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THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

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From the Editors

Certainly everyone in the Hudson River Valley is aware that 2019 is the fiftieth anniversary of the Woodstock Music Festival. In June, The Hudson River Valley Institute held a conference commemorating the festival, and our cover article was presented there as part of a panel on Civil Rights and Black Power in the 1960s. Ty Seidule presents an episode of empowerment for black cadets at the United States Military Academy at West Point, illustrating both the result of the progressive thinking of the 1960s and the ongoing nature of our struggle to evolve as a society.

While the Woodstock Festival eventually landed in the town of Bethel, the organizers named it after the town that had been home to artist colonies since 1902. The Woodstock Artists Association was founded by a diverse group of artists in 1919 and is celebrating its centennial this year. Karen Quinn's article on the Arthur C. Anderson Collection is a useful introduction for anyone unfamiliar with that original cast of artists and colonies; Bruce Weber's discussion of their "quest for harmony" reminds us that even intentional communities have to work at it.

The artists of the original Woodstock colonies and the musicians and artists who attended the Woodstock Festival had a common love of nature, whether it was *plein air* painting in the Catskills or dancing in the mud on a Bethel farm. Years before either of them, Alfred B. Street roamed the woods of Sullivan County and wrote about their wonders; Andrew Higgins introduces us to this now-obscure champion of the Catskills and Adirondacks. Likewise, Jeanne Haffner introduces Edith Gifford and the role that she and the New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs played in saving the forests of the Palisades and creating the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC) in 1900. The PIPC went on to create many more parks throughout New York, establishing Highland Lakes State Park in 1970; Spencer Hogan attests to the silent history that remains there under field, forest, and trail.



This issue of *The Hudson River Valley Review* is dedicated to the late
Brigadier General Patrick J. Garvey, Jr., New York Naval Militia, Retired
(Colonel, United States Marine Corps Reserves, Retired)
and a founding member of the *Hudson River Valley Institute* Advisory Board.

Pat served in senior development roles at the Foreign Policy Association and Rockefeller University and was the post commander at Camp Smith in Peekskill, New York, for the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs. Upon retirement, he became the city manager of Peekskill and then president of the National Maritime Historical Society.

We remember him for his service to the Hudson River Valley Institute.

Semper Fi.



On the cover: The photos from a two-page paid "advertisement" that appeared in the 1976 *Howitzer*, the yearbook of The United States Military Academy at West Point.

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Alfred B. Street: New York's Forgotten Nature Poet

Andrew C. Higgins



Image courtesy of www.Hathitrust.org

Scholarship on American nature writing of the Romantic period has long focused on William Cullen Bryant, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry David Thoreau as the major early voices challenging the utilitarian ethos of the period and urging Americans to value the wild and non-human world that surrounded them. Since the rise of ecocriticism in the 1990s a number of new voices have been added to that canon, including James and Susan Fenimore Cooper, John James Audubon, and William Bartram, while Walt Whitman

and Emily Dickinson have been hailed as America's first environmental poets.¹ This essay seeks to expand that canon further by recovering the writings of Alfred B. Street.

All but forgotten today, Street was a moderately well-known, mid-nineteenth-century Romantic who wrote poetry, essays, and narratives about the environment of upstate New York. He is significant because he *begins* his career by looking closely at the minute details of the natural world. Ten years before the publication of Thoreau's *Walden* and Cooper's *Rural Hours*, Alfred Street was writing poetry grounded in careful, precise observation of the non-human world. Further, his writings about the environment are largely devoid of the kind of idealization of nature found in much Romantic writing. It is poetry that anticipates twentieth-century environmental poets such as A.R. Ammons, Gary Snyder, and most of all Pattiann Rogers. Street's interest in nature stems from his experiences roving the wilds of Sullivan County as a child and young man at a time when it was still largely unsettled. He was passionate about hunting and fishing, which he wrote about often, and this in turn led him to a group of sportsmen artists that came together in New York in the mid-1800s. They included the poet Nathaniel Parker Willis and Hudson River School painters such as Asher B. Durand, James William Stillman, and Frederic Edwin Church. All were deeply influenced by John Ruskin's ideas about the representation of nature in art and were associated with the sportsman culture of New York City, a community of wealthy hunters and anglers who advocated for the earliest conservation laws in the United States.

As Street's career progressed, though, Romantic literary culture criticized his failure to idealize the non-human, and so while he continued to write poetry, he turned increasingly to prose narratives, eventually publishing two books about his travels through the then-largely unknown Adirondack region. Both *Woods and Waters: or, The Saranacs and Racket* (1860) and *The Indian Pass* (1869) contributed to a growing interest in the Adirondacks, which would culminate in the formation of the Adirondack Forest Preserve in 1885.

Alfred Street spent his whole life in and around the Hudson River Valley. He was born in Poughkeepsie in 1811. His father, Randall S. Street, represented Dutchess County in the U.S. Congress as a Federalist from 1819 to 1821. Soon after his father left Congress, his family moved to Monticello, in Sullivan County, where Street was raised, and where he

1 The study of nature in American literature arguably begins with Norman Foerster's study *Nature in American Literature: Studies in the Modern View of Nature* (Russell & Russell, 1923). Foerster established a tradition beginning with Bryant, moving through Emerson and Thoreau, and ending with Muir and Burroughs. Since that time, Bryant has slid into the background (oddly, considering his prominence in nineteenth-century discussions of nature), while Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, and Dickinson have come to be seen as central figures. Since the 1990s, scholarship and anthologies on writing about nature has been voluminous, so I'll offer a few works as representative of the field. One of the first major works of ecocriticism, Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Harvard UP, 1995) identifies Thoreau as the central figure in American discussions of the environment, while Bill McKibben's influential anthology *American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau*, published by the Library of America in 2008, sees him as the starting point in writing about the environment in America. Recent books that focus on poetry have placed Whitman and Dickinson at the beginning of American poets' engagement with nature. These include *The Ecopoetry Anthology*, edited by Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street (Trinity UP, 2013) and John Felstiner's *Can Poetry Save the Earth? A Field Guide to Nature Poems* (Yale UP, 2010).

spent a great deal of time rambling the wilds while hunting and fishing. Street then read law with his father and, in 1839, moved to Albany to set up practice for himself.² In 1848 he was appointed State Librarian of New York, a post he held until 1862. After that, he served as state law librarian until 1868. During his tenure in these posts, he co-authored with Martin Van Buren a history of New York State government and wrote a book on taxation in the United States.³

Street began writing as early as age eleven.⁴ He published his first two poems in William Cullen Bryant's *Evening Post* at age fourteen (1825). His first book, *The Burning of Schenectady, and Other Poems*, appeared in 1842. From the 1830s through the 1870s, Street was a regular contributor to many popular literary publications, including *Graham's Magazine*, *The United States Democratic Review*, *Scribner's Monthly*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *Appleton's Journey*. His poetry and prose appeared alongside such names as William Cullen Bryant, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, William Dean Howells, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Alice Carey, and many others. He published several collections of lyric verse, some longer narrative poems about colonial New York, and two prose narratives about explorations in the Adirondacks. In the process, he became a well-known figure in the artistic circles of upstate New York. He was a friend of Frederic Edwin Church, the sculptor Erastus Dow Palmer, and the composer George William Warren.⁵ Street was also a friend of Peter Gansevoort, who was deeply annoyed with his nephew, Herman Melville, when the young writer snubbed Street after one of the poet's readings.⁶ Perhaps Street's reputation is best captured in the title of an 1888 article about him in the *The Albany Argus*: "Albany's Greatest Poet." By 1900, though, literary historian Barrett Wendell would include Street's name among those writers now "completely forgotten."⁷

What sets Street apart from other Romantic poets known for writing about nature—figures such as William Cullen Bryant, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Emily Dickinson—is that he writes a large body of poetry that attempts to record the physical world in precise detail. Like the poets listed above, he generally eschews the pastoral mode for the picturesque (separating him from more popular pastoral poets such as John Greenleaf Whittier, Henry

2 "Alfred B. Street." *American Literary Magazine*, vol. 3, no. 6, December 1848, pp. 323–330.

3 Several biographical essays on Street were published in his lifetime. These include (in chronological order): "Our Contributor—No. XXII Alfred B. Street. With a Portrait." *Graham's American Monthly Magazine of Literature, Art, and Fashion*, vol. 29, no. 2, August 1, 1846, pp. 61–66; "Alfred B. Street." *American Literary Magazine*, vol. 3 no. 6, December 1848, pp. 323–330; "Mémorial of Alfred B. Street. With a Portrait." *Bentley's Miscellany*, vol. 25, January 1849, pp. 562–566; and "Alfred B. Street." *Littell's Living Age*, vol. 122, no. 1569, July 4, 1874, pp. 39–52. All of these are unsigned; however, a printed copy of the essay from *Graham's* with minor edits done in Street's own hand exists in his papers in the New York State Library. A table of contents for a never-published volume of essays that includes this essay as "Biographical Notice" raises the possibility that Street is the author. If he is not, he certainly approved of the essay. (Alfred Billings Street Papers, New York State Library, SC 10809. Series III, Box 7, folder 1.)

4 "Our Contributors.—No. XXII. Alfred B. Street. With a Portrait." *Graham's Magazine*, vol. 29, no. 2, August 1846, pp. 61–66.

5 Church owned a copy of Street's poem *Frontenac: Or The Atotarho of the Iroquois, A Metrical Romance* inscribed to him by the author. The inscription reads "F.E. Church, Esq. From his friend the author Alfred B. Street Sept. 25, 1856 / In presence of E.D. Palmer and George Wm. Warren" (Brier).

6 Parker, Hershel. *Herman Melville: A Biography. Volume 2, 1851–1891*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1996, p. 139.

7 Wendell, Barrett. *A Literary History of America*. New York: C. Scribners, 1900, p. 222.

Wadsworth Longfellow, and later Robert Frost).⁸ Unlike Bryant, Emerson, and Dickinson, though, Street favors a precise, accessible description of the natural world. His poems are filled with the names of flora and fauna far beyond the occasional flower or bird found in Emerson or Bryant. Further, Street's poems are accurate to both geography and season. "A September Stroll," for example, includes only fall flowers and other plants in their fall foliage. Many of his poems describe particular locations—streams, ponds, mountains—often at specific times of the year. "The Callicoon in Autumn," "The Falls of the Mongaup," and "The Beech-Tree" are typical titles. In an era when writers abstracted nature, perceiving the ideal in the material, Street stubbornly stuck to the material. Lawrence Buell writes that "environmentality worthy of the name means letting the goldfinch be, not petrifying it into the kind of 'golden' bird the Yeatsian speaker imagines as his immortal body in 'Sailing to Byzantium'."⁹ In Street's poems, natural objects remain steadfastly themselves.

"The Hill Hollow" offers readers a good introduction to the way Street's poetry engages the non-human world. The poem begins by situating its subject—a place where a stream in flood has eroded a bank—in both geomorphological and seasonal terms:

A hollow in the hills. Spring's melted snows
And many rain-showers swelled the tiny brook,
Until it dashed a torrent, scooping out
A channel, as it tore upon its way.
But now, the slender springlet trickles on.... (1–5)¹⁰

This is not a static, idealized stream. It is something in flux, something that changes with seasons and weather. As the poem continues, Street describes the eroded bank with such precision that a stream morphologist would instantly recognize the features of the streambed:

The yellow bank, scarped by the rushing flood,
Dangling with threads of roots, with here and there
The twisted feet of clinging firs, like veins
Bare, bulging from the earth, and bedded stones,
And crowned with ranks of tall, majestic trees,

8 While there is a tendency to see the pastoral and the picturesque as interchangeable terms, the pastoral refers to lands ordered by human culture—cultivated landscapes—while the picturesque refers to scenes of wild roughness. An excellent illustration on the difference between the two can be found in an 1849 essay on Street found in the English journal *Bentley's Miscellany*, in which the writer contrasts the pastoral reaches of Dutchess County, where Street was born, with the picturesque wilds of Sullivan County, where he was raised: Instead of the smooth meadow ascent [of Dutchess County], he saw the broken hill-side blackened with fire, or just growing green with its first crop. Instead of the yellow corn-field stretching as far as the eye could see, he beheld the clearing spotted with stumps, with the thin rye growing between—instead of the comfortable farm-house peeping from its orchards, he saw the log cabin stopping amid the half-cleared trees; the dark ravine took the place of the mossy dell, and the wild lake of the sail-spotted and far-stretching river. ("Memoir of Alfred B. Street." *Bentley's Miscellany* vol. 25, 1849, pp. 563–566, p. 564) For a fuller definition of the picturesque, see Barringer and Raab, pp. 17–29.

9 Buell, Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005, p. 55.

10 All quotations of Street's poetry cite line number in *The Poems of Alfred B. Street in Two Volumes*. New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1867.

Casts a black massive shadow half across.
The short, thick emerald grass slopes opposite,
In a tall graceful curve, to where the rill
Glides in its sparkling dance, with castanets
Made by the pebble tricklings. (19–28)

We have an eroding bank on the outside bend of a curve with exposed root systems and cobble. At the moment, this curve runs in its banks (“glides in sparkling dance”), but in spring flood, it rises up and eats at the bank, part of the regular meandering of streams. We’re a long way from the generic stream of Romantics like Bryant or Wordsworth.

“The Hill Hollow” offers readers a picturesque scene—one can easily imagine this as a painting by Asher B. Durand or Worthington Whittredge. But in “The Willewemoc in Summer,” we see Street attempting to capture not just a picture of a particular place on a stream, but the whole of it—from headwaters to its end. He does this by depicting a series of scenes, each alive with motion. The poem explores a stream that Street fished frequently while growing up. The Willowemoc¹¹ rises in the southern Catskills and flows west, joining the Beaverkill in Roscoe before eventually emptying into the Delaware River. The poem begins at the Willowemoc’s source:

Bubbling within some basin green
So fringed with fern, the woodcock’s bill
Scarce penetrates the leafy screen,
Leaps into life the infant rill. (1–4)

Street then leads readers along the stream in stanzas three and four, showing how its character changes in response to flora and geography, much like what an angler experiences wading a stream hunting for trout. In this version, the trees, bushes, birds, insects, and mammals that live in and around the stream are as much a part of it as the water itself. The reader encounters alder, aspen, hemlock; sees deer, otter, and trout; and observes bees, flies, gnats, and nine different species of birds. It becomes clear that the Willowemoc is not a single thing, but rather a conglomeration of scenes and settings. One moment Street is describing delicate moss along the water’s edge; the next, he’s describing the way the sound of the stream varies as the terrain changes. Then Street offers a twenty-two line description of a pool “sheltered” by trees. At first, “the roofed water seems to be / A solid mass of ebony.” But as the speaker observes, the pool teems with life. First, “the quick darting waterfly / Ploughs its light furrow, skimming by.” Then swallows appear, and then “the gnat-swarms, dust-like, speck the air” (37). This is a description written by someone who has looked closely at a stream and found something that matters.

Though the term was not available to Street, his is a poetics of the watershed. The 114-line poem is divided into five stanzas of varying lengths that are not linked by any

11 “Willowemoc” is the contemporary spelling of the stream.

logical or thematic progression. Only the progress of the stream over local geology joins the passages. In this sense, the poem is distinct from William Cullen Bryant's poem "Green River," maybe the most famous American romantic poem about a stream, in which Bryant offers little specific description of the river, while the stream in that poem serves mostly to evoke a conventional pastoral meditation. For Street, however, the Willowemoc is not simply a river but a blending of geography, water, flora, fauna, and weather.

In "A September Stroll," we see another example of Street allowing the natural world to dictate the form and progression of the poem. Here, though, climate and season shape it. The poem engages the long tradition of the autumn poem in Anglo-American literature, yet Street refuses the tradition's conventional metaphors of approaching death and divinity. Perhaps the best exemplar of this in American literature is Emily Dickinson, who wrote several poems on the end of summer, such as the poem that begins "These are the days when Birds come back –," in which the momentary return of summer is a "fraud" that almost returns the speaker to faith.¹² In Bryant's "Autumn Woods," the speaker laments that autumn will "so soon / Depart" and decides that the colors of autumn foliage, which he likens to a "blush of maiden shame" are "a lot too blessed" for this fallen world.¹³ In these poems of Dickinson and Bryant, as in Keats' "To Autumn," autumn is personified, addressed in an apostrophe, and imagined in sensuous, idealized terms.

Street's poem differs radically from those in that there is no personification and no overt attempt to make the end of summer serve any metaphorical purposes. Street doesn't even acknowledge that September is the end of anything—it is an end-of-summer poem devoid of nostalgia. Its 119 lines in blank verse describes a walk from "the city close" (most likely Albany, where Street was living at the time), through pastures, into woods. In the course of the walk, the speaker explores several ravines, streambeds, and copses of woods, ending, ultimately, by watching the sunset. Of course, this is a Street poem, so the September stroll it describes is identifiably a *September* stroll. The streambeds are nearly dry, the flora is right for the ninth month—oak trees are just starting to turn color, goldenrod is blooming. Street's speaker eventually takes us into one particularly dense stand of trees in which,

The hickory-shell, cracked open by its fall,
Shows its ripe fruit, an ivory ball, within;
And the cleft chestnut-burr displays its sheath
White glistening, with its glossy nuts below. (93–96)

The poem isn't a generic meditation on the end of summer; it is a precise description of the flora and fauna encountered on a September day in upstate New York.

12 Dickinson, Emily. *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Edited by Thomas H. Johnson, Little, Brown and Company, 1961, p. 61.

13 Bryant, William Cullen. *Poetical Works*. New York, Appleton and Company, 1878, p. 98.

Perhaps most surprising about the poem, though, is the climactic precision. The opening lines of the poem describe a weather pattern that creates the conditions the speaker encounters on his stroll.

The dull mist of September, fitfully
Thickening to chill and gusty streams of rain,
Lifted at sunset, and the western verge
Showed a broad stripe of light; a golden smile
Burst o'er the dripping scene, then died away:
And the North swept, in hollow main and hiss,
Round dwellings and through branches.

Morning broke
In cloudless beauty, but a chilly breath
Still edged the crystal air. The sun went down,
With a rich halo glowing round the spot
Where his orb glided, and a splendid belt
Of orange burned above his slanting track,
Melting to soft, bright gray, that deepened up
Into the rich mid-blue; and where the pearl
Darkened into sapphire, bounded forth
The courier-star of night's magnificence.
Morning again rose gloriously clear (1–17)

The first day, described in lines one through seven, is misty, though the sky clears in the evening as a cold wind sweeps in. The next day (lines seven through sixteen) is clear but cold, with a clear sky at night allowing additional cooling. Only on day three does the weather warm up enough to create the atmosphere that allows for the pleasant stroll. The day of the stroll is not a generic September day, but rather the consequence of a specific pattern of weather. Over and over in his early work Street offers readers precise depictions of natural scenes like these.

One way to understand these poems and others like “The Callicoon in Autumn,” “A Forest Nook,” or “Night in the Wilderness”—which describes exactly what its title suggests, complete with “the frog-marsh” that “echoes harsh and loud” and “the mosquito-cloud...with its constant hum” (18–20)—is to see them as poetic versions of the naturalism that Asher B. Durand began exploring in the mid-1840s, about the time Street published these poems. Linda Ferber argues that Durand’s encounters with Ruskin’s ideas about truth and nature in *Modern Painters I* pushed Durand away from the pastoralism of his early landscapes toward paintings of wilderness settings done with increasing fidelity to

the geological and botanical facts of his subject.¹⁴ The “Studies from Nature” that resulted from this shift were detailed, realistic depictions of trees, rock outcroppings, and streams. Ferber calls the 1843 display of the earliest of these works “a first response to Ruskinian Realism.” Works such as *Study: Trees by the Brookside, Kingston, New York* (1846) and *Study from Nature: Rocks and Trees in the Catskill, New York* (1856) echo Street’s detailed poetic portraits of streams, with the latter capturing the same roots “like veins / Bare, bulging from the earth, and bedded stones” as in “The Hill Hollow” (45). Street’s second book, *Drawings, and Tintings*, which includes many of his poems of nature, appeared in 1844, just a year after Durand began displaying his “Studies from Nature” (though several of Street’s poems had been published years before).

The fruit of Durand’s “Studies from Nature” is a turn in his major works from the pastoral to the picturesque. We can see an example of this in his 1848 painting *Mountain Stream*, in which a deer crosses a rocky brook in the mountains. The painting suggests a link between Durand and Street, as it echoes lines from “The Willewemoc in Summer,” where the poet describes the upper Willowemoc as “pebbly shallows, where the deer / Just bathes his crossing hoof” (15–16). Whether the echo is intentional or coincidental is unknown. Durand did make several references in his paintings to the work of William Cullen Bryant, but I haven’t uncovered any references to Street. However in 1852, when George P. Putnam published *The Home Book of the Picturesque*, which was dedicated to Durand, Street wrote the essay that accompanied Durand’s contribution.

Street is also tied to Durand through the work of *The Crayon*, a journal of the graphic arts and literature, which was owned and edited by the artist’s son, John Durand, and the painter William James Stillman. *The Crayon* served as a major vehicle for Ruskin’s writings and theories in the United States, as well as the work of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and ideas of aestheticism in general. Janice Simon has called it “the most substantive, pioneering, and enduring art periodical of the period.”¹⁵ Ruskin himself wrote to the editors of *The Crayon* that Americans exhibited a “heartier appreciation and better understanding of what I am and what I mean” than his English audience.¹⁶

In its first two volumes, *The Crayon* published Asher B. Durand’s famous “Letters on Landscape Painting,” in which he lays out his aesthetics in terms that echo Street’s work from the 1840s. In these letters, Durand offers an Americanized version of Ruskin’s ideas of naturalism from *Modern Painters I*. He urges young painters to “go first to nature and learn to paint.”¹⁷ He later argues that close study of nature brings one to God: “It is impossible

14 Ferber, Linda S. “Asher B. Durand, American Landscape Painter,” in *Kindred Spirits: Asher B. Durand and the American Landscape*. Ed. Linda S. Ferber. Brooklyn Museum, 2007, p. 161.

15 Simon, Janice. “‘The Crayon,’ 1855–1861: The voice of nature in criticism, poetry, and the fine arts” (Volumes I and II) Diss. University of Michigan, 1990, p. 1.

16 Stein, Roger B. *John Ruskin and Aesthetic Thought in America, 1840–1900*. Harvard UP, 1967, p. 263.

17 Durand, Asher B. “Letters on Landscape Painting: Letter I.” *The Crayon*, vol. 1, no. 1, January 3, 1855, pp. 1–2.

to contemplate [nature]...without arriving at the conviction...that the Great Designer of those glorious pictures has placed them before us as types of the Divine attributes.”¹⁸ Durand’s letter echoes Street’s 1841 poem “The Forest Nook,” in which he encourages readers to pay close attention to even such seemingly insignificant things as the spider, the wood-tick, and the grasshopper, which he describes as “*types* / Of His perfection and divinity” (emphasis added 34).¹⁹

In some ways, Street’s attitudes toward nature and religion are commonplace by this point. Bryant, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thomas Cole, and a host of lesser-known American artists had already echoed Wordsworth’s call to find God in nature, and when Durand and Cole sought poetic confirmation for these ideas, they turned to their friend and kindred spirit, Bryant. Street differs, though, in the specific details of his portraits of the non-human. It is difficult to imagine Bryant and Emerson describing spiders and wood-ticks as “these noteless, lovely things” (34). When Emerson writes of mosquitos in his essay “Prudence,” it is to illustrate the folly of sensualism: “if we walk in the woods, we must feed musquitoes.”²⁰ Bryant, in his poem “To a Mosquito,” calls the insect a “brother poet” and asks him to not bite him but “try some plump alderman.”²¹ They write about the mosquito as something that exists to teach a lesson rather than as something of value in its own right.

Street’s precise treatment of nature and his ability to value the things of nature for themselves caught the eye of Stillman, who wrote most of the content for the first two volumes of *The Crayon*. Though Street only appeared once in the journal—his poem “A Summer Day” was published in the February 21, 1855, issue—he was listed as a featured contributor to the journal in 1855 and 1856.²² Perhaps Stillman had hopes that Street would contribute more. (*The Crayon* was still a shoestring operation at this point, while Street was regularly publishing in more prestigious—and higher-paying—journals, which may explain why he didn’t write more for it.) Yet Stillman featured Street prominently in the first volume. In it, Stillman identified Street, Bryant, and his sometimes mentor James Russell Lowell as the three American poets who most fully expressed “the perception of the influences of external nature.” Stillman celebrated these writers in aestheticist terms for “the love of external beauty for itself, rather than as a point to hang a moral on,” and called them “landscape painters.”²³ In the third issue of the journal, Stillman published a long article on Street, praising his fidelity to nature: “I do not think there is another poet who shows in his works so entire a perception of the value of detail and specific truth, as

18 Durand, Asher B. “Letters on Landscape Painting: Letter II.” *The Crayon*, vol. 1, no. 3, January 17, 1855, pp. 34–35.

19 “The Forest Nook” first appeared in *The New-Yorker*, vol. 11, no. 20, July 31, 1841, p. 308.

20 Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Volume II: Essays: First Series*. Ed. Alfred R. Ferguson and Jean Ferguson Carr. Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1979, p. 133.

21 Bryant, William Cullen. *Poetical Works*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1878, p. 200.

22 *The Crayon*, 2.26, Dec 26, 1855, Advertisement, p. 408; 3.3, March 1, 1856, p. 97.

23 Stillman, William James. “The Landscape Element in American Poetry: Bryant.” *The Crayon*, vol. 1, no. 1, January 3, 1855, pp. 3–4.

Street.” He calls “A September Stroll” “a perfect Pre-Raphaelite study. Each object, as it catches the poet’s attention, is given to you in the most faithful manner.” Noting that his poems always accurately reflect the flora of the season, he asserts that Street, “above all our poets, loves ‘Nature,’ *i.e.* inanimate nature, for her own sake, apart from all sentiment of life and its struggles.”²⁴ What Street offered Stillman (and, in turn, *The Crayon*) was an early model of how Ruskin’s ideas could be adopted to the American literary scene.

An important source for the “fidelity to nature” that Stillman observed in Street’s poetry was the poet’s experiences in nature while hunting and fishing in Sullivan County as a youth and his ongoing involvement in sporting culture, an involvement he shared with Stillman, Durand, and a number of other New York artists. Thomas Picton, writing in 1876, described the community of painters in pre-Civil War New York as one “where devotion to trout fishing amounted to almost a predominant passion.”²⁵ As John Reiger explains, the sportsmen were a group of upper and upper-middle class hunters and anglers who wrote some of the earliest descriptions of environmental degradation in the United States and whose call for restrictions on hunting and fishing were some of the earliest attempts to restrict the exploitation of the natural world. The idea that hunters and anglers were at the forefront of the conservation movement may strike many contemporary readers as odd. Yet the literature of hunting and fishing from the early 1800s on is filled with laments about environmental degradation, often tied explicitly to industrialism. Three years before Emerson’s *Nature* appeared in 1836—in which he dismissed the very idea of environmental destruction (“[humanity’s] operations taken together are so insignificant, a little chipping, baking, patching, and washing, that in an impression so grand as that of the world on the human mind, they do not vary the result” [28])—Jerome V. C. Smith published *Natural History of the Fishes of Massachusetts, Embracing a Practical Essay on Angling*, in which he wrote about the destructive effects of commercial fishing, water pollution, and dams.²⁶ Frank Forester, the most popular antebellum writer on sporting culture, wrote regularly about the need for land preservation and game laws. And William T. Porter’s journal *The Spirit of the Times*, in which Street frequently published, advocated stricter game laws and expressed concern about habitat destruction.²⁷

Reiger argues that environmental historians have often misunderstood hunting and fishing in nineteenth-century America because they have tended to lump all hunters and fishers together, while there were at least three distinct groups of them in the 1800s. Market hunters and fishers killed animals for sale in urban markets. They adopted whatever methods would kill the largest number of animals without regard for how their take would impact the overall population. “Pot hunters,” a pejorative term coined by sportsmen, were

24 Stillman, William James. “The Landscape Element in American Poetry: Street.” *The Crayon*, vol. 1, no. 3, January 17, 1855, pp. 39–40.

25 Picton, Thomas. “Old Time Disciples of Rod and Gun.” *The American Fly Fisher*, vol. 10, no. 3, Fall 1983, pp. 22–25. (Reprint of article from the Feb 12, 1876 issue of *Rod and Gun*.)

26 Reiger, John F. *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation*. 3rd Edition. Oregon State UP, 2001, p. 18.

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 36–37, 33.

individuals who hunted for food. The so-called sportsmen hunted and fished for leisure.²⁸ They furiously opposed the market hunters and scorned the pot hunters. Market hunters, the sportsmen argued, used “unsporting” methods such as netting fish or shooting waterfowl while they floated on the water (as distinct from shooting them in flight). These methods resulted in the near elimination of those animals. The sportsmen criticized pot hunters because they hunted and fished year-round, which interfered with the animals’ ability to breed and raise young.²⁹ In response, these sportsmen developed what Reiger calls the “sportsman’s code,” a collection of principles designed to differentiate between what they saw as the ethical and unethical killing of animals. For example, methods that resulted in the mass killing of animals, such as netting fish or shooting birds that were not in flight, were shunned in favor of methods that required more skill and limited the number of animals killed. These sportsmen used this code not only as a guide to personal practice but also as a basis for the game and conservation laws they advocated.³⁰

We can see an excellent illustration of the sportman’s code in action in James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Pioneers* when Leatherstocking bemoans the excessive killing of passenger pigeons and shoots just one out of the air—a scene frequently cited now as evidence of Cooper’s proto-environmentalism.³¹ As Leatherstocking approaches the hunters, even his dogs share his disgust at “this wasteful and unsportsmanlike execution.”³² And his condemnation of those shooting the pigeons in droves explicitly links their wastefulness with their lack of skill:

It’s wicked to be shooting into flocks in this wasty manner; and none do it, who know how to knock over a single bird. If a body has a craving for pigeon’s flesh, why! it’s made the same as all other creators, for man’s eating; but not to kill twenty and eat one. When I want such a thing, I go into the woods till I find one to my liking, and then I shoot him off the branch without touching the feature of another, though there might be a hundred on the same tree. You couldn’t do such a thing, Billy Kirby—you couldn’t do it if you tried.³³

While Reiger celebrates the environmental efforts of these sportsmen and rightly documents their place in the history of American conservation law, it is just as important to be clear-eyed about the politics of their work. These early conservation efforts began when wealthy and connected men recognized that pastimes they valued—hunting and fishing—were threatened by economic and demographic changes, and they organized and used their power to limit the impacts of those changes. In some cases, they sought to limit

28 Ibid., p. 7–24.

29 Ibid., p. 12.

30 Ibid., pp. 48–49.

31 Sivils, Matthew Wynn. *American Environmental Fiction, 1782–1847*. Ashgate, 2014, pp. 10–11.

32 Cooper, James Fenimore. *The Pioneers, or the Sources of the Susquehanna; A Descriptive Tale*. Ed. Lance Schachterle. State U of New York P, 1980, p. 245.

33 Ibid. p. 247.

the impact of the very industrialization that made many of them wealthy and powerful, but more often they sought to limit access to fish and game—cheap sources of food—for those less powerful. While their efforts fostered more sustainable taking of wild animals and preserved animal populations that might otherwise have been eradicated, they were devoid of what contemporary environmentalists would call notions of environmental justice. Leatherstocking's scolding of the pigeon hunters may speak to the hearts of modern environmentalists, but it is also grounded in James Fenimore Cooper's contempt for the mob.³⁴

Alfred Street was immersed in this sporting culture. He often wrote about hunting and fishing in the undeveloped forests of Sullivan County, at that time still largely unsettled and a favorite area for New York anglers and hunters. Prominent sporting writers such as Frank Forester and Henry Inman (also a famous landscape painter) came to Sullivan County to fish Callicoon Creek, the Beaverkill, and Willowemoc Creek.³⁵ Street wrote poems and essays about these streams, often publishing them in the key sporting journals of the day, including *American Turf Register*, *Spirit of the Times*, and *Forest and Stream*. Titles of his essays include "A Day's Fishing on the Callikoon," "A Day or Two's Fishing in Pike Pond," and "A Day's Hunting About the Mongaup." Yet he also travelled beyond Sullivan County. He was a member of the North Woods Walton Club, an angling club of businessmen and other leaders from upstate New York and the first of many such clubs that would bring wealthy anglers and hunters to the Adirondack region.³⁶ Street's essay "Moose Hunting," though published in *Maine Farmer*, describes events in the Adirondacks. His poem "Angling" was widely reprinted in books on angling, and Catskill angling historian Ed Van Put calls him "one of our pioneer trout fishers and an important contributor to American angling literature."³⁷

The deep and detailed knowledge of the natural world that Street displays is one of the elements of the sportsman's code. As Reiger explains, sportsmen believed that a rich, detailed understanding of the animal and its environment was a necessary prerequisite for the ethical taking of that animal.³⁸ In this, Street is typical of the many sportsman artists who tended to a more literal depiction of the natural world in their art. Durand's "Studies from Nature," with their precise depiction of rock outcroppings and stands of trees, may be the most famous of these works. Many of the second-generation Hudson River School painters were sportsman artists, including Jervis McEntee and Worthington Whittredge.³⁹ But the connection between Ruskin-inspired naturalism and sporting culture may be

34 For a more nuanced discussion of the political implications of sportsman's conservation efforts, see Daniel Justin Herman's "Hunting Democracy." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, vol. 55, no. 3, Autumn 2005. pp. 22–33. Herman argues that attempts to limit access to hunting is part of what he calls "the aristocratization of hunting" (25).

35 Van Put, Ed. *Trout Fishing in the Catskills*. New York: Skyhorse, 2007, pp. 15–38.

36 Karas, Nick. *Brook Trout: A Thorough Look at North America's Great Native Trout—Its History, Biology, and Angling Possibilities*. Revised Ed. Lyons P. 2002, p. 214.

