



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resources  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E Page 2

---

### Outline of Historic Contexts

1. Early Settlement and Civic Organization, 1630-1786
2. Professional and Educational Development, 1786-1900
3. Transportation and Industrial Development, 1800-1945
4. Hamlet Agricultural Development, 1800-1945

### **Introduction**

The hamlet of Claverack is located near the center of the town of Claverack, Columbia County, New York. At the center of the unincorporated village is the crossroads of the two main historic north-south and east-west roads. The name "Claverack" is Dutch term, which translated into English means "clover reach." Although this term was used to describe this area by the earliest Europeans to navigate this portion of Hudson's River the actual origins of the name are unknown. However, one theory states that "claver" was used to describe the clover-like markings on the clay river banks near the present city of Hudson. The term "rach" was used to portions or "reaches" of the Hudson River.

### **Prehistory**

Between 14,000-17,000 years ago an extensive glacial lake, identified now as Lake Albany, covered the majority of Columbia County and all of Claverack. As the lake receded it left creeks and fertile soil. The town itself was divided into the lower and upper Taconics creating large water fall at Philmont. The majority of the area covered by the hamlet lies in the alluvial plain. This flat land was fertile and created a natural overland travel route both north and south and east and west.

Archaic Indians were the first human inhabitants to the area. Large game animals including mastodons lived in the receding marshy plain. Eventually over the centuries these nomadic tribes developed into family groups and tribal systems. The Mahicans, an Algonquin tribe and their enemies the Marques or Mohawks of the Iroquois nation both settled here. The hamlet of Claverack was believed to be a Mahican hamlet known as Potkoke. By the time of European settlement the tribes had been diminished through warfare and migration. With increasing encroachment on their land during the early eighteenth century most of these native peoples moved to the Stockbridge mission. By the time of the Revolution only a few poverty stricken "River Indians" remained in the area.

### **Claverack Early Settlement and Civic Development, 1630-1786**

The first Europeans explorers to the Hudson River Valley were the Dutch, in search of trade routes and furs. Initially settlement was not of concern to the Dutch, until the British encroachment from New England threatened their fur trade monopoly. In response to this problem, the Dutch crown sold large parcels of land to wealthy countrymen who were given a Patroonship or manor. These patroons, in return for the land, promised to populate it as a way of ensuring Dutch domain over New Netherlands. One such patroon was Killian Van Rensselaer, a diamond merchant who purchased the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resources  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E Page 3

---

largest of the patroonship - Rensselaerwyck. Most of his holdings were near Fort Orange (present day Albany), but 170,000 acres were located below Kinderhook along the east bank of the Hudson River.

Settlement of this lower section of the manor was slow at first. The Van Rensselaers' did not maintain a full-time residence in the area consequently they were not actively promoting the sale of leases in the area. Probably they were more concerned with the development of their lands closer to Beverwyck (now Albany) a major trading center. However, Killian did give out leases of land to European immigrants who were mostly Walloons, Dutch and Germans. On May 1, 1680 two Labadist priests, Jasper Dankers and Peter Shuyter, traveling through the Hudson River valley arrived at Claver Rack. Here their ship took on grain from the outlying farms. The boors (yomen) who brought the grain offered the priests a tour of their farms. Dankers and Shuyter provided the following narrative dated May 2, 1680:

We rode along a high ridge of blue rock on the right hand, the top of which was grown over. This stone is suitable for burning lime, as the people of the Hysopus, from the same kind, burn the best. Large clear fountains flow out of these cliffs or hills, the first real fountains and only ones which we have met with in this country. We arrive at the places which consist of fine farms; the tillable land is like that of Schoonechtendeel, low flat, and on the side of the creek, very delightful and pleasant to look upon, especially at the present time, when they were all green with wheat coming up. [1]

In 1704, Killian Van Rensselaer gave his brother Hendrick the southern section of his property, some 170,000 acres which included Claverack. Hendrick and especially his son, John actively recruited more settlers to the area. John moved to the residence in Claverack hamlet making it his primary home. Although not technically a manor under the English system, (the British rested control of New Netherlands in 1662 renaming it New York) the 170,000 acres were referred to as the Lower Manor and John as a Lord.

By 1714, the colonial census recorded 214 people as living on the Lower Manor which included the modern day towns of Hudson, Greenport, Ghent, Claverack and Hillsdale. The town was second only to Kinderhook in population in the southern section. One year later, the population increased with the arrival of Palatine farmers, who unhappy with their conditions under the Lord Robert Livingston at Germantown moved to Claverack. Among these industrious German immigrants were the Millers, Hogebooms and Mesicks whose descendants would greatly effect the development of the town.

---

1. Roland VanZandt. Chronicles of the Hudson. (Hensonville, N.Y.: Black Dome Press Corp., 1971) pg. 30.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resour  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E Page 4

---

The hamlet grew at a greater rate than the rest of town. The hamlet's location along the Old Albany Post Road at the intersection of the main roads leading east to the Berkshires and west to the Hudson River enticed settlers. The hamlet was inhabited by farmers and small businessmen including tavern keepers. There were at least two working taverns in the early eighteenth century and travelers mentioned how many of the local farmers were very willing to rent out sleeping space when the taverns were full. In 1726, a Reform Dutch church was established in the hamlet, located near the site of the first county courthouse. The parishioners were served by a minister who also preached at Kinderhook and Linlithgo.

