

With each passing year, more and more Borscht Belt hotels disappear—some slowly, worn down by age and neglect, and others consumed by flames. These fires are not natural occurrences but rather signs of negligence and indifference. They signal a lack of respect for sites of historic and cultural significance. When places like Grossinger's, The Tamarack, The Pines, The Brown's, Homowack, and The Nevele go up in smoke, it's not just the buildings that vanish—it's an entire era. Dedicating this historic marker at a fire station feels especially poignant, particularly with the increased frequency of fires at area in recent years. The marker's presence here serves as a reflection and reminder of how many Borscht Belt hotels have been destroyed or damaged by fire. Their loss isn't just physical; it's symbolic. In the face of destruction by natural occurrence, humankind and inevitable change, preserving the Borscht Belt's legacy feels more vital than ever.

Facing these blazes are firefighters who deserve our utmost respect and gratitude. They enter flaming infernos and hazardous structures, doing all they can to preserve what remain, while putting their lives on the line. While their efforts may not always prevent loss, they stand as the last defense in a world too quick to forget what once mattered.

The Borscht Belt hotels and bungalow colonies weren't just places to vacation—they were hothouses for creativity and expression. These were hubs of community where Jewish culture, art, music, comedy, and tradition, thrived. They were spaces of ingenuity as well as pioneering ventures where generations of people gathered to relax, be entertained, and to simply exist.

For Jewish immigrants arriving from the Lower East Side—many of them having journeyed from Europe or elsewhere, the scenic beauty of places like Greenfield Park evoked memories of the landscapes they had left behind. For the many Holocaust survivors who came to the area after World War II, Greenfield Park and nearby towns offered more than just a place to live and stay, they became chapters of renewal and rebuilding. For many, this was a place to revive not only their personal lives but their collective cultural identity, creating a sense of continuity amid the loss. Over time, the Catskills would come to symbolize both a place of sanctuary and a testament to the strength of a community determined to rebuild, thrive, and never forget.

When put into the perspective of time, the decay, destruction, and burning of so many Borscht Belt destinations is not only an architectural loss but an emotional and spiritual one, too. This marker is the 11th in a planned series of 20. Each marker serves as a lasting tribute—reminders that even when the physical structures are gone, Borscht Belt culture and legacy will endure. Together, they form a path of remembrance that is the Borscht Belt Historical Marker Trail.

Thank you to our partners who have been with us every step of the way – JASHP, the Steingart Family, Catskills Institute, SCHS, DVAA, and Sullivan Catskills. We're so grateful to our newest partners and collaborators: the Ellenville Fire District for providing a permanent home for the marker—with special thanks to Paul Tuzzolino and Dean Burburan. A huge thank you to the Town of Wawarsing Highway Department, especially Tony and Colleen Paes, for their support and installation. To the funder of our cultural programs this weekend, Arts Mid-Hudson – we thank you for making this possible. Lastly, thank you all for being here today. Your presence ensures that this important history continues to be remembered and celebrated.

Marisa Scheinfeld
Borscht Belt Historical Marker Project

