

# HAGUE Historical Society



P R E S E R V I N G   A N D   P R O M O T I N G   O U R   H I S T O R Y

**UPCOMING EVENTS:** June 25, 7 pm — Annual Meeting and Presentation

## THE CAVE AND OTHER SPIRITS OF THE PAST

*By Ginger Henry Kuenzel*

"If these walls could talk..." The walls of Hague's legendary Cave bar will definitely not be talking since they are no longer standing. But who needs talking walls when there are so many folks around who are more than happy to share their stories about nights spent in the Cave?

When the Hague Historical Society announced last fall that we would focus on the Cave for our 2025 museum exhibit and presentation at our annual meeting, people from near and far started weighing in -- on Facebook, in emails, in phone calls, and in conversations around town.

And, oh, the stories we heard.



The Cave, which operated from 1938-1987, was located across the street from the Town Park, in the basement of the Beachside Hotel. The concrete ramp leading down to the bar was the scene of many a creative entrance. Tales are told of a motorcyclist who cruised down the ramp and through the room, bumping into patrons along the way. It's a legendary story. But there are still more. Like the one about the guy who was certain he could drive his VW bug down the ramp. He figured if he could get his car up on its side and enter on two wheels, it just might work. Hint: It didn't. But you can't blame a fellow for trying. With these 'ramped-up' stories in mind, the Hague Historical Society has created Cave-branded merchandise with the tagline: Down the Ramp - Up to No Good.

The Cave was the last in a long line of taverns, hotels, motels, and bars located on this site. It all started when Hague's founding father, the Revolutionary soldier Nathaniel Garfield, opened his tavern and inn in 1810. The 2025 museum exhibit includes photos, menus, advertising flyers, and dishes, as well as original signs, the cash register, and other items guaranteed to bring back memories of nights spent in the Cave.

On June 25 at 7 pm, the Hague Historical Society will host its annual meeting, with a presentation and stories about the Cave. We've collected lots of those stories, but there are surely many more to be told by the audience! Jukebox

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tunes from those decades will help spur memories. Merchandise will be available for sale, including beer glasses, baseball caps, koozies, and bumper stickers. Whether you have a story to tell, are hankering to hear those told by others, or just want to be on hand to correct the facts if your 'friends' start unleashing tales about your antics at the Cave, this is an evening you won't want to miss.

## MUSEUM EXHIBIT NOW OPEN

The Hague Historical Museum's exhibit titled "The Cave and Other Spirits of the Past" is now open. It features original signs, T-shirts, photos, the cash register, dishes and much more from the Cave and Beachside. Visit the bar, have your picture taken in front of a photo backdrop of the building, stir up some old memories. Be sure to sign our guestbook – and feel free to contribute a story or two of your own. Located in the Community Center, museum hours are Monday-Friday, 8am–4pm, closed on holidays. Entrance is free; contributions welcome.

## HAGUE'S HISTORIC DOWNTOWN — *By Kathy Winters Smith*

Recently, I decided to take **The Hague Historical Society Walking Tour**. You can find the historical points of interest on the HHS website. It's not a long tour, just a good stretch of the legs and a great way to learn about Hague's points of interest or refresh your memory.

My tour began with **The Hague Market**. I remember stopping there often as a child to buy a Royal Palm orange or grape soda. Delicious! Mr. Bob Hoyt delivered groceries to our home a mile north of Hague. Now, a stop in the store is a favorite trip down memory lane. The groceries are "updated," but the essence of the store has not changed.

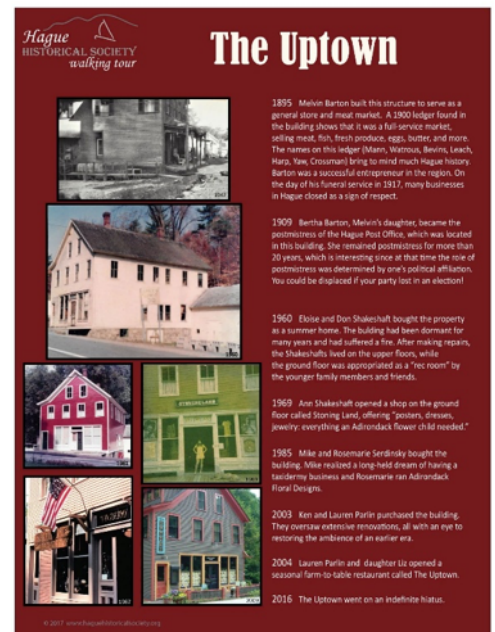
Continuing toward the Hague Community Center, I visited the churches. **The Hague Baptist Church** lists a record of familiar Hague family names on the website and remains a lovely stone structure worth taking the time to admire.

