

Hudson Valley Explore

Fall in the Valley 2020

The days
they do
dwindle

*Autumn comes
to the Catskills*

By Elisabeth Henry Macari

“**T**HE FOG COMES
in on little
cat feet,”

says poet Carl Sandburg about the
clime in San Francisco. The same can
be said of how autumn first comes to
these parts. It's a flirtation of wild asters
and jewelweed and bawdy goldenrod.
The sky is as blue as the Madonna's
robe and the sun is hot, but wake up
early the next morning, and dew has
dampened that tablecloth you left on
the patio table. The cicadas still thrum
in late afternoon, but you notice the
songbirds are silent. Silent and gone.

Continued on page 24

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SUSAN BARNETT

I miss the trains

Rail-trails transform historic corridors

by Susan Barnett

MY FAMILY HAD a soft spot for trains. It started in Ulster County.

My grandmother loved to reminisce about the annual train ride from the Bronx to Rosendale, marking the beginning of her family's summer residence in their beloved, full-to-bursting little farmhouse. Those trips began when she was a girl, long before the Great Depression, and the growing extended family continued to return to the house on Mountain Road throughout her life, jamming beds for cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents into every corner.

My father and my uncle loved the train,

too. They told me about afternoons spent plaguing the Rosendale station manager with questions, soaking up all the lore and the romance of train travel. When they heard the whistle, they'd race up the road to see the train arrive, then watch it chug off across the trestle.

My uncle taught me to spit off the Rosendale trestle. My cousins and I crossed that trestle on hot summer days to reach the ice caves on the other side. It felt like a very dangerous walk, and in fact it was. I remember seeing through the rotting boards to the road and the river below, having to watch where I took my next step. It was exhilarating.

Trains were still running over the Rosendale trestle when I graduated high school.

They stopped just a couple of years later.

Now it's a rail-trail. A beautiful one. The trestle is perfectly safe now.

I have mixed feelings about those improvements.

Sure, it's great that it's an easy walk which most everyone can now enjoy. I'm happy that the long-forgotten tracks along the Ashokan Reservoir are now a place where stressed-out people can get out in the fresh air and maybe relax a little. But I miss the trains. I have my doubts about the long-term wisdom of destroying the once-busy commercial and passenger mass transit lines into the Catskills. And I kind of hate how perfectly perfect the walking trails are.

I've learned we had a busy rail line in



PHOTOS BY DION OGUST

Above, Bullet Hole Spur; right, a view from the trail.

my home town of Franklin. Merrickville and Franklin Depot were part of the New York Ontario and Western line. Now, buried under the weeds, and also in spots underwater, are tracks and tunnels winding over and through the mountains and back toward the Hudson River and New York City, while others reach out to the west. It's a connection to a thriving past that is impossible to picture now. It is not a trail for modern hikers to explore. It is an abandoned rail line.

It is in Andes, between Delhi and Margaretville, where the past and the present feel like they are not so far apart. I discovered the Andes rail-trail recently and walked it with my daughter. It felt refreshingly imperfect, like it had refused to be modernized.

The station itself is gorgeous, and clearly well used by the local folks. The trail is a narrow path with a few delightfully bumpy areas where the heaves and hollows of the tracks are still in evidence. The first couple of miles are typically bucolic





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Catskills scenes, mountains and meadows and vistas that can spoil you for anywhere else in the world.

At one point the old tracks lead onto private property. The rail-trail officially ends, and the walking rail veers up into what's called the Bullet Hole Spur. The trains never went here. It's a narrow path through the woods and up the hillside with long switchbacks. It's challenging enough to get your pulse going a little.

And what's ahead is just remarkable.

The first attraction on the spur was a series of rock formations left behind by glaciers. A sign along the rail-trail pointed out that the Catskills were once underwater, and are actually an eroded plateau. The giant rocks along the trail are what's known as glacier erratics – rocks pushed along by the glacier then left behind. The last ice age in the Catskills was 22,000 years ago. The rocks are still here.

Farther up the trail is a pine barren, which is a magical spot with nothing but tall pines and a soft blanket of pine needles beneath. The wind whispers among the pines with a sound it makes nowhere else.

Along the trail are hemlock trees believed to be more than a hundred years old. And at the top, there is a meadow, a stone wall, reminders of the farmers once toiled to make a living off this rocky land.

The trail then goes down to the Bullet Hole Stream, turns back, climbs back to the top, and retraces the path back down to the railroad tracks.

I felt like I'd seen all the landscapes of the Catskills in just one four-mile walk.

But it was the history that sealed the deal.

First, there's a sign marking where the Andes turntable was. It was a hollow with a large wooden platform, where trains could be spun around and reversed. It was built, according to the sign, after a train going in reverse derailed, went over the



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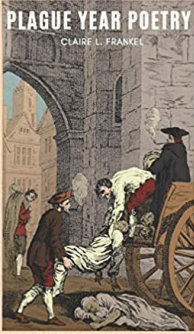
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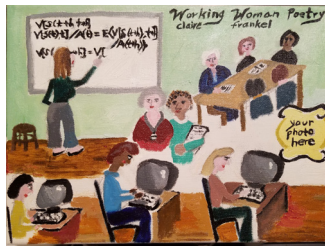
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embankment, and trapped its engineer in the water below. A rescuer held the engineer's head above water for hours until he could be freed.

Then there was the sign explaining that the spot nearby was where there was once a trestle. It was 450 feet long and stood 45 feet above the Bullet Hole Stream. On that trestle, in 1921, the film "The Single Track" was shot. Andes was a stand-in for Alaska, which, if you've been to Andes in the winter, isn't really as outlandish as it sounds.

According to the sign, the director didn't know he'd hired local extras for the fight scene who, in real life, couldn't stand each other. It was a Hatfield and McCoys kind of situation. When the cameras rolled, he was absolutely delighted with "how realistic" the fighting looked. The locals were beating the starch out of each other, and apparently everyone went home satisfied.

Sadly, that film no longer exists. I would love to see it.

State inspectors had been threatening to shut down the trestle just before filming, finding it to be a little too rickety for safety. The filmmakers also were concerned it looked a little rundown for a trestle in the great wilds of Alaska, so they did a classic Hollywood fix and combined paint and clay to make the span look more structurally sound. It worked so well the state inspectors came back to inspect the next year. It passed.

I saw deer while I was walking. I saw snakes sunning themselves on the path. A sign warned hikers that they should wear bright colors during bear-hunting season, which it happened to be.

The Andes rail-trail in its four short miles offered me beauty, quiet, history, and it made me laugh.

The only thing that could improve it is if a train came down the track.

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Living with wildlife

Study project tracks eel populations in the Hudson River

By Bennet Ratcliff

EELS BORN IN the Sargasso Sea south and east of Bermuda are living in a creek just off Route 9G south of Rhinebeck. In fact, eels are living in streams up and down both banks of the Hudson River. How did they get here from the middle of the Atlantic Ocean? How long have they been here, and what exactly are eels doing in the Hudson River estuary? Student volunteers from the Kingston YMCA Farm Project waded into the Ender Kill on a warm afternoon in September to catch eels and collect data that will help answer some of these questions.

Led by YMCA education director Susan Hereth, the student volunteers are participating in an on-going mark-recapture study of eels conducted by state Department of Conservation. The DEC's Hudson River Eel Project has been tracking eel populations over time at a number of Hudson River sites from Staten Island to Troy, including sites at Black Creek in Esopus and the Ender Kill in Staatsburg. The DEC monitors four sites on the Ender Kill each July, August, and September. Students work with the DEC to catch the eels, collect data on their weights and lengths, and then release them.

These eels begin their lives as tiny larva known as leptocephali. They hatch in the fecund waters of the Sargasso Sea and spend several months drifting along the Gulf Stream. As they meander with the current toward the continental shelf, these willow leaf-shaped larva metamorphose into miniature, translucent glass eels. Their bodies plump and grow rounder. As the year-old glass eels approach tidal estuaries along the seaboard, they transform once again into elvers. During this stage, they lose their see-through bodies, develop grey or green-brown pigments, and grow beyond several inches in length.

Some find their way to the Ender Kill or other tributaries along the Hudson River, where they spend most of their years living in muck and dining on crustaceans, caddisflies, minnows, and a variety of aquatic life.



SUSAN HERETH

American eels, *Anguilla rostrata*, are not an invasive species. For as long as anyone can remember, eels have lived in these waters. The Munsee, Lenape, and other indigenous people caught and ate *shoxamèkw*, the Lenape word for eel, during the spring and summer when they lived along the banks of the *Mahicantuck*, the river that flows both ways. Eels were

a staple of the diet of many indigenous people throughout the Atlantic seacoast. The remains of indigenous fishing weirs and the eels they captured have been found as far south as Virginia and as far north as Ontario, Canada via the Saint Lawrence River. Papers from the Massachusetts Bay Company also recorded how Wampanoag people shared eels with the

Mayflower colonists and then taught the Europeans how to catch them by hand.

