(Beacon, NY) – For three quarters of a century, the Mt. Beacon Incline brought local residents and visitors alike to the summit of the city’s namesake and its story has been chronicled in a 126 page book by author Greg Bilotto.

Published in July of this year, the release of this book marks the completion of a nearly two year project that involved hundreds of hours of research and site visits in and around the Hudson Valley to collect and curate the multitude of photos, artwork and facts about the Incline.

“The book captures not only the Incline’s history and origins, but also illuminates how the Incline shaped the city that grew up around it during its 7 decades of operation,” says Jeff McHugh, current President of the MBIRRS. “The book depicts through photographs an entire world in what is now called the Hudson Highlands State Park that includes a historic Fire Tower, a massive city reservoir, and panoramic views of the city and the Hudson Valley”.

“I first became interested in this topic over two years ago when attending a presentation on the Mt. Beacon Incline by society trustee Frank DiLorenzo,” says Bilotto, “The intention of the book aside from retelling its story, was also to investigate the motivation and mind-set of travelers in the early 20th centuries along the Hudson River. Numerous postcards and stereoscopic views were selected to visualize this motivation, providing for rich and poor alike to embark on daylong trips northward to places like Mt. Beacon’s Incline.”

Entitled, “Along the Mount Beacon Incline Railway”, the book also celebrates the history of the rail, street trolley, and river transportation that once encompassed daily life in Beacon and the Hudson Valley.

“The River and Mountain are so integral to our city,” says McHugh, “it’s wonderful to see it so clearly reflected in this book. We as an organization are very proud of Greg’s work and grateful to him for his efforts, generosity, and support.”
Society Opens Up Discussions with NY State Parks

In July of 2013, representatives from NY State Parks, Scenic Hudson, the City of Beacon, the town of Fishkill, Dutchess County, NY State Assembly, and the MBIRRS met at city hall to discuss plans of bringing back the Mt. Beacon Incline.

For NY State Parks, it marked the first time high-level representatives had an opportunity to see the plan up close and hear from local and regional leaders how significant this project could be to the region.

For MBIRRS, it was an opportunity to be introduced to the state agency that is going to be the primary stakeholder in the coming years, as NY Parks acquires all the land in and around the historic Mt. Beacon Incline from Scenic Hudson.

“It was a very productive meeting in which we learned a great deal about how we could best further our plans,” says, Jeff McHugh, current president of MBIRRS. “NY Parks laid out very specific criteria of what they would expect in order to endorse the project and provide the necessary agreements, but at the same time it was encouraging to hear that they have many not-for-profit partners operating on their properties across NY State.”

The meeting ended with the group gathering on the summit of Mt. Beacon and an opportunity to experience the great vista first hand.

A consequence of the meeting is that there now exists a foundation upon which further discussions can proceed, the basic criteria are as follows:

- The initiative must prove itself to be economically sustainable long term.
- No funding for construction or operation will come from NY Parks.
- A detailed set of plans for economic sustainability before any agreement could be entered into.

Update on the 2013 Grant Award

In late summer of 2013, Assemblyman Frank Skartados (D-104th District) announced that the MBIRRS was a recipient of a $100K NY State Capital Project Grant—this money was to be used for the development of a detailed business and operation plan.

In late 2014, despite prior approval by NY State, the disbursement of the grant funds were unexpectedly put on hold because a core requirement of a “Capital Project Grant” mandates the existence of a finalized “land usage” agreement with the property owner, in this particular case that would be NY Parks and Scenic Hudson.

Both MBIRRS and the Office of Assembly representative Skartados are working within NY State channels to find a remedy to this impasse as well as look for alternative sources of funding that don’t have that specific restriction.
Six Month Exhibition Opens in October on Main Street

Save the date — October 10th marks the start of a new exhibition featuring the Mt. Beacon Incline, its restoration and how it relates to today’s community in the Hudson Valley. The exhibit builds on top of the recently released book, *Along the Mount Beacon Incline Railway* by Greg Bilotto.

