

When I was in high school in the late 1990s, there wasn't much happening in Livingston Manor. Main Street was quiet. Storefronts stood empty, and the traces of the town's resort era had mostly faded. If someone said they were headed to Livingston Manor, the natural response was: *Why?*

The town felt suspended in time—its heyday long gone; its revival not yet begun. It's hard to picture that quiet if you knew the Manor of the 1950s, and harder still to imagine, from that quiet, the vibrant place it has become today. Between those two moments lies the town's story: a rise, a hush and a return.

Long before roads and railways, this land was home to the Lenape, the original stewards of the Catskills, who lived in rhythm with the forests, rivers, and seasons. Their presence endures in the Willowemoc and in the names that still echo through the landscape. Later, settlers arrived. Logging, farming, and eventually tourism reshaped the land. Part of the Hardenburgh Patent, Livingston Manor was settled in the early 1800s and named for Dr. Edward Livingston, who helped bring the railroad through the region in the late 19th century. When the O&W Railway arrived in 1882, the town became a stop for travelers escaping the city in search of the clean air and scenic beauty of the Catskills.

A 1920 edition of the O&W guidebook *Summer Homes* described Livingston Manor as “*one of the most flourishing, attractive and picturesque villages in Sullivan County. Those desiring country life with the advantages of the city should investigate the attractions of Livingston Manor.*”

By the mid-20th century, the town had evolved into a thriving resort community with hotels and bungalow colonies such as the Edgewood Inn, Kaplan's, Lake Rest, Menges, Paradise Lake, Sand Lake, Shandalee Camp, Switko's, Trojan Lake Lodge, White Roe, and the Waldemere, all welcoming visitors seeking every kind of Catskill escape.

White Roe and the Waldemere were pioneering resorts, shaping modern American leisure, culture, and romance before such experiences were widely imagined. The Waldemere called itself the *Happy Place for Adults Only*. Long before singles' vacations, boys' trips, girls' getaways, or adult summer camps existed, Waldemere and White Roe offered social resorts—destinations where young Jews, specifically ages 18 to 35, could find freedom and possibility, to escape the city's heat, connect, flirt, and fall in love. In doing so, they helped invent a new kind of American leisure, one that combined social freedom with convenience through an all-inclusive model. Menges Lakeside offered a warm, unpretentious retreat, where guests could fish, boat, and unwind in a simple, peaceful setting. The Edgewood Inn dates to the 1920s, when the Wittenberg family settled in Livingston Manor as dairy farmers. Over time, a farmhouse evolved into a hotel that welcomed guests well into the 1980s. So much history is woven into this town—the stories of its resorts, its families, and its people continue to shape the spirit of Livingston Manor today.

And today, that history continues to find its way back to us. We are honored to have Judy Siegel with us, a descendant of the Edgewood Inn and part of the Wittenberg-Haas family. We also welcome Dennis Hawkins, whose family, the Weiners, owned White Roe. We're also joined by Sarah Teresa Halpern of Sullivan Catskills, whose family owned Sorkin's Department Store. We're also joined by descendants from Paradise Lake and Kaplan's Bungalow Colony, as well as the current owners of what was once Sand Lake and Switko's. We are thrilled to have Barbara Sherer, known then as Barbara White, with us. Barbara was a dancer at the Waldemere. We learned about her after we posted a photograph of Barbara dancing with a group of guests at the pool, made by the Steingart family. Barbara's daughter Melissa reached out to us and said, “*Hi! That's my mom.*” It's those unexpected moments of magic that make this project so special—a reminder that the Borscht Belt

isn't just history on a sign, or a collection of old jokes or and nostalgia of youth; it's a living memory that stretches across generations.

By the 1990s, Livingston Manor—like much of the Borscht Belt—had quieted. Most hotels were shuttered, bungalow colonies lay empty, and Main Street moved at an unhurried pace. What remained was a small, close-knit year-round community. Yet even in its stillness, the town held beauty and resilience. The rivers still drew fly fishers, and artists and farmers began to take root, laying the foundation for the renaissance that began in the 2010s and continues today. Few could have imagined the energy that now fills this town now. Many Borscht Belters scrolling through Facebook and the internet might—and often do—doubt it, unaware of the energy and revival happening today. To stand here today feels like witnessing a full circle—the same mountains that once drew generations of visitors have called people back again.

What I love about the Marker Project is that it gives this history a home. Though physical traces of the Borscht Belt have nearly vanished from Livingston Manor, this marker insists: *this happened here*. Today, as we dedicate it, we honor not only what was, but what is and what will be. Our focus is on celebrating the Borscht Belt's life, rather than lamenting its passing.

Thank you to our partners who have been with us every step of the way: JASHP and Jerry Klinger, who fund each of these markers, the Steingart Family, Sullivan County Historian John Conway, Phil Brown at the Catskills Institute, Sullivan County Historical Society, Sullivan Catskills, and Delaware Valley Artists Alliance.

A huge thank you to Judy Siegel, our first ally, who went door to door helping us find a home for the marker. Thank you to Maria Bivins of Life Repurposed for her steadfast support along the way. And thank you to Ryan and Sims Foster of Foster Supply Hospitality for ultimately giving this marker a permanent home. We're grateful to Catskill Art Space, the Livingston Manor Chamber of Commerce, Sunshine Colony, Manor Ink, and the entire Manor community for embracing this project. Special thanks to Mitch and Mike Juron and Ryan Henry for helping get the marker in the ground. And thank you all for being here to celebrate and share the story of the Borscht Belt.

– Marisa Scheinfeld, Livingston Manor, October 18, 2025