

THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

A Journal of Regional Studies

MARIST



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Tel: 845-575-3052

Fax: 845-575-3176

E-mail: hrvi@marist.edu

Web: www.hudsonrivervalley.org

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On the cover:

Gezicht op Nieuw Amsterdam by Johannes Vingboons (1664),
Library of Congress

THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

Vol. 30, No. 2, Spring 2014

“The Great North River of New Netherland”:
The Hudson River and Dutch Colonization, *Jaap Jacobs* 2

The Abolitionist and The Land Reformer:
Gerrit Smith and Tom Devyr, *Amy Godine*..... 16

The Recognizable Ramapough: Chief Butch Redbone’s Quest for Federal
and State Acknowledgement, *Laurence M. Hauptman and Heriberto Dixon* 40

Notes & Documents

Who Planned Fort Arnold? *Merle G. Sheffield, adapted by James M. Johnson*..... 69

Regional History Forum

The Northgate Estate in Cold Spring, *Thom Johnson and Rob Yasinsac* 79

Regional Writing

Beneath Clouds, *Raphael Kosek* 90

Book Reviews

SACHS, *Arcadian America: The Death and Life of an Environmental Tradition*,
by Andrew Forney..... 91

WILTON, *Frederic Church and the Landscape Oil Sketch*,
by Evelyn Trebilcock..... 94

LAWSON, *Smugglers, Bootleggers, and Scofflaws*, by Timothy Houlihan..... 96

New & Noteworthy 98

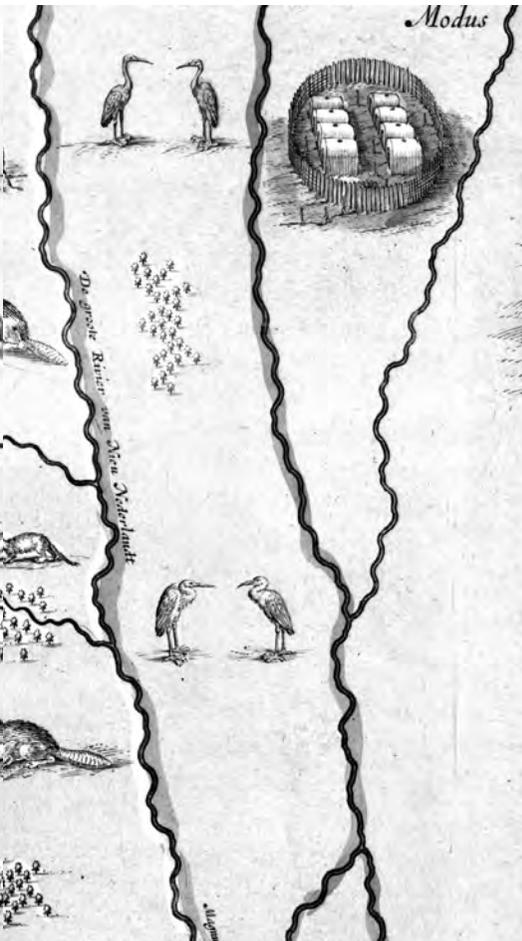


Figure 1. Detail from *Nova Belgica et Anglia Nova*, from Willem Jansz Blaeu, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, 1635. Map reproduction courtesy of the Norman B. Levanthal Map Center at the Boston Public Library.

“The Great North River of New Netherland”:

The Hudson River and Dutch Colonization

Jaap Jacobs



In his *New World or Description of the West Indies*, first published in 1625, Johannes de Laet, geographer and director of the Dutch West India Company, called it “The Great North River of New Netherland.” It also was occasionally called the Manhattes River or the Mauritius River (after the Dutch Republic’s stadtholder Maurice of Nassau). Henry Hudson is often said to have called it “the great River of the Mountains.” However, the most common name for the river now named after him was the “North River.” That name fitted in well with other Dutch names for waterways in the area, such as the South River (the Delaware) and the East River, both of which were included in the map that Willem Jansz Blaeu made in 1635.¹ (Figure 1) Along with the Fresh River (the Connecticut), these waterways are included in most descriptions of New Netherland, the predecessor of the colony of New York, which was under Dutch rule for a large part of seventeenth century. But what did Dutch colonists think of the “Great North River of New Netherland,” of its strategic advantages, geographic features, plentiful resources, and manifold uses? How did they compare it with the other rivers in New Netherland? What did it remind them

of? And, finally, how did it fit into Dutch colonial culture?

The 1635 map shows New Amsterdam strategically located at the river’s mouth. Yet both Blaeu’s map and Hessel Gerritsz’s, entitled *Nova Anglia, Novum Belgium et*

Virginia,² which De Laet included in the 1630 edition of his book, are indications that cartographical exploration of the hinterland was still in its early stages. De Laet mistakenly suggested that the Hudson River extended north up to the latitude of the St. Lawrence River; Dutch skippers had testified that Native Americans came all the way down from Quebec to trade at Fort Orange (Albany).³

Even so, his suggestion points to the greatest advantage of the Hudson River: It provided an excellent route into the interior and remained navigable for oceangoing ships all the way to Fort Orange. Native American canoes were better suited for the upper reaches of the river, even though the crossing from the Hudson River watershed to the St. Lawrence watershed required a ten-mile portage (“The Great Carrying Place”) between present-day Fort Edward and Lake George. Shorter portages were needed to get past falls and rapids to enter Lake Champlain and the Richelieu River in order to reach the St. Lawrence. Going west, the Mohawk River (not on this map) provided a natural pathway between the Catskills to the south and the Adirondacks to the north. Again, a portage was required at the Oneida Carry to enter other waterways and eventually reach Lake Ontario at Oswego. Not coincidentally, these routes later became dotted with forts (Fort George, Fort Ticonderoga, Fort Stanwix, to name but a few) and remained of great importance until the arrival of the Erie Canal and the railroads in the nineteenth century.⁴

Johannes de Laet, writing in the early seventeenth century, very likely did not realize just how lucky the Dutch had been to settle where they did. In the Northeast, the Hudson River is second only to the St. Lawrence in providing access to the hinterland. There is no other river that even comes close. Yet the French in Canada not only had a better starting position, they also explored the interior years before the Dutch did, as the St. Lawrence allowed oceangoing vessels to sail up to the Lachine Rapids at Montreal. Further inland, portages also were required, but there was no need to move from one watershed to another. In other words, there were no mountain ranges to cross. By 1616, Samuel de Champlain had already travelled as far west as Georgian Bay. It took the French only a few years more to reach Lake Superior.⁵

In contrast, the Dutch appear to have been reluctant to venture deep into the interior. In the northerly direction, it is likely that Arent van Curler explored the upper reaches of the Hudson River in the 1640s and 1650s, but unfortunately he did not leave any record of it. The inland trek made by Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert between 1634 and 1635 was very likely the first time that a Dutch colonist went west beyond the Hudson River basin. Van den Bogaert and two other Dutchmen, accompanied by a group of Mohawk Indians, started out from Fort Orange on a trade mission and went as far west as Oneida Creek. Significantly, the trip was made in winter and they had to plod through heavy snow rather than make use of convenient waterways. This reluctance to explore should not lead us to believe that Dutch colonists were lacking in geographical curiosity. Rather, there was little need for them to engage in long, expensive trips. Dutch control over the North River allowed traders to let the natives

bring furs to them at Fort Orange.⁶

The navigability of the Hudson River and its access to the hinterland were great assets, arguably the single largest factor why New York eventually became the gateway to America, thus shaping the metropolis we know today. Yet navigating the river was not an easy task in the seventeenth century. When Henry Hudson went up the river during his famous voyage of 1609, he had to make several stops: the tide was running against him, a sloop had to be sent out to sound possible channels, the wind was contrary, etc. Of course, Hudson was charting unknown waters and had to be careful. By the time De Laet published his book, many others had gathered information for him, and he made good use of it. In fact, his description was intended to serve as a sailor's manual and it abounds with nautical details such as latitudes, depth soundings, locations of reefs and islands, with the occasional remark thrown in about the Native peoples. In sailing up the river, de Laet's imaginary sailor encounters several reaches, "racks" in Dutch. (The word found its way into the name of Claverack, for instance.) After navigating many islands in the river, de Laet's sailor finally comes to a place where only small sloops could travel further. That is where his description ends.⁷

The most remarkable feature of Johannes de Laet's section on the Hudson River is actually what he leaves out. He does not mention the Palisades, Storm King, or other geographical features other than those that could pose a danger to passing ships—for instance, "a sharp point that juts out [...] with some sands." Both his aim of providing information to navigators and the fact that he personally never traveled to the New World are obvious explanations for these omissions, but there is more to it than that. Very few of the seventeenth-century descriptions of New Netherland contain appreciation of natural beauty; the emphasis consistently is on practical use rather than aesthetic delight. To us, accustomed as we are to visiting national and state parks, seeking out scenic sites, and venturing into the great outdoors for rest and recreation, the Hudson River Valley is a region of exceptional natural splendor.

But this perspective on nature is a modern phenomenon. In the seventeenth-century biblical worldview, man took the central position. God had created nature for the benefit of mankind, but after the fall of man much labor was required to gather its fruits. To be of use, nature needed to be tamed and kept in check. Wilderness was abhorrent, evil, and to be feared. It was the domain of the devil, which goes some way toward explaining European attitudes toward the Native Americans who inhabited it.⁸

This anthropocentric view is dominant in all descriptions of New Netherland. Positive adjectives were not used to signal natural beauty but to highlight the abundance of resources. Most of these were of course to be found on land rather than water and needed a human hand to reach their full potential. For instance, West India Company secretary Isaac de Rasière in 1628 was only moderately impressed by the meadows on Manhattan: "The grass is good in the forest and valleys, but when made into hay is not so nutritious for the cattle as here [meaning the Dutch Republic], in consequence of its wild state, which yearly improves by cultivation."⁹ He observed the seasonal

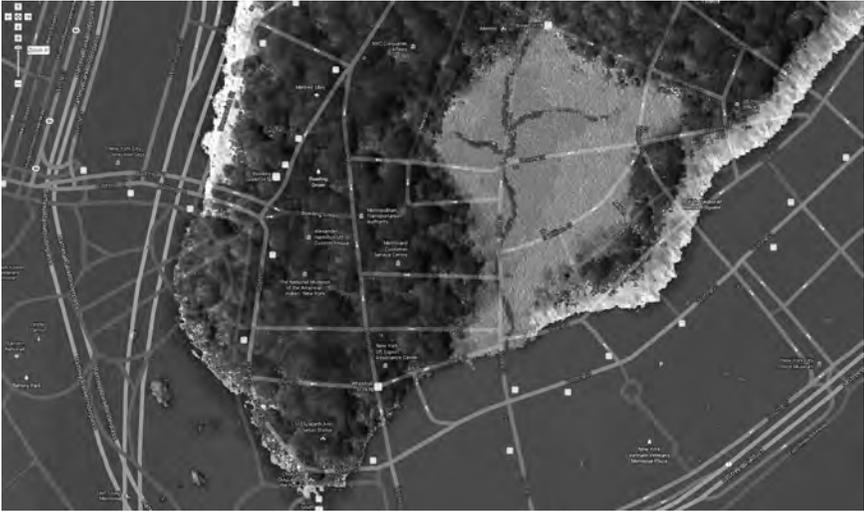


Figure 2. Screen shot from <http://welikia.org/explore/mannahatta-map/> (accessed 11 September 2013)

fishing of the Native Americans and the ease with which they obtained large catches, but remained silent as to the extent to which the Dutch colonists engaged in fishing.¹⁰

De Rasière also noted the defensive advantages the river offers to the Dutch fort and even suggested turning the southern point of Manhattan into a small island by cutting a channel across to the Hudson River and extending the tidal creek at the site of present Broad Street to construct a small harbor there for sloops and ships. (Figure 2)

This is an interesting observation that warrants a closer look. Even though De Rasière does not use the word “canal,” digging a Dutch-style canal was very likely what he had in mind. He was used to the soft soil of the western Netherlands, which is easy to dig through, but he would have been sorely disappointed in the difficulties of assaulting the bedrock of Manhattan, which is only ten feet below the surface at Bowling Green. De Rasière’s scheme would never have worked, yet the plan reveals his mindset: He tried to comprehend New World circumstances by using an Old World outlook.

We encounter the same attitude in the well-known Castello Plan of New Amsterdam. (Figure 3) Johannes Vingboons, who never set foot in New Netherland, drew this plan on the basis of a map, now lost, made by Jacques Cortelyou. Vingboons depicted the tidal creek and its tributaries as neat, Amsterdam-style canals. This adaptation of the image of New Amsterdam to suit European sensibilities is quite understandable. Vingboons was trying to sell this watercolor to Cosimo III de’ Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, who visited Amsterdam in 1667 and 1669. Obviously the grand duke would have been much interested in the way in which European civilization in all its glory was conquering the New World. A realistic depiction of the small, muddy village that New Amsterdam actually was would probably have been less to his liking. Unfortunately, the Castello Plan is often taken to be an accurate portrayal of New



Figure 3. *Afbeldinge Van de Stadt Amsterdam in Nieuw Nederlandt* (The Castello Plan), Jacques Cortelyou/Johannes Vingboons, ca. 1667. Process print by Alinari from watercolor copy. Museum of the City of New York. Gift of the Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, Florence, Italy, 49.150

Amsterdam. Appropriate source criticism is not often applied to it.¹¹

Yet this kind of source criticism is essential when interpreting any illustrations and depictions of New Netherland, including the taking into account of several questions: Who produced the depiction, what transformations did it go through, what was the intended audience, etc. Sixteen years after de Rasière, the observations of another Dutch colonist, Johannes Megapolensis, appeared in print. Megapolensis was a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, so there is little surprise when he compared the height of Cohoes Falls, on the Mohawk River, to that of a church. In other cases, too, his text, written for unknown correspondents in the Dutch Republic, aimed to connect to the mental framework of an audience that had never experienced the New World and had trouble grasping it. In the very first sentence of his tract, Megapolensis compared “the country here” [meaning the area around Albany] to that in Germany. The walnuts are somewhat harder than in the Netherlands, he writes, but the grapes are just as sweet, and the wine, if the vines were cultivated in the right way, would be as good as German or French. The deer are as fat as those in Holland.¹²

Megapolensis had an eye for differences between New Netherland and the Dutch Republic as well. He praised the “excellent” Hudson River for its abundance of fowl (“swans, geese, ducks, widgeons, teal, brant geese”) and fish (“pike, eels, perch, lampreys, suckers, catfish, sunfish or *carnousen*, shad, bass, etc.”). The minister further related how in a single hour a man with a hook and line can catch as many perch as ten or twelve

people can eat. To add credibility to this statement, which might seem over the top to his European readers, he produced eyewitnesses: “My boys have caught fifty in one hour, each a foot long. They have three hooks on the instrument with which they fish, and draw up frequently two or three perch at once.” With an eye to pasturing cattle, Megapolensis called the islands in the Hudson River “very beautiful [..], with “very good” soil. Islands were much in demand, as the surrounding water prevented wolves and bears from preying on the colonists’ cattle.

The river also makes an appearance in Megapolensis’s description of the New Netherland climate. In winter, he maintained, “it freezes so hard in one night that the ice will bear a man.” Megapolensis wrote at the coldest decades of what is now called the Little Ice Age, lasting from about 1400 to 1800. The Hudson froze solid most winters, making sailing down the river impossible and thus cutting off regular communication between Beverwijck (Albany) and New Amsterdam. Contact in the midst of winter was maintained by sending a letter with a Native American messenger. The river only began to open up again in March.¹³

Almost all Dutch observers remarked on the abundance of natural resources in the Hudson Valley, but none paid heed to the role of Native Americans in shaping nature, although all of them included sections on the indigenous people. The Dutch, like other

European colonizers, were unaware that the great variety of wildlife did not come about solely through natural causes. Where the Native American had farmed, America was no natural wilderness, untouched by human hand. The Native method of farming, whereby areas of forest were burned down, cultivated, and abandoned cyclically, resulted in a mosaic of afforestation at different stages of development, with a wealth of species as a result.¹⁴ Even the observant Adriaen van der Donck, who did remark upon Native agricultural practices, did not fully grasp what impact the Native Americans had on the land.

Adriaen van der Donck was, of course, the most astute as well as the most prolific colonial writer on New Netherland. He was an eloquent writer who knew the power of well-chosen words. His *Beschryvinge van Nieuw-*



Figure 4. Adriaen van der Donck, *Beschryvinge van Nieuw-Nederlant (gelijck het tegenwoordigh in staet is)* (Aemsteldam: Evert Nieuwenhof, 1655, 2nd. ed. 1656). Library of Congress, F122.I.D66

Nederlant (Description of New Netherland) (Figure 4), first published in 1655 and reprinted a year later, is a marvelous piece of scholarly writing in the classical mold. It takes its inspiration from Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, which he mentions several times. As a writer, Van der Donck has been compared to William Bradford and John Smith. The only reason he has not achieved similar fame is because he did not write in English. In the first section of his book, Van der Donck provides a description of the geography. This is followed by a practical second section on farming and hunting, and a third on the Native Americans. The fourth section is devoted entirely to the beaver. van der Donck completes his *Description* with a discussion of the merits of New Netherland in the often-used dialogue format. Unsurprisingly, most of what he wrote on the four main rivers of New Netherland—the South River, North River, Fresh River, and East River—is found in the first section of his book.¹⁵

Like other observers, Van der Donck found much to praise along the South River and its tributaries, which “could offer good opportunities to found large hamlets, villages, and places there and about because of the large number of rich, fertile meadows through which they flow.”¹⁶ His positive view of the Delaware River, though, should be placed into the context of his aim of furthering immigration. Especially after 1655, when promoting colonization under the auspices of the City of Amsterdam became a major aim in publications featuring New Netherland, the Delaware River was invariably singled out as the best place for settlement. Van der Donck even stated that “all those that are well-travelled” compare the Delaware River with the Amazon because of the outstanding qualities of both the river and the surrounding lands. In this case, he cannot convince the contemporary reader by putting forth himself as an eyewitness. As far as we know, he never actually visited the southern part of New Netherland.¹⁷

However, Van der Donck was personally acquainted with the North River. He lived in the vicinity of Fort Orange for a number of years and later spent some time on Manhattan. To him, the Hudson River was “at the moment the most renowned and most populous in New Netherland,” and “most of the trade and commerce happens on this river.” van der Donck listed “several fine kills” that flow into the Hudson River, including Wappinger Creek and Catskill Creek. Like Megapolensis, he also noted the abundance of fish and could not refrain from including an anecdote from his personal experience: In March 1647, two whales made their way up the river. One of them beached itself near Cohoes Falls. It turned out to be a bonus for the colonists, as they were able to get a large quantity of oil from it. Once the carcass started rotting, the stench could be noticed for some distance. Remarkably, Van der Donck does not interpret the beached whale as a sinister portent, as was usual in the seventeenth century.¹⁸

Having advanced so far up the Hudson River with his description, Van der Donck described the upper reaches of the Hudson as well as the Mohawk River, reporting that the Mohawk, which he compares in breadth to the IJssel River in the Netherlands, “reaches quite through the lands of the Mohawks and Oneidas and dies in a lake well over sixty miles distant and remains always navigable up to that point.” Van der Donck

further praised the Mohawk, as “it sprinkles very many great meadows and is full of fish.” But like Johannes de Laet, Van der Donck was not geographically accurate: Oneida Lake is not the source of the Mohawk. Likewise, he stated (on the basis of Native American reports) that the Hudson River springs from Lake Champlain, which with some exaggeration he considered as big as the Mediterranean Sea. Yet he did understand the importance of the rivers and streams as trade routes into the interior, emphasizing that aspect—as well as the danger of waterfalls—in reporting an incident of a Native American being dragged over the falls in a canoe made of tree bark. The man’s wife and child were killed in the incident and he lost most of his trade goods, but he survived. Van der Donck related that he had heard this story told by the survivor himself and thus used the incident to assert his own reliability.¹⁹

On describing the Fresh and East rivers, Van der Donck was quite brief, but he emphasized that the latter “is famous and should be preserved because of the great multitude of convenient bays, harbors, kills, gulfs, rivers, and other places.” Yet even after describing the four main waterways of New Netherland, Van der Donck could not leave the subject of water, adding a few general remarks that illuminate his dominant interest in outlining opportunities for prospective colonists. New Netherland, he stated, has “many fine streams of kills, brooks, and creeks that are navigable, spacious, and large.” He added that there are “also many waterways, tributaries, and running creeks with many beautiful waterfalls suitable for all kinds of milling work,” “several standing waters [...] well stocked with fish,” “innumerable fine springs and wells [that] become very clear and amazingly pure streams” with excellent drinking water. Indeed, Van der Donck emphatically added, he had never heard of any ill effects of drinking natural water in New Netherland.²⁰ In short, the Hudson River and its tributaries were extolled for (1) their navigability, (2) their suitability for water mills, (3) their fisheries, and (4) their drinking water. What a land, what a river! Every seventeenth-century Dutchman reading such praise would immediately want to move to the New World...

Or would he? The seventeenth-century Dutch were of course well acquainted with water in many ways. If Simon Schama is to be believed, Dutch culture in the 1600s was shaped by the struggle against water. And there are many people in the Netherlands who seek the origins of the current Dutch political system in the late medieval water boards that organized the maintenance of dikes, especially the western provinces of the Dutch Republic, Holland and Zeeland, which were flatlands crisscrossed with rivers, estuaries, and lakes. While these were mostly navigable, they did not always provide convenient and safe routes, so during the seventeenth century an elaborate network of canals was constructed, mainly for transporting people and mail. With multiple departures every day, this provided an inexpensive and very reliable means of transportation between cities. Of course, it was different in the eastern parts of the Dutch Republic, but rivers like the IJssel, the Meuse, and especially the Rhine offered transport opportunities far inland, similar to the Hudson River. Travelling by boat would have been as familiar to colonists in New Netherland as to those Dutchmen who never ventured beyond

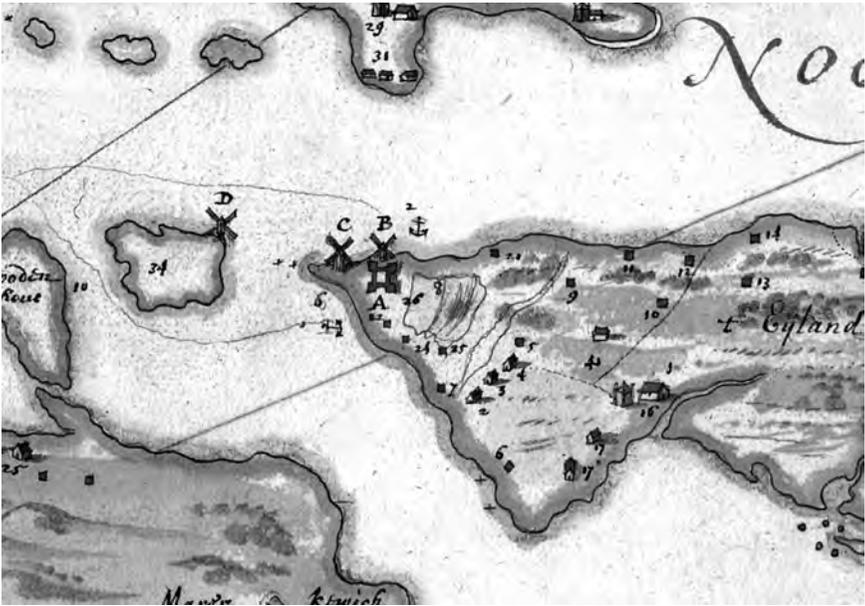


Figure 5. Detail from *Manatvs gelegen op de Noot Rivier*, Johannes Vingboons, 1639. Library of Congress, G3291.S12 coll.H3

their country's borders.²¹

Second, watermills were not as common in the Dutch Republic as windmills; in most areas, there was no elevation of the kind that allowed waterfalls. The main exception was in Gelderland, where the edges of the sand plateau called the Veluwe provided a sufficient drop to power watermills, most of which were used to produce paper. In contrast, the watermills on the creeks and kills flowing into the Hudson were mostly intended as sawmills. And there were many of those. There are still three creeks in the Hudson River Valley called Sawkill, and the Bronx River used to be called that as well. A Sawkill even traversed Manhattan once, but only a small portion of it is left: the lake in Central Park. Also on Manhattan was the Collect Pond—called *Varsche Water* (Fresh Water) by Dutch colonists. Already in the 1620s attempts were made to build a weir in the stream issuing from it and construct a water-powered gristmill. Added to the windmills constructed on Governors Island and on the southern tip of Manhattan (Figure 5), these were very early efforts to introduce expensive, state-of-the-art Dutch water and wind technology into the New World.²²

Third, fisheries, which for the Dutch Republic were of prime importance; every town and city had fish markets on designated days. While the saltwater fishery, especially the herring fishery, was on the rise and became one of the Dutch Republic's prime exports, the freshwater fishery mainly served the less affluent part of the local population. For various reasons, however, it declined in the seventeenth century. So the abundance of fish described by Megapolensis and Van der Donck would have appealed to many of

the common folk in the Dutch Republic.²³

Fourth, drinking water. For most people in the Dutch Republic, especially in its cities, good drinking water was hard to come by, as the canals also served as sewers. The common drink was weak beer, of which the average consumer drank some 280 liters per year. It was even drunk at breakfast. So the abundance of good drinking water in New Netherland was a bonus to most colonists, especially as it allowed them to save on beer money. Beer could be expensive, and as the outlay for a brewery was a costly affair, brewers usually were rich members of the local elite. In that respect, New Netherland did not differ from the Dutch Republic.²⁴

The four advantages of the Hudson River as listed by Van der Donck (transport, sawmills, fisheries, drinking water) were certainly substantial. Yet when compared to the Dutch Republic, they were only different in terms of degree. For the Dutch colonists, all features of the Hudson River that they encountered had familiar counterparts in the culture of the Dutch Republic. Colonizing the Hudson River meant adapting their worldview only slightly; there was no need to overthrow it completely. Dutch colonists did not “Americanize” by sailing the Hudson River or drinking its waters. Yet, like Adriaen van der Donck, they greatly valued its benefits. While Van der Donck placed a strong emphasis on the practical use of resources, he was not completely blind to natural beauty. Writing about the hills in the Hudson Valley, he mixed the two:

Most of the hills do not have steep drops but rise steadily, so that one sometimes finds oneself on a very high ground and looks over all plains and valleys and tall trees before one becomes aware of it or notices that one has ascended. Which then commonly offers wonderful visions for lovers of the art of painting or of the hunt, for it shows a multitude of pleasant prospects, shadows, hills, watercourses, and valleys, and for the hunters deer and other wildlife which one can see pasturing or playing on the hillside or in the valleys.²⁵

Just there, for a fleeting moment in between all practical matters that faced Dutch colonists who were trying to stay alive, there is a glimmer of the awareness of natural beauty that would come to fruition two centuries later in the Hudson River Valley School of painting.

Jaap Jacobs is honorary lecturer at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland.

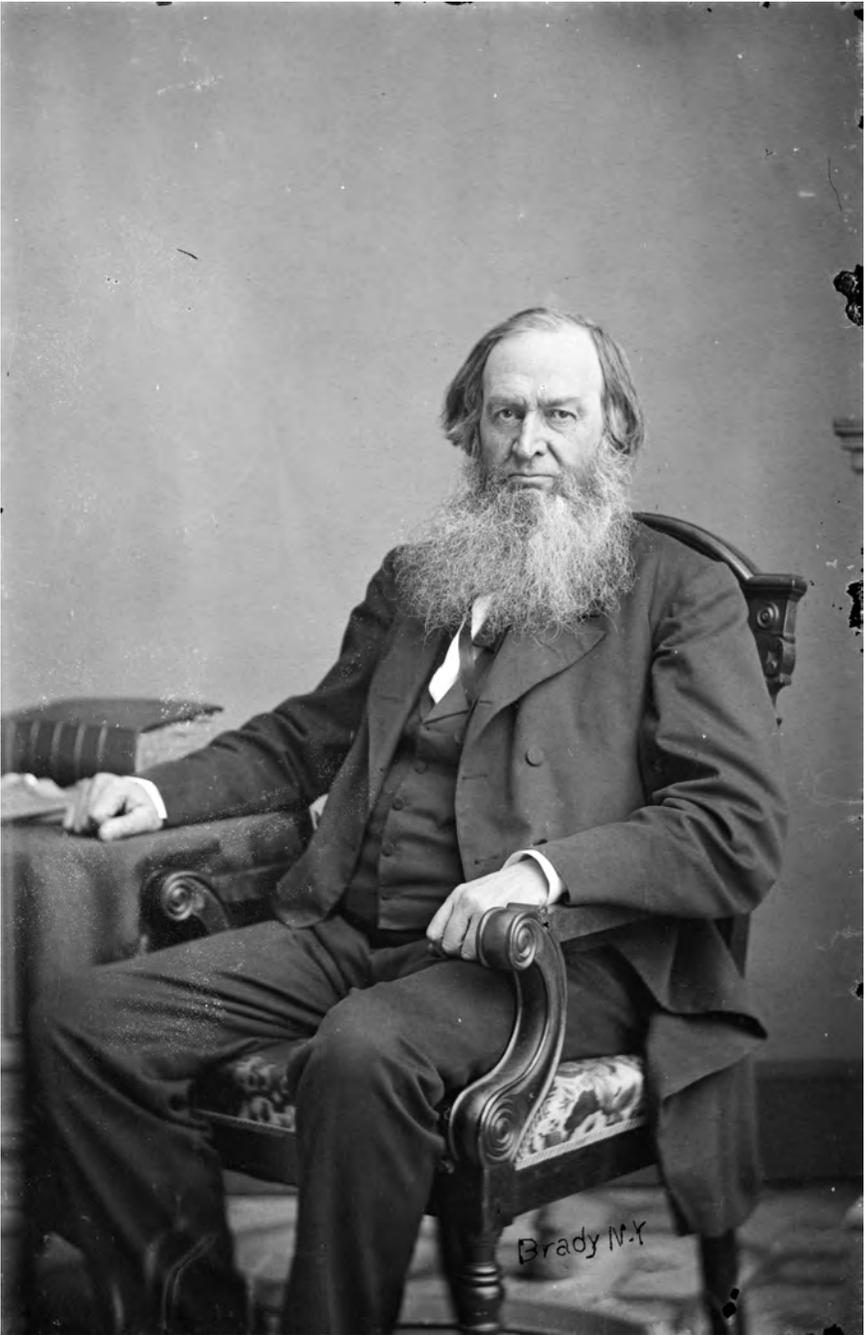
This article is adapted from the Hudson River Valley Institute's second annual Handel-Krom Lecture in Hudson River Valley History, “‘Spacious and Broad, Clear and Deep’: The Hudson River and Dutch Colonization.”

