

# Philmont, New York

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## Overview

The Village of Philmont (1.2 square miles) is located in the center of Columbia County, New York and is fully encompassed by the Town of Claverack. The Hudson River lies approximately seven miles west; to the east are the foothills of the Taconic and Berkshire mountains. The Hudson River was the primary transportation route in colonial era America and served as a conduit for trade and settlement beginning in the 1600's.

Philmont was permanently settled in the 1800's when the Agawamuck Creek was harnessed to provide power for mills. Philmont became a significant regional manufacturing center and benefited from the routing of the Harlem Rail line on its northern border in 1852. Philmont became the largest textile manufacturing center in Columbia County, it's mills employing well over 1,000 workers. As water power and rail transport were replaced by new technologies Philmont's economic significance declined. Philmont's population peaked in the early 1900's and has continued to decline since.

Today, Philmont is a small rural community struggling to find its place in the regional economy. Some of physical legacy of Philmont's old industries remain, but many of the buildings have sunk into disrepair and vacancy.



### Surrounding Area

The City of Hudson (pop. 6,648) eight miles west, is the closest city. By car, Hudson is less than 20 minutes away. The City of Albany (pop. 98,424), the state capitol is 40 miles north, accessible by car in 45 minutes. Both Boston and New York City are within easy driving distances. Philmont is part of the federally designated Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area which stretches from New York City to the Capital District.

	Proximity to Metropolitan Areas	Driving Time
<b>Boston</b>	160 miles	2:45
<b>New York</b>	122 miles	2:30
<b>Albany</b>	40 miles	0:45

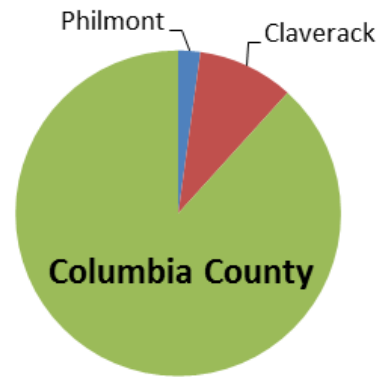


Figure 1 Relative Population

### Development of Philmont

In the 1795, George Philip bought the land that Philmont currently occupies from the Van Rensselaer estate (originally 1,200 square miles). By 1796 the first mill was established above High Falls. In 1845 the area became known as “Factory Hill,” due to the construction of a large dam and a series of runs to serve five mill sites. Each mill site had the power equivalent to 40-60 feet of fall.

Early roads in the area ran east-west; the Hudson River was the primary north-south transportation route. One of the most significant roads that connected Philmont to the larger region ran from the City of Hudson to Sheffield Massachusetts.

Philmont’s first brush with rail access came in 1838 with the Hudson Berkshire Railroad just south of today’s village in Mellenville. In 1852, by the urging of local businessmen, the New York and Harlem line was routed directly through Philmont. By the 1860’s Philmont was the industrial and employment center of Columbia County and boasted over a dozen mills. Connection to rail transport expanded the markets for Philmont’s goods, mainly textiles, to New York City and beyond. In addition to moving goods south, people were moved north to Philmont requiring accommodation and local transportation. As the mills expanded, ancillary industries building equipment for them were developed.

The Civil War (1861-65) generated high demand for textiles to clothe the Union Army and Philmont’s mills experienced rapid growth. By 1913, 870 employees worked at the High Rock Knitting Factory alone, more workers than anywhere else in Columbia County. Unfortunately, the same technologies that had allowed for Philmont’s development led to its decline. The Great Depression, a massive flood in 1938, changing consumer preferences, and the development of textile facilities in southern states conspired against Philmont.

Philmont's complete dependency on milling left its economy vulnerable. The 1938 flood that ripped through town destroyed much of the mill infrastructure and destroyed major mill sites. The Great Depression limited the availability of reconstruction funding. The Harder family, who owned the High Rock Company, was denied reconstruction loans. Mills were eventually replaced, but the population was floundering.

In 1939 the High Rock Company had sold all of its assets and stopped production. Before that, almost half of village taxes were paid by the High Rock Company.

In the following years mills were operated by out of town companies who did little to invest in the facilities. Trains stopped running to Philmont in 1976. But the final blow to Philmont's legacy of milling came in 1977 when the High Rock Mill suffered a massive fire. At the time the mill employed 50 people and had plans to increase that number by 300 within the year.

## **Transportation Access**

### ***Automobile***

Philmont enjoys easy access to major transportation routes. Built in the mid-1960's, exit 2B of the Taconic State Parkway is 2.3 miles from the center of Philmont and provides easy connections to Interstate 90 and New York City. Exit 21 of the New York State Thruway is 18 miles to the west, 30 minutes by car, on the other side of the Hudson River.

