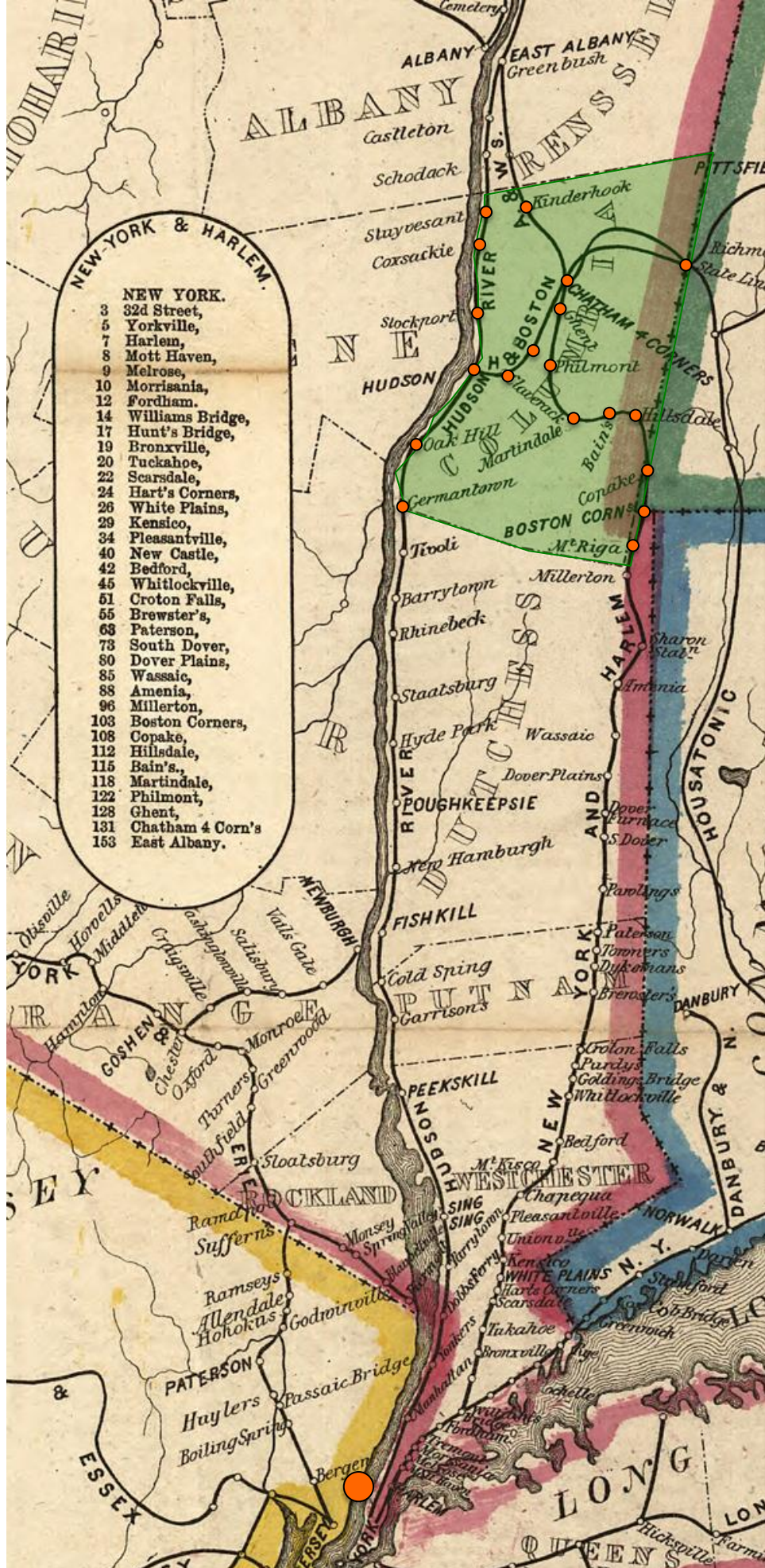


Columbia County/NYC Interactions: Flows of Nature, Agriculture, Ideas & People

'Station Stops' of a
presentation given
by the Hawthorne
Valley Farmscape
Ecology Program
on November 6,
2013



