

Paradise Past

THE NEWSLETTER
OF THE

PARADISE
Historical
Society

SUMMER 2013 • Volume 2, Issue 2

Joseph Jefferson, RIP VAN WINKLE

Did you know that Paradise Valley was host to a world renowned actor, comedian and famous portrayer of Rip Van Winkle? Sure enough, Joe Jefferson, born February 20, 1829, in Philadelphia lived at the intersection of Route 191 and Red Rock Rd. In 1850 Jefferson married actress Margaret Clements Lockyer who died in 1861 leaving Joe with 4 small children. He remarried in 1867 and died of pneumonia on April 23, 1905 in Palm Beach, Florida. During his life time he traveled worldwide, including Australia and England, portraying Rip Van Winkle. He became famous as an actor playing one character, although he acted in many roles from childhood. He was a third generation actor.



The Stroudsburg Times of April 10, 1890, observed that the idea of dramatizing Rip Van Winkle originated right here in Monroe County. The following is taken from the Autobiography of Joseph Jefferson, published by the Century Company, New York, 1891. "During the summer of 1859 I arranged to board with my family at a queer old Dutch farmhouse in Paradise Valley, at the foot of Pocono Mountain, in Pennsylvania. A ridge of hills covered with tall hemlocks surrounds the vale, and numerous trout-streams wind through the meadows and tumble over the rocks. Stray farms are scattered through the valley, and the few old Dutchmen and their families who till the soil were born upon it; there and only there they have ever lived. The valley harmonised with me and our resources. The scene was wild, the air was fresh, and the board was cheap. What could the light heart and purse of a poor actor ask for more than this?"

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Pat and Larry Paretta and other leaders of the Parkside Chapel of Henryville, Inc., deserve the thanks of our entire community. They have worked carefully, over many years, to preserve and protect this priceless historic landmark at the "gateway" to Paradise Valley. With the help of an allocation from Paradise Township, which was administered by Paradise Historical Society, and grants from ESSA Bank and Trust Charitable Foundation and the Willing Workers, as well as private donations and gifts-in-kind, the building has been completely restored. From the slate roof to the ceilings, walls, original furniture, and flooring, the Chapel must look today very much as it did 120 years ago when it was first built.

The Chapel hosts non-denominational worship services on Sundays through September at 11:00. All welcome. You are also invited to visit their website www.parksidechapelofhenryville.org. A report on the rededication of the Chapel and your Historical Society's historic marker to be mounted there, will be in the next issue of *Paradise Past*.

Carol.

Carol Hillestad,
President

Summer COLLECTING, PRESERVING &
DISSEMINATING PARADISE HISTORY



Farm on the Hill

AKA Lord's Resort by Barbara Lord

My recollections...

Barbara and Bill Lord bought Farm on the Hill from Jim and Eva Van Hoevenberg, son and daughter-in-law of the original Van Hoevenbergs who owned the Resort, in 1965 and ran it as a year round resort for 4 years. We encouraged families in spring, summer and fall and had skiers and church groups in the winter. We served three meals a day and also had "Ye Old Candle Shoppe" in the barn.

When we bought it there were 100 acres. The road went in front of the house, past the barn and across the creek up to Donaldson Rd until the flood of 1955. At that time the bridge over the creek which had been washed out was not replaced and the road became part of the property. The whole property that we

bought was on all four corners of Red Rock and Bush Road. Twelve of the cottages, the house, barn and swimming pool were on the two south quadrants. Two cottages were on the northwest quadrant and on the northeast we built our house, now the Chastain house.

Van Hoevenbergs had owned it since I think the 1940s (not sure of date) and had the first honeymoon resort in the Poconos. They took only college graduates and according to Paul Asure, owner of Memory Town, any requests that came in the mail on post cards were discarded and from those discards, Paul and May Asure built their business at Memory Town on Grange Road. The "Vans", as they were called, built one of the first indoor swimming pools at any resort here in the Poconos. Before it had been Farm on the Hill (this name was translated from the name Van Hoevenberg in Holland Dutch) it was called Locust Lodge and run by the Palmer family of which Mrs. Englehart was a member. She was Edna Palmer Englehart, the well known artist. The original part of the house dated to the 1840s (not sure of that date either) but had been added onto a couple of times. Research was started by my father-in-law but never finished.

