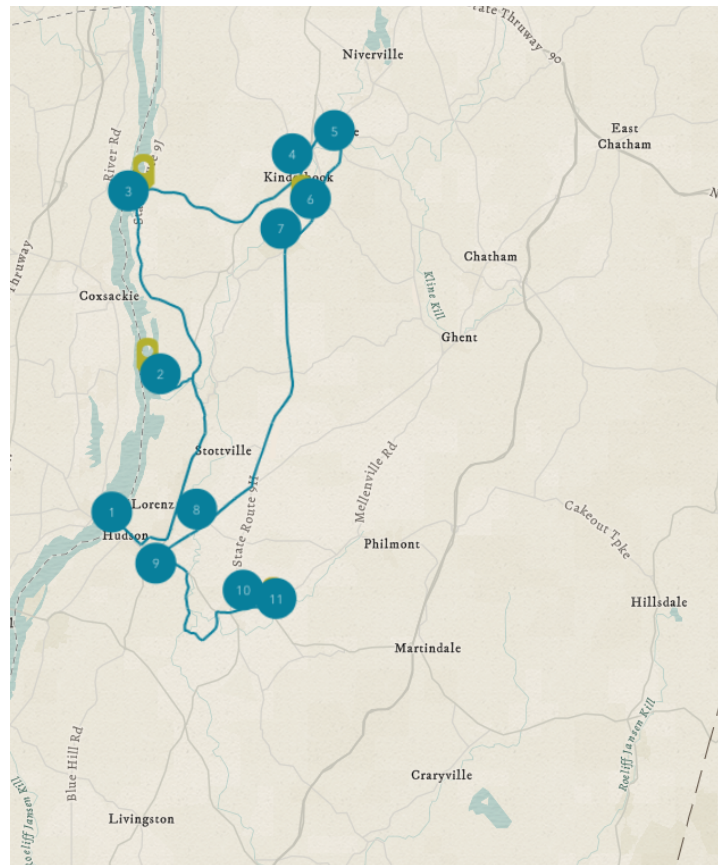


Dutch & Mohican Heritage

of Columbia County

Henry Hudson, an English captain exploring for the Dutch, sailed to North America in 1609 in search of a Northwest Passage. Though he did not find a route to Asia, he did discover an untapped supply of "soft gold"—beaver pelts—that would help make the Netherlands a major power in the global fur trade. The Dutch did not do this alone, however. Shortly after Hudson's voyage, the Europeans formed crucial trade relationships with the region's Indigenous peoples, including the Mohicans who lived and hunted in what is now Columbia County. But Dutch gains brought devastating losses, and within 150 years the local Native population was reduced to virtually zero. This driving tour follows the rise and fall of both the Dutch colony of New Netherland and the Mohican peoples—two cultures that are forever entwined in the history of Columbia County.



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| ① Henry Hudson Riverfront Park | ⑦ Lindenwald / Martin Van Buren NHS |
| ② Stockport Creek & Staats House | ⑧ Jan Van Hoesen House |
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1 Henry Hudson Riverfront Park

Ferry Street, Hudson

The week of September 14, 1609, Henry Hudson sailed into the vicinity of Hudson, New York, on his flyboat, the *Halve Maen* (Half Moon). Within five years, a Dutch trading post was established at Castle Island, near present-day Albany, and by the mid 1600s Dutch settlers and their descendants had begun to settle the region that would later be called Columbia County.

Hudson was originally given the name Claverack Landing by Dutch settlers, who began buying up large tracts of land from the native Mohican Indians in the 1660s. By the mid 1700s, Claverack Landing was inhabited by a handful of Dutch families, and the settlement consisted of two stores, two wharves, a school, a grist mill and a ferry which carried families across the river to Athens (then called Loonenburg) for church services.

In the 1780s, another major cultural shift occurred when a group of Nantucketers bought up Claverack Landing to establish a whaling and shipping port. These "Proprietors" founded Hudson in 1785, and gave the city an unmistakably New England character that belies its Dutch beginnings.

Head southwest on Ferry Street toward Water Street. Turn left onto S. Front Street, then turn right onto State Street. Turn left onto N. 6th Street, then continue onto Glenwood Boulevard. Turn left onto U.S. 9 N/Fairview Avenue, and continue to follow U.S. 9 N. Turn left onto Station Road and follow until you reach the Hudson River.

2 Stockport Creek & Staats House

End of Station Road, Stockport

As Henry Hudson continued up the river, he and his crew were paid visits by hospitable Mohicans who brought gifts of corn, tobacco, pumpkins and oysters. The Mohicans knew the Hudson as the Mahicannituck, the "river that flows both ways"—a reference to its tidal movements. They hunted and dwelled along the Mahicannituck and its tributaries, including Stockport Creek. This spot, where the two waterways meet, was described by first mate Robert Juet in his travel journal as follows: "*The seventeenth, fair sun-shining weather, and very hot. In the morning as soon as the sun was up, we set sail, and ran up six leagues higher, and found shoals in the middle of the channel, and small islands, but seven fathoms water on both sides.*" The crew anchored here for the night.



