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# THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

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**MARIST**



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## From the Editors

We are a “journal of regional studies,” so we should be familiar with the concept of “place”—in our case, the Hudson River Valley. But sometimes even we are surprised about how great an influence this region has had, both on the surrounding world and on its own residents. This issue highlights the interplay between “our place” and people from colonial times to the present.

It also answers some intriguing questions. For example, who developed the British strategy during the American Revolution, and how was that strategy implemented by field officers and affected by the “field” itself? Or how has a legendary commander profoundly impacted the U.S. Military Academy despite never setting foot on its grounds?

While both sides in the Revolution coveted the Hudson River Valley, at times it stood in their way, as when the French and American armies marched from Rhode Island to Yorktown. Their epic journey contributed immensely to America’s independence, so why did it take an equally epic effort to have the federal government establish the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route? Some fifty years after the Revolution, one British citizen relied on the New World to forge his own independence from the Old. Today, a scholarly debate rages as to how British or American Thomas Cole may have been. Our author maintains that the artist’s small-town life in Catskill is the key to understanding his identity. Community and identity also are essential to the history of the Rhinebeck Fire Department, which has maintained a reputation for selfless service and strong fraternal ties since its founding in 1834.

We hope this issue will inspire you to think about how we continue to inform and to be formed by the places we call home.



*On the cover:*

*Detail of View on the Catskill – Early Autumn, Thomas Cole, 1836-37.*

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift in Memory of Jonathan Sturges by his children, 1895: 95.13.3

# THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

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# The Hudson River in the Revolution: America's Key to Victory

*James Kirby Martin*



View up the Hudson River from West Point



Thirteen links of the Great Chain  
on display at United States  
Military Academy  
at West Point

At the time of the Revolutionary war, waterways often dictated the direction and course of key military movements. Moving south to north along North America's eastern coastline were five major river networks: the Ashley and Cooper rivers in South Carolina; the James and Yorktown rivers in Virginia; the Delaware River, dividing New Jersey and Pennsylvania; the Hudson River separating New York and New Jersey; and the St. Lawrence River in Canada. Each river network played some sort of pivotal role in major combat operations affecting the outcome of the Revolution.

My question for consideration is as follows: Which river network was the most important, and why? Surprisingly, this subject has not received much attention in assessing the reasons for success and failure in the Revolutionary War. As a generalization, commentators seem to assume that major campaigns and battles more or less took place in haphazard fashion, as if land forces just happened to bump into each other for no particular reason. In reality, the geographic location of waterways had a profound effect in determining the sites of military operations during the war. It's my conclusion that one river network, featuring the Hudson River, had the greatest impact of them all.

So let's go back in time to 1775 and 1776. The rebellion got off to a rather surprising start on April 19, 1775, when New England militiamen drove off a British force charged with capturing and destroying weapons being stashed in Concord, Massachusetts. Most shocked that the Americans could put up a good fight were British planners 3,000 miles across the Atlantic Ocean in imperial mother England. King George III and first minister Lord Frederick North, along with many leaders in Parliament, had blithely assumed that these treasonous American rebels, as they called them, would break and run at the first whiff of massed British gunfire and gleaming bayonets. The loss of Fort Ticonderoga to Benedict Arnold, Ethan Allen, and the Green Mountain Boys a month later, coupled with the brutal contest at Bunker (Breed's) Hill in June shocked Britain's leaders into realizing that the "rude rabble" represented a more worthy opponent than they had ever imagined.<sup>1</sup>

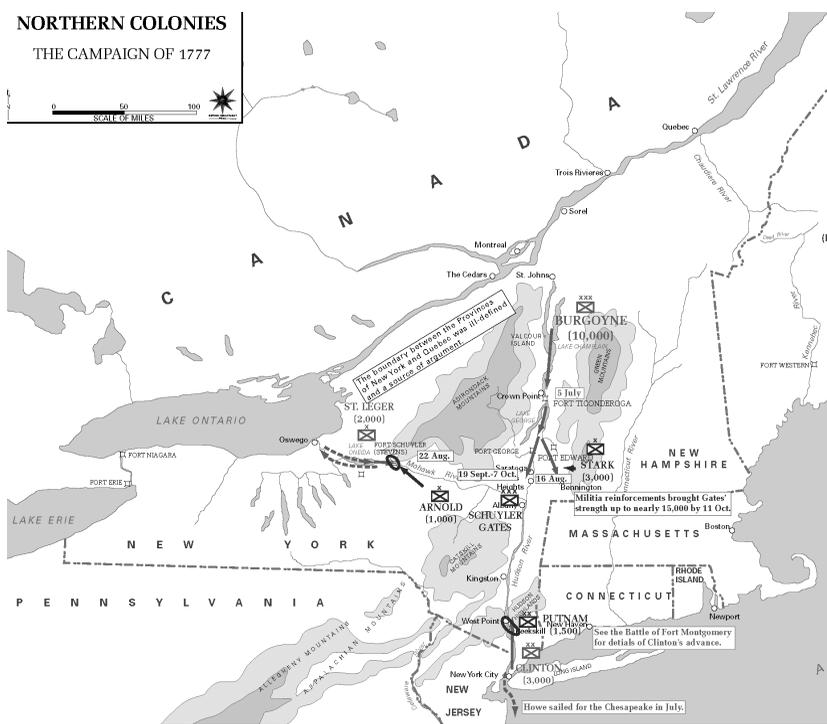
Developing a broad strategic plan to suppress the rebellion before it was too late to do so thus became an urgent British priority. During the autumn of 1775 and early winter days of 1776, King George, Lord North, and newly appointed Secretary for American Affairs Lord George Germain considered various options for effecting a quick end to the uprising.<sup>2</sup> As they studied maps of the colonies, they came to appreciate the difficulties of regaining the political allegiance of more than two million Americans spread out along more than 1,000 miles of coastline—and in some locales, living more than 100 miles inland. Trying to subdue so huge a territory and so many people lay beyond their limited military means, referring to the size of land and naval forces of the day.

Britain's was a maritime empire, but using His Majesty's navy to control the American coastline and key waterways could not guarantee the containment of ongoing rebel uprisings in the countryside. Any plan had to combine in some fashion the coordinated deployment of land and naval forces. Furthermore, any land-based operations would require thousands more trained troops than currently available in Britain (enter the hiring of Hessians to supplement His Majesty's land forces).

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1 For rebel success during 1775 in juxtaposition to supercilious British attitudes, see James Kirby Martin and Mark Edward Lender, *"A Respectable Army": The Military Origins of the Republic 1763-1789* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 33-52.

2 On Germain, known for his alleged cowardice at the Battle of Minden in 1759 but critical role in shaping British strategy during the Revolutionary War, see Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 165-203; and Gerald Saxon Brown, *The American Secretary: The Colonial Policy of Lord George Germain* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963).



The Campaign of 1777, *Atlas of the American Revolution*, Department of History, United States Military Academy

Their study of the maps indicated to them that focusing operations on one geographic location had the potential to both contain and end the uprising before such traditional enemies as France began supporting the rebel cause in various covert ways. Establishing New York City as the main base of operations while also taking control of the Hudson River was the obvious choice. The idea was to cut off New England, at that time the epicenter of the rebellion, from the other colonies, some of them not yet fully committed to what would eventually morph into a widespread independence movement. Once in control of the Hudson River up to Albany, and even beyond, British land forces would then sweep eastward across New England to vanquish lingering rebel resistance. The Royal Navy, meanwhile, would complete the pincers movement by blockading the New England coastline. If need be, these war vessels would not hesitate to bombard any coastal community still offering rebel resistance.

Let's call this overview plan for British victory the Hudson Highlands Strategy. Part of the thinking of George III, Lord North, Lord Germain, and other advisers was that most colonists remained loyal to the Crown but had been duped into treasonous thinking by a few radical leaders like Samuel Adams in Boston and Alexander McDougall in New York City.<sup>3</sup> The presence of the King's troops would reawaken the suppressed loyalists to

3 For an example of the commonly held attitude that most colonists were still loyal to the empire but the dupes of popular leaders, see Douglass Adair and John A. Schutz, eds., *Peter Oliver's "Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion": A Tory View* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1961), 27-37, 144-51.

the merits of their imperial allegiance. By signing loyalty oaths to the Crown, they could then help in the process of reestablishing royal political authority in every rebel region.

On paper the Hudson Highlands Strategy seemed doable in the context of the actual military resources available to the British. However, as with so many well thought out strategic schemes, effective implementation was another matter. Among many challenging factors, two in particular stand out as serious obstacles that blocked the Crown's pathway to success. First, some American resistance leaders appreciated how the Hudson River waterway might greatly influence British planning to bring an end to what started as a New England-centered uprising. They would devote themselves to disrupting British objectives. Second, key British generals soon to arrive in America with the assignment of executing the strategy had their own ideas about when and where to conduct their operations. Their actions, too often at odds with strategic planning, proved to have counterproductive effects in bringing the disaffected colonists back into the British Empire.

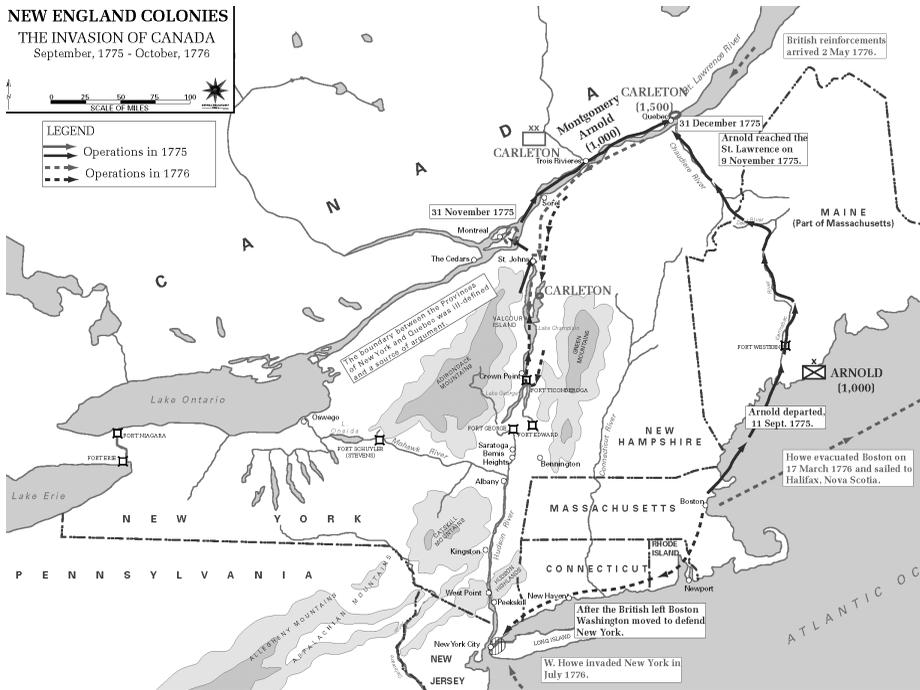
During the summer of 1775, the Continental Congress, after much deliberation, decided on a bold plan to invade Canada in attempting to lure Quebec Province into becoming the fourteenth colony in rebellion. Part of the reasoning had to do with the St. Lawrence watershed in geographic relation to the Hudson River. The two river systems almost touched each other at the southern end of Lake George. Only about twenty miles of rugged terrain separated this lake from the Hudson River. Stated differently, in terms of waterways, that short stretch was the only land formation standing between New York City and Montreal, 350 miles to the north. The distance on the St. Lawrence River from Montreal to Quebec City was another 160 miles. As it had during the French and Indian War, the Hudson-St. Lawrence water corridor could be employed to move armies north and south through the rugged mountain terrain in the Lake George-Lake Champlain region. So, too, could the British use this route if their plans involved sending an army south out of Canada to help cut off New England from the north.

Benedict Arnold, involved in capturing Fort Ticonderoga on May 10, 1775, was familiar with Canada's geography. As a trading merchant operating out of New Haven, Connecticut, he had personally captained vessels sailing up the St. Lawrence River to Quebec City and Montreal. Arnold was among those patriot enthusiasts who encouraged Congress to invade Quebec Province with a sizable enough force to convince the French habitants and English subjects to swing their allegiance over to the patriot side. His argument was straightforward: If the British attempted an invasion through Canada, it would be better to begin fighting them at Quebec City than some point hundreds of miles south, say at Fort Ticonderoga or even the area of Albany.<sup>4</sup>

Before 1775 was over, two patriot detachments had struck into Canada. The first, under the direct command of General Richard Montgomery, captured Montreal in mid-November;

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4 Benedict Arnold to the Continental Congress, Crown Point, June 13, 1775, in Peter Force, ed., *American Archives*, (4<sup>th</sup> Series, 6 vols., Washington, D. C., 1837-1846), 2: 1087. See also James Kirby Martin, *Benedict Arnold, Revolutionary Hero: An American Warrior Reconsidered* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 78-103.



The Invasion of Canada, September 1775 – October 1776, *Atlas of the American Revolution*, Department of History, United States Military Academy

and the second force, commanded by Arnold himself, had reached the walled city of Quebec near the same time. Exhausted from its harrowing overland journey through Maine Province, Arnold rested his soldiers until Montgomery sailed his troops down the St. Lawrence. Under the cover of a blinding snowstorm early on the morning of December 31, the combined patriot forces attacked but were easily repulsed. A cannon blast ended Montgomery's life; Arnold took a damaging musket shot below his left knee; and more than 400 patriot combatants were captured besides many dozens killed.<sup>5</sup>

The patriot invasion had failed in capturing Quebec City but still had a significant effect on British strategic planning. Planners in London now had to respond to the patriot Canadian invasion. Their decision was to divide their own troop numbers and send a major force to Quebec Province as well as to New York City and environs. Logic dictated that the largest number (35,000 soldiers and sailors, including a sizable contingent of Hessians) would sail in hundreds of vessels to New York. There they would establish what became the major base of British operations in North America. As for Canada, an estimated 12,000 soldiers, including Hessians, would be transported up the St. Lawrence River to Quebec City. From this point, they would mount a full-scale campaign to drive the upstart American rebels all the way back to Fort Ticonderoga—and beyond, if possible.

5 Ibid., 129-74. See also Mark R. Anderson, *The Battle for the Fourteenth Colony: America's War of Liberation in Canada, 1774-1776* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 2013).

Given the limited military capacities of the times, a total force of 47,000 soldiers and sailors represented a massive manpower commitment, clear evidence that George III and his advisers did not want to lose control of the rebellious American provinces. Stated differently, the British-Hessian attack force that would arrive in North America during May-June 1776 represented the largest overseas offensive movement of troops to a theater of war until the Allied invasion of North Africa in 1942.

Strategic planning, now that George III and his advisers had gotten serious, was truly impressive in its manpower commitment. Less impressive were the generals sent to America to organize and direct actual operations. Doubting General Thomas Gage's effectiveness in his efforts to subdue troublesome Boston area colonists, the Crown reinforced him during the spring of 1775 with three high-ranking officers: William Howe, Henry Clinton, and John Burgoyne. On paper they looked like worthy choices. Each had significant military experience gained either in Europe or America during the Seven Year's War (called the French and Indian War in the colonies). All three held seats in Parliament, with only Howe expressing mild opposition to legislation designed to tax the American colonies. A distant relative of George III (Howe's mother was apparently an illegitimate daughter of King George I), he expressed reluctance to serve but bowed to appeals from his king to provide military leadership in America. Before the end of 1775, Howe willingly replaced General Gage as commander in chief of British forces in North America.<sup>6</sup>

Some knowledgeable observers in England wondered about the martial capacities of these three generals to triumph in America. One bit of doggerel verse made the rounds as follows:

Behold the *Cerberus* the Atlantic plough,  
Her Precious Cargo, Burgoyne, Clinton, Howe.  
Bow, wow, wow!<sup>7</sup>

Cynical, yes, but in many ways also accurate. The best laid strategic planning is no better than well-executed operational actions in the field. Neither Howe nor Clinton, nor Burgoyne for that matter, seemed to have the desire, let alone the determination, to successfully implement the Hudson Highlands strategy. That failure was one of the key reasons why the British lost the War for American Independence.

Lord George Germain wanted the generals to strike quickly and hard, employing what we might label shock and awe tactics. He expected them to deploy their superior numbers to crush rebel opposition totally—and without mercy, if necessary. They had to do so before the hated French offered the patriots too much covert aid, perhaps, even

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6 On William Howe and his older brother, Admiral Richard, Lord Howe, see O'Shaughnessy, *Men Who Lost America*, 83-122. For more on Howe's operational decision making while in America, see David Smith, *Whispers Across the Atlantic: General William Howe and the American Revolution* (Oxford, England: Osprey Publishing, 2017), 1-29, 175-209; and Ira D. Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972). Due to time and space limitations, I have not discussed the importance of William Howe's close working relationship with his older brother or the peace mission that involved both of them.

7 Quoted in O'Shaughnessy, *Men Who Lost America*, 87.

overt aid in financial and materiel support. Further, they had to strike with full force before it became impossible, from England's financial point of view, to sustain the current intensified level of martial commitment.

Germain, however, was in London, but the generals were on site in America, and they had their own ideas about how to end the rebellion. For William Howe, working in concert with his older brother, Richard, Lord Howe, in command of British naval forces, the emphasis was as much on awe as on shock. During the summer and fall of 1776, the Howes threw punch after punch at Washington's inferior numbers, beginning with the Battle of Long Island in late August, but they passed up opportunities to destroy the main Continental Army with a decisive knockout punch. At the same time, they tried to negotiate some form of patriot submission with Washington and also a delegation from Congress. When driving Washington's battered but not yet beaten army across New Jersey, over the Delaware River, and into Pennsylvania, they used the threatening presence of their soldiery to cajole local inhabitants into signing loyalty oaths.<sup>8</sup>

As it turned out, mixing the olive branch with stark military force was like trying to get oil and water to congeal. In many ways, the Howes' operational decision making, in passing up opportunities to wipe out the Continental Army, allowed Washington boldly to move a modest-sized force back across the Delaware River during a driving snowstorm on Christmas night in 1776. The next morning, this column surprised and bagged a large Hessian detachment performing outpost duty at Trenton, New Jersey. Washington's impressive turnaround victory served notice to the Howes that on the verge of success, their campaign efforts had failed. Despite the expectations of King George and Lords North and Germain, the patriot cause was still alive and ready to gear up for another campaign season, or even more such combat seasons for that matter.

Wait a minute! I thought I was supposed to convince you about the primary importance of the Hudson River, not the Delaware River, in shaping the outcome of the Revolutionary War. Yes, the Delaware River mattered, especially in relation to the startling patriot victory at Trenton; but remember, the Hudson River was at the heart of the Hudson Highlands strategy in 1776. On their own, the Howes had decided that chasing after and slowly destroying Washington's army was a better approach to ending the war quickly—and they were wrong, very wrong.

By not going up the Hudson River and locating a land site to entice the main Continental force into an all-out set piece battle, Howe also left the British/Hessian/Indian army dropping out of Canada and onto Lake Champlain in the lurch. The story of Benedict Arnold's brilliant defense on that lake against a superior British naval force is beyond our limits here, but the battles of Valcour Island and Split Rock that took place in mid-October 1776 are significant in terms of strategy and results. General Guy Carleton, governor of Quebec Province, led his powerful British flotilla southward toward

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8 Smith, *Whispers Across the Atlantick*, 157-84; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, 127-57.

Fort Ticonderoga. However, with no British army moving north and concerned about maintaining supply lines back to Montreal during the upcoming winter season, Carleton only scouted his main target, Fort Ticonderoga, before retreating back to Canada. No doubt Arnold's determined patriot resistance at Valcour Island, in combination with Washington's masterful tactical victory at Trenton, effectively thwarted British strategy in 1776, to the point that His Majesty's forces were no closer to ending the rebellion at the close of that year than they had been at the end of 1775—after a supreme, all-out effort in troops engaged to break the back of patriot resistance.

Certainly King George, Lord North, and Lord Germain were not pleased with the performance of either Howe or Carleton. At this point, another member of the bow, wow, wow team presented them with a bold operational plan to regain control of the erstwhile American colonies. "Gentleman" John Burgoyne, a flamboyant character to say the least, disliked being an underling in his local rank to Howe and Clinton, and he found service in America distasteful, especially in comparison to far more fashionable and sophisticated doings in London. In addition, he loathed patriot American rebels as little more than treasonous dogs not worthy of a British gentleman's respect. He was sure he could teach these rude beings a thing or two about the power of British arms, and he was more than familiar with the British Hudson Highlands strategy—and the major role assigned to the Hudson River.<sup>9</sup>

Having returned to London during the winter of 1776 into 1777 after serving as Carleton's second in command, Burgoyne eagerly presented his operational plan to Germain and quickly gained the king's blessing to proceed with a second major invasion from Canada—in other words launching another attempt to succeed in implementing the Hudson Highlands strategy.

On paper, Burgoyne's "Thoughts for Conducting the War, from the Side of Canada" seemed reasonable. His main force would push southward across lakes Champlain and George to reach the Hudson River before proceeding to Albany. A diversionary column would travel up the St. Lawrence River, then move across Lake Ontario and into the Mohawk Valley. The objective was to divide and weaken the rebel resisters by forcing them to fight their superior opponent on two fronts. In addition, the expectation was that General Howe would move thousands of troops up the Hudson River to rendezvous with Burgoyne. Once having assembled a massive army in the Albany area, this force could then launch a bone-crunching sweep of rebel opposition in New England.<sup>10</sup>

So much for strategic planning. About everything that could go wrong for the ever self-assured Burgoyne did. The diversionary column got hung up around Fort Stanwix (then called Fort Schuyler) at the western end of the Mohawk Valley, then fled back to

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9 On Burgoyne, see O'Shaughnessy, *Men Who Lost America*, 123-64; and Gerald Howson, *Burgoyne of Saratoga* (New York: Times Books, 1979).

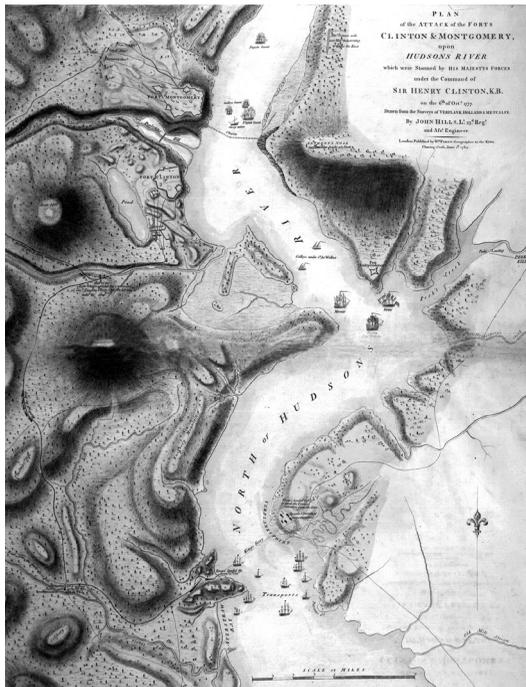
10 Douglas R. Cubbison, *Burgoyne and the Saratoga Campaign: His Papers* (Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark Company, 2012), 178-86.

Canada. A large Hessian raiding detachment foraging for horses and food supplies in Vermont territory suffered massive troop losses at the Battle of Bennington.<sup>11</sup> Worse yet, once again General Howe decided to go after Washington's army, seeking to lure the Americans into a climactic battle when they attempted to block the British force from capturing the nominal patriot capital of Philadelphia. Moving 15,000 troops by sea to the northern end of Chesapeake Bay, Howe failed to wipe out Washington at the Battle of Brandywine on September 11, 1777. His army did go on to seize Philadelphia, but the consequences were obvious: By again abandoning the Hudson Highlands strategy in favor of chasing after Washington's Continentals, Howe left Burgoyne's increasingly beleaguered force without any meaningful support or relief from the lower Hudson River.

Our second bow, wow, wow team member, diffident Henry Clinton, was left behind by General Howe to command British forces remaining in New York City. He had about 7,000 troops, mostly loyalists and Hessians, at his disposal. To be fair, Clinton did not have enough manpower to send a sizable force up the Hudson to assist Burgoyne while also defending New York City and environs. Washington's Continentals were lurking in the area, but in August when they marched away to defend Philadelphia, Clinton still remained inactive. Complaining that he could not hope to offer diversionary support for Burgoyne until receiving expected reinforcements, he did nothing until those

troops arrived in late September. Finally, Clinton sailed northward with about 3,000 soldiers on October 3. This movement occurred way too late to relieve or save the British northern invasion force from a humiliating defeat.

General Clinton, so often slow to take action, but once moving a good tactician, showed his skills on October 6. That morning he ordered 2,000 troops to debark on the Hudson's west bank and march around Bear Mountain to attack forts Montgomery and Clinton from the land side—with naval fire pouring into the forts from the river side. Patriot defenders at the forts, located about five miles south of West Point, fought bravely but were eventually



Plan of the Attack on Forts Clinton and Montgomery, 6 October 1777, by John Hills, Published by William Faden, 1784, Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division

11 On Bennington, see Richard M. Ketchum, *Saratoga: Turning Point of America's Revolutionary War* (New York: Holt, 1997), 285-308; and Michael P. Gabriel, *The Battle of Bennington: Soldiers and Civilians* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2012).



*The Chain and Boom at Fort Montgomery*, by Jack Meade,  
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

overwhelmed. Claiming sickness, Clinton decided to return to New York City, but he sent General John Vaughan farther up the river. Before retreating, Vaughan ordered the burning of the state capital of Kingston and then sailed a little closer to Albany, but none of these actions proved of any value in helping out Burgoyne, who surrendered the remains of his depleted army near the Hudson River and the village of Saratoga (modern day Schuylerville) on October 17, 1777.<sup>12</sup>



*Burgoyne's Surrender at Saratoga*, Percy Moran, 1911  
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

Once again, in relation to following the Hudson Highlands strategy, the bow, wow, wow team of generals had failed. Their uncoordinated operations had turned British strategic planning into a virtually guaranteed loser, and with huge consequences for the course of the War for Independence. First, the

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<sup>12</sup> Gregory Smith and James M. Johnson, "Interpreting the Battle for the Hudson River Valley: The Battle of Fort Montgomery," *The Hudson River Valley Review*, 20.1 (Summer 2003), 15-26. See also George C. Daughan, *Revolution on the Hudson: New York City and the Hudson River Valley in the American War of Independence* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), 173-81. Daughan argues that British home leaders doomed their chances of ending the rebellion by developing the Hudson Highlands Strategy. Apparently, as a maritime power they should have relied more on naval forces.

patriot victory at Saratoga was a major turning point in convincing the French to become “good and faithful” allies of the Americans. Second, France’s overt involvement shifted what had been a civil war into a global contest. As Lord Germain had earlier emphasized, unless the rebellion was crushed quickly, the British Empire could face such nightmarish scenarios as the French navy capturing valuable sugar island holdings in the Caribbean, or worse yet, even a direct invasion of England itself by well-trained French military forces.<sup>13</sup>

These two developments, in and of themselves, provide compelling evidence that the Hudson River should receive first place as the waterway with the greatest impact on the outcome of the Revolutionary War. But wait: As the pitch persons like to say on television, there’s more, much more and all for the small low price! Many more critical actions occurred along the Hudson River after 1777. Specifically, I’m referring to the importance of developing a key network of patriot defenses at West Point, Benedict Arnold’s treasonous actions in 1780, and the Newburgh “conspiracy” that played itself out ten miles north of West Point in 1783.

Construction of the elaborate West Point defenses began in 1778 in reaction to General Clinton’s October 1777 raid up the Hudson. British naval vessels had easily broken through the chain stretched from Fort Montgomery across the river, and a feeble patriot shot from Constitution Island had Clinton’s detachment laughing at the pathetic level of rebel resistance in sailing north around West Point. To discourage other such expeditions, the patriots, following the guidance of the brilliant Polish engineer Thaddeus Kosciuszko, constructed an impressive network of defensive works at West Point and on Constitution Island. Also put in place was the famous Great Chain stretching across the Hudson. Its purpose was to hang up enemy ships, which made them vulnerable to damaging patriot cannon fire as they tried to navigate their way through the ever-shifting currents in this twisting area of the river.<sup>14</sup>

At no point for the rest of the war did British forces attempt to challenge this muscular defensive stronghold. Not even when dealing in secrecy with apostate Benedict Arnold to obtain plans regarding the location of these defenses did ever-unadventurous General Clinton, who replaced General Howe as British North American commander in 1778, seriously contemplate such an assault. Once Arnold’s plotting came apart after the capture of British adjutant general, Major John André, in September 1780, Clinton gave scant thought to mounting an all-out offensive operation against West Point. Given that the main theater of fighting had shifted to the southern states, such an assault might well have proved pointless. That West Point existed as a powerful point of patriot resistance

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13 Sam Willis, *The Struggle for Sea Power: A Naval History of the American Revolution* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015), 204-294; and Larrie D. Ferreiro, *Brothers at Arms: American Independence and the Men of France and Spain Who Saved It* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016), 75-117.

