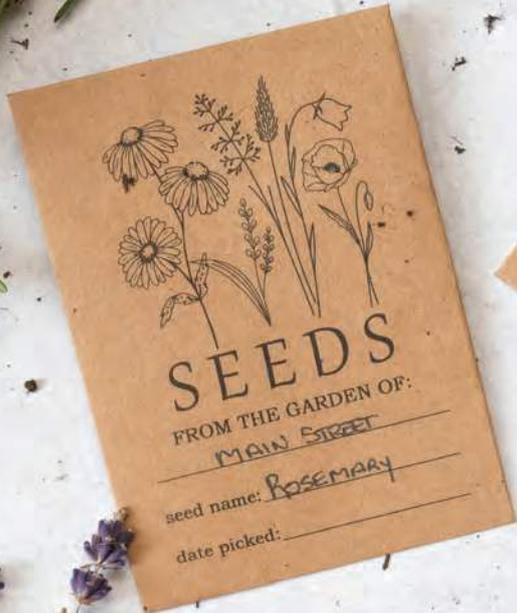


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MARCH MADNESS

March madness has begun, and I'm not talking about basketball. March is a busy month, and we begin by changing the clocks! Can I just tell you how excited I am when we finally change those clocks and it stays bright out until 6 and 7pm? It makes a world of difference.

Shortly after that we're hit with the Ides of March and St. Patrick's Day. Okay, in all fairness it's not like we're celebrating the Ides of March per se, but around here we actually associate something entirely different with March 15. You see, it's our anniversary! That's right, this March 15 marks *Main Street Magazine's* thirteenth birthday! Whoop whoop! The magazine is officially a teenager. It's crazy – I know.

It's certainly been a wild journey from the days when Ashley and I started, quite literally knocking on doors in the dead of winter soliciting advertising. And we could not have done this without the help of so many people, way too many to name. But I'd like to take this moment to shout out every advertiser, supporter, reader, contributor, writer, photographer, editor ... literally every single person who has had a hand in helping us reach this milestone. It takes a village, and *Main Street* is certainly a collaborative effort. From the depths of my heart, I want to thank every one of you who has taken the time to help and support us. It's thanks to people like you that we have had the success that we have had and are able to do what we do every single day. For that, thank you!

With that all said, we've got another banger here for you. This issue, let me tell you, it's got so many great stories! My amazing writers have really gone above and beyond yet again. So can we just take a moment to give them some love and appreciation? Because their stories always capture my attention, and I always learn a little something new. To me that is an indicator of success.

Sure, some stories resonate more than others, but my incredibly talented writers always put their all into the stories they produce for your reading pleasure, and I consider myself so lucky to have them on our team. So with that said, I hope that while you flip through these pages that you too learn something and enjoy the stories to be found here.

I'm not sure how we're going to celebrate our birthday this year; we're open to suggestions! But thank you all so much for helping us get to where we are. As always, thank you for reading.

– Thorunn Kristjansdottir



MARCH 2026

We're not sure about you, but we're ready for spring! We're ready for a pop of green, to dig in the dirt, feel the warm sun on our faces, and to see everything come back to life after this long, cold winter. Happy spring!

Photo by
Olivia Valentine

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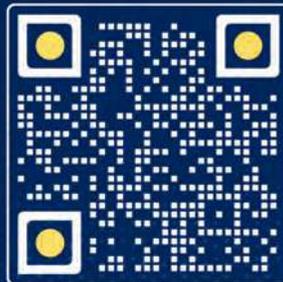
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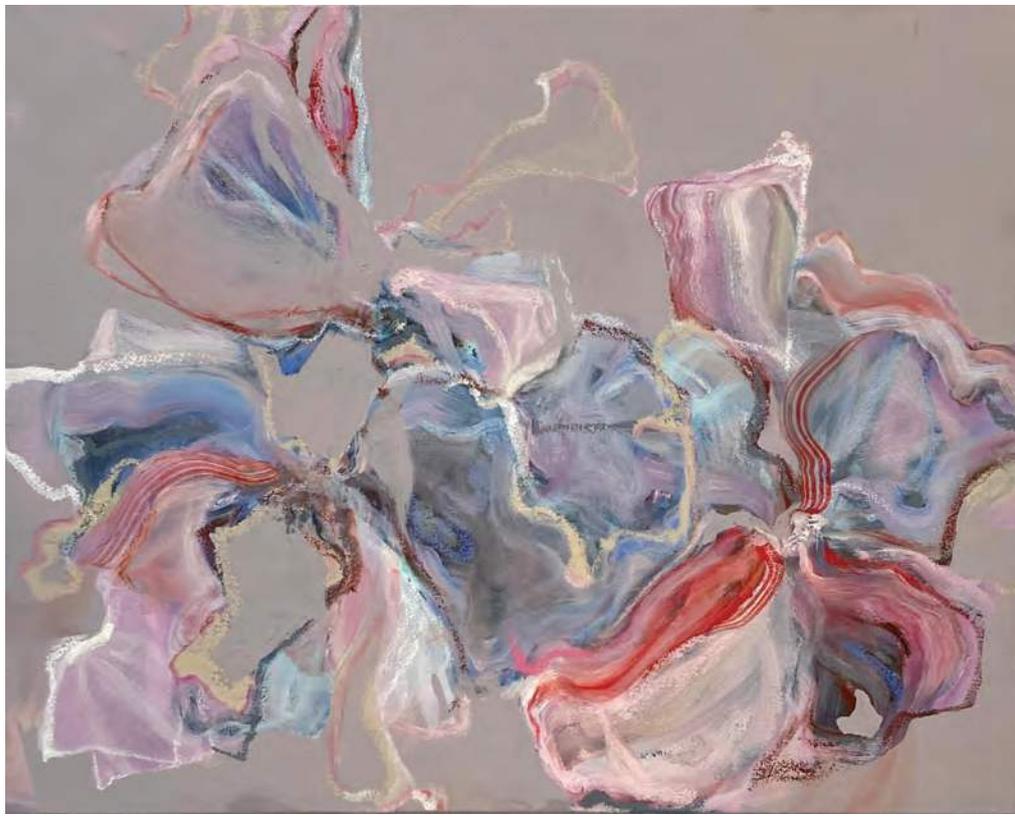
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THE BALANCING ACT OF PAINTING ALEXIS ENGLAND

By Leora Armstrong
info@mainstreetmag.com

Alexis England's studio is a place of beautiful contradictions. While curious goats peer in from the cold Millerton winter outside, England manages two different creative worlds within the same four walls. To your right, an immaculate setup for her celebrated animal portraits, detailed, pinpointed, and traditional. To your left, the room opens into large-scale abstraction, where the brushwork is broad, sweeping, and rhythmic. It is a space where precision meets expression, and where every mark tells a story. I caught up with her to talk about her practice.

What was it about this area that prompted the move?

I used to visit a friend up here, and eventually, I just knew I had to be here, too. Luckily, my husband Scott felt the same way. We found this house and never looked back; in fact, we bought the house before we even looked for an apartment. We were living in New York at that time. I had originally moved back there from Los Angeles, where I spent a long chapter of my life in the music business, but I was ultimately unhappy there. For me, the lack of seasons on the West Coast felt soulless; I realized that experiencing the change in seasons is key to my happiness.

I grew up on the East Coast for the most part, at least when my parents weren't dragging me all over the place.

I was so excited to finally come back. It feels good to finally be planted.

I came for the beauty of the landscape. Our farm is currently home to donkeys, goats, turkeys, and dogs. My creative process happens in a converted steel garage that we've softened with wood to make it our own. It's a space of shared purposes: part studio, part guest house, and part hay storage. Being surrounded by this life and these creatures keeps me centered.

I tend to be a bit messy when I work larger, so I created a dedicated "portrait corner." It's a tight, focused space where I can zone in. To borrow a term from my music career, the portraits are my "straight gig." I like that balance. The rest of the studio, the bigger, more open space is reserved for what I call my personal work. It's a strange term, but it's the only one that fits.

Your early career was as a singer. Can you talk about that time and what prompted you to start painting?

I studied both music and art in school. I was at a level where I could have excelled in either, but eventually, I had to make up my mind. I spent my late teens, 20s, and 30s focused entirely on music, singing in bars and navigating that industry. But even then, I always dabbled in art along the way. Music was incredibly important to me, and I had a rewarding career.

I had a good voice and a deep love for R&B and soul. At my core, I'm a

soul singer. It was my total passion, and for years, I was singing full-time. Back then, I was playing in cover bands, which meant singing five hours a night in clubs, on and off, set after set. You finish feeling completely exhausted, you sleep until two in the afternoon, and then you do it all over again. I was a total night owl back then, and that lifestyle is so immersive that there's really no room for anything else. I was contained in this small, vibrant microcosm of musicians and music business. It was a great experience, and I'm sure it informs my work today.

People often ask how it translates to my art, and while I'm not always sure of the exact link, I know that those years of intensity stayed with me. Eventually, I felt the pull to shift back to my other passion full-time. To bridge the gap, I took a few classes just to get a technical handle on oil paints; I went to the Art Students League, which was a wonderful place to find my footing. Now, the art has taken center stage again.

What artists have inspired you on your journey?

To be honest, I didn't start out with many outside influences. It was almost backwards: I established my own style before I really knew the art world. I was moving forward on instinct. Once I began to immerse myself, I started to seek out work that resonated with me, and I found artists I truly love.

My tastes are broad, everything

from the abstraction of Gerhard Richter, Willem De Kooning, Cy Twombly, Nathan Olivera, and Franz Kline, to the raw power of Georg Baselitz. I delve into books and go to the Metropolitan Museum.

Ultimately, it's all about whatever triggers a reaction; for me, that is almost always nature. Early on, I made a series focused on the figure. I had a friend float in a pond – even then, I was drawn to the idea of something “floating” on the page. It's a theme that stuck. Since that early work, my focus has shifted entirely to animals, botanicals, and the natural world.

I'm not drawn to painting people; I don't feel like I'm missing anything by leaving them out. You must be truly drawn to a subject to paint it. Nature is where my inspiration lives. You must paint for yourself, and this path has given my work a sense of purpose.

Your work feels musical, almost as if there is a hidden notation or a specific sound attached to the marks. Do you listen to music when you work?

Interesting. That same rhythm and soul carries over from my past life, just expressed through a different medium. My relationship with music has changed completely; it feels almost like a divorce or a death. It sounds heavy, but now I choose to work in total silence. I talk to myself a lot while I paint, it's how I figure things out. I'll spend five minutes discussing a specific move with myself, almost as if I'm teaching a third party. It's my way of embedding an idea into the work.

I've found that if I physically write something down or speak it aloud while I'm doing it, the concept truly takes root in me. Can you talk about your portraiture practice?

Whenever possible, I love to meet the dogs I paint in person. When I can't, the process becomes a bit of a treasure hunt. We've all been there, the perfect pose but the feet are cut off, or the dog is so far away that I can't see the light in their eyes. I work closely with my clients to find that one 'magic' photo that captures the face perfectly. At the end of the day, they need to see their dog in the brushstrokes. It can be a tedious search, but once we find it, I'm off to the races. Most of my work comes through word of mouth, and I wouldn't have it any other way; it keeps every commission personal.

To be honest, I've intentionally kept my two practices separate. While portraiture is a vital part of my business, my personal work is where my deepest motivations lie; it's the work I consider my most 'serious' exploration. I've always been concerned that showing them together might confuse my identity as an artist or dilute the impact of the abstracts. For me, it's about clarity; I want my personal work to stand on its own merits, especially as I look toward to formal representation. I've learned to balance my commissions with my more abstract series, often working on both simultaneously. While I can transition between them out of necessity, I prefer not to step away once I'm deep into a series. There is a specific momentum to that personal work, a 'high' that comes from knowing exactly where



Above: 'T.' Housepaint and liquid rubber on canvas. 60"x36".

Below: *Bound*. Housepaint and oil, stick on canvas. 30"x40".

Opposite page: Left: *Untitled*. Housepaint and embroidery thread on canvas. 24"x36".

Right: Alexis England in her studio.

All images with this article courtesy of Alexis England.

the next piece is going. I find that I have to protect that focus; getting distracted when I'm in the middle of a series is the hardest part of the job.

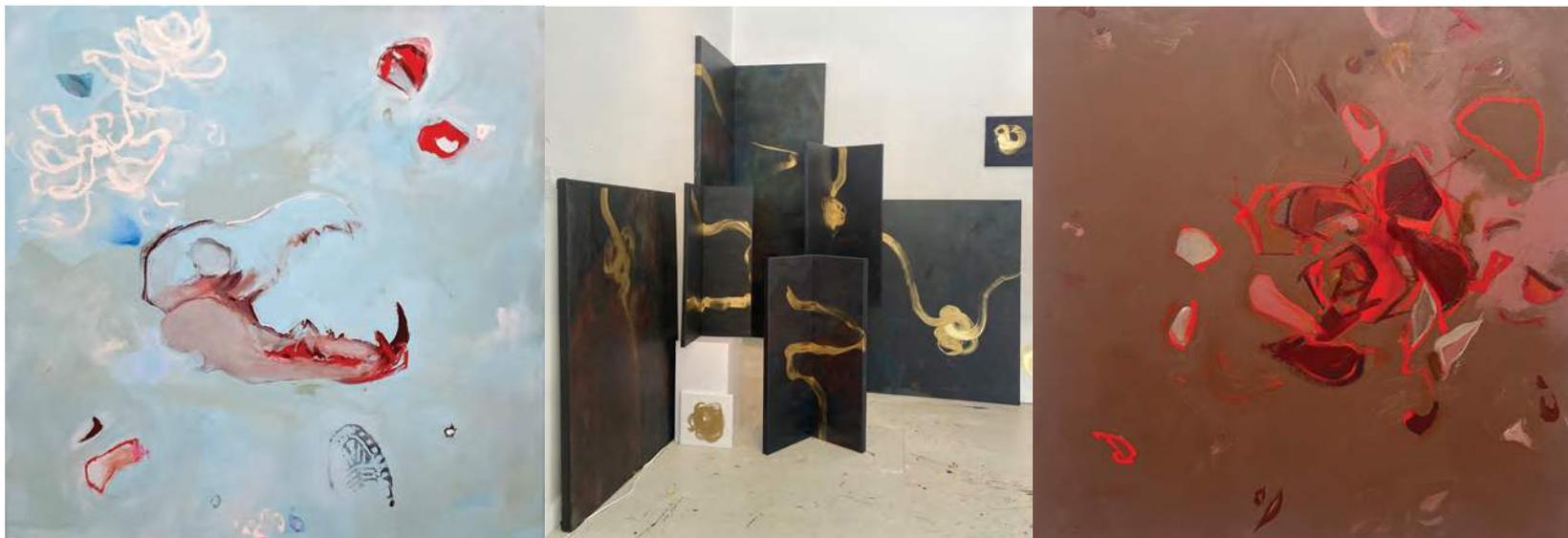
What motivates your art practice?

