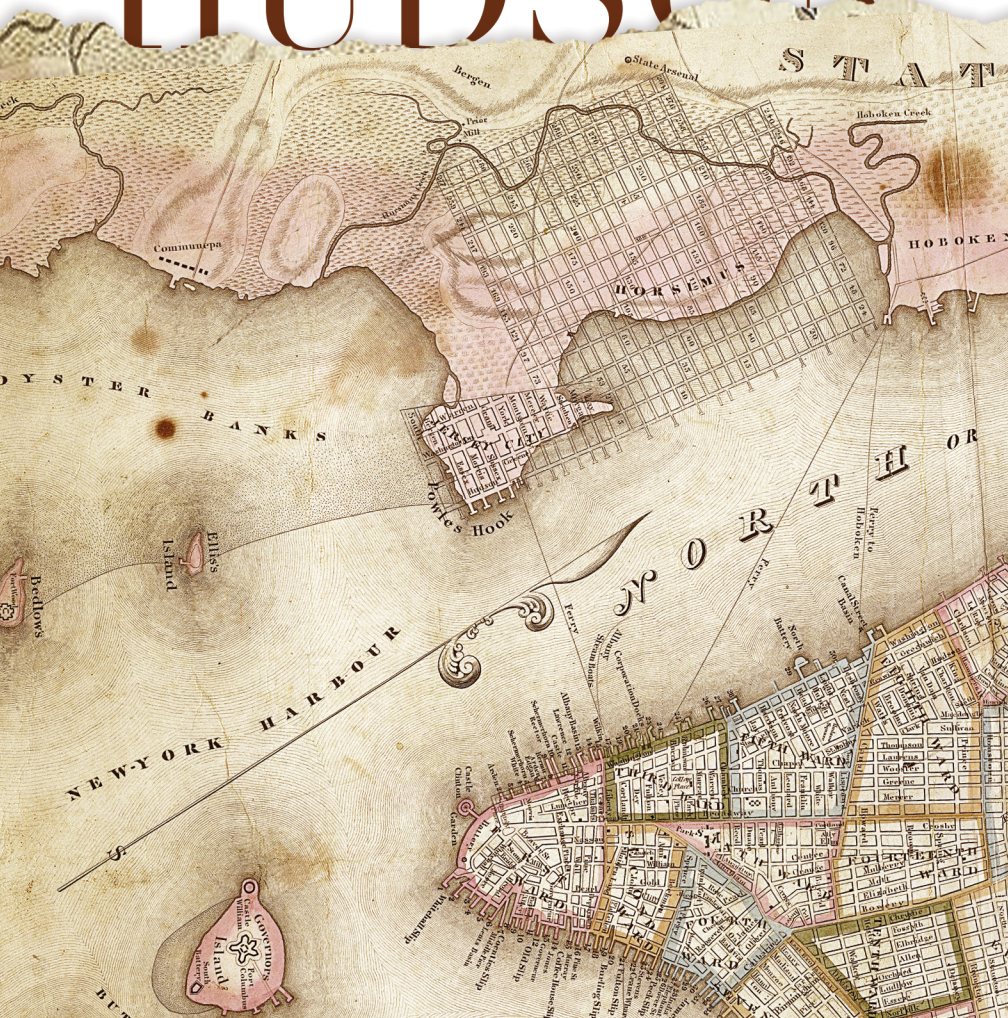


HISTORY ON THE HUDSON

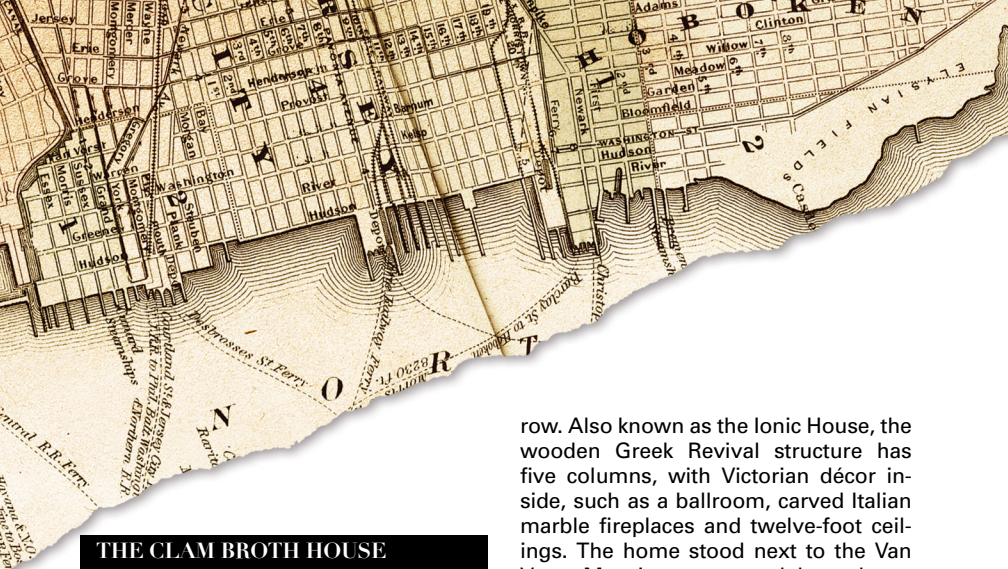


BY VICTORIA KEENAN

Throughout history, the state of New Jersey has played an important role in decisive battles, industrialism, and developing technology. Many of the events have taken place in our very own neighborhoods across Hudson County, from the first permanent town being what is now Jersey City, to the first ferry service in the United States opening

right here in Hoboken. Throughout the county, many historical buildings and homes still stand today, repurposed to fit the towns they were built in so many years ago. Aside from some of the obvious spots, our research led us to a few places that are now being used for some very different purposes than they once were.





