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rosendale revisited

BY JAY BLOTCHER | PHOTOS BY KEITH FERRIS

The Ulster County town of Rosendale has lived many lives: a boisterous 19th century outpost of bars, boarding houses and bordellos for cement miners; a sleepy burg for residents shifting from agriculture to factory work; and, most recently, a haven for artists and musicians relocating from New York City.

The past, present and future of Rosendale are commemorated with style and whimsy in the 1850 House, a self-described “boutique inn” that opened in March 2012. The new accommodations offer a burst of life to a town that has been weathered by economic challenges in the last generation.

The building itself is steeped in history. For 130 years, it was known as The American Hotel, a modest but inviting brick edifice that offered shelter and sustenance to travelers. The structure became efficiency apartments in the 1980s and the spirit of the place seemed to sag with the cycle of transients who took up residence. But in the early years of the 21st century, local businessman Mike Ruger engineered an ambitious reincarnation for the structure at 435 Main Street.

The 1850 House offers 12 rooms of varying shapes and sizes, each with a private bathroom and king- or queen-size bed. Working with area contractors and designers, Ruger has rejuvenated the 19th century hotel, offering a beguiling hybrid of old and new, comfortable and stylish, trendy and traditional. Whether you are only looking for a home base between day trips through the region, or crave

a refuge from everyday chaos, The 1850 House will provide.

Echoes of Rosendale’s past are omnipresent. They beckon in the poster-sized enlargements of vintage postcards on the walls, reminding guests how the hotel and town looked a century ago. Over my bed was a poster-sized image of the trestle of the Rosendale Railroad Bridge with a train, frozen in time, as it chugged across the bridge. Outside my window stood the selfsame trestle, now a rail trail.

A tangible sense of yesteryear radiates from the antiques that nestle in corners and wall nooks throughout the three floors of the building: a 1930s folding camera here, an 1890s fire hose holder there. The past lives on in the elegantly turned banisters and original plank floors, as well as the old barn door repurposed for indoor use.

For every totem of the past, however, there is a flourish of modern-day life. Elegant and inviting chairs and sofas are scattered throughout the eclectic décor that offers alternating notes of Asian and American Southwest design. Asked for a guiding philosophy in the creation of The 1850 House, Ruger has a simple answer. He wanted to create a place where people could feel comfortable hanging out.

Wonderful details abound that make one feel pampered. There are personal logo mugs, thick towels and comfy bathrobes. Helpful binders stuffed with information about area destinations are in every room. Flatscreen televisions and DVD



FOR MORE INFO

The 1850 House & Tavern
435 Main Street
Rosendale, NY
845-658-7800
855-658-1850 (toll-free)
www.the1850house.com

PHOTOS: KEITH FERRIS

players are in every room and there is a mini-cooler at floor level.

Throughout the hotel there are numerous corners for curling up and letting the world go by. Check out the back room that gives onto the canal, the spacious common room with a gas fireplace, the expansive front porch and the reading nooks on each floor.

