

History of Philmont

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The Comprehensive Plan for the Village of Philmont examines the Village today and how it can and should grow in the future. The Comprehensive Plan Board has looked to the past for lessons both positive and negative that can be incorporated into the planning process. This component of the Comprehensive Plan summarizes the historical information gathered during the process.

Some of this material comes from the Centennial Book prepared in 1992. Other material comes from a history of the Village prepared by Charles R. Nichols for the dedication of the Philmont Community Building in 1962. Still more comes from other secondary sources as well as primary sources such as Hattie Johnson's memoir of growing up in the Village. Most of the buildings shown in the figures are still standing. Notes in the captions indicate those buildings that are not extant.

This component consists of three sections:

- *Hattie Johnson's memoir of growing up in the Village*
- *A historical walk down Main Street*
- *A timeline of Village history*

My History of a Lovely Old Village—Hattie Johnson (1903-2003)

I was born in Copake, New York and moved to Philmont when I was two and a half years of age.

My dad delivered milk for Mr. Frank B. Harder. My mother worked in the factories.

When I was a young girl growing up Philmont had four hotels, six mills, a needle shop, and two blacksmiths.

Some boys would go to the blacksmith and had a stick to keep the flies off the horses while being shod.

Also there were three millineries, five grocery stores, and four barber shops. We have only one barber in town now.

Two movie theaters, a weekly paper called the Philmont Sentinel, and three livery stables. I remember Mr. Charlie Whiteman meeting the train up by the railroad station; he had a surrey with fringe on top.

The roads were so dusty that people could not sit outside. In later years, they were paved. Also, remember the old Red Fin? [The Red Fin was a swimming area east of the reservoir; it was silted up by the hurricane of 1938.]

We now have water and sewer systems. For a long time it was only wells and out houses. In 1896, Philmont Hose Company was formed and in later years a rescue squad.

Old timer outfits of high lace collar, long skirts, and crochet shawls were the style. The Philmont United Methodist held an old timers night in 1981 in the Church to help with the celebration of 109 years in service. In the years of 1886 – 1899 the church had 494 people as members.

We had plenty of dirt roads at one time. There was a booklet on Philmont and it illustrated that Philmont was a flourishing mill town with \$1,000,000 invested in different industries.

I made a tour of the Village pointing out sites to Tom Hotalen as Pat Harder drove us around. [That tour follows this history.] We had an enjoyable day, especially myself as I reviewed the history of Philmont.

Our newest building is the Philmont Family Practice built for Dr. Baillargeon where the old "beehive" used to be. Dr. Baillargeon started in the former Dr. White office. Dr. Baillargeon and Dr. Silvernail have over 2,000 patients. Much credit is due them, for people without transportation can stay in town or out of towners can come in.

My home used to be dismantled and taken to Copake Lake for the summer when Harder owned it. It was bolted together in the attic.

Some of the blocks of streets were known as the Capelli Block, Eliza Parks Block, and Harder Square Carney Block.

At one time where the park is in the center of town there used to be a pond.

Remember the High Falls by #4 Mill?

—Hattie Johnson

A Walk on Main Street and Its Environs, Historically

Upper Main Street, heading East from the intersection of State Route 217 and County Route 11 (Martindale Road) The Columbia County Sanitarium opened about 1920. It was moved from the Ghent Old Folks Home (County Home) to its present location adjacent to Pine Haven because the facilities in Ghent got too small. Pine Haven (County Home) was opened in 1978 and was added to in 1985. Its location is on upper Main Street.

Figure 1: Columbia County Sanitarium



The oldest home in the village of Philmont is on the corner where State Route 217 and County Route 11 meet. It was constructed in 1815.

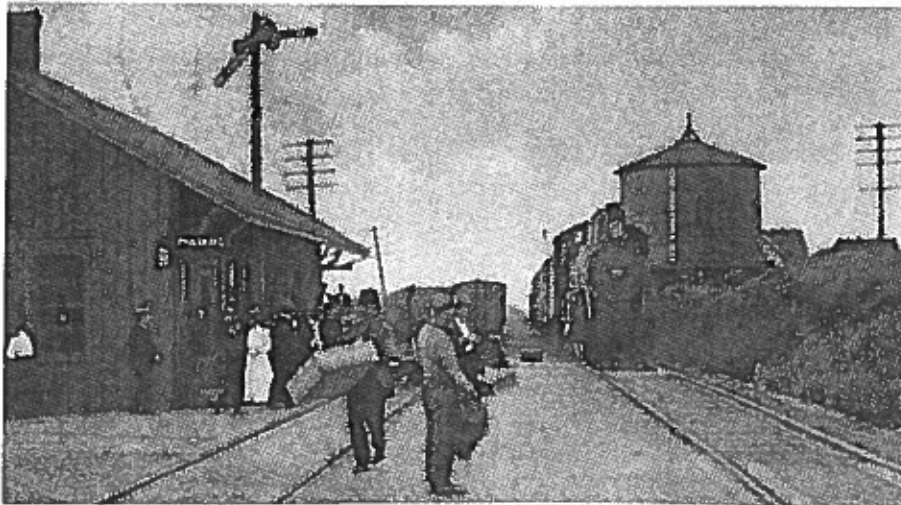
Main Street, between the intersection of State Route 217 and Summit Street, heading East to the intersection of County Route 11 (Martindale Road)

Where the present Mike Johnston Trucking is located, just before the turn onto County Route 11, prior businesses were owned by Dick Shelton, Kenny Harris, Mr. Grau, and Stanley Stickles.

The American Legion Hall (Minkler-Seery Post No. 252) was a factory, an opera house, and then 3 factories.

On the lot where Ritchie's Car Wash (and Scoops Ice Cream) are located, next to the American Legion Hall, the Philmont Railroad Station was located.

