

THE CATSKILLS:

ICAN WILDERNESS



A CONSTRUCTED

A CASE STUDY

Jessica Minn

IMAGE OF AMER



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IMAGE OF AMERICAN
WILDERNESS

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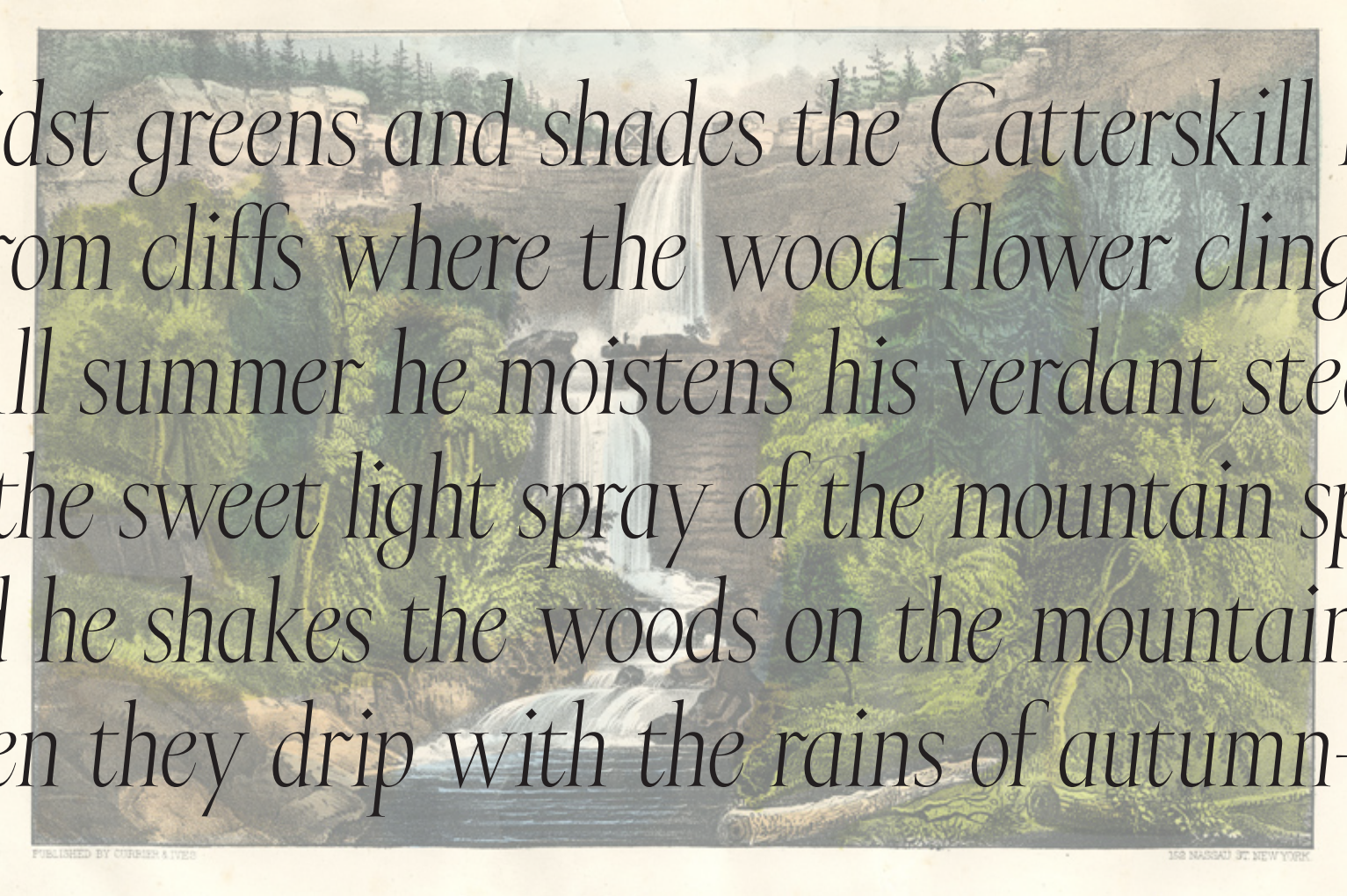
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All material including photographs and maps, unless otherwise stated, is by the author.



*“Midst greens and shades the Catterskill leaps,
From cliffs where the wood-flower clings;
All summer he moistens his verdant steeps
With the sweet light spray of the mountain springs;
And he shakes the woods on the mountain side,
When they drip with the rains of autumn-tide.”*

INTRODUCTION

“What is the nature of human attachment to the landscape? ...What gives a landscape special emotional meaning, collective or individual? What makes us fond of landscapes, enjoy them, remember them with emotion?”¹

This research explores the influence of romanticism and the Hudson River School on the way in which Americans view and interact with nature.

The investigation takes form in a case study that examines the manifestation of the romantic ideal through the rise of wilderness tourism in the Catskills during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The establishment of luxurious resort hotels and the resulting landscape architectural operations drastically changed what was viewed as the epitome of American wilderness.

The ambition is to deconstruct these wilderness ideals in order to reveal the artificial spectacularity behind both the Hudson River School paintings, and the “wilderness” experiences of tourists of this time.



THE CATSKILLS

HISTORY OF THE CATSKILLS

The Catskills make up a mountainous region of Southeastern New York located 160 km northwest of New York City. The area was originally settled by the Lenape Native Americans who lived on the banks of the Hudson River and hunted in the Highlands.¹

The Catskills can perhaps be called America's first wilderness. Dutch explorer, Henry Hudson, first sighted the profile of the blue mountains when he sailed up the river that would later bear his name in 1609.

In 1741, early American naturalist, John Bartram traveled to the Catskills to collect samples of the resin of the "Balm of Gilead" tree (balsam fir) believed to have restorative powers, to send back to England. During this trip he became the first person to record a visit to Kaaterskill Falls. His account, "To ye Cats Kill Mountains with Billy", was the first scientific report on the Catskills. It listed most of the flora of the area and theorised how the mountains might have been formed.²

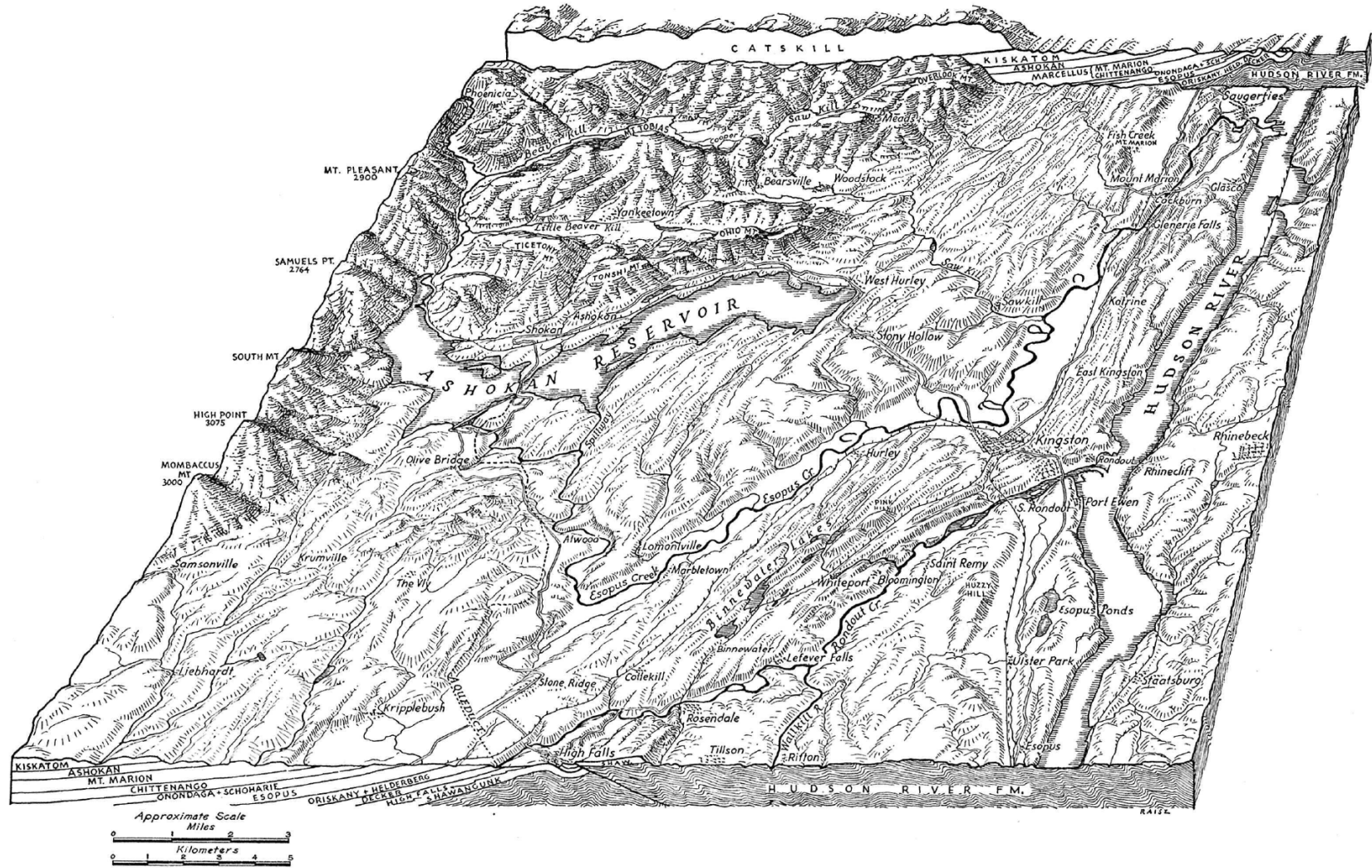
In terms of land use, the first Dutch and English settlers established a rich agricultural area growing wheat and other crops. The Victorian romantic period in the 1800's made the Catskills a famous tourist destination. Simultaneously, heavy industry in the form of tanneries, lumber mills, and bluestone quarries left its mark on the region that is still visible today.

