

# How the Land Shaped History And History Shaped the Land

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A Book About the  
Central Catskill Mountains

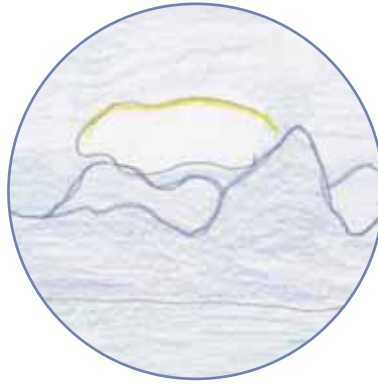


by Mrs. Scherry's  
4th Grade Class

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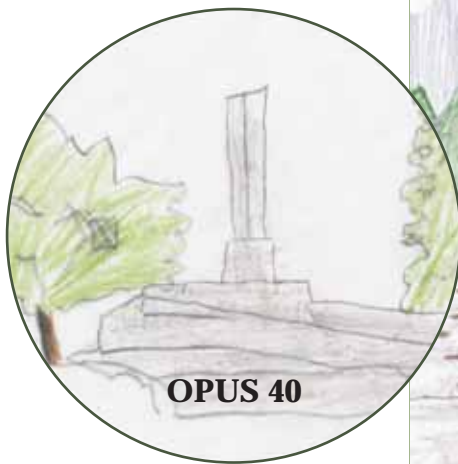
# Introduction



Our book shows the history of our relationship with the mountains where we live. The Stony Clove Valley of Chichester was first settled by colonists in the early 19th century. People were attracted to the Catskill Mountains because they provided special resources for business, trade, and building a community. Clean water, plants, timber, wild game, and connection to nature itself were among the attractions. Human habitation in turn affected the mountains as forests were stripped, quarries were created, and the Ashokan Reservoir was built to provide water for New York City. In order to protect the mountains, the Catskills were designated by New York State as "forever wild" wilderness preserve in 1904. Conservation efforts must always continue as people learn to use the mountains and forests wisely.

## Bluestone Quarrying

Bluestone quarrying started 10,000 years ago for making arrowheads. The best known variety of bluestone is feldspathic sandstone. It is produced in lots of small quarries in areas of PA and NY. The grains of bluestone were deposited in the Catskill Delta over 300 million years ago. Bluestone is resistant to wear, changes in temperature, and shifts in pressure. Miners for bluestone usually mine areas that are high in elevation and on steep slopes. Once they remove the stone, a majority of it is sold to regional dealers. Bluestone was used for building NYC roads, sidewalks and fireplaces. The DEC was against quarrying because it caused land erosion. Famous places made out of bluestone are the Washington Monument and Opus 40. Bluestones isn't used much anymore because of cement and concrete.