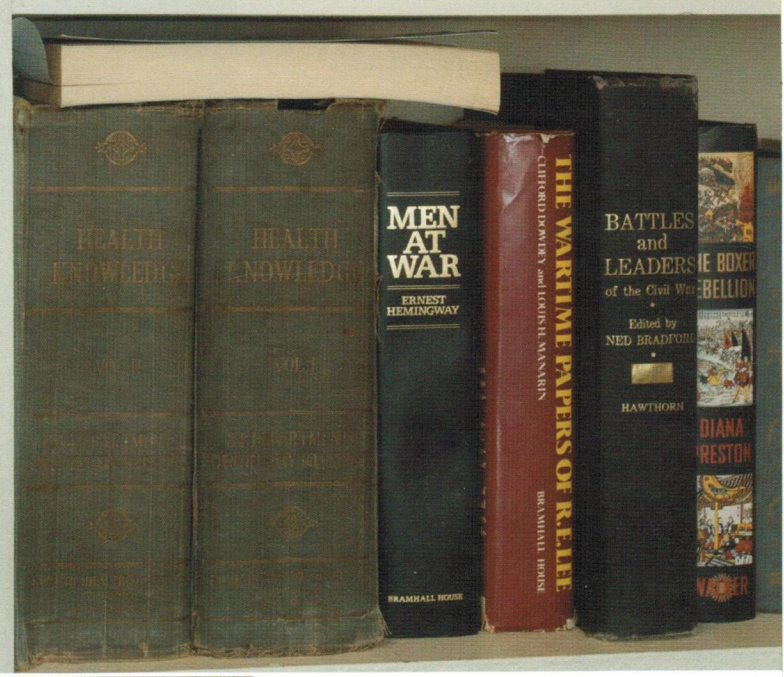
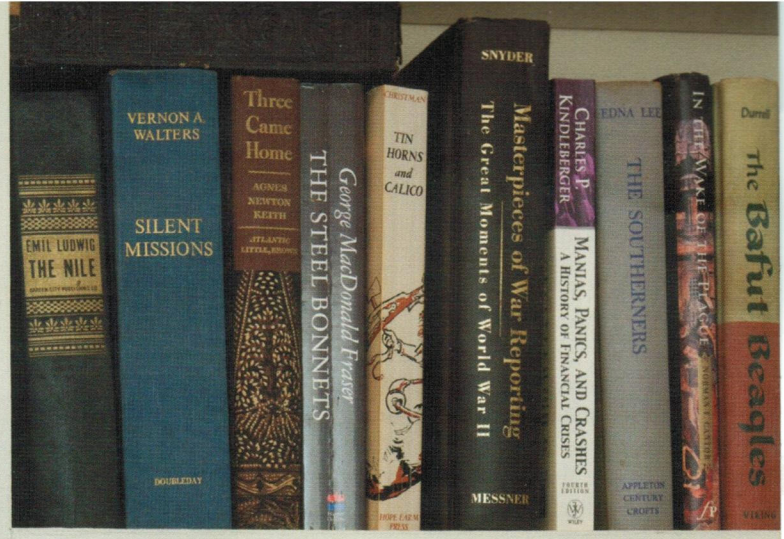
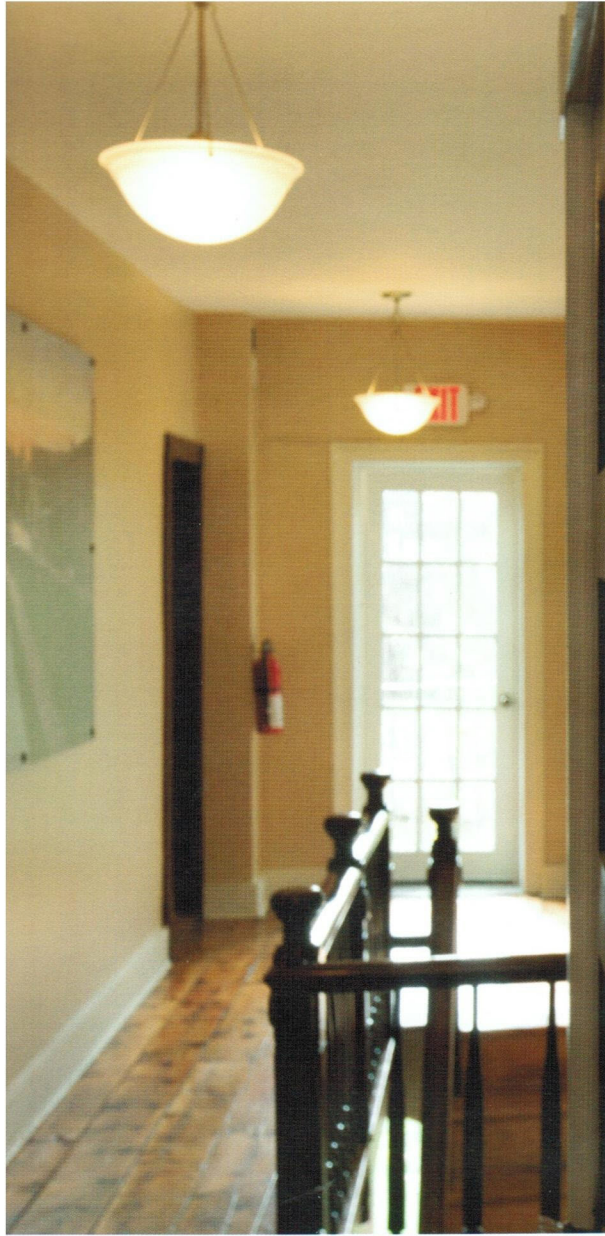
Breakfasts are cooked fresh daily. I choose the sausage and egg tortilla casserole with salsa and banana nut bread one morning. Juice, tea and coffee were plentiful. Additionally, the common room coffee machine operates at any hour, day or night.

