



# **Main Street to Mainframes: Landscape and Social Change in Poughkeepsie (SUNY series, An American Region: Studies in the Hudson Valley)**

*Harvey K. Flad, Clyde Griffen*

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*Tells the story of Poughkeepsie's transformation from small city to urban region.*

The history of growth, decline, and revitalization in Poughkeepsie, New York, parallels that of many other small northeastern cities. *Main Street to Mainframes* tells the story of Poughkeepsie's transformation over the past three centuries—from an agricultural market town, to a small city with a diversified economy centered on Main Street, to an urban region dependent on the success of one corporation—and how this transformation has affected the lives and landscape of its inhabitants. As it adjusted to major changes in agriculture, transportation, and industry, Poughkeepsie was also shaped by the forces and tensions of immigration and race. The voices of immigrant and migrant newcomers, from the Germans, Irish, and African Americans of the nineteenth century to the Italians, Poles, and Latinos of the twentieth, enliven the narrative and offer personal perspectives on the social and demographic shifts that have taken place over the years. The book also places Poughkeepsie in the context of the mid-Hudson Valley's other cities—Kingston, Newburgh, and Hudson—as they competed from the colonial period onward. Finally, the book examines recent revitalization efforts based on tourism, culture, and the arts.

More than just a local history, *Main Street to Mainframes* addresses important issues in urban and regional planning, community development, and sociology. Like a palimpsest, Poughkeepsie shows how past landscapes live on in the present, and how, over time, popular perceptions both shape and reflect urban and rural realities.

“...remarkably informative ... The book is an engaging read ... [and] perhaps the best handbook to my hometown.” — Jerome Hodos, *Journal of Regional Science*

“...[Flad and Griffen's] thoroughness, careful research, and cogent writing offer the serious student of historical-urban geography and urban landscapes a useful and interesting evaluation of Poughkeepsie and the central Hudson Valley. The utility of this volume will last for a long time ... this volume adds much to the literature on small city development, landscape change, and historical geographic studies of American places. Many should read this volume.” — *Pennsylvania Geographer*

“With an intimate knowledge of the region, [the authors] have compiled a detailed account of their hometown and the surrounding mid-Hudson River valley hinterland ... Flad and Griffen chronicle some of the most important trends that have affected not only Poughkeepsie but other older cities in the northern United States.” — *Journal of American History*

“...an ambitious examination of Poughkeepsie and the broader Mid-Hudson region in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries ... Flad and Griffen bring to their study a devotion to Poughkeepsie as community and shared landscape and present a compelling argument for why understanding history is essential to shaping a more inclusive society and economy in the decades to come.” — *Hudson River Valley Review*

“...a thoughtful, comprehensive portrait of Poughkeepsie’s growth from colonial outpost to thriving waterfront city...” — Chronogram

“This is a profoundly important book, a model community history from a cross-disciplinary perspective that concentrates on the transformations of the land and the built environment. It is also timely. It makes clear that, in Poughkeepsie’s case at least, revitalization has just entered an important phase.” — Field Horne, Conference on New York State History

At Vassar College, Harvey K. Flad is Professor Emeritus of Geography, and Clyde Griffen is Lucy Maynard Salmon Professor Emeritus of American History. Griffen’s previous books include *Natives and Newcomers: The Ordering of Opportunity in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Poughkeepsie* (with Sally Griffen) and *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (coedited with Mark C. Carnes).

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