

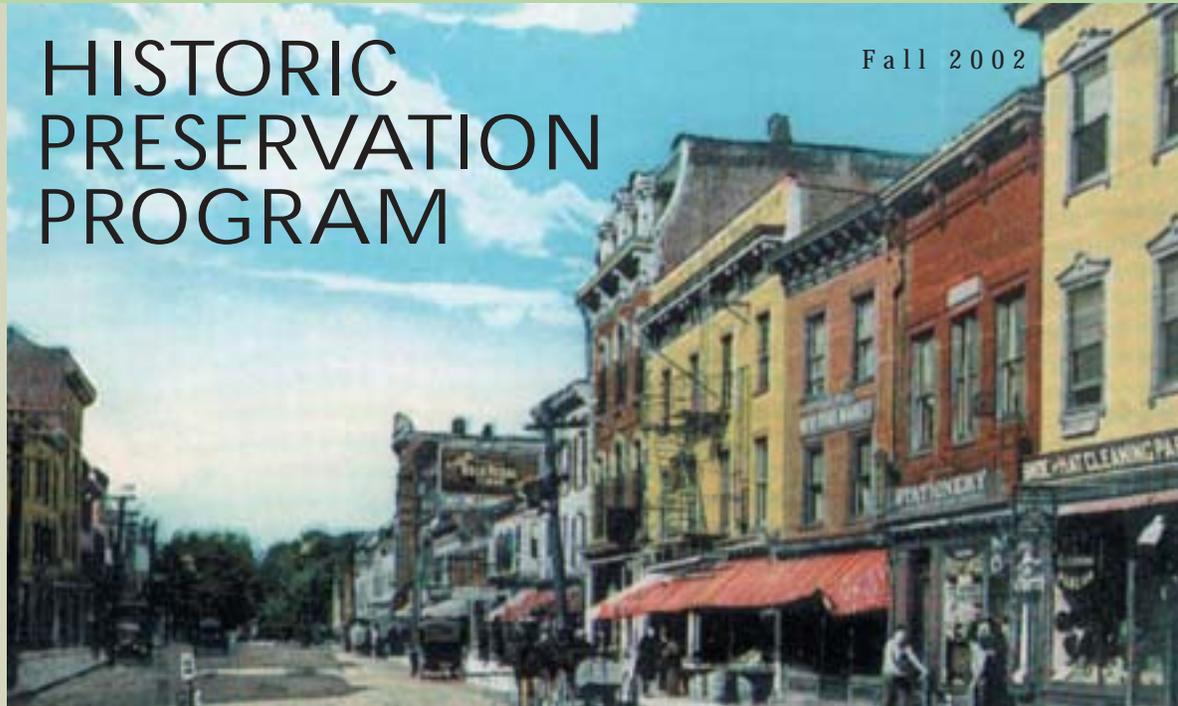
PEEKSKILL

HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

Fall 2002

CONTENTS

Overview of Historic Preservation in Peekskill	1
The Review Process	2
Design Guidelines	3
Summary of Peekskill's Historic and Landmarks Preservation Ordinance	4
Benefits of Designating a Neighborhood as a National Register Historic District	6
Peekskill's History and Development	8



MAIN STREET LOOKING WEST, CIRCA 1900

Overview of Historic Preservation in Peekskill



FRANKLIN STREET SCHOOL
CONSTRUCTED IN 1902,
DEMOLISHED IN 1969.

Over the last three decades, the City of Peekskill has experienced a marked increase in the replacement of older structures with new construction in its downtown area. This prompted Peekskill's Common Council to begin the process of protecting the remaining historic resources in its central business district. In May 2000, the Common Council adopted legislation that provides for "Historic Districts and Landmarks Preservation". On March 26, 2001, the City designated its first local historic district in the downtown area (see map on page 2). This prestigious designation highlights the historical and architectural significance of the district, and ensures that all renovations, demolition and new construction within the district are reviewed by the City prior to construction. It is anticipated that this legislation will stabilize neighborhood growth and value, bring long term investment to the

community, and promote Peekskill's rich historic and architectural heritage.

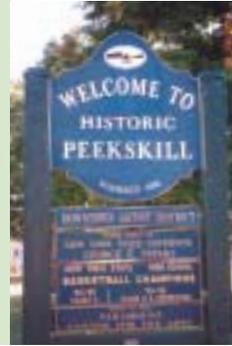
Historic preservation is a catalyst for the revitalization, stabilization, and enhancement of historic neighborhoods. The creation of a historic district typically results in improved property maintenance and a heightened sense of cooperation within the neighborhood. Another important outcome of preservation activities is increased property values. Historic designation fosters community cohesion, identity, and pride, along with an appreciation of the historic character of the community and concern for its future.

If you own a structure that is designated as a local landmark or located within a historic district, this legislation will make it subject to certain standards. While you have to meet these standards when exterior work is done on your property, you also benefit from knowing that all the property in the district will be treated in the same manner. The relationship between you, your neighbor and the City becomes one of partnering to maintain historical, architectural, cultural and real property values.

For more information, contact Peekskill's Department of Planning and Development at 914-734-4210.



VISITORS ARE GREETED WITH "WELCOME TO HISTORIC PEEKSKILL" SIGNS AT THE ENTRANCES TO THE CITY.



A HISTORIC HOME IN THE DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT: THE MCGURTY HOUSE AT 136 UNION AVENUE, BUILT IN 1885.