Nature is connected to everything

To catch eels in the Ender Kill, the DEC and Kingston YMCA team don chest waders, wear rubber gloves, and use a shock pole and hand nets. From the bridge overlooking the ribbon of water, I see nothing swimming about. The water is clear, but a brown muck coats the creek bed. Several pools are about two feet deep, but most places are no more than a trickle.

Clouds muddy the stream when two students armed with their nets and the DEC specialist shouldering an electric backpack attached to a shock pole enter the Ender Kill. With a netter on either side, the DEC specialist leads the way. Behind the team, Susan Hereth readies a bucket of stream water. When the electrified loop of the shock pole touches the water, a student scoops the area with the net and swiftly dumps the catch into Susan's bucket. Shouts of "Eel!" and laughter fill the air. This is nothing like the meditative trout fishing I am used to.

Step by step, they work their way up both sides of the tiny creek. Attentiveness and speed are required because the mild shock wears off quickly. The team crosses a partially submerged log into deeper water. Hereth spied a rusty car jack and tossed it to the bank. In the murky pool, the netting becomes faster-paced. In half an hour, they have scoured a 20-foot beat. They emerge with smiles and bucket filled with treasures.

One of the eel anglers, Aleshanee Emanuel, sums up the work. "It is challenging. The eels are tiny and fast. I like this kind of science. Before, I never thought about eels – where they were born, why they come here, and when they go back. Working at the Kingston Y Farm has opened my eyes to a lot."

A second team of YMCA students and a DEC specialist have prepared a data collection station: a triple beam scale, a measuring board, a species ID book, and a log to record their data. The DEC specialist is busy attaching an aerator to a bucket of water and mixing clove oil and stream water in another bucket. Clove oil? I don't know what is about to happen, but I'm sure something will.

The broad goal of the Kingston YMCA Farm Project is to empower youth. "The farm – our base for learning – teaches how nature is connected to everything," Hereth tells me.

A bald eagle soars overhead. She calls it out, and the students identify its glinting white cap before it glides below the tree line and down toward the river. They



PHOTOS BY SUSAN HERETH

resume their work.

DEC environmental educator Adian Mabey walks the students through the process of data collection. Each species captured must be positively identified and returned to the creek. Eels must be separated out and placed in the clove water to induce sleep. Once asleep, they will

be measured and weighed. Eels over 25 centimeters will be scanned for a personal identification tag, and the information recorded. If no tag is found, one will be placed just inside the eel's skin.

What's on the bucket list

"All eels that are tagged also have their

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eye and pectoral fin measured," Mabey explains. "This means if they are recaptured we can see any change in location, length, weight, eye and fin measurement from the last time they were caught. Over-

all, this gives us a better sense of the eel community in the creek and how eels at different life stages are using the Ender Kill as habitat." The students total up the non-eel catch: nine pumpkinseed, one

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smallmouth bass (four inches long), two male spiny-cheeked crayfish (one with a missing claw), two mummichog, one banded killifish, three white sucker fish, three tessellated darters, and three green frogs. With each species, Adian pauses to show the students specific characteristics. The mummichog have upturned mouths that resemble a smile. The tessellated darter has fins to help it walk and swim.

By the time the bycatch has been logged, more than a dozen eels are fast asleep in the clove-oil water. One by one, the students take out the eels, measure, and weigh them. Some of the eels are yellow eels, the stage following elvers. Yellow eels have a distinctive yellow-green or olive-brown coloration. They are larger than elvers, several over ten centimeters.

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Fall in the Valley

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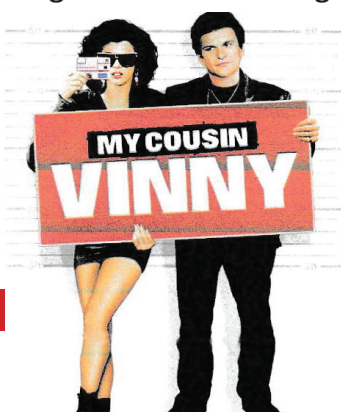
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These yellow eels will spend another ten to 20 years living among us in the Hudson River estuary. One yellow eel measures 22 centimeters but is not long enough to tag. This one will return to the creek with the rest and spend another year maturing before it begins its transformation into its final stage, a silver eel.

Improving wildlife habitats

When their bodies are ready to reproduce, the eels metamorphose for a final time. "An eel becomes what it needs to be when the time is right," writes Patrik Svennson in his 2019 bestseller, *The Book of Eels*. Silver eels turn grey or creamy white in color, lose their digestive tracts, and develop reproductive organs. Their pectoral fins enlarge for swimming, and their head grows in width between their eyes. At this time in their lives, silver eels journey back to the Sagrasso Sea to spawn and die. Curiously, the precise location of their spawning grounds remains unknown. "Eels are still a mystery, and mysteries are a rare find in this world," remarks Hereth.

The Hudson River Eel Project has documented that American eel populations are on the rise after a precipitous decline at the end of the last century. More data is needed to help scientist understand the health of the eel population in the Hudson River. Climate change, land management planning, industrial and residential pollution, rising water temperatures, dams, and invasive species all play a part in the lives of eels, people, and hundreds of wildlife species living together in the Hudson River Valley.

This inter-relationship was one topic examined during the recent Cary Institute for Ecosystem Studies webinar workshop. The first of a three-part workshop, the



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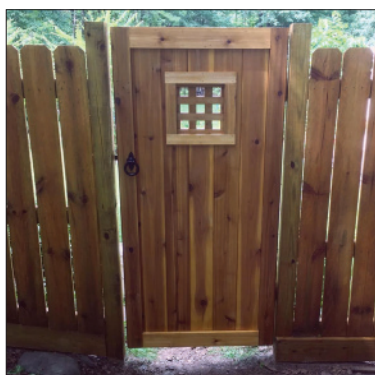
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event was free to the public.

In these workshops, Cary Institute experts explored the roles that each of us can play in improving wildlife habitats.

At the first workshop, the speakers discussed setting goals and making plans for wildlife management and provided tips on estimating wildlife populations. Like the eel study, gathering data is an important part of living with wildlife. Mike Fargione, manager of field research and outdoor programs at the Cary Institute,

demonstrated how to set up a wildlife camera to capture images of the animals in your backyard, forest or field. He explained that knowing the species around us was critical if we are to plan correctly to live together with them, enhance their habitats, and reduce conflicts.

Julie Hart of the Dutchess County Land Conservancy outlined the importance of understanding how habitat changes positively affect some species while pressuring others. She explained how removing

standing dead trees may reduce nesting sites for nuthatches who raise their young in tree cavities. Removing fallen dead trees may reduce various insect populations that help to decompose the trees but also serve as food for nuthatches. Consequently, a reduction in nuthatches reduces the feeding opportunities for hawks that prey on the birds.

The webinar workshop series continues at the Cary Institute with programs scheduled for October 7 and October 14.

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Hope incarnate

This Shandakenite will never look at trees the same way again

by Robert Burke Warren

I TRY NOT TO fool and flatter myself, but looking back over 2020, it does seem that Mother Nature was sending me signals that I would do well to better acquaint myself with my immediate outdoor environment, instead of the one in my head, where, regrettably, I spend most of my time. Or perhaps those signals were always there, and, by being grounded from much of what I do – i.e. traveling and performing – I only just got the message. Whatever the case, in January, this publication asked if I'd like to write about SUNY's work creating a blight-resistant American chestnut to reforest the region with "the redwood of the East."

Unbeknownst to my editor, I was already hip to a bit of the tragic American chestnut story. After being dominant from Georgia to Maine for thousands of years, this "keynote species" of the Catskills in particular had succumbed to Asian blight in the first decades of the twentieth century.



DION OGUST

(Asian chestnuts were imported because they produce fatter nuts. These brought blight to which the older, squatter Asian

species was – and is – immune.)

I'd learned all of this from a local old-timer. At a party in my then-new home, he'd pointed out the doors, trim, and moldings – all American chestnut -- and told me about the blight, a twentieth-century ecological catastrophe few modern folk seem to know about. I wish I knew where that old-timer was today so I could tell him about the brilliant scientists in Syracuse who've figured out how to alter a gene in lab-raised American chestnuts, making the trees harder against the ineradicable fungus that had brought the species down.

The article got a lot of attention in those last pre-pandemic weeks. Several people directed me to the novel *The Overstory*, assuring me I would "never look at trees the same way again." This would turn out



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to be true. The American chestnut figures into that multi-tiered narrative, as does a poetic critique of man's bungling and/or hubris hastening environmental woe. We are a blight of sorts.