I work to get my emotions out physically. I strive to create beauty, but that beauty isn't always a tangible thing that others can easily grasp. It's hard to describe a process that is so visceral. The physicality of painting is essential to me; it's the reason I'm drawn to working on a large scale. Big canvases allow an exuberance and a sense of movement that I just can't replicate in smaller work. I need that space to get the energy out. The work begins with slapping paint down so instinctively that I often don't remember the start; it's a total flow state. But that wild beginning is always followed by an exacting second phase.

My process is a dialogue between instinct and precision. Technically, I love the tension of mixing mediums, working with house paint and oils together, sometimes incorporating other materials for more texture, a combination that is technically at odds. I love the experimental nature of forcing

Continued on next page ...





Jaw. House paint, oil stick and liquid vinyl on canvas. 30"x30".

Entanglements. Housepaint and oil stick on wood and canvas. Various sizes. Grouping of a series.

Blow Up. Housepaint, oil stick on canvas. 20"x 20".

these two mediums to coexist. It's a process-driven approach where the 'rules' of the materials are meant to be broken, though I keep those worlds separate for my portraiture, which is strictly oils.

I feel extraordinarily fortunate to do what I do every day, especially in these surroundings. To be able to do this for a living is a gift. I'm lucky, too, to have a husband who is also pursuing what he loves, we're in a good place together.

I agree with you, it doesn't matter what you choose, but let it be something that interests you, because you're going to be doing a lot of it. If you're truly gripped by your work, you'll find yourself getting up at 4am for a photograph or staying up until 2am to finish a client's piece. You do it because you truly care.

This work requires an immense amount of self-discipline, but when I'm truly into it, the feeling is incredible. It's such a high when a series is chugging along, and I know exactly where the next piece is going. In those moments, I can't wait to get back to the studio. I've always been quite insular and private, which makes talking about my art feel a bit uncomfortable. I'm not used to sharing the process. I've always worked solo, in a space that feels much like the music business, personal and quiet.

Does it help having the tightness of one practice and then going back, do you find one loosens the other up as well?

I must be very careful not to let my portraits get too tight, even though that work requires a certain level of precision. My practices speak to each other; the abstract work loosens me up. I love the balance between the two, moving from something very pinpointed and exacting to a piece that is massive and open. I couldn't just do one or the other, because at the end of the day, I just love paint.

People often ask about my routine, but the truth is, I don't have one. I work when the energy is there. When I'm in a groove, I'll stay in the studio until I hit a wall, grab a quick bite, and go right back in. It's various, it's intense, and it's unpredictable, but when you're chasing a specific high in a series, you don't stop until the work is done. When I'm finished, I just take a hiatus until I am ready for the next project.

What advice would you give someone wanting to be an artist today?

There's a note on my board that I wrote to myself that simply says: 'Shut up.' It's a vital reminder to block out the noise and the external voices that try to dictate the work. At the end of the day, you must paint for yourself, not for anyone else. You must love the act of creation enough to protect it from outside influence. When those voices go quiet, that's when the real work begins.

Can you talk about your show last year at Troutbeck?

This series was about the tragedy of extinction, and it changed the way I see space. I found myself working with fragments, excavating the surface by constantly putting down and removing paint. You can't see every layer in the final piece, but I know they're there. It's a process of covering and uncovering, a search for what remains when the rest has been stripped away.

The world can be mean, especially in its treatment of nature. I wanted to capture that by using a soft, 'pretty' palette as a juxtaposition against the reality of extinction. Placing a skull against a pale pink creates a friction that I find essential. This work isn't about my usual sweeping movements; it's about shards and remnants. It's about the fractures left behind. These pieces are the shards of a natural world we are losing, and the process of painting them is my way of documenting that disappearance.

Sometimes the most important part of a huge painting is a tiny, single mark of red tucked in a corner. I love playing with that scale, the massive brushstroke versus the 'micro-gesture'. Most people might not notice the tiny details, but they are the reason the piece works. The magic is in the things you feel without knowing why.

Is there a piece of work in the world if you could beg, borrow, and steal it that you'd love to own?

If I could live with one piece of art, it would have to be something that acts as a grounding wire, a work that centers me every time I look at it. It could be a Cy Twombly drawing. There is something about his graphite marks on paint. It's not about decoding the work, I just love them. Or the

raw energy of De Kooning or even a small Gerhard Richter. I'm drawn to work that reminds me to trust the act of making.

Children paint with a wonderful naivety. Then, school happens, and we're taught that an apple must look like an apple, and everything must be a copy of reality. We can lose that early freedom of abstraction.

Originality can come from how you look at the things no one else wants. I love going to the florist for the 'garbage', the flowers that have already fallen apart. I throw them on the studio floor and look for the shapes in the wreckage. I did the same with shoes and hangers when I felt overwhelmed by the excess in my life. The excitement is in the whole journey: from the 'shit' on the ground to the finished canvas. There is so much strength in the broken and the passing.

It is a joy to see an artist who can have the intensity of two disciplines, her larger pieces filled with gestures that move across the surface, where the viewer leans in to inspect each mark. Meanwhile across from this large work sits a dear four-legged friend, coming to life with minute brushstrokes, who is staring intensely at England as she focuses on the flow of her paint. •

To see more of Alexis England's work or to commission her for a portrait please visit her website and her Instagram, each tells a different story. Email Alexis at alexisenglandart@gmail.com. Visit her website at alexisenglandportraits.com or her gallery at geraldblandinc.com.. Find her on Instagram at @englandportraits and @alexisenglandart.

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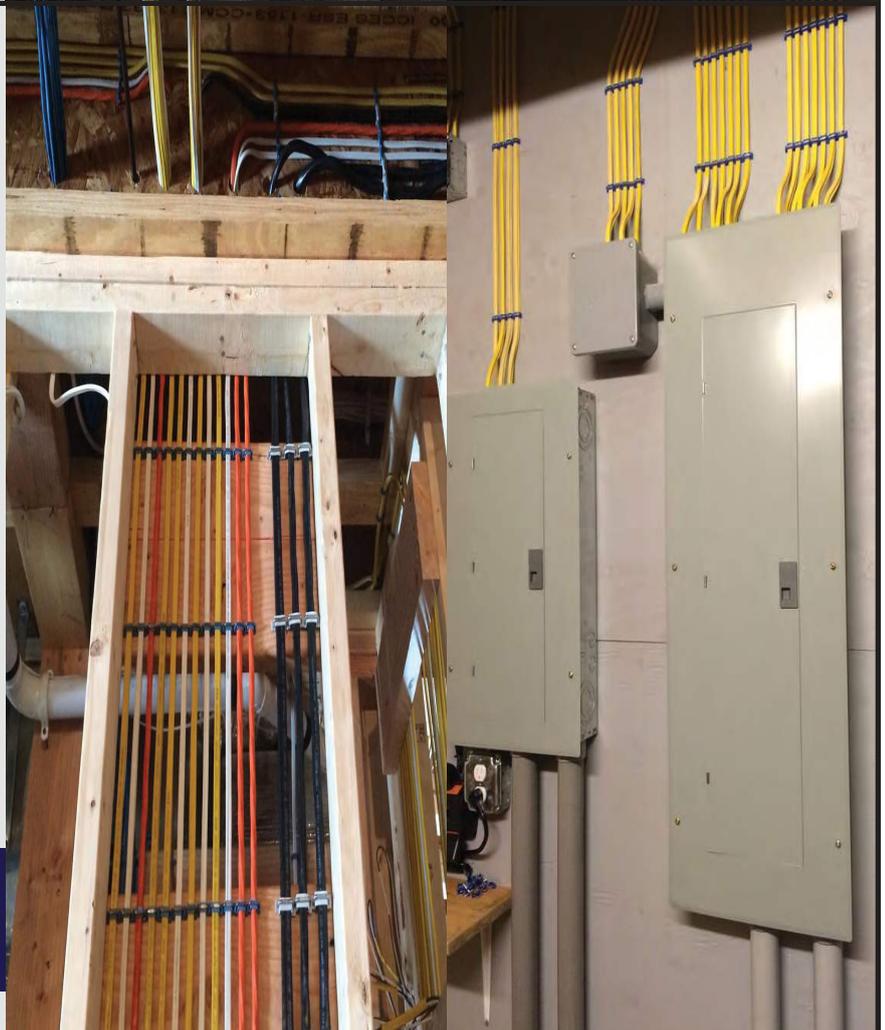
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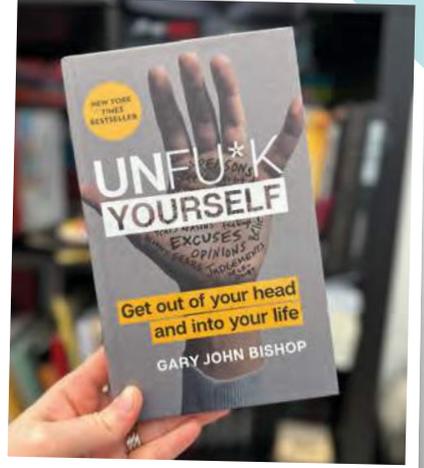
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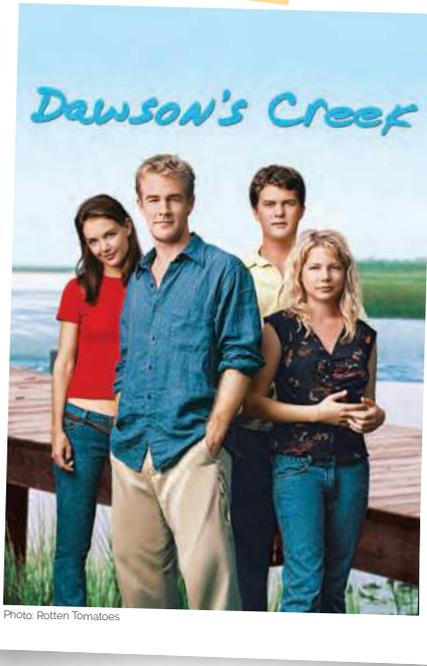


Boba and smoothies at Tea Fresh. Thorunn's pick: Tea Fresh is located at 6384 Mill St #1 in Rhinebeck, NY and is a must-stop when exploring Rhinebeck. The staff are always incredibly friendly and welcoming, the store itself smells so good as you step in the door, and their offerings? Delicious! My daughter thinks it's such a treat when we go there and she can concoct her specialized boba drink, because Tea Fresh has a generous amount of smoothie, tea, and boba options for you to make your own custom beverage. For those not in the know, boba originated in Taiwan and is typically a combination of tea, milk, fruit, and tapioca balls (aka the boba), which you enjoy through a wider-than-normal straw so you can suck up the boba balls. If boba isn't your thing, they have lots of other choices like delicious fresh smoothies, teas, seasonal drinks, and macarons! So the next time you're in Rhinebeck, stop by Tea Fresh and customize your next favorite drink.



to watch

Rewatch of Dawson's Creek. Thorunn's pick: With the recent passing of James Van Der Beek, I had a wave of nostalgia hit and the urge to do a rewatch of the iconic 90s show *Dawson's Creek*. The show first aired in 1998, taking us on a journey with Van Der Beek playing the main character, Dawson Leery. The show quickly morphed into so much more than just Dawson's life. We also got to know his friends, played by Katie Holmes, Joshua Jackson, and Michelle Williams, while following them through the ups and downs of their high school lives. The show ran through the early 2000s, while we followed the main characters, and some additional characters that we met along the way, to college. For me, the college episodes were some of the best. However, running through the duration of the show was the question of whether Dawson and Joey would end up together or not, which was always one of the underlying storylines throughout. The ending though, as surprising as it was, just felt right. So if you're like me and want to have a walk down memory lane with Dawson and the gang, a rewatch is definitely a must.



TO READ

Unfu*k Yourself by Gary John Bishop. Thorunn's pick: That's some title! It certainly grabbed my attention, as did the words on the inside of this book. The book's description states: "Change your mindset, change your actions, change your fu*king life – a BS-free guide to building better habits, boosting resilience, breaking free from self-doubt, and becoming the fiercest version of yourself." As the verbiage for the book promises, it does provide the reader with a real no-nonsense and quite refreshing guide to help move past self-imposed limitations as well as self-sabotaging tendencies. Because, hey, we all got 'em! As Bishop tells us, "True happiness and success come when you are willing to take that next step – and this is your final push. With all the sh*t going on in the world today, it is time to become the toughest, most tenacious version of yourself." Who's with me?

To do

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus at the MVP Arena in Albany, NY presents The Greatest Show On Earth. Ashley's pick: The MVP Arena always has fun events throughout the year that my friends, family and I enjoy attending, but what's becoming a yearly family tradition in my household is attending the circus. Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey puts on a fantastic, suspenseful, and high-energy show for nearly two hours. Paired with music to get your excitement pumping, just when you think you've seen it all, they climb higher, spin faster, contort their bodies into unimaginable positions, and wheel out new props. This year the Ringling Bros. presents *The Greatest Show On Earth* at the MVP Arena March 12 -15. I highly recommend attending a show with your family! Be sure to look them up on the world wide web for more tour dates and times.





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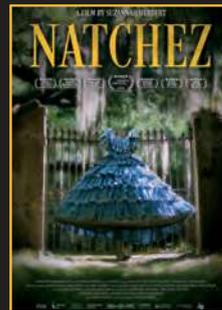


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Doug Muller of Hudson Valley Seed Co in Accord, NY

HOW TO GROW A SEED COMPANY



By Christine Bates
info@mainstreetmag.com

With Spring just around the corner, Christine was able to catch up with Doug Muller of Hudson Valley Seed Co to talk all things plants and seeds.

How did Hudson Valley Seed get started?