The Review Process



A TYPICAL STOREFRONT LOCATED IN DOWNTOWN PEEKSKILL, SHOWING IMPORTANT HISTORIC ELEMENTS THAT SHOULD BE MAINTAINED.

If a property owner or tenant plans to undertake any alterations or additions to the exterior of his property in the historic district or to a local landmark (including the installation of signs, awnings, fences, etc.), the historic ordinance requires that plans be submitted to the City for review by the Historic and Landmarks Preservation Board. No HLPB review is required for interior alterations, except if they affect the exterior appearance of the structure. An application for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) can be obtained by calling the Department of Planning and Development in City Hall. (Information is also

available on the City's web site, www.ci.peekskill.ny.us). The application lists the information that is required for HLPB review. Incomplete forms and missing information will delay the review process. There is a minimal application fee.



EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF COMMERCIAL INFILL ALONG SOUTH STREET. THE NEWLY CONSTRUCTED ART LOFTS BLEND IN NICELY WITH THE HISTORIC STREETScape.

Applications for a COA should be submitted to the Department of Planning and Development approximately three weeks prior to the scheduled HLPB meeting.

The HLPB's review will be based upon the Historic District's *Design Guidelines*, which are available in City Hall. Applicants will always be notified of the date and place of the HLPB meeting, so that they can attend and be an active part of the process.

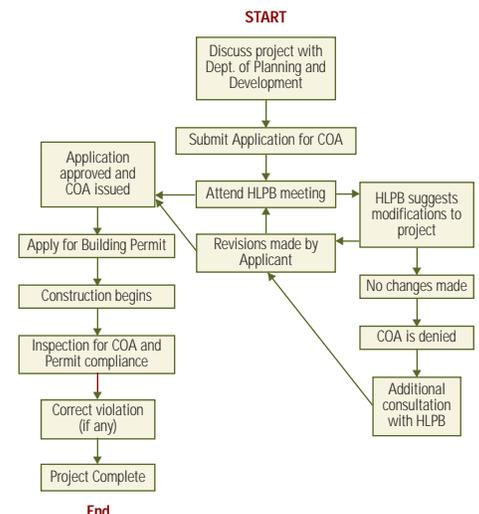
After reviewing the proposed project, the HLPB will render its decision as to the appropriateness of the work and its conformity to the *Design Guidelines*. If the HLPB

finds that the proposed work meets the *Guidelines*, a COA will be issued and the project can proceed accordingly.

The COA is the Board's official approval of an application and gives the Building Inspector permission to issue a Building Permit if all of

the other approvals are in place. A building permit must be issued within one year of the date of the COA approval; otherwise the COA expires. The Building Inspector will verify that construction follows approved plans. It is critical that the work is performed as approved. Any deviations from the approved plans must be reapproved; otherwise you may be required to remove unauthorized work. The flowchart shown here illustrates the typical review process.

The flowchart below is provided to illustrate the process associated with securing approvals to undertake exterior rehabilitation of properties within the Downtown Peekskill Local Historic District. Owners and their agents are urged to contact the Department of Planning and Development or the Building Department prior to making any commitments, ordering materials, or beginning work.



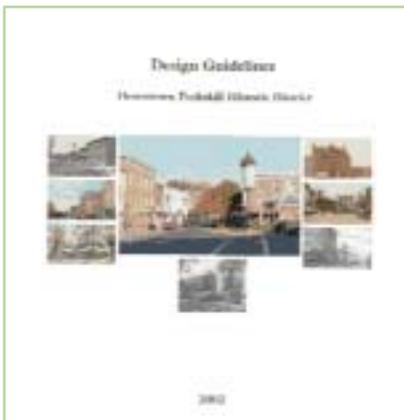
Design Guidelines



MAIN STREET LOOKING EAST, ABOUT 1900.

Peekskill's Common Council adopted Design Guidelines for the downtown Historic District. The purpose of these guidelines is twofold:

1. To provide City officials, property owners, renters, architects, and contractors a manual by which to gauge what the HLPB will consider "appropriate" to the District.



RECENTLY PUBLISHED "DESIGN GUIDELINES" FOR THE DOWNTOWN LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT CAN BE VIEWED AT THE FIELD LIBRARY OR OBTAINED IN CITY HALL.

2. To provide the HLPB with standards to follow in the review process in order to establish an objective basis for decision-making.

Design Guidelines define the significant elements of building appearance and setting within the historic district, and establish standards for preserving and enhancing those elements. Included in the guidelines is a description of the major architectural styles found in Peekskill's historic district. This identifies the features that give a building its historic character, and these features should be preserved in rehabilitation and maintenance projects.

Design Guidelines can help avoid hasty or misinformed alterations of historic architecture by offering preferred options for dealing with significant architectural

features and by specifying precise treatments for solving common maintenance-related issues. Most importantly, however, is that property owners and tenants in the Downtown Historic District must be familiar with the Design Guidelines if they intend to make physical changes to the exterior of their properties.

The HLPB always welcomes questions relating to exterior improvement, restoration, and sensitive rehabilitation of properties in the Historic District or to a local landmark. Before making any exterior alterations, owners, tenants, or contractors must consult with the HLPB and obtain all necessary permits.

Please call the Peekskill Department of Planning and Development at 914-734-4210 before submitting your application, ordering materials, or starting work.