The exhibit is being generously hosted at the *Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries* at their 199 Main Street Gallery in Beacon. “Our previous years’ exhibitions held at Scenic Hudson’s River Center and at Hudson Beach Glass were wonderful experiences and invited the public to view, interact and share their thoughts and impressions, and this exhibit will continue along those lines,” says Jeff McHugh, MBIRRS President, “but each time we engage the public we want to shift the focus and do something different to make it a fun and enjoyable experience to return to.”

Using large format photographs, digital renderings, animations, and infographics, this exhibition blends the historic narrative with a vision towards the future. “The 1902 Incline not only connected the city to its Riverfront through the use of mass transportation and shuttle service, but also connected Beacon to all of the river-towns along the Hudson River,” says McHugh, “a restored Incline could further this concept again but in a modern context, yet this time around it’s destinations such as the *Walkway Over the Hudson*, *Storm King Arts Center*, *DIA: Beacon*, and *FDR’s Presidential Museum*, and that only a few of the many interesting places to visit.”

The exhibit will also focus on the intention of providing access to the summit of Mt. Beacon to people of all abilities. Already an inspiring and breathtaking vantage point enjoyed by those able to hike the steep and rocky 1,500 foot climb, the exhibit endeavors to show how a restored Incline would make this location a unique “public space” unparalleled in the region that could be shared by everyone in the community.

“Much like the project itself, this exhibition joins the *old* with the *new* and the hope is that it conveys not only how proud many of the long-time residents of Beacon are of this iconic attraction but also conveys how its restoration can be accomplished in a modern and relevant way that both preserves its heritage and serves a greater good for the community”. He continues, “We invite and welcome everyone to attend during its six month engagement.”
Incline Carries on its Commitment to Education

With the start of coming school year this Autumn, the MBIRR enters into its 4th consecutive year of a partnership with Stevens Institute of Technology. The program, sponsored by the society, enables the students in the Department of Civil, Environmental and Ocean Science Schaefer School of Engineering and Science to work closely on “real-world” engineering projects directly associated with the Mt. Beacon Incline and is restoration.

“It gives the students an opportunity to learn and apply their studies using something that’s concrete and specific”, says Frank DiLorenzo who runs the program for the society and advises and mentors the students throughout the year.

Each year, approximately 5 students enroll in the program and their project spans two semesters—usually as part of their final year. “It’s really a great program and the Incline is proud of all the students and delighted to continue this partnership with Stevens Institute”, say Jeff McHugh, President of the society, “An aspect of our organization’s mission is to educate, and what better way to do that than to connect with the youth and hopefully inspire the students to apply their knowledge and creativity towards the goal of making things that have a positive impact on the community.”

Incline Project Presents at the 2015 Placemaking Conference & Awards

The Incline was among many interesting civic projects presenting at this year’s Placemaking Conference organized by the Orange County Citizens Foundation. The day-long event was held at SUNY Orange’s Kaplan Hall in Newburgh and included several panels, presentations, discussions, and featured a Keynote speech by Robert G. Shibley, Dean and Professor, School of Architecture and Planning, University of Buffalo.

The day’s topics included: Transitioning from Concept to Reality, Trail Development, and Art as a Placemaking Tool. Participants in the event included Safe Harbors of the Hudson who presented on their transforming revitalization projects in the city of Newburgh and Sullivan Renaissance who presented their organization’s role in creating community gardens to improve the local communities with whom they partner.

The Incline’s presentation included both a historical narrative combined with the most recent plans and renderings from the 2011 Restoration Concept Plan.
To Supporters

As President of the MBIRRS, I have enjoyed the benefit of meeting so many of the city’s residents as well as having the opportunity to engage and connect with the many organizations that make this part of the Hudson Valley such a wonderful place to live. The initiative of bringing back the Mt. Beacon Incline has been the hopes and ambitions for many people over many years and have occupied the thoughts and energy of countless individuals.

At this very time when the city is transforming and revitalizing, this initiative stands out for its unique ability to merge both the traditions and heritage of the community’s life-long residents with the energy and ideas from the more recent arrivals, while at the same time creating a one-of-kind amenity that connects us with our past, opens up access to a wonderful natural resource, and provides a boost to our local economy.