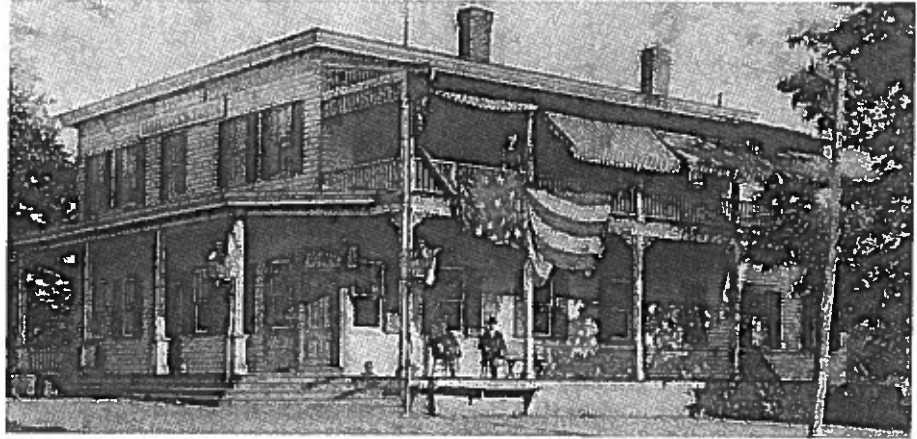
Figure 2: First Railroad Station (burned)



The building below Ritchie's Car Wash was the Gas Co. and a lumber company at one time. Later, it was owned by Mr. Splittberger, and later Mr. Elliot; it was a hardware store.

Crossing Main Street, the Vanderbilt Inn has been a hotel and bar since its opening in 1860 and continues as a bar and restaurant today.

Figure 3: Vanderbilt Inn



The building adjacent to, and below, the Vanderbilt Inn was Wasner's Grocery at one time.

Figure 4: Wasner's Grocery



A large green house, two doors below the Vanderbilt Inn and on the same side, housed at least three generations of Snyder's Insurance. Then it was James N. Johnston's funeral home, and later a stained glass business.

The building below Johnston's had a grocery store downstairs and an apartment upstairs.

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church was at first a small wooden structure, but was torn down and replaced with its present brick structure. It is located at the intersections of Ark and Main Streets. At the top of Ark Street is the Parish Hall. Five apartments were demolished to provide room for this structure.

Figure 5: Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church



Near the Reservoir, the Ice House was located, its function indicated by its name. It stood where the future Community Center and the adjacent playground are today.

Figure 6: Cutting Ice on the Reservoir

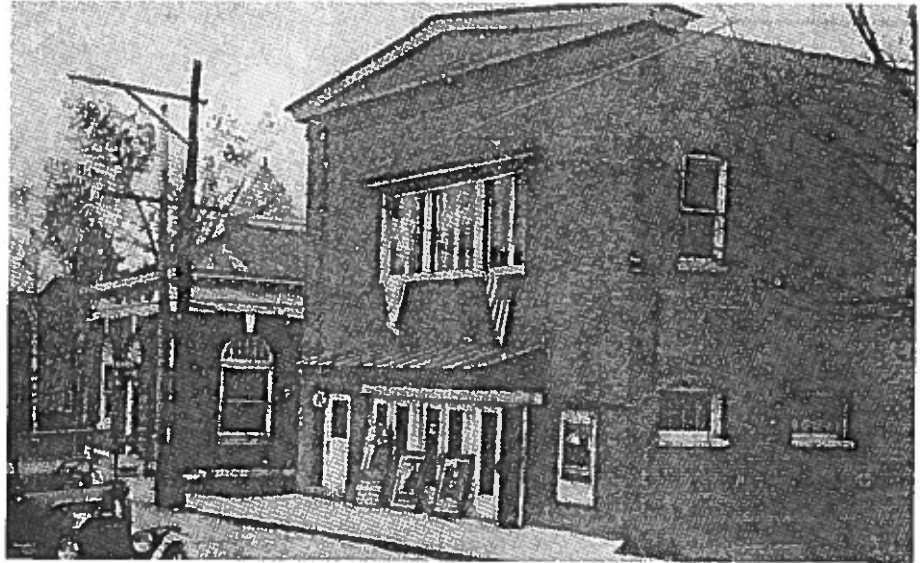


The Flood of 1938 broke out of the Reservoir at the top of Ark Street, rushed down Ark and Lower Ark Streets, eventually cutting a swath of destruction to the bottom of the hill of Prospect Street, and on to Melleville and eventually to the Claverack Creek.

Crossing Main Street, at 130 Main Street is the second oldest house in the Village. It was constructed circa 1817.

Just east of the present bank was the location of the Strand Theater and Nick's Ice Cream Store.

Figure 7: Strand Theater (demolished) with Bank in Rear



On the corner of Main Street and Maple Avenue was the 1st National Bank (1904), which later became the Farmer's Bank, and later the present Key Bank, Philmont Branch.

Crossing Main Street, on the corner of Main Street and Summit Street, where Lou's Barber Shop is presently located, was a shoemaker.

Figure 8: Shoemaker



Just up Main Street, East from the barbershop and on the same side, was the 1899 Firehouse. The fire company was located on the first floor, the library on second floor, and an apartment on third floor. This building was recently torn down, but the 1899 dated arch from its roofline and its stained glass windows were preserved.

Main Street, from the intersection of Summit Street, heading West, to Rock Street

Across from the present Stewart's Shop location were Wildermuth's Grocery, White's Shoe Store, and DeCaneo's Barber Shop. The present Stewart's Shop was the site of the Village of Philmont School. The school used St. Mark's Episcopal Church Hall, next door, for its gym.

Figure 9: Philmont Union Free School (demolished)



Richardson's Hardware was located next to the present Stewart's Shop and it is presently part of Richardson Hall, a senior residence center with 24 apartments, recently refurbished from Richardson's Hardware and its adjacent building Richardson's Hotel and joined by a second story walkway. At one time, Richardson's Hardware had a dance hall on 2nd floor and the Odd Fellows fraternal organization met there as well.

