), a tree placed in the village center around which different types of popular entertainment were organized. These included innocent games such as *zaklopen* (sack racing), *eiertikken* (egg tapping), *eierlopen* (running while holding an egg on a spoon), and *ringsteken* or

ringrijden (attempting to lance a ring while riding a horse at a gallop). There also were rougher forms of entertainment such as *hanengevechten* (cockfights), *katknuppelen* (cat clubbing—taking turns clubbing a suspended barrel containing a cat until the barrel shatters and the animal is released), *ganstrekken* or *gansrijden* (goose riding—riding a horse at a gallop and attempting to pull the neck off a goose smeared with oil and hung upside down), and charivari or mock serenading of the *luilak* (late sleeper). May festivities were occasions during which established borders in society could temporarily be crossed with impunity.¹



Anonymous, *Pinksterbloem Parade in Schermerhorn*, c.1750. Four girls carry a Pinkster Flower Girl in the Dutch village of Schermerhorn. Courtesy the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

By the early Middle Ages, these traditional May festivities had become incorporated into a Christian worldview and given a new interpretation that related them to Pentecost. Typical Dutch Pentecost customs were the brewing of *pinksterbier* and the distribution of milk (the so-called *pinkstermelken*) by farmers to young people. Youths used to collect money when they accompanied the *pinksterbruid* (Pinkster bride) or *pinksterbloem* (Pinkster flower), the latter being a young girl wearing a wreath (called *pinksterkroon*—Pinkster crown), who danced and sang around the village. This pre-Christian fertility ritual had come to be seen as a celebration in honor of the Virgin Mary. Other fertility traditions, such as *ringsteken*, came to be associated with St. George's fight against the dragon. The encounter with parrots during the Crusades had resulted in a new Pentecost tradition, also dedicated to St. George: *papegaaischieten* (parrot shooting). Members of the *schuttersgilden* (shooting guilds) shot at a figure in the form of a parrot that had been placed atop a pole.²

As the earliest dedications of churches in the Netherlands had traditionally occurred on Pentecost, these celebrations often coincided with the *ker(k)mis*, an outdoor fair to commemorate the dedication of the local church. At those fairs, music was played, people

- 1 Johannes ter Gouw, *De volksvermaken* (Haarlem: Erven F. Bohn, 1871), 221–33; Hermina C.A. Grolman, *Nederlandsche volksgebruiken naar oorsprong en betekenis* (Zutphen: Thieme, 1931), 152–60; Catharina van de Graft and Tjaard W.R. de Haan, *Nederlandse volksgebruiken bij hoogtijdagen* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1978), 89–105; Gerard Nijsten, *Volkscultuur in de late Middeleeuwen. Feesten, processies en (bij)geloof* (Utrecht: Kosmos, 1994), 94; Bart Lauvrijs, *Een jaar vol feesten* (Elmar: Standaard, 2004), 191–206.
- 2 G.D.J. Schotel, *Het maatschappelijk leven onzer vaderen in de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: J.G. Strenghtolt, 1905), 427–28; B.W.E. Veurman, "Kinderfolklore," *Folklore der Lage Landen*, ed. T.J.W.R. de Haan (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1972), 106–09, 125; Van de Graft and De Haan, *Nederlandse volksgebruiken bij hoogtijdagen*, 99; Marc Wingens, "De pinksterkroon is weer in 't land, hoezee! Het Pinksterkroonfeest in Deventer," *Volkscultuur* vol. 6, no. 2 (1989): 8.

danced, and booths sold drinks and food. Waffles and *oliekoeken* or *oliebollen* (a Dutch variety of dumplings) were typically associated with kermises, as were ring-dances to the rhythm of the bagpipe and the *giga*, a three-stringed violin. Pentecost fairs typically included boxing tournaments, horse races, and wrestling matches; they attracted conjurers, acrobats, quack doctors, and fortune-tellers; and they were stages for the exhibition of deformed or exotic people and animals.³

In the early seventeenth century, Dutch settlers in the colony of New Netherland introduced the Pinkster festival in America. Long after the Dutch surrender to the English in 1664, descendants of these settlers continued to celebrate Pinkster in New York and New Jersey. A description of a Pinkster celebration in the Mohawk Valley, dating to 1846, indicates how the Dutch-American community continued to celebrate Pinkster in the nineteenth century with ancient traditions such as *ringrijden*: “A small cord was extended across the road with a finger ring suspended to it by a small twig or thread” and “the competitors all being prepared and mounted on their prancing steeds, armed with sharp-pointed skewers held between the thumb and forefinger, with which to pierce the ring.” Then, “each in his turn and on a full gallop would make the essay, and the one who was first to succeed in piercing and receiving the ring on the end of his skewer successfully three times and in his regular turn, was considered the winner.”⁴

One of the best sources on the transition to America of elements relating to popular Pinkster celebrations is a lengthy article by the physician James Eights (1798–1882), who was born and raised in Albany. In his childhood recollections, he offers a lively description of a kermis scene. “The Pinkster grounds,” he writes, “were quaintly laid out in the form of an oblong square, and closely hemmed in with the rude buildings on every side save one, and this was left free, so as to give entrance and freely to admit the crowd.” Beyond this square were “various exhibitions, such as of wild animals, rope dancing, circus-riding and the playing ground of all simple gaming sports.”⁵ Dutch-Americans also preserved certain elements of the *Pinksterbloem* parades. Eights’ account reveals that children who assisted at the Albany Pinkster kermis in the early nineteenth century still were “gayly decorated with ribbons and flowers of every description.”⁶ The Dutch word *Pinksterbloemetje* (little Pinkster flower) survived in America in the English corruption *Pinksterblummachee*, *Pinkster bloomitze*, or *Pinxter blumachy* in reference to the Pink Azalea (*azalea nudiflora*).⁷

While Dutch identity remained strong until the Revolution in Albany and parts of rural New York and New Jersey that had once formed New Netherland, things began to

3 Ter Gouw, *De volksvermaken*, 277–78; Adriaan Buter, “Boerendansrevel van toen,” *Neerlands Volksleven* vol. 30, no. 1 and 2 (1980): 35–42; Nijsten, *Volkscultuur in de late Middeleeuwen*, 100–02.

4 *The Schenectady Cabinet, or, Freedom's Sentinel* (28 July 1846).

5 James Eights, “Pinkster Festivities in Albany Sixty Years Ago,” *Collections on the History of Albany*, ed. Joel Munsell, 4 vols. (Albany NY: Munsell, 1865–71), 2:324.

6 Eights, “Pinkster Festivities in Albany Sixty Years Ago,” 124.

7 Alice Morse Earle, “Pinkster Day,” *New Outlook* vol. 49 (1894): 743–44; John Russell Bartlett, *Dictionary of Americanisms: A Glossary of Words and Phrases Usually Regarded as Peculiar to the United States* ([1848] Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1877), 468.

change in the late eighteenth century. During his journey through upstate New York in 1783 and 1784, native Dutchman Carel de Vos van Steenwijk had no difficulties finding older people with whom he could still speak his native language, and he observed with surprise “how incredibly content they were to see a Dutchman.” In a village near Kingston, he even met with Dutch-American families who spoke hardly any English. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that in most of these families, children increasingly used English as their main language of communication and behaved “in an American fashion.”⁸ Once their heritage was no longer a matter of pride to these young Americans, they naturally lost the desire to uphold their forefathers’ traditions, and Dutch Pinkster festivities gradually disappeared.

In January 2017, I published a book on Pinkster, entitled *The Pinkster King and the King of Kongo*, in which I studied the historical development of this originally Dutch festival in the states of New York and New Jersey.⁹ In my book, I not only paid attention to how Dutch settlers in the seventeenth-century colony of New Netherland and their descendants celebrated Pinkster, but also to how the Dutch-owned slave community took advantage of the holiday to elect and celebrate its own “king” with festivities that were different from those of the Dutch. Not convinced by the existing scholarly theories about these African-American Pinkster celebrations, I presented my own, which traces the festivities back to the first slave community in Manhattan that was predominantly of Angolan-Kongolese origin. I thereby rejected the assumption that the Black Pinkster King was to be understood in the European tradition of role reversal during carnival, but explained the practice with reference to Black associations. I did so because I was convinced that African-American Pinkster celebrations were not impromptu social gatherings. Rather,



Attributed to John Heaton, *Boy of the Van Rensselaer Family*, c.1730. This painting is the oldest image of an African-American resident in Albany. It depicts a young boy of the Van Rensselaer family (with a flower, a small bird, a dog, and a jingle) as well as a male black child. The bird and flower are common *vanitas*-symbols of mortality. The obedient dog symbolizes the boy’s good education. His jingle with a whistle and teether of red coral indicates that his permanent teeth were erupting. It was common at the time for both boys and girls to wear such robes up until the age of five. Since the African-American boy is wearing breeches, he must be at least ten. Current repository: Ms. and Mr. Rodman C. Rockefeller

8 Carel de Vos van Steenwijk, *Een grand tour naar de nieuwe republiek: journaal van een reis door Amerika, 1783–1784*, ed. Wayne te Brake (Hilversum: Verloren, 1999), 77, 87, 166, 171.

9 Jeroen Dewulf, *The Pinkster King and the King of Kongo: The Forgotten History of America’s Dutch-Owned Slave Community* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2017).

the complexity of their festivities—which in Albany attracted up to 1,000 spectators, both Blacks and Whites—must have required a team that coordinated activities, made decisions, and assumed responsibilities for the execution of a carefully planned program. Therefore, I claimed that it would be wrong to narrowly reduce Pinkster to its festive nature and argued that the spectacular African-American Pinkster celebrations were just one manifestation of a well-organized cooperative structure that implied Black group solidarity as well as tactical negotiations with slaveholders. I also demonstrated that in many parts of the world, slaves of Angolan-Kongolese origin used to form mutual-aid and burial associations that were led by a community leader whom they called their king and whom they honored with parades similar to those we observe in Black Pinkster celebrations. In doing so, I rejected the assumption that Black Pinkster celebrations were a unique phenomenon and claimed that they should be understood as a specific variant of a much broader tradition that existed in slave societies all over the Americas.¹⁰

Whether or not this new theory on the origins of African-American Pinkster celebrations is convincing I leave up to the reader to decide. In this article, however, I would like to present a different perspective on the Pinkster tradition based on literary sources. When writing my book, I relied primarily on historical sources on Pinkster, such as newspaper articles, diaries, letters, memoirs, and slave narratives. To my surprise, I also discovered how frequently Pinkster was featured as a topic in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature. While I occasionally made references in my book to such fictional sources, much of what I had gathered remained unused.

The compilation of passages from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fictional literature the reader will find in this article is accompanied by background information on the Dutch origins of the Pinkster festival, its transition to America, its development into a predominately African-American celebration, and, eventually, its demise. Some of the passages from these “forgotten books” might be a challenge for the contemporary reader. Since more than a century has passed, our literary tastes have changed dramatically, and much of what then appealed to readers can sound boring and even silly to today’s audience. More importantly, these texts were written by members of the White bourgeoisie and reflect a mindset about minorities that clashes with contemporary norms and values. Therefore, the reader of this article should be warned that some of the passages could make one feel uncomfortable because they take us back to an era when certain stereotypes we repudiate today were still commonplace. But there are also reasons to speak positively about the authors mentioned below. I was surprised to see that many of the references to Pinkster are historically accurate and reveal that the authors made a serious effort to inform themselves about the tradition. Although embedded in a romanticized narrative,

10 For slave communities of Kongolese origin in New Orleans electing and celebrating their “kings” with rituals similar to the ones that used to take place during Pinkster celebrations in Albany, see Jeroen Dewulf, *From the Kingdom of Kongo to Congo Square: Kongo Dances and the Origins of the Mardi Gras Indians* (Lafayette, NO: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2017).

these passages represent a valuable source of information on one of the Hudson Valley's most important folkloric traditions.

Bucolic Scenes with Pinkster Flowers

Pinkster, or "Pinxter," as she calls it, plays a role in Agnes Sage's novel *Little Colonial Dame: A Story of Old Manhattan Island* (1896). Born in Brooklyn in 1854, Agnes Carr [Carolyn] Sage studied in Oswego and later lived in Hackensack, New Jersey, where she passed away in the early twentieth century.¹¹ She wrote several books for children and juveniles, including *Little Colonial Dame*, whose story, she hoped, would "help to revive fresh interest in the honest sturdy settlers of Manhattan Island...their joys and sorrows, festivals and sports." The book is a collection of short stories, in the tradition of James Kirke Paulding, about Geertruyd Vanderen and several of her young teenage friends. The stories are full of references to Dutch (or allegedly Dutch) folklore.

The chapter in her book dedicated to Pinkster begins with a reference to flowers. Geertruyd, or "Grietje" as she is called by her friends, received "a Pinxter *blumie* [flower]" from her male friend Nicholas Bayard, which, according to tradition, she was to wear in her girdle when going "to the *kerck* [church]." To everyone's surprise, however, "just then a woolly head was popped in at the half-open door, followed by the meager form of small, black Deborah, clad in a scant robe of green linsey-woolsey, with a string of 'Job's tears' around her ebony neck." The female slave "held out a daintily arranged nosegay of pink and white English daisies and gracefully drooping ferns," offered to her by a "big, gran' furrin' gemman. Dat Injun 'wano fotch 'em, and says de British haas promised to gib him ten stivers for pullin' de brakes in de wood."¹² The "foreign gentleman" turns out to be Sir Ralph Hastings, an Englishman, which confronts Geertruyd with a dilemma: should she wear the Pinkster flowers of her Dutch friend or the bouquet of the mysterious English visitor to the Dutch colony?

As we have seen, the link between Pinkster and girls decorated with flowers is authentic. The Pinkster flowers also are recalled in Anna Sadlier's historical romance *Gerald de Lacey's Daughter* (1916). Born in Montreal to publisher James Sadlier and novelist Mary Anne Madden Sadlier, Anna Theresa Sadlier (1854–1932) was educated at the Villa Maria Convent in Montreal and later in New York City at Mademoiselle Lagarde's French School and at St. Mary's and Holy Cross Seminaries.¹³ In New York she learned about the Pinkster tradition. Considering her strong interest in Catholic history, it should not surprise that Sadlier became intrigued by the 1689 rebellion under the leadership of the (Protestant) New York City militia captain Jacob Leisler against the (Catholic) English Lieutenant Governor Francis Nicholson. This episode in New York history formed the background of Sadlier's romance about Gerald de Lacey's daughter Evelyn, where Pinkster

11 *Woman's who's who of America* (1914–15): 712.

12 Agnes Carr Sage, *Little Colonial Dame: A Story of Old Manhattan Island* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1896), 78.

13 *Catholic World*, vol. 104 (Oct. 1916/March 1917): 847.

(or Pinxter, as she calls it) is described as a moment of peace that reunites the deeply divided Dutch community:

Manhattan was at its gayest. The trees, dressed in their most exquisite costumes of feathery green, tossed their branches merrily, exhaling the fresh odor of new verdure; the gardens were ablaze with the midsummer glory of flowers—roses of every hue, nasturtiums, pinks, peonies, phlox. Sweet William and mignonette filled all the beds or strayed over the paths; flowering shrubs, late lingering lilac and syringa perfumed all the air; wistaria, clematis and rambler roses made festive all the trellises. The people of the town rivaled the flowers in their bright-hued garments. Faces were radiant, as if the gloom and darkness of the late troublous times had passed; there was the laughter of happy children mingling with the songs of the birds. For it was Pinxter day, to which the elders, only less eagerly than the little folk, had been looking forward for weeks. Picnics were arranged on every hand, by boat, by carriage, or, for the less favored ones of fortune, on foot. The peregrinations of these latter extended no farther than some spot by the river in the Wolfert's Valley, or in the comparatively rural quietude of Greenwich Village.¹⁴

Pinkster flowers are also mentioned in *A Garden of Simples* (1900), a book about gardening and folklore by Martha Bockée Flint (1841–1900). Flint grew up in Dutchess County, where she also spent her final years. She was a graduate of Elmira College and taught history in several schools in New York. In her gardening book, she explained that “the custom in Nieuw Amsterdam which is fairest in retrospect, and which lingered longest, was the gathering of the Pingster-bloem.” Parties of young people “set out from the village clustered about the fort, and strolling past ‘T Claverwaytje, ‘T Schaape Waytje, and ‘T Kalchhoeck, beyond the governor’s bouwerie and the pleasant farmsteads on the Boston road, or rambling over the Inleberg, wandering through the Out-Ward, perhaps as far as the grassy flats of New Haarlem which had allured so many of the Dutch settlers.” From there, “the youths and maidens returned laden with branches of the Pingster-bloem, to adorn the houses, and the flowers of spicy aroma were woven in the blond braids of many a Jacquemijntje or Tanneké.”¹⁵

The Shame and Sin of Pinkster

These bucolic descriptions of Pinkster should not hide the fact that the festival was controversial within the Dutch community. Ever since the arrival of Protestantism in the sixteenth-century Netherlands, popular Pinkster celebrations had come under pressure. Protestant church leaders perceived Pinkster kermises as a typical example of the Catholic tendency to incorporate pagan rituals and customs into Christian practices, which in their

14 Anna T. Sadlier, *Gerald de Lacey's Daughter: An Historical Romance* (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1916), 450.

15 Martha Bockée Flint: *A Garden of Simples* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), 36–37.

view corrupted Christianity. Hardliners in the powerful Dutch Reformed Church ruled that ministers had to discourage any type of popular celebrations during Pentecost. Despite such discouragements, however, many people in the Dutch Republic remained attached to the popular Pinkster traditions and continued to organize them.¹⁶ The continuation of these celebrations illustrates the failure of the Reformed Church to impose its strict moral values on the Dutch population.¹⁷ In fact, the Dutch community became divided during Pinkster. For devout members of the Reformed Church, Pentecost offered little more excitement than a special church service. For less devout people in the Dutch Republic, however, the holiday continued to be a time of unrestrained merriment. Pinkster kermises in the Dutch Republic remained, according to folklorist Johannes ter Gouw, “a Bacchanalia” during the seventeenth century. They only began to lose importance in the eighteenth century.¹⁸

In her novel *Little Colonial Dame*, Sage linked the opposition against the boisterous Pinkster kermises in New Netherland to Director-General Petrus—“Peter”—Stuyvesant (1647–64). Geertryd and her female friends wonder if it is worth wearing any flowers at all for the Pinkster festival because “Old Silverleg”—Stuyvesant’s nickname following the loss of his right leg during a fight in the Caribbean—is “putting a stop to the Pinxter merrymaking ... First the Shrovetide revels went and now the Pinxter fun. Why, pray, should he spoil our pleasure? Even the old folks like it not. They say the Governor is too straightfaced by far, and it will do his High Mightiness no good whatever.”¹⁹ Stuyvesant, the son of a minister in the Reformed Church and former student at the Calvinist University of Franeker in Friesland, was an adherent of strict Calvinist doctrine and a fierce opponent of popular celebrations on Sundays and major Christian holidays.²⁰ In 1654, he prohibited *gansrijden* and even ordered the imprisonment of a few farmers who had dared to organize the traditional “goose riding” anyway.²¹ Well aware of the difficulties to impose such a ban, local administrators showed reluctance to support Stuyvesant’s prohibitions.²² Although they concurred with him that it “is considered entirely frivolous, needless and disreputable by subjects and neighbors, to celebrate such heathenish and popish festivals and to introduce

16 Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* ([1987]; New York: Random House, 1997), 182.

17 Arie Th. van Deursen, *Bavianen en slijkgeuzen. Kerk en kerkvolk ten tijde van Maurits en Oldenbarnevelt* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974), 133–34.

18 Ter Gouw, *De volksvermaken*, 231.

19 Sage, *Little Colonial Dame*, 77.

20 Joyce D. Goodfriend, “The Struggle over the Sabbath in Petrus Stuyvesant’s New Amsterdam,” *Power and the City in the Netherlandic World*, eds. Wayne te Brake and Wim Klooster (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 205–24.

21 “Council Minutes” (25 and 27 February 1654), in Charles T. Gehring (ed.), *Council Minutes, 1652–1654. New York Historical Manuscripts*. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co 1983), 117–20; Bayard Tuckerman, *Peter Stuyvesant: Director-General for the West India Company in New Netherland* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1893), 152.

22 Jaap Jacobs, “‘To Favor This New and Growing City of New Amsterdam with a Court of Justice’: The Relations between Rulers and Ruled in New Amsterdam,” *Amsterdam-New York: Transatlantic Relations and Urban Identities since 1653*, eds. George Harinck and Hans Krabbendam (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2005), 17–29.

such bad customs into this country,” they pointed out that these customs “may be tolerated in some places of our Fatherland or winked at.”²³

Stuyvesant’s moral crusade also affected popular Pinkster celebrations. We can assume that the “weekly Market-Day, to wit Monday [the Monday after Pentecost]” in New Amsterdam was accompanied by a kermis.²⁴ Also in Beverwijck, the later Albany, there were popular celebrations on Pentecost. In May 1655, the Court of Fort Orange and Beverwijck gave permission to Hendrick Joachemsz, a tavern owner and lieutenant in the town’s burgher guard, to have the guard “*den Papegay te laten schieten* [shoot the parrot]” on “the third day after this coming *Pijnghsteren* [Pentecost].”²⁵ Although Joachemsz had promised to keep good order, the Pinkster festivities ended up being so boisterous that the authorities announced that damage caused to property should be reported to them and that reparations would be paid. Stuyvesant himself also intervened, arguing that “experience has demonstrated and instructed that on New Year and May days with the shooting, May pole planting and excessive drinking, besides unnecessarily wasting powder, much drunkenness and other insolences are committed.” He decided to “forbid henceforth shooting and planting of May poles on New Year and May days within this province of New Netherland.”²⁶ However, just as in the *patria*, such prohibitions had no lasting effect. Rowdy popular entertainment continued to be part of Dutch celebration culture long after Stuyvesant had surrendered the colony to the English. In 1677, for instance, the authorities in the still heavily Dutch town of Albany issued a proclamation to punish “all misdemeanors which have occurred here on Shrove Tuesday, *viz.*, riding at a goose, cat, hare, etc., etc., on a penalty of £25 sewan.”²⁷

For many decades, the discussion over the moral turpitude of Pinkster kermises continued within the Dutch community in America. We find an indirect reference to it in the *Memoirs of an American Lady* (1808) by the Scotswoman Anne Grant (1755–1838), who spent her childhood years with the Dutch Schuyler family in Albany. While Grant does not explicitly mention Pinkster celebrations in Albany, she refers to certain “licentious and idle habits” that were particularly strong during “three stated periods in the year, when, for a few days, young and old, masters and slaves, were abandoned to unruly enjoyment, and neglected every serious occupation for pursuits of this nature.”²⁸ We can assume that Pinkster was one of these three periods, the two others probably being Shrovetide

23 “Court Minutes of New Amsterdam” (26 February 1654), in Berthold Fernow (ed.), *The Records of New Amsterdam from 1653 to 1674*, 7 vols. (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1897), 1:172.

24 “Ordinance” (10 March 1648), in Edmund Bailly O’Callaghan (ed.), *Laws and Ordinances of New Netherland, 1638–1674. Compiled and Translated from the Original Dutch Records in the Office of the Secretary of State, Albany, New York* (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1868), 89.

25 “Court Minutes” (9 May 1655), Charles T. Gehring (ed.), *Fort Orange Minutes 1652–1660* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 192.

26 “Ordinance Prohibiting New Year and May Day Disruptions” (30 December 1655), in Charles T. Gehring (ed.), *Laws & Writs of Appeal 1647–1663* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1991), 52–53.

27 Esther Singleton, *Dutch New York* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1909), 296.

28 Anne Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady with Sketches of Manners and Scenes in America as they Existed Previous to the Revolution* ([1808]; New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1909), 92.

and New Year's Eve. The fact that Grant does not tell her readers anything specific about these celebrations indicates that elite families such as the Schuylers considered the festival inappropriate for a young girl. In a description of a Pinkster festival in Albany in 1803, an anonymous author calling him- or herself A.B. confirmed that "a certain class of Whites" attended the boisterous Pinkster kermises, whereas "the serious part of the Dutch congregation" opted to celebrate Pentecost in church only.²⁹ Robert Lowell's *A Story or Two from an Old Dutch Town* (1878) also reveals that devout members of the Dutch Reformed Church opposed Pinkster kermises. Born in Boston, Reverend Robert Traill Spence Lowell (1816–1891) moved to Schenectady around 1860. There he studied the town's Dutch history and wrote a collection of fictional short stories about it. In one of these stories—"Master Vorhagen's Wife"—Lowell describes how the Dutch Reformed Dominie Van Schaats had "his heart and mind stirred by the evil wrought among his flock by the ill-keeping of the Pinkster-holidays" and led a moral campaign against "the shame and sin of Pinkster."³⁰ These examples show that while devout Dutchmen tended to keep a distance vis-à-vis the popular revelries, others ignored the objections by the religious authorities and took an active part in the "Bacchanalian" Pinkster kermises.

Interestingly, Eights specifies that on the third day of Pinkster, "the upper class of revelers had left the ground to seek entertainment elsewhere" and that "on the succeeding fourth and fifth days the grounds were left to the free enjoyment of the humbler classes," which, "instigated by the more potent draughts they swallowed, speedily brought on wrangling discord" and "quickly succeeded by rounds of fighting, bruised eyes, and bloody noses unnumbered, big Jack Van Patten, the city bully, being unanimously declared the champion of the lists, having successfully overthrown all his numerous opponents." Eights thus indicates that early nineteenth-century Pinkster celebrations in Albany observed a social hierarchy and that people were well aware of who was supposed to be seen or not seen on which days.

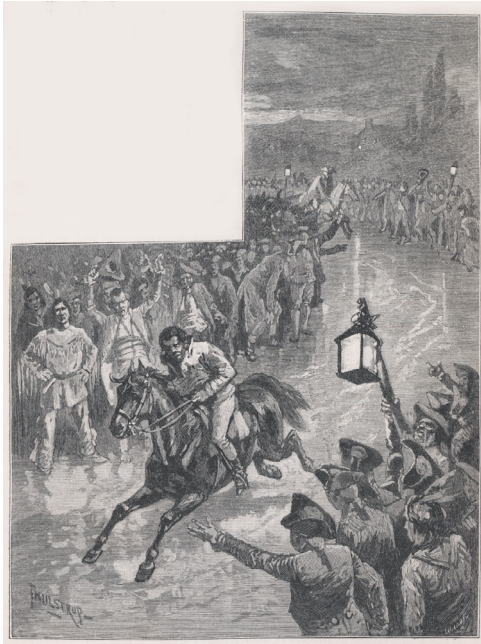
The Black Pinkster King

Although Pinkster celebrations among descendants of Dutch settlers in New York and New Jersey correspond in many ways to those in the Netherlands, the American version of Pinkster cannot be simply reduced to an offspring of a Dutch tradition. Due to the presence of slaves, Pinkster festivals in America developed differently. While the interest in the tradition among descendants of Dutch settlers began to wane in the aftermath of the American Revolution, the Dutch-owned slave community continued to be attached to the holiday to the degree that, in the nineteenth century, this originally Dutch festival was primarily perceived as a celebration of the Black community.

We find a lively description of a Pinkster celebration by members of the Dutch-owned slave community in the novel *The Begum's Daughter* (1890), by Edwin Lassetter

29 *The Albany Centinel* (13 June 1803).

30 Robert Lowell, *A Story or Two from an Old Dutch Town* (Boston, MA: Roberts Brothers, 1878), 260, 268.



Anonymous, *King Charles Racing on Ice*.
Artist's conception of Charles, the Pinkster king,
winning a nightly horse racing competition for his
master, Volkert Petrus Douw, against General Philip
Schuyler. In: *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*,
vol. 62 (March 1881)

Bynner (1842–93). Born in Brooklyn, Bynner moved with his family to Massachusetts as a young child. There he obtained a degree from Harvard Law School, but combined his work as a lawyer with literature, mainly historical novels and fantastic tales that later made him famous as one of the American pioneers of science fiction.³¹ Similar to Sadlier's *Gerald de Lacey's Daughter*, Bynner's *The Begum's Daughter* portrays the late seventeenth-century Dutch community in New York at the time of Leisler's Rebellion. The title refers to Catalina Staats, child of a Dutch physician and an East-Indian mother (the "Begum"), whose own marriage plans and that of her female friend Hester Leisler are thwarted by the intricacies of politics.

Not surprisingly, Bynner begins his description of Pinkster with a reference to flowers. "The second and most important day of the festival, which usually lasted a week," he writes, "was filled with the holiday clamor of groups of children, both white and black,

under the care of some gray-haired old aunty or buxom young wench, all alike bedizened with cheap jewelry and gay streamers, and decked out with branches of lilac and cherry blossoms." However, he also introduces a Black character called "old Congo," who had "asked for leave to go the Pingster feast." Upon arrival on Pinkster Hill (where later the State Capitol would be built), Catalina, her friends, and old Congo "found the grounds laid out in the form of an oblong square, surrounded on three sides by rude booths and tents, and open only at the eastern end for entrance and exit." There they found "the whole slave population of the town, together with a plentiful sprinkling of Indians, feathered and blanketed, otherwise easily to be distinguished by their stolid gravity amid the effervescent jollity of the negroes, like notes of discord in music artfully put in to accentuate the harmony." They arrived just in time to witness the arrival of the Black king: "No Roman conqueror in triumphal car ever bore himself with loftier port. Few, indeed, among mere conquerors and potentates have been so blessed by kindly nature, or furnished forth in greater pomp of awe-striking haberdashery, withal, than was the Pingster king." The king's "gold-laced cocked hat was perched upon his snow-white head; his tall, spare figure was draped in a scarlet coat, which hung to his very heels, while his

31 Barrett Wendell, "Memoire of Edwin Lassetter Bynner, LL.B.," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Oct. 1894): 178–89.

buck-skin breeches, bleu stockings, and silver-buckled shoes flashed in and out as his wide-flapping coat-skirts yielded to his stately tread.” Then the music started. The Blacks used “a grotesque instrument called an eel-pot, which looked like a big, hollow, wooden cask covered by a tightly drawn sheepskin.” They sang “in cadences, now dolefully prolonged like the wind sighing in the tree-tops, now tense, sharp, and ringing like a dithyrambic chorus, the uncouth refrain, *Hi-a bomba bomba*.” To this music, the dancing began with “a drumming of feet, a waving of hands, a nodding of the head, and a swaying of the whole body.” Even the elderly king and his entourage participated “with high skip and jump, with picked and fantastic steps, each and every movement seeming to adapt itself without difficulty to the resounding *Hi-a bomba bomba*.”³²

When writing this scene, Bynner relied heavily on the memoirs of James Eights. In fact, his references to the eel-pot, the king’s dress, and the “hi-a bomba” shout can all be traced back to Eights’ description of the Pinkster festival. Another novel that provides a similar, though less lively, scene of Black performance rituals on Albany’s Pinkster Hill is Ruth Hall’s *The Black Gown* (1900). Born in Schoharie, Hall (1858–1934) graduated from Catskill Academy in 1875 and made a name in the Catskill region as a journalist, columnist, and author.³³ A historical novel about life in and around Albany in the middle of the eighteenth century, *The Black Gown* pays a lot of attention to Dutch customs. Eve Verbeeck, its female hero, describes Pinkster as a holiday that “was the slaves’,—given up utterly to them,—during whose seven days they deserted their masters and followed their own devices. No one issued a command while Pinxter lasted, and it was an annual treat to visit the scene of frolic and look on at its sports.” When visiting Pinkster Hill with her friends, Eve witnessed “King Charley,” who was “decked in a discarded military coat of tarnished red and gold, a tiny cap perched on his shock of wool. He sat astride a hollow log, both ends of which had been covered with skins, whereon he beat as if they were drums.” The Black king was accompanied by “other slaves, who held eel-pots, also converted into musical instruments. A weird chant, brought by their ancestors from Africa, led a frenzied dance.”³⁴

We also find a description of the election of a Pinkster king called Harry in the anonymous fictional story called “Poor Harry—the Old Slave” (1859). It characterizes Pinkster as “the Slaves’ yearly jubilee, which lasted three days” and during which “Harry was declared by acclamation, martial for the celebration,” because he “was beloved by all the colored population.” The author compares Harry to the famous Albany Pinkster king and claims that if “King Charley himself had been present, his hat would not have been filled with loose change sooner than was Harry’s; he was the master spirit in that and all subsequent celebrations.”³⁵

32 Edwin Lassetter Bynner: *The Begum’s Daughter* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1890), 362–66.

33 *Who’s who in America: A Biographical Dictionary of Notable Living Men and Women of the United States* vol. 5 (1908–09): 797.

