

SAUGERTIES

A History Atlas

by Michael Sullivan Smith

Author's Foreword

The town of Saugerties is on the west bank of the Hudson River 100 miles north of New York City. It is the most northerly town in Ulster County, New York State. Easterly Saugerties borders parts of Columbia County and Dutchess County mid-channel in the Hudson. North and northwest it borders on Greene County. The Ulster County Towns of Ulster, Kingston and Woodstock border south and southwest.

Saugerties measures 32 square miles from its eight mile frontage at sea level on the Hudson River to a 2200-foot elevation on the great escarpment of the Catskill Mountains. It is divided north-south by the Mount Marion Hills, or "Hoogebergs", with peak elevations at Mount Marion of 740 feet and at Mount Airy of 612.

Midway along the Town's border with the mountains is the Plattekill Clove. This is a break in the mountain wall where a steep, scenic road travels from the 800-foot elevation at the edge of the Hudson Valley to the edge of the 1800-foot continental plateau in the Catskill Mountains in a little over a mile "as the crow flies". Saugerties' width is the closest the Catskill Mountains come to the Hudson River. Saugerties hosts the shortest routes between the tidewater of the Hudson River and the mountains through the Plattekill Clove, and other mountain accesses at the Kaaterskill Clove and at Woodstock.

All of the drainage from the eastern escarpment of the Catskill Mountains feeds into Saugerties' Plattekill Creek. This

enters the Esopus Creek on Saugerties' southern border and combines with its drainage of the southeast slopes of the Catskills to enter the Hudson at the Village of Saugerties.

Two additional stream systems water Saugerties. The Hoogebergs drain into the Beaverkill Creek and flow north to enter the Kaaterskill Creek in Greene County. The Sawyerkill Creek meanders south through the broad flats north of the village and drops to the Hudson at its historically important mouth on the northern border of the Village of Saugerties.

Henry Hudson was filling his casks with water from the mouth of the Sawyerkill when he first encountered the Warranawonkongs. After meeting Katskills further up the river he spent three days on his return with the highest chiefs of both of these peoples at Saugerties. A passage from the 1609 journal kept during this voyage characterizes their gesturing from this point to the extent of their lands.

The Sawyerkill Creek had a significance ages before Henry Hudson's "Discovery". South of it was the territory of the native Warranawonkong people which ranged to the headwaters of every tributary of the Esopus. The territory of the Katskill people encompassed the drained lands to its north.