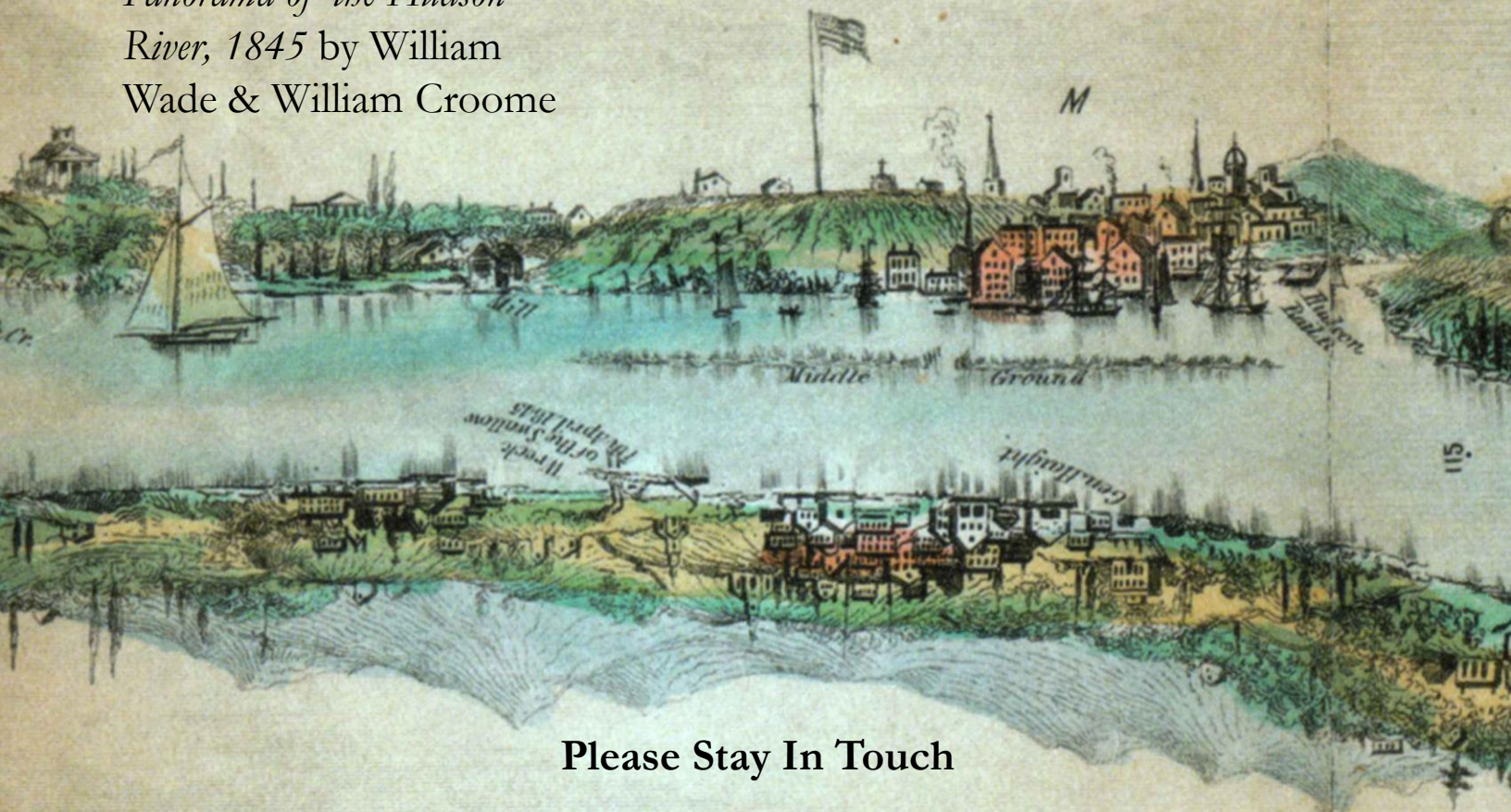
1858 New York and Harlem Railroad Map



Hillsdale, NY Station Agent

*Panorama of the Hudson
River, 1845* by William
Wade & William Croome

HUDSON CITY. 116



Please Stay In Touch

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Also find us on Facebook

Join us for Open House on the first Thursday of each Month
at 1075 Harlemville Road in Ghent



Introduction to the Stations

In field ecology, the organisms which one finds in a particular locale reflect not only the nature of that spot itself (Is it field? Forest? Swamp?), but also its location relative to other elements in the landscape (If field, how far from forest and vice-versa? If wetland, how far from a major river?). Just as in ecology, the relative geographical location of a particular place (such as Columbia County) plays a large part in determining its human culture.

Columbia County's proximity to New York City (NYC) has long played an important role in determining how people perceive of and use its land. Those human perceptions and uses have, in turn, shaped the habitats available to support other life.

Each of our 'stations' contains an object (or two), an image, and a map which highlights one particular type of flow or interaction between Columbia County and NYC. We know we're glossing over details, but perhaps we're exposing some useful generalities. Our goal is not to render a net judgment on the consequences of these flows, but rather to increase awareness of them and so the potential for their conscious stewarding.

We hope to encourage creative thinking by all of us as the current embodiment of such interactions: how can these flows continue in ways that best satisfy the diversity of human desires for the land and the range of needs of non-human life upon it?

We Invite Your Thoughts

We are interested to hear more of your thoughts and experiences of the interchanges between Columbia County and NYC. Please find our contact information in the inside cover and feel free to be in touch.

Station 1: Flow of Native Animals

Numerous creatures that do visit or have visited Columbia County also pass through the greater NYC area and vice versa. Migratory species of fish, dragonflies, birds, butterflies and other organisms have made the commute under their own power, often on their way to more distant lands. Other species have made the trip as wampum (a Native American shell currency), fur, or game meat in human economic interactions.

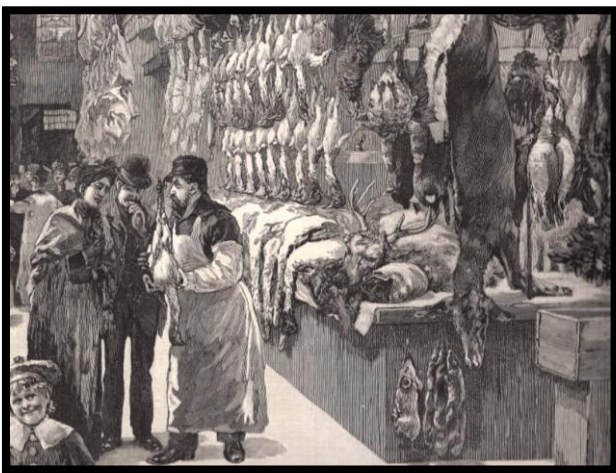
Object: Beaver Pelt



Beaver pelt courtesy of the Columbia County Soil and Water Conservation District

Beaver, or more specifically, their furs, were one of the main draws for Dutch settlement along the Hudson. One of the first Dutch settlers in the County, Abraham Staats, was a Beaverwyck (modern-day Albany) fur trader, amongst other things. During the mid-1600s, as many as 45,000 pelts were sent downriver yearly from Beaverwyck. As a consequence of this commerce, beaver were basically extinct in Columbia County by around 1700. As ecological engineers, beaver can exert a tremendous influence on a land's hydrology. Doubtless, the beaver's demise spelt major changes in the aquatic and wetland habitats available to a range of other organisms. Beaver have returned to the County, but at a substantially reduced density and with their effects carefully moderated.

Image: Meat Stalls, Washington Market, NYC

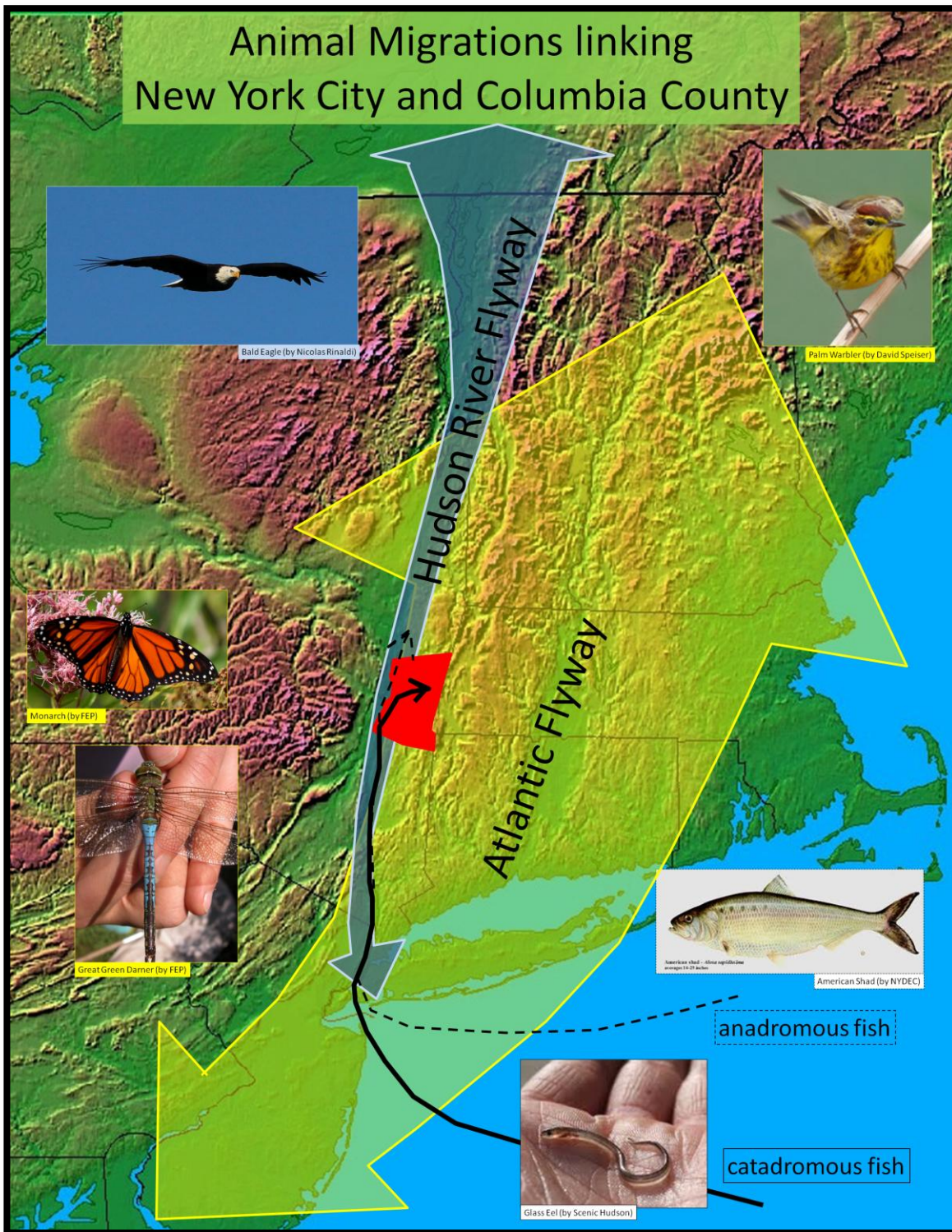


From Harper's Weekly, November 28th, 1885.