THE CATSKILLS GEOGRAPHY



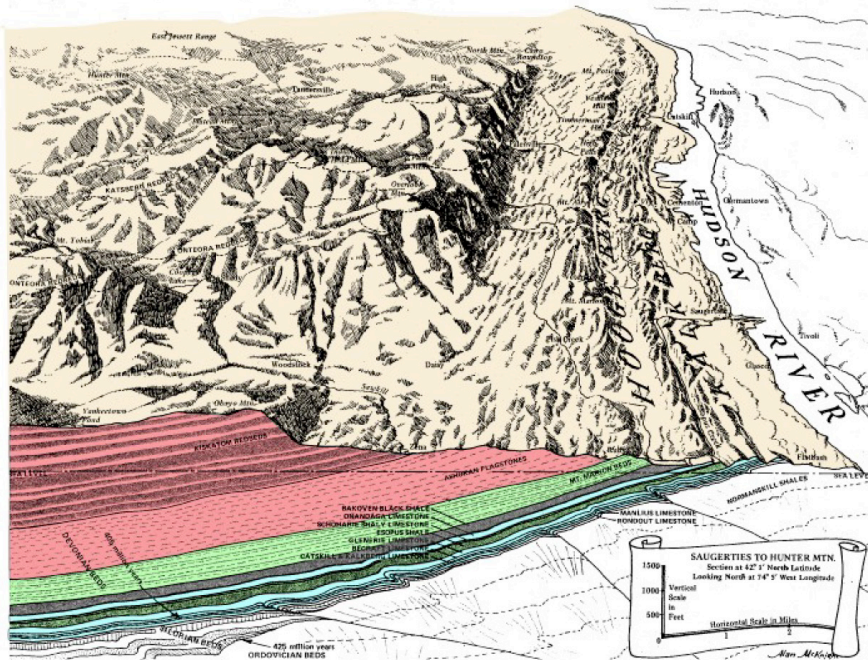
2.1 Nicolaes Visscher, *Novi Belgii Novæque Angliæ nec non partis Virginie tabula* [Map of New Netherland and New England, and also parts of Virginia] Original map 1656; reprint 1685. Detail of map of New Netherland showing the locations of the "Lands of the Kats Kill" and Manhattan down the Hudson River.

TOPOGRAPHY



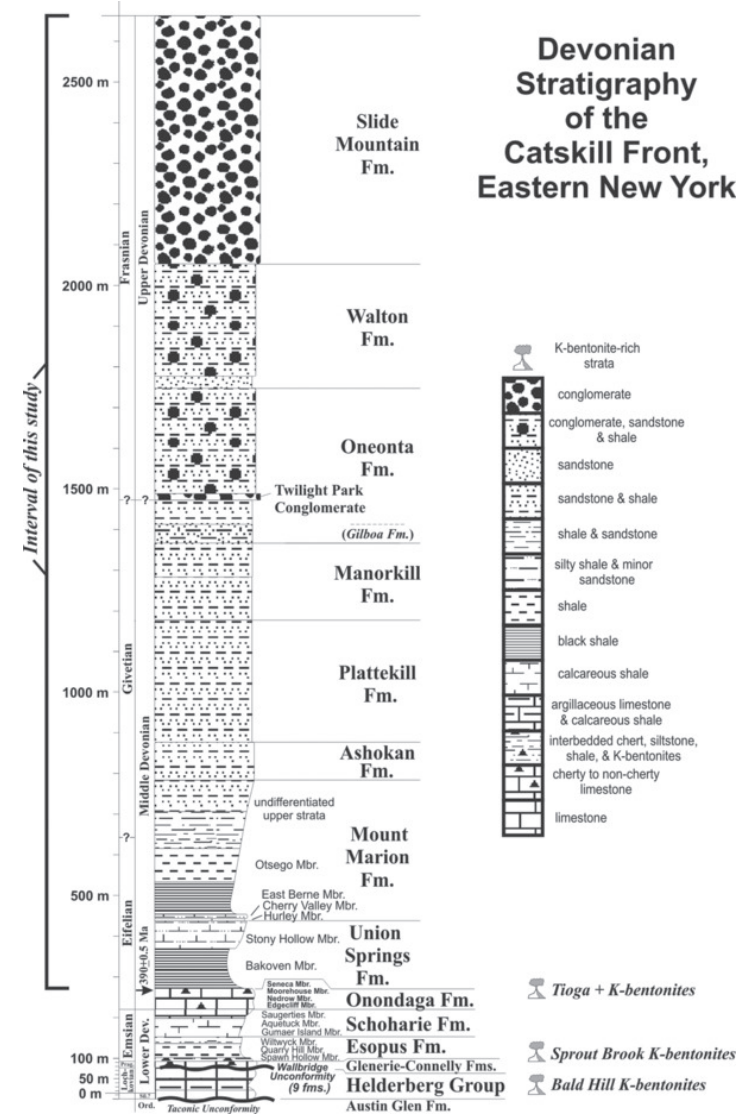
2.2 Block diagram of the area around Kingston, New York

THE CATSKILL FRONT



2.3a Cross section of the Catskill front. Physiographic map and cross-section of the Hudson Valley and Catskill Front, showing bedrock and relation to topography. The Front's limestone bedrock began forming 400 million years ago in the Silurian period when the region was a river delta that the shallow sea drained into. In the second phase during the Acadian orogeny, the sand and clay of the newer mountains formed into shale and sandstone as the sea became the deeper Appalachian Basin. During the third geological phase, the sea floor began to drain and uplift creating a plateau of Devonian sediments.³

Devonian Stratigraphy of the Catskill Front, Eastern New York



2.3b Devonian Stratigraphy of the Catskill Front, Eastern New York.

THE
HUDSON
RIVER
SCHOOL

THE HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL

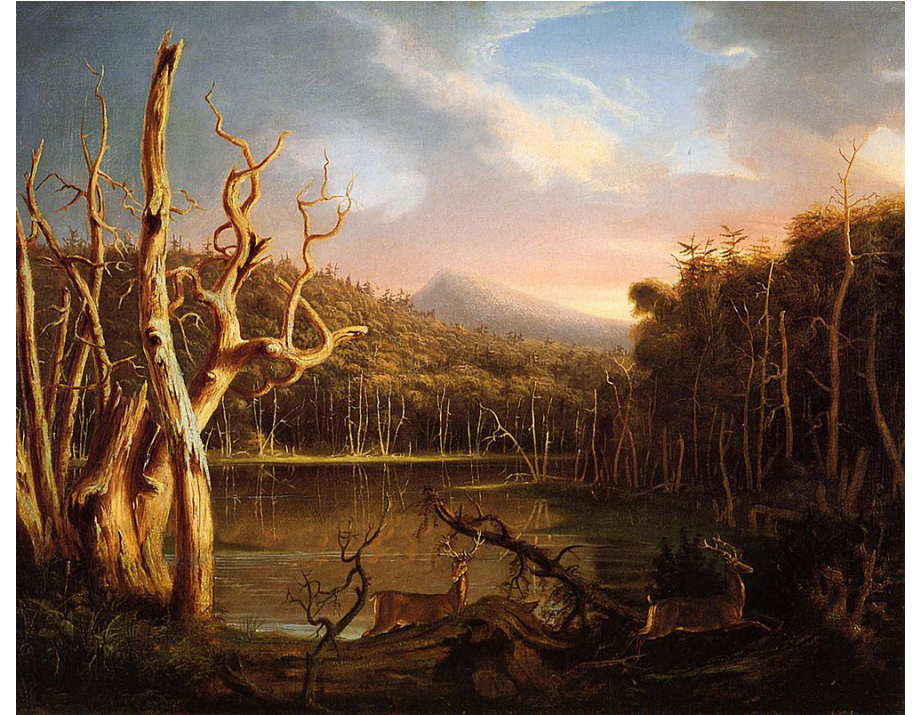
The American Romantic movement in art and literature began in the 19th century as there was a cultural shift from 18th century rationalism towards romanticism. The Hudson River School, named so because many of the artists lived in New York and depicted scenes around the Catskill Mountains and the Hudson Valley, was the first uniquely American school of landscape painting.

Thomas Cole, considered to be the founder of the movement, and the other artists following, saw nature as “God’s Cathedral”. These wild landscapes were sublime examples of God’s power, seen in the mighty peaks and dramatic waterfalls. And by immersing oneself in nature, it was a way of connecting and bringing man closer to God. Painting was also seen as a spiritual act, guiding viewers of the works with an aesthetic lens through which to view wilderness and experience a moral reawakening.¹

While America didn’t have the picturesque ancient monuments of Europe, it was a young nation of untouched natural bounties and a fresh, bright future. In Cole’s 1836 *Essay on American Scenery*, he writes “Nature has spread for us a rich and delightful banquet. Shall we turn from it? We are still in Eden; the wall that shuts us out is our own ignorance and folly”.² By associating God with the nation and its nature, romanticism sparked a sense of hopeful nationalism in which nature was not savage and threatening, but full of undiscovered promise and freedom.

THE HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL

THE FIRST OF ITS KIND



3.1 Thomas Cole, *Lake with Dead Trees*, 1825

This painting by Thomas Cole is considered to be the first of the Hudson River School movement. This was one of the initial paintings and sketches done on Cole’s first trip by steamboat up to the Catskills, establishing the area and the Hudson Valley as the inspiration point of the artists to follow.

BOTANICAL & GEOLOGICAL DETAIL



3.2 **Asher Brown Durand**, *The Catskills*, 1858
Durand and his contemporaries such as Frederic Church were often amateur geologists and gave much importance to highlighting the flora, fauna, and unique geological features of the Catskill landscape.

FORCE OF NATURE



3.3 **Thomas Cole**, *Catskill Mountain House, The Four Elements*, 1844. The paintings frequently depicted the power of God through dramatic weather forces such as thunderstorms strong winds, and lightning-struck trees.



