

# Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

June 2018, Issue 269

Pleasant View Lodge

A top-ten summer day – sunny 80 degrees, low humidity, a few puffs of breeze – greeted the nearly fifty who came out for the program about **Schmollinger's Please View Lodge**: Fred & Maria Thompson, Larry Reidy, Debbie Magee, Lorrie Spinner, Arjay Schmollinger, Gail Nicholsen, Marge Donohue, Kathy Smith, Arlene Matthews, Edna Huffman, Sherry & Ed Baron, Bob & Ann Hallock, Ken Thompson, Dodie Maxwell, Linda & Rich Suelin (sp?), Walter & Donna Ingalls, Barbara Brumell, Terry & Garth Bryant, Rachel Ceasar, Richard Ceasar, Sally Stauch, Arlene & Lee Brown, Mary Heisinger, Bob Shaw, Joyce Barry (sp?), Stanley Maltzman, Eric Schmollinger, Stephanie Ingalls, Christine Mickelsen, Al Hulick, Ken Mabey, Johanne & Robert Titus, Paul & Katja Rehm, Tom & Joanne Baumann, Barbara Valicenti, Roger Morey, and Don Teator, and a few more that breezed past me. If I missed a name, and you wish to change the official version, let me know.

The list above attests to the draw of what was one of our biggest area resorts. Fred Thompson, a long-time employee of Schmollinger's (of the early years and more) could have written a book from his memory, and was supported by nearly a dozen people in the audience who worked at the resort, and a half-dozen more who were friends with the Schmollinger family.

**Barbara Brumell Schmollinger, wife of Ralph, along with sons Eric and Arjay,** read Robert Scmollinger's written account of the resort history, sprinkled with

commentary and memories both from this trio as well as from many in the audience.

Don noted that the 2018 calendar featured PVL, with a photo of a postcard aerial from the 1980s showing the extent of the resort, with insets of the indoor pool and of the original farm house. The caption read:

*"One of the area's most vibrant resorts of the 20th century, Pleasant View Lodge started when Eugene and Ria Schmollinger bought the Shult farm on CR 67, about two miles east of Freehold, in 1940. Over the course of the next fifty years, they and their sons Robert and especially Ralph developed a destination resort with a 9-hole golf course, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, softball, basketball and tennis facilities, a bar and ballroom, three restaurants, and a capacity of over 300 guests. ...In 1994, the resort was sold to new owners, renamed Thunderhart, and the golf course was later expanded to its current 18-hole configuration. When neighboring Sunny Hill Resort, owned by The Nicholsen family, acquired the "new" Thunderhart at Sunny Hill in 2007, a 36-hole golf complex was created with the merging of the two courses."*

**Bob Schmollinger's account** is too worthy to try to improve so I am including excerpts of it here.

## History of Pleasant View Lodge

My earliest memories of Pleasant View are from approximately Summer, 1949, which, you have to remember, would have been my



third birthday. My Father was driving a 1949 Chevrolet woody station wagon with "Pleasant View Farm" painted on the sides. At that point in time the property consisted of the following: the main house (a two story building with a front porch which extended across the entire façade facing the road), this building had the family living quarters, the kitchen, dining room, and guest rooms on the second floor; the Annex across the road and to the east of the original Doman Road (also a two story building which I believe to have been, originally, a carriage barn, with some guest rooms on both floors); a cottage immediately to the west of the main house (a single story building with 4 rooms facing the road); a recreation hall (directly across the road from the main house) with a dance floor and a band stand; and the barns. Yes, that's plural, as there was the main barn used for storage of hay as fodder for the cows, the milking area, a two-story chicken coop, and a silo to store the corn fodder. Immediately to the west of the barn there was a pig sty in the area where later a tennis court was built. Pleasant View was a working farm with probably not more than 15 guest accommodations.

**My parents, Eugene and Maria "Ria" Schmollinger** bought the farm from Rosie Schultz(sp?) in late 1940 and moved to Freehold in January, 1941, with their infant

son, Ralph, who was born in September 1940. I remember my parents speaking about driving up the hills out of Freehold in a snow storm. They, and their cousins, used to drive up from New York and New Jersey to stay at the farm during the 1930's. My fa-

ther recalled the Aratoga Inn in Cairo where, during Prohibition, an attempt was made on the life of Jack "Legs" Diamond.

My mother's uncle, who was a European trained chef and hotel manager, convinced my parents that the farm with its wonderful view of the mountains would have the potential for success as a hotel.

