

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

November 2010, Issue 205

Share Session

A gray, wet, mostly tranquil day (however, there was slippery snow in Albany and Ashland) welcomed the attendees of the last meeting of the year: Bette Welter, Bob & Marie Shaw, Christine Mickelsen, Phyllis Beechert, David & Judy Rundell, Allyn & Mary Shaw, Ron Golden, Stephanie Ingalls, Richard Ferriolo, Dot Blenis, and Don Teator.

Our share session ran a range of topics. Our first was to remember Harriett and all she did, especially for the Local History Group. She had helped Richard with the veteran book project. Phyllis, from years of being a neighbor, could have told many a tale. Don mentioned a few of her projects: the R.E. Taylor diary transcriptions in longhand and then retelling the annual story; a similar process with the Eleanor Ingalls diary; the dozens of single sheets of notes about a person or family; her account of Burdette Griffin's 100th birthday party; a ride around town with Burdette and recording who lived where in Burdette's days; the account of the Sherrill house being razed; help Don proof-read calendar captions; and more. In her gentle and quiet manner, Harriett had more of an effect on people than she could ever imagine. When I first called her one of our 'local treasures,' she blushed in

slight embarrassment and great humility, but she also was proud to be so recognized. And there is so much more. Thank you, Harriett, for your inspiration.

Richard updated us on the Potter Hollow School project, which appears to be nearing a happy ending, with possible NYS Historic Register status. He asked Don, on behalf of the group, to support the current push to have the NYS Historic Register contact to pass along a recommendation to the Register committee, and to write a letter showing our support. (Done, next day.)

Stephanie indicated the Ingalls Reunion was better attended than most years, and Don read from Carrie Ingalls' diary about the Ingalls Reunion those first few years of the current reincarnation.

Christine brought in her transcription of Gladys Beylegaard interview with June Clark. Thank you, thank you, thank you for such a good deed. This is one of those projects that is much appreciated. And then Christine took a few more tapes, with a promise to give them a try.

Allyn and Mary, with Mary the main exhibitor, again brought several artifacts and machines for us to guess. First was a budget cookbook from 1935 with Nucoa as an ingredient. Several

had used it or seen it on the shelves a very long time ago. Then Mary showed a sample of the product and read how it was used in the "eggless, butterless, milkless" biscuit.

Second, at least three different machines were used. A sifter for whip cream and egg whites (for meringue) was shown, and one person came close identifying it. Imagine four groups of three tubular bars revolving in a cylinder. Next was a coffee grinder, which most people guessed but the story of it being on someone's lawn was the attention-getter. And the photos before-and-after Shaw ownership told how much care Allyn and Mary have taken for this hobby. The last machine was a Sterritt food chopper, a cylinder with a bunch of exterior gearing that made a sharp blade move pretty darn fast. We knew better than to stick our hand in there.

Finally, Don had made copies of the 1937 pamphlet resorts (Gail Banker's copy that was sent back from Gail. Thanks, Gail!) and we checked to see what we knew about the locations. We got most but could not locate Pine Bush Farm, Cherry Hill Farm (we know up North Road but which structures are still standing?), Edmonds Farm, and Rose Terrace. If you know, contact me.

Don remembered a couple of boarding houses not listed in either, possibly because the owners did not advertise, or it was not in existence for either of those dates. So, if you know of any that operated in Greenville or its outlying areas (South Westerlo, Lambs Corners, south side of Gayhead, west of Norton Hill, etc.), please let me know.

Don could remember Green Lawn Farm (his parents' house, operated by Henry Carlson, Big Woods Rd,

Freehold); Burrless Chestnut House (operated by Carrie Garrison, Margie Bennett's mother); and Cherry Hill on Rt 32 north of Freehold where Joe Mangold lived. What other ones were there?

Don has indicated, in the last newsletter, some history projects that could be undertaken. One that he will start is the listing of all the resorts we can remember, and information about each (who operated, when, size, pictures, etc.). An update will come in the annual newsletter this winter. (This one was getting too full for a single stamp.)

So, the end of another year of meetings has come and gone, we got a bunch done, and I wish each of you a healthy and productive five months until I see many of you next. I suggested a few types of projects last time but, really, any project that furthers our knowledge will be a good one.

