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Hudson Flag Dedication Day, Hudson, NY

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HUDSON FLAG DEDICATION DAY

AUGUST 23, 1984

STANDING AT THE THRESHOLD OF THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INCORPORATION OF THE CITY OF HUDSON, WE BEGIN A GREAT CELEBRATION OF THE CITY'S PAST AND REAFFIRM AN ONGOING COMMITMENT TO ITS FUTURE. THIS DAY HAS BEEN SET ASIDE FOR THE DEDICATION OF AMERICAN FLAGS TO BE FLOWN DURING 1985 - THE BICENTENNIAL YEAR. ALTHOUGH MANY CEREMONIES AND COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS WILL TAKE PLACE THROUGHOUT THE COMING YEAR, THESE FLAGS WILL SERVE AS A CONTINUING REMINDER OF THE CELEBRATION AND COMMITMENT UNDERTAKEN BY THE PEOPLE OF THIS CITY.

THE LAND UPON WHICH WE NOW STAND WAS PART OF A LARGE TRACT ON THE EAST BANK OF THE RIVER PURCHASED FROM THE INDIANS IN 1662 BY A DUTCH SETTLER NAMED JAN VAN HOESEN. HE CALLED IT KLAUVER RACHEN OR CLOVER REACH, AND IT LATER BECAME KNOWN AS CLAVERACK LANDING. PERMANENT SETTLEMENT BY NEW ENGLANDERS ENGAGED IN THE BUSINESS OF SAILING THE OCEANS IN SEARCH OF WHALES DID NOT BEGIN UNTIL 1783. THE STURDY MEN AND WOMEN WHO SETTLED THIS PLACE WERE KNOWN AS THE "PROPRIETORS," AND THEY SUCCEEDED IN 1785 IN OBTAINING A CHARTER FOR THE CITY THEY ESTABLISHED HERE. THEY NAMED THEIR CITY FOR HENRY HUDSON, THE ENGLISH NAVIGATOR EMPLOYED BY THE DUTCH EAST INDIA COMPANY, WHO IS SAID TO HAVE LANDED HERE IN 1609. WHILE HE NEVER FOUND THE ELUSIVE NORTHWEST PASSAGE TO

THE ORIENT THAT HE SOUGHT, THE EXPLORATIONS OF HENRY HUDSON RANK AMONG THE GREATEST IN WORLD HISTORY.

WHEN THE CITY BECAME INCORPORATED AND RECEIVED ITS CHARTER IN 1785, THE NATION'S INDEPENDENCE FROM ENGLAND HAD BEEN SECURED, ALTHOUGH THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION HAD NOT YET BEEN ADOPTED. WE THEREFORE CLAIM THAT HUDSON WAS THE FIRST CITY CHARTERED IN WHAT SO RECENTLY HAD BECOME THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. 1785 WAS AN IMPORTANT YEAR IN AMERICAN HISTORY. THE DOLLAR WAS ESTABLISHED AS THE COUNTRY'S OFFICIAL CURRENCY, AND THOMAS JEFFERSON TOOK OVER THE POST OF MINISTER TO FRANCE FROM BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, WHO RETURNED AFTER NINE YEARS TO FIND THE NEW NATION IN SERIOUS ECONOMIC DIFFICULTY. AMERICAN FARMERS AND MANUFACTURERS WERE UNABLE TO SELL IN FOREIGN MARKETS, AND NEW ENGLANDERS WERE UNABLE TO FIND OUTLETS FOR THE PRODUCTS OF THEIR SHIPYARDS. THESE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS MAY HAVE ACCOUNTED, IN PART, FOR THE SETTLEMENT OF HUDSON.

