

# Chapter 2

## Life and Labor in the Hudson Valley



**R**apid change marked the history of the Hudson Valley in the nineteenth century. As the conflicts of previous times receded into a storied past, its farms and towns became laboratories in which the new nation experimented itself into modernity. Major changes in agricultural production, the stirrings of big-business enterprise, and a transportation revolution that would transform both state and nation were only part of its tumult. The Hudson Valley also fostered alternative lifestyles and the first great school of American artists. Many members of the American leisure class chose to settle and frequent the region. The story of the century is often telescoped as the rise of New York City as the national metropolis, but the domination of Manhattan makes far more sense when considered in conjunction with events in the valley.

### The New Hudson Valley

No state suffered more from the Revolution than New York. Its borders were ravaged, the Hudson corridor was a battlefield, and its greatest city was depopulated and forlorn. When rebuilding began in the 1780s, the flight of tens of thousands of loyalists along with their money and expertise posed a severe challenge. New York's recovery would have been long delayed had not a major shift of population occurred to replenish the loss. A wave of new immigration flooded into the state from the countryside of New England after

peace opened a convenient route west from its unyielding soil. The “Yankee invasion” that began in the 1780s aimed to occupy arable land where hard work would receive a better reward. Emigration in the postrevolutionary years was of such proportion that Timothy Dwight, later president of Yale, claimed that the entire Hudson Valley became a colony of Connecticut by 1788; he was both impressed and saddened by his state’s losses. Dwight feared that virtue itself was being drained from New England as the unending flow of Puritan stock replenished New York’s lost population. Lured by rich and fertile land, and inspired by the reports of those who preceded them, the Yankees filled vacant acres first in Westchester, then Dutchess, and finally Orange counties. Some newcomers sought commercial opportunity in cities; in New York and Albany they proved themselves “the tribe of trade.” Some of Manhattan’s greatest retailing fortunes were amassed by newcomers named Low, Griswold, and Macy. Arriving by the thousands, the industrious migrants altered the nature of Hudson Valley life. They were tenacious; not even winter deterred them since many arrived by sled. They were careful; Yankee thrift and close dealing soon became the rule in both city contracts and county horse trades. They were inventive; the changing land system of the Hudson area allowed Yankee farmers the flexibility to initiate and profit from new agricultural patterns. New England stock constituted the largest population group in the Hudson Valley by 1825 and retained its primacy for the rest of the century.

The Yankee invaders rejoiced to find available fertile land that lacked the rocky underpinnings of New England, but their influence extended beyond agriculture to the urban life of the valley. From 1783 to 1785 several groups of Quaker sailors from Nantucket and Providence founded the town of Hudson. Situated on a high bluff along the river, Hudson occupies a site the Dutch called Claverack Landing and was supposedly a place where the explorer traded with friendly Indians. Whether indeed the site of Hudson’s landing, today’s town luxuriates in fine views of the moving current. Seth and Tom Jenkins led “The Proprietors,” settlers who arrived with families, ships, and homes they transported in prefabricated sections. The site they occupied was a sheltered bay at the last deep water of the river, and it was there they replicated not only their former town life but also their livelihood. The Nantucket whalers, anticipating another war with Great Britain as inevitable, had

decided that only a complete transfer of their home port could guarantee access to the world's oceans. Hudson began its urban existence as a whaling port complete with sperm oil works, rope and sail manufacturers, and the essential distillery. Incorporated by 1785, it had a population of 1,500 within a year, boasted an urban grid by 1787, and was a United States port of entry by 1795. The town added houses, tanneries, and mills so rapidly it challenged Albany's claim to upstate leadership; in 1797 Hudson failed to become the state capital by only a single vote in the legislature. Its mariners made fortunes from hunting whales well into the 1830s, and prosperity lasted until kerosene displaced whale oil. Linked by ferry to Athens across the river, the area became famous for shipbuilding while later in the century Hudson produced cement, iron goods, and doors. Rowdy sailors and workmen made Diamond Street the most lawless place on the river. In the contemporary town, nineteenth-century mansions built by successful sea captains still look down from Promenade Hill to the river while tourists search for antiques along Warren Street.

North of Hudson but also on the east bank of the river, another town was created by the New England influx. Farmland opposite the mouth of the Mohawk River was originally part of the original Van Rensselaer grant, but in the mid-seventeenth century Derick Van der Heyden turned the site into the most important ferry crossing on the upper Hudson. A century and a half later, the combination of fertile land and access to the river drew New Englanders, who purchased choice plots after a land survey was completed in 1786. The newcomers founded Troy in 1789, a name paying homage to classical learning and implying ambition strong enough to challenge Albany's historic control of river-borne commerce. By 1798, when Troy was awarded village status, it already had a post office, brick works, and several paper mills. Across the Hudson but also in 1798, Schenectady received the third city charter in New York. Connecting the growing urban centers was imperative, and between 1797 and 1807 New York State chartered eighty-six turnpike companies, which constructed nine hundred miles of road; the fabled Albany Post Road along the east bank of the Hudson assumed definite shape in this decade. The profusion of river ferries and new roads eased the movement of Yankee settlement and the subsequent flow of farm goods toward the river. Albany, the hub where eight separate turnpikes met, kept its commer-

cial leadership despite the Trojan challenge and its turnpike to Schenectady was the busiest in the nation. Four thousand miles of roadway served the ten-county Hudson region by 1821 and facilitated the growth of area industry. Troy never aspired to political power, but its industrial drive and entrepreneurial skills fostered bitter economic rivalry with Albany for many decades.

Located across the Hudson, Albany itself was strongly influenced by the arriving Yankees. The second-oldest city in the colonies, Albany had long been dominated by a Dutch merchant elite. It had pioneered the fur trade and sent armies off to battle, but the city retained a staid complacency; its show-places included the Pastures, where Schuylers reigned, and a new mansion at Cherry Hill (1787) built by the Van Rensselaers. Yet at the turn of the century its traditional leadership was challenged by ambitious newcomers such as Elkanah Watson, a merchant who arrived in 1788 from the “hive” of New England. Watson described himself as one of many workers arriving to “subdue and civilize the wilderness,” and by 1797 he was part of the coalition of old and new Albanians that wrested the title of state capital away from New York City. Albany was close to the agricultural heartland of the state, more connected to ordinary people, and its location, 150 miles inland, made government secure against invaders. The coalition seemed to believe that Albany, with a population of six thousand, was capable of challenging Manhattan’s commercial primacy. For a decade the state legislature would convene in the old Stadt Huys, but proud Albanians led by Mayor Philip Van Rensselaer laid the cornerstone for a more suitable building in 1806; Philip Hooker designed the new capitol and New York’s representatives first convened under the statue of Themis (Divine Justice) in 1809. Within another decade, Yankee politicians dominated the town council and wrested control of Albany’s future away from Dutch dynasties. But despite all its pretensions, the city seemed insecure in its role, and an executive mansion was not purchased until the 1870s.

The effects of the Yankee influx had an obvious impact on the east shore of the Hudson. Sleepy Poughkeepsie, granted a town charter in 1788, quickly became a transportation hub serving migrants from New England. Located on the post road to Albany, it built turnpikes eastward to Sharon and Litchfield so that Connecticut’s caravans could more easily wend their way west. Poughkeepsie, along with the smaller ports of Athens and Catskill, joined with Hudson to send whalers out into the oceans of the world. These

towns and a dozen others along the river used capable New England shipwrights to build improved nineteenth-century versions of the traditional Dutch sloop. The new river craft were sixty- to seventy-foot-long, center-board, tiller-directed ships that effectively moved the ever-increasing volume of river tonnage through the narrow channels of the Hudson. Nyack specialized in creating vessels with brightly colored hulls, while the Poughkeepsie firm of Van Zandt, Lawrence and Tudor boasted the finest craftsmanship. Commerce-minded Albany built the most vessels, and its largest, the sloop *Utica*, could carry 220 tons of cargo down to Manhattan. The downriver trip normally took four days, but under exceptional sailing conditions might be accomplished in one. Naval historians estimate that 1,300 Hudson River sloops were built from 1796 to 1835, but their commercial domination gradually faded as barges and steamships replaced them.

### **Transportation Revolution in the Hudson Valley**

Despite increases in population and urban settlement, life in the Hudson Valley remained essentially rural and agricultural as a new century began. But revolutionary improvements in steam power and canal construction would bring sudden, massive change. One leader of the transformation was Robert Fulton (1765–1815), the son of an impoverished tailor whose accomplishments inspired the new age of steam. Fulton received little formal education, but his aptitude for drawing won him a letter of introduction to the expatriate American painter Benjamin West from no less a hero than Benjamin Franklin. Six years of apprenticeship near London (1787–93) proved the limits of Fulton’s artistic gift, and the young man transferred his attention to building machines. Great Britain was in the first decades of its Industrial Revolution, and Fulton contributed schemes for ropemaking machinery and iron bridge building to that movement; he also patented a method of canal improvement using inclined planes. The young inventor worked with Charles Mahan to build a steamship for the British navy, but their efforts failed. A disgruntled Fulton left London for Paris, where he spent the years 1797–1803 vainly attempting to interest the French in a “plunging boat” that could fire torpedoes. Then, in 1802, the young inventor was introduced to the United States ambassador to Paris, an encounter that changed history.

Robert Livingston, the lord of Livingston Manor whose family controlled the shoreline of Columbia County, had been sent to Paris to negotiate American access to the Gulf of Mexico; his mission ultimately purchased Louisiana and doubled the size of the United States. A man of eclectic interests and something of a political chameleon, Livingston presided as Washington became president but had joined Jefferson's Republicans when his talents went unappreciated by Federalists. Mechanical advances also intrigued the ambassador, whose farms made use of every agricultural innovation. He had previously financed two failed efforts to build a steamship, but Fulton, now styling himself an "engineer," convinced Livingston that his new scheme would work. Their collaboration in Paris experienced many setbacks, including a prototype that broke in half due to excessive engine weight, but Livingston retained his faith in Fulton. While his friend tinkered, Livingston used his political influence to obtain a steamship monopoly from New York State. When the partners returned to Manhattan in 1806, they held an unused monopoly that would expire unless they could show results by December 1807.

No one knows the exact dimensions of the steamship that Fulton built in Manhattan; its hull is estimated to be 135 by 16.5 feet, but it was essentially a flat-bottomed Durham-style platform capable of holding a heavy Watt engine. Constructed at the Corlear's Hook shipyard of Charles Brown, "Fulton's Folly" was powered by a British "tea kettle" when it made its first test run on the East River on August 9, 1807. After adjustments were made, Fulton sailed the *North River Steamboat of Clermont* around the Battery to a dock opposite Trinity Church. Steam power, if properly utilized, would allow ships to ignore the prevailing Hudson River winds and sail upriver at any time, but to onlookers in 1807 Fulton's ship appeared very dangerous, "a sawmill on a raft spitting fire." When Fulton steered it upriver on August 17 he was immediately forced to fine-tune the ship's balky engine and saw "nothing but disaster" in the faces of his passengers. But listen to his quietly triumphant log report. "I left New York on Monday at four o'clock and arrived at *Clermont*, the seat of Chancellor Livingston, at one o'clock on Tuesday. . . . On Wednesday . . . arrived at Albany at five in the afternoon. . . . The sum is one hundred fifty miles in thirty two hours, equal to near five miles an hour." Fulton's dry reportage heralded a revolution.

Fulton's journal of the steamboat's first trip omitted interesting sidelights. The *North River Steamboat* carried members of the Livingston clan, who endured the overnight trip despite the lack of cabins. When the vessel docked, the chancellor greeted the travelers with an effusive welcoming speech that ended with the announcement of the inventor's engagement to Miss Harriet Livingston; whether the nuptials depended on nautical success was not recorded. After the *Clermont* (the name reporters decided to use) returned to Manhattan, major renovations began and by the time the ship made its first scheduled trip to Albany on September 7, twenty-four berths had been added and a \$7 fare established. Brave souls who wished to experience steam travel on any leg of the vessel's trip were charged a dollar. When the *Clermont*, under the command of Seth Jenkins, proved capable of making three round trips weekly, the delighted Albany legislature extended Livingston's steamship monopoly to the entire state. Fulton, so often destitute during his earlier career, never had to worry about his bank account afterward. During the frozen winter months of 1808, Fulton reconfigured the *Clermont* to offer fifty-four bunks and a family room. New engines were ordered from a Jersey City fabricator, and in 1809 *Car of Neptune*, *Firefly*, and *Paragon* joined Fulton's fleet.

As the steamship conquered the river valley passenger trade, communication and trade in the entire region were revolutionized. Falls in the Hudson at Troy made that town the last stop for upriver traffic, but by 1809 steamboats of Fulton's monopoly sailed on Lake Champlain. River sloops recognized the threat that steamships represented to their livelihood, and their angry captains often sailed close in attempting to disable paddle wheels. Moreover, Fulton, who launched the first Ohio River steamboat in 1811 and instituted steam-ferry passenger service between Manhattan and Brooklyn in 1814, was forced to constantly defend his monopoly from infringements. The year after he died of overwork and fever in 1815, having initiated a revolution that made his life a subject in school curriculums, the New York City Council named a street in his honor. The Fulton-Livingston steamship monopoly was nullified by the Supreme Court in 1824 (*Gibbons v. Ogden*), but the revolution unloosed by the partners continued to expand. By 1840 more than a hundred steamships were active on the Hudson, and a decade later 150 vessels carried an estimated one million passengers. Steamships capable of cross-

ing the Atlantic entered service in the 1820s, and by 1860 the time for a transoceanic voyage had been reduced to only a week. When combined with the impact of the steam engine on wheels, the locomotive, the legacy of Fulton and Livingston was the modern United States.