ALTHOUGH SHANDAKEN HAS BEEN MY hometown for 18 years – the longest I've lived anywhere – I have only just begun to really know it. I've mostly come to this knowledge against my will. Since March, I've been beholden to a creeping

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virus, with its own schedule. This entity has forced me to truly appraise my immediate surroundings, the safest place I now know: Shandaken.

I did not come to Shandaken by choice those 18 years ago. A man asserted his rights of ownership over the place I then lived – a tenement at 113 St. Mark's Place in the East Village and forced upon my family a drastic pivot. We came here licking our wounds in the particularly cold winter of 2002, nesting in a cabin in the Shandaken hamlet of Chichester. To be honest, I wasn't looking forward to being a Shandakenite. We didn't exactly get off on the right foot.

For the first time since the pandemic, I recently walked that old neighborhood

from which we came: the East Village. I'd moved there from Georgia as a 19-year-

old dreamer, met the woman who would be my wife, proposed to her beneath

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a still-standing scholar tree (Japanese pagoda tree) over KFC and French red in Tompkins Square Park. A few moons later, I walked beneath that scholar tree with our son in a backpack until he was just shy of four years old. Sometimes it really does seem like yesterday.

Except for the iPhones and the face-masks, I was much like the young parents

I saw in that same locale on that recent quite lovely late summer day. My wife and I were once that couple locked in a full-body embrace near the aforementioned scholar tree, their entangled hair obscuring their faces and spreading in the grass beneath, oblivious to the surrounding swirl of activity, the sun beating down, a graying man, a ghost of sorts, with a cup

of potent coffee from Porto Rico Coffee Importers, glancing over, making note of their clueless beauty.

Did I long to travel back to the Eighties and be like those young folks in Tompkins Square Park, with so much yet ahead? Not really. I mostly wanted to just tap into exuberant New York City life, seemingly undimmed by the pandemic, take a little nip, then go collect my 22-year-old son at his erstwhile college roommate's house in Brooklyn, and head back to Shandaken, to the hamlet of Phoenicia. Our home.

IF YOU'D ASKED ME ONE YEAR AGO TO define the word Shandaken, I would've needed to Google it. Today, however, I can hold forth. It's a phrase of the indigenous Esopus people, meaning "land of rapid waters." Or it could be "place of the hemlocks." One imagines a white colonist of centuries ago asking the people they were displacing: "What do you call this land we're evicting you from?" And an Esopus person thinking, "What can I say to get this man to leave me alone?"

Driven out by violence and smallpox, hallmarks of white conquest, the people for whom the trout stream across my street is named fled for their lives. Settlers' eventual deforestation of the millennia-old hemlock forests would echo their treatment of the Esopus people.

For decades, the invaders' reckless descendants used hemlock bark to tan leather. Stupidly, but typically, they did not replant. When the hemlocks were

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gone and the streams fouled, the tanneries closed, new Shandakenites replaced the flora with deciduous trees – invasive, non-indigenous Norway maples in particular – which, like the settlers themselves, grow fast and aggressively. Now, a century and a half later, those Norway maples account for much for the golden autumnal hue of our remade terrain. (Indigenous sugar maples are the fiery red ones.)

Some of these factoids I sort of knew prior to the coronavirus pandemic, but only in the recesses of my mind. Now, the knowledge resides in my body, sinking ever deeper into my bones. I feel the history of my town in my everyday actions, like pulling weeds, or using stones from ancient dry stone walls to shore something up, or collecting wood for the oncoming, more-unpredictable-than-usual winter. I sense threads in a tangled skein of time, the electricity of my touch connecting to a pulse leading in more than one temporal direction. I place my hand on a surviving hemlock, and I can almost see nearby Romer Mountain shrouded in dark, year-round green.

While battling an invasive weed, I climb a massive 150-year-old spruce in my backyard and see the lush, towering Norway maples as planted by the McGraths, who built our house – first on this street – in 1910. Our next door-neighbor's home was their barn, and the entire, tree-thick acreage of all my neighbors' property was grazing land for McGrath livestock.

If the McGraths desired, they could've boarded the Ulster-Delaware line at the

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DION OGUST

street corner and disembarked in Kingston, then hopped a train to New York City. The steel tracks from the train that stopped in Phoenicia were only recently removed, as were the beautiful silver birches that had grown between the ties since the last ride of the Ulster-Delaware in 1974. Hurricane Irene had warped the rails like so much licorice in 2011, but they remained until a few years ago, when some humans made up their minds that the rails, and the birches, had to go. We can't bear to burn the sawed-up remains of those trees. They lay in a wooded lot beside our house, surrounded by young growth brethren I can, as of this year, cite as elm, ash, and cedar.

Especially as lockdown commenced, and much of my world radically, and unpleasantly, changed, my desire to see an American chestnut intensified. In a state of fervent, almost desperate imagination, I envisioned when the redwood of the East dotted the surrounding hills and riversides, the scent from its white blossoms perfuming the spring air of Shandaken. A friend whose Shandakenite father was alive then told me his dad spoke of those fragrant blossoms wistfully, as did Tho-

reau in *Walden*. Locals called it "winter in the spring," as the white flowers on the mountainsides looked like snow. By 1940, all those trees had fallen.

My longing to see an American chestnut was not actually pie-in-the-sky. Even though they are almost gone from the landscape, the species is technically not extinct. Very rare, inexplicable mutants exist, and original root systems live on, sending up saplings. In the latter, the blight attacks only the trunk in a tree's first decade of life. The trunk dies, but the roots send another back up eventually. The process repeats, life in all its tenacity, perennially striking back. I needed to see that, even if it was only a sapling. Hope incarnate, bigger than me, beyond coronavirus, beyond politics, in the continuum of deep time.

I learned of a mutant 95-foot American chestnut six hours away in Hebron, Maine, and was making plans for a pilgrimage (yes, to see a tree), when, to my astonishment, near some black-eyed Susans and Michalmas daisies, I "chanced" upon two American chestnut saplings growing from an intact root system directly beside my house here in Shandaken. I'm

still processing this.

I was weeding yet another invasive, and, because I'd written about the American chestnut, I recognized the scalloped leaves. The entire time I'd been captivated by this tragic yet hopeful story of the American chestnut, that very species was growing where I walk every day. In the shade of a lilac bush. And I'm just going to say it: calling to me.

An expert confirmed the saplings as American chestnut, but broke it to me that, if I looked closer, I would see the beginnings of blight – an orangey film – at the spot where the saplings rise from a root entangled with the old lilac. The saplings will very likely ultimately rot, instead of eventually dwarfing my home (long after I'm gone), which is how it would otherwise be.

It's okay, though. The three-foot-long saplings look fine now, even robust. And every time I see them, even if I'm just passing by, I am briefly transported, and not a moment too soon. Perhaps one of these saplings will survive, like the mutant in Hebron, and it'll be on Wikipedia, and tree aficionados will travel to see the Shandaken American Chestnut. Probably

not, though. The much greater likelihood is that blight will get them, yet spare the roots to try again, as they apparently have been doing for years.

Meanwhile, when various governmental agencies sign off, I hope to bring one of those blight-resistant specimens to my Shandaken home, and plant it. Due to the deep-time nature of trees – one hundred years growing, one hundred years living, one hundred years dying – I won't live long enough to see the full glory of that tree, but future Shandakenites – perhaps my blood descendants – will.

The mix of humility, wonder, hope, and sadness I feel is hard to boil down into a single term or phrase. It rises when I touch those fragile scalloped leaves and run my fingertips down to the strong, thick root just beneath the soil, entangled with the lilac, which is entangled with the spruce, the Norway maple, the Michalmas daisies, etc., all doing the work of life in the dark Shandaken soil, come what may: blight, coronavirus, cultural upheaval. And ac-

cording to recent science, these systems are aiding one another, messaging one another, and sharing resources.

When I reluctantly came here in 2002, I would not have believed that these would be the things I would learn, and that they would nurture me in a time of need. Yet the “land of rapid waters,” or “place of

the hemlocks,” or whatever the people of the future will call this strange, beautiful, sentient land, has entangled me and my will. I am part of a root system sending life into the air. Some kind of blight may strike down my efforts, but it may not. If it does, I will access the lifeblood energy of the Shandaken soil, and try again.

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The days they do dwindle

Continued from cover

And then there is that one arc of maple bough bending over your street that is,

suddenly, red. Very red, every leaf. No brown edges warned you, no yellow spots. She's here. She's bold about it and she's going to take your measure.

Too bad if you have not ordered your pallets of wood pellets, your cords of wood. According to my supplier, the price has already gone up twenty bucks and delivery is four weeks out. Four weeks. That's the

end of October.

We had a two-foot snowfall on October 12 one particularly cruel winter. Does the enhanced price of renewable fuel sources, and the delayed delivery dates signal a shortage of supply (both in inventory and willing labor/brawny young country boys?) Nope. It's what the market will bear, now that we've been "gentrified." Things were going this way, but it's been a sort of fever dream since last February.

