

The First City Chartered
Under the United States Government

HUDSON WALKING TOURS

WARREN STREET



Developed by Historic Hudson
Hudson, New York Columbia County



The City of Hudson, with its unique urban scale, has been called by one architectural historian “one of the richest dictionaries of architectural history in New York State.” From 18th-century Federal buildings to 20th-century Arts and Crafts houses, Hudson is a treasure house of architectural styles. This walking tour will help the visitor discover the city’s architectural gems and provide a broader understanding of Hudson’s rich heritage.

Warren Street, Hudson’s main commercial thoroughfare, runs east from the river for about ten long blocks. Numbered streets bisect Warren Street south to north. Allen, Union, Columbia, and State Streets run parallel to Warren Street west to east.

HUDSON: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1609, Henry Hudson, exploring in the Half Moon for the Dutch East India Company, was probably the first European to visit the site of what is now the City of Hudson. Mohican Indians, an Algonquin-speaking people, inhabited the area at that time.

The Dutch arrived in the mid-17th century. In 1662 Franz van Hoesen purchased a large tract of land from the Mohicans, including the present area of Hudson and part of what is now Greenport. The hamlet that emerged was called Claverack Landing and served as a port for the surrounding country.

Soon after the Revolutionary War, a group of seafaring men from Massachusetts and Rhode Island, fearing retaliation from the British Navy, sought a safe harbor for their vessels. Most of the group were Quakers. In the spring of 1783, Thomas and Seth Jenkins, who were sent out to find such a place, purchased the large tract of land that was Claverack Landing. By that fall, the founders of Hudson, who called themselves Proprietors, began arriving with in ships with their families and possessions. Some even brought with them houses that had been framed out in Nantucket.

At their first meeting in 1784, the Proprietors set to work designing the city. They planned it out on a grid pattern, with lots 50 x 120 feet. Gangways, twenty feet wide, were laid out between long streets.

In 1785, the City of Hudson was chartered. It was the third chartered city in New York State and the first city to be chartered after the Declaration of Independence, making it the “first chartered city in the United States.”

By 1788, Hudson had become a commercial city with a considerable population, warehouses, wharves, and docks, ropewalks, shipping, and the dim of industry. Its economic mainstays were whaling, sealing, and international trade. The discovery of petroleum in the mid-1800s decreased the demand for sperm whale oil, and this, combined with the coming of the railroad in the late 1840s, which transected the north and south bays, caused Hudson to enter a period of decline.

Even as the railroads and steamboats sealed the fate of one era, they fostered the beginning of a new era and enabled new industries to prosper. In the 19th century, knitting mills and cotton mills were opened and brick yards flourished, as did an iron works and breweries. But by the end of the 19th century the economy of the city once again began to decline. The cement industry, which had arrived about 1900 and dominated the economy until the Great Depression, finally closed in the late 1960s. It was also during the early 20th century that Hudson’s red light district flourished, and Hudson became known for its brothels. This industry was brought to an end in 1950 by a massive raid conducted by the State Police.

During the middle years of the 20th century, Hudson’s economy continued to be depressed, and because no one could afford to do so, or was willing, able, or interested in doing it, many of Hudson’s elegantly simple buildings, along with its mansions, rode through time unappreciated, neglected, then abandoned, and finally, for some, demolished. Despite depredation caused not only by neglect and the passage of time, but by planned demolition and ill-considered destruction, it remains a cause for celebration that the city of Hudson has retained so much of its superb architectural heritage.

The most recent chapter in Hudson’s history is one of urban renaissance. In the 1980s antique dealers and artists rediscovered Hudson and initiated a renaissance, which continues unabated. In the last two decades, Hudson has

renewed itself as it did before, in the 18th and mid-19th centuries. The city, with its architecture and unique character, has come to be once more avidly appreciated, and more importantly, saved and restored by some long-time residents and by many new devotees of the city—all the spiritual if not the actual heirs of those who built—and rebuilt—Hudson better than they found it.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

When the Proprietors arrived from New England in 1784, they brought a style of architecture known as Federal. Named for the newly formed federation of the United States, Federal architecture looked to the design forms of ancient Greece and Rome for inspiration, with an emphasis on symmetry. Buildings were of brick or clapboard, two stories high with a pitched roof and side or central hall. In wealthier homes, fanlights, low-relief trails, and keystones added decorative touches. Because this style, which remained popular until about 1820, was the dominant style during Hudson’s boom period, there are more surviving buildings of this style in Hudson than any other.



