

WISH YOU WERE HERE
An Exhibition of Historic Postcards*
Hudson Area Library



Vintage picture postcards provide a fun and colorful glimpse back in time, showing a community's life and culture, what they were proud of and what they valued.

Enjoy these historic postcards from the Hudson Area Library's History Room collection. They include Hudson street scenes, buildings and landmarks – in addition to charming messages handwritten by locals and tourists alike who wanted to send their regards to loved ones.

Many of the postcards were used to invite someone in a neighboring town to dinner, or to update a family on a sick relative, or to announce the birth of a child. In many ways, they were like today's Facebook posts. They sometimes went across the country but often they only traveled a few miles, or a few blocks and were delivered, in many instances, overnight.

Postcards have long been a part of American culture since their introduction in the late 19th century. The 1893 Chicago World's Fair popularized them as souvenirs and led to the "golden age" of postcards from 1900 to 1918.

"Deltiology is the collection, study, and preservation of picture postcards for fun, recreation, relaxation, and enjoyment – and for the historical preservation of life in years past," observed Barbara A. Harrison in an article about postcards for the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors.

"Many people collect because they are nostalgic or perhaps yearn for a time they never experienced," Harrison wrote. "We owe a great debt to those collectors of nearly 100 years ago for their foresight in collecting the wonderful cards of the period, and for carefully preserving them for us to enjoy in the 21st century."

**Displayed in Community Room September - October 2018,
Images available in History Room*

Hudson Armory

The Armory is a visual landmark and center for much community history. It was designed by the architect Isaac G. Perry, who designed many other armory buildings now on the National Register of Historic Places. As with virtually all post 1879 armory buildings, its basic form and design copies the 7th Regiment Manhattan Armory, which was modeled after 12th to 15th century medieval castles and forts.

The Hudson Armory was built to serve as an administration and drill practice site for the 23rd Separate Company of the New York National Guard and, in the ensuing years, housed various military units. Some of these units were deployed in war and some were given homeland tasks including Co. F of the Infantry Regiment, which in 1917, was dispatched to the Catskills to protect the reservoirs supplying New York City's drinking water after a German plot to poison it was uncovered.

Besides functioning as an armory for military units, many area residents recall attending high school proms, auto shows, wrestling, Harlem Globetrotters basketball, and many other events in the Armory. Most recently the Armory was home to the Armory Art and Antique Gallery.

Today, it houses the Hudson Area Library, City of Hudson Senior Center, and Perfect Ten After School. It was built in 1898 for \$6,000.

Sources: Hudson Area Library website & *The Hudson Armory: Historic Structure Report* by Ward Hamilton, 2012

Hudson-Athens Lighthouse

In the late 1860s, hazards created by the Middle Grounds Flats opposite the City of Hudson made navigation of the Hudson River extremely risky. The U.S. Congress in 1872 approved \$35,000 to build the Hudson City Lighthouse, now known as the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse. Construction was completed in 1874.

The lighthouse was staffed by lighthouse keepers, who often lived in the lighthouse with their families. In 1949 when the last keeper, Emil J. Bruner, retired the light was automated and is kept by the United States Coast Guard.

Today the lighthouse is owned by the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse Preservation Society and continues to guide ships safely around the flats. It is on the National Register of Historic Places. On the second Saturday of the month July to October the preservation society offers tours of the lighthouse, which has been restored to represent life in the 1930s when the Bruner family occupied it.

Source: Hudson-Athens Lighthouse Preservation Society website

New York State Training School for Girls

Originally home of the House of Refuge for Women, the school was established in 1904 as a place of confinement for “incurable” girls between the ages of 12 and 15. At one point, the Hudson Training School held as many as 500 girls but the population declined and it closed in 1975. Singer Ella Fitzgerald was incarcerated at the school as a 16-year-old.

The training school was a place of important research in social work and psychological assessment as well as a place under scrutiny for its penal practices, including solitary confinement. In 1936 when the yacht of Dr. M. E. Ross, a black doctor from Harlem, docked at Hudson harbor he toured the school facilities and reported the poor conditions in which the inmates of color lived, worked and trained. His report helped lead to the Race Discrimination Act in New York intended to “prohibit public funding of any charitable institution discriminating on the basis of race”.

After its closure, the facility was converted to a New York State security prison. The Prison Public Memory Project has digitized historic photos and documents as well as text of their research of all three prisons that existed on this site. This collection is largely available on its website.

Source: Prison Public Memory Project website

Old Toll Gate/West Gate Toll House

Columbia Turnpike, chartered by the NYS Legislature in 1799, connected Hudson to the Massachusetts border. The newly established city of Hudson was the 24th largest city in the United States by 1790, and demand for more efficient access to markets and lower transportation costs drove the turnpike creation. Three toll houses collected fees: East Gate in Hillsdale, Middle Gate in Martindale, and the West Gate Toll House in Greenport.