Main Street had many stores, including still another grocery, an ice cream shop, a shop for bicycles, a corsets and hats store, and later, a beauty parlor (run by Mr. Hawes).

Figure 10: Bicycle Shop



Dr. Raver had a dentist's office and there was also Rion's Paper Store. Roy's Restaurant was located in the presently closed Laundromat, which also housed a newsroom. In the buildings between the closed Laundromat and the corner of Main and Church Streets were a drug-store where LaGonia's Pizza is now located, Glickman's Clothing Store next to the present LaGonia's, and a grocery store where Sharper Image Beauty Parlor is presently located on the corner. [This was known as the Beadell Block.]

Figure 11: Beadell Block



Across Main Street from the present LaGonia's was an A & P Store, with a Chinese laundry in the back. This building later became Dingman's Grocery, and still later was a hardware store.

Figure 12: A & P Store



On the corner of Main and Church Streets, on the same side as the present Sharper Image, was Keen's, later Palen's, and presently the High Falls Café. This building also housed, at one time or another, a gas station, a shoe store, a hat store, and a drug store.

Figure 13: Palen's



At the locations of the present Jack's Village Market and Cumberland Farms Store was the High Rock Mill, destroyed by fire in 1977.

Lower Main Street, from Rock Street, heading West, to the
Philmont Village Line

The first house below the former Hill Top Hotel [also known as Hopkins House] was the telegraph office.

Figure 14: Hopkins House



A little further up Main Street, is the Yerick House (later Richardson's), where, in the back, a stove polish business was located.

Figure 15: Yerick House



Most of the houses on this same side, across from the Hill Top Hotel, were owned by the mills. Just past the last house was the storage mill, followed by Cedar Row.

At the corner of Block and Main Streets was a mill which later became a garage. Between it and the present Nick's Restaurant and Bar was a bakery. The next building down Main Street on the same side as Nick's was a gas station. Further down the street, on the other side where the sand pile is located at the Town of Claverack Garage, was a paper mill.

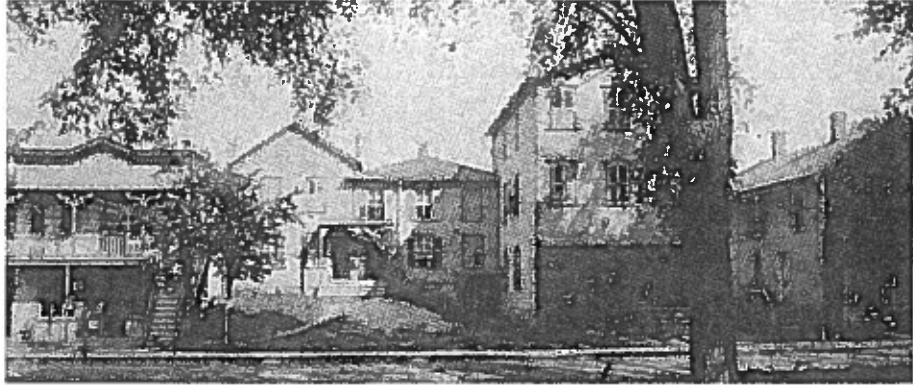
Main Street Environs

Taking a bit of a stroll from Main Street, between Garden Street and Highland Avenue, on Church Street, was an auction hall (by day) and a dance hall (by night). This building was razed in 2001.

Further up Church Street, on the other side was the Crusader Club founded by Miss Clara Harder in 1909. It housed a gym upstairs, used by Philmont High School, and downstairs, a pocket billiards, ping pong, and games room. Recently the building housed a glassblowing business.

Returning to Main Street, take a turn at the Tripp Center onto Elm Street. The "Beehive", which housed 5 apartments was located where the present Philmont Family Practice and its parking lot are today. Jutting off Elm Street onto Canal Street, the #4 mill was located at the far end of Canal Street. Turning the corner of Elm Street, and following Elm Street to its intersection with Summit Street, across from this juncture was a funeral parlor.

Figure 16: The "Beehive"



A Philmont Time Line

Factory Hill/Early 19th century

Philmont was then known as Factory Hill. In 1847 a school house was built.

School and Library/1842

School district for Factory Hill formed by people of towns of Claverack and Ghent. First public library established in connection with the school. In 1847 a school house was built.

Dam/1845

George P. Phillip constructed a dam above the High Falls and cut a dam through solid rock along the hill slope at an angle to Agawamuck (Ockawamick) Creek, to provide power for several mills.

High Rock Mill/1847

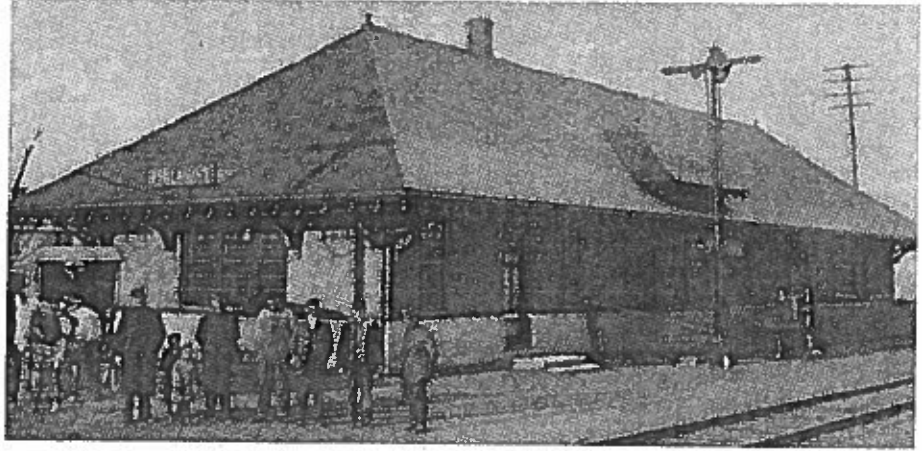
Mr. Phillip constructed a mill for the manufacture of fine woolen goods on "High Rock."

