

Keyport, New Jersey

By Ann Dingman Watson

Sitting on Raritan Bay right across from Staten Island, Keyport bustled with activity in the 1870s. Goods from all over northern Monmouth county were shipped out of Keyport to New York City, supplying Manhattan markets with fresh vegetables, fruit, eggs, meat, and poultry, and in the winter, holiday greens and ice.¹ Oystermen sent thousands of barrels of their catch to New York each season, and everyone in Keyport ate oysters because they were cheaper than meat, poultry, or fish.² Although founded only fifty years before, the little town had become the busiest port in Monmouth County by the early 1880s.³ By 1875, Herman lived on one of the liveliest blocks in town: Lower Broad Street.⁴

Broad Street, running perpendicular to the shore, carried traffic right down the hill to the steamboat docks. Teamsters hauling their loads to the docks had to come in via either First Street or Broad. Wagons loaded with produce rumbled down the hill, the big draft horses' hooves thudding on the roadway as their drivers called to them. The steamers *Minnie Cornell* and *Holmdel* each made a trip to New York once a day, carrying farm produce, residents, businessmen, and visitors to and from the city.⁵ Their low, hollow whistles announced departures at ten in the morning and eight in the evening. Freehold and New York Railway trains stopped at the First Street and Broad Street Depots several times daily.⁶ The cries of gulls and shouts of oystermen at work drifted up from the docks, and briny salt air mingled with the pungent odors of horse manure and beer.

¹ Jack Jeandron, *Keyport: From Plantation to Center of Commerce and Industry* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, *Making of America* Series, 2003), 29.

² *Ibid.*, 58.

³ *Ibid.*, 28, 37. Also, "Keyport History," *Keyport Historical Society* (www.keyporthistoricalsociety.com : accessed 13 April 2019), path About > History.

⁴ *Monmouth County Directory for 1875, Containing the Names of the Inhabitants of Freehold, Keyport, Matawan, Long Branch and Red Bank: Together with a Business Directory of the Principal Towns of Monmouth County, and Much Other Useful Miscellaneous Information* (Freehold, New Jersey: J. H. Lant, Publisher, 1875), 53; "U.S. City Directories, 1822–1995," *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 16 April 2019), path New Jersey > Monmouth County > 1875 > Monmouth County Directory, 1875 > image 69 of 146.

⁵ Advertisement for the *Minnie Cornell*, *Keyport Weekly*, 4 June 1881, p. 1, col. 2; image, *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com> : accessed 21 November 2018). Also other advertisements: *Keyport Enterprise*, 7 November 1885, p. 3, col. 7; *Keyport Enterprise*, scattered issues, 1886, 1887, and 1888. For the *Holmdel*, "Timetable Steamer *Holmdel*," *Keyport Weekly*, 13 August 1881, p. 2, col. 4; image, *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com> : accessed 13 April 2019). Also "Notice," *Keyport Enterprise*, 18 May 1889, p. 3, col. 7; image, *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com> : accessed 13 April 2019).

⁶ “Freehold and New York Railway Time Table,” *The Monmouth Inquirer* (Freehold, New Jersey), 16 April 1885, p. 4, col. 8; *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com> : accessed 24 October 2018). Also, *The Monmouth Inquirer* (Freehold, New Jersey), 19 November 1885, p. 4, col. 8; *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com> : accessed 24 October 2018). Also, *Keyport Enterprise*, 1 January 1887, p. 4, col. 6; *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com> : accessed 20 July 2018). Also, *Keyport Enterprise*, 31 March 1888, p. 4, col. 6; *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com> : accessed 12 February 2019).