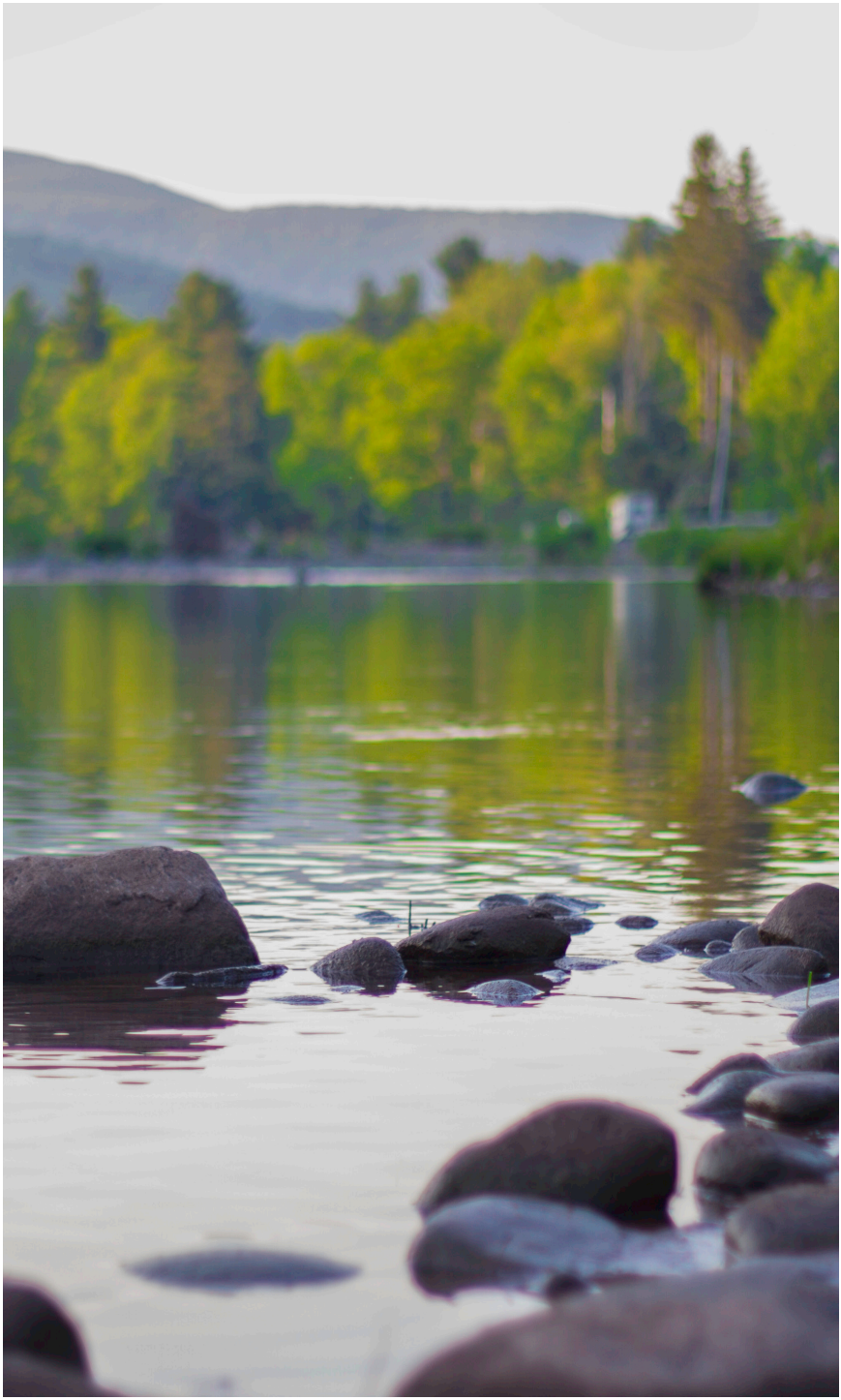
The Catskill Mountains: History Happened Here

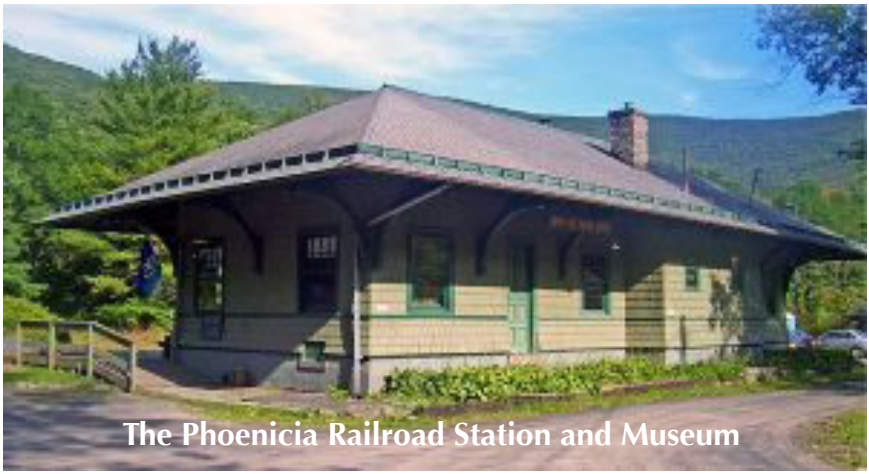


Phoenicia Railroad Station and Museum
70 Lower High Street, Phoenicia NY 12464 info@esrm.com (845) 688-7501

The museum is open to visitors weekends and holidays from Memorial Day through Columbus Day, 11am-4pm. Tickets are $3.

