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IS IT REALLY SEPTEMBER?

I'm in disbelief! September is officially here and I just cannot believe it. How are we three quarters through the year already, and how are the kids starting school already? Come on, I know I'm not the only one who's thinking it! It feels like 2025 just started and yet, here we are. *sigh*

I do love September though. To me, it is quite literally the perfect month, or has been in years past. The weather is normally in the 60s to the low 80s with minimal to no humidity (here's hoping), while the sun doesn't beat down on us and make my skin feel like it's burning. Meanwhile the nights are cool. It's just the perfect weather for camp fires and cozy nights. And soon enough it'll be apple-picking season, and who doesn't love that? Hitting up some of the local farms with the family, picking apples, eating apple cider donuts, and drinking some fresh cider – it's just so fun.

I also love to ride my horses in September. The weather enhances the experience, because it's not uncomfortably hot and sticky. Also, with the lower temps are fewer flies, and that makes the whole riding experience so much more enjoyable for both rider and horse.

Just as I'm a bit all over the place here, talking about things I love in September, this issue has articles that run the gamut of content. Our writers have been all over, and there's so much going on this month. The content you'll see on the following pages certainly follows that, and we hope that you find something to pique your interest here. I also want to remind you to check out our website for daily stories, as well as our social media accounts. Our posts and content cover a wide spectrum because they echo our communities: there's so much going on all over the tri-state, and we love to learn all about and share everything that catches our attention. If you ever have story suggestions for us, we're always happy to hear from you!

Speaking of listening, our podcast, Main Street Moxie, released a new episode last month, and we'll be dropping one more this month. Be sure to keep an eye out for those. You can listen anywhere you listen to podcasts. That's right, we're on all of the main podcast platforms. And if you're not familiar with our podcast, we talk to folks about their moxie and the things that drive them, while giving advice to our listeners on how they can cultivate their own moxie. Much like our magazine, it's all positive and helpful. So find us anywhere and everywhere and give us a shout!

– Thorunn Kristjansdottir



SEPTEMBER 2025

Well folks, this has officially become our most expensive and dangerous cover! Olivia had a little mishap to capture this beautiful shot and ended up in the ER. After two more trips to the doctor and an ortho appointment, she's on the road to recovery. We hope that Olivia thinks it was worth it because we love the cover and hope you do too! Happy September.

Photo by
Olivia Valentine

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ART IS A LIFE FORCE

- HILARY COOPER

By Leora Armstrong
info@mainstreetmag.com

It was a warm afternoon when I had a wonderful conversation with Hilary Cooper, a portrait artist who works across multiple mediums – painting, watercolor, and clay. Drawing together likenesses of people, each of her subjects carries a unique narrative.

As we walked around some sculpted heads in progress, I watched how they seemed to converse with one another – quietly keeping an eye on each other as they emerged from Cooper's hands. It is an intimate practice: looking closely, talking about life, and, through that exchange, finding a person's smile, their gaze, their character – gathering threads and weaving them together.

Her work is filled with muted colors, impressionistic strokes, and expressive marks that allow the material itself to speak. There's a quiet joy in preserving the image of a loved one – held forever on a wall, a constant presence in our thoughts.

You studied art, what first inspired you to pursue a career as a painter?

I discovered early on that I had a knack for art. I was a foreign service brat – my father worked as a diplomat – so we lived all over the world. I especially remember our time in Karachi before we were evacuated from Pakistan to London.

Both my parents came from very modest backgrounds. My father was a Kansas farm boy, and my mother grew up in Brooklyn. Her parents were immigrants who came to the

US from Greece. In her day, public high school education was excellent, and she went on to Barnard and later Oxford and London School of Economics. She always believed deeply in the value of education. So, when we landed in London, I began attending a local school in North London, in St. John's Wood.

My mother was unimpressed with the school I was attending – it was dreadful – and she tried to persuade the embassy to move us to a better school district. When they wouldn't, she opted to send me to a boarding school, which I absolutely loved.

Living in London during the school breaks and having access to all that art on our doorstep was amazing. I was constantly at the National Portrait Gallery, fascinated by faces. Later, I also studied at Goldsmiths College for a semester.

As a foreign service kid, you're always watching people – trying to read them, make friends quickly, adapt. You become attuned to faces, to expressions. I think that made me deeply curious about how an artist captures a likeness. That curiosity drew me into portraiture. It turned out I had a real feel for it, and I knew from early on that I wanted to be a portrait painter. That said, I was a bit hopeless in traditional art classes – coming up with something from scratch didn't come easily to me. But I was good at rendering what I saw. That's where I found my strength.

We didn't have much money, so

when I graduated from college, I felt a real sense of financial insecurity. I kept asking myself: What kind of job could I take that would allow me to support my artistic pursuits? Where could I live that would make that possible?

New York was the only place that made sense; it felt, to me, like the only truly non-provincial town in America at the time. I had a choice: I could wait tables, or, on the advice of a friend, I began interviewing at banks and eventually became a banker. I went through the credit-training program at NatWest USA and NCNB National Bank of North Carolina, which would become Bank of America. It was like getting paid to get an MBA. But during that time, I never let go of art. I studied at both National Academy and The Art Students League during evenings and weekends. I was a banker by day and an art student by night.

It wasn't until I got married that I felt the security to study art full-time. That's when I really started putting miles on a paintbrush and working regularly with models. In the mornings, I'd work in studios with indoor light; in the afternoons, I'd shift to those with north-facing windows, learning to observe how natural light moved across the figure.

Later, in my thirties, I began to sculpt. My Russian sculpture teacher, Leonid Lerman, told me bluntly, "Hilary, you know nothing. You are only copying!" And he was right. He also taught me structural anatomy, adding: "In youth, structure is concealed beautifully. In old age, structure is revealed beautifully."

I loved his teaching – it was so deep and demanding. I took as many of his classes as I could. I had to create my own curriculum from scratch, which is why, even now, I sometimes feel inarticulate when I talk about my work.

I think that's a familiar feeling. People develop their own language when they talk about their work. It's important that you know what you're saying, even if you don't always say it in the way others expect. Writing down thoughts helps me process what I am working on.

Yes, Ann Truitt's *Daybook*, her journal of being an artist and living her practice, is a great one to read. But honestly, the career aspect of being an artist didn't occur to me. I really wish I'd had a mentor back then who said, "Get an MFA."

At the time, my husband and I were living just outside Sag Harbor, back when it was a much simpler place. An artist friend, Louisa Chase, who taught at RISD and was part of the art world, once told me, "An MFA helps because it allows you to build a whole social world around your work – a community."

Absolutely. It can give you a foundation to read more deeply and to write and think differently about your practice. But today there are also so many valuable online courses that can help shape that process instead of an MFA. Writing and thinking about your subject can be as revealing as the making itself.

It really can. As James Salter once said, "Nothing exists unless it's written." He was a dear friend of ours, he sat for me, and I made a bronze of him.

What was it about this area that prompted your move here?

Well, we were living in Sag Harbor and used to rent out our house every summer. I had just met Susan Rand. One day she called and said, "I would love you to do a show with me at the Norfolk Library; however, they only show people who live here, why don't you come up and visit?"



Above: 2025 Kim and Prisca Marvin in progress still in clay. Below: (L and R) *Peonies*. Oil on canvas. 30"x24". 2024. (Middle) *Peonies*. Oil on canvas. 30"x24". 2025. Opposite page, L-R: Bronze, 2016. Hilary Cooper in her studio.

So, we drove up, Chris complained the whole way, but once we got here, he loved it. We saw this house for sale, and that was it, we moved. In Sag Harbor, you have to lay rubber to get from a secondary road to a primary one; you can't park anywhere or find a parking space. Up here, you can just pull right up to where you want to go. It's so much easier.

What motivates your art practice?

Art is a life force. It's hope. It's creative energy. I live for it. My work feels like my children. I thrive on that motivation, on the practice. The repetition, the variation – it feels vital. I especially love doing portraits. Physically, we're all 99% the same, but it's that small difference – that one thing – that makes someone utterly unique.

The painter Giorgio Morandi and the sculptor Marino Marini have both been strong influencers as well as Isamu Noguchi and Alice Neel. Also, the book *The Artist's Way*, which I read when it first came out. I re-read it recently. It's still so relevant. I'd forgotten how clearly it talks about "the crazy makers" in your life.

I learned a lot about art, philosophy, and sculpture from Leonid Lerman, a Russian artist and a true genius. He was the first art teacher I really admired and respected. I complained once that I wished he'd come into my life earlier to which he replied, "when the student is ready the teacher will come."

Do you have a project you're most proud of?

In 1996, I was staying with a client whose portrait I was about to begin. But on the very first morning, I fell down the stairs and suffered a spinal injury that left me a quadriplegic. I was given the slimmest chance – a shard of hope – that I might regain some movement. Miraculously, a couple of months later my toes began to wiggle and, after intense rehab, I walked out of the hospital on my own. I am incredibly fortunate.

Emerging from that extraordinary physical and emotional experience, as my mobility returned, I knew I wanted to paint a series of portraits of people with disabilities. When I was in a wheelchair, I became hyperaware of others in wheelchairs. It struck me how often people only see the chair and not the person.

I had an epiphany while painting a New York City policewoman in uniform. Again, realizing that the viewer's attention was fixed on the uniform – it overwhelmed everything else. Appearances can blind us. So emerged my book titled *Divided Portraits: Identity and Disability*, which explored disability and how we

Continued on next page ...

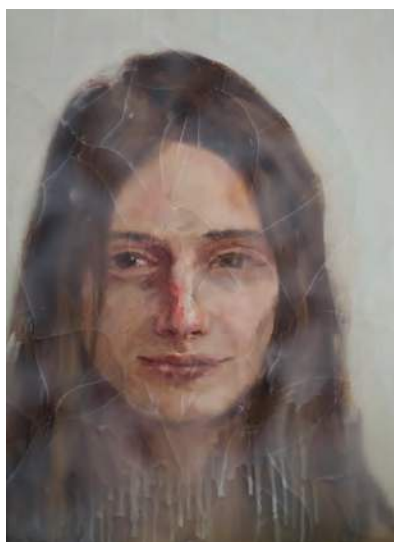




Mother and Children portrait. Oil on linen. 2007.



Watercolor portrait. 2025.



Portrait in encaustic. 1995.



Dogs always work their way into Cooper's paintings. Even the Dean of the Cathedral of St John the Divine.

perceive it. This shaped the format of the series: I created diptychs, two-part portraits, with one panel showing the person and the other showing the wheelchair separately. By removing the chair, I separated the subject from the uniform.

One of the portraits was of Jimmy Hueva, the first American to win an Olympic downhill skiing medal. I played with scale in some works, shrinking the chair in relation to the figure. Other images were inspired by the visual strategies of artists like Bonnard. It felt essential to make this work – to talk about it, to give something back.

Leafing through the book now, it's a stunning portrayal of people whose mobility has been impaired by illness or injury. Every person carries a profound narrative – each finding a new way to live. This book changes the way we see identity itself.

Are you ever nervous about working with clients?

Oh no, I'm never nervous. I'm excited to meet people. There's always a conversation throughout the session, which gives me insight. However, one of the most memorable experiences was painting Peter Matthiessen, the writer and Zen Buddhist. I had been asking him to sit for me, and he kept saying, "I can't sit still." And I said, "Well, I know that you can."

I'd been to a Zendo sitting, I knew he could sit for 45 minutes. So, I had him sit in his Roshi robes, and I couldn't believe how much I achieved in that silent time without talking. It was incredibly productive.

What also fascinates me about portraiture is how abstraction drives the process – examining light, dark, tonality, and shape. You're not thinking about the person directly. You're focused on the formal elements, the abstract shapes that make up the figure. Their personality? That comes later. It emerges on its own. Sometimes, a preconception sneaks in. I remember painting a young woman whose portrait had been commissioned by her mother. To me, she strongly resembled her father. As I was working away, and just before we were about to break, I stopped and looked at the painting – and there on the canvas was ... her mother! I was stunned. I had thought she resembled her father because she had his coloring, but through painting, something deeper came through.

That's why it's so important to clear your mind of preconceptions. I'm always excited by how, through the act of painting itself, the soul just ... appears.

Can you talk about your sculptural approach to creating a portrait? Whether it's a sculpture or a painting, do you use 360-degree images to capture detail, or do you sketch?

With sculpture, yes, you really must capture all those little nuances. It's almost as if the form reveals itself just before it disappears. You must

stay alert to this as it is seen from all angles. I tend to work fast. I paint quickly. But I make a conscious effort not to capture the likeness too soon. If I get the likeness right away, it can be constraining. It sort of stills the painting when it becomes fixed too early. So instead, I often begin with the background or the surroundings. I let the figure emerge more slowly, letting the painting breathe and unfold over time.

Have you taught or led workshops? What's the best advice you would give a new artist?

Yes, I've taught at Anderson Ranch in Colorado. I've been teaching again this summer at the Scoville Library: *Blooms and Brushwork*, a two-day, watercolor, flower-painting workshop. Last fall I taught a pet portrait drawing class. My advice to new artists, treat it like a career. Too often, art is seen as a hobby, but if you're working full-time at it, then it is your career. Own that.

You currently have a show on view at Sweet Williams Bakery. Can you talk about your flower portraits?

Those paintings began when I started house-swapping with a woman in Paris. She stayed in my New York apartment a few times, and I banked a few weeks with her, just enough to spend a month in Paris. So, I took my dog and my watercolors and went.

I had just started getting back into watercolors and bought this amazing bouquet. I began painting the flowers as if they were portraits. I imagined the vases as bodies, and the flowers as their heads, each with its own per-

sonality. Sourcing pots from antique shops and flea markets gave even more personality. I tend to paint them in a single sitting, trying to find the spirit of each flower, they really do become someone.

Watercolor is such a wonderful medium: it's fast, expressive, and slightly unpredictable. It's alive and immediate. It lends itself particularly to portraits of children, which occupy a great deal of my time these days, especially since the pandemic when I instituted FaceTime "sittings," which is a pleantry when dealing with three-year-olds! ●

If you are in the Salisbury area, pop into Sweet Williams on Main Street to see Cooper's flower portraits. They are a breath of fresh air. Cooper has worked on an enormous inventory of portraits. She is able to recognize our distinct traits and carry them onto a canvas, or into another form, where they continue to live and breathe. Some of her commissioned work includes James Salter, George Plimpton, Peter Matthiessen, Erica Jong, Ed Koch, Kimberly Rockefeller, John Roselli and Patricia Hearst Shaw, and she has been featured in numerous magazines. If you are interested in more of Cooper's work, please contact her directly through her website, hilaritycooper.com, Instagram@hilaritycooperart, or by emailing her at hilcoop@gmail.com.



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SEPTEMBER MUSTS

to eat & drink



Clocktown Brewing Company. Clocktown Brewing Company in Thomaston, CT, offers a range of craft beers in all styles, complemented by a full bar and pizza restaurant within the taproom. The brewery is located in a historic factory that was once home to the Seth Thomas Clock Company, which was founded in 1853. The factory closed in 2009, and in 2020, Clocktown Brewing Company opened its doors, giving new life to the historic space. Today, the historic building “serves as a gathering place where craft beer, great food, and friendly faces join under the same roof that once kept the world on time,” Clocktown Brewing Company writes on its website. We stopped into Clocktown Brewing Company for lunch a few weeks ago and enjoyed it immensely. The staff was incredibly friendly, the atmosphere was great – the weather was nice, so we were able to sit outside! – and the food and drinks were delicious.



TO READ

Spencertown Festival of Books. Celebrating its 20th year, the Festival of Books in Spencertown, NY, will have something for all book and bargain lovers this Labor Day weekend. Held from Friday, August 29, to Monday, September 1, this special event will be hosted at the Spencertown Academy, which is located at 790 Route 203 in Spencertown, NY. According to the Spencertown Academy's website, thousands of affordably priced books and media will be on display during the festival, as well as rare and collectible volumes, a children's collection with emphasis on diverse voices, and acclaimed writer talks. Access to the sale begins on Friday for members only, and then will be open to all visitors Saturday through Monday. Joining in on the festivities will be authors Peter Canellos, Bonnie Yochelson, Lisa Lerer and Elizabeth Dias, Chloe Caldwell, Mayukh Sen, and David Hajdu. The children's program will be held on Saturday morning, along with author talks and book signings on Saturday and Sunday afternoon.