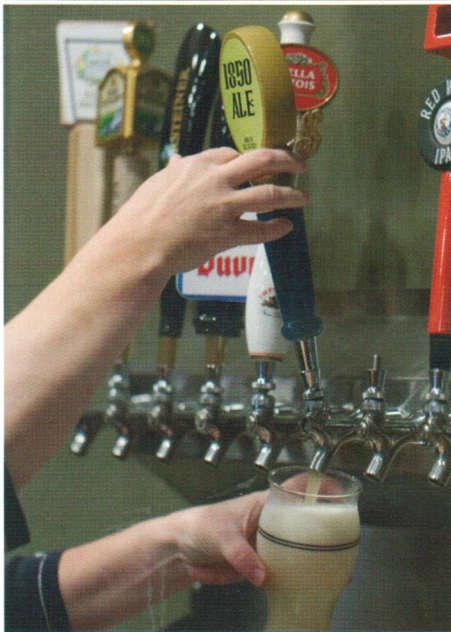
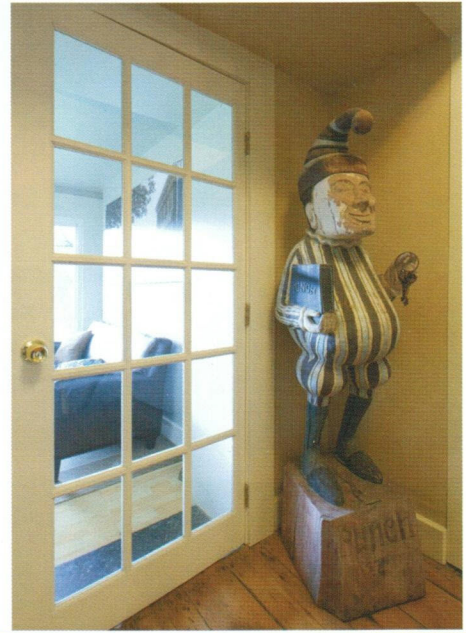
In the evening you can gather with fellow lodgers and locals in The 1850 House Tavern, a convivial room where owner Ruger pours regional microbrew beers on tap as well as upscale spirits. Whiskey lovers should order The Widow Jane, crafted with water from the eponymous cement mine down the road.


There are, however, a few adjustments necessary to maximize the bliss factor of this boutique inn. My bathroom lacked shelves to set down my toiletries, making morning ablutions an awkward affair. My room also lacked a dresser, forcing me to live out of my suitcase. Unfortunately, the illusion of time-travel created by the décor is interrupted periodically by modern traffic on Main Street. Better-insulated windows could have muffled the din.

Yet The 1850 House remains a glorious retreat. In fact, management has planned additional improvements, including a back deck for warm-weather gatherings and a spa across the street, offering massage, beauty treatments and yoga.








Ruger has rejuvenated the 19th-century hotel, offering a hybrid of old and new, comfortable and stylish, trendy and traditional. Echoes of Rosendale's past are everywhere from the poster-sized enlargements of vintage postcards on the walls, to the antiques that nestle in corners and wall nooks throughout the building. The past lives on in a 1930s folding camera, an 1890s fire hose holder and the elegantly turned banisters and original plank floors, as well as a repurposed old barn door.