



Portland Poynts

The Chronicle of the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society

March - April, 2021

27 Prospect Circle, P. O. Box 108, Atlantic Highlands, NJ 07716-0108 ♦ www.AHhistory.org

A Tale of Two Beacons Bringing Joy to the World



Christmas tree in the Strauss Mansion tower room

The 2020 holiday season was significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Governmental restrictions on the size of public gatherings impacted the festivities that are normally associated with the several December holidays. Yet there were two beacons bringing the joy of the season to our local communities.

The Strauss Mansion Museum had to forgo the well attended annual Henry Hudson Regional High School Christmas Cantata. Typically, the Mansion would have been lavishly festooned with holiday decorations for the standing-room-only event. Nonetheless, Board Member Bette VanDeventer once again hung wreaths along the building's exterior perimeter and installed flameless candles in the windows. This year she went a step further, lighting a Christmas tree in the Mansion's tower room which was visible from Route 36. It was an inspired move and, hopefully, will become an indispensable part of the Mansion's annual decorative plan.



Christmas lights in the Twin Lights Lighthouse south tower

Just few miles to the south in the Twin Lights Lighthouse south tower lantern room, a group of volunteers — affectionately nicknamed the “Treeple” (a portmanteau of “tree” and “people”) — installed a Christmas tree that isn't really a tree. It's a light installation consisting of 14 lengths of C-9 colored lights (the big bulbs) strung from a two-by-four piece of lumber and draped into a tree shape. The group has been doing this since 2009. “You can't have a real or artificial tree up there. It's just impossible logistically to do that,” said Twin Lights Historic Site superintendent Maggie Mitchell. The lights are installed before the Saturday preceding Thanksgiving and are illuminated on the Friday after Thanksgiving. Until 2019, the lighting was uneventful. That year, Twin Lights Historic Site held its first Winterfest which included children's holiday crafts, historian-led tours, and a countdown to the lighting. Hopefully, post-Covid, the event will be resumed and become an annual tradition.

Thank you!

FOR YOUR CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP AND SUPPORT DURING THESE CHALLENGING TIMES. YOU ARE AN IMPORTANT MEMBER OF OUR TEAM!



We gratefully recognize our 2020 members and donors, who made this difficult year a bit more navigable. Everyone who donated to the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society in 2020 has been made a member for 2021...our way of saying THANK YOU for your support.

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The Atlantic Highlands Historical Society also extends special thanks to Dan Calandriello, Lisa Ebeling, Doris Irwin, Albert Lewis, John & Kathleen Ligon, Bonnie & Gerard Lordo, Lenore Manicioto, and John Moffett for their exceptional generosity in 2020.



Pieces of the Puzzle

By Greg Caggiano

As I was preparing a virtual tour lecture on the Strauss Mansion Museum for Brookdale Community College in early February, I likened the exploration of this magnificent mansion to finding pieces of a giant puzzle. The size of the house (approximately 8,700 sq. ft. of living space, considered “a small cottage” in comparison to the Strauss family New York City home) and its 21 rooms is one thing. But the fact that the Strauss Mansion has had 10 different owners and includes a collection ranging from myriad donations and acquisitions, along with a few leftover items from the purchase of the house by the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society from the final owners in 1980, makes it more challenging than one might think. Combine that with alterations made over the years, hidden but yet also in-your-face components of design, and even the original and eccentric Victorian architecture makes this an adult scavenger hunt when one walks through the place.

I have been volunteering at the Strauss Mansion Museum since 2013 and on the Board of the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society since 2014. Even today, I still notice something new with almost every visit. Having to study each room to develop my lecture led me to a closer examination of them. Thankfully, I also had years’ worth of research compiled by former board historians and presidents John King and the late Paul Boyd. It is Paul Boyd’s exhaustive “tour guide” (which really could be a complete book in itself) co-written with Laura Poll that was a all-important starting point. Though much has changed since it was written in 2008, the numerous detailed references allow a historian like me to explore more, be it other works by Boyd and King or the original sources they used to write them. (Many of these sources can be found in the Atlantic Highlands Journal digitization project of the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society.) The guide was updated in late 2019 by Portland Poynts editor Walter Johnson and myself, but, unfortunately, not many visitors had a chance to make use of it in 2020 due to the Covid pandemic closure of the Museum. Hopefully that will change later in 2021.

This column is going to take a look at my findings. It started out as a few posts on both the Museum’s social media and my own. People were sincerely fascinated by the information and asked for more. Some tidbits are new, while others have been there all along. Each room and the items in it tell a story. Perhaps it will be from the lavish Strauss era when the building was a summer retreat for its

wealthy owners, the many decades as a private year-round residence, or even the later years when it fell into near-ruin and had been divided into unsanctioned apartments. One never knows what one might find on this journey.