GO EXPLORE

Sites to Celebrate: Local History Revisited at the Roeliff Jansen Historical Society. Opened on Saturday, July 12, and on display until Sunday, October 26, the Roeliff Jansen Historical Society is currently holding their summer exhibition, titled *Sites to Celebrate: Local History Revisited*. Each weekend (Saturday and Sunday) from 2pm to 4pm, visitors will be welcome to visit and explore the current displays at the rescued, restored, and repurposed Methodist Church located at 8 Miles Road in Copake Falls, NY, where the RJHS operates its historical society and museum. Having worked in collaboration with community partners, including the Copake Historic Preservation Committee, the RJHS Board of Directors, Historic Hillsdale, and the Copake Grange, the RJHS has arranged this exhibit directly in tandem with various organizations and individuals who have contributed items to the effort. Indeed, the society's president Lesley Doyel and the RJHS team explain that “the exhibition reflects a shared commitment to protecting and preserving our local heritage,” while highlighting how the spotlighted sites “have and continue to play a vital role in our community through restoration and repurposing.”



to do: hudson valley wine & food festival

For the past two decades, the Hudson Valley Wine & Food Festival has been one of New York's premier showcases for New York wineries and gourmet specialty foods. This year, the festival will be held at the Dutchess County Fairgrounds in Rhinebeck on Saturday, September 6 and Sunday, September 7. Presented by WineRacks.com, the festival has added a New York Craft Beer Pavilion, and also highlights local distilleries, hard ciders, and more. With an impressive lineup of over 300 vendors including a variety of wineries, food trucks, fine arts and crafts, and an inviting beer tent experience, the Hudson Valley Wine & Food Festival is the place to be for any foodie! View demonstrations from professional chefs and mixologists, enjoy live music, and soak up the final days of summer in the Hudson Valley. A full list of vendors and tickets for purchase are available at hudsonvalleywinefest.com.





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INDEPENDENT CABI STYLIST

Jennifer Ryan

By Christine Bates
info@mainstreetmag.com

Christine recently caught up with Lakeville, CT, resident Jennifer Ryan to discuss with her all aspects of her independent stylist business as well as to learn all about cabi.

What is cabi?

Cabi is a women's fashion brand that offers high-quality women's clothing that is on trend but not trendy; flattering, wearable, and washable; and gives women options. Our design team, made up of women, creates designs and groups them to be presented by the stylist in a way that shows the versatility of each group.

Our designers consider the challenges women face in feeling comfortable aesthetically and physically when choosing clothes and design silhouettes that can be comfortably worn by all body types, in a size range from 00-20. Our clothes are timeless and can be mixed and matched to suit a woman's lifestyle, whether your style is casual, trendy, conservative, romantic, sporty, or tailored. Cabi stays within certain color palettes that allow you to build upon your cabi wardrobe from season to season, always enhancing your prior cabi purchases. We have a simple but beautiful collection of jewelry each season that completes the look.

What is cabi's business model?

The model for our business starts with women who would like to host a party with their friends, at their home or mine, and will receive 50-65% off of their personal order based on sales. We provide beautiful marketing materials. Hostesses use a combination of email, texts, and printed invitations to invite and follow up with their friends to acquire good attendance for their party.

I arrive at their home an hour before the party time to set up all the clothing, lighting, and mirrors. My

presentation starts shortly after the party's start time and lasts about 30 minutes, then the ladies enjoy the collection up close. Try-on time is a blast. I enjoy watching all the positive reinforcement that takes place, women complimenting each other, saying "I want to try that on next" and "That's fabulous on you!"

I assist with recommendations and sizing. The clothes ship to the hostess and arrive in 7-10 days in beautiful packages. She distributes the clothes to her friends.

Additionally, I offer private appointments in my cabi boutique in my home. I provide a short overview of the clothes, help choose correct sizes, and let the client browse and enjoy. I am there to assist, but never to pressure. And I work with groups to plan cabi shopping events, fashion shows, and fashion for fundraising events.

What drew you to cabi?

After graduating from the University of Arizona, I went directly into the hotel business, which was my goal. I worked for Hyatt Hotels for ten years in food and beverage management.

I then moved into the private golf club industry as a food and beverage manager. All the while, I was also working in the talent industry, as a model and commercial actress.

Time flew. I left the golf club when my first child Rachel was born. I was excited at the opportunity to be home with her and work part time in the talent industry. My second child arrived, and long days on set and casting calls that ran hours behind left me feeling unfulfilled.

Our family lived in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, in the summers and Scottsdale, Arizona, the rest of the year, so



Above: Jennifer Ryan wears the faux fur leopard coat that's part of the cabi fall collection.

Right: For every season, cabi publishes a full color reference guide to the collection sorted by style, type of clothing, and how various pieces look on women of different sizes.

All photos courtesy of Jennifer Ryan.

Continued on next page ...

I wanted a business that was flexible and a schedule that I could control. That summer I was invited to a cabi party. The experience was amazing, and I could see the value of an evening with ladies shopping, drinking wine, and learning about the latest fashions from a knowledgeable stylist who would then assist us in putting together outfits and wardrobes that gave us confidence in our choices. I was one of the women who had a closet full of clothes, but nothing to wear, so the concept that cabi provided was extraordinary!

In 2008, I started my cabi business as an independent stylist.

How would you describe success in your business?

I could never have imagined what a gift cabi would be to my life. My business took off; I was the top newcomer in sales my first season and have been top seller every season since. More importantly, I spend time in the company of amazing women who have become friends and depend on me. It is incredibly fulfilling.

For me, success means loving what I do and having it be well received by friends and clients. My business provides women with a social experience, which is so important in these times of busyness. The days of lunch

out and hours shopping with a friend seem to have disappeared from our schedules. Cabi brings it all together.

I enjoy helping women to confidently express themselves through well-fitting and well-put-together outfits, which affect how we move about our days and ultimately how we feel about ourselves. Rarely can we enter a retail store and find an associate who will take the time and interest to assist us in putting together what cabi stylists call a “capule”: perhaps a jacket, cardigan, couple of blouses, pair of jeans, and a skirt or pair of trousers that all interrelate, creating several outfits.

Additionally, I feel success when I meet a woman who needs to be lifted up, appreciates a touch of attention without pressure, and leaves with a huge smile and a hug. It is my goal to never push, only recommend and serve. I want ladies leaving a cabi event to be excited, not feel as they have been oversold.

Why are you successful?

I work hard and I care deeply. In this business I am fortunate to say, I am creating relationships and earning trust. I have been selling cabi for 17 years. I have clients shopping with me that I have been helping since the beginning, and that retention is part of my success.

I have a full-time cabi business in Arizona although I moved to Connecticut five years ago. I spend three to four weeks in Arizona each season showing the collection at parties and helping clients in private appointments during the day.

I also travel to St. Louis, Missouri, for my clientele there. I am so grateful for the all new women I meet each season, which helps me grow my business. I have met so many friends through cabi here in Connecticut and New York, it made the move from Scottsdale so much easier. As women, we all have fashion in common.

Describe your customer base

My customer base is women who range in age from their early 30's and up. My mother is my biggest cabi fan. She always wears cabi, and she is 92.



Above: Ryan takes the fall collection into customers' homes. Below: Ryan models a denim barn jacket (\$169), part of the cabi fall collection.



It's interesting, I often meet women who say “I don't go anywhere so I don't need new clothes.” And yet, they leave excited about a new pair of jeans, a soft sweater, and a simple jacket that can be layered and worn as a toss on for running errands. When I run into them in town, they excitedly tell me about all the compliments they have received, and how much they have worn particular items. That truly brings me joy! My customer base is actually all women who want to feel good in clothes that feel good.

Who is cabi's most direct competitor?

Wow, that is a tricky question!

I would say there are certainly other retailers that offer beautiful clothes in our price range. There are other retailers who offer comfortable clothes and athletic wear that are similar to items in our collection each season.

But here's the important note: I do not think there are other retailers who offer all that we do, with the attention to detail in the designs, lasting quality at our price point, versatility in how the clothes are paired to offer a range of day-to-evening options, and consistency in design and color, giving

the option to add to the cabi in their closet, while providing the level of service from both the company and their stylist, that is consistent and caring. That is cabi!

What is the most difficult part of being a cabi stylist?

Maybe the loading and unloading ... but I simply consider that my daily workout.

Tell me about the cabi Foundation?

It's one of the reasons that I'm proud to be a stylist for cabi. The cabi Foundation supports nonprofits globally that support women entrepreneurs, care for cancer patients, and operate education and health initiatives. The foundation has donated over \$70 million in 66 countries. Cabi sends volunteers to help women when natural disasters strike in this country, and we support women in need by collaborating with other organizations during Heart of cabi Month each May in cities throughout this country. ●

To learn more visit Jennifer's website on cabi, where anyone can shop. Visit jenniferryan.cabionline.com.

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Salsa

By Olivia Valentine with
Caroline Markonic
info@mainstreetmag.com

Salsa! This homemade recipe comes to you courtesy of Caroline. She first texted me back in June saying she had whipped up a batch. Living in North Carolina, she was harvesting tomatoes and peppers already. I was just planting mine in the garden!

Caroline brought her homemade salsa into work to share with her coworkers. It was a huge hit – love at first dip! Her coworkers were obsessed, some said she should bottle it and sell it, others claimed they could eat it by the spoonful and skip the chips altogether!

But here's the real story: my first attempt at making it? Total flop. I didn't want to eat it with a spoon or a chip; I wanted to toss it in the trash.

Sometimes we have recipes that we know how to make over and over again but they have never been written down. Caroline had accumulated so many tomatoes that she was making salsa in huge batches and couldn't give an accurate recipe that was scaled down. That's the beauty of recipe-sharing though. When one of us comes up with something new, we make it, test it, give feedback, and

decide if it's good enough to share. We tweak until it's right.

Well, I'm happy to report that we've got a winner now. And I hope you'll agree when you try it. Remember, salsa isn't just for chips. It's incredibly versatile. Use it on eggs, tacos, grilled meats, bowls, and so much more!

Maybe some of you are still harvesting fresh tomatoes and peppers from your gardens? If so, this is the perfect way to use them. As always, enjoy!

Ingredients

5-6 large tomatoes (should cover ½ of a full-sized sheet pan/baking tray)
2-3 jalapeños
4 large garlic cloves
1 large white onion
1 medium red onion
4-6 tbsp olive oil
2 tsp cumin
1.5 tsp chili powder
1 tsp garlic powder
1 tsp paprika
Salt and pepper to taste
1-2 limes (¼ cup juice)
¼-½ cup cilantro (stems can be included)

Directions

Preheat oven to 375° Fahrenheit.

Slice tomatoes in half and place slice side up on one half of a sheet pan. Use enough tomatoes to fill one

half of the tray. (The other ingredients can all fit on the other half.) Halve and de-seed jalapeños, placing them skin side up on the tray.

Slice onions in half, halve lengthways again, and quarter into 1-2" chunks, adding them to the sheet tray. It helps to break up the onion chunks a bit too. Peel and add garlic cloves to the tray.

Completely coat everything in olive oil and sprinkle seasonings, salt, and pepper on top. No need to mix anything together.

Bake for 10 minutes and then turn the oven to broil until the vegetables are charred. The peppers will blacken first, followed by the onions and garlic, and then the tomatoes, which don't always char at all. This normally takes about another 10 minutes, but will largely depend on your oven and how close the rack is to the broiler. Just keep a watchful eye on the tray. If some things are looking a little dry, you can add a touch more olive oil and continue to broil.

Once sufficiently broiled, remove from the oven and allow to cool slightly. Juice the lime(s) and add the lime juice, cilantro, and 1-2 tomato halves to the blender and blend until smooth. (This will chop up the cilantro without having to make the whole salsa like soup). Add the remainder of the sheet tray contents along with the

juices to the blender or food processor and pulse until chopped but not super thin. Give it a stir to look for large chunks and check the consistency. Taste and add more salt, pepper, lime juice, or seasonings if needed. Pulse more if necessary.

Add salsa to your storage container of choice and refrigerate for at least an hour (until cool).

Our favorite way to enjoy it is simply with a good tortilla chip or on citrus-marinated steak tacos along with extra fresh chopped white onion, cilantro, and lime juice.

Note: This recipe is very versatile and can be made using ratios only. The more diversity, the better. If you have leftover cherry tomatoes or a half yellow onion sitting in your fridge, add those too. Add any bell or spicy peppers dying in your fridge. As long as the sheet tray is at least 50% tomatoes and the rest is onions then peppers, it will (in my experience) always turn out delicious. •

Olivia and Caroline are enthusiastic foodies and bakers who are constantly in the kitchen, as well as explorers who create their own adventures in our area – and did we mention they are mother and daughter? Follow Olivia on Instagram to see her many creations at @oliviaavvalentine.



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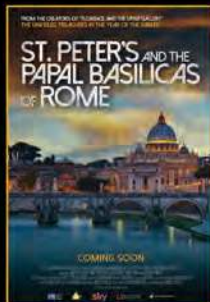
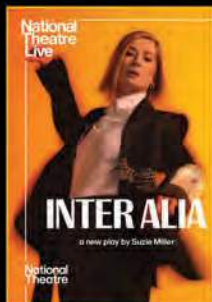
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Four September Days

From Ground Zero to Copake, Susan Massarella's astonishing story of terror, survival, and healing

By Jim Calvin
info@mainstreetmag.com

September 11, 2001

As Tuesday dawned in Brooklyn's Bay Ridge neighborhood, Susan Massarella hit the snooze button, toying with taking the day off, but talked herself into getting ready for work. Her then-husband Peter Mollo was away, traveling in Southeast Asia with his children.

She took a bus into lower Manhattan, where a cloudless blue sky inspired her to stroll the plaza before entering the World Trade Center. A down escalator placed her on the concourse level with shops, PATH trains, and a security checkpoint for elevator access.

"Now, this gets interesting," said Susan, grinning wryly. "My ID wouldn't swipe. After the third try, the guard hand-checked my ID and opened the gate. As I entered, as God is my witness, I said to him, 'Is someone trying to tell me something?' and we both smiled."

She rose to the 44th story "sky lobby," where workers transferred to elevators for higher floors. She was bound for the 72nd story of 1 World Trade, where she worked as a contract administrator in the engineering department of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. The PA built and ran the WTC, and operates bridges, tunnels and airports across the NYC metro area.

Described by her cousin Jane Holdridge of Ancram as chatty, outspoken, emotional, and good-hearted, Susan occupied a cubicle with world-class views of New York Harbor.

"At 8:46 that morning, as I was going through my inbox, there was a loud explosion, and I was thrown into my desk," said Susan. "We could see flaming debris falling outside our windows." As trained, everyone moved quickly to their assigned stairwell. Emergency lights installed after the 1993 WTC bombing illuminated their orderly descent.

"There was no panic at that point, just curiosity," remembers Susan. "I wonder what that was? Everyone was calm."

However, at 9:03, while they were switching stairwells at the sky lobby, a second thunderous explosion rattled the building. As they continued downward, "every few floors, there were guards offering us water, or a place to rest, but something told me to keep going."

"Every so often we'd hear people calling from below, 'Stay to the right, firefighters approaching.'" Susan remembered. "I'll never forget those brave men as they passed us, carrying 80 or 90 pounds of gear. We all thanked them and applauded them as they climbed the stairs. The look on their faces was numb – no expression."

The farther down she went, the more anxious Susan became. Full-blown panic set in when water started cascading down the stairwell.

As her group exited onto the indoor plaza level, "out the windows, I could see flames all around," said Susan. She descended an escalator to the concourse, sloshing through ankle-deep water for what seemed like forever. Ascending another escalator, she emerged onto the street to the grim sights and sounds of sheer terror.