As the century progressed so did the hamlet's growth. This increase was reflected in the establishment of a grist mill along the Claverack creek by Robert Van Rensselaer in 1767. The relatively large mill complex had two stones available for grinding cereals for flour. Claverack now became not only a stop along the Albany Post Road but a destination for farmers from throughout the region.

By the time of the American Revolution, Claverack had become a substantial hamlet with a large Georgian style church, several taverns, a grist mill complex and a resident professional class composed almost exclusively of lawyers. The war also brought excitement to the hamlet. Since most farmers were still renting from the Van Rensselaer family there was a considerable amount of Tory sentiment in the area. Some tenant farmers resented the claim the Manor lords had on their property. These industrious men and women believed that since they toiled the soil that they should have ownership of it or at least an opportunity to purchase the land. Instead they were tied to the land through leases which could stipulate that a farmer work the land for his entire lifetime and that even of his son. Original tenants, often penniless immigrants, accepted these arrangements because they guaranteed them a use of land without having to purchase a claim. Later generations of tenants believed that if the British won they would take the property rights away from the landed gentry and give it to the farmers. Ultimately the anti-rent debate continued in the Hudson River Valley until the mid-nineteenth century when the courts finally abolished the practice after several rebellions and fervent political battle.

Combined with this anti-rent spirit was an intricate spy system along the Albany Post Road making Claverack the center of some controversy. Tories would send information along the Albany Post Road about the movements of Patriot militia to British garrisons down the river. Despite the presence of Tories a number of Claverack citizens were on the patriots' side. Among these revolutionaries was Cornelius S. Muller, a member of the Committee of Safety, in whose house the group met. At the end of the war the patriots found themselves in important positions in the new local government, however, most Tories simply continued to prosper in the hamlet.

The Revolution also brought a few refugees from New York City. Rev. John Gebhard a German Reform minister was one of these unfortunates who made his way to Claverack in 1776. He became the minister at the Claverack Reform Dutch church and despite the difficulties of war founded a school for boys called the Washington Seminary in 1779. The start of this secondary school for the study of the classics and higher

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resources  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E Page 5

---

mathematics, would eventually establish Claverack as an educational and cultural center for the region. About the same time John Bay arrived in Claverack and established a thriving law practice. He was particularly known for his willingness to train apprentices in the law. One of his more famous students was William W. Van Ness, a Federalist leader, prominent lawyer and New York State Supreme Court justice.

After the conclusion of the Revolution more changes occurred in Claverack. In 1784, the majority of the Lower Manor and its manorial rights were sold by the Van Rensselaer family to Daniel Penfield. The original Claverack district established in 1772 with the formation of Albany county was divided in the 1780s into separate towns of Claverack, Hillsdale, and the City of Hudson. The result of all the changes in civil government after the Revolution was the establishment of Columbia County in 1786 with Claverack hamlet designated as the county seat.

#### **Claverack Professional and Educational Development, 1786-1900**

With the establishment of Claverack as the county seat, the hamlet seemed to grow overnight. The Board of Supervisors met in Gabriel Esselstyne's house while the Courthouse Committee decided on the funding and style of the new courthouse. This committee of the most prominent men of the county included William Whiting, Abram I. Van Alstyne, John Livingston, Henry I. Van Rensselaer, Matthew Scott, Seth Jenkins and William Henry Ludlow. The latter businessmen had moved to Claverack during the Revolution from New York City. The siting of the courthouse on the western end of the hamlet may have helped his grain operations to prosper since they were located adjacent to the proposed courthouse.

Over 3,600 English pounds were spent to construct the Federal style, brick structure with a large courtroom on the second floor and a jail facility in the back. The building was opened in 1789 and became the scene for many significant judicial debates. The most significant of these cases was the seditious libel trial which pitted President Thomas Jefferson against Federalist newspaper editor, Harry Crosswell. Crosswell was convicted of libel at Claverack, but in a landmark appeals case argued Alexander Hamilton the conviction was overturned.

In 1805, the county seat designation was dropped from Claverack and moved to the burgeoning city of Hudson. There a new new courthouse opened the following year. Although Claverack never again experienced the prosperity of those years, the legacy of the years as a county seat would continue.

Initially, the loss of the county seat meant the closure of several taverns and small businesses in the western end of the hamlet. However, many of the professional men particularly the lawyers who had made Claverack their home continued to live and practice in the town. Hudson was only three miles to the west and easily accessed by the newly constructed Columbia Turnpike. Most of the stores and taverns moved to the east along the crossroads of the Turnpike with the Albany Post road, leaving space along the western approach to the hamlet for the construction of large and stylish homes. By the end of the nineteenth century Claverack became a summer residence for a several

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resources  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E Page 6

---

wealthy professionals from New York City. Most of these summer and occasional residents were either natives of Claverack or married to a former Claverack resident. However their presence helped support the cultural institutions of the hamlet and its economy.