Every Piece Tells a Story

If you look VERY closely at the southern exterior doorframe of the Dutch double door (the main entrance in 1893), you will notice a mezuzah affixed to it. (A mezuzah, Hebrew for doorpost, represents the dividing line between the living spaces of a Jewish home and the outside world. Each mezuzah contains a piece of parchment called a klaf contained in a decorative case and inscribed with specific Hebrew verses from the Torah. These verses consist of the Jewish prayer Shema Yisrael, beginning with the phrase: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord (is) our God, the Lord is One”.



Strauss descendants in 2007 installing the mezuzah on the main entrance door frame

This particular mezuzah was installed in 2007 when descendants of Adolph and Jeanette Strauss learned that the summer home of their great-great-grandparents’ was still standing...and was open to the public as a museum. Adolph and Jeanette Strauss were German-Jewish immigrants who built the house as a

summer retreat from their main residence on East 49th Street in New York City. The family vacationed at their Atlantic Highlands “cottage” from 1893 to 1907. Traveling from all over the country to hold a large family reunion, they asked if they could place a mezuzah by the door. A private ceremony was held.

While Atlantic Highlands was then the largest resort town on the Jersey Shore, being Jewish prohibited the Strausses from staying at any of the nearly 70 hotels in operation from 1880-1953. Although newspaper records from the time indicate they and several other prominent Jewish families were highly regarded citizens in town, they were still relegated to building their own mansions on the hillside, not downtown, if they wanted to enjoy what the area had to offer. Many of the Victorian structures in town, specifically the ones on the hill, are a product of this unfortunate, though widespread, prejudice.

continued 

Recently I went to the currently-closed Strauss Mansion Museum with former Atlantic Highlands Historical Society Junior Board member Patrick Osborn to take more photographs for my lecture and posts. As we drove around Atlantic Highlands, I took photographs of the other house built by the Strauss' architect/builder team — Solomon Cohen and Adolph Huntera — and did a side-by-side image comparison with the Strauss Mansion. With many striking similarities in design, the houses look like they were separated. I would love to get inside.



In a contract dated December 17, 1892, Huntera undertook to complete the work “in all its details” by June 1, 1893 — a period of only 5½ months! — as the Strauss couple were eager to occupy their summer cottage for the entire summer of 1893. It was completed in its entirety on time.

While browsing in the third floor apartment area (which has not yet been restored and is still in the deteriorated condition in which it was left by the last owner — a future, expensive project for the Society), we found a 1937 RCA Victor radio underneath a small sink/stove in one of the apartments. While I recall that area once having being cleared a few years ago, this was a new find. Patrick was very excited since music, sound, and sound editing is a passion of his. For him, seeing the technology (and tubes) inside this radio was “awesome”. A neat find. The plug is attached but the radio does not work. It would be wonderful if we could get it restored and turned into a working display item, augmenting the Strauss Mansion Museum’s wide-ranging collection of historic audio/entertainment items which include Edison wax cylinder phonographs, wind-up 78 rpm record player consoles, and two period radios.

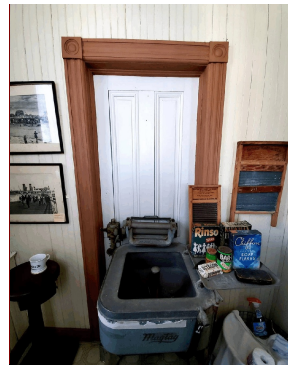


I have delved deeply into the mysteries this amazing house has to offer. Preparing for the Brookdale Community College lecture opened my eyes to how much we still do not know about the Mansion. Consequently, I have been looking with greater detail at the rooms, especially downstairs. For

example, there is an on/off switch adjacent to the original front door. The wire is cloth covered so it may be from the early 1900s. But a switch to what? Always assuming it was a call bell due to its shape, I never really looked at it before.

Doors, Doors Everywhere!

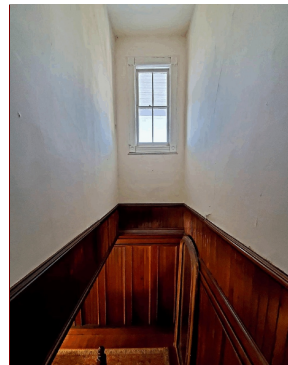
There are 69 of them to be precise. Some are fancy, some are plain. Most are practical but a few do not appear to make sense initially.