Railroad/1852

Completion of the Harlem Railroad helped to boost local industries, including a machine shop and foundry, a machine works, a scale works

making platform and counter scales, and a needle factory. The local station was named by the railroad in honor of Mr. Phillip.

Figure 17: Second Railroad Station (demolished)



Paper Mill/1855

Mr. Phillip began manufacture of paper. The mill operated until 1890.

Post Office/1858

First post office established.

Paper Mill/1858

Philmont Paper Mills established by Samuel Rogers on the site of the old Gifford Grist Mill on the main stream, just below the foot of the falls.

Civil War/1861-1865

Some of Philmont's men served in the Civil War.

School Building/1861

The school building (later added to and known as Philmont High School) constructed and used until completion of Ockawamick Central School in 1952.

Figure 18: Union Free School Building (before addition of wing)



Underwear/1862

Nelson P. Aiken started an underwear factory. This factory was expanded in 1865 and became Philmont Hosiery Mills.

Population 700/1871

Population 700. Philmont now contained 3 knitting mills, 3 paper mills, a machine shop, a building and joiner shop, a feed mill, one hotel, 3 stores, 2 blacksmith shops, and one school.

Figure 19: Interior of a Mill

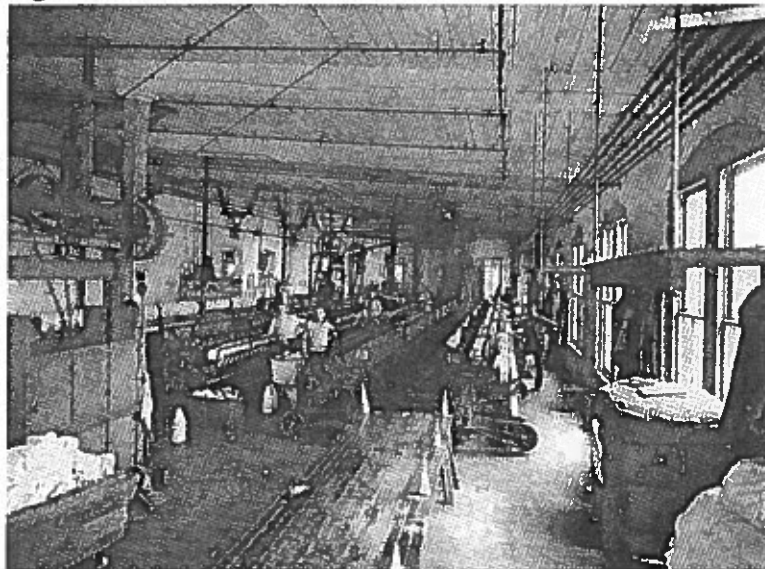
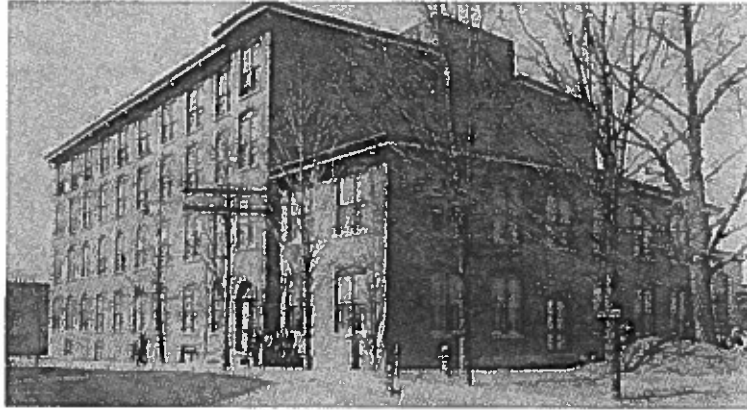


Figure 20: Mill # 1 (demolished)



Methodist Church/1872

Present United Methodist Church of Philmont completed.

Figure 21: Methodist Church and Parsonage



Catholic Church/1881

Sacred Heart (Roman Catholic) parish established. Present brick church replaced smaller wooden church in 1902.

Midland Mill (Underwear)/1886

Midland Mill established by John Hayes to make underwear.

High Rock Knitting Company/1890

High Rock Knitting Company organized by P. M. Harder and Son.

Incorporated Village/1892

Philmont incorporated as the Village of Philmont on July 2, 1892. George Baker served as the first Village President.

Reformed Church/1892

Reformed Church of Philmont organized. (After merger with Reformed Church in Mellenville in 1969, it was renamed the 2nd Reformed Church of Claverack).

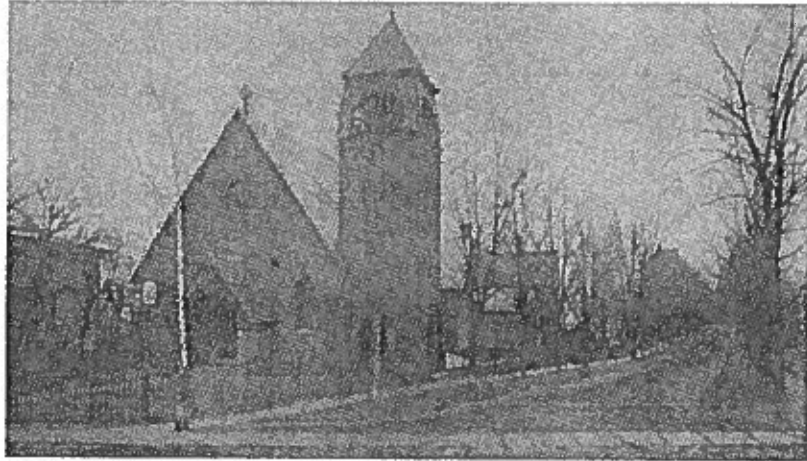
Figure 22: Reformed Church



Episcopal Church/1892

St. Mark's (Episcopal) Church was organized in 1882 and the present church building was consecrated in 1892.