Vintage postcard, CCHS Collection



The Landing of Henrick Hudson, based on a painting by Robert Weir, published by Martin, Johnson & Co., New York, 1857. CCHS Collection.



Stockport Creek

An historical marker in front of the **Abram Staats House** (200 Station Road) memorializes the landing. Built c.1654–1664, this stone home (with modern additions) is believed to be the oldest surviving house in Columbia County. Staats, a surgeon for the Dutch West India Company, apparently quit medicine soon after his arrival and took up the lucrative fur trade. For much of the 17th and 18th centuries, Stockport Creek was known as Major Abrams Creek.



Abram Staats House

NOTE: This is a private residence. Please do not trespass or disturb the owners.

Local Attraction: Bring your kayak and explore the islands that Juet mentions in his journal at **Hudson River Islands State Park**, part of the Hudson River Greenway Water Trail.

Head east on Station Road, then turn left onto U.S. 9 N. In 1.1 miles, turn left onto NY-9J N. In 4.6 miles, turn left onto Riverview Street. The destination will be on the left.

3 Stuyvesant Landing

Riverview Street, Stuyvesant

During the 1600s and 1700s, the Hudson River was a super-highway for the fur trade. As you look out at the river, imagine small sloops shuttling beaver skins between the trade capitals of New Amsterdam (present-day Manhattan) and Beverwyck (Albany), a Dutch name which translates to “beaver district.”

This small river landing was initially called Kinderhook Landing. Legend has it that Henry Hudson himself coined the name Kinderhook—meaning “children’s corner”—after spotting young Mohicans on the riverbank near where you stand. True or not, the name stuck. As agriculture flourished in Columbia County during the 18th and 19th centuries, this landing became an integral port for shipping farm goods downriver. Many of these goods were grown by the Dutch families who owned vast farms just to the east.

Hudson’s 1609 voyage took him as far as Albany, where the narrowing of the river ended all hopes of a passage to the Far East. He returned to the Netherlands, only to lead a second voyage to North America the following year. It would be his last; Hudson met his death in Canada’s Hudson Bay at the hands of a crew mutiny in 1611.

Local Attraction: Overlooking the landing, **Pico de Gallo** (48 Riverview Street) serves outstanding Mexican fare.

Head northeast on Riverview Street. Slight right onto County Road 26A/398. Continue to follow County Rd 26A. In 3.3 miles, turn left onto U.S. 9 N. In 2 miles, you will arrive in Kinderhook Village.



Photo: Google Maps, G. O’Connor



Photo: Google Maps, Arthur E.

4 Kinderhook Village

Kinderhook first appeared on Dutch maps in 1614, and by the mid 1600s it became a major Dutch settlement point. The land was reportedly purchased by the Dutch from a Mohican sachem (chief) named Emikee in 1667. By this time, the Mohicans had been significantly weakened by ongoing wars with rival Mohawk Indians over the fur trade, as well as by foreign diseases that decimated much of the Mohican population. As these forces of conflict, disease and colonization converged, the Mohicans were forced to sell what remained of their land and resettle in the Housatonic River Valley of Massachusetts. Many adopted European ways and converted to Christianity at Stockbridge, an English “praying town.”

Kinderhook is perhaps most famous as the birthplace of eighth U.S. president Martin Van Buren (1782–1862), who grew up speaking his parents’ Dutch tongue. Dutch was commonly spoken in Kinderhook well into the 19th century, and many families of Dutch descent still populate the area. Stroll this well-preserved village to spot houses built in the Dutch style.

Head northeast on U.S. 9 N/Chatham Street. Continue to follow U.S. 9 N. In 1.6 miles, turn right onto Main Street. At the intersection of Chatham Street/NY-203, turn right, then turn right onto Elm Street.

5 Pachaquack Preserve

4106 Elm Street, Valatie

Prior to the Dutch arrival, Mohicans knew the area of Valatie as Pachaquack, or “cleared meadow.” Within the village just south of Beaver Mill Falls, Pachaquack Preserve was a historic Mohican meeting place and settlement, now a park offering scenic water views and nature trails that follow old Mohican footpaths. The Dutch named this village *Vaaltje*, meaning “little falls,” after the many waterfalls that spill from the Kinderhook Creek and Valatie Kill (“kill” is the Dutch word for “creek”). Historians believe the Dutch began settling the area around 1665.