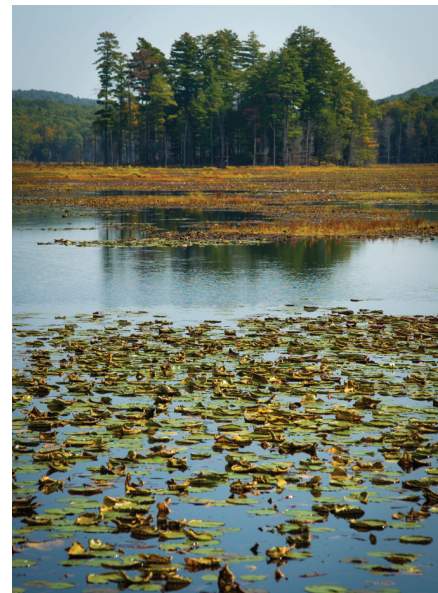
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Jim, the guy who owns the land next to mine in Lanesville, tells me that his real-estate lady has not one house for sale. Everything is sold. It seems every house, cottage, cabin and yurt is inhabited. And even available vacant land is hard to find.

What accounts for this sudden rush to gentrify? Is it the coronavirus? It might be possible with infra-red technology such as it is to watch bands of light exiting the RR, the Numbers 1, 7, and 4 trains, and the shuttle and glimmering northward like a moving LED strip of light. My

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PHOTOS BY DION OGUST

own daughter left behind her cool digs in Brooklyn last January and seems not to mind me so much any more.

IS IT THE WILDFIRES, SOME ALLEGED to be the result of arson, that sent a middle-aged lady to us, asking to buy our land, because she so fears the fire and has been told it is coming to Kingston? We could tell she was very frightened (who isn't these days?), and so we spoke in gentle tones about what she must consider.

Oh, she exhaled with relief, don't worry about the snow. I have a snowblower! A snowblower. She would have to be at work by 6:30 after blowing snow on a road that is the length of a football field and 25 feet wide.

Which reminds me. Contract with a snow-plow operator now. They get booked quick. And read your contract carefully before signing.

Should you decide to call this place home, there is more to know about such things as snowblowers, snowplows, four-wheel-drive vehicles and mowers.

Let me share this anecdote. I worked on a shoot last Monday. It was a gorgeous old homestead in Staatsburg, owned by very bougey people ... new to lawns, chickens, screen doors. Traversing the lawn, I spot an enormous bolt, two fingers thick, attached to two broken pieces of metal each as large as the bolt.

The thing was made grizzly with rust. It had obviously stared down and defeated any number of seasons and mower blades. I plucked it out of the lawn, and placed it on the porch. When the lady of the house breezed in



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Start Date 9/10: Thursdays 6:00 - 8:00pm

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Mondays 6:30 - 8:00pm

Eating Disorder Support Group

This group is for individuals who identify as having a restrictive eating disorder, and offers education and support.

Tuesdays 5:30 - 6:30pm

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Mondays 6:30 - 8pm

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from “spin class” (lordy, she lived on a flat road that provided lots of free spin opportunity), I was quick to show her the unsightly bolt.

She stared at it, then at me. I explained I had retrieved it so as to spare the mower's blade. She blinked at me as if I had, and instantly conveyed to her, the solution to the Collatz Collective. Then she sniffed “fine,” and smiled gratuitously as she disappeared inside the screen door, “just put it somewhere.”

Is it the lawlessness, as reported in the more urban environs, launching citizens at us, eager to buy, hoping to settle in the realm of the angels? Well, hikers, be aware that here we have hunting seasons. Those seasons involve bows and arrows, guns and bullets and camouflage clothing. Or lively red and orange plaid.

None of this is violent. But your hiking adventure might get lively, too, if you step out unaware without colorful togs. And please, please, please wear appropriate footwear. As beautiful as this landscape is, it is rugged.

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fare al fresco! These summer days, but that's going to end. Like Ole Blue Eyes warbles in *September Song*, "the days dwindle down to a precious few," and even the heartiest of us, sipping coffee with a now-trembling hand while angling for the sun on a crowded porch, will be looking for a more hospitable arrangement next. Herzog's in Kingston Plaza has ordered a lot of heaters useful for extending the outdoors restaurant season.

Many places will go dark, like theaters. Except for Sylvia's in Woodstock, Maggie's Krooked Cafe and Mama's Boy Burgers in Tannersville and Amy's Take Away in Lanesville. By the way, Amy's is the best kept secret up here. Let it be secret no longer. This is truly five-star cuisine.

That beautiful, clean, fresh air was so noticeably frigid a week ago. This is what autumn typically is and does to us here in these parts. I worked with a young actress who said, "Gee. It's cold. This is unusual, right?"

She's newly transplanted from Texas. She's very talented, and I suppose everyone wants to keep her around, so they all looked at their shoes (I could tell that was what they were doing, even though it was a Zoom rehearsal.) But I said, "No. No it's not."



PHOTOS BY DION OGUST

Let that young thing scamper to The Well in Saugerties and grab some warm clothing before she turns blue. And let this be a lesson to all you young brides-to-be out there. We do have the most spectacular wedding venues in the county right here, but advise your guests to

pack flannels and socks for that May or maybe June fete.

This is not hyperbole. I am three times mother of the bride.

THERE IS SUCH A THING AS ROMANCE with place, and there is such a thing as

a spirit, or spirits that inhabit the land and the air of a particular locale. Here there are spirits that inspire some to take what is here and shape it so that even those among us most narrowly limited in scope and imagination can see with awe. Think Opus 40 in Saugerties. Think Art Omi in Ghent. Think Storm King at Storm King.

You can visit these places, corona or no corona, any time of year.

This year, at Art Omi, you can take that antsy child to see and skate Chemi Rosado-Seijo's Mahican Pearl Hole (Mahican Bowl.) It's an impressive piece, a large skate bowl that honors the skate community. The rocks leading up to the bowl create a circular form that references Indigenous rock formations. The piece's



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name is an homage to the Mahicans, a culture and people that inhabited these lands. Jasper Kahn, a Hudson Valley local and skate board expert, is the artist who poured the concrete to its perfect shape and surface.

I continue to be amazed and pleased to see that the generic magazines and websites luring tourists upstate ignore us completely. It's benign neglect and decades

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long, and I can only hope it lasts forever. We are Brigadoon! www.upstatenewyork.com, travelandleisure.com, news10.com, IloveNY.com all apparently do not know we exist. Hallelujah!

We love you, our guests, and are grateful for the what you bring. If you like it here, please, you must honor its spirit. If we learned anything about the Kaaterskill Clove invasion it is that, in order to keep peace, we all must agree to honor the land and honor the way of life that is upstate. There are things to know, and I have outlined some of that.

If you came here to find a better way to live, trust that the people here have created that. Do not assume that you know better, like a city friend of mine who took a position on a local town board. He tried to impose a law involving animal rights within a practice of animal husbandry about which he knew nothing. Not only was he humiliated when his lack of knowledge was made obvious, it was delivered in the persons of about 50 angry people who had an expertise and a credibility that crushed his attempts. Publicly. At a town-hall meeting. It will take some time for him to regain trust.

I learned this the hard way years ago when I wrote a column on education for another news publication. We may be gen-

trified, but the locals are still here and wise enough to admit that when Steve Sabol wrote "The Autumn Wind" for the Oakland Raiders, he knew something about the weather here in the Northeast. What autumn becomes when the silhouette of that little cat advances and transforms into something that howls.

*The Autumn Wind is a pirate
Blustering in from sea
With a rollicking song he sweeps along
swaggering boisterously
His face is weather beaten*

*He wears a hooded sash
With his silver hat about his head
And a bristly black moustache
He growls as he storms the country
A villain big and bold
And the trees all shake and quiver and
quake
As he robs them of their gold
The Autumn wind is a Raider
Pillaging just for fun
He'll knock you 'round and upside
down
And laugh when he's conquered and
won.*



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Real estate in a time of pandemic

Delaware County is too far no more



A village home in Franklin was under offer after just one showing.

by Susan Barnett

THE HUDSON VALLEY in general, and recently Ulster County in particular, have gotten national attention for the precipitous rise of the cost of housing. But the mass exodus of buyers from the new York City area to upstate covers a lot more ground than that.

Delaware County, the forgotten, sleepy

area the size of Rhode Island, has been white-hot, too.

The shocking inflation in prices upstate is driving buyers further into the Catskills. Buyers have been introduced to new areas by Airbnb or friends who fled into the hills and invited them to follow. The old reluctance to travel outside convenient mass-transit routes or beyond a two-and-a-half-hour travel time from the city has evaporated. Delaware County is very

much on their radar.