Bill and I sold the resort to Bob and Dink Bullock in 1970 and it has been sold a couple of times since then. Bob recently passed away in 2010. Don't know anything about the history since our ownership.

Joseph Jefferson, RIP VAN WINKLE *Continued from Page 1*

"On one of those long rainy days that always render the country so dull I had climbed to the loft of the barn, and lying upon the hay was reading that delightful book "The Life and Letters of Washington Irving." I had gotten well into the volume, and was much interested in it, when to my surprise I came upon a passage which said that he had seen me at Laura Keene's theater as Goldfinch in Holcroft's comedy of "The Road to Ruin," and that I reminded him of my father "in look, gesture, size, and make." Till then I was not aware that he had ever seen me. I was comparatively obscure, and to find myself remembered and written of by such a man gave me a thrill of pleasure I can never forget. I put down the book, and lay there thinking how proud I was, and ought to be, at the revelation of this compliment. What an incentive to a youngster like me to go on.

"And so I thought to myself, "Washington Irving, the author of 'The Sketch-Book,' in which is the quaint story of Rip Van Winkle." Rip Van Winkle! There was to me magic in the sound of the name as I repeated it. Why, was not this the very character I wanted? An American story by an American author was surely just the theme suited to an American actor.

"In ten minutes I had gone to the house and returned to the barn with 'The Sketch-Book.' I had not read the story since I was a boy. I was disappointed with it; not as a story, of course, but the tale was purely a narrative. The theme was interesting, but not dramatic. The silver Hudson stretches out before you as you read, the quaint red roofs and queer gables of the old Dutch cottages stand out against the mist upon the mountains; but all this is descriptive. The character of Rip does not speak ten lines. What could be done dramatically with so simple a sketch? How could it be turned into an effective play?"



Photo of the "Joe Jefferson Cottage" and barn courtesy of Helen Dietz.

The directors and officers of Paradise Historical Society are Ed Burns, Eleanor Burns, LeeAnne Dyson, Dan Hamblin, Carol Hillestad, Aaron Imbt, John Layton, Laura Layton, and Harold Metzgar — and we welcome our new members!

Jeanette Arnone
Bill & Linda Besecker
Faye Cyphers and Family
Jeannette Detrick
Ruth Henry
Fred & Judi Jabara and Family

Solweig Kerber
Gary & Cynthia Konrath
Sheldon Kresge
Lynn Kuchinski
Marlene Marks
Jerry & Annie Messina

Ed & Amy Matthy
Robert & Maureen Pelcher
Jeff & Dawn Ross
Richard Shackleton
Jim VanArtsdalen & Jade Golo
Susan Vardalis

Life AT THE Devil's Hole GENERATING ELECTRICITY

In our last issue, excerpts from Dan Hamblin's talk about the history of his family property on the west rim of Devil's Hole Creek took us through his grandfather's purchase of the 122 acres at a tax sale on December 31, 1912 for \$750, or \$6 an acre. Audio and hard-copy versions of Dan's talk are available for members of the Society.



Photo: Don Miller

During the early years of his ownership, my grandfather J. Burton Hamblin planted buckwheat in the farm field which then existed on our lower lots between the stone wall and the railroad. His sons occasionally used the land for hunting, fishing, firewood and cutting a few locust trees, which made excellent fenceposts. But my grandmother never let him forget about buying that useless land in the Devil's Hole!

Early in the 20th Century, Monroe County was experimenting with rural electrification. Prior to that time, only businesses, public buildings, and a few well-heeled families had stand-alone Delco plants to generate electricity. Some citizens in Mount Pocono looked to the Devil's Hole Creek — which drops 600 feet between its headwaters on top of the Pocono Plateau and the railroad — as an ideal source of power.