14 Dave Richard Palmer, *The River and the Rock: The History of Fortress West Point, 1775-1783* (New York: Greenwood Publishing, 1969), 131-86; and Hugh T. Harrington, “The Great West Point Chain,” *Journal of the American Revolution*, September 25, 2014, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/09/the-great-west-point-chain/>.

was enough to encourage Clinton and his advisers to look elsewhere for opportunities to defeat the patriots in the increasingly hopeless assignment of putting down the rebellion.<sup>15</sup>

The British maintained New York City as their primary base of operations until late November 1783, not quite three months after the signing of the Paris treaty that recognized American independence. With inestimable French involvement in defeating and capturing Charles Lord Cornwallis' 8,000-person army at Yorktown in October 1781, Washington relocated his army in the Hudson Highlands region while waiting for the final British evacuation. In October 1782 he moved his troops farther upriver to the New Windsor area, about ten miles north of West Point and roughly two miles west of his command headquarters overlooking the Hudson River at the sprawling village of Newburgh.



Hasbrouck House/Washington's Headquarters, photo by Bernadette J. Hogan

What Washington had to contend with was an army of some 7,000-plus veteran soldiers increasingly restive about long delays in being paid amid angry memories of putting up with food and supply shortages of every kind for so many years. Going back to 1778, the Continental Congress had promised the officers postwar pensions to keep them in the service. Worried that Congress would disband the army once peace terms were at hand while shirking its long overdue financial obligations to the army, the officers sent a menacing petition to Congress threatening “fatal effects” for the republic if payments were not forthcoming. As for Congress, which lacked any power of taxation and with loans from France drying up, this body was all but bankrupt—pretty much helpless to do anything but talk a lot and urge patience.

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15 Despite popular lore, the question remains whether British success in capturing West Point would have had a significant impact in perhaps altering the course of the war in imperial Britain's favor.

Some thought that making George Washington a temporary dictator would solve the young nation's problems. When Washington quickly shunned such notions as completely at odds with the avowed objective of establishing a freedom-loving republic, other plotters began to suggest that the army should turn its allegiance to Horatio Gates, second in command at Newburgh. Near mid-March 1783, Gates' followers were urging that officers and soldiers together should not lay down their arms until financial justice had been realized—or worse yet, possibly march on Philadelphia and set aside Congress, with Gates playing some sort of dictator role.<sup>16</sup>

Maneuvering shrewdly, Washington brought his mutinous-minded officers back under control during the week of March 9, 1783. In a dramatic meeting held on March 15 (the Ides) at the New Building (sometimes called the Temple of Virtue) near the center of the New Windsor cantonment, the commander in chief appealed to the officers to regain their senses and remember the reasons why they had fought so long and hard for the cause of liberty. The atmosphere was tense. The officers seemed deadened to Washington's exhortation. Then Washington reached into his coat pocket and pulled out eyeglasses that he had never before worn in public. He wanted to read a letter from a Congressional delegate that spoke to their concerns, but he could no longer see the words clearly without his spectacles. Catching the officers' surprise at this gesture, Washington seized the moment and stated: "Gentlemen, you must pardon me: I too have grown gray in your service and I too find myself going blind." These words spontaneously clicked. Yes, Washington was saying, we have fought and bled, we have suffered from material shortages of all kinds, we haven't been treated well by an indifferent civilian populace, and we have given the best years of our lives to the cause. But together, he reminded them, they in concert with him, had created something much greater than themselves and their particular needs. Their gift to posterity was the beginnings of a freedom-loving republic dedicated to the rule of law rather than to the whims of some self-serving political tyrant.<sup>17</sup>

That Washington disdained the role of dictator near the western shore of the Hudson River represents a critical moment in determining the future course of United States history. Like it or not, most revolutions fail. They produce the likes of a Napoleon or a Stalin or a Zedong, revolutionary leaders who promise to deliver liberty to the people but who, once in power, become self-absorbed masters of oppression.

That Washington decided to lay down his sword (technically resign his commission before Congress) after departing from the Hudson River Valley was of monumental importance in assuring a positive ending to the American Revolution. The Newburgh confrontation might be described as a capstone to the many pivotal confrontations that occurred along this vital waterway. The process started in late 1775 when King

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16 Key documents relating in more detail to the events at Newburgh may be found in Worthington C. Ford, et al., eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* (34 vols., Washington, D.C., 1904-1937), 24:290-301.

17 Richard H. Kohn, "The Inside History of the Newburgh Conspiracy: America and the Coup d'Etat," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, 27 (April 1970), 188-220; and James Kirby Martin, "Conspiring Patriots," *George Washington's Mount Vernon* (Spring 2016), 17-21.



Tower of Victory, c.1906. Detroit Publishing Company Collection  
at the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

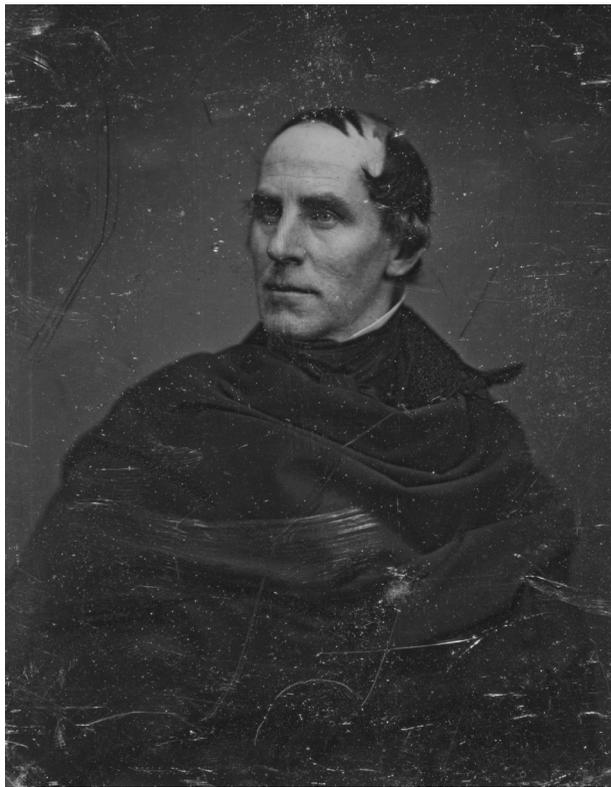
George III and his advisers began framing the Hudson Highlands strategy. Then came the establishment of the main base of British operations in and around New York City. Along with the troops appeared William Howe, who had Washington's army divided and all but trapped on Long Island and Manhattan in August-September 1776; but Howe set a pattern when he failed to bag his prey. Field generalship out of harmony with strategic objectives finally led to the crushing defeat of John Burgoyne's army at Saratoga in 1777, the construction of vital West Point defenses beginning in 1778, the collapse of Benedict Arnold's plotting in 1780, and the upbeat ending at Newburgh in 1783. And let me assure you that there is much more than I've had time to discuss here. To mention one example: Stony Point in 1779...and on and on.

Certainly other waterways in eastern North America mattered as well, but none can match the incredible story of the Hudson River and its valley as the water highway that foiled British efforts to keep the thirteen rebellious colonies attached to the mighty British Empire. Because of advancing technology, river networks are not as important in shaping warfare today as they were up until recent times. To stay in context, we need to remember that key waterways very much influenced the course of military action in Revolutionary America. In conclusion, please join me in saluting the Hudson River, the waterway that mattered the most in winning for the American people the opportunity to build a republic of laws, not of tyrants, for which we should all be grateful, indeed.

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# Thomas Cole's Knickerbocker and Catskill Identity, 1825–1838: A Reconsideration of Cole's "Englishness" and "Conservatism" through a Brief Portrait of the Artist who Chose Cedar Grove

*Matthew DeLaMater*



Thomas Cole, c.1845. Daguerreotype, Studio of Matthew Brady.  
Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

*And if he who has travelled and observed the skies of other climes will spend a few months on the banks of the Hudson, he must be constrained to acknowledge that for variety and magnificence American skies are unsurpassed.*

—Thomas Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," 1836

Thomas Cole's Catskill wedding to Maria Bartow on November 22, 1836, stands as more than just the consummation of a romance, for it also signifies the lasting commitment of an artist to a place, with all that it signified for the first foundational movement in American art.<sup>1</sup> For on the grounds of the modest estate of Maria's guardian uncle, in this period of 1833 to 1838, the Anglo-American artist Thomas Cole worked in his first Cedar Grove studio.<sup>2</sup> There he transitioned from bachelorhood into early married life, personal developments matched by an increasing mastery in his work. During this time, through the peaks and valleys of inspiration and melancholy that marked his characteristic emotional being, Cole managed to produce a series of diversely iconic works, including the five-part allegorical series *The Course of Empire* (1836), the panoramic *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm—The Oxbow* (1836), and the sublime *View of Schroon Mountain, Essex County, New-York, after a Storm* (1838). These seven selected canvasses alone represent the most significant body of masterworks created on American soil in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Cole's marriage,



*View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm—The Oxbow*, Thomas Cole, 1836. Oil on canvas, 51 1/2 x 76 in. (130.8 x 193 cm) The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Russell Sage, 1908: 08.228

- 1 This American movement was disparagingly labeled the Hudson River School circa 1872. Cole never knew the term. While the name has stuck to the benefit of the Hudson Valley, it has done as much harm as good for Cole, confining his popular reputation to a regional notion.
- 2 Visitors can still stand on the front porch of the Thomson House in Catskill and see the famous view of the mountains in the distance at the Cedar Grove National Historical Site.
- 3 We might cite the paintings' present locations as substantiation of the "masterworks" claim. *The Course of Empire* is displayed at the New-York Historical Society, *The Oxbow* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and *View of Schroon Mountain* at the superb Cleveland Museum of Art (along with *View of Florence from San Miniato*, another masterwork). Technically, Cole's very first Catskill studio would have been at Bellamy's boarding house in the summers of 1827–29—as opposed to his first Cedar Grove studio, which he had from approximately 1833–41.

patronage, and evolving artistic talent synergized in Catskill to spur this unprecedented achievement, resulting in a concentrated body of work substantive enough to cement a legend to a location.

Consequently, ideas of Thomas Cole—and his sanctified regional reputation—have become so rooted to the historical memory of this valley that his presence seems to hover above its landscape still, as if his spirit may yet materialize above Kaaterskill High Peak in the ethereal manner of one of his painterly allegories.<sup>4</sup> We can scarcely imagine a time that Catskill might yet have been but a mere choice to the artist.<sup>5</sup> But choice it was, and by imbricating himself in the community, Cole found himself among a new set of small-town relations. His Catskill village life now co-existed with other significant identities he juggled—such as the dutiful son supporting aging parents and struggling sisters; as a noted leader of upstart Romantic artists in Knickerbocker New York; or as the proto-Bohemian expatriate artist just back from London, Florence, and Rome.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, by locating closer to nature’s compelling Hudson Valley landscapes to derive creative sustenance—and by limiting his New York City residency to the extended winter—Cole settled into a more eponymous American experience.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, in the energized times of market revolution, Cedar Grove occupied a remarkable vantage point to absorb an indelible impression of America’s ambiguous transformation—in which, as Washington Irving described, “the national character is vet in a state of fermentation” caught amidst “the greatest political experiment in the history of the world.”<sup>8</sup> Not only could Cole observe the practical course

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4 Beyond William Cullen Bryant’s noted eulogy and William Dunlap’s nationalist art advocacy, the chief sanctifier of Cole’s legacy was Catskill Episcopal Reverend Louis Legrand Noble. Cole’s close companion produced a self-serving hagiography in 1853 entitled *The Life and Works of Thomas Cole*.

5 Indeed, if not for the cholera epidemic of 1832, and dire worries about his parents’ health and finances in New York City, Cole might well have lingered in Florence. In contrast with notions that he was unequivocally anti-urban, Cole wrote that “Florence to me was a delightful residence. The magnificent works of art, the quietness and seclusion in which a man can live, make it a painter’s paradise. Indeed, to speak of Italy is to recall the desire to return to it. And what I believe contributes to the enjoyment of being there, is the delightful freedom from the common cares and business of life—the vortex of politics and utilitarianism, that is forever whirling at home.” By home, he meant New York City. Thomas Cole to William Dunlap, September 1834, Thomas Cole Papers, Manuscripts and Special Collections, New York State Library (Cole Papers, NYSL), also quoted in William Dunlap’s biography of Cole in *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, vol. 3 (Boston: C.F. Goodspeed, 1918) 154.

6 Indeed, one can read Cole’s manifesto “Essay on American Scenery” in part as a reassertion of his Knickerbocker identity and to counter his friends’ fears that Europe did not corrupt him as an artist. Read “badly” before the New York Lyceum and published as “Proceedings of the American Lyceum: Essay on American Scenery,” in the *American Monthly Magazine* (January 1836), Cole reassured Bryant that indeed he had kept “that earlier, wilder vision bright.” Noble also described Cole as unaffected, not prone to any airs: “He was in Rome what he was at home, simply Cole.” Noble, *Life*, 104.

7 For salient social historical considerations of the transformation in the Hudson Valley to which Cole became a chronicler and witness, see Thomas Wermuth, *Rip Van Winkle’s Neighbors: The Transformation of Rural Society in the Hudson Valley* (Albany: SUNY, 2001). Also see Martin Bruegel, *Farm, Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780–1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002) for case studies in how market modernity changed rural Hudson Valley. John L. Brooke’s magisterial *Columbia Rising: Civil Life on the Upper Hudson from the Revolution to the Age of Jackson* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2010) is particularly germane, though significant cultural differences exist in Greene County on the west bank of the Hudson where Cole lived, as opposed to the deeper manorial legacy of Columbia County, with undoubted implications for the development of the public sphere in both places.

8 Washington Irving, “English Writers on America,” *The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). 51. Not everyone was pleased with Irving’s perceived Anglophilia. The *Cincinnati Literary Gazette* expressed common nationalist resentments in its review of *The Sketch Book*, March 8, 1825: “Mr. Irving has done much to lessen our self-respect. He could not submit his works to the test of his native air; his genius must be fanned by the breath of royalty. He could not rise or fall with his countrymen; but must engraft himself upon a foreign stock, till he almost loses his original taste, and becomes an exotic at home.” Such widespread popular Anglophobia undoubtedly influenced Cole’s advocates.

of the Republic along its main commercial artery, but, in cultural terms—long before Mark Twain’s Mississippi seized the literary imagination—Cole had positioned himself on the banks of America’s first mythic river, fixing his place in the firmament of that experiment. Cole’s Catskill residency proved one of the most deliberate acts of his life, and should be remembered as a definitive expression of his chosen identity. For here he stood, and here he remains.<sup>9</sup> Yet the understanding of Thomas Cole’s legacy—rooted firmly to his great choice—remains increasingly under contestation.

## Fashioning Cole as an “Aristocratic Conservative”

In contrast with “sanctified” views of Cole tethered in foundational ways to American landscape art, an institutionally powerful line of scholarship has expounded alternative interpretations that, given their present public currency, invite further scrutiny.<sup>10</sup> Initially coalescing around the 1995 National Museum of American Art exhibit entitled *Thomas Cole: Landscape into History*, a number of scholars have created and advanced a portrait of Cole as a “conservative.”<sup>11</sup> The revisionist turn emerged in a 1981 article by Alan Wallach entitled “Thomas Cole and the Aristocracy,” which asserted that a strong mutual affinity existed between Cole and his wealthier patrons, one so powerfully intertwined that the author asserts that “Cole identified in crucial ways with the values and beliefs of the Federalist aristocracy. Thus, he would attempt to realize in imaginative terms the ideas and beliefs that aristocracy derived from its social position and historical experience.”<sup>12</sup> Rather than tracing evidence of tensions between patron and artist in a correspondence full of aesthetic negotiations, Wallach instead sees little light between Cole and his Federalist patrons.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Cole’s mirroring older generational values formed the crux

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9 Cole had become a citizen on April 8, 1834, after his return from Europe and prior to his serious courtship of Maria Bartow. See certificate of citizenship in the Thomas Cole Papers, McKinney Library, Albany Institute of History and Art. Cole is buried in Catskill in the cemetery across from Cedar Grove. See Cole’s undated poem “The Burial Ground at Catskill” in Tymn, *Thomas Cole’s Poetry*, 53. “This is indeed a place of rest and such/Would be my choice if heaven’d would grant my boon,/To be sepulchred here—to rest upon/The spot of earth that living I have lov’d.”

10 One of the most persuasive surveys of Cole’s environmentalism comes in David Schuyler’s *Sanctified Landscape: Writers, Artists, and the Hudson River Valley, 1820–1909*, (Ithaca: Cornell, 2012), 28–46. For a supporting iconographic approach to the same environmental thread in Cole’s work, I can recommend Alan Wallach, “Thomas Cole’s ‘River in the Catskills’ as Antipastoral,” *The Art Bulletin* 84, no. 2 (2002): 334–50.

11 The general list of “sanctifiers”—meaning non-revisionists who see Cole as a progenitor of a national American art or “Mind”—include contemporaries William Dunlap, William Cullen Bryant, and Louis Legrand Noble. Among later American Mind scholars, see key examples such as Perry Miller’s famous “The Romantic Dilemma in American Nationalism and the Concept of Nature,” *Nature’s Nation* (Harvard, 1967) 197–207. For formalist approaches, start with Ellwood Parry’s chronicle *The Art of Thomas Cole: Ambition and Imagination* (University of Delaware Press, 1988) as the essential reference work on Cole’s career and artistic influences, but which largely avoids broader historical context, social networks, and psychological interpretation. Barbara Novak and Linda Ferber are among the most important art historians on Cole and the Hudson River School. Also recommended is Avery, Kevin J. “A Historiography of the Hudson River School,” *American Paradise* (Metropolitan Museum, 1988) 3–20.

12 Allan Wallach, “Thomas Cole and The Aristocracy,” originally printed in *Arts Magazine*, 56.3 (November 1981), 83. Wallach cites Karl Marx’s *Louis Napoleon and the Eighteenth Brumaire* in understanding the “relationship between the artist and his patrons” relying on “Marx’s theoretical formulations between a class and its ‘political and literary representatives.’” See also Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, anon. trans. (New York, 1963), 51.

13 In an opposing view that ascribes patronage as “a necessary evil,” Barbara Novak characterizes the aesthetic debate between the wealthy patron Robert Gilmor and young Thomas Cole as “two men whose artistic precepts coincided neither with those of their age, nor with each other: radicals at opposite poles of the extreme.” See Barbara Novak, “Thomas Cole and Robert Gilmor,” *Art Quarterly* 25, Spring, 1962, 41–48.

of his success.<sup>14</sup> Wallach asserts that Cole's identification with his Federalist patrons was so complete and earnest and that it was "precisely this sincerity that made him valuable to his patrons."<sup>15</sup> In this Marxist interpretation of Cole, the Federalist aristocrats found their collaborative craftsman, faithfully transcribing their visions to canvas.

Depicting Cole as a sincere aristocratic collaborator becomes the keystone of revisionist interpretation—thereby leading to subsequent scholarly assertions of his anti-democratic conservatism. Angela Miller, whose work *Empire of the Eye* sees the later Hudson River School as a visual endorsement of Manifest Destiny, echoes Wallach's "aristocratic Federalist" characterization when she declared that "Cole was a profoundly conservative man whose social attitudes and loyalties suggest he found more to admire in the hierarchical society of the 18th century than in the more fluid democratic culture of the 19th century."<sup>16</sup> Miller also asserts that "the belief that Cole's sympathies were democratic" is an "inaccurate assessment."<sup>17</sup> From there, a short leap bridges the testimony of noted Jacksonian historians Christine Stansell and Sean Wilentz, who penned the introductory synthesis for *Landscape into History*.<sup>18</sup> In ratifying the theory that Cole possessed an anti-Jackson vehemence that animates *The Course of Empire*, they state that "Cole's hatred of the Democracy [the political party] intensified from the time of the bank war in the mid-1830s until the outbreak in 1845 of what he called the vile Mexican War."<sup>19</sup>

By interpreting the artist as a Federalist aristocrat invested with partisan animus, Cole can be assumed to share the virulent loathing of Andrew Jackson that many Federalists expressed, including the oft-quoted diarist Philip Hone. In fact, Hone's arch-conservative diatribes are frequently quoted as sentiments assumed to be shared by Cole.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, goes the argument, this Federalist partisan agenda *must* infect Cole's five-part series *The Course of Empire*, which should *now* be interpreted as a pessimistic anti-democratic jeremiad.<sup>21</sup> While the assertions of Thomas Cole's extreme partisanship rest heavily upon one incident in Catskill in 1834—which we shall examine in more depth—the essential point is to note that the entire edifice of Cole revisionism rests significantly upon this highly politicized portrait of Cole as an anti-democratic anti-Jacksonian.

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14 Wallach, "Aristocracy," 83.

15 Wallach, "Aristocracy," 83.

16 Angela Miller, "Thomas Cole and Jacksonian America: *The Course of Empire* as Political Allegory." *Prospects: An Interdisciplinary Journal of American Culture* (Cambridge University Press Annual: 1989): 60.

17 Miller, "Thomas Cole and Jacksonian America," 65.

18 Christine Stansell and Sean Wilentz, "Cole's America," in William H. Truettner, ed. *Thomas Cole: Landscape Into History*; [publ. on occasion of the exhibition *Thomas Cole: Landscape Into History*; National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC, March 18–August 7, 1994; Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford, Conn., September 11–December 4, 1994; The New York Historical Society, New York, NY, January 8–March 25, 1995; Yale University Press, 1994.

19 Stansell and Wilentz, "Cole's America," in *Landscape into History*, 18.

20 Indeed, in Angela Miller's "Thomas Cole and Jacksonian America: *The Course of Empire* as Political Allegory." *Prospects* 14 (1989): 65-92, the author quotes Hone no less than six times while ascribing them as Cole's shared political sentiments.

21 Among others who follow Angela Miller to see a politicized Cole are Ross Barrett in "Violent Prophecies: Thomas Cole, Republican Aesthetics, and the Political Jeremiad." *American Art* 27, no. 1 (2013): 24-49; and Sarah Burns, *Painting the Dark Side: Art and the Gothic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Univ. of California Press, 2006) 24.



*The Course of Empire: The Savage State*, Thomas Cole, 1834. Collection of the New-York Historical Society: 1858.1

### “The English Circumstances of His Formation”

While ratifying the rabid “Federalist” and “conservative” strains of Wallach’s interpretation, Tim Barringer, in his polemical 2011 essay “The Englishness of Thomas Cole” and, less stridently, in the recent 2018 Metropolitan Museum catalog *Thomas Cole’s Journey: Atlantic Crossings*, adds a third revisionist strain. Overall, Barringer makes a binary argument for the primacy of Cole’s Englishness over his Americanness, rendering an unabashed challenge to various popular notions of the so-called Hudson River School as a feat of American originalism. To do so, Barringer prioritizes selected nineteenth-century homilies pushed by Cole’s friends, as epitomized by William Cullen Bryant’s famous eulogy of the artist, Louis Legrand Noble’s fawning “biography,” and Asher B. Durand’s elegiac painting *Kindred Spirits*, from which the “sanctified” interpretation took root.<sup>22</sup> Their “central rhetorical strategy,” Barringer asserts, “is to parallel Cole’s uniqueness with that of the American landscape.”<sup>23</sup> The result is that “Cole had become a fixture of the landscape, as American as the Catskills themselves.”<sup>24</sup> While the popular identification of a landscape artist with

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22 Tim Barringer, “The Englishness of Thomas Cole,” in *The Cultured Canvass*, (1-2). Barringer’s central rhetorical strategy is to emphasize contemporary elegies rendered by Cole’s friends, to which early Cole biographer and promoter William Dunlap must be added to the list, as well as Henry Tuckerman’s limited work. More perceptive and less nationalist scholarship in Cole studies has long existed, including Ellwood Parry, Barbara Novak, Linda Ferber, and Alan Wallach, among others. Unfortunately, Barringer’s depictions of American scholarship often read like a strawman argument. For example, Barringer writes that “Cole’s biographers have all implicitly served a nationalist and exceptionalist agenda in their fabrication of the artist as an all-American product.” See “Englishness,” 15.

23 Barringer, “Englishness,” 2.

24 Barringer, “Englishness,” 2.



*The Course of Empire: The Pastoral or Arcadian State*, Thomas Cole, 1834.  
Collection of the New-York Historical Society: 1858.2

his geographical subject would not ordinarily be seen as damning, Barringer interprets such correlation as an ongoing act of American cultural nationalism. After all, Cole and his friends had the audacity to “elide or underestimate” the “significant fact” of Cole’s English birth.<sup>25</sup>

Of course, Barringer is correct in noting the importance of Cole’s early youth. We should not minimize the fact that Thomas Cole, born in 1801 in Bolton, England, and immigrating to the United States in 1818, spent the first seventeen years of his life in Lancashire, an auspicious time and place to come to consciousness. However, Barringer chooses to prioritize English historical conditions over Cole’s American experience by rendering Cole as permanently traumatized by his upbringing in the cauldron of modernity that Lancashire often symbolizes. He states that “Cole’s imagination was haunted by those memories of those boyhood years in industrial England.” Of course, scholars familiar with E.P. Thompson—including Alan Wallach—have not hesitated to locate in Cole’s urban upbringing a correlation to his overriding passion for nature.<sup>26</sup> Seeing romantic landscape painting as a response to the burgeoning Industrial Revolution represents a commonplace in writing about Cole. But in the nebulous task of separating Cole’s “Englishness” from his “Americanness,” Barringer prioritizes Cole’s response to the Britain of his boyhood: “The England [Cole] experienced was a paradigm of modernity—a modernity he adamantly

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<sup>25</sup> Barringer, “Englishness,” 3.

<sup>26</sup> Alan Peter Wallach, “The Ideal American Artist and the Dissenting Tradition: A Study of Thomas Cole’s Popular Reputation,” (PhD diss. Columbia University, New York, 1973.) Wallach was the first American scholar to delve deeply into Cole and his family’s Dissenting intellectual background in Lancashire, and to explore its manifestations in Cole’s subjects.

rejected.”<sup>27</sup> This rejection “defined” Cole’s art, “albeit negatively,” through a determinism shaped by the “geographical, economic, and cultural milieu of his early life,” which we can identify through his “frequent, if tacit, references to British art and culture.”<sup>28</sup> Barringer, in focusing his argument, skims over the eleven-year period from 1818 to 1829, when Cole came to manhood and worked solely in America. This, of course, is precisely the critical biographical period where the most extravagant Americanist claims about Cole not only emerge, but also find evidence.<sup>29</sup> However, in Barringer’s view, Cole’s rise as a prominent young artist in Knickerbocker New York—based on the popularity of his Hudson River Valley, Lake George, and White Mountains landscapes—should ultimately be reclaimed as expatriated acts of English aesthetics, American scenes painted against an overriding “English” modernity. “Even as Cole asserted the uniqueness of American scenery,” Barringer argues, “he rehearses the results of historical processes that he had witnessed in England.”<sup>30</sup> From the cloying soot of Lancashire’s mills, Cole can never seem to clean himself.

In conjoining Wallach’s claims of Cole’s aristocratic Federalism to the assertion of English determinism, Barringer garbs revisionist arguments with English threads: “Despite his comprehensive disavowal of his own English background, Cole’s imagination was haunted by his boyhood memories of those years in industrial England. His artistic project was framed by, and judged against, the work of English landscape painters; and his Federalist social vision, based in hierarchies of class, accorded more closely to that of his English contemporaries than with most in New York.”<sup>31</sup> As with other revisionist arguments, Barringer must cast off Cole’s own biographical testimony as disingenuous, stating that “in contradiction to the artist’s own fervent assertions and much of the edifice of subsequent [American] scholarship...the experience of those early [English] years shaped, even determined, Cole’s later cultural and aesthetic positions.”<sup>32</sup> But the question of whether Cole was “determined” by his boyhood, such that his life in America was a foreordained and constructed act of Englishness, seems over-broad at a minimum and risks the ironic re-enactment of the very tropes of nineteenth-century British condescension that so energized the Knickerbockers in the first place.<sup>33</sup>

In combining the main revisionist currents, we see a portrait of Thomas Cole alienated from earlier notions of the artist’s biographical landscape. Tethering patronage directly

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27 Barringer, “Englishness,” 44.

28 Barringer, “Englishness,” 3.

29 See Cole’s biography in William Dunlap’s *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, vol. 3 (Boston: C.F. Goodspeed, 1918).

30 From Tim Barringer, “Thomas Cole’s Atlantic Crossings,” *Thomas Cole’s Journey: Atlantic Crossings* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2018), 29. In another line along the same theme, Barringer writes that “The dreamy Chorley artisan was able, almost, to become a Federalist Gentleman.” Quoted from “Englishness,” 20.

31 Barringer, “Englishness,” 46.

32 Barringer, 3. Inspired by Freudian notions advanced by Bryan Wolf, Barringer writes of a Cole trapped in a “repeated projection of the repressive social and aesthetic values he imagined himself to have escaped, a return of the repressed Englishness that Cole was so keen to disavow and replace....”