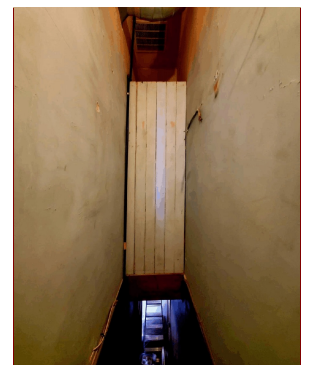
#1 - Butler's Pantry door to kitchen



#2 - Sink covering Butler's Pantry door



#3 - Where a bridge existed between two bedrooms



#4 - Bridge over servants' staircase connecting two original bedrooms

Picture #1: The first floor visitors bathroom was originally the butler's pantry which explains this doorway leading into the kitchen.

Picture #2, however, shows what is behind that door. When the kitchen was remodeled, presumably in the 1960's, the owners decided to install cabinets, fully blocking the door.

In Picture #3, there are currently no doors existing at all, but when the house was built in 1893 there was a small bridge spanning the hallway in front of the hall window between the current library and the local history room (both originally bedrooms). If you look closely when visiting the Strauss Mansion Museum, continued

you can see faint imprints of these long lost doorways. In fact, every second floor room was connected with a doorway for a cooling air flow and to allow the staff to maneuver through the house performing their duties without encountering their employers or guests. At that time, it was possible to walk a complete circle around the second floor without ever stepping foot in the hallway.

Picture #4 shows a remaining bridge above the concealed servants' staircase connecting the current Old Homes Room with the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society's office.

Cooking For Parties



Ignore the clutter and imagine cooking for a large dinner party on this stove which dates to the early 1900's. It was likely added after the Strauss family was gone and the house was a private year-round residence. Behind the stove is the now-closed-off hearth which would have been part of the original

Strauss kitchen. A brick chimney still exists directly outside. There was evidently a second kitchen below in the basement for cooking on the hotter days. A dumbwaiter door still exists a few feet away connecting to an existing basement structure that transported food (and probably laundry) up to the first floor.

The large extravagant parties hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Strauss would often have required both kitchens being utilized simultaneously. The Strauss' original spacious dining room now functions as the Museum's Visitor Center.



For the longest time I wondered if this stove came with the house or was donated very early after the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society purchased the building. But as viewed in the 1979 horror motion picture *Don't Go In the House* filmed at the Strauss Mansion Museum when it was a private residence, the stove was in working order. In fact, it was used to depict the torture of one of the film's characters. I have no doubt, given the enduringness of kitchenware construction back then, that with a bit of refurbishment it would still function today. For now, it remains simply a display piece alongside other period cooking implements.

Back in 1895... the Strauss

family would have been reading about...



March 1 - William Lyne Wilson is appointed U.S. Postmaster General.

March 3 - Bicyclist in Munich, Germany must pass a test and display license plates.

March 15 - In Ireland, Michael Cleary is convicted and imprisoned for the manslaughter of his wife, Bridget. His defense was his belief that he had killed a changeling left in his wife's place after she had been abducted by fairies.

March 18 - First worldwide gasoline bus route began in Germany.

March 19 - Auguste and Louis Lumière record their first footage using their newly patented cinematograph.

March 20 - A fire gutted the New York City six-story building housing the apparatus of electrical experimenter Nikola Tesla. When the fourth floor gave way, all the equipment fell to the second floor where it lay in ruin. Nothing was insured.

March 25 - U.S. Treasury gold reserve saved when J. P. Morgan and the Rothschilds loaned \$65,000,000 worth of gold to the government.

March 30 - Rudolf Diesel patents the Diesel engine in Germany.

April 3 - Libel case brought by Oscar Wilde against John Sholto Douglas, the 9th Marquess of Queensberry, eventually results in Wilde's imprisonment on charges of homosexuality.

April 7 - Norwegian explorer Fridtjog Nansen's expedition to the Arctic reaches farthest North ever attained.

April 14 - Major earthquake severely damages the Slovenian capital of Carniola.

April 17 - Treaty of Shimonoseki between China and Japan signed, ending the First Sino-Japanese War. The defeated Qing Empire is forced to renounce claims on Korea and concede southern portion of Liaoning.

April 24 - Joshua Slocum set sail from Boston aboard the sloop *Spray* to become the first person to sail single-handedly around the world.

April 27 - Historic Spiral Bridge at Hastings, Minnesota constructed to carry horse-drawn traffic over the Mississippi River.

Blast from the Past - Atlantic Highlands Style

Promoting the Digitization of the Atlantic Highlands Journal

By Patty Bickauskas

If you have had a chance to view any of the digitized versions of the Atlantic Highlands Journal on our website, you would have seen that we have digitized most of the issues from 1894 to 1966. So I decided this time to look through the pages of the first and the last newspapers listed in our website to see what was considered newsworthy on those days.