## **Hudson Canals**

Scores of volumes describe the origins, construction, and importance of the Erie Canal, an idea that ambitious New Yorkers had advanced since the late eighteenth century. Visionaries insisted that if goods from west of the fall line could gain access to the Hudson and New York City, if the flow of immigrants could be channeled, then New York would become the empire George Washington predicted. Presidents Jefferson and Madison refused to endorse the enormous project, much less provide national assistance, but able young leaders such as De Witt Clinton, the son of General James Clinton and nephew of Governor George Clinton, kept the dream alive. As early as 1811, a route through the wilderness using the Mohawk River Valley had been tentatively mapped out, and New York State seemed willing to fund the project on its own. But before the immense financial and engineering problems were addressed, the entire scheme was temporarily shelved as the United States once again fought Great Britain.

Prosperity came to Manhattan in the aftermath of the Treaty of Ghent, and its busy merchants were not interested in providing support for the canal scheme. But De Witt Clinton was elected governor in 1817 on a platform that promised a canal to his upstate supporters. He immediately won legislative approval of a 363-mile-long canal, a proposal opponents derided as “Clinton’s Folly” or the “Governor’s Gully.” It took eight years, but the state and its fiery governor “built the longest canal, in the least time, with the least experience, for the least money and to the greatest public benefit” in history. The economic effect of the Erie Canal transformed New York into the “Empire State” and brought Manhattan commercial supremacy in the nation. In Albany, the merchant community, which had always supported Clinton, began construction of a four-thousand-foot dock even before the Erie Canal was completed in 1825. In 1823 engineers completed a series of tiered locks at Waterford, which finally connected the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers. The locks bypassed the



raging falls at Cohoes and made possible direct shipment of western New York wheat to Manhattan millers. Albany, which had long awaited the junction of the two rivers, received only 1,329 ships in 1823, but by 1826 its newly built docks serviced over 7,000 vessels; city population exploded from 12,630 in 1820 to 24,209 a decade later. For the next two decades the Erie Canal primarily served New Yorkers; until 1847 more than half its total freight came from within the state. But American expansion brought ever greater trade to valley and city; as early as 1851, two-thirds of Erie tonnage came from beyond New York's borders. The 218,000 tons transported in the Erie's first year rose to 4,650,000 tons by 1860 and reached an all-time high of 6,000,000 tons in 1872. Before the Erie opened, both New York City and New York State already held the largest populations in the nation. After 1825, Manhattan ranked as America's premier port. State farmers filled the national breadbasket, and New York was truly the Empire State.

But the Erie Canal was not the only story of the decade. In 1823 political leaders such as George Tibbets (Rensselaer) and Philip Schuyler (Albany) understood that the old invasion corridor between the capital and Lake Champlain awaited another canal that could tap the riches of the northern Hudson wilderness. The Champlain Canal was authorized in 1818 to connect Fort Edward on the Hudson to Whitehall on the lake. When completed in 1823, the 64-mile-long Champlain Canal made commercial lumbering operations possible and facilitated American trade with Canada. Logging operations in the eastern Adirondacks now became possible, a welcome addition to the log driving from Glens Falls south toward Troy, which had begun in 1813. Lumber finishing, furniture making, and paper production would soon bring great prosperity to the small town at the "Big Bend" of the Hudson and create a raft of job opportunities in Fort Edward and Hudson Falls. By 1850 New York would surpass Maine to become the leading producer of lumber in the nation. But lumber was not the only product the Champlain Canal brought south. Eels and other freshwater fish, ice, and grain were also coming down to Albany, and the large capacity of canal boats made area iron mines profitable. The economic transformation of New York was extended to its far north.

Upstate leaders were the most enthusiastic supporters of canals, but profits gradually transformed metropolitan resistance. Thus, when William and

Morris Wurts arrived in Manhattan from Philadelphia to solicit funding for a mid-Hudson canal, investors such as Philip Hone paid attention. Addressing a meeting at the Tontine Coffee House in January 1825, the brothers proposed a plan to bring coal from the anthracite fields of Pennsylvania to the Hudson. The million dollars they raised enabled the Wurts to build a “gravity railroad” across the Moosic Mountains and link it with a canal heading for Kingston on the Hudson. Benjamin Wright, fresh from years of engineering work on the Erie, was hired to create a system of 108 locks, 137 bridges, and 26 basins that became the Delaware and Hudson Canal (1828). John Jarvis, who designed the railway, and John Roebling, whose innovative aqueducts bridged four rivers, ably seconded Wright; both engineers would go on to greater glory. In October 1828, the *Orange* became the first ship to travel the 160-mile length (108 canal miles) of the D&H system, completing the trip in only two days.

From 1828 to 1898, the D&H was the economic heart of the mid-Hudson economy. The *Orange* carried agricultural goods and bluestone, but Pennsylvania coal made the D&H invaluable. Kingston shipbuilders became rich by constructing hundreds of “flicker” barges specifically designed for bulk service on the D&H. Coal was floated down Rondout Creek to Hudson River holding areas and transferred by barge to New York City. In 1831, William and Simon Finch launched a second major industry from their home in Wilbur, at the New York end of the D&H. By 1850 the firm they created was the largest exporter of bluestone in the world, and thousands of miles of Manhattan sidewalks attested to the longevity of their product. Before the D&H arrived, Kingston was a quiet town of only three thousand persons that occupied seventeen square blocks and could be covered in a ten-minute walk. When Rondout, Wilbur, and Kingston merged in 1872, their combined population was twenty thousand. The D&H Canal operated for only seventy years, but it was largely responsible for Kingston’s growth and prosperity during the nineteenth century.

### **Agricultural Change in the Hudson Valley**

Agricultural production is the oldest industry of the Hudson Valley. Both Dutch and English governors gave away vast tracts of land, conferring neo-feudal privileges in the expectation that grain for export and sustenance

would flow down the river to Manhattan. Milling was the first great New York City industry, and it is not surprising that the seal of the city displays a barrel of flour. But historians agree that the paternalism inherent in the manor system deterred initiative, especially along the eastern shore of the river. Individually owned farms were far more the norm on the other side of the Hudson, and corn production flourished there. But the great estates kept an estimated five thousand tenant farmers in almost medieval restrictions. Deep resentment and restrictions on agricultural opportunity led many renters on “Patriot family” manors to remain loyal to George III.

After victory in the Revolution, as reform of land tenure made land more available, agriculture continued to support four-fifths of New York’s population. Crevecoeur’s *Letters from an American Farmer* not only studied the emerging national character but also offered a pungent analysis of farming practices along the Lower Hudson. He believed farms prospered only if all members of the immediate family worked and considered that the availability of land fostered wasteful agricultural methods. New York farmers knew little of crop rotation, fertilizer use, or the conservation practices Europe’s agricultural reformers were advocating. Instead, Hudson Valley farmers simply used up land fertility, and when it returned depleted yields they moved on to other acreage. The process caused a gradual westward movement of the agricultural frontier even before the Yankee invasion tremendously increased New York acreage under cultivation; from 1784 to 1821 improved farmland in the state rose from one million to 5.5 million acres, mostly in western areas of New York. By 1823 the Genesee Valley had replaced the Hudson area as the “Granary of America,” and the wheat grown there soon made Rochester the state’s primary milling center. New York remained the breadbasket of the nation, but the grain in the loaf no longer came from the Hudson Valley.

No manor lord understood the ongoing process and saw the threat as well as Chancellor Robert Livingston. The lord of Livingston Manor not only ordered better methods of cultivation on his lands but also decided to shift production toward fruits and vegetables. Livingston helped found the Society for the Preservation of Agriculture, Arts and Manufactures (1791), a group whose primary goal was revitalization of farm practices. Aware of British efforts to improve grain production, Livingston was an early advocate of a more scientific approach to agriculture in the valley. The society gradu-

ally convinced valley producers they need not “skim” the land and move elsewhere. By using clover and grass and applying gypsum as fertilizer, even older farms could remain self-sustaining and profitable. By 1811, the wheat farming that had long dominated the Hudson Valley was clearly declining as more lands opened in the western counties. In Westchester, gentleman farmer John Jay decided that growing wheat was “like taking a ticket in the lottery.” Area wheat farmers made their last profits during the War of 1812, and corn then replaced it as the staple on most farms. Potash and lumber production increased as it became apparent that Hudson Valley farmers would have to diversify if they were to survive.

Beyond pioneering fruit and vegetable crops, Livingston also helped to create the Hudson Valley woolen industry. Wool from farm sheep had always been harvested and used by women to produce clothing for their families. But Livingston introduced Merino rams to improve the breed and published his *Essay on Sheep*, which publicized the good results. When the market for fine wool passed \$2 a pound in 1807, the valley’s economy experienced a speculative frenzy; the price of a single Merino ram surpassed \$1,000 before the bubble burst in 1810. Hard times and war followed the market decline, but Livingston estimated an average farmer kept two dozen sheep and hogs, stock readily augmented when economics changed. By the time of Livingston’s death, raising sheep was part of the normal farm economy on the east shore of the river, and it remains visible today in Chatham. More importantly, when textile manufacturing began in the 1820s mills on the Hudson had access to a basic raw material.

Elkanah Watson (1758–1842), who purchased his first breeding sheep from Livingston and helped to stimulate the Merino craze, retained his faith in the product even after its first bloom faded. As part of the Yankee invasion Watson accumulated a substantial fortune in Albany even though he considered its citizenry “the most illiterate portion of the human race.” Retiring to Pittsfield, Massachusetts, he raised sheep and is credited with convincing nearby Shaker communities that producing “superfine broad cloth” was a worthy endeavor. But Watson’s influence extended far beyond his faith in wool. He sponsored the first Berkshire County Fair, and the nationwide publicity garnered by that event made him a crusader for better agricultural information. He helped New Yorkers organize county farm societies and

advocated shifting cropland into orchard or dairy operations, new businesses that would become identified with the Hudson Valley.

The third Hudson reformer of the period was Jesse Buel (1778–1839), a New England transplant who made a fortune buying up lands sold for taxes and reselling them. Buel edited newspapers in Kingston and Albany before establishing a model farm at Sandy Barrens near the capital. He advocated crop rotation, the use of manure, planting fallow grasses, and the use of deep plowing techniques, all of which turned unproductive land into thriving enterprises. Buel called for the creation of farm journals and state supported agricultural schools; his influence was critical in forming the Board of Agriculture (1819). Greater crop yields demanded better equipment, and Buel encouraged use of a cast-iron plow developed by Jethro Wood; demonstrations at county fairs doomed the wooden plow. Forges across the valley, especially those in Troy, provided many models, with a particular favorite being the “Livingston county” type. In 1834 Buel founded the *Albany Cultivator* and preached agricultural reform as editor; he also published the *Farmers Companion* and *A Treatise of Agriculture*, volumes that succinctly summarized the agricultural reforms practiced in the valley.

By the 1820s the wheat culture of the valley was being replaced by more varied agricultural production. Wheat continued to flow down the Hudson River from the Erie Canal, but its sources were now the Genesee Valley or the lands of the Middle West. The historian David Ellis concluded that along the river “farming as a way of life” had ended and was replaced by “farming as a means of profit.” Orange County became known as a butter producer and would soon add cheeses and fluid milk to the stream of foods it sent down to Manhattan. Onions would soon become a major crop in the “black belt” lands of its western reaches. The Hoosick Valley running east of the Hudson above Albany became a major producer of flax and provided it to spinning mills. Schuyler money sponsored a linen manufacturing plant close to the river at old Saratoga, and grateful residents renamed their town Schuylerville in 1831. The Downing family opened a plant nursery in Newburgh, and offered their expertise to farmers who were shifting to the production of fruits and vegetables for the urban marketplace; young Andrew Jackson Downing advocated planting apple orchards on the west bank. As dairy farming and cattle raising grew in importance, larger herds made possible the creation of

major slaughtering facilities in Albany and Troy; scores of smaller, equally bloody operations served communities along the river. New York State led the nation in beef production in the 1840s and remained third into the 1870s. In 1835 John Jacques, heir to a Huguenot tradition of fine winemaking, planted his first vines in Ulster County and produced his first wine four years later. The Brotherhood Winery (1839), the oldest such business in the United States, still has the largest cellar in the nation and receives half a million visitors annually. By the twentieth century, wine would rank as a major valley industry, and tourist “Wine Trails” were established in several counties. Brotherhood survived Prohibition and the Depression by manufacturing sacramental wine, and in May 2002 the Hudson Valley Wine School opened on its grounds.

By 1860 New York State led the country in number of farms, farmers, and value of production, and in crops as varied as potatoes, hops, flax, and lumber. The Jonathan apple, introduced by Abe Jensen in the 1820s, became a staple crop in the valley, but there were also Pippins, Greenings, Maiden’s-blushes, Baldwins, and Russets; beginning in the 1880s the Macintosh assumed primacy. The profusion of apples was outdone by a variety of pears surpassing the century mark. The county fair movement, begun in Dutchess County in 1806 by Dr. Samuel Bard and expanded by reformers such as Watson, created regional pride in the cornucopia of Hudson Valley produce. The New York State Fair, approved in 1841 and first held in Poughkeepsie, became an annual extravaganza to display the wealth produced by the soil of the Empire State. While the bulk of agricultural yield gradually shifted away from the Hudson Valley, its farmers continued to prosper because the doctrine of diversification had adjusted production to meet changing conditions. The flexibility of nineteenth-century farmers provided stability for the region even as the foundations of American economic expansion shifted toward manufacturing.

