

# THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

*A Journal of Regional Studies*

**MARIST**



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## From the Editors

It is hard to imagine anyone associating George Washington with un-American activities, but our lead article reveals that some expressed just such a sentiment toward the Washington Benevolent Society during the War of 1812. The cover article, on the Springside estate of Matthew Vassar, rounds out the noteworthy presentations from our 2015 symposium dedicated to the legacy of Andrew Jackson Downing, the founding figure of American landscape architecture characterized by art scholar Morrison Heckscher as “endlessly fascinating [and] charismatic.” We want to thank Mr. Heckscher for his commentary throughout the symposium, and to recognize J. Winthrop Aldrich for his witty and inspired concluding remarks, especially his parting wisdom regarding historic preservation: “Be on the alert to say what needs to be said and do what needs to be done.”

What are the lessons and circumstances that shape an individual’s ambition and actions? The article on Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Hyde Park upbringing and our adapted Cunneen-Hackett lecture on General Jacob L. Devers provide answers to this question as it relates to these two men who influenced international events and relations. And in addition to our regular Regional History Forums and book reviews, the issue introduces a new, occasional feature called “Personal Reflection.” This first installment focuses on the beginnings of the Hudson River Valley Greenway.



*On the cover:*

Henry Gritten (British, 1818-1873), *Springside: View of Barn Complex and Gardens*, (1852). Oil on canvas. 25.5 x 37 inches. Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, gift of Thomas M. Evans, Jr., in honor of Tania Goss, class of 1959, 2015.22.3

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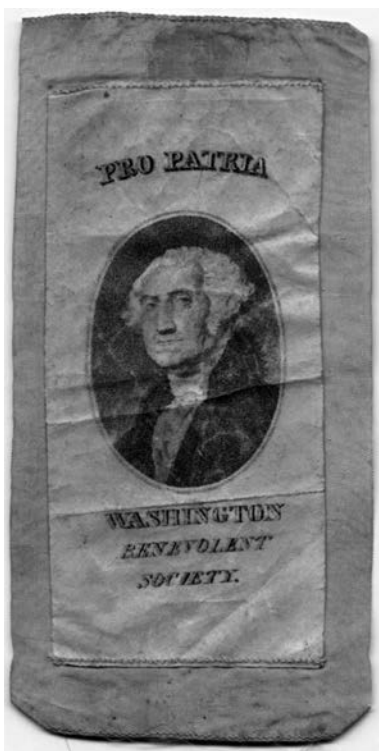
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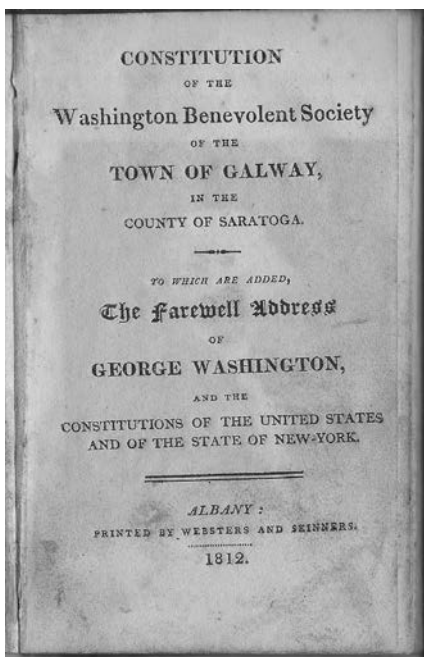
# The Delinquency of George Holcomb: Civil Disobedience in the Upper Hudson River Valley, 1812

*Jennifer Hull Dorsey*



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Title page of a chapbook for  
the Town of Galway Chapter of the  
Washington Benevolent Society.  
Image courtesy of the Montgomery  
County Historical Society



On September 5, 1812, Captain Pliny Miller ordered George Holcomb to prepare for service with the United States Army. He was instructed to pack “a knapsack, blanket and one day’s provision” and report for duty. In previous weeks, New York militiamen and regular army soldiers had descended on the headquarters of the Northern Division of the U.S. Army, located at Greenbush, where they awaited orders to “proceed to the frontiers as soon as they are organized.” This combined military force joined well-wishers at the Dutch Church in Troy a few days before their deployment to hear a farewell address from the Reverend Samuel Blatchford. The reverend warned them against profanity and intemperance, prayed for their safe return, and distributed bibles donated by the Albany Bible Society. In his closing remarks, Blatchford reminded the soldiers that “your country looks on and marks your line of march: let your conduct be so exemplary that America may boast of her sons.” The next day the army crossed over the Hudson River and began a westward march to Sackets Harbor.<sup>1</sup>

George Holcomb had just turned twenty-one in the summer of 1812. He was not a boy, nor was he a man by the standards of his Connecticut-born Yankee parents. He lived with his parents and worked as a farmhand for his father and elder brother in Stephentown, New York. His parents and siblings were tenants on the estate of Stephen Van Rensselaer, major general of the New York Militia. Holcomb’s father and many of his neighbors were Revolutionary War veterans. He knew as well as anyone the martial duties expected of young men in the early Republic. Holcomb also knew military service would confer more tangible rewards. For a three-month stint he would receive a gun and, potentially, a bounty of either cash or land. Such bounties successfully attracted 20,000 men to enlist for the duration of the war, and enabled many veterans of the War of 1812 to give up tenancy in the East for freeholding in the West.<sup>2</sup>

The War of 1812 presented George Holcomb and his generation with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to live up to the legacy of the Revolutionary generation. And yet, Holcomb was not among the recruits encamped at Greenbush Cantonment in September 1812. He was delinquent—a draft dodger in modern parlance. On September 12, he decided “to keep out of the way of being called into the United States service” and fled to Massachusetts. His choice to evade the draft illustrates a curious fact about the history of New York State in the War of 1812 era. New York produced more enlistments than any other state, but this mobilization followed a distinctly political pattern. According to historian John Brooke, “Republican towns sent men to war”; Federalist towns did not. Stephentown and most towns within Rensselaer County certainly qualified as bastions of Federalist convention. Ten of the county’s thirteen electoral districts were safely Federalist. As an example, in the 1809 state election, five times as many Stephentown

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1 “Diary of George Holcomb,” Holcomb Family Papers, 1805-1889, New York State Library Manuscripts and Special Collections. Record 11835 (Box 1, Folder 1, September 5, 1812). Hereafter, Holcomb, “Diary,” date. NYSL/MSC. (Record 11835). “The Northern Army,” *Lansingburgh Gazette*, September 1, 1812. Bound and Unbound Newspaper Collection. NYSL/MSC. (Volume 3379). Rev. Samuel Blatchford, “A Farewell Address, Delivered in the Dutch Church,” (Albany, Websters & Skinners, 1812), 15. Early American Imprints, Series 2, no. 24889.

2 On enlistments and New York see J.C.A. Stagg, “Enlisted Men in the United States Army, 1812-1815: A Preliminary Survey,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 43 (October 1986): 629-639.

voters cast ballots for the Federalist candidate (322) for the Assembly than for his Republican rival (66). In the adjacent district of Nassau, the Federalist candidate won three-to-one (256 to 66). In Berlin, north of Stephentown, the margin of victory for the Federalist candidate was slightly smaller but still decisive: 191 to 140. As late as 1818, a Federalist candidate won fifty-two percent of the countywide vote for the Assembly seat.<sup>3</sup>

A long-forgotten political organization known as the Washington Benevolent Society played a part in sustaining this ideological uniformity. The society disappeared almost as quickly as it had developed, making it difficult for historians to assess how it worked, its efficacy, and its legacy. Organized in the early 1800s, the Washington Benevolent Society was the electioneering arm of the Federalist Party. Its stated purpose was to engage, educate, and mobilize voters in opposition to Democratic Republican measures in Washington, D.C., and Albany.<sup>4</sup> The society outlined its political philosophy and ideals for the young republic in *Washington's Legacy*, a small chapbook that included a portrait and short biography of Washington as well as an abbreviated copy of Washington's Farewell Address. Local chapters tailored these books for their membership to include the group's constitution and by-laws, but certain themes reappear in all of the society's publications. Everywhere, Washingtonians pledged to "collect and diffuse correct information on matters respecting our state and national affairs" and to educate voters "in the choice of our rulers." They promoted "a free interchange of sentiment and opinion" because the "welfare of a community depends upon the preservation of public morals and the progress of information." They professed to "cherish and perpetuate the memory of the illustrious George Washington, whose eminent virtue, inestimable public service, and meritorious example, entitle his memory to every mark of respectful consideration from a grateful people." They also promised to do good works "diffusing as widely as possible the principles of morality, charity, and brotherly love, without which no people can prosper, no nation long exist."<sup>5</sup>

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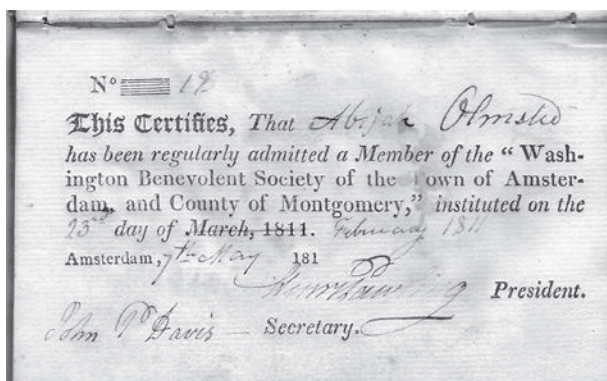
3 John L. Brooke, *Columbia Rising: Civil Life on the Upper Hudson from the Revolution to the Age of Jackson* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 422. "New York Election 1809 for State Assembly in Rensselaer County"; "New York Election 1813 for State Assembly in Rensselaer County" and "New York State Election 1813 for Governor" in Lampi Collection of American Electoral Returns, 1788-1825, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. Available online at "A New Nation Votes: American Election Returns 1787-1825" <http://elections.lib.tufts.edu>

4 Summary histories of the Washington Benevolent Society include David Hackett Fischer, "Federalists and the 'French System of Fraternity': The Birth of the Washington Benevolent Societies" in *Revolution of American Conservatism: The Federalist Party in the Era of Jefferson Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965) and Dixon Ryan Fox, "New Methods and a Victory" in *The Decline of Aristocracy in the Politics of New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1919). On the Washington Benevolent Society in New England, see William Alexander Robinson, "The Washington Benevolent Society in New England: A Phase of Politics during the War of 1812," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 49 (Mar. 1916): 274-286, and Matthew H. Crocker, "New England Federalism on the Attack: The Washington Benevolent Society and Turning Gardens into Republican Farms, 1800-1819, in *The Magic of the Many: Josiah Quincy and the Rise of Mass Politics in Boston 1800-1830* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).

5 "The Farewell Address of George Washington to which are added the Constitutions of the United States and of the State of New York; and the Constitution of the Washington Benevolent Society, of the Town of Amsterdam, in the County of Montgomery" (Albany: Websters & Skinner, 1811), n.p., and "Constitution of the Washington Benevolent Society of the Town of Galway, in the County of Saratoga" (Albany: Websters & Skinner, 1812), n.p., Montgomery County Historical Society, Old Fort Johnson, NY (MCHS).



Cover of a chapbook for the Town of Galway Chapter of the Washington Benevolent Society. Image courtesy of the Montgomery County Historical Society



Inscription page of a chapbook for the Town of Galway Chapter of the Washington Benevolent Society. Image courtesy of the Montgomery County Historical Society

The society experienced a surge in membership after 1807. The Embargo Act of 1807 had closed the port of New York City with devastating consequences for the agricultural economy of the Hudson River Valley. Across the region, agricultural prices and property values dropped steadily. Farm prices rebounded after 1809, but the price of imported goods also soared. Within five-years, there were at least eight chapters of the Washington Benevolent Society within twenty miles of George Holcomb's home in Stephentown. Washingtonians gathered in Troy, Berlin, and Pittstown in Rensselaer County; Hudson in Columbia County, and across the state line in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. The membership included rural and urban laborers, clerks, shopkeepers, mechanics, and urban professionals, all united in their opposition to Republican trade policies that had devastated the economy of the northeastern United States. By design, chapter meetings followed the calendar of local politics. As an example, the Berlin chapter met on "the last Wednesday preceding the annual Town meeting each year to elect officers." The Washingtonians also sponsored emotionally charged public functions

that coincided with civic holidays: Independence Day, George Washington's birthday, the anniversary of Washington's first inauguration (April 30), and statewide elections. One such celebration in Troy in 1812 included a procession of members, a display of the "Standards and Banners, and music from the Washington Band."<sup>6</sup>

The Washington Benevolent Society capitalized on the frustrations and anxieties of voters in the upper Hudson River Valley. In speeches, pamphlets, and locally published partisan newspapers, the Washingtonians charged that the Democratic Republicans had led the nation adrift, but given a chance by the electorate, the Federalist Party would right the course. Robert "O.K." Bennett's address to the Albany chapter of the Washington Benevolent Society in January 1811 exemplifies the style and substance of Washingtonian rhetoric. Bennett characterized Democratic Republicans leaders as men "who have willfully and wickedly, or through ignorance, cowardice, or imbecility, brought desolation on the once happiest nation on earth." He urged Albany Washingtonians, true "friends of their country and of the constitution," to step up and oppose "the destructive measures of a corrupt administration." He equated civic engagement with true patriotism and pressed his listeners to do "what is fair and just, amidst discouragement and opposition" and even in the face of "censure and reproach." A change in government was the only remedy for the nation's woes. Disgruntled voters must go to the polls "to place men in power who shall have the wisdom to guide us in the path of prosperity and peace."<sup>7</sup>

The society's electioneering energized New York Federalists and helped revive the Federalist Party as an opposition party in Washington, D.C., and Albany. In 1808, the New York Congressional delegation included just two Federalists (and fifteen Republicans), but two years later it had six Federalists (and nine Republicans). The following year the Federalists gained additional seats in the New York State Senate and Assembly and after sitting out the 1807 gubernatorial elections, the party challenged Governor Daniel Tompkins in 1810. Washingtonians rallied for Jonas Platt and the partisan press urged its readership to vote for "Platt, Commerce, and the Constitution." Tompkins prevailed, but the Federalist Party would challenge the incumbent governor again in 1813 and 1816.<sup>8</sup>

George Holcomb joined the Washington Benevolent Society in June 1812. He documented his brief but intense experience as a Washingtonian in a diary where he

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- 6 On the economic woes of the Upper Hudson River Valley see David Maldwyn Ellis, *Landlords and Farmers in the Hudson-Mohawk Region, 1790-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1946), 120-127. "Constitution of the Berlin Branch of the Washington Benevolent Society of the County of Rensselaer" (Albany, 1814), n.p. Early American Imprints, Series 2, no. 33589 (filmed). "Washington's Birth-Day!," *Lansingburgh Gazette*, February 25, 1812. Bound and Unbound Newspaper Collection. NYSL/MS. (Volume 3379). David Waldstreicher describes the evolution of these public celebrations in "Celebratory Politics as the Early Republic's Public Sphere," *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
- 7 Robert O.K. Bennett, "An address delivered before the Washington Benevolent Society of the City and County of Albany on 14th January, 1811." Early American Imprints, Series 2, no. 27875 (filmed), 5 and 8.
- 8 On these elections see Fox, *Decline of Aristocracy*, 109-116, and Harvey Strum, "New York Federalists and Opposition to the War of 1812," *World Affairs* 142 (Winter 1979-1980), 171. On the resurgence of the Federalist Party in the War of 1812 era see Philip J. Lampi, "The Federalist Party Resurgence, 1808-1816." *Journal of the Early Republic* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 255-81.

scrupulously recorded his daily work routines between 1805 and 1856. His account presents a unique opportunity to understand this partisan organization's role in a civil disobedience movement that swept through Rensselaer and Columbia counties in the summer and fall of 1812. Between 1807 and 1811, the Washington Benevolent Society campaigned to "get out the vote," but the prospect of war with Great Britain in 1812 gave rise to more aggressive political behavior. The society not only challenged the Republican rationale for war; it promoted draft evasion as a civic duty and Christian virtue. Holcomb's account illustrates the society's appeal to the people of the upper Hudson River Valley.<sup>9</sup>

In 1811, George Holcomb showed no interest in local, state, or national politics. He was preoccupied with school, work, and the affairs of his parents, siblings, and neighbors. But by early 1812, the Republican leadership actively talked of war with Great Britain. In February 1812, the local press reported that Governor Tompkins had instructed the New York State Legislature "to stand prepared for the approaching contest." By this, Tompkins meant that he anticipated the federal government would activate the New York State militia for national service. In the early Republic, this practice of mobilizing state militias for national defense was known as militia detachment. In 1792 and 1795, the United States Congress adopted legislation that empowered the President to put militia units under the direction of the regular army to "execute the laws of the Union, to suppress insurrection, and repel invasions." Militia detachment was meant as a republican alternative to a permanent, professional army—a concept that had little popular or political support in the aftermath of the American Revolution. In the 1800s, the Executive branch exercised its detachment power sparingly and always in response to a defined security crisis. As an example, in 1808, Congress approved the mobilization of New York State militiamen to assist the regular army in enforcing the Embargo Act of 1807. Specifically, the militiamen were directed to assist the army in suppressing cross-border smuggling in the Lake Champlain Valley. The 1808 detachment act required Congressional approval for renewal, but Congress repealed it as soon as Thomas Jefferson stepped down from the presidency.<sup>10</sup>

A few months before an actual declaration of war, Governor Tompkins consented to detach 13,500 militiamen to service with the regular army. In April 1812, Hudson River Valley newspapers published details about the anticipated draft, which would begin in May, and an explanation of how the draftees would be organized into the regular army. Anger, confusion, and public debate ensued. The April 30 edition of the *Albany Gazette* scolded New York Congressman Peter B. Porter for irresponsibly comparing

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9 Historian John L. Brooke mentions Holcomb's decision to evade the draft on page 422 of *Columbia Rising*, but this essay describes and contextualizes this incident. Martin Bruegel makes extensive use of Holcomb's work-related diary entries in *Farm, Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780-1860* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), but does not examine Holcomb's experience as a draft evader.

10 "Governor Tompkins address legislature-takes up the draft," *Lansingburgh Gazette*, February 4, 1812; "A Conscription!" *Lansingburgh Gazette*, April 28, 1812. Bound and Unbound Newspaper Collection. NYSL/MS. (Volume 3379). The role of the New York militia in embargo enforcement is discussed in Harvey Strum, "Smuggling in the War of 1812," *History Today* 29 (August 1979), 532. Edward Skeen reviews the history of detachment in "Congress and Military Mobilization" in *Citizen Soldiers in the War of 1812* (Lexington, KY: 1999).

a proposal to conquer Canada “to a party of pleasure.” On May 12, the *Lansingburgh Gazette* reprinted an “extract of a letter” originally printed in the *Albany Gazette* that questioned the likelihood of war even as the draft was scheduled to begin the following week. The editors wondered aloud how President James Madison planned “to drive the eastern states into war.” After all, “with the exception of a very few desperadoes,” most people “see nothing but ruin, distress and disgrace arising from such a measure of madness.” As if to answer this question, the *Albany Gazette* assured readers on May 28 that notwithstanding the rumors of war, “[G]entlemen in this city, of the first standing, and who are presumed to be in the confidence of government [in Washington, D.C.], hold the contrary opinion, and say there will be no war.”<sup>11</sup>

In the spring of 1812, George Holcomb had joined with three other young men to share the subscription price of a newspaper, and what he read surely made him queasy. As a rule, Holcomb did not share feelings or opinions in his diary, but his 1812 entries indicate his anxiety about the pending draft of New York State militiamen. In May, he noted, “I was ordered to training by Sergeant William Dixon to appear at Niles Inn to stand for the draft.” He ignored the order, choosing instead to spend the day planting cucumbers and peas, because he was sure that he was ineligible for service. He explained his absence: “[O]n account of I am hard of hearing and received a certificate Sept the 10, 1810 and have not Drilled from that day to this.” In spite of his absence, or perhaps because of it, Holcomb discovered he “was put in the draft and drafted.” The next day he went to see two local physicians to discuss a medical deferment. “Doc Main” assured him that he was unfit for duty because he “had been unwell the winter past and the other he believes [me] hard of hearing.” Holcomb wrote that Dr. King, a surgeon, concurred he was “not fit for military duty.” According to Holcomb, King then “wrote a line” to Dr. William K. Scott, the regimental surgeon, who also examined Holcomb and found him “deficient.” This was not the first time that Scott had examined Holcomb. In fact, it was Scott who had prepared the original “stificate” excusing him from military duty in September 1810 on the basis that he was “hard of hearing.” Scott promptly agreed to approve Holcomb’s “final discharge” from military service and recommend that the commanding officer find “a volunteer to fill [his] place.”<sup>12</sup>

Having received the coveted medical deferment from service, Holcomb “made Scott a present 50cts” for his efforts. It was the second time he had paid for such a certificate. In September 1810, he paid Scott “one dollar for helping me on the account of getting clear.” Were these presents, as Holcomb claimed, or bribes? Years later, Governor Tompkins notified Brigadier General Samuel Haight of Greene County that he intended to prosecute officers and soldiers for receiving money for certificates. Either

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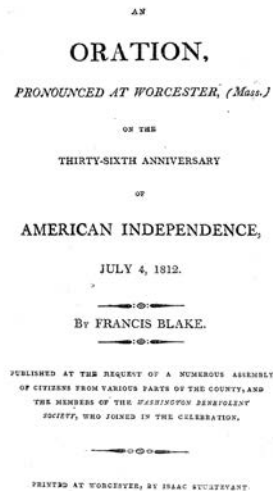
11 “Invasion! Invasion!” *Albany Gazette*, April 30, 1812; “Extract of a letter, dated New York, April 30, 1812,” *Lansingburgh Gazette*, May 12, 1812. Bound and Unbound Newspaper Collection NYSL/MSC. (Volume 3379). *Albany Gazette*, May 28, 1812, Readex (Firm). 2004. *America’s Historical Newspapers*.

12 Holcomb, “Diary,” May 11 and 15, 1812. NYSL/MSC. (Record 11835).

way, within two days of the draft selection, Holcomb's father notified the commanding officer that his son's "name on the drafted roll should be erased."<sup>13</sup>

On July 2, Holcomb curtly noted in his diary that "Congress Declared War against Great Britain." Of greater interests to him and others in Rensselaer County was the news that the Federalist governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts had refused to comply with the federal government's request for forty-one Massachusetts militia companies. On July 14, the *Lansingburgh Gazette* reported Governor Caleb Strong was "disapproving of the War with Great Britain," and then reprinted the salient points of the Governor's July 3 General Order, in which he denied the request. A few months later, Strong defended his defiance in an address to the Massachusetts Legislature. He challenged the constitutionality of militia detachment, arguing "many of the most important attributes of sovereignty are given by the Constitution to the Government of the U.S. yet there are some which still belong to the State Governments; of these, one of the most essential is the entire control of the militias." Strong asserted that to comply with the order was to broker away the constitutional rights of the sovereign state of Massachusetts. Even more troubling, it would give the federal government the means to form a standing army and prosecute "an offensive war."<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, across New England, the Washington Benevolent Society began making a case for civil disobedience. In an Independence Day address in Worcester, Massachusetts, speaker Francis Blake encouraged a "citizen's revolt." Blake insisted that Americans have a "right of resistance"



Blake, Francis, 1774-1817. *An Oration, Pronounced At Worcester, (Mass.) On the Thirty-sixth Anniversary of American Independence, July 4, 1812.* Printed at Worcester [Mass.]: By Isaac Sturtevant, 1812

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- 13 Holcomb, "Diary," September 10, 1810. NYSL/MSC. (Record 11835). Letter from Daniel Tompkins to Brigadier General Samuel Haight, September 17, 1814, *Public Papers of Daniel D. Tompkins, Governor of New York, 1807-1817*, Volume 3 (Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, 1902), 531. The New York State Militia Law of 1809 prohibited surgeons from receiving compensation for exams or certificates. There are references to prosecutions of surgeons for accepting payment for certificates (false and genuine) in *New York State Assembly, Documents of the Assembly of the State of New York*, Volume 21, (1898), 302 and 522.
- 14 Holcomb, "Diary," July 2, 1812. NYSL/MSC. (Record 11835). *Lansingburgh Gazette*, July 14, 1812. Bound and Unbound Newspaper Collection. NYSL/MSC. (Volume 3379). "The speech of His Excellency Governor Strong delivered before the legislature of Massachusetts, October 16, 1812" (Boston: Russell and Cutler, 1812), 5 and 8. <http://openlibrary.org/books/OL23338939M>. On the nullification of the detachment order by governors of New England, see J.C.A. Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War: Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early American Republic, 1783-1830* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 258-262 and Richard Buel, *America on the Brink: How the Political Struggle over the War of 1812 Almost Destroyed the Young Republic* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 164-167.
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and should apply it to end “predatory warfare.” He argued that anti-war or anti-draft sentiment “may be individually or collectively expressed,” but he clearly favored a collective approach. He urged communities to form anti-war “assemblies” in order to give the movement more “force and concentration.” Blake imagined that these assemblies “may embrace a Town or a County—a Commonwealth or a Continent,” and that such collective action would work because “our rulers may declare war...but, in a government like ours, without the aid of popular opinion, a war, thank Heaven, cannot long be supported.” He assured the audience: “For the exercise of this right of resistance, no man, however exalted will dare denounce you as ‘perjured traitors!’”<sup>15</sup>

On June 23, Holcomb joined the Berkshire County chapter of the Washington Benevolent Society. He wrote, “I went to Mr. John Gardner’s and joined the Washingtonian [sic] Society—a branch from Pittsfield, to Hancock, both in Berkshire County and Massachusetts State.” His elder brother Sylvester gave him one dollar for the membership fee. Upon his induction, he received the Society’s “Badge of Honor” and his copy of *Washington’s Legacy*. On July 4, he returned to Pittsfield with a friend to attend a Washington Benevolent Society-sponsored Independence Day celebration. Of the event he wrote, “[A]ll we Washingtonians Celebrated the day—there was about 1400 hundred members walked in procession besides a large concourse of other citizens.”<sup>16</sup>

Holcomb felt safe and patriotic marching alongside other Washingtonians. He did not want to serve, and he may have evaded the draft under any circumstance, but the society assured him there was honor in political dissent. More important, the size of this crowd made evident to him that his worries about war, and especially the draft, were broadly shared. Whatever choice he made going forward, Holcomb was assured of some community support.

This rally occurred two weeks after Congress declared war, and Holcomb surely listened attentively to the address by William C. Jarvis, a local lawyer who would rise to become speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives in the 1820s. For months, the Washingtonians and the Federalist press had railed against Republicans who made light of war, but now, war was imminent. Surely, the crowd looked to this speaker, a presumed leader in the emerging anti-war movement, for direction. Predictably, Jarvis asked his audience to consider “What would Washington say, my Countrymen, could he awake from his tomb, and survey the measure which at this time forces itself upon our minds?” He then asserted the right of a citizen to act according to one’s conscience. Yes, citizens “are pledged to support the federal constitution, to obey the constitutional mandates of [the] government.” At the same time, every American citizen had “by the constitution of [the] country, a right to exercise [their] judgment in relation to the expediency of the war.”<sup>17</sup>

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15 Francis Blake, “An oration, pronounced at Worcester, (Mass.) on the thirty-sixth anniversary of American independence, July 4, 1812.” Early American Imprints, Series 2, no. 24888 (filmed), 25.

16 Holcomb, “Diary,” June 23 and July 4, 1812. NYSL/MS. (Record 11835).

17 William C. Jarvis, “An oration, delivered at Pittsfield, before the Washington Benevolent Society of the County of Berkshire, on the 4th July, 1812.” Early American Imprints, Series 2, no. 25733 (filmed), 10-11.



Holcomb returned to work in the month after the rally, convinced he was erased from the draft rolls. He harvested winter rye, pulled flax, hayed, and weeded. He attended religious meetings at the Presbyterian and Baptist churches and singing school. He was justifiably stunned when Captain Miller ordered him to prepare for service with the army on September 5. This time Holcomb sought counsel from his neighbor, Hosea Moffitt, a Revolutionary War veteran and stalwart Federalist. Moffitt had served as Justice of the Peace, Town Clerk, Supervisor, a New York Assemblyman, and most recently Sheriff of Rensselaer County. Moffitt also had run for Congress in 1806 and narrowly lost to Republican Josiah Masters (1,222 votes to 1,283). Moffitt assured Holcomb he was not obliged “to go in to the service if [he] paid the fine” and he was not cleared for service.<sup>18</sup>

All through the summer, citizens met in town meetings to determine how they would respond to the call up of militiamen. The *Lansingburgh Gazette* reported on June 9 that when “the Young Men of the town of Greenwich” learned that their militia would be sent to Sackets Harbor, they met and decided: “[T]o declare unanimously and publicly, that they do most pointedly disapprove the recent measures.” Holcomb noted in his own diary that the residents of Stephentown held their own meeting on September 1, “to know the minds of the people whether they are for war or not.” Two days later, the Rensselaer County residents met in a countywide assembly at Washington Hall in Troy, where they resolved to defy the detachment order. Finally, on September 8, the *Lansingburgh Gazette* printed the resolutions of that meeting. The participants challenged the assertion that the war “was necessary, expedient or just” and called on “the friends of peace and liberty throughout the Union, to unite their efforts with ours, by a constitutional change of rulers, to restore to our abused country the blessings of peace.” They called the draft of the militia an “assumption of power, unwarranted by the constitution, dangerous to the rights and privileges of the good people of this state.” The assembly agreed to organize a committee of correspondents, which included Hosea Moffitt, to “confer with the friends of peace in other parts of the state.” Finally, the participants stated clearly their intent to support young men who opted to evade the militia draft: “In vain will government expect that the independent yeomanry of our country, dragged from their farms by injustice so flagrant, will achieve anything worthy of the soldiers of freedom.”<sup>19</sup>

The Washington Benevolent Society’s campaign against the draft proved remarkably effective. On September 15, the *Lansingburgh Gazette* reported that of the 860 militiamen drafted from Columbia and Rensselaer counties, only 380 “appeared at the rendezvous; and these bro’t with them but about 50 muskets, and perhaps a dozen blankets and knapsacks.” In October 1812, the pro-war Republican press of Albany charged the Washingtonians had “proved themselves the ministers of discord and are

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18 Holcomb, “Diary,” September 5, 1812. NYSL/MSC. (Record 11835). *History, Art & Archives, U.S. House of Representatives*, “MOFFITT, Hosea,” <http://history.house.gov/People/Detail/18385> (July 25, 2017)

19 “Greenwich Meeting,” *Lansingburgh Gazette*, June 16, 1812 and “County Convention,” *Lansingburgh Gazette*, September 8, 1812. Bound and Unbound Newspaper Collection. NYSL/MSC. (Volume 3379). Holcomb, “Diary,” September 1, 1812. NYSL/MSC. (Record 11835).

therefore the just objects of public contempt.” In greater New England, Republican-dominated county committees passed resolutions condemning the Washingtonians. Some proposed committees of safety to monitor the society’s activities. In 1814, the *New Hampshire Patriot* concluded: “It is as evident as the sun at midday that their objects are not only political, but intended to overthrow the present republican administration.”<sup>20</sup>

Such anxiety about the society’s political activism only dissipated with the debacle of the Hartford Convention. In late 1814, Federalist ideologues organized a convention of party leaders to develop additional strategies to protest the war. Among the more extreme ideas was a proposal that the predominately Federalist states of New England secede from the United States and form a New England Confederacy. The Hartford Convention overlapped with peace talks in Ghent, as well as Andrew Jackson’s decisive victory at the Battle of New Orleans, and proved a blunder from which the party would never recover. By January 1815, the war was over, Andrew Jackson was a national hero, and most Americans associated the Federalist Party and its New England leadership with obstructionism, uncivil disobedience, and even treason.<sup>21</sup>

And what of the handful of militiamen from Rensselaer and Columbia counties who reported for duty at Greenbush Cantonment in September 1812? Many of them likely came from the militantly Republican town of Pittstown. Its voters consistently supported Republican candidates in Assembly elections between 1809 and 1816 as well as Daniel D. Tompkins in the 1810 and 1813 gubernatorial elections. Jonathan Read was among the Pittstown youth encamped at Greenbush. Like Holcomb, his political identity evolved in reaction to the outbreak of the War of 1812, but unlike Holcomb, he sincerely believed the war was necessary to preserve American trade rights and the honor of the young Republic. He kept a memo book during his tour of duty that drips with the language of Republican nationalism. On his westward march, he qualified the civilians he met as either “good Republicans” or “Tories.” Good Republicans toasted his company, shared supplies, and “wished us good success in going forth to defend the cause of our ingeered [sic] country.” Tories grouched when militiamen camped, drilled, or paraded in their communities. Read enjoyed agitating war opponents in Montgomery County, noting that “we mounted our guard and bid them defiance.” When he arrived in Sackets Harbor on Sunday, October 4, his militia unit greeted his “Excellency” Governor Tompkins with a “salute of fifteen guns.” The governor extended his appreciation by offering Read and his comrades “five dollars to get some refreshment for the guard.”<sup>22</sup>

Read never exchanged fire with the enemy, and by his own account, nothing much happened on his short tour of duty, but he advanced the cause by receiving

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20 “Conscripts!,” *Lansingburgh Gazette*, September 15, 1812, Bound and Unbound Newspaper Collection (Volume 3379) NYSL/MS. “At a meeting of the Republicans of the city of Albany and town of Colonie, at the house of Jared Skinner, inn-keeper, in the city of Albany, on the 30th day of October, 1812.” Early American Imprints, Series 2, no. 25242 (filmed). Robinson, “The Washington Benevolent Society in New England,” 279.

21 On the Hartford Convention and its consequences for the Federalist Party see Buel, *America on the Brink*, and Joseph F. Stoltz III, “IT TAUGHT OUR ENEMIES A LESSON: The Battle of New Orleans and the Republican Destruction of the Federalist Party,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 71, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 112-27.

22 Jonathan Read, “Memorandum Book of Jonathan Read,” n.p., Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, New York (RCHS).

seven Canadian defectors who “took the oath to be true to the United States.” These defectors affirmed for Read what Democratic Republicans had insisted all along: “[T]his is the only place where the goddess of liberty dares to lift her head.” Read was proud of his service and exasperated by those who did not share his enthusiasm for the cause. He participated in two courts martial for three different militiamen charged with abandoning their posts. According to Read, the officer corps required two deserters to “serve out their time of Absence and lose one half month pay and ride a wooden horse thirty minutes before the brigade” while a fifer played the Rogues March. Read recognized the justice in the sentences. In fact, he expected the dishonor of desertion “twill always be flung at them while they live [and serve as] a warning to others not to be guilty of the like crime.”<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, the anti-draft, anti-war press in the upper Hudson River Valley regularly published accounts of U.S. soldiers abusing drafted militiamen. The August 17 edition of the *Albany Gazette* included news “that drafted militia [in South Carolina] had mutinied on being ordered on fatigue, and were driven to their duty at the point of the bayonet.” On September 1, the *Troy Gazette* reported on the mock execution of deserters at Greenbush. The militiamen awaiting deployment for the frontier “were under arms to witness the execution of two deserters” who were “marched into the centre of the square, but were pardoned without the formality of even blank cartridges.” On September 8, the *Lansingburgh Gazette* reported that two regiments of U.S. infantry consisting of 1,400 men passed through Troy on their way from Greenbush to Plattsburgh when “a soldier fell from one of [the batteaux] opposite Waterford, and no attempt being made to save him, he was drowned.” The same press routinely referred to detached militiamen as “Conscripts”—a term that conjured up images of forced laborers.

Such news affected Holcomb. A few days before he left for Massachusetts, he wrote in his diary that a unit of 300 U.S. volunteers had started a march from Pittsfield to Burlington, Vermont, and “one soldier did not quite obey orders and the officers kicked and whopped him so bad that before he got to Williamstown he died.” With hundreds of regular soldiers and militiamen streaming into Rensselaer County, Holcomb justly described his departure from Stephentown on September 13 as “an escape from home.” He feared being caught, but took comfort in knowing he had the support not only of his community but his family. In fact, his parents organized the getaway to his uncle’s home in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts.<sup>24</sup>

On the day of his departure, Holcomb walked with his older brother William as far as the top of Hancock Mountain in Berkshire County, Massachusetts. He met his uncle Levi Pease in Pittsfield and together they continued by wagon to Shrewsbury.