Sirens blared and radios crackled as hundreds of first responders positioned themselves inside and around the burning towers. Among thousands more en route to help was firefighter Stephen Siller of Brooklyn's Squad 1. He had just finished his shift when he learned a plane had hit the North Tower. He drove his truck to the entrance of the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, but it was blocked off to vehicles. Determined to fulfill his duty, Siller strapped gear onto his back and raced on foot through the tunnel to the WTC, where he later would lose his life saving others.

Once outside, Susan heard a security guard calling, "Keep moving, don't look up!" She paused near St.



Above: Susan Massarella's ID badge from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (at the time, her married name was Mollo). Curiously, the ID failed to scan at the World Trade Center security checkpoint the morning of September 11, 2001.

Paul's Chapel to peek at the horrifying inferno above, and her heart sank. A few blocks away, she reunited with some co-workers. As they tried to console one another, a deafening roar signaled the collapse of Tower 2, spewing a multi-story column of swirling, debris-filled smoke in their direction.

"I started screaming as the smoke approached," said Susan. "My co-worker Bernie yelled 'Shut up and run!' He grabbed my arm, and we started running. I was so scared, I couldn't really see anything through the smoke, so I was lucky Bernie was holding my hand."

Now covered in the ghostly white ash that blanketed lower Manhattan, they made it to the Brooklyn Bridge. Once across, she instinctively walked to Peter's Brooklyn law office, where her son Andrew Perez worked as a paralegal. He wasn't there. A sense of dread washed over Susan.

Unbeknownst to her, Andrew was still at home, watching the drama unfold on TV with his father Pat Perez (Susan's first husband), who lived nearby and came over to console their son. Fighting tears, Andrew desperately tried to count floors, wondering if Susan had gotten out. When he saw Tower 1 crumble, "I was convinced my mother was dead," said Andrew.

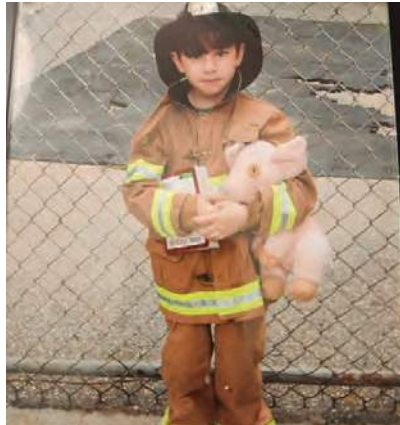
"I fell to the floor, howling, with my father holding onto me."

Meanwhile, Susan's father John, a widower residing in Copake Falls in Columbia County, New York, was enjoying a senior citizen outing in Connecticut, oblivious to the day's events until the bus reached its destination and the emcee requested a moment of silence for the victims. Agonizingly aware of Susan's WTC office location, John was so distraught he banged his head on the table and prayed out loud for God to spare her.

On the street next to Peter's law office, suddenly someone called to Susan. It was Andrew's girlfriend, Sarah, who immediately took Susan inside, phoned Andrew, and put her on the line. "Andrew, it's Mommy. I'm alive," she assured him. Both broke into tears. Meanwhile, cousin Jane had reached John by phone to say his prayer was answered.

After Sarah drove her home, Susan shakily stepped into a hot shower and began processing the anguish she had just experienced. As clumps of gray goop fell from her signature curly red hair into the drain, she pounded a fist

Continued on next page ...



Top, left: Susan displays the raffle ticket that floored her and other attendees of the 2019 Copake Grange square dance.

Top, right: Andrew Perez, left, and his mother Susan.

Above, left: In 2012, at age 5, Susan's grandson Julian was all set for Halloween in his firefighter costume.

Above, right: During a presentation at lower Manhattan's 9/11 Tribute Center, Susan shares her 9/11 experiences and how she found healing through volunteering at the Tribute Center.

against the side of the shower, shrieking uncontrollably.

Two days later, Susan and Andrew drove north to her father's home to escape the calamity. Within days, however, the Port Authority directed her to return to work at a makeshift headquarters in Jersey City. "Every piece of paper was gone," she remembered. "We had to reconstruct everything."

Amid the challenges, "I became Miss Port Authority USA – head-to-toe red, white, and blue, every day," said Susan. "I was filled with positive feelings about my company, my home, and my country. Then you start going to funerals. I never wanted to hear *Amazing Grace* again."

One day in March 2002, she just couldn't get out of bed. She took two days, then a whole week off. "I slept all day, and I'd wake up disappointed that I was alive," Susan confessed. Like scores of other 9/11 survivors, she had plunged into a deep depression.

"I would say to myself, why am I alive? Why me, when my friends died – people I worked with, had lunch with? I felt embarrassed, ashamed." Eighty-four Port Authority personnel perished in the WTC attacks.

Eventually, Susan took a medical leave, went on antidepressants, and entered individual and group therapy. Gradually, her condition seemed to

stabilize. In December 2002, the PA offered an early retirement incentive. She took it, ending a 32-year career with the agency.

Then came a call from the new Tribute WTC Visitor Center, inviting her to assist with guided tours of the 9/11 Memorial by sharing her personal recollections. The 50 tours she did were emotionally draining but cathartic.

In June 2005, she moved to Copake Falls full-time to care for her ailing father. His house on North Mountain Road was where the family had summered every year. John passed away that August.

September 19, 2007

Another sunny autumn morning in Manhattan was memorable for an altogether different reason. It was the day Susan first held her new grandson Julian, the child of Andrew and Sarah, shortly after his birth at Columbia Presbyterian Children's Hospital.

"And I said hey, Jules, I'm your Nana. We're gonna have a lot of fun. We're gonna take care of one another. You need me, and I need you."

When Julian was five, he asked for a firefighter costume to wear for Halloween, so Nana got him one. "I have this picture of him dressed up in his fireman costume, holding a pink stuffed pig," Susan said. "I think this was Julian's way of saying to those brave men that I passed in the stairwell, 'Thank you for saving my Nana.'"

September 14, 2019

The Copake Grange Hall, a stone's throw from the town clock, was jumping on this Saturday night with an "Old Fashioned Ice Cream Social and Square Dance." Around 9:30, after the final do-se-do, it was time for the 50-50 raffle drawing.

Susan lowered her eyeglasses from the top of her head to the bridge of her nose and peered at her strip of six tickets. Eyes bulging as she looked closer, she gasped, "Oh my God!" Incredibly, the last three digits on one of her tickets were 9-1-1. And inconceivably, the first three digits of that same ticket were 8-4-6 – the precise time the first plane hit Susan's tower on that harrowing day.

Was someone again trying to tell her something?

"I was completely blown away," she said. "I showed everyone. This eerie look came across people's faces."

Now 73 and living in a smaller home on Park View Court in Copake hamlet, Susan is a driving force in the Knit Club of the Hudson Valley, whose craft fairs have raised \$75,000 for a school backpack program, food pantry, and other local charities over the last eight years. She's also involved in a local Christmas Friends program and the Copake town park commission.

Susan loves live theater, especially "Come From Away" – the true story of a town in Newfoundland that welcomed 7,000 stranded passengers whose flights were suddenly ordered to land when American airspace closed on 9/11. She's seen it four times, one followed by a backstage visit arranged by the cast.

"My mom has overcome a lot of adversity," said Andrew. "She is a survivor. She hasn't let 9/11 completely define her. She could have just closed the curtains and stayed inside the rest of her life. I feel very proud that she came through this on the other end."

September 28, 2025

On the 28th of this month, a delegation from the Ancram Volunteer Fire Company will participate in the annual Tunnel to Towers Foundation 5K Run & Walk, which traces the final footsteps of that valiant Brooklyn firefighter, Stephen Siller, 24 years ago. Susan has been invited to ride the bus to Manhattan with them and, at the 9/11 Memorial, share with them her solemn recollections of that day and its aftermath.

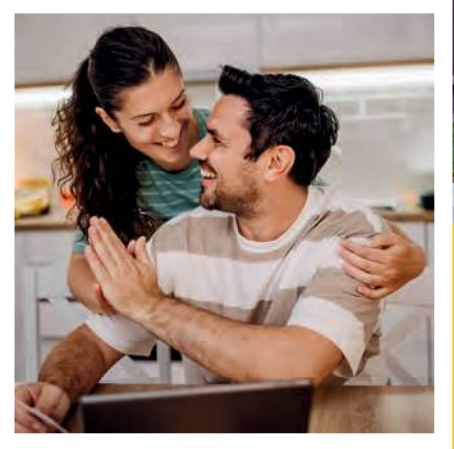
With the 25th anniversary of 9/11 one year away, Susan is unsure of the broader meaning of all the tragedy, healing, and odd coincidences she has endured over the past quarter-century, other than to shrug and say softly, "I'm still here." •

Jim Calvin of Valatie, NY, is a former managing editor of the Hudson Register-Star and the Principal of Calvin Communications.

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By Abby Audenino
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“Writing personal essays is a way of finding out what I really believe about my life and relationships and of coming to terms with that discovery,” shares Hudson Valley-based author Roselee Blooston of her upcoming book, *Including the Periphery*.

Roselee has a storied history as a professional actress and playwright. She holds an MFA in drama from Trinity University at the Dallas Theater Center in San Antonio, TX, and a BA in drama from Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, NY. Throughout her career, she has taught acting, voice and speech, and dramatic writing on faculties of many prestigious colleges and universities across the country.

While writing was always a part of her life, she only began writing in earnest whilst working as an aspiring actress. Her creativity led her to write and perform four original one-person plays in New York City, across the country, and overseas. Much later, after she left the theater behind, Roselee wrote for magazines and even started a non-profit organization for writers called Tunnel Vision Writers' Project, which operated from 1998 to 2005 and specialized in original interdisciplinary collaborations with composers, visual artists, and dancers.

While running multi-genre support groups for that organization, Roselee began dabbling in fiction. When the first short stories she wrote got published, her commitment to a life of writing began in earnest. Since then, she has written a novel, *Trial by Family*; two memoirs, *Dying in Dubai* and *Almost: My Life in the Theater*; and a story collection, *The Chocolate Jar and Other Stories*.

Including the Periphery, a collection of personal essays, is Roselee's fifth book. “Writing is my way of being in the world, and will continue to shape and reflect my life,” she shares.

The vulnerability of sharing your life's story

Including the Periphery is a collection of essays that spans Roselee's life from her adolescence to later adulthood. While some of the essays were written a while ago, many of them were written more recently.

“My perspective on the incident cited in ‘Puberty,’ the first essay in the collection, has changed over the years, but I wasn't ready to write about it until recently,” she shares. “Clarity can be elusive and coming of age looks much different decades later. I'm glad that I waited, because now I see that facing that early setback gave me a lifelong habit of resilience. The arc, if you will, of the collection traces a dialogue between past and present with many such insights.”

Including the Periphery is not Roselee's first time writing about her life; her first memoir, *Dying in Dubai* (2016), tells of her marriage and the first year following her husband's sudden death, while her second memoir, *Almost: My Life in Theater* (2019), covers her ambition to be an actress, her failures, and the drive to create that continues to present day.

Although writing her memoirs was an incredibly vulnerable process,

Roselee was gratified to find that many of her readers identified with the challenges that she faced personally and professionally. “I'm in my seventies and felt that now was the time to address the aftermath of those books, especially *Dying in Dubai*,” she explains. “I consider *Including the Periphery* an informal companion piece to that memoir. ‘Hudson Valley Happiness’ is the final essay; its title gives you a sense of how far I've come.”

A handful of the fourteen essays in *Including the Periphery* were written years ago, and some had even been previously published. When Roselee decided to put together a collection, she wanted the pieces to stand alone, but also be compatible as a whole if read in order. Given the collection's overarching themes of change, renewal, and perspective, there were essays that did not find their way into the collection because they didn't fit the bill.

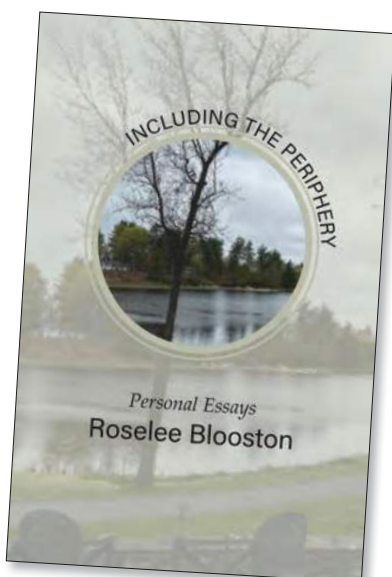
“I write about my life only when I really need to do so – when something won't leave me alone, either a subject that's been bothering me or that I want to celebrate,” she says. “Memoirs are long form works. Personal essays are not. That was the biggest change. I focused each stand-alone essay around a theme or subject, rather than pushing one story from beginning to end.”

More than anything, Roselee hopes that readers of every generation will reflect on the ways that time, evolving priorities, and self-awareness have impacted their own lives. “I hope they will include the periphery of their personal histories, allowing the past to inform the present without overwhelming it, as I have attempted to do in these pages.” ●

For more information about Roselee Blooston, her work, and her upcoming events, visit her website roseleeblooston.com. Her books are available wherever books are sold.



Photo courtesy of Rosalee Blooston.



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LET'S SKATE!

By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

Since I'm not a skateboarder, I can only imagine the sheer feeling of freedom people get when hopping on their boards and navigating the streets or neighborhood ramps with nothing but the rush of adrenaline pumping through their bodies and the cool wind racing through their hair.

I still recall that scene in *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* when Walter, played by Ben Stiller, whizzes through the streets of Iceland on a longboard with dramatic landscape scenes behind him.

Skateboarding has become more popular in recent years, and with that, it is finally being recognized as a legitimate sport. According to *Smithsonian* magazine "From its origins – roller-skate wheels attached to a wooden board – the skateboard has given rise to a vibrant culture of art, music, and sport. Used by surfers when there were no waves to ride, the skateboard was first manufactured in California. Its board, or deck, owes its heritage to the papa he'e malu (surfbboards) and papahōlua (land sleds) of Native Hawaiians."

A history

The sport, which was already popular among Hawaiians, grew on the US mainland during the 1960s. A

drought in southern California in the mid-1970s also helped fuel the skate culture.

That drought led to a ban on filling backyard swimming pools. Soon, the empty pools in the backyards of California homes became playgrounds for freestyle skateboarders in the greater Los Angeles area. By the time the 1980s rolled around, skateboarding was a prominent part of youth culture.

A personal reflection

Skating has been a part of Chris Hoffman's life for several decades. "I grew up skating in the Red Hook area during the '80s with a small crew of friends. Back then, it was tough being a skater around here," said Chris.

"When I was growing up, we were riding a lot of BMX until we saw *Back to the Future* in 1985. We had to have that skateboard. Little did we know it was a James Way board, like the boards sold at Target today. It sparked an interest either way," said Chris.

Mainstream movies like *Thrashin'* in 1986 and *Gleaming The Cube* in 1989 were also part of the Hoffmans' inspiration. "Once my brother and I were given 'real' skateboards one Christmas, the drive to learn really began."

Chris spent countless hours watching Powell Peralta videos such as *The Search for Animal Chin* and Santa Cruz videos such as *Wheels Of Fire* and *Streets On Fire*. Then he headed out to the streets to learn everything

that the skaters were doing in those clips.

Between 2000 and 2010, interest in the sport continued. The pandemic sparked a resurgence since skateboarding enables participants to keep their distance even while doing it together. It is also a very individual sport where skaters are out there solo working on perfecting their tricks.

In 2020, skateboarding really arrived when it became an Olympic sport and debuted at Tokyo's Summer Games. The event marked a historic moment for skateboarding and its community.

Skating stateside

When we think about New York's Hudson Valley, its farm-to-table food, topnotch restaurants, outdoor activities such as hiking and kayaking, and vibrant arts scene, often come to mind. Many of us are unfamiliar with the area's skateboarding culture and history.