I took time to transcribe (as faithfully as my eye could see, even a misspelling or two) Edna Adams' article in the Daily Mail some 27 years ago, and have included it in this newsletter. I plan on attaching the information contained in this article to the Resorts database.

Take care,

Don

Here's to a healthy
holiday season!

Greenville Resorts in Review

By Edna Ingalls Adams
Greenville Town Historian

(A two part installment. The first was on Saturday, July 23, 1983 in the Catskill Daily Mail, pg. 4; the second installment came a week later on July 30, pg 12.)

Part 1

Recently a book was published about resorts in the Catskills and none of the town of Greenville was mentioned. We felt like poor relations! Perhaps the editors thought that Greenville is not exactly in the mountains, but we belong to that area.

Our town was mostly settled by New England Yankee farmers after the Revolution. (My own ancestors came from New England in 1731.) Our resorts were started by these farmers' descendents who slowly accepted "boarders" from the city. This happened long after the Mountain House, built in 1820-1830, and other large resorts in the mountains became popular.

In the historian's final at the town offices I have the histories of some of these earliest boarding houses. Many of them have long gone out of existence. For this article I am going to report only the ones that have stayed in business and are thriving today.

These early boarding houses, as they were first called, were mainly for the middle-class and certainly not for the wealthier people who went to the large and, in some cases, famous mountain hotels.

We get the flavor of our early resorts in the advertisement for one of them, that of Mrs. Lillian Joy, who lived near Norton Hill. Her Meadow Dale Farm, we read, was located in "the beautiful Catskill Mountains on Old Plank Road," has a "telephone in house, daily mail," and is serviced by "teams or auto livery." Her ad also states, "no consumptives," "no malaria." As with all early houses, she advertised fresh milk, etc. right off the farm. She could take as many as 20 guests, from June 1 to October 15.

A number of small boarding houses like Mrs. Joy's were in business before World War I. By the middle 1930s many of them had indoor plumbing and electric lights. A few even had a swimming pool. (Ingalside had the first one, built 50 years ago.) Also the first running water was perhaps at Ingalside in 1922. A gasoline engine pumped water to a cistern on the second floor from where the flow ran down through pipes to a faucet in the kitchen!

As in the case of Mrs. Joy, the early advertisements for the old boarding houses always referred to the home cooking from their farms. Vegetables and milk brought directly from the fields apparently appealed strongly to the people in the cities who read the advertisements. Later, as the clientele increased in numbers, some houses gave up farming but continued to offer sumptuous meals.

Also in the early days, many of the people in the cities who were attracted to a vacation in the Catskills had to find convenient means of transportation, until the days when they would have their own automobiles. One ad gives exact logistics: Take Hudson River Day boat to Catskill. This affords a daily trip of the beautiful Hudson and is considerably cheaper than by rail. By New York Central, West Shore Catskill or New York Central to Greendale and then by ferry to Catskill. Auto will meet trains when notified."

Many boarding houses hired "jitneys" or ran their own with family members meeting the trains or the ferries. It is said that from 1500 to 2000 city guests -- for the whole Greene County area -- got off the Day Line, from one of the large river steamers, every summer day. The "Washington Irving" was always on time but the "Robert Fulton" was invariably late, according to those who met them.

These city guests besides being middle-class were usually of the same race and religion, reflecting the prejudices of the times. In the 1930s some ads were saying "Christian Homestead," or "Gentile Management," and in at least one case, "Christians

Only." Yet a long-time resident of Greenville Center, Gladys Beylegaard, tells me that in that community there were once many Jewish people who came as boarders.

The early advertisements always mentioned "Churches Near By" but in the case of the Catholics this was not exactly true until St. John's was built in Greenville in 1933. Before that they were taken to East Durham and to Cairo, since the boarding houses felt responsible for transportation to church.

The early houses might take as many as 20 or 25 guests at one time, but several grew very large and are still with us. The following is a brief history of these.

Alberta Lodge

This was originally Ernest Slater's father's farm. In 1924 it was bought by Mr. and Mrs. Orloff and given the name Alberta Lodge for their adopted daughter from England. In 1958 it began to be a boarding house under the new owners, the John Singers. Slowly the Singers built and refurbished old buildings. They added a swimming pool in 1953 and later renovated the old barn into the Hay Loft recreation hall. When they sold the Lodge to the Werner Nelsons in 1979, they were taking 100 to 118 guests.