Rather inevitably, agricultural change provoked another rebellion against the manorial system, which still existed in sections of the Hudson Valley. The survival of patroonship and feudal practice into the nineteenth century seemed a standing insult to America’s democratic spirit. Livingston Manor tenants in 1811–12 petitioned the legislature against sporadic attempts to have local officials collect levies, and sheriffs in collusion with the chancellor soon regretted their alliance with wealth. Yet the legal system continued to

support the lordly rents. As Jacksonian democracy swept the nation, the manor lords on the east side of the river retained their extrajudicial authority and the right to evict their tenants for nonpayment. Stephen Van Rensselaer, the “Good Patroon,” did not collect his due rents for years, but the issue remained unsettled. Van Rensselaer died in January 1839, like most gentlemen deeply in debt. His will instructed his sons to collect the \$400,000 in back rents he had ignored for decades. When the notices demanding payment were sent, a “committee of respectable men” met with Stephen Van Rensselaer IV, only to be treated “with marked coldness and disdain.” Therefore, on July 4, Independence Day celebrations in Columbia County were transformed into anti-rent rallies demanding the termination of a pernicious system; leaders of the tenants then made a concrete offer of settlement. The two Van Rensselaer brothers, who disagreed on most subjects, united to obtain eviction notices if December rents were not forthcoming. Tenants in Columbia County believed the land was theirs. Possession for years had made it so, and when Sheriff Michael Archer attempted to serve the papers he and his deputies were rudely handled. Governor William Seward had to call out guardsmen from Troy and issue a proclamation insisting on the enforcement of the law. When some leaders were evicted from their farms, the so-called Anti-rent War began.

For the next decade the upper Hudson Valley and land as far west as Delaware County experienced acts of civil disobedience and guerrilla warfare that undermined the power of large landlords. Tenants masquerading as Indians rode into town as “Calico Cowboys,” and by threatening the courts they virtually paralyzed the legal system. Anti-renters admitted that their own ancestors were “fools” who had agreed to work for a “lazy, worthless, immoral and bastard aristocracy.” But their heirs were free men “no longer willing to be slaves.” Columbia’s rebels were led by Dr. Smith Broughton, popularly known as “Big Thunder” for his troublemaking ability. When Broughton was captured in Hudson, the cowboys gathered at the jail in such numbers that three militia companies were mobilized to prevent his escape. More devastating were two deaths in Delaware County, where mobs also destroyed the records of the Holland Land Company. Anti-rent advocates became a potent political force, and by 1845 most political leaders had been converted to their cause. Public opinion as well as local courts favored

the rent protesters, but everyone was forced to take sides. The most famous defender of the landlords was the novelist James Fenimore Cooper, an aristocrat who simply condemned the entire “disagreeable race” of anti-renters. Years of analyzing the American character and writing social criticism had honed Cooper’s instinctive class bias; he considered the protesters merely invading Yankees who hated their betters. Cooper’s anger renewed his literary muse, and his quickly written “Littlepage Manuscript” trilogy of novels (*Satanstoe*, *The Chainbearers*, *The Redskins*) defended the old system. Of more lasting value, Cooper finished his *Leatherstocking Tales*.

When New York held its scheduled Constitutional Convention in 1846, the rent controversy was much discussed by delegates. One proposed amendment set a twelve-year limit for the leasing of land yet ignored the question of previously existing obligations. The anti-renters had successfully supported the election of local sheriffs and justices who impeded landlord attempts to collect their rents, and in the gubernatorial race of 1846 they provided the decisive margin of John Young’s victory. When Young assumed office, he immediately pardoned convicted anti-rent leaders and authorized a state investigation into land titles. Ultimately the Court of Appeals decided that “quarter sale” payments to landlords like the Livingstons (who still held 700,000 acres) were unconstitutional; rentals claimed by the Van Rensselaers were not settled until the 1850s. Almost 225 years after the patroon system was instituted, democratic landholding finally became reality throughout the Hudson Valley.

### **Industrialization Comes to the Valley**

As the nineteenth century opened, the Hudson Valley provided some of the most beautiful vistas in America, ever-changing panoramas of land and water. But the land, which originally drew settlement because of its wealth of furs, was now producing a wide variety of crops that sustained the families, towns, and cities of the area. The magnificent river, filled with a vast variety of fish and the largest oyster beds in the world, offered its bounty freely to both the lonely angler and commercial fisherman. Already shattered by decades of conflict, the bucolic idyll was now to be altered by the forces of an Industrial Revolution whose effects were already evident in Western Europe. The Hud-



son Valley did not lead this process but would shortly display many examples of its impact. In less than a century labor would shift away from the land and the river into factories and shops. The process of industrialization would change life in the valley.

Samuel Slater, who emigrated from Great Britain in 1789, carried in his mind the schematics that allowed him to build textile machinery along New England streams. The secrets of technology spread rapidly, and New York entrepreneurs quickly learned how to adapt steam power to textile machinery. By 1813 there were already forty-three cloth factories in Albany and Columbia counties, and in 1814 investors led by John Jacob Astor and Philip Hone started a cotton mill at Fishkill Falls. In 1815 William Teldor, taking advantage of the sheep-raising craze, opened the Hudson's first woolens factory on Sparkill Creek. The census of 1820 identified 9,400 New Yorkers already employed in factories, and increasing productivity made clothing manufacture at home foolish. After the Erie Canal opened in 1825, New York City investors financed the huge Harmony Cotton Manufacturing Company at the Cohoes waterfall. Harmony became the largest textile complex in the nation and pioneered the manufacture of knitwear. Nearby the Star Woolen Mills made use of local wool and flax to challenge Harmony's dominance. County fairs along the Hudson corridor simply stopped displaying homespun cloth by the 1840s, since little was being made, and before the Civil War most New Yorkers purchased only readymade clothing. Industry had altered the texture of valley life.

Manufacturing inventiveness and business initiative transformed the Hudson economy. Local entrepreneurs used natural resources—trees, wool, clay, stone, and metals—to industrialize the valley. More than a hundred steamships operated on the Hudson by 1840, but factories using steam-powered engines far surpassed that level. The advantages of machinery are apparent in the development of nineteenth-century lumbering. In colonial times small-scale sawmills, mostly for local consumption, were established as towns grew along rivers, but nineteenth-century steam-powered cutting for export could make a town rich. Glens Falls, under the leadership of Daniel Parks, made logging the foundation of its economic revival. In 1813 Alamson and Norman Fox “drove” individually branded logs to a holding/sorting pool above the village, and water-driven mills transformed the raw wood into

boards. When the newly constructed Champlain Canal opened, trees from the eastern slopes of New York's mountains became available for processing. By 1830 Glens Falls, Sandy Hill, Fort Edward, and Cohoes had built sufficient steam-powered mills to challenge Maine's long domination of the lumber trade; Francis Parkman visited Glens Falls in 1842 and counted twenty working mills. New York State led the nation in finished lumber products by 1850. Glens Falls alone produced 26 million running feet, and wood products were the most important Adirondack industry of the nineteenth century. During the Gilded Age, as wood pulp substituted for rags in newsprint, a dozen large factories supplied the raw material for the papers and books Americans read. Logging, steam power, and the Champlain Canal trade created a vital role for the north Hudson in the national marketplace.

Lower Hudson Valley trees made possible a prosperous leather industry along the west shore of the river after the War of 1812. Natural tannins from hemlock trees can soften stiff hides before they become shoes, gloves, boots, saddles, or belts. The vast stands of hemlock along the Hudson below Albany spurred the new industry, and soon oak, chestnut, and blue spruce were also being used in the tanning process. Zadock Pratt in Greene County pioneered the new industry, became rich, and served two terms in Congress. A host of imitators around the Catskills followed in his wake. As the industry outgrew the capacity of local herds, hides had to be imported from South America to keep valley tanneries operating. By the 1860s the tree stock was depleted, and the leather industry moved west from the river to towns like Gloversville. But during the Civil War the Hudson Valley still produced most Union cavalry saddles. Hudson tanneries injected industrial pollution into the river and destroyed forest land. By 1870 clear-cutting techniques had destroyed all the hemlocks along the Hudson, eradicating as well the blue sheen they gave to the Catskills. The green-hued Catskill wilderness of the twentieth century is almost all second-forest growth.

But another industry emerged from the forest devastation. Tanneries need the tannins from the trees but left behind thousands of hemlock and spruce stripped of their bark. These naked trunks were harvested, cut into four- or eight-foot sections, shipped to New Paltz sawmills, and transformed into hoops and barrel staves. A niche industry was built out of the debris of another, and it manufactured fifty to sixty million hoops yearly. Cooperage

was a Hudson industrial craft that lasted until the world no longer needed wooden barrels.

Boston's "Ice King," Frederick Tudor, had taught New Englanders that money resided in frozen water, and New York and Hudson entrepreneurs quickly emulated his business success. Manhattan first sent ice south in 1816, beginning a river trade that shipped 146,000 tons by 1856. From the 1820s hundreds of Rockland County farmers cut winter ice for Manhattan dealers, and innovations pioneered by John and Edward Felter created a major industry after 1835. The brothers successfully moved ice from the pure waters of Rockland Lake (Hook Mountain) and Hessian Lake (Bear Mountain) down to the Hudson using gravity railways and ice chutes. River sloops, soon replaced by a fleet of thirteen steamships, transferred ice blocks packed in straw and hay down to the city. The Knickerbocker Ice Co., an offshoot of Felter operations around Slaughter's Landing, dominated the lucrative trade until 1926. During the 1800s ice sheds 150 by 200 feet in size and storing up to 30,000 tons could be seen along the river from the Palisades to Troy. Upriver firms benefited by cutting ice directly out of the river, since salt contamination ended at Poughkeepsie. The advent of refrigeration in the 1920s ended this saga of Hudson River life, but nineteenth-century icehouses found new occupation in the twentieth century as mushroom producers.

Perhaps the most famous Hudson Valley industry grew out of the clay and stone of its riverbank. Yellow brickwork was one of the features of Dutch colonial architecture, and local brickmaking facilities date back to the Revolutionary era. Making good brick demands wood, suitable clay, straw, and coal dust, as well as businessmen capable of bringing all these elements together. In nineteenth-century Haverstraw, British immigrant James Wood formed his first bricks in 1817–18. He discovered clay fields near the river, which supplied a fine compound for bricks, and locally grown straw added to the strength of his product. In 1829, Wood received a U.S. patent for an oven that reduced brick firing time to a single week rather than the normal fifteen days. Experimentation discovered that anthracite dust quickened drying from inside the bricks, and this additive was abundantly available from Kingston's D&H coal yards. All the nascent industry lacked was large markets.

On the evening of December 16, 1835, a fire broke out in downtown Manhattan. Whipped by strong winds from the harbor, the flames devastated

the area around Broad, Wall, and South Streets before moving north and west toward Greenwich Village. Before overmatched volunteer companies halted the blaze, more than twenty city blocks were consumed and millions of dollars in property lost. New metropolitan building codes were enacted, making brick the favored material; brickyards from Haverstraw to Hudson expanded rapidly to meet the need, and 75 percent of Manhattan construction for the rest of the century was done with goods produced in the Hudson Valley. Thousands of Irish immigrants found their first jobs digging clay, tending the kilns, and transferring bricks to scows at dozens of sites along the river. At its height there were perhaps 250 brickyards, with John Derbyshire, Richard Van Valen, John Rose, and Juan Jovas among industry leaders; Haverstraw alone had forty-two firms employing 2,400 men in 1883. The height of valley brick production came in 1905 when 1.3 billion bricks were fired, but the industry died as twentieth-century builders shifted to steel and glass and southern competitors undercut valley prices. Haverstraw and Kingston closed their remaining yards in the 1980s and the last river brickyard, Powell and Minnoch near Albany, closed in 2002. Modern travelers can experience this basic Hudson industry at the Brick Museum in Haverstraw.

Hudson quarries also provided stone for construction. Haverstraw held deposits of red sandstone, while brownstone and hard bluestone were found in the hills of Rockland, Orange, and Ulster Counties. Brownstone, despite its fickle composition, became the primary construction material for acres of Manhattan townhouses, while bluestone, hard enough to resist freezing cold and impervious to heat, became the ubiquitous paving material of city sidewalks. When the state prison at Sing Sing opened in 1825, inmates sent “up the river” excavated marble deposits used in mansions as well as the walls that held them inside. The stones of the Hudson Valley endure as part of many architectural monuments.

Most significant for national development was an entirely new industry shaped in the Catskills. During construction of the Erie Canal it had been discovered that certain earth would harden below the waterline, “cement” that made construction of locks much easier. During the 1820s, in the hills west of Kingston, around High Falls and Rosendale, the cement industry was born. The Rondout Formation under the lands of Jacob Snyder dates back 400 million years and contains vast amounts of limestone rock heavily laced

with magnesium. Farm workers under Snyder had been ordered to make quicklime for agricultural use, but the powder produced when mixed with water created slurry that hardened into rock. Rosendale cement was first used in construction of the D&H canal, but found its major market in Manhattan. Cement from the Rosendale Company was immensely durable, and late in the century it provided the foundation for both the Brooklyn Bridge and the Statue of Liberty. Cement was so essential that after the D&H Canal officially closed in 1898, the channel between Rosendale and Rondout remained operative to ship cement; today it is part of the Rosendale Natural Cement Historic District.

