

THE
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VALLEY
REVIEW

A Journal of Regional Studies

MARIST

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From the Editors

We've looked forward to presenting an issue on the Hudson River Valley's landscape legacy for a long time, both to share information about some of its treasures and to honor those who have dedicated their lives to preserving them. The region holds a unique place in the history of our nation's landscape architecture: it's where the art was first imported from Europe and where it began to evolve—alongside the works of Hudson River School painters and Transcendentalist writers—into something distinctly American. An excerpt from Robert Toole's new book, *Landscape Gardens on the Hudson: A History*, provides a succinct overview of this evolution and its far-reaching impacts. Peter Manning illustrates how these concepts were translated by the Smiley family to create the carriage roads and other popular plein air amenities so popular today in the Shawangunks. Following the further development of the country's outdoor ethic, we republish Benton MacKaye's 1921 call for an Appalachian Trail. Returning to the domestic landscape, Robert Toole also offers an article on Thomas Cole's Cedar Grove, discussing the relationship between painting and landscape architecture at the artist's Catskill home. Thom Johnson's photo essay on Bannerman's Castle presents another legacy, tracing the history and precarious present circumstances of the iconic structures on Pollopel Island. Our History Forum introduces the South Road History Trail, which will serve to connect many important landscapes in Poughkeepsie, and continues with essays on Kykuit and Wilderstein before arriving at the Bard Arboretum, a curatorial landscape architecture project encompassing the grounds of several historic estates on the college campus.

We're especially pleased that this issue coincides with the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area's celebration of landscape architecture at eleven nationally significant sites across our region, the first in a series of events to celebrate and elaborate the Heritage Area's themes of Nature and Culture.

In J. Michael Smith's article in issue 26.2, the Bill of Sale on page 71 includes a transcription error; the name of 1st signer Minsam (carried over from an earlier translation) should be Ninham. On page 75, Figure 1 appears courtesy of the FDR Presidential Library and Museum. In the lower right corner of Figure 3 on page 83, in the South Precinct, the two "Gorelands Patented 1761" tract labels were reversed; the smaller tract is 221 acres, the larger 4,402. Lastly, in Figure 4 on page 89, Ninham the Grandfather's dates were transposed; his correct dates are 1696-1744.



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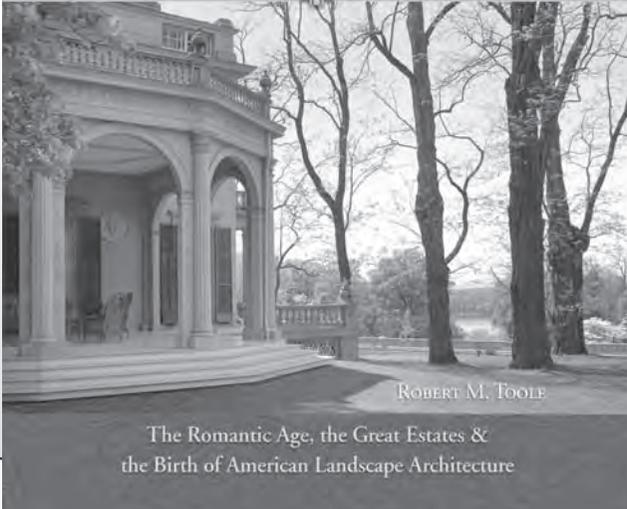
This issue of *The Hudson River Valley Review* is dedicated to

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Founding Chairman of the Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College,
whose inspiration and vision not only made HRVI a reality but helped to
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LANDSCAPE GARDENS

on the HUDSON *a history*



Landscape Gardens on the Hudson — a history **The Romantic Age, the Great Estates & the Birth of American Landscape Architecture**

Robert M. Toole

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Call for Essays

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

Submission of Essays and Other Materials

HRVR prefers that essays and other written materials be submitted as two double-spaced typescripts, generally no more than thirty pages long with endnotes, along with a computer disk with a clear indication of the operating system, the name and version of the word-processing program, and the names of documents on the disk. Illustrations or photographs that are germane to the writing should accompany the hard copy. Otherwise, the submission of visual materials should be cleared with the editors beforehand. Illustrations and photographs are the responsibility of the authors. Scanned photos or digital art must be 300 pixels per inch (or greater) at 8 in. x 10 in. (between 7 and 20 mb). No responsibility is assumed for the loss of materials. An e-mail address should be included whenever possible.

HRVR will accept materials submitted as an e-mail attachment (*hrvi@marist.edu*) once they have been announced and cleared beforehand.

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

Contributors

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Benton MacKaye (March 6, 1879–Dec. 11, 1975) was a forester, planner, and conservationist. A graduate of Harvard University (B.A., 1900; M.A. School of Forestry, 1905), he worked for the U.S. Forest Service, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the U.S. Department of Labor. MacKaye was the author of *The New Exploration: A Philosophy of Regional Planning* and *Expedition Nine: A Return to a Region* as well as the originator of the Appalachian Trail.

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Robert M. Toole is a landscape architect practicing in Saratoga Springs since 1975. He has completed landscape studies for numerous historic sites and has written extensively on the topic. He is the author of *Landscape Gardens on the Hudson—a History: The Romantic Age, The Great Estates* and *The Birth of American Landscape Architecture* (Black Dome Press, 2010).

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On the cover: Henry Gritten, English 1818-1873

Springside: Center Circle, 1852

Oil on canvas, 25 ½ x 37 in.

The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York
Promised gift of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas M. Evans, Jr. (Tania Goss, class of 1959)



THE PICTURESQUE



BEAUTIFUL DESIGN

Engravings illustrating the Picturesque and Beautiful Design Modes, from *Landscape Gardening* by A.J. Downing (1844). The Picturesque (at top) emphasized an appearance in harmony with mid-nineteenth-century conditions along the Hudson. A Gothic-style cottage, a rustic garden shelter (far right), and indigenous woodland surroundings dominate the scene. A man with a gun, accompanied by a dog, introduced a decidedly New World domesticity. The Beautiful design mode (at bottom) contrasted a woman and child standing before a classical (Federal-style) house flanked by urns and a fountain, creating a refined and formal appearance.

Excerpted from Landscape Gardens on the Hudson, published by Black Dome Press.

The Romantic Hudson

by *Robert M. Toole*

By 1825 the Hudson River Valley had awakened from the aftermath of the Revolutionary War with great vigor. New York City grew from a postwar population of about 25,000 to a metropolis of 125,000 people. Americans migrated from New England, and new immigrants arrived from Europe; commerce and farming flourished. At the end of the era, the Erie Canal opened the West to settlement, and New York State prospered. After 200 years of lackluster colonialism, New York City and its river valley to the north settled into the domestic life of a nascent republic.

Americans still recognized the excellence of European models, but they began to look to their own country for local inspirations. Writing led the way, with the imported works of Englishmen such as Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), quickly augmented by locals such as James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) and Washington Irving (1783-1859), who recounted revolutionary heroics and glorified the sublimity of the American wilderness.

Notably, Americans of romantic persuasion began to appreciate the greatness of their vast and varied land. In 1825, Thomas Cole (1801-1848) commenced the Hudson River School of landscape painters. He was “discovered” after exhibiting three modest oil paintings of identifiable Hudson Valley scenes. Championing the “genius of the place,” an indigenous focus developed in all the arts, and a Romantic period blossomed. In the Hudson River Valley, the Romantic period was a golden age. This was a distinct regional phenomenon of place and people where, for a time, popular culture celebrated human emotions and feelings over purely intellectual and practical judgments. The romantics valued above all else the affections of the heart. While persons of romantic persuasion have lived in many periods, and romantic thought remains important today, its historic expression in America was noteworthy because it coincided with the earliest manifestation of cultural ambition in the United States. For the focus here, American romanticism provided a context that influenced landscape gardening on the Hudson.

American romanticism had its particular themes. The idea that “all men are created equal” was its political manifesto; for the arts, freedom of imagination and freedom of expression were the message. Individual freedoms were essential to romantic stimulation. Romanticism in the arts represented not the choice of

subject or objective fact, but individual sensibilities. By asserting that the emotions of each individual mattered, it was assumed that an individual had natural rights that made them so. Now, in America, a new nation was to be governed on these values. It took time for these lofty, revolutionary thoughts to filter down, but when they did, in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the depth of idealism provided heady substance for would-be romantics and the arts.

In turn, American religious life in the Romantic period supported romantic sensibilities. Modesty, restraint and chasteness, born of Puritanism and mercantile thrift, were common values. Simple and spontaneous reflections, pleasurable sensations of awe, delight, contentment, and even melancholy, were deeply felt. This pleasure was spiritual, transient, and illusive, yet sustained not only by the formal churches, but by a national philosophy epitomized by the Transcendentalism of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau.

The sense of America as “Nature’s Nation” was a central theme for romanticism in the early republic. Europeans knew the natural world was important, but in America, wild nature was an essential component of the “genius of the place.” America was seen as special, distinguished by its wilderness condition. “In the beginning,” wrote the English philosopher John Locke, “all the world was America.”

The Gardens

Added to the expressions of romantic thought in the Hudson River Valley in the region’s golden age are its historic designed landscapes. During the pre-Civil War decades, the Hudson Valley saw extensive developments in landscape gardening as nowhere else in America. Today, many of the largely unaltered grounds of numerous riverfront properties are preserved as historic sites, open to the public. Some of the region’s premier historic attractions are, in fact, landscape garden compositions, where architecture is but a part of the holistic historic artifact.

From the south, these museum properties include **Knoll** (today called Lyndhurst) and **Sunnyside**, close to one another on the Tappan Zee in Tarrytown. Moving north to Poughkeepsie, **Locust Grove** and **Springside** are nationally significant examples. **Hyde Park** (the so-called Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site) is further north toward Rhinebeck, as is **The Point**, often called the Hoyt House property, now part of the Mills-Norrie State Park in Staatsburg. Beyond Rhinebeck, dozens of residential landscapes glorify a continuous string of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century estates. These expansive designed landscapes constitute today’s **Hudson River National Historic Landmark District**, at thirty-two square miles, it is the largest such district in the United States. This is “Livingston Country,” named for its most prominent family. On nearly all

Map of the Hudson River Valley Showing Sites, by R.M. Toole. "There is no part of the Union where the taste in Landscape Gardening is so far advanced, as on the middle portion of the Hudson," was the claim in 1844. In the Hudson River Valley there remains a string of nineteenth-century landscape gardens representing a unique heritage and historic resource. Many of these designed landscapes are preserved at today's historic sites. This map also illustrates the concentration of estate properties in the Hudson River National Historic Landmark District. Many of these properties preserve documented, nineteenth-century designed landscapes, notably Clermont near the northern end and Hyde Park on the extreme south. In between are Blithewood, Montgomery Place, and dozens of others, all fronting on the river.

these sites, landscape gardening influenced the historic arrangements. **Clermont** and **Montgomery Place** were significant Livingston family homes, not so much for their links to any one historic person, but as indicative of the valley's long residential and landscape garden heritage. Other properties in the landmark district, with lesser pedigrees, remain in private ownership, such as **Rokeby**, **Steen Valetje**, and **Wilderstein**. A few homes have largely disappeared—most regrettably **Blithewood**.

Millbrook at Tarrytown, **Idlewild** at Cornwall, **Highland Garden** at Newburgh, and **Kenwood** at Albany have succumbed to changing circumstances. While these last cannot now be visited, their importance dictates that they be included in the story of Hudson Valley landscape gardening. Several others will be mentioned here in passing. Finally, one of the most popular museum properties in the Hudson Valley, and very



well preserved, lies just south of the city of Hudson in Columbia County. This is **Olana**, the aesthetic crescendo of American landscape gardening, unique and famed for its creation by a renowned landscape painter, Frederic Edwin Church. Olana has been rightly called by a recent commentator “one of the most perfectly realized Romantic landscape gardens in the world.”

The Landscape Garden Deconstructed

The general characteristics of the Romantic-period landscape garden can be concisely described. All these landscapes were associated with gentleman farming and, with a few exceptions, amateur designers—the property owners themselves. Unlike a building or formal garden where the design is semi-permanent, a naturalistic landscape garden requires season-to-season adjustments with the growth and decline of vegetation in a largely organic composition. Owners lived with their landscapes. Then too, the expertise of the landscape gardener was gained primarily from broad-based academics and exposure to artistic principles, an education seldom found in the lower status of a gardener. The few professionals available did impact local examples, and their writings (and imported written advice from England) offered comprehensive coverage of landscape gardening as the art form it was then considered to be, at least for the inquisitive and literary-minded.

Sometimes the designed landscape, or “pleasure grounds” as it was called, were separate from the farmland, but often the two landscapes melded. Turning a profit was not the point of a gentleman’s farm, but farming was part of an idealized rural lifestyle. In the nineteenth century, farming remained integral to residential life and to the heightened landscape design aesthetics required of romantic taste. The emphasis was on a purely ornamental purpose.

The acreage of the era’s gentleman farms varied widely, from less than twenty to hundreds. The house was the central focus, but in the landscape it was not the only important component. Some of the house sites discussed here predated the practice of nineteenth-century landscape gardening. Other houses were constructed when the Romantic period landscapes were designed, so that the results were a set piece that can be attributed to one owner at one moment in time. The earlier houses were classical designs, but after the mid-1830s a variety of eclectic styles emerged. These “picturesque” house designs often complemented the landscape gardening, so that an Italianate house might have a more formal and grand landscape, while a Gothic cottage would be associated with more casual and intricate grounds.

In general there were no large scale restructurings of the landscapes in the

Romantic period designs because the idea was to work harmoniously with the natural “lay of the land”—the *genius loci*—with its opportunities and constraints, rather than imposing an intrusive overlay. This has meant that some designed landscapes have been dismissed as indistinguishable from nature, with only the use of native or long-introduced plantings, and in layouts that can appear to be unconscious and haphazard. For some Hudson Valley house museums, the landscape is now reduced, in thought, to mowed lawns and trees, a consequence of naturalistic design, changing use, and a loss of subtleties inherent to modern maintenance practices. Originally all these properties were farms, an activity no longer practiced at modern museum properties. One consequence is that many of these landscapes are severely overgrown, with detrimental aesthetic impact.

Carriage drives and their pedestrian cousins, footpaths, played the single most important role in determining how the designed landscape was experienced. Drives were especially critical in defining the arrival experience, i.e., how one was brought from the property’s gateway to the house. This was always a carefully contrived route, and the resulting visual sequence fixed the landscape’s personality, and largely defined the visual experience and the property’s sense of place. Footpaths were almost always present so that visitors and owners could stroll the grounds at leisure and take in the landscape’s features and scenery.

Water was always a prime component of these designs. This began with the unequalled splendor of the Hudson River, the era’s grandest and most scenic river. As the vast majority of the residential properties lay on the east bank of the Hudson (because of historic land grants and the evolving infrastructure), the relatively undeveloped western shoreline, punctuated by the Palisades, Highlands, and Catskills, offered highly scenic and distinctive backdrops. In addition, the numerous small streams that joined the Hudson offered very different watery pleasures. These tributaries often descended to the river over waterfalls and rapids, and elsewhere were formed into decorative pools set into small valleys and glens, all enhanced by the practice of landscape gardening.

Trees formed the fabric of the landscape garden, and these were almost always indigenous varieties or long-established imports. Such native stalwarts as red, white, and chestnut oaks (*Quercus rubra*, *Q. alba*, and *Q. prinus*); sugar, red, and silver maples (*Acer saccharum*, *A. rubrum*, and *A. saccharinum*); and beloved natives such as the American elm (*Ulmus americana*) and basswood (*Tilia americana*) were valued landscape trees. Some of the smaller native trees also gained favor beginning in this era, including the white birch (*Betula papyrifera*), redbud (*Cercis canadensis*), honeylocust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*), and black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*). Evergreens were represented by white pines (*Pinus strobus*) and

hemlocks (*Tsuga canadensis*), both common on the Hudson, as well as balsam fir and spruce. Shrubs were used sparingly, given the scale of the average landscape, but there were a few designed botanic collections that earned the title “shrubbery.” Flowers, per se, were not an integral part of the landscape garden, but flowers were almost always incorporated as features, often on a small scale, typically arranged in separate, well-defined enclosures or in “lawn beds,” where seasonal bedding-out flowers enlivened areas close to the house. The informal mingled flower garden, precursor to our modern perennial borders, was popular.

Finally, the landscape garden was embellished with built features. Although these played a secondary role at most properties, they were numerous at others. Uniquely, estate outbuildings, such as farmers’ cottages, gatehouses, barns, and stable buildings, were set up as landscape features. In addition, icehouses, mausoleums, water towers, and dovecotes were given ornamental roles beyond their practical usefulness. Purely decorative buildings varied widely, from sizable pavilions and summer houses to small individual seats. They provided shelter and rest for those touring the grounds, and were also landmarks and artistic highlights in the garden. Urns and sundials, planters and commemorative constructions were also inserted as features. One owner excavated and propped up an old tree stump and presented it on his front lawn for all to see. Pride in a sculptural tree stump was a design conceit peculiar to the Romantic period.

But then the Romantic period was a proud time in America. There was enthusiasm and optimism, if innocent and naïve. Romantic sensibilities were upbeat. There was an ease in New York’s social, economic, and political life that was seldom bitter, but rather prideful, optimistic, and irrepressibly vital.

“Can there be a country in the world better calculated than ours to exercise and to exalt the imagination?” asked New York Governor DeWitt Clinton in 1816, going on to find his muse in the American landscape, “this wild, romantic and awful scenery...calculated to produce a correspondent impression in the imagination—to elevate all the faculties of the mind, and to exalt all the feelings of the heart.”

Fueled by sympathetic political, religious, and nationalistic principles, after a period of assimilation, America’s cultural aspirations joined with the nation’s physical assets—the landscape—to achieve a distinctive artistic expression. This garden design work stands at the center of historic events that decisively shaped the concept of scenic beauty in America. It was undeniably indigenous, because it reflected America’s “genius of the place”—the *genius loci* of the Hudson River Valley.

Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-1852)

A.J. Downing (as he was often called) was a native of Newburgh-on-Hudson. He was a nurseryman and horticulturist by training, had a knack for writing, and a curiosity for sophisticated culture (and a handsome and suave personality according to those who knew him). Downing became America's most prominent landscape gardener in the mid-nineteenth century, known for his early important books, *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening Adapted to North America*, with three editions in Downing's lifetime (1841, '44, and '49) and *Cottage Residences*, with four editions (1842, '44, '47, and '52), and as editor of the periodical, *The Horticulturist*, from July 1846.



COURTESY OF GEORGE TATUM

Andrew Jackson Downing

For social historians, Downing is probably most important for his influence on domestic architecture as a prominent proponent of America's earliest picturesque house designs. Still, in considering historic landscape gardening on the Hudson, no one is a better guide. In the first and subsequent editions of his *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, Downing commented that "nothing is more instructive than a personal inspection of country seats, where the grounds are laid out in a tasteful manner." It is this role as guide to the Romantic-period properties that most interests us as we go off touring historic sites today. Downing knew the Hudson Valley intimately, and as he put it, "There is no part of the Union where the taste in Landscape Gardening is so far advanced, as on the middle portion of the Hudson."

A.J. Downing was no fan of older colonial designs, such as the Hudson's old-fashioned Anglo-Dutch gardens, which he chided as "the Ancient or Geometric Style" for their "regularity, symmetry and the display of labored art," and "a fertility of odd conceits." Instead, Downing made himself a champion and student of landscape gardening as it had evolved in England over the previous century, and where he felt "Landscape Gardening was first raised to the rank of a fine art." Downing sought out and read the standard works on the topic, so that he understood the century-long evolution of English landscape gardening. He had the intellectual inquisitiveness, and connections, to visit the Hudson Valley's premier estate properties, and he had the design background to evaluate the situation in

mid-century America, vis-à-vis what had gone before. As such, Downing was the most important chronicler of antebellum landscape gardening in America, and his focus on the Hudson River Valley is of great benefit to a regional study.

In addition to Downing's studied background in landscape gardening, he was also influenced by more contemporary ideas, notably the prolific writings of John Claudius (J.C.) Loudon (1783-1843). Loudon was England's most prominent garden authority during Downing's lifetime. Downing appreciated Loudon's professional success and modeled his own career accordingly. As befitted his English audience, Loudon covered all varieties of garden and landscape design in his works, providing a shopping list of eclectic ideas in contrast to the more consistent, dogmatic tenets of eighteenth-century landscape gardening in the age of Capability Brown. A modern, Loudon ushered in the plethora of stylistic approaches that characterize international landscape design to this day.

In 1832, Loudon coined the term "Gardenesque," a design philosophy that emphasized individual plants placed in the landscape to show their particular attributes. The garden was now an arboretum. Loudon pointedly suggested that the Gardenesque, as its name implies, elevated what he called "the botany of trees and shrubs" above wild nature. For Loudon, domestic grounds modeled on picturesque themes weren't much of a garden. He proclaimed:

Mere picturesque improvement is not enough in these enlightened times: it is necessary to understand that there is such a character of art, as the gardenesque, as well as the picturesque... Any creation to be recognized as a work of art, must be such as can never be mistaken for a work of nature.

While admitting Loudon's influence, Downing was understandably concerned that the American situation was an awkward fit with pretentious Gardenesque goals. In later editions of *Landscape Gardening*, Downing called Loudon too scientific, labeling him "somewhat deficient as an artist in imagination," preferring "mere artistical beauty to that of expression," and the Gardenesque style suited to "artificial planting only." In a review of Downing's book, *Landscape Gardening*, that appeared in the periodical *The Cultivator*, Loudon was cited as "extensively read in America with a corresponding influence on this art [i.e., landscape gardening]," but the reviewer added that Loudon presented "far less appreciation of the picturesque than is contained in the work before us [i.e., *Landscape Gardening*]."

Related closely to this comparison of the Gardenesque to the earlier picturesque, the most important design reference provided in Downing's writings was the distinction he made between "Beautiful" and "Picturesque" design. Downing grounded this discussion in the history of English landscape gardening, and he

explained the difference simply, but in great detail and without bias.

The “Beautiful design mode” (sometimes he used the term “Graceful”) took inspiration from nature, but sought a refined polish that resulted in a man-made appearance. A “Beautiful” landscape garden would be clearly artificial, with a tidy and unnatural look, often using exotic plants and formal placements. Beautiful landscape gardens, wrote Downing, were “characterized by curving and flowing lines” and “an idea of beauty calmly and harmoniously expressed.” Maintenance was increased by the need for “grass mown into a softness like velvet, gravel walks scrupulously firm, dry and clean; and the most perfect order and neatness should reign throughout.”

Downing did not dismiss the Beautiful approach, which he knew well from recent English fashion. The Beautiful was J.C. Loudon’s taste, and Downing, in *Landscape Gardening*, called the Gardenesque “but another word for what we term the Graceful [i.e., Beautiful] school.” The Beautiful style also incorporated French influences popular in America in Downing’s time. For Downing, the Beautiful was an amalgam going back to English precedence, both old and new, from Capability Brown to Loudon. In a sense, the Beautiful was everything in landscape gardening, except the Picturesque.

The “Picturesque design mode” was for Downing the legacy of the English picturesque. A Picturesque approach, said Downing, produced “outlines of a certain spirited irregularity, surfaces comparatively abrupt and broken, and growth of a somewhat wild and bold character.” The Picturesque is:

An idea of beauty...strongly and irregularly expressed, [where] every object should group with another; trees and shrubs are often planted closely together; and intricacy and variety—thickets—glades—and underwood—as in wild nature, are indispensable. Walks and roads are more abrupt in their windings, turning off frequently at sudden angles... In water, all the wildness of romantic spots in nature... The keeping [i.e., maintenance] of such a landscape will of course be less careful than in the graceful [i.e., Beautiful] school... The lawn may be less frequently mown, the edge of the walks less carefully trimmed, where the Picturesque prevails.

In short, a Picturesque landscape garden would be modeled on natural occurrences and be of a natural appearance. Still, the Picturesque design was not wilderness. Man’s presence was benign. The term “vernacular” had design implications, modeled on the ideal of yeomen farmers working agrarian pursuits in settled but primitive landscapes. A wilderness landscape garden that embraced connections to common and pioneer life. Downing suggested that the appeal of

the Picturesque was not for everyone:

Artists, we imagine, find somewhat of the same pleasure in studying wild landscape, where the very rocks and trees seem to struggle with the elements for foothold, that they do in contemplating the phases of the passion and instincts of human and animal life. The manifestation of [nature's] power is to many minds far more captivating than that of beauty.

While the Beautiful mode was often employed in the pre-Civil War era, and increasingly thereafter in the stampede to Victorian excess, it is the Picturesque that distinguished landscape gardening in the Hudson River Valley's Romantic period. Initially, A.J. Downing felt only one in a thousand would prefer the Picturesque, but by 1844 he claimed it was "beginning to be preferred." Even if public acceptance of the Beautiful was widespread, Downing called the Picturesque "appropriate" in the setting of the Hudson Valley, and as it was more practical to maintain, he thought the Picturesque should appeal to Americans.

Today the Romantic-period appeal of the picturesque aesthetic and Picturesque landscape gardening are recognized as precursors of other cultural achievements. Notably, the development of America's urban parks, beginning with Central Park in New York City (1858), was directly related to the earlier practice of landscape gardening in the Hudson River Valley. As an urban park, Central Park had its appropriate Beautiful components, but the inspiration behind its plan was Nature and the appeal of the picturesque aesthetic. Central Park, it was said, brought the Catskill Mountains to New York City. Picturesque design sensibilities were also factors in the early history of the American national and state park systems of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In turn, today's typical suburban home, with its reliance on mown lawns and shade trees overhanging a swing chair or a sundial or birdbath, owes its aesthetic foundation to Downing's definition of the Picturesque design mode.

Today, scholars have an easier time evaluating many of the Hudson Valley's historic landscape compositions because of Downing's period descriptions. Touring the valley ahead of the second edition of *Landscape Gardening*, published in 1844, Downing provided expert analysis and made the point again that it was "important and instructive... to examine, personally, country seats of a highly tasteful character." He visited numerous sites, "newly laid out, or greatly improved within a few years." Downing was often accompanied by the property owners, seeing the landscapes as they were intended. This was key to understanding the historical character of so ephemeral an art as landscape gardening. Downing understood the Hudson Valley's *genius loci*, describing it in intimate terms:

The natural scenery is of the finest character, and the places but a mile or two apart often possess, from the constantly varying forms of the water, shores, and distant hills, widely different kinds of home landscape and distant view. Standing in the grounds of some of the finest of these seats, the eye beholds only the soft foreground of smooth lawn, the rich groups of trees shutting out all neighboring tracts, the lake-like expanse of water, and, closing the distance, a fine range of wooded mountain. A residence here of but a hundred acres, so fortunately are these disposed by nature, seems to appropriate the whole scenery round, and to be a thousand in extent.

Downing's role was as a reporter and a critic, and to a lesser extent as a designer. He designed a number of landscapes, but in an age of limited media coverage, his actual works were little known to the public. Owing to the loss of Downing's office files and records, attribution of his work has been difficult. Even the facts of his professional life—his clients' names and billings for example—are fragmentary. Fortunately, one of Downing's best landscape garden designs is preserved at Springside in Poughkeepsie, a strikingly well-crafted design responsive to the owner's needs and the site's innate *genius loci*.

Downing's reporting and his few discernable design efforts enrich the study of landscape gardening on the Hudson. His writings outlined his interpretation of the basic elements and design tenets. These presentations were often broadly sketched, speaking of the universal design principles of form and expression, of unity, harmony, and variety. On the specifics of how to lay out grounds and select plantings, Downing recited a varied agenda, often influenced by his distant mentor, J.C. Loudon. In these recitations, the particularities of a site and the varied needs of owners were identified as critical factors. Myriad circumstances led to idiosyncratic results. This eclectic approach did not generate rigid design guidelines likely to inspire a "fashion" or amount to a "Downingesque style," as is sometimes claimed. Downing called his landscape gardening advice "my hints," representing much less than dogma. Typically in the nineteenth century, professional landscape gardeners worked as part of a long organic process, where the owner's myriad decisions decisively influenced the design scheme. In this way landscape gardening was an art reflective of varied owners and aspirations and influenced by the dynamics of broadly felt fashion, where professionals took on bit parts in the drama of man's interface with nature and design in the outdoors.

