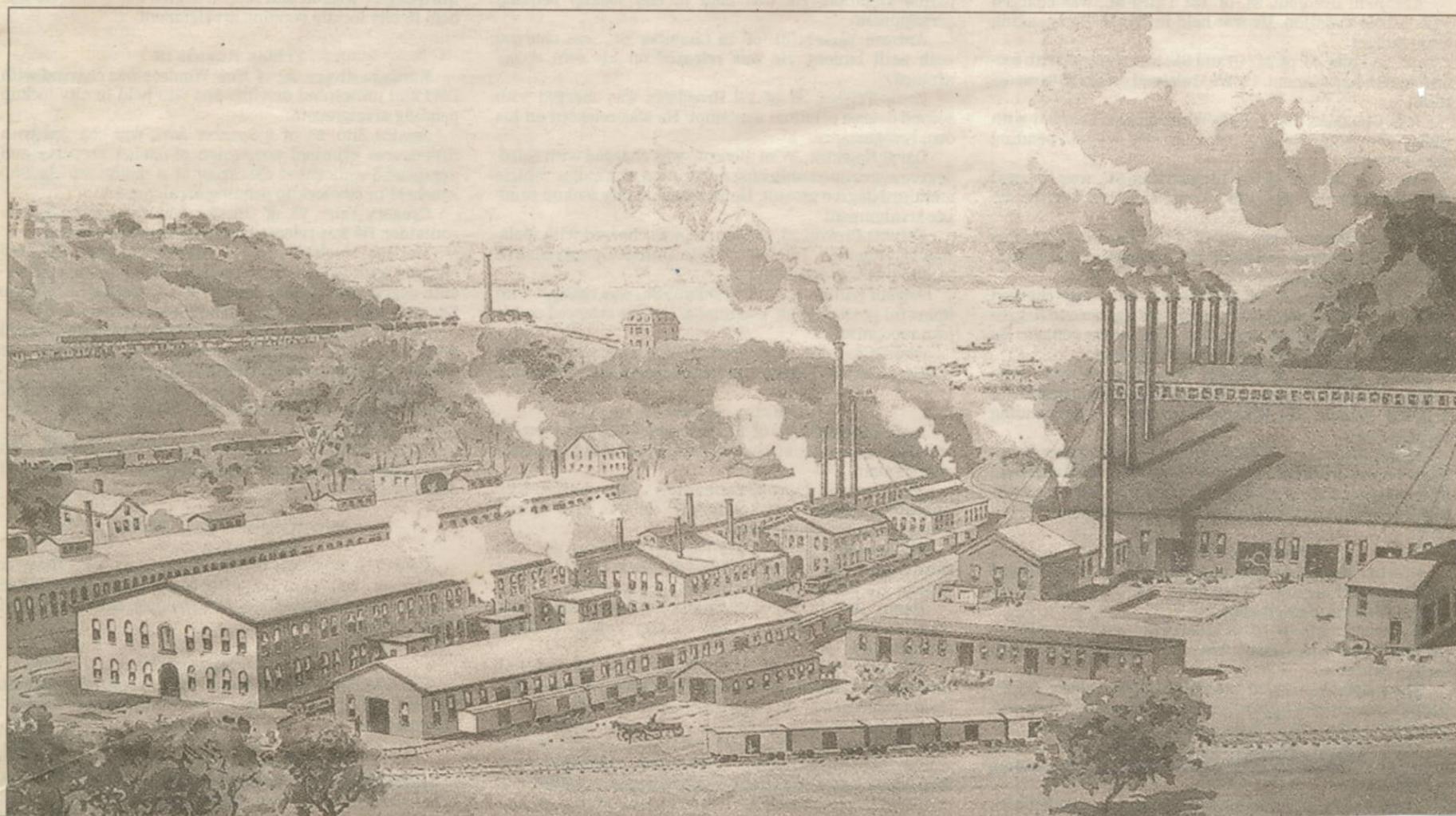


NEWBURGH HERITAGE

Newburgh's industrial heyday



This watercolor shows the extent of the Kilmer Wire Works manufacturers of wire, nails, ornamental fencing and iron rods. It is now the site of American Felt & Filter

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While working with groups interested in developing a scenic walking trail along the Quassaick Creek corridor, I researched the industries that once thrived along that fast-moving creek at Newburgh's southern border. It was stunning to discover that more than 600 people were employed in the factories and mills that lined the creek. Now only American Felt and Filter operates a manufacturing plant there. Long gone are the grist mills, paper mills, woolen mills, foundries and other enterprises to which men and women walked each morning carrying their lunch pails.

Diamond Candle Company's big smokestack still peeks up from the thick forest even though a devastating fire destroyed the candle factory many of us remember operating just under Bridge Street east of Robinson Avenue.

It is eerie to walk along the creek today and imagine the voices of all those who drove wagons and hoisted bales and unloaded boxcars and stacked crates. My 98-year-old mother in law told me how long ago she took lunch to her father at his job at Turl Iron Works down along the New Windsor river-

front. She walked down along the Quassaick Creek from the border of Newburgh and New Windsor's

"Ducktown" or, as she prefers to call it, "Clancyville." I have taken that nostalgic walk through the creek trails and other streets in Newburgh's old manufacturing neighborhoods more than once with my friends Russ and Allyn Lange. They are both historians whose specialties are industrial history and maritime history and their knowledge of how much was once produced in our community is fascinating.

100 years ago Newburgh had a Board of Trade. That was an association of businessmen who came together to promote

their own businesses and also attract other businesses because they knew that adding to Newburgh's mix of enterprises benefitted everyone. Articles they contributed to publications around the turn of the last century paint a picture of a thriving Newburgh known worldwide for its quality products. In the 1880s for example, 350 men were employed by one shipbuilding company along the Hudson, 200 men in a steam engine company at the foot of North Street, 100 men in a foundry at the corner of

Grand and Broadway, 300 men at the Pennsylvania Coal Yards along the Quassaick Creek, 440 men and women in the six local woolen mills, 350 men and women at the Sweet-Orr overall factory, and many more industries employing hundreds of hands making products like lawn mowers, boilers, folding chairs, brushes, train wheels and wire.



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