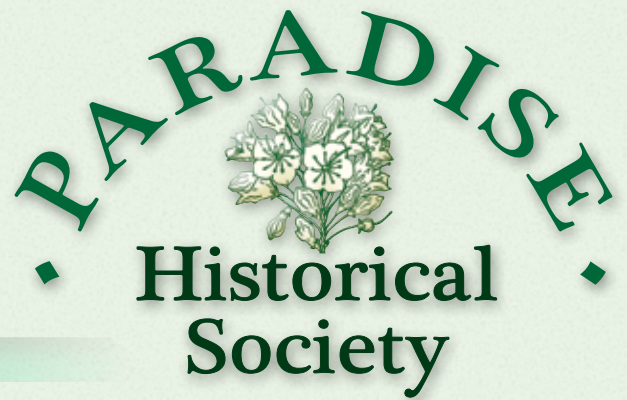


Paradise Past

THE NEWSLETTER
OF THE



VOLUME 10, Summer 2016

President's Letter

So many exciting things happening at your Historical Society! Remember that our August meeting is the *second* Sunday, August 14 — a field trip to Sylvan Cascades on the Butz Run with renowned local naturalists Don Miller and Don Baylor. Because of conflicts with Labor Day and Paradise Township's Community Day, there will be no meeting in September. October 2nd, we will welcome back historian Fred Lehrer for a lively talk about the history of the White House.

If you are not a member, please consider joining Paradise Historical Society — and help preserve and share the stories of our beautiful Paradise!

Jane

Jane Niering, President

Pocono Gardens Lodge

AN American Success Story

Pocono Gardens was founded by Peter and Lucy Rossi in the late 1940s. Peter was born in Italy in 1883 and came to the United States in 1886. Pocono Gardens was a honeymoon/couples resort, located on Keokee Chapel Road, near what is now the Route 390 intersection. The history of Pocono Gardens and Peter Rossi, the entrepreneur, is fascinating and was the subject of the Historical Society June meeting.

Mr. Rossi began his entrepreneurial life as a very young man making sandwiches for railroad employees in Elmira, New York where his family lived at the time. By 1910 he was living in Brooklyn, New York and working as a milk man. Peter observed that there was a need for a package delivery service and founded Package Express sometime prior to 1920.

Business was good and around 1939 he acquired property in Paradise Township. The property was being tended to by a couple whose first names were Larry and Ollie. (We have been unable thus far to determine who they were and whether they were the previous owners of the property.) Initially the

John Layton
Summarizes
His Research
on this
Paradise Icon



intention of Mr. Rossi was to entertain family and friends at his country property. The country entertaining was a success, and he extended the entertaining to paying guests and then began a resort that was intended for newly married couples. With the help of family members the business expanded and new buildings were constructed. The newlyweds who began arriving over the weekend were in place by Tuesday night when the "Champagne Welcome Dinner" was served. It was a grand affair featuring prime rib and champagne.

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A Research Note

Tax records for Paradise Township going back to the 19th century have been provided to the Historical Society for safekeeping.

They are available to researchers by contacting Society Vice President John Layton at 570 839-5702.

Summer

COLLECTING, PRESERVING & DISSEMINATING PARADISE HISTORY

“MY HOUSE: NESTLEDOWN”

A BRIEF HISTORY
Based on Documents,
Archives,
Photos, Remembrances &
Best Guesses!

by Chris P. Matthy

Part 2 of 2

Editor's note: In the Winter 2016 issue of "Paradise Past," Chris Matthy shared the first half of the story of his home in Paradise Falls Lutheran Association.

In this issue, the story is brought up to date.

The Growing Community House

Construction continued at Nestledown after the first season, and for the first full season, July 25 – October 11, 1925, there were ten bedrooms and three bathrooms. This would suggest that work had started on the upper floor, indicating the date for the addition of the dormers. Heat was added at the same time. Pictures, including the one that was used in much early publicity, show a smokestack rising out of the center of the roof; the stack still exists in the attic, as does a flue vent in the first floor ceiling. Families could use common stoves to make their own meals, called “housekeeping privileges” or the “kitchenette plan,” or could eat meals that were cooked and served in the adjacent farmhouse.