THE CLAM BROTH HOUSE

The Clam Broth House was a landmark restaurant in Hoboken that operated for over a century, first opening in 1899. The most notable and attention-grabbing facet of the restaurant was the giant hand-shaped signs, directing restaurant-goers to the doors. One sign hung outside and pointed directly downwards toward the front door, the second on a neighboring building, where it still sits today. In its prime, The Clam Broth House was a hotspot for dockworkers, who would drink from a clam broth dispenser at the bar — anyone having a drink or an entrée could have free clam broth. And though originally built as a men's-only restaurant, they began allowing women to enter in 1972. In 2003, the building was deemed unstable and destroyed. A year later, it was purchased by a Hoboken restaurant family and rebuilt and sold in 2012 to the owners of Biggie's Clam Bar, the popular restaurant which sits in its location to this day.

BARROW MANSION

Built between 1835-1837, The Barrow Mansion in Jersey City was one of two homes constructed by Cornelius Van Vorst, the mayor of Jersey City from 1860-1862 and a founder of the Township of Van Vorst, which is now a neighborhood in Jersey City. The Van Vorsts were a prominent family, whose daughter Eliza was married to Dr. William Bar-

row. Also known as the Ionic House, the wooden Greek Revival structure has five columns, with Victorian décor inside, such as a ballroom, carved Italian marble fireplaces and twelve-foot ceilings. The home stood next to the Van Vorst Mansion, separated by a lawn, adjacent to the Van Vorst farmhouse. The Y.M.C.A. bought the Barrow Mansion in the 1890s and added a rifle range and gymnasium. In 1897, St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church purchased the residence for a parish house, and converted the pistol range to a two-lane bowling alley. A year later, St. Matthew's Church was built on the lawn between the Barrow and Van Vorst mansions, serving as a popular social center. The Van Vorst mansion was eventually demolished.

During the post-war era, the mansion started falling apart, and in 1984 the Barrow Mansion Development Corporation was founded to renovate the mansion and reopen it as a center for community service. The BMDC's board is composed of members from St. Matthew's Lutheran Church and the community. Now, the mansion provides office space to small businesses and nonprofits, is home to the Attic Ensemble theater company, the Jersey City Children's Theater and hosts Hudson County's largest number of Twelve Step groups.

WEEHAWKEN WATER TOWER

During the late 19th and early 20th century, The Hackensack Water Company was developed for water supply and storage services for the towns in the Northern Hudson region, and the cities of Hoboken and Hackensack. Orig-



nally in Hackensack, Robert W. de Forest—who ran Hackensack Water for 46 years beginning in 1881—moved its headquarters to Weehawken. The most recognizable feature was the red brick Weehawken Water Tower, built and designed by Frederick Clarke Withers in 1883 and modeled after the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, Italy. The tower served multiple purposes, including housing the local headquarters of the Hackensack Water Company. The “Red Tower” is also a landmark for ships heading south on the Hudson River to let them know that they are approaching the New York Harbor.

In 1981, Entin Associates, a real-estate developer, purchased the property for \$1.6 million. Because it was listed as a historical landmark, the tower was spared demolition and structurally maintained, and the gatehouse and reservoir were raised for the construction of a supermarket and parking lots. In 2000, the township of Weehawken took over the property and began to restore both the interior and exterior spaces. In October 2005, a park was created at the base of the tower and in 2010, for the town’s 150th anniversary, the interior brickwork was updated to preserve its historical appearance. In 2014, Mayor Richard Turner opened the Water Tower for a three-week-long PlayWorks reading series, in which playwrights presented readings of their unfinished plays, and celebrated the first time the restored tower had been used in over 100 years.

SYBIL’S CAVE

One of Hoboken’s best-known historical landmarks, Sybil’s Cave is a cave with a natural water spring, that is now buried at the bottom of the Stevens Institute of Technology hill. The cave was first excavated in the early 1830s by Hoboken’s founder, Col. John Stevens III, who named it after the ancient Greco-Roman prophetesses and adorned it with a Gothic-style stone arch. The cave was originally Hoboken’s biggest tourist attraction for the magnesium-laced water that flowed from the spring, but gained national attention in 1841 when

the body of Mary Cecilia Rogers, a beautiful young cigar shop worker, was pulled ashore nearby. Though there were many stories and speculations surrounding the murder, the case was never solved, but inspired Edgar Allan Poe’s story, *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt*, one of the first true-crime detective novels.

From the mid-to-late 1800s, thousands of glasses of the caves water were sold daily for a penny each to tourists from New York who believed the water had therapeutic properties. The cave was closed in 1880 due to the health department’s concerns about its water quality, and it was used as a coal storage locker for a nearby tavern. During World War I, the cave was sealed. It was reopened in October 2008 when former Mayor David Roberts worked with the Hoboken Historical Museum on a renovation project to unblock the cave and make it accessible to the public. Today, the gate to the cave itself is locked, and there are no plans to reopen it to the public.

VAN WAGENEN HOUSE

One of Jersey City’s most historic homes is the Van Wagenen House, otherwise known as the Apple Tree House. The home was built in 1750, with an addition added in the 1820s. The name ‘Apple Tree House’ was given to the home because of the apple orchard and cider press that were on the original property. Passed down through family members for 259 years, the last private owners used it as a funeral parlor, before selling it to Provident Savings Bank who, in 1999, sold it to the city to make the home a historic museum and education center, which it has been since 2014. Legend has it that the house may have been the site of a meeting between George Washington and General Marquis de Lafayette in 1779, during the Revolutionary War. Though the long-standing legend has never been proven, it is the main reason the home is so popular. Every year, an annual wreath laying ceremony occurs at the house on President’s Day, hosted by the George Washington Society.