

Closter

then and now...



... a celebration of that which we still possess.



We can indeed count ourselves lucky that within our borough there still stand the many structures that give our neighborhoods distinction. Some are not too different from what they had been, some are altered almost out of recognition, but... they are still with us.



A lot busier
and a lot less
muddy...





Notice the roller in the center- needed to keep dirt roads “smooth”. Mud morasses in Winter kept across- the street- neighbors from visiting for months on end. And no, we don’t advocate a return to that...





The north side of Old Closter Dock Road in the old commercial district is an intact late nineteenth-early twentieth century streetscape, and therefore rare in Bergen County.

Porches were a big innovation of the Victorian era, symbolic of welcoming, appropriate for a home or a business- a cultural marker, if you will. Do people really use porches at all today?



Originally the C.A. Demarest & Brothers Hardware Store, much later Wind Mill Hardware and now, due to the vision of its latest owners, Home Town Hardware, and much as it was like back then.



At some point, pedestrians in Closter walked too fast to accommodate navigating porch posts- so, no more porch posts! And no more porches.



Again, rather the same, with some exceptions here and there. The new traffic island solves an esthetic problem of some years' standing; a big thanks to the volunteer who keeps it a beautiful centerpiece.



It still carries a memory of its porch.



A somewhat later time. Who can identify the makes and models?



Originally two houses, as seen to the left; later connected and remodeled, it was Moskowitz's Department Store, the reigning emporium for miles around. Remodeling continued. Were they always commercial, or were they ever private homes?





It is somewhat amazing to think of a small town building such a grand, high-style masonry structure, but back then that's what it was like in America- people built for the centuries.

The interior was, until the mid-fifties, a marbled palace of commerce- then the modernizing bug set in. Other than the signs, what other changes have been made over the years?





The Eckerson and Brothers Carriage and Sleigh Manufactory; this building is, in a sense, one of the oldest running commercial interests in Closter inasmuch as it still operates as a concern catering to vehicles.





The train changed everything- from a cow town backwater to a thriving cow town center for the Northern Valley, all within the space of a few quick years. Yes, the cows remained for some more years, but after a while, they wandered away...

The opening of 9W, the George Washington Bridge and later the PIP sounded the death knell of railroad travel. The depot is now a private residence. The Closter City depot sign still makes the rounds of railroad shows today.





Still discernibly the
old neighborhood...



Along the corner
of Closter Dock
and County Road,
many years ago.



Girls' fashions have surely
changed, but could that
be the same hedge?



Around the bend on Closter Dock Road- right across from the undertaker's! So go slowly and carefully around that bend.





A vernacular building is a building that exemplifies the popular building ideals of the time; even so, don't think that builders then did not think about historic styles: the bracing in the apex of the gables are Gothic; the porch frieze and railings are derived from Japan-by way of England! Such well-executed comminglings were common in the building of the time.





First the Ferdon House;
occupied later by Dr. L.B.
Parsells; then owned by Mr.
Quackenbush (the author of a
text about Closter); later by
Marcel and Angela Jovine,
and now by their daughters.

Have you ever attended an
opera in the Jovine garden?





In the Nineteenth Century it was popular to make churches look like either Greek and Roman temples or Gothic cathedrals in miniature. In 1888 the church fathers showed their preference for Gothic; fifty years later their grandchildren demonstrated a liking for Greek styles. Both are very effective.





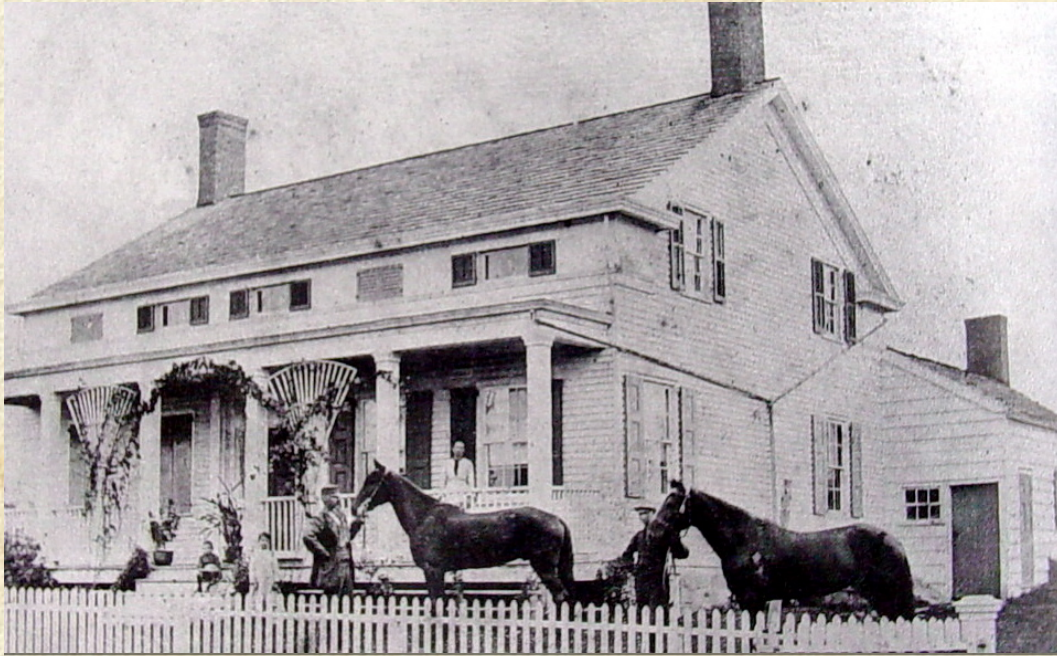
Erected just after we celebrated our national Centennial. Its lines are crisp and clean: an example of how some Victorian styles started to simplify late in the era.



Designed and built in the early days of the Civil War.
Two casualties of that conflict worshipped here.



Look carefully at the vertical siding in the older photograph-it is called board-and batten siding, another feature of Gothic design. Built in 1896 by the descendants of historic Skunk Hollow residents.



Recently restored and the recipient of a preservation award; if you look carefully at the older photograph, you will see large fan trellises nailed to the porch. These were each made from one piece of wood, carefully split to form each fan rib.



Of course, there are a lot more still standing, all good causes to celebrate; sadly, however...



...many have not survived to stand among us,
to shape our feelings and thoughts. So now,
a memorial to that which we have lost...



...all of the following no longer
stand in Closter.



The John Henry Stevens House decorated the corner of Durie and Knickerbocker for a century, until demolished in the 1960's.



The house of his granddaughter Marion Stevens meet a similar fate shortly thereafter.



We lost it- but it exists still, in Wyckoff, where it is a jewel in that community's diadem.



Ward's Hotel, erected when Closter was a summer time refuge for city dwellers. It stood on the north side of Closter Dock Road, east of the railroad tracks.



Closter Dock Road, east of the tracks. All gone.

Certainly there are others which have
fallen; will there be more?

Look around you, and enjoy the things
that remain.