Teaching Diversity in the Hudson Valley

Resources for teaching regional history with a multi-ethnic perspective

“. . .the idea of history is not that of a single people, but the interaction, interconnectedness and interdependence of a multiplicity of racial, ethnic and religious groups.”

— A. J. Williams-Myers, A Portrait of Eve: Towards a Social History of Black Women in the Hudson River Valley

K-12 PROGRAMS

Albany Heritage Area Visitor’s Center, Albany, Albany County, features a planetarium and exhibits. The museum also organizes walking tours. A program for students in grades 2-12, The Underground Railroad and the North Star, at the visitor center’s Henry Hudson Planetarium, teaches the role constellations played in freedom seekers’ search along the Underground Railroad. A second planetarium program for grades 2-5, Skytellers, explores Native American legends about the sky. A section of the museum’s permanent exhibit highlights Albany’s role in the Underground Railroad Movement using documents and pictures to interpret the story.

Website: www.albany.org (click on Visitors Center)
Phone: (518) 434-0405

Bevier House Museum, Marbletown, Ulster County, offers museum tours and education programs that engage students in exploration of the lives of Native Americans and enslaved Africans. Exploring Ecology: From Native Americans to Today, teaches students, grades 2-6, about the land-use practices and technologies employed by Native Americans who lived in the areas now known as Dutchess and Ulster Counties. Hands that Picked no Cotton: Slavery in the Hudson Valley, introduces students, grades 3-12, to the institution of slavery in New York State and at the Bevier Home.

Website: www.bevierhousemuseum.org
Phone: (845) 338-5614

Bowdoin Park, Wappingers Falls, Dutchess County, offers an anthropology program introducing K-12 students to the Native American history and pre-history of the park. Groups can request an interpretive hike to a Native American rock shelter, in which students explore the interior and discuss the use and preparation of this type of shelter. Programs on hunting, music, and survival techniques of regional Native Americans are under development.

Phone: (845) 298-4602
E-mail: dbeck@co.dutchess.ny.us (for naturalist, David Beck)

John Jay Homestead, Katonah, Westchester County, offers tours and educational programs to engage students in a study of the life and times of John Jay, a U.S. founding father. A program for grades 8-12, Slavery, Abolition and the Jay Family, teaches students about Jay’s role as a slave owner and manumission advocate as well as his son William’s work as an abolitionist.

Abolition as a Social Movement: Purity vs. Pragmatism, for grades 8-12, explores the connections between the Abolition and Women’s Rights Movements. The lesson aims to demonstrate that many of the issues dealt with in the past were complex and had consequences that remain significant today.

Attitudes of Slavery: Change Starts Slow, 7th and 8th graders use documents to explore views of slavery held by some Americans during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Website: www.johnjayhomestead.org
Phone: (914) 232-5651, ext. 103

Mount Gulian Historic Site, Fishkill, Dutchess County, presents interactive programs to involve students in studying the life and times of the Verplanck family. A House Divided: Mount Gulian Interprets the Civil War introduces students to some of the period’s complex racial issues. A collection of letters to and from one of the Verplanck sons brings to life his experience in President Lincoln’s army, training and leading African American troops into battle.

Related Resource: Mount Gulian

### Annual Events at Philipsburg

**The Green Corn Festival,** Friday through Monday, Labor Day weekend. A celebration of Native American history and culture, the festival includes traditional craft and food demonstrations, storytelling, song and dance.

**Okra, Beans and Leafy Greens: The African-American Foodways Festival,** last Sunday in July. This festival explores the influence of free and enslaved Africans on colonial and contemporary cuisine. The event features food-making demonstrations, dance performances, planting, harvesting, and cooking activities; garden tours, and tasty traditional cuisine.

**Pinkster Festival,** third Sunday in May. A celebration of spring brought to the Hudson Valley by the Dutch and adapted by Africans. Festivities include drumming and traditional dance, African folktales, and demonstrations of traditional African instruments and wares. There is also an on-site Pinkster school program for grades 2-12 on the three days following the festival.

Students learn about the contributions of African American soldiers and the struggle to help them find their rightful places in the military and in American society.

Guided museum tours introduce students to the story of escaped slave, journal keeper, and Mount Gulian gardener James F. Brown. *Dutch Settlers and Trade with the Native Americans* acquaints students with the colonial period in the Hudson Valley, with a focus on the life ways of the Wappinger Indians and the early Dutch fur traders. The program and activities stress the economic and historical forces that shaped the region. Students learn vocabulary from Native American languages and engage in a fur trading game.