### ***Train***

An Amtrak station is located eight miles away in the City of Hudson, providing regular service to New York City.

### ***Air***

Albany International Airport, 49 miles north, is the primary airport in the region. The Columbia County public airport is 6.5 miles northeast in the neighboring town of Ghent.

### ***Bike and Pedestrian***

Currently, Philmont's residents enjoy access to a small trail system in the High Falls Conservation Area. Sidewalks connect Philmont's main street to the High Falls trailhead.

The Harlem Valley Rail Trail, a 46 mile regional trail using the now defunct Harlem line right-of-way, is planned to route through Philmont. When complete, the trail will link pedestrians and cyclists to a network extending from Wessaic, NY to Chatham, NY. Currently the rail trail begins at the Metro-North station in Wessaic and extends 14.6 miles north. The Harlem Valley Rail Association a 510(c)(3) is actively working to complete the remainder of the trail.

### ***Public Transportation***

Due to Philmont's rural setting, the village is not served by any metropolitan planning organizations (MPO). The Capital District Transportation Authority serves the capital region and Rensslear County directly to the north. There are no publically financed transportation options available to residents of Philmont. Johnston and Pulcher.

## **Topography**

The Village of Philmont is roughly 500 feet above sea level, with some points as high as 690 feet. Philmont's varied topography allows for scenic vistas and interesting water features. In 1917, Philmont's hilly location prompted Columbia County to build a tuberculosis sanitarium (1920-1951) on the current site of the Pine Haven Nursing and Rehabilitation facility.

Philmont's topography has resulted in development patterns that are more concentrated than the surrounding agricultural lands of Columbia County. High Falls to the south, protected land to the southeast and steep slopes to the north have constrained development towards the village center.

## **Water Resources**

Philmont's history was shaped by water. The Agawamuck Creek was the impetus for settlement in the mid 1700's as manufactures and millers harnessed the power of moving water. The Summit Reservoir

(21-acres) that was created by damming the Agawamuck Creek remains as a significant physical feature of the Village. Over the years sedimentation has reduced its capacity as a recreational feature, but it's potential for reuse has been recognized recently. Annual Family Fun Day, sponsored by local businesses and established in the 1970's, features a fishing derby (amongst other events) on the Reservoir.

The High Falls Conservation area, containing a 150 foot cascading waterfall, starts at the southeast edge of the summit reservoir. The property is owned and managed by the Columbia County Land Trust and serves as a regional attraction.

Underground channels built to power mills still carry water under the streets of Philmont.

## Demographics

Philmont, like much of the Hudson River Valley saw its industrial hey-day come and go, except that industries departure from the village, amidst floods and fires, was faster and more dramatic. As the region touts its rich history and beautiful settings some pockets of the Hudson Valley are being rediscovered and reinvested in. The Villages of Kinderhook and Chatham are very similar to Philmont and have seen rising home values and incomes (see table). But, villages like Valatie and Philmont have not rebounded at the same rate. Observing Philmont’s demographic trends in relation to the surrounding region show that the village has a younger, less wealthy and less educated population than its neighbors. Despite those challenges, Philmont has a rising median income, affordable housing, a wealth of historic buildings and growing employment opportunities in a variety of sectors.

The demographics of Philmont are much like many faded industrial cities, but on a smaller scale. The loss of industrial jobs has had rippling effects on Philmont, lower incomes mean less tax revenue for local government and other public services. Lower incomes also mean fewer funds to maintain homes and pursue higher education.