August 16, 1894 Highlands Beach Annual Gala Day!

Never before was such a crowd assembled at Highlands Beach as on Saturday. Last tally 5000 people lined both shores of the Shrewsbury, the bridge, the steam boat dock, the roofs of the bath houses and all the other buildings.

The anchorage was crowded with yachts, launches and row boats which were gaily decorated with flags by day and brilliant at night with many colored lights and pyrotechnics. The many events were finished to the din of booming cannons.

The ball in the evening given by William, Sandlass, Jr., inside of the hotel was a brilliant affair. It was excellent and a fine collation was served. Many well-known people were present and all personnel at the affair decided success.

Places of business advertisements:

Columbus Hotel	First Avenue
The Waldmere	First Avenue
Morres Cottage	Central Avenue
The Portland	Bayview Avenue (now Ocean Boulevard)
The New Amsterdam	Bayview Avenue (now Ocean Boulevard)
Thomas Watts & Co.	Fine Groceries (two doors down from the Post Office*)
J. G. Booker	Five Groceries (opposite the Post Office*)
J. M. Quackenbush & Sons	Groceries (First Avenue, Brick Store)
Leslie's	Bathing House and Boat Rental (Pavilion)
E. R. Turnes	Clothier & Men's Furnisher (Center and Mount Avenues)
The Curtis Pavilion	Bowling Alleys and Hot Salt Bath (Pavilion)

May 27, 1966 ~ Revised A.H. Master Plan Objects Cited in Letter

The following letter sent to the newly formed Business Association by the local Planning Board was one of the subjects discussed at the meeting Wednesday night.

Certain recommendations for the revitalization of our commercial area:

1. Commercial area to be confined to First Ave and along Rte. 36.
2. Selective repairs would be more for the central business district than wholesale replacement.
3. Some deteriorating properties on the side streets might well be used for off street parking facilities.
4. A goal is to provide centrally located civic and cultural facilities such as library, municipal building, community center and park.
5. The commercial establishments at the entrance to Atlantic Highlands should be carefully set back from Rte. 36 and insulated from it, so they do not contribute to the traffic congestion.
6. Some thought should be given to the location of the utility lines underground at some future date.

Places of Business Advertisements:

Finast Supermarket (Foodtown)	Hot house tomatoes 39¢
	Savarin Coffee 79¢ per lb.
	Extra Large White Bread 2½ lb. Loaves 49¢
	Chicken 39¢ a lb.
	Bumble Bee solid white tuna 2 - 7 oz. cans 79¢

Bayshore Pharmacy
McCarthy Chevrolet
Atlantic Highlands Yacht Harbor


Folding wheel chairs, walkers, crutches, canes, commodes, bathtub seats and rails
Proprietor, Richard D. Stryker
First Avenue "Look who's behind the wheel of the Chevy Impala. Why it's you!"
Memorial Day Buffet, \$2.50 per person


It is interesting to see what was considered the "news of the day". I especially enjoyed reading the discussion of the newly-formed business association. How many of these topics are still relevant today?

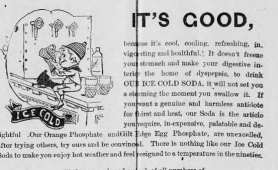
I hope you have enjoyed reading this article and will, perhaps, take some time to view more of this newspaper's articles on our website. You can also do a search using a word or words. If you are a long-time resident of the town, you may want to see if you or an ancestor might have been mentioned in an article. Go to www.ahhistory.org/archives and click on the link for the Journal. As we go through some trying times right now, perhaps settling down on a nice comfy couch and immersing yourself in these newspapers is a perfect way to get your mind off the issues of the day.

Below are reproductions of some of the advertisements in the August 16, 1894 issue of the Journal, all of which can be viewed in the Archives section. The Strauss family could very well have been reading these same advertisements.

*A note pertaining to the advertisements of 1894 that stated some of the businesses were located near the Post Office. At that time, the Post Office was located on the corner of Bayview Avenue and First Avenue.



CARVING TOOLS
Should be at the table that that
...
Crockery and Glassware,

W. H. Posten, Jr.




IT'S GOOD,
...
ANTONIDES & COOPER,
FIRST AVENUE.

WALL PAPER
60c a Room. Embossed Golds 20c. (formerly \$1.50). Samples mailed free. Fares to and from N. Y. City paid on reasonable purchases. Bargain House, 10 W. 23d St., N. Y.

SUMMER GUIDE OF ATLANTIC HIGHLANDS, AND VICINITY.