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23 Read, “Memorandum Book,” n.p., RCHS.

24 “Mutiny,” *Albany Gazette*, August 17, 1812, Readex (Firm). 2004. *America’s Historical Newspapers*; “Militia service-public execution of deserters in Greenbush,” *Troy Gazette*, September 1, 1812, Bound and Unbound Newspaper Collection NYSL/MSC; and “Military Movement,” *Lansingburgh Gazette*, September 8, 1812. Bound and Unbound Newspaper Collection. NYSL/MSC. (Volume 3379). Holcomb, “Diary,” September 8 and 12, 1812. NYSL/MSC. (Record 11835).

The day before he left, he borrowed five dollars from a family member and agreed to pay it back “with interest,” indicating that he always intended to return to New York. Holcomb stayed away until November 1813, but his siblings periodically sent news from Stephentown. In October, his sister Miriam reported “there has been no inquiry for draughted men.” She also relayed an unconfirmed (and ultimately false) report that the local militia companies had been captured by the British. Ironically, Holcomb’s escape put him out of the way of the draft and an epidemic that struck Stephentown. In February 1813, he learned from his brother William that their sister Eleanor and brother Samuel were both very sick with a fever “prevalant in this part of the country.” Their aged mother also was “not very well.” Four months later, Miriam reported everyone had survived the fever, but they counted themselves lucky. “We have all escaped death which is very remarkable in so large a family.”<sup>25</sup>

While Holcomb was away, voters in Rensselaer County sent Hosea Moffitt to Washington, D.C. Moffitt was among a cohort of Federalist freshmen who rode into Congress on a wave of voter discontent with the 1812 declaration of war. He learned rather quickly that while the anti-war sentiment was broad and deep with the electorate of the upper Hudson River Valley, the Federalist minority in Congress had little hope of effecting meaningful change on the Republican war strategy. He complained about the heat “either from Democracy predominant, or the Southern Latitude,” as well as the futility of his work. Congressmen spent their time, “debating on contested elections, resolutions, settling some abstract point of order, or mending, some old Obsolete Rule of the House.” The Republicans seemed intent “to break down the Minority,” and the minority, aware of their impotence, would hold the Republicans “uneasy on the Floor Squawking in the Nature of the thing, whether the tune shall be sung tweedle dum or De.” His only “consolation” was that “when we do nothing in effect we do no hurt.”<sup>26</sup>

Moffitt believed the best strategy for the Federalist Party in Congress was to do nothing at all: “Let the Democrats manage the thing in their own way.” Instead, the party should focus on educating Americans about “the imbecility of the Administration to Carry on the war with a possibility of success, with the force of the country divided in opinion, the manifest injustice of their offensive war as it respects the unoffending Civilians of Canada.” Moffitt’s ally in Congress, Representative John Lovett of Albany, shared this negative view of Congress, which he called a “Legislative Newgate,” but he was pessimistic about the party’s prospects for ascension to the majority. On June 9, 1813, Lovett expressed his exasperation with the American electorate in a letter to

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25 “Letter from Miriam Holcomb to George Holcomb,” (October 3, 1812), “Letter from William Warner Holcomb to George Holcomb,” (February 23, 1813), and “Letter from Miriam Holcomb to George Holcomb,” (June 17, 1813), all found in Holcomb Family Papers, 1805-1889, “Holcomb Family Correspondence, 1812-1829.” NYSL/MS. Record 11835. (Box 6, Folder 1).

26 “New York 1812 Election for Congress District 10,” “A New Nation Votes.” <http://elections.lib.tufts.edu/catalog/tufts:ny.uscongress10.1812> “Letter from Hosea Moffitt at Washington to Joseph Alexander,” June 1813. Historic Cherry Hill and the Edward Frisbee Center for Collections & Research. John Lovett Papers, (Box 3, Folder 18).

Stephen Van Rensselaer. “When, when will our poor distracted, bleeding country know her real friends?”<sup>27</sup>

On June 20, 1813, Holcomb noted with some relief that his father “wished me to come home as quick the times will do,” with the promise that he would put part “if not all” of the family farm under his care when he returned. New York State never caught or punished Holcomb for his delinquency, but not for lack of effort. Governor Tompkins issued general courts martial in 1812, 1814, and again in 1817 to prosecute those “delinquents in the Militia of the State of New York, who failed, neglected or refused to obey the orders of the commander in Chief of the said State.” Some of these arrests began soon after Holcomb left for Massachusetts. Jonathan Read recorded in his memo book that a sergeant was sent from Sackets Harbor to Pittstown in November to “summon the delinquents to a Court Martial.”<sup>28</sup>

A partial return of delinquents for Columbia County identified more than 100 men investigated and fined for draft evasion in 1814. Most claimed they were too sick, poor, or handicapped to serve. A surprising number claimed that, like Holcomb, they were hard of hearing. Some emphasized the financial hardship a tour of duty would have inflicted on their families. Others claimed that they would have served had they not been away from home when “the call came,” or they only received notice of the draft “after the troops were gone.” Only one of the charged delinquents stated that as a Methodist, he had “scruples of conscience against bearing arms.” But a few answers suggest that the spirit of civil disobedience lingered. Two men, John Beekman and Robert McDonnell, told the inquiring officers that they objected to “the jurisdiction of the court.” They would not comply because they were only “amenable to the laws of the State of New York.”<sup>29</sup>

Memories of the anti-draft, anti-war activism of the Washingtonians embittered Democratic Republicans in Washington, D.C., and Albany. President James Madison famously complained about the wartime conduct of the Federalist governors, legislators, and Congressmen, and by extension the Washington Benevolent Society. In 1814, he wrote of the Eastern States: “The greater part of the people in that quarter have been brought by their leaders, aided by their priests, under a delusion scarcely exceeded by that recorded in the period of witchcraft.” New York Republicans similarly held onto their resentment well into the 1810s, when the federal and state governments still insisted upon prosecuting militia delinquents, as “the public justice of the country requires such atonement.”<sup>30</sup>

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27 “Letter from Hosea Moffitt at Washington to Joseph Alexander,” June 1813 and “Letter from John Lovett to Stephen Van Rensselaer,” June 9, 1813. Frisbee Center. Lovett Papers, (Box 3, Folder 18).

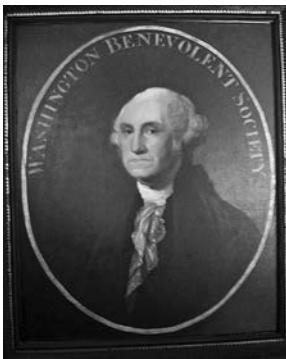
28 Holcomb, “Diary,” June 20, 1813. NYSL/MSC. (Record 11835) and Read, “Memorandum Book,” n.p., RCHS.

29 A record book of disciplinary proceedings against delinquents (part of collection of War of 1812 Military documents, 1813-1818). NYSL/MSC. (Call. No. 16367).

30 “From James Madison to Wilson Cary Nicholas, 26 November 1814,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified March 30, 2017, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/03-08-02-0337>. [Original source: *The Papers of James Madison*, Presidential Series, vol. 8, *July 1814–18 February 1815 and supplement December 1779–18 April 1814*, ed. Angela Kreider, J.C.A. Stagg, Mary Parke Johnson, Anne Mandeville Colony, and Katherine E. Harbury. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015, pp. 401-402] and Letter by G. Steddiford to Col. Reynolds, 1813, asking for reports on delinquents in order to try by courts-martial (part of collection of War of 1812 Military documents, 1813-1818). NYSL/MSC. (Call. No. 16367).

Historians know a great deal about the arguments Democratic Republican and Federalist ideologues made for and against the War of 1812. We know less about what meaning men and women took from this rhetoric. George Holcomb's experience as a Washingtonian, and specifically his anti-draft, anti-war activism, offers a unique opportunity for understanding the potency and power of these words. As the chief propagator of anti-war rhetoric, the Washington Benevolent Society provided Holcomb and the citizens of Rensselaer County with both the rhetoric of civil disobedience and an effective strategy (draft evasion) for undermining the war effort in New York State. The society became a vehicle for collective action against a policy that people in the upper Hudson River Valley perceived as a direct threat to their values, families, and prosperity. Holcomb joined the society expecting that his association with the group would wash away any stigma associated with draft evasion, and just maybe put him on the right side of history.

According to his diary, Holcomb attended a Washington Benevolent Society chapter meeting in January 1814 and participated in the 1815 celebration of Washington's



Portrait of George Washington.  
Image courtesy of the  
Montgomery County  
Historical Society

Birthday in Berlin, New York. He described the event as “a very large procession” that featured “the Stephentown band and prayers attended by Elder Hull” of the Baptist meeting house. If he heard an address, it may have sounded much like the one given at the Washington's Birthday celebration in nearby Canaan. The speaker “sketched a very general picture” of the revolutionary era and Washington's legacy, and then reminded his audience what they could take from this “monitory lesson.” In short, “freeman have duties to perform—that your independence cost much precious blood and treasure—much toil and suffering, and was committed to your virtues to keep!”<sup>31</sup>

Thereafter, Holcomb did not mention the society. In 1819, he married Lucinda Wylie, and together they raised five children in Stephentown (a sixth child died in infancy). On June 13, 1825, he brought his wife and children to catch a glimpse of the venerated Revolutionary war hero the Marquis de Lafayette on his final tour of America. He wrote: “we went as hundreds of others to see General Lafayette arrive on his way from Albany to Boston accompanied with Gen. Solomon Van Rensselaer and troops and band of music from Albany, he was escorted to the state line and thus received by the Massachusetts military.” In 1836, he went back to Pittsfield to hear an address by the Whig presidential candidate Daniel Webster. And of course, Holcomb voted. In 1824, he voted for DeWitt Clinton, one of two Democratic Republican candidates

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31 William Darling, “An Oration, Delivered before the Washington Benevolent Society of Canaan” (Hudson, William L. Stone, 1816). *Early American Imprints, Series 2*, no. 37390 (filmed): 5-6.

for governor of New York State. In 1829, he voted on the “Union Freemason” ticket, although there is no evidence that he was Freemason. In 1832, he supported “the Jackson ticket” and in 1848, he voted “the Free Soil Van Buren ticket.” At different times, he also served on juries, the school board, and was elected an assessor. Holcomb died in 1856, at the age of sixty-five, on his family farm in Stephentown.<sup>32</sup>

The lessons George Holcomb learned about civic duty, civil disobedience, and political activism stayed with him long after the Washington Benevolent Society disappeared. In 1839, Rensselaer County faced a crisis nearly as threatening as the draft. On the death of Stephen Van Rensselaer, George Holcomb's new landlords presented him with a bill for eighteen years of back rent (approximately \$3,000 in 2017). Diary entries indicate that the prospect of losing his very livelihood rekindled the activist spirit in Holcomb, who in 1843, at the age of fifty-two, started attending anti-rent meetings, paid twenty-five cents to join a new anti-rent association, and began voting “the anti-rent ticket.” It is not hard to imagine this elder in the Stephentown community reminiscing about his youthful civil disobedience as he and his neighbors prepared for what would be a lengthy battle against the Van Rensselaer heirs. He may even have flipped through dog-eared copies of *Washington's Legacy* or published copies of speeches given at the rallies of the Washington Benevolent Society. If he did recount his tales of earlier activism to his neighbors or his own children, he likely wondered in silence or aloud “What would Washington do?” as he reassured himself that the approaching contest was righteous, winnable, and aligned with his own values.

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32 “Biographical, genealogical, and historical notes compiled by Elizabeth McClave,” Holcomb Family Papers. NYSL/ MSC. Record 11835 (Box 5, Folder 8).

# Saving Springside: Preserving Andrew Jackson Downing's Last Landscape

Harvey K. Flad



Figure 1: See color plate on page 37

Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-1852) was the preeminent figure in landscape design in antebellum America. On July 28, 1852, Downing died tragically in the explosion and sinking of the Hudson River steamboat *Henry Clay* on his way to continue work on the Public Grounds in Washington, D.C.<sup>1</sup> Three days later, on July 31, the *Poughkeepsie Eagle* published a poetic reverie of “An Hour at Springside.” In it, the author seeks a cool retreat from the “sultry month of July” in “shady hill-sides, where under stately trees, and upon the fresh green grass we may repose ourselves, listening to the rustling of the leaves and the gentle chanting of birds. We may watch the murmuring [*sic*] bubbling

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<sup>1</sup> David Schuyler, *Apostle of Taste: Andrew Jackson Downing, 1815-1852* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); and D. Schuyler, “Andrew Jackson Downing: Promoter of the Urban Public Park,” *The Hudson River Valley Review*, vol. 33, no. 2 (Spring 2017), 54.



[sic] spring, as it fills brim full and gently reckless o'er its mossy brim." At the end of the hour in "the glowing tints of a setting sun...the waters of the spring steal over the brim, like tears down a sorrowing face, noiselessly."<sup>2</sup>

In both time and place, the reverie was a fitting memorial to Downing, for Springside was his last major completed work.<sup>3</sup> Downing created Springside for Matthew Vassar, a wealthy retired brewer, philanthropist, and founder of Vassar College. From 1850 until his death in 1868, it served as Vassar's summer retreat and ornamental farm. Designed in the Romantic style with elements of the picturesque and beautiful, Springside was described by visitors in glowing prose and poetry. For example, a nine-stanza poem titled "Ode to Springside" was published in the *Eagle* in June 1852. Its first two stanzas exclaim:

Oh tell me not that Paradise  
Bloomed in the distant East,  
Ere culture o'er this darkened world  
Her radiant light had cast.  
No, Paradise near home is found,  
As future poets will sing,  
And nature's beauties ever crown  
'Springside's' returning spring.<sup>4</sup>

Vassar enjoyed showing off his landscaped grounds to visitors. He entertained students and faculty from Vassar College there, and spent his summers in the gardener's cottage. In 1867, Vassar retired from his city home and lived at Springside until his death a year later. Vassar had no children, and upon his death the northern side of the estate was purchased by a neighbor, John O. Whitehouse, whose family enjoyed picnicking on the landscaped grounds.<sup>5</sup> Whitehouse's son-in-law, Eugene N. Howells, occupied the property and expanded the farm until his bankruptcy in 1901, when he sold it to neighbor William Nelson. Nelson built a substantial house on the property, known as Hudson Knolls, south of the Springside gatehouse. Upon his death, it was bequeathed to his wife, and upon her death to their children: Gerald Nelson, Geraldine Nelson Acker, and Gertrude Nelson Fitzpatrick, each of whom lived on separate parcels of the combined property. The Nelson family lived in the Hudson Knolls mansion until the 1940s, while the Fitzpatricks resided at Springside. In 1929, the Ackers built a new house, called Spring Gable, on the site Downing had selected for Vassar's stone mansion, which was never constructed. In 1952, a century after Downing's death, the site was considered for a new high school, the first of a number of proposals to develop, alter, or destroy his most enduring and well-documented landscape.

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2 *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, 31 July 1852.

3 Harvey K. Flad, "Matthew Vassar's Springside: "...the hand of Art, when guided by Taste," *Prophet With Honor: The Career of Andrew Jackson Downing, 1815-1852*, eds. George B. Tatum and Elisabeth Blair MacDougal, Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture, XI (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Trustees for Harvard University, 1989), 219-258.

4 *Poughkeepsie Eagle* (12 June 1952)

5 Notes on the property's ownership after Vassar's death can be found on the website of Springside Landscape Restoration, Inc., "Springside Landscape Restoration: Historic Designed Landscape – History," at <<http://springsidelandmark.org/history/>>

By the 1960s, the site faced abandonment; Springside's formerly well-groomed grounds were becoming overgrown and its buildings on the verge of collapse. In New York State and the nation generally, historic preservation efforts were at an early stage, with most focused on properties of historical significance to the public. However, Springside was privately owned, decaying, and virtually unknown even to historians of landscape architecture.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, surveys by the New York State Council on the Arts in the mid-1960s began to focus attention on preservation of sites of local history and vernacular architecture.<sup>7</sup> Also, efforts in the late sixties to preserve Olana, the home and studio of Hudson River School artist Frederic E. Church in Hudson, N.Y., garnered interest from art and architectural historians in the landscapes of the Hudson Valley.<sup>8</sup>

## Saving Springside

An inventory of historic resources in the Hudson River Valley by Governor Nelson Rockefeller's Hudson River Valley Commission in 1967 spurred further surveys by local planning agencies. Dutchess County began an inventory of the county's historic sites that year; it would include Springside.<sup>9</sup> The Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) also documented Springside's structures, and the following year the property was declared a National Historic Landmark.<sup>10</sup> During this period, public interest in preserving local architecture by local volunteer groups such as Dutchess County Landmarks was spurred by the clearance of whole city blocks by the Poughkeepsie Urban Renewal Agency.<sup>11</sup>

In February 1968, the Ackers planned to sell the Springside estate and petitioned the City of Poughkeepsie Common Council to rezone the property from single- to multi-family and commercial land use.<sup>12</sup> After a review, the planning board concluded that the site was "one of the most significant historic landmarks existing in Dutchess County"

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6 Springside is not included in Norman T. Newton, *Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971). In fact, Newton is remarkably dismissive of Downing, suggesting that "Downing's book and his fieldwork leave so much to be desired" (265), even while he "seems to have been held in awe and a sort of patron saint in the years just after his tragic death." (309)

7 New York State Council on the Arts, "Architecture Worth Saving" publications: *Architecture Worth Saving in Onondaga County (1964)* and *Architecture Worth Saving in Rensselaer County, N.Y. (1965)*

8 David Schuyler, "Saving Olana," *The Hudson River Valley Review*, vol. 32, no. 2 (Spring 2016), 2-26. A decade later the Sixteen-Mile National Historic District was formed of the contiguous great estates along the river's east bank in Dutchess and Columbia counties. The nearly twenty-mile district was officially designated as the Hudson River Valley Historic Landmark District in 1990 through the efforts of J. Winthrop Aldrich, then New York State Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation and a board member of Hudson River Heritage. John Russell, "Endangered Houses on the Hudson," *New York Times* (Sept. 27, 1979); "Protecting a Heritage," *Hudson River Quarterly*, Center for the Hudson River Valley, vol. 2, no. 2 (Winter 1979), 4-5; Harvey K. Flad "The Hudson River Shorelands Task Force: Citizen Participation in the Preservation of a Historic Landscape," *Partnership in Conservation: Second Conference of National Trusts* (The National Trust for Scotland, 1980), 57-62; and Robbe Stimson and Harvey K. Flad, "Preservation of an Historic Rural Landscape: Roles for Public and Private Sectors," *Farmsteads & Market Towns* (Albany: Preservation League of New York State, 1982), 34-38.

9 Dutchess County Planning Board, *Landmarks of Dutchess County, 1683-1867: Architecture Worth Saving in New York State* (New York State Council on the Arts, 1969), 194-95.

10 "'Springside' listed as historic site; council hears rezoning request," *Poughkeepsie Journal* (22 Oct. 1968); "'Springside' Ruled Eligible to be United States Landmark," *Poughkeepsie Journal*, 4 April 1969. National Historic Landmark Springside Designation, August 11, 1969.

11 Harvey K. Flad, "A Time of Readjustment: Urban Renewal in Poughkeepsie, 1955-1975," *New Perspectives on Poughkeepsie's Past*, ed. Clyde Griffen (Poughkeepsie: Dutchess County Historical Society, 1988), 152-80.

12 "'Springside' listed as historic site; council hears rezoning request," *Poughkeepsie Journal* (22 Oct. 1968)

and refused the request.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, the threat to Springside spurred public reaction.<sup>14</sup> At Vassar College, President Alan Simpson and art historian Thomas McCormick spoke out about the site's significance; the acting chief of HABS and assistant to the regional director of historic preservation for the National Park Service wrote letters of concern to the mayor; and Congressman Hamilton Fish, Jr., convened a meeting of local, state, and federal officials to discuss approaches for



Figure 2: See color plate on page 38

its use as a historic resource. From the Dutchess County Department of Planning, Commissioner Henry Heissenbittel and Senior Planner Kenneth Toole issued a booklet titled “Springside – Partnership with the Environment.”<sup>15</sup> Letters from art and architectural historians George B. Tatum, Jane B. Davies, Christopher Tunnard, Donald B. Egbert, H.R. Hitchcock, and George F. Earle supported the efforts of local, regional, and national organizations such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, New York Historic Trust, Hudson River Valley Commission, Poughkeepsie Area Vassar Club, and the Women’s City and County Club.<sup>16</sup>

In August 1969, Springside’s carriage house and stable burned to the ground. Recognized as a tragic event, it was characterized by *New York Times* architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable as another “note” on “doomsday” in the “rotten game” of escalating land use conflicts between development and historic preservation in the nation at large.<sup>17</sup>

The next year the Ackers sold the property to Robert S. Ackerman in consideration of future development. In the 1970s, the property was rezoned to allow a 700-unit luxury apartment complex.<sup>18</sup> These plans were not executed,

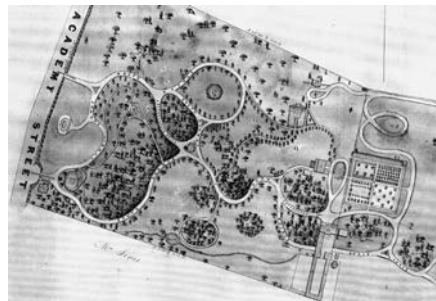


Figure 3: See color plate on page 39

13 Henry Heissenbittel, Commissioner of Planning, “Recommendation with full statement of reasons, zoning referral 68-12 – City of Poughkeepsie Re: John B. Fitzpatrick & Others Rezoning Petition,” Dutchess County Planning Board (15 Apr. 1968)  
 14 “U. S. seeking delay in rezoning ‘Springside,’” *Poughkeepsie Journal* (5 Nov. 1968)  
 15 Letters of support in “Springside” file, Department of Planning, City of Poughkeepsie, reprinted in *Springside: A Partnership with the Environment*, (December 1968)  
 16 “Vassar Club joins ‘Save Springside’ move,” *Poughkeepsie Journal* (20 Oct. 1968)  
 17 Ada Louise Huxtable, “Doomsday Notes on a Rotten Game,” *New York Times* (28 Sept. 1969); R. Stearns, “Fire claims buildings at Springside,” *Poughkeepsie Journal* (18 August 1969)  
 18 “City planning recommends Springside rezoning,” *Poughkeepsie Journal* (29 Oct. 1970) and “Springside is rezoned,” *Poughkeepsie Journal* (22 Dec. 1970)

and in 1973 the Common Council eventually withdrew its approval.<sup>19</sup> Over the next decade, the site remained dormant; the summer cottage deteriorated, and in 1976 the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation removed the front dormer, entrance porch, and most of the front façade to Albany, where it is now on exhibit on the second floor of the State Museum.<sup>20</sup> Today, only the porter's lodge (gatehouse) remains intact.

In 1983, Ackerman's Springside Associates filed a preliminary site plan with the City of Poughkeepsie Planning Board for a 191-unit condominium project identified as "Springside." This plan superseded the developer's 1982 proposal for 190 townhouse condominiums "on substantially the same site."<sup>21</sup> The new proposal called for the condominiums to be located throughout the property; there was little consideration of the existing historical or topographical environment.<sup>22</sup> Local preservationists sprang into action. Members of Dutchess County Landmarks, including Stephanie Mauri and Jeanne Opdycke (recently appointed to the city planning board by Mayor Thomas Aposporous), as well as Tim Allred for the Dutchess County Historical Society, generated public support to save Springside by offering informal talks before local groups and tours of the site.<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, Springside Associates pressed its case and after a public hearing on August 23, 1983, the planning board, without any New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) review, voted conceptual approval of the site plan and voted to recommend that the Common Council consider rezoning the site for a multi-unit project. After further review and discussions with representatives of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), the planning board rescinded its approval and rezoning recommendation and voted to send a letter to the developer with comments regarding its earlier SEQRA Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) that had been submitted in July and a support memorandum submitted in September. The planning board's letter, dated October 27, 1983, required the developer to submit a corrected and updated EAF as well as corrected support data.

The next month, the planning board reviewed a new EAF. Even though its members agreed that several potentially large environmental impacts remained, they decided these issues could be mitigated. On December 6, 1983, the board voted to approve a negative declaration under SEQRA (a decision that justifies no further changes are necessary); thus approving the preliminary site plan and recommending

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19 "Planners may rescind Springside project," *Poughkeepsie Journal* (27 Aug. 1973)

20 Vandalism on the site is noted in *The Old House Journal*, 2, no. 10 (1974), p. 10 and in "Springside — monument to vandals," *Poughkeepsie Journal* (23 May 1975); removal of the façade is reported in Sleight, "Pieces of City's heritage spirited away to Albany," *Poughkeepsie Journal* (28 Dec. 1976)

21 Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, "Short Chronology of 'Springside' Events," press release (February 29, 1984).

22 Although located on the site of a National Historic Landmark, the proposal was reviewed as "an intelligent and sensitive treatment," by A.F. Fleming and D. McFadden of AKRF, Inc., consultants to the city planning board, letter (6 Dec. 1983)

23 Jesse Effron, "How Springside an important National Landmark was saved," typescript copy, November 1988, Springside Landscape Restoration archives; Timothy Allred, "Springside: Where the Public Met Nature & Art," *Clearwater Navigator* vol. 15, no. 2 (March/April, 1984), 7-9.

rezoning the property.<sup>24</sup> The planning board's preliminary site plan approval and determination of non-significance (negative declaration) under provisions of SEQRA drew widespread rebuke.<sup>25</sup>

A large gathering attended a public hearing before the planning board in January 1984 to determine the "Environmental Significance" and subsequent necessity for a full SEQRA review.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, the planning board and the Common Council debated the need to rezone the property for multi-unit development.<sup>27</sup> John Mylod, executive director of Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, an environmental organization with its national headquarters in Poughkeepsie, submitted testimony opposing the proposed zoning change to Planned Residential Development (PRD). As an example of the planning board's inadequate review of the developer's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), Mylod noted that no visual impact assessment had been made of the proposed twin six-story residential structures.<sup>28</sup> Mylod also submitted an evaluation report commissioned by Clearwater. In it, professional landscape architect Robert M. Toole referred to a "romantic garden" zone and a "farmstead zone" that, he wrote, would more adequately address the status of the site as a National Historic Landmark.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, the following month, on February 20, 1984, the Common Council approved the site plan without a full environmental impact statement as required by SEQRA.

A group of private individuals opposed to the development met in the offices of Hudson River Sloop Clearwater to challenge the site plan approval. Robert Stover, a lawyer and activist in environmental affairs with the New York City law firm Raggio,

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24 City Planning Board minutes December 6, 1983; see minutes of previous planning board meetings for debate between Planning Board chairman David Aldeborgh who favored a fuller EIS and City Corporation Counsel Richard Cantor who did not (November 22, 1983), and "short chronology of 'Springside' events," Hudson River Sloop Clearwater press release (February 29, 1984). Letter to Mayor Thomas Aposporos and Aldermen of the Common Council from John Mylod, Executive Director of Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Inc.; Kay T. Verrilli, Vice President of Hudson River Heritage; and Stephanie W. Mauri, Chairman Board of Trustees, Dutchess County Landmarks Association, Inc. (January 27, 1984)

25 Letter to Mayor Thomas Aposporos and Aldermen of the Common Council from John Mylod, Executive Director of Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Inc.; Kay T. Verrilli, Vice President of Hudson River Heritage; and Stephanie W. Mauri, Chairman Board of Trustees, Dutchess County Landmarks Association, Inc. (January 27, 1984)

26 City Planning Board minutes January 22, 1984 public hearing "A determination of Environmental Significance pursuant to Section 617 of the SEQRA regulations regarding the development of 115 townhouses, 72 mid-rise units, 3 cottage condominiums, and 1 unit in the porter's lodge, located at 171 Academy Street, submitted by Springside Associates." The planning board held the public hearing to review an Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) that had been "revised" from a November presentation. Speakers who urged the city to follow the law with a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) included: Ellen Muller (NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation), Loretta Simon (NYS Heritage Task Force), Don McTernan (Roosevelt/Vanderbilt National Park Service), Neal Larsen (NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation), Melody Katz (Dutchess County Historical Society), Stephanie Mauri (Dutchess County Landmarks), Elizabeth Carter (City of Poughkeepsie Historian), Tim Allred (Dutchess County Historical Society), Virginia Hancock (City of Poughkeepsie Shade Tree Commission), Richard Birch (Dutchess County Planning Department), William Rhodes (Professor of Architectural History, SUNY New Paltz), Harvey Flad (Chairman Geology & Geography Department, Vassar College), Ken Lutters (Landscape Architect, Taconic region, NYS O.P.R.H.P.), Ellen McClelland Lesser (Landscape Architect), Joel Russell (Scenic Hudson), and other local residents. Noel A. DeCordova spoke for the developers in opposition to the need for a full EIS. See also Preservation League of New York State, "Springside: Preserving a National Historic Landscape," *Newsletter*, vol. 10, no. 1 (January-February, 1984), 2-3.

27 Letter from William Theyson, city manager, to Common Council in favor of rezoning.

28 John Mylod, "Testimony on Proposed PRD Zoning," January 23, 1984, also offered during public hearing February 6, 1984.

29 Robert M. Toole, "Evaluation Report for Restoration Potential and Proposed Development at Springside National Historic Landmark, Poughkeepsie, NY," Saratoga Springs, NY, 28 January 1984.

Jaffee, Kayser and Hunting, agreed, at no charge, to initiate a lawsuit to reverse the planning board's decision.<sup>30</sup> At issue was the board's failure to require developer Springside Associates to prepare an adequate environmental impact statement (EIS), even though the site was of national significance and listed as a National Historic Landmark, and the city itself had observed established historic preservation policies for more than a decade.

The lawsuit was initiated in New York State Supreme Court on February 29, 1984. Petitioners included two non-profit environmental organizations (Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, and Hudson River Heritage) and five Poughkeepsie residents (Tim Allred, Barbara Borgeson, Michael George, Virginia Hancock, and John Mylod).<sup>31</sup> Attached to the press release issued by Hudson River Sloop Clearwater was documentation that detailed the various decisions by the Common Council, planning board, and the developers over the previous year. It included comments by a number of professionals engaged in historic preservation and landscape architecture, including Julia S. Stokes, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation deputy commissioner for Historic Preservation; U.S. Department of Interior Landmark Coordinator Gene Peluso; James Ryan, director of Olana State Historic Site; Patricia M. O'Donnell, chair of the American Society of Landscape Architects' Historic Preservation Committee; George B. Tatum, H. Rodney Sharp professor of Architectural History, Emeritus, at the University of Delaware; architectural historian Dr. Arthur Channing Downs, Jr.; Dr. Deborah A. Howe, senior planner for the Dutchess County Planning Department; and Everett M. Rood of the Dutchess County Horticultural Society.<sup>32</sup>

The Article 78 proceeding to annul the December 6, 1983, determination by the planning board was denied and the petition dismissed by Supreme Court Justice John C. Marbach on May 18, 1984.<sup>33</sup> The petitioners filed a notice of appeal and were pursuing the case when the prospects for a settlement became apparent. Robert Ackerman, for the developers, and John Mylod of Clearwater, for the petitioners, negotiated over an extended period of time.<sup>34</sup> Each party also arranged for two professional landscape architects to work up new plans that would both preserve the historic landscape and

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30 Stover was a resident of Poughkeepsie and had previously been lead attorney in the successful opposition to the Greene County Nuclear Power Plant in 1979; see Robert C. Stover, letter to Edward Cohen, presiding examiner, State of New York Public Service Commission and Andrew Goodhope, Atomic Safety & Licensing Board, prepared testimony of Harvey K. Flad, Alan Gussow and David C. Huntington re: CASE 80006 and NRC Docket 50-549 Power Authority of the State of New York Greene County Nuclear Generating Facility (March 2, 1979).

31 Article 78 proceeding against the Planning Board of the City of Poughkeepsie and Springside Associates, Supreme Court of the State of New York, County of Dutchess, Index No. 1090/84, May 18, 1984. See also "Affidavit in support of the petition," by Robert M. Toole (February 6, 1984).

32 Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Inc., "City Sued on Springside Decision," Press Release (February 29, 1984), signed by John Mylod and Sarah Johnston for Clearwater and Harvey Flad for Hudson River Heritage.

33 Supreme Court of the State of New York County of Dutchess "In the Matter of the application of...petitioners, for a judgment pursuant to Article 78 of the Civil Practice Law and Rules against...respondents," Index Number 1090/84 (motion date 4/23/84).

34 A description of the discussions is in Elizabeth Pacheco, "Understanding America's First Gardener: Andrew Jackson Downing and his legacy at Matthew Vassar's Springside Estate," Vassar College senior thesis, 2010, 83-85. John Mylod offered a remembrance and tribute to Robert Ackerman, "recalling his generosity of spirit," at the Springside Landscape Restoration Board of Director's meeting on May 19, 1986 (SLR minutes May 19, 1986).

allow development.<sup>35</sup> On behalf of the petitioners, Clearwater contracted with Robert M. Toole for “technical review oversight with respect to design criteria and project impacts.”

Finally, in December 1984, a settlement was reached with Ackerman. It allowed for development to continue outside the area of the historic landscape, primarily on the former Nelson parcel.<sup>36</sup> Speaking for the petitioners, John Mylod described the settlement as a compromise: “Although our lawsuit was narrowly focused on the Planning Board’s divergence from the strict SEQRA process, Robert Ackerman opened a door for us and we walked through. We saw a way to save the site and accepted his offer along with the challenge of restoration.... To his credit, Bob Ackerman altered his development plans, among other reasons, so that historic preservation values could be maintained. This is a significant compromise through which the people of Poughkeepsie, the Hudson River Valley and the Nation will be well served.”<sup>37</sup> Years later, Mylod would recall the dedication and diplomacy of “Bob Stover in reaching a compromise and Bob Ackerman’s epiphany in recognizing the value of the historic site.”<sup>38</sup> The city gave final site plan approval in May 1985.<sup>39</sup>

The settlement stipulated that Springside Associates, by way of property owner Robert Ackerman, would donate the approximately twenty acres of historic landscape – the major part of the Vassar property – to a non-profit organization for the purpose of restoration and public access.<sup>40</sup> That organization, Springside Landscape Restoration (SLR), was required to develop a master plan to restore, maintain, and provide public access to the site as well as



Figure 4: See color plate on page 40

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35 Robert M. Toole, “Evaluation Report for Restoration Potential and Proposed Development at Springside National Historic Landmark, Poughkeepsie, NY,” Saratoga Springs, NY, 28 January 1984; see also “Historic Landscape Report of Springside National Historic Landmark Poughkeepsie, New York 12601,” 20 May 1987.

36 John Mylod, executive director, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, letter to Robert S. Ackerman (March 25, 1985), attaching memorandum from Robert M. Toole (March 19, 1985).

37 John Mylod, quoted in “National Historic Landmark Saved: Preservation and Development Goals Compatible,” Press Release, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater (December 28, 1984), 3.

38 John Mylod, email to Harvey Flad 10 September 2016.

39 Susan Sanderson, senior planner City of Poughkeepsie, “Springside Site Plan – Final Comments,” (memorandum April 20, 1985), “Final Site Plan,” (memorandum April 24, 1985); and “Final Site Plan Approval for Springside Project,” (memorandum April 30, 1985).