Endnotes

1. Johannes de Laet, *Nieuwe Wereldt ofte Beschrijvinghe van West-Indien, wt veelderhande Schriften ende Aen-teeckeningen van verscheyden Natien by een versamelt door Ioannes de Laet, ende met Noodighe Kaerten ende Tafels voorsien* (Leyden: In de druckerye van Isaack Elzevier, 1625), p. 87: “de groote Noordt rievier van Nieuw-Nederlandt”; p. 88 and 90: “de groote rievier[e] de Montaines”; Johannes de Laet, *Beschrijvinghe van West-Indien door Ioannes de Laet. Tweede druck: In ontallijcke plaetsen verbeteret, vermeerderet, met eenige nieuwe Caerten, beelden van verscheyden dieren ende planten verciert* (Leyden: bij de Elzeviers, 1630), p. 104, 106; J. Franklin Jameson (ed.), *Narratives of New Netherland 1609-1664* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1909. Reprint New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1967) (hereafter abbreviated as *NNN*), p. 45, 51. While “the great river of the mountains” is usually ascribed to Hudson, it seems more likely that Johannes de Laet penned the phrase. It is not included in the journal of Robert Juet, nor in the quotations that de Laet took from Hudson’s journal. Instead, the phrase occurs once in the title of chapter 10 and once at the beginning of chapter 11, both in book 3 of De Laet’s compilation.
2. See Kees Zandvliet, *Mapping for Money: Maps, Plans and Topographic Paintings and Their Role in Dutch Overseas Expansion During the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Amsterdam: Batavian Lion International, 1998), p. 167-168; <http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/history-and-heritage/digital-exhibitions/charting-new-netherland-1600/the-maps/nova-anglia-novum-belgium-et-virginia-1630/> (accessed 7 November 2013).
3. De Laet, *Nieuwe Wereldt*, p. 88: “naer alle apparentie soo komt dese rievier tot aen de groote riviere van St. Laurents ofte Canada, want onse schippers ghetuyghen dat hier tot aen het fortjen [Fort Nassau] wilden komen van de voornoemde riviere ende van Quebecq ende Tadoussac”; *NNN*, p. 47.
4. Adriaen van der Donck, *A Description of New Netherland*. Ed. Ch.T. Gehring, W.A. Starna, trans. D.W. Goedhuys (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), p. 150, n. 13-14; William J. Campbell, *Speculators in Empire: Iroquoia and the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), p. 28-29.
5. Donald W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America; A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History: I. Atlantic America, 1492-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 43, 109, 11; Claiborne A. Skinner, *The Upper Country: French Enterprise in the Colonial Great Lakes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), p. 7. While we may consider such inland expeditions by the French impressive, it is worth mentioning that by 1640 200 to 250 Hurons would make the 1,400-mile round trip from Georgian Bay to the Saint Lawrence annually to trade their furs.
6. Charles T. Gehring & William A. Starna (eds.), *A Journey into Mohawk and Oneida Country, 1634-1635. The Journal of Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988); Jaap Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland: A Dutch Settlement in Seventeenth-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), pp. 109-117.
7. de Laet, *Nieuwe Wereldt ofte Beschrijvinghe van West-Indien*, p. 87-88; *NNN*, pp. 45-47; *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, s.v. ‘rak’, B, 1, <http://www.wnt.nl> (accessed 11 November 2013).
8. “een scharp uytstekende punt [...] met eenighe sanden”; De Laet, *Nieuwe Wereldt ofte Beschrijvinghe van West-Indien*, p. 87; *NNN*, p. 46; Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, 1st edition 1983); Peter N. Carroll, *Puritanism and the Wilderness: The Intellectual Significance of the New England Frontier 1629-1700* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969).
9. “’t gras isser goet int boos ende valeijen, doch gehooyt sinde ist so voetsaem niet voor de beesten alshier, door de wildicheyt, dat mette Culture Jaerlicx betert”, Kees-Jan Waterman, Jaap Jacobs & Charles T. Gehring (eds.), *Indianenverhalen: De vroegste beschrijvingen van Indianen langs de Hudsonrivier (1609-1680)* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers 2009), p. 45; *NNN*, p. 104.
10. *NNN*, pp. 105-106. De Rasière does mention the fishing by the English colonists in New Plymouth: *NNN*, p. 111.
11. “dien punt waere met Cleenne moite tot een Eeijlandeken te maeken door gravende blomartsdal”, Waterman, Jacobs & Gehring, *Indianenverhalen*, p. 45; *NNN*, 105. In *NNN* this passage is translated thus: “This point might, with little trouble, be made a small island, by cutting a canal through Blommaert’s valley.” However, the original Dutch does not include the word “canal” (*canal/kanaal* or *gracht*); Jason Barr, Troy Tassier, Rossen Trendafilov, “Bedrock Depth and the Formation of the Manhattan Skyline, 1890-1915”, figure 5, (http://www.fordham.edu/images/academics/graduate_schools/gsas/economics/dp2010_09_

- barr_tassier_trendafilov.pdf*, accessed 11 September 2013); Martine Gosselink, *New York New-Amsterdam: the Dutch Origins of Manhattan* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Nieuw Amsterdam/Nationaal Archief, 2009), p. 123-125.
12. NNN, p. 170; "Het landt alhier", Waterman, Jacobs & Gehring, *Indianenverhalen*, p. 103; NNN, p. 168.
 13. "treffelijcke rievier"; "swanen, gansen, eenden, smienten, teelingen, rotgansen"; "snoeck, aal, baars, pricken, suyger, dick-kop, sonne-vis of carousen, elften, twalfden, ec." In the NNN translation carousen is left out. A possible translation is "carriage fish", based on the similarity with the word *karos*, but *carousen* could also have been derived from kroes as in kroeskarper, Crucian carp (*Carassius carassius*). This is however a completely different species than the sunfish family (*Centrarchidae*). While the Crucian carp is not found in North America, its similarity to the *Centrarchidae* family may have led Megapolensis to use the name. A third possibility is that *carousen* is a Mohawk word. I thank Professor Nicoline van der Sijs and Dr. Dirk Mouw for their advice. "Mijn jongers hebben in een uurtje wel 50. gevangen, elck so groot als een voet. Sy hebben aen haer instrumenten daer sy mede visschen 3. angelen en trecken menichmael 2. a 3. baarsen tseffens."; "seer schoone eylanden"; "Die gront is seer goet"; "soo vriest het met kracht. Op een nacht een gang-ys, jae de rievieren selfs, met stil weer, en alser geen harde strom en gaet vriest in een nacht los toe, datmen de tweede dagh daer over gaet"; Waterman, Jacobs & Gehring, *Indianenverhalen*, p. 104-105; NNN, p. 169-171; Charles T. Gehring, "New Netherland: The Formative Years, 1609-1632," in Cornelis A. van Minnen, Hans Krabbendam & Giles Scott-Smith (supervisory eds.), *Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations* (Amsterdam: Boom Publishers, 2009), 74-84, esp. 78.
 14. William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1983).
 15. Adriaen van der Donck, *Beschryvinge van Nieuw-Nederlant (gelijk het tegenwoordigh in staet is)* (Aemsteldam: Evert Nieuwenhof, 1655, 2nd. ed. 1656), translated in Van der Donck, *A Description of New Netherland*. The translation provided by Goedhuys is reasonable, but unfortunately incomplete. Without offering an explanation it leaves out no less than eight pages of preliminary material, including some laudatory poetry and Van der Donck's own introduction to the first edition (replaced by the publisher's introduction in the second edition), thus depriving the unwitting reader of the opportunity to place the text in its appropriate context. On Van der Donck's writings, see also Frans Blom, "Picturing New Netherland and New York; Dutch-Anglo Transfer of New World Information", in Siegfried Huigen, Jan L. de Jong & Elmer Kolfin, *The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2010), pp. 103-126; Frans Blom & Henk Looijesteijn, "A Land of Milk and Honey: Colonial Propaganda and the City of Amsterdam, 1656-1664", in *de Halve Maen*, vol. 85, Fall 2012, pp. 47-56; Roelof van Gelder, "Een land van melk, honing, kou en corruptie", in *Ons Amsterdam* 35 (1983), pp. 35-38; Ada van Gastel, "Adriaen van der Donck, New Netherland, and America" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Pennsylvania State University 1985), esp. p. 225; Ada van Gastel, "Van der Donck's Description of the Indians: Additions and Corrections", in *William & Mary Quarterly* 3rd ser. 47 (1990), pp. 411-421; Ada van Gastel, "Rhetorical Ambivalence in the New Netherland Author Adriaen van der Donck", in *Melus* 17 (1991), pp. 3-18; Cornelia Gertrude Hibbeler, "Deux Regards sur l'Amerindien: Marc Lescarbot et Adriaen van der Donck" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Louisiana, Lafayette, 2002); Cornelia G. Hibbeler, "Adriaen van der Donck observateur des moeurs amérindiennes dans la colonie de Nieuw Nederland", in *Canadian Journal for Netherlandic Studies* 24 (2003), pp. 1-11; Russell Shorto, "Foreword", p. ix-x in the Goedhuys edition.
 16. Van der Donck, *Beschryvinge*, p. 8: "en wel goede ghelegentheden souden konnen zijn om groote Vlecken, Dorpen en plaetsen by en ontrent op te rechten door de groote menigte van vette vruchtbare Landsdowen daerse door heen stroomen"; "verscheyde schoone killen"; Van der Donck, *A Description of New Netherland*, p. 10.
 17. Blom & Looijesteijn, "A Land of Milk and Honey"; Van der Donck, *Beschryvinge*, p. 8: "alle die ghene die bereyst zijn"; Van der Donck, *A Description of New Netherland*, p. 10.
 18. Van der Donck, *Beschryvinge*, p. 8: "de fameuste and ghepopuleerte van Nieuw Nederlant, rechte voort is", "Den meesten handel en negotie valt op dese Rivier"; Van der Donck, *A Description of New Netherland*, p. 11; Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland*, p. 11. The whale also was sighted by Anthony de Hooges, who did interpret it as a portent. See "Memorandum Concerning the Sighting of a White Whale in the River Before Fort Orange" in "Copije van eenige Acten ende andere aenmerckelijke Notitien" (De Hooghes Memorandum Book, 1643-1650), box 31, p. B23, Van Rensselaer Manor Papers, New York State Library (<http://liarchives.nysed.gov/PubImageWeb/collectCollections.jsp?id=69220>; accessed

- 13 November 2013); also in *The Memorandum Book of Anthony de Hooges: Transcription*, transcribed by Gijs Boink and Tom Weterings, edited by Dirk Mouw (Albany: New Netherland Research Center and New Netherland Institute, 2012), p. 91 and *The Memorandum Book of Anthony de Hooges*, translated by Dirk Mouw (Albany: New Netherland Research Center and New Netherland Institute, 2012), p. 110 (<http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/research/online-publications/>, accessed 27 May 2013); Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: an Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London: Collins, 1987), pp. 130-145.
19. Van der Donck, *Beschryvinge*, p. 10: “het streckt heel tot door het Macquas en Scimekas lant en sterft in een Lack wel over de tsestigh mijlen veer en blijft tot daer toe altijd navigabel”; “Het besproeyt heel veel schoone Landen ende is seer Vis-rijk”; Van der Donck, *A Description of New Netherland*, p. 13.
 20. Van der Donck, *Beschryvinge*, p. 10-12: “dese Riviere is fameus ende behoort in waerden ghehouden te werden om de groote menigte van bequame Bayen, Havens, Killen, Inwijcken, Rivieren ende andere plaetsen”; “versheyde schoone wateren van killen, Beecken en Kreecken, die navigabel, ruym en groot zijn [...] oock veel waterloopen, spruyten en stroom-killen met veel schoone Afvallen, bequae tot allerley Molen-werck: [...] versheyden stil-staende Wateren [...] wel met Vis versien”; “ontallijcke veel schoone Fonteynen ende Water-wellinghen [...] worden seer klaer en uytermaten, ja tot verwonderinghe toe suyver”; Van der Donck, *A Description of New Netherland*, p. 14-16.
 21. Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, pp. 15-50; Dennis Bos, Maurits Ebben & Henk te Velde (eds.), *Harmonie in Holland: Het Poldermodel van 1500 tot Nu* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2008); Jan de Vries & Ad van der Woude, *Nederland 1500-1815: De eerste ronde van moderne economische groei* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans, 1995), pp. 173, 221-231, 430, 573.
 22. Van der Donck, *Beschryvinge*, p. 8: Van der Donck, *A Description of New Netherland*, p. 11; Stadsarchief Amsterdam, Notarial Archives (5075), inv.nr. 943, not paginated (25 June 1632, 17 July 1632, 3 and 6 November 1632); Elva Kathleen Lyon, “The Darling Strangers and English Appetites: Technology Transfer and European Cultural Barriers in the Early Modern Atlantic World” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Rutgers University, 2010), pp. 199-237.
 23. De Vries & Van der Woude, *Nederland 1500-1815*, pp. 286-292.
 24. R.E. Kistemaker & V.T. van Vilsteren, *Beer! The Story of Holland’s Favourite Drink* (Amsterdam: Batavian Lion, 1994); Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland*, pp. 132-134.
 25. Van der Donck, *Beschryvinge*, p. 13: “als over al in het Lant de meeste Heuvels vallen niet steyl, maer gaen verdraeghlijck op, so dat men somtijts op heel hoogh Lant is ende over alle vlackte en dalen en hooghe boomen siet, eer mender op denckt ofte merckt dat men hoogher ghegaen is, dat dan ghemeenlijcke fraeye speculatie aen de liefhebbers van de Schilder-konste/ ofte van de Jacht toe is brenghende, want het toont menigte van aengename verschieten, schaduwen, heuvels, waterloopen, dalen, oock voor de Jagers Herten en ander wildt werck dat men in ‘t hanghen van de Heuvels en Dalen siet weyden ofte vertieren”; Van der Donck, *A Description of New Netherland*, p. 18.



The Honorable Gerrit Smith of New York, portrait from the Brady-Handy
Photograph Collection of the Library of Congress

The Abolitionist and the Land Reformer:

Gerrit Smith and Tom Devyr

Amy Godine

Who Was Gerrit Smith?

All spring and well into the summer of 1846, black reformers in New York followed the debate in Albany on equal suffrage. The question facing delegates to the New York State Constitutional Convention (the first since 1821) was momentous. *Would this assembly grant to black New York males the same right to vote as whites, or would New York blacks—alone among the state’s potential voters—have to show proof of ownership of \$250 in order to cast a ballot?* Since 1821, a starkly discriminatory property requirement had effectively disenfranchised New York’s free black electorate. Equal rights activists, white and black, lobbied, preached, and prayed for a change.¹

Stalled and stymied, the acrimonious, all-white convention delegates referred the decision to a plebiscite. On November 3, the racist stipulation was overwhelmingly reinstated at the polls.

For white Americans, 1846 may have been the momentous “Year of Decision” described by the historian Bernard DeVoto. For black New Yorkers, it was the opposite: a year of stasis, impotence, and grief. Without access to the ballot box, black New Yorkers could not vote for candidates who spoke for antislavery legislation or equal rights for free blacks in New York. More than disenfranchised, they were silenced. They could not engage in the political war on slavery, or vote against legislation that withheld the rights of citizenship. They had no lobby. They had no voice. Their campaign for a meaningful, active citizenship, two decades in the organizing, had failed. As one black activist wrote two months after the vote, “Each succeeding day, that terrible [anti-black electoral] majority feels sadder, heavier, more crushingly on my soul. At times I am so weaned from hope, that I could lay me down and die...”²

Why would this writer, a black doctor from Manhattan, choose as his confidante a rich white land speculator who made his home in a tiny town in central New York? What was it about Gerrit Smith—a homebody, a proudly self-described upstate provincial—that compelled the trust of not only the despairing Dr. James McCune Smith but numberless black civil rights activists from every state in the Northeast?

A founder of the small, determinedly antislavery Liberty Party; a man professing to hate politics who nonetheless ran doggedly and often for state and national office,

and who, on a Free Soil ticket, won a term in U.S. Congress from New York's 22nd District in 1852; a member of the storied "Secret Six" who backed and bankrolled the militant abolitionist John Brown in his failed bid to seize a federal armory in Harper's Ferry, Virginia; an intimate of Frederick Douglass, an acquaintance of William Lloyd Garrison, Susan B. Anthony, Horace Greeley, William Seward, Charles Finney, Thaddeus Stevens—Gerrit Smith was as recognizable a public figure in his time as he is largely unremarked today.³

Yet on Smith's death, in 1874, the eloquent black orator Henry Highland Garnet would tell the *New York Herald* that, "...the colored people, without exception, looked upon Mr. Smith as their dearest and even their only friend... They know that in him they have lost their strongest champion." Sad, grave, enduring words. Who was Gerrit Smith?⁴

He was named for his grandfather, and grew up in Peterboro, a village founded by and named for his father. The Town of Smithfield, to which Peterboro belonged, was named for Peter Smith, too. An early business partner of John Jacob Astor, Peter Smith was a land speculator, noted mainly, if uneasily, for the lively, sometimes shady-seeming business he did leasing duchy-sized tracts of land for very little money from the Oneida Indians of New York. Smith taught himself the Oneida language and named his first son for a chief, Skenandoah. The Oneida offered him a name as well: "Saw Mill"—whether for his industry or his appetite for profit is unclear. Recognizing in Gerrit a kindred talent for a deal, Peter Smith made his son the manager of his land office in 1820, and for the next half century Gerrit Smith built the already impressive family fortune with energy and zeal; indeed, his stunning legacy of philanthropy and his career as a reformer stood squarely on the shoulders of the day job whose importance he tended publicly to discount.⁵

That public stance was understandable. Smith's remunerative work was unglamorous and grueling. He spent thirteen hours a day at his desk, fighting eyestrain, managing his books. In his dealings with reformers, he often downplayed the importance of his business. This inclined them, not surprisingly, to envision it as something apart (and implicitly beneath) his better-known philanthropic and political career. Taking their cue from Smith's professed disdain for business, most of his biographers also underestimated the role of Smith's "day work." But in truth, that day job was energizing and essential. Each day, commerce challenged Smith with opportunities to translate his Christian faith into considerate and careful action. Free trade, he said more than once, was an expression of the divinely sanctioned "voluntary principle" that gifted people with the right to choose, over and over again, to make good choices, moral choices. That's why Smith fervently opposed government proposals (a federal postal system, a state-run canal, a common school system) that threatened to hobble private enterprise and to snatch from individuals or private groups the incentive to do good, progressive work that honored God.⁶

Smith's storied generosity, no less than his business, also expressed "the voluntary

principle” so dear to his heart—and reformers who assumed Gerrit Smith gave from shame, guilt, pride, self-consciousness, or habit mistook him utterly. He gave because he could. He had inherited and made a pot of money, and giving satisfied him. It was his choice. As a friend wrote in a tract that Smith commissioned: “None but hearty, free-will offerings, the result of the soul’s best wishes. . .” Good deeds and works that were *privately volunteered*, not externally compelled by convention, collection plate, or law, were the coin of his philanthropic kingdom.⁷

Enter that rich realm with no good grasp of this currency, Gerrit Smith might lend you his ear. But as the radical land reformers would discover, to win his ear was not to gain his heart.

A Scheme of Justice and Benevolence

When white New Yorkers voted to deny black men the vote in 1846, Gerrit Smith had been twenty years committed to the abolition cause, but it took a bruising collision with a city mob to rouse him to real action. In 1835, he joined 600 activists at an antislavery convention in Utica. He had come only to watch and listen, but when a mob drove the assembly from its meeting place, Smith was converted to a radical abolitionism that never wavered. He opened his Peterboro home to the ousted conventioners (300 of them made the thirty-mile trip). He took charge of the New York Antislavery Society, and called on true enemies of slavery to defy the law and help fugitives at every opportunity. He made himself a pillar—strategic and financial—of the tiny antislavery Liberty Party, the one party in the nation committed unequivocally to the abolition ticket. Many white reformers saved their outrage for the plight of black slaves and slaves alone. Smith drew no hard line between the agony of the enslaved millions and the misery of free blacks in the North. Between Northern-style racism and Southern white supremacy he recognized a link as tight and binding as a manacle; he took pains to see his good work benefitted slave and free black alike.⁸

Equal voting rights for black New Yorkers would have helped both slave and freeman, but even before the 1846 plebiscite that killed the hope of voting rights for free black New Yorkers, Smith saw the bad news coming. And so, that August, Smith made public his intent to parcel out 120,000 acres of his northern New York property in forty-acre lots to 3,000 black New Yorkers. Not that he had any faith his “scheme of justice and benevolence” would work a sudden magic on the outcome of the voting rights referendum. Even if his 3,000 deeds were all distributed that August (and they weren’t; it took eight years), land ownership could not turn Smith’s “grantees” into voters all at once. For one thing, no forty-acre wilderness lot held a \$250 value. Over time, however, gift lots could be improved to gain this value and make antislavery voters out of the black pioneers. “Since they must become landowners that they will be entitled to vote, they will become landowners,” Smith explained. And more than any radical reformer in the nation, Smith had the land to spare—more than 750,000 acres, much of this in rural upstate New York.⁹

Among chroniclers of Smith's initiative—Smith's biographers, abolition scholars, writers with an interest in John Brown—the strong consensus is that Smith's giveaway was a failure. In Adirondack histories especially, the giveaway occupies a bottom drawer of folly and misadventure. There are reasons for this reading. For all the hoopla in the antislavery press when the giveaway was announced, it drew fewer than 100 deed holders to Essex and Franklin counties, where most of the Adirondack gift lots were dispersed. Smith's ignorance of the disabling poverty of his urban beneficiaries (and in particular their utter lack of start-up capital), combined with the rumors and reversals that beset the giveaway from the outset (to name the most obvious: the difficulty identifying 3,000 downstate grantees who could meet Smith's rules of eligibility; the discouraging reports of backwoods trickery and fraud; anxiety about the impact of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 on the grantees' safety in a strange new territory; concerns about the legality of Smith's deeds; and not least, the grantees' own unfamiliarity with northern farming) brewed a perfect storm of risk that spelled the giveaway's demise.¹⁰

Today, the legacy of Smith's giveaway is largely understood in terms of its place in the life of the radical abolitionist John Brown. In 1849, Brown, a farmer and wool broker, moved his family to the Adirondacks to build a farm and lend a hand to a dozen-plus black homesteaders on their North Elba lots. Ten years later, the militant abolitionist made a national name for himself in a legendarily ambitious and badly botched bid to seize a Virginia armory full of rifles. Brown's plan—to arm the slaves; to spring them from bondage—resulted in his capture, trial for treason, and hanging. And that's the John Brown whose name resonates today. Not the sheep farmer who lent a hand to his black neighbors in North Elba, but the "Martyr-Emancipator" of Harper's Ferry whose nation-polarizing actions anticipated the Civil War.

But the impact of the giveaway was greater than its relatively minor contribution to Brown's hagiography. Notwithstanding the giveaway's failure to lure black New Yorkers from metropolitan New York, Gerrit Smith's master plan lived in memory—black and white—for generations. And these memories, long unremarked by scholars and historians, are notably diverse. For a first generation of radical black reformers, the giveaway (failed or not) was stirring proof of the nobility of the man the radical minister Henry Highland Garnet called the black man's truest friend. For an emerging generation of black Republicans, its value was more vexed—a gift nobody asked for, an albatross for which young blacks were expected to be grateful, a reminder of black dependence on the caprice of white largesse. Proslavery Southerners, too, found useful ways to "read" the giveaway. After John Brown's arrest in 1859 and the revelation of Gerrit Smith's complicity in Brown's scheme, the giveaway (then thirteen years old) was invoked by many as proof of the instability of its originator (who but a lunatic, it was argued, would give land to blacks?). After the Civil War, some Southerners invoked Smith's generosity in a gentler light, as hopeful evidence of his disinterested benevolence. (If he could give land to 3,000 men he didn't know in the North, might he be persuaded to give land, or at least to bankroll, prospective farm colonies in the ruined South?)¹¹

A Mutual Romance

This essay takes up yet another willful reading of the giveaway—the peculiarly distorting glass through which some of New York’s leading land reformers chose to know and judge it. Their reading was not fantastical. Smith himself encouraged it—to a point. He intended that the giveaway excite the interest of New York’s influential agrarian reformers. He hoped it might kick up their sympathy for New York’s thousands of landless, vote-less blacks—“the poorest of the poor, and the most deeply wronged class of our citizens.” Indeed, suggests John Stauffer in *The Black Hearts of Men*, Smith originally devised the giveaway in no small part as an *homage* to the land reformers, a grateful nod to a movement he admired.¹²

And there were other proofs of Smith’s sympathy with land reform. In 1846, he tried to sell three-quarters of a million New York acres at county and state auction. The main idea was to dump unwanted land and cut his taxes, but Smith was also moved by his own growing discomfort with land monopoly. Then, a few years after he gave land to black New Yorkers, he gave another batch of wilderness lots to impoverished *white* New Yorkers—and for this distribution, he made the downstate land reformer George H. Evans one of his key agents. Smith’s speeches lauding land reform were so prolific in the late 1840s and early 1850s that some historians have argued that his love of antislavery work had cooled. In these years, Smith argued that international land monopoly was not simply as detestable as slavery, it was worse, that land reform was not only as urgent as abolition, it made abolition all but moot, because only land reform had the power “not only to overthrow present slavery, but to prevent, or make impossible, its resuscitation and repetition. . . . Apportion the soil equally among its equal owners, and where would there be room for slavery? You could not work it in even edgewise,” Smith claimed in 1848, the year the National Land Reform party nominated him for President (one of three presidential nominations from several parties he would win). The next year brought from Smith the remark that land reform was “the great basis reform,” which, if successful, would “be found to be, not only the seminal principle of other reforms, but their controller, regulator, harmonizer.” In 1850 Smith asserted that the right to the soil was man’s very “greatest right” of all, and in 1851 he urged the government, “without delay,” to “prescribe the maximum quantity of land which each family might possess. In our country, as its population is so sparse, the quantity might go as high as a couple of hundred acres.” The United States was lucky: the “vested rights” of owners of unimproved land “may be spared. . . . until the stores of wild land are exhausted.”¹³

No wonder New York City organizers anticipated a bold alliance between land reform and Smith, one of the best connected radical reformers of the age. And no wonder, too, when Smith proved a better friend than convert and the alliance failed to gel, land reformers took it hard. One in particular, the once powerful, now forgotten agitator Thomas Ainge Devyr, engaged in a bruising debate with Smith about his wrongheaded priorities. But the rift revealed in their correspondence was deeper than Devyr ever knew. It was, at root, a profound if never openly articulated divide

between two visions of human freedom, one spiritual and one economic. It would not be reconciled.

A Call to Action: George H. Evans

It is much harder to know how much Tom Devyr meant to Gerrit Smith than it is to gauge the value of Smith's friendship to Tom Devyr. The thirty-some letters Devyr wrote Smith from 1856 until Smith's death in 1874 were charged with feeling, high hopes, and intimate reflections; plainly, he supposed Smith returned the favor of his high esteem for this relationship. But Devyr could not know he was one of a vast fraternity; that letter writers all over the country considered Smith a soul mate (the Gerrit Smith Collection at Syracuse University packs seventy-three microfilms and enough boxes to fill a room). We know, however, and we know, too, that Devyr cannot be made to stand for all of radical land reform in his dealings with the land baron (Devyr was one ideologue in a throng) any more than Smith's interest in land reform can be said to be the one concern that ruled and organized his life.

As the land reformer one historian has called "the strongest...proponent of a natural-rights argument for man's access to the soil" in the nation; as the friend and ally of prominent downstate land reformers George H. Evans, John Windt, and Thomas Commerford; as the publisher of the widely circulated reform sheets, the *Albany Freeholder* and its peppery successor, the *Anti-Renter*; as a leader of sufficient influence to see his own name converted by his adversaries into a movement ("Devyrism"); and as, not least, the one land reformer in his circle inclined to bare heart and soul to Gerrit Smith, Tom Devyr was, if not land reform's chief spokesman, still an advocate with high honors.¹⁴

And how did land reform's great knight esteem Smith's philanthropy and his gifts of land to African-Americans in particular? "To me it is a bitter thought that we—Gerrit Smith and Tom Devyr—could have turned the helm right and we did not," Devyr told him bluntly not long before Smith's death. Resentment, envy, competition, even charges of betrayal—Tom Devyr's grief lit up the darker side of the land reform movement's relationship to antislavery reform like a flare.¹⁵

A few words about the agrarian movement Tom Devyr made his life's cause. Land reform—in rough, the conviction that no man ought to own more land than what he needs to support his family, that every man ought to have enough land to provide for his survival—sailed to America with the books and letters of French and British radicals in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Steeped in the Enlightenment rhetoric of natural rights law, buoyed by the Jeffersonian conviction that a republic was only as strong as the farmers who sustained it, the transatlantic land reformers argued that a portion of the earth was as much the entitlement of men as water, air, and light. As the Welshman-turned-New Yorker George H. Evans reasoned, "If any man has a right on earth, he has a right to land enough to raise a habitation on. If he has a right to live, he has a right to land enough for his subsistence." And if a portion of God's earth for self-survival was every man's divine entitlement, the land reformers said, it was no

The Odd Book

OF THE

NINETEENTH CENTURY,

OR,

“CHIVALRY” IN MODERN DAYS,

A PERSONAL RECORD OF REFORM—CHIEFLY

LAND REFORM,

FOR THE LAST FIFTY YEARS.

BY THOS. AINGE DEVYR.

“For the Land is Mine, saith the Lord, for ye are strangers and sojourners with Me.”—*Leviticus, Chap. xxv., v. 23.*

“When he can hide the Sun with a blanket, and put the Moon in his pocket, I'll pay him Rent.”—SHAKESPEARE.

“The Land belongs in usufruct to the Living.”—THOMAS JEFFERSON.

“I do not endorse all the headlong opinions of Mr. Devyr. I believe that he has fallen into errors and made mistakes.* But he has labored so long in Land Reform, and so sincerely, that I accord to him the privilege of having letters addressed to him, at the Office of the *Irish World*, New York, Box 3,624.
PATRICK FORD.

*Right! Pope says:

“Virtuous and vicious every man must be;
Few in the extreme, but all in the degree.” See p. 200,
Amc'n Sec.

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Copyright, Thomas Ainge Devyr, 1882.

The title page of Thomas Ainge Devyr's self-published book from 1882
Courtesy of the Internet Archive

less his right to demand land from those who hoarded more than what they needed to survive, and who, in doing so, violated God's great plan for human self-sufficiency.¹⁶

Was it Evans' well-articulated editorials in his Manhattan weekly, *People's Rights*, that roused Gerrit Smith's interest in the cause in 1844? George Evans called Smith "one of the largest Slaveholders in the United States." Land barons like Smith who hoarded land which, *broken up*, might give poor laborers a shot at self-sufficiency and self-respect, owners whose lust for land denied economic freedom to the needy—these people, Evans argued, were *making slaves, white slaves*—in Smith's case by the tens of thousands. Call that slavery chattel or wage, direct or indirect, it was slavery all the same, claimed Evans, and the daily proofs of its expansion—rampant speculation in the West, a contagion of tenements, mills and slums in the North—were the reformer's call to arms. At risk was the agrarian ideal, the sustaining vision of a landed democracy that promised every home-owning citizen a *material* stake in the Republic. Land monopolists, then, were worse than greedy, they were un-American: they profaned a basic right. The solution, radical land reform, espoused nothing less than the equitable redistribution of land as a just and reasonable compensation for the labor of those who worked it.¹⁷

When Evans charged Gerrit Smith with slaveholding, he fully meant (as Stauffer notes) to goad Smith into a vigorous debate. He did all that and more. Smith proved much less an antagonist than an eager, interested acolyte. So out of step was he in tiny Peterboro, he claimed ("so far from the world's track") he had simply never heard of Evans and his broadsides. Would Evans tell him more? As their correspondence quickened, Smith was compelled to remind Evans of the basic difference between a "man's right to himself" and his right to property, and to insist that the former had to be obtained before the latter could be guaranteed. This was the standard abolitionist answer to all talk of "white slavery," and Smith knew his lines. Even so, Evans had the land baron's ear. And this is where the debate rose to the fore, this public romancing of Gerrit Smith by the land reformers and his subsequent embrace of land reform principles and program, expressed so proudly in the "practical land reform" (Smith's words) of his land distributions to poor black and later white New Yorkers from 1846 to 1849.¹⁸

In the end, though, we have to wonder: who was the romancer here and who was being wooed.

