



Marker #31

Previous to the Revolutionary War, about 1740, three original settler families, the Seversons, the Van Aernams and the Crounses, chose land at the base of the Helleberghs to start their new life. A familiar village tale tells of German shoemaker Frederick Crounse, who travelled on a trek from Rhinebeck-on-the-Hudson to Schoharie Valley with his family. When they reached a beautiful area close to the Hellebergh Mountains, Mrs. Crounse, weary from travel by land and sea, refused to go another step. They built a house and remained on the land that is today Altamont.

Following the Revolutionary War, a small settlement arose east of the present Altamont village line and was known as West Guilderland. The year 1829 saw a post office established in George Severson's Wayside Tavern. In 1863, the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad (later the O&HRR) was constructed, bringing transportation to the tiny town with 10 trains daily to Albany and swelling the population of the new community. The town burgeoned into a resort area where people from Albany came out for the fresh air and to dine at the Kushaqua Inn on the road leading up the hill from the village.

Altamont has had seven different names; Manor of Rensselaerwyck, Helleberg, West Manor, West Guilderland, Knowersville, Knowers and finally Altamont. In 1887, Mrs. Lucy Cassidy, a wealthy resident who thought "Altamont" (meaning high mountain) was more befitting of the place than Knowersville, and used her influence with President Grover Cleveland. He ordered the post office to change its name to Altamont.

On May 20, 1890 in the Hall of the Union Hotel, Attorney Hiram Griggs led a meeting to incorporate the village. Altamont became the first and only municipal unit within the town of Guilderland. It established its own government, police court, judges, and water and sanitation department. Griggs was elected village mayor.

The charming old homes in the village of Altamont reflect the era of the golden years past. The blue and gold marker donating the incorporation of the place where the Seversons, VanAernams and Crounse families settled is no longer on Route 146 by the firehouse. Its whereabouts is a mystery. Perhaps one day the marker will be rediscovered to take its historical place in an historical town.