40 The stipulation was drafted in May 1984 and filed as Index no. 84/1090 and reviewed by the city later that year by Richard I. Cantor, City Corporation Counsel in a letter to Ronald C. Blass, Jr., copied to Robert C. Stover, in general agreement with the Stipulation and without “any serious problem or reservation as to its content or form.” (October 30, 1984). Upon Robert Stover’s death late that year, Daniel Riesel, environmental lawyer at the firm Sive, Paget & Riesel, signed a “memorandum of understanding” with Robert S. Ackerman “to retain as much as possible of the original A.J. Downing landscape at Springside.” (6 December 1984). The next month Riesel wrote Cantor to “initial” the Stipulation of Settlement (January 3, 1985). Signed by Robert S. Ackerman for Springside Associates, Ronald C. Blass, Jr., attorney for Springside Associates, Daniel Riesel attorney for petitioners and Richard I. Cantor corporation counsel of the city of Poughkeepsie for the Poughkeepsie Planning Board, the stipulation was “so ordered” by Judge Joseph Fundice on January 9, 1985. Ronald C. Blass, Jr., of Van Dewater and Van Dewater reported the order to John Mylod, executive director of Clearwater, in a letter the next day (January 10, 1985), and filed the “so ordered” stipulation of settlement in the Dutchess County Clerk’s Office on January 21, 1985.

raise \$200,000 in funds from private and non-governmental sources by the time the developers had reached a certain stage of construction.

Springside Landscape Restoration, Inc., was fully organized in 1986.<sup>41</sup> The first acting Board of Directors included Roger Akeley, head of the Dutchess County Department of Planning as chairman; John Mylod, executive director of Clearwater; Harvey Flad representing Hudson River Heritage; Jeanne Opdycke from Dutchess County Landmarks as secretary; Tim Allred; Judith (Kip) Bleakley; John Clarke; Lisa Dreishpoon; Michael George; Virginia Hancock; and Robin and Sabrina Ackerman, son and daughter of the developer.<sup>42</sup> At its meeting on June 2, 1986, an Executive Board was elected. It included: Akeley, president; Opdycke, vice president; Clarke, secretary; Gerard Dathowski, treasurer; and board members Mylod, Hancock, and George.<sup>43</sup> The organization received its charter as a historical educational society from New York State in September 1987.

Throughout 1985 and 1986, the board developed plans to meet the requirements of the settlement, such as hiring a consultant to research existing conditions and prepare for a restoration master plan. Committee members met with local professional gardener Everett Rood and Tom Ciampa as well as Neil Larson from the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. In addition to reviewing Toole's report, they offered changes to the draft of a design for the entrance drive by Ackerman's son Robin; the drive would go from Academy Street through SLR's property to the condominiums on the twenty acres on the southern border of the historic property.<sup>44</sup> By late December 1986, SLR remained in negotiation with Springside Associates on numerous "unresolved issues."<sup>45</sup> Over the next two years, discussions were held and funds raised to comply with the \$200,000 settlement requirement.

In May 1986, SLR was given a \$1,000 grant by the Heritage Task Force of the Hudson River Valley to survey the restoration needs of the gardener's cottage. Abandoned and in disrepair, it was one of only two existing structures then on the property along with the porter's lodge/gatehouse. A caretaker lived in the latter and maintained it and the associated original gates.

In August 1987, the Poughkeepsie Common Council voted to grant the organization \$15,000 to pay for the development of a master plan. That December, the state Office

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41 Incorporators included: Roger Akeley, John Mylod, Jeanne Opdycke, Frances Reese and Kenneth Toole.

42 Springside Landscape Restoration, Inc., minutes (April 29, 1986)

43 Springside Landscape Restoration, Inc., minutes, June 2, 1986; Elizabeth Daniels, Vassar College Historian, joined the board on June 23, 1986.

44 Springside Landscape Restoration, Inc., minutes, June 23, 1986 and August 25, 1986. Letter from Richard Cantor, City of Poughkeepsie Corporation Counsel to Robin Ackerman regarding site plan changes for entranceway (December 5, 1986). For concerns about the master plan draft see Robert M. Toole, *Historic Landscape Report for Springside National Historic Landmark, Poughkeepsie, New York 12601* (Saratoga Springs, N.Y., May 15, 1985) and the letter summarizing the committee's opinion and suggestions for changes.

45 Letter from Roger Akeley, President of Springside Landscape Restoration, Inc. to Thomas Aposporos, Mayor of City of Poughkeepsie requesting a meeting with Richard Cantor, City Corporation Counsel and Robin Ackerman of Springside Associates in which he notes "a distressing pattern of violations to the spirit and the letter of the agreement, and, in some cases, to the site plan....There are still many unresolved issues and opportunities for continued destruction of the landscape if the pattern of unresponsiveness and disregard for the landscape continues." (December 15, 1986).



of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation made a \$200,000 matching grant with the requirement that a similar amount be raised from non-governmental sources.

Among the first efforts of the newly formed SLR was the development of a landscape master plan. Over the fall of 1987, Anthony Walmsley, principal of Walmsley & Company, produced a *Site Analysis Landscape Master Plan and Maintenance Plan of Springside National Historic Landmark* with assistance from landscape architecture historian Charles Birnbaum as associate project director. It included the history of the site and was designed as a Cultural Landscape Report.<sup>46</sup>

Over the next decade, much natural disturbance occurred as many of Springside's older trees were lost to age and storms. In 1999, SLR in partnership with the Garden Conservancy received a Preservation League of New York State Council on the Arts Program grant to update Walmsley & Company's study. As stated in the ensuing report, *Preservation Maintenance Plan for a Historic Landscape: Springside National Historic Landmark*, "[T]he focus was to be on shorter and on-going management actions that the small but active band of SLR volunteers could undertake to stabilize the site, prevent further destruction and safeguard its essential surviving features."<sup>47</sup>

Over the past three decades, a number of studies have been done of Springside with the aim on discovering the changes to its natural and cultural landscape and for planning its future. Meanwhile, storms and diseases have brought down a number of older trees, underground hydraulic systems have failed, and much of the footprint of former structures has yet to be recovered. Still, a great deal has been accomplished by a small group of volunteers. Grants have been received to repaint the porter's lodge and repair the formal gates, while carriage roads and parklands have been reopened to view. Springside's historic landscape offers the visitor and the landscape historian the most completely documented testimony to Andrew Jackson Downing's legacy.

## The Site

The ongoing preservation efforts on the Springside property have been undertaken with the guidance of extensive research on Matthew Vassar's intentions and decisions, and on Andrew Jackson Downing's role in designing the estate.

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46 Walmsley & Company, Inc., *Site Analysis, Landscape Master Plan and Maintenance Plan of Springside National Historic Landmark*, New York, NY, [undated draft; letter from Charles Birnbaum to Harvey Flad dated 20 December 1988 with enclosed "final master plan report" with revisions; final report dated 1989]. Other professional consultants in architecture, horticulture and archaeology contributed, as did art historian George B. Tatum, co-organizer of the Downing symposium at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C. in 1989, of which the Marist symposium on the 200th anniversary of Downing's birth in 2015 was a natural successor. See also G.B. Tatum and E.B. MacDougall, eds., *Prophet With Honor: The Career of Andrew Jackson Downing 1815-1852* (Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks, 1989; G.B. Tatum, "Introduction," in A.J. Downing, *Landscape Gardening and Rural Architecture*, Dover edition of 1852 *Treatise*; and Flad, 1989. For note as "Cultural Landscape Report," see Tourbier & Walmsley, 2000, 6.

47 Tourbier & Walmsley, *Preservation Maintenance Plan for a Historic Landscape: Springside National Historic Landmark, Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County, New York* (New York, NY: May 2000), 7. The *Springside National Historic Landmark Master Plan*, 1989 by Walmsley & Company was described as "A pace-setting report for its time – including important historic contributions by Professor Harvey K. Flad of Vassar College and John Clarke of the Dutchess County Planning Office – the team produced what in the early 90s became known as a Cultural Landscape Report. It has guided preservation efforts since."



Figure 5: See color plate on page 41

Matthew Vassar had acquired the property for Springside as a possible site for a rural cemetery for the Village of Poughkeepsie. A cholera epidemic in 1842 had caused much anxiety; by 1850, Poughkeepsie's existing burial grounds were overcrowded. Most churches were "anxious to have a cemetery established because they had no grounds of their own." According to an article in the *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, "eight out of every ten of our citizens generally are in want of some spot to lay their heads when they sleep the 'sleep that knows no waking.'" <sup>48</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century, cemeteries were being built outside of populated areas in bucolic settings. Existing graveyards in more densely populated areas had become crowded. They were cause for concern on sanitary grounds, based on fear of the possibility of contamination of nearby wells and water supply. Moreover, as Aaron Sachs has posited, these spaces of "repose" offered a new, more peaceful perspective on death: they brought into the rapidly expanding and industrializing cities elements of the pastoral countryside that could remind visitors of the natural cycles of life.<sup>49</sup> In 1831, the Massachusetts Horticultural Society organized Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, a few miles outside of Boston. It initiated a Rural Cemetery movement.<sup>50</sup>

## Cemeteries, Gardens, and Parks

In July 1846, Downing became editor of the journal *The Horticulturist and Journal of Rural Art and Rural Taste*. In monthly editorials, he developed his theory and practice of landscape gardening, begun since the 1841 publication of his *Treatise on the Theory*

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48 *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, 5 April 1851.

49 Aaron Sachs, *Arcadian America: The Death and Life of the Environmental Tradition* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr., 2013); David Schuyler, "The Evolution of the Anglo-American Cemetery: Landscape Architecture as Social and Cultural History," *Journal of Garden History* 4, no. 3 (1984), 294 and Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Pr., 1986).

50 Blanche M.G. Linden, *Silent City on a Hill* (Amherst, MA: Univ. of Massachusetts Pr., 2007); B. Rotundo, "Mount Auburn: Fortunate Coincidences and an Ideal Solution," *Journal of Garden History*, 4, no. 3 (1984), 255-67.

and *Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America*.<sup>51</sup> In an essay on “Public Cemeteries and Public Gardens” in *The Horticulturist’s* July 1849 issue, Downing observed that rural cemeteries had become public gardens akin to parks. Outside of the increasingly polluted cities, landscaped cemeteries provided pastoral open spaces, open to all the community for contemplation, pleasant walks, or picnicking, as well as burials. He wrote that the Rural Cemetery concept had taken “the public minds by storm. Travelers made pilgrimages to the Athens of New England solely to see the realization of their long-cherished dream of a resting-place for the dead, at once sacred from profanation, dear to the memory, and captivating to the imagination.”<sup>52</sup> He added that “at the present moment, there is scarcely a city of note in the whole country that has not its rural cemetery.” Downing noted how the public flocked to the cemeteries as desired open space. For example, he wrote that Laurel Hill in Philadelphia, developed in 1836, attracted 30,000 visitors in 1848; he suggested that “double that number visit Green-Wood,” established in 1838 in Brooklyn, “in a season.”<sup>53</sup>

In 1849, the year of this essay’s publication, Downing took Fredrika Bremer, a Swedish social reformer and champion of women’s rights, to Green-Wood Cemetery on her first day in New York. She observed, “One drives as if in an Extensive English park, amid hill and dale...I should like to repose here.”<sup>54</sup> The following year, Downing traveled to England and visited many of the English parks of which Bremer had spoken and became an advocate for public parks: “how much our citizens, of all classes, would enjoy public parks on a similar scale,” he wrote.<sup>55</sup> Graceful, expansive rural cemeteries offered the opportunity to engage the civic interest in such a useful purpose for public benefit.

## Poughkeepsie, Vassar, and Springside

The effort by Poughkeepsie in 1850 was, therefore, an obvious act for city betterment and progress.<sup>56</sup> As part of the Rural Cemetery movement, a local committee searched for a site that would best express the aesthetic principles of the Romantic movement, one in which it was “the setting, not the grave itself, which inspired emotion,” where visitors would be engaged in “a kind of luxuriating in a solemn and picturesque environment.”<sup>57</sup> Even more important, according to Downing, “the true secret of the attraction lies in the natural beauty of the sites and in the tasteful and harmonious embellishment of these sites by art.”<sup>58</sup> Indeed, for Downing they would act as moral educators in taste,

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51 Downing, *Treatise*; Judith K. Major, *To Live in the New World: A.J. Downing and American Landscape Gardening* (The MIT Press, 1997, 4).

52 Downing, *Horticulturist*, noted in Sachs, 2013, 56 and Major, 1997, appendix 176.

53 Sachs, *ibid.*

54 Fredrika Bremer, *The Homes of the New World* (1853). Over the next two years Bremer became fully aware of Downing’s role as the “arbiter of taste” in domesticating the American landscape and of combining “the beautiful and the useful” in his designs for cottages and villas. Schuyler, 1996, 170; Tatum and MacDougal, 1989.

55 Downing, *Rural Essays* editorial, reprinted in Major (1997).

56 Edmund Platt, *History of Poughkeepsie*, 1909, 148. J.B. Jackson, *Landscape 1967-68*, 25.

57 J.B. Jackson, *Landscape 1967-68*, 25.

58 Downing, “Public Cemeteries”

where, “in the absence of great public gardens, such as we must surely one day have in America, our rural cemeteries are doing a great deal to enlarge and educate the popular taste in rural establishment.”<sup>59</sup>

On May 29, 1850, the cemetery committee reported that a forty-four-acre portion of the Allen Farm, on the south side of “Eden Hill” one mile south of the village, was “the most suitable and attractive grounds” considered.<sup>60</sup> The committee’s report discussed the site’s attributes and outlined possible development. The property was described as “undulating,” with “a portion of meadow, groups of forest trees of luxuriant growth, about 10 acres laid out in an apple orchard; there are also several curious mound formations of rocky character, studded with oak, hickory, chestnut and evergreens.”<sup>61</sup> A “rivulet” was mentioned as flowing through the site. Landscape development was anticipated, with the property was said to be “susceptible of tasteful embellishment.” A “spacious lake” is suggested, with “its outlet enlivened by small cataracts.” “Much of it,” according to Benson J. Lossing, the nineteenth-century historian and biographer of Matthew Vassar, “was in a state of natural rudeness. Wooded knolls arose about tangled hollows. Springs gushed out from oozy little hill-sides, and formed rivulets. . .the committee saw in that topographical rudeness the substantial elements out of which a most beautiful landscape might be fashioned by the hand of Taste.”<sup>62</sup> In other words, the site had all the potential of variety of landscape and vegetation admired by Downing.

About a month after the committee’s report, Vassar purchased the Allen Farm property for \$8,000, intending to hold it for cemetery use.<sup>63</sup> Unfortunately, subscribers were few.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, that autumn Vassar began to make improvements. Meanwhile, Downing had just returned from his trip to England and had established an architectural firm at Highland Gardens, his home and nursery outside Newburgh, New York, with assistance from the young Calvert Vaux, whom he had met in London.<sup>65</sup>

As one of Downing’s first commissions since his return, Vassar engaged him to “suggest a plan of avenues for walks and drives” and to design several buildings.<sup>66</sup> The improvements were made to be “suited to a Cemetery” yet also in a design vocabulary of the *beautiful* and the *picturesque* from Downing’s *Treatise* for a potential house and garden.<sup>67</sup> The curving avenues, roads, and paths would be equally suitable for visitors

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59 Ibid.

60 *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, 1 June 1850.

61 *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, 1 June 1850.

62 Benson J. Lossing, *Vassar College and Its Founder*, New York, 1867, 60.

63 *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, 1 June 1850.

64 *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, 7 September 1850; *Eagle*, 5 April 1851; and *Eagle*, 12 April 1851.

65 Francis Kowsky, *Country Park & City: The Architecture and Life of Calvert Vaux* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1998). See specific reference to Springside in Kowsky, “Continuing the Quest to Elevate the Tastes of Our People: Calvert Vaux, Frederick Clarke Withers, and Frederick Law Olmsted,” *The Hudson River Valley Review*, vol. 33, no. 2 (Spring 2017), 70.

66 Lossing, 1867, 63.

67 17th and 18th century English theories of landscape design promoted by William Gilpin, Humphrey Repton and “Capability” Brown and their relationship to Downing and Springside are discussed in Harvey K. Flad, “Following ‘the pleasant paths of Taste’: The Traveler’s Eye in New World Landscapes,” in *Humanizing Landscapes: Geography, Culture and the Magoon Collection* (catalog) Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY, 2000, 69-102.

to grave sites or to the cottage or farm buildings, or for poetic ramblings through an ornamental garden, by a spring-fed rivulet, or into a wild or naturalistic grove. The landscape design for Springside would eventually incorporate both the *beautiful* and the *picturesque* in its topographic features of stone outcrops, native tree species of variegated forms, domestic and utilitarian structures, formal and informal plantings, and pathways offering intimate and scenic views.<sup>68</sup> It would remain as Downing's testament to "Unity, Harmony, Variety."

Although subscribers were few and the local cemetery committee looked into another property to the west overlooking the Hudson River (organized two years later as the Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery), the cemetery option remained open. In December 1850, the newspaper reported this ambivalence about its ultimate use when it reported that Vassar was keeping a cemetery firmly in mind as "that object in his disbursements and plans as far as would be compatible with its improvements as a private residence."<sup>69</sup>

## Improvements

Downing, meanwhile, began to prepare for the site's use as an ornamental farm with a cottage, gardens, and utilitarian structures (Figure 1). The frontispiece for *The Horticulturist* for February 1851 featured "a perspective view and ground plan of a barn and stable designed for the villa residence of a gentleman on the Hudson."<sup>70</sup> The carriage house integrated both aesthetic and utilitarian elements in a harmonious whole. It was a board-and-batten structure that, Downing wrote, "is intended to produce a picturesque effect externally, and to contain internally all the convenience demanded in a building of this class" (Figure 7).<sup>71</sup> Downing went on to praise the client's development, "whose whole establishment will be remarkable for the completeness, convenience, and good effect of the various buildings, joined to much natural beauty of features of the locality in which they are placed."<sup>72</sup>

The carriage house would be the first of many designs by the Downing firm for Springside. As Lossing reported in 1867, "From the designs of Mr. Downing, a porter's lodge, a cottage, barn, carriage-house, ice-house, and dairy-room, granary, an aviary for wild and domestic fowls, an apiary, a spacious conservatory and neat gardener's

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68 Flad, 1989; see also Robert M. Toole, "Springside: A.J. Downing's Only Extant Garden," *Journal of Garden History*, 9 (1989), 20-39.

69 Eagle, 7 December 1850. The Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery would eventually be built in 1853, designed by Howard Daniels. Daniels was born in 1815, the same year as Downing. Listed as an architect in 1844, although primarily known as a landscape gardener, Daniels designed a number of cemeteries in the romantic rural cemetery style throughout the 1840s and 1850s. While in Ohio he designed Spring Grove in Cincinnati, Woodlawn Cemetery in Xenia, and Green Lawn in Columbus. In 1851, Daniels moved to New York City where, according to an advertisement in *The Horticulturist* in 1855, he had designed fifteen cemeteries and an equal number of private grounds, one of which was Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery. A decade later he offered landscape design advice to Matthew Vassar for the grounds at Vassar College, although the plan by James Renwick, architect of Main Building, was chosen. Christine B. Lozner, "Daniels, Howard (1815-1863)," *Pioneers of American Landscape Design*, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2000, 73-76.

70 Downing, "Our Frontispiece," in *The Horticulturist*, February 1851.

71 *Ibid.*

72 *Ibid.*

cottage, and a log cabin on the more prosaic portion of the domain, where meadows and fields of grain may be seen, were erected” (Figure 3).<sup>73</sup>

Downing’s design for the cottage is very similar to the “symmetrical bracketed cottage” published as Design III in *The Architecture of Country Houses*. (1850).<sup>74</sup> Downing’s Springside version was a board-and-batten structure with symmetrical front façade, a central gabled window with two simple window hoods on either side of the front door, and small seated porch. The cottage also featured truncated gables from Design XVII “Bracketed American Farm Home.” These, Downing noted, would be appropriate to a rural English farmhouse, in “modesty and simplicity,” as, he posited, “the farmhouse seems to us to unite fitness and simplicity with as much architectural refinement of features and expression as properly belong to the subject.”<sup>75</sup> Downing added: “But the greatest charm of this cottage to our eyes, is the expression of simple but refined home-beauty which it conveys” (Figure 7).<sup>76</sup>

At the time of Downing’s death, the cottage, stables, wooden gatehouse, and iron gates had been completed. Downing and Vaux drew designs for a number of other structures, including both a stone-faced porter’s lodge and a proposed mansion-style villa; however, neither was built.<sup>77</sup> Over the decades, through neglect and vandalism, most of the structures deteriorated and were lost. By 1987, the year of SLR’s incorporation, only the wood-framed, board-and-batten, neo-Gothic style porter’s lodge/gatehouse was extant. It and the estate’s adjacent gates remain as original picturesque elements of the 1852 Romantic landscape (Figure 8).

Downing designed Springside as an ornamental farm, or *ferme ornée*. The design is similar to Design IV and the grounds of Design VII in *Cottages and Residences*, with various utilitarian structures, a kitchen garden, open fields, and livestock.<sup>78</sup>

## Embellishments

Downing and Vaux worked on the site from 1850 to 1852, and after Downing’s death Matthew Vassar continued to add “improvements.”<sup>79</sup> However, in 1854 he considered offering the property for sale. In an advertisement in the local paper, Springside was

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73 Lossing, 63.

74 A.J. Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses*, 1850, reprinted by Dover, 1969, fig. 12, 82. See also Schuyler, 1996, 164-166 and figs. 69 and 70, and front jacket illustration of cottage.

75 Downing, 1850, 164. See also Adam Sweeting, *Reading Houses and Building Books: Andrew Jackson Downing and the Architecture of Popular Antebellum Literature, 1835-1855* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1996), 56-62.

76 Downing, 1850, 84. Jane Davies, architectural historian and biographer of Andrew Jackson Davis, who drew most of Downing’s illustrations prior to Calvert Vaux, described the Springside cottage drawing as “an epitome of Downing’s rural architectural designing. Apart from its great significance as the documented work of Downing, it is surely one of the very finest romantic cottages in the United States,” quoted in Flad 1989, 245.

77 The design for a “villa of brick and stone” by “D&V” (Downing and Vaux) was later published as Design XXV by Vaux in his 1857 edition of *Villas and Cottages*, 277, and also listed as Design No. 30 in his 2nd revised edition, 1864, 298-302. Drawings of the Porter’s Lodge, mansion, gardener’s cottage and the coach house and stables, are held in Vassar College’s Special Collections. All are signed “D&V” signifying Downing and Vaux.

78 A.J. Downing, *Cottage Residences*, 1842, 1873 ed., (Dover, 1981), 85 and 135.

79 In his “Essay on American Scenery,” Thomas Cole lamented “...meager utilitarianism...sometimes called improvement” but, through the art of landscape design, foresaw that the Hudson River Valley had the “capacity for improvement by art.” T. Cole, *The American Monthly Magazine*, n.s. 1 (1836), 3-4, 8-9.

described as having a “variety of surface formation, rural and picturesque scenery, springs of pure water, supplying jets, fountains, fish ponds, and pools for aquatic birds by its own gravitation. . .some two miles of drives and walks girding the knolls and encircling the hills, through gently sloping vales.”<sup>80</sup> A description of existing structures followed, including a gardener’s cottage, porter’s lodge, grapery/conservatory, carriage house and stable, and dairy building, along with a long list of farm animals and exotic fowl. “A large Kitchen garden well stocked with a choice variety of the best dwarf fruits on quince stock in full bearing last summer.” The advertisement concluded with a description of an apple, plum, and cherry orchard.

Ultimately, Matthew Vassar did not sell the property and retained it until his death in 1868. In 1857, he hired Caleb N. Bement to manage and superintend farming at Springside, “including the purchasing, rearing and selling of live and dead stock, such as cattle, pigs, poultry, and other fancy stock, butter, eggs, fruit, vegetables, etc.”<sup>81</sup> In 1857, Vaux revisited Springside:

This estate, being full of easy sweeps and gentle undulations, is somewhat secluded and park-like in its character, fine healthy trees being scattered in groups and masses over its whole extent. These have been sparingly and judiciously thinned by the proprietor, and the arrangement of roads and general distribution of the grounds has been adapted to the peculiar features of the situation. The effect is very rural and homelike, although a great deal of rough work has been done, and it is only a few years since the hand of improvement was first laid upon it.<sup>82</sup>

A decade after Vaux’s visit, Lossing reported on Vassar’s efforts to complete Downing’s design of the ornamental grounds: “The primitive forest-trees on the knolls were left to grow on, untouched; the hollows and ravines were transformed into beautiful narrow paths or broad roadways; a deer-park was laid out and peopled with tenants from the woods; *jets d’eau* and little hollows filled with sparkling waters were formed; and in the course of years more than one hundred thousand dollars were added to the first cost of the then almost profitless acres.”<sup>83</sup> Lossing concluded: “Visitors agree that these acres, beautiful and cultivated, are not surpassed by any spot in our country, of equal area, in variety of surface, pleasant views and vistas, near and remote, and picturesque effects everywhere.”<sup>84</sup>

## Artistic Composition

As with paintings by Hudson River School artists, Downing’s landscape design for Springside offered both sweeping views toward the west and the Hudson River, as well as more intimate scenes of a domesticated homeground. The site offered artists and poets elements of both the beautiful and picturesque: Lossing’s illustration of the swan

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80 *Eagle* 29 December 1854, cited in CITYSCAPE/Cultural Resource Consultants, *Analysis of Effect of Proposed Project on “Springside,” a National Historic Landscape* (prepared for The Chazen Companies), March 1999, 15-16.

81 M. Vassar and C. Bement, “memorandum of understanding,” April 1859, Vassar College Library Special Collections.

82 Calvert Vaux, *Villas and Cottages*, 1857, 2nd rev. ed., 1864, 299-300.

83 Lossing, 1867, 63.

84 *Ibid.*

in Jet Vale fountain and two ladies with parasols represents the former; an image of Cottage Avenue Gate, with a male horseback rider in a darkly vegetated farm scene, depicts the latter.

On June 12, 1852, one month before Downing's death, Vassar Professor Russell Comstock described the property in aesthetic terms: "We took a stroll over the ground of M. Vassar, Esq...and a more charming spot we never visited. There is combined within these precincts every variety of park-like and *pictorial* landscape that is to be found in any part of our country –meadows, woodlands, water-sources, jets and fountains, elevated summits gently sloping into valleys, forming the natural openings for the roads to girdle the hills and knolls, and thence again reaching upward to the highest peaks, from whence the eye at one glance can survey almost every spot of the entire enclosure."<sup>85</sup>

After his 1857 visit, Vaux also described Springside in pictorial terms:

Although the property lies some distance from the river, agreeable peeps of the gleaming Hudson and its beautiful white sails are gained here and there. Still, it is the bold horizon lines, and the broad, free stretches of richly wooded intermediate distance contrasting, and yet in harmony, with the home landscape, that gives the peculiar charm to the place. It can, indeed with difficulty be separated from its surroundings, and a mutual understanding advantageous to both seems to have sprung up between Springside and the scenery in its vicinity.<sup>86</sup>

Shortly after Downing died, Vassar commissioned Henry Gritten, an English landscape painter living in New York City, to undertake a series of oil paintings showing the landscape and structures at Springside. Four paintings were executed in a realistic style as the foliage was changing in the autumn of 1852.

Three of these paintings are overviews, and together they provide a nearly comprehensive view of the property. Two paintings (Figures 1 & 4) show the more utilitarian grounds; they look west over the farmyard complex and kitchen garden, with significant structures such as the coach house, stable, and cottage. A third perspective (Figure 5) looks from the Lawn Terrace south to the porter's lodge/gatehouse, entrance gate, and "Summerhouse-hill," and then east over the center of the landscape garden, showing "Jet Vale" and "Center Circle." Embellishments include a beehive-shaped aviary or conservatory, while the ornamental garden is complete with groups of deciduous oak, maple, and elm, and plantings of hemlocks along the curving carriage roads. Matthew Vassar is depicted riding in his carriage on one of the hemlock-lined carriage roads, while the background has a glimpse of the Hudson River adorned with boats and their white sails. An ethereal blue sky with wispy clouds covers the upper half of the painting. It suggests a lovely day for a visitor or artist to stroll through the grounds.

The fourth painting, "Springside: View of Gardener's Cottage and Barns, 1852" (Figure 6), has both beautiful and picturesque elements in a harmonious composition. It is an interior view focused on "Knitting Knoll" covered by maples and poplars in early-

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85 *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, 12 June 1852, emphasis added.

86 Vaux, 1857/1864, op. cit.



autumnal colors, with a pastoral view of a half-dozen sheep grazing on the grassy lawn of Deer Park in the foreground. The west façade of the cottage, featuring board-and-batten siding painted a muted shade of yellow, pointed gables, and rustic porch; the coach house and stable; and Cottage Gate suggest a picturesque ornamental farm setting. A cook walks toward a kitchen in



Figure 6: See color plate on page 42

the basement of the Cottage, while two farm workers (one herding Devonshire cattle, the other with a hay rake and child) walk along South Avenue, ringed by newly planted hemlocks. All are elements of the pictorial picturesque.

## Conclusion

In the same year as Vaux's 1857 visit, an artist with the pen name "Neutral Tint" wrote of his visit to Springside:

[H]ere we are in a perfect paradise of beauties. There are, as near as I could judge, about sixty acres laid out in the most perfect taste, and presenting to the enraptured eye at every turn a constant succession of the most strikingly picturesque and beautiful effects. . . .

To adequately describe Springside requires the poet's pen and the artist's pencil. It is a lasting monument to the genius of Downing, the management of Bement, and the liberality and taste of its proprietor, Mr. Vassar, who with generosity equal to his taste, permits the public to enjoy the charms he has created. I have never beheld a spot which equaled the attractions of this, nor where my pencil so longed to linger, and a new hope has been awakened in my soul, that I may yet find the opportunity of transferring to the leaves of my sketch book some of those beauties which ravished my eye and filled my soul with pleasure.<sup>87</sup>

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87 N. Tint, "A Drive through Springside with Matthew Vassar," *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, 13, no. 9 (1857), 126-128.

Downing's design for Springside fulfilled his guiding principle for a homeground where both theory and practice, ornament and utility, the beautiful and picturesque, and "the hand of Art, when guided by Taste," combined to form a landscape with "unity of expression."<sup>88</sup> The emerging landscape could evoke emotional responses from visitors, where one might like to "repose," as suggested by Fredrika Bremer in her musing to Downing at Green-Wood Cemetery in 1849.

Just days before Downing's death three years later, a visitor penned in Romantic prose: "the 'spirit of beauty' smiles up from every dew-laden flower, and taste appears in each fairy nook, or finely graveled walk... Surely, Paradise could scarcely have been lovelier."<sup>89</sup> The reverie concluded with an appeal for Springside's preservation for the future: "Long may it continue – long it be ere that ruthless engraver, 'Time,' shall write his magic work 'change' upon thee; and years hence, when the present generation shall have joined 'that caravan which is moving to the pale realms of shade,' may thou remain, a lasting memorial of what may be accomplished by the hand of Art, when guided by Taste."<sup>90</sup>

Springside is Downing's only fully documented landscape design. It has influenced both the establishment of urban parks and the creation of the American suburban "middle landscape." The property continues to offer the visitor a peaceful respite in a fast-paced world. Saving Springside is a cultural and environmental imperative. It is to be hoped that the preservation and research in recent decades, most notably the voluntary efforts of Springside Landscape Restoration, Inc., will provide the foundation for long-term protection of this highly significant historic landscape.<sup>91</sup>



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88 Downing, *Treatise*; also see Flad, 1989.

89 *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, 10 July 1852, 3.

90 *Ibid.*

91 On June 8, 2017 the City of Poughkeepsie Historic District Commission placed Springside on the city's register of historic sites, upon nomination by Springside Landscape Restoration and "Statement of Significance: Springside Landscape" by Holly Wahlberg.