Hotels & Boarding Houses. The Family Hotel ... The Portland ... Livery, Carriage, etc.	Merchants - Supplies in General. ... Boating, Bathing, Fishing, etc.	Real Estate & Professions. ... Church Directory.
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A. Martin,
Carriage -:-
Manufacturer,
Atlantic Highlands, N. J.
HORSE SHOEING
and all kinds of repairing Promptly Attended To.
ROAD WAGONS, RUNABOUTS, GROCERY AND FARM WAGONS MADE TO ORDER
First-Class Workmanship Guaranteed.

THE WALDEMERE
Hotel and x x
Dinning Rooms.
EUROPEAN PLAN
Rooms by Day or Week.
Mrs. J. DEY,
ATLANTIC HIGHLANDS, N. J.

CLARENCE TUTTLE,
DEALER IN
Fish, Clams, Oysters and Lobsters.
MARKET - ON - PIER,
ATLANTIC HIGHLANDS.
Orders Called For and Goods Promptly Delivered.

GEORGE W. DAVIS,
DEALER IN
FRESH FISH,
CLAMS & OYSTERS,
CANNED and SALT FISH.
BAY VIEW AVE.,
Atlantic Highlands, N. J.
All Orders Promptly Attended To.

QUACKENBUSH & SONS.
— Dealers In —
CLOTHING,
Gents Furnishings
Clothing Dept
We have in this department suits ranging in all sizes and prices, among which may be found a full line of
Cutaways, Square Cuts, Sacques,
Gents Furnishings.
A FULL LINE OF
FINE UNDERWEAR, -
AND A COMPLETE LINE OF
Laundried and Unlaundried Shirts
Outing Shirts,
Collars Cuffs & Ties
ALL AT VERY LOW PRICES.

CHARLEY YOUNG,
Chinese Laundry,
Atlantic Highlands.
FIRST AVENUE.
Shirts, Collars, Cuffs, in fact everything pertaining to ladies and gentlemen were washed in good style.
ALL WORK SATISFACTORY.

PORTLAND POYNTS

Electronically published bi-monthly March-November by the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society, 27 Prospect Circle, Atlantic Highlands, NJ 07716. Portland Poynts is the original name of the area that became Atlantic Highlands.

Incorporated in 1974, the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society at the Strauss Mansion Museum is a volunteer-run 501(c)3 tax exempt organization committed to promoting interest in the past and present heritage and history of Atlantic Highlands through a variety of services and programs to the community at large. All donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

The Strauss Mansion Museum is open to the public Sundays, 1:00 - 4:00 pm, April through December. Free admission, \$5 suggested donation. Self-guided tour.

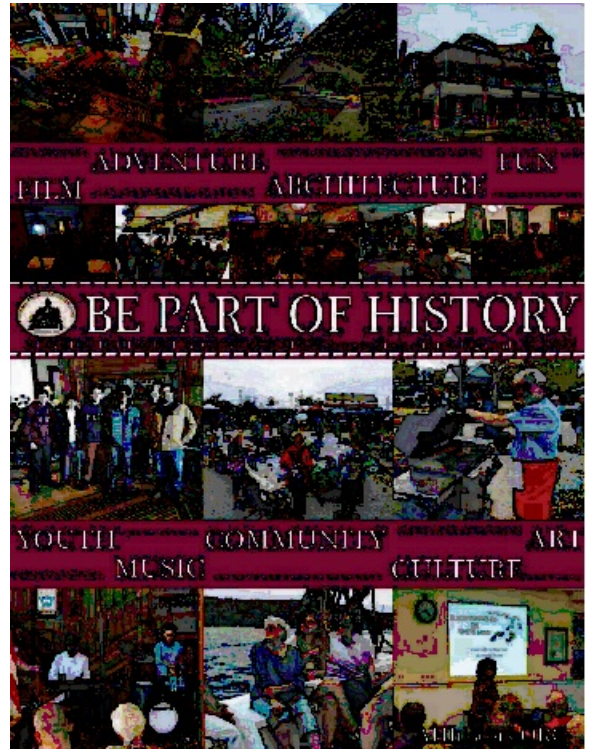
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With the constantly changing state-mandated regulations regarding the size of public gatherings during the Covid pandemic, the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society Board has not made any plans, as of this date, to resume regular programs and events or to create virtual programs at the Strauss Mansion Museum. Once such plans are made, they will be posted on the Society's website and disseminated via the Society's email. To be sure to receive these notifications, register on the Society's website link: AhhistoricalINFO@gmail.com.



Photography by
Greg Caggiano



Photography by
Christine Burke



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Christine Burke