The Hudson Valley Seed Company has its roots in the public library of Gardiner, NY, where my co-founder, K Greene, was working. K had always been a plant person and started the country's first seed library program at a public library there in 2004. By 2008, the seed library was online, and people reached out wanting to buy seeds to support the program. K and I realized that there was a demand for buying and saving organic, heirloom seeds, and in 2009, our seed company began in the drawer of an oak dresser.

We asked fourteen artist friends to design fourteen seed packs to tell the stories of our first seeds – the beginning of our art pack line, which now comprises over 200 varieties. Our business expanded gradually into a renovated summer camp concession stand, then to a trailer, a renovated boarding house, a rented storefront – and to our current location, a 107-

acre former airstrip on Route 209 in Accord, NY.

Other garden products were selectively added to seeds, beginning with Japanese hand tools. We started hiring part-time help with three people on our regular payroll in 2011 and now, 15 years later, we have around 30 employees.

How do you decide on seed varieties?

We have a trial garden where we test the viability of seed varieties for our climate. We have a new marigold this year. We grew five to eight varieties and introduced one or two of them to our line. At the same time, we retire unpopular ones.

How many types of seeds do you sell?

Typical of most seed companies, we have around 800 to 1,000 products. We use data to identify weak spots in our product line and respond to customer requests and the market.

Are there trends in the seed business?

Definitely. During the pandemic, vegetables were the driver as people dreamed of growing their own food. Our business exploded from 2020 to 2022, with everyone wanting to grow carrots and have an outside activity. Now there is an interest in native wild flowers as gardeners discover

they are less finicky than vegetables and important to local ecology. Both the individual varieties and the native mixes are popular.

Where do your dahlias come from? They aren't native.

We grow them in our fields from replanted tubers with some from other local organic farms. Dahlias aren't grown from seed but are propagated vegetatively from tubers' eyes because the seeds produce unpredictable offspring. Last year we started all-you-can-pick dahlias from August through October and charged by the bunch or bucket.

How do you reach your customers?

We started with a website and then a catalogue. During COVID, print became too expensive and unnecessary. Now we reach gardeners through our website and social media. E-commerce accounts for about 70% of our business. Our wholesale business with botanical gardens, museum shops, and farmers accounts for another 20% to 25%.

We continue to do the big gardening shows in person, which gives us face time with our customers. This year we'll go to the Philadelphia

Left: Peredovik sunflowers flourish.

Middle: Doug Muller stands proudly in front of Otto File Flint Corn available from Hudson Valley Seed.

Right: Picking dahlias by the bucket full at Hudson Valley Seed's garden.

All photos courtesy of Hudson Valley Seeds.

Continued on next page ...



Above, left: "Art packs" that tell a story are designed by local artists and distinguish Hudson Valley Seeds.

Above, right: A honey bee hovers on a Monarda punctata native plant.

All photos courtesy of Hudson Valley Seeds.

flower show, one in Hartford, CT, and one in the capital region in Troy, NY. We do no print advertising.

Last year we opened our own store at 11 Airport Road in Accord to sell directly to customers. We are open year-round every day except for Tuesdays and Wednesdays. From April to October customers can select plants from our greenhouses, and come August they can cut dahlias.

Where are your customers from? Why do they buy your seeds?

Our customers are primarily, 60% to 70%, from the Northeast. But we sell all over the country including to farmers when we have something they can't get anywhere else. Last year the traditional supply chain was out, and we sold over \$2,000 worth of Jimmy Nardello sweet pepper seeds to a large-scale pepper farmer in Florida. For certain heirloom seeds, we may be the only supplier.

When you buy seeds, you are buying a promise. We are very open about what we do, and our customers trust us. It's a combination of packaging, organic practices, on-farm production, and breadth of local and regional varieties that customers can't find elsewhere. We don't cut corners, and we have great customer service.

What are some of your most popular seeds?

Basil, native wild flowers, zinnias, and tomatoes, including Cesare's Canestrino de Lucca tomatoes – they are delicious.

Has your vision of the business changed?

It definitely has. Hudson Valley Seed is still very much about heirloom seeds and local vegetables, but our focus has become broader. Now our mission is to supply products that allow our customers to experience joy in their gardens and to encourage ecological awareness. By leaning into plant performance and quality, we can help our customers be successful in their gardening efforts. Our selection of seeds focuses on varieties that do well in our relatively short growing season.

Do you grow all your own seeds?

To have a full catalogue of seeds, it would be impossible to do all the production ourselves. We grow 30% to 40% of our seeds. Another 10% to 20% come from small-scale, specialized suppliers, and the rest are from reputable traditional seed companies. In the spring we grow our own vegetable starts available in our greenhouses. Recently, we added fruit trees from Full Circus Farm in Pine Plains, NY. This year we'll be selling 300 to 400 trees.

What are your current strategic business issues?

During COVID our business exploded with crisis gardening, and now our business is at a plateau while our expenses are rising. Health insurance premiums for our team are up 20%, for example, and utilities are up too. As AI has taken over search during the past year, organic traffic to our site has dropped, and we have to pay for traffic we used to get for free. For example, before if you googled "how to plant tomatoes" you would see us in your search results. Now AI will answer a question with paid ads along the side, capturing most of the traffic and reducing organic traffic to actual content-forward websites – this is something happening worldwide at this point.

How did you learn about business? What mistakes have you made?

I gradually learned about business – I was a comparative literature major in college. K and I started out with an honorable but somewhat unrealistic desire to do good. The first year I didn't know what a P&L was, not to mention margins, employee handbooks – all the structural aspects of sustaining a business. We benefited from consultants such as Brian Zweig who showed us what a budget looks like and helped us apply for grants. I educated myself on the Internet and learned from other business owners.

An example of major misjudgment occurred during the first year of COVID when we were awash in cash. We hired an expensive fancy architect to design a new building for our headquarters project, and the expensive result was a cool structure that would have cost way more than we could afford. We learned not to get complacent when you're at the top of a wave, since business ebbs and flows and is always changing.

How do you and your partner share responsibilities?

K is still 50% owner but has become the full time director of seed and engagement of the Hudson Valley Farm Hub, because he wanted to return to educational preservation and non-profit work. He is still involved in high-level decision making, but I run our business on a day-to-day basis.

What's next for Hudson Valley Seeds?

We are planning a second phase of development to bring everything together in one place. Right now, our people are scattered across four locations plus remote workers. We are consolidating in one warehouse with office space at the same site. The plans are ready, and we're just working on the financing. And we are adding another greenhouse and always working on our website. ●

To learn more about Hudson Valley Seed Co, visit their website at hudsonvalleyseed.com.



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Creamy

ROASTED CARROT & APPLE SOUP

By Olivia Valentine with
Caroline Markonic
info@mainstreetmag.com

I made this soup one chilly Sunday afternoon after stopping at an apple farm stand just outside of Hudson, NY. I wasn't quite sure what to expect of the place, since it clearly wasn't apple season; it was the dead of winter! I was shocked when I stepped inside. The place was packed – not only with apples, but with people, eagerly buying all sorts of different varieties of apples. I purchased two large bags of yummy, crisp apples and some local honey.

When I got home, I was craving soup. I wanted something comforting, healthy, and practical, something that would be perfect for weekday work lunches. I already had a huge bag of organic carrots in my fridge and the beautiful, crisp apples that I had just brought home, so a lightbulb went off and I began slicing and dicing!

Exceeding expectations

I was fairly certain my partner wouldn't be into carrot and apple soup, since he can be pretty picky when it comes to soup. However, my expectations, and his, were exceeded!

I didn't even get one weekday's worth out of this batch. My partner absolutely loved it. He had two bowls in one sitting, then stood by the stove eating it hot, straight out of the pot, spoonful by spoonful. "I don't even

really like soup all that much, but man oh man, do I love this stuff!"

At one point, he actually begged me to stop him, which I did. I was thrilled that he loved it so much, especially when he insisted I had to turn it into a sharable recipe. But I'll admit, I was a little miffed that what I thought would last nearly a week barely made it through one day! Though I did get to make it and enjoy it again in order to perfect the recipe for all you lovely readers!

This soup is incredibly creamy without containing any cream at all. It pairs beautifully with a simple side salad, and a big hunk of your favorite bread for dipping. Or let it shine all on its own!

Ingredients

2 lbs carrots, peeled and cut into bite-size chunks
2 apples, peeled, cored, and quartered
3 Tbsps olive oil, divided
½ tsp salt
½ medium yellow onion, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
½ tsp coriander
¼ tsp cumin
6 cups vegetable stock (I used Better Than Bouillon)
2 Tbsps butter
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste



Optional garnishes

Coconut milk
Croutons

Instructions

Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Toss the carrots and apples with 2 Tbsps olive oil and ½ tsp salt, making sure everything is well coated.

Roast for 30-45 minutes, stirring once halfway through, until the carrots are tender and nicely caramelized.

While the carrots and apples roast, heat the remaining 1 Tbsp olive oil in a Dutch oven over medium heat.

Add the onion and sauté for 7-9 minutes, until soft and translucent (do not brown). Stir in the garlic, coriander, and cumin. Cook for about 30 seconds, just until fragrant.

Add the vegetable stock. Once the roasted carrots and apples are ready, add them to the pot.

Bring to a gentle boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for 15-20 min-

utes to let the flavors meld.

Carefully blend the soup until very smooth with an immersion blender or blend it in batches with a blender. Return the soup to the pot.

Stir in the butter until fully incorporated. Season with freshly ground pepper to taste.

If the soup is too thick, thin with additional stock or water as needed.

Serve warm, garnished with a swirl of coconut milk and croutons if desired.

Additional info: Soup is vegan without that final addition of butter! As always, enjoy! ●

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 @oliviawvalentine.



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Starter Homes Still Exist

By Christine Bates
info@mainstreetmag.com

What is a starter home?

Drive the rural roads or village side streets of Litchfield, CT or Dutchess County, NY and you'll spot them if you're paying attention: the modest Cape, the 1950s ranch with aluminum siding, the Victorian with peeling paint and a sagging porch. Starter homes are not grand weekend estates with acreage, new modern builds perched on hillsides, or cosmetic flips. Starter homes are the houses that initiate people in homeownership.

The idea of a "starter home" sounds simple, a first house, not your forever house. The meaning of a modest, affordable stepping stone for a family has shifted dramatically over the past hundred years. The starter home hasn't disappeared, but finding one requires quick, decisive response times, informed number crunching, and cash or mortgage approval in order to compete with real estate investors and flippers.

Traditionally, a starter home was defined as a small, detached house on its own lot, affordable to a first-time buyer, with the possibility that the first-time owner would eventually outgrow it. For decades, a starter home usually meant two to three bedrooms with one bathroom, 800 to 1,500 square feet on a small lot, and a price at the lower end of the local market.

A history of starter homes

In the early years of our country, a starter home was built by a landowner clearing land and building a one-room

house that was gradually expanded or replaced. By the 1920s and 1930s, many working and middle-class families lived in compact or multiple-family buildings with less than 1,000 square feet of living space and limited amenities. Buyers didn't start small and move up; small was standard. Function and affordability mattered more than resale value, and home ownership was limited to less than 50% of the population.

After World War II, the starter home became a cultural symbol. Returning veterans, aided by GI Bill financing, bought newly built Capes and ranches in expanding suburbs. These homes were deliberately modest and affordable, designed for entry into the expanding middle class. Garages were optional and one expected en suite bathrooms or central air conditioning. Developers built tens of thousands of "starter homes" – modest, mass-produced, single-family houses designed to be affordable entry points into homeownership. The most iconic of these was Levittown on Long Island.

Between 1947 and 1951, the original Levittown expanded to approximately 17,000–17,500 homes built on about 7.3 square miles of land, making it one of the largest private housing developments in US history. The homes were priced to be affordable for working-class families. A house cost around \$6,990–\$8,000 – a price point far below most traditional houses at the time. (\$8,000 in 1948 is equivalent in purchasing power to \$108,000 today. Average household annual income was \$8,000.) With federal support from the Federal Housing Administration and Veterans Administration through mortgage guarantees, buyers often could purchase these homes with very low down payments or even no down payment and favorable long-term financing. This made monthly mortgage



Above: This Salisbury Housing Trust home at 26 Under Mountain Road has 3 bedrooms and 2 baths and is being offered for \$250,000 to qualified buyers. Below: An "investor's dream" is listed for sale in the Town of North East for \$125,000. Photos by Christine Bates.

payments comparable to or less than rent.

Starter homes were small and efficient, typically around 800 square feet with pared-down designs. Many original Levittown houses had no basements or porches, reflecting the focus on basic, affordable living space rather than luxury. Builders used mass-production techniques adapted from wartime industry: standardized materials purchased in bulk, assembly-line construction methods on site, poured concrete slab foundations (instead of basements), and frequent use of factory-cut lumber and components. These techniques allowed crews to build as many as 30 houses per day at peak production. In later decades, some of these 1950s-era houses were seen as targets for renovation or tear downs due to their minimal finishes and small scale. Today these Levittown houses are listed at \$750,000.

Bigger new houses, smaller households

Over the past 80 years, American houses have grown steadily larger even as the number of residents per household has shrunk. In 1948, the average newly built single-family home measured roughly 1,000 square feet; today it is closer to 2,400–2,600 square feet, depending on the year –

more than twice the size of most 20th century starter houses. At the same time, the average US household size declined from about 3.6 people in 1948 to roughly 2.5 today, reflecting fewer children per family and more one- and two-person households.

The result is a striking reversal of the post-World War II model: larger homes built for smaller families, often with more bedrooms, bathrooms, and specialized spaces, than earlier generations of homeowners would have considered necessary for a "starter" house.

Today fewer small homes are being built. Builders face higher land costs, stricter zoning rules, larger minimum lot sizes, more building code and zoning regulations, and more expensive materials. If it costs nearly as much to build a small house as a large one, the math nudges builders toward larger homes with higher margins. The result is that the pipeline of brand-new starter homes has slowed to a trickle.

In places like Litchfield and Dutchess counties, that means today's starter homes are usually older homes, many built between 1900 and 1980, requiring renovation, or subsidized "affordable" new builds for buyers who fall within certain income limits.

Continued on next page ...



Are starter homes a good investment?

Looking at the big picture, starter homes under 2,000 square feet still offer buyers the opportunity to build equity. The chart comparing four rural small towns, one of the most expensive and one of the most affordable, in Connecticut and New York, supports the wisdom of investing in home ownership at the entry level. In the last ten years, the median price of a 2,000-square-foot or less house in Salisbury rose 178% – more than the 150% increase of the median price of all single-family homes during the period. The median value of a starter home in North Canaan, CT increased 222%, similar to the overall 219% increase in the median price of any sized home.