34 Ruth Hall: *The Black Gown* (Boston/New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1900), 91–92.

35 *The Albany Evening Journal* (1 September 1859).

This suggestion that Charles may not have been the only Pinkster King corresponds to a discussion among scholars. Historian Sterling Stuckey, in particular, is convinced that besides Albany, slaves in other parts of New York and New Jersey also must have elected a Pinkster king.³⁶ The most convincing piece of evidence that Stuckey may be right comes from Grace Niles' little-known study *The Hoosac Valley* (1912). According to Niles, a certain Tom Mandolin, who lived in Schaghticoke on Colonel Johannes Knickerbacker's mansion, was called "king" by his fellow slaves. Niles was very knowledgeable about the region; allegedly, he told Washington Irving about the adventures of Ethan Allen, Ignace Kip, Mallery, Spook Hollow, and the Schaghticoke Plains. During the Pinkster holidays, Niles argues, not only King Charles in Albany, but also King Tom in Schaghticoke was "clad in gold-laced scarlet coat and yellow breeches, and amused the crowd with antics and songs."³⁷

The possible existence of other "slave kings" in the Hudson Valley also corresponds to David Murdoch's novel *The Dutch Dominie of the Catskills* (1861). Born in Scotland in 1800, Murdoch migrated to Canada as a member of the London Colonial Missionary Society. In 1837, he and his family moved to Catskill, where he preached at the Dutch Reformed Church until it was destroyed by fire in 1851. He then moved to Elmira, where he served as minister of the First Presbyterian Church until he was forced to leave, allegedly because of his involvement in the Underground Railroad movement. Part of the congregation followed him to the newly established Lake Street Presbyterian Church, but he died in 1861 before being able to give a single sermon in the new church.³⁸ His historical novel covers a brief period in the fall of 1778, during the Revolutionary War, in the Catskill Mountains. It includes ample information on Hudson Valley Dutch folklore. Murdoch describes how the local slave community had a leader, whom they called their "king." Dressed as a dominie with a "cocked hat ... and a large towel tied around the neck," he acted as a judge over other slaves and used his authority to impose sanctions on them.³⁹

A Rural Festival?

Another topic of debate among scholars is whether Pinkster was primarily a rural celebration or also had an urban counterpart in New York City. This question takes us to the famous passage on Pinkster in James Fenimore Cooper's novel *Satanstoe; Or, the Littlepage Manuscripts. A Tale of the Colony* (1845). Cooper (1789–1851) was born in Burlington, New Jersey, but soon after his parents moved to Otsego County, where he spent most of his youth. Since Albany was the nearest large city in the region, Cooper had significant interaction with the local Dutch-American community. He also had a

36 Sterling Stuckey, *Going through the Storm: The Influence of African American Art in History* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 77.

37 Grace Greylock Niles, *The Hoosac Valley, its Legends and its History* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), 415, 488.

38 <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=55676780>

39 David Murdoch, *The Dutch Dominie of the Catskills; The Times of the "Bloody Brandt"* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1861), 311, 364.

personal connection to the community through his wife, Susan Augusta De Lancey, who had relatives of Dutch heritage in Fishkill. Cooper visited the Netherlands several times, in 1828, 1831, and 1832.⁴⁰

In *Satanstoe*, a historical novel set in 1757, Cooper describes the Pinkster festival through the eyes of Cornelius—“Corny”—Littlepage, a New Yorker of mixed English-Dutch descent. During his visit to New York City on Pinkster day, Corny is accompanied by two friends, one of whom, Dirck Van Valkenburgh, is of Dutch descent, while Jason Newcome is an Anglo-American “Yankee” from Connecticut:

After showing Jason the City Hall, Trinity Church, and the City Tavern, we went out of town, taking the direction of a large common that the King’s officers had long used for a parade ground, and which has since been called the Park, though it would be difficult to say why, since it is barely a paddock in size, and certainly has never been used to keep any animals wilder than the boys of the town. ... Jason was at first confounded with the noises, dances, music, and games that were going on. By this time, nine-tenths of the Blacks of the city, and of the whole country within thirty, or forty miles, indeed, were collected in thousands in those fields, beating banjoes, singing African songs, drinking, and most of all laughing, in a way that seemed to set their very hearts rattling within their ribs. ... The features that distinguish a Pinkster frolic from the usual scenes at fairs, and other merry makings, however, were of African origin. ... Among other things, some were making music, by beating on skins drawn over the ends of hollow logs, while others were dancing to it, in a manner to show that they felt infinite delight.⁴¹

The area known as the Common had originally served as a place that could be used by anyone to let cattle graze or to collect firewood. Part of the Common was later also used as a cemetery for slaves. This graveyard was accidentally discovered during construction work in 1991, which led to the erection of the African Burial Ground National Monument. While the historical connection to the city’s Black community is undisputed, scholars have expressed doubts about the authenticity of Cooper’s description and assume that he either invented the scene or transferred—for unknown reasons—a Pinkster celebration he had witnessed in Albany to Manhattan.⁴²

However, a hitherto unknown article in *The Public Advertiser* from 1809 confirms that in the early nineteenth century Pinkster celebrations were still taking place in the very heart of Manhattan. The unknown author informs that on “Whitsun Monday called by

40 Wayne Franklin, “Cooper in the Netherlands,” *James Fenimore Cooper Society Miscellaneous Papers* vol. 26 (2009): 3–8.

41 James Fenimore Cooper, *Satanstoe, or The Littlepage Manuscripts: A Tale of the Colony (1845)*, eds. Kay Seymour House and Constance Ayers Denne (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), 61–65.

42 Kay Seymour House, “Historical Introduction,” In Cooper, *Satanstoe*, xvii; James H. Pickering, “Fenimore Cooper and Pinkster,” *New York Folklore Quarterly* vol. XXII, no. 1 (1966): 17; White, “Afro-Dutch Syncretization in New York City and the Hudson Valley,” 72.

the negroes of Long and Staten Island 'PINGSTER HOLIDAY'...all the negroes of Long and Staten Island obtain permission from their masters to visit New York to participate in the amusement of the day." On their arrival in the city, they "repair to the Park, which is the general rendezvous, where they...engage in pitching and tossing coppers, others in leaping, jumping and a great variety of extraordinary feats of agility."⁴³ The "park" mentioned here as the original venue of the festival is in all likelihood City Hall Park, the area formerly known as the Common where Cooper set the stage of Pinkster.

Other references confirm that African-American Pinkster celebrations used to take place in City Hall Park as well as on Chatham Square. In 1876, *The Sun* wrote that "in the old Dutch times, the limits of the Park were known as the Vlacte or Flat, and was the scene of many a Paas [Easter] and Pinxter festival." In 1878, *The New-York Times* wrote that "'Pinkster' is the Dutch word for Whitsunday, or Pentecost. Among our forefathers the Pinkster feast lasted a whole week... On Whit-Monday all manner of shows were exhibited in the Park and Chatham Square." And in 1880, the *New York Evening Express* wrote that "the Dutch are particularly famous for their wholesouled enjoyment of Whitsuntide... In this city, too, in the days of the Knickerbockers, Pinkster was a time for universal merriment. Park Row and Chatham Square were alive with all manner of shows, and young and old flocked to see them."⁴⁴ This indicates that Cooper's description of the Pinkster festival, despite being presented in a work of fiction, may well be reliable. It also shows that it would be wrong to assume that Pinkster was primarily a rural festival, celebrated only in the Hudson Valley. Rather, the area in which it was celebrated in the early nineteenth century still roughly coincided with the borders of what had once been New Netherland, including its former capital New Amsterdam.

Abolition and the End of Pinkster

Following the American independence, the ideal of liberty grew stronger. Although most Whites excluded the slave population from their noble ideals, exceptional ones such as the Quaker community insisted that true liberty could not be achieved without abolition. The debate over slavery also divided the Dutch-American community. Following the adoption in 1780 of a law that gradually emancipated slaves in Pennsylvania, wealthy Dutch-American slaveholders realized that New York would follow sooner or later. Although the complete abolishment of slavery in New York State did not take place until 1827, most elite families had already begun to replace their slaves with cheap European, mostly Irish, immigrants in the early nineteenth century. However, the vast majority of Dutch-Americans were yeoman farmers who still relied heavily on their slaves. They were among the fiercest opponents of Governor John Jay's Gradual Emancipation Law, which freed all slave children born after the fourth of July 1799 and paved the way for the complete abolition of slavery in the state. In 1793, in the midst of this tense discussion over slavery in the Dutch-American

43 *The Public Advertiser* (23 May 1809).

44 *The Sun* (30 April 1876); *The New-York Times* (11 June 1878); *New York Evening Express* (16 May 1880).

community, a fire that had erupted in the stables behind Leonard Gansevoort's home in Albany burned out of control, destroying twenty-six homes and almost an entire block in the city's business district. Three slaves—Dinah, Bet, and Pomp—were accused of arson and subsequently sentenced to death. Dinah was owned by Volkert Douw, King Charles' master; Bet by Philip van Rensselaer; and Pomp by Mathew Visscher. All three masters belonged to influential landowning families of Dutch origin.⁴⁵

These tensions also affected the annual Pinkster celebrations. The dark clouds forming over Pinkster Hill are clearly visible in the pseudonymous Absalom Aimwell's *Pinkster Ode for the Year 1803*, dedicated to "Carolus Africanus Rex" or, in the English form, "King Charles, Captain-General and Commander in Chief of the Pinkster Boys." The author behind this work is unknown. His initially bucolic description of Albany in late May is suddenly interrupted when the poet addresses the Black community:

Rise then, each son of Pinkster, rise, snatch fleeting pleasure as it flies. See nature spreads her carpet gay, for you to dance your care away. Care! what have we with care to do? Masters! Care was made for you. Behold rich free-men—see dull care oft make their bodies lean and spare. How many weave the web of life, with wool of care, and warp of strife. With care of state and statesman groans, as if its weight would break his bones. But what have we with care to do, my Pinkster boys? 't is not for you. Thus spake the genius of the day, as up the hill she led the way.⁴⁶

The *Pinkster Ode* proceeds to a condemnation of slavery, which is paralleled by a speech in which King Charles calls for slave loyalty to the masters:

Harken, ye sons of Ham, to me; This day our bosses make us free; Now all the common on the hill, Is ours, to do what e'er we will. And let us by our conduct show, we thank them as we ought to do. ... Let us with grateful hearts agree not to abuse our liberty. Tho' lordlings proud may domineer, and at our humble revels jeer, tho' torn from friends beyond the waves, tho' fate has doom'd us to be slaves, yet on this day, let's taste and see How sweet a thing is liberty. What tho' for freedom we may sigh many long years until we die, yet nobly let us still endure the ills and wrongs we cannot cure. Tho' hard and humble be our lot, the rich man's spleen we envy not. While we have health, whence pleasure springs, and peace to purchase fiddle-strings, let's with united voice agree to hail this happy jubilee.⁴⁷

45 Alice P. Kenney, *The Gansevoorts of Albany: Dutch Patricians in the Upper Hudson Valley* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1969), 135–36.

46 Absalom Aimwell Esq., "A Pinkster Ode for the Year 1803," eds. Geraldine R. Pleat and Agnes N. Underwood, *New York Folklore Quarterly* vol. 8 (1952): 33.

47 *Ibid.*, 34–35.

The *poem* ends with a reference to the African burial ground and the prospect of emancipation:

Now if you take a farther round you'll reach the Africs' burying ground. There as I rambled years ago, to pass an hour of love-lorn woe; I found a stone at Dinah's grave, on which was carv'd the following stave: *Here lies Dinah, Sambo wife, Sambo lub him like he life, Dinah die 'bout sik week go, Sambo massa tell he so. ...* Enough, says I, to Dinah's shade, thou too, wilt drudge no more, with spade, nor hoe, nor pot, nor washing tub, nor clean away-nor sweep, nor scrub. Sleep on good wench, or only doze, I'll not disturb thy blest repose. Thy honest soul has wing'd its flight, beyond the reach of tyrant's sway; In realms of everlasting light—to meet good Benezet and Lay.”⁴⁸

The mention of Dinah's grave is a likely allusion to the slave girl involved in the alleged 1793 plot; after her execution, she was buried in the African cemetery near the place where the Pinkster celebrations occurred. Her death is connected to the names of Benjamin Lay and Anthony Benezet, two prominent Quaker abolitionists whom Aimwell highlights as models of patient reform. The *Pinkster Ode* should thus be understood as a call for patience to the slaves and an appeal to Black community leaders such as King Charles to ensure that the gradual transition to abolition would occur without the eruption of violence.

The transition toward a society without slavery coincided with a growing concern in elitist White circles over the moral condition of the Black population. The boisterous Pinkster celebrations, in particular, came to be seen as an example of the poor moral condition of people who were soon to become fellow American citizens. The bad reputation Pinkster had acquired in the nineteenth century is apparent in John Russell Bartlett's entry for “Pinxter” in his *Dictionary of Americanisms* (1848): “(Dutch, *pingster*) Whitsunday: ‘On Pinxter Monday, the Dutch negroes of New York and New Jersey consider themselves especially privileged to get as drunk as they can.’”⁴⁹ The growing concern over the alleged negative influence of Pinkster on the Black community explains why the transition toward abolition was accompanied by requests from within the White community to end the tradition. Significantly, an anonymous article in *The Albany Centinel* from 1803 spoke about Pinkster as a time when “married negroes consider themselves as absolved, on these occasions, from their matrimonial obligations...all restraints are flung off, and nature, depraved nature, undisguised and without a veil, on every side is exhibited.” To the author's dismay, “these shameful indecencies are tolerated, with as much apparent complacency as an eastern deacon going to a general training.” And even worse, “parents, and Christian parents too, permit their children to go and even accompany them to this place of shameful dissipation—*Tell it not in Gath! Publish it not in the streets of Askalon.*”⁵⁰ As a result of this

48 *Ibid.*, 42–45.

49 Bartlett, *Dictionary of Americanisms*, 468.

50 *The Albany Centinel* (13 June 1803).

pressure, on April 28, 1811, the Albany Common Council prohibited the Pinkster festival because of “too much boisterous rioting and drunkenness.”⁵¹

Concerns about Pinkster not only existed among White Americans. A new generation of Black community leaders was eager to inculcate a Protestant morality based on self-restraint, education, and sobriety among its people, which required a distance from cultural practices rooted in African traditions deemed inappropriate for respectable free citizens in the modern Republic. For them, there was no place any longer in a post-abolition society for a festival like Pinkster that was deeply rooted in the era of slavery.⁵² Although small Pinkster celebrations continued to be organized in isolated areas until the late nineteenth century, interest in the festival declined sharply after 1810, and there was little concern among African-Americans about the Pinkster tradition eventually coming to an end.⁵³

Conclusion

Although Pinkster celebrations had come to an end by the late nineteenth century, the festival survived as a topic in American literature. Interestingly, the very same festival that had been portrayed in American media as a deplorable excess at the beginning of the century was reinterpreted by American authors and folklorists in the second half of the century as a festival of racial harmony. This romanticized interpretation of Pinkster was part of a broader tendency in American literature and historiography—including John Lothrop Motley’s *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* (1856), Mary Mapes Dodge’s *Hans Brinker* (1865), and Douglas Campbell’s *The Puritan in Holland, England, and America* (1892)—to idealize the Netherlands as a nation characterized by a strong spirit of community and to use this image as a mirror for readers in the United States. Due to the Dutch heritage of New York and New Jersey, this semiotic strategy did not simply have a comparative value but served as a vision of what America could have been.

Inspired by these influential works, the image of the Dutch in America underwent a radical change in the late nineteenth century. Once ridiculed as clumsy yokels in Washington Irving’s *History of New York* (1809), the Dutch were now glorified as New York’s visionary forefathers who on the island of Manhattan had built the foundations of what had made America the world’s greatest nation. American values such as the love of liberty, religious tolerance, and freedom of conscience were suddenly claimed to have Dutch roots; even the American Declaration of Independence was credited to have been inspired by the Netherlands’ sixteenth-century Act of Abjuration.⁵⁴ The only blot on the

51 Cuyler Reynolds (ed.), *Albany Chronicles of the City. Arranged Chronologically from the Earliest Settlement to the Present Time* (Albany, NY: J.B. Lyon Company, 1906), 409.

52 Mitch Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom: Memory and Meaning in African American Emancipation Celebrations, 1808–1915* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 5, 20.

53 Shane White, “‘It Was a Proud Day’: African Americans, Festivals, and Parades in the North, 1741–1834,” *The Journal of American History* vol. 81, no. 1 (1994): 31; Claire Sponsler, *Ritual Imports: Performing Medieval Drama in America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 63.

54 Annette Stott, *Holland Mania: The Unknown Dutch Period in American Art & Culture* (New York: The Overlook Press, 1998), 78–100.

otherwise immaculate image of the Dutch was slavery. In this respect, the romanticized interpretation of the Pinkster tradition as a reflection of Dutch community spirit proved to be a useful argument in downplaying the practice of slavery among Dutch Americans. In *The Story of New Netherland* (1909), historian William Elliot Griffis went so far as to claim that no surer proof of the fact that “slavery in New Netherland was very mild in form” and that “the black slave...scarcely felt his bonds” could be imagined than “the existence of Pinkster.”⁵⁵ It was this utopian vision of a racially harmonious American society that paved the way for the reinvention of Pinkster in the 1980s in places such as Sleepy Hollow, where the festival is today celebrated in accordance with the new norms and values of diversity and multiculturalism that American society has come to embrace in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement.

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55 William Elliot Griffis, *The Story of New Netherland: The Dutch in America* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), 60.

The Esopus Water War: New York City's Conquest of the Esopus and the Locals Who Contested It

Steve Lechner



Aerating the Water, Ashokan Reservoir

7177

Historic postcard showing the gate chamber below the dam, image courtesy www.hrvh.org

In October 1917, as American doughboys prepared to enter the Great War's European battlefields, New York City celebrated its victory in the Esopus Water War with a three-day festival. Over the course of the prior decade, after receiving the state's blessing to appropriate Catskill watersheds, the city had constructed four reservoirs, along with a 127-mile-long aqueduct and tunnel system, to deliver pure and wholesome water southward. The city claimed that capturing and bending the Catskill flow had saved New Yorkers from a "water famine." Elected officials past and present hailed the Catskill project as an engineering feat of unparalleled import and awe-inspiring magnitude, an improvement on the work of the Romans, a work grander than the Panama Canal. The message was unmistakable—New York had cleared one of the highest obstacles on its path to global

grandeur. A recently installed jet fountain in Central Park visually reinforced this audacious claim by shooting a liquid stream of “pure” mountain water eighty feet into the air. Festival planners also reminded New Yorkers that a reliable water source supports both farm and factory, offers protection from flames, promotes health and hygiene, and is the essential mixer in the commercial cocktail. The city fathers sought to paper over accusations of graft by stressing that they had completed an infrastructure project unparalleled in scale and complexity on time and within budget. Public lecturers lionized the technocrats, and spokespersons hailed as heroes a select subset of municipal politicians, bureaucrats, and engineers who were fitted with medals befitting warriors who had displayed uncommon valor and courage on the battlefield.¹

Amid all of this motion and noise intended to educate and mollify locally, inspire nationally, and shock globally, there was a jarring silence. Not a significant word was said about the people who inhabited the area near the source of the city’s new water supply. During the project’s initial phase, the city dammed the Esopus Creek at Bishop’s Falls, the aesthetic jewel of Ulster County, and constructed the massive Ashokan reservoir, capable of holding 123 billion gallons of water. This project obliterated nine communities,² 504 homes, thirty-five stores, nine blacksmith shops, ten churches, ten schools, seven sawmills, and one grist mill. It forced the relocation of the area’s primary roadway as well as twelve miles of the Ulster & Delaware (U & D) Railroad. It also displaced more than 2,000 people, indirectly damaged dozens of other businesses, forced the exhumation of 2,800 graves, and altered the region’s ecology and social patterns.

At the October 1917 festival, no salutes were given or prayers offered for the people who lost their homes and businesses and had their way of life torn asunder. Instead, the fête was to culminate in an allegorical pageant called “The Good Gift of Water,” depicting the mayor, city bureaucrats, and project engineers negotiating a water-use compact with the Indian chief Ashokan, who symbolized control of the Esopus. Blessed with an abundance of pure water, Ashokan magnanimously delivered to the mayor a jar of water representing the captured flow, with which the mayor filled the cups of the city’s five boroughs.³ This symbolism of sharing and consent belied the decade-long, multi-front battle that raged along the Esopus over the city’s heavy-handed treatment of local communities. The historical record lays bare the nature of this fight.

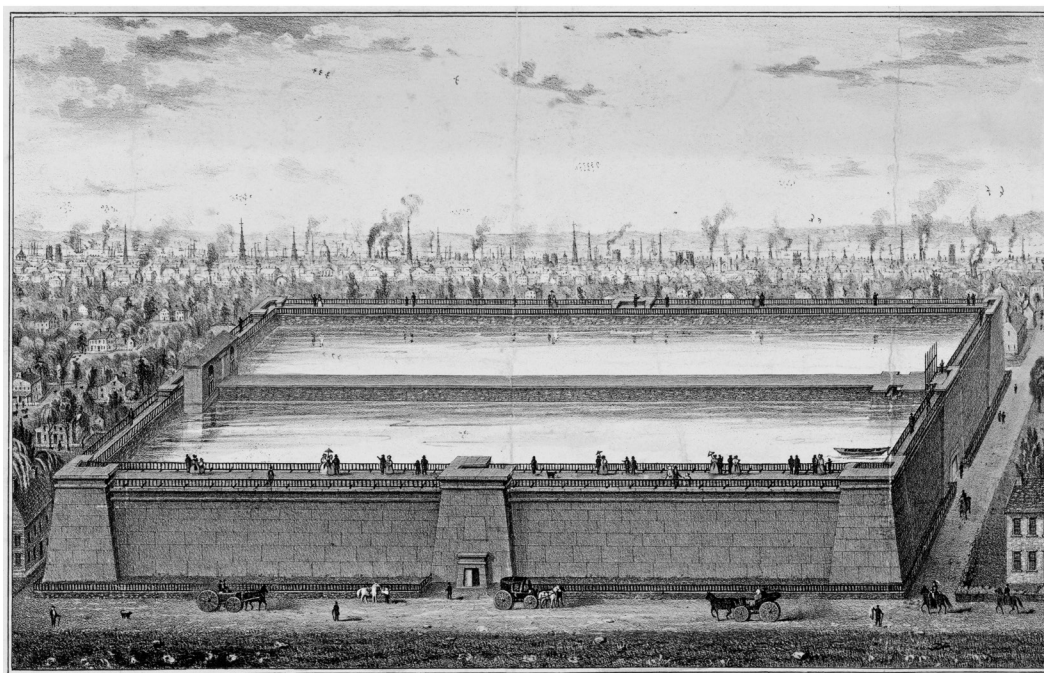
1 Catskill Aqueduct Celebration, *The Municipal Engineers Journal*, Souvenir Edition (October 12–14, 1917): 8–12, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nncl.cu55749607;view=1up;seq=20>; “Water Celebration to Begin Tomorrow,” *New York Times*, October 11, 1917; “Water Pageant Today,” *New York Times*, October 12, 1917; “Catskill Aqueduct Formally Accepted,” *New York Times*, October 13, 1917; “Catskill Aqueduct Celebration Closes,” *New York Times*, October 14, 1917.

2 The numbers of communities eliminated by construction of the reservoir varies from eight to twelve. This paper uses nine based on an article in the local press that expressly set forth the town names as: Ashton, Boiceville, Broadhead’s Bridge, Brown Station, East Shokan, Olive Branch, Olive City, West Hurley, and West Shokan. *The Catskill Mountain News*, “The Ashokan Reservoir,” February 21, 1908.

3 Bob Steuding, *The Last of the Handmade Dams: The Story of the Ashokan Reservoir* (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 1989), 77–91; Bob Steuding, *Ashokan Watershed Conference*, April 11, 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=IjshlsB70Fc; ; Central Catskills Collaborative, “Catskill Mountain Scenic Byway: Proposed Corridor Management Plan,” September 2011, (available through Town of Shandaken, New York), 23, www.shandaken.us/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Catskill-Mountains-Scenic-Byway-CMP-Draft.pdf.

New York City's use of political power, technical expertise, and economic might were consistent with what scholars refer to as Urban Imperialism. In the end, water flowed from the country to the metropolis. The Ashokan reservoir, the Esopus project's centerpiece, currently supplies in excess of forty percent of the city's water supply. While local resistance to the city's scheme did not stop the flow, it produced enough drag to change its nature. The result was a kind of turbulence, which, in many ways, is as evident today as it was a century ago. The historical roots of this turbulence are worthy of close examination. Among other things, this story reveals the pluck and guile of those who called the Esopus region home during the early twentieth century.⁴

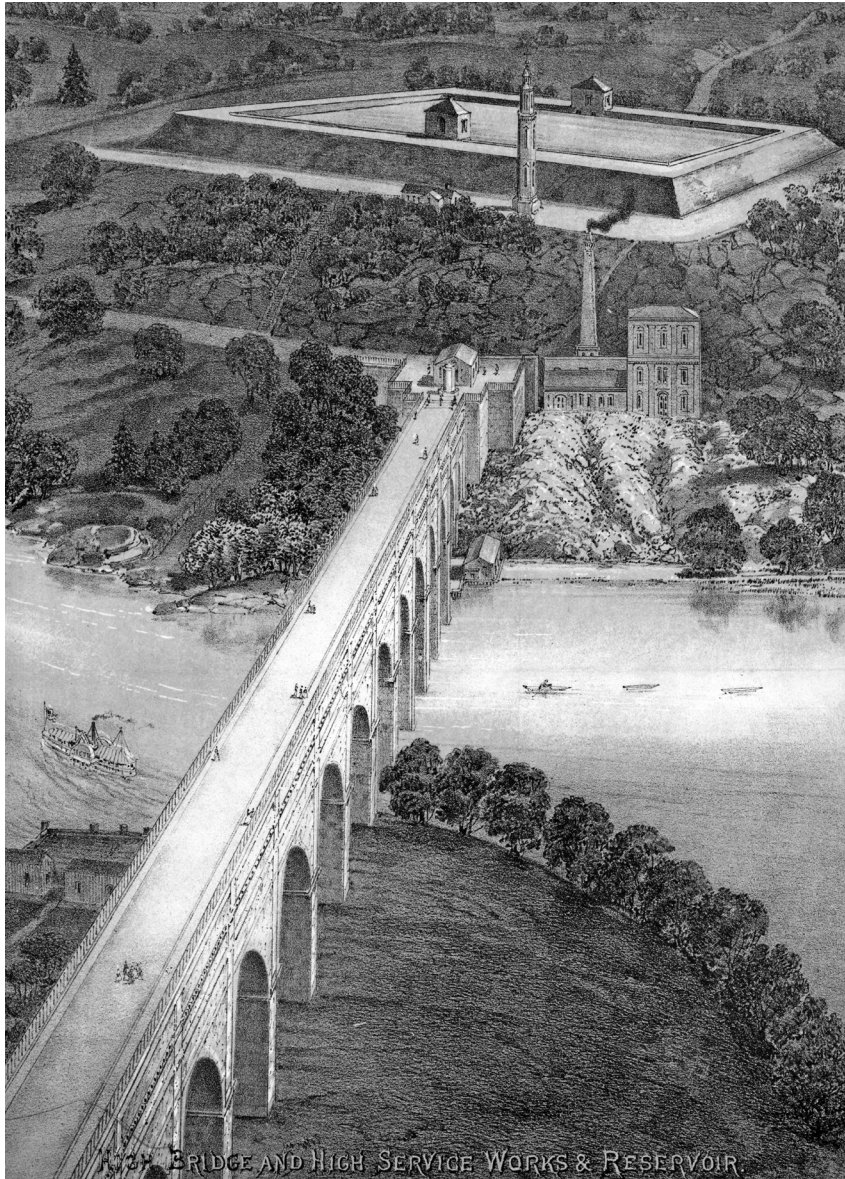
New York City's plan to direct its imperial flow toward the Catskills was driven by a dramatic population increase that coincided with the city's newly-minted vision as "the Greatest New York." By combining present challenges with future aspirations, the city constructed a need that could only be satisfied through an infrastructure project of epic scale. Clothing an actual need with a grand fix is consistent with resource-based urban



View of the Distributing Reservoir on Murray's Hill. This reservoir extended from 40th to 42nd Streets, and took 420 feet of frontage on 5th Avenue; it covered four acres. When full, it was thirty-six feet deep and contained 21,000,000 gallons. N. Currier, c.1842. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.

4 The literature suggests three discernible phases of Urban Imperialism: convincing, coveting, and conquest. During the convincing phase, urban centers make a credible case for the need for rural resources. During the coveting phase, a city hones its sights on a specific location as a source of natural resources. Conquest refers to the attempt to carry out the imperial plan, that is, to acquire or gain control of the desired resource. For more about how the Esopus project fits within this urban imperialism paradigm, see the following works: David Soll, *Empire of Water: An Environmental and Political History of the New York City Water Supply* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013); Diane Galusha, *Liquid Assets: A History of New York City's Water System* (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 1999); Bob Steuding, *The Last of the Handmade Dams: The Story of the Ashokan Reservoir* (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 1989).

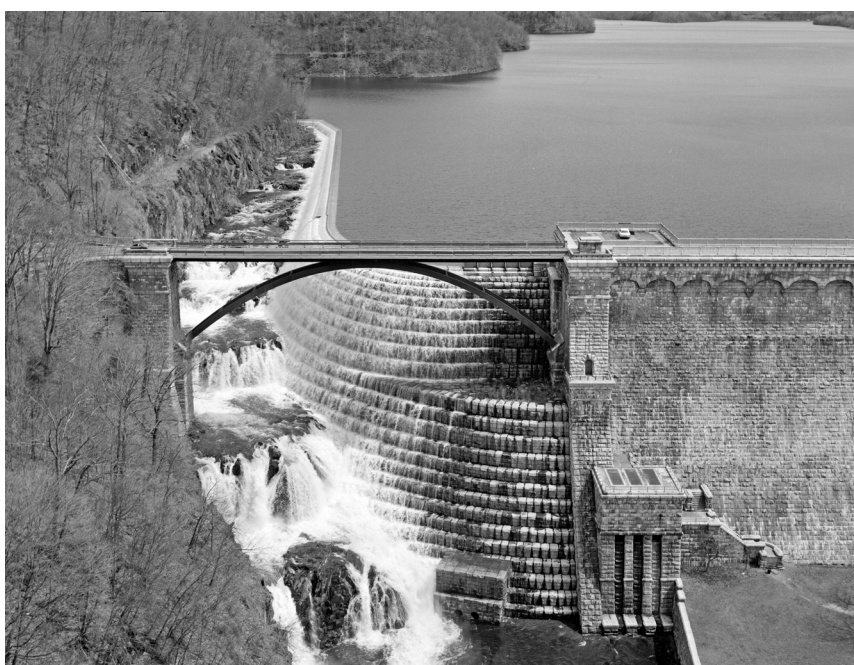
imperialism. Through this strategy, the need becomes unquestionable and the imperial plan inevitable. After some missteps in the first years of the twentieth century, New York City leaders followed this script to great effect, adroitly and cleverly acknowledging its deficiencies while proclaiming its exceptional status as the American metropolis best positioned to achieve global preeminence.⁵



The High Bridge aqueduct spanning the Harlem River to the pumping station and reservoir in Washington Heights, c.1841. Lithograph by D.T. Valentine.
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.

5 Galusha, 83–87; Soll, 1–10; “Mayor McClellan Reviews and Forecasts,” *New York Times*, January 1, 1905.

This early twentieth-century claim of need must be understood within a deeper historical context. Since its seventeenth-century founding as New Amsterdam, securing, delivering, and maintaining an ample supply of fresh water had taxed city authorities. Through the Dutch period and for nearly a century thereafter, the majority of New Yorkers drew water from private wells. The first municipal foray into the systematic development of a public water supply, which included an urban reservoir, coincided with and was disrupted by the American Revolution. A private enterprise oversaw the municipal water system during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, as the city population reached 165,000. The dubious quality of this water and two yellow fever epidemics generated a demand for municipal management of a safe and dependable fresh water supply, thus beginning the city's search for sources outside the urban footprint.⁶



New Croton Dam & Reservoir, c.1968, Croton River, Croton-on-Hudson, Westchester County, NY. Historic American Engineering Record, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.

