

Andes Society for History and Culture

Spring 2009 Newsletter

ASHC - Established in 1975

A WALK THROUGH THE IRA J. HUGHES HOUSE

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ANNUAL SPRING MEETING

The Andes Society for History and Culture will hold their annual Spring Meeting on Monday, April 20 at the Pleasant Valley Meeting Hall. The evening will begin at 6 pm with a potluck dinner, so bring a favorite dish-to-pass and your place settings.

There will be no formal program, but attendees are asked to come with their memories and mementos of Andes as it was in days gone by.

Two new board members will be introduced during the meeting, Harold and Marge Haugeto.

By Jim Andrews

I walk. A lot. Every night I make my way over the new sidewalks all through town. These trips on the pavement afford me ample time to reflect on every house in the village and what I remember about them. The village has changed dramatically since I was growing up; so many of the homes have had multiple owners and many, unfortunately, have lost much of their original character and charm. Several important buildings have disappeared from our landscape. One such building that once held a commanding presence over the community and was razed in the name of progress was the Ira J. Hughes house on Delaware Avenue.

This classic Italianate style home was constructed in the 1850's by David Ballantine on the site now occupied by the Andes Town Swimming Pool. It sat back from the road about even with the school and had a three-story carriage house and stable to its right. By 1869 the *Beers Atlas of Delaware County* shows the house as being owned by Ira J. Hughes and encompassed a field behind the adjacent McKee and Calvert homes as well as part of the hillside behind the school playground. Ira Hughes was a local tailor and civic leader who owned the house well into the 20th century. His place of business on Main Street was one listed as having burned in the Great Fire of 1878. I am assuming that Dr. C. L Wakeman was the next owner and, along with his wife and sisters, occupied the house until his retirement, when he moved back to his native Hancock. During his ownership, he took in as boarders Hilton Memorial High School students who lived too far out of town to commute to school (bus service was not provided in those days) and had his examining room



The Ira J. Hughes house, shown above, once stood where the town pool is now located

and supply storage on the first floor. The house then passed to Pete and Joe Ali. The Ali's often rented part of the house as an apartment. George and Louise Redden and their family lived in part of the house from 1947 until they purchased their home on Lower Main Street in 1959. Pete Ali and his wife Ann owned the home until it was sold to the school district and turned over to the town for a swimming pool site in 1967.

It was during the Ali ownership that I became familiar (and enthralled) with the house. Their son Manny was my brother's and my best friend and his family (who also owned and operated the Ali Inn) periodically lived in the house. My brother and I, along with Manny, spent many happy hours exploring the house and the great old carriage house in the back. I can vividly remember the room arrangement and interesting details contained within their walls.

There was a long, L-shaped porch on the front which led to a large front door with sidelights containing beautiful acid-etched cranberry glass. Once in the large front hall, a traditional Italianate staircase greeted you on

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A WORD FROM THE ASHC PRESIDENT

Thank You, Eddie!

We, the Society, accept with deep regret the resignation of our treasurer, Edna Piervincenzi. We must have worked her too long and too hard. We thank Eddie for all she has handled over the years. We will miss her wonderful work, her willing hands, her laugh, and her help. Our best wishes to you, Eddie, for all you want to do in the future. And come back anytime.

Always, we are signing up new members and renewing current memberships. We now have seats available on our Board of Directors. If anyone is interested in membership or being a Board member, please call any current director. Also, you are welcome to attend our Spring General Meeting on April 20th at the Pleasant Valley Meeting Hall. We will introduce Harold and Marge Haugeto that evening as new board members.

I believe the Hunting Tavern Museum, with our Parthenia Davis Gift Shop, has been one of our greatest achievements. We also

have our very successful Thrift Shop at the Old Fire Hall. A big Thank You goes to Dot Andrews and her helpers for a great job each year. A large portion of the community looks forward with anticipation to the seasonal shopping available at the Shop.