Later in the 17th century, Dutch families established a small settlement just east of Valatie near present-day Chatham Center. Take a short detour on Upper Main Street/County Road 28A to see if you can spot one of the oldest houses in Columbia County, located right next to the train tracks. Called the **Block House**, it is said to have served as a fort where families could take refuge in the event of an Indian attack.

Turn right onto NY-203 S/Chatham Street. In 1.3 miles, slight right onto Rod and Gun Club Road. Continue onto Novak Road. Follow the signs for NY-9H S. In .8 miles, the destination will be on your right.



Kinderhook, historic view.
CCHS Collection



Martin Van Buren birthsite,
Hudson Street.



Pachaquack Preserve footpaths.
Photo: Instagram/HollandHouseNY

6 1737 Luykas Van Alen House

2589 NY-9H, Kinderhook

Archaeology reveals that Mohican Indians and their predecessors hunted and dwelled on this site for thousands of years prior to Dutch settlement. Projectile points and pottery shards are among the hundreds of Native American artifacts discovered here during several excavations. The late 1600s brought the end of this era—and the beginning of a new one—when a land prospector named Lourens Van Alen bought this land from the Mohicans.

In 1737, Lourens' son Luykas built this farmhouse in a traditional Dutch rural style. Even though the English had taken over the New Netherland colony in 1664, many culturally Dutch settlers continued to build houses using Old World methods. Despite containing just two rooms when built, this was the home of a well-off family, and stood at the center of a bustling, 500-acre farm. Members of the Van Alen family lived and farmed here for the next 200 years. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1967.

In the early 1900s, stories began to circulate that writer Washington Irving had based the home of Katrina Van Tassel in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* on the Luykas Van Alen House. A description of the Van Tassel home matches the “best room” of the Van Alen House, and it is very likely that Irving would have visited the homestead during his stay in Kinderhook in 1809 (more on that at the next stop).

Also on the property is the c.1850 Ichabod Crane Schoolhouse, named for *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*'s iconic schoolteacher. Irving's real-life friend Jesse Merwin taught at the original log school this one-room schoolhouse replaced, and it is widely believed that Merwin inspired the character.

Local Attraction: If you've got time for a walk, explore the 1.7-mile (each way) **Dutch Farming Heritage Trail**. The trail connects the Luykas Van Alen House to Martin Van Buren's Lindenwald, crossing historic Dutch farmlands along the way. Take care to stay on the trail and be respectful of the land, as much of this farmland is being actively used by **Roxbury Farm**.

Continue south on NY-9H S. In 1.3 miles, the destination will be on your right.



7 Lindenwald (Martin Van Buren N.H.S.)

1013 Old Post Road, Kinderhook

Multiple threads of Dutch lore weave through Lindenwald, known today as the Martin Van Buren National Historic Site. This house was built c.1797 for Judge Peter Van Ness, a Revolutionary War veteran and politician. Upon his death in 1804, his son, William P. Van Ness, inherited the home. That same year, William served as Aaron Burr's second in Burr's famous duel with Alexander Hamilton. Rumor abounded that Burr hid out at the Van Ness house after firing his fatal shot, though the story has never been substantiated. In 1809, William welcomed a bereaved Washington Irving for an extended stay while he mourned the death of his fiancée. Here, Irving found much inspiration in the Dutch people, homes and tales he encountered—much of which would find its way into several of his books and stories, including *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and *A History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty*, by Diedrich Knickerbocker.

In 1841, Martin Van Buren purchased the Van Ness home and renamed it Lindenwald. He retired here as a gentleman farmer, happily tending his 221 acres until his death in 1862.

Continue south on NY-9H S. In 7.1 miles, turn right onto NY-66 S. In 1.9 miles, the destination will be on your right (Dutch Village Mobile Home Park).

8 Jan Van Hoesen House

440 NY-66, Claverack

NOTE: This is a private residence. Please do not trespass or disturb the owners.

The Van Hoesens were among the first known settlers of Claverack Landing (present-day Hudson), when Jan Franz Van Hoesen purchased several hundred acres from the Mohicans in 1662. This house, a rare form of Dutch architecture in America, was built by Van Hoesen's grandson between 1715 and 1724. Similar to the Luykas Van Alen House, it features a steep gable roof and an inner framing style that originated in northern Europe during the medieval period. Van Hoesen, a farmer, lived here with his wife, Tanneke Witbeck, and their 11 children. In the 1960s, the farm was sold off and developed into Dutch Village Mobile Home Park. The house has since remained vacant. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

Continue on NY-66 toward Hudson for 1.2 miles, then turn left onto NY-23B. In just under 1 mile, turn right onto Spook Rock Road.



