

THE WOODBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

543 Route 32 - P.O. BOX 30

HIGHLAND MILLS, NY 10930

(845) 928-6770

Open During the Following Times Each Week:

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

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

WOODBURY FALLS: OUR TOWN'S FORGOTTEN HAMLET

A Then and Now Journey: Alex Prizgintas

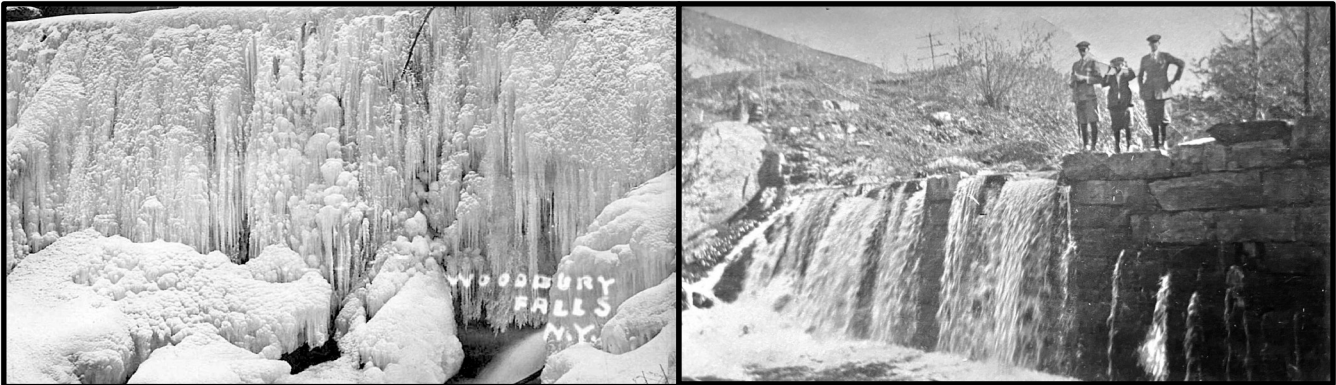
This summer, the Woodbury Historical Society has been rapidly reorganizing its collections with two major milestones completed. The first of these was the creation of a digital database for our library by MWHS alum and summer intern Kayden Manson, now publicly accessible on our website. Additionally, we have completed the refining and re-labeling of more than 500 postcards and original images in our archives. Reviewing our amazing collection of period photographs inspired me to change the format for some of our newsletter articles with an emphasis on images that carry common themes. This issue covers the then-and-now transformation of Woodbury Falls, our town's lost hamlet that was once situated north of Highland Mills. Woodbury Falls occupied the land extending northward from the former Black Forest Mill Restaurant, near the entrance of Brigadoon, to the Cornwall town line and eastward from Schunnemunk Mountain to the Town of Highlands. With far more rugged terrain compared to Central Valley and Highland Mills, Woodbury Falls never had a strong business district with the "downtown" largely concentrated in the area of Yesterday's Village antique store along Route 32. Its primary industry of summer resorts and boarding houses vanished by the late 1930s with the rise of automobiles and the decline of local railroads. However, although the name Woodbury Falls may be unknown to many living in our town today, many of the buildings that defined its landscape remain standing and, in some cases, largely unchanged from times past. I hope you enjoy the following guide designed to help recall some of Woodbury's forgotten history.