Game, such as the deer, squirrels, and wild turkey seen in this late 19th century image from *Harper's Weekly*, was consumed in large amounts in NYC, and much commercial game came from 'upstate'. During the hunting season, columns of recreational hunters apparently fanned out into the hinterlands, sometimes to the despair of local residents. By 1900, there were so few deer left in Columbia County, that the rare sighting was worthy a newspaper article. The outlawing of wild game sales around 1910, and the subsequent decline in popularity of hunting has meant a reprieve for some species. However, the current boom in deer has had a major impact on forest ecology.

Animal Migrations linking New York City and Columbia County

Map: Examples of Native Animal Flows

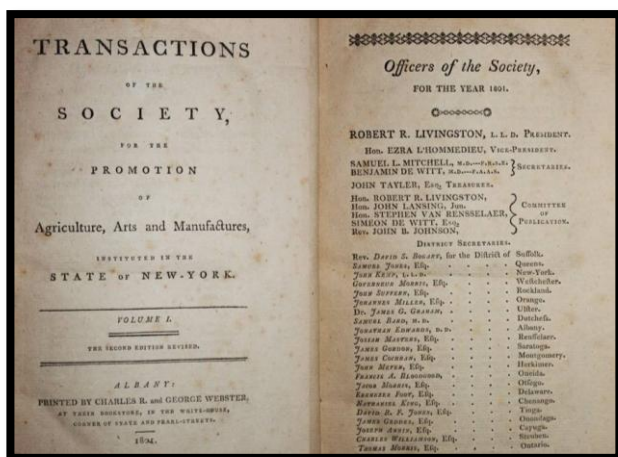


Although precise data are hard to come by, various species of butterfly (e.g., Monarchs, Red Admirals, Painted Ladies), dragonfly (e.g., some Darners and Gliders), and fish (e.g., American Shad, Blue Herring, American Eel, Striped Bass), together with numerous bird species, make north/south migratory movements that effectively link the region of NYC with areas to the north such as Columbia County. We are stops on the same line of the ‘wildlife subway’ (or, should we say, airway or waterway?).

Station 2: Flow of Agricultural Goods & Ideas

Agricultural commerce has long been a major linkage between Columbia County and NYC, with the County producing goods both for NYC's human and equine consumers and for the national and international trade that streamed from the City's port. At the same time, agricultural ideas generated in both NYC and Columbia County have played important roles in shaping approaches to food and farming.

Object: Transactions of the Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Arts, and Manufactures



Above: Transactions title page and directory for the Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Arts and Manufactures, 1801.

Wheat was one of the earliest agricultural commodities in the County. As early as 1680, there are reports of Columbia County traders sending wheat downriver. The manors of Livingston and Rensselaer were founded largely on wheat production, with tenant tithes being paid in wheat. Robert R. Livingston, co-drafter (but not signer) of the Declaration of Independence, and part of the manorial Livingston family, used his farm at Clermont for much agricultural experimentation. In the 1790s, together with NYC figures such as Samuel Mitchell and Ezra L'Hommedieu, he founded the Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Arts and Manufactures. The impetus for scientific agriculture which this represented saw many subsequent participants, including native Columbia County son Amos Eaton (founder of RPI) and his student Ebenezer Emmons, whose mid-19th century series on New York agriculture highlighted up-and-coming crops such as orchard fruits.

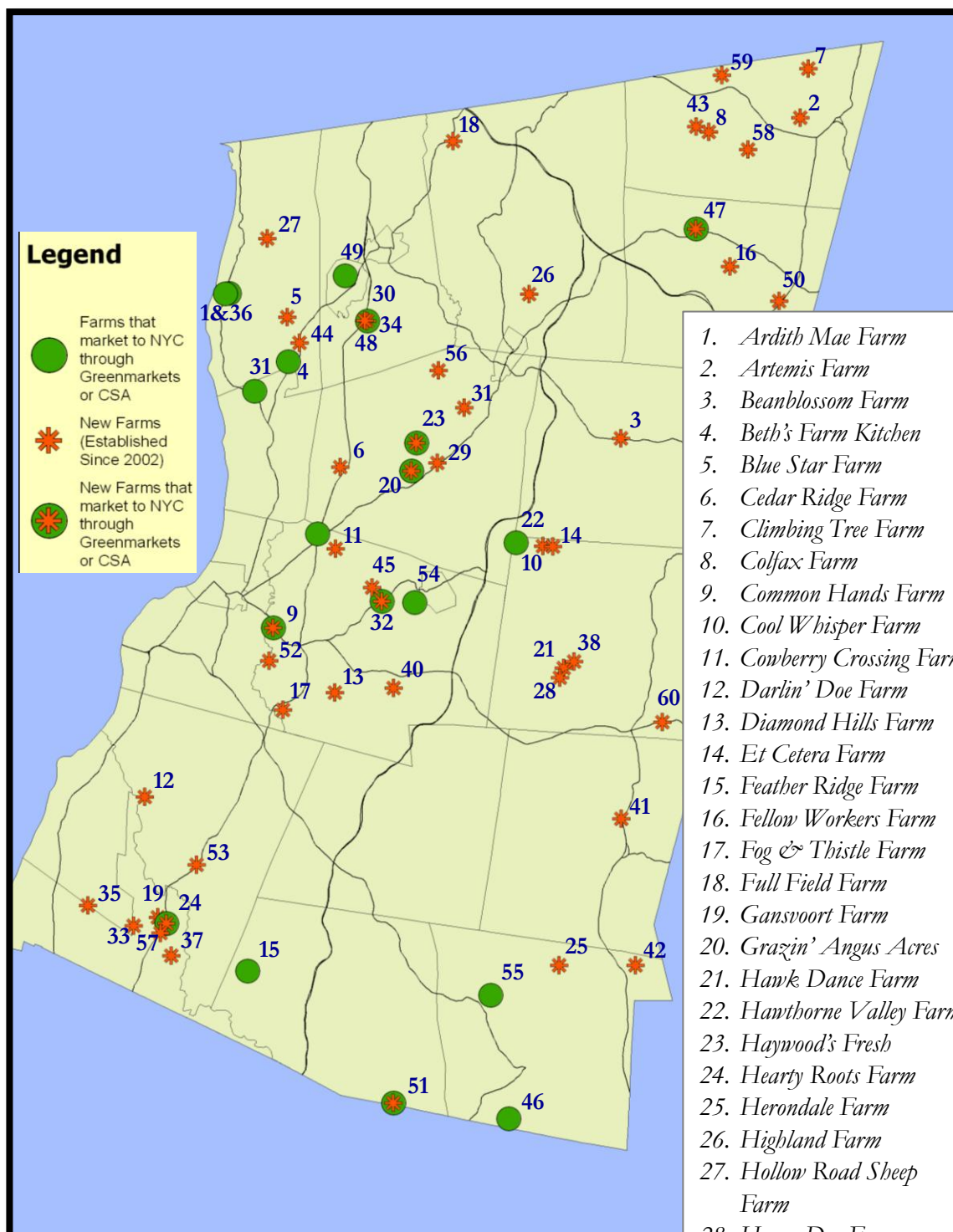
Image: Borden's Milk Wagon in NYC



From the Library of Congress: "Work Horse Parade, Borden team, winner, New York", 6/13/1908.