**OPUS 40**



by Zoren & Loic

## The Chichester Furniture Factory

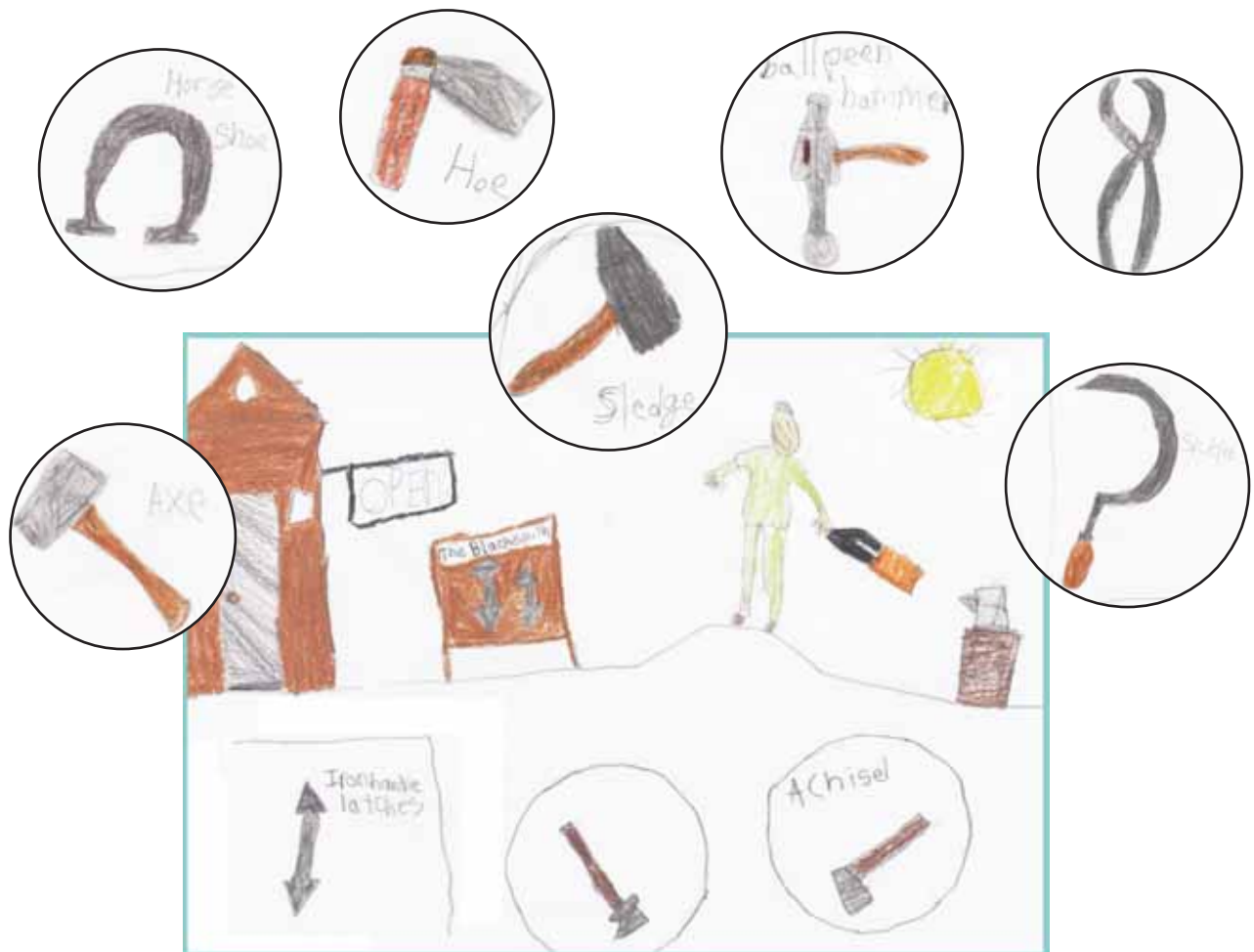
In 1865, Frank Chichester and his brother Lemuel were hiking up the Stony Clove Valley and saw a great place to build a chair factory. There were a lot of hardwood trees and the Stony Clove Creek. This became the town of Chichester. The chair factory was called Chichester Chair & Cradle Factory. The power was run by water, then later steam. The factory was 500 feet long. 3000 chairs and 1000 cradles were produced every week. All the chairs and cradles were transported by horse and carriage to Kingston where they were boarded onto ships and sent all around the world. The Chichester Furniture Factory was closed in 1884 when the entire town was sold.



by Akanksha

# The Blacksmith Forge

In the 18th & 19th centuries , blacksmiths made many useful iron objects. Iron could be forged or heated and hammered into many different things. Iron can be shaped only when it is really hot, and it cools rapidly when it is out of the fire. To avoid burning himself, a blacksmith holds the iron with a pair of long-handled tongs. The blacksmith used many kinds of tools to work metal into different shapes. In the Catskills one important job of a blacksmith was to make the iron parts of a wagon. Wagons brought goods to markets in Kingston and New York City.



by Mia & Amber

## The Building of the Ashokan Reservoir

New York City turned to the Catskill Mountains for water in the early 20th century. This took place in 8 different towns. So the people in those 8 different towns had to move or tear down their houses to make room for the new reservoir. People also had to move cemeteries, churches, and other important buildings.