After five years of construction, the city completed the Croton Aqueduct in Westchester County in 1842. This new water source provided higher-quality drinking water, guarded against the vicissitudes of urban fires, and served the needs of industrial concerns. It bears emphasis that the city put this water to uses far afield from meeting these basic needs, as Croton water soon streamed through several decorative fountains. By the time Brooklyn

6 NYC Environmental Protection, "History of New York City's Water Supply System," http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/html/drinking_water/history.shtml.

became part of Greater New York in 1898, the vast majority of the city's fresh water came from an enlarged Croton system coupled with the Bronx-Byram watershed.⁷

New York City's desire to supplement those sources in the early twentieth century must be situated within demographic shifts occurring from 1880 to 1900. In 1880, New York (limited to Manhattan) had a population of 1,206,299, nearly 350,000 more than Philadelphia, the second largest American city. During the next decade, New York added more than 300,000 residents as its total population topped 1.5 million. The 1898 consolidation of the five boroughs to create Greater New York as well as the increasing pace of immigration drove the city's 1900 population above 3.4 million, making it three times larger than Chicago, then the next most populous city. By 1900, this startling pace of growth was causing stress fractures in the city's infrastructure. Expanding the water supply became a top priority. Brooklyn's shortages during the century's first three summers were the proximate cause for city officials to reassess long-term needs, and to boldly claim an unfettered right to tap into any watershed in the state.⁸

Starting in 1902 with the Seth Low administration, City Hall deployed catastrophic language to amplify its position on water scarcity. It was during this time that the term "water famine" gained wider currency in discussions about the city's water supply and future needs. In March 1902, only two months into his only term, Mayor Low warned that Brooklyn's water shortage had reached a dire stage, having barely averted a water famine the prior three summers. He believed the hour was growing late for the city to find new, reliable water sources, and he railed against a state law placing Suffolk County's watershed outside the city's imperial reach. As the former mayor of Brooklyn, Low was determined at least to find a solution to that borough's calamity; accordingly, he appointed an independent committee to study the city's water supply. The Burr-Freeman-Herring Study Committee, led by an academic and two practicing engineers, issued a voluminous report. Among other things, it recommended that the city implement metering and plumbing inspections to reduce water waste, develop additional Long Island wells, use filtered water from the Hudson River, and explore upstate watersheds as sites for reservoirs. After summarily rejecting metering or other conservation practices, the city fixed its gaze upon the upstate water sources. The tributaries of need were beginning to coalesce; all that was needed was an imperial commander to unleash the flow.⁹

7 Nelson M. Blake, *Water for the Cities: A History of the Urban Water Supply Problem in the United States* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1956), 165–6; Anastasia van Burkalow, "The Geography of New York City's Water Supply: A Study of Interactions," *Geographical Review*, vol. 49, no. 3 (July, 1959): 369–86.

8 "Table 11, Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places: 1880" U.S. Bureau of the Census internet release date June 15, 1998, www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab11.txt, "Table 12. Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places," U.S. Census Bureau, internet release date June 15, 1998, www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab12.txt; "Table 13. Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places: 1900," U.S. Bureau of the Census, internet release date June 15, 1998, www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab13.txt; Phillip Lopate, "The Greatest Year: 1898: When the City Came Together," *New York Magazine*, January 9, 2011, <http://nymag.com/news/features/greatest-new-york/70466/>, accessed November 30, 2016.

9 Galusha, 83–97; Soll, 1–10; Stradling, 140–76; "Message of Mayor Low: Statement of the Financial Condition of the City," *New York Times*, March 5, 1902, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9B04E7DD103EE33A25756C0A9659C946397D6CF>.

In fall 1903, George McClellan, Jr., son of the famous Union general and unsuccessful presidential candidate, defeated Low for New York City's top position. A Democrat who had represented the city in Congress, McClellan was portrayed as a man in a hurry, with the vision and energy to guide the city through a giant leap forward. It was during the McClellan administration that New York's imperial outline assumed a clearer form. On New Year's Day 1905, McClellan spewed forth a number of prognostications. He predicted that within a single generation the city's population would increase more than threefold, topping 12 million. McClellan championed New York as the national passageway for immigrants, and he assured all that the city was "big and healthy enough to swallow and digest both the gnats and the camels in so far as they are of a material which makes good citizens." He coined the phrase "the Greatest New York," a play on Greater New York, to connote a melting pot of Euro-Americans, unmatched in commercial and industrial potential. New York's success, McClellan asserted, was a predicate to national success. Water was an essential part of this plan—it would aid industry, guard against fire, quench the thirsty, and clean the great unwashed pouring into New York by the millions.¹⁰

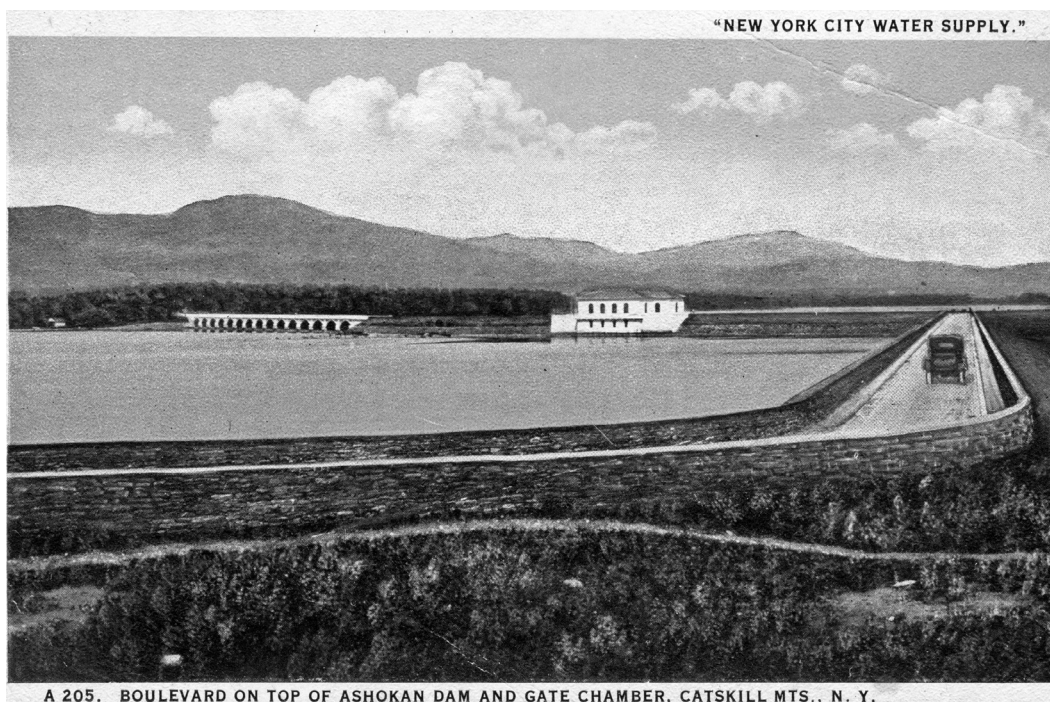
The Burr-Freeman-Herring report delineated multiple options for supplementing the city's water supply. Soon, however, the Catskills, and specifically the Esopus region, was the site in the imperial crosshairs. This result was never inevitable and, for a time, not the most likely scenario. This begs the question of how and why the Esopus became the object of New York's hydraulic dreams. Three urban perspectives address this question: the area as a *terra nullius* space, as a source of pure water, and as a politically vulnerable region. These perspectives flowed together to produce an imagined landscape.¹¹

Esopus Creek, which originates atop Slide Mountain, the highest peak in the Catskill range, curls around the uplands before descending toward southernmost Ulster County along a sixty-five mile journey to the Hudson River. The creek has been a natural-human landscape from pre-contact to the present day. Despite this fact, the city reimaged the Esopus as an almost exclusively natural environment, a sort of *terra nullius*. *Terra nullius*, from the Latin meaning no one's land, usually connotes an empty space, devoid of humanity. European colonizers often wielded this concept to back legal arguments intended to deprive indigenous people of land. The urban vision of Esopus as a *terra nullius* developed over time, and was driven by the mid-nineteenth century literary/artistic construction of the area as well as the late nineteenth-century conservation movement.¹²

10 "Mayor McClellan Reviews and Forecasts," *New York Times*, January 1, 1905.

11 David Blackbourne, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 3–19; Yifeng Yao, *Nanking: Historical Landscape and Its Planning from Geographical Perspective* (Springer: Nanjing, China, 2016).

12 Cornell Cooperative Extension—Ulster County, *Upper Esopus Creek Management Plan, Volume II Draft: Community and Stream Use Characterization*, January 2007, www.catskillstreams.org/pdfs/Esopus_volume_II.pdf; U.S. Geological Survey, "Esopus Creek at Shandaken, New York, last updated June 26, 2000; <http://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/circ1173/circ1173a/chapter09.htm>, *Lower Esopus Creek Watershed Project*, "A Journey Through Lower Esopus Creek," 2011, www.loweresopus.org/download/Lower_Esopus_Creek_book.pdf; Tom A. Midtrod, *The Memory of All Ancient Customs: Native American Diplomacy in the Colonial Hudson Valley* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 1–5.



Historic postcard of the “New York City Water Supply”
Ashokan Reservoir with Slide Mountain in the background, image courtesy www.hrvh.org

In considering literary depictions of the Esopus, it is impossible to overstate the impact of Washington Irving. In “Rip Van Winkle” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” Irving depicted a region where the old ways, associated with the descendants of those who settled New Netherland, clashed with a new Americanism built on an ethic of progress. Through these stories, the people of the region became a mysterious “other” who did not fit within a modern worldview. To this literary marginalization must be added an artistic and poetic privileging of the natural world embodied by the Hudson River School. The Hudson River School is an umbrella term for a group of Romantic artists and poets who drew inspiration from the Hudson Valley’s natural vistas. These artists and poets paid particular attention to the Catskills. In 1850, artists John Frederick Kensett and Asher Brown Durand each painted scenes of the Esopus. Neither imagined landscape depicted people or the built environment. An unpeopled landscape was typical of this genre, and the work of painters like Thomas Cole and poets like William Cullen Bryant helped to perpetuate an image of the Catskill watersheds as open, wild, and pristine nature. Together, the major literary and artistic works of the nineteenth century relating to the Esopus invited an urban perspective on the area that focused almost exclusively on the land, relegating people to background roles. This image endured well into the twentieth

century, and it affected the way those from the city viewed the region during the quest for fresh mountain water.¹³

The movement to create the Catskill Forest Preserve during the last decade of the nineteenth century reinvigorated the region's terra nullius reputation. Conservation was gaining momentum in the late nineteenth century, with Yellowstone becoming the first national park in 1872. In 1885, state law established a commission to study New York's forested lands. In the early 1890s, after initially focusing on the Adirondacks, the Forest Commission recommended designating a major portion of the Catskills region as a state park. The commission stated that "one of the primary objects of forest preservation is the protection of the watersheds," and it noted that the Catskills lies "in close proximity to the great cities of New York and Brooklyn [and] is easily accessible to three-fourths of the population of the state." It does not appear that the commission considered how this action might affect the local population. Indeed, locals were divided on the state park question, with lawmakers and those involved in the tourism industry supporting the idea, and others expressing concern over how conservation might limit certain activities on and uses of private property. Eventually, 287,500 acres were protected as part of the Catskill Forest Preserve, an area covering parts of Ulster, Greene, Delaware, and Sullivan counties, and including portions of Esopus Creek. The establishment of the Catskill Park, as it is commonly known, reinforced the area's image as pure, natural, and mostly empty. This logic argued that the Catskills was a region to be managed externally, not left to local oversight.¹⁴

Closely associated with the terra nullius perspective is the notion that the Catskills were home to pure and wholesome air and water. With respect to water, purity is often associated with mountain streams. With the establishment of the Catskill Mountain House in 1824 and continuing throughout the nineteenth century, urban tourists raved about the region's fresh air and pure water. Some believed they had special healing properties due to the high elevation, and others claimed the mountains were free of mosquitoes. For much of the century, these travelers tended to be people with means, but as the city started to swell with immigrants, programs were developed to send underprivileged children to the Catskills to commune with nature, drink wholesome water, and learn hygienic practices. Paternalistic and patronizing though they were, these fresh air trips portrayed the Catskills as a transformative space. This trope of purity became the dominant feature of advertisements by area resorts, hotels, and boarding houses. Esopus Creek served as an exemplar of the exceptionalism of the Catskills' mountain streams.¹⁵

13 Stradling, 46–75; Sherret S. Chase, "The Catskills of New York: Past, Present, and Potential," *American Forests*, (August 1967), available through Catskill Center, <http://catskillcenter.org/our-history/>.

14 Stradling, 46–75; Soll, 37–67; New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, "Catskill Forest Preserve," www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5265.html; *Annual Report of the Forest Commission of the State of New York for the Year Ending December 31, 1891*, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000048302>.

15 Roland Van Zandt, *The Catskill Mountain House* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, 1966); Alf Evers, *In Catskill Country: Collected Essays on Mountain History, Life and Lore* (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 1995), 46–113; "In the Ulster Catskills," *New York Times*, July 24, 1879.

Urban promoters of the area, locals in search of gain, and artists who tried to capture its natural essence had to work hard to ignore the multi-use nature of the Esopus region. From the Dutch colony of New Netherland forward, it had been a place of commerce, much of which was connected to the city. In the early nineteenth century, lumber mills, flour mills, and tanneries became prominent features of the Esopus landscape. Their products eventually made their way to New York for immediate sale or distribution. Over time, these commercial activities reshaped the landscape, sharply reducing the hemlock population and polluting the watershed. This history is noteworthy because it speaks to the degree to which the vision of the Esopus as pure and wholesome was constructed.¹⁶

To be sure, the environmental health of the area steadily improved over the last three decades of the nineteenth century, as the tanneries moved on and amateur conservationists reshaped parts of the landscape. City-based sport fishermen also contributed to this turnaround. During the 1880s, through their network of sporting clubs, they purchased land and even parts of streams in order to restore the fisheries. Soon thereafter, the state became involved with restocking and managing the fisheries. These late-nineteenth-century trends seemed to help wash clean the creek's polluted history.¹⁷

Although not emphasized by historians of New York City's water system, the evidence supports the conclusion that the city targeted the Esopus as the cornerstone of its Catskill water project because it viewed the region as politically vulnerable. The political record suggests that New York calculated that Ulster County lacked the ability to secure special legislative protection for its watershed, as other counties had done. An 1896 law protected Suffolk County, ostensibly to save its oyster industry. All of the city's subsequent attempts to repeal that law in order to resolve Brooklyn's dire water shortage failed. In 1904, as the city considered the options laid out in the Burr-Herring-Freeman report, Dutchess County, a once-likely target, gained legislative protection for its watershed. Even though multiple options still existed, it behooved the city to identify expeditiously the softest political target. The Catskills emerged as the best choice. Even though this region had been mentioned as a possible water source for some time, no Ulster county lawmaker proposed special legislation for the Esopus watershed...until it was too late.¹⁸

The city schemed to transform its vision into action rapidly. Its attempt to conquer the Esopus and the local resistance that rose up constituted a water war waged on multiple fronts. It was an asymmetric fight in which the city had the advantages of money, political power, prestige, and an experienced press corps, forcing locals to adopt creative strategies to protect their families, communities, and way of life. In addition to pushing for maximum compensation, they yearned to make the big city hurt, at least a little.

16 Stradling, 24–36; Ed Van Put, John Merwin, *Trout Fishing in the Catskills* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2007), 55–87.

17 Stradling, 126–35; Jerry Bartlett Angling Collection, "A Little History," www.catskillanglingcollection.org/history.html; "In the Legislature," *Ticonderoga Sentinel*, March 2, 1905.

18 Galusha, 89–97; Soll, 24–67.

In November 1904, New Yorkers approved a constitutional amendment exempting water bonds from the city's debt limit, thus increasing the city's fiscal flexibility. In June 1905, the state Legislature, acting on the wishes of Governor Frank Higgins, created a State Water Commission with the power to review and decide the fate of any New York City plan to procure extra-urban water. At that same time, the Legislature passed and the governor signed the McClellan Act, which permitted the city to pursue "an additional supply of pure and wholesome water" and acquire necessary land, subject to approval by the State Water Commission. Ulster County lawmakers opposed these measures, but could not piece together an upstate block large enough to stem the flow. News coverage of this period suggests that a substantial number of the Esopus region's residents, fearful of the devastation the imperial city might bring, appealed to the governor for relief. The governor's frustrations bubbled over: He attacked the Esopus petitioners as ingrates who preferred to peddle exaggerated concerns about the possible consequences of the city's legitimate quest to supplement its water supply rather than make plans to move to higher ground.¹⁹

The people of the Esopus did not shrink as a chastened lot. Instead, they searched for other ways to impede the imperial flow. Judge A.T. Clearwater, the region's leading jurist and orator, put the State Water Commission through its paces. He argued that the legislation granting the city authority to chase water sources wherever it wished was unconstitutional on its face and as applied. He mocked the city for seeking "power that the Almighty would not delegate to an archangel, let alone, if I may use such an irreverent comparison, a Tammany contractor." While the veteran Clearwater poked and prodded the commission, a rookie lawmaker from Kingston worked a different angle.²⁰

As soon as Joseph Fowler took his seat as the new state Assemblyman representing Ulster County's 1st District, he searched for ways to guard his constituents from the city's imperial reach. In addition to special bills designed to clarify individual property rights in the Esopus region, Fowler sponsored legislation making the city liable for incidental damages proximately caused by the project. The State Water Commission intimated its intent to approve the city's Esopus application upon passage of the Fowler bill. Indeed, Governor Higgins signed the bill in late April 1906 and the state commission formally approved the city's Catskill water scheme less than three weeks later. The Fowler bill represents one approach to the Esopus quandary. Believing the city's plan could not be stymied, Fowler sought to expand the scope of economic and legal protection to those in the path of the city's imperial flow. Fowler continued this approach even after leaving the Assembly. He and other local attorneys petitioned the state Public Service Commission

19 "No Sympathy for Ulster," *New York Tribune*, March 25, 1905; Galusha, 89–97; Soll, 24–67

20 Steuding, 27–33; Galusha, 95 (citing *Ellenville Journal*, December 8, 1906).

to intervene to resolve property owner's claims that the forced relocation of the U & D Railroad reduced area property values.²¹

Once the commission approved the city's plan, the bulk of the contest took place within the context of condemnation proceedings, special damages hearings, and related legal challenges. No arena of battle had more bends, rapids, and falls than this one. The city was publicly committed to staying within its projected budget, and it hoped to avoid accusations of excess and corruption. On the other hand, many locals swore allegiance to making the city pay as much as possible. The *Catskill Mountain News* hailed the Fowler bill as an opportunity for the Esopus region to change the course of the flow. In May 1906, it rattled the sabers:

There is not a farmer in the watershed wanted by the city who does not intend to make the city not only pay a little more than the value of his farm, but incidental and indirect damages as well. This was the cardinal feature of the Fowler bill, and under it land owners will stand out for many intangible damages.²²

Historians who have examined the complete record have come to different conclusions about how well or poorly the locals did in seeking just compensation. Some commercial entities, such as the U & D Railroad, the DuPont Company, and the Cantine Paper Company, received large awards. Additionally, most individuals who did not take the city's first offer increased their eventual award at the condemnation hearing stage. Hundreds of locals pursued this avenue even though it meant long delays in receiving their full award. Delay seemed to favor the well-heeled city, but locals still found ways to rebuild homes, tear down and reassemble churches and businesses, and, in some cases, relocate entire communities. Some historians have concluded that the local response to the condemnation process illustrates an abiding sense of regional pragmatism. While this perspective is not inaccurate, it fails to capture the whole story. The fact that so many people of modest means were willing to pursue what they believed to be full compensation, including indirect and incidental damages, and endure a protracted claims process, speaks to a certain notion of fairness and justice.²³

Scholars who have chronicled this water war have not articulated completely the impact of local intransigence within the condemnation and special damages spheres. Mayor McClellan, the man most associated with directing the imperial flow, left office at the end of 1909. Some critics predicted that the new mayor, William Gaynor, would

21 "Fowler Bill Signed, Board's First Report, Work on City's New Water System Advancing Rapidly," *New York Tribune*, April 26, 1906; "Important Water Bill," *Adirondack News*, April 28, 1906; *Report of the New York State Public Service Commission, Second District*, 1913, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/005060311>. The Political Graveyard: A Database of American History, <http://politicalgraveyard.com/bio/fowler.html#128.03.69>

22 *Catskill Mountain News*, May 25, 1906, page 1.

23 Galusha, 125–39; Soll, 37–67; Steuding, 75–96; "Will Village Burn," *Catskill Mountain News*, May 23, 1913; "U & D Gets \$2,800,000," *Catskill Mountain News*, June 16, 1911; *The Sun* (Fort Covington, NY), May 23, 1918.

be a Tammany Hall stooge. However, soon after his election in November 1909, Gaynor announced his intention to make good on his campaign promises to clean up Gotham politics. The Esopus project was near the top of his list of concerns: He tended to see the scheme as wasteful and unwise. He supported a wholly different system whereby the state would develop and manage water sources so as to create an equitable sharing arrangement capable of ending interregional fights over water access and control. In addition, he opined that the level of local resistance to accepting the city's offers for land and the battles of indirect and incidental damages were making the project too expensive. For a brief period, it appeared the Esopus resistance was wearing down the city's resolve. In the end, however, the weight of Gaynor's aggressive and multifaceted reform agenda was too heavy, and no material change occurred in the Esopus. Further, on August 9, 1910, just eight months into his term, Gaynor was shot by a would-be assassin. Although he survived, this event changed the tone and tenor of his remaining time in office.²⁴

In addition to the political and legal battles, Gotham and the Catskills engaged in a rhetorical proxy war conducted primarily through the print media. The city borrowed from old caricatures to lampoon Esopus residents. Throughout the nineteenth century, city travelers to the Catskills tended to see locals, if they bothered to take account of them at all, as quaint and generally affable. Gotham's journalists, however, regularly scoffed at the region's people, devoting particular attention to those living in Ulster County. They painted it as the place where a special breed of small-town political corruption festered and local criminals were free to wreak havoc. These stories cast the region as a sort of "wild east," where pristine nature was inhabited by a less-civilized humanity. Headlines featured a colorful cast of upstate villains such Rev. Zell, the intemperate Baptist minister; Mr. Westbrook, the wealthy but insane farmer who committed suicide; the Murray brothers, who horsewhipped a city broker in broad daylight; Mr. Hasbrouck, the county treasurer accused of embezzlement; and the eleven white men who cited backward racial views when they refused to sit on the same jury as a long-time black resident.²⁵

During the water war, the city's major publications massaged these preexisting images to produce an ever-more damning construction of Esopus culture. Once again, Ulster County bore the brunt of this rhetorical offensive. As if to awaken the spirit of Rip Van Winkle, city scribes cast the former core of colonial New York as "aboriginal Ulster," a space harboring a spooky, backward, and insular population descended from simple Dutch farmers. These locals clung to antiquated customs, bought and sold property through legal

24 "Gaynor Wins in New York's Great Contest," *New York Times*, November 3, 1909; "Gaynor Speaks Out on City Problems," *New York Times*, December 11, 1909; Sam Roberts, "Way Back Machine! The Mayor Is Shot," *New York Times: City Room Blog*, August 10, 2010, http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/08/08/way-back-machine-the-mayor-is-shot/?_r=0; "Big Boss Again," *New York Tribune*, December 13, 1909; "Powder Company Award Confirmed," *New York Times*, June 9, 1917; "Ashokan Awards Filed in Friday," *New York Times*, January 1, 1910.

25 "Cause of a Pastor's Resignation," *New York Times*, September 2, 1879; "A Wealthy Farmer's Suicide," *New York Times*, February 13, 1879; "Robert Berdell Horse-Whipped," *New York Times*, July 14, 1876; "Burglars in Ulster County," *New York Times*, May 29, 1877; "The Delinquency in the Ulster County Treasury," *New York Times*, June 8, 1875; "Color Prejudice in Ulster County," *New York Times*, May 3, 1878.

instruments incongruous with American property law, and hid behind an anti-progressive mentality. On top of this Irvingesque portrait, urban politicians and journalists charged that opportunism had become the cult of the Catskills. The people of the Esopus, this argument claimed, were engaged in a conspiracy of undisciplined profiteering. Residents demanded that condemnation awards include the value of doorknobs, bluestone flags, and rose bushes. Several years into the Esopus project, *The Sun* commented that the area's "farmers" appeared "simple," but they soon "made Father Knickerbocker and his people in New York City pay well for the four square miles in the Ashokan Valley taken for the new reservoir." The paper connected these individual acts with regional politics by quoting a local representative who characterized the collective goal as making the city "pay through its nose" for the Esopus region's land.²⁶

In the rhetorical theater of this water war, the locals gave as good as they got. The local press exploited stories of urban greed and graft that flowed their way. As the project's construction phase commenced in 1907, irate taxpayers blasted the city's failure to accept the lowest bid for the Esopus dam. Soon thereafter, the regional press joined the fray. In one of the strongest rebukes, *The Catskill Mountain News* implied that the city's slow pace of land acquisition via purchase or condemnation payment was tied to cronyism. The paper accused Mayor McClellan of ties to a "land-option ring," which was allegedly scheming to take advantage of locals hoping to sell land quickly to bring some stability to an uncertain future.²⁷

Eventually, the *Kingston Freeman*, the leading paper in the Esopus region, hoisted the battle flag. Throughout the political fight in Albany in 1905 and 1906, and even during the start of the Esopus project, Kingston journalists had engaged in even-handed reporting, which tended to give equal voice to the diversity of local opinions concerning New York City's water plans. Eventually, however, the *Freeman* joined the chorus of local critics. It rebranded the city's entire Esopus worksite, including its worker camps, as "Plumland," the plum symbolizing graft. Plumland, therefore, was a place of corruption and waste. Reports from Plumland regularly commented on the fancy new automobiles driven by the water project's police force and condemnation commissioners. In a turnabout of the newspaper's focus on Ulster crime, exposés revealed rampant criminal activity in Plumland, including the alleged rape of an area woman by a city-employed police officer. The *Freeman* delivered reports from Plumland with a biting wit. One shared a rumor about "a movement to form a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Commissioners of Appraisal." The message was clear—the people charged with fairly adjudicating local claims were part of a corrupt and self-dealing cabal. They fast became targets of local rage.²⁸

26 "Aboriginal Ulster," *New York Times*, September 16, 1908; *The Sun*, May 18, 1913.

27 *Richmond County Advance*, December 7, 1907; "Age of Patriotism Yields to Age of Commercializing: Love for Dollar Supplants That for Nation's Flag," *Catskill Mountain News*; "Water Works Graft," *Catskill Mountain News*, April 24, 1908.

28 "A Plumland Honker," *Kingston Freeman*, June 25, 1908; "Visiting Plumland," *Kingston Freeman*, November 11, 1908; "Self-Denial in Plumland," *Kingston Freeman*, May 25, 1909; "A Plumland Rumor," *Kingston Freeman*, January 11, 1910; "Plumland Cop in Trouble," *Kingston Freeman*, March 25, 1909.

Perhaps the strangest instance of local resistance to the city's imperial intentions also provides an apt metaphor for how some Esopus people envisioned the city-country struggle. During the project's incipient stage, from 1907 through 1908, tensions ran high between locals and the army of workers, engineers, and bureaucrats who invaded the area. On one fall evening in 1908, Bill Rose, known throughout the Catskills as the "Shokan scrapper," allegedly rescued a local woman from the unwanted advances of an out-of-town worker during a public dance. The ensuing imbroglio made front-page news, as Rose "laid low" a supervisor and nine laborers from the Ashokan project. Although Rose sustained a serious neck wound, the local paper assured all that the area strong-arm would survive. In this story, the "Shokan scrapper" was transformed into the "Esopus avenger," and came to symbolize the region's honor, toughness, and courage. Like Rose, the Esopus was dealt a potentially mortal wound, but it would survive.²⁹

New York City's Esopus adventure was an act of urban imperialism. The city convinced itself and the state of its urgent need for a long-term solution to its water supply problem. Its leaders promoted a vision of a metropolitan powerhouse capable of shepherding the nation through a period of unprecedented growth. City authorities targeted the Esopus region, recasting it as an empty space with a superabundance of pure and wholesome water. They waged and won a campaign led by an army of engineers, lawyers, and bureaucrats. This, however, is only a partial story. City leaders had not anticipated the degree and depth of local resistance they would face. The people they dismissed out of hand fought back, at one point causing the highest levels of city government to consider whether the Esopus Water War was worth it. In the end, the city got its mountain water, but the flow was turbulent and remains so to the present day.

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²⁹ Catskill Mountain News, "W. Rose Scrapper Mows a Big Swath at Shokan Dance," September 25, 1908.

Pine Hill Farm, Lost Paradise of a French Gentleman Farmer

Michael J. Matsler



*Historical marker at the site of Crèvecoeur's Pine Hill Farm;
the original smokehouse is visible through the branches of the tree at far left*

Today, little remains of his farm except the small stone smokehouse. A historical marker shows where his farmhouse once stood, replaced by a later dwelling. Yet 243 years ago a traveler along the old King's Highway to Newburgh would have seen a sturdy Norman home and a prosperous farm, and a man tilling his field with his young son riding atop the plow in a chair the man had fashioned, oblivious to the furies of war soon to devastate his farm and his family.

Few people know today about Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur, a French adventurer turned farmer who settled in Blooming Grove a few years before the Revolutionary War. But he was well-known in Orange County under the name Hector

St. John, and destined to become the first French consul to the new State of New York in 1783. He helped to legalize Catholicism in New York and establish its first Catholic Church, St. Peter's, on Barclay Street in Manhattan. The town of St. Johnsbury, Vermont, is named in his honor.¹

Letters from an American Farmer, the gentleman's book about America published after Yorktown, and his later volumes reveal more about his optimistic personality than his actual life as an American farmer in tumultuous Orange County.² His postwar correspondence with luminaries such as Franklin, Jefferson, Ethan Allen, and French officials and philosophers reveals nothing of his past life. Two biographies, one by his grandson Robert published in France in 1883 and another by Julia Post Mitchell in 1916, combined with occasional references to him in the records of the New York Colonial Assembly, a couple of deeds, and snippets of wartime correspondence offer only enigmatic details of his life in New York before his metamorphosis into French consul.³

He was born into the landed gentry in Normandy in 1735 and, after attending a Jesuit college in Caen, went to England to live with relatives, where he became engaged to a merchant's daughter who died soon after. He served in Canada as a French army officer and cartographer during the Seven Years' War with England; wounded at the Battle of Quebec in 1759, he became a citizen of the Colony of New York in 1765 before popping up in sparsely-settled Orange County on the west banks of the Hudson in 1769. Calling himself Hector St. John, he married an American and bought a farm in Blooming Grove.

When war broke out in April 1775 his desire for peaceful change and reluctance to sign the patriotic Pledge coupled with his French heritage aroused the suspicions of his neighbors, leading to persecution and imprisonment—first by the Patriots then the British—until he finally escaped to France. Three years later, he returned to the new United States of America almost miraculously as a French diplomat, only to find tragic news awaiting him....

November 19, 1783. Scavengers dressed in hardly more than rags rummage through refuse cluttering the docks at the foot of the Broad-Way in New York City, in the background

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- 1 The blue historic marker on Route 94 is between Roe's Orchards and Chester village. A white clapboard house sits on the foundations of Crèvecoeur's house. Writing in 1881, historian E. M. Ruttenber refers to Crèvecoeur's as the house "where Hezekiah Moffat lived and died." E. M. Ruttenber and L. H. Clark. *History of Orange County, New York with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Many of its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: Everts & Peck 1881) p. 614. Hezekiah Moffat descended from Thomas Moffat, a close friend of Crèvecoeur. See *infra*.
 - 2 Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* was published, in English, in 1782. A French edition was published in Paris in 1784; a French edition in three volumes in 1787; his last work, *Voyage dans la Haute Pennsylvanie et dans l'État de New York*, in 1801. In his first book he offers few details on his life in New York, writing about the optimistic, dynamic American *sui generis*, revealing his own enthusiastic personality, humanistic interests, and love for hearth and family. In his last work we meet distinguished friends in Orange County such as Jesse Woodhull. His 1787 version, written after learning of the tragedy striking his family, contains several dark, anguished chapters recounting the suffering he endured in wartorn New York. His 1782 edition in English is widely available in the United States. His 1801 *Voyage* and his 1787 *Lettres d'un Cultivateur américain* (hereinafter, "1787 Lettres") are available online at books.google.org.
 - 3 de Crèvecoeur, Robert St. John. *Saint-John de Crèvecoeur, sa Vie et ses Oeuvres* (Paris: 1883) (archives.org) pp. 3–16 (hereinafter "Robert"); and Mitchell, Julia Post. *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur* (New York: Columbia University Press 1916) (books.google.org).
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the blackened ruins of burned-out houses and the charred remains of Trinity Church. Tendrils of gray chimney smoke curl upward, forming question marks against the leaden sky. Red auction flags beckon from drooping doorways, finding no takers.⁴

Loyalists, men and women, once-elegant attire tattered and faded, trundle by pushing handcarts sagging with their few dingy possessions. They make their way toward ships waiting to set sail for Nova Scotia along with the last of the British Army evacuating the once-prosperous city. Most of the Loyalists, citizens as well as combatants fighting for the British, had left during the summer, leaving only a few stragglers along with General Guy Carleton and troops occupying Staten Island, Fort George, Harlem Heights, and points in between, awaiting final orders to depart.⁵

A British Army officer glances up. He sees the snow-white *pavillon* with the blue and gold *fleur-de-lys* of the King of France, the flag fluttering mockingly atop the top gallant of the main-mast of a frigate-size vessel plowing through the Straits of Verrazzano under a stiff ocean breeze. Strange slivers of iron point heavenwards, affixed to the top of the masts: lightning rods, courtesy of Benjamin Franklin.