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Mohonk Mountain House, with Lake Mohonk in the foreground and the Catskills in the distance

Developing the Middle Landscape: The Shawangunk Carriage Roads

Peter Manning

The Shawangunk Mountains, well known for their soaring white cliffs, jewel-like “sky lakes,” and ridgetop pitch pines, offer a unique combination of recreational and educational opportunities that enhance our appreciation and understanding of the natural environment. Large portions of the Shawangunk Ridge have been preserved and public access is facilitated by the extensive network of carriage roads that have been artistically threaded into the landscape. The roads were developed by the Smiley family in association with the Mohonk and Minnewaska estates, founded in 1869 and 1879, respectively. The sensitive design intentions and incredible amounts of labor involved in the creation of these roads are often not realized by those who travel them. In this respect, they are a success. Their design reveals and highlights the beauty of the natural surroundings, blending seamlessly into the landscape. From the fine quality of their craftsmanship to the great vision of their designers, these roads have become an enduring legacy alive with the timeless character of the great mountains through which they traverse.

These roads, many constructed more than a century ago, have remained intact, offering uninterrupted participation in nature to countless visitors. The carriage roads are an intermediate device connecting people with their life-giving environment, both its ancient past and its present beauty. They promote “the kind of recreation which is not merely a form of escapism but a life renewing activity.”¹ In our modern world such places are becoming scarcer and are continually being sought by those seeking the rejuvenating pleasures of the great outdoors. The Shawangunk carriage roads are an outstanding work of landscape design deserving special attention, especially by those involved in the profession. Understanding the success of the carriage roads begins with the story of their creators—the Smileys.

The story of Mohonk begins, fittingly, with a horse and carriage excursion. In September 1869, Alfred H. Smiley and family planned a day’s journey to Paltz

Point (now Sky Top) from their home in Poughkeepsie, some ten miles east of the Shawangunk Ridge. Such outdoor excursions were typical for the Smileys:

When not busy with farming, Alfred delighted in taking his family on long walks and picnics in new places. He knew many interesting facts about nature, acquired over the years of study and teaching. Because of his interesting narrations, family and friends eagerly accompanied Smiley on his walks.²

As the picnic party neared the Shawangunk Mountains, they traveled over a rough road that eventually took them to Lake Mohonk at the base of Paltz Point. As Alfred first glimpsed the waters of Lake Mohonk and the white cliffs surrounding it, his journey became filled with “all the sensation of discovery” and he was overcome by “speechless wonder.”³ From the summit of Paltz Point, the Mohonk landscape became “a prospect for which he could imagine no bounds. He saw in that quick sweep of his eye the whole future of the place unfolding and forming.”⁴ This marks the inception of Alfred Smiley’s vision, a dream that would be realized during the next several decades. Soon after his journey, he summoned his twin brother Albert and informed him that the Lake Mohonk property was for sale. As soon as Albert saw the Mohonk landscape, he too “fell in love with the scenery and felt sure of its development.”⁵

Lake Mohonk and 300 surrounding acres were owned by John Stokes, proprietor of a small tavern on the lake that served alcohol, a practice that went against the Smileys’ Quaker beliefs. Stokes’s attitude toward the landscape contrasted sharply with that of the Smileys, which became evident when he and the twins journeyed to the summit of Paltz Point. Stokes is quoted by Albert as saying, “I suppose the Creator made everything for some use; but what in the world He ever made this pizen laurel for I can’t see. It never grows big enough for firewood, and the cattle won’t eat it.”⁶ Apparently Stokes “talked only of firewood, fodder and area.”⁷ On the other hand, the Smileys were taken by the beauty of the craggy wilderness, and as they ascended the mountain they were struck by the expansive, unfolding view. The magnificent panorama spanned from the Wallkill Valley in the east to the Hudson Highlands in the south, and on to the Rondout Valley, backed by the majestic Catskill Mountains in the west. This fundamental difference in the appreciation of nature between Stokes and the Smileys illustrates how the fate of a landscape often rides a delicate balance, teetering on the value systems placed on it by contemporary, yet markedly different, types of stewards. It also characterizes the paradoxical struggle of the American nation during the nineteenth century. While the hand of progress strove to transform the continent

into a productive landscape of agriculture and industry, a simultaneous current of aesthetic sensibility sought to preserve the disappearing wilderness.

Once Stokes and the Smileys settled on a price and a down payment, the Smileys decided to begin a hotel business to pay the debt.⁸ Alfred would manage the business, while Albert would remain in Providence, Rhode Island, during the winter months teaching at a Quaker school. (The twins communicated extensively throughout the winter; their preserved letters shed much insight into Mohonk's early development.) With this pivotal transfer of land, the Smileys became uniquely positioned to interpret this beautiful setting for the "summer-travelling public." Much of the success of their business depended on the aesthetic experience they offered their well-to-do guests, many of whom were from Philadelphia and New York. This urban clientele sought the peaceful benefits of nature that were absent in the city. They harbored romanticized notions of the country. The Smileys gradually created a landscape that resolved the opposition between wilderness and city, and the carriage roads became the primary medium through which this was accomplished. Through proper design, the roads provided safe and comfortable access to Mohonk's beauty, enabling visitors to enjoy it from the confines of a horse-drawn buggy. They answered the urban curiosity for nature by physically shaping a participatory experience of the landscape. The ongoing development of roads was consistent with the Smileys' belief that nature should be readily accessible to their guests. This invitation to explore the landscape as well as the hospitality of the Smiley brothers helped promote the reputation of Mohonk.

As the popularity of Mohonk grew, Alfred started a new resort business in 1879 at Lake Minnewaska, seven miles to the south. Here he situated Minnewaska Mountain House, later to be known as Cliff House, high above the lake's crystal-blue waters. It commanded spectacular views of the surrounding mountains and countryside. Road building at this new estate continued at a steady pace, enabling easy access to many of the wilder reaches of the Shawangunk Ridge. Carriage travel between the two resorts became a common practice as each locale offered a variety of breathtaking scenery. In 1880, Daniel Smiley, the twins' younger half-brother, assumed partnership with Albert in the Mohonk business. Daniel took charge of Mohonk operations about 1892 and was responsible for a great deal of the present-day Mohonk carriage road system. In 1887, Alfred opened a second mountain house, The Wildmere, at the north end of Lake Minnewaska. The construction of carriage roads at both resorts reached its peak around the turn of the twentieth century; by 1920 most of the present network was in place. On June 1, 1920, the Smileys' feelings toward the Mohonk landscape were expressed in an

address by Daniel Smiley at Mohonk's fiftieth anniversary:

In a very real sense we do not look upon ourselves as irresponsible owners, but as trustees or stewards with the mandate of administering the property for the recreation of visitors equally with ourselves.⁹

Today, in Mohonk's 141st year, this policy continues. The carriage roads and grounds are well-maintained, and in 1963 much of the original estate became part of the Mohonk Trust. Reorganized in 1980 as the Mohonk Preserve, this nonprofit organization has focused on preserving the natural landscape and "giving expression to the Smiley family's humanistic and environmental concerns." The preserve encourages research and education through active participation in the unique natural environment it protects. It maintains twenty-two miles of carriage roads within its nearly 7,000-acre landholding. Smiley Brothers, Inc., presently owns 2,200 acres, including the Mohonk Mountain House and adjacent properties where an additional twenty-two miles of carriage roads are maintained. At Minnewaska, which is owned and managed by New York State as a park, there are about forty miles of carriage roads. The roads are complemented by an extensive network of footpaths that skirt rocky ridgetops, overlook lakes, explore wooded ravines, and penetrate rock crevices. The entire carriage road and trail system is well illustrated in the Shawangunk Trail Maps issued by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference.

While there is no substitute for a journey along the carriage roads, our appreciation of this landscape is enhanced when we explore their design as an expression of the changing attitudes toward nature during the nineteenth century. In the early part of the century, the Hudson Valley landscape emerged as the cultural hearth where an initial fear of wilderness was gradually offset and redirected toward a deeper appreciation of nature. This appreciation was rooted in the wild character of the American landscape, but it also gained momentum as settlement increased, industry progressed, and wilderness became threatened. The development of Mohonk and Minnewaska certainly reflected these evolving attitudes; it took place as the national parks movement was emerging and the creation of urban parks was in full swing. These influences also contribute to our understanding of the extensive system of carriage roads, which today help protect and manage a regional ecosystem and provide recreational enjoyment for visitors on a grand scale.

A convenient starting point for understanding the shifting American attitudes toward the wilderness is an excerpt from an 1816 address delivered by DeWitt Clinton, governor of New York. The address was given at the opening

ceremonies of the New York-based Academy of Fine Arts.

And can there be a country in the world better calculated than ours to exercise and to exalt the imagination—to call into activity the creative powers of the mind, and to afford just views of the beautiful, the wonderful, and the sublime? Here Nature has conducted her operations on a magnificent scale: extensive and elevated mountains—lakes of oceanic size—rivers of prodigious magnitude—cataracts unequalled for volume of water—and boundless forests filled with wild beasts and savage men, and covered with the towering oak and the aspiring pine.

This wild, romantic, and awful scenery is calculated to produce a correspondent impression in the imagination—to elevate all the faculties of the mind, and to exalt all the feelings of the heart. But when cultivation has exerted its powers—when the forest is converted into fertile fields, blooming with beauty and smiling with plenty, then the mind of the artist derives a correspondent color from the scenes with which he is conversant: and the sublime, the wonderful, the ornamental and the beautiful thus become, in turn, familiar to his imagination.¹⁰

In 1816, the United States was a young nation, politically freed but still in search of a cultural identity. The vast, unexplored wilderness would help form that identity as it became linked with national pride. The appeal to the imagination, as advocated in this address, would soon be answered by a variety of American romantics.

In 1819, author Washington Irving created the character of Rip Van Winkle and cleverly grabbed the imagination of the American public. Many soon found themselves wanting to be like Rip Van Winkle, scampering up the Catskills' wild ravines. Their desire for an escape could be answered by the mountains that loomed majestically before them, stirring their curiosity and instilling a sense of prospective adventure. Whether or not this adventure involved a game of nine pins, as in the story, it had the potential to include an element of timelessness, transcending the common life in the valley. As the public sought a drink from Rip's famed flagon, shrewd businessmen took advantage of the increasing attention and migration to the Catskills.

Four years after the appearance of "Rip Van Winkle," the first in a series of mountain houses was being built in the Catskills. The Catskill Mountain House was perched high above the Hudson River on the eastern flank of the Catskills, and this location became a prime method of advertisement. Visitors to the new hotel found themselves next to North and South Lakes and within close prox-

imity to the spectacular falls on the Kaaterskill. The location was lauded by many, including DeWitt Clinton, who remarked on its scenery in his diary. He compared scenes of the Catskills with those of Europe and “indulged in a long reverie in which bears, wolves, wildcats, buffalo, and grizzly bears were mingled.”¹¹ The references to wild animals were most likely influenced by *The Pioneers*, an 1823 novel by James Fenimore Cooper. In the same manner as “Rip Van Winkle,” this story establishes a foothold in reality through the medium of landscape. The reader is lured into a fictional web woven by symbolic characters whose attitudes toward the wilderness are highly representational of the conflicting American situation. Cooper introduces Natty Bumppo, who appreciates wilderness beauty, which he sees as a blessing of God. Although Natty is pushed farther into the woods by the wave of progress, he does not retreat without capturing the heart of the reader. With four additional “Leatherstocking Tales” appearing by 1841, Natty Bumppo became a uniquely American folk hero who helped influence the American perception of wilderness by instilling it with a moral and aesthetic sense of worth. Like Rip before him, but to a much greater extent, Natty showed the public that the American wilderness was not only romantic and awesome, but something to be respected and explored.

As the imaginary leap of Rip Van Winkle became one step more real with Natty Bumppo, the American public became further primed for a direct experience of nature. This closer relationship was encouraged earlier by Irving when he said that “he...who would study nature in its wildness, and variety must plunge into the forest, must explore the glen, must stem the torrent and dare the precipice.”¹² And the concept of God in nature, present in the works of the English poets, was finding its way into American thought. William Cullen Bryant was among the first of the American poets to promote the holiness of nature. “A plunge into the forest” was quickly becoming a spiritual invitation. In the early 1820s, a young Thomas Cole accepted this invitation and began interpreting what he saw with his paintbrush. In 1825, Cole made his first trip up the Hudson River and soon after composed paintings that caught the attention of highly acclaimed members of the New York art community. Unlike the usual practice of painting the distant landscape from a comfortable position, Cole journeyed into the wilderness to sketch numerous scenes from dynamic viewpoints. He transformed his sketches into colorful paintings that delivered the viewer into nature, capturing the essence of a particular spot and conveying the excitement of being there. He enlivened the writings of Irving and Cooper by sketching scenes from “Rip Van Winkle” and painting a scene from *The Last of the Mohicans*. Cole was becoming an American pioneer, not just through his skill with a paintbrush and

his frequent experiences of nature, but in his writing. In his “Essay on American Scenery,” he wrote that the associations within the wilderness “are of God the creator—they are his undefiled works, and the mind is cast into the contemplation of eternal things.”¹³ Cole believed “it is of greatest importance for the painter always to have his mind upon Nature, as the star by which he is to steer to excellence in his art.”¹⁴ Like Cooper, Cole was concerned with the beauty of the American wilderness, but also with the effects of progress on that beauty. He incorporated various aspects of progress in many of his paintings, including the symbolic devices of tree stumps and railroads.

As painters of what was later to be known as the Hudson River School were exploring and recording the works of the Creator, the Transcendentalists, a philosophical group of writers in New England, were promoting a spiritual connection between man and God through nature. These men, most notably Ralph Waldo Emerson, described how the human soul was positioned between physical reality and universal truth. Nature became the house of worship and the vehicle enabling man’s soul to transcend its earthly presence through a spiritual meditation with God, which, in turn, enhanced the meaning of his own physical existence. To achieve transcendence, it was necessary to remove oneself from societal routines and submerge the inner being in the wilderness. Taking this advice to heart was Henry David Thoreau, who made his famous retreat to Walden Pond outside of Concord, Massachusetts, in 1845.

A year later, Thoreau’s journey to the desolate northern woods of Maine evoked darker moods. In *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Roderick Nash describes how “the wilderness of Maine shocked Thoreau,” and how Thoreau himself uses such terms as “grim and wild” and “savage and dreary” to describe his feeling of being “more lone than you can imagine.” The significance of this journey was that “instead of coming out of the woods with a deepened appreciation of the wilds, Thoreau felt a greater respect for civilization and realized the necessity of balance,”¹⁵ what Nash describes as a “combination of the good inherent in wilderness with the benefits of cultural refinement.”¹⁶ This state of equilibrium would exist as both physical place and mental construct. As place, this “middle landscape” would be located somewhere between the inner city and the desolate wilderness. In the mind, this counterpoise was both a dream of Arcadia dancing in the imagination and an achievable goal fixed in practical thought.

In many ways the writers, poets, and painters of the mid-nineteenth century hinted at this balanced situation through their own mediums. In 1850, Cooper remarked that the Leatherstocking represented “the better qualities of both conditions [civilization and savage life] without pushing either to extremes.”¹⁷ Many

painters of the time created various combinations of civilization and wilderness, technology and pastoralism, with George Inness's *The Lackawanna Valley* being one of the more richly symbolic examples. Inevitably, this union of civilization and wilderness would be resolved in the landscape, and the idea that it could be steered by proper design was rapidly becoming popular.

Landscape Gardening

By the mid-nineteenth century, the practice of landscape gardening in America was elevated to the status of an art form. Designing one's landscape was both an act of individual creativity and an expression of cultural identity. In essence, a landscape gardener, like a poet, writer, painter, or transcendentalist is communicating an experience of nature.

The foremost works of art that influenced landscape gardeners were paintings. Landscapes, like paintings, were based on principles of aesthetic theory which, once properly embodied in a composition, would serve as a "correct" example of art for the observer. Although the connection between landscape gardening and painting was expressed in America, it was rooted in the writings on aesthetic theory of eighteenth-century England and the related English School of landscape gardening. By studying paintings, or more precisely the principles of painting, the landscape gardener could develop the proper "taste" and become better equipped to "improve" the landscape. Two primary concepts, the *Beautiful* and the *Picturesque*, both derived from paintings, informed the practice of English landscape gardening. "Beautiful" landscapes were polished and marked primarily by smooth, flowing, curvilinear lines and shapes; the Picturesque was more random and chaotic, characterized by irregularity, deformity, and the ruggedness of nature itself.

Since many of the Picturesque principles were based on the existing qualities of nature, they would be pertinent in America, where cultural identity was being established within a wilderness setting. Unlike much of the English countryside, which promoted a refined feeling of idyllic pastoralism, America's expansive wilderness was a catalyst for exploration and adventure. The wilderness was a common denominator to all Americans, and if taste was to be a factor in its development, then taste had more of a democratic potential than in England, where it tended to foster a separation within society. Still, a taste for landscape gardening in America had to be cultivated. Although many significant examples of landscape design were present in America by 1840, they were relatively unknown to the general public. This absence of attention would change almost overnight with the landmark writings of Andrew Jackson Downing.

With the publication of his *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening Adapted to North America* in 1841, Downing placed landscape gardening at the forefront of the American consciousness. Recognizing that the rapidly developing enthusiasm of nature was unfolding on the landscape, he skillfully guided it with his aesthetic sensibility and expertise on the subject. He felt a responsibility toward the nation and gave new meaning to “taste” by developing its public potential in a manner that was both romantic and practical. The principles of landscape gardening could “be studied with advantage, even by him who has only three trees to plant for ornament; and we hope no one will think his grounds too small, to feel willing to add something to the general amount of beauty in the country.”¹⁸

Downing reinforced the distinctions between the Beautiful and the Picturesque (see image and caption, page 2) and noted that the Picturesque was becoming the preferred mode of expression in the American landscape. Since the existing character of place was quite prominent in much of the landscape, the Picturesque effect could be conveniently achieved in an economical manner with “so little art.” Downing advised citizens moving to the country to choose naturally wooded sites “which seem absolutely to court the finishing touches of the rural artist. Place a dwelling in such a site and it appropriates all nature’s handiwork to itself in a moment.”¹⁹

Downing always emphasized how crucial it was for the landscape gardener to have a deep understanding of the spirit of a place before undertaking improvements. Exemplary landscapes were cited by Downing to convey instances in which this relationship was convincingly exhibited through design. In particular, he lauded the estates along the Hudson for their masterly embodiment of design principles and encouraged his readers to “examine, personally,” these landscapes. To do so would be “far more convincing and instructive to most minds, than lessons taught in any other mode whatever.”²⁰

With his writing, Downing was encouraging the reader to experience the landscape firsthand, to spend a portion of one’s time outside, to take a journey. We admire Downing’s writing for its inspiring descriptions of his experiences, which prompted readers to have their own. For the landscape gardener, journeys become a way of life, rituals supplying a source for design. These journeys helped bridge the gap between theory and practice by enriching the design process. By visiting landscapes described by Downing, the landscape gardener’s ability to make design judgments is expanded. The landscape gardener aims not to mimic these designs but to develop his “own original powers to seize the subtle essence, the half disclosed idea involved in the finest portions of nature.”²¹ Instruction

comes through individual perception, igniting creativity, but it is grounded in the more universal experience of nature. The experiential landscape is the instructive medium that breathes life into theory. By submersing ourselves in nature, whether it is a designed rural landscape or the wilderness, we improve our interpretive skills. We recognize the inherent design in nature and realize that we, too, are a part of this grand scheme. Through this realization, we understand that our design of the landscape is not an intrusion, but a natural process emerging from the earth. This enables us to become more conversant in the various means of design communication and allows us to establish a greater appreciation of our connection with nature in the various situations that are presented. The “art” becomes the passing on of an experience. By becoming “one” with the landscape, we understand not how we design it, but how it designs us.

The Middle Landscape

The Shawangunk carriage roads can be considered a prime answer to Downing’s call “for a counterpoise to the great tendency towards constant change,”²² as they considerably expanded on many of Downing’s principles and elevated them to regional proportions. As public access to Mohonk was facilitated by the extension of the Wallkill Valley Railroad and the Mountain House was enlarged, the carriage road network expanded further into the mountains. And it is the sensitive design techniques employed by the Smileys that express the balance, experiential depth, and richness that characterize an ideal middle landscape. In many ways, the Shawangunks are an excellent example of the Picturesque middle landscape. Owing partly to the craggy nature of the terrain with its rugged appearance and irregular forms, it is also largely due to the fact that the primary designed object in the landscape is also the means of experience—the carriage road. The carriage roads provide the means for a constant unfolding of scenery, refreshing the eye and piquing the imagination. According to William Gilpin, an early aesthete on the Picturesque, “The first source of amusement to the Picturesque traveller is the pursuit of his object and searching after effects. This is the general intention of picturesque travel.”²³

The Shawangunk carriage roads are the medium for an amusing pursuit that reveals the natural environment while maintaining our connection to it. The *road* is an ideal integration of process and product and of time and space, as the journey and its changing course of events become unified within an ongoing experience of nature. The traveler quickly becomes immersed in nature since there is no requirement of deciphering the design. The traveler need not be a connoisseur of art but bring only his inherent capacity to experience beauty. A graceful curve in

a road might be considered an object of beauty threaded through the forest, but more importantly it is a segment of the traveler's experience.

As the urban interest in nature steadily increased in the decades following the Civil War, several hotel resorts sprang up in the Catskills, many of them boasting tremendous guest capacities. Despite the grand proportions of these resorts, they failed to offer the integrated experience of nature found in the rapidly growing network of Shawangunk carriage roads. The Smileys, unlike owners of many other resorts, deliberately created a diversion from the normal activities that occurred in the city. They did not serve alcohol or allow gambling and tailored the experience of their guests to be in direct contact with nature, reflecting their Quaker upbringing. By combining the intimacy of secluded carriage drives with the capacity of a large mountain house, they created a balanced experience that remains unique.

Conservation

The expansion of the carriage road system also enabled the Smileys to manage the forest and draw wood for furniture, bridges, fences, and heating. Although many wood-harvesting activities took place in the off-season, the Smileys did not hesitate to explain to their summer guests the benefits of both aesthetic and scientific forest activities on the property. According to Daniel Smiley (1907–1989), grandson of Daniel Smiley, “Mohonk forestry goes back almost to the beginning of scientific forest management in the United States.”²⁴ The era of Daniel Smiley's management, roughly 1880 to 1930, was a period of tremendous growth, and he was instrumental in carefully leading the expansion of the road system and of the Mountain House. As the concept and location of the middle landscape in America underwent a shift, Mohonk became a place where a balanced condition was fixed and sustained. In the 1920s, when the automobile began to change the face of the American landscape, Daniel Smiley banned its use because it threatened to disrupt Mohonk's peaceful setting. This marks an important point in the history of Mohonk since many state and national parks were being designed to accommodate the automobile. It was not that the car was totally destructive to the wilderness—certainly this invention made the landscape more accessible—but it was slowly changing the design of the landscape, and more importantly, the American relationship with nature. Today, Mohonk allows limited automobile traffic to and from the Mountain House, while the secluded character of the carriage roads has been preserved.

Landscape gardening was a way of life for Daniel, who combined the practical skill of an engineer with the taste of an artist in his passion for improving

the Mohonk landscape. He explored it on horseback, planning the carriage road system and supervising its construction. As Larry Burgess relates:

To keep a balance in life, he devoted much time to landscape gardening and the development of a subtle blend between natural scenery and the need to serve recreational purposes. As a result of these interests, he assembled an extensive and rare library on landscape gardening, forestry, and related subjects. This splendid collection guided the visual beauties of Mohonk which many visitors and guests credited to nature alone.²⁵

As Mohonk became increasingly popular for its labyrinth of paths and carriage roads, guests and visitors soon realized that fully exploring this landscape would require more than a day's journey. The prospect of untraveled carriage roads undoubtedly left a yearning for continuing one's quest for the Picturesque. The creation of more carriage roads contributed to the insatiable thirst for adventure and the ongoing pursuit of resolving curiosity. Building more roads reduced the effect of having a limited number of arteries for travel that seem like extensions of civilization into a wild territory.

By threading a finely knit system of roads into the landscape, the Smileys explored the intricacies of the Shawangunks, realizing the full potential of design. This expansion heightened the idea of the middle landscape to the point where it began to lose its designation as "middle" and assume a life of its own, becoming more of a center. For the traveler, Mohonk would begin to feel more like a separate place as he or she became continually suspended in the Picturesque experience, losing contact with the bustle of the Mountain House without being swallowed by the wilderness. Since navigation was left to the driver, this would allow time for reflection and ensure a safe journey; however, traveling alone on foot was a common activity of the more adventuresome. In either case, the fascination of getting lost for a better part of the day was characteristic of Picturesque pleasure. From the early years of road and trail development, the Smileys and their work crew understood this fascination. Through their design work, they have ensured that travelers can experience it for generations to come.

Design Features of the Carriage Roads

The design of the carriage roads can be understood as a tasteful compromise between adjusting to the natural features of the locality and creating a pleasurable traveling experience. These features physically shaped the configuration of roads and influenced aesthetic decisions. Although the Shawangunk environment is highly diverse and varies considerably within short distances, it is possible to

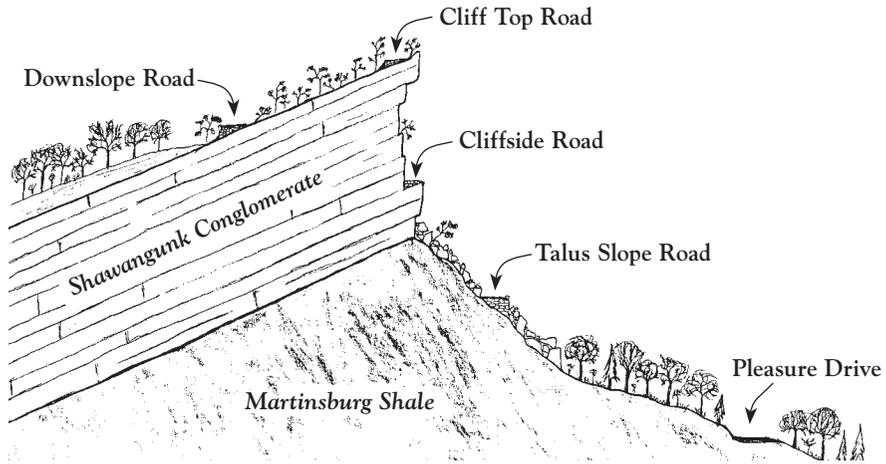


Figure 1: Carriage Road Typology, adapted from Snyder

isolate the prominent natural features of the mountains and develop an associated typology of roads. Figure 1 reveals five carriage-road types and provides prominent examples of each. Table 1 explores the contextual elements and construction considerations that shape and complement road design, tailoring it toward an aesthetic traveling experience.

When examining the important influence of topography on carriage-road design, it's important to note how varying combinations of grades and curves, serving both aesthetic and functional purposes, were skillfully blended into the landscape. Whenever possible, the existing terrain was preserved in order to minimize labor and construction costs and to preserve the existing character of place. It is no coincidence that many of the carriage roads either follow a consistent line of elevation or ascend and descend gradually. Level or near-level gradients facilitated the road-building process, made the traveling experience more pleasurable, and allowed the horses to travel with less difficulty. In addition to gradual gradients, the carriages needed a sufficient turning radius; and this meant including more sweeping curves in the roads' design. These curves provided a constant unfolding of scenery while continually changing the carriage traveler's point of view.