Of course, a project of this scope and magnitude mandates the alignment of many different entities and requires the kind of funding that is beyond any one individual, organization, or foundation. It also requires a great deal of planning, participation, and cooperation from the community.

While the realization of this initiative is far from guaranteed, I’m mindful of how many supporters continue to make contributions in time and money and how many encouraging words of enthusiasm I have heard over the past few years. It’s also rewarding to hear from new supporters who bring with them fresh ideas and opportunities that help propel things forward.

As Autumn begins, I look forward to working with our partners, to meeting all the challenges with a sense of optimism, and most of all the opportunity to build upon the vision that a restored Incline be something meaningful, relevant, and important to the community as a whole— a shared public space that people of every age, ability, and economic strata visit and our community takes pride in.

President, Jeff McHugh

Call for Support

Has your membership expired? Please take a moment to fill out the renewal form and mail it back to us. All of your donations go to the advancement of this mission and make things such as the upcoming exhibit possible.

You can also visit www.inclinerailway.org to renew electronically.

MBIRRS to Apply for the Upstate Revitalization Initiative

In Spring of 2015, Governor Cuomo announced the Upstate Revitalization Initiative, a one-time program that would award each of the three winning regions a $500 million funding grant to be applied to priority projects in that particular region.

Each region is responsible to submit a proposal by October, 2015 with a set of initiatives that advances that particular region’s strategic plans and goals. As part of this process, the MBIRRS has submitted an “Intent to Present” application to the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council which is our city’s representative to the NY State EDC.

While there are many worthy and formidable projects in this particular region, we welcome the opportunity for the region to evaluate the merits of the Mt. Beacon Incline Restoration and how it fits into the overall plans and vision for this part of the Hudson Valley and look forward to being considered for inclusion in its URI proposal.
Hudson Highland Fjord Trail Master Plan Review Begins

Led by Scenic Hudson, the Hudson Highland Fjord Trail project recently completed its draft master plan. Developed in conjunction with many partners including the Village of Cold Spring, the Town of Fishkill, and the City of Beacon, the master plan outlines a future set of projects that will ultimately connect the Cold Spring with Beacon through a series of multi-use trails and bike lanes along the 9D corridor and the banks of the Hudson River.

The proposed trail project further reflects Beacon’s commitment to embracing the benefits of hiking, alternative transportation, and connecting its residents and visitors alike to the city’s wonderful scenic beauty. Utilizing the Fishkill Creek Greenway & Heritage Trail which starts at Scenic Hudson’s Long Dock Park, visitors will one day be able to walk from the train station all the way to Mt. Beacon and perhaps one day take a ride on the Incline!

Supporter Donates 1913 Artifact to Our Archive

One of the most rewarding aspects of a historical project is that which comes from the past.

Most recently this nearly pristine post card book was donated to our organization from a supporter from NYC.

Passed down to her from her mother who visited the Mt. Incline in 1913, this wonderfully preserved postcard book was originally published by Beacon resident Robert Van Tine in the early century.

The Van Tine family played a significant role in the lives of Beacon’s Main St. and Robert was the original photographer of some of the most inspiring and iconic photos of the Mt. Beacon Incline. It’s wonderful that this supporter decided to share this rare artifact with our organization, we’re honored to preserve it in permanence, and are deeply grateful.

With over 3.5 million riders on the Mt. Beacon Incline, there must countless photos and materials sitting in boxes and attics, if you know of any, please connect us to the source or send us any materials. We’d love to preserve and share them.
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Make checks payable to “MBIRRS” and address them to: “Mount Beacon Incline Railway Restoration Society, P.O. Box 1248, Beacon, NY 12508.”

You may also renew your membership via credit card at: inclinerailway.org/membership

If your employer matches your gift, please include their donation form. Donations to the Mount Beacon Incline Railway Restoration Society are tax deductible.
Preserving our Past. Building our Future.

Incline Railway viewed from Newburgh. Photo courtesy Martin Brecth.