37 Van Put, p. 38.

38 Reiger, p. 11.

39 Van Put, pp. 71–77.

best illustrated by Stillman's account of his 1854 fishing trip in the Adirondacks—*The Wilderness and its Waters*—published serially in *The Crayon* right alongside Ruskin's *The Poetry of Architecture* and Durand's "Letters on Landscape" (all three works appeared in *The Crayon* in the first seven months of its existence (Volume 1–2, January–July 1855). Stillman's book recounts his adventures with two friends, all "artists and anglers"⁴⁰ The book alternates between painstakingly detailed accounts of fly fishing and rich descriptions of the north woods and lakes. Stillman would become most famous, however, as the organizer of the Philosophers' Camp on Follensby Pond in August 1858, where he guided Emerson, James Russell Lowell, Louis Agassiz, and several other Boston luminaries on a month-long adventure in the wilds of the Adirondacks, during the course of which Stillman tried (unsuccessfully) to help Emerson satiate his desire to kill a deer.⁴¹ So while Ruskin may have been the theoretical source of naturalism, for these sportsmen artists it was their involvement in sporting culture that gave them the eye to carry out Ruskin's ideals.

Literary critics of the mid-1800s were conditioned to expect the idealization of nature rather than a detailed rendering of it, so they didn't know quite what to make of Street. His apparent lack of poetic skill was a frequent topic, mentioned even by his most ardent defenders. His descriptive powers blunted his artistic capacity, they argued. Those writers who championed him the most saw his poems about nature as unique contributions to literary nationalism, in the same way that American landscape painting was seen as a response to Europe. Rufus Griswold likens his poetry to the landscapes of Thomas Cole and pronounces them "among the most peculiarly *national* works in our literature."⁴² Henry T. Tuckerman also likens him to painters: "He is a true Flemish painter, seizing upon objects in all their verisimilitude. As we read him, wild flowers peer up from among the brown leaves...." To Tuckerman, though, this fidelity to nature serves nationalistic purposes: "In a foreign land his poems would transport us at once to home. He is no second-hand limner, content to furnish insipid copies, but draws from reality. His pictures have the freshness of originals. They are graphic, detailed, never untrue, and often vigorous. He is essentially an American poet."⁴³

More often, though, critics saw Street's careful, precise descriptions of the non-human world as a kind of parlor trick: Entertaining, yes, but ultimately of limited value. An 1846 article on Street in *Graham's Magazine* quotes a review of the poet in the English *Foreign Quarterly Report* levying this criticism:

40 Stillman, William James. "The Wilderness and Its Waters: Chapter I The Threshold." *The Crayon*, vol. 1, no. 11, March 14, 1855, pp. 163–165.

41 Schlett, James. *A Not Too Greatly Changed Eden: The Story of the Philosophers' Camp in the Adirondacks*. Cornell UP, 2015, pp. 97–98.

42 Griswold, Rufus W. *The Poets and Poetry of America: With an Historical Introduction*. Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1852, p. 408.

43 Tuckerman, Henry T. "A Sketch of American Literature." *Outlines of English Literature*, by Thomas B. Shaw. New York: Sheldon, 1866, p. 480.

He runs into a false luxuriance in the ardor of his love of nature, and in the wastefulness of a lively, but not large imagination;...he continually sacrifices general truth to particular details, making un-likeness by the crowding and closeness of his touches.⁴⁴

In an essay that was frequently excerpted in other periodicals, George H. Cotton complained that it was Street's very similarity to landscape painters that limited him as a poet:

As the painter of landscapes, however, can never rank among the greatest of painters, so the merely descriptive poet can never stand with the highest in his art. It needs a higher power of the mind, the transforming, the creative. Mr. Street endeavors only the pictures of external things. He rarely or never idealizes Nature; but Nature unidealized never brings a man into the loftier regions of poetry. For the greatest and highest use of material Nature, to the poet, is that she be made an exhaustless storehouse of imagery; that through her multitude of objects, aspects, influences, subtle sources of contrast and comparison, he should illustrate the universe of the unseen and spiritual.⁴⁵

Even writers who praise him, such as Tuckerman, acknowledge that his descriptiveness limited his artistry because it prevented Street from idealizing the non-human.

Perhaps the most damning—and damaging—criticism of Street came from his erstwhile champion and mentor, the Southern novelist William Gilmore Simms. Simms met Street while on a trip to New York City just before *The Burning of Schenectady, and Other Poems* appeared in 1842. Simms offered Street guidance and advice, and later wrote at least two enthusiastic reviews of his poetry. In an 1846 letter to Street, though, Simms praises Street, but then urges him to cut back on details in favor of impressions that suggest moral truths:

If Mr. Street is pleased with a scene let him describe it, only not forget in merely describing its actual features to say how these impressed him, —with what associations, analogies &c. This is associating the moral with the physical, as is done by Wordsworth, Bryant &c. Besides, you must not describe by details, since it is the *tout ensemble* that strikes & impresses you & not the constituents. Remember that! Struck by a scene, you proceed to ask how it is compounded, & thus make a survey rather than a picture.⁴⁶

Simms is correct that Street's instinct, upon writing about a scene, is "to ask how it is compounded." That's exactly what makes his early poetry about the landscape so interesting and valuable. It is firmly grounded in the details of the land. Unfortunately, Street seemed to have taken Simms' advice to heart, for as he progresses, his poetry shifts away from

44 "Our Contributors.-No. XXII. Alfred B. Street. With a Portrait." *Graham's Magazine*, vol. 29, no. 2, August 1846, p. 62.

45 "Alfred B. Street." *Littell's Living Age*, vol. 122, July, August, September, 1874, pp. 44–55.

46 Simms, William Gilmore. *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms: Vol II*. Ed. Mary C. Simms Oliphant, Alfred Taylor Odell, and T.C. Duncan Eaves. University of South Carolina P. 1953, pp. 131–132, 137, 173.

naturalistic portraits of nature and he begins writing narrative poetry about American history, and during the Civil War he turned to writing pro-Union poetry. In the process, the voice of a potentially exciting bioregional poet was silenced.

Scholars seeking to recover lost literary voices have a tendency to overstate the literary accomplishments of their subjects. Knowing that, I want to be clear about the limitations of Alfred B. Street. While he demonstrates real skill with blank verse, on the whole he is not an exceptionally talented poet. He lacks the ear of Bryant or Poe and the imaginative daring of Emerson, Dickinson, and Whitman. He is fond of clichés. Tall trees are frequently “majestic.” Sunshine is often “golden.” And hearths, when they appear, are always “blazing.” And you get the feeling, at times, that Street is a hostage to his form, as if he’s filling out phrases to fit the meter. His many historical poems are utterly conventional in their attitudes toward European settlement and Native Americans. In Street’s poems, Native Americans are occasionally noble (as in “Morannah”), mostly treacherous (as in “The Blood-Stained”), but never fully human. His collected poems are filled with uncomplicatedly patriotic poems with titles like “Song for Independence” and “Fourth of July Ode.” He is also capable of abandoning his careful naturalism and deploying natural images as symbols. One of his most frequently anthologized poems, “The Gray Forest Eagle,” portrays an eagle as “An emblem of Freedom, —stern, haughty, and high” (5). His many Civil War poems are best described as pro-Union propaganda, celebrating vague ideals of union and freedom without ever mentioning slavery, and trumpeting famous generals and battles without showing any insight into what war was really like for those who fought it.

At his best, though, and especially in his early poetry, Street was an artist who saw value in the close observation of the natural world, who believed that the non-human world itself was of value. To Street, an eroded stream bank was significant. The variety of trees in a particular glade was worth noticing, as was the way the sunlight disappeared off a mountainside at sunset. But literary culture of his time steadfastly denigrated those observations. He was told, over and over, that what he wrote was pretty but unimportant. He was told, over and over, that he must attach some larger significance to his observations of the natural world. He was told that in fact the natural world was not valuable unless it could teach us something else, for example about God’s love or the form of Creation. And as his career progressed, he learned to write the conventional middle-brow poetry that readers of mid-nineteenth-century periodicals expected.

Street is worth reading today, though, because he complicates our ideas of American’s attitude toward the land in the mid-nineteenth century. We often talk about the ways that literary culture championed nature and fostered an early environmental vision. In that telling, American culture did not value the natural world in and of itself. It was concerned only with “getting and spending,” to use Wordsworth’s phrase. Then writers such as Wordsworth, Bryant, and Emerson wrote poetry that celebrated the natural, non-human world, and caused readers to look more closely at it. These writers then led to later

generations of writers—Thoreau and Susan Fenimore Cooper, and eventually Thomas Wentworth Higginson, John Burroughs, and John Muir, with each generation looking more closely at the natural world. Thus we see a line from the early Romantic poets to the full-throated environmentalism of John Muir.

Street, I think, disrupts this genealogy because as early as 1840—fourteen years before *Walden* appeared—Street was writing poetry with as sharp an eye for natural details as that other Catskill boy, John Burroughs, would write in the late 1800s. What eventually squelched Street's concern with the natural world wasn't the acquisitive nature of American capitalism, but rather the conventions and expectations of American Romantic literary culture. Ultimately, Street adapted to those conventions and expectations in his poetry. He never abandoned his love for the natural world, but he seems to have decided that succeeding as a writer meant bowing to the expectations of critics, publishers, and readers.

While Street turned away from writing about nature in his poetry, he did not abandon a concern for nature. The mid-1800s saw a boom in travel narratives about the Adirondacks, and Street was a part of that boom, publishing two books of his travels in the North Country.⁴⁷ *Woods and Waters; or, The Saranacs and Racket* (1860) tells of a trip with a group of hunters and anglers—members of the Saranac Club—journeying through the lakes region west of Lake Placid. His second narrative, *The Indian Pass* (1869), dispenses with tales of hunting and fishing and tells of his journey through the High Peaks region of the Adirondacks. While *Woods and Waters* contains the expected tales of hunting and fishing exploits, it also offers readers detailed descriptions of the lakes region, and Street's guides speak about the habits of non-game animals as much as deer and trout. *The Indian Pass* is more of a naturalist's book. It opens with a fifty-eight-page essay on the geography, flora, and fauna of the Adirondacks. Then in the narrative itself, Street documents his observations about the world around him in painstaking (though sometimes painful) detail. Here's Street describing the approach hike to the pass:

Onward, Onward! Past colonnades of lordly trunks, where sunlight lay in speckles; past vistas opening denser shades, and looking as if only the light

WOODS AND WATERS

OR

SUMMER IN THE SARANACS

WITH

TWO ILLUSTRATIONS ON WOOD

DESIGNED BY WILLIAM HART, AND ENGRAVED BY AVERY

By ALFRED B. STREET

AUTHOR OF "POEMS," "FRONTENAC, A NARRATIVE POEM," &C.



ALBANY, N. Y.:

PUBLISHED BY WEED, PARSONS AND COMPANY.
1870.

Image courtesy of www.Hathitrust.org

47 For a history of early romantic travel in the Adirondacks, see Schneider, Paul, *The Adirondacks: A History of America's First Wilderness*. Henry Holt, 1997. See especially chapter 14, "The Romantic's Arrival," pp. 155–174.

foot of the rabbit or partridge had ever left a print; past delicious dingles where diamond runlets danced; past hemlocks dripping with ringleted moss as old towers of ivy; past delicate white birches glittering as if of silver in the emerald light....⁴⁸

The sentence continues like this for another page and a half, only to be followed by another long catalog that goes on for a half-page more. If Street did sometimes try his readers' patience in *The Indian Pass*, nonetheless he offered them a vicarious journey into a realm few white people had entered.

Woods and Waters appeared to favorable reviews in *The Knickerbocker* and *The Crayon*, as well as *Spirit of the Times: A Chronicle of the Turf, Agriculture, Field Sports*, and the journal *Literature and the Stage*. The book evidently did well enough that nine years later the prestigious firm of Hurd and Houghton would publish *The Indian Pass*. At least one reviewer admired Street's second narrative, saying that "It abounds in fine and accurate description. There are not wanting passages of great beauty, original poetry, and poetry in prose, in keeping with the wild and the sublime, the lovely and the beautiful, there to be seen."⁴⁹ But other reviewers disagreed. While it would seem that Street was poised to play a major role in the post-war boom in field sports, his extravagant prose style was more suited to the pre-war era. One reviewer says of Street's lyricism in *The Indian Pass*, "Some of us perhaps would enjoy more outpourings of a simpler and less rhapsodical enthusiasm; but those who like eloquence in such matters have it here in full blast."⁵⁰ Post-war readers preferred the directness of Mark Twain and John Burroughs. In addition, Street was unfortunate enough to publish his book at the same time as one of the great phenomena of Adirondack writing, *Adventures in the Wilderness; Or, Camp-Life in the Adirondacks*, by William Henry Harrison Murray. "Adirondack" Murray, as he came to be called, wrote one of the first "how-to" books on Adirondack travel. Where Street emphasized the danger and exclusivity of travel in the region, Murray included railroad schedules in the opening pages of his book and instructed readers what equipment to bring and where to buy it. That he salted these instructions with tall tales about his adventures with giant trout and ghostly Indian maidens only increased the popularity of his book. Where Street wrote as the Romantic artist, perceiving the truth of the mysterious Adirondacks and communicating it to his readers, Murray wrote as a peer, portraying himself as a kind of everyman. Even when battling a Moby Dick-sized trout, Murray manages to portray himself as an average angler, the assumption being that the reader, too, would have caught the fish had he or she been in the same place and had the same fly. *Adventures in the Wilderness* was a democratic guidebook that encouraged readers to go there themselves and experience the same heroic

48 Street, Alfred B. *The Indian Pass*. New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1869, pp. 10–11.

49 Rev of *The Indian Pass*. *Hours at Home; A Popular Monthly of Instruction and Recreation*. vol. 8, no. 6, April 1869, pp. 578.

50 "Review I" Rev of *The Indian Pass*. *The Independent, Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Tendencies*. vol. 21, no. 1058, March 11, 1869, pp. 6.

wonders that Murray had experienced⁵¹. *Putnam Magazine's* dual review of *Adventures in the Wilderness* and *The Indian Pass* captures the different reactions to Murray and Street. Murray's book, the reviewer proclaims, "makes one loathe his desk," and "makes one's fingers tingle for the rifle and rod." Street, however, he dismisses with a joke about the last few pages of the book, in which Street imagines the mountains talking to each other:

We congratulate Mr. Street upon his admission to such dramatic interludes, but are not disposed to compliment the mountains upon their progress in the rhetorical and imaginative use of our English tongue.⁵²

The sporting journals of the late 1800s contained occasional references to Street, but by the dawn of the twentieth century he had largely disappeared from view. However, the Catskill streams and the Adirondack lakes and mountains that he wrote about were preserved in part due to the efforts of conservation-minded anglers and hunters of the late 1800s and early 1900s, a tradition that lives on today in the work of national conservation organizations such as Trout Unlimited, and New York-based groups such as the Theodore Gordon Fly Fishers and Trout Power. Street may have left little mark on American literature, but his writings on sporting culture did help shape the course of land preservation in New York State in an important way. Sometime around 1865 he gave a copy of *Woods and Waters* to a teenaged Verplanck Colvin, who was then clerking at his father's law firm in Albany. Colvin already had a healthy interest in the out-of-doors, but according to his biographer, Street's book sparked his love affair with the Adirondacks.⁵³ Colvin, of course, would go on to survey the Adirondacks, and his arguments for preservation led directly to the formation of the Adirondack Forest Preserve in 1885. While Street may have hoped for literary fame, I suspect he would consider that a much more valuable legacy.

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51 For an excellent discussion of the cultural impact of Murray's book, see Alisa Marko Iannucci's "Summer of '69: Adirondack Murray and the American Wilderness Vacation."

52 Anonymous. "Literature—At Home." *Putnam's Magazine*, vol. 3, no. 18, June 1869, pp. 754–760.

53 Webb, Nina H. *Footsteps through the Adirondacks, The Verplanck Colvin Story*. Utica: North Country Books, 1996, p. 13.

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Women in the Forest: Trees and “Tree Ladies” in the Creation of Palisades Interstate Park

Jeanne Haffner



Fig. 1: Blasting the Palisades cliffs for trap rock also destroyed its trees. Carpenter Brothers' Quarry in Fort Lee, NJ, 1890s. Courtesy of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission Archives

On the chilling morning of September 22, 1897, Edith Gifford boarded the yacht *Marietta* on the Hudson River along with other civically minded members of the New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs (NJSFWC) and their male allies from the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society (ASHPS). Their goal: to assess how far quarry operators had accelerated the blasting of the 200 million-year-old Palisades cliffs, which stretch for approximately twenty miles from Fort Lee, New Jersey, to just over the New York state line. The majestic talus slopes of the Palisades had been quarried for decades.



Fig. 2: Women's Club representatives on Harrison B. Moore's yacht, 1897.
Courtesy of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission Archives

But now quarrymen used the new invention of dynamite, in addition to other tools, to extract the trap rock needed to build New York City streets, piers, and the foundations of new skyscrapers.

While preserving the scenic beauty of this large piece of ancient volcanic rock was paramount for all onboard, Mrs. Gifford led the way in drawing attention to the forests that lined its base and top. An amateur forester herself who was married to the State Forester of New Jersey at the time, John Gifford, she argued that "the forestry interest...exceeds the interest of preserving the bluffs." Reminding her colleagues of her studies of the Palisades woodlands, she remarked that "in some places, the Palisades look exactly as they did when Hendrick Hudson sailed up the river. That is a very remarkable thing to find a primeval forest near the heart of a great metropolis." Joseph Lamb of the ASHPS, who built one of the first resorts in the Palisades in the 1850s, supported Mrs. Gifford's statement. "The

Palisades are perhaps more valuable as woodlands than anything else."¹

The 1890s campaign to save the Palisades, which led to the creation of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission in 1900 and the opening of Palisades Interstate Park in 1909, has typically been understood in isolation. Gifford's and others' concerns demonstrate that this effort was, in fact, interwoven with other conservation movements at the time, especially the creation of Adirondack Park in 1892. Both were informed, to varying degrees, by widespread concerns over deforestation and threatened water supplies. As the following discussion will show, trees were pivotal actors in this parallel story—but in different ways. Mrs. Gifford serves as our guide into this untold account, helping us understand why trees were as important as rocks in the campaign to save the Palisades, and how women effectively communicated this message within governmental and non-governmental circles alike.

1 See "To Save the Palisades," *The World*, September 23, 1897, 3; "Plan for the Protection of the Palisades," *New York Journal*, Sept. 26, 1897, 49.

Seeing the Forest from the Rocks

In the mid-1890s, as people on both sides of the Hudson began advocating for the preservation of the Palisades cliffs, the importance of forests to water supplies was taking hold in the U.S. The publication of George Perkins Marsh's bestselling book *Man and Nature* in 1864 had generated public discussion of the potentially disastrous consequences



Fig. 3: Seneca Ray Stoddard, *Drowned Lands of the Lower Raquette, Adirondacks*, c.1888. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

of large-scale deforestation: When trees were destroyed, Marsh warned, the ground can no longer hold moisture to feed the streams that ultimately feed the river. Instead, water carried sediment into waterways, leaving behind desolate landscapes and erosion. Deforestation threatened entire watersheds, impacting commerce, navigation, and public water supplies (Fig. 3).²

Marsh mentioned the Adirondacks in this book, but it was state surveyor Verplanck Colvin who, from the 1870s to 1900, convinced New York State legislators and New York City businessmen to protect the forests of the Adirondacks in order to protect the Hudson River. The Adirondack Forest Preserve was created in 1885, followed by Adirondack Park in 1892 and the addition of the “Forever Wild” clause in New York

² George Perkins Marsh, *Man and Nature: Or, the Physical Geography of the Earth as Modified by Human Action* (NY: Charles Scribner, 1864), 214–215.

State's Constitution in 1894. In 1891, Congress passed the first nationwide Forest Preserve Act with the intention of protecting the country's essential waterways. While the U.S. Forest Service was not established until 1905, scientific forestry was taught, studied, and written about, and the public's enthusiasm for trees was growing (Fig. 4).³

Established in 1894, the New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs took an interest in forestry issues from the very beginning. Its first annual meeting in the fall of 1895 included "papers on health culture, forestry, and traveling libraries."⁴ Protecting and planting trees was part of its members' broader, Progressive-era interests in urban reform, public education, and city beautification.⁵ At a time when women could not yet vote, involvement in environmental conservation perhaps offered an accepted form of resistance: still within the realm of domestic duties in the sense of taking care of nature, but also resisting societal norms and literally shaping the world around them.⁶

The NJSFWC became involved in the protection of the Palisades after a proposal to create a military reservation there failed in 1895.⁷ Many women were not necessarily in support of this proposal; in fact, NJSFWC member Katherine Sauzade pointed out the destructive impact it would have had on the forested summit.⁸ But they supported the government's acquisition of privately-owned land so that the cliffs and surrounding woodlands could be protected.⁹ When most were ready to give up, the NJSFWC revived the issue in governmental circles and in the press. Club members Elizabeth Vermilye and Cecilia Gaines (later Holland) lobbied New Jersey Governor Foster Voorhes, insisting on the creation of a committee to investigate the possibility of creating a public park. Vermilye and Gaines found powerful partners in the ASHPS across the river, who secured support from their own governor, Theodore Roosevelt. By 1900, both states had joined forces to

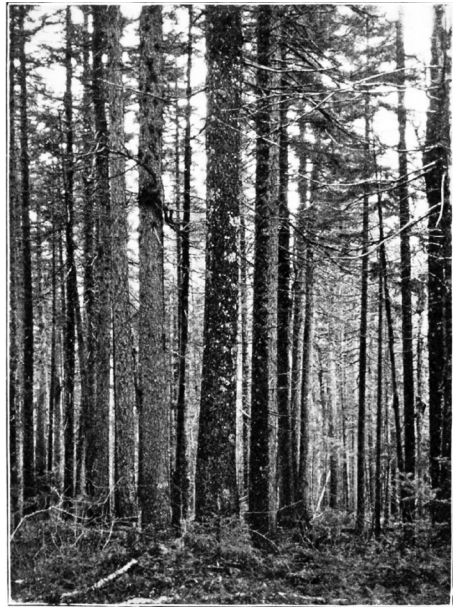


Fig. 4: Image from Gifford Pinchot, *The Adirondack Spruce: A Study of the Forest in Ne-Ha-Sa-Ne Park*. New York: Critic Co., 1898

3 Bernhard Fernow, "The Palisades Park," *The Forester* (May 1, 1896): 45.

4 NJSFWC, *A History of the New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs, 1894–1958* (Caldwell, NJ: Progress Publishing Company, 1958), 13.

5 Carolyn Merchant, *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* (NY: Routledge, 1995), 109.

6 Sonja Dümpelmann, "Designing the 'Shapely' City: Women, Trees, and the City," *Journal of Landscape Architecture*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2015), 7; see also Sonja Dümpelmann, *Seeing Trees: A History of Street Trees in New York City and Berlin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

7 "How the Women of New Jersey Helped to Save the Palisades," *Pearsons Magazine*, December 1902, 1282.

8 Katherine Sauzade, "Preservation of the Palisades of the Hudson," paper read at the meeting of the NJSFWC in Englewood, May 1897. Published in *The Forester*, vol. 3, no. 7 (July 1, 1897): 87.

9 "Plan for the Protection of the Palisades," *New York Journal*, September 26, 1897, 49.

create the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC) through an act to “preserve the scenery of the Palisades.”¹⁰

Under its first president, George Perkins, the PIPC purchased or received successive tracts of land to save the Palisades from quarry operators, resulting in iconic recreational areas such as Bear Mountain. When the Palisades Interstate Park opened in 1909, few could imagine that it would become one of the most popular public parks in the entire nation.¹¹ A landscape marked by resource exploitation had become a landscape of recreation, environmental education, and nature appreciation.

From Pedagogy to Policy Making

In the 1890s, male and female forest advocates alike agreed that the forests of New Jersey were in trouble. In his *Report on the Forests of North America* (1884), Charles Sprague Sargent, director of the Arnold Arboretum at Harvard, had painted a rather grim picture of the situation: “The original forests of New Jersey have disappeared. . . . [They] are insufficient to supply the wants of the population of the state, and nearly all the lumber it consumes is brought from beyond its limits.”¹² Until the 1870s, the state had ranked second in the nation in the production of forest products like timber, charcoal, firewood, and construction materials. By 1900, New Jersey was suffering from the loss of this revenue. In addition, it had to import trees to complete its own infrastructure and electricity networks.¹³



Fig. 5: Photograph showing forested land along the cliffs of the Palisades. J.S. Johnston, “Palisades on the Hudson,” no date (probably 1890s). Courtesy of New-York Historical Society

Just as in the Adirondacks, scientific foresters raised concerns about the impact of deforestation on the state’s water supplies. As urban and suburban populations across New Jersey swelled, many felt that preserving water supplies and spaces for recreation was more pressing, and more feasible, than reviving timber revenues.¹⁴ In 1894, the New Jersey Legislature ordered that a survey of forests be included in the State Geological Survey. The survey’s purpose was to determine the feasibility of creating a network of forest reserves across the state to satisfy needs for water and recreation. In this survey, the Palisades

10 Chapter 170 of the New York Legislature Session Laws for 1900.

11 Frances Dunwell, *The Hudson: America’s River* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2008), 230.

12 Charles Sprague Sargent, *Report on the Forests of North America* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1884), 506.

13 Emily W. B. Russell, “The 1899 New Jersey State Geologist’s Report: A Call for Forest Management,” *Journal of Forest History*, vol. 32, no. 4 (October 1988): 206–207. See also Robert O. Binnewies, *Palisades: 100,000 Acres in 100 Years* (New York: Fordham University Press and PIPC, 2001), 6.

14 Kevin Wright, “A Century of Forest Stewardship in New Jersey,” 2005, published online at http://www.newtonnj.net/pdf/NJParks_Forest05.pdf, accessed 02/28/2019.

was singled out, both for the quality of its old-growth timber and its important role in protecting water supplies in the Hackensack Valley below. The survey also noted the Palisades' value for future students of forestry, who could study its native plants and trees. "This beautiful forest," the report stated, "has almost as good a claim to future preservation as the escarpment of the Palisades (Fig. 5)."¹⁵

The State Forester of New Jersey at the time was Dr. John Gifford, the husband of NJSFWC member Edith Gifford. Both had been active members of the American Forestry Association and shared a passion for forests and trees.¹⁶ Dr. Gifford was the founding editor of *New Jersey Forester*, which ultimately became *American Forestry*, the journal of the U.S. Forest Service.¹⁷ His wife was active in numerous urban reform and environmental campaigns. After the establishment of the NJSFWC in 1894, she worked to bring the issue of forestry into the discourse surrounding the preservation of the Palisades from quarrying. A newspaper report described her this way: "Mrs. Gifford is a New Jersey woman who makes a special study of forestry for the NJSFWC when not engaged in household duties. She can tell you all about the management of European forests...[and] pathetic tales of wanton destruction of beautiful forests in this country."¹⁸ In 1896, she was appointed chair of a new Committee on Forestry and Protection of the Palisades at the NJSFWC.¹⁹

While scientific foresters focused on reports and surveys, Edith Gifford devoted herself to educating the public. At a NJSFWC meeting in 1896, which was attended by numerous state legislators and some of the nation's leading foresters, she showcased a traveling forestry library and exhibition. These were intended to educate children and the public more generally about the importance of forests and forestry. The exhibition included contrasting images of "pristine" forests and those ravaged by lumber dealers for economic profit; depictions of trees in art and leaf charts by Graceanna Lewis (Fig. 6); maps of New Jersey's forests and their connection to the state's geology; tree portraits; and examples of erosion caused by deforestation in France and other European countries. The library consisted of a bookcase made of oak, encased in "a traveling dress of white duck."²⁰ It contained major forestry textbooks of the day, including *What is Forestry?* by Bernhard Fernow and Franklin Hough's *Elements of Forestry*, as well as tree planting manuals and pamphlets on forestry's importance to watershed protection and timber supplies.²¹

Sargent attended the meeting and wrote a rave review in his journal *Garden and Forest*. Applauding the role of women in increasing public literacy about trees, forests, and forestry, he linked their efforts directly to policy making. "No comprehensive forest

15 *Annual Report of the State Geologist for the Year 1899*, 87–88.

16 Wright, "A Century of Forest Stewardship in New Jersey," 2005, 3.

17 Bernhard Fernow, *A Brief History of Forestry in Europe, the United States, and Other Countries* (University Press Toronto, 1911), 500.

18 "Plan for the Protection of the Palisades," *New York Journal*, Sept. 26, 1897, 49.

19 "How the Women of New Jersey Helped to Save the Palisades," 1282.

20 "Forestry in Women's Clubs," *Garden and Forest* (November 24, 1897): 467.

21 Charles Sprague Sargent, "Women's Clubs and Forestry," *Garden and Forest* (April 1, 1896): 132; and "Forestry in Women's Clubs," 466–467.

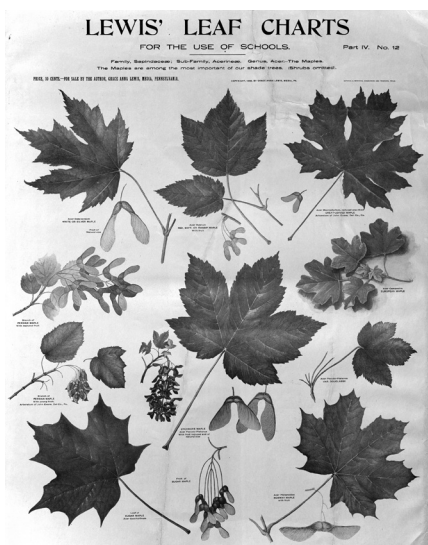


Fig. 6: Graceanna Lewis' Leaf Charts were displayed at the NJSFWC meeting in 1896. Lewis-Fussell Family Papers, RG5/087. Courtesy of Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College

policy," he wrote, "can even be devised without a more cultivated public sentiment."²²

Yet, for Sargent, the exhibition and traveling forestry library were not merely didactic tools but ways to make the public care about these important issues and want to get involved. In other words, they encouraged a crucial *sentimental* connection between trees and people. The "cultivation of a sympathetic love of trees," for Sargent, was the basis for citizen involvement and nature appreciation. For Sargent, this is why Mrs. Gifford's exhibition and library were so effective. "The arrangement of this exhibit," Sargent remarked, "was so effective that it seemed a pity that it must be transient, and the suggestion that every library and schoolroom should have something of this kind...was felt by all who saw it."²³ In the wake of this meeting, Edith Gifford's traveling forestry library circulated in women's clubs across the state. Clubs applied for the privilege of

hosting the oak bookcase over the course of a month at their own expense and used it to generate public discussion of forestry issues.²⁴

Explaining the necessity of such a library as well as other forms of outreach—including reading circles and exhibitions—Mrs. Gifford stressed the centrality of pedagogy to policy making. "Much education is needed" to bring about necessary legislation and Progressive methods, she argued.²⁵ Going further, she took the cause of public education and forestry to the national level. At a meeting in 1896 of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, of which the New Jersey State Federation was a part, she urged members across the country to take a pledge to forestry by declaring among themselves, "We pledge ourselves to take up the study of forest conditions and resources, and to further the highest interests of our several States in these respects (Fig. 7)."²⁶ Copies of the document were sent out to all 1,500 local GFWC clubs as well as the press, augmenting both women's role in forest protection and public awareness of the problem. The pledge in its entirety was published in her husband's journal, *New Jersey Forester*, shortly afterward, ensuring that it reached the eyes and ears of forestry experts across the nation.

22 Sargent, "Women's Clubs and Forestry," 132.

23 Ibid.

24 "Forestry in Women's Clubs," 467.

25 Mrs. John Gifford, "Report of the Committee on Forestry and Protection of the Palisades," *The Forester*, vol. 3, no. 10 (October 1, 1897): 123–124.

26 "For Forest Protection," *The Forester* (December 1, 1896): 67.

The Beauty of Utility

Edith Gifford was not the NJSFWC's lone forestry advocate. At a national GFWC meeting in 1898, NJSFWC President Cecelia Gaines (later Cecilia Gaines Holland), raised the issue of forestry and the protection of the Palisades once again: "There are utilitarian reasons for the protection of the Palisades," she told club members. "The valleys at their feet are covered with farms and small towns whose water supplies are drawn from sources in the Palisades. Disturb or remove these sources by blasting and the dwellers below suffer in consequence."²⁷

Other club members like Sauzade were more focused on the (visible) beauty of the forests than their invisible role in maintaining water levels. In her 1897 speech calling for the preservation of the Palisades, Sauzade insisted on the contribution of the woodlands to the aesthetic value of the cliffs as a whole. Whereas Edith Gifford had stressed the importance of healthy forests to healthy waterways, Sauzade instead emphasized the role of trees in creating the "wild, rugged character" of their beloved Palisades.²⁸ For Sauzade, destroying the scenic beauty of the trees as well as the cliffs was an attack on civilization itself. "We cannot escape," she wrote, "the disgrace, nor the just censure of the civilized world if we permit, by further neglect, the continued defacement of these grand cliffs."²⁹

After 1900, as the Palisades Interstate Park began to grow exponentially alongside urban populations in New York and New Jersey, advocates on all sides and of all genders stressed the social and recreational aspects of forestry as much, or even more, than its importance for water or timber supplies. In a park located within close proximity to New York City, the value of its woodlands to public welfare and urban reform—key tenets of the Progressive Era—could not be ignored.

In 1920, for instance, the New York State College of Forestry at Syracuse published a bulletin that outlined the value of "recreational forestry" in the Palisades. "The Palisades Interstate Park of New York and New Jersey," it stated, "on account of its proximity to the American metropolis, is, and should be, dominated by the needs of the people in

For Forest Protection.

The following resolution was submitted by the ladies of New Jersey, and adopted by the General Federation of Women's Clubs, at Louisville, May 29, 1896:

Resolved that

"WHEREAS, There is nothing of more paramount importance to the welfare of State and Nation than the preservation and economic development of our natural resources; and

"WHEREAS, It is everywhere apparent that the wicked and wasteful destruction of our forest cover is a direct robbery of these resources, and should be checked by every measure, both of private endeavor and legislative enactment; and

"WHEREAS, It is self evident that if these threatening conditions are realized and public sentiment aroused an incalculable benefit will be conferred on our entire nation; be it

Resolved, That as General Federation of Women's Clubs, and as individual clubs, as far as possible, we pledge ourselves to take up the study of forest conditions and resources, and to further the highest interests of our several States in these respects."

Fig. 7: In 1896, Edith Gifford urged all GFWC members across the country to take this forestry pledge. "For Forest Protection," *The Forester*, vol. 2, nos. 5 and 6 (December 1, 1896): 67

27 "Miss Gaines' Address," newspaper clipping found in Cecilia Gaines' scrapbook, PIPC archives.