A slightly different pattern emerges in lower priced Dutchess County with starter homes in Amenia increasing 184% less than the 219% in upscale Washington and less than the overall increase in prices of all homes in Amenia. Like Salisbury, starter homes in Washington, NY appreciated more than the town's median price of any single-family home. Generally, if buyers can afford a more expensive starter home, they might want to pay more and buy a home in a more affluent market. However in the past ten years investing in any real estate was a smart idea during this period of historic house appreciation.

How handy are you? The temptation of a fixer upper

Because move-in-ready smaller houses are scarce, many first-time buyers consider distressed properties – the ones with leaning porches, no kitchen, or 1950s bathrooms – at a very low price. An extreme example is a 2,000-square-foot structure listed for \$125,000 in Dutchess County,

described in the listing as an “investor’s dream with endless potential.”

A distressed home can look like an opportunity, and sometimes it is, or it can turn into an expensive surprise. (Watch the 1986 movie *The Money Pit* with Tom Hanks if you are tempted to buy one.) Renovation costs have risen sharply, contractors and subs are booked up years in advance, and materials fluctuate in price. So how much might necessary improvements to a small house cost? What’s considered a light renovation of painting, flooring, and minor carpentry could run up to \$35,000. An economical kitchen refresh with new appliances, counters, and cabinets (think IKEA) may approach \$50,000, and bathroom re-dos \$15,000 to \$30,000 each. A simple roof replacement will be at least \$12,000, new septic anywhere from \$20,000 to \$45,000, and a new furnace \$15,000 to \$20,000.

A full gut renovation including major system upgrades, windows, and insulation could easily approach \$200,000. The emotional math is tricky, and a buyer may think, “We’ll fix it slowly.” But houses do not age predictably. Roofs leak on their own schedule and furnaces fail on cold days. The best distressed-property buyers have renovation experience, reliable contractor relationships, and cash.

Great expectations, smaller homes

Another change to the starter home concept is cultural. First-time buyers today often arrive with high expectations shaped by renovation television programs and social media – sleek kitchens with islands, home offices, spa showers. Older starter homes were built for a different lifestyle – fewer possessions, fewer electronics, fewer rooms. This mismatch can make a



An example of a Levittown starter home and young family from the Library of Congress.

perfectly solid small house feel inadequate until someone lives in it and realizes that smaller is also simpler, cheaper to heat, faster to clean, easier to maintain, and less expensive to insure.

Starter homes continue to serve a practical economic and important emotional role. Owners build value, pay down principal, and later use that equity toward a larger purchase. A starter home is where people learn home ownership skills – mowing the lawn, paying taxes, maintaining the deck, servicing the oil furnace, and developing working relationships with plumbers and electricians.

How to find a starter home

Today starter homes can still be found for less than \$300,000, especially if you look in less affluent towns like Torrington, Amenia or North Canaan where they account for more than half of all sales, or in village locations with small lots. Smaller, less expensive houses are sold quickly, and buyers need to be prepared with financing in hand to act decisively with a buyer’s agent who understands the specific market and can guide negotiations and documentation. Don’t expect to bargain on price unless extensive renovation is required.

Another avenue to pursue is subsidi-

dized housing available for \$250,000 to \$300,000 to young families who meet certain income qualifications. 26 Undermountain Road in Salisbury, CT is a newly completed, ready-to-move-in three bedroom with a basement available for around \$250,000. Using state and not-for-profit funds, the house cost approximately \$500,000 to build according to Karen Sunnarborg, Housing and Planning Consultant. Potential buyers must complete a pre-application, and qualified candidates are entered into a lottery. After qualifying in terms of household income, the biggest stumbling blocks are credit scores, down payments and mortgage approval. Sunnarborg estimates that at current interest rates the monthly cost of ownership would be approximately \$2,000 including mortgage, taxes, and insurance.

The starter home has always been about entry – a modest, imperfect house that makes homeownership possible. While postwar America built thousands of small, affordable houses for first-time buyers, rising costs, zoning, and changing expectations have inhibited new, market rate construction and pushed today’s buyers toward older homes, fixer-uppers, or subsidized options. In Litchfield and Dutchess Counties, starter homes still exist, but they sell fast, often need work, and demand financial readiness. Despite the challenges, smaller homes continue to offer a proven path to equity, practical living, and the hands-on education that comes with owning a first house. •

Christine Bates is a registered real-estate agent in New York and Connecticut with William Pitt Sotheby’s. She has written about real estate and business since Main Street Magazine’s first issue in 2013.

2006-2026 STARTER HOME 10 YEAR VIEW

SINGLE FAMILY MEDIAN HOME PRICE < 2,000 SQUARE FEET

	January 2006	January 2026	10 year change
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Salisbury	\$312,500	\$557,500	178%
North Canaan	\$137,000	\$303,500	222%
New York			
Washington	\$205,000	\$450,000	219%
Amenia	\$185,000	\$341,000	184%

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\$345,500	219%
\$625,000	158%
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Colu Henry's recipes are effortless and elegant in

Better at Home



Photos courtesy of Silver and Seck/Abrams

By Abby Audenino
info@mainstreetmag.com

"I've always been interested in food, but I didn't initially see it as a formal career path. I majored in musical theater after all," chef and author Colu Henry muses. Henry's winding career history has led to the publication of her third cookbook, *Better at Home: Recipes for Big Nights In*, which releases on March 10, 2026.

Before and after college, she worked in hospitality to make ends meet. When she moved to New York City, her path shifted into communications, where she worked in fashion PR. Over time, she found herself increasingly drawn back to food and restaurants. Eventually, Henry transitioned to working as a restaurant publicist, where she spent a great deal of time in professional kitchens alongside some of the world's greatest chefs.

"I edited their recipes, produced photo and television shoots, and absorbed an enormous amount simply by being so close to the work," she shares. "When I moved into publishing, it finally clicked that I could take everything I had been doing for other people and do it for myself. That light bulb moment was what pushed me to pursue food as my own creative and professional path."

Better at home

Like Henry's past cookbooks, *Better at Home* reflects where she is in her life at the moment. Her previous years of living in the city and going

out constantly no longer mirror how she cooks or how she and her friends gather. "I think of my books as snapshots in time – who I'm cooking for, what's happening around the table, and the stories that naturally unfold there."

Henry's life is currently split between Hudson, NY, and Nova Scotia, Canada, where she and her husband are spending their summers restoring a farmhouse. Regardless of where she is and what she's doing, however, Henry's life always revolves around gathering family and friends at the table.

"The recipes in *Better at Home* grew directly out of a philosophy that food should feel generous, unfussy, and meaningful wherever you are."

At this point in Henry's career, she says that writing recipes is actually the easiest part of the process. "There's a rhythm to it. It's almost formulaic in the best way, like a painter mixing colors they know well," she shares. The real challenge, Henry says, is development. Throughout the process, she has to ask herself the tough questions, such as, "Why does this recipe matter?," "Is it special enough to live in a printed book?," and "What separates it from other versions that already exist?"

"Everything has been done before, so the work is in finding a point of view – something that makes the recipe feel intentional, personal, and truly my own. That's where most of the effort falls," she says. "The recipes themselves are all elegant, relatively easy, and more often than not, skew

Italian-American. I can't help it – it's in my DNA! Oh, and I worked with my husband on this book – a first!"

How environment inspires cooking

"My life is beautiful and full and busy, but it doesn't look the same way it once did," she says. "The truth is, I don't want to be out every night of the week anymore. I much prefer the comfort of my own home (or someone else's) to cook or be cooked for. I want to be in charge of the guest list, the menu, the music, and the overall vibe. This also changes based on where we are."

When Henry and her husband are in Hudson, for example, they frequently wander back and forth between friends' homes. In Nova Scotia, however, Henry cooks more simply. She packs up much of her pantry before they make the 11-hour drive east to the Maritimes for the summer. What does she bring with her? Ingredients that are hard to come by, such as Diamond Crystal kosher salt and grated Locatelli pecorino cheese.

Their home in Nova Scotia is in a very rural area, and while she can drive up the road to get meat from a local farm or to the lobster pound, the closest grocery store is a 30-minute drive away. She sources much of her produce from nearby farms, but instead of having the option of eight or ten varieties of tomatoes and peppers, she typically only has the choice between two.

"My cooking is more straightforward but no less delicious. I find it inspiring to cook within constraints."

Cooking is caring

For Henry, cooking is the purest act of nurturing and the "most instinctive way" she knows how to show care for others. "If I love you, I will cook for you. I want people to feel tucked in and truly seen. Taking the time to prepare someone something to eat is an elemental way of saying, 'I care about you,'" she says.

Likewise, working and educating within the culinary industry allows Henry to share her philosophy that cooking doesn't have to be complicated or intimidating to be meaningful. "When someone feels more confident in the kitchen or uses food to connect more deeply with the people around them – that's the win," she says.

This philosophy is one of the things that Henry is most excited for readers to take away from *Better at Home*. "I'm genuinely excited to share stories, recipes, and imagery from our time in Nova Scotia," she shares. "People still don't really know where it is on a map, so there is a bit of mystery there. My husband and our friend Martin took the photographs for the book as well, and to be able to share some of their magic with the world feels really good. We all need more beauty in our lives." ●

Learn more about Colu Henry on her website coluhenry.com, sign up for her bi-weekly *Substack* newsletter coluhenry.substack.com, and visit the *Abrams Books* website to pre-order a copy of *Better at Home: Recipes for Big Nights In*.

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Hudson Valley history will come alive with the

Northern Dutchess Symphony Orchestra

By Dominique DeVito
info@mainstreetmag.com

It's March, and there are still four months before Independence Day brings the biggest America 250 celebration of them all, but if you haven't started celebrating yet, now is the time. And this is the event: "Americana 250," presented by the Northern Dutchess Symphony Orchestra at the Marriott Pavilion on the grounds of the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, NY. It's taking place on Saturday, March 21, at 7:30 pm.

When I became aware of the program for this special concert, I had to learn more. It's not your typical symphonic event, and it turns out that, for the Northern Dutchess Symphony Orchestra, nothing really is. In the best of ways.

"Americana 250" is much more than just beautiful music performed by the very talented orchestra led by its conductor and artistic director, Kathleen Beckmann. It is a multimedia tribute to colonial Hudson Valley life that will incorporate orchestral music, imagery, and spoken word.

There's a pre-concert talk on what life was like for colonial soldiers by Neil Murray, an award-winning teacher from Pine Plains. Master Storyteller Jonathan Kruk will be on hand, telling the story of "The Origin of Yankee Doodle," while the orchestra performs *Fugue and Chorale on Yankee Doodle* by American composer Virgil Thomson. Kruk also plans to tell the story of Sybil Ludington's ride and a story about George Washington's spectacles.

Orchestral programming will include *Colonial Dances* by Florence Price, Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring*, and a traditional colonial piece, *The Girl I Left Behind*, during the playing of which there will be images projected above the orchestra of

various historical sites in the Hudson Valley, including the Beekman Arms, Hasbrouck House, and Van Wyck Homestead.

But wait, there's more!

Images telling the story of Daniel Nimham will be accompanied by a beautiful piece entitled *Far From the Water*, written by James DeMar, featuring the multi-talented musician Premik Tubbs performing on a Native American flute. Daniel Nimham was the last sachem of the Wappinger people and a respected Native American leader who fought for the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. He is remembered for defending his people's land rights and for dying in battle in 1778 alongside his son. A statue of him is in Fishkill.

If you want to stop reading right now and get tickets, go to ndsosymphony.org/americana

About Kathleen and the NDSO

I'm 20 years late to the game, but I'm glad I made it! The Northern Dutchess Symphony Orchestra is celebrating its 20th anniversary season during 2025/2026, which is quite impressive. It was started by Kathleen Beckmann and "a bunch of us sitting around the kitchen table wondering if we could do something like this," as she tells it. Kathleen has been at the helm since the beginning, and many of the musicians in the orchestra are also original members of the group.

Kathleen's love of music was fostered by her mother, Mary Baxter, who was a music teacher in Vestal, NY, near Binghamton, where Kathleen grew up. Her mother was also on the board of the Binghamton Philharmonic and often brought Kathleen to rehearsals. An early lesson for her about how thinking outside the box for programming could be not only entertaining but also financially viable



Top: Epic Movie Scores, January 2026, with a full orchestra.

Above: Kathleen conducting Epic Scores in 2026.

Photos courtesy of NDSO.

was driven home when her mother arranged for Captain Kangaroo to perform with the Binghamton Philharmonic. "It brought them from the red to the black," she remembers.

Another inspiration for her was the conductor of the Binghamton Philharmonic for many years, Fritz Wallenberg, who was also her cello teacher. Kathleen's primary instruments are the piano and the violoncello. "Fritz was a gifted musician and teacher," Kathleen recalls. "He also found ways to include his students when possible. For example, I got the opportunity to perform with the Binghamton Philharmonic as a high school student."

Continued on next page ...

Kathleen attended the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam, earning a degree in music education. She was a public school music teacher at the Franklin D. Roosevelt High School in Hyde Park, where she was also the school's orchestra director. Her passion has always been as an advocate of music education, and she served on the executive board for the National School Orchestra Association in New York State and was the editor for its publication, *Orchestrations*.

"One of the things I'm most proud of," she shares, "is that the NDSO is made up of musicians of all ages. Some are straight out of conservatory," she continues, "while others have been playing with the NDSO for decades. It's a great combo of young and old. The kindness and collaboration everyone brings to the music and performances are wonderful."

In reflecting on her decades with the NDSO, Kathleen says, "I'm struck by how the organization has grown from two small concerts to a season of six evening concerts and additionally two student concerts with third and fourth graders bused in from eight area school districts. In addition to the well-attended concerts by people of all ages, Kathleen reflects that, "Over the years, the programming has evolved to be less traditional with more variety."

Beyond the Traditional

Kathleen says she is a "Google queen," which is how she brings her ideas of how to expand more traditional programming into something she hopes

is more interesting and, for everyone, more fun. "I decided to branch out," she says, "and although I do include classical 'favorites,' that piece is not the focus of the concert. For example, we performed a concerto for Japanese koto and orchestra in April of 2024. It was written by Daron Hagen, a world-class composer who lives in Rhinebeck. I paired it with Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty Suite*. Last April," she continues, "the NDSO did the New York state premiere of a piece for theater organ – which is different from a traditional organ – and orchestra, called *Once Upon A Castle*. The piece was written by Michael Daugherty and our performance was the New York State premier of the piece. I paired the organ concerto with a silent movie starring Buster Keaton, and the orchestra and organ accompanied the movie. We also performed traditional orchestral music on that program, including Handel's water music."