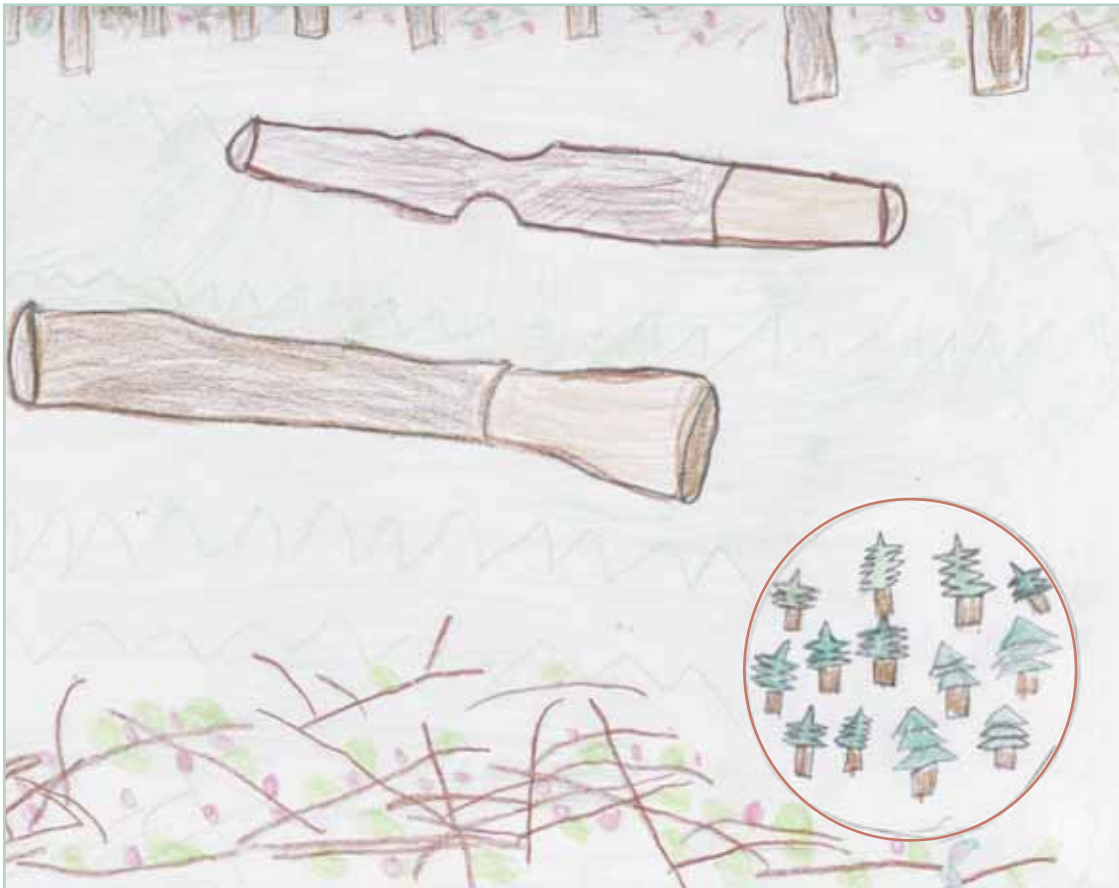
The Ashokan Reservoir was the largest reservoir in the world when it was built. The reservoir started being built in 1912 and was completed in 1914. The reservoir is over 180 feet deep. African-American laborers and Italian immigrants built the Ashokan Reservoir. A large dam was built to hold over 122.9 billion gallons of water. The dam was built out of Rosendale cement, the strongest cement at that time.



by Kylie & Cole

## Hemlock Tanneries

From the 18th to the late 19th century people cut down hemlock and oak trees to use the bark to tan leather. Hemlock bark is especially rich in tannins which help to soften leather. Shiploads of hides from South America were transported by boat up the Hudson River to Kingston and then by wagon to the mountain tanneries. Hemlock trees largely disappeared from the Catskills except for steep, remote areas where the trees could not be logged. The places where the biggest tanneries were are Mt Tremper, Woodland Valley, Phoenicia, Shandaken, Bushnellville, Smithville, Big Indian, and Pine Hill. Tanneries only lasted about 40 years. The Simpson Tannery in Phoenicia was the last one to close down in 1870 due to no more bark. Textile factories eventually replaced tanneries as fabric became more popular than leather.