Was Smith really so out of the loop as he insisted in the cozy guise of small-town naif? If he didn't know Evans' newspapers, he knew Horace Greeley's—and the *New York Tribune* editor had been brooding over land monopoly for years. At the New York Constitutional Convention in the summer of 1846, Greeley scolded Smith for his outsized holdings. He did not name him. He did not have to. What other New Yorker answered to the second land monopolist in this description? "At this moment I hear of one man who owns *Eight Millions* of fertile acres in Texas; another wants to sell over *One Million* of acres in this State. They are both good men. It is not their fault that Land Monopoly is legalized and sanctified the world over... It is *your* business to rectify elemental Political abuses even though softened and disguised by Time." Principal

among those abuses, Greeley said, were laws that allowed even “good men” to “deny the use of the soil to those who need it.”¹⁹

Greeley’s jab was not the first. Two years earlier, in 1844, tenant farmers in the leasehold counties near the Hudson and the Catskill Mountains were jousting with their long-time landlords, among them Gerrit Smith, who had ‘inherited’ several hundred title-holders from his late father. In the 1840s, leasehold tenants made up a tenth of New York’s population, or over a quarter million people. Smith did not know which of the political factions the agitators tramping his leasehold land were backing. Agrarian ideology was represented very differently by George H. Evans on one hand, and the Anti-Renters on the other. (Recall Smith’s determination in 1846 to distinguish his brand of agrarianism—law-abiding, peacable—from the *bad* kind. No defender of the rabble, he!). But for all the differences between parties, movements, factions, there was overlap. Ideas rolled around. For five years the city-based land reformer Tom Devyr advised the grass-roots anti-rent farmers in the Hudson Valley; upstate “Indians” gave their city allies pointers on country-style resistance tactics at distress auctions; veteran Jacksonian-era agrarians buoyed the movement with tales of early sabotage and rebellion. Smith may have hoped the comparative smallness of his leasehold county holdings and his good name for leniency would spare him the attention of the activists. Had *he* ever treated tenants with the patroon’s icy scorn? Was *he* to be likened with a Van Rensselaer, Livingston, or Verplanck? Was it *Smith* who demanded that his tenants show up at his land office with four fat chickens and a wagonload of wheat? When twenty-five petitioners, prosperous farmers rigged out in their Sunday best, trudged to Albany to plead their case to Stephen Van Rensselaer in his great hall, the great patroon strolled past without a glance.²⁰

Gerrit Smith met all tenants who came to see him, and was no more anxious to do battle with his Catskills renters than to invite an association with the aristocratic patroons whose largely Democratic, pro-slavery politics he despised. But the wide brush of the land monopolist caught him nonetheless. Well before Evans’ editorials reached distant Peterboro, Smith was hearing from his agents about “Indians” consorting with his tenants, giving them grandiose ideas about lawsuits and faulty deeds, and urging them to steal timber from his woods.²¹

How to best protect his interests? The best defense was a good offense. Smith struck fast. In 1844, he offered six months rent-free to any tenant who made a good faith effort to find legal defects in his lease. No other proprietor made such an offer. It was indisputably benevolent and, just as useful, distinguished Smith from the patroons and posed for them a challenge. *Instead of waging war on your own tenants, why not this?*²²

Of course, Smith’s tenants faced a challenge, too. Smith made his offer knowing title searches on this scale were nearly always unavailing. First, the Hudson Valley anti-rent associations were too poor to carry legal costs for prolonged cases of this kind. And the landlords had the legal talent all sewn up. “Mr. Van Rensselaer’s business in Albany County is worth more to any lawyer than that of any one hundred tenants,”

admitted the *Albany Freeholder*. Only ask the tenants of Rensselaerwyck; in 1830 they found an agent to hire lawyers to vet a title for a Van Rensselaer estate. But all the city attorneys the agent went to were already in the pay of the patroon. It's no use, the agent was advised by President Andrew Jackson's Secretary of State, Martin Van Buren. Since "any attempt to invalidate [the patroon's title] would be rendered unavailing by the passage of time and the acts of the parties," why "embark in a controversy from which there is so little to hope and which must unavoidably be attended with great expense and trouble"? Title documents were notoriously hard to trace, and a state statute of limitations worked strongly in the landlord's favor.²³

Further, Smith himself had perfect faith in the legitimacy of his titles and his regard for his tenants' doubts about their contracts was as cool as the patroons'. Pay for a title search if you think it worth your while, he told his tenant farmers in his broadside. *But*: "To expect that I shall put myself to the pains and expense of inquiring into my land titles, whenever A, B or C, Tom, Dick, or Harry, shall clamor against them... is most unreasonable."²⁴

Still, there was that gift of six months rent, an honest sacrifice for Smith when his own debts loomed. He recognized the tilt in the playing field; this was how he'd roll it smooth. He could afford to pay attorneys. His tenants could not. Now, with unspent rent money, they could press their case. Note: he never questioned the legality of the leasehold system or urged anyone to break a contract. He only asked his tenants to get to know their contracts well enough to learn if they had grounds to fight him. He doubted they'd find anything incriminatory. He himself regarded his tenants' "Indian advisors" as unprincipled and uninformed. But as essentially conservative as his offer was, there was radicalism in his *respect* for his tenants' interest in their titles, the radicalism of disinterested benevolence—and this the Hudson Valley land reformers noted and admired. What other absentee proprietor had gone this far, asked Albany attorney Calvin Pepper, Jr., in 1846. In a tract disputing the Van Rensselaers' claim to their vast estate, Pepper invoked Gerrit Smith as a shining rarity among proprietors, a beacon for the unenlightened rest. "When the title of Gerrit Smith... was questioned by the tenants, he sent for them and generously and with the true spirit of an honest man, offered to submit his title to the most rigid scrutiny... There is not an honest and ingenuous mind that does not at once approve of this course on the part of Mr. Smith as dictated alike by reason and justice."²⁵

Then came all the other seeming evidence of Smith's new-found interest in land reform: The giant land sales. The several distributions of free land and deeds to New York's neediest. The speeches and endorsements ("Often, within the last few years, has my heart ached, when I have heard abolitionists speak contemptuously of land-reform. They know not what it is of which they speak..."). Can we blame Devyr for apprehending a certain paradigm shift in Smith's deepest-held beliefs?²⁶

A Knight Errant

The first time Devyr heard Smith work a crowd was at an Albany convention, sometime in the late 1840s. (Devyr, who in several letters invoked this “glorious address which never before was equaled on this earth,” did not state its date). It wasn’t the first Devyr heard of New York’s great philanthropist. In 1846, when Smith decided to unload much of his land, Devyr flagged the coming sale in his newspaper with a wink. (“Getting Tired Of It,” ran the header in his *Albany Freeholder*. “Light is breaking through.”) Neither was it Smith’s polished mien that dazzled him—Devyr’s own outdoor oratory in the Helderbergs drew a crowd; he was an old campaigner, too. And it wasn’t Smith’s ideology, for nothing Gerrit Smith had to say about land reform could surprise Tom Devyr. For three decades in as many countries he had been preaching the great cause.²⁷

No, the news was not the message but the messenger. For a radical abolitionist as influential as Gerrit Smith to not only categorically proclaim the villainy of land monopoly but to declare it the very spring that enabled chattel slavery to flourish, not slavery’s lesser twin but its parent—this was newsworthy, and it augured an alliance whose potential for winning converts tantalized and frustrated Tom Devyr for thirty years. Like many other land reformers, Devyr firmly felt that slavery could be fathomed and resolved only in the wider context of the crime of land monopoly, itself a crime against natural law. Free the slave without first rooting out the source of slavery, and the emancipated black would only be re-enslaved alongside several million landless whites. Before slavery could be abolished, said Devyr, landlordism had to go, and with it all the worn-out, used-up laws that made it possible for rich people to enslave the poor by accumulating land they never meant to use, or by refusing tenants’ titles who’d paid in rent the value of their property five times over, or, more profoundly, by denying people the portion of God’s bounty that was their due. Enter the New York land agitators with their arsenal of platforms, slogans, broadsides. Then, in 1844, the National Reform party, whose radical ideas on land limits and inheritance would make it to the land reform movement what the Liberty Party was to abolitionism. And finally, the possible support of one of the most effective radical reformers in the state, the abolitionist Gerrit Smith.²⁸

Their talent for grandiosity aside, the two men could not have been less alike. Smith was patient, grave, considerate; Devyr irascible and pompous, prone to epistolary tantrums and fits of petulance and self-pity. Smith reflected; Devyr pecked and needled. Smith was rich, the star-kissed son of a famous land baron, himself a landlord to struggling hundreds, never happier than when home in Peterboro writing letters to his friends in his high-ceilinged mansion. Devyr, a Catholic baker’s boy from Donegal, Ireland, made a break for Liverpool in his teens, only slumping home when he could not land a job. (“I was willing to be a slave, but could find no master.”) All too familiar with the plight of tenant families languishing on lots too worn to furnish a nominal subsistence, rents that soared even as the soil’s productivity went down, secret societies that waged war on rent collectors through midnight raids and arson, Devyr knew land

reform from the hard ground up; he had suffered its opposite firsthand. His hatred of land monopoly was visceral and fierce. This wasn't, and would never be, Smith's style.²⁹

In long, confiding letters, Devyr told Smith he counted the dog-eared romances of knight errantry of his youth a greater influence than his own parents. Inspired also by the revolutionary rhetoric of free thinkers like Thomas Paine, Devyr penned a tract, *Our Natural Rights*, then betook himself again to England and lingered four years. He edited a radical newspaper. Joined a Chartist union in Newcastle-On-Tyne. Better still, discovered a political community that helped him work out his own thoughts on land reform. For if Devyr couldn't slay dragons or dash to the rescue of distressed damsels and hapless orphans, good works still awaited. "I was no armed knight, but there were oppressed Tillers of the soil, and the great landlords were their giants and necromancers." He would be, he told Gerrit Smith, a "Chivalrous Reformer" who advocated for turning over unused land to the landless unemployed. After an abortive bid in 1840 to provoke an uprising against Newcastle's anti-Chartist constabulary (700 resisters pledged to join the fray; only seventy showed up), Devyr, a wanted man, grabbed his family and sailed to New York.³⁰

The editorship of a Brooklyn newspaper was his first job and it didn't last; Devyr and his Democratic backers had a falling out (a familiar pattern, as it happened). But the immigrant was untroubled. His contacts in the land reform community all said the *real* work for organizers was in the leasehold counties of the Catskill Mountains and the Hudson River Valley to the north. Land-rich and cash-needy proprietors were stepping up their rent collections, distress sales, and evictions, and hard-pressed tenant farmers were fighting back, defying sheriffs, subverting farm auctions, and sabotaging foreclosures; indeed, before the Civil War, this was the biggest farmers movement in the nation. Tom Devyr "first drew sword" for the upstate Anti-Renters in 1840, glad to help them organize, alarmed to find their aims so modest. All they wanted, he would later gripe, was a crack at a title for the land they'd lived and worked on for generations. Devyr goaded them to reach for more—think big and go for real working limits on land ownership (no more land than what God intended!) and even limits on the rights of inheritance. Devyr and land reformers in his camp would challenge contracts that concentrated the God-given right of the majority in the hands of a patrician few (imperiling the stability and health of the American republic), organize the anti-renters into a voting bloc, and press their program at the polls.³¹

By 1844, the charismatic agitator was honing strategy with leading lights in land reform like Evans, John Commerford, and printer John Windt. From a flag-draped wagon in Manhattan the reformers worked the crowds, papering the town with handbills. And with Devyr's deep knowledge of the leasehold counties, his newspaper experience, and his nimble touch with grassroots rural insurgencies, he easily emerged as the best choice to pitch the program of the new National Reform Association to the upstate Anti-Renters and to serve as National Reform's "war correspondent" to downstate sympathizers. Land reform historians Charles McCurdy, Reeve Huston, and Jamie

Bronstein, each drawn to Devyr's neglected story, concur that he acquitted himself admirably. "A man with an unusual combination of great empathy and boundless energy," notes McCurdy, "Devyr spent several days each week on the road attending meetings of Anti-Rent locals in Albany, Rensselaer, and Schoharie counties. He respected the farmers, listened to their hopes and fears, and summarized their concerns in his weekly editorials. He neither talked down to them nor claimed to speak for them. The tenants loved him." And his influence was considerable, at least on the fractious west side of the Hudson River and until his beloved *Albany Freeholder* was taken over by the more moderate Whig land reformer and attorney Ira Harris. Until that time, Devyr had a fan base, a program, a well-circulated newspaper, and a party with a zinger of a motto, "Vote Yourself a Farm!" (Later on, Republicans would poach it.)³²

All the cash-strapped agitator wanted was a backer. Could this be Gerrit Smith?

The Fan Dance

Meaningful, enduring land reform is structural, systemic. It cuts deep; it realigns the very bones of ownership. Where it gives, it also grabs, and as many fight it as embrace it—it makes pain. What Smith called land reform—his many gifts of land—was less reform than an exercise in personal philanthropy. It set a bold example for rich landowners like himself, but that example, being private, occasional, and above all, voluntary, had no teeth. It did not call for limits on land ownership, speculation, or inheritance. It did not ask for changes in the status quo. Indeed, one is led to wonder why Smith called it land reform at all when it honored so few of the basic principles of the movement.

Then, this may have been Smith's point. His sort of land reform was "practical" before all else. No pie-in-the-sky manifesto but something that might actually happen, something you could see. That's what distinguished his work from the rest. And he loved the rest—embraced the theories, *in theory*, and was all for legislation that would parcel out public land out West to hopeful farmers. When it came to setting an example with his own land however, Smith was true to form and all business. Land reform in his backyard would have to be *practical*—that is, a privately-arrived-at, conscience-driven, voluntary activity that hardly answered to the deeper vision of the term at all.

Was it Smith's fault that his new friends in the movement were so dazzled by his interest and largesse (and by his blazing difference from other large-scale proprietors) they ignored his emphasis on practicality and volunteerism, claimed him as their own, then lamented his betrayal when he seemed to stray from the fold? Was he to blame when they chose to understand his giveaway to black men in terms of land reform alone, willfully ignoring its role in the struggle for equal voting rights and enfranchisement? George H. Evans applauded Smith's giveaway to black New Yorkers, but not for what it could do for *them*; he saw it as an opportunity to put pressure on the Legislature. If only Smith would appeal to the Assembly "for power to confer on [the gift lands] the National Reform plan of inalienability except to landless persons, which would have preserved those lands from monopoly if the legislature had acceded to the proposition,"

then we'd see some results, Evans urged. Even if the proposition were shot down, he wrote, the "discussion on the principles of Land Limitation [limits on the amount of public land that could be sold to any one entity or person]" would probably do "more good" than the gifts themselves.³³

This offhand dismissal of the gift lands was from land reform's most loyal and outspoken abolitionist! And if Evans was so unmoved by the political value of the giveaway, what did his less progressive cohorts make of it! Gerrit Smith's reaction to Evans' request was telling. He thanked the land reformer for a good idea—even said he might have used it if only he'd thought of it "in time." But when Smith had a chance to work it into a subsequent giveaway of land, this time to white New Yorkers, he did not. Notwithstanding Evans' reminder, Smith made no provision for curtailing resale rights on the land lots he offered poor whites in 1849. *Why would he?* How could Smith slap a land sale limit on one group of beneficiaries when no limit had been imposed on the first? The double standard would not have gone unresented or unremarked. Further, Smith was a *speculator*. While the land reformers hazily extolled the farm as the sacred preserve of feminine virtue, and the true alternative to the manifold corruptions of the mill, the market, the public workplace ("But for Land Monopoly," lamented Evans, "every female in a factory would have a parental roof to retreat to from the oppression of capital"), the longtime feminist Gerrit Smith was only too delighted to sell a city house lot to women who had pooled their factory earnings to buy a home. If Evans had forgotten this side of Smith; if his delight in Smith's attention had dulled his appreciation of Smith's progressive capitalism (the career that enabled Smith's philanthropies); if he could not anticipate the storm of outrage that would follow the discovery that Gerrit Smith, of all people, was imposing sale limits on his grantees when he would not abide by them himself—if Evans could not see the problem here, the threat to Smith's credibility, Smith himself saw it bold as day.³⁴

To Evans and the land reformers however, Smith's failure to make land limits a feature of his giveaways signaled nothing but a missed chance. And more rude awakenings were in store. In the late 1840s, Devyr asked Smith to put him on a payroll as a traveling spokesman for National Land Reform in the Anti-Rent counties. Devyr hoped to "combine and invigorate the powerful Reform element that could there be found, and bring it to the aid of our organization in New York City." Smith said no, and Devyr nursed a grudge for twenty years. He stayed angry, too, about Smith's indifference to the fate of "the good and virtuous" George Evans' newspaper *Young America* (Smith could have backed it; he did not). Smith might have put Devyr on a small retainer that would have let him stay upstate and do the land reform field work he loved; Smith declined. Back in New York City, Devyr urged Smith to bankroll his attempt to float a land reform newspaper that could go against the Whigs. In it, Smith would find a reliable and sympathetic forum for his columns (in pointed contrast, Devyr stressed, to Horace Greeley's standoffish *Tribune*). Nothing doing. Devyr dropped a hint as broad as a floorboard for "the means" to move his "numerous and small family to some remote

[upstate] farmhouse.” While none of Smith’s side of their correspondence has survived, it seems Smith did not oblige.³⁵

These slights and disappointments mounted. Time and again, as Devyr saw it, Smith missed the opportunity to privilege land reform above abolitionism in his pet projects and philanthropic gifts. “You affirm that ‘Land reform is the greater, and involves in its success the lesser Reform of slave emancipation.’ How is it then, that you devote to the latter one hundred times more of your resources and your talents than you do to the former?” You talk the talk, fumed Devyr, but I look at what you *do*, and you fail to deliver.

Set Smith’s work for land reform against his labors for the slave, the fugitive, the destitute free black—and we see at once that Devyr was right. Smith did much more for black rights than he ever did for landless labor. The only land monopolist he ever challenged was the federal government, an easy target when half the nation was clamoring for the distribution of public lands. Private property bound by contracts that enjoyed constitutional protection he would never be persuaded to assail. But was Smith’s refusal to go whole hog for radical land reform a betrayal of his own convictions, as Devyr liked to insist? Or was it Devyr who inadvertently revealed the deeper inconsistency, praising Smith on one hand for his bold reformist spirit, then denying him the spiritual wellspring of his beliefs?

The Voluntary Principle

Smith was a radical perfectionist. The principle of self-ownership (and its antecedent, the belief in the ineluctable divinity of every human) ran as deep in him as faith. Beguiling as he found the land reformers’ definition of personal freedom—economic independence and, more particularly, the right to make a living on the soil—he could not bring himself to betray the abolitionist vision of freedom as self-ownership, which in the last resort, as Eric Foner has pointedly reminded us, had not one thing to do with class relationships or economic justice. If Tom Devyr were half as considerate of Smith’s convictions as he was of his own hopes for Smith’s assistance, he might have spared himself half a lifetime of pointless disillusion. But just as Smith could only go so far in his affair with land reform without betraying his dearest held beliefs, Devyr, too, had a line he could not bear to cross.

He could not overcome his white supremacism. Nor did he mean to try.

Do not “scold me’ for keeping up a distinction of race,” Devyr wrote Smith in 1860. “Nature is beside you—scold her... I do not attempt to obliterate lines made by my Mother and my instructor.” Devyr kept his bigotry on a taut leash for the first few years of their correspondence, but by 1859 it was lunging out, and after the Civil War his sentiments yanked free. “No, Mr. Smith! No Blackman was not in a tenth part of as much ‘need’ as the white man. See the countless millions of Europe clothed in rags! Resident in filth—cold—hunger! The black slave never had to press his dying baby to his breast—dying of hunger!” (That Devyr’s presumptive black slave may never have

been able to press his baby to his breast because his wife and baby had been sold at auction, that the slave might have preferred self-ownership, however starved, to any well-fed enslavement—this was a point white apologists for land reform often chose to ignore). Devyr’s frantic outrage was the jealousy of a suitor losing ground. “The truth is the inequitable prominence given to the black race is fast crushing the destinies of the white man totally out of sight.” Devyr took everything Smith did for black Americans as a slap at his own cause—a gift of land or money, a speech for black America, was that much less for whites. The thought that the coming doom of land monopoly “might even, yet, be averted,” he grouched to Smith in 1866, “that Gerrit Smith might at least make an effort—might do what he could—might give to the myriads of his miserable white brothers a tenth or a hundredth part of what he has given to—but why waste words.”³⁶

Smith had framed his land giveaway to black New Yorkers in 1846 as a gift to the cause of land reform. In doing so he surely hoped—ever the conciliator—to rouse the white land reform community to the plight of landless blacks. Unabashed racists like Devyr (and in the ranks of midcentury land reform, racism was rampant) bluntly spurned the suggestion of a common cause. The only reason you favor black people over whites, Devyr declared, is that you never grew up poor, as I did. If you had—if you had been “appointed to contend with personal necessities, as I was, your sympathies and labors would, like mine, have leaned decidedly toward the white race.”³⁷

More remarkable than Devyr’s careless condescension is Smith’s evident forbearance with it. For twenty-five years he put up with Tom Devyr’s pompous grandstanding, his gripes, digs, and blasts. Maybe he felt sorry for Devyr, or saw some truth in Devyr’s oft-repeated insistence that he and Smith were spiritually twinned. Both lived and breathed reform; each man embodied the radical fringe of an outsider movement; each man nursed a vivid notion of his political centrality and perceived himself to be misunderstood if not outright maligned by the downstate city press. Both Smith and Devyr suffered painful political setbacks—Smith in 1844, when his Liberty Party won delegates enough in New York State to throw the national majority to proslavery Presidential candidate James Polk. The Liberty Party’s subsequent reputation among antislavery Whigs as a spoiler would bedevil Smith for decades. And Devyr, too, was bitterly embarrassed when a cabal of moderate land reformers took over his *Albany Freeholder* (“stolen by force” from [the farmers] by Ira Harris and the Whigs,” he later raged), and forced the bankrupt editor to move downstate “when I could no longer give my children food.”³⁸

Mostly, though, what they liked about each other was the promise of a portal to more power, greater influence, a wider turf. What might land reform accomplish with a friend like Gerrit Smith, his thousand links to political progressives all around the Northern states, his newspapers, his purse! And Devyr’s vision of Smith’s influence was nothing if not exalted: “Direct slavery of the negro was killed by Gerrit Smith,” he gushed in 1865. “Yes, sir, you are the man who killed Chattel Slavery in this Republic. Time, 1858. Place, New York State. It was to [counteract] your canvass that Seward declared

the ‘Irrepressible Conflict’ that virtually abolitionized his party...” (Devyr was referring to the gubernatorial campaign of that year; without the threat of a third party spoiler, he implied, Republican presidential hopeful William Seward would not have felt the pressure to speak up just before the election about an “irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces,” words that not only clarified the Republican Party’s commitment to “a free labor nation,” but were meant to stop Republican defections to Smith’s camp.) Envisioning himself as a knight errant of land reform, and Smith as the *echt*-Abolitionist, Devyr ached to hitch his chariot to Smith’s star (“If the whole world had abandoned [land reform], and left only Gerrit Smith and myself, I think we would have saved it...”). For his part, Smith likely discerned in Tom Devyr exactly the kind of grassroots political organizer who could breathe fresh life into antislavery politics. Look how well the Anti-Rent cause had done in the election of delegates to the 1846 Constitutional Convention! Now, *there* was a voting bloc—consolidated, focused, quick to mobilize—that really went to work! Had his antislavery party ever wielded this kind of fast-acting clout?³⁹

In the end, however, the epistolary friendship between the two reformers was to a political alliance what Smith’s philanthropy was to land reform—a token of esteem, loving and respectful, but no marriage of the souls. The two great causes would not join ranks, the occasional shared candidate or platform notwithstanding. If labor historian David Roediger was not referring to Gerrit Smith when he wrote the following, the point still applies: “If, to use tempting older Marxist images, racism is a large, low-hanging branch of a tree that is rooted in class relations, we must constantly remind ourselves that the branch is not the same as the roots, that people may more often bump into the branch than the roots, and that the best way to shake the roots may at times be by grabbing the branch.” Gerrit Smith grabbed the branch because it seemed to him to pose the greater threat. While he agreed with Devyr that “the landlord’s absolute ownership of the soil” was “the parent of all evils,” what did abstract issues of first causes matter to the man who did not own himself? Parental bragging rights did not make land monopoly the more *urgent* evil, not in the United States. The breach came down to a disagreement about *what freedom was*. Eric Foner’s summary cuts to the mark: “The labor movement [and its offspring, land reform], articulating an ideal stretching back to the republican tradition of the American Revolution, equated freedom with ownership of productive property. To the abolitionists, expressing a newer, liberal definition, freedom meant self-ownership—that is, simply not being a slave.” While Smith was one of the few abolitionists to observe with the land reformers that self-ownership without ownership of some means to self-sufficiency was the slippery path to economic re-enslavement, he was still enough of a perfectionist to insist on a careful hierarchy of need. Bluntly stated, the pain of the landless worker was terrible, but not to be confused with the agony of the black slave.⁴⁰

And if the conciliatory Smith was not always as clear on this as his uneasy black reformer friends would have liked, white reformers got the point. In his actions where

it mattered, Smith never would renounce his primary allegiance. He might dazzle land reformers at their conventions, host them at his Peterboro home, and roar along with them when J. K. Ingalls struck up the National Reform anthem, “Acres & Hands”—but the divinely sanctioned battle for self-ownership came first. In his view, this did not diminish the importance of the cause so dear to Evans and Devyr. It was not a competition. A good reformer could find ways to honor both causes and exult in their affinities. He had done it, or tried to do it, with his land giveaways to blacks and whites. No other abolitionist would take his interest in land reform, or go so far to press its cause.⁴¹

It would never be enough, and in the end a sour disappointment would be the mood that colored Devyr’s regard for his hoped-for hero. In 1874, the last year of Smith’s life, Devyr, in Brooklyn, vented yet again:

“You and I are passing off the stage. You have accomplished the great object of your life. Well, that is something. But what (in your memorable Address submitted at the Convention in Albany) you affirmed to be a greater object has been left undone. Now Disinheritance of the Race is assured. Now the blasphemous Monopoly—robbery, which has so desolated Europe—is descending on the myriad people who will hereafter wear the yoke in the land once redeemed by the brothers of Washington...” *You could have helped us*—is what he meant. *You failed us*. “It is not my fault if a wall has grown up between you and me. It is simply because you would give me no cooperation... This to me was most dispiriting. For if the honestest, aye and the ablest man I know would give me no help where could I expect any?”⁴²

But Devyr had tipped his hand early in his complaint. “*Well, that is something.*” In four grudging words he revealed all, summed up and flicked away the emancipation of four million Americans, or twelve percent of the nation’s population, and in so doing revealed a key reason for Smith’s ultimate reluctance to make the radical land reform cause his own. For there was nothing Smith could do to bridge the gap between opposing dreams of freedom, nothing he could say to melt the unexamined racism at the core of Tom Devyr.

Not long after the Civil War, when Jefferson Davis, the vanquished president of the Confederacy, was languishing in jail, the radical abolitionist Gerrit Smith had contributed substantially to the price of his bail. He did so, he told his Northern critics, to set an example. He hoped the South would answer and reciprocate his generosity with an equal effort to reach out to the freed slaves and deal with them—*voluntarily, without compulsion*—as God’s children in no less need of kindness than themselves.

The South, as he learned soon enough, had other plans.

At least Smith would live to see the New York Assembly rescind the \$250 property-ownership for prospective black voters. But in all the vanquished South, the campaigns to curtail or abolish the civil rights of black Americans were unrelenting. Poll tax laws disenfranchised hundreds of thousands of prospective voters. Vigilante racists terrorized civil rights activists, black and white. Thanks to the Amnesty Act of 1872, former secessionists could run for office, and when they won they speedily replaced

the biracial legislatures enabled by Reconstruction with all-white assemblies in thrall to the old Confederate cause. “Redeemer” governments were set up in one state after another. And in 1874, before Smith died, Democrats took control of Congress for the first time since before the Civil War.

“One bright long day,” wrote Devyr—the last wistful words from him that Smith would ever read—“we may meet where land or money is not of much account.”⁴³

Maybe Tom Devyr dreamed of a heavenly reunion.

Not, we’re guessing, Gerrit Smith.

Independent writer Amy Godine has been writing about Adirondack ethnic and black history for 25 years. Curator of the 2001 traveling exhibition, “Dreaming of Timbuctoo,” about abolitionist Gerrit Smith’s “scheme of justice and benevolence,” Godine adapted this essay from a work-in-progress, The Black Woods.

Endnotes

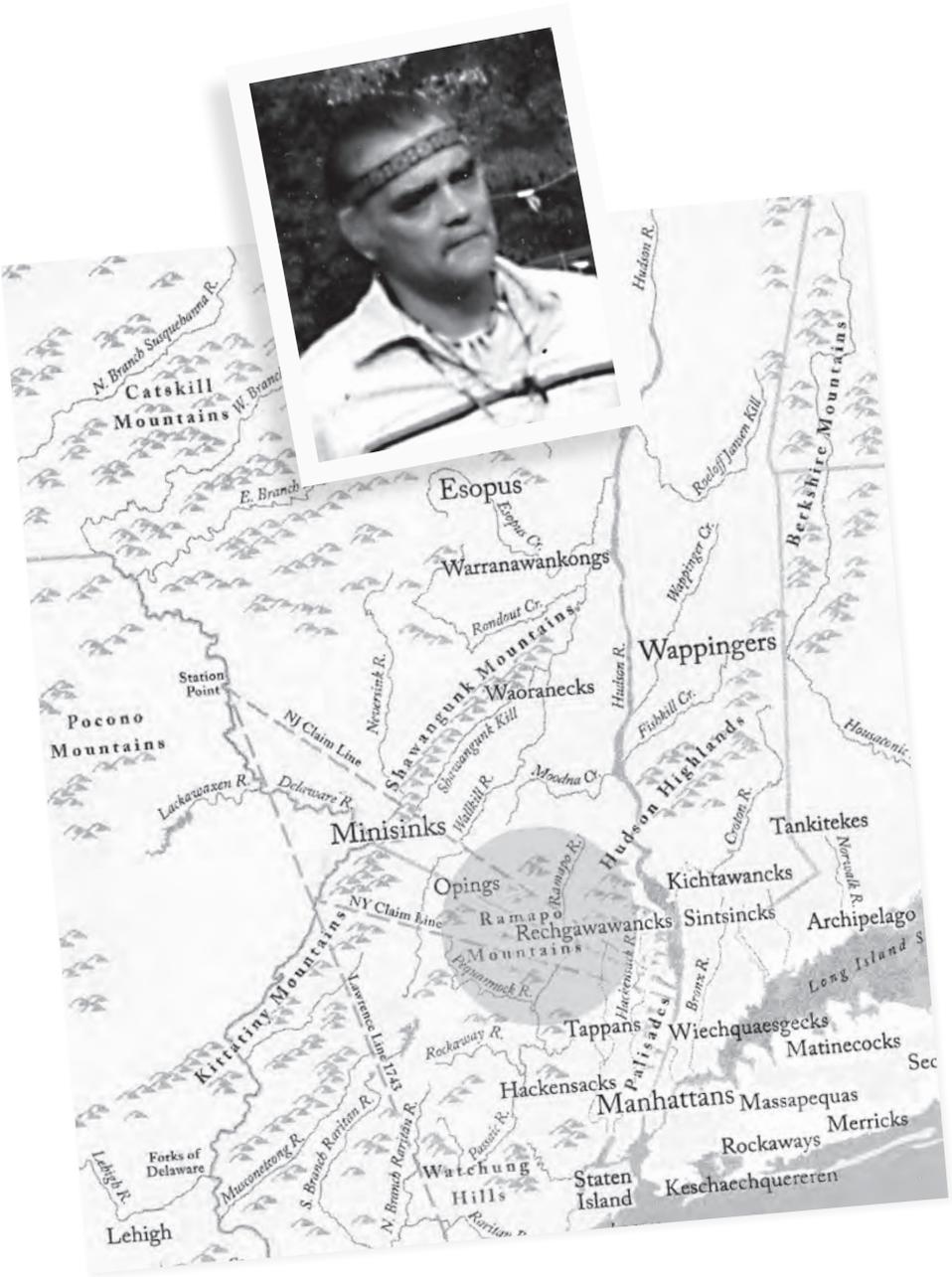
1. See *Jim Crow New York*, eds. David N. Gellman and David Quigley, NYU, 2003, for a documentary history of the 1821 and 1846 New York Constitutional Conventions and the politics of disenfranchisement.
2. “**Year of Decision**”: DeVoto, Bernard, *The Year of Decision: 1846*, Little, Brown, 1942; “**Each succeeding day**”: Letter. James McCune Smith to Gerrit Smith, NYV, Dec. 28, 1846. Gerrit Smith Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library, NY, henceforth GSP. All correspondence from Gerrit Smith is from this collection unless otherwise indicated.
3. “**James McCune Smith**”: See *The Works of James McCune Smith*, ed. John Stauffer, Oxford, 2006, for the correspondence between James McCune Smith and his friend and confidante, Gerrit Smith, and the Introduction, xxiv-xxviii, for an incisive analysis of the value of this friendship for the black physician.
4. “**...the colored people**”: *The New York Herald*, Jan. 1, 1875.
5. “**He was named for his grandfather...**”: For details of Gerrit Smith’s life, see Smith’s three biographies: Frothingham, Octavius Brooks, *Gerrit Smith: A Biography*, G.P. Putnam’s, 1878, Harlow, Ralph Volney, *Gerrit Smith: Philanthropist & Reformer*, Rinehart & Winston, 1939, and Dann, Norman K., *Practical Dreamer: Gerrit Smith and the Crusade for Social Reform*, Log Cabin Books, 2009.
6. “**downplayed...his business**”: “He Stands Like Jupiter”: The Autobiography of Gerrit Smith,” by McKivigan, John R. and McKivigan, Madeleine L., *New York History*, April, 1984, 189-200. Gerrit Smith’s campaign autobiography, a 1,600-word essay he penned sometime in the mid-1850s and cast in the third person, indicates the place or status he felt his business should hold in the public eye. In a sentence, he summarized and dispensed with the work that occupied the better part of his working days: “He... took upon himself the care of his father’s immense property, the charge and improvement of which, though naturally a very industrious man, have made his life a very busy one.” The rest of Smith’s self-profile emphasizes his career as reformer, philanthropist, and political figure; “**voluntary principle**”: Frothingham, 216.
7. “**None but hearty**”: J. T. Marshall, *Tribute to the Memory of Fitzhugh Smith, Son of Gerrit Smith*, 1840, 238, GSP.
8. “**twenty years committed**”: “He Stands Like Jupiter’...”, NYH; “**city mob**”: Frothingham, 164-65.
9. “**And so, that August...**”: Letter. Gerrit Smith to Theodore Wright, Charles Bennett Ray, and James McCune Smith, Aug. 1, 1846; “**scheme of justice and benevolence**”: Ibid; “**eight years**”: Gerrit Smith, *Land Book, 1844-1877*, Vol. 88, or, *Account of my Distribution of Land among Colored Men*, c. 1846-1853; “**Since they must**”: Letter. GS to Wright, Ray, and McCune Smith, Nov. 14, 1846.