When Kathleen is thinking of a particular program, she searches out various musical genres that complement each other. This may seem like a lot more work, and it probably is, but for Kathleen, "It is a lot more fun than just doing an overture, a concerto and then a symphony for the second half of a show," she says, adding, "I also enjoy the educational process. What can I learn and, more importantly, what can the audience learn? I love it when an audience member comes up after the concert to share that they never knew or heard of a particular piece before."



Epic Scores with Jiayi He on harmonica. Photo courtesy of NDSO.



Buster Keaton MultiMedia, 2025. Photo courtesy of NDSO.

Americana 250 & more

Kathleen had lots to work with in coming up with the program for Americana 250.

"The Hudson Valley was an important location for the Revolutionary War," she notes, "and with the National 250th celebration, it made sense to make the concert about the Hudson Valley." Kathleen came to the Hudson Valley with her husband in the 1970s, so she has plenty of contacts who she could plumb for extra inspiration and assistance, including the Dutchess County Historical Society. She knew that others steeped in this history would bring the kind of magic she was looking for. They include the master storyteller, Jonathan Kruk; the Native American flutist, Premik Tubbs; and a high school social studies teacher, Neil Murray, who will get the stories started with the pre-concert talk titled, "A Revolutionary War Soldier Comes to Life." (Check out these performers' impressive bios on the NDSO website.)

When I spoke with Kathleen for this article, she was in the Hudson Valley to conduct the NDSO's first concert of 2026, "Epic Movie Scores," which took place on January 24.

Kathleen lives in Fort Lauderdale now, where she can enjoy being near her grandchildren and where, she admits, "the weather is pretty nice, too." She had come up just a few days ahead of the performance and had already had a rehearsal. Getting the show performance ready in just a few days is a testament to the orchestra and all who are involved with it. "It's a professional group," Kathleen says, "they know the drill." They know the program and have the music well ahead of schedule. "Typically, we

do three rehearsals before the show. Everyone comes prepared. It's amazing how quickly we can go from 0 to 100," she says with true pride in her voice.

What was on the program for "Epic Movie Scores"? Arrangements from *Back to the Future*, *Forrest Gump*, *The Great Escape*, and *Dances with Wolves*, among others, concluding with a medley from James Bond movies. The audience was treated to the featured performers Jiayi He on harmonica of all things, and violinist Marka Young.

In June, the NDSO will present "The Beatles, Elvis, and Beyond," which will not only tap into the wonderful music of the time, but will include the guest artist Gene DiNapoli. For those who don't know (yet!), DiNapoli is one of the top Elvis tribute artists in the country, and he's been at it for over 20 years. Fun!!

Kathleen knows that the Hudson Valley is rich in the arts, with plenty of great options for people every weekend to go to an art gallery, concert, play, or show. Her hope for the NDSO is that it will continue to have broad appeal and be right up there in people's plans. "Everyone should feel excited about attending our concerts," she says.

I know I am very excited to attend "Americana 250," and "The Beatles, Elvis, and Beyond" sounds really fun, too. And it's always nice to be on the grounds of the Culinary Institute of America. Thank you to the NDSO and the CIA. I'll see you at the concert. •

To learn more about the Northern Dutchess Symphony Orchestra, visit the website at ndsorchestra.org. You can also follow the orchestra on Facebook, Instagram, and X.



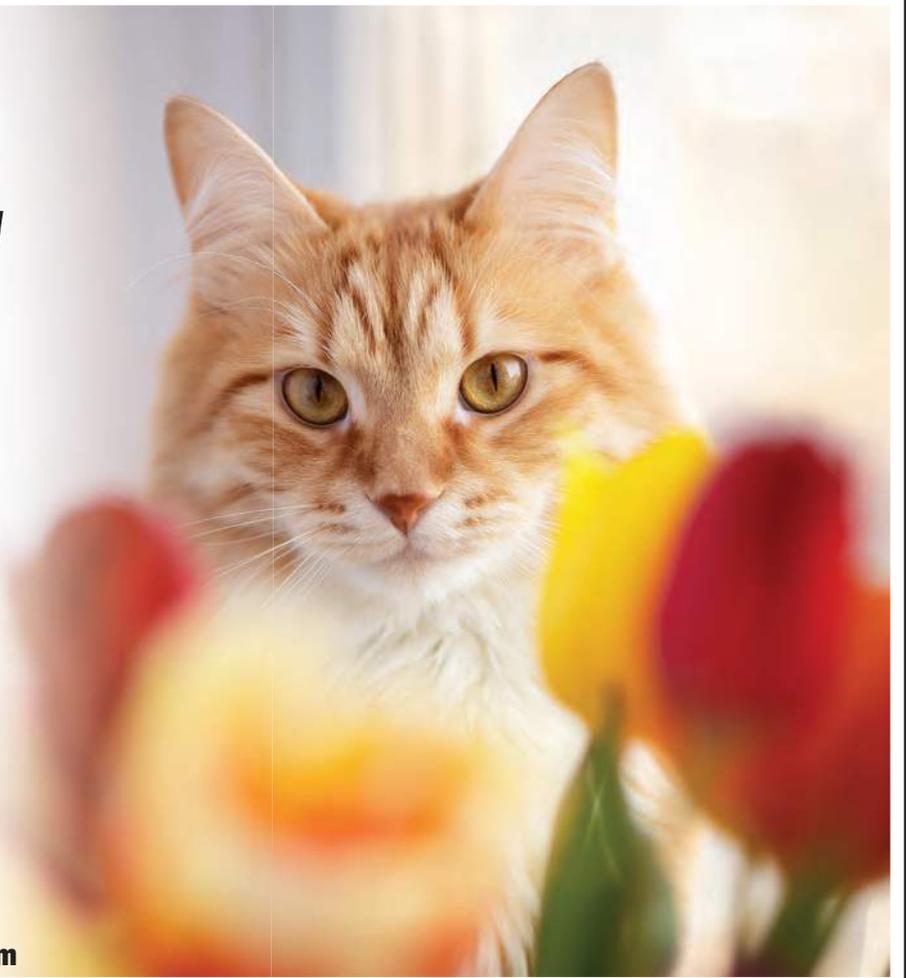
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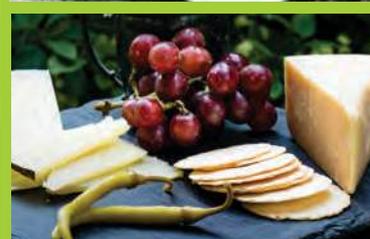
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It's Health Awareness time



It's important to take care of ourselves from top to bottom and inside out. That translates to regular doctor visits, a healthy diet, exercise, and, as necessary, lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking and minimizing alcohol intake. Wait, there's more.

Beyond all the other occasions and events occurring in March – from St. Patrick's Day to the arrival of spring – March also marks National Kidney Month, Brain Injury Awareness Month, and Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month.

*By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com*

Several doctors from the community have pitched in to share their expertise and provide a brief education on their respective specialties, so read on to become more knowledgeable about your own health.

National Kidney Month

Let's recap why the kidneys are so important to our health. Our kidneys not only filter all our blood, but they also regulate our blood pressure and stimulate growth of our red blood cells.

Chronic kidney disease occurs when the kidneys become damaged. Over time, they may not clean the blood as effectively. When kidneys are damaged and not working effectively, toxic waste and extra fluid accumulate and may lead to high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and early death.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than one in seven adults in the United States (about 35.5 million people) are estimated to have CKD. As many as nine in ten adults with the disease do not know that they have it; and about one in three adults with severe CKD are unaware that they have it.

Thanks to National Kidney Month, health care providers have an opportunity to generate awareness about kidney health, risk factors for disease, and the importance of early detection.

"Kidney disease often develops silently, so awareness is critical. When kidney disease is detected early, it can sometimes be reversible, and in many cases its progression can be halted or significantly slowed with appropriate management," said Vinny Anand, MD, Nephrology, Albany Med Health System.

Diabetes, high blood pressure, and long-term use of NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) are the most common causes of kidney failure. Certain populations are at higher risk, as mentioned those with diabetes or hypertension. They should be closely monitored.

Symptoms include early fatigue, swelling in the legs, and changes in urine such as decreased output or foamy urine, which can indicate protein leakage.

As with any health issue, early detection is key. Prevention focuses on effective control of diabetes and blood pressure and avoiding unnecessary

use of pain medications, especially NSAIDs.

Regularly scheduled visits with a primary care physician can help people manage care. Routine blood tests can help monitor kidney function, and urine testing can identify protein leakage, which may be an early sign of kidney disease. Patients with diabetes or high blood pressure should insist on regular blood and urine testing as part of their routine care.

"Much of our kidney education takes place directly in the office setting and within the dialysis unit, where patients receive ongoing education about kidney function, prevention strategies, and treatment options," said Dr. Anand.

As for treatment options, Albany Med Health System offers comprehensive care, including ongoing management, patient education, and dialysis services when needed. Treatment plans are individualized based on the stage of disease and the patient's overall health, with a strong emphasis on slowing disease progression and maintaining quality of life.

Brain Injury Awareness Month

This annual March campaign, led by the Brain Injury Association of America, aims to educate the public about traumatic brain injuries, which are also known as TBIs.

Continued on next page ...

“A TBI is a disruption in brain function caused by a blow, jolt, or piercing to the head, ranging from mild concussion to severe, life-altering trauma. Common causes are falls with a head strike, sports impacts, and motor vehicle crashes,” said Tom Moran, MA, EMT, CPSTI-STAC, CRASE Instructor, Trauma Education, Injury Prevention and Outreach Coordinator, Albany Med Health System.

According to the CDC, there were approximately 214,110 TBI-related hospitalizations in 2020 and 69,473 TBI-related deaths in 2021. Beyond prevention and treatment, Brain Injury Awareness Month educates about the long-term impacts of injuries caused by falls, sports, and violence. Part of its mission is to also reduce stigma and support those affected by TBIs.

“TBIs can cause immediate or delayed physical, cognitive, and emotional symptoms, and are a leading cause of death and disability. TBIs may be missed, especially in older adults who may be on an anti-coagulant such as warfarin (Coumadin) and do not seek a medical assessment immediately after a fall and head

strike. On the other end of the spectrum, undiagnosed TBIs in children can have long-term developmental impacts,” said Moran.

The three most common populations impacted by TBIs are children ages 0-4, teenagers/young adults 15-24, and older adults aged 65 and above. According to Moran, those 65 and above have the highest rates of TBI-related hospitalizations and deaths. These are primarily due to falls. Children and young adults are also at high risk due to falls, sports, and motor vehicle crashes (for teens).

As a trauma education, injury prevention, and outreach coordinator, Moran is pitching in to kickstart this campaign. The Albany Med Health System Injury Prevention Outreach Team communicates with and educates the public through numerous outreach events such as community health event booths, bike and snowboard helmet fittings, and injury prevention education on ATV and snowmobile operation and proper helmet use. “We also have several free outreach programs focused on preventing events that would lead to a TBI – one on teen drivers and another on adult fall prevention,” said Moran.

A bit of awareness can go a long way. People can prevent TBIs by focusing while driving, avoiding distractions, wearing seatbelts, and using appropriate child-safety seats. Moran advises the public to protect their heads by properly wearing the appropriate safety helmet for each activity (ski helmet for skiing, bike helmet for biking) and performing activities as responsibly as possible.

To prevent falls, Moran advises people to remove all tripping hazards at home, work, and beyond; ensure that all walkways are well lit; and treat outdoor surfaces for snow and ice. Also be sure to use the appropriate safety devices such as gates at the top and bottom of stairs.

Finally, if symptoms include severe headache, vomiting, confusion, slurred speech, or loss of consciousness, seek immediate medical attention.



Above: Tom Moran, MA, EMT, CPSTI-STAC, CRASE Instructor, Trauma Education, Injury Prevention and Outreach Coordinator, Albany Med Health System. Below, top to bottom: Vinny Anand, MD, Nephrology, Albany Med Health System. Stanley Penc, MD, PhD, Albany Medical Center, Neurology. All images courtesy of Albany Med.

Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month

Finally, it's time to address Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month. Also known as “MS,” this disease affects approximately one million people nationwide. More common in women than men, it has an approximate ratio of 3:1.

Not just this month, but throughout the year, the Albany Med Health System helps spread awareness for programs and events that are sponsored by many organizations, including the National MS Society and the Multiple Sclerosis Foundation. It also encourages community members to don orange this month; it's the official color for Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month.

“The pathophysiology of MS involves both genetic and environmental factors that lead to an immune system attack on the central nervous system which includes the brain, spinal cord, and optic (vision) nerves,” said Stanley Penc, MD, PhD, Albany Medical Center, Neurology.

Certain genetic risk factors play a role and may help explain the higher incidence in certain populations. It is also known that various environmental factors are involved and may help explain some of the geographic variations.

“For example, some studies suggest the further north in latitude from the equator, the higher the incidence. Although not conclusive, there is some speculation that perhaps differences in sunlight and vitamin D exposure are

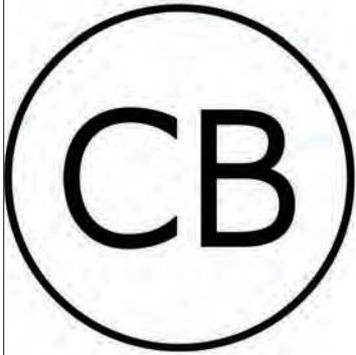
involved,” said Dr. Penc.

Symptoms may include weakness or abnormal sensations on one side of the body, vision changes, difficulty with walking and balance, and bowel or bladder dysfunction. Versus the general population, there is also a higher association with cognitive difficulty, depression, and headaches.

“This is a very small sample of the possible symptoms that an individual with MS may experience, and fortunately with the highly effective disease modifying therapies now available, the likelihood of experiencing such attacks and associated symptoms is significantly lower than just 15 to 20 years ago,” added Dr. Penc.

Fortunately, over the last 15 years, there has been an incredible increase in the number of medications that are now FDA approved.