by Sierra & Annie



## The Simpson Memorial Ski Slope

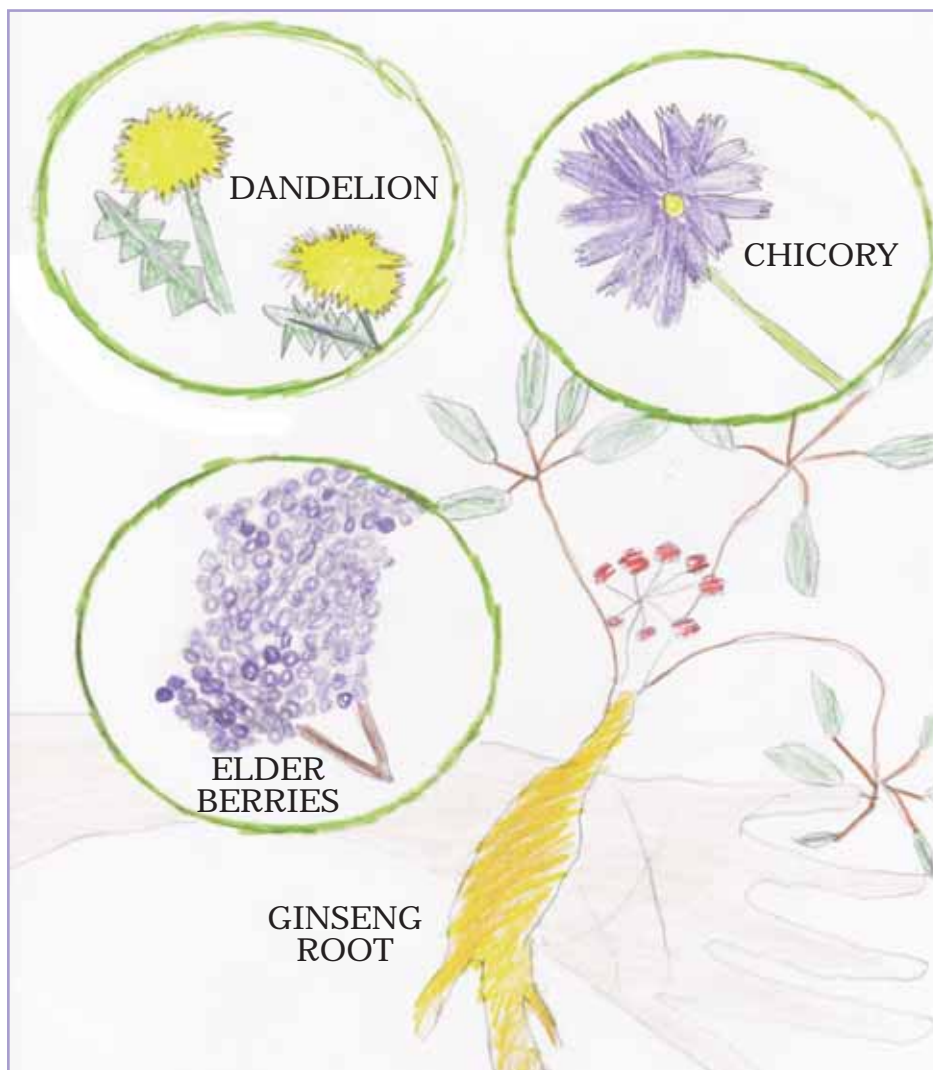
The first ski slope in the Catskill Mountains was the Simpson Memorial Ski Slope. It opened on February 11, 1935 in Phoenicia. It only cost about 75 cents for adults and 50 cents for children. There were lots of dangers. Like in the beginning there was no tow rope. You had to walk up. Bellayre was another place for skiing. But a ski lift came later on and the Simpson Memorial Ski Slope got a tow rope. Skiing still goes on today. In fact, Bellayre is still open today.



by Zach & Sam

## Ginseng Hunting & Foraging for Plants

Foraging started 12,000 years ago in the Catskill Mountains. People used the plants as medicine and those who sold the plants profited from it. Some people foraged wild mint. Other people foraged sweet chestnut because it's healthy and rich in vitamins. Dandelions were foraged because they had kidney and liver benefits. Elderberries were also foraged for making wine. People also foraged ginseng. Ginseng root was especially valuable because people believed it had powerful medicinal value. Ginseng was sold in Chinatown, NYC, for as much as \$300/pound in 1889. If you want to make a medicine mixture you can put blackberry root bark, cinnamon, and honey together. Anyone who wants to try foraging can, because it's still around today.



by Sage & Jazarah

## Beekeeping & Candlemaking

Beehives were started in the colonies in the 1800s. Honeybees were not native to the western hemisphere. America, Australia, and New Zealand had to import them from Europe. At the peak of the season a good queen bee can lay 3000 eggs in one day. Beeswax was used for lots of things such soap, candles, and honey. It is hard being a beekeeper.

Candlemaking was first introduced thousands of years ago. Tallow was the main ingredient. It was made from cattle and sheep fat. A candle's purpose was to provide light. Tallow candles were unhealthy because they smoked and smelled bad. The more beeswax a candle had in it, the better the candle. Only the wealthy could afford wax candles. Some candles were made by pouring wax into a mold.



by Roan & Hannah

## Hiking in the Catskills

People hike on the trails and they even hike to exercise. This activity began in the early 1920-1930. Most trails in the Catskill Mountains were built in the 1900s. This activity took place in the mountains and forest.