No Hudson Valley city benefited as much from the Industrial Revolution as Troy, long a ferry site and the best way across the Hudson. Already a prosperous transportation hub, the Champlain Canal gave the city access to iron ore mined in the Adirondacks, and the genius of Henry Burden (1791–1871) made Troy the most important iron manufacturing center of the antebellum period. In 1823 Burden invented a machine that made spikes (nails), and he soon adapted it to manufacture horseshoes. His iron works near the river soon produced a horseshoe every second, adding up to a million a week. Burden iron products were essential when Troy engineers built the first railway bridge across the Hudson in 1835. In 1851 Burden enhanced his fame by unveiling a giant water wheel sixty feet in diameter, an ever-turning wonder that provide up to five hundred horsepower. The great wheel was dismantled in 1941, but visitors can still experience Burden's accomplishment in a modern museum demonstration. Unlike earlier iron forges in Sterling Forest or the Livingston works at Ancram, Burden's installation was Troy's big business and fostered secondary operations in iron plating, lamps and lanterns, farm equipment, and stoves.

Troy benefited enormously from its geographic position opposite the Erie Canal. When bargemen celebrated their arrival at the Side Cut of the long canal, they headed for Troy's Barbary Coast, a district of taverns and sporting houses. For much of the century Troy battled against Albany for economic primacy, valiantly seeking to overcome the banking, governmental, and shipping advantages of the capital. It was an uneven struggle, but because of an overworked housewife named Hannah Lord Montague the city was able to persevere. Mrs. Montague was simply tired of constantly washing

and turning the dirty shirt collars of her equally hardworking husband. In 1827 she created a detachable collar for men's shirts, an innovation so useful that Ebenezer Brown began mass production of the product in 1829. An industry was born, and by the 1840s Troy's riverfront was devoted to some two hundred factories employing more than ten thousand seamstresses; America's "Collar City" was responsible for 90 percent of total U.S. production. The sewing machine made it possible to add cuffs, and Troy's Cluett-Peabody firm introduced fully assembled Arrow Shirts to department stores.

These vignettes hardly present the full story of fifty years of industrial growth in the Hudson Valley, but they do illustrate its unexpected vitality. Taking advantage of the natural resources of the area, people of the valley created new industries even as river life shifted away from its agricultural base. The enormous barge traffic generated by the Erie Canal was headed for Manhattan and generally bypassed river communities. Unwieldy canal boats lashed together at Albany or Troy for conveyance to New York would rarely make stops along the Hudson. Nevertheless, local initiatives compensated for lost trade by creating new commodities. Transportation convenience cost river towns some degree of prosperity, but entrepreneurs did create products indispensable for metropolitan growth. Apparel, lumber, iron, bricks, ice, stone, paper, and leather all flowed toward the great national marketplace as the transportation corridor of the Hudson grew ever busier.

### **The Hudson Valley in the Civil War**

Until 1827 it was legal for New Yorkers to own slaves, and Hudson Valley farmers held many in bondage well into the 1800s. Although Manhattan organized one of the earliest antislavery societies, the state constitution of 1821 retained high property qualifications for black voters, a discriminatory practice endorsed by several statewide referendums. Although Governor William Seward refused to return fugitive slaves to the South in 1840, Southern slave catchers legitimately roamed the state until the war. New York business gained far more by maintaining good trading relations with the South than by adopting a stance of moral condemnation. The circumstances invited individual protest, and some valley residents became abolitionists and actively supported the Underground Railroad transporting fleeing slaves. Peekskill's

African Methodist Zion Church and the Beecher estate outside the village were stations on that line. Harriet Tubman, the most famous “conductor” on the railroad, had valley support during several of her nineteen trips out of the South. Only illness prevented her personal participation in the Harper’s Ferry raid of 1859. When John Brown, the leader of that action, was executed, the city of Albany accorded him a hundred-gun salute. He is buried in North Elba, the Adirondack community he helped found. In April 1860 Tubman led a Troy crowd that prevented the court-ordered return of a fugitive slave to the South, a militant action that would have thrilled Brown.

In November 1860, Manhattan gave two-thirds of its vote to opponents of the Republican Party, but a torrent of Hudson Valley and upstate votes gave Abraham Lincoln a narrow statewide victory. In January 1861, New York City Mayor Fernando Wood suggested New York City’s secession, while in Albany a large public meeting resolved that “Civil War will not restore the Union, but will defeat forever its reconstruction.” When Lincoln stopped in Manhattan to solicit the support of its bankers in February, city businessmen were already lamenting declines in the ship, iron, carriage, apparel, and ice trades. Lincoln did his bit for the economy by purchasing a Tiffany necklace for his wife, but he left uncertain of the loyalty of the city. Many New Yorkers believed the new president was incompetent, yet when the Civil War began at Fort Sumter everything changed. During the greatest crisis in American history no state sacrificed more, purchased more bonds, or paid more taxes than New York. The legislature authorized 30,000 volunteers, but by the end of April 1861 more than 47,000 enlistments had been processed. During the war the state provided more than 484,000 men for the Union, a sixth of the army total, and 53,114 of them died to give the United States a “new birth of freedom.” Within this immense effort, the role of the Hudson Valley was preeminent.

The many textile factories of the valley produced miles of cloth that were transformed into blankets and uniforms by New York firms as different as A. T. Stewart and Brooks Brothers. Hudson River steamships were conscripted into the navy, while the leather industry produced saddles and riding gear for the cavalry. No industry contributed more to Union victory than valley iron foundries. A naturalized American named John Ericsson, while staying at the Poughkeepsie estate of industrialist John Winslow, worked out the

plans for an armored ship with a movable turret. Winslow was an ironmonger whose family had introduced the Bessemer process at the Burden works, and that innovation allowed the casting of iron plates large enough to cover the sides of such a vessel. The Burden works forged the plates and floated them downriver only weeks before a great fire destroyed much of Troy. At Greenpoint, in Brooklyn, Ericsson's "saltbox on a raft," the *USS Monitor*, was actually constructed, but the Burden Museum at Troy displays artifacts gathered from its wreckage. Pending completion of a final home for the *Monitor* at Newport News, remnants of the famed vessel are visible only in the Hudson Valley.

Most vitally, the Hudson Valley produced the artillery that won the war. The oldest armory in the United States was established at Watervliet in 1813, and the "Arsenal City" opposite Troy proved its value during the conflict as Napoleons, howitzers, naval weapons, and all types of ammunition poured out of its doors. Yet by the end of the war, the Cold Spring Foundry opposite West Point surpassed Watervliet in fame. It was there that Robert Parrott, using pig iron produced in Orange County (some from the same mines that had produced ore for the West Point chain), created rifled artillery barrels with great range and amazing accuracy. Parrott guns provided Union regiments with artillery supremacy, and Cold Spring produced more than 1,700 cannon and 3 million rounds of ammunition during the war. Although the famed works closed in 1911, a historical society in nearby Philipstown offers an extraordinary collection of memorabilia.

Valley support for Lincoln never wavered during the long struggle, and thousands viewed his funeral cortege as it came up the Hudson rail corridor in 1865. Celebration of Memorial Day and the influence of the Grand Army of the Republic were important in the valley. A profusion of Grand Army memorials in towns along the river mark losses sustained, but perhaps Yonkers can represent them all. During the Civil War the city sent 254 of its sons into battle, and seventeen of them died. But as manufacturing and commerce dominated the development of the city, wartime efforts were forgotten. On Memorial Day 1888, William Allen Butler, a local lawyer and poet, chastised city burghers for their neglect of the past. Butler's appeal fostered a two-year fundraising campaign, featuring expositions, lectures, bake sales, and businessmen's lunches, to place a memorial at the most important intersection



in the city, in front of old Philipse Manor, now converted into the City Hall. Yonkers spared no expense, and bronze statues representing each service (army, navy, artillery, cavalry) were commissioned to surround a column of Vermont granite. When the Soldiers and Sailors Monument was dedicated on September 17, 1891, Grand Army veterans from the entire Hudson Valley stood at attention, the USMA band played, and twenty thousand spectators cheered. Sadly, when the Yonkers monument was restored and rededicated in 2002, only a handful of persons attended the ceremonies.

### **Completing a Century of Enterprise**

In Gilded Age America, business enterprise continued to flourish along the Hudson River as the United States matured as an industrial power. Yonkers developed a diversified economy that included hats made by the Warner company, patent medicines, and sugar refining. Its major factory, founded by Elisha Graves Otis in 1854, built elevators. Otis made his reputation in Manhattan but set up shop in Yonkers, where his son Charles reorganized the company. Otis Brothers and Co. (1864) set the world standard for stock and passenger elevators, boasting that no lift problem was beyond its capability. When a tourist railway was installed to the top of Mount Beacon, Otis overcame the steep angle; the company's funicular operated until 1971. When Yonkers was incorporated as a city in 1872, the Otis Company was its largest employer and remained a presence there for the next century. It employed workers of every ethnic background, and the famed comedian Sid Caesar developed and perfected his double-talk routines before those mixed audiences. The second signature corporation in Yonkers, the Alexander Smith carpet and rug plant, arrived with the new city charter. Smith and his partners pioneered the use of the Axminster power loom, and their enormous factory buildings covered almost a mile of riverfront. The corporation remained the largest rug manufacturer in the tri-state area until it moved south in the 1950s. Large companies such as Otis and Smith made Yonkers extremely prosperous even as it retained its suburban charms. Those who remember the plot of *Hello, Dolly* know that many Manhattan merchants lived in Yonkers and, because of municipal wealth, it is not surprising that the first golf club in the United States was formed there in 1888. Twentieth-century Yonkers lost its

industrial edge as manufacturers moved away, but it remains the third-largest city in the state.

Across the Hudson, the town of Piermont nestles between the end of the Palisades Escarpment and the mountain called High Tor. Located where Sparkill Creek runs into the river, Piermont, the entry point into both Rockland County and New York's interior, at mid-century became a railroad center. It was the eastern terminus of the Erie Railroad, which reached Dunkirk on Lake Erie in 1851. All Erie passengers to and from Manhattan had to board steamships for part of their trip. Despite its railway importance, Piermont remained isolated, and only in the 1860s did State Senator William Marcy Tweed win legislative approval funding for a road down the west side of the river. In time the terminus for the Erie was shifted to Pavonia, but the complex of machine and metal shops and the concentration of locomotive workers and painters brought prosperity to Piermont into the twentieth century.

The town of Peekskill (1866) offers an example of mixed industry that brought prosperity in the late century. After 1865 Peekskill won fame as the manufacturer of Crayolas, hats, and underwear. It flourished as a port and railroad stop, and as the place where seven foundries built cooking stoves. Although Peekskill fell victim to the changing economic tides of the twentieth century, more than half its most attractive housing dates from the Victorian Era. Crayolas left for Pennsylvania, the foundries closed, and large employers such as Fleischmann's Yeast and Baker Underwear came and left. Today Peekskill brags of being an artists' haven whose residents endure economic decline and debate whether their most prominent citizen is former Mayor (and later Governor) George Pataki or movie star Mel Gibson.

North of Peekskill on the Hudson is Poughkeepsie, the seat of Dutchess County since 1714 and a transit hub, which became the "Queen City" of the Hudson in the nineteenth century. Poughkeepsie welcomed railroad lines, integrating them with the road system it already commanded, and became quite prosperous. Matthew Vassar (1792–1868), an English immigrant who had become the town's leading brewer, recognized that bringing the New York and Harlem north out of Peekskill to his town was essential to its growth. He and fellow merchants raised \$3 million and hired John Jervis to extend the tracks up the east shore of the Hudson. When the line was finally extended up to the capital area, Poughkeepsie became one of five express stops on the line. The town

appreciated the value of innovation. Samuel B. Morse built his mansion there, and Poughkeepsie enjoyed telegraph connections even before Manhattan. Railroads going north and east stimulated its growth, and its merchants built their factories on bluffs that rose some two hundred feet above the Hudson.

Poughkeepsie developed a varied manufacturing sector in the decades after 1865. There were elevator and typewriter companies, knitwear and silk thread factories, and iron works that turned out both horseshoes and gun turrets. Adriaance Platt & Co. built the Buckeye mowers and reapers coveted by every farmer in the valley, while dairy and farm machinery as well as refrigeration equipment also made substantial contributions to the local economy. But amid all the hardware, the most famous factory in Poughkeepsie was run by the sons of James Smith, the maker of “cough candy” powerful enough to thwart the cold winds that blew down the valley. William and Andrew Smith first worked in the family “home-quality” restaurant, but soon focused on producing “drops” that eased throats across the nation. Despite a host of imitators, shopkeepers insisted on the real thing, dispensing the distinctive Smith Brothers cough drops in glassine envelopes from jars on the store counter. The Smith Brothers (not really “Trade” and “Mark”) introduced their first packaged product in 1872, and a grateful nation cheered when menthol, cough syrup, and wild cherry flavor became additional weapons in the unending fight against common colds. Although now part of a conglomerate, Smith Brothers products are still made in Poughkeepsie.

