

THIS IS NOT THE BORSCHT BELT!

PART ONE:

Early summer RESORTS OF THE JEWISH CATSKILLS

PART ONE of a two-part series. PART TWO will be presented at a later date.

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150 years ago, just north of New York City, in the lush forests and lakes of the Catskill Mountains, celebrated Jewish resort communities were created. These enclaves provided a reprieve from city life, with summer destinations in a specifically Jewish environment for members of the cultural and social elite of American Jewry. We'll explore the Jewish histories of important, but largely forgotten summer communities in towns such as Fleischmanns, Tannersville, Hunter, Sharon Springs, and even New York's famous resort for politicians, Saratoga Springs.

In these affluent communities, we'll learn of world-transforming musicians and composers, prominent Jewish businessmen, actresses and opera singers, a New York State Governor, history-making rabbis, stars of the Yiddish Theatre, and the one woman who was a close second in American popularity to Eleanor Roosevelt... Today, the histories of these historically important communities are largely forgotten – having been overshadowed by more recent memories of the later resorts of Sullivan County.

These Catskill Mountain communities, in which anti-Semitism was consciously challenged, set the groundwork for the appearance of those later resorts in the Shawangunk Mountains that included Grossinger's, Kutsher's, the Nevele, and so many that lovingly reside in people's memories... Those resorts (and many others) will be included in the second part of this two-part series.

So now, let us begin at the beginning!