Although skating may be off the radar for lots of locals, it is the sport of choice for many thrill seekers in Rhinebeck, Red Hook, Hudson, Poughkeepsie, Newburgh, and beyond. Inclement weather aside, all these towns have strong skate communities.

"As long as it's dry, people can skate. Only rain and snow will keep us

Above: You can find just about anything you need for skating at The Board Room Skate Shop in Red Hook, NY, whether it be a board, sneakers, apparel, or accessories.

Photos with this article are courtesy of The Board Room Skateshop.

Continued on next page ...

away,” said Chris.

Chris and his wife Zsanne Hoffman, opened The Board Room Skateshop in Red Hook, NY, in 2013. It specializes in skateboards, but also carries longboards; surf skates; skim boards; and safety gear, including helmets, pads, and wrist guards. The shop also sells cool apparel and shoes, and accessories such as trucks, wheels, bearings, grip, and hardware.

The duo opened the shop because they wanted to create something long lasting to support and grow the skate scene in the region. Growing up in the area, the duo felt there was not much support for skaters. Back then, skateboarding wasn't nearly as accepted, and it was tough being a skater in a small community. When shops popped up, they didn't last long, so it was a challenge to get gear without ordering from magazines.

About four years ago, the Hoffmans relocated their shop to Rhinebeck because they were looking to grow their business. At that point, Boarding School was born. Individual lessons are offered on weekends. During the week, Boarding School offers three-hour club sessions for more experienced skaters.

The Board Room Skateshop is eager to support younger/newer skaters as well as adults. “We teach six days a week, and our students range in age from 5 to 65,” said Zsanne. There's always something in store for kids as well as their parents. A lot of parents bring their kids in. “It takes them back to their younger skating days.”

Brand watch

Top brands at the shop include Baker, Deathwish, Creature, Real, Traffic, Hopps, NB Numeric Skate Shoes, Dickies, and Santa Cruz. Some of the Hoffmans' faves include Nimbus, Devil Street Decks, Natural Konzept, Thumbs NYC, and Dais. Board prices range from \$160 to \$250.

According to market.us, which specializes in in-depth market research and analysis, the global skateboard market is expected to soar to \$4.2 billion by 2033. That's good news for The Board Room Skateshop.

Skate culture

When it comes to skate culture, Chris and Zsanne admire a lineup of talent. That list includes Mike Vallely, Natas Kaupas, Frankie Hill, Jason Lee, Lance Mountain, Tony Alva, Tony Hawk, Steve Caballero, Tommy Guerrero, and Jeff Grosso.

“There's also a huge female skateboarding scene. Professionals such as Leticia Bufoni, Lizzie Armanto, Alexis Sablone, Elissa Steamer, Nora Vasconcellos, and Sky Brown are a few who have inspired girls to move into the sport,” said Chris.

“The list goes on. These were all pros that we watched and looked up to when we were young. Most of these guys are now in their 50s and still support skateboarding in big ways,” added Zsanne. “A lot of them own their own brands that we carry at Board Room Skate Shop. Tony builds skateparks in low-income areas, so that he can support the skate scene



Above: Chris and Zsanne with Evan Kanarakis (in the middle) who owns Devil Street Decks Skateboards in New York City.

Left: The in store mix at The Board Room Skateshop.

and provide skaters with an outlet.”

Community

June 21st marked Go Skateboarding Day – a global event created by Don Brown and Per Welinder. Brown and Welinder created this day to enable the skate community to ride together and elevate the energy of the sport worldwide. The time was apropos for Chris and Zsanne to host their first event at Starr Park in Rhinebeck. At press time, the duo had already proposed dates to town decision makers for potential events in September and October. These skate jam events offer prizes for best tricks as well as music and giveaways.

Other popular parks in the area include Red Hook Recreation Park and Waryas Park Promenade in Poughkeepsie as well as indoor spots such as SHRED Foundation in Albany and 2nd Nature Skate Park in Peekskill.

What would they say to someone who never skated? “It's just like any other sport. It takes work and practice, but it's totally worth it,” said Chris. “The shop is very much a labor of love, but we are happy to be here to support the skate community and see a little growth since moving to Rhinebeck.” ●



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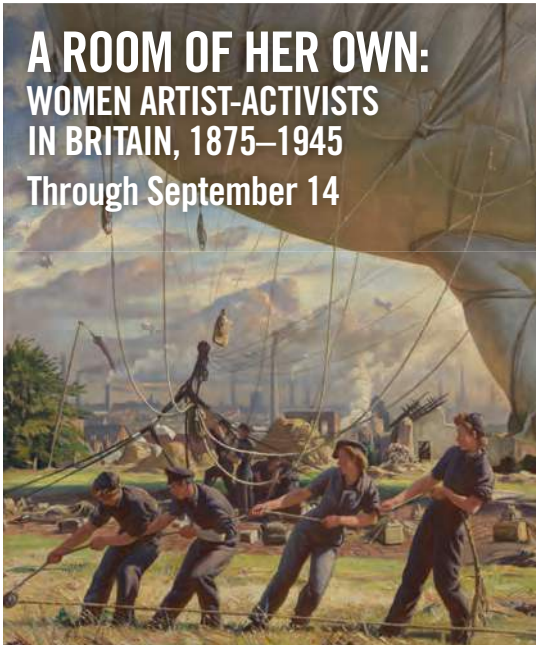
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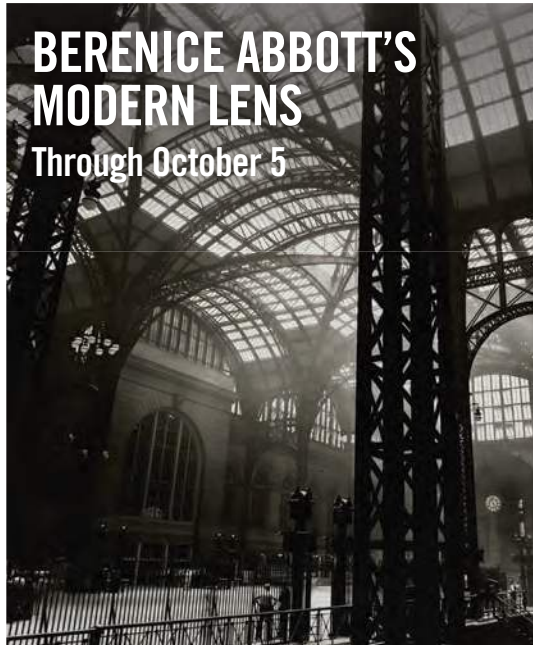
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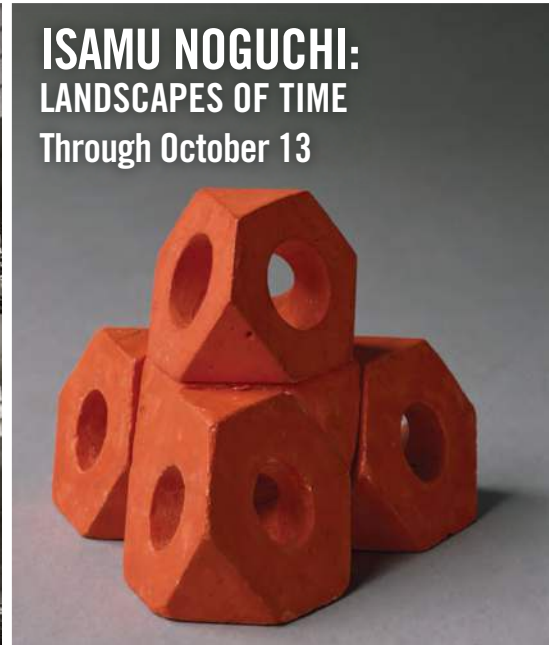
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The importance of local libraries & why they matter more than ever

By Abby Audenino
abby@mainstreetmag.com

Public libraries are one of the few places in modern society where nothing is expected from visitors. There is no status or membership required to access them, and you can stay all day without having to spend a dime.

In recent years, public libraries have increasingly taken on roles in their communities that fall well outside of the range of merely checking books in and out. A study titled, “The Role of Rural Public Libraries in Providing Access to Online Government Services,” from the University of Pennsylvania states that particularly in the past few years, librarians and staff have become “ad hoc social workers, helping citizens obtain access to government services, as well as employment and mental health services.”

Drawing a younger crowd

A new report titled, “Gen Z and Millennials: How They Use Public Libraries and Identify Through Media Use,” published in 2023 by the American Library Association, states that Gen Z (those born between 1997 and 2012) and Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) are using public libraries at higher rates compared to older generations.

The report, authored by Kathi Inman Berens, Ph.D. and Rachel Noorda, Ph.D., shows that 54 percent of Gen Z and Millennials visited a physical library within the previous 12 months. Of the 2,075 people surveyed in 2022, more than half reported visiting a library and borrowing from the library’s digital collection. “The data also revealed younger American’s distinct preference for physical versions of books: survey respondents read and bought on average twice as many print books per month as any other category,” the American Library Association states.

The study also reports that libraries are drawing Gen Z and Millennials who don’t self-identify as readers – more than half of the 43 percent of Gen Z and Millennials who don’t self-identify as readers have been to their local library in the past 12 months. Perhaps what makes the library appealing even to those who are not self-proclaimed readers is the fact that many public libraries offer a variety of services, resources, and programming.

An article titled “The Complicated Role of the Modern Public Library,” written by Jennifer Howard for *Humanities*, the magazine of the National Endowment for the Humanities, states, “That commitment to inclusivity, along with a persistent ability to adapt to changing times, has kept public libraries vital in an era of divisive politics and disruptive technological change. But it has also put pressure on them to be all things to all people, and to meet a vast range of social needs without correspondingly vast budgets.”

Many libraries provide guests the ability to access a variety of resources – from computers to audiobooks and other digital resources – as well as an abundance of diverse programming for people of all ages. Arguably, the average public library is becoming just as much about finding connection and community as it is about furthering education and knowledge.

“There’s something for almost everyone at the local library, whether you’re a parent who needs literacy support for your preschooler, an immigrant working on language skills or bureaucratic forms, a mystery fan in search of the latest whodunit by a favorite author, or someone experiencing homelessness who needs assistance with social services or access to a computer and the Internet,” Howard writes.

Bridging the digital divide

Addressing the “digital divide” is another equally important, yet often



Top: Town Hall with Dutchess County Comptroller. Above, left: Library carnival. Right: The Amenia Free Library. All photos courtesy of the Amenia Free Library.

overlooked service that public libraries provide for patrons. The digital divide is defined as the gap between those who have access to and can effectively utilize technology, such as broadband Internet, and those who do not.

The Public Library Association’s Public Library 2023 Technology Survey summary report states that, “Libraries are leaders in providing Internet access for their communities and empowering patrons to participate more fully in the digital world. That includes everything from public computers and Wi-Fi connections in library buildings, to training in digital skills, assisting patrons with getting connected at home, and hotspot lending. Research has shown that hotspots can make a difference in the lives of patrons, particularly those who cannot afford home broadband subscriptions or who live in areas where physical broadband is unavailable.”

The digital divide is not just an issue that exists across the globe, it

is an issue even in highly developed countries such as the United States. Low-income groups, older adults, and those living in rural areas are often victims of the digital divide. Public libraries help bridge this gap by not only offering access to computers, Internet, and other digital devices, but they often aid in enhancing digital literacy and increase computer skills for community members.

Amenia Free Library

The Amenia Free Library, located off Route 343 in the center of Amenia, NY, was first established in 1919. When the first by-laws were adopted, members of the association were able to borrow materials for just one dollar per year. In November of 1935, the Amenia Free Library signed a lease with the First Presbyterian Church

Continued on next page ...



Above: The David M. Hunt Library in Falls Village, CT.

Photos courtesy of the David M. Hunt Library.

of Amenia, which granted the library the ability to use the original parcel of land for one dollar per year. In 2014, the library officially purchased the parcel, in addition to another neighboring parcel a few years prior.

Although the Amenia Free Library is the only library in town, they are a part of the Mid-Hudson Library System, which is a public library system in the Hudson Valley that comprises libraries in five counties – Columbia County, Dutchess County, Greene County, Putnam County, and Ulster County.

“We are very fortunate to have a library in just about every town in our region. I never thought I’d be in libraries, let alone a public one, but it has been a great opportunity,” says Victoria Herow, the Amenia Free Library director. “We meet new people every day and see our regulars quite often. It is great to introduce new patrons to our library, what we offer, and all the opportunities available with your library card.”

Victoria stresses that the Amenia Free Library is there to support patrons, regardless of what they may need – from Internet access to printing a shipping label, or simply just having a quiet afternoon resting in the air conditioning. “Libraries are a ‘third space’ in people’s lives, and we are here for all of the various reasons that

our community needs us,” Victoria says. “Third spaces’ are defined as spaces that are separate from home and work where people seek conversation, neutral ground, and comfort in feeling connected.

Within the past year, the Amenia Free Library has seen an increase in patrons coming into the library. The library completed an expansion and renovation project in 2022 that quadrupled the size of the library, and since then, there has been a steady increase of patrons flowing in.

“We have been able to offer programs on-site, and the larger space allows more people to stay. We offer a variety of programs for all ages: Story Hour for our younger patrons twice per week; several book clubs for teens and adults; a monthly Library Tea Society, in which we taste food and teas from a different region/country changes each month; craft programs for all ages; a weekly chair exercise class; and other presentations around a topic.”

In the coming months, the Amenia Free Library will continue its weekly and monthly programs, while continuing to add and increase their other offerings, such as craft programs and presentations. The library will also be present at a variety of fall events, including the Amenia Lions Club Classic Car Show on September 14 at Four Brothers Drive-In, with proceeds benefitting the library.

Going forward, Victoria hopes to see public libraries continuing to flourish. “There is always something for everyone to discover at the library. Whether you’re looking to research, read the latest best-seller, or cool off in the air conditioning, libraries are essential and of immense value in our communities.”

David M. Hunt Library

The David M. Hunt Library in Falls Village, CT, founded in 1891 by sisters Wealthy Ann and Catherine E. Hunt, and named in honor of their brother, has always endeavored to be a house of learning “fitted to the wants of our youth and the high purpose of promoting the intelligence and welfare of this community.”

The library has been the cultural hub and educational center of the Falls Village, CT, community for over 125 years. “The Hunt’s goal is to advance the welfare of its citizens by fostering a love of books and respect for well-written words; promoting and encouraging literacy; and offering a wide selection of books, periodicals, references, and all types of media materials to spark and encourage lifelong learning and a hunger for knowledge,” the Hunt states on its website.

Throughout its lengthy history, the Hunt has presented and promoted various cultural events including concerts, musical programs, art shows, plays, guest speaker programs, poetry readings, book discussions, among many others. In 1992, the Hunt’s Board undertook a library renovation and expansion, doubling the library’s size. The funds to support the library’s educational and cultural programs come from a combination of the annual town grant, fundraising events, direct appeals, endowment earnings, gifts, and bequests.

“At its core, the library serves as a community gathering space. Much of what we do brings people together to educate, entertain, and connect. Whether it’s attending a program or art reception, coming in to ask the librarian for a book recommendation, or serving as a volunteer – the Hunt brings people in our community together,” says executive director Meg Sher. “In a small town with few public spaces for people to go to that don’t require them to spend money, the library fills that need.”

The Hunt, too, has noticed increased foot traffic in the library over the past year. The Hunt has been working on strengthening its relationship with the Lee H. Kellogg School next door through outreach and after school programming. As such, more elementary school children are becoming regular library users.

Community groups as well are taking advantage of the Hunt’s space for meetings, which bring new people into the building. Young families also regularly attend story times and get to socialize with other children and parents.

“We strive to provide a diverse array of programming for all ages, and this year, we’ve had great intergenerational

programs including modern calligraphy and a six-month writing workshop that culminated in a book, 'Falls Village Stories,'" Meg shares. "We've also seen an increase in people coming in to use our printing, copying, and scanning services. A few years ago, we renovated our second floor, creating a quiet space for people to work, and we've seen more people taking advantage of that."