However, the primary operation of the property was as a **dairy farm**. At the time, my father was working for my mothers' uncle at the Apolda(?) Knitting Mills and living in New Jersey. The farming operations continued until sometime in the mid-1950's when during a Gypsy Moth infestation the State of New York sprayed insecticide mistakenly onto the grazing fields which resulted in the death of the majority of the dairy herd.

By that point, an additional two room cottage had been built between the Annex and the barns and a concrete swimming pool had been added behind the recreation hall. The pool itself is an interesting story in that the decision to build it was made just prior to the outbreak of the Korean War. The construction was delayed until after the end of the hostilities because of the government's freeze on steel. With no steel reinforcing bars available, the pool was not finished until around 1952.

Also, during the early 1950's a three-story building was added to the east side of

the main house. This building expanded the kitchen, added 8 guest rooms on the second floor, provided staff housing on the third floor, added a lobby and check-in desk on the first floor, and added additional recreation space in the cellar.

These guest rooms featured private bathrooms for each room. This was ground breaking for the "resort" business as all existing accommodations had shared bathrooms. The addition was built by Emil Fingerle (?) of Greenville Center, virtually single-handedly. I can remember Mr. Fingerle walking upright across the ridge beam at the very top of that tall building and being the only person working on the construction.

Although I'm sure that the plumbing and electric work was done by others. This building was built prior to the loss of the dairy herd as we had an itinerant farm worker, George, who used to come every year to assist with the farming operations and I can remember him in the remodeled kitchen as late as 1955.

In the latter 1950's we were granted a license to **sell alcoholic beverages** and an addition was built to the recreation hall. This was a bar and storage area added to the south side of the hall, toward the pool. The bar area was small with seating for only about 12 customers but it increased the space in the recreation hall as a snack bar which was located on the east end of the hall was removed and the dance floor was replaced and expanded. A bar was also built into the cellar recreation area in the main building which permitted "cocktail hours" there without going outside.

I'm not sure, but this may have been when Pleasant View was granted a "Hotel" liquor license that permitted the sale of alcoholic beverages throughout the premises. This license was very unique because it covered the entire premises which was comprised of all the buildings on both sides of the Schoharie Turnpike which was the town line between Greenville and Cairo. It was the only such license in the State of New York that encompassed two different townships.

Also, a garage was built to the east of the main house. It was a two car garage on the ground floor with 4 guest rooms, with private baths, on the second floor. To the rear of this building, an extension was eventually added which provided an additional 4 guest rooms, with baths.

Also in the late 1950's the first of the "new" cottages, the Honeymoon Lane, were built. This was three two-unit buildings set in echelon on the north side of the road and west of the existing cottage. This was probably 1956 or 1957, and brought about the change of the name from "Farm" to "Lodge". Pleasant View Lodge advertised in the major bridal magazines and did a strong honeymoon business for several years. These cottages were suites and featured separate areas for sleeping and sitting with a wood-burning fireplace in each unit and private bathrooms.

We have had several couples who returned to Pleasant View after up to 30 years of marriage. The Honeymoon business extended the resorts' business season in Spring and Fall and was in competition with The Po-

conos in Pennsylvania for this business segment. Unfortunately, this business segment was not sustainable against this competition. I believe that this was also the year when we installed televisions in the guest accommodations. We only received one channel – WRGB Channel 6 out of Schenectady, New York, but I think we were the first Greene County resort to have televisions in the guest rooms.

The following year the Sunset Strip buildings were erected behind the original cottage and the main house. These two buildings were 4 units each and were also suite type accommodations with private baths. In addition, a former staff “bunkhouse” directly behind the main house and to the east of these new cottages was remodeled into 2 additional suite accommodations, providing a total of 10 additional rooms for the hotel.

Finally, I think this was the year when we bought the property to the west from the Hommel family. This consisted of the open field directly to the west of the Honeymoon cottages, the house which sat on a small hill and the “schoolhouse”, a small cottage farthest to the west of the property, right on the Schoharie Turnpike. This entire property was on the north side of the road in the town of Greenville.

The next expansion was the construction of the Ballroom and bar. This building extended from the rear of the existing recreation hall back to the swimming pool. It consisted of the ballroom with a bandstand/stage, the “J” shaped bar, storage, a kitchen, public bathrooms, and a snack bar facing out to the west but also opening out to the swimming pool.

The apple orchard which was on the south side of the property across from the Honeymoon cottages was cleared and this now open field became a softball field which doubled as extra parking when needed. The expanded ballroom area became a drawing card for the expansion of the catering business for weddings, political fund raisers, and cultural events (the Bauernball etc.)

