



Historical Society of the Nyacks

Newsletter

Volume 9

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Fall-Winter 2014

NYACK—A DESTINATION

by Gini Stollendorf, Editor

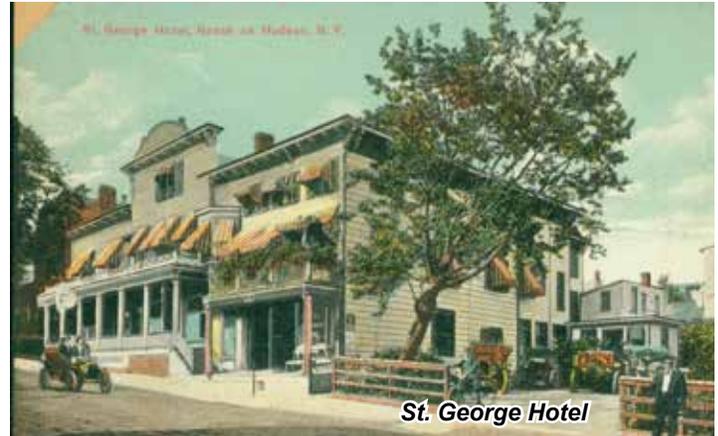
For most of the 1800s, Nyack was a destination. The Nyack Turnpike, completed in the 1820s, opened Rockland County from west to east with Nyack being the final destination in the eastern part of the county. The Northern Railroad that came through Nyack hastened its industrialization and prosperity and provided a convenient commute to New York City. There was also a ferry service at the foot of Burd Street. Early on, Nyack built hotels to accommodate people in transit and on holiday. The first, *Mansion House*, located on Main Street near Broadway, opened in 1822.

After this date and through World War I, Nyack was home to dozens of hotels. By the 1870s, Nyack had become a resort for residents of New York City seeking cleaner air and water. They wished to escape the city air and spend time in the country by the Hudson. During this time, epidemics were quite common—measles, malaria, cholera, and influenza. People fled the city, especially during summer months, and stayed in Nyack's many hotels and boarding houses. Room rates were \$1.50 to \$2.00 a day with weekly rates of \$8.00 (half price for children).

In July 1889, between terms as president, Grover Cleveland came to Nyack on the Northern Railroad and stayed at the *Prospect House* located on South Highland Avenue. When a reporter for the *Rockland County Journal* showed up to talk to Cleveland, he commented that "reporters are all over, wherever one goes, ready to jot down everything that happens." Cleveland then proceeded to talk about his favorite hobby, fishing. Later on, the Democratic Club of Nyack held a rally in his honor and he spent the rest of the day talking with Nyack residents. He left the next morning by train.

Bicycles were also a popular means of transportation from the 1860s to the early 1900s (see Edward Hopper's bicycle at the Edward Hopper House on Broadway). In June 1885, the *Rockland County Journal* published an article reporting on a particular Sunday when over thirty bicyclists from New York City rode to Tarrytown, ferried across the river to Nyack, ate lunch at one of the numerous hotel restaurants, got back on the ferry to Tarrytown, retrieved their bicycles, and biked back to the city. The rapid development of the automobile caused many people to lose interest in cycling.

The hotels had dining and bar facilities, which caused problems with noise during the evening hours. On June 29, 1889, an article appeared in the *Rockland County Journal* titled: "Noise in Saloons," which stated that a petition was



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Once Labor Day is past, things start hopping at the Historical Society. We invite you to the events on page 2. We hope you'll enjoy them!

Win Perry, AIA, Society President

presented to the Board of Trustees of the Village of Nyack to take some action to compel hotels to close at midnight. Numerous complaints had been made that loud noises coming from some of the establishments, lasting until 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning, greatly disturbed the peace of the neighborhoods, preventing people from sleeping. The police were ordered by the Board to look into the matter and compel the hotels and saloons to close at midnight.

One hotel, located on North Broadway and Fourth Avenue, started out as *Lydecker's Boarding House* and in 1892 was christened the *Ivanhoe Hotel*. The article in the *Journal* reported that fifty boarders and guests from the village gathered to rename the building. Three "ladies" from those in attendance who suggested names were chosen to make a selection from the list—it only took a few minutes to settle on the name *Ivanhoe*. In 1962, Samuel Eidelberg, builder of the current apartment building on the site, decided to retain the name in homage to its history.

