

Thank you for joining us as we unveil our 18th Historical Marker honoring Rock Hill and Glen Wild. While these may seem like small communities, they are where the Borscht Belt story ultimately began.

Long before the grand hotels and sprawling resorts, Jewish farming families here opened their homes to summer guests. Those early boarding houses and family-run businesses created a tradition of hospitality laid the foundation for the legendary Catskills resort era.

What started as a way for Jewish farm families to make a living grew into something much larger. At a time when antisemitism limited opportunities, these families opened their homes and created places of welcome and belonging. The Borscht Belt became both an American and Jewish story of reinvention, shaped by generations of people who came to this place seeking opportunity, connection, and the chance to create something new.

Today is especially meaningful because of what this number represents. In Hebrew, the number 18 represents *chai*, or life. It wasn't planned, but it feels beautifully fitting that this marker connects us to the communities where the Borscht Belt first took root and where Jewish life in the Catskills began to flourish.

This dedication is especially personal for me. My family has called Rock Hill home since 1997, and I grew up just down the road. To come full circle and help preserve the history of this place is something I never would have imagined when I was growing up here.

I want to thank our partners—the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation, the Steingart Family, the Catskills Institute, Sullivan County Historical Society, DVAA, and Sullivan Catskills—along with the supporters, descendants, historians, volunteers, and community members who helped make this marker possible.

A special thank you to Melinda Ketcham-Meddaugh for her support and commitment to this community, and to Hayden Carnell and the Town of Thompson for helping bring this marker to life.

With 18 markers now across the trail, the meaning of *chai* feels especially present. These stories are still here. Through these markers, they remain part of the landscape—a reminder that history is never truly lost as long as we continue to see it.

Marisa Scheinfeld, August 8, 2026, Rock Hill + Glen Wild