

HAGUE

Historical Society



PRESERVING AND PROMOTING OUR HISTORY

COMING UP IN 2026: Hague Central School museum exhibit

WELCOME TO OUR FALL 2025 ISSUE

THE ISLAND HARBOR HOUSE HOTEL AND MORE —

By Ginger Henry Kuenzel

"If these walls could talk..." Sound familiar? That's what we said about the legendary Cave bar, the focus of our 2025 summer newsletter, presentations, and museum exhibit. The many visitors to the museum from near and far commented on how the exhibit brought back fond memories of evenings spent in the Cave. We also had record attendance at our Annual Meeting in June and heard countless hilarious tales from former bartenders and patrons.



Island Harbor House on its original site



The building is now a private residence

Now we invite you to 'listen to the walls' of another legendary Hague site: The Island Harbor House Hotel, owned and operated by the Clifton family from 1883-1967.

For this issue, we turned to the writings of Clifton West, former Hague Historian and grandson of the hotel founder Albert Clifton; Hague Historian Sally DeLarm Rypkema; and Carol Clifton, great granddaughter of Albert. Colleen Benton, Carol's daughter, shared many family photos and documents with us.

J.B. Henry, my great grandfather, was one of the hotel's first guests, moving to Hague from Bolton. Three generations of our family summered in one of the hotel's guest cottages before purchasing property in the 1920s. That cottage is now owned by one of our board members, Janet Lawrence. The research of another board member, Tina Barth-King, led her to the Ticonderoga Fire Department, where their historian showed her the actual fire truck that responded to the hotel's devastating 1933 fire.

Also in this issue you'll read about clothing at the turn of the century and learn about some cold and flu remedies from the past that might still come in handy today. Last but not least, if you wonder how we are using your generous donations, our treasurer Kim Bryant provides an update. We hope you enjoy this issue! //

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HISTORY OF THE ISLAND HARBOR HOUSE HOTEL

This history is compiled from documents we have in our Hague Historical Society archives. We appreciate all those who have taken the time over the years to write about the hotel's history and share their memories.

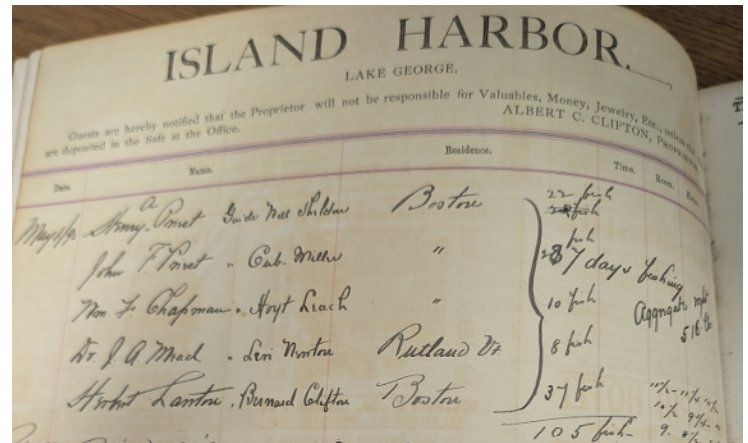
The hotel was built in 1883 by Albert Clifton, born Albert Graves in New England in 1842. He served as a drummer boy in the Civil War, was captured by the Confederates, and sent to Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia. In the winter of 1864, he joined more than 100 fellow inmates in digging a tunnel to escape. Albert walked home to Vermont, bringing with him his drum, which is now part of our Hague Historical Society collection.

Albert changed his name to Clifton and moved to Hague in 1882 with his wife. They purchased land along the lakeshore, where Seddon Beaty's house is today, and opened a 14-bedroom inn in 1883. Albert was a renowned Adirondack guide, and his new inn, open year round, catered to fishermen and hunters. In 1903, he enlarged the hotel to accommodate 50 guests. When he died shortly thereafter, his son Bernard Albert Clifton -- known as B.A. -- took over the business. He and his wife Mattie, who had been a waitress at the hotel, ran the hotel until his death in 1928. During that time, it was enlarged to four stories. A dining room overlooked the lake and four large cottages and several smaller ones were added across the road. The hotel could now accommodate 150 guests in the main house and 50 guests in the cottages. Canoes and rowboats were provided for guests, a tennis court was built, and more property purchased. After B.A.'s death, Mattie took over running the business with her 17-year-old son Bernie.

