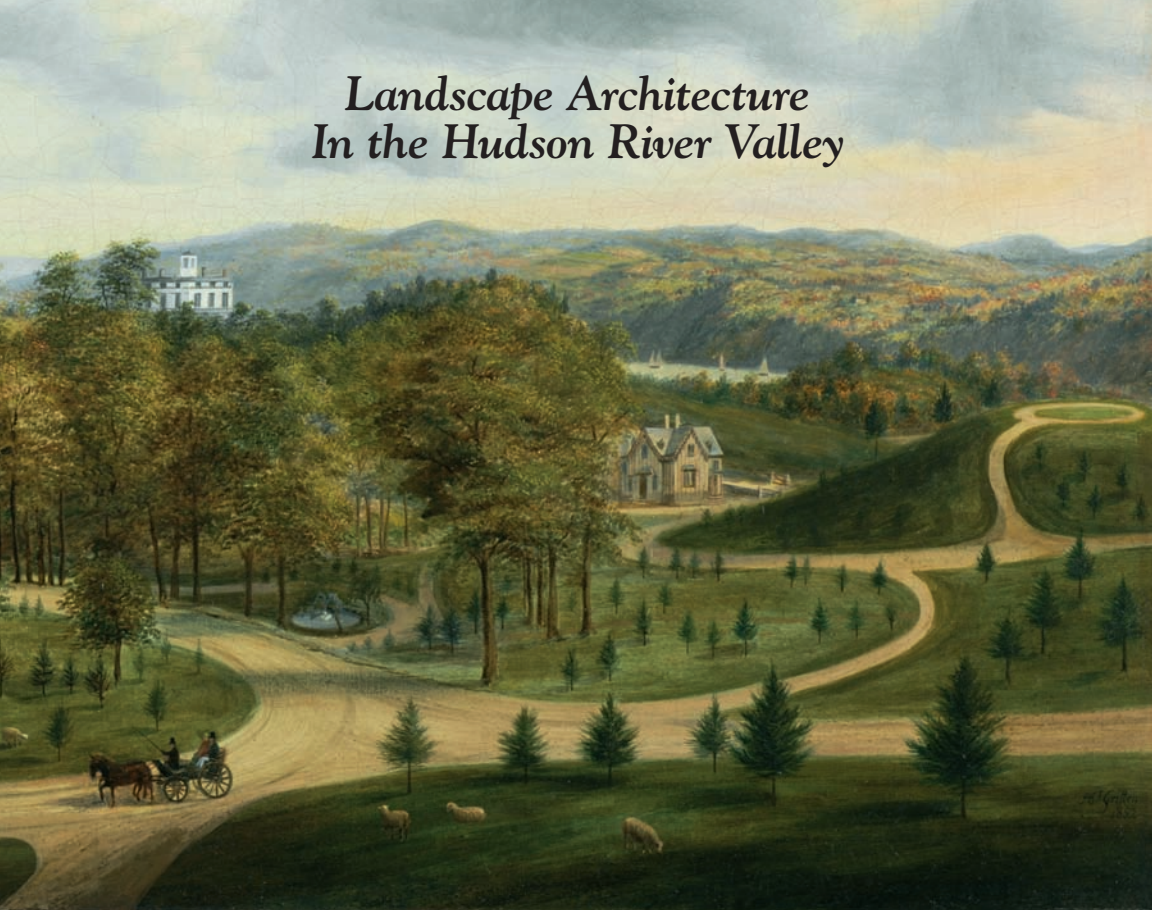


AUTUMN 2010

# THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

*A Journal of Regional Studies*

*Landscape Architecture  
In the Hudson River Valley*



*Published by the Hudson River Valley Institute*

THE  
HUDSON  
RIVER  
VALLEY  
REVIEW

*A Journal of Regional Studies*

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## From the Editors

We've looked forward to presenting an issue on the Hudson River Valley's landscape legacy for a long time, both to share information about some of its treasures and to honor those who have dedicated their lives to preserving them. The region holds a unique place in the history of our nation's landscape architecture: it's where the art was first imported from Europe and where it began to evolve—alongside the works of Hudson River School painters and Transcendentalist writers—into something distinctly American. An excerpt from Robert Toole's new book, *Landscape Gardens on the Hudson: A History*, provides a succinct overview of this evolution and its far-reaching impacts. Peter Manning illustrates how these concepts were translated by the Smiley family to create the carriage roads and other popular plein air amenities so popular today in the Shawangunks. Following the further development of the country's outdoor ethic, we republish Benton MacKaye's 1921 call for an Appalachian Trail. Returning to the domestic landscape, Robert Toole also offers an article on Thomas Cole's Cedar Grove, discussing the relationship between painting and landscape architecture at the artist's Catskill home. Thom Johnson's photo essay on Bannerman's Castle presents another legacy, tracing the history and precarious present circumstances of the iconic structures on Pollopel Island. Our History Forum introduces the South Road History Trail, which will serve to connect many important landscapes in Poughkeepsie, and continues with essays on Kykuit and Wilderstein before arriving at the Bard Arboretum, a curatorial landscape architecture project encompassing the grounds of several historic estates on the college campus.

