

Discover The Hudson Anew

Handel-Krom lecture

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It is an honor, and a pleasure to be here with you all tonight. Having been asked to unpack my creative process, I will do my best to share a few thoughts about mindful travel through drawing and writing, which for the sake of tonight's program will be focused on the Hudson River Valley.

Let me begin by going back thirty years, when I had an epiphany about how human endeavor is conditioned by configurations of waterways and terrain. At the time I was living in Richmond Virginia, exploring through a series of landscape paintings how Civil War battlefields reflected how the American landscape is shaped by a quarrel about what it is. During this period, several things hit my radar that would nurture my development. The first was my introduction to Benson J. Lossing through his 1874 *Pictorial Field Book of the Civil War*.

Lossing's 1866 book *The Hudson from the Wilderness to the Sea* would accompany me on my travels along the river that we'll be exploring tonight. The second was John Brinckerhoff Jackson's *Understanding the Vernacular Landscape*, a collection of essays recommended to me by Cynthia MacLeod, who was then superintendent of Richmond Battlefield National Park.

One quote from Jackson's opening piece was especially resonant. He states that,

"Landscapes do not occur in nature but are created when people adapt terrain to their use."

Human desires are often in conflict. Thus any location becomes a palimpsest, of competing systems of value. Prior to embarking on the battlefield project, I had considered the idea of retracing George Catlin's journey up the Missouri River. Brian W. Dippie's remarkable book *Catlin and His Contemporaries* introduced me to a host of expeditionary artists.

Seth Eastman, Alfred Jacob Miller, Richard and Edward Kern and John Mix Stanley provided inspiration.

Pouring over maps drawn by Jed Hotchkiss and Peter Michie stirred my curiosity, which led me into the realm of living history. Becoming a volunteer interpreter with the national park service, I learned how to ride horses, but preferred mules. Learning how to handle a musket, I taught myself how to draw maps, many of which saw use at major battle reenactments. This immersive approach to research remains an important part of my practice.

Moving to Colorado in 1998, I shifted my attention to western battlefields, including those involving clashes with indigenous peoples. The most troubling of these sites haunts me still. On November 29, 1864 scores of noncombatant Cheyenne and Arapaho were slaughtered mercilessly, by U.S. Volunteers at Sand Creek.

Around that time The Institute of Western Art at the Denver Art Museum purchased one of my paintings of the massacre site and published a slim volume entitled *West Point Points West* that included an article on the military academy's drawing program by David Reel, now executive director of the West Point Museum. Reel's essay provided yet another piece in the puzzle.

Slowly, a different history of American landscape art came into view. Materializing around the familiar concatenation of poetic geniuses was a dauntless assortment of explorers, naturalists

and military draftsmen, scornful of danger, traversing the continent. Who in their right mind would not wish to join their ranks?

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The moment of truth arrived for me when I was delivered to the emergency room at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in New York City, suffering from an undiagnosed pulmonary infection that some predicted would be fatal. Happily they were wrong, but afterward I found exposure to oil paint and solvents intolerable. During the three-week ordeal, Katherine Manthorne, to whom I now am married, brought me a watercolor sketchbook and a set of paints. One day I began a sketch of the George Washington Bridge. I lost track of time, and by the time I put it aside, the sketch had made the leap to being a finished painting. Suddenly everything fell into place. Gradually, my priorities shifted from painting on an easel to painting on the page-spread of a pocket-sized notebook.

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Some of you may be curious about my process. As I did with the battlefield series, before setting out to paint at whatever location, I would prepare by acquainting myself with its history, geology, flora and fauna; study maps and seek out any existing depictions. Once on site the challenge is to find the best view to embody its character, a process similar to posing the subject of a portrait.

As with any drawing or painting, the first thing one must see is the shape of the page. An empty page is never an empty space, as within it are implied armatures of symmetry and imbalance known as the laws of quadrants and thirds.

In my classes, we work with 18th and 19th-century concepts for topographic rendering; mapping the image with movements, metes and bounds; defining forms with broken lines, developing value and color relationships with glazing—laying one transparent layer of color upon another to build up the image. Think of this not as *technique* but a thought-process of exploration and discovery. Anyone can draw what they know. Going after the picture first put the cart before the horse. Drawing to teach ourselves what we behold has the added benefit of increasing what we know, and thus what we are able to draw.