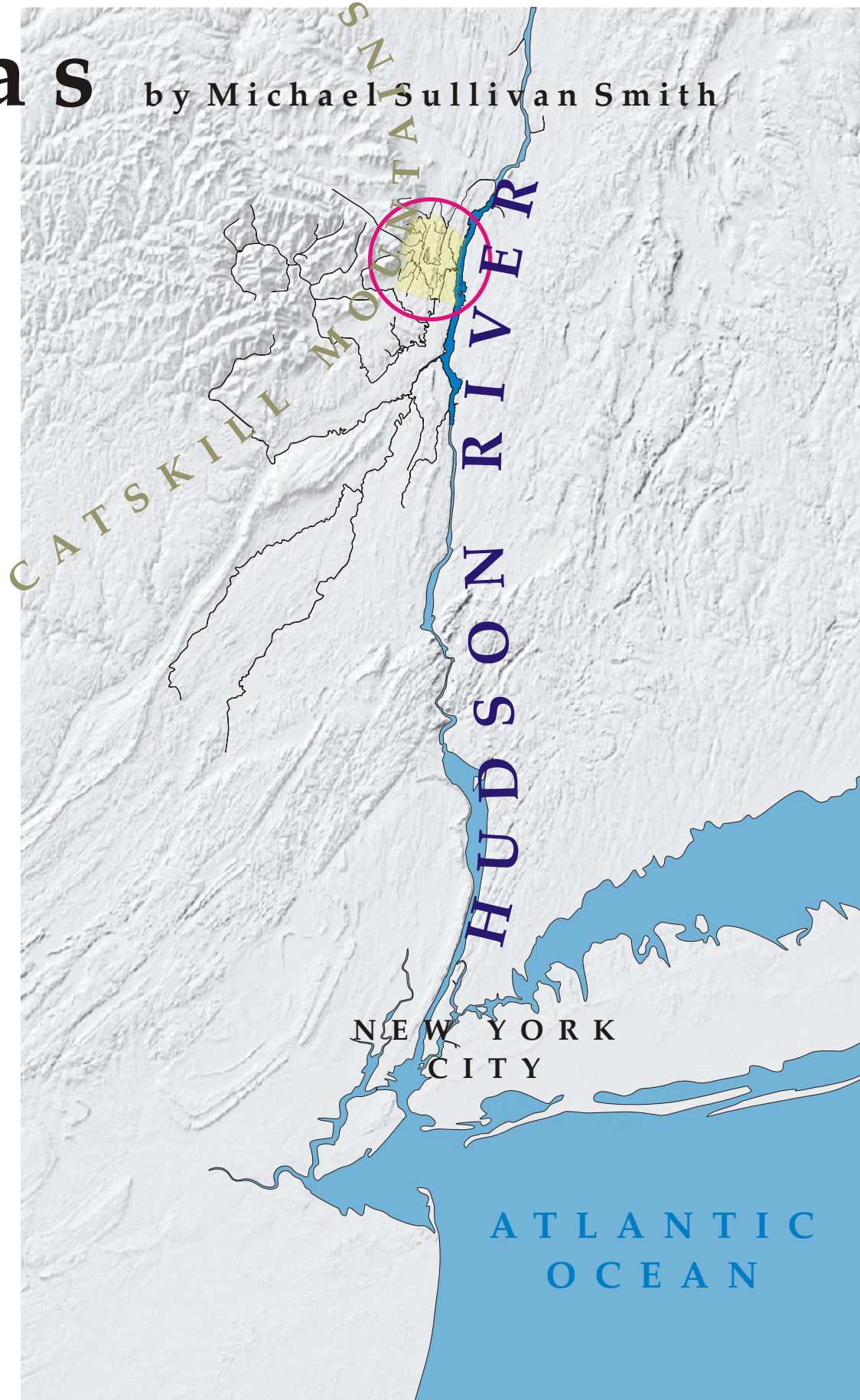
In 1685 when New York was divided into counties the mouth of the Sawyerkill Creek was used to define the border between the original counties of Albany and Ulster. At this time the means of declaring a true north for surveys was established as a line

from the mouth of the Sawyerkill through its source at the "Great Fountain". Thus the aboriginal importance of the geographic characteristics of Saugerties was carried intact into the era of land surveying, making Saugerties literally and measurably "on the map" for ages.

Saugerties was a territory of the third settlement area of the early Dutch Colonial period: Esopus. It gains its name and separate identity as early as the 1680's. It was governed as part of the Commons of Kingston for over 120 years and after the creation of Greene County and the division of the Kingston Patent in 1803 was officially named "Saugerties" and made into a Town in 1811. The village of Saugerties was first incorporated in 1832 as "Ulster" and renamed Saugerties-on-Hudson in the 1850's.

The purpose of this Atlas is to create a graphic matrix for interpreting historical references by placing them geographically in the time when they took form and developed. It is not created as an authoritative History. As a "Matrix" this work is designed to continually evolve as information is learned, evaluated and validated for placement on its pages. The initial statements made are subject to this authentication and the addition of references.

The landscape of Saugerties has changed significantly over its 400-year history. Its importance as a transportation hub has had routes change from footpaths to wagon roads to turnpikes, railroads and



thruways. Its shoreline has been progressively adapted for access to the canoe, sloop, steamboat and ocean freighter. Industries have changed the course of water bodies and moved land forms. The passing of a few decades may have seen the removal of a landmark used in centuries of records or the creation of a new one used in the same context. For preservation and legal concerns the precise placement of period landmarks is a necessity.

Saugerties is full of fragments of history begging to be recognized and interpreted. It is a goal of this work to bring a common awareness to all of Saugerties' citizens of the deserted roads, overgrown ruins, quarry pits and mounds, functional realignments of houses, yards and walls and other details of the built landscape that tell the story of Saugerties.

Saugerties has a story that is clearly linked to the land. It is the perfect base for building a History Atlas. So much has been buried in and layered upon it over the past that it is hard to find an inch of surface without something to say.

This work will tell this history and link it to Atlas elements where history is recognizable and retrievable in every roadway, lot line and architectural landmark of not only the Town but the greater region it grew out of.