NYC was (and is) a major consumer of NYC agricultural products. The development of a railroad system in the 19th century made it possible for perishable products to be quickly transported from Columbia County farms to City markets for delivery by wagons such as this. There were seven Borden milk plants in Columbia County, including a successful one in Copake that continued to bottle milk for direct delivery to consumers long after most plants had centralized this process. But NYC was home not only to human mouths but to horses too. Columbia County fueled NYC horsepower through the production of hay for feed and rye straw for bedding. Consequently the City's shift from horsepower to other forms of transport, early in the 20th century, contributed to a huge shift in land use in the County; hay and rye fields gave way to dairy farms.

Map: Columbia County Farms and NYC



- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Ardith Mae Farm | 31. Kinderhook Farm |
| 2. Artemis Farm | 32. Lineage Farm |
| 3. Beanblossom Farm | 33. Loose Caboose Farm |
| 4. Beth's Farm Kitchen | 34. Lover's Leap Farm |
| 5. Blue Star Farm | 35. Marsh Meadow Farm |
| 6. Cedar Ridge Farm | 36. Monksbush Nursery |
| 7. Climbing Tree Farm | 37. Neverdun Farm |
| 8. Colfax Farm | 38. New Leaf Farm |
| 9. Common Hands Farm | 39. Nine-Jay Nurseries |
| 10. Cool Whisper Farm | 40. Oakwood Farm |
| 11. Cowberry Crossing Farm | 41. Pigasso Farms |
| 12. Darlin' Doe Farm | 42. R'Eisen Shine Farm |
| 13. Diamond Hills Farm | 43. Raven & Boar |
| 14. Et Cetera Farm | 44. Red Oak Farm |
| 15. Feather Ridge Farm | 45. Rocky Fresh Farm |
| 16. Fellow Workers Farm | 46. Ronnybrook Farm |
| 17. Fog & Thistle Farm | 47. Row by Row Farm |
| 18. Full Field Farm | 48. Roxbury Farm |
| 19. Gansvoort Farm | 49. Samascott Orchards |
| 20. Grazi'n' Angus Acres | 50. Shady Acres Farm |
| 21. Hawk Dance Farm | 51. Silver Petals Farm |
| 22. Hawthorne Valley Farm | 52. Smyler's Farm |
| 23. Haywood's Fresh | 53. Sparrowbush Farm |
| 24. Hearty Roots Farm | 54. The Farm at Miller's Crossing |
| 25. Herondale Farm | 55. Thompson Finch Farm |
| 26. Highland Farm | 56. Tickety Boo Farm |
| 27. Hollow Road Sheep Farm | 57. Tousey Winery |
| 28. Honey Dog Farm | 58. Trusted Roots Farm |
| 29. Hudson-Chatbam Winery | 59. Uprising Farm |
| 30. Katchkie Farm | 60. Yonderview Farm |

Despite the rise of a globalized food system based on the long-distance transportation of food, the local flow of food we have depicted in the 19th century is again very much part of our present. As illustrated by this map, many of the County's farms have begun to directly supply NYC markets, thanks in large part to the development of a local food movement in urban centers like NYC. City residents passing time in the County are also major in-County consumers of local produce. Green markets and CSAs have given County farmers opportunities not only to sell their product but also to interact personally with their customers, an important foundation of the local food movement. Interest in local food has not only shaped existing farms but presented opportunities for new farms, many started by farmers with roots in urban areas like NYC. Although NYC-based interest in County real estate has meant land prices that are often challenging to start-up farmers, NYC has also provided the markets that, together with Columbia County's semi-rural landscape, make farming in the County attractive.

Station 3: Flow of Perspectives on the Land

Through its influence on agriculture (and manufacturing), NYC has had a direct effect on the Columbia County landscape. However, it has also influenced land aesthetics. When they have the means, humans shape their surroundings according to their beliefs of what constitutes a beautiful, comfortable and/or appropriate landscape. Those tastes can have major implications for the ecology of the landscape.

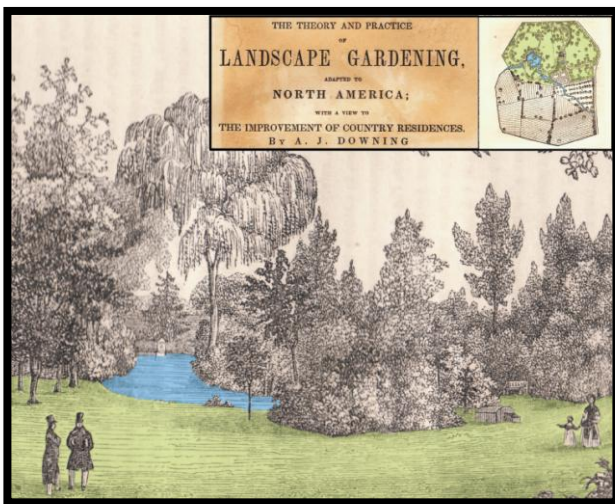
Object: St. Paul's Chapel of Trinity Church, NYC



Paper model of St. Paul's Chapel.

As showcases and as hubs of architectural activity, major cities, such as NYC (and especially Philadelphia and Boston), have played central roles in establishing architectural fashion. Completed in 1766, St. Paul's Chapel exhibits the Greek/Roman details that late 18th century British architects were beginning to champion. This approach evolved into the Federalist and later Greek Revival forms of architecture; the latter is widely displayed in the houses of Columbia County. As a trend setter, urban building design helped establish the patterns that rural builders emulated.

