

Kaatskill Life

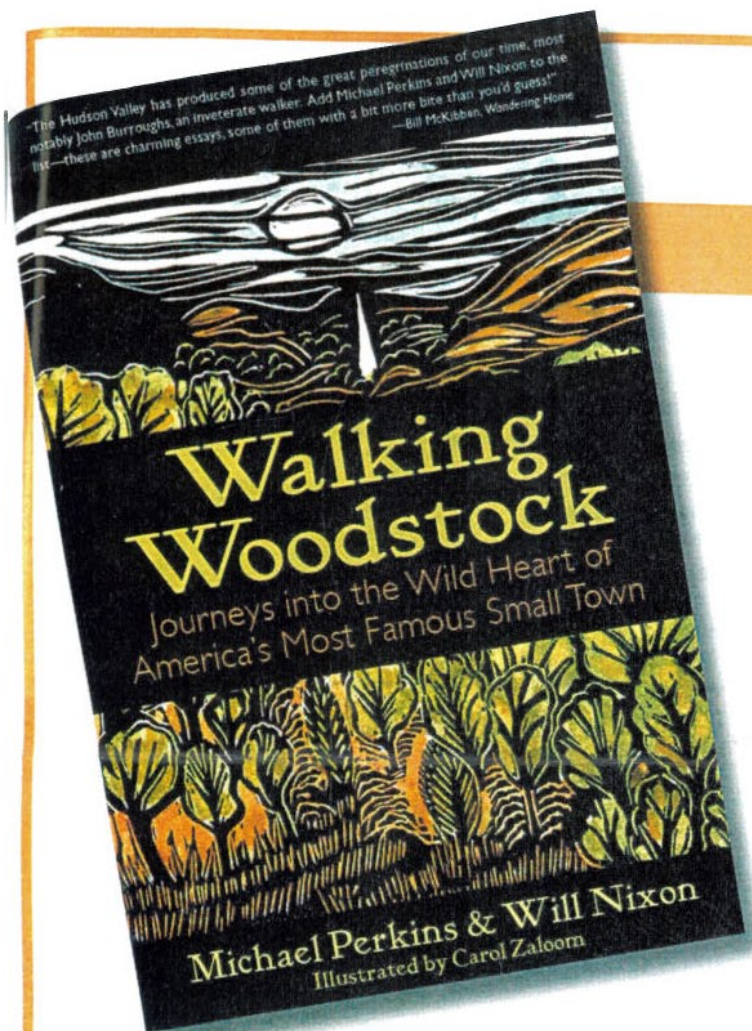
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STEPPING OUT

Walking Woodstock: Journeys into the Wild Heart of America's Most Famous Small Town

by Michael Perkins & Will Nixon
illustrated by Carol Zaloom

(Bushwhack Books, 250 pages. \$18.95. In area bookstores and at www.tbmbooks.com)

reviewed by Peter Senterman

When I first heard of *Walking Woodstock* in an advance ad, I pretty much dismissed it as the title gave me the impression it was about walking the streets of the village. Even the subtitle, *Journeys into the Wild Heart of America's Most Famous Small Town*, reinforced that thought as Woodstock has a reputation of being a "wild town." I couldn't have been more wrong! It turns out that only a few of the walks are on roads around the town's edges and the authors make them as interesting as the deepest woods walks.

Michael Perkins and Will Nixon walk a lot. They walk everywhere. They play off each other's strengths and weaknesses and together seem to have a blast wandering around exploring the nooks and crannies of the area while debating the world at large. They rarely venture far but they don't have to; they seem to have perfected the fine art of walking while finding much of interest on the simplest of walks. If you are a reader of the *Woodstock Times* you will be familiar with Will Nixon's writing as several of the essays have appeared in that publication.

Both are poets; however, this is not a book of poetry. It is a collection of essays about their adventures and explorations around the greater Town of

Woodstock in Ulster County, plus more ambitious hikes in the Catskill Forest Preserve and beyond. The longest adventure is by Michael Perkins: a walk from Woodstock, NY, across the Hudson Valley and northern Connecticut to Woodstock, CT, to commemorate the New York town's bicentennial. Why not Woodstock, VT, or any of the other towns named Woodstock? You will have to read Perkins's reasoning.

Some stories bring alive short walks in the local town parks and land conservancy area and a somewhat humorous attempt to follow the Sawkill Creek from Bearsville to Woodstock. Will Nixon recounts a gripping story of his being lost in the thick spruce forests on Southwest Hunter Mountain — because he didn't trust his compass — and an equally gripping account of Perkins getting seriously hurt and the ensuing rescue on an early spring hike to the base of Kaaterskill Falls. Most of the stories are more lighthearted, sometimes humorous accounts of walks that transpired without incident. Some are walks of discovery while others rambled along familiar paths. All are fun to read in their rambling, sometimes serious, sometimes humorous style. At the end of some of the walks is a brief description and directions to the locations for those who would like to trace their path.

The essays rarely exceed three or four pages in length and make interesting and quick reading. The style is very folksy and enjoyable. You can read one or two stories at a time or quite possibly devour the entire book in an afternoon. It is one of the few books I've read that I was sorry to see end. 🍷