Bios of Speakers and Presenters

Myra Young Armstead is Professor of History at Bard College where she teaches broadly in the areas of U.S. social and cultural history in the undergraduate college and in the Master of Arts Program in teaching. She received her doctorate in history from the University of Chicago. She authored “Lord, Please Don’t Take Me in August”: African Americans in Newport and Saratoga Springs (1999) and edited Mighty Change, Tall Within: Black Identity in the Hudson Valley (2003), a chronologically comprehensive volume. She is currently completing a contextualized biography for New York University Press of James F. Brown, master-gardener for the wealthy and prominent Verplanck family of the Hudson Valley. The life of this freed fugitive slave is analyzed for what it reveals about struggles to define American citizenship in the Antebellum period.

P. Thomas Carroll is an American cultural historian who specializes in the history of American science and technology. A graduate of Caltech and the University of Pennsylvania, he has been the Executive Director of the Hudson Mohawk Industrial Gateway since 1997, and the Executive Director of RiverSpark, New York State’s First Heritage Area, since fall 2002. He has taught in the Department of Science and Technology Studies and the School of Architecture at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Carroll has published on topics ranging from Charles Darwin to the history of American chemistry. He is co-author of the lead article in the centennial issue of Science, the nation’s leading weekly magazine of scientific research and is the sole author of the lead article in the centennial issue of American Scientist. He has been a Mellon Fellow at the Library of the American Philosophical Society and an Exxon Research Fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Sara Johns Griffen is President of The Olana Partnership, the not-for-profit support arm of Olana State Historic Site. In this role, Griffen is responsible for overall management of the organization, including fundraising, planning, public relations, government relations, fiscal management, implementation of preservation and restoration projects, special events and board relations for the organization. She serves as vice chair of Hudson River Valley Greenway Conservancy and is a member of the steering committee for the Hudson Valley National Heritage Area and the New York Department of Environmental Conservation Estuary Management Committee. She is former chairman of the board of The Olana Partnership and the Planning Board of the Village of Kinderhook. Griffen holds a B.A. in public policy and psychology from Duke University.

The Hudson River Ramblers are master storyteller Jonathan Kruk and folk singer Rich Bala. They have been performing together since 1990, transforming historic and folkloric material into interactive, family-friendly shows. The group has performed at events ranging from the Clearwater’s Great Hudson Revival Festival to Governor’s Island Opening Day Family Festival, as well as at schools, libraries, museums, and historical events throughout the region. Their first CD, “Revolution on the River”, was named “Best CD of 2001” by Hudson Valley Magazine, and Pete Seeger called it “a great way to learn about those bloody times!”.

The Barefoot Boys are a folk trio specializing in the traditional songs and music of the Hudson/Catskill region, from the Colonial era to more recent times. The band consists of:
- Rich Bala, on vocals, guitar, harmonica, mountain dulcimer,
- Tom White, on vocals, banjo, concertina, fiddle, mandolin, hammered dulcimer,
- Rick White, on vocals, bass, guitar, banjo.

Chronogram Magazine has said of their music, “lusty 3 part harmonies and a rich variety of instrumental sounds”, and Taconic Weekend called their concerts, “timeless songs played with expertise, feeling, and a sense of humor. . . .”

William Husson is a Lecturer in the Department of Communication at the University at Albany. He received his Ph.D. in communication and rhetoric from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1981. His teaching and research interests relate to visual communication, mass media effects and communication theory. At UAlbany he teaches courses that explore film as a medium of persuasion; the connection between language and social action; and the media-audience relationship. His published research includes: a critique of the encoding-decoding model of communication informed by the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein; investigations of children's attention patterns to educational program content on television; and examinations of the relationship between voter preferences for political candidates and voter perceptions of those candidates' communication styles. Currently, he is working on an explication and critique of Erving Goffman's ideas about photographic meaning.

Fred LeBrun holds a master’s degree in English from the University at Albany and has taught journalism at Albany High School and UAlbany. For 41 years LeBrun worked at the Times Union serving in a variety of capacities: suburban beat reporter, city editor, arts editor, restaurant critic, and for the past two decades, metro columnist. Although he retired from the Times Union in 2008, LeBrun is still producing two columns a week for the newspaper as a freelance columnist. In fall 1998 LeBrun, along with former TU features editor Michael Virtanen and photographer Paul Buckowski, took an 18-day trip down the Hudson River. They hiked to the source of the Hudson in the Adirondack Mountains and canoed, rafted, sailed and motored to the river’s mouth in New York City. Over the Hudson’s 306-mile course they documented the condition of the river,
explored its communities, and recorded the thoughts of its residents, filing short sketches and journal notes every day of their journey for the Times Union.

**Susan Ingalls Lewis** is an Associate Professor of History at the State University of New York at New Paltz, where she teaches courses in New York State history, American women's history, and American social and cultural history. Lewis received her B.A. from Wellesley College and her Ph.D. in American history from Binghamton University. Her recent publications include: *Unexceptional Women: Female Proprietors in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Albany, New York, 1830-1885*, from Ohio State University Press, 2009. She has authored articles and spoken extensively on nineteenth-century businesswomen. Lewis is currently developing a college textbook on New York State history, and working on an edited edition of the 1870 diary of Emma Waite, an African-American domestic worker and hotel cook in Saratoga Springs and New York City.