With access from the Hudson River, westward expansion into the mountains became more economical. Turnpikes were chartered and constructed to provide access to resource-rich hinterlands. Roads were cut into the hills to support bluestone quarrying, logging, and bustling tanning industries which utilized the abundant amount of hemlock trees for the tannic acid extracted from their bark. Horse-drawn wagons full of lumber, furniture, hides or bluestone shared the turnpike with stage coaches that brought mail and visitors to the region including sportsmen to hunt and fish from the natural bounty.

Construction of the Rondout & Oswego Railroad (later the Ulster & Delaware) provided a new, more efficient means of transportation for both freight and passenger traffic. Following the railroad's reorganization in 1875, the Central Catskills began to be promoted as a tourist destination. A great wave of resort hotel construction followed. The Ulster & Delaware Railroad's passenger traffic peaked at 676,000 in 1913. The Stony Clove and Catskill Mountain Railroad was completed in 1882 from Phoenicia to Hunter, making Phoenicia the crossroads of the Catskills for motorists and railroads. The Tremper Mountain House, built and owned in 1879 by Captain (Major) Jacob H. Tremper, Jr. and Captain William C. Romer, was the first hotel relying exclusively on its railroad connection.



The Phoenicia Railroad Station and Museum

Historic Shandaken, Riseley Farm
During the colonial era, the Central Catskills were part of the Hardenburgh Patent, owned primarily by the Livingston family. This land grant had a profound impact on the development of the area, as difficulties in surveying the land and legal battles among the descendants kept most settlers out of the mountains until well into the nineteenth century. The Town of Shandaken was part of Woodstock until 1804. Early Americans, fleeing the stony soils of Connecticut, joined immigrants from other states and foreign shores in exploring the region west of the Hudson in hope of locating arable farmland. Settlers in the valleys of the Central Catskills soon learned to use the natural resources of the mountains to supplement their attempts at farming.

Where the Emerson now stands was once The Riseley Flat, a thriving dairy farm built in 1840, and a barn built in 1860, which is now The Country Stores. In 1874 trains began stopping at this site daily, bringing hordes of visitors for their first taste of the Hudson Valley. For many, that first taste was of the ice cream, made fresh at the Riseley dairy. Though the cows have since moved on, the historic buildings have been lovingly restored for modern use. One of the most remarkable adaptations is the 60-foot high barn silo that was turned into the World's Largest Kaleidoscope.

Town of Shandaken Historical Museum
26 Academy St., Pine Hill (845) 254-4460; www.shandaken.us
A 1920's schoolhouse in historic Pine Hill with many and varied displays of historical tools and artifacts from the 1800's on including a 1900's schoolroom and kitchen, displays on the people and history of the 12 hamlets of Shandaken, a library of books on the Catskills, genealogy files, and wireless internet. Open Saturday & Sunday 10am-4pm. Admission is free.

Near today's Mount Tremper Corners, about 100 feet above the Esopus Creek, once stood Great Fort Shandaken, built of logs in 1779 by Col. Levi Pauling and commanded by Col. Johannis Snyder until the end of the Revolutionary War. The fort was one of several built to command the most direct routes across the mountains to warn and protect Hudson River settlements. The area where the fort stood can be seen by making a left out of the Emerson, and driving 1.3 miles. The clearing is on the Left.

Town of Shandaken Historical Museum

The Ashokan Reservoir

The Ashokan Reservoir was constructed between 1907 and 1915, by the New York City Board of Water Supply, by impounding the Esopus Creek to become New York's largest reservoir. Thousands of acres of farmland were submerged. Residents of the area to be flooded did not take kindly to the idea, and fought eminent domain proceedings bitterly. The impoundment covered twelve communities located in a valley where farming, logging, and quarrying prevailed. The area that became the West Basin of the reservoir contained 504 dwellings, nine blacksmith shops, 35 stores, 10 churches, 10 schools, seven sawmills and a gristmill. Several of these communities were re-established in nearby locations. The dam was constructed mainly by local laborers, as well as African-Americans and Italian immigrants, who also did the job of razing most of the trees and buildings in the area. Fights would often break out in the labor camps where the crews would eat and sleep, so a police force, which would later become the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP) Police, was established to keep peace in the camps. The dam was constructed with Rosendale cement, which at the time was the world's strongest cement. When the dam was completed, giant steam whistles blew for one hour, signaling to people in the valley to evacuate immediately. The resulting body of water is the oldest New York City–owned reservoir in the Catskill Mountains.