Built in 1799 out of Becraft Mountain fossiliferous limestone from the quarry behind the toll house, the West Gate was active until 1907. In 2000 it was added to the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The Greenport Historical Society is planning to restore and use the building as a museum and education center.

The Middle Gate is long gone but the Friends of East Gate, formed in 2016, aims to stabilize, preserve, and restore the East Gate Toll House, which is also listed on the National Register.

Sources: *All Roads to the River: The 1799 Columbia Turnpike*, a Local History talk, by Peter Cipkowski, & the Greenport Historical Society website

Hudson Firemen's Home

Located on Harry Howard Avenue, the Firemen's Association of the State of New York (FASNY) Firemen's Home was founded in 1892 and opened in 1895 as a "haven for indigent, sick or disabled firefighters." It is now a fully licensed skilled-nursing facility and continues to serve members of the New York State volunteer fire service.

The original firemen's home was demolished in 1965, and the arch over the entrance to the grounds is the only original structure still standing. In 1926 FASNY established the Museum of Firefighting, which houses a world-class collection of American firefighting artifacts.

Sources: Firemen's Association of the State of New York & Gossips of Rivertown websites

Hudson Boats

The Hudson River was once a busy means of passenger transport, with steamboats running from New York City to Albany, and ferry service between Hudson and Athens.

Families on summer vacation, day trippers, and outings by clubs and schools all traveled on the elegant Hudson River Day Line, which had its peak from the 1860s to the 1940s. In 1925, its busiest year, the Day Line carried two million passengers. These steamboats were “floating palaces” with wide open decks complete with lounge chairs and there was usually a band or orchestra on board. The steamer *Hendrick Hudson*, pictured in two of the images, had its maiden voyage in 1906 and was licensed to carry 5,500 passengers. It cost almost one million dollars to construct and was sold for scrap in 1951. The last steamer finished its run on the Hudson River in 1971.

The Hudson-Athens Ferry was originally a horse-powered paddle-wheel ferry service, begun in 1816. Ferry service ended in 1949, in the wake of the Rip Van Winkle Bridge opening in 1935. Hudson Cruises started running weekend ferry service in 2012, this time without the horses.

Sources: Hudson River Maritime Museum website & “Greene County History Notes: When Horses Walked on Water” by David Dorpfeld in *Columbia-Greene Media*, August 8, 2017

Columbia County Courthouses

The existing courthouse, located at 401 Union Street, is the third on that site after fires destroyed the previous two buildings. It was designed in 1908 by Warren and Wetmore of New York City, who are famous for designing Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan. Another Hudson building designed by Warren and Wetmore is the former Hudson City Savings Institution at 560 Warren Street, which now houses the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Source: Columbia County Historical Society website

Orphan Asylum and Hudson City Hospital

This Federal-style building located at 400 State Street was built in 1818 and has served as an almshouse, insane asylum, the Hudson Female Academy, a private residence, an orphanage, and from 1957 until 2016, the home of the Hudson Area Library. Currently, the building is owned by the Galvan Foundation.

Hudson City Hospital was incorporated in 1889, opening with six beds, a fracture table, and ten physicians. In 1900, it moved to its current location on Prospect Avenue. The name of the hospital was changed to Columbia Memorial Hospital in 1949 to reflect its service to Columbia County, not just Hudson.

Sources: Columbia County Historical Society & Columbia Memorial Hospital websites

Promenade Hill

The Proprietors voted in 1795 that "a certain piece of land known as the Parade, or Mall, in front of Main Street and on the bank fronting the river, should be granted to the Common Council forever, as a public walk or mall, and for no other purpose whatever." Main Street's name changed to Warren Street in 1799.

Promenade Hill was also called Parade Hill because Hudson's militia would parade there. High above the Hudson River atop the hill stands a statue of a sword-bearing woman, Saint Winifred. The statue was made of bronze in Paris by George E. Bissell and was erected in Hudson in May 1896.

Sources: "Saint Winifred" by Pat Fenoff, *Columbia County History & Heritage* magazine, Summer 2003, & *Historic Hudson: An Architectural Portrait* by Byrne Fone, 2005

Rip Van Winkle Bridge and Hudson Train Station

In 1932, New York State's newly created Bridge Authority passed a resolution to apply for \$2.4 million to build a new bridge across the Hudson River at Catskill. Dedication ceremonies took place on July 2, 1935, Approximately 3,000 cars crossed the bridge during the "free hours" that followed and the first toll was collected that day at 6 p.m. Cars were 80 cents plus 10 cents per passenger up to a maximum of a dollar. Pedestrians and bicycles were charged a dime. There was also a provision for one- and two-horse wagons and tolls were charged in both directions. The western approach for the bridge was supposed to be built on land owned by Thomas Cole, an artist of the renowned Hudson River School. The state was prepared to pay up to \$15,000 for the land, or condemn it if necessary. Thomas Cole's heirs, though, felt the historic value of the land should bring a price of at least \$100,000. The controversy dragged on, and the state decided to expedite construction by modifying its design plans, and moved the approach to just north of the Cole property.