Website: [www.mountgulian.org](http://www.mountgulian.org)
Phone: (845) 831-8172

**New York State Museum,** Albany, Albany County, offers education programs on the Iroquois Nation from pre-colonial times to the present. A Mohawk longhouse replication allows hands-on exploration of Iroquois life. *Native Peoples of New York and People of the Longhouse,* programs for grades 1-12, are available October-April. *Cradleboards and Cornhusk Dolls,* for preschoolers and kindergarteners, is available September-June.

*The Ellis Island Experience* introduces students in grades 1-8 to the dreams and hardships of immigrant families and working conditions in Lower East Side sweatshops.

*Street Scenes: New York City in 1895* allows students in grades 1-8 to experience the struggles of tenement life at the end of the 19th century. Students compare and contrast the lives of the City’s working poor, mainly immigrant populations to the wealthy elite. Both programs are available October–April.

Website: [www.nysm.nysed.gov](http://www.nysm.nysed.gov)
Phone: (518) 474-5877

**Philipsburg Manor,** Sleepy Hollow, Westchester County, is a living history museum that includes the stories of 23 enslaved Africans who lived and labored at Philipsburg Manor. A colonial-era provisioning plantation that exported food for sugar plantations in the West Indies, Philipsburg Manor also chronicles the development of commerce and cultural diversity in colonial New York. Hands-on activity sessions follow tours of the Manor’s gristmill, farm, house, and slaves’ garden, opening a window into what daily life was like in the mid-1700s for enslaved people.

Website: [www.hudsonvalley.org](http://www.hudsonvalley.org)
Phone: (914) 631-8200, ext. 628

**Philipsburg Manor Hall State Historic Site,** Yonkers, Westchester County, features a long-term, interactive exhibit, *Slavery: The Great and Foul Stain.* The exhibit explores the views on slavery pronounced by the first 18 U.S. presidents and other prominent figures. A program recommended for grades 4-12, *The Enslaved Population of Philipsburg Manor Hall,* introduces students to Philipse Manor through the eyes of the enslaved people who lived and worked there. Students begin their visit with a tour and then engage in role-playing. Tours related to both exhibits are available for students grades 1-12.

Website: [www.philipsemanorfriends.org](http://www.philipsemanorfriends.org) or [www.nysparks.state.ny.us/sites/info.asp?siteID=24](http://www.nysparks.state.ny.us/sites/info.asp?siteID=24)
Phone: (914) 965-4027

**Rockland County Historical Society,** New City, Rockland County, offers *Growing up Lenape: Early Life in Rockland County.* The program is an opportunity for students to experience what life was like for the county’s first human inhabitants, the Munsee speaking Lenape. A hands-on demonstration of corn grinding, typical Lenape clothing, and games will be given to show how they worked and lived. Student participation will be encouraged. The class will explore how each family member contributed to the families’ survival. Students will also compare the Lenapes’ lives to what students’ own lives are like today.

Website: [www.rocklandhistory.org](http://www.rocklandhistory.org)
Phone: (845) 634-9629
**St. Paul's Church National Historic Site**, Mount Vernon, Westchester County, runs regular tours of its historic cemetery including visits to the graves of African Americans and an overview of their lives. Among the graves, are those of several men who were born enslaved and then fought with Union regiments during the Civil War.

Website: [www.nps.gov/sapa](http://www.nps.gov/sapa)
Phone: (914) 667-4116

---

**Underground Railroad History Project of the Capitol Region, Inc.,** Albany, Albany County, offers walking tours of historic sites connected to the Underground Railroad (UGR) in Albany and Troy. Dates and times are posted on the website and groups may arrange alternate times. The project’s website provides short biographies of local figures important in the abolition movement, highlighting the stories of African American abolitionists and freedom seekers. Also available on the website are descriptions of UGR institutions and their instruments for communication, as well as historical UGR locations in Albany and Troy. The project sponsors an annual winter conference on the UGR, featuring research on a variety of aspects of the movement, music, literature, and biographies by and about the enslaved. Check the website for details.

Website: [www.ugrworkshop.com](http://www.ugrworkshop.com)
Phone: (518) 432-4432

---

**Van Cortlandt Manor**, Croton-on-Hudson, Westchester County, introduces students to manor life just after the Revolutionary War. A program for students, grades 5-12, *African Americans in Search of Freedom*, explores the history of slavery in New York and engages students in activities recreating the work of enslaved people. The program is based on a collection of primary documents, including numerous family letters.