33 Just as in writing the article I have feared being cast as a reflexive Americanist by the cards dealt with the topic, I hope my ultimate points make my transatlantic concerns clear.

to identity, Allan Wallach sees Cole as a Federalist aristocratic sycophant in a political era when Federalism was all but dead, a man living in the past. Angela Miller, accepting this notion of Cole as Federalist conservative, transforms masterworks like *The Course of Empire* into a kind of elaborate political cartoon aimed at Andrew Jackson and his minions. Barringer re-categorizes Cole's Americanness by seeing it predominately in relation to a dystopian Modern England that the artist's psyche never left, and to which the rest of his transatlantic life was largely a projection of a quintessentially English cultural construction. Weighing the various strains of the revisionist views, one might wonder why Cole risked any Atlantic crossings at all, when the approval of a venerable aristocracy and the class hierarchy he allegedly craved could have been found in purer forms by remaining in England.<sup>34</sup> Thomas Cole's identity as an American landscape painter, it turns out, *must* be a myth perpetrated by American nationalists, done with Cole's complicity, in which his own private writings and biographical assertions should be cross-examined as hostile to the truth.

Thus, rather than accepting the weight of Cole's own testimony, such revisionism requires a theory of personality that accounts for the self-blindness of Cole's autobiography. Again, Wallach provides the oft-cited bedrock. In addition to the Industrial Revolution that traumatized Cole's psyche, Wallach emphasizes a second grievance, one rooted in a



*The Course of Empire: The Consummation of Empire*, Thomas Cole, 1835–36.  
Collection of the New-York Historical Society: 1858.3

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34 Gordon S. Wood, succinctly describing the world Cole was born into, wrote that “Eighteenth-century Britain remained under the authority of about 400 noble families whose fabulous scale of landed wealth, political influence, and aristocratic grandeur was unmatched by anyone in America.” See *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different* (Penguin, New York, 2006) 12.

grasping and futile class aspiration: “It is perhaps hard to overestimate the effect the English class system had on [Cole]. He had learned to think of himself as a gentleman. Whatever his actual [poor] circumstances, his belief was unshakeable. It formed the core, the alpha and omega of his identity.”<sup>35</sup> Wallach assumes that the values of a “gentleman” that Cole allegedly aspired to were English aristocratic ones. Such an assumption overlooks the fluid historical context in which new notions of the republican gentlemen had emerged. Even a strident Federalist like John Adams called for a new American conception of this masculine ideal: “By gentlemen are not meant the rich or poor, the high-born or the low-born, the industrious or the idle: but all those who have received a liberal education, an ordinary degree of erudition in liberal arts and sciences. Whether by birth they be descended from magistrates and officers of government, or from husbandmen, merchants, mechanics, or laborers; or whether they be rich or poor.”<sup>36</sup> Cole, son of a failed calico-maker, could achieve John Adams’ definition of a gentleman, but he could never hope to attain an aristocratic one. To understand the appeal of Cole’s chosen American identity, one must first posit whether he sought an aristocratic or non-aristocratic ideal of gentility. In Wallach’s aristocratic theory, Cole can only exist in a pathetic condition—a kind of social eunuch—desperately craving a status his birth precludes him from attaining, in which his limited financial means would always mock and undercut him. But in substituting



*The Course of Empire: Destruction*, Thomas Cole, 1836. Collection of the New-York Historical Society: 1858.4

35 Wallach, *Aristocracy*, 83. Barringer ratifies the “alpha and omega” passage—stating that “Wallach rightly asserts” in his essay “The Englishness of Thomas Cole” 11.

36 John Adams, quoted from Gordon S. Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founding Fathers Different*, (New York: Penguin, 2006) 15.

something like John Adams' notion of a gentleman as an attainment of liberal education achievable regardless of inheritance, Cole's choice to pursue his ambitions in New York may make more coherent psychological sense, and certainly offers a potential career path not doomed from the outset to servile inauthenticity.

Revisionism, at its best, posits new questions and forces new scholarship: Was abandoning England and immigrating to America essential or secondary to "becoming Thomas Cole?" Was he more expatriate than immigrant? How do we reimagine Cole's migration story if he were a "Federalist Aristocrat" at heart, and English to the marrow, rather than someone choosing an American identity for entirely different motives? Can we reconcile his "rejection" of industrial modernity with his alleged identification to the political descendants of manufacturing advocates like Alexander Hamilton—can one be both a Luddite and a Federalist at the same time? Does a psychologically plausible Cole emerge from revisionist versions, one substantiated by Cole's extensive writings and relationships, such that depictions of his Lancastrian childhood and Hudson Valley adulthood make holistic sense? While a full biography cannot be attempted here, a closer look at some of Cole's American experiences of 1818 to 1838 can briefly be posited as test cases, pushing back against these widely enshrined revisionist ideas.



*The Course of Empire: Desolation*, Thomas Cole, 1836. Collection of the New-York Historical Society: 1858.5

## Vagabond on Native Ground and the Birth of an “American” Artist 1818–1825

Thomas Cole’s early American years formed the practical crucible where the artist first made his work. By the time he boarded the steamboat to make his legendary journey up the “North River” in 1825, he had been acclimated to American life for more than six years, traveling widely, learning of its darker and rougher aspects as well as getting a taste of its natural splendors. Through city life, country life, small-town quietude, across rivers and dales, Cole had gained a wide sampling of the American vernacular. In November 1818, the Coles settled in Steubenville, Ohio, a town with a population about 1,000 where veterans might still regale newcomers with stories of Tecumseh’s defeat, and a place that could also boast, somewhat ironically considering the Coles’ background, the finest woolen mill in the West.<sup>37</sup> Here another Cole family enterprise followed a fatal financial trajectory, the shadow of the 1819 crash making economic conditions unpropitious, especially for a business making wallpaper for the early post-frontier market. Cole’s earliest existing poem, called “The Times,” laments the economic hardships following 1819 with a strikingly working-class, even Chartist, sentiment: “When I was young the times were bad.../and oft I heard that cry so sad/that money’s money now a days.” Cole ended the poem with this assessment: “This Truth I think around us flies; There is no money now a days.”<sup>38</sup> Cole, ever anti-pecuniary, lamented that the family’s money problems had followed them to America.

Relieved of English apprenticeship and only beginning his intellectual life, Cole found more opportunity to become an artist in Ohio than he did in Lancashire. Barringer correctly notes that it was “unlikely that in Bolton or Chorley he would have had much exposure to works of art.” His art education, therefore, “must have been limited.” Yet Barringer argues that through “the engravings, aquatints and mezzotints inevitably present in a printmaker’s shop [where Cole apprenticed in Liverpool], he must have absorbed the main compositional tropes and expressive effects of British landscape art of the period.”<sup>39</sup> Cole, however, through the unpublished portions of a biographical letter to his friend William Dunlap, challenges the idea that he was artistically “determined” in a Liverpool print shop, and contests the degree that “his eye had been trained by looking at picturesque prints in Liverpool.”<sup>40</sup> Instead, Cole described his turning point taking place in Steubenville, 1820—rendering a full *bildungsroman* moment—after having been lent an “English work on painting...illustrated with engravings and treated of design, composition and color: This

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37 Benjamin Rickey & Co, *Steubenville Historical Contexts and Resource Evaluation* (Columbus, 1993) 11-15.

38 Marshal B. Tynn, *Thomas Cole’s Poetry: The Collected Poems of America’s Foremost Painter of the Hudson River School Reflecting His Feelings for Nature and the Romantic Spirit of the Nineteenth Century*. (York, Liberty Cap Books) 31.

39 Barringer, “Englishness of Thomas Cole,” 14. Barringer doubles-down on this argument in “Atlantic Crossings,” 23.

40 Barringer, “Englishness,” 19. The full sentence goes on to saturate Cole’s 1825 Hudson Valley experience in British nationalism: “his responses to what he saw in the picturesque prints in Liverpool, and his response to what he saw in the Hudson Valley were shaped by pre-existing mental formulations—such as the picturesque itself—which had developed principally in Britain.” Again, this pushes against Cole’s own testimony that Claude and Rosa were primary influences and argues against those who therefore see a more blended transatlantic influence.

book was my companion night and day, nothing could separate us—my usual avocations [reading and music] were neglected—painting was all in all to me.” Cole’s letter continues the account, including important tidbits later omitted from William Dunlap’s 1834 *History*: “I had made some proficiency in drawing, and had [in Liverpool] engraved a little both in wood and copper, but not until now had my passion for painting burst its bounds—my love for the art of painting exceeded all love—my ambition grew, and in my imagination I pictured the glory of being a great painter. The names of Stewart [Rhode Islander Gilbert Stuart] and [Philadelphian Thomas] Sully came to my western ears like the voices of great conquerors, and the great masters were hallowed above all earthly things. About this time my father’s business affairs were in a ruined condition and I found myself necessitated to find some means of earning a livelihood and contributing to that of my family. You may easily imagine to what I turned—inclination blindfolds reason—I had always detested the dollar and cents business of life and I clung to painting as my only hope.”<sup>41</sup>

Cole indeed followed his inclinations and headed off to be an itinerant portrait painter. He tramped his way about Ohio, going through St. Clairsville, Chillicothe, and Zanesville, a pilgrim for art, the “glory of being a great painter” proving illusory, an ambitious mirage. Threadbare, he lived with the squalor and indignities of near-pennilessness in pursuit of his new vocation, taking in the picaresque sights of boarding house life and, in one case, narrowly avoiding arrest for non-payment.<sup>42</sup> Cole confessed: “It is a fact, that I scarcely ever knew what are called the ‘blues’ before I came to Zanesville; but they have been pretty regular companions ever since.”<sup>43</sup> (Cole’s confession raises questions—if Cole had been so traumatized in industrial England, why did he consider Zanesville so singularly difficult?) Cole toughened up in this adversity, negotiated the risks and hardships of solitary travel in a roughed-out land. He built up a formidable hiking endurance, such that it became a legend among his friends, and a staple of his method.<sup>44</sup> Years later, recalling his many overland adventures, Cole complained to his eventual biographer, Louis Legrand Noble, “Why do not the younger landscape painters walk—walk along endlessly?”<sup>45</sup> Fellow artist Asher B. Durand poked fun at Cole’s strenuous sketching outings—claiming he would need “the seven league boots of Jack the Giant Killer” to keep up with him. Of Catskill, Durand wrote “Now if there be a man on earth whose location together with whose locomotive power I envy, it is Thomas Cole....”<sup>46</sup>

If rendered footsore, Cole’s acquaintance with itinerant life taught him both the lay and the democratic tone of the land. Local Ohioans in turn ratified his ambitions in the

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41 Cole Papers, Box 1, NYSL.

42 Noble, 18.

43 Cole Papers, NYSL.

44 Cole exhausted both Durand and Noble on various wilderness journeys in the Adirondacks, though Noble had experienced a true frontier youth in Michigan and was an able outdoorsman.

45 Noble, 80-81.

46 Asher B. Durand Correspondence, American Archives of Art, microfilm from letter to Cole, from New York City to Catskill, dated September 5, 1837. Durand, in the same missive, calls New York City a “miserable little pen enclosing 250,000 human animals or more.”

limited ways they could, giving him his first opportunities to move beyond rudimentary engraving and on to apply paint to canvas—here he fed his nascent ambition. Judge Benjamin Tappan, brother of the noted abolitionists, was an early encourager. Unfortunately, Cole accidentally broke a palette that Tappan loaned him, and the young artist avoided a humiliating confession because of an “excessive bashfulness” where “I heard my heart beat, and felt myself incapable of utterance.”<sup>47</sup> In Zanesville, however, he received an important badge of assimilation when he gained admission to the Freemasons, which, however local, carried deep republican (and “new” gentlemanly) significance, and later may have played an important entry for Cole into Philadelphia and New York City.<sup>48</sup> Cole’s entrepreneurial efforts ended no better than his father’s, and Zanesville became untenable, only so many portraits to paint. Cole’s first skirmish with professional painting ended in a retreat to Steubenville, where he made stage scenery for the local thespians, indulging his love of trees and clouds, and perhaps identifying a preference for landscapes over portraits. He finally left Ohio, abandoning his debts and joining his family in Pittsburgh for yet another failure before heading to Philadelphia in late 1823 to study unofficially at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art. Here portraitist Thomas Sully and landscapist Thomas Doughty (another Claudian) showed their works, and Cole first saw such masterpieces as David’s *Napoleon Crossing the Alps*, on loan from the nearby collection of the exiled Joseph Bonaparte.<sup>49</sup> Few painters ever improved so rapidly, from the abysmal to the sensational. The eminent Cole scholar Ellwood Parry, evaluating Cole’s ungainly 1824 to 1825 work, *Landscape with Figures in a Mill*, noted “how little training Cole had received in composition shows up here in the odd sense that this one canvas contains two separate views...The woodchopper in the foreground is actually suspended several feet in the air as he chops away at the obstruction.”<sup>50</sup> Plainly, however familiar the trope of perspective, it had not been fully inculcated in a Liverpool print shop. The bulk of his pragmatic artistic education took place in Ohio and Pennsylvania, though the details of Cole’s *annus mirabilis* in Philadelphia remain largely enshrouded by a dearth of primary accounts. But the visual

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47 Dunlap, *History*, 3:141.

48 This topic is covered in a fascinating thesis by Julie L. Hughey that examines Cole’s themes and patronage in the light of Freemasonry. Rather than seeing Cole’s sympathetic relations with his patrons like Trumbull and Wadsworth as being formed from Cole’s identification with a Federalist aristocracy, Hughey sees the traditional republican bonds of the popular secretive fraternity at work. Freemasonry reached its political zenith at the time of Cole’s entry into New York, and DeWitt Clinton, great patron of the arts, was also the Grand Master of the New York Lodge until 1819. See Julie L. Hughey, “Thomas Cole and the Language of Freemasonry.” Master’s Thesis, George Washington University, 2002. Cole’s involvement with preparations for the Lafayette civic festival indicate that he likely utilized Masonic connections as necessary while at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. William Dunlap, William Irving, and poet Fitz-Green Halleck were among the several Knickerbocker brothers in Holland Lodge No. 8 in New York City. (Hughey, 59).

49 For my awareness of Joseph’s loan of *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, I would thank a recent talk by Bonaparte’s biographer, Thierry Lentz, at the Consortium of the Revolutionary Era in Philadelphia, February 23, 2018. For a listing of the paintings Cole would have seen in the PAFA exhibition, see the catalog *Thirteenth Annual Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts*, (Philadelphia, John Bioren, 1824) 1-13. There Cole would have seen paintings attributed to Rubens, Titian, Le Brun, Correggio, Rosa and Canaletto, most likely his first exposure to such works in person. There Cole exhibited an untitled “landscape” possibly *Landscape with Figures in a Mill*. He also saw at least three Thomas Doughty landscapes, including *Landscape: Hunting scene on the lake from the Pioneers* based on James Fenimore Cooper’s novel, as well as landscapes by the Anglo-American Thomas Birch. Special thanks to Hoang Tran, director of the PAFA Archives, for his exemplary assistance.

50 Parry, *Views and Visions*, 169.

evidence of the improvement in his work is staggering. By the time Cole arrived in New York City in April 1825, he had advanced well beyond the crude painting skills exhibited in *Landscape with Figures by a Mill* to the point that within the next two years, he was producing the stunning landscapes that made him an American phenomenon, eclipsing Doughty by a considerable magnitude. To his subsequent Knickerbocker friends, Cole must have seemed to have emerged authentically from the wilderness—as Cole’s proudly self-described “western ears” were attuned to the post-frontier aspect of the national experience. In that sense, Cole was more American than his influential New York circle, just as, ironically, his more educated American literary companions were often better versed in English Romanticism and Classical literature than the young Lancastrian, despite his enthusiasm. Such was the peculiar nature of this blended transatlantic intellectual culture.

### First Hudson River Voyage 1825

Cole’s most consequential artistic expedition remains his first Hudson River venture, undertaken in the late summer of 1825.<sup>51</sup> No doubt influenced by specific depictions of Hudson Valley nature within James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Pioneers* and Washington Irving’s “Rip Van Winkle”—both with famous Kaaterskill Clove scenes—Cole boarded a northbound steamboat, pencil in hand. The rhapsodic historian Thomas Flexner dramatically imagined Cole’s first contact with these famed mountains as the very fulfillment of his immigrant anticipations: “As [Cole] approached the Catskills, he saw, moving towards him, the physical manifestation of those dreams that had called him across the ocean from smoke-choked Lancaster.”<sup>52</sup> If there existed a cogent symbol of American modernity to pair with ideas of an English one, it was chugging up the Hudson at that moment, with the young artist in its hold. Cole impressionably described the steamboat in gothic hyperbole, mixing Miltonian notions with monstrous images reminiscent of the “Satanic Mills” he left behind: “the ponderous workings of the steam machinery, near which I had the fortune to be lying—struck my ears as the huge Idol of Juggernaut rolling over its victims with a thundering sound...The continuous hissing of the steam appeared as the sound that issues from the black gates of pandemonium.”<sup>53</sup> Cole made his way to Fort Putnam, above West Point, where he sketched the ruins, then stomped about Cold Spring, and wound his way to Cohoes Falls before doubling back to Catskill Landing.<sup>54</sup>

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51 See Ellwood Parry’s article “Thomas Cole’s Early Career: 1818–1829,” in *Views and Visions: American Landscape before 1830* (Washington D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1986) 161-186. This account of Cole’s New York City discovery stands in contrast with the ecstasies of his early promoters like playwright and gadfly William Dunlap. Such trips Wallach describes as an act of “aesthetic pioneering,” which involves an “appropriation” deploying “an ensemble of cultural practices” in which nature had to be “seized, tamed, brought under the dominion of artistic law.” See Wallach, “Aristocracy,” 83.

52 Thomas Flexner, *That Wilder Image: The Native School from Thomas Cole to Winslow Homer, History of American Painting vol. 3* (New York, Dover Edition, 1970). 34.

53 Untitled Cole Essay, Cole Papers, NYSL. Though not precisely dated, the description marks an early response to Hudson steamboat travel. Also transcribed in Christine Robinson’s *Thomas Cole: Drawn to Nature*, (Albany Institute of History & Art, 1993) 73.

54 For an excellent summary, subscribers can refer to David Schuyler’s “Thomas Cole and the American Landscape,” *The Hudson Valley River Review* 31, no. 1 (August 2014). 17-20.

From there, he hiked his way to the Clove, and then to North and South lakes, Kaaterskill Falls, and to the recently erected Catskill Mountain House.<sup>55</sup> Whether he had the ten dollars to stay seems unlikely, but the views he encountered there were just as Flexner described, the “physical manifestation” of dreams.

The fruits of that celebrated trip—memories and sketches—enabled an obscure twenty-four-year-old Anglo-American artist to seize his day by portraying an increasingly popularized subject, and upon his return to New York City he got to work in the dim light of his father’s Greenwich Street garret. The resulting landscapes that emerged in the late fall of 1825 propelled him into the thick of Knickerbocker literary and artistic celebrity. He became, as popular critic Robert Hughes has described, “the first boy wonder of American painting to prove himself entirely on native ground.”<sup>56</sup> His *View of Kaaterskill Falls* sold to Federalist historical painter John Trumbull, *Lake With Dead Trees* was carried off by theater maven and playwright William Dunlap, and, the last to be picked, the ambient ruin study *View of Fort Putnam*, went to engraver and artist Asher B. Durand. Durand would go on later, beyond even Dunlap, to become one of Cole’s most intimate friends.<sup>57</sup> From this coterie of early patrons, more doors opened in Gotham. Here Cole’s Masonic affiliations may have played a critical role, facilitating a more republican bond with his new patrons.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, the polymathic Dunlap, who claimed painting along with his literary and theatrical talents, also understood the nature of street promotion. He wrote effusively in the papers about this new sensation, ratifying Cole as “an American boy” hailing “from the interior of Pennsylvania.” Though he claimed it was “no puff” piece, Dunlap extolled Cole’s Hudson scenes as comparable to “the works of the first European masters,” which have “been the boast of Europe and the admiration of ages.”<sup>59</sup> Early aristocratic patron Philip Hone, soon-to-be mayor of New York City, also met Cole at the time, and remembered him as “a fine young fellow, full of undying ardor in the pursuit of knowledge, a lover of nature... Modest and unassuming, he was unacquainted with the artistical quality of humbug.”<sup>60</sup>

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55 Tracy Felker, “First Impressions: Thomas Cole’s Drawing of his 1825 Trip up the Hudson River,” *The American Journal of Art*, vol. 24, no. 1 / 2 (1992). 66-93.

56 Robert Hughes, “America’s Prodigy,” *Time* (July 11, 1994). In this review of the exhibit and catalog for “Thomas Cole: Art into History,” 1993-4, Hughes is also playing with a reference to another New York *wunderkind*, Alfred Kazin, who delivered the seminal *On Native Grounds* at the prodigal age of twenty-seven and was subsequently called “the boy wonder of American literary criticism” in Orville Prescott’s October 30, 1942, review in *The New York Times*. Somehow the phrase “native ground” and “boy wonder” stuck with Hughes, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/10/12/home/kazin-grounds.html>.

57 Ellwood Parry III, *The Art of Thomas Cole: Ambition and Imagination* 24-27. Dunlap, ever impoverished, sold the piece to Philip Hone for twice what he paid.

58 Cole had joined the Freemasons in Zanesville, Ohio, in 1822. Many of his patrons, including Trumbull, had Masonic connections. See Julie L. Hughey’s “Thomas Cole and the Language of Freemasonry.” PhD diss., George Washington University, 2002. Also see David Bjelajac, “Thomas Cole’s Oxbow and the American Zion Divided.” *American Art* 20, no. 1 (2006): 60-83.

59 “American” (William Dunlap), *The New York Evening Post*, November 22, 1825. At about the same time, William Coleman, the editor, was bringing William Cullen Bryant on board. “No puff” from Dunlap, *History*, 360, as cited in Parry, *Ambition*, 26.

60 Philip Hone, *Diary of Philip Hone*, February 15, 1848. Written in eulogy recalling Cole’s arrival in New York.

Dunlap understood humbug, at least in a promotional sense. With the American arts yet residing in a post-colonial moment simmering with Anglophobia, Dunlap, in his notable *Evening Post* piece, stressed Cole's Americanness for at least one pragmatic reason. Just a week before Cole's debut, a riot had broken out at the Park Theater, when anti-English rowdies pelted the stage with rotten fruit during a performance by England's noted Shakespearean actor Edward Kean. Appearing that night as *Richard III*, Kean may never have managed to shout for a horse, as no one was able to hear him against the jeers and catcalls.<sup>61</sup> And if Kean were not safe, an "English" artist displaying local landscapes might not have played well to the nativist crowds either. A theater man like Dunlap—who very likely witnessed the appalling vandalism that night—would hardly have sought to advertise Cole's "Englishness" as his overriding attribute. Thus, the legend became fact, and the story of the "American boy" from the "interior of Pennsylvania" entered print.

Of course, another transatlantic consideration in Cole's rapid assimilation exists in the obvious swell of English immigration at the time, and the existence of an already thoroughly blended Anglo-American intellectual culture. In contrast with Barringer's notion of an English modernity, if we erase the lines of "nationhood" and simply look at the two metropolitan areas in question, one might well argue that the two northern commercial cities of New York City and Liverpool had far more in common than either had with, for example, their more aristocratic southern cousins, Charleston and London, respectively. Travel accounts at the time suggest the distance between English and American modernity might not be so great as often imagined. Indeed, if one were looking for an explicit comparison between New York and Liverpool in 1825, one could hardly do better than to read the travel letters that Albany newspaper editor Nathaniel Hazeltine Carter wrote from England—at the same moment Cole was "making it" across the pond in New York. Among Carter's first dispatches, he confessed his disappointment upon landing in Liverpool. Instead of finding that ambient sense of Englishness and the exotic thrill of the foreign, he found an astonishing similarity in the apparent spread of a homogenizing modernity:

[One] reason may be found in the external appearance of Liverpool, which is comparatively a modern town, not unlike New-York. Although it was founded eight hundred years ago, yet the greater part of it has sprung up within the last half century. By a comparison of its number of houses and population at different periods, I find that its recent growth has been nearly as rapid as that of our metropolis. Not a vestige of its ancient appearance now remains. A spirit of improvement, an accession of population, and the conveniences of

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61 Paul A. Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy: Popular Disorder in New York City, 1763–1834* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1987). Gilje lists four such anti-English theater disturbances between 1825 and 1834. For colorful accounts of the event, see *The New York Evening Post*, November 15, 1825, the issue one week before Cole's coming-out column. These would hardly be the last such Anglophobic theater disturbances—a recurring phenomenon that peaked with the infamous Astor Place Riot of 1849.

commerce have swept away every relic of antiquity, and left no monuments to carry the mind back to other times. Even taste has in many instances yielded to a spirit of enterprise, and been violated by a thirst for gain....

There is also the same bustle—the same noise—the same activity through the town. Everyone moves with a hurried step, in straight lines, and with an air of business depicted in his countenance. The display of goods in the shop windows is remarkably neat, resembling that of Broadway and Cornhill. When to these circumstances are added similarity of dress and manners in both sexes, and an actual mixture of population in the two places, the difference becomes so slight as to be scarcely observable; and since our arrival at Liverpool, we have in all respects felt ourselves very much at home. The intercourse is in fact so frequent, and the interchange of inhabitants so common, that the resemblance between New-York and Liverpool is much more striking, than between remote parts of our own country.<sup>62</sup>

Carter's account suggests that a Lancastrian arriving for the first time in New York was indeed a citizen of a shared transatlantic urban culture, making the task of prioritizing the Anglo over the American even more problematic, and perhaps futile.

Thus, if a unique Lancastrian modernity cannot be the wellspring of Cole's deterministic Englishness, one could argue that Cole, as part of some "imagined community," carried a national identity through literature. Certainly, two influential literary works played upon Cole's deepest imagination, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*—the allegory indelible to his boyhood mind—and Lord Byron's *Childe Harold*—which shaped Cole's youthful longings and poetic conceptions of antiquity.<sup>63</sup> Yet, any set of English works hardly make for a hermetic national identity—and literate Americans not only had the same reading lists but were birthed in the same traditions of Protestant Dissent. Indeed, as the evolution of Cole's writing and poetry seem to attest, many in his Knickerbocker circle had received better literary educations than the former engraver's apprentice. In visual culture as well, the former colonies had shops just as Liverpool did, and Cole absorbed his favored "compositional tropes" of Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa—neither noted as Englishmen—from books and prints procured locally. These two artistic influences literally framed much of his early Hudson Valley and Lake George work, painted well before Cole ever set foot in London

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62 Carter, Nathaniel Hazeltine. *Letters from Europe, Comprising the Journal of a Tour Through Ireland, England, Scotland, France, Italy, and Switzerland, in 1825, '26, and '27*. G. & C. Carvill, 1827. Carter (1787–1829), from New Hampshire, was variously a Professor of Languages at Dartmouth College and a Clintonian newspaper editor. He died just two years after completing this journey on his return to Marseille. See listing in George and Evert Duyckinck, in *Cyclopedia of American Literature* (1856) 1:796.

63 Cole's personality in his twenties can be understood as being pulled by these two impulses, paradoxically balancing a Byronic wanderlust with a Pilgrim's conscience.

or saw his first Turner—and even Barringer concedes that “the Hudson River School was ninety per cent Claude.”<sup>64</sup>

In short, Cole’s development in art evolved dramatically in the United States beyond his limited exposure in Dissenting industrial Lancashire, outside any prints he may have seen of English or Continental landscapes as a boy. The first art book he claims to have possessed he acquired in Ohio, with whatever that may suggest about class, hierarchy, and literacy on the post-frontier. According to his own hand, he made the resolution to become an artist in Steubenville. His early aesthetic inclinations were refined and matured in the United States and conducted within new social and class relations that not only enabled his rise as an artist and a (new) gentleman, but also made for an artistic sensation. “His fame spread like fire,” Durand recalled. “I well remember what an enthusiasm was awakened by those early works of his...”<sup>65</sup> Cole’s success in his first Hudson Valley trip soon followed with requests for more such scenes, and, though his creative brainstorming featured an array of ideas for literary and allegorical canvasses, he went to work largely as an American landscape painter, setting up in part at Bellamy’s, a Catskill boarding house, where he worked summers in 1826 through 1829. Here, in part, he extended his early reputation, working on a range of preliminary masterworks such as *Sunny Morning on the Hudson River* (1827), *The Clove, Catskills* (1827), *Scene from “The Last of the Mohicans, Cora Kneeling at the Feet of Tamenund* (1827), and *Landscape Scene from “The Last of the Mohicans”* (1827), among other noted canvasses.

