

The Nelson House, 1686-1876



The Establishment's Namesake

Courtesy of the Adriance Memorial Library

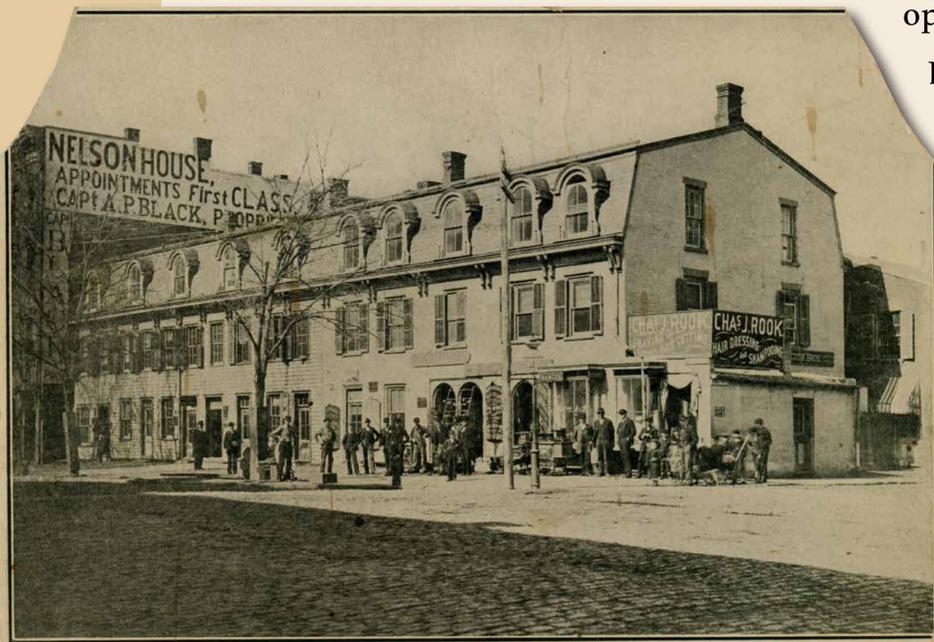
A Poughkeepsie native, Homer A. Nelson led a distinguished life of public service. His posts included Dutchess County Judge (1855-62), U.S. Congressman (1863-64), and New York State Senator (1882-83). He died in 1891 and is buried in the Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery.

This section of Market Street has been a center of county life since the late seventeenth century. The Van Den Bogart Family settled this area, deeded part of their estate for the county courthouse, and entertained visitors in their adjacent home. Starting in 1777, Stephen Hendrickson hosted dignitaries including James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and the delegates to New York's United States Constitution Ratification Convention in the summer of 1788 at his inn here. The site continued to serve as a hotel through 1861 when Mrs. Catharine E. Taylor purchased the property from her brother, Homer A. Nelson. After significant demolition and remodeling of the existing buildings, she opened a new hotel named in his honor on May 16, 1876.

The Nelson House, 1876

Courtesy of the Adriance Memorial Library

Captain A. P. Black operated the Nelson House for Mrs. Taylor from its opening in 1876 until 1880. Lawyers' Row, seen here in the foreground, sat on a portion of the current County Office Building's location before its demolition in 1884.



Hendrickson's Inn, 1799

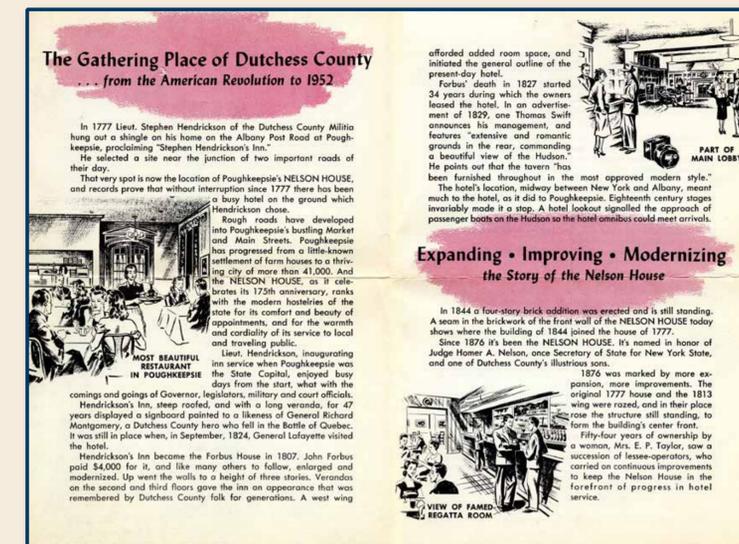
Courtesy of the Dutchess County Clerk

Henry Livingston's 1799 Poughkeepsie map marks Hendrickson's Inn on Market Street. The current county courthouse sits on the same corner of Market Street and Main Street noted on this map.