My own personal approach may vary from day to day, depending on the location, weather and a host of other factors. Opening moves are often made in red or orange ink. Working in a panoramic format involves working with multiple foci, which invisibly divide each painting into episodic fragments. This is because such elongated images cannot be viewed in a glimpse. One must first look to one side, and then to the other. Reading books from side to side and top to bottom is something we do by default. The gutter between the pages creates a diptych. The open page-spread become my canvas. Written notations are sometimes added. This expeditionary practice is also found in Asian art, in which pictures and calligraphy are often combined.

My goal is not a finished work of art, but the visualization of a complete idea. This is due in part to working outdoors, where one has no control over the weather and a variety of other conditions. I travel light, carrying everything I might need in a travel vest and small field-bag, and sometimes a folding camp stool or small collapsible table.

Mindful that by exploring the Hudson River Valley, I was traveling the wake of others like William Guy Wall and John Agg, Jacques-Gerard Milbert, Benson John Lossing and the late Don Nice, who traveled the length of the Hudson on an inflatable boat. Tonight let's join them on the river, pausing here and there to step out of our canoe, disembark from our steamboat, or climb out of our SUV, to discover the Hudson anew.

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Our first stop is the confluence of the Sacandaga and Hudson rivers, near the villages of Hadley and Lake Luzerne. In 1820, Irish landscape painter William Guy Wall and travel-writer John Agg followed the Hudson River from the southern Adirondacks to New York Harbor. Published between 1821 and 1825, Wall & Agg's *Hudson River Portfolio* consists of twenty color intaglio prints, eight of which depict waterfalls, ready to power new mills and factories. Agg describes the land around the mouth of the Sacandaga as,

"...broken and precipitous; and the natural course of the current is impeded and distracted by large fragments of stone, which choke up the narrow channel. The character of the scenery is wild, ferocious and solitary sublimity; lofty and irregular acclivities, covered the gloomy verdure of interminable forests and glens; over whose terrific depths unchanging darkness lowers."

Touring the area around the same time as Wall and Agg, French naturalist Jacques-Gerard Milbert described the area as,

"...sad and uncultivated, for, along with the loss of the magnificent forest cover, all the creatures which once livened and embellished it have vanished. On the summits I found only an occasional snake and some insects"

Visiting Wall's point of view, I found myself drawn to a pair of bridges spanning the Sacandaga.

A parabolic lenticular bow-truss bridge, built in 1885, had replaced the covered bridge Agg and

Wall would have crossed in 1820. Falling into disrepair, the bridge was closed to traffic in 1994.

Five years later, Saratoga County considered replacing the bridge, until Adirondack

Architectural Heritage and others stepped in with the funds and know-how to restore it. The bridge was reopened to automotive traffic in 2005.

Looking beyond we see a *deck truss steel* bridge, built in 1943. Both spans rest on masonry stone piers. The challenge of rendering a scene like this one is to favor neither the architectural subjects, nor their natural settings. I decided to address the stone piers of both bridges as though they were geological formations, like *The Mittens* and mesas of Monument Valley.

The girders and cables of the bridges seemed to rhyme with the tangle of trunks, branches and foliage rising from the banks, and with the mortar-gapped masonry. Looking back across the Hudson toward my point of view, the rocky stream was much the same, but the surrounding area had changed. The pastures, meadows and stump-littered fields had disappeared beneath a new forest, spreading out as far as the eye can see. Late nineteenth century clear-cutting and brush fires ravaged the understory, which reduced groundwater-retention. This in turn decreased the cubic volume of navigable waterways like the Hudson River and the Erie Canal to such a degree that commerce was threatened.

Reforestation of the Adirondacks thus was motivated not just by nature-lovers, but by the same pursuit of profit that had created the problem in the first place. At the mouth of the Sacandaga, wild space has reclaimed its own, save for a whisper of human desire, in the industrial blemish of these twin bridges.

Our next port of call is a lock on the Champlain Canal at Fort Miller.