With this additional revenue generating space, the hotel’s business was again ex-

panded. Pleasant View Lodge was no longer a “Summer Resort”, it was rapidly becoming a year-around business.

Weekends in the Spring (mid-April thru June) and Fall (from Labor Day into November and Thanksgiving), and even the Christmas week were busy times, as all the newer accommodations were insulated and heated as were the main building accommodations.

This allowed us to retain a cadre of full time local employees which were the trainers for our seasonal workers (primarily college students). It was also about this time when my Mother stopped being the cook and we hired our first trained chef to take over the culinary operations as we were now accommodating upwards of 125 to 150 guests daily during the Summer season and were still offering full-American plan (three meals per day).

It was also at about this time that we installed a telephone switchboard and phones in all our guest accommodations. I believe that we were the first in Greene County to offer this service to guests.

The next addition was the 80’s building, an 8 unit building also providing a suite type accommodation and with private baths. This building was located on the north side of the road behind the Honeymoon cottages and to the north and west of the Sunset Strip.

At the same time, the cottage along Doman Road between the Annex and the barn was renovated and expanded to provide 6 accommodations called the Priscilla.

It was about this time that the old portion of the barn was demolished and removed. A newer portion of the barn, built of concrete block was retained. Needless to say, the pig sty to the west of the barns was long gone, replaced by two blacktop tennis courts. A blacktop basketball court was added to the rear of the concrete block barn.

The following year, the Office Building and new family quarters was built in the open field to the west of the Honeymoon cottages. This building was built in a “vee” shape with the two legs of the “V” being single story, back to back motel type accommo-

dations, six units on each side. The center of the building was a lobby, check-in desk, public bathrooms, and a private office on the ground floor.

The second floor provided a 3 bedroom home for our family. Master bedroom and bath to the east, Living Room, Dining Room and kitchen in the center, and a large bedroom which my brother and I shared and a smaller guest bedroom which shared a bathroom to the west.

The Living Room portion of the building was constructed overhanging the entrance as a "porte cochere". The building was set back off the Schoharie Turnpike and a curved driveway started just past the former Hommel home and connected with the driveways leading to the Sunset strip and the Honeymoon cottages.

A well was drilled in the field in front of this building which turned out to be high output and relatively shallow. This well eventually became one of the primary water sources for the entire hotel. I think this was 1961.

The year 1961 was also the year we had the first of two visits by Governor Nelson Rockefeller to attend the Greene County Republican fund raising dinner. The Vice-President to be used one of the Honeymoon

#### Accommodations

**1** **OAK GROVE LODGE** — Luxurious accommodations. Ceramic Tile Bath. Vanity. Private sun balcony. Individually controlled air conditioning: (176; 183-187; 197)

**RIP VAN WINKLE LODGE** — All luxuriously furnished. Full bath. Air conditioned: (150-152; 160-165; 173-175)

**HONEYMOON LANE COTTAGES** — With fireplace. Air conditioned: (60-65)

**SUNSET STRIP** — Air conditioned: (70-79)

**1A OAK GROVE LODGE** — Luxurious. Air conditioned: (177-182; 188-193)

**RIP VAN WINKLE LODGE** — Luxurious. Air conditioned: (153-159; 166-172)

**MAIN LODGE** — Cozy and comfortable. Air conditioned: (1-11)

(All above accommodations have wall-to-wall carpeting, Private Bath, Television and Telephone)

**2 PLEASANT VIEW** — w/Telephone: (120-131)

**PRISCILLA**: (90-97)

**SLEEPY HOLLOW** — with Telephone: (80-87)

**TURNPIKE MOTEL**: (100-107)

**WESTGATE** — w/Telephone: (49-51)

(All above with wall-to-wall carpeting, Private Bath and Television)

**2A ROOMS IN JOHN ALDEN** — extension: (19-22)

**ROOMS IN MAIN LODGE**: (41-48)

**ROOMS in EAST GATE**: (37-40)

(Cozy and comfortable, all with bath, wall-to-wall carpeting & air conditioning)

**SINGLE ROOMS** — w/Bath & Air Conditioned

**LODGING ONLY (European Plan) Daily Rates**

Single	\$14.00
Double Room (For 2 Persons)	24.00
3 or more in room — ea. add. person	5.00

**EXTRA MEALS**

Breakfast (8-11 A. M.) — Per Person \$2.00

Dinner (6-7 P. M.) — Per Person 4.50 to 5.50

All accommodations offered for Fall, Winter and Spring are Heated!

