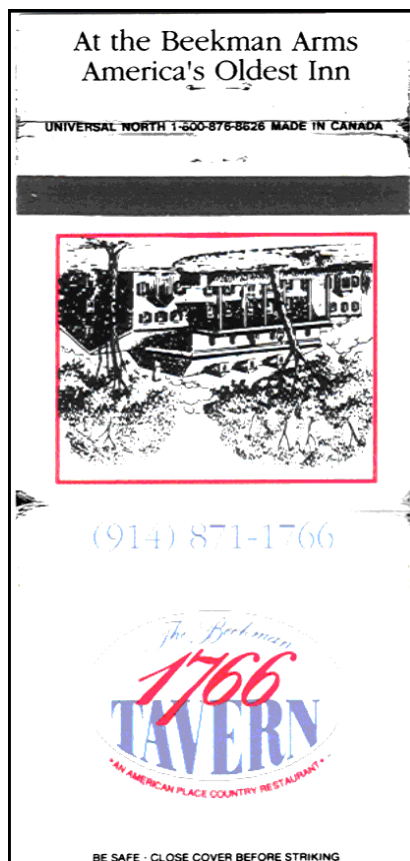


# Historic Hotels!

## XLIII: Rhinebeck's *Beekman Arms*

Now, here's a hotel with *history!* The Beekman Arms is located in Rhinebeck. The Beekman Arms opened in the year 1766. It is the oldest hotel in America. Rhinebeck was founded in 1686. There are 63 rooms and many fireplaces in the Beekman Arms. Some rooms even have a private baths. Arent Traphagen built the Beekman Arms. It was built on the main road that ran through the Hudson Valley. It was called the Kings Highway and later became the Post Road. People who traveled the road would stop at the inn to rest. It was a stage stop over the years between New York City and Albany. It was built of sturdy wood and stone to be strong enough for Indian attacks. During the Civil War and World War I many wealthy people built estates along the Hudson River. Private railroad cars stopped at Rhinecliff and many of the people would come to the Beekman Arms. Rhinebeck became the center of Dutchess County for grand estates and violets and gave the town attention. Market Street is wider because there actually was a market there that sold violets and other goods from the area.

The Beekman Arms today still has the wide plank floors and overhead beams that it was originally built with. In the lobby is a stone hearth by an old fireplace. Many of the original features remain including some of the first guest books. Much of the history of the United States and the Hudson Valley can be connected to visits to the Beekman Arms.



The hotel was always the center of social and civic life. Club meetings, weddings, parties, and dinners were held there. It also served as a town hall, theater, post office and newspaper office. The ballroom or long room had lodge meetings, public teas, auctions and Sunday services for traveling preachers. In 1918, the hotel was owned by Tracy Dows. His son Olin Dows painted the murals in the Rhinebeck and Hyde Park Post Offices. Tracy Dows added the ballroom. In 1958, Charles LaForge bought the inn. He has been its longest owner. In the 1980s the greenhouse was added. In 1995 all of the rooms were renovated. Few changes have been made to the original structure. People continue to this day to gather in the taproom to talk.  
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