3.4 Thomas Cole, *View of the Round-Top in the Catskill Mountains (Sunny Morning on the Hudson)*, 1827

CELESTIAL LIGHT & COLOUR



3.5 **Frederic Edwin Church**, *Morning, Looking East over the Hudson Valley from Catskill Mountains*, 1848. Dramatic vibrant skies at sunrise or sunset, highlight the sublime beauty of the landscape. Here a man is portrayed in the foreground admiring the majestic view.



3.6 **Frederic Edwin Church**, *Above the Clouds at Sunrise*, 1849. Church uses the pink, sun-light fog and windbent tree in a sweeping circular composition and the perspective of being high above the clouds to draw the viewer's eye to the heavenly glow of the rising sun.

ARCADIA, THE SUBLIME
& THE PICTURESQUE



3.7 Thomas Cole, *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm — The Oxbow*, 1836

BEHIND
THE IMAGE
OF WILDER-
NESS

FANTASIES

IDEALISED

The Hudson River School painters promoted a moral vision of the country as pure, untouched land. The artists often created an idealised portrayal of the nature meant to evoke an emotional and awe-inspired response from viewers rather than act as a realistic snapshot of a particular landscape.

This celebration of wilderness and “nature” in 19th century America was happening in parallel to a surge in the exploitation of natural resources and the commodification of the landscape.¹ The nature that the Hudson River School was exhibiting was in reality, rapidly disappearing.

However, these paintings were meant to transport the viewer to another time and place of “sentimental pastoralism” and harmony with nature. The artists used techniques experimenting with large panoramic formats, impossible perspectives, nostalgic figures, and leaving out traces of industry/the man-made in the landscape.

Artists such as Frederic Church created his paintings with a spectacular exhibition experience in mind. His masterpieces such as “Niagara” utilised the drama and performative aspects of theatre such as spotlights and music and soon had paying New Yorkers lined up around the block.²

BEHIND THE IMAGE

ARTIFICIAL SCENES



4.1 Asher Durand, *Kindred Spirits*, 1849. *Kindred Spirits* depicts Thomas Cole and Romantic poet, William Cullen Bryant, conversing and immersing themselves in nature. The scene is construction of two different viewpoints in the area, Kaaterskill Falls and the Clove, bringing together elements of their beloved landscape.

NOSTALGIC FIGURES



4.2 **Thomas Cole**, *Falls of the Kaaterskill*, 1826. Cole paints the Kaaterskill Falls, a scenic landmark of the area, one year after his first visit to the Catskills. He depicts a golden, autumnal scene. A Native American stands on a rocky ledge facing a beam of sunlight.

ERASING OF THE MAN-MADE



4.3 **Kaaterskill Falls 1826**. By the time of Cole's painting, railings and a bridge have already been installed for safety. Cole edits out all evidence of buildings or tourist infrastructure, painting a nostalgic fantasy of the original landscape.

TRANSPORTING THE VIEWER

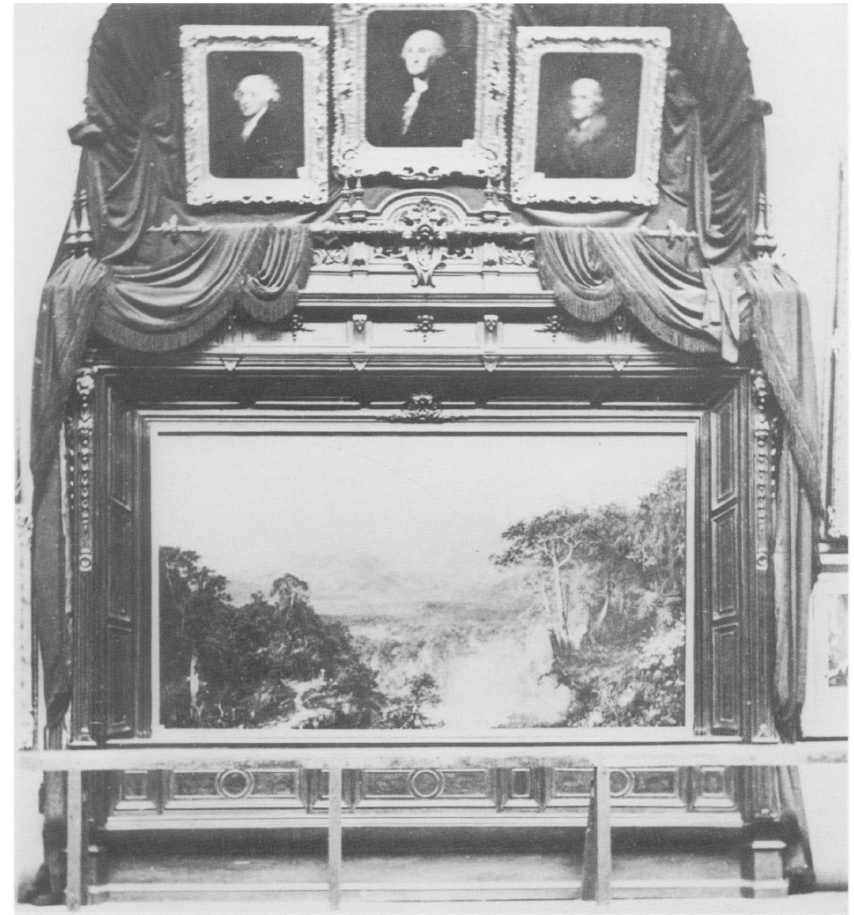


4.4 **Frederic Church**, *Niagara*, 1857. Church curated a dramatic experience for his audience with large-scale panoramic paintings such as *Niagara*. Displayed in a darkened Manhattan gallery with a single spotlight, “the painting would become the surrogate for a visit in person to the site.” The thrilling perspective positions the viewer floating above the rushing water. Tens of thousands of visitors paid 25 cents to view the painting, and it was displayed on tour in Europe as the ultimate example of American nature and art.³

NOSTALGIC FIGURES



4.5 **Frederic Church**, *Heart of the Andes*, 1859. Church's three-meter-wide painting was based on a trip to Ecuador in an effort to broaden the American landscape further than the United States. Church included several small vignettes to encourage the viewer to experience the painting in several scenes with the use of viewing devices such as binoculars. [1] while music specifically composed for the painting was performed.



4.6 *The Heart of the Andes* on exhibition at the Metropolitan Fair in aid of the Sanitary Commission in New York, April, 1964. An ornately framed stage complete with curtains were designed for the one-painting exhibitions as a window to another paradise.

Mr. BANVARD exhibiting and explaining his MAMMOTH PANORAMA OF THE MISSISSIPPI, before the Queen, Prince Albert, the Royal Children, and the Court, at St George's Hall, Windsor Castle. At the Close of the Exhibition, HER MAJESTY was pleased to bestow upon Mr. BANVARD a distinguished mark of her Royal Approval.

WILL OPEN MONDAY EVENING, February 9th, 1852
 AT THE
ASSEMBLY ROOMS,
 GEORGE TAVERN, NORTH SHIELDS.
MR. BANVARD
 Has the honor of announcing that his GIGANTIC, ORIGINAL, MOVING PANORAMA of the
MISSISSIPPI
 MISSOURI AND OHIO RIVERS,
 THE SAME THAT WAS EXHIBITED BY ROYAL COMAND, BEFORE THE
 QUEEN AND COURT, AT WINDSOR CASTLE,
 Will be exhibited, as above
FOR FIVE DAYS ONLY.
 Positively closing Friday Evening, February 13th, 1852.
 Exhibition on Monday, once only: in the Evening at half-past 8 o'clock. On Tuesday and Wednesday,
 twice each day: at 2 and half-past 8 o'clock.
 And on Thursday and Friday, THREE TIMES A DAY: at 2, half-past 6 and half-past 8.
 Doors Open half an hour previous.

NOTICE TO THE PRESS.
 The Panorama of the great American River, by BANVARD, has in the town of North Shields, where we have no doubt it will produce the same feeling of excitement and wonderful interest it did while in this town, where some thousands viewed the exhibition daily.—Newcastle Journal.

BANVARD'S PANORAMA OF THE MISSISSIPPI.—This extraordinary and magnificent picture on the screen of which are delineated with consummate skill the Mississippi, river and forests of 3,000 miles, is exhibiting at North Shields, and will probably soon be introduced. The land projecting half the depth across, the pretty village the river and the water town built on the side of the river, and the big boat on the breast of the water, the deer on the bank, the living birds of the air, the foliage, the clouds, the sky, and the great variety of plants, flowers, and trees give you as if you were there before the eye. Some portions well grand and extend from the audience boxes of admiration. Such are the great glaciers, content on the Ohio, the right across, the forest on the right. The river frequent in where the exhibition is exhibited, is a very fine one in a glass fact.—Newcastle Journal.

The painting occupies about two hours in passing before the audience, during which time so varies and beautiful is the Scenery, it is with difficulty that the Spectators can convince themselves that they are not actually sailing along these mighty rivers. This will be the only opportunity in this town of seeing the "GREAT ORIGINAL."

Admission:—RESERVED FRONT SEATS, 2s. MIDDLE SEATS, 1s. BACK SEATS, 6d.
 Children under 12 years of age and School's half-price to the Front and Middle Seats.

Fig. 10. Broadside for the exhibition at North Shields, near Newcastle, England, of John Banvard's moving panorama of the Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio Rivers, 1852. Collection, Missouri Historical Society, Saint Louis, Missouri.

4.7 An advertisement for John Banvard's moving panorama of the Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio Rivers, 1852. A seated exhibition for a moving landscape scene. The description reads "The painting occupies about two hours in passing before the audience, during which time so varies and beautiful is the Scenery, it is with difficulty that the Spectators can convince themselves that they are not actually sailing along these mighty rivers."