We're especially pleased that this issue coincides with the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area's celebration of landscape architecture at eleven nationally significant sites across our region, the first in a series of events to celebrate and elaborate the Heritage Area's themes of Nature and Culture.

In J. Michael Smith's article in issue 26.2, the Bill of Sale on page 71 includes a transcription error; the name of 1st signer Minsam (carried over from an earlier translation) should be Ninham. On page 75, Figure 1 appears courtesy of the FDR Presidential Library and Museum. In the lower right corner of Figure 3 on page 83, in the South Precinct, the two "Gorelands Patented 1761" tract labels were reversed; the smaller tract is 221 acres, the larger 4,402. Lastly, in Figure 4 on page 89, Ninham the Grandfather's dates were transposed; his correct dates are 1696-1744.



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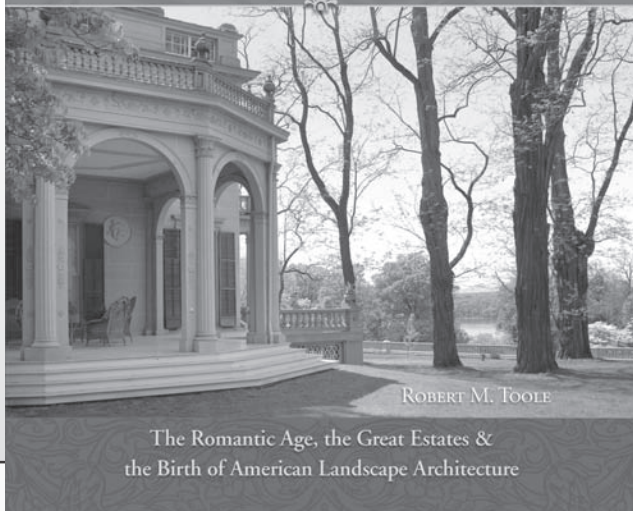
This issue of *The Hudson River Valley Review* is dedicated to

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## Call for Essays

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

## Submission of Essays and Other Materials

HRVR prefers that essays and other written materials be submitted as two double-spaced typescripts, generally no more than thirty pages long with endnotes, along with a computer disk with a clear indication of the operating system, the name and version of the word-processing program, and the names of documents on the disk. Illustrations or photographs that are germane to the writing should accompany the hard copy. Otherwise, the submission of visual materials should be cleared with the editors beforehand. Illustrations and photographs are the responsibility of the authors. Scanned photos or digital art must be 300 pixels per inch (or greater) at 8 in. x 10 in. (between 7 and 20 mb). No responsibility is assumed for the loss of materials. An e-mail address should be included whenever possible.

HRVR will accept materials submitted as an e-mail attachment (*hrvi@marist.edu*) once they have been announced and cleared beforehand.