By the second full season of 1926 the lower level dining room and kitchen probably were completed – pictures show a small extension to the rear of the bottom floor and a chimney added – the first real kitchen? Above that extension was a small deck with a door leading to the living room and stairs leading to the ground. The second floor construction was most likely completed at this time as well; the brochure states that there were twenty-one bedrooms (thirteen double and eight single) and five bathrooms. When one of the second floor bathtubs was removed in 2002, on the back was written “Charles Vogt” (the contractor) and the date “May 15, 1926.” Another historic find was on the back of a window frame during remodeling in 2012. The board is signed by Harry Hulbert, the contractor. Tradition states that when a job was done the contractor literally “signed off” on the job; unfortunately, Hulbert did not include a date.

E. Viola Roedel, who is on the Sept. 8, 1924 guest list, was hired as Hostess. Room and board was \$12.00 a week per person (double, \$13.00 single),

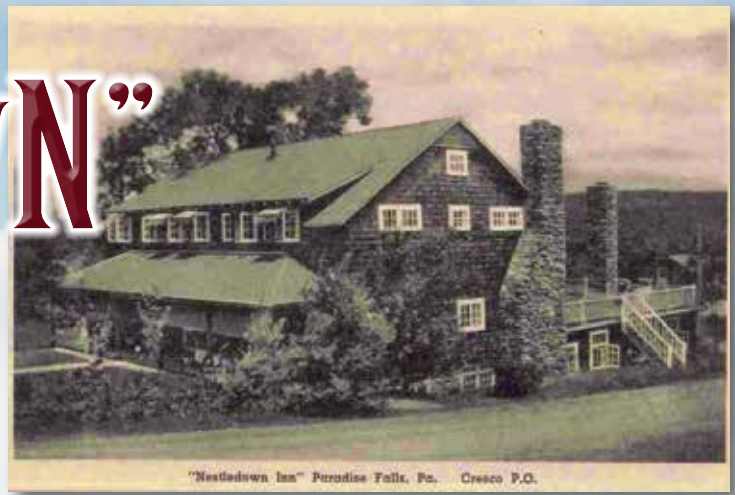
with rates for children according to age. The housekeeping plan was still available, with some food available at a store on the grounds and milk, meat and ice deliverable. The brochure states that life at Nestledown was very informal and that it had a reputation as a “glorified camp.” The 1927 brochure states that over six hundred guests were served in 1926. Guests could enjoy bathing (swimming), tennis, quoits and croquet, as well as organized nature and “botanizing” hikes and “delightful drives” in the Association’s Dodge bus. Worship and Sunday School were available at nearby Parkside chapel.

Into the Big Times

There were several major changes at Nestledown over the next seasons. It was completely “electrified” for 1927. With increased popularity demanding more space, overflow rooms were available in the Brown and White Cottages, Gate Lodge, and Social Hall (1928), with meals still provided at Nestledown. The housekeeping plan disappeared, so that all guests ate in the Nestledown dining room. Guests would walk down the path, still existing from the Brown Cottage to Nestledown, and gather in the waiting room upstairs for one of several seatings in the dining hall.

The 1928 brochure states that the dining hall capacity was expanded from seventy to one hundred. This would suggest the date for the pictures which show the dining hall extension – the ground was excavated from the side wall, transom windows were installed the length of the dining room on the road side, and new stone fireplaces (centered in the dining room, in the corner in the living room above) were added. The wall extension still exists as an outside retaining wall, the only remaining part of the additions. Eventually a stairwell with direct access from the front porch to the upper rooms also was added. Weekly rates rose to \$15.00, and there also were daily rates in 1928, as well as discount rates for June and September-October.

The programming for guests and the community at Paradise Falls in general was growing, as well as an “outside” reputation. The 1928 Nestledown brochure states that over fifteen *thousand* people visited the Falls yearly, and a picture exists of a billboard inviting passers-by to stop at the rustic dining room at Paradise Falls – a picture of Nestledown is on that billboard. An existing menu from the 1940s (“Nestledown – where happiness is provided



three times each day”) offers eleven full course dinners (lobster with all the trimmings for \$2.50!) and fourteen luncheon plates. But even as many of those changes occurred, the building known as Nestledown was pretty much in its finished state for its life as a community house, hotel and public restaurant.

