

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

May 2013, Issue 225

Baumann's Brookside—a Greenville Boarding House

A warm, low-80's Monday-before-Memorial-Day awaited the attendees of the May meeting. Among the regulars: Walter & Donna Ingalls, Bette Welter, Evelyn Jennings, Mary Heisinger (now a regular!), Christine Mickelsen, Bob & Marie Shaw, Stephanie Ingalls, Phyllis Beechert, and Don Teator. Add in the almost regulars, the newcomers, the hosts, and we totaled in the 30-35 range—a nice turnout indeed.

The draw of the evening was both the setting and the topic of the evening—Baumann's Brookside, one of the three long-running original boarding houses that still survive and remain strong in 2013. We used Baumann's to show the historical cycle of boarding house/resort in Greenville.

So, before I get into the meat of the topic, allow me to thank Carol and Rich Schreiber for not only hosting our group but also providing refreshments. Another treat this evening was the participation of the other families—Roe & Kevin Lewis and sons Tucker and Russell, Courtney Reinhard, and Joan Smith. More about importance of family later.

Upon entering the dining room through the lobby, one found several tables laden with photos of the resort throughout the years.

Brochures of past years were shown, as were brochures of other nearby resorts. Also shown was a sketch of the resort by one Fred Becker, of unknown identity to us from the 1930s.

After my brief introduction, Carol took the reins and ran with the show until the question period. I will write some of the snippets I remember or made notes of.

Actually, on second thought, I will copy the short history that Con wrote and gave me more than a few years ago, and I will fill in a couple pieces. So, if you want, take time to read that now.

The house (described in Con's notes) near Place's Corners (the intersection of Sunny Hill, CR 41, and Drake Hill Rd), if my directions are right, is north of the corners on Rt 41, up and past the first couple houses on the left. The driveway is on the right, washed out after a couple big storms in the past ten years.

My other sense, as Carol was talking, was three stages of building. One came at the beginning, in the 1920s, when they needed to establish the Johnny Cake Lane venture. The second big stage came around 1940, followed by the third stage in the late 1950s and early-mid-1960s.

Carol noted that early entertainment was self-made—swimming in the mill pond (yup, the Red Mill dam pond), walking the

roads and fields, and so on. Fresh air and getting away from the city was reward enough. Of course, guest expectations of what is entertainment world change constantly.

And Carol told a story or two of personal nature that is not part of the official history of Baumann's but is so typical of families working together and dealing with stressful times. (The only clue I will reveal is "Prohibition.")

Carol noted the effect of deaths in the family, her own mother passing away and how her step-mother Vivian became and remained a strong force in her (Carol) life.

At some point, Carol asked each of the family members to say something, and to their credit, most did, and presented the human face of a family-owned business.

And that influence of family is an important element in the three remaining resorts—the succeeding generation picks up to continue the business. Without that, and without that happening at the right time, the decision to withdraw from the resort business is often made (if other factors have not already forced the issue)..

We debated the correct pronunciation: bough-men over bo-men (emphasis on the bough of the tree, not the bo of Little Bo Peep).

Richard Nestlen, who I had never met before, introduced himself as the delivery man of chlorine products to the area resorts. Anyone associated with the resorts in the 1960s on may remember Spick products (a name that would not do today!) and Richard was still delivering locally into the 1980s.

Carol talked about some of the challenges of the modern era, the next five or ten years, and this provoked some commentary from the floor about successes, or otherwise, of area businesses that have since become part of PAST history. (Shepard's was a main topic, and such a visible one today.)

The meeting closed, we scouted out

more photos, and chatted some more before leaving. We had witnessed what I affectionately call *real* local history, a meeting that measures up to my standard of *superb*, if you can excuse my enjoyment and pride in local history, knowing that many in the audience this evening share it as strongly as I do.

We had started the meeting with introductory material – GLHG history, sign-up sheet, email newsletter, etc.