28 Sauzade, "Preservation of the Palisades of the Hudson," *The Forester* (July 1, 1897): 87.

29 Ibid.



Fig. 8: Nature study in Palisades Interstate Park, ca.1920s. Courtesy of Palisades Interstate Park Commission Archives

the vicinity of this great city.”³⁰ In a section called “Forests versus City Streets,” the main author of this document addressed the impact of forestry camps on low-income inhabitants of New York City. “Outdoor influences,” he wrote, “...curb and counteract tendencies of other environments which fail to promote the ultimate good of these juvenile elements of society.”³¹

Similarly, an ecological survey of Palisades Interstate Park in 1919 included an entire section on “The Relation of Forests and Forestry to Human Welfare.” While the survey began by discussing social forestry initiatives in Palisades

Interstate Park, in the end it turned to the public needs that inspired national parks: “The moment that recreation...is recognized as a legitimate Forest utility the way is opened for a more intelligent administration of the National Forests. Recreation then takes its proper place along with all other utilities.”³²

Edith Gifford’s pedagogical mission was thus ultimately realized in the park itself, but in ways that she could never have imagined. Far from city streets, park visitors experienced the wonder of the Palisades woodlands firsthand, through excursions and nature study. Simultaneously, they also learned about the utilitarian value of rocks to trees, trees to watersheds, and watersheds to public health.³³ When they left, they brought back a new appreciation for nature of all kinds.

Nature Study: Nature Appreciation

By the time the *Marietta* set sail on the Hudson in September 1897, therefore, forestry was already a dominant interest at the NJSFWC and elsewhere in the state. It was linked to the cause of saving the Palisades through the need to protect the state’s water supplies, provide recreational areas for growing populations, and preserve scenic beauty.

Despite the essential role of the NJSFWC in the creation of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission in 1900, women were excluded from the commission itself on the basis of their gender (Fig. 8). However, this did not stop their involvement. Elizabeth Vermilye, for instance, formed the League for the Preservation of the Palisades, a citizen advocacy

30 NYS College of Forestry at Syracuse University, *The Palisades Interstate Park, a study in recreational forestry*, Bulletin No. 10, vol. XIX, no. 22 (February 1920): 12.

31 *Ibid.*, 41.

32 Charles C. Adams, “An Ecological Survey of the Palisades Interstate Park.” Reprinted from the *Empire Forester*, vol. 5, 17.

33 One of the major discoveries in geology and soil science at this time was that the material structure of soil, i.e. its rockiness, was more important than its chemical composition in promoting forest health. See Geological Survey of New Jersey, *Annual Report of the State Geologist for the Year 1899*. Report on Forests. Trenton, N.J.: MacCrellish & Quigley, State Printers, 1900.



Fig. 9: Dedication of the Women's Federation Memorial, Alpine, NJ, April 30, 1929. Women were excluded from participating in the Palisades Interstate Park Commission on the basis of their gender. Courtesy of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission Archives

group that raised funds, generated support for the growth of the park, and remained crucial advocates for forestry, scenic beauty, and recreation in the Palisades.³⁴ Nationally, the GFWC's interest in forestry reached its height in the first decade of the new century. In 1905, GFWC President Lydia Phillips Williams declared in a speech at the American Forestry Congress that "[The GFWC's] interest in forestry is perhaps as great as that in any department of its work...[forestry committees] are enthusiastically spreading the propaganda for forest reserves and the necessity of irrigation."³⁵ By 1912, however, women were excluded once again, this time from the American Forestry Association—the organization to which Edith Gifford had once belonged. Environmental historian Carolyn Merchant suggests that this shift was due to the full-fledged institutionalization of scientific forestry, which was not accessible to women.³⁶

At the opening ceremony for Palisades Interstate Park in 1909, New York Governor Charles Evans Hughes stated that he hoped that the creation of the park was the first step in "[safeguarding] the Highlands and waters.... The entire watershed which lies to the north should be conserved."³⁷ George Frederick Kunz, a curator at the American Museum of Natural History, echoed this sentiment in his own address. Pointing to the example of the Adirondacks, he said, "It must be borne in mind that without your forests

34 Binnewies, *Palisades*, 23.

35 USDA, *Forest Preservation and National Prosperity* (1905), 24.

36 Merchant, *Earthcare*, 132–133.

37 Fifteenth Annual Report of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, 1910, 437.



Fig. 10: CCC workers manage forested areas in Palisades Interstate Park.
Courtesy of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission Archives

you would have no lakes...until we have reforested our hills, we will not have proper water for this river.”³⁸

These sentiments opened the way for tree planting to become part—perhaps the most literal part—of the growth of the park itself across New York State in the early twentieth century. Students at newly created forestry schools such as Yale and the New York State College of Forestry in Syracuse contributed to this process—in 1916 alone, students from the latter planted 700,000 trees.³⁹ In the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps managed wooded areas in Palisades Interstate Park and planted trees as well as constructed new infrastructure (Fig. 10). Forestry students also used the woodlands of the Palisades as a laboratory, studying its native plants and trees, conducting ecological surveys, and developing forest management plans.

Today, historians are still working to unearth the contributions of women to early forestry and forestry-related activities in the United States.⁴⁰ They have much to learn from Edith Gifford’s story. In the 1890s, few could have predicted how much of an impact the introduction of trees to a campaign to save an ancient geological landmark would have. Recognition of the importance of an informed public shaped not only the growth of the park itself, but also the future of environmentalism in the United States.

38 Ibid., 443.

39 Letter to George Perkins from Hugh Potter Baker, NYS College of Forestry at Syracuse University, May 22, 1916. PIPC Archives, 20171102_0001.

40 See, for instance, DümpeImann, *Seeing Trees*.

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In Quest of Harmony: The Founding and Early Years of the Woodstock Artists Association

Bruce Weber



Image 1. Stowall Studios, *Exterior of the Woodstock Art Association building* (c.1920s). Gelatin silver print.
Woodstock Artists Association Archives

By nature unassuming, quaint, and perhaps even sleepy, the village of Woodstock, New York, became one of the national—even global—centers of artistic creation in the first half of the twentieth century. Emerging as one of the leading art colonies in the United States, it was as diverse a community of artists as may ever have flourished. Their styles

ran the spectrum—traditional, modern, and experimental. The painters ranged from exponents of the evocative and moody Tonalist landscape aesthetic practiced during the century's early years to the gestural and emotional Abstract Expressionism that exploded to global acclaim in the 1950s. Woodstock also was home to an intensely active community of decorative artists, an outgrowth of the establishment in 1902 of the Byrdcliffe arts and crafts colony on a mountainside overlooking the village. An astounding roster of America's leading artists thrived for decades in Woodstock, as full-time residents or summertime migrants, typically from New York City, about 100 miles south. Leading figures included George Bellows, Birge Harrison, John F. Carlson, Eugene Speicher, Andrew Dasburg, Alexander Archipenko, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Bradley Walker Tomlin, and Philip Guston—in short, many of the important contributors to the development of American art during the last century.

In 2019 the Woodstock Artists Association celebrates its 100th anniversary. From the global perspective of the early twenty-first-century art world, it is fascinating to look back upon the rich history of this regionally based organization and the people who shaped its formation, met its early struggles, and sought not only to keep it afloat but to ensure its relevance and vitality.

Today, the association stands in the center of Woodstock, where the Beekman Store was in operation until destroyed by fire in 1910.¹ Some thirteen years later, in 1923, the *New York Herald* referred to the association's home as "easily the most important public structure" in Woodstock, adding that it "is the investment of the community artists."² As we will see, these words were written at a time when that community was, in fact, at the epicenter of an artistic battle between artists of a more traditional or conservative background, influenced by such increasingly outmoded styles as Tonalism and Impressionism, and artists of a more modern persuasion, who worked principally under the influence of Post-Impressionist Paul Cézanne and Cubism.

Woodstock was hardly the only art colony in the 1920s to experience tensions between different schools of artistic practice. In 1927, the Provincetown Art Association in Massachusetts became an armed camp over artistic differences. Its dean, painter Charles Webster Hawthorne, demanded one month of exclusive gallery time for the traditionalist faction, and Cubist-inspired artists demanded a second exclusive month.³ On the other hand, the art colony in New Hope, Pennsylvania, appears to have been free of conflict between its painters and, as shall be related, its artists became bewildered at the turbulence that ensued in Woodstock in the early 1920s. This article will touch on the key players

1 The conflagration was witnessed by art student Florence Ballin (later Cramer) who reported on the event in an unpublished memoir now in the Archives of American Art. See <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/konrad-and-florence-ballin-cramer-papers-9413/series-5/box-5-folder-17>.

2 "Agricultural Retreats, Easels Advance at Artists' Settlement," *New York Herald*, July 1, 1923, p.9.

3 For a brief discussion of the conflicts between modern and conservative artists at the Provincetown Art Association between 1927 and 1937, see <https://www.paam.org/about-paam/history/>. Partial conciliation was reached in 1937, when concurrent exhibitions were hung in the same gallery on opposite walls.

who thrust themselves into the storm in Woodstock—among them the artists Andrew Dasburg, Birge Harrison, John F. Carlson, and Carl Eric Lindin—and reveal their personal aesthetic attitude.

The Woodstock Art Association—the organization would not formally change its name to the Woodstock Artists Association until 1933—rode the crest of a wave of art associations founded in the United States between the two world wars, among them the Salem Art Association (founded in 1919), Marblehead Arts Association (1922), Kent Art Association (1923), Carmel Art Association (1927), and the Chester County Art Association and Northern Vermont Artist Association (both 1931).⁴ The 1922 Preamble to the Constitution of the Woodstock Art Association proclaimed both the colony's aesthetic diversity and the reason behind its formation: "The Art Colony of Woodstock, being unique and fortunate among art colonies in representing a great diversity of aesthetic opinion and variety of artistic expression, including painting, sculpture, the crafts and applied arts, has formed an Art Association for the purpose of bringing together in an annual exhibition all these arts."⁵



Image 2. Unknown Photographer, *Partial Installation of the Exhibition of the Woodstock Art Association* (August 1920). Gelatin silver print. Woodstock Artists Association Archives

The Woodstock Art Association and the other high-minded arts organizations that came on the American art scene between 1915 and 1920 followed in the wake of the International Exhibition of Modern Art of 1913, better known as the Armory Show, which helped inject a more progressive and freer, more open-minded attitude into the nation's artistic climate. The association had come into being just three years after the Society of Independent Artists was founded in New York City in 1916. Based on the

French *Société des Artistes Indépendants*, its annual exhibitions were open to all who wanted to display their work. Another New York organization, the New Society of Artists, followed in 1918. Its members had the freedom to choose whatever they wished to show, and entries from guest artists were voted on by the entire membership. Members included Woodstock colony artists George Bellows, Eugene Speicher, Robert Chanler, Peggy Bacon,

4 It is not known why the organization chose to change its name in 1933, but it became common during the decade of the 1930s for newly formed art associations in America to select the term "artist" over "art" – perhaps in keeping with the social spirit of the Great Depression, and in acknowledgement of the individual "workers" who principally created, ran, and supported the organization.

5 Preamble to the Constitution (Woodstock, New York: Woodstock Art Association, 1922), n.p. some of the text from the *Preamble to the Constitution* can be found online at: https://archive.org/stream/woodstockessay00lega/woodstockessay00lega_djvu.txt

Alexander Brook, Andrew Dasburg, Ernest Fiene, John B. Flannagan, Emil Ganso, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Katherine Schmidt, Henry Lee McFee, Konrad Cramer, Georgina Klitgaard, and Joseph Pollet.

The Society of Independent Artists and the New Society of Artists were organized in reaction to the exclusive exhibition and membership policies of the National Academy of Design, which had been founded in New York in 1825 by a group of young insurgent artists who demanded changes to the administrative policies of the American Academy of Fine Arts. Since 1908, the National Academy had been under attack by Robert Henri and other progressive artists opposed to the reactionary practices of members of its exhibition juries as well as to its narrow-minded membership policies. Artist Katherine Schmidt related that the New Society “was formed really to help American art grow its own legs; and also, to counteract the terrible influence of the Academy.”⁶ Schmidt went on to relate that many of the people who formed the organization were members of the academy, but were more progressive and open-minded in their artistic and political views.

The Florence Gallery in New York City opened almost simultaneously with the formation of the Woodstock Art Association. Its creation was an outgrowth of the desire of some of the Woodstock artists involved with the start of the organization to have a regular place to show their work in Manhattan. In existence from November 1919 through May 1920, the gallery was started by the Woodstock artist Florence Ballin Cramer as a cooperative venture. Art lovers were asked to contribute \$100 in return for receiving a painting, or \$50 for a drawing. Florence’s friend Elie Nadelman, the Polish-born modernist sculptor who would go on to achieve a major reputation in America for his figurative works inspired by native folk art, encouraged her to open the gallery and helped her find a space. It showed mostly Woodstock artists, among them Dasburg, McFee, Speicher, Wilhelm Hunt Diederich, Caroline Speare Rolland, Grace Mott Johnson, and her husband, Konrad Cramer. The gallery also aimed to exhibit work by talented young artists who had yet to show in New York City. The Florence Gallery was the first to display art in New York City by Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Ernest Fiene, and Alexander Brook.⁷

The Woodstock Art Association was founded a short time before the Florence Gallery opened its doors. In September 1919, Andrew Dasburg returned from a trip to New Mexico and announced that he and the still-life, landscape, and figure painter Henry Lee McFee

6 Oral History Interview with Katherine Schmidt, December 8–15, 1969, Archives of American Art. Schmidt’s interview with her discussion of the New Society can be found online at <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-katherine-schmidt-12892>.

7 For information on the Florence Gallery see Tom Michael Wolf, “Konrad Cramer: His Art and His Context,” Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1985, p. 84, and Tom Wolf and Franklin Riehlman, “Konrad Cramer: 1917–1964,” essay in *Konrad Cramer: A Retrospective* (Annandale-on-Hudson, New York: Edith C. Blum Art Institute, Milton and Sally Avery Center for the Arts, The Bard College Center, 1982), p.14.

intended to establish a gallery.⁸ Dasburg reported on the initial formation of the association in a letter he wrote to his wife, the sculptor Grace Mott Johnson, on November 25:

After speaking to a number of persons in regard to the project of an art gallery in Woodstock we find that there is enough interest and the major part of the monies necessary for building are available We expect to have two galleries and several smaller rooms for crafts and books. One gallery will be controlled by the moderns and the others by the [Birge] Harrison, [John F.] Carlson group—It has been tentatively agreed that the rent for one yard of wall space should be three dollars per month including the privilege of showing a different picture weekly. We have negotiated for the Beekman property from Mr. Greene and are just about to secure it. This is the old Beekman house and old [Beekman] store site. After asking a higher figure he finally agreed to let it go for 4000.00 dollars with a mortgage for 1000.00 dollars on the house and another thousand on the store site – We agreed to take it if we could find a buyer for the house – This we had no difficulty in doing. I sold it to [the sculptor Wilhelm Hunt] Diederich for 3100 dollars – This will give us the site for our gallery without paying a cent in cash and leaves us 100.00 in working capital.⁹

In addition to Dasburg, McFee, Harrison, and Carlson, other key contributors to the organization's early formation included artists Frank Swift Chase, Carl Eric Linden, Walter Goltz, Alice Lynde Owen, Marion Bulliard, Captain Henry Lang Jenkinson, businessman Neilson Parker, artist and local arts patron Allice Wardwell, Byrdcliffe founder Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, and Norman Tower Boggs, a former professor in the department of

8 The date of September 1919 is recorded in "Minutes of the 1st Meeting of Stockholders of July 1920," Woodstock Artist Association Archives. Dasburg reported the project of starting the art gallery with McFee in an undated letter of late 1919 to his artist wife Grace Mott Johnson. This letter is found in the Andrew Dasburg Papers at the Archives of American Art and can be located online at <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/andrew-dasburg-and-grace-mott-johnson-papers-7320/subseries-1-2/box-2-folder-23>. During the early years of the colony Carl Eric Linden and Hervey White discussed the idea of building a gallery to exhibit paintings, but nothing materialized, and four years before the association opened its doors, White spoke out about building a "live museum" in the town. Hervey White, "Autobiography," manuscript in the Papers of Hervey White, Special Collections Department, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, p.234. A photocopy of this unpublished autobiography is located in the Woodstock Library. Woodstock, New York. White further stated (p.234): "Andrew Dasburg came back from a trip to New Mexico and announced that he and McFee would have the gallery. He naturally went to Linden and Miss Wardwell and Mr. Whitehead and Mr. Boggs. They agreed to form a corporation and sell shares." For another study of the early years of the Woodstock Artists Association see Molly A. Sullivan, "The Formative Years of the Woodstock Artists Association (1919–1929), Senior Project, Division of the Arts, Bard College, 1985. For a publication exploring the establishment of the organization, and the art and contributions of the organization's founders see Tom Wolf, *The Founders of the Building*," Woodstock Artists Association (Woodstock, New York: Woodstock Artists Association, 2000).

9 The letter of November 25, 1919 to Grace Mott Johnson can be found in the Arnold Dasburg Papers at the Archives of American Art. See <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/andrew-dasburg-and-grace-mott-johnson-papers-7320/subseries-1-2/box-2-folder-23> and the following four pages. Woodstock art colony founder Hervey White noted in his autobiography (p. 237) that during his intermittent stays in Woodstock from the late teens through the 1930s, Wilhelm Hunt Diederich bought "junk real estate wherever he goes and transforms it to saleable property." Diederich's presence in Woodstock early on is difficult to document, but he contributed a block print featuring a horse and rider in his characteristically flamboyant decorative manner for the cover of the January 1919 issue of *The Plowshare*. In 1930 he was making pottery at Byrdcliffe, and Ralph and Jane Whitehead owned some of his metalwork. The old Beekman property is the current Marigold home decoration store (c.2019) and also houses the papers and memorabilia of the historian Alf Evers that was bequeathed to the Woodstock Byrdcliffe Guild. In his autobiography (pages 234–235), White also briefly discussed the origins of the Woodstock Art Association.

theology at Columbia University. The group agreed to form a corporation and sell shares. It was also decided to create a pair of complementary organizations: the Woodstock Art Association, charged with running the exhibition space and setting the artistic policies, and the Artists Realty Company (ARCO), a holding company to deal with the finances of erecting a building and financing the space. Certificates of stock were sold to interested parties. Two hundred shares were offered at \$50 a share to raise \$10,000. Among the original stockholders were Bellows, Harrison, Wardwell, Speicher, McFee, Dasburg, Johnson, Parker, Steele, Harry Leith-Ross, Bolton Brown, Harvey Emrich, Carla Atkinson, Maud Hanson, Ralph and Jane Whitehead, Carl and Louise Linden, Albert and Mary Webster, Walter and Bertha Weyl, and about thirty others. Hervey White, founder of the Maverick art colony in nearby West Hurley, credited the artist and local arts philanthropist Alice Wardwell with being the most generous donor to the art association; he referred to her as heading “the list of shareholders.”¹⁰

The five founding artist members—Linden, Dasburg, McFee, Carlson, and Chase—formed the core of the first board of directors. Its first meeting, in January 1920, approved by-laws for the organization and elected Linden president. The next step was selecting an architect to design an exhibition space. Birge Harrison called on his friend, William Alciphron Boring, who, with his former partner Edward L. Tilton, designed the Ellis Island Federal Immigration Station and St. Agatha’s School in New York City, among other notable public buildings. Boring submitted a budget that was higher than anticipated, prompting the board to consider alternatives to a new building, including purchasing the Twadell House, located at the intersection of Tinker Street and Rock City Road. However, the projected cost of converting this building likewise proved too expensive for the fledgling organization.¹¹

ARCO then decided to temporarily lease the former studio space of the Art Student League’s School of Landscape Painting, which appears to have been located close to the center of the village near the intersection of Tinker Street and Tannery Brook Road. The association installed a new, larger dormer window for northern light and put up a

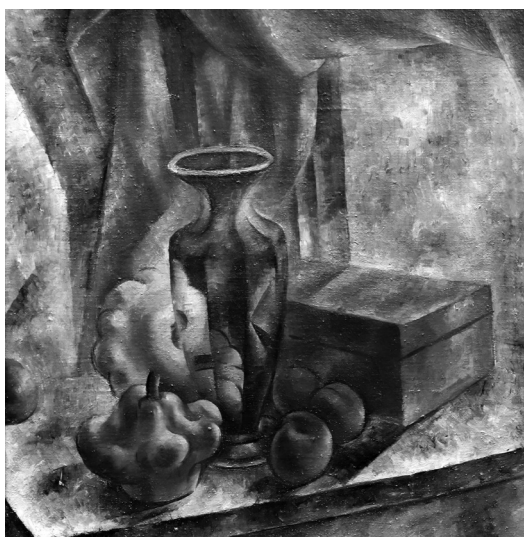


Image 3. Henry Lee McFee (1886–1953), *Glass Jar with Summer Squash* (1919). Oil on canvas. Woodstock Artists Association, Gift of Susan Braun, 1984-04-09

¹⁰ White, p. 214.

¹¹ Minutes of the 1st Meeting of Stockholders of July 1920

dividing wall, so that the works of the conservative or more academically oriented artists could be displayed in one space and the modern group in the other.¹² This division was experimented with for a year, at which time the policy was abandoned by popular vote.¹³ A photograph survives showing a portion of the conservative artworks exhibited in August 1920 (IMAGE 2).

By October 1920, hoping to make a new building feasible, the association decided to ask Boring to simplify his plan by eliminating the storeroom and studios. The new, less-costly design was adopted, and Captain Henry Lang Jenkinson—who had gained his military title for heroics displayed during the Philippine-American War of 1899–1902—served as chairman of the building committee and supervised builder Griffin Herrick. The Colonial Revival building (IMAGE 1) was completed in June 1921. Measuring forty-six by thirty feet, the white, box-like structure featured a pitched roof, paneling on the exterior with horizontal bands of wood, and four oval porthole windows symmetrically placed on either side of the central doorway. The neoclassical double-door entrance supported a lintel and gable. Large pilasters framing the façade were surmounted by a plain white pediment. Despite Boring's simplification of his plan, the Woodstock Art Association was obliged to borrow \$2,000 from the Kingston Trust Company to cover a construction-cost shortfall. In 1921, the association raised the money to pay back the loan by holding benefit dances and an auction of small works. The auction raised \$696 from the sale of fifty-four works. Harrison served as auction chairman; no less a figure than George Bellows played auctioneer.



The first curator of the Woodstock Art Association was the art writer William Murrell Fisher, who came to Woodstock about 1917 after retiring from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where he had worked as the custodian of paintings. Fisher served for two years and was followed by the journalist Marinobel Smith, who was also referred to as the association “manager.” She had a background in art, especially ceramics, and was married to local painter and sculptor Warren Wheelock.

From the start, the association relied on a group of dedicated artist-volunteers, who at various times also served on the board. These included Watson-Schutze, Steele, Leith-Ross, and Wardwell. Non-artists also generously volunteered their time and energy. At the opening of the building, the subscription committee consisted of Dasburg, McFee, and Wardwell; the publicity committee Linden, Fischer, and a Dr. Arnold; and the benefit committee Harrison, Linden, Dasburg, and McFee.

During the early years, between three and five exhibitions were held annually. Exhibitors paid a rental fee for wall space, and the Woodstock Art Association received a fifteen-percent commission for works sold. Crafts were included in the earlier programming, but

12 Ibid.

13 Alexander Brook, “The Woodstock Whirl,” *The Arts* 3 (June 1923), p.420.

were sometimes shown separately from painting and sculpture. Shortly after the association was founded, a committee was set up to oversee crafts submissions, which were sometimes charged a higher sales commission than that assessed for fine art.

The early exhibitions received coverage both in the local and national press. They were reviewed in many of the leading monthly art magazines and in such daily newspapers as *The New York Times*, *New York Herald*, *New York Herald Tribune*, *New York World*, *New York Sun*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Atlanta Journal*, and *Springfield Union*. The creation of the gallery and the extraordinary national exposure its exhibitions received played an important role in inspiring countless artists to spend time or settle in Woodstock during the course of the 1920s. Initially, the exhibitions were on view from mid-June through mid-October, but by 1925 showings ended in September, shortly after Labor Day. The remainder of the year, the association's exhibition space went unused or was rented out for other purposes. Unfortunately, attendance records do not survive for the association's early years, so gauging the popularity of its exhibition program cannot be measured.

The first exhibition in the new building opened in the summer of 1921. Reportedly, the membership was critical of the overall quality of the work. This is significant because before the new building was opened, the issue of quality does not appear to have been a major concern. Moreover, up to this time artists were free to show work of their own choosing. Beginning in 1922, submitted works had to be reviewed by a "selecting committee."¹⁴ The art historian Tom Wolf has noted, "Some judicious splitting of hairs was involved in describing this group as 'a selecting committee rather than a jury.'"¹⁵ Early members of this committee included Bellows, Speicher, Watson-Schutze, Anita M. Smith, Paul Rohland, Konrad Cramer, and the five artist founders. It was commended by association curator Marinobel Smith for its openness to diversity. In a review of the 1922 exhibition opening, she expressed her feeling that "an amazing spirit of harmony and tolerance in working toward the realization of an ideal art exhibition, where the artist who has ideas and skill or shows decided imaginative promise is not shut out." The writer further remarked that the "seventy-five pictures are not crowded. The walls are of a warm, grayish-white tone and the lighting well diffused and agreeable."¹⁶

In early 1922, the Woodstock Art Association prepared and published its Preamble to the Constitution. This document includes notice of the new committee responsible for selecting submitted works, but the most striking part of the document comes at its beginning: "It is the purpose of the Association in these exhibitions to give free and

14 The announcement of the creation of the committee of selection appears in "Art: Summer Sales and Exhibitions," *The New York Times*, June 18, 1922, p. 83. Marinobel Smith, "At Woodstock," otherwise identified article of 1922, Scrapbook 1922–1935, Woodstock Artists Association Archives. As noted in this essay, Smith later served as curator/manager of the association.

15 Wolf, "The Founders of the Woodstock Artists Association: 'The Lion and the Lamb, Living Happily Side by Side,'" essay in *The Founders of the Woodstock Artists Association*, p.3

16 Marinobel Smith, "At Woodstock," otherwise identified article of 1922, Scrapbook 1922–1935, Woodstock Artists Association Archives. As noted in this essay, Smith later served as curator/manager of the association.

equal expression to the 'Conservative' and 'Radical' elements, because it believes a strong difference of opinion is a sign of health and an omen of long life for the colony."¹⁷

The first year of exhibitions in the new building appears to have passed with the artists hanging together as a harmonious community. The British-born poet, journalist, and author Richard Le Gallienne, who was commissioned by the association to write a short history of Woodstock and the art colony, remarked that such a bond comes "about naturally from men and women of like dreams dwelling together in one of those beautiful places of the earth where nature herself is an artist . . ."¹⁸ The artist and chronicler Anita M. Smith, who was also on the scene in the early 1920s, wrote that "At the time the gallery started, a rather fine cooperation existed between the academic and radical groups. Gradually the differences between them widened, until the younger and more radical group took possession of the Gallery. Finally, the academicians withdrew almost entirely from the exhibitions . . ."¹⁹

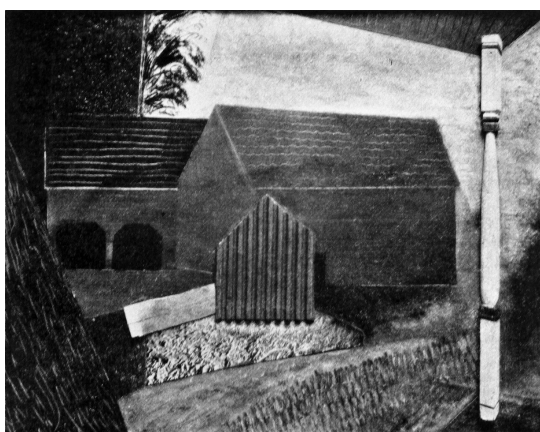


Image 4. Konrad Cramer (1888–1963), *Red Barns* (c.1922–1923). Location unknown. Reproduced in Richard Le Gallienne, *Woodstock: An Essay* (Woodstock, New York: Woodstock Art Association, 1923), p. 25

The truth was that conflict had been slowly brewing among artists who embraced different styles and aesthetic points of view. The Maverick Festival of 1917 featured a performance satirizing the town's diverse group of artists. At the start of the performance, Rip Van Winkle (played by the landscape painter John William Bentley) is deep in sleep. When a group of Byrdcliffe artisans tries to wake him up, he only sleeps more soundly. Next, a group of students from the Art Student League's Woodstock School of Landscape Painting barely manages to startle him. Then a ballet based on Dewing Woodward's *Blue Dome Fellowship* (held

in nearby Shady from the summer of 1913 through 1917 and focused primarily on painting nudes out-of-doors) was performed featuring nude female models and artists singing and circling the stage. And still Rip slept—until he was finally stirred to consciousness by a group of ultra-modern artists who caused him to run into the woods in utter bewilderment. The production was conceived by Hervey White and produced by Dasburg, McFee, Captain

17 *Preamble to the Constitution*, n.p.

18 Richard Le Gallienne, *Woodstock: An Essay* (Woodstock, New York: Woodstock Art Association, 1923), p.18. Le Gallienne (page 16) informs us that it was a "long cherished dream of Woodstock artists [to have] a gallery where they could exhibit their work . . ."

19 Anita M. Smith, *Woodstock History and Hearsay* (Woodstock, New York: WoodstockArts, 2006, p.171. Smith's book was first published in 1959 by the Catskill Mountains Publishing Corp. in Saugerties, New York.

Jenkinson, and the craftsman and landscape painter Edmund Rolfe.²⁰ In his autobiography, Hervey White relates that the “idea made a great hit and each school [of art] saw the humor of its seriousness.”²¹

The tensions escalated throughout 1922 and 1923. The founders were clearly split in their aesthetic points of view. Linden did his best to act as peacekeeper, even though his own art had moved in a more modern direction during the early 1920s. Hervey White related that Linden “praised the moderns but kept free from their extravagances. . . . Always open-minded, he kept friends with both groups, saw good in everything somewhere and praised that.”²² Dasburg was strongly opinionated about modern art. His work and words had helped shift the artistic direction of the community beginning in 1910, when he returned from Paris with an awareness of the newest trends in painting and sculpture. Linden considered Dasburg to be “always the experimenter, the fighter; I believe he loved contention for its own sake—but in the main he was right, for he had dreams and visions of a new beauty and the strength and intelligence to create it.”²³

If Dasburg was the “experimenter” at Woodstock, Birge Harrison and his Tonalist landscapes were representative of the early days of the colony. As a teacher, he had been tolerant of experimentation, but as a member of the selecting committee, he chose more conservative works for inclusion. Anita M. Smith wrote how, on one occasion, Harrison was ill and unable to attend a meeting of the committee, and Dasburg took up Harrison’s proxy. He voted yay when a modern work was up for consideration, but he also represented Harrison’s point of view, voting yes when a more conservative work was in question. Hervey White reported that Harrison soon grew “alarmed at [the] quarreling family” of artist members.²⁴

John F. Carlson’s position was clear. The artist and art writer Alexander Brook related that “Carlson admits that when he thinks of modern art he foams at the mouth.”²⁵ Carlson’s attitude toward modernism may have sowed the seeds for the Art Student League’s decision to let him go after twelve successful years with the school, including eight as its head. He was replaced by Charles Rosen as the teacher of landscape painting, and by Dasburg as the instructor of outdoor figure painting.

Carlson resigned after the league’s failure to agree that figure-painting students must have prior schooling in painting the human form before entering the class. Carlson left Woodstock and went off to start the Broadmoor Art Academy in Colorado. However, he returned to Woodstock in 1923, when he saw the opportunity there to fill a gap in the

20 A description of the theatrical piece appears in Tom Wolf, “Hervey White’s Maverick Colony & Its Artists,” essay in *The Maverick: Hervey White’s Colony of the Arts* (Woodstock, New York: Woodstock Artists Association, 2006), p. 20. See the autobiography of Hervey White (page 223) for a further discussion of the performance at the Maverick Festival. White notes that McFee and Dasburg painted the stage floor in a “modern pattern.”

21 White, p.223.

22 White, p.192.

23 Linden is quoted in Smith, p.169.

24 White, p.192. Smith, p.169.

25 Alexander Brook, “The Woodstock Whirl,” *Arts* 3 (June 1923), p.418.

teaching environment after the Art Students League closed its Woodstock school. The closure was the result of a sharp decline in enrollment following Carlson's departure and the ascendancy of other artists to leadership positions at the summer school. Carlson operated his own school of landscape painting in Woodstock for twenty summers.

While it is not clear how Frank Swift Chase personally felt about modern art, it is true that after the resignation of Carlson—his longtime boss at the league's summer school—Chase began spending his summers teaching in Nantucket, where in 1945 he founded the Nantucket Art Association, which initially was not a fully professional organization and was immune to the problems that surfaced in Woodstock.

More artists threw themselves into the fray, but still others, stoically or passively, observed from the sidelines. Hervey White related that Konrad Cramer “loved to argue and experiment with all kinds [of materials],” while Speicher “looked on benevolently [and] supported the moderns in talk and appreciation, and continued to paint his own way.”²⁶ White noted that the landscape painters Allen Cochran, Sam Wiley, Cecil Chichester, and John William Bentley remained “true to all traditions much to [their former teacher] Harrison's joy.”²⁷ He also recalled how Byrdcliffe founder and ceramicist Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead “would not adjust himself to the fashion of the times. And the fashions of Art change like all others. His pronouncements against the Modern School were open and bitter. He never approved of one picture in the [Art Association] Gallery, though he was friends with many of the men who exhibited there.”²⁸

During the first decade of the association's existence, art critics took special delight in informing their readers about whether the conservative or modernist side had won, and they sometimes went out of their way to point out which works were the most controversial. By all accounts, and despite conservative resistance, the modernists handily won the artistic battle at the Woodstock Art Association in the summers of 1922 and 1923. The conflict was reported by Woodstock artist and critic Norbert Heeman in *American Art News* in 1922 under the dramatic headline “Modernists Capture Woodstock Display: Their Extreme Work Causes a Dignified Withdrawal of the More Conservative and Astonished the Native Element.”²⁹

The pictures that caused the most alarm in 1922 were experiments by Cramer, Dasburg, and McFee, whose paintings reportedly included bits of tin, wood, and plaster; newspaper clippings; and other assorted found materials. Heerman revealed in his review of the August 1922 exhibition that the works on view “aroused such astonishment that men like Dasburg, McFee, and Cramer have been forced to place ‘Do Not Touch’ placards on their pictures in order to safeguard them. . . . Dasburg's picture, bizarre though it undoubtedly is, and still regarded as an inexplicable jest by the laymen, has undeniable power of structure, and

26 White, p.192.

27 Ibid

28 Hervey White, “Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead,” essay in *Publications of the Woodstock Historical Society*, No. 10 (July 1933), p.28.