The Hudson River Railroad Company was incorporated in 1846 to construct and operate a railroad from New York City to East Albany, now Rensselaer. The Hudson train station, located at 69 South Front Street, was built as a depot along this route in 1874 by the New York Central Railroad, making it the oldest train station still in operation in the state. It is currently the third-busiest station in New York State. Amtrak took over the station in 1971.

Sources: New York State Bridge Authority & Great American Stations websites

Public Square/Seventh Street Park

The park on upper Warren Street was originally a cobble-stoned marketplace known as Public Square. It was donated by a private citizen as a dedicated community space with the intent that it be a park. It was denuded of trees and the Hudson & Berkshire Railroad was allowed to lay track crossing it.

In 1878 a nearby resident sold subscriptions to improve the square with grass, trees, and statuary and the barren square was transformed. The railroad also offered help, “atoning for its presence,” by furnishing gravel to fill the surface of the park. A central fountain was built with a statue, “Venus Rising from the Sea.” In 1975 the City of Hudson Department of Public Works removed the statue to the corner of 7th & Columbia streets and “Inspiration Fountain” was created in the center of the park. The Venus statue has since been moved to a DPW garage after being twice damaged.

A new non-profit, the Hudson Parks Conservancy, has recently formed with the “goal of [partnering] with the City of Hudson in maintaining and improving the city’s parks to ensure that these most democratic of spaces enrich the lives of all Hudsonians and are a source of community pride.”

Sources: Gossips of Rivertown website, *History of the City of Hudson New York* by Anna Bradbury, 1908, & “What Has Happened to Venus?” by Pat Fenoff in *Columbia County History & Heritage* magazine, Summer 2003

General Worth Hotel

The site of the hotel, 213-215 Warren Street, was home to inns and hotels from 1786 until 1969. The first inn was called Kellogg's, which was known for its "good coaches, excellent horses, skillful drivers, and strict attention to the wants, comforts and conveniences of his visitors." In 1837, the inn was destroyed by fire. Recognizing that the bustling city needed a hotel, the land owners Robert and Nancy Barnard, donated the land for a new hotel. A group of Hudson businessmen financed the new hotel and hired a contractor, who built it in 100 days. It was called Hudson House. Modeled after Tremont House in Boston, it was considered an excellent example of Greek Revival architecture.

In 1859, the hotel was purchased by Cornelius H. Miller for \$17,000. The name was changed to Worth House in honor of Gen. William Jenkins Worth, a native of Hudson. Miller and his sons ran the hotel for 70 years. In 1905, *Hudson of Today Illustrated* noted: "It is the best first-class house in the city, with a rate of \$2.50 and \$3.00. The House is commodious in every respect, having one hundred large and airy sleeping rooms, furnished in the most inviting manner." Mr. Miller sold the hotel in 1917 to the Worth House Corporation, made up of local business leaders. In 1934, the property was sold to Potts Memorial Hospital of Livingston and the name was changed to the General Worth Hotel. Improvements were made and the hotel prospered for several decades.

By the 1960s, business had fallen off and the hotel fell into disrepair. It was purchased by the city for back taxes. After a heated public debate -- including having the hotel added to the National Register of Historic Places -- the city demolished it in 1969 saying it was a public-safety hazard. During its heyday, the hotel was the center of Hudson social and community life, acting as host to many meetings, weddings, and political dinners that drew the likes of Eleanor Roosevelt and Gov. Thomas Dewey.

Source: *The General Worth Hotel: A Community of Worth*, a Local History talk, by Gary Sheffer

Street Pump and Bell Watering Trough

The original Hudson proprietors created a central water system in 1787-88 supported by three wells (at 1st and Warren streets, at 2nd and Warren streets, and at 4th and Warren streets), pumps for use by citizens at multiple sites throughout the city, and connecting hollowed-out wooden pipes underground. The spring near present day Spring Street was an early water source.

The Hudson Aqueduct Company obtained capital in 1835 sufficient to permit it to substitute iron pipes for the wooden ones.

By the 1870s, water issues became acute, and an expenditure of \$350,000 was authorized for improvements using the Hudson River as the source.

Health concerns in the early 20th century led by 1905 to a change in the source from the Hudson River to what is now the Churchtown Reservoir, including about 12 miles of pipe and a storage capacity of 82 million gallons.

The postcard above left shows a pump on West Court Street near Allen Street. The postcard at the bottom shows an inverted bell used as a horse watering trough in the middle of the intersection of Green Street and Fairview Avenue. The building in the background, much modified since, is the American Legion Post 184.