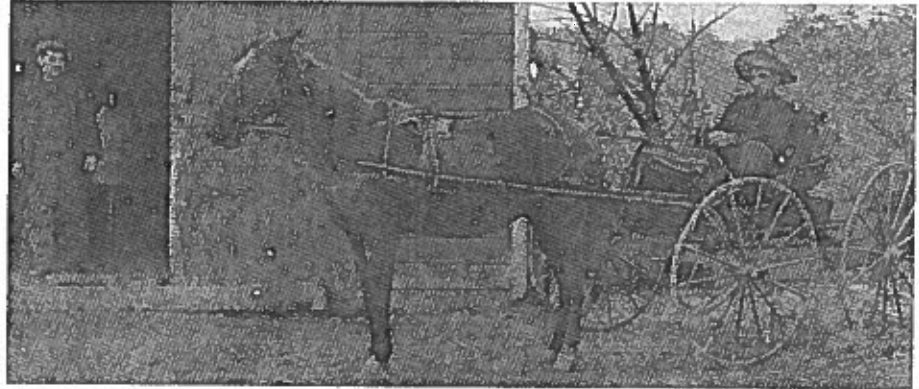
Figure 23: St. Mark's Church



Kerosene Street Lamps/1893

Kerosene street lamps installed.

Figure 24: Village Lamplighter



Hose Company/1896

Philmont Volunteer Hose Company No. 1 organized.

Newspaper/1897

Philmont Sentinel named the official Village paper.

Library/1898

Philmont Public Library chartered as a municipal library to serve the village of Philmont.

Population 1,956/1900

Population 1,956. The Village contained 3 drug stores, 6 general stores, 2 hardware stores, 1 furniture store, 2 hat stores, 12 groceries, 3 hotels, 4 churches, and 4 doctors.

Figure 25: Johnnie Walker Insurance and Bill Yerick, barber



Trainwreck/1901

A trainwreck drew attention in 1901.

Figure 26: Trainwreck



Sacred Heart Church/1902

The church was completed in this year.

Figure 27: Sacred Heart Church



Masonic Lodge/1902

Agawamuck Lodge #841 F. & A. M. (Masonic lodge) established.

Columbia Mesh Mill/1903

Columbia Mesh mill started operation.

Bank/1904

First National Bank of Philmont established.

Gas Street Lights/1907

Gas lights replace kerosene street lights.

Crusader Club/1909

Crusader Club founded by Miss Clara Harder (1887-1970). Construction of Crusader Club completed 1911, with gymnasium, sewing room, and game room.

Figure 28: Crusader Club



Grange/1911

Mellenville Grange #1255 organized. (Incorporated in 1913).

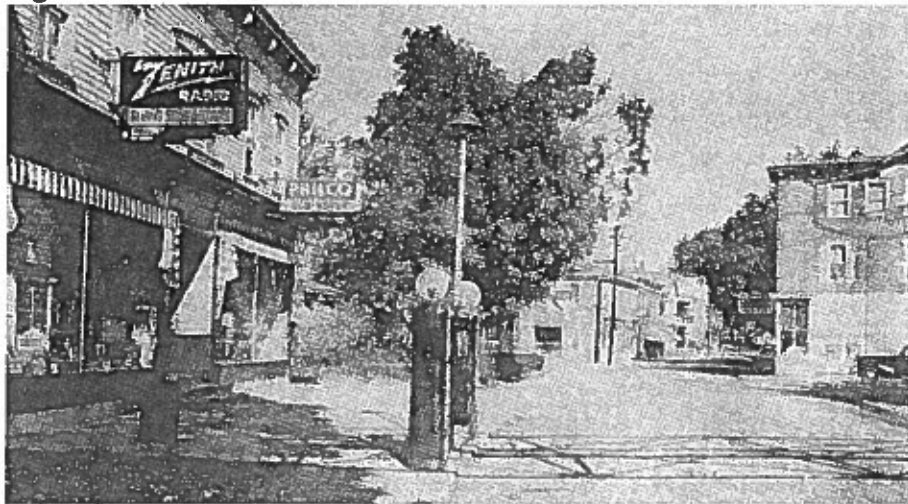
Electric Street Lights/1913

Electric street lights replaced gas street lights.

Main Street Paved/1915

Main Street has concrete road laid.

Figure 29: Main Street



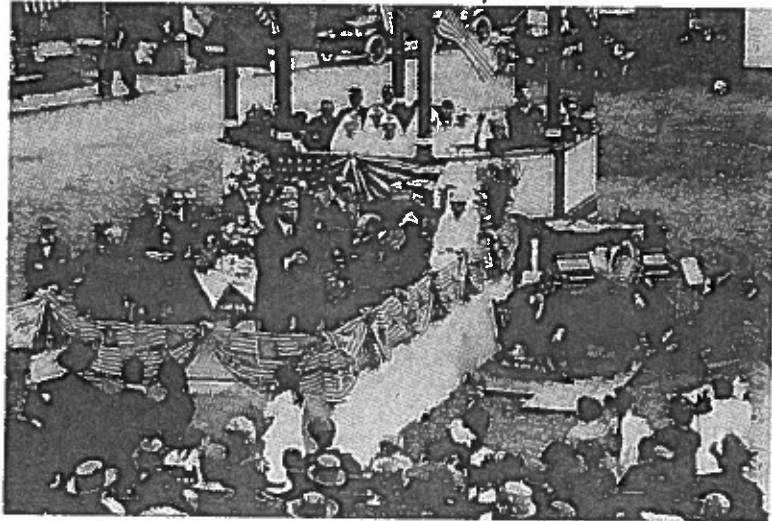
Strand Theatre/1916

Strand Theatre constructed and had 400 seats.