In addition to the five types of roads, the *Approach Road* is treated as a special category. The Smileys were constantly improving on the original roads they traveled over during their first visits to Paltz Point. The approach to the hotel was very important in creating a first impression for visitors and setting the tone for one's vacation. Alfred's letters to his brother reveal the meticulous attention given to the design of the approach road from the Wallkill Valley to the Mountain House. It underwent a series of re-routings. Eventually the Stage Road begun in 1902

Table 5.1
Description of Carriage Road Types

<i>Road Types</i>	<i>Natural Landscape Examples</i>	<i>Aesthetic Features</i>	<i>Features</i>	<i>Construction Issues</i>
Pleasure Drive	Oakwood Drive Cedar Drive Bonticou Road	Many ravines Mature hardwood forests	Near-level gradient Curvature: lengthening of journey, continual reorientation of view	Cut-and-fill method commonly used Many culverts, bridges, and roadside ditches installed for stream crossings and drainage
Clifftop Road	Upper Castle Point Road Upper Hamilton Point Road Sky Top Road Eagle Cliff Road Shale Slopes	Thin soils Conglomerate often exposed Low, sparse vegetation (commonly pitch pine, Scrub oak, low blueberry) Mixed forest (hardwoods and pitch pine, etc.) Conglomerate exposed along upper portions Occasional vista cuts	Pronounced curvature (switchbacks and road following cliff line): lengthening of journey, continual reorientation of view Many distant views, but also vista cuts	Blasting often necessary Shale transporting for road surfacing (presently, shale has eroded along Upper Castle and Hamilton resulting in sections of exposed conglomerate) Many switchbacks required Drainage: mostly surface (waterbreaks, roadside ditches)
Talus Slope Road	Undercliff Road Humpty Dumpty Road Forest Drive	Shale-conglomerate "contact zone" Sloping topography Huge conglomerate boulders Mixed forest (pitch pine more common along Humpty Dumpty, hardwoods along Upper Forest)	Distant views: vista cuts and open views "Picturesque" talus and crags Gentle gradient (Underchiff) Undulating gradient (Humpty Dumpty)	Blasting common Extensive moving of rock Many supporting walls Road curvature often impractical Surface drainage common: complemented by raised subbase
Cliffside Road	Lower Hamilton Point Road Castle Point Road (Battlement Terrace) Awosting Road (Litchfield Ledge)	Cliffs above and below road Wooded ravines also below road	Excitement of traveling through such an environment Numerous overlooks	Blasting often necessary Extensive supporting structures Drainage: natural and through constructed subbase
Downslope Road	Overcliff Road (straight section) Trapps Road (section paralleling Near Trapps)	Inclined slopes of conglomerate often exposed Mixed forest (hardwoods and pitch pine, etc.)	Distant views (especially Overcliff) Gentle gradient Extended line of sight along road	Minimal blasting Extensive supporting structures Drainage: culverts, waterbreaks, and natural-subject to erosion Road curvature impractical



COURTESY HUDSON RIVER VALLEY HERITAGE

Testimonial Gateway, from an historic postcard

would emerge as the primary route. Although it is no longer used, this road is known as Lenape Lane for part of its course, and it passes under the Testimonial Gateway, which is now a private residence. Made of Shawangunk conglomerate and dedicated in 1908, this gateway was erected to commemorate the fiftieth wedding anniversary of Albert and Eliza Smiley and to mark the entrance to the Mohonk estate. West of the gateway, the road exhibits notable design features that mark its prominence as the primary approach to the mountain. These features include a broader width, an allee of pin oaks, and a separation of grade with Butterville Road, a public road open to automobile traffic.

This separation of grades reflects the Smileys' concern for creating a continuous traveling experience, and it is an important technique of landscape designers. Albert expressed his plans for this road at the groundbreaking ceremony for the gateway, one year prior to the dedication. His words reveal how each grade separation becomes a crucial link that supports the entire system.

The building of roads, making all parts of the estate accessible also affords me great pleasure. We have already more than fifty miles and we plan to construct a very beautiful one from the new gateway to the hotel, following for more than a mile the course of a charming brook. In order to make our private roads continuous we already have five bridges over the public road and extensions now planned will make it necessary to build two more. The estate is continuous, adjoining Minnewaska property on one end and reaching seven miles to a point far beyond Guyot's Hill. We have tried to make every part of it available for the enjoyment of our guests and friends.²⁶



PHOTO BY FRANK TKAC, COURTESY OF MOHONK PRESERVE

View of the Trapps from Old Minnewaska Carriage Road, Mohonk Preserve



PHOTO BY FRANK TKAC, COURTESY OF MOHONK PRESERVE

Hikers on Overcliff Carriage Road, Mohonk Preserve



PHOTO BY FRANK TKAC, COURTESY OF MOHONK PRESERVE

Undercliff Carriage Road, Mohonk Preserve



PHOTO BY FRANK TKAC, COURTESY OF MOHONK PRESERVE

Undercliff Carriage Road, Mohonk Preserve

Although some of the overpasses are no longer active, the Trapps Bridge (passing over US 44/55) and the bridge over Mountain Rest Road are absolutely critical in retaining the continuity of the entire (Mohonk-Minnewaska) carriage road system.

In addition to the physical design of the approach road, the Smileys were constantly extending their hospitality and looking for ways to create a more seamless approach for their guests.

Prospects, Gazebos, and Vista Cuts

On that September day in 1869, it was the distant promontory of Paltz Point that guided Alfred Smiley and family to their destination. Soon, the prospect from this point helped convince Alfred and Albert of the property's development potential. The term "prospect" appears frequently in the picturesque travel literature of eighteenth-century England and was considered a highly desirable feature to encounter in the landscape. A prospect is an unobstructed view of the distant landscape, also called a bird's-eye view and often extending 360 degrees. The prospect tower or high point, being above the individual picturesque scenes, was often viewed by the traveler during a journey, serving as a beacon and suggesting an appealing destination. Once reached, the traveler could look back upon the places



JIM SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY

A.K. Smiley Memorial Tower, Paltz Point

he had traveled, all of which became united within this one encompassing view. Prospects and their potential were quickly recognized by the Smileys. All three mountain houses, for instance, were sited so that they would overlook the lake on one side while creating excellent prospects on the other. And numerous other promontories, such as Eagle Cliff and Castle Point, were eventually woven into the carriage road system. But Paltz Point, renamed Sky Top in the Indian tradition, was the first to be developed and it always has remained the most popular.

Traveling connections between the Mountain House and Sky Top received special attention since accessibility to the summit and its views would increase Mohonk's popularity. In early 1871, Alfred explored possible routes for a road to the summit and then wrote to his brother, including a sketch of a proposed road with notes on gradients, blasting, and a switchback. This road was quickly constructed and then improved over the next several years, until it was rebuilt in 1881. It was hailed as one of the most beautifully engineered roads of its time, with graceful curves swirling about the summit, constantly reorienting the viewer's perspective and celebrating the many distant views. As one reviewer expressed in 1901:

It is doubtful if anywhere in America there is any example so nearly approaching the superb road construction of Switzerland, or anywhere a more extensive and satisfactory view of valley and mountain.²⁷

Alfred's letters also reveal the importance of roads as fire breaks, citing an instance in which "the whole of Sky Top would have burnt over"²⁸ had it not been for an old wood road. Roads not only served to transport water, but the switchbacks and curves contributed to a road pattern that is almost parallel at points, reinforcing firefighting efforts. In these ways, the carriage roads protect what they were built to explore. There are two reservoirs along the carriage road to Sky Top, one the result of stone quarried for the construction of the A.K. Smiley Memorial Tower (1923). This irregularly shaped reservoir is also a reflection pool for the tower, which itself served for decades as an observatory for fire rangers.

Today, the A.K. Smiley Memorial Tower is one of the most well-known landmarks in the Mid-Hudson Region; on a clear day, it can be seen from miles around. This tower is the fourth observation structure to occupy this location. The evolution of these towers provides insight into the design and development of the Mohonk landscape. The first structure was erected only two months after Albert purchased the original property. In an early letter to his brother, Alfred describes how careful positioning of this observatory and the cutting of trees enables the structure to be seen from the Mountain House. This passage is one of



Thuston Rock Summer House overlooking Shawangunk Ridge

the earliest references to creating a viewshed at Mohonk—a technique of landscape gardening that would be used extensively along the carriage roads. Prior to the construction of the present-day A.K. Smiley Memorial Tower, a trial structure was placed at the location. It was carefully viewed from several distant vantage points, including the Testimonial Gateway, before the final position was secured. The view of the Mountain House from Sky Top was to become one of the most significant in Mohonk's history. It was photographed frequently for advertising and appears in the old Mountain House letterhead. As this view was kept open over the years, it revealed the architectural developments of the Mountain House. With the blue Catskills as a backdrop, the hotel slowly grew into its current, eclectic design. This view was reciprocal: as guests gazed up at the tower, it became an invitation to journey to the summit. As the carriage roads were developed, Sky Top became visible from numerous distant locations within the carriage road system. Many of these points were enhanced through vista-cutting and marked with gazebos.

Gazebos

For anyone who has visited Mohonk, rustic gazebos are a familiar sight throughout the landscape. Also known as summer houses, or covered seats, there were 157 of these structures on the Mohonk property in 1917.²⁹ At Minnewaska, as many as 170 were said to exist.³⁰

Gazebos also occupy the middle landscape and are pivotal structures in the traveler's experience. They can be thought of as extensions of the Mountain House, satellites of the porch nestled in the woods. In form, they evoke an architectural feel, while the materials themselves have been gathered from the woods and left in their raw state. In this sense, their design connects nature and architecture through art. Their placement along roads, often at the cliff's edge, connects the safe and familiar terrain of the road with the wilder lands beyond, and their provision of seating and shelter invites a pause in one's journey. Gazebos are excellent examples of the landscape dialectics of *inside-outside*, *prospect-refuge*, and *protected-exposed*.³¹ Like the profusion of roads in the landscape, the large number of gazebos expands the possibilities of adventure while simultaneously providing for a greater capacity of guests.



Lakeside Gazebo

The craft of gazebo construction would become a long-standing tradition at Mohonk, and this art form was passed along only after a period of apprenticeship. The continuance of tradition at Mohonk was and continues to be a key to the business's success. The attention to detail found in the rustic furniture, gazebos, and bridges is very much influenced through the owners' appreciation of the surrounding landscape and the ability to communicate this feel to visitors. In describing how transfer of management was passed from Albert to Daniel Smiley, Larry Burgess reminds us how journeys on the property were an integral component of the landscape design process.

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“The walks turned out to be more than pleasant interludes. Albert was testing Daniel to see whether his younger brother had the taste to lay out a road or spot a scenic view.”³²

Over the years, the diverse architecture of gazebos has been the result of many influences. An assortment of images, including many from Japanese and English sources, exists in the libraries at Mohonk. In the 1920s and 1930s, “Summerhouse Contests” were held.³³ One double-story summer house in the Mohonk Gardens was modeled directly after a drawing in Downing’s *Treatise*. Today, the tasks of gazebo construction and repair remain in the hands of Mohonk Preserve and Mountain House staffs, with the Mohonk Barn Museum serving as the primary workshop.

In the Shawangunks, the abundance of interesting spots, coupled with the extensive miles of carriage roads and paths, opened up countless possibilities for locating gazebos. While some are precariously perched on outcrops in the vicinity of crevices and talus slopes, others are nestled in the quieter recesses of Mohonk paths. Lakefront locations at both resorts, especially in the past, saw the greatest concentration of gazebos. The profusion of these structures within close proximity of the Mountain Houses “carried” the architecture into the landscape, enticing the traveler to become closer to nature. The most common location of gazebos along the carriage roads are the cliffside spots offering distant views. Like the prospect tower, their location combines many benefits. As Downing relates:

If there are certain points from which are obtained agreeable prospects or extensive views of the surrounding country, a seat by designating those points and by affording us a convenient mode of enjoying them, has a double recommendation to our minds.³⁴



JIM SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY

Two-story gazebo in the garden of the Mohonk Mountain House



Mohonk Mountain House, Lake Mohonk, and Paltz Point

Vistas

I have treated this property, the result of seventy-six purchases, as a landscape artist does his canvas, only my canvas covers seven square acres.

—Albert K. Smiley, 1907³⁵

Vistas or vista cuts are one of the closest connections between painting and landscape gardening. Like a landscape painter, the landscape gardener works with the principles of light, shade, depth, framing, and unity of composition to create a pleasing, framed scene. Vista cuts along the carriage roads are a significant component of “aesthetic forestry” practiced by the Smileys. In the earlier years of Mohonk, trees were planted to help create vistas, as Albert suggested, “to give seclusion to a too open view.”³⁶ Over the years, though, the many picturesque views were formed and maintained by the removal of trees. This was a delicate process, involving careful attention. Unlike on the painter’s canvas, mistakes are not easily rectified.

Picturesque views were integral to the sequence of the traveling experience as well as for the advertising of Mohonk. With the availability of historical images of views and the knowledge of experienced crews, the traditional art of vista-cutting was carried out. Considered a “sacred duty,”³⁷ vista-cutting involves an interactive process. While one person stands at the observation point, others occupy positions in the viewshed and shake individual trees or limbs. The observer calls out

which trees are to be removed and which are to be saved. This duty respects the traditional concerns of the Smileys by maintaining the vistas, and it engages the participants in an active design process. By working both sides of a vista, part of the exchange associated with the experience of place can be visually adjusted by the designers, who strike a balance between the traveler’s aesthetic point of view and the natural composition of the site.

Reconstruction

The quality of construction in the carriage roads is superb as evidenced by their longevity and relatively low maintenance required. Undercliff Road, for instance, is an exceptionally well-crafted example of road building. In addition to the heightened engineering skill of the Smileys, most of the special care exhibited in such projects can be attributed to the stoneworkers who lived in the Shawangunk region. The presence of an indigenous stonecutting industry greatly influenced the skills of this local labor force, while benefiting the Smileys and greatly enhancing the quality of road construction.

An awareness of the various construction processes contributes to a deeper appreciation of the roads by giving a sense of how the existing environment was reworked and given new expression. The various built features of the roads—the bridges, supporting walls, altered rock outcrops—become touch-



PHOTO COURTESY MOHONK MOUNTAIN HOUSE ARCHIVES

Widening of Garden Road



Construction of Undercliff Road

stones connecting us with another time. This was a time when work crews, without bulldozers and backhoes, slowly transformed rocky mountainsides into expertly graded roadbeds. A visit to the Mohonk Barn Museum assists one's journey into this past, as a variety of hand tools and horse-drawn equipment, although resting peacefully, helps bring to life the days of road building. Further investigation at the Preserve's Daniel Smiley Research Center and the Mountain House archives, reveals

site-specific images that give a sense of what might be accomplished in a single day. Imagining these bygone times, we begin to realize the magnitude of the road-building process and we develop a respect for those who put long years of hard manual labor into the construction of what is now a regional system of preserved carriage roads. These road builders not only paved the way for wealthy carriage travelers in search of pleasing vistas, but they physically built a legacy that has been inherited by succeeding generations.

As travelers of today delve into this past, we might wonder what it was like to work on a Shawangunk road crew. While we cannot experience the exact feeling of working day in and day out, wielding heavy tools and using horse-drawn equipment, we can develop an appreciation for the intensity of the construction process. In a similar way, these turn-of-the-century road crews might have wondered who would be traveling these roads in the future. While they probably did not imagine a bustling Undercliff Road awash with brightly clad mountain climbers, bikers, and hikers some 100 years later, they must have had some sense of how their hard work would transfer into an enjoyable experience for many a future traveler. Our imaginative reconstruction of the past and the road builders' curiosity of the future, although a century apart, are rooted in the Shawangunk landscape and connected through the design of the place.

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PHOTO BY FRANKTYAC, COURTESY OF MOHONK PRESERVE

Undercliff Carriage Road, Mohonk Preserve

The Mohonk Preserve

The Hudson River Valley is recognized nationwide for playing host to some of America's most beautiful historic sites and scenic wonders. It should come as no surprise, then, that this small section of the Northeast contains precious wildlife preserves that protect some of the region's rare natural wonders while providing educational and recreational opportunities for locals and visitors alike. The Mohonk Nature Preserve and the Mohonk Mountain House, located in the Shawangunk Mountains just fifteen miles west of Poughkeepsie, have a long history of conservation, education, and recreation.

Alfred and Albert Smiley first purchased Mohonk as a 280-acre parcel in 1869 with hopes of preserving it by creating a mountainside resort. The Mohonk Mountain House was a success, and continues to operate today, at the northern end of the Preserve. The Smiley family eventually formed the Mohonk Trust to manage designated conservation and recreation areas. Today, the Mohonk Preserve is home to approximately 7,000 acres of pristine natural habitat. Each year, Preserve staff work to maintain its function as a wildlife preserve as well as a place where over 150,000 visitors annually hike, bike, and come to explore; they closely monitor land erosion patterns as well as plant and wildlife populations.

Every few years, park planners re-direct trails to help maintain the integrity of the land and keep a healthy balance between visitors and nature.

The staff also is responsible for maintaining cultural relics: century-old carriage roads, gazebos, and bridges. They maintain and interpret the remains of the Trapps hamlet, a mountain community populated by subsistence farmers, berry pickers, and barrel- and millstone-makers. Only the Van Leuven cabin remains, but Preserve staff interpret the entire community who lived and worked in this secluded mountain region by using nearby ruins and archaeological finds as well.

The Mohonk Preserve is committed to conservation; they work year-round to protect and monitor the many caves, ravines, cliff faces, streams, swamps, and pine barrens that house countless rare or endangered species of plant and animal life. These ecosystems provide year-round homes to many types of animals and key stopping points in the migration of several bird species. The Preserve partners with other public and private organizations to help maintain the vast expanse of land in the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Program. It also participates in the Shawangunk Ridge Coalition, which is active in educating nearby residents and businesses on how to contribute to the conservation of nature in the area.

Mohonk Preserve boasts an impressive educational program that focuses on parkland and includes an outreach component that targets area schools and camps. Established in 1994, the Nature Access Program has been instrumental in organizing field studies for school-age children, tours for disabled persons, summer camps, and even aid in designing rehabilitation programs for patients in need of both physical and psychological therapy. The outreach program operates in grades K-12, and meets New York State Learning Standards in Health, Social Studies, Math, Science, and Technology. These programs help children understand specific aspects of nature and serve as the basis for building a respectful relationship with the environment.

Finally, the Preserve is committed to research. The research center was established in 1980 in honor of Daniel Smiley, who was co-founder of the Preserve as well as an influential natural scientist. The center engages research associates from across the country, seeking to use the Preserve as a basis for their studies. It also is home to the oldest weather station in New York. In past years, research has focused on patterns of amphibian breeding, peregrine falcon nesting, bird counts and surveys, deer management, insect studies, and studies concerning plant life and invasive species. They offer internship opportunities, as well as volunteer positions for those seeking to get involved in the research constantly being conducted there.



COURTESY OF HUDSON RIVER VALLEY HERITAGE

Cliffside trail, from an historic postcard

The Mohonk Nature Preserve conducts one of New York's largest and most successful conservation programs, and has done so for more than 100 years. It has been instrumental in providing recreation to hundreds of thousands of nature lovers without jeopardizing the integrity of the park's natural function. Mohonk serves to protect, educate, research, and entertain, and has done so flawlessly since its establishment in the mid-1800s. It remains one of the country's most pristine natural preserves, and will continue to serve the needs of all those who take an interest in its beauty, as well as to inform our understanding of the natural world.

The Mohonk Nature Preserve is open 365 days a year from sunrise to sunset. Day passes for hikers, bikers, and climbers may be purchased at the visitor's center from 9-5 p.m. for \$10-\$15; an annual membership grants visitors free access. For more information on visiting the Preserve, visit www.mohonkpreserve.org. For more information on the Mohonk Mountain House, please visit www.mohonk.com.

—Alyssa Hewitt, Marist '10



LARRY WHEELOCK, APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY

Bear Mountain, New York Appalachian Trail Relocation Project

Benton MacKaye's "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning" was first published in the Journal of the American Institute of Architects 9 in October 1921. This led to the formation of The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) in 1925 to carry out MacKaye's vision. Countless volunteers answered the call as well, and the trail was completed in 1937.

An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning

Benton MacKaye

Something has been going on these past few strenuous years which, in the din of war and general upheaval, has been somewhat lost from the public mind. It is the slow quiet development of the recreational camp. It is something neither urban nor rural. It escapes the hecticness of the one, and the loneliness of the other. And it escapes also the common curse of both—the high powered tension of the economic scramble. All communities face an “economic” problem, but in different ways. The camp faces it through cooperation and mutual helpfulness, the others through competition and mutual fleecing.

We civilized ones also, whether urban or rural, are potentially helpless as canaries in a cage. The ability to cope with nature directly—unshielded by the weakening wall of civilization—is one of the admitted needs of modern times. It is the goal of the “scouting” movement. Not that we want to return to the plights of our Paleolithic ancestors. We want the strength of progress without its punitiveness. We want its conveniences without its fopperies. The ability to sleep and cook in the open is a good step forward. But “scouting” should not stop there. This is but a feint step from our canary bird existence. It should strike far deeper than this. We should seek the ability not only to cook food but to raise food with less aid—and less hindrance—from the complexities of commerce. And this is becoming daily of increasing practical importance. Scouting, then, has its vital connection with the problem of living.

A New Approach to the Problem of Living

The problem of living is at bottom an economic one. And this alone is bad enough, even in a period of so-called “normalcy.” But living has been considerably complicated of late in various ways—by war, by questions of personal liberty, and

by “menaces” of one kind or another. There have been created bitter antagonisms. We are undergoing also the bad combination of high prices and unemployment. This situation is world wide—the result of a world-wide war.

It is no purpose of this little article to indulge in coping with any of these big questions. The nearest we come to such effrontery is to suggest more comfortable seats and more fresh air for those who have to consider them. A great professor once said that “optimism is oxygen.” Are we getting all the “oxygen” we might for the big tasks before us?

“Let us wait,” we are told, “till we solve this cursed labor problem. Then we’ll have the leisure to do great things.”

But suppose that while we wait the chance for doing them is passed?

It goes without saying that we should work upon the labor problem. Not just the matter of “capital and labor” but the *real* labor problem—how to reduce the day’s drudgery. The toil and chore of life should, as labor saving devices increase, form a diminishing proportion of the average day and year. Leisure and the higher pursuits will thereby come to form an increasing portion of our lives.

But will leisure mean something “higher”? Here is a question indeed. The coming of leisure in itself will create its own problem. As the problem of labor “solves,” that of leisure arises. There seems to be no escape from problems. We have neglected to improve the leisure which should be ours as a result of replacing stone and bronze with iron and steam. Very likely we have been cheated out of the bulk of this leisure. The efficiency of modern industry has been placed at 25 percent of its reasonable possibilities. This may be too low or too high. But the leisure that we do succeed in getting—is this developed to an efficiency much higher?

The customary approach to the problem of living relates to work rather than play. Can we increase the efficiency of our *working* time? Can we solve the problem of labor? If so we can widen the opportunities for leisure. The new approach reverses this mental process. Can we increase the efficiency of our *spare* time? Can we develop opportunities for leisure as an aid in solving the problem of labor?

An Undeveloped Power—Our Spare Time

How much spare time have we, and how much power does it represent?

The great body of working people—the industrial workers, the farmers, and the housewives—have no allotted spare time or “vacations.” The business clerk usually gets two weeks’ leave, with pay, each year. The U.S. Government clerk gets thirty days. The business man is likely to give himself two weeks or a month. Farmers can get off for a week or more at a time by doubling up on one another’s chores. Housewives might do likewise.

As to the industrial worker—in mine or factory—his average “vacation” is all too long. For it is “leave of absence *without* pay.” According to recent official figures the average industrial worker in the United States, during normal times, is employed about four fifths of the time—say 42 weeks in the year. The other ten weeks he is employed in seeking employment.

The proportionate time for true leisure of the average adult American appears, then, to be meager indeed. But a goodly portion have (or take) about two weeks in the year. The industrial worker during the estimated ten weeks between jobs must of course go on eating and living. His savings may enable him to do this without undue worry. He could, if he felt he could spare the time from job hunting, and if suitable facilities were provided, take two weeks of his ten on a real vacation. In one way or another, therefore, the average adult in this country could devote each year a period of about two weeks in doing the things of his own choice.

Here is enormous undeveloped power—the spare time of our population. Suppose just one percent of it were focused upon one particular job, such as increasing the facilities for the outdoor community life. This would be more than a million people, representing over two million weeks a year. It would be equivalent to 40,000 persons steadily on the job.

A Strategic Camping Base—The Appalachian Skyline

Where might this imposing force lay out its strategic camping ground?

Camping grounds, of course, require wild lands. These in America are fortunately still available. They are in every main region of the country. They are the undeveloped or under-developed areas. Except in the Central States, the wild lands now remaining are for the most part among the mountain ranges—the Sierras, the Cascades and the Rocky Mountains of the West and the Appalachian Mountains of the East.

Extensive national playgrounds have been reserved in various parts of the country for use by the people for camping and various kindred purposes. Most of these are in the West where Uncle Sam’s public lands were located. They are in the Yosemite, the Yellowstone, and many other National Parks—covering about six million acres in all. Splendid work has been accomplished in fitting these Parks for use. The National Forests, covering about 130 million acres—chiefly in the West—are also equipped for public recreation purposes.

A great public service has been started in these Parks and Forests in the field of outdoor life. They have been called “playgrounds of the people.” This they are for the Western people—and for those in the East who can afford time and funds for an extended trip in a Pullman car. But camping grounds, to be of the most

use to the people, should be as near as possible to the center of population. And this is in the East.

It fortunately happens that we have throughout the most densely populated portions of the United States a fairly continuous belt of under-developed lands. These are contained in the several ranges which form the Appalachian chain of mountains. Several National Forests have been purchased in this belt. These mountains, in several ways rivaling the western scenery, are within a day's ride from centers containing more than half the population of the United States. The region spans the climate of New England and the cotton belt; it contains the crops and the people of the North and the South.

The skyline along the top of the main divides and ridges of the Appalachians would overlook a mighty part of the nation's activities. The rugged lands of this skyline would form a camping base strategic in the country's work and play.

Let us assume the existence of a giant standing high on the skyline along these mountain ridges, his head just scraping the floating clouds. What would he see from this skyline as he strode along its length from north to south?

Starting out from Mt. Washington, the highest point in the northeast, his horizon takes in one of the original happy hunting grounds of America—the “Northwoods,” a country of pointed firs extending from the lakes and rivers of northern Maine to those of the Adirondacks. Stepping across the Green Mountains and the Berkshires to the Catskills, he gets his first view of the crowded east—a chain of smoky bee-hive cities extending from Boston to Washington and containing a third of the population of the Appalachian drained area. Bridging the Delaware Water Gap and the Susquehanna on the picturesque Allegheny folds across Pennsylvania he notes more smoky columns—the big plants between Scranton and Pittsburgh that get out the basic stuff of modern industry—iron and coal. In relieving contrast he steps across the Potomac near Harpers Ferry and pushes through into the wooded wilderness of the southern Appalachians where he finds preserved much of the primal aspects of the days of Daniel Boone. Here he finds, over on the Monongahela side the black coal of bituminous and the white coal of water power. He proceeds along the great divide of the upper Ohio and sees flowing to waste, sometimes in terrifying floods, waters capable of generating untold hydro-electric energy and of bringing navigation to many a lower stream. He looks over the Natural Bridge and out across the battle fields around Appomattox. He finds himself finally in the midst of the great Carolina hardwood belt. Resting now on the top of Mt. Mitchell, highest point east of the Rockies, he counts up on his big long fingers the opportunities which yet await development along the skyline he has passed.

First, he notes the opportunities for recreation. Throughout the Southern Appalachians, throughout the Northwoods, and even through the Alleghanies that wind their way among the smoky industrial towns of Pennsylvania, he recollects vast areas of secluded forests, pastoral lands, and water courses, which, with proper facilities and protection, could be made to serve as the breath of a real life for the toilers in the bee-hive cities along the Atlantic seaboard and elsewhere.

Second, he notes the possibilities for health and recuperation. The oxygen in the mountain air along the Appalachian skyline is a natural resource (and a national resource) that radiates to the heavens its enormous health-giving powers with only a fraction of a percent utilized for human rehabilitation. Here is a resource that could save thousands of lives. The sufferers of tuberculosis, anemia and insanity go through the whole strata of human society. Most of them are helpless, even those economically well off. They occur in the cities and right in the skyline belt. For the farmers, and especially the wives of farmers, are by no means escaping the grinding-down process of our modern life.