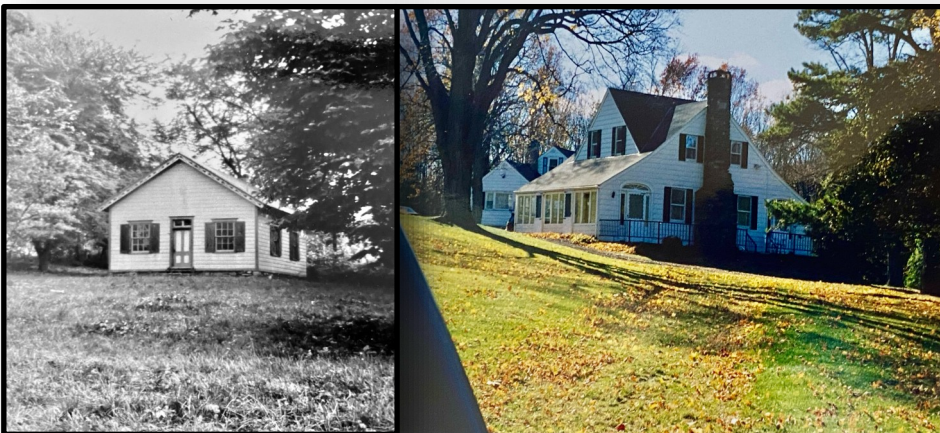
One of our newer donations is this c. 1870s scene of Woodbury Falls looking south to Highland Mills (left). Note the early stone bridge where Route 32 once crossed Woodbury Creek, and the train station which is just barely visible in the background. By 1909, this stone bridge was replaced with a modern metal crossing (right). During Hurricane Irene in 2011, the bridge was damaged and partially collapsed into the Woodbury Creek. It remains today behind Yesterday's Village antiques but is no longer passable.



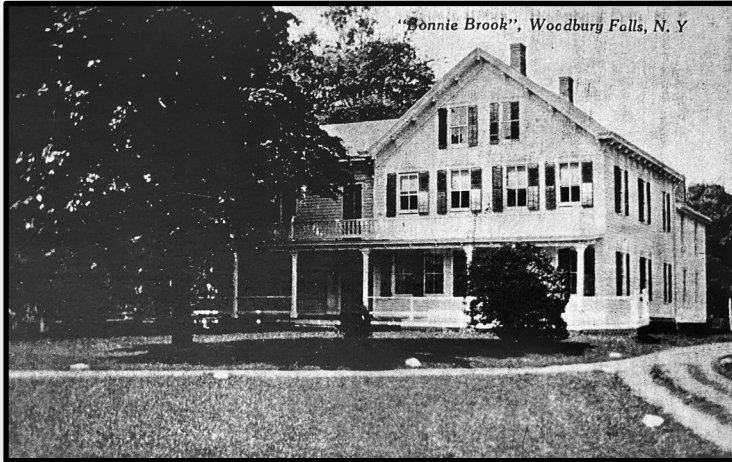
The heart of Woodbury Falls was the railroad, which was opened through our town in 1869. Originally, the tracks of the Erie Railroad's Newburgh Shortcut crossed Woodbury Creek directly above the waterfall and then crossed today's Route 32 at a level grade where the building housing the train station and post office was located. This dangerous grade crossing, which also featured a blind curve and a steep grade down today's Falls Lane, was partially mitigated when the Erie Railroad built its railroad trestle to carry the Graham Line over the valley between 1906 and 1909. In the process, the Newburgh Shortcut was also raised above Route 32 and passed over the road on a bridge. The steep descent was also removed along the road but a sharp curve remained along with a dangerous stairway connecting the road with the station (left). In the 1930s, Route 32 was removed from its original trajectory along the narrow Falls Lane and placed on an entirely new route with gentile curves. Coupled with the abandonment of the Newburgh Shortcut by 1937, the lower bridge was eventually removed and the road was moved east to the site of the station, which offered wider clearance (right). The upper trestle, originally for freight trains, today sees more passenger service as a part of Metro North's Port Jervis Line.



The actual waterfall of Woodbury Falls was a man-made structure, possibly dating to the time when the Woodbury Iron Furnace operated here many centuries ago. A popular source of postcards during the late 19th century (left), the falls attracted tourists and the small lake that was created as a result of the waterfall upstream had several boarding houses built along its shoreline. The first stage of the waterfall's destruction took place between 1906 and 1909, when the Erie Railroad built the Graham Line and the large railroad trestle across Route 32. In the process of construction, the waterfall was cut down in size by more than 50% and became awkwardly located well below Route 32 (right). By the 1930s, Route 32 was realigned yet again and what remained of the waterfall was almost completely removed. Today, all that remains of the falls are a few stone blocks located underneath the railroad trestle.



