Hudson
by Ruth Piwonka

Hudson, New York, is located about 120 miles north of New York City on the east shore of the Hudson River at the midpoint of the western border of Columbia County, for which it has served as county seat since 1805. It is today a small city—about 2.5 square miles—with its potential for both growth and urban sprawl abruptly terminated by the river and the civic boundaries of the Town of Greenport which surrounds it in the other three directions. This constrained situation was not always the case.

In considering the city's general economic development it is important to realize that the area of land originally incorporated as city was much greater than the compact part of the city: it included all of the modern town of Stockport south and west of Major Abrams and Claverack creeks and all of the modern town of Greenport. Lands in these areas were well developed, agricultural, rural, and without any community center. The city was reduced first by the formation of the town of Stockport in 1833 and dramatically altered to its present size with the formation of Greenport in 1837. The changes were made as organizational improvements.

Specific topography and geology determined the development of the site. A stony promontory of land projects into the river forming natural bays to the north and south. The projection into the river has an interesting form: at river’s edge its width is about fifteen hundred feet; its middle 500 feet is a
natural rocky bluff rising about 20 feet above water level; from this bluff land slopes north and south to water level thereby forming natural landings at each of the bays. From this bluff a ridge of land rises to an elevation of 310 feet about seven thousand feet to the southeast of water level at the river. This small area and its periphery became the compact part of the city in the 1780s and is today essentially the whole of the city of the Hudson (see Figure 1/map).

The city began abruptly at the close of the Revolutionary War in 1784, when New Englanders purchased tracts of land from the Dutch owners of Claverack Landing and subsequently established a city dedicated to commercial purposes. Hudson's economic success and meteoric growth attracted the attention of regional residents, early travellers, journalists, and others intrigued by the new town, which was well-planned, thoughtfully laid out, and filled with new, handsome, domestic and commercial structures.

One commercial enterprise has captured public imagination since the later nineteenth century. Hudson's fame as a whaling center has dominated popular histories of the place and the novel inland enterprise has been stressed at the expense of other important factors in the city's history. Although an exciting and colorful part of the city's history, whaling was not—except perhaps for a brief time—a major part of commercial enterprise, nor was Hudson a major center for this industry. New England ports ever exceeded Hudson's capacity in this regard. Whaling started on a small scale in Hudson in the mid 1790s; its introduction was consistent with the commercial interests and seafaring activities of the New England proprietors of the city. The nature of trade at Hudson in the eighteenth century and most of the nineteenth century was general and not limited at all to whaling. The topographic and geographic advantages of the place made it commercially significant from the seventeenth century onward.

The natural harbors and landing formed by the "norder bought" and "souder bought" (north and south bay) and the promontory were a main attraction in one of the earliest major land purchases made by Dutchmen as they expanded their bases beyond trading settlements at Manhattan, Albany, and Kingston. In 1649 Gerrit van Sliichtenhorst, acting as agent for the Van Rensselaer family purchased a tract of approximately 170,000 acres of land on the east side of the Hudson River, considerably south of the patroonship that family had established in 1629 in the Albany vicinity, and comprising the central third of modern Columbia County. Until 1704 it was part of the Manor of Rensselaerswyck with one notable exception.

In 1661, Jan Franse van Hoesen purchased from Indians a smaller tract of land plainly within the 170,000 acre bounds of apparently undeveloped van
Figure 1. A map illustrating Hudson as originally incorporated in 1785, and with its present boundaries.

Figure 2. A map illustrating principal colonial features of Hudson and vicinity.
Rensselaer land. Peter Stuyvesant, director of Dutch colony of New Netherland, confirmed the Van Hoesen purchase with full knowledge of previous van Rensselaer acquisition, reflecting both his policy to populate and develop the colony as well as his contempt for Rensselaer ownership. Following the English takeover in 1664 the English honored Stuyvesant’s confirmation of the Van Hoesen purchase. Although a clear instance of overlapping land claims and contested periodically by van Rensselaer family members the tract remained in the Van Hoesen family from its purchase until descendents sold their inheritance to New Englanders (1661-1783). As late as 1773, John van Rensselaer (then proprietor of the Claverack tract that had been separated from the Manor of Rensselaerswyck in 1704) sought to reclaim at least portions of the Van Hoesen patent as his own property (see Figure 2/map).

Although Claverack Landing, the colonial name for the site of Hudson, was underdeveloped when compared with neighboring Kinderhook, Livingston Manor, and Catskill landings, it was used as access for rural and farm produce from its hinterland.

