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Hudson Valley

BUSINESS JOURNAL

Part Twenty- One

The golden age of Hudson ferry service

As we move through this quadricentennial year of celebrating Henry Hudson's exploration of the Hudson River, Samuel de Champlain's exploration of Lake Champlain and the bicentennial of Robert Fulton's successful steamboat run on the Hudson, we thought it might be fun to take a look at the economic history behind these events. The series is a synopsis of a forthcoming book I'm working on the subject.

BY Debbie Kwiatoski

More than 100 separate ferry routes have been established - and faded to oblivion - on the Hudson River over the past 400 years. A few survive today, making the trek between New York City and New Jersey or New York and Staten Island, along with new seasonal services established mainly to attract tourists to communities like Beacon or the Kingston Rondout. But, during their heyday in the early part of the 20th century, ferries were a crucial link between the east side of the river and the west. The bridges had yet to be built and, without them, the region would never have developed into the economic engine it became.

For the better part of a couple of centuries, the Hudson River ferries not only demonstrated the power to cost-effectively move both goods and people between its two shores, they spurred technological innovation ranging from the practical development of the steam engine to mechanical cable operations and streamlined boat design.

As we learned last week in last week's segment, the first ferries across the Hudson were informal, simple affairs, consisting of a man with a boat (and the power to move it from one bank to another) and a merchant or traveler willing to pay a fee to cross. There were no schedules or timetables and what could be car-



ried was severely limited - until the era of cable systems, actual horsepower, and flat bottomed, stable, commodious boats.

By the mid-1800s, however, all that had changed and there were regular ferry services running across the Hudson in key places, from Albany to New York - north and south, as well as just east and west. In 1871, the Weehawken ferry route (which ran until 1959) was purchased from Samuel Bayard by the New Jersey Midland Railway. In 1884, together with three other local railway companies, they opened the Weehawken Terminal, not far from the site where Aaron Burr killed Alexander Hamilton decades earlier). In its heyday, the terminal was base camp for five ferry slips, along with 16 passenger rail tracks and, by 1927, the line regularly carried 27 million passenger trips a year between New Jersey and Weehawken.

Then, in 1937, the Holland Tunnel opened, followed by the George

Washington Bridge (1931) and Lincoln Tunnel (1937) and, as automobiles gained dominance over mass transit, the ferries began a long slow decline, closing one by one.

Up river, the services fared better for longer.

"When we were kids, back in about 1938, Main St. Tarrytown used to be lined up with cars on a Saturday, waiting for the Wyoming or the City of Keansburg ferry to go across to Nyack. We'd spend a nickel on the trip, and a quarter to see a first run movie in Nyack..." remembered Bill Macguire in an interview with Lenore Person, a writer for www.hudsonriver.com.

The recollection shows the important place ferries once held in a whole valley economic ecosystem that held together well into the end of the 20th century.

Besides the Tarrytown - Nyack run, there were ferries out of Haverstraw, Highland/Poughkeepsie, Bear Mountain, Newburg/Beacon, Kingston, and on up the river at key crossing point all the way to Albany. There were also dayliners (which were, basically, huge, ferries) running up and down the river from Albany to the city on regular, frequent schedules. They built the valley's economy.

One of the major routes (revived today each summer as a tourist attraction) was the ferry that used to run between Newburgh and Beacon. It actually began in 1743, when King George II granted the right to the route to Alexander Colden. During the Revolution, it served both British and American troops, although, in truth, it was also a major link in the American rebels' communication lines. After the Battle of Saratoga, General John Burgoyne and his retreating troops used the line, but George Washington, himself, was also a frequent passenger - presumably not at the same time.



CAREERS for People with Disabilities, Inc. celebrates 13th Anniversary

Over 250 CAREERS' clients, their employers and guests attended the Thirteenth Annual Anniversary Celebration of CAREERS for People with Disabilities, Inc. (CAREERS) on Tuesday, June 30, at PepsiCo World Headquarters in Purchase. This event recognizes outstanding individuals with disabilities, as well as organizations and individuals who support CAREERS' mission of providing employment for people with disabilities throughout Westchester and Putnam Counties. Clients celebrated employment anniversaries – ranging from 1 to 28 years – and CAREERS celebrated its 22nd year as the most successful supported work program in the area.

