

THE WOODBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

543 Route 32 - P.O. BOX 30

HIGHLAND MILLS, NY 10930

(845) 928-6770 - woodburyhistoricalsociety.org

Open During the Following Times Each Week:

Tues. 2-4 PM; Thurs. 7-9 PM; Sat. 10:30-12:30 PM.

Newsletter Editors: Alex Prizgintas, Leslie Rose, & Millicent Treloar.

Winter 2025

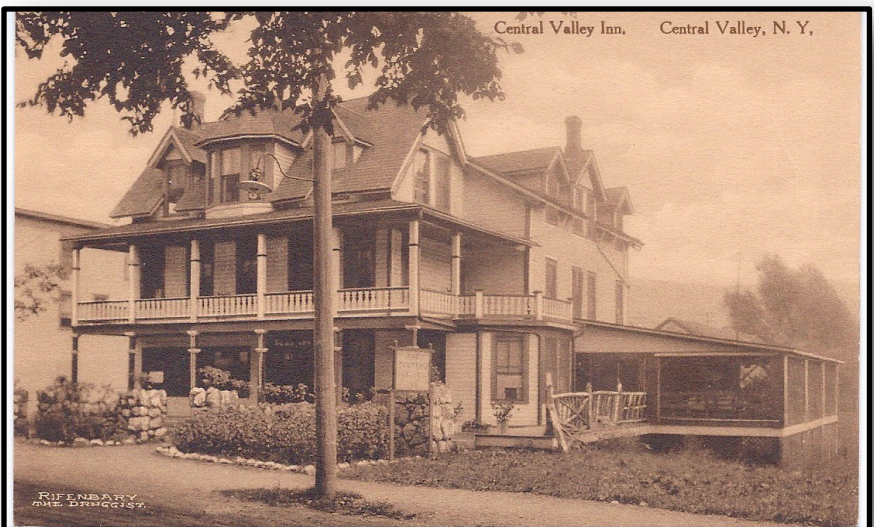
A Tale of Two Woodbury Inns with the Same Name

Part 1: Next Stop, Central Valley, NY: Watch Your Step Disembarking!

Millicent Treloar

In historical dramas, Victorian-era train engines belching smoke beckon you into a world of summertime getaways from myriad stresses of dense urban living. All around the world where railroad tracks were laid in the late 1800s, people sought the respite of spending leisurely days in the greenery and pure air of the country.

In America, the Central Valley Inn was one such summer destination in Woodbury, New York. A photo taken sometime before 1910 (right) shows the Inn at its site on Smith Clove Road. Guests walked, or rode in a horse cart, a short distance from the station to the Inn. The building might have started out as a private residence; it was the Central Valley Hotel before becoming the Central Valley



Inn. It was considered a “mid-sized” hotel perfectly suited for accommodating weary railroad travelers, but not on par with more luxurious establishments such as the Summit Lake House in Central Valley or Hillcrest in Highland Mills, both of which were further away from their respective railroad stations.

Perhaps the most distinct architectural detail of the Central Valley Inn was its large second-story balcony that allowed guests to view today's Smith Clove Road. Additionally, note the large enclosed space to the right of the main hotel building, likely used as a dining room.

The Ramapo Valley Gazette of Monroe, NY reported on December 18, 1908 that the owner of the Central Valley Hotel, E. Steenberg of Catskill, NY, had sold it to a Mr. Atwater of a road construction business. Mr. Atwater “thoroughly renovated [the building] from top to bottom,” renaming it the Central Valley Inn. It had several owners and operators over the years. Henry Goff is the best-known manager, from sometime in those early years until 1923 when he left to run his own establishment. He expanded on the Inn's New York City guest services to also host locals throughout the year. The next page features a memoir in the Woodbury Historical Society's Hotel archives, written by a grandchild of a long-ago patron of the Inn. Unfortunately, we do not know the name of the writer or when these fond memories were shared. If anyone reading this can help to identify the date and the author, please let us know.

"Before the porch and other additions were added to the Inn, it was the Central Valley Hotel. It must have been difficult sleeping, with a livery stable housed under the hotel. When the Hotel became an Inn, the livery stable was moved elsewhere. A large screened porch and other additions were made. The Inn became the place to go [for locals]. The manager, Henry Goff, proved to be very good and business poured in. The West Point graduating classes had dinners there, and whenever there was a need for a special town meeting, it would be held at the Inn. My grandfather loved the Inn and the good fellowship. One night he was enjoying too much fellowship, ... his horse left, with the buggy, and went home to the barn. Harry left the Inn in 1923 and built his own place in Highland Mills, Goff's Inn. He did a very big business, but it lasted only five years because the place burned down in 1928.

In the early thirties there was a big auction of furniture and other items at the [Central Valley] Inn. The days of the Inn were over. I remember Dean Arnold's parents bought some items; one was a large mirror that Dean broke trying to put it in the car. I remember it because his mother made a big fuss about it and Dean became very angry.

Once the Inn was officially closed down, we used the screened porch for roller skating. It was a good roller rink, and the support post made [for] good grabbing.