As early as 1678, when a handful of local farmers squabbled viciously about their rights-of-way on the road to the Strand at Claverack Landing, the virtue of this landing site for funneling produce from inland farms to easy river transportation had been valued by residents of the area. It served the colonial population of at least 160 square miles along the east side of the Hudson River, which had grown by the early 1770s to an estimated 800 households, and by 1790 to 1600 households. By the time of the Revolution, this “rural” population had grown and can be considered relatively dense—especially in the eastern portions of colonial Claverack district.

Nineteenth century histories of Hudson state that the area around the promontory had only two stores, two wharves, a grist mill, and a ferry to Lunenburgh (now Athens) directly across the river when the Proprietors arrived in 1783 and concluded the area was sparsely settled. Their conclusions were likely based on evidence they found in a 1774 map drafted by William Ellison, illustrating the two landing facilities, and recollections of the grist mill and ferry which entered into the New Englander’s community history of the place.¹

Other evidence—an undated map of the Herdyk family plots, the 1779 tax list for West Claverack District, and records of sales made by Herdyk, van Hoesen, Hogeboom, and van Alen family members to the New England proprietors that came to Hudson—offers additional information and suggests a relatively dense rural population consistent with one hundred twenty years’ Dutch occupancy and commercial development appropriately advanced for the situation.²

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occupants of the landing were of Dutch descent. Those related to the van Hoesen family attended the Lutheran church at Lunenburgh and had done so since its founding in 1704. The Herdyks had in particular a special relationship with this church since Willem Herdyk had married a daughter of Daniel Falckner, one of the earliest Lutheran ministers in America, and his sister Gerritje had married Pastor Justus Falckner, the first Lutheran minister ordained in America, who came to reside on the Herdyk tract at Prauween (modern Priming) Hook. A number of Lutheran families also lived across the river at Lunenburgh. The congregation under pressure from Dutch Reformed church authorities had moved to this location in the late seventeenth century and they were an enclave somewhat isolated from their surrounding Dutch Reformed neighbors. During the Revolution some notable Tories were among their number.3

Community centers in the colonial Hudson Valley developed in patterns differing from those in other colonies: typically they were formed at a river landing site or more often inland from the river in close proximity to waterpower and intervale land along a creek. A row of long narrow lots perpendicular to the river’s edge was the usual form at landing communities; such properties were owned by different persons representative of different families.

Claverack Landing did not conform to these community characteristics. Descent and inheritance from the original proprietor, chance of birth, and the number divisions made in land parcels determined a patchwork of homestead lots. Its households were distributed as close to the river shoreline as possible or along wagon roads leading to the landing. Close relationships with households across the river added a distinctive dimension.

The patchy form of settlement began in 1704 when heirs of the original proprietor divided the large patent among themselves. Francis (Frank) Herdyk, from Liverpool, England, and son-in-law of Jan Franse van Hoesen, received as his portion a substantial tract of land that extended along the river beginning around modern Priming Hook and running south to modern Ferry Street and encompassing all of North Bay; the tract extended inland to the Claverack creek. Around 1745, upon his death, his four children divided the tract. Lands along the North Bay and the promontory went to Willem Herdyk (ca. 1692-1755). Of Willem’s eleven children, seven sons are found listed on the 1779 tax lists for West Claverack district directly on the promontory or cluster nearby. The area they owned included nearly all of the promontory north of modern Ferry Street northward to the original shoreline of North Bay and extending southwesterly to approximately modern Second Street. About 1745 Jeremiah
Hogeboom acquired from Francis Hardick (Jr?) a small but important portion of land. This was the north slope of the promontory that formed a landing site at North Bay, and there developed a wharf, store, and nearby a grist mill. By 1774 Peter Hogeboom was operating this property on behalf of his kinsmen.1 (See map, p. 24.)

Another important sale was made by the heirs of Jan Johannes Van Hoesen. Some time prior to 1764, John Van Alen purchased his tract that was south of Ferry and Partition Streets, including the landing site at North Bay which he developed. In December 1768, he petitioned for “500 yards of land under water, to the north of Rocky Point, near his dwelling house at Claverack and to the same distance to the south of said point, along the Hudson River, for the breadth of 100 yards into said river”. The September 1774 map pertains to the desires of several Claverack citizens who also wished to develop water lots in South Bay, the 1779 tax list indicates that at least one of them owned such a lot.5 John Van Alen’s steep-roofed, brick Dutch style house stood at the southwest corner of Ferry and Water Streets and was an important local landmark until the Congflagration of 1838.