The French ship was named the *Courrier de l'Europe* and on board was John Thaxter, private secretary to John Adams. Thaxter had in his satchel the original Treaty of Paris signed by Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay representing the new United States of America.⁶ Opposite their signatures was the lone autograph of David Hartley, their British counterpart. The definitive peace treaty had been signed on September 3, 1783, at Hartley's lodgings in Paris, following months of waiting for approval by Congress and London after a year of tedious palavering between the two delegations, while their French hosts secretly reviewed every word they exchanged thanks to their spies, the most prominent of whom was none other than Franklin's own confidential secretary, Edward Bancroft. But if Franklin knew, he didn't care, as his method of negotiating was to simply express candidly the logic of his thinking. Hearing the truth was such a novelty to the professional diplomats of the French and British courts that they were utterly baffled by Franklin.⁷

Thaxter was not the only person of importance to alight from the *Courrier de l'Europe*. With him was the first French consul to the former British colonies of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, now calling themselves "states" of the new United States of

4 A fire in September 1776 devastated the west part of the city. The area remained in ruins throughout the British occupation. McCullough, David. 1776 (Simon & Schuster 2005) p. 222. Crèvecoeur's account of his return to New York is at 1787 *Lettres*, *op. cit.* Vol. III, pp. 250–78.

5 W.O. Raymond, "The Loyalist Regiments Leave New York", June 19, 1895, *Provincial Archives of New Brunswick* (archives.gnb.ca). Gen. Sir Guy Carleton issued orders Sept. 12, 1783 to evacuate the Loyalists, including Benedict Arnold's American Legion. See also Gen. Sir Guy Carleton's letter to Gen. Washington November 19, 1783 and proposed plan of evacuation, in *George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress 1741–1799* (memory.loc.gov).

6 Robert, *op. cit.* p. 85. The arrival of the *Courrier de l'Europe* with Thaxter and Crèvecoeur was reported in Rivington's *New York Gazette* and Holt's *Independent New York Gazette*, November 22, 1783, reproduced in I. N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island 1498–1909* (New York: Robert H. Dodd 1926) Vol. V, p. 1171. Thaxter was Adams' law clerk and secretary in Europe. McCullough, David. *John Adams* (New York: Simon & Schuster 2001) pp. 143, 274, 278. The New York newspapers misspelled Thaxter's name as "Thatcher."

7 Van Doren, Carl. *Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Viking Press 1938) pp. 580–84; 689–99.

America, whose bickering members were anything but united. It was the consul who had worked with King Louis' Navy Minister, the Marquis de Castries, to outfit the *Courrier de l'Europe* and four other vessels as packet ships to deliver mail between the two nations, and it was the consul to whom Franklin had given the lightning rods as well as advice on the packet service.⁸

The diplomat's legs were wobbly as he stepped onto the decaying docks of Whitehall, and his hands were shaking. He was feverish. For more than three years, he had dreamed of this moment, of returning to New York, to his American wife and daughter and youngest son and their farm he called Pine Hill, on the King's Highway just east of the tiny settlement of Chester, in the fiercely Patriot soil of Orange County. He recalled his fine, five-bay house flanked by a lush orchard and well-tended *potager*, and his farmhands tilling the sod of his land with a plow, on whose beam he had affixed a little chair, so that his son, Louis-Philippe, could ride along with them as they worked.



Portrait of J. Hector
St. John de Crèvecoeur,
artist unknown. Photograph
in the Gay Wilson Allen
Papers of the Rubenstein
Library. Reproduced with
the kind permission
of Duke University

Daughter Fanny was there, too, in his feverish dreams, stooping barefoot in their garden, picking strawberries. And standing sentinel not far from their house, the sassafras tree they had planted together, a grape vine encircling its trunk in a loving embrace.⁹ The consul had had no word from them since the day he had departed in early 1779, his oldest son Ally at his side, fleeing from his hostile Patriot neighbors only to be thrown in jail by the British, the foreign gentleman farmer with the American wife accused of being a spy for the very same rebels who had chased him away.

The consul's name was Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur¹⁰ and the 120 acres he farmed with his wife, Mehetable, were in the area of Orange County referred to as Blooming Grove, which did not become a town in its own right until 1799, until then being a part of Cornwall.¹¹ In those days, the boundary line between

8 Robert, *op. cit.* pp. 77–80. St. John's letters of appointment were issued June 22, 1783. *Ibid.* p. 79. Franklin taught Crèvecoeur how to install lightning rods. See Franklin letter to Crèvecoeur April 12, 1783 in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (franklinpapers.org); Robert, *op. cit.* pp. 72–73.

9 Crèvecoeur and his daughter planted the tree and vine in October 1774 to symbolize their love for each other. 1787 *Lettres*, *op. cit.* vol. 1, p. 252. Crèvecoeur painted a watercolor depicting his farm and family, a photo of which appears in a biography by Gay Wilson Allen and Roger Asselineau, *St. John de Crèvecoeur, the Life of an American Farmer* (New York: Viking Penguin, Inc. 1987). The color reprint for this article is through the gracious courtesy of Duke University, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

10 Crèvecoeur referred to himself in various ways. His name on his birth certificate is Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur. His father did not precede his family name with "Saint." His birth certificate (*Acte de Naissance*) is set forth in Robert's biography, p. 284. In official correspondence he usually signed his name Michel-Guillaume Jean dit Saint-John de Crèvecoeur, that is: "called" Saint John. Robert, *ibid.* 283. In the Act of the New York Colonial Assembly conferring citizenship on Crèvecoeur on December 23, 1765 he is John Hector St. John. See *Colonial Laws of New York, from the Year 1664 to the Revolution – Vol. IV (1755–1769)* (Albany: James B. Lyon, State Printer 1894) Chapter 1294, p. 899.

11 The colony was divided into twelve counties by Chapter 4 of the Laws of 1683. Rutenber, *op. cit.* pp. 6–7. Until 1788 the term "precinct" in lieu of "town" was used. Blooming Grove was part of Cornwall Precinct/Town from 1764 until 1799. Before that it was in Goshen Precinct. *Ibid.* p. 630.

Orange and Ulster counties was more to the south, such that Newburgh, New Windsor, and Montgomery (then called Hanover) were in Ulster County. When he bought the land on December 12, 1769, it was untamed wilderness overlooking marshes known as the Greycourt Swamps, the northern-most vanguard of the vast area called the Drowned Lands sprawling east of the Wallkill River down to New Jersey.¹²

Crèvecoeur had found it prudent to Anglicize his name. Hatred of the French was widespread, bitter memories of the recent French and Indian wars still smoldering in the minds of many in the Hudson Valley.¹³ He flourished as Hector St. John, married to an American Protestant, speaking English as fluently as his native French, and developing friendships with prominent Orange County leaders.¹⁴

Along with two of these friends, Jesse Woodhull and Elihu Marvin, St. John was appointed to act as a trustee to drain the Greycourt marshland and collect the tax, by official Act of the Colonial Assembly in 1772.¹⁵ In 1773 the Assembly voted to drain the Drowned Lands, appointing Woodhull, Nathaniel Roe, Henry Wisner, and Samuel Gale among others, although not St. John.¹⁶ The Drowned Lands are today known as the Black Dirt region, famous for its sweet onions.

St. John's farm lay on the north part of a tract called Greycourt, a portion of the old Wawayanda Patent. The Greycourt mansion, built around 1716 by stonemason William

12 The deed is at page 310 of Mitchell's biography and on the website of the Hudson River Valley Heritage (hrvh.org) ("James Nesbitt deed to J. Hector St. John/Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur"). As to the Drowned Lands, see Ruttenber, *op. cit.* p. 38.

13 The Seven Years' War, called the French and Indian Wars by the American colonists, inflamed the western frontier along a scythe-like swath running from the Ohio and the Alleghenies northeast through New York into New England, culminating in the Treaty of Paris between Great Britain, France and Spain in 1763. See, e.g., Ketcham, Richard M. *Divided Loyalties* (New York: MacMillan 2003) pp. 29–31, 36–39, 82–84. Robert believed his grandfather served in Canada, in the Colonial Regulars, then as a lieutenant in the royal LaSarre Regiment, and was a surveyor and cartographer, citing a map of French Canada in the French National Archives with notes in his grandfather's hand. Robert, *op. cit.* pp. 7–14. Mitchell postulates he did not serve in the war but Allen accepts that Crèvecoeur fought for the French, was wounded and possibly captured at the Battle of Quebec in September 1759. Allen, *op. cit.* pp. 21–22. Crèvecoeur was known in New York for his surveying skills, as noted by Loyalist William Smith (see Stokes, *op. cit.* p. 1171).

14 Civic and militia leaders are set forth in Ruttenber, *op. cit.*, with Revolutionary War muster rolls at pages 62–73; the history of Blooming Grove at 629–649.

15 *Colonial Laws, op. cit.* Vol. V, pp. 428–432, Chapter 1569, March 24 1772, "An Act to raise the Sum of one hundred fifty pounds on the Lands therein mentioned for the use of clearing and opening the Creek, commonly called Crommeline's Creek, and for other Purposes therein mentioned." The "bog-meadows" were "in a tract of land commonly called Grey Court in the Patent of Wawayanda in the County of Orange...." Appointed as inspectors were Jesse Woodhull, Samuel Gale, and Nathaniel Roe, and as trustees to receive the assessments: "Elihu Marvin, Hector Saint John and Joseph Drake...." *Ibid.* p. 429. Woodhull's farm was east of St. John's; Gale lived in Goshen to the west; the Marvin homesteads were south, at Oxford. Joseph Drake owned a tavern in East Chester, near Nathaniel Roe's farm. Barrell, Donald Melville. *Along the Wawayanda Path From Old Greycourt To Chester To Sugar Loaf* (Middletown: T. Emmett Henderson 1975) pp. 12–16, 50–51, and map p. 61.

16 *Colonial Laws, op. cit.* Vol. V, p. 483, Chapter 1588, "An Act to Raise fifteen hundred pounds for draining the drowned lands in the Precinct of Goshen in Orange County," February 6, 1773. In place of St. John appears Henry Wisner in the 1773 statute; Wisner five years later would accuse Crèvecoeur of spying for the British. See *infra*.

Bull¹⁷, is no more, but the name of its original owner, French Huguenot Daniel Crommelin, lives on today in the name of the stream that marked the easterly boundary of St. John's farm.¹⁸ The fertile farms along this stream prospered, as did St. John and his family. Years later, he wrote a nostalgic chapter about the joys of family, hearth, and home in the cozy intimacy of a Hudson Valley winter.

But the mood was far from festive by 1779. Fear gripped Orange County and famine stalked close behind.¹⁹ Butler's Tory raiders and Iroquois allies led by Joseph Brant had been on the rampage up and down the Catskills, and the Tory outlaw Claudius Smith had just been hanged in Goshen for murdering Blooming Grove Major Nathaniel Strong and stealing the Woodhull family's silverware.²⁰ The British Army was encamped in Westchester and occupied New York City as the stalemate dragged on through the unforgiving winter.

Washington's arrival at Smith's Clove—today's Harriman and Monroe—in June 1779 and General “Mad” Anthony Wayne's capture of the small British outpost at Stony Point in July heartened the local folk, but it did not erase the pain of losing so many loved ones at the disastrous battles over Forts Clinton and Montgomery on the Hudson River a scant eighteen months earlier.²¹ In July 1779, a local militia led by Warwick's Col. John Hathorn ran into an ambush by Brant's raiders above the Delaware River, with a loss of forty-three lives to add to the dozens of murdered settlers in Minisink near the New Jersey line.²² Patriots cried out for vengeance and passions ran high. Anyone who had refused to sign the Pledge of Association or take up arms for the cause was branded a traitor or

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- 17 William and Sarah Wells Bull were among the first settlers west of the Hudson. Crommelin hired stonemason Bull right off the ship in 1715. The remarkable story of William Bull and his wife Sarah is told by descendants Emma McWhorter, Dolly Booth and Philip Seaman, authors of *The History and Genealogy of the William Bull and Sarah Wells Family of Orange County, New York – the First Six Generations in America and Canada* (Middletown, New York, Emmett Henderson 1974).
 - 18 Daniel Crommelin, or Crommeline, was a French Huguenot and investor in the Wawayanda Patent, who by 1709 owned a significant share. Rutenber, *op.cit.*, pp. 17–19; O'Callaghan, E.B. *Calendar of N.Y. Colonial Manuscripts, Indorsed Land Papers in the Office of the Secretary of State of New York 1643–1803* (Harrison, New York: Harbor Hill Books 1987) Vol. V, p. 7, “Petition of Daniel Crommelin and others, for a grant of 2,000 acres each, east of the land patented to Capt. John Evans on the west side of Hudson's River...” November 8, 1709. He received another grant February 27, 1710. *Ibid.* Vol. VII p. 135. The history of the Crommelin family is at crommelin.org. See also Maynard, John Albert F. *The Huguenot Church of New York* (New York: 1938) (babel.hathitrust.org).
 - 19 1787 *Lettres*, *op. cit.* Vol. I, pp. 235–60, 307–27.
 - 20 The Strongs from Long Island settled west of Satterly's Creek along Prospect Road, appearing on Beer's 1875 *Atlas of Orange County, New York*. As with the Woodhulls in Blagg's Clove and the Marvins in Oxford, the Strongs attended the Blooming Grove Church on the King's Highway. These surnames appear on church records and Jesse Woodhull was co-executor under the will of the parish's first pastor, Rev. Enos Ayres. A. Elwood Corning, *History of the Congregational Church of Blooming Grove, N.Y.* (Newburgh: The Lanmere Publishing Co. 1929) pp. 5–6. Maj. Nathaniel Strong, Committee of Safety member and officer under Col. Woodhull, was murdered on October 6, 1778 by Tory outlaw Claudius Smith. Rutenber, *op. cit.* pp. 631, 649–51; Eager, Samuel. *An Outline History of Orange County* (Newburgh: S.T. Callahan 1846–47) pp. 550–64. See also *Public Papers of George Clinton* (Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co. 1899) Vol. IV, pp. 145–49. Smith was hung in Goshen on January 22, 1779. Rutenber, *ibid.* pp. 71–72. Strong's mother Hannah was a sister of Jesse Woodhull and his brother Gen. Nathaniel Woodhull, mortally wounded at the Battle of Long Island in 1776. Dwight, Benjamin W. *The History of the Descendants of Elder John Strong of Northampton, Massachusetts* (Albany: Joel Monsell 1871) pp. 649–50 (books.google.com); Rutenber, *op. cit.* p. 632.
 - 21 Johnson, James; Pryslopski, Christopher; and Villani, Andrew. *Key to the Northern Country: The Hudson River Valley in the American Revolution* (Albany: State University of New York Press 2013) pp. 107–08; 159–60. George Clinton's grim report to Washington October 9, 1777 is in Rutenber, *op. cit.* pp. 56–57.
 - 22 Rutenber, *op. cit.* pp. 59–61. Rutenber lists forty-three killed, *Ibid.* p. 20.
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Tory spy. Many fled to New York City or Canada.²³ Even Thomas Bull, a respected farmer whose father William and mother Sarah Wells Bull had been among the region's very first settlers, was thrown in jail by order of Governor George Clinton in 1778 for refusing to disavow his love for his king.²⁴

If descendants of esteemed pioneers like Thomas Bull could be thrown into prison without trial, how much easier to persecute foreigners, especially ones with a French accent.²⁵ To many a Patriot, being French carried with it guilt, at least by association, for the massacre at Fort William Henry and other atrocities during the Seven Years' War. To many, it also implied being a Catholic, at a time when the hatred of the Orange County Patriots for Parliament's Quebec Act of 1774, which ceded all of the Ohio to the "Papist" French, still smoldered.²⁶

According to the biography written by Robert St. John de Crèvecoeur, his grandfather had enlisted in the Colonial Regulars defending French Canada before serving as a lieutenant in the LaSarre Regiment of the Royal French Army from 1757 through 1759 against the combined British and American forces attacking Canada. On his deathbed in 1813, Crèvecoeur wrote to his son that he had served as a surveyor in Quebec in 1755, and his books show firsthand knowledge of the Great Lakes and the Ohio Valley down to the Mississippi.²⁷ In his 1801 *Voyage dans la Haute Pennsylvanie et dans l'État de New York*, he recounts the battle of Fort William Henry as seen from the eyes of a French officer. It would seem he was that officer.²⁸

St. John's military service in defense of Canada would not be something he would want known among his American neighbors, and it is not surprising he leaves this period of his life a closed book in his 1782 English edition of *Letters from an American Farmer*. Exactly how or when he first came to New York will also probably never be known. His writings show extensive travel in Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Nantucket Island, and Vermont (then called the Hampshire Grants, a region long hotly disputed between New Hampshire and New York until it achieved statehood in 1791). He lived for a while with

23 Allen, *op. cit.* p. 33. The Pledge of Association was promulgated by the New York Provincial Convention on April 29, 1775. Ruttenber sets forth the text, the signers, and those who refused at pages 62–71. See also *American Archives, Documents of the American Revolution 1774–1776*, "New York Association" (lincoln.lib.niu.edu). The returns for the Cornwall Pledge were submitted by Thomas Moffat as clerk of the Committee of Safety.

24 McWhorter, *op. cit.* p. 90; Seese, Mildred Parker. *Old Orange Houses Volume II* (Middletown: 1943) p. 14. Thomas was born 1727, third child of William and Sarah. He was jailed in Goshen in September 1778, then Fishkill until August 1780. His wife pleaded with Gov. Clinton for his release due to his deteriorating health. McWhorter, *op. cit.* pp. 61, 90, 114. See *Clinton Papers, op. cit.* Vol. IV pp. 38, 142, 618, 718. Thomas had a son, born in 1773, named Cadwallader in honor of Lt. Governor Cadwallader Colden, Sr. who was despised by the Patriots. McWhorter, *op. cit.* pp. 79, 112. Another son, George, became an officer in Benedict Arnold's loyalist American Legion, before evacuating to Canada. W.O. Raymond, "Progress of the Woodstock Settlement," August 28, 1895 (archives.gnb.ca).

25 Cadwallader, Jr., signed the Pledge yet was arrested for conduct "inimical to the popular cause" even though his father-in-law, respected merchant Thomas Ellison, hosted Gen. Washington in 1779 and 1780. Ruttenber, *op. cit.* p. 70, 223–25. Colden was sent to the infamous Fleet Prison near Kingston. Johnson, *op. cit.* pp. 15–18.

26 Ketcham, *op. cit.* p. 260.

27 Robert, *op. cit.* pp. 7–8, 14–15.

28 St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, *Voyage, op. cit.* Vol. I, pp. 337–40; Robert, *op. cit.* p. 11.

the Oneidas, a tribe belonging to the Iroquois Nation, and his books reveal a familiarity with their culture.²⁹

St. John became a citizen of New York on December 23, 1765, by act of the Colonial Assembly.³⁰ He married Mehetable Tippet on September 20, 1769, in Westchester County. Their original marriage certificate was passed down to grandson Robert, who reproduced it in a French translation in the biography of his grandfather. St. John identifies himself as “Michel-Guillaume St.-Jean de Crèvecoeur, communément appelé M. Saint-John” (known as “St. John”). He embellishes his French birth name with a flourish, adding “Saint” to “Jean”; his baptismal certificate, also set forth in Robert’s biography (as well as Mitchell’s), records his name as simply “Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur.”³¹

How or under what circumstances St. John met Mehetable will likely never be known.³² It is possible he was introduced to her by Jean-Pierre Tétard, the French Calvinist minister who performed their marriage ceremony. Rev. Tétard lived at King’s Bridge (now part of the Bronx), on a farm referred to on maps of the time as “Tétard’s Hill.” Here he also ran an academy teaching the classics, mathematics, and French.³³ Tétard had served as pastor of the Calvinist French Church in New York City after preaching in South Carolina, where St. John may have met him during his travels.³⁴ In December 1776, the pastor baptized St. John’s three children. The baptismal certificate, translated into French, is appended to Robert’s biography.³⁵

St. John did not overtly profess to be Catholic and he could not have attended mass even had he wanted to, for Catholicism was not legalized in New York until an act of the

29 See, e.g., *Voyage*, *op. cit.* Vol. II.

30 *Colonial Laws*, *op. cit.* Vol. IV (1755–1769) “An Act for Naturalization, John Hector St. John...” p. 899.

31 Mitchell, *op. cit.* pp. 36–37; Robert, *op. cit.* pp. 23, 285.

32 Crèvecoeur never mentions his wife by name. The marriage certificate states she was “of Dutchess County.” No Tippets appear in published wills or histories of Dutchess County. Mehetable may have been the daughter of George Tippet, Mitchell, *op. cit.* pp. 35–37, wealthy Westchester landowner. Tippet Stream is in Yonkers; Tippet Hill overlooks Spuyten Duyvil. Shonnard, Frederic and Spooner, W.W. *History of Westchester County, New York* (New York History Company 1900) pp. 143–44. The only Mehetable Tippet from Westchester appears in a 1675 will. See Pelletreau, William S. *Early Wills of Westchester County 1664–1784* (New York: Francis P. Harper 1898) p. 3. It is possible Mehetable descended from Nicholas Tippet, a French Huguenot immigrating to Boston in 1690. Sanborn, Franklin B. “St. John de Crèvecoeur, the American Farmer (1735–1813),” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society. Second Series. Vol. XX. 1906–1907* (Boston 1907) pp. 44–45 (babel.hathitrust.org).

33 The Continental Army’s retreat from Fort Independence on Tétard’s Hill preceded the Battle of White Plains, October 28, 1776. Shonnard, *op. cit.* pp. 406, 614.

34 Mitchell, *op. cit.* pp. 38–39.

35 Robert, *op. cit.* p. 286.

Assembly in 1784. He would be instrumental in establishing the state's first legal Catholic church, St. Peter's, on June 10, 1785, and be named one of its first four trustees.³⁶

Daughter Fanny was born on December 14, 1770, at St. John and Mehetable's farm in Blooming Grove.³⁷ Her poetic name was highly symbolic: America-Frances. She was born into a family of two cultures and two languages, in an optimistic new land free from the shackles of aristocratic, semi-feudal Europe and the tyranny of the nobility and clergy. But the Sons of Liberty and their Tory adversaries would soon prove that tyranny knows no class or social distinction.

Following the battles of Lexington and Concord in April 1775, New York's Provincial Congress promulgated the Pledge of Association. Professing loyalty to the king but requiring obedience to Congress,³⁸ the pledge was read aloud in meeting houses and taverns, including the tavern of John Brewster, town clerk of Blooming Grove. Possibly, it also was read at the nearby Congregational Church, where Jesse Woodhull and Elihu Marvin were members, and likely their friends the St. Johns were as well.³⁹ Most civic leaders signed the document; many of those who did not were noted as having refused. St. John's name appears neither on the pledge nor on the list of those who refused. Non-signers walked a precarious tightrope, as did those who refused to take up arms.

In the war's early days, St. John was likely protected by respected friends like Marvin and Woodhull.⁴⁰ News of King Louis XVI's declaration of war on England and treaty of friendship with America signed in February 1778 also might have soothed resentment

36 See Laws of the State of New York, Chapter 18 "An Act to enable all religious denominations in this State to appoint Trustees...." April 6, 1784; Bennett, William Harper. *Catholic Footsteps in Old New York* (New York: Schwartz, Kirwin and Fauss 1909) pp. 370–73. ("Without consulting the ecclesiastical authorities, Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, José Roiz Silva, James Stewart and Henry Duttin [sic] were incorporated by an act of the legislature, June 10th [1785], under the title 'The Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church in the City of New York'...."Crèvecoeur, although instrumental in establishing the first Catholic Church in New York, was not regarded as an exemplary Catholic.") *Ibid.* p. 373, 379. Other Catholic historians were more gracious of Crèvecoeur. "The one to whom the Catholics of the great city owe the most is Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, Consul-General of France...." Stokes, *op. cit.* Vol. V, p. 1201, entry for April 30, 1785, citing to Shea, *Life and Times of the Most Rev. John Carroll* (1888) pp. 266–67.

37 Robert, *op. cit.* p. 286.

38 See note 23.

39 Cornwall precinct meetings were held at Brewster's tavern on King's Highway (Route 94) in Blooming Grove. John Brewster, Jr., had been the precinct clerk since 1769. Ruttenber, *ibid.* p. 630, 642. At the Town Meeting May 15, 1775, Woodhull was appointed to represent Orange County at the 2nd Provincial Congress. See "American Archives, Documents of the American Revolution" (threeivers.com/nyrev/orange). The Blooming Grove Committee of Safety was formed on Sept. 14, 1775. The arrest of dissenters began soon after. Ruttenber, *op. cit.* p. 69–70.

40 Another close friend was Peter Townsend. His Sterling Iron Works forged the chain placed across the Hudson at West Point in 1778. Diamant, Lincoln. *Chaining the Hudson* (New York: Carol Publishing Co. 1989) pp. 141–56. His nephew Robert was a spy for Washington. Kilmeade, Brian and Yaeger, Don. *George Washington's Secret Six, The Spy Ring That Saved the American Revolution* (New York: Penguin Group 2013) pp. 71, 74, 77. Peter, originally from Oyster Bay, resided in Chester, appearing on the 1775 tax rolls. Ruttenber, *op. cit.* p. 614. Townsend is featured in St. John's 1801 *Voyage*, as are Woodhull and John Ellison, son of Thomas. (See Vol. II pp. 264–82). Gen. Henry Knox was quartered at Ellison's house in New Windsor several times during the war. Marion M. Mailler and Janet Dempsey's *18th Century Homes in New Windsor and its Vicinity* (The National Temple Hill Association, Inc. 1969) pp. 48–57. (St. John erroneously refers to John Ellison as "Allison." He is identified as Ellison in the table of contents; the prosperous mill St. John describes was owned by Ellison in New Windsor. Col. William Allison of Goshen was captured at Fort Montgomery in October 1777.)

against the French, aided by the presence of officers such as Lafayette.⁴¹ The anti-French animosity could not have been uniform; after all, many American Patriots possessed French blood, including John Jay, president of the Continental Congress,⁴² and Jesse Woodhull's wife Hester, descendant of the Dubois family of New Paltz.⁴³

But those Patriots with Gallic blood had all been born in America, did not have a French accent, and had openly joined the rebellion. In the dark days of 1778 and 1779, St. John's Patriot neighbors knew only that this foreigner refused to fight the British and sign the Pledge. Governor Clinton and state Attorney General John Morin Scott made no bones about their willingness to imprison or banish anyone suspected of Tory sympathies.⁴⁴ "*Contra nos est quis non pro nobis*" ("He who is not with us, is against us") was their guiding policy, in the words of St. John.⁴⁵

In his 1787 *Lettres d'un Cultivateur Américain*, St. John, with the graphic clarity and heart-wrenching anguish of an eyewitness, describes the dark fear, incessant terror, and abject misery of the residents of once-prosperous and happy Orange County. Their western frontier was now soaked in blood and the rule of law and justice had been replaced by an arbitrary inquisition and a lust for vengeance. In letters written while in a British prison in New York City in 1779, he recounts the relentless persecution he had endured for desiring peace and a severe beating he had received at the hands of a roaming militia company at his own house in front of his terrified wife and children. Accused of aiding the enemy and about to be lynched, St. John's pleas of innocence and prayers for mercy finally touched the militia captain, who ordered his release.⁴⁶

But the trauma and ceaseless, nerve-wracking terror he suffered became too much for him to bear. No one would grind his grain or help him bring in his harvest. St. John was thrown into jail for a period of time.⁴⁷ By 1778 he was asking his few Patriot friends to support his request to Governor Clinton for permission to leave Orange County and

41 Lafayette, not yet twenty years old, arrived in America in June 1777 and developed a close bond with Washington; Congress, impressed by his courage at Brandywine Creek, gave him command of his own division on Dec. 1, 1777. Auricchio, Laura. *The Marquis, Lafayette Reconsidered* (New York: Vintage 2014) pp. 39, 48–54.

42 Morris, Richard B. *Seven Who Shaped our Destiny: The Founding Fathers as Revolutionaries* (Harper & Row 1973) p. 151.

43 *Ibid.* pp. 630–32. (Ruttenber identifies Col. Zachary DuBois and sister Hester's father as Lewis rather than Nathaniel; however, Lewis DuBois was their brother. Nathaniel's father was patentee Louis DuBois of New Paltz. See Seese, Vol. II, *op. cit.* p. 101; see also [www. Geni.com/people/Nathaniel-DuBois](http://www.Geni.com/people/Nathaniel-DuBois).

44 Kaminski, John P. *George Clinton, Yeoman Politician of the New Republic* (Madison House 1993) ("I'd rather roast in hell for all eternity than show mercy to a damned Tory," p. 77).

45 1787 *Lettres*, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 319.

46 Crèvecoeur's delight in neighbors and family in wintertime, described in "*Description d'une Chute de Neige*" (1787 *Lettres*, Vol. I, pp. 282–307), renders that much more heart-wrenching the dark, heartless cruelty and terror of the civil war. In "*Pensées sur la Guerre Civile, Histoire de Joseph Wilson*" dated August 29, 1777 (pp. 307–27) he depicts a once-happy society now destroyed and soaked in blood, neighbors accusing neighbors, consumed by fear, hatred, and vengeance. In "*L'Homme des Frontières*" dated Orange County, September 1779, he longs for a country where he can take his family, where there is no hatred, no persecution or fear from marauding Indians or violent vigilantes.

47 Diary entry of Loyalist William Smith dated August 1, 1779, reproduced in Stokes, *op. cit.* p. 1091.

cross the lines into New York City, from there to take a British vessel to England before returning to France.

At first he seems to have contemplated taking his wife and three children with him; *The Papers of George Clinton* contain an undated letter stating: "Permission is given to Mr. Hector St. John to send his family by a flag [of truce] going up the Hudson's River." For reasons unknown, his family did not leave.⁴⁸

When Henry Wisner of Warwick, an influential munitions-maker and delegate to the Continental Congress in 1774 and 1775, learned of St. John's plan, he wrote to Governor Clinton on February 19, 1778. He objected to St. John receiving a safe-conduct on the grounds he was a spy and would betray information about Orange County's defenses.⁴⁹ But in April, St. John's friends Elihu Marvin, then a militia general, and Thomas Moffat, who served on the revolutionary Committee of Safety, wrote letters of support to the governor.⁵⁰

At some point someone—whether Clinton or Washington—issued a pass to St. John. He left for New York City, taking only his six-year-old son Ally with him. Mehetable, Fanny, and baby Louis-Philippe remained at the farm.

St. John wrote in his 1787 *Lettres* that he received the safe-conduct, signed by Washington, from General Alexander McDougall, commander of the fort at West Point. He recounts that McDougall treated father and son cordially; they even dined with him before resuming their journey.⁵¹ St. John's recollection is doubtful given the letter McDougall had written to Governor Clinton on April 28, 1778. In it, he asked for advice on St. John's character and admonished that if permission were granted for him to proceed to New York City, it should be on condition that he be required to go by land, under guard, and not return until war's end.⁵² It seems unlikely that McDougall, a passionate Patriot (he was a founder of New York's Sons of Liberty), would have viewed St. John with a tolerant eye.⁵³

St. John may have obtained his pass through the British lines with the help of his close friend William Seton, a Tory merchant in New York City who seems to have retained the respect of both warring parties during as well as after the war.⁵⁴ He must have led a charmed life, for after the Patriots reclaimed the city in November 1783, thirsting for vengeance, Seton somehow remained immune to persecution and repressive laws targeting Loyalists.⁵⁵ After the War, Seton helped St. John with the new Franco-American mail service before

48 *Clinton Papers, op. cit.* Vol. V, p. 364.