War/1917 – 1918

April 5, 1917 – November 11, 1918 Philmont sends men to fight in World War I. Sgt. Guy Minkler and John W. Seery lost their lives in this conflict. Philmont American Legion Post # 252 was named in their honor.

Figure 30: World War I Bond Rally



American Legion Minkler-Seery Post #252/1919-1920

The post was organized in 1919 and received its charter in 1920.

Figure 31: American Legion (formerly Empire House)



Victory Lingerie Company/1919

Victory Lingerie Company begins making fine shirt waists and underwear.

Telephone/c. 1920

The telephone exchange has 144 customers. The Village has a telegraph office, a dentist, and Columbia Sanatorium (for TB patients).

High Rock Knitting Company Abroad/1920's

High Rock Knitting Company employed 750 people and had offices in New York City and London.

American Legion Auxiliary/1922

American Legion Auxiliary to Minkler-Seery Post # 252 was formed.

Rod and Gun Club/1923

Philmont Rod and Gun Club organized.

Royal Neighbors/1927

Royal Neighbors of America (fraternal benefit society) organized Mayflower Camp in Philmont.

First Mayor/1928

Abram Palen served as the first Village Mayor. In 1927 he served as the last Village President.

Auction/1935

High Rock Knitting Company auction disposed of 37 houses.

Figure 32: An Auction Disposed of Mill Property

ANNOUNCING THE SALE
AT PUBLIC AUCTION TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

37 Valuable Dwelling Properties
OF THE
HIGH ROCK KNITTING CO.
OF
PHILMONT, NEW YORK

ATURDAY, MAY 11, 1935, at 10.00 A. M. (Daylight Saving Time)

SALE INCLUDES:

- 18 Cottages
- 10 Two Family Dwellings
- 3 Three Family Dwellings
- 6 Four Family Dwellings
- 1 Seven Family Dwelling
- 1 Ten Family Dwelling
- Unimproved Land

To be Sold on the Respective Premises, in Separate Parcels Only, as set forth and Described Herein

Bank Robbed/1938

Philmont National Bank robbed at gunpoint of \$9,800 by 2 gunman. A manhunt by the New York State Police and the FBI later captured the two bandits.

Flood/1938

On September 21, 1938, flood waters from the Hurricane of '38 broke out of the Reservoir above Ark Street, carving a swath of destruction all the way to Mellenville. The dam held.

Figure 33: Ark Street after the Flood



Figure 34: Prospect Avenue after the Flood



Mills Foundered/1938

A Reconstruction Finance Loan is denied. The mills foundered. Hard-ers lose control of the mills in 1939.

Mills Reconstructed/1939 +

Susquehanna Mills Corporation reconstructed the mill organization and continued until 1953.

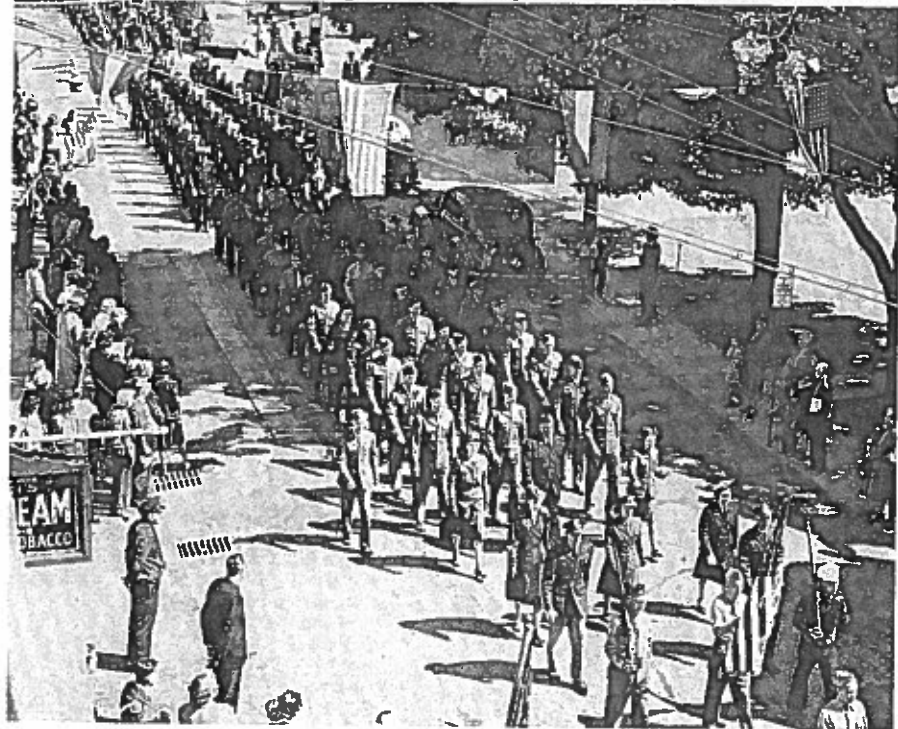
World War II/1941 – 1945

Philmont sent men and women to World War II. 9 died serving their country.