THE WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

'CATSKILL MOUNTAINS A visit to the Mountain House'

The Boston Recorder And Telegraph Oct. 6, 1826

The town of Catskill is not visible at landing. It is built beyond the ridge which rises from Hudson, upon the declivity to a small creek whose banks are western boundary of the village. The principal street is about half a mile in length, nearly parallel to the river. The buildings are neat, and the town wears an appearance of cleanliness, far beyond most towns upon Hudson. The banks of the creek opposite the town are very picturesque, rising at the entrance abruptly, and farther in with every variety of slope, studded with clumps of trees, and in a high state of cultivation. They afford fine sites for building, and will probably with the growth of the place become its chief beauty.

We started for the mountain at 4 o'clock. The distance to the House is 12 miles, and the ascent occupies about 5 hours. The road for the first 8 miles is highly interesting -- passing over elevations, mountains in themselves, and crossing a broad valley whose fine cultivation, graceful outline and woodland, combine to make a picture like a creation of poetry.

What is called the ascent commences about 3 miles from the summit. There is a good carriage Road but it is uncomfortably steep for a ride, we got out to pursue our way on foot.

This you know is classic ground; and you are very gravely assured by the inhabitants of the valley, who have been questioned about Rip Van Winkle till they believed it to be a veritable tradition from their ancestors, that it is the identical path up which Rip toiled with the contents of the oblivious flagon.

RIP VAN WINKLE'S HOUSE

Two miles from the summit is a small hut, or shantey as they are called here, whose occupant by universal consent bears the name of the immortal sleeper. Whether a genuine descendant or not is the point upon which I will not state my veracity. His hut is in a singularly romantic situation built in a deep angle of the rock with a perpen-

dicular ascent fifty feet directly above him. He keeps refreshment for travelers, and is supplied with water by spout which is laid from his window to the spring in a rock behind him. It was just dark when we arrived there, and probably the deep shadows of the woods and rocks added to the effect - but I have seldom been so struck as by the sudden turn which brought me upon the wild eyrie of this modern Rip Van Winkle.

We toiled on at the rate of a mile and a half an hour, keeping at that pace far in advance of the carriage, and growing more vigorous as we came into the bracing atmosphere of the summit.

Perspiration became very free, as the tenuity of the air increased, and I felt as if every trace of bodily infirmity oozed with it from my pores. I could have shouted with the exhilaration and elasticity which grew upon me. Command me to mountain air and free limbs, if ever I am hyp-ridden.

I forgot to speak of the sun-set, and perhaps it was better. But I will merely assert that the local advantages of a bold horizon, high atmosphere and interposed water combine to render the "gloomings" of Catskill valleys beyond conception beautiful.

CATSKILL MOUNTAIN HOUSE

We reached the house about 9 o'clock buttoned to the throat, and breasting a chill November blast. Fifty feet below we had stood at a turning in the road, peering through the darkness to get a glimpse of the House, which we at last discovered perched on a perpendicular rock, rising almost from our feet. The road which pursues a zig zag course all the way up the mountain, here made several abrupt turns and brought us very suddenly to the broad tabular rock upon which the House is set. We could hardly realize it.

After threading in the dark for two or three hours a perfect wilderness, without a trace save our narrow road, to burst thus suddenly upon a splendid hotel and, glittering with lights, and noisy with the sound of the

*piano and the hum of gaiety
- it was like enchantment.*

I seated myself in the drawing room, and was for a moment bewildered. It was in keeping with the place; for so was Rip Van Winkle when he woke upon that very spot. But to find myself in an elegant room, fashionably furnished, and thronged with people promenading to the sound the piano - in such a place! - a long beard and a rusty gun were trifles to it. To return to tangible impressions, however - my supper convinced me that it was not fairy land, and a view of the promises satisfied me of their substantiality. The house is a large wooden building, capable of accommodating two or three hundred people. It makes a fine appearance, is well-painted, and has a noble piazza running the whole length of the front. The host is uncommonly polite and gentlemanly, and his table and rooms afford all the comforts and most of the luxuries of the city. I went to bed, and having added my cloak to a winter provision of covering, I was sensible of the single impression of comfort as I heard the wind whistling at the window, and slept as a well man sleeps.

I rose the next morning at day break to see the prospect. It was a clear cold morning, and

the minute points of a view with a radius of 50 miles were distinctly visible. The magnificent prospect from this mountain has been often described, and is too familiar to be repeated.

*It is indeed magnificent -
and he who could look upon
such a scene and not turn
from it a better man, must
truly have forgotten his
better elements.*

An area wide enough for the territory of a nation lies beneath you like a picture, with the Hudson winding through like an inlaid vein of silver. The steamboats were just visible, and I cannot give you a better idea of them than is given in the ludicrous remark of someone, that "they looked like shoes with cigar's stuck in them". The sun rose, and excuse me if I say much to my comfort; for although wrapped in my cloak, I was chilled through. The first beams which streamed across the landscape, looked like sprinklings of white; for at my elevation the hills all sunk to a level, and I puzzled myself to account for the long shadows. They soon diminished however, as the sun rose higher, and the beauty of the scene became transcendent. The rich colours of the "garniture

of the earth" stole out and the hundred towns within the range of the eye glittered like studded gems over the scene.

*It looked like a distant Eden
flooded with light.*

The Cauterskill Falls, (I do not know the etymology) are a mile and half from the hotel, by the foot path; by the carriage road it is farther. We pursued the gradual descent through woods which seem to have suffered only from the hand of ages. The way was exceedingly rough, and the huge trees were knit together in every position as decay or storm had left them. Is really a noble forest; fit for the company it keeps, of glen and waterfall; and if I were disposed to moralize as I sometimes do over the prostration of these kings of inanimate nature, I know of no place where the text would be more forcible. We pursued our way for about an hour, till without being aware of its neighborhood, we stood nearly upon the brow of the precipice; I cannot describe the effect.

*It makes a man feel like the
poor worm, or elevates him
to sublimity in keeping with
its own, as his humility or
his pride is uppermost. I felt*

*both, for my temperament is
chameleon.*

UNDER THE FALLS

The glen of Cauterskill is probably half a stone's throw in width, and two or three hundred feet in depth. It looks like, I scarce know what

*- a huge well - a fearful
chasm - a sinking of the
earth to its center - any
thing that will give you
an idea of depth made by
violence.*

There is no slope - but abrupt ragged perpendicular of sides, appearing as if they had been rent asunder by an earthquake. The rock over which the water pours projects far out of from its base, somewhat in the shape of an umbrella; leaving a very considerable area between it and the sheet of the fall. There is a ledge about halfway up from the base, of the width of a mantelpiece around which you can get, for it is neither walking nor creeping, but a very ugly kind of hitch, not all comfortable, when coupled of the danger of mingling with the "mighty waters" at the bottom.

Here, however, we perched ourselves, and clung long enough to get our four shillings worth of the sublime for this is the price the Miller received for opening his sluice, that supplies the water for the fall, though I must do myself justice to say that I forgot my four shillings till the roar subsided.

KAATERSKILL FALLS

The quantity of water is very small, and in falling a hundred feet it divides: into drops, and has a beautiful effect when seen from behind. It pours immediately from the basin which receives it, over a second fall about 80 ft., where, breaking repeatedly upon projecting rocks before it reaches the bottom it assumes an appearance of most wonderful sublimity and beauty. We went to the bottom, and looked up both the falls. This is the perfection of the scene. You gaze up from such depth along two sheets of water -

one just above you, pouring down its fearful path with the noise of a thunder peal,

and another beyond leaping from a projecting shelf which seems to you more like an outlet of the clouds than an earthly level, -

to look up and see only a piece of the blue sky, and be walled in apparently by rocks reaching up to it, it is awful. It is a place for man to fall down and confess himself a worm.



WILDERNESS TOURISM

RESORT HOTELS

THE GRAND

On September 18, 1822, a group of wealthy Catskill merchants and their wives gathered for an evening ball held at the top of the Catskill Escarpment, a location perched 2250 feet high with an unrivaled view over the Valley. The incentive of the ball was to gain investors for a construction of a hotel on the site. The Catskill Mountain was built over the winter of 1823, and opened in the summer of 1824.

As the fame and popularity of the Hudson River School landscapes and stories of James Fenimore Cooper's *Pioneer* and Washington Irving's *Rip van Winkle* drew romantic tourists to the Hudson Valley and the Catskills, the luxurious Catskill Mountain House and its later competitors were built to provide a comfortable experience for these "wilderness" travelers.

The Catskill Mountain House was the first resort or "house of entertainment" of its kind, shining as a white-columned beacon of the original American nature retreat.¹ It initiated the onset of extreme changes to the surrounding landscape, leading to one of the biggest landscape efforts in romantic tourism the country had ever seen.

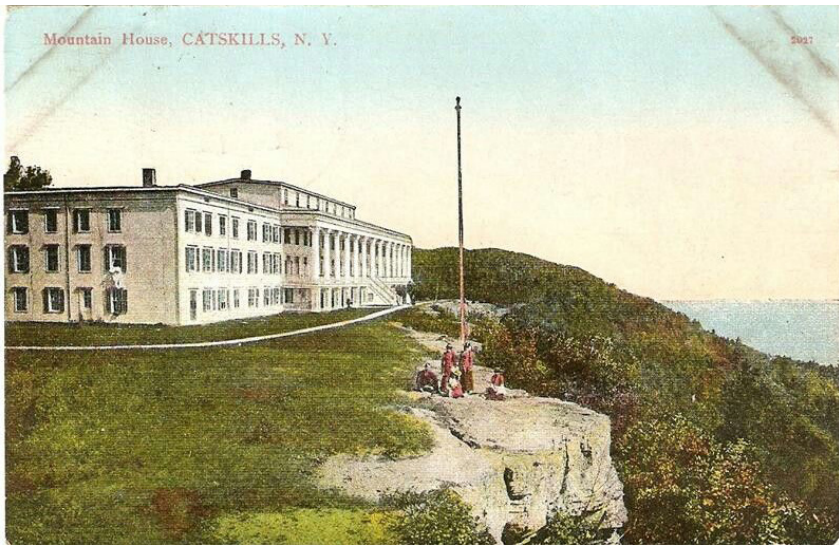
THE MOUNTAIN BALL

*"Come, and trip it,
as you go,
On the light fantastic toe,
An in thy right hand
bring with thee
The Mountain nymph,
sweet Liberty."*

-Milton 'L'Allegro'

On Wednesday evening, the 18th. inst. the first annual ball was opened at the Pine Orchard, on the Catskill Mountains. Besides the ordinary incidents of an Assembly, there was a novelty and pleasure attached to this, which were altogether peculiar."