During colonial times, fortifications were constructed along the western shore of the Hudson to protect a portage, or carrying-place, above a set of falls upstream from the mouth of the Battenkill River. These were improved and enlarged during the French and Indian War. Across the river a supply-depot was established to support Fort Edward a few miles upstream, and Fort George at the head of Lake George. It was here on August 16, 1777, that Lieutenant-Colonel Friedrich Baum received the fateful orders that dispatched his command to its doom along the Wallomsac River. Baum's defeat and the loss of native levies contributed to General John Burgoyne's surrender two months later at Saratoga. In his letterpress text that accompanied William Guy Wall's rendering of Fort Miller, John Agg writes,

There are some considerable falls and rapids near tis place...Over these falls it is by no means unusual for raft-men to precipitate their rafts...the usual course is by a short canal entering the Hudson at a short distance above and below the bridge, which avoids the falls altogether.

General Putnam...is said to have been the first to have tried this daring achievement. A party of Indians came suddenly upon him...one of his men was stretched out dead at his feet, the balls flew in showers about his head; trusting to Providence he pushed off his boat, which by the force of the rapids was soon carried out of the reach of musket-shot...and although eddies whirled around him...he ultimately succeeded in rescuing himself from imminent destruction, to the terror and admiration of his superstitious enemies, who attributed his escape to the assistance of some supernatural power."

The area between the Mohawk River and Lake Champlain would soon be popularized through the *Leatherstocking Tales* of James Fenimore Cooper.

Now as then, Fort Miller is a pleasant hamlet on the banks of the Hudson River, next to one of the locks on the canal that links the Hudson to Lake Champlain. Architectural historian, novelist, and raconteur James Howard Kunstler has for many years been a plein-air painting companion. On May 27, 2015, we piled into his pickup truck and headed off to paint at Fort Miller. I was drawn to a pair of dredging-barges that rode on the stream, cranes at rest, cables slack. It was unknown to us if the barges were engaged in PCB cleanup operations, or simply maintaining channel depths. Like drowsy dinosaurs, these dystopic gatecrashers disrupt what might be a visually harmonious *pastorale* with rusty dissonance; a piquant reminder that The Hudson River is a going concern, a working waterway that mingles beauty with muscle.

Olana needs no introduction. Sweeping magisterial vistas surround the hilltop aerie that Hudson River School painter Frederic Edwin Church called “The Center of the World.” Writing to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1880, Church proclaimed, “*Nature has been very lavish here in the gift of her beauty- I am sure you would enjoy the noble scenes which our windows command*”

I had just driven up from the city to deliver my wife to a meeting at Church’s palatial Moorish-revival home. The building was inspired by Church’s visit to the Holy Land and Petra, and designed in collaboration with architect Calvert Vaux whose business partner, Frederick Law Olmsted, had led the development New York’s Central Park. Crippled by arthritis in his later years Church set painting aside to focus on the grounds of Olana.

The grounds blend picturesque terrain with a working farm. The boundaries between open

spaces and woodlots are defined. Carriage-roads and footpaths lead visitors to dramatic belvederes.

Today the site has been largely restored to its stunning, late nineteenth-century appearance.

The day was warm. As we approached from the west, rain clouds hovered beyond the Catskill Escarpment. One week earlier, had Kathie delivered a paper at a symposium at Tate Britain in London. Instead of lodging near the British Museum, as we so often do, we rented an Air BnB in Greenwich and traveled mostly by water. One of our excursions was to the Marianne North Gallery, in the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew. North was a friend of Church, and had been a guest at Olana, which crowns a hill that rises above a wide, grassy slope. Sitting on the stone steps looking out toward the mountains, I was reminded of the view from the Royal Observatory at Greenwich, across the Thames, past the Isle of Dogs, toward the high-rise Docklands looming beyond. A guided tour spilled out of the house. Visitors peered over my shoulder. Out of courtesy or shyness, no one paused to comment, offer advice, or ask me what I was doing. I had become just part of the scenery. Hand in hand, a young couple walked to the edge of the hilltop. As they took a selfie, a drop of rain landed on the back of my hand.

Extending westward from the Catskill Escarpment, North-South Lake rests in a broad vale between the North and the South Mountains. On its eastern rim, the site of the long-gone Catskill Mountain House is now a wide grassy ledge. Westward, the land rises toward Tannersville. Before European colonists established settlements in the mountains, indigenous farmers lived in the bottomlands, using the heights as their hunting-grounds. Dutch expansion into the region triggered resistance, which escalated into warfare.