49 *Clinton Papers, op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 778, Wisner to Clinton February 19, 1778. Wisner's son Gabriel was to be among those killed by Brandt on the Delaware in July 1779. Ruttenber, *op. cit.* pp. 59–61.

50 *Clinton Papers, op. cit.* Vol. III, p. 148, Moffat to Clinton April 9, 1779; Marvin to Clinton April 7, 1778.

51 1787 *Lettres, op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 425–28, letter, "Dublin, 18 Décembre, 1780."

52 *Clinton Papers, op. cit.* Vol. III, p. 227, McDougall to Clinton April 28, 1779.

53 Ketcham, *op. cit.* pp. 217–23, 241–51.

54 Bennett, *op. cit.* p. 366; Robert, *op. cit.* pp. 58–59.

55 See, e.g., Kaminski, *op. cit.* pp. 79–82; Law of May 12, 1784, prohibiting Loyalists from returning to New York or reclaiming their property. The law was repealed two years later. *Ibid.* See also Ketcham, *op. cit.* pp. 366–70 and the 1779 Act of Attainder pushed by John Morin Scott banishing all Loyalists for life under pain of death without benefit of clergy and confiscating their property.

acting (along with Alexander McDougall) as an official of Alexander Hamilton's new Bank of New York.⁵⁶

But in 1779, when St. John and Ally slipped into New York, hoping to catch a ship to England, the city was a heap of charred ruins filled with half-starved citizens, stray dogs, and listless redcoats. Father and son spent months in misery; St. John wrote to General Sir Henry Clinton almost begging for food. Accused by the city's Loyalist "refugees" of being a spy for the Patriots and the French, whose navy was lurking off the New Jersey coast, the British command threw him into prison and took Ally away. Through some miracle, Ally was released into the care of a family in Flushing, then lived with a young English merchant named Henry Perry while his father, ill, weak, and depressed, was to spend the next several months in vermin-infested, disease-ridden confinement at the sadistic mercy of the notorious British jailer Captain William Cunningham.⁵⁷

Many of St. John's letters in his 1787 work recount the stories of fellow prisoners and the horrors they had experienced: Brant's massacres surrounding the battle and ambush on the Delaware, torture and torment at the hands of Tories and Iroquois, cruel and abusive treatment by British officers occupying Long Island. He also describes his own terrible experiences. In reading his *Lettres* and entries concerning St. John in the diaries of Loyalist Judge William Smith, Jr., we feel the brutal harassment he suffered and his desperate zigzagging between one tyrant and then the other, trying to placate each and incurring the hatred of both. In a civil war there can be no middle ground. *Contra nos est quis non pro nobis*.⁵⁸

A respected lawyer before the war, author of a well-known history of New York, and a staunch Loyalist, Smith recorded in his diary several intriguing discussions he had with British officials concerning St. John. On August 1, 1779, he noted that police magistrate Peter DuBois had come to take tea and told Smith that "St. John, who is still a prisoner, is 'the Sport of the Vindictive Rage of the Refugees [Loyalists].'"⁵⁹

DuBois had received a report from a secret informant in "the Country" (Orange County) that "St. John had acted the part of a Loyal Subject and was at Length confined – that a General Stevens got him released & after that he was less frank." DuBois told Smith that a Loyalist spy had written the report, that DuBois recognized the handwriting

56 Stokes, *op. cit.* p. 1187, citing to the *N.Y. Packet* March 15, 1784 reporting the election of McDougall as president of the Bank of New York and Hamilton, Isaac Roosevelt, and William Seton as officers. Seton's future daughter-in-law Elizabeth was destined to be canonized as Saint Elizabeth after her husband's death. She founded the college known today as Seton Hall University. Bennett, *op. cit.* p. 366.

57 Crèvecoeur and son Ally, six years old, arrived in New York City on February 17, 1779. Mitchell, *op. cit.* 49–51. In his 1787 edition, Vol. II, p. 249 Crèvecoeur invokes a later date, September 15, 1779 in a letter purportedly written in Orange County ("The moment has finally arrived; either I must die, or leave my home."). Robert puts the date as April 19, 1779. Robert, *op. cit.* p. 56. Loyalist William Smith wrote in his diary August 1, 1779, that St. John, "still in prison," had arrived some months earlier. Stokes, *op. cit.* p. 1091. St. John was seized on July 8 after performing surveying work for Trinity Church. Mitchell, *op. cit.* pp. 52–53.

58 Stokes, *op. cit.* p. 1091. Smith relates Gen. Sir Henry Clinton's reluctant consent to Crèvecoeur's imprisonment to appease refugee Loyalists accusing him of spying. See also Robert, *op. cit.* p. 60; 1787 *Lettres*, *op. cit.* Vol. I, pp. 415–78.

59 Stokes, *op. cit.* p. 1091.

as being from “a Person of Character & one who has access to the Rebel Chiefs.” Explaining why the city’s Loyalists should nonetheless hate St. John, DuBois ventured that he had reportedly switched sides, allegedly having spent six weeks “in the Rebel camp with La Fayette – That he and other French officers were at his House.”⁶⁰ In other words, St. John was in the city as a spy for the Patriots.

Smith also records that “the General,” presumably Henry Clinton, did not give much weight to the accusation, viewing it as hearsay. However, William Franklin, New Jersey’s Loyalist governor and a refugee, insisted that St. John be locked up. His demand stemmed from a conversation he had with Nicholas and Isaac Ogden, who had intercepted a letter from St. John to his wife that allegedly cast him in a suspicious light. The letter’s substance is not set forth. The Ogdens and a “Mr. Matthews”—most likely Fletcher Matthews, leader of the Loyalist refugees whose father had been the first settler in Blooming Grove—were adamant that St. John be jailed. The general, reluctantly it seems, consented. But according to Smith, “[h]e followed this with Censures upon Nicholas & Isaac Ogden as revengeful & Matthews as a Man without Principle devoted to avarice & one of the worst of Men.”⁶¹

Smith thought the secret Loyalist informant was “Mr. Wickham” of Warwick, and that Wickham and St. John were known to be “sworn friends.”⁶² The “Rebel Chiefs” whom DuBois alluded to were probably Henry Wisner and members of the Committee of Safety such as Thomas Moffat and Elihu Marvin. Smith’s diary raises the intriguing possibility that St. John had convinced the committee to let him leave Orange County by offering to work as a spy. But if so, it is apparent he had no intention of spying, as his writings show only a man trying to walk the tightrope of moderation and neutrality.

Smith was asked to post bail for St. John. He declined, afraid to become embroiled in a power struggle with other refugees and concluding that discretion was the better part of valor.⁶³

The anguish of the father was shared by the son. Ally wrote a poignant note to his imprisoned father:⁶⁴

Is it true, dear father, that the red coats have confined you?
What have you done them then? Shall Ally see you never
never more? They say as how they will hang you; poor father,
dear father – when you are dead, they say as how everybody
will hate me; wou’d it not be better that Ally shou’d die also.
I cannot write for crying –

Your dear Ally St. J. –

60 In February 1778 Washington sent Lafayette to Albany to confer with Gen. Philip Schuyler about Canada. Auricchio, *op. cit.* pp. 57–60. To reach Albany from Valley Forge he would have taken the King’s Highway from New Jersey to Newburgh, passing by St. John’s farm. It would have been a logical stopping place.

61 See note 59.

62 See note 59.

63 See note 59.

64 1787 *Lettres, op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 435 n. 1.

St. John was set free thanks to William Seton's efforts. He and Ally departed on a British ship on September 1, 1780.⁶⁵

After a six-week voyage they were shipwrecked on the coast of Ireland. Rescued, they were sheltered by an Irish family before arriving in London in May 1781. Here St. John signed a contract with a publishing house for his manuscript *Letters from an American Farmer*, based on writings composed over the years that he had managed to hold on to notwithstanding his imprisonment in New York and abrupt landfall in Ireland. Written in English, his book is a flowery panegyric in the allegorical style of the times. It praises the beauty and grandeur of America and its optimistic, dynamic farmers and entrepreneurs free to flourish in the gardens of the New Eden. *Letters from an American Farmer* was to become a sensation in England and France. It provided his entrée into the high society of intellectual Paris and the king's ministers.

St. John received an advance of thirty guineas from his publisher with a promise of more should the book sell well. He used the money to move on to France, arriving with Ally at his father's estate outside the village of Pierrepont on August 2, 1781.⁶⁶

Through his father, St. John met distant relative Marquis de Turgot and his friends, including Countess Sophie d'Houdetot, a renowned *salonnière* and patron of philosophers, scientists, and writers. Sophie fawned over Benjamin Franklin, U.S. representative to France, and she wasted no time in introducing St. John to him. St. John had befriended five American naval officers who escaped from an English prison ship. With Franklin's help, he found a berth for them on a departing American vessel.⁶⁷ One of the escaped officers, Lieutenant George Little, in turn offered to enlist the help of an uncle in Boston, Captain Gustaves Fellowes, to get in touch with Mehetable. St. John furnished the lieutenant with correspondence to deliver via Fellowes to his wife.⁶⁸ He received no replies, the war severing civilian mail almost totally.⁶⁹

St. John's nascent identity crisis is evidenced by Franklin's puzzled inquiry to Sophie in late 1781 over the correct name of her protégé, whether "St. John" or "St. Jean de Crèvecoeur." It was exacerbated by fear his children could lose their inheritance of their grandfather's estate due to their Protestant baptism and the American citizenship of father

65 Robert, *op. cit.* p. 62; 1787 *Lettres*, *op. cit.* Vol. III, p. 253.

66 *Ibid.* pp. 63–64. Pierrepont is southwest of Caen. The Château de Crèvecoeur in Auge, east of Caen, was owned by distant relatives before the Revolution. Robert, *op. cit.* p. 289.

67 Robert, *ibid.* pp. 65–66; 1787 *Lettres*, *op. cit.* Vol. III, pp. 2–12. See also Crèvecoeur to Franklin from Caen, August 27, 1781, seeking help for the American sailors; Lt. Little to Franklin dated Caen, August 25, 1781; Franklin's letter Sept. 2, 1781, thanking Crèvecoeur; Sophie to Franklin March 13, 1782, and Oct. 18, 1782 (discussing Crèvecoeur's book). *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (franklinpapers.org). See also Van Doren, *op. cit.* p. 640 (Sophie's fête champêtre dedicated to Franklin). Crèvecoeur published Sophie's poem to Franklin in American newspapers. See "Account of Fête Champêtre in Franklin's Honor" (founders.archives.gov).

68 Fellowes was a successful privateer during the War who had refused to carry the East India Company's infamous 1773 cargo of tea to Boston. Sanborn, *op. cit.* pp. 49–50.

69 1787 *Lettres*, *op. cit.* Vol. III, pp. 1–4.

and children.⁷⁰ Around this time, the honorific “de Crèvecoeur” began to predominate in his correspondence, his surname Jean nuanced by an occasional “Saint” as prefix. In deference to his choice, he shall be referenced hereafter as “Crèvecoeur.”

Marquis Étienne Turgot was the brother of deceased royal Finance Minister Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot. He rubbed shoulders with the leading writers and natural philosophers of the day, including Franklin. He introduced Crèvecoeur to Count Buffon, director of the King’s Royal Gardens, and the mathematician Nicolas de Condorcet of the Académie française, destined to be a member of the revolutionary National Assembly before perishing in the Reign of Terror.⁷¹ At their urging, Crèvecoeur busied himself writing a treatise on the American potato; it was presented to the Royal Academy of Science, earning him election as a correspondent in 1783.⁷²

Sophie and her husband, an army general, introduced Crèvecoeur to French Foreign Minister Comte de Vergennes and the Naval Minister, the Marquis de Castries. De Castries was a pragmatic administrator, eager for timber and resin for the navy and looking to establish a mail service between France and the United States. With peace all but certain after Congress’ approval of the draft treaty in April 1783 and London’s assent expected to follow, de Castries had Crèvecoeur appointed director of the new royal mail ship service to go along with his royal commission as the first consul of the King to the States of New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey.⁷³

Soon after the Treaty of Paris was finally signed on September 3, 1783, Crèvecoeur left Ally in the care of Sophie and embarked for New York on the *Courrier de l’Europe*, one of five packet ships he had outfitted with Franklin’s lightning rods.⁷⁴ The New York newspapers announced the ship’s arrival on November 19, 1783, having on board John Thaxter, John Adams’ secretary, bearing the treaty, and “Hector St. John, Esq., appointed by the Court of France to be Consul and Superintendent of Pacquets.”⁷⁵

As he stepped back onto American soil, someone Crèvecoeur knew informed him about the catastrophe that had struck Pine Hill Farm after Crèvecoeur left in 1779. A fire had burned down the house, with his wife Mehetable trapped inside. Already feverish, Crèvecoeur became violently ill.⁷⁶

70 Mitchell, *op. cit.* pp. 138–40; *Franklin Papers, op. cit.*, letters from Crèvecoeur to Franklin Aug. 27, 1781; Franklin to Crèvecoeur Sept. 2, 1781; Franklin to Crèvecoeur and Sophie Sept. 21, 1781; Sophie to Franklin Oct. 20, 1781; Crèvecoeur to Franklin Dec. 5, 1781.

71 Robert, *op. cit.* pp. 66–69, 83–84; Franklin to Turgot April 25, 1781 describing a new copying device and May 1, 1781, explaining his improved stove design. *Franklin Papers, op. cit.*

72 Robert, *op. cit.* pp. 82, 122–27.

73 1787 *Lettres, op. cit.* Vol. III, p. 4; Robert, *op. cit.* pp. 77–88. The royal commission was signed June 22, 1783.

74 Crèvecoeur to Franklin March 1783 requesting advice for the packet ship project and installing lightning rods for Countess d’Houdetot; Franklin’s reply April 12, 1783, discussing the design of the ships and the Gulf Stream of which Franklin sent Crèvecoeur a chart. *Franklin Papers, op. cit.*

75 Stokes, *op. cit.* p. 1091 citing to Rivington’s *New York Gazette*, Nov. 22, 1783, and Holt’s *Independent New York Gazette*.

76 Robert, *op. cit.* 85–86; 1787 *Lettres, op. cit.* Vol. III, pp. 11–13. Crèvecoeur did not identify the bearer of the terrible news which “struck me like a bolt of lightning....I would have fallen to the ground had I not been held up by my worthy friend William Seton....” *Lettres* (1787 ed.) Vol. III, p. 5.

William Seton nursed his friend back to health, while General Washington prepared his triumphant entry into New York City on November 25, 1783. As French consul, Crèvecoeur would have been invited to the gala dinners, balls, and celebrations to mark the occasion; with his health and spirits in a broken state, it is not clear how many he attended.⁷⁷ Although his wife had perished, he clung to the hope that Fanny and Louis-Philippe were still alive.

In the new American post office a few days later, Crèvecoeur met Deputy U.S. Postmaster William Bedlow. He presented to Crèvecoeur a letter intercepted by the British and then left behind.⁷⁸ Dated December 17, 1781, it was from Captain Fellowes of Boston and addressed to Crèvecoeur in France. Fellowes had found Fanny and Louis, safe but near starvation, in the care of an old, destitute couple in Chester. Fellowes' direct style is concise but elegant:

I received your letter of September 29, by the five officers of the vessel 'Protector': having read it attentively, your readiness to come to their rescue, and the important service you did them made on my mind an impression so strong that I at once took all necessary steps to obtain information about the state of your family, but in vain, the war having interrupted all communication. Seeing that, I then resolved to go myself to Orange County. I told my wife, who approved of the plan....A week after I left Boston I was lucky enough to meet on the shores of the Hudson the Sheriff of Orange County, Jesse Woodhull, Esq., who as Colonel of the militia was with his regiment at their barracks at Fishkill. Your letter, which I handed him, was the first he had got from you since you left the prison at New York....I learned from him the death of your wife and the deplorable condition of your children from the devastation by the savages and the scarcity of food as the result. Horror-struck at the news, I at once made up my mind to snatch them away from that unlucky place, bring them to Boston, and raise them with my own children. Fortunately the snow was deep, and the roads well trodden....

Since they have been with us we have treated them as our own... My wife and I receive them as if they were children we had lost and recovered; were we so unfortunate as never to see or hear of you again, we shall educate them as our own. Not knowing what religious principles you had given them, I take them to church with my family, and they offer to God the same worship that we do. If you receive this, please tell us your wishes on this point; we shall be glad to conform to them.... As to your farm and lands, I advised him never to allow

77 Lamb, Martha J. *History of the City of New York* (New York: A.J. Barnes and Company 1896), Vol. II p. 277–78. Washington's grand entry, scheduled for Nov. 19, was pushed back to the 25th due to bad weather. See Stokes, *op. cit.* pp. 1171–73. See also *Clinton Papers* for Nov. 25, 1783; Kaminski, *op. cit.* pp. 55–56.

78 Stokes, *op. cit.* citing to Holt's *New York Gazette* Nov. 29, 1783.

their sale without first obtaining your consent... I will send to you a copy of this letter by every means until I receive your response.

Gustaves Fellowes⁷⁹

Eagerly and tearfully, we can imagine, Crèvecoeur wrote to LéTombe, the French consul in Boston, to contact Fellowes and his children. The winter of 1783 to 1784 was harsh, and the ill Crèvecoeur could not leave for Boston until March. He traveled by sleigh.⁸⁰ The Fellowes' mansion on Harvard and Orange streets was luxurious, befitting the family's wealth and prominence. By a miraculous twist of fate, Crèvecoeur's children had gone from abject poverty and suffering to affluence and plenty in the loving lap of a warm and distinguished family. It must have been an indescribable reunion that wintry spring day when father and children hugged and kissed each other after so many years and so much tragedy.⁸¹

In his 1787 *Lettres*, Crèvecoeur presents Fanny's moving story of their salvation from desperation:

It was time, dear father, for divine Providence to look with favor on little brother Louis-Philippe and me. When Capt. Fellowes arrived we had neither stockings nor shoes, and were almost naked, and it was very cold....My little brother, being younger, did not feel the misery of our lot so much as I, although he cried a good deal. But I, who remembered so well your tender care and that of poor Mother – I, who used to be your dear vine, how I did grieve when I thought of all that – and I thought of it often.

J...D... and his wife, not knowing who this stranger might be who came to claim us, did all they could to persuade us to stay with them. They alarmed little brother, who began to cry, saying, "I don't want to go with that stranger." I said to them, "We cannot be more wretched than we are now; why should you want to keep us? You have nothing to give us; you can hardly supply your own wants. This man must wish us well, else he would not have come such a long way. Perhaps God has sent him to us..."

You could not yourself have been kinder than this blessed man was, in our whole journey...When we got to Hartford, some of his friends asked him, "What have you got in your sleigh?" "Two lost children," he said, "I lost them, and have just got them back. I am taking them to Boston, where my wife will soon make them forget all they have had to bear. We have seven children now, and the two little lost lambs will make nine..."

79 1787 *Lettres*, *op. cit.* Vol. III, pp. 17–21. The English translation of Crèvecoeur's French version of Fellowes' letter is by the author of this article.

80 1787 *Lettres*, *op. cit.* Vol. III pp. 6–7; Robert, *op. cit.* pp. 87–88.

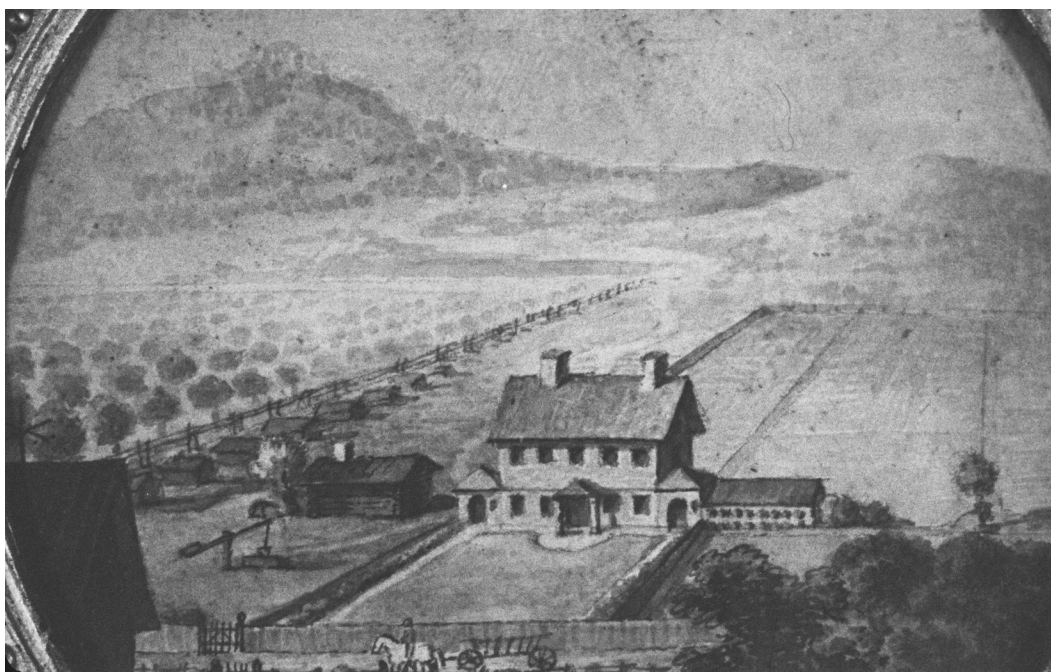
81 1787 *Lettres*, *op. cit.* pp. 7–20.

...How I liked being pitied, being put into warm clothes, having enough to eat when I was hungry, and especially to fear no longer being attacked by Indians. ...our kind adoptive mother... had us sit by her at the table, and gave us the best there was saying, "These poor children have suffered so much, they must now have more care than our own...."⁸²

Fanny's discreet reference to "J.D." must refer to Joseph Drake. He had served with her father on the Greycourt swamp project and lived nearby in Chester, where he and his wife Martha kept a tavern. Local lore identifies Drake as Fanny and Louis-Philippe's savior.⁸³

Fanny did not want to leave her Boston family to live with her father in New York, and she could not bear to go with him to visit the ruins of their home in Blooming Grove. By deed dated May 2, 1785, Crèvecoeur conveyed this property to Thomas Moffat.⁸⁴

Following his arrival as consul in New York City, Crèvecoeur had been busy: helping to establish St. Peter's Church, and presenting gifts of books, plants, and scientific instruments



Crèvecoeur's Pine Hill Farm, allegedly painted by the author and farmer himself. Photograph in the Gay Wilson Allen Papers of the Rubenstein Library. Reproduced with the kind permission of Duke University

82 1787 *Lettres*, *op. cit.* Vol. III, pp. 22–27 (Translation by the author of this article). See also Delesderniers, Emily Pierpont. *Fannie St. John; a romantic incident of the American Revolution* (New York: Hurd and Houghton 1874) pp. 38–42.

83 Barrell, *op. cit.* p.14–15, 50–51. Joseph Drake is listed as a property owner in Chester in the 1775 tax roll. Rутtenber, *op. cit.* p. 614.

84 Deed, "Hector St. John/Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crevecoeur to Thomas Moffatt [sic]", available at the Hudson River Valley Heritage website (hrvh.org). Samuel Moffat, father of Thomas, came from Ireland to Blagg's Clove around 1730.

from the King of France and the Royal Academy of Science to Yale College, the governors of New Jersey and Massachusetts, and to his friend Ethan Allen of the Vermont Assembly. During Lafayette's tour of America in 1784, Crèvecoeur and his children joined the marquis in receiving honorary citizenship from the cities of New Haven and Hartford.⁸⁵ According to Robert, after receiving the keys to the City of New York from Mayor James Duane in September of that year,⁸⁶ Lafayette traveled to Boston and visited with Fanny St. John and the Fellowes family at Crèvecoeur's invitation.⁸⁷

Crèvecoeur returned to France with his sons in June 1785 for a two-year visit. In addition to witnessing firsthand the seismic rumbling of the ground on which French society had been built and soon would erupt in revolution, Crèvecoeur shared ideas on agriculture with Thomas Jefferson, U.S. Ambassador to France. In 1786, after presenting his studies with Antoine-Augustin Parmentier on the American potato and the acacia tree, he was accepted into membership of the Agricultural Society. He founded the Gallo-American Cultural Society with intellectual Jean-Jacques Brissot, destined to lead the revolutionary Girondin party before going to the guillotine in 1794.⁸⁸ In departing for New York in May 1787, he entrusted the care of Ally and Louis-Philippe to the Duke de la Rochefoucauld and the Countess d'Houdetot. Sophie promised to take his sons to dine with her at Jefferson's villa every Sunday afternoon.⁸⁹

Upon Crèvecoeur's return to America, he presented Washington with a gift of the three-volume 1787 edition of his book, dedicated to the general. Ethan Allen arranged for Vermont to grant honorary citizenship to Crèvecoeur and to name the town of St. Johnsbury after him. Fanny St. John came to live with her father in his house on New York City's Maiden Lane.⁹⁰

In April 1789, Washington assumed the presidency of the new nation, followed by the first debates in the Senate over how to address the chief executive, with partisans for "His gracious Excellency" almost getting into fistfights with Senators of a populist bent.⁹¹ The astounding news of the French Revolution arriving in September 1789 via one of

85 Robert, *ibid.* pp. 109–14.

86 Lafayette arrived August 1784 on the *Courrier de l'Europe*, receiving honorary citizenship in New York before travelling to Fort Stanwix and Boston. Auricchio, *op. cit.* pp. 107, 121, 126; Bennett, *op. cit.* pp. 368. New Haven granted Crèvecoeur honorary citizenship as did Hartford on February 22, 1785 to Crèvecoeur and Lafayette. Robert, *op. cit.* pp. 112–14. See also 1787 *Lettres*, *op. cit.* Vol. III, pp. 314–80.

87 Robert, *ibid.*

88 Robert, *op. cit.* p. 115. Crèvecoeur's paper on the American locust (acacia) tree was presented to the Royal Academy of Agriculture in 1786. The American Philosophical Society accepted Crèvecoeur as a member on January 16, 1789 upon John Paul Jones' nomination. *Ibid.* pp. 122–27; 139.

89 Robert, *op. cit.* pp. 118–136.

90 Robert, *op. cit.* pp. 137, 139. In 1788 Fanny was visiting Col. Wadsworth's family in Hartford; she was brought back to New York by Gen. Henry Knox and his niece. Mitchell, *op. cit.* pp. 276–279. Henry Knox's brother William wrote to Wadsworth in Nov. 1788: "I beg you to tender my best compliments to Mrs. Wadsworth, your son and young ladies and tell Miss Crèvecoeur, that we are all anxious to have her return again to N. York and that she must not fail to hold herself in readiness to embrace the opportunity of coming with my brother and niece, who will certainly leave Boston next week." Henry Knox wrote from Boston on Nov. 16, 1788: "Mrs. Knox has written to me that it is Mr. St. John's desire I should escort his daughter Miss St. John from y'r house to New York – This I shall do with pleasure...."

91 McCullough, *op. cit.* pp. 402–08.

Crèvecoeur's ships divided American politicians even more, with conservatives like John Adams deploring the excesses of the mob and rejection of God ("I cannot imagine a nation of thirty millions of atheists") and republicans like Ambassador Jefferson in France dismissing the severing of heads and spilling of blood in furtherance of social equality and the new Age of Reason.⁹²

America-Frances St. John de Crèvecoeur took her wedding vows with French chargé d'affaires Louis-Guillaume Otto at St. Peter's Chapel on April 13, 1790.⁹³ Thomas Jefferson attended, as did others from the upper echelons of society and government.⁹⁴ At the time, Louis XVI was still king of France, although confined to the Louvre Palace in Paris, and the French Assembly was debating the draft of the new Constitution and the Rights of Man modeled by Lafayette on the Declaration of Independence. To most Americans, the future of France as a constitutional monarchy seemed assured. Only John Adams and Edmund Burke in London predicted with terrible accuracy the dictatorship soon to come.⁹⁵

Crèvecoeur was recalled to France in June 1790, while Fanny's husband was ordered to return in late 1792.⁹⁶ They disembarked into a country torn asunder by Danton's coup d'état and the Paris mob's overthrow of the king and the Convention, as the Assembly was then called. Danton was now dictator and his ally Jean-Paul Marat proceeded in September 1792 to have the Paris Commune butcher thousands of priests, nuns, and ordinary citizens in the name of the New Humanity.⁹⁷ The Revolutionary intellectuals had even created a new calendar: March, April, and May, for example, were now to be called *Ventôse*, *Germinal*, and *Floréal* or, as a British wit commented, Breezy, Wheezy, and Sneezy. But the revolutionaries were not amused by such humor. Replacing the corrupt monarchy and clergy with an enlightened cult based on Reason was a serious matter. Anyone who joked about the new régime was put to death. Even Danton found himself on the guillotine in April 1794, on orders of the new dictator Robespierre, soon to lose his own head. Many of Crèvecoeur's friends, such as the Duke de la Rochefoucauld and Condorcet, perished as well.⁹⁸

92 The news appeared in the New York newspapers on September 19, 1789. For the reaction of Adams and Edmund Burke, see McCullough, *ibid.* pp. 416-421. For Jefferson's reaction, see Brodie, Fawn M. *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate Portrait* (W.W. Norton and Company 1998) p. 241.

93 Robert, *op. cit.* p. 163-64. Louis-Guillaume Otto was born in Strasbourg in 1754. As a rising young diplomat he married Elizabeth Livingston, daughter of Pierre van Brugh Livingston and sister of Mrs. Sarah Livingston Jay. Elizabeth died in childbirth on December 17, 1787. *Ibid.*

94 Robert, *op. cit.* pp. 163-64. Jeremiah Wadsworth was Commissary to the Continental Army in 1778 and to Rochambeau in 1779 and later a Congressman. Purell, L. Edward. *Who Was Who in the American Revolution* (New York: Facts on File, Inc. 1993) p. 491.

95 McCullough, *op. cit.* n. 113.

96 Crèvecoeur left New York on May 31, 1790, on his ship *Washington*, never to return. Otto and Fanny arrived in France in December 1792. Robert, *op. cit.* p. 164, 173.

97 Loomis, Stanley. *Paris in the Terror, June 1793 - July 1794* (Lippincott 1964) pp. 73-83.

98 *Ibid.* pp. 84-97; 305-21; 390-403; Boshier, J.F. *The French Revolution* (New York: W.W. Norton 1998) Chronology pp. xxvi-liv. See also Hibbert, Christopher. *The Days of the French Revolution* (New York: William Morrow and Company 1981) pp. 136-46, 166-179, 216-44. Sophie and husband survived the Terror; as did Lafayette who fled into exile. Auricchio, *op. cit.* pp. 265-87.

Fanny's husband was thrown into prison, for reasons not known today—and perhaps not known even then. Thousands of people were imprisoned for simply not smiling politely enough at their neighborhood Committee chairman or for declining to let the gentleman flirt with his wife. Somehow, Louis-Guillaume Otto obtained his freedom after Robespierre's fall in July 1794 and the end of the Reign of Terror. He resumed a high position in the diplomatic corps and, in London in 1801, negotiated the Treaty of Amiens between England and France. He was posted to Munich before Napoleon sent him to Vienna as Ambassador to Austria in 1809.⁹⁹ Crèvecoeur lived with Otto and Fanny before dying in 1813. Fanny passed away at the age of fifty-three in 1823.¹⁰⁰

Ally had died in 1806 in Normandy, to the intense grief of his father. Louis-Philippe, after trying his hand at farming in Pennsylvania, wound up serving in Napoleon's army. He died in 1850, leaving Fanny's son Robert to write his grandfather's biography.¹⁰¹

Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur and America-Frances were never again to see the place he once called their little paradise in Blooming Grove. How many people who today drive by Pine Hill and the small, decrepit stone smokehouse know that once upon a time there lived on that spot a French gentleman and his daughter with the poetic name, memories faded away like the epitaphs on the gravestones of their neighbors nearby.

St. John's own family name was no less poetic—and prophetic. For Crèvecoeur, in French, means “heart-breaker.”

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⁹⁹ Robert, *op. cit.* p. 163; 222; 233; 277.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 278, 288.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* pp. 209; 231; 275; 288.