The hotel was abuzz with activity in the early 20th century. It hosted regattas, formal dinners with orchestras, balls, and hunting and fishing trips. Some guests came simply to relax and enjoy the fine food and beautiful surroundings. A typical dinner would be fresh lake trout, vegetables harvested that day, homemade pies, and hand-cranked ice cream -- all for about \$1!

The hotel burned to the ground in 1933, taking with it two eight-room cottages across the road. Fortunately, the Cliftons had purchased a building on the point just north of the hotel about 10 years previously to use as an annex. This had been the house of Colonel D'Alton Mann, who had moved it across the ice from Waltonian Island in 1917, after being told that he could no longer squat on state land. After the fire, this building became the main hotel and was enlarged to include rooms for about 60 guests, a dining room, commercial kitchen, and grand wraparound porch. This building still stands on the point today.

Bernie married Fran Springer from Ticonderoga, and they had two children, Carol and Bernard. The entire family was involved in operating the business for many decades. In 1967, they sold the property to Al and Barbara Lawrence, and it ceased operating as a hotel. Today it is the residence of the Pedlow family. //



Date	Name	Residence	Fish Caught
May 1st	Army Bonet	Boston	22 fish
June 1st	John P. Bonet	"	28 fish
June 1st	Mr. F. Chapman	"	10 fish
June 1st	Mr. J. A. Macd.	Rutland Vt.	8 fish
June 1st	Harriet Lantier	Boston	37 fish
			105 fish

Guests recorded in the registry the number of fish caught

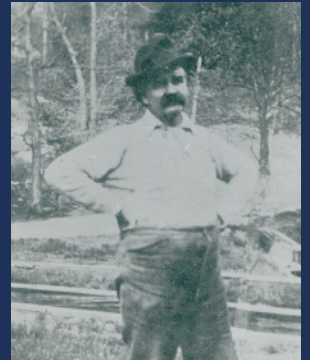


Island Harbor House, with cottage across the street

COLORFUL CHARACTERS OF HAGUE: ALBERT CLIFTON

When Albert Clifton died in 1903, Frank W. Hoyt, a good friend and frequent guest at the hotel, wrote this letter to the editor of the New York Sun titled 'Tribute to a Veteran Guide.'

Many New Yorkers read with deep regret the announcement today of the sudden death of Albert Clifton of Hague, Lake George. Mr. Clifton was a veteran Adirondack guide, one of a small company that is fast passing away. He had a multitude of friends, not only in New York, but in all of the Atlantic states as far south as Georgia. Those who had ever availed themselves of his services in the woods or on the lake, who had listened to his rare tales of hunting and fishing, or who, in later days, had enjoyed the hospitalities of his simple hotel, got the truest taste of the North Woods.



His hearty laughter and his cheery and explosive "By Mighty" were as the very breath of the Adirondacks. Albert Clifton was born in Massachusetts, and, a mere boy at the time, served through the civil war. He was badly wounded in one engagement, and his life was long in jeopardy. In search of health he went into the Saranac region, then an unbeaten wilderness, as soon as he was mustered out of service. He took up the business of a guide and followed it for years all through the Adirondacks. The demand upon his strength was too severe, and he eventually settled in a little cottage at Hague, on the shores of Lake George, as a trapper, hunter and fisherman. Fifteen or twenty years ago he built an unpretentious hotel on an unsettled portion of the lake, amid the Waltonian Islands. Here gathered every season those who sought woodcock and partridge, or trout and bass. But largely through the personality of the man, a settlement of cottages and camps grew up around his hotel and the fishermen and hunters gradually gave place to the summer girl and her satellites. With the unconventional freedom of the woods, although largely self-educated, Clifton was an excellent writer on woodcraft and the ways of beast, bird, and fish. A sportsman in the truest sense, he advocated the enactment of stringent game laws and their enforcement, served as Game Warden, and frequently appeared before legislative committees at Albany when game laws were under discussion. As keen in the chase as a "Natty Bumpo," he had a deeper interest in the creatures of the forest and the stream than merely their fitness for the game bag. He would have pleased an Audubon as well as a Cooper. //

