Stockport Hamlet

The history and landscape of the Stockport hamlet were shaped by the waters of Stockport and Claverack Creeks, which provided power for textile mills for over a century.

The Textile Industry

Before 1800, Columbia County’s small streams powered gristmills and sawmills supplying local needs. Trade restriction acts in 1806–1807 and the War of 1812 interrupted British cloth imports. Columbia County entrepreneurs then built textile mills powered by waterfalls on swift creeks flowing to Hudson River shipping ports. This area was a major textile producer until well after the Civil War. By the mid-1900s, most mills closed in the face of cheap southern US labor, foreign competition, and synthetic materials.

Upper Falls Mills

In 1809, Seth Macy built a woolen mill here on Claverack Creek that ran until about 1817. In 1825, Benjamin and Joseph Marshall of Lancashire, England, established the Hudson Print Works here to make printed cotton cloth. By 1836 they employed a large workforce living in a village nicknamed “Huddersfield” after the Lancashire textile mill town. The mill closed in the financial Panic of 1837.

Empire Loom Works

In 1852, Rensselaer Reynolds established his Empire Loom Works here. Reynolds was born in 1807 in Valatie, New York, where he was apprenticed to mill owner Nathan Wild. Reynolds was a mechanical genius who patented a high-speed cloth-weaving loom that dramatically increased productivity. His works built 150 looms a month, mostly for export to other countries, including Austria, England, and Mexico. Reynolds died in 1872, and his four sons carried on the business, which dwindled until 1900, when the mill was sold and converted to yarn production before eventually being demolished.