WHEN IS A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS REQUIRED?

Any treatment that affects the exterior of a landmark building or property in the historic district (including new construction and demolition) requires the approval of the HLPB before the work begins. This includes the modification of nearly every aspect of the property and building exterior, including modifications to windows, doors, roofs, porches, the installation of siding, storefront remodeling, painting, fences, signage, awnings, etc.



MAIN STREET LOOKING EAST TOWARD DIVISION STREET AS IT APPEARS TODAY.

The Commission reviews only those changes that are proposed by the applicant and that affect the exterior of the building or property. If you are simply repairing something with the same material that is currently on your building or repainting in exactly the same color, no review is required. If a feature is being replaced in its entirety, even with the same materials, you must apply for a COA. If you are unsure what needs to be reviewed, it's better to call the City before you order materials or begin work.

Summary of Peekskill's Historic and Landmarks Preservation Ordinance

I. PURPOSE OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE:

The Peekskill Common Council has determined that it is desirable to designate local historic districts and landmarks for the following public purposes:

- To protect districts and landmarks associated with the growth and development of the City, State and Nation. These districts and landmarks provide enjoyment and educational benefit by highlighting Peekskill's past.
- To preserve the architectural, artistic, technological and cultural elements of the City's past that cannot be replaced.
- To stabilize and improve property values and promote reuse of historic districts and landmarks.
- To enhance the City's tourist attractions.
- To foster civic pride in historic elements that give Peekskill its unique character.
- To foster economic growth through preservation of historic districts and landmarks.
- To protect against the demolition of historic landmarks and the inappropriateness of exterior design that adversely affects the desirability of the surrounding area.

II. DUTIES OF THE HISTORIC AND LANDMARKS PRESERVATION BOARD (HLPB):

The HLPB consists of seven members, all City residents, appointed by the Common Council for three-year terms. Meetings are generally held once per month. Duties of the HLPB are as follows:

- Make recommendations to the Common Council on nomination of areas and buildings as landmarks or districts.
- Issue or deny Certificates of



EXAMPLE OF A HISTORIC MARKER AWARDED TO VARIOUS BUILDINGS THROUGHOUT PEEKSKILL THAT HAVE MAINTAINED THEIR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY.

Appropriateness for buildings in local historic districts or for local landmarks.

- Maintain listings of historic buildings and districts in Peekskill.
- Formulate and recommend design guidelines to be adopted by Common Council.
- Establish a system of markers for historically and architecturally significant buildings and districts.

- Prepare and publish maps and brochures about the City's historic and architectural resources.
- Advise the Common Council, Planning Commission, and other boards and departments about historically and architecturally significant sites and buildings.
- Promote education about historic landmarks and districts.
- Enlist assistance and cooperation from other public and private agencies concerned with historic buildings and districts.
- Advise owners of historic buildings on preservation issues.
- Advise Common Council of preservation grants available to the City.
- File an annual report with the Common Council.

III. DESIGNATION OF LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND LANDMARKS:

HLPB recommends to the Common Council the designation of a building as a **local landmark** if it has one or more of the following characteristics:

- Is associated with persons or events of historic significance to the City, region, State or Nation;
- Is illustrative of historic growth of the City, region, state or nation;
- Has distinctive characteristics of an architectural type, period, or method of construction;
- Is the work of a designer who has influenced an age;
- Contains unique architectural, archaeological, or artistic qualities; or
- Is on the National Register of Historic Places.

THE REHABILITATED PARAMOUNT CENTER FOR THE ARTS ON BROWN STREET IS ACTIVELY USED BY THE COMMUNITY, AND THE PARAMOUNT EAST IS SLATED FOR RENOVATION INTO A PRODUCTIVE NEW USE.



HLPB recommends to the Common Council the designation of an area of the City as a local historic district if it has the following characteristics:

- The area has special historic value because it contains properties that meet the criteria for landmark designation, and
- The area represents a style or period of architecture typical of a past era, and
- The area is a distinct portion of the City, or
- The area is on the State or National Register of Historic Places.

A written proposal for the designation of a building as a local landmark may be submitted by any person to the HLPB, and must include the following:

- Description of the architectural style, period and historic significance of the building.
- Statement of how the building fulfills the characteristics of a “landmark”, as outlined above.
- Exterior photographs and a site map that illustrate these characteristics.
- Name and address of property owner(s), including section, block and lot numbers.
- Name, address and phone number of person submitting the proposal and who is being represented.

A written proposal to designate an area as a local historic district may be submitted by any person to the HLPB, and must include the following:

- Statement of the physical elements of the area that warrant a historic district, and a description of all buildings within the proposed district, noting type, architectural style, and period of construction.
- Statement of how the area fulfills the characteristics of a historic district, as outlined above.

- Map showing the boundaries of the proposed district, and the locations of buildings therein.
- Justification of proposed district boundaries.
- Exterior photographs of buildings in proposed district.
- Name and address (with section, block and lot number) of every property owner within the district.
- Name, address and phone number of person submitting proposal and who is being represented.

Procedure for the designation (or rescission) of historic districts and landmarks:

- A written proposal is submitted to the HLPB, as outlined above.
- If the HLRB recommends designation of the landmark or district, it forwards a report of its findings to the Common Council.
- The Common Council refers the HLPB report to the Planning Commission to determine the designation’s compatibility with the City’s Comprehensive Plan and Waterfront Plan.
- The Common Council holds a public hearing on the proposed designation and then renders the final decision on designation.

