



"A literal roadmap through history."

Chronogram Magazine

"The famed Borscht Belt era lives on through a meaningful marker project."

Hudson Valley Magazine

A new trail of historical markers pays tribute to a Jewish vacation hub — and could spur Catskills tourism."

Jewish Daily Forward

"Preserving the rich history of the Borscht Belt with a new series of historical markers and cultural programming."

Forbes

"An immersive experience for visitors, fostering a deeper understanding of the Borscht Belt's legacy and aims to keep its memory alive for future generations."

Sullivan County Democrat

PRESS RELEASE:

Established in August 2022, the Borscht Belt Historical Marker Project is a historic preservation initiative that marks and interprets locations important to the Borscht Belt era. Our project is a celebration of the era's vibrant history, its impact on American Jewish life, the legacy of the Catskills and American culture. Directed by locals, historians, and artists our efforts engage local history, national history, Jewish history, and promote a shared sense of community while serving to educate citizens and visitors alike about the events that have shaped the region's past.

Our mission is to create an interpretive marker system and an array of public programming easily accessible by the public while benefitting the communities in which they are placed. A large-scale trail comprised of 20+ historic markers, the Marker Project is inclusive of all towns where documented Borscht Belt hotels and bungalow colonies once existed. When complete, it will be united by a self-guided audio driving tour.

From the 1920s through the 1970s, the Catskill Mountains were a popular vacation destination for millions of Americans, many of them Jews. Known as the Borscht Belt, the resorts and bungalow colonies of Sullivan and Ulster County were a refuge for American Jews, who found themselves excluded from business ventures, employment opportunities, social circles, and vacation access in the anti-Semitic climate of America during the first half of the 20th century. Out of this exclusion sprouted a place that was both a refuge and Renaissance – a promised land that offered acceptance, community, tradition, leisure, and culture.

The Borscht Belt combined recreational activities with a sense of community, culture and entertainment, particularly stand-up comedy, which was born in the region's theaters and showrooms. At its peak during the post-WWII era, the Borscht Belt sustained more than 535 resorts and hotels and over 50,000 bungalows. From the 20th century and into the 21st century, the Borscht Belt influenced the positive, transformative growth of America societally, culturally, and artistically. Since the era's decline, much of its structural environment has been disappearing year after year, decomposing over time or, in other instances, new structures have taken the former's place.

As of the Borscht Belt Marker Project's inception in 2022, there were no historical markers dedicated to the Borscht Belt era nor were there major historic preservation efforts that devoted itself to celebrating the era's legacy & historic impact. As a result, we feel we've identified a need that will benefit local towns, communities, the region, cementing the era's legacy.

Whether on or near sites of significant events or historic properties, the Marker Project selects locations significant to the era and illuminates them in the present day. Our historic markers are intentionally placed on public domain lands and in existing public spaces, parks, and locations where people can easily maneuver.

Our markers aesthetic is atypical from the average New York State historic marker, paying homage to the mid-century era with its palette. A vibrant blue railing encircles a tan background adorned with blue lettering, dual sided text, photographs and QR codes, all which amplify the viewer's experience. When scanned, the code takes visitors to our website where extended stories about the various towns, hotels, bungalow colonies along with more images, videos, and media.



With the goal of attracting both those who have experienced the era and those newly intrigued by it, the Marker Project translates the Borscht Belt's celebrated history and combines a multitude of mediums to experience it – all that aim to expand upon the marker experience. By using new (QR codes, media) with traditional historic markers, the project aims to attract people of all ages and demographics.

In addition to taking our audience on a literal roadmap through history, the Marker Project, and its compendium of public programs (rolled out with each historic marker dedication) promotes community involvement, a sense of social belonging, and serves to bolster the relationship citizens and visitors have with the region's vibrant past.

When complete (estimated 2025), the permanent marker trail combined with its audio tour will encourage people to venture out into landscape and visit the various towns that comprised the era. In this sense the project aims to be a fun, educational endeavor that encourages the experience of physical place while also promoting economic development and tourism throughout the region.

The Marker Project is spearheaded by Marisa Scheinfeld, a photographer and author who grew up in Sullivan County. Scheinfeld's work is among the collections of the Library of Congress, The New York Public Library, The Center for Jewish History and has appeared in publications such as National Geographic, The New York Times, Wall Street Journal and American Photography.

She is assisted by Louis Inghilterra, a historic preservationist and the project's Research Coordinator. Isaac Jeffreys, a visual artist, and photographer, who acts as the Project's Visual Coordinator. Our team also includes Catskill historian Kelli Huggins, who also acts as the project's Copywriter. The Marker Project is supported by Sullivan County Historian, John Conway, who acts as the official co-signor for each marker. Our partners also include Sullivan Catskills, the Catskills Institute, Sullivan County Historical Society.

More than just historic markers, the Borscht Belt Historical Marker Project encompasses a diverse range of initiatives from film screenings to exhibitions, bus tours, author, literary, comedic, and musical events, and the creation a self-guided audio driving tour. The public programs that coincide with our historic marker dedications are free. Our aim is to combine history, adventure and encourage the experience of physical place with an immersive, educational,community, experience while promoting economic development and tourism throughout the region.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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