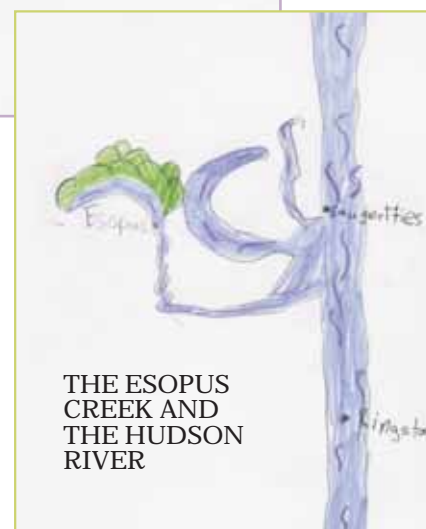
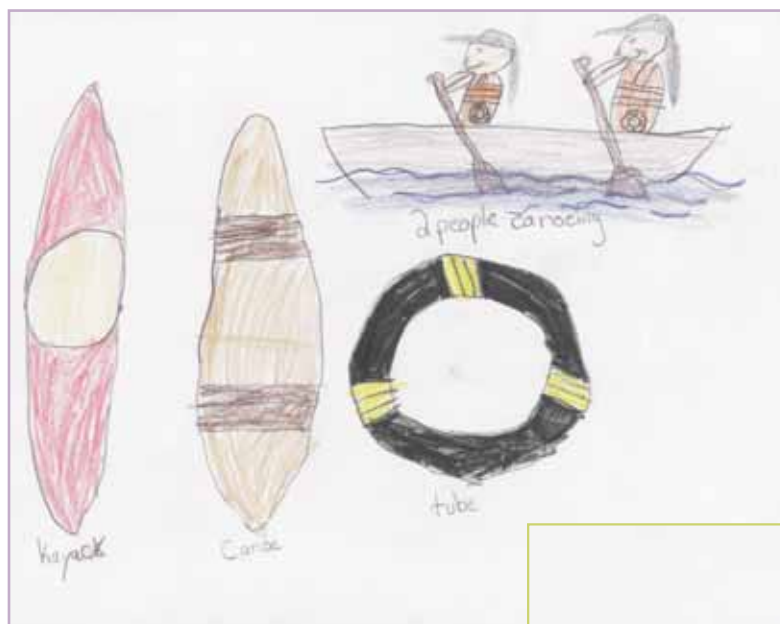
Tourists came from the city to hike with local guides. The special or famous examples are high peaks of the Catskills. Slide Mountain is the tallest mountain. The resources of the land are unharmed, if people take care of it. Hiking still does take place today.



by Caitlyn & Tobias

## Water Sports On Esopus Creek

The Esopus Creek is a 65-mile long tributary of the Hudson River that drains the east-central Catskill Mountains. Since the early 19th century, the Esopus has been a popular place for sports, including kayaking, canoeing and tubing. People from the hot cities came to the mountains in the summertime to cool off and connect with nature. Recreational sports are an important part of tourism. 15,000 people tube the upper Esopus every year, and each June there is a whitewater kayak race. The flow of the Esopus is supplemented by water periodically released from the Shandaken Tunnel, which carries water 13 miles from the Schoharie Reservoir to the Esopus. Some people have been hurt or drowned kayaking or tubing, but these water sports are mostly safe.



by Hayley & Faith

# Maple Syruping

Maple sap starts flowing in mid February and continues for 4-6 weeks. Native Americans in the rural Catskill Mountains started maple syrup followed by pioneers to us. You would collect sap from maple trees, and boil it. Today people sell it for money. Long ago syrup was needed to sweeten foods.

Step 1: Drill a hole in the bark of a maple tree in the early spring when the sap is beginning to rise. Hang a bucket under the spout.

Step 2: Gather sap in the bucket. Step 3: Boil the sap down until it's syrup. It takes 8-10 hours. Maple sap from the tree is about 98% water and 2% sugar. Finished maple syrup is 33% water and 67% sugar. It takes about 40-45 gallons of maple sap to make just one gallon of maple syrup!



by Erin & Leslie

## Wild Game Hunting

Hunters were very important in the Catskill Mountains in the 18th and 19th centuries. They provided meat so people wouldn't go hungry. They set traps and used guns to hunt. They sold animal skins. Hunters shot deer, black bears, wild turkey, geese, rabbits, fox, beavers, ducks, and squirrels.

Jake Moon was a hunter who lived in Chichester who became famous when he shot seven partridges at once by hiding near wild grapevines where the birds came to eat. The remains of Jake Moon's cabin can be seen today on the new hiking trail between Chichester and Lanesville.



by Jacob & Nick

# Fur Trapping

Fur trapping was in North America and many other places from the 1600s on. Hunters set traps and caught beavers, wolves, foxes, squirrels, and rabbits. They took the fur and made clothes and traded them with the Indians. Fur trapping affected many people because they were losing animals and if there were no more animals people will get sick and they might die. Fur trapping still goes on today as a sport, but most people get their clothes from fabric.



by Jullian & Sveinn