### Young Knickerbocker in Rebellion Against Federalist Patronage

The varnish had hardly been applied to Cole’s debut Hudson Valley *œuvre* when he became involved in the most consequential public feud theretofore in American art history. At stake was this very matter of Federalist patronage and control over this new generation of artists. This critical episode challenges assertions that Cole identified powerfully with a class-based Federalist aristocracy. The rebellion itself erupted over the extent to which these wealthy patrons would control the process of creation of art in the republic. It took the form of an institutional insurgency. In short, the American Academy of Art, presided over by Federalist neo-classicist John Trumbull, felt that such academies should be controlled by the patricians who funded the operation, and that the artists should accede to the superior tastes of the wealthier members. At one point, Trumbull curtailed

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64 As Barbara Novak notes, “the Claudian convention is most easily recognized by the trees that frame the picture’s lateral edges, as well as by the dark foreground coulisse, the middle-ground scoop of water, and the distant mountain—a set of motifs endlessly permuted.” Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture*, 196-197. Barringer’s remark from a lecture at the Albany Institute of History and Art, April 29, 2018. For an important book propounding the foundational importance of Claude to subsequent English aesthetics, see Andrew Brink *Ink and Light: The Influence of Claude Lorrain’s Etchings on England* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s, 2013). In it, Brink claims that “throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Claude tutored the English in how to see their landscape, how to envisage its natural wonders in terms of classical mythology and imagery.” Cole’s nickname as “The American Claude” reinforces the transatlantic essence of the process.

65 Quoted from Louis Legrand Noble, *The Life and Works of Thomas Cole*, 36. Durand’s narrative overlooks a small detail, for Cole had achieved a modest notoriety when his partly autobiographical (very) short-story “Emma Moreton” appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* on May 14, 1825—one could argue that, ironically, Cole had first “made it” in New York as a writer before he did as a painter.

the younger artists' physical access to the Academy facilities—including the coveted plaster sketching models—and in full patriarchal mode reminded the artists that “beggars cannot be choosers.”<sup>66</sup> This episode inflamed the artists, led by Cole's friends Samuel F.B. Morse and William Dunlap, who hoped (and failed) to gain more representation in the Academy, and to wrest control of the art selection process for the annual exhibition. Trumbull's imperious dictates escalated the initial conflict until full rebellion erupted. A new artist-run organization, led by firebrand Morse and grandly titled the National Academy of Design, threw down the gauntlet in 1826 by founding itself “on the common-sense principle, that every profession in society knows best what measures are necessary for its own improvement.”<sup>67</sup>

Inflammatory accusations spread in the New York press over the rift. Trumbull and Morse lobbed epithets, Bryant and Dunlap joined in the fray, everyone writing under thinly disguised pseudonyms, as was the protocol in an age of sticky libel laws and touchy personal honor. A near-Jacobin level of broadsides emerged from the National Academy advocates in savaging the attitudes of patronage, as in a piece written by “Denon” (a republican homage to the public museum of the Louvre opened under Napoleon). Appearing in the *Evening Post*, the diatribe was likely penned by Cole's “Kindred Spirit,” Democratic newspaper editor William Cullen Bryant:

In [Trumbull's] American Academy then, the artist is in leading strings [a puppet]; men of other professions tell him that they are to judge for him, that he cannot be trusted with office, that the weakness of his judgment, and the jealousy to which he is prone because he is an artist, render him unfit to do justice to his contemporaries. In apportioning the influence of the Academy, therefore, on these principles, care must be taken that the artist never has more than a minority in office; such has always been, and is now the fact. The artist of independent feeling, especially if he has anything of our National spirit of freedom within him, must perceive at a glance the shackles by which he is bound in such an Institution, and will retire from it in disgust, or remain an unconcerned, inactive spectator of measures in which he has no voice, and against which he has no remedy, and on which perhaps his opinion is considered obtrusive, and gratuitous. And the shallow pretender in his profession, the half-souled artist, puffed up with sophomorical consequence, who can play the sycophant, and fawn upon the rich in hope of patronage, he is most likely to be the *prélégé* of such an Academy; here he will find just the place to play off his quackery upon superficial and therefore vain connoisseurs.<sup>68</sup>

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66 In addition to Thomas Seir Cummings' *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design, New York Drawing Association, Etc. With Occasional Dottings by the Way-side, from 1825 to the Present Time* (Philadelphia: George A. Childs, 1865) which includes full excerpts of the newspaper debate, also see Thomas Bender, *New York Intellect: A History of Intellectual Life in New York City, from 1750 to the Beginnings of Our Own Time*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987) 127-129.

67 Cummings, *Historic Annals*, 29.

68 Cummings, *Historic Annals*, 83.

This defiant statement of artistic independence and satire of wealthy patronage had necessitated that Cole take sides, which, if his sympathies were with the Federalist aristocracy, he might well have chosen Trumbull's. However, his decision to throw in with his fellow artists of the National Academy seems at odds with the "alpha and omega" of someone who craved acceptance into the elite gentleman's parlor. After all, John Trumbull had proven valuable as an influential patron for young Cole. Given Cole's perpetual financial difficulties, offending his patrons and losing their support would have provoked life-altering consequences for his parents and siblings. Here, in this dispute, was an opportunity to "play the sycophant and fawn upon the rich" and reap the reward. Instead, Cole chose his fellow artists and new friends, exhibiting the "National spirit of freedom." Despite the rift, Cole characteristically maintained cordial relations with John Trumbull, perhaps honoring Masonic feeling, while still contributing to later American Academy exhibitions. Cole also continued to curry important Federalist patrons such as Robert Gilmor and Daniel Wadsworth—all stories frequently referenced by art historians—but he remained foremost committed to the republican impulse of the National Academy of Design, and to the necessary empowerment of the new artist over the old patronage system. The intellectual historian Thomas Bender considered the birth of the National Academy as a rejection of the past so profound that it established "a whole new premise for art and intellect in New York."<sup>69</sup> Cole proudly and conscientiously served as an officer in that movement, which also included a large set of his closest friends. In an address prepared for the National Academy years later—after his presumed "hatred of the Democracy" had intensified—Cole continued to espouse his hopes for a public art promulgated through concerted academy efforts: "But my earnest desire is to see [art] presented in such a form that none shall be deprived of its pleasures and benefits: that art shall be exposed, free as air, to every citizen, high or low, rich or poor."<sup>70</sup> Cole may have had an elitist conception of Taste (and shared much of John Adams' liberal conception of the gentleman), but he held firmly to a deeply democratic notion of the role of public art, a viewpoint that would not be too distant from that of academic curators working in the twenty-first century. Cole also continued to rail against the indignities of old school patronage throughout his career.

This anger intensified during the winter of Cole's first fame, when he suffered the "cruel injustice" of a "heartless employer" during what we might label as an unfortunate stint as an "artist-in-residence."<sup>71</sup> This episode took place on the estate of George Featherstonaugh, an English aristocrat and scholarly scoundrel who had married an American heiress of the Duane family. Featherstonaugh treated Cole in a "supercilious manner," keeping him like a hired servant in "miserable and cheerless" quarters.<sup>72</sup> Cole endured, producing a handful of relatively uninspired portraits of the Duanesburg estate and the Schoharie

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<sup>69</sup> Bender, *New York Intellect*, 129.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas Cole, "Lecture on Art" [113.]

<sup>71</sup> See Noble, *Life*, 37.

<sup>72</sup> From William Cullen Bryant's funeral oration. Cole impressed that story upon Noble as well, as he evidently seethed over the humiliating experience for years.

Valley, before fleeing the situation. This experience would not likely have encouraged a nostalgia for the class system Cole left behind in England. His return to London in 1829 and 1830, which he vainly hoped might be triumphal, was instead devastating, as he was treated as an American (or a Lancastrian), even though still technically an English subject. Cole seemed shocked by the mix of condescension and indifference he encountered: “I found the artists in London cold and selfish: there might be exceptions, but I found few. My own works, and myself most likely, had nothing to interest them sufficiently to excite attention: the subjects of my pictures were generally American—the very worst that could be chosen in London. I passed weeks in my room without a single artist entering, except Americans.”<sup>73</sup> Cole transferred the chill of his first experience toward the latest generation of British artists: “Although, in many respects, I was delighted with the English school of painting, yet, on the whole, I was disappointed: my *natural* eye was disgusted with its gaud and ostentation; to color and chiaroscuro all else is sacrificed.”<sup>74</sup> Turner (and Martin) had committed a cardinal sin, in Cole’s eye, of “appearing to have an artificial look” and of being false to nature’s colors. “Nature, in her most exquisite beauty, abounds in darkness and dullness; above all, she possesses solidity.”<sup>75</sup> And here, more than any single statement, encapsulates the philosophical divide between Cole and Turner, the fork in the road between these two inheritors of the Claudian legacy.

Overall, Cole summarized his first London experience as a bitter one: “I did not find England so delightful as I anticipated. The gloom of the climate, the coldness of the artists, together with the art in fashion, threw a melancholy over my mind that lasted for months even after I had arrived in sunny Italy [in June 1831]. Perhaps my vanity suffered, I found myself a nameless, noteless individual, in the midst of an immense, selfish multitude.”<sup>76</sup> When Cole at last encountered his English contemporaries in London, he did not do so with any great sense of shared national identity or common angst—after all, he had made something of himself elsewhere. London came to be a liminal space where he recognized the extent that his American identity had taken hold, such that even in London, he associated mostly with Americans, and when he left London, he joined a colony of mostly American expatriates in Italy. What he saw in English galleries, he took in judiciously, a maturing artist stealing as well as rejecting the various tropes of the present and past masters, seeking a place of his own among them, and expecting ultimately to take this refining art education back to the banks of the Hudson.

By the time he returned to London in 1841 and 1842, hoping to sell the second version of *The Voyage of Life*, Cole gave full vent to a lifetime of frustration with the aristocratic class patronage system, not only spelling it out in a scathing letter to his wife Maria, but

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73 Dunlap, 151.

74 Dunlap, 152.

75 Noble, 81.

76 Cole Papers, NYSL.

leaving little possibility of believing that Cole had an infatuation with the British or American aristocracy:

[I]t requires in England, as elsewhere, that a man should have built up a reputation either through years of perseverance or through the fortunate patronage of some distinguished personage. The first I have [no] intention of attempting and the second I shall not seek. I am conscious, and not egotistically, of the merit of my work and of their superiority over the flashy and fashionable productions of the day; but if I cannot get them properly appreciated without hunting after the favor [of] the rich and the titled, they must remain the decorations of our own humble apartments.<sup>77</sup>

### Knickerbocker Associations

To evaluate the assertion that Cole identified so completely with the Federalist aristocracy, one must obviously look to his freely chosen friendships rather than to his financially influential patrons. Cole reveled in his new circle of younger friends, and from a lonely, autodidactic youth who had fallen into working class life, he now found himself in fellowship with the most ambitious and well-read intellectuals of his American contemporaries. Sometime after publishing a Romantic short story entitled “Emma Moreton” in the *Evening Post* in June 1825, Cole became a member of James Fenimore Cooper’s boisterous Bread and Cheese Club, which featured a large and mixed group of New York’s intellectuals.<sup>78</sup> When Cooper departed for Europe, the group fell off and splintered without the author’s brash centripetal energy. Cole helped fill the void and proved instrumental in founding the later legendary Knickerbocker group known as the Sketch Club in 1829—hosting the first-ever meeting at his lodgings in the city.<sup>79</sup>

The Sketch Club reflected a split in Cooper’s gathering that was part ideological, part class-based, and part generational. Cole did not attend the other side’s gatherings, the Literary or Book Club, sometimes known as “The Lunch,” which was “highly exclusive and conservative in its membership and enjoyed lavish meals at a hotel called Washington Hall.”<sup>80</sup> Philip Hone and Chancellor Kent attended it, and its members (many former Federalists) leaned toward what David Walker Howe calls the conservative (rather than

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77 Letter to Maria, May 21, 1842, from Rome to Catskill. Quoted from Ellwood Parry, *Art and Ambition*, 272, as the letter is evidently in private hands.

78 Marckwardt, Albert H. “The Chronology and Personnel of the Bread and Cheese Club.” *American Literature* 6, no. 4 (1935): 389-99.

79 Cummings, 111. According to Cole’s good friend, the painter (and militia General) Thomas Seir Cummings: “The first regular meeting took place at the rooms of Thomas Cole. It was a decided success. All the members exerted themselves to please, and everything was agreeable—even the figs, milk, and honey. But on the day after the feast, came the pangs of repentance—and many a vow was made that the refreshments of the Club should be changed.”

80 Foshay, *Mr. Luman Reed’s Picture Gallery*. (New York: Abrams with N-YHS, 1990) 30.

the “modernizing”) branch of the Whigs.<sup>81</sup> However, the Sketch Club, or “the Twenty-One” as they were also known, represented the artists who were “all of a liberal turn of mind, and might be said to represent as much of the Bohemian spirit as any early nineteenth-century American city could have furnished. Those who had political convictions were Democratic rather than Whig.”<sup>82</sup> These Knickerbocker artists and writers of the Sketch Club did contain a number of Jackson and Van Buren Democrats, including founder William Cullen Bryant. What seems reasonable to assume is that if Cole held reactionary aristocratic ideas he would either have been roundly mocked or excluded from the Sketch Club, and he would have been a highly unlikely leader of the National Academy’s efforts at independence from wealthy Federalist patrons.

Over various libations with his fellow artists, Cole could commiserate over their high ambitions and low financial means, while sharing passionate exchanges about the arts along with sharp social observations. In addition to actual sketching, the primary purpose of the Sketch Club was to share laughter, much of it at the members’ own expense. Louis Legrand Noble noted Cole’s heightened sense of absurdity, which seems well-suited to the satirizing moods of the Sketch Club: “When stirred by wit and humor, or overcome by the ridiculous, for which he had the keenest sense; then he resigned himself, for a moment, to the heartiest laughter.”<sup>83</sup> Cole also possessed that middling habit of habitual self-deprecation, often a way to balance his more passionate high-toned outbursts, a reflex against hubris. The Sketch Club collectively served to keep its high-minded members grounded. Evenings featured spoofs of fatuous behaviors, silly poetic send-ups, and other effusions of wit and jocularly. At one meeting William Cullen Bryant was censored for “giving excellent criticism” of an oration he had not heard, and for trying to pass off “an admirable account of a dinner which he had not been within scent of.” In November 1829, Cole entertained with a mock scientific lecture on the dangerous “combustion of pea nut shells,” while his friend, artist Charles Cromwell Ingham, issued the dissent.<sup>84</sup> More pertinently, earlier that same year, the Sketch Club uproariously ridiculed Colonel Trumbull and his American Academy, including “a mock-vote of thanks for commanding high prices,” though it was determined not to send the resolution in a galley pot, as one wag suggested.<sup>85</sup> Art historian Ellen Foshay concurred that politics “were not a dominant concern of the members, but those who had convictions were generally of a liberal frame of mind.”<sup>86</sup> Instead of partisanship, the core of the camaraderie centered around a common

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81 We tend to forget in our transatlantic mood to adjust our political labeling accordingly. Given the prevailing Ultra-Royalism and Toryism in Europe at the time, American politics were a relatively narrow argument among republicans, and even Philip Hone would have been a moderate liberal in Metternichian Europe.

82 Marckwardt, “Bread and Cheese,” 397.

83 Noble, *Life and Works of Thomas Cole*, 104. Most of the tributes to Cole were written in the aftermath of his death—but, if these posthumous accounts are by decorum necessarily kind, they are not contradicted by contemporaneous private accounts.

84 The best account of the Sketch Club is found in James T Callow’s *Kindred Spirits: Knickerbocker Writers and American Artists, 1807–1855*. P.26. See also John Durand’s *Prehistoric Notes of the Century Club* for details of the Sketch Club minutes.

85 Callow, *Kindred Spirits*, 26.

86 Ellen Foshay, *Mr. Luman Reed’s Picture Gallery*, 30.

aesthetic bond, where their individual high ambitions merged with a collective sense of the importance of creating arts and letters worthy of the Republic. Accusations of Cole's Federalist aristocratic sympathies seem challenged by the actual character of Cole's closest friends. It strains credulity to accept that Cole hid his true political sympathies from his intimate friends, while only revealing his actual "alpha and omega" to his conservative older patrons.

### The Argument of Cole as Propagandist: Parsing the Celebrated Incident of the Partisan Shouts in the Woods, November 1834

On November 6, 1834, on the day after the defeat of William Seward for Governor of New York at the hands of Democrat William Marcy of the Albany Regency, Thomas Cole wrote of an idyllic Catskill outing with his future wife and her sister that was marred by an act of political rowdiness.<sup>87</sup> Given that Cole almost never mentioned partisan politics (only three remarks in hundreds of pages of documents), the incident receives great weight, and forms the basis of the depiction of Cole as a rabid anti-Jacksonian. This interpretive portrait stands at the heart of Angela Miller's (and other scholars') vision of *The Course of Empire* as Cole's partisan and pessimistic critique of Andrew Jackson's America.

In this seminal journal entry, Cole belabored the contrast between the peacefulness of nature with the current political uproar. In a hike to a "favorite vale" overlooking a local pond, Cole notes, with obvious wish-projection, the "small fishes, who, one would suppose, lead a quiet and contented life and for a spirit of seclusion and tranquility seem to dwell in this little valley. We gathered mosses [and] noticed the beautiful effects of sunlight and shadow in the now almost leafless woods...we conversed on times past when the woods were in their glory...While we were in the valley we heard the shouts of a company of Jacksonians who were rejoicing at the defeat of the Whigs of this county. Why were they rejoicing? Because of the triumph of good principles or the cause of virtue and morality? No! but because *their party* was victorious."<sup>88</sup> Characteristically, this oft-culled "political" incident is dominated, in its full context, mostly by Cole's abundant use of nature imagery. Miller interprets this entry as *prima facie* evidence of Cole's being "distinctly anti-Democratic and Whiggish" and portrays him as "commenting scathingly on Jacksonian political behavior." She also pointedly notes that the "behavior of the citizens in *Consummation* [the third canvas in *The Course of Empire*] recalls such popular demonstrations" as occurred that afternoon, as if Cole's grandiose DeMille-like painting could somehow have been inspired by this act of minor rowdiness.<sup>89</sup> Based on Alan Wallach's theory of Cole's

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87 However, Maria and Thomas were not yet dating. Cole wrote in his journal in November 21, 1835, almost a year later, that "I cannot but consider myself unfortunate in not having found a companion of congenial mind, whose spirit would mingle with mine in unreserved communion. I feel an enduring want, a lasting & unsatisfied desire to have intercourse with one to whom I could reveal thoughts not spoken to the world." Obviously, he had not yet identified Maria in 1834 as that person, nor had he done so a year later. See Thomas Cole's Journal "Thoughts and Occurrences" Cole Papers, NYSL.

88 Thomas Cole, Journal, November 6, 1834.

89 Miller, *Allegory*, 60-66.

Federalist aristocratic longing, Miller asserts a full identification of Cole's political beliefs with arch-Federalist Philip Hone—despite their Bread and Cheese social divide—such that Hone's most vitriolic quotes are assumed to be representative of Cole, even conflating the “incident in the woods” with Hone's broader political condemnations. Miller asserts that “For both Hone and Cole, such excesses [shouting in the woods] reflected Jackson's own contempt for republican principles.”<sup>90</sup>

Cole's obvious irritation at the disorderly noise—a pique nature lovers have undoubtedly experienced—no doubt reflected anger that his preserve was violated, and that his delightful meditative afternoon was disrupted. The Jacksonian partisanship obviously exacerbated his anger and simmered long enough for him to write about it—indeed, Cole had just become a citizen, and this may even have reflected disappointment after his first-ever voting defeat. Yet however “Whiggish” he does appear in this journal entry, he avoids admitting a partisan identity with a possessive “my party” in paired opposition to his use of “their party.” His observation is carefully worded with an objective distance indicative of a posture of disinterestedness. Yes, Cole *may* very well have identified “virtue and morality” with William “No Mortgage” Seward's promise of reforming Regency corruption or in his attacking Governor William Marcy's profligate use of the spoils system. Cole *might* have identified with Seward's progressive positions on abolition, Indian removal, ending debtor's prison, and subsidizing Catholic education.<sup>91</sup> Notoriously opposed to destructive forms of “utilitarianism” while advocating progressive beautification, Cole might also have found common cause with Seward's earlier opposition to the public subsidies for private corporations like the New York & Erie Railroad or the Chenango Canal, projects that smacked of Regency cronyism, a particular “vortex of politics and utilitarianism” that Cole most despised. Or perhaps Cole was disgusted by the antagonism and violence of the spring's New York City mayoral election—with violations on both sides—as he witnessed fellow Knickerbocker Gulian Verplanck narrowly defeated by Tammany after three days of violent unrest.<sup>92</sup> Even if we were to accept Cole's journal evidence here as hard confirmation of a fully partisan Whig identification, Cole's alignment with Seward places him as a progressive reformist Whig, hardly as a “conservative” or “aristocratic Federalist” like Philip Hone.<sup>93</sup> Perhaps the most persistent misunderstanding of Jacksonian historiography is in attempting to place the two emerging parties side by side, Whigs to

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90 Miller, *Allegory*, 66. This statement reflects a general confusion over republicanism versus authoritarianism.

91 DeAlva Stanwood Alexander, *A Political History of the State of New York, 1774–1832*, vol. 1 (New York: Henry Holt, 1906). 401-402. Alexander writes that “The mottoes of this campaign illustrate the principles involved in it. ‘Seward and Free Soil, or Marcy with his Mortgage’ was a favourite with the Whigs. ‘The Monster Bank Party’ became the popular cry of Democrats, to which the Whigs retorted with ‘The Party of Little Monsters,’ ‘Marcy's Pantaloon,’ ‘No Nullification,’ and ‘Union and Liberty’ also did service. Copper medals bearing the heads of candidates were freely distributed, and humorous campaign songs, set to popular music, began to be heard.”

92 For the campaign of 1834, see Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967). 19-32. Also, Walter Stahr, *Seward: Lincoln's Indispensable Man*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012). 32-58. Also, see Stephen J. Valone, “William Seward, Whig Politics and the Compromised Indian Removal Program in New York State, 1838–1843,” *New York History* 82 (Spring 2001).

93 Angela Miller in “Thomas Cole and Jacksonian America: *The Course of Empire* as Political Allegory” omits Cole's condemnation of Whig partisanship in 1838.

the right, Democrats to the left, on a political continuum that resembles our own. This conflation has permitted a great deal of imprecision, and revisionist scholars have not defined their historiographical approach to Whig ideologies, nor defined what conservatism means, either in a New York or a transatlantic context. Instead, the revisionists appear to have relied on the narrative of Jackson rendered by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., which largely ignored questions of the expansion of slavery and Indian removal—with Jackson’s white supremacist mobocracy being the elephant in the room. Whigs, meanwhile, are portrayed as the forerunners of modern conservatives, complete with a business and evangelical wing. Such inapt presentism renders all sorts of misidentifications when wading into the complexities of the era, as the personal beliefs of antebellum Americans and the peculiar coalitions of New York politics were far more fluid than left-right identifications can encapsulate.

Yet a second, rather overlooked incident casts doubt on Cole’s political partisanship. When Seward triumphed for the governorship in his second bid in 1838, Cole’s response takes an interesting turn that casts even further ambiguity upon the “conservative” labeling of his politics. Once again, a Seward-involved election provoked a response from Cole and, once again, he wrote about it the day after from Cedar Grove. Given Cole’s alleged deep anti-Jackson proclivities and hatred for “The Democracy,” he should have extolled the triumph of “virtue and morality” in an elated response to Seward’s Whig victory. Certainly Ira DuBois, editor of the Whig *Catskill Messenger*, waxed ecstatic and gloated over the dramatic victory: “The State is redeemed—and the Arch Demagogue Van Buren has received his desserts at the hands of his native state—his political destiny is sealed—his career ends with his present term. . . . What a withering rebuke to the political knaves who have been sporting with the privileges and prerogatives of free men.”<sup>94</sup> Cole, by contrast, was motivated to draft a fourteen-line “Sonnet” about the election.<sup>95</sup>

#### Sonnet<sup>96</sup>

O that in adamant were cased my breast!  
Or closed mine ear against the distracting noise  
Of the great strife political! That voice  
Which like a hurrying whirlwind comes unblessed  
And prostrates man’s affections, sympathies  
Domestic joys and duties—makes the Guest  
An Enemy and deadly hate has placed  
‘Twixt Brothers. Holy Peace and virtue fly  
Before the fierce and multitudinous cry

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94 Ira Dubois, *Catskill Messenger*, November 15, 1838. There is a widespread assertion that Whigs were opposed to partisanship. I suggest spending time with a Whig newspaper as an antidote to that notion.

95 Seward ended up owning a Cole painting, *Portage Falls*, which hung in the Seward home. He acquired it from Samuel Ruggles, the Genesee River Canal Commissioner. See Parry, *Art and Imagination*, 222-223. If there was a more explicit connection between Seward and Cole, it has not yet been discovered, but perhaps they were distant admirers.

96 Transcription from Marshall B. Tynn *Thomas Cole’s Poetry*, 99. Also available from Cole Papers, NYSL. Previous scholars have not tethered it to the Whig victory of William Seward.

For Liberty. Dishonored name! Shouts shrill,  
Of selfishness they are and lawless Will.  
My soul is sad; for Freedom sinks to die,  
Where Party hath usurped her sacred throne  
And Love's and Truth's bright Altars overthrown

[November 8, 1838.]

Once again, no jubilation despite Seward's Whig victory, as Cole instead laments the damage that partisanship is sowing. No longer disrupting nature's solitude as in 1834, the toxic discord had contaminated intimate levels, corroding the bonds of fraternity and domestic sanctity, until it threatens the very destruction of "Truth," "Love," and "Freedom" itself. When Cole writes that "deadly hate has placed 'Twixt Brothers," he likely references the steady unraveling of the Knickerbocker circle he first grew to love, his intellectual companions growing distant, even turning on each other in partisan publications. Bryant, of course, had been involved in an early blow to comity, with his notorious scuffle with opposing editor William Leete Stone in 1832 (Stone being Asher B. Durand's good friend). In 1836, Democrat Washington Irving's close ally, James Kirke Paulding (of *Knickerbocker* fame), wrote a shocking pro-slavery justification entitled *Slavery in the South* that combined a "positive good" perspective with a Unionist stance. His pro-Southern bona fides in tow, Paulding would become Van Buren's Secretary of the Navy. At the same moment, Cole patrons like Federalist Philip Hone and pro-Jackson Luman Reed served on the board of the New York City Anti-Abolitionist Society.<sup>97</sup> Other Knickerbocker writers like Lydia Maria Child and Catherine Maria Sedgwick had turned to abolitionism. By 1838, at the time of Cole's poem, the now-centrifugal Cooper was spinning out a spate of libel suits against Whig newspaper editors, a counterattack against his partisan literary critics. Cooper's legal victories proved self-defeating for his reputation, just as his later position on Anti-Rent would make him highly unsympathetic to both populists and progressives.<sup>98</sup> Overall, by 1836 the many Knickerbockers who had early supported Jackson were scattering politically. Gone were the happy days of Bread and Cheese, the bond of 1820s republicanism strained to the breaking point, everything churned with the ever-rising moral indigestion of abolition. The shattering of artists and literati over these issues plainly presaged and even exacerbated the wider national fissures to come. Cole lamented these events with personal sorrow, and consistently blamed "party" as the cause.

Such, then, are the two Cole "partisan" writings in journals and correspondence during the first Cedar Grove studio period. If Cole were rabidly anti-Jacksonian, such that it formed the underlying animus of his most ambitious series of paintings, he proved silent about those political feelings in dozens of letters and journal writings where he had every opportunity to expose his partisan feelings—one would expect something to slip. While Angela Miller

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97 Cited from article headlined "The Voice of New York: Meeting in the Park," 5 September 1835 *Niles Weekly*.

98 Constance Evans, "Fenimore Cooper's Libel Suits," *Syracuse University Library Associates Courier*, Vol. XXVII, no. 2 (Fall 1992), 47-74.

acknowledges that “Cole consistently renounced overt partisan involvement,” no effort is made to reconcile in some psychological way his alleged hypocrisy.<sup>99</sup> In considering the 1834 “partisans in the woods” incident in conjunction with the 1838 sonnet, this revisionist argument turns to *non-sequitur*. For Cole’s adamant condemnation of both Whig and Democratic partisanship would seem inexplicably hypocritical—absurd, really—if Cole were violently condemning partisanship with his pen, while busily engaged in making the most extravagantly partisan painting of the Jacksonian era with his brush. Why would Cole condemn partisanship consistently in his private journal and poetry—where hypocrisy or histrionics would serve no ostensible purpose—if, all the while, he was fully engaged in an elaborate and bitter partisan condemnation of Andrew Jackson and “The Democracy” through covert (or subconscious) co-option of cartoon imagery and other political “jeremiads”? Such revisionist narratives require us to overlook the explicit expressions of anti-partisanship in his journal in 1834 and in his poetry in 1838, while asking us to believe the idea that in 1836 he exhaustively painted a vast partisan allegory. Thus, Cole’s study during his three years abroad, his solicitation of patrons for a further year, and three more years of exhaustive painting, all were to be subordinated into creating the world’s most expensive political cartoon. This subversive act was paid for, in whole, by Jackson admirer Luman Reed. The paintings were also extolled in print by noted Democrats and Jackson advocates James Fenimore Cooper and William Cullen Bryant, who somehow, despite knowing Cole, missed his deeply partisan message. As tenuous as the argument seems on its face, it has received official endorsement by our highest cultural institutions.

