

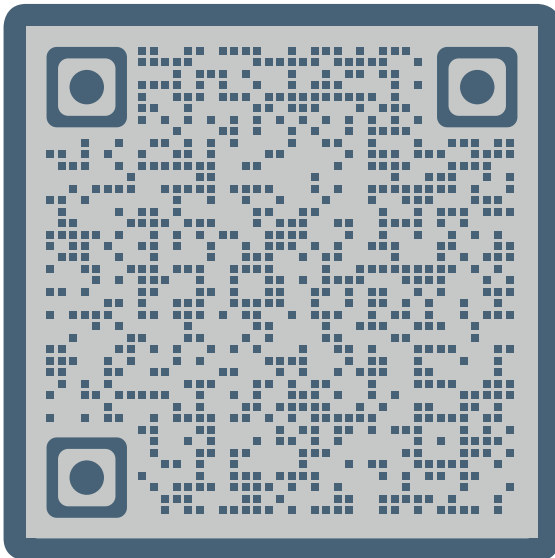


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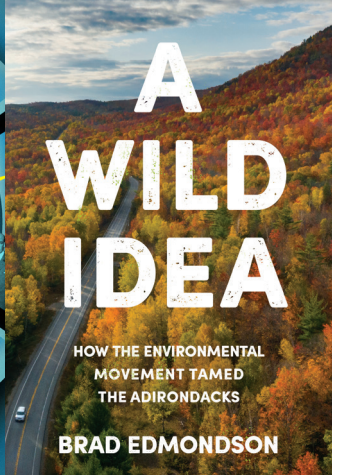
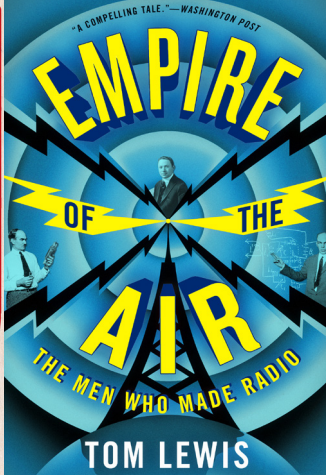
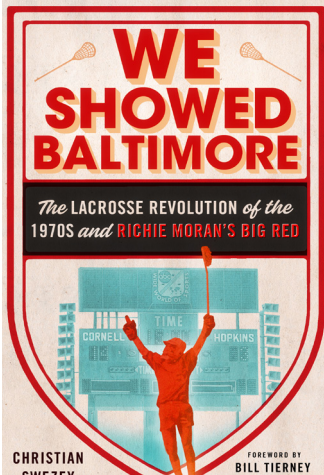
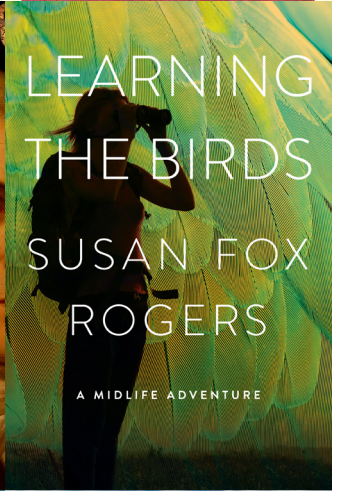
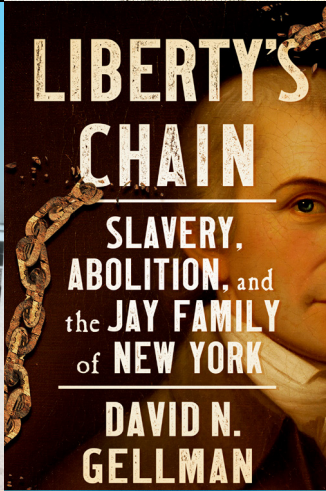
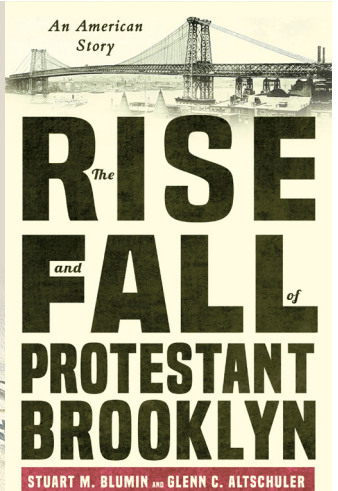
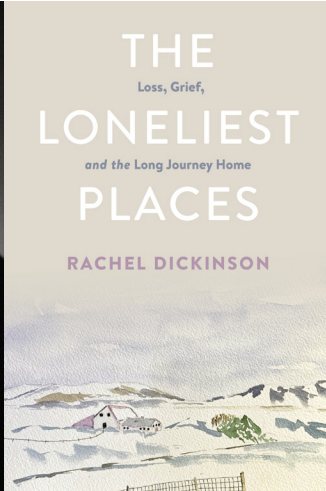
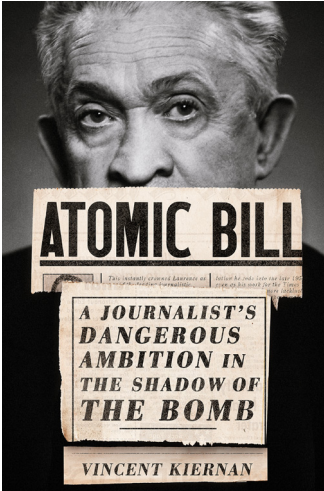
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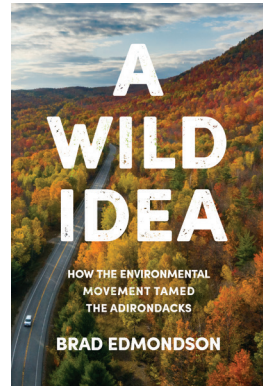
The Article

“SAVING” THE ADIRONDACKS

by *Brad Edmondson*

New York’s Adirondack Park is bigger than Yellowstone, Yosemite, Glacier, Grand Canyon, and Great Smokies National Parks combined. It has one thousand miles of wild and scenic rivers, and hundreds of crystalline lakes and lofty peaks. It is one of the largest unbroken deciduous forests on earth, and it has been cited as a model in the global campaign to control climate change.

But here is an even more amazing thing about the Adirondacks. Most of the Park’s land is privately owned, and eighty-five million people live within a day’s drive. Yet the Adirondacks seem almost completely undeveloped. How did that happen? The answer is a dramatic story about people and conflict that is the subject of the new book, *A Wild Idea: How the Environmental Movement Tamed the Adirondacks*.



But here is an even more amazing thing about the Adirondacks.

This summer marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Adirondack Park Agency Act. The Adirondack Experience Museum is building on the research from *A Wild Idea* to commemorate this milestone with a virtual symposium, a documentary film, an online exhibit, and a season of book talks and community discussions inside the Park. It should be an interesting summer!

New York’s Adirondack Park is bigger than Yellowstone, Yosemite, Glacier, Grand Canyon, and Great Smokies National Parks combined.

A Land Use Revolution

The land-use plan of the Adirondack Park Agency (APA), adopted in 1973, is based on the ideas of landscape architect Ian McHarg. In *Design With Nature* (1969), McHarg described ways of determining how much development a parcel of undeveloped land can bear without damaging the ecological integrity of surrounding areas, using assessments of slopes, soil, vegetation, wildlife, and other natural features. McHarg’s book led a revolution in land use planning. The revolution began in the Adirondacks when New York State places permanent regulations on land use in an area the size of Vermont.

A small group of activists spent decades arguing that the Adirondacks needed to be protected from development. By 1968, they had amassed overwhelming public support. Governor Nelson Rockefeller, who was fond of big ideas and bold government action, set up a commission that studied the Adirondacks for two years before issuing 181 recommendations that were audacious. Many of them had never been tried before. But Rockefeller knew a winning political issue when he saw one, so he eagerly supported the activists' cause.

Rockefeller strong-armed state lawmakers into passing the bill that created the APA.

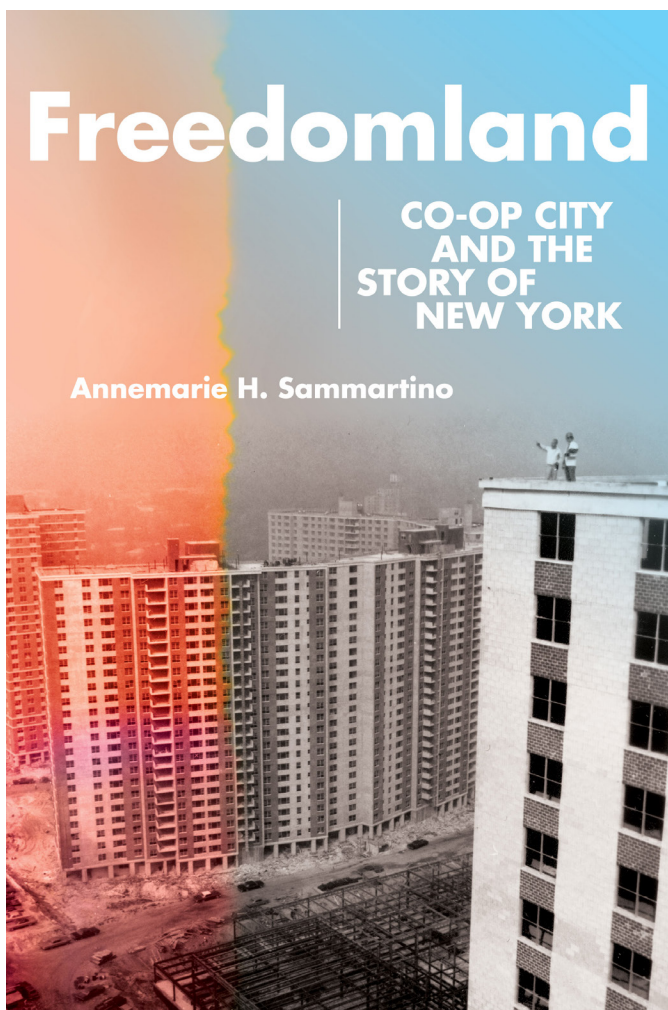
Rockefeller strong-armed state lawmakers into passing the bill that created the APA. He ordered the brand-new state agency to write two master plans for all six million acres in the Park and to complete them in less than two years.

A Furious Backlash

The APA's young staff was brilliant, passionately devoted to their cause, and extremely hard-working. But they lacked two critical things: money and time. The plans they produced were complex and imperfect. They also did not try very hard to explain their tough new regulations to local landowners, even though zoning laws had been almost entirely unknown in the Adirondacks. The activists were so focused on saving land that they didn't think about the 100,000 people who lived in the Park year-round. And many of those people were outraged.

Over its first fifty years, the APA has been praised and studied as a triumph of land-use planning. But a lot of people who live inside the park see it differently. Even after fifty years, they still think that the Agency and its restrictions on private land development are un-American. They say that private property is private and that the Adirondacks doesn't need more wilderness as much as it needs better jobs.