Figure 35: Homecoming Parade, September 14, 1946



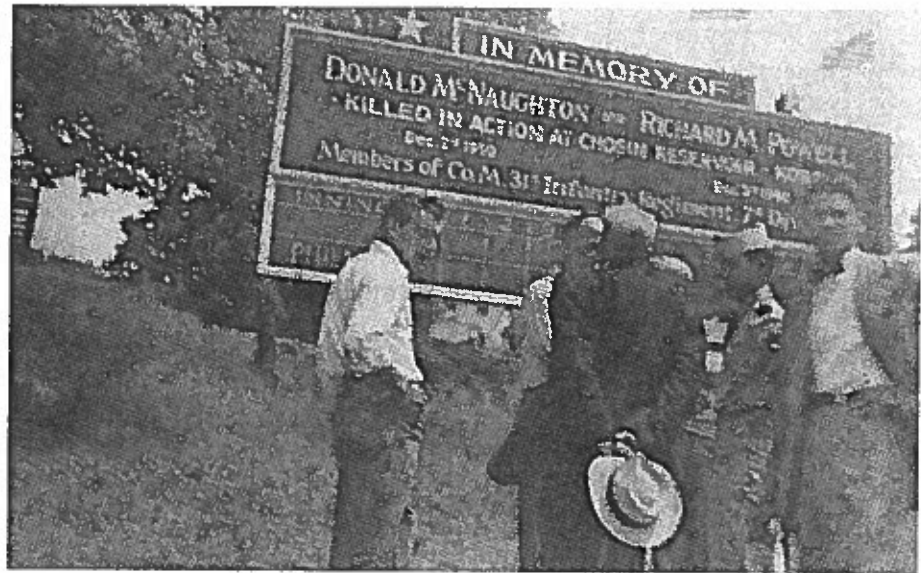
Figure 36: Home coming Parade, September 14, 1946



Korean War/1950 – 1953

The Korean War claimed 2 area men.

Figure 37: Dedication of Memorial Field in Memory of Donald McNaughton and Ronald M. Powell



School Closed/1952

Philmont School closed.

Mills Close/1953 +

Competition from synthetic fibers and cheaper labor in the South caused the mills to close, one by one.

Fire Company Auxiliary/1955

Philmont Volunteer Fire Company Auxiliary was organized.

Rotary Club/1956

The Rotary Club of Philmont, Inc. was organized.

Rescue Squad/1958

Philmont Rescue Squad was organized.

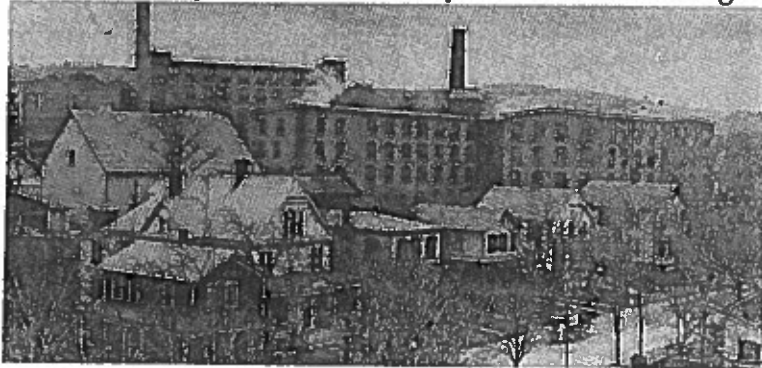
Vietnam War/1964 – 1973

Vietnam War claims 3 area servicemen.

Fire/1977

X-Tyl Corporation (a rubber vulcanization factory), located in the former High Rock mill, burned in a spectacular fire. Four other businesses were destroyed.

Figure 38: High Rock Mill (Prospect Avenue in foreground)



Philmont Hearth/1982

Philmont Hearth, Inc., a psychiatric community residence, opened in the former F. B. Harder Greek Revival mansion on Maple Avenue.

Figure 39: Harder Mansion



Zoning/1990

Zoning ordinance enacted.

Centennial/1992

Village of Philmont Centennial celebrated.

Library Internet/1993

Philmont Public Library offers free public access to the Internet.

Main Street Rebuilt/1997

Main Street reconstructed by NYS DOT.

Main Street Committee/1998

Main Street Committee established by Village Board.

High Speed Internet/2000

High speed Internet access installed throughout the Village by Mid-Hudson Cablevision.

Comprehensive Plan Adopted/2002

After more than a year of work by the Comprehensive Plan Board, consultants, and residents of Philmont, the Village Board adopted the Comprehensive Plan to guide the Village in its future growth and development.

Snapshots of Philmont

In preparing this component of the Comprehensive Plan, the committee assembled a number of photographs, many of them from the 1992 Centennial booklet. Some photos of historical interest were left over; they are presented here.

Reservoir Sights

The railroad trestle at the east end of the reservoir was a popular spot. The reservoir itself was used for swimming.

Figure 40: Railroad Trestle

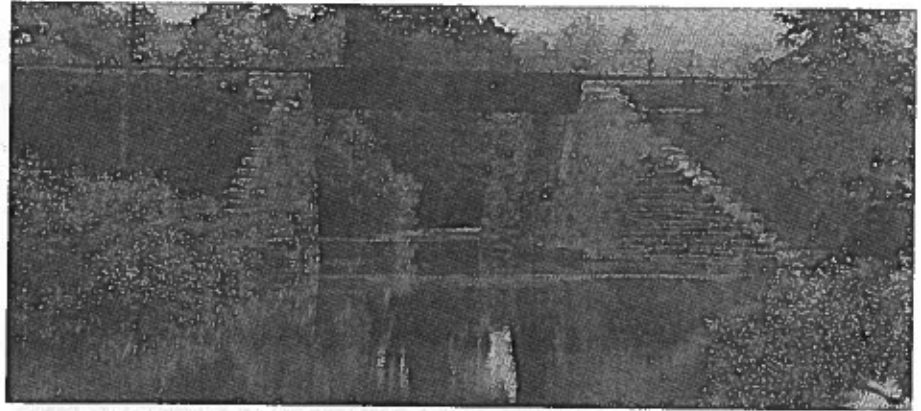
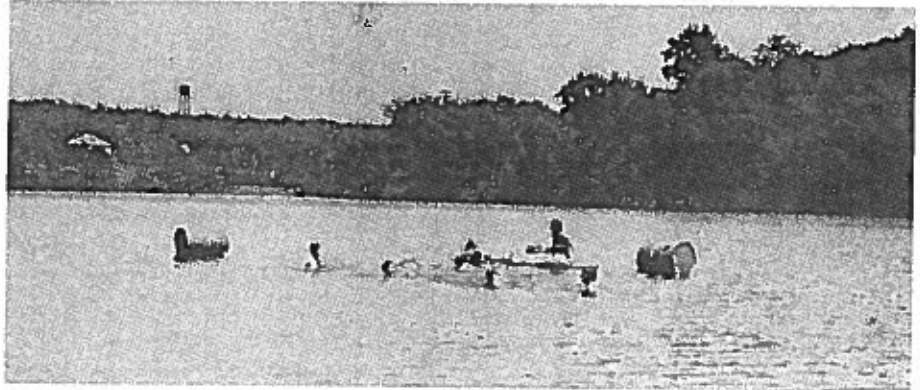