An Illustrious History

Courtesy of the Poughkeepsie Journal

In 1952, the Nelson House celebrated 175 years of service with this



brochure, which detailed the site's long history in the hospitality business.



The Nelson House, 1876-1952



The Nelson House, 1904

Courtesy of Shorpy Historic Photo Archive

The Nelson House reached the height of its Victorian architectural grandeur in the opening decade of the twentieth century, solidifying its status as a major cultural landmark.

The Nelson House continued to thrive and expand in the twentieth century. By 1915, Proprietor Horatio N. Bain was promoting the hotel to automobile tourists. The Nelson House Company opened a new 55-room annex in 1926 on the building's south side to accommodate increasing numbers of guests. The hotel hosted numerous visitors including performers at the 1869 Bardavon Opera House and President Franklin D. Roosevelt's staff. Roosevelt, a Dutchess County native, described the Nelson House as the region's best hotel. In 1952, the Nelson House celebrated 175 years of service to the community.

To your right stands the original historical marker produced by the New York State Department of Education to commemorate the Nelson House in 1935 and an original hotel hitching post to which horses would be tied.



The New Nelson House

Courtesy of the Adriaance Memorial Library

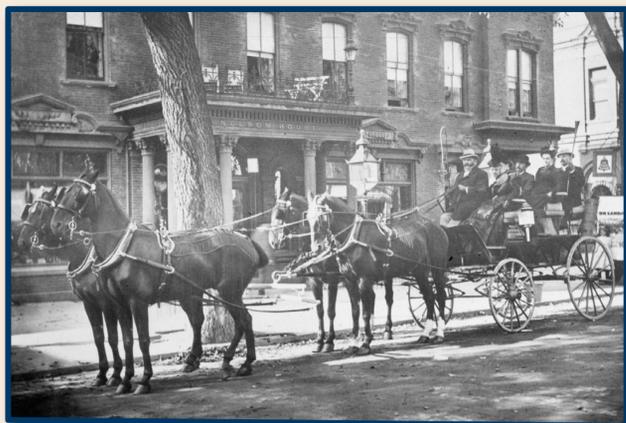
The Nelson House underwent a substantial renovation and expansion during the 1920s and 1930s. Additions included a new 5th floor, a parking garage, a 55-room annex, and a new kitchen.



President Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Courtesy of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library and Museum

President Roosevelt frequently delivered speeches from the Nelson House marquee, including this one on November 4, 1940, the day before winning an unprecedented third term in the White House.



**Horatio N. Bain,
Early Proprietor**

Courtesy of the Poughkeepsie Journal

Horatio N. Bain, seated in the carriage's rear and wearing a dark bowler, operated the Nelson House from 1884 to 1918.

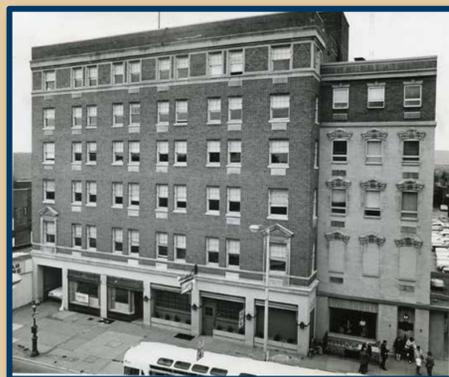
The Nelson House, 1952-1970



Market Street in the 1950s

Courtesy of the Dutchess County Historian

This view of Market Street in the 1950s shows the Nelson House in the foreground and the 1902 county courthouse that still stands today. The Regatta Room was established in 1947 as a tribute to the Intercollegiate Rowing Association's annual Hudson River race. It became the Pickwick Pub in 1958.



The Nelson House's last day in operation

Courtesy of the Poughkeepsie Journal
The Nelson House opened its doors for the last time as a private establishment on September 13, 1969.

A combination of competition from new motels and county government's need for additional office space shaped the Nelson House's final decades. Dutchess County purchased half of the Nelson House in 1963 to make way for the new County Office Building. The remaining portion, largely the 1920s annex, continued to operate as the Nelson House Motor Inn until 1969, when the county purchased the building. County personnel occupied the annex in early 1970 and would use the building until the 1990s. This park occupies the Nelson House Annex's former location and commemorates the Nelson House's importance to Dutchess County.



The Regatta Room

Courtesy of Robert Rolison

The Dutchess Rotary Club was one of many local organizations to hold events in the Regatta Room. This late 1950s gathering included, from left to right, William Sedore, George Reid, Jay Rolison, Robert Watson Pomeroy, Beatrice (Betty) Zimmer, and Joe Burnett.



The Pickwick Coffee Club

Courtesy of the Poughkeepsie Journal

Established in the 1940s by hotel owner Walter Averill II, the Pickwick Coffee Club brought businessmen and elected officials together for breakfast at the Nelson House with "a free cup of coffee on the house."