THE EXCERPT



Introduction

Co-op City and the Story of New York

Shortly after nightfall on July 13, 1977, New York City was plunged into darkness. The blackout is remembered by many New Yorkers as the city's nadir. Looting and vandalism hit neighborhoods across the city, in poor areas like Morrisania in the Bronx, middle-class neighborhoods like Flatbush in Brooklyn, and even the wealthy Upper East Side of Manhattan.¹ One firefighter described the Grand Concourse in the West Bronx, where so many of Co-op City's original residents had come from, as a "battlefield." In fifteen years on the force, he said that he had never before seen fires rage on both side of the boulevard.² New York City's electric utility Con Ed declared the blackout an "act of God," nothing more than a lightning strike at the wrong place at the wrong time. Mayor Abraham Beame nevertheless accused the utility of "gross negligence" and spoke out against the violence and vandalism, decrying the fact that "we've been needlessly subjected to a night of terror in many communities that have been wantonly looted and burned."³

In 1975, New York City had barely escaped bankruptcy. Now, less than two years later, the blackout appeared to reveal the anarchy and crime that lay just under the city's thin veneer of civility. The "orgy of looting and pillage" that engulfed New York was, in the words of one reporter, "a prophecy fulfilled."⁴ The author James Goodman later summarized, "Back in the 1970s, New York had been in desperate straits, wracked by stagflation, strikes, arson, drugs,

INTRODUCTION

graffiti, cynicism, a serial killer, stinking subways, white flight, high crime, fiscal crisis, and racial strife.”⁵ The summer of the blackout was also the summer that New Yorkers were terrorized by the “Son of Sam” serial killer, a former Co-op City resident, who killed eight New Yorkers and wounded seven others before he was finally apprehended that August. Even good events had their dark side that year. During game two of the World Series in Yankee Stadium, a helicopter shot of the surrounding neighborhood revealed a fire burning out of control in a nearby elementary school. “Ladies and Gentlemen,” Howard Cosell announced, “the Bronx is burning.”⁶

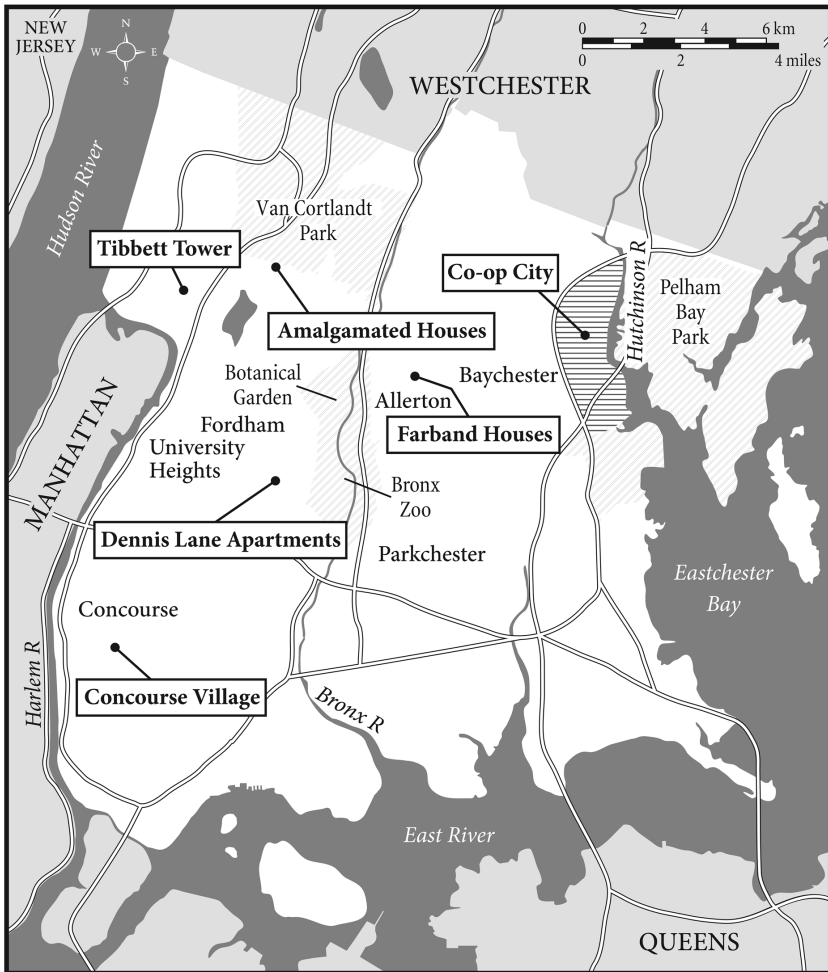


FIGURE 1. The Bronx. Created by Mike Bechtold.

CO-OP CITY AND THE STORY OF NEW YORK

In 1977, the Bronx may have been the premier literal and figurative symbol of urban decay. But there was an exception, and it was a huge one: Co-op City. When the power failed, Mayor Beame was actually in Co-op City, giving a speech in a synagogue as part of his reelection campaign. Before he was hurried out by his aides, he joked that the blackout was not related to Co-op City's failure to pay its electric bill.⁷ This joke did not sting as it might have even a few weeks earlier. The very week of the blackout, Co-op City and the State of New York agreed to a final settlement to the largest rent strike in US history, which had lasted from June 1975 to July 1976. As part of this settlement, the state agreed to cede operational control of the development to Co-op City's residents.

As the lights began to go out across the city, one area at a time, a group of teenagers in Building 2 looked out as the nearby Boston Secor housing project went dark. They began to chant "Co-op, Co-op," hoping that they too could enjoy the blackout. Two minutes later, their chants were answered as the entire cooperative lost power.⁸ Volunteers worked under the guidance of Co-op City security to keep the cooperative safe, escorting returning residents home from the garages.⁹ Elevator operators climbed the hundreds of stairs to the roofs of the tower buildings to manually move the elevators to allow trapped cooperators to escape.¹⁰ Others, armed with candles and flashlights, assisted residents in the lobbies, while still others comforted those stuck in elevators when the lights went off or helped elderly and infirm neighbors. There was no looting and only three reports of attempted robbery (two of which were foiled) in the entire community of over fifty thousand residents. Residents who did not want to trudge the many flights to their apartments gathered in and around the lobbies on the warm summer night. Capri Pizza in Section One gave out free pizza and soda to neighbors who had helped retrieve their delivery truck.¹¹ Residents came downstairs with flashlights and portable radios.¹² One former resident recalled sleeping outside on a mattress that his mother threw down from their twenty-second-floor apartment.¹³ Kids played with glow-in-the-dark Frisbees. The entire affair had something of a block party atmosphere.¹⁴ Co-op City was one of the last places in the city to have full power restored, which did not happen until the following evening. However, by 10:15 on the first night, emergency power had been restored to the elevators and for other essential services.¹⁵

The 1977 blackout was not the first time that Co-op City had appeared as an exception to the urban crisis that engulfed New York in the second half of the twentieth century. The development had, in fact, been conceived of for just this purpose. It was the largest and most ambitious development constructed by the United Housing Foundation (UHF),

a cooperative-housing developer that was responsible for over 5 percent of the housing constructed in New York between 1945 and 1975.¹⁶ Planning for Co-op City, comprising over fifteen thousand apartments, began in 1964, and city and state officials viewed it as an effort to keep middle-class families from moving to the suburbs. However, the aims of the UHF for the development were even loftier. The UHF marveled at the development's planned tower buildings: "Height . . . man's ability to move up to clouds and outer space . . . is something new for our species! . . . The views of our City, a wondrous and growing phenomenon, will enchant our future Tower residents."¹⁷ And most importantly, the UHF sought to use Co-op City and similar cooperatives to create "a better society." In a 1971 publication designed to celebrate twenty years of its existence, the UHF explained its aims: "Co-operative housing as a way of life extends beyond buildings. It includes the development of a cooperative community with shopping centers, pharmacies, optical dispensers, furniture stores, [and an] insurance company. The approach is best typified by the statement of the purpose of United Housing Foundation: 'All that we do is directed towards utilizing the methods of cooperation to enable people to enjoy a better life and to achieve a better society.'"¹⁸

In its first years of existence, Co-op City appeared poised to fulfill its promise. Even as it was decried by architects and urban planners as a set of "scattered towers [that] stand on wasteland, hemmed in by a hopelessly polluted and commercialized ilet [*sic*] . . . a gross debasement of the masses," it nevertheless remained very popular with potential residents, who flocked to get on its waiting list as soon as it opened to the public in 1965.¹⁹ As whites left the city in droves in these years, Co-op City was an exception: a neighborhood to which middle-class, white New Yorkers wanted to move. Although Co-op City did not keep records of the racial makeup of the development, estimates and census records indicate that approximately 75 percent of its initial population was white, the overwhelming majority of whom were Jewish. These figures nearly matched the racial dynamics of New York City as a whole, where census figures indicate a city that in 1970 was 78 percent white.²⁰ At a time when racial turmoil may have roiled the rest of New York, former residents of all ethnic and racial backgrounds saw Co-op City as a relatively successful example of integration.

Cost overruns plagued the development from the start, and as the extent of Co-op City's economic problems became more evident, as reflected in a series of increases to residents' monthly carrying charges starting in 1970, Co-op City residents began to organize in opposition both to the UHF and to the state that held the development's mortgage.²¹ This organizing culminated

CO-OP CITY AND THE STORY OF NEW YORK

in the rent strike of 1975–76, which was led by a young, fiery, self-described Maoist named Charles Rosen. The strike, which commanded the support of approximately 75 to 80 percent of residents, overlapped with New York City's own financial crisis. The city's crisis ended with devastating cuts to city services, including fire stations, hospitals, and schools, which a wave of protests and strikes were largely powerless to stop. In contrast, Co-op City's strikers achieved full resident control of the sixty-thousand-person cooperative. A conclusion to the strike, negotiated by Rosen and his allies, was ratified by 74 percent of households who voted in a referendum.²² Once again, in July 1977, Co-op City appeared exceptional, and there was reason to believe, as many Co-op City residents did, that the development would continue to thrive, even as the rest of the Bronx burned.

It was not to be. As Co-op City residents soon found, control of Co-op City meant responsibility for Co-op City's debt. Hundreds of millions of dollars needed to repair construction defects added to the nearly half-billion-dollar mortgage. This was a bill that the middle-class residents of the cooperative could ill afford. As debt continued to mount, residents found themselves paying yet higher monthly carrying charges. In part as a result of Co-op's financial instability, and in part owing to the racial dynamics that prompted white flight elsewhere in New York and around the United States, white families began to move out in increasing numbers in the late 1970s and 1980s. By the mid-1980s, crime had begun to rise, and test scores in the development's schools had begun to fall. It may have taken an extra decade or two, but it appeared to many in Co-op City that New York's urban problems had finally reached the Bronx's northeastern corner. Meanwhile, New York's 1980s and 1990s renaissance, anchored in finance capital and the gentrification of the kinds of neighborhoods Co-op City's residents had left, passed Co-op City by. Co-op City was too remote from the city's core, its cooperative ownership structure did not offer the possibility of a financial windfall, and its housing towers were scorned by gentrifiers longing for "character" and Old World charm. Co-op City, the largest and most lasting symbol of New York's institutional commitment to assist its poor and middle class in the decades after World War II, existed uneasily in the regime that took over the city in the final decades of the century.