#### GOLF RATES

**Special Weekly Golf Rate — \$15.00  
Unlimited Play**

**Daily Green Fee — \$4.00 — 18 Holes**

**Golf Weekend — \$6.00 — 36 Holes**

**Free Golf with Off-Season Mid-Week Special  
To June 23rd 1972**

cottages as a private area prior to his address to the dinner where he asked to have Harvey's Bristol Cream Sherry available as a refreshment.

I believe that 1962 was the year that we enclosed the existing swimming pool. This was a major undertaking which included the installation of pre-fabricated redwood arches to span the width of the pool. These arches were fabricated in California and shipped across the country, delivered by semi-trailer trucks. A crane was needed to place these structural beams attached to the south end of the ballroom and bar building. The renovated pool area included lower level locker rooms and a sauna with a sitting area above which looked down into the pool.

This was the first indoor pool in Greene County and provided a real attraction for the extension of the hotel's business during the non-Summer months. It also gave the community a place to swim and have both youth and adult activities during the Winter.

This was also the year when we built an A-frame on top the hill to the south of the pool and tennis courts. Inside this A-frame we installed a gasoline powered rope tow and on the hillside we installed portable snow machines. We built our own ski area, complete with snow making equipment. The lower level of the Annex building was renovated to give us a larger gift shop and area to rent

sports equipment during the Summer and ski equipment, both downhill and cross country, during the Winter. To add to this, we purchased a fleet of snowmobiles which we also rented to our guests. Pleasant View Lodge was now officially a year-round resort.

The following year saw the construction of the Rip Van Winkle motel style building to the north of the office building. This building contained 26 guest accommodations on two floors with interior corridor.

Each of these guest rooms had private baths of course but also offered air conditioning for Summer guests. Other guest accommodations were also retro-fitted with air conditioning units. I believe that we were the first "Summer Resort" in Greene County to provide air conditioning in our guest rooms.

Also this year saw the construction of the new outdoor swimming pool, an Olympic sized pool with 10 foot depth in the far end and a high diving board. This pool was enclosed in a chain link fence for safety after operating hours. This would have been 1963.

We were now hosting upwards of 320 people during the peak weeks of Summer and most Spring and Fall weekends we would have over 200 guests. We were open in the Winter for weekends and would have well over 150 guests mid-January thru mid-March.

The next guest accommodation expansion was the construction of the Oak Grove on the site of the Hommel home, to the west of the office. This building was a two story motel style with interior hallways and sat on a small hill looking toward the east. It provided an additional 22 guest accommodations, all with private bath, AC, and television.

The original house at this site had been utilized as staff housing for several years. Pleasant View Lodge purchased the farm to the east from Mr. Wicks (this was previously owned by Bitner who was a butcher at this time. The main house on this farm was converted to staff housing and the barns were used for storage. This is the property which became the golf course.

In either 1966 or 1967 we added the cocktail lounge to the bar/recreation hall.

This was a flagstone floored casual entertainment area utilizing the bandstand/stage from the original recreation hall and featured a field stone fireplace.

...Golf paragraph

...Police Academy paragraph

After/during the reading of Robert's notes, the commentary included: Barbara's memories, dates of family milestones, boarding house routines (if it is Wednesday, dinner is xx, etc.), Gov. Rockefeller, demolitions, changes of the 1980s & 1990s, the acquisition by Sunny Hill Resort, and a few dozen other topics. This is the kind of meeting that could go on till after midnight around the resort campfire!

**Thank you, Bob,** for the writing, and for **Barbara, Eric, and Arjay** for the narrating. I think we agreed that there is more to flesh out for a fuller account of the resort, including text, memories, and photos. Good luck. Anyone who has more info or stories to add, contact Barbara (or me, to relay to Barbara).

#### **Other notes:**

—The July 9 meeting should prove to be worthy mix. **Jonathan Palmer, Archivist for the Vedder Library** (Gr Co Hist Soc) will take 20-30 minutes to explore family record collections and how to take care of them now and for the future. **David Dorpfeld, Greene County Historian**, will share his insights and research of dairy farming and milk delivery in Greene County. Bring questions and your own insights.

—A thank you goes to Hilde Tompkins for her photo boards for the Schmollinger presentation. We are sorry you were unable to attend.

—Again, a **thank you goes to Stephanie and Christine** for providing the light refreshments I keep promising in the paper. If anyone wants to help, contact Stephanie.

—If there are ever any news to include in this newsletter, feel free to forward it to me, keeping in mind that I try to publish a week or so before the next meeting.

Take care,