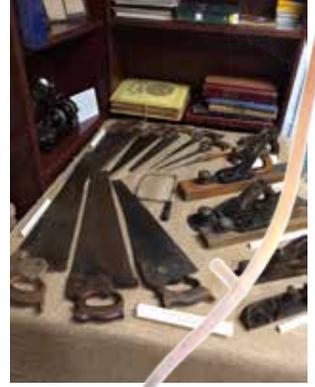
The *St. George Hotel* on Burd Street was under the ownership of George Bardin (1846-1909) for over 20 years. Bardin had previously managed a few other hotels in Nyack. Before he came to Nyack, Bardin had been the personal secretary to James "Diamond Jim" Fisk, a tarnished American financier who, along with Jay Gould, helped cause the collapse of the gold market on September 24, 1869, known as "Black Friday." (Fisk was only 36 when the collapse occurred and shortly thereafter was fatally shot in New York City by a disgruntled associate.)

Continued on page 3.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE NYACKS - WHERE LOCAL HISTORY HAPPENS

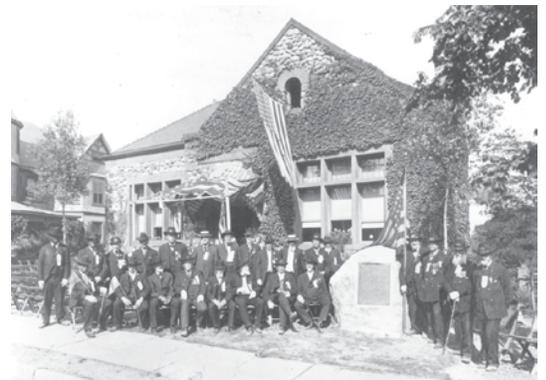
A NYACK TOOLBOX: IMPLEMENTS FROM THE PAST

An extensive exhibit of old tools and implements from various occupations, contributed by Nyackers in response to an invitation in the last issue of the *Newsletter*, is now open in our Museum at 50 Piermont Avenue. There are varieties of hammers, saws, chisels, planes, and drills as expected, but also a doctor's sphygmomanometer and stethoscope, a pharmacist's mortar and pestle, a bootblack's footrest, machinist's tools, and others that you will enjoy trying to identify. Many of the tools are accompanied by stories describing how they were used in someone's youth or by parents, grandparents, or other relatives, together with details of these people's lives. Come see how many of our grandparents were immigrants! **Open on Saturdays from 1:00 to 4:00 pm.**



BERTA AND ELMER HADER: A LIFETIME OF ART

An exhibit in the display cases in the Carnegie-Farian Room of the Nyack Library features the work of this beloved team of artists and author-illustrators, whose children's books have delighted three generations and whose paintings hang in many museums. They built their own home on the hillside in Grand View and described the experience in *The Little Stone House*. But they were very much a part of the Nyack community, which is featured, along with bits of Piermont, in *Little Town*. The exhibit showcases a new book, titled the same as the exhibit, which beautifully illustrates and records their joint artistic career and is available for sale at the Library. **On display through November.**



2014 JOHN SCOTT ARMCHAIR WALKING TOURS

Program 1: *Nyack and the Civil War*

Wednesday, October 15, 7:00 pm, Nyack Library

Thursday, October 16, 2:00 pm, Valley Cottage Library

Speaker: Brian Jennings, Local History Librarian, New City Library

Program 2: *The Return of the Eagles to Rockland County, a Photographic Journey*

Wednesday, November 19, 7:00 pm, Nyack Library

Thursday, November 20, 2:00 pm, Valley Cottage Library

Speaker: Ray Wright, retired Nyack realtor and published nature photographer extraordinaire, who specializes in photographing bald eagles, humming birds, and other nature subjects

Program 3: *When Nyack Meant Business*

Wednesday, December 10, 7:00 pm, Nyack Library

Thursday, December 11, 2:00pm, Valley Cottage Library

Speaker: Bob Goldberg, Historical Society of the Nyacks trustee and producer of the Armchair Walking Tours



HISTORY PIQUES FIFTH GRADERS' INTEREST

Please enjoy the following comments written by three students entering the fifth grade. In May of this year I met Tyler, Clyde, and Aiden at Upper Nyack Elementary School and was immediately impressed with their interest and enthusiasm for history. — Editor



Tyler, Aiden, and Clyde

We are interested in history because it recaps interesting and exciting events that have happened throughout time. We are grateful that our fourth-grade teacher, Mr. Galantich, gave us many opportunities last year to look deeper into history, especially the Revolutionary War. This year, we'll learn more about the Civil War. All of us recently visited the Haverstraw Brick Museum because we wanted to learn more about a very old brick that we found in the brook in Memorial Park. Following is a bit more information about each of us:

Tyler Willcox, age 10

My interest in history started when I was four years old and I knew basically everything (well, a lot) about the presidents. I could name flash cards with the presidents' pictures on them. It only escalated from there. When I was seven years old I went to Washington, D.C., and to the Smithsonian Museum. When I was eight, I went to Boston and saw the Bunker Hill monument and Quincy Market. Last month I went to Philadelphia and saw the Liberty Bell, Betsy Ross's house, the Benjamin Franklin Museum (where I discovered how harsh it was to be a colonist by using a tabletop game), and the U.S. Mint, where I found they had a debate about whether to use the British currency or create their own. I'm excited about the fifth-grade History Club this year.