Figure 1: Henry Gritten (British, 1818-1873), *View of Springside* (1852). Oil on canvas, 26 x 37 inches. Private Collection

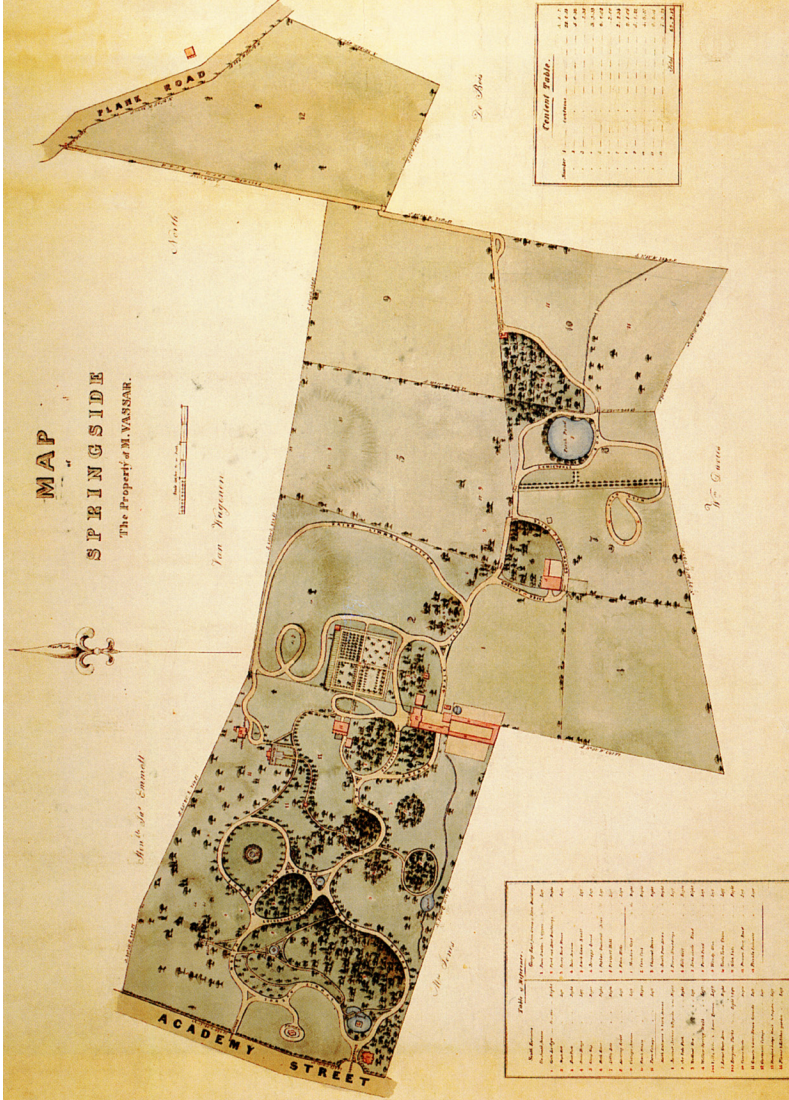


Figure 2: Unknown American artist (signed "E. Jacob"), Map of Springside (c.1853). Ink and watercolor, 27 x 38 inches, Local History Collection, Adriaance Memorial Library, Poughkeepsie, New York

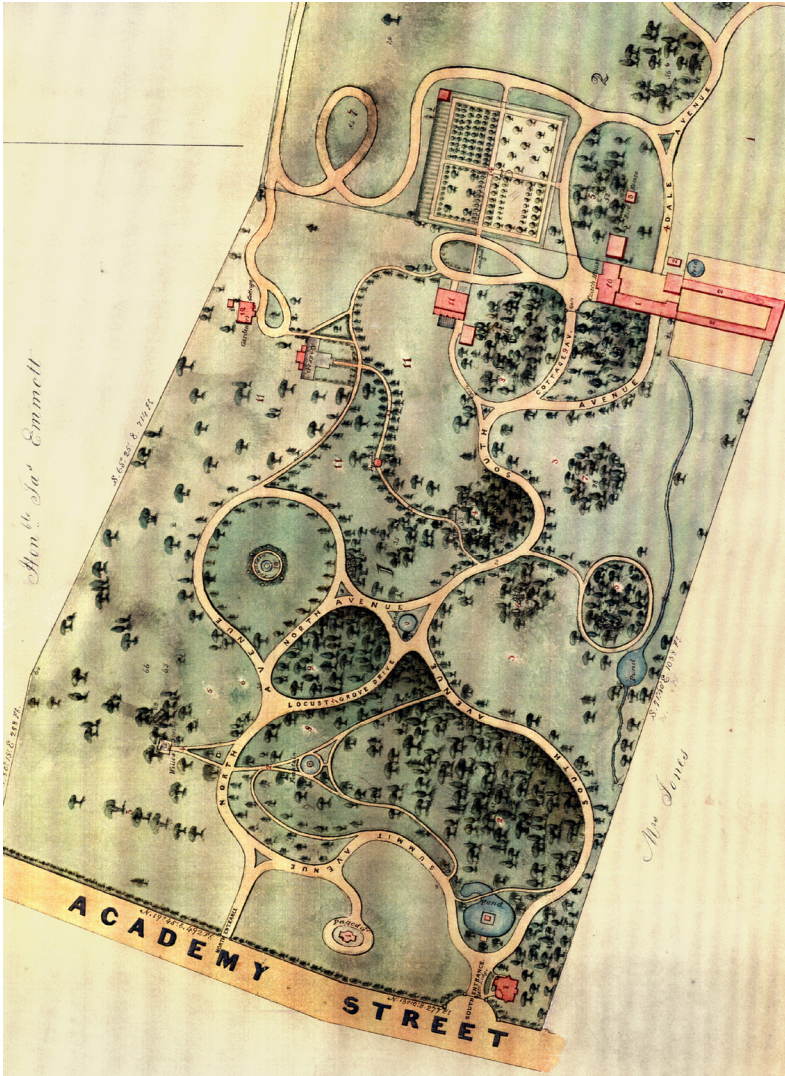


Figure 3: Unknown American artist (signed "E. Jacob"), Detail, Map of Springside (c.1853). Ink and watercolor, Local History Collection, Adriaance Memorial Library, Poughkeepsie, New York



Figure 4: Henry Gritten (British, 1818-1873), *Springside: View of Barn Complex and Gardens* (1852). Oil on canvas. 25.5 x 37 inches. Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, gift of Thomas M. Evans, Jr., in honor of Tania Goss, class of 1959, 2015.22.3

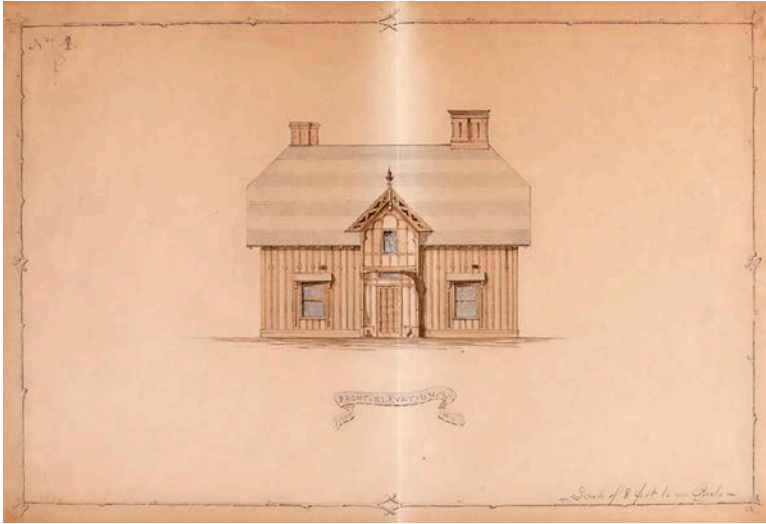


Figure 5: Henry Gritten (British, 1818-1873), *Springside: Center Circle* (1852). Oil on canvas, 25.5 x 37 inches. Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, gift of Thomas M. Evans, Jr., in honor of Tania Goss, class of 1959, 2015.22.2

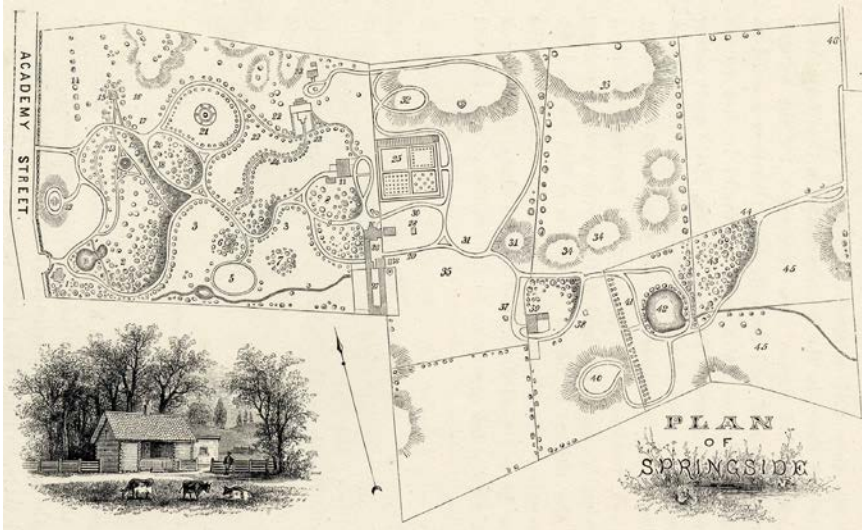


Figure 6: Henry Gritten (British, 1818-1873), *Springside: View of Gardener's Cottage and Barns* (1852). Oil on canvas, 25.5 x 37 inches. Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, gift of Thomas M. Evans, Jr., in honor of Tania Goss, class of 1959, 2015.22.1





Andrew Jackson Downing's drawings of the Gardener's Cottage and the barn and stables at Springside. Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library



Engravings of the Springside Estate from Benson Lossing's *Vassar College and Its Founder* (New York: C. A. Alford Printer, 1867).  
 Vassar College Archives & Special Collections Library

# “Thy Servant Franklin”: How the Hudson River Valley Shaped the Faith of Franklin D. Roosevelt

*Durahn Taylor*



All roads in FDR's character development lead eventually to his birthplace and lifelong home in Hyde Park. It was here where his parents raised him and instilled within him the values of religion and neighborliness that he would seek to reaffirm in his public addresses as President.

Photo by Durahn Taylor

“All that is in me,” Franklin D. Roosevelt claimed, “goes back to the Hudson.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, this was just as true for his religious outlook as it was for many other aspects of his life. For those who maintain that FDR, as President, tried to replace the nation's civil religion with a form more in his own image, with himself at its center, one has only to look back to Roosevelt's Hudson River Valley upbringing to refute that claim. This is because FDR's faith, which Frances Perkins described as the “faith of his fathers,”<sup>2</sup>

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1 Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, the Home Front and World War II*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1994, 74.

2 Frances Perkins, *The Roosevelt I Knew*, first printing New York, Viking Press, 1946, edition with introduction by Adam Cohen, New York, Penguin Books, 2011, 133-141.

had its immediate roots in the land of his fathers: the Hudson River Valley. This study focuses on how FDR's Hudson Valley religious upbringing contributed to his rhetoric and his leadership as President. His was a faith based on the virtues of servanthood, both to God and to others. Indeed, the Bible chapter on which FDR took the Presidential oath four times was Corinthians 1:13, which asserts that charity (also translated as "love") "seeketh not its own."<sup>3</sup> FDR was no spiritual Henry VIII, seeking to establish his own church in order to better achieve his own purposes. Rather, he sought to use the strength of his religious faith, taught to him in childhood and tested in the bitter throes of affliction and adversity later in life, to fortify the American people through the nation's greatest economic depression and the world's deadliest war. It was an inclusive, service-oriented civil religion that Roosevelt sought to follow in his role as the nation's leader. It was a faith that, as expressed in Ray Palmer's beloved hymn, "My Faith Looks Up to Thee," focused itself on a higher power, but which emphasized the virtues of empathy and charity shared by most of the world's faith traditions, regardless of their specific beliefs about that higher power.



The front entrance to St. James' Church in Hyde Park, the home congregation of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his family.  
Photo by Durahn Taylor

On March 4, 1933, the day he was first inaugurated President, FDR did not widely publicize the fact that prior to the inauguration ceremony, he, his family, and close advisors attended a service at St. John's Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C. The church's rector, Rev. Robert Johnston, and FDR's old schoolmaster at Groton, Rev. Endicott Peabody, co-officiated. Both ministers used the same words in referring to the President-elect, for whom they asked God's blessing and guidance.

Reverend Johnston prayed, "Almighty and most merciful God, grant, we beseech Thee, that by the indwelling of Thy Holy Spirit, Thy servant, Franklin, that he and all his advisors may be enlightened and strengthened for Thy service." Later, Reverend Peabody prayed, "O Lord, our Heavenly Father...most heartily we beseech Thee, with Thy favor to behold and bless Thy servant, Franklin, chosen to be the President of the United States."<sup>4</sup>

From his inauguration to the end of his life, "Thy servant Franklin" is who he would

3 Gary Scott Smith, *Faith and the Presidency: From George Washington to George W. Bush*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, Chapter 6: "Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the Quest to Achieve an Abundant Life."

4 Davis W. Houck, *FDR and Fear Itself: The First Inaugural Address* (Library of Presidential Rhetoric), College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 2002, Chapter Nine: "March 4, 1933: Final Scene."

be. FDR employed his faith in a civil setting not to divide people, but to unite them against the forces of economic and military oppression, not to set himself as master over the hearts of humanity, but to be one of humanity's leading servants.

## Train Up a Child: Sara, Mr. James, and St. James'

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6, King James Version

For FDR, religion was a family affair. Many of his forbears lie buried in the graveyard of St. James' Episcopal Church, not far from the Roosevelts' Springwood estate in Hyde Park. The young Franklin was baptized in the Chapel of St. James', which is located about a mile away from the main church building. The literature on FDR's childhood is rife with accounts of how his parents impressed upon him the sense of *noblesse oblige* (the principle that those who are blessed with more material abundance ought to help those who have less), but less discussed is how in many ways the faith journey of the future President was foreshadowed by that of his father. James Roosevelt, known as "Mr. James" to the Hyde Park household staff, was a vestryman at St. James' Church, as his son would someday be. In 1900, the year he died (leaving his only son to be the "man of the house" at the age of eighteen), James Roosevelt delivered an address at St. James' on the subject of "Work." The handwritten manuscript of that speech survives today in the archives of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library at Hyde Park. In James Roosevelt's mind, the residents of Hyde Park were not to be like the rich man in Jesus's parable who ignored the poor man named Lazarus.



The exterior of St. James' Chapel, about a mile from the main church building. Franklin Roosevelt was baptized here shortly after his birth on January 30, 1882.

Photo by Durahn Taylor

True, the first part of the “Work” address reads much like the kind of tribute to individual industriousness that characterized many opinion leaders in late-nineteenth century Gilded Age America. Yet, James Roosevelt is careful to point out that there are two “pictures” (his word) to which one must pay attention when one is considering the notion of “work” in contemporary society. “Would that all mankind who are diligent, industrious, and persevering [sic], sparing neither labor, nor self-denial in their endeavors to succeed in life, would, I say, that all could succeed if they tried,” he says. Yet, in a world in which there are, and always have been, “more workers than work,” there is another picture he paints for his audience: “a picture of want, of misery, and death,” which one can experience by going to the tenements “of London or Paris,” many of which “contain[ed] more people than [the] whole village” of Hyde Park. He describes to his audience the dimly lit, over-crowded tenements he visited in London, and the starvation of children. He also quotes a lengthy verse known as “the Song of the Shirt,” which describes the hardships of the sweatshop labor involved in producing the shirts he and his audience wear and take for granted every day.

He ends with sentiments that would be echoed by the New Dealers with whom his son later surrounded himself and became identified:

“Help the helpless.” Here is word for every man, woman and child in this audience tonight, the poorest man, the daily worker, the obscure individual, shares the gift and the blessing of doing good. It is not necessary that men should be rich to be helpful to others, money may help, but money does not do all. It requires earnest purpose, honest self devotion and hard work. Help the poor, the widow the orphan, help the sick, the fallen man or woman, for the sake of our common humanity, help all who are suffering.

Man is dear to man; the poorest poor long for some moment, in a weary life when they can know and feel that they have been themselves the fathers and dealers-out of some small blessings; —have been kind to such as needed kindness—for that single cause that we have all of us, one human heart.<sup>5</sup>

One can detect many foreshadowings in the words of James Roosevelt of the later language of Franklin Roosevelt. For instance, the idea of painting two different “pictures” of work, one of which—the dramatic image of life in the tenements and sweatshops—foreshadows President Roosevelt’s second inaugural, in which he uses the same word, “picture,” after his famous observation: “I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished...But it is not in despair that I paint that picture for you. I paint it for you in hope—because the Nation, seeing and understanding the injustice in it, proposes to paint it out.”<sup>6</sup> The unity of human destiny that James Roosevelt described as “that single cause that we have all of us, one human heart,” was echoed by his son toward the end of his second inaugural address:

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5 James Roosevelt, “Lecture for St. James Guild”, Papers of James (II) Roosevelt; Roosevelt Family Papers; FDR Presidential Library.

6 “Franklin D. Roosevelt Second Inaugural Address Wednesday, January 20, 1937,” in James Linden, assembler, *U.S. Presidential Inaugural Addresses*, iBooks, 378-379.

In every land there are always forces that drive men apart and forces that draw men together. In our personal ambitions we are individualists. But in our seeking for economic and political progress as a nation, we all go up, or else we all go down, as one people.<sup>7</sup>

As the only child of James and Sara Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt was instilled with a great sense of family responsibility and destiny. After all, the Roosevelt family motto, “Qui plantavit curabit” (translated as either “The one who planted it will take care of it” or “He who will plant will cultivate”) implies a following-through with work that has begun.<sup>8</sup> In fact, it echoes Paul’s words to the Philippians: “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”<sup>9</sup> So when Mr. James died in 1900, it fell to the young FDR to follow in his footsteps and carry on his father’s work, both in concrete ways (such as succeeding him as a vestryman at St. James’) and in more thematic ways with the work he would do, and the religious ethos underlying why and how he would do it. His education at Groton under the legendary Dr. Peabody only built upon a service-oriented moral foundation that his parents had already instilled in him, at Hyde Park, before sending him there.<sup>10</sup> His courtship of, and marriage to, his cousin Eleanor Roosevelt provided experiences that helped Franklin grow in his awareness of how his religious education could be practically applied in society. Not long after Mr. James’ death, when Eleanor and Franklin started courting, Franklin would sometimes meet Eleanor at the Rivington Street Settlement House on Manhattan’s Lower East Side, where Eleanor taught dance and exercise classes to Jewish and Italian immigrant children. On one occasion, one of the children took ill and Eleanor asked Franklin to help her take the child home to her tenement. Franklin was shocked and appalled at the squalid living conditions, exclaiming to Eleanor after they left, “I didn’t know anyone lived like that.”<sup>11</sup> After Eleanor and Franklin were married and started having children, Eleanor stopped teaching at the settlement house because Franklin’s mother Sara advised Eleanor to avoid the risk of contracting and bringing home any of the diseases known to exist in tenement communities. Yet, as Eleanor recalled in the 1960s, Franklin’s frequent trips to Rivington Street to meet her while they were courting left a lasting impression upon him about how poor people lived. Eleanor would ask him to meet her there, instead of at a relative’s house further uptown, just for that purpose. Thus, Eleanor ensured

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7 Ibid., 379-380.

8 <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/facts.html#family>

9 Phillipians 1:6, *King James Version*.

10 See Geoffrey Ward, *Before the Trumpet: Young Franklin Roosevelt, 1882-1905*, New York, Harper & Row, 1985, especially Chapter 1 “Mr. James,” and Chapter 4, “A Loving Conspiracy.”

11 Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt: Volume 1, 1884-1933*, New York: Penguin Books, 1993, 134-138; Goodwin, 96-97; Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin: The Story of Their Relationship, Based on Eleanor Roosevelt’s Private Papers*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1971, 119-121, 166, and 187; Jean Edward Smith, *FDR*, New York: Random House, 2007, 47 (where Franklin’s exclamation is alternately quoted as, “I didn’t know anyone lived like this.”); Geoffrey C. Ward, *Before the Trumpet: Young Franklin Roosevelt, 1882-1905*, New York, Harper & Row, 1985, Chapter 8: “Keeping the Name in the Family.” The third Source Note for that chapter describes Eleanor’s later admission that she had purposely arranged for Franklin to have these instructive exposures to life in the Manhattan slums.

that Franklin got the same experiences in observing life in the slums that his father had described in his 1900 “Work” speech. As Franklin matured as a husband, father, and politician, and as his life and career took him beyond the Hudson Valley, these lessons in how to apply his religious faith would stay with him. Yet, while his faith was developing an external direction, perhaps its greatest internal tempering lay ahead of him, and the Hudson Valley would be the point of origin for that experience as well.

## Valley of the Hudson, Shadow of Polio: FDR’s Illness, Convalescence, and Crisis of Faith

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”  
Psalms 23:4, King James Version

Although FDR came down with polio on Campobello Island, off the coast of Maine, we now know that he was first exposed to the polio virus in the Hudson Valley, at Bear Mountain, when he was sharing potentially contaminated utensils with Boy Scouts during an outdoor picnic.<sup>12</sup>

It was during FDR’s convalescence at Campobello that for a brief time, as Eleanor later recalled, he seemed to be “out of his head” and even questioned why God had seemed to abandon him by allowing him to be stricken with this debilitating condition.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps Franklin never truly learned the answer to that question. But his experience with polio, as Eleanor and Frances Perkins also later remembered, helped him develop a humility and a personal empathy for others that he had not quite shown before.<sup>14</sup> In whatever way that Franklin wound up reconciling his religious belief with the sudden and tragic experience of contracting polio, what emerged was a man whose religious ethos was focused on service to others, not on self-aggrandizement. It was just the ethos that was needed when the country was stricken by the Great Depression and FDR was elected to lead the nation through that crisis.

## The Form of a Servant: FDR’s Approach of Applied Religion, 1933-1945

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”  
Philippians 2:5-8, King James Version

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12 James Tobin, *The Man He Became: How FDR Defied Polio to Win the Presidency*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013, 13-29.

13 See Geoffrey Ward, *A First-Class Temperament: The Emergence of Franklin Roosevelt, 1905-1928*, New York, Harper & Row, 1989, Chapter 13, “Franklin Has Been Quite Ill...”

14 *Ibid.*, and Goodwin, 16-17.



Roosevelt's eldest son James once described his father as a "frustrated clergyman," so it is no surprise that many of FDR's speeches took on the character of sermons.<sup>15</sup> In laying out how he would approach many crises, both domestic and foreign, Roosevelt would first set out the moral principles involved, making direct and/or indirect references to Bible verses along the way. Then he would describe in slightly more specific fashion how he planned to put into practice the positive moral principles he discussed. One great example of this was his First Inaugural Address of March 4, 1933. This address has been analyzed by scores of historians, and Jonathan Slonim's analysis focuses on its relationship to American "civil religion," which is the form in which a specific nation legitimizes itself in terms of its relation to divine power. Slonim posits that FDR recast America's civil religion, particularly in the early New Deal days, in a way that made him, not God or Christ, the center of a new faith.<sup>16</sup> Authors such as Kenneth S. Davis, Mary E. Stuckey, and John Meacham challenge Slonim's framework by arguing that Roosevelt sought to apply the faith principles in a way that made him not the center of America's spiritual community, but the servant of it.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Timothy Wyatt has analyzed the critiques of Roosevelt's use of religious rhetoric to muster American support for World War II.<sup>18</sup>

Whether FDR's invocation of religion in confronting domestic or foreign crises is considered appropriate or not, the fact remains that it was a prominent part of his rhetorical repertoire during his long tenure as President. For Roosevelt, religion served not as a wall, but as a bridge: a bridge between various populations in American society, and a bridge between America and Great Britain during some of the war's darkest days.

An early example of this took place during Roosevelt's Brotherhood Day address of February 23, 1936. The National Conference of Christians and Jews had asked him to address them at an event commemorated as Brotherhood Day. Granted, given the nature of the sponsoring organization, Roosevelt could assume that his audience was already inclined toward bridging the divides between religious faiths, so he did not have to lay the initial groundwork for that process by himself. Yet, the way in which he characterized what Brotherhood Day should be gives an informative model for how he thought Americans in a religiously pluralistic society should get along. It has its roots in his Hyde Park experience, to which Roosevelt had offered an equally informative window in a speech three years earlier, when he addressed the Hyde Park Methodist Episcopal Church for its centennial in 1933.

Roosevelt had brought the unique qualification to the 1933 event of having been the Official Historian of the Town of Hyde Park at an earlier time, so he was familiar

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15 John Meacham, *Franklin and Winston: An Intimate Portrait of an Epic Friendship*, New York, Random House, 2003, 65-67.

16 Jonathan Slonim, "A More Abundant Life: FDR, The New Deal, and the Civil Religion," 2013, *passim*.

17 Kenneth C. Davis, "BIOGRAPHY: FDR as a Biographer's Problem," *The American Scholar* 53, no. 1 (1984): 100-08. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41211584>; Mary Stuckey, *The Good Neighbor: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Rhetoric of American Power*; East Lansing, Michigan State University Press, 2013, *passim*; John Meacham, *Franklin and Winston*, 65-67.

18 Timothy Wyatt, "America's Holy War: FDR, Civil Religion, and the Prelude to War," *Memphis Theological Seminary Journal*, vol. 50, <http://mthsjournal.memphisseminary.edu/vol-50-1>.

with the jangled religious history of his home village. He was aware that prior to the American Revolutionary era, European settlers living in the area later known as Hyde Park did not have regular religious services; every few months, an itinerant Quaker preacher arrived to deliver a sermon. When the settlers finally got around to starting a regular church in 1789, it was from the beginning an ecumenical one for Protestants of any persuasion. The Methodist, Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian citizens all worshipped in the same meeting house, Roosevelt noted. That first church brought Protestants of different sects together, rather than serving as a fortress wall established to keep any of those groups separate from each other. In fact, Roosevelt recalls that he himself first became acquainted with the Hyde Park Methodist Episcopal Church as a young boy through an elderly neighbor who invited him into her home and gave him some gingerbread. It was, FDR said, the first time that he was made aware that there was another church in the area besides his own congregation (St. James', of course), and he remembered that the acquaintance was made in a pleasant way, through an act of neighborliness. Roosevelt went on to observe that, as various denominations became numerous enough to establish their own separate congregations, they began to cooperate less with one another, a state of affairs he remembered observing in his youth. Yet, he applauded how, in the years between his youth and his Presidency, the local Hyde Park churches of various denominations were learning to work with each other again for common community causes, a development he hoped would continue in the future.<sup>19</sup>

FDR's Brotherhood Day speech of 1936 evokes this image of small towns with communities of various denominations that had more to gain by working together than by remaining apart. It is clear that FDR had Hyde Park in mind when talking about such towns. He delivered the speech from his Hyde Park home, his mother and wife sitting with him by the fireside. In the 1936 address, FDR observed:

There are honest differences of religious belief among the citizens of your town as there are among the citizens of mine...This is no time to make capital out of religious disagreement, however honest. It is a time, rather, to make capital out of religious understanding. We who have faith cannot afford to fall out among ourselves.

Making one of the few references that dates the speech, Roosevelt then took notice of the totalitarian regimes already on the march overseas. He declared:

The very state of the world is a summons to us to stand together.... Religion in wide areas of the earth is being confronted with irreligion; our faiths are being challenged. It is because of that threat that you and I must reach across the lines between our creeds, clasp hands, and make common cause.

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19 Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address at Hyde Park, Methodist Episcopal Church, September 29, 1933" and "Radio Address on Brotherhood Day, February 23, 1936" in William J. Federer, ed., *The Faith of FDR—From President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Public Papers 1933-1945*, St. Louis, Amerisearch, Inc., 2006, 25-29 and 78-80.

Observing that, "Brotherhood Day, after all, is an experiment in understanding; a venture in neighborliness," and that "[t]he good neighbor idea—as we are trying to practice it in international relationships—needs to be put into practice in our community relationships," Roosevelt expressed that he "should like to see Associations of Good Neighbors in every town and city and in every rural community of our land." At the base of that suggestion was his conviction that "we may discover that the road to understanding and fellowship is also the road to spiritual awakening." What Roosevelt was describing paralleled what he observed happening in Hyde Park itself: each individual faith community being strengthened by reaching out to other faith communities and practicing neighborliness.<sup>20</sup>

The fascinating thing about FDR's Hyde Park religious upbringing is how effective it was, not only when Roosevelt brought it into play to influence others, but also when others sought to use it to influence him. John Meacham observes that Winston Churchill, when he sought to gain Roosevelt's support as an ally against Hitler, realized the value of FDR's Hyde Park religious upbringing as the means to do so. As Meacham puts it in the 2015 PBS film, *The Roosevelts*,

In August 1941 Churchill is desperate to figure out how to engage FDR's heart. How do you get him into this struggle, which Churchill is basically fighting alone? He decides to use the language and imagery of faith, the world of Groton, of St. James' Church, the high Anglican world from which Roosevelt came.<sup>21</sup>

When he and Roosevelt planned their first face-to-face meeting of the war (which resulted in the Atlantic Charter), a joint religious service was included as part of the proceedings. For this service, Churchill chose hymns that would encourage solidarity between the two leaders (and their respective countries), hymns that would be common to the backgrounds of both Britons and Americans at that meeting: "Eternal Father, Strong to Save," "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," and "Onward, Christian Soldiers." The final hymn left such an impression upon Roosevelt that he later confided to his son, Elliot, that he did indeed see the British forces and the American forces as a common band of Christian soldiers, and that the religious service "would have cemented" the two delegations and leaders if nothing else in the proceedings did.<sup>22</sup>

Churchill had apparently done his homework on the man he continually sought to win over during this period. The meeting and the service would not have had their desired effect on FDR unless Churchill, with his own astute politician's insight, had realized how resonant the atmosphere of that "high Anglican" world was for the President.

Not only was that world and its rituals compelling for Roosevelt, but as his son, James, recalled, FDR the "frustrated clergyman" was eager to take on a greater leadership role in it when the opportunity presented itself. In fact, while serving as governor

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> *The Roosevelts: An Intimate History, Episode 6: The Common Cause (1939-1944)*, DVD, directed by Ken Burns (Original release, 2014; Florentine Films, Public Broadcasting Service, distributed 2014.)

<sup>22</sup> Geoffrey C. Ward, *The Roosevelts: An Intimate History*, based on a documentary film by Ken Burns, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014 Chapter 6, "The Common Cause: 1939-1944," the section entitled, "Making a Get-Away."

of New York, Roosevelt had offered to substitute as a lay reader one Sunday when the rector of St. James' in Hyde Park had fallen ill with appendicitis. (Roosevelt was, James recalled, genuinely disappointed when the rector turned down his father's offer in favor of another local priest.)<sup>23</sup> The war years would enable Roosevelt to step onto the world stage as a national, even an international, clergyman, and showcase how his religious upbringing would lead him to turn to prayer when the stakes were highest, either for the life of the free world or even for his own political fortunes.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 brought the United States officially into the war against the Axis, Roosevelt and Churchill got together again; this time, Churchill came to the White House as a guest during the Christmas holiday season. At this solemn moment, America's first Christmas as an official combatant in the war, FDR sought to set the tone by appointing January 1, 1942, as a National Day of Prayer. It was not the first day of prayer ever appointed—that was not new—but what was telling was the language FDR used in his official proclamation:

I...do hereby appoint the first day of the year 1942 as a day of prayer, of asking forgiveness for our shortcomings of the past, of consecration to the tasks of the present, of asking God's help in days to come.

We need His guidance that this people may be humble in spirit but strong in the conviction of the right; steadfast to endure sacrifice, and brave to achieve a victory of liberty and peace. <sup>24</sup>

It is one thing to pray for guidance and courage for the entire nation in such a moment, but to include a request for “forgiveness for...shortcomings of the past,” particularly when the events of Pearl Harbor clearly indicate that the United States was the victim in this case, not the aggressor, was an audacious move. It has its roots in the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer, included, notably, in prayers for individuals who are physically ill or for communities that suffer famine. In other words, it is included in prayers for people who have suffered a calamity that, in the immediate sense at least, was outside the person's or community's control.<sup>25</sup> Seen in that light, it was an appropriate petition to include in the National Day of Prayer proclamation, particularly as FDR would discuss in the years to come how America and the world needed to learn lessons from the international events of the 1930s so that another world war would not occur.

On January 6, 1942, less than two weeks after his Christmas Eve appearance with Churchill and only five days after the National Day of Prayer, Roosevelt delivered his annual State of the Union Address. The speech is most famous for Roosevelt's announcement of the ambitious production totals that would be met in the manufacture of ships, airplanes, tanks, and anti-aircraft guns during the year ahead.<sup>26</sup> Interestingly,

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23 Meacham, *Franklin and Winston*, 65-66.

24 Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Christmas Eve Message to the Nation, December 24, 1941,” in Federer, ed., 304-307.

25 *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, According to the Use of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, Together with The Psalter or Psalms of David*, New York: The Church Pension Fund, 1928, passim.

26 Franklin D. Roosevelt, “State of the Union Address, January 6, 1942,” in Federer, ed., 307-310.

Roosevelt concluded the speech by expanding upon and applying principles contained in the Book of Common Prayer's petition "For Social Justice":

Almighty God, who has created man in thine own image; Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil, and to make no peace with oppression; and that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice among men and nations, to the glory of thy holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.<sup>27</sup>

In his own concluding remarks, after declaring that the United States was "fighting to cleanse the world of ancient evils, ancient ills," Roosevelt made the following observation:

We are inspired by a faith that goes back through the years to the first chapter of the Book of Genesis: "God created man in His own image... We are fighting... to uphold the doctrine that all men are equal in the sight of God. Those on the other side are striving to destroy this deep belief and to create a world in their own image—a world of tyranny and cruelty and serfdom... No compromise can end that conflict. There never has been—there never can be—successful compromise between good and evil."<sup>28</sup>

In an interesting way, Roosevelt applied the principles of social justice, which may have seemed more appropriate for a domestic policy speech about the New Deal, to the global conflict between the Allies and the Axis, perhaps in this way reinforcing the continuity between what he would later call his roles of "Dr. New Deal" and "Dr. Win the War."<sup>29</sup> By going back to his Hyde Park church traditions, he established continuity between the challenges Americans faced during the Depression and those they would now face during the war.

The collaboration between Churchill and Roosevelt, and between the British and Americans, established in the Anglican aura familiar to both leaders, would bear fruit in 1944 during the D-Day invasion. It was on this occasion that FDR performed the most famous religious act of his Presidency: the famous "D-Day prayer" delivered on the radio. The speech was the product of collaboration between Roosevelt, his daughter Anna, and Anna's husband John Boettinger.<sup>30</sup> Of course, Roosevelt would deliver the address himself. As Meacham puts it, it was FDR assuming the role of "national pastor," and in fact, he conducted that radio address much like a pastor would; he had the text of the prayer distributed to the public ahead of time, so when he went on the air, the audience could read along as he delivered the prayer, and indeed, could pray it aloud with him, as is often done in church services. The D-Day address itself, therefore, was constructed to be an act of common prayer.<sup>31</sup>

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27 "For Social Justice," *Book of Common Prayer*, 1928.

28 Franklin D. Roosevelt, "State of the Union Address, January 6, 1942," in Federer, ed., 310.

29 See Goodwin, 481-482 for an account of how FDR publicly formulated the distinction between "Dr. New Deal" and "Dr. Win The War."

30 Goodwin, 506-507.

31 Meacham, *Franklin and Winston*, 433-436.

In it, Roosevelt prayed for strength and courage both for the soldiers on the battlefield and for the American people on the home front. (In an ecumenical move over which theologians might argue, Roosevelt asked that God receive those “heroic servants” who would not be able to return home from the battle “into [His] kingdom,” deftly sidestepping the issue of whether people of this faith tradition or that would or would not go to heaven after they died.) FDR also shifted at one point from prayer leader to national admonisher when he mentions that many people had asked him to declare another National Day of Prayer. Instead, Roosevelt advised, the American people should devote every day to prayer, both in the morning and evening (similar, incidentally, to the routine of the Book of Common Prayer and the worship formats of several other denominations).<sup>32</sup> Of course, as evidenced earlier in his administration, FDR was not averse to declaring national days of prayer. Yet, as the war effort entered a crucial phase in June 1944, he was now asking Americans to increase the frequency of their prayer life beyond a given designated day.<sup>33</sup>

An existing copy of the draft suggests a poignant incident in the prayer’s composition, one that again indicates that Roosevelt, however much a religious leader he may have sought to be, ultimately saw himself as a religious servant. Whereas the original draft read, “So be it, Almighty God. Amen” (which would have been redundant, because “so be it” is what the word “Amen” literally means),<sup>34</sup> Roosevelt substituted words that subtly put the outcome of the petition back in the hands of God rather than in the hands of the petitioner, words that of course Jesus Himself used in teaching His disciples to pray. The final, broadcasted version of the ending went, “Thy will be done, Almighty God. Amen.”<sup>35</sup>

Although today it is FDR’s most famous public prayer, the D-Day address was by no means the only public prayer of his Presidency. Later in 1944, as he was running for a fourth term, he culminated his campaign with a radio address from Hyde Park the night before the election. FDR began the address by talking about the ongoing challenges of the war and the dangers continually faced by soldiers on the battlefield. He noted that overseas soldiers still took time to send in their ballots, and urged Americans at home to turn out in large numbers for the election. He mentioned four great ongoing goals of the struggle: to achieve victory in the war, reunite soldiers with their families, give those soldiers “honorable jobs” (referring to the G.I. Bill of Rights about which he had addressed Congress in October 1943 and signed into law in June 1944)<sup>36</sup> and to create an organization of world peace to prevent future global wars (referring to the United Nations organization). Then, in a move even more daring than the D-Day prayer, and

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32 *Book of Common Prayer*, 1928, passim; InterLutheran Worship Commission, *Lutheran Book of Worship: Pew Edition*, Minneapolis, MN, Augsburg Fortress, 1978.

33 Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Christmas Eve Message to the Nation, December 24, 1941,” in Federer, ed. 304-307; “Prayer on D-Day, June 6, 1944,” in Federer, ed., 366-368.

34 *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 12th ed., s.v. “amen.”

35 Online Documents collection, FDR Library, <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/04DD010.HTML>; Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Prayer on D-Day, June 6, 1944,” in Federer, ed., 366-368; “D-Day Prayer,” audiorecording in collection, “FDR: Nothing to Fear, Famous Speeches Given by Franklin D. Roosevelt,” Audio CD, published by SoundWorks, 1995.

36 Goodwin, 467-470; Ward, *The Roosevelts*, Chapter 7, section entitled, “A Very Quiet Time.”

using language that would shock the more secular sensibilities of later decades, the President directly admitted to the people that:

To achieve these goals we need strength and wisdom which is greater than is bequeathed to mere mortals. We need Divine help and guidance. We people of America have ever had a deep well of religious strength, far back to the days of the Pilgrim Fathers.

And so, on this thoughtful evening, I believe that you will find it fitting that I read a prayer sent to me not long ago...

The President then read an extensive prayer for the fighting soldiers on land, sea, and air, for justice to prevail amongst governments and nations, for harmony amongst races and classes, and finally for wisdom, courage, and a spirit of charity throughout the entire land.<sup>37</sup> Wherever Roosevelt got this prayer from, some of it was evidently taken from the Book of Common Prayer, a section of which includes a prayer "For the Family of Nations," which includes the following petition:

[G]uide, we beseech thee, the Nations of the world into the way of justice and truth, and establish among them that peace which is the fruit of righteousness...<sup>38</sup>

In the prayer Roosevelt read, there is a comma after the phrase, "Nations of the world" and the word "reward" is substituted for the word "fruit," but beyond that, the words are identical.<sup>39</sup>

It is interesting how, in contrast to the Presidential campaigns of later decades that downplayed religious distinctions so as not to offend any constituencies, Roosevelt sought on the eve of America's first wartime Presidential election since the Civil War<sup>40</sup> to blatantly assert the need for religious faith, and then lead the radio audience in a prayer drawn at least in part from his own denominational background. It is ironic, though perhaps not surprising, that this rhetorical move back to his home religious background was done at his geographic home base of Hyde Park. Later generations might have called this an almost recklessly risky move, but for Roosevelt it worked; he of course won that election and was granted an unprecedented fourth term as President.

## Homegoing

Roosevelt's speeches tended to come back around to faith. His first Fireside Chat, on the banking crisis of 1933, included accounts of several specific things that the national and local governments were doing to meet the crisis, but ultimately it came around to the admonition: "You people must have faith. You must not be stampeded by rumors or guesses. Let us unite in banishing fear."<sup>41</sup> Similarly, in his 1942 State of the Union

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37 Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Radio Address at Hyde Park, New York, November 6, 1944," in Federer, ed., 385-387.