Franklin, the little town where I live, is particularly in demand. Every buyer I've worked with this year has known about Franklin, and many of them say it is their community of choice. Just as I saw happen in Kingston, they know people who live here, or they know people who want to live here, and they're spreading the word.

But it's not just Franklin. Meredith, Davenport, Kortright, Hobart — all beautiful



This renovated Franklin farmhouse listed, and sold, during the shutdown for \$250,000.

areas that buyers used to argue were “too far.” Not any more.

Despite that, and despite a strong demand for rural properties, what’s interesting is that the urban expat clients I’ve encountered have a strong sense of the market, or at least what Zillow has told them the market is. They know it’s a seller’s market, but they’re not jumping to pay what they believe are inflated prices.

Good houses with prices that are higher than similar houses in the same community are not selling fast. They sell eventually, because there just isn’t enough inventory to meet the demand this year. But they’re sitting on the market longer.

Finding that dream property

Good houses with prices that seem in line with other properties get snapped up. And if they look like a bargain? Gone. Very quickly.

Properties with commercial potential

aren’t moving yet. That’s how it happened in Kingston, too. First, the people moved in. Then the investors and businesses moved in to capitalize on the new

customer base.

My phone had been ringing throughout the shutdown. People stuck at home had plenty of time to surf the Internet, looking for their dream property in the country. Once the restrictions were relaxed, the floodgates opened and the buyers poured in. I collected Covid disclosure forms, handed out masks and gloves, and followed buyers around houses, wiping down doorknobs with disinfectant cloths as we went.

According to the Otsego Delaware MLS statistics for late September, 17 properties sold in the Town of Franklin since March. Two more are pending, and several more have an accepted offer. There are six homes for sale for more than half-a-million dollars now. That’s all unusual. It’s a small town.

Expanding the view, 549 properties listed on the Otsego-Delaware Multiple Listing Service have sold since March 1. The average sale price was \$193,227. Average days on the market was 170.

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Delaware County accounts for 313 of those sales. Average sale price was \$212,000. Otsego County, the far more affluent neighbor to the north, is a trickier proposition to analyze – Cooperstown, which is the home of the Baseball Hall of Fame, Otsego Lake and the Dreams Park, skews the stats to the high side. In addition, few Cooperstown real-estate agents list their properties on the local MLS. But anecdotally, the talk in the market is that the Otsego County expat influx is not as

lively as the one in Delaware County. And the fact that SUNY Oneonta created a newsworthy spike in Covid-19 cases when it reopened likely didn't help matters.

What's eye-popping in the overall statistics is sales price. The average sales price was 97 percent of asking. That's the definition of a sellers' market. And that's something this area hasn't seen since 2001.

Stronger market, higher prices

That kind of frenzy is common in the Hudson Valley now. I have a former colleague who was stunned to sell one of his

luxury listings in a community near the Hudson for a full \$100,000 over asking.

Downstate buyers looking in Delaware County expect to find bargains, and they do. But the market here isn't what it was even two years ago. It's much stronger. And prices reflect that.

Once the contract is signed, the secondary effect of the shutdown becomes clear. Buyers and sellers both need to be prepared for the frustratingly slow experience that follows the excitement of an accepted offer. The spring shutdown has impacted everything, and closings that once took six to eight weeks are taking three months or more. Lawyers are swamped, title search companies are drowning. Some banks are moving forward fairly smoothly, others are crawling. Sellers are angry and buyers are, too, but there's nothing anyone can do. There's a backlog after the shutdown, and it was compounded by a flood of new deals. It's just slow.

How long will the sellers' market hold? No one knows. But many of our buyers are working from home now. All they need is a good Internet connection. And a place to unwind. With DelhiTel and OE Connects stringing fiber optic through the area, the western Catskills aren't looking like a step too far any more.

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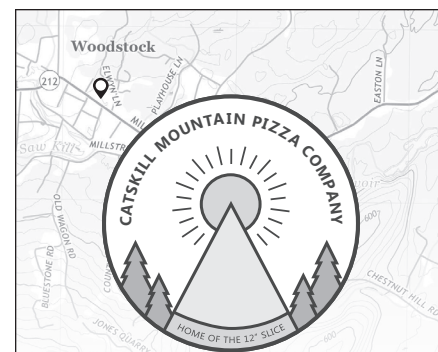
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LAUREN THOMAS

Main Street in New Paltz in the early evening.

Resist what?

An ex-imperial invader considers what he wants for his community

By John Burdick

ONE WEEKEND NIGHT in let's say 1979, in let's say autumn, at let's say 11 p.m., I left my friends' family house on North Oakwood Terrace in New Paltz with intent to head home. It was a short walk from the quaintest street on the village grid up to my parents' house, one grooved by repetition in my high-school years. As the bird flies, the way back to point A would take me past Ed's College Diner, which closed after lunchtime, and the Jack in the Box, which was still open and serving fish filets, by and for stoned SUNY students, until midnight.

I would have slanted across the Convenient (nee EZ) Deli parking lot and entered the grounds of the New Paltz Middle School, passing swing sets, bleachers, and goalposts, picking up a footpath at the south bend of the school's gravel track that would deliver me to the bottom — Joalyn Road — of the wooded Cherry Hill neighborhood where my now 93-year-old mother still lives. But of course we're talking about selling now because, you know

Odds are I was probably a little buzzed, and that can endow any blindingly familiar ten-minute walk with Odyssean dimensions of journey and return. I was no party animal, or rather a purely domes-

ticated one — five friends in a bedroom with some herb and music and a lot of silliness. If I was even into beer yet, it was a bottle or two of some import darkened by the musky secrets of European cultural superiority, perhaps elk's blood! I did not fake IDs and sneak into the bars or deface things. When we went out, it was to the willow-canopied benches around the college pond. My idea of chasing women involved looking bummed and hoping they'd notice.

But for some reason, the binary of fate, that night I deviated and turned right on Main Street rather than the homeward left, and you are thereby spared a lengthier nostalgic meditation on the Huguenot vil-

lage that has perhaps not really changed very much in these last 40 years going on 300. I walked, for some reason, toward downtown.

PASSING THE BEND AT THE ANCIENT Elting Library, mine eyes did there behold a scene hallucinatory and warped,

like everything about downtown New Paltz after dark, but acutely inflamed on this evening. Hundreds — maybe thousands — of young people who seemed old to me at the time careened in the streets, chanting, sweaty faced, incited and aroused. It was a druggy, drunken carnival at which the rides seemed to

be all internal but pretty intense. There was, indeed, police presence.

It was, as some of you veterans of SUNY and the village will verify, a spontaneous No-Nukes rally, done in New Paltz style, with an -ism more hedon- than activ-. It may have been unplanned, but it wasn't original. While the famous institutional New York City No-Nukes rally was still two or three years away, these grassroots demonstrations had been sweeping not the country but the world for several months. This one was blissfully anarchic and headless, disorganization being kind of the whole idea. After all it takes massive foresight, bureaucracy and infrastructure to build and operate a nuke plant, a mere raging party to dissolve one and hold out until the sun can power everything.

There were no leaders or talking points or pamphlets on the street that night, and if the argument went beyond those two tunelessly alliterative words, I didn't hear it. Did it work? Well, to date, there are still no nuclear power plants in New Paltz, so I guess so.

MEANTIME, THE VERY SAME CALENDAR year, a group of area citizens and leaders mobilized to defend the Shawangunk Ridge from the Marriott Corporation's plan to purchase the Minnewaska property from the Phillips family and build an enormous lakeside resort complex. A sober, multi-mode act of community resistance, the movement had strong legs, spending six intensive years in conflict with the corporation and with the many pro-development local authorities and interests (to whose arguments I am not entirely unsympathetic), stringing out Marriott via acts populist (there was chanting) and fine-print litigatory (much dispute of tax abatements). Marriott withdrew in 1984, and the state purchased the land a few years, a victory of community resistance with resonance and implications that extended far beyond the couple thousand acres in question.

In Marriott's own version of the story, the hotel giant's withdrawal after six years of committed pursuit and millions spent is credited not to the work of the gadfly local-advocacy groups, and not even to the sober assessments of New York's Department of Environmental Conservation or New York State's longstanding reputation as a thorny place to do business. Instead, Marriott blamed a single, unappealable decision made in a federal court regarding space for the expansion of a golf course. Goliath never credits David with the win. The corporation refuses to allow that grassroots efforts prevailed, lest the roots

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of resistance grow deeper.

THIS WEEK, *THE NEW YORK TIMES* published a lavish, long, multidimensional story about how wonderful the stupid little town of my life was. A thematic centerpiece of the story was all the wonderful natural preserves in a community of longstanding progressive values. Yikes.

As I read the story, in which several friends are quoted, eloquent and balanced, I felt a familiar impulse. Resist.

But resist what? Them is us. My father came here on the first big wave of SUNY hirings and construction in the early Sixties. Not only am I sure a sizeable sector of the local population resented the development and the change in the town's character, villainizing the PhDs and their presumption of authority. Man, I tell you I still feel it! The wounds and the divide! I am the imperial invader of half a century ago.