Since HRVR is interdisciplinary in its approach to the region and to regionalism, it will honor the forms of citation appropriate to a particular discipline, provided these are applied consistently and supply full information. Endnotes rather than footnotes are preferred. In matters of style and form, HRVR follows *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

## Contributors

**Mary M. Flad** has worked as planning consultant and advisor with historic sites and non-profit organizations throughout the Hudson Valley for three decades, and was a founder of the Maple Grove Restoration Project. She lives in the City of Poughkeepsie.

**Thom Johnson** is an artist, photographer, educator, and lifetime resident of the Hudson Valley. He is one of the founders of the Bannerman Castle Trust, one of its first tour guides, and coauthor of *Bannerman Castle*. In addition to his ongoing documentation of the castle, he is working on a second book that will present the story of Francis Bannerman VI, the man behind the castle ruins.

**Benton MacKaye** (March 6, 1879–Dec. 11, 1975) was a forester, planner, and conservationist. A graduate of Harvard University (B.A., 1900; M.A. School of Forestry, 1905), he worked for the U.S. Forest Service, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the U.S. Department of Labor. MacKaye was the author of *The New Exploration: A Philosophy of Regional Planning* and *Expedition Nine: A Return to a Region* as well as the originator of the Appalachian Trail.

**Peter Manning** is the Regional Planner at the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development. He is a graduate of SUNY New Paltz (Geography) and Cornell University (Master of Landscape Architecture). He is a volunteer trail-maintainer and writes a column about place in a weekly newspaper.

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**Robert M. Toole** is a landscape architect practicing in Saratoga Springs since 1975. He has completed landscape studies for numerous historic sites and has written extensively on the topic. He is the author of *Landscape Gardens on the Hudson—a History: The Romantic Age, The Great Estates and the Birth of American Landscape Architecture* (Black Dome Press, 2010).

# THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

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**On the cover:** Henry Gritten, English 1818-1873

*Springside: Center Circle*, 1852

Oil on canvas, 25 ½ x 37 in.

The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York  
Promised gift of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas M. Evans, Jr. (Tania Goss, class of 1959)

# Annandale-on-Hudson's Historic Estates and their Landscapes

*Amy B. Parrella*

“A place to think”—Bard College’s motto proclaims the college as an academic environment conducive to intellectual thought, exchange, and engagement. Yet if we shift the emphasis of the motto to understand Bard as a “place” in the most literal sense—a physical setting, a “landscape of learning,” possibly even an “outdoor classroom”—then the awe-inspiring backdrop of the campus emerges, somewhere that can equally inspire, transport, and open minds to new possibilities and ways of thinking. Today this landscape includes 550 acres of woodlands, meadows, ravines, former estates, and rural residences. It is rich in prehistoric, historic, and modern artifacts woven together by trees, streams, and rolling topography.

In Bard’s 150th anniversary year, it seems appropriate to look back on its history of place in order to look forward to explore how the land shaped us, and how we have shaped it. Additionally, next year will be the fourth anniversary of the Bard Arboretum. The campus has long been recognized for its spectacular gardens and superb collection of living trees and plants—in fact, many of the Hudson Valley’s most notable trees are located there. The college’s Landscape and Arboretum Program was established in 2007 with the charge of preserving and cultivating the campus’s horticultural assets. The Arboretum Program formalizes the college’s dedication to caring for its unique landscape and opens the door to horticultural education, outreach, and research.

## Historical context of Bard’s landscape and its physical development

Situated along the east bank of the Hudson River within the hamlet of Annandale-on-Hudson, the Bard campus is privileged to have sweeping views of the Catskill Mountains, spectacular gardens, and a rich natural history. Due to a host of natural features and man-made changes to the landscape, the college was afforded the opportunity to take advantage of this unique place.

