

THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

A Journal of Regional Studies

MARIST



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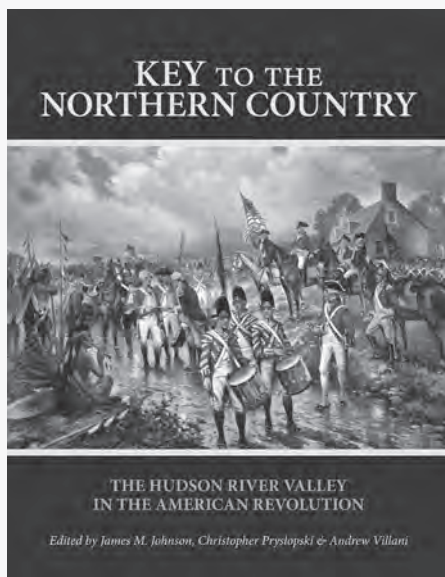
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KEY TO THE NORTHERN COUNTRY
The Hudson River Valley in the American Revolution

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

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From the Editors

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



The Hudson River Valley Institute

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

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 analysis.

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HRVR prefers that essays and other written materials be submitted as one double-spaced typescript, generally no more than thirty pages long with endnotes, along with a CD with a clear indication of the operating system, the name and version of the word-processing program, and the names of documents on the disk.

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On the cover:
The Stone Cottage at Val-Kill,
photograph by Bill Urbin,
courtesy of The Roosevelt-Vanderbilt
National Historic Sites, National Park Service

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Regional History Forum

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



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

Rescuing Boscobel

Emily Hope Lombardo, Marist '15

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



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

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

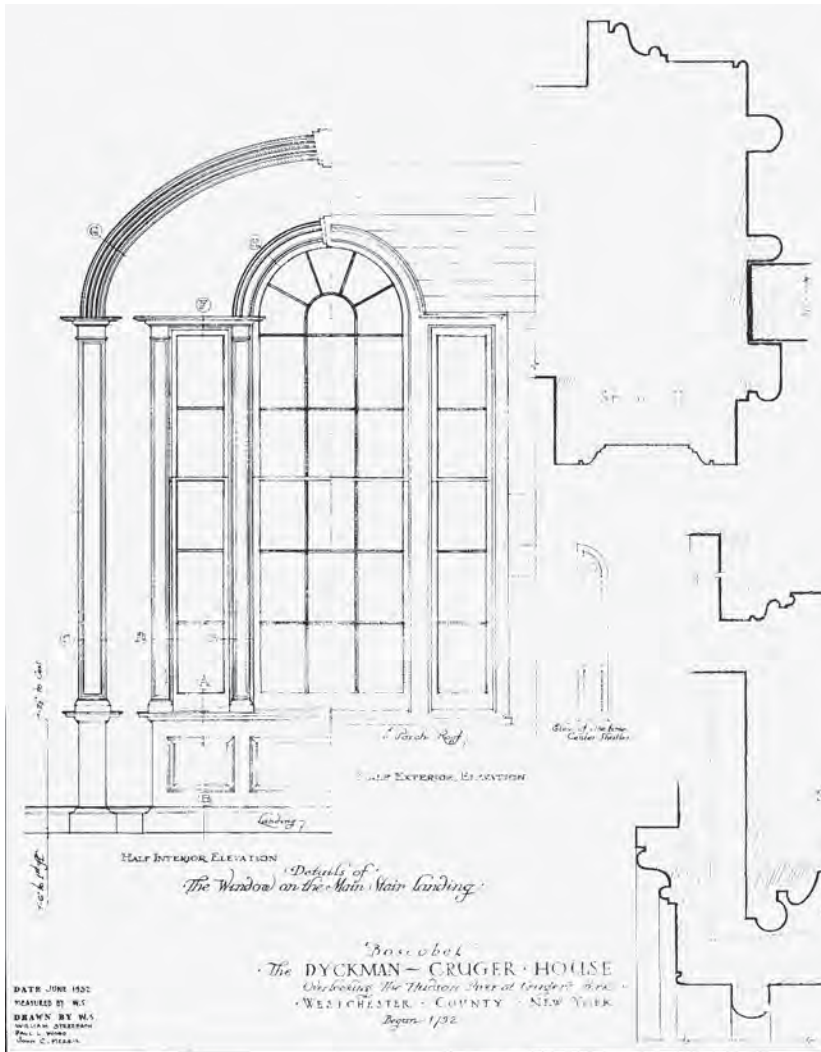
To fully appreciate the preservation and restoration of this cultural landmark, one must begin with the initial conception of the estate. States Morris Dyckman dreamed of a life as a gentleman farmer, a goal that became a reality after the American Revolution. Born in 1755, the descendant of a Dutch-German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