The Hunt's fall programming spans a variety of categories. Their banned book club, in partnership with the Falls Village Equity Group, takes place every other month on the first Friday of the month. In September and October, the library will host events including a book sale, a collage class with local artist Lynn Lena Curtis, rotating art exhibitions, various educational lectures and talks, and the Falls Village Fall Festival.

Douglas Library

The Douglas Library, located on Main Street in Canaan, CT, was first established by William Douglas in 1821. "Libraries continue to meet the diverse needs of their community, adapting to changing community needs while consistently promoting shared resources and intellectual freedom," says Laura Moran, the incoming library director for the Douglas Library. "Our primary purpose remains to ensure equal access to information and ideas, enriched by an ever-evolving collection of resources."

Douglas Library's print collection is varied and substantial, and they are also fortunate to be part of Connecticut's interlibrary loan network, which brings patron-requested materials from across the state and beyond. Access to free Internet and electronic resources empower patrons of all ages, from emerging readers through students mastering literacy; teens exploring new passions; adults honing career and life skills with printing, copying, and faxing support; and seniors seeking social engagement.

"Libraries engage lifelong learners by nurturing curiosity, cultural exchange, and community bonds, with ever-increasing opportunities," Laura says.

Over the past year, foot traffic at the Douglas Library has steadily increased. Library card registrations con-

tinue to be popular, Laura shares, and former patrons who haven't visited in years are returning in droves. "Our print circulation still exceeds digital checkouts, but e-book and audiobook lending has grown noticeably," Laura notes. "Overall, we're seeing every age group come through our doors."

Douglas Library visitors seek a wide array of programming and resources. Computers, wi-fi, and low-cost printing stay in high demand at the library, with Laura reporting that many patrons use these services frequently for email, job searches, insurance, government services, and genealogy research. Community groups often utilize meeting rooms for Scrabble nights, book clubs, environmental stewardship meetings, and HOA gatherings.

The Douglas Library is also actively coordinating an exciting fall lineup featuring a talk by a local artist, an ongoing book sale that helps support programming, an inclusive art project for every generation, and the community development of its non-traditional lending "Library of Things."

The library will also be holding an open house in November to celebrate the retirement of its longtime director and treasured leader, Norma DeMay.

"While she's stepping back from day-to-day management, she'll still be on hand to help you find your next great read. At the same time, we're launching a fresh wave of initiatives: inviting local artists to share their talents in a new way, expanding our speaker/workshop series, gathering interest-based groups to share experiences, and creating a reimagined space for all-ages where everyone can learn, grow, and explore new skills," Laura says. "We can't wait to celebrate with you! We are grateful for community support and look forward to diving into this exciting new chapter together!"

NorthEast-Millerton Library

The NorthEast-Millerton Library, located on Main Street in Millerton, NY, was originally chartered as the Millerton Free Library in 1927. At that time, the library was located on the second floor of what is now the screening room at The Moviehouse.



Top: The NorthEast-Millerton Library. Above, left: From the North East Historical Society. Right: Local author, farmer, and veterinarian Julian Straus, discussing his book, 'Home Farm: The Love of Place in a Changing World'. Pictures courtesy of the NorthEast-Millerton Library.

Though the library has changed locations a few times since its inception, it has been located at its current spot on Main Street since 1975.

In 2008, the Millerton Free Library was officially renamed the NorthEast-Millerton Library to accommodate both the Town of North East and the Village of Millerton.

Rhiannon Leo-Jameson, the director for the NorthEast-Millerton library, says that the library has morphed into a community hub of sorts. "We're a place where you can meet your neighbors and build connections with your community," she says. "The tradition of providing information for our community is going strong, but there is also an increased emphasis on entertainment and interaction."

She also notes that the library does seem busier this year than the previous, and she has noticed a marked increase of new faces utilizing the library's resources. "Patrons are able to apply for a card online and use our many digital resources, and our programs that have more of an element of interaction between participants

always seem to do well."

In addition to its 30,000 plus physical and digital items, the NorthEast-Millerton Library also offers adult and children's programs that draw community members. This fall, they will offer the supper club, a community potluck hosted every third Wednesday at 6pm; an AARP Driver Safety Course on September 6; a cooking class centering on crêpes on September 20; the new Millerton repair cafe on October 11; and the annual craft fair on November 8.

"We are in the process of gathering community input for our long-range plan to help guide the future of the library," Rhiannon notes. "We are looking forward to hearing what our community has to say. If you are interested in completing a survey, please visit the library or our website." ●

To learn more about any of the libraries mentioned, visit their websites for more information.

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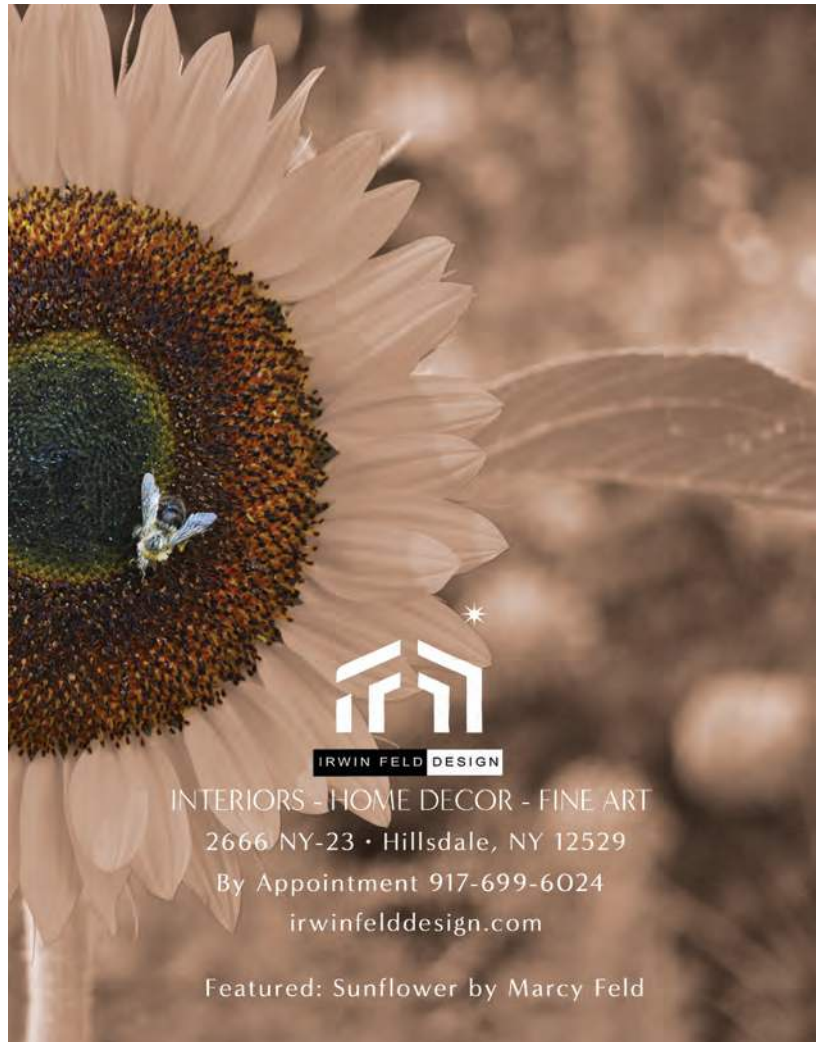
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LESSONS FROM THE (RAIL) ROAD

By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com

We all have a list of things we haven't done, but muse about.

"If I just had the time ..."

"If there's one thing I'd like to do ..."

"It's on my 'bucket list' ..."

Admittedly, some are merely flights of fantasy. Most of us will never climb the Matterhorn, drive a Ferrari at 140 miles per hour, or appear on stage at Carnegie Hall.

But, there's always the imagined trip.

So, with some bravado, an overstuffed rollerboard suitcase, and cash for tips, we showed up at Boston's South Station, ready to step on board an Amtrak train to see the great expanse of America through a rail car window. Coast to coast. Great Lakes, Great Plains, and Rockies. Stops in Chicago and Denver and finally roll into San Francisco. "All aboard!"

Not so fast.

Seems that there was track work near Pittsfield on the first important leg of the adventure, so feeling like many New England "leaf peepers," we were hustled onto a bus heading through the Berkshires to Albany. We were assured that our train would meet us there. "All luggage under the bus, please."

It seemed like a very shaky start to the adventure, but realizing there were few alternatives, we clambered aboard and found a window seat toward the back. Just a few hours and we'd catch up with the train and truly be on our way.

Within moments, down the aisle came a young family with a delightful four-year old who wanted to know if sitting with me would be okay. Of course it would. Having both children and grandchildren, we had abundant memories of traveling with young adventurers and knowing the challenges

of plans being instantly changed and the creative requirements for parents to come up with answers to endless questions.

And, we were away.

To quote Snidely Whiplash, "Foiled again!"

Dad took the first leg of the journey, sitting in the row in front and entertaining his inquisitive son. That left Mom to sit next to me. We had spent a career buckling into airline seats, immediately pulling out the headphones and taking out a book, thereby signaling to fellow passengers that conversation was not an option. About to do the same, the book I was reading appeared and, with it a simple comment from my seatmate. "I'm reading that too. Isn't it terrific?" Caught. "The best laid plans of mice and men ..."

Our conversation began pleasantly enough, focused on the literary merits of the author (John LeCarre, if you must know) and how beautifully he weaves characters, plot, settings, and historic events. "It's almost like a symphony — carefully organized around a theme but layered with harmony and counterpoint." That was my observation, and it opened the floodgates of conversation.

It suddenly became clear that my seat companion was a classically trained musician who had dedicated her life to not only mastering her performance skills but also teaching countless students the mysteries and wonders of the piano. She knew more about music in her little finger than I did in all of my 13 stone.

The hours in the bus, rolling toward our rendezvous with the cross-country train evaporated. With a few targeted questions, she easily peeled back the layers of effectively taking young, eager (and, sometimes not so eager) children not much older than her son and guiding them through the minefields that lie in the way of becoming reasonable, then acceptable, then good then proficient pianists.

Full disclosure

At some point in the discourse, I admitted to having been one of the hordes of kids who hated piano lessons. I didn't care. I didn't want to play scales over and over again. I didn't want to waste my afternoons practicing or going to anxiety-provoking piano lessons while the rest of the neighborhood was outside riding bicycles and playing stickball. I served my sentence until the day my parents, in deep frustration, mumbled something like "Well, if you don't want to keep taking piano lessons ..." My apologies, Friedrich Chopin. No offense, Johann Sebastian Bach. I never looked back.

My companion smiled, gracefully, and continued to fill the journey with the insight that in retrospect made so much sense it was painful ... a life lesson worth sharing, even from this distant remove.

"It's all in the way you play the first note. Is it expressive? Is it melodic? Is it forceful? Is it subtle? You commit. Then you add the second note ..."

A dose of ancient wisdom

Of course. Like anything else in life, the process of learning an instrument or a language or a dance routine or the directions from home to work and back is just that. A process. It takes focus and discipline, eagerness and openness, and patience.

Out the window, the Berkshires gave way to the Hudson Valley and soon enough the skyline of Albany came into view. As we pulled into the reasonably pleasant train station, ready to become "intermodal" as the term is used in the cargo-movement business, it was only proper to thank my teacher for the lesson learned.

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step." Centuries old wisdom from the Tao Te Ching serenely blanketed the afternoon and, lesson learned, we headed off "west toward the sun."

Play the first note ... then the second. ●

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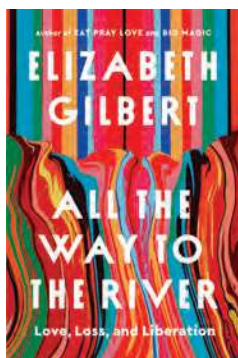
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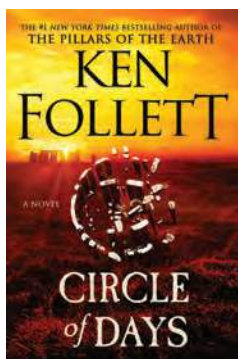
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FROM TREE TO PRESS



Left Bank Ciders in Catskill, NY



Jmash Cider at Hilltop Orchards in Richmond, MA



Little Apple Cider in Hillsdale, NY

By Abby Audenino
abby@mainstreetmag.com

If you're an apple lover like me, then you know that there are few things better in this world than a nice, fresh hard cider. Autumn has always been my favorite season for many reasons – and apple picking is certainly one of them! We are lucky to live in a region that is bountiful with apple orchards and farms. Many of these farms also have on-site cideries where they use their estate-grown apples to ferment ciders, wines, and other delicious beverages. Next time you find yourself planning an apple-picking excursion, don't miss out on stopping into the cideries at one of the orchards that I've rounded up below.

Hilltop Orchards and JMASH Ciderhouse

508 Canaan Road/Route 295, Richmond, MA. hilltoporchards.com.

Hilltop Orchards, located in Richmond, MA, is nestled at the foothills of the Berkshires and on the border of upstate New York. The orchard, which is over 100 years old, is a 187-acre working farm with an orchard-to-can cidery, winery, and tasting room. They grow over 27 different varieties of apples, including heritage and heirloom apples, and the on-site cidery is one of the oldest continually operating cideries in New England.

"We're proud to sustainably grow our many apple varieties and other fruits at the orchard. Some of our apples are heirloom apples with century-old trees that date back to the

start of the orchard. We turn them into amazing apple and fruit products with complete quality control on-site," Hilltop Orchards writes on its website.

The Vittori family operates Hilltop Orchards under three guiding principles, "creating warm memories for groups of friends and families with an immersive orchard experience, producing artisanal ciders and wines that authentically represent the fruit, and operating using the principles of sustainable agriculture that will enable our orchard to last for generations."

JMASH, Hilltop Orchards' cider line, is a blend of cider that perfectly walks the line between sweet and dry. Hilltop Orchards cold-presses its apples using the traditional rack and cloth method – a process of pressing fruit to separate juice from the pulp by layering crushed fruit between racks and cloths and applying pressure to extract the juice. From there, the fermentation process begins. JMASH ciders are also made with pinpoint carbonation, which is a carbonation process that produces a smoother, smaller, and more balanced bubble for an "airy effervescence," and aged in oak barrels, which improves the taste and quality of the cider, adding depth and nuance to the flavor.

Hilltop Orchards currently has four ciders listed on their site. Johnny Mash Original American Cider is made with estate-grown McIntosh and Northern Spy apples and slowly

aged in American Oak, which creates a semi-sweet, lightly toasted oak finish. The Farmhouse Hazy Cider is made with a variety of estate-grown heritage apples fermented in the traditional Herefordshire manner to produce a dry, crisp cider. The Coconut Lime Cider is made with creamy coconut and bright lime flavors, and will transport you to a tropical location with the first sip. The French Cidr  is made with Golden Russet apples and fermented with the apple skins on before being slowly aged in French oak, producing a rich and bittersweet cider with characteristics of overripe apples and a dry finish.

Left Bank Ciders

150 Water Street, Catskill, NY.
leftbankciders.com.

Owners Tim and Anna started Left Bank Ciders after working for the compost program at their neighborhood farmer's market. "Every Saturday morning, one of the big orchards would borrow a compost bin to fill with bruised, banged, and other 'bad apples' that they couldn't sell. Most looked just fine, and after doing all we could think of with these apples, week after week, we eventually decided to try our hand at hard cider," they write on the Left Bank Ciders website.

"Using a food processor and old pillowcases to grind and squeeze all we could from our formidable bushel of apples, we were left with about two gallons of juice, which we fermented,

aged, and bottled. It tasted great, so we kept at it, gathering castoff apples on Saturday, grinding and pressing on Sunday."

Left Bank Ciders produces "inventive, small-batch ciders that celebrate apples and their environment." Left Bank forages their own apples from wild and abandoned trees, as well as partners with local orchards to make the best hard ciders. Because Tim and Anna's roots are in compost, they aim to work towards simplicity and utilize regenerative practices whenever possible. While they do plan to operate their own orchard someday, for now, it's important that they help their local orchards thrive.