After the recession of the glaciers at the end of the Pleistocene period, starting ca. 16,000 BP, the mid-Hudson Valley was covered in tundra vegetation and occupied by Pleistocene fauna (i.e., mastodon and caribou). Spruce and pine forests gradually filled in the landscape starting ca. 12,000 BP, and the warmer climate eventually brought deciduous forests to the region ca. 7,000 BP. These changes in the landscape encouraged intermittent prehistoric settlement on what today is the Bard campus. Native American inhabitants also were present during the time of the first historically documented European voyage up the Hudson River, by Henry Hudson, in 1609.<sup>1</sup>

## EARLY ESTATES

Bard College emerged out of centuries of land ownership transferring from one family to another. Beginning around 1680, Col. Peter Schuyler, an Albany merchant and colonial government official, purchased the riverfront land at Cruger's Island (originally known as Magdalen Island) from local Native American inhabitants. This property included Bard's entire campus and most of the township of Red Hook. From this point onward, four major estates were formed—Bartlett, Blithewood, Ward Manor, and Sands.<sup>2</sup> These estates now create a patchwork of history spread out over the Bard College landscape.

## BARTLETT ESTATE

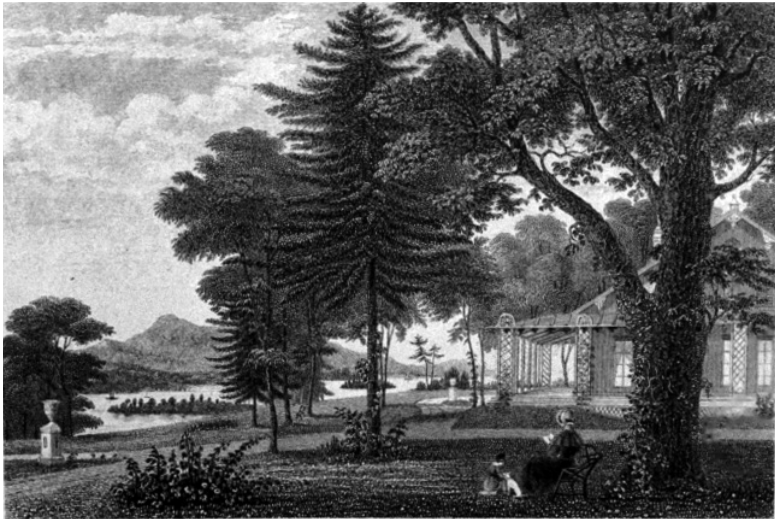
The riverfront section of the Schuyler property was purchased in 1720 by Barent van Benthuisen, but Schuyler retained rights to three prospective mill sites along the Saw Kill Creek, each of which had eight acres connected to it for harvesting timber. Van Benthuisen's slaves cleared the land and built a large house, called Van Benthuisen's Castle, along the road to Cruger's Island that was mapped in 1747. A family burying ground lay in what later became the Bartlett family meadows, not far from his house.

The van Benthuisen property gradually was sold off or lost in mortgage foreclosures. William Allen purchased the property from the van Benthuisen family at an unknown date. He built a house and later sold the property to Robert Tillotson, who lived there with his family until 1862, when he moved to Rhinebeck and sold the property to Edwin and Caroline Harrod Bartlett in early 1864. The Bartletts renamed the property Miramonte and made plans for a new mansion and landscaping.

In 1865, the new main house and stables were reportedly designed by renowned architects Calvert Vaux and Frederick Clarke Withers. Mr. Bartlett died at Miramonte in 1867; Mrs. Bartlett died in 1893. Both are buried in a stone

mausoleum opposite Bard Hall. It was erected by Mrs. Bartlett after her husband's death, also from a design by Withers. The Bartletts had no children and it is unclear who controlled the estate after their deaths. However, there are records that Miramonte was mortgaged by Mary Agnes Bartlett to Emma Forster. Mary Agnes Bartlett transferred the estate to Andrew Zabriskie in 1901. Today, ruins of the nineteenth-century Bartlett stable complex remain on the campus.<sup>3</sup>