The Inn did not suffer too much from vandalism, but Town Supervisor Howard Gregory had the Inn torn down in 1942 in fear that it might be set on fire. It was homeless men that probably started the fire at the lumber yard the year before."

We do not know the exact date that the Central Valley Inn hosted its last guests. The inn has since disappeared into distant memories along with the dissipating train-engine smoke. But the draw of good times in Woodbury remained powerful for decades to come. A second installment of this series will cover the history of the later, and more contemporary, namesake likely familiar to many who lived in Woodbury.



This photo of the original Central Valley Inn shows its location in comparison to downtown Central Valley, with the railroad in the background. Today's Central Valley Post Office now sits on the inn site.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Fifty People That Shaped Southeastern Orange County

Sunday, April 27th, 12:00—4:00 PM

If you enjoyed last year’s “Fifty Items that Tell the Story of Southeastern Orange County” event, be sure to stay tuned for this April as we switch the theme to both locally and nationally famous individuals that helped to shape the region we call home. Featuring participation from up to twelve historical societies from municipalities such as Woodbury, Monroe, Harriman, Tuxedo, Highland Falls, Cornwall, Warwick, Chester, and Goshen, we look forward to this event continuing our theme of collaboration and partnerships among organizations in Orange County. The event will take place at the Town of Woodbury Senior Center, 16 County Route 105, Highland Mills, NY. If you have any suggestions for famous people in your community or wish to help set up for the big day, please call 845-928-6770 or email woodbury1889@optonline.net.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

A Message from the President

2024 was a significant year for the Woodbury Historical Society, with a 20% growth in membership, increased digital access to our archives through our website, and new acquisitions greatly enhancing our collections. Especially notable are the extensive assemblage of drawings, patents, correspondences, and even a prototype hand-held electric saw from industrial inventor Ethan I. Dodds of Central Valley, a brass microscope with slides of seeds and insects tied to the nationally-renowned Houghton Farm, and two marching band drums with provenance from the Highland Mills Band. Of course, we also cannot forget the debut of our 2025 calendar, with our 2026 edition already being planned, and our popular lineup of public events. From our 100th anniversary of the Rushmore Memorial Library Building in July to “Fifty Items that Tell the Story of Southeastern Orange County and a “2024 Toy Train Legacy,” these events all drew large crowds—some with more than 250 attendees. In all cases, none of this would be achievable without your continued support through an organization membership. Thank you for helping to spearhead our momentous growth in 2024, with even greater plans for 2025!

Sincerely,

Alex Prizgintas

President, Woodbury Historical Society

Town Historian, Woodbury, NY

BEHIND THE IRON GATES: GATEHOUSE NEWS

The Gatehouse Committee would like to wish Leslie Rose well on her decision to pass the torch on as Woodbury Historian to Alex Prizgintas. She has been an asset and a staple in this community for many years. We know Woodbury is in good hands with Alex at the helm and look forward to the continued collaboration with both him and Leslie on future endeavors.

Last year, the first opening of the Gatehouse Museum and Learning Center since 2019 was met with success—especially concerning the strong attendance in joint events held with the Woodbury Public Library at our location. With this in mind, The Gatehouse is starting to gear up for an exciting 2025 season. Particularly important for this year will be the development of new exhibits for our three rooms and the establishment of formal operating hours to coordinate with the historical society’s visiting hours. We look forward to seeing everyone and look forward to input and ideas from the community. For those who wish to contribute their help towards the Gatehouse Committee, please contact site chairperson, Joanne Calore, at jojo24.jb@gmail.com.



THE WOODBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

543 Route 32 - P.O. BOX 30

HIGHLAND MILLS, NY 10930

(845) 928-6770 - woodburyhistoricalsociety.org

Open During the Following Times Each Week:

Tues. 2-4 PM; Thurs. 7-9 PM; Sat. 10:30-12:30 PM.

2025 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____ EMAIL: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

PLEASE CHECK APPROPRIATE BOX(S)

SENIOR CITIZEN	\$5.00
INDIVIDUAL	\$15.00
FAMILY	\$20.00
SPONSOR	\$35.00
PATRON	\$75.00
CORPORATION	\$100.00
I WISH TO DONATE AN ADDITIONAL AMOUNT TO THE KIRK SCHOLARSHIP FUND IN THE AMOUNT OF: _____	
I WISH TO DONATE AN ADDITIONAL AMOUNT TO THE GATEHOUSE MUSEUM AND LEARNING CENTER FUND IN THE AMOUNT OF: _____	

TOTAL: _____

Thank you for your support of the Woodbury Historical Society.

Officers:

Alex Prizgintas: President - Neil Crouse: Vice President - Millicent Treloar: Secretary - Desiree Potvin: Treasurer

Trustees:

Robert Anzalone, Joanne Calore, William Doyle, Arlene Maher, Robert McCue, June Menkens, Viktor Prizgintas, Leslie Rose, Pat Reynolds, Walter Stanfield, Jr.