Crops were destroyed and settlements scattered, clearing the way for modern economies.

Exploring the mountains in the 1740s, Philadelphia naturalist John Bartram discovered new plant species. At age fourteen his son Billy had demonstrated a passion for drawing. In 1755 Bartram writes: "I design to set Billy to draw all our turtles with remarks, as he has time, which is only on Seventh days in the afternoon, and First-day mornings; for he is constantly kept to school to learn Latin and French."

Father and son had traveled to the Catskills two years earlier, visiting North-South Lake.

Attracted to a large growth of *Auricularia auricula-judae*, the boy was about to test it with his foot when his father pulled him back, away from a coiled rattlesnake. Despite protest from both father and son, their heartless guide put the creature to death. The precise location of this incident is unknown. Decades later Thomas Cole, Jasper Cropsey, Sanford Gifford and other painters visited the area. Hiking along the rim of the Catskill Escarpment they scrambled over rockfalls and escalades to reach Sunset Rock. Having made the ascent several times, I was always struck by the liberties taken by these artists, unwilling to let facts stand in the way of good pictures.

Having made notes on site, I later added a map in overlay, and beside it a thumbnail of Sanford Gifford's view from Sunset Rock, which I had visited earlier in the day. Over the years I have come to regard any location on the surface of the earth as a *palimpsest*, not just as living things clinging to the rocky crust of a molten orb, but as our residual memories and desires, inscribed upon the terrain.

The Naturalist John Burroughs (1837-1921) was born near Roxbury in the Western Catskills. He

later lived at *Slabsides*, his woodland refuge in Ulster County. Drawing heavily on travels through the mountainous regions around the Hudson Valley and New England, Burroughs argued that deeper connections with nature would develop the mind and nourish the soul, advocating the practice of close observation. In his essay, *The Art of Seeing Things*, published in *Leaf and Tendril*, 1908, Burroughs writes,

“To know is not all; it is only half. To love is the other half.”

To a neighbor’s complaint that birds no longer visited her home, Burroughs called her attention to the songs of several, naming the species one by one.

“You must have the bird in your heart”, he told her, “...before you can find it in the bush.”

Toward the end of his life Burroughs repaired to *Woodchuck Lodge*, a rustic farmhouse on the slopes of Clump Mountain, near the farm where he was born. His fondest retreat was a large recumbent boulder, with a sweeping view of the valley. Full of memories from his boyhood, there he remains. A fieldstone wall encloses the grave. His wife rests beside him.

Kathie and I discovered the site on a ramble into the western Catskills. Parking along the shoulder of Burroughs Memorial Road, we followed a narrow track north into the woods to arrive at a clearing, anchored at the tree-line by a large, recumbent boulder. Descending eastward, wild meadows reached out to broad vistas, no less inspiring in their modest bucolic charm than majestic wonders like Yosemite or the Grand Canyon. Hewn by the east branch of

the Delaware River and the headwaters of Schoharie Creek, which feeds into the Mohawk River below Auriesville, the little valley is the source of two mighty watersheds—the Delaware and the Hudson. Beheld from Burroughs’s beloved boulder, his *Boyhood Rock*, a harmonious patchwork of farm-fields and woodlots presents a soothing view. Roxbury’s farming-community relied upon railway-depots in Arvkill and Margaretville to deliver its bounty to market.

Young Burroughs heard the clamor of steam-powered machinery echo through the valley and the song of the axe from deep in the woods. Burroughs’s mountainside retreat was just far enough from the land of men, to stand at the edge of God’s country.

Located on the left bank of the Hudson, a few miles above the Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridge, is a rolling tract of land that was first developed into a private pleasure-park in 1849.

Having built estates atop the bluffs, wealthy landowners decided to set aside a tract of uncultivated land for the enjoyment of nature and the improvement of health. German landscape architect Hans Jacob Ehler was engaged to oversee the project. Dividing the land between clearings and woodlands, Ehler laid out trails leading to vistas, benches and pavilions. Washington Irving, William Cullen Bryant and other notable recipients of Delano and Astor hospitality are said to have drawn inspiration from rambles at Poets’ Walk. In recent years the park has come under the control of **Scenic Hudson Land Trust**, which maintains the trails and other amenities for year-round public use.