### More Major Problems in Making *The Course of Empire* a Jacksonian Allegory

Even if Cole were somehow shown to have a secret loathing for Andrew Jackson equivalent to that of Philip Hone, could we therefore prove, beyond *post hoc* argumentation, that *The Course of Empire* reflects a pessimistic attack on Jacksonian Democracy? (Here we should note, in fairness, that Tim Barringer parts company with the American revisionists, seeing *The Course of Empire* as being a critique of British imperialism, a far better fit for the timeline of the paintings’ conception).

In the fall of 1832, when Cole returned from Europe, he carried more than indelible impressions of Europe’s galleries and inspired memories of Roman ruins. He also held, in his sketchbook, the outline of the conception that would largely define his artistic legacy, and certainly holds a key to our argument. These intentions were written in his own hand less than nine full months into the Jackson presidency, jotted down far away from the American din, just as Cole’s stay in imperial London approached its sixth

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<sup>99</sup> Miller, “Allegory,” 60.

month.<sup>100</sup> Scrawled over a full page and onto part of another, he proposed the outline of a new series of paintings—at first four canvasses, then he scribbled a fifth idea vertically along the left margin. By its position in the sketchbook, the inspiration arrived before the momentous occasion of meeting William Turner in the master’s studio (December 12, 1829)—and after viewing Claude’s influential *Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba* at the National Gallery.<sup>101</sup> Scribbling in an obviously inspired hand, Cole fixed upon his largest conception to date. He essayed the germ of the idea magisterially: “A series of paintings might be painted illustrative of the mutation of earthly things.”<sup>102</sup> He went on describe the main idea of each canvas, a broad scheme that he did not deviate from in the later execution, though the details were only broadly suggested in his notes. For the eventual middle piece of the sweeping five-part series, which ultimately became known as *Consummation*, Cole jotted that “the [painting] should be a noonday scene, a noble city with grand temples, glittering domes, etc. The port crowded with ships, splendid processions, Worshippers in a temple.” Cole then decided to place a second allegory aside the first—proposing the synchronized turning of two symbolic gears—so that the allegorical narrative and affective nature imagery would mesh, conveying simultaneously the “mutation of earthly things” with “The Epitome of Man.” To make sure his eventual audience would not be confused as to his universalist intentions, Cole jotted a key caveat next to an underlying asterisk: “As this subject is the picture of man & the world [and] not of any particular nation or country, the Architecture as well as costume ought not to be those of any particular nation.”<sup>103</sup>

This critical caveat of the original idea for the eventual *The Course of Empire* becomes the key primary evidence—for it not only unequivocally states the universalist intentions ultimately ratified by the pictorial results, but also assigns the date of its conception before December 12, 1829, only nine months into the Jackson presidency, the last six months of which Cole had spent abroad.<sup>104</sup> The challenge for the revisionist argument for Cole’s partisanship—in addition to dismissing the artist’s own fervent testimony—is to provide real evidence of the radical change over time they are asserting. In this case, how and where did Cole’s conception transmogrify from his universalist sentiments and long historical view into revisionist notions as reprised by art historian Sarah Burns, that the *The Course of Empire* should be seen as “a highly politicized, moralizing tract

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100 Here, I concur with Tim Barringer, that the Empire of the time was the British one. Note also that Andrew Jackson had, on December 8, 1829, given his first State of the Union message, so Cole had not yet read that when *Course* was conceived.

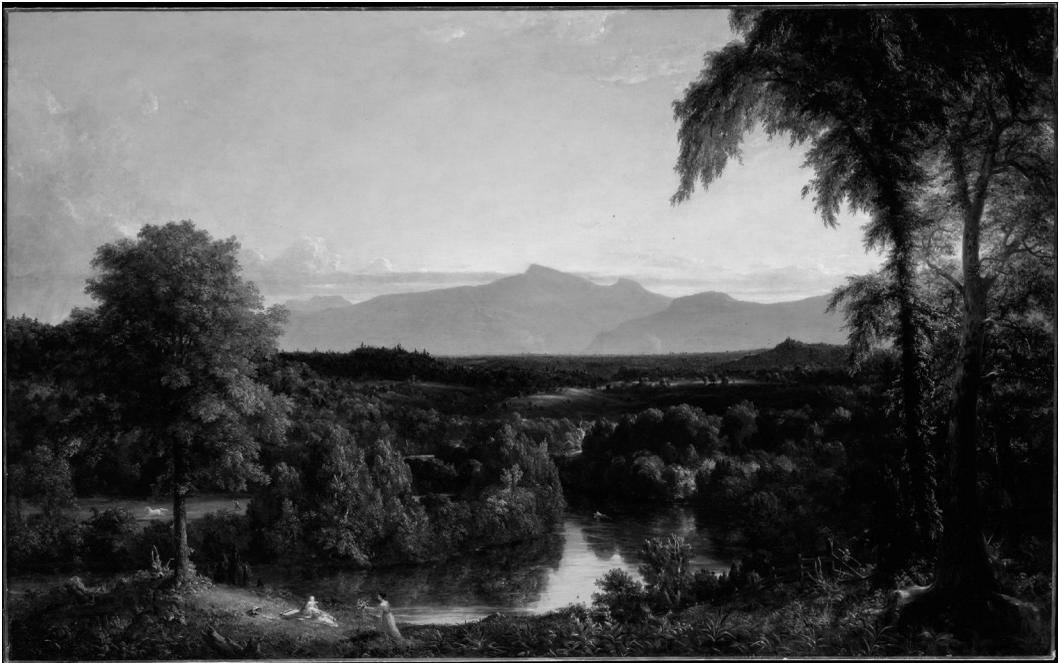
101 Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape Painting, 1825–1875 with New Preface* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). 198.

102 For a chronology of Cole’s conception of *The Course of Empire* and his subsequent meeting with Turner of December 12, 1829, see Parry, Ellwood. “Thomas Cole’s ‘The Course of Empire’: A Study in Serial Imagery.” PhD diss., Yale University, 1970. 39-40. Throughout, Parry painstakingly parses the potential influences that inspired Cole’s masterwork.

103 Thomas Cole, Sketchbook Dated “1828,” Cole Papers, NYSL.

104 Angela Miller acknowledges Cole came up with the theme in “1828 to 1829,” but that the “idea matured during Cole’s three year stay abroad.” She does not explain how Cole maintained his Jackson obsession while in Florence and Rome. One would think Cole would be too much in his moment, sketching Italian landscapes and Roman ruins, to follow partisan bickering in the United States. Obviously, his journals and letters are full of travel reflections, but rarely once does he mention American politics, much less ask anyone for the news. See, Miller, *Allegory*, 60.

against the catastrophic consequences of Jacksonian Democracy”?<sup>105</sup> Pinning this event within the timeframe of Cedar Grove, 1833 to 1836, Angela Miller theorizes that “the impact of Jackson’s second term on Cole was to transform a generalized Romantic *topos* of earthly mutability into a political and national allegory with a pointed import for his own time.”<sup>106</sup> Such an assertion deserves a smoking gun, yet no specific evidence suggests that Jackson’s authoritarian second term agitated Cole to overturn or risk the core principles of his most ambitious project, conceived in London seven years earlier. Rather, contemporary epistolary evidence reaffirms Cole’s high historical and philosophical aims. While accurately prophesizing to patron Luman Reed in March 1836 that “very few will understand the whole scheme of [*Course*], the philosophy there may be in them,” Cole repeats the scope of universalist ambition that “I have worked at the pictures with a strong desire to make them worthy of note hereafter.”<sup>107</sup> By what plausible subversive motive would Cole risk the “hereafter” of his labor-intensive masterwork to criticize a presidency that expired concurrently with the completion of the paintings, all the while underwritten by a patron who admired that very president?



*View on the Catskill—Early Autumn*, Thomas Cole, 1836–37. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift in Memory of Jonathan Sturges by his children, 1895: 95.13.3

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105 Burns, Sarah. *Painting the Dark Side*. Univ. of California Press, 2006. 24.

106 Miller, 60.

107 Thomas Cole to Luman Reed, March 9, 1836, Cole Papers, NYSL. Also transcribed in Parry, *Serial Imagery*, 173. Cole’s comment certainly does not completely preclude Cole’s inserting some little message or gesture as a joke, but Cole’s immense seriousness about this project makes this seem unlikely to the extreme, and even if he did so, would not be the driving force of the series.

## Conclusion: Reasserting the Meaning of Cole's Hudson Valley Life

Undoubtedly, Thomas Cole will benefit from a fuller transatlantic contextualization, but one in which his determination upon an American identity makes satisfying psychological sense. In America, Cole could pursue a republican conception of gentleman open to him and not precluded by his middling birth and artistic vocation—as opposed to the fate he avoided, symbolized in the condescending treatment he received when he returned to London, or at the hands of George Featherstonaugh. Reframing Cole's politics and attitudes—away from belonging to a dying Federalist conservatism—to his evident progressive impulses returns Cole to his times and restores him to his circle of friends. It also opens viewers to better consider the environmental concerns manifest in his works, and to understand his deep and related beliefs for the democratization of art. The creative apogee of Cole's first Cedar Grove studio—producing a series of acknowledged masterworks—occurred under the great patronage of the merchant Luman Reed, an unpretentious Jackson admirer from Cossackie. Freed from the controlling impulses of his early Federalist patrons, Cole attained his highest degree of artistic notoriety in executing Reed's commissions, and this is hardly a coincidence. The important question about Cole's identity has never resided in parsing the degree that his English childhood shaped him—for it did—but rather to pursue the reasons why his artistic career happened here and not there. Furthermore, the various portrayals of Cole as a Federalist aristocrat, as deterministically English, or as a pathetic figure engaged in the ironic pursuit of a gentility that his birth did not permit is to diminish the agency implicit in his most critical life choice—that of marrying Maria and settling in Catskill.

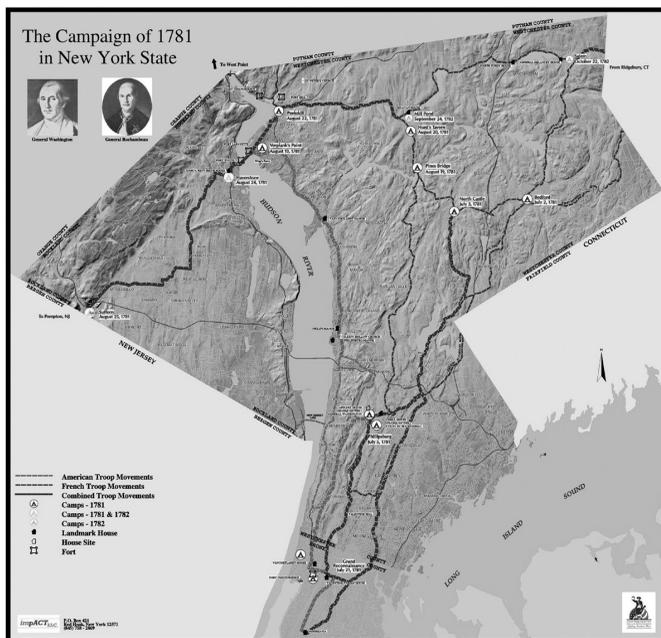
A child of Lancashire, Cole's artistic journey could not have been performed by remaining in the old world, just as his art would have been inconceivable without its traditions. The widespread synergies that came together in Cole's Cedar Grove studio ultimately facilitated a series of masterworks that justify the esteem this region has accorded him. These works should now stand as the basis for a new transatlantic appreciation that respects Thomas Cole's profound relationship to the Hudson Valley and its people—and honors his choice to be an American artist.

*Matthew DeLaMater was the History Research Fellow at the New York State Museum from 2014-17, and is presently a doctoral candidate at SUNY Albany. The author wishes to thank Dr. Richard Hamm with the University at Albany; Chief Historian Jennifer Lemak at the NYSM; Jonathan Palmer, Archivist of the Greene County Historical Society; the staff of the New York State Archives; and, lastly, Doug McCombs and Tammi Groft at the Albany Institute of History and Art.*

# The Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail

James M. Johnson

This article was adapted from a speech by Hudson River Valley Institute Executive Director Dr. James M. Johnson at the dedication of two wayside exhibits for the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail at FDR State Park on August 22, 2016. Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Acting Executive Director Mark Castiglione hosted U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, U.S. Rep. Nita Lowey, and New York State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Commissioner Rose Harvey for two events in the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area that kicked off a weeklong celebration of the centennial of the National Park Service. Following the dedication, a roundtable discussion on the importance of historic preservation in the valley was held at the Bear Mountain Inn in Bear Mountain State Park.



On 11 July 1780, a French Expeditionary Corps—the *expédition particulière*—of some 5,500 soldiers landed in Newport, Rhode Island, and helped General George Washington and the



General Jean Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau

Continental Army change the course of history. While previous efforts to celebrate this joint Franco-American achievement produced mixed results, on 16 December 1999 in a meeting at Washington's Headquarters in Newburgh, New York, the states of New York and Connecticut took the lead to designate the route traveled by these two armies a National Historic Trail. The meeting resulted in a collaborative project taken up by a new national organization, the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route Association, Inc. (W3R®-US), the National Park Service (NPS), and the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area (HRVNHA). This route commemorates the French-American campaign of 1781, which first laid siege to General Sir Henry Clinton's army in New York City, later surrounded the main southern British army under General Charles Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown, Virginia,

and then made a return march northward in 1782. The trail has national and international significance, linking nine states and the District of Columbia from Massachusetts to Virginia to commemorate the considerable contribution that General Jean Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau, and his French Expeditionary Corps and General George Washington and the Continental Army made for American liberty and independence.

The Franco-American journey was an amazing feat of endurance and military achievement under the threat of attack by British armies and navies at points along the route. Leaving behind soldiers who were sick, on detached duty, or had died, the French *expédition particulière* of some 4,200 soldiers marched from June until September 1781 from Rhode Island to Maryland and then sailed to their destiny at Yorktown. The Continental Army, some 2,700-strong, also made the march and then voyage from Philipsburg, New York, to Virginia's York River.<sup>1</sup> General Washington moved the Continental Army by brigade first to Peekskill and then to Philipsburg (present-day Greenburgh) by 4 July 1781. General Rochambeau moved his regiments in two brigades screened by Lauzun's Legion, the First Brigade comprising the Regiments Bourbonnais and Royal Deux-Ponts and the Second Brigade comprising the Regiments Soissonnais and Saintonge. They camped successively at North Castle and Bedford before arriving at Philipsburg, where they supported Washington and Rochambeau's Grand Reconnaissance of British fortifications around New York City. It was here on 14 August that the two generals learned that the fleet of French Admiral François Joseph Paul, Comte de Grasse, was sailing to the Chesapeake

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1 Dr. Robert A. Selig, "The Departure of Allied Forces, 18-25 August 1781," *The Franco-American Encampment in the Town of Greenburgh, 6 July – 18 August 1781: A Historical Overview and Resource Inventory*, Department of Community Development and Conservation, Town of Greenburgh, 2017, 2, 39.

Bay, where he would defeat the British fleet commanded by Admiral Thomas Graves in the Battle of the Capes.<sup>2</sup>

In 1782 the French Army retraced its steps northward, to Boston, Massachusetts, where it boarded ships for the Caribbean, while the Continental Army returned for its final encampment at Newburgh and New Windsor. The French Expeditionary Corps used thirty-nine camps in its 1781 march to Virginia and fifty-five on its return journey the following year. Heading south, it made seven camps in New York—at Bedford, North Castle, Philipsburg, Hunt’s Tavern, Verplanck, Haverstraw, and Suffern. In 1782, it camped in five places in the state—Suffern, Haverstraw, Peekskill, Hunt’s Tavern, and Salem.<sup>3</sup>

Attempts to memorialize the contributions of France to the victory in America’s War for Independence produced greater results than efforts to highlight the route of the march to Yorktown itself. Congress authorized a marble column immediately after the successful siege of Yorktown, but the War Department did not complete work on the Yorktown Victory Monument until 1885.<sup>4</sup> President Theodore Roosevelt dedicated a statue of General Rochambeau in Lafayette Park in Washington, D.C., on 24 May 1902.<sup>5</sup> In 1953 Virginia Governor John S. Battle tried unsuccessfully “to arrange with other States for the uniform marking of the route taken in 1781,” appointing Charles Parmer as General Chairman of the Interstate Rochambeau Commission of the United States. Responding to this initiative and a law passed by its General Assembly in January 1957, Connecticut actually erected twenty-seven signs “at or near known camp sites” in the state. Congress came close in 1976 as a part of the celebration of the nation’s Bicentennial when it passed Joint House-Senate Resolution 225, “The Washington-Rochambeau National Historic Route,” but it failed to appropriate funding to make the trail a reality. In 1980 Virginia marked its “Washington-Rochambeau Highway” and, starting in 1998 under the leadership of State Historic Preservation Officer Jack Shannahan and Colonel (Ret.) Serge Gabriel, Connecticut erected twenty-six new markers along its part of the route.<sup>6</sup> Reverend Dr. Jacques Bossière had been instrumental in bringing attention to the French contributions in the American Revolution in Southbury, Connecticut, with the dedication of the Rochambeau Bridge on Interstate 84 and as a commissioner on the Governor’s Advisory Commission on American and Francophone Cultural Affairs. He would continue his interest when he moved to Bronxville, New York.

As Military Historian of the HRVNHA, I responded to Dr. Bossière’s call to plan a meeting at Newburgh in December 1999 to see what could be done to educate Americans about the French participation in the American Revolution. It attracted forty-three

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2 [http://www.hudsonrivervalley.org/library/pdfs/articles\\_books\\_essays/BattleOffVACapes.pdf](http://www.hudsonrivervalley.org/library/pdfs/articles_books_essays/BattleOffVACapes.pdf).

3 Public Archaeological Survey Team, Inc., *Archaeological Investigations of the Revolutionary War Encampments of the French Army in the State of New York*, April 2004, 14-15.

4 <http://sah-archipedia.org/detail%2Fcontent%2Fentries%2FVA-01-HR45.9.xml?q=agent%3A%22Richard%20Morris%20Hunt%22>

5 <https://www.nps.gov/whho/learn/historyculture/rochambeau.htm>

6 Dr. Robert A. Selig, “Travelling on the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route,” *Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine* 135 no. 5, May 2001: 430.

delegates from Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey, along with representatives from the major organizations dedicated to preserving the memory of the American Revolution—the NPS, Sons of the American Revolution, Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Society of the Cincinnati. The participants agreed to a name, the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route, an informal organization, and a mission—to seek Congressional designation of a National Historic Trail. Bolton, Connecticut, Town Historian Hans DePold provided the template, based on his long campaign to get the “Revolutionary Road” listed in the National Register of Historic Places, chronicled in “The Connecticut Revolutionary Road Newsletter.”<sup>7</sup> U.S. Rep. John Larson of Connecticut’s First Congressional District introduced legislation (H.R.4794) and announced it at the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum in Wethersfield, Connecticut, on 3 July 2000 with Dr. Bossière and me in attendance.<sup>8</sup> With the help of U.S.



Left to Right: Author COL (Ret.) James M. Johnson with U.S. Rep. John B. Larson and Rev. Dr. Jacques Bossière at the press conference on July 3, 2000, at the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum in Wethersfield, Connecticut, announcing the bill to study the creation of the W3RNHT

Rep. Maurice Hinchey of New York and Connecticut Sen. Joseph Lieberman, Congress passed, and on 9 November, President Bill Clinton signed Public Law No: 106-473: The W3R National Heritage Act of 2000. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton designated the W3R a Millennium Trail in November 2000 as well. As a result of the legislation, the NPS initiated a study so the Secretary of the Interior could make a recommendation to Congress. Dr. Bossière and I led the effort to form the National Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route Association to spearhead the effort; he served as its first Chair and I as Executive Director.<sup>9</sup> I testified before the House of Representatives’ Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands in 2007. Governor George E. Pataki designated the Washington-Rochambeau Trail through Westchester and Rockland counties part of his New York State Revolutionary War Heritage Trail, and Heritage New York included

7 “The Connecticut Revolutionary Road Newsletter,” <http://connecticutsar.org/page/3/?s=Revolutionary+Road>

8 Press release, U. S. Congressman John B. Larson, “Larson Unveils Legislation to Preserve Connecticut’s Role in the Revolutionary War,” 3 July 2000.

9 Dr. Bossière was succeeded as Chair by Ms. Kim Burdick, Dr. Ralph Nelson, Mrs. Charles G.L. de Barcza, Ms. Ursula Reed, and Ms. Janet Burnet. On 23 April 2017 members of W3R-US elected Ellen von Karajan the Executive Director on the last day of the annual meeting. One of the founders, Christian Bickert, president of the American Society of Le Souvenir Français, recommended that the organization’s title be shortened to W3R.



**Author testifies in support of the W3RNHT on October 30, 2007, before the U.S. House Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands**

it in its map/brochure. It is also marked in the HRVNHA's American Revolutionary map/brochure, "The American Revolution in the Hudson River Valley." The Florence Gould Foundation contributed funding for a historical study of the W3R in New York (completed by Dr. Robert A. Selig in 2001), an archaeological survey by the Public Archaeology Survey Team (completed in 2005), and the preservation of the Odell House in Hartsdale, the headquarters of General Rochambeau. (Seven other states and the District of Columbia have followed suit with historical studies by Dr. Selig.) The U.S. and New York State Departments of Transportation allocated almost \$300,000

to the HRVNHA to mark and interpret W3R though Westchester, Rockland, Orange, and Dutchess counties.

W3R focused attention on the march to and from Yorktown in 1781-82 during the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American Revolution. President George W. Bush signed the 225<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Revolution Commemoration Act into law as PL 108-447 on 8 December 2004. The bill had passed the House of Representatives on 20 November 2004 as part of the omnibus appropriations bill. Twenty-three co-sponsors, including Hudson River Valley Representatives Hinchey, Lowey, Michael McNulty, Sue Kelly, and John Sweeney led the fight. Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton and John W. Warner of Virginia secured passage of identical legislation in the Senate.



**U.S. Rep Maurice D. Hinchey of New York with author after his testimony in support of the W3RNHT on October 30, 2007, before the U.S. House Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands**

The Hudson River Valley Institute (HRVI) had been working since 2002 to pass legislation to establish a program in the NPS to promote the celebration of the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American Revolution, as New York and its Hudson River Valley were instrumental in the winning of the American Revolution. HRVI and the HRVNHA led the campaign from 2000 to 2009 to remember and celebrate our Revolutionary heritage with Patriots'

Weekends. The American Revolution has been a critical theme of the HRVNHA as well. When I testified before the U.S. House of Representatives' Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands on 14 September 2004, I argued that "the 225<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Revolution Commemoration Act provides the means to fulfill our responsibilities as citizens to preserve the past so that we may better understand the challenges of the present and future."<sup>10</sup>

A July 2005 encampment at Fort Adams in Newport, Rhode Island, kicked off the commemoration of the French involvement in the War for American Independence. States then had appropriate celebrations and re-enactments in 2006 to spotlight the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the march of the French army to New York and the Continental and French armies to Yorktown. The HRVNHA, HRVI, and the Brigade of the American Revolution (BAR) recreated the Grand Reconnaissance of the British fortifications of New York City by Generals Washington and Rochambeau at Westchester County's Ward Pound Ridge Reservation in July 2006 and, during Patriots' Weekend the following month, the armies' crossing of the Hudson River. Three re-enactors marched the full 650 miles from Rhode Island to Virginia from June to October 2006. The HRVNHA, HRVI, and the BAR again sponsored the return march of Rochambeau's army to New York for Patriots' Weekend 2007, with a re-enactment in September 2007 of its crossing of the Hudson River in 1782.

Led by the New York and Connecticut delegations, Congress continued to consider legislation for a National Historic Trail. Then-W3R Chair Kim Burdick testified before the Senate Subcommittee on National Parks of the U.S. Senate Committee for Energy and Resources on 22 April 2007 in support of the Senate bill (S.686). On 30 October 2007, I testified before the Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands of the U.S. House of Representatives to push its bill (H.R.1286). In my statement I said that a "National Historic Trail will allow the National Park Service with its partners to find, to interpret, and to preserve the individual sites along the route and to link them together as a string of pearls." Under the leadership of Rep. Hinchey and Sen. Lieberman, the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail (W3R) Designation Act passed Congress as a part of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009. President Barack Obama signed the act into law on 30 March 2009.<sup>11</sup>

With the law's passage, W3R became institutionalized. Kim Burdick incorporated the national organization as W3R<sup>®</sup>-US, a 501(c) (3). She was succeeded in turn by Ralph Nelson, Sallie T. deBarcza, Ursula Reed, and Janet Burnet. NPS Superintendent Joseph DiBello assumed the role of the first superintendent of the National Historic Trail on 1 October 2009; upon his retirement in January 2017, Paul Kenney succeeded him as trail manager (acting). Helen Mahan is now director of the Washington-Rochambeau National

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<sup>10</sup> [http://w3r-us.org/w3r-us/aa\\_org\\_setframes.htm](http://w3r-us.org/w3r-us/aa_org_setframes.htm)

<sup>11</sup> <http://maplight.org/us-congress/bill/110-hr-1286/376662/contributions-by-vote>; <http://maplight.org/us-congress/bill/110-s-686/239305/timeline-of-contributions>; <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-111publ11/pdf/PLAW-111publ11.pdf>.



Artist David Wagner's depiction of the crossing of the Hudson River in 1782



The French Dillon's Irish Regiment crosses the Hudson River to Stony Point during Patriots' Weekend 2006, Aug. 26, 2006



French and American re-enactors in boats led by the sloop *Clearwater* recreate the 1781 crossing of the Hudson River by Washington and Rochambeau's forces Aug. 26, 2006

Historic Trail (WARO). NPS's Harpers Ferry Center supervised the design and fabrication of outdoor wayside exhibits for fifteen sites in New York selected as destinations for the trail. (Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Virginia also have erected historical markers.) Wayside exhibits were installed without ceremony for King's Ferry at Stony Point Battlefield State Historic Site, White Plains at Tibbets Park, the Odell House in Hartsdale, Smith's Tavern in North Castle, and Bedford. The Friends of the Fishkill Supply Depot and Fishkill Historical Society dedicated panels at the Van Wyck House, and the North Salem Historic Preservation Commission did likewise at the North Salem Town Hall Campus in September 2015. The Town of Cortlandt dedicated signs at King's Ferry, Verplanck, and Old St. Peter's Church in Van Cortlandtville in November 2015. Our ceremony at FDR State Park remembers the French camp at Hunt's Tavern/Crompond. Washington's Headquarters in Newburgh followed suit on 14 September 2016, and Peekskill's Mayor Frank Catalina hosted the installation of his city's signs on 17 June 2017.

The W3R received a boost from June through July 2015 with the voyage of the replica French frigate *L'Hermione* from Rochefort, France, some 3,800 miles across the Atlantic Ocean, and then up the East Coast of the United States from Yorktown, Virginia, to Castine,

Maine. Just as with the original *Hermione*'s arrival in Boston in April 1780—with Continental Major General Lafayette aboard—this beautiful ship galvanized our attention and focused our minds on the vital role that the French played in winning the War for Independence. After much lobbying over the fall of 1779 and spring of 1780, Lafayette had persuaded King Louis XVI and his ministers to supply an army, ships, uniforms, 15,000 muskets, and loans to aid the Continental Congress. He even put up 120,000 livres—about \$1.2 million today—of his own funds. Lafayette's orders were to “hasten to join General Washington, to whom he will announce under the bond of secrecy that the king, who desires to give the United States a new proof of his affection and of his interest in their welfare, has decided to send. . . six ships of the line and six thousand infantrymen.” On 10 June 2015, after *L'Hermione* docked in Alexandria, Virginia, a ceremony took place in Washington's Lafayette Square. Standing between the striking statues of Lafayette and Rochambeau, and in the presence of soldiers in the U. S. Army's Old Guard wearing period uniforms, we saluted the ship and these giants of history who made the United States of America possible. In my speech that day, I recalled that Lafayette wrote to Washington on 30 March 1782: “Both Nations will for ever Be attached to each other. . .in an eternal Amity and Alliance.” For that we owe a debt of gratitude to Generals Rochambeau and Lafayette.

General George Washington remembered with wonder what the Continental Army had accomplished in eight long years of war as he issued his farewell orders to the Continental Army on 2 November 1783 in Newburgh. He and the Continental Army could not have pulled off what he called a “standing miracle” without General Rochambeau and his French Expeditionary Corps and Admiral de Grasse and his fleet. French and American soldiers marched and died along the route from Rhode Island to Virginia and back. In Newburgh in December 1999, dedicated citizens of New York's Hudson River Valley led the journey to the “standing miracle” that is now the Washington-Rochambeau National Historic Trail. Hip, hip, huzzah!



