

Thank you for being here for the dedication of our 19th historic marker.

Standing here today at Sullivan West, we're looking at a landscape that holds two very different chapters of the same place. Green Acres Hotel once stood on this property, before a fire destroyed it in 1966.

Green Acres was purchased in 1920 by Elmer Rosenberg, a Hungarian Jewish labor leader who became the first Jewish hotelman in Lake Huntington. He created a place where working families could come for rest and recreation, at a time when Jews faced restrictions on owning property in the area.

If you look, you can still find traces of the hotel—the driveway, old railings, the pool; small physical reminders of a place that opened the Catskills to Jewish working families. These pieces give us a glimpse of what was here before. And now there's this marker. The places it represents—Lake Huntington, Fosterdale, Kenoza Lake, and Callicoon, what we're calling "Western Sullivan"—were home to Jewish, Black, Polish, and Italian communities. They were also home to hotels and retreats serving workers and people seeking health and recovery.

The Borscht Belt is often remembered through the lens of its largest and most famous hotels—glitz, glamour, neon signage, lavish dining rooms, theaters that seated thousands, Olympic-sized swimming pools, and famous entertainers. Those places created an extraordinary cultural world, and they've come to define the image of the Borscht Belt. But the story is much bigger than the image. There was never one community, one kind of hotel, or one version of the Catskills.

These histories give us a fuller picture of the Catskills. People came here for many reasons—to work, to rest, to recover, to gather with family and community. They weren't simply coming here for a summer. They were creating places of their own. At its root, the story of the Catskills is a story of reinvention. People came here and made places that didn't exist for them elsewhere. The Borscht Belt ennobled that impulse and it resonated far beyond Jewish communities, shaping places for other ethnic and minority communities as well.

I want to thank Sullivan West High School, the school board, and everyone who helped make today possible—especially Kathleen Bressler, Christina Kautz, David Eggleton, Ryan Vogler and his installation team. Thank you to Paul Blumberg and Amy Goldbas for being here with us. It is an honor. And thank you, Kristina Snedecker, Town of Cohecton Historian, for all your support.

We're grateful to our partners: the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation, who fund all of our markers; the Steingart Family; the Catskills Institute; Sullivan County Historical Society; Delaware Valley Arts Alliance; and Sullivan Catskills. The Delaware Valley Opera is welcoming us to the Nutshell tonight. This nearly 100-year-old music and dance hall, just down the road, is part of the story too. It's still here, still in use, and still bringing people together.

At 7:30, we'll be screening the iconic Dirty Dancing in a room that feels almost made for the film. Tickets are \$10 at the door, with popcorn and a full bar. All proceeds go toward our public programming and the Opera.

What I love about this project is that these markers make history visible. You don't have to seek it out—you simply encounter them throughout the landscape: in the center of towns, in parks, at libraries, schools, and other community spaces—and suddenly, you're standing in the middle of a story.

Thank you.

Marisa Scheinfeld, Marker Project, 9/4/2026