Left Bank Ciders are made with a combination of propagated orchard varieties blended with wild seedling apples that they pick themselves. Orchard apples offer a balanced structure – providing necessary pH levels and alcohol content to make a good-stable cider – while wild apples bring depth and complexity through a sometimes unpredictable mix of bitterness, acids, and tannins (naturally occurring compounds in apples that provide a dry, astringent sensation on the tongue). Left Bank Ciders tend to be complex and on the dry side, but they like to think that they make something for everyone.

Continued on next page..

Little Apple Cidery

178 Orchard Lane, Hillsdale, NY.
littleapplecidery.com.

Little Apple Cidery was started more than 40 years ago by founders Ron Bixby and Alanne Baerson. Throughout the years of restoring the orchard, Ron and Alanne discovered that the Northern Spy, Golden Russet, and Baldwin apples created a delicious cider. The vision to build a cidery was realized in 2015, and the rest is history!

The cider-making process is seasonal. Little Apple Cidery presses all of the apples during the harvest season, which runs roughly from September to November. Some of the pressed apples become part of Little Apple's 100% organic fresh cider to drink right away, but the majority of the juice is fermented to become cider.

Little Apple stores their fermented dry cider in bulk and packages small batch blends throughout the year as needed. While Little Apple does occasionally experiment with wild ferments (when naturally occurring yeasts do the job of fermentation rather than controlling the process), their ciders are typically fermented with intentional cultures. Little Apple's go-to yeasts are neutral strains that allow for maximum fruit expression and consistent flavor profiles.

"We ferment low and slow, at the bottom of a yeast's given temperature range, to retain desirable aromatics and allow for complex flavors to develop," explained Hayley Shine, an experienced brewer and cider maker from Chicago who joined the Little Apple team in 2019.

Primary fermentation typically occurs within a matter of weeks, and maturation takes place over months and sometimes years, depending on the cider. Hayley and her team conduct regular evaluation of the base ciders, blending them to achieve the target flavor profiles. "Our 'little batch' series is where we try out single varietal ciders or special blends, experimenting with product and process."

Hayley notes that Hillsdale is in the heart of "one of the world's premier apple-growing regions." One of Little Apple's favorite parts of their work is being able to share their ciders with the community. These days, they are proud to be part of their close-knit community by participating in the Copake-Hillsdale Farmers Market, events at local libraries, and Roe Jan Summerfest and serving their cider on tap at the Roe Jan Brewery, also located in Hillsdale, NY.

"We can't think of a more enjoyable and rewarding occupation than to plant and grow apple trees, unless it's making cider from the fruit of those trees," Hayley jokes. "We do both here at Little Apple Farm and Cidery because it's all about the apples. Our ciders are dry or semi-dry and made to celebrate the apple – so more like an apple wine, not sweet or blended with lots of other flavors."

Rose Hill Ferments

19 Rose Hill Farm, Red Hook, NY.
rosehillferments.com.

Rose Hill Ferments is located at Rose Hill Farm (a historic orchard founded in 1798) in Red Hook, NY. Since 2018, Rose Hill Ferments has worked hand-in-hand with the farm



Above: Rose Hill Ferments at Rose Hill Farm in Red Hook, NY.
Below: Left Bank Ciders in Catskill, NY.

to produce low-intervention wines, ciders, and co-ferments from primarily Rose Hill Farm grown fruit.

Low-intervention wines and ciders are produced with minimal interference in the process, which allows the natural characteristics of the fruit to shine through and is characterized by minimal additives, limited or no fining/filtering, and natural fermentation.

Rose Hill Ferments selects premium quality, whole fruit and facilitates fermentation without additives. Their low-intervention approach allows the fruits to express both themselves and the Hudson Valley terrier. Rose Hill Ferments does not add harsh chemicals such as malic or tartaric acids, or fining agents, and they also do not use the industrially common processes of filtering, pasteurizing, back-sweetening, or force carbonating. The processes of grinding, foot-stomping, pressing, and bottling are all done on a small scale with attention to detail.

Prior to crushing, grapes and other fruits are fermented in a carbon dioxide-rich environment which causes fermentation from the inside out due to the oxygen-free conditions. The carbon dioxide breaks down the sugars and malic acid within the fruit to produce alcohol, which contributes to the wine and cider's final flavors.

"We strive for zero waste and utilize our apples, plums, peaches, cherries, blueberries, and apricots for fermentation," Rose Hill Ferments


write on their website.

You might notice when you purchase a wine or cider from Rose Hill Ferments that you see some sediment in the bottom of the bottle or at the bottom of your glass. This is because Rose Hill Ferments does not filter most of their ciders or wines, which ensures that all of the flavor and textures stay in the bottle. If that's not your style, they do remove the sediment from some of their wines and ciders, including their premium cider, Selection Suspendue; their champagne-style cider, Quincunx; and some of their grape wines.


If you're not sure where to start, Rose Hill Ferments has a great guide to their products. If you're interested in apple cider, they recommend first trying the Kitchen Sink, their flagship product made with all Rose Hill Farm fruit. "Expect bright notes of lively citrus and a tropical finish," they say. A great introduction to their line of co-fermentations (the practice of fermenting two or more fruits at the same time when producing a wine or cider), is the Pearly Dewdrops. As far as wine goes, Rose Hill Ferments recommends starting with Bird Bath, their sparkling rosé. This beverage is a blend of Traminette, Valvin Muscat, and Cab Franc grape varieties and "produces a beautiful floral aroma and herbaceous palette." •

For more information about any of the above cideries, head over to their official websites.






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EARLY RAILROADING IN THE HUDSON VALLEY



By Jesse DeGroot
info@mainstreetmag.com

It was half-past six in the morning when the first-ever train out of New York City was drawn by horse from Chambers Street to its starting point on 31st Street, on its way to stops at 152nd Street, Yonkers, Hastings, Dobbs Ferry, Tarrytown, Ossining, Peekskill, Cold Spring, Fishkill, New Hamburg, Poughkeepsie, Hyde Park, Rhinebeck, Oakhill, Hudson, Stuyvesant, Castleton, and last but not least, Albany at 11:35am.

The date of this inaugural trip of the Hudson River Railroad along its entire length was Wednesday, October 3, 1851.

Prior to that blessed event, the train could get itself by rail to Poughkeepsie, whereupon passengers would disembark and climb aboard a steamboat to get to Tivoli, where their train ride could continue. When that final 26 miles of track was complete, the way was clear for the full 143-mile trip.

How did things even progress to that point?

For years, a railroad line from New York City to Albany was considered a troublesome and ridiculously expensive proposition, if not altogether downright preposterous. One of the primary obstacles, which off the top of the head one might surmise was the terrain involved, was the predominant

thinking of the time that train travel could hardly be expected to best that of steamboats. However, as it began to dawn on those who pondered such things, steamboats were great and all, yet then there was the matter of Mother Nature herself, as “during the winter months, averaging from 90 to 100 days of each year, the river is closed by the ice; and it proved a serious inconvenience, to say the least, for a channel, through which from one and a half to two millions of passengers were conveyed in the summer months, to be closed for the remainder of the year.”

To go forward, let's first wander on back to 1826 and John Stevens, who, according to the Library of Congress, is “considered to be the father of American railroads. In 1826, Stevens demonstrated the feasibility of steam locomotion on a circular experimental track constructed on his estate in Hoboken, New Jersey, three years before George Stephenson perfected a practical steam locomotive in England.”

Now let's leap ahead to 1831, when “on September 24, on what was known then as the Great Western Turnpike outside Albany, the first steam-powered passenger train in the country left from the spot now called the Point, at the juncture of Western and Madison avenues, on its first journey down 16 miles of track to Schenectady” at a top speed of 30 mph,

notes the Upper Madison Group.

Organized in 1826, the company known as the Mohawk & Hudson R.R. Co., the first railroad chartered in the state, was responsible for that short journey, which sounds as though it may have been an uneventful excursion for the 15 passengers and countless rubbernecks along the route. But no.

“The chimney belched burning embers of pitch pine, ‘which showered down on the dignitaries.’ One rider noted that passengers had to raise umbrellas to protect themselves against the smoke and fire, but after one mile the umbrellas all burned and the passengers engaged in ‘a general melee. Each whipping his neighbor to put out the fire.’ Along the route, the train spooked the horses of those who came to watch, sending spectators tumbling in every direction.”

Connecting to the Big Apple

Skipping ahead to 1842, the New York and Albany Railroad was busy cranking up its efforts to connect the two cities. A somewhat cryptic travelogue of sorts popped up in the August 3, 1842, *Morning Courier* and *New-York Enquirer*, in which its author outlines what for all intents and purposes seems to be something

Continued on next page ...

Left: Blue Hill Curve in Chatham, NY, is known as the sharpest curve on the Boston & Albany Railroad line.

Right: A replica of John Stevens' first steam carriage, which he developed in 1825. Credit: rgusrail.com.

of a celebratory/anticipatory trip – of a future completed rail line – from the Big Apple that wound up in Troy. Much of this trip comprised 44 miles of wagon rides, “in cars twenty-two, and on the steamboat six.”

“A delightful ride of sixteen miles brought us to North East, which is the highest summit of the road, and at this place again crossed over to the western side of the same beautiful valley, stopping at Cassaque for a short time,” states the writer. After a stop in Hillsdale for eats, the party proceeded to head “en route for Chatham, there to take the cars of the Western Rail Road for Greenbush.

“Up to Hillsdale, as far back as Owensville, our whole has been in sight nearly all the time of the Valley, bounded by high mountains, through which the road is intended to pass, and I cannot forbear repeating that of this entire distance, upwards of sixty miles, there is no portion of the road so difficult of construction, as have proved many miles on the best part of the Western Rail Road.”

ROI and planning

By this time, observes the LOC, “Planning and construction of railroads in the United States [had] progressed rapidly and haphazardly, without direction or supervision from the states that granted charters to construct them. Before 1840 most surveys were made for short passenger lines, which proved to be financially unprofitable.” Not good. After all, the whole idea here was to return something in the way of profits to the many already well-heeled investors in this burgeon-

ing new world of transportation and commerce.

Yet, as they say, the horse was out of the barn and the investors were seriously invested. Short rail lines had sprouted like crabgrass on the sixth fairway, although any sort of real planning, by states or otherwise, might best be described as haphazard, and these lines ultimately proved financially unprofitable. Overall, from 1826 to 1850, the NYS Legislature granted 151 charters with a total of 30 lines eventually developed, including the Albany to Buffalo route, composed of seven distinct companies that finished their work at different times.

In 1847, along came renowned civil engineer John B. Jervis (for whom Port Jervis is named), who surveyed a train line from Manhattan to Rensselaer – this would become the aforementioned portion of the Hudson River Railroad line that first extended from Manhattan to Poughkeepsie, then resume in Tivoli.

Curvature

According to Bradbury and Guild's *The Hudson River and the Hudson River Railroad – 1851*, the grades of the road would be described as quite regular, with 114 of the line dead level, five of its miles from one to five feet, 13 of 10 feet per mile, and five miles of 13 feet per mile inclination, the steepest grade on the road, leading to a total rise and fall along the route of but 213 feet. The shortest curve, at Peekskill station, is of 1,000 feet radius. Apart from that, no curves present less than a 2,000-foot radius, and more than one half in all are from



Above: Train gang. Below: Peekskill view. Credit for these two photos and Blue Hill Curve on previous page are unknown but are public domain.

4,000-10,000 feet radius. The whole number of curves is 279, for a total of 58½ miles of curved line.

Okay, perhaps things weren't quite as simple as they may sound. Following closely along the banks of the Hudson River, as the line did, rock excavation presented a sturdy challenge. The total amount of rock cuttings would be calculated at two million cubic yards, with the Highland division (Peekskill to Fishkill, a distance of sixteen miles,) calling for more than 425,000 cubic yards of excavated rock.

“At Poughkeepsie the line passes through the lower part of the place, all the roads leading to the river being carried over the railroad. North of this station are two heavy sections,” notes the Bradbury and Guild piece. “Indeed, of the twenty-six miles extending from Poughkeepsie to Tivoli, the north line of Dutchess County, seven are rock cuttings.

A line was originally surveyed from Poughkeepsie to Albany, passing through the country away from the river, in some places being as much as seven miles distant; but, for various reasons, it was abandoned.”

Mergers

In 1853, along came the formation of the New York Central Railroad when Albany industrialist and Mohawk Valley Railroad owner Erastus Corning managed to unite the Albany and Schenectady Railroad, Utica and Schenectady Railroad, Syracuse and

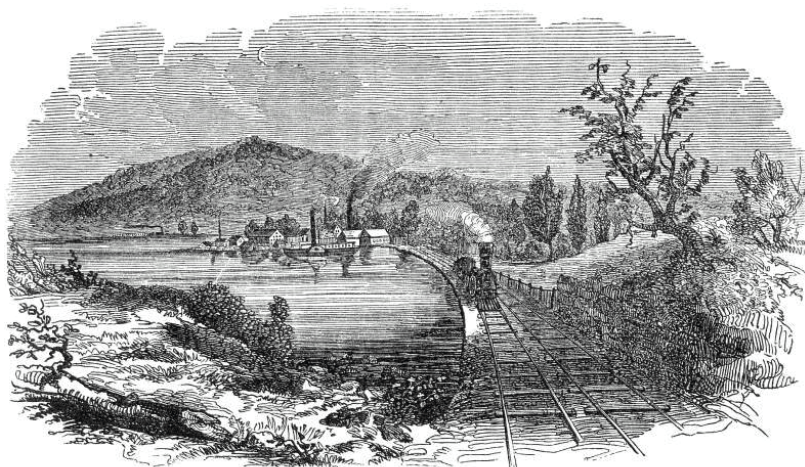
Utica Railroad, Auburn and Syracuse Railroad, Buffalo and Rochester Railroad, Schenectady and Troy Railroad, Rochester, Lockport, and Niagara Falls Railroad, Buffalo and Lockport Railroad, Mohawk Valley Railroad, and Syracuse and Utica Direct Railroad into one system, and on March 17, 1853 executives and stockholders of each company agreed to merge, noted trains-and-railroads.com.

Corning, who would also serve four terms as Albany mayor, was the New York Central's president until 1864, when it was off to the races as “Cornelius Vanderbilt won control of the company, after beating down the Central's stock, and combined it with his New York and Hudson railroads running from Manhattan to Albany.”

The system would ultimately grow to the extent that it could boast of 10,000 miles (16,090 km) of track linking New York with Boston, Montreal, Chicago, and St. Louis.

If you can't arrange for a cruise on the Hudson River, the next best thing might be to ride the rails adjacent to it, and perhaps along the way spend a little time contemplating what was required to get it to this point. •

Sources: *New York Almanack*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Upper Madison Group*, *Catskill Archive*, *Library of Congress*, *Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer*, and *trains-and-railroads.com*.



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TIKTOK SENSATION PATTIE EHSAEI SHARES CRITICAL FINANCIAL FREEDOM TOOLS AND LIFE-CHANGING EMPOWERMENT IN HER NEW BOOK

Never Date a Broke Dude

By Lindsey Clark
lindsey@mainstreetmag.com

Having migrated with her family from Iran to the United States at only seven years old, author, content creator, and keynote speaker Pattie Ehsaei strived from a young age to achieve financial independence while carving out a career for herself.

Through her dynamic experiences as a lawyer and manager in financial services, she's developed a sharp array of skills for building financial independence as a source of power and protection, growing wealth through a five-account system, approaching careers with practicality and decorum, rejecting outdated views of women and money, and finding partners who match one's own ambition and commitment.

Pattie is eager to share what she's learned in a whole new way, building upon the millions she reaches on TikTok as the "Duchess of Decorum" and the many she's able to teach through her speaking, courses, and coaching. *Never Date a Broke Dude: The Financial Freedom Playbook* was released on May 6 of this year. This in-depth guide features a mixture of personal stories and concrete tips to help you create financial independence in your

own life while also fostering a career and healthy relationships that align with your goals and boost your confidence. Now, Pattie shares all about what inspired this book and what she hopes readers will take away from her stories and advice.

