

1700



1917

BEEKMAN ARMS



RHINEBECK

NEW YORK

REMINISCENCES OF THE OLDEST HOTEL IN AMERICA



1769

THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE REPRINTED FROM
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RHINEBECK, N. Y.



INETY-EIGHT miles from New York on the Old Post Road along the east side of the Hudson River at the crossing of the New England turnpike in the very heart of Rhinebeck stands the oldest hotel in America. About the year 1700, William Traphagen bought the land of Henry Beekman, being the first parcel Beekman sold out of his patent from Holland.

Traphagen built a one-story stone house of two rooms with a loft above. The kitchen, which still is used as such, was then the general living room while the other and larger apartment served as the public room. A little bar in one corner, a big fireplace with rude benches in front of it offered the traveler of those days comforts not always met with in a day's journey. A pile of sheep skins formed his bed before the fire while the family climbed to the loft for sleep.

Arent Traphagen, the son, enlarged the house until in 1769, at his death, it included the parts enclosed by the heavy stone walls of the present building, which was, in 1769, two stories high with an attic which later became a ball room. The first ceiling is now 8 feet high—the second 7 feet 2 inches—the original dimensions. The whole construction denotes the character of a fortress, and was a place of refuge for the whole community in time of trouble with the white or red foes. The walls are 2 or 3 feet thick on each side and the fire places and arrangements for living in the great cellar lead to the conclusion that non-combatants were massed below while the fighting men held the walls above.

The floors are strong enough to support the light artillery of those days. The lower floor

beams, of oak, are 8 by 12 inches, the floor planks 1½ inches thick, 14 inches wide and fastened by hand made spikes 4 and 6 inches long.

Legend and folk lore are prolific of stories concerning the house during its long career. Its history is the history of the town and its people. A book can be made of a tenth part of the incidents, many of them historic, occurring in and around the venerable pile. Every room has its separate narrative of tragic or humorous interest, but the dining and tap rooms perhaps can muster more than their quota. In the tap room the adventurous pioneer, the hardy trapper and traveler, and often the red savage of two hundred years ago, met on equal ground.

General Montgomery lived in the hotel at times before his ill fated expedition to Canada in 1775 where he fell before Quebec. Later during the revolution, Washington, LaFayette, Schuyler, Arnold, Hamilton and scores of other noted men spent anxious hours there. Aaron Burr, Silas Wright, John Armstrong, DeWitt Clinton and hundreds more who made names in early history of nation and state rested in it at times. Martin Van Buren often stopped at the house and the list is a long one down to Theodore Roosevelt who has been a guest.

The general arrangement of the rooms and walls of the older part remain the same. The alteration of the third story in 1865 did not materially change the interior below. The dining room is the same that all the guests of the past, great and humble, have broken fast in. The fireplace there is the same before which one night in 1813 Aaron Burr and Gen'l. John Armstrong sat chatting when Miss Eliza Jacques, daughter of the landlord, en-

tered to pass through to the kitchen. Burr, who had just returned from the French court, imperiously ordered her to bring him a boot-jack. She modestly replied: "It is not my place to bring you a boot-jack but I will order a negro to do it." Burr sprang up angrily and shaking his fist at her, shouted: "By God! you are not too good to bring me a boot-jack!" General Armstrong sprang in front of Burr and shaking his fist in turn at him, cried: "By God, sir, she is too good to bring you a boot-jack, and if you say that again I'll knock you down, sir!" Burr subsided; he knew the General was an expert swordsman. Gen'l. Armstrong lived long in the house an honored guest. He was U. S. Senator from New York, Minister to France, and Secretary of war. A fine old portrait of the General hangs in the sitting room. It was made in France in 1804, while he was U. S. Minister at Versailles.

The old tap room, in which the guests of all the ages of the house have gathered, is now used as a sitting room. The window in which Washington sat watching the cross roads many hours for the coming and going of his couriers, is as it was in his day, except the old sash has been replaced by that of modern make. Panes in the former sash bore many noted autographs carelessly scratched with a diamond as the owner idly watched the roadway.

The huge brown beams and planks of the ceiling are there as the builders placed them. The rough walls are white washed and a plate rail extending across two sides of the room is filled with remnants of the crockery and pewter used in the primitive days of the 18th and 19th centuries. Flint-locks hang on the beams and swords cross on

the chimney breast and, below, the pure white mantel rises above the Dutch tiled fireplace and hearth over which hang crane and kettle. The mantel dates back to 1798 and was then the property of Janet, widow of Gen'l. Richard Montgomery. The room is replete with fine pieces of old polished mahogany and the cabinets contain many articles of rare interest. The big blue pitcher easily outranks all other relics of the house. It was the bar pitcher previous to 1800 and to-day rests honored and revered in the room where it served so long and well. It is of extraordinary dimensions, being 13 inches high, 3 feet in circumference and holds 4 gallons. It is of Staffordshire make and shows fine views, in blue and white of Gloucester Cathedral. It is probably without a counterpart in America.