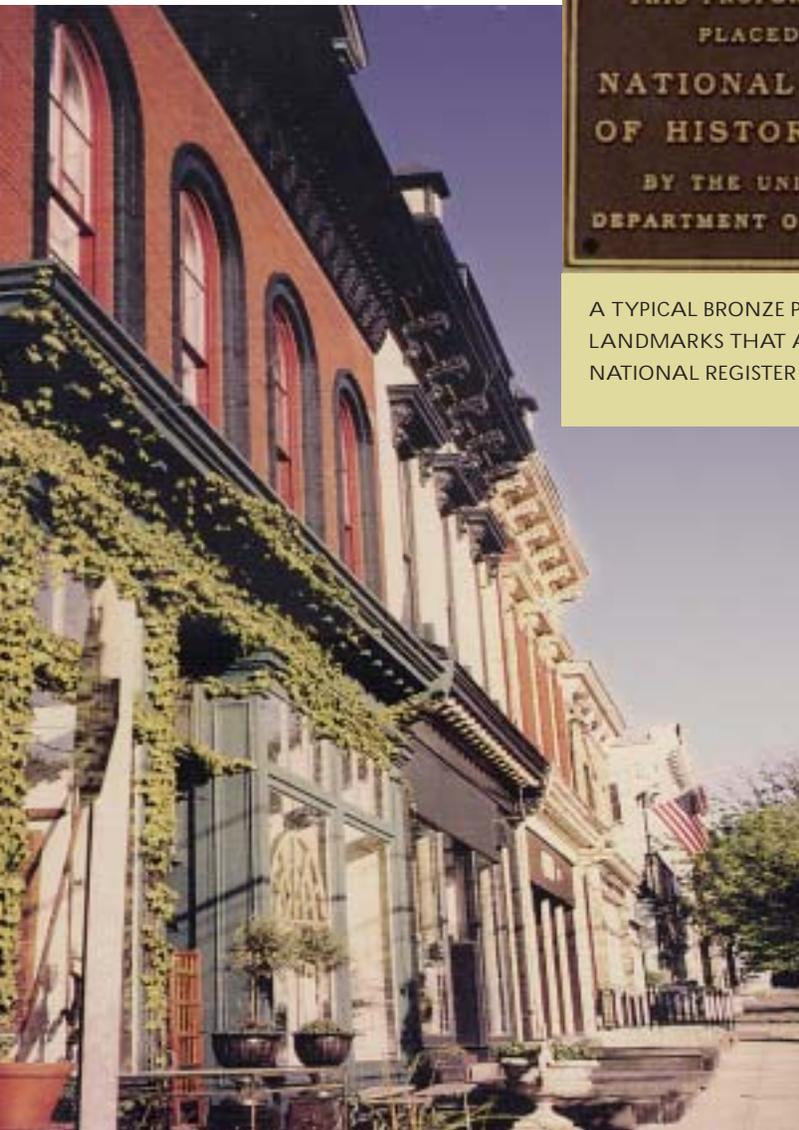
IV. CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS (COA):

- Once a historic district or a landmark has been locally designated, a property owner or tenant must apply for a COA for the following:
 - Any material change to the exterior of a local landmark or to the exterior of a building in a local historic district.
 - Any new construction or demolition in a local historic district or on the site of a local landmark.
- A COA application and supporting material must be submitted with a nominal

application fee. The HLPB makes its decision based on the City’s adopted Design Guidelines and the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. Any alteration or new construction must be compatible with the building’s historic character and with the district in which it is located.

- The HLPB can issue a COA with conditions. It is unlawful to deviate from approved plans and conditions of approval.
- If a COA has been approved, any other permit or approval must be consistent with the COA. If the application is denied, then the applicant can apply to the HLPB for relief if he/she feels that it is an economic hardship to comply. The applicant will be asked to provide documentation to support the hardship. If relief is denied, the applicant can appeal to the Zoning Board of Appeals.
- Ordinary maintenance and repair of a building is allowed without a COA, as long as it does not involve a change in design, texture, material, color or outward appearance. The owner shall not permit his property to fall into a serious state of disrepair resulting in the deterioration of any exterior architectural feature.
- If work performed is not in compliance with a COA, the HLPB can require the applicant to restore the building to its appearance prior to the violation.
- In a historic district or for a local landmark, all signs are reviewed by the HLPB for location, size, color, lettering, graphics, materials, and attachment method. A COA application must be submitted for all signage in the local historic district or for a local landmark.

Benefits of Designating a Neighborhood as a National Register Historic District



A TYPICAL BRONZE PLAQUE PLACED ON LANDMARKS THAT ARE ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES.

The City of Peekskill has several National Register landmark buildings (see list on page 7). Designation as a National Register landmark or district differs from local designation in several important ways. Only properties in the local historic district are subject to review by the Historic and Landmarks Preservation Board. No review is required in a National Register district, and the benefits are as follows:

- Owners of private property in a National Register Historic District are free to maintain, alter, demolish, or dispose of their property as they choose. There are no new restrictions imposed on this type of historic district.
- Property owners are eligible for the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program. This allows an owner of income-producing property to deduct (from federal income taxes) 10–20% of the cost to rehabilitate the building. (For detailed information on the tax incentives program, log on to www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/tax/).
- National Register designation is an effective marketing tool for tourism; it is useful in educating the community about its history and development; and it ensures that the district is considered in the planning of federally funded projects.