From Washingtonville to the Western Front

Matthew Thorenz



Portrait of David Wright Hudson in uniform, c.1917. All images courtesy of the Moffat Library of Washingtonville. These and other photographs from the First World War and David's family can be accessed on the Moffat Library's digital collections page on Hudson River Valley Heritage: (<https://www.hrvh.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/mlw>)

Beginning in June 1917, David Wright Hudson, a soldier from Washingtonville, Orange County, started keeping a written record of his experiences during the First World War. Like pieces of a puzzle, his letters home to his family provide lengthy descriptions of his personal experiences from raw recruit to experienced sergeant, while his diary records his unit's daily actions. These documents, along with his uniform and other keepsakes, were lovingly curated by David's sister, Clara, herself a Red Cross volunteer during the war, until her death in 2002 at the age of 103. These items were then donated to the Moffat Library of Washingtonville, where they are currently being transcribed, examined, and cataloged to share David's story with historians, schoolchildren, and the general public.

Born on June 29, 1893, to William J. Hudson and Grace A. Hudson, David was the second oldest of five children, the others being Ethel, Clara, Reeves, and Alma. He spent most of his time helping his father on the family dairy farm, located off Hudson Road. He never attended school, although he was educated to read and write. Washingtonville at the turn of the century can be considered a typical farming community. In 1910, the population numbered 664 inhabitants, and along with "Farmer," other occupations included "Wagoner," "Blacksmith," and "Poultryman." Although Washingtonville appeared far removed from the war that was waging over 3,000 miles away, by April 1917 many young men from Orange County would enlist to fight in a conflict that had already claimed the lives of thousands.¹

¹ McLaughlin, Edward J., III. *Around the Watering Trough: A History of Washingtonville*. Washingtonville, NY: Washingtonville Centennial Celebration Inc., 1994. Ancestry.com. 1910 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006.

When the United States officially declared war on April 6, 1917, it was clear the World War had arrived in Washingtonville, and David wanted to be a part of it. That month, the Seventy-first New York National Guard was deployed from New York City to the Hudson River Valley to guard railway lines and bridges from threats of German sabotage; Company M of the Seventy-first was stationed in “Moodna, near Washingtonville,” while the Machine Gun Company was stationed in nearby Salisbury Mills.² On April 4, 1917, New York Governor Charles Whitman authorized the creation of home defense corps in municipalities throughout the state. Two months later, local residents Isaac and Alfred Nicoll formed the Washingtonville Home Defense Corps, which provided military training to forty-five to fifty local men who were unable to serve due to age, health, or other obligations. A local chapter of the American Red Cross also was established, and David’s sisters Clara and Ethel became members. David would eventually enlist in the regular army at Fort Slocum, New York, on June 23, 1917.³



Hudson Family photograph that David kept with him during his service (rear, left to right: Sarah Alma Hudson, Ethel Hudson, Clara Hudson. Front, left to right: William J. Hudson, Phoebe Wright, Grace Alma Hudson. Sitting: Reeves Hudson)

Located off Long Island Sound in New Rochelle, Fort Slocum was one of the first stops an enlistee would make on his way to becoming a doughboy. Between 1917 and 1919, 140,000 recruits from New York, New Jersey, New England, and Pennsylvania were processed and assigned to training from this post; one of those young men was David Wright Hudson.⁴ “Dear Aunt Phoebe...You need not worry, for I am here safe, with thousands of others under the stars & stripes...I am sleeping in a tent with 9 other fellows, from Boston, Hartford, and New York; this camp is the center of all the Eastern state.”⁵

2 Sutcliffe, Robert Stewart. *Seventy-First New York in the World War*. New York, NY: J.J. Little & Ives Co., 1922.

3 Moffat, David H., *Letter to David Wright Hudson*. Washingtonville, NY: October 28, 1917. New York State Archives, Ancestry.com. *New York, World War I Veterans' Service Data, 1913–1919* [database online]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

4 “The Army’s Century on David’s Island.” Digital Collections. 2016. <http://davidsisland.westchesterarchives.org/>.

5 Hudson, David W., *Letter to Phoebe Wright*. Fort Slocum, NY: July 2, 1917.

Despite the completion of twenty new buildings (including barracks, a mess hall, and hospital) several years prior, the camp soon found itself unable to cope with the large influx of recruits. David and his comrades had to sleep in tents until proper accommodations could be found: *"The recruits are coming in by the 500 a day, the island is pretty thickly populated, it is a site to see them all on camp at drill."* The island became so filled with troops that in December 1917, when a total 8,000 recruits were being trained, the inadequate housing forced many to sleep in local churches, schools, and homes until additional barracks were constructed.⁶ In a letter dated July 3, 1917, David wrote to his sister Clara "the island is so crowded they are sending them away by the 300 at once." The United States would send roughly 4.8 million men into the First World War as members of the Army, Navy, or other armed services; 367,864 came from New York, the most of any one state, and many of those young men passed through the grounds of Fort Slocum.⁷

By late July, David was assigned to Company L, Sixth U.S. Infantry Regiment of the Fifth Infantry Division, and transferred to Chickamauga Park, Georgia, where he received his formal military training. His letters from July 1917 to April 1918 describe the strict training many doughboys received before being transferred overseas.⁸ On July 30, 1917, David wrote: *"I have had a week and a half of training with the manual of arms, I like it for I pay attention to all the commands, several of the fellows think they know it all, and the Lieutenant jumps on them pretty hard."*⁹ One month later, he moved from rifle drill to the firing range. In an August 19 letter to his sister Ethel he writes: *"We have completed our rifle range, which we have been working on for a month. Last Thursday we had our first try out shooting our rifles. We are shooting the regular army ammunition, and every time a charge is fired it was like a cannon."*¹⁰ When he wasn't shooting, David was helping to score targets in the camp's firing trench, which gave him a small taste of trench life: *"The trench is 5 ft. wide and 144 ft. long. The back wall is 5 ft. deep with a shelf 3 ft. wide by 3 ft. deep, the front wall is 8 ft. deep to which the targets are fastened every 9 ft. apart...believe me those bullets do hum over our heads, and when they hit the ground the dirt flies as though it was a blast."*¹¹ In addition to drill and marksmanship, David also participated in long marches with his unit and learned the importance of maintaining his kit in the field. On September 20, he wrote to his brother Reeves: *"Thursday we made up a full pack consisting of one blanket, one poncho, a shelter half, one set of under ware, soap, comb, tooth brush, 2 pairs of socks, one towel, mesket, meat-can, canteen, and spade or small shovel."*¹²

6 Special to *The New York Times*. (1917, Dec 15). "RECRUITS SWAMP NEW ROCHELLE," *New York Times* (1857–1922) [database online].

7 Hallas, James H., ed. *Doughboy War: The American Expeditionary Force in WWI*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2009, pp. 9–10.

8 David belonged to the 6th U.S. Infantry Regiment of the 5th Infantry Division. The size of a typical U.S. infantry regiment at the time of World War One was around 3,000 officers and enlisted men. A Division consisted of several regiments of infantry, artillery, and support units grouped together, and totaling between 8,000 and 30,000 men.

9 Hudson, D.W., *Letter to Grace Alma Hudson*. Chattanooga, TN: July 30, 1917.

10 Hudson, D.W., *Letter to Ethel Hudson*. Chattanooga, TN: August 19, 1917.

11 *Ibid.*

12 Hudson, D.W., *Letter to Reeves Hudson*. Chattanooga, TN: September 20, 1917.

David's letters from Chickamauga Park also highlight the United States' inability to supply an unprecedented number of new recruits with proper uniforms and equipment. In late February 1917, the War College Division was told by five supply departments that it would take nine to twelve months for one million recruits to receive clothing and twelve months for small arms and equipment. On July 30, 1917, David wrote: "*The Government is backward on issuing clothes on account of the rush. I only have one pair of shoes they have to answer for every day and... One outside shirt, one pair of leggings so it keeps me washing and scrubbing twice a week if the weather is wet or rainy. I have plenty of underflannels. I don't mean to have you send any clothing for they are going to issue us more in a few days.*"¹³

Despite the lack of proper clothing and equipment he received, the one thing not lacking in David's initial training was vaccinations. By 1900, smallpox vaccinations were mandatory in many public schools throughout the United States, and by 1915, vaccines for typhoid and whooping cough had become available for the U.S. market.¹⁴ The success of vaccines in treating typhoid was not lost on the U.S. military, which made them mandatory in 1911 for all personnel. In July 1917, David wrote: "*Well mammy you will have to tell Doctor, that I have had six inoculations so far expect another to day [sic]. I had 2 at Fort Slocum for typhoid in the right shoulder, they told me they cost \$50 each. Have had 4 inoculations in the left arm that cost \$25 each and also have had three vaccinations and none of them took. By the time they get through, I will be able to stand all kinds of diseases.*" As a result of these inoculations, only 156 deaths from typhoid were reported out of over four million officers and enlisted men who served in the U.S. military during World War I.¹⁵

By the time the U.S. declared war on Germany in April 1917, Europe had been at war for nearly three years. In the period between August 1914 and April 1917, the war on the Western Front had changed from one of movement and offense to defense, undermining, and frontal assaults. In addition to high-powered rifles, soldiers now had to compete with machine guns, airplanes, and poisoned gas. To prepare U.S. soldiers for this new way of war, French and British veterans were sent to U.S. training camps to act as training officers. David mentions meeting one of these liaisons in a letter to his brother Reeves in February 1918:

I was down to the Y.M.C.A. one night and Sergeant Harrington from the British Army spoke on Trench and Gas life, who was in the trenches and on "No Mans land" spoke to a large audience. He began by saying that the British Army was very strick with the discipline of the soldiers, and second on entering the trenches. No smoking allowed...the reason was for at night when ever a match is lite or a cigarette it can be seen and would aid the enemy to locate our soldiers. third on

13 Hallas, *Doughboy War*, p. 24. Hudson, D.W., *Letter to Grace Alma Hudson*, Chattanooga, TN: July 30, 1917.

14 Hillstrom, Kevin. "The History of Vaccination." In *Vaccines*, 11–35. Nutrition & Health. Detroit: Lucent Books, 2013. Gale Virtual Reference Library (accessed April 30, 2017). [database online]

15 "Results of Antityphoid Vaccination in the World's Armies." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 76, no. 23 (June 4, 1921): 1576–1577.



Group photo of an excursion of U.S. Soldiers in the army of occupation to a French village (c.1919)

*entering the front line trenches no talking above a wisper...Then he spoke of making attacks with the Germans, as to what cowards they were when you meet them face to face, and you have the advantage of them, they drop their guns, and get on their knees and pray for mercy as to their poor wife and children, but take no pity and do your worst as to the distruction done in Belgium by them.*¹⁶

By April 1918, nearly a year after the U.S. officially declared war on Germany, David and thousands of his fellow soldiers were being shipped to Europe. On April 6, he wrote to his mother from Roanoke, Virginia, “We are not allowed to say much, but we are leaving for somewhere in France...it won’t take us long for we show the Kaiser how the Yankey boy come through.” By April 23, David had arrived in Brest after having “A splendid trip across” and gleefully reported to his mother: “I was lucky I was not sick at all, and had a good appetite.”¹⁷ *The Official History of the Fifth Infantry Division in the First World War (1917–1919)* concurs: “The journey overseas was accomplished without incident. Most all of the troops sailed in convoys guarded by cruisers and destroyers,” although several U-boats were sighted and a collision between *The Huron* and another ship did create some minor drama.¹⁸ David had another reason to be happy: “our Mess Sergeant of Company L had been left in the states for the present time. Our Captain J.W. Leonard of 6th Inf appointed your

16 Hudson, D.W., *Letter to Reeves Hudson*. Chattanooga, TN: February 8, 1918.

17 Hudson, D.W., *Letter to Grace Alma Hudson*. Brest, France, July 8, 1918.

18 *The Official History of the Fifth Division, U.S.A. During the Period of its Organization and of its Operations in the European World War 1917–1919*. Washington, DC: The Society of the Fifth Division, 1919, p. 55.

son D.W. Hudson as Mess Sergt. So I am wearing the three stripes on my right arm.” As such, David, and the four cooks and two student cooks under his direction were responsible for creating menus and preparing food for the 120 men of his company.

From Brest, the Fifth Infantry Division established its headquarters at Bar-sur-Aube, France. David’s diary notes that he travelled by train on “boxcars” to this location on April 28.¹⁹ On May 18, the divisional history records, the Tenth Brigade consisting of the Sixth and Eleventh infantry received their national and regimental colors from the granddaughter of Marechal MacMahon, the former president of the Third Republic, and a descendant of the Comte de Rochambeau, the French general who helped the American colonies win their independence during the American Revolution. In late May, David’s diary records that “our Sixth inf. passed in review of General Pershing.”²⁰ Pershing had previously won praise for his conduct in the Indian Wars, the Spanish-American War, and, most recently, the punitive expedition against Mexican rebel Pancho Villa. By 1917, he was in charge of a 1.2-million man army and had earned some controversy for not allowing his units to be broken up and sent to replenish the depleted forces of America’s French and British allies.

Shortly after passing in review of the commander in chief of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF), David’s unit was sent to its first assignment at Pagny-sur-Meuse, where it formed the reserve for the Twenty-sixth “Yankee” Division, which had been serving in France since September 1917. Here David learned how to use a gas mask, and the ways of trench warfare: “All during the week it was clear weather and very hot during noon time. We had our usual schedule every day of inspection in the morning and drilling all day both with gasmask and helmets on, besides one hour with our gasmasks on. The joke of all was at the time tho’ it was necessary when we went in action, was that the cooks had to cook with their gasmask, and when it came to sweeten the coffee they would dip in the salt instead of the sugar.”²¹



David Hudson (in cap and apron)
with his assistant cooks (c.1917)

19 Hudson, D.W., “Diary.” April 1918 – June 1919.

20 *Ibid.*

21 Hudson, D.W., *Letter to Alma Hudson*. July 1919.

Although David was a mess sergeant, preparing meals for the men of his company, he was not far from the front lines. His diary notes that on June 1, while stationed at Trousey, a mere thirty miles from the front lines, *"I first had my opportunity to see an anti-aircraft gun and witness the operation on a hun plain."*²² He would later describe this experience in a letter to his sister Alma in July 1919: *"A year ago we were at a place called Trousey France...A year ago to day we were out in the field drilling and on the hill was an anti-aircraft gun operated by the French and the day was a clear one so the Bosh took advantage and came sailing over when all at once to my astonishment a fog horn sounded and the gun was in operation. We at once fell to the ground and I never felt so small as I did then as that was my first experience."*²³

Little did he know, but David was witnessing the final moments of Germany's "Spring Offensive" (March 21 – July 18, 1918), the German army's last attempt to break the allied lines before the full-scale entry of the United States. The offensive ended up taking the lives of nearly 700,000 German and over 800,000 French and British soldiers. David's division suffered several losses during this closing offensive, including an officer and private of the Eleventh Infantry killed by shell fire on the first night their division entered the trenches at Romagne-sous-Montfaucon; thirty men of Company G, Sixtieth Infantry, who were killed, wounded, or gassed when their dugout was shelled on June 17; and the capture of the First Sergeant of Company G, Sixth Infantry, after David's unit rejoined the division on June 23. That day David wrote in his diary, *"We were on a hike to the trenches, our first experience."*²⁴ Over a week later, on July 4, he entered the front lines: *"on the 4th of July myself with the sixth Inf entered the trenches for the first time Oh! but it was frightful, to hear the shell whirling through the air that was a real 4th never again!"*²⁵

Nearly a century after the fact, no letter, diary entry, or photograph can give a reader a true sense of what combat was like during the First World War: the fear one feels when a high explosive shell impacts an earthen trench, the dread of hearing the whirring of airplanes (a technology then only fourteen years old) dropping bombs and strafing helpless troops on the ground as they attempted to defend themselves, and the odors of poisoned gas, which killed many in a matter of minutes and affected survivors for years after. However, the letters and diary kept by David during the war's closing months give a glimpse of the hell many soldiers experienced and how they coped with the dangerous situations they were thrust into. On June 24, just one day after entering the front lines, he noted: *"Stayed in all night in woods carrying gasmask at alert."*²⁶ Five days later he wrote: *"spent my birthday at this place, had huckleberry pie."*²⁷ David also went "over the top" on August 17, when his company, along with company M, Sixth U.S. Infantry, led the assault

22 Hudson, D.W., "Diary." June 1, 1918.

23 Hudson, D.W., *Letter to William J. Hudson.* June 4, 1919.

24 Hudson, D.W., "Diary." June 23, 1918.

25 Hudson, D.W., *Postcard.* July 4, 1919.

26 Hudson, D.W., "Diary." June 24, 1918.

27 Hudson, D.W., "Diary." June 29, 1918.

on Hill 451 and the village of Frappelle.²⁸ His kitchen was shelled by German artillery during an unsuccessful counterattack two days later.²⁹

Airplanes, as noted, played an important role for both sides as artillery spotters and support for ground assaults. However, in addition to delivering bombs, bullets, and intelligence, David Wright Hudson also noted a more peaceful use of military aircraft during this period: “One clear day while we were cooking dinner we noticed an aeroplain circling over our heads, and all the time desending to the ground. then all at once when he was near down came a bundle of papers, so this is the way news papers is distributed over the battlefield to the soldiers, We get the New York Herald “Paris Times.”³⁰

Black humor and thoughts of home were also common ways many soldiers dealt with the strain of combat and horrors of war. An interesting passage in David’s diary is a list called “Force of Habit; or a few mistakes discharged soldiers will make after the war,” in which he lists “Ducking in a manhole cover if a siren sounds,” “Reaching for a gas mask while passing an onion field,” and “Saluting, or saying “Sir” when addressing his wife” as common after-effects of combat stress.³¹ After the St. Mihiel offensive, in which over a half-million (mostly American) troops, 419 American tanks, and 1,481 aircraft led a three-pronged attack on 55,000 Germans in what was to be the AEF’s crucible, David’s letter to his brother Reeves is mostly filled with questions: if the apples and nuts have been harvested, how the family car is handling. He also related that the French have “plenty of goats, they depend on them to make cheese from their milk...but the young ones run and scamper about while grazing through the fields.”³²

Following the success of the St. Mihiel attacks, the Americans pushed the Germans further east into the Meuse-Argonne, where the final offensive of the First World War would take place. During the first phase of this offensive, on September 29, Washingtonville native Sergeant Chadwick Gerow of Company B, 105th Infantry, lost his life, his being one of only three recorded deaths of local soldiers, and the only death in combat.³³ David went “over the top” on October 14 and again on November 4, but it was clear the German army was spent from four years of hard fighting and dwindling supplies. On October 24, 1918, David wrote to his father: “We have had some frosty mornings, but nothing for it to kill over here, as we are killing all the Germans and gaining ground... Their was a pretty strong talk [in the newspapers] of peace for a while, I guess it will take a nother note as Aunt Pheobe says.” That “other note” would come nearly two weeks later on November 11, 1918 with the

28 Hudson, D.W., “Diary.” August 17, 1918.

29 Hudson, D.W., “Diary.” August 19, 1918.

30 Hudson, D.W., *Letter to William J. Hudson*. October 24, 1918.

31 Hudson, D.W., “Diary.” pp. 15–16.

32 Hudson, D.W., *Letter to Reeves Hudson*. September 26, 1918.

33 “Roll Of Honor: Citizens Of The State Of New York Who Died While In The Service Of The United States During The World War.” New York World War One Units NY State Unit History Project. May 22, 2013. <https://dmna.ny.gov/historic/reghist/wwi/>.

announcement of a cease fire at 11 am. David noted this occasion in his diary as simply “Jametz, November 11, Armistice was signed at 11 o’clock.”³⁴

Despite the armistice, it would take nearly a year for peace negotiations to finally end the war. During this time, the AEF began to occupy key German cities to receive prisoners and enemy material, and to strengthen the allied position heading into the peace talks in Paris. In late November, David wrote to his Aunt Phoebe from Spinecourt, France: “At this place that we are staying is on the main road from Belgium to Verdun and I see hundreds of prisoners that have been freed going home. I had the oppertunity [sic] one day last week to see the President Raymond Poincare of France who visited the liberated region of the Meuse valley.”³⁵ By December 1, David’s unit was ordered to Trier, considered the “Gateway to Germany.” In his diary he noted: “The first day of Dec. Our Regiment and the First Army consisting 26 Inf. with their light art. Battery were the first troop to cross the W Luxemburg-Deutschland Bridge on German soil at 10 O clock Our regiment Crossed the bridge and marched 11 KM. to Trieses the oldest City in Germany. 75 Ger[man] inhabitants. Reached our final objective of our six day hike at 2 Oclock. For supper I had, Corned Beef, Baked beans, boiled potatoes, bread and coffee. I had stake and fried potatoes.”³⁶

As the peace delegates met in Paris to discuss the fate of Germany and her allies, 200 miles away in Beaune, France, the YMCA was preparing the men of the AEF for civilian life. In March 1919, the former military hospital received its first 1,000 doughboys as students to a university dedicated to teaching courses from basic reading and writing to agriculture.³⁷ David Hudson became one of its first students, attending the nutritional school in March and a three-week agricultural course at Allery in April. Here he learned how to cut beef and prepare recipes. He also applied his skills as a farmer to aid French civilians replowing fields torn apart by four years of war. On March 17, David wrote to his father: “Today I was out for a short hike through the country and noticed most of the farmers are out in the fields ploughing and preparing the ground for puting in spring crops. . . I noticed over here they still use the old Roman style of work their animals, instead of hitching up two horses in a team, they work them single file or one hitch one ahead of the other, probably they have adopted this system since the period of war in case of a stray shell coming over or bombs from aeroplanes which would aid in many case to save the animals life, just as we marched on our way for the front or going through a heavy shell fire.”³⁸ David’s letters from this period convey a sense of how Europe had changed and how the U.S. had begun to rise in international prominence: “[Our companies] have handled a large quantity of food products which all comes from the Rich U.S. Farmers. So therefore the European nations of the day are living on the edge of starvation patiently waiting for the resources and products from the Great U.S. Farmers.” These images

34 Hudson, D.W., “Diary.” October 14 – November 11, 1918.

35 Hudson, D.W., *Letter to Phoebe Wright*. November 24, 1918.

36 Hudson, D.W., “Diary.” December 1, 1918.

37 Library of Congress. *The stars and stripes, March 7, 1919*. Paris, France, March 7, 1918. Newspaper. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/20001931/1919-03-07/ed-1/>. (Accessed May 09, 2017.)

38 Hudson, D.W. *Letter to William J. Hudson*. March 17, 1919.



David Hudson in dress uniform (c.1918)

of U.S. prosperity contrasted with descriptions of starving civilians, leading David to write: *"I knew what to expect around the kitchen as I several times had the experience through France of the Children and the aged women making their daily visit during each meal time to gather up all waste and scrap around and about the kitchen."* By the time the school closed in late May, David wrote: *"I am very much indevered to say this is one of the greatest oportunities [sic] that I will ever have again to hear lectures from many of our prominent and educational men of the United States speak in France...I have heard representatives from different European countries speak. Those of France, Belgium, England Wales and Canada. All the lectures delivered by these great men were based on Agriculture and co'operation."*³⁹

Despite a brief scare of redeployment in early June, on account of Germany's reluctance to sign the Treaty of Versailles, peace was finally declared on June 28, 1919. David and the rest of the Fifth Division returned to the

United States in early July, and were encamped at Camp Upton, New York. His sister Clara wrote that *"On the 24th [of July] I went to Hempstead [Long Island] saw my brother who I hadn't seen in a year and it didn't seem possible to think he had been across in this terrible fight and came back without a scratch on him. It seemed more like a dream."*⁴⁰ Out of the two million men of the AEF sent over to France since the spring of 1917, over 300,000 were killed or wounded by the summer of 1919, including the three men from Washingtonville.⁴¹

Although David returned from the war unscathed, he lived with its memories for a lifetime. After his discharge, he returned to his family's farm. Three years after entering the trenches at Meuse-Argonne, David married Susan Mae Brown on September 7, 1921, and together they had four children. In 1920, David was a guest of honor at the Blooming Grove Congregational Church for the unveiling of a new memorial window, which listed him among the area soldiers who had served in the war. In the early 1940s, he met with an unfortunate accident when he was struck by a car. He survived but would walk with

39 Hudson, D.W. *Letter to Grace Alma Hudson*. May 11, 1919.

40 Hudson, Clara. *"Diary."* July 24, 1919.

41 DeBruyne, Nese F. *American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics*. Congressional Research Service, 2017, p. 2.

difficulty for the rest of his life. He eventually took up work at a rubber plant in Beacon, and was a participant in a local chapter of the World War I Veterans Association. He died in 1971 at the age of 78. He never spoke about the war to his children. In a phone interview with David's daughter Ruth in 2014, she was even unaware he had kept a diary.

There is a saying that "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away." However, they never truly fade away. They are stored in photo albums and scrapbooks kept in attics and basements, and preserved in libraries and archives. They are here in what they have left behind—letters, photos, diaries, uniforms, and souvenirs—and they will never fade away so long as we continue to uncover their stories, and share them with families, friends, and scholars. What David kept silent during his lifetime he shared with us after his death. His effects shed light on a soldier who served in one of the most violent and monumental events in world history, and for that we invite others to listen to his words and uncover many other stories that help us better understand the life and times of the U.S. doughboy.

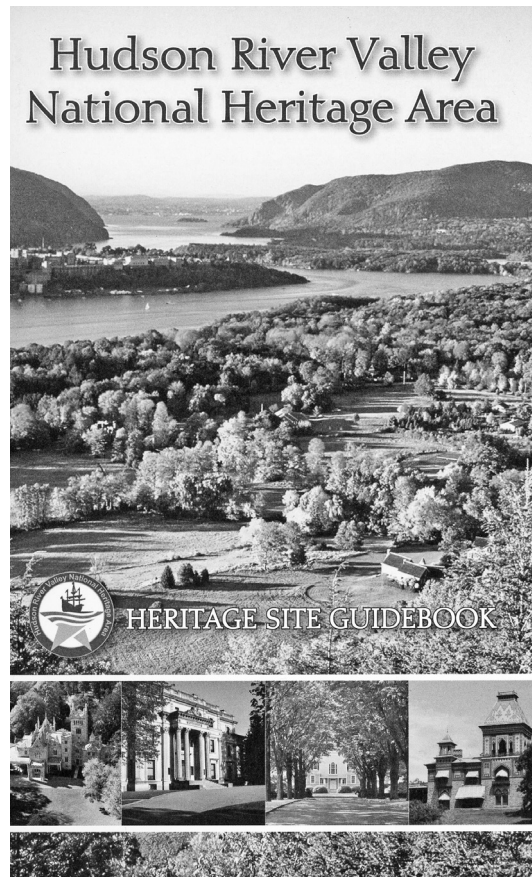
Matthew Thorenz is head of Reference and Adult Services at the Moffat Library of Washingtonville, and currently oversees the library's collection of local history materials.

A Hudson River Valley Greenway (Part Two)

Barnabas McHenry

Part one of this article chronicled the Hudson River Valley Greenway¹ from the 1980 bright promises of Governor Mario Cuomo, Laurance S. Rockefeller, and Henry Diamond to New Year's Eve 1991, when Governor Cuomo signed the Greenway into law. Governor Mario Cuomo had first endorsed the notion of a Hudson River Valley Greenway in a public meeting in Staatsburg on Arbor Day, 1989. This concluding article spans the years from that first day of January of 1992 to the close of 2017, the first twenty-five years of the Greenway. It ends in the second term of the second Governor Cuomo, Mario's son Andrew. Included are three terms of the Greenway advocate George Pataki (January 1995 to December 2006).² While the exuberance and expectations of the Rockefeller/Diamond era did not survive, the Greenway does survive and occasionally prospers. Some would agree that many of the "bright promises" have been fulfilled.

There was a study published just before the Greenway Act was signed into law by Governor Mario Cuomo, and it is an interesting part of the Greenway history. In *Greenways for America* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), Charles Little, a renowned



The Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area's
Heritage Site Guidebook

1 W.H. "Holly" Whyte was the originator of the name "greenway," which he first used in his 1959 essay, "Saving Open Space for America." Author of *The Organization Man*, Whyte was one of the many prominent conservationists associated with Laurance S. Rockefeller. By 1991, the term greenway had become the common name for these generic programs in the United States.

2 The original 1991 sponsors of the Hudson River Valley Greenway included three prominent Republicans, George Pataki (then a New York State Assemblyman) and New York State Senators Steve Saland and Bill Larkin.

chronicler of land conservation, wrote that the Hudson River Valley Greenway was the “most ambitious greenway project in America,” but he doubted whether it could ever be more than a “paper project—a greenway only by declaration”! He describes seventeen effective greenways located from Oregon to Connecticut, but with respect to the Hudson River Valley Greenway he identified the paradox that while the local governments in the Hudson Valley might embrace the notion they would never surrender their planning (especially zoning) powers to a state commission. Little is correct, and from the days of Rockefeller and Diamond’s progressive notions to our existing metropolitan mess, river mavens preached and pleaded for New York State legislation. Most prominent was Klara Sauer of Poughkeepsie, who in 1985 began promoting a *heritage corridor*. Charles Little credits Klara Sauer for much of the continuing intellectual support for the Greenway, but many would agree that Henry Diamond deserves that honor. However, all agree that Klara’s efforts in the Storm King/Scenic Hudson campaign were Olympian and her courage won many hearts in the Highlands.

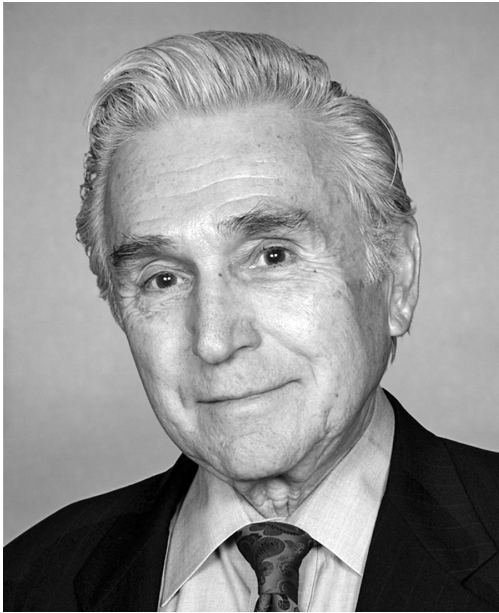
In early 1992, the Greenway began to take shape because of the encouragement and participation of Governor Mario Cuomo. David Sampson, who had worked with Henry Diamond on New York conservation projects, was hired to organize the Greenway—a job for which he was eminently qualified.

The Greenway is now celebrating its quarter century (1992–2017), and this article recounts its successes and failures. Although it was never possible to fashion the Greenway into the vigorous regional planning powerhouse envisioned by Rockefeller and Diamond, the question now before us is whether the vigorous Hudson River Valley planning tiger became a regional pussycat?

The argument of this article is that the Greenway now constitutes an effective compact (for lack of a precise legal equivalent) among the Hudson River Valley’s counties: Albany, Rensselaer, Columbia, Greene, Ulster, Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Westchester, Bronx, and New York. The Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area does not legally include Greene and Columbia counties, and it stops at Yonkers; however, for all practical purposes, we have a Hudson River Valley arrangement for half of the river—the navigable half—from Albany south to our fair city.

Maurice Hinchey: The Greenway Champion

The tallest tree in the Greenway is universally recognized as the late Maurice Hinchey, even though his complex nature was sometimes at odds with other conservation programs and political leaders. But there should be no question that without Maurice’s leadership, continuous and effective advocacy and sponsorship the Greenway project would never have succeeded. Maurice’s wisdom, foresight, and determination led both Republicans and Democrats to the conclusion that a greenway could be the most reasonable and workable political structure for the creation and operation of a heritage land conservation scheme for the Hudson River Valley.



Congressman Maurice D. Hinchey

Maurice Hinchey was for thirty years the leader and most prominent legislative force for the Greenway in Albany and Washington, and he is credited as a sponsor of both the Greenway and its federal companion, the Hudson River Valley Heritage Area.³

For the purposes of this article, the proper distinction between federal and state legislation and funding is often blurred, and that is just the way that Maurice envisioned the Hudson River Valley Greenway—federal and state, Republican and Democratic. He was always aware of the differences among federal and state jurisdictions, while at the same time encouraging a bipartisan Hudson River philosophy.

Maurice's letters to us about the programs of the Greenway and Heritage Area often

concluded with a phrase such as this, "please accept my comments in the spirit in which they are intended," which can be translated as, "Beware Barney—I'm watching and you aren't doing things quite the way I think they should be done!"

Speed Bumps

Organizational fractures in not-for-profit organizations are often self-inflicted, and in the early years of Greenway they were frequent and nearly fatal.