Most sanitariums now established are perfectly useless to those afflicted with mental disease—the most terrible, usually, of any disease. Many of these sufferers could be cured. But not merely by “treatment.” They need acres not medicine. Thousands of acres of this mountain land should be devoted to them with whole communities planned and equipped for their cure.

Next after the opportunities for recreation and recuperation our giant counts off, as a third big resource, the opportunities in the Appalachian belt for employment on the land. This brings up a need that is becoming urgent—the redistribution of our population, which grows more and more top heavy.

The rural population of the United States, and of the Eastern States adjacent to the Appalachians, has now dipped below the urban. For the whole country has fallen from 60 per cent of the total in 1900 to 49 per cent in 1920: for the Eastern States it has fallen, during this period, from 55 per cent to 45 per cent. Meantime the per capita area of improved farmland has dropped, in the Eastern States, from 3.35 acres to 2.43 acres. This is a shrinkage of nearly 28 percent in 20 years: in the States from Maine to Pennsylvania the shrinkage has been 40 per cent.

There are in the Appalachian belt probably 25 million acres of grazing and agricultural land awaiting development. Here is room for a whole new rural population. Here is an opportunity—if only the way can be found—for that counter migration from city to country that has so long been prayed for. But our giant in pondering on this resource is discerning enough to know that its utilization is going to depend upon some new deal in our agricultural system. This he knows if he has ever stooped down and gazed in the sunken eyes either of the Carolina

“cracker” or of the Green Mountain “hayseed.”

Forest land as well as agricultural might prove an opportunity for steady employment in the open. But this again depends upon a new deal. Forestry must replace timber devastation and its consequent hap-hazard employment. And this the giant knows if he has looked into the rugged face of the homeless “don’t care a damn” lumberjack of the Northwoods. Such are the outlooks—such the opportunities—seen by a discerning spirit from the Appalachian skyline.



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK ARCHIVES, EARLY TRAIL CONSTRUCTION COLLECTION

Appalachian Trail construction in Shenandoah National Park, Mary’s Rock Trail hikers on completed trail

Possibilities in the New Approach

Let’s put up now to the wise and trained observer the particular question before us. What are the possibilities in the new approach to the problem of living? Would the development of the outdoor community life—as an offset and relief from the various shackles of commercial civilization—be practicable and worthwhile? From the experience of observations and thoughts along the sky-line here is a possible answer: there are several possible gains from such an approach.

First, there would be the “oxygen” that makes for a sensible optimism. Two weeks spent in the real open—right now, this year and next—would be a little real living for thousands of people which they would be sure of getting before they died. They would get a little fun as they went along regardless of problems being “solved.” This would not damage the problems and it would help the folks.

Next, there would be perspective. Life for two weeks on the mountain top would show up many things about life during the other fifty weeks down below. The latter could be viewed as a whole—away from its heat, and sweat, and irritations. There would be a chance to catch a breath, to study the dynamic forces of nature and the possibilities of shifting to them the burdens now carried on the backs of men. The reposeful study of these forces should provide a broad gauged, enlightened approach to the problems of industry. Industry would come to be seen in its true perspective—as a means in life and not as an end in itself. The actual partaking of the recreative and non-industrial life—systematically by the people and not spasmodically by a few—should emphasize the distinction between it and the industrial life. It should stimulate the quest for enlarging the one and reducing

the other. It should put new zest in the labor movement. Life and study of this kind should emphasize the need of going to the roots of industrial questions and of avoiding superficial thinking and rash action. The problems of the farmer, the coal miner, and the lumberjack could be studied intimately and with minimum partiality. Such an approach should bring the poise that goes with understanding.

Finally, these would be new clues to constructive solutions. The organization of the cooperative camping life would tend to draw people out of the cities. Coming as visitors, they would be loath to return. They would become desirous of settling down in the country—to *work* in the open as well as *play*. The various camps would require food. Why not raise food, as well as consume it, on the cooperative plan? Food and farm camps should come about as a natural sequence. Timber also is required. Permanent small scale operations should be encouraged in the various Appalachian National Forests. The government now claims this as a part of its forest policy. The camping life would stimulate forestry as well as a better agriculture. Employment in both would tend to become enlarged.

How far these tendencies would go the wisest observer of course can not tell. They would have to be worked out step by step. But the tendencies at least would be established. They would be cutting channels leading to constructive achievement in the problem of living: they would be cutting across those now leading to destructive blindness.

A Project for Development

It looks, then, as if it might be worth while to devote some energy at least to working out a better utilization of our spare time. The spare time for one per cent of our population would be equivalent, as above reckoned, to the continuous activity of some 40,000 persons. If these people were on the skyline, and kept their eyes open, they would see the things that the giant could see. Indeed this force of 40,000 would be a giant in itself. It could walk the skyline and develop its various opportunities. And this is the job that we propose: a project to develop the opportunities—for recreation, recuperation, and employment—in the region of the Appalachian skyline. The project is one for a series of recreational communities throughout the Appalachian chain of mountains from New England to Georgia, these to be connected by a walking trail. Its purpose is to establish a base for a more extensive and systematic development of outdoors community life. It is a project in housing and community architecture.

No scheme is proposed in this particular article for organizing or financing this project. Organizing is a matter of detail to be carefully worked out. Financing depends on local public interest in the various localities affected.

There are four chief features of the Appalachian project:

I. THE TRAIL

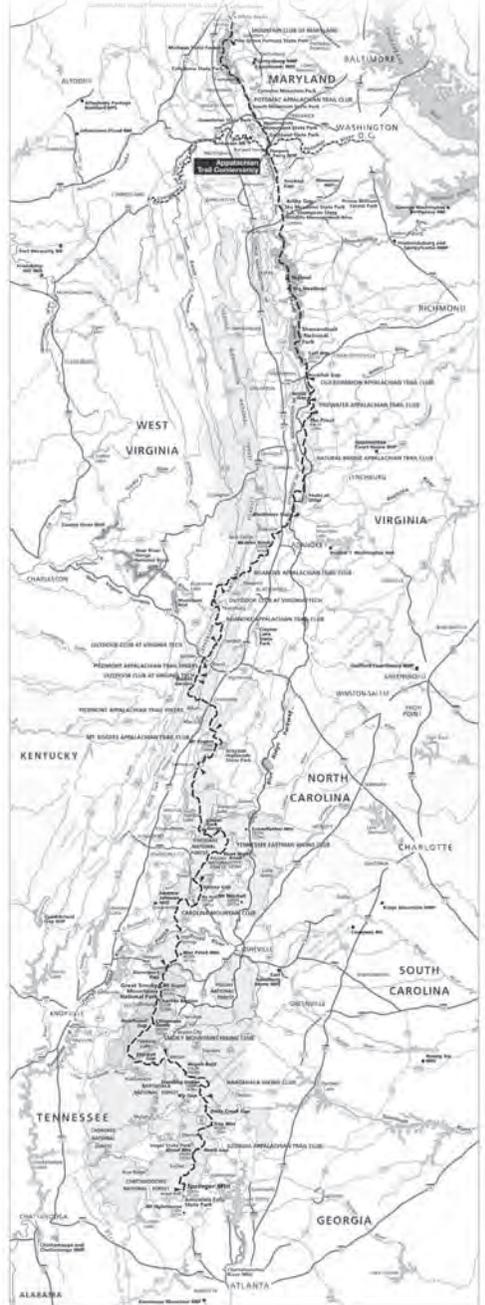
The beginnings of an Appalachian trail already exist. They have been established for several years—in various localities along the line. Specially good work in trail building has been accomplished by the Appalachian Mountain Club in the White Mountains of New Hampshire and by the Green Mountain Club in Vermont. The latter association has already built the “Long Trail” for 210 miles thorough the Green Mountains—four fifths of the distance from the Massachusetts line to the Canadian. Here is a project that will logically be extended. What the Green Mountains are to Vermont the Appalachians are to eastern United States. What is suggested, therefore, is a “long trail” over the full length of the Appalachian skyline, from the highest peak in the north to the highest peak in the south—from Mt. Washington to Mt. Mitchell.

The trail should be divided into sections, each consisting preferably of the portion lying in a given State, or subdivision thereof. Each section should be in the immediate charge of a local group of people. Difficulties might arise over the use of private property—especially that amid agricultural lands on the crossovers between ranges. It might be sometimes necessary to obtain a State franchise for the use of rights of way. These matters could readily be adjusted, provided there is sufficient local public interest in the project as a whole. The various sections should be under some sort of general federated control, but no suggestions regarding this form are made in this article.

Not all of the trail within a section could, of course, be built all at once. It would be a matter of several years. As far as possible, the work undertaken for any one season should complete some definite usable link—as up or across one peak. Once completed it should be immediately opened for local use and not wait on the completion of other portions. Each portion built should, of course, be rigorously maintained and not allowed to revert to disuse. A trail is as serviceable as its poorest link.

The trail could be made, at each stage of its construction, of immediate strategic value in preventing and fighting forest fires. Lookout stations could be located at intervals along the way. A forest fire service could be organized in each section which should tie in with the services of the Federal and State Governments. The trail would immediately become a battle line against fire.

A suggestion for the location of the trail and its main branches is shown on the accompanying map.



Appalachian Trail Map available
at www.Appalachiantrail.org

2. SHELTER CAMPS

These are the usual accompaniments of the trails which have been built in the White and Green Mountains. They are the trail's equipment for use. They should be located at convenient distances so as to allow a comfortable day's walk between each. They should be equipped always for sleeping and certain of them for serving meals—after the function of the Swiss chalets. Strict regulation is required to assure that equipment is used and not abused. As far as possible the blazing and constructing of the trail and building of camps should be done by volunteer workers. For volunteer "work" is really "play." The spirit of cooperation, as usual in such enterprises, should be stimulated throughout. The enterprise should, of course, be conducted without profit. The trail must be well guarded—against the yegg-man and against the profiteer.

3. COMMUNITY GROUPS

These would grow naturally out of the shelter camps and inns. Each would consist of a little community on or near the trail (perhaps on a neighboring lake) where people could live in private domiciles. Such a community might occupy a substantial area—perhaps a hundred acres or more. This should be bought and owned as a part of the project. No separate lots should be sold therefrom. Each camp should be a self-owning community and not a real-estate venture. The use of the separate domiciles, like all other features of the project, should be available without profit.

These community camps should be carefully planned in advance. They should not be allowed to become too populous and thereby defeat the very purpose for which they are created. Greater numbers should be accommodated by *more* communities, not *larger* ones. There is room, without crowding, in the Appalachian region for a very large camping population. The location of these community camps would form a main part of the regional planning and architecture.

These communities would be used for various kinds of non-industrial activity. They might eventually be organized for special purposes—for recreation, for recuperation and for study. Summer schools or seasonal field courses could be established and scientific travel courses organized and accommodated in the different communities along the trail. The community camp should become something more than a mere "playground": it should stimulate every line of outdoor non-industrial endeavor.

4. FOOD AND FARM CAMPS

These might not be organized at first. They would come as a later development. The farm camp is the natural supplement of the community camp. Here is the same spirit of cooperation and well ordered action, the food and crops consumed in the outdoor living would as far as practically be sown and harvested.

Food and farm camps could be established as special communities in adjoining valleys. Or they might be combined with the community camps with the inclusion of surrounding farm lands. Their development could provide tangible opportunity for working out by actual experiment a fundamental matter in the problem of living. It would provide one definite avenue of experiment in getting "back to the land." It would provide an opportunity for those anxious to settle down in the country: it would open up a possible source for new, and needed, employment. Communities of this type are illustrated by the Hudson Guild Farm in New Jersey.

Fuelwood, logs, and lumber are other basic needs of the camps and communities along the trail. These also might be grown and forested as part of the camp activity, rather than bought in the lumber market. The nucleus of such an enterprise has already been started at Camp Tamiment, Pennsylvania, on a lake not far from the route of the proposed Appalachian trail. The camp has been established by a labor group in New York City. They have erected a sawmill on their tract of 2000 acres and have built the bungalows of their community from their own timber.

Farm camps might ultimately be supplemented by permanent forest camps through the acquisition (or lease) of wood and timber tracts. These of course should be handled under a system of forestry so as to have a continuously growing crop of material. The object sought might be accomplished through long term timber sale contracts with the Federal Government on some of the Appalachian National Forests. Here would be another opportunity for permanent, steady, healthy employment in the open.

Elements of Dramatic Appeal

The results achievable in the camp and scouting life are common knowledge to all who have passed beyond the tenderest age therein. The camp community is a sanctuary and a refuge from the scramble of every-day worldly commercial life. It is in essence a retreat from profit. Cooperation replaces antagonism, trust replaces suspicion, emulation replaces competition. An Appalachian trail, with its camps, communities, and spheres of influence along the skyline, should, with reasonably good management, accomplish these achievements. And they possess within



Appalachian Trail construction in Shenandoah National Park, Mary's Rock Trail—
Section 1b—after construction

them the elements of a deep dramatic appeal.

Indeed the lure of the scouting life can be made the most formidable enemy of the lure of militarism (a thing with which this country is menaced along with all others). It comes the nearest perhaps, of things thus far projected, to supplying what Professor James once called a “moral equivalent of war.” It appeals to the primal instincts of a fighting heroism, of volunteer service and of work in a common cause.

Those instincts are pent up forces in every human and they demand their outlet. This is the avowed object of the boy scout and girl scout movement, but it should not be limited to juveniles.

The building and protection of an Appalachian trail, with its various communities, interests, and possibilities, would form at least one outlet. Here is a job for 40,000 souls. This trail could be made to be, in a very literal sense, a battle line against fire and flood—and even against disease.

Such battles—against the common enemies of man—still lack, it is true, “the punch” of man vs. man. There is but one reason—publicity. Militarism has been made colorful in a world of drab. But the care of the country side, which the scouting life instills, is vital in any real protection of “home and country.” Already basic, it can be made spectacular. Here is something to be dramatized.

Learn more about the trail and its history online at: www.appalachiantrail.org.



COURTESY OF CEDAR GROVE

Figure 1: Painting by Charles H. Moore (c. 1862) showing the house and flower garden. This painting is the earliest pictorial record of the garden south of the house. The design was arranged along a gravel walk centered on the house. Note the honeylocust tree on the west, already a large specimen 150 years ago.

“Quiet Harbor:” Thomas Cole’s Cedar Grove

Robert M. Toole

“A man must not be a vagabond, and roam all the days of his life.
He ought to cast anchor in some quiet harbor.”

—Thomas Cole, 1843

Introduction

Abandoning the known for the unknown, seeing the future with anxiety and expectation, the artistically inclined teenager, Thomas Cole (1801-1848), cajoled his parents to leave England and their modest lives for the romantically charged promise of America. Setting off in the spring of 1818, Cole’s artistic sensibilities found little sympathy in establishment Philadelphia, where the family first landed, or on the rough and tumble frontier west of the Alleghenies where they fitfully settled. For years, Thomas Cole wandered across Pennsylvania and Ohio, following his well-intentioned father’s futile attempts at woolens, dry-goods, wall-



COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Figure 2
Portrait of Thomas Cole
by Frederic Church, c. 1845.
Then age 19, Church was
under Cole's artistic tutelage
when he drew this likeness



COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Figure 3
Portrait of John Thomson by Frederic Church,
c. 1845. This sketch shows John Thomson,
"Uncle Sandy," about a year before his
death. Thomson was the owner and mas-
ter of Cedar Grove during Cole's lifetime.

paper, and floor coverings. Thomas nurtured his art, sketching, doing portraits, and even setting off for awhile as an itinerant artist. He also pursued a modest livelihood preparing woodcuts and working on some of his father's projects. Cole longed for success as an artist and eventually he returned from western isolation, first for a destitute period alone in Philadelphia before moving with his parents to New York City in the spring of 1825.¹

New York was then on the cusp of an explosive period of *laissez-faire* expansion, mightily symbolized by the completion of the Erie Canal. Thomas Cole was also on the cusp of his long-sought recognition. Late in the summer, he sailed up the Hudson River to the Village of Catskill and visited for the first time the scenery of the Catskill Mountains. He experienced the juxtaposition of dramatic, true wilderness and the pastoral splendor of the Hudson Valley's romantic idyll, in its golden age. Returning to the city, enthralled, Cole fervently painted several compositions. Interestingly these were all identifiable landscapes that together represented the Hudson Valley's *genus loci* of wilderness (*Lake with Dead Trees*), sublime wonder (*The Falls of the Katterskill*), and historical reflections (*A View of Fort Putnam*). These three paintings, \$25 each, were purchased by leading lights—John Trumbull, William Dunlap, and Asher B. Durand—who spread the word of the genius they had discovered. It was an iconic moment in the history of American art, the genesis of the Hudson River School.²

For Thomas Cole, Catskill thereafter became a second home, at first for summer visits. Early on he made the acquaintance of John Thomson (1776-1846),

a dry-goods merchant whose business on Main Street Cole would have walked by on his way to the mountains. Years later, Cole became a valued member of John Thomson's household when he married Thomson's niece, Maria Bartow (1813-1884). This connection resulted from Cole's rental of studio space at Thomson's farm property, Cedar Grove, located above the village, fronting on the Hudson River. This property and its family members were to be an important part of Cole's life from this point forward, and that story will interest us here. Cedar Grove, Thomas Cole's "quiet harbor," his place of refuge. It is today one of the Hudson Valley's premier national historic sites.

The History of the Thomson Farm "on the Hill" (17th Century to 1825)

The origins of Cedar Grove are closely linked with the history of the Catskill community. In 1684, a Dutch frontiersman named Gysbert uyt den Bogaert purchased from Native Americans 460 acres on the Hudson River at the mouth of Catskill Creek. He lived creek side for several decades but after his death the property went back to the public domain. In 1738, a land speculator named John Lindsey obtained a patent to the old Bogaert property. Over many decades "Catskill Landing" developed slowly as a river port and Bogaert's land was methodically subdivided.³

The Thomson family's origins at Catskill date from the arrival of John Thomson's father, Dr. Thomas Thomson, originally from New England, who established himself there after the Revolutionary War.⁴ When he died in 1805, John and his six siblings inherited their father's estate. This included an old house in the village, possibly Bogaert's original dwelling, and a modest twenty-four-acre lot from the Lindsey subdivision located "on the Hill," as it was often described, above the village. Dr. Thomson also held long-term leases on several nearby lots. The hilltop property included a modest farmhouse (called the "cottage"), a barn, and several outbuildings. Thomson's mini-farm was long and narrow, extending all the way over the hill to Catskill Creek. The parcel was only 300 feet wide but $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile (3,700 feet) long. Crossing through the property near the top of the hill was the Albany-Greene turnpike road, today's Spring Street. The hilltop property seemed to have been used by Dr. Thomas Thomson to serve the family's agrarian needs, their village home being too small for draft and farm animals, or crop cultivation. An inventory of Dr. Thomson's estate included two "old cows," three horses, and one pig, kept "on the Hill." It is not clear who lived in the cottage/farmhouse, but it could have pre-dated Thomson's ownership. In later years it was rented, eventually to Thomas Cole.⁵

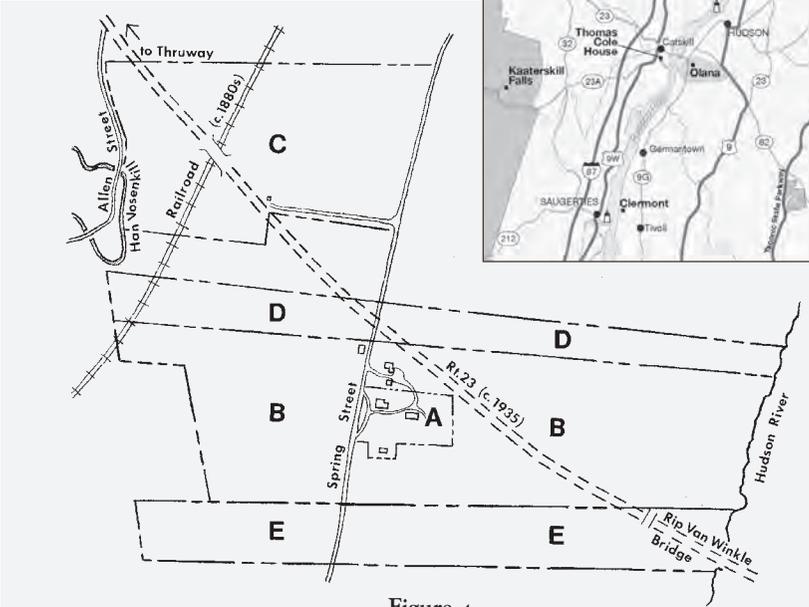


Figure 4

Plan Showing Cedar Grove property (1848), by R. M. Toole. The Route 23 approach to the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, built in the 1930s, is shown cutting diagonally through the historic Cedar Grove farm. Note also the intrusion of the railroad (c. 1880s). The boundary of today's 3½-acre National Historic Landmark is highlighted (A). This was part of the core farm property totaling 75 acres (B). Included were the house grounds, older cottage and barns, and all of Cole's studios. This was also the venue for agriculture, including crop cultivation and grazing fields, kitchen gardens, and orchards. The somewhat isolated Vault Lot—35 acres (C) was habitually rented, but its spectacular views of the mountains prompted development of the family burial vault on this parcel. Finally, two adjoining lots, a total of about 45 acres, (D and E) were under long-term lease to the Thomson family. These parcels were typically rented to others, primarily for grazing. In total, Cedar Grove totaled about 155 acres.

Dr. Thomas Thomson's modest estate, divided by seven siblings after his death in 1805, might easily have led to its disbursal. However, John Thomson evolved as the amiable family's leader, due to the good will and the pitfalls of his siblings, and sheer luck. Most importantly, in 1815, one brother, Thomas T. Thomson (1778-1821), returned from South America, as he wrote his sister, in "flourishing circumstances having realized my full expectations as far as regards the accumulation of wealth."⁶ Thomas's mercantile profits, teamed with his brother John's consolidation of the family's Catskill properties, led to the purchase of additional land adjacent to their father's hilltop farm (Figure 4). On one of these new lots, just 200 feet south of the cottage, the Thomson brothers constructed the



COURTESY OF CEDAR GROVE

Figure 5

Photograph looking west from the house, c. 1900. In this somewhat blurry, spliced image, note the lilac shrubs in the foreground, and the large spruce tree on the right. Orchard trees are visible on the grounds west of Spring Street. In the hazy distance is the Catskills' "Wall of Manitou."

Federal-style main house in 1815. The modest twenty-four acres had been enlarged to about seventy-five acres, and the Thomson family had achieved the landscape and infrastructure of a gentleman's farm.⁷

The house grounds were entered from the turnpike off a looping access drive that led to a handsome gateway, flanked by tall brick piers topped with urn finials and a substantial white picket fence. The veranda-wrapped house was oriented south but uniquely arranged to exploit the western prospect of the Catskill escarpment, the great "Wall of Manitou," laid out from the western façade (Figure 5). The mountain views and sunsets were later described as "wonderful" and "magnificent... lovely with rounded hills, little bits of the village peeping out here and there from behind clustering foliage, and scattered groups of old apple trees."⁸ The house and street-front picket fence formed an ensemble. To the east, complementing the harmonious whole was a fancy, Federal-styled privy, topped by a weathervane. A formal flower garden was arranged to the south, laid out on the center line of the house. It was, and remains, overhung by a thorny honeylocust tree (*Gladitea triacanthos*) which records indicate may have been purchased by the Thomsons in 1817, with the house completed.⁹ It survives, today about 200 years old (Figure 1).

In 1818, the Thomsons acquired a separate but nearby lot. This was a thirty-five acre parcel located north, on the west side of Spring Street at today's busy intersection of Spring Street and the Rip Van Winkle Bridge approach (Rt. 23). In 1821, Thomas T. Thomson died and was buried in a vault built on that parcel at the edge of the slope oriented west toward the mountains. The parcel was

thereafter known as the “Vault Lot” (Figure 4). After Thomas’s death, his brother John consolidated the whole property under his sole ownership. Thomson’s farm was about 110 acres with an additional forty-five acres under long-term lease.¹⁰

A couple of years after the house was completed, in 1819, John’s and Thomas’s older sister, Maria Thomson Bartow, was widowed, leaving seven children in need of support. Her brothers came to the rescue and over the next several years four unmarried Bartow daughters came to live at the Catskill homestead. One of these women, Maria, would later marry Thomas Cole. The other sisters, Emily, Harriet, and Frances, affectionately called “the girls” even into middle age, were all spinster residents at Cedar Grove in Thomas Cole’s lifetime. Working with hired help and servants, the Bartow women provided much of the domestic comforts enjoyed by the men.

By 1830, John Thomson (age 54) had retired from the dry-goods business and turned solely to gentleman farming, and to the loving attention of his numerous nieces. Thomas Cole was by then familiar with the household and he may have been influential in suggesting the property’s name. The first recorded use was on the heading of an undated letter written before June 1830.¹¹ There is no evidence that John Thomson habitually used the term “Cedar Grove,” but Cole conjured it up on numerous occasions, notably in his poetry. “Cedar Grove,” of course, does not refer to the Federal-style main house alone, as we sometime see it used today, but rather to the entire 155-acre farm estate. In fact, the name closely related to the actual landscape, referring to a venerable stand of old eastern red cedars (*Juniperus virginiana*) located about a hundred feet east of the house. If coined by Thomas Cole, the name is emblematic of the infusion of picturesque sensibilities which Cole’s presence at Cedar Grove engendered. With an evocative name, Thomson’s earlier, formal Federal-era landscape was transformed on the strength of Cole’s romantic persuasion.

“Very Comfortable” Thomas Cole’s Early Years at Cedar Grove (1825-1836)

Cole knew the Cedar Grove household before May 1827, when he witnessed an agreement involving Alfred Bartow, John Thomson’s nephew, who was living at Cedar Grove in this period.¹² This documentation suggests that Cole was already acquainted with the family at least from the summer of 1826, or even from his initial, brief visit in 1825. In a magazine article written before Maria Bartow Cole’s death, it was asserted that Cole knew his future wife “first as a child during his earlier visits to the mountains.”¹³ Maria was 12 years old in the summer of 1825. Cole returned to Catskill in 1828 and probably stopped there briefly in

1829 before he sailed to Europe in June. He did not return to America until the autumn of 1832. After spending the winter in New York City he went to Catskill in the spring of 1833. It had been a four-year absence. Maria Bartow was about to celebrate her twentieth birthday. That summer, Cole rented a portion of the cottage located north of Cedar Grove's Federal-style main house. In the autumn he retreated again to New York City, but by April 1834 he wrote a friend, "it is my custom to spend the summer at Catskill."¹⁴

In November 1834, two summers after his return from Europe, Cole had still not admitted an attraction to Maria Bartow. However his affection for the Thomson/Bartow household was obvious in a poem he penned as he left following the summer season:

Oh Cedar Grove! Whene'er I think to part
From thine all peaceful shades my aching heart
Is like to his who leaves some blessed shore
A weeping exile ne'er to see it more.¹⁵

Perhaps not one of Cole's best poems, but the sentiment is clear. In the spring of 1835, Cole again set out for Catskill, calling it his "favorite haunt," and vowing to stay there through the following winter in order to concentrate on his art and reduce the expense of wintering over in New York City.¹⁶ The commitment to stay over the winter indicates Cole's heightened interest in Catskill. Again, Maria Cole's romantic role in that interest got little overt attention in Cole's correspondence and notations, at least in the documentation that survives and has been studied. Still, in the summer of 1835, one visitor hinted at a romantic link, reminiscing that Maria had arranged flowers in Cole's private rooms (in the cottage), and speculated that this would be Cole's future wife well over a year before the actual marriage.¹⁷ For Cole, all this may have been secondary to his work. In this period he spent long hours on his masterpiece, *The Course of Empire* series, five large canvases which were completed at the cottage in 1836.