THE CATSKILL MOUNTAIN HOUSE (1824-1963)



6.2 *View from the Mountain House, Catskills.* The Catskill Mountain House was the first of its kind, offering a “complete view of the Hudson”.² It was called the “Yankee palace” and represented the perfect Arcadian fusion of civilisation with its neo-classical columns and piazza, and savagery seen in the wild surrounding landscape.

THE LAUREL HOUSE (1852-1967)



6.3 *Postcard of the Laurel House, Catskills.* The Laurel House was constructed by Peter Schutt, a wealthy local tavern owner who purchased a large tract of land that included Kaaterskill Falls. It was located close to the edge of the Falls. Considered a middle-class hotel, it could house up to 300 visitors.

HOTEL KAATERSKILL (1881-1924)



6.4 Postcard of the Hotel Kaaterskill. Hotel Kaaterskill was constructed by Philadelphia lawyer, George Harding, in 1881 on South Mountain between the Laurel House and the Catskill Mountain House. At the time of construction, this 7 story, 1000 room hotel was claimed to be the largest framed building in the world.

THE GRAND HOTEL (1881-1966)



6.5 Postcard of the Grand Hotel. The Grand Hotel was opened by the Ulster and Delaware Railroad with 418 rooms and view down the Big Indian Valley and Slide Mountain. The building was a replica of the Oriental Hotel on Coney Island in Brooklyn.

WILDERNESS TOURISM

WILDERNESS TOURISM



IN THE WOODS



THE LAST MILE OR SO



CHILDRENS PLAYING GROUND



ARRIVING



ON THE ROAD



DEPARTING



IN THE CLOUDS



THE ARTIST IN THE MOUNTAINS



THE BEAR AT THE LAUREL HOUSE



HALF WAY HOUSE



KAUTERSKILL FALLS



VIEW FROM NORTH MOUNTAIN



VIEW FROM SUNSET ROCK

SKETCHES AMONG THE



THE PLAZZA



THE MOUNTAIN HOUSE

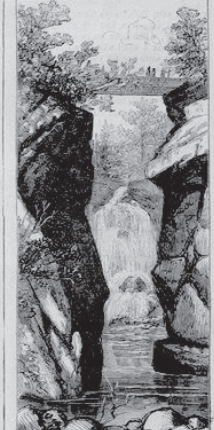
CATSKILL MOUNTAINS



NEARING THE MOUNTAIN HOUSE



HAIN'S FALL



LAST ON NORTH MOUNTAIN



THE RIP VAN WINKLE HOUSE



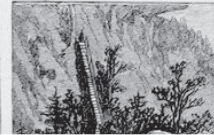
DIFFICULT TRAVELLING



SUNRISE IN THE MOUNTAINS



DREAM AFTER A DAY'S ADVENTURE



THE LAUREL HOUSE AT THE KAUTERSKILL FALLS



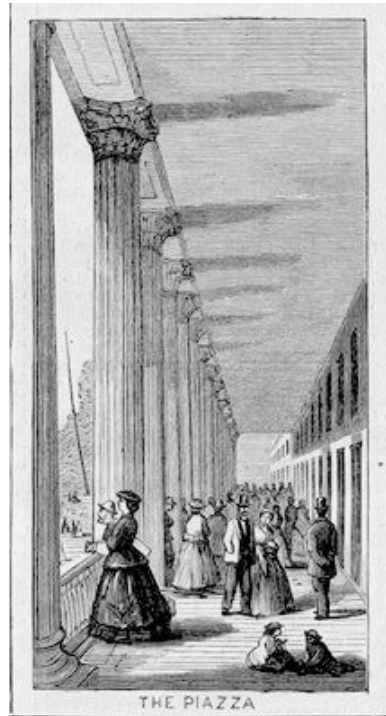
GOOD-BY



UNDER THE KAUTERSKILL FALL

6.6 Thomas Nast, *Sketches Among the Catskill Mountains*, Published in *Harp-er's Weekly*, 1866. These 28 sketches by political cartoonist, Thomas Nast, were created during a two-week stay at the Catskill Mountain House.

WILDERNESS TOURISM



6.7 Thomas Nast, [Details of] *Sketches Among the Catskill Mountains*, Published in Harper's Weekly, 1866. With the Mountain House in the center, the vignettes depict the natural attractions, the wealthy guests' orchestrated "nature" experiences in the surrounding landscape, and the luxurious atmosphere of the hotels.

JOURNEY

A THRILLING

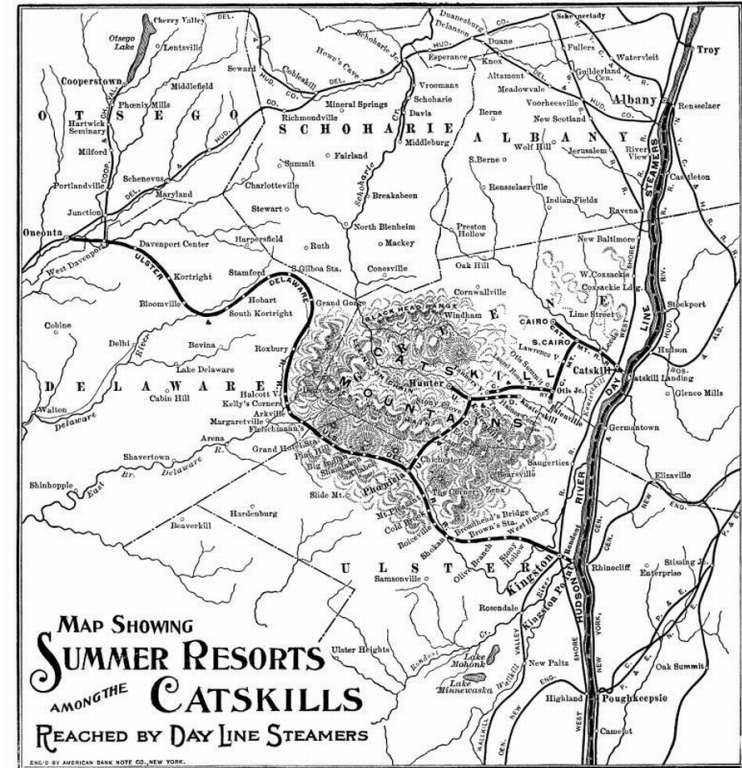
As wilderness tourism surged in 19th and early 20th century America, the Catskills with its glittering promise of luxurious accomodation and spectacular vistas, soon became the most popular destination of the wealthy elite of New York City and internationally.

The industrial age brought about the invention of the first American steamboat by Robert Fulton and the development of the railroad enabled faster travel options for city folk to escape the heat and rush of the city for a few week nature retreat.

The excursion began with a steamboat journey headed north 160km. The travelers could embark in the morning and arrive at in the Catskills by noon. In the early days of the Catskill Mountain House, the travelers would take a stagecoach up the steep mountain roads, but as technology and the number of tourists developed, train tracks began to crisscross the landscape.³

The hotel owners also controlled the transportation in the area and there was established partnership with the railway companies for beneficial promotion and economic profit.

The competition between the resort hotels came to a head especially in this regard. Tourists wanted to be transported directly and conveniently to their destination, no matter the destruction to the landscape they came to admire.



STEAMBOAT PALACES



6.8 **Passenger steamboat headed to the Catskills.** By the early 20th century, these ships which went up and down the Hudson throughout the day, were over 120 meters long and could carry 5000 passengers.

66



6.9 **Interior of passenger steamboat.** Known as "Palace steamers", the ships were as opulent as the hotel destinations.

67

THE TRAINS ARRIVE



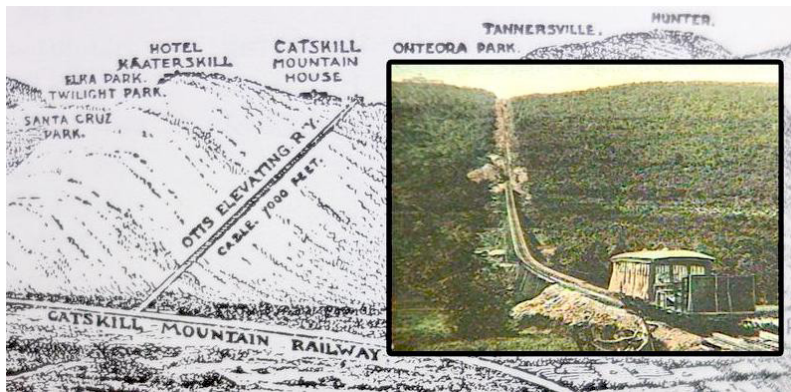
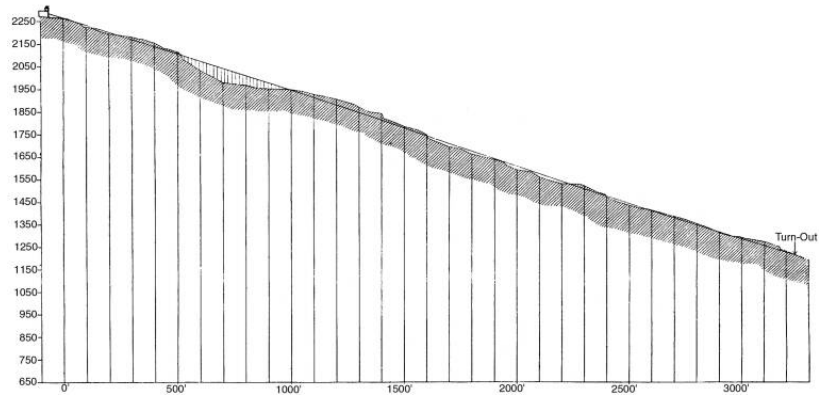
6.12 Annual guide to resorts by the main railroad company in the area, 1905. The railroad companies and the hotels were dependent on each of other for profit. For many years up till the popularity of the automobile, trains were the most common mode of transport.