Vassar’s contributions to his adopted hometown did not stop when the railroad arrived. His goal was to use his fortune for public good, and he first attempted to build a memorial to Henry Hudson on Polly Pell Island in the river. When that scheme failed, he decided to fund a girl’s school to provide “useful, practical and sensible” learning. The Vassar Female College was established in 1861 and became Vassar College in 1867. It admitted men in 1974, but it has never wavered from its founder’s goal. With astronomer Maria Mitchell as one of the many stars of the faculty, Matthew Vassar’s school became the model for female colleges as the century progressed, and its prominence encouraged Poughkeepsie to host Ivy League regattas at the end of the century. In 1895 the first of these was held on the Long Reach above the city, and grandstands were erected on both sides of the rivers to hold the crowds that cheered a victory by Columbia University.

During the 1870s Poughkeepsie Mayor Harvey Eastman encouraged factory construction and proposed spanning the Hudson with the first railroad bridge south of Albany. Even many engineers believed the project was impossible, but the railroad bridge that opened on December 2, 1888, ranked as the longest in the world. Poughkeepsie became the key link between New England to the coal fields of Pennsylvania, but its success hastened the economic decline of Newburgh and Catskill across the Hudson. The Queen City remained a transit hub for decades, but its great bridge has been closed since a fire in 1974.

Farther to the north, Kingston enjoyed the prosperity fostered by the coal, concrete, and fishing enterprises centered near Rondout Creek and the D&H Canal. By 1872 population growth eliminated the borders between settlements and three area villages were merged into the city of Kingston. A Victorian city hall, magnificently situated on a high hill, dominated its skyline. It was carefully renovated in 2000. Believing that future growth demanded improved rail connections, Kingston investors purchased a failing railroad line and extended it north along Lake Champlain to Plattsburg and Montreal. By the time the D&H Canal closed in 1898, the Kingston railroad system named in its honor was the third-largest network in New York. The D&H headquarters building near the river in Albany is a well-preserved city landmark, now serving as the administrative center for the State University of New York.

Kingston's future depended on adding manufacturing to use the new rails. New factories were soon producing cigars, clothing, and electric trolley cars for the light-transit lines that crisscrossed upstate counties and ran into the Midwest. River traffic and fishing employed many residents. Thomas Cornell, founder of the prominent Cornell Steamboat Company, made his first fortune by shipping cement to Manhattan, but by the time of his death in 1890 he was a principal in several steamship lines, the Rhinecliff Ferry, the First National Bank of Rondout, and the Ulster and Delaware Railroad. Kingston was a major landing site for river steamers, and the town was an early pioneer of tourism. The city administration built Kingston Point amusement park to accommodate daily visitors debarking from Manhattan vessels. Tourism was increasing on the Hudson—the city of Newburgh made Washington's Revolutionary War headquarters the first historic site in New York in

1850—and Kingston worked with Albany to purchase the Senate Building and have it designated the second state historic site. Few valley communities have competed for the tourist trade as successfully as Kingston, whose many museums and old Stockade District continue to attract visitors.

Above Kingston smaller industrial sites dot the Hudson, but the major complex of industry grew in the Albany-Troy metropolitan area. Troy ranked as the fourth-richest urban center in the nation at the time of the Civil War, and its prosperity financed cultural amenities. Architect George Post constructed one of the finest concert spaces in the United States above the Troy Savings Bank in 1874, and Louis B. Tiffany built his studio in the city; his finest glasswork still glows in St. Paul's Episcopal and St. Joseph's Catholic churches and the public library. Troy also has the oldest continuously used synagogue in New York (1870) and some of the Hudson Valley's most exceptional homes along Second Street. A rich city rebuilt after a wartime fire, Troy survived the St. Valentine's Day flood of 1889 and remained an extremely busy port well into the new century. It continued to dominate the shirt business and, in an unpredictable offshoot of industrialization, held leadership in laundry machine production by 1900. Yet it never lost its undertone of bawdiness. Madame Faye, the most notorious courtesan of the riverfront, was so famous that she had a tugboat named in her honor. Modern Troy honors all aspects of its past, and present-day visitors to the city will discover no fewer than eight separate historic districts.

Finally there was Albany, both the administrative center of the state and a capitalist stronghold. In 1830 Henry Christman still believed the city was the "seat of power of a landed aristocracy, the center of an island of semi-feudalism," but modern business was already displacing the old regime. Its antebellum industries included tanneries, distilleries, tobacco manufacturing, furriers, and brickmakers, while iron fabricators, lumber companies, printers, and apparel factories were increasing in number; furniture and shoemaking were soon added to the capital mixture. Francis Parkman noted the bustle of its docks, the vigor of its people, and "the most ancient and fish-like smell which saluted our shrinking nostrils"; commercial fishermen provided "Albany beef" to the state while Albany meat packers were the largest in the valley. Antebellum Albany and Troy combined to produce fully 10 percent of all American beer, and from 1845 to 1917 the Quinn and Nolan Ale Co. was

consistently one of Albany's largest employers. But shipbuilding for canal and river traders remained the single greatest industry.

Albany was a transportation hub, the center of the state turnpike system, the transfer point for traffic from the Erie and Champlain canals, and the focal point of railway networks that covered upstate New York after the Civil War. It was a railroad town, and the Union Station constructed near the Hudson was one of the most impressive sights of the valley. Troy built the first rail bridge across the Hudson, but when the Hudson River Railroad arrived at Greenbush in 1851, Albany seized the traffic. The city failed at its first attempts at bridge building, in part because of Trojan obstructionists, but in 1866 freight could cross the Hudson at Albany. The capital prospered as three additional bridges were built by 1882.

During the 1840s an effort to relocate New York's capital to the geographic center of the state failed before the power of an Albany/Manhattan alliance. But Albany politicians knew that no specific law proclaimed their city the Empire State's permanent capital, and they were determined to guarantee its place as the permanent government center. In 1863 construction of a new capitol building was authorized on lots donated by banker John Pruym. Robert Fuller won the design competition, and Governor Reuben Fenton broke ground for the building in December 1867. But ceremonies setting the cornerstone were postponed for three and a half years, and the construction of the capitol became one of the great sagas of Hudson Valley lore. Impressively situated on a hill some 150 feet above the river, the State Capitol Building is certainly unique. It took as long to build as the Great Pyramid of Giza and cost twice as much as the national capitol in Washington. The capitol incorporates the visions of three architects in a "Battle of Styles" (Italian Renaissance, Romanesque, and French Renaissance). It is a cacophony of noisy turrets and ridges, gables and varied granite; its Great Staircase alone cost a million dollars. Governor Lucius Robinson labeled the entire project a "public calamity" and refused to set foot in its Executive Chamber. The capitol's famous outdoor Grand Staircase facing State Street was not finished until 1897 and the complex was not completed until 1899, just in time for the gubernatorial inauguration of Theodore Roosevelt.

In 1900 Greater New York City had a population of over 3,000,000, while Albany, the largest city of the Hudson Valley, held a mere 94,151. Yet

the capital boasted of its antiquity and basked in the confidence that the Schuyler (1762) and Ten Broeck (1798) mansions outpaced nouveau riche Manhattan counterparts. Albanians were disturbed when Stephen Van Rensselaer's manor house, built in 1765 and torn down in 1893, was gutted, but its architectural features quickly became part of the most elegant townhouse in the city. William Van Rensselaer, the current "prince" of the storied clan, built a new mansion opposite Washington Square in 1895 and imprinted the family crest onto its facade. Manhattan might have more people and more money, but Albany was the capital city, had greater class and represented a wider historic area. It held the oldest state museum in the United States and boasted a Catholic cathedral that replicated Cologne's masterpiece and an Episcopal cathedral that was the fifth-largest in America. Take that, Manhattan! In terms of lifestyle and distinction, Albany and the Hudson Valley were more than content.

### **Seeking Utopia in the Hudson Valley**

From the first Dutch settlement to the present day, the lovely Hudson Valley has always been a place where dreams might become reality. The Dutch West India Company envisioned a commercial empire; patroons and manor lords built feudal domains; the Revolutionary generation fought to achieve a world where ideals of equality and personal liberty could become reality. Entrepreneurs and merchants sought wealth amid the exciting tumult of an industrializing economy. It is not surprising, therefore, to discover that the Hudson Valley drew more than its fair share of utopian settlements in the nineteenth century. Many practical-minded moderns dismiss those who believe in communal egalitarianism as eccentric, if not outright foolhardy, but there was a plethora of such experimentation in what was a less cynical age. Attempts at building a perfect society flourished in the now-lost optimism of the peaceful Hudson Valley. With one exception, the attempts failed.

The most famous and successful group that sought Utopia along the river comprised the followers of Mother Ann Lee (1736–84), the sect called the Shakers. It was in Britain in 1758 that Lee joined an extremist Quaker sect called the Tremblers. She later led a small group of followers to settle seven miles north of Albany, and taught them to "put your hands to work and

your hearts to God.” Near Watervliet, the small group lived in celibacy and cooperation as they cleared the land, and there Lee won additional converts. Lee’s successor, “Father” James Whittaker, authorized a second Shaker community at New Lebanon in January 1786, and it served as the “Center of Union” for the Shaker movement until its demise in 1947. Absolute obedience to authority and constant labor established a Shaker “gospel order” that forbade play, pets, and sex. Charles Dickens visited New Lebanon and perceived a “silent commonwealth” whose rigid rules “strip life of its healthful graces, rob youth of innocent pleasures . . . and make existence but a narrow path toward the grave.” Yet in the 1870s Charles Nordhoff was impressed by the community’s health and its “tricks of housekeeping.” But Mother Lee’s prohibition on procreation doomed the community, and the last Shaker died in 1961. The Shakers were the most durable of all Hudson Utopias, and the history of their community is kept alive at an extraordinary museum located in Old Chatham, a site that holds the finest collection of their artifacts, and by the Shaker Historical Society of Albany.

A different vision of the Promised Land was presented by Jemima Wilkinson (1752–1819), a prominent Rhode Islander deeply influenced by the preaching of George Whitefield and Mother Lee. In 1775 she became convinced that a prophetic spirit had assumed control of her body and that she had been returned to life as the “Public and Universal Friend.” Winning an immediate following, the Friend and her followers first settled near New Paltz under the Shawangunk Mountains, before they moved farther west.

Equally short-lived were two experimental villages adopting the societal prescriptions of Robert Owen (1771–1858), the utopian visionary who created a successful industrial community in Scotland. Owen had reluctantly concluded that only in the New World could his dream of fully functioning socialist communities become reality. He traveled to the United States in 1824, spoke before Congress, and met President Monroe. Owen’s famed attempt to build a working cooperative society in New Harmony, Indiana, marked the high point of his effort to create Utopia, but in 1826 his Manhattan supporters, led by George Houston and Abner Kneeland, founded the Franklin Community on a 130-acre farm west of Haverstraw Bay. A constitution was adopted and a Church of Reason established, and the Rev. Robert Jennings arrived from New Harmony to direct the effort. A second community was created at



Forestville on a 325-acre site near Coxsackie. But both communities were populated by Manhattan freethinkers who knew nothing about farming, and by the end of 1827 a combination of unremitting work, bad weather, and indecisive leaders doomed the effort. Robert Dale Owen (1801–77), later a Manhattan editor and politician who lived out his days in an estate on Lake George, rarely spoke of his father’s forlorn Hudson communities.

Perhaps the strangest attempt to build an Eden along the river was that of Robert Matthews, a failed shopkeeper from Sandy Hill on the upper Hudson who transformed himself into the Jewish Prophet Matthias, the embodiment of the “Spirit of Truth.” His passion attracted a few zealous believers, and in the summer of 1833 he moved his converts to the Heartt Place mansion in Sing Sing village. The estate was renamed Mount Zion, and Matthias ruled his extended family as a biblical father. By 1834, reports of strange sexual couplings at Mount Zion led to local police intervention. Robert Matthews was forced to spend a few months in Bellevue Hospital, after which he migrated west and vanished from history.

One woman involved in Matthias’s community, though not part of its sexual athletics, was a servant named Isabel Van Wagener, who had grown up a slave in Ulster County. The closing of Mount Zion left her longing for a cause, and Isabelle enlisted in the most notorious of all the utopian dreams spawned along the Hudson. William Miller (1782–1849) knew from his reading of the Bible that the Second Coming of Jesus was imminent, and his pamphlets and lectures convinced thousands of potential believers, including Isabelle. In June 1843 Isabel changed her name to Sojourner Truth and experienced the “great disappointment” as Millerites gathered near the falls of the Hudson to await the advent of the Redeemer. She went on to serve abolitionism nobly. Despite crushing disappointments in 1843 and 1844, the Millerite faith endures in the Advent Christian Church and Seventh Day Adventists.

## **Personal Edens**

The Hudson is often called “America’s Rhine,” a phrase indicating both its centrality and its attractiveness. Both rivers lead the way into a continent and can justly boast of the castles, landed estates, and vineyards that line their shores. The Rhine is more than twice as long as the Hudson and has its source

in significantly higher mountains, but residents along both great rivers attempted to hold the outer world at a distance by constructing private domains. From the patroons to the CEOs of the twentieth century, personal Edens have dotted the banks of the Hudson, just as the dukes and barons of earlier times appropriated parts of the Rhine. The modern river still lures wealth as powerfully as it did in the age of Kiliaen Van Rensselaer.