Despite increasing reliance on Cedar Grove as a base for his activities, and basking in the hospitality of the Thomson/Bartow family, Cole was quite ambivalent about stepping into married life. He was a dedicated bachelor and celebrated his wanderlust as essential to his art. In fact, Cole expressed unease with his growing involvement in the Thomson/Bartow family's domestic affairs and, more generally, with provincial life in Catskill. At one point, he described in his diary a party he attended with the Bartow women, and others, complaining of "giggling girls and idealess men," wishing "the ladies strive more to please by true refinement and accomplishments than by chattering nonsense everlastingly, but,"

he continued, “the men are worse than they!”¹⁸ Cole also complained of being interrupted at his work:

I am most happy when I can escape most from the world. The longer I live in it, the more its common cares and troubles seem to claim me. Nothing makes me so melancholy as that which prevents me from the pursuit of my art.¹⁹

While settling down caused anxiety, Cole was now past his mid-thirties and, as he later wrote a friend, “a man must not be a vagabond.”²⁰ In turn, Cole’s sister, Sarah Cole, who was friendly with the Bartow women, urged him on, writing her brother in July 1836: “I think Maria would make you very comfortable. I do not see that you need to be much troubled with her family affairs.”²¹ Late in 1836, with *The Course of Empire* series completed and exhibited successfully in New York City, Thomas Cole, for the moment financially secure, married Maria Bartow.

“The spot of earth that living I have loved” Married Life at Cedar Grove (1837-1848)

For twelve years Cole was an intimate member of the Cedar Grove household and the Catskill community. This is not to say that he was much involved with the day-to-day operations of the farm property, nor inclined to stay at home. The farm continued to be the sole responsibility of John Thomson. “Uncle Sandy,” as the family called him (his middle name was Alexander), worked with a salaried farmer and seasonal help to accomplish an array of domestic and agricultural activities. After his marriage, Cole did not just hole-up in Catskill. On the contrary, he spent significant time away from Cedar Grove, including the entire winter of 1838-39, when he and Maria lived in New York City.²² More commonly Cole was away on numerous occasions on sketching trips and to attend exhibitions. In June 1837, Cole and Maria traveled with fellow artist Asher B. Durand and his wife to the Adirondack Mountains, one of many such journeys Cole participated in. Often Cole traveled without Maria, who generally remained with the family after Cole’s first child, Theodore, was born on January 1, 1838.

Cole’s finances varied with the ebb and flow of his career, but in these early years of his marriage he was quite secure, flush with the earnings from *The Course of Empire* series. Then, in March 1839, Cole signed a contract for the then princely sum of \$5,000 to paint *The Voyage of Life* series. Even before his marriage, Cole’s extra cash inspired him to consider investing in Catskill real estate. This does not seem to have happened, but as early as 1836 it prompted one friend to remark: “Who would have thought a quiet painter, accustomed to the contemplation of



COURTESY OF CEDAR GROVE

Figure 7: Painting by Charles H. Moore (c. 1862) showing the storehouse from the south. This view shows the western (studio) end of the 1839 structure, with a glimpse north that includes the grove of eastern red cedars that may have inspired the name “Cedar Grove.”

nature, would have so suddenly become so sanguine [for the potential of land speculation].”²³

Cole’s relative prosperity was not shared by John Thomson, who was adversely affected by legal problems with the estate of his brother, Thomas T. Thomson, and from investment setbacks in the so-called Panic of 1837, an economic recession that lasted into 1839. In 1838, Thomson was forced to mortgage portions of the Cedar Grove property for the first time. Uncle Sandy also began to borrow cash from other family members, including Thomas Cole. Fortunately Cole was in a good position to accommodate these financial imperatives. Most basically, he paid board for his family, as well as rent on their living space, all of which contributed to the household’s day-to-day upkeep.

With *The Voyage of Life* series on his easel, Cole realized he needed larger studio space than the cottage could provide. The six-foot+ by four-foot+ canvases were even larger than those of *The Course of Empire* series. He quickly entered into an agreement with John Thomson to help pay for the construction of what was called a “store-house,” (possibly for fruit), a portion of which Cole reserved, and no doubt designed, as a large studio²⁴ (Figure 7). In addition, or perhaps as part of their agreement on the store-house, Cole purchased about 2 1/2 acres of Cedar Grove laying south of the main house in what seems to have been an

orchard. Cole immediately planned to build a separate house and studio on his lot, possibly motivated by the birth of a second child, Mary, in September 1839. Despite these plans there was a quick change of heart, no doubt due to the death, in November 1839, of Cole's patron on *The Voyage of Life* series, Samuel Ward. Ward's heirs quickly made it clear they felt no desire or responsibility to continue Cole's lucrative commission and this likely prompted cancellation of his plans for house construction.

While the house was never built, Cole's interest in having his own home preceded this incident and continued for several years. Indeed his interest in architecture predated his marriage. At least one of Cole's house designs survives, and he was in this same period working informally with others on a competition to design the Ohio statehouse.²⁵ Also it may be presumed that he contributed his design thoughts to the 1839 store-house construction. The store-house was a highly picturesque structure. Later artists found it irresistible (Figure 7). One reporter called it "picturesque without an effort."²⁶ The low-slung structure included a covered outdoor work space and a decidedly barn-like appearance. It was carefully fitted between two large oak trees, each being left only a few feet from the north and south façades. Surrounding the store-house were other mature trees. This was a dramatic and romantic siting and suggests Cole's influence over the design.

While Cole mused on the idea of building a house in this period, he also commented to a friend that "fools build houses while wise men live in them," indicating some detachment from the responsibilities of house planning and construction, an attitude befitting his peripatetic personality.²⁷ In light of John Thomson's financial downturn, the uncertainty of *The Voyage of Life* commission, and the needs of Cole's extended family, there was every reason to economize. As it turned out, instead of building a house, Cole sailed for Europe in August 1841, returning a year later. His contribution to the construction of the store-house, generous room and board payments, the within-the-family land purchase, and assorted loans were convenient ways for Cole to contribute to the relief of John Thomson's ill fortune, while he dreamed whatever dreams he felt comfortable with on the topic of house architecture and retired to Europe with his art, leaving Maria and two young children behind.

From our perspective studying the Cedar Grove property, Cole's purchase of 2 1/2 acres was a harbinger; the earliest subdivision of Thomson's farm, a process then just beginning that would eventually reduce Cedar Grove to the 3 1/2 acre parcel around the 1815 house that remains today. John Thomson owned land, but was cash poor, a condition that hounded the Thomson/Bartow/Cole family long

after Thomas Cole's death and right into the modern period.

After Cole's return from Europe in August 1842, he expressed great affection for Cedar Grove: "I am once more at home, and have learned to value more highly than ever my own fireside."²⁸ By August 1842, any thoughts of building a separate house at Cedar Grove had languished and Cole focused instead almost exclusively on his art. In his first year back, he completed over a dozen elaborate canvases, much of it from his European sketches. He lectured to audiences in Catskill, and attended exhibitions in Boston, and then, again alone, spent the winter in New York City, where he stayed until March 1843 in order to attend an exhibition of his work. In correspondence with Maria, there were only occasional hints of interest in life at the Thomson farm. At one point, Cole expressed concern that Uncle Sandy would find another "farmer," after the current farmer, a "Mr. Witbeck," decided to leave John Thomson's employ. This was one of the few direct references to a hired farmer serving on the property, although John Thomson's account book shows he hired much seasonal help in the 1830s, a situation that is thought to have been typical throughout his ownership.²⁹ In all these Cedar Grove matters, Thomas Cole was on the sidelines. He occasionally mentioned the grove of trees east of the Thomson house and he referred several times to the flower garden that occupied the grounds south of the house. From Europe in the spring of 1842, he hoped "Harriet [Bartow] has good luck with her flower-bed," suggesting that his sister-in-law, then age 34, had primary responsibility for the flower garden in that period.³⁰

For her part, Maria Cole wrote to her "deary" of the activities at Cedar Grove. So, for example, in 1841, Maria reported that "Uncle Sandy was busy setting out grape vines and current [sic] bushes," while in autumn 1843, she was "working in the yard about the whole day, having the dahlias taken up, etc. If it were not wishing time away, I could wish it spring that I might attend to the flowers." A few days later she wrote: "Uncle Sandy has sent off the apples, etc., this morning to the City."³¹

For two years, 1844-45, Thomas Cole received a modest retainer to serve as artistic tutor to Frederic Church (1826-1900), who would soon thereafter mature into an acclaimed member of the Hudson River School. Initially Church may not have resided at Cedar Grove (renting elsewhere in the village), but in time he became a close friend of the family's and remained so throughout his lifetime, as we shall see.

In 1846, in the early summer, John Thomson died, aged 70. Cole commented that the event "has brought upon me new duties and cares and will probably influence my whole life," a comment that both confirmed John Thomson's



Figure 8: Photograph of Cole's 1848 "New" Studio, c. 1915.
The view shows the path that led to the northwestern corner entrance of the studio. The ground surface is rough, indicative of the "studio in an orchard" that seems to have been the original setting.

primary role at Cedar Grove and Cole's previous detachment. In commenting on his uncle-in-law's death, Cole lamented that Thomson had not been

. . . spared to see a little longer the luxuriant growth of the vines and fruit which he had planted and pruned with so much skill and pleasure. He had a passion for Horticulture, and was skilled above most men and it was amusing to hear him [converse] on a peach or apple, a pear or a strawberry. The gardens and orchards for weeks past have shown evidences that their master's hand is no longer there. Useless shoots disfigure the [orchard] trees and weeds riot over the beds and the grape-vines with their redundant foliage and curling tendrils trailing over the ground.³²

Despite his concerns, Thomas Cole is not thought to have become directly involved in Cedar Grove's operation after Uncle Sandy's death. He did serve as a co-trustee of John Thomson's estate and this role elicited his comment that "the business of the estate is very distasteful to me."³³ The farm operations seemed to have continued under the management of a paid farmer, as had been the case for Thomson, but with slackened family supervision. The status quo was perpetuated and fruit production remained the property's most important cash crop.

Late in 1846, Cole finished construction of a separate studio building (but not a house) of his own design on the land he had purchased from John Thomson seven years earlier. The Italianate structure—a forty-four-foot by twenty-foot rectangular building, was erected on open ground that allowed unencumbered views to the west, mirroring those from the main house (Figure 8). Cole went to work there in December 1846, and in his last year completed several important works, most notably the studies for *The Cross of the World* series, unfinished at his death.

Only two years after John Thomson's passing, Cole died suddenly of severe congestion and pleurisy in February 1848. His last words, "I want to be quiet," echoed the many tributes made after his death, "...having finished his own pilgrimage here on earth."³⁴ Cole was buried in the family tomb at the Vault Lot. A newspaper tribute noted "his lonely tomb, which lies on a sequestered hillock on his domain upon the banks of the Hudson."³⁵ It is a spot Cole had known well, and favored. He had written of the Vault Lot:

To be sepulchered here—to rest upon
The spot of earth that living I have lov'd
Where yon far mountains steep; would constant look
Upon the grave of one who lov'd to gaze on them.³⁶

Today, Cole is buried close-by, off Spring Street in Catskill's public cemetery. His remains were moved there along with several other Thomson/Bartow family members in 1858. Except for the overgrowth of trees along the cemetery's western edges, his grave remains within the Catskill Mountain's "constant look."

Cedar Grove during Cole's Residence

It is here that taste, which is the perception of the beautiful and the knowledge of the principles on which nature works, can be applied and our dwelling places made fitting for refined and intellectual beings.

—Thomas Cole, *Essay on American Scenery*, 1835

From its formation in 1815 until the time of Thomas Cole's marriage—about twenty years—Cedar Grove was a gentleman's farm, although its earnest owner, John Thomson, might never have agreed with that title. In fairness, the records of Thomson's agricultural activities are fragmented and understudied, and no doubt his goals and labors varied over the years of his residence. Critically, after his financial problems in the mid-1830s, Thomson increasingly relied on the farm's output, and so there was less idle time for the more gentlemanly aspects of farming. Indeed, Thomson always took his agriculture seriously, and personally,

calling the property “My Farm.” In a typical year his paid farmer hired numerous farm laborers, whose numbers increased in the summer months and into the autumn harvest. All of these employees answered directly to John Thomson. In addition to his own farm activities, Thomson rented substantial acreage to others, primarily as pastureland. This was apparently the common use of forty-five acres held in long-term leases, and of the separate, thirty-five-acre Vault Lot. These rentals provided cash for the family’s upkeep. As to his own operations, Thomson specialized in fruit production and also raised vegetables, notably potatoes, in which he took special interest. In addition, bush fruit, such as strawberries, currants, raspberries, and grapes were raised in significant quantities. One historian called John Thomson “an important New York State horticulturist.”³⁷

Inventories at Thomson’s death show that livestock, including a pair of oxen for plowing, horses, cows, pigs, and beef cattle, were kept at Cedar Grove. There was a large flock of chickens and other fowl. Grain production, for example of barley, rye, and corn, also was pursued. Several acres were mowed for hay.³⁸ A portion of the property was kept as woodland, significantly an area of old oaks, hemlocks, chestnuts, and pines located east of the house. Thomas Cole occasionally mentioned this area, calling it the “grove.” As such, a simple woodlot was given picturesque connotations, deemed “a forest rank with its woody smell, its ferns and wild flowers.”³⁹ The store-house was snuggled into the western side of the grove, which effectively separated the house grounds from the open land above the Hudson River. The river front was used for pasturage and for cultivating crops. The steep river bluff was left heavily wooded. Much of the land west of Spring Street was planted in orchards. Uncle Sandy’s interest in fruit cultivation and the resulting orchards played a character-defining role in Cedar Grove’s landscape. A later newspaper article reported: “Surrounding the Cole dwelling on three sides are orchards which are gardens of bloom in spring.”⁴⁰ One early nursery order survives that included fifteen varieties of apples, four varieties of plums, five of peaches, five of pears, and three different cherries. In total, this order, possibly an initial planting after the main house was completed, included eighty trees.⁴¹

Even a cursory investigation of the apples listed on the nursery order shows a wide-ranging variety for eating, desserts, canning, and laying down for winter use, far more than would be ample for the Cedar Grove household. Interestingly, many of the apples were antique varieties. Nearly all had been in commerce since the Colonial period and some represented varieties popular in the seventeenth century, such as Rhode Island Greening, one of the oldest of American apples, dating to the 1650s, and the Spitzenbergs, very old Hudson Valley apples dating from the early 1700s and a Dutch settler by that name. Others had European

origins, for example Golden Rennet, a French apple (spelled Reinette). It was known for its dry and sharp taste, and for its ability to keep late into winter. Also on the list were Pippins, old English types, and three different Sweetings, whose name so obviously give away their presumed chief asset. Finally, there were crab apples, Siberian crab (*Malus baccata*). Crab apples were used for jellies and preserves, and were also added to cider. This analysis can help in understanding the role of fruit trees at Cedar Grove, but it is only a glimpse as other fruit trees are thought to have been planted by Thomson over the years.

It seems that for John Thomson, farming Cedar Grove for a livelihood was an uncertain activity. Initially there were other sources of income, but after 1837 Thomson appears to have been cash poor, in debt and with a farm that did not provide ample income. Still, despite the household's financial difficulties and uncertainties, the early 1840s were good years at Cedar Grove, with John Thomson still active and his nieces, aided by hired hands, handling much of the domestic chores. Thomas Cole was free to pursue his art in what by his accounts were near idyllic if modest circumstances. At times the artist consciously shied away from domestic rigors and responsibilities, and he did not care too much for the long and harsh winters in Catskill, nor its provincial ways. In the winter of 1843, Cole wrote to a friend whose company he had enjoyed in Rome the previous winter:

There is little of real art in our atmosphere, and to me but few congenial minds. I languish, sometimes, for the intercourse I enjoyed last winter and feel that there is little to hold me here but my family and my own dear Catskills.⁴²

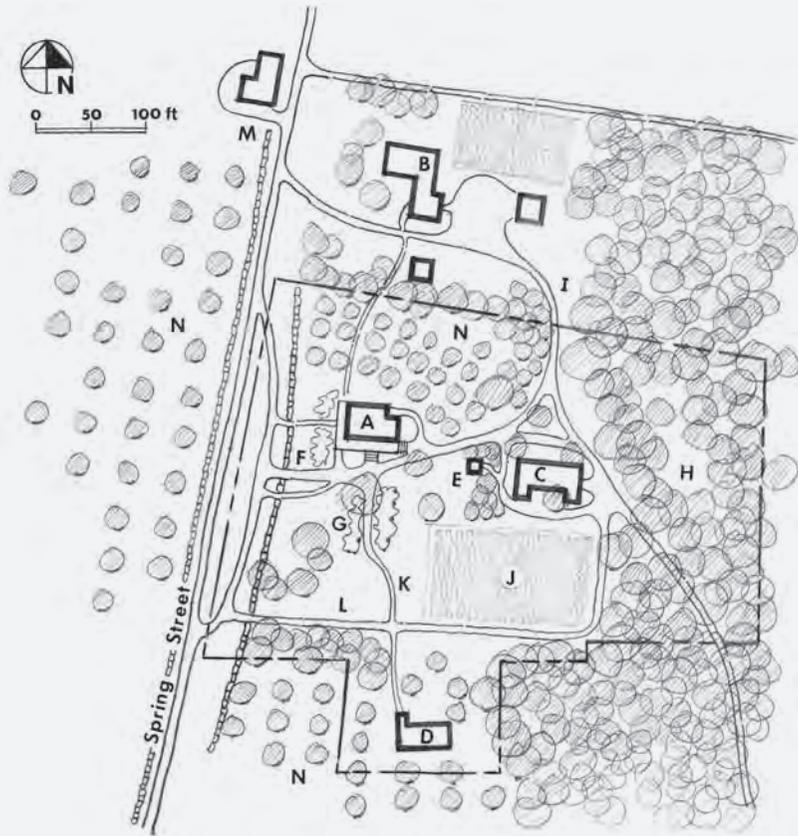
Cedar Grove to the Present Day (1848-2009)

After Thomas Cole's death, his widow Maria, the three unmarried sisters, Emily, Harriet, and Frances Bartow, and the Cole children, Theodore, Mary, Emily, and Thomas II, remained at Cedar Grove. Over the next six decades, little changed at the property, which was maintained consistently by the family into the twentieth century, as one reporter described it, "like a shrine"⁴³. This situation preserved the buildings and grounds into the era of popular photography, which has helped inform scholarship and aid restoration efforts at today's historic site. Only in the twentieth century did the house grounds receive notable alterations that would have been unfamiliar to Thomas Cole.

After Cole, the Thomson's farm continued to operate, but for a long period there were no immediate family members available to be actively involved in its

Figure 9

Plan Showing the House Grounds, Cedar Grove (1848), by R. M. Toole. This plan illustrates the house grounds as they are thought to have appeared in 1848. The boundary of today's 3 1/2-acre National Historic Landmark is highlighted. Thomas Cole originally rented studio space at the old "Cottage" (today's Temple Israel and parking lot). He lived and died at the "Main House." Cole also financed and probably helped design the "Store-house/Studio" (1839) and, later, he designed and had built the "New Studio" (1846). Many of the historic landscape elements, including roads, paths, walls and fences, plantings, and other landscape features were preserved or have been restored since 1999.



- | | |
|--|---|
| A Main House | H Woodlot (The "Grove") |
| B Cottage (w/ chicken house and shed) | I Cedar grove on path from the Cottage (today's entrance path from parking lot) |
| C Store-house/Studio | J Kitchen gardens |
| D New Studio | K Path to New Studio |
| E Privy | L Secondary farm access roads |
| F Entrance gate and wall/fence line on Spring Street | M Old barns |
| G Flower garden (and old honeylocust tree) | N Orchards |

management, indicating that a paid farmer remained on the site, hiring seasonal help as needed to operate the modest agrarian enterprise. The family's financial affairs, always precarious, grew worse. They were managed by trustees. Eventually, Frederic Church and others set up a trust fund for Mrs. Cole, indicating that the situation was dire late in her life. These circumstances evolved with the coming of age of Theodore A. Cole (1838-1928), Thomas Cole's oldest son. Theo (as the family called him) grew up on the farm, but initially may have had ambitions to professional life. His bucolic vocation emerged in 1860, when, at age twenty-two, he was hired by Frederic Church to superintend the early development of Church's property, Olana, located just across the Hudson River in Columbia County.⁴⁴ Theodore no doubt benefited from his association and responsibilities under Church, which lasted into the 1870s, and this experience must have enhanced his efforts at Cedar Grove, where he became increasingly involved in managing the property. Frederic Church encouraged him. In 1865, he wrote: "I trust that your farm [Cedar Grove] will produce abundantly this year and heavy crops of all kinds reward your care and skill."⁴⁵

"Care and skill" aside, at Cedar Grove the agricultural cards were stacked. The land and its operations were not easily suited to profit-making pursuits, and



COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION, TACONIC REGION

Figure 10

Drawing showing Cedar Grove from the west, by Frederic Church, October 1848.

This sketch was made about eight months after Thomas Cole's death. It is an accurate depiction of the house (left), 1846 "new studio" (right) and privy (center, background), as well as the landscape elements, down to individual trees and shrubs.

Spring Street is seen between the flanking stone walls across the foreground. The main gateway was framed by two large brick piers topped by classical finials

Theo does not seem to have been up to the challenge, although he had himself regularly listed as a “farmer” in the local census.⁴⁶ A later family member recited Theo’s reputation as “not an efficient farmer . . . more imaginative than practical.” It seems that Theo was his father’s son, more interested in “poetry and sketching” than profitable farming.⁴⁷ Frederic Church seems to have grown increasingly concerned with what he called the family’s “embarrassments,” warning Theodore at one point of the “urgent nature of your family affairs.”⁴⁸ In 1867, Cedar Grove’s accountant wrote: “It does not seem probable that you can get a surplus from your farm above what you require to live in any considerable amount.”⁴⁹ It was an understatement. One typical year’s income, mostly from fruit production, totaled about \$5,470, against expenses in labor, fertilizer, animals and interest on the farm’s debt totaling \$5,630, representing a small loss, but without consideration for the family’s domestic expenses.⁵⁰ In this situation, the land itself became Cedar Grove’s only ready asset. After first mortgaging the property, outright sale of lots became an option.

With the Village of Catskill slowly expanding, subdivision of its outskirts—“on the Hill”—picked up, first along Spring Street and then on High Street, Cedar Grove’s southern boundary, which came up from the village on an older road and was opened for development by the Bartow/Cole owners after 1869. In these years, there seemed almost a dreamy, far-away detachment to the correspondence and reporting, as a post-romantic melancholy descended over Cedar Grove. The landscape, especially the grounds around the house, remained largely unchanged, but it was also overgrown and somewhat dilapidated due to Theodore Cole’s reverence for the picturesque aesthetic, but also his slack maintenance, threadbare resources, and informal approach. One report, late in the nineteenth century, described the entrance from Spring Street as “most picturesque, with lilac bushes massed on either side and pressing lovingly against the old house.”⁵¹ The “little, old-fashioned flower garden,” as it was described,⁵² was a “wilderness of garden sweets,”⁵³ being a composition of antique varieties, including “poppies, roses, lemon lilies, fraxinella, larkspur, hollyhocks, valerian, . . .”⁵⁴ Several commentators who visited the site commented on its “old fashioned” character, and noted that Mrs. Cole, especially, protected the site’s status quo. Thomas Cole’s studio was, one reporter noted, “regarded by his devoted widow as a place too sacred for the common gaze. The stranger never enters it.”⁵⁵

Close to the house, today’s historic site was altered after 1914 under the influence of Mrs. Florence Cole Vincent (1876-1861), Theodore Cole’s oldest child, who was widowed that year. Mrs. Vincent lived at Cedar Grove and went about sprucing the place up. These moves did not result in wholesale changes,

but rather refurbished the landscape to a tidier, more polished “Colonial Revival” scheme that was then popular. Mrs. Vincent’s landscape activities extended past Theodore Cole’s death in 1928. After that, Cedar Grove was inherited by Florence and her two siblings, Mary Cole and Thomas Cole III, who were of a mind to divest of their holdings. But with Florence living at the property, where she ran an antiques shop for many years, the matter was not soon resolved.

Then, in 1933, New York State decided that the planned Rip Van Winkle Bridge approach should be located south of its present alignment, right on top of the Cedar Grove grounds. The house would have to be destroyed. Florence offered the property to the state for \$100,000, but was offered \$15,000. She declined, and after a spirited fight, and some support from academics (despite the fact that the Hudson River School was all but forgotten in this period), the state engineers found a way to site the bridge somewhat to the north, cutting a diagonal swath through the historic Cedar Grove farm, but sparing the immediate house grounds (Figure 4). Extensive earth excavation was required on the altered bridge approach road, as can be seen when coming to the toll booth on the western end. The resulting fill from the excavation formed the artificial land to the west that was later developed to commercial clutter along Route 23.⁵⁶

In the 1940s, ’50s, and ’60s, with the remnants of Cedar Grove owned by three siblings, most of what remained of the former farm acreage was sold, leaving today’s diminutive historic site. The cottage site, where Thomas Cole had painted *The Course of Empire* series, was sold in the 1960s to Temple Israel and its buildings dismantled to make way for the new. In the 1970s, Cole’s 1846 Italianate studio was sold as a summer home, but was then deemed unsuitable for conversion and was summarily torn down. After Florence Cole Vincent died in the early 1960s, the main house and its immediate landscape of a few acres was left to her niece, Edith Cole Silberstein.

Over a thirty-year period, Mrs. Silberstein orchestrated, as best she could, the site’s transfer to the public domain, a celebrated event that occurred in 1998 when the property was acquired by the Greene County Historical Society. After initial stabilization and restoration, the house was opened for visits in 1999. The store-house, Thomas Cole’s second studio on the property, was restored (but inexplicably painted white) in the spring of 2001. There are plans to reconstruct the 1846 Italianate studio using the original drawings and old photographs. In the landscape, a “Cultural Landscape Report” was prepared, and a “Landscape Restoration Plan” followed in 2006.⁵⁷ Restoration of historic landscape elements, such as the entry gateway, flanking picket fence, old paths and carriage drives, and many of the original plantings—including the “cedar grove”—are ongoing.

Epilogue

“If we would triumph, we must live in Nature”

—Thomas Cole

The rescue and ongoing restoration at Cedar Grove may be the most important preservation story in the Hudson River Valley so far in this twenty-first century. If so, this would be due to the significance of Thomas Cole and the American Romantic period, which came early in the history of the United States, and which is increasingly recognized as a landmark in the history of American art. In turn, the Romantic period was a golden age in the Hudson River Valley, an important part of regional heritage and, with its positive imagery and uplifting ideals, it is a very appealing tourism theme. Basic to these evaluations were the paintings of the Hudson River School. In all this, the supremacy of “Nature” (commonly spelled with a capital “N” by Cole and his contemporaries), and the landscape, were central conceits. As such, understanding the historic landscape at Cedar Grove is especially appropriate.

Today, only a few acres constitute the Cedar Grove National Historic Site, but the modest picturesque residential grounds reflect Thomas Cole’s period and are to be restored to their period condition. Artist Jasper Cropsey said Cedar Grove “did not give off an atmosphere of luxury and wealth.”⁵⁸ Instead, there was a rural and even rustic air to the property when Cole knew it, even while the classical elegance of the Federal-era architecture and its complements in the landscape were harmonious and unifying factors. Importantly, the panoramic views to the Catskill Mountains, experienced daily by Cole, can still be enjoyed from today’s house museum. The entry driveway coming from Springs Street can still be traced, and the replanted lilac shrubs and adjacent garden flowers bloom each summer with renewed care. Close by, a stand of cedar trees will grow again, testimony to Thomas Cole’s poetic sentiment that these trees reminded him of his “evergreen,” never-fading affection for Cedar Grove and its residents: “O may their friendship as enduring be / As thine unfading foliage.”⁵⁹ With its scenic attributes and authentic rural amenities, the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, and its related “Art Trail,” are living memorials to the artistry of its famous resident and the world of romanticism in the Hudson River Valley.

This article is dedicated to the memory of Raymond Beecher, the preservationist extraordinaire who saved Cedar Grove as a national historic site, and whose research on aspects of the property’s history, as cited in the endnotes, has enriched this study.