In the 1820s Greek Revival replaced Federal as the dominant style. Greek Revival, as its name implies, derived elements from classical Greece, including the use of columned porticoes and pilasters. Another characteristic of the style seen in Hudson is the insertion of “eyebrow” attic windows in the cornice. Many Federal houses were modernized to Greek Revival in the 1830s, as the result of a business boom that lasted until the Panic of 1837, but the style remained fashionable until about 1860. Another variant during this same period was the Italianate, derived from Renaissance design and characterized by prominent eaves supported by heavy brackets, low sloping roofs, and verandas. A less popular style, known as Egyptian Revival, which includes ancient Egyptian architectural elements, including the lotus design, is also found. There are several rare examples of the style in Hudson.

In the 1850s, Gothic Revival gained popularity. The most obvious characteristic of this style is the pointed roof with decorated verge boards, vaults, and arches, and the use of natural building materials. Complex forms, elaborate detailing, multi-textured and multi-colored walls, asymmetry, and steeply pitched roofs defined the exteriors characteristic of this style. At the same time, a number of sub-styles developed. Second Empire style, 1860-1880, is identifiable by its tall curved mansard roofs with dormer windows, molded cornices, and decorative brackets beneath the eaves. For a short period, 1860-1880, Stick Style, so named for the wooden exterior walls, decorative stick work on the exterior, and gabled roofs with pitched cross-gables, became fashionable.

After 1880, Queen Anne style replaced Second Empire in popularity. Dominant characteristics of Queen Anne are a steeply pitched roof of irregular shape, usually with a front-facing gable, patterned shingles, cutaway bay windows, and other architectural devices to avoid a smooth-walled appearance. An asymmetrical façade with a partial or full width porch one-story high along one or both sidewalls contributed to the complexity of the shape.

The 20th century witnessed a number of revivals including Colonial Revival and Jacobean. Particularly popular was the Arts and Crafts style, most popular in the cottage bungalows of 1910-1930. Commercial buildings often had Art Deco facades added in the 1930s and 1940s, but these are relatively rare in Hudson.

One important Hudson architect was Henry S. Moul. Moul, who came to Hudson in 1875, was responsible for the design of numerous turn-of-the-century residences.

Few architects have had a more profound effect on Hudson than Michael J. O’Connor. O’Connor came to Hudson in 1879 and for a half century O’Connor was the primary architect for numerous private houses and public buildings, including the Firemen’s Home, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Central Grammar School, Sixth Street School, and Allen Street School.

Warren Street was laid out in 1784 and originally called Main Street. The name was changed to Warren Street in 1799.

PROMENADE HILL

On the west side of Front Street is the open space known as Promenade Hill or Parade Hill. Designated by the Proprietors in 1785 as a public space set aside for the leisure use of the city's inhabitants, Promenade Hill is a rare surviving example of a Georgian townscape. It is also one of the earliest examples in the United States of a park area established for the viewing of scenic vistas.

Facing the river, directly ahead, is a low island known as "The Flats," where Henry Hudson dropped anchor in September 1609, and, on the opposite shore, the Village of Athens. To the left is the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse, built in 1874, with the Catskill Mountains beyond. Farther to the left is Mount Merino (named for the famous sheep imported and raised here in the early 19th century); below and to the left of Promenade Hill is the Hudson Boat Launch.



The twelve-foot bronze statue of St. Winifred is by the sculptor George E. Bissell. General William De Peyster commissioned the statue and donated it to the City of Hudson in 1896. According to tradition, Winifred, a devoutly Christian Welsh princess, was beheaded by Prince Caradoc when she repelled his advances. Her head rolled down a hill, and where it came to rest, a holy spring arose. The coping around the statue is local limestone from Becraft Mountain. Notice the fossil shells encased in the limestone.