Some history: When the Greenway was being considered, Larry Rockefeller organized a tour for four New York conservationists to visit California and inspect the remarkable success of its two state-chartered conservation entities. All of the visitors were much impressed with this costal bifurcation of duties and the opportunity to create and staff two organizations and thus engage more supporters. But what works on the gentle Pacific shores created near mayhem in the Hudson Valley. The Greenway Council and the Greenway Conservancy now work as one organization, but in the late 1990s the Conservancy filed what were meant to be separation papers when the newly appointed chair of the Conservancy, Professor Nick Robinson of Pace Law School, chose independence as his guiding model. In a sixty-nine-page Strategic Plan (December 1994), he articulated "concrete

³ Attendance at Hudson River Valley historic sites comes from visitors in cars, and most of this audience receives Social Security checks. Alas, their numbers have declined by about half since the Greenway began. The federal sites on the Hudson, Roosevelt principally, are the attendance exception; their continued success reflects the extraordinary talents of the former National Park Service Superintendent Sarah Olson. Another philosophy, however, is espoused by Dick Jenrette, master of the splendid Hudson River mansion *Edgewater* (1820), who believes that the decline in attendance at historic sites is only generational and that today's primary school students will flock to our Hudson River historic sites when they leave graduate school.

goals,” but these goals almost became cement boots when a few years later Governor George Pataki purged the Conservancy and Council of its founding administrators. The fracture came when in June 2000 Maurice Hinchey unaccountably convened a Greenway meeting in Newburgh without consulting the Pataki administration. Within days, David Sampson, executive director of the Greenway Council and a talented architect of the Greenway, and Maggie Vinciguerra, director of the Conservancy, were separated from the Greenway. The band continued to play on without the advice and assistance of four prominent and diligent non-Republican members who were replaced when they declined to support the dismissal of Conservancy Chair Matt Bender. While Professor Robinson soon returned to his perch in tranquil academia, the Greenway was damaged by the departure of Sampson, who had contributed so successfully to the bipartisan ethos.

In a *New York Times* article on this fateful twentieth of June, Bob Worth (before commencing his extensive and storied journalistic tour in the Near East) chronicled the Greenway dismissals as a “furor on the Hudson.” And indeed, it was that. But the Greenway gradually healed and became the beacon of bipartisan conservation once again.

Also interesting (and amusing, at least in retrospect) were the two absurd and unsuccessful attempts by the Hudson River Estuary Program to assume the legislative powers of the Greenway. Survival and continued independence quickly arrived via the Hudson Valley legislators after frantic pleas for independent survival were recognized as more politically attractive than custody by the lethargic Estuarrians.

Although the furor about Hinchey, Sampson, and Vinciguerra came from the Governor’s office, George Pataki was always a stalwart leader of conservation in New York State, and particularly the Hudson Valley. His record of land conservation is only now matched by Andrew Cuomo’s Empire State Trail.

Greenway Programs

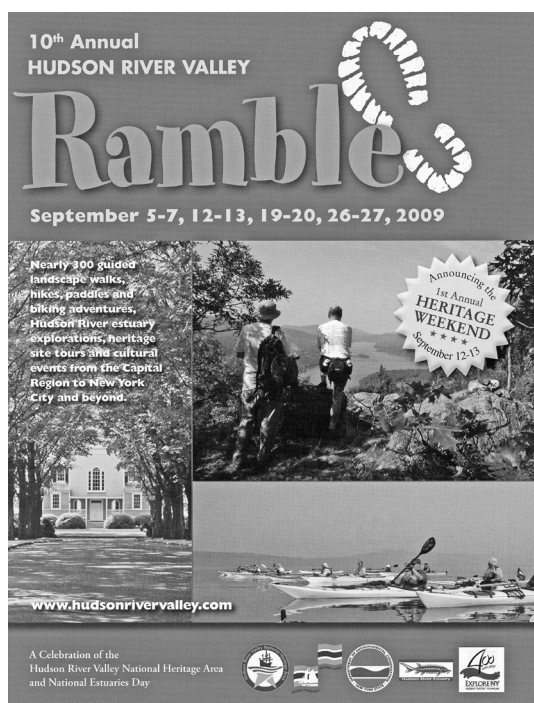
Commencing in the 1990s, a congeries of programs and publications developed out of the evolving framework of the Greenway. Among the surviving and most successful are The Hudson River Valley Institute, Teaching the Hudson Valley, Hudson River Valley Ramble, Greenway Small Grants Program, Heritage Site Guidebook, and Hudson River Trails.

The Hudson River Valley Institute is a program of Marist College at Poughkeepsie, and is the brilliant collaboration of the Vice President of Academic Affairs, Thomas Wermuth, and Professor of Military History, James Johnson, who holds the Frank T. Bumpus Chair in Hudson River Valley History. The institute serves as the academic arm of the Greenway, sponsors a highly regarded regional program, two annual lecture series, and publishes this journal, *The Hudson River Valley Review*, which began at Bard College in 1984.

In his classes over the last eighteen years, Colonel Johnson has taught the American Revolution to Marist students with just the same excitement and detail as he did as Professor of Military History at West Point. But even Colonel Johnson has not been able to solve a continuing and vexing historical conundrum—why is there a near complete absence of

interest in the celebrated Henry Knox Cannon Trail—the extraordinary 1775–76 winter transport of fifty-nine captured cannons from Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain to Dorchester Heights in Boston, where their emplacement forced the jittery Redcoats to abandon Boston to the Continentals. The 250-mile transport by oxen and mules was organized and directed by Henry Knox, then a twenty-five-year-old overweight Boston bookseller with no military background, who survived the Revolution and became President Washington’s first Secretary of War.

Teaching the Hudson Valley began under the aegis of Sarah Olson in 2003, when she was director of the National Park Service sites in the Hudson River Valley, as a summer institute at Marist, again under the supervision of the ubiquitous (then) Dean Thom Wermuth. Sarah’s brilliant notion was to encourage Hudson Valley grade-school teachers to use the National Park Service properties and other historic places in the Hudson River Valley as teaching aids. Early on, she hired Debi Duke, who continues to manage and direct this wonderfully successful program that has provided historical field trip experience (often referred to as “place-based learning”) to about 20,000 teenagers in the Hudson Valley during the school year.



The 2009 Hudson River Valley Ramble guide

Teaching the Hudson Valley is a school program that has been made available for a relative pittance in public education dollars and now even includes K-12 lesson plans. Debi Duke has wisely organized the process so that about half of the grants and programs provide funding for special needs students.

The Hudson River Valley Ramble has become a popular program during its eighteen years of existence, growing fourfold from only twenty-five late-summer activities to three full weekends of events located from Lake Champlain to the Battery in Manhattan. With Greenway funding substantially augmented by local and other state monies, and led by energetic and committed organizers Pat Murphy and Carol Clement, the Ramble has helped, in the words of former Greenway Executive Director Mark Castiglione, “to make the Hudson River Valley a unified tourism

destination.” And one should add that the circulation of the annual Ramble calendar/booklet has succeeded beyond all expectations; it is likely the impetus for “the millions in economic impact” so often claimed in Albany.

The Greenway Small Grants Program began in 1992 with modest funding from bipartisan member items obtained by the same New York State Senators who sponsored the founding legislation. From this modest beginning, the program now makes grants of up to \$10,000 to communities for specific Hudson River projects. Beth Campochiaro of the Greenway staff has the honor of managing this marvel. As Acting Executive Director Scott Keller wryly notes, “Grant money attracts continuing interest in the Greenway.”

The Heritage Site Guidebook (see page 68) was first published a decade ago and is now in a second and revised edition. This handy, 126-page guide to historic sites has a special place in the Greenway saga because of its elegance and integrity. “Elegance” because the format of a single-page illustration and a description is classic guidebook, and “integrity” because the Greenway has made every possible effort to recruit and respect the knowledge of the curators and directors of the 107 historic sites described in the guidebook. A ranking system was initially used but has been abandoned because geography and restroom availability always trumps aesthetics and history. The guidebook sells for \$19.95 and is widely available in the valley and universally acclaimed. Wint Aldrich, dean of Hudson River Valley architectural history, and Dan Jensen of the Greenway staff deserve, and occasionally even receive, credit for this outstanding regional travel guide to historic places.

The Hudson River Trails program, inaugurated by Fran Dunwell of the state Department of Environmental Conservation, is the most ambitious and long-lived of the Greenway projects. These mostly riverside trails extend north 150 miles from Manhattan to Albany and, as has often been noted, they constitute one of the most ambitious trail projects in America. Governor George Pataki added another dimension to the Greenway’s Hudson River Trails in April 2001 when he created and funded the Hudson River Greenway Water Trail. As the title suggests, this is a trail on the river, commencing where the Erie Canal connects with the Hudson and continuing south to Croton-on-Hudson. In 2012, it was designated by the Department of the Interior as one of the first National Water Trails. This Water Trail is the only Greenway project that has not only been enormously successful but also was completed considerably *under budget*. Scott Keller was the guiding genius for the Water Trail, and he did all the “lifting,” as they say in Albany.

The notion of a Hudson River Valley Trail (properly trails, because both the east and west banks have always been the goal) is generally credited to Bob Bendick, then deputy commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. A quarter of a century ago, railroad rights-of-way were being abandoned, and once again the ubiquitous magician Karl Beard of the National Park Service organized the acquisition and transformation of railroad tracks to trails. Fran Dunwell notes that the notion of connecting a string of separate trails and parks would seem to be a “no-brainer,” but she attests that it took a vast amount of work and political pressure to accomplish what Jane Daniels and she have so elegantly completed and documented.

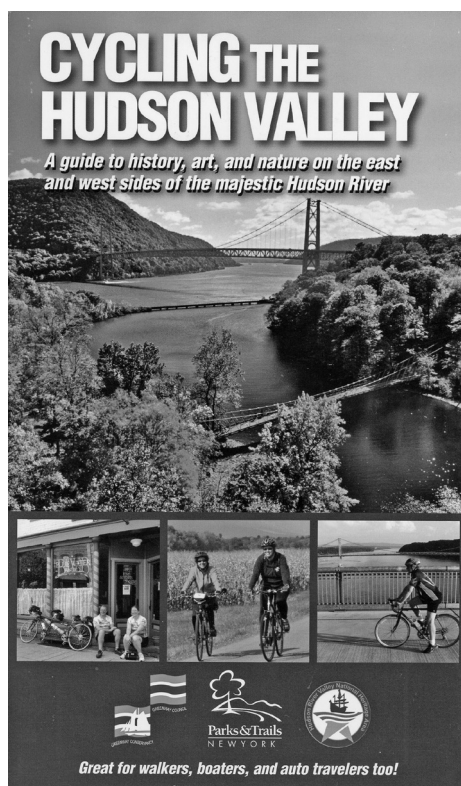
The Hudson River Valley Bicycle Trail was proposed from the first days of the Greenway by Ivan Vamos, then New York State deputy commissioner of Parks, who mapped and encouraged its development. After a quarter century, it is almost complete, with signs and maps.

The first installment of this article ended with the welcome news that the Hudson River Trail has now morphed into the much grander notion of the Empire State Trail in two forms: first west from Albany to Buffalo and, second, north by extension of the Hudson River Valley Trail from New York City to Canada. And *now* the Greenway has been designated as the official state sponsor of this grand notion, with an ample budget for implementation. Huzzah!

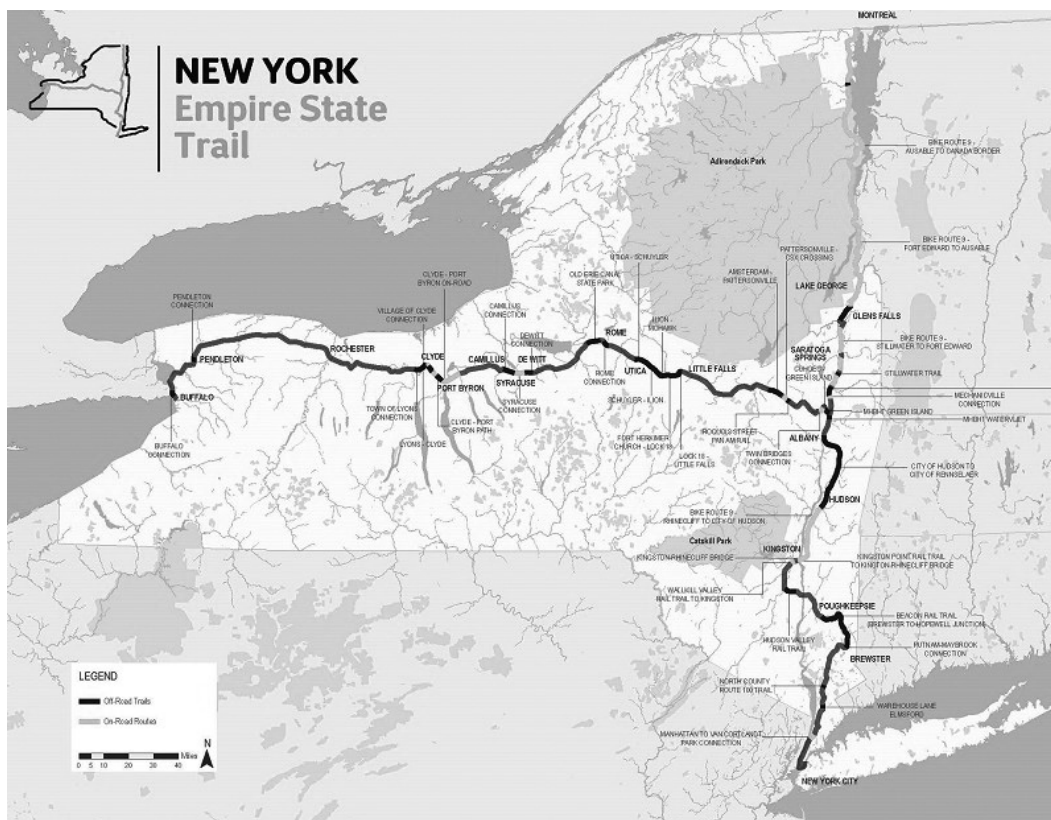
Conclusion

The first installment of this article began with the story and a dramatic 1972 photo of Henry Diamond on his 535-mile bond act bicycle ride from Buffalo to the Battery in New York City. An ardent conservationist and the first-ever New York State Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation, Henry was promoting a \$1.2-billion state bond act, which passed handily. Now forty-five years later, Hudson Valley residents still struggle with identical problems—the decline of funding for protecting the environment, public indifference to Hudson River conservation issues, and sparse media support in the valley. But the environmental/conservation community has not faltered, in a large measure because of the encouragement of the Hudson River champions both private and public—Rockefeller, Diamond, Cuomo, Pataki, and Hinchey. The public-sector champions are thankfully now led by a new and stellar group—Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, members of Congress Nita Lowey and Paul Tonko, with state Senators Bill Larkin and Steve Saland (now retired), who both, twenty-five years earlier, were among the key founding members (along with then-state Assemblyman and later Governor George Pataki) for his brilliant and historic 256-mile water trail on the Hudson River.

The Hudson River Valley has a history of art appreciation and support for artists, and 180 years ago, Thomas Cole’s “The Course of Empire” series was completed. Now in 2018, the Metropolitan Museum has mounted an important exhibition of Cole’s work. Meanwhile, in Washington federal funding for the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area continues to survive the curious biannual Congressional attacks.



Cycling the Hudson River Valley guide book



Empire State Trail Map (projected routes)

The three late leaders—Rockefeller, Diamond, and Hinchey—would applaud the survival of the Greenway funding, but probably they would continue to regret the failure of legislation for a unified regional program. A searing example of this malaise is the proposed cross Hudson River Greenway confederation of west bank Newburgh and east bank Beacon that was never realized; the 30,000 residents of Newburgh continue to search for a way to return to their former regional prosperity.

This article concludes as it should, on an optimistic note, because not only has the Greenway (and the Heritage Area) survived, but there is extraordinary and wonderful news from Albany. The Greenway has been tasked with a monumental project, The Empire State Trail, for which funding has been approved by the voters of New York State. The Cuomo *pere* to Cuomo *filis* trail legacy will be fulfilled and New York State has regained its rightful place as the national leader.

A member of The Hudson River Valley Institute's Advisory Board, Barnabas McHenry is also co-chair of the Hudson River Valley Greenway and the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area.

Washington Irving's Sunnyside

Meghan V. Jones, Marist '17



Sunnyside's main entrance, cloaked in Wisteria, is at the left, the tower wing is visible to the right.

Photo by Karen M. Sharman, courtesy of Historic Hudson Valley

Washington Irving played a major role in defining America's literary culture. While most know him as the author of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip Van Winkle," he also is considered the first American to make his living solely through writing. Though he studied law as a young adult and worked at a law firm, his true passion was writing. Throughout 1807 he wrote for the satirical and well-received periodical *Salmagundi*, and he published "Diedrich Knickerbocker's" *A History of New York* in 1809. He would later poke fun at his old profession in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow."¹ While he was writing, the United States was still in its infancy, and his works helped shape the culture and identity of the new nation.

Irving's estate, Sunnyside, has become a representation of his legacy as well as an American architectural treasure. Kathleen Eagan Johnson, former curator of Historic Hudson Valley, says that "Sunnyside serves ably as a three-dimensional autobiography of

1 Tom Lewis, "Definers of the Landscape," *The Hudson, a History* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2005), 192.

Irving.”² Joseph T. Butler, another former curator, calls the house “one of the most beloved spots of America and certainly one of the best known American houses in Europe.”³

Born in 1783 in New York City, Irving was the youngest of eleven children born to William and Sarah Irving, Scottish and English immigrants.⁴ He remained close with many of his siblings for the rest of his life, welcoming them to visit, and even to live, at Sunnyside.

In the 1770s, while in his late teens, Irving was introduced to both the Hudson River Valley and the place he would one day call home when he traveled up to the Tarrytown area. He immediately fell in love with the region. While visiting the family of James Paulding, who lived near “the valley known as Sleepy Hollow,” he became enchanted by the area’s Dutch legends and dwellings, such as the small colonial farmhouse at “Wolfert’s Landing.”⁵ Believed to have been built during the seventeenth century, the original cottage belonged to Wolfert Acker, a counselor to Peter Stuyvesant, director-general of New Netherland. Located within the bounds of the Manor of Philipsburg, the cottage was partly burned by a British raiding party during the American Revolution.⁶ At that time, it belonged to Acker’s relatives, the Van Tassels. Irving would later immortalize this family name in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” which includes the character Katrina Van Tassel.

By 1809, Irving’s satirical works had earned him much acclaim throughout the nation. He had spent 1807 and 1808 contributing to the satirical periodical *Salmagundi*, and earned a large following with *A History of New York*, which blurred the lines between fact and fiction. Placing a series of advertisements about a “lost” manuscript prior to its publication, Irving generated interest and convinced many that its imaginary narrator, Diedrich Knickerbocker, was a real person. To this day, “knickerbocker” is a nickname for a New Yorker, especially one of Dutch ancestry.

In 1815 Irving traveled to England with the goal of “talking up” and hopefully saving his family’s failing mercantile firm. The firm went bankrupt in 1818, and Irving remained in Europe for what would be seventeen very productive years.⁷ In 1826, he accepted a position with the American Legation to Spain and spent three years in Madrid. He then moved on to London, where he served as secretary of the American Legation until his return to the United States in 1832. Throughout his years in Europe, Irving continued to produce successful literary works, including a biography of Christopher Columbus and a collection of writings by “Geoffrey Crayon.” These increased his renown on both continents and earned him a large Spanish fan base that remains today.

2 Kathleen Eagen Johnson, *Washington Irving’s Sunnyside* (Tarrytown, NY: Historic Hudson Valley Press, 1995), 5.

3 Joseph T. Butler, *Sunnyside: Washington Irving’s Home* (Tarrytown, NY: Sleepy Hollow Restorations, Inc., 1962), 18.

4 Harold Dean Cater, *Washington Irving & Sunnyside* (Tarrytown, NY: Sleepy Hollow Restorations, Inc., 1957), 3.

5 *Ibid.*, 3.

6 Polly Anne and Stewart Graff, *Portrait of a Village: Wolfert’s Roost, Irvington-on-Hudson* (Irvington-on-Hudson, NY: Washington Irving Press, 1971), 187.

7 Irving did not remain in Europe of his own volition; Kathleen Eagen Johnson describes how, with the firm bankrupt, he was financially unable to return to the United States.

During his time in Europe, Irving also paid a visit to Abbotsford, the estate owned by his friend, *Ivanhoe* author Sir Walter Scott, who was overseeing renovations to his home while Irving was there. At that time, it was a popular custom for travelers to visit places of literary significance.⁸ Abbotsford, as well as the neighboring Melrose Abbey, would have considerable influence on Irving's future embellishments to Sunnyside. With his later development of the house, he would bring the Scottish tradition of the writer-turned-architect to the United States.

In May 1832, *The Albion*, a weekly gazette published in New York, announced: "Washington Irving has returned to this country after an absence of seventeen years."⁹ There was even a public dinner held in the city on May 30, 1832, to celebrate his arrival, "the first thing of its kind ever given in honor of a literary figure."¹⁰ Irving returned from Europe determined to settle down in the United States and become truly immersed in the evolving American culture.

Irving's older brother, Ebenezer, was a widower with eleven children, including five girls. Another of his brothers, Peter, had never married, and his health was declining; he would die at Sunnyside in 1838. Irving himself remained a bachelor after losing his fiancée, Matilda Hoffman, to tuberculosis years earlier. Believing that being surrounded by loved ones "could be the next most blissful life to that of marriage," he sought to "set up a haven" for himself and his family at Sunnyside.¹¹

When Irving returned to the United States, his nephew Oscar was in possession of a piece of property near the stone farmhouse on Wolfert's Landing. To his sister, Catherine, Irving wrote, "I am more and more in the notion of having that little cottage below Oscar's house, and wish you would tell him to endeavor to get it for me."¹² On June 7, 1835, he acquired the house and nearly ten-acre property for \$1,800.¹³

In those early years of the United States, architecture was not exactly the profession it is today. Harold Dean Cater explains that, rather than professional architects, "there were commonly master builders, artists and a few men who were beginning to develop a special interest in landscaping and its relation to structures."¹⁴ Artists would design a property with the assistance of more architecturally skilled master builders.

George Harvey was a painter in his thirties, originally from Boston, who lived near Irving's new house. Irving collaborated with Harvey on the design of Sunnyside and bestowed upon him the title of "master-builder" of the house.¹⁵ Harvey, however, did

8 Kerry Dean Carso, "Old Dwellings Transmogrified: The Homes of James Fenimore Cooper and Washington Irving," *American Gothic Art and Architecture in the Age of Romantic Literature* (Cardiff, Wales: U of Wales Press, 2014), 77.

9 Cater, *Washington Irving & Sunnyside*, 7.

10 Ibid., 7.

11 Ibid., 10.

12 Ibid., 11.

13 Ibid., 11, and Michael Middleton Dwyer, "Washington Irving's Sunnyside," *Great Houses of the Hudson River*, compiled by Charles Davey (Boston, MA: Bulfinch, 2001), 177.

14 Cater, *Washington Irving & Sunnyside*, 13.

15 Ibid., 14.

not have much architectural experience. There is evidence that the two men sought additional architectural guidance; in its collections, Historic Hudson Valley has floor plans, dated July 1835, for “Proposed Alterations to the Property of Washington Irving, Esquire” by established New York architect Calvin Pollard.¹⁶ These suggested alterations look very dissimilar to those that ultimately were made; Irving had a specific vision for the character of the house and Pollard’s drawings did not align with it. He did not want his new dwelling to be Greek Revival, then the prevailing architectural style. Having been so inspired by the Dutch legends surrounding Wolfert’s Landing, Irving wanted to emphasize the cottage’s Dutch heritage. He did so partly with the inscription carved into the house in Dutch. It translates: “Founded 1656—Improved by Washington Irving 1835—Geo. Harvey Master-builder.”¹⁷ The year 1656 was consistent with several of the Sleepy Hollow legends regarding the date of the house’s construction. The inscription further confirms Irving’s desire to recognize Harvey’s architectural authority.



The porch on Sunnyside facing the Hudson River. Photo by Bryan Haeffele, courtesy of Historic Hudson Valley

Irving’s desire to highlight the house’s colonial history didn’t stop with the inscription. He insisted that he did not want “another typical house of the day” but rather “a snug little Dutch nookery”; the way he described the house emphasized that its small-ness and coziness were important to him.¹⁸ He was “updating” the house, but with the intention

16 Ibid., 13. From the Collection of Historic Hudson Valley (SS.80.28)

17 Ibid., 14.

18 Ibid., 13.

of making the exterior appear older rather than newer. He added crow-stepped gables, or “corbie steps,” because of their prevalence in Dutch colonial architecture.¹⁹ He also added three weathervanes in the style of New Netherland. Irving nicknamed the house “the Roost.” The house would later become officially known as “Sunnyside.”²⁰



Washington Irving's study. Photo by Bryan Haeffele, courtesy of Historic Hudson Valley

While much of the exterior and ambiance of the structure was inspired by Dutch architecture, Sunnyside had Gothic influences as well. He covered it with stucco made to look like Abbotsford's cut stone. The ivy he grew up its walls was brought from Scotland (directly from Melrose Abbey, it was said) as a gift from Mrs. James Renwick.²¹ A small portion of Sunnyside's furniture, too, is in the more contemporary Gothic style, including walnut dining room chairs with Gothic Revival backs.²² The Gothic-inspired cast iron benches on the porch, flanking each side of the front door, came from the West Point Foundry in Cold Spring, owned by Gouverneur Kemble, an old friend of Irving's. Irving himself sketched the design for the benches and sent it to Harvey in 1836. To Harvey he wrote:

Mr. Gouverneur Kemble, who was at my cottage a few days since, offered to furnish me with two gothic seats of cast iron for the porch, and to have them cast in the highlands, if I would send him patterns. You were kind enough to say you would give me designs for the seats; I will be much obliged to you if

19 Carso, “Old Dwellings Transmogrified,” 88.

20 Cater, *Washington Irving & Sunnyside*, 18.

21 Carso, “Old Dwellings Transmogrified,” 90.

22 Butler, *Sunnyside, Washington Irving's Home*, 13.

you will do so at your leisure & convenience. I should like the backs to incline a little and to be smooth at the top so as to admit of a lounging position, and to be leaned upon.²³

Irving and Harvey truly did collaborate, down to the design of the furniture.

Irving moved into Sunnyside in September 1836.²⁴ It was a lively place where family and friends could gather to relax and celebrate. After the Panic of 1837, Ebenezer Irving lost his business and Irving invited him and his five daughters to live with him. Sunnyside's parlor became the house's social center, where Irving and his nieces often played music in the evenings.²⁵

In 1842, Irving left New York for Europe again, this time to serve as the American minister to Spain. He returned to Sunnyside in 1846 and added a "tower wing," which Kemble nicknamed the "pagoda."²⁶ The tower was added for practical purposes rather than aesthetic ones: it contained extra bedrooms, a laundry room, a pantry, and servants' quarters. By this time, Sunnyside was home to two generations and the house simply needed to be bigger. However, the new wing "further romanticized what was already a romantic concoction."²⁷



The laundry and stairs in the tower wing. Photo by Bryan Haeffele, courtesy of Historic Hudson Valley

Irving also was aware "that a picturesque house must sit in a picturesque landscape."²⁸ The grounds of Sunnyside were full of both aesthetic and functional features, including a

23 Ibid., 7.

24 Cater, *Washington Irving & Sunnyside*, 16.

25 Butler, *Sunnyside, Washington Irving's Home*, 14.

26 Kathleen Eagen Johnson claims that the "tower wing" was the "correct" name for this addition to the house, and that the "pagoda" was Gouverneur Kemble's facetious nickname for it.

27 Carso, "Old Dwellings Transmogrified," 86.

28 Dwyer, "Washington Irving's Sunnyside," 180.

kitchen garden, a greenhouse, an icehouse, and a stable.²⁹ In 1853, he built a Gothic-style cottage on the property for Robert, his gardener, and Maria, his cook, who were married and had newborn twins.

To optimize the view of the Hudson River, Irving removed or trimmed trees, but his mantra was that “a tree is to be cut down only when the picture it hides is worth more than the tree.”³⁰ A brook on the property leads to a cove that Irving dammed to create a pond, fondly known as the “Little Mediterranean,” which provided water to Sunnyside’s kitchen, laundry, and flush toilets.³¹

Celebrations were as frequent as visitors at Sunnyside. To help with all of the entertaining, Irving hired household staff: “two cleaning women, a cook, a house maid, a hand maid, an ornamental maid, and [an] assistant cook.”³² Many times, complete strangers who loved his work would come to pay their respects. Irving often found them tiresome: “They come at all hours and without ceremony, people whom I never saw or heard of,” he said in 1858. “Mr. Smith of Texas walks in, sends up his compliments, and when I shake hands I find myself gazed at like a show. Mr. Smith of Texas evidently expects me to say something brilliant, and when I don’t, considers himself defrauded.”³³

Irving lived the rest of his life at Sunnyside and died there in 1859, shortly after the publication of his final literary masterpiece, a five-volume biography of his namesake, George Washington. He was in poor health and died suddenly in his bedroom over the study, after a dinner with family and an evening spent admiring the view and the sunset. He was buried in the nearby Sleepy Hollow Cemetery.

After his death, ownership of Sunnyside passed to Ebenezer Irving and his daughters, who inherited it from their father and lived in the house until 1896. That year, Washington Irving’s grand-nephew, Alexander Duer Irving, purchased the property and began construction on a large “new wing.” The addition matched the style of the cottage, and nearly tripled its size. It contained a long gallery full of memorabilia from and about the famous author as well as living space for the family. In 1945, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., acquired the house from Alexander’s son, Louis DuPont Irving, as part of a historic preservation initiative.³⁴ It was opened to the public two years later. Sleepy Hollow Restorations, a precursor of Historic Hudson Valley, used the addition for exhibition and office space until the late 1950s, when it was removed and the house restored to the way it looked when Washington Irving lived there.

29 Cater, *Washington Irving & Sunnyside*, 32.

30 Ibid., 30.

31 Ibid., 32–33.

32 Ibid., 25.

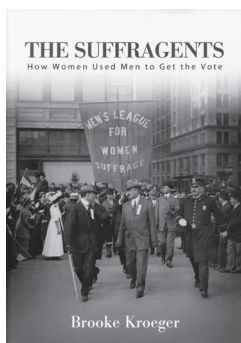
33 Ibid., 34–35.

34 Kathleen Eagen Johnson describes how the preservation of Sunnyside “marked a new phase in the development of the American architectural preservation movement,” because most other houses being preserved at that time “dated from the colonial or federal period.” Irving’s house was unique among those houses because it was a mid-nineteenth century house owned by a literary figure rather than a war hero.

Today, tours of the house and grounds emphasize Washington Irving's eclectic tastes and varied writings beyond his two most famous stories. Tour guides in nineteenth-century dress discuss the way Irving's travels and experiences influenced his vision for Sunnyside. A museum shop and offices are located in Sunnyside's former stable and garage complex, allowing much of the estate's historic fabric to remain intact. The site itself focuses on the historical facts of Irving's life. Events focusing on the legend and mystery of Irving's tales include retellings of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," held in Sleepy Hollow's Old Dutch Church, and the famous Great Jack O'Lantern Blaze, which takes place every Halloween at Van Cortlandt Manor in Croton-on-Hudson.

Located at 3 West Sunnyside Lane in Irvington, the house and grounds at Sunnyside are open to the public May through November. Historic Hudson Valley also offers school tours and educational activities for students K-12; schools may schedule these programs beginning in April. To schedule a tour and purchase tickets, or to learn more about this and other sites operated by Historic Hudson Valley, visit www.hudsonvalley.org or call 914-631-8200.

Book Reviews



The Suffragents: How Women Used Men to Get the Vote.

By Brooke Kroeger (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2017) 371 pp.

Brooke Kroeger has added immeasurably to our understanding of the complexity of the woman suffrage movement with her latest book, *The Suffragents: How Women Used Men to Get the Vote*. Not only is it a fun, timely, and interesting topic, but the book also is deeply researched and packed with archival resources. Feminist scholars, for a variety of reasons, all too often ignore or downplay the role men played in women's demand for their enfranchisement. After all, which of us would want to admit how much men had to do with a women's movement? However, as Kroeger makes exceedingly clear, women could not have won the vote without men. "Suffragents," a disdainful and mocking British moniker of the time occasionally used in the United States, played a critical role in the ultimate success of the movement. But this book is not an argument for the dominance of a men's movement, as its subtitle makes very clear. Men who organized for woman suffrage consistently marched at the back of the parades—behind the women marchers—throughout the decade of their public involvement. As pointed out by James Lees Laidlaw, one of the most charismatic main characters in this intriguing story, "We men, too, have learned something. We who were auxiliaries to the great woman's suffrage party. We have learned to be auxiliaries" (231). Kroeger gives the men their due but maintains that women dominated the movement and male supporters consistently deferred to them.

