

GOING MY WAY

River city renaissance

One county away, **Betsy Shequine** rediscovers the City of Hudson.



All of the Hudson river cities have been trashed pretty thoroughly in the past 25 years, both literally and figuratively. Some of the bad reputations taken on by these formerly glorious river cities were sadly deserved, as the Dayliners stopped coming, industries left, and the now ubiquitous Mall raised its ugly head across the land. We have wondered if any of these cities can survive, let alone redeem their former glory.

Well, there's good news up the line in the City of Hudson. A delightful renaissance is taking place. It's fast becoming the place for antiques. I counted more than 40 shops on my last visit. This is not yet Woodbury or Long Melton, but the quality of the antiques is surprisingly high.

Most are located along a five-block area on Warren Street, between Park Place and Third Street. Warren is the main street which runs down to the river. Hudson's vernacular architecture, mostly single-family dwellings, has a homogeneous quality, reminiscent of a nice middle-class 19th-century town. Much of it is being restored to something like its former quality, and it is a heartwarming sight to see. It's not perfect, and frankly I hope it doesn't get to be. After all, it is a working town, evolving and growing, even as you and I, so it should retain some of its character-forming scars, even as you and I.

As is often the case with such rejuvenations, other services have followed. Hudson is no exception, and several restaurants and even the St. Charles Hotel have been reinvented. Two or three first-rate art galleries are showcasing good local talent as well. The Carrie Haddad Gallery, at 622 Warren, has recently featured works by Dutchess County artists like Jean Tate, and the abstract paintings of David Schestenger, soon to be a resident of our county.

Hudson has always had the Firemen's Museum, which was, and is, good for a Sunday afternoon ride with the kids (read children and fathers). As county seat, Hudson is the location of the Columbia County Courthouse. It has always been one of the places in which lawyers like me don't mind having to appear, since there are kindly country people guarding the doors, which almost never happens

closer to the City of New York. The courthouse itself stands behind its own park, in a neighborhood of lovely turn-of-the-century homes and churches. It's just a block south of the Warren Street antiques shops, so do take a look.

Beyond that, all I'd ever heard about Hudson was that it had a former reputation as one large red-light district. (Probably not entirely true, as with most such stories.)

So, enter the antiques dealers, many from the Big Apple, looking for country life and cheaper rent. Blessings on them all. They are resurrecting an old river town and its architecture from oblivion and blight. Among my favorites are Abyssinia Antiques, at 524 Warren, which has 19th- and early 20th-century fine antiques, lamps and porcelains, and a warm ambience throughout; Noonan Antiques, at 551 Warren, which has Continental furniture, decorations and eccentricities; and A. Sutter Antiques, at 556 Warren, with 18th- and 19th-century antiques. Hudson Photographic Center, at 611 Warren, specializes in antique cameras and vintage prints.

On the north side of Warren Street, between Fifth and Fourth streets, is an old church which has recently been renovated to hold several antique dealers' wares. It is one of the most beautifully executed spaces of its type that I've ever seen. There are some remarkable early paintings, and authentically displayed furniture. Several friendly dealers there are most helpful, including the well-known Delores Murphy of Dutchess County. Be sure to pay a visit to the church if you go to Hudson. And next door you'll find Botanicus Antiques, in a charmingly restored house.

Looking at all these antiques and art will no doubt whet your appetite, so I suggest Charleston, a nice bistro on Warren. Less formal (bring your own beer or wine) is a place called Earthfood, which has casual, eclectic health food. And I'm told that the reborn St. Charles Hotel has two well-thought-of restaurants.

Go on up to Hudson, and make it on a weekend, when most places will be open.



Betsy Shequine, a local attorney, is fascinated by the metaphor of the journey.

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