What does resistance even look like

against the yellowing trees, drying grasses, and falling fruits of the autumn? The BMWs come as usual, but this time they just stay. I know to honor that vague reflex to resist and to party it out in the streets and to be the New Paltz I want to see.

What I want is a New Paltz of diversity, a New Paltz with room for the down-on-

their-luck, where people can still discover themselves in shambolic, affordable and undistinguished ways, a SUNY where a kid can act the dilettante without accruing a prison of debt, a New Paltz where doing nothing — big nothing, like what Marriott and Con Ed got done here — really means something.

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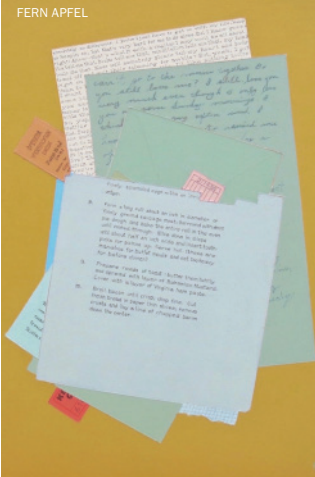
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Coping with change

Almost everybody has had to adjust in some way

by Erin Quinn

IN THE PAST seven months, the landscape of our daily lives has changed in ways we could have never imagined, unless we dwelled in the minds of fiction writers like Margaret Atwood or George Orwell. We've been transformed into a mask-wearing, hand-sanitizing, plexiglass-shielding, remote-almost-everything state of existence.

How have people adapted? We spoke with a high-school teacher, a hair stylist, a restaurant and bar owner, an arts center director, and the owner of a moving company. Here's what they had to say.

Mike Beck Jr., owner of P&G's a long-time institution of drink and dining and a cornerstone of downtown New Paltz culture, spoke about how places like his

have fared. P&G's was able to stay open during the early months of the pandemic, providing curbside delivery and takeout. It has now reopened with limited capacity and hours and a host of safety and sanitation guidelines.

"We are limited to 50 percent capacity indoors and social distancing of six feet or more between any tables or groups at the bar," said Beck, who, along with his sister took over the family business this past January. "Guidelines from the governor require a purchase of food with any alcohol order. This has shut down most of our bar business and our late-night college business."

Known as a dependable place for business lunches and family dining, P&G's has always transformed itself into a late-night watering hole for thirsty college revelers as

**"We cannot thank the community enough for going through this uncertain journey with us."
— Mike Beck, Jr., P&G's**

well. Since reopening, it's had to truncate that part of the business, closing at 10 p.m. instead of the traditional 4 a.m. last call.

Personnel are now employed whose only job is sanitizing, cleaning and maintaining social distancing amongst patrons. "We have also reorganized our operation to handle the increase in takeout food," said Beck. "Thanks to the village and SLA [State Liquor Authority], we were able to put four tables out front on the sidewalk." Business has decreased slightly on the food side and more dramatically in beverage sales.

The greatest challenge has been "to find enough work for all the employees." The staff has been great in adapting to the new operation and working in the face of adversity. The business has been grateful, Beck said, for the "the constant reminder of the gracious support from the community." That support never goes



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unnoticed, and “as the restaurant business is struggling nationally, we cannot thank the community enough for going through this uncertain journey with us.”

The performing and fine arts have plummeted financially.

Allowed to re-open in a very limited capacity this summer, they’re attempting to energize, create and find new ways of engaging the public without much of the close proximity these intimate settings have been constructed for..

Alex Bear, director of Unison Arts and Learning Center off Mountain Rest Road in the foothills of the Shawangunk Mountains, has worked towards turning their productions and exhibitions outside and their classes online.

Unison has been closed physically for over six months and has only just started concerts in its newly built outdoor stage. Income has dropped drastically. Bear said that she was not optimistic going into 2021 “that we will be able to keep everyone currently employed.”

Unison is actively looking for ways to be a strong community organization by reaching out to senior, long-time members and local youth for support through the arts. It’s seeking to create after-school art-based pop-up events. It’s working also on issues of sustainability, equality and accessibility in programming in order better to reach marginalized audiences that don’t have ready access to the arts.

Ultimately, Bear said that the greatest challenge she faces is keeping Unison solvent. It’s applying for grants even as it struggles to increase attendance.

“So many non-profits in New York State will not make it through this pandemic, and I am determined to have Unison thrive, especially after 43 years of being in our community,” said Bear. “The greatest surprise was how quickly we were able to transfer so many of our events online, due in great part to two of our staff that are below 30 and are very adept at the digital world! Another great surprise is how well our beloved community has been there to continue supporting us.”

IN THE SECOND WEEK OF MARCH, public-school teachers were asked to teach remotely from a computer. As the virus numbers decreased in New York, the governor allowed schools to use the best and safest way to continue teaching. Right now, Kingston High School is

all-remote, with no immediate plans for high-school students to return to brick-and-mortar classrooms.

Unison Arts & Learning Center Is seeking to create after-school art-based pop-up events.

Jane Farrell, a tenth grade English teacher who also works with integrated classrooms and English as a second

language students, said that “it’s been an enormous learning curve” for her to go from in-person classroom teaching to holding classes online, alone or with a co-teacher from a student-less school.

“I take two steps forward and one step back almost every day,” she said. She is trying to learn how to utilize Microsoft and Google team teaching. “I’ve also never sat so much in my life. I literally sit in front of a screen for at least six hours a day, if not more.”

While Farrell misses the personal relationships of a traditional format, she said that she likes features that allow her to check in on individual students pri-

Arts & Events



Dos Mundos: (Re)Constructing Narratives



Cintha Santos Briones, *While living in Sanctuary, Sujitmo Sajuti*, ankle monitor, Unitarian Universalist Church, Meriden, Connecticut, 2018

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vately about whether they've completed their assignments or whether or not they need help. Technology features like a notebook program can allow her to see students writing in real-time and help them with revisions or when they get stuck. "That's a neat feature, but we're certainly losing that one-on-one relationship and that's tough. It feels like it's all business without that personal attachment."

Attendance has been great, especially for Kingston High School, she said, "I never

imagined I'd have this much attendance virtually and have so many of my students turning in their assignments on time. That part has been a pleasant surprise."

"I never imagined I'd have this much attendance virtually." — Jane Farrell, Kingston High English teacher

Overall, Farrell said that she has never worked harder than she has doing remote teaching. "I end up doing simple tasks four

and five times. Like taking attendance! I do it manually, and then inside the program, and then I have to go back and check the next day because they can watch a recorded version of the class and have 24 hours to login," she said. "It's those things that you never imagined would be so redundant and time-consuming."

For instance, Farrell is having to read and upload and then shift to another window to read a separate paper, and then go into a different program to put grades in. "I can end up recording a grade on a paper three times in different places. So, it's been a real challenge for me, but we're doing the absolute best that we can, and I certainly never imagined that I would become a tech person, but I think I am," she said with a laugh.

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their clients risky. While a few some underground salons crept up like speak-easies, most played by the rules, which took a financial toll on their businesses.

Stephanie George, a local hair stylist, said her salon "opened later than most, because we wanted to

make sure that we had all of our PPE in place and our hand sanitizers and masks and protocols in place for how clients would come in, temperature taking and asking them questions about their health and possible exposure to the virus."

Out of work for months, George learned how to cook with her mom and went for a lot of walks together. "So, I tried to make the best of it, but it was so hard," she said. "I didn't see my boyfriend for more than a month and a half because he was an essential worker. I didn't really see anyone but my mother."

Now only being allowed half her beauty and grooming business takes a toll. "We don't really have walk-ins anymore, which used to be a significant portion of our business. If we have room, we will, but typically people call in and make a reservation, as we only have three stylists on per day because of the social distancing."

"Slowly but surely, clients are coming

back," reported George. "We trust our clients to stay home if they don't feel well or believe they were exposed. And we've not seen some of our regular clients in

seen anything like this before. "We've moved 80 families from New York City to this region since June," said Benkert. "I've never had to turn people away.

This is the first time in 30 years, that I've actually had to say, 'I'm sorry, I can't help you this week.'"

All his 460 storage units are full

Slowly but surely, clients are coming back. — Stephanie George, hair stylist

months because they're afraid of contracting the virus or might be particularly vulnerable, but we're running such a safe operation here."

A plexiglass shield hangs between the client and the person doing their nails,

so there's really no contact beyond the hands, which of course are washed and sanitized.

It's all they can do. "Personally, I'm happy to see people feel better about themselves and getting out and getting their hair touched up or cut or high-

lighted," she said. She may not be able to see their smiles behind the masks, but she can see it in their eyes.