During the seventeenth century, only the Van Rensselaer grant on the east side of the Hudson was effectively developed. The manor house on that estate, the site where “Yankee Doodle” was written, was in reality not very large and was overshadowed by the family’s Albany mansion. Mansion construction on the upper Hudson is more properly identified with the dynasty established by Robert Livingston, the first Lord of the Manor, whose heirs would control over a third of Columbia County. The riverside mansions of the Sixteen Mile Historic Area along the river that so intrigue modern tourists are primarily located on Livingston land. In 1742, Judge Robert R. Livingston (1718–75) married Margaret Beekman, a union that produced ten children and constant hubbub at the country estate they called Clermont (Clear Mountain). The judge’s oldest son, also a Robert, inherited his original thirteen-thousand-acre grant, augmented by Margaret’s dowry, which was the heart of Livingston Manor at the time of the Revolution. Livingston was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and chancellor of New York from 1777 to 1801, and it is natural that his home made a tempting target for John Vaughan’s loyalist raiders in October 1777. They burnt the original Clermont to the ground. The task of rebuilding was undertaken by Margaret, who built a new Clermont on the foundations of the old manor house. The Georgian mansion she erected from 1779 to 1782 was substantially different from her original home and has been much enlarged, but it has served as the ancestral home for seven subsequent generations of Livingstons. It survives today, filled with family artifacts and objects present when the North River steamboat stopped at the estate in 1807. Modern visitors can enter Robert Livingston’s office in the north wing and see the table where the lord received tenants paying rent.

Only a few miles south of Clermont, at Annandale-on-Hudson, a twenty-three room rival estate was constructed from 1803 to 1805. General Richard Montgomery failed in his heroic attempt to capture Canada, but a

New York county had been named in his honor, and his widow, Janet Livingston Montgomery, built a home that is today the heart of a 434-acre riverside estate. Later remodeled by famed valley architect Andrew Jackson Davis, who added gardens and orchards, Montgomery Place (along with Clermont) displays the style and power of the Livingston dynasty. Preserved as a National Historic Landmark and meticulously restored by Historic Hudson Valley, the estate allows visitors to recapture a lost era.

The many siblings of Chancellor Robert Livingston could not be satisfied with visiting their illustrious brother, and constructed their own sanctuaries on personally selected sites across the manor. Between 1750 and 1900 the clan built almost forty family mansions close to Clermont, an ongoing construction process lovingly documented by architectural historians. Although time and development have doomed many of these, a good number survived for inclusion in the Hudson River National Landmark District created by Congress in 1991. Besides Clermont itself, the oldest survivor is Walter Livingston's Georgian Teviotdale, built in 1774 with stone from Livingston quarries and iron forged at their Ancram works; its most famous residents were Robert Fulton and his bride, Harriet Livingston. Henry Gilbert Livingston built the Callendar House in 1794. It has been extensively remodeled and long ago changed hands, but John Livingston's Oak Hill, constructed in 1795, remains in possession of the family; Henry H. Livingston, a financial analyst, was among its recent tenants. Catharine Livingston married the Methodist leader Freeborn Garretson, and together they built Wildercliff (1799) at the southern end of the family property opposite Esopus Creek and lighthouse.

It was family that drew the Livingstons to the Hudson Valley, but it was the incomparably lovely sights of the river that kept them resident. Early in the nineteenth century, General John Armstrong brought his wife Alida Livingston to La Bergerie (1811) in Red Hook, and through years of national service he never changed his residence. After his death the estate was renamed Rokeby and was owned by Livingstons, Beekmans, and Astors. William B. Astor, whose socialite wife was "the" Mrs. Astor, hired Stanford White in 1895 to add a Gothic library done in octagonal shape. Rokeby remains one of the most impressive riverside mansions. Nearby are Richmond Hill (Walter Tryon and Elizabeth Livingston, 1808), Grasmere (Peter R. Livingston, 1824),

the Forth House (Carroll Livingston, 1833), Southwood (Levinus Clarkson and Mary Livingston, 1842), Holcroft (Edward P. Livingston, 1881), and Chiddingston (Thomas S. Clarkson, 1895). In 1868, Robert E. Livingston designed the church for St. Paul's and Trinity Parish, in whose graveyard numerous members of the family, including the chancellor, rest.

It is something of a paradox that Benson Lossing, the first great historian of America's Rhine in 1866, either totally missed or willfully ignored the presence of such landed dynasties along the upper Hudson. His volume on the Hudson proudly notes that the river "presents no gray and crumbling monuments . . . no fine old castles . . . no splendid abbey or cathedrals. . . . Nor can it boast of mansions and ancestral homes wherein a line of heroes have been born, or illustrious families have lived and died, generation after generation." While it is true that many of the most luxurious estates were constructed later, during the Gilded Age, the Livingston presence in Columbia mocks his words. While all deference ought to be accorded Lossing, an identical conclusion applies to the lower reaches of the Hudson.

Staats Dyckman (1755–1806), a Dutch aristocrat who loyally served the Crown during the Revolution, returned to the United States after the Constitution was approved. He married, won success, and planned a family dream house along the Hudson at Montrose in Westchester County. Dyckman died before the structure was completed, so no one knows the architectural origins of Boscobel, but in 1808 his wife and son moved into the beautiful mansion he commissioned. The Dyckman family remained at Boscobel for eighty years, filling their home with Duncan Phyfe furniture, fine silver service, and a Benjamin West painting. Boscobel became a model of elegance, a home whose owners made their money elsewhere but who spent it pursuing the good life in the Hudson Valley. The pattern was to be a recurring one. When the famous estate declined precipitously by the 1950s, a wrecker/developer purchased the site for \$35, intending to raze the structure. Preservationists organized by Benjamin West Frasier obtained financing from Lila Wallace of the *Reader's Digest* and transferred the entire mansion to a new hillside location. The Federal-style house traveled fifteen miles to its present outlook opposite West Point, and after a period of restoration, it was opened to the public in 1961. Fully restored with original furnishings and now boasting landscaped formal gardens, Boscobel thrills

thousands of visitors with walking tours, concerts, Shakespeare plays, and Christmas candlelight fetes. Like the Livingston homes farther north, it embodies the spirit of a bygone age.

Contemporary New Yorkers believe the riverside towns of Westchester County are characterized by rundown housing and abandoned factories, yet in the early decades of the nineteenth century Westchester represented the desirable suburbs. Lovely sites along the flowing Hudson and an already existing tradition of gentility drew successful businessmen and prominent artists to Westchester. A northern orientation was part of the city mentality since the colonial era when the Van der Donck, Philipse, and Van Cortlandt families established restful Edens along the river. In the 1800s, one of the first luminaries to escape to Westchester was William Paulding Jr. (1770–1854), the former New York mayor who had presided over the ceremonies formally opening the Erie Canal (1825). Seeking the pleasures of retirement, Paulding purchased Westchester farmland in 1836 and hired Alexander Jackson Davis (1803–92) to create a sylvan retreat. Davis, who would also redesign Montgomery Place during this decade, willingly accepted the job. The diarist Philip Hone, also a former mayor, scorned the isolated estate as “Paulding’s Folly,” but the initiative inspired others to break away from Manhattan.

Manhattan-born Davis was the most important architect working in the Hudson Valley during the nineteenth century. When approached by Paulding he was about to publish *Rural Residences*, a volume that aimed to free American architecture from European restrictions of style. Davis, who advocated an emphasis on the connections between a building and its site, is given primary credit for creating the “American Bracketed” style, which would soon dominate architecture in the valley. Paulding allowed the young architect freedom to experiment with both techniques and material. The Knoll (1842), a home suitable to a cliffside setting, was completed using the Gothic Revival style that would soon be greatly imitated. Philip Paulding continued to use the home after his father died, but in 1864 he sold the property to the noted inventor George Merritt (1807–73). Fortunately, Davis was still available to make renovations which transformed the existing building into a castle. William Pierson in *American Buildings and Their Architecture* (1866) declared that Davis had made Lyndhurst “the most profoundly intelligent and provocative house to be built . . . since Thomas Jefferson’s Mon-

ticello.” Merritt, enthralled by the renovation and by the natural setting, was inspired by the linden trees stretching down to the Hudson to make the name change that endures to this day. Lyndhurst served as the Merritt family home until 1880, when they moved farther up the Hudson and built Leacote in Dutchess County.

The new owner of Lyndhurst and its sixty-seven-acre park was Jay Gould (1836–92), the famed financier who reveled in his reputation as the meanest man in America. Ruthless though he was in business, Gould was a dedicated family man who delighted in pleasing his six children; his family used the estate as their summer home while Gould commuted to Manhattan by yacht. He loved Lyndhurst and spent a fortune on new greenhouses while landscape designer Ferdinand Mangold created magnificent “surprise” views of the nearby river. Gould’s daughter Helen considered Lyndhurst her favorite residence, adding a swimming pool and a bowling alley. Helen was also a good neighbor who allowed the town sewing circle to meet in her home and opened her rose gardens to local horticulturists. Her sister Anna, the Dutchess de Talleyrand, volunteered Lyndhurst for the use of recuperating veterans of the Second World War and later arranged its transfer to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Located within sight of the Tappan Zee Bridge, the estate that enthralled New Yorkers as different as Paulding, Merritt, and Gould now beguiles a much wider public.

Even more than businessmen, writers and artists sought the quiet and serenity of the Hudson Valley. Modern tabloids and celebrity shows in our time document the relocations of media stars to havens along the river, but the inclination to enter nature and revitalize a muse has been evident since the 1830s. Washington Irving (1783–1859) first won literary attention in 1808 with *Salmagundi*, a compilation of poetry and essays he published with his friend James Kirke Paulding. But the comic *History of New York* (1809), a whimsical look at Dutch Manhattan by “Dietrich Knickerbocker,” won Irving fame. In the *Sketch Book* a decade later, Irving (writing in the guise of Geoffrey Crayon), gained immortality as the creator of Rip van Winkle, Ichabod Crane, and the Headless Horseman. Travelers along the Hudson, whether on sloop or steamship, knew that “not a mountain reared its head unconnected with some marvelous story” and it was Irving’s genius to recapture those folk tales; his descriptions of the Hudson “fairy mountains”

charmed a nation. After a stint in the foreign service, Irving returned home to be hailed as America's greatest writer. He no longer sought fame; the "plaintive cry of the whip-poor-will" and the "sudden leap and the heavy splash of the sturgeon" called him back to the river. In 1835 the nation's most beloved author decided to quit Colonnade Row in Manhattan and purchase a Dutch stone cottage in Westchester County.

Tarrytown was supposedly named by the willingness of its men to linger in local taverns, a neighborly characteristic that attracted Irving. Located "in the bosom of one of those spacious coves which indent the eastern shore at that broad expanse of the river denominated the Tappan Zee," Tarrytown seemed caught in a time warp suitable to Rip van Winkle himself. Irving set about converting his hideaway home into a "snuggery," adding a Dutch roof and a Spanish tower to stone walls. Sunnyside was now "made up of gable ends and as full of angles and corners as an old cocked hat," a *mélange* of styles that delighted the author and where he lived happily until his death. Irving willingly shared his "dear, bright little house" with the world's literary and political elite (Thackeray, Louis Napoleon) and entertained the many other visitors who made pilgrimages up the Hudson. He was thrilled when a nearby river town renamed itself Irvington in his honor (1854) and participated in its business and community affairs. A founder and board member of the People's Westchester Savings Bank, the author resented the railroad, which reduced access to his beloved Hudson less than a decade after he moved north. Yet his move to rural climes initiated a flight from the city he christened "Gotham." Wealthy Manhattanites seized anchorages on the Hudson, claimed a section of the landscape, and built homes on a scale Irving rejected. But Sunnyside always remained the home of a working author who continued to write and entertain; he was buried at the Old Dutch Church in the town he had come to love and was soon joined in the graveyard by Americans such as Andrew Carnegie, Whitelaw Reid, and William Rockefeller. Almost 150 years after Irving's death, no American writer is more identified with the Hudson River. In a contemporary tribute, North Tarrytown changed its name to Sleepy Hollow in 1996.

A second major artistic figure who settled along the Hudson was Samuel F. B. Morse (1791–1872), America's own Leonardo da Vinci. Morse founded the National Academy of Design and served as its president for

twenty years, but it was the telegraph, “the invention of the century,” that secured his place in the American pantheon. In 1847 Morse, recently defeated in an effort to become Manhattan’s mayor, purchased a riverside estate south of Poughkeepsie that originally served as the landing site for Henry Livingston’s farm. Working in tandem with A. J. Davis, Morse rebuilt the existing house into a mansion named Locust Grove, a site that later became the first National Historic Landmark in Dutchess County. Perched within the four-story Tuscan tower that dominates the structure, Morse painted, watched his tenant farmers, and marked the advance of the east shore railroad. Unlike Irving, he reveled in progress, perhaps because his hilltop site was less affected by the noisy passage of the steam locomotives that brought great prosperity to Poughkeepsie in the 1850s.

The list of notables who chose to live along the Hudson is impressive. Riverside summer homes began to appear everywhere from the northern end of Manhattan all the way to Columbia County. The Morris family built Wave Hill in 1893 in what later became the Bronx. Literary friends who emulated Irving’s example included Nathaniel Parker Willis, who built Idlewild near Murderer’s Creek south of Newburgh. Willis wrote of the beauty of the Hudson Valley in articles for the *Home Journal* gathered and published as *Out of Doors at Idlewild; or the Shaping of a Home on the Banks of the Hudson* (1855). Willis’s salon on the west bank of the river rivaled Irving’s at Sunnyside, and he led the campaign that changed the name of Butter Hill to Storm King Mountain. A frequent visitor at both villas was James Kirke Paulding (1778–1860), whose popular novels of the Dutch era helped to salvage its place in history. Paulding’s estate, called Placentia, ultimately became part of the College of Mount St. Vincent. Businessmen from Manhattan quickly followed the intelligentsia north. Robert Pell erected Cliffwood amid the 25,000 fruit trees of his model orchards; Cyrus Field was an early settler of the new town of Irvington; and shipping magnate George Howard hired Richard M. Hunt to built Tioranda (1859) in Beacon. The Gothic Revival mansion built by actor Edwin Forrest, called Fonthill, echoed the melodramas in which Forrest starred. A. J. Downing designed a country estate for the horticulturist Henry W. Sargent in Beacon called Wodenethe. In Westchester, the vast Waring mansion called Graystone (1864) completed the first cycle of construction, but in time luminaries such as Peter Cooper, Henry



Ward Beecher, and Horace Greeley also joined the exodus north; Chauncey Depew, Hamilton Fish, and Thomas Fortune Ryan came in the 1870s. Literally dozens of homes were constructed as the Hudson Valley became the sanctuary of the well-to-do.