The sitting room is kept free from modern innovations and the spinning wheel, the fine old dutch spindle chairs, the 200 years old clock ticking off correct time under wooden works, the old prints, the rare china, the rag carpets and the many other accessories of the apartment are never profaned by the presence of things more modern than guests.

The hotel does not impress the visitor by its exterior, but at once after entering he is aware of its age. The broad hall out of which rises the stair, up which a man above the average height cannot ascend without stooping; the extremely low ceiling of the parlor floor, the spacious bed rooms furnished with rare old mahogany, the deep window seats, every where tell of the days when men "builided better than they knew."

The house stands on the chief corner of the town, back from the roadway behind a space of

lawn and flowers with rows of great elms overhanging all. It has broad piazzas on two stories.

The list of landlords is not a long one considering the two centuries of its life. After the Trap-hagens 69 years of occupancy the succession was infrequent until the death of William Jacques. He took the property in 1805 and for 30 years was a noted figure in the community because of his rugged honesty, his great physical strength and sarcastic wit. Men were careful not to cross him for he visited on them either the punishment of fist or tongue. It was a common act for him to take a barrel of cider by the chimes from a cart and place it in the cellar.

The sign of the inn swung from poles at the south east corner. In 1812 a detachment of troops enroute to invade Canada camped for the night in a grove of locusts close to the hotel, where the town hall now stands. Jacques offended the soldiers in some way, so during the night they cut down the sign. Next day he hung it high between two large locust trees in the grove and defied the whole army to cut it down. There it remained until his death, in 1835.

The wooden wing on the north end in which office and bar are now located, was added about 1810. It was built for use as a general store. Many of the landlords combined the two professions. In the term of the Tremper Brothers occupancy the Rhinebeck Club was formed by the leading residents of the town including J. B. and Lewis Livingston, William Astor, Douglas Merritt, Wm. Bergh Kip, Robt. B. Huntington, and a select few who loved the environments of the old hostelry and for five years used two of its large rooms as their club house.

It stood literally as a landmark in the early part of the 18th century. It has received as guests successive generations of many families. Scores of travelers, professional and casual, have regarded it as the old homestead. Some have stopped in it regularly during 30 years. All seem to know its many doors and turnings as if at home. The town people regard the place as a public heritage and while many rivals have appeared from time to time the old house alone has survived the vicissitudes of two centuries. A stranger guest, if he wishes, can hear absorbing tales about the hotel from the gray heads of Rhinebeck ringing the changes on ambition, passion, pleasure and pain, for the drama of life has been played a thousand times beneath its roof and often by actors whose names are written high on history's page.

LANDLORDS

Arent Traphagen }	1700-1769
Wm. Traphagen }	
Evaradus Bogardus	1769-1802
Asa Potter	1802-1805
Wm. Jacques	1805-1835
Mrs. Jacques	1835-1837
Robt. T. Seymour	1840-1853
O. V. Doty	1853-1855
Fred'k Sipperly	1855-1857
Edward Pultz	1857-1858
Hunting Germond	1858-1860
Burnett Conkling	1860-1862
Jas. N. McElroy	1862-1864
Griffin Hoffman	1864-1873
Tremper Brothers	1873-1884

Lorenzo Decker	1884-1891
Edward Lasher	1891-1893
E. M. Vanderburgh	1893
Vernon D. Lake	1894-1906
Halleck Welles	1906-1907
Arthur Shuffle	1907-1914
W. W. Foster	1914-

The present proprietor of the Inn, Mr. Foster, purchased the property in 1914, and has been constantly developing it along the best lines believing that there is a demand for the highest class accommodation and food from the large number of automobilists using the great tourist routes, the Inn being located at the intersection of the two greatest Hudson Valley routes as will be seen from the diagram on the back of cover.

The oldest hotel in America has been completely remodeled from plans of Harrie T. Lindeberg, the New York architect, and retains the charms of age and historic association with the added attraction of an up-to-date heating plant, many bath rooms and modern plumbing throughout the building.

The brick wing, which embraces a large new dining room besides suites of rooms and baths, is nearly ready for occupancy. It adjoins on the south the original stone building dating from 1700, shortly after the grant from the English Crown of a large tract of land on the Hudson River to Henry Beekman, from whom Rhinebeck takes its name. This wing is shown in the architect's sketch appearing on the front cover.

The restaurant is open for business, and many of the bedrooms with new bathrooms are com-

pleted and in service. Mr. Foster has engaged the services of an experienced steward, for many years with a well known New York hotel, and particular attention will be given to maintaining the highest standard of cuisine. Fresh vegetables from the hotel's own garden and the celebrated dairy products of Dutchess County will add to the quality of the menu. Artesian well water will be used throughout the establishment.

Special attention will be given to automobile parties, who will be able to obtain meals at all hours, and the patronage is solicited of those who wish to enjoy the comforts of a metropolitan hotel combined with the quaint charm of an historic country inn.

RHINEBECK

The Village of Rhinebeck is 266 feet above sea level; population 1581; ten miles of streets, the village of homes and business combined; the parlor of Dutchess county and the vacation spot for hundreds of city people. Every corner of Rhinebeck is a beauty spot. The village public square is located at 41 degrees, 55 minutes, 36 seconds North Latitude and 73 degrees, 54 minutes, 47 seconds West Longitude.