29 Norbert Heerman, “Modernists Capture Woodstock,” *American Art News* 20 (August 19, 1922), p.5.

McFee's still life possesses the quiet charm of fine textures."³⁰ Heerman also reported that the modernists' "temperamental and bizarre works outdo both in number and size those of the conservative members of the community, although the latter group comprises a large number of America's best known artists. It almost seems as if the onslaught of the extremists, varying from the old-fashioned Cubists to the up-to-date 'Dadaists' had caused a dignified withdrawal of the conservatives."³¹

It is not clear which works Cramer, McFee, and Dasburg had on view in 1922 and 1923, but a clue to their identity may be discovered among the paintings reproduced in Richard Le Gallienne's *Woodstock: An Essay*, published in 1923 under the auspices of the Woodstock Art Association. These include unlocated works by Cramer and Dasburg (IMAGES 4, 7) and McFee's *Glass Jar with Summer Squash* (IMAGE 3), now in the collection of the Woodstock Artists Association. It is likely that Cramer's *Barns and Corner Porch* (IMAGE 5) and Dasburg's *Still Life* (IMAGE 6) were also seen in the early exhibitions. The works by Cramer and Dasburg are the only ones in this group that include collage elements. *Barns and Corner Porch* is made up of a combination of oil paint, photography (the glued-on photograph of leaves at left of center), and collage (the corrugated cardboard painted red at far right of center). In stark contrast to such works were Impressionist-inspired landscapes by artist residents of the town such as John William Bentley and Frank Swift Chase, or the previously mentioned misty twilight pictures by Birge Harrison.

The August 1922 exhibition at the Art Association stirred up palpable anger in Woodstock. *American Art News* reported that during the month, a group of fifty summer residents and visitors to Woodstock "circulated a protest against the modern art included in a show which they signed 'with a desire to precipitate a feeling against what was considered a degrading tendency in art.' The signers, first of whom was [William] C. L. White, an



Image 5. Konrad Cramer (1888–1963), *Barns and Corner Porch* (1922). Oil and collage on board. Woodstock Artists Association, Gift of Aileen B. Cramer and Margot Cramer Taylor, 1973-03-01

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid. From a perusal of reviews of exhibitions held in 1922 at the Woodstock Art Association it is possible to discern that the shows included the following modern works: Alexander Brooks' *The Poet*, Charles Rosen's *Railroad Bridge*, various carvings in wood and the painting *Adam and Eve* by Warren Wheelock, a still life and portrait of a child by McFee, two landscapes of New Mexico by Dasburg, a portrait by Konrad Cramer, landscapes and flower studies by Paul and Caroline Rohland, three watercolors created in Italy by William Emil Schumacher, and a landscape of a farmyard (probably *Old Farm, Toodleums*) by George Bellows. *The Poet* is reproduced in William Murrell, *Alexander Brook* (Woodstock, New York: William M. Fisher), n.p., and an image of *Old Farm, Toodleums* can be found at <http://www.hvallison.com/WorkDetail.aspx?w=28&b=http%3A//www.hvallison.com/Sear ch.aspx%3Fs%3Dtoodleums%26si%3D0>.

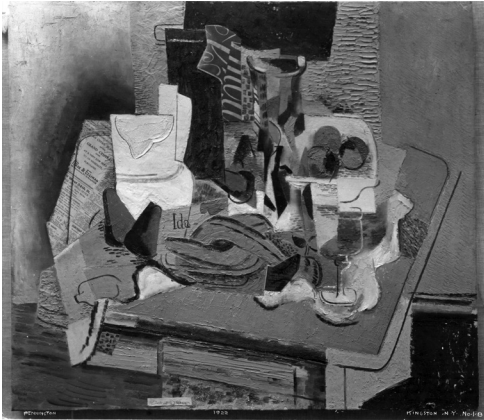


Image 6. Andrew Dasburg (1887–1979),
Still Life (1922). Oil and collage. Location Unknown.
Woodstock Artists Association Archive

instructor in the Boys High School in Brooklyn, N.Y., protested ‘against the so-called ‘Modern Art’ movement in general.’”³² The little-known White graduated from Pratt Institute and the Columbia University Fine Art Department. He was a member of the Brooklyn Water Color Club, the Art Club of Philadelphia, and the Brooklyn Society of Artists, for which he served as president. In addition to Boys High School, White taught at the New School of Art in Arden, Delaware, and at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences (later the Brooklyn Museum Art School), and like many artists in the colony during that period, he shuffled

regularly between the Catskills and the city. An article in the *Brooklyn Standard Union* about the art conflict at the Woodstock Art Association featured a statement by White about the reasons for the protest, listed the names of the protestors, and related the group’s statement of purpose, underscoring the stylistic and aesthetic arguments that reigned at the time in the American art world:

Our purpose is to let the public know that there is a decided opinion against this so-called [modern] ‘art’, and that there are still those who, not, accepting this insane, rrational and inexplicable product, are also willing to say so ‘out loud’ and in plain language.

We, the undersigned, wish to protest against the so-called ‘Modern Art’ movement in general, and particularly against . . . the present exhibition in the Woodstock Art Gallery.

Our purpose is to encourage others, who for various reasons have not expressed their disapproval, as well as to try to stimulate artists to the production of sane and rational work.

We believe that the work we protest against is not beautiful, but ugly; not pleasurable, but painful; not inspiring, but degrading; that it does not uplift, but depresses and discourages. If the purpose of art is not to inspire, then what is its purpose?³³

32 “Protest Against Woodstock Show,” *American Art News* 21 (October 21, 1922), p.3.

33 Art Board Scores the Ultra Modern,” *The Brooklyn Standard Union*, September 24, 1922, p.13.

White evidently enlisted the signatures of fellow high school art teachers in New York City who were active in the Woodstock area that summer. Among them were the landscape and still life painter Agnes Baskin (who later married local artist Otto Bierhals) and potter, painter, and printmaker Henry G. Aitken. The list also includes White's Boys High School colleagues Robert Dulk, who would establish a successful career as a jewelry designer, and Anna C. Carolan, who later operated a gallery and art museum in Woodstock.³⁴ Otherwise, the list is made up principally of art students.

One critic blamed the art conflict in Woodstock on followers and students who she accused of "doing all the demonstrating and talking."³⁵ The conflict motivated one of Harrison's former students, Harry Leith-Ross, to step down from his position as secretary/treasurer of the association. Eventually, he left Woodstock for the art colony in New Hope, Pennsylvania, where (as alluded to earlier) the Woodstock situation caused bewilderment in that more conservative environment. In October 1923, the *New York World* related that:

When Birge Harrison and later on John Carlson collected their students in the little town of Woodstock in the foothills of the Catskills an art colony was brought into being which promised [to] be as quietly pastoral as the New Hope of Messrs. [William] Lathrop . . . and [Edward] Redfield. Upon this scene of pastoral dreaminess there [now has appeared] a devil whose name is modern art, and in the twinkling of an eye Woodstock begins to cut up and misbehave until now no self-respecting member of the New Hope group can bear the name of Woodstock without feeling a chill. Artists who couldn't stand the riot moved away. Some sought the backwaters of New Hope and in turn from New Hope an adventurous spirit or two moved to Woodstock to join the revolution."³⁶

Charles Rosen established a major reputation for his large, bold Impressionist landscapes of New Hope and the surrounding area, but he yearned to adopt the practices of Cézanne and the Cubists. He left New Hope in 1918 to teach landscape painting at the Art Students League in Woodstock. Two years later, he moved to Woodstock with his family to live full time. Rosen explained that "The [Art Association's] art gallery was a center of controversy as I imagine others were . . . There were 'moderns' and 'conservatives; also 'ins and outs' . . . I was a modest participant in these activities and cast my lot with the

34 A discussion of Carolan's art activity in Woodstock will appear in the author's essay "Making It Permanent: Community, Family, Friendship and the Building of the Collection of the Woodstock Artists Association and Museum," which will be published in the forthcoming centennial publication of the Woodstock Artists Association. Carolan studied art in New York City and Paris, and locally in Woodstock with Cecil Chichester, Walter Goltz, Winold Reiss, and Hayley Lever. Carolan included a brief resume of her background as an artist in her article "You Can't Eat Your Goldfish and Have Them Too," *Woodstock Gargoyles*, August 1949, n.p. I would like to thank Rick Pantell for sharing his copy of this issue with me, and for his helpful and informative discussions about the association, for whom he has served in various capacities.

35 Alice Judson, "The Woodstock Colony," *American Magazine of Art* 21 (June 1930), p.341.

36 "Members of Busy Colony Show Work," *New York World*, Sunday, October 26, 1923, otherwise unidentified clipping, Scrapbook 1922–1935, Woodstock Artists Association Archives.

more liberal group, which had a natural tendency to alienate old friends who had known me as a conservative painter.”³⁷

Rosen’s modernist leanings led him to join Dasburg, Cramer, and McFee in founding the Woodstock School of Painting and Allied Arts in 1923—one of a number of summer schools that opened in the 1920s and 1930s after the closure of the Art Students League school in 1922. By far the most modern of the Woodstock schools was the one Ukrainian-born Cubist sculptor Alexander Archipenko opened in 1924 and moved in the late 1930s to his thirteen-acre property on the site of a rock quarry in Bearsville. The school continued there until the sculptor’s death in 1964.

At the other end of the spectrum from Rosen, Dasburg, Cramer, McFee, and Archipenko was the painter and printmaker Bolton Coit Brown, who was never reticent about expressing his low regard for the modernists. According to Linden, Brown “thought modern art was ‘Nuts,’ and tried to persuade himself to no avail to admit the greatness of the French Post-Impressionist Paul Cézanne. He could see nothing in it.”³⁸ If Brown saw any of the modernists walking to and from the village, he “would pass them on the other side of the road with no sign of recognition.”³⁹



Image 7. Andrew Dasburg (1887–1979), *New Mexican Landscape* (c.1922–1923).

Reproduced in Richard Le Gallienne, *Woodstock: An Essay*
(Woodstock, New York: Woodstock Art Association, 1923), p. 26.

37 Rosen is quoted in Tom Folk, *Charles Rosen: The Pennsylvania Years (1903–1920)* (Greensburg, Pennsylvania: The Westmoreland Museum of American Art, 1983), n.p.

38 Carl Eric Linden, “Bolton Brown,” *Publication of the Woodstock Historical Society* 13 (August–September 1937), p.16.

39 Ibid.

In 1923 the flag of modern art still gamely waved over the Woodstock Art Association.⁴⁰ The *New York World* reported the victory and praised the victors for having:

found themselves in the horrid predicament of not having any more barricades to overcome. The fortress has been handed to them. The flags of modern art flutter as peacefully in the summer breeze as if the fight had never been. In place of John Carlson's studies of trees and their bark or Birge Harrison's misty twilights, we find an almost equally peaceful pursuit of modernism. [We now find] gently intellectual reactions to problems translated from the words in which they were understood to the paint in which they are interpreted . . . there is a great deal more talent and infinitely more achievement among the artists of Woodstock than in the olden days.⁴¹

Among the modernist works shown in 1923 were McFee's *Portrait of an Artist*, Warren Wheelock's *The Bride*, Rosen's *Bridge and Landscape*, and Dasburg's *New Mexico Landscape*, which was described as "one of the completest he has shown recently, in effect an astonishingly realistic rendering of a Pueblo village in terms of interrelated shapes of practically flat color, a highly abstract affair."⁴² The exhibitions also included a view of rooftops framed by autumn leaves by Torajero Watanabe and religious subjects by William Emil Schumacher that were "commended for their sophistication of feeling" while being criticized for their seeming "search for strangeness . . . by way of obvious distortions."⁴³ The *New York Times* reported that by the time of the second exhibition in 1923, "the conservatives had folded their tents and silently stolen away. It was not until rather late in the day that you discovered the defection, so insistently do the modernists hold attention in a mixed group."⁴⁴

The Hue and Cry helped stir the artistic battle by publishing provocative images and texts in its early issues. This satirical periodical began publication in Woodstock under the editorship of Peggy Bacon and



Image 8. Attributed to Peggy Bacon (1895–1997),
Masthead of *The Hue and Cry* (July 21, 1923).
Woodblock. Historical Society of Woodstock

40 The names of members of the jury for the 1923 season were recorded in the minutes for the May 21 meeting of the directors. Members included moderns Dasburg, McFee, Rosen, and Paul Rohland; the more moderate Linden, Bellows, and Speicher; conservatives Carlson and Chase; and Marinobel Smith, who was more closely affiliated with the moderns, as was her husband Wheeler Wheelock. "Minutes of the Directors Meeting of May 21, 1923," Woodstock Artists Association Archives.

41 "Members of Busy Colony Show Work."

42 "Moderns Influence Woodstock Show," otherwise unidentified exhibition review, Scrapbook 1922–1935, Woodstock Artists Association Archives.

43 "The World of Art: Summer Exhibition at Woodstock," *The New York Times*, July 14, 1923, p.16. Rosen's *Bridge and Landscape* and Henry Lee McFee's *Portrait of a Painter* appear as illustrations on the same page of this article. In the summer of 1923 *The Hue and Cry* published a humorous fictional account of the removal from the Woodstock Art Association of what the author describes as "a pink and white checkerboard painting" by Dasburg. "Dasburg's Picture Removed from the Gallery by the Censors," *The Hue and Cry* 1 (July 21, 1923), p.1.

44 Ibid

Alexander Brook. It was printed in newspaper format with woodblock prints and linoleum cuts scattered throughout.⁴⁵ Bacon was likely responsible for the design of the original lighthearted masthead (IMAGE 6). A woodblock, it depicts an allegory of Truth, in the guise of a nude female model, chased by a beret-wearing young artist with his dog. That pair disrupts Art—represented by an older bearded artist, who holds a palette in his left hand—as he struggles to paint Truth.

Art historian and curator Patricia Phagan has noted that the whimsical imagery seriously alludes “to the controversies between the radical and the conservatives in the art world of Woodstock, where some of the more traditional artists in the community were feeling railroaded by the modernist contingent.”⁴⁶ Phagan has also pointed out that in the early 1920s, woodblock prints and linoleum cuts surged locally in popularity and appeared in numerous small art publications, and were also issued as individual prints produced in and around Woodstock.⁴⁷

The prints that appeared in *The Hue and Cry* only added fuel to the fires of aesthetic controversy blazing at the Woodstock Art Association. The battle was the source of a humorous story in the July 21, 1923, issue of *The Hue and Cry*:

Dasburg recognized ART at once, having seen him in Zuni [New Mexico] last winter. He said, as far as he was concerned, ART could stay in the gallery right along - 'But, of course, I can't speak for the conservatives. We had better have a meeting - we haven't had one for two days, so we must have one anyway. It might be wise to begin with letting ART stay one night. He could make out for that long since there are so many modern improvements this year.

We can put the motion this way: Moved, that ART be permitted to spend one night in the gallery through the courtesy of the Art Association. They all agreed and went inside for the customary arguments.

ART was told to wait on the steps. He sat looking at the red gasoline tank, and heard voices growing louder . . . Picasso . . . E. L. Henry . . . What? . . . What? . . . Cézanne !!!! Michael Angelo!! . . . Bruce Crane and Ben Foster . . Marie Laurencin . . Rubens . . . Yes NO . . . ART? . . !!!! Gosh, no! Who? Zuloaga, Joshua Reynolds, Augustus John . . . oooopppppjjjj...!!??00000 ?!!!!!!!!.....\$\$\$\$""....1..... xzfññññf?!!

Art ran for the hills.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ By the end of the summer of 1923, Frank Schoonmaker took over as editor of *The Hue and Cry*. In its second year, the periodical appeared every two weeks during the course of the summer in a magazine format, and featured a cover design by Harry Gottlieb, which differed from issue to issue only in its color. In 1925 and 1926 it appeared as an annual.

⁴⁶ Patricia Phagan, *Made in Woodstock: Printmaking from 1903–1945* (Poughkeepsie, New York: The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, 2002), p.32.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.37.

⁴⁸ Rose Madder, “Art Comes to Woodstock,” *The Hue and Cry* 1 (July 12, 1923), p.5.



Image 9. Konrad Cramer (1888–1963), *Cover of The Hue and Cry* (August 23, 1923). Linocut. Historical Society of Woodstock

A follow-up story appeared in the August 4, 1923, issue titled “Art is Dead,” which reported that “The editors of *The Hue and Cry* regret to announce the death of Art. He was found cruelly murdered in the Art Gallery, his gore and remains scattered here and there on the canvases about him. It was evident he had been stabbed through a vital organ.”⁴⁹

Among the most startling images to appear in *The Hue and Cry* was Konrad Cramer’s bold block print celebrating the annual Maverick Festival (IMAGE 9), which was printed in bright blue ink on white or orange-hued paper on the cover of the August 23, 1923, issue. It is one of a number of prints that Cramer created for the publication that year. Interestingly, once the controversies settled down, the modernist Cramer created a new, distinctly more pastoral image for the masthead (IMAGE 10), as if to signal the hopeful coming together of the fractious factions for the good of the artistic community.



Carl Eric Linden was reelected president of the Woodstock Art Association at its annual meeting in 1924, but before long—possibly even before the exhibition season began—he resigned because of the inflammatory situation between the conservatives and moderns. Linden was clear in explaining his feelings:

Five years ago when we started the gallery there was a good deal of enthusiasm and cooperation by everybody concerned and both the so called conservative and modern groups worked side by side for the realization of the gallery. . . . The gallery then was a place where all the different schools could be represented and where the artists could learn from each other how to better express themselves. A temple where all the creeds could meet and where the divine idea of beauty could be seen and perhaps understood, in its many differentiations

You all know that almost from the start there has been a decided unwillingness on the conservative side to exhibit together with the modern group. I think this is to be deplored and I would ask all those who have the welfare of the

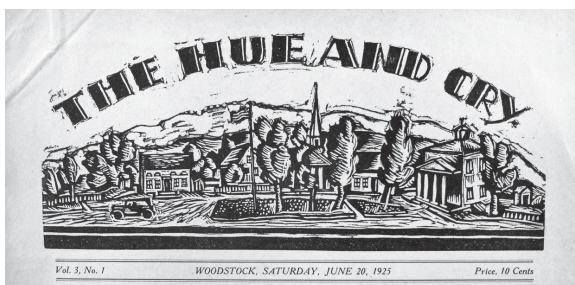


Image 10 . Konrad Cramer (1888-1963), *Masthead for The Hue and Cry* (June 20, 1925). Woodblock. Historical Society of Woodstock

49 “Art is Dead,” *The Hue and Cry* 1 (August 4, 1923), p.1.

Woodstock Gallery at heart to be a little more helpful and considerate. At least to come forward with suggestions of what can be done to bring about a little more cooperation and a better understanding of the individual's responsibility in this enterprise.

In conclusion – and perhaps as a solution to the above-mentioned difficulties let me offer my resignation as president of the Artists Realty Co. There are many better men in the community who could bring about the desired harmony. I have seriously tried my best and I thank you all for the trust and honor you have given me during the last five years.⁵⁰

Upon Linden's resignation, board member Birge Harrison stepped up to take a larger leadership role in the art association, of which he served as president from 1925 to his death in 1929. Carlson had returned to the fold by the time of the annual meeting in 1924, during which he was elected vice president. Because of Harrison's leadership, skill as a peacemaker, and general popularity in the artist community (many, including the rebellious Dasburg and McFee had been his students), others returned over the course of the coming year, including Frank Swift Chase, Judson Smith, Allen Cochran, and Carl Walters, all of whom joined the board.

In 1924, Dasburg, McFee, and Rosen dropped off the exhibition committee, perhaps as a gesture intended to further promote peace. Ironically, Harrison had attempted to cool the situation at the association as early as June 1922, when he made this recommendation at the meeting of directors: "Mr. Harrison . . . moved that the passage in the Preamble relating to 'Conservative' and 'Radical' elements be changed to read 'It is the purpose of the Association in these exhibitions to give free and equal expression to all phases of artistic expression, because it believes a strong difference of opinion is a sign of health and omen of long life for the colony.'"⁵¹

In August 1925, Linden related his thoughts on the record of the association over its first five years:

there should be more interest and cooperation among the different groups which make up the Woodstock art association is undeniable, and I for one have always tried hard to work for some such result, but Rome was not built in one day, and it seems to me that the record of the last five years is not such a failure after all. Now and then there may be some individual differences among the directors, but on the whole there has been a decided tendency to welcome all the young forces, all the schools, modern and academic, to cooperate and

50 Minutes of the Annual Meeting, 1924, Woodstock Artists Association Archives. The minutes do not include the exact date that the meeting was held.

51 "Meeting of ARCO Directors of June 13, 1922," Woodstock Artists Association Archives. At the same meeting Harrison moved that "article 11 first paragraph be amended to read 'The Board of Directors shall be composed of 10 active members representing equally all shares of artistic expression.'" This motion was carried through by the board.

exhibit with the gallery. In fact, as I understand it, the criticism up till now has been, that the gallery has favored the modern group altogether too much.⁵²

Looking back from the vantage point of 1927, the writer, editor, and publisher Frank Schoonmaker noted that three years before:

there occurred a very significant change in Woodstock painting. Up until then the gallery had been a sort of local battlefield of post-impressionism-an open forum of vital importance to the artists themselves. The work that hung there was largely of an experimental character – corrugated pasteboard glued to the canvas, abstractions á la Picasso, and landscapes served up á la Cézanne - and the discussions that ensued were as heated as they were lengthy. Then quite suddenly, a change occurred. An assurance began to creep into Woodstock painting, and an intense individuality. Practically no experimental work of any importance has been hung in the gallery.⁵³

Art historian Karal Ann Marling has commented that as “long as Harrison remained at the helm of the Association, respected if not passively obeyed by his rebellious artistic offspring, the growing rift could be breached.”⁵⁴ Upon Harrison’s death in 1929, Linden replaced him as head of the association, and spoke out again for mutual tolerance between radicals and conservatives, but the battle flared up once more when the conservative painter Orville Peets resigned his directorship in 1931 and accused the board of “permitting the gallery to be used by a single group for the encouragement of their own work and the discouragement of any who [do] not conform to their views.”⁵⁵

In 1932 major steps were undertaken to improve the situation. A change was made in the constitution that provided for an annual election of directors to encourage an influx of new blood. A newly formed executive committee of ten was given the responsibility

52 “Resignation Letter of Carl Eric Linden,” Woodstock Artists Association Archives. The resignation letter is undated, but Linden notes that it presently was the fifth year of the organization, which is 1924. In July of that year, Linden commented that there “has been a good deal of dispute about the Woodstock Art Association. It is now in its fifth year, still young and inexperienced but very much alive in spite of that The idea that good conservative art cannot hang beside good modern art is somewhat of a superstition. It is contrast which brings about the process in your mind which makes for growth and it seems to me most pictures are improved by such hanging. And I have just as much aesthetic pleasure from looking at a glazed pot by Walters, or a rug by Marie Little, as I get from looking at a Titian or Cezanne [stet] canvas.” Carl Eric Linden, “The Woodstock Art Association,” *The Hue and Cry* 2 (July 19, 1924), pp.6,18.

53 Frank Schoonmaker, “A Note on Woodstock,” *The Arts* 12 (October 1927): 227. In 1924 Schoonmaker reasoned that the artists “have ceased to be iconoclast and have become builders. They have begun to realize that nothing constructive can ever be accomplished through revolution, that the battle was won by Cézanne, and that they, like Andrew Jackson at New Orleans, have been fighting long after the war was over. But at last the news seems to have gotten around and the hostilities ended.” Frank Schoonmaker, “The New Exhibition,” *The Hue and Cry* 2 (July 19, 1924): 5. One of the ways that the conservative artists fought back against the dominance of the modernists was to arrange solo exhibitions of their work during the course of the summer in their studios and elsewhere. This practice continued even past the cooling of conflicts. In August 1925, for example, there were solo exhibitions in Woodstock of the work of Alfred Hatty, Boyer Gonzalez, John F. Carlson, Henrik Millbrom, John Banks, Walter C. L. White, and others. “Art Exhibits at Woodstock, N.Y.,” *Christian Science Monitor*, September 6, 1925, p.14.

54 Karal Ann Rose Marling, “Federal Patronage and the Woodstock Colony,” Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate School of Bryn Mawr College, 1971, p.25.

55 Tom Wolf, “Woodstock, 1929,” essay in Eugene Ludins: *An American Fantasist* (New Paltz, New York: Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, 2012), p. 53; “Woodstock’s War,” *Arts Digest* 6 (October 15, 1931), p.13.

of managing the association. In addition, a Woodstock Artists' Annual Exhibition was established, the artist Joseph Pollet explaining that the exhibitors would be selected by vote of the association from "a list as tolerant and inclusive as the combined membership of the Association can make it, the candidates to be limited to a number small enough to assure a handsome looking show when hung. Each elected exhibitor will be asked to send one of his finest works regardless of when painted or where exhibited, and a strong effort will be made to give this show as much publicity as possible so that the outside world interested in Art shall have its attention called to what really valuable work is going on in this community."⁵⁶ Pollet noted that the changes, which were being driven by the concerns of older members that the association was dominated by the wave of young artists who migrated to the area, were less than the "left-wing desires but show a genuine social spirit and a working towards the general artists' goal in the community."⁵⁷



At the end of its first thirteen years, the Woodstock Artists Association was still buffeted by the winds of an aesthetic storm that swept the entire art world. However, the organization was not only weathering that storm but doing so without suppressing either the conservatives or the modernists. The association continued to be a home for art and artists across a broad creative spectrum as the organization grappled with the inevitable changes in the art world.

Yet a new storm was already upon the association, the nation, and the world—and it stirred far more than aesthetic controversy. The darkest years of the Great Depression were still ahead—just ahead—and the topic of economic survival understandably eclipsed many of the purely artistic arguments. But even the Depression, which caused such profound disruption worldwide, did not destroy the Woodstock Artists Association. Nor would it be the last of the ordeals, confrontations, and controversies to roil the organization over the coming decades. Throughout the Depression, the artists of Woodstock would struggle for economic survival with aid provided by local organizations and federal art programs—but the association survived.

Today, the Woodstock Artists Association continues to thrive and move forward, expanding the geographic radius of its membership, elevating its profile in the contemporary art of the region, and enhancing the presentation and appreciation of the art of the present with an outstanding historical collection of work by members of this ever-fascinating art colony.

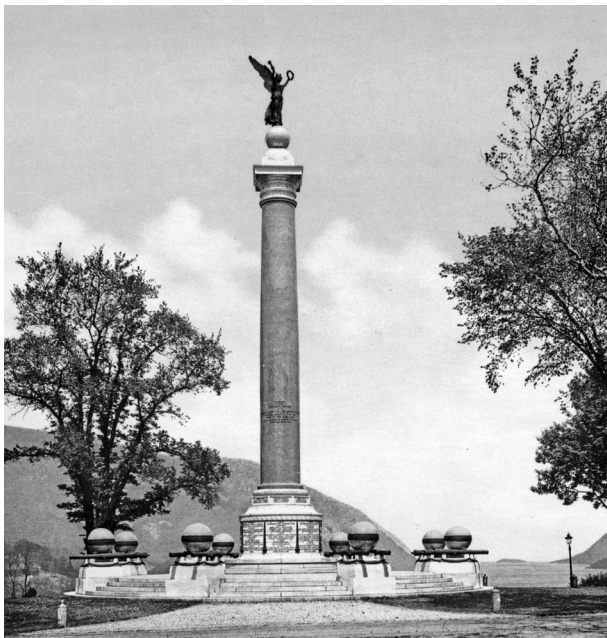
Bruce Weber is a scholar of nineteenth- and twentieth-century American art and former curator at The National Academy of Design and the Museum of the City of New York.

⁵⁶ Joseph Pollet, "Art . . . The First Woodstock Artists' Annual," *The Hue and Cry*, 1 (August 8, 1933), p.1.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Black Power Cadets: How African American Students Defeated President Nixon's Confederate Monument and Changed West Point, 1971–1976

Ty Seidule



Dedicated in 1897, the Battle Monument at Trophy Point recognizes the 2,230 officers and enlisted soldiers who died fighting for the United States in the “War of the Rebellion.”

When Major General William A. Knowlton described the monument to Richard M. Nixon, the president’s response was “Where’s the one for the Confederate Army?”

The heyday of the 1968 and 1969 Black Power demonstrations went largely unnoticed at West Point. The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the dramatic protests in hundreds of universities across the country saw no similar reaction at West Point. In the spring of 1969, African American students at Cornell, another prestigious New York university, seized Willard Hall, the center of student life. Chanting, “The revolution has come...pick up the gun,” students spent the night occupying the building. One of the student leaders of that protest was Eric Evans, a former cadet at West Point. Wearing a bandolier and holding a shotgun, Evans departed Willard Hall the next afternoon with other students who carried knives, clubs, rifles, and handguns. Associated Press photographer Steve Starr reflected the mood of the

nation, “Oh my god. Look at all of those goddamned guns.”¹ Just north of West Point in Poughkeepsie, thirty-four African American students walked into Vassar College’s Main Building in the early morning of October 30, 1969, and announced, “This is a take-over.” Similar protests occurred up and down the Hudson River, at the State University of New York at New Paltz as well as Columbia University in Manhattan.²

At the United States Military Academy, the nation’s oldest and most prestigious service academy, all was calm. In fact, when the Academy interviewed black cadets in 1969, they were asked if they expected to protest either educational or military policy. To a man, they said no. Yet, two years later, African American cadets at West Point organized quickly, protested dramatically, if peacefully, and convinced a conservative, white institution to recognize their identity as black men. Moreover, the school started promoting the idea of black identity to faculty, staff, cadets, and alumni. Black cadet activism persuaded, even forced, West Point to change from a race-relations laggard to a self-proclaimed leader.³ At no other time in the Military Academy’s 200-year history have cadets protested so vehemently or so effectively. At no other time have cadets had such power. Ironically, the impetus for black cadet activism came from the very top. Commander in Chief (and President) Richard M. Nixon sparked the cadets to action.⁴

President Richard Nixon’s Visit to West Point

On May 27, 1971, on a beautiful late spring day in New York’s Hudson River Valley, Richard Nixon made his first and last visit to West Point as president. His trip marked a low point for the U.S. Army. American participation in the Vietnam War was winding down, but racial tension had reached alarming rates. In 1970 and 1971, the NAACP and the Department of Defense had released damning reports of racial inequality and black

1 Donald Alexander Downs, *Cornell '69: Liberalism and the Crisis of the American University* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 5. Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley, 2012), 1–12. Ibram H. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965–1972* (New York, 2012), 103–106 and 127–129. Maria Höhn and Martin Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom: The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs, and Germany* (New York, 2010), 155–157. For an overview see Jonathan B. Fenderson, “‘When the Revolution Comes’: New Perspectives on Black Student Activism and the Black Studies Movement,” *Journal of African American History* 89 (Fall 2013): 607–622. Kimberley L. Philips, *War! What is It Good For? Black Freedom Struggles & the US Military From World War II to Iraq* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012). Richard Stillman, II, “Racial Unrest in the Military: The Challenge and the Response,” *Public Administration Review*, Vol 34, No. 3 (May–June 1974), 221–229. Charles C. Moskos, Jr., “The American Dilemma in Uniform: Race in the Armed Forces,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 406, “The Military and American Society” (March 1973): 94–106.

2 Claudia Lynn Thomas ’71: “Takeover of Main Building, 1969,” Vassar Encyclopedia. <http://vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu/interviews-reflections/claudia-lynn-thomas.html>. M.S. Handler, “State U Refuses a New Paltz Inquiry,” *New York Times*, July 17, 1970, 21. Columbia University Libraries, “1968: Colombia in Crisis.” <https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/1968>

3 For a short overview of African American history at West Point see Ty Seidule, “From Slavery to Black Power: The History of Racial Intolerance at West Point, 1780–2015” in *Intolerance: Political Animals and Their Prey* edited by Bruce Chilton and Robert Tully, (New York: Hamilton Books, 2017). Brian Shellum, *Black Cadet in a White Bastion: Charles Young at West Point* (New York: Bison Books, 2006). John Marszalek, *Assault at West Point: The Court Martial of Johnson Whittaker* (New York: Touchstone Books, 2004). For the twentieth century see Isaac Hampton II, *The Black Officer Corps: A History of Black Officer Military Advancement from Integration through Vietnam* (London: Routledge, 2012). Krewasky Salter, *The Story of Black Military Officers, 1861–1948* (London: Routledge, 2014).

4 Student Survey, 1969, Special Collections and Archives, United States Military Academy Library, United States Military Academy, West Point, NY, referred to hereafter as USMA.

soldiers' unwillingness to stand for injustice.⁵ In addition to problems with race relations, the army suffered from endemic drug use, poor morale, and indiscipline. The army had lost its heroic reputation earned in World War II. Instead, incidents like the My Lai massacre, where army soldiers slaughtered Vietnamese civilians, created the impression of an ill-disciplined force outside the American mainstream. Nixon came to West Point to deliver a sober message. He declared, "The symptoms of trouble in the army are plain enough, from drug abuse to insubordination." The president asked the graduating seniors of the Class of 1971 to lead a "moral rebirth" of the army.⁶ At most colleges, Nixon's presence would result in near riots. As the commander in chief, he received a rousing welcome from the cadets. By all accounts, he loved his visit and stayed longer than his staff wanted.⁷

After finishing his talk and watching a parade, Nixon joined the Academy's superintendent (the school's president), Major General William A. Knowlton, in the president's Lincoln Continental convertible for a tour. Together they drove to Trophy Point, a dramatic vista on a bluff overlooking the Hudson River. In addition to hundreds of captured enemy weapons from the American Revolution through the Spanish American War, Trophy Point holds West Point's most important memorial—Battle Monument, a seventy-foot granite column erected to the 2,230 Regular Army officers and soldiers who fought and died for the United States during the Civil War. In 1897, a West Point professor dedicated the monument to those who "freed a race and welded a nation."⁸

As Knowlton explained the purpose of the Battle Monument, Nixon remarked, "Oh, that's fine general. Where's the one for the Confederate Army?"