Here is one of several views I produced over the years.

Thursday July 7, 2011. 6:45 PM. West across the grassy bluffs, past the distant shore lies the Esopus Valley and the Ashokan Reservoir. Rising above these waterways are Overlook Mountain, Mount Tremper and Shandaken. Obscured behind the stand of trees to the right are the cloves of Platt and Kaaterskill, North Mountain and the Catskill Escarpment. The mercury is almost 90 degrees Fahrenheit, 70 percent humidity. Almost two hours before sunset, the atmosphere is hazy with a faint covering of clouds. My point of view is seated, on a park bench beside a trail descending northward, from a large wooden pavilion to the intersection with the trail that heads west to the edge of the bluffs.

Having visited the park on numerous occasions, I have never met other hikers on the trails, without an exchange of pleasant greetings. Seeing me at work, they might slow their pace in passing, or steal a glance, but never interrupt. By celebrating natural beauty, such places might inspire bards, but they also seem to promote civility.

In the foreground to the right is Constitution Island, with West Point on the far shore. This vista is from Boscobel House and Gardens in Garrison, New York. The site attracts thousands of visitors every year. Famed as one of America's scenic treasures, the Hudson Highlands were shaped by the river carving a path through an outcropping of basement rock extending northward from the Reading Prong of Pennsylvania and the Ramapo Mountains of northern New Jersey.

The waterway variously known as *Muhheahkunnuck*, *North River*, and *Hudson's River* has been a thoroughfare since the dawn of human habitation. Rising in the Adirondack Mountains, the

river flows more than three hundred miles to its confluence with the Atlantic. In the early nineteenth century, more than three hundred commercial vessels plied the waters daily between Troy and New York City. On September 14, 1608, the *Half-Moon* dropped anchor in these waters. Writing in his journal on September 14, 1609, the later mutinous Robert Juet described the setting.

“The Land grew very mountainous. The River is full of fish.”

As a choke-point in the southern section of a series of waterways known to indigenous communities as the *Great Warpath*, the Highlands were always of strategic importance. During the American War of Independence this stretch of the river was hotly contested. Crown forces captured Forts Montgomery and Clinton just eleven days before John Burgoyne surrendered a British army to Horatio Gates 150 miles upriver. West Point was fortified with outlying redoubts constructed across the river, on Constitution Island and in the western Highlands.

On September 25, 1780, Benedict Arnold boarded the Swan-class war sloop H.M.S. *Vulture* in these very waters. When a causeway was built for the railroad in 1851, wetlands behind Constitution Island were briefly converted to rice paddies. The plantation failed, but traces remain as a grid of flooded ditches crisscrossing the area. Deposits of industrial waste from battery manufacturing concentrated in Foundry Cove migrated south into the marsh, which has largely recovered after decades of remediation. Managed by the Constitution Marsh Audubon Center and Sanctuary, the wetland is frequented by numerous species of migratory birds, while serving as a nesting-area for an estimated one thousand snapping-turtles.

In *The Hudson from the Wilderness to the Sea*, Benson Lossing describes that General Anthony Wayne

"... was then in command of the Americans in the neighborhood (of Stony Point). Burning with desire to retake the forts, he applied to Washington for permission to make the attempt...The cautious Washington considered; when the impetuous Wayne, scorning all obstacles, said, "General, I'll storm hell if you will only plan it!"

On July 16, 1779 General Mad Anthony Wayne lead a night assault against a British garrison stationed on a rocky promontory on the right bank of the Hudson. Reaching into the the river toward Verplanck's Point, Stony Point marks the boundary between Haverstraw Bay and the southern waters of Peekskill Bay. Advancing through the waist-deep water of a soggy marsh, Wayne's troops silently scaled the precipitous bluffs, taking the redcoats by surprise.

Having visited the site many times, I was familiar with the terrain. Divided between leafy tree clusters and grassy glades, the undulating ground is punctuated by large outcroppings of Ordovician limestone. Upon reaching Stony Point lighthouse, the light mist had turned to drizzle. Setting up my three-legged camp-stool, I mapped out the image. Unsure if the rain would increase or abate, I worked rapidly to establish a level of specificity sufficient to form a complete idea.