The PVMH is doing us proud also, with mini musical nights and performances as we can book them. Remember, both the Hunting Tavern and Pleasant Valley Meeting Hall, with its dining hall, are available for your affairs at very reasonable rates.

The Andes Society for History and Culture welcomes new ideas and new people anytime. Talk to any of us in the Society if you are interested.

We are looking forward to another good year for ASHC.

Margaret Moshier
ASHC President

THE IRA J. HUGHES HOUSE—CONTINUED

(Continued from page 1)

the right with a cherry newel post and bannister. To the right was the front parlor with a high ceiling and a three-windowed bay facing the street. The woodwork was grained to simulate walnut, a popular practice at the turn of the century. Behind that room was what was probably the "parlor bedroom." On the left side of the hall was another large parlor which was used as Dr. Wakeman's office and examining room. There was a side door which led out onto the porch—probably where the patients entered so as to not disturb the rest of the Wakeman family. The room also had a large "pocket" window which opened into the walls to gain access to the front veranda. Behind this room was Dr. Wakeman's pharmacy where he stored all of his medicines and "cures" of the day. Traveling down the long center hall, the cellar door was at the right, under the staircase. Straight ahead led to the large dining room, with two immense windows facing the west. The back stairs led from this room to the back upstairs hall. Directly behind the dining room was a large kitchen with an exterior door that faced the school. The house was originally heated with multiple wood stoves but when I visited there, the mammoth converted-to-oil coal boiler in the basement provided steam heat to all of the house's massive radiators. The kitchen sported an ornate radiator unique because of the two-doored warming oven it contained. Dishes and food could be placed there to keep warm before being served. Manny Ali used to put his mittens and boot socks in there to dry out after being out

playing in the snow. To the right of the kitchen was a large pantry with lots of built-ins and a sink. Behind the kitchen and down several steps was a large, unheated back room with a door to the backyard.

At the head of the main stairway you followed the long bannister towards the front of the house and the entrance to the greatest feature the house had to offer (at least to an elementary school child)---the tower. Through a door with frosted glass you entered a small square room directly under the tower. There was a small closet under the stairs and a curved staircase complete with cherry newel post and bannister leading to the tower. The view from the tower afforded grand vistas of Delaware Avenue and down the valley towards the Tremperskill. It was in this tower and the room beneath that the remains of the acetylene gas fixtures once used to light the house were found. The fixture was still in the tower and the pipes visible in the room below.

On the right front of the second floor was an immense room also boasting a "pocket" window which once led to a small balcony on the top of the first floor bay window. By the time I frequented the house the balcony had been removed. I vividly remember Pete Ali being enraged with his son Manny because he had opened the pocket window in the dead of winter and, not bothering to close it, drained the oil tank of \$200 worth of fuel!!

Behind this room was another large room, originally a bedroom but converted to a kitchen/dining area for the upstairs

apartment. My uncle boarded (along with Roland Burton) in this room when he attended Hilton Memorial High School. Across the hall was another large bedroom. A step down took you to the back hall which had two bedrooms on the left and one bedroom and a large bathroom complete with clawfoot tub on the right. The back stairs leading down into the dining room descended just before the bathroom door.

The carriage house provided room for several wagons or carriages as well as for the horses. The third floor was the haymow. At the time the buildings were demolished, I rescued a hand painted kerosene lamp dome which now is attached to the fixture hanging over my dining room table as well as a flatiron and several medicine bottles, all of which are still in my home.

During the house's demolition, it was obvious that the superbly constructed house just didn't want to come down. The building had been cut in half lengthwise with a cable encircling it—the cable being attached to a bulldozer which was to be used to pull the top half of the house from the bottom half. The plan didn't work since the house wouldn't budge. An alternate method was devised which finally brought the proud structure to the ground.

I can't help but remember this wonderful house every time I pass the pool and the new town hall and can only dream that if I had been 10 years older in 1967 or the house had survived 10 more years, I might be living in that house right now!

