

Part IV. Narrative Description of Activities

Past, Present and Planned Activities:

I. Past and Present Activities:

Generally, over the past five (5) years, HVAS has been using its website: www.ossining.org (referred to herein as the HVAS Website”) as a platform for preserving and displaying examples of the arts, culture, and science of Ossining, New York and the Hudson River Valley. HVAS recently purchased the domain name www.HVAS.org and plans to use this website server in conjunction with www.ossining.org. In addition to using and building these web portals, HVAS plans to engage in other activities related to the arts, local history, culture and science of the Hudson Valley as well. Examples of its work are as follows.

A. Arts:

1. HVAS’s President, Gareth Hougham, has researched and written an article on the work of photographer, Walker Evans, produced during the time he spent in the Ossining area in the nineteen twenties and thirties. This article features thirty five (35) of Mr. Walker’s photographs that have never before published. This project has been researched and written with the cooperation and assistance of the Metropolitan Museum of Arts Department of Photographs. It is groundbreaking in the sense that it is a policy of the MET photographic archive to never publish printed collections of photographs unless the artist himself had previously done so. However, since the Web is a new medium, the MET has decided to broaden its policy for this project, and is allowing it. HVAS intends to present this work on the Website.
2. HVAS has a web feature on “outsider art” showing the artwork of local artists who live and work outside the traditional bounds of the visual arts.
3. HVAS has written essays on the composer Aaron Copland who is a former resident of Ossining, NY and Peekskill NY. These essays include photographs by Copland that have never before published.
4. HVAS has written an essay on work produced by George Gershwin during the time he spent in Ossining NY.
5. HVAS has written an essay on the groundbreaking jazz guitarist Sonny Sharrock who lived and worked in Ossining, NY. Sharrock collaborated with Miles Davis and other notables of the 1970’s.

6. HVAS has a galley of photographs dedicated to the Croton River, a river that winds its way west from Connecticut, through Putnam County and into Westchester County before it feeds into the Hudson. The mills and history along the river are documented in photographs, historical description, and pen and ink drawings by Theodore Cornu, a notable local artist of the 1930's.

B. Culture:

1. HVAS presents a web article of the "Christmas House," a house built in 1741, used by both sides during the revolutionary war and later owned by Clement Moore, the author of "The Night Before Christmas." This includes interior photographs taken by G. Hougham during the years he lived there in the 1980's. This house is also of interest because it was built in 1741 making it the oldest house in Ossining and was the house of the northern-most tenant farmer of the Phillipsburg Manor (of Sleepy Hollow, NY). The house was, incidentally, used in the recent Robert DeNiro movie "Hide and Seek").
2. HVAS has written an essay on John Cheever, the noted author and former resident of Ossining, NY, which is based in large part on a 2002 interview conducted by G. Hougham of HVAS with John Cheever's widow, the poet Mary Cheever.
3. HVAS has over 60 photographs showing the Ossining, NY area from the late 1800s up through to contemporary times. Many of these photographs were culled from the archives of, and used with permission from, the Ossining Historical Society Museum.
4. HVAS has built and maintained an online list of non-profit organizations in the Ossining, NY area in a partnership with The Greater Ossining Volunteer Network (GOVN) which has issued paper copies of this list annually for many years. Gareth Hougham has been on the GOVN committee for 5 years. The HVAS online edition allows listing by category and searching for services, while the paper copy was only able to list the several hundred organizations alphabetically to limited benefit to the public.

C. Science:

1. HVAS (G. Hougham, L. House, and Elizabeth O'Mara) interacted with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to make the results of the first sonar survey of the Hudson River Floor available to the public for the Hudson Valley Region. Using data never before released to the public, HVAS created a rich interactive website showing the depth and benthic characteristics. Animating 3-D images from side-scan sonar to be interactive both with respect to bottom

topography, grain size (silt, sand, gravel), and subbottom characteristics showing the location of ancient oyster beds.