Society followed the elite's migration north. John Jacob Astor, reportedly the richest man in America, already had a "country" home on the west bank of the Hudson, near the Elysian Fields where organized baseball would be born. His salon drew literary figures as prominent as Irving and William C. Bryant and minor writers such as Fitz-Greene Halleck, but the estate was, after all, in Hoboken. Better society was found farther upriver, and by the 1840s the Astors moved north to join the Livingstons in the Rhinecliff area. Colonel J. J. Astor held court at his Ferncliff estate, William Astor took possession of Rokeby from the Livingstons, and William's sister Mary lived nearby. Ferncliff became the family gathering place, and Vincent Astor lived there well into the twentieth century; it ultimately was converted into a convent for the Carmelite order. One of the truly great river mansions belonged to Mrs. Elizabeth Schermerhorn Jones, an Astor relation whose Wyndcliff estate (1853) was so lavish that it inspired the phrase "keeping up with the Joneses." In the late nineteenth century, Elizabeth ruled society in the upper Hudson as ruthlessly as her cousin, Mrs. William Astor, controlled Manhattan. Edith Wharton, a niece who spent many months there, found Wyndcliff "intolerable," and mocked her aunt's excesses in her famed novel *The Age of Innocence*.

## **Saratoga Springs**

After the 1830s, a sizable element of Manhattan's elite pursued part of its elegant lifestyle outside the city. Hudson Valley suburbanization was often joined with ostentation. In the years before the Civil War, having a retreat "up the river" became increasingly common, and the shores of the river took on a velvet edge. What was lacking was a common meeting ground, and the development of Saratoga Springs gave the Hudson Valley its "must see" destination. Located on a lake just off the upper Hudson, Saratoga's land has been continuously occupied since 7000 BC, making it one of the world's most ancient human settlements. The Mohawk Indians who long held the area believed in the healing power of local mineral springs. In 1765 William

Johnson, wounded at the Battle of Lake George, came to the springs to recuperate and returned years later to treat his arthritis. George Washington considered buying the entire springs area as an investment before victory diverted his attention toward Mount Vernon. Afterward, except for the activities of loggers, the area reverted to sleepy isolation.

Saratoga Springs was created by lumberman Gideon Putnam, who began to lay out a full town site in 1802, finishing it by 1805. With a clientele of rough loggers, the Springs won a reputation for hard drinking and inspired Dr. Billy Clark to organize America's first temperance society there in 1808. Clark hoped to reform the lumberjacks who worked the Adirondacks forests, but he failed; in its heyday Saratoga boasted more bars per capita than Manhattan. To attract visitors, Putnam added amenities such as billiards, bowling, and fishing to its "waters"; dancing at his Union Hall hotel joined the roster of pastimes in 1816, and weekly balls became commonplace during the 1820s. It was then that Dr. John Clark began to bottle mineral water taken from Saratoga Springs, marketing it first in Manhattan and then nationally. Saratoga's sudden cachet led city merchants to send their families north by river steamer and Albany stagecoach. When the Schenectady and Saratoga Railroad was completed in 1832, Saratoga became accessible to visitors from everywhere. The attraction increased when President Martin Van Buren located his Summer White House there. The "Little Magician" who organized New York's first political machine, the "Albany Regency," Van Buren is best remembered today for the "O.K." (Old Kinderhook) that he used to approve documents. In retirement Van Buren purchased a mansion he named Lindenwald and made it one of the most famous places along the Hudson. But his presence clearly made Saratoga a summer destination, and before the end of his uninspired presidency the small village near the Hudson was receiving twelve thousand tourists annually. Most of them sipped the "waters" at John Clark's entertainment pavilion in Congress Park, and their patronage soon made him the richest man in town. By 1839 Manhattan aristocrat Philip Hone confided to his *Diary* that "all the world is here."

The introduction of gambling (1835) and horse racing (1847) made Saratoga Springs attractive to southern planters who "summered" there to escape Dixie's heat. Men compared fast trotters and bet every race at Horse Haven track, while women enjoyed an extensive summertime program of circuses, magic-lantern shows, and concerts. In 1853, George Crum responded

to the demands of Cornelius Vanderbilt and created a thin potato treat called a "Saratoga chip." By 1860 the spa received fifty thousand visitors annually and was the finest resort in America, an "oasis of repose in the desert of American hurry." Not even the tragedy of Civil War dimmed its luster. Although southern belles and their beaux were gone, they were replaced by wealthy war contractors, members of the "petroleum aristocracy," and several battalions of dubious "actresses." In 1864 a thoroughbred racetrack operated by William Travers, John Hunter, and Leonard Jerome was opened. The first Travers Stakes was held that August at what is still the finest track in the nation; the Society for the Improvement of the Breed has always considered the Saratoga Meeting as the key to the racing season. Other attractions for the visiting elite included polo, the annual Ivy League regatta on Saratoga Lake (1874–98), balloon ascensions by Madame Carlotta, and afternoon teas at magnificent hotels. The pampered nouveau riche came to town with their "Saratoga Trunks," stayed at the United States Hotel or the Grand Union, and shopped under covered piazzas. As many novels attest, the hotels were an international marriage marketplace for American debutantes. At the Grand Union in June 1877, New York banker Joseph Seligman and his family were denied rooms, a well-publicized case of anti-Semitism.

During the 1890s, under the stewardship of Richard Canfield, Saratoga became even more opulent. Canfield hired a French chef for his casino, paid him \$5,000 for two months, and considered the investment a good one. Women were encouraged to dine in his restaurant but barred from the greater excitements of roulette and faro. In time the saga of Saratoga included almost mythical stories about wagers by "Bet-A-Million" Gates and the excesses of "Diamond Jim" Brady, who once gambled in a suit that featured 2,548 gems. Lillian Russell reigned as the uncrowned "Queen of Saratoga," and her court of "Farm Flirts" broke many a heart and emptied many a wallet. And in keeping with the Spa's respect for horseflesh, the Saratoga Polo Club was organized in 1898 to provide yet another outlet for high-spirited competitors. Canfield abandoned Saratoga in 1907, and his casino is now a museum sitting amid Daniel French sculptures in Clark's Congress Park. But even after he left, reporter John Reed declared Saratoga Springs the focus of "society, sport and sin" above Manhattan.

Twentieth-first-century Saratoga remains a pleasant place to visit, even though it lacks a casino, a regatta, and a queen. Walking tours reveal its truly

extraordinary architectural history, even though the United States Hotel (1946) and the Grand Union (1953) have been razed. Restorations of the Saratoga Arms (1870), the Saratoga Bottling Plant (1903), and the casino have reclaimed bits of a past that still draws visitors. Racing remains supreme in Saratoga, and the heritage of William Travers and Leonard Jerome suffuses America's oldest thoroughbred track. The Fasig-Tipton annual horse auction is world famous; few owners are unaware that Man o' War was purchased there for only \$5,000. Saratoga's annual six-week race meet has been supplemented by a cultural extravaganza featuring the New York City Ballet and the Philadelphia Orchestra, along with jazz and chamber music festivals. Whether for the waters, the horses, or the cultural rush, summer at Saratoga remains a strong Hudson Valley institution.

### **Valley Architecture and Art**

Andrew Jackson Downing (1815–52) led the emergence of the Hudson Valley as a cultural entity. His brief and meteoric career fostered architectural and artistic forces that affected the area for the next century. A native of Newburgh, Downing was the protégé of Baron de Liederer, the Austrian consul-general in Manhattan and husband to a Fishkill heiress, and so secured entry into Hudson Valley society. His contributions to valley agriculture have been noted, but his true importance was in creating a Hudson sensibility. His first architectural commissions were organizing gardens around mansions of the valley, work that yielded *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening Adapted to North America* (1841). Downing enhanced that success by publishing *Cottage Residences* (1842), a primer on building country homes free of city turmoil. The Hudson River setting demanded houses using Tuscan, Tyrolean, or Gothic styles, for classical forms of architecture were out of place there. Downing, a close friend and advocate of the work of A. J. Davis, recruited the young British landscape architect Calvert Vaux to join his practice. Together the three men created an architectural and landscape heritage that still endures.

Downing's *Architecture of Country Houses* (1850) affected Hudson Valley life for the next century and influenced generations of architects. If builders and designers intended to create a fine valley society, they must move away from Dutch and English simplicities and create homes that ex-

erted a civilizing force. Wealth was flowing into the valley, and the young theorist rejoiced in a clientele that could afford homes that would compliment the beauty of the landscape. In truth, Downing was a bit of a snob and used his writings to appeal to rich patrons. His theory of architecture divided homes into cottages, farmhouses, or villas dependent on the number of servants each demanded; villas were suitable only for those “whose aspirations never leave them at rest.” But every home—small Tuscan, forbidding Gothic, or large Georgian—had to use local material and blend into the landscape even as its cut trim, turrets, stained glass, and interior elegance displayed the client’s affluence. The Hudson River Bracketed style advocated by both Downing and Davis insisted that site selection, choice of material, and planned vistas were integral elements in building a home.

Downing taught Americans that architecture had to respect the landscape. He was one of the first public figures to advocate a Central Park for Manhattan. His former partner, Calvert Vaux, working in collaboration with Frederick Law Olmstead, ultimately built the park, which successfully incorporated the ideas of *Landscape Gardening*. But Downing himself had no part in the plan, for his life tragically ended in the river he loved. The young architect was a passenger aboard the steamship *Henry Clay* when it engaged its rival the *Armenia* in an epic race down the Hudson on July 28, 1852. After the race was over and victory gained, the *Clay* inexplicably caught fire and was wrecked off Yonkers. Downing survived the initial crash but drowned attempting to save other passengers. Famed botanist Asa Gray lamented a “national loss,” since Downing uniquely combined both the practical builder and the theorist. But his theories inspired valley building, and thirty-five years later the city of Newburgh dedicated a riverside park in his memory.

Downing’s lasting legacy was not the few buildings he managed to finish but rather his respect for the Hudson Valley landscape. Appreciating the wonders of nature seems easy for modern travelers in the Hudson Valley, who park at a convenient overlook and gaze out over noble panoramas. Yet in the early decades of the nineteenth century such introspection was rare. Implausibly, the Hudson River Valley came to attract America’s elite because of the power of art. It was the output of the Hudson River painters, the first great school of native American artists, that made the valley come alive in the national mind. In a world that was changing from agriculture to industry, the Hudson River school

painted vistas of the valley that forcefully reminded Americans of their relationship with nature and provided the new nation with self-awareness and pride.

Until the emergence of the Hudson River school, American art existed in subservience to European forms. Samuel F. B. Morse, president of the National Academy of Art and Design, in fact lamented the lack of true American artists and demanded that “Our soil must warm into life the seeds of native talent.” His request was suddenly fulfilled in the work of Thomas Cole (1801–48), an English-born designer of textile patterns who emigrated to the United States in 1818. Cole worked as an engraver in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh before moving to Manhattan, where his imagination was captured by reports of Hudson Valley mountains. In 1825, Cole traveled north, seeking the union with nature that constituted the “necessary condition of a perfect artist.” He displayed the few oil landscapes that resulted from his trip in the front window of a friend’s frame shop. Showing greater detail than most previous art, dark and woody in feeling, they were sold immediately.

The impressed pedestrians who purchased Cole’s paintings for \$25 were John Trumbull, Asher Durand, and William Dunlap. Trumbull, whose earlier efforts at depicting nature had failed to move the public, lamented that “this youth has done what I have all my life attempted in vain.” He recognized Cole’s work as essentially different and became a forceful advocate for the young artist. Durand, already a successful engraver, was inspired by Cole to turn his talents to painting. Dunlap, a theater person more than a painter, sold his purchase at a large markup to former Mayor Philip Hone. All recognized that Cole was “more than a leaf-painter”; indeed he was the first artist whose work conveyed the “natural magnificence” of the Hudson. In 1826, Cole’s *View of the Schoharie* emphasized the wildness of the American scene, and his paintings proved that the Hudson Valley was the “soul of all scenery.” Beauty and drama were inherent in his every vista of the Catskills, and Cole taught artists to have reverence for the scenes nature had presented. By 1835, *Knickerbocker* magazine was hailing Cole as “the best landscape painter in the world,” and Hone was happily seeing his purchases appreciate.

