



This 1965 photo of the waterfront shows the entire central shoreline of built-up Newburgh. A group of Mount Saint Mary College graduate business students are creating a business plan to pitch a documentary that will chronicle the history of the region.

Photo provided by the City of Newburgh.

Mount Saint Mary students pitching documentary on Newburgh

Getting financing is their MBA project

By Wayne A. Hall
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Newburgh — If only cameras had caught Henry Hudson sailing up the Hudson in his sturdy little ship in 1609 — and then followed what happened over the next 400 years to the Newburgh Bay region.

It's an epic filled with steamboats, high rollers, dreamers and doers, and empire building.

How would you compress all that history into a 60-minute documentary? Answering that question is the job of a group of Mount Saint Mary College graduate business students.

The group must come up with the documentary's business plan — the pitch for money — for their research seminar master's degree project.

Their goal: Turn this saga into a sellable business plan for an estimated \$100,000 documentary.

It won't be just any old documentary, either. It's going to be in the style of famed filmmaker Ken Burns, whose documentaries about the Civil War and baseball were triumphs.

"We've got tons of research to do," says award-winning media consultant and former Mount Saint Mary professor J.C. Barone. He's getting his new students at Western Connecticut State University into the Newburgh act. If the business students are successful in selling the plan, Barone will be responsible for getting the wheels turning on the project.

There are already some possible funding sources, such as the Provident Bank Foundation.

A bank official said the Mount's film project is "certainly something to be interested in." The foundation has just received a request to fund part of the project.

Also, the City of Newburgh's Quadricentennial Committee has applied for a \$50,000 grant from the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Commission.

So how do you sell this documentary? The possibilities are rampant, but they have to make good business plan sense.

Told in chapters, this documentary will include the area's business growth from 1609. It will follow two generations of musicians, composers and music and dance instructors, the Alsdorfs, descended from a Town of Newburgh slave.

Part of the students' task is to "show why it's needed," says Moira Tolan, Mount MBA coordinator.

For sure, this is no typical MBA research paper. It's got to sell lenders and givers on the idea. From script development to production costs to insurance and film rights.

"This is fun, it's real world," said Susan Unger, 50, who commutes from Norwalk, Conn., and is a Xerox financial analyst.

"I tell them this is not a project you're going to forget," said Barone.

Henry Hudson might have said the same thing to his crew.

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