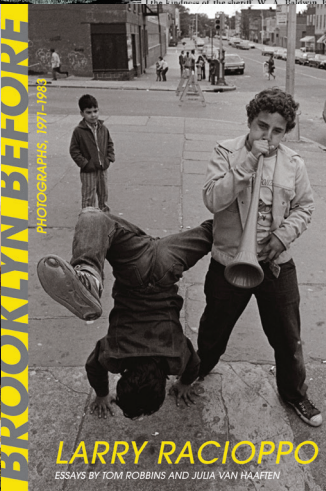
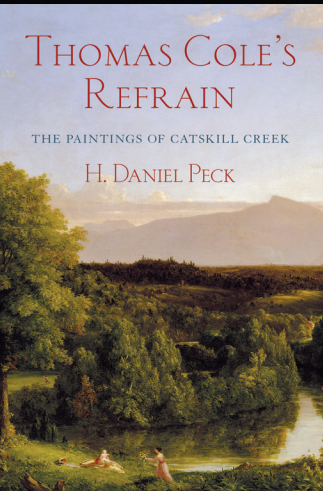
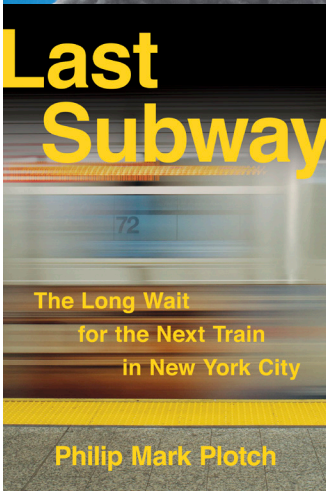
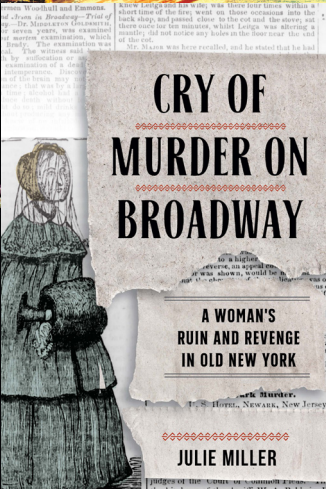
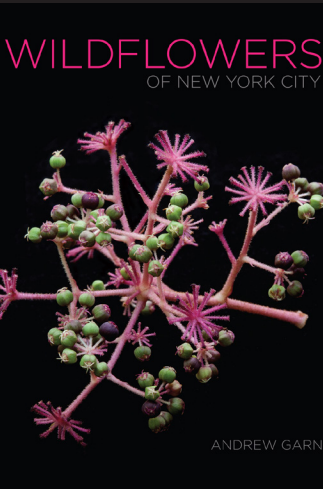
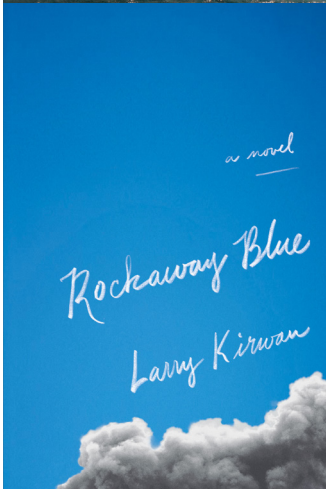
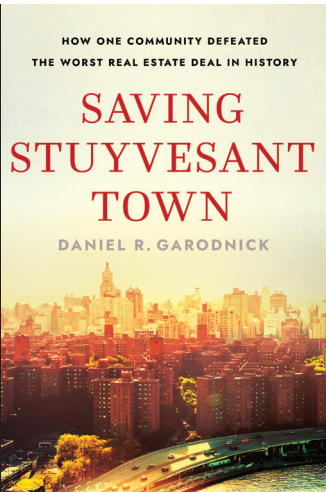
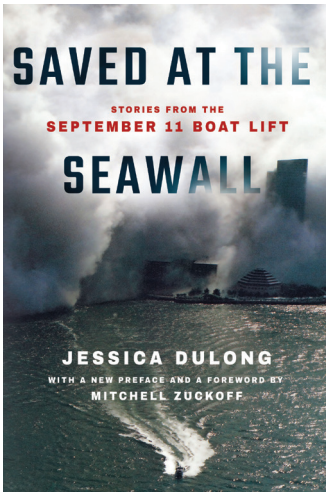
In retrospect, Co-op City's apparent crime wave of the 1980s was more a reflection of anxieties about its racial transition than the actual—tangible but not huge—increase in crime, which began to decrease in the following decade as crime declined across New York. Furthermore, in part because of its own stabilizing finances, and in part as a response to the fear that Co-op City's size and crusading residents inspired, New York State began in the late

INTRODUCTION

1980s to pursue a less punitive approach toward Co-op City, investing money and pursuing policies that allowed carrying charges to stabilize. The neighborhood is now a stable, middle-income pocket of the city. For all the ways that Co-op City has changed markedly since its first occupants moved in, the median household income of its residents has been near the median of the city for its entire existence (see appendix, figure 27). The people who live there enjoy the privilege of affordable housing in an increasingly unaffordable city. The Co-op City of today would be unrecognizable to the UHF that built it in the mid-1960s, but it nevertheless remains affordable for New Yorkers of moderate means in a city with all too few places for them to call home.

The construction of Co-op City was the apotheosis of a vision of affordable housing that stretched back to the teeming tenements of the immigrant Lower East Side in the early years of the twentieth century. Radical Jewish unionists at the ILGWU (International Ladies Garment Workers Union) and the ACWA (Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America) were interested improving the lives of workers beyond the factory floor. Even before World War I, they saw cooperatives as a way to translate the collective action of workers to the consumer realm.²³ After the war, union interest in cooperatives grew, with Sidney Hillman, president of the ACWA, proclaiming in 1919 that consumer cooperatives “will bring a large measure of democracy and human happiness into industry.”²⁴ At the same time, New York housing activists became interested in the European innovation of “limited dividend” (also known as “limited profit”) housing. In limited dividend housing arrangements, private developers agreed to limit their profit and the rent paid by residents to prescribed maximum levels, and in exchange were provided with either direct subsidies or state tax exemptions.²⁵ Housing activists such as Catherine Bauer brought this funding scheme to American shores, where it was first used in 1924 for Sunnyside Gardens in Queens (developed by the City Housing Corporation) and then enshrined in the 1926 New York State Housing Law.²⁶

Taking advantage of this new law, in 1927 a series of housing cooperatives for mostly Jewish left-wing or union workers opened in the Bronx: the United Workers Cooperative on Allerton Avenue (known as the Coops), the Sholem Aleichem Houses near the Jerome Park Reservoir, the Farband Cooperative on Williamsbridge Road, and the largest and most ambitious of them all, the Amalgamated Houses off Van Cortlandt Park.²⁷ The last of these was spearheaded by Abraham Kazan, who would later head the UHF. Kazan was born in 1891 and was part of the great migration of Jews from the Russian Pale of Settlement to the United States. Like many Jewish immigrants, Kazan found



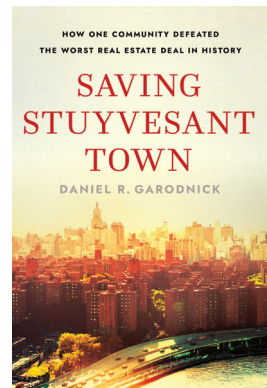
The Article

LEGENDARY REAL ESTATE: STUYVESANT TOWN

by Daniel R. Garodnick

During my twelve years as a member of the New York City Council, I had the occasion to represent 160,000 Manhattanites at City Hall, to engage residents of all corners of New York City as a candidate for Speaker of the Council in 2013, and to explore substantive areas that ranged from tenants rights to consumer protections and police reforms. But no issue or challenge quite compared to the battle that we fought to save Stuyvesant Town.

Built by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company as housing for veterans returning from World War II, Stuyvesant Town, and Peter Cooper Village is the largest rental community in the United States and home to about 30,000 mostly middle-class people on the East Side of Manhattan. For nearly sixty years it had stood as a beacon for middle-income New Yorkers, a place to enjoy a stable and affordable life in the heart of Manhattan. Under the care of “Mother Met,” as Met Life was known to tenants, with stable and affordable rents, it was a quiet enclave designed to resemble suburban living, where people could safely raise their kids.



Then, in July 2006, at the height of the real estate boom, Met Life announced that it would put it all up for sale. Their marketing materials emphasized the opportunity for a new owner to transform the drab and nondescript buildings into a luxury enclave. In October 2006, bidders from across the globe participated in a white-hot auction that bid the property over \$5 billion dollars, billions more than what experts had been predicting. When the dust settled in October 2006, Tishman Speyer Properties and BlackRock emerged as the winners, paying a record-shattering \$5.4 billion in a deal that would go down in the books as the largest residential real estate transaction in American history.

But no issue or challenge quite compared to the battle that we fought to save Stuyvesant Town.

Unfortunately, a sale of this magnitude could only be justified with a business plan that would seek to drive up rents and drive out existing tenants. Almost immediately, our fears were confirmed. Tishman Speyer had borrowed \$4.4 billion to buy Stuy Town and had to find a way to

generate more revenue from the property to pay back their enormous debts. In short, this deal did not pencil out unless they got the people who paid the lowest rents out of their units, and fast.

Over the course of a decade, the newly-energized Tenants Association and I used every ounce of leverage that we could find. We assembled our own competitive bid to buy the property on behalf of the tenants themselves—and did it twice. We defended the interests of residents who found themselves subject to legal claims, we litigated and won the biggest tenant victory in the New York Court of Appeals in a generation, and we were courted by nearly all of the major real estate players across the globe. Ultimately we put ourselves in a position to strike a deal that would preserve thousands of units as affordable housing for the next generation.

Almost immediately, our fears were confirmed.

How did the tenants of Stuy Town get from a place where tenants were being threatened with eviction to a place where the largest real estate entities in the world were fighting to join forces with us? This is the story of a community with a history of activism banding together to fight back against corporate greed and excess, and how the real estate world concluded that working with the tenants would yield a better outcome than fighting with them. The negotiations played out both in public and in private over many years, and the process was often choppy and sometimes bitterly contentious. The result was an extraordinary outcome for middle-class New Yorkers.

THREE QUESTIONS WITH JESSICA DULONG

author of *Saved at the Seawall*

1. What is your favorite anecdote from your research for this book?

Time creates distance from the raw emotion unleashed by disasters. This can make it difficult to document, after the fact, the shock and horror of historical events like the cascade of catastrophe that unfolded in Manhattan on September 11.

I could hear that distance in recordings made in the immediate aftermath versus years later. Early recordings captured the fresh pain expressed in pinched or raspy voices. Some

painting, I came to see the stories I was sharing as a constellation with each individual mariner or survivor as a single point of light. By tuning in to readers' needs and questions, I took advantage of the mind's capacity to blend thematically linked details into a full, sweeping story.

3. How do you wish you could change the field of study?

Years ago, I attended a history conference in New York State. I was surprised to discover how many fascinating-sounding talks wound

“The story is what I love about history and I wish that the craft of narrative was a more integral part of the field.”

people raced through their words while others had slowed, almost slurred speech. In later recordings, those same individuals sounded more relaxed, yet somewhat muted. It was clear through the telling who had and had not recounted their stories many times before.

2. What do you wish you had known when you started writing your book, that you know now?

I wish I'd known earlier that if traditional narrative methodologies don't serve your story, it can help to consider your readers' ability to spot constellations in a sky full of stars. Through reporting and writing *Saved at the Seawall*, I stitched together characters, exposition, and scenes to reveal a panoramic event in all its complexity. Inspired by pointillist

up being dry presentations stripped of all the elements of a good story. The story is what I love about history and I wish that the craft of narrative was a more integral part of the field. This would help grant greater public access to all the gloriously detailed minutiae and the complex, thoughtful analyses of the past. Instead, too many enchanting truths discovered through years or even decades of dedicated research remains siloed in academia rather than accessible to a wider audience.



Amelia Norman attacks Henry Ballard outside the Astor House Hotel in 1843. Inspired by *Cry of Murder on Broadway* by Julie Miller

Artwork by Yuuto Kuroki

YK



1869

The Cornell University Press Podcast

AN INTERVIEW WITH **JESSICA DuLONG**
AND **LARRY KIRWAN**,
HOSTED BY JANE BUNKER

THE TRANSCRIPT

JONATHAN Welcome to 1869, The Cornell University Press Podcast, I'm Jonathan Hall. To commemorate the 20th anniversary of September 11th, we are proud to present to you a special Remembering 9/11 episode with guest host Jane Bunker, Director of Cornell University Press. Jane will be interviewing two Cornell authors whose recent books directly address the events and the aftermath of the September 11 tragedy -Jessica DuLong, author of *Saved at the Seawall: Stories from the September 11 Boat Lift* and Larry Kerwin, author of *Rockaway Blue: A Novel*, both published under our Three Hills imprint.

