

Hawkwood
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The house that became known as Hawkwood was probably built in the late 1700's by Henry Walton who "bucked the trend" of the rich and famous who were all buying land in Saratoga. He, instead, decided to build his house in Ballston.

The house was purchased by Edward Delevan in 1832 and became known as the Delevan Farm which went all the way from Goode St. to Ballston Lake. The Delevan family was a wealthy Albany family who probably owned slaves. To this day, there is a Delevan Creek in the area of the old Delevan property.

In the 1880's, the Baker family, led by wealthy brother Guy, purchased the Delevan estate, which encompassed many acres from current day Route 50 just north of the Burnt Hills intersection all the way to the shores of Ballston Lake. They renamed the mansion which sat upon the property, "Hawkwood." The Baker brothers later built a house on Ballston Lake so that William Bliss Baker, a famous painter of the time, could have a studio in which to work. That building was and still is known as "The Castle."

It was the Bakers about whom we know the most. Guy Ellis Baker's marriage to Louise Irene Palma Di Cesnola on December 28, 1904 was reported in the New York Herald on the subsequent day. That wedding as well as many visits and social events which involved the couple were published in many other newspapers and on many dates in later years. Her father, who was of Italian heritage, was a Civil War veteran and a winner of the Medal of Honor. After the war, he became US consul to Cyprus and, for 25 years, he was the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In 1873, the museum was even expanded to accommodate his extensive collection of antiques.

Hawkwood, where the newly married couple lived was described in the New York Herald as "a fine estate." The mansion's entry/receiving hall was 20 by 30, big enough for balls and concerts. It had textured crimson wallpaper throughout. The dining room had mahogany furniture; the bedrooms, canopied beds, one a Victorian sleigh bed. The house contained four pianos, one a full grand and it had fireplaces in every room—11 total. The walls were lined with brick for protection against stray bullets and arrows. Up to 15 servants were needed to maintain the house. Its outdoor three-seater privy even had plastered walls!

For its time, this house was quite significant. It had pull chain toilets upstairs and was the first house in Ballston to have running water and gas lights (carbide and water produced the light). Its outbuildings numbered at least five: a "tenant house" for farm laborers, a creamery, an ice house, a hog house, and barns as well.

Teddy Roosevelt visited Hawkwood. He came to go fox hunting in this area. To get to Ballston, he would come by railroad and then coach but, one time, the coach was so late that he decided to buy some ice cream. Because of his subsequent white mustache, many

people in the area remarked about his unusually “white” mustache! His daughter, Alice, came with him on another visit and fell into a watering trough on Midline Road!

Although the house burned down fifty some years ago, its importance is verified by its inclusion in the Library of Congress’ Historic American Buildings Survey. Pictures of Hawkwood can be found on their website at <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/hh/item/NY1108/>. However, there are still remains of the house today on the property. Still to be seen are the foundations of the mansion itself and its many outbuildings, as well as a few fireplaces.

And it is this property that now is owned by the town of Ballston to be used as a passive park by all of the town residents.