The Albany Med Health System has highly qualified neurologists experienced with using these DMTs. They state that their health system is uniquely capable of providing multispecialty treatment for multiple sclerosis. For example, in addition to neurologists, their health system has infusion centers for administering medications that are given intravenously comprehensive physical and occupational therapy programs; and various medical specialties including rehabilitation physicians, urologists, and mental health specialists, to name just a few. ●



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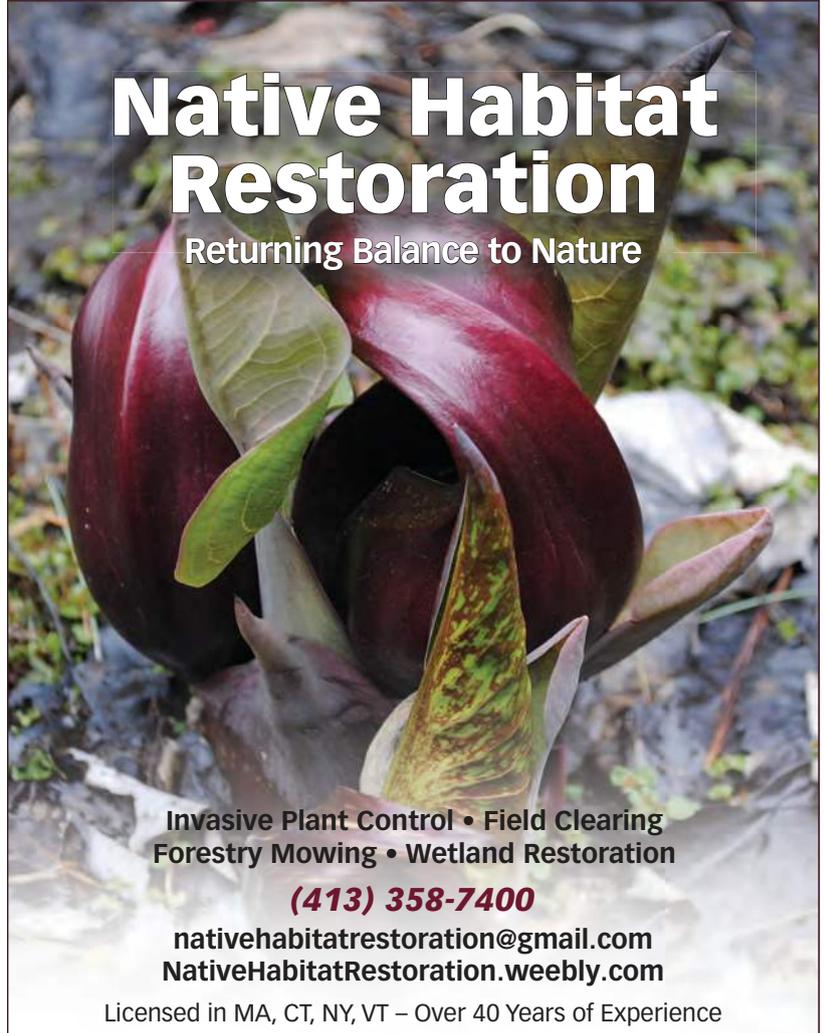
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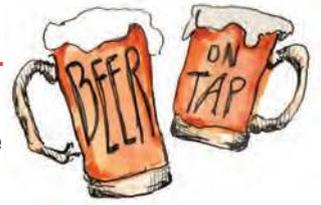
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By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com



The moment has likely been forgotten, or at least ground up in the fine mulch of memory, spread evenly and settling in. The sports season had ended, and the high school seniors and their anxious parents settled into the uneven terrain of the long wait. It's early spring. Applications have been sent into colleges, deposits paid, first choices and "safety schools" selected. Check the inbox every few hours to see if, fingers crossed, the words "we're pleased to inform you..." might appear.

Drifting further into the distance at the end of fall, sports has been the rather unfortunate message sent to a coach, who finally succumbed to the waves of innuendo and nastiness leveled by a small group of parents to announce the intention of not returning to the sidelines next year. The message? "You ruined my daughter's senior year." It was finally enough.

The blame game

Human nature had overcome other team parents when they learned of the final missive, and they immediately tried to guess who would have had the nerve to not only write but send that message. Ruined her senior year? A bit dramatic to be sure.

Was it possible that the young lady referenced had neither the skills nor the motivation that would justify her spending significant time on the soccer pitch? For most of the parents and players touched by the incident, the discussion had long since evaporated. The coach was gone of her own volition. The wait for college admissions continued. Chapter closed.

And yet, for a few who had lived through the wins, the ties, and the bitter defeats of a season closed, the message continued to haunt. Who would write something like that? Who

would be so hurtfully angry as to blame the coach of a middling soccer team for the destruction of an entire academic year?

Get a "Grip"

There have been many cartoons over the years depicting an individual pondering a decision with an imaginary devil on one shoulder and an imaginary angel on the other. Back and forth. Push and pull. Take the high road ... or sink into the mire and thrash about until we succumb.

In 1841, Charles Dickens coined a phrase in his book *Barnaby Rudge* that seemed to bring things into focus.

"So do the shadows of our own desires stand between us and our better angels, and thus their brightness is eclipsed."

Sitting on the shoulder of Dickens's title character were not angels and devils, but a talking raven, Grip. Throughout the book, it is Grip who delivers the punch lines, the insights, and the wisdom that somehow escape young Barnaby who is clearly not the sharpest knife in the drawer.

A bit of simple research reveals that a talking raven was less of an imaginary character, and one that actually inhabited Dickens's life. Not only did he have a pet raven named Grip, he ended up having this ornery companion who croaked such memorable phrases as "Polly put the kettle on; we'll all have tea" preserved by a taxidermist when lead poisoning stopped its antics. For those inclined, a visit to Philadelphia's Parkway Central Library will be rewarded with a view of Grip, still frozen in time, sitting in a glass case.

The impact of a talking, mischievous raven didn't stop with Dickens. Edgar Allen Poe was so intrigued with the adventures of Grip that he penned his most famous poem, *The Raven*, giving his character only one spoken word. "Nevermore."

And, your point is?

Presuming the reader has not been thrown off balance by this intriguing hopscotch through history, there is a point to all of this. One can choose to be lulled into letting the sarcastic raven determine our approach to even the most simple life decision, or one can relegate that spirit to a glass case and choose to listen to one's "better angels."

The timeworn axiom "measure twice, cut once" has implications well beyond the accurate sawing of a piece of wood. "Look before you leap" might be another way of approaching the same decision point.

Are we responsible as much for what we say as for what we do? Did the parent sending that cutting email to a small town soccer coach feel better about their outburst? Was outrage turned into gleeful celebration with a nasty barb fired toward its target? Did the complete elimination of "better angels" satisfy?

One would hope not.

Perhaps a bit of Platonic insight would bring this all into summary focus. 2,400 years of wisdom offered up with true appreciation:

Wise men speak because they have something to say. Fools speak because they have to say something.

May we be carried forward on the wings of our better angels. •



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“It’s attainable,”

New York State’s first Black woman sheriff says

By Barbara Peduzzi
info@mainstreetmag.com

“I went into this feeling I was the most qualified person for the position – who happened to be a Black female,” Columbia County Sheriff Jackie Salvatore said about her recent history-making election as the first Black woman elected to that position not only in that county, but also in the 400-year history of New York State.

Salvatore is a native of Columbia County and went to Hudson schools, then Columbia-Greene Community College. Her family moved from Virginia, “when my mom was pregnant with me.”

A self-described “all or nothing kind of person,” she soon proved her claim of being the most qualified, while relating her journey to the office she now occupies.

It all began with taking civil service exams, which led to a career in the New York State Police, which led to becoming Columbia County undersheriff, which led to the sheriff position.

How it all began

Her habit of taking vocational exams started early. While in high school, a perfect score on the first one she tried, for stenographers, led to a clerical job in a state office. She kept taking any exam “that was a promotional opportunity.” When the envelope with results for the NYSP one arrived, with passing results, “I looked at it and had to determine, ‘Do I really want to do this?’” As a young mother, the deciding factor was financial: “It was a \$5,000 a year raise, which was a lot back in 1988.”

A “high energy” 16-month-old daughter meant finding child care: “My parents’ help allowed me to go into the academy.” When it all seemed like it would be too much, “A couple of classmates sat me down and said, ‘Please, do whatever you can.’ They

talked me into staying.”

Her first patrol assignment was in Newburgh: “What an eye opener for a young girl who grew up in a relatively small agricultural community!” Salvatore termed it a “very, very good learning experience,” because it exposed her to a lot right out of the academy, “that I wouldn’t get here in Columbia County.”

Unfortunately, the very first thing it exposed her to was an active case of tuberculosis, and she spent most of her first shift at the hospital.

She remembers finding her first time doing shift work exhausting. “Some 11 to 7 shifts, driving home, I had to pull over on the side of the thruway to sleep for a couple of minutes.” Laughing, she added, “One time I got home and went to bed ... while Niagara Mohawk was working on the street with a jackhammer right outside my room!”

After a year, she was transferred to the Thruway Troop T Newburgh barracks, and later to the Claverack station. Within three or four months of starting, “I got a call to go to the Community Narcotics Enforcement Team, doing street level enforcement, and spent four years undercover.”

When her father became terminally ill, she was hardship reassigned back to Claverack. Then, after 9/11, Salvatore moved to the Director of Employment Assistant Program.

While still a full-time State Police officer, in 2014 Salvatore went back to school, gaining a degree in Biblical Studies, “of all things.” She was also caring for her family and managing her parent’s construction business, with all the related scheduling, taxes, and other associated paperwork.

“There were times I’d come home, go to my office, and tell everyone, ‘Please don’t bother me unless it’s absolutely necessary!’”



Jackie Salvatore is the first Black female Sheriff in both Columbia County and New York State. Photo courtesy of Jackie Salvatore.

The road to becoming sheriff

Further proving the ‘all or nothing’ label, in 2015 she started working at Albany International Airport, loading luggage. She was promoted to supervisor, but decided that driving to Albany for the job wasn’t cost effective, so she quit. While many people took jobs there for the free flights, “That was not for me. The family was flying while I was working,” she laughed.

Four months later she was asked back, as a manager, a position she praised as giving valuable lessons in understanding people, learning their strengths and weaknesses. She was also still managing the family business, plus putting her oldest daughter through college.

In 2016, she retired from the NYSP. Then, several years later, along came the offer to become undersheriff.

“I was managing a literary agent’s office,” Salvatore recalled. “I had turned down an offer from Ulster County to become undersheriff,” not

Continued on next page ...



Top: In an historical moment, Jackie Salvatore is sworn as the first Black female Sheriff not only in Columbia County but all of New York State. State Representative for Columbia County Didi Barrett officiates, while Salvatore's daughter holds the Bible. Photo by Duncan Teasdale-Ulrich for The Columbia Paper.

Above: Surrounded by personal and professional memorabilia, Jackie Salvatore sits at her desk as Columbia County's. Photo by Barbara Peduzzi.

wanting to return to that long drive to work, when Donald Kraft unexpectedly asked her to lunch. He said he was considering a run for sheriff and asking her to join him as the second-in-command candidate.

"You gotta give me a minute to digest this," she retorted, meaning she had to consider leaving her job and returning to policing. The obvious answer was yes, "And we ran our campaign during COVID!"

An undersheriff, she explained, basically oversees the day-to-day operations of the sheriff's office. Other officials, including the jail administrator and law enforcement captain, report to the undersheriff, who, she says, "makes sure the machine is well-oiled and runs smoothly."

In the role, she accompanied Sheriff Kraft to many functions and activities, "all of which I know now helped prepare me for this role." She explained that Kraft was very day-to-day operations oriented, while, "for me, the undersheriff oversees that."

She sees her role more as, for example, getting to all of the towns in the county's board meetings, to know their concerns and thus be more effective. "Fostering community – I'm a big believer in community. I want to get to know who people are, not just meet them if there's a horrible incident."

There's a new sheriff in town

Observing the easy camaraderie between Salvatore and some of the sheriff's officers at a community event before the elections led to asking how

she feels she achieves that. She admitted to some anxiety with how she would be received, as she had never worked with anyone there, but then correctly determined, "I can't allow that to consume me. I'm just gonna bring me to the table."

She credits the airport and construction business management stints with helping to understand how workers have to juggle their lives. At the airport, "I had to know workers' strengths and weaknesses, and use that knowledge to put people in positions they would be more adept at."

All of that experience, the new sheriff feels, "helped forge relationships with people here," noting that some said, "thank you for asking," when she would talk with them, "because that hadn't always been done before."

Her concern for her staff is evident. She relates, "If I have an opening, I'll have a conversation to see how it will impact their life. I don't want anybody in a position that creates a hardship, puts them somewhere they don't want to be, or might negatively impact their home life. We have the opportunity to make those adjustments."

"Having put a lot of miles on my car and feet, I was excited about winning the election, but I didn't really absorb the gravity of it at first." The significance of herself gaining the position, "wasn't my focus during the campaign."

"It's like women of color who have ascended to a different position," she mused, citing, "the audacity of Shirley Chisholm, Rosa Parks, Kamala Harris, and Ruth Bader Ginsberg – trailblazing women who wanted to make something better and proved it."

Someone who cares and listens

As far as any planned changes, she thought for a moment and then said being director of EAP lets her understand things in ways many in law enforcement officers don't, including the importance of wellness and how that can impact how officials show up for the public. "I want citizens to know the administration trusts and supports them and that we care about their well-being."

Backing that claim, an attribute in a letter endorsing her for the position was, "someone who cares and listens."

Defining her comments, she went on to note, "That doesn't always mean I acquiesce, but I listen, and I consider how something will affect the person at the bottom. I'm in the driver's seat, but I need them to make the engine run."

Salvatore hasn't begun thinking beyond her term in office. "I'm really, really enjoying the moment every day. The building needs a cohesive unit here. It's great to see people smile in the hallways."

Speaking of well-being, she says, "I have a room in my house with probably too many plants, a garden. I love playing in the dirt; it's therapeutic. I love theater, music, cooking, and riding my motorcycle whenever I can squeeze it in. In winter, I sit in my chair with multiple snacks and the remote and watch whatever."

The most rewarding part of her career is, "the seat I'm in now." Out of many memorable accomplishments over the years, she recalls one that was touching and rewarding at the same time; "a single mom who had taken money from her work place. I stood with her at her arraignment, and she got to go home. She had used the money to pay past-due bills and buy her kids coats. I understood on a human level what she did and didn't want the kids punished."

