

# SCENIC HUDSON PARK QUEST

ESOPUS MEADOWS PRESERVE, ESOPUS

## QUESTING:

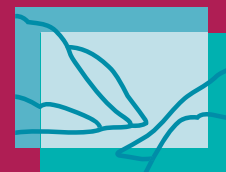
Use the information to learn about the history and ecology of Scenic Hudson's Esopus Meadows Preserve. After you've finished exploring the park (please stay on marked trails), look for the Quest box. You'll find a special stamp inside to mark this booklet. Don't forget to put the box back where you found it, so other people can discover it too. The adventure takes about an hour. Have fun!

## DIRECTIONS:

On River Rd. in Port Ewen, 1.3 miles north of intersection with Rte. 9W.

## OPERATING HOURS:

Open year-round from dawn to dusk.



**SCENIC  
HUDSON**

## SCENIC HUDSON PARKQUEST

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### GOING WITH THE FLOW

Long before the *Half Moon's* arrival, Native Americans relied on the Hudson River for transportation, utilizing dugout canoes on the waterway they called "Mahicantuck," meaning "the river that flows both ways" (for how its flow changes with the tide). The Dutch created a special ship, the sloop, to handle the river's winds and currents; in the 18th century, sloops were the prime mode of moving people and freight. With the introduction of the steamboat and the opening of the Erie Canal in the 19th century, the Hudson became the main artery for shipping goods to and from the West. In essence, it was America's first superhighway.

Opened in 1871, Esopus Meadows Lighthouse alerted captains to the dangerous shallows along the western shore.

### LIVING IT UP

Americans who prospered from the nation's industrial and transportation revolutions in the mid-1800s showed off their new wealth by purchasing land along Dutchess County's Hudson shoreline and erecting grand homes. One of these – Mills Mansion – is visible across the river; another, Vanderbilt Mansion, stands south of here in Hyde Park. Although they only visited for a few weeks each summer or fall, the owners of these palaces spared no expense in creating beautifully landscaped grounds where they enjoyed horseback riding, hunting and the same magnificent views that thrill visitors to these historic homes today.



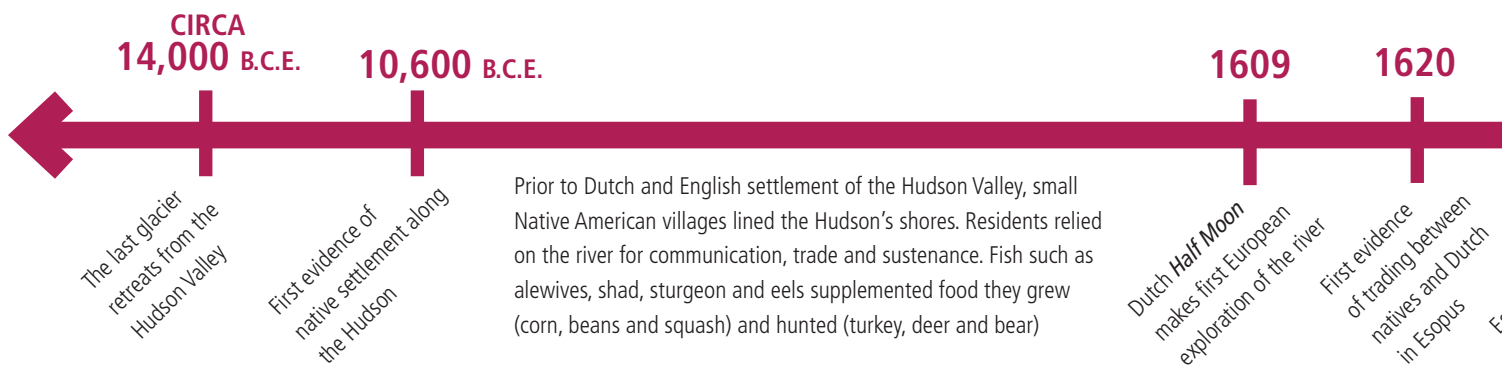
Jeff Anzevino

Historic homes in Staatsburg viewed from Esopus Meadows.



### HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Native Americans called this land "esepu," meaning "high banks." Your drive here from Route 9W descended these banks. But where are the meadows at Esopus Meadows? They're underwater. Actually they're a tidal flat, an area so shallow that the muddy river bottom is almost exposed at low tide. Esopus Meadows is one of the largest tidal flats in the Hudson River. It's called a meadow because farmers once brought their cattle here to feast on native water celery. The flat also is a nursery for shad, perch and striped bass, which made it an important fishing ground for Native Americans. The Klyne Esopus Kill, a Hudson River tributary, flows into these shallows. "Kill" is the Dutch word for creek.