6.13 Big Indian Station, the Catskills

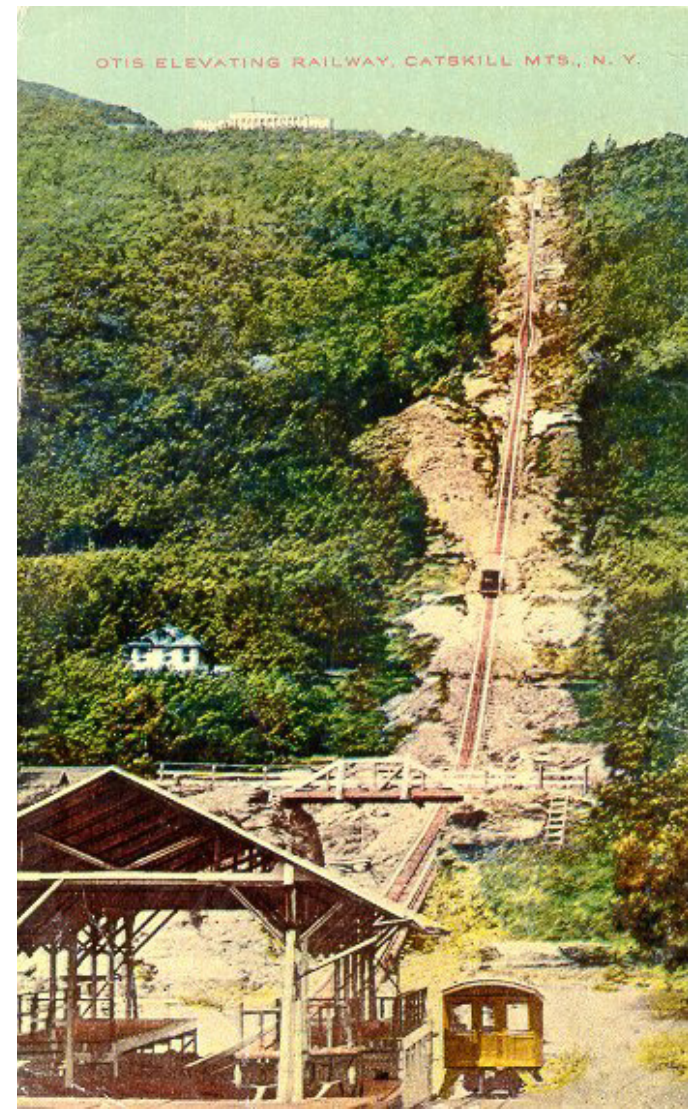
6.14 Two train lines, one built buy the owner of the Catskill Mountain House, and the other the Ulster & Delaware Railroad, ran parallel to each other.

THE MOST MODERN TECHNOLOGY



6.15 The Otis Elevating Railway, 1892. Due to competition with the Hotel Kaaterskill which had a trainstop right at its doorstep, Charles Beach of the Catskill Mountain House hired the Otis Elevator Company to build a cable funicular railroad straight up the face of the Catskill Escarpment. The line was 2,134 meters long, rose 497 meters with a maximum grade of 34% in ten minutes.⁴

A SCAR ON THE LAND



6.16 Postcard of the Otis Elevating Railway. Though popular, the funicular was also seen as a “scar on the mountain” [2].



6.17 The elevated tracks of the Otis Elevating Railway. The train was made up of four cars; two for passengers (75-90 people) and two baggage cars.

THE VIEW

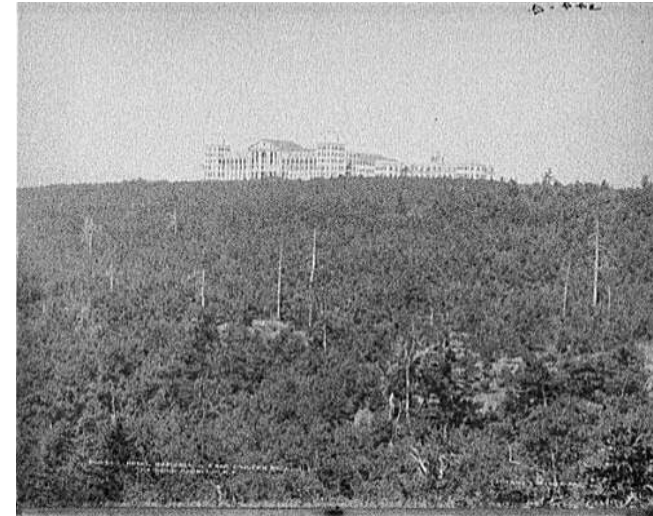
ALL ABOUT

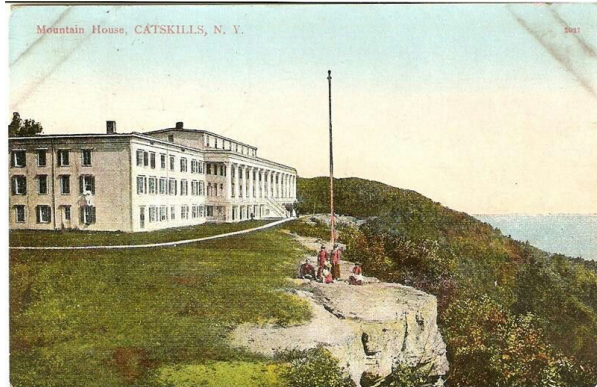
The Hudson River School and Romantic poets and writers of the era depicted the Catskills as an area of picturesque landscapes. The artists brought attention to particular rocky overlooks and natural scenes around the Catskills and the Hudson Valley.

The wealthy tourists traveling to the area and staying in the resorts wanted not only the creature comforts of rest and relaxation in the hotels, but outdoor experiences in the famed surrounding “wilderness”.

The hotels were strategically built on ledges or mountaintops with a stunning sublime view. Tourist infrastructure such as trails, walking paths and stairs led the guests to the exact spots that inspired paintings and other curious natural attractions in the area, while ensuring their comfort and safety in the landscape.

In the romantic outlook, man was a spectator, standing at a safe distance to the savage and thrilling power of nature.





6.19, 6.20 The Catskill Mountain House was famed for the 50-mile vista over the Hudson Valley. A bell would be rung before sunrise to wake the guests.

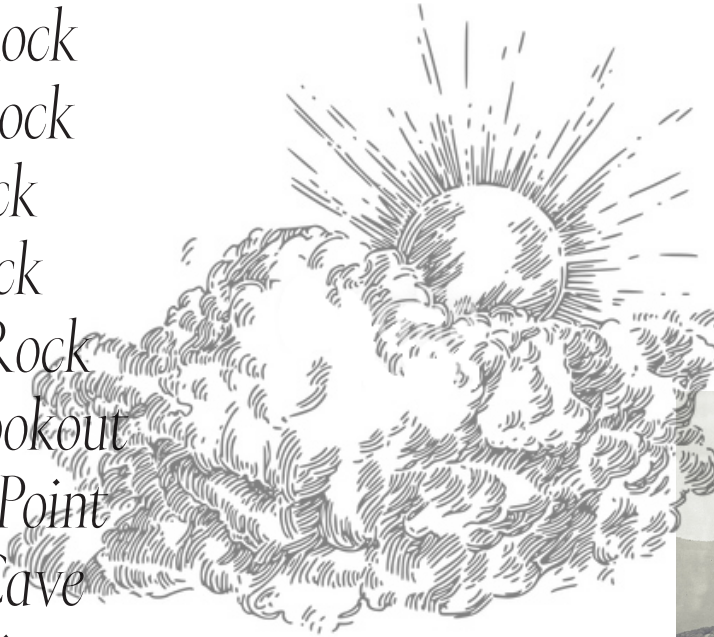
PERCHED ON LEDGES



6.21 The Laurel House and Kaaterskill Falls. The Laurel House was built just 30 meters from the edge of the Falls, the tallest double-tiered waterfall in New York. It provided an extraordinary view of the Kaaterskill Falls Clove.

ROMANTIC ATTRACTIONS

Artists Rock
 Sunset Rock
 Lookout Rock
 Boulder Rock
 Split Rock
 Rip's Rock
 Alligator Rock
 Palenville Lookout
 Inspiration Point
 Badman Cave
 Fairy Spring
 The Sphinx
 Pudding Stone Hall
 Fat Man's Misery



6.22 Romantic names given to the famous viewpoints and rock formations in the area by the guests of the Mountain House. Walking trails were established to lead the tourists to the famous viewpoints depicted in the Hudson River School paintings,

SAFETY INFRASTRUCTURE



6.25 Walking paths of wooden planks built by the Laurel House under and around the Falls for the safety of their visitors.



6.26, 6.27 An observation deck above the Falls and a zigzagging series of staircases were built going down to the first water basin.

CONSTRUCTIONS FOR DRAMATIC DISPLAYS OF NATURE



6.28 **Dam built at the top of the Falls.** Peter Schutt, owner of the Laurel House and the surrounding property, placed a dam on Lake Creek above the Falls. This gave Schutt control over the amount of water going over the falls and for a fee of 25 cents, the tourists below could experience a mighty rush of water as if seen during a hurricane.

84



6.29 **The Laurel House would set rafts on fire at night and send them over the Falls in a cascade of flames**

85

GUIDED TOURS TO THE HIGHEST PEAK



6.30 **Guided tours up Slide Mountain.** In 1972 Swiss geologist, Arnold Henry Gujot, identified Slide Mountain as the highest peak in the Catskills. Guests of the Grand Hotel would descend from the hotel area by train, take a stagecoach to the base of Slide Mountain, and a mountain guide would take them up to the summit.