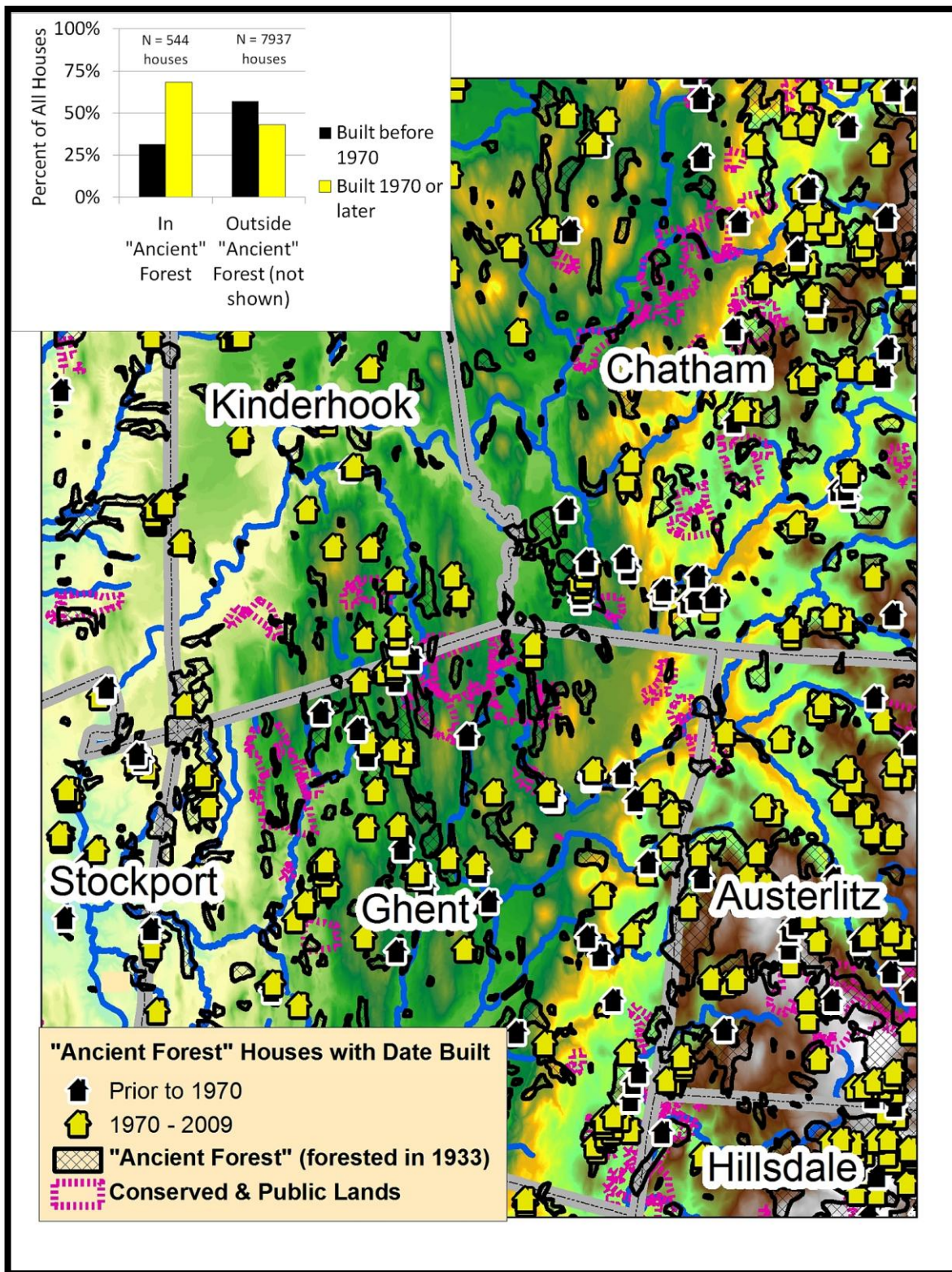
Image: Montage from Downing's Treatise on Landscape Gardening



A montage created from Andrew Jackson Downing's influential book, Treatise on Landscape Gardening, 1844 (colors added)

If the connections we're making between Columbia County and NYC regarding early building architecture are a bit 'stretched', those between the County and NYC regarding 19th century landscape architecture were anything but. Andrew Jackson Downing, of NYC, is considered the founder of Landscape Architecture in the United States. Together with his partner, Calvert Vaux, he was one of the initial forces behind Central Park. Upon Downing's early death, Frederick Law Olmsted took over Downing's role in the project. Downing's conceptions and formalization of rural beauty, echoing and influencing the aesthetic of the contemporaneous Hudson River School of painting, continue to have major influences on the landscaping and hence on the land ecology of rural properties such as those in Columbia County. He advocated wide lawns, park-like tree arrangements, and the incorporation (and manipulation) of ponds and streams.

Map: Ancient Forests and Modern Houses

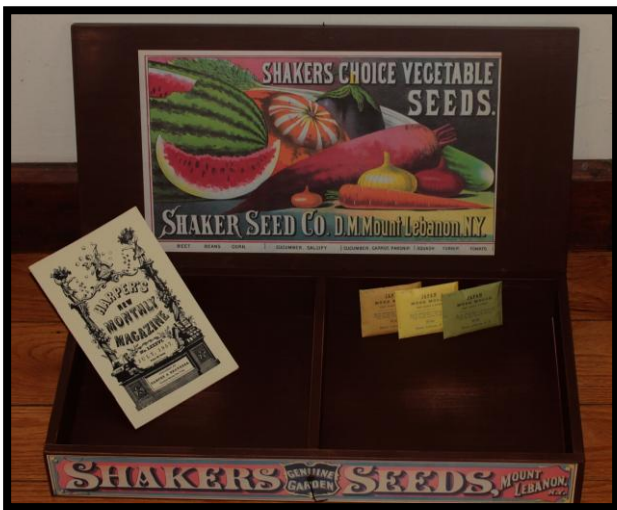


Design tastes apply not only to the styling of house and property but also to its location. At the same time, location has also influenced patterns of human use for farming and forestry. As a result, the relatively modern interest in, and ability to consummate, the construction of houses on ridge tops and other points with striking vistas has interacted with land use history to produce modern ecological impacts. Today, as the map illustrates, many high land houses are in what we call 'ancient' forests – long-forested lands which are ecologically unique because of their long, continuous freedom from cultivation. A disproportionate number of new houses are thus impacting increasingly unusual ecological habitats. Many of these houses often reflect the site choices of NYC-based home owners. At the same time, the map also illustrates part of the County's growing body of conserved lands. NYC funding has been crucial to the success of conservation organizations such as the Columbia Land Conservancy, that have made major contributions to maintaining valuable ecological lands in the County.

Station 4: Flow of People and Culture

Perhaps no connection between NYC and Columbia County is more obvious than the flow of people, and with them, the cultural contributions that have often been inspired by the County's natural and agricultural landscape. New York City residents have moved north to Columbia County to settle, visit, and establish country residences for hundreds of years, and County residents have in turn exerted influence on the City and greater society.

Object: Shaker Seed Box and Harper's Article



This replica of a Shaker seed box is courtesy of the Mt. Lebanon Shaker Museum. The reprinted article is from the Harper's New Monthly Magazine, 1857

The Shakers arrived in NYC in the second half of the 18th century, and soon made their way up the Hudson Valley. They eventually chose New Lebanon as the site of the first Shaker village, where they sought to realize their spiritual and communal ideals in agrarian village life. This produced many social, cultural and industrial innovations that were valued by the larger society. The Shaker seed box is an example of an early innovation – packaging and selling garden seeds – that made gardening and farming far more accessible to people on small, even urban, plots of land. The Shakers' way of life also attracted many people from NYC as tourists, writers and solace-seekers. The 1857 Harper's New Monthly Magazine article is an example of the kind of popular NYC press that the New Lebanon Shakers received. In particular, it illustrates how their communal, agrarian way of life was romanticized as an appealing alternative to the industrializing and urbanizing 19th century landscape.