Photo: Van Hoesen House Historical Foundation

9 Spook Rock Road

Claverack

The rock shelters and open plains that surround Claverack Creek made this area an ideal hunting and camping grounds for Mohicans and their ancestors. In fact, a sizable Mohican village called Potkoke is known to have existed nearby along the Claverack Creek. Artifacts found in this area suggest that some Indigenous groups camped along Spook Rock in the winter and moved to the shores of the Hudson River in the warmer months. Some of the items found here include projectile points, pottery pieces, hammer stones, knives and scrapers, which were used in the skinning and butchering of animals.

Pause at the historic marker pulloff to learn about the Legend of Spook Rock, which tells of two young lovers from enemy tribes whose forbidden relationship so angered the Great Spirit, he struck them down in a fury of thunder and lightning.

As Dutch settlers came to Claverack Landing in the mid-late 17th century, many established their farmsteads on this fertile plain. Some present-day roads between Hudson and Claverack, including this one, began as Dutch wagon trails. As you drive on Spook Rock Road, keep your eyes peeled for the home of **Conyn Van Rensselaer**, a sprawling red-brick farmhouse with a gambrel roof that dates to c.1766.

Just after you cross Claverack Creek on Spook Rock Road, turn left onto Van Deusen Road. In .5 miles, turn left onto Stone Mill Road, then travel for 1 mile until you reach NY-23B. Turn right, and continue for .9 miles (NY-23B becomes NY-23).

10 Van Rensselaer Lower Manor House

103 NY-23, Claverack

NOTE: This is a private residence. Please do not trespass or disturb the owners.

In an effort to attract more settlers to New Netherland, the Dutch West India Company sold enormous tracts of land to wealthy landowners called patroons. In exchange, these patroons were required to recruit at least 50 new settlers to their “patroonships.” One of these was Van Rensselaer Manor, or Rensselaerswyck, which spanned much of the Capital Region and approximately 170,000 acres of present-day Columbia County. In 1704, Rensselaerswyck was split in two, and the southern portion—encompassing the town of Claverack—became known as the Lower Manor.



Legend of Spook Rock historic marker.



Conyn Van Rensselaer House.

Source: CCND MLS

NOTE: This is a private residence. Please do not trespass or disturb the owners.



Van Rensselaer Lower Manor House

This house, one of the oldest in Columbia County, was used by members of the Van Rensselaer family for tending to Lower Manor business. It was built between 1685 and 1715 by Hendrick Van Rensselaer, and occupied by several generations of the same family. The house has been expanded in sections through the years, which accounts for its unique appearance. With the active promotion of the Lower Manor, new settlers from the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and England began to put down roots in Claverack, and elsewhere in the County.

Continue east on NY-23 for .8 miles, and the destination will be on your left.

11 Jacob Rutsen Van Rensselaer House and Mill Complex (Red Mills)

NY-23 at Claverack Creek

NOTE: This is a private residence. Please do not trespass or disturb the owners.

This unmissable red mill building once anchored the Jacob Rutsen Van Rensselaer House and Mill Complex, one of the important early industrial sites of Columbia County. Mills were a crucial component of Van Rensselaer Manor and other colonial Dutch patroonships. This one, dating to the late 1700s, is thought to be the oldest standing mill building in Columbia County. It was later acquired by the Lampman family, who ran a thriving pancake and buckwheat flour business during the first half of the 20th century.

Local Attraction: In addition to the mill interest, Jacob Rutsen Van Rensselaer also ran a distillery and cooperage beginning around 1805. Today, **Cooper's Daughter Spirits** at Olde York Farm (284 State Route 23, Claverack) has taken the baton of that early enterprise, operating a small-batch distillery out of Van Rensselaer's former carriage house, located just across the street from Red Mill—a perfect place to end your drive.



Photo: Google (Tanya Almonte)

Not the Last of the Mohicans...

Contrary to the title of James Fenimore Cooper's 1826 novel, the Mohican people survived unthinkable hardships—including displacement, disease, war, Christianization and a total loss of territory—only to reestablish themselves on Federal reservation land in Shawano County, Wisconsin. Read more about the Mohicans' story, and learn how they're preserving their culture today, at mohican.com.

Identifying Dutch Houses

By the mid 1700s, many Dutch-descended residents of Columbia County began using English methods to build their homes, incorporating elements such as the gambrel roof to accommodate second-floor bedrooms. Many of these houses, however, retained characteristics of traditional houses in the Netherlands, including: brick or stone exteriors, red-painted trim, Dutch doors, Dutch stoops, casement windows and end chimneys. As you explore Columbia County, keep your eyes peeled for these features; they just may be authentic remnants of our short-lived time as a Dutch colony.

Explore more **Drive Through History** road trips, and consider supporting the Columbia County Historical Society, at www.cchsny.org

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