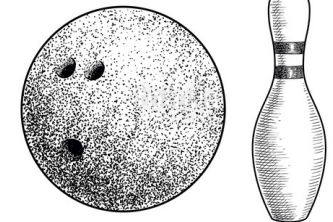
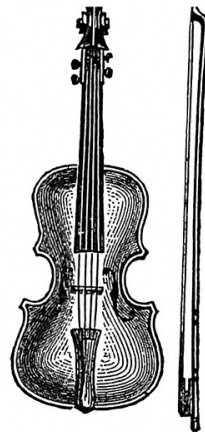
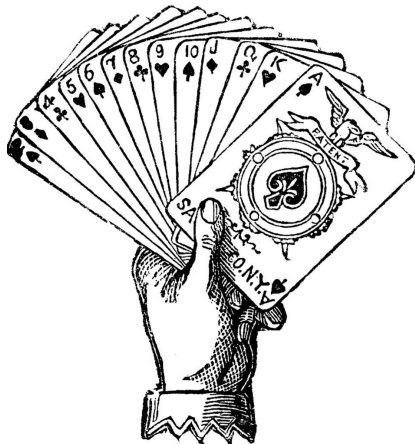
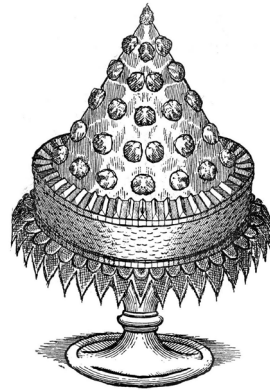
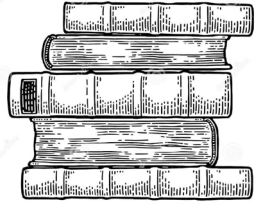
LUXURIES

SIMPLE

Though the guests were retreating from the heat and pollution of the city, they still expected cosmopolitan comforts. The resorts offered the most modern and civilised conveniences such as an in-house orchestra, French chefs, modern plumbing and entertainment activities such as casinos and bowling alleys.

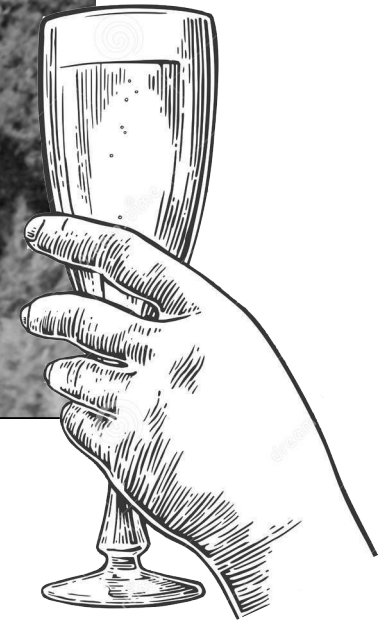
The hotels were furnished with expensive and fashionable decor, creating a cultured and pleasurable indoor environment while being able to gaze at the breathtaking views through the windows.⁵

HOTEL AMENITIES



6.31 Some of the amenities offered by the grand hotels such as the Catskill Mountain House and Hotel Kaaterskill.

PICNICS & OUTDOOR REFRESHMENT



6.32 **Basket and pulley above Kaaterskill Falls.** Tourists could enjoy lunch at a café at the top of the Falls serving brandy, ice cream, and lemonade. The installed pulley system would lower champagne and other refreshments down to the picnickers below.⁶

LAVISH FURNISHINGS



SHORPY

FINE DINING



6.34 Dining room of Hotel Kaaterskill where French chefs would serve high-end cuisine.

MEANWHILE,
IN THE BACK-
GROUND

RAGING INDUSTRIALISATION

The celebration of wilderness and “nature” in 19th century America occurred at the same time that the exploitation of natural resources and the transformation of the landscape into real estate was moving at full force.¹

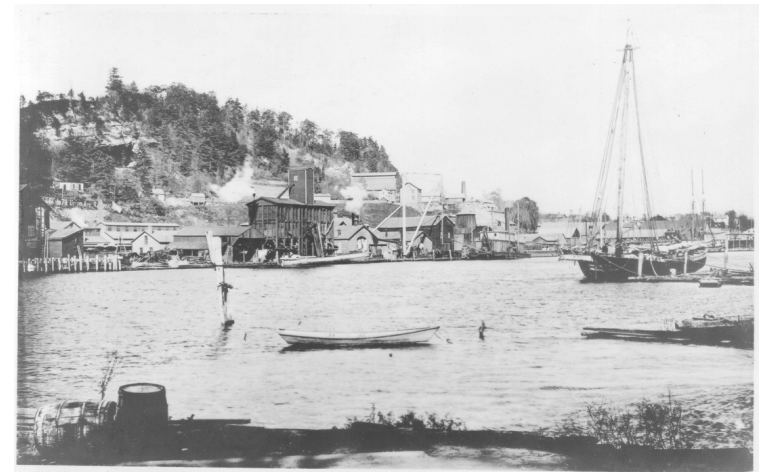
Even at the time of Thomas Cole’s first steamboat trip up to the Catskills in 1825, the Hudson River was already one of the busiest commercial shipping routes in the nation due to its connection to the Erie Canal.

The tanning industry was rapidly clear-cutting the hemlock forests of the Catskills, and there were numerous lumbering and mining activities.

In order to avoid the man-made eyesores on the landscape that would ruin the picturesque nature experience, tourists were given guidebooks that coordinated the exact times of day and locations in which to best enjoy untainted views.

MEANWHILE, IN THE BACKGROUND

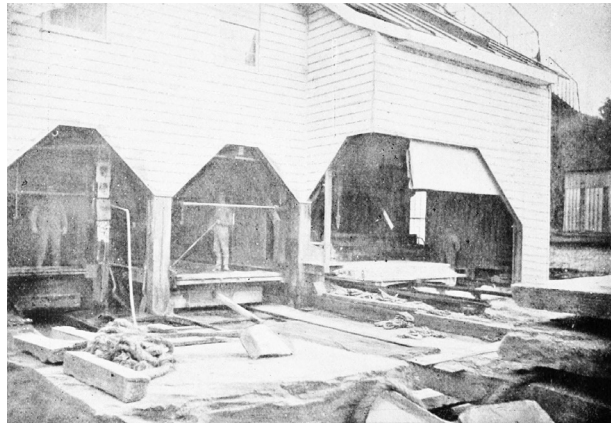
HEAVILY TRAFFICKED TRANSPORT ROUTE



DEFORESTATION OF HEMLOCK FOR THE TANNING INDUSTRY



7.2 **Stripped hemlock logs in Herkimer County.** The thick eastern hemlock forests of the Catskills were being chopped down by the tanning industry. The bark from the hemlock trees provide the tannins needed for the hide-tanning process.



7.5 Bluestone Sawing and Planing Mills at Kingston, N. Y.

7.6 Quarryman's Home with Rubbish Banks in Rear, West Hurley, N. Y.

Bluestone refers to the feldspathic sandstones found predominantly in the eastern North America such as the Catskills. Bluestone tends to split along planes parallel to the bedding, resulting in smooth, thin slabs. It was widely used in New York city for sidewalks and flagstones.²

QUARRIES & MINING ACTIVITIES



7.7 An Ulster County Monolith Size slab. Six by seven meters wide

THE DECLINE

NATURE OF TOURISM

THE CHANGING

The Catskills was a fashionable must-see tourist destination, established as part of the Grand American Tour, for over seventy years till the 1890's.

However, with the popularity and rise of automobiles, the wealthy now had the freedom to go further and to fresher destinations or to build their own summer villas. The Catskills were no longer exclusive to the elite as easy railroad connections were bringing the middle-class crowds to the areas as well.

By the time of the Great Depression in the 1930's, people were no longer interested in listening to the birds sing in the trees. The grand hotels became obsolete.

In 1940, Milo Claude Moseman took over the property at Catskill Mountain House and built a theme park based on the fantasy of Rip van Winkle. The state was not pleased as they felt that the theme park was seen as too "glitzy" for the "pristine" location where visitors were now camping.¹

With a shift from the Romantic view of nature to a more preservationist mentality, the government took over the properties of the Catskill Mountain House, the Laurel House, and Hotel Kaaterskill, eventually demolishing the buildings.

THE DECLINE



SKELETON OF ANOTHER ERA



RETURNED TO THE EARTH



8.3 The Catskill Mountain House and The Laurel House were eventually sold to New York State and torched as by the Forest Service in a preservation effort to keep the land “forever wild”. Hotel Kaaterskill burned down by a fire in 1924 caused by soap making.



THE LEGACY

AN EMBRACED SYMBOL OF THE ROMANTIC



9.1 Sarah Cole, *A View of the Catskill Mountain House*, 1848
9.2 Jasper Francis Cropsey, *Catskill Mountain House*, 1855



9.3 Thomas Cole, *A View of the Two Lakes and Mountain House, Catskill Mountains, Morning*, 1844
9.4 Thomas Cole, *Catskill Mountain House, The Four Elements*, 1844.

IMAGINATION

ENVIRONMENTAL

“From the beginning, there has been a link between how Americans have acted toward the natural world and how they have imagined it... Imagination is less precise, less worked-out, more inclusive than ideas, and it belongs to people in their lives, not to philosophers working out doctrines. Imagination is a way of seeing, a pattern of supposing how things must be.