**The Lakeside Regional Church** was the Wesleyan Methodist Church when I was a young girl. My favorite part of this church is the steeple. It has not changed since the early days. I learned from the website that, in 2014, "Reflecting on the diversity of the region's congregation, the Methodist Church expanded and was renamed the Lakeside Regional Church."

I grew up attending **The Church of the Blessed Sacrament** every Sunday during the summers. My grandfather was instrumental in funding the building of the church, giving me roots in the community I cherish.

On the other side of the road and heading back toward the Lake, I passed **The Hague Firehouse Restaurant**. I remember when it operated as a firehouse for the volunteer firefighters. In later years, I enjoyed my time there in the restaurant, sitting by the Hague Brook. One could not beat the ambiance, with the sound of the brook while enjoying good food and times with friends and family.

Next door, I came upon **The Uptown**. This is another Hague landmark that claims an active history of families and events in town. My memories include the Shakeshaft family and my afternoon visits to hang out at Stoning Land, as it was then known.. The long, rich history of the structure is a fascinating read on the website. I did not realize how the building had changed hands and uses over the years.



My final stop, **The Dairy Building**, I knew as DeLarm's Dairy in my childhood. But it, too, has a long history of owners and businesses. The pictures on the HHS website show the evolution of the building through the years, but it retains a familiarity that welcomes me every time I head up Route 8.

I highly recommend **The Hague Historical Society Walking Tour**. Walking around Hague is always lovely, but taking in these sites with the HHS signs makes for an interesting way to spend your time. Check out the [website](#), too. It lists the rich history of the people and their pursuits in Hague through the years in each of these buildings.

## A WIN-WIN VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY — *By Kathy Winters Smith*

To begin my summer at the lake, I decided to volunteer a few hours a week at the Hague Community Center. I grew up here in the summer and call it my home, and I have a keen interest in the history of Hague and Lake George. It seemed like an interesting idea to assist in the Town Historian's office. The wealth of information is astounding! Sorting through the maps, letters, reports, and other documents while organizing and filing them has allowed me to learn more about a place I love. While they thank me for my help, I thank them for the opportunity to feed my passion for this area. It's a volunteering win-win!

## COLORFUL CHARACTERS OF HAGUE IN THIS ISSUE: WILLIAM D'ALTON MANN

Hague has a colorful history. And we owe that in large measure to the colorful characters who have lived here. Using information from past Hague Historical Society presentations, researched in detail by some of our members, we are featuring one or more of these characters in this and future newsletters.

William d'Alton Mann was born in Sandusky, Ohio, in 1839. He was a flamboyant character, some would say a scoundrel. But one thing is for sure -- he added much to Hague's history.

At age 23, long before arriving in Hague, Mann distinguished himself by becoming the youngest man named colonel in the Civil War. At Mann's suggestion, the Secretary of War approved the use of mounted riflemen and put Mann in charge of them. Mann organized the 5th and 7th Michigan Cavalry companies. He led the 7th Michigan under the command of Gen. George Custer, and Mann commanded this company at Gettysburg.

Mann entertained all the best people at his lavish dinners and dance parties. During those activities he was gathering tidbits to publish in his weekly New York City magazine, *Town Topics*. He wrote his column based on tidbits from eavesdroppers like servants or "hired spies" who might also be the musicians playing a ballroom waltz. People would pay huge amounts of money to keep scandalous inferences out of print. Col. Mann was so clever that *Town Topics* was never successfully sued for libel. He didn't name names, but his victims were easily recognizable by readers in the same social circles. Writer Mark Caldwell summed-up Mann in one sentence: "The rudest man of the twentieth century was a master of every social grace."