Image: Hudson River School Painting

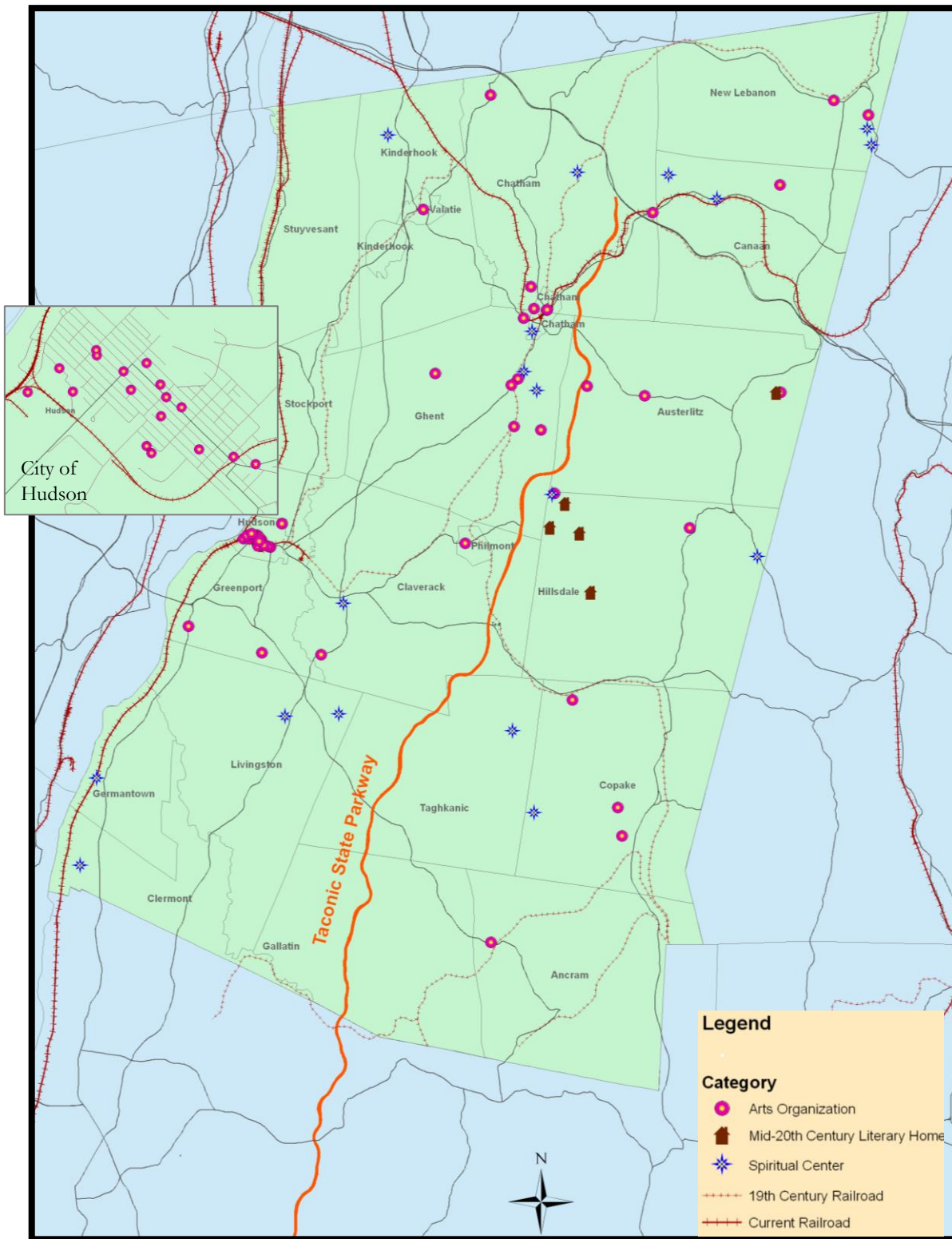
Columbia County's natural landscape itself became a huge draw for NYC artists seeking a more authentic, emotional connection with Nature as part of the Hudson River School art movement in the mid-19th century. One of the most famous of these painters, Frederic Church, settled in Columbia County and created his home – Olana – as a work of art emulating many of the landscape design elements pioneered by Downing and epitomized in Central Park. The image is a painting by Church looking out over Olana towards the Hudson River. The framing of views like this helped to define a nature aesthetic that continues to draw people from NYC to the Hudson Valley to experience its natural beauty and scenic views. It also helped to seed the idea that beautiful natural areas are worthy of protection for future generations. Early conservation battles that were won in the Hudson Valley, in large part because of the influence of the Hudson River School artists, reverberated around the Country and have resulted in the types of environmental laws and values we have in place today.



Frederic E. Church, "The Hudson Valley in Winter from Olana", c. 1871-72, Collection Olana State Historic Site, OL.1981.14

Map: 20th Century Arts and Spiritual Organizations

Please contact us if you are interested in receiving an electronic version of this map with the sites labeled.



The 20th century has seen the continuation of earlier artistic impulses. A literary scene flourished in the County in the mid-20th century, with NYC-based writers such as John Cowper Powys and Edna St. Vincent Millay settling onto pieces of land rich in natural beauty and agricultural heritage, landscapes that were then reflected in their writings. During this time, people traveled between the City and the County in large numbers on the many passenger trains that traveled between Columbia County railroad stations and Grand Central. This ease of accessibility continued with the construction of Route 22 and then the Taconic State Parkway. Today, we have an abundance of artistic, spiritual and cultural organizations that reflect the continued appeal of Columbia County to City-dwellers, and the on-going cultural contributions that have been inspired by this place and landscape, often in juxtaposition to the City.

Station 5: Our Work

The flows illustrated above have had an influence on and have been influenced by Columbia County's cultural and ecological landscapes. Much of our work focuses on exploring those landscapes and communicating our understandings of their dynamics. Because of NYC's major role, our work has included trying to research and share information on the varied landscape influences of the flows of nature, agriculture, ideas, and people linked with the City.

Object: Insect Box



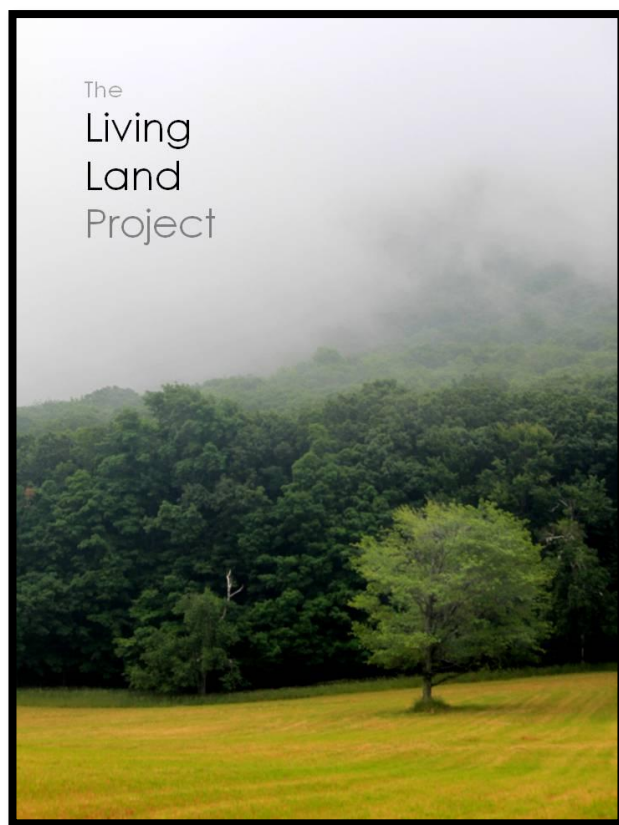
Our insect boxes harbor species which are ecological indicators and purveyors of agricultural services.