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

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

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



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

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

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

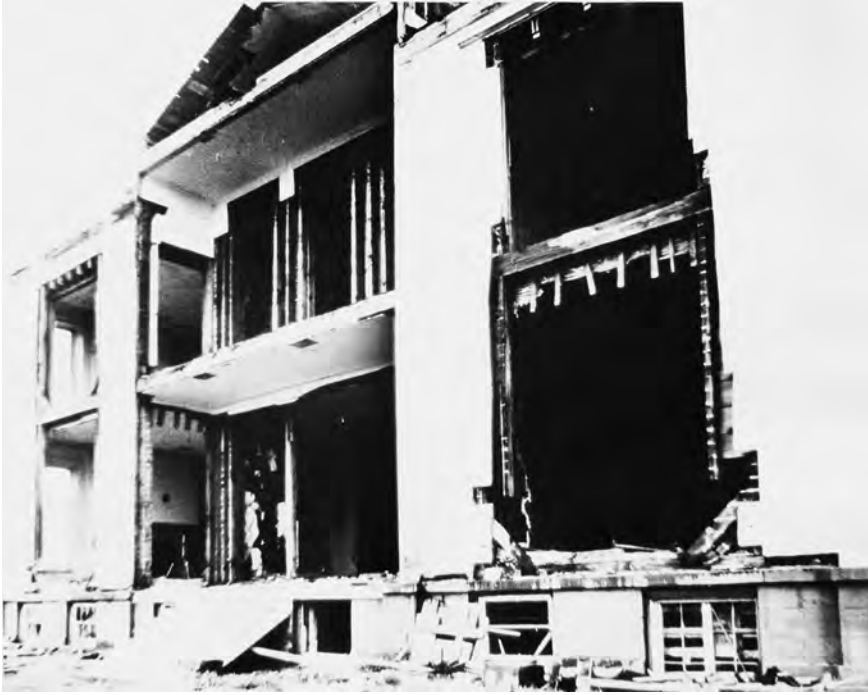
the building as well as the surrounding landscape.⁶ Their drawings would become the basis for the authentic restoration of key elements during Boscobel's reconstruction in the 1950s. But the mansion's fate looked bleak in 1941, when County Parks Chairman Evan Ward threatened to demolish Boscobel unless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

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

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



A view of Boscobel house before it was dismantled



Front façade Boscobel house, Cortlandt, New York

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Benjamin Frazier's wife Helen would later say:

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



Boscobel’s historically upgraded entrance hall in 2014



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

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

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

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

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



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

Endnotes

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2. Kelly, Richard, and Reed Sparling. "History." *Boscobel Restoration Inc.* (Boscobel Restoration, 2005). 11.
3. States Dyckman letter written to bank in England in 1804
4. Boscobel was the name of the hunting lodge in Shropshire, England, where Charles II went into hiding after being defeated by Oliver Cromwell at the Battle of Worcester in 1651. The story of the day Charles II spent hiding in a tree in the forest spread, and the Royal Oak became a popular symbol of the British monarchy, House of Windsor.
5. She was named in honor of Peter's mother (Eliza being short for Elizabeth) and his younger sister, who died in infancy.
6. Charles T. Lyle, "Docent Training Manual for Boscobel Restoration" (Boscobel Restoration, Inc., February 1997).
7. *New York Times*, January 2, 1942.
8. Charles T. Lyle, "Docent Training Manual for Boscobel Restoration" (Boscobel Restoration, Inc., February 1997), 6.
9. Email interview with Julia Fraizer, October 12, 2014.
10. Margery O. Erikson, *A Few Citizens of Philipstown* (Capriole Press Garrison New York, 1990), 107-122.
11. Benjamin West Frazier, "The History of Boscobel," mss, Boscobel Restoration, Inc. Archives.
12. Margery O. Erikson, *A Few Citizens of Philipstown* (Capriole Press Garrison New York, 1990), 107-122.
13. Board of trustees meeting minutes, November 18, 1961.
14. Invoices and estimates from the contractors are included in Keith Ray, *Fabric Analysis*, Boscobel Restoration, Inc., unpublished (March, 1978), 2.
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16. John Heidenry, *Theirs Was the Kingdom: Lila and DeWitt Wallace and the Story of the Readers Digest* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1993), 383.
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18. Mrs. Benjamin West Frazier interview with Charles T. Lyle 1997
19. Greg MacGregor, "1804 Mansion Dedicated; Governor Rockefeller Speaks at Boscobel- It Was Slated for Razing," *The New York Times*, May 21, 1961, 1.
20. "Open House Reception Marks Opening of Boscobel Here on Sunday, August 21st," *Putnam County News*, August 25, 1961.
21. Example of an article in the Hudson River Valley, "Mrs. Wallace Gives \$500,000 To Restore Historic Boscobel," *Peekskill Evening Star*, May 21, 1960.
22. Mike Risinit "Lady Bird Memory" *LoHud News*, July 13, 2007
23. Larson, 29.
24. Benjamin West Frazier, "The History of Boscobel," mss, Boscobel Restoration, Inc. Archives.

