

3.1 Broadstreet Hollow Community History

3.1.1 Broadstreet Hollow: Some Local History – written by Christine Baltz

3.1.2 Broadstreet Hollow, A Brief History: The Bather Family and Regina's Way – written by Johanna Patience



Mark McCarroll, 2003

3.1.1 Broadstreet Hollow: Some Local History – by Christine Baltz, Broadstreet Hollow landowner, Co-chair Broadstreet Hollow Watershed Landowners Association

Early visitors:

- *Paleo Indians* hunted in the area at least 1200 years ago
- *The Delaware Indians* (also known as Lenni Lenape) lived in the Esopus River area between 1500-1700. The Indian word for large creek is “seepus” and the Dutch settlers called these Indians the Esopus Indians and the river also became the Esopus.

Major General Bradstreet:

- It is believed that BSH was named after *Maj. Bradstreet* a commissioned officer in the Kings Army. He was very involved in the British campaign against the French and is most remembered for successfully attacking Ft. Frontenac Kingston, Canada. Maj. Bradstreet was a man of unlimited self-confidence and great ambition but had difficulty dealing with others especially fellow officers. He married the widow of his cousin and they had two daughters. In 1764 his wife became disillusioned and left for England with the children never to return. Bradstreet, then stationed in Albany, took up with Catherine Schuyler, wife of his close friend. At age 61 he was promoted to major general. He died 2 years later and is buried at Trinity Church in NYC. At one time the street sign for BSH did indicate “Bradstreet Hollow” however, after the sign was knocked down during an auto accident it was replaced by the name Broadstreet.

Business enterprises:

- Stone quarries scattered throughout the valley operated in the early 1900’s and most of the bluestone was sent to NYC for sidewalks.
- Many residents had some farm animals evidenced by old photos and the remnants of stone walls and barbed wire that enclosed a long abandoned pasture. A significant number of sheep were raised in pasture land (now overgrown) by the present “oldest bridge”. *Jay Hand* raised a herd of Black Angus cattle that were pastured in fields adjoining Timber Lake Camp. Most of the herd was sold to the US Army during WWI. A good number of these pastures with their encompassing stone walls and apple trees (some over 100 years old) are still maintained and mowed now providing a habitat for wildlife.
- At least two hemlock tanneries were producing tannin for the leather industry. The remnants of a stone wall by the stream on the former *Swenson* property is still visible where a water wheel stood to power the mill.
- A sawmill belonging to *William Rowe* supplied rough sawn lumber to the *Chichester Furniture* factory located in Chichester. It is still possible to walk the perceptible trail over the mountain once -used by horse and oxen drawn wagons that would deliver the wood to the factory. The sawmill burned down in the early 1900’s but artifacts (cogwheels & old burned beams) have been found on the site.
- A one-room school house (now a private residence) educated many of the BSH children. When the school was purchased by auction sometime in the late 1940-early 50’s it still contained the desks and wall maps that were used by the children.

- Two camps were situated in the valley. *Camp Brighton Rock* was founded by *Rev Reginald McHugh*, a minister from Harlem, who at first brought up many underprivileged children for two week stays in the Catskills. Frequently the campers would hike down BSH to the portal where they enjoyed a picnic. Later Rev McHugh accepted only middle class paying campers that would spend the entire summer. The camp is now a private residence. Present day *Timber Lake Camp* can trace its history back almost 100 years. Founded in 1908 as the *Mountain School* it became *Camp Allegro*, then *Allaben Acres*, *Camp Delmar* and, in 1963 was purchased in a run down condition by *Jay Jacobs* who transformed it into one of the most premier up-scale co-ed camps in the country.

People:

- *Claude Rowe*, an early BSH resident worked at the Shandaken Tunnel as a timekeeper. He was only 14 and was not permitted to work in the actual tunnel as it was considered too dangerous. He was also uncle to *Basil Rowe* of Shandaken. Basil was an early aviation pioneer and learned how to fly at the Greene County Fairgrounds. He barnstormed around the US with his troupe "*The Rowe Fliers*". In 1927 Basil organized the *West Indian Ariel Express*, which was absorbed by *Pan American Airlines* to fly the mail route from Miami to Puerto Rico. Basil piloted many of these flights and was frequently accompanied by Charles Lindbergh. Basil eventually became chief pilot for PAA.
- *Will Enest*, affectionately known as "Uncle Will" also worked on the Shandaken tunnel. He enjoyed sitting on his porch with his three-legged dog Tippy and give a history lesson to any of the local children willing to listen. Uncle Will was an avid Brooklyn Dodger fan and knew every player on the team and their stats. He reminisced about the sheep being raised on the pasture across from his home. He died July 5, 1955 at the *Shady Grove Rest Home* and was laid to rest in the *Catholic Cemetery* on Rte 28.
- *Felix Hughes* lived at the foot of the hollow with his wife Adie, 3 sons and one daughter. During the summer months the family moved about half way up the hollow to their summer home. He would walk to the end of BSH and continue on the once existing trail to Spruceton. Here he would spend the week building stone retaining walls for the road department. On Friday he would again return home on foot. He built the stone walls in front of his summer home and took pride in the apple orchards behind his house. When his daughter married, the young couple bought the summer home hoping to become successful chicken farmers; they built a large coop behind the house. Unfortunately her husband *Mike* died and *Adelaide* moved back home. The house was bought by *Giles Rowe*, brother of *Claude*. *Giles* operated the gas station (now closed) at the foot of BSH.
- *The Swenson's* originally from Kansas where *Mr. Swenson* was an attorney engaged in the state politics. He became very disenchanted with the political system and once while visiting their daughter Valerie (an aspiring art student in NYC) they toured the Catskills and settled in BSH. Their son John was a student of law at Cornell but did not finish and returned to BSH. The family survived from a large vegetable garden, a cow, and game and were supported financially by their daughter who had become an accomplished artist in oils and watercolors. She held numerous art shows in