Endnotes

1. For a modern review of Cole's early history in America, see Ellwood C. Parry III, "Thomas Cole's Early Career: 1818-1829," in Edward J. Nygren and Bruce Robertson, eds., *Views and Visions, American Landscape Before 1850* (Washington DC: Corcoran Gallery of Art), 1986. Also, Louis L. Noble, *The Life and Works of Thomas Cole* (1853), reprint: (Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press), 1997. Noble's detailed, period account of Thomas Cole's early history is unique and despite a lack of source documentation and several mistakes accurately sketches Cole's history before 1825. For background on Thomas Cole, see: Ellwood C. Parry III, *The Art of Thomas Cole: Ambition and Imagination* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses), 1988; and William H. Truettner and Alan Wallach, eds., *Thomas Cole: Landscape into History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press and Washington DC: National Museum of American Art), 1994.
2. Earl A. Powell, *Thomas Cole* (New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.), 1990, 18-19.
3. J. B. Beers & Co., *History of Greene County, New York, 1884*, 86-87. Under discussion of "Old Catskill," this county history provides the earliest source of information on early Catskill (although the narrative does not source the information conveyed). Owners and acquisitions in the Lindsey Patent are cited from unidentified, undated newspaper article that include a map of the disbursements [Vedder Research Library, Coxsackie, New York (hereafter cited as VL)]. For background on Catskill Landing and the early history of the area, see: Field Horne, *The Greene County Catskills*, (Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press), 1994, 10, 34-36.
4. For background on Dr. Thomson, see: Raymond Beecher, "The Thomsons of Catskill Landing: An In-Depth Study," (2 vols.), *Greene County Historical Journal* (Coxsackie, NY: Greene County Historical Society, Inc.—hereafter cited as *GCHS Journal*), 23: 2 and 3, Summer-Fall 1999. Dr. Thomas Thomson may have originated in Connecticut and lived in the Clermont, New York, area before moving to Catskill as part of the notable immigration to New York State and westward by New Englanders following the 1783 conclusion of the Revolutionary War.
5. In 1787 Dr. Thomson (who, in addition to medicine, dabbled in land speculation), leased the 24-acre hilltop. Then, in 1792, he purchased the property outright. Copies of the relevant rental agreements, deeds and inventories are in the collection of the Vedder Library. All deeds, wills, inventories and agreements related to Cedar Grove are compiled in Heritage Partners and The Office of R. M. Toole, "Cultural Landscape Report," Thomas Cole National Historic Site (hereafter cited as CLR), March 29, 2004.
6. Letter: Thomas T. Thomson to Maria Thomson Bartow, 5/17/1815 [Albany Institute of History and Art (hereafter cited as AIHA)]. For background on Thomas T. Thomson, see: Raymond Beecher, "Thomas T. Thomson—Pinckney's Enigma," *GCHS Journal*, 4:3, Fall 1980. Thomas T. Thomson was a merchant and realized considerable profit during a ten-year long (1804-1814) trading operation based in British Guiana.
7. For details of these transactions, see: CLR, 8-9 and notes 34 and 39. For a discussion of gentleman farming in the Hudson Valley, see: Robert M. Toole, "The Role of Agriculture at Hudson Valley Historic Sites," *The Hudson Valley Regional Review*, Bard College, 17:2 (September 2000) 1-15. Gentleman farming was described in the nineteenth century as "amateur farming," practiced by "men who depend for a livelihood upon other pursuits" (Richard L. Allen, *New American Farm Book*, 1869).
8. N. M. Russel, "Cedar Grove," *Greene County Examiner*, c. 1896 [VL].
9. Letter: John A. Thomson to Elyah Janes, 9/29/1817 (old ledger entitled "Copies of Letters Sent") [VL].
10. For details of these transactions, see: CLR, 9 and notes 40 and 41.
11. Letter: Maria Thomson Bartow to her children, 5/15/? [VL]. Maria T. Bartow died in 1830.
12. John Thomson's account book, 8/1/1837 (notations on an agreement dated May 1827). [AIHA].

13. *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, c. 1879 [VL].
14. Letter: Thomas Cole (hereafter cited as TC) to William A. Adams, 4/23/1834 [New York State Library, Thomas Cole Papers (hereafter cited as NYSL)].
15. "O Cedar Grove," by Thomas Cole, 11/1834 [NYSL]. For Thomas Cole's poetry, see: Marshall B. Tymn, ed., *Thomas Cole's Poetry* (York, PA: Liberty Cap Books), 1972.
16. TC journal entry, 4/17/1835 [NYSL].
17. Noble, 156.
18. TC, journal entry, 8/16/1835 [NYSL].
19. *Ibid.*, 9/6/1835 [NYSL].
20. Letter: TC to G. W. Greene, not dated (1843), as quoted in Noble, 253.
21. Letter: Sarah Cole to TC, 7/3/1836 [NYSL].
22. Miscellaneous account book records, the Thomas Cole Papers [NYSL].
23. Letter: George Ackerley to TC, 8/24/1836 [AIHA].
24. TC account notations, 1840 [AIHA]. "This year having given up my old painting room for which I paid \$2 per week, and taken the one in the new building . . . having paid in part for its building."
25. There are numerous letters related to the Ohio statehouse project in the New York State Library's Thomas Cole Papers, box 3, folder 2.
26. C. G. Hine, "The West Bank of the Hudson River—Albany to Tappan" (private printing), 1906, 50 [VL]
27. Letter: TC to William A. Adams, 4/8/1841, as quoted in Noble, 219.
28. *Ibid.*, 11/27/1842, as quoted in Noble, 250.
29. Letter: TC to Maria Cole, 2/12/1844 [NYSL].
30. *Ibid.*, 3/26/1842, as quoted in Noble, 241.
31. Letters: Maria Cole to TC, 1841 [NYSL], MC to TC, 10/30/1843 and 11/3/1843 [AIHA].
32. TC, journal entry: 7/1/1846 [NYSL].
33. *Ibid.*, 2/1/1848, as quoted in Noble, 285.
34. "Tribute of Respect," Jacob Haight, Chairman (ad hoc Village of Catskill Committee commenting on the death of Thomas Cole, February 15, 1848) [VL].
35. *New York Tribune*, 2/21/1848 [VL].
36. Thomas Cole, "The Burial Ground at Catskill" (poem) [NYSL].
37. Raymond Beecher, "John A. Thomson (1778-1846) Catskill Merchant," *GCHS Journal*, 7:2, Summer 1883.
38. Inventory, estate of John Thomson (1846) [VL].
39. N. M. Russell, "Cedar Grove," c. 1896. *The Greene County Examiner*. The grove was an old stand of virgin forest left when the lots on Spring Street were subdivided and cleared for development before 1815. The Thomsons left the wooded area undisturbed after that date.
40. "The Garden at Cedar Grove," unidentified newspaper article, November 27, 1922 [VL].
41. Letter: John Thomson to Elyah Janes, 9/29/1817 [VL].
42. Letter: TC to G. W. Greene, not dated (winter 1843), as quoted in Noble, 253.
43. "The Kaatskills, Their Attractions Enthusiastically Set Forth," unidentified newspaper/magazine article, c. 1871 [VL].
44. For background on Olana, see Robert M. Toole, "The Art of the Landscape Gardener: Frederic Church at Olana," *Hudson River Valley Review*, Poughkeepsie, NY: Marist College, 21:1, 2004 38-63. For details of Theodore Cole's work for Frederic Church, see: The Office of R. M. Toole,

- Landscape Architect, "Olana Historic Landscape Report," The Olana Partnership and New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, 1996, 36-51.
45. Letter: Frederic E. Church to Theodore Cole, 7/28/1865 [VL].
 46. See Raymond Beecher, "The 1875 Census, Bartows, Coles and Even a Cawthorne," *GCHS Journal*, 23:3, Fall 1999.
 47. Edith Cole Silberstein, "Our Lovable Eccentrics," unpublished manuscript, n.d., (c. 1990s) [copy, VL].
 48. Frederic E. Church to Theodore Cole, 2/16/1882 [VL].
 49. Letter: J. A. Taylor to Theodore Cole, 5/22/1867 [VL].
 50. Letter: Theodore Cole to J. R. Taylor, 4/1884 [VL].
 51. N. M. Russel, "Cedar Grove" c. 1896.
 52. Ibid.
 53. "The Kaatskills, Their Attractions..." (c. 1871) [VL].
 54. "The Garden at Cedar Grove," November 27, 1922 [VL].
 55. Benson J. Lossing, "The Hudson, from the Wilderness to the Sea," *Arts Journal*, 1860-61.
 56. See: Raymond Beecher, "Rip's Hudson River Bridge," *GCHS Journal*, 9:3, Fall 1985.
 57. The Office of R. M. Toole, Landscape Architect, "Cedar Grove Landscape Restoration Plan," Greene County Historical Society and The National Park Service, February 15, 2006.
 58. Letter: Jasper Cropsey to his wife, c. 1853 [VL].
 59. TC, *To Cedar Grove—Catskill. The Residence of J. A. Thomson*, not dated (c. 1834).



This view of the tower, shot during the spring of 2010, shows what remains of the south wall after the collapse. Even with half of the wall gone, the structure is still a wonder to look at, with repeated textures and patterns.

Photo Essay

Bannerman's Island Arsenal: One Man's Castle and its Legacy

Thom Johnson

Many travelers who pass the castle ruins on Pollepel Island wonder why they are there. How this Hudson River landmark came to be is illustrative of the American dream come true. It's the story of Francis Bannerman VI, a young Scot who came from his homeland as a child and created a unique American business—selling military surplus. Bannerman did so well with his business that he designed and built an island arsenal to store his goods.

The castle was first built to provide safe storage primarily for gunpowder, a need created after Bannerman purchased ninety percent of captured military goods at the end of the Spanish-American War. At the time he was running a business that sold surplus army and navy goods; he's often credited with being the originator of the army navy store. By the time he bought the island in 1900, Bannerman had built an international business with a warehouse on the Brooklyn waterfront, a retail store on Broadway in Manhattan, and a brisk trade through catalog sales. Outgrowing his urban surroundings, he needed a location that would be safe for the materials stored there, as well as for those living around it.

There are two stories as to how Bannerman came to find Pollepel Island, located fifty miles upriver from Manhattan, just where Breakneck Ridge on the east and Storm King Mountain on the west plunge into the Hudson River. The first was told by his son, David. Visiting a friend in Newburgh, he was canoeing on the Hudson, when he saw the island and reported back to his father. The elder Bannerman related the second story in a lecture to a church group from Cornwall. He remarked that he and his wife Helen were returning from a trip to the Catskills on a riverboat when he noticed the island. Helen reacted with incredulity to his interest to build there: There were no flat areas. But a man with kegs of black powder would have no problem creating a suitable construction site.

Bannerman learned that Mary Taft of Cornwall owned the island. She'd purchased it in the 1880s to stop the illegal sale of liquor there. When Bannerman



The east view of the arsenal as it appeared in 1918.

Bannerman started construction. After the northeast corner of the island was blasted and cleared, a dock was built. He erected a small house for the island's superintendent and the three-floored number one arsenal. Its walls were white-washed and then inscribed in four-and-a-half-foot letters with "Bannerman's Military Magazine." The arsenal also was a billboard, to be seen by passing boats and trains.

By 1905 Bannerman's business had grown to such an extent that he needed more storage and better docking at the island. So he approached the State of New York to buy 6.5 acres of underwater rights on its eastern and southern sides. The state stipulated that Bannerman must mark his property line. He did so by sinking old barges and boats and then building harbor arms and a breakwater out of masonry.

At the same time, Bannerman blasted more of the island. Using the resulting stone, workers built the three-story number two arsenal and a five-floor number three arsenal. Their designs resemble the castles of Europe, mostly from Bannerman's homeland. Interestingly, there were almost no right angles in the buildings. This may be because Bannerman understood the visual impact of false



The Margaret Tower, located at the west end of the breakwater, marks the end of the Bannerman property.

purchased the island on December 5, 1900, Taft insisted the deed include a covenant that he "shall not manufacture or sell or expose for sale any malt, spirituous or intoxicating liquor whatever as a beverage or drink in, about or upon the premises." This wasn't a problem: Bannerman did not drink.

As soon as the ice cleared from the Hudson in the spring of 1901,

the Hudson in the spring of 1901, Bannerman blasted more of the island. Using the resulting stone, workers built the three-story number two arsenal and a five-floor number three arsenal. Their designs resemble the castles of Europe, mostly from Bannerman's homeland. Interestingly, there were almost no right angles in the buildings. This may be because Bannerman understood the visual impact of false perspective, which made the structures appear larger and attracted attention to his business.

In 1908 Bannerman built a small residence for himself and his wife on the island's highest point. It offered a commanding view of the northern gate of the Hudson Highlands. At first the residence provided little more than a room for their beds and a dressing area. Over the next decade, it was enlarged



The south side and entrance to the superintendent's house, located between the tower and the #3 arsenal.

many times. Eventually it had a kitchen, living area, dining room, sun porch, and a second floor with separate bedrooms for the Bannermans, a guest room, two sleeping porches, and a toilet.

In 1909 Bannerman designed and built what many see as the main castle—Crag Inch Tower—perched on the rock above the other buildings. Its four sides are very similar, but there are slight differences. This could be due to Bannerman's practice of buying job lots of items such as windows and having his men make them fit. The southern view was the most unique; it contained the main entrance.

Around 1915 Bannerman built the lodge, which housed island staff, a shop for shipping and receiving, and the island's sole telephone. Constructed between the lodge and the number two arsenal is the Sally Port and Watergate, with a moat and portcullis. This is where Bannerman placed his name and coat of arms, which he crafted to represent his life experience. Among other things, it depicts a grappling hook, a tool Bannerman used as a young man; an ordinance pot, a symbol of the military business; and a hand holding a banner, to honor the family name.

Bannerman kept building on his island until the end of his life in 1918. After his death two of his sons, Francis VII and David, continued the business. Francis VI had hoped his sons would build their own castles on the island, but they preferred to live elsewhere. From then on, the island became a summer family retreat.

The first major change occurred on August 15, 1920, when the island's powder house exploded. Felt for many miles, the blast caused considerable damage. Just before it occurred, Helen had risen from a hammock at the residence to get a drink. A section of the wall landed just where she'd been resting. Unperturbed, she joined the island staff in putting out the many fires caused by the explosion.



This painting shows the fire that left the arsenal in ruins. It started on August 8, 1969, and burned for three days.



This photo was made during the first illumination of the castle that was designed by Deke Hazirjian and done as part of the first Riverfest at Cornwall.



This photograph was taken in the early morning and at low tide. The image shows the ruins of the north arm of the harbor, and provides a good example of how Bannerman built. In the center can be seen the prow of a boat that he sunk to build the foundation.



This photograph was taken from the shore next to the railroad tracks, and shows what is left after the collapse.

After Helen's death in 1931, the family only visited the island on occasion; a superintendent was its sole full-time occupant. The business began a slow decline as its products became old and outdated. In 1958, all of the island's remaining ordnance was removed.

In 1967, with the help of the Jackson Hole Preserve, a Rockefeller Foundation, the island was sold to New York State. Two years later, on the night of August 8, 1969, fire consumed the arsenal. The whole complex was involved by the time an alarm was sounded. Fire-fighting equipment could not be brought to the island. The blaze continued for three days, leaving behind a monolithic ruin. Mother Nature soon began to cover the island with trees, bushes, and poison ivy.

My introduction to the castle began in 1969, when a friend showed me a photo by New York Central photographer Ed Noack. The railroad used the castle as a background to photograph their trains; being a railroad enthusiast, I looked at the train first and then saw the castle. But soon I was intrigued enough to "visit" the island. Gazing out at it from the shore of the Hudson, I wondered why such an eclectic castle existed. Thus began my forty-year quest for answers.

In 1993 I met Neil Caplan, who had recently learned about the castle after being given a book on the Hudson. Along with others (including Jane Bannerman, the widow of Charles Bannerman, Francis VI's grandson), we formed the Bannerman Castle Trust. Its stated goal was—and is—to open the island on a limited basis for educational and recreational tourism. Soon we were working with the New York State Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation as a friends group.

One of the projects that raised awareness of the ruins and involved many different groups was the illumination during the first Cornwall Riverfest in 1998. Lighting designer Deke Hazirjian lit the castle, I was the photographer,

and members of Corwall Yacht club were part of the transportation team. Years later, students of mine saw the photographs and motivated me to repeat the extravaganza. We lit the island again as a student-based project, which would have pleased Francis Bannerman given his practice of bringing youngsters to the island for adventures.

Over the years, much has been accomplished. The island now hosts tours for both kayaks and larger boats. Gardens and trails that Frank and Helen Bannerman laid out have been cleared and made useable. Many volunteers, including West Point cadets and scout troops, have engaged in projects.

Then on December 27, 2009, the Hudson valley experienced a nor'easter. At some point during the storm, the southeast corner of the tower collapsed. First reports of this came from railroad workers who see the castle as they pass on their trains. Over the next few days, Bannerman Castle Trust members stood on the shore and tried to survey the damage. With the Hudson starting to freeze, it was apparent it would be some time before we could safely go to the island for a proper assessment.

On January 25, 2010, we had another round of heavy weather. As I drove past the Island, I saw through heavy fog that more of the tower had collapsed. The next day I returned. I could now see that the top of the south wall, what remained of the east wall, and the entire north wall had fallen. I found it hard to stand on the shore and photograph what remained of my old friend, which had provided me with so many interesting adventures. Although much has been lost, there is still much left to save.

In his book on the island, Charles Bannerman ends by saying, "Time, the elements, and maybe even the goblins of the Highlands, will take their toll of some of the turrets and towers, and perhaps eventually the castle itself." As I look at the walls that still stand, I can see that some day only the north wall that still proclaims Bannermans' Island Arsenal will remain. If so, may that be a reminder of the story of an immigrant who lived the American dream to the fullest by building his own castle.



Volunteer gardeners stand in front of the tower in 2009.



The Margaret tower with Cornwall in the background. Cornwall has long been the location where Bannerman boats would dock. Mr. and Mrs. Bannerman often visited Cornwall and attended church there.



These two photographs were taken in the early 1980s and show the tower (left) and residence in winter.



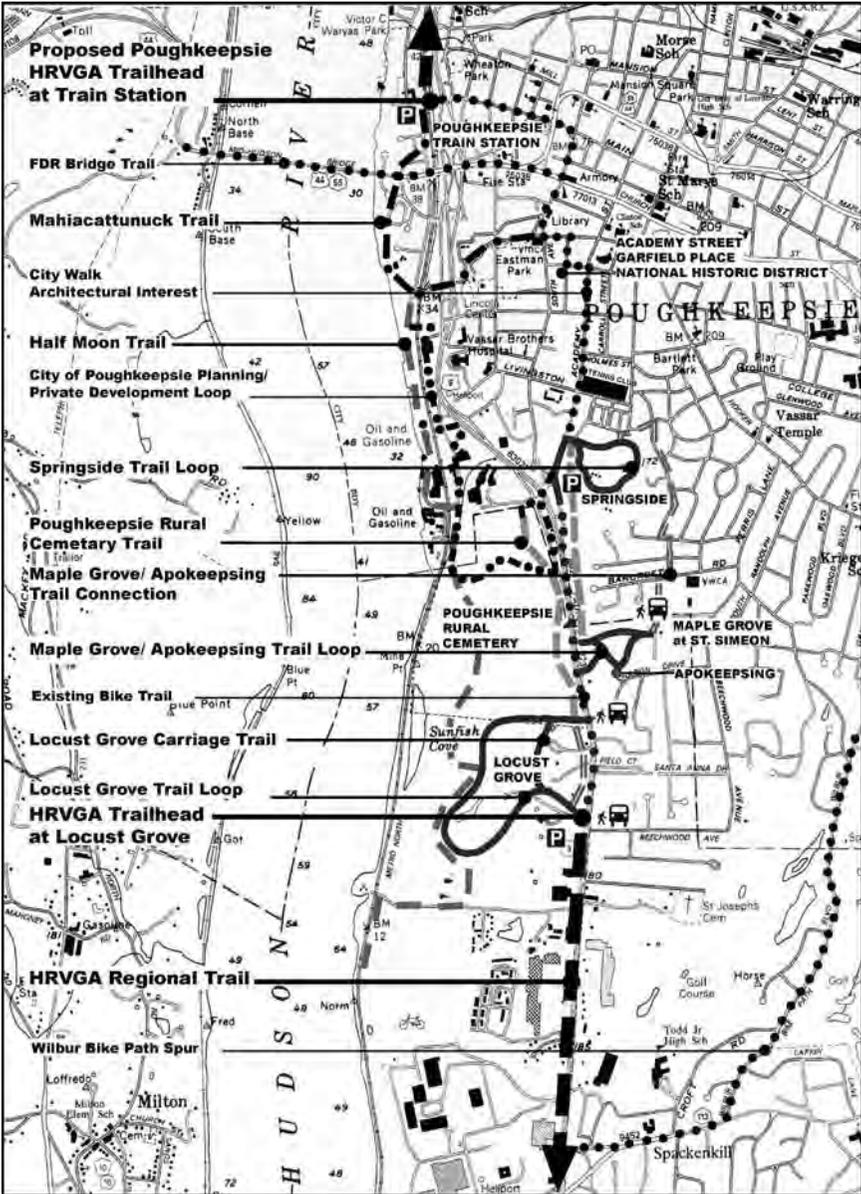
This image shows the east view of the arsenal in better day prior to the collapse. Compare this with the photograph on page 86 to see what has been lost.



These two photographs are of the sally port located on the east side of the arsenal near the main dock. The observation that the two lined up together was made after the film was processed and is a good example of how chance, when seen, can provide wonderful results. Because of the collapse, this area is very hard to get to as much of the tower now fills this area.



This recent image shows all the details and textures that Bannerman used to create the tower. As an example of the art of photography, it shows how camera angle can make something look like it's from an other place—in this case, perhaps a temple in Tibet. In reality, it is the south wall of the tower. The photographer is flat on his back.



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<p>Scale 1 : 8,000</p>		

South Road Heritage Trail Master Plan conceptual map

Regional History Forum

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

Poughkeepsie's South Road: Its Past and Future

Mary M. Flad

Just at the south edge of the City of Poughkeepsie are a number of properties of social and architectural significance. All of them are close to “South Road,” the traditional name given in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries to what is now better known as Route 9; some are in the Town of Poughkeepsie and some within the city limits. Each has its own distinct historical past. Early in the last decade, a discussion began about linking them as part of a “Greenway Trail,” which could then be linked to other trails and to the “transportation hub” at the Poughkeepsie railroad station. The locations, buildings, and properties that have been discussed as part of the “South Road heritage area” include the following:

- Locust Grove: the home of Samuel F.B. Morse for the last twenty-five years of his life, and one of America’s first National Historic Landmarks;
- The Poughkeepsie Spring or “Apokeepsing” (shown on some early maps with the Dutch name “Rust Plaets”): tradition holds that it was an original settlement location of newly arrived European immigrants to the area;
- Maple Grove historic site: a “Hudson River Bracketed” country villa built in 1850;
- Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery: established in the 1850s, when church graveyards within the city limits were no longer used for burials;
- Springside Landscape Restoration: originally the site of Matthew Vassar’s summer home, a privately maintained National Historic Landmark that is open to the public.

Because these properties are the small vestige remaining of the cultural landscape of the area fifty or 100 years ago, they are of particular interest.

The Poughkeepsie urban area has a long settlement history. The presence of European settlers is documented more than 320 years ago, while Henry Hudson's explorations along the Hudson River took place several decades earlier. Tradition says that the original settlement was named with a mutilated version of an Indian name for the locale, meaning "little reed hut by the falling-water place."¹ What is now the City of Poughkeepsie remains at the center of this place on the east side of the river, but over the last four centuries there has been constant change, and this process continues.

The north-south roadway now known as Route 9 follows the track of a road that dates from the time of the earliest European settlers, in all likelihood following the pathway defined even earlier by Indian trails; but in reality the main "highway" in this era was the Hudson River. Transportation of goods and passengers took place most easily and efficiently on the water. The road north from Broadway in New York City was known as the King's Highway (or the Queen's, during the reign of Queen Anne) until the time of independence, and then became the Albany Post Road. By the latter part of the eighteenth century, the Albany Post Road (quite literally the roadway along which the mail delivery traveled) was an important connector, linking the settlements and farms along its route, paralleling the river but generally on higher land a mile or two (or sometimes more) to the east. The *Dutchess County* volume of the American Guide series, prepared by the Federal Writers' Project in the 1930s², provides a vivid picture of commerce and activity along the highway in this era:

Stagecoaches began running regularly over the Post Road from New York to Albany in 1786. The necessity of changing horses every 10 or 20 miles led to the establishment of the stage houses. In the hamlets these taverns were the centers of community life; travelers enlivened discussions with the latest news, and liquor flowed freely. De Chastellux, traveling twice through Dutchess, in 1780 and 1782, writes that he found taverns enough, but few sufficiently unoccupied to accommodate him. It is believed that by 1800 there were nine taverns in Rhinebeck alone.³

A few of the milestones from the era of the Albany Post Road can still be spotted along the edge of Route 9. The placement of these stones was initiated by Benjamin Franklin when he served in the role of Joint Postmaster General in the colonial period, then as the first Postmaster General of the new nation appointed by the Second Continental Congress in 1775. Taverns and places of accommo-



Annette Innis Young and horse-drawn carriage in front of Locust Grove (1913 photo)

dation continue to be in abundant supply, although quite different in scale and design from what could be found along the road in the late eighteenth century.

A 1799 map of Poughkeepsie reproduced in Platt's *History of Poughkeepsie*⁴ shows ten houses along the stretch of the Albany Post Road south of what is now the city boundary, reaching down two miles to the Spackenkill area, all of them on the east side of the road, and most of them with the family name Freer associated with them. Small farms dotted the landscape, prosperous from growing wheat to meet the demands of New York City to the south. When the Erie Canal was completed in the 1820s, suddenly grain was coming from larger farms further west and undercutting the prices at which Dutchess County's farmers had been selling. At the same time, a wheat rust blight attacked crops in the region, and the local agricultural economy weakened. But small-scale farming and dairy herds continued to be a dominant land use in the area up into the mid-twentieth century.

The road itself was improved gradually, from the rutted carriage path of early days to a better-maintained dirt road, and then to a paved surface with a trolley track running along its edge. Some of the properties along the road progressed from being "working farms" into "country homes" with more prosperous owners, many of them also claiming another residence in New York City or within the



PHOTO BY MARY M. FLAD

Maple Grove main house and lawns

City of Poughkeepsie. This was true particularly in the years immediately after train service reached Poughkeepsie in 1850. Two of the houses in the South Road heritage area exemplify this trend.

Samuel F.B. Morse, a prominent New Yorker, purchased an old farmhouse and surrounding property in 1847. He named it Locust Grove, and hired the well-known architect Alexander Jackson Davis to redesign the house to meet his needs and taste. Morse was widely known as the inventor of the telegraph, as well as an artist and a founder of the National Academy of Design.⁵ He made his home primarily at Locust Grove until his death in 1872, occasionally involving himself in social causes and politics (once he ran for Mayor of New York City, another time for Congress), as well as local philanthropy. In the twentieth century, the property was owned by Annette Innis Young; upon her death it became a house museum and historic site memorializing Morse's career.

Maple Grove, another country house, was built by New York City banker Charles A. Macy in 1850. It changed hands more than once in the next two decades, and then in 1870 was purchased by Adolphus Hamilton, a friend of

Morse's who had been living in New York City, and who earlier had been in business in New Orleans until the Civil War threw his life there into turmoil. The Hamilton family and their descendants, the Kinkeads, owned and lived at Maple Grove for almost 120 years. In 1987 the estate of Elise Kinkead deeded the property to the St. Simeon Foundation, to facilitate the expansion of housing for the elderly, which had been built on adjacent land. Maple Grove and Locust Grove are the only remaining "country estates" of the number that had been built in the immediate area in the mid-nineteenth century, when the arrival of the railroad at Poughkeepsie made it seem the perfect location for "a house in the country."

Springside, the "summer home" of Matthew Vassar, also dates from about 1850, when the wealthy owner of a local brewery (and later founder of Vassar College) purchased a piece of farmland about two miles from his home in the City of Poughkeepsie and hired the renowned landscape designer Andrew Jackson Downing to lay out a plan for the property and oversee its development.⁶ Although Downing died tragically at the age of thirty-seven in 1852, the scheme that he laid out was substantially executed over the next several years. Downing described his vision for Springside as "a place which is a combination of the park-like and pastoral landscape" with "sylvan and pastoral beauty."⁷ Although a private estate, Springside was a popular site of visitation for tourists and travelers, and it remained so up until 1864, when Vassar moved there permanently



PHOTO BY MARY M. FLAID

Springside rustic bench and walking path

upon retirement to spend the last four years of his life. Springside was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1969. The property was deeded to Springside Landscape Restoration in 1990; in the years since, the non-profit organization has been working on preserving and restoring the site, and developing and maintaining its walking trails for visitors.

The Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery, immediately across Route 9 from Maple Grove and within about a half-mile of both Locust Grove and Springside, also dates from the same period as these neighboring properties. The development of “rural cemeteries,” beginning with Mount Auburn Cemetery outside of Boston in 1831, became an essential cultural resource for an urban area. A.J. Downing himself referred to them as “the first really elegant public gardens or promenades formed in this country.”⁸ The Sunday visit to the rural cemetery, combining a picnic, the enjoyment of the beauty of the park-like landscape, and then tending of the gravesites of departed family members, became a popular recreational activity in every city that had this amenity. The Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery was established in 1852. Its curving drives, beautiful and varied trees, and ornately designed tombstones and burial vaults are typical of the rural cemeteries laid out across the country in the mid-nineteenth century. Just inside the gate, an elegant round brick structure (which is still standing) served as a shelter for those waiting for the trolley, giving evidence to the popularity of the cemetery as a site of visitation.

The Poughkeepsie Spring emerges from the earth off Sharon Drive in the Town of Poughkeepsie, several hundred feet northeast of the road’s intersection with Route 9, in an overgrown thicket of vines, saplings, and poison ivy. From there a small stream meanders northward through an adjoining property, and then through the open meadow at the western edge of Maple Grove, past clumps of cat-tails and other wetland plants. Close to the northern edge of Maple Grove, the stream crosses Route 9 through a culvert and then makes its way down through the Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery to the Hudson River. It is a very small water body, and would likely be totally ignored were it not for the legends linking it to Poughkeepsie’s early settlement history. Early maps indicate that a Livingston house and mill were located close to the stream’s entry into the Hudson.

Until the last few decades, the route of the Albany Post Road north into Poughkeepsie, once it reached the city limits, followed South Avenue and Market Street into the center of town, and then continued north on Washington Street until it was again outside the city and proceeding northward toward Albany. This remained the route of the highway once it was renamed Route 9 in the 1920s, when the scheme for numbering highways was adopted—odd numbers



Trolley shelter at entrance to Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery

running north/south, even ones east/west. As automotive traffic replaced horses, stagecoaches, and trolleys, the nature of the roadway changed as well. Between 1940 and 1980, the major transformation of land use and the local economy—the building of the IBM main plant, the development of strip malls and shopping centers, the widening of Route 9 to a multi-lane highway, the laying out of an arterial roadway (now sometimes referred to as the “NASCAR speedway”) to bypass the city streets—all combine to make the historic landscape of South Road almost unrecognizable. This was the challenging setting in which discussion about developing a “South Road Heritage Trail” began in 2004. With the active involvement of volunteers and staff from Springside, Maple Grove, and Locust Grove, and with input from the Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery and Central Hudson (whose headquarters are another neighboring property), an application was submitted for planning funds from the New York State Greenway program, with Locust Grove acting as “lead agency” for the group. Stefan Yarabek, landscape architect of Hudson & Pacific Designs, was commissioned to prepare a conceptual plan for linking the trail resources of the South Road properties that could be drawn together to grapple with the daunting challenge of more than 53,000 vehicles a day racing through the middle of it.

The volume of traffic on a highway like Route 9, which only grows from year to year, can make it seem pointless to develop a plan for walking access through the same area. However, the unusual collection of resources in the South Road

heritage area, and the potential for a collaborative initiative to enhance their accessibility, made it possible for the planning phase of work to move forward. Locust Grove itself maintains about three miles of walking trails on its 100-acre property, and acquisition of three additional parcels of land in 2005, 2006, and 2007—previously parts of the Edgehill and Southwood estates—has expanded its potential trail resources. Former carriage paths are being incorporated into the trail system. The Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery has always been available for walking through its 165 acres of trees, lawns, and monuments. Springside Landscape Restoration’s efforts over the last forty years to restore the historic landscape on its twenty-two-acre site and to improve the trails through it have drawn an increasing number of visitors. Although the Maple Grove Restoration Project has concentrated to date on the restoration of the main house on the property, walking tours during Watershed Awareness Month in 2009 and 2010, going from the house down through the allee of maple trees, to the meadow where the Poughkeepsie Spring’s stream flows, have drawn dozens of interested visitors. It is hoped that, in the next few years, it will be possible to develop a disabilities-accessible trail loop on the Maple Grove land that would be part of the South Road Heritage Trail.

The Hudson & Pacific Designs’ study and master plan laid out the following delineation for the South Road Heritage Trail:

- A route connecting the South Road properties
- Suggested pedestrian crossing points across Route 9
- Location of available parking areas along the proposed route
- A recommended walking path from the South Road properties, on through the historic district (Academy Street and Garfield Place) of nineteenth-century houses in the city, past the Soldiers’ Fountain and the Adriance Memorial Library on Market Street, and down Main Street to the Poughkeepsie railroad station
- Access to bus routes and bus stops along the proposed route

Since the completion of the Hudson & Pacific study, Locust Grove has had further discussions with the New York State Department of Transportation about installing walk lights and road markings at appropriate locations (particularly the Sharon Drive intersection with Route 9) to provide a safe walking environment for visitors. Locust Grove has made application for such improvements to be installed the next time DOT work is undertaken on this stretch of Route 9.

The existence of a Master Plan for the South Road Heritage Trail provides a foundation to build on for developing another walking-trail resource for the

Poughkeepsie area. In 2009, Walkway Over the Hudson opened on the span of the old Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge, and sections of the Dutchess Rail-Trail have come into use, from Morgan Lake toward the southeast. The plan for a walking trail along the Fall Kill, reaching from the banks of the Hudson at Upper Landing (the site of two eighteenth-century buildings), through the city, and on northeast toward Val-Kill, the Eleanor Roosevelt Historic Site in Hyde Park, continues to evolve. Walkway Over the Hudson has taken close to twenty years to come into actuality; the Fall Kill trail plans have been underway for about a decade, and the rail trail for about the same period. During that span of time, interest in walking paths and pedestrian recreation has grown steadily.

The South Road Heritage Trail exists only on paper as of 2010, but it has gone through a significant planning process, including public meetings and review. Most of the trail network is already in place; all that is needed is the connecting links, the trail loop within the Maple Grove property, and the endorsement of it as a Greenway trail by public-sector entities, including local governments (the Town and City of Poughkeepsie) for it to become a reality. This may take another five or ten years. But that is only a short period of time in the continuing transformation of South Road.

For more information about the properties in the South Road Heritage Area, visit the following Web sites: Locust Grove, www.lgny.org; Maple Grove historic site, www.maplegroveny.org; Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery, www.poughkeepsieruralcemetery.com; and Springside Landscape Restoration, www.springsidelandmark.org.

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Annandale-on-Hudson's Historic Estates and their Landscapes

Amy B. Parrella

“A place to think”—Bard College’s motto proclaims the college as an academic environment conducive to intellectual thought, exchange, and engagement. Yet if we shift the emphasis of the motto to understand Bard as a “place” in the most literal sense—a physical setting, a “landscape of learning,” possibly even an “outdoor classroom”—then the awe-inspiring backdrop of the campus emerges, somewhere that can equally inspire, transport, and open minds to new possibilities and ways of thinking. Today this landscape includes 550 acres of woodlands, meadows, ravines, former estates, and rural residences. It is rich in prehistoric, historic, and modern artifacts woven together by trees, streams, and rolling topography.

In Bard’s 150th anniversary year, it seems appropriate to look back on its history of place in order to look forward to explore how the land shaped us, and how we have shaped it. Additionally, next year will be the fourth anniversary of the Bard Arboretum. The campus has long been recognized for its spectacular gardens and superb collection of living trees and plants—in fact, many of the Hudson Valley’s most notable trees are located there. The college’s Landscape and Arboretum Program was established in 2007 with the charge of preserving and cultivating the campus’s horticultural assets. The Arboretum Program formalizes the college’s dedication to caring for its unique landscape and opens the door to horticultural education, outreach, and research.

Historical context of Bard’s landscape and its physical development

Situated along the east bank of the Hudson River within the hamlet of Annandale-on-Hudson, the Bard campus is privileged to have sweeping views of the Catskill Mountains, spectacular gardens, and a rich natural history. Due to a host of natural features and man-made changes to the landscape, the college was afforded the opportunity to take advantage of this unique place.

After the recession of the glaciers at the end of the Pleistocene period, starting ca. 16,000 BP, the mid-Hudson Valley was covered in tundra vegetation and occupied by Pleistocene fauna (i.e., mastodon and caribou). Spruce and pine forests gradually filled in the landscape starting ca. 12,000 BP, and the warmer climate eventually brought deciduous forests to the region ca. 7,000 BP. These changes in the landscape encouraged intermittent prehistoric settlement on what today is the Bard campus. Native American inhabitants also were present during the time of the first historically documented European voyage up the Hudson River, by Henry Hudson, in 1609.¹

EARLY ESTATES

Bard College emerged out of centuries of land ownership transferring from one family to another. Beginning around 1680, Col. Peter Schuyler, an Albany merchant and colonial government official, purchased the riverfront land at Cruger's Island (originally known as Magdalen Island) from local Native American inhabitants. This property included Bard's entire campus and most of the township of Red Hook. From this point onward, four major estates were formed—Bartlett, Blithewood, Ward Manor, and Sands.² These estates now create a patchwork of history spread out over the Bard College landscape.

BARTLETT ESTATE

The riverfront section of the Schuyler property was purchased in 1720 by Barent van Benthuisen, but Schuyler retained rights to three prospective mill sites along the Saw Kill Creek, each of which had eight acres connected to it for harvesting timber. Van Benthuisen's slaves cleared the land and built a large house, called Van Benthuisen's Castle, along the road to Cruger's Island that was mapped in 1747. A family burying ground lay in what later became the Bartlett family meadows, not far from his house.

The van Benthuisen property gradually was sold off or lost in mortgage foreclosures. William Allen purchased the property from the van Benthuisen family at an unknown date. He built a house and later sold the property to Robert Tillotson, who lived there with his family until 1862, when he moved to Rhinebeck and sold the property to Edwin and Caroline Harrod Bartlett in early 1864. The Bartletts renamed the property Miramonte and made plans for a new mansion and landscaping.

In 1865, the new main house and stables were reportedly designed by renowned architects Calvert Vaux and Frederick Clarke Withers. Mr. Bartlett died at Miramonte in 1867; Mrs. Bartlett died in 1893. Both are buried in a stone

mausoleum opposite Bard Hall. It was erected by Mrs. Bartlett after her husband's death, also from a design by Withers. The Bartletts had no children and it is unclear who controlled the estate after their deaths. However, there are records that Miramonte was mortgaged by Mary Agnes Bartlett to Emma Forster. Mary Agnes Bartlett transferred the estate to Andrew Zabriskie in 1901. Today, ruins of the nineteenth-century Bartlett stable complex remain on the campus.³

Bartlett's historic vegetation: Meadows and hardwood forest now dominate the previous location of the Bartlett estate. Oak, elm, maple, beech, ash, hickory, and tulip poplar constitute the woodlands. Vegetation in meadow areas is primarily pasture grasses, timothy, clover, asters, and goldenrod and other herbs and woody plants.⁴



Blithewood engraving from an 1859 edition of *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America*

BLITHEWOOD

Blithewood is one of the most charming villa residences in the Union. The natural scenery here, is nowhere surpassed in its enchanting union of softness and dignity—the river being four miles wide, its placid bosom broken only by islands and gleaming sails, and the horizon grandly closing in with the tall blue summits of the distant Kaatskills.⁵—A.J. Downing

Blithewood is currently a forty-five-acre area of the campus landscape that is associated with a historic estate comprised of a manor house, outbuildings, drives, surrounding gardens, lawns, and meadows. Situated atop a bluff on the Hudson

River, it is a majestic property that has a rich cultural landscape history.

Barent van Benthuyzen sold 200 acres of his original riverfront property to General John Armstrong Jr., a U.S. Senator (1800-1804), minister to France (1804-1810), and Secretary of War (1813-1814), and his wife,

Alida Livingston, in 1795. The Armstrongs named their residence “Mill Hill,” based on two mills located along the nearby Saw Kill Creek. The Armstrongs converted an existing one-and-a-half-story barn into a fifty-by-fifty-foot Federal-style residence and began planting Eastern white pine trees (*Pinus strobus*) along the driveway. Although many of these trees died over the years, several survive along today’s Blithewood Avenue.⁶

In 1833, Mill Hill was sold to John Church Cruger, a wealthy New Yorker, who also owned Cruger Island, where he resided with his wife Euphemia Van Rensselaer. Two years later, Cruger sold ninety-five acres, including the riverfront bluff, to Robert Donaldson, a patron of the arts and architecture, for \$19,000. Donaldson and his wife, Susan Jane Gaston, both native to North Carolina, were awestruck by the beauty of the land. Susan is credited with naming the property “Blithewood,” from “blythe” (meaning “happy”) wood. The Donaldsons went on to play a pivotal role in developing the property into a premiere example of American landscape and architectural design.⁸

Under the guidance of influential architect Alexander Jackson Davis, Donaldson renovated Armstrong’s residence in the style that later became known as Hudson River Bracketed. Working with Andrew Jackson Downing, the noted landscape designer, horticulturist, and writer, the trio created a prototype of the Picturesque villa that integrated the landscape with the manor house.

“Through Davis’s architectural designs and Downing’s prolific writings, their audience actualized. People became aware of Blithewood nationwide. Davis and Downing expressed their values in house and garden, as a foundation from which one’s moral character was shaped. They believed the land was a partner in creating a life worthy of high moral character.”⁹

One distinguishing feature of the renovated home was the wide-covered veranda attached to the house on three sides. It served to connect the outside world



Blithewood exterior

COURTESY OF BARD COLLEGE ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS



COURTESY OF BARD ARBORETUM

The Blithewood Gatehouse



IMAGE FROM GOOGLE BOOKS

The Blithewood Gardener's Lodge and Gatehouse, from *A Treatise...*



COURTESY OF BARD ARBORETUM

The Blithewood Garden

with inside civilization. Additionally, it created a frame around the outdoors, as did the oval window on the house that looked out at the mountain scenery, creating a living picture.¹⁰

Archaeological investigations revealed that the first Gothic Revival cottage in America, the gatehouse of the Donaldson estate, was located just



COURTESY OF BARD COLLEGE ARCHIVES
AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The Elm Drive, passing the chapel

east of the main house. A lithograph of this design (the “Gardener’s Lodge”) was published in Downing’s *Rural Residences* (1837). It was the first building in the United States to employ the use of board-and-batten siding. A steel engraving of Blithewood is featured in Downing’s *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1841).¹¹ Both books were very influential, serving as pattern books for other builders.¹²

In 1853, Donaldson sold Blithewood’s 130 acres to John and Margaret Bard, founders of Bard College, for \$63,000. The Donaldsons moved to the Edgewater estate in Barrytown. As educational and pious philanthropists, the Bards constructed Bard Hall (1854) as a Sunday school for the local community. They also commissioned the building of the Chapel of Holy Innocents in 1856.

The Bards collaborated with Rev. John McVickar and Episcopal Bishop Horatio Potter to establish St. Stephen’s College in 1860. It was founded as a training school for young men who wanted to become ministers in the Protestant Episcopal Church. John Bard donated eighteen acres and \$1,000 per year to the endeavor. Together the founders “had the conviction that through education, leadership and an institution, they could improve people, communities and the nation.”¹³

After the death of their son Willie in 1868, the family moved to Europe. The Annandale property deteriorated and went into foreclosure in 1897, when it was sold to St. Stephen’s College for \$38,444. Two years later, the college sold it to Captain Andrew C. Zabriskie, a real estate entrepreneur and active member of the National Guard, and his wife, Frances Zabriskie. She renamed the estate Blithewood. The Zabriskies tore down the Donaldson home, which had fallen into disrepair, and hired the then-prominent architecture firm of Hoppin & Koen to design the current Georgian manor house and walled Italianate garden.

Only months after his mother’s death, Christian Zabriskie transferred Blithewood to Bard College in 1951. James H. Case Jr., then the college’s president, is quoted as saying, “We now have one of the most beautiful campuses in the



COURTESY OF BARD COLLEGE ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Levy red maple



COURTESY OF BARD COLLEGE ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Blithewood garden

country with a wide frontage on the Hudson River and a commanding view of the Catskill Mountains.” In 1956, Blithewood was remodeled as woman’s dormitory; in 1987, it became the Levy Economics Institute.¹⁴

Blithewood’s historic vegetation: Blithewood’s formal garden, lawn, and woodlands contain remnants of the historic vegetation that once existed around the estate. A former New York State Champion red maple (*Acer rubrum*), known as the “All Saints” maple, still stands on the north lawn. Twin black locusts (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) on the south lawn are approximately 300 years old. Along the woodland edges, significant groundcovers of periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) and pachysandra (*Pachysandra terminalis*) and large forsythia (*Forsythia x intermedia*) may represent plantings from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The elaborate formal plantings of Blithewood’s garden complemented its Neoclassical design. A 1905 Hoppin & Koen garden plan shows numerous shrubs within the walled garden, evenly spaced and uniform, lining the walk from the house and encircling statuary at the path crossing in the garden, centered in garden beds, and edging the fountain basin. Evergreens were probably used here—possibly junipers, yew, and boxwoods—some of which have been replaced today. An early postcard of the garden shows roses, iris, wisteria, peonies, and maintained turf.¹⁵



COURTESY OF BARD ARBORETUM

Locusts in June

WARD MANOR

Today's north campus encompasses approximately ninety acres, including Ward Manor house (a dormitory complex), gatehouse, historic entrance drives lined by spruce and maple allees, the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, and several open meadows. Ward Manor shares a similar Picturesque setting to Blithewood, although the Hudson River is obscured by woods because of the home's inland setting.

Ward Manor sat on 400 acres that General John Armstrong Jr. purchased from the van Benthuisen family in 1790. He built a house called "The Meadows" that stood in the vicinity of current Ward Manor. Soon thereafter, he sold the property to Chancellor Robert Livingston, whose family renamed the property Almont. The main house was expanded by Col. Andrew De Veaux, a member of the British Army, who called the property De Veaux Park. De Veaux died in 1812. Part of his estate was sold to Dr. John Masten of Kingston; the remainder was acquired by Robert Swift Livingston of New York City. The main house at Almont burned in 1877 and was not rebuilt. Archaeological remains of the property's gardens and greenhouse are believed to be among the earliest found in the Hudson Valley.¹⁶

The Almont property was sold to Cord Meyer in 1906. He intended to harvest 200 acres of virgin forest but never did. In 1914, Louis Gordon Hamersley purchased Almont and some adjoining farm properties to its north. Four years later, he constructed an elaborate Tudor-style mansion. At the same time, the Ward Manor gatehouse was erected in a similar style. Hamersley served in World War I and rarely visited his home, preferring to live on Long Island.

The manor house was converted to charitable use when William B. Ward purchased it in 1926. In 1929, the Ward Annex was added. The expanded structure was intended to "create a self-sustaining



DONNA MATTHEWS COLLECTION, COURTESY OF BARD COLLEGE ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

community, emphasizing work and fresh foods in the healthful country air.” Due to changing social conditions, in 1960 all but ninety acres of Ward Manor was sold to Central Hudson Gas and Electric to build a new nuclear power facility. The plant was never built; the state acquired the property in 1982, and created a nature preserve in the Tivoli Bays. Bard College purchased the remaining ninety acres in 1963.¹⁷

Ward Manor’s historic vegetation: Ward Manor’s vegetation lent itself to the site’s multitude of uses as a camp, retreat, and rest home from the 1920s through the 1960s, providing fresh air and other benefits of country life to the urban underprivileged. At the time, the property was more cultivated than it is today, with an orchard, picnic grove, large vegetable gardens, a berry patch, and iris gardens along the creek to the north (today currently owned by the state). A maple allee

COURTESY OF BARD ARBORETUM



American sycamore

along Manor Avenue, one of the estate’s main drives, was planted during the 1950s; it gradually is being replaced by a new maple and oak allee. Mature oak groves still shade the entrance to the Fisher Center and a mature Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) allee still lines Robbins Road, another drive to the manor house. A solitary American sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) with a

diameter of four and a half feet stands in the east meadow. These large meadows currently contain native and introduced species of pasture grasses, timothy, clover, asters, goldenrod, herbs, and woody plants.¹⁸

SANDS ESTATE

The most recent estate included in the Bard Campus is the Sands Estate. Sands House is a vernacular wood-framed farmhouse with additions that was built in 1841 by the Donaldson family. Although considerably smaller than its surrounding estates, it was built in the Gothic Revival style and served as a farmhouse. Robert Adam lived in the house and ran the farm until he sold the building and five acres to Rev. George F. Seymour in 1859. The house was then occupied by Charles Edward Sands, nephew of John Bard, and his family who most likely rented it from Seymour. (Seymour became the first warden of St. Stephen’s College in 1860.) In

1864, the college sold the house and land to Mr. Sands. Both Sands and Adam are believed to have farmed the land near the house. Sands lived there until 1883, when Dr. Malcolm purchased the property. In 1904, it was acquired by Andrew Zabriskie. The present carriage house, two dairy barns (one of which is part of the Bard College Buildings and Grounds complex), and an icehouse were added to the property during the Zabriskie era. In 1951, the farm was donated to the college as part of the Blithewood holdings. The main house is used as a student dormitory.¹⁹

Sands historic vegetation: Due to recent construction, very little remains of the historic vegetation surrounding the Sands estate. One remnant is a short stretch of Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) lining the east side of the house. They are approximately seventy-five to 100 years old.

Bard's current landscape and arboretum

The entirety of Bard's campus is listed in the National Register of Historic Places through its inclusion within two designated Historic Districts. In 1979, the Bard College campus was listed as part of the Sixteen-Mile District; in 1990, this district was re-evaluated and its boundaries were expanded through the listing of the Hudson River Historic District. Almost all of the campus buildings built prior to 1950 are listed on the National Register of Historic Places as contributing features to this larger district. Several of Bard's archeological resources have also been deemed eligible for listing on the National Register.²⁰

Since Bard's historic character is central to its image in the minds of students, faculty, staff, alumni, visitors, and the community, it is important that it be retained. As Bard continues to expand and evolve, it is critical to recognize and preserve those aspects of its history that have helped define Bard's character and identity over the years and can help guide its future.

The Bard Arboretum is fortunate to have inherited a wealth of prehistoric and historic landscape and architectural resources that coexist with modern and postmodern development. The Hudson River ravines and bluffs are considered to predate European settlement and have some of the most significant prehistoric archaeological findings in the area. The ravines and waterways are also significant for their role in the industrialization of the Hudson River Valley in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries because of the numerous mills that they powered. The four historic estates mentioned above are representational of other country estates throughout the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. Blithewood, however, is nationally significant for its contribution to architecture and landscape design, both for serving as an ideal of the Picturesque landscape movement and its association with A.J. Davis, A.J. Downing, and Hoppin &

Koen. The college landscape also is significant because it provided a home for many influential families, including General John Armstrong and the Bards.

As a recipient of such historical wealth, the arboretum undertook a two-year Preservation Master Planning process, sponsored by the John Paul Getty Foundation, to study all of its historic buildings and landscapes. It explored connections between the college's past and present, and outlined a preservation approach after looking at existing campus resources. Since the completion of this study, the arboretum has become a member-based program that works to:

- Develop a comprehensive horticultural database and library, including a tree inventory that will support staff, faculty, and students as they research the college's botanical collections, track changes in the landscape, and plan appropriate maintenance, restoration, and preservation of Bard's trees and plantings;
- Support the maintenance of the historic landscapes so they can act as an outdoor classroom for courses offered across the academic curriculum;
- Utilize the preservation master plan and develop a landscape master plan to guide future growth and development that would preserve and protect the campus's natural beauty; and
- Exist as a satellite site and co-sponsor adult education classes with the New York Botanical Garden.

As the caretaker of Bard's landscape, the arboretum hopes to become a destination for individuals to understand and appreciate this nationally significant historical landscape. To learn more about the program, please visit <http://inside.bard.edu/arboretum/about/>.

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The Kykuit Estate: An Embodiment of the Intellect and Creativity of the Rockefeller Family

Kykuit is the Rockefeller estate nestled in the Pocantico Hills of Westchester County, twenty-five miles north of New York City. Appropriately named “Kykuit,” the Dutch word for “lookout,” the estate provides views not only of the Hudson River, but of the vast stretches of land the Rockefellers owned and carefully landscaped. Kykuit was constructed with the intention of being a safe, serene haven amid the family’s political, social, economic, and philanthropic endeavors. Four generations lived in the estate; however, John D. Rockefeller Sr., John D. Rockefeller Jr., and Nelson A. Rockefeller left the most distinct individual impressions.

Since 1905, Kykuit has been an embodiment of the intellectual and creative endeavors of the Rockefeller family, changing most dramatically after Nelson obtained ownership in the 1960s. In December 1991, according to the former Vice President's will, Kykuit was bestowed to the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Rockefeller estate was opened to the public as a historic site. Historic Hudson Valley provides tours, which share the historic significance of Kykuit with those interested in the Rockefeller family, twentieth-century architecture, gardens, and modern art.

The estate is the product of the intersection of intellectual and aesthetic philosophies of three generations of Rockefellers. It was built with the intention of appearing simple and dignified. Kykuit's construction began in the mind of John D. Rockefeller Sr., the founder of Standard Oil, in the late 1800s. He purchased the land in the Pocantico Hills in 1893. Construction of the house began in 1905, after a series of discussions and disputes between John D. Sr., John Jr., and the architects. Senior primarily wanted to build the estate as a comfortable domestic refuge for his family. He desired a T-shaped building, designed to take full advantage of the Hudson River and afternoon sunlight, with an office and drawing room at the entrance, a large central space, and a library, tea room, and dining room extending beyond the central living space. He envisioned the house as the focal point of the estate. Junior and his wife, Abby, wanted to build a setting for family life, but also saw the estate as a symbol of classical beauty.

The architects, Chester Holmes Aldrich and William Adams Delano, were educated at Columbia and Yale, respectively, and later went on to study at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in France. The *Beaux-Arts* style was focused on preserving the aesthetics of the Classical period. William Welles Bosworth was hired as Kykuit's landscape architect; however Frederick Law Olmsted contributed to the design as well. Bosworth, like Aldrich and Delano, was a skilled American architect who obtained his education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the *École des Beaux-Arts*. He also worked on the restoration of the Palace of Versailles and Notre-Dame de Reims, projects partially funded by the Rockefeller family. Although these men were well-trained and educated, they often had to concede to the artistic demands of the Rockefellers, most notably John Sr.

In 1906, Kykuit's construction was threatened by the lack of structural steel; however, John Jr., who served as the force behind initiating and carrying out the construction process—he oversaw decisions regarding heating, plumbing, and brands of appliances—contacted the president of U.S. Steel and received assurances there would be enough material. Senior and Junior were both united in their financial and emotional investments in a home that was proving difficult



Oceanus fountain in the garden



Basement level of the house

to construct. Despite these difficulties, Kykuit's basic structure was completed in 1907; soon after, John Jr. and Abby began considering the interior of the house, ultimately admiring the work of Ogden Codman and Edith Wharton, authors of the influential book, *The Decoration of Houses*. Junior and Abby began working with Codman on the interior plans that same year, and purchased wallpaper, carpets, and other decorations for the home. In 1908, the first stage was finished. From 1913 to 1915, the estate underwent a series of renovations. By 1915, Kykuit was complete, embodying the tension between rigid formality and the rustic, with an overall stately appearance. The home served as a gathering place for family as well as notable political and social figures.