JONATHAN Jane Bunker has been serving as Director since March of 2020, and is the first woman to lead Cornell University Press. She was previously the director of Northwestern University Press and Associate Director and Editor in Chief at the State University of New York Press. Jane holds a BA in Philosophy from St. Norbert College and an MA in Philosophy from Fordham University. Jessica DuLong is a journalist, historian, book collaborator and ghostwriter, as well as chief engineer America of the retired 1931 New York City fireboat John J. Harvey. Her first book, *My River Chronicles*, won an American Society of Journalists and Authors, Outstanding Book Award for memoir. Her work has appeared in *Rolling Stone*, *CNN.com*, *Newsweek International*, *Psychology Today*, *Huffington Post*, *Newsday*, and *Maritime Reporter and Engineering News*. Jessica appears and Spike Lee's HBO docuseries, "NYC Epicenters 9/11 to 2021->1/2" and in cartoon form in Maira Kalman's picture book *Fireboat: The Heroic Adventures of the John J. Harvey*. Larry Kirwan was the leader of the New York based Irish political rock band *Black 47* for 25 years. He is author of five previous books, including *Liverpool Fantasy*, *Rockin' the Bronx*, and *Green Suede Shoes*, and 19 plays and musicals, including *Paradise Square*, which will open on Broadway March 22 2022. He is currently working on a stage version of the informer, and *Iraqi Rose*, a musical about the Iraq war. Kirwan also hosts *Celtic Crush*, a popular radio show on Sirius XM, and writes a column for the *Irish Echo*. Hello, Jane, Jessica, and Larry, welcome to the podcast. Thank you. We're so happy to have you join us for this special episode that's tied to the 20th anniversary of 9/11. Jane will be our special guest host for this discussion. And so I turn the microphone over to you, Jane.

JANE Thank you so much, Jonathan. I'm really happy to be here and to have the opportunity to speak with Jessica and Larry today. Thank you for making the time to speak with us as we near this really important anniversary. And I also would like to give a shout out to my colleague Michael McGandy, who worked with you both on your books, I was really interested to see when I was coming on board last year as the new director of the press that he had planned two books on 9/11 during this season one fiction and one non. And it's really interesting to look at the events of September 11 from both of these vantage points. So I think we can acknowledge we'll be writing and reading and discussing this event forever. And I have so many questions for both of you. But I'm going to try to limit myself to

maybe three. If you'd like to both begin by talking a little bit about how 9/11 impacted you personally, and how that informed the books that you both wrote. And Jessica, would you like to start us off?

JESSICA

So I'm a marine engineer. I served for two decades as engineer aboard retired New York City Fire boat John J. Harvey, and the boat, while it was not an active duty vessel on September 11, it was called back into service to pump completely necessary river water to firefighters to land based crews. When the towers came down, the fire hydrants were obscured by debris and rubble and the water mains were shattered. And so I served at ground zero for four days as a marine engineer. And so it's always hard for me to describe when The beginning of this recording started for me, because it really started in a very informal way with me just as a writer, carrying a notebook around with me writing things down on site, just for no clear purpose, except that I hope to one day make sense of what was happening around us. So that service is both what made me feel a deep responsibility to tell the story of the maritime evacuation of nearly half a million people from Manhattan on September 11, I felt a responsibility to my community, I felt a responsibility to bear witness to these remarkable choices that people made time and time again to to help one another. Similarly, I was really hesitant to dive into writing a book about this topic, because it I still carried the psychological effects of my service down there. And so it's meant that for two decades, I've still been swimming in these same stories. And so what makes it worth it is the ability to draw attention to the reality that we are so much more than are constrained, formulated hero narratives are idea that people divide into two categories, heroes and everybody else, because really, what we saw in full force that day was that so many people time and time again, put themselves and their concern for their well being aside so that they could help other people. And it's really that is the remarkable story that day.

JANE

Thank you so much. I really appreciated that part in your book, where you talk about look to the helpers. And that's where some sort of saving grace comes in. Larry, what about you? How did the effects of 9/11 play into your writing this novel?

LARRY

Well, I live just above the area, I live just above Canal Street. So I heard the plane coming over. And I actually bang my head on to the table because I thought it was comfortable to hit our building and everyone upstairs and saw this incredible sight of a huge plane embedded in the north tower. And I went down that straight away. But I only got about eight blocks down and then there's smoke in the dust. And I realize this is not a good place to be and turn back and wander around. But as regards writing the book that happened the following Saturday night, because black 47 was the house band of York City at the time and had a an enormous following, particularly with cops and firemen and first responders and a lot of young Irish American financials, as we call them, many of whom had gone to college for the first time and in their families, and we're working

on there. So we lost a lot of people. And because of the nature of the band, when we weren't on tour, we would play in a regular place every Saturday night, we were in New York and it happened to be Connelly's on 45th Street. So we put out the word that we would go back in the the following Saturday night because that everybody was laying low in New York and people weren't coming in, and the streets are deserted. So we said we'll be in Connelly's and come on up. And of course, black 47 fans came, but the great majority of people who came were the first responders who were actually down in the pit, as we call it then. And for about four or five weeks, the strange phenomenon happens. And think back to it. We didn't know who was alive and who is dead for the most part early on. So whenever the door would open, everyone would turn around. And when someone would walk through everyone with this audible sigh of relief, John or Mary had made it Yeah. And that that kept happening for about four or five weeks. And I began to think Yeah, but how about Billy or Michelle? They're not coming back. And I got this, this need to write the story of the regular people. Because already I could feel what was happening. The politicians were taking it over. And we're going to use it. And they did use it to go to war in Iraq, and a lot of our fans because we had our basic support group for working class and lower middle class people. And many of those young people joined up because I wanted to do some kind of service for the country. And the next thing I know two years later, they're in Baghdad on the way to Baghdad. I've been shot at So we were hearing the stories of that straightaway too. So I wanted to capture what it was like for the regular people on New York. And I tried it in different ways try to with an album called New York Town for Black 47, then put it into a playwright form because I am a playwright. And that was produced by couldn't, I couldn't get into their heads in that form. And I realized, would have to be a novel because you'd have to find out what the characters were thinking. And that's what Rockaway Blue is all about.

JANE

Thank you, Larry. It's almost as if you anticipated my next question, which is always going to ask about the fact that both of the books explore this tragedy through the lens of ordinary working class people doing what you know, end up being truly extraordinary things. And I was curious about why you took that approach and why it's so powerful. And I think you've you've just explained that perfectly in the case of Rockaway Blue. Good. And I'm also as I'm listening to you both, I'm struck by the fact that I'm speaking to, you know, a rock and roll star and an author and playwright and and, you know, an engineer of a New York City, fireboat, it's it's extraordinary, and also a very accomplished writer, as well, of course, Jessica, and you know how every buddy has a story, everybody's got their perspective on what happened that day, we all lived through it in a particular way, you both were much, much closer than I was actually up the Hudson, a couple of hours in Albany, New York that day. But it was the same weather. Remember that blue sky, everybody remembers that blue sky that day. And now it's 20 years since the incident. And I'm wondering if we could talk a little bit about how the people in your books

have healed, if they have healed, and how they haven't. In the latter case, and you know, extrapolate perhaps from that outward to the nation as a whole. I'm personally struck by the similarities between that historical time period and now where we're living through the global pandemic, there is incredible collective trauma, and grief. And it strikes me as a really similar time period, where we are really in need of healing and connection, and the transcendence that art can offer us. And I realized I didn't really ask a question. Larry, you look like you've got something to say

LARRY

9/11 changed America, we became a fearful people after it. I often think that I've been think it's a huge change, you know, in that we weren't asked to do anything. I mean, as Jessica says, so many people did do something. But for instance, Black 47 was really lucky in that we were able to do whatever we wanted to, we didn't need to--we didn't need permission from anyone, but so many bands and artists wanted to contribute. And there were stymied, there was nothing anyone could do. But apart from that, it was the country wasn't asked to do anything, we would have done anything at that period, we would have gone into poor areas, and raise the level of education, we would have donated money to different things. But you know, the powers that be wanted everything to go along the same. And I have nothing but disgust for the politicians of the states people. At that point, they they missed this huge opportunity to change America. And America needs a lot of changing. And my guess is it's not happening at this point with the pandemic either. You know, people can't even take the simple step of getting vaccinated. And for people are not thinking in terms of the common good, because politicians see a way of keeping us separate, and of staying in power because of that. And it's strange. I'm interested to get Jessica's view on this, but it just seems that we're heading down the same track again, as we did after 9/11.

JONATHAN

Yeah, I remember President Bush famously saying that we just needed to go shopping.

LARRY

I mean, there is one there is one guy who knew how to get out direct the world. He wrecked the Middle East. He didn't do very much for the US. And he, I think, realize it and got his butt down to Texas, got on his farm and stayed down there and escaped the the reckoning that shouldn't have happened to him. But that's, that's my take on it.

JANE

I may say I was really struck in your book, Jessica, by the fact that I'm really sure I could be wrong. I'm pretty sure you don't mention Bush's name, possibly not Giuliani's name. Your focus is so lasered in on the people who are getting the boats to the seawall to see how many people they could get off Manhattan Island, it was entirely focused on the people who needed saving, and the people who showed up to do it.

JESSICA

Well, then the mention of Giuliani's name comes because he's he's the mayor, and he's at a certain point, you know, puts out an order that any-

body who can go north should go north, right. So point of information. It's, it's included as point of information, because it was then President Bush's arrival that actually stalled us in in place, because the harbor shut down for security reasons that there was a whole group of largely fire-fighters, but first responders who were stuck waiting on the back of a tugboat just wanting to go to New Jersey, and they had to wait until President Bush arrived and then departed. It is very easy for us to continue down this road of division, where we we categorize people, and we look at people with the sort of tight lens focus of a small narrative of who we can be and how we can be. And there are plenty of examples in history, in New York, and everywhere, all over the world of terrible things that people do and terrible things that happen. And what does not get enough real estate, in our words, in our images, in our art, in our common commentators discussing are the ways that we come together. And Rebecca Solnit has a beautiful book that collects all of these examples, Paradise Built in Hell. And she looks throughout history at all of these stories that actually took place in the ways that disasters happened. And people came together, people came together, who were not trained to do so who didn't necessarily have special equipment, or a special sort of professional obligation to do this. And those examples, do not get enough attention, do not get enough airtime. And I think there are some good reasons that Larry mentioned about why those divisions are important to maintain for certain certain of us. But we all lose, we all lose when we have this limited sense of our human potential doesn't serve any of us. And so the more that we can draw attention to the incredible selflessness and the choices that people made over and over again, to help people, even when and it's hard to bring ourselves back to those that morning and those those minutes that crept by and raced by sort of all at the same time. And the weird way that time gets mangled. When we're in crisis situations, we didn't know if if the the first plane was the beginning or the end, we didn't know if the second plane we didn't know that the tower it just kept getting worse. So it seemed that it was this you know, arrow of trajectory of of worse and worse and worse. And the Mariners continued to turn their boats around, they would drop off passengers on safe shores in New Jersey, in Brooklyn, elsewhere, Staten Island and they turn their boats around, and they headed straight to the island on fire. Without knowing what was going to happen next, many times they had to navigate their boats only with radar because the smoke and dust and debris was in the air was just choking. And people have paid the price. I mean, you asked earlier about healing and people paid the price psychologically. And that's very hard to put metrics on and I certainly don't want to speak for others and whether they've healed or not. I think that's a moving target moving targets probably not the best analogy to use in that setting. But you see what I'm saying? But people, mariners have gotten sick and died for making that choice over and over again. And just one other point on this is that even though I think it's important, and when when the Mariners I spoke with sort of took pause and thought it through They recognize that they made choices in those moments, they could look back and say,

Okay, I guess I could have done something different. But at the time, there was no something different that they were ever going to do. It was just a given, because this is what you do when you have the tools, and the skill set, and the wherewithal and the equipment and the ability to help. And you see someone standing at the seawall or jumping into the river, because they think they are somehow going to swim to New Jersey, and they're that desperate to get away from the island. You rescue them. That's just what we do. And that piece of who we are, needs more attention needs more highlighting. And right now, especially in the pandemic, it's really important. We're such a divided nation right now. And yet you see neighbor helping neighbor over and over again. And those are stories that need more daylight.