Woodstock and NYC. She delighted in illustrating several children's' nature books and would sketch the original art design for upscale wallpaper. A "special" stone placed on the porch floor (carted to the house from the quarry across the street) held the soap barrel that was used exclusively by *Mrs. Swenson* who made the family soap using lard and lye when her supply ran low. *Mr. Swenson* died in the late 40's; his wife lived for many years cared for by her children. *John* died while residing in a veteran's home. When *Valerie* (Ole, as she was known in the art world, and by friends) passed away, the property (about 200 acres and house) was left to the state. The house was demolished leaving only a large lilac tree and spring daffodils to give silent testimony that a family once lived here. An old stone wall on the property at the edge of the stream remains giving mute evidence that once this was the site of a water wheel that supplied power to one of the BSH tanning mills.

Linda Mohl who served as an invaluable source of information with regards to some of the "old timers". Linda and her family spent their summers here the same time as my family. She is presently living in West Virginia and hopes to visit BSH this summer.

Although the above mentions only a very few of the residents that have called BSH home through the years, there are many more that have been born, lived and died in the valley. Families such as the Riseleys, Osterhoudts, Storeys, Longyears, Fords, Bathers, Burkes, Mohls, Steins, and Holzers have all left a part of themselves in the valley. New residents continue to take the place of those that have gone before, repairing and enlarging the homes of those passed. Hopefully in future years, the story of their lives will be compiled and left for future generations so they can know the history of BSH.

3.1.2 Broadstreet Hollow, A Brief History: The Bather Family and Regina's Way – by Johanna Patience, Broadstreet Hollow landowner.

In the mid-fifties, the Bather family had a vacation home on the water in Marion, Massachusetts. Their summer home was a modest one, built on a concrete slab. They had a barbecue built out of stone, which they enjoyed cooking on during their stays. The family was informed by nearby neighbors of a hurricane approaching the area, and to evacuate their home. The Bathers fled the area with only themselves and their dogs and cats. Within forty-five minutes after fleeing the area, the house was removed from its foundation, with only the outdoor grill remaining intact. The waters in the ocean inlets rose to the top of the shoreline trees, with cabin cruisers wedged in the treetops as evidence.

After this experience, Regina Bather decided that she did not want to live near the ocean waters anymore. A year later, the Bathers were returning from a trip to Canada. They were driving on the Onteora Trail, which is now Route 28. The family was attracted to the Catskill Region, and decided to go to a local realtor in Phoenicia to look at properties. They found a vacation home on Broadstreet Hollow, which was

the Racusin residence. The property consisted of a main house with several small cottages and 100 acres.

The property's previous owner, Dr. Racusin, had died at a young age. He and his wife had a disabled daughter, and bells were set up in the house for the daughter to ring when she needed help. After Dr. Racusin's death, Mrs. Racusin met up with a man who liked to gamble and spend time at the horse track. The boyfriend wanted to move out of the mountains and move to Florida to avoid the long, cold winters in the hollow. The Bather's were able to negotiate a cash sale with Mrs. Racusin and her boyfriend in the mid 1950's. Regina and her family returned to their home in Brooklyn, New York to compile the family assets and pay for the property.

Mr. Bather, also known as Benny, worked for the American Sugar Refinery (Domino Sugar) in Brooklyn, New York. When he and Regina retired, they moved their family to their Broadstreet Hollow home. Their children eventually bought the house and property from them so they could enjoy their retirement with minimal expenses. In the hollow, the Bathers were referred to as Aunt Regina and Uncle Benny. Regina was a pillar of the community, known to help others and take people in. She was a dressmaker and designer, with a dress store in Phoenicia, and made costumes for the local plays. Each year, a worthy student, at the Onteora H.S. (one who has excelled in their academic achievements) is eligible to receive the Regina Bather scholarship award.

Regina had an impact on her family and the community. Many roads and places were named after noteworthy people in the Catskill Region. The road leading to the Bather's house was named Regina's Way, one of the people worth mentioning and remembering on Broadstreet Hollow Road and in the Catskill Mountains. At present, the property still remains in the Bather family, with Johanna (Bather) Patience residing at, and maintaining the property, and her brother, Paul Bather, of Louisville, Kentucky, having joint ownership.