EXAMPLE OF A PRESERVED DOWNTOWN STREETScape IN A NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT.

- No additional regulations are imposed upon government-funded projects. All eligible buildings that use public money are reviewed by SHPO in any case, whether or not they are in a National Register district. This program imposes no additional costs on the local government.
- Publicly owned National Register structures are eligible for federal matching grants for rehabilitation work on an annual basis.
- Rehabilitation of historic buildings creates jobs, provides new locations for businesses, increases patronage for existing businesses, improves the local tax base, and enhances the quality of life within a community.
- Rehabilitation enhances property values, resulting in augmented revenues for local and state government through increased property, business and income taxes.
- A downtown National Register district in Peekskill would give added prestige and visibility to the existing local historic district. It compliments the growth of the Artists' District, and gives the property owners an added incentive to improve the appearance of their storefronts with the federal tax incentives program.
- The existing local district regulations protect the appearance of the downtown; the National Register designation would provide the financial incentives to enhance that appearance.
- National Register properties receive priority consideration when federal and state agencies lease office space.
- Property owners have no obligation to open their properties to the public.
- A bronze plaque bearing the name of the landmark and attesting to its national significance can be purchased and erected by the property owner, adding prestige and historic value to the property.



THE STANDARD HOUSE ON HUDSON AVENUE IS BOTH A LOCAL AND NATIONAL REGISTER LANDMARK.

Peekskill properties currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places include the following:

1. Drum Hill School on Ringgold Street, listed on 12/31/79.
2. Beecher-McFadden Estate off East Main Street, listed on 11/2/87.
3. Peekskill Post Office on South Street, listed on 5/11/89.
4. Villa Loretto on Crompond Road, listed on 6/2/89.
5. Standard House on Hudson Avenue, listed on 11/24/00.
(Also a local historic landmark)
6. Thomas Nelson House on Seymour Lane, listed on 8/20/01.
7. Peekskill Presbyterian Church on South Street, listing expected 2002.

Note: In 2003, the City expects to apply to the State Historic Preservation Office for nomination of the downtown as a National Register district.

If a property owner of a historically significant building or owners in a historic neighborhood are interested in a National Register nomination, please contact the State Historic Preservation Office at **518-237-8643**.

Peekskill's History and Development

European Discovery and Settlement

Peekskill was recognized by sailors in the 1600s as a distinct locale on the Hudson River. Henry Hudson, the English sea captain and explorer, sailed the river in the Fall of 1609 onboard the Dutch ship *Half Moon*. This voyage of exploration began Holland and England's land claims to the Hudson River Valley.

The first recorded white person to set foot on this territory was Jan Peeck, a resident of New Amsterdam (New York City). On numerous sloop journeys to this region around 1640, Peeck exchanged various manufactured items with native tribal people located along Peekskill Bay. These Mohican Indians identified this locale as "Sackhoes".

The Peekskill region, specifically what is now Annsville, was first identified by European immigrants as "Peeck's Kill". The name Peeck (Peak, or Peek) was combined with the Dutch word for creek (kill or kil) and the area was known to the Dutch as "Jan Peeck's Kill" and to the English as "John Peak's Creek".

