Stuyvesant Falls

The history and landscape of the Stuyvesant Falls hamlet were shaped by the waters of Kinderhook Creek, which provided power for textile mills and the Albany-Hudson electric trolley line.

Textile Mills

Kinderhook Creek drops seventy feet at Stuyvesant Falls, the site of an early woolen mill established in 1800 by William Van Hoesen. James Wardle built a stone cotton mill here in 1827, and in 1841 Van Allen & Company bought that mill and built the brick mill next to it in 1845. By 1878 the Van Allen mill employed over two hundred workers and made one hundred thousand yards of cotton cloth a week. Successor owner Frisbee Manufacturing Company sold cloth to the US government during World War I. Textile production ended after the stock market crash of 1929.

Electrical Power

In 1900, the Albany & Hudson Railway & Power Company built a thirty-seven-mile-long rail line powered by an electrified third rail. Albany & Hudson built a hydroelectric generating plant at the Van Hoesen mill site, diverting water from the upper falls through 4,200-foot-long penstock tubes to spin turbines connected to generators. Steam power was used at times of low water. The plant generated three kinds of electrical current: 12,000-volt, 25-cycle AC for the rail line delivered by high-tension lines to substations at Hudson, East Greenbush, and North Chatham and stepped down to 600 volts and converted to DC; 600-volt DC power for the rail line near the plant; and 2,200-volt, 60-cycle AC for streetlights at Hudson, Rensselaer, and communities along the line. After rail service stopped in 1929, Niagara Mohawk Company generated electricity at the plant until 1993. Restored by a private generating company in 2012, it now produces fifteen million kilowatt-hours a year.

Van Allen Mills

Built in 1837 and 1845, the Van Allen mill complex, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, among the most picturesque pre-Civil War industrial sites in New York. Source: Town of Stockport / Alice Engel.

Generator Installation

Electrical contractors are shown installing General Electric Company generators in the Albany & Hudson Railway & Power Company hydroelectric power plant in 1900. Source: Albany Engineering Corporation.

Electrical Power

The Albany & Hudson Railway & Power Company built this electrical generating plant here in 1900 to power its thirty-seven-mile Albany-Hudson rail line and illuminate streets in towns along the way. Source: Albany Engineering Corporation.

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This 1878 engraving shows the Van Allen cotton mills at left, and at lower right the Van Hoesen cotton mills, where the Albany & Hudson Railway & Power Company built its hydroelectric plant in 1900. Source: Franklin Olin, History of Columbia County, New York, 1878.