Mary Heisinger updated the audience about the Memorial Day festivities, and about upcoming CWRT events (book discussion on June 12). Contact Mary if you might be interested in the Civil War activities. (The Memorial Day program, despite record low daytime temperatures and a consistent light rain, did Greenville proud. Great job, Mary, in organizing the day!)

Mary Lou Nahas noted her boarding house efforts. Although she blames/credits me for her start, she and Nick have certainly pulled together a fine collection of pictures of resorts in the Town of Durham. Most of this is on Facebook (type in Boarding House, Hotels, and Resorts in Durham NY) and you will see the public back-and-forth in helping Mary Lou find even more!

Our next meeting, on June 10, should be another worthy meeting. I have employed the services of Chuck D'Imperio to be our guest feature. To quote from my press release:

... Chuck D'Imperio, a lover and story-teller of things Upstate New York. Chuck is a radio broadcaster at WDOS in Oneonta (NYS' Broadcaster of the Year, 2000), a newspaper columnist, an inductee into the NYS Country Music Hall of Fame, a speaker at over 40 sites a year, and father of four children.

His works include: *Monumen-*

*tal New York: A Guide to 30
Iconic Memorials in Upstate New
York; Upstate New York in 100
Words or Less; Great Graves of
Upstate New York; Upstate New
York: History Happened Here;
and soon-to-appear 50 Museums
in Upstate New York You Have
Never Heard Of.*

Chuck's style is to capture the big picture by drawing attention to the lesser known; the out-of-way; the quirky; and to people, places and events that deserve attention. With his engaging speaking style, D'Imperio will inspire you to read more and to look at our surroundings in a different delight. His books will be available this evening to be signed.

I first listened to Chuck at a Gilboa Historical Society, and based on how little, or nothing, I had ever heard about Chuck locally, I thought he would be an interesting

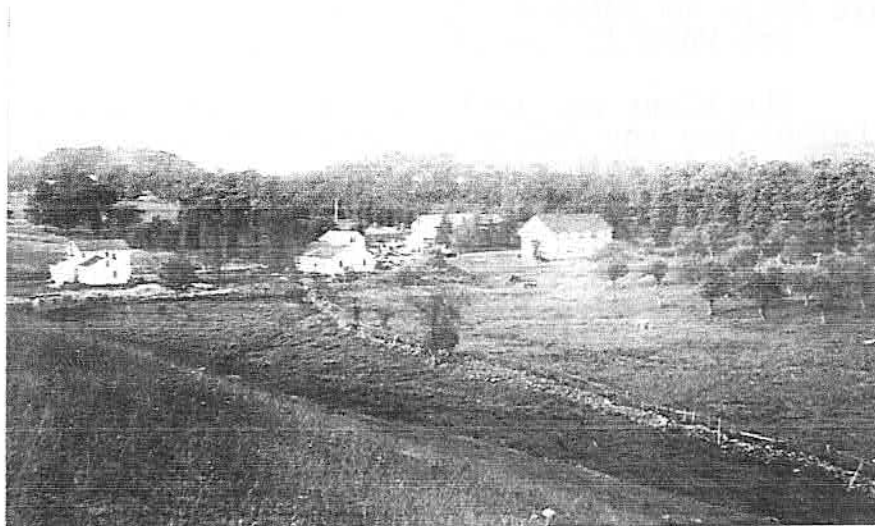
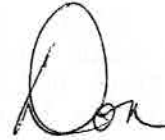
and worthwhile reason for a night out, both for people who love local history as well as for people who enjoy listening to stories of the small pieces of history of upstate New York.

A sad note: Dot Blenis, one of our mainstays for stories and notes of longer ago than most of us could tell, passed away this past month. She certainly lived a full and active long life.

Included are a couple of pictures of Baumann's.

C'mon out to the June 10 meeting, and bring a friend who wants to be entertained by a versatile story-teller.

Take care,



A view from the southwest, looking back to the corner of Johnny Cake Lane and Red Mill Rd. from early-mid century.

BAUMANN'S AUTO SALES, INC.