THE MOVING BUSINESS IS ONE OCCUPATION that has gone through the roof. Paul Benkert, longtime owner of Always Moving, his moving and storage company in Kingston said he's never

"because people are either in the process of moving here or they're in the process of selling their homes because they're getting such incredible prices for them and moving somewhere else."

Always Moving's 25 employees have been working round the clock. "Most of my guys don't like wearing masks, but they have to," said Benkert. "It's a hard, physical job, and in the middle of the summer with the heat having that extra layer of cloth over your face is not comfortable at all. But it's what we have to do, and fortunately not one of my employees or family members or clients have gotten sick, so in that regard I feel so lucky."

The business owner said that he's had to invest in masks, hand sanitizers, gloves and other PPE materials to protect his workers and his clients. "The majority of people we serve call and ask what we do to ensure their safety when we're moving their belongings, and I tell them exactly what we're doing. Thankfully it's worked well so far."

Benkert said that this year his numbers are up by at least 20 percent.

What's around the corner? We do not yet know, but we're in a region that is destined to continue to metamorphize.

"I've never had to turn people away," — Paul Benkert, Always Moving

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Making it work

Some thoughts from a careerist of commuting

by Paul Smart

I'VE HAD GOOD commutes for most of my life. I've also shaped my life in ways to reduce the time I spend going from home to work, and make such journeys are enjoyable. I write this as the Hudson Valley goes through a new wave of mass migration from New York City and its environs. People are shifting abodes as they did after 9/11. Many have lost a taste for city living. The balance between convenience and stress has changed. Migration patterns in the metropolises have switched from centripetal to centrifugal.

Work patterns have changed. Huge numbers of jobs have been rendered virtual, shifted commutes from hours and minutes to the seconds it takes to get from one's kitchen to whatever you're calling an office.

According to realtor Dina Palin of Houlihan Lawrence, Inc., the hottest markets she's dealing with are within close driving distance of Metro North and Amtrak. She's heard the same is true for the Trailways routes on the western shores of the Hudson. "People want the option to still be



able to go into the city one or two days a week, if necessary," she said. "People want to do this easily."

Many clients who moved to the area for its views, its quality of life, and in one case to be close to a specific bar/cafe/bookshop couldn't find work that paid well enough to support their lifestyles. But they're still coming, and in numbers larger than ever,

"I get people who spend time here renting, or visiting friends or family, and decide they want their own place," Palin added. "You go out now in Hudson, Woodstock, Rhinebeck or New Paltz and it's hard to see anyone local. It's like a sense of community's been suspended. Everyone's worrying it'll all become cliquish again."

In the past, attempts to shift the way employers manage employees has tended to snap back to older patterns involving standard offices. But it also depends on economic factors. Will high-stress industries be able to function as well with more relaxed schedules not fueled by urban benefits and liabilities? Will those buying here now be able to (or even want to) maintain high-pressure lives once they've resettled in Phoenicia, Rosendale, Rhinebeck or Uptown Kingston?

In a spur-of-the-moment fashion, with no real idea why I wanted out of Brooklyn. I maintained work from whence I came until I decided to embrace a new life. My first commute was from Phoenicia to Margaretville... really sweet except when it snowed a lot. I found ways to go quasi-virtual., creating a weekly commute that accommodated my work. I got to know the area well while maintaining a cheap, honorably rural lifestyle at the center of a circle with a 50-mile (or hour's drive) radius.

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It wasn't easy. Eventually I simplified, as much because of the house I had bought as any employment dreams, with a 20-minute commute across the Greene County Mountaintop. Then I moved with marriage, had a kid, and started working from home all but a day or two each week.

What did I learn through all this? As much as it's nice to shorten the length one drives for employment, it's also nice to be fully involved in whatever community one's investing in. To be seen on its streets. To limit one's chances of accidents to and fro, especially during deer season. And to daydream as one passed through the beauty of the region.

There are limits to how far one can commute. Friends who came up every weekend from the city forever and eventually found ways to let that other urban life go.

I moved back to the city for a while, and then to Albany. Eventually I ran out of steam and found local work to augment what I could do virtually, which diminished over time. Suddenly my expenses ebbed and I was able to save more even though I was making less. To top it all off, the real-estate market ticked up, giving me a nest egg of sorts.

I stayed. And now my only commutes are on foot.



View of the Catskills from Route 32 in Saugerties.

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Room to explore

Phil Warish, Blue Farm Antiques and Letterpress Printing

by Susan Barnett

AS HE TELLS it, moving to the country was the beginning of exploration for Phil Warish. He was living and working in New York City when his partner began lobbying for a part-time country home.

"It was Vincent's idea," Warish said. "I was the one whining about the long drive and saying 'I don't want to do this every weekend.'"

After three years of hunting they found a farmhouse outside of Franklin. They did the weekend country thing for awhile.

Then Warish's job as a graphic designer vanished. The company's owner decided to close up shop. And Warish was faced with a choice.

"New York City is not the creative capital it once was," he said, "and it wasn't worth looking for another job when the work was so demanding and the pay was so low."

He moved full-time to their country house outside Franklin in Delaware County full-time. Vincent, the one who wanted to live in the country, continues to work in the city, and commute home on weekends.

Warish describes living in a small town as a never-ending learning experience.



"There are so many business and community roles for people in small towns to play," he said. "These places may be small. They may look sleepy. But they're not stagnant."

Warish became a local business owner. In 2007

he hauled his 19th-century floorstanding Chandler Price platen press out of storage, where it had been for fifteen years. He arranged an eclectic collection of vintage items, put up a sign, and opened Blue Farm Antiques and Letterpress Printing. He's been in his current location for six years.

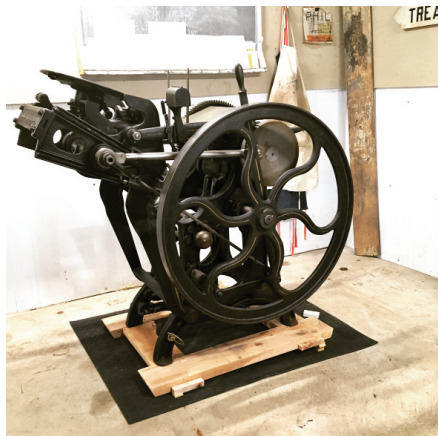
"There was no room for me to explore these interests in the city," he said. "It



was the move to the country that gave me not only the mental space, but the physical space, to do it. It's a grind in the city and there are extreme limitations." He laughed. "I mean, how do you open a letterpress printing shop in New York City? It requires space. And space comes at a cost."

Last year, Warish said he sold out of the 1400 holiday cards he designed and printed. He did a run of 2400 cards with a more somber palette during the Covid shutdown, which sold well. He's preparing to print more holiday cards, and he's now creating a line of notebooks which he machine-stitches.

The antique shop is doing well, too. Warish said he's seeing a lot of newcom-



ers since businesses reopened. He said it was just a few sluggish weeks until business was "surprisingly normal." And then, he said, the summer brought a surge of new people.

"I don't know how they find us," he said. "But they're so surprised, when they get here, that there's *anything*."

Warish began a no-negotiations policy with his pricing, instead, offering customers a choice of where ten percent of the purchase price would be donated. So far, he's collected \$928 for the Boys and Girls Club of Oneonta, \$843 for the Franklin

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Stage, and \$732 for the Garrett Smith Abolition Museum. He calls it economic activism. And he said it's been a hit with his customers.

"They seem okay with not being able to negotiate. They're still getting something off the purchase price – it's just going to a good cause, and they get to choose which one."

Warish is also active in the community. He does graphics and marketing strategy for the Franklin Stage. He heads the committee that organizes the Stagecoach Run Arts Festival in town every year. This year, the self-guided tour of local art studios had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.

"That's a moral obligation to make sure that event continues," he said.

Living in the country has also given him more room for his collection of West African tribal art. "Rooms in our house have been given over to that collection," Warish said. "I think living here, with all this affordable place, has allowed me to indulge in a lot of interests. But people from the city still don't get it. There's this perception we're in the woods fighting off bears."



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Columbus Day weekend events

As events begin to happen in new and different ways, don't forget to check out the Calendar of Events on HudsonValleyOne.com for all your local happenings.

Saturday, 10/10

8:00 am-1:00 pm Middletown Farmers' Market Saturdays, 8am-1pm held through October 24th on Cottage Street and Railroad Avenue in Middletown.

9:00 am-2:00 pm 2020 Outdoor Kingston Farmers Market Featuring 50 vendors offering produce, dairy, meats, baked goods, specialty foods, prepared food, wines/cider, wellness items (view website for vendor details). Located at a NEW location, Ulster County Courthouse Parking Lot. Customers are encouraged to sign up for 30 minute shopping spots online and to pre-order to expedite shopping times. Outdoor market will run every Saturday 9am-2pm through Nov 21. kingstonfarmersmarket.org; facebook.com/kingstonfarmersmarket; info@kingstonfarmersmarket.org; 646-262-4672.