I was able to catch up with Pattie recently and learn more about her life, writing, and advice.

How does writing fit into your life?

I've always had a knack for writing, honed sharply during my years in law school, where precision and persuasion became second nature. But my true passion lies in storytelling that leaves a lasting impact. Empowering people, especially women, to seize control of their financial futures has been my driving force, and writing emerged as a natural extension of that mission. After building a million-strong TikTok following as the "Duchess of Decorum," I saw the power of words to connect and inspire. Writing *Never Date a Broke Dude* became my megaphone, a way to blend my legal and financial expertise with my personal journey, delivering a message that resonates and drives real change. For me, writing isn't just a lifelong love; it's a tool to spark transformation and amplify impact.

What was it like sharing your vulnerable, tragic, and ultimately very personal experiences with financial independence while honoring your mother's memory?

Sharing the importance of financial freedom is deeply personal for me because it's tied to my mother's story. She couldn't leave a tough situation due to financial dependence, and it

cost her everything, including her life. Writing about that in *Never Date a Broke Dude* and dedicating the book to her was both heartbreaking and healing. It meant baring my soul – talking about her loss, my parents' struggles, and how those shaped me. It wasn't easy. It felt raw, like reopening old wounds, but it was worth it to honor her memory and help others avoid that kind of pain. Being vulnerable in the book let me connect with readers on a real level, showing them that financial independence isn't just about money, it's about safety, self-respect, and freedom.

Is there anything else you'd like to share about what inspired you to write *Never Date a Broke Dude* and what motivated you to embark on this process of sharing your story and advice?

I wrote *Never Date a Broke Dude* because I've seen too many women, including myself in the past, make financial and romantic choices that held them back. My own dating missteps, combined with my mother's tragic experience, lit a fire in me to create a guide that's both a wake-up call and a playbook for success. I was inspired by the idea of helping women become the "rich man" of their own dreams, challenging the old narrative that we need a guy to save us. My TikTok platform, where I've connected with millions, showed me people are hungry for straight-talking advice, and that motivated me to turn my insights into a book. Sharing stories like my ayahuasca-induced revelations or the heavy stuff, like murder-suicide tied to financial dependence, wasn't easy, but I wanted to show the real stakes of ignoring financial red flags.

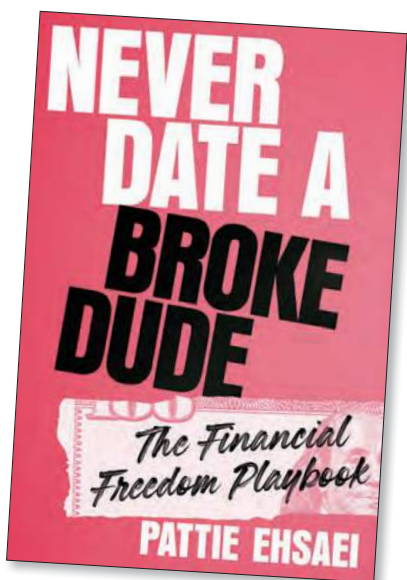
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Above: Pattie Ehsaei. Photo by Greg Crowder.

Left: Pattie's new book. Photo by Grand Central Publishing / Balance.

All photos courtesy of Pattie Ehsaei.



What was your process when it came to putting your book together and providing both your own stories and your financial freedom roadmap?

My approach to writing *Never Date a Broke Dude* was to create a clear, actionable playbook that felt like a conversation with a big sister who doesn't sugarcoat things. I started by mapping out the four key areas I wanted to cover: the basics, money, work, and power (aka self-worth). I drew from my life, my parents' struggles, my own dating disasters, and my 20 years in finance to anchor the book with real stories. Then, I layered in practical tools, like my five-account system for managing cash flow, paying off debt, fixing credit, and investing with just \$100. My process was about blending those raw, personal moments with step-by-step advice, keeping the tone no-nonsense and relatable, like my TikTok videos. I wanted every reader to feel like they could start small and still win big.

How do you hope this book will help readers on both a financial and personal level?

I want *Never Date a Broke Dude* to give readers the tools to build a financial safety net and the confidence to demand more from their relationships and themselves. Financially, I hope it helps people master budgeting, saving, investing, and career moves so their money stays theirs. On a personal level, I want readers to see their worth, set higher standards, and never settle for less than they deserve. The book's for anyone, but I wrote it especially for ambitious young women, daughters, granddaughters, nieces, and goddaughters, who've been told they can't handle money and they need a man to succeed. I've had readers, even men, say it made them rethink their beliefs about relationships, which is huge. Whether you're starting from scratch or leveling up, I want this book to be your guide to freedom and power.

Why do you think it's important to share this message with the world, especially today?

My main goal was to create a definitive playbook for navigating love and money, helping readers avoid the trap of financial dependence and make smarter choices in relationships.

Choosing a partner is the biggest financial decision you'll ever make, and I want people to go in with their eyes open. Today, with rising costs, economic uncertainty, and shifting gender roles, financial literacy is more critical than ever. Women especially need to hear that they can be financially independent and don't have to rely on anyone. My mother's story drives home why this matters; her lack of options cost her her life. Sharing this message is about saving others from that fate and building a world where everyone, especially women, has the tools to thrive.

How does your social media presence and other services, like your courses, coaching, and speaking, contribute to your mission?

My social media, especially TikTok where I'm the "Duchess of Decorum," is the heart of my mission to teach financial literacy and empower women. With a million followers, I share blunt, funny content, like telling people to stop blowing money on Amazon or Sephora and start investing \$100 a month to let compound interest work its magic. I mix in personal stories, financial tips, and big-sister advice to pick partners who match your drive. My courses, coaching, and speaking gigs build on this, offering deeper dives into budgeting, investing, and career strategies, though I keep the details flexible to meet people where they are. My content's all about making finance approachable, calling out excuses, and inspiring women to own their power.

Do you have any words of advice you'd like to share with our readership and those who might be interested in your experiences with financial freedom?

Start small, but start now. With consistent investing and compound interest, \$100 a month can grow into real wealth. See financial independence as

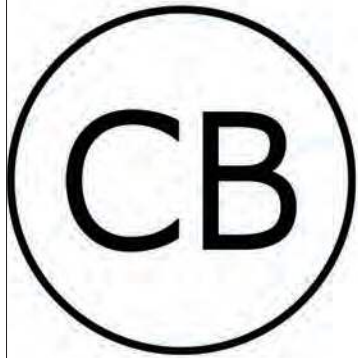


your ultimate act of self-respect; it's your safety net, no matter what life throws at you. Choose partners who match your ambition, not just your bank account, because a true teammate lifts you up. Don't be afraid to fail; it's how you grow. And push back against anyone who says you can't handle money; you're more capable than you know. Take charge of your finances and relationships, and you'll build a life with options, security, and power.

Is there anything else you'd like to share that hasn't already been covered in the above questions?

I'd love for readers to know that *Never Date a Broke Dude* isn't just for women. Its lessons on money and relationships are universal. The book's mix of humor, tough love, and real talk makes it a fun but life-changing read. My mother's memory drives everything I do, and I hope this book sparks a movement where financial freedom becomes the norm, not the exception. •

To learn more about Pattie and order your copy of Never Date a Broke Dude: The Financial Freedom Playbook, please go to her website, pattiehsaei.com. You can find Pattie on TikTok and Instagram @duchessofdecorum.

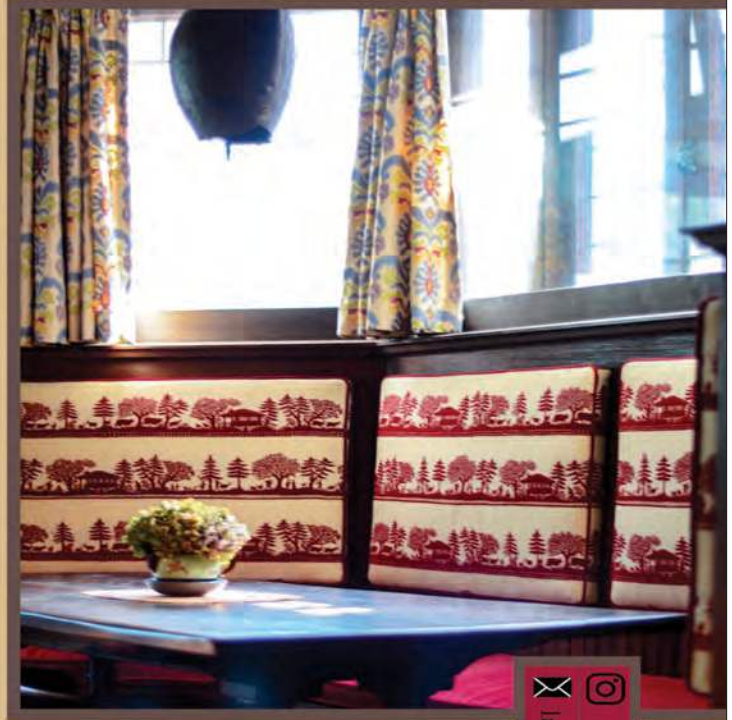


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TurnPark Art Space



By Dominique DeVito
info@mainstreetmag.com

September and October are months made for getting outside. The hottest days are (almost) behind us, and the shorter, cooler days are still on the horizon. The air is clear and crisp. There's nothing better than getting out to explore this amazing part of the world we live in.

A place at the top of my list in every season, but especially late summer, is TurnPark Art Space in West Stockbridge, MA. I learned about it shortly after it opened in 2017, and was enchanted from the moment I pulled into the parking lot on my first visit. It has a vibe.

Don't tell anyone!

Now in its ninth season, TurnPark has come into its own in so many ways, and yet it is always seeking to grow. It has a devoted following, and its long-time admirers are often more interested in keeping it a secret than offering it up to bigger audiences. But there's a joy in sharing it, too, and like a child whose enthusiasm for something can't be ignored, TurnPark will tug at you until you yield. From there, well, its charms will bring you back again and again.

What the heck is it about the place that's so amazing? Lots of things.

It's a beautiful park. Come just to walk through it and marvel at the varied terrain. It's a 16-acre property that was once a marble quarry, so there are lots of rocky outcrops and backdrops. There are also open expanses and copses of young trees, and you often feel like you're in a secret garden – but not one that's uber-groomed. It's a wild-ish place where you really feel free to be you. If that sounds odd or pretentious, well, so be it. You'll understand once you've been there.

It's a marvelous sculpture park. It was founded by art collectors Igor Gomberg and Katya Brezgunova. They never forgot an experience of visiting with the Russian artist Nikolai Silis at his studio in Moscow, where his studio was, for them, “a unique place bursting with creative energy, a meeting place, a melting pot.” They were further inspired by Silis's telling them that “art is the only way to recapture cosmos from chaos.” It became a kind of mission for them: How could they create such a space and place in their own lives?

They were living in Boston and exploring what else was possible for their artistic callings. When they discovered the quarry property in West Stockbridge – on Moscow Road, of all

things – they knew it was where their mission had to play out.

A place to elevate

Igor and Katya share, “Our dream, ignited by Silis's vision, was to create a place for an artistic experiment, a place that would elevate us and our children towards the terrains of new discoveries, a place that could trigger artistic growth and development. If you are curious, open-minded or just are a lover of life or a lover of art, we invite you to join us in the making of TurnPark Art Space!”

The first piece of art they installed in the park was a Nikolai Silis sculpture of Don Quixote. For repeat visitors, coming upon the piece is like visiting an old friend. He's still there! And on repeat visits you'll discover that while the sculpture hasn't changed much, you may have.

TurnPark features a permanent and rotating collection of modern and contemporary sculptures. While Igor and Katya have a special connection to and interest in Eastern European and Russian émigré artists who are known for rejecting the state-sanctioned art of the USSR – and their works are part of the Park – there are

Left: TurnPark features performance pieces enchant people of all ages.

Right: A sculpture of Don Quixote by Nikolai Silis was one of the first pieces installed at the quarry-turned-art park, and remains on permanent exhibition.

Continued on next page ...

works by American artists and artists from around the world. Seeing the diversity of works and artists in the outdoor environment brings that much more to the works.

Being there

It's an architectural marvel. Once you're parked, you enter through a building called the Gate House. It's a space that includes indoor galleries, an amphitheater, restrooms, and a gift shop. It was designed by Alexander Konstantinov, a Moscow-based sculptor and architect. While Konstantinov developed the master plan, it was Grigori Fateyev of Art Forms Architecture who was hands-on in leading the development and construction of the Gate House. It's a piece of art in and of itself.

But wait, there's more!

Besides the art throughout the park, TurnPark is a showcase for contemporary artists in its galleries. Through October are a couple of shows.

In the Gate House gallery is a show of the contemporary mixed-media art-

ist John Clarke's works titled "Passing Through." Clarke combines drawing, painting, photography, and sound to create multi-layered landscapes. In this exhibition, the source of the sound will be what is generated by the nearby Massachusetts Turnpike. Clarke will be working at TurnPark so that visitors can experience his creative process. (Contact TurnPark directly or follow on social media to learn more about watching Clarke in action.)

Also on display through October in the Garage Gallery will be a show called "Daily Deviation" by Martine Kaczynski. The show is billed as "a selection of work which challenges and navigates our psychological interaction with architecture and the semiotics of the constructed world." Kaczynski grew up in London. Her parents were Holocaust survivors who fled Germany and, upon entering England, formed a community in London. Kaczynski describes that environment as having a "haunting history ... [that] left an indelible mark on who I am and how I see the world."

She says that, "The work is my reaction to those very things that should offer a sense of security, yet do the opposite, and set into motion the varied complexities best described by the word 'unheimlich,' which literally means not homely."

Alive and moving

TurnPark is a performance space. There's live music and theater; dance performances; art talks and film screenings; community and family events – all as creative and quirky and magical as the park on any day.

TurnPark hosts an outdoor film series on the last Thursday of every month through the summer, concluding with one on September 25. The series is called "Movies That Can Change Who You Are," and the films are chosen by Fima Furman, who is the head of the Boston Cinema Lovers Club. Shown in the park's beautiful amphitheater (cushions and blankets are provided on a first-come, first-served basis, and popcorn and beverages are available for purchase), September's selection is Jim Jarmusch's



2003 film, *Coffee and Cigarettes*. It's a collection of vignettes celebrating connections to the shared ritual of coffee and cigarettes.

On Friday, October 3, visitors are invited to *Turtle Island* – an outdoor performance celebrating the Haudenosaunee Creation Story that will include an inflatable puppet brought to life through traditional dance and storytelling.

The magic of TurnPark is magnified again on October 11, when the Fairy House Festival is happening. Fairy houses designed by local artists and community members will be set up throughout the park, and there will be interactive workshops, storytelling sessions, and live performances all day to accentuate the whimsy and wonder of fairy houses.

What are you waiting for?

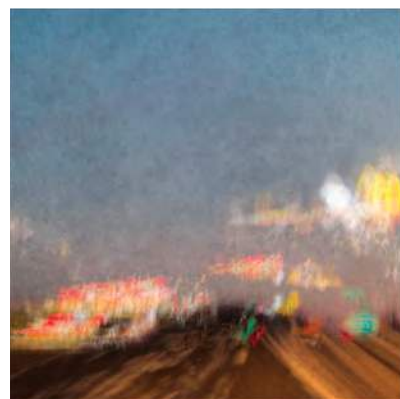
A beautiful park. A provocative yet peaceful sculpture park. A performance space. A gathering place. A creative community. An oasis of places. All this and more is TurnPark Art Space. Oh, and it's in the charming town of West Stockbridge, MA. In addition to stores and restaurants worth visiting, the town has a farmer's market on Thursdays from 3 to 6pm until October 2. •

TurnPark Art Space is a member of the American Alliance of Museums. The address is 2 Moscow Road, West Stockbridge, MA. Follow the park on Facebook and Instagram, or go to the website at turnpark.com. Learn more about West Stockbridge at visitweststockbridge.com.