Throughout her law enforcement career, she recalled, nothing ever came up to make her question what she was doing in this field, but she did admit to having cases with people who were difficult to interact with, "but nothing made me question why I was doing it."

Two words she'd like people to describe her as are qualified and caring. "My goal during the campaign was to let people know my experience, qualifications, and what I'd like to implement. I would always put that first, 'I'm qualified and not gonna be just a Black female. The historical aspect is a byproduct, not the main feature.'"

Along with that, "I like setting an example for young women, regardless of ethnicity, because policing is predominantly male. As the first Black woman in a 400-year history, I hope someone who looks like me can now think about what they might want to accomplish and say, 'It's attainable.'"



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Samuel Tilden

and the election of 1876



By Jesse DeGroot
info@mainstreetmag.com

"I still trust the people"
– Epitaph of Samuel J. Tilden

He'd have had every right to not.

The 1876 United States presidential election was expected to be close, but not so close that the victor would go officially undeclared until three days prior to the scheduled March 5, 1877, inauguration, following the work of a Congressionally appointed electoral commission. Nor, when they headed to the polls on November 7, 1876, would anyone have suspected that Chatham, New York's political potentate, Louis Payn, known as "The Marshal," would play a role in what many would say was a put-up job that handed victory to the man who had in fact been turned away at polls.

The race – in those days, campaigning by presidential candidates on their own behalf was frowned upon – was between 62-year-old New York Governor Samuel J. Tilden from New Lebanon, a Democrat, and Republican Ohio Governor Rutherford B. Hayes. It would be described by a Smithsonian Internet post as the

"ugliest, most contentious, and most controversial presidential election in US history," notwithstanding elections of recent times.

From New Lebanon to the White House?

Born in New Lebanon, NY, on February 9, 1814, Tilden's professed political idol was Kinderhook's Martin Van Buren, the 8th President of the United States and friend of the family. Tilden would eventually establish his law practice in New York City and reside in Yonkers.

Fervent, one might say, was the opposition to Tilden, with the election arriving on the heels of a campaign in which Tilden's opposition "called him everything from a briber to a thief to a drunken syphilitic. Suspicions of voter fraud in Republican-controlled states were rampant, and heavily armed and marauding white supremacist Democrats had canvassed the South, preventing countless blacks from voting," noted *The Chatham Courier*.

Lest we forget, the Civil War had ended a scant 11 years prior, leaving in its wake the attendant issues of its time. As most of us have come to learn in one fashion or another, very little in the political realm happens in a vacuum. What might the *Port Jervis Tri-States Union* editorial page have to say, in late September 1876,

under the headline, "Look, Before You Leap?" "If any argument can convince the people that the election of Tilden for president will be disastrous, that which promises to the former Southern slave holders' reimbursement for their slaves, their cotton, their property of all kinds, taken or destroyed by the Union armies in their transit through the South in the event of Tilden's election, ought to deter thoughtful and right-minded men from casting their votes for this Apostle of Democracy."

On election night, Tilden was announced the winner by many newspapers of both the popular vote by some 260,000 total votes, and by the critical Electoral College tally. A gloomy Hayes prepared his concession speech and turned in for the evening. But when the dust settled the next morning, Tilden stood at 184 Electoral College votes, one short of the 185 needed at the time for a win. Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina and their total of 20 electoral votes were deemed too close to call, leaving Hayes at 165. Hayes would refuse to concede, although he was known to opine that he felt Tilden had indeed carried the day.

Left: Chief Justice Morrison R. Waite administering the oath of office to Rutherford B. Hayes, 1877. Photo: historytoday.com.

Middle: Samuel J. Tilden. Source unknown.

Right: Samuel J. Tilden is announced as the Democratic presidential nominee. Photo: historytoday.com.

Continued on next page ...

Pahhhtyy!

Jubilant Chathamites placed an ad in *The Chatham Courier* for a “Grand Parade in Chatham Village in honor of the successful candidates on Saturday, November 11. All the political organizations of the county, without regard to party, are invited to join in this celebration” for Tilden, who would have been the second man elected president from Columbia County in 40 years.

Louis Payn had been a strong supporter of a third term for President Ulysses S. Grant, to the point that Grant later noted he would have snagged that third nomination by his party – decades prior to the establishment of the 22nd Amendment, limiting presidential terms – if he’d had more supporters like Payn at the national convention that ultimately chose Hayes after a long and bitter fight. As a good party leader, though, at the end of the day Payn stood behind the candidacy of Hayes.

In Chatham, a “crowd of some 50 men milled around the telegraph office in the railroad depot on election night,” the *Courier* said. “While the fragrance of hard cider and wood smoke from a pot belly stove were redolent in the pleasantly warm station, outside, horses which had brought men from all sections of the county were hastily blanketed ... in the confines of the telegraph office an operator wrote out the presidential election returns as they rattled and clacked in on his metal receiver.”

“Some Columbia County townships were slow in reporting the count of paper ballots, particularly the 4th District of Chatham, where the election board had repaired to a local tavern for a post-election collation. The results would not reach Chatham until the following morning on the first Rutland train.” Let it be noted

that Chatham’s 4th, considered a heavily Republican district, turned out to have “firmly backed Tilden’s bid for the presidency.”

Bitter mood

When December 6, 1876, rolled around and it was time for individual states’ electors to cast their ballots, noted the Miller Center, “Generally, the process went smoothly but in four capitals – Salem, Oregon; Columbia, South Carolina; Tallahassee, Florida; and New Orleans, Louisiana – two sets of conflicting electors met and voted so that the US Congress received two sets of conflicting electoral votes.”

According to Wikipedia, initially it appeared Tilden had carried Florida by 91 votes, South Carolina by several hundred, and Louisiana by more than 6,000. When time came for electors to vote, “Republicans controlled the bodies charged with determining the validity of election results in all three states. On November 22, the South Carolina canvassing board adjourned after declaring that Hayes had won the state’s electoral votes. On December 4, the Louisiana canvassing board announced that it had thrown out 15,623 votes due to “systemic intimidation.” Subsequently, Florida fell in line and selected Hayes as the winner of the state’s electoral votes, giving him the 185 he needed to assume office.

The tinkering was not quite complete. Congress would soon take up the election issue, and in January 1877 it would establish the Electoral Commission, composed of five senators, five Supreme Court justices, and five members of the House of Representatives (seven Democrats and eight Republicans, one – a justice – noted for his independent decisions) to hear



Two Democratic posters from 1876 depicting Tilden and Hendricks. Source, left: Miller Center. Right: Wikipedia.

“arguments from lawyers who represented both Hayes and Tilden. Associate Justice Joseph P. Bradley emerged as the swing vote in the decision to name the next president of the United States,” according to the Smithsonian. Oddly enough, Hayes was not supportive of the commission, but changed his mind with the realization that to deny its work would delegitimize the eventual winner.

“The disputed electoral votes were dealt with and in each case the vote, on purely party lines, was 8-7,” noted *The Chatham Courier*. “The final tally was Hayes 185 while Tilden still held to his original 184. A bitter mood prevailed throughout the nation, and there were reports and counter-reports of possible anarchy or rebellion. Democrats still referred to Tilden as ‘Mr. President,’ and they insisted that their man assume the role of Chief Executive, election commission or not.”

When all was said and done, and all machinations and shenanigans apparently deemed to have concluded, Hayes was said to have received 4,036,298 votes, with 4,300,590 going to Tilden, according to Britannica.com.

On the morning of March 8, Payn, said to be as “keen as a Damascus blade” and at that time United States Marshal for the Southern District of New York, was summoned by telegraph to New York on a matter of “supreme importance.” Upon his return, Payn was carrying a pistol and an official document calling for the

“immediate arrest of Samuel J. Tilden” should he or any of his supporters attempt to seize the presidency. Alas, Payn was never forced to brandish his weapon or serve the documents. Tilden, known to be a “believer in the Republic, in orderly process ... refused to incite his followers into acts of anarchy.”

“I can retire to public life with the consciousness that I shall receive from posterity the credit of having been elected to the highest position in the gift of the people,” said Tilden after his defeat, “without any of the cares and responsibilities of the office.”

Not so fast?

Upon attempts by the Democratic Party to draft him to run again in the 1880 and 1884 presidential elections, Tilden responded with a lengthy letter detailing why that would not be happening, in the process leaving us with words that would serve us well in any era.

As published in the June 13, 1884, Maysville, KY, *Daily Evening Bulletin* (and a host of other newspapers across the country), Tilden wrote: “Of a people to elect their rulers – violated in my person, I have accorded as long a reserve of my decision as possible, but I cannot overcome my repugnance to enter a new engagement which involves four years of ceaseless toil. The dignity of the presidential office is above a merely personal ambition, but it creates in me no illusion. Its value is for its great power for good to the country.” ●



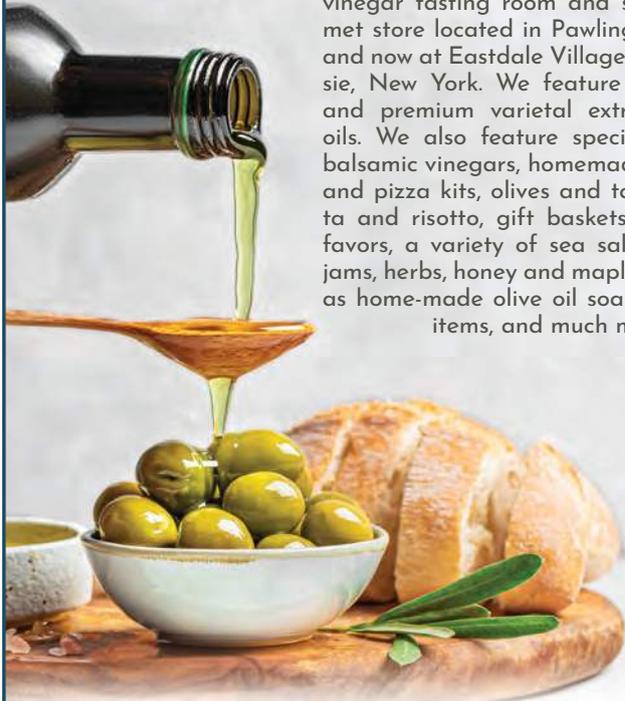
“A truce – not a compromise, but a chance for high-toned gentlemen to retire gracefully from their very civil declarations of war.” By Thomas Nast in *Harper’s Weekly*, February 27, 1877.



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Forest Bathing

THE ART OF LEAVING THE DAILY GRIND BEHIND & PRIORITIZING RELAXATION

By Whitney Joseph Shavelson
info@mainstreetmag.com

At this very moment, I'm leaning back lazily – and perhaps a tad dangerously – in a somewhat shabby but deliciously comfy chocolate brown microsuede recliner, savoring my first in a string of daily rituals. This one is conceivably my favorite; at the very least, it's a requisite part of each day – if I want to stay alert, that is.

Inevitably, there will be more cups of coffee to follow. Like my late dad, I'm partial to a robust roast – straightforward and strong – reminiscent of the aromatic cups 'o joe I remember my folks getting every summer from those classic diners that are ubiquitous throughout the Northeast. My lifelong preference for full-bodied, hot-as-you-can-tolerate coffee has led many of my loved ones to describe me not only as a coffee fiend with a penchant for drinking mud; some have gone so far as to label my own brew “cowboy coffee.” I can't argue with the portrayal.

With mug in hand, my longish legs are stretched out before me, one crossed over the other. My slipper-clad feet are extended comfortably over the chair's edge. From afar, I likely look like an elongated, fuzzy, oddly contoured, and lumbering checkerboard, thanks to the cuddly red-and-black robe I'm wearing – a gift from my thoughtful mother-in-law a few Christmases back.

My husband, Jason, has an identical robe hanging on his side of the closet. Soft and comfy, they're perfect for keeping us snug when we're hunkered inside our cabin.

Stretching those legs and exploring the AT

Currently, I'm ensconced in a quaint but modernized split-log cabin that's flooded with light, deep in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Specifically, I'm in Ellijay, Georgia, near the southern terminus region of the Appalachian Trail, which stretches northward, ending in Maine.

Several of our Harlem Valley towns belong to the AT Community, including Pawling and Dover, New York. The Harlem Valley “is part of the 2,190-mile-long Appalachian Mountain landscape known as the Wild East. Only an hour train ride from New York City, visitors can explore 16 miles of the AT through Dover and Pawling, with hikes ranging in ability from easy rolling terrain to rock scrambles,” according to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

Just across the border, there's more trail to explore as the AT continues into the Nutmeg State. It “skirts the town [of Falls Village, Connecticut] along the east side of the river, with a portion of the Trail forming part of a gentle, one-mile, universally accessible loop. Just below the bridge on the west side of the Housatonic is a picnic area that offers a scenic view of the river.” From NYC, it's about an hour and 15 minutes by car to Hartford, the nearest city.

Thru-hikers trudging along US Route 7 in Connecticut, which parallels the AT, will likely chance upon some other familiar towns we all know and love near the trail, like Kent, Cornwall Bridge, and Salisbury – where AT hikers famously pop into LaBonne's Market for a quick pick-me-up and frequent friendly chats with locals. Bull's Bridge, a covered bridge and waterfall near Kent, is

another popular attraction, but the scenic spot gets so packed that even the AT Conservancy warns it's “best visited on a weekday due to its popularity and limited parking.”

In Massachusetts, AT hikers are encouraged to visit Mount Greylock near North Adams, roughly two-and-a-half hours from Boston. It's the state's highest point at 3,491 feet, providing 360-degree views via a 93-foot-tall tower that honors war veterans. On a clear day with good visibility, it's been reported that hikers “can see for 90 miles” from atop the tower.

For details, go to appalachiantrail.org.

Back to the Blue Ridge Mountains

This is my first time staying in the Blue Ridge region. It's our first trip to Georgia as a family and the first time we've visited Ellijay. It's lovely. Ellijay is the Apple Capital of Georgia, with Georgia being the Peach State.

We landed in Georgia one day before the Southeast saw the “Ice Storm of a Generation,” as news stations dubbed the rare cold snap that brought ice, snow, and extremely low temperatures within 24 hours of our arrival.

A couple of inches of snow have fallen since. That was the storm's first phase (more followed shortly afterward – not much by northern standards, but those Georgians were certainly frozen in their tracks). The Arctic blast gave us the perfect chance to revel in a wintry wonderland at a slower-than-usual pace; it was all we could have wished for and more during our midwinter getaway.