Existing data found in the map of Herdyk homestead lots, tax assessments of 1779, and sales records made in 1784 by Herdyks, Van Hoesens, Hogeboom, and Van Alen, is summarized in Figure 3. In general, property assessment and no personal assessment is interpreted as meaning that an individual does not live on the premises; in the converse situation it is interpreted that the individual was living in the household of an adjacent name. Based on general assessment patterns from a number of Albany County districts it is understood that a relatively low real property assessment combined with a higher personal property assessment is understood to mean that the individual was merchandising.

In 1779 the aggregate assessments of the Herdyk family was greater (£3725) than that of Hogeboom (£1800) or Van Alen (£1400). Equal division of property among heirs over one or more generation—a condition that was common to many Dutch freeholders in the late colonial period—leveled many once-prosperous families. In this instance, since the Herdyks had sold their most valuable resource to an outsider, it took many of their less developed acres to be the equivalent of the smaller parcel owned by Hogeboom.

Thus, Hogeboom and Van Alen sold their properties in 1784 for a proportionately higher value than the sales made by the Herdyks. With their operation of the most desirable landing sites, Hogeboom and Van Alen appear to have been the more energetic businessmen. Further, the Van Alen property was greatly enriched by his ownership of the water lots,
which would eventually come to play a great part in the development of Hudson shipping and merchandising business. Other important tracts related to waterlots were owned by Van Hoesens who owned tracts south of Partition Street (now an alley between Union and Allen Streets) along the north shore of South Bay had an aggregate assessment of £4300 in 1779. Their property became the site of one of the first shipyards in Hudson.

Some Dutchmen at Kinderhook and Claverack opposed the New England proprietors’ plans. Since the proprietors did not speak Dutch, the proprietors employed Samuel W. Edmonds, who worked for John Van Alen as bookkeeper, “in the double capacity of bookkeeper and spy... to counteract all efforts made to injure them.” The Ten Broeck, Delemater, Huyck, Elting, Miller and Hogeboom families were friendly to the newcomers. But judging from the numerous omissions of other family names, it must be concluded that many were at least suspicious of the new

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<td>Personal</td>
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<td>250</td>
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Athens from the Hudson Iron Works. (Engraved illustration by Benjamin Lossing from The Hudson River, 1861.)

Hudson. (No. 13 Hudson River Portfolio, 1820-1826; engraving on paper by I. Hill after a watercolor by William Guy Wall, 14 x 21". Columbia County Historical Society.)
endeavor, which all but erased any evidence of the earlier Dutch occupation of the place. 6

Beginning on 19 July 1783, a series of land purchases from the various Dutch proprietors of Claverack landing were made by Thomas Jenkins and his associates on behalf of their association of thirty proprietors. Most purchases of important river shore were made by 1785. Additional tracts were added to this over the following decade or so.

The New England proprietors, who arrived first sometime in the spring of 1783, sought a landing suitable for further development as a “commercial settlement.” An East River location, Poughkeepsie, and an area south of Albany, as well as Claverack Landing, were considered. Motivation for this inland port has been attributed to their desire to escape marauding British cruisers that had harrassed them during the Revolution. It has also been suggested that some of the proprietors were politically motivated to leave Providence, Edgartown, Nantucket, and Newport, and establish new homes for their families along the Hudson. Neither view makes entirely good sense, since the Revolution had ended by the time they actually decided to purchase Claverack Landing and since many of the proprietors and/or their families frequently travelled back and forth between Hudson and their place of origin. It may well be they simply desired commercial success and sought an innovative way to achieve it.

In 1784, before the city of Hudson was officially conceived or chartered, eighteen proprietors signed articles of agreement acknowledging that they were joint proprietors in the tract of land purchased by Thomas Jenkins and that their purpose was to establish a commercial settlement. They agreed not to build any structures until the land had been divided and roadways laid out.

Formation of the city advanced with intensity and in a most organized manner; much emphasis was placed on the physical arrangements of the town. At the first business meeting, 17 May 1784, a committee was appointed to regulate streets and “fix buildings uniformly”. A 9 June 1785 meeting provided additional survey and plotting of the city, which was laid out in a grid pattern with a main street or axis running the length of the stony promontory. On 17 February 1785 the association of proprietors agreed to petition for incorporation with city privileges. The act of incorporation was passed by the state legislature 22 April 1785 with the appendage that several named individuals were awarded underwater lots immediately adjacent to the land at Hudson.

Between 1784 and 1797, a superlative record of city planning survives in the Minutes of the Proprietors. Attention to lot size, number of lots per
View of Hudson and the Catskills. (Plate 4, no. 12, Amerique Septentrionale, ca. 1820. Drawn from nature by Jacques Gerard Milbert; lithography by Louis Bichebois; figure by V. Adam. Columbia County Historical Society, gift of Peter Hoes.)