MY MEMORIES OF THE CLIFTON FAMILY

By Sally DeLarm Rypkema, Town Historian

My mother, Nancy DeLarm, was a waitress at Island Harbor House. She would come to the lake from Springfield, Vermont, to summer with her aunt and uncle, Ethel and Walter Clifton, brother of B.A. Clifton. One summer, my mother asked her college roommate, Penny, to join her as a waitress at Island Harbor. My father, Keith DeLarm, delivered milk from his dairy to the hotel daily. Bernie introduced him to my mother. My dad then introduced his friend Dick Bolton to Penny, and as they say, the rest is history. Both Keith and Dick would later serve terms as Town Supervisor, and Penny Bolton would become Postmaster.

The hotel and cottages of today look much like they did when I was a child. I spent my early years playing on the beach or in the hotel kitchen watching Fran cook and being her "head tester." I played the nickel slots in the lobby, hopefully winning enough to keep on playing. I remember hearing from my mother and Penny about the day the "officials" came and took away the slot machines for the last time. It was just one of the stories I heard many times over the years from my mother and Penny. //



Nancy DeLarm (middle, back) with fellow Island Harbor House waitresses, 1947

GROWING UP AT ISLAND HARBOR HOUSE — *By Carol Clifton Turner*

Carol was the great granddaughter of Albert Clifton, founder and proprietor of the Island Harbor House. She passed in 2012, but we are grateful for her memoir, which gives us the flavor of a bygone era in Hague's history.



Carol in her waitress uniform

When I was young, I usually ate in the dining room with Grandma and the office desk clerk for lunch and dinner. I ate breakfast in the back room off the kitchen. In the dining room, I was expected to be on my best behavior. The family table was the one closest to the kitchen swinging doors. Eating at the help's table in the kitchen was jolly. The help was fed really well. The 12-16 people shared guest stories (and there were many) and usually joked with our reclusive hired man — Abner, and later, Percy. Both were quiet bachelors but good eaters and good men.

Once a week, we had a movie night on the lawn. Some evenings the guests would gather around the piano in the living room of the main house and sing. Once or twice a week, a local man, Mr. Ticknor, appeared at our dock with his large inboard and took guests on a tour. If the boat had room for me, I'd get a free ride. Once a week, lunch was served on the lawn. Mom had cold cuts, potato salad, macaroni salad, grilled hamburgers and hot dogs, sliced cheese, pickled beets, pickles, cottage cheese, fruit, and watermelon slices. The guests loved it, but the waitresses hated it, because it was more work. The kids ate on the rocks separating the two lawns. This was a great location for two reasons. No adults wanted to sit there, and we got great views if anything happened in the adult world, like the time Mrs. Tobin spilled iced tea in her lap and yelled an extremely naughty word!

When I was 15, my life changed dramatically. Now I was working in the dining room with college girls. The first year I worked under the head waitress. The next year, I became head waitress at age 16.

We prided ourselves on the quality of our food. Imagine cooking for 50-75 guests and 13-16 employees — six different meals a day! Three women did it all: Mom, her second cook, Lillian Yaw, and one pastry cook.

My favorite time of year was September. That's when Lake George became "our lake" again, and the main house became "our house." No dinner bell ringing three times a day, no cars zooming by on 9N, no motorboats. Our family became the off-season hotel staff. We stopped serving lunch. Mom was the cook and breakfast waitress, and I was the dinner waitress. Dad and Bernard did dishes. Dad manned the front office, Mom cleaned the rooms, and Grandma made the desserts. //

RECIPE: MATTIE CLIFTON'S SPONGE CAKE

Ingredients: 2 eggs, 1 cup sugar, 1 cup flour, 1 tsp. baking powder, 1 tsp vanilla, 1/2 cup hot milk