They formed a corporation called the Mt. Pocono Light and Improvement Company, headed by Paul McBride. Members of the company approached my grandfather to sell them 19 acres surrounding the 1,000 feet of Devil's Hole Creek which passed through his property. In 1919, he sold them the land they requested for one dollar.

They immediately built a powerhouse near the railroad embankment, with a large undershot waterwheel and generating equipment. They also constructed a 30-foot high dam upstream and a 600-foot long pipe flume connecting the two. Permission was obtained to flood several hundred feet of the adjacent property with water from the reservoir created by the dam. The power line ran diagonally from the powerhouse toward where our house now stands, then along Devil's Hole Road to Mt. Pocono. I had to remove the remains of two power poles and some steel electric cable when building our house.

There were probably 15 such power plants built in Monroe County during this period. So successful were the projects, that Pennsylvania Power and Light Company of the Lehigh Valley conceived Lake Wallenpaupack, large enough to generate power for the entire region. The Lake Project was begun in 1925 and completed in 1928.

Soon, the small plants became obsolete. Some of their owners, like Paul McBride, became officers in PP&L. The Devil's Hole Plant continued to produce electricity into the mid-1930s, and became the property of PP&L. Paul McBride and Richard Spragle bought the property from PP&L in 1948. It soon began to deteriorate, and in August 1955, hurricanes Connie and Diane dropped more than 10 inches of rain on the Poconos. The pressure of the water and pounding debris burst the power dam, and the water backed up against the railroad embankment, finally washing it out — and contributing in a big way to the floods which took nearly 100 lives downstream.

Over the years, someone stole the waterwheel — which must have required a crane! The generators and flume disappeared, probably sold for scrap. The 1919 cornerstone of the powerhouse was stolen for a souvenir. You can still see what is left of the powerhouse, the concrete supports for the generators and the flume, and the concrete arch across the creek which is all that remains of the dam.

In 1959, the power property was deeded to McBride's daughter and son-in-law Jeannette and Charles Henning, for \$3,000, with the provision that the land could never be used to produce electric power. Mr. Henning, of Pocono Lake, died two years ago and the 19 acres, with its 1,000 feet of pristine stream is currently being considered for purchase as public land.

In the next issue, Dan Hamblin's story continues with discussion of the railroad and State Camelands adjoining the property.



Photo: Don Miller

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Do You Have a Memory of POCONO MOUNTAIN INN to Share?

Pocono Mountain Inn (PMI) was located on the Paradise Valley to Cresco Road, known today as Rt. 191. Skywood Park now occupies part of the land that was once the PMI resort. Mr. Michael Fossa, the son of the last owners of PMI, gave a very interesting talk about the resort to the historical society at our March meeting. Then, at the May meeting of the society, we took a field trip to Skywood. Mr. Fossa narrated a tour of the grounds, accompanied by his sharing photographs illustrating the various buildings and accoutrements which were part of the facility.

Prior to being Pocono Mountain Inn, the resort was known as the Rudolph and the Crestwood. Over the years, many Paradise residents and folks from the surrounding communities worked at the resort. Mr. Fossa's talk, as well as the contributions of those familiar with the past of PMI and its predecessors, helped bring to life one of the former resorts of the Poconos.

Because the park is public land, anyone can now visit and enjoy the spectacular views toward the Delaware Water Gap, along with first-class birdwatching during spring and fall raptor migrations.

The Historical Society and Mr. Fossa are interested in learning more about PMI's connection to residents of the area. If you have a story, the Paradise Historical Society would like to hear from you!



YOUR MEMBERSHIP COUNTS! Please help Paradise Historical Society collect, protect, and share the interesting history of our area. Become a member today!

- Student or Senior (65+) - \$8.00 Family - \$25.00 Individual - \$10.00
 Corporate - \$50.00 Couple - \$20.00 Sustaining - \$100.00

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