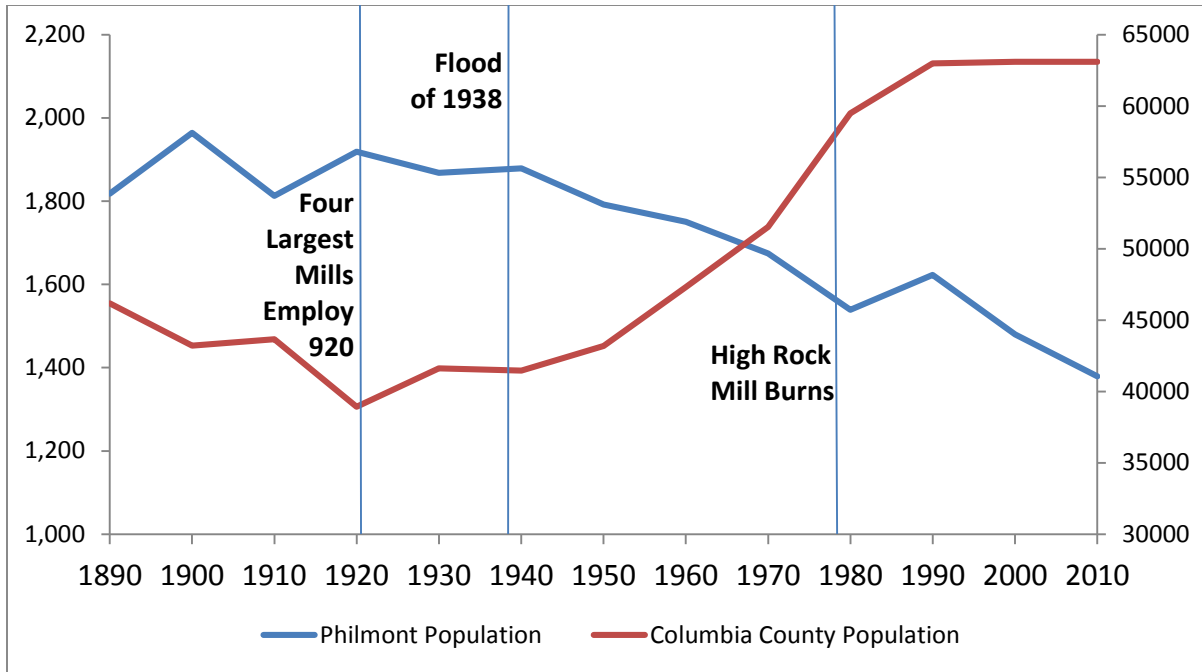
Village	Square Miles	Population
Philmont	1.2	1,342
Chatham	1.24	1,770
Kinderhook	2.1	1,211
Valatie	1.27	1,819

### Population

The Village of Philmont has experienced a steady loss of population since the 1940’s, excepting a 5.5% population increase in the 1980’s. The largest recorded population was 1,964 in 1900. A 2013 population of 1,342 was a 29 percent decrease from the 1940 population of 1,868. The countywide population of Columbia County was growing rapidly from 1940 to 1990 shadowing national trends of suburbanization and dispersal. Population growth has been generally flat in Columbia County from 1990 to present while Philmont’s population has continued to decline. (See Figure “Historic Population Trends”) Vertical lines represent some of the pivotal moments in Philmont history.

Population Comparison	Philmont	Claverack	Columbia County
<b>Population (2013)</b>	1,397	5,996	62,674
<b>Population- (2010 US Census)</b>	1,379	6,021	63,096
<b>Population- (2000 US Census)</b>	1,480	6,401	63,094
<b>Population Growth – 2000 – 2010</b>	-101	-380	+2
<b>Median Age</b>	41.9	46.2	46

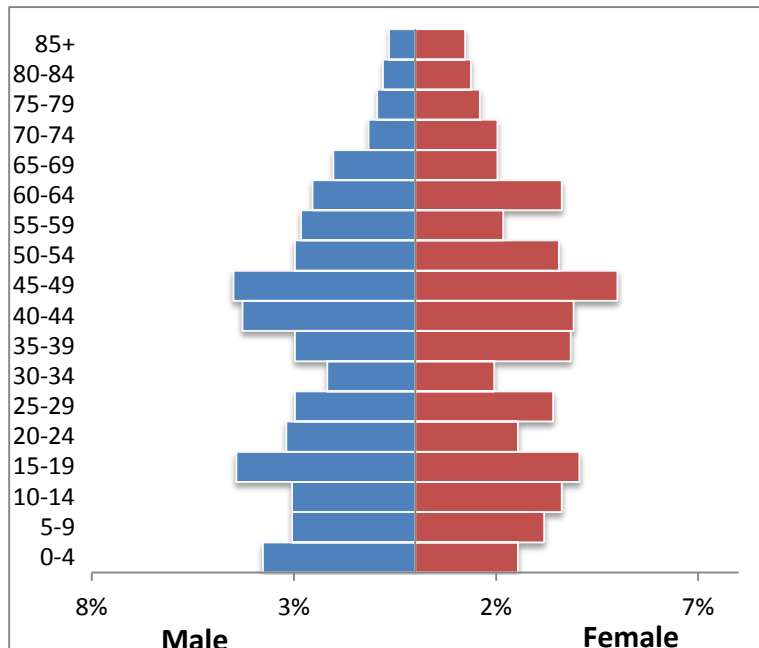
Source: 2000 US Census, 2010 US Census Bureau, 2009 – 2013 5-Year American Community Survey, US Bureau of Labor Statistics