The colonel, a millionaire from New York City, lived on one of Hague's islands, Waltonian, where he built his summer cottage, Saunterer's Rest. Carol Clifton Turner, whose family owned the original Island Harbor House Hotel, wrote in 2006: "The state finally mandated that the cottage be removed. Mann had it cut into sections and moved it across the ice in the winter of 1917-18. After his death in 1920, his daughter sold the cottage to the Clifton family."





In Hague, Mann was respected as a courteous and congenial gentleman. He was viewed as a benefactor, often sponsoring events and even hosting the Warren County centennial celebration in Hague in 1913. The *Ticonderoga Sentinel* reported "Supervisor O'Connell made a good choice when he selected Colonel Mann of *Town Topics* fame as master of ceremonies, as was attested by the masterful way in which the Colonel officiated. It was with great interest that the crowd watched and listened to this man with flowing white locks and beard."

Colonel Mann was very competitive with his neighbor Harry Watrous when it came to fishing. He manufactured a huge wooden lake trout, hung it in a darkened corner in his island home where Harry would see it, and thought he had pulled off a humorous scam. That was the beginning of what turned out to be a major Lake George prank – one for the history books! It led to the 'birth' of the Lake George Monster.

## NEW LOGO FOR THE HAGUE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Perhaps you noticed our fabulous new logo on the front page of this newsletter. We also proudly sport it on our website. This creative design is the fantastic work of long-time summer resident Ann Shakeshaft, who used the *Mohican I* as inspiration. This was one of a fleet of ships that brought visitors to Hague in the days before Route 9N was built. Ann is also the creative genius behind our Cave-branded merchandise (see page 1). The new layout for our newsletter is the creation of another very talented designer here in Hague, Chris Quinn. The Hague Historical Society is extremely appreciative of the time and effort put into this by Ann and Chris. We are always looking for volunteers to join us in our work. If you'd like to volunteer, let's talk. Tell us where your interests lie: researching, writing, administrative, or other. Email us at: [haguehistorical@gmail.com](mailto:haguehistorical@gmail.com).

## A HISTORY OF ROUTE 9N / LAKE SHORE DRIVE — By Kathy Winters Smith

In my new volunteer position in the Town Historian's office, I have come across some fascinating documents. The information from two of these about 9N is shared with you here: "Indian Trail, Military Way, Great Road, Woods Road: The Henry Hypothesis of Route 9N" and "People of Hague" by Jack Henry, found in the December 1976 issue of *The Hague Chronicle*.

According to Henry, there was no permanent population in the Hague area before 1760. The Native peoples as well as French and British armies used the Lake George region as a transportation route, with plenty of game and a vast primordial forest. "The Algonquins from Canada and the Iroquois from the Mohawk Valley used the valleys for travel, the woods and lake for hunting and fishing, and all three for warfare," Henry noted. It appears that the Native people used trails that followed the lake's edge on both the East and West sides, as evidenced by the many pieces of worked flint that have been found. Later, the colonists also used the lake and trails to fight the British.

In June 1757, Montcalm took command of Fort Carillon (Ticonderoga) and had orders to capture Fort William Henry at the south end of Lake George. 600 Hurons, Ottawas, Foxes, and others from different tribes joined the British forces and set out on their mission, following the western shoreline of the lake.

"The weather was hot and the tortuous mountain trails were exceedingly rough," Henry wrote. "There were many stragglers; some of the regulars broke down completely. The Indians, however, had a merry time, meandering over and around the mountains. They chased rattlesnakes, and when they caught a couple, they would tie their tails

together and watch their efforts to free themselves. Later, they cut off their heads and tails and ate them with evident enjoyment. After two days in the forest, they arrived at Ganouski [*ed.note: today's Bolton*], where they set out a triangular fire to show Montcalm they had arrived safely."