Lomontville, Early Spring

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

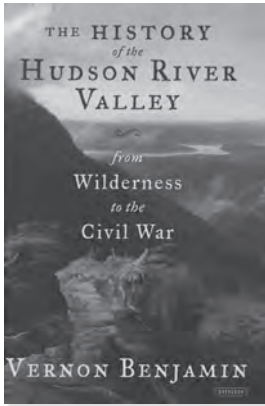
grown son driving, turning on Tongore Road
and heading for Joe Hasbrouck's farm
where they've begun plowing. Nothing's
getting planted yet, frost still possible at night,

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

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

Matthew J. Spireng

Book Reviews



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

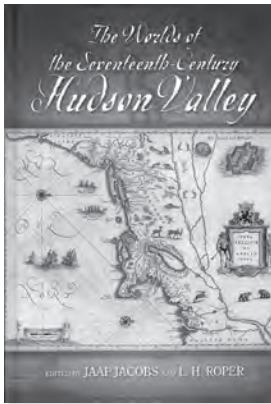
In a detailed chapter entitled "By Water and Rail" the author provides a succinct review of the role of sail and steam in creating local transportation networks. The discussion of Robert Fulton is a dynamic rendering of his character and ambitions. But again the narrative challenges us to go further—what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

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

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

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

Roger Panetta, *Fordham University*



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

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

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

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

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

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

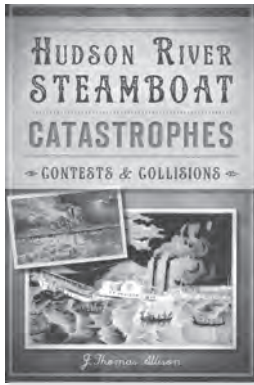
The next three essays are organized under the theme of "Colonial Worlds." Leslie Choquette discusses the population growth of seventeenth-century New France, Jaap Jacobs European migration to New Netherland, and Lauric Henneton Anglo-Dutch rivalries in the Connecticut Valley. Choquette's essay contextualizes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

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

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

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

Mark Meuwese, University of Winnipeg



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Maj. Erik M. Davis, United States Military Academy



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Robert Chiles, University of Maryland

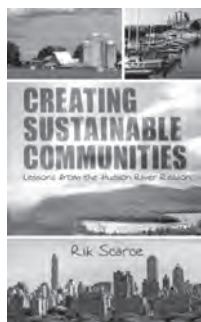
New & Noteworthy Books Received



A Taste of Upstate New York

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

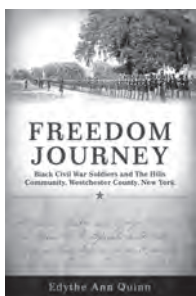
New York is home to a multitude of famous and not-so-famous culinary classics (think bagels and Buffalo wings). *A Taste of Upstate New York* compiles forty notable combinations of local ingenuity and ingredients—from chicken riggies in Rome to candy canes in Kingston. Complete with color photos displaying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



Creating Sustainable Communities: Lessons from the Hudson River Region

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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



Saratoga Springs: A Centennial History

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

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



Sleepy Hollow: Birth of the Legend

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

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

Andrew Villani, The Hudson River Valley Institute

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