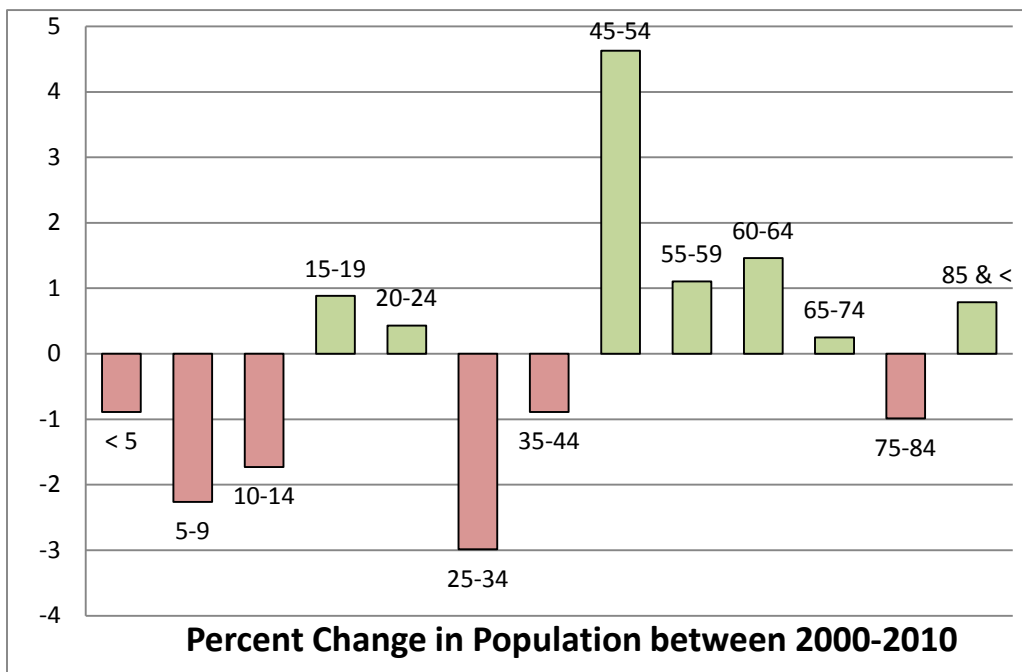
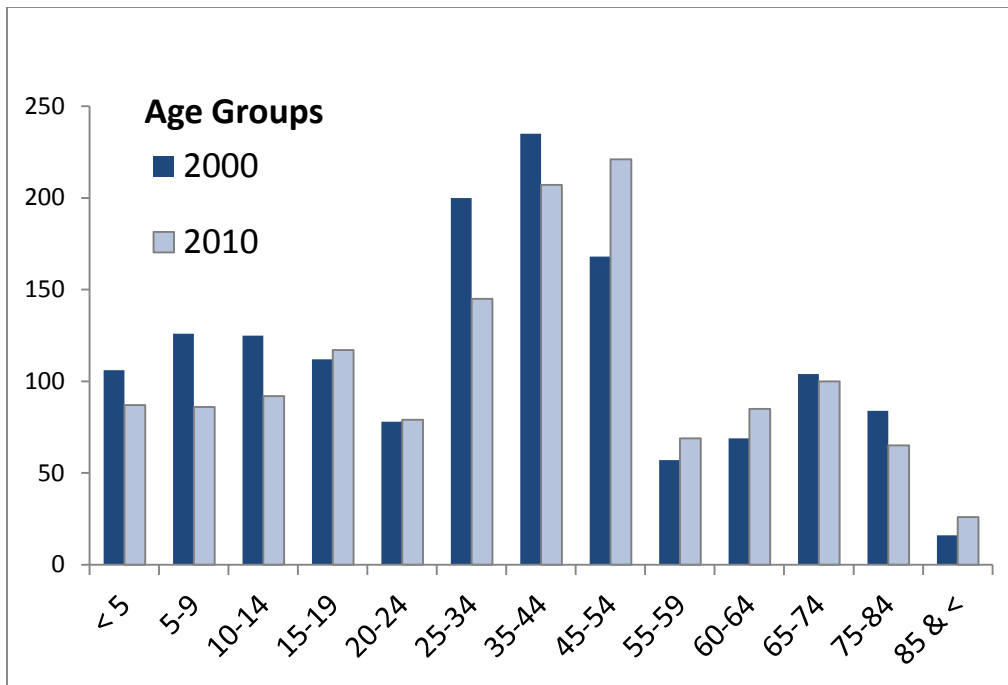
While Philmont’s population declined in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the surrounding town of Claverack grew. Once industry’s significance diminished, residents turned to agricultural pursuits and moved further into the countryside. Philmont’s municipal borders were drawn when it was an industrial center and incorporation offered a useful designation for services targeted to the needs of mills, like fire protection. The amount of land devoted to agriculture accounts for just six percent of village acreage, residents wishing to start their own farms had little choice but to move away.

### Age and Sex Profile

Comparisons to the 2000 Census and 2010 Census show that Philmont has a smaller number of school aged children than in 2000. This is associated with a decline in student enrollment at the local school district. Females represent 51.7 percent of the population and males 48.3 percent.