10. **"consensus is...giveaway was a failure"**: Among Adirondack nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians and journalists who deemed the giveaway an incontestable failure were Winslow Watson, Nathaniel Sylvester, Alfred Donaldson, Charles C. Hammond, Seneca Ray Stoddard, and T. Morris Longstreth. John Brown's early biographers (Franklin Sanborn and Oswald Garrison Villard) were only slightly more forgiving; **"put few deedholders on Adirondack soil"**: A review of state and federal census records; school, court, and tax records; private correspondence between Gerrit Smith's agents and the grantees; local folklore; and articles about the giveaway and the grantees in the black press suggests that as many as 100 blacks tried settling in the so-called "Smith Lands." Timbucto, the best-known of their scattered colonies, was in the Essex County township of North Elba. Other enclaves developed in the Town of Franklin, Franklin County, and an extended family compound took hold in St. Armand, the Essex township on Franklin's southern line; **"lack of access to...capital"**: Letter. McCune Smith to GS, NY, Feb. 6, 1850; **"trickery and fraud"**: Letter. Rev. Jermain Loguen to McCune Smith. See "Gerrit Smith's Land," *The North Star*, March 24, 1848.
11. **"truest friend"**: *New York Herald*, Jan. 1, 1875; **"For...black Republicans, its value...more vexed"**: "Wm. J. Watkins," *Troy Daily Times*, Oct. 12, 1858. This address also was published in Stephen Myers' *Voice of the People*, No. 5, 1858, n.d. New-York Historical Society Archives, NYC. Fully five pieces in this election-year black newspaper (the editor was Albany antislavery activist Stephen Myers) criticized the perennial radical abolition candidate Gerrit Smith, and several of them invoked the giveaway in unflattering terms; **"giveaway...proof of...instability"**: "Gerrit Smith's Whereabouts," *Baltimore Sun*, Balt., Md., Oct. 31, 1859, "Gerrit Smith's Insanity," *Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 14, 1859, "The Insanity of Gerrit Smith," *Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 17, 1859, *Trinity Advocate*, Palestine, Texas, Nov. 30, 1859, "Gerrit Smith's Insanity," *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer*, Columbus, Ga., Nov. 11, 1859, "The Insanity of Gerrit Smith," *Daily Confederation*, Nov. 16, 1859, Mont., Ala.; **"southerners invoked Smith's generosity...evidence of...disinterested benevolence"**: Letters. Lemuel Fletcher to GS, Mountsville, Virginia, July 27, 1867, A.M. Jones to GS, Sept. 17, 1866, Amelia Island, Fla., T. T. Tredway to GS, Hampden Sidney, Va., June 3, 1867. GSP.
12. **"the poorest"**: Letter. GS to Wright, Ray, and McCune Smith, Aug. 1, 1846; **"homage to...land reformers"**: Stauffer, John, *The Black Hearts of Men*, Harvard, 2001, 136-138.
13. **"three-quarters of a million New York acres"**: Harlow, 241; **"made...land reformer George H. Evans [agent]"**: Letter. GS to John Cochran, Isaac T. Hopper, Daniel C. Eaton, George H. Evans, and William Kemeys, May 1, 1849; **"historians...inferred...love of antislavery had cooled"**: Bronstein, Jamie L., *Land Reform and Working-Class Experience in Britain and the United States, 1800-1862*, Stanford, 1999, 96. Bronstein suggests that for a few years the downstate land reformers "romanced" Smith away from his first love, abolitionism, and then he drifted back. But these years saw no decline in his antislavery speeches, political strategizing, or philanthropic work on behalf of the slave. In practical terms at least (the terms that interested Tom Devyr), Smith's commitment to abolitionism remained unshaken. Unlike other abolitionists, however, he could at least concede the fateful link between self-ownership and ownership of the means to survival. Hence a land distribution program for impoverished black New Yorkers, which struck two birds—racism and poverty—with one well-aimed stone; **"not only to overthrow present slavery"**: "Extract" from Gerrit Smith's speech on land reform in Syracuse, January 20, 1848, *The North Star*, April 21, 1848; **"great basis reform"**: Letter. GS to Beriah Green, April 4, 1849; **"prescribe the maximum quantity"**: "Land Freedom—Unalienable Homes for the Millions," *FDP*, Sept. 4, 1851. Other writings that reveal Smith's support for land reform include his widely published letter, "To the Voters of the State of New York," Oct. 10, 1846, his letter to Lewis Tappan, Dec. 22, 1848, his letter to John Cochran, et al, Jan. 4, 1850; his "Address To the Voters of the United States," July 15, 1851; his speech in Troy on "The True Office of Civil Government," April 14, 1851; his Liberty Party speech at Buffalo, Sept. 17, 1851, and, perhaps most famously, his speech on the Homestead Bill, "Homes for All," delivered in Congress, Feb. 21, 1854. All are in the GSP; many are online.
14. **"the strongest...proponent"**: Bronstein, 67; **"Devyrism"**: "Thomas A. Devyr," *Albany Freeholder*, Nov. 4, 1846. When C. F. Bouton took over the *Albany Freeholder*, his columns often blasted Devyr for not urging Anti-Rent farmers to join ranks with the Whigs. See *Albany Freeholder*, Oct. 28, Nov. 4 and 18, Dec. 9, 1846, and Jan. 6, 1847.
15. **"To me it is a bitter thought"**: Letter. Devyr to GS, n.d., Green Point, NY. The Green Point address identifies this as a letter sent to Smith sometime from 1869 to 1874.

16. **"If any man has a right"**: George H. Evans, editorials in the *Radical*, quoted in Sean Wilentz' *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850*, 336-337, and in Charles W. McCurdy's *The Anti-Rent Era in New York Law and Politics, 1839-1865*, North Carolina, 2001, 172
17. **"one of the largest"**: Evans, "To Gerrit Smith," *People's Rights*, July 7, 1844. Smith's public response to Evans' accusatory editorials credited the city land reformer with rousing his interest in the land reform movement (Stauffer, 136, Bronstein, 93). But even if Smith was wholly ignorant of Evans' National Reform party, he was certainly aware of the work of land reformers, Anti-Renter organizers, and self-styled "Indians" in upstate leasehold counties where his financial interest was significant and the allure of National Reform rhetoric was strong. If the names of prominent land reformers—Evans, Commerford, Devyr—were new to him that summer, he had felt the reach of their ideas about land reform in the restive protests of his tenants. He was never quite "so far from the world's track" as he claimed; **"direct or indirect"**: "Indirect slavery—nominally the least odious, practically the worst of its forms, is now enthroned high and unquestioned. Disinherited man!" Devyr wrote Smith on August 26, 1872 from Green Point, New York.
18. **"Evans...meant to goad Smith"**: Stauffer, 136; **"so far from the world's track"**: "Gerrit Smith's Reply," *Working Man's Advocate*, July 20, 1844; **"practical land reform"**: 'He Stands Like Jupiter': The Autobiography of Gerrit Smith, by McKivigan, John R and McKivigan, Madeleine L, *New York History*, April, 1984, 189-200.
19. **"[Greeley] brooding over...land monopoly...for years"**: Robbins, Roy Marvin, "Horace Greeley: Land Reform and Unemployment, 1837-1862," *Agricultural History* VII, 18, January, 1933. Robbins tracks Greeley's serial infatuation with the radical ideas of Albert Brisbane, the advocate of Fourieristic socialism, and George H. Evans; **"At this moment"**: Horace Greeley, "Land Tenures. To the Members of the N.Y. Constitutional Convention," *Signal of Liberty*, 1846, Aug. 1.
20. **"Gerrit Smith...had 'inherited'...leasehold tenants from...Peter Smith"**: Harlow, 26-28; **"leasehold tenants..."**: Huston, Reeve, *Land and Freedom: Rural Society, Popular Protest and Party Politics in Antebellum New York*, Oxford, 2000, 5, and "antirent movement," ed. Reeve Huston, *The Encyclopedia of New York State*, Syracuse; **"Smith's determination...to distinguish his...agrarianism...from the bad kind"**: Letter. GS to Wright, Ray, and McCune Smith, Aug. 1, 1846. "I am an Agrarian. I would that every man who desires a farm, would have one; and I would, that no man were so regardless of the needs and desires of his brother men, as to covet the possession of more farms than one. Do not understand that I sympathize with lawless, violent, and bloody Agrarianism. 'My soul, come not into their secret; unto their assembly mine honor, be not thou united.'"; **"Devyr advised ...anti-rent farmers...in Hudson Valley"**: Bronstein, 121, Huston, 138, McCurdy, 173-174; **"Indians' gave their city allies pointers"**: Reeve Huston, "The Parties and 'The People': The New York Anti-Rent Wars and the Contours of Jacksonian Politics," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Summer, 244-254; **"four fat chickens"**: Christman, Henry, *Tin Horns and Calico*, Henry Holt, 1945, 30; **"When twenty-five petitioners"**: Huston, *Land and Freedom*, 88-89.
21. **"patroons...Democratic, pro-slavery politics"**: Huston, 100.
22. **"In 1844...offered six months rent-free"**: Circular. "To the persons who derive title from myself or my late father to land in Charlotte River and Byrne's Tracts, in the Counties of Delaware, Otsego and Schoharie," Peterboro, May 24, 1844.
23. **"Mr. Van Rensselaer's business"**: "A Word of Advice," *Albany Freeholder*, Nov. 25, 1846; **"tenants of Rensselaerwyck found"**: Huston, 82-84; **"any attempt to invalidate"**: Ibid., 83-84 and 255n. Huston cites an exchange of letters between Stephen Hungerford to Martin Van Buren: Hungerford to Van Buren, Aug.10, 1830, and Van Buren to Hungerford, Aug. 16, 17, 1830. Huston, 82-84.
24. **"To expect that I shall put myself"**: Circular. "To the persons who derive title..."
25. **"When the title of Gerrit Smith"**: Calvin Pepper, Jr., "Manor of Rensselaerwyck," pub. Albany and Rensselaer Anti-Rent Association, Albany, 1846, 33. Pepper's acquaintance with Smith harked back at least to 1838, when the famous abolitionist addressed an antislavery meeting in Casenovia.
26. **"Often...has my heart ached"**: "Extract," *The North Star*, April 21, 1848.
27. **"Devyr...several times invoked...glorious address"**: Letters. Devyr to GS, April 25, 1860; July 14, 1866; July 21, 1866; March 11, 1868; **"Getting Tired Of It"**: *The Anti-Renter*, Albany, Feb. 28, 1846.
28. **"this was newsworthy"**: Jamie L. Bronstein notes that National Reform *Landmark* editor J. K. Ingalls was so buoyed by a letter from Gerrit Smith describing land monopoly as "a far more abundant source

- of suffering than slavery," he published it as a broadside for his cause. Bronstein, 94. Letter. Smith to Ingalls, Aug. 15, 1848, New York State Library.
29. **"Devyr irascible and pompous..."**: Ellis, David Maldwyn, *Landlords and Farmers in the Hudson-Mohawk Region, 1790-1850*, Cornell, 254-255; **"Devyr, a baker's boy..."**: For biographical information on Devyr, his cultural roots, early childhood influences in northwest Ireland, and political work in England, see Reeve Huston's careful study, "Multiple Crossings: Thomas Ainge Devyr and Transatlantic Land Reform," in *Transatlantic Rebels: Agrarian Radicalism in Comparative Context*, eds. Thomas Summerhill and James C. Scott, Mich. State, 2004, 137-166, and Bronstein, 122-123; **"I was willing to be a slave, but could find no master"**: Letter. Devyr to GS, Williamsburgh, Jan. 28, 1861.
 30. **"romances...a greater influence"**: Letter. Devyr to GS, Williamsburgh, Jan. 28, 1861. GSP; **"no armed knight"**: Ibid; **"After an abortive attempt"**: Huston, "Multiple Crossings...", 150; **"lingered four years"**: Letter. Devyr to GS. Williamsburgh. Dec 18, 1856; **"Chivalrous Reformer"**: Letter. Devyr to GS. Williamsburgh, May 13, 1865; **"a wanted man"**: Letter. Devyr to GS. Dec. 18, 1856.
 31. **"Land-rich and cash-needy..."**: While recent scholarship has overtaken this, Henry Christman's *Tin Horns and Calico* (Henry Holt, 1940) remains the most dramatic and accessible account of the Anti-rent movement in New York's Hudson Valley; **"first drew sword"**: Letter. Devyr to GS, July 21, 1866, Williamsburgh.
 32. **"Land reform historians...concur"**: McCurdy, Charles W., *The Anti-Rent Era in New York Law and Politics, 1839-1865*, North Carolina, 2001, 213, Huston, *Land and Freedom*, 138-140, 163-172, and Bronstein, 122-129; **"A man with"**: McCurdy, *Ibid*, 213; **"the Republicans would poach it"**: Roediger, David R., *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of an American Working Class, Revised Edition*, Verso, 1991, 1999, 80: "The Republican appeal 'Vote yourself a farm' came straight from an 1846 land reform handbill."
 33. **"for power to confer"**: Letter. George H. Evans to GS, Granville, N.J., Jan. 17, 1850.
 34. **"subsequent giveaway...to white New Yorkers"**: Letter and published circular. GS to John Cochran, Isaac T. Hopper, Daniel C. Eaton, George H. Evans, and William Kemeys. Peterboro, Jan. 1, 1850; **"But for Land Monopoly"**: Quoted in Bronstein, 78. Jamie Bronstein deftly tracks land reform's doggedly romantic, retrogressive vision of farm women and their work in "Land-Reform Rhetoric and the Currents of Reform," Chapter 3, *Land Reform and the Working-Class Experience...*; **"[Smith] to sell a house lot to women"**: Letter. J. B. Edwards to GS, June 26, 1846. Edwards was Smith's land agent and rent collector in Oswego. The rich description in Edwards' account of a sale of a Gerrit Smith house lot on a ten-year payment plan to Susan, Dorothy, Louisa, and Bethany Hamilton, "young women that work in the cotton factory—they are to erect a house on the property immediately," suggests he felt Smith would be pleased by this report and intrigued by their plan.
 35. **"combine and invigorate"**: Letter. Devyr to GS, Williamsburgh. Feb. 27, 1868; **"good and virtuous Evans"**: Letter. Devyr to GS, Dec. 18, 1856; **"Smith's indifference to the fate of...Young America"**: Letter. Devyr to GS. Williamsburgh, March 26, 1860, and Jan. 11, 1861; **"Devyr urged Smith to bankroll...newspaper"**: Letter. Devyr to GS, Williamsburgh, Dec. 18, 1856, and Oct. 6, 1859; Devyr's disappointment in Smith's refusal to partner with him in a host of initiatives (publishing a newspaper, hiring Devyr to organize anti-renters, sponsoring a conference) was echoed, if less sharply, by Joshua King Ingalls, editor of *The Landmark*, in Chap. VII, *Reminiscences of an Octogenerian in the Field of Industrial and Social Reform*, pub. M. L. Holbrook & Co., 1897. In 1849. Ingalls and other land reformers visited Smith in Peterboro, and at the end of a congenial visit Ingalls pressed Smith for "a little assistance... to keep *The Landmark* going. He declined to assume any further responsibility at that time." When Smith ran for governor in 1858, he sent Ingalls \$500 to jumpstart a new land reform paper, *The Land Reformer*, hoping for the support of the land reform lobby for his candidacy. Ingalls put out a few issues, "But the time was unpropitious." The movement was in disarray, and Ingalls returned half the money; **"the means" [to move] "my...family to some remote farmhouse"**: Letter. Devyr to GS, Williamsburgh. Jan 11, 1861.
 36. **"scold me"**: Letter. Thomas Devyr to GS, May 12, 1860; **"No, Mr. Smith!"**: Letter. Devyr to GS, Williamsburgh. Aug. 11, 1866.
 37. **"appointed to contend"**: Letter. Devyr to GS, Williamsburgh, May 3, 1860.
 38. **"stolen by force"**: Letter. Devyr to GS. Williamsburgh, Dec. 18, 1856.

39. **“Direct slavery”**: Letter. Devyr to GS, Williamsburgh, May 13, 1865; **“If the whole world”**: Letter. Devyr to GS, Williamsburgh, July 14, 1866.
40. **“If, to use tempting”**: Roediger, 8; **“The labor movement”**: Foner, Eric, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War*, Oxford, 1980, 64.
41. **“host them...and roar along”**: Lause, Mark A., *Young America: Land, Labor and the Republican Community*, Illinois, 2005, 97.
42. **“You and I are passing”**: Letter. Devyr to GS, Green Point, Feb. 24, 1874; **“It is not my fault”**: Letter. Devyr to GS, Green Point, Dec. 15, 1874.
43. **“One bright long day”**: Letter. Devyr to GS, Green Point, Dec. 15, 1874.



Chief Butch Ronald Eugene Redbone VanDunk, and a map of the Munsee region with the Ramapough territory highlighted. Photo furnished courtesy of Floyd Little Sun Hicks, chief representative of the Ramapough in the Waywayanda area.

The Recognizable Ramapough:

Chief Butch Redbone's Quest for Federal and State Acknowledgment

Laurence M. Hauptman and Heriberto Dixon

“When the legend becomes fact, print the legend.”

—Reporter Maxwell Scott, played by Carleton S. Young, in John Ford's classic 1962 western, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*.

Introduction

A plethora of roadside historical markers, officially placed or otherwise, are scattered throughout New York State. Ideally aimed to educate the public about state and local history, these signs are found from Suffolk to Niagara County. The cast metal markers, mostly painted blue and gold, vary widely in how they came about as well as in their accuracy. In 1960, the New York State Legislature established the Historical Area Marker program to educate, but also to encourage tourism, by planting signs at rest stops. The act authorized the New York State Education Department (SED) to work with the New York State Thruway Authority to install historical area markers at Thruway service areas. The act was supposed to resurrect SED's roadside marker program, originally established in the mid-1920s, but which went out of existence a decade later. From 1960 to 1966, as a result of this official state historic area marker program involving the two agencies' cooperation, numerous oversize signs with more text than previous roadside markers were placed in service areas along the Thruway route.¹

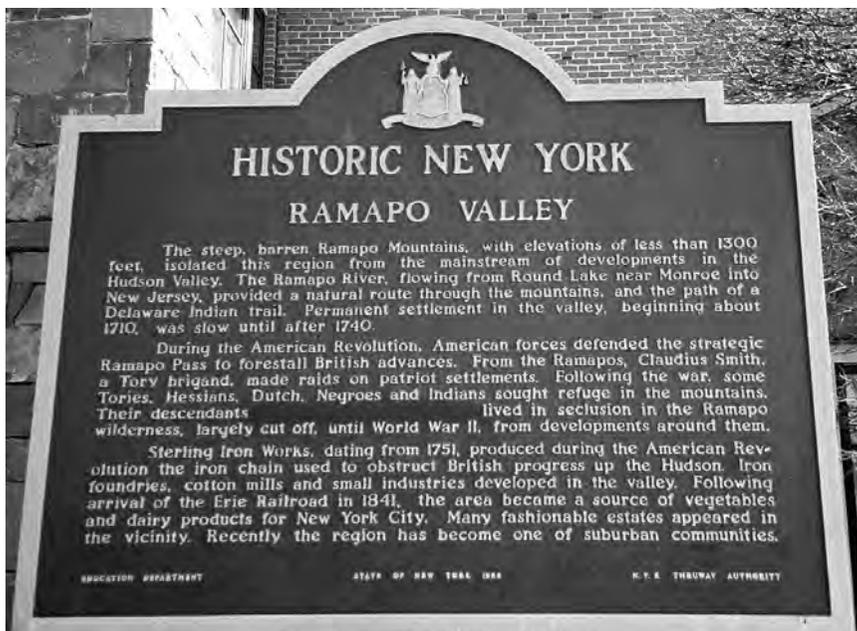
One such sign is located at the western entrance of the I-87 service area at Sloatsburg. Today, the Ramapo historical area marker, erected in 1963, reads as follows:²

The steep, barren Ramapo Mountains, with elevations less than 1300 feet isolated this region from the mainstream of developments in the Hudson Valley. The Ramapo River, flowing from Round Lake near Monroe into New Jersey, provided a natural route through the mountains, and the path of a Delaware Indian trail. Permanent settlement in the Valley, beginning about 1710, was slow until after 1740.

During the American Revolution, American forces defended the strategic Ramapo Pass to forestall British advances. From the Ramapos, Claudius Smith, a

Tory brigand, made raids on patriot settlements. Following the war, some Tories, Hessians, Dutch, Negroes, and Indians sought refuge in the mountains. Their descendants [] lived in seclusion in the Ramapo wilderness, largely cut off, until World War II, from developments around them.

Sterling Iron Works, dating from 1751, produced during the American Revolution the iron chain used to obstruct British progress up the Hudson. Iron foundries, cotton mills, and small industries developed in the valley. Following arrival of the Erie Railroad in 1841, the area became a source of vegetables and dairy products for New York City. Many fashionable estates appeared in the vicinity. Recently the region has become one of suburban communities.



Ramapo Historical Area Marker at the New York State Thruway Service Area at Sloatsburg, Milepost No. 33, February 14, 2013.
Photograph by Laurence M. and Ruth Hauptman

In a related move, in 1970 SED's Office of State History published a paperback guidebook, *Historical Area Markers in New York State*. It was aimed to highlight "some of the more significant trends in the history of New York."³ It included the original text on the Sloatsburg signpost about the Ramapo region, revealing three words—"called Jackson Whites"—which appeared in the third sentence of the second paragraph and were rubbed out as a result of a protest made by then-Ramapough Chief Butch Redbone in 1997.⁴ Yet long before the chief expressed his concerns, the state's official historical marker program had portrayed Native Americans in an overall unfavorable light.

In 1926, the New York State Legislature passed a resolution directing the Commissioner of Education to plan the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of

the War for Independence. The act included a provision to place “markers to designate sites that are of historic significance in the colonial, revolutionary, or state formative period.”⁵ Subsequently, most of the markers were placed along roadsides between 1926 and 1936, but funding for the program continued through 1939.⁶ Not surprisingly for the times, many of the signs had texts that cast American Indians as obstacles to New York’s development. As was typical nationally and in Canada, the markers told the story from the white majority point of view, and too many were politically incorrect.⁷ They frequently depicted Native people as merely “savage” opponents in bloody conflicts. None in New York State dealt with the vital role the Oneidas and Tuscaroras played on the Patriot side in the American Revolution, but a significant number of these markers described the route and impact of the Sullivan-Clinton Campaign, the massive expedition that devastated Iroquois villages in 1779.⁸ Indeed, any New Yorker reading these signs would assume, incorrectly, that all Native Americans had been driven out of the state.

Redbone’s protest was no knee-jerk reaction. He specifically targeted the Thruway Authority. When built in the early 1950s, the superhighway had bisected Ramapough territory—including the communities of Hillburn, New York, and Mahwah and Ringwood, New Jersey, all less than thirty-five miles from New York City. In the 1950s, the suburbanization of the New York metropolitan area had begun to affect the Ramapoughs. New industry, such as the massive Ford plant at Mahwah established in the same time period, brought thousands of non-Indian workers into the region. It also brought another major crisis. By the 1960s, Ford had contracted with garbage haulers that dumped toxic wastes from the Mahwah plant into the Ringwood Mines landfill adjacent to Ramapough homes. The previous isolation of the Ramapough world was ending.⁹

The Thruway Authority and state Department of Public Works (now the Department of Transportation) have frequently been in conflict with Native Americans, including the Ramapoughs, over state land acquisition for highway development. In 1954, state officials “negotiated” an agreement with the Senecas for a 3.6-mile corridor through the Cattaraugus Reservation to extend the Thruway route between Buffalo and Erie, Pennsylvania; the Seneca Nation received the paltry sum of \$69,500.¹⁰ In 1957 and again in 2007, Iroquois Indians threatened to establish a tollbooth or charge the state for all cars traveling through their areas.¹¹ In one of the filed Indian land claims cases, that of the Senecas over Grand Island, the Thruway Authority was named as a defendant.¹² In 1992 and again in 1997—the latter the year of Redbone’s protest over the historical area marker—the Senecas led demonstrations blocking Thruway traffic.¹³ Hence, it is not surprising that in the historical area marker controversy at Sloatsburg, Thruway officials tread lightly in dealing with the Ramapoughs and their charismatic leader.

The chief’s objection to the historical area marker was to be a component of a much larger story involving Redbone and his people’s quest for respect that came at the exact time the Ramapoughs were denied federal recognition as a “tribe.” Federal

recognition, meaning a government-to-government relationship, provides certain benefits to Native communities. By attaining federal acknowledgment, the newly recognized nation attains equal status with hundreds of other Native American communities from New York to Alaska. These advantages include certain protections against the alienation of their tribal land base; allowance into federal courts in the pursuit of land claims; eligibility to apply for and secure federal grants and participate in programs administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and other federal agencies; and the right to establish gaming operations. By securing federal recognition, the Ramapoughs also would become eligible to receive Indian Health Service medical care and become members of advocacy groups such as United South and Eastern Tribes and the National Congress of American Indians.

Currently, there are eight federally recognized tribes in New York: the Seneca Nation of Indians, the Tonawanda Band of Senecas, the Tuscarora Nation, the Cayuga Nation, the Onondaga Nation, the Oneida Nation, the Mohawk Nation, and the Shinnecock Nation. Besides the Ramapoughs, two other Native American communities are not recognized by the state and federal governments: the Matinecocks, on the Queens-Nassau County border, and the Montauketts, on the far end of Suffolk County. While the Ramapoughs are Native peoples who historically chose isolation as a survival strategy well into the twentieth century, the Matinecocks and Montauketts had no place to hide from the colonial era onward and thus are better documented in the historical record.

The savvy Redbone understood how his people would benefit by achieving federal recognition, but by 1997 they had been stymied at every turn. He recognized that if Thruway officials acknowledged the slander on the Sloatsburg historical marker, this would be a back-door way for his much-maligned people to get the respect they had long sought. A year before the sign controversy broke, the chief insisted that his people had been “knocked down, but, we are going to keep trying because we know the truth... We want our children to be sure of their identities and to have their full due as Native Americans. We want our history to be recognized and told... Recognition will be a real shot in the arm as far as our children are concerned.”¹⁴

On May 5, 1997, Chief Redbone wrote to Thruway Authority Chairman Howard Steinberg, protesting words on the historical marker at Sloatsburg. The Ramapough leader sent copies of the letter to U.S. Representative Benjamin Gilman, the powerful Republican congressman whose district included the lower Hudson Valley, and the mayors of Hillburn and Sloatsburg. Redbone’s frustrations were clearly evident in the letter. Quite aware that many New Yorkers were not knowledgeable that a Native community lived so close to New York City, he first described his people as being of Munsee-Delaware descent and that they had lived for centuries in their “ancestral home,” the Ramapo Mountains of New York and New Jersey. He explained that his people’s exclusion from history books was because their “survival depended upon isolation.” The chief pointed out that ignorance and “racist theories and labels which attacked and



**Chief Butch Ronald Eugene
Redbone VanDunk**

belittled our identity” had created numerous problems, and that the Thruway Authority was unwittingly carrying out these slanders through the text on the historical marker at the Sloatsburg service area. He then went on to explain the Ramapoughs’ objection to the sign. Chief Redbone emphasized that the term “Jackson Whites” was as offensive to his people as “the term ‘nigger’ is to people of African ancestry.” He pointed out that the Jackson from whom the derogatory name derived “was essentially a pimp for the British Army and the Natives here being people of color, were derided as descendants of his whores,” who apparently were the ‘Tories’ to which the sign refers. He maintained that the sign was a “throwback to the days of state sanctioned racism” and a “reminder to us of the years of hostility and derision we’ve endured and we cannot tolerate its continued presence.” He then urged Steinberg to agree to remove or correct the historical marker. Besides a revised text informing service area visitors of the presence in the Ramapos, Redbone suggested that

if a new marker was erected, it should include the depiction of a *Mesing’w’* [Mësingw], the keeper of the game, a carved effigy mask found in the Delaware Big House, the traditional site where ceremonials were held.¹⁵

Unaware of who the Ramapoughs were and uninformed about the then-dormant New York State Historical Area Marker Program, Steinberg immediately assigned John Platt, executive director of the Thruway Authority, to deal with the chief’s letter. In typical bureaucratic fashion, Platt wrote back to Redbone on May 19, 1997, thanking him for bringing the matter to the authority’s attention and indicating that his office was making an immediate and thorough review of the matter. In his response, Platt quickly shifted the blame for the sign, indicating that the markers had first been developed by the SED in cooperation with the Department of Public Works, and that a number of them had been “relocated to our reconstructed service plazas a few years ago.” Attempting to placate the chief, Platt then asked Redbone to send him a sketch or description of the marker that could be used as a replacement for the offensive one. Platt further told Redbone that he would be contacted again once after the Thruway Authority completed its internal review.¹⁶ The chief did not wait for Platt to follow up. Instead, he sent Platt the following text, which he hoped would be used on a new sign:¹⁷

The Ramapo Mountains are the ancestral home of the Munsee-Delaware (Minisink-Lenape) tribe whose forefathers, known as Tappan-Hackensack, once held all the lands between the Hudson Passaic Rivers from Newark Bay in the south, up to and including the Ramapo range in the north. Friction between the tribe and Dutch settlers led to warfare in 1642 [actually began in 1640 with Governor Kieft's War] that continued to the arrival of the English in 1664 [intermittently—1640-1644; 1655-1657, and 1659-1664]. Shortly afterwards the tribe withdrew from its lowlands and unified in the hills. The Ramapough Mountains have given the tribe its home and its name since the early 1700s. The carved figure of "the *Mesing'w'*" located nearby is the work of Sakima Mackeu Wochgan, Chief Redbone of the Ramapough Mtn. Indians. It represents the guardian spirit of the forest animals and is a representative totem of the Lenape (Delaware) Indian people.

By this time, the Thruway Authority had reached out and consulted with SED officials Philp Lord, Jr., acting head of the Office of State History, and George Hamell, senior curator of Anthropology at the State Museum. Both were knowledgeable about the state's Native American history, and they saw the accuracy and value of most of the information on the historical area marker at Sloatsburg. However, they recommended that the words "Jackson Whites," which they judged offensive, be removed if it was not possible to replace the sign. Lord noted that the state had never officially recognized the Ramapoughs and that his recommendation was unofficial since neither the SED nor the Thruway Authority had legislative authority or funding to edit, change, or remove roadside markers.¹⁸

In the end, the Thruway Authority grounded the words off the sign, leaving the noticeable blank space indicated above. Despite promises by Thruway officials that they would consider Redbone's suggestion for a new marker, none was ever erected.¹⁹ To fully understand why this controversy arose, it is first necessary to explore the numerous misconceptions held about the Ramapoughs.