One of the lawyers who remained in Claverack after 1805 was John Bay. Many important lawyers and politicians apprenticed with him including Martin Van Buren and Ambrose Spencer. Bay was elected an area representative to the state Constitutional Convention. Later in the century doctors practicing in the Hudson hospital moved to Claverack and built homes along the turnpike. Thus Claverack developed a reputation for being a wealthy and attractive hamlet.

Claverack's reputation as a professional and cultural center was greatly enhanced by the presence of the Washington Seminary established by Rev. Gebhard during the Revolution. The secondary school continued to grow and by 1780 had over 100 students led by Andrew Mayfield Carshore as headmaster. Carshore had left a private seminary in Kinderhook to work in Claverack. Fifty years later the school was chartered as the Claverack Academy and Colonel Ambrose Root helped finance the construction of a school building. The school still under the auspices of the Reformed Dutch Church continued to grow and attract students from outside Columbia County.

With the growth of formal education throughout the United States it is not surprising that the school was rechartered yet again in 1854 as Claverack College and Hudson River Institute. Rev. Alonzo Flack, president of the reorganized school established it as a secondary and college preparatory school for boys over the age of fourteen. There were eleven departments: French, German, English, classical, normal, music, painting, military, commercial, telegraphic and agricultural. The young men were prepared after four years of study to enter the junior year in college or a career. A military course was mandatory for all in addition to their academic subjects. Within ten years two more buildings were constructed for the education and housing of approximately 300 students. The new College Hall held lecture rooms and the chapel while the drill shed was used for military drilling and gymnasium. In 1869 the Institute accepted women for a Mistress of Arts degree. They unlike the men had a completed degree at the end of their four years in either the arts or normal education. The school continued to prosper throughout the nineteenth century. Some of the more famous students who attended the Seminary or Claverack College were Martin Van Buren, Stephen Crane, the author and Margaret Sanger, an early women rights advocate. Brochures described the school as being located in the country away from the harmful distractions of the city. Although a small proportion of the students came from Columbia County the majority were from New York City, other states and even a few foreign countries. However, as the century waned the growth of accredited high schools and universities in the country helped to lead to a decline in the school's enrollment. In 1902 Claverack College begun some 125 years earlier closed its doors.

Private schools were not the only educational development for Claverack. As early as 1795, monies from New York State were being allocated in the county for the establishment of grammar schools. Although the creation of schools was slow at first by mid-century Columbia County had been divided into two school districts and had over

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resources  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E Page 7

---

150 schools including one at Claverack. In addition to secular education, Rev. Richard Sluyter established one of the first Sabbath day schools in the area at Claverack. As the minister of the Reformed Dutch church he saw a need for formal religious instruction for both children and adults. Eventually, his Sabbath school grew and became part of the national Sunday School Association movement.

Schools were not the only centers of learning and culture in Claverack, the churches also provided the community with a sense of pride and culture. For most of Claverack's development the Reformed Dutch church established in the first decade of the 18th century dominated the religious life of its inhabitants. The church not only promoted Calvinist religious beliefs but preserved the Dutch language and cultural traditions throughout the 1700s. In 1815, Rev. Richard Sluyter became pastor of the Reformed Church in Claverack. He began to encourage more participation in the church by introducing English into the services and the establishment of the Sunday school movement.

The church remained the only denomination in the hamlet until 1856 with the establishment of Trinity Episcopal Church. Trinity Church is created at the time of great expansion of the Episcopal church throughout the Hudson Valley. Trinity Parish in New York City helped to fund the creation of many such churches including churches at Clermont, Kinderhook and Hudson. The parish was most likely helped by the mother church in Manhattan and by Christ Episcopal in Hudson. Four years later Alonzo Flack, President of Claverack College helped to establish the Methodist Episcopal Church in the hamlet. All three churches were still in operation at the end of the century and were mentioned in the Claverack College brochure as being available to the students of the College in addition to the school's interdenominational Bible study groups and prayer services. Presently, only the Claverack Reformed Church dates from this period and remains an active parish. The congregation continues to meet in the original 1767 church.

#### **Claverack Hamlet Transportation and Industrial Development, 1800-1945**

Although Claverack's growth slowed after 1805, the hamlet did continue to prosper. This continued development was due in large part to Claverack's ideal location along major roadways. In 1800 the main east/west road that bisected the Albany Post Road at Claverack was greatly improved as a private turnpike. Several Hudson and Claverack businessmen including Thomas Jenkins, Elisha Jenkins, Rufus Backus, Stephen Miller and Jacob Rutsen Van Rensselaer formed a corporation for the establishment of the Columbia Turnpike. A private venture the turnpike stretched east from the City of Hudson to Great Barrington in Massachusetts. The new road was the first true roadway to run east and west through the county to Massachusetts. The turnpike allowed for increased traffic and the transport of goods from New England to the Hudson River. The new Columbia Turnpike traversed right through Claverack (along present day Route 23 and 23B) past the new courthouse, William Ludlow's grain stores and Jacob R. Van Rensselaer's Red Mills.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resources  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E Page 8

