

Historical Tour of Downtown Hudson

Hudson's downtown represents a good example of a 19th to early 20th century mill community. Little from those days remains now but a stroll around the main streets will reveal the early town layout. The three defining moments in time for Hudson are the laying out of the first road at the dam from Marlboro (1699) across the Assabet River (where Washington Street now crosses); the incorporation of the town in 1866, and the Great Fire of 1894. This fire cleared all the buildings around the rotary and eastward almost to the Town Hall. These fires seemed to plague most towns in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The tour begins at the South Street parking lot (the star is #1) and proceeds west to the Washington St dam, up to the Armory, north along the west side of the Rotary to the Library & Fire Station and then across to the east side of the Rotary, along the north side of Main Street. There are various points of interest as we walk along past the Town Hall, the Unitarian Church to Broad Street. Then right (south) along Broad to the South Street Extension and west to the beginning at the parking lot.

The total length is one mile, an easy walk which illustrates some of Hudson's most iconic and handsome buildings.

Also there are the several excellent Images of America series of books (Arcadia Publishing) that contain early pictures of Hudson. These are written by Lew Halprin & the Hudson Historical Society. Hudson (1999); Hudson, Post Card History Series (2008). There is another book in the series, Hudson's National Guard Militia by William Verdone, (2005) that deals with the Armory and the units who were stationed there over the years.

The numbers at each location correlate with the attached map.



Tannery Brook flood on Main Street 1930s

The Hudson Historical Society was formed in 1916 to capture the fascinating history of the town. The Society has a large collection of artifacts, print and digital materials. Ellen Busch is the genial and knowledgeable Curator and David Bonazzoli, Historian of the Society. All are welcome.

Hudson Mill Building 43 Broad Street,
4th floor, Room c-402
Hours: Tuesdays 2 - 4 PM
10 - Noon on the 1st Saturday of the month
HudsonHistoricalSociety.org.

*This walking tour was developed by Richard Gelpke
with able assistance from David Bonazzoli and
Lorene Jean, Hudson Art & Framing.
Printed by Nashoba Blue.*