Knowlton replied, "Well sir, we don't have one up here."

"Oh, General," the president replied, "I've just been down to Alabama and I got a wonderful reception down there, and this is a time of healing of all these things, and this is the theme of my administration, bringing us together, and you've got to get a monument up here to those Confederate dead."⁹

A Confederate memorial at West Point might help protect Nixon's southern flank and his election prospects in 1972. He had recently returned from a trip to meet Southern governors, including Alabama Governor George Wallace. Wallace had run as an independent in the 1968 presidential election and won several states. He looked to be even more formidable in 1972. Nixon pondered a worst-case scenario in which Wallace would win enough states to deprive him or the Democratic nominee of a majority of

5 NAACP, *The Search for Military Justice: Report of an NAACP Inquiry into the Problems of Negro Serviceman in West Germany* (New York: NAACP, 1971). Department of Defense, Manpower and Reserve Affairs, "U.S. Military Race Relations in Europe—September 1970."

6 Richard Nixon, "Remarks to the Corps of Cadets at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York," 29 May 1971, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=3029>.

7 General William A. Knowlton, USA Retired, interviewed by Lieutenant Colonel David W. Hazen, Senior Officer Oral History Program, U.S. Army Military History Institute, 1982, 611.

8 Charles Larned, "The Battle Monument at West Point," *Harper's Weekly*, 12 June 1897, 594. James Tyrus Seidule, "'Treason is Treason': Civil War Memory at West Point," *Journal of Military History* 76 (Winter 2012), 427–452.

9 Charles D. W. Canham to the Superintendent, "Memorial to West Pointers who served the Confederacy," 16 July 1971, USMA. Knowlton, Oral History interview 612–613.

Electoral College votes. In that scenario, the House of Representatives would elect the president, with each state receiving one vote. Because the Democrats controlled the House, Nixon would lose.

The purpose of Nixon's Confederate Monument had nothing to do with bringing people together. A new monument on West Point would exploit race for political gain. Several books published in late 1969 and early 1970 looked at Wallace's success as part of a potent white backlash against the racial inclusion of Civil Rights legislation and economic gains by African Americans. In early 1970, Samuel Lubell wrote in *The Hidden Crisis in American Politics* that Wallace received high vote tallies in Northern white communities that abutted black districts. Increases in black prosperity had pushed African Americans closer to white neighborhoods, inciting fear among majority whites. Lubell wrote that academics had assumed that the South would eventually resemble the North in race relations. "Wallace raised the prospect that the North, as it changes, may become more southernized."¹⁰

Lubell was a respected political journalist. Kevin Phillips, the author of *The Emerging Republican Majority*, written in 1969, was a wunderkind in Nixon's 1968 campaign. One of the first analysts to master computerized voting trends, Phillips was an indispensable, although maligned, figure in 1968. One Nixon aide called him "The Computer." In his book, Phillips wrote that white fear of black Americans would drive a future Republican majority. To prod the new majority, Phillips urged the Republican Party to endorse black voting rights in the South in order to push more Southern whites into the Republican Party. Politics wasn't hard, Phillips argued. Find out who hates whom. "That is the secret." Historian Dan T. Carter writes that Phillips' book showed both brilliance and "breathless cynicism."¹¹

Nixon paid attention. In a memo written by White House Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman, Nixon ordered his staff to "use Phillips as an analyst—study his strategy—don't think in terms of old time ethnics, go for Poles, Italians, Irish, must learn to understand Silent Majority...don't go for Jews and Blacks." After 1970, Nixon abandoned his moderate policies on race to maintain Republican majorities in the South and elsewhere. Stoking racial fears in white America became a strategy for dealing with the threat of George Wallace. As Nixon confided to biographer Herbert Parmet, Democratic nominee George McGovern provided little worry. "My concern was about Wallace." The Confederate Monument proposal at West Point reflected Nixon's abandonment of racial moderation, his move to neutralize Wallace, and his sign to white America that he was on their side.

10 Samuel Lubell, *The Hidden Crisis in American Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970), 105 in Dan T. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: Race in the Conservative Counterrevolution, 1963–1994* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University), 41.

11 Kevin Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New York: Arlington House, 1969). Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich*, 44.

A Confederate Monument attached to the apolitical Military Academy might help Nixon create a majority for the 1972 campaign.¹²

Back at the White House, Nixon sent a letter to Knowlton thanking him for a visit that proved a “great boost to my morale.” In a long postscript, he ordered the superintendent to create a monument to “West Pointers who lost their lives serving on the Southern side.” To track the Academy’s progress, Nixon assigned the project to the deputy assistant to the president for National Security Affairs, Brigadier General Alexander M. Haig, a 1947 graduate of West Point. Two years earlier, Haig had served at West Point as a lieutenant colonel. Plucked from relative obscurity to serve on the National Security Council, Haig began a meteoric rise from colonel to four-star general in increasing positions of power at the White House, where he became known as a “go-to-guy” for his hard work and stellar staff work. If Nixon needed a tough or unpleasant task accomplished, he turned to Haig. During the difficult Watergate years, Haig served as Nixon’s chief of staff. After he retired from the army, Haig would serve as Ronald Reagan’s secretary of state. However, in 1971 he was known as the most political of generals, a soldier who knew how to use power aggressively.¹³

The president wanted a memorial and Haig made sure the superintendent received the message. Haig called Knowlton the day after Nixon’s visit and many times thereafter. The president was not suggesting a Confederate memorial. The commander in chief demanded a statue, a big statue. Haig told Knowlton that the monument was the president’s “personal initiative” and he wanted it completed on an “urgent basis,” in time for the Republican Convention the next year.¹⁴

By mid-June, Knowlton appointed an ad hoc committee to create a proposal. He realized that the Confederate project had “real hazards.” In particular, Knowlton wondered how “one gets the support of black cadets and graduates,” a prescient concern. He hoped the committee could somehow finesse the president’s “priority project.” The committee recommended the use of a building given to West Point after the 1964 World’s Fair. The Academy could create an exhibit in the building that recognized all West Pointers who fought in the war. Rather than creating a Confederate Monument, the committee suggested an exhibit that would tell the story of the Civil War from West Point’s perspective. The exhibit would highlight both those who stayed true to the United States and those who renounced their commission to fight for the Confederacy. By creating an exhibit inside a building, the committee hoped to placate the president without creating a paean to the Confederacy. Unfortunately for Knowlton, Haig had kept in close contact with the

12 Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich*, 50–51. Joseph E. Lowndes, *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 81, 100–104.

13 Richard Nixon to William Knowlton, 1 June 1971, Box 56, Trip 20, White House Central Files, West Point, New York, 28 May 1971, Nixon Presidential Library, Yorba Linda, CA. Referred to hereafter as NPL.

14 Alexander Haig to the President, 31 May 1971, Box 377, National Security Files, Subject Files, President’s West Point Speech, “Follow-up actions resulting from your visit to the US Military Academy,” (Stamped “The President has seen”), NPL. Alexander Haig to Jay Dymek, 15 November 1993, author’s files. Knowlton, Oral History interview, 613.

committee and fed the president inside information. In September, Nixon vetoed the idea of a discrete museum exhibit. He demanded an ostentatious monument for Confederates. Thwarted, Knowlton now had to create a new plan. Nixon wanted the project completed in less than a year, an ambitious timeline to plan, fund-raise, build, and dedicate a monument.¹⁵

The first order of business was finding money. Nixon provided plenty of guidance to Knowlton but no funding. The president had left little time to ask Congress for money and the superintendent knew that a Confederate Monument would draw the wrath of the Congressional Black Caucus. Instead, Knowlton contacted the Association of Graduates, West Point's alumni foundation, to fund the monument. As a non-profit, private organization, only the association could raise money for the federally funded college.

In October, after Knowlton made a formal request to fund the Confederate Monument, the association's Board of Directors met and had a contentious debate. Many argued that the Academy had never had a Confederate Monument because officers who fought against the United States were traitors who abrogated their oath. As evidence, they pointed out that no Confederate was buried in the West Point cemetery. Moreover, federal law barred the recognition of "unworthy subjects," code for Confederates, in West Point's Valhalla, Cullum Memorial Hall. The founder of the Association of Graduates and the namesake of the memorial hall, Major General George W. Cullum, the Academy's superintendent at the end of the Civil War, had written that the Academy should never forgive Confederates, who, he said, "forgot the flag under which they were educated to follow false gods."¹⁶

Captain Arthur Hester, a 28-year-old African American and the youngest member of the Association of Graduates' board, led the charge against the monument. The Academy's minority admissions officer and a 1965 West Point graduate, Hester argued stridently that Confederates resigned their commissions to fight against the United States in order to create a slave republic. How could West Point countenance a monument to them in 1971? Hester worked with Frank Borman, who commanded Apollo 8, the first mission to fly around the moon, to convince his fellow board members not to fund the president's monument. Hester faced a formidable roster of West Point graduates who either wanted to help the superintendent or who supported the Confederate memorial, including General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General Harold K. Johnson, former chief of staff of the Army. Other older men thought a Confederate Monument a great idea and believed they could fund it through the United Daughters of the Confederacy, which had previously funded prizes and a portrait of Robert E. Lee. The pro-monument group proved formidable. Hester and Borman lost after a "heated discussion" among the members. The board agreed to raise money for a Confederate Monument, but the close vote, eighteen to sixteen was a less-than-ringing endorsement. In fact, many agreed

15 Major General Knowlton to Colonel Griess and Colonel Nye, 14 June 1971, "Statue to West Pointers in the Confederacy," USMA. Alexander Haig to Jay Dymek, 15 November 1993.

16 George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy*, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1879), xii.

to the monument only because of the superintendent's direct request; the Association of Graduates charter required it to support the superintendent. The chairman promised the board that he would tell Knowlton of the deep division on this issue.¹⁷

West Point and Minority Recruitment

Knowlton had another reason to stop the monument. He knew that the negative publicity surrounding a Confederate Monument would devastate the Academy's recruitment efforts. West Point was trying to increase the number of African American cadets to overcome the school's dismal record of minority admissions. In the 100 years since African Americans first came to West Point in 1870, seventy-three black cadets had graduated from it. The Naval Academy was even worse, graduating its first African American in 1946. By the late 1960s, the institutional racism that allowed for only a handful of African American cadets was under assault. During the inauguration of President Nixon in January 1969, West Point cadets assumed their usual position leading the army contingent in the inaugural parade. This time, however, African Americans lining the parade route in Washington, D.C., yelled at the formation, asking why there were no black cadets. While large numbers of African American soldiers fought in Vietnam, there were only a tiny percentage of black officers to lead them. To address this problem, the army ordered West Point to start tracking minority admissions in 1968, pressuring the Academy to increase the number of black cadets quickly. Later that year, it added one African American officer to the Admissions team and told him to start recruiting more black candidates. He brought results immediately. In the summer of 1969, West Point admitted forty-seven black cadets, dwarfing the number brought in during the previous nine years combined. With the change in numbers came a change in attitudes. As one cadet pointed out, "Until these plebes [freshman] arrived, it wasn't possible to have a black identity. There just weren't enough of us." By the fall of 1971, 119 black cadets were attending West Point, enough to change culture. As Knowlton would later describe it, going from "eight black cadets in a class to eighty in a class is like nuclear fission. Tremendous stresses were placed upon the blacks at West Point and upon the administration."¹⁸

The Class of 1972, the last class admitted before the creation of the Equal Admissions program, had only eight African American cadets, less than one percent of the class. Their informal leader was Percy Squire, the highest-ranking black cadet in the corps,

17 William Knowlton to Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Department of the Army, "Possible Civil War Memorial," 4 November 1971, USMA. Minutes of the Association of Graduates, 23 October 1971, Association of Graduates Archives, West Point, NY. Percy Squire, conversation with the author, 13 August 2010. David Brice, conversation with the author, 27 July 2012.

18 Timothy Lupfer, conversation with the author, 14 March 2014. West Point was not alone in admitting few African Americans. Yale started their minority recruitment efforts the same year that West Point did. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., conversation with the author, 24 February 2013. Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1968–1969, 7, USMA. "Negro Cadets at the Academies Triple," *Washington Post*, 25 August 1967. Thomas Fleming, "West Point Cadets Now Say, 'Why Sir?'," *New York Times*, 5 July 1970, 126. Fred S. Hoffman, "Record Total of Negroes Attend Service Schools," *Washington Post*, 21 July 1965. James Ferron, "Blacks in The Long Gray Line," *New York Times*, 2 June 1991. Jeffrey K. Toomer, "A Corps of Many Colors: The Evolution of the Minority Recruiting Effort at the United States Military Academy," 1997, unpublished paper, USMA. Knowlton, Oral History Interview, 603.

a battalion commander. Confident and charismatic, Squire came to West Point from Youngstown, Ohio. His father was a stove tender who ran a blast furnace for U.S. Steel, and his grandfather was a World War I veteran of the 365th Infantry Regiment. Squire was a multi-sport star, Eagle Scout, and president of the Student Council in his interracial high school. Raised on the tough east side of that Balkanized steel town, he had seen multi-ethnic strife from African American, Irish, Italian, and Puerto Rican communities. He had also witnessed the violent labor movements in Youngstown. Squire understood the need to organize, and he provided black cadets with a rallying point in 1971. His white classmates considered him the most radical member of the class of 1972. Knowlton said Squire “had leadership oozing out of his fingertips.”¹⁹

David Brice, Squire’s good friend and fellow leader, came from a starkly dissimilar background—the small, rural town of Blythewood, South Carolina (north of Columbia). Brice attended a segregated high school where he played three sports and was both the class president and valedictorian. Before coming to West Point, he had never had a conversation with a white person. When the local paper published an article about Brice coming to the Military Academy, members of the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross on his family’s front lawn. Brice’s father suspected that the culprits worked at a local store. He took his shotgun there and told the store employees that if they ever set foot on his property again, he would blast them. The KKK never bothered the Brices again.²⁰

The transition to West Point from the rural segregated South proved difficult for Brice. He arrived after a journey that required five different family members to take him on various legs of the trip. After he entered the gates, the upperclassmen screamed at him, as they did at all cadets, but for Brice, who had never seen white culture, this was especially hard. Most of the older African Americans left the younger black cadets to fend for themselves. Adding to his stress, Brice’s first roommate was a racist from Meridian, Mississippi. The cadet refused to speak to Brice or help him dress for inspections. With no other African American freshman in his company of 120, Brice had no support and endured a tense and lonely year.²¹

While the number of African American cadets increased dramatically the year after Brice and Squire entered, the institutional structures to support them did not. Even before Nixon came to West Point, black cadet activism started to change the Academy in important but not public ways. Cadets wanted a forum to discuss issues important to them, as well as a social outlet to meet African American women. The Academy, however, would not allow a club based on race. Clubs provided one of the few venues to leave campus, making them popular for cadets anxious for even a little freedom. In the late summer of 1971, African American cadets picked the Contemporary Affairs Seminar club for a

19 Timothy Lupfer, conversation with the author, 13 March 2014. Knowlton, Oral History Interview, 615.

20 Richard C. U'Ren, *Ivory Fortress: A Psychiatrist Looks at West Point* (New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1974), 112. David Brice, conversation with the author, 27 July 2012.

21 David Brice, conversation with the author, 27 July 2012.

hostile takeover. They showed up en masse and easily outvoted the white cadets, creating a de facto black student union. The cadets selected Squire to serve as the seminar's first president. The yearbook described the Contemporary Affairs Seminar as a place where "The problems of Black America are illuminated and discussed within the realm of free interchange." With a critical mass of African American cadets, strong leadership, and a club that provided an organizational setting, the cadets needed only a spark to react. In this setting, Nixon's Confederate Monument proposal was a blowtorch.²²



Contemporary Affairs Seminar (1972 Howitzer): In 1968, fewer than twenty African American cadets attended West Point. By 1971, the number had reached 119. African American cadets ran the Contemporary Affairs Club as a de facto Black Student Union. Percy Squire, the highest ranking African American cadet, led the club

Black Cadet Activism in Reaction to Nixon's Confederate Monument Proposal

On October 23, 1971, after failing to stop the monument and staring at a sharp deadline, Superintendent Knowlton asked Cadet Squire about the president's proposed Confederate Monument. Knowlton described the reaction as "instant turmoil and chaos." Squire and Brice convened a meeting of all African American cadets the night of October 25, 1971. The meeting ran more than three hours. Anger over the Confederate Monument created seething resentment that bordered on mutiny. Knowlton called it "a screaming, yelling rebellion." Some cadets argued for resigning en masse. Others called for strikes, mass

22 1972 *Howitzer*, USMA. Percy Squire, conversation with the author, 13 August 2010. David Brice, conversation with the author, 27 July 2012.

demonstrations, or sit-ins. If ordered to march in a parade for a Confederate Monument dedication, cadets would refuse to participate or refuse to render honors and sit down during the parade. The underclassman in particular argued for more aggressive tactics. Unlike the seniors who came to West Point in the summer of 1968, younger cadets had been a part of demonstrations and confrontations at their high schools. About fifteen cadets claimed that no white institution could understand their needs, and they argued strenuously for radical, even violent action.²³ Some of the underclassmen accused the seniors of acting like pawns or “Uncle Toms” by bowing to the demands of the white establishment.²⁴

Squire and Brice developed a sophisticated strategy to use the most radical cadets as a threat to gain the majority’s demands. The first step was writing a “militant manifesto” (some called it the “black manifesto”), modeled after demands made by prisoners during the Attica prison riot two months earlier. The Attica prisoners had a list of twenty-five grievances against their treatment; state authorities worked on those demands until Governor Nelson Rockefeller ordered an assault by the police to retake the prison. The African American cadets made thirteen grievances against the Academy. The language also evoked the American colonists’ petitions against the British government leading to the American Revolution, and the number thirteen linked to the original United States.²⁵

Percy Squire was the primary author of the manifesto and he used Charles A. Reich’s *The Greening of America* as an example. A bestseller in the fall of 1971, Reich’s book promised a “revolution of the new generation.” Squire also had a very able editor to help him craft the document, Captain Joseph Ellis, who taught the Black History course. Ellis later won the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award for biographies of the founders of the United States.²⁶

On November 8, 1971, every black cadet signed the manifesto. That evening, Squire and Brice took the document to Captain Howard Shegog’s house to talk to the African American officers who had been following their progress closely. Twenty-one of the twenty-two black officers signed the manifesto. The one officer who refused to sign worried that it would damage his career. For those unfamiliar with military customs, signing the manifesto might seem like an obvious moral imperative—the “right thing” to do. For career officers, however, signing a militant manifesto was an act of moral courage that placed their careers in jeopardy. The near-unanimous public support by the officers put even more pressure on Knowlton. Spurred to action by the cadets, the officers created

23 William Knowlton to Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Department of the Army, 4 November 1971, “Possible Civil War Memorial,” USMA.

24 Knowlton, Oral History Interview, 616. Percy Squire, conversation with the author, August 13, 2010.

25 “Manifesto,” 3 November 1971, author’s copy. The author is indebted to Arthur Hester who found a copy of the manifesto in his personal papers. It is the only known copy to exist.

26 Joseph Ellis and Robert Moore, *School for Soldiers: West Point and the Profession of Arms* (New York, 1974), 216, 282. Richard C. U’Ren, *Ivory Fortress*, 118. Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America: How the Youth Revolution is Trying to Make America Livable* (New York, 1970). Robert Moore, conversation with the author, 6 August 2012. Frank Slaughter, conversation with the author, 6 August 2012.

the Black Officers Association of West Point to maintain pressure on the Academy and to mentor the young African American cadets.²⁷

The next day, Squire delivered the six-page manifesto to the superintendent. It stated that as black Americans, they had entered West Point with “awe and expectation.” Their goal was to join the army and improve the quality of leadership for the “black military man.” Instead, they found a “long train of abuses and usurpations” and “blatant racism.” The manifesto highlighted the long record of racism at the Academy.²⁸

The cadets presented their thirteen grievances to a “candid America.” The first grievance described the poor treatment of African American cadets and the startlingly few number of black cadets admitted to the Academy prior to 1968. The second point described the lack of recognition for the African American soldier in general and the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments in particular. Called the Buffalo Soldiers by the Indians during the Plains Wars, they fought bravely in the Spanish American War alongside Theodore Roosevelt’s Rough Riders. Parts of the regiments moved to West Point in 1907 and provided equestrian support to cadets for more than forty years until the Academy discontinued cavalry training. Many of the former Buffalo Soldiers lived in the area and some of them mentored African American cadets.²⁹

Six of the grievances described in detail the lack of black cadets, officers, and coaches in positions of leadership throughout the Academy. No area outside of custodial services saw more than a handful of African Americans. The cadets wanted leaders whom they could emulate, and there were precious few. Among the other grievances, the cadets complained that the Black History course was being discontinued and that the Academy took an “unethical approach” in denying a request to invite black speakers who criticized the military.³⁰ The twelfth grievance described the skits presented by white cadets that portrayed black non-commissioned officers who supported summer training as “fawning sambos and as examples of ignorant incompetence.” While the manifesto named no one in particular, it still served as a hard-hitting exposé of institutional racism.³¹

Nixon’s Confederate Monument proposal was the thirteenth and final grievance. The cadets charged that Nixon’s proposal, more than any other, “seriously weakened the faith we had in the administration to understand our racial pride.” They argued that Confederate graduates had “abrogated their oath.” The cadets noted that when they became officers, they might lead a military unit against a group of African American citizens like the radical Blackstone Nation. If, as officers, they left the army to accept positions of leadership among “rebellious blacks,” they would be punished, even though “emotion, birth and racial ties” attracted them to this cause. If the cadets fought against the U.S. Army, would they

27 Black Officers Association of West Point Contact Roster, undated, author’s copy.

28 “Manifesto.”

29 “Manifesto.”

30 Captain Joseph Ellis, the Black History Course instructor left West Point in 1972.

31 “Manifesto.”

be immortalized with a monument? Or would they be court-martialed and thrown in the stockade? The answer was obvious. No American would countenance a memorial to African American West Pointers who fought against their country in the 1970s.

The cadets provided Knowlton with a devastating argument that the Confederates were traitors who fought against their country. No other single foe in American history had killed more U.S. Army soldiers than the Confederate army. Yet, Nixon wanted to put a monument on West Point's sacred ground to the enemies of the United States. Interestingly, the cadets refrained from arguing that a monument would commemorate those who fought to retain slavery. Instead, they made a strategic decision to focus on the oath issue because they realized that it resonated with white senior officers. The cadets clearly understood their audience. Many senior officers at West Point detested the idea of erecting a monument to enemy combatants who killed U.S. soldiers, no matter where they went to school.³²

With the issuance of the manifesto, Knowlton understood that he and the Academy were in crisis. If the monument process continued, he could face a mutiny. Squire told Knowlton that if the monument were completed, black cadets would refuse to march in any parade to honor it. Under a rash leader, the situation could have led to mass protests and even violence. Knowlton, however, was a savvy, brilliant officer. During World War II, when West Point was short of faculty, Knowlton taught Spanish as a cadet, one of only four cadets selected for this honor. As a young officer, he worked directly for Generals of the Army Dwight Eisenhower and Omar Bradley after World War II, becoming a protégé of Bradley. As a major, he taught political science at West Point. The superintendent at that time, Major General Garrison Davidson, selected Knowlton to sit on what became known as the Ewell Board, created by Davidson to try and modernize West Point's curriculum, which badly needed change. Knowlton saw how Davidson, considered one of the best superintendents in West Point's long history, led the school. Knowlton also had extensive combat experience in World War II and Vietnam, earning three Silver Stars for bravery. As a colonel, Knowlton served as a military attaché in Tunisia, where he learned to speak Arabic, adding to his knowledge of Spanish, French, German, Turkish, Dutch, and Italian. West Point could not have had a more experienced, intelligent, and empathetic leader during the crisis years in the early 1970s.³³

Knowlton also had served as the Director of the Army Staff before arriving at West Point. That position gave him a strong network within the Pentagon as well as the trust of senior Army leaders. Knowlton wrote a letter to the Army Staff detailing the ferocious reaction of the African American cadets and arguing that a Confederate Monument

32 "Manifesto." Knowlton, "Possible Civil War Memorial." A. Peter Bailey, conversation with the author, 19 July 2012. David Brice, conversation with the author, 27 July 2012. Arthur Hester, conversation with the author, 24 July 2012. Percy Squire, conversation with the author, 12 August 2010. Both Brice and Squire purposefully refrained from bringing up the slavery issue.

33 The latest history of West Point calls Davidson the best superintendent in the twentieth century. Lance Betros, *Carved from Granite: West Point since 1902* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2012). Knowlton, Oral History Interview, 616.

would hurt minority recruiting efforts and cause a publicity nightmare. Moreover, he wrote that the current “turmoil” was a mere dress rehearsal for an actual Confederate memorial dedication. West Point could expect mass protest and “uncomplimentary visitors from the Black press [and] the Black Caucus” along with “bad headlines at West Point’s expense.” Finally, while others worried that killing the monument would make the black community “overconfident,” Knowlton felt a decision not to build it would strengthen the “conservative Black element” who wanted to work within the system and “weaken” radicals who wanted to escalate all issues to the press and Black Caucus. The letter masterfully threatened widespread publicity and chaos at a time when the army was already reeling.³⁴

Squire and Brice wanted to keep the pressure on Knowlton and the army through limited engagement with the press. *Ebony Magazine*, a leading voice of black America, ran a story by A. Peter Bailey, a founding member of the Organization of Afro-American Unity and one of Malcolm X’s pallbearers. His article, “Getting it Together at ‘The Point,’” served as a reminder that if West Point’s leadership failed to listen to the cadets, more publicity was forthcoming. The article mentioned the Confederate Monument proposal in passing, but the real message was that if the project went forward, *Ebony* would lead a journalistic assault on the Academy. The cadets had hemmed in the Academy’s leaders, the army, and the president on all sides, leaving only two choices—capitulation or escalation. In recalling this article, Bailey later said that he was impressed with the cadets’ strategy because they focused on the oath issue rather than slavery. “Those were some savvy brothers,” he noted.³⁵

The manifesto’s effect was immediate. West Point leaders listened to cadet demands and delivered help, fast. Cadets wanted an improvement in their social lives and that meant two things: the opportunity to meet African American women and the relaxation of hair standards to grow Afros. West Point was a male enclave in 1971. The cadet hostess bused young, mostly white women in from surrounding colleges for dances (known as hops). The few black women that did brave the trip to West Point left unimpressed with the experience of an overwhelmingly white and, often, Southern culture. One young woman recalled her visit to West Point with horror: “We spent the whole evening square dancing!”³⁶

The manifesto generated resources from the Academy to fix the problem. The superintendent provided a bus that Brice sent to his uncle, a deacon in Hackensack, New Jersey. The bus came back filled with women from Bloomfield State College. Brice and Squire arranged for use of the superintendent’s large boat. As the boat cruised the Hudson River to the melodious strains of the Chi-Lites, the Delfonics, and Marvin Gaye,

34 Knowlton, “Possible Civil War Memorial.”

35 A. Peter Bailey, conversation with the author, 19 July 2012.

36 Peter Bailey, “Getting It Together at ‘The Point,’” *Ebony Magazine* 27, no. 2, (December 1971): 136–144.

African American cadets danced—for a night not that much different from college students anywhere in America. For many cadets, that was real progress.³⁷

More progress came when the cadets solved the issue of Afros. When Percy Squire came to West Point in 1968, the Italian barbers employed by the Academy could not cut black hair. Nor did the cadet store sell black hair care products. West Point, although only fifty miles north of New York City, remains a rural enclave. With mountains to the north, south, and west, and a river to the east, there are no close towns catering to African Americans' needs. For that matter, the Academy's leaders rarely let any cadet off campus. Moreover, the written haircut regulations insisted on a "Whitewall," which meant that the neck of cadets must show white skin. Obviously, this standard could not apply to the skin of African American cadets. Close-cropped hair made the cadets feel as though they had "abandoned the black culture." After the manifesto, the Academy's leadership quickly changed the regulations, allowing black hair to be as long as the highest-ranking cadet. Squire, as the highest-ranking African American cadet, grew a large Afro, even though he hated it. His fellow cadets forced him to have long hair so that they could as well. In 1971, West Point's black community wore their hair short, despite the growing popularity of Afros among civilians and soldiers. The following year, African American cadets sported large Afros. One cadet's caption for his yearbook photo explained that he "sometimes looked military when his hair wasn't blown out." The cadet store finally started carrying black hair care products and hiring barbers who could cut black hair.³⁸

Cadet demands improved their own living conditions, but they addressed broader issues as well. Memory plays an important role at West Point, home to many monuments recognizing America's military heroes. Yet, no memorial on campus recognized the important role African Americans played in U.S. military history. After the manifesto, the superintendent immediately ordered the memorialization committee to recognize black soldiers. By early 1973, the old cavalry parade ground was renamed Buffalo Soldiers' Field, in recognition of the segregated 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments. The ceremony to mark the occasion was an important one for the entire African American community, not just cadets. The Buffalo Soldiers who served at West Point attended the ceremonies along with their families, providing a source of pride that continues to this day.³⁹

Other changes followed swiftly. The year before, there had been a fight during the Army Navy football game. A white cadet started waving the Confederate battle flag when the West Point band struck up the Confederate anthem "Dixie." A black cadet snatched it, starting a scuffle. During the monument fight, African American cadets hung Black Power posters that featured a raised fist in their rooms. The Academy's leadership deemed the posters too political and ordered them taken down. The black cadets complained that

37 Interview, David Brice, 27 July 2012. Ellis and Moore, *School for Soldiers*, 216.

38 David Brice, conversation with the author, 24 July 2012. Percy Squire, conversation with the author, 13 August 2010. *Howitzer*, 1974.

39 "Progress Report on the 9th and 10th Cavalry Memorialization," 31 March 1972, Museum, Historical Memorialization Committee Files, West Point Museum, West Point, New York.

white cadets were allowed to have Confederate flags in their rooms, a symbol more offensive than a raised black fist. Quickly, leaders banned the flag as well as the playing of “Dixie.”⁴⁰

Cadets told the superintendent that of the hundreds of portraits at West Point, none featured a black officer. In the main ballroom where cadet dances were held, portraits of the U.S. Army generals during the Civil War looked down on the dancers. Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman had pride of place. Black cadets wanted a portrait to recognize an African American military hero. Knowlton immediately wrote to Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., leader of the Tuskegee Airman and the first black graduate of West Point in the twentieth century, to sit for a portrait. Davis refused. Despite repeated attempts by Knowlton, Davis felt a portrait of him as a black man would be divisive. Instead, the superintendent commissioned a bust of Henry O. Flipper, the first African American graduate of West Point.⁴¹

African American cadets also demanded lecturers who could discuss the black experience. High on their list was U.S. Representative Ronald Dellums, a leader in the Black Caucus and a Democrat from Oakland. Dellums had travelled throughout the country speaking at military bases, highlighting systemic racism through the services. Knowlton balked at bringing a known firebrand to campus and refused the Contemporary Affairs Seminar’s request to invite Dellums. The Pentagon overruled Knowlton. Dellums’ speech was entitled “The Politics of the Niggers.” Despite the incendiary title, Knowlton admitted that Dellums gave one of the most important talks during his four years at the Academy. Dellums told the cadets, “We need you, we blacks, to stay at West Point and go through this place and become Regular Army officers, because we need black Regular Army officers.” Here was a committed anti-war activist and a radical African American politician telling black cadets to stay at West Point. Knowlton left the event with a changed opinion of Dellums. Even more incredibly, the Academy allowed cadets to host Nation of Islam Spokesman Louis Farrakhan for a visit and speech. Farrakhan told the cadets, “Don’t be lulled to sleep by the fact that you’re at West Point. There’s no place in the West where you are respected.”⁴²

While West Point allowed controversial speakers, it still recoiled from negative publicity. West Point has only one source of funding—Congressional appropriations. Its leaders worried that a scandal would jeopardize funding, especially in the early 1970s as the army’s budget started to wind down from the Vietnam War. Moreover, the Academy was still finishing infrastructure improvements from the mid-1960s meant to nearly double the number of cadets at West Point. Any loss of Congressional appropriations would be

40 David Brice, conversation with the author, 27 July 2012. *The Howitzer*, 1970 shows cadets waving three large Confederate flags.

41 Knowlton, Oral History 611.

42 Hank Burcham, “Dellums Hailed in Ft. Meade Antiwar Talk,” *Washington Post*, 14 April 1971, A20. “Caucus to Investigate Racism in the Military,” *Hartford Courant*, 4 November 1971, 4. “Manifesto.” Superintendents Annual Report, 1972, Appendix P, “Lectures,” USMA. Knowlton, Oral History, 637. Askia Muhammad, “The Historical Legacy of U.S. Military Double Standards Revisited,” *The Final Call*, May 24, 2016. http://www.finalcall.com/artman/publish/National_News_2/article_103112.shtml

devastating. Two years earlier, West Point did have a scandal: The army fired the previous superintendent, Major General Samuel Koster, for his role in the My Lai massacre. With daily reports of fragging, drug abuse, race riots, and continued negative coverage about Vietnam, the army could ill afford to have its flagship institution mired in a racial crisis. The publicity that would follow a race riot at West Point would dwarf the army's woes elsewhere.⁴³

By November, the President's ardor for a Confederate Monument had cooled because Wallace became less of a concern. One reason was the federal grand jury that convened in September 1971 to investigate the finances of Wallace's brother Gerald and other close supporters of the Alabama governor. While the grand jury eventually chose not to indict Gerald Wallace, there were rumors that the Nixon White House had made a deal not to prosecute either Wallace brother if George ran as a Democrat. Twenty-four hours after the Justice Department dropped the investigation against his brother, George Wallace announced his candidacy as a Democrat.⁴⁴

Nixon also found an issue that Wallace had used successfully to appeal to white voters, an issue even more effective than a Confederate Monument—court-ordered desegregation of schools. In 1971, the federal courts mandated sending children to different schools to end de facto segregation. The decision meant sending white suburban children to previously all-black schools or sending African American children to white schools. Either way, white parents and politicians complained loudly about “forced busing” or “forced integration” on racial grounds. One poll reported in late 1971 that seventy-seven percent opposed integration. Nixon told his White House staff to make his opposition to “forcibly integrated schools” as public as possible. Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman said Nixon was “fixated on the issue.” Nixon realized that busing was a gut issue that could turn white voters all over the country against the Democrats because no Democratic candidate (except Wallace) criticized forced integration. Nixon would not publicly come out against busing until March 1972, after Wallace won the Florida Democratic primary, but the president had prepped the issue with his staff for months, even contemplating a constitutional amendment against forced busing.⁴⁵

On one of the many calls between Haig and Knowlton, the superintendent again tried to have the White House back down from the president's Confederate Monument proposal. Haig told Knowlton, “You've been given an order by the commander in chief.”