38 "For the Family of Nations," *Book of Common Prayer*, 1928.

39 Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Radio Address at Hyde Park, New York, November 6, 1944," in Federer, ed., 385-387.

40 Jean Edward Smith, *FDR*, New York: Random House, 2007, 624.

41 Franklin D. Roosevelt, "March 12, 1933," in Steve Bonner, prod. *The Fireside Chats of Franklin Delano Roosevelt: Radio Addresses to the American People Broadcast Between 1933 and 1944*, etext, iBooks, 3-14.

Address, in which he had echoed the Book of Common Prayer's petition on social justice, his last sentence declared that "Only total victory can reward the champions of tolerance, and decency, and freedom, and faith."<sup>42</sup> In the D-Day prayer, after praying for the soldiers, he asked God for a number of general blessings for Americans on the home front: first "strength in [their] daily tasks," then stoutness in their hearts "to wait out the long travail," and then the final request:

And, O Lord, give us Faith. Give us Faith in Thee; Faith in our sons; Faith in each other; Faith in our united crusade.<sup>43</sup>

In April 1945, Roosevelt was tired. He went to Warm Springs, Georgia, to rest from the rigors of running the war effort, to get his energy back, and hopefully gain some of the weight he had lost in recent months. Yet, he was still working: fielding correspondence with Churchill on how to deal with Stalin and preparing the address he was to deliver for Jefferson Day. The notoriety of that address in Roosevelt lore lies in the fact that he never got to deliver it; FDR died of a cerebral hemorrhage on April 12.<sup>44</sup> Roosevelt did not know at the time that it would be his last composed speech. Nevertheless, it is telling, revealing perhaps of the ultimate influence his Hudson Valley religious upbringing had on his approach to governance, that his very last public words come one more time to the theme of belief, and that "faith" turned out to be the very last word of his very last public address.

Today, as we move against the terrible scourge of war—as we go forward toward the greatest contribution that any generation of human beings can make in this world—the contribution of lasting peace, I ask you to keep up your faith. I measure the sound, solid achievement that can be made at this time by the straight edge of your own confidence and your resolve. And to you, and to all Americans who dedicate themselves with us to the making of an abiding peace, I say:

The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with strong and active faith.<sup>45</sup>

Whether he knew it or not, Roosevelt had also gone back to the very theme around which his home congregation was named. The official history of St. James' Episcopal Church mentions that a question had often arisen concerning which James the church was named for: James the brother of John or James the author of the New Testament epistle. The history then answers its own question: Dr. John Bard had "selected the name of Saint James for that of the church he founded, in reference to the great practical principle that Evangelist [the writer of the epistle] lays down, that "faith without words [works] is dead."<sup>46</sup>

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42 Franklin D. Roosevelt, "State of the Union Address: January 6, 1942," in Federer, ed., 310.

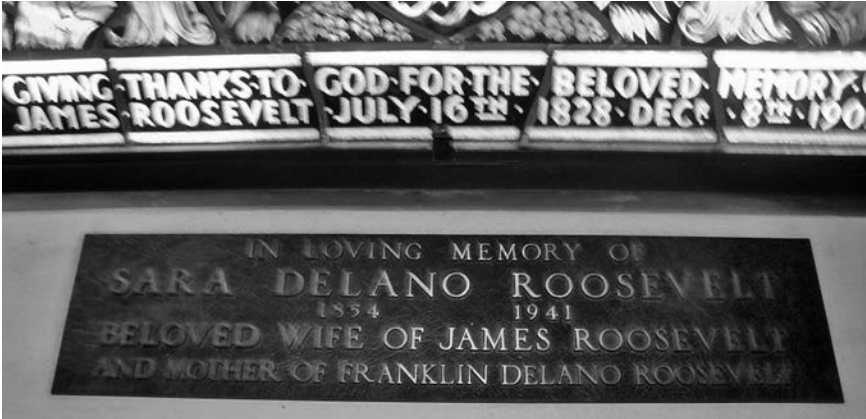
43 Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Prayer on D-Day, June 6, 1944," in Federer, ed., 367.

44 Goodwin, 597-602; Meacham, *Franklin and Winston*, 504-518; Smith, *FDR*, 635, index.

45 Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Undelivered Address Prepared for Jefferson Day," April 13, 1945. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16602>

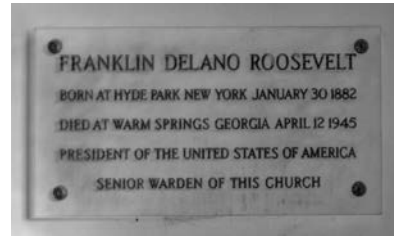
46 Edward Pearsons Newton, *Historical notes of Saint James Parish, Hyde Park-on-Hudson, New York, in commemoration of the belated centenary anniversary of the consecration of the first parish church, October 10, 1811, Poughkeepsie, NY, The A.V. Haight Company, 1913, 7-8.*





Plaque dedicated to Sara Delano Roosevelt beneath the stained glass window dedicated to James Roosevelt at St. James' Church. Photo by Durahn Taylor

Plaque dedicated to Franklin Roosevelt on the wall beside the lectern at St. James' Church. Photo by Durahn Taylor



Franklin Roosevelt was not buried near his parents in the cemetery of St. James' Church, but in his mother's rose garden on the grounds of their home in Hyde Park. (His wife Eleanor would be buried next to him following her death in 1962.) As his body had been brought home to Hyde Park after he died in 1945, his Presidential rhetoric on his last day on earth had also come home, to the religious principles which he had been taught during his lifetime in the Hudson River Valley. Photo by Durahn Taylor

By urging Americans to have a “strong and active faith,” FDR was encouraging his readers and listeners to have the kind of faith that had motivated the founders of his own church congregation. As he went home to the Kingdom on that day in April, and as his body was returned home for burial in his mother’s Rose Garden at Springwood, his Presidency had gone back home to his roots as well...to the faith he had learned at St. James’ Episcopal Church, in Hyde Park on the Hudson. It was a faith that was meant not just to be professed, but to be used: one that the privileged and underprivileged alike were obligated to exercise as a means of serving others. Through this faith, Franklin D. Roosevelt was able to help the nation and the world make their “rendezvous with destiny”<sup>47</sup> in a way that honored his own family’s legacy.

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*This study is dedicated to the memories of Rev. Dr. Luther Kriefall and Mr. Carl Hetzel, mentors of faith and action.*

The author would like to thank Reverend Chuck Kramer and the community of St. James’ Episcopal Church in Hyde Park, New York, for their extensive assistance in the researching of this study.

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47 This famous phrase, of course, came from FDR’s acceptance speech upon being nominated for a second term as President in June 1936. Franklin D. Roosevelt: “Acceptance Speech for the Renomination for the Presidency, Philadelphia, Pa.,” June 27, 1936. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15314>.

# From the Hudson to the Rhine: The Life and Service of General Jacob L. Devers

*By James Scott Wheeler*



Jacob Devers as a cadet in 1906, with his mother, after his plebe year

## Devers at the Rhine, November 1944

In November 1944, the U. S. 6<sup>th</sup> Army Group launched a major offensive against the German forces holding the French province of Alsace. In a series of brilliant maneuvers, the U.S. Seventh and the French First Armies broke through the German defenses in the Vosges Mountains and drove to the west bank of the Rhine River. On November 24, the army group commander, Lieutenant General Jacob Devers, ordered the Seventh Army to carry out a well-prepared plan to assault across the Rhine and into Germany. That same day, General Dwight Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander and Devers' boss, arrived at 6th Army Group headquarters in Vittel, France, and ordered Devers to halt the preparations for the river crossing and to turn the Seventh Army north, on the west side of the Rhine, to help Patton's faltering Third Army.

During a private discussion that lasted through the night, Devers argued vehemently that the assault crossing would succeed and that it would catch the Germans by surprise. Eisenhower, however, was adamant that the plan was too risky and, more importantly, did not fit his risk-averse "broad front" strategy to reach the Rhine. In the end, a furious Ike ordered Devers to turn his forces north. Devers complied. This confrontation between the two most senior American generals in Europe soured their relationship for the rest of the war. Devers had done what no other senior American officer dared to do: He faced the force of Eisenhower's fierce temper and told his boss that his strategy was flawed.<sup>1</sup>

Historian David Colley has concluded that "Many young men's lives might have been spared had Devers crossed the river in late November or early December; almost certainly the war would have been shortened. Instead the Germans were given a free hand to continue their massive troop buildup in the Ardennes in preparation for the Battle of the Bulge . . . three weeks after Devers' planned operation."<sup>2</sup>

Where did Devers develop the self-confidence, courage, and integrity he displayed in this heated meeting with a commander whom even George Patton refused to confront openly? As one would expect, Devers' character and his capabilities as an officer and senior leader were shaped in large part by his experiences as a cadet and as an officer at the United States Military Academy (USMA) in the Hudson River Valley.

## Devers' Cadet Years, 1905-1909

From its founding in 1802, the USMA at West Point has played a prominent role in American history by educating and training leaders who have served their country as soldiers, engineers, and political leaders in war and peace. A prime example of such a leader is Jacob "Jake" Devers.

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1 For a record of this confrontation and for evidence of Eisenhower's towering temper, see Carlo D'Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life* (New York: Henry Holt, 2002), Jean Edward Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace* (NY: Random House, 2012), and James Scott Wheeler, *Jacob L. Devers, A General's Life* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2015).

2 David Colley, *Decision at Strasbourg: Ike's Strategic Mistake to Halt the Sixth Army Group at the Rhine in 1944* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008), xii-xiii.

Jacob L. Devers served in the United States Army from 1909 to 1949. He entered the USMA in 1905, from his hometown of York, Pennsylvania. He graduated in 1909 and eventually became a four star general in charge of over a million soldiers in France in 1944 and 1945. After graduation, he served three tours of duty at the USMA, for a total of eleven years, and if you add his four years as a West Point cadet, Devers spent fifteen years of his life in the Hudson River Valley. His experiences during these years helped prepare him for his wartime service as a senior military commander. At the same time, Devers contributed in a number of ways to the development of the USMA and to the infrastructure of the Hudson River Valley.

Devers was one of the youngest members of his class, and before his trip to West Point, Philadelphia was the only large city he had visited. His four years of education as a cadet honed the moral and intellectual attributes that he carried with him from his early life in York. His was a Norman Rockwell upbringing, with nurturing and loving parents and siblings. He acquired a work ethic from his family that was reinforced at West Point. He excelled at sports, playing on the USMA's varsity baseball and basketball teams. He became an accomplished horseman and began a lifetime of polo playing.

The USMA's curriculum was designed to train engineers, although very few graduates have served as engineers in the army. "Jake" Devers was required to take algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and calculus in his first year. In the next three years, he took more geometry and calculus, French, Spanish, chemistry, mineralogy, geology, and drawing. In his final year, he studied civil and military engineering, the science of war, law, history, and historical geography. There was little free time in Jake's daily schedule, and that was filled with athletics. No doubt, such a program of study exposed him to many disciplines and taught him how to deal with a massive amount of information in a short time.<sup>3</sup>

Devers did well in his mathematics courses, but struggled in English and foreign languages. Through it all, he learned the importance of hard work when faced with adversity.<sup>4</sup> While a cadet, Devers was mentored by remarkable future army leaders such as Charles P. Summerall and Joe Stillwell, who both became four star generals.<sup>5</sup> This was and is an important aspect of a West Point education. Cadets are given the opportunity to interact in a professional and social manner with young officers who come from the field army to the USMA to teach for a few years. In Devers' case, he chose to accept mentoring and thus learned a great deal about the army from such officers.

General Summerall, the senior artillery instructor when Devers was a cadet, explained in his memoirs how he interacted with cadets: "I took a battery of the first class on Friday afternoons for a practice march and a problem. Then we made camp. After the horses and guns were cared for, the cadets had supper, followed by a campfire,

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3 Lance Betros, *Carved From Granite: West Point since 1902* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1912), 113.

4 York Heritage Trust, Devers Papers, Box 3, Devers Interview with Dave Palmer, Tape 12, page 19. Hereafter cited as YHT, DP (Devers' Papers).

5 YHT, DP, Box 3, Devers Interview, Tape 12, 19 and Tape 15, 6.

around which we sat and talked artillery.”<sup>6</sup> Summerall’s influence led Devers to choose the Field Artillery branch upon graduation.

Cadet Devers also was exposed to national leaders and events. For example, Russian and Japanese officials who were negotiating the treaty to end the Russo-Japanese War visited the USMA in 1905. Senior political and military leaders from around the nation often spoke to the Corps of Cadets, widening their understanding of the world. By the time Devers graduated, his worldview had greatly expanded.

Cadets also were exposed to the beautiful Hudson Valley. For example, at the end of his first summer at West Point, Devers and his classmates took part in their first military field training. As Jake wrote to his boyhood friend in York,

We left West Point carrying about 20 pounds and one gun on our shoulders, crossed the Hudson with 6 companies of infantry, 2 companies of cavalry, & 1 detachment of artillery, also a wagon train consisting of 16 wagons & proceeded over mountains & hills into the state of New York for 25 miles. Fighting all day & camping all night was our routine. . . . We would locate the enemy perhaps on some mountain then we would try to outflank them, doing it at a run with all our equipment on our shoulders all the time firing.<sup>7</sup>

Such training and the USMA’s athletic programs fit Devers’ personality perfectly. They also showed him the importance of such activities to build esprit in a group of soldiers and taught him how to follow orders before he became a leader and gave them.<sup>8</sup> Devers passed all of his courses and in the end was academically ranked thirty-ninth in his class of 103 graduates. He was high enough to receive a commission in the Field Artillery. His time as a cadet broadened his view of the world and gave him a solid professional grounding for his future service.

After graduation, Devers traveled west to serve as a lieutenant in the 4<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment in Washington and Wyoming. The 4<sup>th</sup> Artillery was a “Pack” artillery unit, which meant that the guns and equipment were carried on mules. During his time in Wyoming, Devers’ battery commander was Lesley J. McNair, who later became commander of the Army Ground Forces in World War Two and one of Jake’s firmest advocates.

## Back to West Point: 1912-1916

In 1912, Devers received orders to return to West Point to teach mathematics, his strongest academic subject. By then he was married to his battalion commander’s niece, Georgie Lyon. When Jake and Georgie arrived at the USMA, they were assigned quarters at 16 Kingsley Row overlooking the Hudson. Devers recalled that “one of the

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6 Timothy Nenninger, ed., *The Way of Duty: The Memoir of General Charles Pelot Summerall* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 84.

7 YHT, DP, Box 3, Devers to Ira Weiser, 25 August 1905.

8 Cadet Devers earned eighty-four demerits, most for minor offenses such as talking in the barracks during inspection, sleeping in his chair during call to quarters, or leaving his towel in the bath house. He was also written up for “galloping his horse at about 1030 AM” and for being late for formations. This is a relatively small number of demerits for a cadet in those years. USMA Archives, *Description and School History of Cadets*, “Abstract of Delinquencies,” various dates 1905-1909.

first things I did, of course, after I arrived there was to call on the superintendent, General Townsley. General and Mrs. Townsley returned the call." When they arrived, Mrs. Townsley observed to her husband that the young couple ought to have a porch added to the front of the house, overlooking the river. "So within a couple of weeks I had a porch and awning. You could sit out there in great comfort and have the greatest scenic view in the world."<sup>9</sup>

Devers arrived at the USMA with no teaching experience. He recalled that "I was thrown into the middle of Plebe Math, Convergency and Divergency of Series, Probability, and Chance, and I hadn't been too good in those subjects when I was a cadet."<sup>10</sup> Fortunately the math department had developed a new instructor training program to prepare instructors for their classroom teaching. This type of training for new instructors remains a tradition at the USMA, ensuring that cadets receive the finest technical education possible while exposing them to young officers such as Devers.

Jake Devers taught two math classes a day, six days a week. Each class had about twelve cadets. The cadets were organized into class sections based upon their math grades. Devers taught the second from the bottom section, just above the "Goat section." If his students flunked math, they would be turned out of the USMA, so Devers considered it his duty to save as many of them as possible by providing good instruction and frequent tutoring. He recalled that "I was able to save more than 50% of the people, particularly in the Plebe year. . . . I got terribly interested in why they were having trouble with Math. . . . Well you know, that taught me a good lesson because in all the rest of my career I found out that you must look very carefully at both sides of the question to get the facts before you get rid of a man you don't like or you don't think is any good."<sup>11</sup> Devers was never known to fire people unfairly during his long career.

Devers' teaching experience at West Point illustrates an aspect of the USMA still evident today. West Point graduates two classes each year: the first is the cadets, who are commissioned officers; the second is the group of young officers who are selected to teach at the USMA and then return to the field army after their teaching tour with enhanced intellectual capabilities and more finely honed leadership skills. Their teaching experience provides officers the chance to mature and expands their ability to understand and mentor younger officers later under their command.

Devers continued to take an avid interest in athletics. He was the officer manager of the varsity baseball team, which in the 1915 season was undefeated. One of the cadets on that team was Omar Bradley who, along with his classmate Dwight Eisenhower, certainly knew Devers. When his tour in the math department came to an end, Devers had acquired an increased understanding of human nature and enhanced leadership skills. He and his wife also fell in love with West Point and the Hudson River Valley, to which they would return twice more voluntarily.

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9 YHT, DP, Box 4, Devers Interview, Tape 17, 42-43.

10 Ibid. 43-45.

11 Ibid. 46-47.

In 1916, Devers was assigned to the 9<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment at Schofield Barrack, Hawaii. This assignment exposed him to the motorization of the army then just beginning, since the 9<sup>th</sup> Artillery was one of the army's first motorized artillery regiments. When World War One broke out, Devers served at the Field Artillery School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where his teaching experience stood him in good stead. He became the director of the gunnery program and commanded an artillery regiment, although the war ended before he could go overseas. In 1919, the army sent Devers and other promising officers who had missed the war to France for three months. After this period of study, he returned to the United States with orders to again teach math at West Point.

On the way home aboard the ship, however, Devers' career took a new turn. Since he had the wartime temporary rank of colonel, he was assigned a stateroom with another officer. Also traveling on the ship were two lieutenant colonels, Robert Danford and Bill Bryden, who a month earlier had been brigadier generals. These officers were five years senior to Devers, who was to revert to his permanent rank of captain when he got to West Point. Danford was to be the USMA's commandant of cadets. Devers and his roommate wisely decided to invite Danford and Bryden to share their stateroom during the voyage. According to Devers, this gave the four officers a chance to talk about what they learned while in France. When Danford found out that Jake was returning to the USMA to teach math, he asked him instead to become the senior artillery instructor in his tactical department. Devers accepted the offer. This assignment allowed him to command the artillery detachment stationed at the USMA while also working directly for the commandant as senior artillery instructor.<sup>12</sup>

## Again to the Military Academy: 1919-1924

On August 20, 1919, Jake and Georgie Devers got off the train at the West Point station of the West Shore railroad. Although he was no longer a colonel, Devers remembered thinking that "I was going back to a wonderful environment and a great experience. As it turned out, General MacArthur, whom I had never met, had just been assigned superintendent."<sup>13</sup> As commander of the post's artillery detachment, Devers commanded five officers and 200 enlisted soldiers. The unit was composed of a horse-drawn battery with four 75mm guns and a tractor-towed artillery battery with four 155mm howitzers. During the academic year, Devers oversaw the artillery instructors and his gunners supported cadet training with artillery demonstrations.

Jake and his wife lived in one of the large quarters overlooking Buffalo Soldiers' Field, where his unit's barracks, garages, and stables were located. Like many army officer families, they employed servants. In fact, they brought an American Indian

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. Tape 19, 45-46.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 49.



woman named Allie with them from Fort Sill.<sup>14</sup> The Devers entertained cadets on a frequent basis and traveled to places in the area such as Bear Mountain to skate in the winter and picnic in the summer. They also went to New York City for sporting events and an occasional play.

The USMA faced one of its most challenging periods of history in 1919. During the war, three classes of cadets were graduated in one year, to provide officers to the rapidly expanding army. When the war ended, there was only one cadet class at the USMA and its leadership development system, which relied

heavily on senior cadets to mentor younger cadets, was a shambles. William Ganoe, the superintendent's adjutant in 1919, recalled that "never in its precise production of officers through the previous hundred and sixteen years had the U. S. Military Academy been so battered and broken as in 1918."<sup>15</sup> Devers later noted that "We had no cadets with any experience. . . . We had to set up a new honor system, so I was at West Point at a very difficult time; but a very progressive time."<sup>16</sup>

The army chief of staff, Peyton March, selected Brigadier General Douglas MacArthur to serve as superintendent of the badly battered USMA. March told MacArthur that "West Point is forty years behind the time," and he expected him to reform the curriculum to better prepare cadets for the modern world of airplanes, telephones, and motor vehicles. He also expected MacArthur to revive the honor system and rebuild the corps of cadets.<sup>17</sup>

Devers wrote years later that MacArthur "inherited an old institution with a great heritage of success and tradition, but now reduced to a pitiable state as a result of action of the War Department. . . . There was no written code of procedure. The physical plant was in great need of repair. The morale of the student body, the faculty, and staff was at a low ebb."<sup>18</sup> MacArthur was thirty-nine years old and an academy graduate when he became superintendent. Although a war hero, he had never served on the faculty of any educational institution. He faced a senior faculty that opposed



Devers (center) with MacArthur at a USMA baseball game, 1920. Jake was the officer representative of the baseball team

14 Allie and her three daughters lived in the top floor of the house, since she was divorced from her husband. Allie and her girls lived with the Devers for five years, and when Jake and Georgie left in 1924, Allie married a sergeant. Her daughters married West Point graduates, according to Jake's daughter Frances. YHT, DP, Box 54, Frances and Alexander Graham Interview, Tape 71, 24-25.

15 William Ganoe, *MacArthur Close-up* (New York: Vantage Press, 1962), 13.

16 YHT DP, Box 4, Devers Interview, Tape 19, 39-40.

17 D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur*, volume 1, 1880-1941 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), 261.

18 Jacob L. Devers, "The Mark of the Man on USMA," *Assembly*, XXIII, (spring, 1964), 16-19.

changes to a venerable nineteenth-century institution wedded to a curriculum designed for army leaders of that century.

As commander of the artillery detachment and senior artillery instructor, Devers was in a good position to observe MacArthur's attempts to reform the USMA. The superintendent made a lasting impression on him:

I had never met MacArthur. . . . One of the first things I had to do was to go see him in his office. . . . I was very rigid, I saluted, I did everything that I had been taught, and General MacArthur very quietly said, "Sit down." Then he came over and offered me a cigarette." I said, "General I don't care to smoke." He said, "Take a cigarette." So I took the damn cigarette. Then he lit it for me. Then he paced the floor. . . . But the conversation was terrific. . . . He was thinking out loud. . . . When he got through, he simply walked to his desk and picked up a two-inch thick report from the Inspector General on my [artillery] detachment. . . . All he did was say, "Here, I give you ten days to clean this up. I'll be down to inspect you in ten days from today." I said, "Yes Sir" saluted, and left.<sup>19</sup>

Devers grabbed the opportunity to make the artillery detachment a model unit. When the army inspector general addressed the corps of cadets on the subject of soldierly standards in 1922, he stated: "I have recommended to the Superintendent that every cadet of the present 1<sup>st</sup> Class be given the opportunity to visit the barracks, stables, gun sheds, store room, and mess of the Detachment of Artillery. Such a visit will give you a very good idea of what we expect of an efficient army organization."<sup>20</sup> With such success, it is not surprising that Colonel Danford summed up Devers' service at West Point with these comments: "The all around efficiency of this officer is exceptional. Has made the U.S.M.A. Detachment of Artillery a model organization. Is full of enthusiasm and initiative. Would feel fortunate to have this officer as my subordinate at any time."<sup>21</sup>

Throughout his life, Devers had the ability to see a problem and to come up with a solution that made sense in the circumstances. For example, when he assumed command of the artillery detachment, he found out the unit had a farm that provided food for the mess hall, but he also discovered that the married enlisted men were not getting their fair share of the produce. He recalled that,

I had a good farm—and I ran a pig farm—and I ran a chicken farm—and I used the produce from this to enrich my Mess. When I butchered the pigs, instead of [just] selling them on the market and using the money in the Battery Fund, I always did both. I used to cut them up—the pigs—and used the money to take care of my married enlisted men because they thought they weren't getting a fair deal. So every time I used a lot of pork in the Mess I had a drawing—a lottery—in which they drew to see what package they were going to get of the pigs we cut up for them.<sup>22</sup>

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19 YHT, DP 4, Devers Interview, Tape 19, 66-67.

20 YHT, DP, Box 4, Memorandum from the Assistant to the Commandant, 17 October 1922.

21 National Archives, Saint Louis, Mo., Devers' Personnel File, Efficiency Reports, 1919-1924.

22 YHT, DP, Box 4, Devers Interview, Tape 19, 63.

Devers' hands-on approach to such family concerns remained a characteristic of his leadership style. His leadership of the detachment certainly improved the lives of many soldiers and their families.

Devers was not a major participant in MacArthur's attempts to modernize the USMA's curriculum. However, he did spend time defending MacArthur's changes to young officers like Omar Bradley, who were resistant to change.<sup>23</sup> The one MacArthur innovation that directly affected Jake was the decision to end the "Summer Encampment," which for decades had been more of a social event than a training exercise in tents pitched on the Plain. Summer Encampment gave officers and their wives the opportunity to parade unmarried young women before the cadets at the weekend dances.

In place of the encampment, MacArthur developed a program of field training at West Point and at Fort Dix, New Jersey. Devers described the training at Fort Dix as "one of the greatest experiences I ever had—moving over the road with a group of cadets who had had very little coordinated training. We put the team together, really, when we put them on driving those draft horses and riding those cavalry horses, commanding their own units and going into camp, and going into traffic."<sup>24</sup> The training gave cadets an opportunity to train with regular army soldiers as they drove tanks, fired artillery, and conducted tactical maneuvers.

When MacArthur left the USMA in 1922, the tactical training ended and Summer Encampment was reinstated. Nonetheless, many of MacArthur's reforms were retained, and he successfully defended the four-year curriculum and the use of military instructors. The reorganization of the cadet corps and the institutionalization of the honor code and system also remain a legacy of Douglas MacArthur, who showed Devers how much a senior officer can accomplish, even in a conservative and somewhat staid institution. When given the chance as a colonel and a general officer, Devers showed the same determination and self-confidence needed to change institutional behavior and to empower subordinates to do their jobs without undue supervision.

During his five years at the USMA, Devers served with and got to know a number of promising officers such as the future generals Omar Bradley, Lesley McNair, Bill Bryden, Matthew Ridgeway, and Willis Crittenger. He also made an impression on some cadets with his humane approach to leadership and discipline. For example, Cadet Eugene Harrison remembered meeting Major Devers near the enlisted men's Post Exchange, which was off-limits to cadets. Devers, "with a very nice smile on his face," asked Harrison and a fellow cadet if they realized they were off-limits. Devers told them to report back to their quarters, and Harrison expected to be reported for a serious infraction of the rules. "However, he never did report us. . . . We from then on

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23 Omar Bradley and Clay Blair, *A General's Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 51-52.

24 YHT, DP, Box 4, Devers Interview, Tape 19, 60.

had a very good opinion of General Devers.”<sup>25</sup> This is a good example of how Devers treated cadets and subordinates.<sup>26</sup>

Devers remained at West Point until 1924. He continued in his duties as the chief artillery instructor and commander of the artillery detachment. He also played a great deal of polo as a member of the USMA’s traveling team. This activity brought him into contact with Averell Harriman, who “was then a young player . . . and he was just learning, really to ride; but he owned the big estate . . . over in Central Valley.”<sup>27</sup> Devers would meet Harriman again in 1943 when Jake was the commanding general of the European Theater of Operations and Harriman was in charge of the Lend Lease program to Britain.

In 1924, Devers attended the Command and General Staff Course at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Following a year there, he returned to Fort Sill to direct the gunnery program. After playing an important role in the modernization of American artillery practice and doctrine, he was assigned to the Office of the Chief of Artillery, in Washington, D.C., from 1929 to 1932. After attending the War College, Devers served with several artillery units and commanded the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 16<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, at Fort Myers, Virginia, from 1933 to 1936. There he and the cavalry commander, George Patton, served together and played on the army polo team in international matches.

Devers’ career from 1909 to 1936 was unusual in that he spent over thirteen years working directly with soldiers. He led men at every rank he held, from lieutenant to lieutenant colonel. In contrast, Dwight D. Eisenhower spent less than three years in troop units before becoming a general. In 1936, Lieutenant Colonel Devers was approaching thirty years of service with little chance to command the only artillery brigade in the army. Promotion to colonel would come within three years, according to strict seniority laws, and he had thirteen years more before his mandatory retirement at age sixty-four.

At this point in his career, Devers received another chance to serve at West Point in an assignment that was to expand his capabilities significantly. As his tour of duty as a battalion commander was coming to an end, Devers’ classmate, Thurston Hughes, adjutant of the USMA, approached him about the possibility of returning to West Point to serve as the Graduate Manager of Athletics, a position akin to the current athletic director. Devers expressed interest in the assignment, feeling that his previous experiences at the USMA had prepared him for the job. After an interview with the superintendent, Major General William D. Connor, Devers was selected for the job. In April 1936, he and Georgie returned to West Point for their third assignment there, and their eleventh move as a couple.

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25 YHT, Griess Papers (GP), Box 8, General Eugene Harrison Interview, Tape 69, 1.

26 For another example of the way Devers treated cadets and subordinates, an academy graduate of the 1938 class, now 101 years old, remembered “escorting” a girlfriend to the Devers’ quarters where he was treated with respect and courtesy by Jake and Georgie Devers. Author’s interview with Major General (retired) Neil Van Sickle, in Kalispell, Montana, 2014.

27 YHT, DP, Box 4, Devers Interview, Tape 19, 65-66.

## Third Tour of Duty at West Point: 1936-1939



Devers (center, in uniform) on Storm King Mountain during the construction of Route 9W, c.1936

The Graduate Manager of Athletics was responsible for a great deal at the USMA. He ran the Athletic Board; directed the maintenance, repair, and construction of athletic facilities; scheduled intercollegiate competitions of the varsity sports; oversaw the coaches of the intercollegiate teams; and supervised the Army Athletic Association (AAA). The major intercollegiate sports were football, baseball, basketball, fencing, hockey, lacrosse, polo, soccer, tennis, and wrestling. Football was the most important of these, especially since it raised most of the money to support the AAA.<sup>28</sup>

The number of intercollegiate sports had grown from six during Devers' cadet years to eighteen in 1936, and the corps had grown from 396 cadets in 1909 to 1,842. These increases required a major expansion of athletic facilities, and when Jake returned in 1936 a new gymnasium had just been completed and a recreational swimming facility was under construction at Delafield Pond. A field house was in the plans, and the athletic fields were badly in need of expansion.

The Athletic Board met every four weeks, and its decisions had to be approved by the superintendent. Funds for the expansion of intercollegiate sports facilities came

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<sup>28</sup> Betros, *Carved from Granite*, 175.

from AAA funds, most of which were generated by football receipts. The AAA was in good shape when Jake took over, with annual receipts of about \$450,000 and a reserve fund of roughly \$5 million. This money was used to support the varsity teams and to supplement government appropriations for athletic facilities.<sup>29</sup>

Devers assumed his responsibilities in June 1936. He set out to shake up an organization that he considered “too conservative.” He concluded that the Athletic Department “had operated in the big [football] games with full houses . . . They weren’t spending [their surplus] and that was the first thing I looked at. They had wonderful office personnel. They had been there a long time and all we had to do was give them some new tools to work with.”<sup>30</sup> He kept the staff he inherited, and provided vision and guidance that allowed them to do their jobs without undue supervision by Devers.

The first major challenge that Jake tackled was the need to expand the athletic fields for intramural and varsity sports. West Point is hemmed in by rugged mountains to the west and the north, and most of the open ground was taken up by the parade field on the Plain and the academic buildings and barracks. Devers determined that the amount of open ground north of the West Shore Railroad tunnel under the Academy could be expanded if the railroad agreed to move its mainline east, into the Hudson River. He presented this idea to the railroad engineers, who told him, “all you have to do—[with] all this rock you’re getting—is build us a right-of-way up there. We’ve already got the easement. We can just drag those tracks out and straighten it up. We save all kinds of money in having a straight track with those freight trains.”<sup>31</sup> So the USMA provided the rock fill for the new roadbed and the railroad moved its line east. This gave Devers the space between the tracks and the hills to the west, which he had filled in and leveled by December 1936.<sup>32</sup>

Devers delegated the work for such projects to three talented subordinates: Captains Dave Erskine, Eugene Harrison, and Alvin Viney. Erskine managed the finances, Harrison the athletic facilities, and Viney maintenance activities, the construction of the new field house, and expansion of the gymnasium. “They handled all the details. . . . They did the leg work and got the job done.”<sup>33</sup> To support these activities, Devers increased the athletic budget from \$381,000 in 1935-1936 to \$677,000 for 1936-1937. More than \$300,000 was for improvements to the armory and to furnish the new gymnasium.<sup>34</sup>

The gymnasium project was a good example of how the USMA mingled funds appropriated by Congress with money raised by the AAA. Federal funds paid for the

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29 USMA Archives, Athletic Board Proceedings, 1936-1939, “Memorandum of the Athletic Board to the Superintendent,” 1 February 1936; YHT, DP, Box 4, Devers Interview, Tape 2, 11.

30 YHT, GP, Box 4, Devers Interview, Tape 38, 23.

31 *Ibid.* 50.

32 USMA Library, Army Athletic Association memorandum, 5 March 1965, “Accomplishments of General J. Devers While G.M.A.” The fill for the railroad project possibly came from the construction of the Storm King Highway, a project Devers was very familiar with, and which he visited often. In his papers in York, Pennsylvania, there are several photos of Devers on the road construction site on the mountain.

33 *Ibid.* 1-2; YHT, GP, Box 4, Devers Interview, Tape 38, 24-26.

34 USMA Archives, Academic Board minutes, 30 June 1936.

basic structure, including the outer walls and internal partitions. The AAA provided \$137,000 for the weight room, the squash courts, and the handball courts. When spending AAA funds, Devers could hire the best contractors and buy the best equipment, whereas he was required to accept the lowest bid when using government money. He worked with the post quartermaster to get additional materials, pointing out their common interest in maintaining an attractive and functional facility. He also convinced the Athletic Board to make a \$6,000 no-interest loan to the Association of Graduates to redecorate the superintendent's quarters. In addition, the AAA paid to deepen the swimming pool to allow Olympic-level competitions.<sup>35</sup>

The Army football team was and is the centerpiece of intercollegiate athletics at USMA. When Devers arrived in 1936 the coach of the football team was Captain Garrison "Gar" Davidson. During his five seasons as coach, Davidson's teams won thirty-five games and lost eleven. Army even beat Navy! But Davidson had an advantage in recruiting that helped a great deal in his ability to field good teams. As Lance Betros explains in his book *Carved from Granite*,

West Point had big advantages in recruiting athletes. Most significant was the Academy's refusal to observe NCAA's three-year varsity eligibility rule, to which most colleges adhered. As a result, a three-year letterman at a civilian college could have a second playing career by entering West Point prior to his twenty-second birthday—the maximum permissible age of entry. . . . Enough collegiate athletes matriculated to allow the West Point football team to continue its unbroken string of winning seasons through 1938.<sup>36</sup>

Devers was faced with a lot of pressure in his first year as Graduate Manager of Athletics to bring the USMA into compliance with the NCAA eligibility rules. According to Devers, some of that pressure came from a former Assistant Secretary of the Navy, who was then in the White House. But even greater pressure came from the Ivy League universities and Notre Dame, against which West Point played the majority of its games in the 1930s. Devers, as athletic director, represented the USMA at meetings with those schools and he concluded that it was in the academy's interest to adopt the same rules as its competitors. In exchange, schedules were modified to enable Army to play more home games against Ivy League schools.<sup>37</sup>

At first the Athletic Board and the superintendent did not agree with Devers about the eligibility changes, probably because they recognized the advantage the Army team would be losing. In the end, however, Devers convinced the superintendent that it was important to show other schools and the nation that West Point was not taking unfair advantage of its competitors in recruiting, and also that it was not lowering its academic standards for star athletes. In fact, the USMA did lower its entrance standards for the "stars," as Devers called them.<sup>38</sup> After adopting the NCAA rules in 1938, the

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35 "Accomplishments of General J. Devers, While G.M.A.," 2.