**Bartlett's historic vegetation:** Meadows and hardwood forest now dominate the previous location of the Bartlett estate. Oak, elm, maple, beech, ash, hickory, and tulip poplar constitute the woodlands. Vegetation in meadow areas is primarily pasture grasses, timothy, clover, asters, and goldenrod and other herbs and woody plants.<sup>4</sup>



Blithewood engraving from an 1859 edition of *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America*

## BLITHEWOOD

Blithewood is one of the most charming villa residences in the Union. The natural scenery here, is nowhere surpassed in its enchanting union of softness and dignity—the river being four miles wide, its placid bosom broken only by islands and gleaming sails, and the horizon grandly closing in with the tall blue summits of the distant Kaatskills.<sup>5</sup>—A.J. Downing

Blithewood is currently a forty-five-acre area of the campus landscape that is associated with a historic estate comprised of a manor house, outbuildings, drives, surrounding gardens, lawns, and meadows. Situated atop a bluff on the Hudson

River, it is a majestic property that has a rich cultural landscape history.

Barent van Benthuyzen sold 200 acres of his original riverfront property to General John Armstrong Jr., a U.S. Senator (1800-1804), minister to France (1804-1810), and Secretary of War (1813-1814), and his wife,

Alida Livingston, in 1795. The Armstrongs named their residence “Mill Hill,” based on two mills located along the nearby Saw Kill Creek. The Armstrongs converted an existing one-and-a-half-story barn into a fifty-by-fifty-foot Federal-style residence and began planting Eastern white pine trees (*Pinus strobus*) along the driveway. Although many of these trees died over the years, several survive along today’s Blithewood Avenue.<sup>6</sup>

In 1833, Mill Hill was sold to John Church Cruger, a wealthy New Yorker, who also owned Cruger Island, where he resided with his wife Euphemia Van Rensselaer. Two years later, Cruger sold ninety-five acres, including the riverfront bluff, to Robert Donaldson, a patron of the arts and architecture, for \$19,000. Donaldson and his wife, Susan Jane Gaston, both native to North Carolina, were awestruck by the beauty of the land. Susan is credited with naming the property “Blithewood,” from “blythe” (meaning “happy”) wood. The Donaldsons went on to play a pivotal role in developing the property into a premiere example of American landscape and architectural design.<sup>8</sup>

Under the guidance of influential architect Alexander Jackson Davis, Donaldson renovated Armstrong’s residence in the style that later became known as Hudson River Bracketed. Working with Andrew Jackson Downing, the noted landscape designer, horticulturist, and writer, the trio created a prototype of the Picturesque villa that integrated the landscape with the manor house.

“Through Davis’s architectural designs and Downing’s prolific writings, their audience actualized. People became aware of Blithewood nationwide. Davis and Downing expressed their values in house and garden, as a foundation from which one’s moral character was shaped. They believed the land was a partner in creating a life worthy of high moral character.”<sup>9</sup>

One distinguishing feature of the renovated home was the wide-covered veranda attached to the house on three sides. It served to connect the outside world



Blithewood exterior

COURTESY OF BARD COLLEGE ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS





COURTESY OF BARD ARBORETUM

The Blithewood Gatehouse

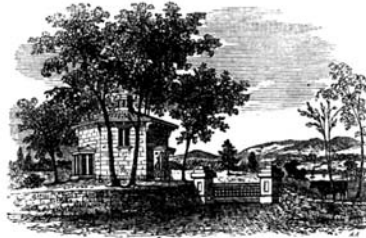


IMAGE FROM GOOGLE BOOKS

The Blithewood Gardener's Lodge and Gatehouse, from *A Treatise...*



COURTESY OF BARD ARBORETUM

The Blithewood Garden

with inside civilization. Additionally, it created a frame around the outdoors, as did the oval window on the house that looked out at the mountain scenery, creating a living picture.<sup>10</sup>

Archaeological investigations revealed that the first Gothic Revival cottage in America, the gatehouse of the Donaldson estate, was located just



