Introduction: The Hudson River Maritime Museum in Kingston, New York

The Lenape People called it “Muhheakunnuk” the “river that flows both ways,” the Dutch River “Mauritius”, and the English “North River.” The Hudson River has carried the names and wishes of the people who have been lucky enough to live along its banks and in its magnificent valley. Yet hidden under the poetry of its many names lies something more utilitarian because it has served as a source of food and water, a sewer, and one of the Earth’s many transportation corridors.

At only 315 miles, the Hudson River is short compared to most of the Earth’s other great water ways. From its origins somewhere in the Adirondacks, by countless tributaries, the river is just that, fresh water. From its south, she is an estuary, an “arm of the sea.” If a summer is particularly dry, the salt front can run as far north as Poughkeepsie. As a result of its form, ocean going ships have been able to sail all the way up to ports in Albany and Troy.

The earliest inhabitants have taken advantage of its usefulness as a transportation corridor. Native Americans plied its waters with canoes carved from tulip poplar trees. The Dutch invented the Hudson River sloop to be able to sail into the Hudson’s sometimes shallower waters. Robert Fulton and Chancellor Robert R. Livingston partnered up to launch *The North River Steamboat* (*Claremont*), the beginnings of the world’s first successful steamship operation.

During the American Revolution, the river took on strategic military significance. It was also becoming economically significant. Since the valley is rich in the resources needed for iron smelting, it was the location of the mighty West Point Foundry. The foundry supplied the war effort with its products. Settlement of the areas between New York City and Albany continued to expand in the years following the war. As farmers tied more into a market economy, their various agricultural products were transported to various river landings and then to the ships that transported the various materials downriver.

As communities in the lower river industrialized, a growing middle class’s leisure time led to the construction of parks for relaxation. With local waters supplies increasingly polluted, demand for fresh water supplies led entrepreneurs and upstate farmers to partner up to create a thriving ice industry. Local lakes and the river itself were carved up into blocks that were also transported all over the world.

Even though America and its great Hudson are post-industrial, this corridor remains one of the one most active in the world. Ocean going ships still venture up-and-down the river, along with the railroads which arrived in the mid-nineteenth century. Ironically, a thriving tourist industry also accommodates “econ-travelers” whose means of conveyance, kayaks and canoes, are more like the first inhabitants of the river the Lenape.

The Hudson River is home to many privately run historical attractions. The Hudson River Maritime Museum is a true treasure. Its founders, experienced river men, were passionate about preserving the Hudson’s rich transportation history. The museum also includes exhibits on the brick and ice industries in the valley.

The study of river transportation raises significant issues about environmental protection. The Native American population, though small, had a significant impact on the river’s ecosystems; however, with European settlement and the Industrial Revolution, humankind’s impact has been more significant. What has been the impact of advances in transportation on the Hudson River valley? Has it been a benefit or a detriment?

Primary Sources:

- **Edison film of ice harvesting on Rockland Lake:**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsc62uqYKFw

- **Images of the Hudson River ice industry (Hudson River Valley Heritage):**
  http://www.hrvh.org/cdm/search/searchterm/Ice%20industry/mode/exact

- **History and images of the ice industry in the Town of Schodack (Rensselaer County): includes many images of tools and industry logos:**
  http://www.schodack.org/hist_feature_ice.htm

- **Robert J. Yasinsac's "Hudson Valley's Ruins" pictures of the remains of the West Point Foundry:**
  http://www.hudsonvalleyruins.org/yasinsac/foundry/foundry.html

Print/Web Resources

- "Toward An Archaeology of the Hudson River Ice Harvesting Industry" Wendy Elizabeth Harris and Arnold Pickman An Article Published in *Northeast Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 29, 2000 (pp.49-82) **http://cragsmoorconsultants.com/cnehaart/article2.html**

- Robert Fulton article: **http://www.hudsonrivervalley.org/review/pdfs/HRVR24Pt1Online.pdf**

- Hudson River Valley Icehouses and Ice Industry An Introduction: **http://www.hudsonrivervalley.org/library/pdfs/articles_books_essays/NatIceIndustrydicehousepaper.pdf**

- The War of 1812 and the Creation of the WPFA:
  http://www.hudsonrivervalley.org/library/pdfs/articles_books_essays/WestPtFoundry.pdf

- Hudson River Maritime Museum website: **http://www.hrmm.org/**

- "Rockland Lake and the Hudson Valley Ice Industry: Before refrigerators and freezers, the Hudson Valley, particularly Rockland Lake, supported a thriving ice industry" David Levine *Hudson Valley Magazine.com* January 2011.
  www.hvmag.com/core/pagetools.php?pageid=8142&url=%2FHudson-Valley-Magazine%2FJanuary-2011%2FRockland-Lake-and-the-Hudson-Valley-Ice-Industry%2F&mode=print

- Michigan Technological University's 2002-2009 industrial archaeology field work at the Foundry site: **http://www.scenichudson.org/parks/westpointfoundrypreserve**

- *Youtube video on Hudson River brick industry:*
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qW5P_rG1PsQ

- Delaware and Hudson Canal Historical Museum website:
  http://www.canalmuseum.org/