



..Museum and Headquarters  
LAMBERT CASTLE  
Garret Mountain Reservation  
Paterson, N. J.

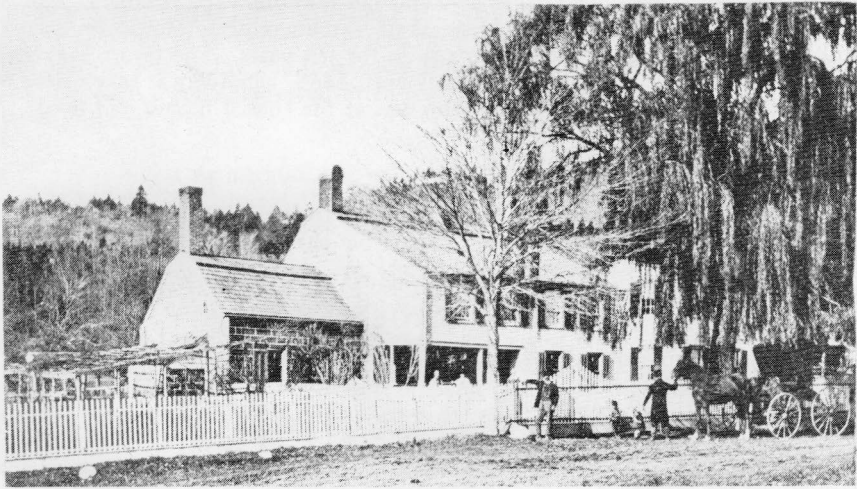
# PASSAIC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## ***THE GREAT NOTCH INN***

*by Edward M. Graf*



*Piaget's Inn - Great Notch*

*c. 1880*

After early settlers took over their lands in the back country, their first concern was for better means of transportation. Earliest transportation was on foot or horseback by old Indian trails, where wagons could not travel in order to get iron ore, lumber and produce from the farms to the Passaic River at Acquackanonk Landing, where sailing ships could carry these products to the market.

One early road came through the Notch, then along the Valley Road to what is now known as Van Houten Avenue, which went directly to Acquackanonk Landing.

Drivers transporting the iron ore from the mines of northern Jersey, complained of the lack of places along the route where they could stop to rest, eat and often 'lay over' for the night on their slow arduous passage over these bad roads.

Cornelius A. Vreeland, who had been working on the docks at Acquackanonk Landing, got the idea of establishing a tavern at Great Notch, receiving a hotel license in 1798. This tavern met with great success and supplied a long felt need, not only for the wagon drivers, but also for the travellers by stage coach who had to attend to business in the larger settlements. The hotel became popular and was sometimes used as a court by Justices of the Peace for residents in the area.

Vreeland continued the tavern until 1818, at which time he sold out to Simeon Brown who conducted business there until 1839, at which time it was taken over by Henry F. Piaget. The buildings with about thirty acres of land were sold for \$4,000. The annual meetings of the Township of Acquackanonk were held here during April of each year.

Henry F. Piaget continued the business of the tavern and also a large farm for a dozen years when, on Sunday, he sold a farmer a sherry cordial to relieve colicky pains, for three cents. For this act the farmer had him indicted since selling liquor on Sunday was unlawful. On Piaget's own admission of guilt he was fined \$200.

Disgusted, Piaget quit the tavern business and sold it to his son Frank, a jeweler from Albany, who came here and ran it about 1852. Frank at the same time transferred his regular business of watchmaking to Montclair, operating both the tavern and the watchmaker's shop for ten years. The tavern was then leased to George Kesse who continued it until 1868, when it was taken over by another son of Henry's, Francis H., who was at the time a farmer and lived near the tavern.

Francis kept the Piaget Hotel until March 23, 1897, disposing of the old hotel to George F. Skidmore. Thus, after some fifty-eight years, the hotel went out of the Piaget family, ninety-nine years from the time that it had been started by Cornelius Vreeland.

## HENRY F. PIAGET

Henry F. Piaget was born near Neufchatel, Switzerland in 1804, of an old Huguenot family. He left his native land in 1818 and went to London, England to live with an uncle.

He married Miss Ann S. Rogers at Cripplegate Church, England, January 20, 1830.

In 1832 Henry came to New York and engaged in the watchmaking trade in Brooklyn, returning to London in 1833 for his wife, whom he had left behind. Returning to Brooklyn, he continued in business, but due to failing health, bought a farm at Great Notch in 1839.

Seven sons and one daughter were born to Mr. & Mrs. Piaget. The eldest son Henry, died in London in infancy; the other sons being Alfred W., Francis H., Frederick (Frank), Henry V., Philip T., and Louis A.