COURTESY OF BARD COLLEGE ARCHIVES  
AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The Elm Drive, passing the chapel

east of the main house. A lithograph of this design (the “Gardener’s Lodge”) was published in Downing’s *Rural Residences* (1837). It was the first building in the United States to employ the use of board-and-batten siding. A steel engraving of Blithewood is featured in Downing’s *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1841).<sup>11</sup> Both books were very influential, serving as pattern books for other builders.<sup>12</sup>

In 1853, Donaldson sold Blithewood’s 130 acres to John and Margaret Bard, founders of Bard College, for \$63,000. The Donaldsons moved to the Edgewater estate in Barrytown. As educational and pious philanthropists, the Bards constructed Bard Hall (1854) as a Sunday school for the local community. They also commissioned the building of the Chapel of Holy Innocents in 1856.

The Bards collaborated with Rev. John McVickar and Episcopal Bishop Horatio Potter to establish St. Stephen’s College in 1860. It was founded as a training school for young men who wanted to become ministers in the Protestant Episcopal Church. John Bard donated eighteen acres and \$1,000 per year to the endeavor. Together the founders “had the conviction that through education, leadership and an institution, they could improve people, communities and the nation.”<sup>13</sup>

After the death of their son Willie in 1868, the family moved to Europe. The Annandale property deteriorated and went into foreclosure in 1897, when it was sold to St. Stephen’s College for \$38,444. Two years later, the college sold it to Captain Andrew C. Zabriskie, a real estate entrepreneur and active member of the National Guard, and his wife, Frances Zabriskie. She renamed the estate Blithewood. The Zabriskies tore down the Donaldson home, which had fallen into disrepair, and hired the then-prominent architecture firm of Hoppin & Koen to design the current Georgian manor house and walled Italianate garden.

Only months after his mother’s death, Christian Zabriskie transferred Blithewood to Bard College in 1951. James H. Case Jr., then the college’s president, is quoted as saying, “We now have one of the most beautiful campuses in the



COURTESY OF BARD COLLEGE ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Levy red maple



COURTESY OF BARD COLLEGE ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Blithewood garden

country with a wide frontage on the Hudson River and a commanding view of the Catskill Mountains.” In 1956, Blithewood was remodeled as woman’s dormitory; in 1987, it became the Levy Economics Institute.<sup>14</sup>

**Blithewood’s historic vegetation:** Blithewood’s formal garden, lawn, and woodlands contain remnants of the historic vegetation that once existed around the estate. A former New York State Champion red maple (*Acer rubrum*), known as the “All Saints” maple, still stands on the north lawn. Twin black locusts (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) on the south lawn are approximately 300 years old. Along the woodland edges, significant groundcovers of periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) and pachysandra (*Pachysandra terminalis*) and large forsythia (*Forsythia x intermedia*) may represent plantings from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The elaborate formal plantings of Blithewood’s garden complemented its Neoclassical design. A 1905 Hoppin & Koen garden plan shows numerous shrubs within the walled garden, evenly spaced and uniform, lining the walk from the house and encircling statuary at the path crossing in the garden, centered in garden beds, and edging the fountain basin. Evergreens were probably used here—possibly junipers, yew, and boxwoods—some of which have been replaced today. An early postcard of the garden shows roses, iris, wisteria, peonies, and maintained turf.<sup>15</sup>