In 1832, Cole moved to Catskill on the west bank of the Hudson; his house there, Cedar Grove, is a designated National Landmark. It is still possible to stand at its entrance and see the mountains that inspired his revolutionary art. Cole taught Americans that “the Hudson, for natural magnificence, is

unsurpassed.” The river may have been junior to the Rhine, but Europeans had nothing comparable to America’s forests or the might of Niagara. Yet even in 1835 Cole feared the loss of the national heritage as commerce flowed down the Hudson and visitors filled the Catskills. Cole, the artist who saw the United States as the “New Eden” and found God in nature, was also the first American painter to put a railroad train in his art, and he personally feared the rise of industrialization. Civilization threatened to destroy his beloved wilderness, for “where once there was beauty, there is now barrenness.” Despite his fears, most of the scenes that inspired Cole, from Kaaterskill Falls to the mountains that fill his *Course of Empire*, are still visible. When the Tate Gallery of London exhibited his work, it properly titled the show “America Sublime.”

When Cole died in 1848, William Cullen Bryant’s eulogy credited the artist with teaching Americans to “delight” in their natural environment and cherish “scenes of wild grandeur peculiar to our country.” Cole’s mantle as leader of the Hudson River school fell naturally to Asher Durand (1796–1886). Lumen Reed, who attended Cole’s burial service, commissioned Durand to honor both the poet-eulogist and the painter in a single canvas. The result was *Kindred Spirits* (1849), a masterpiece of American painting recently and lamentably deaccessioned by the New York Public Library. Durand placed the two men near Kaaterskill Falls, the symbolic center of the mountains they both loved. Like Cole, Durand encouraged aspiring young artists to go into nature and experience its wonders before they studied technique. In the wilderness they could discover God through the creation he had made, and the discovery of his “divine architecture” would infuse all their subsequent art.

A second generation of “Luminists” kept the Hudson River school dominant in America into the 1880s. Twentieth-century scholarship lists up to fifty painters who belonged to the school that Cole founded, a talented army whose work is found in many museums and is particularly cherished in the valley. Prominent among this group is Jasper Francis Cropsey (1823–1900), famed for autumnal landscapes, who established his Ever Rest studio in Hastings-on-Hudson and lived in a Warwick estate he called Aladdin. Many of Cropsey’s paintings are found in a Westchester museum devoted to his work. But the school began to suffer from repetition, since Kaaterskill Falls, Mount Merino (south of Hudson), and Storm King Moun-

tain appeared with numbing regularity. By the time of the Civil War the Hudson itself was no longer adequate to inspire all members of the expanding Hudson River school, and artists as different as Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902) and George Inness (1825–94) found subjects in other climes. But the works of Hudson River painters, available to the nation in dozens of Currier and Ives prints, proved to Americans that their nation was blessed by God and that the Hudson was Eden.

Frederick Church (1826–1900) was the only student whom Cole personally taught. No Hudson River painter wandered so far in search of images, and *Niagara Falls* (1857) and *Heart of the Andes* (1859) only marked the start of Church's peripatetic career. Though he traveled to Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, Church never lost his conviction that the east bank of the Hudson Valley was the "center of the world." Writing to Cole he rhapsodized about the "blue mountains" of the Catskills, and in 1870 he built a refuge where he might daily enjoy their beauty. Not surprisingly, the site he picked was located almost directly across the Hudson from Cedar Grove. On a bluff some five hundred feet above the river, Church built Olana, arguably the finest home in the entire valley. Richard Morris Hunt and Calvert Vaux contributed to the design, but the "personal Persian" quasi-Moorish house emerged out of Church's artistic vision. Using Downing and Vaux principles, Church consciously built paths and roads whose turns displayed river vistas and forest scenes to please visitors. Marshes were drained and replaced by reflecting pools and a lake that reflected the sky. Stone for construction came from nearby Mount Merino. The Churches decided on interior stenciling, color schemes, and furniture placement. Increasingly crippled by arthritis, the ailing painter could still experience the Hudson as a living tableau and see his beloved "blue mountains" perfectly framed in a picture window. When Church's *Iceberg* was rediscovered in 1979, it sold for \$2.5 million, but Olana is his greatest work of art.

## **Democratizing the River**

The Hudson Valley drew farmers and soldiers, merchants, manufacturers, utopians, and artists. As the century advanced, its fame and beauty also drew tourists in ever increasing numbers. As literary and artistic visions of the river



worked their way into the American consciousness, adventurous travelers decided that they must experience the Hudson on their own. "America's River" became a destination that drew foreign and domestic visitors to its shores with a power that has never ended. Taking a steamer north through the valley became a travel "must," and enthusiastic reports created a mystique around the river.

Robert Fulton's *Clermont* was a ship that made history, but the mixed company on its initial voyage had to stand most of the time. The river was beautiful, but traders believed that moving goods was more important than transporting people. Steamships gradually introduced belowdeck accommodations for passengers, but travel remained a rough-and-ready experience for decades. James Kirke Paulding, in his *New Mirror for Travelers* (1828), chose to highlight the potential discomforts of river travel. "We had such a delightful sail in the steam boat, though we were all sick and such a delightful party, if only they had been well . . . going eight miles an hour let what would happen." Yet the *Gazetteer of the State of New York* was quite prescient when it urged all readers to see the Catskills, for nothing can match the "elegant display of light and shade occasioned by their irregularity, their fine blue color, the climbing of mists up their sides." The Hudson held sights to enthrall everyone and, if affluent visitors chose to stay, valley hotels could be situated to offer spectacular views of the river.

The grandest and most storied of these magnificent inns began its career in 1823 atop a high scarp, on the west side of the Hudson, that local Indians called the Wall of Manitou. When Cooper's Natty Bumppo climbed South Mountain, he was able to see "creation! All creation." The view was still available. Erastus Beach constructed the Pine Orchard House at the end of a twisting country road that rose swiftly to a height of 2,212 feet. When river travelers landed at Catskill Point, the hotel seemed to be only "a small white cloud in the midst of the heaven." Few dared walk the twelve-mile trek uphill. Instead they boarded Beach's coach for the tortuous, even dangerous trip to the pinnacle; the halfway point of the ascent stopped for refreshments at the Rip Van Winkle House. Thomas Cole visited Beach's hotel during his trip to the Catskills in 1825, and his many paintings of the area, especially "The Falls of the Kaaterskill," assured its popularity. Renamed the Catskill Mountain House, this towering retreat became the preferred destination for

several generations of river travelers.

Guests made it clear to Beach that they expected more than the opportunity to commune with nature, climb past the falls, or stare out over five states. Amenities must match the view, and changes began when even British visitors complained about the quality of the cuisine. Amid the abundance of the Catskills, the culinary deficiency was overcome, and excellent meals became part of the Catskill House experience. The Mountain House featured 315 rooms, verandahs that faced the morning sunrise, and rocking chairs that allowed people to enjoy the scenery without having to walk the fifty feet to prime viewing locations at the edge of the cliff. The Catskill Mountain House was the first specialized tourist hotel in the nation, the model for the thousands that followed. Competition for the Mountain House began in 1840, when the Windham House opened nearby. While less favorably situated, the Windham claimed that it was closer to the Hudson and easier to reach. Benny Havens's Hotel near West Point, long the off-grounds emporium where cadets did their drinking, also began to draw visitors to the west side of the Hudson. Yet despite all imitators the Catskill Mountain House remained the premier Hudson hostelry. After 1845 it was efficiently run by Charles Beach, who added superstar entertainers like Jenny Lind to the attractions of nature.

The reports of European visitors taught Americans to appreciate the Hudson. James Buckingham, editor of London's *Athenaeum*, praised the valley's "most extensive and beautiful landscapes," while Fanny Kemble claimed that in the Mountain House "I felt as though I had been carried into the immediate presence of God." Kemble typified the intrepid spirit these early visitors displayed; her fall into India Brook entered Hudson lore as "Fanny Kemble's bath." The more acerbic Frances Trollope was also stunned but hardly silent. "I had heard so much of the surpassing beauty of the North River that I expected to be disappointed, and to find reality flat after description." Yet in *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), she was moved to "weep for my friends at home—they will never see [a stream that] can be surpassed in beauty by none on the outside of Paradise." Tyrone Power Esq. (not to be confused with the actor Tyrone Power, star of John Ford's 1955 West Point film *The Long Gray Line*) praised the wonderful vistas of the valley, as did Harriet Martineau, who made three trips up the

Hudson. Martineau described the Mountain House as the “noblest wonder” of an extraordinary place, but she was probably the only person to claim she saw the Atlantic Ocean from its verandah.

The intelligentsia, the well-to-do, and artists represented the first surge of foreign travelers into the Hudson Valley, but they were far from alone. To ease passenger crowding on steamboats, ornate “barges” were introduced that were towed behind ships loaded with freight and livestock. These sleepers accommodated travelers in comfort, but gradually became unnecessary as upriver speed increased. Alexis de Tocqueville, sailing up the Hudson in 1831 to celebrate the Fourth of July in Albany, wondered at the fragility of the steamships and was told their useful life was brief because technology was improving so rapidly. Sleeping accommodations were soon unnecessary to reach the Mountain House, and later in the century more elegant ships were constructed to make overnight runs between Albany and Manhattan.

In antebellum America, the Hudson tourist trade ranked as big business. By 1846, more than a hundred steamboats were active on the Hudson, and later side-wheelers could measure up to 370 feet and carry a thousand passengers. By 1850, the number of river travelers passed 1 million annually. The Albany–Manhattan trip was cut to seven hours, and widely publicized attempts to reduce it further led to races that cost lives; the wreck of the *Henry Clay* was merely the most famous of these tragedies. At his Idlewild estate, Nathaniel Willis lamented the loss of rural isolation as up to twenty steamboats passed each day: “There is no seclusion on the Hudson, or there is so much that the conveniences of life are difficult to obtain.” Towns offered inducements to have vessels make stops, or at least slow down and take passengers off smaller boats paralleling them in midstream. Hosts at Hudson hotels enhanced visitor satisfaction with nature trails through the forest, gazebos, afternoon tea, lawn tennis, cards, and croquet. At Catskill Mountain House, where appreciation of natural beauty was the first obligation, managers improved the performance of Kaaterskill Falls by damming part of its flow. In 1866, Charles Baldwin recorded the excitement of the female members of his group when “the water-gates above the falls were opened and a tremendous volume of water poured down. . . . The concussion produced . . . from a height of 180 feet to the pool below fairly shook the dome of rock . . . and the roar of the waterfall echoed and re-echoed.” So

popular were river trips that the Mountain House had to hire the Otis Elevator Company to build a rail incline up to its plateau.

A worthy rival of the Mountain House opened in 1870 when Albert and Alfred Smiley dedicated their Mohonk Mountain House on a glacial lake near New Paltz in Ulster County. Run by Quakers, the Mohonk offered an alcohol-free moral atmosphere of hymns and social-reform seminars. Some years later, Alfred Smiley built a second "Cliff House" at a sky lake in the Shawangunk Ridge and called it Minnewaska (1879). Still later he built the Wildmere. Smiley's establishments maintained a genteel style of life even as the range of entertainment expected by Catskill guests broadened in other locales. The Kaaterskill Resort opened in 1881, soon followed by the Grand Hotel in Ulster County. New hotels drew crowds not because of their views or their rustic nature, but because of the amusements they provided and their accessibility; the Grand promised that a visitor could go "by Parlor Car to the lawn of the hotel." As the Catskill region was becoming available to ever larger numbers of people, hotel managers faced the issue of admitting Jewish guests. Generally denied rooms at better places and insulted by an "anti-Hebrew" movement in the late 1880s, Jewish vacationers soon established bungalow communities. The Borscht Belt of the twentieth century had its origins in these unhappy years.

Taking a trip on the Hudson was no longer an adventure for visiting Europeans, enthusiastic writers, or honored dignitaries. The Catskill Mountain House advertised itself as the favorite vacation spot for Presidents Grant and Arthur, but the valley was ever more available to ordinary travelers. By the end of the century the most common Hudson transport was an excursion boat. The most famous of these river queens was the *Mary Powell*, a 267-foot side-wheeler surely more famous than either the *Half Moon* or the *Clermont*. Commanded by the Anderson family from 1861 to 1917, the *Mary Powell* made round trips from Manhattan to the Kingston Point amusement park. Everyone along the river knew her silhouette, and also knew that she never lost a passenger, whether day visitors, a Vassar girl, or a West Point cadet. The *Mary Powell* represents the democratization of the Hudson Valley, which belonged to everyone for the price of a ticket.

For a century ships like the *Mary Powell*, joined by the *Herman Livingston*, *Hendrick Hudson*, *Washington Irving*, *Robert Fulton*, another *Cler-*

*mont*, and a score of other passenger boats made the river available to ordinary Americans. In 1880, more than two million people lived within a day of the Catskills, but that number quadrupled before the First World War. After 1888, almost all first-time travelers to the Hudson clutched Brownie cameras to record their experience. Such towns as Kingston, Cornwall on Newburgh Bay, and Iona Island built parks and amusement areas to entertain the thousands of visitors who went back and forth from Manhattan in a single day. Early in the twentieth century, Indian Point Park in Buchanan opened a pool where refugees from the hot city could frolic in sight of both mountains and the river. At Beacon, the main attraction was an incline railway that rose at an angle of sixty-four degrees, the steepest ever built by Otis Elevator. The Catskills boasted hundreds of facilities that could accommodate up to ten thousand guests; both numbers continued to increase in a new century. Perhaps the greatest compliment the Hudson Valley ever received came in 1899, when the famed German travel writer and publisher Karl Baedeker issued his United States guidebook; the travel connoisseur told his readers that the Hudson River was superior to the Rhine. As the twentieth century began, only three generations after the Hudson first drew the rich and powerful, it now belonged to the world.

