THE HUDSON RIVER 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, Nimham the Grandfather's dates were transposed; his correct dates are 1696-1744.

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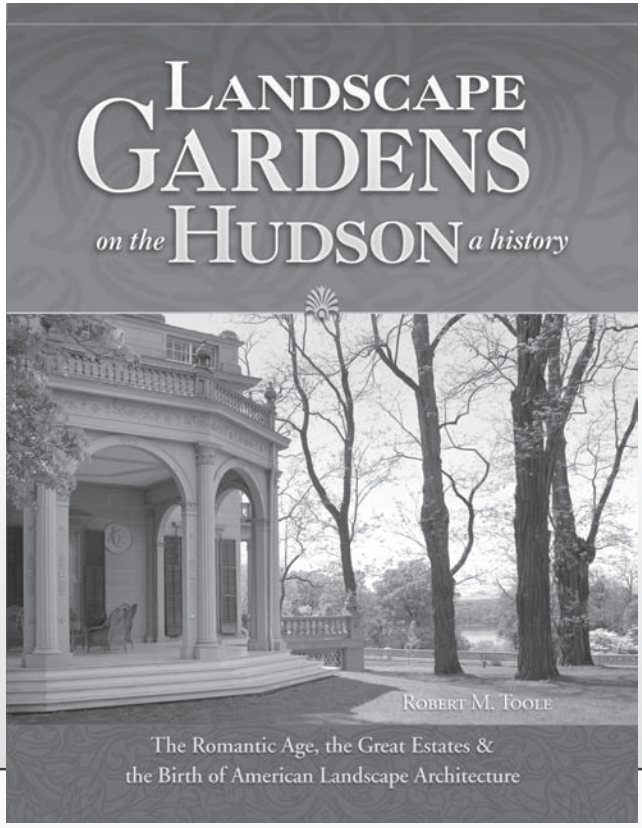
Founding Chairman of the Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College, whose inspiration and vision not only made HRVI a reality but helped to develop it into one of the premier regional study centers in the United States.



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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- "Upon putting down this volume, no reader will be in doubt as to why these gardens are a supreme legacy to our civilization and one of the foundations stones of the environmental movement. This book is a marvel." ***J. Winthrop Aldrich, Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation, NYSOPRHP***
- "Landscape architect Robert Toole, with his specialty in Hudson Valley historic landscape study and restoration, has the professional perspective and the onsite experience to guide us on this journey." ***Waddell Stillman, President, Historic Hudson Valley***

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Albany, NY 12224
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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

Mary M. Flad has worked as planning consultant and advisor with historic sites and non-profit organizations throughout the Hudson Valley for three decades, and was a founder of the Maple Grove Restoration Project. She lives in the City of Poughkeepsie.

Thom Johnson is an artist, photographer, educator, and lifetime resident of the Hudson Valley. He is one of the founders of the Bannerman Castle Trust, one of its first tour guides, and coauthor of *Bannerman Castle*. In addition to his ongoing documentation of the castle, he is working on a second book that will present the story of Francis Bannerman VI, the man behind the castle ruins.

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.

Peter Manning is the Regional Planner at the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development. He is a graduate of SUNY New Paltz (Geography) and Cornell University (Master of Landscape Architecture). He is a volunteer trail-maintainer and writes a column about place in a weekly newspaper.

Amy Parrella is the Arboretum Director and Horticulture Supervisor at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson. She has a certificate in professional ornamental horticulture from Longwood Gardens and a B.A. in community, regional, and environmental studies from Bard College. She co-founded the Landscape and Arboretum Program at Bard in 2007.

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).

THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

Vol. 27, No. 1, Autumn 2010

Regional History Forum:

Book Reviews

On the cover: Henry Gritten, English 1818-1873
Springside: Center Circle, 1852
Oil on canvas, 25½ 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)

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THOM JOHNSON

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

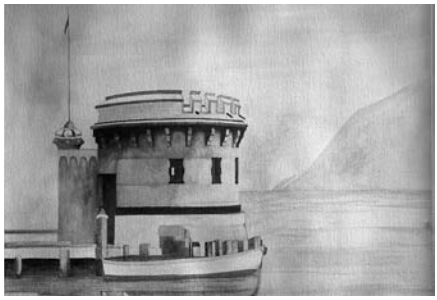
The east view of the arsenal as it appeared in 1918.

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, 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 whitewashed 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 perspective, which made the structures appear larger and attracted attention to his business.



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

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 etravaganza. 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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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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