Beat eggs until light; gradually add sugar, beating constantly. Beat in flour and baking powder slowly. Stir in hot milk and vanilla. Bake in a greased, floured 9" x 9" pan at 350 degrees for about 25 minutes, or until toothpick comes out clean. //

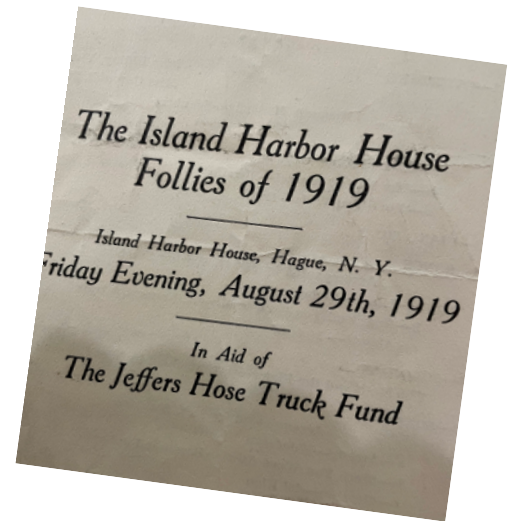


Mattie as a waitress

ISLAND HARBOR HOUSE: FROM FOLLIES TO FIRE — *By Tina Barth King*

As a child, there was never much talk about my grandfather's younger brother, Charles. I knew that he had died in an airplane crash over Iceland during WWII, but not much more. That is until my cousin decided to clean out a back closet at our lake cottage. Tucked away behind the old fishing gear, opera records, and Tarzan paperbacks was a scrapbook of Charles' teenage adventures in Hague from 1918–1920. The book is filled with pictures of his Lake George activities – camping, swimming, sailing and of course, girls.

But what really caught my eye was a brochure of the *Island Harbor House Follies of 1919*. The event featured singing, instrument solos, dancing, and a vocal performance by the Island Harbor House Minstrels, a group of young men that included Charles. The *Ticonderoga Sentinel* reported that the Island Harbor Follies were the "most delightful entertainmentin Hague in many a day." The room where the event took place was "wholly inadequate to accommodate the crowd" seeking admission. The evening exceeded expectations. Over \$160 was raised. With tickets going for 50 cents each, it must have been packed!



Jeffers Hose Co. 1927

Proceeds were donated to the Jeffers Hose Co. of Ticonderoga to defray the costs of a motorized fire truck. Without an official town fire department, Hague residents relied on Ti's private fire companies to assist in fire-fighting efforts. At a time when most firefighting equipment was still hand- or horse-driven, Hague residents and visitors undoubtedly realized the value of a motorized truck and were willing to raise funds to support the purchase.

When the Island Harbor's Beach Cottage burned down in October 1931, Jeffers Hose Co. arrived at the scene in just 17 minutes, thanks to their motorized truck. Together with the Hague volunteer firemen, they were able to save the adjoining buildings. In 1933, the main hotel was destroyed in yet another devastating fire. Mrs. Clifton, her son Bernie, Jr., and others escaped "down a fire escape in their night clothes a few minutes before their rooms were swept away by the spreading flames." With the phone lines down, a Hague resident rushed to Ti and alerted the Jeffers Co. of the fire. When they arrived, the hotel and two cottages were engulfed in flames, although they were able to save the boathouse, docks and other hotel buildings.



*Fully restored Jeffers Hose Co. fire truck
Photo by Shaundra Bartlett Yaw for the Sun*

The fire engine used in both Island Harbor House fires as well as many others remained in service until the 1950s. The truck was restored in the 1980s at a cost of \$85,000. It is now housed in Ticonderoga's Fire Department Hall of Flame Museum, along with other amazing historical fire treasures. To schedule a visit, contact the fire department on Facebook. //

COMMON COLD REMEDIES IN THE EARLY 1900s — By Kathy Winters Smith

Although we do not know the author of this piece, which we found in the Historian's office, it might provide some helpful tips as we head into another cold and flu season.