---

Despite the improvements that a private turnpike made for east/west travel, leading citizens of both Massachusetts and Hudson sought even better means of transportation. As early as 1826, local businessmen approached the New York State legislature with plans for a cross county railroad that would link Hudson with western Massachusetts. The line would then connect with the railroad to the rail lines to Boston. Such a system would connect Hudson to the two largest cities in the east, Boston and New York City. After nearly ten years of discussion the Hudson and Berkshire Railroad was finally built under the guidance of James Mellen. The railroad's first station stop was Claverack. The railway then traveled east and north through Mellenville, Ghent to Chatham where it connected to the Albany and Boston line. Initially, the railroad was used to carry farm products, pig iron to Hudson foundries and other commercial goods. In time passenger cars were added making the travel time from New York to Boston about 45 hours via steamboat to Hudson then train east to Boston. At its peak, about the turn of the century, the railroad (called the Hudson and Boston since 1842) ran four passenger trains per day. The fare from Claverack to Hudson was only seven cents. The railroad became easy transportation for people working in Hudson but living in Claverack. Farmers used the railroad to deliver fresh produce to Hudson and hay to the horse car market in New York City. The railroad provided an important transportation link and economic resource in the town until the mid-twentieth century. With the advent of the car and truck, the railroad lost much of its business and was closed in the mid-1950s.

Despite the access to transportation Claverack hamlet had very few industrial operations. The hamlet relied more on commerce, farming and consumer services than manufacturing as an economic base. The one large industrial employer in the hamlet environs was the Red Mills located on the Claverack creek on the eastern edge of the hamlet. [2]

The first grist mill was built on the site for Robert Van Rensselaer in 1767. However it was his son Jacob Rutsen who truly developed the site. He built at least two grist mills, a plaster mill and a fulling mill on the property. Van Rensselaer's mill operations were only a part of his activities. As a lawyer he practiced law, served in the New York State Assembly, and was a Brigadier General in the War of 1812. He also invested in several local endeavors including a woolen mill, cabinet factory and the Bank of Columbia. The latter investment eventually forced Van Rensselaer to sell the mills when the bank failed in 1829 as part of the Bank of America bank scandal. The mills continued under several owners with one of the last being the Lampman family who purchased the property in 1884. About that same time the water wheels were replaced with turbines which greatly increased the speed of productivity. The Red Mills were renowned for their buckwheat and pancake flour. The Lampman family sold the operation in 1945 and the mills stopped working about a decade later.

---

2. This property was listed in 1982 to the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places as the *Jacob Rutsen Van Rensselaer House and Mill Complex*.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resources  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E Page 9

---

The other large manufacturer was the Bristol Brothers Hay Press. This agriculturally related business begun the late nineteenth century, featured a horse powered hay press. The machinery compressed hay into bales for transport. The three building facility were adjacent to the railroad station allowing for easy access to the hay market in New York City and Boston. Bristol Brothers also sold feed, grain, coal and fuel oil. The latter commercial interests overshadowed the hay business in the twentieth century.

Despite the relative lack of industry in Claverack hamlet proper, industrial development surrounding the hamlet helped its growth particularly in the early 20th century. Around 1900, Portland cement factories were built around Hudson attracted to the area by the natural limestone available. One of those deposits was on the border of Claverack and Greenport at Becraft Mountain. The Lone Star cement company built a factory along Route 23 B (the old Columbia Turnpike) in 1911 along the Claverack creek. Between 1920 and 1940 the plant was enlarged and at its peak could store over 500,000 barrels of cement. The plant's proximity to Claverack as well as the industrial park built in the 1920s in Greenport along Route 66 ( about five miles from the hamlet) provided jobs for the hamlet's residents.

Along Maple Avenue where the train station was located, small workshops and stores opened in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Some of the stores included a cobbler, grocer and dry goods store. Although not industrial in nature these businesses added to the economy and made Claverack a commercial center for farmers in the surrounding area.

#### **Claverack Hamlet Agricultural Development, 1800-1945**

Agriculture was the most important factor in Claverack's economy throughout its history. Beginning in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries most farmers practiced subsistence farming with grain or wheat as their one cash crop. The transportation routes to the Hudson River gave farmers access to the New York City and Albany markets for their grain. The growth of these cities created a new demand which was for hay. Farmers readily switched to hay production. Wheat by this time was being grown and shipped from Central New York and the Mid-west creating competition for the local market.

The hay market continued throughout the century but another equally important agricultural crop to develop in the latter part of the century was fruit. The sandy and over tilled soil surrounding the hamlet was ideal for the growing of apples, peaches and cherries. Three of the biggest farms, "Talavera" to the north, "Brookbound" to the south and the Mesick farm to the east all prospered through fruit production. Even as late as 1940, the Town of Claverack ranked second only to Kinderhook in apple production in the county.

In the early twentieth century, some farmers in the hamlet and surrounding area began specializing in dairy production to replace the then dwindling hay market. Dairy products were processed at several regional creameries including one owned by Borden in

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resour  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E Page 10

---

nearby Mellenville (a stop of the Hudson & Boston rail line.) Other farmers sold their milk directly in the City of Hudson and Greenport.