### UNION HOTEL AT THE GREAT NOTCH.

THE subscriber begs leave to inform Travel-  
lers and the Public in general, that his *House*  
will be continued open, as usual for their accom-  
modation, although he could not obtain a License,  
believing it must have been owing to some mistake,  
or if not, then through the *secret, false and malicious*  
*representations of a few individuals*, who would take  
the bread out of myself and family's mouths if in  
their power. But I trust and hope that such will  
not be the case. The Hotel or Tavern now occu-  
pied by the subscriber, has so continued for up-  
wards of 50 years—it is in the central part of the  
township of Acquackanonk, and all the Township  
Meetings and Committee Business are held there,  
as well as the Fall Election to be held there. And  
the subscriber will defy any fair or legal complaint  
has or can be made against the house, either since  
he has had the honor of keeping it, or for the long  
period that it has been in existence—that he is and  
has at all times been provided with all the requi-  
sites of a Public Inn. There is no house now li-  
censed between the villages of Acquackanonk and  
Little Falls, nor from Paterson to West Bloom-  
field—consequently the subscriber will continue his  
Hotel as usual, except the retailing of ardent spirits  
as is prohibited by law.

HENRY F. PIAGET.

Great Notch, between West Bloomfield and Pat-  
erson.

May 6, 1846.

12.3°

Louis, born February 6, 1842, the only child born at the Notch, later was a leading jeweler and watchmaker in Paterson, the other children having been born in New York.

Henry F. Piaget died July 1, 1883 in his seventy-ninth year, his wife Ann Sophia Rogers died April 14, 1890 at the advanced age of eighty-six. Mrs. Piaget had resided at the old homestead at the Notch for fifty-one years. Her funeral took place from the Notch on April 16th.

### THE GOLDEN WEDDING

On Tuesday, January 20, 1880, a happy company assembled at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Henry F. Piaget, at Great Notch, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of their marriage.

The six surviving sons with their wives, the daughter with her husband Robert W. Peach of Paterson, twenty grandchildren and four great-grandchildren met at the Notch together with a few invited guests.

The company gathered in the parlor and after an appropriate address by the Rev. Charles Pelletreau and a prayer by the Rev. William H. Clark, the eldest son, A.W. Piaget of Paterson, in a few words presented the congratulations of the children, each of whom advanced in turn, saluted the parents with fervor, embraced them and brought a golden token of their affection.

The eldest grandchild, the wife of Mr. S. Schoonmaker of Paterson, greeted the aged couple with words of love in behalf of the grandchildren, all of whom approached with salutations and golden offerings.

Afterwards, Master Paul G. Schoonmaker, a lad of six years, the eldest great-grandchild, as the spokesman of the fourth generation came forward with his address of welcome, which ended with a burst of emotion that brought tears to the eyes of all present. All the little ones, including the babes-in-arms, each had a golden token of affection for the couple in whose honor the company had gathered.

A short address followed by John Avilia of Brooklyn, who had known the Piagets for more than forty years.

Dr. J.G.C. Robertson presented Mr. Piaget the congratulations of the Joppa Lodge of Free Masons of Paterson.

Also greeting the aged couple were Mr. Suttie of New York; Prof. Florian Oborski and the Rev. William H. Clark of Paterson.

Letters were read from a grandson in Kansas and two grandchildren in Greenwich, New York, the only members of the family circle not present.

After these exercises the company sat down to a bountiful meal, which was prolonged into the evening. The wedding feast was prepared by Andrew Moser of Paterson in his usual excellent style. The wedding cake which graced the center of the table was garnished with golden foliage.

Death had entered the family only four times in fifty years. The eldest son had died in infancy in London; Lulu, eldest daughter of Louis A. Piaget in 1875; a grandchild in 1878 and Freddie, son of F.A. Piaget in February 1879.

## THE DEATH OF HENRY F. PIAGET

Death came to Henry F. Piaget, July 1, 1883 at the age of seventy-nine years. On July 5th there was a very large attendance at the Second Presbyterian Church where the pastor Rev. Dr. Charles D. Shaw officiated, assisted by the Rev. Pelletreau and the Rev. W.H. Clark of Nyack, late of the Broadway Reformed Church. They had been present at the Golden Wedding anniversary at the Notch homestead in 1880. It required ten carriages to convey those who attended the service.

No Christmas, in all the years, passed without witnessing a complete family reunion. The one exception being the year that Louis A. Piaget was absent through his participation in the Civil War, the first break in the family circle for forty years, and then only temporary. The sons sometimes travelled hundreds of miles to reach the old homestead for the reunion.

The last Christmas reunion at which the entire family assembled in 1880, there were fifty-four persons including the deceased and his aged wife, their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. This was the first death in the United States, other than grandchildren, of any nearer the root of the family tree. Henry's survivors included his six sons and a daughter.