The unexpected storm (unexpected before our holiday, at least) provided a beautiful backdrop while exploring the Blue Ridge region. We chose this

area intentionally, so we could bring Bailey, our nine-year-old Shiba Inu. Ellijay is very dog-friendly.

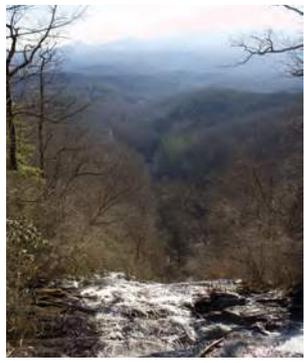
Bailey is accustomed to walking along beaches and boardwalks, parks and preserves; she's never experienced real winter weather before. Happily, she loves the change of scenery and the different climate. In fact, this vacation has basically been all fun and games for Bailey thus far – just one great, big adventure!

Jason and I are somewhat shocked by how fun and fulfilling it's been watching Bailey experience the snow and the great outdoors – with minimal restrictions – for the first time. She's been squeezing the maximum amount of joy from every moment. I would have thought it impossible, but our little furball may be endearing herself to us even more during this mountainside escape. Completely engrossed in her surroundings, she's been on her best behavior, and she's been listening like a champ. We're very thankful she's following her training and thrilled she's so excited to be here. Seeing Bailey this elated is beyond gratifying.

Bailey's joyful presence and adorable antics during this trip may be the best part – she's giving Jason and me more pleasure than almost any other activity. The smile on her face says it all. Shibas are known for their smiles, and the grin on Bailey's foxy-looking orange countenance has never been more prominent than during this vacation.

Part of me is curious if Bailey's glee and affinity for the mountains is in part some subconscious recall, as she's actually a Georgia native. Jason got

Continued on next page ...



Bailey as a puppy from a breeder here, though she hasn't been back since.

Recall: By a native and of nature

Since arriving in Georgia, Bailey's been investigating every nook and cranny; it's all brand-new to her. Outside, it's ice crystals and snowflakes; everything is silvery and white. The rural dirt road is little more than compressed rocks and grit, lined on both sides by a forest floor still carpeted with fallen leaves, frozen into place and dusted with snow. Herds of deer wander it constantly. Bailey's Nirvana. Bailey seems as keen on the concept of forest bathing as I am. It was one of the main reasons Jason and I chose the Blue Ridge Mountains for our getaway. From the anecdotal evidence I've gathered while here, forest therapy (aka forest bathing) is just as alluring – and just as meaningful – to canines as it is to humans.

I get it.

Forest bathing

This ancient concept has Shinto and Buddhist roots. Its modern-day revival, called "Shinrin-yoku," was reintroduced in Japan in 1982 thanks to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries' then-director, Tomohide Akiyama.

The Forest Therapy Society explains at fo-society.jp/en that forest bathing is "a research-based healing practice through immersion in forests with the aim of promoting mental and physical health and improving disease prevention while at the same time being able to enjoy and appreciate the forest."

The FTS adds that humans were born with five senses into a very simple environment. As of 2026, we've "moved very far away" from our native ecosystem into manmade and unnatural settings.

Our bodies, our souls, our psyches crave nature.

"Today we live in a modern artificial environment, which is different from the original living environment, and this is very stressful on us," the Society website explains, listing ways

in which forest bathing can reduce stress and positively affect our state of mind.

The FTS further claims those who bring nature into their daily lives and allow it to seep into their senses "will feel the trees and wind in the forest."

Feeling the trees and the wind

For the entirety of our sojourn, Jason, Bailey, and I have been doing just that – embracing nature – and we're enjoying a closer and more meaningful relationship with our native environment as a result. Even Bailey's been communing with the surrounding natural world in a way I've never observed. She's run after deer for hundreds of yards, only to return promptly when called. She's sniffed and smelled under every possible rock, twig, and leaf in her path, but to our amazement, walks away leaving her discoveries practically undisturbed. She's investigated what seems like hundreds of microscopic snowflakes only to realize they melt instantaneously, yet that does little to quell her curiosity about why those cold bits of fluff keep falling from the sky, nor does it dissuade her from continuing to inspect them. We feel more in sync with the great outdoors than ever, and we regularly venture outside to explore Mother Nature's offerings. Jason agrees: It's been magical.

We can breathe deeper, laugh harder, sing louder, and walk farther. It feels amazing.

Each day, we flounce amid the flora and fauna, ramble along riverbeds, cross over creeks, and wander upon waterfalls. Even when the deep freeze kept us indoors, we huddled near the fireplace to stare out at the beautiful views beyond and, when brave enough, bundled up to venture onto one of the many porches and breathe in the cold mountain air. It's been both inspiring and invigorating!

The point? It's possible to immerse yourself in nature anywhere. Doing so promises to help unlock your senses in a visceral way; it has for me (and for Jason), which has helped me tap into my creativity. It's been a stimulating

and liberating experience.

I'm amazed what a dose of fresh air can do. Best of all, gulping in all that air is free and available to everyone. The basic mix of gases – primarily nitrogen and oxygen – is essential for human life, and it can do wonders for our spirit and our soul.

No wrong way

The best part of it all is that there's really no wrong way to nature bathe, and the Society seems to back me up on this.

"We advise individuals to find the most relaxing method that is best for them," states the website. "Although the trigger to what makes us feel relaxed varies, we will realize that we enjoy being in nature and are made to fit in a natural environment."

Outdated science implied one must do strenuous activity for it to be beneficial. Today an increasing number of doctors place a priority on mental health and realize that an inquisitive mind, a soaring spirit, and a serene soul are vital for a flourishing and healthy body. Personally, I know when my mind is calm, my body seems to function more harmoniously, too.

Forest bathing helps. The basic premise is simple: submerge yourself in a forest. If a traditional forest isn't immediately or easily available, think outside the box. Find a local park, a botanical garden, a nature preserve, or even a patch of grass in your backyard – just claim a bit of green space for a spell and submerge yourself in its wonders. Though a forest is the ideal environment to gain optimal benefits, the main goal is to immerse yourself in nature – its sights, its sounds, its smells.

The Society explains why forest therapy works: "From the moment you step into a lush forest covered with dense vegetation and fragrant fresh soil, you can feel the surrounding life with your senses. We experience the therapeutic and relaxing power of the forest."

Activities to enjoy while forest bathing may be found online, along with relaxation techniques like mind-

ful meditation, yogic breathing, and aromatherapy. The FTS suggests forest walking or visiting quaint towns and villages dotted along many of the forests where we live, work, or visit. Other recommendations include enjoying natural resources like hot springs, or preparing healthy meals with fresh local ingredients, perhaps foraged during a forest trek (make sure all ingredients are safe to eat!).

Local and thru-hiking

Checking out the wildlife is a common motivator for many who forest bathe. And while many people hike locally or regionally, others pursue more inspirational feats of strength and endurance, like hiking the nearly 2,200-mile-long AT. Generally, it takes the average hiker about six months to complete the entire length of the AT. Its starting point is in Springer Mountain, GA, and it ends at Mount Katahdin, ME.

The consensus seems to be that whether taking a brief break or an extended adventure in nature, everyone can benefit from forest therapy. People see a lot of green – rather than spend a lot of green – while soaking in all of nature's glory.

Those who dip a toe into the waters of forest bathing may be surprised by how powerful the experience is, and how long the effects can last. Beyond new discoveries or unexplored territory, those who try this modern-day therapy rooted in ancient wisdom may find the tranquility and calm they're seeking – something we could all use.

And once a toe gets dipped into the waters of forest bathing, participants may be surprised by just how powerful the experience is and by how long the effects last. I'm even willing to bet those who try this modern-day therapy rooted in our Earth's ancient wisdom will quickly find themselves awash in the tranquility and calm they've been seeking – something we could all use a little more of, if not a lot – as we try to leave each day's stressors behind... •

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Side of Culture

An online magazine and newsletter focusing arts and cultural organizations. editor@sideofculture.com. sideofculture.com

Victoria Larson founded Side of Culture, an online magazine and newsletter, in 2017. “The idea is to write about and support smaller arts and cultural organizations mostly in America but also some that are overseas. These organizations are vital educational and cultural centers for their communities. We write articles, showcase photographs and provide news about smaller arts and cultural organizations ranging from house museums and public gardens to performing arts centers and even bookstores. We also write book reviews and profile leaders in the arts.” Victoria explained that long form writing and well-researched articles by top editors and journalists, many professionally-shot photographs in each article, consistent publishing (the beginning of each month) and outstanding subjects are hallmarks of their publication is what makes Side of Culture unique. Victoria went on to say, “Working with professional writers and editors; covering fascinating organizations run by people who really care about their communities; receiving appreciation from the leaders of the organizations especially because opportunities for publishing have diminished is the most rewarding part of what we do.” And the future? “We will continue our monthly publishing; working to boost our social media reach and online presence; and we have just started the application process to become a non-profit as we are an educational publication and support the arts.”



Vivash Med Spa

Patient-centered wellness and aesthetic physical and mental well-being services. 249 Main St., Unit 103, Beacon, NY. vivashmedspa.com

Dr. Elaine Suderio founded her wellness and mental health practices to carry forward the compassion and connection she provided during COVID. After witnessing profound isolation and unmet emotional needs, she set out to create accessible, holistic care that supports both mental and physical healing in her community. Vivash Med Spa provides patient-centered wellness and aesthetic services focused on physical and mental well-being. The clinic offers medically guided treatments that support confidence, stress reduction, and overall health, combining clinical expertise with a holistic approach to care in a calm, supportive environment. Vivash stands apart by offering physician-led, NYC-caliber medical aesthetic and wellness care in the Hudson Valley. “What’s most rewarding is helping people feel seen, heard, and supported. Whether improving physical confidence or addressing deeper emotional needs, the work allows us to care for the whole person and make a meaningful difference in our patients’ well-being. Going forward, we see wellness care becoming more integrated with mental health support. People are looking for care that acknowledges the connection between how they feel emotionally and how they feel physically. Our focus is on expanding access to clinically grounded services that address both, with compassion and safety.”

WHAT'S YOUR SIGN?

ARIES

March 21 - April 19

The viewpoint you thought explained matters turned out to be not so simple. It's OK to re-examine matters and come to a different conclusion.

TAURUS

April 20 - May 20

The day pulls forward your pragmatic side, the side others appreciate and seek out in you when decisions need to be made. Let the work speak for itself rather than big, fancy words.

GEMINI

May 21 - June 20

An observation could throw you off even though it's not meant in a negative way. It is better to ask than to jump to negative and assumed conclusions.

CANCER

June 21 - July 22

You might find a need to spend more time at home than would be normal, even though things outside the home are calling for your attention. There's no obligation to be everywhere at once.

LEO

July 23 - August 22

Something you proposed earlier in the month is now gaining more attention than you anticipated and is causing a reaction. It is wise to stick to your guns, and your words.

VIRGO

August 23 - September 22

The schedule you had set in place with plenty of warning is proving more opportune

than you could have anticipated. It is amazing to see forethought and planning pay off.

LIBRA

September 23 - October 22

An unexpected request will put you in a position where you have to weigh your options with more precision than you are used to. It is advisable to give yourself a cushion before you respond.

SCORPIO

October 23 - November 21

You might notice a change in someone's attitude that's close to you that you believed to be like cement. It is best to give the attitude and person a wide berth.

SAGITTARIUS

November 22 - December 21

You're faced with a conversation that's been hanging in the air for a while but is now finally out in the open. It's best to grab the opportunity when it presents itself.

CAPRICORN

December 22 - January 19

A slight delay could alter plans and preconceptions but the overall plan won't be changed at the end of the day. It is better to remain calm than to let irritation impact the outcome.

AQUARIUS

January 20 - February 18

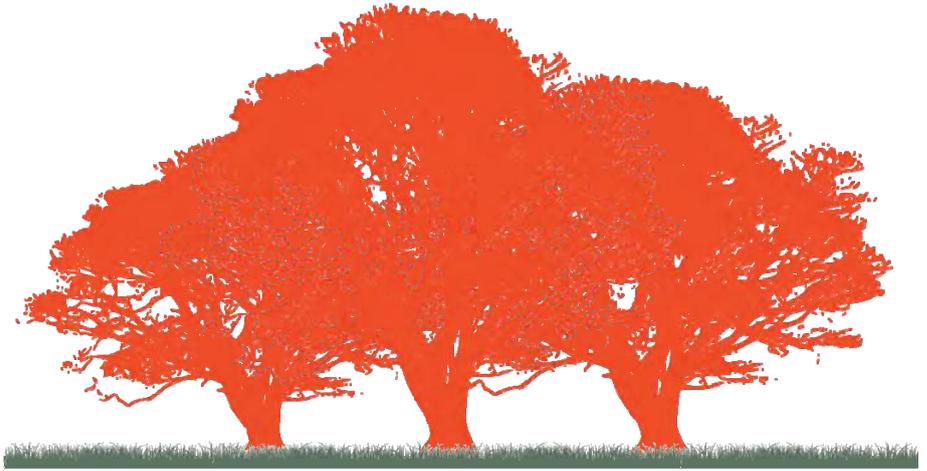
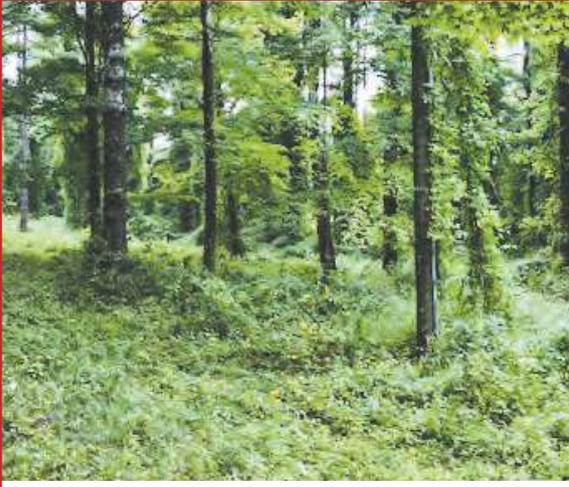
Something unexpected could impact the rhythm of your day and call for a quick

reaction. It is advisable to take a moment before continuing on.

PISCES

February 19 - March 20

Not everything that moves around you is as sharp or finite as you might believe. Some things can wait until morning without any damage being done. Breathe.



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