THE CITY PROSPERED FROM ITS WATERFRONT ACTIVITIES ALMOST FROM THE BEGINNING, AND IT CONTINUED AS A WHALING CENTER AND BOATBUILDING RIVERPORT UNTIL THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY. IN 1790, HUDSON WAS DESIGNATED AS A PORT OF ENTRY AND THEREBY BECAME A CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL, AS WELL AS DOMESTIC, TRADE. IT EVENTUALLY SUCCEEDED NANTUCKET AS THE "WHALING CAPITAL OF THE WORLD." BY 1805, HUDSON HAD BECOME THE COUNTY SEAT OF COLUMBIA COUNTY AND, AS THE WHALING INDUSTRY BEGAN TO WANE, VARIOUS

COMMERCIAL AND GOVERNMENTAL FUNCTIONS ATTENDANT TO A COUNTY SEAT, AS WELL AS SEVERAL NEW FACTORIES, KEPT THE CITY PROSPEROUS. MARTIN VAN BUREN, 8TH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, PRACTICED LAW HERE FROM 1809 TO 1828. HIS SON, NEW YORK ATTORNEY GENERAL JOHN VAN BUREN, PROSECUTED THE ANTI-RENT WAR CASES IN HUDSON IN 1845. OTHER FAMOUS LAWYERS AND STATESMEN LIVED IN HUDSON DURING THOSE EARLY YEARS, AND NEW INDUSTRIES WERE ESTABLISHED TO REPLACE THOSE THAT BECAME OBSOLETE OR ECONOMICALLY UNSOUND. RETAIL BUSINESS FOR THE ENTIRE COUNTY BECAME CENTERED IN THE CITY OF HUDSON.

BUT THE CITY'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STATE AND NATION HAVE BEEN MADE NOT ONLY IN INDUSTRY, COMMERCE, LAW AND GOVERNMENT. HUDSON'S SONS AND DAUGHTERS HAVE SERVED IN THE CIVIL WAR, BOTH WORLD WARS, AND IN KOREA, VIETNAM, AND, MORE RECENTLY LEBANON. SOME WERE CALLED UPON TO MAKE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE, AND THEY HAVE MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO COME TO THIS STAGE IN HUDSON'S HISTORY, STILL FREE, INDEPENDENT AND PRIVILEGED TO LIVE IN THIS GREAT REPUBLIC.

THE YEARS FOLLOWING WORLD WAR II SAW A GRADUAL DECLINE IN HUDSON'S POSITION AS A PRE-EMINENT COMMERCIAL CENTER, A PHASING OUT OF CERTAIN LOCAL INDUSTRIES, A DETERIORATION OF HOUSING STOCKS, AND A REDUCTION IN POPULATION. INCREASED INTEREST IN SUBURBAN HOUSING, CHANGES IN SHOPPING HABITS, GREATER POPULATION MOBILITY, SHIFTING PATTERNS OF INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY AND AN AGING

INFRASTRUCTURE ACCOUNTED FOR MANY OF THESE CHANGES. THESE PROBLEMS WERE NOT UNIQUE TO HUDSON - THEY AFFECTED MANY OLDER CITIES THROUGHOUT THE STATE AND NATION. WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT HUDSON IS THAT THE PEOPLE OF THIS CITY DECIDED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THEIR PROBLEMS. AS A RESULT, A NEW ERA HAS DAWNED FOR THE CITY AS IT PREPARES TO ENTER THE THIRD CENTURY OF ITS EXISTENCE.