From the steps at the entrance to Promenade Hill, you can get a good overall look at the full length of Warren Street. On your left is the building that, up until recently, housed the Washington Hose Company, organized in 1803 as Engine Company No. 3. The firehouse was built in 1896 when the area was known as Market Square. The two large windows facing Front Street were originally the bays through which firefighting apparatus entered and left the building.

As you walk east on Warren Street, note the following buildings. (Even numbers are on the north side of the street; odd numbers are on the south side.)

BETWEEN FRONT AND FIRST STREETS

- 14 Shiloh Baptist Church was built as the Jewish Anshe Emeth Synagogue in 1909. The architect was Henry S. Moul and the builder was Charles Crammer. Stone Stars of David are still on either side of the upper floor. Over the front door is the Star of David in stained glass with the inscription Anshe Emeth (House of Truth).
- 32 The Curtiss House, built c. 1834, is one of the few homes in the old city that originally had a large yard. Mr. Curtiss was in the whaling industry and was elected mayor of Hudson in 1844. The house is Greek Revival with Ionic columns. The octagonal cupola on the roof, known as a "widow's walk," provides a good view of the Hudson River and of the rest of the city.

BETWEEN FIRST AND SECOND STREETS

- 113 The Robert Jenkins House is a two and a half story brick Federal style home built in 1811. Robert Jenkins was the son of Proprietor Seth Jenkins. Robert was elected mayor of Hudson in 1808 and again 1815. The five bay brick house features delicate tracery in the Palladian window and door surrounds. The house was presented to the Hendrick Hudson Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution by Robert Jenkins' granddaughter, Frances Chester White Hartley, in 1900. The building houses the D.A.R. Museum, which is open to the public on Sunday and Monday from 1 to 3 PM during the months of July and August, or by appointment.
- 115 The Seth Jenkins House is a two and a half story brick Federal style home, which was built c. 1795. Note the marble facing on the foundation. Seth Jenkins was the brother of Robert Jenkins and the son of Seth, one of the original Proprietors and the first Mayor of Hudson. The interior of the house is currently undergoing a major restoration.
- 116 Across the street from the Jenkins houses is a rare surviving Adam style building. It was built in 1809 for the Bank of Hudson but was converted to a residence in 1819 when the bank failed during the depression that preceded the War of 1812. The building contains both Federal and Greek Revival features, including an ornamental marble frieze, marble pilasters, and medallions. On top of the pilasters are elaborately carved capitals. Peek through the large keyhole to get a glimpse of the lovely fenced in garden.
- 124 Three and one half story brick building with a cast iron front. This unique structure, built about 1869 for the brewer Ezra Waterbury, is probably the only cast iron building in the northeast that was constructed exclusively as a residence. Iron was prefabricated to imitate stone blocks. It is believed that this house was produced by the New York City firm of J. L. Jackson & Brothers, an iron foundry specializing in this type of iron front imitation ashlar.

BETWEEN SECOND AND THIRD STREETS

- 218-220 An impressive late 18th-century three-story brick residence with simple lines and large central chimney. Unusual in Hudson for being set back from the street, this home was built for Thomas Jenkins, probably the richest of the original Proprietors. A Quaker, Jenkins was criticized for being "somewhat aristocratic" because of his palatial home. The house was later divid-

ed into two dwellings, the lower one serving as Miss Peake's School for Young Ladies. In the late 19th century, a rear addition was made for stables. In the mid-20th century, the one-story structure was added to house a bar known as the "The Tainted Lady Lounge."

- 244 This is one of the early houses of Hudson. Interior details suggest that its original owner was a ship's captain or a ship builder. Beams in the attic resemble the hull of a ship and may have been fabricated at the local shipyard.
- 247 Center door with two windows on each side and eyebrow windows nicely set in short supports under the roof cornice. Notice the cast iron screens on the foundation windows. This house was at one time used as the post office when its owner became postmaster.