NEW ADDITIONS AT THE HUNTING TAVERN MUSEUM

By Jim Andrews

The parlor at the Hunting Tavern is now the home of a magnificent George Steck rosewood square grand piano. This wonderful instrument found its way to Andes about 1902 when Andes photographer and businessman David L. Bruce purchased it second hand for his daughters Marjorie, Elizabeth and Helen. The girls were taking piano lessons from bank teller Luella Burroughs and needed an instrument upon which to practice. I remember Elizabeth recounting how excited she and her sisters were when they came home and found the piano in their parlor. As an aside, the girls detested Miss Burroughs and felt that she was a "mean woman" who "rapped their knuckles with

a ruler to force them into the proper keyboard position." As a result, Helen refused to go back for any more lessons but was determined to learn and proceeded to teach herself and ended up being the most musically talented of the three! The instrument was about 35 years old when Dave Bruce purchased it and it stayed in the parlor of their house on Main Street until Elizabeth's death in 1986. Former ASHC board member Robert Miller purchased the piano from Elizabeth's estate and had it in his home until this past July when he sold it to the ASHC. It is planned to have the piano restored to working order so that it can be played, just as the "Bruce Girls" did at the turn of the century.

Robert Miller, having sold his home and moved to Walton, donated a 1904 Edison cylinder phonograph with "morning glory" horn along with two cases of wax cylinders. According to Bob, his grandfather Miller was a paperhanger and had done some work for Thomas Edison. Mr. Edison gave Mr. Miller this phonograph in appreciation for the fine work that he had done for him. The phonograph is in perfect working order and is currently being displayed in the parlor at

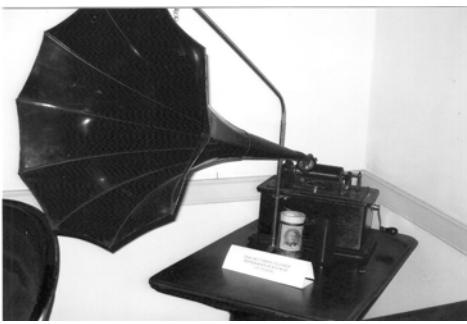


Robert Miller donated this beautiful piano

the Hunting Tavern. The ASHC thanks Bob Miller for this significant contribution.

Another interesting contribution was made this fall by former board member Eric Olson. Eric donated a Victorian era ANDES Parlor Heater along with several "Andes Stoves" advertising pieces. The Andes Stoves were manufactured by the Phillips and Clark Company in Geneva, NY and were so named because they were of "highest" quality. After this stove is restored, it will become part of a permanent "Victorian Parlor" exhibit on the second floor of the Hunting Tavern.

Make sure you stop by the Hunting Tavern this season and check out these fine additions.



The 1904 Edison cylinder phonograph

OSMAN STEELE RETURNS

By Jim Andrews

Osman Steele played an important role in the Delaware County Anti-Rent Wars and most certainly in the tragic occurrence at the Moses Earle Farm on August 7, 1845. His position as Undersheriff of Delaware County is well known in the histories of both Andes and Delhi. Steele was born on August 16, 1809 in Walton, NY and served as Delaware County Undersheriff under Sheriff Green Moore who was elected in 1843. His role in the Anti-Rent disturbances in this area is widely known. When the Sheriff's department was assigned the task of collecting back rents from delinquent tenants, Osman Steele headed up the endeavor. Having a temper and disposition matching his red hair, Steele's determination to seek out and arrest Anti-renters became so zealous that he soon became the enemy of many and the governor was flooded with letters protesting Steele's violation of the tenants' rights and privacy. The Andes farmers referred to him as "Bub" Steele, his nickname in school and they insulted him and joked about him whenever possible.

On March 10, 1845, Steele and a constable, Charles Parker were on their way back to Delhi after a trip to Greene County when they were attacked by a band of Calico Indians and forced back to Andes. Steele and Parker managed to escape and fled to the Hunting Tavern where the Huntingts gave them sanctuary. It was then that Sarah Hunting met the Indians at the bottom of the staircase wielding a butcher knife and shouted at them "I'll pierce your heart if you don't retreat! Neither you nor your clan shall pass as long as there is a drop of blood in my veins."