**Tom Lewis** is a Professor of English at Skidmore College. His most recent book is *The Hudson: A History* (Yale University Press, 2005), which won the annual preservation award from Scenic Hudson. Other books include *Empire of the Air: The Men Who Made Radio* (1991) a Book-of-the-Month Club selection, and *Divided Highways: The Interstate Highway System and the Transformation of American Life* (1997). Lewis has consulted on, written, and produced a number of documentary films for public television. His credits include *Brooklyn Bridge*, Ken Burns and Florentine Films (Director of Research); *The Shakers: Hands to Work and Hearts to God*, Ken Burns and Florentine Films (script writer); and *The Civil War*, Ken Burns and Florentine Films (consultant). Films Lewis has produced have won numerous awards including a George Foster Peabody Award for Broadcasting Excellence and an Emmy Award from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for Outstanding Historical Programming. In 2007, Lewis was named a Charter Fellow of the New York Academy of History. He received his Ph.D. from Columbia University.

**Christopher Lindner** is Director of the Archaeology Field School at Bard College. He is also Visiting Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Archaeologist in Residence. Lindner earned his Ph.D. in anthropology at the University at Albany, SUNY, and M.A. from the University of Cincinnati. He directs the Guinea Community Archaeology Project that studies a free Black and fugitive slave community in Hyde Park. He served as president of the New York Archaeological Council 1997-2006 and president of Hudson River Heritage 2006-09. His articles have been published in such journals as the *Hudson Valley Regional Review and Archaeology of Eastern North America*. Lindner was co-editor of *A Northeastern Millennium* and *A Golden Chronograph*, festschrift volumes for his mentor, Robert E. Funk, the late NYS Archaeologist Emeritus. His interests include prehistoric adaptations in the Hudson River basin and the historical archaeology of rural 19th-century African American and 18th-century German American communities.

**Assemblymember John J. McEneny, 104th District**, is a fifth-generation Albanian. A former Albany County Historian, he is a well-known teacher and speaker on local history, ethnicity and related fields. Among his local activities, he led the effort that saved the 17th-century Quackenbush House, Albany's oldest building, and later chaired the Albany Historic Sites Commission. He also wrote and narrated WMHT Public Television's Tricentennial documentary on Albany and authored *Albany, Capital City on the Hudson*, the definitive text on the city's four centuries of history for the past 27 years. His extensive public career includes serving as the first full-time director of the State Urban Cultural Parks Program, now called Heritage Areas. In over 16 years in the Assembly, he has authored some 90 bills which have been signed into law. Among these included one to make former Erie Canal sites eligible to participate in the Barge
Canal Tourism Programs. As an Appointee of the Speaker, he is a member of the New York State Archives Partnership Trust, the Commission for the Restoration of the Capitol, and the Albany Convention Center Authority.


**Warren Roberts** is a Distinguished Teaching Professor in UAlbany's Department of History and a cultural historian. As an author of four books about French and English artists and writers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Roberts’ central area of interest, in both teaching and writing, has been the interplay between history, literature and the arts. He also has strong interest in Albany and has taught courses covering the period 1775 to 1825, particularly looking at links between the colonies, the early republic and France. This teaching has led to his forthcoming book with SUNY Press called *Early Albany Stories, 1775-1825*. Roberts received his bachelor’s, master’s, and Ph.D. degrees from the University of California, Berkeley. He was recently awarded the Nancy Lyman Roelker prize by the American Historical Association for the mentoring of students at all levels from undergraduates to doctoral candidates.

**Ray Sapirstein** is Assistant Professor of History and Documentary Studies at the University at Albany, SUNY. He teaches cultural history, visual studies, documentary photography, and documentary video production. His publications include essays on the illustrations in each volume of the *Oxford Mark Twain* and an essay in *Icons of Design: The Twentieth Century*, a history of industrial design. Sapirstein is currently finishing a book manuscript on six books of dialect poetry by Paul Laurence Dunbar illustrated with 450 photographs made by the Hampton Institute Camera Club. This collection represents the largest body of photographs of African-Americans published to date. Sapirstein conducted research as a Fellow in the Walker Evans Archive at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He is currently researching a forthcoming article on Evans’ investment in photographing African-Americans. Sapirstein earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Texas, Austin.

**Len Tantillo**, who attended the Rhode Island School of Design, had an early career as an architectural designer which led to architectural illustration. Commissions included visually representing long-past structures, many that had been on the Hudson near Albany, and involved research of archeological and historical records. Tantillo began the full-time pursuit of fine art in 1984 and has spent the last 25 years creating numerous historical and marine paintings, many focusing on the Hudson River. His work has appeared in national exhibitions, books, periodicals, and television documentaries in the U.S. and abroad. Tantillo is a Fellow of the American Society of Marine Artists. In 2002, Russell Sage College awarded him an honorary doctorate for contributions made by his artwork to public awareness of the maritime history of the Hudson River. In 2004, he was the subject of a national public television documentary, “Hudson River Journeys.” Tantillo was commissioned in 2005 by the Metropolitan Museum of Art to paint “Dutch
House, 1751 (Bethlehem, New York)” for a permanent exhibition. His work is being shown in the Westfries Museum in Hoorn, Holland in the fall of 2009.

Gerald Zahavi is Professor of History, Director of Documentary Studies, and Associate Director of the Oral History Program at the University at Albany, SUNY. He received his PH.D in U.S. history from the Maxwell School at Syracuse University. In 1991, Zahavi founded the GE Oral History Project, an initiative which continues to the present. In 1996 he founded Talking History, an aural history production center with a weekly FM radio program, also archived at http://www.talkinghistory.org. Zahavi is the author of Workers, Managers, and Welfare Capitalism: The Shoemakers and Tanners of Endicott Johnson, 1890-1950. He is completing a book Embers on the Land: Local and Regional Studies in Culture, Community, and Communism, 1918-1955 (forthcoming, The University of North Carolina Press). Zahavi is also working on research and media production projects on the history of General Electric and Cold War era America.