



WALKWAY OVER THE HUDSON

FAIR DUTCHESS

Poughkeepsie, Hyde Park, and Pleasant Valley

By **Lindsay Pietroluongo**
Photographs by David Morris Cunningham

Long-time dwellers of Poughkeepsie, Hyde Park, and Pleasant Valley sometimes lose sight of just how exceptional, inspiring, and revered these towns can be. When you drive by the same colleges, restaurants, theaters, and parks day after day, it's easy to brush them off as uninteresting and trivial. In truth, though, our Hudson Valley is brimming with so much culture and wisdom.

Poughkeepsie

Vassar College is possibly the Hudson Valley's most respected school. Highly esteemed throughout the nation, Vassar's admissions is extremely selective and the 1,000-acre campus is picturesque. Started in 1865 by Matthew Vassar as a Great Experiment to see if higher education for women would actually flourish, the college has seemed to exceed its goal. Today, Vassar is coeducational and breeds independent thinkers, pioneers and students who defy convention.

Around the corner from the college is the Zagat-rated Babycakes Café, a restaurant-bar-coffee-shop-bakery that has a little bit of everything, including live entertainment, beer flights, and seasonal wine lists. Owner Susan Wysocki also caters weddings and holiday parties throughout the year at local spots, like Locust Grove and Vassar's Alumni House. Nearby, Twisted Soul Food Concepts sells



VANDERBILT MANSION IN HYDE PARK



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
FIREFIGHTERS MIKE OLHEISER AND TOM MURPHY
OF THE PLEASANT VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT;
BEEHIVE SCULPTURE ON MAIN STREET, POUGHKEEPSIE;
JENNY CORONEL AT THE MID-HUDSON HERITAGE CENTER;
DON GODDARD AT HYDE PARK ANTIQUES;
MARINA JOHNSTON AND KATIE MULLINS
AT PAST N PERFECT;
SUSAN WYSOCKI AT BABY CAKES





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
EMPIRE CRUISE LINES DINNER AND SIGHTSEEING CRUISES;
LONNIE CONNERS FISHING THE WAPPINGERS CREEK;
DAWN RESMESBURGER, DOT CHENEVERT, AND KIM SPEWAK AT GREEN OAK FLORIST;
MILL SITE MUSEUM PARK;
THE ARTIST'S PALATE

house made international street food for less than \$10 a plate.

The Italianate-style Samuel B. Morse Estate, part of Locust Grove, was designed in 1850 for the artist and inventor. After the Young family bought the mansion in 1900, their daughter established the foundation that still preserves the estate today. In 1979, the mansion-turned-museum was opened to the public. Visitors can browse the 15,000-piece collection of paintings, decorations and furniture from the beginning of the 20th century.

The Bardavon hosts entertainment ranging from live bands and the Hudson Valley Philharmonic to classic movie nights during the winter. The Chance Theater is Poughkeepsie's go-to live music joint, featuring both huge names in the music world and small, local performers who are just starting out.

Main Street in Poughkeepsie is a hub of eateries, bars and lounges. Brasserie, a chic Parisian-style restaurant, is about one block from Alex's Diner, which isn't your typical greasy spoon. Alex's is small and charming, and thrives thanks largely to City of Poughkeepsie businesspeople. The Out Bar, the area's newest and hottest LGBT venue, is next door to Karma Lounge, home of the area's most imaginative cocktails. The Derby, which dates back 80 years, was revitalized in 2008 and business has been booming ever since. Lumped together down by the waterfront are Akari Sushi, a modern Japanese restaurant; Amici's Restaurant, famous for its enormous pizza slices; Mahoney's Irish Pub and Restaurant; and River Station Restaurant, a favorite of Marist students.

After opening Waryas Park's concession stand on July 4th, the Ice House was established in the same location. "We are a beautiful new restaurant in a renovated building that has been vacant for years," Front of the House Manager Michael Van Houten says. "We have done almost \$1 million in renovations and the decor is breathtaking. The view—it doesn't get much better." Patrons look out on the Hudson River, the Mid-Hudson Bridge and the Walkway Over the Hudson from the outdoor patio, indoor dining room, and bar area.