On the fateful day of August 7, 1845, Steele was to conduct a

tax sale at the Dingle Hill farm of Moses Earle, who owed \$64 in back taxes. Before proceeding to the Earle farm, Steele stopped in the Hunting Tavern for some food and drink. According to legend, when Steele was questioned by Tavern owner Ephraim Hunting about the safety of the sale, knowing that there were literally hundreds of "Calicos" on Dingle Hill, Steele brazenly pulled a bullet out of his pocket and dropped it in his drink stating "Lead can't penetrate Steele." We all know the outcome of that afternoon. Steele was shot during the attempt to conduct the sale and was taken to the Earle house where he died later that afternoon, six days short of his 36th birthday. His body was brought back to the Hunting Tavern until it could be claimed and returned to Delhi.

Steele is buried on the highest knoll in Delhi's Woodland Cemetery. He was lauded as a hero who was murdered while carrying out his duties. To Andes residents, he was a rogue who got what was coming to him.

This past October, The Andes Society for History and Culture was gifted an oil portrait of Osman Steele by the estate of Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Foster of Delmar, NY. When deciding upon the fate of the painting, the Foster family had considered donating it to the Delaware County Historical Association but then felt that it might be more appropriate that "Osman Steele" take up permanent residence in the Hunting Tavern. The ASHC is planning to hold an "unveiling" of the Steele painting on Memorial Day weekend with the Foster family in attendance. Watch for further advertisements and plan on attending the introduction of this important addition to our collections.

ASHC
P.O. Box 455
Andes, NY 13731

Phone: 845-676-3775
Email: ashc@catskill.net

www.andessociety.org

THE ASHC RUNS ON VOLUNTEERS

"America Runs on Dunkin'" states the popular donut food chain advertisement. The Andes Society for History and Culture, on the other hand, runs on volunteers. Everything from managing the finances, staffing the Thrift Shop, leading Tavern tours, planning the event schedule, cataloging collection items as well as replacing the Hunting Tavern's two restrooms after broken pipes and a flood is all done by volunteers. The very being of this organization depends upon the many people who donate their time to make the ASHC the diverse and successful group that it has become. Literally hundreds of people have volunteered their time, money and efforts over the Society's 34-year history.

Volunteers are still needed. We have a busy season before us and are urging you to help in a variety of ways. Board members are always needed. Providing creative guidance for the organization is rewarding but also challenging. The Thrift Shop is currently seeking volunteers to help sort, mark and display items as well as "man" the shop for 4 hour shifts six days a week during the summer. Several cultural events are being planned at the Pleasant Valley Meeting House and help is needed to take tickets and arrange for refreshments. Individuals are always sought to provide Hunting Tavern Tours throughout the season and to aid in the preparation of the summer's exhibits.

If you would be interested in volunteering in any way or have ideas for exhibits or programming, contact any board member. Your help will be greatly appreciated and you might even have some fun!!!

"COME INSIDE: A LOOK AT ANDES' INTERIORS"

The upcoming season's historical exhibit is being planned as "Come Inside: A Look at Andes' Interiors." The ASHC archives contains some wonderful pictures of interior shots taken in local homes and businesses—some very serious formal pictures as well as some comical "staged" pictures showing us that our Victorian ancestors did, indeed, have a sense of humor. Also being sought are any interior shots that our readers may have of their homes or any local homes taken prior to 1960 showing architectural features such as staircases, built-ins, kitchens, etc. These pictures most definitely can portray family life and the identities of the people in the pictures should be listed. Interior pictures taken in our lifetimes are the historical events of the future. If you should have such pictures and would allow them to be copied and used for this exhibit, please contact Jim Andrews at 845-676-3474 or email him at victorian@catskill.net.

ASHC Board of Directors

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