2. HVAS has organized an effort to save a line of mature trees along a highway (Route 9) that were slated for removal in the plans for the highway expansion. HVAS led a letter writing campaign to the New York State Dept. of Transportation (NYSDOT) to save that line of trees in the design. HVAS sponsored a local meeting where the DOT presented its plans to the public, took verbal feedback and fielded questions from the public. The result was that the DOT changed its plans, and the trees were saved. In the same highway project, our actions saved more than an acre (out of about thirteen) of wetlands that were going to be filled in during the project. HVAS also succeeded in convincing the DOT to change the highway lighting design from standard sodium vapor high intensity lights to lights that had side shields to limit the effect on a Hudson river view during the nighttime from the Croton River community area.
3. HVAS investigated the claims of sightings of Harbor seals in the Hudson River in the Ossining area. For years this was thought to be myth. Communications with faculty of the Cornell University Ichthyology department confirmed that Harbor seals do, in fact, travel annually past Ossining for points farther upriver. On the Website, HVAS exhibits a photograph taken in 2005 by a local sailor on the shoreline of the Hudson at Ossining showing Harbor seals in transit.

II. Planned Activities.

A. Arts:

1. HVAS has arranged music for “The Tender Land,” a composition written by Aaron Copland when he lived in Ossining. The score, for guitar and three voices, is currently available on the website. We plan to sponsor a recording of a performance of this short piece. The sound file will be playable on the website. This will provide the local community a glimpse of the composer’s work during the period he lived here and is a pleasure to hear.
2. HVAS is building a sub website featuring the etchings of the Hudson Valley chapter of “Picturesque America” from c. 1880, a book in the traditional style of travelogues. This project will soon be available for public viewing on the HVAS website. This will also have the imaged text pages and will have a “Play” feature where a recorded voice reads this fascinating text to the aid of the elderly or sight impaired.

B. Culture:

1. HVAS intends to conduct expeditions and tours of significant sites in the Hudson Valley, such as a canoe tour of the old van Cortlandt Mill site up the Croton River and the remains of a bridge used by George Washington's troops. Further, HVAS plans to exhibit the transcription of a letter written by George Washington concerning the bridge and his instructions to the local commanding officer regarding bridge security procedures.
2. HVAS plans to continue to work with archives and special collections departments of libraries to scan the printed pages of historical books and associated etchings on subjects relating to the Hudson Valley and make these images available to the public on the HVAS Website. The public now has little access to these educational tools because many of these books are relatively unknown to the general public and are generally only available by special appointment with such archives and libraries.
3. HVAS hopes to raise money for the design and building of a small historically accurate workboat, called a Periauger, which was common in the Hudson River Valley in the 1700's. These are two masted, flat bottomed boats designed for hauling agricultural or industrial products down the shallow tributary rivers (such as the Croton River) to New York City. These had retractable side-mounted keels so they could sail in open Hudson River waters after navigating by oar and pole the shallow and treacherous rivers and bays. We have interacted with the Mystic Seaport Small Boat archive to identify a design. It is our hope to partner with another non-profit organization called Rocking the Boat (www.rockingtheboat.org) that teaches traditional boat building to underprivileged youth in the Bronx. They have built traditional wooden boats for the Historic Hudson Valley organization in (a nonprofit Rockefeller organization to preserve and promote local historical sites in the Hudson Valley). We are now in discussions with Rocking the Boat to build a Periauger, which may then be donated to Historic Hudson Valley for use at their van Cortlandt Manor Farm preservation on the Croton River. This would serve the educational purpose of demonstrating a crucial technology of that time period in an authentic setting. It could further be used for environmental educational outings on the Croton River and Croton Bay.
4. HVAS has also documented the history of the "Black Horse Inn," a pre-revolutionary house located in Ossining. We have conducted interviews with former occupants who in full seriousness report sightings of ghosts in the house. We have commissioned a painting of the house. We plan a videotaped interview of the current occupant and hope to get footage of the entire interior of the house at that time.

C. Science:

1. In partnership with Urban Divers Estuary Conservancy a local non-profit in the New York metropolitan area (www.urbandivers.org), we are planning an underwater expedition to investigate and film unusual 10meter diameter ring features on the Hudson River bottom which has been identified by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation during their benthic sonar scanning project. In collaboration with scientists at Harvard University, a theory that these are formed by the release of gas pockets in the deep silt has been formulated. HVAS will raise funds for the travel and operating expenses for the expedition, and will film these underwater features for presentation on the website.