Above: The grounds of TurnPark are a magical wonderland of paths through woods, views that open up onto meadows, a natural amphitheater, the backdrop of the quarry, and of course, art works of all kinds.

Left: The artists John Clarke (top) and Martine Kaczynski (bottom) will be featured in special exhibitions through October.



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Author and journalist Rolando Pujol takes readers on a journey through vintage treasures & roadside Americana in his new book

Getting to know "The Retrologist"

By Lindsey Clark
lindsey@mainstreetmag.com

Author of *The Great American Retro Road Trip: A Celebration of Roadside Americana* – and executive producer for digital content, innovation, and strategy at WABC-TV Channel 7 – Rolando Pujol first received praise for a book he had written when he was in grade school. “In formal and informal capacities, I’ve been a writer my entire life,” he explains.

During his time at a parochial school in North Tarrytown (now Sleepy Hollow), NY, Rolando wrote and published a short story, two books on religion, and one book on astronomy. He recounts these early memories of writing as not only elucidating his passion for the written word, but also giving him first-hand experience with the realities of the craft.

“I’m being exceedingly generous when I say they were ‘books’ that were ‘published,’” Rolando jokes. To show his encouragement and that he was impressed by his work, Rolando’s father typed up his son’s efforts, and the two worked together to bind them into small books with cardboard paper, staples, and tape. “One of my elementary school teachers read the first three to the class and affirmed my humble efforts,” muses Rolando.

However, the next year, Rolando received what he refers to as an early example of rejection. When Rolando presented a different teacher with his

final childhood book, she dismissed it, tossing it in her desk’s junk drawer. As time went on, it was clear she had forgotten about it. Rolando asked for the book back at the end of the school year, only to have the copy returned to him scuffed and ink-ridden.

While that incident stuck in Rolando’s memory, he clarifies, “That early encouragement from my dad and a kindly nun was enough to propel me forward, and the indifference shown by the other teacher was a lesson, too, that not everyone is going to appreciate what you do.”

A journey through journalism

Like many writers in their formative years, Rolando explains, he spent his time “looking for any excuse to write.” He points out how in his teens, from showcasing his writings in the church’s Sunday bulletins to writing and editing for his high school paper, he encountered plenty of opportunities to do so.

Once he went to college, he wrote and edited for Columbia University’s *Daily Spectator* while majoring in history. He owes much of his academic inspiration to history professors Alan Brinkley, Eric Foner, and James Shenton. He also notes journalism idols Charles Kuralt, Charles Osgood, Jack Perkins, and Bob Dotson, who clarified the type of journalism Rolando was eager to pursue.

“It should come as no surprise that my work has primarily centered around Americana-based storytelling, tales from the road, interesting people and places, and pockets of storytelling where history meets journalism,” he states. “The two fields are one and the same, with journalism the first and most crucial step in the documentation of history.”



Above: Rolando Pujol.

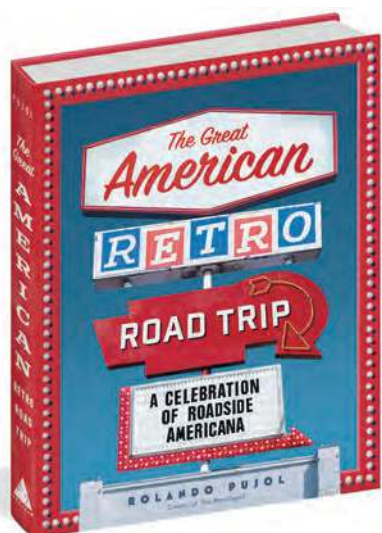
Left: Rolando’s new book.

All photos courtesy of Rolando Pujol.

While still in college, Rolando took his first job as a newsroom assistant at *The New York Times*, a role that he credits as not only making a significant impression on him, but also focusing his attention on print, despite the emerging digital scene circa 1995. “I never really considered any other career path: journalism, in some form, it would be,” says Rolando.

Counting himself fortunate to have worked for the Long Island and New York editions of *Newsday*, as well as *The New York Daily News*, Rolando also worked locally as a news editor at what is now *The Journal News* in White Plains, NY. He observes, “Soon, I found my subjects of interest weren’t just limited to news, and I began to write about history, preservation, arts, and culture.”

Indeed, while serving as managing editor at *amNewYork*, Rolando began writing about these new topics, and also launched several blogs. From there, he went on to work at a number of television stations, including WNBC-TV – where he contributed a



Continued on next page ...



regular on-air segment, *Hidden City*, featuring content reminiscent of that in his new book – and WPIX-TV. Now, he works as the executive producer for digital content, innovation, and strategy at WABC-TV Channel 7.

Formative, familiar inspirations

Just as writing and journalism impacted Rolando's youth, so did his upbringing in Sleepy Hollow. Growing up in the setting of Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* left a resonant impression on Rolando; he remembers learning everything he could about Irving as a child. "Growing up in Sleepy Hollow, NY, was a seminal experience because the region is suffused with history and lore. You live among the ghosts," he asserts.

As a child of Cuban immigrants, Rolando also notes how this impacted his family's relationship with the country around them. "Growing up in a family of immigrants instilled in me both a special pride and a perpetual sense of otherness, and endless questions about my 'Americanness,'" Rolando describes.

This tension is encapsulated in a 1977 incident where Rolando's father had the door slammed in his face when trying to introduce himself to a neighbor. However, Rolando clarifies, this ignorance was not the complete picture of his experiences growing up, and much of the good is owed to the types of places featured in his book.

"Many people were deeply welcoming and gave me trust in and admiration for our American system and instilled in me a desire to be a productive part of it," recalls Rolando. "I saw roadside Americana – the Howard Johnson's, the McDonald's with their McDonaldland PlayPlaces, the old candy shops – as a vivid and beautiful manifestation of America, and we were always welcomed in those places."

Rolando only grew to love and appreciate these spots even more as he got older. "These places were a symbol of an America I could be a part of," he points out. "There's a reason the subtitle of the book is *A Celebration of Roadside Americana*. There's a lot to celebrate about these places, and they often don't get their due."

Launching "The Retrologist"

With this deep, nostalgic interest blossomed a motivation to capture and share stories about all that is retro and roadside. It wasn't until the spring of 2012, however, that "The Retrologist" began in earnest, with the launch of Rolando's Tumblr blog and the start of his Instagram posts.

He decided to dedicate a new space, beyond his Twitter account, to writing, sharing, and building community, specifically related to his interest in vintage or old-fashioned places he's come across, whether they be active businesses or long-gone remnants of what used to be. Discovering and telling the stories of these places, and sharing them with an audience, is at the core of "The Retrologist," a neologism he aptly chose to describe his work as "an unofficial expert in studying and celebrating the past, those things 'retro' or vintage."

Rolando adds that what started out as merely a curiosity quickly became a new calling, and skyrocketed thanks to social media; his largest following is on Instagram where he has over 94,000 followers. "When I doubled down on Instagram as a creative outlet in 2019, the account took off, and it soared during the pandemic, when my photos and mus-

ings from my travels resonated with readers trapped at home, restless and full of wanderlust," Rolando recalls.

What exactly does Rolando mean when he refers to "roadside Americana," you might ask? Whether it's "quirky roadside attractions like giant coffee pots, ducks, shoes," or "iconic pit stops like South of the Border, off I-95, with a kitschy theme and billboards along the way to build excitement and anticipation," these spots and landmarks can consist of just about anything vintage or nostalgic that's meant to grab your attention and make you stop by.

Curious mom-and-pop stops or "world's biggest" creations also fit the bill. Rolando notes that their being roadside relates in large part to the development of these places parallel to the car and national highway system. "But," he notes, "they can just as well be on Main Streets, with homey barber shops and cute ice cream parlors that add charm to American downtowns."

The looming potential for a book

Rolando explains that from the very beginning, he was always encouraged to write a book about this work, to the point where he began to worry about his capability, or if the concept was even viable. In his eyes, Instagram posting and book writing were on two different planes.

Rolando recognizes that this angst persisted despite the support of many people, from an old boss to an old newspaper colleague. This colleague not only offered constant support on Facebook, but in his last exchange with Rolando after the colleague became terminally ill, he once again encouraged him to write a book. Rolando acknowledges him by name in *The Great American Retro Road Trip*, and was deeply touched by this final interaction with him. "Truly, I did not lack encouragement," Rolando observes.

In 2022, Rolando launched his Substack. Also around this time, he began considering a book pitch for publishers. Then, he says, "the moment of kismet happened."

An email from an Artisan Books (Hachette Book Group imprint) editor inquiring about Rolando's interest in writing a book landed in his inbox. Shortly after, Rolando signed a contract to write *The Great American Retro Road Trip* and recognized just how much his past efforts had culminated in this fulfillment of a childhood dream. "I soon realized I had been writing this book my whole life," he explains. "Now, I had a deadline."

Where to next?

Rolando describes his research for "The Retrologist" and his book as "endless and constant." Having built digital maps for every state, as well as many countries, Rolando plots places he wants to visit and creates ever-growing lists that draw upon a variety of sources: websites, articles, social media posts, Google Street View, tips from readers and commenters, or random strikes of inspiration, like a place spotted in the background of a TV news report.

While he likes to keep a basic itinerary when going on a trip, Rolando also lets recommendations or discoveries along the way change his plans. On a 2022 Montana trip, he explains, "I ended up blowing up my plans after multiple people suggested I visit the Sip 'n Dip in Great Falls. The tiki-style bar, since 1962, features 'mermaids' swimming behind the bar. I HAD to see this, and the location made the cut in my book, of course."

With such a wealth of places he's explored, Rolando found that in addition to balancing travel and writing for his book with a demanding, news cycle-reliant career, it was challenging choosing which locations to feature. *The Great American Retro Road Trip* encompasses every contiguous state (the lower 48; he hopes to include Alaska and Hawaii in the next book).

You'll not only find plenty of roadside attractions, like the Flanders, NY, Big Duck or the Newark, OH, office building shaped like a massive Longaberger Basket, but you'll also stumble upon a variety of quirky gems like a parade of dinosaurs, fiberglass Muffler Men, and the world's smallest Buc-ee's, situated deep in the Texan desert. This is, of course, in addition to a slew of ice cream shops, drive-ins, diners, and more.

"Among those nearest to my heart," reflects Rolando, "is South of the Border in Dillon, SC, which I first visited as a four-year-old during my first trip with my family, and Wall Drug in Wall, SD, which was a stop on my first solo cross-country road trip when I was 25."

The significance of preserving roadside Americana

The Great American Retro Road Trip is not just about the places themselves, but understanding what it means to appreciate the built environment on a deeper level (using what Rolando calls "Retrologist Spectacles"). He seeks to encourage a sense of joy, fascination, and wonder in everyday life: "You can find curiosities and hidden stories in the most pedestrian strip mall."

In bringing about this sense of optimism and curiosity, Rolando also hopes "to help us all understand how much we have in common," which he recognizes is crucial now more than ever.

Part and parcel of this aim is supporting the small shops and businesses featured in the book. Rolando hopes to celebrate and preserve their characteristics and stories amidst an increasing homogenization in the country's retail landscape that's only been worsened by online shopping. He also wants to ensure that these spots will stay open for years to come.



"Buying the book and finding out about these places is a wonderful way to then get out there and support these shops. I want these places to survive for the enjoyment and enrichment of people not even born yet," Rolando states. "This is exactly what is at stake: historic institutions that give our communities character, that add layers of richness that cannot be replaced when they are gone." •

To learn more about Rolando and explore "The Retrologist," please visit his Substack rolandopujol.substack.com and follow him on Instagram @rolandopujol. To order your copy of *The Great American Retro Road Trip: A Celebration of Roadside Americana*, which was released on June 24, 2025, please visit hachettebookgroup.com/titles/rolando-pujol/the-great-american-retro-road-trip/9781648293719/.

All photos with this article: Excerpted from *The Great American Retro Road Trip* by Rolando Pujol (Artisan Books). Copyright © 2025. Photographs by Rolando Pujol.





Amenia Free Library

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The Amenia Free Library Association was established in 1919, when members of the association were able to borrow materials for \$1 per year. In August of 1935, the association met to outline the plan, under which the Works Progress Administration would build a new library building. It opened officially in 1937. The Amenia Free Library provides all kinds of services including printing, copying, faxing, and scanning; computers, free wifi, and hotspots; chairs for resting and tables for working; books, DVDs, audiobooks, magazines; and more. “In our town, we’re the only library! But we are in a library system with 66 other libraries, so lending between libraries is easy and convenient,” says Victoria Herow, the library director. “We are very fortunate to have a library in just about every town in our region. I never thought I’d be in libraries, let alone a public one, but it has been a great opportunity! We meet new people every day and see our regulars quite often. It is great to introduce new patrons to our library, what we offer, and all the opportunities available with your library card.” Going forward, Victoria hopes to see public libraries continuing to flourish. “There is always something for everyone to discover at the library. Whether you’re looking to research, read the latest best-seller, or cool off in the air conditioning, libraries are essential and of immense value in our communities.”



Scoville Memorial Library

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scovillelibrary.org

The Scoville Memorial Library opened the doors of its current location in July of 1895. The three libraries that were started in Salisbury in earlier years were incorporated into its collections, including the Caleb Bingham Library, the first in the country to receive public funds for its operations. The Scoville Memorial Library works overtime to meet the growing community need for quiet workspace and provide inspiring adult and children’s programming; an ever-growing collection of current books, newspapers, magazines, movies, digital content, museum passes; and a Library of Things, including useful items like tools, crafting kits, and tech equipment. Scoville is the busiest little library in Northwest Connecticut, with an average of 40,000 visitors each year! “We’re proud to be the heart and hub of the community – a welcoming place where people gather, connect with others who share their interests, and access the resources they need to inform, enrich, and enhance their lives,” shares Karin Goodell, the library director. “We are always learning, and we value community collaboration and input to inform and improve our services.”



Berkshire Agricultural Ventures

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Launched as a community nonprofit in 2017, Berkshire Agricultural Ventures was founded through a passion for helping farmers and protecting the region’s farmlands. Today, BAV continues its founders’ crucial mission, offering farmers and food producers vital support services while helping to foster a thriving local food economy. Through integrated services that allow clients to not only solve business issues, but also access low-cost capital and grow, BAV works closely with farmers over time and meets their evolving needs. “BAV provides one-on-one business assistance, flexible lending, and relevant resources/support to farmers and food producers in Columbia, Dutchess, Litchfield, and Berkshire counties,” the organization explains. BAV is all about building relationships with farms and producers, and their passionate, knowledgeable staff focuses on clients’ specific needs and opportunities. They strive to contribute to farms’ successes and determine areas of impact that can strengthen the local food system as a whole. “A client recently told us, ‘I would not have the farm I have today if it wasn’t for BAV. They allow farms to grow and feed the community.’ It’s deeply rewarding to know that BAV makes a real difference to farmers.” Looking forward, BAV wants to open up new market opportunities for clients, while working toward a bigger picture goal: creating a more equitable, resilient local food system that can benefit everyone.



Elevated Gatherings

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One day in December 2023, Kira Proper woke up with an idea: to combine her own background in the cannabis industry and her husband’s professional experience as a chef. The couple became business partners, and Elevated Gatherings launched in April 2024. Kira explains, “Looking back, I’m a little surprised it took me so long to come up with it!” They bring the restaurant experience to clients’ homes or short-term rentals, often for groups of eight to twelve people, or with staffing for larger events as necessary. By taking care of all the details, from the shopping and cooking to the serving of a customized meal, Elevated Gatherings not only delivers a restaurant-level event, but for those who are so inclined, they’ll even add a little something extra (cannabis)! The business focuses on fresh, simple food, purchased directly from local farmers as much as possible, while bringing in a unique cannabis infusion aspect that makes Elevated Gatherings truly stand out in the crowd. “We love seeing our clients get to really enjoy their own events,” says Kira. “It’s a lot of work to host and cook and serve and clean up, and we do all of the work so all they have to do is relax and have a great time.” Elevated Gatherings plans to continue their current business model – private dinners in people’s homes – with the hopes of expanding into larger events as well.



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