Balsam Shade

Burdette and Evangeline Griffen bought this resort in 1935 from Shepards. Gus and Gladys Shepard had a very popular resort just across the Greene County line in Albany County. Balsam Shade was at first an over-flow house from Shepards. Growth began and continued with several hotels, the large main house, swimming pool, tennis courts, etc. It is still owned by the Griffen family and the present managers are Edward and Mary Griffen.

Baumann's Brookside

This resort was started in 1921 by Neil and Bertha Baumann, who were from Long Island and originally from German ancestry. Neil was a graduate of Pratt Institute. Coming to the mountains because of

his health with their two sons, Wilber and Connie, they tried farming for a while and then started taking "boarders." Moving to the current Brookside, they slowly started to build the current resort on Red Mill Road. Descendants of the Baumanns are still the owners -- since 1965 Carol and Richard Schreiber.

Better Days

This farm was bought in 1946 from the Soltys family. Paul Biskupich had come from a farm family in Yugoslavia and wanted to find a farm in this country. Eleanor, his wife, had immigrated from Czechoslovakia. They came to this area and farmed extensively until 1963 when Paul died. They had been taking a few boarders through the years and had a bar and grill and continue to receive guests through the summer. The resort is located on Route 32, a few miles south of Greenville.

Breezy Knoll

Breezy Knoll was at one time a popular resort which boasted the "Longest Bar in the Catskills." It is still in existence but is now Retreat Center for Tibetan Buddhists. We are happy to report this at an international flavor to our town.

Ingalside

Margaret and Warren Ingalls with their son Gerald bought this farm in 1913 and almost immediately began to take guests. The main house burned on Christmas Day, 1924. Many local people responded with a bucket brigade for it was a hopeless situation and all was lost. Yet at once in a flurry of new buildings was started which has continued on to the present. (This year a racket-ball court was added.) Warren Ingalls died in 1947 and Gerald and Annella Ingalls were the owners until 1972. Ingalside was a working farm as well as a "boarding house" until 1951. It continues to receive many guests throughout the summer. Franklin and Joyce Roth are the present owners.

(Continued next week)

Part 2

Last week we began an article written by Greenville Historian Edna Ingalls Adams, covering the origins of resorts in the Greenville area. Here is the conclusion to the article.

Pine Crest Farm

This resort was started in 1929, when Rene and Pierette Stern came up from the city. Rene had arrived just nine years before from Switzerland, and from the start this resort catered to the Swiss Colony in New York City. Rene became a US citizen in 1937, with Stanley Ingalls and Charles Mesow as his sponsors. The Sterns began with 25 guests but at their peak they were taking 120. The present owners are Robert and Lillian Beshore with their aunt, Elsie Budenday. Four years ago, the old main house burned, but the resort is still open and the Swiss Colony from New York come for several weeks every year.

Pine Lake Manor

This resort has been in the Schermer family since Nicholas and Lydia Schermer came from Germany in 1924. In the earliest days it was on the Coxsackie Turnpike and in 1839 there was a tavern and hotel on the site of the Main house. Nearby there was a toll gate. Nicholas came up to the country to look for land and found this old place east of Greenville on Route 26. There was a lovely lake on the property and they named their place Willow Rest Farm. When their son Reinhold started to manage the resort in 1949, they changed the name to Pine Lake Manor. Reinhold and Jo Schermer's daughter, Joanne, married Thomas Baumann, son of Wilbur and Thelma Baumann, and they are the present owners of this resort.

Pine Springs

Like so many others, the Cravata brothers, William and Roger, came up from the City looking for a farm because someone has suggested that they "should go to the country." They found a farm east of Freehold at the corner of country roads Nos. 67 in 41. They bought the 79 acres in 1929 and with the help of the previous owner began to farm. (They sold eggs at 12 cents a dozen

and milk for four cents a quart.) But right from the start they "took boarders." Soon they converted a barn into a casino and had the first one in the area. William entertained the guests -- imitations of Jimmy Durante, etc. -- and "enjoyed himself." In the early days they sold beer for 50 cents a pitcher. During Prohibition William made his own beer. The brothers spent the winters in Florida and in Miami contacted a fine Chinese cook who came up to Pine Springs, every summer, and cooked for them. Roger Cravata was the businessman of the partnership. When they sold the resort in 1957, they were accommodating as many as 190 people. Michael Garzilli, the present owner, can now take as many as 300 at one time.