Aiden Mars, age 10

The reason I'm interested in history is because I'd like to know what happened back in the past, because there were many more people on earth before me. I was initially interested in sports history—I know a lot about sports, from the start of baseball to today's baseball. But when I started my fourth-grade year in Mr. Galantich's class everything changed. I was still interested in the history of baseball, but I became so much more interested in historical wars, including the Revolutionary War, than I was before. I plan to join the fifth-grade History Club where we'll act out what it's like to actually live in colonial days.

Clyde Lederman, age 10

My interest in history began when I visited London, England, and seeing the Parliament Building sparked my interest in British history. After I researched British history, I became interested in the Revolutionary War. From there I became interested in the presidents and U.S. history. I have visited many historical sites, such as Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Bristol and London, England. Recently, I took a trip and visited the following places: Fredericksburg, Charlottesville, Richmond, Colonial Williamsburg, and Yorktown. I am enthusiastic about history because I would like to learn about how people lived and how they thought and functioned in society, and how historical events and people influenced each other.

A Glimpse of Nyack

by Lawrence Hecht, Nyack High School, Class of 1955

My fondest memories of growing up in the early 1950s in the Village of Nyack center around Main Street on Friday evenings. It was a diversified street with menswear shops, ladies' apparel boutiques, hardware stores, and numerous restaurants and bars. The shops generally stayed open until 9:30pm on Friday nights, and people from all over Rockland County shopped here. Folks from Rockland and Orange counties parked their cars in the village to shop and frequent the local beauty shops. Due to the many cars in town, shoppers had to park as far away as Cedar Hill Avenue or Fourth Avenue on Broadway.

I can still see the students from Nyack College handing out religious literature at the corner of Broadway and Main Street. The *Skouras Theater* on Broadway and First Avenue was a favorite gathering spot for Friday night shoppers.

The only store that has remained intact since 1950 is *Koblin's Pharmacy*. I spent many a Friday night waiting for Jerry Koblin to complete his evening shift so that we could walk or ride our bikes to the *Hilltop Restaurant* for a slice of pizza and a *Coke*. *Schmidt's* was an ice cream parlor in the heart of Nyack, and students from all seven high schools in the county would share ice cream treats there on Friday nights.

During the 1950s, the only traffic light in the village was located on the corner of Main Street and Broadway. And by 9:30pm, all stores were asked to close for the evening or be faced with a police fine.

Destination, continued from page 1

From the time he purchased the *St. George* in 1886, Bardin wanted to make its restaurant one of the best along the Hudson. He was successful and it became Nyack's *Delmonico's*. Bardin was known to be a perfect gentleman, always courteous and polite. Many people thought that no one knew better than Bardin how to manage a first-class hotel and he was held in high esteem by the Nyack community. He was elected four times as Rockland County representative to the New York State Hotel Association. When Bardin died in August 1909, memorial services were held at St. Ann's Church.

By the 1930s, most of Nyack's hotels had closed as the automobile broadened people's choices of vacation destinations.

Visit our museum to see the *Hotel St. George* front desk and register. — Editor

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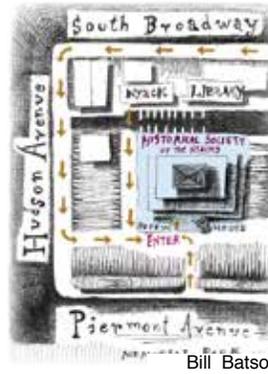


Historical Society of the Nyacks

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Our museum is open from 1 to 4pm on Saturdays and is located in the lower level of the Depew House, 50 Piermont Avenue (directly east of the Nyack Library).



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SUPPORT LOCAL HISTORY

Please take a few moments to benefit local history. Your support helps us to maintain and enhance our museum in the DePew House and enables us to continue popular activities such as our acclaimed Great Nyack House Tour, our John Scott Armchair Walking Tours, and other special lectures and programs. See the mailing label on this page for your membership status.

Please mail your donation to Historical Society of the Nyacks, P.O. Box 850, Nyack, NY 10960 or go to nyackhistory.org/support.html

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