

Book Reviews

Looking to the Past, Present and Future with the Latest Books on Local Industry and Environment

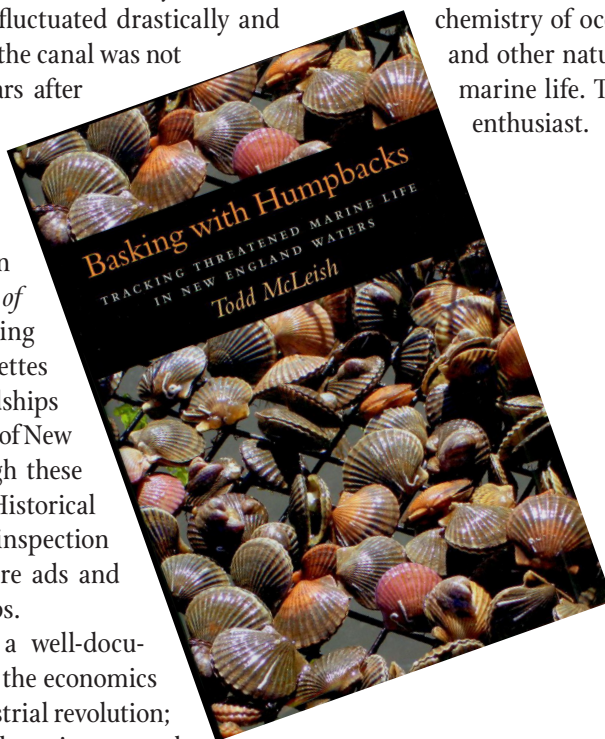
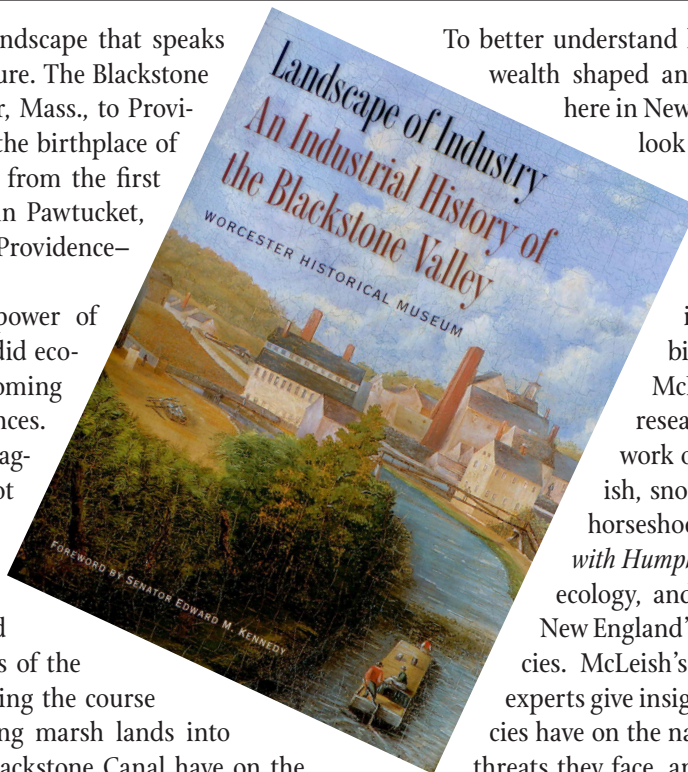
Lesley Lambert

The Blackstone Valley is a living landscape that speaks to our nation's past, present and future. The Blackstone River flows 46 miles from Worcester, Mass., to Providence, R.I. The valley is considered the birthplace of the American industrial revolution, from the first American textile mill (Slater Mill) in Pawtucket, R.I., to the Blackstone Canal and Providence–Worcester Railroad.

As the ability to harness the power of water spread through the valley, so did economic activity. However, the booming new businesses had many consequences. Conflicts were spurred between villagers and farmers; labor laws did not protect women, children or African Americans; and the health of the environment declined. The rising demand of goods and services pulled on the human and natural resources of the land, developing urban hubs, changing the course and hydrology of rivers, and turning marsh lands into town centers. The impacts of the Blackstone Canal have on the natural environment were seen immediately, as the water level in both the canal and river fluctuated drastically and tributaries ran dry; however the canal was not decommissioned until 20 years after its construction, when the Providence–Worcester Railroad rendered it obsolete.

The remarkable history of the Industrial Revolution comes alive in *Landscape of Industry* through astonishing images and fascinating vignettes of actual events. The hardships that faced the colonial people of New England become real through these pages; as the Worcester Historical Society digs through factory inspection records, railroad tickets, store ads and hand drawn community maps.

Landscape of Industry is a well-documented coffee table book on the economics and social effects of the industrial revolution; however, it does not detail environmental effects.



To better understand how our quest for products and wealth shaped and influenced the natural world here in New England, one would do better to look to *Basking with Humpbacks: Tracking Threatened Marine Life in New England Waters*. Author Todd McLeish takes the reader aboard research vessels, detailing the work of world-renowned biologists and oceanographers. McLeish relates his hands-on research experience as he is put to work on vessels tracking Atlantic wolfish, snorkeling for bay scallops, tagging horseshoe crabs and much more. *Basking with Humpbacks* profiles the natural history, ecology, and habitat requirements of 11 of New England's rarest and most threatened species. McLeish's experiences and interviews with experts give insight into the critical role these species have on the natural environment, the complex threats they face, and what must be done to ensure their survival. McLeish also discusses the physics and chemistry of oceanography as well as the geology of the seabed and other natural elements that influence the survival of local marine life. This book is a must-have for any coastal ecology enthusiast.

—Lesley Lambert is an environmental scientist with NBEP.

Go Deeper!

[Landscape of Industry: An Industrial History of the Blackstone Valley](#) was published by the Worcester Historical Museum and can be purchased from the [University Press of New England](#).

[Basking with Humpbacks: Tracking Endangered Marine Life in New England Waters](#) by Todd McLeish can also be purchased from the [University Press of New England](#).