Left to Right: COL (Ret.) Serge Gabriel, Rev. Dr. Jacques Bossiere, Dr. James M. Johnson, and RADM Robert Lunney at the author's induction as a French Chevalier in the Order of Academic Palms, Nov. 19, 2008

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# The Maid of the Highlands: Joan of Arc Reflected in West Point Iconography

*Dr. John Pendergast*



Detail, *Panorama of Military History Cadet Mess*.  
All photos by the author unless otherwise noted

Over 600 years ago, in 1412, Joan of Arc was born. Nineteen years later, she was put to death at the age at which most cadets at the United States Military Academy (USMA) begin to study a foreign language in the Department of Foreign Languages. This is far from the only connection Joan of Arc has with West Point. In fact, cadets, staff, and faculty are surrounded daily by imagery which, in one way or another, is associated with her, sometimes quite obviously—as in the Panorama of Military History in the Cadet mess, and the Saint Joan window in the Catholic Chapel—and sometimes not so obviously. The image of greatest significance linking Joan and West Point is the USMA crest, whose most prominent detail is the helmet of Athena (page 45). A closer look at the connections between West Point and the Maid of Orleans permits us to learn some perhaps surprising details about the literary career of Joan and to consider in a new light the mission

of the USMA, to which one old cadet song raises a toast with the words: “To our kind old Alma Mater, our rockbound Highland home.” The three connections between Joan of Arc and West Point to be considered here concern: 1) her skills as a military leader; 2) the West Point crest, especially the helmet of Athena; and 3) the Black Knights mascot. If one grants credence to these connections, one may be emboldened to name Joan “the Maid of the Highlands.”

Why is Joan called the Maid of Orleans? The answer to this question may be found by considering page 45. We call this young woman Saint Joan today, which may produce

the image of a pious recluse in a meadow, tending sheep and praying. In Joan's case, this is rather far from the truth. Once she had convinced her feudal lord, Robert de Baudricourt, to allow her to serve future king of France Charles VII, she began a year of military deployment, which saw her in charge of thousands of soldiers and crossing hundreds of miles on horseback, often through enemy territory. She fought in at least half a dozen battles, but she is best known for the first, at the walled city of Orleans.<sup>1</sup> By the time Joan arrived there with Count Dunois in April 1429, the city had been under siege by the English for six months. Edward Creasy writes: "Seldom has the extinction of a nation's independence appeared more inevitable than was the case in France when the English invaders completed their lines around Orleans."<sup>2</sup> In a series of military victories and diplomatic intrigues, the English had, toward the end of the Hundred Years War, taken control of nearly all of the northern half of what we today call France. Had they succeeded in taking Orleans, no barrier would have remained to impede them from taking the rest of the country. Joan of Arc directed the innovative placement of artillery and the daring movement of troops to conduct a direct assault on the walls and towers of the citadel.<sup>3</sup> In the course of a single day, the English were defeated and driven out of the city. Eventually, they would leave the country, and the course of history would be changed. How Joan came to know military tactics is still a matter of speculation. She attributed her knowledge to counsel she gained from the voices of three saints, Michael, Margaret, and Catherine. Those not inclined to accept this possibility surmise that she simply had an abundance of common sense and a knack for military maneuvers.<sup>4</sup> She herself summarized her abilities quite plainly in her advice to other officers: "I used to say to them, 'Go boldly among the English,' and then I used to go boldly among them myself."<sup>5</sup> Army officers will recognize this approach as a fundamental aspect of leadership: ask of your soldiers only that which you are willing to do yourself. It seems safe to say that Joan epitomizes the mission statement of the USMA: "To educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character committed to the values of Duty, Honor, Country and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the Nation."<sup>6</sup>

The image of Joan in the Cadet Mess itself has a rather interesting history, tied closely to the mission of educating, training, and inspiring cadets. Thomas Lofton Johnson

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1 Pernoud, Regine. *Joan of Arc: Her Story*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999, 268-269.

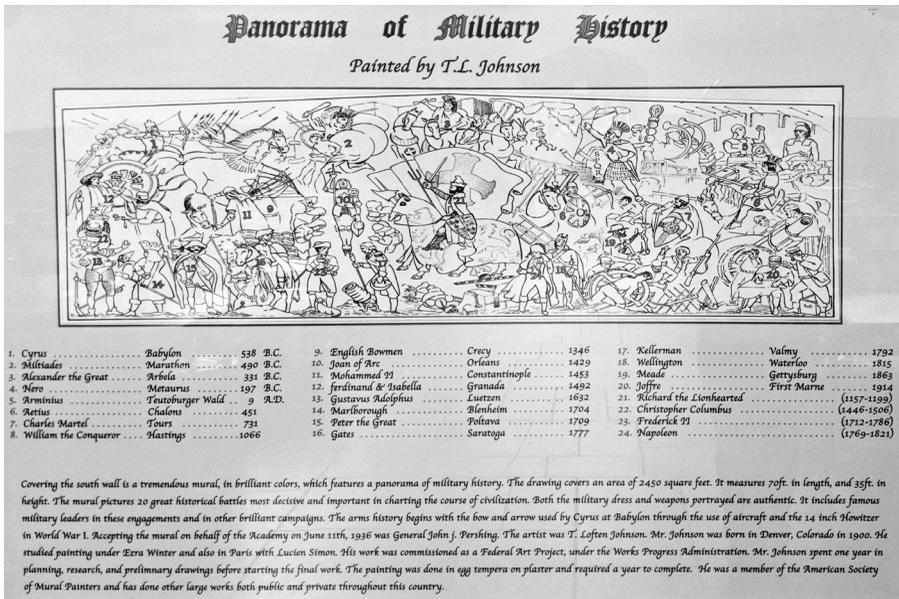
2 Creasy, Edward. *The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*. New York: Thomas Crowell and Company, 1902 [Orig. published 1851], 243.

3 Ibid. 246.

4 Given the remarkable exploits attributed to this extraordinary young woman, some readers might reasonably expect this article to address Joan's place in feminist history, but as the intent here is to focus on West Point iconography, that is not the case. To explore that topic further, the reader is referred to the following works: Victoria Sackville-West, *Saint Joan of Arc*, Doubleday, 1936; Bonnie Wheeler, and C.T. Wood (eds.) *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc*, Psychology Press, 1996; Regine Pernoud and Marie-Veronique Clin, *Joan of Arc: Her Story*, Trans. Jeremy DuQuesnay Adams, St. Martin's Press, 1999; Kathryn Harrison, *Joan of Arc: A Life Transfigured*, Doubleday, 2014; Helen Castor, *Joan of Arc: A History*, HarperCollins, 2015.

5 Ibid. 254.

6 *United States Military Academy homepage* <<https://www.usma.edu/about/SitePages/Mission.aspx>> accessed 5 November 2017.



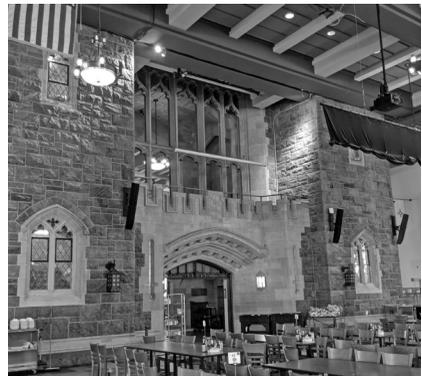
Panorama mural diagram

Painted the mural in 1936 as part of a Depression-era Works Progress Administration project.<sup>7</sup> Called the Panorama of Military History, it depicts twenty-four military leaders (twenty-five, if one counts Isabella and Ferdinand separately) and their most famous battles. Many are drawn from Edward Creasy's *The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*, first published in 1851. How Johnson came to choose the nine individuals not found in Creasy's book is unclear, but he shows unusual breadth of cultural understanding by adding both Richard the Lionheart and Mohammed II (Ottoman Sultan and conqueror of Constantinople in 1453).

It would be fair to ask how great a role this image plays in the hearts and minds of cadets: today, perhaps less great than when the image first appeared. The room in



Cadet Mess with Panorama



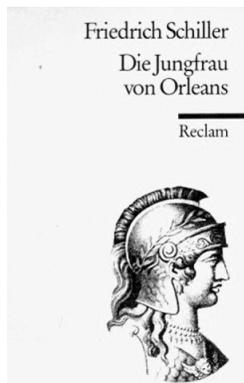
Cadet Mess, "poop deck"

7 Miller, Rod. *West Point U.S. Military Academy: An Architectural Tour*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002, 71.



Washington Hall, “fish bowl”

1936 to 1949, at least half of the Corps of Cadets saw the mural every time they ate. Creasy’s book has been available in the library since at least 1902. When Army Lieutenant Colonel Joseph B. Mitchell published an update with five modern battles in 1964, he reproduced Creasy’s first fifteen chapters verbatim, including the account of Joan lifting the siege of Orleans. There are nine copies of Creasy’s book on the shelves in the library and four of Mitchell’s. They have a borrowing history that most authors would envy.



Cover detail of Schiller’s  
*Maid of Orleans*

The second connection to be examined here is: How is the West Point crest related to Joan of Arc? This requires a bit more background, most of it tied to the helmet of Athena at the center of the image. Friedrich Schiller, the German Romantic Idealist poet and playwright, wrote a play in 1801 called *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*, usually rendered in English as *The Maid of Orleans*. The edition published by Reclam reproduces the cover that Schiller himself requested when he originally published the play.<sup>9</sup>

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, people tended to refer to this figure as Minerva, the Roman name for the Greek goddess Athena. In both cases, she is the goddess of wisdom, which explains her selection as an image by artists and designers at West Point.

She can be seen in a frieze at the top of the old library, as well as in the rafters of the Officers’ Club.

The building housing the club was originally constructed in 1890, thus it is possible that the architects’ neoclassically inspired decisions influenced the committee that designed the crest, which the West Point website says was first used



West Point Crest

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 68-71.

<sup>9</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1997. [Orig. pub. 1801]

in 1898.<sup>10</sup> When the library was built in the 1960s, the architects incorporated symbolism already of long standing. West Point’s reasons for appropriating the image of Athena as a symbol seem fairly obvious. The bust on the cover of Schiller’s work, on the other hand, may not be.



Exterior Detail: Cadet Library,  
now Bartlett Hall



Interior Detail: West Point Club

Schiller was inspired to select Joan of Arc as a subject for a play partly out of a sense of indignation. At the end of the eighteenth century, the two best-known literary works dealing with Joan’s life were Shakespeare’s *Henry the Sixth, Part One* and Voltaire’s *La Pucelle d’Orleans*. Shakespeare’s depiction of Joan borrows from Holinshed’s chronicles, and his characters describe her variously as a sorceress, a hag, a witch, an enchantress, and a “foul, accursed minister of hell.”<sup>11</sup> In Voltaire, she is depicted as an ignorant illegitimate stable girl who rides around on a flying donkey and is constantly in danger of being sexually assaulted. Shakespeare was writing a history play doused with anti-Gallic patriotism, while Voltaire was intent on poking fun at the aristocracy and clergy. Joan merely got in the way of these two great minds on their way to saying something that had very little to do with her. Schiller wanted very much to rescue Joan from this ignominy. Although the transcripts of her heresy trial would not be published for another three decades, he had access to considerable historical material about the Hundred Years War. Nonetheless, he made the decision to depart rather broadly from history early on in his writing process. In Schiller, there is no Inquisition, no trial, and no stake at which Joan is to be burned. Instead, Johanna—as he calls her—dies in battle in a kind of apotheosis while experiencing an ecstatic vision of the Blessed Virgin. In the course of the play, Schiller turns her historical

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<sup>10</sup> Miller, 58.

<sup>11</sup> Shakespeare, William. *Henry VI, Part One. The Works of Shakespeare in Ten Volumes*. Vol.V. Ed. C.H. Herford. New York: MacMillan, 1902. (Act V.Sc iv.92-93)

capture by the Burgundian officer Lionel Wandomme into a romantic infatuation. Lionel seizes her attention and causes her to experience a fleeting romantic attachment, which catches her by surprise because she had mistakenly assumed that her vow of chastity would save her from temptation. Following Charles VII's anointing as king in Rheims Cathedral, she is denounced as a sorceress by her own father. She accepts this denunciation because she feels that her infatuation with Lionel has made her unworthy. Schiller makes all of these striking departures from history quite intentionally. He had decided that Joan's story needed to be made more legendary, to be mythologized, in order for it to capture the public's imagination. The myth that he decided to use was that of Iphigenia.

Today, Iphigenia may seem to be an obscure minor character in Greek mythology, but in Schiller's day, admiration for her was commonplace. She is known from two plays by Euripides: *Iphigenia among the Taurians* and *Iphigenia in Aulis*. Gluck wrote two operas based on Euripides' plays, one of which Schiller produced in Weimar the year that he wrote *The Maid of Orleans*. Schiller also admired Goethe's play, *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, also based on Euripides. Because the action in *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, which Euripides wrote first, takes place after the events in *Iphigenia in Aulis*, the chronology of the plots can seem a bit convoluted. Starting with the earliest action—i.e., with *Iphigenia in Aulis*—the main episodes follow this sequence: Agamemnon and the Greeks want to sail to Troy to wage war and avenge the abduction of Helen, who in addition to being the most beautiful woman in the world is the wife of Agamemnon's brother. The gods, however, have stilled the winds, making it impossible to sail. A priest tells Agamemnon that the goddess Artemis demands that he sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia in order to restore the winds. Agamemnon lures Iphigenia to Aulis under the ruse of a betrothal to Achilles. The ruse is discovered, Achilles tries to save Iphigenia, but in the last moments of the play, Iphigenia decides that she is willing to be sacrificed for the greater glory of Greece. She experiences an ecstatic vision of Artemis, who rewards Iphigenia's bravery and piety by transporting her to Tauris and causing a deer to appear in her place on the sacrificial altar. In Tauris, years after the Trojan War, she experiences a reunion with her brother, but to her great distress, her priestly duty in that realm is to sacrifice all foreigners to Artemis. When she and her brother try to escape, they are caught by the king, who intends to have them killed. At the last moment, they are rescued and returned to their homeland—*deus ex machina*—by the goddess Athena. Iphigenia's willingness to give her life for the glory of her homeland explains the admiration that her story provoked in Schiller's time. The looming sacrifice, the fleeting love interest, the paternal betrayal, and the final ecstatic vision all explain Schiller's unusual departures from history in his Joan of Arc play. The rescue by the virgin goddess Athena explains his decision to use her image on his play's frontispiece, and it provides the connection to West Point's symbolic use of Athena's helmet. The cultural prominence of the image of Iphigenia under the protection of Athena in the nineteenth century was enormous, appearing in countless works of art. Schiller's plays were extremely popular, receiving the most performances (1,926) of any playwright's work

at the Berlin Royal Theater between 1786 and 1885. (Second place went to Shakespeare, with 1,720 performances.) The most performed of Schiller's plays was *The Maid of Orleans*, accounting for twenty percent of the total number of performances.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, it seems unsurprising that when President Jefferson signed the order establishing the USMA in 1802, the founders would have turned to images of Athena and Joan of Arc, then among the most potent and popular of the day.<sup>13</sup>

Having considered the significance of Schiller's play, now is an opportune moment to note another point, concerning the resemblance of the final scene of *The Maid of Orleans* to Johnson's image of Joan in the cadet mess panorama. In the painting, the soldiers are shown kneeling around her, and she herself seems to be lying prone upon a crimson banner embroidered with silver *fleur-de-lis*. This impression is reinforced by the downward turn of the toes of her armored footwear and the foreshortening of her legs as though bent at the knee, a pose that would be impossible for someone standing. She grasps her helmet by the visor. This unusual scene is unlike any of the accounts of Joan's appearances in Orleans, where she is usually depicted astride her steed. On the other hand, it bears a striking resemblance to Schiller's stage directions for the final scene of his play: "The banner falls from her hand; she sinks in death upon it. All stand around in speechless emotion."<sup>14</sup> The helmet is not a trivial detail. In the prologue of the play, Schiller's Johanna is fascinated by a helmet purchased from a mysterious woman at the market in Vaucouleurs. She seizes it and claims it for her own, after which she begins to prophesy France's victory over the English and her role in that victory. It is likely that Schiller had this scene in mind when he requested that the cover of his play be adorned with Athena in her helmet. Likewise, when the founders of the USMA sought an emblem to represent the wisdom that inspires West Point's future leaders to martial victory, they found a ready-made symbol in the helmet of Athena. Similarly, when the leadership of the USMA decided to admit women to the Corps of Cadets in 1976, the researchers assigned to examine the efficacy of the policy seized on the potency of this female image in naming the study Project Athena.<sup>15</sup> Subsequently, when that first cohort of women convened at West Point four decades later for a symposium to share their experiences and consider their legacy, the April 2016 conference was entitled "Athena's Arena."

It remains to explain what the connection might be between Joan of Arc and West Point's mascot, the Black Knight. For this, we must turn once again to Schiller and his use of the dramatic methods of ancient Greek tragedy in his *Maid of Orleans*. The revelation of the moment of *hamartia*—commonly translated (somewhat unsatisfactorily) as "the fatal flaw"—is often preceded in tragedy by the appearance of an *eidolon*. The

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12 Ludwig, Albert. *Schiller und die deutsche Nachwelt*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1909, 490.

13 Miller, 5.

14 Schiller, Friedrich. *The Maid of Orleans: A Romantic Tragedy*. Trans. Lewis Filmore. London: Charles Griffin and Co. 1882, 124.

15 Vitters, Alan G. and Nora Scott Kinzer. *Report of the Admission of Women to the U.S. Military Academy: Project Athena*. West Point, 1977. This was the first of four such reports.



The Black Knight mascot

eidolon is a kind of alter ego, something like the German concept of *Doppelgänger*, which is also associated with the inexorable power of fate. In the scene preceding Johanna's fateful encounter with Lionel in Schiller's play, she comes upon a figure who appears rather mysteriously and warns her that she should stop fighting. Not knowing that her next opponent in battle will be Lionel, nor that the encounter will lead to her denunciation by her father and her subsequent downfall, she assumes that this phantom is merely an enemy trying to

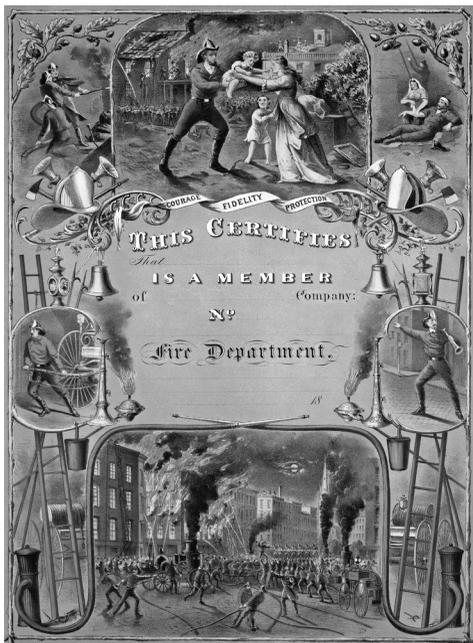
frighten her from fulfilling her mission to save France. There is considerable evidence to assume that this figure is supposed to represent the ghost of Talbot, whom Johanna has slain in an earlier scene. However, Schiller does not assign this eidolon the name Talbot, nor does he call him a ghost. He calls him the Black Knight, which is the mascot that has been associated with West Point's sports teams since the mid-twentieth century.

Joan committed herself to a cause that provoked the wrath of her enemies, who handed her over to the Inquisition to be tried as a heretic. They convicted her and burned her at the stake. Their reasons are not of concern in this discussion; on the other hand, her cause is. She committed herself to ridding her country of English invaders so that her people could come together as a nation and live freely. George Washington—the man after whom West Point's central academic building is named—and Thomas Jefferson—who decreed that the USMA should exist—would surely have agreed that Joan's was a cause worth fighting and dying for. The founders and leaders of the USMA have enshrined that opinion in images of the Maid that continue to surround cadets, faculty, staff, and visitors to the Highlands of West Point to this day.

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# Answering the Call: The Rhinebeck Fire Company and the FASNY Museum

*Elijah Bender*



Fireman's certificate surrounded by firefighting scenes. At the top, a fireman hands a rescued child back to its mother; at the bottom, a large firefighting crew battles a blaze in city row buildings.

New York: Published by Currier & Ives, c.1877.  
Library of Congress

Fear of fire was a great concern in early America. Bucket brigades, night watches, and ordinance regulations were established early in the seventeenth century in burgeoning urban hubs such as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Organized volunteer companies were not as prevalent as unorganized bucket brigades comprised of neighbors and community watches. In these early years, insurance companies were created, most notably by Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia in 1752. Subscribers paid these companies, with the proceeds utilized for the purchase and maintenance of equipment. Each company employed its own fire brigade and provided marks to be affixed on dwellings and businesses for protection. Those who went without these fire shields were at the mercy of the neighborhood and were not guaranteed fire protection until the introduction of volunteer companies.

Eventually, these volunteer companies would take on the aura of a fraternal order, with massive participation from men in the community, even offering death benefits for families and a social outlet for members. Many of these fraternal themes were advanced by the Victorian age and by printmakers like Currier & Ives, who created a series of lithographs pertaining to the volunteer firefighter.

The Village of Rhinebeck provides a typical case study of the evolution of fire companies in small-town America, while the FASNY Museum of Firefighting, located in Hudson, offers ample illustration of the technologies used in firefighting. In July 1834, the Rhinebeck

Fire Department was organized through “Ordinance Rules by the Village of Rhinebeck By-Laws in appointing a Fire Company.” With village incorporation, a rudimentary fire brigade was established consisting of an eighteen-man crew with fifteen regular men and three fire wardens. The group of fifteen was broken down into positions of captain, two fire engineers, four managers of the hooks and ladders, and eight persons “to take charge of property endangered by fires.”<sup>1</sup> Firemen would be distinguished at the scene by a white handkerchief tied around their hats.

In the formative years of the fire company, bucket brigades were the only form of strategy against the outbreak of fire. Bucket requirements were legislated for households and businesses and were proportional to the size of the building and number of fireplaces. Businesses with greater likelihood of fire, such as brew houses, distilleries, and bake shops, were required to secure additional buckets, and feature them conspicuously. Each bucket was mandated to contain two and a half gallons of water. They often were elaborately decorated with the name of the owner, a symbol, and the year. On display at the Fireman’s Museum is a horse-drawn bucket wagon originally from Jamaica, Long Island, dating to about 1840. This primitive vehicle is an example of the early methods of firefighting.



Bucket carriage of unknown make, c.1860, used by Jamaica, Long Island, Continental Bucket Company #1, carries 50 tarred canvas buckets, all of which are inscribed “Continental Company.”

The Firemen’s Association of the State of New York,  
American Firefighting Museum

During this early stage of organized fire protection in Rhinebeck, a hand pumper was acquired and at least two others were purchased prior to 1859. On October 25, 1834, the taxable inhabitants of Rhinebeck voted to obtain \$600 through assessment for the purchase of a fire engine.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, there is no information as to the make or model purchased. These engines were likely large hose carts with hooks for numerous buckets as shown in an old picture of the “engine” of Relief No. 1. By June 1845, the company known as “Engine No. 6” of Rhinebeck transferred possession and use of that engine to “Company No. 2”

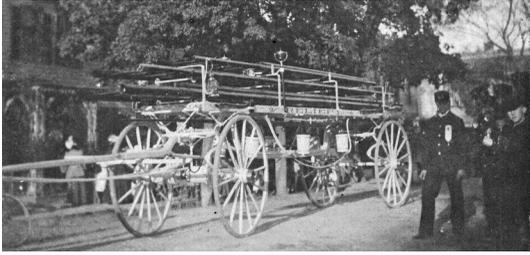
and likely disbanded. In the minutes for the following month, the board approved an expenditure of fifteen dollars to paint the engine and procure hose for it.<sup>3</sup> This early fire brigade was known as the “Rhinebeck Flatts Fire Company” as evidenced by a certificate of 1838 issued to Edward Smith as a duly-elected member. Engine and hose companies were employed in extinguishing fires while hook and ladder companies usually served to ventilate structures and to perform search and rescue operations.

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1 *Ordinance Rules by the Village of Rhinebeck in Appointing a Fire Company*, July 7, 1834.

2 *Rhinebeck Village Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes*, October 25, 1834.

3 *Rhinebeck Village Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes*, June 6, 1845.



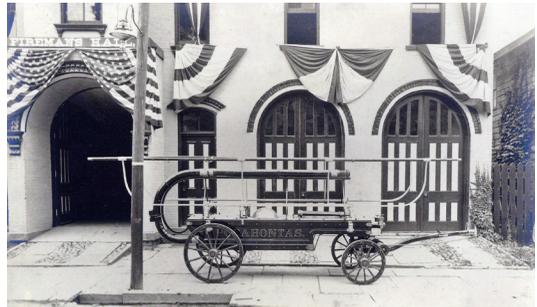
Fire Engine, Relief Ladder, No. 1, 1898,  
Rhinebeck Historical Society,  
courtesy of the Consortium of Rhinebeck History

Technology advanced, and handtubs began to emerge as an effective means of fighting fire. Hand-pumped fire engines have long bars, running parallel to the body, that operate a pump. When activated, these pumping arms operate pistons in the engine that move water from the tub into a pressure chamber. The earliest form of these pumps required bucket brigades to feed water into a chamber reservoir, which

then sprayed water through a simple, hand-operated piston pump. These units were likely the earliest purchased by the Village of Rhinebeck. By the mid-nineteenth century more sophisticated pumps were able to draft water from sources like cisterns and streams, eliminating the need for a bucket brigade to operate it. Hose carts provided a system of storing lengths of hose that would be attached to the handtub for drafting water. These carts were often drawn by hand, along with the handtub, to the scene of a fire.

In 1859, the Village of Rhinebeck acquired a handtub from the Button Fire Engine Company that they named “Pocahontas,” and formed a fire company under the name “Pocahontas Engine Co. No. 2” to operate and maintain the pumper for fire protection. The design of Pocahontas is referred to as “piano-box” style, with the wood portion constructed of cherry and mahogany. The pumper has two ten-inch pistons and cylinders along with four clapper valves and a buffer dome, most of which are copper, brass, and bronze.<sup>4</sup>

Research into the minutes of the Pocahontas Engine Co. No. 2 reveals a conscientious group of men who sought to maintain their firehouse and keep the new apparatus in perfect order. Fines were imposed on members who failed to report to fire calls, attend meetings, or maintain equipment. At a monthly meeting held on September 17, 1860, a motion was carried “that on and after the next meeting night, a fine of 10 cents, be imposed on members for non-attendance at the roll call,”<sup>5</sup>



Pocahontas Fire Engine in front of Firemans Hall,  
West Market Street, Rhinebeck Historical Society,  
courtesy of the Consortium of Rhinebeck History

4 Companies like the American Fire Engine Company of Elmira, N.Y., and the Button and Blake Company of Waterford, N.Y., began manufacturing these fire apparatuses. Button started in Waterford in 1831 as John F. Rogers & Co., acknowledged as the founding of the great American LaFrance Company. In 1834 it was known as Wm. Platt & Co. The plant was acquired in 1841 by Lysander Button and went through several more name changes: Button & Blake (1858), Button Engine Works (1865), L. Button & Son (1868), and Button Fire Engine Co. (1882). In 1892, the company was merged with three other fire equipment makers (Ahrens, Silsby, Clapp & Jones) to form the American Fire Engine Company, which later merged with the LaFrance company.

5 *Minute Book of the Pocahontas Engine Company No. 2*, September 17, 1860.

suggesting a regimental commitment to the department and to the duties of early fire prevention. Committees were established to “clean the machine” and “see that firehouse is in strict order.” Social engagement and interaction with neighboring departments is evident, as are festivities within Rhinebeck, such as balls and parades.

Recruitment and applications were handled through a special committee comprised of three men. From the organization’s early days, a strong involvement by the Rhinebeck Village Board of Trustees suggests that the fire department remained under control of the village, which provided supplies and funds. Financing came through budgeted referendums by the village board, voted on each year by the village’s taxable freeholders. If necessary, special referendums were called to levy additional funds.

Pocahontas Engine Co. No. 2 was created after the May 30, 1859, village board meeting, when Smith Quick was called to create a fire department for the purchase of the new Button and Blake handtub. Shortly thereafter, the election of officers was held, including a chief foreman, first and second foremen, secretary, treasurer, and chief engineer.<sup>6</sup> A steward was elected to provide refreshments and keep up the meeting room. The early engine house is believed to have been a frame building located on Center Street. In the early organizational meetings of the company, one committee was adopted to draft by-laws and another (on June 17, 1859) to “procure hats and belts.” These early minutes reflect practicality and regulation in fashioning a fire company. Cloth hose frequently had to be replaced for damage and long duration of use and were approved expenses paid for by the village.<sup>7</sup>

The Rhinebeck community felt the impact of national events when, in April 1861, the Civil War took volunteers off the fire roster as they volunteered to serve in the Union Army. Village Trustee William Van Wagenen made a motion on March 13, 1862, that “the names of firemen who volunteered for the army be placed on the record.”<sup>8</sup> On the back cover of the minute book for Pocahontas Engine Co. No. 2 is scrawled “Cal Rikert March 31 62, J. Van Etten 10 June 1862, J. O’Keese 21 July 62, Frank Rikert 31 March 63.” It seems a reasonable guess that these dates refer to members’ enlistment. It is believed that all of these men were members of Company C, 128th Regiment, of which Francis S. Keese was captain. All survived the war and many returned to resume commercial business in Rhinebeck. They all returned to the fire department.

