

Haverstraw

Part of the Hudson Valley's River Town Revival: Haverstraw, NY

By Alia Akkam and Grace Turner



Photographs by Ken Karlewicz

Haverstraw, located at the river's widest point (three miles), is a historic town in every sense. In 1609, Henry Hudson docked his Half Moon there, laying claim to the Valley for the Dutch. During the American Revolution, the town was the meeting spot for Britain's Major John Andre and Colonial traitor Benedict Arnold during their foiled attempt to hand West Point to the Brits in 1780. By the 19th century, the region had parlayed its rich clay deposits to become the "brick-making capital of the world;" in a single year, more than 300 million bricks were shipped

southward to help build New York City. As a child, composer and entertainer George M. Cohan had his debut playing the violin at Waldron Opera House in the village; Babe Ruth hit a home run while filming a movie there, and Upper Nyack-born artist Edward Hopper's 1925 painting, *House by the Railroad*, which is now owned by the Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan, depicts a Victorian manse that still stands.

In more recent times, like many Hudson River towns, Haverstraw has had a bit of a bumpy ride. The brick-making industry was gone by the early 1940s, the victim of increased competition and improved building materials. With the loss of their livelihood, many workers left the area; the availability of inexpensive housing attracted immigrants from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, many of whom adopted the village as their new home in the 1950s and '60s. Today, more than 67 percent of the village's 12,000 residents identify themselves as Hispanic, according to the 2010 census.

"Haverstraw has always been a melting pot because of the brickyards," says Mayor Michael Kohut. "Many ethnic groups — Irish, Italians — came here to work making the bricks. But it's a community despite the different cultures and religions."

The last few years have seen a turnaround in the village's fortunes, sparked by Harbors at Haverstraw, the Ginsburg Development Company's luxury apartment complex on the waterfront. "Harbors has added 400 new families to the village," says Kohut, and Riverside, another Ginsburg property with 106 units, is scheduled to open this year. Other rental housing projects, including a 300-unit development, currently are in the planning stages.

Who is moving into all these apartments? "More people are coming up from New York City because of the ferry," says Kohut, referring to New York Waterway's ferry service between Haverstraw and Ossining, which connects with the Westchester village's Metro-North station for an easy commute to Manhattan. "They like the fact that the real estate is cheap in an ethnic, urban-feeling village," the mayor continues. "And between the Hudson River to the east and High Tor Mountain to the west, we are surrounded with lots of natural beauty, and all the things that go with that. There are lots of destinations you can get to in a half-hour."



Haverstraw Bay

Along with new residents comes new restaurants, and Haverstraw has its share. The popular Union Restaurant and Bar Latino opened its doors in 2007; owners Jose David Martinez and Paulo Feteira started the more casual UNoodles Snack Bar in late 2012. A third Martinez-Feteira eatery, the Bricktown Tavern and Grill, is slated to launch in early spring. An April opening is also expected for 16 Front Street, which will occupy the former site of Civile's Venice on the Hudson, a local landmark that was decimated by Hurricane Sandy in 2012 and never reopened.

The mayor is confident the village is heading in a positive direction. "We embrace our history," says Kohut. "We don't shy away from it. Sometimes there's a sense of culture shock for new residents, and also for existing residents. But we all make it work together for the common good."