36 Betros, *Carved from Granite*, 176.

37 Athletic Board proceedings, Board minutes, 20 December 1937.

38 YHT, GP, Box 4, Devers Interview, Tape 38, 31-35.

West Point football team had its first two consecutive losing seasons. “It was quite a shock, as the last time the football team had suffered a losing season was in 1906.”<sup>39</sup>

One of Devers’ duties was to represent the USMA at NCAA meetings. Eugene Harrison, Devers’ assistant, observed firsthand how his boss dealt with the other athletic directors and with his staff: “Devers appeared to be quite friendly with the other directors and quite respected by them. . . . Devers endeared himself to me and almost to everyone else, because he gave you a job—gave you the means to do it—and did not interfere.” Harrison concluded that “It is very seldom that you find a person with his attitude, particularly in the military service at that time.”<sup>40</sup> When one evaluates the reason for Devers’ success in his later assignments, one should bear in mind his experiences dealing with civilian leaders, large-scale financial management, and internal army politics during his years as Graduate Manager of Athletics.

Devers not only impressed subordinates with his accomplishments and positive leadership style: The USMA’s superintendent, Major General William Connor, was impressed enough to expand Devers’ responsibilities in 1937 to include the duties of “Executive Officer for Construction, Maintenance, and Fiscal Affairs.”<sup>41</sup> In this role, he oversaw the USMA’s budgeting process as well as the activities of the post quartermaster. He changed the budget process so that departments and agencies received their money on a quarterly basis, enabling them to better manage their funds. This change helped lessen the problem of “end-of-year” excess funds.

His new duties enabled him to make a significant contribution to the USMA and to the development of the surrounding Hudson Valley communities such as Newburgh, New York, when he helped establish Stewart Army Airfield. In the late 1930s, army aviation was coming of age as the Army Air Forces began to expand. With the need for more pilots, air force leaders expected the USMA to give the Army Air Forces its “fair share” of graduates. As a result, cadets were allowed to take aeronautics courses and undergo flight training, but there was no major airfield near West Point until the late 1930s.

By 1935 the USMA had acquired land west of Newburgh on which to build an airfield for cadet flight training. The USMA applied for and received \$400,000 in Works Progress Administration funds to begin construction in 1936 and to acquire more land. As Devers remembered, “They gave us Stewart Field and the Quartermaster was going up there to do the building. . . . I went up there with Littlejohn [the post quartermaster] and he said . . . , ‘No, I can’t handle this.’” Devers then volunteered to oversee the project as part of his job as executive officer for construction. Two young officers, Captains Elvin Heiberg and John Weikert, took over the detailed planning for the airfield in 1937.<sup>42</sup>

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39 Betros, *Carved from Granite*, 176.

40 YHT, GP, Box 8, Harrison Interview, Tape 69, 9-10.

41 USMA, *Official Register of Officers and Cadets, USMA, 1937* (West Point Publishing Office, 1937), 8.

42 USMA Special Collections, Stewart Airfield file, George J. Richards, “Outline of Status and History of Stewart Field,” 13 November 1944; *Official Register of Officers and Cadets, 1938*, 19 for Weikert and Heiberg.



Devers studied Heiberg's and Weikert's initial plans and pointed out that a 1,500-foot-long runway was too short for army planes such as the B-17 bomber and the P-40 fighter. He suggested that a much longer runway could be built if they reoriented it to avoid a mountain on the site. The engineers agreed and laid plans for an airfield that has a 10,000-foot-long runway today. Devers also encouraged his engineers to seek advice from the army engineers involved with the construction of La Guardia Airport. When construction got underway, the contractors had to deal with drainage problems resulting from the clay soil, and with power lines that ran across the proposed runway. In the end, they dug a big trench for drainage and buried the power lines under the runway, as Devers had suggested.<sup>43</sup> Although Stewart Army Airfield was not completed until the early 1940s, Devers had gotten the ball rolling. His vision and energy affected the future economic development of the Newburgh region.

Jake Devers was promoted to colonel in 1938. The new superintendent, Major General Jay Benedict, asked him to fill the newly created position of executive officer of the USMA. Benedict explained the need for the new position in the 1938 USMA Annual Report:

The correlation of activities and staff development had not kept pace with the growth of the Academy. . . . Requests were made upon the War Department for the few additional officers deemed necessary. . . . They have made it possible to assign officers to full-time duty as Executive Officer, Graduate Manager of Athletics, Recreation and Welfare Officer, and Post Inspector, all of which duties are extensive and important to the efficiency of the Academy.<sup>44</sup>

Benedict's observations about the USMA's increased complexity were well-founded. Devers' class of 1909 graduated 103 cadets, and the entire corps of cadets consisted of 396 men. The class of 1939 graduated 456 men and the corps had increased to 1,842 cadets. The staff and faculty had tripled in the same period, and over 1,200 enlisted men worked on the post.<sup>45</sup> Devers relinquished his duties as Graduate Manager of Athletics and assumed the duties of USMA executive officer.

During his year as executive officer, Jake assumed many of the responsibilities for entertaining important visitors to the USMA and for the planning of the 1939 graduation ceremony at which President Franklin Roosevelt was to speak. Mrs. Devers explained some of the challenges of the job in a letter to Jake's sister:

The Swedish Crown Prince and Princess are coming the 19th of April, the Danes in May and their British Majesties will be at Hyde Park in June, the 10th and 11th. So far as they know here that ends their stay in the States, but with the Mayflower in the river and graduation parade to be seen on Sunday afternoon [11 June], I would believe no one would be surprised at having a last minute call to have seats reserved for them. . . . But I can assure you that Jamie [Jake's nickname] hopes they decide in favor of a nap that afternoon. The responsibility of having the President here on Monday is all the headache he needs.<sup>46</sup>

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43 YHT, GP, Devers Interview, Box 4, Tape 31, 97.

44 USMA, *Annual Report, 1938* (West Point Publishing Office, 1939), 1.

45 USMA, *Annual Report, 1939; Official Register of Officers and Cadets, 1909*.

46 YHT, DP, Box 4, George Devers to Catherine Devers, 3 April 1939.

Fortunately the royals did not come to graduation, but the planning and organization for the ceremony fell to Devers. Traditionally, graduation ceremonies had been held outdoors, on Trophy Point. The superintendent and Devers decided to change the location to inside the new field house because of the mobility problems of the President and the fear of rain for the event. Devers arranged for the floor of the field house to be planted with grass to make it look pastoral. He also had the engineers install a ramp at the west end so the President could drive in his car to the speaker's platform. The ceremony went off smoothly, with 456 cadets receiving their commissions from Roosevelt.<sup>47</sup> The President appreciated the consideration shown him, and in a note to the superintendent wrote, "My information and observation leads me to request you to commend, in addition to the above personnel, the services rendered by Colonel Jacob L. Devers."<sup>48</sup>

The last major obligation for the Deverses at West Point was to serve as the unofficial hosts of his class reunion, since he was the only member of his class then serving at the USMA. As Georgie told Jake's sister:

Time is growing short till June and the 30th reunion. Some ten sons of 1909 are in the Corps. . . . Some eighty people have decided to come to the reunion, counting wives and daughters. This will of necessity be headquarters. . . . Hot water, ice water, towels, cigarettes, drinks, all sorts of food at all hours of the day and night, rafts of strange people rushing in to phone, change clothes, use my lipstick, ask for hankys, stockings, umbrellas, change, and that's just a beginning.<sup>49</sup>

In a later note, Georgie was more optimistic: "It will end however and if I survive, we will go . . . to the [World's] Fair."<sup>50</sup>

As Jake and Georgie were preparing for all of these events, Jake received orders to serve as the chief of staff of the army garrison in the Panama Canal Zone, beginning in August 1939. Georgie observed that "there is so much activity at the Zone that Jamie will be happy. In fact . . . it's a recognition of his ability to get things done."<sup>51</sup> Devers was chosen for this assignment by General George Marshall in large part because he had demonstrated to the army chief of staff his ability to cut red tape, work with civilian contractors, and get major projects completed expeditiously.

During his service at West Point in the 1930s, Jacob Devers contributed directly to the development of the Hudson River Valley's economy and infrastructure. His work in rapidly expanding the USMA's facilities enabled West Point to educate and train cadets for the next thirty years as the Corps of Cadets expanded. He oversaw the construction of the field house and the north athletic fields, and he modernized the Army Athletic Association, which remains committed to the support of cadet athletics. His

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47 Ibid., Devers Interview, Tape 31, 97; FDR Library, Hyde Park, New York, Berle Papers, Box 66, FDR trip to West Point, 12 June 1939. Troopers of the Tenth Cavalry Regiment escorted FDR during his visit.

48 YHT, DP, Box 4, Roosevelt to BG Benedict, 26 June 1939.

49 Ibid. Georgie Devers to Catherine Devers, 3 April 1939.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid. Georgie Devers to Catherine Devers, some time after 3 April 1939.

initiative in getting the development of Stewart Army Airfield underway was perhaps his most significant contribution to the region's future growth.

## The Impact of West Point on Devers' Career

Devers' experiences at West Point during his years there as a cadet, math instructor, senior artillery instructor, and Graduate Manager of Athletics contributed to his development into one of America's most important army leaders of World War Two. His moral-ethical grounding as a cadet, the things he learned about young men as a math instructor, the expansion of his worldview while working for MacArthur, and his experiences during the expansion of the USMA in the 1930s helped prepare him for his future assignments.

After leaving West Point in 1939, Devers oversaw the rapid expansion of the Canal Zone garrison. As a major general, he trained the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry division and built Fort Bragg, North Carolina. As a lieutenant general he commanded the Armored Force and was instrumental in picking senior armor commanders, developing new equipment, and fielding fourteen armored divisions. As the commanding general of the European Theater of Operations in 1943, he played a key role in the development of the Eighth Air Force and the preparations for Operation Overlord. As commanding general of the Mediterranean Theater of Operations in 1944, he oversaw the planning for the invasion of Southern France, picked the key commanders for that operation, and then commanded the invasion that drove the German army back to the Vosges Mountains and then across the Rhine. After the war, Devers served four years as commander of the Army Ground Forces. In that role, he helped reorganize the army for the Cold War and saw the importance of helicopters to future warfare.

The skills Devers needed to carry out so many different tasks in his career were developed or enhanced by his times in the Hudson River Valley. Devers received a great deal and he gave a great deal back to the region during his service on the U.S. Military Academy's staff and faculty. Unfortunately, his contributions to West Point and the Hudson River Valley remain largely unknown to regional and military historians. Additionally, the role his repeated assignments and experiences at West Point played in his professional development is an unappreciated example of how officers' service at West Point has, and still does, develop and hone their leadership abilities and helps mold their moral-ethical worldview.

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# A Hudson River Valley Greenway

*Barnabas McHenry*



A Hudson River Valley Greenway had been the subject of discussion among the various public and private organizations involved with the future of the valley since the 1950s. This Greenway was usually defined as the lands on both sides of the Hudson River from Albany south to either the Battery or New York City line at Yonkers; both definitions appear in proposed legislation. In this article, the southern Greenway boundary is the Battery, the northern Saratoga, and the time is the four years before the Greenway,

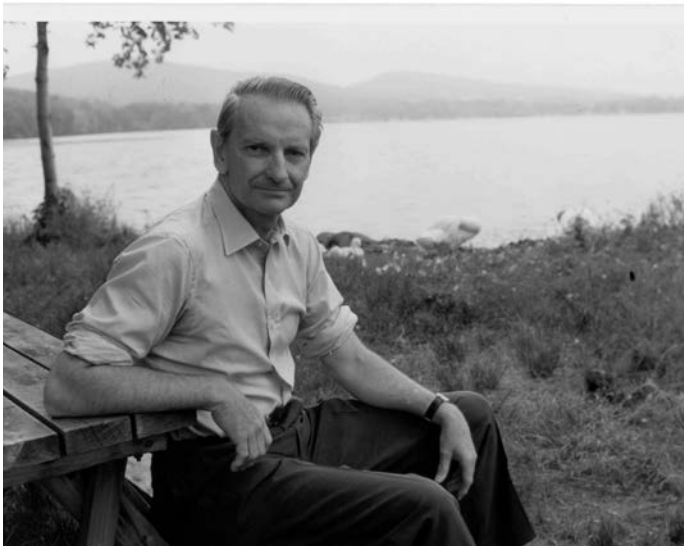


Henry Diamond, first commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation, on his 533-mile bicycle ride across the state in 1972 to promote passage of the \$1.2-billion bond act that ultimately provided funds for water and air pollution programs as well as land acquisition. Photo courtesy of The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

thanks to Governor Mario Cuomo, became New York State law just before midnight on December 31, 1991.

Five studies about aspects of a proposed Greenway were published beginning in 1988, and the sponsors, heroes, and sometimes authors were Laurance S. Rockefeller, Henry Diamond (the first commissioner of New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation), Karl Beard of the National Park Service, David Sampson (who became the first executive director of the Greenway), Maurice Hinchey (New York State assemblyman and later congressman), and New York State Senator Steve Saland.

The first study was *Greenways in the Hudson River Valley—A New Strategy for Preserving an American Treasure* (Sleepy Hollow Press, 1988), by Henry Diamond with an introduction by Laurance S. Rockefeller. The forty-six-page report was ostensibly the consensus of a group of “private citizens,” however the substantial majority (seven of ten) were directly or indirectly connected to Laurance Rockefeller's conservation enterprises.<sup>1</sup>



Laurance S. Rockefeller at Rockland Lake, July 1969. Photo by Phillip Harrington, LOOK Magazine Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, used with the permission of Evan Harrington. Image courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center

The proposal recommended the creation of a Hudson River Greenway as a public/private undertaking to link the extraordinary environmental, cultural, and historic heritage of the Hudson River Valley and thus create regional identity. Rockefeller and Diamond credited Governor Mario Cuomo's 1988 State of the State address for the

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1 Of the ten members, only Frances Beinecke, Pat Noonan, and Klara Sauer could claim complete independence from the conservation work of Laurance S. Rockefeller. The other seven—Henry Diamond, Nash Castro, Dana Creel, Richard Halverson, George Lamb, David Sampson, and Ken Toole—were directly involved with Rockefeller's work in the Hudson River Valley.

notion to create a Greenway; however, many would agree with me that the Diamond/Rockefeller team planted the seeds for the Hudson River Valley Greenway. (The notion of a greenway is not original to New York; the land use category of greenway has been a part of national conservation programs for over thirty years.)

Of the Rockefeller group's thirteen recommendations, less than half have been adopted, not only because of New York's "Home Rule Law" (power to the least common denominator) and the requirement of considerable state funding, but also because of the complexity of New York State government. The various Hudson River villages, towns, and cities could not relinquish statutory governmental functions. But the Greenway idea was promulgated with the energy and determination of Rockefeller and Diamond. And even though at least six of the Rockefeller/Diamond recommendations were never seriously considered because of the lack of statutory authority or funding, the structure of a Hudson River Valley Greenway emerged and was applauded. It may seem surprising that the canny and experienced Diamond would endorse costly budget proposals without requiring authority, but the time was right for new and exciting organizations and ideas. In any event, except for a short-lived attempt much later to use a hotel tax for the Greenway budget, there was no immediate interest by the New York Legislature or the governor to fund Greenway land acquisition or visitor centers, or to require the communities to provide Hudson River access. In fact, there is still near complete absence of recognition of the difficult river access problems created by shoreline railroad tracks on both sides of the river. On the east bank, the distance of rail to river can often be measured in feet.

As noted, the Diamond/Rockefeller *Greenways in the Hudson River Valley* strategy was proposed by a group of private citizens—not one was employed by or appointed by the state. Thus it can be said that the Hudson River Valley Greenway originated as a non-governmental proposal from a Laurance Rockefeller group and, while most of the recommendations were never realized, the grand notion of a Hudson River Valley Greenway started in Tarrytown and 30 Rockefeller Plaza. Some informal groups had suggested similar notions to protect and enhance the Hudson River Valley, but it was the Rockefeller/Diamond group of private citizens that publicly proposed the Greenway from New York City to Albany and suggested the structure that was adopted and exists today. So we start here by celebrating the intelligence and diligence of two great conservationists and a visionary New York Governor, Mario Cuomo, who prophetically said:

I recommend that we create a Hudson River Greenway... The Greenway will be a national model for efforts designed to ensure public access and also preserve our precious natural resources...in the process fostering a sense of regional identity...a greenway of national and international significance.

And they did.



Governor Mario Cuomo speaking  
at Cornell University in 1987  
Photo courtesy of Kenneth C. Zirkel, Wikimedia  
Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/  
User:Kzirkel](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Kzirkel)

In 1989, two more studies were published. The first was *Between the Railroad and the River* (Hudson River Access Forum, September 1989) by Karl Beard, who also rendered the superb drawings of Hudson River access points. This 148-page work is essentially a cartographic exercise illustrating Hudson River access opportunities for the public in seven counties: Columbia, Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rensselaer, Rockland, and Ulster. Albany and Greene and about half of Rockland and Ulster were not included because the railroad is too far inland from the river in those areas.

Access to the river from most of the east bank is difficult, as anyone traveling by Metro-North or Amtrak can appreciate. Scenically splendid because of the river views, the railroad is literally at water's edge in more than half of the 178 miles from New York City to Albany.

Beard explains that there are public and private marinas, with about two-thirds of these commercial or publicly owned. About the same percentage of railroad crossings are safe bridges or tunnels. Though this excellent study was published more than a quarter of a century ago, the number of access points available to the public has remained about the same. The railroad along the west bank hasn't changed much in the last 150 years, though perhaps Commodore Vanderbilt would notice that two of the four tracks have been removed and it's just a noisy freight line.

In December 1989, Scenic Hudson and the National Park Service published *Building Greenways in the Hudson River Valley: A Guide to Action*, an elegant, fifty-six page study using twelve then-existing examples in the region. Again, the primary author was Karl Beard, with assistance from Barry Didato and the usual conservation suspects. The dozen examples of "greenway type" trails in seven of the ten counties (Greene, Columbia, and half of Putnam again not included) are diverse: country roads, bike paths, rail corridors, and even a sidewalk. All of them still exist and are increasingly used. The booklet was designed to promote the development of greenways, and the coalition list includes every Hudson River environmental and conservation organization (including, for the first time, Laurence Rockefeller father and son). The study notes on its first page that a Marist Public Opinion Poll found "Hudson Valley residents overwhelmingly endorsed the [Greenway] concept." This is in contrast to a February 2017 poll in which only a minority expressed approval of the proposed Empire State Trails.

In April 1990, the Hudson River Valley Greenway Council published its seventy-seven-page *Draft Study of a Hudson River Valley Greenway*. The Greenway Council had been established by Governor Mario Cuomo on August 16, 1988. Six of its thirteen members<sup>2</sup> (including the author) were appointed by him; it also contained six ex-officio members. The council was provided with a budget appropriation of \$144,690.

David Sampson was engaged as the council's executive director, and he straightaway began the complicated task of organizing nine public meetings at Hudson River communities in seven months.<sup>3</sup> At the first public meeting, held in Staatsburg on Arbor Day 1989, Governor Cuomo famously proclaimed:

It is a wonderful mission. It is wonderful work. I want this to be one of the most effective things we've ever done. I want this to be a legacy. I want them to say, *Mario—the Greenway*. (Emphasis supplied.)

The river meetings were pure cultivation and promotion, and the organizational skills of Executive Director Sampson turned the commentary toward the goal of an enlightened and supportive Hudson River Valley community seeking to find a workable process. The study area included the boroughs of Bronx and New York (Manhattan), which would not be included in the Greenway-establishing legislation in 1990. However, both boroughs would become part of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area when it was authorized by Congress in 1996.

Study committees were established: Open Space, Agriculture, Access and Liability, Recreation, Heritage, Conservation, Environmental Education, and Tourism. Each contained about ten members. Committee reports were drafted and included in the 1990 greenway study.

Many of the committee recommendations were predictable and sensible, and some became part of all future Greenway programs. The phrases “open space” and “public access” were frequently employed in the various reports. However, of particular interest now are the reports of the Access and Liability Committee, which was chaired by Rose Harvey, who was then (and for twenty-seven years) an executive of The Trust for Public Land. Since January 2011 she has been the highly-regarded Commissioner of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

The Access and Liability Committee suggested the adoption of three primary recommendations, two of which are, after twenty-seven years, again the subject of attention by a Governor Cuomo—a trail network the spine of which would be the banks of the Hudson River and reorganized as The Hudson River Trail (including the Water Trail that Governor George Pataki famously championed and created).

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2 Anna Bucholtz, Joan Davidson, Maurice D. Hinchey, John F. Hudacs, Richard H. Jenrette, Thomas Jorling, Orin Lehman, Franz Leichter, Barnabas McHenry, Francis J. Murray, George Pataki, Jay P. Rolison, Klara Sauer, Richard Schwartz, Gail S. Shaffer, George R. Sharp, Vincent Tese, Franklin E. White, Carl G. Whitbeck, Jr., and David S. Sampson (Executive Director)

3 In 1989, public meetings were held in Staatsburg (April 28), Kingston (May 28), Troy (June 16), Bear Mountain State Park (July 21), Catskill (August 18), New York City (September 22), North Tarrytown (October 20), Newburgh, (November 17), and Hudson (December 8).



Another committee, Recreation, recommended hiking trails that included links to the Appalachian Trail and the D&H Canal.

Essentially, the *Draft Study of a Hudson River Valley Greenway* became the final report, *A Hudson River Valley Greenway* (NYS Office of General Services, February 1991). Thanks to the assistance of then-Commissioner of General Services John Egan, the report was elegantly presented in a seventy-five-page booklet to Governor Mario Cuomo. The recommendations mirrored the earlier draft and urged adoption of legislation that would establish a Hudson River Valley Greenway Council and a Conservancy for the Hudson River Valley Greenway.<sup>4</sup> The notion of a valley-wide referendum to ask voters for approval of a Greenway did not elicit support from either the executive or legislative leaders and was soon forgotten.

The establishment of the Greenway Council and the Greenway Conservancy and their powers (but no regulatory power) and membership was endorsed as desirable and non-partisan. The Greenway Council would consist of representatives from each of the Greenway counties appointed in the classic bipartisan fashion; the majority of Greenway Conservancy members would be appointed by the Greenway Council. Other important recommendations that did not survive included a GIS program, several extensive land inventories, and a tourism tax to support the Greenway. But a Hudson River Valley Trail was strongly recommended for both sides of the river from the Battery north to the Mohawk River. The concept of a Hudson River trail has, after twenty-five years, survived as a necessary and continuing project with wide support. Now, it is part of a much grander proposal, the Empire State Trail, from Manhattan north along the Hudson, then to the west side of Lake Champlain, and thence to the Canadian border.

## Conclusion

This article has chronicled the Greenway from its earliest, “Rockefellerian” proposal to “Cuomonian” statutory embodiment of what is known today as the Hudson River Valley Greenway. This four-year planning stage was exciting and great things were expected when Governor Mario Cuomo signed the authorizing legislation on New Year’s Eve in 1991. Part two of this study will cover the twenty-five years of the Hudson River Valley Greenway’s existence. Its survival is a marvel considering the economically difficult and occasionally politically dangerous years when a variety of wholly unanticipated events and actions occurred in the Hudson River Valley, including a substantial increase in rail use; a disastrous decline in “cultural visitation” for nearly all of the region’s historic and cultural sites; an unplanned but enormously successful “farm to market” program of market gardens and greenmarkets that has created what in effect is a revival of agriculture in the valley; and a decline in industry, with the most visible manifestation being the loss of an estimated 35,000 jobs at IBM (once the region’s largest employer).

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4 The bifurcation into two organizations, a Council and a Conservancy, came directly from legislative experience in California via Larry Rockefeller and had the appearance and effect of doubling public involvement. Its danger will be discussed in a supplemental article.

But the bitterest disappointment of all may be the failure to create an integrated tourism infrastructure because, as visitors to the extraordinary cultural sites in the valley soon realize, there are no family-friendly hotels or inns.

*A member of the Hudson River Valley Institute's Advisory Council, Barnabas McHenry is also co-chair of the Hudson River Valley Greenway and the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area.*



Beverwyck, Washington Avenue extension, Rensselaer, Rensselaer County, NY,  
Library of Congress, Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering  
Record/Historic American Landscapes Survey

# Beverwyck Manor

*Charles Semowich*

Upon his death in January 1839, Stephen Van Rensselaer III, the last patroon of the Manor of Rensselaerswyck, left the west side of the patroonship to his son, Stephen Van Rensselaer IV, and the east side to his other son, William Paterson Van Rensselaer. Stephen received the manor house in Menands, just north of Albany. Needing a place to live, William began construction of a house he called Beverwyck (“beaver’s place” in Dutch.) It has been suggested he wanted to use this early name of Albany to remind people his family had established the city.<sup>1</sup> Beverwyck is located in the northern part of the City of Rensselaer, across the Hudson River from Albany. The property included land now occupied by St. Anthony-on-Hudson, parts of Washington Avenue, and the Beverwyck Cemetery, which Stephen Van Rensselaer III had set aside for use as a public burial ground.<sup>2</sup> Construction began in 1839 and was completed in 1842. Also in 1839 (April 4), Van Rensselaer married Sarah Rogers, his second wife. She was the

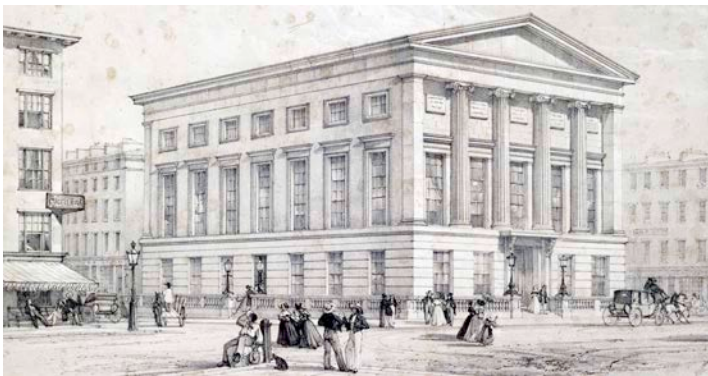
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<sup>1</sup> Rittner. Mind our Manor, [www.donrittner.com](http://www.donrittner.com)

<sup>2</sup> Deed, Rensselaer County Clerk’s Office, Book 79, page 157

sister of his first wife, who had died in 1836.<sup>3</sup> The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1979, the nomination report prepared by Shirley W. Dunn and Doris Manley.

Beverwyck was designed by Frederick Diaper (1810-1906), an English architect who had trained in the offices of Robert Smirke, John Harland, and George Snell.<sup>4</sup> He was a member of the Royal Academy of Architects and a founding member of the American Institute of Architects. He settled in the United States in 1834. Other buildings he designed include the New York Society Library, Delmonico's Restaurant, the Samuel Lord store, and many houses on Fifth Avenue, all in New York City. He had an office in Troy between 1862 and 1863, possibly locating there to assist in the city's rebuilding after its great fire. Earlier, he had designed the Quackenbush Store there, built in 1855.<sup>5</sup>



*The New York Society Library, Frederick Diaper architect. From the Eno collection of New York City views, The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Print Collection, at The New York Public Library*

Diaper designed Beverwyck in the Italianate style with neoclassical details. The first two floors were for family use, the third floor housed servants, and the basement contained the kitchen. (A dumbwaiter connected the kitchen to the first-floor dining room.) Ceilings and walls in the house's primary rooms were painted by Mario Bragaldi (1806-93), a decorative painter who immigrated to the United States from Italy in 1832. The house was heated by hot water pipes in the Perkins hot water system; it consisted of two miles of wrought-iron pipes located throughout the house.<sup>6</sup> To show how early this was for central heating, it can be mentioned that the White House had received partial central heating only in 1837.<sup>7</sup> The cantilevered central staircase of Carrara marble without supports is noteworthy, as is its cast-iron balustrade.

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3 Cuyler Reynolds. *Hudson-Mohawk Genealogical and Family Memoirs* (New York and Chicago: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1911), 1815

4 Douglas L. Sinclair, *Three Villages, One City* (Rensselaer: City of Rensselaer Historical Society, 1992), 110

5 Walter Richard Wheeler. "Troy Architecture: The Quackenbush Stores," *Troy United Newsletter*, July 1999.

6 Sinclair. *Three Villages*, 110-111.

7 Robert P. Watson, ed. *Life in the White House: A Social History of the First Family and the President's House* (Albany: University Press, 2004), 235



Carrara marble staircase, Beverwyck,  
Library of Congress, Historic American  
Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering  
Record/Historic American Landscapes Survey

Andrew Jackson Downing, considered the founder of American landscape architecture, described Beverwyck's grounds, which consisted of 500 acres.<sup>8</sup> Six or seven miles of graveled roads and walks traversed the grounds. The estate also contained extensive greenhouses ("Perhaps the most splendid in the Union," said Downing) and stables. Beverwyck's west entrance "faced upon a plateau which dropped abruptly to the river...affording charming vistas of the Hudson and the city of Albany."<sup>9</sup> A gatehouse (near the location of the former Knights of Columbus building, now a Sikh gurdwara) provided entry into the estate.

The original cost of the building and its furnishings was \$140,000.<sup>10</sup> (According to MeasuringWorth.com, this amount can be compared to 2013 values in three ways: It would equal \$3.2 million in real price or inflation, \$35.7 million in unskilled labor wages, and \$1.49 billion when compared as a percentage of the GNP.) To further explain the huge nature of this sum, there exists a receipt dated Jun 1, 1845, in which a plumber is paid \$2 for one day's work fixing Beverwyck's pipes.<sup>11</sup>

Van Rensselaer hired the best workmen, importing some from Europe. The general contractor for the house's construction was Boardman and Van Voast of Albany. The structure is built of brick, with the exterior covered in mastic. Interior ceilings measure nearly sixteen and a half feet high on the first floor and almost thirteen feet on the second.<sup>12</sup> Each room had a fireplace with Italian marble; some featured carvings of classical subjects.

The house contained a ballroom, music room, and other special-use rooms. Bragaldi's trompe l'œil ceiling frescoes featured the design of a harp in the music room and dancing

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8 *Daily New Albany Democrat* (New Albany, In) March 2, 1849

9 Andrew Jackson Downing. *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adopted to North America, with a view to the improvement of country residences and rural architecture* (New York: A.O. Moore and Co.,1859), 35

10 *Troy Daily Whig*, August 6, 1850

11 Invoice from Charles Pitt and Son to William Paterson Van Rensselaer, June 1, 1845, *William Paterson Van Rensselaer Papers*, BM400, Albany Institute of History and Art.

12 Receipt from Boardman and Voast for 1840-41, *W. Rensselaer Papers* L.G. Hoffman, *Hoffman's Albany Directory and City Register for the Years 1844-45* (Albany: L. G. Hoffman, 1844), 100



Carved marble fireplace mantel, Beverwyck, Library of Congress,  
Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record/  
Historic American Landscapes Survey

goddesses in the ballroom. (The murals still exist above drop ceilings.) An extant receipt details construction costs between May 1840 and January 1841. It reveals that sixty-two men worked a total of 4,182 days, earning \$7,285.70.<sup>13</sup>

Andrew Jackson Downing asked William P. Van Rensselaer for permission to illustrate Beverwyck in the 1844 expanded second edition of his book, *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America*.<sup>14</sup> Frederick Diaper sent a letter to Van Rensselaer indicating that he had completed a drawing of the house and would send it to Downing.<sup>15</sup> Obviously, the sketch was made into a wood engraving to be included in the book. This engraving is illustrated below.



Illustration of Beverwyck in Andrew Jackson Downing's second edition of *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America* (1844)

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13 "Mario Bragaldi" *New York Times*, October 30, 1893; Receipt from Boardman, op. cit.

14 A.J. Downing to William Paterson Van Rensselaer, *W. Rensselaer Papers*.

15 Frederick Diaper to William Paterson Van Rensselaer, *W. Rensselaer Papers*, June 11, 1842.

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A stone balustrade is located around the bottom of the house. Originally, Diaper thought it would cost \$5,000, and a Mr. Brown was willing to do the work.<sup>16</sup> The actual cost was \$3,210.88, which included \$81.13 for shipping and thirteen and a half days of labor. The stone came from Masterton & Smith of New York City.<sup>17</sup> A second bill, dated Sept 27, 1843, indicates that forty-two boxes of the balustrade stone weighing 13,550 pounds were sent.<sup>18</sup>



Detail of stone balustrades, c.2016. Photo by the author

A considerable expense was incurred on the gardens. A receipt dated 1843 indicates that the most expensive plant acquired was a *Rhododendron Altoclorensis* costing \$25. Also purchased were a fuchsia *Elegans Superba* (\$1), a yellow *Banksia rose* (\$1.50), two magnolia *Grandifloras* (\$2), one acacia *Suaveoleons* (\$4), one *Ingo Pulcherrima* (\$4), one *Leptospermun decisata* (\$1), a *Stribitsia Regina* (\$3), and a Cape Jessamine (\$0.23). There were azaleas, as well as other plants and seeds bringing the total to \$57.50.<sup>19</sup>

The most noteworthy of the house's significant furnishings was a mahogany extension table made by Alexandre Roux of New York City, one of the era's most important cabinetmakers. Measuring more than 140 square feet, it cost \$150. (After Van Rensselaer complained about the table, the firm offered to replace two of the leaves.)<sup>20</sup> Van Rensselaer paid \$95 for a large French bedstead from New York City cabinetmakers G. and F. Elleau.<sup>21</sup> From the same firm he also purchased a small, marble-topped center table; parlor table; two ball chairs; a whatnot stand; mattresses and pillows; and six yards

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16 Receipt, November 1842, *W. Rensselaer Papers*.

17 Receipt, September 27, 1843, *W. Rensselaer Papers*.

18 Invoice from Allen Smith to William Paterson Van Rensselaer, April 24, 1843, *W. Rensselaer Papers*

19 Letter/Receipt, August 3, 1844, *W. Rensselaer Papers*

20 Receipt, no date, *W. Rensselaer Papers*

21 Doggett's *New York City Directory* (New York: Doggetts, 1845), 120

of silk and tassels.<sup>22</sup> A painting in the collection of the Albany Institute of History and Arts depicts William Paterson Van Rensselaer, Jr., sitting on a French bed. It cannot be determined if the bed in the painting is the one on the receipt, as it could have been an artist's invention. In 1844, Van Rensselaer purchased a large quantity of fabric from Paton and Co. of New York.<sup>23</sup> They included fifty-two and a half yards of drab Thibet (a brown or olive brown flannel-like wool), 109½ yards of Canton flannel, and seventy-eight yards of blue silesia, iron fixtures, muslin, gimp, cornices and cords. A piano with veneered columns by Chickering of Boston was purchased for \$450.<sup>24</sup> There was carpet made in Glasgow containing a medallion. It is interesting to note that Diaper was at least partially involved in the design of interior decorations since he was involved in obtaining the carpet. Van Rensselaer also purchased three white china hoppers with arms, and the house contained at least two French clocks, a tall-case clock, a silver tea set, a silver egg stand, and other silver.<sup>25</sup>

William Paterson Van Rensselaer moved from Beverwyck during the 1840s and settled in Rye, New York.<sup>26</sup> He died in 1872. It has been stated that he left the area as a result of the Anti-Rent Wars, although he remained a trustee of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy until 1864.<sup>27</sup> His interest in rents from the farms was sold in 1864 to Walter S. Church.<sup>28</sup>

In 1848, the manor and land were sold to a partnership consisting of Andrew White and Charles Lansing (both of Albany) and James C. Bell of Greenbush.<sup>29</sup> The following year, the house and its 500 acres were again offered for sale, with an asking price of \$50,000. The advertisement noted that the annual cost for ground maintenance would be \$2,500, and annual costs for the entire estate \$20,000. It stated that "it is a great pity that such a superior seat so long remained untenured." The advertisement suggests that the place would be suitable for a millionaire.<sup>30</sup>

In 1850, Paul Siemen Forbes acquired Beverwyck for \$62,500.<sup>31</sup> The higher amount may reflect the fact that he purchased 847 acres, which included public roads and the cemetery.<sup>32</sup> This purchase also may have included some of the furnishings; an 1886 account of the house states that the "adornments are still in place."<sup>33</sup> Forbes was a principal in Russell and Co., a major shipping firm that imported tea, opium, and other items, mainly from China. In 1843, he was appointed the first U.S. consul for the Chin government; he also represented French interests in the Far East.<sup>34</sup> In the 1860 U.S.