Philmont residents are getting older, with the more growth in the “middle aged” category between 45-64 years old. The 45-54 age group increased by 4.5 percent.

### Household Types

Philmont has a higher proportion of family households with children under 18 than Claverack or Columbia County as a whole. Notably single female households with their own children under 18 account for 10.2% of all households, almost double that of Claverack (5.2%) and Columbia County (5.8%). Single mother households are at a greater risk of poverty. Nationally almost 31% of households

headed by single women were living below the poverty line. This is of particular concern in Philmont with its high poverty rates and higher than national percent of single female householders with children under 18 (7.2%) (US Census 2010, National Center for Law and Economic Justice).

HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE	Philmont	Claverack	Columbia County
Total households	566	2478	25906
Family households (families) [7]	352	1551	16418
With own children under 18 years	165	564	6389
Husband-wife family	217	1196	12363
With own children under 18 years	85	382	4204
Male householder, no wife present	44	121	1313
With own children under 18 years	22	54	687
Female householder, no husband present	91	234	2742
With own children under 18 years	58	128	1498
Nonfamily households [7]	214	927	9488
Householder living alone	183	768	7452
Male	69	332	3475
65 years and over	24	115	1099
Female	114	436	3977
65 years and over	65	257	2088
Households with individuals under 18 years	198	637	7070
Households with individuals 65 years and over	157	850	8031
Average Household Size	2.44	2.33	2.35
Average Family Size	3.08	2.91	2.89

Income Comparison	Philmont	Claverack	Columbia County
<b>Median earnings for workers</b>	\$26,408	\$29,213	\$31,837
<b>Median Household Income</b>	43,654	51,329	57,336
<b>Poverty Rate</b>	21.6%	8.7%	9.8%
<b>Housing (Total Units)</b>	654	2,960	32,708

<b>Average Household Size</b>	2.44	2.33	2.38
Source: 2000 US Census, 2010 US Census Bureau, 2009 – 2013 5-Year American Community Survey, US Bureau of Labor Statistics			

### Employment Trends

The “arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services,” and “manufacturing” are two

growing employment clusters for Philmont workers. Both clusters are above Claverack and Columbia County rates. The “information” employment cluster is a despondent 0.3% as compared to Claverack (2.3%) and Columbia County (2.1%). However, due to Philmont’s smaller working population a gain or loss of one position in the information sector would have a larger impact on the relative percentage.

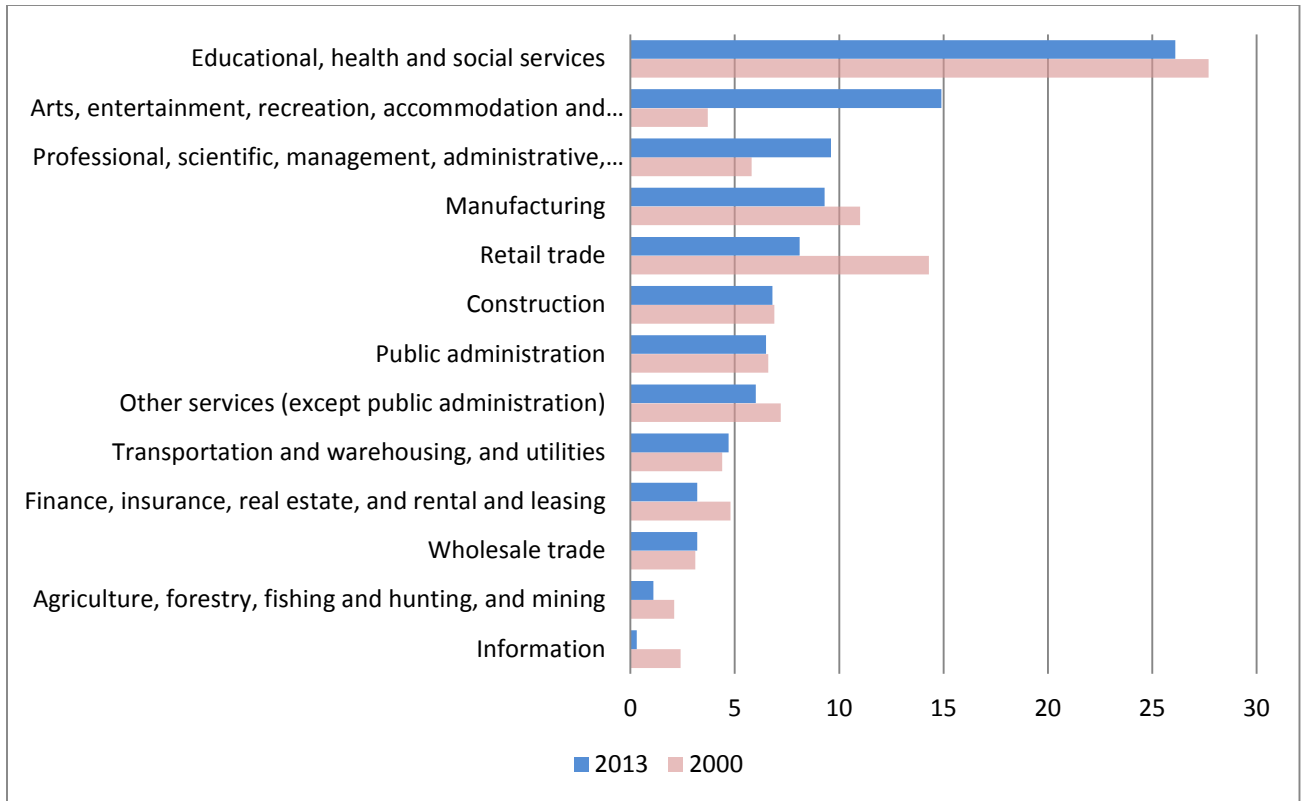
Median Household Income, Columbia County Villages 2000-2013<sup>1</sup>