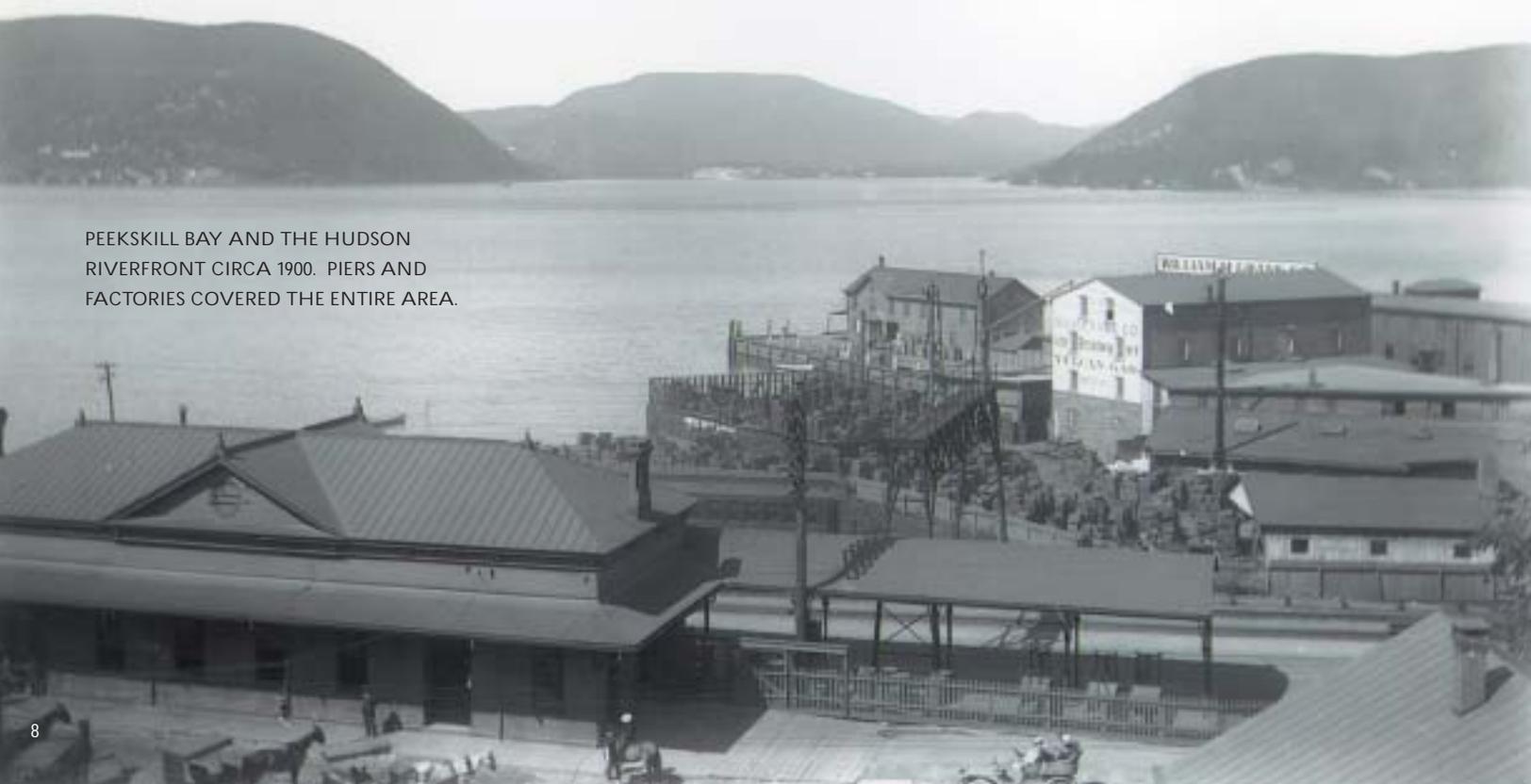
Peeck's Kill was identified as a distinct geographical location in 1643, when products were officially transferred from the Europeans to the native tribe. These items included brass kettles, fish hooks, knives, swords, muskets, lead, bullet molds, gun powder, pistols, needles, axes, hoes, tobacco pipes, rum, beer and tobacco. The deed transfer of land for these items was the Ryck's Patent, signed by the chiefs and the English Governor in 1685. In return, six New Amsterdam residents representing three families (DeKey, Abramson and

Harche) were given title to 1,800 acres. An additional 1,500 acres of territory was added to Peekskill with a land grant given to Hugh Magregere in 1691 by the King of England. McGregory's Brook marks the boundary line of that real estate transaction.

The initial growth of the community was slow. In 1712, only 32 people made their homes in the area known as Ryck's Patent, but within twenty years portions of that tract were sold off for residential and commercial development. The Post Road brought tavern keepers, boat builders, blacksmiths, carpenters, and farmers. Among the new arrivals in that era were Daniel Birdsall, Nathaniel Brown, Joseph Travis, and Isaac Conklin. Other early settlers in Peekskill before the Revolutionary War were the Horton, Depew, Weeks, Lent, Cronkite, Johnson, Hall and Hawes families. Their primary activities were agriculture, river transport, and manufacturing.

Early in its history, Peekskill prospered as a manufacturing and shipping community. Peekskill's maritime heritage developed chiefly because the east bank of the Hudson River widens considerably at the inlet that became known as Peekskill Bay. Writing in 1952, Chester A. Smith described Peekskill Bay as follows:

PEEKSKILL BAY AND THE HUDSON RIVERFRONT CIRCA 1900. PIERS AND FACTORIES COVERED THE ENTIRE AREA.





THE TROLLEY LINE ON SOUTH STREET (A.K.A. QUEEN'S HIGHWAY OR POST ROAD) LOOKING EAST TOWARD DIVISION STREET, CIRCA 1900.

“...its shallow depth bordered by a stretch of level land made possible the construction of wharfs and docks, with the resulting building of sloops and schooners which plied between Peekskill and New York... This gave Peekskill an outlet to the outside world...”

— Smith, Chester A., Peekskill, A Pictorial History of the City from 1654 to 1952 (The Friendly Town Assoc, 1952, p. 21.)

Annsville Creek and McGregory Brook were recognized as ideal locations for using water transport and waterpower. Sawmills and grinding mills were located on these streams, convenient to river shipping. Industrial processes were set up to turn wheat and corn into flour, tallow into candles, leather into shoes, and rags into paper. Docks and wharves allowed sloops and other vessels to carry flour, leather and manufactured material to other locations while importing necessary supplies.

Another contributing factor in the growth and development of Peekskill was the construction of the “Queen’s Highway”, built early in the eighteenth century from New York City to Albany, passing through Peekskill. Known also as the Post Road because of the post (mail) riders who frequented it, the highway entered Peekskill near the railroad bridge at Buchanan, followed Lower South Street to North Division Street, through Van Cortlandville and northward. The stagecoach first appeared on the local highways in 1785, and by 1800 scheduled runs began.

The Hudson River Railroad reached Peekskill in 1849, and was eventually headed by Chauncey Depew, a prominent Peekskill citizen whose house at 660 Main Street still stands. The 1874 passenger depot continues to serve commuters on a daily basis.