Website: [www.hudsonvalley.org](http://www.hudsonvalley.org)
Phone: (914) 271-8981

---

**BACKGROUND RESOURCES**

**African American History**

**BOOKS AND PAPERS**

*African American Heritage Trail, Westchester County Office of Tourism.* Download or print this 6-page guide and map of sites reflecting the actions and experiences of African Americans in the evolution of the county at [www.westchestergov.com/africanamerican_aaheritage.htm](http://www.westchestergov.com/africanamerican_aaheritage.htm). For a print copy, phone (914) 995-8500.

*Afro-Americans in New York Life and History,* published by New York History Net, is a journal featuring research and descriptive articles pertaining to the life and history of Afro-Americans in New York State. Subscribe by sending your name, address, and subscription fee ($8 per year) to: Afro-Americans in New York Life and History, P.O. Box 63, Buffalo, NY 14207.


*Nyack in Black and White,* Carl Nordstrom, 2005, The Historical Society of the Nyacks and the Nyack Public Library. $16 at the library or $20.28, with tax and shipping, from [http://nyackhistory.org/publications.htm](http://nyackhistory.org/publications.htm).


---

**WEBSITES**

[www.fergusbordewich.com](http://www.fergusbordewich.com)

For author Fergus Bordewich’s 2005 article, *The Underground Railroad in the New York Hudson Valley,* click on his blog. The website also has a timeline of the national UGR movement including Hudson Valley events and people.
www.hudsonrivervalley.net/lessonplans.php
Offeres a variety of lessons plans for grades 7-11. Scroll down to Slavery and the Underground railroad in the Hudson River Valley.

www.hudsonvalley.org/learn
Presents several online exhibits. Cross Roads and Cross Rivers is the history of peoples that converged at Philipsburg Manor, 1680 to 1750. Slavery in the North features activities for grades 4-8. A resource list is included. Pinkster Festival presents the history of this African-Dutch celebration of spring. Pretends to Be Free exhibits local high school students' artistic interpretation of advertisements for runaway slaves and a lesson plan for recreating the activity.

http://lib.newpaltz.edu/banner/archives/stcoll2.html
The Sojourner Truth Library at SUNY New Paltz features records associated with the life of this famous Ulster County resident along with a list of related sites in the county.

www.cr.nps.gov/hrl/travel/underground/ny5.htm
Information about Tarrytown AME Zion church, preserved by the National Park Service as part of the New York Freedom Trail initiative.

Native American History

Books and Papers

Chief Ninham, Forgotten Hero, Bowler Elementary School


The Mohicans and Their Land 1609-1730, Shirley Dunn, 1995, Purple Mountain Press. An in-depth examination of interactions between early European traders and settlers and the Mohicans native to the Hudson Valley. Out of print, used copies are available at amazon.com and other sources for used books.


Websites

www.hopefarm.com
Hope Farm Press and Bookshop publishes and distributes books on New York State history. Their online database is searchable by 'Hudson Valley,' 'Indian,' and other keywords.

http://oyate.org
Oyate reviews publications to ensure that portrayals of Native American lives and histories are honest and balanced.

http://www.mmai.si.edu/
The National Museum of the American Indian provides lessons and resources on Native American traditions, art, music, culture, history, contemporary life and more.

http://www.berkshiremuseum.org/programs/youth1
mohican_3_5.html
The Berkshire Museum offers several links to learn more about Native Americans including searchable databases, book reviews, articles, fact sheets and more.

On-line Access to Additional Materials

Hudson River Valley Heritage, www.hrvh.org, is a collection of documents, images, audio, and other resources from more than 25 colleges, museums, libraries, historical societies, and other organizations in the region. It is searchable by key words, such as African American, Indian, and more. Of special interest is a section called, "The Missing Chapter: Untold Stories of the African American Presence in the Mid-Hudson Valley," www.hrvh.org/exhibit/aa07. This section is also searchable and includes lessons and supporting materials for grades 4-8. The Southeastern New York Library Resources Council, www.senylrc.org, administers HRVH and regularly adds material to the site.

Teaching the Hudson Valley is a program of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area and its management entity, the Hudson River Valley Greenway Conservancy HRV, Inc., in partnership with the National Park Service/Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, Hyde Park, NY; the Hudson River Estuary Program/New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; and the Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College.

www.TeachingtheHudsonValley.org, 845-229-9116, ext. 35, e-mail: rova_TeachingtheHudsonValley@nps.gov.

This brochure was developed by Helen Cowart, Student Conservation Associate, 2007.