JANE

Yeah, I couldn't agree with you more. And and as you were speaking, and going through, you know, first plane hit, and we didn't know if it was the beginning or the end. And it kept getting worse, that that was done. So effectively, the way the narrative sort of unfolds in your book. Frankly, when I opened it up and looked at the timeline in the front matter, I just started reading it. And I, I started to cry, and I had to shut the book. And this was a couple of weeks ago, when I was getting ready for this. I had no idea. It would be so affecting still. I was sitting with my husband, and he said, What's the matter with you? And I just held up the book, and he handed it to him. And he said, Really? I said, you know, this, this is this is a tender time. You know, it's everything is? Everything is painful right now, on some level. And the hope, you know, you mentioned Rebecca solnit. She's one of the things that's been helping me get through, you know, the the focus on the things that we show up for one another, and we do what's needed. And people don't need to tell us it just happens over and over and over again. Yeah, yeah. The other thing that I was really struck by in st by the sea wall is you don't really think about the fact that the waterfront in Manhattan is no longer structured for sea vessels to come up and get human beings on and off of boats. And so those scenes of cutting through railings and setting up Gangplanks and what happened at Pier 63 was really, really fascinating. And I was grateful to have a light shone on that. Back to this, I want to get back to this hopeful narrative. I really keep thinking your your words, Larry, keep resounding in my mind about how in the wake of the attacks, we would have done anything for this country. Would you like to say more about that? Do you think that there's any way we can, you know, I, I just can't help but keep bringing it back to where we are now. And you think we can pull it together? in the in the pandemic? What have to happen?

LARRY

Well, I think people should look at the facts. You know, we're in a really difficult time because social media is so strong. And I regret to say that when I'm when I'm talking to people, they say crazy things. It's like I read this on the internet as if that means, you know, it's true. And I wrote a column for the Irish echo. And anytime I read about politics, or write about anything of that nature, I have to check every fact because it's just

so important. And my elverson check everything I write. But there's so much garbage information out there that people are believing that getting beyond that is one of the things we have to do. And that's a huge battle. You know, Facebook won't take responsibility for what's on there. You know, for for good reasons. Sometimes they don't want to get in the way of people's opinions. But there is a breakdown in in the moral trust in the country. That's going to be hard to overcome but Try to overcome it by telling the truth as best you can. And in the case of Rockaway blue, or I was trying to do is to see what happens to people, not during the actual day but but three years later when things have settled in a bit, and the worst part of the grief is over the cold steel of the briefest of the grief is over. But if time to think back a bit, and putting this character, Jimmy Murphy, who all of a sudden finds out that his son was actually in the tower, North Tower, 30 minutes before the crash, and his family is finally coming to terms with this, but he has to make the decision, should I find out what he was doing there, because it may not be good. And Ryan wasn't always a morally clear person. And if he find that something bad about his wife will revert back into the depressed state she was a personal the same thing for him. So as a writer, as an artist, what I was trying to do is get into the hands of people to see what happens to people, when a huge cataclysmic thing like 9/11 happens, but then what happens to them afterwards, when they have time to think back? And can their lives get healed? And I'm an optimist about that, I think lives can get healed, because you've seen that done true humanity that people pick themselves up and go on. Because as Beckett says what choice we have, but to go on. So that's that's what I was trying to do with the book.

JANE

Thank you so much. It's it's I'm, I love how you keep anticipating questions, I was going to ask about why you chose to set the novel, you know, three years after the events and how you think memory affects the larger society's perception of 9/11. Just as you know, the characters and Rockaway blue, have their memories of that day affect how they perceive it, and why it's important to remember and how the fact that we all remember so differently, plays into the collective narrative as well.

LARRY

We also remember differently ourselves. Right before 9/11, I wrote a solo album and recorded and I, a lot of it was autobiographical, and I wrote a song about my parents, life's like that isn't it and how they met, and my memories of their romance when they were young people. My father was a merchant marine, so it used to go away for six months at a time. And there will be just preparation when he was coming back. And all of a sudden, my mother would kind of desert us as children because she was a wife again. And I wrote about that in 2000, while the two of them are still alive, and my mother died soon after. And my father died a couple of years after that. So it was around that period. And sometimes I hear that particular song now and I, I see it differently now than I did when I wrote it. And, you know, that's what memory does. Memory puts a gauze over things, wood with time. So it's important to remember that so even with-

in my own self, artistic self, I see things differently than I did 20 years ago. And I probably see 9/11 differently to that I did at the time.

JANE Now, you just reminded me of a line from a, I read a piece in The Atlantic just the other day about a 9/11 story. And the writer says we keep inventing and reinventing the dead. And I don't know what it is. I think it's just human nature. It's it's the nature of trauma and memory and the passage of time. Yeah.

LARRY I have a question, Jessica, because one of the things I think is that with the two 3000 people, whatever the figure was 2700 down at the towers, I feel that almost like when there's spirits left On that day New York became a different place. You know, big cities go on new people come in new spurts come in. But I miss the old New York before 9/11 because it changed in F. ineffably on that day. So I'd be upset from Jessica's point of view what what she thinks of that.

JESSICA Such an interesting question. And the image that I have of the departure is really powerful. This is probably not the more linear answer that you're looking for. But this honestly what I'm thinking about, that the gods of memory and the reinvention of the dead, I think that happens over and over, has something to do with the nature of time. And I've been actually writing a lot about grief, collective grief trauma. I'm a book collaborator, as well as a writer of my own work. And almost all of my book projects right now have to do with grief and trauma. So somehow, I've put that out into the universe. But I'm also I'm also doing journalism in this area. And I'm working on a piece right now that is about anniversaries, and about how we approach anniversaries and how grief is cyclical. And I also wrote a piece recently, inspired by the work of it's called the book has a great title, it's called the terrible unlikelihood of our being here. And it's Santa Paula and tonetta. And she writes about loss and physics and the the, the actual nature of relative time. And so I wrote a piece sort of talking with her about the folding of time, and that perhaps pandemic time, or Crisis time, as I mentioned earlier, right, that we're actually experiencing time more as it actually is in the world, rather than the way that we perceive it as a as a sort of straight line of linear reality. And so where this overlaps with the spirits leaving on that day, the people who departed that day, when time if time is a folding in on itself, sort of thing, a plastic, you know, more chewing gum kind of entity, then it means that our, our past and our present can come together. And it means that we can actually have different encounters with the people after they're gone. At least theoretically speaking, right? Because there's this great physicist and this I'm so in my out of my realm right now in the depths of physics that I'm not an expert in. But I find it fascinating, where this is notion of all of the nows as a series of Polaroid shots that are all laid out on a table. And so if all of the now is our coexistence on the table, then you could pick one up from over here and pick another one up from over there, and maybe your grandmother's in one, and maybe it's your parents meeting,

again, Larry, in another, you know, and, and we can bring these things close to us, right, we can we can, we can look in the look at the world with that level of vast perception. Not the linear, I miss New York to that you're looking for. But I think it's an ever changing thing. I mean, I missed the New York of, of, you know, 1931, that I researched deeply for my first book, *My River Chronicles*, that was all about the rise and fall of respect for craftsmanship, and hands on work. And so I never lived there. But I immersed myself in that sea of reality at the time. And so I missed that in New York to where there were finger piers all along the shoreline of the western side of Manhattan, you know, counting to I think the number is 76 miles of working waterfront, with those finger piers, if you traced, you know, all of the geography there. And so instead, to go back to what you had mentioned earlier, Jane about the infrastructure, really, we were confronted the past and present we're, we're right up against each other on September 11, when life or death decisions and life or death actions were affected by that lack of the infrastructure. So in a very real way, there is a woman, I was not able to get further on her story than a certain point and then it hit a brick wall. But I believe I actually have a photograph that may include her and it does not look that look like she survived. And she had in a panic jumped from the sea wall, which is erected with a it's hard to describe just by audio, but it's basically it's an ornamental railing. It's not just ornamental, because it's meant to keep people off the river. So it actually curves towards you if you're standing on the shore. So So this woman had to climb over this railing, and she jumped down to the steel deck of a fire boat, because there was no ladder, there was no you know, no, there was no concept that big boats would come up alongside and individual people would, would try to get on. Right. And so and she suffered what is what was very likely a fatal injury, head injury on that on that boat. And so there's a juxtaposition of before and after, right? of, of who we once were as a, as a working waterfront community. And, and, and we are now where so much of the very alive waterfront that is still, you know, some dock worker had their hands on everything that anybody had in their lives back then, right? crates and barrels and things like that. Now, it all comes offloaded in a container, like a Lego block, right? But all these things actually, you know, found their way across the seas. And I'm, I'm rambling a little bit here, but another collision moment that happened on September 11 12th, and so on, was that we actually returned to the working harbour of the past, because everything was offloaded by hand. So it was like a bucket brigade of like, okay, we need water on the side. And so boats would deliver water and hand to hand, you know, make a pile. Oh, we need you know, food. Okay, hand to hand people would deliver it was breakbulk cargo come back to New York shores, which I found really moving.

JANE

I completely agree. Thank you so much for telling us that story. And I don't know, I think we've gotten to quantum physics, we may need to stop. It's time to stop. You know, I feel we've also had a kind of a hopeful point, because you know, what we can do is we can talk to one another,

and we can connect over our common experience and compare memories. And we've great books. And there's a lot of hope there a lot of opportunity for learning. It has been so good to talk to you above. Thank you.

JESSICA Thank you so much. I agree with you. I think stories are absolutely the only thing that can save us. I really do.

LARRY Yeah, and trying to tell the truth.

JANE Yes. Amen.

JONATHAN That was Jane Bunker, interviewing Cornell authors Jessica DuLong and Larry Kirwan.

THREE QUESTIONS WITH PHILIP MARK PLOTCH

author of *Last Subway*

1. What inspired you to write this book?

After completing my book, *Politics Across the Hudson: The Tappan Zee Megaproject*, about why it takes more than three decades to finalize a transportation plan in the Hudson Valley, I decided to find out why it takes a century to build one-quarter of a subway line.?

3. What do you think readers will most enjoy about this book?

Every city has its own fanciful project. A London architect proposed building a 94-story pyramid to accommodate more than 5 million dead bodies. Frank Lloyd Wright unveiled plans for a mile-high Chicago skyscraper with parking for 15,000 cars. The Soviet Union began erecting steel for Moscow's version of the Statue of Liberty standing on top of the Empire State Building resting above Madison Square Garden. One of the cynical lessons learned from the past century is that New York's politicians benefit when they tell people

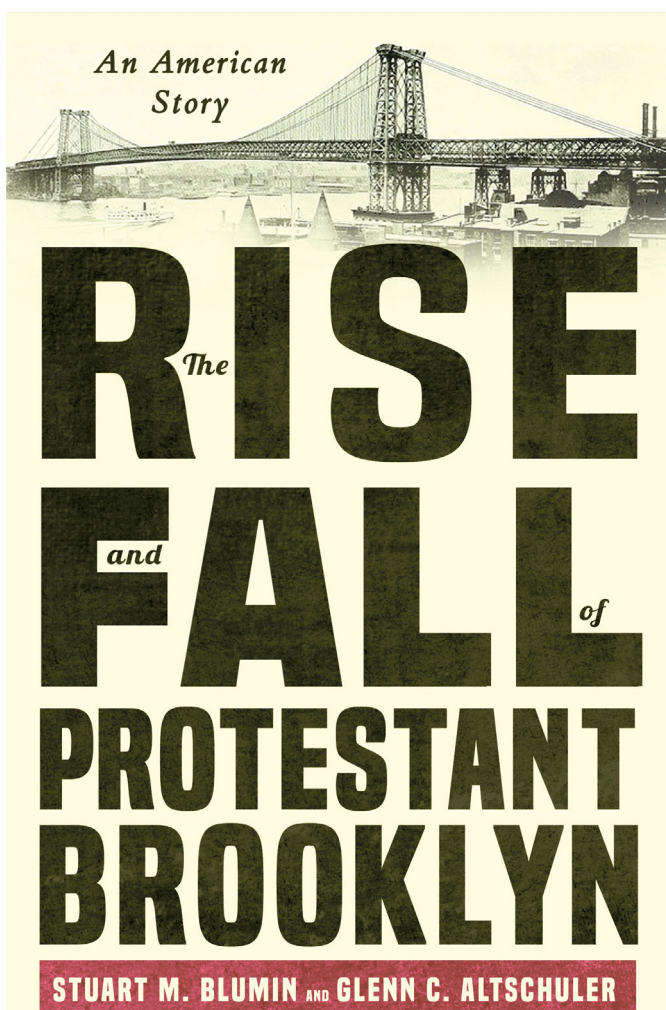
A London architect proposed building a 94-story pyramid to accommodate more than 5 million dead bodies.