Rhinebeck has paved streets, two banks, six churches, Starr Institute, the Thompson House, a well equipped hospital; Holiday Farm, a home for convalescent children, given by Vincent Astor; the Choristers' School, belonging to the Church of the Messiah; the Beekman Arms, said to be the oldest hotel in America; day and night electric light and power service, pure water in plenty, one theatre, adequate schools and fire protection, good govern-

ment, an exceptionally good public library, two auto stage lines and one auto freight truck operant to Rhinecliff, and nightwatch service. The Rhinebeck Gazette is the local weekly newspaper, a model rural paper, now in its seventy-second year of publication. Because of the high grade of its editorial and special articles and its columns of local news The Gazette is read by a large circle of people, not confined to the Hudson Valley. The Gazette operates the only Print Shop in Dutchess County with Federal endorsement of its cost finding system. The editor is glad to answer inquiries as to items of historical interest in Rhinebeck, and to give any information within his power pertaining to local conditions. Two local histories have been written, one by Edward Smith, published 1881; the other by Howard H. Morse, published 1908. Copies of these histories may be obtained at the Gazette Office.

Rhinebeck is the center of the violet growing industry and supplies all markets east of the Mississippi river with the blooms; two railroads pass through the town limits, the New York Central and the Central New England and the service is the best.

Any information relative to Rhinebeck will be gladly furnished by The Rhinebeck Gazette at 24 East Market street.

REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH

One block below Beekman Arms, where the Saulsbury Turnpike (Sepasco Road) joins the old Albany and New York Post Road, is located the Dutch Reformed church of Rhinebeck, which was established in 1731. The present dignified edifice was erected in 1809 on the site of the little red church which was built under the supervision of Colonel Henry Beekman in 1732 on two

acres which he had previously given for church purposes and which was, of course, a part of the Beekman patent. The vast estates of this family were inherited by Colonel Beekman's daughter Margaret, who became a member of this church in 1742. A few years later she became the wife of Robert R. Livingston and the mother of the remarkable family of children famous in local, state and national history.

In the walls of this old church are tablets to the memory of Beekmans, Livingstons and Tillotsons, and in the lobby hangs the picture of Margaret Beekman-Livingston, surrounded by portraits of her illustrious sons and sons-in-law, adherents of this historic old church.

Robert R. Livingston, son, was Chancellor of the State of New York and administered the oath of office to President Washington. He was also Minister to France and negotiated the Louisiana Purchase.

Edward Livingston, son, was Secretary of State under President Jackson, Minister to France and author of a code of laws which were used in the territory comprised in the Louisiana Purchase.

Morgan Lewis, son-in-law, was Governor of the State of New York, Attorney General and served as Chief Justice. He was Major General in the War of the Revolution and in the War of 1812. He was also the founder of our common schools.

General Armstrong, son-in-law, served as United States Senator, Minister to France and was Secretary of War under President Madison.

General Richard Montgomery, son-in-law, was the famous soldier who fell at Quebec in 1775. The site of General Montgomery's residence is on Montgomery street, and the house in which he lived when he left for the memorable campaign to Quebec now stands in Livingston street, where it was moved many years ago.

Visitors are always welcome at the old church, which is open every day.

Many interesting tombstones are to be found in the grave yard adjoining the church.

RHINEBECK
THE TOURING
CENTER
OF
THE
HUDSON
VALLEY

HUDSON 25 MILES
 ALBANY → 60 MILES
 BERKSHIRES - VIA HUDSON - STATE ROADS

- RHINEBECK TO*
HUDSON 25 MILES
ALBANY 60 MILES
BERKSHIRES VIA
HUDSON &
GREAT BARRINGTON
 55 MILES
LENOX 70 MILES
PITTSFIELD
 75 MILES
SPRINGFIELD
 110 MILES
WORCESTER
 160 MILES
BOSTON
 200 MILES

← KINGSTON - FERRY 2 1/2 MI.
 ROUTE TO ASHOKAN RESERVOIR
 CATSKILL MOUNTAIN ROUTE
 TO ONEONTA

SHORT ROUTE TO BERKSHIRES
 VIA - PINE PLAINS - MILLERTON
 (DIRT ROADS) →



BEEKMAN ARMS
 THE
 BEST OF
 MEALS
 AND
 ACCOMMODATIONS.
 STOP AND INSPECT
 THE
 "OLDEST HOTEL
 IN AMERICA"
 WITH ITS
 HISTORIC ASSOCIATIONS

16 MILES POUGHKEEPSIE STATE
 ROAD ← NEW YORK
 90 MILES ← POUGHKEEPSIE
 CAMP WHITMAN VIA POUGHKEEPSIE

- RHINEBECK TO*
POUGHKEEPSIE
 16 MILES
BEACON
 31 MILES
COLD SPRING
 34 MILES
TARRYTOWN
 66 MILES
YONKERS
 76 MILES
CAMP WHITMAN
 VIA POUGHKEEPSIE
 38 MILES