	2000	2013	Percent Change
<b>Philmont</b>	\$31,094	\$43,654	+40.4%
<b>Valatie</b>	\$44,375	\$44,732	+0.8%
<b>Kinderhook</b>	\$57,500	\$78,068	+35.8%
<b>Chatham</b>	\$39,063	\$46,591	+19.3%

Employment Profile Comparison	Philmont	Claverack	Columbia County
<b>Agriculture, forestry, fishing/hunting, mining</b>	1.1%	3%	4.5%
<b>Construction</b>	6.8%	8%	8.0%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	9.3%	4.5%	5.9%
<b>Wholesale trade</b>	3.2%	2.9%	1.9%
<b>Retail trade</b>	8.1%	8.9%	11.9%
<b>Transportation and warehousing, and utilities</b>	4.7%	2.5%	3.4%
<b>Information</b>	0.3%	2.3%	2.1%
<b>Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing</b>	3.2%	5.8%	4.7%
<b>Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services</b>	9.6%	7.9%	9.8%
<b>Educational, health and social services</b>	26.1%	32.8%	27%
<b>Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services</b>	14.9%	7%	7%
<b>Other services (except public administration)</b>	6%	5.1%	5.5%
<b>Public administration</b>	6.5%	9.4%	8.3%
<b>Unemployment</b>	15.5%	10.6%	5.6%

Source: 2000 US Census, 2010 US Census Bureau, 2009 – 2013 5-Year American Community Survey, US Bureau of Labor Statistics

<sup>1</sup> US Census 2000, US Census American Community Survey 2009-13



**Table 1 Philmont Employment Sector Change 2000-2013**

Comparing Philmont’s employment profile from the 2010 Census shows that the “Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services,” increased by over 100%. And while “manufacturing” employment was higher than town and county averages in 2010, Philmont lost manufacturing jobs between the censuses.

Despite the encouraging number of jobs in the “Arts, entertainment, recreation accommodation and food services” sector, data from the 2009-2013 American Community Survey reported a paltry median income of just \$5,197 for 44 jobs in the “Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations” sector. The “Food preparation and serving related occupations,” was more promising, providing 25 jobs with a median income of \$25,972.<sup>2</sup>