Second Printing



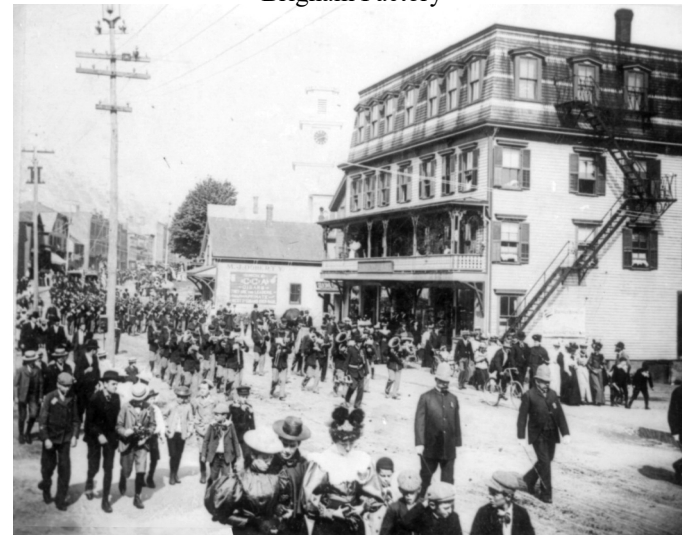
Solon Wood Dry Good Store



Knight Fuel



Brigham Factory



Main Street Parade 1900

Selected dates in Hudson's History

- 1660 Marlboro becomes a Town
- 1674 Marlboro has 10 families
- 1698 John Barnes builds grist mill, north bank of Assabet River (now at Washington St)
- 1700 Joseph Howe owns mill
Marlboro builds first road to mill at dam
- 1711 John Barstow owns mill
- 1723 Robert Barnard owns mill
- 1790 First store, "old red house" (Lewis Block site, ODD fellows building)
- 1794 Joel Cranston store & tavern at ODD Fellows site
- 1799 Silas Felton & Joel Cranston in business
Tannery begins on Tannery Brook
- 1800 Feltonville (now Hudson), 13 dwellings & 100 inhabitants
- 1816 Daniel Stratton begins shoe factory
- 1820 14 dwellings, 1 public house, grist, cotton & cloth mills
- 1841 Jedidiah Wood's son builds at Wood Square
- 1843 Brigham starts shoe 'factory' on Main Street
Stephen Pope buys land at Market & South Streets area, develops Tannery
- 1848 Marlboro Branch, Fitchburg Railroad reaches Hudson
- 1857 Brigham builds Factory at dam
- 1860 Feltonville (now Hudson) has 1,000 residents
- 1860s Civil War era—Company I, 5th Regiment with 49 men formed Agitation for new town begins, to be split from Marlborough
South Street tenements built
Great demand for shoes, Hudson factories develop & expand
- 1865 Trowbridge builds at Wood Square
- 1866 Hudson incorporates; population at 1800
- 1868 Population 2,600, part of Bolton annexed
- 1872 Town Hall built; Japanese delegation visits shoe factories
- 1875 Population of Hudson reaches 3,493
- 1880 Joseph Bradley shoe factory, Main & Tannery Brook site
- 1881 Central Mass Railroad reaches Hudson
- 1882 Larkin Lumber begins
- 1885 Goodyear Gossamer (later Goodyear Rubber) established at the dam
- July 4, 1894 The Great Fire**
- 1895 Much of the destroyed downtown rebuilt in brick
Town buys Solon Wood's land, becomes the Rotary
First trolley arrives
- 1900 Hudson had 7500 residents
Fire Station No. 1 built at Wood Square
- 1900-23 Concord, Maynard & Hudson trolley line operates
- 1904 Present Library built
- 1910 Armory built on site of Marshall Wood's home (Washington & Park)
- 1911 Methodist Church (site of Hudson Pawnbroker-Main & South St) burns
- 1916 Hudson celebrates 50th Anniversary and Hudson Historical Society forms.
- 1920 Hudson Movie theater opens on Pope Street
- 1935 Chase Block burns
- 1951 Jeff's Block (Murphy Insurance on Main Street) suffers major fire
- 1966 Hudson celebrates 100th Anniversary

Hudson Historical Walking Tour



Wood Square circa 1900

Hudson, Massachusetts 1866—2016 150th Celebration

*This area was also known as
Indian Plantation, Cow Commons,
The Mills, New City and Feltonville*

History, architecture and exercise
together—
what could be better?

Walk and learn more about our town.

- 1. South Street Parking Lot** - Site of five story shoe factory building. In 1890 it was Thomas Logan Shoe factory, then Brigham & Gregory Shoe and Ascutney Shoe. Burned 1971.
- 2. Horseshoe Pub** - In 1832, this was a home on Main Street near the Town Hall and one of Hudson's oldest buildings. Moved here prior to 1880, the pub is built around the original structure.
- 3. AMVETS Post 205** - Built as freight house for the Electric Street Railway facing Washington Street on gas station site. Turned on its present site in the 1930's.
- 4. Washington Street** - Built by Marlborough in 1699 to connect with the mill at the river; hence, Hudson was called *The Mills*: it is the earliest road in Hudson.
- 5. Assabet River** - The key to Hudson. A natural location for a dam with higher ground sloping up on both sides. The Assabet River joins the Sudbury River to form the Concord River in Concord, MA.
- 6. The Washington St. Bridge Dam** - Originally a 'brush dam' with industrial buildings on the four corners. In 1877, Capt. Francis Brigham's Shoe factories and a Grist Mill, now the site of two gas stations. Across the river (now occupied by McDonald's) was P. E. Millay, a last (shoe form) manufacturer. On Robinson's site was Brigham's Saw Mill, then Hudson Worsted Co., followed by the Hudson Counter Company (shoe backs). The Counter Company burned in 1913, rebuilt in 1916 and included the Hudson Batting Company. In the late 1950s it was succeeded by W.T. Grant Co. - now Robinson's Hardware.
- 7. McDonald's** - Around 1900 this site was home to a paper box factory and steam laundry building. It was a wheelwright building and then became Broad's Garage (1916 -1970s).
- 8. Hudson House** - An early fire station was here. In the second half of 1900s it was Manny's Café. In 2002 it became Harvest Café and recently became Hudson House Restaurant.
- 9. Hudson Armory** - Original site of Marshall Wood 1832-97 home. A classic State Armory building, built in 1910 at a cost of \$4,000. MVM over the front door stands for *Massachusetts Volunteer Militia*. This is a medieval Gothic style castle projecting strength and authority.
- 10. Robinson's Hardware** - Site of the Hudson Worsted Company; one of the largest wool combing factories in the country; bought by Henry Dyson in 1895 and later moved to Broad Street. Norman Underwood moved Robinson's Hardware from 29 Main Street here in 1974.
- 11. Chamberlain Building** - This building, recently renovated, replaced the Trowbridge Shoe factory where the Great Fire of July 4, 1894 started in the rear. The fire burned 40 buildings over 5 acres causing at least a half million dollar loss.
- 12. Solon Wood Dry Good Store** - Wood Square still bears the name. Wood's store occupied the center (then called Feltonville). It was a central meeting place providing all kinds of essential goods. Six months after the fire, Solon Wood had erected the Wood building. The Town paid Wood \$10,000 for his previous location (now the rotary). From 1895-1928 Wood Square was the focus of three electric street car lines. Connections were available to Concord, Clinton and Southborough and from there to Boston & Worcester. The first house in "the Mills" was that of Robert Barnard in 1723 near here.
- 13. Liberty Park** - Site of the Atkinson house. A handsome structure burned in the Great Fire. The land was purchased by the Town in 1915 and commemorates soldiers from the wars.
- 14. Hudson Public Library** - The library was built in 1904 for \$25,000 from the Carnegie Foundation (which contributed to many libraries around the country) and \$500 from Charles Hudson who "gave" his name to the Town. Hudson Fire Station 1 is next to the Library and is Hudson's first modern (1900) fire station built for \$14,000.