There were no flowers or other emblems noticeable at the funeral except a large sheaf of ripe grain and two beautiful palm leaves with a Lily between them. Masonic services were held at the grave by Past Grand Master Isaac Van Wagner, a special request made by the deceased at the time of the Golden Wedding anniversary at the old homestead.

At the Annual Town Meeting held in the Township of Aquackanook, County of Passaic, at the House of Simeon Brown, in the Notch, on Monday the 8th instant, the following Whigs were duly elected Town Officers for the ensuing year. There was no opposition or Loco foco ticket run, viz :

Moderator—John R. Nafie.  
 Town Clerk—Henry R. Van Ness.  
 Assessor—Isaac I. Vanderbeck.  
 Collector—John R. Speer.  
 Judge of Election—Samuel Van Saun.  
 Township Committee—Aaron A. Van Houten, Nicholas R. Terhune, Adrian Van Ripper, Richard I. Jacobus, John R. Nafie.  
 Overseers of the Poor—John G. Van Ripper, John Fairchild Jr.  
 Chosen Freeholders—Cornelius G. Van Ripper, Peter G. Speer.  
 Judges of Appeal—Richard A. Post, John Zelliff, John I. Sip, Jr.  
 Pound Masters—John H. Van Winkle, Cornelius W. Van Winkle, Peter Zelliff.  
 Surveyors of the Highway—John D. Mercelis, Charles T. Van Winkle.  
 Constables—Garret Van Houten, David Dierick, Moses Pier.

School Committee—Richard Morrell, Thomas Gould, William E. Van Ness.

Overseers of the Road—1st dis. John Joseph Speer—2d dis. John A. Post—3d dis. David A. Westervelt—4th dis. Daniel G. Demarest—5th dis. Cornelius M. Post—6th dis. Philip I. Van Ripper—7th dis. Edw. E. Mercelis—8th dis. John Riker—9th dis. James B. Wilson.

No additional Tax on a single Dog.  
 Every additional Dog or Slut, One Dollar.  
 \$1,200 for the support of the Poor for the ensuing year.

\$300 for keeping the Highways in repair.  
 \$200 for the support of Public Schools for the ensuing year.

The next Annual Town Meeting to be held at the House to be kept by Henry F. Piaget, at the Notch.

Fall Election, 1st day, at Peter G. Speer's, at Little Falls, 2d day, at John Headden's, at Aquackanook.

First Township of Aquackanook meeting at the House of Simeon Brown, April 8, 1839.

At the annual Town Meeting of the Township of Aquackanook, held at the house of Henry F. Piaget, on Monday last, the following persons were duly elected Township officers for the ensuing year, all good whigs and true. There was, in fact, no regular opposition to the whig ticket:—

Town Clerk—Henry R. Van Ness.  
 Assessor—Isaac I. Vanderbeck.  
 Collector—Richard I. Jacobus.  
 Judge of Election—Samuel Van Saun.  
 Township Committee—Aaron A. Van Houten, Nicholas R. Terhune, Adrian Van Ripper, Evert H. Van Ness, John R. Nafie.  
 Overseers of the Poor—John G. Van Ripper, Garret Yorks.  
 Chosen Freeholders—Cornelius G. Van Ripper, Peter G. Speer.  
 Judges of Appeal—Richard A. Post, John Zelliff, John Sip, Jr.  
 Pound Masters—John H. Van Winkle, Cornelius W. Van Winkle, Benjamin H. Bone.  
 Surveyors of the Highways—John D. Mercelis, John Bowman.  
 Constables—Garret Van Houten, David Dimick, Moses Pier.

School Committee—Richard Morrell, Francis Van Ness, David A. Westervelt.

Overseers of the Road—1st district, John Joseph Speer, 2d John A. Post, 3d Adrian R. Post, 4th Daniel G. Demarest, 5th Cornelius M. Post, 6th Philip I. Van Ripper, 7th Edw. E. Mercelis, 8th John Riker, 9th James B. Wilson.

No additional Dog Tax on a single dog.  
 Every additional Dog or Slut, One Dollar.  
 \$1,200 for the support of the Poor for the ensuing year.

\$300 for keeping the highways in repair.  
 No School Tax for the support of the Public Schools for the ensuing year.

Next Town Meeting to be held at the house of Henry F. Piaget, at the Notch.

Fall Election, 1st day at the house of B. H. Bone, Little Falls, 2d day at William L. Adruss's, at Aquackanook.

First Township of Aquackanook meeting at the house of Henry F. Piaget, April 13, 1840.

( Mr. Graf is curator of the Passaic County Historical Society Museum at Lambert Castle and has written numerous articles for the Society. )