Pleasant View Lodge and Golf Course

This is another farm that grew to be a very large resort. When the Schmollingers bought the farm from William and Rosie Shult in 1940, they found an inscription, "Cook 1780," on one of the flagstones in front of the original house. This farm was on the Schoharie Turnpike and apparently there was a tollgate there. The Schmollingers moved a small old building by the road and found several old coins. Today Pleasant View Lodge boasts a German-American cuisine, a large indoor pool and many different types of accommodations. The Schmollingers advertise, "The breath-taking Northern Catskill Mountains will surround you at Pleasant View."

Rainbow Resort and Golf Club

This used to be Birman's Farm but any resemblance to a farm is long gone. It is a large resort and has a beautiful golf course. The two brothers, Walter and Carl Birman, share in the operation. Walter is in charge of the golf course and Carl operates the resort.

Spohler's Elm Grove

The Fursatz-Spohler family has owned the present resort since 1931. Like most of the others, it started out as a farm taking a few guests. Carol and Fred Spohler took over the management in 1974. They have added improvements every year to strive to keep the small country-type Inn atmosphere. This site can be traced back to

the days of Noah Shaw who purchased it from the Provost Patent, in the early 19th century. It is on Red Mill Road.

Sunny Hill Farm

This resort was started by the father and mother of Arnold Nicholzen in 1920. They came up from the City and slowly built a large resort. They have a beautiful lake on their property. Fifteen acres of land was cleared and an area bulldozed, making a lovely lake fed by surface springs and used for water, boating and fishing. There is also a nine-hole golf course. The Nicholzens originally came from Norway and several of their motels have Norwegian names. The resort is located north-east of Freehold.

The Greenville Arms

In addition to the "boarding houses" our Town boasts an old-fashioned Inn which is well known outside our area as well as locally. It has been described and praised in the popular book, "Country Inns and Back Roads," as well as in two other books of this type. Greenville Arms has been owned by the Pierce and Ruth Stevens family since 1952. It is still owned and operated by two of the daughters, Laura and Barbara. It is a fine old place, originally built by the Vanderbilts of our area.

In conclusion I would like to point out that our guests have grown to love our area and many come back year after year. Recent statistics have indicated that our county has grown by 23 per cent in the last decade and part of this is certainly due to the fact that many "boarding house" guests have come back to retire here.

In 1983 there are fewer resorts than there were in "olden" days but those that are left take many more guests.

Another amazing fact about our area is the right through the Great Depression many houses were started and grew. In the present hard times the resorts have continued to be strong. We are within easy distance of the City and our rates have stayed modest -- \$15 a week, for example, in the 30s.

The resorts are the back-bone of the economy and our Town and also in most of Greene County. Our friends from the City, whether we call them "boarders" or "guests" are a welcome sight as summer arrives.

Among my sources of information for this essay, I want to thank Elizabeth Burnett, who shared with me her green booklet, published about 1937, called "Greenville in the Catskills." This booklet retains some of the early flavor of the first resorts. It was published by the Greenville Chamber of Commerce (Pres. Harrison Gardner, Vice-president Leon Wood, Treasurer Harry Levers, Sec. Clifford Van Pelt, Advertising Mgr. Ralph Yeomans, who was also the editor of the "Greenville Local."

Not reproduced here are the photos that went with the articles. In Part One, the only photo showed the main house of Ingalside from the road, captioned: Ingalside Farm bought by Warren T. Ingalls from Henry Botsford, 1913. Photo was taken circa 1914 or 15. The original house burned down in 1924, but the hitching post is still there I 1983. The large stone was a horse block, used for stepping out of wagons.

In Part 2, three photos were shown.

- *One was a photo captioned: Rundel Farm – sold to John Craw of East Greenville in 1917, then sold to Nicholas Schirmer on May 28, 1924.*
- *A second photo was captioned: The lake in the early days at "Willow Rest Farm", now Pine Lake Manor.*
- *A third photo was captioned: Mrs. Anna Spohler Beare and son Fred Spohler on the occasion of the 63rd anniversary of Spohler's Elm Grove. Anna's parents Tony and Mary Fursatz established the resort as a farm and boarding house on Red Mill Rd in June, 1921. The original farm dates back to the days of Noah Shaw, 1864.*