Knowlton responded, “Yes, but I can tell you that the commander in chief is going to find that a very tainted order, because connected with it is going to be a massive

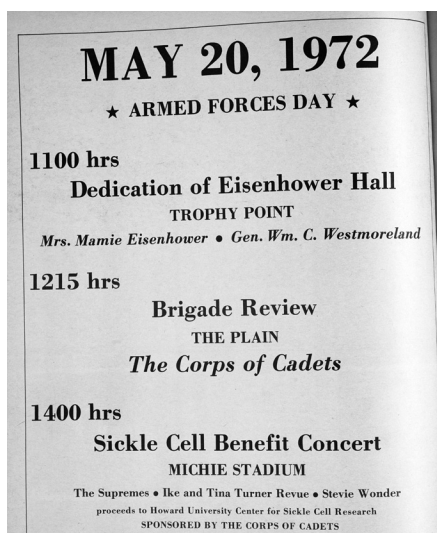
43 David Stout, “Gen. S.W. Koster, 86, Who Was Demoted After My Lai, Dies,” *New York Times*, February 11, 2006.

44 Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 422–424.

45 Robert Mason, *Richard Nixon and the Quest for a New Majority* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 144–149. Carter, *The Politics of Rage*, 422–423. See Davison M. Douglas, *Reading, Writing, and Race: The Desegregation of the Charlotte Schools*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995) and Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

rebellion...at West Point.” Haig understood. On December 6, 1971, the Pentagon wrote to Knowlton. Haig had talked to the president about the crisis at West Point concerning the memorial. The White House asked Knowlton to “terminate” the project immediately. Nixon’s Confederate Monument at West Point died. Percy Squire, David Brice, and 100 African American cadets defeated President Richard Nixon.⁴⁶

Black Cadet Activism after the Monument: “The Concert For the Blood”



Newspaper announcement for the Sickle Cell Anemia Benefit Concert: “The Concert for the Blood” featured Soul Royalty – the Supremes and Stevie Wonder. While the Ike and Tina Turner Revue were scheduled to perform, the group canceled at the last minute

Victory on all fronts created new opportunities for black cadet activism. Cadets searched for ways to use their newfound power to help all African Americans. Imbued with leadership and a sense of mission, they strove to show those outside the gates that they were not the instruments of white repression. Like many Black Power advocates, cadets asserted their history, heritage, and culture, but doing so within the confines of a military environment remained difficult. The defeat of the Confederate Monument proposal created momentum to say in public what they had discussed in private. What does it mean to be a black man in a white institution? As Peter Bailey wrote in *Ebony*, “They have not been left untouched by the rising tide of black consciousness.” The cadets felt their outsider status not only at West Point but within the black community as well. One cadet said, “Our isolation from the black community makes me feel

like a stranded sheep amongst a pack of wolves.” Another felt “stifled as a black person.” Yet, if African Americans met together in twos or threes, white cadets would ask them, “Ya’ll planning a race riot?” The black cadets looked for a way to show the larger community, outside West Point, that they were no regular cadets. As one said, “First of all, I am a black man. Then I am a cadet and then I may possibly be an officer.” This phrase worried the Academy’s leadership. Would African American cadets no longer integrate into the larger corps of cadets? Would they refuse to join the army as officers? Rather than protest against further injustice, cadets seized on a novel way of bringing attention to themselves as black men in a white institution.⁴⁷

46 The Nixon Library has no papers or taped conversations related to the decision to terminate the Confederate Monument, except a letter from Kerwin to Knowlton. Walter T. Kerwin, Jr. to William Knowlton, 6 December 1971, USMA. William Knowlton to President, Association of Graduates, 6 January 1972, “Possible Civil War Memorial,” USMA.

47 Bailey, “Getting It Together at ‘The Point,’” 136–144.

At the time, sickle cell anemia, a scourge of the black community, had captured America's imagination. *The Washington Post* called it "the top attention getting disease of 1971." Famous athletes like boxer Muhammad Ali and baseball player Willie Stargell began fund-raising activities to garner resources for research. Could the cadets create a fund-raising event to benefit all African Americans? Squire went to General Knowlton and asked, "Sir, sickle cell anemia is something which hits blacks. We would like to have a big rock concert at West Point for the benefit of sickle cell anemia." Knowlton approved, despite misgivings by his staff.⁴⁸

The cadets started to plan a soul concert, making a long list of the acts they would like to see. With the help of a prominent African American attorney in Poughkeepsie, cadets found the right phone numbers and called 200 agents and acts. The cold calls worked. Incredibly, they soon had commitments from the Supremes, Stevie Wonder, and the Ike and Tina Turner Revue. The Supremes and Stevie Wonder agreed to play for just their expenses; the Supremes never even billed the cadets for that. Ike and Tina Turner demanded \$10,000, but they cancelled at the last minute. The cadets had several meetings with Aretha Franklin's brother, but he would not waive the singer's \$20,000 fee. One cadet commented to Knowlton that after several meetings with Franklin's team, "I've learned the black bond is strong, but that green bond is stronger." The cadet then rubbed his fingers together—the universal sign for money.⁴⁹

A concert of this size required a commitment from the Academy and the army. Cadets visited Capitol Hill and met with Senator Edmund Brooke from Massachusetts, the first African American elected Senator in the twentieth century. Brooke was also a combat veteran of the segregated 366th Infantry Regiment and had seen combat in Italy during World War II. After discussing issues that affected cadets, Brooke gave his full support for the concert. Squire and Brice then visited the Pentagon and talked to the army's general counsel. The Pentagon first denied the cadets' request to host a concert because Department of Defense regulations prevented fund-raising activities on military installations. When the first denial came through, the newly promoted Lieutenant General Knowlton went back to senior leaders in the Pentagon and forcefully argued that the Academy needed the concert. The cadets would see the denial as one more refusal of a white institution to understand the needs of black cadets. Knowlton convinced his superiors in the Department of Defense to grant a waiver, which explicitly stated that the one-time approval was primarily to promote "racial understanding." The fund-raising aspect was incidental to the larger purpose. Only two months before execution, the concert was on.⁵⁰

48 "Athletes: Group Sponsors Sickle Cell Anemia Tests," *Washington Post*, 18 August 1971, 14. Knowlton, Oral History Interview, 632.

49 Samuel Collins, "Meeting with black cadets and officers on the Sickle Cell Anemia Benefit," 17 March 1972, USMA. Knowlton, Oral History Interview, 633. See Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight against Medical Discrimination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

50 Knowlton to HQDA, 27 January 1972. Winant Sidle to Knowlton, 2 February 1972. John R. Jeter to Knowlton, 23 March 1972, AG Files, USMA. "Cadet Activities Office After Action Report," Sickle Cell Anemia Concert, 12 June 1972, AG Files, USMA.

The example of Monterey, Altamont, Woodstock and other rock concerts that attracted hundreds of thousands of young people, and occasionally violence, worried a few senior leaders, but they cleared every bureaucratic hurdle to make the concert a reality. Back at West Point, the superintendent put the full resources of the military to work. Knowlton assigned one of the senior African American officers on post, Major Melvin Bowdan, as director to run the event, and told Captain Frank Slaughter to assist him. Both officers stopped working on all other projects to concentrate on the concert. While cadets had passion, intellect, and brawn, they lacked the staff skills to organize such a large event. Moreover, they had classes to attend. Every part of West Point pitched in now that the concert had the command's blessing. Among the army's great strengths is its ability to plan. With only two months between Pentagon approval and the concert, military police, lawyers, engineers, audiovisual experts, the athletic department, treasurer, cadet activities director, and the band all planned furiously. Under the poorly chosen acronym SCAB (Sickle Cell Anemia Benefit), the entire community pivoted and worked on the concert above any other task to ensure the event was a success.⁵¹

The cadets formed a committee headed by Percy Squire, with David Brice as his deputy. They received permission to miss class and intramural athletic activities to promote the show on radio and at other colleges in the area. The Academy worried that despite the big names performing for only their travel expenses, the outlay of money for such a complex event could be greater than the proceeds. Once the army approved the concert, the cadets worked zealously to promote it. Afterward, the Academy recognized that the reason the concert wound up making money was because of the "sales promotion efforts of the cadets."⁵²

While the Academy and the army worked feverishly to prepare the venue and post for the concert, the local town outside West Point's gate panicked. Even though Highland Falls had 35,000 football fans moving through its downtown on several weekends each fall, the idea of African American young people scared them thoroughly. The mayor, town supervisor, and police chief were "very concerned" that the "rock concert" would pose serious "repercussions" for their small town, and they asked West Point for help. The leaders at the Academy, however, had already analyzed the potential problems, contacting the New York State Police about their work at Woodstock. After hearing from the state troopers, West Point's leaders concluded that compared to a rock concert, soul music concerts had been free of violence and drug-related incidents.⁵³

"The Concert for the Blood" occurred on May 20, 1972, a week shy of a year from the date Nixon first mentioned the Confederate Monument. Squire, as the cadet in charge, sold the first ticket (priced at five dollars) to Knowlton. African American cadets, who

51 Letter Orders 422, "Staff to assist the Sickle Cell Anemia Benefit," 5 April 1972, AG Files, USMA.

52 "CAO After Action Report," 12 June 1972, AG Records, USMA.

53 Arthur J. Yagel, Jr., Town of Highlands Supervisor to Colonel Patrick Dionne, Chief Information Officer West Point, 5 May 1972, AG Records, USMA.

earlier in 1971 had tried and failed to have a soul-themed dance, planned and executed an outdoor, Woodstock-like concert that featured soul royalty—Stevie Wonder and the Supremes backed by seventeen members of the West Point band.⁵⁴

The media predicted 50,000 people for the concert in West Point's football stadium. A deluge that day (in fact, the most rain ever recorded on a May 20) kept the total to about 10,000. Despite the rain and mud, The Concert for the Blood was a thunderous success. For the first time, African Americans from the surrounding area—Newburgh, Poughkeepsie, and Middletown—attended an event at West Point. An African American woman who had worked at West Point for eleven years commented to the superintendent that

the concert was the first time she had ever felt part of the community. One white officer called the concert "the first socially conscious event ever held at the Academy." The actor and activist Ossie Davis, who also attended, called the concert "the miracle at West Point."⁵⁵

Knowlton clearly understood that the concert had changed West Point. He wrote to several prominent friends of the Academy, confiding that the event had given African American cadets a real sense of pride. Furthermore, Knowlton bragged that several members of the media presented the Academy as "being in front on racial understanding and cooperation." Six months earlier, Knowlton faced mutiny. Had the manifesto become public, Knowlton's career would have been over. Instead, he was now a lieutenant general, and in 1976 the army promoted him to four-star general. West Point, Knowlton asserted, would now lead the army in promoting black identity. However, Knowlton did not take all the credit. Many officers at the Academy helped channel the cadets' passion toward making the institution more progressive, not embarrassing it. In a letter to Bowdan, who led the



LTG William A. Knowlton, Superintendent, purchases the first two tickets to the Sickle Cell Anemia Concert from Cadet Percy Squire last Friday. The concert is slated for May 20. (Photo by Mr. Palazzo)

The newly promoted Lieutenant General Knowlton purchases the first concert ticket from Cadet Squire for \$5. The benefit concert raised over \$30,000 for Sickle Cell Anemia Research.

The actor and activist Ossie Davis called the concert, "The Miracle at West Point"

54 Picture, *The Pointer View*, 20 April 1972, 1. Interview, David Brice, 27 July 2012. "Operations Order Sickle Cell Anemia Concert," 3 May 1972, AG Files, USMA.

55 The football field suffered extensive damage but the superintendent decided to take the money from his budget rather than take money raised by the cadets. "Town Braces for Saturday, Crowds Could Reach 50,000," *News of the Highlands*, Highland Falls, New York, 18 May 1972, 1. "Raindrops Dampened Saturday's Busy Schedule," *News of the Highlands*, 25 May 1972, 1. George Basler, "Downpour Dampens USMA Festivities," *Newburgh Evening News*, 20 May 1972, 1. "CAO AAR," 12 June 1972. Mrs. Floyd H. McAfee to Knowlton, 29 May 1972. Knowlton to McAfee, 2 June 1972. Sickle Cell Anemia Benefit Concert, AG Files, USMA. U'Ren, *Ivory Fortress*, 119. William Knowlton to Richard W. Darrow, 28 June 1972, USMA.

concert planning effort, and Robert Moore, a white officer in the English Department, Knowlton praised both for “helping to diffuse black cadet anger.”⁵⁶

In June, cadets travelled to Washington, D.C., to visit Howard University (named after Oliver O. Howard, a West Point graduate and former Academy superintendent) and present its Center for Sickle Cell Anemia Research at Freedman’s Hospital with the first check from the concert’s proceeds. Money continued to pour in from many sources, including American schools and military units in Germany. By the final tally, the cadets had raised \$31,000 for sickle cell anemia research, the largest single donation in the history of the center.⁵⁷

Black Cadet Activism after the Concert, 1972–1976

When Percy Squire and David Brice graduated in June 1972, they had ample reason for pride. Together, they had led the effort to defeat the Confederate Monument and started several initiatives that made life better for all African Americans at West Point. Over the next year, cadets increased their activism to create a black cadet identity that had been missing prior to 1971. The evidence was visible all over campus. In the fall of 1972, for the first time, an African American woman—with an Angela Davis-style Afro—was voted homecoming queen. To bring more black women to West Point, the Academy hired an African American hostess, Etta McAfee, who ensured cadets had a robust social calendar.⁵⁸

Cadet activism continued to forge a black identity. The most important event of the year was Black History Week. In February 1973, West Point’s officials trumpeted the “most extensive” event ever. Much more than a history lesson, Black History Week was a celebration of black culture. Fashion, music, history, politics, and outreach all came together as the Academy sought to portray itself as a promoter of black identity. Knowlton tried to explain the change to bewildered alumni who saw black identity as a threat to the Long Gray Line’s supposed egalitarian virtues. Knowlton compared African American pride to Polish or Italian heritage. While that explanation seems facile, overlooking the long history of prejudice against African Americans at the Academy, it was an attempt to explain to a conservative white alumni base that change was afoot.⁵⁹

Promoting black identity was part of the change. Starting in 1973, West Point’s leadership created a race relations and equal opportunity staff and mandated twelve hours of race relations classes for cadets and sixteen hours for officers and staff. The head of the new office hoped that by the time a cadet graduated, he would receive more than eighty hours of race relations training, equivalent to a two-credit-hour course. The goal

56 William Knowlton to Richard W. Darrow, 28 June 1972, USMA. William Knowlton to Robert Moore, 22 May 1974, author’s copy.

57 “Aid for Sickle Cell Study,” *New York Times*, 3 June 1972, 59. CAO AAR, 12 June 1972. Captain Frank Slaughter to Mrs. Carolyn James, Bad Neuheim American School, 20 October 1972, AG Files, USMA.

58 Howitzer, 1972, USMA. Knowlton, Oral History Interview, 619.

59 “Letter from the President of the Association,” *Assembly Magazine*, (Summer 1972). Press Release, United States Military Academy, February 1973, USMA.

of the training, which included lectures and directed discussions led by race relations professionals, was aspirational—to achieve racial harmony. The pace of change at such a conservative institution staggered the mind. In one short year, the experience of African American cadets at West Point had been transformed.⁶⁰



The Behavioral Science Club in the 1972 *Howitzer*. The club provided African American cadets with an important venue to further black identity at West Point. Throughout the 1970s, the Behavioral Science Club and the Contemporary Affairs Seminar sponsored Black History Week, a celebration of African American culture

The idea of African American identity became stronger throughout the 1970s, with both black cadet activism and the Academy's leadership providing opportunities for exploration of what it meant to be Black in the Long Gray Line. The Contemporary Affairs Seminar held a "Loss of Identity" colloquium in 1974 that focused on how to remain an African American man in uniform. Cadet Michael L. Smith wrote a paper for other cadets in 1975 in which he shared how "black me can make it in 'Whitey's World.'" One cadet remarked that the seminar allowed cadets to "feel as though they are not in this by themselves." While the cadets continued to explore their identity, the Academy created a mutually beneficial relationship with the Urban League of Chicago to recruit African American high school students to attend West Point. In the first year, the program identified eight students who received offers of admission.⁶¹

60 Race Relations Packet, June 1972, 1973, 1974, USMA. Black Studies Report, September 1971, author's copy. Superintendent's Annual Report, 1973, USMA.

61 Michael L. Smith, "Another Duty," 1975 Black History Week Celebrations, USMA. Superintendent's Annual Report, 1974, USMA. Darryl Dean and Jeanne Lynch, "Black Cadets at West Point," *Eagle and the Swan*, May 1980, 36–37, USMA.

Programs by the Academy continued to focus on racial issues, but black cadet activists also wanted to engage with the broader community outside of West Point's gates. The Concert for the Blood had shown African American cadets that they could make tremendous contributions to the black community despite their relatively small numbers. The prestige of West Point opened doors that would otherwise have remained closed to them. To reach a broader community, they had to first receive permission to leave West Point, no easy task in such a paternalistic institution. With the Academy's help, African American cadets identified projects in Newburgh, Highland Falls, and Poughkeepsie that needed assistance, and they provided both funds and labor through Project Outreach.⁶² African American cadets became very aware of their role, both in the West Point community and outside it. As one cadet commented at the 1975 Black History Week celebration:

Black cadets are always concerned about the effect their decisions will have in enhancing the advancement of the black community.... To act abrasively to the interests of the black community, in this present struggle for equality, is to ignore the duty of every black American—unity of effort to achieve equality of opportunity.⁶³

The difference between the cadets who graduated in 1971 and those who graduated in 1972 could hardly present a greater contrast. No graduate had an Afro or any yearbook caption that mentioned his race in 1971. One year later, black activist cadets had large Afros and highlighted their sense of racial identity in their photo captions. Cadet Edgar Anderson was described as "proud and defiant... respect is his due." Cadet Tony Desmond was congratulated for "showing us all that BLACK, gray, and gold are beautiful." Cadet Lloyd Austin would later command all American military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan as a four-star general, but in 1975 his yearbook caption proclaimed "YOUNG, GIFTED, AND BLACK."⁶⁴

By 1976, black cadet activism at West Point was at its apex. The African American cadets who graduated that year paid for an advertisement in the yearbook. The two-page, full-color spread (the only ad from a non-business) featured two photos and two poems. The first page contained a photo of twenty-three African American cadets, all in full dress uniform, exuding strength (and no smiles). The poem above the photo, entitled "Black Is," provided a full-throated declaration of Black Power in a white world. Its last stanza read, "Black is big; Black is small; Let ME inform You that Black is ALL!" The second photo showed the cadets lounging; it copied the relaxed "Old Corps" pose of Henry O. Flipper, the first African American graduate in the nineteenth century. Its accompanying poem described the pain of the slave and Jim Crow experience, and the hope and responsibility

62 Dean and Lynch, "Black Cadets at West Point," 36–37.

63 Smith, "Another Duty," USMA.

64 Howitzer, 1971, 1972, 1975.

BLACK IS

Black I am
Black I shall ever be
For Black is much more than
being too cold in winter
And too hot during the
summer.
It is more than partying hard
Talking loud
And sporting a big 'fro . . .

Black is me

Black is you
Black is US — the things that
we do.

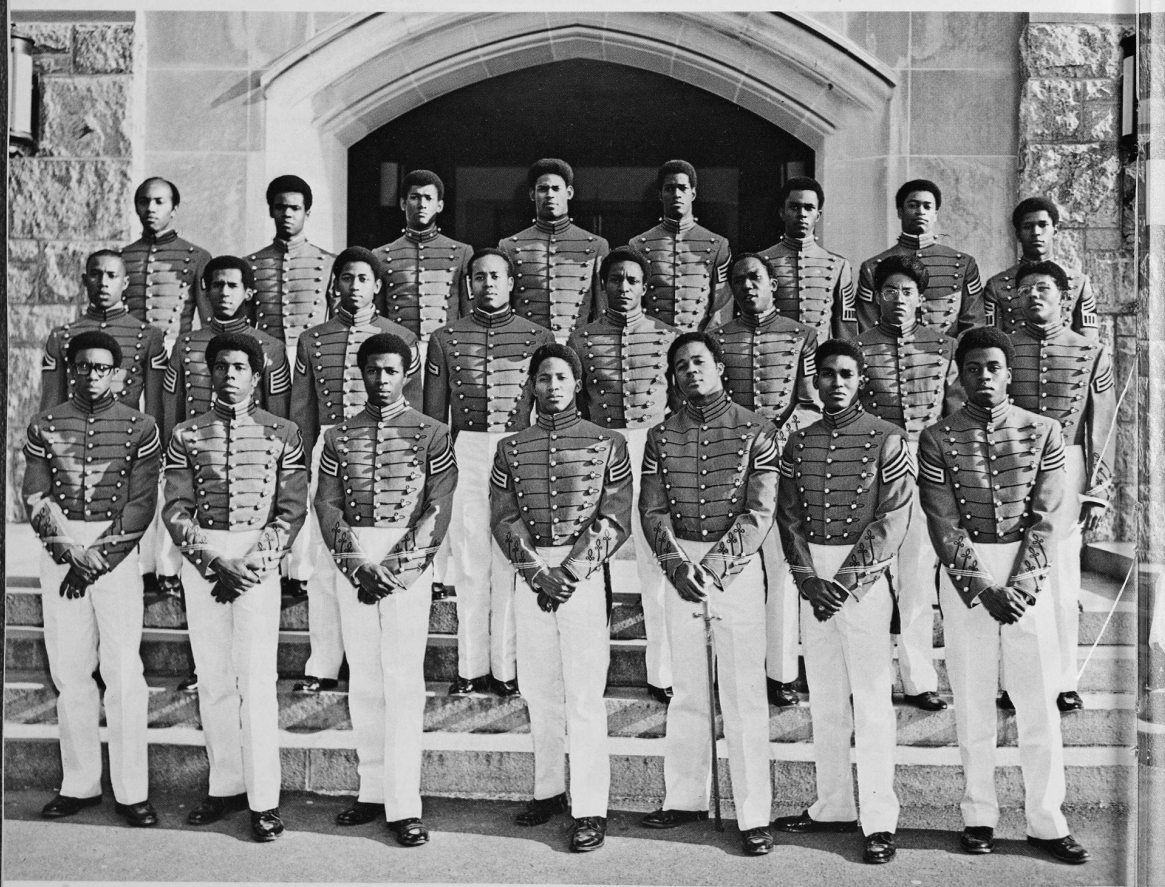
Black is time
Black is space
Black is the mother of the
human race.

Black is proud
Black is true

Black is we people who are
darker than blue.

Black is mind
Black is action
Black is the friction that gives
the soul its traction.

Black is big
Black is small
Let ME inform YOU that
Black is ALL!



600

FROM SERVITUDE TO SERVICE

I started here in servitude
but, my mind was free;
You captured my body
but you didn't catch me.

You kept me on plantations,
broke my spirit and my will;
Put my mind on your god
and my body in your field.

With Emancipation you
freed my body
but my mind wasn't set free;
You could free my body

but my mind was left to me.

I rode in buses, sat in clubs, fought in
court and sang in church;
But riding, sitting, fighting and singing
still didn't end my search.

I've got to prove to me and I have to
prove to you,
that when I speak of equality
all that I say is true.

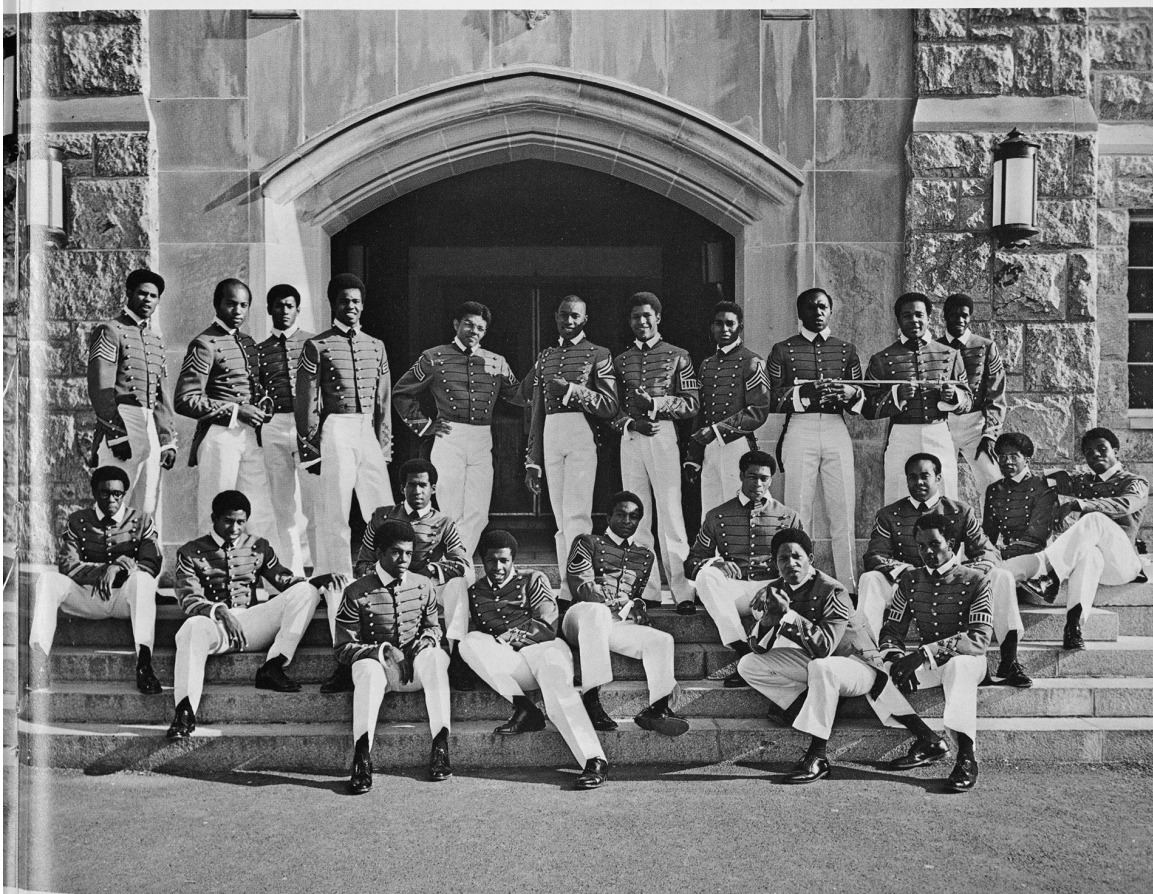
You seem to be coming around,
but we've quite a ways to go;

Though progress began quickly,
its pace has gotten slow.

Though no longer in servitude,
I am not yet free,
But I am a bit closer now,
to what I ought to be.

Once I was denied everything,
but now I'm getting what
all men deserve;

Once I was held in servitude,
but it is now my right to serve.



601

The two-page paid advertisement that appeared in the 1976 *Howitzer*

that the cadets felt representing all African Americans as they went into the army. It ended with this stanza:

Once I was denied everything, but now I'm getting what all men deserve;
Once I was held in servitude, but now it is my right to serve.⁶⁵

Conclusion

Black cadet activists forged a very public racial identity and forced West Point to promote it. Some black student activists across the country achieved more, especially by helping to create Black Studies programs.⁶⁶ Yet, black cadets achieved real progress despite challenging the president from within the military system, which features laws and regulations to prevent political protest. Uniformed personnel do not have the same free speech rights as other Americans.⁶⁷

The cadets accomplished something extraordinary. How were they able to affect change so rapidly? Nixon's monument proposal provided the spark and black cadet leadership made the difference. Percy Squire, David Brice, and the seniors in the class of 1972 knew how to lead. Well-organized, with a clear strategy, firm goals, and unity, the African American cadets were a formidable force. The support and counsel of Captain Arthur Hester and almost all of the black officers meant that the entire African American community of West Point demanded action and change.

How did this story stay out of the press at the time? Black activist cadets and officers did not want to shutter West Point. They believed in the importance of having African American officers in the army's elite. They wanted to save the institution, not ruin it. Furthermore, some credit must go to General Knowlton. The superintendent understood immediately that Nixon wanted to use West Point for his own partisan political purposes. Knowlton talked to Squire often in the fall of 1971 to gauge cadet feelings. When presented with a unified body of African American cadets and faculty, the superintendent quickly acquiesced to cadet demands, rather than escalate the situation. Then with the Concert for the Blood, Knowlton realized he could lead the army toward greater racial understanding, helping the Academy and his own career. The superintendent also finessed white hostility to African American identity. Many white officers and alumni believed that there was no white or black, only army green. Knowlton convinced them otherwise.

Black activist cadets used President Nixon's cynical political ploy at West Point to their advantage. While they did not end racism there or in the army, they did make a difference. Today, when visitors to West Point step on to Trophy Point, they see the

65 "From Servitude to Service," *Howitzer*, 1976, Capitalization in the original text, USMA.

66 In the past ten years, many scholars have looked at Black Student Activism at a variety of colleges. For an overview see Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement*, and Fenderson, "When the Revolution Comes."

67 The Uniform Code of Military Justice governs law for those in the military including cadets. The 1939 Hatch Act, Army Regulation 600-20 and USMA Regulation 27-2 all prohibit political protests from all Federal government employees, especially those in uniforms. Those regulations also prohibit political protest on military installations.

colossal Battle Monument. Tour guides and historians explain that it honors the U.S. Army officers and men whose sacrifice “freed a race and welded a nation” during the “War of the Rebellion.”⁶⁸ They may need to explain why the Civil War is called the “War of the Rebellion.” They may need to explain why the war “freed a race and welded a nation.” Thanks to Percy Squire, David Brice, and other African American cadets, there is no Confederate Monument to explain.

Postscript

In 2014, Cadet Michael Barlow from Atlanta, Georgia, heard a lecture about Percy Squire, David Brice, and the other African American cadets who did so much to change West Point in the 1970s. Influenced by their passion and success, he started his own movement. Barlow knew that the highest honor at West Point went to those whose names graced the dormitories, or barracks as they are called on the army post. The names of West Point’s barracks read like a roster of the U.S. Army’s most successful senior commanders, including Douglas MacArthur, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Omar Bradley, Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman, Winfield Scott, and surprisingly, Robert E. Lee. Lee never served as a general in the U.S. Army.

Barlow knew that Lee resigned from the U.S. Army after more than thirty years of service, fought against his country for the worst possible reason—to create a slave republic. Lee committed treason for slavery. Naming a barracks after him, one where many African Americans lived, dismayed Barlow. However, changing the name of Lee Barracks would require approval at the highest level of government, no sure thing. However, a new barracks was under construction in 2014, the first in nearly a half-century. Barlow thought that he might be able to influence the Military Academy to name this new barracks after someone who represented the diversity of the West Point experience.

Barlow convened most of the African American cadets during two rowdy sessions to discuss his plan for Operation Tuskegee. Barlow asked the cadets to sign a petition he wrote demanding that West Point name its newest dormitory after Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., the first black graduate of West Point in the twentieth century. Davis had undergone a tortuous experience from 1932 to 1936. Because of his race, Davis’s fellow cadets silenced him. No one would talk to him, sit with him, or room with him during his four years at West Point. Davis graduated because of his iron will and keen intellect. After his commissioning the army refused to allow him to fly because that would place him in command of white officers. During World War II that racist constraint lifted, and Davis commanded the segregated Tuskegee Airmen, known as the Red Tails. He retired from the Air Force as a lieutenant general, but late in life President Bill Clinton promoted him to four-star general. Barlow

68 Charles Larned, “The Battle Monument at West Point,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 12 June 1897, 594. James Tyrus Seidule, “‘Treason is Treason’: Civil War Memory at West Point,” *Journal of Military History* 76 (Winter 2012), 427–452.

started Operation Tuskegee to force the Military Academy to name its new barracks after its most distinguished African American graduate—Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.⁶⁹

Barlow and his fellow cadets modelled their efforts and the petition after the manifesto written by Percy Squire in 1971. As Barlow said, “I felt as though I owed it to people like Percy Squire. If we failed at Operation Tuskegee, we’d be failing them.” After Barlow’s impassioned talk to his fellow cadets of color, Barlow asked an instructor to tell the assembled cadets about the history of African Americans at West Point, especially the Black Power cadets in the 1970s. After the meeting, eighty percent of cadets of color signed the petition. The other twenty percent refused to sign it because they wanted to allow any cadet to sign the petition.⁷⁰

Barlow had read the manifesto and the tone of his petition echoed Squire’s 1971 document. The problem, Barlow wrote, was the “malevolence of a few” and the “negligence of others.... We are relegated to the margins of cadetship and officership.” Barlow and many other black cadets had “experienced instances of subjugation” while at West Point. Yet, despite prejudice, Barlow felt “optimistic about the future” because he and his classmates were willing to continue the struggle.⁷¹

Barlow brought the signed petition to Lieutenant General Robert Caslen, the Academy’s superintendent. Caslen had worked successfully to increase the number of underrepresented minorities and he readily agreed to Barlow’s proposal. In the fall of 2017, Caslen and assorted dignitaries dedicated Davis Barracks, a \$183-million, state-of-the-art barracks. Above the transom, the word “Davis” with four stars greets every one of the 650 cadets who lives there. Nearly fifty years later, Black Power cadets still influence West Point.

Brigadier General (Retired) Ty Seidule is Professor Emeritus and former Head of the Department of History at the United States Military Academy at West Point.