Town of Hudson. (Plate 3, No. 11, Amerique Septentrionale, ca. 1820. Drawn from nature by Jacques Gerard Milbert; lithography by L. Sabatier. Columbia County Historical Society, gift of Peter Hoes.)
block, street width, restricted step size protruding into walk-ways, provision for water supplies (a major issue to be addressed since water had to be brought from a source outside the compact part of the city), provision for public and religious structures, market squares, and other public places including recreational facilities. Of the last, the most distinctive plan of the association, was its creation of a public promenade or "the Parade" on the bluff at the river between the two landing sites on former Herdyk land. This afforded residents an unparalleled vantage point to view the landscape of river and Catskill mountains to the west, to watch for ships and to view the activity at the nearby docks. Except for the Parade, the careful planning represented in the Proprietors' records were not unique, but represent the cumulative past of European and American town experience. What was unique is the energy with which the formulated plans were carried out.

True to its commercial purpose, economic and business activity flourished, dramatically affecting all aspects of life from its early successes between 1784 and 1810 when the Proprietors' formal association dissolved itself.

In 1786, the New York Journal reported that Hudson contained several fine wharves, four large warehouses, a covered rope-walk, a spermaceti works, one hundred fifty dwellings, "one of the best distilleries in America", shops, barns, and fifteen hundred people. There was also in that year a shipyard situated on North Bay and twenty-five sea-going vessels sailing from Hudson. Eighteen licensed innkeepers in the city provided lodging for the likes of twelve hundred sleigh drivers that brought from the countryside, in February of that year, wooden goods, iron-ware, building stone, and firewood to trade at the market. In June 1790, Hudson was made an international port of entry; in 1797 it lost by one vote a state legislative contest determining the seat of the state capitol.7

In the fall of 1797, Englishman William Strickland toured the Hudson Valley and spent a weekend in Hudson—

...at a tavern kept by one Gardener, an intelligent Son of Massachusetts, the sign of the Rights of Man, represented by the figure of Fame flying over the World, and trumpeting forth the rights of man. Our host ... informed us that two thirds of [the town] had been built, since his residence in it commenced, now four years and an half since [i.e., spring 1793]; that the foundation of it was laid by Messrs. Seth and Thomas Jenkins in 1784 ..., that it now contains upwards of 300 houses, and the population was so great that he found that eight people might be estimated to each family; that it first increased so rapidly that 150 Houses were built in the three first years; but that it was ceasing to increase as rapidly as it had done, not more than twelve good houses having been erected this last summer; that three large ships two of them above 300 tons,
two large brigs, and a sloop had been launched this year, and that several tanneries, manufactories of soap and candles and other such like trades had been opened also, and that the back trade to this place was considerably increasing, as it was the natural market for the [western] parts of Massachusetts...; that it was entirely settled and inhabited by people from the New England states, the most active and enterprising people... in the world.

The City is laid out with streets intersecting each other at right angles; the principal street is of considerable breadth and upwards of a mile in length running from the river into the country, but a small part of it only is yet built; it stands chiefly on a neck of land formed by two bays which run back into the country, and are in part dry at low water, the tide rising here five feet, which is nearly as much as the usual height of it upon the coast; the river is [navigable]; on the banks of it below the town is an high natural terrace several hundred yards in length which is judiciously preserved, as a walk for the inhabitants. The city commands an extensive view of the river particularly to the Northward, and of a variegated, irregular, well settled, and well cultivated country on this side of the river, and of a wooded country on the opposite, broken by a few settlements, and backed by the Kaatskill, a chain of stupendous mountains....

On a fair hot August day in 1798, Count Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, a Polish patriot, dropped anchor at Hudson. His report of the city provides additional information and new perceptions:

The size, the warehouses and the shops of this place gave it a very showy appearance. The growth of this town is practically miraculous. In 1783, immediately after the Revolution, a few merchants from Rhode Island, wearied by the disorder, controversy, and slothfulness which seemed at this time to vex the inhabitants, gathered together 1,200,000 dollars in capital, moved here and created the town of Hudson. Their inexhaustible activity, the enormous advantages and pledges given to newcomers, a period of time most advantageous for trade, the advantage (which Albany higher up on the river does not have) of sending boats of 300 tons to the sea; everything contributed to its rapid growth so that there were already 200 houses in it after the first two years. The growth continued for a few years, but today current opinion has it that the town is not growing but has started to decline. After shooting up like a mushroom it will last only as long. The principal reason for this is that Hudson does not, unlike Albany, have behind it an extensive hinterland both fertile and well-populated. The transportation of products to it is small and is dependent entirely upon wheels. These reasons are important. All in all it seems to me that into this sudden denigration enters somewhat the jealousy of the citizens of Albany. A city so well inhabited and built up and so favorably situated for seaborne trade cannot decline. The decline at the moment of business can be ascribed to general circumstances and to the darkening picture of trade everywhere. Once these conditions cease, industry with its former explosive development will break out again. The past year a ship, fitted out in Hudson for whaling, returned after a 19-month voyage with 1,800 barrels of Spermaceti or whale oil.
These early accounts—both of which remained in unpublished diary form until 1965 and 1971—highlight the memorable origins of the city that were recited in later accounts; more importantly they confirm what was important about the city from the time of its inception. This was the extraordinarily great and successful growth that accompanied its energetic beginnings, as well as a concern for the apparent slow-down of growth (which the early travellers related to “housing starts”), and the effect of the planned layout of the city. Although Niemcewicz mentions in particular the whaling, which started in Hudson in the mid 1790s, it must be pointed out again that Hudson’s whale fishery was at this time but a part of a larger picture of general trade and manufactories.

Manufacturing activities not only employed the city’s population but also drew on the ability of the hinterland to supply raw materials for craftsmen and mechanics. Thus, with “one of the best distilleries in America” and spermaceti works, barrel staves were needed; shipbuilding, a rope-walk, and sailmaking, and tanneries, all early operations at Hudson, drew materials from surrounding rural regions. “A decline” in the fortunes of the city was predicted—but controversial—as early as the last years of the eighteenth century: “Mr. Garden” believed the prosperity of the city was insured by the extent of the hinterland; Niemcewicz heard that the hinterland was small compared to Albany’s—but that navigation of sea-going vessels to Albany was not possible, and he concluded that a city so well built and established could not do anything but prevail. But the economy existed in a fragile balance, and the city was limited in size and came to be limited in population. From 1784 to the dissolution of the proprietors’ association in 1810, Hudson was a successful company town in the best sense of that phrase. But, looking ahead, the opening of the Erie Canal in 1823 further reduced the market for trade out of Hudson’s hinterland. Other developments, however, created other possibilities. In fact, in the future the fortunes of Hudson would both decline and prevail.

In 1805 Hudson became the seat of Columbia County. Hudson had been traditionally the stronghold of anti-Federalists and eventually Democratic in contrast to the rest of Columbia County, which was rural, agricultural, Federalist, and eventually Republican. Colorful but brief tales of the press and political party meeting rooms are given in nineteenth century histories. After business and pre-industrial developments, politics gradually developed as a major concern of the city. The Columbia County junta—Elisha Williams, William W Van Ness, and Jacob Rutsen van Rensselaer—operated out of Hudson and were influential in state and occasionally national politics. Their complicated dealings with the Bank
of Columbia (at Hudson) in 1812 resulted in scandal and bank failure in 1819. The eighth President of the United States Martin Van Buren began his extraordinary career of public service as county surrogate in Hudson where he lived from 1808 until moving to Albany in 1817. Benjamin Franklin Butler, U.S. Attorney General under Jackson, founder of the New York University School of Law, and the case-method of teaching law, began his career in Hudson. Other attorneys distinguished for contributions to state and national government were also associated with the city.11

The apparent energy that went into legal and political affairs did not extend to civic matters. The city was without any structure of even typical substance for both the county and city public buildings. These matters were dealt with in 1833 and 1854 respectively. Although tentative early efforts had been made, it remains a curious omission in the early annals of such a prosperous and energetic place and may after all be a stronger political statement. It is all the more so curious since one who had awareness of public edifices and planning was close at hand. Andrew Mayfield Carshore, a prominent teacher and headmaster at Claverack and then Hudson and also first clerk to the county Board of Supervisors, was one of ten who submitted designs for the President's house and the Federal capitol building in the national competition.