The Walkway Over the Hudson, which preserved the late 1800s railroad bridge connecting Poughkeepsie to Highland, is one of the town's favorite settings for both leisure and activity. Runners, bikers, and dog walkers enjoy the world's longest elevated pedestrian bridge year-round.





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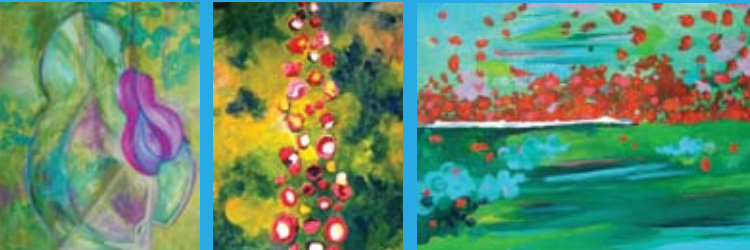
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From Left: *SWOLLEN*, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 24 X 18 IN., *A BURST FROM THE MOSSY HAZE*, ACRYLIC, SAND AND JAPANESE TISSUE PAPER ON CANVAS, 24 X 20 IN., *CANTERBURY ROSES*, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 18 X 24 IN.

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LOCAL NOTABLE Carole Wolf



The first thing that Carole Wolf, founding executive director, says about Mill Street Loft is, "We change lives through the arts." If there was a stronger statement in the English language, it would be used here. The Mill Street Loft does such an incredible amount for the local arts community it's staggering, especially considering the fact that they're a nonprofit organization.

Back in 1981, Wolf started the Mill Street Loft as a grassroots organization in the City of Poughkeepsie, on the fourth floor of an old factory building, when she and several artists used the space as a studio. It was a different community—a different world—back then. There wasn't much technology for the arts and computer graphic design hadn't been developed yet. To help pay for studio costs, the artists decided to start a summer camp for children. That tiny little program that had 19 members at first has since grown in the four campus-wide Dutchess Arts Camp. "It's all about fostering self expression," Wolf says. Teaching multiple arts with a visual arts focus, kids work in studios with professional artists to learn different mediums, dance, music, and drama.

At Mill Street Loft, the arts are used to address issues related to gender, poverty, aging, education and soft skills for work and life. "Social justice is what we use the arts for," Wolf explains. "Remember, art is the universal language." While programs are open to the public, they're specifically geared toward low-income families and at-risk youth. By trying to offer what many schools can't, preparatory classes get future college students ready for intense art courses. Thanks to this, many students start as freshman in undergraduate school already ahead of the curve.

Intergenerational programs help the wisdom of age to meet the spirit of youth while bridging the gap between the two. Project Able, the summertime employment training program, teaches high school students to break barriers, prepares them to find a job and helps them to eventually become what they dream of. While they learn, they earn a minimum wage. Youth outreach programs, like Girls Empowerment, are entirely dependent on grants, donations, and fundraising. The Art Institute brings 40 colleges together with representatives who view and assess portfolios. This specific program has helped students to earn more than \$27 million in merit-based scholarships through the years.

"I see a whole new generation coming up," Wolf says. She innately understands something that most people fail to notice: the Hudson Valley is ripe with talent. "I never knew the Mill Street Loft was going to grow into what it is today." The organization is still growing, too, as they continue to work with whole communities. "We're trying to fill community needs that aren't being filled instead of duplicating what's already being done." Relying on the old adage to make new friends but keep the old, Wolf's team continues to foster relationships with current associates while staying on top of trends and always being open to progress.

Millstreetloft.org

Poughkeepsie residents have St. Francis Hospital and Heart Center nearby, as well as Vassar Brothers Medical Center, which has been around since 1887. Poughkeepsie Day School teaches young minds from pre-K to senior year, with attention paid to global awareness. Graduates are creative and resourceful thinkers and learners who value their community. Heading to Hyde Park from Poughkeepsie, Marist College is one of the last things you'll pass. The school's scenic backdrop is the setting for NCAA Division 1 athletics and a sought-after fashion program.

Hyde Park

The Hyde Park Antiques Center is the weekend shopper's best resource for everything vintage. "It's a community of history buffs, design enthusiasts and avid collectors," Meagan Camp, owner of Telesca home decor, says. "I find myself constantly inspired by my fellow dealers and their wealth of knowledge, be it on a style of furniture, a type of pottery or a genre of dress." Set up as a sort of maze, the center has space for 50 dealers. You can find everything from glassware and fine china to original paintings and books.

The Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site includes Springwood, FDR's beloved home; the Presidential Library, operated by the National Archives; a museum; and grounds with blossoming gardens and rugged trails. Across the street is the 1949 Hyde Park Drive-in Theater, one of the last of its kind in the US. For less than the cost of one ticket at most indoor theaters, you can see two movies. With a capacity for 670 cars, movie lovers can watch the latest releases on an 82-foot-wide screen as the sun goes down. Stick around during intermission between the films—the same footage that was played during the '50s still lights up the big screen.

The Eveready Diner is a nod to the great American diners of the past and has been featured on Food Network. The Hyde Park Brewery produces eight original beers on premises. Regulars can purchase their own pint glass, have it etched with their nickname and keep it safely behind the bar to be used when they come in. 2 Taste Food and Wine Bar's primary goals are to prepare fresh food and perfectly match it with exceptional wines.

The Culinary Institute of America is one of Hyde Park's greatest achievements. World renowned chefs teach future food and hospitality professionals on the petite, breathtaking campus. Viewable teaching kitchens, top-notch cooking classes for the public, three formal restaurants and the bakery-cafe draws visitors from all over the world. Over the summer and winter, when students have short breaks from their intense schedules, popular cooking shows often film on location. In July, the French Escoffier Restaurant closed its doors, and is currently undergoing a \$3 million renovation by interior design maven Adam Tihany, to be reopened as a sleek, modern brasserie, Bocuse Restaurant (named after celebrated French chef Paul Bocuse) early next year. Until then, the American Bounty Restaurant, the Ristorante Caterina de Medici, St. Andrews Café, and the Apple Pie Bakery Café are still open almost year-round.

Pleasant Valley

Dermasave Labs specializes in Bio-identical Hormone Replacement for both men and women. Owner Glen Arpino started the company after his wife encountered severe complications while giving birth. Seeing how well she responded to hormone treatments, Arpino wanted to offer these life-saving services to the public. Next, Arpino and his wife launched Hudson Valley Skin Care. The company reaches out to local businesses to use their ingredients in their line of natural products. "The products are freshly made in small batches here in Pleasant Valley," Arpino says. "So far, the response to these products has been amazing."

The Past 'n' Perfect ladies consignment boutique has nearly-new clothing, furs and accessories for consumers who are looking for unique steals. Carrying both vintage and modern pieces, the shop has a collection of designer labels, including Armani, Chanel, Coach, Ralph Lauren, and Prada. For a bit more selection, the Pleasant Valley Department Store carries clothing for men, women, and children; footwear; accessories; sporting goods; toys; and gifts. As one of the last small, independently owned department stores in New York, it's quaint and not a bit overwhelming.

Foodies can dip into Ana Marie Organic Farms Olive Oil, which has been producing extra virgin olive oil on their family-owned farm since the early




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1500s. Instead of spraying crops with chemicals, soil is naturally free of weeds and insects thanks to sheep grazing. At Quattro's Game Farm and Farm Store, part of the Hudson Valley Bounty, epicures can pick up chickens, pheasants, ducks, geese, turkeys, and venison. Smoked meats and a variety of eggs are also available. Hudson Valley Bounty believes that buying local products is beneficial for both helping and preserving the environment.

Bike riders who love to unhurriedly roll down lovely paths—or those who want to race up hill against fellow enthusiasts—should pay a visit to the PV Bicycle Shop. Every bike is professionally assembled and ready to ride out of the store. Whether you're still a little shaky behind the handlebars or you're a bike aficionado, the staff at the Bicycle Shop will help with everything from first-time bike buying to repairs.

James Baird State Park is a serene destination with generous picnic areas, pavilions, sports complex, playground, nature center and wooded hiking, cross country skiing and snowshoeing trails. The 590-acre park includes a golf course circa the 1940s that was designed by the distinguished golf architect Robert Trent Jones.

Each town, centuries-old attraction, and business owner begs locals to look within their own suburbs. With so much to do, see, eat, hear, and buy, the community should catch on to what out-of-towners already know: Poughkeepsie, Hyde Park, and Pleasant Valley are overflowing with good taste. ①

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