One final addition to Nestledown must be mentioned: the Girl's Camp Dining Hall. At this point, we do not have a construction date, but we have a few outside pictures, and a 1939 aerial survey picture shows the exact positioning of the Dining Hall, added to the west end of Nestledown off of the “L” addition, facing the farmhouse. That way the kitchen served both the Dining Room and the camp Dining Hall. The girls would come from the camp, which was located on the field by the bridge over Paradise Creek, and walk the Nestledown path three times a day for meals. At some point after the close of the camp the entire addition was removed and transported to the former camp field, where it became PFLA's Rec Hall.

The Second Life of Nestledown

Culture continues to change, and eventually the same forces that brought Nestledown into being began to conspire against it. Local resorts with private bathrooms and nicely finished rooms made the “rustic” qualities of Nestledown, with its open-studded walls and common bathrooms, less appealing. In addition, the construction of Camp Hagan, the Lutheran girl's camp on the Delaware River, helped bring the demise of the girl's camp in 1951 (which was then destroyed in the 1955 flood), which in turn brought less demand for Nestledown's meal services. And of course, by this time PFLA was the site of a good number of private cottages, several of which also were available for rental.



The last full season of operation for Nestledown was 1953. For a few more years, guests were served meals in the Tea Room of Gate Lodge at PFLA, but Nestledown itself, as well as the farmhouse and carriage house which had served as dormitories for the male and female help, were abandoned and fell into disrepair.

As the story goes, the Association was actually considering allowing the local fire company to use the old barn-become-hotel for a practice burn. But in 1954, an adventuresome Bauers family purchased the ramshackle farmhouse and began to restore it, and in 1958 Burton and Ruth Mitchell, encouraged by the Bauers, made a similar offer for Nestledown which was accepted by the Association. Nestledown was now a member "cottage."

Aside from the obvious need to clean and repair, there was little need for twenty-one bedrooms and five bathrooms in a family cottage. The Mitchells made an agreement with Association caretaker Kenny Harrison to dismantle the back additions in exchange for the lumber (out of

which he apparently constructed a nice garage at his home in Stroudsburg). Partitions were taken out of the upstairs, reducing the number of bedrooms to six of varying sizes, with one bathroom at each end of the hall. A kitchen was constructed at the west end of the ground floor. One remembrance that would make history buffs shudder, but which made perfect sense then, is that the Mitchells used the tables and chairs from the dining room as firewood! Under the Mitchells' care, Nestledown took most of its current shape.

In 1968 ownership of Nestledown passed to Napoleon and Margarite Bradley. Over the years several contemporary upgrades were made. New windows were installed throughout, parts of the kitchen were modernized, a screened-in porch was added to the west end, accessed from the kitchen, carpeting was installed throughout the upper two floors, and the bathrooms received cosmetic facelifts, though most of the fixtures remained original (the first floor bathtub now resides in the Linders cottage). It's possible to date the kitchen and lower bathroom facelifts –

the "padding" under the linoleum was the New York Times and Pocono Record for July of 1976! Anybody remember the Big N?

In 2000 Nestledown was gifted by the Bradley's to the ELCA Foundation, where it was actually offered for sale worldwide. The membership was purchased by current owner Chris Matthy and over the past 15 years Nestledown has been transformed into a winterized full-time residence.

Many PFLA people have shared their remembrances: Bob and Dottie Bauers (Dottie ate in the girl's camp dining hall), Jacquie Bond (waitress/hostess 1946-1951), Luther Dittmer (kitchen worker), Ruth Mitchell (first private owner), Carolyn Pohl (who still has a girl's camp uniform), Ruth Schaffner (waitress), and Ginny Warburton (waitress). Special thanks to Frieda Ammon Miltner, our PFLA archivist, whose sharing of her personal knowledge, as well as the collections of materials from her father, George Ammon, and others, filled in many details.

Pocono Gardens Lodge

AN American Success Story

Continued from Page 1

The 1950s brought fires and floods to Pocono Gardens. The flood of 1955 caused extensive damage and put the kitchen out of service for several weeks. During that time the owner of Strickland's Inn provided meals to the Rossi family. On September 24, 1955, Peter Rossi had published in the Pocono Record a note of thanks to the

community for its assistance during the recovery from the flood. He noted that the resort would reopen on October 15, 1955.