The Ramapoughs: Myth and Reality

Academics, news reporters, local historians, and the general public long have speculated about the origins of the people who occupy the Ramapo Mountain region of southeastern New York and northern New Jersey. Their interpretations vary widely. Too often, outsiders (including state officials) have painted disparaging, inaccurate, and racist portraits of the Ramapoughs that have plagued them for well over a century and still affect their efforts to gain justice. Most disturbingly, the Ramapoughs were designated "Jackson Whites," mean-spirited, illiterate, ferocious, six-fingered mountain people—an inbred multiracial community descended from English and Caribbean prostitutes imported by a man named Jackson during the American Revolution.²⁰ To Chief Redbone, these words so frequently used by New York and New Jersey residents to designate his people were "a slap in the face."²¹

Many accounts interpret that the Ramapoughs were no longer "Indians" or were never Indians at all. This is not surprising when one understands that prior to 1870,

federal census enumerators had no separate category to define “Indian.” Hence, Native peoples were designated “white,” “colored,” “Negro,” or “mulatto.”²² At times academics, in their culturally insensitive, pseudo-scientific jargon, also have “classified” the Ramapoughs as if they were a new breed of dog sanctioned by the American Kennel Club. They have been designated as “racial hybrids,” “almost white,” and “tri-racial isolates.”²³ Hence, their Indian identity was denied or minimized because of intermarriage, especially with African-Americans.²⁴ Three decades ago, the prominent historian Francis Jennings challenged these scholarly views, pointing out that the term “race” “may be studied as part of the history of ideas, but only as such. As a category referring to real people, it is genetically invalid and historically misleading.” Jennings added: “We know Europeans to be a conglomeration of peoples, but Whites are presented as homogeneous. Racially categorized Indians are homogeneous and mythical; they never were such people.”²⁵

The Ramapoughs were too often judged by their appearance as well. Some members appear to be white and others black. After all, outsiders could not comprehend that a Native population could survive so close to New York City. Yet it should be emphasized that leading authorities Herbert Kraft, David Oestreicher, Robert Grumet, and Edward Lenik all concluded that the Ramapoughs have Munsee/Lenape Indian ancestry, although each recognizes that as a result of colonization, settlement, and acculturation much of their Munsee culture has been lost.²⁶ In 1986, Kraft wrote:²⁷

Regardless of their racial and intertribal composition, the Ramapough identify themselves as Indians, and they conduct workshops on Native American history, culture, and arts. These skills are not necessarily those of the indigenous Lenape, for they realize that much of the native culture has been lost in the past three hundred years. Rather, the Ramapough Mountain Indians are striving to reinforce their identification with other groups of Native Americans across the nation.

Historian Jennings also has noted that Munsee populations along the lower Hudson in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries “protected themselves so well, they appear seldom in the written record.”²⁸ It is little wonder that they used this strategy of isolation to survive. Between 1640 and 1664, New Netherland fought four bloody conflicts—Governor Kieft’s War, the Peach War, and two Esopus Wars—against the Munsees of this region. Native populations inhabiting the area also were drastically reduced by post-contact epidemics such as by smallpox, measles, and influenza. During the English colonial era, especially in the first six decades of the eighteenth century, Munsees who still lived in the region had to show their loyalty by serving the British army in conflicts against the French. There were, however, several alternatives to English military service: to leave for New France and ally themselves against the English; to migrate to the Susquehanna Valley and live under the watchful eyes (namely domination) of the Iroquois; or to retreat to several short-lived Moravian missions in the Oblong Valley in eastern Dutchess County and western Connecticut or the longer-lasting Congregational mission at Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Until the

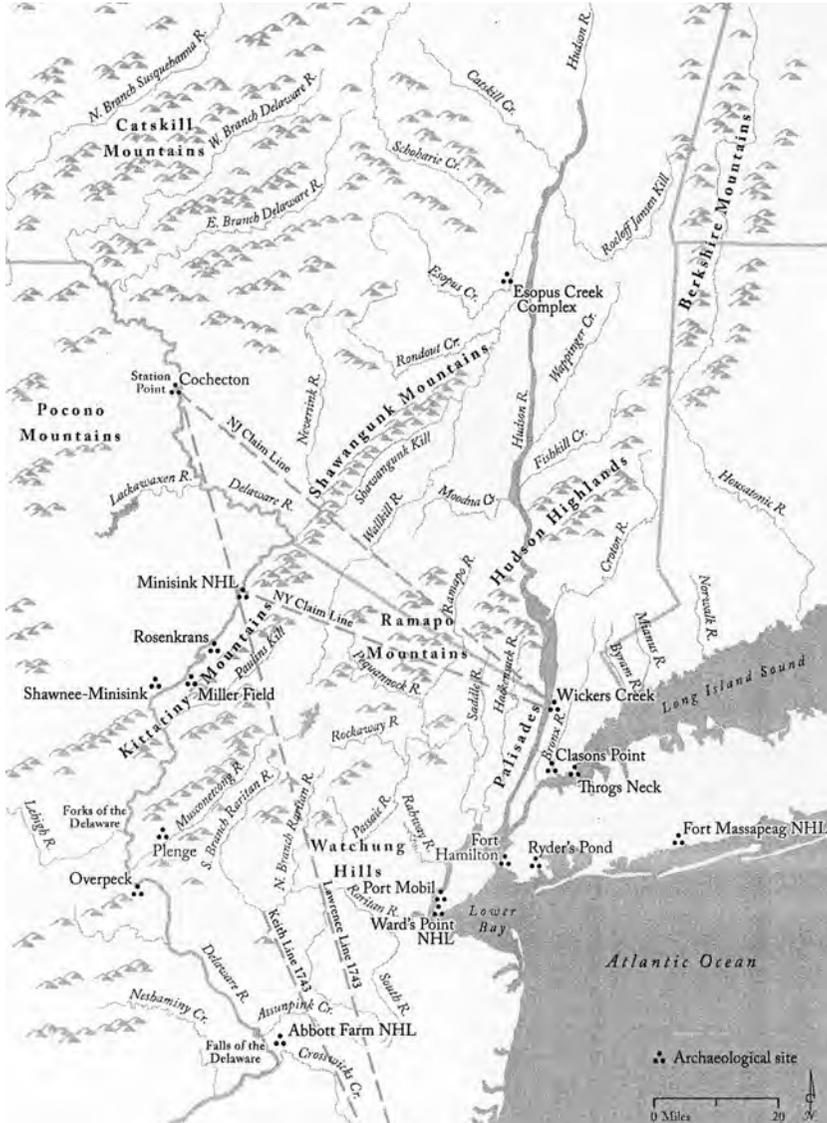
French and Indian War, some Munsees also found temporary havens at Minisink Island on the Delaware River and with Mahican and New England Algonquian refugees at Schaghticoke, north of Albany.

Yet there was another route for Indian survival—to retreat into the then-inaccessible Ramapo Mountains. This intentional strategy of separation from the outside continued into the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and thus the Native history of the



Map of the Munsee region with the Ramapough territory highlighted.
 Courtesy of University of Oklahoma Press

region has been less formally documented than many others, such as the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. Because of the Ramapoughs' purposeful separation, few outsiders made their journey to the Ramapo Mountains. Instead, reporters and others sought to spin a yarn or two, inventing stories about the mysterious and dangerous mountain people who lived so near New York City. Ironically, while the Ramapoughs' historic separation, mountain terrain, and kinship structure kept their communities



Map of the Munsee region.
 Courtesy of University of Oklahoma Press

together, their steadfast isolation unfortunately led outsiders to print and reprint damaging stories about them.

Until the 1970s, the Ramapoughs had no centralized political structure to coordinate the overall needs of their three largely impoverished communities. This changed in 1978, when they incorporated as the “Ramapough Mountain Indians,” established a tribal council, and formed three clans based on geography, not kinship: the Fox (Hillburn), the Deer (Mahwah), and the Turkey (Ringwood).²⁹ Much like numerous other Native communities without treaties with the United States, they sought to become acknowledged as a “tribe,” by federal officials in Washington as well as state officials in Albany and Trenton.

On August 14, 1978, the Ramapoughs filed their letter of intent to seek federal recognition as a “tribe” from the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).³⁰ The same year they received a Title IV grant from the U.S. Department of Education to establish Indian cultural programs, a clear indication that a tribal renaissance was occurring and that the Ramapoughs sought to reclaim their long-dormant Indian identity.³¹ On January 7, 1980, the New Jersey Legislature awarded the “Ramapough Mountain Indians” formal recognition as a state-recognized tribe. Today, formally incorporated as the “Ramapough Lunaape Nation,” it is one of three Native American communities recognized by Trenton; its representatives serve on the New Jersey Commission on Indian Affairs, established in 1995.³²

**Communities Denied Federal Acknowledgment as a “Tribe”
By the United States Department of the Interior’s Federal
Petition Process, 1978-1998***

<i>Community</i>	<i>Year Denied</i>
1. Lower Muskogee Tribe-East of the Mississippi [Georgia]	1981
2. Creeks East of the Mississippi [Florida]	1981
3. Munsee Thames River Delawares [Colorado]	1983
4. Principal Creek Nation [Alabama]	1985
5. Kaweah Indian Nation [North Carolina]	1985
6. United Lumbee Nation of North Carolina and America [California]	1985
7. Southeastern Cherokee Confederacy [Georgia]	1985
8. Northwest Cherokee Wolf Band [Oregon]	1985
9. Red Clay Intertribal Band [Tennessee]	1985
10. Tchinouk Indians [Oregon]	1986
11. MaChis Lower Alabama Creek Indian Tribe [Alabama]	1988
12. Miami Nation of Indians [Indiana],	1992
13. Ramapough Mountain Indians [New Jersey]	1998

** Compiled from the BIA/OFA website*

**Communities Granted Federal Acknowledgment as a “Tribe”
(with Acceptance Date) through the United States Department
of the Interior’s Federal Petition Process, 1978-1998***

<i>Community:</i>	<i>Year Acknowledged</i>
1. Grand Traverse Band of Ottawas and Chippewa [Michigan]	1980
2. Jamestown Clallam Tribe [Washington]	1981
3. Tunica- Biloxi Indian Tribe [Louisiana]	1981
4. Death Valley Timbi-Sha Shoshone Band [California]	1983
5. Narragansett Tribe of Indians [Rhode Island]	1983
6. Poarch Band of Creeks [Alabama]	1984
7. Wampanoag Tribe of Gayhead [Massachusetts]	1987
8. San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe [Arizona]	1990
9. Mohegan Indian Tribe [Connecticut]	1994
10. Jena Band of Choctaw [Louisiana]	1995
11. Huron Potawatomi [Michigan]	1996

* *Compiled from the BIA/OFA website*

New York State’s policies are quite distinct from those of New Jersey. Although the Legislature in Albany passed a nonbinding resolution in 1982 recommending that President Reagan issue an executive order recognizing the “Ramapough Mountain Indians” as a federally recognized tribe, the governor’s office and the State Department of Law continue to ignore the Ramapoughs and fail to include them with others that have been state-recognized.³³ In 1992, Chief Redbone attended the opening of the new, permanent Mohawk Longhouse display at the New York State Museum. Despite the 1982 legislative resolution and federal Bureau of Indian Affairs documents citing the Ramapoughs as a “state recognized tribe,”³⁴ he was not included as an honored Native American representative in the official receiving line of Governor Mario Cuomo. While certain state agencies work with the Ramapoughs, thereby providing them with *de facto* recognition, Albany’s highest officials still shun them and deny *de jure* recognition.

Although New Jersey has not dealt effectively with Native Americans’ economic and environmental concerns, Trenton from the late 1970s through the late 1990s was outwardly more responsive than Albany to Native cultural and political aspirations. During this period, New York opposed land-claims suits filed by five separate federally recognized Indian nations in federal courts. In addition, the Empire State faced strong Seneca protests to its efforts to acquire Indian lands for the completion of the Southern Tier Expressway. Albany officials also attempted to apply the state sales tax on Indian reservation lands, leading to confrontations between state police and demonstrators that resulted in the temporary closure of major highways. In contrast, New Jersey benefited by its relations with its Native American communities because

of the noteworthy efforts of James Lone Bear Revey, a widely respected member of the Sand Hill Tribe with ties to the two Delaware communities in Oklahoma. Until his death in 1998, Revey encouraged an awakening of tribal cultural activities and helped foster a network of mutual cooperation in New Jersey. Importantly, he helped educate officials and eminent scholars, such as Herbert Kraft, about the history and common concerns of New Jersey's surviving Native communities.³⁵

The Recognizable Ramapough and His Crusade for Justice

For two decades, Chief Butch Redbone was an extraordinary leader of the Ramapoughs. From 1982, when he was elected chief, until his death in 2001, he led his much-maligned people in their quest for respect and federal recognition as a "tribe." Unlike most previous community leaders who purposely avoided outward attention, Chief Redbone sought visibility for the Ramapoughs. Born Ronald Eugene VanDunk [Van Dunk] in Hillburn on April 2, 1932, "Butch" (as he was affectionately called) spent his boyhood learning how to track and hunt with his father in the then largely-isolated Ramapo Mountains. Although in Louisiana "Redbone" is a derogatory term denoting mixed Indian, black, and white ancestry, the future chief was given this nickname as a young child by his father, who was said to have noticed a red haze around his son's frame.³⁶

Butch Redbone's activism was rooted as far back as World War II. As a sixth grader, he was deeply affected when as many as eighty-eight African American and Native American children were pulled out of school at Hillburn to protest segregation. Their parents had objected to inferior facilities and poor instruction at the "colored" Brook School. As a result of the efforts of Thurgood Marshall, then the lead attorney for the NAACP, the Ramapo School District was integrated and the Brook School closed.³⁷ According to Redbone's wife, Sheila Marshall, the protest made a lasting impression on her husband and his people.³⁸ One of the Ramapoughs leading this and other local protests for civil rights and improved social services was Otto Mann, Sr., the Pentecostal minister at the Full Gospel Church in Mahwah, local president of the NAACP, and leader of the Stag Hill Civic Association. Later, Mann's son helped initiate the federal acknowledgment process while serving as the Ramapoughs' sub-chief in the late 1970s.³⁹

A proud veteran of the United States Army (he served in Germany in the 1950s), Redbone later worked at the Ford Motor Company plant in Mahwah, which operated from the mid-1950s until its closure in 1982. He then was employed for a brief time by the Shortline Bus Company, but his major duty from the early 1980s onward was serving as the official voice of the Ramapoughs. Redbone encouraged tribal efforts at cultural revival, which had begun in the 1970s with the establishment of an annual powwow. He also hired the scholar David Oestreicher to teach Delaware/Lenape (Unami) language and culture classes in the early 1980s.⁴⁰

In November, 1995, in one of the few enlightening, culturally sensitive articles written about the Ramapoughs, *New York Times* reporter Andy Newman interviewed

Redbone at the chief's Stag Hill office in Mahwah. Newman described the chief as a silver-haired, high-cheekboned man. Retired from Shortline, Redbone delighted in carving ash wood Indian heads and walking canes in his limited spare time. He readily admitted that much of his Lenape [Munsee or Delaware] culture had been lost, but he took pride in his efforts at promoting Indian culture and language classes. Unlike younger Ramapoughs who have "become born-again Indians wearing Indian rings on every finger all the time," the chief indicated to the reporter that for him being Indian was quite different: "It's more in what we know about ourselves and about where we come from, in living respect for people for what the elements do for us."⁴¹

Newman went on to describe Redbone's crowded workday. His tribal assistant commented to the reporter that the chief was in perpetual motion. She noted that the chief was constantly on the telephone, consulting with attorneys and legislators trying to win support for federal recognition. When he wasn't lobbying, he was driving his old blue station wagon to the homes of infirm tribal members, making presentations to teachers, or educating youngsters about Indian ways while bedecked with his turkey feather headdress. Newman brought out the chief's important role in countering stereotypes and educating the public about the Ramapoughs. The public, with their views of Indians living in tepees and images based on old Hollywood westerns, frequently asked him how his Indian people lived today. With his keen sense of humor and his knack for providing publishable quotations, the chief responded that he "just got back from bowling, I'm eating a hamburger I picked up at Burger King, and I'm about to watch a video I got at the tape store." However, he also knew when to interject and convey his people's frustrations with the way they were treated. Sadly, in the same interview, the chief pointed out that his people still faced "taunts and discrimination."⁴²

Redbone was part of a rising generation of Ramapoughs shaped by the activism of the 1960s and early 1970s. The Ramapoughs were well aware of the tumultuous events happening nationally in Indian Country. He could not avoid hearing about the Indian takeover of Alcatraz in 1969, the seizure of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1972, or the events leading to the occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973. It is not surprising that in the 1970s, the Ramapoughs began defending these types of actions and showing up at Native protests from New York to California.⁴³ Moreover, in and around Ringwood, Ramapoughs were becoming more organized, establishing a self-help society—the How-to-Organization—to raise money to train people in house repair, which was much needed in the community. Besides securing Federal Housing Administration funding and refurbishing sixteen homes, this organization built upon ongoing efforts in the three Ramapough communities to promote economic, educational, and social development; overcome years of racial discrimination; and promote a greater awareness of Indian identity.⁴⁴

The New Humiliation: Failed Federal Acknowledgment as a “Tribe.”

This dynamic setting contributed directly to the Ramapoughs’ tribal rebirth in the 1970s and their efforts at securing federal recognition as a “tribe.” Other Northeast Indian communities without formal treaties with the United States, including the Micmacs in Maine; Mohegans, Pequots, and Wampanoags in Connecticut and Massachusetts; and Shinnecocks on Long Island were undergoing what anthropologists would label “revitalization movements.” Colonial and later state policies had attempted to remove them from their lands and/or assimilate them into the body politic or group them with blacks. However, by the early 1970s, being “Indian” was acceptable.

As poor people facing centuries-old racial discrimination, they sought better lives for their children in an era of national social upheaval. Besides pride that would come with it, the Ramapough leadership understood that federal status would give them access to money for educational improvements and economic development projects from the BIA, Indian Health Service programs, as well as entry into federal courts to protect their shrinking land base. It also could have allowed them to file a land-claims suit against New York State in federal court for lands condemned in the vicinity of Sloatsburg and Hillburn for Thruway construction and highway development, and to establish gaming enterprises in their territory.

From his election as chief in 1982 to his retirement from office in 1999, Chief Redbone led his people’s fight for federal recognition as a “tribe” of Indians. Much of Redbone’s attention was devoted to overcoming hundreds of years of popular and even scholarly writing that dismissed and demeaned his people’s American Indian ancestry.⁴⁵

During the petition process, Redbone made it quite clear why he advocated this path for his people. In September 1987, he maintained that the Ramapoughs were attempting to overcome “the stigma written about us... We’re fighting against our kids dropping out of school and trying to encourage them to go to college, but we need educational grants.” The chief added: “We want our young people to be a credit to the community, not a burden, and we need help with housing. We’re just trying to catch up.”⁴⁶

By the early 1970s, there was a resurgence of pride in having Native ancestry. Thus, it was not surprising that the Ramapoughs took steps to reclaim themselves as “Indian.” In seeking federal recognition, they also were trying to undo the effects of a major study that had been published in 1974. Although David S. Cohen’s book, *The Ramapo Mountain People*, attacked the veracity of the “Jackson Whites” legend, the author maintained that the Ramapough community was largely descended from blacks. Indeed, Cohen—a historian and folklorist, but not a trained archaeologist, certified genealogist, scholar of the Native American experience, or recognized linguist—questioned the “Indianness” of the Ramapoughs. Although admitting gaps in the genealogical record, he argued that they were largely descended from former slaves living in Dutch New Amsterdam, that their descendants had migrated to the Upper Hackensack Valley and thence to the Ramapo Mountains.⁴⁷

What Cohen failed to understand was that numerous Native American communities, including federally recognized Indian nations, are composed of ethnically, racially, and religiously diverse peoples as a result of adoption and intermarriage, and that Native communities are not static over time. These include nations from Martha's Vineyard to Palm Springs, California. Indeed, Native American identity is based on kinship, not purely race. Two New York examples illustrate this point. In the years during and after the American Revolution, Louis Cook [Atayataghronghta or Atiatoharongwen], an African-Abenaki by birth and officer in the Continental Army, was fully adopted as a member of both the Mohawk and Oneida Nations; today his descendants are well respected Mohawks living on the Akwesasne reservation. Today, David Kimelberg, who is Jewish, is chief operating officer of Seneca Holdings, a subsidiary of the Seneca Nation of Indians. He is an enrolled tribal member, a grand-nephew of Cornelius Seneca, one of the most prominent Seneca presidents in their history.⁴⁸

The publication of Cohen's book clearly damaged the Ramapoughs' case for federal acknowledgment. Nevertheless, in part, their negative reaction to the book led them out of their isolation and into the federal acknowledgment process. Since 1978, there are four ways that a Native community can achieve federal status. It may take action in court to force the United States to recognize its trust responsibilities. Second, a Native American community may be deemed a federally recognized tribe by congressional action. Third, it may be declared a federally acknowledged tribe by an Executive Order issued by the President of the United States. Finally, a Native community may engage in a convoluted petition process established by the Department of the Interior.

The Ramapoughs chose the fourth route, which proved to be both lengthy and costly. For nineteen years—longer than any other Native community—the Ramapoughs entered the Interior Department's maze, namely the bureaucracy of the federal acknowledgment process. The BIA's Branch of Acknowledgment and Research [BAR], now referred to as the Office of Federal Acknowledgment [OFA], is technically in charge of a review. It makes recommendations to the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs, who makes the final determination. This Byzantine process of qualifying as a "federally recognized/acknowledged tribe" is expensive because it requires the hiring of a battery of attorneys and lobbyists as well as an ethnohistorian and a genealogist to work over an extended period of time.

To the Ramapoughs and other nonrecognized tribes in the two-decade period from 1978 to 1997, the petition route also proved to be a humiliating process, one that required a Native American community to prove their long-held identity to bureaucrats more oriented to Western Indians and with little knowledge about the unique experiences of Eastern tribes. Steeped in the conventional wisdom of "racial purity," the bureaucrats too often saw these applicants as "racial imposters." Thus, in the twenty years from the Ramapoughs' letter of intent to file for federal acknowledgment in 1978 to 1998, when the Interior Department formally announced its final denial in the Federal Register, only eleven Native American communities received federal recognition by the petition

route, while thirteen were denied.⁴⁹

Under pressure from Congress and a report of the congressionally appointed American Indian Policy Commission, the BIA created the BAR in 1977 and 1978. It soon developed its own definition of what constitutes a “tribe.” The seven-criteria process at the time the Ramapoughs filed (modified several times since) required communities to furnish evidence that they have been “identified from historical times to the present on a substantially continuous basis as American Indian”; to document that “a substantial portion of the group inhabits a specific area or lives in a community viewed as distinct from other populations in the area”; to furnish proof that the group “has maintained tribal political influence or other authority over its members as an autonomous entity throughout history until the present” ; include a “copy of the group’s present governing document...describing in full the membership criteria and the procedures through which the group currently governs its affairs and its members”; furnish a “list of all known current members... based on the group’s own defined criteria” (but “membership must consist of individuals who have established, using evidence acceptable to the Secretary of the Interior, descendancy from a tribe which existed historically or from historical tribes which combined and functioned as a single autonomous entity”); establish that the group’s members are not members of any other tribe and that the group has not been terminated by a previous act of Congress. In 1994, while the Ramapoughs’ petition was still under consideration, the BIA modified its requirements. Among its revisions, communities now had to be identified as Indian since 1900, not from historical times. Communities could make use of church records as evidence and would have prima facie evidence if they could show that 50 percent of their membership lived in a core area and maintained distinct cultural practices, such as retaining their Indian language.⁵⁰

Important to note, Native American communities are quite diverse and the BAR’s definition of “tribe” did not fit all of them. Political scientists David E. Wilkins and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik define “tribe” as a “community or combination of communities that occupy a common territory, share a political ideology, and are related by kinship, traditions, and language.”⁵¹ The two authors point out, however, that the term has been used in both an ethnological and political-legal sense.⁵² Anthropologists generally define it as a group of indigenous people connected by kinship, cultural, and spiritual values; language; political authority; and a territorial land base. Nevertheless, some anthropologists cringe at using the term, question its meaningfulness as a category to describe Native American communities, and substitute other words in its place.⁵³ In its political-legal usage by the United States government, the term is even more confusing. Wilkins and Kiiwetinepinesiik have observed that the federal government does not have a universal definition since “each [Native American] community defines itself differently and because the U.S. government in its relations with tribes has operated from conflicting sets of cultural and political premises across time.” They added that “many different statutes give definitions for purposes of particular laws, federal agencies like the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) generate their own definitions, numerous

courts have crafted decisions, and the term *tribe* is found—though not defined—in the Constitution’s commerce clause.”⁵⁴

William Quinn, Jr., a former BAR staffer and its most ardent defender, has insisted that federal regulations announced in 1978 “brought some needed order and clarification to a once wholly confused area.”⁵⁵ Nothing is further from the truth. During the two-decade period when the Ramapough petition was under review, critics of the BAR noted that the original regulations were applied inconsistently and the process was overly long; that some members of the BAR’s staff were incompetent or did not have the qualifications to assess the petitions; that the level of proof kept going up and the BAR staff was too secretive and did not inform tribes until after decisions were already made; that they assumed that all non-recognized tribes fit into the same historical pattern and political structure of those already recognized; that BAR decisions were unduly influenced by politics and powerful congressmen tied to special interests on Capitol Hill; and that the process favored petitioners without African ancestry. Moreover, the BAR, unlike the federal courts, did not accept certain evidence, such as tribal oral history.⁵⁶

In 1990, six years before the BAR’s final determination on the Ramapough petition, John “Bud” Shapard, Jr. who directed the BAR office from its inception and wrote the original seven criteria, complained that the process was subjective and hardly accurate, “flawed and unworkable,” and took “too long to produce results.” He insisted: “The criteria are limited in scope and are not applicable to many of the petitioning groups which are, in fact, viable Indian tribes.”⁵⁷ Later, Shapard was hired by the Ramapoughs to advise them on how to deal with the numerous problems they faced in making their way through the petition process. In 1992, the late Vine Deloria, Jr. commented that the BIA’s criteria established in 1978 were supposed to speed up the process and make it more efficient; however, the noted Native American intellectual added that if the seven criteria established had been applied in the past, it “would have eliminated about half of the presently recognized groups.”⁵⁸

With a grant from the Administration of Native Americans in 1983, the Ramapoughs hired anthropologist Dr. Jack Campisi, who had just helped the Mashantucket Pequots achieve federal recognition through congressional legislation. They asked him to undertake the ethnohistorical research for their tribal acknowledgment petition. Unfortunately, the grant was not renewed and the impoverished Ramapoughs were unable to fund the lengthy and costly ethnohistorical and genealogical research on their own.⁵⁹ Rightly or wrongly, Redbone then turned to outside investors willing to cover the expenses of funding the petition process. In 1981, the Seminoles, a federally recognized tribe, had won the right in federal court to open a high-stakes bingo hall in Hollywood, Florida. With outside financing, the operation became an overnight—and highly profitable—success.⁶⁰ Redbone and potential investors also were aware that a 1,700-seat high-stakes bingo “palace” was being planned to open in 1986 at the Mashantucket Pequot Reservation in Connecticut. The chief understood that private investors might be attracted to a similar venture in the heavily populated

New York metropolitan area.

After a much-heated debate, the Ramapough tribal council voted four to three in September, 1985, to accept a contract with Robert Frank of Miami and his Rory Management Corporation. At the time of the hiring, Chief Redbone faced harsh criticism from within his own community. He was accused by political opponents of personally benefiting from the deal. Knowing full well the risk of allowing outsiders into his historically insulated territory, the chief insisted that bingo was “not the main issue. Federal recognition is. I gained nothing from this, but I have grandchildren who will benefit from recognition.”⁶¹

The contract allowed Frank’s company to seek out investors and purchase, establish, and run a bingo operation and other money making enterprises on a ten- to fifteen-acre site in Mahwah if and when the Ramapoughs achieved federal tribal recognition. In return, Frank gave the Ramapoughs a fifteen-year commitment to help them in efforts to gain federal recognition. He agreed to subsidize the considerable expense involved in the petition process. When the bingo hall was operational, Frank also guaranteed that the Ramapoughs would receive approximately \$1 million during the first year and fifty-one percent of the profits (estimated at \$2 million a year) over the next nine years.⁶²

Between 1985 and 1990, Rory Management spent \$500,000 for petition research, lobbying, and attorney’s fees, and an additional \$100,000 purchasing property for the proposed bingo hall. An outside team was formed to push for federal acknowledgment. At the recommendation of Charles Blackwell, a well-connected Chickasaw attorney and Capitol Hill lobbyist, Kendy Rudy, a professor of anthropology at Upsala College in East Orange, New Jersey, was initially hired to conduct the research. Blackwell’s lobbying firm was later replaced by the Madison Group in Washington. Albert Catalano became the Ramapoughs’ lead attorney and was put in charge of the advocacy effort in Washington. Catalano hired Roger Joslyn, a well-known and certified genealogist, to prepare extensive family histories to document the Ramapoughs’ Native American ancestry. After a negative preliminary finding, Ronald Jarvis was hired to meet with BAR staffers reviewing the petition.⁶³

On June 15, 1990, “Ramapough Mountain Indians” filed with the BAR their completed petition, the fifty-eighth submitted by a non-recognized community since 1978. After initial negative comments based on its incompleteness, a revised petition was forwarded to Washington on March 5, 1992.⁶⁴ It included reams of documents as well as extensive genealogical charts. The Ramapoughs attached their 1992 tribal enrollment, listing 2,654 members; slightly more than half—1,333 people—resided in the five-mile core area on the New York-New Jersey border. There were 1,212 Ramapoughs living in New Jersey, 502 at Mahwah and 332 at Ringwood. A few less, 1,189, lived in New York, with 373 residing at Hillburn.⁶⁵ By July of that year, the petition was placed in “active consideration” status at the BAR.

The Ramapoughs faced numerous roadblocks in this petition process. They had organized their governing body only recently, in 1978, and their clan structure was

not the typical Indian pattern based on kinship. They had no treaties with the federal government or with New York or New Jersey. Although fifty percent of their tribal membership lived in the five-mile radius between Hillburn and Ringwood, they did not have a reservation as such. They also had to counter all of the negativity written about them as well as the assumptions they were no longer culturally "Indian."

Besides the label "Jackson Whites" attached to their community, the Ramapoughs were apparently judged by a hidden racial agenda. The Ramapoughs' case, as well as those of other Native communities who submitted petitions during this period (such as the Golden Hill Paugussets), appear to have been influenced by racism. In an excellent study of three Louisiana Native communities that went through or are still proceeding with the federal acknowledgment process, Brian Klopotek has pointed out that "indigenous identity can persist even when racial and cultural markers of aboriginal heritage have receded significantly." He added: "When an indigenous community has also African ancestry, racial thinking spurs suspicion of ulterior motives, and outsiders often suspect that the community is trying to 'pass' for Indian to explain away its nonwhite features." Klopotek concluded: "The practice of anti-black racism under white supremacy has trained generations of people from all over the United States [including from federally recognized communities] to be vigilant about racial boundaries in general, and signs of African ancestry in particular."⁶⁶ Thus, when Joslyn traced the lineage of 7,500 Ramapoughs, past and present, and found Indian ancestry, BAR staffers countered with examples from different censuses that labeled some of the same families as "colored," "Negro," or "mulatto."⁶⁷

To many in and out of government service, and even to some American Indians, Native people who intermarry with whites often are regarded as still qualifying as "Indian"; but those who intermarry with blacks are often categorized as African American. It is important to point out that in this regard, the Ramapoughs were not unlike some other Native peoples along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts, such as the Narragansetts, who had intermarried with blacks and whites. However, unlike the Narragansetts, who were awarded federal recognition in 1980, the Ramapoughs were denied this status when the political landscape substantially changed by the 1990s, making it harder to meet the BAR's increasingly stringent interpretation of its criteria.⁶⁸ Despite claims by Interior Department personnel that no racial bias was involved in its decision-making process, the Ramapoughs and their supporters question this defense down to the present day.⁶⁹

In the Ramapoughs' case and those of others seeking federal recognition, this underlying prejudice was reinforced by the BAR's misuse of the writings of leading scholars. Ironically, works that acknowledged the Ramapoughs' Indian ancestry now were used to disprove their Indian identity! In 1911, Frank Speck acknowledged the Ramapoughs to be of Minisink (Munsee) and Tuscarora ancestry, but that they had intermarried with "slaves, freedmen and vagabond white men." Speck concluded that they were "a type of triple race mixture," and their knowledge of Indian ways were mini-

mal.⁷⁰ A similar interpretation was made by William H. Gilbert in a 1948 Smithsonian report.⁷¹ The writings of both of these scholars were cited to challenge the Ramapoughs' "authenticity."