COURTESY OF BARD ARBORETUM

Locusts in June

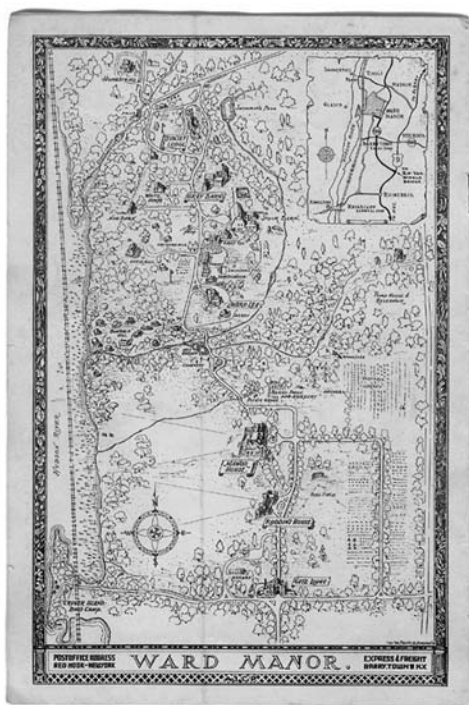
## WARD MANOR

Today's north campus encompasses approximately ninety acres, including Ward Manor house (a dormitory complex), gatehouse, historic entrance drives lined by spruce and maple allees, the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, and several open meadows. Ward Manor shares a similar Picturesque setting to Blithewood, although the Hudson River is obscured by woods because of the home's inland setting.

Ward Manor sat on 400 acres that General John Armstrong Jr. purchased from the van Benthuyzen family in 1790. He built a house called "The Meadows" that stood in the vicinity of current Ward Manor. Soon thereafter, he sold the property to Chancellor Robert Livingston, whose family renamed the property Almont. The main house was expanded by Col. Andrew De Veaux, a member of the British Army, who called the property De Veaux Park. De Veaux died in 1812. Part of his estate was sold to Dr. John Masten of Kingston; the remainder was acquired by Robert Swift Livingston of New York City. The main house at Almont burned in 1877 and was not rebuilt. Archaeological remains of the property's gardens and greenhouse are believed to be among the earliest found in the Hudson Valley.<sup>16</sup>

The Almont property was sold to Cord Meyer in 1906. He intended to harvest 200 acres of virgin forest but never did. In 1914, Louis Gordon Hamersley purchased Almont and some adjoining farm properties to its north. Four years later, he constructed an elaborate Tudor-style mansion. At the same time, the Ward Manor gatehouse was erected in a similar style. Hamersley served in World War I and rarely visited his home, preferring to live on Long Island.

The manor house was converted to charitable use when William B. Ward purchased it in 1926. In 1929, the Ward Annex was added. The expanded structure was intended to "create a self-sustaining



DONNA MATTHEWS COLLECTION, COURTESY OF BARD COLLEGE ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS



community, emphasizing work and fresh foods in the healthful country air.” Due to changing social conditions, in 1960 all but ninety acres of Ward Manor was sold to Central Hudson Gas and Electric to build a new nuclear power facility. The plant was never built; the state acquired the property in 1982, and created a nature preserve in the Tivoli Bays. Bard College purchased the remaining ninety acres in 1963.<sup>17</sup>

**Ward Manor’s historic vegetation:** Ward Manor’s vegetation lent itself to the site’s multitude of uses as a camp, retreat, and rest home from the 1920s through the 1960s, providing fresh air and other benefits of country life to the urban underprivileged. At the time, the property was more cultivated than it is today, with an orchard, picnic grove, large vegetable gardens, a berry patch, and iris gardens along the creek to the north (today currently owned by the state). A maple alley

COURTESY OF BARD ARBORETUM



American sycamore

along Manor Avenue, one of the estate’s main drives, was planted during the 1950s; it gradually is being replaced by a new maple and oak alley. Mature oak groves still shade the entrance to the Fisher Center and a mature Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) alley still lines Robbins Road, another drive to the manor house. A solitary American sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) with a

diameter of four and a half feet stands in the east meadow. These large meadows currently contain native and introduced species of pasture grasses, timothy, clover, asters, goldenrod, herbs, and woody plants.<sup>18</sup>