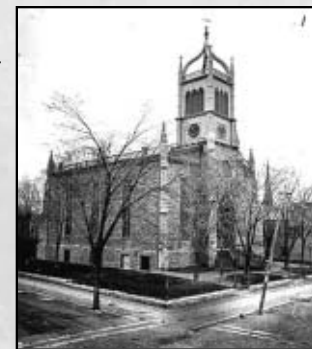
BETWEEN THIRD AND FOURTH STREETS

- 306 Definitely predating 1870 when it became the home of Dr. George Benson, this house remained in the Benson family for the next ninety years. The interior of the house was extensively redone in the 1880s. The Bensons added to their home many fine examples of late 19th-century decorative art, which have been preserved to this day. Among the exterior details, the carved stone windows and the roof trim are in original condition. The wrought-iron railings on the front stairs were added in the 1880s.
- 327 The Hudson Opera House was designed by local architect Peter Avery and built in 1855. The brick building in the Greek Revival style was constructed as Hudson's City Hall. In addition to city offices, it has housed a bank, the post office, and a library. In the 1870s, when it became fashionable for towns and cities to have opera houses, the upstairs auditorium was outfitted with a proscenium, a stage, and dressing rooms, and people began calling city hall the Hudson Opera House, although the only opera, Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, was ever performed here. Henry Ward Beecher was among those who lectured here. Among the famous who sang here was Galli-Curci. In 1962, City Hall moved to 520 Warren Street, and the building became the Moose Hall. In 1992, a non-profit group purchased the building to restore it. The Hudson Opera House, now used as an exhibition and performing arts center, is the fourth oldest surviving theater in the country.
- 336-338 The building that is now the VFW hall and its sister building next door have elements from Federal, Greek Revival, and Victorian periods. They were built together in the Federal period, when they were only two stories tall. The eyebrow windows were added to both buildings in the Greek Revival period. Victorian windows and a bay were added to 338; 20th-century alterations have diminished the charm of 336.
- 339 Three story brick, three windows wide; bow windows are possibly part of a renovation. The house above 339 has stone window trim and is four windows wide. The doorway is not original, but the fan trim over the center door is still in place.
- 342 H. W. Rogers Hose Co. No. 2 is the second oldest fire company in the city, organized in 1794. This firehouse was constructed in 1874.
- 364 The building that currently houses Hudson Valley Newspapers is one of only a few buildings set back from the street. The building originally served as a jail, and yard in front was known as Hangman's Square. It was the site of public executions, although only one person was ever executed there. In 1835, it became known as Davis Hall and was used as a city hall and an assembly and dance hall for twenty years. For a time, it was used as a theater and called the Opera House. Since 1862 it has been a printing shop and newspaper building.



On the southwest corner of Warren and Fourth is the First Presbyterian Church. This corner was once the site of the second Columbia County Court House. Lafayette addressed the citizens of Hudson on this spot when he visited the city in 1824. The First Presbyterian Church, which was founded in 1792, built its new church on the site in 1837. Originally constructed of local stone in early Gothic Revival Style, the church was expanded and given a new Gothic façade with rose window and soaring steeples in 1875. The architect for the new façade is believed to have been John A. Wood.

Looking south on Fourth Street you will see the Columbia County Court House. This is the third courthouse that has stood on the site. Designed by the illustrious architectural firm of Warren and Wetmore, the same architects who designed Grand Central Station in New York City, the building was completed in 1908. The building is in the Beaux Arts style and is composed of Vermont marble. Its interior contains an imposing entrance foyer and grand staircase. In the majestic courtroom, containing a stunning dome, is a mural of the first state justice Peter Van Ness painted by Charles Clark in 1934.



