

Once Upon a Time in Philmont

PART ONE: PHILMONT AT THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY
PERIOD PHOTOS FROM THE NICHOLS COLLECTION. NOTES BY CHARLES NICHOLS



This is the long commercial block across from High Rock Mill, around the turn of the century. It was destroyed in a big fire that also destroyed the mill, on January 10, 1977. There is a barber shop in a second story window and a grocery on the ground floor. It was common practice to have businesses on both the first and second floor. The building was home to the first Post Office and the Grand Army of the Republic meeting rooms. The Johnnie Walker Insurance building is there now.





This is the Empire House and the first station on the Harlem Valley Railroad in the late 1800s. Next to the Empire House, across Railroad Avenue, was the Empire Opera House, really a music hall, used for entertainments by troupes of vaudeville performers and local gatherings. The railroad station is gone, Empire House is the American Legion building, and the Empire Opera House is a bus garage.



This is the Vanderbilt House, then one of four hotels in the village, shown in the early 1900s. It was a particularly popular spot for photographs of groups getting ready to take the train, is still in operation as a restaurant, and has been continually in use since its construction.





This is the first firehouse and Village Hall, built in 1899 and demolished in 2000. The fire equipment consisted of ladders and a hose cart, or "jumper cart," pulled by manpower. The Village Board and President met upstairs. It's a vest-pocket park now.



This is looking west along Main Street, photographed in the 1880s, including the bandstand that stood at the southwest corner of Main and Canal. It was constructed above a shallow pond, with entrance from a gangway. The pond was later filled in, but the bandstand remained until it rotted away. It's a small park now, with monuments to various village veterans.





This is High Rock Mill No.2. These were extremely large brick buildings; both mills—No.1 and No.2—adjoining buildings, and the entire block of buildings opposite were destroyed in the fire of 1977. Cumberland Farms and the now-empty supermarket building are there now.



This is Hopkins House, photographed about 1900, another of the four hotels on Main Street, which catered to “drummers” or salesmen, who had business in the village. It’s now an apartment house and for sale.