The last agricultural specialty to develop in Claverack was the growing and marketing of vegetables and fruit for the growing Hudson market. As more factory workers moved into Hudson and Greenport, the need for fresh produce also increased. At present the farms still in operation in Claverack are primarily fruit orchards and small truck farms who sell their product at roadside stands and in local stores.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resources  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number F Page 11

---

### Outline of Property Type

1. Residential and Civic Architecture
2. Industrial Structures
3. Religious Properties

I. Name of the Property Type  
**Residential and Civic Architecture**

II. Description

The Hamlet of Claverack's residential architectural styles reflects the development of the community from earliest settlement until the mid twentieth century. At each stage in the hamlet's growth houses were constructed in the latest national architectural styles.

#### **Vernacular/Dutch Style**

The first houses, constructed of brick, stone and wood were built by Dutch, German and English settlers. These vernacular buildings reflected the mixed ethnicity of the residents. The earliest of these houses is the Van Rensselaer Lower Manor House ca. 1685. Although the house has endured many alterations over the centuries it still features a steep gable roof which extends to form a porch over the one and half-story house.

Prior to 1700, rural house construction in Rensselaerwick (the present counties of Albany, Columbia, Greene and Rensselaer) was most often typified by one and one-half story, rubblestone construction with brick gables. These dwellings rested on stone foundations and were covered by steeply pitched gable roofs. The exterior masonry walls would be tied to an interior frame composed of heavy timbers, by means of wrought iron anchors. Generally, the fenestration pattern in these dwellings was asymmetrical. The Pieter Bronk House, (ca. 1663, NR Listed: 1967), Cossackie, Greene County and the Luykas Van Alen house, (ca. 1737, NR Listed: 1967), Kinderhook Columbia County; the William Van Ness house (ca.1730), Claverack, Columbia County are rare surviving examples of this early Dutch house type in the region.

In the early eighteenth century, this traditional rural house type began to evolve. The introduction of the gambrel roof form; the greater availability of brick; and the use of English inspired architectural patterns began to influence the rural house type in the region. In this new form, the former house type became more elongated, symmetrical in design and the steeply pitched gable roof was replaced by the English gambrel roof. Floor plans also evolved from the more functional open plans of the previous century to the more formal center hall, single and double pile plans. Beginning in the mid 1720s a number of these rural houses were built throughout the outlying areas of Rensselaerwick. Extant regional examples of this house type include

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resources  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number F Page 12

---

the Van Schaick house (ca. 1735, NR Listed: 1971), Cohoes, Albany County; the Nicoll-Sill house (ca. 1736, NR Listed: 1973), Bethlehem, Albany County; the Tobias Ten Eyck house (ca. 1740, NR Listed: 1995), Coeymans, Albany County; the Cornelius S. Muller house (1768), Claverack, Columbia County; the Mesick house (ca. 1760), Claverack, Columbia County; and the Stephen Miller House (ca. 1760), Claverack, Columbia County.

### **Georgian Style**

The first national style popular throughout the colonies was the Georgian style. Georgian houses are generally large in scale with rigid symmetry. They often include, axial entrances, hipped roof lines (often with balustrades), multiple light double-hung sash windows, palladian windows, quoining, and elaborate entrances. The houses were built using a variety of materials, but brick was the most popular material in the Hudson River Valley region. Claverack's prominence and wealth has its early beginnings at the end of the Colonial period and is reflected in a number of its Georgian style houses. These dwellings include the William Ludlow house (1786), the William Bay house (1787), and the Stephen Hogeboom House (1784).

The most prominent of the Georgian style structure in the hamlet is the original Columbia County Courthouse. This two story brick building features rigorous Georgian massing and symmetry with early Federal details such as gable end fan lights and delicate cornice decoration. The courthouse stands as an architectural transition between the old colonial world and the new nation.

### **Federal style**

The emergence of the Federal style in America in the early nineteenth century coincides with Claverack's greatest period of growth and prominence. Federal style homes feature rectangular massing with low pitch gable roof line that run parallel to the front facade. Details on the structures are inspired by Greek, Roman and other Classical motifs. Generally these details are delicate and light. Often these decorations created from lead, wood or plaster are present in side lights around door surrounds, paladin window and elliptical lights on side elevations. Windows are usually double hung sash with multiple lights and thin muntins.

Although the Federal period style is most often associated with late eighteenth and early nineteenth century the style lingers well into the mid-century in Columbia County. A fine example of the early and more purely Federal style house is the Peter Mesick house (ca. 1813). Peter Mesick a wealthy farmer built the house as a wedding present for his daughter who married local physician Abram Jordan. The five bay brick house has delicate tracery in the side lights around the front facade door. The Steven Storm house (ca. 1820) is another outstanding regional example of the style.

A much larger and impressive classically inspired Federal era house is William W. Van Ness's home called "Talavera" built between 1813 and 1816. The house's center section features a two bay, two and one half story portico with massive Doric columns and a wide entablature. On either side of the center section are replicas of the center

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resources  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number F Page 13

---

but only one story in height. These wings are connected to the main section by hyphens with low pitch roof lines hidden by balustrades. The entrances to the house are located in these connections.