Although politics and government matured distinctly in this period, a tenuous economy prevailed at Hudson when the Embargo Act was legislated in 1807 until 1830. The Embargo Act dealt a heavy blow to the neatly balanced flow of trade and goods at Hudson and its hinter-land. Then in August 1807, Fulton's steamboat (its captain was from Hudson) successfully travelled the Hudson River, deleting as it were, the substance of Hudson's economy. In 1808 the founding father Thomas Jenkins died. In 1809, remaining proprietors established the Columbia Manufacturing Company—dedicated to the mass production of cloth—situated at the powerful waterfall on Major Abram's creek. Perhaps catching straws in the wind—the reasons are not recorded—the formal association of the proprietors was dissolved in the spring of 1810. The War of 1812 brought nearly unbounded success to the textile manufacturing company at Major Abram's creek. Eventually the place would be incorporated as Columbia-ville. In turn its success reaped bitterness throughout the remainder of the county which was filled with rural cottage textile manufacturing operations. The painfully lively changes in political and social views that developed over the 1810s and 1820s at once bolstered and undermined the dogmatic rules that had made "the company town" a stunning accomplishment.

It is said that in 1819 the economy of Hudson collapsed and that the 1820s were a period of depressed conditions in the city. This statement surely
requires qualification. Freeman Hunt writing about Hudson 1835-37, said that the decline had occurred about ten to twelve years previous, putting the depression somewhere between 1823 and 1827.\textsuperscript{12} No one explains just what the decline was, why it happened, or who it affected. From the preceding review of events affecting economic life between 1807 and 1819, it becomes apparent that the commercial activities of the proprietors had been in jeopardy since at least 1807 and in the view of some since the 1790s. Evidence from the 1830s and 1840s evokes the decline. William B. Stoddard, editor of the \textit{Rural Repository}, in 1830 lamented the fact that it was of Hudson often remarked that, ”Hudson will never recover from the slumber into which it has fallen. The summer-like days of her commercial prosperity have passed, and public spirit and pride are buried ....”\textsuperscript{13} Mr. Stoddard’s suggested remedy was construction of handsome public buildings (a suggestion which was in part carried out within the next three years).

C. Gorham Worth in writing about Hudson in 1847 states that Hudson was then “half depopulated,” “a finished city,” “a dead town.” His \textit{Random Recollections of Hudson} may have been influential in convincing the rest of the world that Hudson was finished, since it was published and bound with the author’s random recollections of Albany and Cincinnati as well. Worth’s treatment of the subject, however, is a lament for and not a history of times passed and the days of the proprietors and the lively sea-faring atmosphere of the place.\textsuperscript{14} Stephen B. Miller, in his history published in 1862, appropriately questioned the issue of the decline. He noted that he frequently heard visitors remark that they “cannot see that Hudson had changed in the least; everything is just as was thirty years ago [ca 1832].” In Miller’s view, however, everything had changed. He observed increase and prosperity. This is in part demonstrated in Figure 4 (overleaf), which provides population figures from censuses, travel accounts, and gazetteers.

In spite of rumoured decline and death, healthy population increases in Hudson suggest something was going quite well. The dramatic change in Hudson, in spite of commercial losses, resulted from advances in manufacturing and technology. In 1829, an association of Hudson citizens formed to re-establish at Hudson a whale fishery. With $300,000 capital, they incorporated as Hudson Whaling Company in 1833. As many as fourteen vessels used in the whale-fisheries were owned at Hudson in the late 1830s. The success of the first voyage in 1830-31 encouraged others to follow; and through 1845 when the business abruptly closed, vessels from Hudson brought significant amounts of whale oil—a raw material—that was then processed at Barnard & Curtiss’ spermaceti works, which turned the harvested oil into candles, soap and other products. This processing
### Figure 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>Estimated Actual # of DWELLINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actual</td>
<td>Compact + Greenport + Stockport = Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1786</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>150*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1787</td>
<td></td>
<td>200@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>2584</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1794</td>
<td></td>
<td>300**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>3664</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>4046</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1813+</td>
<td></td>
<td>3300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1815</td>
<td>4725</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>5310</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1824++</td>
<td></td>
<td>3600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>5004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>5392</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>5531</td>
<td>2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835-37</td>
<td></td>
<td>6000@@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>5672</td>
<td>5672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>5677</td>
<td>5677</td>
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<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>6286</td>
<td>6286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>6720</td>
<td>6720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>7265</td>
<td>7265</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources for '00 years are the Federal census; for '05 years, the New York State census; *New York Journal; @@Niemcewicz; **Strickland; + and ++ 1813 and 1824 Spafford Gazetteers; @@ Freeman Hunt.

was an important adjunct of the whale fisheries. Two devastating fires swept the wharf district where the oil works were located. After the first fire in 1838, the reputedly most modern, up to date, and safe oil works was reconstructed at the same location. It burned in the fire of 1844. After the second fire, the business left the city.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries a variety of pre-industrial manufactories common to other cities of the period flourished. These included: tanneries (which were of some size); a few grist mill operations; the manufacture of nails, sails, rope, and textiles. The Embargo Act changed the direction of manufacture in the city, creating a labor market.