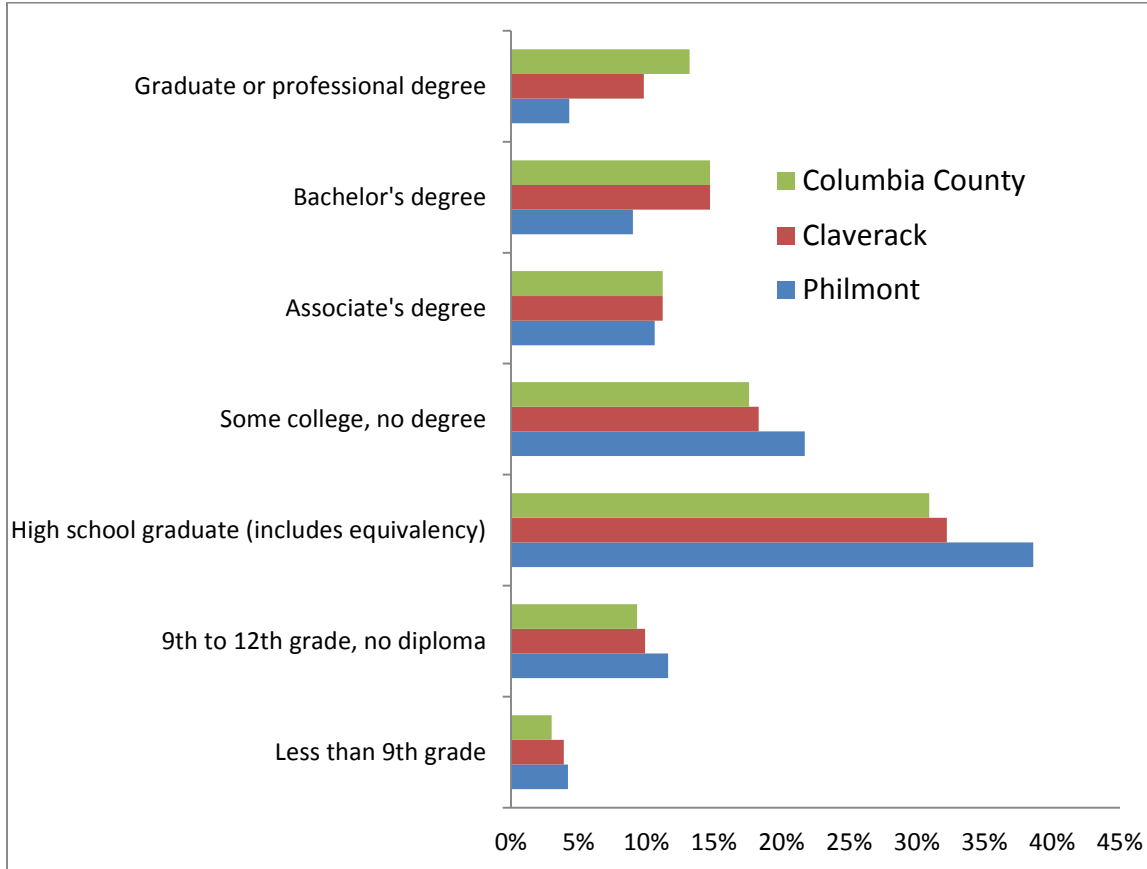
The slight decline in manufacturing jobs for Philmont residents could have been worse, particularly considered with the fact that Columbia County as a whole lost 32% (608 positions) of its manufacturing jobs between 2002 and 2012.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> OCCUPATION BY SEX AND MEDIAN EARNINGS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS (IN 2013 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS) FOR THE CIVILIAN EMPLOYED POPULATION 16 YEARS AND OVER  
2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

<sup>3</sup> 2002-2012 Economic Census NAICS Data

## Educational Attainment

Philmont’s population has lower levels of college graduates than Claverack and Columbia County as a whole. The percentage of Philmont residents with bachelor’s degrees and graduate/professional degrees is 52.3% less than Columbia county averages.



## Schools

Philmont’s school closed in the

Philmont is part of the Taconic Hills Central School District. The district is composed of 1,403 students and covers almost 250 square miles. The Taconic Hills elementary, middle and high schools are located on the same property in Craryville, 8.5 miles to the southeast of Philmont. The communities of Copake, Hillsdale, Philmont, parts of Ancram, Austerlitz, Claverack, Gallatin, Ghent, Livingston, Northeast and Taghkanic are served by Taconic Hills School District<sup>4</sup>. Annual assessments by the New York State Education Department rank the district as average<sup>5</sup>. 55% of Taconic Hills Central School District were considered “Economically Disadvantaged” in the New York State Education Departments 2013-2014

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.taconichills.k12.ny.us/district/dprofile.html>

<sup>5</sup> New York State Education Department Data Site

assessment. Since 2000, enrolment has declined 25% from 1,868 students, to 1,402 in the 2013-2014 school year. However, regional population trends are in keeping with this decline. According to 2013 estimates Philmont had 231 school aged children enrolled in grades K-12; where they were enrolled was not specified.<sup>6</sup> Within Philmont there is a “head start” early childhood facility operated by the 501(c)(3) Columbia Opportunities, Inc.

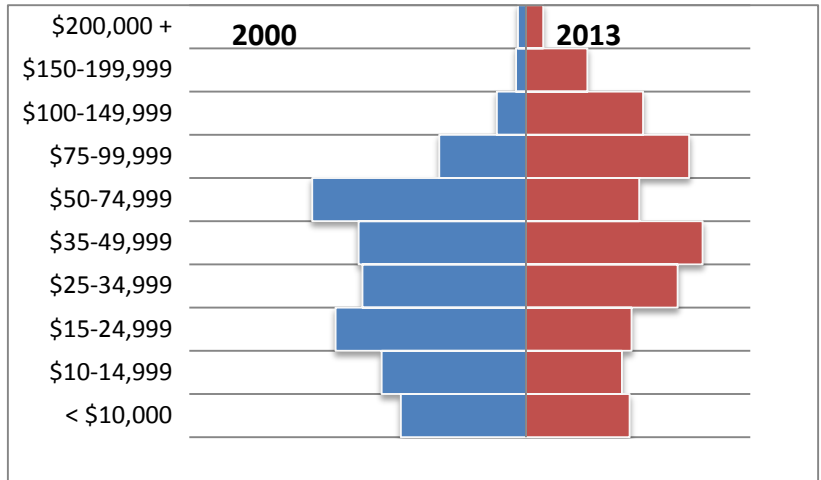
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<sup>6</sup> SELECTED SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS IN THE UNITED STATES  
2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