Looking north on Fourth Street, you will see the Hudson Area Library, which is located in what was once considered the most handsome building in Hudson. This native stone building of Federal design was built in 1818. Robert Jenkins had a hand in designing the building, and the central portion is similar to his own house at 113 Warren Street. Built as the city's poorhouse, the building has been a lunatic asylum (1832-1851), a seminary for young ladies (1851-1865), the private home of a wealthy Hudsonian (1865-1878), and an orphanage (1878-1958). The building became the Hudson Area Library in 1959. It is believed that the lions, one nap-

ping and the other looking down benevolently, were placed at the front steps by Captain George Power, whose home it was from 1865 to 1878.

BETWEEN FOURTH AND FIFTH STREETS

401 On the southeast corner is a three-story building dating from about 1851, reputed to be on the site of the law offices of Martin Van Buren. The present building housed a clothing manufacturing business where Civil War uniforms were made. The shop was on the first floor, business offices on the second floor, and workrooms on the third. Fifty years ago, some of the old pressing irons were still in the building. The building is now the flagship store of the cosmetics firm FACE Stockholm.



403 Tall third-story windows suggest a hall or other public use. Eastlake-designed window lintels are linked with a sandstone band that runs around the building.

412 The C.H. Evans residence was built in the early 1870s in the Second Empire style. It is one of three residential properties in Hudson listed for individual significance in the National Register of Historic Places. Evans owned the prosperous brewery that manufactured the world-famous Evan's Cream Ale. His house, the first on upper Warren Street with deliberate side and front yards, is also distinguished for its highly ornamented tower and chimney work.

435-437 A short row of storefronts constructed by Hudson photographer Frank Forshew and rented to other merchants in the later 19th century. Cornice and window surrounds are richly ornamented.

440 The firehouse for the C. H. Evans Hook & Ladder Co. No. 3 was built in 1889-1890. It features Romanesque decoration and molded brick arches. Hook & Ladder Company No. 3 was founded in 1799 and renamed in 1868 for Cornelius H. Evans, owner of the Evans Brewery. The fire company moved to new quarters in 2002. The firehouse will soon be a pub serving Evans Ale, produced by a microbrewery owned by a descendent of Cornelius Evans.

441 The well-preserved Rowles Studio building was originally the photographic studio of Frank Forshew, a pioneer in photography who took the pictures of Hudson in the latter half of the 19th century that illustrate this walking tour guide. The building retains its 19th-century columns and, in the upper stories, distinctive Italianate window sash.

445 This unusual building was designed by architect Henry S. Moul as his home and office. The building comprises two stories on the east side, three on the west, and an elegantly framed entry in a central bay topped by a balcony tower. Fine woodwork, stained glass, and molded brickwork add surface richness to this complex design. In the early 20th century, part of the building served as the medical office of Dr. C.E. Fritts, whose name appears in the ceramic tile doorstep of the side entrance to the building.

448 This church building was constructed for the Universalist congregation in 1869 when its Romanesque detail made it a Hudson landmark. The parsonage for the church was located in the adjacent Greek Revival brick building, which has suffered many additions over the years.



BETWEEN FIFTH AND SIXTH STREETS

This block is the best-preserved length of Warren Street. Most buildings retain their late 19th-century cornices and other ornaments, and storefronts are intact. Despite some 20th-century modernizations, the uniform lot widths preserve the orderly 19th-century character of the commercial buildings.

520 This building with its columned façade was built in 1907 for the National Hudson River Bank. Built of Vermont marble, it was designed by noted local architect Michael O'Connor. The interior is wainscoted with quartered oak shelves and counters surmounted by bronze grills. The dome in center is capped by large curved stained art glass, and the ceiling of the dome is of steel tinted green and touched with gold. Since 1962, the building has housed Hudson's City Hall.

534-536 According to early maps, Dr. Van Vleck owned these properties. 536 is one of the oldest on the block, built c. 1830-1840, and its style has a Federal flavor. The lower facade has been changed, but the upper stories remain intact, and the roofline suggests a fairly early structure.

544 This Colonial Revival building was originally the Farmer's National Bank. It replaced a truly extraordinary 19th-century building, which was destroyed by fire in the first half of the 20th century. The interior of the building has been renovated as a concert hall, and the building is now the Pleshakov Music Center.

