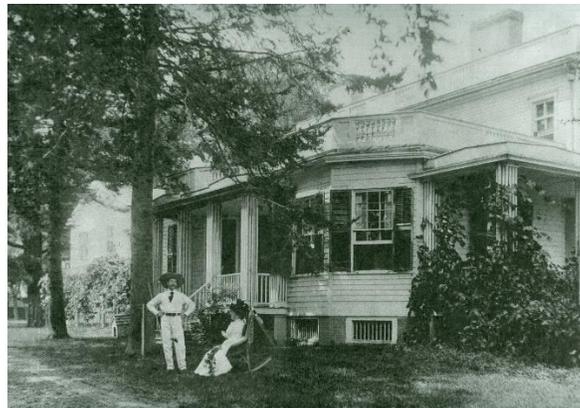


This Week in Saratoga County History

Teddy Roosevelt visits Ballston

Submitted by Rick Reynolds January 7, 2021

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Hawkwood circa 1900

January 6, 1919, 101 years ago, Teddy Roosevelt, the 26th President of the United States, passed away. But what does that have to do with Saratoga County?

Well, believe it or not, Teddy spend a bit of time in Saratoga County particularly in the years leading up to and including his time as Governor of New York (1899-1900).

Yes, Teddy, also known as TR, would often come to visit one of his friends, Guy Baker, who lived in the town of Ballston. Sometimes he came to Baker's Hawkwood estate to hunt on the vast acreage there. Other times he would bring members of his family for a short visit with the Bakers. The trolley which went through nearby Ballston Lake village actually had a stop for Hawkwood right on it!

On one visit, he brought his daughter, Alice, and she accidentally fell into a horse's trough. You can well imagine what that was like! Teddy, then probably New York's Governor, picked her up, cleaned her off, and then they went about the rest of their day. (Can you imagine ANY of our current politicians doing that???)

It was the Baker family who in the early 1900s made Hawkwood mansion into the grand place that it was: a place for entertaining, a beautiful farm with beautiful locust trees all around the mansion. Guy Baker's marriage to Louise Irene Palma Di Cesnola, known as "The Countess," on December 28, 1904 was reported in the socially-proper New York Herald on the subsequent day. That wedding as well as many visits and social events which involved the couple were published in many other newspapers and on many dates in later years.

Her father, who was of Italian heritage, was a Civil War veteran and a winner of the Medal of Honor. After the war, he became US consul to Cyprus and, for 25 years, he was the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In 1873, the museum was even expanded to accommodate his extensive collection of antiques.

It was Guy Baker's brother, William Bliss Baker, who was a renowned artist with a studio on Ballston Lake. William Bliss Baker died tragically at age 27.

So if you would like to follow Teddy's journey to the Hawkwood mansion, you can visit Anchor Diamond Park, the home of the remains of Hawkwood. Within the confines of Ballston's park, there are 5 miles of trails on which to walk or cross country ski. There are historic interpretive signs as well as other signs that will automatically link you to YouTube videos about the site and its history.

Anchor Diamond Park is at the corner of Route 50 and Middleline Road in Ballston. It's all free to visit and open dawn to dusk.