

Thank you all for joining us today as we dedicate our 16th historic marker honoring Ferndale. Ferndale may seem like a small place, but it stood at the heart of the Borscht Belt story. Long before neon signs, sprawling resorts, and packed dining rooms, Jewish immigrant families were welcoming summer guests into their homes and farms.

When I think about those early years, I don't picture the glittering resort era that so many people associate with the Borscht Belt. I picture winding dirt roads. Farmhouses. Chickens wandering through yards. Families hanging laundry on clotheslines. Rocking chairs lined up on porches. Guests arriving by train and settling into spare bedrooms. It was a simpler world. Unpolished. And it was where something extraordinary began.

Ferndale flourished through the vision and hard work of countless families who created boarding houses, hotels, bungalow colonies, businesses, and gathering places that welcomed generations of visitors. Before it became world-famous in nearby Liberty, Grossinger's began right here in Ferndale alongside places like Pollack's, Stier's, Upper Ferndale Country Club, Garden, Kappy's, Julene, Turrey, Hy-Sa-Na, Wiss Wigwam, Lipkowitz, Mayberg's, Shelburne, and Dan-Bee. Together they formed the fabric of this corner of the county, each adding its own thread to a tapestry that unfolded here over the course of a century.

Today, we're fortunate to be joined by descendants and community members connected to many of those places. As we dedicate our 16th marker, we honor not only what was, but what is and what will be.

From the beginning, this project has never been about lamenting the passing of the Borscht Belt but celebrating its life. These markers give this history a place. They stand in the landscape and say: **This happened here. These people were here. This story matters.**

Thank you to our partners, supporters, descendants, and community members who helped make this marker possible. A special thank you to Leisah Swenson and Monica Byrne for opening the historic Shelburne Theater earlier today, and to Foster Supply Hospitality for welcoming us to Otto's for tonight's celebration.

Finally, I'd like to thank Supervisor Frank DeMayo and Nick Rusin for helping make this marker a reality, and Maurice and Alan Gerry for welcoming it here. From our very first conversation, Maurice understood why this history mattered. His enthusiasm, generosity, and commitment to preserving Ferndale's story helped bring this marker home, and for that we are deeply grateful.

Marisa Scheinfeld