- 15. R.B. Lewis Home** - 1 Lincoln Street & Apartments (2-8 Main Street) Lewis, a widely known photographer, developed these three adjacent buildings (home, apartments & commercial building). His home, a recently restored 1877 handsome Victorian (with a carriage house in the rear) survived the Great Fire of 1894. The apartment building and corner building did not.
- 16. ODD Fellows Building** - The first store in The Mills (1794) called The Little Red Store built by Joel Cranston, was at the west end of this building. The second building on this site was destroyed by the Great Fire along with Lewis's extensive photo collection. In the present building (1894), L..D. Carpenter began a long running pharmacy in the corner store—now Hudson Art & Framing. Lewis's studio, a dentist and the ODD Fellows occupied the rest of the building.
- 17. Wood Building or New City Microcreamery** - Site of Cox's Tavern (1842), one of the town's earliest.; also the location of the first meetings of the Baptist & Unitarian Societies. By the 1860's, the Mansion House Hotel was here. During the Civil War the 3rd floor was a "Drill Hall" for Co. I, 5th Regiment.
- 18. Avidia Bank & adjacent Holden Building.** The earliest building here was Lorenzo Stratton's house (1834), lasting until the Great Fire of 1894. It was dynamited to prevent the burning of the structures across Pope Street - a bank in the Jeffs Block and the adjacent Town House (Town Hall).
- 19. Cochran Building & Lawrence Building** - These distinct but similar buildings (1894) are styled "Renaissance Revival". Before the Great Fire, F. Brigham owned the site; it housed Hudson's first bank, the Savings Bank (1873-1881), the first library in town, and the Union War Veterans organization (the Grand Army of the Republic).
- 20. Chase Building** - H.L. Chase from Holden, Mass, started a grocery business on this site. After the 1884 fire, a three story structure was built in its place, it also burned in 1935.
- 21. Wright's Jewelry-Underwood Building** - Built by Underwood in the 1860s, it was used as a newsroom, a variety store and a dwelling. This structure barely survived the Great Fire which burned all the buildings closer to the Rotary.
- 22. Hudson House Hotel** - An early hotel (1870); in a jocular 1906 ad, Fred Sawyer, proprietor, was labeled as "the tightest-fisted man in Massachusetts" and the hotel as "noted far and wide for its hard beds, tough steaks and poor cooking"; also "having a nice brook in