2. What's your favorite anecdote from your research for this book?

While I was going through Governor Nelson Rockefeller's papers in Westchester, I came across his version of a meeting that he had with Richard Nixon in 1972. I was skeptical that he was accurately portraying Richard Nixon's enthusiasm for funding the Second Avenue Subway. My suspicions were confirmed when I listened to the Oval Office tapes stored at Nixon's presidential library.

that they are studying, planning, designing, and preparing for the Second Avenue subway. They do not have to actually start building it to reap rewards.

THE
EXCERPT



Prologue

America's Brooklyn

Brooklyn, New York, is a place like no other. There is hardly a city in America, or even a large section of a city, that is not, like Brooklyn, ethnically, racially, economically, and culturally diverse. But the mosaic of Brooklyn's sections and neighborhoods—scores of them—many with names and identities known well beyond the borders of this “outer” borough of New York City, seems different from other places. Coney Island, Prospect Park, the long-lost Dodgers (“dem Bums”), the breathtaking views of lower Manhattan—these too lend a distinctive identity to the borough. And a striking stereotype of Brooklyn and its inhabitants endures through many years and changes, including the flood of up-and-coming artists and well-heeled professionals that has gentrified old neighborhoods. The stereotypical Brooklynite would not be from any other place. If challenged about the prospect of Brooklyn's becoming something unrecognizably new—perhaps even ordinary—this dyed-in-the-wool Brooklynite might well respond in the borough's once-distinctive language: Fuhgeddaboutit!

Brooklyn's uniqueness stems in no small measure from the borough's location just across the East River from Manhattan, New York's only “inner” borough and the center of America's most powerful metropolis. The dominance of Manhattan has been a constant in Brooklyn's history and an ongoing annoyance to boosters who point out that by 1855, when it absorbed neighboring Williamsburgh—which in the process dropped its concluding

PROLOGUE

“h”—Brooklyn had become the nation’s third largest city; that by 1930, thirty-two years after Brooklyn joined Greater New York City, its population exceeded Manhattan’s; and that Brooklyn’s East River piers and basins had long been the real center of the Port of New York. But for all that, Brooklyn grew up as and has remained a satellite of Manhattan—a “town across the river,” even to the point where the first bridge that finally spanned that river, though a Brooklyn-based initiative, was ultimately named from the point of view of Manhattan (as was the East River itself). It is the Brooklyn Bridge, the bridge that leads to Brooklyn, not the other way around. True, a Manhattan Bridge was built some years later, but with much less fanfare and no discernible contribution to American urban legend. The Manhattan Bridge awaits its Hart Crane, its Joseph Stella, and its David McCullough. No one will try to sell it to you.

America has many towns across the river—Somerville and Cambridge across the Charles from Boston, Camden across the Delaware from Philadelphia, Covington across the Ohio from Cincinnati, East St. Louis across the Mississippi from, well, St. Louis, to name a few. But none is as large, as complex, and as significant as Brooklyn, and none has so interesting a history. Brooklynites will hate reading this, but the uniqueness of their town across the river does reflect the uniqueness of that place on the other side. Only New York could have created Brooklyn.

The Brooklyn it did create is known for that mosaic of neighborhoods within which ethnicity and race have been the primary modes of local identity. Williamsburg and Brownsville were known for their Jews; Bay Ridge and Bensonhurst for their Italians; Sunset Park for its Norwegians (and then its Chinese); Bedford-Stuyvesant for its African Americans. The boundaries between such places are not always clear, and many ethnic and racial transitions—and conflicts—have occurred within areas once clearly associated with a particular population. The banker Nathan Jonas, who grew up in Williamsburg, recalls that “the Jewish boy in Brooklyn was more than ordinarily likely to get into a fight.”¹ In Gravesend, which was predominantly Italian in the 1920s, but with an adjacent Jewish community north of Avenue U, the Protestant memoirist Lionel Lindsay tells us, “there were Italian kids who were willing to accept me for being not Jewish, and Jewish kids who warmed up to me because I was not Italian.” For many, the path between ethnic hostilities was not so easy to navigate. Lindsay’s father, ironically enough the neighborhood’s Dutch Reformed minister, was known as the “false-priest” to his Catholic neighbors, many of whom crossed the street to avoid walking by his “false-church.” One can imagine how much more

AMERICA'S BROOKLYN

difficult it was for the Jews (“morte-christas”) and Italians (“swartzers”) of Lindsay’s Gravesend to get along with each other.²

How—and whether—Brooklyn’s ethnic groups got along is an important subject of this book. Here we merely note that the familiar story of massive ethnic migrations from Manhattan’s Lower East Side does not capture the whole of the history of this town across the river. Far less well known is another story, of a Brooklyn vast and vanished, yet hidden in plain sight; of a new and rapidly growing city and suburb of busy wharves and water-side factories, wealthy brownstone neighborhoods and middle-class streets of brick and frame single-family homes, boulevards and parks, open spaces and not-yet-leveled hills, and above all proliferating churches, many of them grand, and built of stone in then-fashionable neo-Gothic styles.

Even before it received its city charter in 1834, and throughout the nineteenth century, Brooklyn was “the City of Churches.” To Brooklynites, this sobriquet was far more than a booster’s slogan and more than a way of contrasting the new city with the Sodom across the river (though it was certainly both of these things). And it was more than a census of steeples. Brooklyn did indeed have more churches in proportion to its population than Manhattan, but that often-repeated boast only began to express the meaning of City of Churches. Above all, it signified the dominance of a New England-style Protestantism, still Calvinist in spirit if not in the letter of old New England ecclesiastical law, that permeated the Presbyterian and Congregational churches formed in Brooklyn Heights and other neighborhoods during the early days of village and city growth, and that deeply affected Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, Reformed, and other churches rooted in different Protestant traditions. To be sure, there were also Roman Catholic churches from the earliest periods of Brooklyn’s growth, and somewhat later a small number of synagogues. But these served far less influential populations. The understood elision from City of Churches—the part written in invisible ink—was “Protestant.”

Rooted in social class as well as religious thought and practice, Protestant dominance extended to the politics, economy, society, and culture of the new city to the east of Manhattan. Although the term defies precise measurement and is revealed more in outcomes than in explicit expressions of intent, hegemony, defined as a preponderant influence or authority over others, is not too strong a term for the nature and force of Protestantism—particularly Yankee Protestantism—in nineteenth-century Brooklyn. We use it in this book to refer to the extension and power of certain religious norms beyond the church to the shaping and control of Brooklyn’s secular institutions,

PROLOGUE

public space, values, and discourse. This Protestant cultural hegemony was by no means absolute in its reach; it was repeatedly challenged as Brooklyn grew from a small village to one of the nation's largest cities. But it was notable for its endurance in the face of these challenges, especially the growing ethnic and religious diversity that finally overcame its influence. *The Rise and Fall of Protestant Brooklyn* describes a nineteenth-century city that contrasted markedly with the borough that succeeded it and tells the story of the transformation from one to the other.

That transformation was far from complete in 1905, when the Tammany Hall ward boss George Washington Plunkitt, seated comfortably at the boot-black stand of the New York County courthouse, and surrounded by his Manhattan-based cronies, dictated a series of "very plain talks on very practical politics" to the newspaperman William L. Riordon. Riordon's popular volume reporting (and no doubt embellishing) these lectures includes Plunkitt's dismissive account of the "hayseeds" of Brooklyn, who can never become real New Yorkers:

And why? Because Brooklyn don't seem to be like any other place on earth. Once let a man grow up amidst Brooklyn's cobblestones, with the odor of Newtown Creek and Gowanus Canal ever in his nostrils, and there's no place in the world for him except Brooklyn. And even if he don't grow up there; if he is born there and lives there only in his boyhood and then moves away, he is still beyond redemption.³

Plunkitt offers as proof of his contention the story of just such a Brooklyn native, discovered as a young boy, nurtured by Plunkitt in the art of New York City politics, and sent eventually to the State Assembly from a Manhattan district. "You'd think," asks Plunkitt, "he had forgotten all about Brooklyn, wouldn't you? I did, but I was dead wrong." The young assemblyman showed no interest at all in Manhattan's political affairs and was eventually caught by his mentor trying to hide a Brooklyn newspaper. To Plunkitt this was the final indignity:

"Jimmy, I'm afraid New York ain't fascinatin' enough for you. You had better move back to Brooklyn after your present term." And he did. I met him the other day crossin' the Brooklyn Bridge, carryin' a hobby-horse under one arm, and a doll's carriage under the other, and lookin' perfectly happy.⁴

To Plunkitt, Brooklyn had already developed a special magnetism, at least for the hayseeds who were born there, and we are again invited to believe in the uniqueness of the place, even before the crowding in of ethnic and racial

AMERICA'S BROOKLYN

communities in the twentieth century. Not identified with any ethnic group, Jimmy migrated to New York well before the unraveling of the Protestant domination that characterized his native city. Should we be convinced that Brooklyn, even then, “don’t seem to be like any other place on earth”? Perhaps, but we would point to something else about Plunkitt’s description of the liberated Jimmy: the hobbyhorse and doll’s carriage he so happily carried home to his children. The Jimmy we see on the Brooklyn Bridge was a young husband and father, and his traipse across the bridge was most likely that of the metropolitan suburbanite. Rather than some sort of mystical magnetism of place, that little scene evokes one of the most American of experiences, the family lives of the men, women, and children who moved into or were born and raised in the emerging suburban neighborhoods that surrounded every nineteenth-century American city. Brooklyn, more specifically Brooklyn Heights, has been called America’s first suburb, a claim not only of its uniqueness, but also of its participation in what would become a far more widely shared phenomenon.⁵

This broader perspective should include “Greater” Brooklyn, for as Manhattan continued to grow, so did its largest town across the river, as a suburb of New York and of its own expanding urban center. Nineteenth-century Brooklyn did become a city, and not just in its form of local governance. As the maritime and canal-borne commerce of New York dramatically increased, so did the demand for new wharves and warehouses, many of which were built on the Brooklyn side of the East River above and below the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The new Atlantic Basin in the South Brooklyn neighborhood of Red Hook became the main destination for upstate and Midwestern grain shipped through the Erie Canal and down the Hudson to the metropolis. The new port facilities also attracted manufacturing firms to the Brooklyn waterfront. This added to the demand for dockside and industrial workers who settled in Williamsburg and parts of South Brooklyn, having neither the need nor the means to ferry across the river to New York. Banks, insurance companies, newspapers, and a downtown to house these and other businesses were the secondary and tertiary effects of industrial and commercial growth. And as urban Brooklyn grew, so did suburban Brooklyn, well beyond the Heights, first to nearby South Brooklyn and toward Fort Greene and Clinton Hill, then, relentlessly into the farmland of Kings County, eventually consuming it all. It may be true that no other American city developed in quite this way and that Brooklyn really was a place like no other. But all the elements of its growth, urban and suburban, were the same as those that drove and defined other American cities and suburbs.

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The same developmental pattern applies to Protestant hegemony in the City of Churches. Its various manifestations—rigid Sabbatarian laws, an active temperance movement, resistance to the presence of theaters and other morally threatening amusements, a public discourse that revolved around expressions of Christian piety and moral correctness, proliferating Sunday schools and an annual Sunday school celebration—all but the latter were present in cities and towns all over New England and across a wide swath of the northern United States, especially in upstate New York and the upper Midwest, where New Englanders had migrated in force. Brooklyn's Protestantism may have been peculiarly strong, but it was not peculiar.