"Each year we celebrate the successes of individuals with disabilities in Westchester and Putnam Counties who have overcome many obstacles to become and stay employed. Especially in this difficult economy and with a countywide unemployment rate above 8 percent, we are proud that 110 of our clients were placed in jobs last year and that less than 1 percent of our clients have been laid off in the past year," said Tina Cornish-Lauria, Executive Director of CAREERS.

Award recipients included Walmart, who received an Award of Appreciation for a grant it has provided to help fund CAREERS' Workforce Readiness, Placement and Training program. For their sincere compassion and generous contributions, other 2009 Award of Appreciation recipients included The



Joe Cuatt & Ron Forehand-HV Chamber

Louise and Arde Bulova Fund, Costco, Senator Vincent Liebell, Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, MasterCard Worldwide, The J.M. McDonald Foundation, Diversified Investment Advisors and Philip Adimari, past President of CAREERS' Board of Directors.

The event was sponsored by Casper & Fischer, LLP; ShopRite Supermarkets; Universal American; Verizon and PepsiCo, who provided the venue, gift bags and some of the refreshments.

Guest speakers included Giselle

Robinson, the mother of Alanna Medlock, a CAREERS' client for six years, who is hearing impaired and works for Marshall's in Cortlandt. "CAREERS services provide me with peace of mind because they are successful advocates for my daughter," Mrs. Robinson said. "Knowing others are as concerned about and accept Alanna for who she is is my sleep insurance."

CAREERS' client Damon Cook received the Employee of the Year Award for his nine years of service as a file clerk

at Tangredi & Associates Law Firm in White Plains. Jamie Smith, Store Manager at Stop & Shop in Port Chester received the Supervisor of the Year Award for hiring six CAREERS' clients in 2008, and The Hudson Valley Gateway Chamber received the Employer of the Year Award for providing opportunities for individuals with disabilities and supporting CAREERS' programs through the years.

Since 1987, CAREERS has provided job placement and support services to people with disabilities in Westchester and Putnam Counties and made over 1,700 individual job placements and provided services to well over 6,000 people. CAREERS' mission is to insure that all disabled individuals find sustained, meaningful employment in the communities in which they live. They work one-on-one with each client and employer to facilitate ongoing success in the workplace, and help those with disabilities reach their maximum level of self-support and self-reliance. All of CAREERS services are provided free of charge to clients and employers.

For additional information about how CAREERS helps disabled individuals, or employers in need of qualified help, contact CAREERS' Valhalla office, which serves central and lower Westchester, at 914-741-8500, or the Carmel office, which serves northern Westchester and Putnam Counties, at 845-225-8007.

Thriving in a down economy

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ing. No matter what anyone says, marketing is in a current state of disarray. Most newspapers are on life support as their former readers get their news online from the same newspapers that have yet to figure out how to support their electronic editions financially. Direct mail is down to a trickle, while broadcast and cable TV struggle to attract sufficient advertising in the face of a stubbornly weak economy.

With clients demanding lower costs

and marketers struggling to find new venues to connect with customers, the social media are touted as the answer, the "silver bullet." While the new media are replete with persuasive success stories, marketers are clearly trying to find their way. Solid answers are illusive, at best.

Many of those who initially spent hours a day "getting linked" are getting tired, primarily due to a lack of positive results and they move on to the next "solution."

On a blog that raised the question, "Does social media marketing even work?" one respondent wrote, "I don't get it. Everyone seems to think this is the next frontier of marketing. Perhaps it just hasn't evolved. I'm fairly plugged into a num-

ber of social apps, programs, blogs, pages and I don't see any results. Sure, you can make money telling and charging clients they need this or that, but does it increase their business? Not as far as I can tell."

All this points to an important conclusion: Marketing is far more complicated than it was in the past when there were few ways to deliver "messages" to customers. Today, "messages" are passé and now the task is finding ways to "talk," not "tell." In other words, if you want customers, you can expect your marketing mix to have far more components than in the past. Marketing is more complicated and demanding than ever before.

Unfortunately, it's popular to blame our current business problems on the recession. But, as the Financial Times recently pointed out, that's a myth. The problem is "broken business models," which "were broken long before Lehman filed for

bankruptcy, and will remain broken unless executives use the downturn to begin fixing them." General Motors, they suggest, is a prime example. "The automaker's problems certainly did not originate with the current drop in consumer demand or higher retiree and medical costs." Over a long period, GM was unable to build cars the customers wanted to buy. If the criticism of GM is accurate, it is far from alone. It's time to act-before it's too late.

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