Sources: *The Proprietors and their Lasting Influence on the City of Hudson*, a Local History talk, by Carl Gifford Whitbeck, & *History of the City of Hudson*, by Anna Bradbury, 1908

Underhill Pond and St. Charles's Hotel

This grouping of postcards contains such iconic images as aerial views of Hudson, Underhill Pond, the Robert Jenkins House, and the St. Charles Hotel.

The Robert Jenkins House, home to the Hendrick Hudson Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), was built in 1811 by Robert Jenkins, third and fifth mayor of Hudson and a son of original Hudson proprietor Seth Jenkins. The auditorium of the Jenkins House, a 320-seat theatre, was planned by Frances Chester White Hartley, who bequeathed the home to the DAR, for the purpose of enjoyment for the people of Hudson and to provide sustaining means for the house. Maintenance and repairs of the theatre became prohibitive and it was demolished in 1960.

The original St. Charles Hotel was located at 735 Columbia Street. The current St. Charles Hotel at 16 Park Place was originally the Farmer's Hotel. When the Farmer's Hotel closed in 1905, the St. Charles moved to that building.

Sources: Daughters of the American Revolution website & *The History of the Robert Jenkins House, a Home in Hudson: A Tour & Talk*, a Local History talk by Jeane La Porta

Cement Plants and Mt. Ray Reservoir

In the early 20th century, cement production became a big part of Hudson's economy and continued as the city's largest industry for the next half century. The Atlas-Portland Cement Company on Route 9 south of Hudson, in proximity to its quarries, began operations in 1911. A second manufacturing plant on Route 23B east of Hudson (now the ADM plant) began as the Knickerbocker-Portland Cement Company in 1911. By 1913, about 1,200 people worked in the two plants.

The postcard on the top left depicts The Knickerbocker Landslide of 1915, which occurred on August 2nd, when the land dropped 25-30 feet from a natural disaster that resulted in massive destruction. Remarkably it happened during the midst of a shift change and only five people were killed. Subsequently, the Knickerbocker plant was sold to the Lone Star Cement Company circa 1916-1920, which continued in business until 1967. The Atlas-Portland Cement Company was acquired by U.S. Steel and merged into its Universal-Portland Cement company as the Universal Atlas Cement in December 1929. Universal Atlas Cement was purchased by Saint Lawrence Cement in 1976 and closed in 1977. These two plant closings resulted in the loss of 450 jobs.

In 1998 St. Lawrence Cement proposed the construction of the world's largest cement plant on the site of Universal Atlas and the Hudson waterfront. But it was ultimately defeated, led by extraordinary efforts of local community and environmental groups, and denied by New York State.

The Mt. Ray Reservoir, located at the top of Rossman Avenue, has been the city's filtering and distributing reservoir for more 140 years. It was created in 1875 as part of a new water system that used the Hudson River as a source. In 1905 it became part a of a new water delivery system that brought water to Hudson from the Churchtown Reservoir.

Sources: *City of Dust: A Cement Company in the Land of Tom Sawyer* by Gregg Andrews, 1996, "Cement Plant Along Hudson Is Rejected as Unsightly" by Michael Cooper, *New York Times*, April 19, 2005, Greenport Historical Society website, & *The New Forge Water Supply, A Special Report to the Commission of Public Works, 1907*

Hudson Schools

The Fourth Street School (pictured in the top two postcards) was erected in 1893. The building no longer exists. It had 20 classrooms, an auditorium, a study hall that could fit 133 students, a gymnasium, and service rooms. In the 1930 City Directory, it was called the Central Grammar School. (Source: *Hudson Public Schools Annual Report year ending July 31, 1916*)

The former Hudson High School building, located at 401 State Street, still exists and was built in 1916. It is pictured on the left, second postcard down. Today it houses Columbia County offices.

The Hudson Academy (pictured in the two bottom postcards) was located on what is now called Academy Hill opposite the present-day Columbia Memorial Hospital. It opened in 1807. The building was torn down in 1909. (Sources: Notes of Margaret Hills in History Room Collection at Hudson Area Library & *Hudson Public Schools Annual Report* for year ending July 31, 1916)

The city began funding free education for the children of Hudson in 1841 (Source: *Historic Hudson : An Architectural Portrait* by Byrne Fone, 2005)

The city's first high school was organized in 1879 and the Board of Education was organized in 1881. (Source: *History of the City of Hudson New York* by Anna Bradbury, 1908)

St. Mary's Academy -- pictured third down on left - located at Third and Allen streets in what is now a vacant lot. It was built in 1899-1900. The building was destroyed by fire in 1969. (Sources: St. Mary's 1848-1948 centennial book & Gossips of Rivertown website)