...Law is a circuit between imagination and the material world. Such legal strictures channel our lives, providing the implicit blueprints of the landscape architecture that we impose on the world.”¹

THE LEGACY

Providential

Nature has the purpose of serving human needs richly, but only if people do their part by filling it up with labor and development



Romantic

Nature as place of aesthetic and spiritual inspiration, a “secular cathedral.” as seen in mountain peaks, sheer canyon walls, and deep forests



Utilitarian

Nature as storehouse of resources, requiring expert management especially by scientists and public officials



Ecological

Nature as the totality of many interdependent systems. A world in which both sustenance and poison can travel through air, water, soil, and in and out of flesh

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES



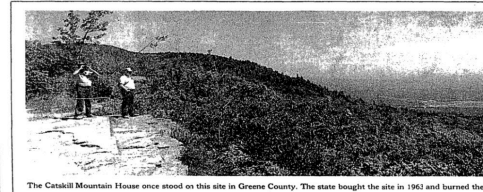
The New York Times

THURSDAY, JULY 1, 1993

Albany Extends Rent Stabilization Law for a Day

By JAMES DAO
ALBANY, Thursday, July 1 — For the third time in two weeks, the New York State Legislature extended rent stabilization laws for New York City without changing them. Wednesday night, the time for only one day.
But although the measure was designed to buy time to reach a final agreement on changing the laws, Gov. Mario M. Cuomo and legislative aides provided differing accounts of whether an agreement was being sought.
After meeting with Assembly Speaker Paul Wefers, a Queens Democrat, and Senate Majority Leader Ralph S. Marino, Republican from Oyster Bay, at 10:20 P.M. on Wednesday, Mr. Cuomo said "there is a good chance they will agree substantially by tonight." They didn't.
After hearing Mr. Cuomo's comments, John E. McAvoy, Mr. Marino's spokesman, said "we have no idea" what Mr. Cuomo was saying. "We were advised some lawmakers Senator Marino was not aware of any deal. They are still going back and forth."

stabilization on apartments that lease for more than \$2,000 a month and on those rented by tenants with incomes above \$18,000 a year.
Assembly and Senate leaders apparently discussed a variety of possible changes to the laws and agreed that new rent stabilization laws would be introduced by the end of the session.
Mr. Cuomo refused to say whether the



The Catskill Mountain House once stood on this site in Greene County. The state bought the site in 1963 and burned the hotel, which had fallen into disrepair.

Picturesque Visions for Tourists Long Gone

On a Forgotten Slope of the Catskills, the Landscape Remains Just as Grand

By GEORGE LUBSON
HAINES FALLS, N.Y. — Across a wide lawn, a father standing on a rock ledge held the hands of two small children and looked down. "All of a sudden there's no more dirt," he told them. "It's a long, long way down. This is called a cliff."
Below the cliff, opening for 60 miles beyond the children's feet, lay a view as celebrated in its time as the Grand Canyon today: the Hudson Valley from the Catskills, in the 1890s, as seen through artists' distanced perspectives and preserved great resort hotels. It had created a new mythology, the Hudson Riv-

er was recognized.
The crowds long ago moved on to ocean resorts and a safari for adventure along the nation's highways. The woods closed and then burned. The landscape remained for those who still appreciated it, or who happened upon it, as did at times as one of the Catskill "first" popularizers, Rip Van Winkle.
"it began with the beauty, and it's still there," said Jane Hommel, Haines Falls's new historian. "The intervening years brought other things, and those things have gone, but the things the artists and writers originally came for

REGION

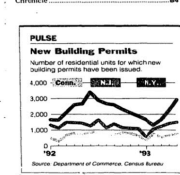
In Valley, Memories Of Tourists Long Gone

Continued From Page B1

est falls in New York, was bought by the state and burned in 1966.
Today many who stay at the state campground behind the Mountain House site, at North-South Lake, are unaware of the old hotels. They take snapshots from the lookout known as Artist Rock, not recognizing scenes painted by Thomas Cole and other artists of the Hudson River School.
HINTS OF ROMANCE
But even those who don't know Cole have heard of his most famous subject, Kaaterskill Falls, and manage to find them — despite a locally notorious article in The New Yorker six years ago that declared the falls all but lost and unreachable behind a newly grown-up wilderness.
At the falls, at the end of a 15-minute hike that state foresters estimate 10,000 people make each year, the myths and romantic illusions of the Catskills resort-era still linger. People admire, picnic, and occasionally misjudge a step and die.
"We have people of all backgrounds using the area," said Jack Sencabaugh, a forester with the State Department of Environmental Conservation. "On the weekend, to see some of the footwear — my God, I wouldn't walk down a city sidewalk in some of that. They don't know what they're getting into. They almost expect a paved walkway."

WITHOUT STEEL, IT'S A WHOLE NEW RACE
City Council President Andrew J. Spano's sudden departure from the campaign for Public Advocate, two weeks before the deadline for filing nominating petitions, has left his city council members scrambling to identify and recruit his supporters and also raises the tantalizing prospect that some unknown candidate might yet jump into the race. B3.
NEW HITMAKS ON THE POND
There is a peculiar system that strikes New York City every time George Steinbrenner threatens to move the Yankees from the Bronx. A low-grade panic frizzes on one image could be a big deal for the Yankees. The Yankees have never been disappointed on the subject and justly famous Yankees pitcher B4.
A Nihil suspect in a plot to bomb four targets in New York City has been arrested. B3.
An effort to raise \$10 million for South African elections is announced. B3.

REGION
A CHANGE AMONG YOUTHIS
In the last year or so, the after-school activities and tutoring has grown more prominent around Mount Helens Middle School and the Bellevue branch of the Montclair (N.J.) library next to it, neighbors say. B5.
A SUSPECT'S CRIME COLLECTION
From each progressive case case areas has the police that he patronized, killed and dropped, he would keep some notes. Stashed in his bedroom, state police found these mementos: partisan and brass driver's licenses, money orders and costume jewelry, a library card. B6.



THE SITES

PRISTINE STATE

BACK TO A MORE

THE SITES



10.1 View from Catskill Mountain House site 2019

10.2 View of Catskill Escarpment at Catskill Mountain House site 2019

10.3 View from top of Kaaterskill Falls 2019

10.4 View from bottom of Kaaterskill Falls 2019

THE CATSKILL MOUNTAIN HOUSE



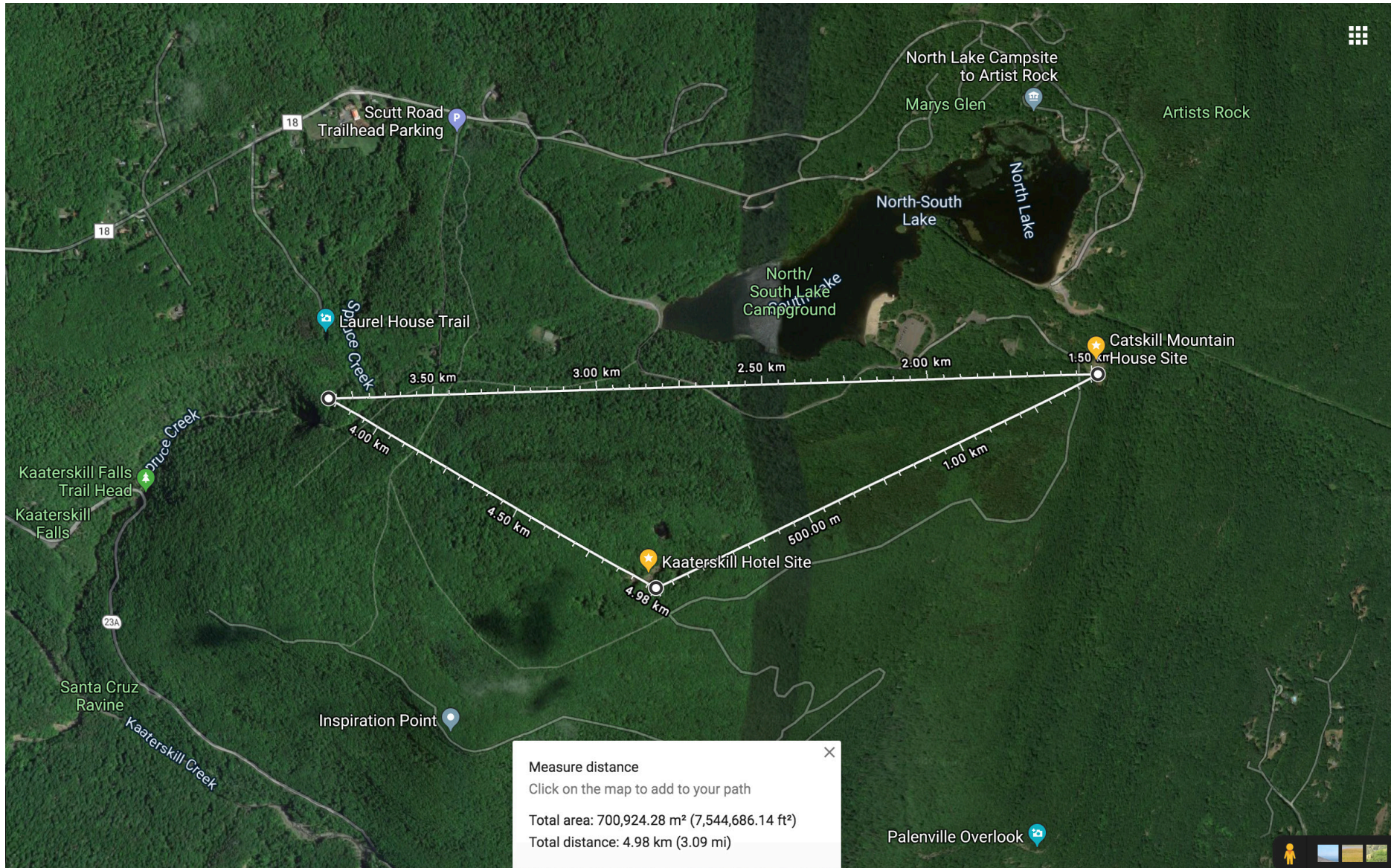
HOTEL KAATERSKILL



LAUREL HOUSE



THE CATSKILL FOREST PRESERVE



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IMAGE

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