Peekskill during the War of Independence

Peekskill was a significant Revolutionary War military base, and it was used intermittently as the Hudson Valley Headquarters from 1776 through 1782. General Washington established Peekskill as the regional command center for the Hudson Valley following a personal inspection tour in November 1776, after the battle at White Plains. Officers used the former Birdsall House at the corner of Division and North (now Main Street) as their headquarters.

Peekskill was important for its hilly defensive location, its view of the bay, and its industries devoted to military purposes. The overlook, now identified as “Fort Hill”, was the site of five large barracks and two redoubts. An average of 1,000 Continental soldiers were stationed here at Camp Peekskill on and off throughout the eight year war.

The Americans established a series of river fortifications along the Highlands, and these forts were garrisoned by soldiers mostly from Camp Peekskill. The local group of Continental soldiers was commanded by Colonel Philip Van Cortlandt. This unit saw action in the battles of Saratoga in 1777 and Yorktown in 1781.

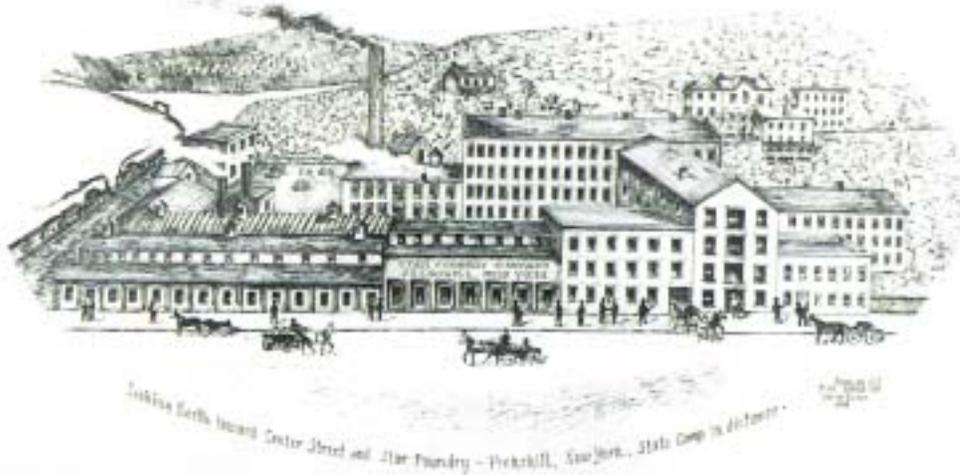
By 1777 Peekskill was an important and vulnerable military location in the Hudson Valley. Arriving with a warship and several support vessels, 500 British infantry bombarded the Peekskill camp with artillery in the early springtime of 1777. Barracks, mills, and war supplies were destroyed. Another enemy attack force arrived at the Hudson Highlands in the Fall of 1777. Due to its vulnerability of attack from the Hudson River, Peekskill was replaced in its role as regional command center by the West Point garrison in the Spring of 1778.

Events surrounding the Benedict Arnold conspiracy in 1780 were significant in Peekskill’s history. General Arnold had received the official command of West Point from General Washington while both were present at the Birdsall house. When Arnold secretly planned to consult with British officer John Andre on a conspiracy mission, Andre’s British warship was attacked. The mission was foiled by John Peterson and Moses Sherwood from Croton Point, and Peekskill’s John Paulding interrogated and captured John Andre, the British spy, at Tarrytown. The cannon believed to have been involved in the attack is now on the lawn of the Peekskill Museum.



THE FRONT LAWN OF THE PEEKSKILL MUSEUM DISPLAYS THE CANNON BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN USED TO FOIL BENEDICT ARNOLD'S CONSPIRACY MISSION DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

(Continued on Page 10)



IRON FOUNDRY COMPLEX
ON THE NORTH SIDE OF
CENTRAL AVENUE NEAR THE
WATERFRONT, CIRCA 1895.

The River's Role in Industrialization

Peekskill's incorporation as a Village within the Town of Cortlandt in 1816 hastened the growth of its industrial, commercial and civic activities. Industrial development expanded, beginning in the early 1820s. Brick making was one of the earliest endeavors, soon joined by a variety of foundries producing stoves and farm implements that were exported across America. Starting with Steven Gregory's small iron casting foundry in 1829, plow and stove making factories began to flourish. The Annsville Wire Company became active in 1833. Typical of the foundries was the Southard-Robertson operation on Main Street that employed two hundred foundrymen and produced two hundred stoves daily. By 1895, seven Peekskill foundries were producing and selling more than 200,000 heating and cooking stoves of all sizes and models annually. The importance of the heritage of Peekskill stoves and implements is reinforced by the inclusion of both products on the seal of the City. The manufacture of pottery was carried on here as well, as was the production of pots, pans, and tea kettles. Other notable industrial endeavors in Peekskill include Fleischmann's, the company that developed the first pound of compressed yeast at its Charles Point plant in 1900. This operation became Standard Brands in 1929, and generations relied on unionized jobs until its departure in 1977.

President Lincoln and the Underground Railroad

President-elect Abraham Lincoln made a stop at the old Peekskill Train Station on Water Street, and delivered a short speech on February 19, 1861. The stop at Peekskill was Lincoln's only living appearance in Westchester County. A memorial marker on South Street, named the Lincoln Exedra, overlooks the original railroad depot, which is slated for restoration.