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22 Receipt, December 14, 1844. *W. Rensselaer Papers*.

23 Frederick Diaper to William Paterson Van Rensselaer, November 12, 1842, *W. Rensselaer Papers*.

24 Receipt from Charles Pitt and Son, June 1, 1845, *W. Rensselaer Papers*

25 Invoice from Mulford and Wendell, November 25, 1843, *W. Rensselaer Papers*

26 W.W. Spooner, "The Van Rensselaers," *American Historical Magazine*, June 2, 1904, 133.

27 Arthur Weiss, *City of Troy and its Vicinity*, (Troy: E. Green, 1886) 174

28 Rutherford Hayner, *Troy and Rensselaer County: A History*, (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co. 1925) 49

29 Deed, Rensselaer County Clerk's Office, book 79, page 157

30 *Daily New Albany Democrat*, New Albany, In, March 2, 1849

31 *Troy Daily Whig*, August 6, 1850

32 Deed, Rensselaer County Clerk's Office, book 70, Page 157

33 *Northern Budget* (Troy), May 16, 1850

34 Sibing He, "Russell and Co. in Shanghai, 1843-1891," a paper presented at Hong Kong University, 2011



Census, Forbes was listed as having a net worth of \$3 million (in 2013 dollars equaling \$85.5 million in commodities [inflation], \$534 million as related to the cost of unskilled labor, and \$1.1 billion nominal GPD per capita).

Forbes moved into the manor by 1853.<sup>35</sup> It is important to note that in 1855, the large township of Greenbush was divided into three townships consisting of Greenbush (the township and village of Greenbush having the same boundaries), East Greenbush, and North Greenbush. Thus, Beverwyck (which had become known as Forbes Manor) was now located in the Town of North Greenbush. Forbes began selling parts of his land in the 1860s and '70s<sup>36</sup> and sold many of his prized horses in 1874.<sup>37</sup> He spent considerable time away from the manor in the Far East. He does not appear in the 1870 U.S. Census, while his son, William H. Forbes, was living elsewhere with his wife Dora Delano (Franklin D. Roosevelt's aunt).<sup>38</sup>

In 1862, a notice appeared in a local newspaper announcing the establishment of a "Civil and Military College" to be located at Forbes Manor. The notice indicated that the school, which would open in the fall, would be under the direction of B. Franklin Greene, James Hale (state geologist), and Amos Dean, LLD. The course of study would be similar to institutions in Europe and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. The notice described Beverwyck Manor as being "large, elegant and commodious [and] having been built at a great cost," with the "grounds comprising 200 acres of landscape gardening...well adapted to the topographical features to the education purposes."<sup>39</sup> Greene, the first director of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, was to be the new school's director. In 1863, he became employed by the U.S. Navy, a fact that may help explain why there is no further mention of the college, which clearly did not last.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps starting a college during the Civil War was ill-advised, there is no record of it ever having opened.

No discussion of Beverwyck (or Forbes Manor) is possible without mention of the legend of the duel. Various sources relate a story that at a party given by Paul S. Forbes one December, a man named Ronald Dunshun became involved in a sword fight with Richard Forbes, Paul's son, which included action on the main stairs. During the duel, according to the story, Richard killed his own baby daughter. Later, the baby and Richard's wife Alice were found dead in a well and Dunshun's body discovered along the Hudson River. One story even suggests the wife and baby were entombed in a wall in the house.<sup>41</sup> It appears that this legend is untrue. Paul Forbes did not have a son named Richard.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, there is no mention he had a daughter-in-law by the name of Alice. An article in a 1910 newspaper indicated that the interviewee stated the stories

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35 Sinclair. *Three Villages*, 114

36 Deed, Rensselaer County Clerk's Office

37 *Cultivator and Country Gentleman*, July 1874

38 U. S. Census for 1870

39 *Albany Evening Journal*, January 2, 1862

40 Wikipedia, article on B. Franklin Greene

41 Sinclair. *Three Villages*, 119. *Albany Evening News*, April 13, 1937; Harold W. Thompson, *Body, Boots and Britches*, (Philadelphia: J.P. Lippencott, 1940), 123

42 U.S. Census 1860, [www.worldconnect.rootsweb.ancestry.com](http://www.worldconnect.rootsweb.ancestry.com) entry 44945, ID 1549

of ghosts are not true, Phoebe Stewart indicated in 1930 that her father was a caretaker at the house and that the “Tale of Blood” was not true.<sup>43</sup> A priest who lived in the seminary later housed at Beverwyck related that he had talked to a man whose father played the violin at the party; the violinist reported that there had been a duel but no deaths. Likewise, the author has found no documentation of either taking place. There could be speculation that the story was composed to embellish the party’s activities.

Paul S. Forbes died in Paris on April 28, 1886.<sup>44</sup> It was reported that Forbes Manor had been unoccupied for many years (because Forbes was living abroad) and the grounds were in charge of a keeper.<sup>45</sup> Other reports indicated that Forbes and his family had moved out of the manor after the death of his daughter in the 1860s, but this cannot be confirmed. Of his twelve children, no daughter died at the manor at that time.<sup>46</sup>

Real estate records for this property after Forbes moved are unclear, with some in undecipherable handwriting. It does appear that William H. Forbes, acting on behalf of his father, sold the property in 1880 to James A. Burden and J. Townsend Burden.<sup>47</sup> It also seems that the property was foreclosed and sold at auction in 1892 to Nathaniel H. and Laura H. Stone of Milton, Massachusetts.<sup>48</sup> (In the 1890s, there was proposal in the state Legislature to purchase the property for use as a soldier’s home; it did not pass. In 1893, it was reported that the manor grounds were used by Gypsies for encampments.)<sup>49</sup> In 1904, Rev. Robert H. Rollins, a Baptist minister, leased the property for a proposed “Van Rensselaer Park,” a resort for Sunday excursions and picnics. Rollins and his family lived in the manor for a year.<sup>50</sup>

The following year, Stone sold the manor to Forbes Manor Realty,<sup>51</sup> incorporated as a real estate company on October 20, 1905, with David Morey of Troy as president.<sup>52</sup> The other directors were Louis W. Emerson of Warrensburg, Francis B. Harrington of Albany, Joseph F. Hogan of Troy, and Louis Thompson of Warrensburg. In 1908, the property was sold for \$534.39 for back taxes by the City of Rensselaer.<sup>53</sup> (The village of Bath, including Beverwyck, had been annexed to Rensselaer in 1902.)<sup>54</sup> The purchaser was John Hourigan, who in March 1911 sold the property back to Forbes Manor Realty.<sup>55</sup> The next year, Forbes Manor Realty sold it to the Fathers Minor Conventional of Syracuse, New York.<sup>56</sup>

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43 Sinclair. *Three Villages*, 119

44 [www.worldconnect.rootsweb.ancestry](http://www.worldconnect.rootsweb.ancestry)

45 *Northern Budget* (Troy) May 16, 1886

46 Sinclair. *Three Villages*, 114; George Baker Anderson, *Landmarks of Rensselaer County* New York (Syracuse: D. Mason, 1897), 541

47 Deed, Rensselaer County Clerk’s Office, book 187, page 251

48 Deed, Rensselaer County Clerk’s Office, book 271, page 33

49 *Albany Evening Journal*, July 10 and 31, 1893

50 Sinclair. *Three Villages*, 116. *Van Rensselaer Park* (Pamphlet) R. H. Rollins, Superintendent

51 Deed, Rensselaer County Clerk’s Office, book 302, page 17

52 Incorporations, number 1080, Rensselaer County Clerk’s Office

53 *Record of Sales for Unpaid Taxes*, Rensselaer City History Research Center, 1908, Certificate 223

54 Deed, Rensselaer County Clerk’s Office, Book 328, page 238

55 Deed, Rensselaer County Clerk’s Office, book 241, Page 33

56 Sinclair. *Three Villages*, 116



Beverwyck Manor, c.2016. Photo by the author

It was reported at the time that the house's exterior would not be altered and the facility could accommodate 100 to 150 young men of the Franciscan order.<sup>57</sup> Following renovations, which included alterations to Beverwyck's interior, the facility was opened as St. Anthony-on-Hudson Seminary in April 1912.<sup>58</sup> In 1916, the Clericate building was constructed near the manor. Later demolished, it contained a chapel, library, classrooms, library, and cells. During that same year, the first ordinations were performed. Noteworthy seminary graduates include Cardinal Peter Turkson and Bishops Elias Manning and Gregory Harmeyer.<sup>59</sup>

The seminary closed in 1988. In 1993, the facility became the headquarters of the Province of the Immaculate Conception, which later relocated. However, since that date the manor house has been named the Immaculate Conception Friary. Part of Beverwyck's grounds now contain a senior housing project called Franciscan Heights Senior Community, a retirement home for priests and brothers, and the North End Rensselaer Fire Station. The manor house remains essentially intact, but is not open to the public.<sup>60</sup>

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57 *Cincinnati Times* (Cincinnati, NY) 1911

58 *Silver Jubilee of St. Anthony-on-Hudson*, (Rensselaer: St. Anthony-on-Hudson, 1937) 18

59 Interview with Friar Dominic McGee, May 31, 2014

60 James Breig, "Franciscan Site in Rensselaer Has Served Different purposes," *Troy Record*, February 8, 2011

# Washington's Headquarters at Newburgh, New York: Then and Now

*Bernadette J. Hogan*



Washington's Headquarters, c.1906. Detroit Publishing Company Photograph Collection at the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division



The Hasbrouck House/Washington's Headquarters. Photo by Bernadette J. Hogan

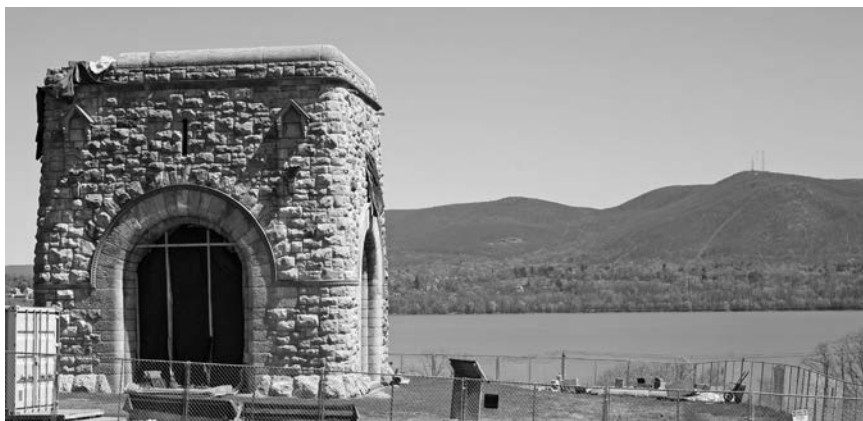
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General George Washington's successful capture of the British army under General Charles Cornwallis at the Battle of Yorktown in October 1781 is often lauded as the decisive conclusion of the American Revolution. However, two full years passed before the Treaty of Paris was signed by representatives of the United States of America and Britain's King George III on September 3, 1783; nearly two years too long for a fledgling nation to await, with bated breath, its eventual peace and security.

One might ask, where was Washington at this time, and what was he doing? Try Washington's Headquarters in Newburgh, New York, where the general would remain longer than at any other headquarters throughout his entire campaign. Where from April 1782 to August 1783, Washington would face some of his worst challenges, which included solidifying a lasting peace and autonomy for the new nation, establishing boundaries of respect between the civilian government and the army, and maintaining his patience during what would become the most trying years of the War.



Travel back to April 1782, when Continental Army scouts delivered Washington to the home of the Hasbrouck family, situated a mere sixty miles from New York City. The house overlooked the Hudson River at Newburgh Bay, just north of the Hudson Highlands, and the property extended west to the King's Highway. Geographically ideal, the house sat on a bluff hidden by lush trees and grasses, shielded from the strong river winds rolling off the Hudson. The rugged, unnavigable Hudson Highlands offered protection from a land attack by the British, and easy river access made trade and communication—as well as the possibility of escape—feasible. What's more, during the winter of 1783, Washington's army camped in the neighboring Ellison estate in New Windsor, in what would be the last cantonment of the War.



The Tower of Victory undergoing renovation with Mount Beacon visible across the Hudson River. Photo by Bernadette J. Hogan

## The Hasbrouck Family

While location was crucial in selecting a headquarters, it certainly helped that the property's former owner, Jonathan Hasbrouck, was a well-known and trusted patriot in Newburgh up to his untimely death in July 1780. Throughout his life, he had amassed an impressive fortune and legacy, including immense social and financial clout in the area. His grandfather, Abraham Hasbrouck, was a Huguenot who fled religious persecution in France in the 1670s and settled in present-day New Paltz to raise his family. Jonathan's father Joseph was born in New Paltz, but relocated to nearby Guilford, where Jonathan was born. His mother, Elsje Schoonmaker Hasbrouck, must have instilled in her son the spirit of entrepreneurialism; when her husband died in 1724 leaving her with ten children to raise and not enough property to divide among all, she sold that land and moved. Elsje purchased property in Newburgh, then an undeveloped precinct with prime river access. It was a gamble, considering the frequent raids by Esopus Indians and other difficulties posed by the relatively untamed land, but Newburgh was on its way to becoming one of the most important trade centers and industrial hubs of the era.

By the 1740s, Newburgh had the makings of a prosperous port city, and a ferry crossing to Fishkill Landing. Goods such as butter, salt, grain, and livestock, moved east, north, and south from the waterfront, contributing to Newburgh's profitability as an active trade center. The young Jonathan Hasbrouck rode these waves of progress. After living on his mother's Newburgh property for two years, making alterations to the house and farming the land, he bought his own property in 1754 with his wife Catherine "Tryntje" DuBois Hasbrouck. He purchased his first—and the first—gristmill along the banks of Quassaick Creek from the wealthy Colden family. An 18.5-mile tributary, Quassaick Creek flowed directly into the Hudson, affording an ideal location for commerce, and the development of other mills. Hasbrouck built a storehouse along the banks where he rented out space to customers and parceled out shipping rights to farmers from his Hudson River dock.

Newburgh grew still more, and in 1762 Hasbrouck became the first supervisor of the newly formed Precinct of Newburgh. He was again elected supervisor in 1772, when Newburgh became its own town, and he served as a local excise tax collector. He was also appointed to ensign in the fourth regiment of the Ulster County Militia in 1747, and promoted to captain of the Highlands Precinct Company of the Ulster County Regiment of the Colonial Militia in 1754. Hasbrouck was a lieutenant colonel of the Fourth Regiment in 1774, when he was chosen to serve on Newburgh's Committee of Safety and Observation in 1775. Due to failing health, he was forced to relinquish his titles, suspending his military career in 1777. Throughout this time, he remained highly active in his own merchant and political affairs, even signing a pact with other Newburgh merchants to boycott imports from New York City after the Tea Act of 1773.

## General Washington

As patriots with a dock situated near the Continental Army's depot, the Hasbroucks received several important figures prior to General Washington's arrival. Continental officers were welcomed to stay the night, and even Inspector General of the Army Baron von Steuben made his rest there. It was only after Jonathan's death in August 1780 that the Hasbrouck home would become the Headquarters as we know it today. In the fall of 1781, Continental Quartermaster General Timothy Pickering and his family rented half the house from Trynje Hasbrouck, the two families living side by side. That same fall, scouts were looking for a place to host General Washington, and Pickering knew exactly where to place him.

In the spring of 1782, George Washington found himself fighting adversaries cut from a much different cloth than those he had been used to throughout the past eight years: uncertainty and impatience. Technically, the Americans had won the War, but the army was well past the point of exhaustion, supplies were piteously depleted, and the Continental Congress was bankrupt. The weight of an unknown future lay upon the general's shoulders, and even as his envoys administered peace negotiations with a proud King George III in Europe, native discontent bubbled along the banks of the Hudson. Men of wealth and power, as well as great legal stature, longed to move forward with nation building, and were eager to assume roles at the top. Washington was stuck. He was the war hero, unanimously respected and revered by all. However, for the good of the new nation, he would also become the guiding executioner of pivotal precedents.

Perhaps one of the most significant challenges and actions to set the tone of Washington's hand in nation building came in the form of the "Crown Letter," written to the Commander in Chief by Colonel Lewis Nicola, commander of the Invalid Regiment, on May 22, 1782. Nicola suggested that Washington consider the idea of a monarchy to usurp the new American government, claiming Congress was currently "incompatible with national prosperity." He argued that even though "some people have so connected the idea of tyranny and monarchy to find it difficult to separate them," the weaknesses and bankruptcy of the Continental Congress might prove too great a burden to overcome. Washington swiftly shut down Nicola's brash imposition. "Be assured Sir, no occurrence in the course of the War, has given me more painful sensations than your information of there being such ideas existing in the Army as you have expressed, and I must view them with abhorrence, and reprehend with severity." Nicola apologized profusely, but this was not the end of tensions.

March 1783 found the American soldiers increasingly tired, homesick, and, broke. They longed to return home to their families, where the luxury of a warm meal and blanket was akin to fantasy, but most of all, they wanted their money. Anxiety plagued the troops, and tempers began to simmer. On March 4, a distressed Washington wrote privately to Alexander Hamilton expressing this dilemma:

The predicament in which I stand as Citizen and Soldier, is as critical and delicate as can well be conceived.... The sufferings of a complaining Army on one hand, and the inability of Congress and tardiness of the States on the other, are the forebodings of evil, and may be productive of events which are more to be deprecated than prevented; but I am not without hope...that your apprehensions... are greater than there is cause for.

Just four days later, on March 8, the contents of the first of two anonymous letters spread like wildfire through the New Windsor Cantonment. Addressed “To the Officers of the Army,” the letter expressed the army’s grievances, seeking an attentive audience and reparations. The rhetoric asked its audience if the new nation would be “willing to redress your wrongs—cherish your worth—and reward your service? .... or is it rather a country that tramples upon your rights, disdains your cries and insults your distress.”

Although the author called for an emergency general meeting on March 11, Washington canceled the unapproved request and set another date. On Saturday, March 15, the general set out to deliver his famous “Newburgh Address” in the Temple of Virtue, or “Public Building,” at the New Windsor Cantonment. It is recorded by an aide that he began, “Gentlemen, will you permit me to put on my spectacles, for I have not only grown gray, but almost blind, in the service of my country,” and to this, all dissent supposedly evaporated. He urged the crowd not to ruin the admirable feats they had achieved throughout the last eight years, as that would “lessen the dignity, and sully the glory you have hitherto maintained: let me request to you to rely on the plighted faith of your country, and place a full confidence in the purity of the intentions of congress...to render ample justice to you for your faithful and meritorious services.” In showing that he too suffered alongside his men, as they made personal sacrifices for the good of their country, he preemptively ended the rebellion and won the crowd over.

A month later, on April 19, 1783, the news that everyone had been anticipating finally—and officially—arrived: the Cessation of Hostilities. While this was a step in the right direction, Washington continued to await a full peace as diplomats negotiated releasing prisoners of war, the peaceful removal of British troops from the country, the settling of back payments, and the creation of a “peacetime standing army.” As departure from the Newburgh Headquarters and New Windsor Cantonment approached ever nearer, he began to furlough troops so as to divert funds, making plans to evacuate soldiers from barracks and officers from local homes. In June, the general sent his final Circular to the States, with each governor receiving a personal copy. He encouraged establishing America as an “independent power,” calling for four measures: “an indissoluble Union of the States under one Federal Head,” “a Sacred regard to Public Justice,” “the adoption of a proper Peace Establishment,” and

“the prevalence of that pacific and friendly Disposition, among the People of the United States, which will induce them to forget their local prejudices and policies, to make those mutual concessions which are requisite to the general prosperity, and in some instances, to sacrifice their individual advantages to the interest of the Community.”



It was at Newburgh that Washington also established a code for rewarding officers, as the consolidation of regiments called for fewer appointments. He created both the “Honorable Badge of Distinction” and the Badge of Merit, the latter today known as the Purple Heart.

August 1783 would be the last time that General Washington ever set foot in the Newburgh Headquarters. He had been called by Congress to relocate to Princeton, N.J., and in preparation for the army’s removal, the state of the Hasbrouck grounds was to be considered. De-militarizing the property took time, as many additions such as barracks, stables, paddocks, workshops, and storerooms altered the grounds during the army’s two-year occupation. Twenty-one carpenters had been hired to make accommodating alterations for Washington’s stay in the house; among other changes, a fireplace had been added to the west wall of the old parlor in the original house. When Washington wrote to Tryntje asking if there was anything on the property that interested her, she asked only that the added garden house remain. Thus, as Washington and the Continental Army said their goodbyes, the Hasbrouck family sought to return their lives to a sense of normalcy.

## The Hasbrouck House as Washington’s Headquarters

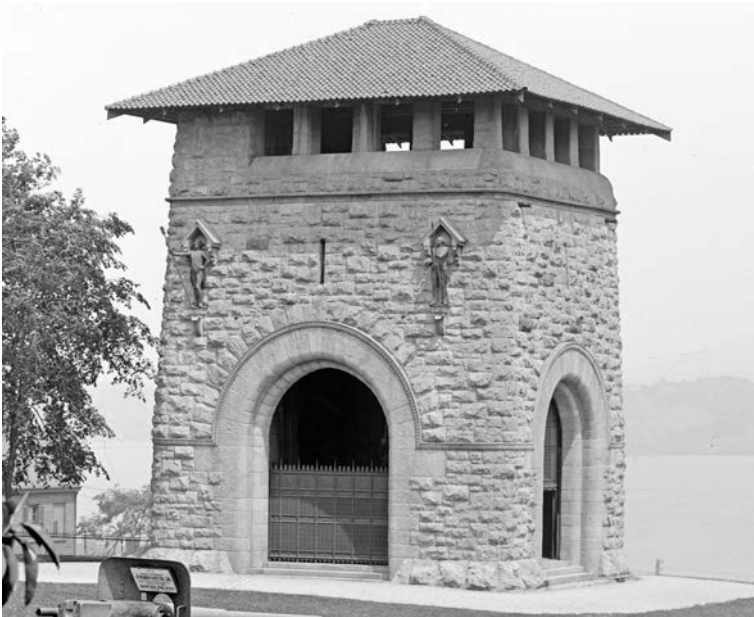
Noted today as an “intact relic of German settlement architecture in the Hudson Valley,” the Hasbrouck’s home was considered to be quite grand for its day. In 1750, Jonathan Hasbrouck completed the first stage of the house, and as a reflection of his wealth and success, additional portions were built in 1770. The two-story fieldstone house includes two bedrooms on the ground floor, a second-floor bedroom and attic, a parlor and a kitchen, and the famous “room of seven doors” dining room and living room, which Washington is noted to have used as his reception area. Three hooded fireplaces, typical of the Dutch tradition, remain as well.

Upon returning to the property in 1783, Tryntje and her family slipped back into a routine. Her sons Isaac and Jonathan Jr. became the two heirs to the estate, and in 1784 Isaac married Hannah Birdsall, taking his role as head of the household. The couple lived with Tryntje until her death sometime around 1799. In 1789, Jonathan Jr. sold his share to Isaac. During the first Federal Direct Tax in 1797, the property was valued at \$1,200, with Isaac listed as owner and occupant. The couple had five children; the property was divided into five shares after their parents died in 1806 and 1807.

As Newburgh was growing, the centrally located Hasbrouck land became increasingly more valuable. In 1813, Jonathan III halted an effort by the town to condemn and demolish the house in order to expand the city’s grid of streets through the property. He began accepting visitors at the house and collecting donations from patrons; in 1848 he even obtained a loan, on which he subsequently defaulted. His efforts were not enough: Upkeep of the house was too much to handle. In March 1839, a newspaper ad read “old headquarters advertised for sale.” The same year, the *New York Mirror* published an article detailing the house’s dire situation, and the Washington’s Headquarters Member

Association was formed. Jonathan Hasbrouck III's fight to retain the house and grounds under the family name proved an unsuccessful vision, but was furthered in other ways.

In April 1850, the New York State Legislature passed "an act for the preservation of Washington's Headquarters" and Governor Hamilton Fish signed it. It called for the state to purchase the land for \$2,391.02, thus transforming the Headquarters into the first historic site open to the public. Restoration efforts were to be made "wholly for the purpose of preservation, and shall not in any way change the plan or alter the appearance of the building or apartments." The site was reopened to the public on July 4, 1850, with 10,000 visitors passing through the front gates to join in the Independence Day celebration.



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

On April 23, 1883, U.S. Secretary of War Robert T. Lincoln said, "It has been made (my) duty to cause to be erected at Newburgh, N.Y. a monument commemorative of the events which took place there a century ago." Situated on the Headquarters' property, this monument is known today as the Tower of Victory: a war monument built to commemorate peace rather than violence. On October 18, 1883, the centennial celebration of the end of the Revolutionary War was held at the Headquarters, and hosted by the Trustees of Washington's Headquarters and the City of Newburgh. A grand parade and party ensued, as well as the planning of this special monument in Washington's

honor. New York native Maurice J. Power was commissioned to design the structure, with the assistance of fellow New York architect John Hemmingway Duncan. It was stipulated that the monument be “a structure of rude but imposing nature” to “typify the rugged simplicity of the times and personages,” and that its design honor requests for an outdoor outlook. It also was intended to be visible from the Hudson River. In June 1886, U.S. Secretary of War William C. Endicott finalized a contract between the United States and Mr. Power to begin work, and the project was funded by the State of New York and Congress.

Originally standing fifty-three feet tall, the thirty-seven by thirty-two foot Tower of Victory, built of native limestone, was completed in December 1887. Four archways open on each side into the atrium; in the middle atop a red granite pedestal stands a life-size bronze statue of Washington sculpted by William Rudolph O'Donovan. Two staircases lead up to an observation deck with a tiled roof above. Four bronze soldiers reside above the east and west archways, each representing a different branch of the military that served during the Revolutionary War. Bronze gates were added after the monument's completion to deter vandalism and theft. In November 1950, a hurricane severely damaged the roof, causing the state to consider dismantling the tower entirely. However, locals started a “Save the Tower” campaign, and in 1953 the state decided to remove just the roof. Since then, the tower has been in need of repair, as increased exposure to the elements and age have contributed to its ongoing decline. Thanks to the procurement of federal funds and private donations, the tower currently is undergoing restoration, including reinstallation of the roof.

Deemed a National Historic Landmark in 1961 and “a contributing property to Newburgh's 445-acre East End Historic District,” the Headquarters grounds today include the Hasbrouck House, the Tower of Victory, and a Georgian Revival-style museum building. Prior to the museum's construction in 1910, historical artifacts pertaining to General Washington, the Revolutionary War, and a miscellaneous assortment of Newburgh-related items were kept in the Hasbrouck House itself. These artifacts had been collected since the 1840s, as locals cleaned out attics and old homes, rediscovering hidden treasures.

At the conclusion of the museum's most recent renovation, the new exhibit “Unpacked & Rediscovered: Selections from Washington's Headquarters' Collection” opened on December 1, 2012. Over 1,300 artifacts are currently on display in an open storage format, increasing the level of visibility for each and every piece. According to Historic Site Manager Elyse B. Goldberg, “the benefit of an open storage format is the ability to display more objects, not worrying about sharing the space with interpretation. The objects are not individually highlighted, but rather are placed with other similar objects.” The display is paired with an electronic catalog and labels designed by the staff of Washington's Headquarters and the Bureau of Historic Sites for each item grouping, allowing patrons to search specific key words, objects, dates, etc. The collection offers relics ranging from swords and muskets to dolls, china, and Washington paraphernalia.

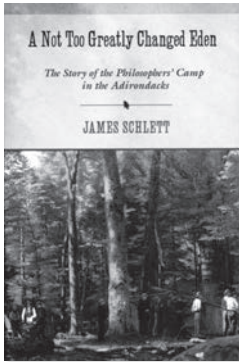
Today, this important time in New York and United States history is implied by the coat of arms and seal of New York State. A dark blue background offsets the goddess Liberty and the goddess Justice. They hold a shield between them that depicts a mountain scene giving way to a river. Joseph Gavit describes, “The shield symbolizes in the full sun the name and idea of Old York and the old world; the mountains, river and meadow, with the ships, convey the name and idea of New York in the new world.” One can imagine General Washington gazing out over the same scene: across the Hudson, a new sun peaks over Mount Beacon. He stands for a minute, soaking in this vision, and then leaves forever to journey home to Mount Vernon and join Martha.

*Washington’s Headquarters State Historic Site is located at 84 Liberty Street in Newburgh. It is open Wednesday through Saturday 11 a.m.-3 p.m. and Sunday 1-5 p.m. from mid-April to late October, and Fridays and Saturdays 11 a.m.-3 p.m. November to mid-April. Group and guided tours are offered by appointment Tuesday through Thursday, and special events are offered in December and on Presidents Day Weekend in February. School programs and tours are also welcome by appointment. Tour admission is \$4 per adult, \$3 per senior and student; children under age 12 are admitted free. Special event information and updated photographs are frequently posted on the Facebook site: Washington’s Headquarters State Historic Site, and can also be followed on Twitter at @WashingtonsHeadquarters.*

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# Book Reviews



***A Not Too Greatly Changed Eden: The Story of the Philosophers' Camp in the Adirondacks*, James Schlett. (Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 2015) 280 pp.**

In Winslow Homer's painting *The Two Guides* (c.1877), a pair of Adirondackers stand on a hillside in autumn, seeming to grow out of the underbrush. The older man, identifiable as Orson "Old Mountain" Phelps, is at the heart of the picture, pointing something out to his younger colleague. Phelps seems the embodiment of wise, rugged comfort; he has experience, skill, knowledge, vision, a calm confidence. His baggy pants, dirty vest, and well-worn shirt all echo the colors of the autumnal meadow. His bushy hair and beard blend together to form a mane. He may not be as brawny as the younger guide, but his smaller, squatter figure seems more self-contained, and his relaxed manner is apparent not only in his posture but also in his casually unbuttoned shirt, which leaves a small triangle of his chest exposed to the cool, fresh air. He is loose and comfortable. He rests his hatchet on his shoulder and carries an Indian-style pack basket on his back: he learned the lay of the land and the tricks of the trade from the original inhabitants.

Wilderness guides occupy a rich and important borderland in American history, the fraught space between culture and nature. Today, that frontier seems to have faded even from the realm of possibility: Modern society has expanded to all corners of the nation, leaving us with sprawling metropolises and exurbs; only a few pockets of wild land persist, far from New York State. But as James Schlett reminds us in *A Not Too Greatly Changed Eden*, the relationship between culture and nature was up for grabs everywhere in the mid-nineteenth century United States, just like the relationship between freedom and slavery.

Schlett's book tells the story of the Philosophers' Camp, a one-time-only meeting of the minds in the Adirondack wilderness in the summer of 1858. In most histories of the Adirondacks, the camp earns a quick mention as a kind of curiosity, notable for the presence of New England luminaries like Ralph Waldo Emerson, James Russell Lowell, and Louis Agassiz. Schlett certainly offers solid explanations of how and why these elite thinkers wound up in the woods, and what they did there, but he wisely focuses more of his attention on the quirky and lesser-known organizer of the event, the painter William James Stillman. Stillman anchors *A Not Too Greatly Changed Eden* the way Orson Phelps anchors *The Two Guides*. And the book also provides a detailed history of the camp's original location, near Follensby Pond, an area whose

legal and environmental status remains in play as our society continues to work out its understanding of the rights and responsibilities associated with both the ownership and stewardship of land.

Schlett, a journalist, editor, and marketing professional based in upstate New York, clearly identifies with his protagonists, and that identification both facilitates and impedes his historical inquiry. On the one hand, he is deeply interested in understanding why men living 150 years ago might have been attracted to the idea of a wilderness vacation—something many of us still value today. And he does an admirable job of demonstrating the appeal of the Hudson River School of painting and explaining how some Americans were starting to construct places like the Adirondacks as potential refuges, when the nation seemed to be “careening toward political, technological, artistic, scientific, and religious upheaval” (86). On the other hand, Schlett never seems to question his subjects’ sense of entitlement to those refuges. He is attentive to the somewhat old-fashioned version of environmental protection embodied by groups like The Nature Conservancy, which bought the land around Follensby Pond for \$16 million in 2008, but he seems not to have considered the cultural politics of that type of conservation, either in the nineteenth or twenty-first century. While he clearly admires Stillman for being skilled enough not to need a wilderness guide of his own, Schlett’s empathy does not extend to the nine guides who sustained the nine other “scholars” of the Philosophers’ Camp—let alone to the many other inhabitants of what Stillman misleadingly called “an almost undisturbed primeval forest” (8).

One of the key findings in the field of environmental history over the last twenty years is that elite, white, Euro-American references to “primeval” or “pristine” wilderness almost always served to erase elite, white, Euro-American acts of violence and displacement. The Adirondack forest hadn’t been empty in previous centuries; rather, it had been home to Iroquois peoples in the south and Huron and Algonquin peoples in the north. After the American Revolution, Abenaki refugees from Maine and Vermont had trickled into the region. The Yankee guides who tended to tourists in the nineteenth century had generally learned the land from Abenaki acquaintances. But the tourists themselves almost never mentioned any native peoples, except in formulaic invocations of their supposed disappearance. Emerson referred to a seemingly remote area as a “craggy Indian wilderness” (99), and Stillman, upon first encountering a portage called the “Indian Carry,” attested that he “could not help thinking of the race who had passed away” (43). Schlett follows their lead and thus encourages readers to skip over the narrative of white encroachment on Indian land in the rush to get to the classic environmental narrative of how modern development destroyed the old-growth forest.

Indeed, the main changes tracked in *A Not Too Greatly Changed Eden* are the shifts from the intellectuals’ appreciation of the wilderness in the 1840s and ’50s, to the tourist industry’s abuse of the wilderness in the 1860s and ’70s, to the newly enlightened recognition that the Adirondack region ought to be protected as a park in

the 1880s and '90s. But in this narrative, the only positive vision of the interrelationship between humanity and nature involves elitist escapism, an understanding of the forest as a space of "pilgrimage for spiritually minded sportsmen" (166). What about all the humble work of subsistence and settlement (gardening, fishing, foraging, farming) that had been going on in the Adirondacks over the course of the century? At one moment in the book, Schlett mentions a town—there were in fact many towns in the region, home to thousands of people—where "the abolitionist Gerrit Smith had established a sanctuary for black families and fugitive slaves" (67). Yet Schlett decides not to pursue the implications of North Elba's radical history—that some nineteenth-century Americans imagined the so-called wilderness not merely as a playground but as a site where unjust social patterns could be reconfigured. Indeed, in a 2013 article, the historian Daegan Miller argued that the black settlements in the Adirondacks represented "a sort of inchoate environmental philosophy mixing work and wilderness with both political and metaphysical freedom."

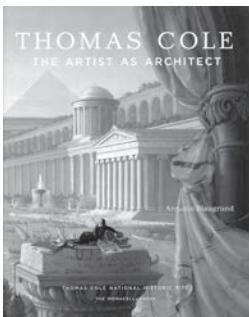
Or consider, again, the situation of a Yankee guide like Orson Phelps. As Karl Jacoby pointed out in his 2001 history, *Crimes against Nature*, laws designed by elites to protect wilderness areas have often directly harmed the local working-class people who make their living in those wilderness areas. In the late nineteenth century, the expert guides who led sportsmen on hunting trips were often unable to afford game licenses themselves, so when they went after animals for their own subsistence, they wound up being labeled as poachers. In fact, some of the "fire invasions" (183) in the Adirondacks that Stillman so detested were actually acts of arson committed by local people fed up with being prosecuted for poaching, "squatting," "timber theft," or other alleged violations against the wilderness.