### **Greek Revival Style**

The Greek Revival style was popular in the region between 1820 and 1850. A formal, dignified style, the Greek Revival form was based upon the ancient Greek temple form. A revival of interest in classical culture had swept America as a result of the archeological discoveries at Herculaneum and Pompeii and sympathy for Greece during its war for independence from the Ottoman Empire (1821-30) leading to a revival and reinterpretation of classical models in art and architecture. The widespread use of the Greek Revival style in the first half of the nineteenth century also reflected the shift of American popular taste away from British architectural influences as a result of the War of 1812. Perhaps most important, Americans revered ancient Greece as the homeland of democracy. In incorporating forms and symbols associated with the architecture of ancient Greece into contemporary churches, schools, and civic buildings Americans reaffirmed the ideals and aspirations that they held for their new communities and for the new nation.

Like the Federal era houses, the Greek Revival residences also feature a low pitched gable roof, but the ridge is perpendicular to the facade. The roof line is usually set off by the use of heavy cornice molding. In the more fully articulated examples of the style, also known as the "temple fronted form," monumental porticoes dominated the facade of the building. Entrances often feature trabeated surrounds with the entrance door flanked by side lights and a rectangular transom or wood entablature. Windows are generally double-hung sash with multiple lights. The first floor windows are often elongated reaching the floor. Massing varies, but is always consists of rectangular blocks. Symmetry is an important element of the style.

In Claverack there are no examples of the formal "temple front" house form, but several examples of variants of this popular style do survive. Oakledge, ca. 1845, is a three bay, two story clapboard house with a side wing. The house does feature a low pitch roof and a wide entablature reflecting the temple style. The parsonage of the Dutch Reformed Church (ca.1840) is similar in design to "Oakledge." In addition to these Greek Revival houses, a number of Federal and Georgian houses were adapted during the period through the addition of Greek Revival inspired porches and facade changes. Some of the more notable examples of these "modernized" buildings include the William Bay house, the Old County Courthouse, and the Stephen Hogeboom house.

### **Italianate Style**

The Italianate style was extremely popular house type in Claverack from about 1865 until 1890. In contrast to the Greek Revival house, an Italianate home is more decorative and picturesque in its design. Generally built using light frame construction these buildings usually feature cubic massing. Italianate structures feature low hipped roof lines, often highlighted by broad over hanging bracketed eaves

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resources  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number F Page 14

---

and cupolas. The windows on the front facade in particular are elongated often featuring segmental or round arches. Windows are also often placed in groupings of two or three. Front entrances are generally composed of paired doors with rounded tops or arches which again supplement the allusion of height. Doors are often carved, have intricate inlaid applied or incorporate etched glass panels.

There are several examples of the Italianate style in the hamlet of Claverack. Four of the largest and most impressive are located on Route 23B the old Columbia Turnpike the main road from Hudson to Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Built between 1860 and 1880, the four properties, Martin house, Bushnell house, Rossman house and Holmes house are typical of the two story clapboard style Italianate house. Both the Bushnell and Martin residences featured sweeping lawns and romantic landscapes to enhance the setting of the house. The Bushnell house has a cupola at the center of the roof. Besides these private homes, The Columbia Hotel located on Park Place was built on the site of the eighteenth century Gordon's tavern which burned in 1876. William Shaw rebuilt a hotel on the property in the Italianate style. In addition to these large and stylish structures there are a number of smaller homes with Italianate massing and decoration on a smaller scale. Many of these homes are located across from the railroad station along Maple Avenue. These buildings served as private residences and as craft shops and dry goods stores.

### **Second Empire Style**

The Second Empire style was a popular late nineteenth architectural style patterned after the large public buildings constructed in France during the reign of Napoleon III. High, mansard roof with dormer windows is the most important single feature of the design. The sides of the roof can be straight, concave or convex and is covered in slate often laid in a decorative pattern. Like Federal and Georgian structures, Second Empire houses are symmetrical and feature bay windows and porches. The windows are most unusual in shape normally round or arched.

There are major examples of the Second Empire style in Claverack, "Brookbound," home of Harmon Miller and Fairview Manor, the home of Alonzo Flack. Brookbound is a typical example of a mid-size Second Empire house. Harmon Miller, a wealthy, fruit farmer built the house in 1870. The clapboard, three story, five bay house has many Second Empire style details including a concave-sided mansard roof, arched windows and heavy cornice and lintel decoration. Fairview Manor is a less typical Second Empire house in its asymmetrical, almost Italianate style massing. Rev. Alonzo Flack president of Claverack College built the mansion in 1869 on the college grounds. The massive, brick house is constructed in three sections with the center sections with the center section supporting a concave mansard roof. The two wings have either a low pitched gable or flat roof line. A cornice with large and numerous cornice brackets envelops the entire structure. All the windows are elongated and round arched at the top. Fairview Manor was one of the largest and most elegant house in the hamlet. Unfortunately a fire in the 1980s did considerable damage to the interior which has yet to be fully restored.