Mr. Rossi's entrepreneurial spirit was persistent. He created a company, Marine Forging and Iron Works, for the purpose of manufacturing turnbuckles. We have not been able to determine what became of this company. His most famous local invention was for a pasta cooking machine called the Spag-O-Matic. The official description contained in the patent application was for an "apparatus for cooking farinaceous

materials." The application was filed on November 10, 1958 by Peter Rossi, Pocono Gardens Lodge, Cresco, PA. He obtained a patent for the machine on April 11, 1961, at the age of 78.

He also developed a method for folding hairnets for insertion into packages.

Pocono Gardens Lodge was sold to Mt. Airy Lodge in 1971 and the Rossi era ended. Mr. Rossi passed away in 1979 at the age of 95. His legacy of creativity is a Paradise Township treasure and he was well regarded by those who knew him. He was self-made man who observed opportunities and made the most of them.



Mr. Peter Rossi observing the manufacturing of turnbuckles



Peter Rossi (L) AND Enzo Stuarti WITH THE Spag-O-Matic



Spag-O-Matic Patent



trucking 1.6 million colonies of bees to do their work at the almond groves of California, the citrus of Florida, blueberries of New Jersey, and apples and pumpkins of New York and Pennsylvania.

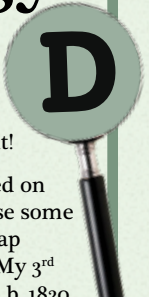
Frank showed a hive (minus the bees) to illustrate the environment in which bees live. The queen's only job is creating more bees, and she lays about 2,000 eggs a day. Drones are the "male bees" whose only job is to reproduce. Like the queen, they are fed and cared for by the worker bees. Worker bees also tend to the eggs, feeding them 1,000 times a day. They clean the hive, carry out bees that die in the hive, and guard the entrance to the hive to keep out predators and other dangers. In their last stage of a life that is only three weeks long, worker bees become foragers — the bees we see out in our gardens. They gather nectar, pollen, and water and bring it back to be used as food and stored for winter as honey. They also bring back propolis, a resinous substance they get from plants and trees. This they use to coat everything in the hive, because of its antimicrobial and antifungal properties.

The topic of honeybees and their role in our food supply was the subject of the PHS April meeting. The speaker was Frank Licata, a hobbyist beekeeper and operations manager of Mann Lake, the largest bee operation in the United States. He is also a Master Beekeeper of the Eastern Apiculture Society.

Honeybees, he said, are all-important pollinators, not just for backyard gardeners, but for all the fruits and vegetables grown in the U.S. Commercial beekeepers travel the country like gypsies,

For more information, a full transcript of Frank's fascinating talk will be posted on the Society's website — www.paradisehistorical.org

Genealogy Assistance Needed



The PHS website gets another hit!

A genealogy request was received on the PHS website and we could use some assistance in helping out a Dunlap descendant. Pam Hudak wrote "My 3rd great grandfather is Joel Dunlap b. 1820 d. 1884. I have many facts of his life however I do not know his place of birth, when he or his family arrived here." Further correspondence with Pam included much information about the family after Joel Dunlap's arrival but no additional information on where he was born or when he arrived in Monroe County. There is a Joel Dunlap b. April 22, 1866 d. April 29, 1959 buried in Swiftwater Cemetery, who is a descendant.

The directors and officers of Paradise Historical Society are:

LeeAnne Dyson, Bruce Estell,
Dan Hamblin, Carol Hillestad, Aaron Imbt,
John Layton, Laura Layton,
Harold Metzgar, Jane Niering and Kim Williams.

And We Welcome Our New Members:

Scott Kissell and Family

Bob Koerner
Elizabeth Potito
Betty Trombetta
Ruth Ziedonis

Become a Member Today!

YOUR MEMBERSHIP COUNTS! Please help Paradise Historical Society collect, protect & share the interesting history of our area.

- Student or Senior (65+) - \$8.00 Family - \$25.00
- Individual - \$10.00 Corporate - \$50.00
- Couple - \$20.00 Sustaining - \$100.00

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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Please send the completed form and check (no cash) to:

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