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BAUMANN'S BROOKSIDE

The story of Brookside has to start at an earlier time and at another place.

Neil Baumann was born in Maspeth, Long Island, and his wife Bertha, in Brooklyn. They met while riding to work on the trolley car.

Because of ill health he had to move to the mountains, so his father Paul bought the "Waldron Farn" near Places Corners in Greenville Center.

They moved there in 1913, with their two sons, Wilbur and Connie. Neil had to learn farming in order to make a living. That was not easy for a city boy in poor health.

Since they came from large families, all the relatives came visiting all summer long. This became such a burden that Neil's brother Will suggested charging board. So the boarding business started - Rates - \$ 7.00 a week.

In those days guests had furnish their own entertainment. They pitched hay, picked fruit and vegetables, hunted woodchucks or went swimming in the creek. Two big treats were picking berries at Cairo Roindtop or picnic trips to Ashokan Dam.

Son Russell was born in 1915.

The place had to have a name, like all resorts. Neil's father ran the Pelham Country Club, near Mt. Vernon so it was called "Pelham Farm".

Business went pretty well, then the farm was ~~sold~~ sold in Nov 1919. Neil and family moved to West Greenville in the small house across from the present Brookside. This was Jan. 13, 1920. Son George was born in Feb 1920

With one spare room, Bertha managed to have a few boarders, while Neil drove cars for Henry O'Keefe meeting trains and busses. Pretty tough for a man who spent five years at Pratt Institute, was a patern maker, draughtman, machinest.

In the spring of 1921 Bertha's mother bought the farm from Tom and Maude Simpson, near Norton Hill. Then another boarding house started. That lasted one ~~season~~ summer, and Eleazer Abrams wanted to sell the farm house that became Brookside.

House was purchased in Nov 1921, and the next summer began BAUMANN'S BROOKSIDE.

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In the spring of 1922 the whole family pitched in to ready the place for guests that summer.

There were no power lines near by in those days. Kerosene lamps, wood fires and hand pumps were right in style, along with out houses.

About the next year Neil installed a 32 volt electric generator with batteries. This seemed like a bigger improvement than TV and jet planes. Now came running water, electric lights and flush toilets.

Improvements were going on each year. In 1930 the roof was raised on the west end of the house making it a full two story. In 1939 the South Annex was built. The pool was built in 39. Max Griffin dug the hole with two horse and a big scoop.

Before the pool was built, guests went down to the mill pond at Burt Griffins house. The Griffins welcomed every one who wanted to swim.

In 1945 Neil and Bertha retired and Russell and his wife Rose bought the business. They continued to make improvements. They had a daughter Carol.

In 1951 Rose died. After all those years of good fortune, this was the first real tragedy.

In 1952 Russ married Vivian Calahan, a former guest.

From 1954 on Vivian and Russ built four more motel buildings, enlarged the dining room several times, enlarged the rec hall and kitchen and many more improvements

Neil died in 1957. This was the saddest day in our lives.

In 1965 Carol and her husband Richard Schrieber entered the business. One time when Rich and his parents were vacationing at Brookside, Rich was lounging by the pool. He was heard to say "If I marry Carol, I could spend all my summers here and have a ball" Well, he married Carol, spends all his summers there is having a ball-not by the pool but in the kitchen.

Russ died in 1972. This was our next worst tragedy. Vivian now became the owner of Brookside.

Carol became half owner in 1976. That year Bertha died. Into our lives came another sad time. Brookside can never seem the same.

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In 1977 the little house across the bridge was purchased from Elsie and Ann Baumann, cousins.

Then in 82 the brick house on the hill was added with 25 acres of land.

Next was purchased 50 acres from Lillian Simpson.

In years past Neil acquired land from Jennie Simpson and Vic Pierson. Today the place includes 100 acres.

Brookside can accomodate about 200 guests

Written by Connie Baumann

July 1983

Son of Neil Baumann

443.19



Exact year not known but car model is certainly a clue.