### **Queen Anne Style**

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resources  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number F Page 15

---

Queen Anne style of architecture gained popularity in the United States in the late nineteenth century. The name of this truly eclectic style was coined in England taken from the pre-Georgian period when classical details were added to medieval forms. In America, instead of sprawling manor homes, the style encompassed buildings from large mansions to modest workers housing. Architects used a variety of materials to achieve the desired effect including brick, stucco, stone and clapboard. The roofs are often complex gabled or hipped forms with projected dormers and turrets. The gabled ends under the roof line are decorated with stylized brackets. The windows can be in a variety of shapes including round, arched or elongated. Many houses incorporated stained glass in the fenestration. Another unique attribute of the design are balconies and porches. The latter often feature decorative turned spindles and carved details.

In Claverack, there are two fine examples of the Queen Anne style - "Villula" and the Dr. Thomas Wilson house. The core of "Villula" is an early Federal, two story clapboard farmhouse that was heavily remodeled in 1891. The Wilson House was constructed as a Queen Anne style home. The two story, wood frame dwelling features a rounded turret at the north corner of the building, decorated gable ends and a stylized front porch with carved brackets. In contrast to these high style Queen Anne homes are several small modest Victorian houses along the western end of Route 23 B and along Maple Ave.

### **Twentieth Century Revivals**

In the twentieth century many architects looked back to previous styles building on the late nineteenth century Colonial Revival movement. These buildings both residential and public adapted the original forms to contemporary needs and materials. Symmetry and regular massing was utilized with in the case of civic buildings classically-inspired details. Often elements from different periods were incorporated into a structure such as gambrel roof and paladin windows.

Not surprisingly, Colonial Revival architecture was prevalent in Claverack, considering the community's interest in its colonial history. Two large Georgian Revival houses, Rice House and Bristol House encompass many of the period features. The Bristol house is a five bay, wood frame house with a hipped roof and flat, double hung windows. An eclectic aspect of the house is the classical porch over the front door. The Rice House is a massive three bay, clapboard structure with a hipped roof, double hung sash windows and side lights around the front entrance. A distinctively classically inspired porch over the front entrance and two side wings is typical of the eclectic nature of this style. Both of the twentieth century civic buildings in the hamlet were designed in the Colonial Revival style. The Claverack Elementary school is a one story, brick structure with Georgian massing and neo-classical porch. Built in 1932, the library invokes a more colonial, vernacular feel with its clapboard, one story, two bay main section with a wing. The front facade features a Greek Revival style porch.

### **Bungalow Style**

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resources  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number F Page 16

---

The Bungalow style became quite popular in the early twentieth century. Usually this Craftsman inspired house form consists of a one and one-half story structure with a low-pitched sloping roof line which is incorporated into a porch. These roofs often support shed dormers. Bungalows were constructed of clapboard, stone, stucco and brick.

A number of examples of this highly popular early twentieth century house type can be found in Claverack, particularly at the western end of Route 23 B. These economical small homes they could easily have housed the growing numbers of cement plant workers living in the community after 1915.

### III. Significance

Claverack's history and economic development over the past three hundred is reflected in the variety of architecture located in the hamlet. A respect for tradition, history and culture has led to the reuse, adaptation and preservation of many structures. In most cases properties satisfy Criterion C as intact, representative examples of specific styles. A few properties, such as the Old Courthouse, Ludlow house, William Bay house and Cornelius S. Muller house may also meet the requirements for Criterion A for significance in the early development of the hamlet.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resources  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number F Page 17

---

I. Name of the Property Type  
**Industrial Structures**

II. Description

Although the economic base of Claverack was more closely associated with agriculture there were related industries and transportation systems that were important to the hamlet's history. The early industries including asheries, distilleries and grist mills are no longer in operation. Little physical evidence remains of these businesses with the exception of the Red Mills complex. Grist mill operations continued here until the 1960s leaving the nineteenth century buildings, mill races and pond intact. The mills built by Robert Van Rensselaer and enlarged by his son Jacob Rutsen Van Rensselaer have been listed in the National Register along with the Jacob's Federal style home adjacent to the mills.

One of the most important economic resources in the hamlet from 1839 until the 1950s was the Boston and Albany railroad. The passenger station built ca. 1850 is still extant. On the same property are the three main buildings of the Bristol Brothers feed and grain complex. The buildings presently house Sotheby's Restorations which has carefully preserved the barn, warehouse and hay scale. Across from the railroad station along Maple Avenue are several houses which in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century housed stores and small craft shops.

III Significance

Claverack's settlement and development was achieved as a center for the transportation and processing of agricultural products. The railroad station, grist mill and grain buildings graphically illustrate this interconnection. The railroad station's siting was the major impetus for the relocation of most of the hamlet's businesses after the closing of the county courthouse. Finally easy and affordable transportation allowed Claverack to continue as a home for professionals.

This physical manifestation of Claverack's industry are eligible under Criterion A as important pattern of the hamlet. The buildings are also suitable under Criterion C as fine examples of the 19th century warehouses, business office and railroad station.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resources  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number F Page 18

---

I. Name of the Property Type  
**Religious Properties**

II Description

Religious properties include the two church structures and cemetery located within the hamlet's boundaries. The parsonages were considered under residential architecture.