A cold always seemed to settle in the throat or head first, then to the chest. Various preparations, such as Vaporrub and Ely's Cream Balm, kept us breathing. When a cold settled on the lungs and croup developed, the battle really started. An old standby was Camphorated Oil made of gum camphor dissolved in olive oil and rubbed on the chest, which was covered with a piece of flannel. Then there was Capsicum Vaseline, which contained pepper. Rubbed on the throat at bedtime, it could be tasted in the throat in the morning. Really could. When all else failed, and the victim was still alive, the home doctor made a paste of Coleman's Dry Mustard, flour, and water, cooked it together, and laid it on a porous cloth which was put on the chest. It was a slow reaction, but similar to that which one experiences while sitting on a hot radiator. Warm, then hot, then absolutely unbearable. //

TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY "FASHION" IN HAGUE — By Kathy Winters Smith



Have you ever considered how folks dressed in Hague in the early days? How did they manage to acquire clothes in the North Country? Well, it was not an easy process, as clothing stores did not exist. It took real effort for residents to keep clothes on their backs as we learn from the following account written by Mrs. Hoyt Johnson in the *Ticonderoga Sentinel* of August 25, 1892: "Everybody spun and wove the cloth for their wearing apparel. Wool and linen garments constituted their chief dress. The flax and wool were spun by hand on wheels. Most of the wool was carded by hand. There was at that time no carding machine nearer than Vermont, and only a few there. The wool was made into reels after carding by the manipulation of the carder, and it was then ready for the wheel. Flax was wound smoothly over a distaff and spun on linen wheels." //

COMING UP IN 2026: HAGUE CENTRAL SCHOOL EXHIBIT/PROGRAM

We are excited to announce that the theme in our museum and the topic of the presentation at our annual meeting in 2026 will be Hague Central School. Do you have memories to share or stories to tell? What was your favorite lunch food in the cafeteria? What do you remember about the sports teams? Or teachers? Send us your stories and school-related photos so we can include them in our exhibit and events. Contact us at Haguehistorical@gmail.com. //



TREASURER'S REPORT — *By Kim Bryant*

The Hague Historical Society has had a financially successful season, thanks in large part to the enduring legacy--and fans--of The Cave. We are thrilled by the response to our museum exhibit. The laughter and stories told during two presentations in July brought the legend back, even for just a summer. Come see it during business hours (8:30 am - 4 pm) at the Hague Community Center.

Our 2025 income to date (from dues, donations, and interest) is \$2,156, with expenses of \$1,597, leaving us with a slight surplus of \$559 for 2025, not including merchandise sales. This year, in addition to our exhibit, program, and customary office expenses, our largest expenditures have included: a new laptop and printer for our office/archive room; computer software; and digitizing of some of our old VHS tapes. Visit our website to see digitized presentations and interviews.

While membership has stayed constant, the merchandise sales of Cave memorabilia proved to be a fruitful fundraiser. We have raised roughly \$3,100, which will go toward our continued preservation and archiving of Hague's history, as well as future projects.

Our long-term hope is to have a larger museum to showcase the many pieces donated by our community members, including a drum used by Albert Clifton during the Civil War...and much more. For now, our archivists, Shelley Gautreau and Kathi Ramant, continue to do a great job maintaining and cataloging these items, and your continued support helps pay for the specialized stock necessary to do so.

Thank you for continued interest and support. //

DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE TO GET YOUR CAVE MERCHANDISE

The t-shirts and caps are sold out, but we still have pint beer glasses, koozies, and 'Meet me at the Cave' bumper stickers for sale in the Community Center as long as supplies last. They make great Christmas gifts! Proceeds benefit the Hague Historical Society. Email us for more information:
haguehistorical@gmail.com //

Glasses \$10 ; Koozies \$5
Bumper stickers \$10



Hague Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and sharing the rich history of our community. Through our exhibits and events, we strive to inspire a love of history in residents and visitors of all ages.

Contact us at PO Box 794, Hague, NY 12836, haguehistorical@gmail.com.

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:

Join and pay online — OR —

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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THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!

\$ _____ Dues \$20/person

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\$ _____ Total