In 1809, several of the original proprietors formed the Columbia Manufacturing Society; in 1810 they purchased the mill-site at modern Columbiaville on the north side of Major Abrams creek and contracted with an English machinist, James Wild, to create the machinery for a cotton mill and to construct an appropriate building for it. Wild eventually took over this operation and in 1824 built his own factory on the south side
of the creek. Besides making cotton textiles, Wild also constructed much of
the first machinery in the state for cotton weaving. Members of the Macy
family had established a wool factory at nearby Stockport hamlet; in 1828 it
became the site of an early print works operated by Benjamin and Joseph
Marshall who went on to establish major textile production at Troy, New
York; in 1850, the Stockport operation closed completely. Water powered
textile operations were also carried on at modern Stottville—in the late
eighteenth century, by the Van Rensselaer family who lost the mill in a
large fire. Extensive mills were built there in 1828 by Jonathan Stott,
another English weaver, who had formerly worked in the compact part of
the city of Hudson. Many English families skilled in the weavers trade
moved to this area beginning in the 1810s; their skill and willingness to
work hard made them preferred employees when contrasted to native
Americans. In 1814, an iron furnace was located in Columbia Street and is
said to have been for many years the only foundry on the river between
Albany and New York. The business made castings and other machine
parts. The furnace was acquired at an early date by the Gifford family, who
eventually established in 1848 the Hudson Iron Company; an extensive
iron foundry was constructed at South Bay and the river's edge in 1850-51.
It employed one hundred men.

Even before the whale fisheries had been thought of, other men
envisioned the Hudson Valley and Massachusetts joined by rail. From its
inception in 1826 until “completion” first in 1838 joining Hudson and
West Stockbridge, the project attracted enthusiasm and brave investors
who lost all of their investment because the wooden rails were not
satisfactory.

Rope manufacturing of the early days had met its demise, but the advent
of railroad again stirred local industry. An intriguing operation briefly
described by Freeman Hunt, who wrote of Hudson in 1835-37, was the only
manufactory in the country of railroad rope. The ropes were often a mile
and a half in length and more than could be carried by two hundred men. A
hundred fifty tons of these ropes were then produced annually. They were
used then on the Portage Railroad in Pennsylvania. It is to be supposed
that this manufactory did not survive railroad design improvements.

Work on the Hudson to Stockbridge line was successfully redone.
Boston and Hudson were joined in 1841. In 1848 further improvements
were required before the operation was completely successful—but at last it
was. Plans for a train between New York and Albany were initiated in 1830.
Eventually in 1848 work began and on October 1, 1851, the first train made
the trip.

As business and manufacturing changed over the nineteenth century, so
did Hudson's waterfront. City maps from the eighteenth century, 1807, 1839, 1851, and 1858 show the transformation of the waterfront; by the 1870s dock facilities had all but disappeared. Railroad tracks replaced them. These were not the only changes, however.

In 1833 the formation of the Town of Stockport took from Hudson important textile manufacturing sites at Columbiaville and Stottville as well as approximately 2000 persons. It formed because at the time the locality surrounding the confluence of the Claverack, Kinderhook, and Major Abrams (now Stockport) creeks were united in their manufacturing interests. The national financial crisis of 1837 caused heavy layoffs; in 1850 one of the large manufactories left the community leaving many more unemployed. The results are evident in the declining population of that town.

In 1837 the Town of Greenport was created: this separation was effected because of the opposing agricultural and urban interests and concerns of the "compact part of the city" and surrounding sub-urban and rural populations. So far as is known there was at the time agreement about the general desirability of this decision; however, from the perspective of nearly 150 years, it is evident that the city lost space for expansion. Through about 1870 this factor does not seem to have made much difference.
Detail from 1839 map indicating commercial and manufacturing sites in Water and Broad Street areas, Hudson. Columbia County Map vol. I no. 69.

- Estate of Joseph G. state grant
- C. Curtiss dock
- Barnard Paddock & Wiswell
- Pier
- Tugboat Co. pier
- H. Livingston
- Ferryway
- H. Tobey R. L. St.
- Steamboat pier
- John Penoyer gangway
- Samuel Plumb
- Jacob Carpenter
- Estate of J. Hathaway
- Seth G. Macy
  - occupied by
  - Jenkins
  - yard
- Titus Morgan shipyard
  - foot of
  - State Street
Two major fires destroyed portions of the waterfront and adjacent residential blocks in 1838 and 1844. Both fires were attributed to sparks from steamboats. Storehouses, lumberyards, the oil works, the old distillery (which was at the time filled with hay), several vessels were all lost. In 1838, wind swept the fire into the residential area bounded by Front, Union, Second, and Cross Streets, destroying seventy dwellings and leaving about one hundred families homeless. Both sides of Ferry Street were devastated. Francis Herdyk’s small parcel was burned over—soon to be renewed as Franklin Square. John Van Alen’s old Dutch house was lost—eventually replaced by a hotel. In 1844, the fire was not so wide spread—but nonetheless total destruction of business interests in the area occurred. Needless to say that in both cases everyone was considerably underinsured.