The earliest and most important church in the hamlet is the Reformed Church Church built in 1767. Constructed of brick and timber, the church is an excellent example of early Georgian architecture. The nave of the church is flanked by two wings built in the nineteenth century creating a cruciform design. Sited on a hill to the north of the hamlet crossroads the building is an imposing feature. The other church structure, the Trinity Episcopal Church, was built much later in 1901. Although presently, used as a residence, the exterior of the structure retains its original ecclesiastical form. In contrast to the large impressive Reformed Church Church, the Episcopal Church is a more modest structure built in the in the Arts and Crafts style.

The Claverack cemetery is situated behind the Reformed Dutch Church and, like the church, dates from 1767. Hundred of headstones and statutes are scattered across the hillside. The older markers are made of native stone and feature death angels and similar designs. Later graves are decorated with marble obelisks and granite gravestones.

III Significance

Claverack religious properties are important resources of the hamlet's cultural and social development. The churches symbolize the religious orientation, ethnic background, diversity, and cultural traditions of the community. The Reformed Church Church congregation were the creators of Washington Seminary and Claverack College an extremely important cultural institution. A change in the social, cultural and economic status is reflected in the establishment of the Trinity Church.

The cemetery is located behind the Reformed Church Church. There are graves dating from the eighteenth century to the present. Many important figures in Claverack's history including Rev. Gebhard, Harriet Fulton Dale (widow of Robert Fulton), Jacob Rutsen Van Rensselaer, Robert Ludlow, William W. Van Ness and Alonzo Flack are buried here.

The properties in this category must be related to one of the four defined contexts. They are eligible under Criterion C and the Reformed Dutch Church under Criterion A. The cemetery satisfies requirements under Criterion D.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resources  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number G Page 19

---

#### **Geographical Data**

The geographic boundaries for the hamlet of Claverack have been selected based on traditionally accepted boundaries. Although Claverack has never been an incorporated municipality the hamlet is often referred to as a hamlet. East, west and south limits are determined by the Claverack creek which encircles the hamlet on three sides. These boundaries also mark the end of residential groupings. To the north two properties have been historically linked as the northern most border on historical maps - the Reformed Church cemetery or the Van Ness farm. For our purposes we have chosen the latter property known as "Talavera" as the northern most boundary. By using the farther border the project encompasses several late nineteenth century groupings of residential homes and an important fruit orchard. The Van Ness family has owned the land since the eighteenth century and they were influential in Claverack's settlement. These boundaries therefore are historically and architecturally significant.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resources  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number H Page 20

---

#### **Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

The multiple property listing for the Historic and Architectural Resources of the Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County, New York developed from an initial reconnaissance survey begun in 1975/76. At this time a Bicentennial Commission for the Town of Claverack completed an inventory of residential properties built before 1850 that existed in the town. A history of the town including the hamlet of Claverack and a listing of houses were published in 1976 and then reprinted a decade later.

About the time of the reprinting of the booklet, Claverack lost an important historic house - the John Bay House - which was moved to another town. Citizens in the hamlet concerned about the future of other historic buildings began another inventory of properties. This survey included structures within the geographic boundaries of this multiple property listing which were important to the development of the hamlet from European settlement until the early 20th century.

This multiple property listing is built upon the two former surveys. The intent of this project is to formally submit to the National Register historically and architecturally significant structures which reflect the social and cultural development of the community.

Properties listed illustrate the changing social, economic and cultural development of Claverack as detailed in the four historic contexts. Each building selected is an excellent example of a given architectural style under the requirements of Criterion C. Some properties are also historically significant as described under Criterion A, B and D. All the buildings retain their architectural integrity and reflect the original use of the structure. The compilation of these buildings create a physical manifestation of the 300 year history of Claverack hamlet.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

The Architectural and Historic Resources  
Hamlet of Claverack, Columbia County,

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number I Page 21

---

### Major Bibliographical References

Blackburn, Roderic and Piwonka, Ruth. A Visible Heritage Kinderhook, New York: Columbia County Historical Society. 1975.

Columbia County at the End of the Century. Two volumes. Hudson: 1900.

Ellis, Captain Franklin. History of Columbia County. Philadelphia: Everts & Ensign. 1878.

Miller, Stephen B. Sketches of Hudson. Hudson, New York: Hendrick Hudson Chapter of DAR. reprint. 1985.

Schram, Margaret. Claverack Township: The History and Heritage. Claverack, New York: Town of Claverack Historical Society, 1976. reprinted. 1983.

Webb, F.H. Claverack, Old and New. Claverack, New York: private published. 1892.

### Unpublished Sources

Stott, Peter. *Industrial Archaeology in Columbia County, New York*. unpublished. written for Columbia County Historical Society. 1990.

Vertical Subject Files on Claverack at Columbia County Historical Society.

Vertical Subject Files on Claverack at Claverack Library.

### Maps

Beers, Ellis & Co. Atlas of Columbia County. Philadelphia: 1873.

Beers, Ellis & Co. Atlas of Columbia County. Philadelphia: 1888.

Penfield, Daniel. *Map of leases formerly of Van Rensselaer Manor*. 1799.