Interestingly, the format of this dense book follows the style of a yearbook. The twelve to seventeen small photographs of men who joined the New York Men's League for Woman Suffrage at the head of each chapter is an innovative, informative, and highly useful idea. Each chapter then focuses on one year of the men's movement, based in New York State, from the birth of the idea of a men's league in 1907 to 1908, until women won the right to vote in 1917. It concludes with a coda focused on the period from 1918 to 1920, when the energy of the New York State movement shifted to the federal amendment, won in 1920. This book is very comprehensive; even the most demanding of readers will be hard-pressed to think of any aspect of the involvement of men and the events in which they participated that the author omitted.

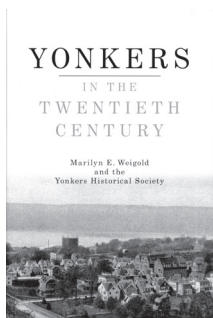
That so many high-powered men came to support the movement may come as a surprise to some people, especially as we are far more accustomed to linking Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton to the suffrage movement than we are to linking men to it. While Kroeger relied heavily on newspaper reports, she also visited the archives of many of the leaders in the New York Men's League, including Max Eastman, George Middleton, Oswald Garrison Villard, and Stephen S. Wise. Although there are hundreds of names in this book, the author took great care to identify the women, men, and power couples (such as Harriet Burton and James Lees Laidlaw, and Narcissa Cox and Frank Vanderlip) to whom she refers. More than twenty images of primary-source documents have been reproduced in this book, along with related photographs of parades and cartoons, adding to its value as a resource not just for understanding the movement, but as a starting point for research into related topics.

Not to quibble too much about an excellent and appealing book, there are some unfortunate errors in book titles and authors' names. For example, Ida Husted Harper co-edited and edited the last three volumes of the *History of Woman Suffrage*, not the *History of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, and Sara (not Sally) Hunter Graham wrote an article on Alice Paul. Graham's full-length book, *Woman Suffrage and the New Democracy* (1996), just one secondary source omission, might have helped with context. Kroeger also should have consulted several readily available monographs on anti-suffrage for her discussions of Everett P. Wheeler and other male anti-suffragists who established the New York State Man-Suffrage Association to Oppose Woman Suffrage (124-36). Because anti-suffrage men tried to mirror the work of the Men's League for Woman Suffrage, but for the opposition, the oversight is conspicuous.

The style of writing follows that of journalists rather than historians, which may be unpleasant for some readers. There are many places where it is not entirely clear why the author inserted the points, facts, or information she did. Within chapters, sections are broken with upper-case bold phrases. These are not subtitles following a conclusion or a marker to alert the reader to a new section of discussion but are randomly-placed direct quotes from newspaper headlines. However, what the book lacks in context, conclusions, transitions between paragraphs, and, especially, analysis, it more than makes up for in the sheer volume of evidence of men's role in the New York woman suffrage movement.

The historiography of the women suffrage movement has been greatly advanced thanks to this valuable study, which has the potential for being the definitive full-length work on the role men played in this movement. It is a fascinating look at an aspect of the suffrage story rarely considered. Scholars of the woman suffrage movement and anyone interested in social movement history will appreciate this book. Warm congratulations to Brooke Kroeger and her "Suffragents."

Susan Goodier is a lecturer of History at SUNY Oneonta.



***Yonkers in the Twentieth Century*, Marilyn E. Weigold
and the Yonkers Historical Society. (Albany: State
University of New York Press, 2014), 364 pp.**

Cities in the northeastern United States have undergone tremendous changes throughout the twentieth century, from growth to decline to rebirth. The experience of Yonkers, the fourth-largest city in New York State, offers many examples of social, economic, and political issues that challenged the city and its citizens. Many of the stories in this book are primarily of local interest, while others offer insight into the tensions between city and suburb in American metropolitan regions. Of national significance is the city's federal court case that forced the city to locate public housing for low-income residents in neighborhoods that linked school and housing segregation.

Yonkers was already a flourishing urban center by the beginning of the twentieth century. It was a thriving industrial city with numerous factories and refineries with access to New York City by railroad and the Hudson River. Its economy supported a population of many thousands of blue-collar workers along with a wealthy elite, while it seemed quite satisfied with its self-identified description as the "City of Gracious Living." As the century progressed, however, the city would be hard-pressed to uphold this rather romantic vision.

Author Marilyn E. Weigold, professor of history at Pace University, is careful to present many of the external factors that supported the city's economic growth up through World War II, as well as its downturn as companies moved away or were overtaken by new technologies. The strikes for higher pay of the early years were but a foretaste of the later closings, resulting in greater unemployment and an increase in poverty. By mid-century, such economic dislocation saw the city's downtown and waterfront become blighted, as neighborhoods became increasingly segregated by racial and socio-economic class.

As in so many Eastern and Midwestern industrial cities in the postwar era, housing for low-income households became a major problem. President Johnson's "War on Poverty," including urban renewal, attempted to address this issue through the construction of public housing projects. During the latter half of the twentieth century, Yonkers battled with the federal government in both the location of public housing and desegregation of its neighborhood schools. The nearly thirty-year court case was finally settled in the twenty-first century, at a time when revitalization efforts began to show signs of progress.

The city's economy at the turn of the century was based on its growth during the nineteenth century. Although the book does not give a snapshot from that era, the short histories of each of the many industries offer clues to their regional, even national, stature. Companies such as Otis Elevator, Alexander Smith Carpet, and three sugar-refining

companies distributed nationally and employed thousands of workers who lived in neighborhoods throughout the city. Large estates from the nineteenth century gave a special cosmopolitan atmosphere. The Untermeyer estate's park-like gardens were often open to the public, one of a number of open spaces throughout the city. Industries covered the waterfront. Over decades, more single-family housing developed on private lots. However, the separation of socio-economic classes into separate neighborhoods, so important to the school and housing conflicts later, is not fully developed in the book. In addition, there are no maps of the city that identify the downtown center, industrial waterfront, streets, or neighborhoods, making it difficult to follow many of the political conflicts that are discussed at length.

Over the century, the city's identity was sorely tested. *Yonkers in the Twentieth Century* attempts to unravel the many threads of the city's fabric through an extensive and comprehensive review. Co-authored with the Yonkers Historical Society, its focus is on local history. Perhaps, too often, this is to the detriment of themes of more general interest in urban studies. For example, the important role that the city has had in the development of urban governance, such as in the early adoption of the city manager form and its conflicts with a strong mayor approach, become entangled with the seemingly endless parade of local personalities involved. The tree gets lost in the forest.

For a history of a city that covers a century such as the twentieth, there are endless stories to be told. It can be difficult to discern which of those tell a wider message, both to resident and non-resident alike. The myriad stories of life in Yonkers are often told in a breezy journalistic style, offering a humanistic context to the specific changes to the city's fabric over time. The expansion of the region's infrastructure is noted by specific transportation developments, such as the "fuming" of the Nepperhan, or Saw Mill, River, and the alignment and construction of the Saw Mill and Cross County parkways. Meanwhile, the arguments in favor of and against mass transit, both bus and rail, alternated between NIMBY and acceptance. Many social histories of industries and factories are told through biographies of their owners and management, although the ethnic and gender mix of the workers is less examined.

Throughout the volume, personal memories enliven a number of local places and events. Reflections on the Depression and World War II offer insight into the everyday activities of workers and residents and the atmosphere of life in the city during those years. The history of Yonkers Raceway is presented along with its role in the social and economic relationships of local residents, developers, and politicians. A fine addition to the volume that brings the personal to the forefront of this local history is "Yonkers Speaks: Excerpts from Oral History Interviews" in the appendix. In twenty-five pages, over two

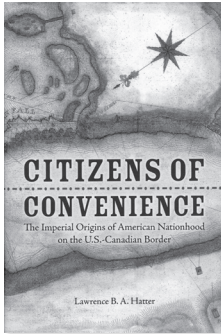
dozen residents and others familiar with the history of the city describe it as a “very big city...made up...of little villages,” or as “a very small town.”

Often, however, the authors’ informal style reduces the wider importance of the development or event. For example, in describing the opening of the Cross County Shopping Center in 1954, the authors opine that the developers “pulled out all the stops.” Indeed, the fact that 15,000 shoppers attended that day was indicative of the role that such shopping centers, or malls, would play in destroying the downtowns of American towns and cities in the twentieth century. Months later, the addition of the Wanamaker, Gimbel’s, and S. Klein department stores in the suburbs attracted tens of thousands of shoppers, causing traffic and parking problems. Commercial development outside the city’s core retail area had serious impacts on social, economic, and political power that promotional language may fail to identify.

Political issues are raised throughout the text, from urban governance and infrastructure challenges in the 1920s and ’30s to economic development post-World War II. In mid-century, urban renewal programs and projects impacted the community. By the end of the century, the crises of the affordability and location of housing and schools became acute. The complicated political history is told primarily through the lenses of news reporting that tends to project the arguments and actions of individual politicians as the main force of policy debates. News reporting of Judge Sands’ decisions in the federal court case concerning local opposition to the various development proposals that attempted to desegregate schools and neighborhoods may be sufficient for a local history, but unfortunately, without a fuller reference to the municipal agency or planning documents, the urban historian can only surmise the significance of the politics by the results.

Authors Weigold and the Historical Society have taken on a formidable task and have written a work that is comprehensive in scope. The *Excelsior* publication is complete with forty-five photographs (although they are not integrated into the text); a bibliography that offers the reader information on how to study local historical documents; over twenty pages of excerpts from oral history interviews; an index; and a list of local sponsors, reminiscent of nineteenth-century local historical publications. It is an important addition to historical accounts of the cities of Metropolitan New York and the Hudson Valley.

Harvey K. Flad is Emeritus Professor of Geography at Vassar College.



Lawrence B.A. Hatter, *Citizens of Convenience: The Imperial Origins of Nationhood on the U.S.-Canadian Border* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017) 288 pp.

The boundary between the United States and Canada is often called the world's longest undefended border. Strictly speaking, this is not true. Civilian law enforcement, after all, guards both sides of the border. Still, most U.S. citizens do not pay much attention to the U.S. border with Canada. In fact, most people would probably argue that the border with Mexico is far more important, especially given recent debates about NAFTA, immigration, and border walls. However, Lawrence B.A. Hatter, currently assistant professor of History at Washington State University, contends that the U.S.-Canada border has always been a site of controversy. This border, he argues, "helped to make the American people" (3) and became a crucial site for state formation because "it was a place where U.S. agents could regulate people's movement to distinguish between American nationals and the nationals of other states" (3). He focuses on the merchants and traders involved in Montreal's fur trade and asserts that they played "a critical role in defining the northern border of the American Republic, and, therefore, determining the course of the American Empire" (7). Hatter illustrates how many merchants became citizens of convenience. In other words, they claimed different citizenship in different locations, all in the name of securing free movement across borders and evading government regulation. Citizenship thus became a strategy that allowed people to avoid the demands of emerging nation-states. In making this striking argument, he covers the period 1783 to 1815, or the end of the American Revolution through the War of 1812, and explores three diplomatic settlements: the Treaty of Paris (1783); the Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation, or the Jay Treaty (1794); and the Treaty of Ghent (1814).

Citizens of Convenience begins in 1783, with the peace preliminaries between the United States and Great Britain. Britons, he comments, "were shocked to read about the extensive territory embraced by the United States" (1). Furthermore, he illustrates the pervasive uncertainty in the border region, which was attributable to "unresolved questions about the relationship between the American Republic and the British Empire" (16). Despite months of negotiations, British and American commissioners in Paris could not agree on how the border should function. The British did not fancy entering into a commercial agreement with the United States because they believed the Confederation Congress incapable of enforcing treaties. In sum, the Treaty of Paris did not resolve the ambiguity about how the border would function. Britain did not evacuate their garrisons and British

soldiers remained stationed in the U.S. This spoke to an important question: Could the U.S. assert sovereignty over this region? Many people assumed the answer was no.

The U.S. and Britain attempted to resolve some of the questions about borders and garrisons in the 1790s. Fortunately for the U.S., the radicalization of the French Revolution and the outbreak of war in Europe made Britain more receptive to negotiations. John Jay and Lord Grenville “framed an agreement that granted British subjects and American citizens reciprocal commercial access to the Indian trade of the United States and British Canada” (68). Furthermore, the Jay Treaty “not only granted some rights of nationality to foreigners but granted individuals the capacity to choose their own nationality” (71). Given these provisions, among others, the Jay Treaty proved controversial. On the domestic front, the ratification of and subsequent fights over the treaty played an important role in the development of the Democratic-Republican Party. However, Hatter is less concerned with domestic repercussion than what it meant for the U.S./Canada borderlands. He contends that it “created the conditions for citizens of convenience to erase the line between British and American nationals” (50). This proved quite dangerous for the young nation. If U.S. officials had no means of accurately determining who was and was not part of the body politic, the survival of the republic seemed in doubt.

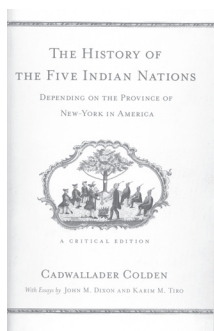
Opponents of the Jay Treaty were not incorrect about the dangers it posed to the new nation. Hatter discusses the U.S. occupation of Detroit to survey how life worked under the treaty. In essence, it “made the American occupation of Detroit more perilous than it otherwise would have been. The right of movement protected by the treaty created a porous border that was a constant source of anxiety and frustration for U.S. officials” (79). Not only did the treaty create a porous border and the conditions for citizens of convenience, it also raised the question of how U.S. officials could, and should, differentiate between U.S. and British citizens. Many U.S. officials doubted their ability to identify merchants masquerading as U.S. citizens. The colorful General James Wilkinson fretted about the restrictions the treaty placed on his ability to regulate the fur trade. Hatter contends that “citizens of convenience poisoned the body politic” (102). In the final analysis, U.S. empire remained a work in progress, but the Jay Treaty made that work far more difficult.

President Thomas Jefferson disliked the Jay Treaty. So did Secretary of State James Madison and Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin. While Jefferson did not intend to openly violate the treaty, he wanted, as did Madison and Gallatin, to “limit and eventually renegotiate the Jay Treaty’s western provisions” (106). U.S. officials began to subvert the treaty. Their “local innovations,” such as using sleight of hand to ensure British subjects paid higher customs duties, “were increasingly welcomed in Washington” (105). Although the national government remained committed to enforcing the treaty, Jefferson, Madison, and Gallatin nevertheless allowed officials to use local innovations to undermine it. Merchants became quite vocal about violations of the treaty provisions

guaranteeing free movement, and they frequently complained to U.S. and British officials. However, for many U.S. officials, cosmopolitan merchants, who changed their citizenship at the drop of a hat, were not particularly trustworthy. Hatter concludes with the War of 1812 and the Treaty of Ghent. He argues that the U.S.'s "recent experience of fighting a war against the British Empire and its Indian allies had made real the threat that foreign traders posed to ordinary American citizens" (164). The Treaty of Ghent, therefore, "made it possible for the United States to close the northern border to British merchants and traders" (165). In the end, "the British government sacrificed the border with the United States to broader geopolitical concerns about the post-Napoleonic world" (184).

Citizens of Convenience is a fascinating book. Hatter has made it impossible for scholars to repeat the old line that the Treaty of Ghent restored the status quo antebellum. As he demonstrates, it terminated specific elements of the Jay Treaty that had become odious to many U.S. officials and threatened U.S. sovereignty. Furthermore, he makes a significant contribution to borderlands studies by constructing a convincing argument about the importance of the world's longest undefended border. This book will work well in graduate seminars and will hold special appeal for anyone interested in the history of the U.S. boundary with Canada, the Atlantic World, borderlands, and the intersections between empires, nations, and commerce.

Evan C. Rothera, The Pennsylvania State University



The History of the Five Indian Nations: Depending on the Province of New York in America (A Critical Edition with Essays by John M. Dixon and Karim M. Tiro) By Cadwallader Colden (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017) 216 pp.

In many respects, Cadwallader Colden (1688-1776) was a representative enlightenment intellectual. The colonial statesman and philosopher entertained a broad range of intellectual interests—moral, philosophical, scientific, and political—and he was both practical and theoretical in his approach to the intellectual and political problems of his time. He was the colonial Governor of New York and he periodically retired to his family estate, Coldenham, in Orange County, to write and speculate about philosophical and scientific questions. Contemporary historians tend to remember Colden as someone who stood somewhat on the wrong side of history in two respects. On the one hand, he was a Crown loyalist, and on the other, he is notorious for his failed attempt to challenge some of the basic tenets of Isaac Newton's natural philosophy.

In addition to his work in politics, philosophy, and science, Colden published *The History of the Five Indian Nations* in New York in 1727. Twenty years later, he published a revised and expanded edition of the book in London. *The History of the Five Indian Nations* was likely Colden's most widely read and influential work; it went on to become both a critical and commercial success in the second half of the eighteenth century. The book was widely used as an important resource for Enlightenment thinkers, especially those concerned with questions about human development, the emergence of society and morality, and the double-edged impact that Europeans had on indigenous populations.

The History of the Five Indian Nations examines the history, government, and customs of the Cayugas, Mohawks, Onandogas, Oneidas, and Senecas, as well as their battles, commerce, and treaties with Europeans. For his research, Colden was given access to all resources and records kept by colonial New York. The book is replete with fascinating detail about Native American culture and early political and social relations with the colonialists.

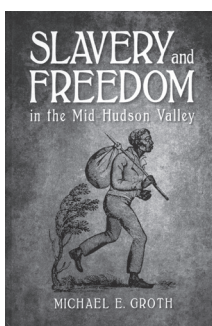
Cornell University Press first issued an edition of Colden's *The History of the Five Indian Nations* in 1958. Since then, it has been read widely and used by scholars, as well as teachers seeking to expose their students to Iroquois history and culture. This new critical edition contains six chapters from the 1727 edition and thirteen chapters from the one published in 1747. More importantly, it includes two introductory essays—"Imperial Politics, Enlightenment Philosophy, and Transatlantic Print Culture" by John M. Dixon and "Iroquois Ways of War and Peace" by Karim M. Tiro. Both essays provide important contemporary context for first-time readers of Colden's book. There is some overlap between the two, but Dixon takes a macro approach to *The History of the Five Indian Nations*, deftly explaining its content in the context of both international and colonial political developments. Dixon cautions the reader that the text itself must be carefully and critically interrogated because the voice of the Native Americans is mediated through Colden's own colonial interests. Tiro dives deeper into Iroquois culture itself. He also explains how Colden, despite some of his limitations in understanding Native American society, nonetheless viewed them as significant autonomous agents in the landscape of North American politics and culture. To some extent, both essays explain nicely why *The History of the Five Indian Nations* is a challenging book for contemporary readers to interpret. First and foremost, the book is simultaneously a work of history that also seeks to accomplish broad political ends. Thus, it is both history and propaganda. As Dixon notes in his essay, Colden "takes aim at French geographical and historical descriptions of North America with the explicit intention of undermining their territorial claims" (xi).

Taken together, the articles by Dixon and Tiro are eye-opening, informative, and clearly written. They provide sufficient depth and context, adding to a reading of Colden's *The History of the Five Indian Nations*. They are certainly nice additions to Cornell's 1958

edition. That said, in a more perfect world the work would have been strengthened by more analysis of Colden's text.

This new critical edition of *The History of the Five Indian Nations* should be of interest to historians of colonial America, New York State, Native American politics and history, early-American ideas, and the history of British and French imperialism. We are currently seeing a resurgence of interest in the thought of Cadwallader Colden. This is certainly a welcome development for Hudson Valley historians with an interest in colonial politics, history, and philosophy. This edition of *The History of the Five Indian Nations* follows the publication of John M. Dixon's *The Enlightenment of Cadwallader Colden* (Cornell University Press) in 2016. One can hope that more scholarly work on Colden is forthcoming.

*James Snyder is associate professor of Philosophy and
director of the Honors Program at Marist College.*



***Slavery and Freedom in the Mid-Hudson Valley*, Michael E. Groth (Albany:SUNY Press, 2017) 266 pp.**

The arrival of Michael E. Groth's *Slavery and Freedom in the Mid-Hudson Valley*—which the author describes as “probably too many years in the making”—is an archival as well as a scholarly event, a labor of more than twenty years that both establishes an important historical record and confirms the dramatic expansion that African-American scholarship has achieved in modern times. Groth's careful survey of this history from the anonymous and largely invisible slave society of the eighteenth century to the emergence of black identity in Dutchess County in the antebellum period is remarkable in its details, and his analyses of these details places the black experience firmly within the American march toward freedom and democracy.

The author is professor of History at Wells College. His ruminations in the often obscure and heretofore thinly explored records of old wills, newspapers, church records, and personal testaments follow a pattern of scholarship that Professor Groth has helped to create, a means of discovering the hidden history of Americans made invisible by a white society that egregiously demeaned and, some might say, still poorly represents them.

Groth's self-admonishment is perfectly understandable when considering how obscurely this history has been buried over the years. He mined dozens of wills and testaments, newspaper articles and advertisements, legal documents, and church and organizational histories for the prime materials that he then analyzed collectively in relating the history that emerged. He uses these details in each of the seven chapters to record the status of slaves, slavery, and prejudice before, during, and after the American Revolution, never

losing sight of the “ordeal of emancipation” and the “arduous struggle” against inequality that these American heroes endured.

In the spirit of full disclosure, I must report that when I first picked up this volume I recalled my introduction to Michael Groth’s 1994 Binghamton University dissertation more than twenty years ago. I was early in my Hudson Valley history work, and the dissertation and a related 1997 article by Groth in *New York History* on manumission came as a revelation for me. I realized that although the depth of African-American history was hidden in the valley, it was not entirely lost and, thanks to Michael Groth, the means to pursue it was made manifest to me. I am surprised that Dr. Groth did not include his own work in the present volume’s bibliography, even though those earlier writings substantially constitute chapters of the book.

Nevertheless, the twenty-six pages of bibliography are not only comprehensive but include many works published in recent years. The author did not take his own earlier work for granted and instead pressed on into the new scholarship as well. He remains the consummate scholar in also acknowledging his debt to other trailblazers in this field. In his Introduction, Groth thanks (among numerous others) Dr. A.J. Williams-Myers, the seminal African-American scholar from SUNY New Paltz, and Dr. Myra B. Young Armstead of Bard College for the assistance they gave him on this volume; he includes eight Williams-Myers references, yet curiously omits *Mighty Change, Tall Within*, the 2003 collection of essays that Dr. Armstead edited and that includes a Groth essay that was an earlier version of this book’s third chapter.

Dr. Groth’s notes add another level to the depth of this history. It is a pleasure to pause in the narrative for a glance at an endnote now and then to find a telling piece of information that expands upon the story itself while affording a bit of anecdotage on the side.

The author’s focus remains on Dutchess County, yet in the accounting he relates how African-American history is regional, and ultimately national, in nature. His American Revolution chapter documents numerous instances of slaves trying to escape to freedom behind the British lines in New York City, although I felt that the Tories who abetted them, either because they hated the manor lords or were easterners who coveted their lands, deserved some mention.

His report on the growth of manufacturing and expansion of transportation that came with the Market Revolution from a bartering to a trade economy from the eighteenth into the nineteenth century complements Thomas Wermuth’s landmark 2001 study of Ulster County (*Rip Van Winkle’s Neighbors*). Groth explores that same context in the ways that blacks took advantage of some of the changes, yet also did not reap many of the benefits.

The dramatic rise of the Improvement Party in Poughkeepsie in the 1830s was a highlight of the county’s embrace of the manifest destiny theme of a “go-ahead” culture

(in Matthew Vassar's words). Groth documents a counterpart rise in African-American cultural and economic improvements in the city as well, which suggested that black society persistently pursued progressive thinking despite the difficulties that prejudice and an aloof white society created for them. An area that may deserve further exploration—if the sources could be found—concerns parallels between the talented white intellectuals who coalesced under Vassar and Benson Lossing at the Potter Bookstore and similar individuals in the local black communities.

One striking feature of Groth's narrative is the sense of hope that imbues this history. Individuals fleeing in the night with nothing but the clothes on their backs had small chances of actually making it to freedom in Canada, yet they persisted and by the early American period made such journeys out of defiance as well as desperation; Sojourner Truth intentionally walked off in the bright light of morning, determined to be cowed no longer by the inhumanity of her situation. This march toward the light of freedom takes on its own form of "go-ahead" thinking in increasingly aggressive responses to prejudice in the African-American rejection of colonization and of William Lloyd Garrison's hesitancy over becoming political, which caused his break with Frederick Douglass.

The author, as I would have expected, points out that Dutchess County was not in the forefront of black progress in the antebellum years. "Anti-slavery political candidates...fared miserably in the Mid-Hudson Valley," he writes. Abolitionist meetings were frequently broken up by mob violence, an anti-slavery newspaper published by the Dutchess County Anti-Slavery Society could not be maintained, and the Poughkeepsie chapter of the society "disappears from the historical record" altogether in the early 1840s. Yet Groth then brings forth a wealth of information on the persistence of black efforts to counteract the "antagonistic racial climate" of America in the embrace of speakers like Gerrit Smith and Henry Highland Garnet, and the contributions of ministers like Nathan Blount, Richard Jenkins, and Charles Gardner. (Blount was involved nationally "a full year" before Poughkeepsie had its own anti-slavery society.) Delegates were sent to national and state assemblies, and African Americans did not hesitate to express their dissatisfaction with the lack of progress toward equality; the entire black membership left one of Poughkeepsie's prominent churches in 1836.

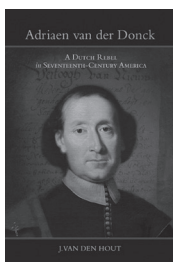
The prevalence of free black communities in the county, which Groth traces to the informal social networks that developed among African Americans on farms in the eighteenth century, were rural manifestations of significant neighborhoods in towns and villages that included independent churches and community groups "dedicated to uplift." And here again, Groth's erudition and scholarship not only add telling facts to the historical record, but allow him to present fuller pictures of how that history evolved.

By the 1850s, the author relates, nationally and locally African Americans were dedicated to the destruction of Southern slavery. Some, like Uriah Boston of Poughkeepsie, albeit rejecting supporters of a separate black state within the Union as “colonizationists in disguise,” was not averse to cutting the South away as a cancer to the American body. Boston was an active black leader in his city and county, and highly respected on the state level. He did not hesitate to take on Frederick Douglass over the latter’s dismissal of blacks working within lower professions—like Boston’s own, barbering. His letters to Douglass prompted spirited exchanges in which the local artisan held his own against the great national intellectual while never veering from a sentiment shared by both—that only full and complete freedom and the end to prejudice were desirable in the long and heartbreaking history of Africans in America.

The book is both relentless and compelling, and highly recommended.

Vernon Benjamin is the author of a two-volume History of the Hudson River Valley (Overlook Press).

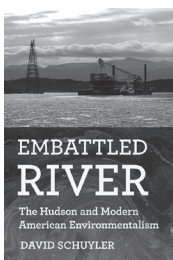
New & Noteworthy Books



Adriaen van der Donck: A Dutch Rebel in Seventeenth-Century America

By J. van den Hout (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2018)
220 pp. \$27.95 (hardcover) www.sunypress.edu

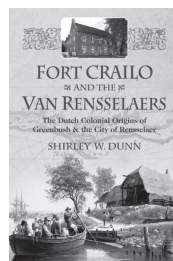
Adriaen van der Donck played an enormous but often overlooked role in the life of New Netherland. J. van den Hout captures all aspects of this dynamic, determined, and complex figure, from van der Donck's early years in the Dutch Republic and acrimonious exchanges with the Dutch West India Company to his later activism and invaluable writings about the geography and native inhabitants of the colony. Using van der Donck's life as a lens to view New Netherland as a whole, this biography makes a significant contribution to literature on Dutch influence in the New World—one that is valuable for scholars and casual readers alike.



Embattled River: The Hudson and Modern American Environmentalism

By David Schuyler (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018)
280 pp. \$29.95 (hardcover) www.cornellpress.cornell.edu

The relationship between the Hudson River and its varied uses—from arts to industry to commerce—has always been, to say the least, complex. Organizations established in the 1960s to halt threats to the river have aided in regaining and sustaining the “natural” component of this natural resource, while simultaneously invigorating environmentalism nationwide. In *Embattled River*, Schuyler highlights the battles that led to the formation of groups like Scenic Hudson and the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, and how their collaborative successes have helped to bring about meaningful environmental regulation to preserve the Hudson River and other endangered natural assets for the future.

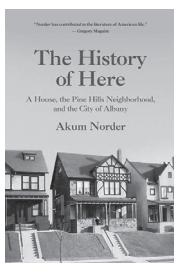


Fort Crailo and the Van Rensselaers: The Dutch Colonial Origins of Greenbush & the City of Rensselaer

By Shirley W. Dunn (Delmar, NY: Black Dome Press, 2016)
208 pp. \$17.95 (softcover) www.blackdomepress.com

A hotbed of activity throughout the military conflicts that took place on both sides of the Hudson River during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Fort Crailo now operates as a state-operated museum of Dutch colonial life. This book tells the story of the Van Rensselaer

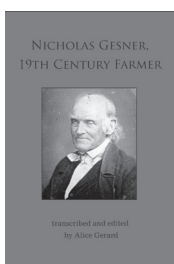
family that erected, expanded, and ultimately helped to preserve the building and its 350 years of history.



The History of Here: A House, the Pine Hills Neighborhood, and the City of Albany

By Akum Norder (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2018)
314 pp. \$19.95 (softcover) www.sunypress.edu

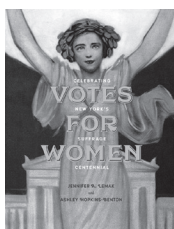
The character of a place can many times be found in the stories it holds and the people who occupy it. *The History of Here* demonstrates this notion at the house, neighborhood, and city levels. Ultimately, Norder's foray into homeownership and her understanding of place—in her case, Albany—can be applied to the experience of twentieth-century life in any city.



Nicholas Gesner, 19th Century Farmer

By Alice Gerard (Palisades, NY: Lulu, 2018)
416 pp. \$25.65 (hardcover) www.lulu.com/shop

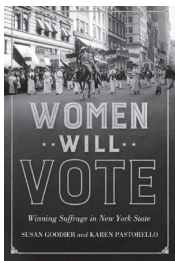
Alice Gerard has done historians a great service by transcribing the diary of Nicholas Gesner (1765-1868), a farmer and schoolteacher who also built ships and provided legal help to his neighbors in Palisades, Rockland County. In the journal he kept from 1829 to 1850, Gesner noted details of his farm and community as well as unusual events such as cholera epidemics, meteor showers, and shipwrecks. Gerard transcribed the entire 1,600-page diary (which is available); this book excerpts the most interesting entries and reveals a perceptive if sometimes cantankerous character navigating daily life in the Hudson River Valley in the first half of the nineteenth century.



Votes for Women: Celebrating New York's Suffrage Centennial

By Jennifer A. Lemak and Ashley Hopkins-Benton
(Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2017)
272 pp. \$29.95 (softcover) www.sunypress.edu

A companion to the New York State Museum exhibit of the same name, *Votes for Women* commemorates the centennial of New York's passage (on November 6, 1917) of a referendum granting women's suffrage. The color images of artifacts from well over thirty lending institutions illustrate how the seventy-year crusade for voting equality depended upon strong, brave supporters from throughout the state. Featuring nearly a dozen essays from leading scholars in women's studies, the book serves as a major contribution to the story of how New York's women achieved the right to vote.



Women Will Vote: Winning Suffrage in New York State

By Susan Goodier and Karen Pastorello (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017)

316 pp. \$29.95 (hardcover) www.cornellpress.cornell.edu

New York State is often a catalyst for national change in progressive movements, and women's suffrage is no exception. *Women Will Vote* credits the diverse groups—including rural and immigrant women as well as men—who played significant roles in the ultimate success of the hard-fought campaign. Relying on suffrage periodicals, newspapers, manuscript collections, and well over 100 books, Goodier and Pastorello capture the many successes and challenging setbacks that defined the seventy-year movement.

Andrew Villani, Marist College

Call for Essays

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

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

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

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KEY TO THE
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