Nelson Rockefeller assumed ownership of Kykuit in 1961, after his father's death, and he left the most notable and lasting impression on the home, embodied by his collection of modern art. (Although John D. Rockefeller 3rd was Kykuit's rightful heir, he conceded the estate to his brother.) Upon acquiring Kykuit, Nelson had the foresight to preserve its historical integrity. He kept the original furniture and pieces of art, including a collection of Chinese ceramics obtained by his father. Portraits of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington remained on the walls, placed there by John Sr. and Jr. and representative of the historical and political legacy they most admired. In an adjacent room, a T'ang Dynasty marble bodhisattva still sits before a large window overlooking the Hudson River; the piece belonged to Nelson's mother. Meandering through the rooms reveals Kykuit's identity as an aggregation of various cultures and eras spanning from Chinese Dynasties to the nineteenth century in the United States.

Nelson brought the collection into the twentieth century. Instilled with a deep appreciation for art by his mother, he collected a variety of avant garde and modern pieces. According to contemporaries and scholars, Nelson's desire to



Temple of Aphrodite



Hudson River view

collect and display art was pure, in the sense that he did not do it to show off his wealth or intellect. The process of acquiring and displaying became therapeutic and was the product of his philanthropic desire to share art with the public. He often lent pieces in his collection to museums. Nelson appreciated art because of its strength and ability to evoke emotion and engage the viewer. However he did not enjoy subtlety in artwork. His collection is dominated by the work of Abstract Expressionists because he admired their boldness.

While the contents of the collection at Kykuit are astounding, the siting of the sculptures, paintings, lithographs, and etchings is just as fascinating. Nelson became consumed with placement in an attempt to ensure that each piece was properly and most effectively displayed. He was pleased when he discovered that the house's basement would be the ideal space for his collection. He also carefully analyzed and rearranged sculptures on the landscape surrounding the estate.

Kykuit's basement art gallery, which is included in the Historic Hudson Valley Classic Tour, consists primarily of paintings, etchings, and lithographs by Toulouse-Lautrec, Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Marc Chagall, Andy Warhol, Henri Matisse, Fernand Leger, Wassily Kandinsky, Jackson Pollock, Robert Motherwell, and Mark Rothko. One corridor consists primarily of Picasso tapestries, commissioned by Nelson from 1955 to 1974 and created by Madame J. de la Baume Durrbach with the approval of the artist himself. The famous medieval Unicorn tapestries were a valued possession of the Rockefellers and may account for Nelson's interest in commissioning these modern counterparts. The Unicorn tapestries would have most likely found their place on the walls of Kykuit's basement; however, they were donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art during Nelson's childhood, exemplifying the Rockefeller family's philanthropic spirit.

The sculpture collection is one of the most visually and physically astonishing



Torso (Blanqui Monument), c. 1906, by Aristide Maillol

facets of Kykuit. Nelson collected sculptures from 1935 to 1970, and although he often gave the works to museums, 120 remain at the estate. There are ninety works in the outdoor collection, seventy-one bought by Nelson, who clearly favored Reg Butler, Gaston Lachaise, Aristide Maillol, and Eli Nadelman, each of whom have three sculptures on display. Other notable sculptors include Jean Arp, Constantine Brancusi, Alexander Calder, Alberto Giacometti, Jacques Lipchitz, Henry Moore, Louise Nevelson, and Isamu Noguchi.

Sculptures were acquired through dealers, by having casts made, and most notably through relationships that Nelson fostered and cherished with artists over the years. In 1962, Gaston Lachaise's *Dans La Nuit* and *Man* became the first two sculptures in Nelson's collection, obtained through his promotion of Lachaise's artistic endeavors. Lachaise later contributed *Woman Standing*, another famous piece. Aristide Maillol contributed *Torso* and *Bather Pulling Up Her Hair*; Moore contributed *Nuclear Energy* and *Knife Edge*, while Calder contributed *Spiny* and *Large Spiny*.

On a typical Kykuit tour, the first three sculptures encountered include Oceanus, a replica of a Florentine fountain, which stands at the house's entrance; *Bird in Space* by Brancusi; and *Woman* by Giacometti. The latter two pieces are unconventional and abstract, whereas the fountain is a classical piece. These sculptures and their proximity to one another exemplify the intersection and tension between Classic, Gothic, European, and Modern styles at Kykuit. The rest of the sculpture collection is placed carefully throughout the gardens, whose design Bosworth based on Italian and Renaissance garden models, fusing English, French, and Italian aesthetics. Together, the gardens and sculptures reflect orderliness, clarity, and definition.

The Kykuit estate is both a microcosm of the domestic and international legacy of the Rockefeller family and a unique collection of artistic expression representing the simultaneous alignment of tradition and rejection of its rigidity. Each sculpture and painting, paired with the intricate presentation of interior furniture and exterior landscape, serves as an extension and embodiment of the family's intellect and creativity. As such, Kykuit is a treasured historical resource in the Hudson Valley.

—Maxine Presto, *Marist '10*

Learn more about Kykuit, including hours and directions, visit www.hudsonvalley.org.



The restored Wilderstein mansion

Wilderstein Historic Site

It may not be the most familiar, the most discussed, or the most publicized historic estate in the Hudson River Valley, but Wilderstein is one of the region's true gems. It boasts a rich family history that extends from the middle of the nineteenth century until 1991, spanning the estate's creation, its renovation, and now its preservation as a house museum showcasing architectural and design elements as well as a family story that is tied to our nation's history.

Wilderstein's story begins in 1852, when Thomas Holy Suckley purchased thirty-two acres, primarily used for grazing sheep, on the east bank of the Hudson River in Rhinebeck. It was a prime location, offering magnificent, open views of the river. Suckley paid about \$150 per acre, and immediately began plans for a home, recruiting New York City architect John Warren Ritch. The resulting Italianate dwelling was unpretentious in its design; however, it still cost \$8,500. Suckley and his wife, Catharine, settled into the house in November 1853, four months after the birth of their first child, a son named Rutsen.

Established in their new home, Thomas set about transforming the grounds. He oversaw a great deal of planting—trees, fruits, and vegetables. In the process,

he changed the name of the estate from “The Cedars” to the more romantic “Wilderstein,” a mock form of German meaning “wild man’s stone.” The change was prompted by a petroglyph of a Native American wearing a headdress that was found on the property.

In 1856, a second son, Robert Bowne, was born. The Suckleys’ third and last child, a daughter named Kittie, was born four years later. For a good number of years, the Suckleys lived happily at Wilderstein, enjoying their lives on the river and traveling with ease when necessary to New York City. Tragedy struck in 1865, when Rutsen died at the age of twelve after falling from an apple tree. A somber pall enveloped Wilderstein. Though life eventually continued for the family, several years later they were struck repeatedly by heartbreak: Thomas’s sister Mary died in 1872, his brother Rutsen died in 1875, and Kittie succumbed to tuberculosis in 1879. Nine months after Kittie’s death, Catharine herself died of grief. After this string of devastation, only Thomas and his son Robert remained.

Thomas never fully recovered from this immeasurable loss; his only source of happiness lay in Robert. Robert himself began to spend a great deal of time in Manhattan, where he began courting Elizabeth Philips Montgomery, nicknamed “Bessie,” in 1882. The couple married in October 1884. They first went to Europe, where they lived for two years and celebrated the birth of their first child, Rutsen. When they returned to the United States in late 1886, they moved to Orange, New Jersey, where their second son, Henry, was born. All seemed well until February 1888, when Thomas Suckley succumbed to either a stroke or heart attack, leaving Robert as his sole heir.

Soon after his father’s death, Robert began plans to move to Wilderstein. First, however, he decided to have a grand addition and major modifications made to the house. Architect Arnout Cannon, Jr., of Poughkeepsie was contracted for the project; he set about turning Wilderstein into a luxurious Queen Anne-style mansion. The new focal point became a five-story tower erected at the house’s northwest end. A carriage house and stable, as well as a boathouse were also constructed. The home’s interior was completely altered as well, to designs provided by Joseph Burr Tiffany. A new plan for the landscape was created and implemented by Vaux and Company and a greenhouse constructed by Lord and Burnham. In the midst of these renovations, two more sons joined the family—Robin, born in 1888, and Arthur, born two years later. (The latter was the first child to be born at Wilderstein.) Both the family and the house were expanding at a rapid pace.

Misfortune soon struck the Suckley family again. Young Rutsen died in August 1890, after a short and sudden illness. Though this greatly affected the



Margaret Suckley at Wilderstein with her dog Button and the offspring of Button and Fala, Mac and Peggy.

household, three small boys remained to be looked after, while improvements to the house awaited completion. So the family moved forward. Three additional children eventually completed the family: Margaret Lynch (who would be called Daisy), born in 1891, and twin girls Katharine and Elizabeth (Betty), born two years later.

The family flourished in the years that followed, but their finances did not. At the beginning of 1897, they moved to Europe as a cost-cutting measure. They spent the next decade there. (Initially, they had planned on staying for only two years.) The livestock were sold and the staff at Wilderstein was reduced to the bare minimum needed to maintain the estate in the family's absence. While the children spent time in various schools throughout Europe, Bessie kept a watchful eye on their goings-on and Robert made occasional trips back to the States. The family did not gather together again at Wilderstein until October 1907.

The children reveled in their return to the estate, exploring and relearning every corner of their thirty-five-room home. The ground-floor rooms were particularly enthralling, each decorated in a contrasting style, including Flemish medieval, American Colonial, and Louis XVI. The children spent their summers outdoors; in winter they enjoyed iceboating on the river. As they grew, the boys were sent away for schooling; Daisy also went to prep school for three years and to college for two. Wilderstein would remain the Suckley nerve center as



FDR and Margaret Suckley on board the USS *Potomac*, cruising the Hudson River, March 1939

the children grew, though Robert frequently returned to Europe.

It was Daisy, however, who ultimately reigned at Wilderstein. Her brother Henry died in 1917, a casualty of World War One; her father passed away in 1921. At that point, Robin was thirty-two, Arthur thirty, Daisy twenty-nine, and twins Katharine and Betty (now married) twenty-seven. Daisy assumed the role of overseeing Wilderstein and monitoring her brothers, sisters, and

mother. She took a job as the personal secretary of her Aunt Sophia Langdon to secure a steady income for the family in the midst of their ever-weakening financial situation. Later, she worked as an archivist for Franklin Delano Roosevelt, to whom she was distantly related.

More notably, Daisy became FDR's confidante and close companion. Though their relationship was largely overlooked for decades, this changed after Daisy's death in 1991. While her bedroom in the Wilderstein tower was being cleared, a worn black suitcase was discovered. It turned out to be full of letters written between Daisy and FDR. The correspondence revealed a much deeper, intimate relationship between the two, triggering questions about the depth of their bond and efforts they made to guard their connection.

The letters were published in 1995 in a book compiled by Geoffrey C. Ward. Pieced together with entries from Daisy's journals, they tell the story of her relationship with the President. The two went for long drives together on his frequent trips home to Hyde Park, while she often visited him in Washington, D.C. In his letters to Daisy, FDR revealed personal details, in direct contrast to his usual correspondences. She was responsible for giving him his beloved, well-known Scottish terrier, Fala. Together, FDR and Daisy discussed plans for spending time with one another. They even had their own spot, called "Our Hill"—a place where something allegedly happened between them in 1935 that "neither of them ever forgot," but whose specifics are unknown (Ward, 34.) They decided that "Our Hill" would be the perfect spot for a cottage, which began as a dream including them both but resulted in the reality of Top Cottage, the retirement retreat FDR built for himself in 1938. Though the relationship eventually lost its flirtatious

edge, Daisy and FDR remained close until the end. Daisy was one of four women with the President when he died in Warm Springs, Georgia, in 1945.

Daisy lived for almost fifty years after Roosevelt's death, spending the remainder of her life at Wilderstein. In 1983 she donated the entirety of Wilderstein to a not-for-profit organization established to ensure its preservation and public interpretation after her death.

Since 1980, this organization has worked to maintain the grounds and buildings at Wilderstein, as well as the staggering number of personal effects; the three generations of Suckleys who so definitively left their mark here also happened to leave behind a wealth of letters, documents, books, diaries, paintings, furniture, and the like. All serve as a testament to the lives of the Suckley family and the times in which they lived in this beautiful place beside the river.

—Amanda Schreiner, *Marist*, '08

Wilderstein Historic Site is open noon until 4 p.m. Thursday to Sunday from May through October; the grounds are open year-round from 9 a.m. until dusk. www.wilderstein.org; 845-876-4818

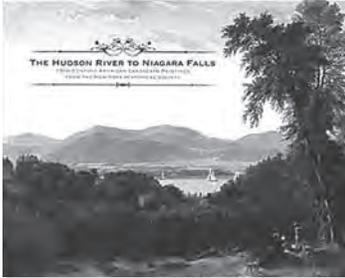
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Book Reviews



The Hudson River to Niagara Falls: 19th-Century American Landscape Paintings from the New-York Historical Society. Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art with essays by Linda Ferber and Kerry Dean Carso. Distributed by State University of New York Press, 2009. (68 pp; with black & white and color illustrations)

In 2009, a wide range of programming was initiated to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's historic exploration of the Hudson River. As part of that celebration, the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art at the State University of New York at New Paltz organized *The Hudson River to Niagara Falls: 19th-Century American Landscape Paintings from the New-York Historical Society*. This exhibition, the third in a trilogy of shows on Hudson River imagery originally conceived by Neil Trager, Director Emeritus of the Dorsky Museum, was curated by Dr. Linda Ferber, senior art historian and now museum director emerita of the New-York Historical Society. The forty-five works displayed were all from the Historical Society's permanent collection and were painted between 1818 and 1892. While Ferber included paintings by well-known artists such as Thomas Cole, Asher Durand, John Casilear, Jasper Cropsey, and George Inness, she also included works by lesser-known but remarkable artists such as Louisa Minot, thus demonstrating the breadth and depth of the Historical Society's collection.

The corresponding exhibition catalogue includes essays by Dr. Ferber and Kerry Dean Carso, associate professor of Art History at SUNY New Paltz. Lavishly illustrated, the catalogue allows the reader to travel geographically along the Hudson River, starting in New York Harbor and proceeding up the river through the Hudson Highlands, into the Catskills, westward to Niagara Falls, and north again to Lake George and the Adirondacks.

In her essay "Landscape Views and Landscape Visions," Dr. Ferber establishes the difference between the topographical and the idealized landscape. As she notes, the "contrast is one between prose and poetry." Ferber is quick to note the balance struck by artists who employed the vocabulary of the "sublime," "picturesque," and the "beautiful" when painting the nineteenth-century American landscape. Just as the illustrations to this catalogue commence with views of New York City, Ferber begins her discussion of landscapes with the city as an active

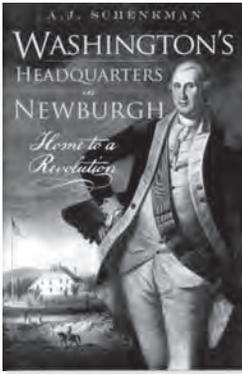
port and a popular example of an urban landscape. The impact of industrial progress is a feature of this essay as is the importance of the landscape experience to city dwellers. Ferber poignantly highlights selected paintings in which artists consciously included details of commerce and industry along the Hudson. These can be read as reflections of growth or, as was often the case with Cole and Durand, their reaction to the invasion of the railroad in the American landscape. Ferber has chosen imagery that represents the well-traveled landscape in America. Sites of wonder such as Niagara Falls were destinations for tourists—then as now.

As a complement to Dr. Ferber's insightful essay, Kerry Dean Carso contributes to the catalogue, "Temples, Castles, Villas, Ruins: The Role of Architectural Association in American Landscape Painting." Dr. Carso interprets the use of architectural forms in landscape painting as the mark of human presence in nature. She deftly selects the Gothic Revival to make her point. An architectural style replete with historical associations, the inclusion of Gothic structures or ruins may suggest a relationship to the pervasive romantic spirit or alternatively suggest a comparison to Europe's past as a means to celebrate a progressive American future. As they appear in the paintings discussed by Carso, the Gothic castles or ruins really were a part of the American landscape—at times employed to identify a popular location or to establish an American tradition of ruins.

As museums continue the trend of contextualizing the visual with the historical/cultural/social, we look increasingly to the smaller museums for truly innovative exhibition concepts and creative curatorial vision, as demonstrated by the well-written and thoughtful essays included in the catalogue *The Hudson River to Niagara Falls: 19th-Century American Landscape Paintings from the New-York Historical Society*. This exhibition and its corresponding catalogue may have been the third in a trilogy, but this reader will eagerly await future landscape exhibitions at the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art. Likewise, the armchair traveler will certainly want a copy of this catalogue for their personal library.

While Drs. Ferber and Carso provide the historical context for our better understanding of how landscape painting functioned beyond pure aesthetic pleasure in the nineteenth century, there is yet a timeless appeal to these works. In her foreword, Sara Pasti, director of the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, summarizes this sentiment: "May those who gaze upon this river valley in another hundred years enjoy the same views that we now see in these paintings and in the landscape that surrounds us."

—Nancy Siegel, Towson University



*Washington's Headquarters in Newburgh:
Home to a Revolution*, A.J. Schenkman.
Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2009
(128 pp. 33 illustrations)

As a site interpreter at Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site in Newburgh, A.J. Schenkman became fascinated with the history of the house and its place in the context of the American Revolution. He also became deeply interested in the life of its owner, a man named Jonathan Hasbrouck. This interest compelled Schenkman to tell Hasbrouck's story, and resurrect him from his position as a "footnote in the history of his home" (12).

Telling Hasbrouck's story is a difficult endeavor, though, as Schenkman honestly notes. Hasbrouck died years before George Washington established his headquarters there, and few documents or papers exist to tell the story of his life. Therefore, historians are left to fill in the holes with either family accounts or myths and legends, a problem Schenkman attempts to remedy. He tells us that we should care about Jonathan Hasbrouck because he was a major part of Newburgh's transition from a small village to a major port on the Hudson River, and he was also a major part of the American Revolution. Both of these assertions seem, at least from the evidence Schenkman presents, to be a stretch.

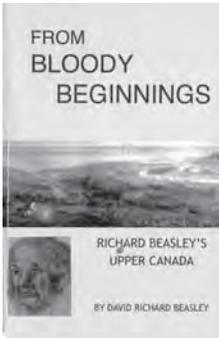
Schenkman's story begins with an exploration into Hasbrouck's upbringing as the youngest of ten children and ends with a discussion of attempts to save Washington's headquarters from demolition. In between, Schenkman discusses a plethora of different topics, from the history of Newburgh itself to religious and economic histories to the histories of colonial warfare and the Revolutionary War. In short, this is why Schenkman's book fails to accomplish the goal he sets for it. Because there are very few documents to support a book about Jonathan Hasbrouck, Schenkman is forced to explore every other facet of life during the period that Hasbrouck lived, and attempt to make a connection that is relevant, important, and interesting. This reader, at least, did not see those connections, and would side with those who asked Schenkman why we should care.

Contradictions abound throughout this work. In the first place, the front cover is dominated by the figure of George Washington, with a small portrait of his headquarters in the background, and an individual on horseback (Hasbrouck perhaps?) in the vicinity of the house. This is certainly an interesting choice, given Schenkman's effort to emphasize Hasbrouck, not Washington, in this story.

Second, Schenkman continuously asserts that Hasbrouck was “respected for bravery on the frontier” (53) and a military leader in the community, yet tells us that Hasbrouck played little role in the French and Indian War and “never actually encountered any combat” (66) during the Revolutionary War. Third, though Schenkman deplores historians’ attempts to fill holes, the book abounds with hole-filling stories that he says “might have,” “perhaps,” or “probably” took place.

In constructing this work, Schenkman undertook a monumental (and perhaps impossible) task. If, as he asserts, the documents simply do not exist, there is nothing more he could have done. This story may be as good as it gets. For serious historians of the period, that may not be good enough. But for tourists visiting Washington’s Headquarters in Newburgh, this book may be a useful companion and a genuine effort to place the site in historical context.

—*Christopher Dempsey, USMA Department of History*



***From Bloody Beginnings: Richard Beasley's Upper Canada*, David Richard Beasley. Simcoe, Canada: Davus Publishing, 2008. (388 pp. 55 illustrations)**

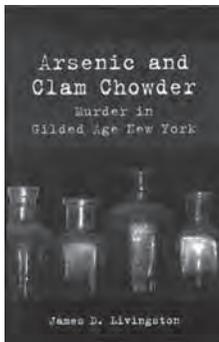
From Bloody Beginnings: Richard Beasley's Upper Canada is categorized by its author as “creative non-fiction,” the well-researched and historically accurate, but fictitious, memoirs of the author’s great-great-grandfather. The book focuses on the experiences of Richard Beasley, originally a resident of Albany, who eventually settled lands north of Lake Ontario, living through the American Revolution, the War of 1812, and settlement of Upper Canada. To that extent, the reader must be aware that Beasley and many of the other protagonists depicted were loyal to the British cause, and this book has a vital interest in showing that perspective on the events.

At times perhaps a bit too heavy-handedly, the author describes mass arrests of loyalist citizens, prisoners suffering in squalid jails, and others subjected to tarring and feathering. Bearing in mind that these fictionalized events were historic realities, the book offers a sympathetic perspective on the struggles of the loyalists, and presents the reader with a challenging new perspective on tumultuous events not common to the broader, largely Patriot, narrative. Yet within that narrative, this reader wished that the depiction of the main characters was a bit more complicated. Various main characters are removed from some of the harsher events of the Revolution, such as the Wyoming Massacre, by scapegoating the events upon the Native American allies.

One final point of confusion within the book is the perspective of the narrator. It presents a first-person account when relating events directly surrounding Richard Beasley, but in sections not directly involving him, it uses a third-person omniscient narrator. However, accepting these issues, *From Bloody Beginnings* does contain a great deal of information about the lives of people in this time and presents it using an uncommon perspective. The author's website includes a list of historic sources cited in researching the book as well as more conventional histories written about Richard Beasley and Upper Canada: <http://www.kwic.com/davus>.

—Jason Schaaf, Dutchess Community College

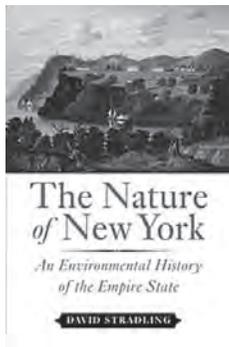
New & Noteworthy Books Received



Arsenic and Clam Chowder: Murder in Gilded Age New York

By James D. Livingston
(Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010).
205 pp. \$19.95 (hardcover). www.sunypress.edu

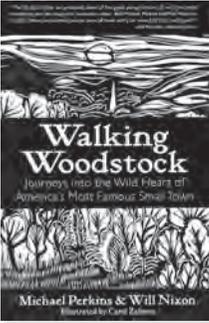
Set in Gilded Age Manhattan, *Arsenic and Clam Chowder* tells the story of Mary Alice Livingston, put on trial for the murder of her own mother. Using arsenic-laced clam chowder as the alleged murder weapon, Livingston drew the attention of the local papers and numerous household names of the day. Her trial, and the complications surrounding it, leads the reader to evaluate issues such as capital punishment, gender equality, and the concept of reasonable doubt. James D. Livingston sheds thoughtful perspective on this unique moment in 19th-century American history.



The Nature of New York: An Environmental History of the Empire State

By David Stradling
(Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010)
296pp. \$29.95 (cloth). www.cornellpress.cornell.edu

New York State is home to a diverse natural landscape and has an abundance of natural resources. Beginning with Henry Hudson's arrival in 1609 and continuing through the present, David Stradling explores the relationship between the natural resources and the individuals who use them. Topics include the ways that agriculture, industrialization, urbanization, and transportation have impacted the state's landscape for better and worse. Stradling recognizes the role that humans have had in the destruction, reengineering, and conservation of New York's environment, and the importance of considering these consequences as we utilize the state's landscape.



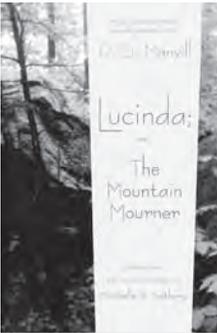
Walking Woodstock: Journey into the Wild Heart of America's Most Famous Small Town

By Michael Perkins & Will Nixon

(Troy, NY: The Troy Bookmakers, 2009).

236 pp. \$18.95 (paperback). www.thetroybookmakers.com

In this unique walking guide to one of the Hudson River Valley's most historic and artistic towns, Perkins and Nixon provide equal parts narrative and guidebook as they recount their walking adventures on Woodstock's roads, paths, and hills. The authors display a strong appreciation for the natural landscape and clearly have benefited from the combination of relaxation and exhilaration that comes with such fundamental exercise.



Lucinda; or, The Mountain Mourner

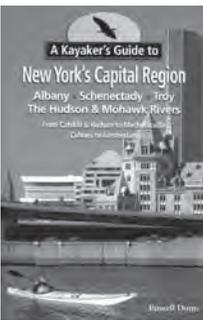
By P.D. Manville

(Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009)

144 pp. \$19.95 (paperback).

www.SyracuseUniversityPress.syr.edu

Originally published in 1807 and written by the title character's stepmother, *Lucinda* tells the story of a young woman who becomes pregnant, is abandoned, and dies shortly after childbirth. This true story, with an in-depth introduction and analysis from Mischelle B. Anthony, provides a unique perspective of a narrative being written by a participant in the events. Anthony's introduction provides a context for both the story told within the narrative, as well as the complicated history of the narrative itself since its original publication over 200 years ago.

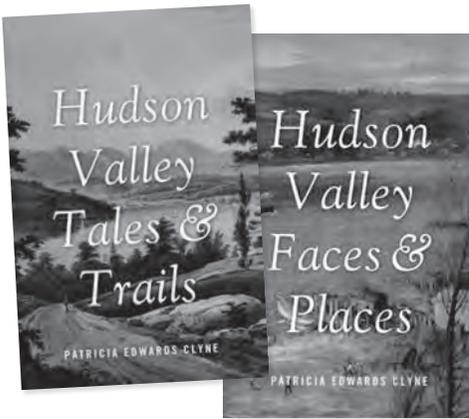


A Kayaker's Guide to New York's Capital Region

By Russell Dunn (Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press, 2010)

320 pp. \$17.95 (paperback). www.blackdomepress.com

Another in the Kayaker's Guide series from Black Dome Press, Dunn divides the Capital Region up by county for both the Hudson River and the Mohawk River. All together, the guide provides access points, maps, and photographs for eight counties. Dunn also includes detailed instructions for each paddle and provides landmarks such as lighthouses and nature preserves to locate from the water. Complete with in-depth history for each of the sixty-three paddles, this guide offers something for kayakers of all skill levels.



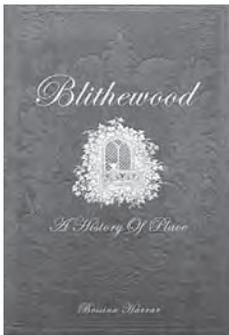
Hudson Valley Tales & Trails

By Patricia Edwards Clyne
(New York, NY: Overlook Press, 1990)
319 pp. \$19.95 (paperback).
www.overlookpress.com

Hudson Valley Faces & Places

By Patricia Edwards Clyne
(New York, NY: Overlook Press, 2005)
367 pp. \$19.95 (paperback).
www.overlookpress.com

These two recently re-released titles by Patricia Edwards Clyne focus on historic sites and historic people, respectively. In *Tales and Trails*, Clyne provides a miscellany of information from different areas making up the eleven counties in the Hudson River Valley. *Faces and Places* is organized thematically and focuses on the different personalities who have left a definitive impact on the region. Both books provide a unique perspective on some of the state parks, historic landmarks, and legendary individuals who have come together to make up the vast history of the Hudson River Valley region.



Blithewood: A History of Place

By Bessina Harrar
(Bluebird Press, 2009)
102 pp. \$19.95 (paperback).
www.blithewoodbook.com

The Blithewood Estate was one of A.J. Downing's favorite examples of fine taste in architecture, garden, and landscape. Harrar presents the reasons why it was then and remains today such an enchanting place, and why it is significant in our national history.

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Photos: Top, Blithwood, bottom, Hyde Park; Steve Gross & Susan Daley from their new book, *Gardens Of The Hudson Valley*, to be published by Monacelli Press, October 2010. Center photo: Montgomery Place, Bryan Haskell. Courtesy of Historic Hudson Valley.

www.hudsonrivervalley.com

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

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