Pocahontas and the early group of firemen were tested at 2 a.m. on May 8, 1864, when a large fire broke out at the building of Stephen DuBois on South Street and the Post Road, and spread north to engulf buildings on the south side of East Market Street. Water was easily provided through the town pump located at the intersection of East Market Street and the Post Road. An account of the scene recorded in the minute book details that mutual aid was received in fighting the fire from the Lackawanna Engine Company

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6 *Ibid.*, May 30, 1859.

7 *Ibid.*, June 17, 1859

8 *Ibid.*, March 18, 1862.

Number One of the Rondout by 5:30 a.m. The entry also provides an inventory of the dwellings and businesses damaged and the time—5:30 that evening—that the men “put out and retired to their house.”

Mobilization to rebuild the partially burned village is evident in entries following the fire. At its May 9 meeting, the village Board of Trustees ordered the printing of twenty-five broadsides to announce a meeting of freeholders and taxable inhabitants to be held at the Rhinebeck Hotel (Beekman Arms) on Saturday, May 14, to “vote upon the question of placing a sufficient amount of money to place the fire department in condition to extinguish fires breaking out in the village.” The objective was to purchase a new fire engine, alarm bell, hooks and ladders, and hose cart; build two cisterns; and provide 800 feet of hose. These expenses were approved within the month. It was agreed funds would be raised by tax and a loan payable in two installments. As for the purchase of a new engine, the minutes suggest that Pocahontas did not fare well during the May 8 fire. This is evidenced, in part, by a \$2.12 bill approved to a George Buckland to repair the engine.<sup>9</sup>

The early Pocahontas Hose Company was also very much a social fraternity as evidenced by parade participation and invitation. It had a close relationship with neighboring companies, both in Dutchess County and across the river in Kingston and the Rondout. An entry in the minute book for Oct. 8, 1860, reads: “Mr. Smith has appointed a committee to confer with the committee of Kingston Company.”<sup>10</sup> This entry appears to be related to attendance at a parade; plans were agreed upon mutually regarding formations, bands, and travel expenses.

Social relationships within the fire company were balanced with discipline; routine disputes between members were brought to the attention of the village Board of Trustees. On April 21, 1866, Mr. Schryver reported that as assistant engineer he was disobeyed by the foreman of the rescue company at the recent fire. Additionally, at times cleaning of the equipment was not adhered to; in response, the trustees provided a sufficient sum to pay a man to clean the engines.<sup>11</sup>

Technological advancement greatly impacted the fire service, and hand pumpers largely fell out of fashion by the 1870s. The advent of steam-powered fire engines quickly caught on in both urban and rural settings. Discussions for the purchase of a steamer began shortly after the May 8 fire. The minutes of May 25, 1864, state “the President stated to the Board that many inquiries were made concerning the purchase of a new fire engine. That some were in favor of purchasing a steamer.”<sup>12</sup> At a meeting held on October 12, 1864, it was agreed that no amount of tax should be levied for the purchase of a steam fire engine. Much of this concern centered around the idea that steam engines drew a great

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9 *Ibid.*, May 9, 1864.

10 *Ibid.*, October 8, 1860.

11 *Rhinebeck Village Board Minutes*, April 21, 1866.

12 *Ibid.*, May 25, 1864

amount of water and that local waterbodies would not suffice in powering the machine.<sup>13</sup> By May 10, 1865, \$1,077.50 had been paid to Mr. L. Button of Waterford for repairs to Pocahontas, and talk of purchasing a steam fire engine was suspended.<sup>14</sup>

By April 1868, plans were approved to build a new firehouse that would offer more luxurious accommodations. An ornate brick building on West Market Street was constructed ten years after organization of the Pocahontas Engine Company. It was characterized by a projecting cornice, large decorative brackets, and arched apertures with ornate cast iron lintels and sills. It was a fine example of the Bracketed Italianate style, with a belfry tower with brass bell that existed until the twentieth century. This tower served multiple purposes. Nineteenth-century fire hose was woven of cloth; once cleaned, it was hung up in the tower to dry. In addition, the tower held the bell that alerted men to respond.<sup>15</sup> The earlier firehouse probably did not have a bell, as a motion on April 22, 1865, suggests: “motion to pay \$5.00 to the sexton of the first church who rings the church bell in any fire rescinded.”

By September 1871, the village Board of Trustees approved the purchase of a Button & Blake steam fire engine. On October 19, 1871, it agreed to pay \$3,350 to Mr. L. Button for the engine. The remaining \$350 was subsidized by William Sayre “for the principle of naming the steamer.” In acquiring this engine, Rhinebeck followed general trends in transitioning to quality equipment of the latest innovation.

By 1873, a new company was established. It was known as the “William M. Sayre Steamer Company,” after the first secretary (and later general cashier) of the Bank of Rhinebeck. (Interestingly, Sayre resided in Pine Plains throughout his life and was involved in the Rhinebeck area solely for commerce.) Festivities ensued after the apparatus’ purchase and a large group photograph was taken in front of the Rhinebeck Hotel with the steam fire engine centered on display.

Such an investment in the early years of the steam fire engine shows the commitment of the village trustees and populace to fire prevention and control. As the village expanded and equipment developed, Rhinebeck’s taxable inhabitants continued to respond with votes to expand the associated departments and purchase additional equipment, including hose carts, axes, and ladders. The steam engine lasted without repair until August 1896, when it was overhauled by the John McEntee Foundry of the Rondout. A *Rhinebeck Gazette* article noted that the steamer “is in first class shape, the sum of \$600 being necessary to replace the boiler.” At the time of its repair, the steamer had been in service for twenty-five years.<sup>16</sup>

Between 1873 and 1875, the Rapid Hose Company was formed to provide ancillary manpower to the Pocahontas Engine Company, Relief Hook and Ladder, and Sayre Steamer Company. This hose company would become the Walter W. Schell Hose Company in

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13 *Ibid.*, October 12, 1864.

14 The Button and Blake Company of Waterford first began manufacturing the new and innovative steam fire engines in 1862.

15 *Rhinebeck Village Board Minutes*, April 22, 1865.

16 *Rhinebeck Gazette*, September 14, 1896.

1877. Schell was a trustee of the Rhinebeck Union School and an accomplished attorney. In addition, he served on the village board, board of assessors, and as justice of the peace.<sup>17</sup> According to his 1933 obituary, “Mr. Schell was public spirited and liberal with his time and funds. He was active in firematic affairs and the H.S. Kip Co.. formerly the Schell Hose, bore his name. He conducted an extensive fancy poultry business at one time.” Around 1873, the Associated Fire Companies was created within Rhinebeck, possibly to share services and assist each other at fires.

The Relief Hook and Ladder Company was organized in 1871 and its first officers included James Monfort as captain and Charles E. McCarty as secretary. By 1909, it included forty-six men on its roster and had earned a reputation for “its successful career.”<sup>18</sup> This organization showcased the volunteer fire service as a fraternal organization. Relief Hook and Ladder took possession of the brick firehouse on West Market Street and filled the second-floor meeting room with games and amusements (including a billiard table), as well as superb furnishings. A committee was set up to regulate the playing of games, which seems to have proved profitable for the organization’s social aspects. Minutes of the Relief Hook and Ladder show routine purchases of cigars, goblets, and other fineries for the benefit of the membership as early as 1873.<sup>19</sup> Such purchases highlight the taste and fashions of the Victorian age. Additionally, this company was unique in that it included members from all strata of the local community. Dr. Frank Latson, a prominent member and the company’s captain, was a druggist whose pharmacy was located in the north storefront of the old town hall. He resided in a stately Victorian home (still standing) on the corner of Livingston and Mulberry streets.

The 1880s and ’90s was a transitional era, with constant developments in technology and industrialization. Fire departments were introduced to mechanized vehicles by the turn of the century. While the steam fire engine was still being perfected, chemical wagons began to emerge. The horse-drawn chemical wagon was developed to carry tanks filled with bicarbonate of soda. When activated by mixing with sulfuric acid and water, the resulting chemical was shot at the fire through a small hose. By 1928, more sophisticated mechanized vehicles were purchased for the department, including a Sanford truck.

The Sanford Motor Truck Company of Syracuse first entered the fire apparatus market around 1925; Rhinebeck purchased at least two apparatus from this company. The July 14, 1928, issue of the *Rhinebeck Gazette* reported “the Mayor turned over the contract for the new Sanford Fire Pumper to the clerk to be placed on file.” Built that August, the truck was a 500-gallon-per-minute pumper on a Sanford Chassis with a “waterous model ‘SB’ Rotary Gear Pump,” Buda model DW6 engine, 34" by 7" tires, and a 161" wheel-base. Rear axles were manufactured by Eaton. Rhinebeck again followed trends in the purchase of innovative equipment; Staatsburgh (Dinsmore Hose Company) had purchased

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17 Howard Morse. *Historic Old Rhinebeck: Echoes of Two Centuries*. (Rhinebeck, NY: Published by the Author, 1908), 105.

18 Pamphlet printed by the Relief Hook and Ladder Company, 1909.

19 *Minute Book of the Relief Hook and Ladder Company*, August 18, 1873.

similar trucks, as did Clermont, Pine Plains, Kingston, and numerous other neighboring departments. Staatsburg acquired a ladder truck before Rhinebeck, in October 1928, in consideration of the need to protect its many large riverfront mansions. Popularity of Sanford equipment can best be explained by its commitment to innovative technology as well as Sales Representative Charles F. Doty having an office on Albany Avenue in Kingston.<sup>20</sup>



Fire truck with firemen, 1917-1952. Photo by Virgil Shafer, from the Clifford Gubler Collection at the Museum of Rhinebeck History, courtesy of the Consortium of Rhinebeck History

By January 1930, Rhinebeck purchased the only “quad” unit made by the Sanford Truck Company. It was built on an extended chassis to combine the functions of several pieces of fire apparatus and include pumping capability. It featured a water tank, hose-carrying capabilities, and the ground ladders of a truck company without an aerial device. Rhinebeck’s massive rig came equipped with a 500-gallon-per-minute pump and featured a high mounting of the booster tank and hose reel.<sup>21</sup> It was rebuilt with new aluminum ladders (replacing wooden

ones) in 1953 by the Zabek Fire Apparatus Company of Palmer, Massachusetts, extending its service life until the early 1970s. It featured an open cab, which exposed drivers and firemen to the elements. Milton Moul, the oldest living member of the department by 1978, recalled a mutual aid call to a fire in Milan when thirty-below-zero temperatures made it impossible for him to drive the open-cab engine. Luckily, he met a friend on the side of the road who provided him with a knitted ski helmet. Moul later fondly recalled the wonderful feeling of gathering with fellow volunteers around the firehouse’s coal stove. The April 4, 1931, issue of the *Rhinebeck Gazette* reflects on the new purchases of equipment:

During the past few years Rhinebeck has taken great steps to provide fire protection for itself. The Hillside Association, which has distinguished itself several times recently, is equipped with new apparatus, the village has purchased a pumper and a hook and ladder truck, the town is in possession of a newly rejuvenated chemical truck, and many of the village firefighters have been trained in the Volunteer Firemen’s Training School at Poughkeepsie. What better protection has any town of the size of Rhinebeck?<sup>22</sup>

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20 Joseph Raymond, Jr. *Sanford Fire Apparatus: An Illustrated History*. (Middletown, NY: Engine House Press, 1986), 32.

21 *Ibid.*, 61.

22 *Rhinebeck Gazette*, April 4, 1931.

Numerous fires kept the Rhinebeck Fire Department busy in the early twentieth century. One of the more notable disasters was the burning of the Astor breeding stable on the Ferncliff estate, which broke out on April 7, 1912, a week before its owner, John Jacob Astor IV, perished aboard the *Titanic*. The frame building, valued at the time at \$10,000, was a complete loss, as were many items of equestrian paraphernalia.<sup>23</sup> Firemen arrived to find the building's second story fully engulfed, but the groundskeeper, a Mr. Werst, and the estate superintendent, Herbert Pinkham, had successfully evacuated the livestock and a few harnesses. In March 1924, Rhinebeck firemen responded to an alarm at the "Old Bowery House," known as Pultz's Tavern, on East Market Street. The town chemical truck and Pocahontas Hook and Ladder successfully countered the blaze.

By this era, the Reo "Speedwagon" chemical truck and other early fire equipment was inadequate in fire protection as noted in an April 16, 1927, *Rhinebeck Gazette* editorial entitled "Fire Apparatus in Bad Shape." It argued that "Rhinebeck needs adequate protection-and must have it. It is time a moderate priced pumper is purchased and other equipment put in shape."<sup>24</sup> By the 1930s, the Sanford ladder truck proved of much use both within the district and in providing mutual aid to neighboring departments that lacked a ladder truck. Other house fires ensued in the late 1930s, some being total losses.<sup>25</sup> In 1934, Thomas Geraghty, a fire department member, died in a house fire on Oak Street. His is the only line-of-duty death for the Rhinebeck Fire Department and he is memorialized in a marble plaque erected at the firehouse in 1976.

But the old methods continued to prove successful in rural areas, as seen in the case of the Hiram Cure house fire on Wurtemberg Road. In January 1939, approximately six neighbors gathered with buckets to quell the fire. It was noted in the *Rhinebeck Gazette* that these farmers had put out the blaze before the fire department's arrival. Delayed response would have been affected by the inefficient use of alarm boxes and bell systems to alert members to respond to a call.

By far, the largest fire to afflict Rhinebeck during these years was the burning of the old section of the high school in April 1939. Newspapers report that Clarence Rhynders and Carlton Sipperley discovered the blaze, which began in the boys' lavatory by 6:45 p.m. They summoned the fire department, which responded quickly with three pieces of apparatus. Sipperley, owner of the C.E. Sipperley plumbing firm that regularly serviced the school, was a member of the fire department. He immediately went to the basement and shut off the furnaces and electrical service. Within an hour, the building was fully enveloped, with heavy smoke conditions. Numerous firemen, including John Lattin, Jr., had to be carried out and revived by Dr. Howard Bulkeley, president of the local board of education at the time. Firemen delivered steady streams of water for over five hours, with small intermittent flames continuing. They battled the blaze well into the evening,

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<sup>23</sup> *Rhinebeck Gazette*, April 8, 1912.

<sup>24</sup> *Rhinebeck Gazette*, April 16, 1927.

<sup>25</sup> *Rhinebeck Gazette*, May 20, 1934.

attracting many spectators. In all of the excitement, it was reported that a 1936 Plymouth owned by Deborah Dows, daughter of Tracy Dows, was stolen in front of Schermerhorn's Pharmacy on East Market Street.

The 1940s saw additional fires, mainly consisting of non-commercial buildings, with chimney fires increasingly prevalent. The next biggest fire was at the Morton estate in Rhinecliff in October 1950. Rhinebeck was called to the scene along with six other mutual aid companies to fight the blaze that engulfed the fifty-eight-room Ellerslie mansion, originally the home of former New York Governor and U.S. Vice President Levi Parsons Morton. At the time of the fire, the property was the Cardinal Farley Military Academy, home to 120 cadets. Reportedly, the blaze could be seen from ten miles away. The \$250,000 building was a complete loss. Rhinebeck Fire Department members James Whittaker and David Martinez were victims of smoke inhalation at the scene but were not seriously injured.

The malfunctioning of a new American LeFrance pumper owned by the Rhinecliff Fire Department at this fire led Rhinebeck to purchase an Oren truck in 1953. Incidentally, American LeFrance and Oren had both been priced by the department and village board, and this fire immediately preceded a board meeting to vote on a bid for the new apparatus. By the early 1950s, Rhinebeck's equipment consisted of a 1953 Oren pumper and the 1932 Sanford ladder truck, with the 1928 Sanford pumper traded in for the Oren. The Oren, purchased from the Oren-Roanoke Company of Roanoke, Virginia, was powered by a 216-horsepower Continental engine. It was equipped with a 750-gallon-per-minute Hale pump. The booster tank held 450 gallons.

All this time, Pocahontas remained at the old firehouse on West Market Street but had been mothballed in the back of one of the bays for years and had fallen into disrepair. Occasionally, it was taken out for parades in the 1930s and '40s, but its poor condition is evidenced by black and white pictures of parade processions. In the early 1950s, several of the younger men, including Max Trombini, took an interest in the antique apparatus and sought to restore it to working order. These men were all members of the Relief Hook and Ladder Company, by this time consisting of many younger men who were ambitious to participate in the fire service and appreciated the historical significance of the associated fire companies that preceded them. They made plans to ready Pocahontas to participate in a pumping competition at the Eastern States Exposition in Springfield, Massachusetts, in September 1953. They competed against twenty-six other departments in pumping for an allotted ten-minute interval.

Plans for Pocahontas' full restoration were made and the machine was taken to the Gazen and Janow blacksmith shop on North Parsonage Street for repairs to the arms and other metalwork, consisting of new handles, tightening the water box, and replacing brass where necessary. New wheels were fabricated out of hemlock by a wheelwright in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley. Carmine Tortorella, also a Relief Hook and Ladder member, did some repairs on Pocahontas to ready it for competition, while Gordon Ross of Ross Welding Service in Rhinebeck fabricated a tip for the nozzle. Unfortunately,



Pocahontas fire wagon on unpaved street in front of two-story building, Rhinebeck Historical Society, courtesy of the Consortium of Rhinebeck History

Max Trombini, chairman of the Pocahontas crew, died before competitions for “Old Pokie” materialized.

By September 1953, the Rhinebeck Fire Department had joined the New England Veteran Firemen’s League, the only department outside of New England to participate. In the ensuing decades, it regularly attended competitions numerous times every year. Vernon Sipperley, a

member of the Rhinebeck Fire Department for seventy years, served as the league’s president and was most active with Pocahontas. From 1972 until his death in 2017, he was foreman of the handtub. Use of Pocahontas in competitive musters was ended by the 1980s in consideration of its age and fragility.

Another monumental event in Rhinebeck Fire Department history was the creation in 1954 of the Rhinebeck Rescue Squad as an independent unit. Prior to this, ambulance service was provided by Northern Dutchess Hospital, with a hospital custodian operating the ambulance. Under this arrangement, a lengthy amount of time often transpired between the dispatch and arrival at the accident scene. Edgar W. Harvey, superintendent of the Rhinebeck Water Works, served as first rescue squad captain and was instrumental in the integration and mobilization of sixteen men to form it. First Rescue Lieutenant Donald Dapson, a local undertaker, recalled the thirteen-week Red Cross training program in which squad members participated. During these early years, the squad utilized the 1949 Cadillac ambulance that belonged to the Northern Dutchess Hospital, later purchasing another Cadillac model. In April 1970, the squad merged with the Rhinebeck Fire Department. The primary motive behind their integration was the impending loss of insurance coverage due to the squad’s financial insecurity. The timely merger was successful through the efforts of Rescue Captain Erwin Bathrick, Jr., proprietor of the Rhinebeck Hardware Company, and Chief Don S. (Sandy) Williams of Williams Lumber.

The 1960s was a transitional period for the fire department and provided stability to members during the turbulent years of the Vietnam War and counterculture movements. The firemen refrained from any participation in the latter and, luckily, the department lost no members to the war.

The old firehouse continued to serve the men’s needs. However, it had fallen into disrepair and structural instability by 1968. A full structural study was conducted to determine the building’s integrity. Finding the repair costs prohibitive and the space limited, discussions about a new, combined firehouse and village hall began. The site of the Williams Lumber property on East Market Street, formerly the Gibson Lumber building and the Frank Herrick Lumberyard, was chosen. This property was purchased by the village, and on March 18, 1969, Rhinebeck village residents voted 289 to 201 to spend \$350,000 on

the new facility. The building was designed in a utilitarian manner, in keeping with the functions of the former village hall and firehouse, albeit much larger. It was comprised of a four-bay firehouse, with two rooms on the ground floor for the radios and engineers. The upstairs accommodated several offices, a kitchen, television room for the firemen, and a village meeting room to hold eighty to 100 people. Much of the momentum for this accomplishment is owed to Mayors Robert Shackleton and Peter F. Sipperley.

Many fires would be tackled by the Rhinebeck Fire Department in the 1970s and 1980s. Some of the more notorious were the Wells barn on West Market Street, a house fire on Platt Avenue, and the gymnasium of the Rhinebeck High School in April 1978.

The early relationship of women with fire departments was of wives, mothers, and sisters preparing provisions for male relatives responding to calls, often in the middle of the night. This domestic support was solidified with the creation of the Rhinebeck Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary in 1957. In the department's 150th anniversary pamphlet, President Ruth Demarest claims "hot coffee, soup and sandwiches, ice water and juice in summer, and occasionally a good breakfast for the men after a night of firefighting, is what the auxiliary is all about."<sup>26</sup> The first female member of the Rhinebeck Fire Department, Nancy Brownell (daughter of Rescue Squad Captain Howard Brownell) was approved by the village Board of Trustees on March 13, 1984, during the sesquicentennial of the department's founding. The acceptance of the first woman in the department reflects a transitional moment in the volunteer fire service as times changed and old normalities were overturned.

The twenty-first century has posed new challenges for volunteer organizations in rural areas. Rhinebeck has shifted from an insular community comprised of local business owners and blue collar professionals to a bedroom and weekend community made up of families from southern New York. Training requirements and state laws have been enacted as a means of safety and quality control for rural fire companies but have had unintended consequences in creating demands for volunteers that require more time away from personal commitments. Some fire districts have been forced to forfeit the areas they cover due to a lack of membership, with many ultimately pursuing other options, such as paid services, for fire and rescue.

The Rhinebeck Fire Department has stood the test of time and is fortunate to have a very active and engaged membership, a high response rate, and the strong support of municipal agencies. These positive attributes have allowed the department to grow and engage in new technological innovations. In 2008, the department purchased a new Ferrara 1,000-gallon pumper and in 2017 replaced a 1988 E-One engine with a custom-built Rosenbauer unit equipped with a 1,500-gallon tank. The rescue squad is fortunate to have a versatile crew of chauffeurs and emergency medical technicians to respond to a growing number of calls. Recently, the department purchased a "Stryker" stretcher unit equipped to handle heavy patients. It is electronically powered to provide ease to the ambulance crew.

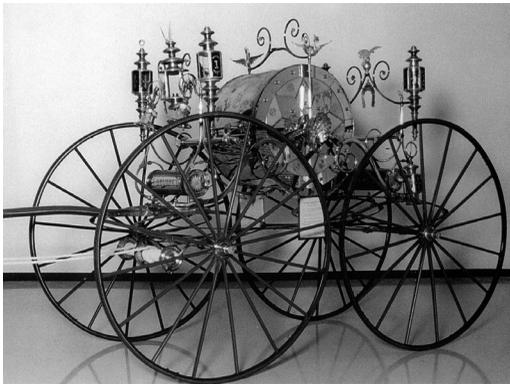
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<sup>26</sup> Rhinebeck Fire Department Anniversary pamphlet, Anniversary pamphlet, 16.

The department is very active in parades and other events and maintains its excellent working relationship with ancillary departments within the Town of Rhinebeck, such as the Hillside and Rhinecliff Fire Companies.

Despite all of these changes and innovations, the Rhinebeck Fire Department has kept a reverence for the past, and members are very much in touch with their company's long and storied history. Recently, the department lost three key members: John McGuire, Henry Campbell, and P. Vernon "Vern" Sipperley. They served as a conduit between past and present and guided members in the tradition of the volunteer fire service.

The Rhinebeck Fire Department is an example of the evolution of volunteer firefighting as well as an opportunity to see changing technology and fashions. Sadly, it is unusual in its ongoing vibrancy, considering that many neighboring departments have suffered in recent years from declining membership and participation. This evolution of circumstances has necessitated advancements in the volunteer fire service and expanded the paid service as volunteerism wanes. In these changing times, exhibiting the history of the volunteer fire service helps people understand the complex and interesting history of firefighting in the United States.



Parade carriage, built by New York Fire Apparatus Works (James Smith) in 1883 for Deluge Engine #1 of Jamestown, NY. The Firemen's Association of the State of New York, American Firefighting Museum

Located twenty-six miles north of Rhinebeck, the FASNY Museum of Firefighting was founded in 1923 by the Firemen's Association of the State of New York (FASNY) for "the purpose of housing the old relics of the New York volunteers... not alone for what they are, but what they stand for."<sup>27</sup> A building was dedicated in 1926 just a few hundred feet from an existing FASNY Firemen's Home.

Many of the artifacts are from antiquated New York City volunteer companies as well as areas of Long Island and upstate New York. The initial donations of several early pieces of apparatus were made by the Exempt Firemen's Association. These pieces include the oldest documented fire pumper in New York State—a 1731 Newsham pumper—as well as hose carts, steam fire engines, and leather buckets. The Newsham pumper was built in Cloths Fair, England, and operated by pumping the brakes. The machine held 170 gallons of water and was advanced for its time. Another notable piece of early equipment is the "Bucket Carriage of Unknown Make," dating to about 1860 and belonging to the Continental Bucket Company No. 1 of Jamaica, Long Island. This carriage, which carried fifty tarred canvas buckets, is a transitional piece of equipment—the advent of handtub and steam

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<sup>27</sup> American Museum of Firefighting.



1904 sleigh built by village blacksmith Fred Rice in Oriskany, NY; it was used until 1923. The Firemen's Association of the State of New York, American Firefighting Museum

engines by the middle of the nineteenth century largely replaced bucket extinguishment. Today, the museum contains one of the most notable collections of American firefighting artifacts and is housed in a state-of-the-art facility containing more than 50,000 square feet.

Small artifacts include badges from the 1810s through the Civil War. Painted shields for leather Cairns-style helmets were ornately decorated with scenes of handtub pumps, Maltese crosses, or the numbers associated with a particular department. One of the more interesting artifacts is a homemade “make-do” pin, originally an 1857

Liberty half dollar that was ground smooth and engraved with the name and badge number of the fire company. Such artifacts showcase the ingenuity of the volunteer fire service as it grappled with limited resources and material. Also displayed are more practical small equipment, including early self-contained breathing masks from the Oceanic Hose, Hook, and Ladder of Staten Island. These are the precursors to the modern SCBA masks that attach to “Scott” packs for men entering smoke-filled buildings. Also featured is an early “Muffin Bell,” used by night watches to alarm communities of an emergency.

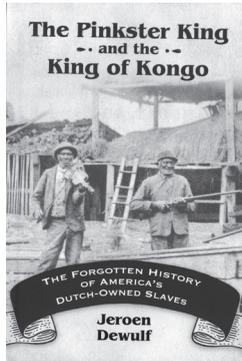
***The FASNY Museum of Firefighting, at 117 Harry Howard Avenue in Hudson, is open daily (excluding holidays and severe weather) from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. [www.fasnyfiremuseum.com](http://www.fasnyfiremuseum.com).***

*Elijah Bender was recording secretary (2015-2018) of the Rhinebeck Fire Department. He would like to recognize those who aided his research on the history of the Rhinebeck Fire Department through material and oral history, including Scott Fisher, Peter Sipperley, William Vickery, Sandy Williams, Bob Ellsworth, John Lobotsky, David Regg, David Miller, John McGuire, and Donald McTernan. Deceased life member P. Vernon Sipperley provided a great deal of the foundation for the writing of this paper.*

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# Book Reviews



*The Pinkster King and the King of the Kongo: The Forgotten History of America's Dutch-Owned Slaves*, Jeroen Dewulf (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2017) 292 pp.

In *The Pinkster King and the King of the Kongo*, Jeroen Dewulf has taken on a formidable task. For years, scholars have struggled to decipher a fragmentary documentary record to understand the fascinating celebration of Pinkster, the Dutch religious holiday commemorating Pentecost that slaves in formerly Dutch North America appropriated as their own by the later colonial period. The paucity of sources on black festive culture in Early America has sparked ongoing scholarly debate. To what extent was Pinkster a Christian religious holiday? To what extent were black celebrations of Pinkster manifestations of transplanted African rituals? To what extent was the festival an “American” creation—i.e., a syncretization of different cultural forms? Did such expressions of black festive culture ultimately serve to undermine or strengthen the institution of bondage? Dewulf weighs in on different scholarly debates, but the real intent of *The Pinkster King and the King of the Kongo* is to reorient the scholarly discussion. By revisiting existing scholarship and imaginatively tapping into largely unexplored sources on different continents in multiple languages, Dewulf fundamentally recasts the historiographical debate.

There is far more to *The Pinkster King and the King of the Kongo* than its subtitle might suggest. New Netherland proper accounts for only a portion of the text. Dewulf is intimately familiar with the history of New Netherland and its black residents, but his scope is truly global. The author takes the reader on a discursive journey that includes not only Dutch New Netherland but also other parts of North America, Europe, West-Central Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America at different points in time.