- the rear of the hotel in which patrons can bathe after dark. The only second class hotel in New England". The livery stables fronting on South Street still exist as the Professional Building.
- 23. Jeffs Block** - Site F. D. Brigham home in 1832, which was moved to South Street and became the nucleus of the present Horseshoe Pub. The three story Jeff's Block was constructed here in 1873. Several devastating fires occurred to this building which is now a two story building.
 - 24. Hudson Town Hall** This Victorian Second Empire structure (1872 for \$50,000) on the site of Stephen Pope's lot bought for \$10,000. Movies and plays were shown in the 2nd floor auditorium. The Police Station (now Town Clerk's office) was on the first floor left. The right side of the first floor was the Hudson National Bank (appropriately enough where the Town Treasurer & tax office is now located). A band stand sat on the front lawn for many years. In 2015 a memorial to former Governor Paul Cellucci, a Hudson resident, was established on the lawn.
 - 25. Rice Block, also The Old Block or Freedman's Block** - Directly across from the Town Hall was The Old Block, built in 1834 and destroyed by fire in 1880 at a \$30,000 loss. Originally a tenement building; the present brick building was constructed in 1884. N. Freedman, a dry goods store, occupied the center section and was a Hudson fixture.
 - 26. Lucia's** - It is thought a stage coach barn was here by the 1840s with an old tannery to the east. Edgar Lucia began operations in 1888 and carried all types of drugs and compounded prescriptions. One of the best known pharmacies in Hudson especially for its 'museum quality' interior. Even though "Lucia" appears in brick at 91 Main Street (Hudson Cleaners), his pharmacy was in the adjacent wooden building at 95 Main)
 - 27. Hudson Pawnbrokers** - This was the site of the Methodist Church until 1911 when it was destroyed by fire. Known to long time Hudson residents as the site of Aubuchon's Hardware.
 - 28. Unitarian Church** - Constructed in 1861 in Victorian style (for \$4500) displaying a mansard roof with dormers and a three-sided clock tower. It is said Mark Twain (writer and humorist) and William Lloyd Garrison (abolitionist) spoke here.

- 29. Tannery Brook** - Flowing from Bruce's Pond, it was the water for the tannery; it flowed south across Main Street flooding the street and adjacent businesses many times in early days.
- 30. Domino's Pizza** - Larkin Lumber, one of Hudson's oldest continuous businesses, (1882-2015) and run as a family operation, occupied much of this area. Frequent flooding from Tannery Brook occurred here along with several major fires in 1992 & 1997.
- 31. Bradley Mill - Webster's Mill** - (1 Houghton Street) Now an empty lot behind T. C. Lando's. A large five story building here had many owners. The Fuller Company began an electric station in a rear three story building (1885); bought by the Town and became the Hudson Light & Power Department (1897). The most recent occupant was the well-known Webster's Shoe factory, it was once a visible reminder of how important shoe making was in the development of Hudson.
- 32. Building containing Law Office, Moira & Frias (145 Main St) & Northeast Academy of Martial Arts** This small building occupies a site formerly a large shoe factory. By 1888 George Houghton's Building housed a number of small shops; offices, produce shop, pool room & barber. The building burned to the ground in January 1904.
- 33. Peking Garden.** This site has been occupied by a lunch cart/diner since the late 1800s. It is now a Chinese restaurant. The Hudson Diner (built by Worcester Lunch Car Company in 1946) moved to Hudson in 1950 from Marlborough where it was Lamy's Diner on the corner of Main & Maple Streets. It moved to Dearborn, Michigan in 1984 to become part of Henry Ford's Greenfield Village Museum.
- 34. Knight Fuel Company** - Knight came to Hudson in 1880. He started this business in 1899 and move to this location in the 1920's. They had a spur track and coal shed on the west side of the rail line.
- 35. Hudson Appliance** - The site of Houghton's Shoe factory. A large factory with an ell (moved from across the street in 1863). There was a grassed park with a fountain on the corner. This was later the site of the Miller & Hudson Drug Company and then Toohey Pharmacy. In the adjacent building was the Bar Lunch with a dance studio above.
- 36. Flax Block** - In the late 1800s, George Davis ran a bakery and a grain business here. Two tracks of the Marlborough Branch of the Fitchburg RR ran through this site—the Lancaster RR which ran only one time and the other track was a short spur track to the Larkin Lumber Co.
- 37. H. LaRosee & Sons** - Dominating Tavares Square (commemorating the first Portuguese immigrant to Hudson); originally the Jeff's Shoe factory (1880) along the Marlborough branch of the Fitchburg Railroad. In 1890 it was reported 140 mill hands produced 2,000 pairs of shoes and 'balmorals' (also called Oxfords) daily.
- 38. Dunn & Green Tannery** - The largest single industrial site along this walk. No remnants of this remain. It occupied all the area from Houghton to South Street and behind the shops on Main Street to the River. Tanning was a complex process requiring separate buildings with associated drying areas and a flowing water source for the vats and washing and disposal of the effluent. The company had offices in Boston. Edward H. Dunn (1826-1906) was a prominent Boston political, religious and business figure in Boston and president of the Boston University Corporation. It is now Cellucci Park.