On December 8, 1993, after a recommendation of denial was made on the Ramapough petition by the BAR, Ada Deer, the Interior Department's assistant secretary for Indian Affairs, released the preliminary determination. It held that the Ramapoughs had not met four of the seven criteria for acknowledgment as an Indian tribe: (1) that the Ramapough Mountain Indians had not been continuously identified as a separate distinct tribe; (2) that they had not lived as a community before 1850; (3) that they could not show continuous political activity since first contact with Europeans; and (4) that they could not present evidence indicating clear descent from either a historic tribe or individual Indians. Deer concluded that the Ramapoughs "have not demonstrated descent from an historic Indian tribe. While a few references have been found to suggest that individual members of the [Ramapough Mountain Indians] may have some Indian ancestry, there is no evidence to show exactly when or where it might have originated." Despite Kraft's writings, Deer claimed that the Ramapoughs had not proved what historic tribe they had been descended from. "Many tribes have been mentioned as possible ancestors: Brotherton, Seneca, Oneida, Mohawk, Tuscarora, Munsee, Creek, Hackensack, Delaware, and others, but no evidence has been offered to make a definite connection to any one of these."⁷²

Clearly, other factors impacted the Interior Department's decision-making. Klopotek has written that one of the main reasons for establishing its procedures was to remove politics from the acknowledgment process, a noble goal since facts are supposed to determine the outcome of the petition process. However, he insists that facts are hardly objective, since "political judgments about what constitutes a sovereign tribe are written into the procedure themselves."⁷³ In the case of the Ramapoughs, powerful Atlantic City casinos began to fear the possibility of future competition if and when the Ramapoughs won federal acknowledgment as a "tribe." Ironically, gaming possibilities (high-stakes bingo) allowed the Ramapoughs to fund research and prepare their petition; however, gaming (casinos) apparently was a reason for the denial of federal recognition.

With the Mashantucket Pequots' successful opening of Foxwoods Casino in south-eastern Connecticut in 1992 and plans underway for development of the Oneidas' Turning Stone Casino in central New York (which opened the following year), non-Indian casino interests became fearful of increased competition. If other Native communities situated in the greater New York City metropolitan area, with its twenty- to thirty-million people, were to be federally recognized and establish Class III gaming, fewer gamblers would be attracted to Atlantic City. Indian casino development had become a much greater threat to casino moguls. They began an intense campaign to thwart the Ramapough efforts at federal tribal recognition.

Although the Ramapoughs' petition was largely based on their need to assert their Indian identity and to seek programs and legal protections available to federally

acknowledged tribes, the news media focused on the casino issue as the only reason for the community's quest for recognition—even though their petition had been filed a decade before Congress's passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988, which allowed gaming operations by federally recognized tribes.⁷⁴ Donald Trump, New Jersey Senator Robert Torricelli, and U.S. Rep. Marge S. Roukema (whose district included Mahwah and Ringwood) formed a powerful alliance against the Ramapoughs. In response, the Ramapoughs demonstrated before Trump Tower in Manhattan and at the district offices of Torricelli and Roukema in New Jersey.⁷⁵

In July 1993, Redbone responded to his opponents: "Gambling is not the issue for us and yet here are the people [Torricelli and Roukema] who are supposed to be helping us, going to the BIA, and talking down our heritage. Trump too." He added that because the Ramapoughs' location is in the New York City metropolitan area and Atlantic City is three hours away, Trump is "raising havoc to see that we don't do this thing [federal recognition]." ⁷⁶ Yet Trump, already known for his brashness and outrageous statements, continued the attack. In October, 1993, seeing the threat to his casino interests if other Native American communities in Connecticut and New Jersey received federal tribal acknowledgment status, he labeled these Indians as pretenders lining up for a big payday. In a blunt statement, he insisted "that they sure as hell don't look like Indians to me." ⁷⁷ For the next two years, Redbone responded to reporters about the casino issue, and especially the chief's view of Trump and his over-the-top statements. The chief later insisted that Trump had showed him "what kind of person he is. . . . He's disrespectful." ⁷⁸

After their petition was denied at the preliminary stage, the Ramapoughs formally appealed the decision. In January 1996, the Interior Department rejected their petition for federal tribal acknowledgment, stating: "While numerous observers clearly identified the group as a distinct entity, their words do not clearly indicate that they perceived it as an American Indian entity." ⁷⁹ Although the Interior Department accepted evidence presented that the Ramapoughs were an established Indian community with political authority over its members from 1870 to 1950, it nevertheless concluded that they had not sufficiently proven their continuous existence as an Indian 'tribe.' ⁸⁰

In 1997, attorney Catalano and associate Matthew Plache challenged this decision, bringing their case to the Interior Department's Board of Appeals (IDBA); however, this effort failed as well, even though the two administrative judges, Anita Vogt and Kathryn A. Lynn, criticized the Interior Department for making procedural errors. ⁸¹ Although the IDBA's denial was formally published in the *Federal Register* in January, 1998, Catalano and Plache continued to file appeals. Finally in 2002, the United States Supreme Court denied their *writ of certiorari* that would have allowed them to bring a suit against the Interior Department for the negative determination and for mismanaging the petition process. ⁸²

Conclusion

Despite failing to achieve federal or New York State tribal recognition for his people, Chief Redbone, who died in 2001, fought the good fight and achieved several lasting legacies. He made a difference, spending two decades overcoming stereotypes and malicious images held by outsiders. He countered the misconceptions about the Ramapoughs in the press and, as the historical area marker controversy indicates, he succeeded in countering outright offensive language that had been presented as fact. In sharp contrast with the past, Redbone understood that the Ramapoughs could no longer use their past strategy of isolation to survive. Indeed, his outward style of leadership helped put the Ramapoughs on the map as Native peoples, in spite of what the Interior Department and its staffers had concluded. During his tenure as chief, Redbone's activist leadership and lobbying activities helped convince New Jersey officials to create its State Indian Commission.⁸³

Perhaps most important, Redbone brought a renewed sense of pride to his people, who so often had been dismissed in the past. A sensitive, intelligent man, "Chief Butch Redbone threw all his energy into an effort to win for his people the respect they had for so long been denied."⁸⁴ In 1995, at a time when he had come to realize that the demeaning federal acknowledgment petition process was stacked against his community, the wise chief revealed why he was committed to pursuing it. He told *New York Times* reporter Evelyn Nieves that while he still hoped to win and gain access to health and other benefits that came with federal tribal recognition, there were other possible rewards from pursuing this difficult path: "But even if we don't win this, we have enough to write a hell of a book [with the reams of documents collected for the petition] for our generations to come. They can deny our name, but we know who we are already. We want to straighten it out for everybody else."⁸⁵ Viewed that way, one could easily conclude that the chief actually succeeded in his tireless efforts.

*Laurence M. Hauptman is a SUNY Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History.
Heriberto Dixon is a SUNY New Paltz Lecturer Emeritus of Business History.*

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Notes

1. *Laws of New York for 1960*, Chapter 394.
2. See Illustration.
3. New York State Office of State History. *Historical Area Markers in New York State* (Albany; New York State Department of Education, 1970), preface, p. 1.
4. *Ibid*, p. 16
5. *Laws of New York, for 1926*, Chapter 786
6. Phil Lord, Jr. [former acting head of the Office of New York State History]; Lord, "Outreach:: State Historical Markers:: A Summary History, New York State Museum Website, accessed January 16, 2013. Phil Lord, Jr., to Laurence M. Hauptman, January 17, 2013.[In Hauptman's possession].
7. Laurence M. Hauptman interview of Robert Weible [New York State's Historian], January 8, 2013, Albany New York; Hauptman telephone interview with George Hamell [Former Senior Curator] January 7, 2013. See also Robin W.Winks, "Review Essay: A Public Historiography," *Public Historian*,14 (Summer): 93-105; Paul Litt "Pliant Clío and Immutable Texts; The Historiography of a Historical Marking Program," *Public Historian*,19 (Fall 1997): 7-28. James W. Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999).
8. See note 6 ; interview of George Hamell
9. Ben McGrath " Strangers in the Mountain," *New Yorker*, March 1, 2010, www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/03/01/100301fa_fact_mcgrath, retrieved March 31, 2013.
10. P.G. Baldwin filed report to Bertram Tallamy [Chairman of the New York State Thruway Authority], September 10, 1954, of a meeting with the Seneca Nation of Indians Tribal Council, August 28, 1954, Records of the New York State Department of Public Works, Deputy Superintendent's Files, # BO 251-84, Box 9 (1954), Folder: Indian Affairs, New York State Archives. The Seneca Nation of Indians to the People of the State of New York, acting by and through the New York State Thruway Authority, "Conveyance of Permanent Easement " (Memorandum of Closing Title) and "Indenture" with attached minutes of the Seneca Nations Tribal Council Meeting of September 18, 1954, at the Allegany Indian Reservation Courthouse, filed at the Erie County Clerk's Office, October 5, 1954, Laurence M. Hauptman FOIL request # FO8-2011 to New York State Thruway Authority, Released February 12, 2008. For this 'take,' see Laurence M. Hauptman's forthcoming book: *In the Shadow of Kinzua: The Seneca Nation of Indians Since World War II* (Syracuse; Syracuse University Press, 2013), chapter 3
11. In 1957-1958, Mohawk activists led by Standing Arrow received extensive coverage. See for example: "Mohawk Invade Upstate Area, Assert Treaty Gives them Land," *New York Times*, August 17, 1957; "Thruway Indians Defying Eviction," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, February 16, 1958; and especially, Edmund Wilson, *Apologies to the Iroquois* (1959; paperback reprint, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991), pp. 39-57. For the Senecas, see "New York Senecas Vote to Rescind Thruway Pact," *New York Times*, April 20, 2007. See the following articles in the *Seneca Nation of Indians' Official Newsletter*: "Seneca Nation Delivers Bill to New York for Thruway Use..." June 15, 2007; and "Senecas Erect Sign on Nation Land Beside New York State Thruway; Message to State and Motorists Indicate the Roadway No longer Has Right-of-Way," September 14, 2007.
12. *Seneca Nation of Indians and Tonawanda Band of Senecas v. State of New York*, *New York State Thruway, et al.*, 206 F.Supp.2d 448 (W.D.N.Y.,2002).
13. "Senecas Clash With Police [on New York State Thruway and the Southern Tier Expressway] over Tax Ruling," *New York Times*, July17, 1992. For the April, 1997 demonstration on the Thruway, see Joy Bilharz, *The Allegany Seneca and the Kinzua Dam: Forced Relocation Through Two Generations* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), pp. 135-136.
14. Chief Redbone quoted in Bryan LaPlaca, " Back in the Day-May 15, 1996; Ramapough Appeal Tribal Status Recognition," *Bergen Record*, May 30, 2011.
15. Chief Ronald Eugene Redbone VanDunk to Howard Steinberg, May 5, 1997, New York State Historical Marker Collection: Ramapo, NYS Museum, Albany [Hereafter cited as NYSHMC: Ramapo, NYSM.] For a discussion of the *Mesing'w* ' [Měsingw], masks, see Herbert Kraft [with the assistance of David Oestreicher], *The Lenape-Delaware Heritage, 10,000 B.C. to 2000* (privately printed, 2001), pp 322-325.

16. John Platt to Chief Redbone VanDunk, May 19, 1997; Chief Redbone VanDunk to John Platt, June 12, 1997, NYSHMC: Ramapo, NYSM. Apparently Honor Conklin was asked to do research on the Ramapoughs for the Thruway Authority and ascertain who they were and the meaning of "Jackson Whites." See Conklin memo, May 27, 1997, NYSHMC: Ramapo, NYSM
17. Chief Redbone VanDunk to John Platt, June 12, 1997, NYSHMC: Ramapo, NYSM.
18. John J. Baniak [Director of Operations, New York State Thruway Authority] to Phil Lord, Jr. May 27, 1997, June 20, 1997; Lord to Baniak, June 4, 1997, with attached undated briefing memo; Lord to Baniak, June 25, 1997; Lord to George Hamell, memo, June 25, 1997, George [Hamell] Memo to Phil [Lord, Jr.] July 2, 1997, NYSHMC: Ramapo, NYSM
19. John Platt raised false hopes, knowing full well that the Thruway Authority no longer had legislative authority to add new historical area markers. Platt to Chief Redbone, June 18, 1997, NYSHMC: Ramapo, NYSM.
20. The demeaning literature on the Ramapoughs is immense. One of the major perpetrators of the slander was John C. Storms, whose writings have been reprinted several times: *Origin of the Jackson-Whites of the Ramapo Mountains* (1936; Reprint edition, Park Ridge, New Jersey, privately printed, 1958). Storms' work has frequently been cited and used by others to slander the Ramapoughs. See for example: Florence E. Greene's defamatory article: "Tobacco Road of the North," *American Mercury*, 53 (July 1941): 15-22. Greene referred to the Ramapoughs as a "dull-minded moral-less, and lawless tribe of mountain folk who make the characters of Tobacco Road seem cultured and effete by comparison." For a critique of Storms' work and influence, see Daniel Collins, "The Racially-mixed People of the Ramapos: Undoing the Jackson Whites Legends," *American Anthropologist* 74 (October 1972): 1276-1285; and David S. Cohen, "The Origin of the 'Jackson Whites': History and Legend Among the Ramapo Mountain People," *Journal of American Folklore* 85 (1972): 260-266
21. Chief Redbone quoted in Jonathan Tilove, "Of Susie Guillory Phipps and Chief Redbone; The Mutability of Race," *Seattle Times*, April 12, 1992.
22. Heriberto Dixon and Laurence M. Hauptman, interview of Roger Joslyn, February 25, 2013, New Paltz, New York. Mr. Joslyn, a well respected certified genealogist who serves on the New York State Archives Advisory Committee, worked for the Ramapoughs on their petition for federal tribal acknowledgment. For Joslyn, see Jay Romano "Three Indian Tribes Stir Casino Fears," *New York Times*, August 1, 1993.
23. See, for example, Brewton Berry, *Almost White; A Study of Certain Racial Hybrids in the Eastern United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1963).
24. For Afro-Indian connections and questions of identity, see Gabrielle Tayac, *IndiVisible: African-Native Lives in the Americas* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, National Museum of the American Indian, 2009); Tiya Miles and Sharon P. Holland, Eds., *Crossing Waters Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006). James F. Brooks, Ed. *Confounding the Color Line; The Indian-Black Experience in North America* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2001); Daniel R. Mandell, *Tribe, Race, History: Native Americans in Southern New England, 1780-1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2008); Jack D. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples. 2nd edition* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1993).
25. Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986), p 5.
26. Herbert C. Kraft, *The Lenape: Archaeology, History, and Ethnography* (Newark, New Jersey: New Jersey Historical Society, 1986), pp. 241-241, 284 n68-71; and Kraft [with the assistance of David Oestreicher], *The Lenape-Delaware Heritage*, pp. 544-545, 562n55- 565n67. Robert S. Grumet *The Munsee Indians: A History* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), pp. 271-272, and especially the maps in Grumet's book on pp 5, 11, 66; and his "The Minisink Settlements; Native American Identity and Society in the Munsee Heartland." In: *The Peoples of Minisink: Papers from the 1989 Water Gap Symposium*, D.G. Orr and D.V. Campana, Eds. (Philadelphia: National Park Service Mid-Atlantic Region, 1991), pp. 175-250; and Edward J. Lenik, *Indians in the Ramapos: Survival, Persistence, and Presence* (New Jersey Highlands Historical Society, 1999).
27. Kraft, *The Lenape: Archaeology, History, and Ethnography* pp. 241, 284n68-71.
28. Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, p 27.
29. Lawrence Freeny, "The Ramapo Ramapoughs; A Thirst for Know How," *New York Times*, December 9, 1979; Kraft [with the assistance of David Oestreicher], *The Lenape-Delaware Heritage*, pp. 562n62; Ada

- Deer, Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs, “Summary Under the Criteria and Evidence for Proposed Finding Ramapough Mountain Indians, Inc., p. 23, United States Department of the Interior, Office of Federal Acknowledgment, December 2, 1993. Acknowledgment Decision Compilation (ADC) for Petitioner #058 (Ramapough Mountain Indians, Inc., NJ), found at www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/AS-IA/OFA/ADCList/PetitionsResolved/Petition58/index.htm. Retrieved February 16, 2013. [Hereafter cited as “Summary Under the Criteria and Evidence...,” BIA/OFA website].
30. The 1978 letter of intent was followed up by a second letter: Otto Mann, Jr. [Mahwah Sub-chief] to Commissioner Bureau of Indian Affairs, August 9, 1979, Letter of Intent, Acknowledgment Decision Compilation (ADC) for Petitioner #058 (Ramapough Mountain Indians, Inc., NJ), BIA/OFA website]. See also Robert Hanley, “Ramapo People’ Seek Recognition as Indians,” *New York Times*, January 17, 1980.
 31. New Jersey State Legislature, Assembly, Concurrent Resolution No.3031, January 8, 1980; *New Jersey Public Law 1134*, Chapter 295 (1995). Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Chief Mark Gould to Laurence M. Hauptman, p.c., March 27, 2013, New York City.
 32. New York State Legislative resolution memorializing President Reagan to issue an executive order to federally recognize the Ramapough Mountain Indians, Assembly No.460 R2-50-66-29), 1982. Ironically, the resolution was read into the *Congressional Record* by Strom Thurmond. Congressional Record, Senate (April 14, 1982), p. 6846. Many accounts, including the BIA’S Branch of Acknowledgment and Research, incorrectly stated in its determination of the Ramapoughs’ petition that they were officially recognized in New York State. Deer, “Summary Under the Criteria and Evidence...,” December 2, 1993, p. 121. BIA/OFA website
 33. David Oestreicher to Laurence M.Hauptman, February 9, 2013 [in Hauptman’s possession] Hamell to Hauptman, p.c March 1, 2013, Cooperstown, New York Oestreicher attended this event, while Hamell was a curator for over a quarter of a century at the New York State Museum and was directly involved in the planning of this permanent exhibit and its opening.
 34. David Oestreicher to Laurence M.Hauptman, February 9, 2013 [in Hauptman’s possession] Hamell to Hauptman, p.c March 1, 2013, Cooperstown, New York Oestreicher attended this event, while Hamell was a curator for over a quarter of a century at the New York State Museum and was directly involved in the planning of this permanent exhibit and its opening. Many accounts, including the BIA Branch of Acknowledgment and Research’s analysis of the Ramapoughs’ petition, state incorrectly that they were officially recognized in New York State. “Summary Under the Criteria and Evidence...,” December 2,1993, p. 121. BIA/OFA website
 35. For the disastrous relations between New York State and one federally recognized Iroquois nation in this two-decade period, see Laurence M. Hauptman, *In the Shadow of Kinzua: The Seneca Nation of Indians Since World War II* (Syracuse, New York; Syracuse University Press, 2013), pp. 180-205, 238-253. For Lone Bear’s cooperation with academics and his role as educator, see James Revey. “The Delaware Indians of New Jersey From Colonial Times to the Present,” In: *The Lenape Indians; A Symposium*, Herbert C. Kraft, Ed. (South Orange New Jersey: Seton Hall University Museum Archaeological Research Center, 1984), pp 74-81. Lone Bear also taught Native crafts in schools and Native communities.
 36. Andy Newman, “In Person; Laying Claim to A Tribe’s History,” *New York Times*, November 26, 1995; Douglas Martin, “Ronald Van Dunk, 68, Chief Red Bone of the Ramapough Mountain Indians, is Dead,” *New York Times*, April 8, 2001. Blair Craddock, “Ramapough Indian Activist Dies,” *Journal News [White Plains]*, April 2, 2001. The anthropologist David Oestreicher taught the language course at Ramapough in the early 1980s. Kraft [with the assistance of David Oestreicher], *The Lenape-Delaware Heritage*, pp. 563-564n61. For the term “Redbone” as used in Louisiana, see Brian Klopotek, “Of Shadows and Doubts. Race, Indigeneity, and White supremacy.” In: *IndiVisible*, p. 86.
 37. Case #4915, decided October 15, 1943. In: *Department Reports of the State of New York Containing the Decisions, Opinions and Rulings of the State Departments, Officers, Boards and Commissions* (Albany: Williams Press, Inc.,1946), 65:106-108. It should be noted that there was little understanding by the press or the New York State Education Department that the children affected were of both African American and Native American descent. The NAACP’s focus was on fighting for the civil rights of African Americans; even its attorneys, such as Thurgood Marshall, constantly referred to his clients as “Negroes.” See the following articles in the *New York Times*: “Race Segregation Charged at Hillburn; Strike of Negroes Closes Two Schools,” September 10, 1943; “46 Negro Children Barred by School,” October 1, 1943; “Negro School in Hillburn Closed By Order of State Education Head,” October

- 12, 1943. Thurgood Marshall and Donald Crichton to [NYS Commissioner of Education George D. Stoddard, September 23, 1943; Legal Brief filed by attorneys Donald Crichton and Thurgood Marshall before New York State Commissioner of Education, October 11, 1943; Petition of parents of students at the Brook School filed in Hillburn case, September 23, 1943; E.R. Van Kleek memo to Stoddard, October 4, 1943; Don L. Essex memo to Stoddard, October 6, 1943; Marshall to Stoddard, October 14, 1943. Records of the New York State Commissioner of Education, Files of Commissioner George D. Stoddard. Administrative Law decisions, # 4915, BO496-05, New York State Archives, Albany. The NAACP continued to monitor this case until the mid 1950s. Further records for the case can be found in the NAACP MSS., Group II, Box C120, File: Hillburn, Library of Congress.
38. Craddock, "Ramapough Indian Activist Dies," *Journal News [White Plains]*, April 2, 2001.
 39. Deer, "Summary Under the Criteria and Evidence for Proposed Finding Ramapough Mountain Indians, Inc., December 2, 1993, p. 23, BIA/OFA website. For Otto Mann, Jr., Hanley, "Ramapo People' Seek Recognition as Indians."
 40. See Note 36.
 41. Newman, "In Person: Laying Claim to a Tribe's History."
 42. *Ibid.*
 43. William Pooch Van Dunk and Paul Ryan, "Indian Heritage." [Ringwood Library] *Talking Wood* (Winter 1979), p. 24.
 44. William Claiborne, "Mountain People Face Adversity," *Journal News [Rockland]*, January 5, 1976.
 45. Ronald VanDunk as told to Hattie Jo Mullins, "Like a Flying Bird: The Leader of Rockland's Reticent Ramapo Mountain People Tells of an Indian Past and Hopes for the Future," *Journal News [Rockland]*, Suburbia Today section, September 18, 1983; Evan St. Lifer, "Ramapoughs Seek Federal Tribal Status," *New York Times*, September 6, 1987.
 46. Chief Redbone quoted in St. Lifer, "Ramapoughs Seek Federal Tribal Status."
 47. David S. Cohen, *The Ramapough Mountain People* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1974).
 48. For Lewis Cook [Atayataghrongha or Atiatoharongwen] see Karim M.Tiro, *The People of the Standing Stone: The Oneida Nation from the Revolution to Removal* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), pp. 51,77-79, 82, 84,119,138; Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972), pp. 149, 155, 197. Darren Bonaparte, a Mohawk educator and journalist, currently is writing a biography of his ancestor Lewis Cook. Laurence M. Hauptman has been a consultant for the Seneca Nation of Indians from 2010 onward and has worked with David Kimelberg during that time. Hauptman interview of David Kimelberg, February 1, 2011, Allegany Indian Reservation.
 49. See the two charts compiled from the BIA/OFA website. Amy E. den Ouden, makes the point that numerous outsiders saw Native communities in New England seeking federal acknowledgment as "racial imposters." *Beyond Conquest: Native Peoples and the Struggle for History in New England* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), pp. 181-208, especially 204.
 50. *Code of Federal Regulations*, Sec.83 (1978); *Code of Federal Regulations*, Sec.83 (1994). For studies of the petition route, see Brian Klopotek, *Recognition Odyssey: Indigeneity, Race, and Federal Recognition in Three Louisiana Indian Communities* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011); Mark A. Miller, *Forgotten Tribes: Unrecognized Indians and the Federal Acknowledgment Process* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).
 51. David E. Wilkins and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesik, *American Indian Politics and The American Political System*. 3d edition (New York: Rowan and Littlefield 2011), p. 313
 52. *Ibid.*, p. 7. See also Bruce Duthu, *American Indians and the Law* (New York: Penguin, 2008), p,144.
 53. Alfred Kroeber, "Nature of the Landholding Group," *Ethnohistory*, 2 (1955), 303-314. See also Morton H. Fried, "The Myth of Tribe," *Natural History*, 84 (April 1975), 12-20. Fried argued the term was a byproduct of colonial domination and therefore useless. Jack Campisi, "The Iroquois and the Euro-American Concept of Tribe," *New York History*, 63 (April 1982): 165-167.
 54. Wilkins and Kiiwetinepinesik, *American Indian Politics and The American Political System*, p. 7.
 55. William W. Quinn, Jr., "Federal Acknowledgment of American Indian Tribes: Authority, Judicial Interpretation, and 25 C.F.R.Sec.83," *American Indian Law Review*, 17 (Fall 1992): 37-69. See also the

- following articles by Quinn: "Public Ethnohistory? Or Writing Tribal Histories at the Bureau of Indian Affairs," *The Public Historian*, 10, (Spring 1988), 71-76; "Federal Acknowledgment of American Indian Tribes? The Historical Development of a Legal Concept," *American Journal of Legal History*, 349 (October 1990): 331-363; "The Southeast Syndrome: Notes on Indian Descendant Recruitment Organizations and Their Perceptions of Indian Culture," *American Indian Quarterly*, 14 (Spring 1990): 147-154.
56. Klopotek, *Recognition Odyssey*, pp. 3-5, 254; Jack Campisi and William A. Starna, "Why Does it Take So Long? Federal Recognition and American Indian Tribes of New England," *Northeast Anthropology*, No.57, 1-17.
 57. John A. 'Bud' Shapard, Jr. quoted in: Campisi and Starna, "Why Does it Take So Long? *Northeast Anthropology*, No.57 (Spring 1999):12. While the head of BAR in 1983, Shapard called the process extremely time-consuming, confusing, and frankly, it is not working as well as we would like it to work..." United States Congress. Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs. Hearings: *Oversight of the Federal Acknowledgment Process*, July 21, 1983, 98th Congress, 1st session (Washington, D. C., U.S.G.P.O., 1984), p. 9. See also his testimony and letter to Senator Daniel Inouye in: United States Congress. House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. Hearings: *The Federal Acknowledgment Process*. 102nd Congress, 2nd session (Washington, D.C.: U.S.G.P.O., 1992), pp. 64-79.
 58. Vine Deloria, Jr., testimony on July 8, 1992, before the United States Congress, House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. Hearings: *Federal Acknowledgment of Various Indian Groups*. 102nd Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S.G.P.O.,1993), p. 93.
 59. St. Lifer, "Ramapoughs Seek Federal Tribal Status."
 60. *Seminole Tribe of Florida v. Butterworth*, 658 F.2d 310 (U.S. Court of Appeals, 5th Circuit, 1981)
 61. Chief Redbone quoted in: Lifer, "Ramapoughs Seek Federal Tribal Status."
 62. *Ibid*
 63. *Ibid*. Deer, "Summary Under the Criteria and Evidence for Proposed Finding Ramapough Mountain Indians, Inc., December 2, 1993, pp. 129-130, BIA/OFA website. Interview of Roger Joslyn. Obituary of Charles Blackwell, *Washington Post*, January 29, 2013.
 64. Ada Deer, Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs, "Summary Under the Criteria and Evidence for Proposed Finding Ramapough Mountain Indians, Inc., p. 4, United States Department of the Interior, Office of Federal Acknowledgment, January 16, 1996, Acknowledgment Decision Compilation (ADC) for Petitioner #058 (Ramapough Mountain Indians, Inc.,NJ, found at www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/AS-IA/OFA/ADCList/PetitionsResolved/Petitions58/index.htm. Retrieved February 16, 2013. [Hereafter cited as "Summary Under the Criteria and Evidence...," January 16,1996, BIA/OFA website].
 65. Deer, *Summary Under the Criteria and Evidence for Proposed Finding Ramapough Mountain Indians, Inc.*, December 2,1993, pp. 178-184. BIA/OFA Website.
 66. Brian Klopotek, *Recognition Odyssey: Indigeneity, Race, and Federal Recognition in Three Louisiana Indian Communities* (Durham, North Carolina; Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 264. Mark Miller claims that the BAR staff was not making decisions based on the degree of African ancestry, but that others in the Interior Department held outright racist views. Miller, *Forgotten Tribes*, p. 63.
 67. Deer, *Summary Under the Criteria and Evidence for Proposed Finding Ramapough Mountain Indians, Inc.*, December 2,1993, pp. 83, 204-206. BIA/OFA Website. Interview of Roger Joslyn. Joslyn quoted in: Jay Romano, "Three Indian Tribes Stir Casino Fears." Iver Peterson, "Our Towns: On Horizon, The Spector of a Casino," July 27, 1993.
 68. For the Narragansetts' struggle to maintain their Indian identity in the face of officials designating them as "colored" or "Negro" in the written record, see Ruth Wallis Herndon and Ella Wilcox Sekatau, "The Right to a Name: The Narragansett People and Rhode Island Officials in the Revolutionary Era," *Ethnohistory*, 44 (Summer, 1997): 433-462.
 69. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt later had to deflect racist charges made against his department brought by the Ramapoughs. Deer, *Summary Under the Criteria and Evidence for Final Determination of the Ramapough Mountain Indians, Inc.*, January 16, 1996, p. 5, BIA/OFA Website.
 70. Frank Speck, "The Jackson Whites," *Southern Workman*, 40 (1911): 104-105.
 71. William H. Gilbert, "Surviving Indian Groups of the Eastern United States." *Smithsonian Institute Annual Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S.G.P.O, 1948), pp. 407-438.

72. Deer, *Summary Under the Criteria and Evidence for Proposed Finding Ramapough Mountain Indians, Inc.*, December 2, 1993, p. 204, BIA/OFA website. See also *Federal Register*, 58 (December 8, 1993): 64662.
73. Klopotek, *Recognition Odyssey*, pp. 262-263.
74. Indian Casino operations were allowed by the decision in: *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians*, 480 U.S. 202 (1987). Congress then passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, 102 Stat., 2467-276 (October 17, 1988).
75. See the following *New York Times* articles: Newman, "Laying Claim to a Tribe's History." Jay Romano, "Three Indian Tribes Stir Casino Fears." Iver Peterson, "Our Towns: On Horizon, The Spector of a Casino," July 27, 1993; Raymond Hernandez, "The Mountain People Dig in Over Recognition as Indians," January 1, 1995; Sharkey "New Jersey Daily Briefing: Protest Over Tribal Status," October 21, 1995; Evelyn Nieves "Rebuffed and Ignored, a Tribe Waits to be Confirmed as Indian," December 1, 1995.
76. Chief Redbone quoted in: Peterson, "Our Towns; On Horizon, The Spector of a Casino."
77. Donald Trump quoted in: Kirk Johnson, "Tribal Rights: The Law of Recognition," *New York Times*, October 17, 1993. Amy E. den Ouden makes the point that numerous outsiders, not just Trump, saw Native communities in New England as racial imposters.
78. Chief Redbone quoted in Nieves, "Rebuffed and Ignored, A Tribe Waits to be Confirmed as Indian."
79. Deer, *Summary Under the Criteria and Evidence for Final Determination Against the Federal Acknowledgment of the Ramapough Mountain Indians*, January 1, 1996, p. 10 For the formal announcement of the negative findings, see *Federal Register*, 61 (February 6, 1996): 4476. For a discussion of BAR's findings, see Kraft [with the assistance of Oestreicher], *The Lenape-Delaware Heritage*, pp. 562-565.
80. See Note 72.
81. *In Re Federal Acknowledgment of the Ramapough Mountain Indians, Inc.* (July 18, 1997) IBIA 96-6A. BIA/OFA website. For the formal announcement of the appeals court decision, see *Federal Register*, 63 (January 7, 1998): 888.
82. Petition for a Writ of Certiorari, *Ramapough Indians v. Gale Norton* (May 16, 2002), but it was rejected.
83. Jim Lone Bear Revey [Sand Hill Delaware], Chief Redbone, Chief Roy Crazy Horse Johnson [Powhatan Renape] and Chief Mark Gould [Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape] helped bring this commission about. Chief Mark Gould [personal friend of Chief Redbone] to Laurence M. Hauptman, p.c., March 27, 2013, New York City.
84. Oestreicher to Hauptman, February 9, 2013.
85. Chief Redbone quoted in Nieves, "Rebuffed and Ignored, a Tribe Waits to be Confirmed as Indian." Since Redbone's death in 2001, the Ramapoughs have focused their attention on bringing their case against Ford Motor Company for its dumping of toxic wastes in the Ringwood mines, contaminating tribal territory. They also have protested the killing of Emil Mann, who was shot to death by a Palisades Park Ranger in 2006. McGrath, "Strangers on the Mountain." For their environmental lawsuit, see "*Mann v. Ford*." HBO Documentary (2011) directed by Micah Fink and Maro Chermayeff. The Ramapoughs also recently protested the motion picture *Out of the Furnace*, which they see as a defamatory portrayal of their community. Chief Dwaine Perry to Laurence Hauptman, e-mail, December 6, 2013.