For the first time ever it presents maps of all the earliest land divisions and relates them to the most current property bounds. It shows Saugerties of today relative to past-era roads and existing and lost stone houses and abandoned and lost communities and the work places they supported in a way that an understanding of a present-day location's place in

history is more apparent than ever before possible.

The format of this Atlas is computer-based. Its maps are filled with information only accessible interactively with the "Acrobat Reader" program. Most details can only be seen with extreme enlargement the Reader makes possible. Though the pages can be printed for reading the text, the illustrations and maps will be too small to be useful from a print. They were made and scaled specifically to be digitally enlargement with a computer.

This digital format also makes searches for specific words and research topics easy. The interactive links within the graphics of the maps and the Reader's interactive Table of Contents and Index make finding, expanding a search or returning to a particular page fast and easy.

Development of this work for the computer also makes updating, correction and enhancement of the material and republishing and redistributing it economical and ecological.

This work grew out of the experience of creating maps for locating surveyed properties for a 2004-2005 Cultural Resources Survey of the Town of Saugerties under a Preservation League of New York State grant. That material and the documentation notes assembled for it are updated and included here to allow it greater distribution and application.

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Michael Sullivan Smith

Introducing the Historic Landscape of Saugerties

Saugerties has man-made geographic/topographical features that span the ages from pre-history to the modern era. These include shell middens and cave shelters, stone houses and stone boundary walls, early Industrial Revolution manufacturing sites, early roadbeds, early port and River-front infrastructure, bluestone quarries and early recreational and tourist attractions.

Archeological digs in shell middens left on Glunt Island in the Hudson River date to near 9,000 years in the past. The more recent landscape of Saugerties is layered with the handiwork of the past 300 years. Hundreds of straight stone walls running survey lines northwest toward the great face of Overlook Mountain and northeast paralleling the east base of the mountains mark the division lots of the Kingston Commons. These have stood since the first decades of the nineteenth century.

There are over 60 stone houses in Saugerties from the earliest 23 foot square frontier settler's fortified cottages to the two story post-Revolution homes of affluent farmers to the mansions

of the gentleman farmers of the early 20th century. Nearly all are visible, well maintained representatives of a long and prideful heritage.

Saugerties' many streams have powered a score of mills over the centuries. The engineering feat of the remains of the 1826 Barclay dam/raceway and mill site shares a heritage with the sawmills and gristmills that came 150 years before it.

The earliest colonial road, the 1703 Kings Highway, runs through Saugerties. Its predecessor, an Indian path, is

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recorded in Saugerties as early as 1669, as the "Footpath to Albany". Wagon roads bypassing the turnpike tolls used by the general public are still to be found, intact, undeveloped, as the turnpikes and nearly every other road were with the advent of the automobile.

Everywhere in Saugerties there are quarries. From the mid

1830's, on, the best stone for sidewalks and curbs came from these quarries. Every farm and small residential plot had one. The largest, the Clove Quarry, removed an entire hill making the clove that Fishcreek road now runs through. Opus 40, a sculpture created from the remains of one small quarry, is a landmark on the National Register of Historic Places.

Saugerties has a unique shoreline profile. Dredging of an estuary shipping channel, a bed for Saugerties' famous lighthouse, a jetty to a freight

terminal in mid-river and the accumulated fill from the debris left from decades of the finishing of bluestone have extended the shoreline nearly a mile into the Hudson River. This all happened during Saugerties' industrial

period in the mid to late 19th century. Earlier, during the Revolution, the deep channel hugging its northern shoreline was the destination of the British fleet which had planned to support the northern expedition from these shores.

Lastly, the Saugerties of today is known for its horse shows, its ball fields and its many home-grown festivals that blossomed out of the

Woodstock Festival it hosted in 1994. But there remains still the remnants of the bike path that followed the Esopus from the Village to the Glennerie falls and the calm waters of the Esopus Gorge where sculling clubs once rowed. In the late 19th Century these were what attracted day visitors to come on the steamers

specifically to relax and rejuvenate. The historic landscape of Saugerties has inspired the painter and the poet of the past and this is the Saugerties that still attracts visitors and invigorates its residents to this day.



The Village of Saugerties was founded as "Ulster" in 1831 and still maintains this identity on this bank draft from 1863.



The Village of Saugerties in 1880.