Looking south from one of the British redoubts, I noted the distinctive skyline of Hook Mountain and the Tors in the distance. A few miles north of these heights, *Minisceongo Creek* flows into the Hudson. Along its grassy banks, Benedict Arnold delivered plans of the American fortifications at West Point to Major John Andre.

Making color-notes on the page, I thought about my location and all I beheld. Behind me stood a lighthouse built in 1825, a beacon for navigators. Just as the railroad divided wetlands from the river, it severed Stony Point from the shore. Had the British been blessed with its road-cut, Wayne's storming their position would have been far more difficult.

Stony Point was and remained a strategic location for many years. King's Ferry had ceased operations long before, but Stony Point and Verplanck's Landing across the river resonated with the history of transportation. Gravel hauled from the huge pit at Tompkins Cove macadamized countless highways. Packing up as rain began to fall in earnest, my thoughts echoed the words of J.B. Jackson,

"And I still find myself wondering if there is not always some deep similarity between the way war organizes space and movement, and the way the contemporary society organizes them"

Following the fall of Quebec in 1759, a group of British military officers traveled from Canada to the Caribbean, producing scenic views of the Crown's North American territories on the spot. Although seldom figured into the backstory of the Hudson River School, Thomas Pownall's renderings of the great falls of Cohoes, and the Palisades were published in London, more than sixty years before Thomas Cole paid his first visit to West Point. These dramatic cliffs are featured again, as Cornwallis's troops scale the heights in a drawing by Thomas Davies, an eyewitness to the event. On a ledge farther south, Alexander Hamilton had one final meeting with Aaron Burr, with dire results. Throughout the nineteenth century stretches of the

Palisades inspired artists such as William Colman, Sanford Gifford, Louis Comfort Tiffany, and George Bellows.

Parklands atop the Palisades are traversed by *The Long Path*—a historic trail, now part of the Empire State Trail. A short distance south of the boundary-line between the two states the trail reaches State Line Overlook, which is also accessible from the northbound lanes of the Palisades Interstate Parkway. A large parking lot serves the café, visitor center and book-store. The path at this point is paved. Several walled promontories have been built at the very edge of the cliffs. Looking north across the river one finds the village of Hastings-on-Hudson, with Dobbs Ferry beyond. To the south are wooded hills occupied by Lenoir Preserve, Untermeyer Gardens and Trevor Park. Beyond, the warm tones of masonry and tall buildings mark the location of downtown Yonkers. I took note of the number of oceangoing ships and oil barges that passed by, trying to envision the Hudson in 1820, with a quotidian flotilla of several hundred steamboats and sailing-vessels plying its waters, a major artery of trade and empire.

The George Washington Bridge opened in 1932. During its construction, a ditch was carved through the basaltic diabase cliffs of the Palisades to accommodate the roadway. In 1937 the states of New York and New Jersey created the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, with *Monument Park* (Fort Lee) as its southernmost terminus. For the bicentennial of the American Revolution, in 1976, the access-road was improved. An interpretive center was built, with adjoining parking-lots. Earthworks were restored to recreate the feeling of an eighteenth-century fort.

I first visited the site on January 2, 1991. The entry-gate had a woebegone appearance.

The park-drive snaked its way up a short rise, leading to parking-area and visitor center. There was no sign of life. A long trail led to the southernmost overlook, from which one scans Manhattan's western shore down to the harbor. Views of the western banks of the Hudson reach down to Weehawken, site of the infamous Burr-Hamilton duel, rebuilt for the Bicentennial with lawn-timbers and earthen fill. Mock artillery positions ran from north to south through wooded heights just behind the precipice. Fiberglass panels simulating fascine revetments were cracked and disintegrating. The fort once again was falling to ruin. The effect was doleful and desolate. Litter, soda-cans and cigarette butts lay scattered among the dead leaves.