After laying out his interpretive framework, Dewulf traces the roots of the Dutch celebration to the Middle Ages, when Christian commemorations of Pentecost fused with traditional pagan fertility rituals. The religious holiday became increasingly commercialized and boisterous over time, as revelers feasted, drank, sang, danced, and participated in rowdy entertainments. Attempts by civil and religious authorities to curtail such excesses in the wake of the Calvinist Reformation proved only partially successful. Dutch immigrants introduced the festival to seventeenth-century New Netherland, a settlement already notorious for its tawdry amusements. Neither civil authorities like Governor Peter Stuyvesant in the seventeenth century nor Pietist reformers in the later colonial period

managed to suppress the celebration, which persisted in some areas of New York well into the nineteenth century. Over time, however, the Pinkster festival was increasingly associated with New York's black residents; indeed, black engagement with the festival increased as interest waned among white descendants of Dutch settlers.

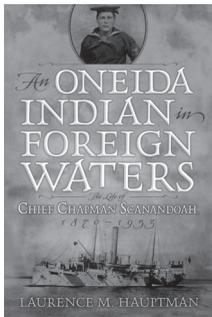
After exploring the origins of the Dutch religious festival and its evolution in Early America, Dewulf proceeds to "search for the Pinkster king," to discover how a religious festival that originated in the Low Countries of Europe during the medieval period was transformed into a powerful expression of black festive culture. Dewulf ultimately agrees with those scholars who argue for the African origins of the black celebrations of Pinkster, but he dates such celebrations not to the late colonial period but earlier, specifically to the "charter generations" of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Atlantic World. Moreover, Dewulf argues that the origins of Pinkster lay not in exclusively indigenous African beliefs and rituals but in the syncretized Afro-Iberian culture of West-Central Africa (notably Kongolese and Angolan kingdoms) and other parts of the black Atlantic that adapted Catholic Portuguese culture. Distinctive features of Pinkster celebrations in New York, notably the selection of a "Pinkster King" and ministers who provided assistance to needy members of the black community, very closely resembled the activities of Catholic brotherhoods and confraternities across the Afro-Iberian world.

Dewulf casts participants of Pinkster festivities as actors. Pinkster did not serve as a "safety valve" that served slaveowners' interests by releasing discontent, nor did it represent submission to dominant European culture. As Dewulf puts it, Kongolese rulers and slaves throughout the Dutch and Iberian colonial worlds negotiated Iberian and Christian culture on their own terms. Celebrants of Pinkster did not revel in carnivalesque misrule nor did they mimic whites. Pinkster and similar celebrations across the Americas represented a powerful exercise of autonomy, an expression of communal solidarity, and a means of "cooperative resistance."

The book's strengths are potentially its weakness. Dewulf casts such a wide interpretive net that some readers might find the narrative unwieldy; the author's comprehensive scope will disorient readers seeking tighter chronological or geographical organization. Dewulf's fascinating and detailed descriptions of black festive culture in Africa, the Caribbean, and other parts of the Americas place Pinkster in a valuable comparative context. Other parts of the narrative are less immediately relevant. For example, Dewulf's examination of Dutch Calvinism and his explorations into other forms of festive culture in Europe and Early America (muster days, civic parades, fantasticals, and minstrel shows) are germane but less useful in proving the Afro-Iberian origins of the celebration. Similarly, the book's final chapter on the demise of Pinkster and the construction of historical memory of the celebration might be more appropriate as an epilogue.

A reader looking for an introduction to the history of slavery in New Netherland should look elsewhere. However, *The Pinkster King and the King of the Kongo* has significance far beyond the study of Dutch New York. Given the fragmentary record, much of the author's argument remains unavoidably circumstantial. However, Dewulf has been so meticulous in his research and imaginative in his interpretation of a wide array of sources that the circumstantial evidence is voluminous and strong. By reexamining previous studies of Pinkster and black festive culture in Early America and directing attention to the syncretization of European and African culture before colonization, Dewulf makes an important contribution to the study of slavery and black life in the Atlantic world.

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***An Oneida in Foreign Waters: The Life of Chief Chapman Scanandoah, 1870–1953, Laurence Hauptman* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2016) 240 pp.**

Laurence M. Hauptman's *An Oneida in Foreign Waters: The Life of Chapman Scanandoah, 1870–1953* provides a detailed biography of a noteworthy Oneida leader and a vivid example of the diversity and efficacy of Native American responses to the social, legal, and political challenges of late-nineteenth through mid-twentieth century America.

The work follows Chapman Scanandoah's life as he became a public figure at the turn of the century—one of the few Native American naval veterans of the Spanish-American war, gaining renown as an engineer and inventor, and playing a vital role in the defense of tribal lands and rights into the early 1950s. Consciously echoing Philip Deloria's call to find "Indians in unexpected places," Hauptmann uses these conspicuous aspects of Scanandoah's life to describe the historical contexts in which Oneida relationships with the government emerged, how Native American attitudes towards modernization and Americanization policies evolved, and to describe how specific tribal responses to these pressures speak to broader tensions between indigenous independence and civil inclusion.

Born in Windfall, New York, in 1870, Chapman Scanandoah attended the Hampton Institute in Virginia from 1887 to 1894, one of nearly 1,500 Native Americans to receive an education and vocational training at the primarily black school between 1878 and 1923. The curriculum mixed industrial, mechanical, and agricultural skills with instruction in English, religion, hygiene, and other topics deemed necessary to groom its students for modern citizenship, the model on which many Indian boarding schools based their

instruction. There he learned the mechanic's trade and observed the modernization of the United States Navy in the early 1890s at Hampton Roads, Newport News, and Norfolk Naval Stations, encouraging him to enlist at a recruiting station in Chicago in 1897 after visiting fellow Oneida in Wisconsin. As Hauptman points out, Scanandoah would have viewed his enlistment in the context of joining a military alliance between the Oneida peoples and the United States government dating back to the Revolutionary War. This relationship was sustained by the tribe even through the World Wars, when Scanandoah and other Oneida protested conscription as a violation of tribal independence but willingly volunteered in large numbers, joining myriad other tribes in recognizing the power of military service to negotiate the terms and meanings of sovereignty and citizenship.

Scanandoah's naval service from 1897 to 1912, including his mostly uneventful participation in the Spanish-American War, was seized on by newspapers and the Navy for its value as a curiosity and recruiting tool, but was otherwise remarkable largely for his shipboard invention of a telescopic gunsight and a naval audiophone. His peacetime port calls also gave Scanandoah a firsthand view of American and European imperialism abroad at the turn of the century. This allowed him to develop a more cosmopolitan view of the United States' role in the world, but also to observe the treatment of indigenous peoples overseas, which he reflexively compared to the condition of Native Americans at home. During his visit to Pearl Harbor, for example, he empathized with Hawaiians as a people subjected to external control, who like the Oneida sought to reclaim greater control over their ancestral land and preserve traditional values against the encroaching threat of political, social, and economic incorporation into the United States. He recorded similar observations as he traversed the globe, mixing sympathy for indigenous peoples with awe at the scale and power of modern empire as he transited the Suez Canal in Egypt and visited Cuba, Honduras, Nicaragua, China, Brazil, the Virgin Islands, China, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Japan, and Argentina.

While much about his life was indeed exceptional, Scanandoah's efforts to hew a respectable path through tangled loyalties is representative of the tensions that pulled at Native communities in this era, both embracing contemporary pressures to modernize and Americanize while retaining close connections and commitments to Iroquois communities and traditions. Central to much of this struggle have been the efforts of Native Americans to retain control over their own land, whether defended in the form of collective ownership supported by treaty or tradition or within the framework of the post-Dawes Severalty Act as individually owned property. For the Oneida of New York, a series of treaties in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had relocated large portions of the tribe but guaranteed their rights to some ancestral lands, holdings threatened in the early twentieth century by the assertion of New York State jurisdiction over tribal affairs and patterns of

partition, sale, and legal dismemberment of individual plots. Indeed, Scanandoah cited the concern for his land and the need for reliable wages as the most important factors in his decision to enlist; he sent a significant portion of his pay home each month to ensure his family could pay the mortgage on their property. The only significant blemishes on his service record are two incidences of going absent without leave, once disappearing in Argentina and reappearing weeks later—and 8,000 miles away in New York—with the explanation that he had become worried that his mother would be dispossessed of their family farm in his absence.

After leaving the Navy, Scanandoah leveraged his education, service, and public standing to help lead the legal defense of Oneida territory, achieving a landmark victory in 1922 when the United States Court of Appeals awarded his family sole title to their thirty-two acres of land, setting a precedent for the return of land to Native Americans in New York and building a foundation for future land restorations. He also served as an advocate and exemplar of modernized education for the Oneida, remaining active as an engineer at General Electric and the Frankford Arsenal and contributing innovations in the fields of agriculture and chemistry. Of particular note was his invention of a binary powder-based explosive he christened “shanandite” that was stable and safe for shipping. He incorporated it into his later patent on a method of using explosive-driven rams to compress metals into a uniform hardness and consistency. Scanandoah was also issued a patent for his revival of a variety of Iroquoian maize, an innovation that illustrates his efforts to preserve and promote Haudenosaunee culture that culminated in the establishment of the Indian Village as a permanent feature of the New York State Fair.

Though the personal papers of Chapman Scanandoah at Cornell University form the documentary backbone of Hauptman’s biography, he builds context and continuity throughout his story with extensive research in federal, state, and local archives. Confirming his status as an experienced and well-regarded scholar of Native-American history, his research features a constellation of archives, libraries, historical societies, and tribal resources throughout Iroquoia, including dozens of Oneida interviews gathered over several decades. The second half of *An Oneida Indian in Foreign Waters* highlights the breadth and relevance of Hauptman’s research as he investigates the role of Scanandoah, his family, and contemporary Oneida activists in reclaiming tribal land and shaping federal and state policies on Indian citizenship, treaties, and reparations. Hauptman commendably puts his fascinating subject and sources to the fore in this project, but the slim volume could have benefitted from further exploration of themes that transform the story of Scanandoah’s life from simply an interesting biography into one that reveals important relationships with other contemporary developments. Scholars who study campaigns of modernization

and Americanization, the citizenship struggles of other tribes or racial groups, or Native American military service will nevertheless find *An Oneida Indian in Foreign Waters* a useful case study that reveals interesting and important historical connections.

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***A Spirit of Sacrifice: New York State in the First World War*, Aaron Noble, Keith Swaney, and Vicki Weiss (Albany, NY: Excelsior Editions of SUNY Press, 2017) 359 pp.**

It is always a delicate task when writing about war to present a holistic consideration balancing narration of military action with historical contextualization; transnational forces with local realities; and revolutionary geopolitical transformations with individual experiences. Aaron Noble, Keith Swaney, and Vicki Weiss have succeeded brilliantly at that important mission in their new book, *A Spirit of Sacrifice*, which illustrates New York’s fundamental place in World War I history—as well as the Great War’s profound influence on life in the Empire State.

Taking its title from a 1918 speech by Governor Charles S. Whitman, this catalog of the recent New York State Museum exhibit of the same name is analytically compelling and aesthetically masterful. The book was authored by a troika of scholars based in the Cultural Education Center—Noble, Swaney, and Weiss are senior figures at the State Museum, State Archives, and State Library, respectively—and in many ways this work stands as a monument to the spirit of collaboration that seems to flourish among those institutions. The authors skillfully exploit their project’s advantageous position at the crossroads of two fundamental contextual realities of World War I: that it occurred at a time when New York was the most prosperous, populous, and powerful state in the union, and that the war took place during the “golden age of poster illustration” (xv-xvi). As a result, the authors had plenty of materials from which to draw, most especially the State Library’s voluminous Benjamin W. Arnold World War I Poster Collection, which alone contains 3,600 pieces (xvi). Strategically, the authors chose to interpret “broadly . . . the significant role played by the Empire State and its citizens during the conflict . . . interweaving the story of New York in war and utilizing artifacts within the pictorial history shown by the posters of the era” to “present a comprehensive examination of how these issues were faced, and of the importance of the state’s contributions to America’s foray into the war” (xviii).

On one level, the book serves as a potent reminder of the primacy of New York State in early twentieth-century America. The sheer scale of the state's contributions to the war effort is staggering: one in ten soldiers in the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) were New Yorkers; more than half a million New Yorkers served, and 13,956 were killed in the conflict; thirteen percent of the war's Medal of Honor winners were New Yorkers; seventy-five percent of all war materiel went through New York Harbor—along with about eighty percent of the AEF; all while a million or so New Yorkers toiled in war industries (xv, 2, 3, 47, 156). Chapter six, which explores New York's financial, industrial, and agricultural contributions, is the longest and perhaps the most edifying chapter. By the time of the Armistice, 38,000 New York firms were producing for the effort, making the Empire State the “undisputed leader” in wartime manufacturing (104-105). Numerous New York firms are profiled (106-115), and the authors note the rising presence of women in such industries (124). New York agriculture also rose to the challenge: grain crop acreage increased ten percent; oat production improved fifteen percent; thirty percent more hogs were being raised; New York dairymen were milking 33,000 cows a day; victory gardens were tilled statewide; and overall agricultural production boomed thirty percent (131-139).

While this is an impressive quantitative story, the heart of the book is the contextualization of war posters. The authors adeptly ground these artifacts in the unique circumstances of World War I, noting that while the Civil War had Fort Sumter and World War II would have Pearl Harbor, “the justifications for war in 1917 were far less tangible to the average citizen,” thus compelling an aggressive propaganda campaign under George Creel's Committee on Public Information and the hiring of noted illustrator Charles Dana Gibson to head a prolific “Division of Pictorial Publicity” (9-10). Once introduced, the posters take the starring role in much of the presentation, with a supporting cast of hundreds of photographs, prints, maps, weapons, uniforms, and other artifacts.

Chapter three provides a swift retelling of the roots of the European war, while chapter four describes the struggle between American pacifists and interventionists (47-53). Meanwhile, war raged with or without U.S. military involvement, and chapter four also includes a fascinating section on enlistment by New Yorkers in foreign armies. In the 1910s, the Empire State was home to over a million foreign-born men of fighting age (45), and the authors explore numerous examples of New Yorkers who fought for their beleaguered homelands (60-69).

Eventually, of course, the U.S. did join the fighting. Noting the particular financial, demographic, and logistical importance of the Empire State, chapter five reveals the outpouring of public enthusiasm for the effort and highlights state and local mobilization initiatives (75-78). Once again, propaganda posters are central, conveying appeals to diverse groups of New Yorkers, historical patriotic sensibilities, and outrage over atrocities

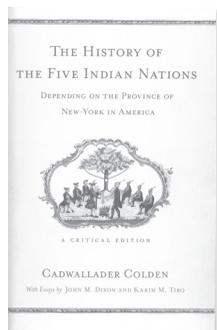
by “the Hun.” While chapter six demonstrates New York’s leadership on the home front, the equally fascinating seventh chapter continues this domestic focus by scrutinizing the reactions of diverse New Yorkers to the war—and to each other. The ethnic diversity of New York was key to this—a particularly revealing poster catalogs a Liberty Loan “honor roll,” with surnames ranging from O’Brien and Pappandrikopolous to Kowalski and Gonzales (186). Other materials are less affirmative but make the same point: “Are you 100% American? Prove it! Buy U.S. Government Bonds” (190). The chapter also documents the outburst of suspicion sweeping the nation during the war—scrutiny of German-Americans and “Enemy Aliens,” suspicion of radicals and pacifists, and fear of saboteurs and spies (190-209).

War buffs and military historians alike will appreciate chapter eight, which meticulously documents the experiences of New Yorkers serving in the AEF. It is lavishly illustrated with uniforms, insignias, weaponry, and supplies, as well as images from the front. The chapter does an excellent service in elevating the individual experiences of specific New York soldiers—some obscure, some celebrated, all receiving dignified consideration (212-213, 223-224, 235-239, 244, 250-254). Similarly, such legendary New York-centric units as the 27<sup>th</sup> “Empire” Division, the 42<sup>nd</sup> “Rainbow” Division, the 369<sup>th</sup> Infantry “Harlem Hellfighters” Regiment, and the 77<sup>th</sup> “Liberty” Division are profiled (214-216; 243-260; 262).

When New York’s soldiers returned home, they were welcomed by a grateful state, as shown in chapter nine. New York City constructed a temporary “Victory Arch,” a remarkable structure straddling Fifth Avenue at Madison Square. A number of images are offered of the “tens of thousands of doughboys” who “marched beneath the arch on their return from the battlefields of France” before it was ultimately dismantled (271, 279, 283). The chapter also includes photos and mementos of “welcome home” celebrations beyond the metropolis, in Batavia, Cohoes, Elmira, and elsewhere. Chapter ten, on postwar New York, explores important developments, including the rise of the American Legion, demobilization, and promises of benefits. In particular, the chapter makes excellent use of “the tragedy surrounding Henry Johnson,” the black war hero from Albany who returned in triumph but swiftly grew disenchanted both by pervasive racism and the lack of opportunities and support for veterans at large, and whose death, “impoverished and alone” in 1929, was made doubly tragic by the erroneous labeling of his Arlington grave. The authors note that Johnson’s sad demise “epitomized the widespread failure of the nation to adequately address veterans’ needs”: as the turgid encomiums of Armistice celebrations faded, politicians’ promises proved as ephemeral as the Victory Arch—especially for African-American vets (303). The final chapter explores global and local legacies of the war, with a useful overview of New York’s Red Scare experience, particularly the sedition investigations of the Lusk Committee (311-312).

In sum, this is a meticulously produced, well-researched, holistic, and sensitive account of New York's crucial role in World War I and the influence of that war on life in the Empire State. It is beautifully illustrated and insightfully narrated, and is a must-have for any school or public library in the state.

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***Embattled River: The Hudson and Modern American Environmentalism*, David Schuyler (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018) 266 pp.**

The beauty of the Hudson River has inspired generations of artists and activists. Through the landscapes of Hudson River School paintings and the prose of a voluminous nineteenth-century travel literature, the Hudson Highlands and the Catskill region in particular became the nation's landscape—an idealized wilderness within easy reach of the nation's largest city. That well-wooded, romantic landscape helped inspire a Progressive Era preservation movement that shaped the New York State Forest Preserve and numerous state parks up and down the river.

The Hudson also has inspired scholars of many stripes, including David Schuyler, a careful and accomplished historian. His many books have explored the history of the American landscape, including the classic *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (1986) and, more relevantly, *Sanctified Landscape: Writers, Artists, and the Hudson River Valley, 1820–1909* (2012). This later work reflects Schuyler's own attachment to the Hudson River, especially the Highlands, an attachment that has culminated in his latest work, *Embattled River*, which focuses on the struggles to protect the Hudson over the last fifty years.

*Embattled River* takes up a series of familiar and important topics, contributing to each new details and a comprehensive vision of the Hudson's beauty as an inspiration not just to the Progressive Era preservation movement, but to the modern environmental movement as well. Fittingly, Schuyler opens the book with the "Battle over Storm King," in which a small army of environmentalists—mostly working through a new organization, Scenic Hudson—outlasted Con Ed's proposal to build a power plant at one of the most scenic spots on the river. Scenic Hudson and its leaders, as it turns out, become central actors in many of the subsequent chapters, joined by other figures and organizations mobilized by Storm King, including the Hudson River Fishermen's Association and Robert Boyle, the sports writer turned activist whose lovely and powerful *The Hudson River: A Natural and*

*Unnatural History* (1969) was an early contribution to the developing field of environmental history and an effective defense of the river as both beautiful and ecologically important.

Schuyler dedicates an early chapter to the establishment and ineffective activities of the Hudson River Valley Commission, a creation of Governor Nelson Rockefeller that was seemingly designed to limit criticism of development rather than control development itself. Schuyler also takes up Pete Seeger's activism and the building of the *Clearwater*, the replica sailing vessel that continues to spread ecological understanding through a blend of art, science, and history as it stops at docks up and down the river. Here Schuyler describes how *Clearwater* linked historic preservation with ecological protection, as well as how it brought together counter-culture figures and old-money preservationists in a sometimes rocky alliance. Another chapter describing the creation of Riverkeeper, an organization that became a model for waterway protection around the world, makes good use of but expands upon John Cronin and Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s *The Riverkeepers* (1977).

Schuyler also recounts the troubling recent history of the General Electric PCB debacle, focusing on the company's efforts to avoid the large costs of river cleanup by hiding information and questioning the negative health consequences of PCB exposure. Since 1976, when the Department of Environmental Conservation banned fishing in the most polluted part of the river, ended commercial fishing everywhere on the Hudson, and warned that eating too much fish could be harmful, New Yorkers, sometimes working through organizations like Scenic Hudson, have worked to force a satisfactory solution. After a long battle, G.E. conducted some dredging, but, as Schuyler justifiably concludes, "The Hudson will long be a poisoned river" (208).

This depressing conclusion contrasts dramatically with those related to historic and natural landscape preservation. Despite ongoing—and often intense—development pressures, the Hudson retains its beauty, unscarred by the massive power plants proposed but defeated by activists, and protected by well-funded programs of purchase and easement, the latter designed to preserve an agricultural landscape and economy in perpetuity. These two very different outcomes—success in the realm of aesthetics and failure in that of river ecology—may speak to the duality of the environmental movement. The old-line preservation movement, often backed by wealthy families (in this case most prominently by DeWitt and Lila Wallace) and fundamentally conservative in its ideology, has been especially successful in the Hudson Valley. On the other hand, the science-driven movement to protect ecological diversity and diminish environmental threats to human health has been less effective. Although investments in sewage treatment plants have paid dividends, the Hudson's waters are still troubled. The riverbanks have been largely protected, the river itself not so much.

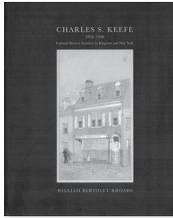
The literature on this collection of topics is extensive, and Schuyler makes good use of many of the most prominent books. These include Robert Lifset's fine *Power on the Hudson: Storm King Mountain and the Emergence of Modern American Environmentalism* (2014), which contains a much fuller account of the Storm King saga, although Schuyler's account is more lively and well-connected to subsequent environmental travails. In addition to the secondary sources, Schuyler also has mined several important manuscript collections, including the papers of Scenic Hudson and the Hudson River Valley Commission.

As is a common reaction to good books, readers may wish for more. Schuyler says very little about either end of the Hudson—New York City and its harbor get relatively little attention, and the Adirondack Mountains, perhaps more surprising, get hardly a mention. Because he spends little time in these areas, Schuyler misses an opportunity to connect the environmentalism that flowers in the 1960s with earlier efforts, some of them tremendously successful, including those that led to the creation of the Palisades Interstate Park and the Adirondack and Catskill Parks. Similarly, Schuyler misses the opportunity to connect activism in the Highlands with the broader environmental movement, so the role of activism along the Hudson in national debates and policy formation is left to speculation. Perhaps most problematic, climate change—the most pressing environmental issue of our time—garners little more than a nod from Schuyler.

Of course, wanting more from a book is in many ways a sign of success. Anyone interested in the Hudson River Valley—even those who think themselves well-versed in these topics—will find something of value in this well-researched and nicely written book. Perhaps most valuable is Schuyler's reminder that rivers have the potential to bind together disparate places and diverse individuals in powerful environmental coalitions. And ultimately, he reminds us that activism matters.

*David Stradling is the Zane L. Miller Professor of History at the University of Cincinnati.*

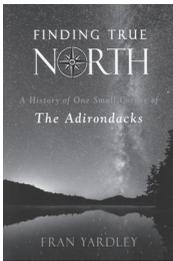
# New & Noteworthy Books



## **Charles S. Keefe 1876–1946: Colonial Revival Architect in Kingston and New York**

By William Bertolet Rhoads (Delmar, NY: Black Dome Press, 2018)  
266 pp. \$25.95 (softcover) [www.blackdomepress.com](http://www.blackdomepress.com)

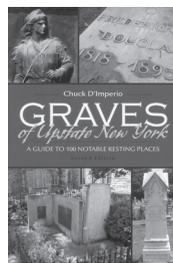
Kingston-born Keefe contributed significantly to American architecture's Colonial Revival movement. His work, however, has gone largely undocumented. Making amends for this oversight, Rhoads chronicles Keefe's early life, career in New York City, contributions to the building boom of the Roaring Twenties, impact of the Great Depression on his career, and his architectural legacy. Photographs, sketches, and architectural renderings supplement the text, while voluminous appendices document Keefe's clients, publication credits, even his will. All of this results in a detailed portrait of Keefe the man and the architect.



## **Finding True North: A History of One Small Corner of the Adirondacks**

By Fran Yardley (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2018)  
337 pp. \$24.95 (softcover) [www.sunypress.edu](http://www.sunypress.edu)

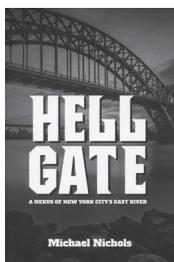
To anyone adventurous enough to explore it, the Adirondacks region offers a unique opportunity to interact with nature, history, and people. In *Finding True North*, Fran Yardley captures her interactions with all of these by sharing her own journey in the Saranac Lake area. Detailing the storied past of the Bartlett Carry Club and the enormous project she and her husband undertook to restore it to its former glory, she recounts the people and places in her Adirondack life with the genuine warmth of a master storyteller.



## **Graves of Upstate New York: A Guide to 100 Notable Resting Places**

By Chuck D'Imperio (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2018)  
392 pp. \$27.95 (softcover) [www.syracuseuniversitypress.syr.edu/](http://www.syracuseuniversitypress.syr.edu/)

It's no surprise that the Empire State has been home to a great many famous—and infamous—people. *Graves of Upstate New York* provides a unique take on the burial sites of 100 of them. For each, it offers a brief synopsis of their life and claim to fame, as well as detailed information (with a photo) about their graves. The profiled subjects, whose gravesites are organized by region, range from Lucille Ball and Harriet Tubman to Thomas Cole.



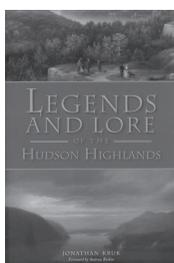
### **Hell Gate: A Nexus of New York City's East River**

By Michael Nichols (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2018)

162 pp. \$19.95 (softcover) [www.sunypress.edu](http://www.sunypress.edu)

As a section of New York City's East River, Hell Gate has much more going for it than a unique name, which dates back to the Dutch. For Michael Nichols, this narrow, mile-long tidal strait separating the Borough of Queens from Ward's Island presents a fascinating combination of past and present, and of the ever-changing relationship between land and water.

Using his own observations as well as a wide array of documented sources, he unravels the layers of history in and around Hell Gate, as well as sheds light on modern-day individuals who continue to give the landscape its character.



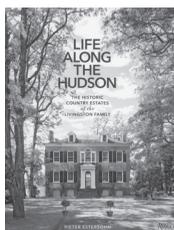
### **Legends and Lore of the Hudson Highlands**

By Jonathan Kruk (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2018)

176 pp. \$23.99 (softcover) [www.arcadiapublishing.com/Home](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com/Home)

Owing to its rugged terrain and strategic proximity to the Hudson River, the Hudson Highlands has featured prominently in American history for centuries. It also has long exuded an air of mystery. In *Legacy and Lore*, noted storyteller Jonathan Kruk combines documented facts, photos, illustrations, and a healthy bit of oral tradition into a compilation of tales

that capture the enchantment of the Highlands as well as vividly illustrate the innate value of folklore as an art form.



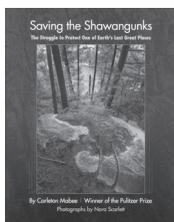
### **Life Along The Hudson: The Historic Country Estates of the Livingston Family**

By Pieter Estersohn (New York, NY: Rizzoli New York, 2018)

336 pp. \$85.00 (hardcover) [www.rizzoliusa.com](http://www.rizzoliusa.com)

Significant Hudson Valley landowners since the seventeenth century, the Livingstons have had both the resources and time to construct some truly incredible estates along the river. In *Life Along the Hudson*, thirty-

five homes constructed by the family from 1730 through the 1940s are presented via 400 color photographs that vividly display their extraordinary variety of architecture and landscape. While some of the featured properties are publicly accessible, many remain private residences—meaning this book provides a rare opportunity to “visit” them.



## **Saving the Shawangunks: The Struggle to Protect One of Earth's Last Great Places**

By Carleton Mabee (Delmar, NY: Black Dome Press, 2017)

168 pp. \$21.95 (softcover) [www.blackdomepress.com](http://www.blackdomepress.com)

Since the 1950s, preserving the natural beauty of the Shawangunks has been a battle against residential, commercial, and industrial development.

In this chronological look at the mountain range, Mabee delves into its history and beauty and also presents it as a local example of the threats natural resources face on the state, national, and global levels. Over two dozen color photographs by Nora Scarlett provide a stunning visual companion to the narrative and underscore the importance of preservation efforts at every level.

*Andrew Villani, Marist College*

## Call for Essays

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

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Illustrations or photographs that are germane to the writing should accompany the hard copy. Illustrations and photographs are the responsibility of the authors. Scanned photos or digital art must be 300 pixels per inch (or greater) at 8 in. x 10 in. (between 7 and 20 mb). No responsibility is assumed for the loss of materials. An e-mail address should be included whenever possible.

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KEY TO THE  
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