Notes & Documents

The Hudson River Valley Institute periodically publishes Notes and Documents to share significant new research and other scholarship that may not otherwise reach its audience.



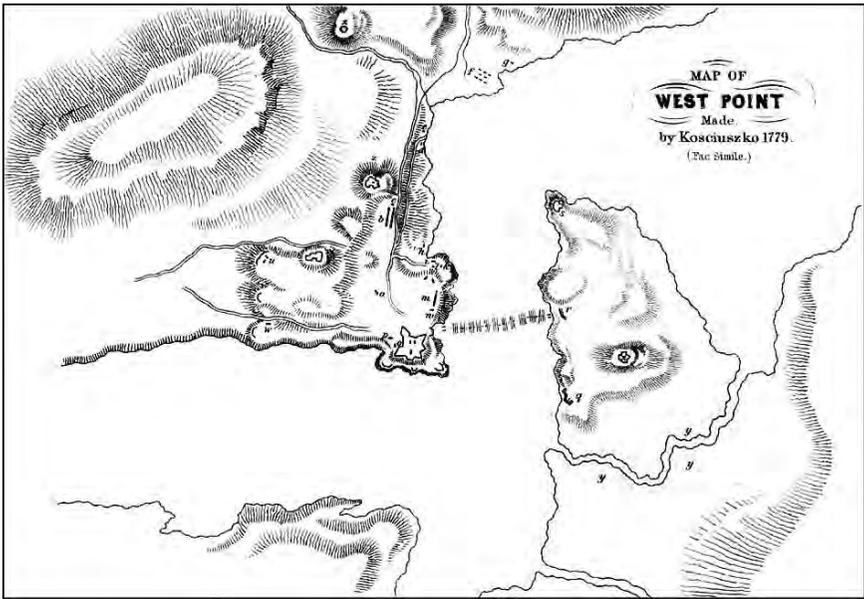
Photograph of the historical marker on Fort Clinton today

Who Planned Fort Arnold?

Merle G. Sheffield; adapted by James M. Johnson

Historians and biographers are always assigning credit or blame to individuals caught up in the great events of history. The contributions of two engineers, Colonels Thaddeus Kosciuszko and Louis Guillaume Servais Deshayes de la Radière, in the construction of Fortress West Point, General George Washington’s “key of America,” have been debated over the last 236 years. Kosciuszko, the Polish-American hero in the American War of Independence, has generally come out on top. Since 1828, the main fortification at West Point, Fort Clinton/Arnold, has been graced with a monument—and since 1913 a sculpture—honoring him. Kosciuszko’s name is closely woven into the whole tapestry of forts and redoubts that guarded the Hudson Highlands during the war. In particular, he was the resident engineer at West Point for a period of two years between his service in other theaters of the war.

Lieutenant Colonel Merle G. Sheffield was a faculty member in the Department of Physics at the United States Military Academy from 1965 to 1971; during my time as a cadet, he became captivated by the role of the other foreign engineer, French Colonel de la Radière. He eventually wrote essays about West Point’s Great Chain and boom and la Radière’s role in the design of Fort Clinton/Arnold. Based on his research, he



Map of Fortress West Point Defenses from *Guide to West Point, and the U.S. Military Academy, with Maps and Engravings* (1867) by Edward Carlisle Boynton

decided he needed to clarify who actually planned Fort Clinton: a little-known French-American patriot who gave his life for America’s cause. This adaptation of his essay “Who Planned Fort Arnold?” honors Sheffield’s historical passion and his service as a soldier and, in retirement, a Peace Corps volunteer. It is a posthumous recognition of his scholarly contributions; LTC Sheffield died in 1991.¹

The reader should understand from the beginning that this is a controversial subject of great interest to a limited number of people. It does, however, highlight how important documentary evidence is in illuminating historical controversies. While some will see this study as an attempt to detract from Kosciuszko’s fine record, this is not the case. The authors’ interest is to give credit where it is due. La Radière’s service with the Continental Army was cut short by his untimely death from consumption on 30 October 1779. He should be honored for what he did, and one of his accomplishments was to draft the plan that would result in the main fort—Fort Clinton/Arnold—and its nearby supporting batteries and redoubt at West Point.

Washington’s army suffered from the lack of trained military engineers until Kosciuszko arrived late in 1776 and a number of French officers early in 1777. The need for competent engineers meant that the Continental Congress had to attract Europeans to the Patriot cause. Although numerous soldiers of fortune sought high pay and rapid promotion, qualified engineers were not so plentiful. To fill that void, the Continental Congress directed Benjamin Franklin, Minister to France, to “engage skilful [sic] engineers not exceeding four.”² Not yet openly allied with the United States,

France selected Major Louis Le Bègue de Presle Duportail to go to America and serve in the Continental Army. Duportail chose three others to accompany him: Captain de la Radière, Captain Jean Baptiste Joseph de Laumoy, and Lieutenant Jean Baptiste de Gouvion.

After the British ended their expedition in the mid-Hudson River Valley in October 1777, Washington sent la Radière to plan the defenses of that region and to get the work started as quickly as possible. Major General Israel Putnam commanded the troops in the Hudson Highlands Department, while Governor George Clinton oversaw New York State's participation from the temporary capital at Poughkeepsie on the eastern shore of the Hudson north of West Point. The general and the governor both agreed that the new fortifications should be sited at the "west point" of the Hudson. La Radière disagreed and argued for an area to the south, where Forts Montgomery and Clinton had been located before the British destroyed them in their 1777 campaign. The French engineer lost the argument; against his better judgment, he was forced to lay out his fort at West Point. Just as the fort was beginning to take shape in March 1778, la Radière left the post for two weeks and came back to find that Kosciuszko had taken up the duties of engineer. For the next six weeks, a dismal game of "What do we do about this?" was allowed to drag on until la Radière finally left on General Washington's orders.

With these facts in mind, it only remains to say a few words regarding the personalities of the two men before we spell out the documentation that proves the case.



Letter and original plan of Fort Arnold "traced out" by la Radière

There is no doubt that la Radière could not get along with people in general and Americans in particular. On the other hand, Kosciuszko was cordially received and worked extremely well with all ranks.

Why has it taken so long to establish the credit for planning this large fort? The answer is linked to the old saying that "Truth is the daughter of time." Our knowledge of things past often hinges upon chance, whim, and even prejudice. Certain facts are written down, others are not. Remembered facts may be recorded at a later date—or they may not. Memories can be faulty, and documents may be destroyed, lost, or misplaced.

The events of spring, 1778, at West Point left a faint trail for those who became interested in them years later. You might say that time granted another crumb to truth around 1972, when a curious sheet of paper in the possession of a Connecticut family

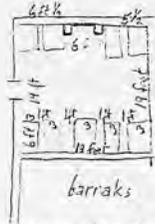
Transcriptions of the handwritten letter

Cube of the breastwork 5 fathoms or 1080 cubique feet. The ditch about 32 feet on the top and 24 feet in the bottom, the deepness according to the ground which will be wanted. If we can make this little glacis it would be the best to cover the breast work () so that we can fire early against the *van* up this glacis. Breast work from A in C 20 feet when it will be 9 feet high and a little less when it will be higher. This is no material thing. From A in C the earth must be beaten every foot or 18 inches to make the breast work stronger. None stones must be in the breast work above the banquette. The sticks must be sunk in the ground as in A every two feet. If we have time and fascines enough we must put a rank of fascines perpendicularly to the breast work with sticks in the ground or we must at least put fascines in this manner in

(Gate) *Bartlett*

the place where the braces join the posts, three sticks for each fascine at less. We must take care for the ground in all saillant angles because we will get too much ground for them. The embrasures must be 2 feet in the inside and () in the outside and their bottom () from 6 inches since the inside () to the outside (vide the figure. The line of their middle must be perpendicular to the flank.

The barracks must be two story high. Each room 19 feet by 19 feet the story in the outside. Each room will contain 9 beds about upon the floor and 9 above them so each room will contain 18 beds, 36 men; the two story, 72 men; and in case of great necessity, more. So we want for a garrison of 600 men about 18 rooms of 19 feet by 19 or 9 with stors, or barracks 180 feet long besides the barracks for the officers. I suppose that my barrak will be enough for them and part of these of the quarter master.



I think that we must keep the ground for the pouldre magasin and the store house to put them parallel to the curtain if it is possible, or one as the garde house should (). Each magasin should be 20 feet weidth and 40 feet long in the wid at less. If we had time we could make them bombeproof and so that we could rake use of them like traverse and like citadels.

We must have a gate of 3 or 4 inches thick in which there must be a little door about three feet weidh the great must be 10 feet or 12 and the place through the breastwork about 14 or 16. We must have rignets with sharp above the gate so that the enemy could not put ladder. We must have a cheval de frise upon the bridge 4 feet before the gate and one in the outside of the bridge with some palinados in the two sides of the bridge in it end. So that the enemy would not come early upon this bridge we must cover the bridge at less with an entrenchement of pickets. If we had time we could make one gate on the inside of the breastwork with planks of three inches and loopholls.



With should have a well. If we have not place enough for all barraks we may put some upon the rock in a covered place.

The little parapet round the brinke of the hill must be very small, about so:



Captain Chempion knows the thickness of the other breastwork. That is - about 12 feet and the ditch 18 on the top and deep according to the ground. If we make the redoute he knows the place. We may make the two communication with small parapet if we had not time that is 12 feet thick with palinados.



came to light. It was untitled, unsigned, and a bit hard to decipher, but it was covered with a lot of writing, some sketches, and one large drawing of a fort, obviously Fort Arnold. This plan, and a letter written in 1837 that accompanied it, assures la Radière's rightful credit for the design.³

The faint trail of previous knowledge regarding the plans for the fort comes from many sources and will be outlined here in the briefest manner:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Correspondence</i>
12 January 1778	la Radière to member of Congress "I am going to trace a fort... It is better to fortify less good than to do nothing." ⁴
5 February	Governor Clinton to Major General Horatio Gates, Board of War: "Engineer who has the direction of the works is deficient in point of practical knowledge." ⁵
10 February	Major General Israel Putnam to Congress: "The batteries near the water and the fort to cover them are laid out... I am apprehensive the public service will be delayed by this Engineer." ⁶
24 February	Brigadier General Samuel H. Parsons (acting commander, Hudson Highlands Department) to Clinton: "We have the works going on now, with some order & Spirit. One 1000 sticks of Timber are cutt [sic.] & many got out of ye mountains. I believe I shall this week have them mostly drawn to the Place where the Fort is to be built..." ⁷
5 March	Parsons to Clinton: "La Radiere I am informed intends asking leave to retire from the Post..." ⁸
7 March	Parsons to Washington: "Col. Radiere finding it impossible to complete the fort and ... has desired leave to wait on your Excellency and Congress, which I have granted him..." ⁹
10 March	Parsons to Clinton: "We shall begin to break ground in two days..." ¹⁰
16 March	Parsons to Washington: "I hope to have Two Sides and one Bastion of the Fort in some State of Defence in about a fortnight; the other Sides need very little to Secure them..." ¹¹
21 March	Washington to Major General Alexander McDougall (new commander of the Hudson Highlands Department): "This will be delivered by Colonel de la Radiere..." ¹²
26 March	Clinton to Parsons (still at West Point): "Colo. Kuziazke [sic.] ... will deliver you this..." ¹³

In addition to this chronology, we have two memoirs written by a participant in these events—Samuel Richards of Farmington, Connecticut. Richards was a lieutenant in one of the Connecticut regiments that crossed the frozen Hudson early in January 1778 to begin work on the fort. In 1832, at the age of seventy-nine, he wrote of those

early days for the benefit of interested West Point cadets:

A week or ten days was spent in erecting temporary huts for our covering... In a short time a site was traced out for a fort by the engineer La Radiere, ... the snow was removed from the spot where the principal work now remains and the rest of the winter was spent in drawing timber and stone for the erection of the fort which was begun as soon as the frost was out of the ground.... Poor Col. La Radiere's delicate health was not equal to sustaining those hardships which were so familiar to the soldiers of the revolutionary army; he caught a severe cold which ended in consumption, of which he died about midsummer following. On the removal of La Radiere, occasioned by his illness the well known Kosciusko came to the post and served as Engineer...¹⁴

The second memoir from Richards, dated 1837, is a letter to the daughter of deceased Revolutionary War veteran Henry Champion. Richards had been asked by Champion's daughter if he could tell her anything of her father's war service. The family that owned this letter and the accompanying plan of Fort Clinton/Arnold apparently were descendants of Henry Champion's.

Then eighty-four years old, Richards replied in part:

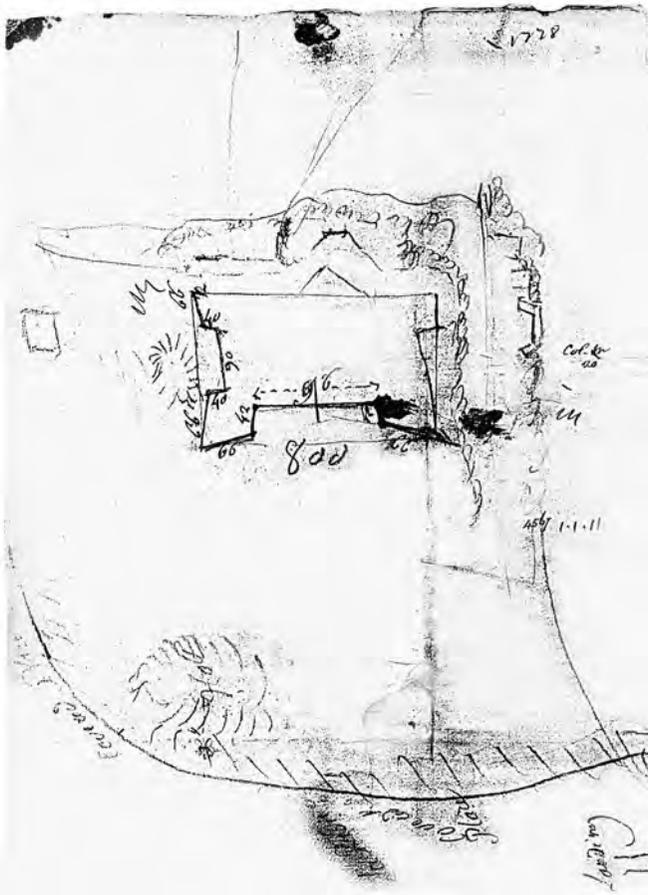
In 1777 I was attached to the company he commanded, in which I continued the remainder of the war.... In '78—February—the regiment moved on to West Point on Hudson river a Col La Radier—a french engineer was appointed to lay out the works; he being recently from a military school in France—possessing the science—but not conversant with the practical part—he succeeded in engaging Kosciuszko to execute the plans he had sketched out in his log hut....¹⁵

From these two memoirs two facts emerge distinctly: The first is that la Radière “traced out” Fort Arnold. The second is that the detailed plan found in 1972 is directly linked to la Radière through Henry Champion.

The Champion plan contains this statement just to the left of the sketch of the fort: “Captain Champion knows the thickness of the other breastwork. ... If we make the redoubt he knows the place.” It was common for an officer in garrison to be assigned the responsibility for coordinating work to be done on a particular fortification. He acted as a go-between in translating the engineer's design into useful effort by the troops doing the work. Captain Champion signed a muster roll of his company at West Point dated 17 February 1778¹⁶ and the Orderly Book of his company shows that it left Fort Arnold on 26 June 1778.¹⁷ He had previously served in the same unit with Colonel Rufus Putnam, who was chosen to construct the other major fort at West Point, later named Fort Putnam. Champion's name has not been well known in this connection, but he obviously deserves a portion of the credit for the construction of Fort Arnold.

From the chronology, we can see that the planning for the fort and its initial construction was done by early March, about the time that la Radière asked to be excused. Kosciuszko arrived at the end of March, too late for major input. The best date for the plan would appear to be late February or early March, when la Radière was preparing for his departure and leaving the works in the capable hands of Captain Champion while he was gone.

Finally, we come to the difficult question of handwriting. Several experts compared la Radière's penmanship with that of Kosciuszko's and concluded that "the so-called 'Champion Plan' was done by la Radière. Kosciuszko's penmanship is not close enough to question his possible authorship."¹⁸ It is not hard to find material signed by la Radière that is not in the same hand as the plan. He had a clerk to help him, a prisoner taken at Saratoga, and we do not know just what the clerk wrote. There is also at least one example of a letter written by la Radière that was signed by another officer. The "Sketch of Fort Arnold and Water Batteries at West Point" has la Radière's signature on it, although it appears that someone tried to rub it out. Rather than going into more detail in this study, suffice it to say that there is no question in the authors' minds as to the handwriting on the plan. It was done by Louis de la Radière himself.



Hand sketched drawing of Fort Arnold with la Radière's name scratched out at the bottom center. Original in the Alexander McDougall Papers, the Manuscript Department, the New York Historical Society, New York, NY; copied from Reel 2, Special Collections and Archives, USMA Library, West Point, NY.

Colonel la Radière has his place secured in the annals of West Point. A plaque installed on the scarp of Fort Clinton credits him with the fort's planning. In addition, a street in the Academy's Stony Lonesome Housing Area is named for him. It is fitting that la Radière be remembered, as he died au camp du général Washington and is buried somewhere in New Windsor. He gave his life for his adopted country, leaving behind Fort Clinton, Sherburne's Redoubt on present-day Trophy Point, and the water batteries along the Hudson as his legacy.¹⁹

Endnotes

1. Merle Sheffield tenaciously sought in his lifetime to get La Radière and Champion their due; for his tentative argument upon which I have built, see his unpublished "Who Planned Fort Arnold?", Sheffield Research File, Box 6, Merle Sheffield Papers, Special Collections, USMA Library, West Point, NY
2. Resolution of Congress, 2 December 1775, in Worthington C. Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 34 vols. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1905-1937, 3: 400-401.
3. Merle Sheffield Papers, Special Collections, USMA Library, West Point, NY
4. Quoted in Elizabeth S. Kite, *Duportail: Commandant of Engineers in the Continental Army, 1777-1783* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1933), 2, 19, 31. Kite included the correspondence from Duportail to Benjamin Franklin; I changed Radière to La Radière because that is the way he personally signed his letters; see La Radière to COL William Malcolm, n.d. [1778], Massachusetts Historical Society.
5. George Clinton to Major General Horatio Gates, George Clinton, *Public Papers of George Clinton, First Governor of New York 1777-1795 – 1801-1804*, ed. Hugh Hastings, 10 vols. (New York and Albany: State printers, 1899-1914), 2:712.
6. Major General Israel Putnam to Congress, *Papers of the Continental Congress and Journals of the Continental Congress*, 10:204.
7. Samuel H. Parsons to Clinton, 24 Feb. 1778, *Public Papers*, 2: 789 and 803.
8. *Ibid.*, 2:859.
9. Washington to Parsons, 7 Mar. in Charles S. Hall, *Life and Letters of Samuel Holden Parsons* (Binghamton, NY: Otsego Publishing Company, 1905), 153-155.
10. Parsons to Clinton, 10 Mar., *Parsons*, 149-50.
11. Parsons to Washington, 16 Mar., George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741-1799: Series 4. General Correspondence, 1697-1799, 1157.
12. Washington to McDougall, 21 Mar., *ibid.*, 113.
13. Clinton to Parsons, 26 Mar. 1778, *Public Papers*, 3: 85-86.
14. From a two-page hand-written document dated April 1832 entitled "West Point" and signed by Samuel Richards. Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, CT.
15. From a typed copy of a letter to Mrs. Maria Watkinson from Samuel Richards signed at Farmington, 17 June 1837. Original is privately owned. Copy provided the author through the courtesy of The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Connecticut.
16. Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, CT. Captain Henry Champion Sr. (1723-1797) served in Colonel Samuel Wyllys' 3rd Connecticut Continental Line. He was from Colchester, Connecticut. His record during the American Revolution indicates he was a very capable officer. He joined the Revolution as a 2nd Lieutenant on 1 May 1775. During 1776 he was the adjutant of the 22nd Connecticut Regiment. He later served also as the 1st Connecticut Brigade Major. He was the acting major of Colonel Meigs' regiment during the successful storming of Stony Point on 15 July 1779. He led a detachment of 46 rank and file light infantry during the early morning attack. He resigned his commission on 1 March 1780 and was appointed the Commissary General of the Eastern (Connecticut) Department.
17. *The Record of Connecticut Men, War of the Revolution*, edited by Henry P. Johnson, Hartford, Connecticut, 1839.
18. Alan C. Aimone, Dr. Kip Muir, and the authors analyzed the handwriting on the plan and compared it to Kosciuszko's, 11 January 1990. Champion Plan is the plan for the construction of the soon-to-be-

named Fort Arnold and had to have been drawn early in 1778 before McDougall's first visit. While the previous authors surmised that the handwriting was Kosciuszko's, it appears to be that of La Radière; he wrote his "y" and "g" with a curl at the end of the tail while Kosciuszko placed a curl at the end of his "d." Work was well underway on the fort before the Pole arrived at West Point. La Radière, not Kosciuszko, put primary emphasis on the fort on the plain. In Jan. 1778, Champion's regiment moved to West Point "and later began the construction of permanent works there." In the summer of 1778, the regiment moved to White Plains. The winter of 1778-79 was spent at Redding, CT, and during 1779 the regiment was under Heath on the east side of the river; Henry P. Johnston, ed., *The Record of Connecticut Men in the Military and Naval Service During the War of the Revolution, 1775-1783* (Hartford: The Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1889), 168-69. Thus, Champion was at West Point and would have been mentioned in the plan for the period January through June or July 1778. In addition, the plan contains the sentence, "If we make the redoubt he [Champion] knows the place," which clearly refers to Sherburne's Redoubt. Since Sherburne's Redoubt was begun on or about 11 April, during or shortly after McDougall's first visit to West Point, then the date of the plan would have to be prior to 11 Apr. and after 27 Jan. 1778. See McDougall's Diary, 7-12 Apr., in McDougall Papers and McDougall to Parsons, 11 Apr., McDougall Manuscripts File, No. 7525). La Radière had made this plan to flesh out his earlier sketch used to trace out the fort on the ground. Troops had been building according to this pattern since their arrival at West Point. La Radière would even convince McDougall to prepare a final plan that he could supervise, 10 Apr. 1778, McDougall Diary.

19. See la Radière's sketch of these works, "Sketch of Fort Arnold and Water Batteries at West Point," n.d., New York Historical Society in Alexander McDougall Papers, Reel 2, Special Collections and Archives, USMA Library, West Point, NY.; Des Hayes de la Radiere, Gilbert Bodinier, *Dictionnaire des officiers généraux de l'armée royale: 1763-1792*. (Paris: Ministère de la Défense, Etat-Major de l'Armée de terre, Service historique, 1982).

Regional History Forum

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



One of the earliest known photographs of the property shows Sigmund Stern's mansion under construction. Note the Hudson River crowded with maritime traffic and that the Storm King highway was not yet built across the face of Storm King Mountain, on the opposite side of the river (Collection of Robin Huntington)

The Northgate Estate Ruins in Cold Spring

Thom Johnson and Rob Yasinsac

The Northgate estate in Cold Spring, Putnam County, has become one of the most popular hiking destinations within Hudson Highlands State Park. While Northgate's ruins may be familiar to historians and hikers alike, a lack of publicly available information about the estate and the families who lived there has made it a mysterious property. Newly discovered information and photographs now shed light on the estate's



West view of the house showing the pergola and sundial
(Collection of Robin Huntington)

development and answer many questions about the ruins while generating new interest in Northgate.

Originally developed by Sigmund Stern in the early 1900s and later owned by Edward Cornish, Northgate entered public imagination after a fire in 1958 began a course of decay and ruin for the mansion and other buildings. Although the estate was written about in hiking guidebooks and newspaper articles, its story remained relatively unknown. One such article, entitled “A Mystery Hike to the Cornish Estate,” was written by Father Fred Alvarez for the *Peekskill Herald* in 1997. While leading the reader on a tour through the ruins, Father Alvarez lamented that only a few historic details were known of the estate and the Cornish family.

A more comprehensive history of Northgate appeared in *Hudson Valley Ruins: Forgotten Landmarks of an American Landscape* (Thomas E. Rinaldi and Robert J. Yasinsac, University Press of New England, 2006), which introduced the ruins to a wider audience. The book noted that little information, including photographic depictions of the mansion before it burned, were available in local archives. Following its publication, descendants of the families who once owned Northgate approached the authors of this article with photographs and family records that now allow us to better understand the history of this fascinating property.

In April 2010, Stephen and Victoria Rasche, granddaughter of Joel O’Donnell Cornish, met with Thom Johnson and Rob Yasinsac with a remarkable scrapbook of photographs that satisfied the curiosity of the authors but also posed new questions that remain unanswered. The Rasches also provided further written information about Edward and Selina Cornish’s ownership of Northgate. Additionally, the family treasure trove includes films made during their residency.

Shortly thereafter, the authors met with Connie Bloom, a member of the Stern family. She provided information about Sigmund Stern, who accumulated numerous parcels

of land and built the mansion. Her cousin, Robin Huntington, great-granddaughter of Sigmund Stern, was in possession of many family photographs that show the development of the property, construction of the mansion, and its appearance during the first period of ownership. Those photographs later became available to the authors as well.

Although known almost exclusively to local residents and hikers as the “Cornish estate,” after its second owners, Edward and Selina Cornish, the mansion was actually built by Sigmund and Dove Stern, who remained virtually unknown prior to the publication of *Hudson Valley Ruins*. The estate name “Northgate” first appears in Cornish family records and now is used to identify the property. It remains unknown if the Sterns established that name or referred to the property by some other appellation. It is a fitting name, however: in the early 1900s, the mansion held a clear and commanding view of the “north gate” of the Hudson Highlands, marked by Storm King Mountain and Breakneck Ridge.

Sigmund Stern was born in 1858 in Germany. He was engaged in the diamond trade in New York City in the 1890s. By 1905, he owned three jewelry stores in the city.¹ In addition to a residence in Manhattan, he also had a summer retreat in Alexandria Bay in the early 1900s. But as early as 1904, he began to buy land in the hills north of Cold Spring, along the Hudson River south of Breakneck Ridge and west of Surprise Lake.

Over the next decade, Stern accumulated over 600 acres. Although consisting of mostly rocky land on steep slopes, the site of Stern’s estate was not undeveloped. In the middle of the nineteenth century, many small farms existed along the Breakneck Valley Road, which runs west-east near the estate’s northern boundary. Stern later built his mansion at a site occupied by one of those farms. Some of the families who sold land to Stern, and who may have previously farmed the hillside, include Hayward, Hendrickson, Heyman, Phillipse, Satterlee, and Wise.



An early view of the mansion, pool, and lawn. This photograph also shows the farmhouse that stood until shortly after the mansion was completed. The woman and child are at present unidentified (Collection of Robin Huntington)

Other land transfer deeds that relate to Sigmund Stern's development of the estate record transactions between him and the Jewish Educational Alliance. Established in New York City in 1889, the alliance had operated a summer camp since 1902 at Lake Surprise. In 1910, the Young Men's Hebrew Association started a camp adjacent to the Educational Alliance camp. Shortly thereafter, the two groups formed a new entity that ran both camps as one. It was officially known as the Surprise Lake Camp of the Educational Alliance and the Young Men's Hebrew Association.

Sigmund Stern served on the board of the Educational Alliance from 1912 to 1916 and was one of the keynote speakers at the 1912 dedication of the camp's new main building, Sigmund Neustadt Memorial Hall.² Constructed in the Tudor style, the building was designed by architect Herbert R. Mainzer. The Neustadt Memorial shares design elements with and may have been an architectural reference for Stern's nearby residence, erected the following year.

Ultimately, the estate and camp shared more than just a boundary and architecture, and Stern's role in the establishment and development of the camp raises other questions about the early history of Northgate. For example, in the latter half of the twentieth century, Surprise Lake counselors led campers on hikes to the ruins of Stern's mansion. Did an earlier generation of campers hike to the newly established estate to see the river views or farm animals Stern may have kept in barns and pens near his mansion? It remains to be determined how directly Stern was involved in the operations of Lake Surprise Camp. Certainly, he can be considered a key figure in its



This photograph, produced for a real estate brochure in 1916, is of the completed mansion and its courtyard (Collection of Robin Huntington)



This view from the northwest emphasizes the variety of design influences—Half-timber, Shingle, Craftsman, and Prairie School styles—in the architecture of the mansion (Collection of Stephen and Victoria Rasche)

ular in plan, with exterior elevations composed of a lower story of stone supporting an upper facade of wood. Its exterior is an eclectic amalgamation of half-timber, Shingle, Craftsman, and Prairie School architectural elements. The lower story of stone, with large, rounded-arch windows, is representative of rustic architecture inspired by the Adirondack great camps of the late 19th century and later popularized by numerous state and national park lodges (including the Bear Mountain Inn, built ten miles downriver in 1915).

The mansion's architect remains unknown, but a realty brochure produced ca. 1916 contains information about the layout of the house. The first floor contained an entrance hall, living room, library, dining room, breakfast porch, pantry, maid's dining room, and kitchen. The second floor included a large hall, six "master's" bedrooms and four bathrooms, and a servants wing with four bedrooms and one bathroom. On the third floor were two master's bedrooms and one bathroom.

A prominent feature of the house was a large stained glass window facing the Hudson River. It depicted a single column and a trellis with vines, referencing a pergola on the west lawn of the house, with a view out to Storm King across the Hudson River. Little else is known about the mansion's interior appearance.

Stern's ownership of the property is closely aligned

early history.

For the site of his new mansion, Stern chose a location approximately 200 feet above the Hudson River adjacent to an existing farmhouse. That house stood throughout the construction of Stern's mansion and was torn down sometime shortly after its completion. Under Stern's ownership, the 650-acre estate also included a garage, stables, other outbuildings, a gravity-fed swimming pool, and flower and vegetable gardens.³

The mansion itself was irreg-



The stained glass window included the image of a column, which referenced the pergola on the west lawn (Collection of Stephen and Victoria Rasche)

with his marriage to Dove (Dovie) Eichelstein. They wed in 1880 in Portsmouth, Ohio (her hometown), and had two daughters. Dove passed away in April, 1915, in New York City and was buried in Temple Israel Cemetery in Hastings-on-Hudson, Westchester County. Stern did not spend the summer of 1916 at Northgate, and the property was advertised for sale. That summer, Edward and Selina Cornish rented the estate; soon they made plans to purchase it. By the time the sale was completed in October, 1917, Sigmund Stern had married Alice Grace Rucker of Kentucky. He passed away in 1923 at his residence at 237 West 74th Street in Manhattan and was buried with Dove and her sister at Temple Israel Cemetery.

Edward Cornish was born in 1861 in Sidney, Iowa. He became a lawyer in 1882, serving in partnerships until 1894 and then in single practice until his retirement from law in 1906. During his time in Iowa, Cornish also served as the assistant city attorney of Omaha from 1892 to 1896 and, in “a purely honorary position,” on the board of Park Commissioners in Omaha from 1896 to 1912.⁴

A course of events that resulted in Cornish’s ultimate relocation to New York began in 1903, when he took on the management of the estate of the late Levi Carter, owner of the Carter White Lead Company. This position led to new opportunities, both professional and personal. Charged with disposing of estate assets, Cornish became president of the Carter White Company and sold all of the firm’s capital stock to the National Lead Company. National Lead later appointed Cornish a member of its board of directors, one of various positions he held until his election as company president in September, 1916.



Edward Cornish with members of a 4H Club at the mansion
(Collection of Stephen and Victoria Rasche)



Joel O'Donnell Cornish and his wife Marcella G. Cornish (née Madson) on the west lawn of the mansion (Collection of Stephen and Victoria Rasche)

In 1909, Edward Cornish married Selina Coe Carter, Levi Carter's widow. With Edward's rise in National Lead (in his estimation, the world's largest consumer of lead, tin, and titanium oxide), the couple later moved to New York and made their primary residence in New York City. The Cold Spring estate, which the Cornishes called Northgate, was a country retreat for them each year between June and October. It was also a "gentleman's farm"—as a member of the American Jersey Cattle Club, Cornish raised cows that won prizes in dairy competitions.⁵ In addition to service buildings located near the mansion, a complex of stone and wood barns occupied the property's northeastern corner, near a reservoir that was part of the estate's extensive water-supply system. For the duration of their ownership, the Cornishes continued to make

improvements, both practical and aesthetic, to the property.⁶

As alluring as the Hudson Highlands were to estate owners, other interests also were moving into the area at this time. Primarily used for agriculture, the hills of Putnam County became more appealing to industrial concerns during the Cornishes' residency. The 1930s saw the appearance of large-scale quarrying at Mount Taurus, located between Northgate and downtown Cold Spring. Quarrying was not entirely new to the Highlands. Almost a century before, a natural monument on Breakneck Ridge known as the "Turk's Face" was destroyed by blasting. But quarrying at Breakneck stopped in the 1850s, and the construction of the Catskill Aqueduct through the hillside in 1913 seemed to spell a permanent end for all mining operations in the area, as blasting near the aqueduct was prohibited.