The flows we have discussed have affected the habitats available to native species in Columbia County (and much of the rest of the Hudson Valley). Some of those species, in turn, provide valuable services to farms, acting as pollinators and bio-control agents. The following is thus a key question: how do our alterations of the farmscape change the ability of these wild species to assist farming? Our evolving work with agroecology delves into both the role of farms (strongly influenced by NYC markets) in creating habitats for native species and the role of nature (influenced by the array of flows mentioned) in supporting local farming. How can we, through research and outreach, help make evident the inter-connectedness of produce stalls at NYC Green Markets and the attitudes we all hold towards our footprints on the land?

Image: The Living Land Project

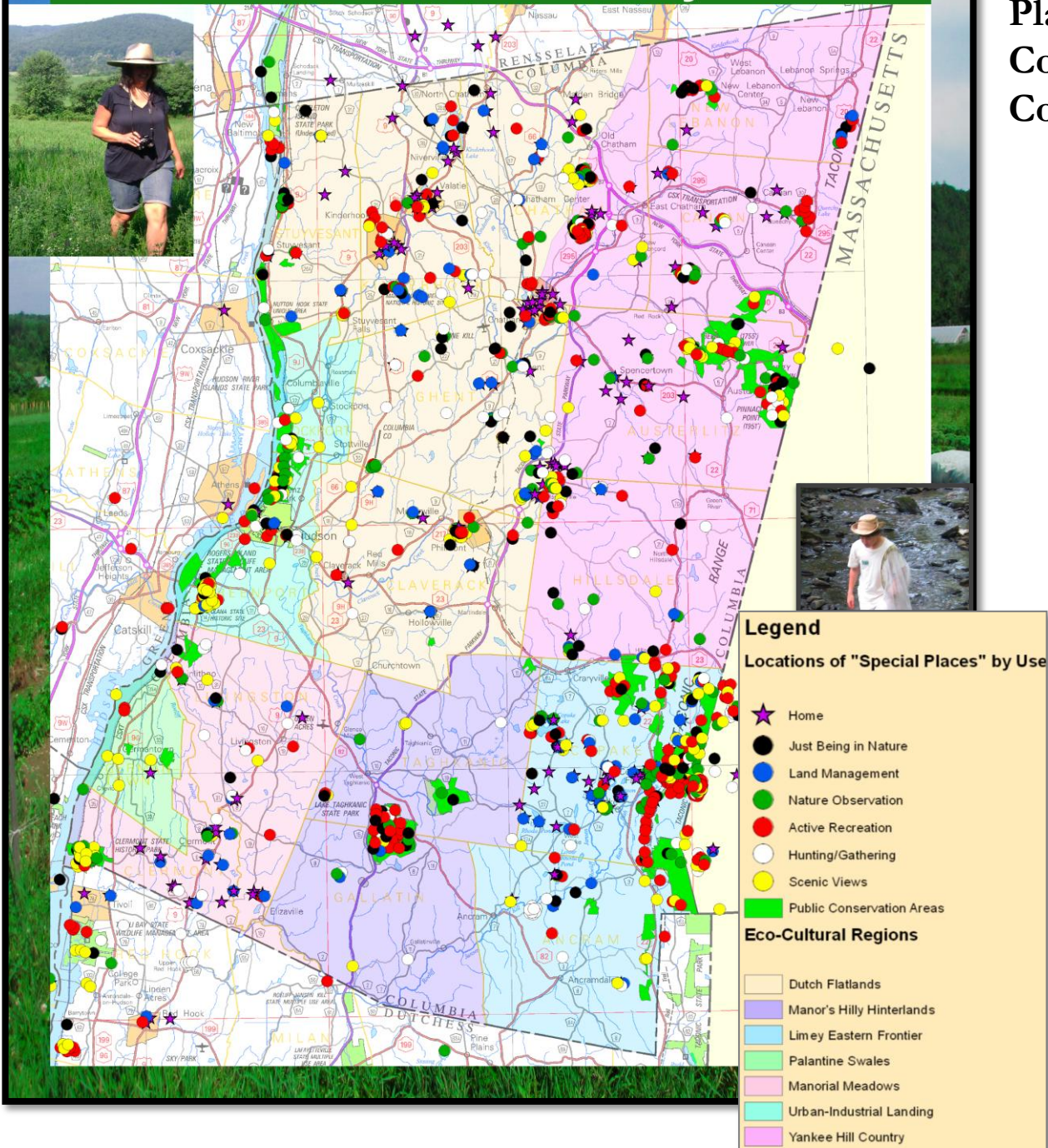
A key goal of our work is learning about and sharing information on the present-day cultural and ecological landscape and the historical forces that may have created on-going currents of change. Our Living Land Project is a multi-year effort to describe the County's ecological variety (through a field guide to habitats), while also helping neighbor meet neighbor by including information on the cultural significance of these habitats.

Based on differences in topography, geology, settlement history, and resulting land use, we have tentatively delimited several so-called eco-cultural regions within the County (see the background of the map on next page). The research for the Living Land Project is designed to help us refine this concept by, for example, letting us document which habitats and associated species might be unique to particular regions.