IN THE EARLY 1960'S, WHILE I WAS PRIVILEGED TO SERVE AS CORPORATION COUNSEL FOR THE CITY OF HUDSON, AN INNOVATIVE CONCEPT FOR THE CITY'S FUTURE BEGAN TO TAKE SHAPE IN THE THINKING OF CONCERNED CITIZENS. IT WAS THEN KNOWN AS URBAN PLANNING AND RENEWAL. ALTHOUGH IT HAS BEEN KNOWN BY VARIOUS NAMES SINCE THAT TIME, ITS PURPOSE HAS BEEN THE SAME - THE CONTINUING RENEWAL OF THE CITY THROUGH A COMBINATION OF GOVERNMENT LOANS AND GRANTS, PRIVATE CAPITAL, CITY TAXES AND THE ENTHUSIASTIC PARTICIPATION OF THE CITIZENRY. THE SUCCESS OF THE VENTURE IS APPARENT, AND THE CITY OF HUDSON HAS BECOME A SHOWCASE AND AN EXAMPLE FOR OTHER CITIES FACED WITH SIMILAR PROBLEMS. HUDSON'S VALUABLE HISTORICAL RESOURCES HAVE BEEN PRESERVED, ZONING RESTRICTIONS HAVE BEEN TIGHTENED, AND THE DOWNTOWN AREA HAS BECOME A PERMANENT EXHIBITION OF FEDERAL, COLONIAL AND VICTORIAN ARCHITECTURAL STYLES. THE OLD STYLE LAMPLIGHTS, THE BRICK TILED STREETS, THE REFURBISHED PARKS AND THE MUSEUM OF FIREFIGHTING HAVE BROUGHT A BRAND-NEW BUSINESS TO THE CITY - TOURISM.

THE PROGRAM HAS RESULTED IN THE ATTRACTION OF NEW INDUSTRY AND THE EXPANSION OF OLDER FACILITIES, DESPITE PHYSICAL LIMITS ON THE AREAS AVAILABLE FOR THOSE PURPOSES. STREETS HAVE BEEN REPAVED, SEWER AND WATER LINES HAVE BEEN REPLACED, AND TELEPHONE AND POWER CABLES HAVE BEEN BURIED. THE WATERFRONT, WHERE IT ALL BEGAN, HAS BEEN REVITALIZED, AND A HEALTHY DEBATE NOW RAGES OVER FUTURE PLANS FOR THAT AREA. NEW HOUSING HAS BEEN BUILT, AND EXTENSIVE REMODELING OF OLDER DWELLINGS HAS BEEN ENCOURAGED. THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY HAS RALLIED TO PROMOTE A STUDY OF WAYS AND MEANS TO INCREASE COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY. AND S.P.O.U.T., THE SOCIETY TO PROMOTE OUR UNIQUE TOWN, SYMBOLIZED BY THE SPOUTING WHALE, THE SPONSOR OF TONIGHT'S FESTIVITIES, HAS ORGANIZED MANY ACTIVITIES TO ADVANCE NUMEROUS CIVIC PROJECTS.

BEHIND ALL OF THIS, AND RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THESE SUCCESSES, HAS BEEN THE REMARKABLE SPIRIT OF THE PEOPLE OF HUDSON. THE INGENUITY, CREATIVITY, SENSE OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND SHEER DETERMINATION - THE SAME QUALITIES THAT MOTIVATED THE ORIGINAL SETTLERS OF THE CITY OF HUDSON - STILL LIVE IN THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE AND WORK TODAY IN THIS SPECIAL PLACE. AS HUDSON FACES TOWARD THE FUTURE, THE RANKS OF ITS CITIZENS ONCE AGAIN ARE BEING SWELLED BY THOSE WHO COME FROM ELSEWHERE, THOSE WHO FIND THIS CITY A WONDERFUL PLACE TO BE IN, THOSE WHO COME BY RAIL, RIVER AND ROAD TO ENJOY THE ADVANTAGES AND AMENITIES, THE HISTORY AND TRADITIONS, THE SPECTACULAR VIEW OF THE RIVER AND THE

CATSKILLS FROM PROMENADE HILL AND, MOST OF ALL TO LIVE WITH AND WORK WITH THESE EXCEPTIONAL AND PROGRESSIVE PEOPLE, THEIR FELLOW HUDSONIANS. AND THE CITY WELCOMES THESE NEWCOMERS, JUST AS FOR TWO CENTURIES IT HAS WELCOMED INTO ITS MIDST OTHER NEWCOMERS FROM ALL PARTS OF AMERICA AND FROM MANY FOREIGN LANDS.

EXCITING TIMES ARE YET TO COME FOR THIS PROUD CITY, SO RICH IN THE HERITAGE OF THE PAST, BUT SO MUCH RICHER IN ITS PROMISE FOR THE FUTURE.