Henry continued: "The *History of Warren County*, 1963, makes the following reference: "What once was an Indian Trail, along which French and Indians came in 1757 to attack Fort William Henry, became the Great Road laid out around 1800 and marked with milestones from Albany. Three of these markers exist in Bolton, one alongside Route 9N and two on private property. Unfortunately, no marker is known to exist in Hague today. This means that there may be some question as to whether the approximate route of 9N or the little-used road that runs from Battle Hill to Wardsboro was the Great Road."

Henry noted that the road was not used frequently after 1895 since all the valuable timber had been cut, and the people who once lived along Tongue Mountain had left. He recalled that his mother learned to drive along the largely abandoned road and spoke with great pride of having driven the car to Bolton over the road. He added that the rock walls used to retain the old road show that it was built with considerable skill.

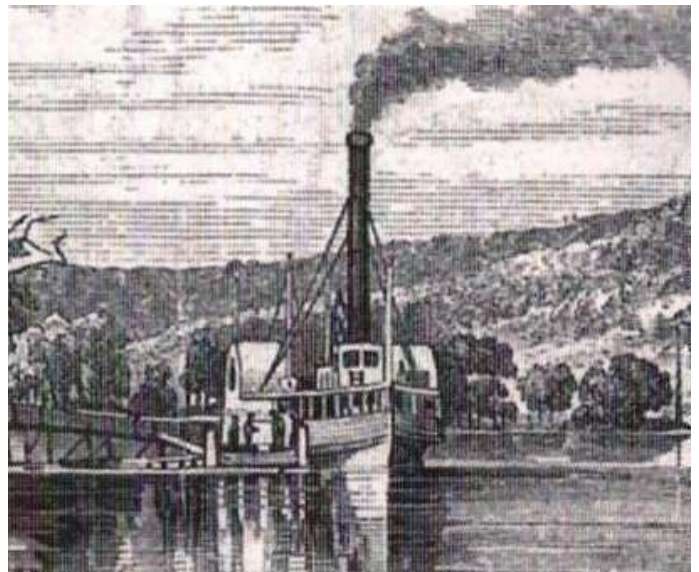
Richard Bolton, Sr., during his membership in the legislature, promoted the development of 9N. I came across a few other names for Route 9N in my research: Old Military Road and Bolton Road. Since Route 9N was completed in sections over the years, it may have held several temporary names along the way. In 1964, it was given the name Lake Shore Drive, which is how we know it today.

## THE SINKING OF THE *JOHN JAY*

On July 29, 1856, the steamship *John Jay* caught fire and sank off of what is today known as Calamity Rock, just south of the Waltonian Island group. Of the 70 passengers on board, six lost their lives, making this the worst marine disaster on Lake George until 2005, when the *Ethan Allen* capsized near Lake George Village, killing 20 passengers.

The following report is from the *History of Warren County*, edited by William H. Brown and published by the Board of Supervisors of Warren County:

*John Jay* was nearing the Waltonian Islands north of Hague, a fire broke out in her boiler room. As the fire raged out of control, the pilot headed toward a beach south of the Island Harbor House with the intention of running aground. The tiller ropes burned, whereupon the pilot grabbed the tiller to guide his boat to the beach. But due to the heavy smoke, he missed his target; the boat hit a ledge, bounced back into deep water, burned to the water line and sank. Six lives were lost in this tragedy. Seneca Ray Stoddard relates this incident about that day: "'Old Dick' who, for several years, wandered up and down the lake with his box of 'Rattell Snacks' was aboard when the boat struck. The box containing the 'snaicks' was washed ashore, with a little girl clinging to one end, while from the loosened trap-door at the other end, the heads of the reptiles were lifted up, swaying and moving about as they were tossed by the waves until the box grounded when they glided over the side, across the beach and disappeared in the thicket."



You can read a more detailed account of the tragedy on the [Hague Historical Society website](https://www.haguehistoricalsociety.org/).

## HAGUE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

*Your membership enables us to preserve and promote  
Hague's rich and fascinating history.*

**Individual membership:** \$20

**Family membership:** \$40

How to join or renew your membership:

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**Join via snail mail:** See form below

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## MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL FORM

Membership dues are \$20/person. Your check can be made out to "Hague Historical Society" and mailed with this form to: HAGUE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, PO BOX 794, HAGUE, NY 12836

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Dues \$20/person

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