Considering all that has changed over the last century in Woodbury, all of its school buildings used between 1900 and today remain standing. The schoolhouse serving the Woodbury Falls hamlet (left) has undergone significant renovations over the years but remains standing on Trout Brook Road as a private residence (right).



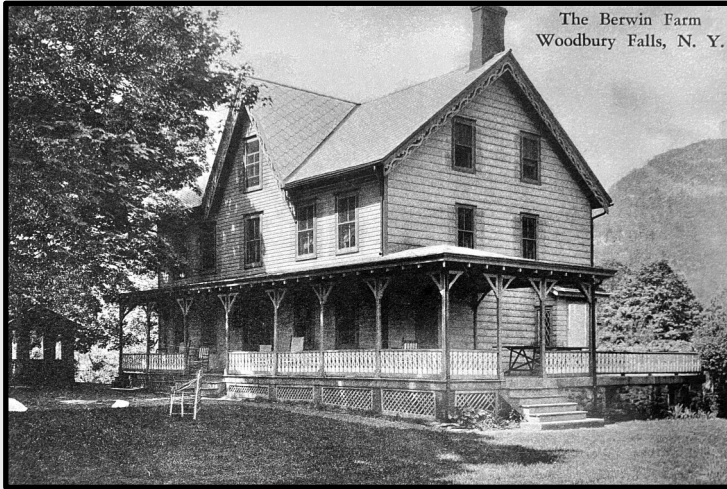
The name "Bonnie Brook" has been popular in Woodbury Falls for well over a century. Named for the portion of the Woodbury Creek located directly behind the property, the Bonnie Brook began as a substantially sized boarding house known as Wolf's along Route 32. In time, the name became associated with the bar and restaurant located directly adjacent to the original boarding house—known more recently as the Savory Grill. Both structures remain standing to this day, with the original boarding house now a private home while the old restaurant, as of 2024, remains vacant



What was once known as the Black Forest Mill Restaurant was originally a boarding house built by John W. Ford. Born in 1853, he was a member of the prominent local Ford family perhaps known best for operating department stores in Highland Mills (today's Mario's Restaurant) and Woodbury Falls. John Ford passed in 1932 and, twenty years later, his home was known as Highland Manor. By 1978, it took the name Black Forest Mill and specialized in German cuisine until its recent closing. Today's image shows the home's north side, replicating the original picture is nearly impossible today due to overgrowth.



The absence of a strong business district in Woodbury Falls meant the hamlet held few hotels compared to Central Valley and Highland Mills. Instead, many of the town's boarding houses were located here. Compared to hotels, boarding houses offered an authentic experience where guests became essentially members of the hosting family during their stay. One such example is Nearwood, located on today's Quaker Road and referred to in later times as the Sargeant House. After more than 100 years, it has remarkably survived the test of time quite well.



The northern extent of Woodbury Falls' business district was generally at today's intersection of Route 32 and Trout Brook Road. Here, adjacent to the Mineral Springs Brook sat the Berwin Farm--another one of the Hamlet's many boarding houses. Though the New York State Thruway now sits directly behind the property, the home itself remains largely unchanged today from the early postcard view. Even the well seen to the far left survives today.



Yes, Woodbury Falls even had its own gas station. Just south of the New York State Thruway overpass was Tom's Service Station and Groceries showing a wonderful collection of vintage signs and advertising. The building hides in plain sight today and was most recently retailed pool supplies. Even the post and bracket where the "Atlantic" gas sign once hung remain, though the vintage sign itself has been lost to time.