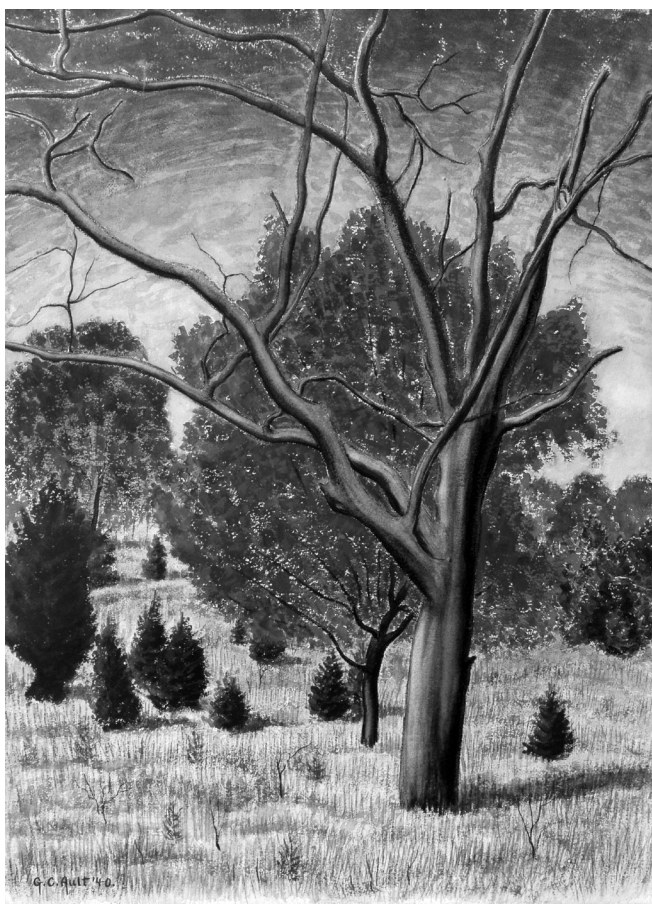
69 Benjamin O. Davis Jr, *American: An Autobiography* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2000), 1–32.

70 Memorandum to USMA Barracks Naming Committee from Cadet Michael Barlow, Subject: Operation Tuskegee, 21 May 2014. Author’s files. The author attended both sessions and delivered a talk on African American history, including the fight over Nixon’s Confederate Memorial and the role Percy Squire and David Brice played in stopping the monument.

71 Barlow discussion with author, 5 July 2019.

The Historic Woodstock Art Colony: The Arthur A. Anderson Collection

Karen Quinn



George Ault (American, 1891–1948), *Autumn Hillside* (1940). Gouache on paper.

All images from the New York State Museum, Historic Woodstock Art Colony: Arthur A. Anderson Collection. Photos courtesy of the New York State Museum

Long before the famous music festival in 1969, Woodstock, New York, was home to what is considered America's first intentionally created, year-round arts colony—founded in 1902 and still thriving over 100 years later. Collecting the remarkable range of work produced

Adapted from the brochure written to accompany the 2019 inaugural exhibit of the collection at the New York State Museum.

there has been Arthur A. Anderson's focus for three decades, resulting in the largest comprehensive assemblage of its type. The artists represented in it reflect the diversity of those who came to Woodstock, including Birge Harrison, Konrad Cramer, George Bellows, Eugene Speicher, Peggy Bacon, Rolph Scarlett, and Yasuo Kuniyoshi, among many others. Anderson recently donated his entire collection—some 1,500 objects by almost 200 artists—to the New York State Museum. This exhibition introduces to the public for the first time just a sample of the highlights of this extraordinary collection, which represents a body of work that together shaped art and culture in New York and forms a history of national and international significance.

The Anderson Collection spans the 20th century and includes works in all media: paintings, watercolors, pastels, drawings, prints, photographs, sculpture, ceramics, and even an easel and a hand-painted melodeon. It is augmented with archival material including letters, personal photographs, and manuscripts. With this breadth, Anderson has established a study collection, invaluable not only for the finished pieces, but for the insights that related work such as sketches, studies, and primary source documents give into an artist's working process. This unique resource presents a fuller picture and greater context for the artists who worked in Woodstock.



Rudolph Wettereau (American, 1890–1953), and Margaret Wettereau (American, 20th century),
Map of Woodstock...Showing the location of some of the artists' homes (1926). Ink on board

Byrdcliffe Arts Colony

In 1902 the Byrdcliffe Arts Colony was established in Woodstock. The year-round utopian community promoted the Arts and Crafts movement, which emphasized individual, hand-crafted work over mass production. Wealthy Englishman Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead and his wife, Jane Byrd McCall, along with writer Hervey White and artist Bolton Brown, founded the colony; its name was derived from the middle names of the Whiteheads, who financed the project.

Byrdcliffe drew artisans from across all media: furniture makers, painters, printmakers, photographers, metalworkers, weavers, ceramicists, and others, as well as writers and musicians. Classes were offered, and notable teachers included co-founder Bolton Brown, Hermann Dudley Murphy, Birge Harrison, and William Schumacher.

Byrdcliffe continues to flourish today under the auspices of the Woodstock Byrdcliffe Guild.

Maverick Arts Colony

Hervey White left Byrdcliffe in 1904 and purchased a nearby farm to establish what would become the Maverick Arts Colony, a community more bohemian than Byrdcliffe. Early on, the colony attracted mostly writers and musicians, though by the 1920s visual artists of wide-ranging approaches had a large presence too. In 1910 White launched the Maverick Press, which published original literary and artistic material. A theater and concert hall also graced the grounds.

In 1915 White staged the first Maverick Festival, which would provide the main economic support for the colony. Held annually on the night of the August full moon, the festival featured music, dancing, food, and drink, and attendees dressed in creative costumes. It is often seen as the forerunner to the famous Woodstock Music and Art Fair that was held in Bethel, New York, in 1969. Every summer Maverick Concerts still take place in the concert hall built by Hervey White in 1916.

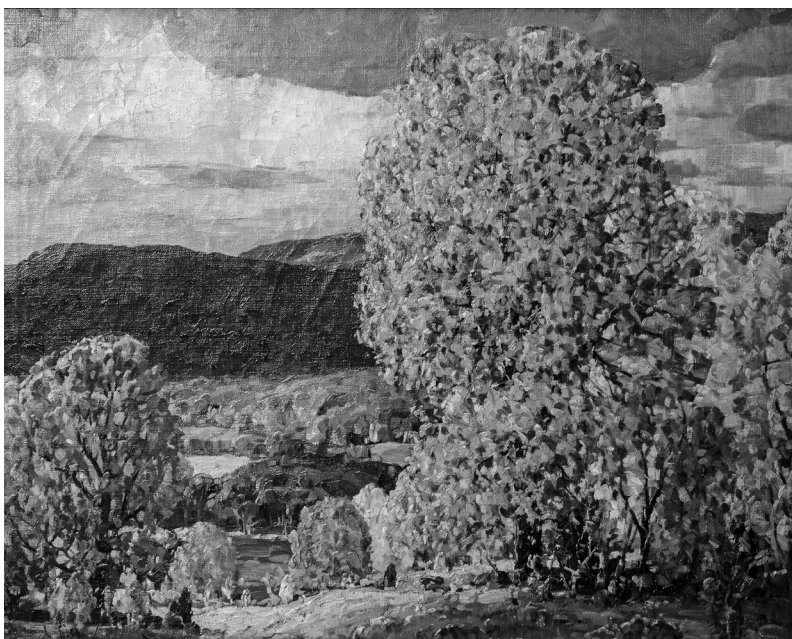


Birge Harrison (American, 1854–1929),
St. Lawrence River Sunset (n.d.). Oil on canvas

Art Students League

In 1906 the Art Students League moved its summer school to Woodstock. The League had been founded in New York City in 1875 as an alternative to the mainstream National Academy of Design and had become one of the most important art schools in the country. From 1906 to 1922, and again from 1947 to 1979, the Art Students League brought as many as 200 students to the Woodstock area each year.

Birge Harrison taught at the summer school in Woodstock for its first five years. He had been the painting instructor at Byrdcliffe in 1904, and indeed there was much overlap of artists, both students and teachers, among the various organizations in Woodstock. As Harrison noted, “The desire is to develop a number of individual painters and not to develop a ‘school.’” Landscape was emphasized as much as the figurative tradition, and naturally, given the bucolic location, it became a focus for many artists working in Woodstock.



Frank Swift Chase (American, 1886–1958),
Catskills at Woodstock (1927). Oil on canvas

Modernism In Woodstock

Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, Woodstock artists associated with the Art Students League and others worked in a variety of styles. Some favored Birge Harrison’s subtle Tonalist approach; others, the painterly brushstrokes and light of Impressionism; and still others the jewel-like tones of the Post-Impressionist palette.

Works influenced by a number of European avant-garde movements also made their marks in Woodstock. Among those experimenting with varying degrees of abstraction were Konrad Cramer, Andrew Dasburg, and Henry Lee McFee, who were dubbed the

Rock City Rebels after the part of Woodstock where they lived. Cramer, born in Germany, drew upon his experiences there with the radical art of Der Blaue Reiter, a group that used exaggerated forms and highly keyed colors to convey emotion. Dasburg had visited France, where he met Henri Matisse, who emphasized color for its own sake—a style called Fauvism. In Paris, Dasburg also studied the work of Paul Cézanne and Cubism, perhaps the most influential of all modernist approaches, based on fragmented images seen from different viewpoints. Elements of all these styles are not only seen in the work of the Rock City Rebels but in that of other Woodstock artists as well.

Artists of all stylistic bents came together to establish the Woodstock Art Association in 1919, a much-needed venue for exhibitions that remains active today as the Woodstock Artists Association and Museum.

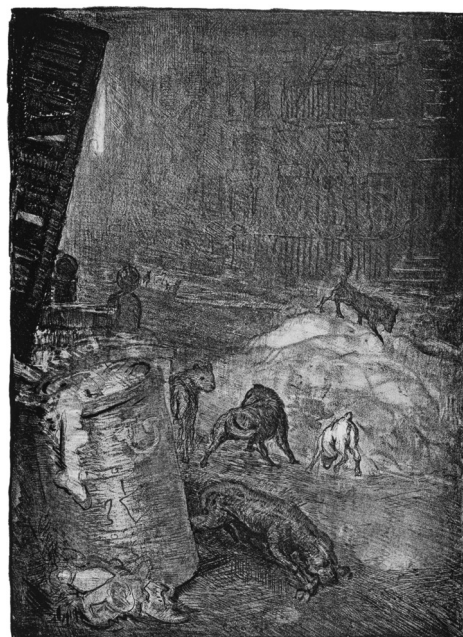
George Bellows and His Circle

In 1920, at the invitation of Eugene Speicher, George Bellows spent his first summer in Woodstock. Bellows belonged to the Ashcan School, a loosely associated group of early 20th-century artists working in New York City who favored urban subjects, often gritty in nature. They painted in a realist style that was in contrast to the prevailing and popular academic approaches. Both Speicher and Bellows had studied with its leader, Robert Henri, in New York.

Bellows became in many respects the backbone of Arthur Anderson's collection and is richly represented by over 150 works, the most of any artist. His circle of artist friends in Woodstock included Speicher and Henri, as well as Leon Kroll, John Carroll, and Charles Rosen, among others.



Winold Reiss (American, born in Germany, 1886–1953), *Woman in Black Hat with Cigarette* (n.d.). Pastel on paper



George Bellows (American, 1882–1925), *Hungry Dogs* (1916). Lithograph



Bolton Brown (American, 1864–1936),
Choke Cherries (1920). Lithograph

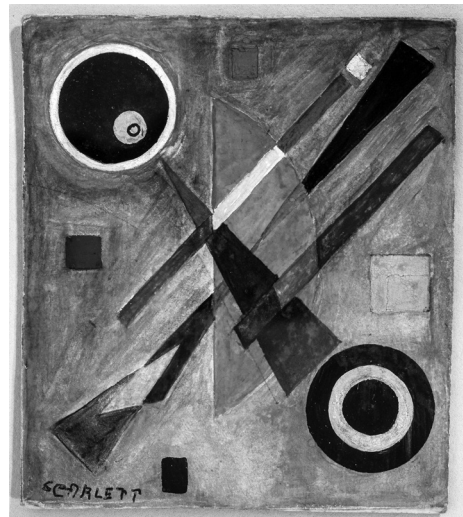
Bolton Brown and Lithography

By 1915, Bolton Brown, a co-founder of Byrdcliffe, was immersed in lithography, a printmaking process using a stone plate. Although the process was invented at the end of the eighteenth century in Germany and used commercially and artistically throughout Europe and the United States in the nineteenth century, Brown is credited as the father of American lithography for his dedication to perfecting the medium scientifically and artistically. He experimented with and invented new

processes, wrote on the subject, printed for other artists, and had an output of over 400 lithographs. His own work ranges in style and subject matter, exploiting the expressive possibilities of the process—from delicate, tonal landscapes to sharply delineated still lifes.

1930s and Beyond

Although a wide range of artistic approaches in Woodstock continued in the 1930s, economic and social issues became more prevalent as subject matter with the onset of the Depression. Realism dominated much of the work, sometimes tinged with modernist elements, including abstraction. Various New Deal government programs—the Public Works of Art Project (1933–1934) and the Federal Art Project under the Works Progress Administration (1935–1943)—helped many Woodstock artists at this time. Some were commissioned to execute murals, others to produce prints, easel paintings, sculpture, posters, crafts, and more.



Rolph Scarlett (American, 1889–1984),
Abstract Composition (c.1940).
Gouache on paper

Karen Quinn is Senior Curator and Historian of Art and Culture at The New York State Museum.

The New York State Museum is a program of The University of the State of New York
The State Education Department Office of Cultural Education
www.nysm.nysed.gov



Norbert Heermann (American, born Germany, 1891–1966),
Lady with Red Lips (c.1940). Oil on canvas

Collector's Statement

Growing up in western Michigan, I was a collector of minerals, reptiles, and stamps, the last from old albums that belonged to my grandfather. My first interest in art can be traced to a small painting I discovered as a teenager in our cottage storeroom, and which my mother gave to me as a youngster. The painting is attributed to the 17th-century Italian artist Salvator Rosa, whose works inspired Thomas Cole, father of the Hudson River School. Later, as a young adult I was captivated by a painting of a beautiful woman with red lips by the Woodstock artist Norbert Heermann, a friend of George Bellows. Together, these two works sparked in me a passion for art—and eventually the artists and art of the historic Woodstock Art Colony.

I always enjoyed lending pieces to museums for exhibition and having them used. The question eventually became: “Where can my collection reside in perpetuity and be best cared for, used, and appreciated?” In due course, it became clear to me that the best place for it was the New York State Museum in Albany. The collection’s new home re-introduces the historic Woodstock Art Colony into the American art canon. It also, I hope, will motivate others to donate their treasures for public appreciation and education. I am absolutely delighted to have my collection of the culture and art of the Woodstock Art Colony join the extraordinary New York State Museum.

Arthur A. Anderson

Highland Lakes State Park: From Settlement to Silence in Under Fifty Years

Spencer Hogan, Marist '20



Common sights along the park's hiking and mountain-biking trails. Photo by Spencer Hogan

Just minutes from Middletown, New York, a regional commercial hub near the center of Orange County, sits a plot of land that appears unremarkable to many passersby. Highland Lakes State Park is undeveloped but encompasses numerous forgotten sites and stories. Its return to natural form in recent decades effectively obscures the grand assortment of people and groups that once called this land home. This former neighborhood once included a short-lived nudist colony, the chateau of a wealthy French dancer, and even a storied YMCA summer camp for boys. Each, it seems, came here in pursuit of seclusion

and serenity, possessing a degree of pioneering spirit. That spirit lingers in those with connections to the land's past.

For a site described by the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation as consisting of more than 3,000 acres of “undeveloped woods and lakes,” the property’s past is not just unexpected, but unknown even to most local residents.¹

Early in 2018, I began formally investigating its local lore—including the notable YMCA Camp Orange it once contained—through newspaper records, maps, the now-defunct *Scotchtown Highlander* history website, and interviews with past residents and explorers of the land.² What started as a personal quest blossomed into a web of narratives on what this land once contained and those who cherished it as their own before it came to belong to all of us.³

This presently uninterpreted landscape once was partly associated with Scotchtown, a place that has shifted from an independent community into a neighborhood in the Town of Wallkill, losing much of its own history and identity in the process. Today, Scotchtown is thought to be no more than an unincorporated neighborhood filled with near-identical bi-level houses on planned streets. For most locals, Scotchtown signifies little more than a Presbyterian Church, a few eateries, and the roads that bear the name. Given the richness of the area’s history, it is surprising how much has been forgotten by all but a few remaining past inhabitants and their descendants. Historian Samuel Eager wrote in 1847 that, even in his time, “we cannot learn from any of the present inhabitants at what time this region was first settled,” meaning that a lack of historic continuity is no new issue for this area.⁴

The great curiosity, though, is how the park, once an agrarian offshoot of Scotchtown with a diverse assortment of former inhabitants, diminished into sleepy woodlands where the wanderer would be surprised at any given time to



The Scotchtown Presbyterian Church, pictured in 2017 as the local Boy Scout troop volunteered at the site.

Photo by Spencer Hogan

1 “Highland Lakes State Park” New York State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, <https://parks.ny.gov/parks/5/>

2 *Scotchtown Highlander* can be accessed through the “Wayback Machine” web archive at archive.org, by typing “www.scotchtownhighlander.com” into the search box and selecting any date among the options prior to 2012 on the archive calendar.

3 By the time this proper research on the park began, close to three years had passed since the discovery of the first of these stories through archives at the YMCA of Middletown.

4 Samuel Eager, *An Outline History of Orange County with an Enumeration of the Names of its Towns, Villages, Rivers, Creeks, Lakes, Ponds, Mountains, Hill and Other Known Localities and the Etymologies or Historical Reasons Therefore; together with Local Traditions and Short Biographical Sketches of Early Settlers, Etc.* (Newburgh, New York: S.T. Callahan, 1847. Reprinted, Goshen, NY: Orange County Genealogical Society, 1995).

find more than one or two others exploring the land, whether by foot, mountain bike, or horseback. Ruth Swyka, one of the last property owners to move out to make way for the park, kept records and wrote on the topic. Her narrative serves as the only fully traceable account of “what happened.” Her assistance helps tell this mostly forgotten history.

“This Most Quiet Corner of Orange County”

In the 1960s, a community of just under fifteen families lived mostly along Pufftown Road off Scotchtown Collabar Road. They sought serenity in “this most quiet corner of Orange County,” and enjoyed exactly that.⁵ Yet, the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC), a joint instrument of New York and New Jersey with park authority, was on a mission to procure 1,600 acres to create a park in the region. Unfortunately for the Swykas and their neighbors, their land was soon to become Highland Lakes State Park. While “Highland” could be seen as an homage to the roots of nearby Scotchtown’s first settlers, the mostly unsentimental name chosen for the site begs the question: What if the community heritage and history of that land was intended to be forgotten?

Between 1964 and 1970, when the last of the personal property was sold by the Swyka family, the process of amalgamating the land consumed the PIPC, just as the fight to prevent it occupied many residents. The first notice of the park’s creation that residents received was via an article in Middletown’s *Times Herald Record* in January 1964. It stated that over \$500,000 had been designated for a park in their area.⁶ Soon after, PIPC appraisers began contacting the residents—to the surprise and dismay of most—that their property would be appraised for the park.⁷ Ruth Swyka wrote in May of 1964 on the appraisal process taking place at her household: “Mr. Cornelius Callahan, the negotiator, explained to me that our home was to be acquired. He requested that we set a price on our home. The fact that our home was not for sale made no difference. When we have set our price we will see how it tallies with the appraisal.”⁸

Through the spring of 1964, the fight against land acquisition by the PIPC was regularly reported by the local press. In a less-than-optimistic report from April of that year, one resident on Pufftown Road, Mrs. Herbert DeGraw, was resigned to the fact that residents would have to move out eventually, as “park officials have not been receptive to our request for a change in boundaries.”⁹ Robert Redgate and his wife, the noted artist Gloria Calamar, expected to lose at least half of their farmland and have their remaining property surrounded by the park. Thus, they were advised to try to get the PIPC to buy their property outright.¹⁰

5 Ruth Swyka, “Majority Requirements Versus Minority Rights” (Undergraduate Research, Orange County Community College, 1964).

6 Robert Van Fleet, “Orange, Ulster, Sullivan park plans unveiled.” *The Times Herald Record*, January 22, 1964.

7 Personal Interview with Ruth Swyka.

8 Swyka, “Majority Requirements Versus Minority Rights.”

9 Budelman, Richard J., “Opposition to park fades in Town of Walkill.” *The Times Herald Record*, April 21, 1964.

10 Redgate, Robert, “Park procedure questioned.” *The Times Herald Record*, April 11, 1964.

Of all of the writings left by those who resisted the park, none were more poignant than those of John Hallaren, published in a letter to the editor in the *Times Herald Record*:

I first saw this land in 1908 when I was a young fellow. I rode my first horse, milked my first cow, tramped, hunted, fished, worked and played throughout my entire boyhood on this property.

In 1926 I brought my bride there and luckily for us she fell in love with the country. We built a house that was to be ours in our old age, and year after year we added something to it. We saw our children grow up, play and love it as we did.

Each week and weekend it is an open house and a happy one, with any number of relatives and friends enjoying themselves. It is a park. Are we not entitled to it? I have not asked anyone to pay for my park.

His letter goes on to relate how the state condemned and took his mother's house in Brooklyn, built by his father, in proceedings "for progress." Later, a commercial property owned by Hallaren also was taken by the state "for progress." He questions what more they could take, asking finally: "If this final piece of property of mine is seized by you, will you *please* find someone that can tell me a safe place for me to live." ¹¹

While Hallaren was writing about his own property in the letter, his neighbors, including those on Pufftown Road, were facing the same fate.

One family whose mark remains on the land, even with the park's current "Highland Lakes" name, is the Youngberg-Swykas. Albin Youngberg excavated and formed a number of the lakes on the property (something that may surprise those who have explored the lakes; just over half a century after their creation, they appear native and natural). The approximately seventy-six acres the Youngbergs owned were all eventually absorbed by the park. Albin Youngberg and his wife sold their land early in the process, but their daughter, Ruth Swyka, and her husband held out until 1970, when they became the last to give up their property to the PIPC. Among those who responded to their concerns was Benjamin Gilman, then a state Assemblyman and Middletown resident who went on to serve for thirty years in the U.S. House of Representatives. In a letter to the PIPC, he references the "irate" constituents who complained of unrealistically low valuations on their land, in the sum of \$100 to \$600 per acre, as compared to the regional standard of \$5,000 to \$10,000 per acre. He also questions why the PIPC would ask for the removal of residents so quickly, and requests that homeowners be allowed to remain as tenants until the park is actually ready for development. His final request, easily the most significant to any preservationist, is consideration for protecting the older homes on the property. Gilman's legacy of deep investment in the concerns of his Hudson River Valley constituents is

¹¹ Letter by resident John Hallaren to be published as a newspaper editorial. From the personal collection of Ruth Swyka.

on full display in this 1968 letter. However, by that time the remaining residents were resigned to their land's fate as a park. They only requested a fair deal.¹²

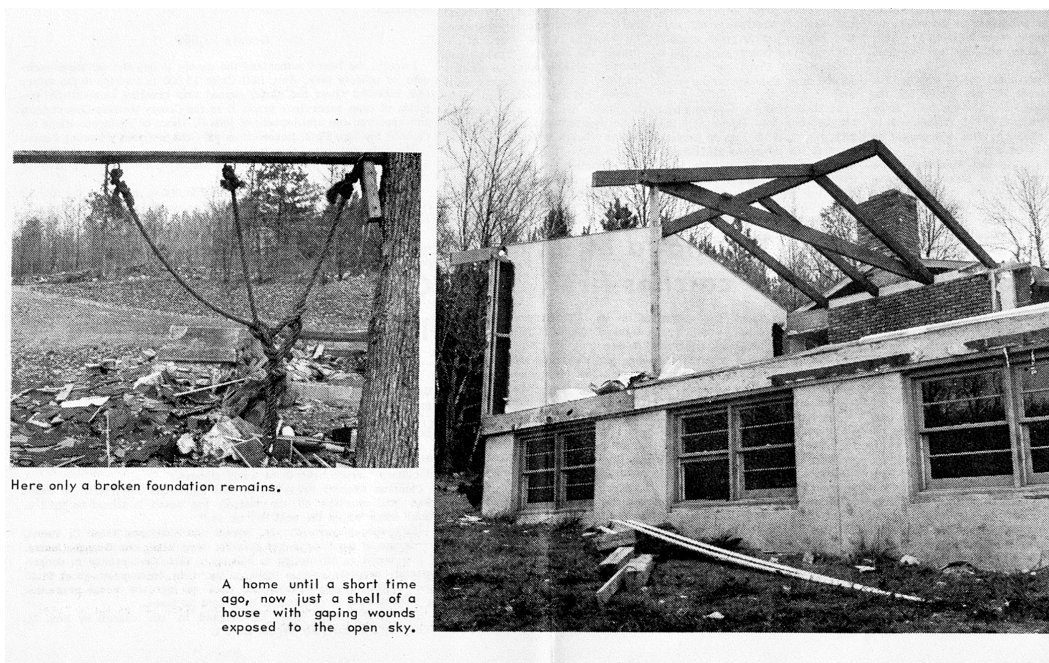


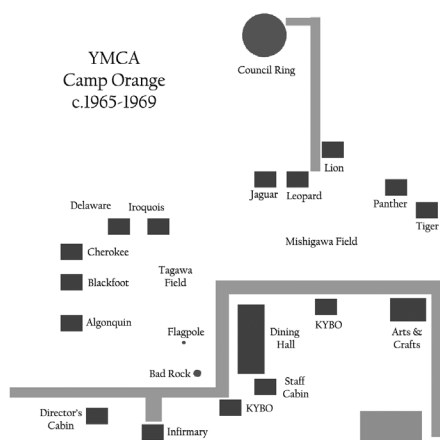
Image from the November 7, 1964, *Middletown Times Herald Record*

In this heated period of land acquisition at the future site of Highland Lakes State Park, the core question was whether the state should be taking the land in the interest of the “majority” (the thousands who could potentially enjoy the land) at the expense of the “minority” (the property owners who were being uprooted). This was the central theme of Ruth Swyka’s 1964 term paper for a class at Middletown’s Orange County Community College. She accepts the park’s inevitability and even agrees with the need for a park, though the fact that the park had to disrupt her community is where her views diverge from those of park officials. Her concluding words should help clarify her thesis on the matter: “we must make the best of the situation and accept the fact that whether we like it or not, progress is going on all over the country and inconveniencing the minority for the good of the majority.”¹³

By 1970, the last residents had moved away, some even moving the homes they had built and placing them on plots outside the park. Less than a decade after bureaucrats entered this “most quiet corner of Orange County” on a mission, the new park was a clean slate for developers to craft as they wished.

12 Letter by Benjamin Gilman to the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, from the personal collection of Ruth Swyka.

13 Swyka, “Majority Requirements Versus Minority Rights.”



Adapted from map of Camp Orange,
Drawn by Camp Alumnus Terry Murray

Camp Orange

The local homes were not the only thing lost to the park's creation. Camp Orange, run by the region's YMCA, was situated not far from most residents who lived within this natural paradise. Even after the PIPC acquired the property, the camp continued to operate for another three seasons until a fire damaged the main mess hall. At that point, all camping was shifted to Camp Robbins in Walden. Still operated by the YMCA of Middletown, this camp is named after former Camp Orange Director E.B. Robbins.

Though it represents a more recent element of the community's history than many of the stories to come, Camp Orange is perhaps the most notable partially "forgotten history" within the property. Highland Lakes State Park contains numerous stone walls, building foundations, clearings, and trails that can be attributed to the park's forced-out former inhabitants. But the group of stone building ruins (including a large fireplace now



The "centerpiece" of the remains of Camp Orange. Photo by Spencer Hogan

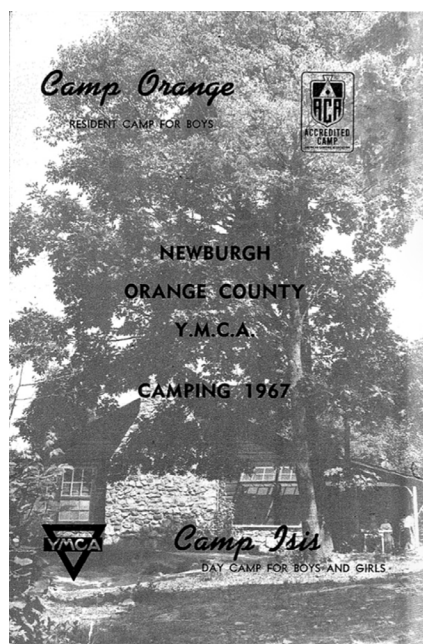
standing virtually alone) at a high point near the intersection of the former Pufftown and Camp Orange roads are the remains of Camp Orange.

While some younger local residents and unfamiliar park visitors have improperly concluded that these ruins were once a part of a now-forgotten town in the woods or even a Depression-era labor camp, records held at the YMCA of Middletown, in combination with the stories shared by former campers and staff at Camp Orange, craft a far richer narrative.

The national trend of organized camping got its start in Orange County when Newburgh's Sumner Dudley, through the local YMCA, took twelve boys camping on Orange Lake (near what is now Newburgh's Stewart Airport) for the summer. The next year, the camp was moved across Orange County to Lake Wawayanda, near Warwick. After three years, the New York State YMCA took charge of the camp and moved

it north to Lake Champlain, where it is still in operation (though independent of the YMCA) as Camp Dudley. The exact year in which the Orange County YMCA restarted a summer camp is unclear, but by 1935 it had 112 boys in attendance at Camp Orange.¹⁴

In an April 1940 edition of the *Orange County Y.M.C.A. News*, the camp is described as a safe environment for boys providing healthy summer fun, recreation, and educational activities. Features described at Camp Orange include a "fine stream" (which supplied a natural "swimming pool"), a large dining hall, screened cabins for campers, and three athletic fields in addition to extensive trails. The benefits that this camp provided to Orange County boys and those traveling from New York City (particularly in the early years) to enjoy the Hudson Valley's fresh air are made very clear in this publication. It afforded local boys the opportunity



1967 pamphlet advertising Camp Orange

to "secure the benefits of a high type camping program at a minimum cost." It can only be imagined that most summers at Camp Orange were filled with activities to keep these young men out of trouble and cultivate a lifelong sense of community and appreciation of the outdoors.¹⁵

Now, more than fifty years after some of their Camp Orange experiences, many of the campers from the 1960s have not only kept in touch, but remain close friends. They reminisce about the imposing dining hall atop the hill and the communal dining

14 Notice of the camp's summer opening, *Middletown Times Herald*, July 1, 1935.

15 1940 YMCA of Orange County Newsletter



YMCA Camp Orange Staff, 1965
 Top row: Mark Israel, Program Director, Barry Schuyler, Ben Hunter, Jan Darr, nurse, Martin Sheffield, Bob Simonson, aquatic director, Gordon Cote, director, Gary Goldberg, Bill Dockstader, Steve Goldberg, unknown, Terry Murray. Front Row: unknown, Steve Schuyler, Bill Plapinger, Dave Schuyler, Peter Rotwein, Larry White

experiences there that made them all feel like family. They speak of the “council ring” beyond the “jaguar,” “leopard,” and “lion” cabins, and the other structures that shaped their summers—the camp store, the arts and crafts cabin, the director’s cabin, and so on. The remains of the pool, built in the early 1960s, are in surprisingly good shape, with tiles marking the deep end and a light blue paint still very evident under a layer of moss and the occasional sapling growing out of the concrete.¹⁶ (Hikers beware: the pool is hidden behind brush and one could stumble into this concrete pit if not careful.)



Left: the remains of the once-popular Camp Orange pool.
 Photo by Spencer Hogan.
 Right: the pool pictured in 1967



Lifelong friends Roy Cuellar and Chris Phelps were able to recall even the most minute details of their Camp Orange days, because their experiences—like working with horses (something no “child of suburbia” outside of camp could enjoy) and learning to live self-sufficiently and take on some personal responsibility and independence, even

16 Lloyd Soppe (Camp Orange Alumnus) in discussion with the Author, September 2018.

Cabins and horseback riding at Camp Orange



ACTIVITIES GALORE

The Orange Camper rides horseback, fires a .22 rifle, shoots arrows, swims, plays softball, badminton, volleyball, basketball and other games. He goes on hikes, sleeps out under the stars, makes things with his hands, finds interesting specimens from nature's abundance. He relaxes under a pine tree with a book, or day dreams while dangling a fishline in the pond; he watches a hawk circle lazily in the sky or a lizard sun itself on a rock. He plays capture the flag and pioneers and indians, goes on scavenger hunts and treasure hunts. He sings, tells stories and listens to them, and is warmed by the campfires of friendship. Camping is truly "Youth's Greatest Adventure."

as ten- and twelve-year-olds—were life-altering.¹⁷ Cuellar and Phelps discussed being surrounded by the young staff, men they “admired” and strived to be like, and almost all of whom went on to college. This fact, which carried much more weight in the late sixties than it does today, is less a coincidence than a result of the camp’s developmental benefits to the boys of Orange County, the Hudson River Valley, and even attendees from New York City.

I asked almost all of the Camp Orange alumni I came in contact with what the experience meant to their generation of young men. Their answers proved that it provided more than a set of activities to keep them busy when school was out. The fact that their Camp Orange friendships have remained a priority tells the reader everything they need to know. In the words of camper, counselor, and later Co-Assistant Director Larry White, “The culture of Camp Orange [has] passed on from generation to generation. There are Camp Orange stories, rituals, myths and lore, music, and even a language (certain terms that I’m quite certain were native to Camp Orange only) that still carry on.”

While little remains aside from the pool, the stone walls and chimney of the dining hall, and some foundations, the memories are strong and incredibly warm. The accounts of many campers sounded nearly identical. This was not just a place where their parents brought them to keep them off of the streets, but rather a place where they grew up, learning teamwork and leadership. Steve Schuyler and Danny Bloomer, reminiscing some

17 Roy Cuellar and Chris Phelps (Camp Orange Alumni) in discussion with the Author, March 2019.

fifty years later, speak of the lifelong friendships that they, like so many others, cultivated during their time at Camp Orange.¹⁸

Those two, and many of their peers from those Camp Orange summers, were able to recall a property that serves as another point of interest within what is now Highland Lakes State Park—the home of Bertha DeLaVigne. The topic of late 1960s campfire lore at Camp Orange, the house coexisted with the camp, standing not far from the residences of the Youngbergs and Swykas and their neighbors.

