

Railroads

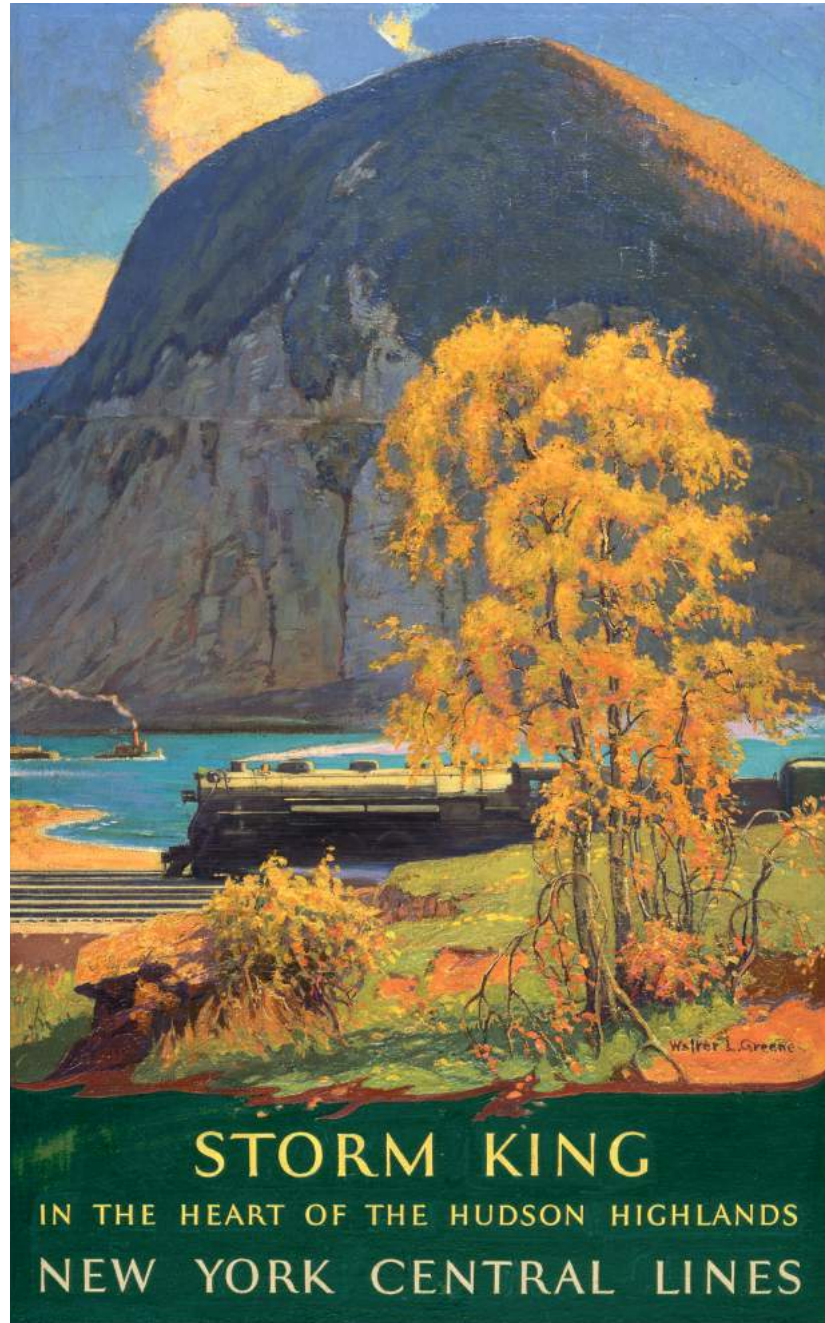
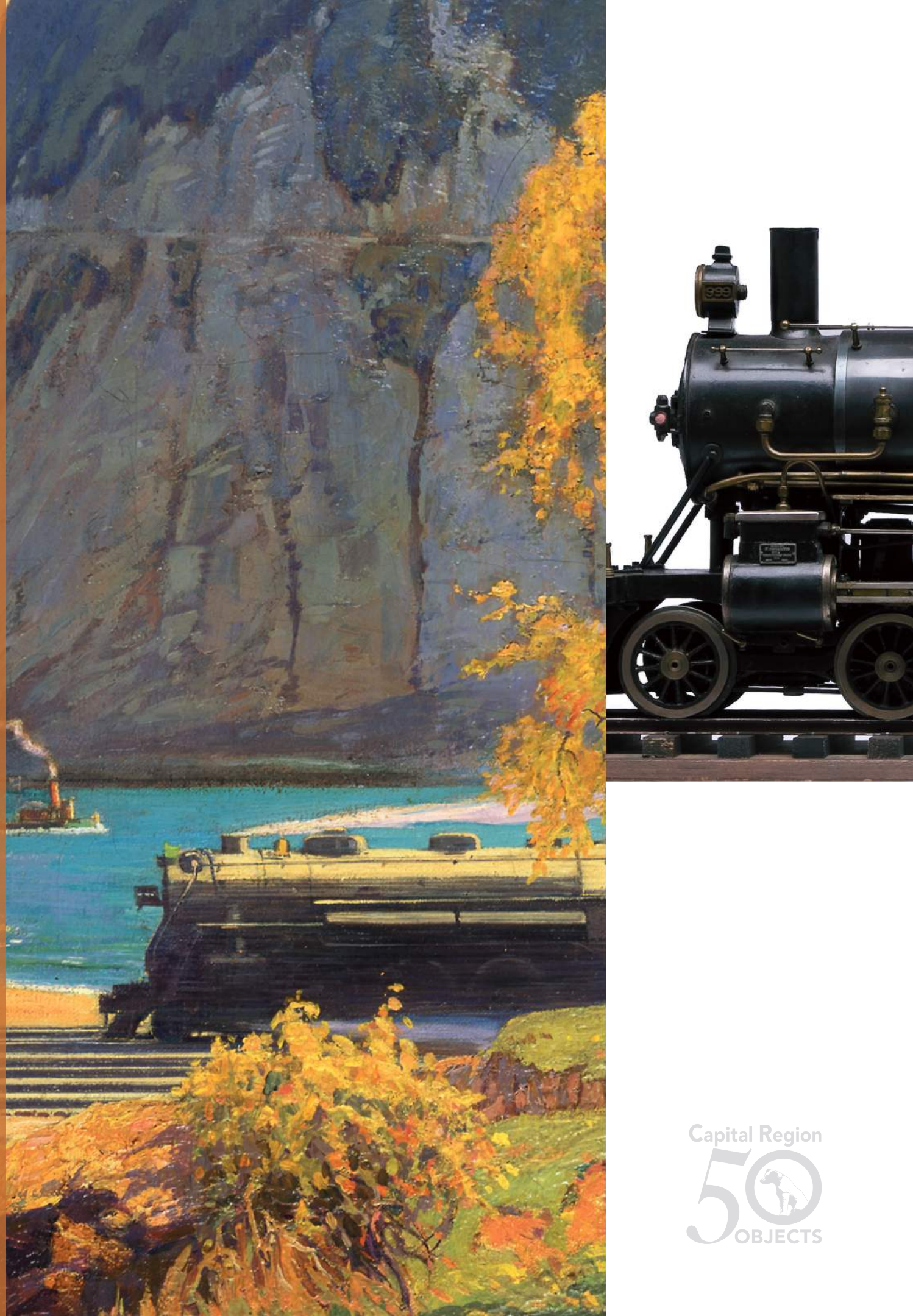


