

PART 1:

“DOWNTOWN”, also known as “DOWNTOWN: THE CITY OF POUGHKEEPSIE, NEW YORK”, is an eight minute documentary, completed in 1999, that explores the history of the Main Mall in downtown Poughkeepsie, New York, and attempts to revitalize the area at the end of the 20th Century. The non-fiction motion picture was created as part of a senior film production class at Vassar College in 1998/1999. It is an unpublished, non-derivative work, that contains 3rd party archival elements, for which permission of use was obtained. It was directed and produced by Rebecca Bender who is the sole author of the work.

The documentary is comprised of original interviews and broll shot on Hi8 video, as well as archival film footage from the 1910s and 1970s, historical photographs and newspaper articles, and pre-recorded music. Interviewees include business owners, community activists, city officials and residents of Poughkeepsie, all of whom offer their viewpoints on the current state of the Main Mall.

Main Street was once the central commercial district of the city of Poughkeepsie, however a failed urban renewal project closed off several blocks of traffic in 1973, creating a pedestrian mall that hastened the area’s decline. Just at the moment this “Main Mall” removed the ability of cars to travel the full length of Main Street, the city also opened “arterial” highways that quickly carried shoppers to strip malls outside the city center, decimating the businesses on Main Street. By the late 1990s, more buildings on the Main Mall were vacant than occupied, and the city had issued a Master Plan to revitalize the area.

The city of Poughkeepsie’s position is articulated in the documentary by Carol Sondheimer, Director of City Development, whose comments are often directly contradicted by community activists Ed Fludd and Ron Phillips. Main Mall shop owners Andre Johnson and Frank Clark offer their own suggestions as to how the area can be enlivened, but are realistic about its current state. Opinions are also offered by residents who frequent the Main Mall, most of whom are of the opinion that crime rates and the isolation of the area have doomed it to long term decay. Visually, the documentary supports these ideas as original footage of the Main Mall shows it to be primarily composed of boarded up buildings in poor repair, and largely devoid of human activity. These contemporary images are contrasted with historical film footage that shows the lively commercial bustle of Main Street in decades past.

PART 2:

See attached

PART 3:

Title: When we were kings / a David Sonenberg production; directed by Leon Gast.

Registration Date: 1997-03-18 (Footage prev. reg. 1992, PAu 1-606-555 / New Matter: music; interviews; additional footage)

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