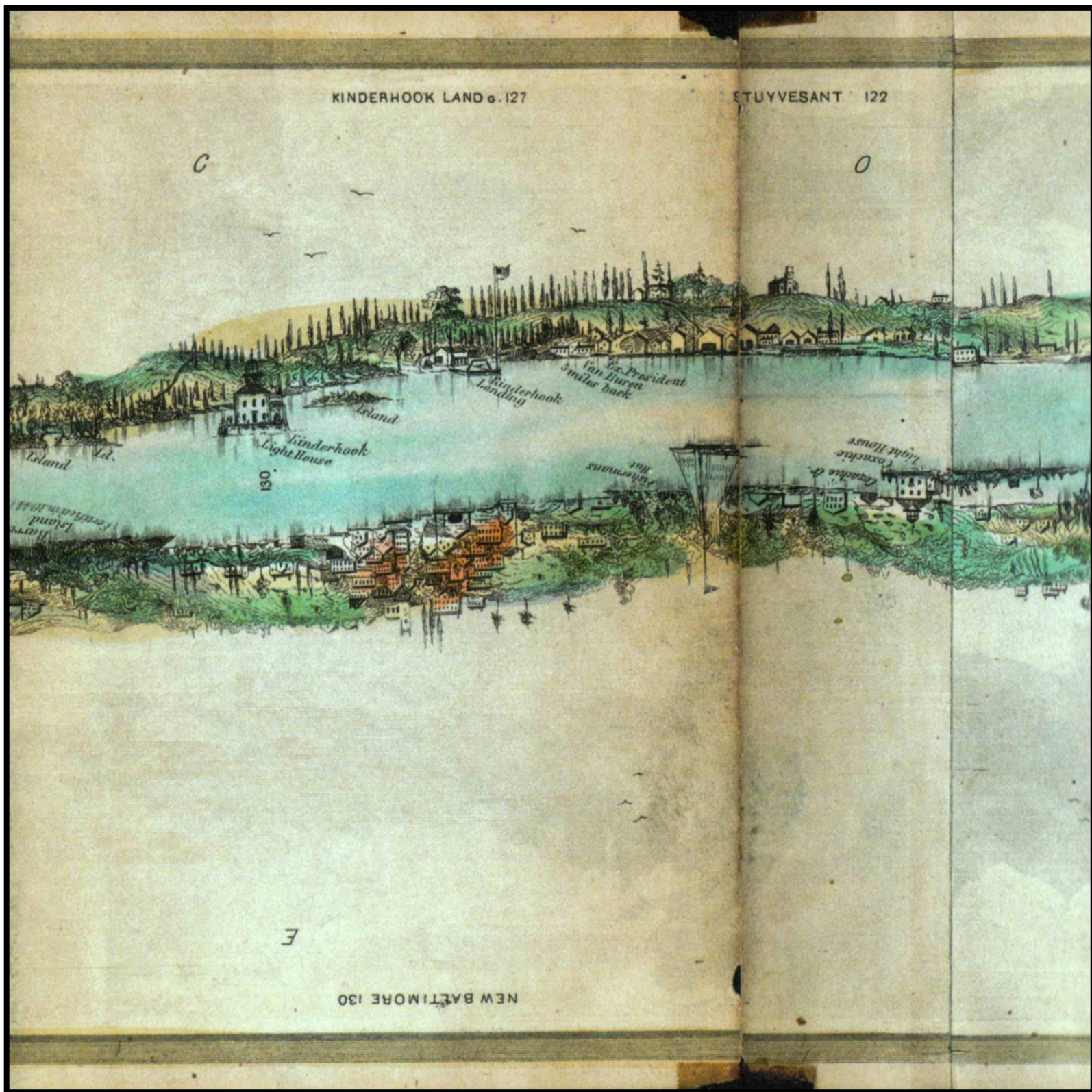
A Map of People's "Special Places" in Columbia County

Map: People's "Special Places" in Columbia County



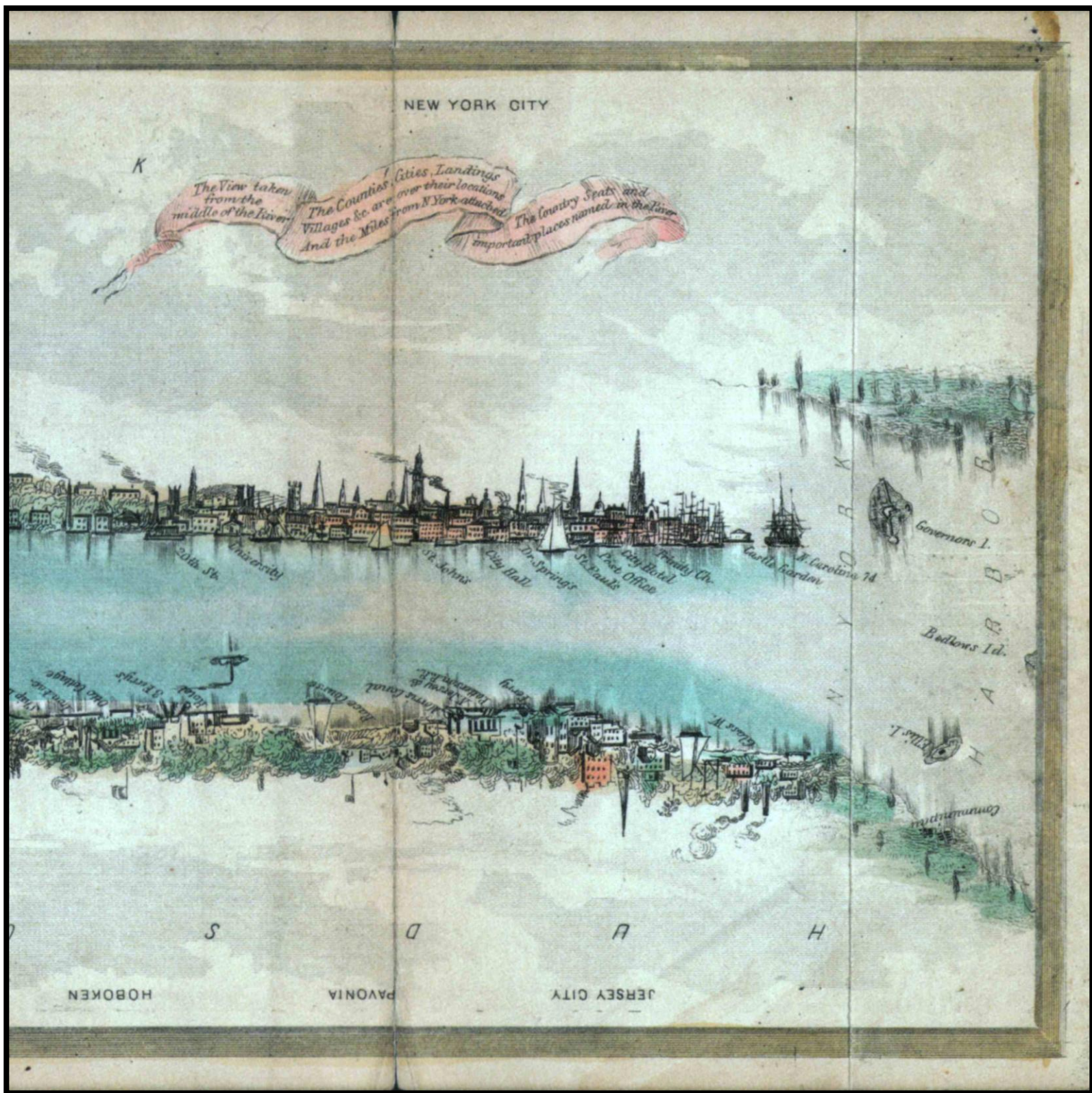
Just as there are ecologically special places throughout the County, there are also places of special importance to people. Sometimes these are closely related to the ecology, and other times there are more cultural factors – the distance from home, or a family's heritage – that determine where these places are and why they are important. The Living Land Project is attempting to look at both the ecological and cultural aspects of our landscape, so that we might better understand the land and each other. This map depicts a snapshot view of our community mapping project in which people were invited to map their favorite outdoor places and indicate why each place was visited. The data in the map are based on responses from nearly 250 people at five different public events where we conducted this participatory mapping. Our map will continue to evolve as we involve more people at more locations throughout the County.

What future do you see...



Columbia County Excerpt of *Panorama of the Hudson River*, 1845 by William Wade & William Croome

...for Columbia County/NYC interactions?



New York City Excerpt of *Panorama of the Hudson River*,
1845 by William Wade & William Croome