The French Lady's "Chateau"

DeLaVigne was born in France and came to the United States when she was three years old. At age sixteen, she became a chorus girl in the famed Ziegfeld Follies, but she quit show business at age eighteen when she developed a lung disease. She then bought the Scotchtown property and lived there alone for the next fifty-four years. When she initially arrived—with a chauffeur, nurse, maid, three limousines, and a collection of horses—she was likely seeking peace and relaxation, just like the land's other inhabitants.¹⁹ After pledging in 1964 to fight the PIPC to keep her property, things took a downward turn. A Middletown newspaper report from January 27, 1965, broke the news that the seventy-two-year old DeLaVigne had been found ill inside her "tumble-down home."²⁰ She had not been seen out of the house in over a month and the hospital was unable to find any relatives. DeLaVigne passed away shortly after that newspaper notice was published, but her legend only grew as the abandoned property was observed by its many curious visitors.²¹

After her death, neighboring residents and boys at Camp Orange described DeLaVigne's property as looking as though "a hoarder had lived there," with the house "falling down." Their memories align with written accounts of this curious figure and her home in the woods.

Namesake Settlers and the Evolution of their Land

DeLaVigne was by no means the first inhabitant on her plot of land. In fact, it is the estimated spot where Moses Bull, Jr., made a home for his family in 1775, shortly after his marriage. Bull (1753–1844) was one of the earliest influences on the community, bringing almost a century of local heritage with him when he settled in Scotchtown. His great-grandparents, William Bull (1698–1755) and Sarah Wells (1694–1796), are regarded as the first permanent Orange County settlers and maintain a local legacy with strong name recognition. In an account useful for understanding the park's history, "One of [William Bull's] daughters later recalled an old 'Indian path' near their land that led south along

18 Their network of Camp Orange alumni opened the door for contact with all of the others cited.

19 Dorothy Hunt-Ingrassia, "Remembering a French Lady." *Historical Society of Middletown and the Wallkill Precinct*, January 2007.

20 Dorothy Hunt-Ingrassia

21 The same goes for the campers who would later tell a twisted version of her story by the campfire.

a stream to the Wallkill River. Part of this path may still be preserved as what is now Indian Trail Road.”²² That road remains in existence, and the Bull family’s speculation on the land’s previous inhabitants surely ties into its name.

Moses Bull’s property sat near this stream, known as McCorlin’s Kill, long before the power of moving water was captured by the likes of Harvey Roe. Roe operated a sawmill at the spot by 1881, the first year for which records of his ownership exist. A lifelong resident of the Town of Wallkill, Roe earned the “universal respect” of his community. A donor and supporter of local and religious causes, he married Hannah Maria Puff, whose family are the namesakes of the still-existing Pufftown Road, where the Youngbergs and others eventually made their homes.²³

As described in a local biography, Roe “efficiently served his fellow-citizens in the capacity of Poor Master and Assessor, as well as in a number of minor positions.”²⁴ While his sawmill is of note, Roe also owned more than 200 acres of “productive land,” which appears by all descriptions to have been within the boundary of Highland Lakes State Park and possibly overflows onto residential property on the outskirts of modern Scotchtown. Other mills are likely to have existed prior to the twentieth century. A descendant of the Puff family was recalled by the Swykas; this Mrs. Puff seems to have been regarded as a matriarch of her neighborhood.²⁵

On the northern end of the park lies a plot that can be traced as far back as 1840, when the Rockafellow family held land near what is now Tamms Road. Their 216-acre estate grew to about 500 acres as the property passed from Walter and Elizabeth Rockafellow to their son William and his family by the time of the 1880 census, the last we know of them.²⁶ This property became known as the old Wickham Rockafellow estate before shifting directions in the 1930s.

From pioneering farm to pioneering leisure, this property took on a new role, as is described in an article in the *Middletown Times Herald* that seems to be written with ironic and humorous undertones: “Nudists Rollick about Big Farm at Scotchtown.” This surprising episode in regional history is virtually unknown to the area’s current residents. The reporter who investigated the property in August 1933 disclosed that the colony had been operating quietly on the site since the previous May. In a statement from the colony’s director, Camp Olympia (as it was called) was the “first American resort publicly dedicated to the practice of nudism.” The director went on to clarify that Camp Olympia should not be confused with the various sanatoria or rest cure resorts where sunbathing

22 E.M. Ruttenber and L.H. Clark, *History of Orange County, New York* (1881), 433, 438. As quoted in Salvatore LaBruna’s *Scotchtown Highlander* web page.

23 Salvatore LaBruna. History Commentary on Highland Lakes State Park, *The Scotchtown Highlander* archived web page. Formerly at <http://scotchtownhighlander.com>.

24 Frederick W. Beers. *County Atlas of Orange, New York*. (Chicago: Andreas, Baskin & Burr, 1875) . As quoted in Salvatore LaBruna’s *Scotchtown Highlander* archived web page. Formerly at <http://scotchtownhighlander.com>.

25 Personal Interviews with Mark and Ruth Swyka.

26 Salvatore LaBruna. “The Tamm Farmhouse,” *The Scotchtown Highlander* archived web page. Formerly at <http://scotchtownhighlander.com>.

is practiced as part of a curative regimen.²⁷ The article concluded by revealing “there was no attempt on the part of any of those present to conceal themselves.”²⁸



An old road (now hiking trail) inside Highland Lakes State Park. Photo by Spencer Hogan

After the short-lived Camp Olympia, the property and farmhouse took on the Tamm family name now known to local residents. As the story goes, after the death of Mr. Tamm, his wife sold the property to a couple who had moved from New York City to retire. The house was later abandoned. Long after becoming public parkland, the satellite buildings and barns had been demolished, but the main farmhouse remained, though abandoned. This historic structure burned to the ground one night in February 2007. More than fifty firefighters were called to the scene due to fears that the fire might spread into the surrounding woods; thankfully, it was confined to the structure itself.²⁹

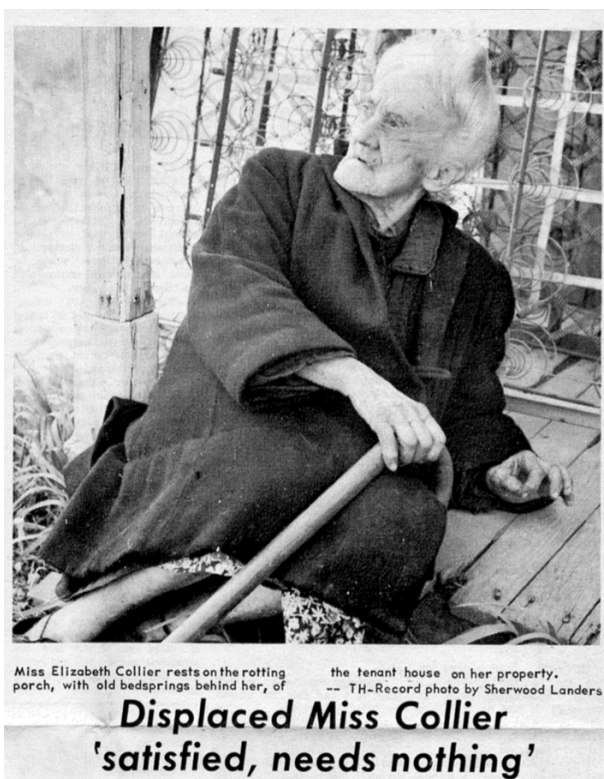
Today's Highland Lakes State Park

By the 1960s, when the Palisades Interstate Park Commission entered with the intention of creating a park, almost two centuries of formal history had been recorded in and around the properties. The emerging debate became whether more was lost or gained by creating the park. While the push for a new park outraged some residents, perspectives

27 “Nudists Rollick about Big Farm at Scotchtown,” *Middletown Times Herald*, August 8, 1933.

28 “Nudists Rollick about Big Farm at Scotchtown”

29 “Abandoned Farm House Burns in Park,” *Times Herald Record*, February 18, 2007.



One of the many affected residents featured in local press reports

seem to have changed as time has passed. It is worth quoting longtime resident Ruth Swyka (Youngberg), who explained that while she and her neighbors were mostly opposed at first, “I do think in the end everyone made out alright.”³⁰ While immense amounts of history were lost, some homes were picked up and moved to plots outside the park boundaries. One couple profiled in Swyka’s writings were finally given the opportunity to unload their property onto the PIPC after having it on the market for years. Even from the perspective of one of the Camp Orange boys who spent numerous cherished summers on the land prior to the camp’s closure and the park’s creation, “I’m glad it’s a state park rather than having been developed with tons of new cookie-cutter

houses back there. It’s still much more like it was in our days.”³¹

As for the developed park complex filled with day trippers from New York City? It never came to be. The grandiose plans for the land were never fulfilled, but that is likely for the better. The serenity that people have sought on this land for centuries continues, only now as a public park designated by the state rather than the private retreat that former residents created for themselves. The park’s surroundings in nearby Middletown and across the region are less rural than ever before, as more residents continue to relocate here, build new homes, and demand more services. The park, though, is moving against the grain: progressing in the opposite, but a more-than-welcome, direction. With each spring’s blooms and summer’s growth, Highland Lakes State Park becomes more wild and less like its commercialized surroundings. One of the most meaningful and ironic pieces of the story is that the ruins—including sturdy stone walls, crumbling brick patios, and cracking concrete foundations for cabins—are nowhere near as dated as visitors may speculate. The deep history that many site visitors suspect the property contains does in fact exist, but they cannot see it. With multiple layers of history in the park mostly

30 Personal Interview with Ruth Swyka.

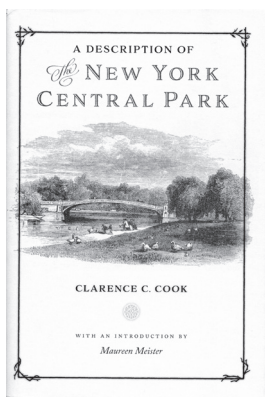
31 Personal Interviews with YMCA Camp Orange Alumni.

concealed by thick natural growth, this research has been done in hopes that more hidden stories on the land's past will continue to emerge.

With the park's past not yet so far removed, though, take this written interpretation of the land's history as an opportunity to explore and enjoy it, so long as we continue to protect what Ruth Swyka characterized in 1964 as this "most quiet corner of Orange County."

The author would like to thank those who contributed with personal interviews, photographs and documents. This includes Camp Orange Alumni Steve Schuyler, Danny Bloomer, Lloyd Soppe, Larry White, Roy Cuellar, Chris Phelps, Terry Murray, as well as Mark and Ruth Swyka, Ira Besdansky and Claire Piccorelli of the YMCA of Middletown, and the Palisades Interstate Park Commission.

Book Reviews



***A Description of the New York Central Park*, by Clarence C. Cook, originally published 1869, reprinted with an Introduction by Maureen Meister, (New York: Washington Mews Books/New York University Press, 2017) 238 pp.**

It is tempting to take New York City's Central Park for granted. These days, the park is beautiful, well-maintained, and safe, welcoming 40 million visitors a year. The Central Park Conservancy, a private non-profit entity established in 1980, raises and administers the park's nearly \$80-million annual budget.

It was not always thus. Perhaps the lowest point was in the 1970s. Conditions then were scabrously captured in Carl Reiner's black comedy *Where's Poppa* (1970), in which a dutiful son (Ron Liebman) gets mugged, or worse, every time he rushes across the park at night to keep his brother (George Segal) from murdering his obstreperous mother (Ruth Gordon). The film was admittedly exaggerated, tasteless, and politically incorrect, but in that era the park was unsafe, poorly maintained, and a sorry sight, the great lawns described as dustbowls.

In fact, the park has had several periods of prosperity and decline. Even its earliest days were rocked by political machinations, enormous challenges, and controversies great and small.

All this is brought to life by the snarky judgments, critical asides, and pointed approvals and disapprovals in the book-length essay on Central Park written by Clarence C. Cook. The modestly titled *Description of the New York Central Park* roams virtually through the entire park as it neared completion in 1869—already 10 years in the making—but with numerous diversions to discuss the aesthetic intentions of the park's designers and the various controversies about those goals and other parties' interests. Reproduced in the same trim size as the original, this facsimile edition also includes the hundred-odd evocative engravings of park scenes drawn by Albert Fitch Bellows, a conventional but spatially subtle illustrator of the period.

The reprinted text is preceded by an insightful Introduction by Maureen Meister, an architectural historian who has published widely on the Arts and Crafts movement and nineteenth-century architecture. Meister notes that this was not the first book published on Central Park, but it “continues to be both memorable and authoritative.”

Meister's introduction provides interesting biographical details on Bellows (he had an architectural background but studied painting in Antwerp) as well as other individuals involved in its publication, including the publisher, the printer, and especially its author, who was on his way to becoming one of the country's first professional art critics. Meister's introduction is especially helpful in placing the book's origins within the context of the struggles to get the park under way and to keep it on track in the era when New York City's government was under the corrupt sway of Tammany Hall.

As advertised, Cook's text is mostly descriptive, written in a vivid and lively style that makes for enjoyable insights as the author guides us on a virtual tour, starting in the park's southeast corner, wending across toward 72nd Street, then meandering to the upper park on the east side and finally back down around its west side, with numerous asides and observations along the way. As a critic, Cook can be sharp, but he is an unwavering advocate of the expressed ideals of Central Park's designers, especially the themes of focusing on nature and being open to all levels of society. These firm priorities fuel many of Cook's more tendentious descriptions.

Cook's text begins with a "glance" at the history of the park. In a sense, it all began in the Hudson Valley, with Andrew Jackson Downing (1815–52) of Newburgh. Cook writes that Downing "gave the first expression of the want, which everybody at that time felt, of a great public park" in an essay published in his journal *The Horticulturalist* in 1848. Rural cemeteries had established precedents—Mount Auburn near Boston started in 1831, followed by Laurel Hill in Philadelphia and Green-Wood in Brooklyn. But a non-funereal civic park, Downing argued, would "refine the national character." Downing traveled in 1850 to England, where he not only visited English picturesque parks but recruited the young architect Calvert Vaux to come to Newburgh and establish an architectural partnership. In early 1852, some months before his untimely death, Downing also hired none other than Clarence Cook! Thus, the author's advocacy for the ideals of elevating moral character through the experience of composed nature was rooted in direct contact with the charismatic Downing, whom Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted later honored as their mentor in the design of Newburgh's Downing Park, their final collaboration in 1897.

Cook recounts the missteps in Central Park's gestation. Once the principle of building a park reached wide agreement, the state Legislature established a Central Park Commission in 1851 to oversee its creation. After first considering another site along the East River, they settled on the current location (initially ending at 106th Street, later extended to 110th). Some landowners tried to change the southern boundary from 59th to 72nd Street, but the mayor vetoed that. An engineering firm prepared an initial design, which Cook calls a "matter-of-fact, tasteless affair" with no effort toward "beauty or picturesqueness." In 1857, a reconstituted commission sponsored a competition, which yielded thirty-three entries; the winner was the "Greensward" design of Olmsted and Vaux.

In the description proper, Cook guides us with vivid accounts of every section of the park, relating each area, pond, walk, or bridge to the goals of the Olmsted-Vaux design. Cook rightly praises what most succeeding commentators view as the design's most significant feature—the effective separation and minimal intersection of the park's various modes of transport: carriage roads, bridle paths, pedestrian walkways, and the transverse roads that cut across it.

The first ten years of the park's construction included several controversies and setbacks, including the departures and later reinstatement of both Vaux and Olmsted. One hot issue arose from a pair of grand ceremonial gates designed and proposed by Richard Morris Hunt—the first American architect trained at the *École des Beaux Arts*, who would later have a hugely successful career (several houses in Newport, the Biltmore estate in Asheville, the base of the Statue of Liberty, and the 1890s facade of the Metropolitan Museum that obscures the one by Vaux). The park's designers opposed Hunt's gates as being excessive, intimidating, and somehow undemocratic. Cook called them “the barren spawn of French imperialism,” and he urged the commission to “avoid everything savoring of ostentation, affectation or mere vulgar display of ornaments.”

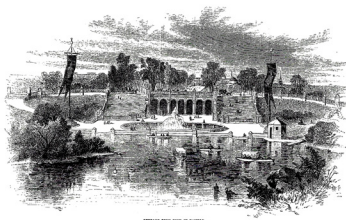
Cook objected that Hunt's gates depended “for any effect or beauty ... upon statuary,” without which they had “nothing to recommend them to an educated taste, and very little to catch even the popular eye.” The author frequently invokes his own superior taste, even while praising the park's commitment to serve people of all classes.

“The whole subject of sculpture in the park is beset with difficulties,” writes Cook. It seems that worthy citizens of foreign governments were constantly offering pieces of statuary, but “thus far there has not been a single piece ... that is at all desirable to have there.” Dismissing certain sculptures as “very unsatisfactory,” Cook suggests that there should be as little as possible of “the artificial” to detract from the park's “natural style of gardening.”

The emphasis on nature is a theme the author emphasizes repeatedly, echoing the sentiments of Vaux and Olmsted. But Cook acknowledges the irony that the “natural” effects of the park were an almost entirely artificial construction, involving tons of rock dynamited and removed, millions of trees planted, and tons of dirt shipped in from New Jersey.

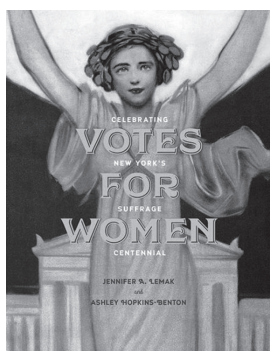
Clarence Cook makes for lively company as he guides the reader from the Sheep's Meadow through the Mall to the Ramble and on to the park's more primitive northern reaches. Along the way, he praises the work not only of Olmsted and Vaux but also other contributors, including assistant architect Jacob Wrey Mould, the entire Central Park Commission, and even Andrew H. Green, who drove Vaux crazy with micromanagement while Olmsted was serving in Washington during the Civil War. (They all seem to have

worked things out after the two designers were reinstated; Green went on to serve the city in numerous ways, including the unification of the five boroughs.)



The original publication of Cook's *Description* took a few years to complete. One advantage of this circumstance is that most of the drawings by Bellows and their engravings were already complete, allowing Cook to refer to individual images in the text. In one case, the author was able to praise Vaux's design for the Belvedere in the northern park even though it had not yet been built—the engraving was based on the architect's drawings. Even today, the illustrations enhance the experience of Cook's virtual tour, although some features have changed. Reading the *Description* "cannot fail" (as Cook would say) to give the reader a renewed appreciation for the park and a resolution to revisit it as soon as possible.

Jim Hoekema, Newburgh Historical Society



***Votes for Women: Celebrating New York's Suffrage Centennial*, edited by Jennifer Lemak and Ashley Hopkins-Benton (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017) 272 pp.**

As New York goes, so goes the nation. In 2019 and 2020, prominent U.S. cultural institutions—including the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery and the National Archives in Washington, D.C.—and countless historical societies, state commissions, and local projects will mark the centennial of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. "Votes for Women," the New York State Museum's recent exhibition honoring the successful 1917 campaign for state suffrage, was very much a harbinger of exhibitions to come, and its companion volume, released by SUNY Press in late 2017, represented the first major suffrage centennial exhibition to be documented in print.

Not simply a catalog of exhibited objects, but perhaps strongest as a visual record of women's activism, *Votes for Women: Celebrating New York's Suffrage Centennial* provides an introduction to more than 200 years of women's history in one elegantly-produced oversize paperback. Jennifer Lemak and Ashley Hopkins-Benton, New York State Museum curators, serve as the volume's authors and editors, and should be given much credit for not only bringing the State Museum's women's history collections to light, but also for

organizing significant loans for the exhibition from forty-five private and public collections from around the country. The more than 250 artifacts, newly photographed and reproduced in full color, play a starring role in the catalog.

Votes for Women, like the exhibition it documents, is organized chronologically in three sections, following a fairly traditional periodization. Its first section—"Agitate! Agitate!"—concerning the years 1776–1890, contextualizes the mid-nineteenth century era of rights conventions as legacies of the American Revolution's demands for liberty. To the curators' credit, they do not begin their story later, with the 1848 convention in Seneca Falls that Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and their woman's rights allies wrote into history with the multi-volume *History of Woman Suffrage*; in fact, as Lemak and Benton-Hopkins plainly note, "women and men had been talking, writing, and working for equality for a long time." The second section, "Winning the Vote," focuses on the state and national campaigns for suffrage between 1890 and 1920, highlighting lesser-known upstate New York reform women and the women's club movement, as well as better-known downstate activists who made Manhattan the home to the national campaign. The main text for these first two sections function essentially as a timeline of major meetings and events leading up to the successful statewide 1917 referendum for women's suffrage, and the May 1919 passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The catalog's final section, "The Continuing Fight for Equal Rights, 1920–Present," is less comprehensive. Text and images briefly document the campaigns for an Equal Rights Amendment and birth control reform after 1920, provide short biographies of notable New York State women who found a national stage for their work (including Eleanor Roosevelt, Shirley Chisholm, and Bella Abzug), and acknowledge the labor of women's history commemorations that began long before twenty-first century centennials.

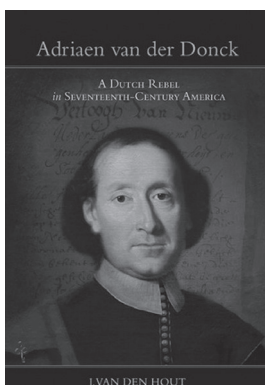
Sprinkled throughout the three sections are nine short essays written for this volume by prominent local historians and a handful of new voices who take up both place-based and thematic topics. Shannon Risk, for example, draws attention to black and white suffragists on the Buffalo-Niagara frontier, terrain rarely explored by women's historians. Lauren Santangelo—whose forthcoming book, *Suffrage and the City: New York Women Battle for the Ballot* (Oxford University Press, 2019) promises to bring a critical urban studies lens to suffrage history—tells the story of the 1886 Statue of Liberty suffrage protest, an important use of public space decades before New York suffragists resorted to major public demonstrations and parades. Karen Pastorello's essay is a useful reminder of the roles men played in the state's pro-suffrage politics. And Jessica Dereleth's fascinating essay, "'These Model Families': Romance, Marriage, and Family in the New York Woman

Suffrage Movement,” uncovers a different kind of public display—suffrage “baby shows” that “responded to anti-suffrage claims about the incompatibility of motherhood and politics.”

Exhibition catalogs rarely tread new ground. Together, the short essays and main text of *Votes for Women* provide a solid introduction for the general reader interested in women’s history during this centennial moment. Reasonably priced and well designed, one can imagine this volume popping up on any number of coffee tables. But for the scholar of local history or voting rights, the strength of this volume lies in its illustrations, which might be used as a women’s history checklist for any future researcher interested in New York State suffrage history. More than half of the catalog’s pages feature full-color images from the State Museum’s own collections, as well as those items loaned for research and exhibition. Collections rarely documented in print—such as the suffrage banners held by an upstate gem, the Howland Stone Store Museum in Aurora—provide a virtual roadmap for future researchers. In the third section of *Votes for Women*, the State Museum’s own growing collections of National Organization for Women posters and ephemera, along with holdings documenting New York City’s Creative Women’s Collective, truly stand out, and suggest there is much more to be written about the visual culture of women’s politics in post-suffrage America.

A handful of factual errors and the lack of robust textual citations or bibliography should not discourage readers from *Votes for Women*. The final page of the catalog—illustrated with a photograph of Susan B. Anthony’s Rochester graveside covered with “I Voted” stickers on Election Day 2016—implies that future readers have a role to play in making history. While the anniversary of the 1917 New York State suffrage referendum, and the upcoming 2020 national centennial, forces participants to make sense of more than 100 years of women’s history, “this endeavor does not end after the centennial celebration,” the authors conclude. “As the struggle for women’s equality continues,” they ask readers, “how will you help preserve this vital story?” Preserving the stories of New York’s women is its own political project, one that *Votes for Women* shows will require continued work to build upon New York State Museum’s history collections, stewarded by curators like Jennifer Lemak and Ashley Hopkins-Benton

Monica L. Mercado, Colgate University



***Adriaen van der Donck: A Dutch Rebel in Seventeenth-Century America*, by J. van den Hout (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018) 220 pp.**

As independent scholar J. van den Hout observes, “no other figure in the compelling and colorful story of the Dutch colony of New Netherland, except perhaps Petrus Stuyvesant, has attracted more interest than the young legal activist Adriaen van der Donck” (xi). Indeed, more than three centuries after his death, Van der Donck continues to fascinate scholars. Van den Hout’s cradle-to-grave biography explores Van der Donck’s short, tempestuous, and consequential life by embedding him in his times and exploring his relationships with the West India Company and the people of New Netherland.

Adriaen van der Donck was born in Breda between 1618 and 1620, likely during the Twelve Years’ Truce with Spain. That truce ended shortly after his birth, and Catholic-Protestant warfare quickly resumed. The Spanish forced Breda to surrender in 1625, which meant that Van der Donck “witnessed firsthand the inescapable inequities of war, the death and suffering of friends and neighbors, and finally, the loss of his very community” (7). Although Van der Donck’s family returned to Breda after the Dutch Republic recaptured it in 1637, he himself did not. Instead, he enrolled at Leiden University in 1638 and received “a world-class education, one designed to put him on a trajectory for a life in the spotlight” (12). Van der Donck chose to study law, but because of the relative lack of sources about the man, it is unclear how long he attended the university. However, what is clear is that he “had attended one of the world’s most progressive universities at a time when intellectual history was being made, when only four to five percent of Van der Donck’s age group went on to university studies at all” (20).

Rather than remain in the Dutch Republic, Van der Donck chose to seek his fortune across the ocean and spoke with Kiliaen van Rensselaer about opportunities in the colony of Rensselaerswyck (located near present-day Albany). Van Rensselaer saw Van der Donck as an asset to the colony, especially when Van der Donck offered to recruit families to settle in it. Van Rensselaer “must have realized that he could use someone with Van der Donck’s pedigree and education in a position of authority” (26); he offered him a position as schout, an officer of the colony similar to sheriff or prosecutor, and facilitated Van der Donck’s passage to the Americas. After his arrival in Rensselaerswyck, Van der Donck quickly ran afoul of the controlling Van Rensselaer, who attempted to manage his officials from across the ocean. Other officials in the colony complained that Van der Donck “seemed to be aligning himself with the farmers, against the council” (54). After Van

Rensselaer's death, Van der Donck traveled south; married Mary Doughty, the daughter of an English minister; cut his remaining ties to Rensselaerswyck; and purchased land for his colony of Colendonck.

Van der Donck began to get more and more involved in the politics and affairs of New Netherland. However, given the grief it caused him, perhaps he ended up regretting this decision. This was a seemingly propitious moment for New Netherland because the West India Company replaced the despised Willem Kieft, the former director of New Netherland, with Petrus Stuyvesant. Van den Hout hints that Van der Donck might have had leadership aspirations. Problematically, "just about anyone the West India Company would have sent would have felt like a corporate outsider" (75), and Stuyvesant faced the difficult task of reestablishing order and healing the wounds left by Kieft. It quickly became obvious that Stuyvesant "was that same construct of authority figure that Van der Donck had rejected in the past" (79), although the two men did not break immediately. Stuyvesant appointed Van der Donck to a board of nine men, but Van der Donck ran into trouble when he and other board members challenged Stuyvesant's authority. Many colonists rebelled against the relatively high-handed ways of the new director and disputes that had begun under Kieft combined with others than began under Stuyvesant to create an ugly cocktail of resentment and anger.

In 1649, Van der Donck returned to the Dutch Republic as one of the delegates from New Netherland. He presented to the States General the Remonstrance, a document he had likely written, which was nothing less than a formal complaint against the West India Company and the government of New Netherland. Although Van der Donck hoped the situation could be resolved quickly, the wrangling in this dispute engendered years of conflict in the Dutch Republic. Van der Donck became the voice of the colonists and, as Van den Hout notes, "it had gone beyond his desire, and become his purpose, to stand up for himself and for the people of New Netherland" (112). In the four years he spent in the Dutch Republic, Van der Donck also wrote a history of New Netherland and received a law degree from Leiden University.

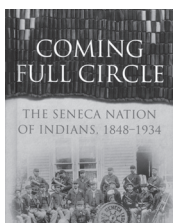
After an unsatisfying end to the legal wrangling, Van der Donck returned to New Netherland in 1653. He seemingly settled back into life, but it is uncertain how much he could have accomplished because the settlement was taken by surprise in a Native American attack on September 15, 1655. It is likely that Van der Donck perished in this attack. Less than ten years after his death, the Dutch surrendered New Netherland to the English. As Van den Hout comments, "the colony's West India Company rule had failed New Netherland. Van der Donck had predicted this too. It was a bittersweet revenge" (148). In sum, Adriaen Van der Donck played an important role in the Dutch settlement of the Americas. His publications spread knowledge about New Netherland and helped increase the population of the colony. As Van den Hout asserts, "not only does Van der Donck

deserve recognition for his role in the development of the municipality that eventually became New York, there is no denying that he is also part of the larger American story, despite the fact that much of his political battle took place on European ground” (157).

This well-written and well-researched biography makes an important contribution to the scholarly literature on New Netherland and Dutch settlement in the Americas. It will appeal to anyone interested in the subject and will work well in graduate seminars on Colonial America.

Evan C. Rothera, Sam Houston State University

New & Noteworthy Books



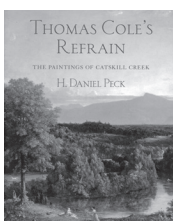
Coming Full Circle: The Seneca Nation of Indians, 1848–1934

By Laurence M. Hauptman

(Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019)

294 pp. \$34.95 (hardcover) www.oupress.com

In previous works, Laurence Hauptman has chronicled New York's Seneca Nation up to the political revolution of 1848 and its history since World War II. Now, he closes the gap in chronology—covering the revolution, the counterrevolution, and the endless challenges of preserving a traditional culture and way of life in a constantly evolving environment. Basing his research on hundreds of archival records, interviews, court cases, and various publications, Hauptman presents Seneca issues regarding land, education, and governance spanning from the mid-nineteenth century through the Great Depression, setting the stage for the changes to come after World War II.



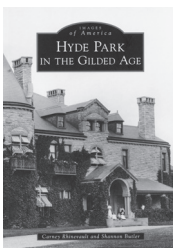
Thomas Cole's Refrain: The Paintings of Catskill Creek

By H. Daniel Peck

(Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019)

200 pp. \$34.95 (paperback) <https://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/>

As the recognized founder of the Hudson River School of painters, Thomas Cole had a profound influence on the generation of artists that followed in his footsteps. In *Thomas Cole's Refrain*, new attention is paid to Cole's own inspiration and motivation, specifically his paintings of Catskill Creek, which he rendered nearly a dozen times over two decades. Using full-color images of many of Cole's works, as well as a series of Catskill Mountain maps, Peck establishes a narrative that contextualizes Cole's attachment to the Hudson River Valley landscape, as well as the dismay he felt over the region's growing industrial development.



Hyde Park in the Gilded Age (Images of America Series)

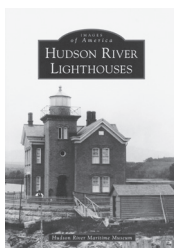
By Carney Rhinevault and Shannon Butler

(Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2019)

127 pp. \$21.99 (softcover) www.arcadiapublishing.com

Located along the Hudson River in Dutchess County, the Town of Hyde Park afforded wealthy families an ideal setting to enjoy their riches away from the bustle of New York City while still allowing them to stay connected to their respective business endeavors. Names like Vanderbilt, Roosevelt, and Livingston brought the lifestyle and architecture of the

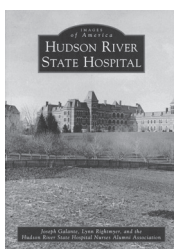
Gilded Age to Hyde Park. They constructed mansions on large estates that also supported the local economy by providing agricultural, construction, and maintenance jobs for residents. The abundant photos in *Hyde Park in the Gilded Age* offer a visual account of how both halves lived in this era, making this a comprehensive depiction of everyday life across the socioeconomic spectrum.



Hudson River Lighthouses (Images of America Series)

By The Hudson River Maritime Museum
(Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2019)
127 pp. \$21.99 (softcover) www.arcadiapublishing.com

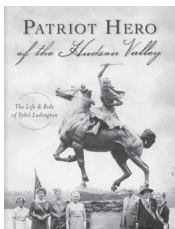
The need for navigational beacons along the Hudson River dates back to the early 1800s, when steam-powered boats began turning it into a bustling commercial highway. From the Statue of Liberty north to Albany, more than two dozen lighthouses of various shapes, sizes, and materials once warned ships of nearby hazards. Through historic photos, artist renderings, and narrative text, *Hudson River Lighthouses* introduces these beacons as well as the people responsible for keeping them operational. Though all but eight of the lighthouses have been lost, community efforts throughout the region have aided in the preservation of those remaining. They sustain the legacy of the men, women, and even children who once played a vital role in making the river safe for travel.



Hudson River State Hospital (Images of America Series)

By Joseph Galente, Lynn Rightmeyer, and the Hudson River
State Hospital Nurses Alumni Association
(Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2019)
127 pp. \$23.99 (softcover) www.arcadiapublishing.com

At the time of its opening in 1871, Poughkeepsie's Hudson River State Hospital was in the forefront of transforming the nation's mental health care system. From Frederick Law Olmsted's landscape design to the main building by Withers and Vaux, the hospital placed an emphasis on comprehensive care that provided the greatest possible amount of patient autonomy. The book's myriad images convey a sense of community among its many employees, as well as the several thousand patients that occupied the facility at its peak. Designed to be self-sufficient, the hospital included its own fire and police departments, as well as a farm, and the book makes clear that both employees and patients were essential to its operations.



Patriot Hero of the Hudson Valley: The Life and Ride of Sybil Ludington

By Vincent T. Dacquino

(Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2019)

160 pp. \$21.99 (softcover) www.historypress.com

Of the Hudson River Valley's many local legends, Putnam County's Sybil Ludington ranks among the most impressive. In 1777—at the age of just sixteen—she traveled forty dangerous miles by horse to warn a Continental Army regiment of an imminent attack by the British. Through extensive review of available sources, Dacquino provides a thorough biography of Ludington before and after her ride, while also tackling the challenges of correcting the historical record and separating documented events from longstanding regional lore.

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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