Nor, as we have said, was Protestantism's power absolute. Opposition, particularly to its strictures on drinking and Sunday entertainments, came from a variety of sources familiar to readers of nineteenth-century American history: Irish Catholic workers from the docks and dockside factories, Germans (Protestant and Catholic alike) who cherished the conviviality of their beer gardens, restive young bucks from the "best" native Protestant families. Nineteenth-century Brooklyn was not a social or cultural monolith, but a fairly diverse city in which an atypically large middle- and upper-class suburban population gave extra force to that population's Protestant traditions and values.

That force receded during the early decades of the twentieth century with the settlement in Brooklyn of vast numbers of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. Increasingly, elegant suburban neighborhoods were hemmed in by miles of tenements and apartment buildings inhabited by working-class Jews and Catholics. Erasmus Hall, the great high school that once prepared Protestant boys for college, taught a decidedly different clientele. The newcomers expressed their own ideas about the meaning of "Americanization." And many Protestant families decamped for greener, more homogeneous pastures on Long Island and in other distant suburbs. Albeit in different ways, at different times, and with a different scale and scope, these developments occurred in many other places besides Brooklyn. As our subtitle suggests, this book in all its dimensions tells an American story.

Even as we depict Brooklyn as a lively laboratory for changes that swept across much of the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we are in no sense surrendering our claim that the County of Kings "don't seem to be like any other place on earth." In this book, we have tried to capture the special character of this special place and the unique as well as representative ways in which Brooklyn experienced the cultural, social, and political power of native-born Protestants and the eventually overwhelming challenge to that power posed by waves of immigrants who claimed no descent from Pilgrim Fathers.

THREE QUESTIONS WITH ANN BUTTENWIESER

author of *The Floating Pool Lady*

1. What's your favorite anecdote from your research for this book?

My favorite anecdote from my research is how I discovered my topic, the history of New York City's floating baths, while up to my ankles in rat excreta and decades of dust at the Battery Maritime building in lower Manhattan. Here sat over a century of forgotten and derelict file cabinets containing aging maps and flaking handwritten letters and reports. Who would know that I would find pure historical gold and my obsession for the next decade in this unlikely place?

3. How do you wish you could change your field of study?

My writing of history was based on finding endangered documents not in a library but in a basement. A renowned urban historian sent me to this basement knowing the city sought a long-term renter for the property. These records, with historical but no monetary value, would incur an unbudgeted expense to the city to curate and were to be discarded. Fortunately, my research enabled me to get the word out. Much of this material has been preserved pending eventual curation. I would like to see municipalities and historians work

“My favorite anecdote is how I discovered my topic, the history of New York City's floating baths, while up to my ankles in rat excreta.”

2. What do you wish you had known when you started writing your book, that you know now?

My first two books were purely historical studies. The real challenge with this, my third book, was learning how to write a narrative that is part history, based on found and existing documents, and part autobiography. The challenges were many. Where should I stop being a historian and just be “Ann”, the protagonist of a decades-long battle to return a floating pool to New York Harbor? How should I deal with my personal relationships with people who are still alive? Where and when should I include my feelings when I was the one making history?

more closely together to save valuable research documents that are in danger of being consigned to the dumpster.

The Article

THE PRIEST AND THE FIREMAN

by *Larry Kirwan*

Rockaway Blue was written for the many Black 47 fans who perished on 9/11. The Priest and the Fireman spring instantly to mind—Fr. Mychal Judge, OFM, and Richard T. Muldowney Jr., NYFD, Ladder 7. I'm not even sure that Mychal liked our music, but he adored being part of the buzz, and there was buzz aplenty around Black 47 in the years leading up to the attack. Richie, on the other hand, was a hard-core fan who loved to pop up unexpectedly at pubs and clubs all over America.

I often wonder how these two very different personalities would have fared in the post 9/11 world? Mychal, no doubt, would have continued his ministry devoted to easing the pain of others, while I heard Richie had begun a new relationship shortly before his death. Truth be told, though, many survivors were in a daze in the months that followed.



Black 47 immediately resumed its Saturday night, mid-town residency at Connolly's. The streets were empty—I remember walking diagonally across a deserted Times Square. Yet our concerts were packed with first responders and fans who craved music and physical contact. The intensity was riveting, especially when the door opened and someone entered.

Truth be told, though, many survivors were in a daze in the months that followed.

“Oh, my God, he (or she) is alive!” Despite the throbbing beat and overdriven amplifiers, you could hear that psychic line reverberating; for we didn't always know names, but we recognized faces, and it was all-important that another friend or comrade was alive.

I wanted to capture that feeling in *Rockaway Blue*—that sense of loss and love, hope and redemption. For the longest time, I didn't even know how to begin the novel, but when in doubt trust the ancient Greeks and their rule of thumb—“from character comes story.”

I knew there had to be a Jimmy Murphy driving the action: someone in command who distrusted authority, a Vietnam vet with his own secret, determined to unearth the truth about his dead

son, Brian. But would that truth destroy his wife Maggie who was finally beginning to recover from her loss?

And as Jimmy's truth became more complicated, I faced a dilemma of my own—would a reader be able to see, hear, and touch the mysterious and absent Brian, because to my eyes, Brian personified the thousands of victims of 9/11. He was one of those who did not come in the door of Connolly's on those incredibly intense Saturday nights.

But would that truth destroy his wife Maggie who was finally beginning to recover from her loss?

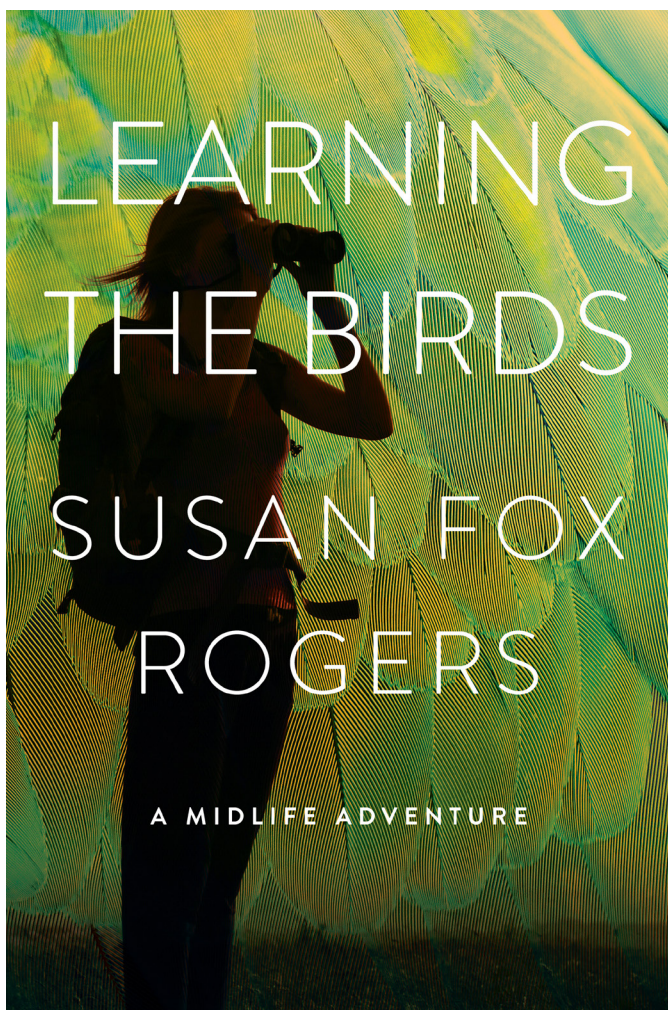
He was now a creature of pre-9/11 days, I call them Clinton's children, those who looked out on the vibrant New York of the '90s and saw only promise and opportunity. They never lost their innocence. They never confronted the lies and deceit that led to the invasion of Iraq; Donald Trump was just another buffoon they scoffed at on Page 6 of the Post. "President Trump? You gotta be kidding me!"

How to contrast that feeling of optimistic abandon with what we've become, and still experience redemption? So I set the story on the Rockaway Peninsula where the Atlantic washes away the detritus of disillusionment twice a day, and where the ocean is your backyard, be you prince or pauper.

How to contrast that feeling of optimistic abandon with what we've become, and still experience redemption?

And now, the book is a reality and there are many people to thank, in particular Dean Smith and Michael McGandy who demanded that I dig deeper. They recognized that this story of regular New Yorkers rising to an unbelievable occasion needed telling. And to think it all began with the Priest and the Fireman. Sleep tight Mychal and Richie, we'll never forget you.

THE
EXCERPT



I WISH I KNEW

Las Piedras River, Amazon, Peru

For a moment the howler monkeys stopped howling. Without the boom of their treetop calls it was as if the earth had stopped breathing. I followed, holding my breath as I sank into my dinky pack raft, my camera cradled between my legs, binoculars strapped to my chest. The raft felt like it might be losing air, slowly deflating to lower me into the muddy Las Piedras River in the Peruvian Amazon. And then the chorus resumed: a Screaming Piha screaming, a flock of Mealy Parrots (so green and more fun than their names imply) bulleting across the lightening sky hollering their intent, and Scarlet Macaws soaring high overhead, their long tails trailing as if off to market, calling out the chaos of life. A half dozen chips and songs I did not recognize, tantalizing calls and songs from the green world, joined the chorus.

The boat hugged me like a sagging bassinet as the current pushed me along, downstream to the research station where I had begun my journey at 4:30 in the morning. I peered ahead to the next bend to see if my three companions were waiting for me. But they had vanished, leaving me alone in the jungle.

Learning the Birds

But not really alone. Yellow-billed Terns coursed upstream. Amazon Kingfisher cackled away like kingfishers do. Hoatzin ruffled about in the streamside bushes. A capybara family swam the far shore in a single file. And, always, the howler monkeys were booming from the tops of trees.

Into this ecstatic musical medley, I heard the puttering engine of a boat. No doubt it was one of the long, narrow, wooden boats taking Brazil nuts into Puerto Maldonado to be sold. The wake of the boat would surely upset my precarious raft, so I made toward shore, to secure myself to a branch or log. As I approached the shore, the log I aimed toward began to move, turned, showed its intent little eyes, and slid into the water. The caiman vanished into the turbid river. I laughed, half nervous, as I realized that for all I heard and saw, there were infinitely more creatures out there, going about their secretive lives. This was paradise.

An hour into my float, and still three hours to the station, a long-legged shore-birdy bird, with hints of blue and green on its back and a great red eye, appeared on a sand bar. I nudged my boat onto shore and slipped out of the raft, camera in hand. As I crouched to watch the bird, it approached, not skittish about having its portrait taken. In that moment, my sense of discovery was acute. Though I had spent time with the *Birds of Peru* guidebook, I could not name this bird. I felt a rush of excitement finding this beautiful unknown-to-me bird.

This is why I bird. The thrill of quiet adventure. The constant hope of discovery. The reminder that the world is filled with wonder. When I bird, life is bigger, more vibrant. And the Amazon, not surprisingly, is the perfect place to nourish such a sense. Though in that moment I was relishing feeling overwhelmed by the natural world, I don't need excess, abundance to get my adrenaline flowing, to have my curiosity piqued. All it takes is an encounter, close or unexpected, something small, even subtle, whether traveling, or near my home in the Hudson Valley of New York to make me thrill to the day.

The boat, the river—this is how I have spent my life: in the outdoors, on adventures far and near. I have hiked, back-country skied, kayaked, and rock climbed around the country and world. But the bird that held my attention tiptoeing the shoreline, this sort of birdy encounter was new in my life. I came late to my love of birds. Though on those hikes and paddles I wanted to know the birds, my efforts to learn were

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halfhearted, remained a wistful “I wish I knew.” But once I realized that birds gave texture, meaning, excitement to the everyday, I gave over, converted to the tribe of binocular-toting people in hats and practical pants.

My conversion story begins on a spring evening in 2009. It was the end of the semester where I teach at Bard College. I was sitting in a cabin tucked in the woods near the Tivoli Bays in New York’s Hudson River Valley with a few of my students, who were drinking beer and chatting with the exhaustion and euphoria of those who are about to graduate. While I looked forward to a summer writing and kayaking the Hudson River, they were all wondering what to do with the rest of their lives.