Stillman and the other scholars of the Philosophers' Camp certainly appreciated the assistance provided by Adirondack guides. As Emerson put it, "the guide you hire to lead your party up a mountain...may not compare with any of the party in mind or breeding or courage or possessions, but he is much more important to the present need than any of them" (168). Of course, other nineteenth-century visitors to the Adirondacks, like Winslow Homer, were capable of a kind of admiration for the guides' competence and worth that went beyond Emerson's genteel, condescending acknowledgment that one simply needed a guide if one wanted "to go to the woods in good company, & with heyday, & bonbons, & comfort, & gentlemen" (23). In *The Two Guides*, Orson Phelps seems to be providing true guidance to his younger colleague, who may be a stand-in for Homer himself or any other tourist. Whatever breeding or training one might bring to a new environment, it's probably best to pay heed to those who have trodden the ground before you.

Schlett cites a number of historians of the Adirondacks, as well as scholars of landscape painting and New England Transcendentalism. And he has done us all a service by providing a much fuller picture of an obscure but truly intriguing episode in

Adirondack history. For that understanding to gain relevance in current debates about both history and the environment, though, it would need to transcend its own framing as a traditional story about wilderness appreciation and protection. Schlett nods in this direction by noting that Stillman, at the end of his life, “deemed social environments more beneficial to a man’s development than primitive environments” (193). So perhaps the best legacy of the Philosophers’ Camp might be some sort of cultural installation in the vicinity of Follensby Pond. Rather than preserving the site of the camp as a wilderness retreat, why not make it a working community—perhaps a school where less-privileged students could take up Agassiz’ science and Stillman’s art and a twenty-first-century environmental justice curriculum, and also take responsibility for producing their own food and energy? As the scholars of the Philosophers’ Camp well knew, one of the best things about engaging with both nature and history is the opportunity to rethink assumptions. Stillman himself, as Schlett points out, went from being an avid hunter in the 1850s to a defender of animal rights in the 1890s. It was partly the wilderness that changed him, and partly, in the words of the *New York Times* reviewer of Stillman’s autobiography, “the happy influences of cosmopolitan experience” (193).

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***Thomas Cole: The Artist as Architect,*  
Annette Blaugrund. (New York, NY:  
The Monacelli Press, 2016) 120 pp.**

By 1834, Thomas Cole had established himself as a leading American landscape painter. However, from 1834 to 1836, he chose to identify himself in the New York City Directory not as an artist, but as an architect. Cole’s self-identification as an architect forms the crux of Annette Blaugrund’s recent book, *Thomas Cole: The Artist as Architect*, which accompanied an exhibition of the same name organized last year at the

Thomas Cole National Historic Site in Catskill, New York.

*The Artist as Architect* is peppered with potential reasons behind Cole’s self-identification as an architect. Blaugrund suggests it may have served as a way for Cole to establish credentials before submitting to design competitions in the late 1830s. The listing also may have been motivated by the higher esteem accorded architects during the time of Cole’s career. Or perhaps Cole actually considered himself an architect. In the first half of the nineteenth century, before the establishment of formal architectural education, the profession was open to any self-taught individual. Cole read pattern books and created successful designs, just as any practicing architect did.

Very quickly, though, the reader’s initial desire to determine why Cole identified as an architect is eclipsed by the triumph of Blaugrund’s rich and encyclopedic narrative.



The author's thoughtful passages and stunning illustrations unveil a side of Thomas Cole that most audiences have never experienced. *Thomas Cole: The Artist as Architect* is the first publication to give full attention to the architectural inclinations of Cole's personality and his art. Cole's architecture has long been obscured by his distinguished ability to capture impeccably both the grandeur and minutiae of the American landscape. Blaugrund, however, brings his buildings to center stage.

Blaugrund's essay "Thomas Cole: The Unknown Architect" comprises the majority of the book, with additional contributions by two distinguished Cole scholars—a compelling forward by Barbara Novak and a short essay by Franklin Kelly in which he tracks Cole's ambition to achieve a "higher style of landscape" and his legacy following an untimely death in 1848. Kelly also contributes a transcription of Jasper Francis Cropsey's 1850 letter to his wife Maria in which he describes the haunting effect of a visit to Cole's studio two years after the artist's passing. Kelly's essay and Cropsey's letter punctuate the true impact Cole had on artists and viewers alike both during and after his career.

As Blaugrund points out, architecture figures prominently in a great many of Cole's landscapes, the most well-known perhaps being *Consummation*, the central painting in *Course of Empire* (1836, New-York Historical Society), Cole's five-part allegory of the rise and fall of a fictional nation. The series was well-received by patron and critics alike, and is still a hallmark of Cole's success as a painter. *Consummation* evidences the artist's knowledge of architecture with its chaotic yet pristinely drawn assemblage of classical colonnades and rotundas. The landscape itself is altogether lost amidst a sea of architectural splendor.

The other architectural painting for which Cole is typically best remembered is *The Architect's Dream* (1840, Toledo Museum of Art). In it, a dreamy figure lies in repose atop a massive column, surrounded by pattern books and blueprints, gazing out at the iconic splendor of Western architectural history receding into the horizon. Just behind the figure, an Ionic temple in the right middle ground leads to a Doric colonnade, then a Roman aqueduct gives way to hazy Egyptian pyramids and palm-frond capitals in the central background. The left side of the canvas boasts a darkly shadowed Gothic church balanced by the wistful figure to the right.

Both *Consummation* and *The Architect's Dream*, brimming with architectural detail, gave Cole the opportunity to demonstrate his vast knowledge of Western architectural history. These paintings also allowed him to display his masterful ability to capture in minute detail a range of architectural elements. Finally, they afforded Cole the opportunity to prove himself, in his own words, more than "a mere leaf painter" by pushing his landscapes toward the more respected rank of history painting.

Going beyond these well-known paintings, Blaugrund sheds light on the unrelenting consistency with which architecture surfaces throughout Cole's painting career. Upon the artist's first visit to Europe in 1829, he became captivated with architectural

ruins, and they began to feature prominently in paintings such as *A View of Tivoli* (1832, Metropolitan Museum of Art) and *The Cascatelli, Tivoli, Looking Toward Rome* (1832, Columbus Museum of Art). In New York, Cole completed commissions for his land-owning patrons that included views of their own palatial homes, like *View of Monte Video*, the Seat of Daniel Wadsworth (1828, Wadsworth Atheneum) and *The Van Rensselaer Manor House* (1841, Albany Institute of History and Art).

Cole often enhanced his glorious vistas with recognizable buildings. For example, the domed statehouse is visible in *A View of Boston* (1837-39, Minnesota Marine Art Museum), as is the iconic Hornby Lodge in *Portage Falls on the Genesee* (1839, Fred L. Emerson Foundation). Cole became renowned for capturing a distinctly American quality that set his landscapes apart from those of his European counterparts, and architecture played a significant role in this process. In works like *The Hunter's Return* (1845, Amon Carter Museum) and *Home in the Woods* (1847, Reynolda House Museum), it is not just the unmistakably American scenery that makes Cole's art distinctly national, but the edifices featured therein.

Even casual observers of Cole's paintings will recognize his penchant for painting architectural subjects. Those who have descended a little deeper into Cole scholarship are likely also aware that the artist entered and won a competition to design the Ohio State Capitol in 1838. His design was awarded third prize; eventually, it was modified into the plan on which the final design was based. Construction began in 1839, then was put on hold the following year for both political and economic reasons. The capitol was not completed until 1861, thirteen years after Cole's death, and his original contribution to the building's design is often lost in the wake of subsequent architects who contributed to its amalgamated design.

In addition to the Ohio State Capitol, Blaugrund reveals a number of Cole's lesser-known architectural endeavors. For example, he sketched ideas for a national monument to George Washington in 1835 and seriously considered entering the competition to design the monument the following year. His first design comprised an altar several hundred feet high. It featured winged animals at the top corners, a continual fire burning atop, and an opening at the bottom for processions. According to the artist's notes, an altar was the most appropriate choice, as it combined beauty with durability in the form of a complete whole, as opposed to a single architectural member like a column or pyramid. His second design for the monument featured a rotunda with 1,300-foot columns and a series of colossal sculptures. Cole not only sketched and described both designs; he wrote to the secretary of the Washington Monument Society in 1836, asking questions about the planned monument and the competition selection process. The artist also shared his own convictions with the society's secretary regarding the particular merits that any monument to a great man should encompass.

While Cole's designs to honor Washington never materialized, Blaugrund also describes multiple buildings seen through to completion. In 1839, after the church he attended in Catskill was destroyed by fire, Cole was asked to design a new building.

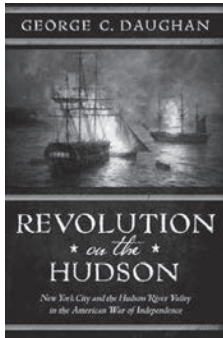
His Gothic Revival design for St. Luke's Episcopal Church was executed in brick and concrete early in 1841. Cole also designed his own studio on his property at Cedar Grove (now the Thomas Cole National Historic Site). The artist's plans for an Italianate studio were realized in 1846, and Cole painted there until his death in 1848. The exhibition, "The Artist as Architect," coincided with the opening of Cole's "New Studio" at the historic site. The original studio was demolished in 1973 after falling into disrepair, and the site stood empty for roughly forty years. In 2016, after over a decade of preparation and planning to ensure loyalty to Cole's original design, the studio reopened to the public. It now serves as a state-of-the-art exhibition and programming space.

With so much evidence of his architectural innovation, *The Artist as Architect* adds a compelling dimension to our understanding of Thomas Cole, and Annette Blaugrund leaves her reader wanting more. While this book swells with compelling evidence, it lacks critical interpretation of the new information it presents. Blaugrund eloquently points out that, like Cole's figures, the addition of buildings "nudged his landscapes from the topographical to the picturesque." She leaves us wondering, though, just how Cole's inclusion of architecture in his landscapes buttressed his concern for the preservation of nature. Furthermore, how did it help achieve the "higher style of landscape" that Cole so notably strove for and achieved? Moreover, outside of a few passing references, Blaugrund excludes mention of how critics responded to Cole's architecture.

Perhaps an exhibition catalog is not the place to delve into the myriad questions that *The Artist as Architect* brings forth. Blaugrund instead whets our appetites. She mines Cole's archive and effectively ties together his architectural paintings and drawings; his architectural projects, both realized and unrealized; and an otherwise wealth of new information regarding Cole's interest in and contribution to the field. She also recounts Cole's relationships with well-known architects from his day, suggesting how they shaped his own architectural understanding and production.

The author unveils a side of Cole that even the most learned Cole scholar may have known little about. And like most of what has been collected, exhibited, and published on Cole, Blaugrund's work establishes that there is so much more to the artist, his landscapes, and the limitless details therein than initially meets the eye.

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*Revolution on the Hudson: New York City and the Hudson River Valley in the American War of Independence*, George C. Daughan.

(New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016) 448 pp.

At the United States Military Academy, we encourage future Army leaders to consider the strategic challenges faced by General George Washington during the American Revolution. His decision to build Fortress West Point on the banks of the Hudson River highlighted his determination to deny the British control of this key waterway to Canada. While several historians have recently published new accounts of the war that support the conclusion that Washington was correct in his assumption that the Hudson was the key to the continent, one scholar has recently challenged this assumption. George C. Daughan, past winner of the Samuel Eliot Morison Award for Naval Literature, finds in his new book *Revolution on the Hudson* that, in fact, both American and British fixation on control of the river was unwarranted and led to poor decisions, particularly on the part of the British, in their strategy to win the war.

Daughan argues that both American and British leaders (political and military) wrongly believed that British control of the Hudson-Champlain corridor would cut the Continental Army off from much-needed support located in New England. A British strategy centered on this belief stemmed from three flawed assumptions. First, the government did not understand the limitations of its naval power, failing to realize the impossibility of blockading the entire New England coastline while simultaneously supporting amphibious operations along 350 miles of rivers and lakes between New York City and Canada. Second, Lords Frederick North and George Germain believed erroneous reports that Loyalist support in New York would strengthen with increased British military presence in the region and allow them to secure the surrounding countryside. Finally, all British leaders maintained a false premise that the war could be won through military means alone; political means were considered unnecessary and ignored. By basing their overall strategy on these three flawed assumptions, and remaining fixated on securing the Hudson River Valley, British efforts to maintain possession of her colonies were significantly compromised.

The first third of the book investigates the campaign season of 1776 and centers on both the fight for New York City and the succeeding war in New Jersey. It becomes quickly apparent that this will not be a military history focused on local participants from the Hudson Valley. Instead, this is largely a British (and naval) history of the war. The Hudson River and her surrounding Highlands play a strategic role in Daughan's telling of the conflict. He quickly makes his assessment of this first full year of conflict known in the third chapter, arguing that British leaders assumed Loyalist support while offering only subjugation and that the size of the fleet commanded by Admiral Richard

Howe was inadequate for the seizure of both New York City and the Hudson River up to Albany. To prove his point, Daughan evaluates the attempt by Howe to sail two war vessels (HMS *Phoenix* and *Rose*) up the river. The ships easily evaded damage from shore batteries but were constantly harassed by Patriot forces while stationed north of the Tappan Zee. The lesson, one both Howe and Washington missed, was that while the Americans could not hope to stop British ships from sailing north, those same ships had no ability to secure their route without the support of the local populace.

Following a familiar retelling of the events that transpired in New Jersey through the battles of Trenton and Princeton, Daughan dedicates one chapter to comparing British actions in New York over the winter with those of the Patriots upstate who were busy writing and enacting their state constitution. The point here was to elucidate growing Patriot support through the exercise of local democratic practices upstate while the city was gradually destroyed by military despotism. The author then continues his larger focus on the war, utilizing decisions made and actions taken in 1777 to drive his point home that British control of the Hudson-Champlain corridor was an impossible dream, given the breadth of British war aims and their lack of political strategy in the colonies. General John Burgoyne's failures, which culminated with his army's surrender at Saratoga, were largely the result of a populace turning out in favor of the Patriots. Meanwhile, Sir Henry Clinton was saved from defeat in the Hudson Valley when General William Howe requested he send reinforcements to Philadelphia rather than continue pushing north to rescue Burgoyne. Washington lost three battles attempting to protect Philadelphia but Howe's decision not to pursue the Continental Army guaranteed it remained to fight another year.

From this point to the end of the book, the British and French navies become the focal point for the narrative, as successes and failures on the ground from 1778 to 1781 appear to hinge on the availability (or lack thereof) of naval support. Sir Henry Clinton successfully removed his forces from Philadelphia to New York when French Admiral Comte D'Estaing failed to trap Admiral Howe's fleet in the Delaware River. A lack of decisive military engagements in the north were the result of American and British generals waiting for naval reinforcements that were slow to arrive as both Britain and France concentrated their naval efforts in the Caribbean and at home. Clinton's decision to remove his forces from both Newport, Rhode Island, and the forts north of New York were not the result of Washington's forays against those posts but instead Clinton's response to the arrival of D'Estaing's fleet off the coast of Georgia in 1779. And Charleston was lost to the British in 1780 not because Clinton arrived with a superior force but because the Continental Navy commander, Captain Abraham Whipple, lacked the will to fight the British Navy, despite holding a significant advantage in position within the town's harbor.

Continuing this focus on the importance of naval power in the conflict, Daughan concludes his narrative of the war by arguing that the defeat of the British at Yorktown

in 1781 rested most squarely on the shoulders of Admiral George Brydges Rodney. Rodney spent much of that year looting the Caribbean island of St. Eustatius despite the presence of a sizeable French fleet under the command of Rear Admiral de Grasse. When the French left the Caribbean to support the Americans in the Chesapeake, Rodney begged the British Admiralty to allow him leave to recover from illness. Daughan believes this request resulted more from Rodney's dislike for Clinton and the British Admiral Mariot Arbuthnot than from any other reason. Rodney's decision to delay sending ships north, and not under his command, doomed General Charles Cornwallis to an ignominious defeat at the hands of Washington and Rochambeau.

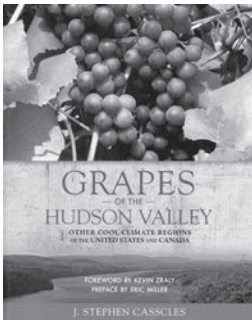
In his final conclusions, Daughan explains that the British lost the war when they failed to recognize the lessons apparent after their defeat at Saratoga, if not before. A strategy focused solely on the use of military power, and fixated on the control of the Hudson-Champlain corridor, doomed British efforts to regain control of her colonies. The campaign in 1777 showed that this policy was untenable in its military objectives and resulted only in a growing support for the Patriot cause, a trend that continued in the South when Cornwallis and his captains resumed their policy of subjugation into the Carolinas. And the author does not present another course by which the British could have succeeded. Instead, he offers questions in his final chapter suggesting that under the leadership of George III, Lord Germain, and Clinton no other outcome could conceivably be imagined. Given their commitment to a restructured colonial system that removed local autonomy and recognized only colonial submission to Parliamentary rule from London, military success would only have resulted in a desultory peace possibly followed by another insurgency.

Despite its title, *Revolution on the Hudson* does not truly focus on the War for Independence within the Hudson Valley. Rather, it is an overview of the war largely investigating British decisions and actions from Canada to the Caribbean. Washington's actions appear to lack initiative, instead originating as reactions to British maneuvers. British and French naval operations take center stage from 1778 to the end of the war, while British and Hessian treatment of American civilians and soldiers largely determine the amount of support given to the Patriot cause in states like New Jersey and the Carolinas. For these reasons, I was often reminded of Piers Mackesy's *The War for America* written over fifty years ago. To be sure, Daughan's work does not explore British administration of the war to such a degree and his narrative is more accessible, but the argument that naval supremacy was important to the conflict harkens back to this earlier work. And it is the narrative that provides this book with its greatest strength. Daughan is an excellent storyteller. In particular, the naval battles are riveting and easily understood, even by those of us who are not experts in war on the sea during the Age of Sail.

Some readers may take issue with Daughan's decision not to give more agency to Washington or to Americans more generally. The ideology of the Revolution has little power in this history, outside of a short section on John Jay's writing of the New

York State Constitution. How Washington was able to keep soldiers in the field over these eight years is not explained, nor is the growing competency of the Continental Army given much weight in the larger outcome. Still, proponents of the school of thought that Britain lost the war (instead of America winning it) will find much to their liking. Additionally, the question of whether or not the Hudson River actually was the key to the continent (as Washington most famously declared) is an interesting point to contend. The author's argument that the British would never likely have cut off New England's men and supplies from Washington's army is compelling, though it certainly would have complicated an already challenging problem for the American commander-in-chief. More importantly, this award-winning historian succeeded in what I believe was his principal goal: He reestablished the often overlooked importance of the navy in the war.

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***Grapes of the Hudson Valley and Other Cool Climate Regions of the United States and Canada, J. Stephen Casscles. (Coxsackie, NY: Flint Mine Press, 2015) 272 pp.***

J. Stephen Casscles' authoritative, captivating, and frequently entertaining book on the origins and cultivation of grapes in the Hudson River Valley opens with a history of place, setting his reader firmly in a geographical region of cool climates, cold—sometimes harsh—winters, and warm summers, and primarily in a time of rapid economic, social, and environmental change. That he succeeds so effectively at tying together diverse threads of roughly 400 years of the history of grape breeding testifies to his strengths as a historian, author, and viticulturist.

Casscles begins his historical ampelography in the early seventeenth century for good reason. At the time of European exploration and colonization, the countryside of the Hudson Valley grew so lush with native grapevines that the air was filled with the fragrance of ripening fruit. Sir Walter Raleigh's observations of the Virginia coast in 1584 (as reported by Barlow) could easily have described the Hudson Valley, a land "so full of grapes...both on the sand and on the green soil on the hills as in the plains, as well on every little shrub as also climbing towards the tops of the high cedars, that I think in all the world the like abundance is not to be found, and myself, having seen those parts of Europe that most abound, find such difference as were incredible to be written."

While grapes are grown today on every continent save Antarctica, one species has primarily held sway over history, the “European” wine grape *Vitis vinifera*. The fact that this grape evolved in the Near East and was subjected to domestication for thousands of years in a predominately Mediterranean climate provides a clue to its limitations. The New World presented a host of fungal diseases and insect pressures the likes of which *V. vinifera* had never encountered. That the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century vineyards of the European settlers, like the Bouverie of Peter Stuyvesant, quickly succumbed to these pressures turned out to be a blessing in disguise. The inability of vineyards to sustain traditional European *vinifera* varieties forced the new Americans to take a second look at the species that grew with such abundance in the wilds about them, despite their tendency to produce unpalatable wine.

From those early selections of superior wild species and through later hybridization efforts with *V. vinifera*, a new breed of table and wine grapes was developed. Schoolchildren raised on peanut butter and jelly sandwiches will immediately recognize the flavor of “Concord” grape jelly. This overwhelming “foxy” flavor is a characteristic of the fruit of *V. labrusca*, an extremely vigorous native species resistant to most native diseases and pests. That it typically makes a mediocre wine is one of the reasons why it remains largely neglected by winemakers today yet is prized as a delicious table or dessert grape despite its lack of subtlety.

Although “Concord” and its progeny remain the primary grapes grown in New York State, many of its neglected descendants and siblings retain traits useful for making wine or for supplying germplasm to current and future breeders. Few texts exist to document the wide palate and growth habits of these lesser varieties as thoroughly as this volume by Casscles. Indeed, his text surpasses the early twentieth-century classic *The Grapes of New York* by Ulysses Prentiss Hedrick, a contemporary of many of the early breeders.

Casscles re-evaluates many varieties described by Hedrick using modern cultivation methods, evaluates recently introduced hybrids, and provides a broad historical context in which these varieties were developed. While mainly an easy-to-interpret reference guide for the cultivation of grape varieties suitable for cool climate regions, this book is also a biographical sketchbook of grape breeders and their families, a historical review of vineyards and wineries in the Hudson River Valley, and personal reminiscences of the Casscles family’s relationships to the rich history of horticulture in the valley. His approach differs from innumerable other modern texts devoted to *vinifera* varieties and their hybrids by considering the development of grapes from the perspective of the breeder, and setting that breeder in a particular time period and geographical location.

The mid-nineteenth century is often considered the “golden age” of Hudson Valley horticulture for good reason. Advances in printing technology, an improved communication infrastructure, and the stirrings of ideas that would give rise to the modern scientific method encouraged professional and amateur horticulturalists to form societies to document the increasing variety of plants available and to publish recommendations to improve their cultivation.



Casscles introduces us to some of the leading contributors to this movement and to many of the lesser-known breeders who sustained the winemaking and table-grape industry throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While several of these individuals were nationally-known horticulturalists of their time—luminaries such as Charles and Andrew Jackson Downing—many came from other professions. Little is remembered about other regional breeders, but Casscles, through an extraordinary depth of research, unearths interesting and entertaining biographical information on each. Many prominent breeders came to viticulture late in life after careers in other fields: Dr. Charles Grant (dentist, physician), Dr. William Culbert (physician), James Ricketts (bookbinder), and the Underhill family (grist mill owners, brick makers, and physicians). It is probably not surprising that Casscles takes this tack, since he is a New York State government attorney by profession and winemaker, vintner, and viticulturist by vocation.

These biographical sketches illuminate the goals and interests of each breeder, illustrating how their preferences and decisions produced an astounding variety of new grape cultivars, several of which figure in the ancestry of varieties grown today. For the plant breeder interested in acquiring germplasm to address particular breeding objectives, each varietal description contains a wealth of useful information.

But more to the point, these historical vignettes bring out the humanity of these early pioneers, reminding us of the struggles and misfortunes of life in the nineteenth century. A particularly poignant biography is the tragedy of nurseryman Andrew Jackson Caywood, who died under a cloud of perceived financial trouble in 1890. Three months later, his only son Walter succumbed to illness while Walter's widow Ruth gave birth to a son the following day. The death of Caywood's wife, Deborah Cornell Caywood, the following year sealed the fate of the nursery. That Caywood's superior varieties exist to this day is a testimony to his legacy.

Casscles' experience as an attorney is evident in his attention to detail and ability to trawl through centuries-old obituaries and obscure publications to draw forth details such as these and to make connections among the various breeders, many of whom lived mere blocks from one another in Newburgh. The text abounds with copious citations and endnotes, many of which include personal anecdotes, brief discussions of international relations between Europe and the United States, and interesting stories of political intrigue and suicide. None of these are told for titillation; like the primary text, they bring out the fullness of history and humanity associated with this overlooked aspect of horticulture.

Considering the grape varieties themselves, the properties and cultivation requirements of each are discussed at length, often arising from Casscles' decades of personal experiences on his four-acre farm in Athens, New York. Discussions of major varieties include an easy-to-interpret key that provides a quick reference for hardiness, disease resistance, vigor, productivity, and wine quality. Parentage, when known, is given in

order of predominant genetic composition, and rough harvest dates based on observations in Athens. Minor varieties have shorter descriptions of their characteristics, either based on personal experience or drawn from authoritative and contemporary sources.

Although the book is primarily about grapes originating in the Hudson Valley, five chapters are devoted to hybridizers working in other areas of the United States and Europe. Many of these breeders relied upon North American species like *V. labrusca* or *V. aestivalis*, or built their breeding programs upon cultivars like “Iona,” developed by Hudson breeders. For each breeder and variety, the same attention to detail is present, with extensive endnotes documenting source material and the same keyed rating system for those whose traits are known.

Aside from minor, infrequent factual errors (for example, referring to nematodes as insects when they are from two distinct phyla, as different as humans are from jellyfish), there are two areas that could be improved with this otherwise excellent resource.

The title’s reference to a distinct fruit, region, and climate disguises the fact that it introduces grape cultivars originating from Geneva (New York), Minnesota, and several European nations—which may cause vintners to overlook the usefulness of this volume. Inclusion of these breeding programs broadens the utility of this book to include modern varieties with fewer finicky cultural conditions, better understood characteristics, stronger disease and pest resistance, and documented parentage. Perhaps a more accurate title would be “Grapes of *and for* the Hudson Valley and Other Cool Climate Regions.”

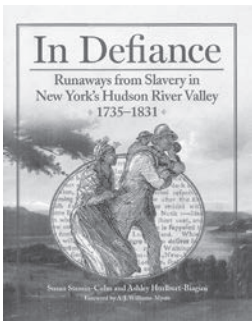
The book’s three objectives, described by Casscles in the introduction, are successfully met: to identify grapes suitable for the terroir of the Hudson Valley, to describe of the types of wines produced from these grapes, and to document the pedigree of these grapes from historical accounts of the breeders or their contemporaries. Furthermore, that he took the approach of documenting the history (and pedigree) of the breeders themselves underscores his commitment to preserv ing not only the genetics of these varieties but also their history, providing insights for modern hybridizers into the objectives of their predecessors.

Unfortunately, the inclusion of chapters on elementary winemaking and on working with *vinifera* varieties disrupts the flow of the narrative and seems out of place. Both of these subjects are covered in greater detail in other texts, such as Morton’s *Winegrowing in Eastern America: An Illustrated Guide to Viniculture East of the Rockies* or Cox’s *From Vines to Wines*. (Both sources are recommended by Casscles in the endnotes.) It may be safe to say that most of the people likely interested in this book would already have more than a passing familiarity with both viticulture and enology. Perhaps these chapters could more effectively have been relegated to appendices where they would remain of use to the novice.

Despite these quibbles, Casscles’ book represents a hugely welcome and recommended addition to the corpus of authoritative horticultural and viticultural literature. His elegant prose, thoroughly documented and annotated references, and personal

anecdotes bring to life historical figures long ignored or forgotten and shine a light on a time when the citizen-scientist and breeder could have a profound and lasting impact on an entire industry. That it serves as a serious reference work for grape varieties that are deserving of a second look only strengthens its utility to historians, breeders, and vintners alike.

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***In Defiance: Runaways from Slavery in New York's Hudson River Valley, 1735-1831*, Susan Stessin-Cohn and Ashley Hurlburt-Biagini. (Delmar, NY: Black Dome Press Corp., 2016) 346 pp.**

Susan Stessin-Cohn and Ashley Hurlburt-Biagini have supplied readers with an enlightening and impressively large compilation of newspaper notices (over 500) charting the presence of African-American fugitive slaves during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the counties lining the Hudson River. Their book follows the model provided by Graham Hodges in *Pretends to Be Free: Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey* (1994) by presenting advertisements placed by slaveholders seeking to recover black escapees from bondage. The ads are drawn from the area's local press—e.g., the *Albany Gazette*, *Catskill Packet*, *Goshen Repository*, *Northern Sentinel*, *Poughkeepsie Journal*, and *Ulster Plebeian*—as well as newspapers published in New York City and in neighboring states. This reflects the destinations of the valley's fugitives: New York State's free black enclaves, Canada, and New England.

The foreword by A.J. Williams-Myers offers an interpretive context for the notices that reveal much about slavery in the valley, slave resistance as a whole, and the biographies of individual escapees. Readers learn of the institution's cruelty through descriptions of maimed runaways and those identifiable by metal collars. References to mulattos suggest the frequency of miscegenation, some or much of which was undoubtedly involuntary on the part of slaves. Many slaves were bilingual in English and Low Dutch and skilled—carpenters, barbers, shoemakers. Most fugitives were in their twenties and two-thirds of them were male. One wonders, though, how these generalizations compare with similar data for other regions and the nation.

Stessin-Cohn and Hurlburt-Biagini have constructed a very useful appendix. There are tables providing details and numbers for points made in the foreword. There is a glossary with definitions of arcane, anachronistic terms found in the notices. One table summarizes the types of material goods escapees carried with them or wore and

the counties from which they escaped; another is labeled “Key Points of New York’s Emancipation Acts” from 1799 to 1817.

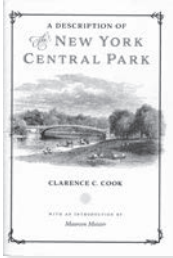
Many of the assorted illustrations are illuminating, including photographic portraits of slaves, sketches of slave activities, a drawing of the slave quarters of “The Old Knickerbocker Mansion,” and photographs of slaveowners’ homes. Too many others, however, like the several period maps of New York State and the period sketch of Bridewell (the infamous Manhattan prison) come off as extraneous because they lack explicit contextualization or explanation.

The reason for the span of time covered in the featured advertisements, 1735 to 1831, is unclear. Does 1735 coincide with some larger, pertinent event in New York colony’s political history? Why end with 1831, when slavery was outlawed in New York State on July 4, 1827? It may be that the authors simply opted to display all the newspaper ads related to the Hudson Valley that they could find, but if that was their thinking, readers would benefit from having that rationale plainly stated.

It is also unclear why ads are not presented chronologically. Had this been done, one might get a sense of whether the ad content—e.g., the size of rewards offered or the age, sex, color, and location of runaways—changed over time, perhaps in response to legislative amendments, economic developments, or abolitionist activity. Without question, however, what the authors have done very well, and admirably, is to supply interested readers, scholars, and students of the Hudson Valley, New York, and American slavery with a convenient and large set of raw materials to begin to address these issues.

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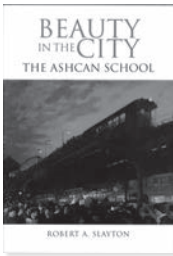
# New & Noteworthy Books



## **A Description of The New York Central Park**

By Clarence C. Cook (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2017)  
240 pp. \$25.00 (hardcover) [www.nyupress.org](http://www.nyupress.org)

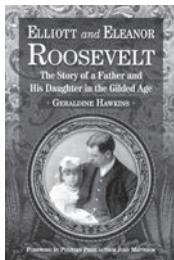
Originally published in 1869, this early description of Central Park evocatively captures the impressive size and unique landscape of one of New York City's must-see attractions. Cook's words are paired with many detailed and eye-catching illustrations by artist Albert Fitch Bellows that highlight many of the park's individual destinations as well as the experience of discovering them. Maureen Meister's newly-added introduction provides valuable historical context for the strategy behind Vaux and Olmsted's design, as well as the political and bureaucratic challenges they faced along the way.



## **Beauty in the City: The Ashcan School**

By Robert A. Slayton (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2017)  
196 pp. \$29.95 (hardcover) [www.sunypress.edu](http://www.sunypress.edu)

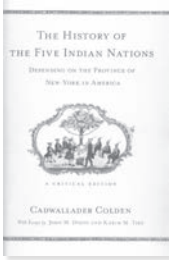
In the late 1800s, a new artistic approach to depicting urban life in New York City began to grow in visibility. The Ashcan School of Art offered illustrations of life in the working class, and how the industrialist experience of ordinary people found a place between the glamorous life of the wealthy and the hopeless life of the desolate. Utilizing dozens of color images to demonstrate the humanity found in this artistic approach, Slayton sheds new light on Ashcan School artists such as John Sloan and Robert Henri, as well as the subject matter that motivated them to paint.



## **Elliott and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Story of a Father and His Daughter in the Gilded Age**

By Geraldine Hawkins (Delmar, NY: Black Dome Press, 2017)  
416 pp. \$21.95 (softcover) [www.blackdomepress.com](http://www.blackdomepress.com)

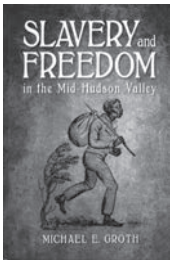
The story of Elliott Roosevelt's life is a complicated one, filled with opportunity and promise that quickly turned to isolation and tragedy. As the father of Eleanor, brother of Theodore, and godfather of Franklin, Elliott bridged the different branches of the Roosevelt family. His struggles with addiction, marital estrangement, and eventual early death complicated all of these roles, but the long-lasting impact he had on Eleanor can be seen in her many accomplishments. Through extensive research, Hawkins puts Elliott in the spotlight, complete with his many struggles and his early influence on the future First Lady.



### **The History of the Five Indian Nations Depending on the Province of New-York in America: A Critical Edition**

By Cadwallader Colden (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017)  
216 pp. \$17.95 (softcover) [www.cornellpress.cornell.edu](http://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu)

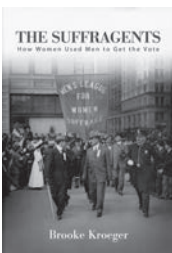
A new edition of Colden's two-part text, originally published in 1727 and 1747, on the tribes that made up the Iroquis nation between 1664 and 1697. Colden presents the many goings-on of this period from a decidedly British perspective, but nonetheless he makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the customs, treaties, and battles of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca tribes. Newly authored essays by John M. Dixon and Karim M. Tiro provide historical context for these tribes, Colden's motivations in writing the book, and its publication history.



### **Slavery and Freedom in the Mid-Hudson Valley**

By Michael E. Groth (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2017)  
266 pp. \$29.95 (softcover) [www.sunypress.edu](http://www.sunypress.edu)

In the antebellum period, slavery was not exclusive to southern states—New York's Mid-Hudson Valley had a significant slave population well into the nineteenth century. The agrarian makeup of Dutchess County resulted in particularly difficult lives for black residents, both slave and free, that allowed for more oppressive conditions and greater difficulty in establishing black community and identity. In *Slavery and Freedom in the Mid-Hudson Valley*, Groth combines an impressive array of local primary sources with a wide variety of literature to present the many challenges of the African American experience in Dutchess County from the American Revolution to the Civil War.



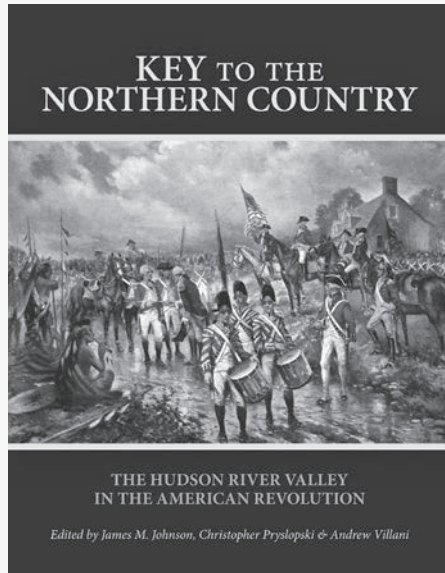
### **The Suffragents: How Women Used Men to Get the Vote**

By Brooke Kroeger (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2017)  
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