555-559 Large windows in the second and third stories signal the advent of department stores with commercial space upstairs. These buildings not only expanded upward but spread over several lots.



At the corner of Warren and Sixth Streets, the stately architecture of two traditionally styled financial institutions gives prominence and dignity to the intersection. The building on the northwest corner was designed by Warren and Wetmore and was originally the headquarters of the Hudson City Savings Institution. The building on the southwest corner was originally the State Bank of Albany. The movie *Odds Against Tomorrow*, starring Harry Belafonte, was filmed at this location.

Looking south on Sixth Street, you will see the Terry-Gillette mansion. This Italianate villa was built around 1850 after a design by architect Richard Upjohn.



Also on Sixth Street is the German Lutheran Church. Built in the Carpenter Gothic style, it was designed by Michael J. O'Connor. A visit to the interior of this small church is worthwhile.

621-623 Large Federal style brick building, constructed in the early 1800s as a public storage place for grain. [Note bricked-in windows along Seventh Street.] A print from the 1830s shows street level openings along Warren Street for storefronts and a sign across the front that reads "Hudson Arcade." The present storefronts are post-World War II.

624 The brick building is 1830s Greek Revival built for commercial purposes. The town house at the back of building, facing the park, is original. The two adjacent wooden structures are both Greek Revival and are still connected internally to the brick sections of the building. On the park façade, one can see that the middle windows were once wider. Ropes rubbing against the lintel when goods were swung into the opening by means of a hoist fixed above the third-floor window left the marks in the stone lintel above the second floor window.

Look south on Seventh Street, you will see a red-painted brick house that is a late 1830s Greek Revival townhouse with a raised basement where the original kitchen was located. It has a brick cornice, instead of the more common wood cornice. Farther along Seventh Street, the Iron Horse Bar dates from the 1870s. In the 1880s the bay and tower were added. The tower is false, only a rooftop ornament. Scenes from the films *Nobody's Fool* and *Ironweed* were shot in this building.

Seventh Street Park Planned as a public square in the 1780s, this area, for a century, welcomed those who came from the countryside on the Columbia Turnpike. The site was paved with cobblestones prior to 1836, when the Hudson and Boston Railroad, which crossed the square, stopped about a block farther north at a depot that still retains some original elegance. The present park, laid out in 1879 at the urging of prominent citizens, is still traversed by tracks used by Conrail.



ABOVE SEVENTH STREET

717 The present Columbia Diner replaced a wooden sidecar diner at this location in about 1940. The movie *Nobody's Fool*, with Paul Newman, was filmed here.

723 This 1890s building was converted into a theater, the Park Theater, in 1921.

731 The building that is now the Warren Inn was built as a movie theater, the Warren Theater, in the 1940s. It has a façade of a tapestry brick and terra cotta. It is purported to be the first, and perhaps only, movie theater to be made into a motel in New York State.

UPPER WARREN STREET

This block was one of the most fashionable in the city in the last quarter of the 19th century and into the 20th. Most of the houses here were built between 1830 and 1920.

736 Greek Revival c. 1830-1840, heavily modified in 1870s. Note the black walnut doors with cut-glass panels and the stone curbing for an iron fence that once stood there. The second-floor sleeping porch was built early in the 20th century during a fad for outdoor sleeping which was thought to cure tuberculosis.

750 This building was originally a car dealership. Look through the windows at the steel vaulting in the ceiling, which supports a poured concrete second floor. The bricks are in a style called "tapestry brick"; the cornice is cream-colored terra cotta.

810 Note the Greek door trim. The round rosettes on the front door are made of lead.

Other Sites to Visit in Hudson

Firemen's Museum The largest museum of firefighting equipment and memorabilia in the Northeast. A wonderful visit for children.

Cedar Park Cemetery Colonel John Van Alen, who was one of the first to be buried here in 1784, gave the land to the City of Hudson for a cemetery. The cemetery contains a wealth of over two hundred years of mortuary monuments of all sizes and styles, and well as pleasant views and vistas.