I remembered being twenty-two, graduating with my philosophy degree from Penn State and thinking as they were: What now? I wanted to travel, explore, rock climb, not get a serious job. So I left for France, my mother’s home country, with a thousand dollars I had earned bussing tables, and spent the next year and a half working the grape harvest in Champagne and as ground crew for a hot-air balloon company. In between jobs, I wrote in my journal, rock climbed on the boulders at Fontainebleau and the seaside cliffs of the Calanques. Like a cat, I knew I’d land on my feet. And when I didn’t, my sister Becky caught me. She was living in Paris, deep into graduate school, so not rich but always generous. She often fed me, let me sleep on the couch, and found me work as a carpenter’s helper where I spent hours sanding overhead beams, sawdust sprinkling into my eyes and ears. Though during those years in France I had been anxious about money, had ached with loneliness, and had tossed through many nights wrestling with the heavy question of what I was going to do with my life, what I remember most is the sense of freedom I had, the privileged ability to say yes to life. I had had it easy, while these graduating students needed to find real work, were wondering about paying off college loans: 1983 and 2009 seemed worlds apart.

The house cat laced its way between my legs, and I rubbed its ears. And then a “spiral of white gold” poured out of the hardwood forest, entered through an open window, and seized the room like a tentacle of sound. Hollow and holy, what I heard resonated so full and complex; it had texture like a silk accordion. Silent, the students looked at each other

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and then at me, Ali's eyes wide, Sam's eyebrows arched. Was this creature going to come through the window and join us? The sound emerged again, winding us closer together.

"What *is* that?" asked Ali, a young woman who grew up in the Hudson Valley. Perhaps she was asking if it was a bird or some other animal, or a visitation from another planet.

I was supposed to know what creature was making this sound, and not only that, have words to describe it. I taught a nature writing class, asked students to go out, pay attention, then write about what they saw, smelled, and heard. I should have been able to name a creature with a song so distinctive, a creature that shared woods familiar to me. That I did not know this neighbor made me feel like a fraud.

"I wish I knew," I said.

Humiliation rests at the heart of my conversion story.

The next week, Ali brought me a card. Her words of thanks for being a teacher have stayed with me. (Not surprisingly, she too has become a teacher.) With the card, she included another gift, a book titled *The Backyard Birdsong Guide*. A number next to each image of a bird led me to the corresponding recording of the bird's song. With a push of the button on the attached plastic audio box, the song emerged. I was uncomfortably aware that the book had a beginners feel to it, the sort of book that had the potential to gather dust on a shelf. But it was just what I needed. I went through each bird, beginning with the Canada Goose and moving on to the perching birds, pushing the audio button to hear songs exotic (American Woodcock) and familiar (Barred Owl), in a rush to find the one that would match what we had heard sitting in the cabin. I finally arrived, just after the Wood Thrush and just before the Gray Catbird, at the Veery.

I looked at the reddish-brown thrush with its speckled throat and pot belly. Such an ordinary looking bird making such an extraordinary sound. Again I tapped the button to listen to its song, and what filled my little living room in Tivoli was a sound described as "the chiming of bells or the gentle sobs of organs." Organs in a church, song reverberating against stone walls, centuries of suffering and love. And in that moment thirty-five years of *I wish I knew* converted to *I will learn the birds*.

It's a tidy story, and in this way follows in the footsteps of many birders, who can tell what bird set them on their birding path. One of my

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favorite conversion stories is told by Frank Chapman, longtime curator of birds at the Museum of Natural History, editor of *Bird-Lore*, and founder of the Christmas Bird Count, now one of the great annual birding traditions. He wrote in his autobiography about the moment he decided to focus his life on the birds. It was the end of the nineteenth century when Chapman found himself working in a bank in order to make a proper living. He met a man, also a banker, and what he saw he did not want to be or become. “As I looked at him there suddenly sprang into my mind with the force of a revelation a determination to devote my life to the study of birds. . . . The sudden and convincing manner in which it was formed had in it something mystical which seemed to take the matter wholly out of my hands.”

Chapman was surely aware that he was writing about his commitment to the birds as if it were a religious experience. His decision is fated, driven by an outside force: God or the birds themselves. Sudden, soul-moving life choices—no one did it more dramatically than St. Augustine, who chronicled his path in *The Confessions*. And even though his conversion occurred in 386 AD, it remains, despite the fact we do not live in an age of miracles, a good model.

Augustine’s conversion did not come without years of hesitations, of wanting his salvation but not being able to give over: “Give me chastity but not yet!” he cries in what is perhaps my favorite line in the book. Chapman, too, spent years birding before he gave over, left the bank, and became a central figure in the history of American bird life. I, too, spent years wanting to know the birds, always curious about a raptor spied spinning in the sky or the songs that accompanied me when I hiked in the Catskills. But as the years marched on I kept hesitating: “Give me birds, but not yet!”

Nineteenth-century author and naturalist John Burroughs writes in his essay “The Art of Seeing Things” of meeting a woman who claims that she wants to see and hear birds: “No,” he responds. “You only *want to want* to see and hear them.” For years I was that woman, thinking that eventually I’d get to the birds, perhaps realizing that I could not learn by accident or in the cracks of life. I would have to give over completely.

To see birds, Burroughs clarified that “you must have the bird in your heart before you can find it in the bush.” You have to *want* them with a particular birdy desire. This is why Chapman’s story is not unusual in the

Learning the Birds

bird world: birders rarely dabble. We are driven by passion; we are a tribe of believers. Since there are so many of these tales of the light turning on and illuminating the true path of birds, they have a name: the spark story.

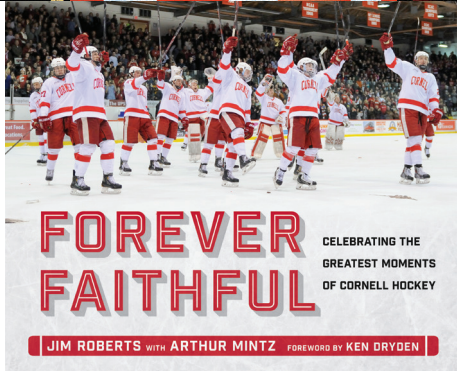
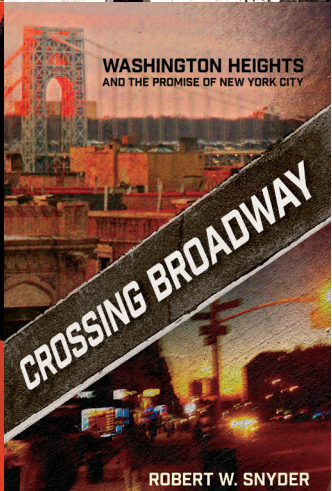
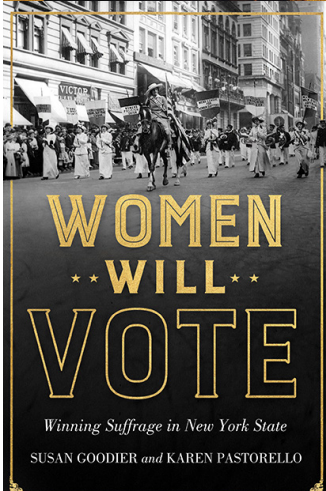
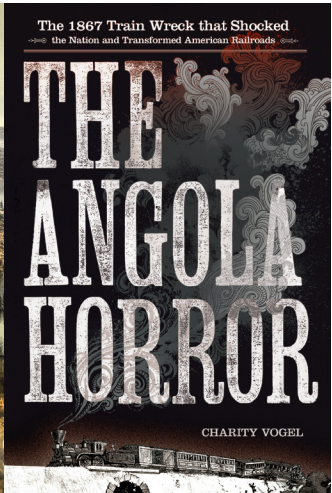
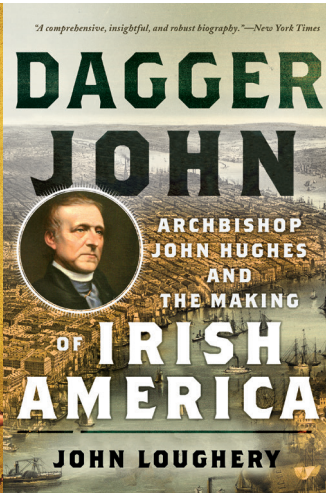
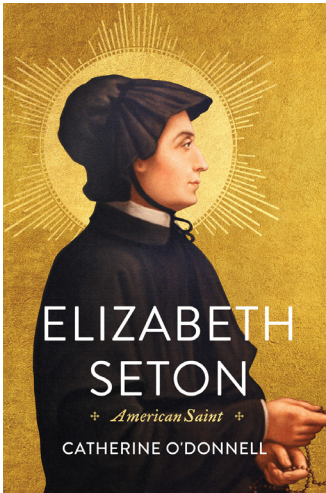
My spark story is that Veery's song, the moment when I knew I had to learn the songs of the birds, wanted to be familiar with the everyday and the rare, wanted to be able to walk down a path and point to a buzz in a tree and say, "Blue-winged Warbler." And yet I also know that just one song can't be the only element that played into my conversion.

That Veery sang just when I needed the birds. I had a career, a calling in teaching. But like many teachers, I had thrown myself in fully, loving and mentoring my students as if they might be my own kids. Now I yearned to be the student not the teacher, to be the one learning, the one mentored.

At the time I embarked on my bird journey I was finishing my first book—the hardest thing I had ever done, I said to anyone who would listen. Writing was isolating, not just from friends and family but from my outdoor pursuits. I spent long hours at a desk, indoors, in silence, writing about being in a kayak on the Hudson River. At times this seemed absurd. By the time I handed the book off to my editor, I was eager to reconnect with the world, wanted to know the world in greater depth, to experience a greater texture.

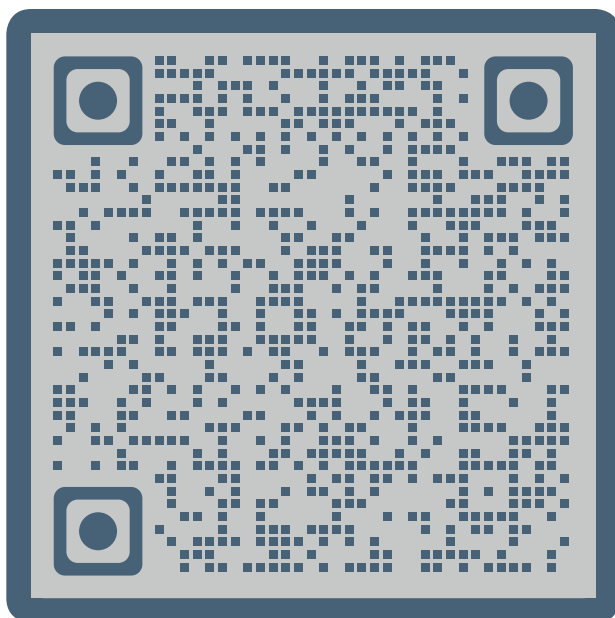
Above all, when that Veery sang, I was taking stock of my life. What I found was that I was tired, not of the world, but of myself. I wanted to take more risks, live bigger. I didn't want to think that who I had become was who I would always be. I value steadiness, but I crave change.

What I had to work with was sobering. I was single with no children, and though I was grateful I wasn't adding to the overpopulation of the planet, I sensed I had missed out on one of life's great journeys. Both of my parents had recently died, and my one sister lived an ocean away in Paris. As for romantic relationships—I had made enough bad choices that it seemed wisest to retire from love. But understanding the shape of my life—that there was not going to be a happily-ever-after story, that I would not write a best-selling book, that I would never be rich, or even the simple fact that my legs would always be too short—was also liberating: I could abandon certain ambitions and follow what made me happy. The birds, I realized right away, made me happy.



Over the course of the next twelve months we will publish more than ten new books about New York State under our Three Hills imprint and from Cornell University Press. You can find these, as well as all books previously published by Three Hills on our website. Either use your smartphone camera to scan the QR code below or visit cornellpress.cornell.edu/imprints/three-hills to see our extensive list.

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