Image: **Storm King in the Heart of the Hudson Highlands**  
Walter L. Greene, c. 1927, oil on canvas, Albany Institute of History & Art,  
gift of the New York Central Railroad, 1959.130.165



Object: **Model of New York Central Steam Locomotive 999**  
Made by Frank DeSantis, c. 1940–1970, painted metal, glass, and wood,  
Albany Institute of History & Art, gift of R. Paul Carey, 1999.29



# The Capital Region in 50 Objects

## Railroads

On September 24, 1831, the first successful steam passenger train to operate in the United States, the *DeWitt Clinton*, made its inaugural “grand excursion” from Albany to Schenectady in one hour and forty-five minutes. Its route was eventually joined to other train lines to form the New York Central Railroad Company in 1853, guided by the business acumen of industrialist and railroad owner Erastus Corning. The industrialist Cornelius Vanderbilt gained control from Corning in 1867.

The New York Central Railroad, Hudson River Railroad, and the Delaware and Hudson Rail and Steamer lines were the premiere rails servicing the Hudson River Valley for more than one hundred years, until the mid-twentieth century. The New York Central Railroad also operated a large repair facility known as the West Albany Shops that employed hundreds of workers.

Some of the best known trains running on the New York Central lines included the *Empire State Express*, or the 999, which broke the land-speed record of 112 ½ miles per hour in 1893 and could make it from Albany to Buffalo in seven hours in comparison to the ten days it took on the Erie Canal. The *Commodore Vanderbilt*, powered by one of the finest steam locomotives manufactured, was in service from 1934 to 1960. The most famous passenger train, the *20th Century Limited*, began serving passengers from New York City to Chicago in 1902, eventually making the overnight trip in less than sixteen hours, with its last trip on December 2, 1967. The rise of the automobile and the building of roads and interstate highway systems eventually led to the decline of most passenger rail systems.

## Vocabulary

**Acumen** – ability to make smart decisions

**Demise** – the end of

**Inaugural** – beginning, or first trip

**Industrialist** – a person involved in the ownership and management of an industry

**Interstate** – existing between the states

## Railroads

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Directions

Use the depiction of the object, image, and corresponding text to answer the following questions.

1. What is the object a model of? \_\_\_\_\_

2. When was the model made? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is the object made of? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What was the object famous for? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Identify two key features of the Locomotive 999:

a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_

6. Name of the image: \_\_\_\_\_

7. What modes of transportation are depicted in the image? \_\_\_\_\_

8. What geographic features are portrayed in the image? \_\_\_\_\_

9. What railroad provided service for the train in the image? \_\_\_\_\_

10. What 20th century developments led to the decline of passenger rail systems? \_\_\_\_\_