## SANDS ESTATE

The most recent estate included in the Bard Campus is the Sands Estate. Sands House is a vernacular wood-framed farmhouse with additions that was built in 1841 by the Donaldson family. Although considerably smaller than its surrounding estates, it was built in the Gothic Revival style and served as a farmhouse. Robert Adam lived in the house and ran the farm until he sold the building and five acres to Rev. George F. Seymour in 1859. The house was then occupied by Charles Edward Sands, nephew of John Bard, and his family who most likely rented it from Seymour. (Seymour became the first warden of St. Stephen’s College in 1860.) In

1864, the college sold the house and land to Mr. Sands. Both Sands and Adam are believed to have farmed the land near the house. Sands lived there until 1883, when Dr. Malcolm purchased the property. In 1904, it was acquired by Andrew Zabriskie. The present carriage house, two dairy barns (one of which is part of the Bard College Buildings and Grounds complex), and an icehouse were added to the property during the Zabriskie era. In 1951, the farm was donated to the college as part of the Blithewood holdings. The main house is used as a student dormitory.<sup>19</sup>

**Sands historic vegetation:** Due to recent construction, very little remains of the historic vegetation surrounding the Sands estate. One remnant is a short stretch of Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) lining the east side of the house. They are approximately seventy-five to 100 years old.

## Bard's current landscape and arboretum

The entirety of Bard's campus is listed in the National Register of Historic Places through its inclusion within two designated Historic Districts. In 1979, the Bard College campus was listed as part of the Sixteen-Mile District; in 1990, this district was re-evaluated and its boundaries were expanded through the listing of the Hudson River Historic District. Almost all of the campus buildings built prior to 1950 are listed on the National Register of Historic Places as contributing features to this larger district. Several of Bard's archeological resources have also been deemed eligible for listing on the National Register.<sup>20</sup>

Since Bard's historic character is central to its image in the minds of students, faculty, staff, alumni, visitors, and the community, it is important that it be retained. As Bard continues to expand and evolve, it is critical to recognize and preserve those aspects of its history that have helped define Bard's character and identity over the years and can help guide its future.

The Bard Arboretum is fortunate to have inherited a wealth of prehistoric and historic landscape and architectural resources that coexist with modern and postmodern development. The Hudson River ravines and bluffs are considered to predate European settlement and have some of the most significant prehistoric archaeological findings in the area. The ravines and waterways are also significant for their role in the industrialization of the Hudson River Valley in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries because of the numerous mills that they powered. The four historic estates mentioned above are representational of other country estates throughout the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. Blithewood, however, is nationally significant for its contribution to architecture and landscape design, both for serving as an ideal of the Picturesque landscape movement and its association with A.J. Davis, A.J. Downing, and Hoppin &

Koen. The college landscape also is significant because it provided a home for many influential families, including General John Armstrong and the Bards.

As a recipient of such historical wealth, the arboretum undertook a two-year Preservation Master Planning process, sponsored by the John Paul Getty Foundation, to study all of its historic buildings and landscapes. It explored connections between the college's past and present, and outlined a preservation approach after looking at existing campus resources. Since the completion of this study, the arboretum has become a member-based program that works to:

- Develop a comprehensive horticultural database and library, including a tree inventory that will support staff, faculty, and students as they research the college's botanical collections, track changes in the landscape, and plan appropriate maintenance, restoration, and preservation of Bard's trees and plantings;
- Support the maintenance of the historic landscapes so they can act as an outdoor classroom for courses offered across the academic curriculum;
- Utilize the preservation master plan and develop a landscape master plan to guide future growth and development that would preserve and protect the campus's natural beauty; and
- Exist as a satellite site and co-sponsor adult education classes with the New York Botanical Garden.

As the caretaker of Bard's landscape, the arboretum hopes to become a destination for individuals to understand and appreciate this nationally significant historical landscape. To learn more about the program, please visit <http://inside.bard.edu/arboretum/about/>.

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Photos: Top, Blithwood; bottom, Hyde Park; Steve Gross & Susan Daley from their new book, *Gardens Of The Hudson Valley*, to be published by Monacelli Press, October 2010. Center photo: Montgomery Place, Bryan Hanfield. Courtesy of Historic Hudson Valley

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