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David Diaz

**A shoreline restoration project to remove invasive Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*).**

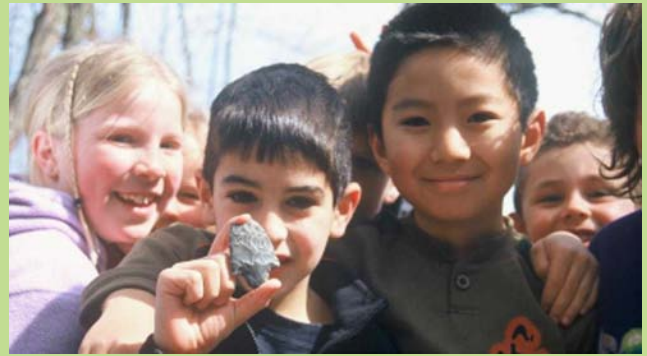
## RISING TO THE OCCASION

The shoreline at Esopus Meadows will play an important role if the Hudson’s water level continues rising because of the expected effects of climate change. As a floodplain – land that is periodically flooded – it serves as a sponge, storing and gradually releasing floodwaters. Natural floodplains also act as filters, trapping sediments and pollution, while trees and plants along their banks prevent erosion and provide essential habitat for native plant and wildlife species. As the river rises, Esopus Meadows Preserve will provide room for these animals and plants to migrate inland, ensuring the preservation of the Hudson Valley’s great “biological melting pot.”



Jolene Johnson

**Esopus Meadows Lighthouse**



Chris Bowser

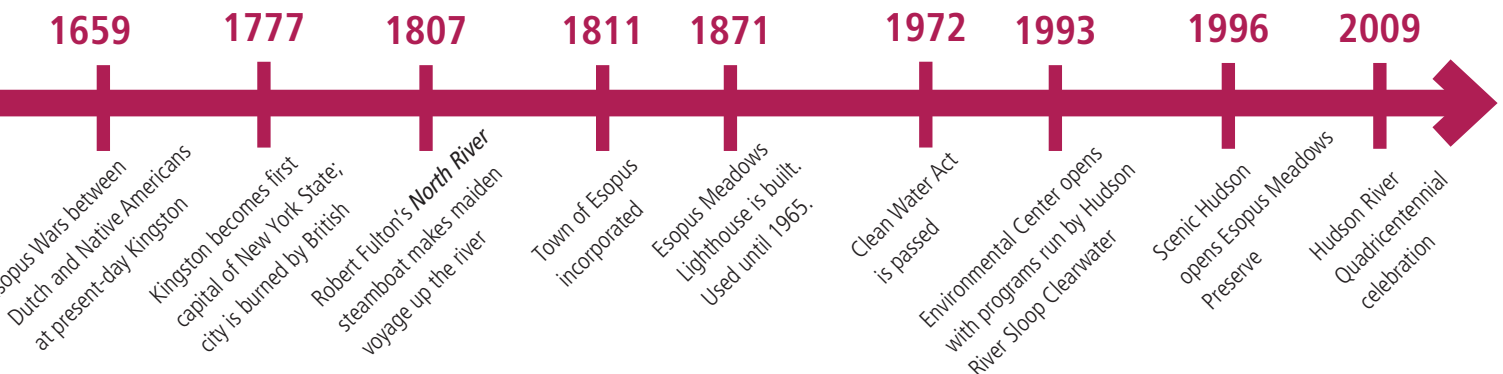
Evidence of Native American activity at Esopus Meadows was found by students on a field trip to the preserve. This point was made 3,000 years ago from Greene County rock. Attached to a wood, bone or antler handle, it served as a spear or knife.

## CONNECTED BY WATER!



**Esopus Meadows Preserve is at “River Mile 87” measured from the southern tip of Manhattan.**

**Soon we will be installing a guidepost in the park for you to see how the Hudson River connects so many communities!**





## The Interpretive Trail

For more information about the upland forest ecosystem, follow the red trail and look for the interpretive signs.

## Who's Scenic Hudson?

We're a group of dedicated people who care about the area we live in—the Hudson River Valley. Forty-five years ago, our founders fought to protect a mountain from being made into a power plant. Since then, we've continued to work together with local communities to protect special places. We've created or enhanced 40 parks and preserves for you to enjoy.

For more information about our parks, visit [www.scenichudson.org/parks](http://www.scenichudson.org/parks).

## Where to find the Quest box:

For Winter Fun Day, the Quest box will be located in the Environmental Center.

## Thank you

Thanks to the Hudson River Foundation for a Hudson River Improvement Fund grant to enhance interpretive information at Esopus Meadows Preserve and Environmental Center.



**PLACE QUEST STAMP HERE**

## Why we protected this place...

Scenic Hudson opened the 95-acre preserve in 1996 to enhance public accessibility to the Hudson River and its shoreline, and to protect its unique tidal-flat habitat. The site's Environmental Center, owned by Scenic Hudson and managed by Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, offers educational programs for schoolchildren and adults.

Become part of our online community at:

[www.scenichudson.org](http://www.scenichudson.org)

Let us know what you think of this Quest.

E-mail your comments to [shereth@scenichudson.org](mailto:shereth@scenichudson.org).

ParkQuest created  
by Susan Hereth