The region between Cornwall and Woodbury Falls was home to a sizable population of Quakers beginning in the late 18th century. By 1801, the Smith Clove Meeting House was constructed on today's Quaker Road and maintained close ties with the Quaker Meeting House in Cornwall. Prominent Quaker families including branches of the Smith, Seaman, Titus, and Townsend lines all resided in or near Woodbury Falls. The meeting house was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 and remains virtually unchanged from its construction more than 220 years ago.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, Nov. 10th, 2:00 PM: MADAMS, MOBSTERS, & MURDERS OF THE HUDSON VALLEY

Woodbury Senior Center, 16 County Route 105, Highland Mills, NY

The tranquil environment of New York's Hudson Valley is the site of both peaceful rural communities and single-family housing developments. Yet some of the Hudson Valley's heritage includes more harrowing tales. Like New York City, some sixty to one hundred miles to its south, crimes such as murder, kidnapping, and mob control over various rackets plagued the area.. Police raids on the country homes of mobsters Dutch Schultz, Legs Diamond, and illegal distilleries occurred frequently. And when mobster crackdowns didn't fill the headlines of daily newspapers, corrupt politicians, police chiefs, and government officials did. The crooked activities that appear in this book are the true stories reported in various Hudson Valley and New York City newspapers, and in the archives of local historic organizations. *Madams, Mobsters and Murders* is a true reflection of the darker side of life in a region otherwise known for its beauty, peacefulness and quiet way of life. Completing a thirty-eight-year career as a writer, editor, and media spokesperson for the government, Anthony Musso simultaneously worked as a weekly columnist and freelance journalist for Gannett Newspapers' Poughkeepsie Journal, Times-Herald Record, and Journal News

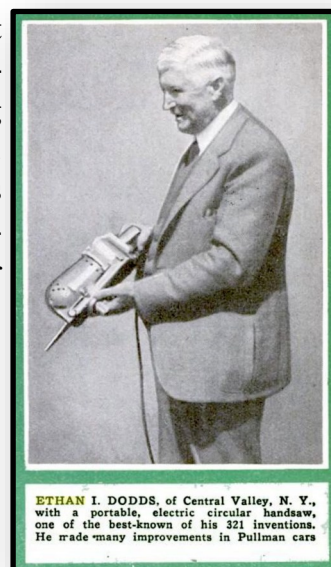
Sunday, Dec. 1st, 12:00 PM-4:30 PM: A WINTER TOY TRAIN LEGACY

The second year of a Toy Train Legacy is returning for the winter season after last year's success of having nearly 300 attendees. This year's train show will be complete with newly designed layouts, fresh displays, and a repair desk encouraging members of the public to bring in their toy trains that may be broken or do not run. As like last year, toy trains made over a span of 100 years will be exhibited in ways designed to attract wide, diverse audiences. Admission will remain at \$2 per individual, \$5 per family. Stay tuned for more exciting news as we approach the winter season! This event will be held at the Woodbury Senior Center in Highland Mills.

NEW PODCAST! A WALK THROUGH WOODBURY, EPISODE 6:

ETHAN I. DODDS, WOODBURY'S FAMOUS INVENTOR

Available on the WHS Website and Apple Podcasts!



BEHIND THE IRON GATES: GATEHOUSE NEWS

The summer brought exciting events to the Gatehouse. With the finishing touches finally complete, including a fresh coat of paint, carpets cleaned, and a good pruning outside, we were ready to reopen the doors and gates to the community. The "soft opening" was held on Sunday, July 14th, with local railroad historian Ray Kelly giving his presentation on the trolley line that once connected Middletown to Goshen. Former chairwoman Dorothy Morris came and gave her nod of approval and committee members were so happy to hear all the positive praise and feedback from everyone who visited.

Our next event was a collaboration between the Gatehouse Committee and the Woodbury Public Library. On July 29, we kicked off the last week of the library's summer reading program on the Gatehouse grounds with "Fantasy Storytime." The adventure featured visits from Rapunzel and Spiderman. Over 70 participants enjoyed an afternoon of stories, arts, and crafts. Many adults remarked on their interest in the Gatehouse but had never been inside before. Others fondly remembered the community icon and all the upgrades. On a final note, Daniel Askenazy completed his Eagle Scout project by building two picnic tables for the Gatehouse. We are looking forward to holding more events in the fall, and especially bringing back the tradition of the Callahan Christmas. As always, any input on event ideas, exhibits, or interest in volunteering at the Gatehouse is welcome and appreciated.