Preceding Hollywood as the center of film production during the early years of silent cinema, Fort Lee had been the headquarters of Fox Film Corporation. Ashcan School artist Everett Shinn worked in the movie business. Young Thomas Hart Benton found odd jobs appearing as an extra, or working as a *grip* in silent films. Scenes shot along the Palisades in the 1914 serial *The Perils of Pauline* starring Pearl White gave American slang a new word: "Cliffhanger."

By the 1920s, film studios relocated to Southern California. As they were shooting in open lots, sunshine and warmer climate increased their productivity.

Monument Park was deserted when I returned to my vehicle. With the onset of twilight, it seemed best to avoid the park's nocturnal denizens.

Thirty years later, the park has been reborn, with numerous improvements and increased visitation. Observing the anniversary of the Battle of Fort Washington, living historians gather every year to interpret the Revolutionary-War period with demonstrations of drills, cooking,

and musket and cannon-firing. Discharging the thirty-two pounder rattles windows and sets off car-alarms in Manhattan.

Painting at Fort Lee a few years ago I noticed two Korean women speed-walking. Spotting me, they slowed to a halt then wandered up, peering over my shoulder. I looked up and smiled.

They smiled back.

“Any questions?” I asked.

“Yes” said the older one. “Are you married?”

Oyster Island, also known as Ellis Island, was first fortified in 1795, in preparation for what came to be known as the Quasi-War with France. It was acquired by the federal government in 1808, and a twenty-gun battery was established, which in concert with the guns of Castle Williams on Governor’s Island and Castle Clinton at the Battery in lower Manhattan, created a kill-zone at the mouth of the Hudson River. While it saw no action during the War of 1812, the island served as a prisoner-of-war camp during the conflict. In 1861 Fort Gibson was decommissioned and repurposed as a naval weapons depot. By 1890 the flood of immigrants into New York City had exceeded the capacity of Castle Garden. The navy vacated Ellis Island. A new immigration inspection station opened its doors there in 1892. It remained in service until 1954. More than twelve million people passed through its gates to become permanent residents and citizens of the United States. Today the site is part of Statue of Liberty National Monument, and is accessible only by water.

This journal-painting was made on the spot, from Battery Park in Lower Manhattan.

Looking across New York harbor, I set up beside the East Coast Memorial, which honors the sacrifice of the U.S. Merchant Mariners and Army Transport Service crews that lost their lives in American coastal waters during World War II.

A dark lenticular cloud hovered above Ellis Island. Both sheltering and ominous, it seemed to resonate with my mournful environs, while at the same time crowning the Golden Door--a symbol of hope, like an angel's wing.

Exploring these places with a purpose has enriched my life, one location at a time. The art of seeing is a practice. The goal is not only the artistic production of pictures and stories, but also to discover oneself along the way. If the art is not found in how one proceeds, it cannot exist in the things that one makes.

Last year Schiffer Publishing released *Sketchbook Traveler: Hudson Valley*, the first in a series of field guides to mindful travel through drawing and writing. Conceived as a hybrid between a coffee-table art-book and backpacker's companion, the book includes historical background, instructional texts, twenty-eight journal-paintings with narrative captions, blank work pages with watermark-style inspirational quotes and backmatter listing sites, resources and selected references. The hardboard binding is secured with an elastic strap, in the tradition of a *carnet de voyage*.

Two more volumes are now in production; one devoted to the American Southwest; the other to New England. I have also just signed a contract with Schiffer to create a trilogy exploring past and present landscapes of the American War of Independence.

Just as Pownall, Davies and British naval officer Joshua Rowley Watson had recognized the value of drawing and journal-keeping as a means to sharpen the senses in ways that transform experience into knowledge and ideas, my hope is that these practices will enhance everyone's experience of heritage tourism, as we approach the semi-quincentennial of our nation's birth. Meeting new classes for the first time, West Point drawing master Thomas Gimbrede would inform his cadets that,

"There are only two lines in drawing, the straight line and the curve line. Everyone can draw a straight line and everyone can draw a curve line, therefore, everyone can draw."

Gimbrede threw down the gauntlet.

Let us all take up the challenge.

One need be neither a poet nor an artist to benefit from deeper engagements with nature, and their surroundings, by picking up a pencil, uploading to the hard-drive knowledge to be gained, and memories to be cherished.

I wish you all happy trails, and hope to see you in the field.

Thank you
