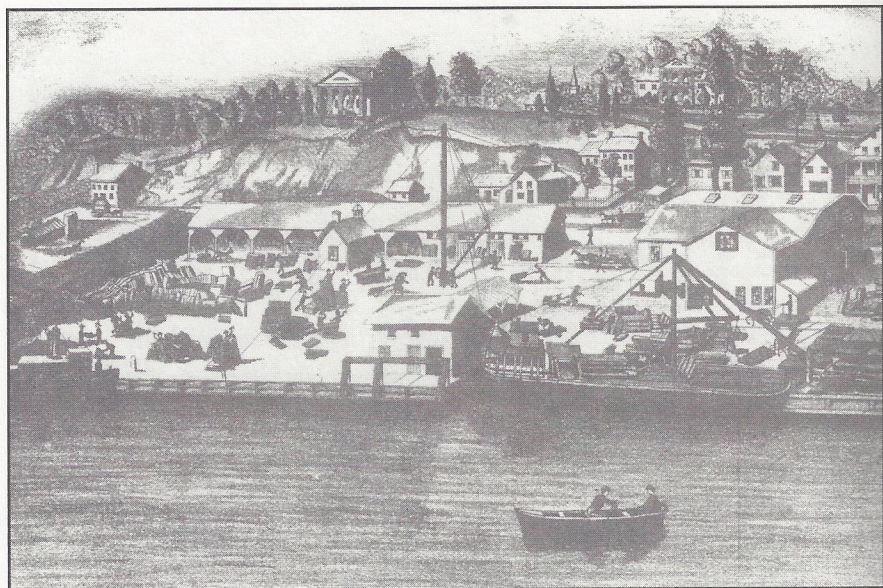




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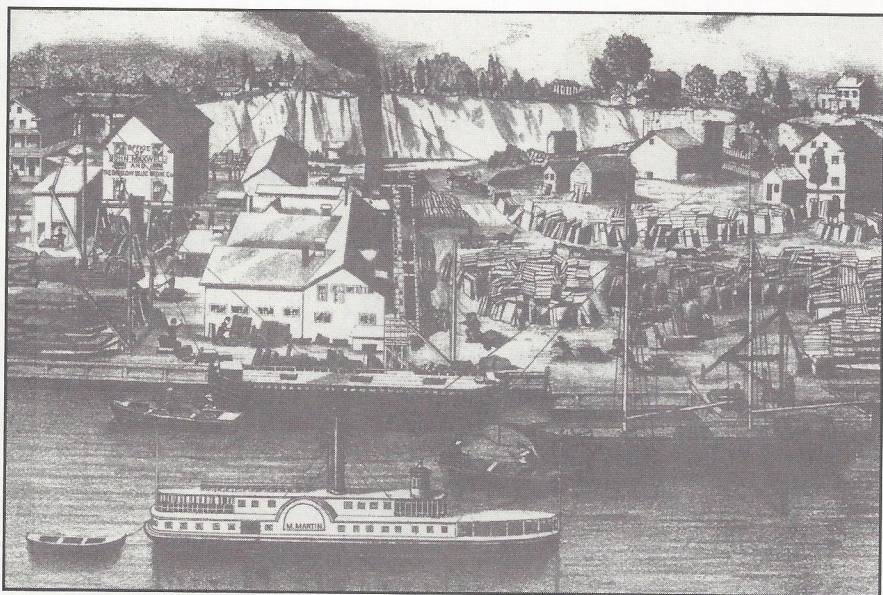
The Bigelow Dock of Malden

By Stuart Murray

During the heyday of Hudson River Valley commerce and industry, the Town of Saugerties, at the mouth of Esopus Creek, was a leading harbor and shipping facility. For most of the 19th and into the 20th centuries, Saugerties attracted freight vessels and passenger boats, going to and from New York City, 90 miles to the south, and Albany, 40 miles to the north.

One of the most important waterfront facilities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the Bigelow Dock at the hamlet of Malden, two miles above the village of Saugerties and now part of the town. Eighteenth-century settlers built grist mills and lumber mills along the creeks and riverfront, and much of the timber being cut in the surrounding Catskill Mountains, as well as the hides being tanned, was brought to Saugerties for shipment to market. In 1808, commerce in timber and hides appealed to Connecticut-born Asa Bigelow, who developed the riverfront at Malden. A builder of fast sailing sloops, Bigelow was enterprising and industrious, and he succeeded in winning considerable freight that otherwise would have gone to the Saugerties or Catskill docks.

In 1810, Bigelow built a two-story brick store at the river's edge, which still stands today, and is a private residence. His Malden wharf—known as the Bigelow Dock—and his warehouses thrived, with blue stone becoming a major product. Saugerties and Ulster County historian Karlyn Knaust Elia describes the commercial vitality of Saugerties and the surrounding region in an online history of the town: “Before the Civil War the iron works processed pig iron and scrap, and employed three hundred people working round-the-clock shifts. Manufacture of paper, calico prints, white lead and paint, and shipment of hides helped support the community and created a business district. Typical nineteenth century tradesmen



lined the streets above the docks and mills. When the early industries failed after mid-century, paper, brick making, gunpowder, farm goods, river ice, and especially blue stone from area quarries, replaced them.

Two thousand men were employed at one time in quarrying, dressing and shipping about one and a half million dollars' worth of blue stone annually from Glasco, Malden, and Saugerties. The blue stone was used for curbing and paving, crosswalks, doorsills and windowsills and much of it found its way to New York City. The Ulster White Lead Company at Glenerie produced nine hundred tons of lead each year. . . . Later in the nineteenth century Saugerties became a popular landing and hostelry for tourists going to boarding houses in the Catskill Mountain foothills.

"Its location on the Hudson made Saugerties ideal for harvesting ice from the river. The ice industry thrived during the 1880's to the 1900's. Ice houses were located in Glasco and Malden. Ice was also harvested on the Upper Esopus and on the Sawyerkill.

"The brick industry grew in the 1880's when Washburn Brothers and Empire State Brick Company opened their brickyards. Later the Staples and Hutton Brickyards were established.

As did many regional entrepreneurs, Asa Bigelow also developed roads, invested in railroads, and established manufacturing facilities, including brickyards.

By 1890, the shipment of Portland Cement became the Bigelow Dock's most important commercial product. Thereafter, new brickyards were established and many thrived until the mid-20th century. Brick maker Terry Staples eventually bought out the Bigelow family's interest in the Malden waterfront operation and ran one of the most successful brickyards on the river.

Malden's fortunes are now closely linked to the Town of Saugerties, but its heritage as an enterprising Hudson River center of commerce is rich and enduring, mainly thanks to Asa Bigelow and the Bigelow Dock.