Figure 41: Swimming in the Reservoir



Streetscapes

It is remarkable how much of Philmont's past is preserved. The large mills are mostly gone as are the school and a number of Main Street buildings. However, in these photos of Philmont streetscapes, many of the buildings remain.

Maple and Prospect Avenues sport the same buildings today (although the Mansion Gate House on Maple Avenue has been moved a block away). In the Main Street photo, the buildings are gone although the intersection (with Elm Street) is immediately recognizable.

Figure 42: Maple Avenue



Figure 43: Prospect Avenue

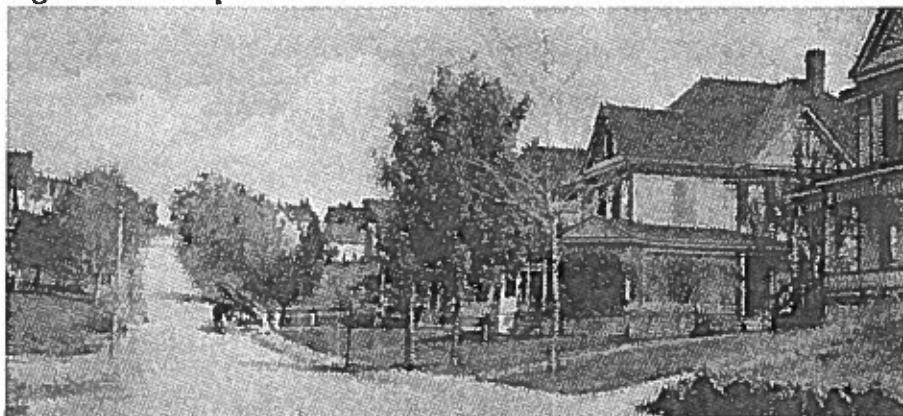
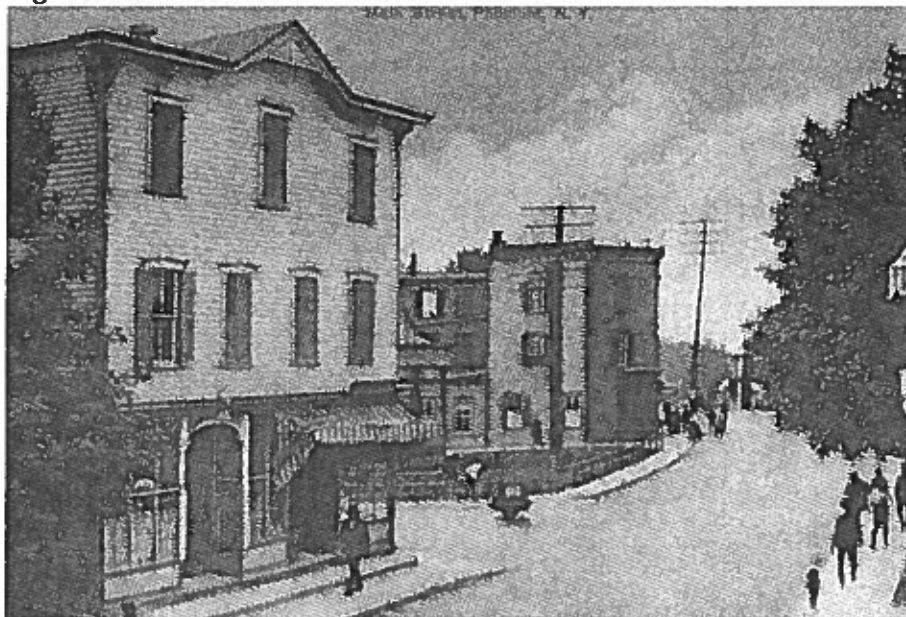


Figure 44: Main Street



Summit Mill, the last of the large mills in Philmont, is planned for conversion to residential use.

Figure 45: Summit Mill

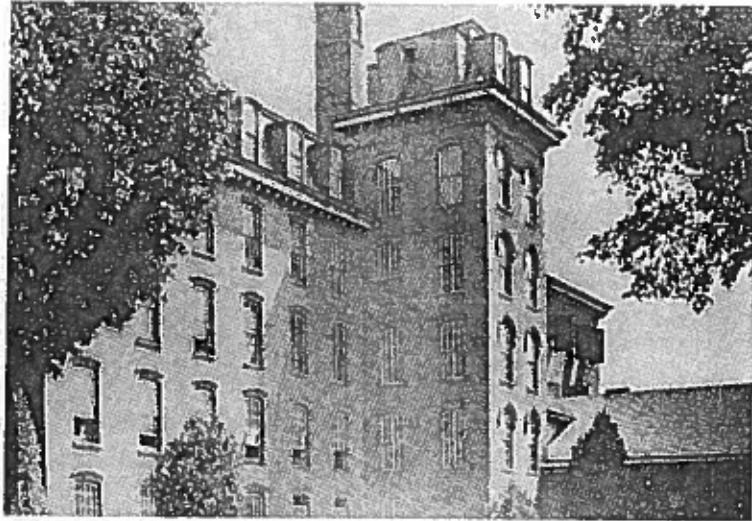


Figure 46: Summit Mill and Summit Street Showing the Dam at Lower Right