The railroad spurred business and manufacturing interests to rebuild at this time. Most often the interest reflected yet other changes: new names invested and built for the most part new kinds of industry at the old landing site. Stovemaking and gas manufacture, shipping offices, a large railroad yard, and the Hudson Iron Company used the space left vacant by the fire and also built on land that was newly created by the filling of the waterlots.

Between 1840 and 1860, Hudson’s population increased 28 percent; Greenport’s, 21 percent; Stockport’s declined 13 percent. If one regards the total populations of the entire area of “old Hudson” before the divisions, one finds that between 1830 and 1860 the population nearly doubled, which it had also done between 1786 and 1813. The only decline is found between 1820 and 1825 the period of acknowledged depression. Allowing

for the acreage that had been subtracted for the city, the steady growth within the city proper during the thirty year period appears to exceed all previous records.

From its settlement in the seventeenth century through the mid-nineteenth century, the site of Hudson was favored with natural advantages of transportation and landing facilities. With the coming of the proprietors in 1783-5, intensive use of the landing broke sharply with one hundred twenty years of agrarian development. Commercial diversity and enthusiastic application of new technologies combined with its highly desirable location on the Hudson River resulted in continuance of the city. Within the seventy years following the coming of the Proprietors, population turned over; and trade, merchandising, transportation, and growing technologies transformed the landing site five times, each time introducing some advance that promised wealth or better living—elegant chairs, powdered lemonade mix, and lobsters delivered live from New York.

Notes

1"A draught of Claverack Landing taken this 21 September 1774 at the request of William H. Ludlow, Henry I. Rensselaer, Stephen Hogeboom and other inhabitants of Claverack pr William Ellison." NYS Real Property, Bureau of Surplus, Map No. 465. The map should have been filed in New York Land Papers, XXXIV: somewhere between pages 100 and 114 where related petitions are found. In September 1774, the above named men sought to have denied the petition of William Van Ness and Peter Fonda for a waterlot at Claverack Landing.

2A January 1906 copy of an undated map (but ca. 1770s) in author's research files shows the homestead lots of Herdyk heirs; 1779 real and personal property assessments for West Claverack district are found in the Bleecker and the Papers, New York State Library; information about sales has been quoted from Franklin Ellis, History of Columbia County (1878), page 154.


4Jan Franse van Hoesen made with his wife a joint will in Albany on Monday 20/30 November 1665. The writing progressed to the point where his major and minor children were provided for and then Jan Franse "wanted to get up from his bed and sit near the fire, where, on being taken there and put in a chair, he suddenly and unexpectedly gave up the ghost and died." (Dutch Settlers Society Yearbook 6: 16 [1931], tr. A. F. J. Van Laer.) Subsequent history of the family and their patent is found in Court Minutes of Albany, Rensselaerswyck, and Schenectady, passim; in Albany County Clerk's Records; in Albany Protocol; Zion Lutheran Church Records, Athens, New York; and Columbia County Surrogate's and Clerk's Records, Hudson, New York.

5NY Land Papers XXV: 36 and 37, December 5 1768, petition of John Van Alen for waterlots around Rocky Point [Parade Hill]; N Y Land Papers XXXIV: 132, November 8, 1774 sundry persons from Claverack petition for certain trustees to get from John Van Alen fifty feet for a public dock and other conveniences. This latter is undoubtedly the ferry landing—today Hudson's boat launching site.
6Stephen B. Miller, *Historical Sketches of Hudson,* (Hudson: Bryan & Webb Printers, 1862), page 9. (Reprinted 1985, Hudson D.A.R.) Miller’s work on Hudson is the fullest nineteenth century history and the one upon which later accounts were based. Much interesting detail of Hudson’s early days is recorded in the volume.

7Information from the *New York Journal* is found in Franklin Ellis (History of Columbia County, 1878), page 159.


10Miller, *op. cit.,* pages 61-68.


13Quoted in Miller, *op. cit.,* page 104.


15Hunt, *op. cit.,* page 205.