The commencement of mining operations on November 21, 1931, led



Victoria A. Cornish and Judson E. Cornish, the two youngest children of Marcella and Joel Cornish, returning from picking roses at Northgate, 1940 (Collection of Stephen and Victoria Rasche)

to numerous outcries and protests against the destruction of the 1,400-foot face of Mount Taurus, an action that was closely followed by conservationists throughout the region.⁷ Few lived closer to the quarry than Edward Cornish, whose neighboring estate shook with every blast. Though his own company later carried out extensive surface mining near the headwaters of the Hudson River in the Adirondack Mountains, Cornish, then in his mid-seventies, eagerly sought to protect Northgate from future development by selling mining rights to the Hudson River Conservation Commission, thereby preventing future quarrying on the property.

In 1936, Cornish offered the estate for sale to the Taconic State Park Commission. The state had already intervened to protect other parts of the Hudson River shoreline from quarrying, including the Palisades, Hook Mountain, and Bear Mountain, near the south gate of the Highlands. In 1929, the Park Commission established Clarence Fahnestock Memorial State Park, located only a few miles east of Northgate. But the commission, acting under the authority of Robert Moses (then chairman of the New York State Council of Parks), declined Cornish's offer, stating that the site was "not at all adaptable for a park area" and citing potential costs associated with the upkeep of the mansion and other buildings on the property.⁸

On May 3, 1938, Edward Cornish died at his desk at 111 Broadway in New York City.⁹ His wife passed away two weeks later at their apartment in the Hotel Savoy Plaza.¹⁰ They are buried in Forest Lawn Cemetery in Omaha, Nebraska, with other members of the extended Cornish family. Cornish descendants, including nephew Joel



This illustration, based on two photographs in the collection of Stephen and Victoria Rasche, shows the appearance of the house following the 1958 fire (Illustration by Thom Johnson)

O'Donnell Cornish, owned Northgate throughout the 1940s and '50s. In 1958, two years before Joel Cornish passed away, a fire destroyed the upper, wood portion of the house.¹¹ The lower level of stone and some exterior wood elements survived, but the house was not rebuilt and instead was left to ruin.

Three decades after the mining industry began to significantly alter the face of the Highlands, another industry posed threats to the north gate's two pillars. In 1963, Poughkeepsie-based Central Hudson Gas and Electric purchased Northgate from the Cornish heirs and announced a plan to build a pumped-storage hydroelectric power plant on the south side of Breakneck Ridge.¹² Concurrently on the river's western shore, Consolidated Edison proposed building a similar power plant on Storm King Mountain. That proposal became a lightning rod for the budding environmental preservation movement, leading to the creation of the group Scenic Hudson that same year. Public reaction against the Con Ed plan eventually reached the national level, and after years of legal challenges the company abandoned its plans for the Storm King plant in 1980.

Central Hudson did not wait as long to drop plans for its Breakneck Ridge plant. In 1967, the company sold the Northgate estate to the Taconic State Park Commission. That same year, the Georgia Pacific Company cancelled plans for an \$8-million gypsum wallboard factory it proposed for the former quarry site at nearby Little Stony Point; this parcel also became parkland.¹³ Under Governor Nelson Rockefeller, the state Office of Parks and Recreation, in cooperation with Laurence Rockefeller's Jackson Hole Preserve, joined both properties (along with various other parcels, including Pollepel Island) to form Hudson Highlands State Park. Quarrying operations at neighboring Mount Taurus also ceased around this time. (Piles of crushed rock and an overgrown scar on the mountain remain.)

Today Hudson Highlands State Park has grown to encompass nearly 6,000 acres, including the ruins of Bannerman's Island Arsenal and the Denning's Point Brick



Winter view of the present condition of the ruins
(Photograph taken February 9, 2013, by Thom Johnson)



The courtyard entrance of the mansion allows a view to the west wall and its arched opening for the stained glass window (Photograph taken November 24, 1997, by Rob Yasinsac)

Works near Beacon. At least one of the old brickyard buildings there has been restored as part of a new research facility called the Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries, another outgrowth of the environmental movement born on the Hudson River.

The Cornishes might not recognize their old estate at first glance today, but part of their wish has been granted—the property now is public parkland. Protected from development, the Northgate estate has essentially remained untouched since the deaths of Edward and Selina Cornish in 1938. Although not faced with the threat of demolition, the mansion, greenhouse, and barns have remained unprotected from decay. As a result, they have fallen into ruin and have been consumed by unchecked overgrowth. At the same time, they have become attractive: Part of the ruins' appeal is that they are left to the elements and not fenced off. No

signs warn hikers to stay out of the buildings, nor are they defaced with graffiti.

In recent years, the mansion ruin was almost entirely overgrown. What previously had been expansive lawns has reverted back into forest, and open views of the Highlands' north gate, Storm King and Breakneck, are now obscured. Since 2010, volunteers working with Friends of Fahnestock and Hudson Highlands State Parks under the direction of Thom Johnson have removed vines and soil in and around the mansion ruin, enabling hikers to walk around the perimeter and gain a better appreciation for its architecture while inspiring imagination for what once existed here. The newly unearthed photographs and family histories also fulfill Father Fred Alvarez's desire: He ended his 1997 article about Northgate by stating, "Perhaps someday someone will research the estate, write a book about it and solve the mystery."¹⁴

This article is adapted from Hudson Valley Ruins: Forgotten Landmarks of an American Landscape, Rinaldi, Thomas E. and Robert J. Yasinsac. University Press of New England, 2006.

Special acknowledgements to Stephen and Victoria Rasche, Connie Bloom, and Robin Huntington.



The removal of overgrowth on top of the stone walls has made the ruins more visible. Note the difference between the far end of the mansion and the foreground (Photograph taken August 25, 2012, by Rob Yasinsac)

Endnotes

1. "Jewels Gone, Butler Held." *The New York Times*, 31 January 1905.
2. "Summer Camp Dedication." *The New York Times*, 2 June 1912.
3. Fish & Marvin, Real Estate Listing R-856.
4. *The Cyclopaedia of American Biography*. Homans, James E., ed. New York: The Press Association Compilers, 1918. Pp. 335-336.
5. "Broadway Farmer." Clark Kinnaird. *The Kingsport Times* (Tennessee), 27 February 1928.
6. "Cornish Estate Reflects Man's Love for Nature." (Paint, Oil, and Chemical Review). 14 October 1937.
7. "First Blast Inflicts Scar on Mount Taurus." *The New York Times*, 22 November 1931.
8. Letter, F.R. Masters to R. Moses, 21 Sept. 1937, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Taconic Region.
9. "Edward J. Cornish Dies at Desk Here." *The New York Times*, 4 May 1938.
10. "Mrs. Edward J. Cornish." *The New York Times*, 19 May 1938.
11. "The Past; In Beacon; Ten Years Ago." *The Evening News* (Beacon, NY), 3 May 1968.
12. "Central Hudson Plans New Area Hydroelectric Project." *The Evening News* (Beacon, NY), 1 April 1963.
13. "Protest Cancels Hudson Factory." *The New York Times*, 13 Jan. 1967. Georgia Pacific later built the plant near the site of another Hudson River quarry, at Buchanan in Westchester County, where it remains in operation over forty-five years later.
14. "A Mystery Hike to the Cornish Estate." Father Fred Alvarez. *The Peekskill Herald*, 9 January 1997.

Beneath Clouds

we are no heaven, but the long grey face of evening
beckons my boat,
rudderless, without oars, paddles

I hear the wind in the tops of pines,
a monotone rushing I am in love with
beyond flesh or word

When the broad gesture of a cloud
smothers the sickle moon, you can
reach out, and something

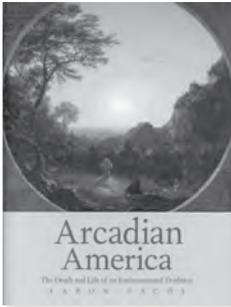
that knows you better than you know yourself
will claim you, and the night
with all its rustlings

its kiss, black and deep, will drench
you and deliver you
to the other side

until you wake to the comforting
careless twitter of pre-dawn birds
arranging and scattering the new day

Raphael Kosek

Book Reviews



Arcadian America: The Death and Life of an Environmental Tradition, Aaron Sachs. New Haven Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2013. (484 pp.)

After closing the back cover of Aaron Sachs' new book, *Arcadian America*, a reader will most likely struggle to find a category in which to place it. Is it a straightforward environmental history of the nineteenth-century United States, an intellectual history of developmental traditions in ante- and postbellum America, a condemnation of our present post-capitalist commercialism, or a memoir that examines Sachs' own relationship to mortality? *Arcadian America* dallies in each of these themes, but refuses to be bound by niche compartmentalization; pages veer off to discuss paintings, literature, philosophy, and ghost stories. Sachs' work breaks the standard "academic book"-mold and attempts to create a holistic image of early environmental thought in America that, he believes, should animate our current view of man's place in nature. Antebellum environmental thinkers, whom Sachs terms "Arcadians," sought to find "repose" in nature, a replenishment of the soul in direct contrast to the burgeoning market revolution that gained momentum around them. But Arcadians did not intend this repose to take place as infrequent sojourns; instead, they viewed the wilderness/civilization divide as non-existent. Humans could exist and thrive in wilderness, and in fact would lose their identity if they strayed from their natural roots.

Central to Sachs' argument is the prominence of death and cemeteries in early American environmental thought. Rather than marking a real-world demarcation between life and death, cemeteries, as envisioned by antebellum environmentalists, emphasized the rhythms of the natural world. Sachs studies Mount Auburn, the Boston-area antebellum cemetery, in depth, both in text and with his own boots. The cemetery's planners envisioned families wandering through the wooded copses, finding opportunities for reflection and relaxation among the headstones, trees, and ponds. Interspersed throughout the historical narrative, Sachs' own search for the grave of a brother who died in infancy adds immediacy to the text. Humans possess a desire to remember the dead, and the juxtaposition of the Mount Auburn planners' conceptions of remembrance and the modern cemetery where Sachs finally discovers his brother's grave helps drive home the striking shallowness of modern society that he portrays.

Sachs charts the geographic borders of the Arcadian ideology running from New England to the Hudson Valley. Traditionally viewed as the home of American philosophical transcendentalism and literary romanticism, the region also marked the first wellspring of the American industrial revolution. Intellectuals and artists witnessing

the rapid changes to both society and nature that the advent of market-based lifestyles inaugurated rejected what they saw as brash commercialism and the loss of community identities. One of the heroes of Sachs' narrative, Andrew Jackson Downing (native of Newburgh and America's original landscape architect), envisioned communal parks as a democratic locale, a reinforcement of the Jeffersonian ideal of agrarian republicanism, simply updated for the age of steam engines and the Erie Canal. Washington Irving and Thomas Cole added their artistic talents to the intellectual fervor, using pen and brush to create a world in which nature's power manifested itself in landscapes of headless horsemen and blasted trees.

And yet surrounded by the life-giving and soul-rejuvenating bounty of nature, death still interwove itself through the Arcadian ideal. Downing developed landscape plans for cemeteries in the Hudson Valley, while Irving contemplated the death and afterlife of Native Americans and Cole's last painting centered on a cross-shaped headstone in the midst of a storm-rouled scene. Throughout his work, Sachs focuses on what he terms the "border region," the murky metaphorical region between life and death, civilization and wilderness, and community and individual. Rather than a place to avoid, Sachs and the thinkers he focuses on find inspiration in this gray place-in-between. An observer of nature's awesome power and redemptive grace, Sachs sees himself as part of a Cole painting, standing just outside the tree line, yet still dappled by its shade.

Arcadian America's longest chapter, "Stumps," is also its best, a heartrending sojourn through war, death, and transformation. Having made the case that American Arcadians viewed wilderness as redemptive, Sachs portrays the Civil War's Battle of the Wilderness as representative of the scar the conflict created in the nation's psyche. The war's industrialized violence ruptured the relationship between man and the republic's natural world. Stumps, represented through both felled trees and felled men, symbolized the sublimation of nature's power over the new American touchstone of progress. Paintings of the expanding western frontier no longer contained the aforementioned "place-in-between." They were replaced by acres and acres of stumps as homesteaders, attempting to put the war behind them, moved to dominate nature through hard work and technological improvisation. The war's physical scars, the missing limbs, necessitated a new call-to-arms, as an upsurge in prosthetic advances evinced another form of progress in the postbellum era. Where man had damaged nature, be it to tree or man, he possessed the new-found ability to reform it to his own predilection.

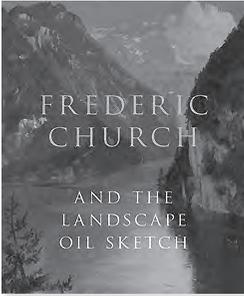
Always present amidst the text, death and cemeteries played a key role in the near-demise of the Arcadian mindset. Death during the Civil War became less a point in the natural rhythms of life and more a schism of loss in American society. The antebellum search for repose through the contemplation of death became transformed, as those that lost loved ones sought to understand and conceptualize death to assuage their loss. No longer did planners of towns and villages see cemeteries as integral to the communal dynamic of these spaces; they moved them to the periphery of the burgeoning burghs on the disappearing western frontier. Gone are the cemeter-

ies that incorporate natural elements, like Mount Auburn; in its place, one finds the stark white headstones and grid patterns of rationalized progress. Sachs spends a large amount of his narrative in cemeteries, and he contrasts the welcoming natural spaces with the coldness of modern burials. By charting his experiences with life and death, Sachs pulls the reader into his own narrative, detailing the trauma of aging and birth in his life alongside his intermittent wanderings to placate guilt and redeem his soul.

The book concludes with biographical studies of Gilded Age torchbearers of the Arcadian tradition. Rather than searching for the figurative border regions from generations before, they instead proposed land reform, denounced natural-resource exploitation, and decried income inequality. The book's latter portions feel more formulaic and depend on the drama in Sachs' life to move the narrative along. He does reserve the book's last few chapters to reach the bombastic heights of commercialist criticism that he hints at in the book's introduction. Sachs makes it clear that he sees the present day as a clear extension and grim caricature of the immediate postbellum era and its disavowal of the Arcadian ideal. The modern world's rejection of death as an ever-present reality, need for immediate commercial satisfaction, and lack of a cultural foundation that unites the natural world with the human all signify the alienation of the modern American from the world around her.

Arcadian America wanders much like the walks that Sachs describes in his book. As he meanders, so does the reader, moving from page to page through centuries of time and thought. Rather than a thesis-driven exploration of a particular idea, era, or theme, Sachs' work feels like a journey, but not one taken by the reader. Instead, as one turns the pages, they have the sense that they are being allowed to tag along with the author as he plumbs his inner psyche and external relationships. For someone whose waking thoughts seem to be consumed with death, Sachs seems like a generally likeable companion. For those hoping to read about early American environmentalism, *Arcadian America* will provide the opportunity as long as they have the patience to contend with the author's own life and rambling hikes. The better audience would include readers starting their own spiritual journeys or contending with loss in their own lives. Either way, *Arcadian America* offers more than just a glimpse into days gone by. It's also a look into the future and, if you allow it, into your soul.

Andrew J. Forney, United States Military Academy



Frederic Church and the Landscape Oil Sketch, Andrew Wilton; with contributions by Katherine Bourguignon and Christopher Riopelle. London: National Gallery Company, 2013. (72 pp.)

The Terra Foundation for American Art is collaborating with the National Gallery, London, on a series of focused exhibitions aimed at bringing American masterworks to British audiences. The first exhibit, *An American Experiment: George Bellows and the Ashcan Painters* (2011), was followed by *Through American Eyes: Frederic Church and the Landscape Oil Sketch* (2013). Church (1826-1900) was selected as the greatest American exponent of the landscape oil sketch. At the National Gallery, *Through American Eyes* was complemented by *Through European Eyes: The Landscape Oil Sketch*, an exhibition of European oil sketches from the Gere Collection, placing the work of the American Hudson River School painter in a broader international art historical context. The Scottish National Gallery loaned Church's *Niagara Falls from the American Side* (1867) and then hosted the exhibition after the its London run.

The catalogue essay by Andrew Wilton gives an excellent summary of Church's artistic career, connecting it to events and influences in late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century British art. He discusses the major works by Church, giving art historical, scientific, and political context. Asserting that Church is one of the most "accomplished exponents" of the oil sketch, Wilton compares him to the great British landscape artist and oil-sketch master John Constable (1776-1837), going on to state that both men explored their emotional ties to nature. Wilton recognizes the monumental canvases Church produced from his sketches as filling a gap left after the death of the great British Romantic painter J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851). The author cites specific examples of the transatlantic interchange of paintings and prints to illustrate the influence of Turner and John Martin (1789-1854) on Church and his teacher, the British-born father of the Hudson River School, Thomas Cole (1801-1848). Turner's seascape *Staffa, Fingal's Cave* (1832) was in the collection of American James Lenox in 1845 and is often understood as an influence on Cole, Church, and other Hudson River School artists. Wilton discusses the less-explored similarity of Pre-Raphaelite painter John Brett's *Glacier of Rosenloui* (1856) to Church's *Heart of the Andes* (1859) in their adherence to the directive of British art critic John Ruskin (1819-1860) to capture natural detail. Wilton credits Ruskin as an influence on Church's career through his encouragement of accuracy in depicting nature and his promotion of Turner as the genius of modern landscape painting, making him someone worthy of emulation.

Wilton articulates the importance of the landscape as defining America and illustrating or promoting the concept of Manifest Destiny. While American artists were encouraged to study the works of the great European artists, they also were tasked with

capturing what was wild and fresh about the New World. Wilton selects *Twilight in the Wilderness* (1860) as Church's final statement on the promise of this world, in conflict with the impending American Civil War.

In his desire for scientific accuracy, Church followed the advice of German naturalist Alexander Von Humboldt (1769-1859) to visit Ecuador and create a visual record of the flora and geology. The author posits that *The Andes of Ecuador* (1855), Church's masterpiece from his first visit to South America, was influenced by the scale and atmosphere of the engraving of Turner's *Lake of Lucerne from Brunnen* (c. 1844).

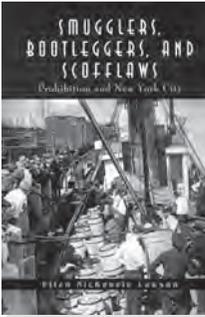
The author concludes with a section on Church's Olana, his home and designed landscape in the Hudson Valley. Wilton selects the Church quote penned in Rome, "The Tiber is not the Hudson," to articulate the significance of the Hudson Valley for Church—his early days with Cole, the forty years he spent creating Olana, and the views from Olana as a favorite subject for sketching. The essay offers a lovely, concise look at Church's career with some new specific connections to European works of art.

The catalogue entries, and by extension the works chosen for the exhibition by Catherine Bourguignon and Christopher Riopelle, give visual insight into Church's career. The exhibition and catalogue cover twenty-eight works, primarily from the collections of Olana and the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution. As explained by Wilton, the works vary from the more complete and finished sketches that Church hung on his walls at Olana to the quick, often unfinished references to rapidly changing weather that were part of Church's visual archive. In addition to the sketches, the curators included a few studio works, *The Iceberg* (1875) and the previously mentioned epic *Niagara Falls from the American Side*. For diversity of media, they also included a photograph of Niagara Falls enhanced with oil paint by Church—referencing the invention of photography in 1839 and the role it would play as an aide-memoire for landscape painters—and a copy of the very popular lithograph of Church's *Our Banner in the Sky* (1861) over-painted perhaps by the artist himself.

The sketches and entries trace Church's travels through North America with studies of the Maine Coast, woodlands, and icebergs. Trips to more exotic locales—Ecuador, Labrador, Jamaica, and the Middle East—are represented by depictions of volcanoes, icebergs, tropical foliage, and the ruins of Petra, in present-day Jordan. Europe is illustrated with castles and mountain lakes. Cloud studies and sky effects captured from Olana show Church's lifelong pursuit of changing light and moving clouds.

Above all, the catalogue and exhibition bring Church to a new audience and place him in the broader context of the European oil-sketching tradition. In his short essay, Wilton deftly brings forward key American concepts and European influences and artistic connections for the British reader. For an American audience, the book works equally well as an excellent introduction to Church and his oil sketches.

Evelyn Trebilcock, Curator, Olana State Historic Site



Smugglers, Bootleggers, and Scofflaws: Prohibition and New York City, Ellen NicKenzie Lawson. Albany: SUNY Press, 2013. (174 pp.)

In 1955, Richard Hofstadter wrote confidently: “To the historian... the story of Prohibition will seem like a historical detour, a meaningless nuisance, an extraneous imposition upon the main course of history. The truth is that Prohibition appeared to the men of the twenties as a major issue because it was a major issue...”¹ Dozens of films, Broadway shows, and popular television series later, historians and others could be forgiven for agreeing only with the first part of Hofstadter’s analysis. In popular culture, Prohibition appears to have been more of an experiment, or a quirk, than a subject for close scholarly inspection. But in her new book *Smugglers, Bootleggers, and Scofflaws*, Ellen NicKenzie Lawson mines a fantastic trove of little-used sources to detail the experience of Prohibition for three distinct but related groups of then-criminals in New York City. Over the course of her book, Lawson builds a credible, detailed argument for the serious study of resistance to Prohibition.

Lawson’s primary contribution is her use of the Coast Guard Seized Vessel Records from 1920 to 1933 to reconstruct the stories of the vast army (perhaps navy would be a more accurate term) of liquor smugglers. Comprised of ninety archival boxes of files organized by the names of seized vessels, the records remained confidential until the 1990s. In them, Lawson finds detailed information on 250 captured rum-running vessels that ferried booze from Canadian, European, and Caribbean supply ships anchored on “Rum Row” to Long Island, New Jersey, Staten Island, Brooklyn, and directly to Manhattan. While the United States had convinced Canada and Great Britain to extend the legal limit of U.S. territory to twelve miles offshore in 1924, this extension clearly did little to limit the supply of rum, whiskey, and vodka. The floating warehouses supplied every taste. Lawson relays captivating stories of the cat-and-mouse games played by rum-running captains and the Coast Guard, with healthy doses of pirates, gangs, and innovative new technologies—radios, planes, and submarines. She resurrects several characters worthy of their own episodic television series, including Gertrude Lythgoe, the “Queen of Rum Row.”

Lawson’s discussion of bootleggers yields fewer revelations than her work on smugglers. However, she makes a compelling argument about the process through which Prohibition spurred the development of organized crime in America. Essentially, three large, ethnically distinct liquor-smuggling groups grew out of gangs on the Lower East Side, the West Side, and Little Italy. These newly rich and sophisticated syndicates then diverted legally produced liquor, together with smuggled liquor from Rum Row and homemade concoctions, to nightclubs, speakeasies, and other popular drinking

1. Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 289.

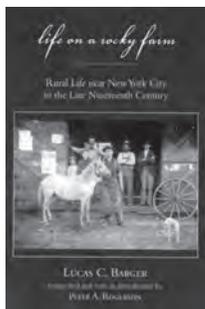
spots. Jewish, Irish, and Italian mobsters ran the trade, and ensured a steady supply of both liquor and violence.

In the final section of her book, Lawson shifts from supply to demand. She writes dramatically of the 500 nightclubs and 30,000 speakeasies that comprised America's largest liquor market. Once again, there is no shortage of colorful characters, like Don Dickerman, whose Pirate's Den on Minetta Lane featured waitresses dressed as pirates, a talking parrot, and re-enactments of Treasure Island by the staff. Lawson also makes tangible the density of clubs. On one block of West 52nd Street alone, thirsty patrons could find Jean Billiams, Club 21, The Onyx, the Dizzy Club, and thirty-five other establishments. There were clubs for everyone from opera patrons to construction crews, and in every neighborhood from the Bowery up to Harlem.

The book's summary is an interesting attempt to link smugglers, bootleggers, and scofflaws to broader American resistance movements, including the defense of the First Amendment, the tradition of smuggling, and the growing respect for diversity. With this final connection, Lawson brings us back to Hofstadter and the rural/urban conflict he saw as the root of so much tension and so much progress and reform. While the stories of swashbuckling smugglers and gangs of hoodlums make great fodder for popular entertainment, Lawson does a fine job of reconnecting their exploits to the longer and continuing narrative of popular resistance as a prominent feature of American life.

Timothy Houlihan, St. Francis College

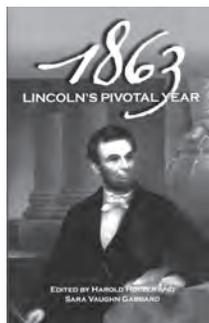
New & Noteworthy Books Received



Life on a Rocky Farm: Rural Life near New York City in the Late Nineteenth Century

By Lucas C. Barger, Transcribed by Peter A. Rogerson
(Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2013)
190 pp. \$19.95 (paperback) www.sunypress.edu

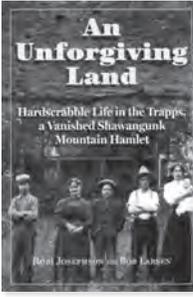
Despite being just fifty miles from New York City, life in Putnam Valley, New York, at the turn of the twentieth century was worlds away from that of the big city. Originally written in 1939, Barger's book captures the challenges and rewards of living off the land in an industrializing society. It documents the many ways farmers made money through handcrafts and nature, the differing roles of men and women, and the importance of various indigenous species to rural survival.



1863: Lincoln's Pivotal Year

Edited By Harold Holzer and Sara Vaughn Gabbard
(Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013)
216 pp. \$32.95 (hardcover) www.siupress.com

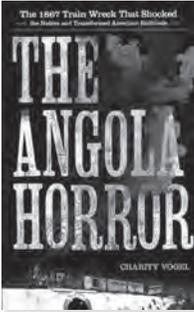
The year 1863 played a crucial role in the legacy of Abraham Lincoln, the Civil War, and the direction of the United States in general. This collection of ten essays highlights many of the key events of that year, including the battles of Gettysburg and Vicksburg, and the response to the Emancipation Proclamation. Complete with over twenty images, a timeline, and full versions of both the Gettysburg Address and the Emancipation Proclamation, the book provides many new perspectives on one of the most volatile periods in American history.



An Unforgiving Land: Hardscrabble Life in the Trapps, a Vanished Shawangunk Mountain Hamlet

By Robi Josephson and Bob Larsen
(Delmar, NY: Black Dome Press, 2013)
303 pp. \$24.95 (softcover) www.blackdomepress.com

The Trapps mountain hamlet in Ulster County is a unique location with a rich and intriguing history. Nestled high in the rocky Shawangunk Mountains, the Trapps community exhibited subsistence living with few resources for nearly 150 years, between the post-Revolutionary era and World War II. Now listed on the national and state registers of historic places, the community's location is protected by the Mohonk and Minnewaska State Park preserves. *An Unforgiving Land* enhances the legacy of the Trapps by not only telling its story, but also providing a timeline, family tree, and instructions on how to visit its remains.



The Angola Horror

By Charity Vogel (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013)
296 pp. \$26.95 (hardcover) www.cornellpress.cornell.edu

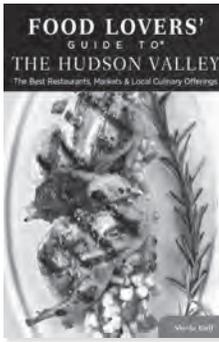
The development of railroads in New York State dramatically changed the landscape of transit for both cargo and people. While many of the contributions of rail travel were positive, *The Angola Horror* tells the story of the 1867 derailment of a New York Express train and the destruction that followed. Using newspaper stories, numerous archives, and countless other sources, Vogel describes the wrecked train cars, under-equipped rescuers, and the impact this early train disaster had on the future of the railroad.



The Color of His Blood

By J.F. Lewis (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2013)
310 pp. \$29.95 (hardcover) www.iuniverse.com

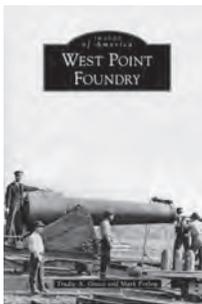
This historical novel intertwines the challenges of survival during the American Revolution with the many complicated emotions that define human interaction. As the characters face increasingly dangerous challenges, the conflict of choosing allegiance in a blossoming new nation shows that no man or woman was really ordinary. From authentic battle descriptions to the struggle for liberty, Lewis's novel has something for everyone.



Food Lovers' Guide to The Hudson Valley

By Sheila Buff (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, 2014)
272 pp. \$16.95 (softcover) www.globepequot.com

The Hudson River Valley is filled with some of the nation's best culinary specialists, food festivals, and wineries. *Food Lover's Guide to The Hudson Valley* highlights opportunities to explore restaurants, farmers' markets, and shops specializing in everything from cheese to fine teas. Providing reviews for each restaurant, as well as key information for all farms and shops, Buff has created a well-organized, essential resource for residents and travelers who desire fine fare.



Images of America: West Point Foundry

By Trudie A. Grace and Mark Forlow
(Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2014)
128 pp. \$21.99 (softcover) www.arcadiapublishing.com

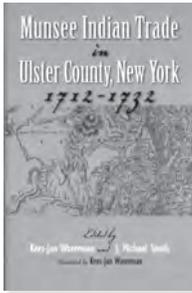
The West Point Foundry in Cold Spring, New York, served as one of the first industrialized sites in the country. Strategically located across the Hudson River from West Point, the foundry built cannons and steam engines among other items, and even supplied iron to construct numerous lighthouses. Filled with hundreds of photos and informative captions, this contribution to the *Images of America* series successfully captures the contributions, local impact, and legacy of this industrial powerhouse.



In the Shadow of Kinzua: The Seneca Nation of Indians since World War II

By Laurence Marc Hauptman
(Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2014)
424 pp. \$45.00 (hardcover) www.syracuseuniversitypress.syr.edu

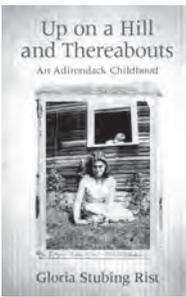
The legacy of the Seneca Nation in New York State spans many centuries and continues to evolve. In this detailed account, Hauptman explores this Native American nation's history since World War II, and the complicated role that the Kinzua Dam has played in the maintenance of tribal lands. Despite challenges from the state and federal governments and forced relocation, the Senecas remain a strong and prominent people who make the most of whatever challenges they face.



Munsee Indian Trade in Ulster County, New York 1712-1732

Edited By Kees-Jan Waterman and J. Michael Smith
(Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013)
232 pp. \$34.95 (hardcover) www.syracuseuniversitypress.syr.edu

Through the recent discovery of a long-lost Dutch account book, the trading relationship between Dutch residents and Native Americans in Ulster County during the early eighteenth century can now be interpreted in ways never before possible. By translating the account book and providing insightful historical context, Waterman and Smith make a valuable contribution to the available literature. The book also provides information on trading practices, pricing, and identities of native patrons.



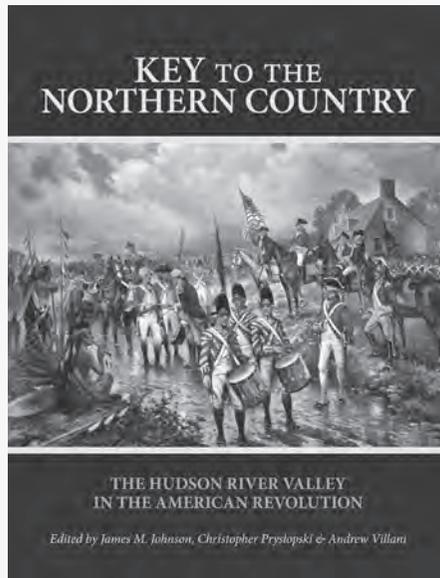
Up on a Hill and Thereabouts: An Adirondack Childhood

By Gloria Stubing Rist (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2013)
341 pp. \$24.95 (softcover) www.sunypress.edu

Life in the Adirondack Mountains during the Great Depression presented many challenges and obstacles just to survive. Rist offers a unique and refreshing perspective on Adirondack life, recounting the stories and lessons that filled her childhood spent in the mountains. Each character and event comes to life through Rist's simple and concise method of storytelling. With short chapters and accompanying photos, *Up on a Hill and Thereabouts* paints a complete picture that harkens back to a simpler time in American history.

Andrew Villani, The Hudson River Valley Institute

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

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