9:00 am-1:00 pm Hudson Farmers' Market Held Saturdays, 9am-1pm, through Nov 21st. For the purposes of public safety and proper social distancing the Market is splitting vendors between two municipal lots at 6th street and Columbia. Columbia between 5th and 6th and 6th Street & Columbia, Hudson, NY. Rain or Shine!

10:00 am-2:00 pm Millerton Farmers' Market Open the second and fourth Saturdays of the month. The market will be held outside of the Millerton Methodist Church, at the corner of Dutchess and Main Street. For more information and updates, go to millertonfarmersmarket.org or Facebook.com/MillertonFarmersMarket.

10:00 am-4:00 pm Olana State Historic Site Weekend Tours Open Saturday & Sundays, 10am-4pm. Info: olana.org. Olana State Historic Site, Hudson.

10:00 am-1:00 pm Art Exhibit: New work, New location, New normal Meet the Artist by appointment in lieu of reception. Pastel paintings by Marlene Wiedenbaum & oils by Jim Kramer. Gallery hours: Tuesday-Friday, 11am-1pm; Saturday, 10am-1pm & Sunday by appt. For details call 845-255-1241 or log onto markgrubergallery.com

10:00 am-5:00 pm Fall Fun Scavenger Hunt Hosted by the Village of Montgomery! \$10 per child. Tix must be purchased in advance by logging onto grayscalecollective.com/sesh



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View of the Ashokan Reservoir

10:00 am-3:00 pm Marbletown Sportsmen's Club holding "Ladies Day at the Range" event Instruction in .22 rifle, shotgun and bow and arrow. The event is free. Reservations requested. Face Masks Must Be Worn! Club grounds located at 105 Scarawan Road in Stone Ridge. All equipment will be supplied, or you can bring your own. Reservations are requested but not required. For more information or to make reservations, call 845-687-7735.

11:00 am-3:00 pm Uptown Kingston and Kingston Post Office Exhibit Sampling by Stephen Blauweiss View a sampling of two exhibits from renowned local film maker, graphic designer and historian, Stephen Blauweiss. Matthew Persen House, Kingston.

11:00 am Maverick Concerts All Access' Schedule Part of a five-part visual series featuring artists who were scheduled to perform during the live 2020 festival and to be made available via Maverick Concert's Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Vimeo channels. Ongoing Maverick Chamber Music Concert Pedja Muzijevic, solo piano Haydn: Sonata No. 62 in E-flat Henry Cowell: Aeolian Harp John Cage: TBD Beethoven: Sonata No. 4 in E-flat, Op. 7 Info: maverickconcerts.org; kitt.potter@maverickconcerts.org; 646.965.2365.

11:00 am-4:00 pm Twin View Stables Fall Festival Pony rides, paint a pumpkin, petting zoo, hay rides, food & vendors. Barn Hours 8am-9pm. Twin View Stables, Campbell Hall.

11:30 am Higher Education in the Era of Pandemic President Elizabeth H. Bradley will moderate a panel discussion about the impact of COVID-19 on higher education. Virtual.

12:00 pm-4:00 pm Members' Autumn Exhibit Enjoy Fall in the Catskills and stop by to view the Members' Autumn Exhibit. Members are local artists inspired by this region. Longyear Gallery, Margaretville.

1:00 pm-5:00 pm HV Empanada Festival Taste your way around and the Best Latin + Spanish pastry turnovers filled with a variety of ingredients like chicken, pork, steak, seafood and vegan options like sweet potato and Mexican corn to name a few! You can also plan to devour the best Latin food trucks and restaurants this side of South America! Latin Brews and our Famous Sangria Barn for those Wine and Sangria lovers! Salsa Band and Live Latin Music! 3 ticket options and remember kids 12 and under are Free! Info & tix: bap.ticketleap.com; 845-590-1915! Orange County Farmers Museum, 850 State Route 17K, Montgomery.

5:00 pm-9:00 pm Beacon Second Saturday A city-wide celebration of the arts held on the second Saturday of every month where galleries and shops stay open until 9pm, most of which are right along Main Street. In addition to displaying art from around the globe, the event often includes free gallery talks, live music, and wine tasting. Beaconarts.org. Downtown Beacon, Beacon.

7:00 pm Haunted History Tour – Live, Virtual and Safe \$10/pp; Each tour limited to 10, social distancing and masking enforced. Tickets and info: livinghistoryny.com Old Dutch Church, Kingston.

8:00 pm-11:00 pm Hasbrouck House Sunset Flix Outdoor Film Series Outdoor Film Series returns every Tuesday-Sunday all Summer long! Weekly themes and family friendly films every Wednesday at 8pm Hasbrouck House, Stone Ridge.

Sunday, 10/11

10:00 am-3:00 pm Beacon Farmers Market Open every Sunday 10am-3pm through November. Veterans Place, off Main St., Beacon.

10:00 am-2:00 pm Rhinebeck Farmers Market COVID-19 Shopper and Vendor protocol will be posted on their website. Open rain or shine. Municipal Parking Lot, 61 East Market St., Rhinebeck.

10:00 am-2:00 pm Rosendale Farmers' Market Open through October 25th. Rosendale Theatre Parking Lot, Rosendale.

10:00 am-3:00 pm New Paltz Open Air Market Sundays, 10am-3pm through November 1st on Church Street, New Paltz.

10:00 am-4:00 pm Olana State Historic Site Weekend Tours Open Saturday & Sundays, 10am-4pm. Info: olana.org. Olana State Historic Site, Hudson.

10:00 am-11:00 am Les Castellanos Figure Drawing Online Course There is no reason why you can't continue to practice Figure Drawing while at home! Join Les Castellanos for a one hour drawing session. Woodstock School Of Art.

12:00 pm-4:00 pm Members' Autumn Exhibit Enjoy Fall in the Catskills and stop by to view the Members' Autumn Exhibit. Members are local artists inspired by this region. Longyear Gallery, Margaretville.

1:00 pm-4:00 pm A Day in the Life of a Farm Wife at the Lost Catskill Farm Experience what life was like for a woman living on a 1930s family farm in the Catskills. Time and the Valleys Museum, Grahamsville.

2:00 pm-4:00 pm In Defiance – Resistance and the Persistence of Racism in American History Join Susan Stessin-Cohn and Albert Cook for a timely and

eye-opening presentation and Q&A about the history of slavery in NY. Ashokan Center, Olivebridge.

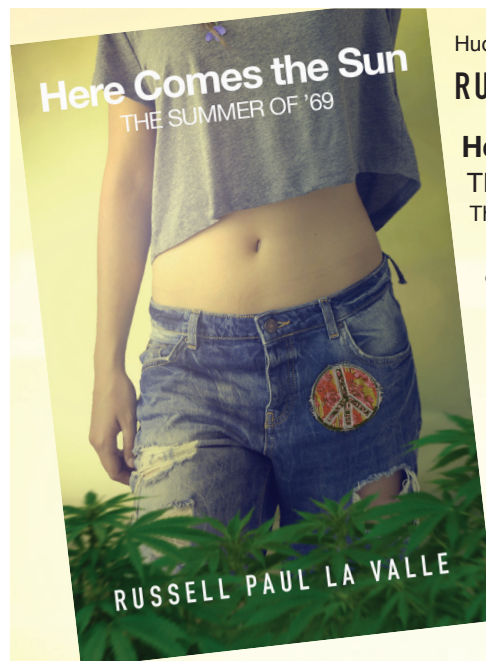
3:00 pm Red Hook Ultimate Frisbee – Check the website before attending Ongoing games – Wednesdays 5pm & Sundays 3pm. Casual, co-ed pickup games. Red Hook High School, Red Hook.

3:00 pm-5:00 pm Poets' Corner Open Mic Monthly Open Mic for writers and readers of spoken word of all types every

2nd Sunday. Featured reader, then mic is open to all. Tompkins Corners Cultural Center, Putnam Valley.

4:00 pm-6:00 pm Honky Tonkin at Home Join jam-leader and musical hostess extraordinaire Paula Bradley for a four-part online Honky Tonk workshop and party Sundays in October, 4-6pm. Ashokan Center, Olivebridge.

Go to www.hudsonvalleyone.com for more events.



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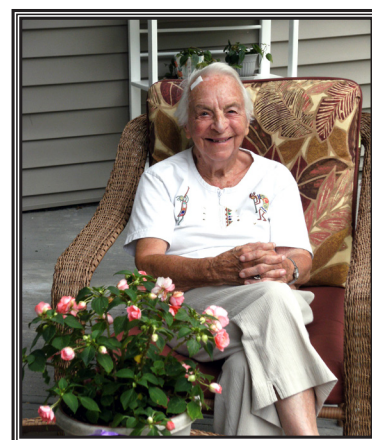
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