THE LINCOLN EXEDRA ON SOUTH STREET
OVERLOOKS THE HISTORIC LINCOLN TRAIN
DEPOT, WHERE PRESIDENT-ELECT LINCOLN
DELIVERED A SHORT SPEECH IN 1861.

Peekskill also served as an "Underground Railroad" station in the system that helped refugees escape from slavery. The establishment of the AME Zion Church was spearheaded by Harriet Tubman in 1852. Hawley and Harriet Green, two prominent African American property owners active in the Abolitionist cause, allowed their house

at 1112 Main Street to be used as an Underground Railroad safehouse. The prominent abolitionist preacher, Henry Ward Beecher, lived at his East Main Street mansion and was visited by his sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, who wrote "Uncle Tom's Cabin". Moses Beach, publisher of the New York Sun newspaper, shared Beecher's views, and also settled on East Main Street in the 1860s.

Post Civil War Prosperity

The Village of Peekskill in the era after the Civil War saw an economic and population expansion. The Peekskill Iron Company at Annsville was sold to Cooper Hewitt Company of New York City in 1887. That factory produced about 30 tons of pig iron daily.

Peekskill is notable for bearing the name of the first factory that later developed into the international Crayola Company. The Peekskill Chemical Works was founded by Joseph Binney in 1864 as an early maker of inks, dyes and paints. The factory was located in a former tobacco warehouse at Annsville. This company created the first "Crayola" product after 1900, when operations had relocated to Easton, PA as Binney and Smith Company.

Education in Peekskill

Peekskill has stood as a center for education throughout much of its existence. In 1860 the local school district acted to create the Union Free School District. The community's first large public school house was erected in 1859 on Drum Hill; it was also the site of an American outpost during the Revolution.

The heritage of private education in Peekskill is particularly strong and includes a variety of institutions, including the Peekskill Military Academy (established in 1833), Mount Saint Gabriel School (an Episcopalian girls' school established in 1872), St. Joseph's Home (a co-educational Roman Catholic facility established in 1879),



THE PEEKSKILL CHEMICAL COMPANY GREW INTO THE CRAYOLA FACTORY AT ANNSVILLE, ABOUT 1875.



VAN NEST DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH AT THE CORNER OF MAIN AND NORTH JAMES STREET WAS DEMOLISHED IN 1965.



TYPICAL PEEKSKILL RESIDENCE AT THE TURN OF THE LAST CENTURY.

the St. Germaine Home (a home and school for girls in the 1870s), the Synagogue School (religious education for Jewish youth, established in 1897) and the Villa Loretto School (a Roman Catholic junior high school).

Peekskill as a City

Peekskill officially became an incorporated City on July 29, 1940. Two years of difficult legal wrangling had finally settled the legal separation from the Town of Cortlandt. The City Charter was revised in 1967 to allow for a City Manager form of government along with a Mayor and six other council members.

Peekskill was the first community in New York State to have an African American mayor. Councilman Richard E. Jackson was appointed to serve the unfinished term of George Pataki. With the election of Mayor Pataki as Governor of New York in 1994, Peekskill continued to contribute outstanding individuals as leaders in American events. The City elected its first woman to the Council in 1983, and its first female mayor in 1994.

Peekskill's greatest years of expansion were between 1870 and 1930. As the community grew, the commercial character of downtown Peekskill was established, characterized by architecture in the Italianate, Queen Anne, Neo-Classical, Colonial Revival, and Art Deco styles. The rise of the automobile in the early years of the twentieth century brought considerable change, with the construction of

bridges that by-passed the downtown area. In order to address traffic-related issues in downtown in the early 1970s, the City cleared many historic buildings for the construction of large scale parking structures.

The community's preservation efforts began in 1976 with the fight to save the former Herrick House from demolition, and its adaptive reuse as the Peekskill Museum. This was followed by the rehabilitation of the Paramount Center for the Arts, one of the community's most recognized architectural gems. The May 2000 passage of the City's Historic District and Landmarks Preservation legislation and the March 2001 designation of the downtown as a local historic district are significant steps to ensure that the distinctive and irreplaceable character of the community and its widespread architectural legacy will not be lost or irretrievably damaged.



THE HERRICK HOUSE ON UNION AVENUE WAS SAVED FROM DEMOLITION AND ADAPTIVELY REUSED AS THE PEEKSKILL MUSEUM IN 1976.



THE NEWLY CONSTRUCTED "ART LOFT" BUILDING ON CENTRAL AVENUE IS EVIDENCE OF THE CITY'S COMMITMENT TO AN ARTIST'S DISTRICT IN ITS DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT.

In the late 1990's the downtown area was designated as an "Artist District", with the intention of attracting artists into the central business district to occupy live/work space in loft apartments and to encourage the revitalization of the downtown. The 2002 completion and occupancy of the Art Loft complex on Central Avenue & South Street is evidence of the City's commitment to an Artist's District in downtown.

PEEKSKILL HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM



Acknowledgements

City of Peekskill, New York
Historic and Landmarks

Preservation Board (HLPB):

Katharina Cerreta, Chairperson
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Blanche Alter, AICP, Director
of Planning and Development



NORTH DIVISION STREET LOOKING NORTH, CIRCA 1900.

This brochure was compiled from the following sources:

- The City of Peekskill Historic Preservation Ordinance
- "History of Peekskill" prepared by John Curran, City Historian
- "Downtown Peekskill Design Guidelines" prepared by Taylor and Taylor Associates, Inc.

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