### Household Income

While Philmont has seen a remarkable 40.4% increase in median household income over a 13 year period from 2000 to 2013, it is still has the lowest median household income of all Columbia County villages (see table XX). It should be noted that due to Philmont’s small population, a relatively small number of new high incomes reported can skew the median income distribution, misrepresenting typical earnings.

All of the median household income increase comes from the \$75,000 to \$200,000 range. All other ranges, \$10,000 & less, and up to \$74,999 decreased.





## Homeownership Characteristics

The Hudson Valley and Columbia County’s proximity to New York City, combined with an ample supply of historic housing has led to a recent boom in second home ownership. The City of Hudson’s main street has been transformed by this trend. Excellent restaurants and a niche antique market catering to second home owners have flourished. Philmont’s median value for owner occupied homes is \$145,600, far smaller than the county average of \$221,600 and Claveracks \$210,200. Gross median rents are lower than average and vacancy rates are lower than the county-wide rate.

Housing Characteristics Regional Comparison <sup>7</sup>					
	Village of Philmont	Village of Chatham	Town of Claverack	City of Hudson	Columbia County
<b>Total Units</b>	698	850	3,070	3,542	32,708
<b>Vacant Units</b>	17.5%	17.9%	19.6%	17.1%	22.7%
<b>Owner Occupied</b>	55.9%	47.4%	76.7%	38.4%	72.4%
<b>Built 1939 or earlier</b>	71.6%	74.1%	40.5%	63.3%	34.8%
<b>Median Value (Owner Occupied)</b>	\$145,600	\$212,500	\$210,200	\$167,600	\$221,600
<b>Moved in 2000 or later</b>	59.2%	65.6%	55%	71.6%	53.1%
<b>Gross Median Rent</b>	\$736	\$854	\$872	\$783	\$851

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey

## Building Activity

New residential building permits are an important indicator of economic activity. New home construction indicates consumer spending and contributes to the local economy. In Philmont a total of 15 new residential building permits have been issued in the past 18 years. This represents just .43% of the 3463 building permits issued in Columbia County in the same time period.

Years	Philmont		Chatham		Columbia County		City of Hudson		Claverack	
	Buildings	Units	Buildings	Units	Buildings	Units	Buildings	Units	Buildings	Units
1996-00	1	1	1	1	861	966	0	0	37	37
2001-05	6	6	3	39	1550	1655	26	31	117	118
2006-10	6	6	6	8	753	884	109	109	45	46
2011-14	2	2	0	0	299	415	16	25	27	29
Total	15	15	10	48	3463	3920	151	165	226	230

While very few new residential building permits have been issued in the Village of Philmont in the past 18 years, the actual number of new building permits issued may not be a robust indicator of housing stock increases or new demand for housing. 71.6% of Philmont’s housing units were built before 1939. In 1940, Philmont’s population peaked. The low demand for new residential construction in Philmont may be attributed to an existing and affordable stock of housing.

Despite having a larger number of new construction starts, the town of Claverack and the village of Chatham both have a slightly higher vacancy rates. Rents in Philmont remain lower than all other villages in Columbia County, reflective of the lower incomes in the area.

## Racial Composition:

Philmont’s racial composition is, like the rest of Columbia County, mainly white (92.1%). The next largest groups are Latinos (3.1%) and those claiming “Some other race” (2.1%).

2010 Race Composition	Philmont		Claverack		Columbia County	
<b>Total population</b>	1,379		6,021		63,096	
<b>White</b>	1,270	92.1%	5,621	93.4%	57,136	90.6%
<b>Black or African American</b>	26	1.9%	180	3.0%	2,855	4.5%
<b>American Indian and Alaska Native</b>	2	0.1%	4	0.1%	123	0.2%
<b>Asian</b>	9	0.7%	44	0.7%	1,002	1.6%
<b>Some Other Race</b>	29	2.1%	49	0.8%	683	1.1%
<b>Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</b>	43	3.1%	205	3.4%	1,297	2.1%

<sup>8</sup> US Bureau of the Census 1996-2014, Estimates with Imputation