Visiting the Ashokan Reservoir

There are two Reservoir Promenades (1,2) that have exceptional views of the reservoir and the mountains. The first promenade begins at terminus of a circular cul-de-sac, locally known as "the Frying Pan."(3) The open, paved path runs westerly along the edge of the reservoir for approximately 1.25 miles. The second promenade begins immediately west of the intersection with Reservoir Road and continues for approximately 1.35 miles. This promenade goes along the reservoir and then enters a wooded section passing a monument dedicated to J. Waldo Smith, engineer of the New York City water supply system. The Dividing Weir (4), atop which Reservoir Road crosses the reservoir, functions to abate sedimentation that occurs in waters that enter the upper reservoir basin. The weir slows the flow between the basins so that the sediment is allowed to settle before the less turbid water is released from the lower basin to begin its journey to the taps of New York City. The Spillway (5), seen from Route 28-A near the junction with Stone Church Road, allows water to exit the reservoir as it exceeds capacity.

Historic Woodstock: Original Art and Music Colony
Upper Byrdcliffe Road, Woodstock (845) 679-2079; www.byrdcliffe.org
Byrdcliffe Arts Colony was founded in 1902 near Woodstock, by Jane Byrd McCall and Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead. It is the oldest operating Arts and Crafts Colony in America. Byrdcliffe was created as an experiment in utopian living inspired by the arts and crafts movement. The colony is still in operation today and is located on 300 acres with 35 original buildings, all designed in the Arts and Crafts style. There is a self-guided walking tour through the compound as well as a hiking path that leads to the mountain top which gives way to scenic Catskill views. The colony continues to foster the development of artistic vision. Along with ongoing music, theater and art performances held in the Byrdcliffe Theater, barn and on property lawns, The Byrdcliffe Colony hosts an Artist-In-Residence program that houses over 70 artists each summer who practice in a wide variety of fields and mediums. Byrdcliffe maintains an exhibition and performance space in the heart of Woodstock, the Kleinert/James Center for the Arts, which hosts 6 or 7 exhibitions of contemporary art annually. T*urn left out of parking lot. Go 13.5 miles to left on Route 375. Drive 3 miles to the end of Route 375 and turn left onto Mill Hill Road. Drive into Woodstock and then turn right onto Rock City Road. After .5 miles, turn left onto Brydcliffe Road. Drive .5 miles to right on Upper Byrdcliffe Road. The trailhead is at the theater .8 miles up the road on the right.*

Alongside Byrdcliffe, visionaries like Hervey White would go on to establish the Maverick art colony in 1905, while the Art Students League, led by Birge Harrison, would begin operation in Woodstock a year later. As a result, Woodstock's story began to diverge from the small town norm, eventually becoming a community shaped by the connections forged between newly arrived artists and those who drew life and livelihood from the very landscape that would find its way onto a multitude of canvases over the years.

Woodstock Artists Association & Museum
28 Tinker Street, Woodstock (845) 679-2940
Since its beginnings in 1919, the Woodstock Artists Association & Museum has been committed to exhibiting and collecting work in all media by area artists and supporting the tradition of Woodstock as the "Colony of the Arts." WAAM functions as a cultural center as well as a repository for the work of American artists associated with the Woodstock Art Colony. Each year, WAAM presents a full schedule of exhibitions of local artists throughout its spacious galleries.

Woodstock Historical Society
Eames House - 20 Comeau Drive, Woodstock (845) 679-2256 www.historical-societyofwoodstock.com
The Historical Society of Woodstock was founded in 1929 by a group of artists, writers, academics, and local citizens. In addition to the exhibition space, which is located at the historic Eames House on Comeau Drive in the center of Woodstock, the Historical Society has an extensive archive consisting of paintings, prints, drawings, sculpture, textiles, photographs, books, manuscripts, correspondence, documents, film/sound recordings, and antique tools. The archive serves as a resource for a wide range of exhibitions, public programming, and research.

Woodstock Playhouse
103 Mill Hill Rd, Woodstock (845) 679-6900 www.woodstockplayhouse.org
In 1938, the Woodstock Playhouse became one of the first rural extensions of Broadway in the nation. As times began to change, the Playhouse also went on to institute a number of midnight concerts and, later, found itself as host to the final concert in a series of performances known as the Sound-Outs, considered by many as a precursor to the Woodstock Festival. Even though the original theater burned down, the Playhouse was rebuilt through a remarkable home-grown effort and, today, triumphantly carries on the tradition of celebrated performances on the same site Robert Elwyn originally selected for his theater at the gateway to Woodstock.

Maverick Concerts
120 Maverick Rd, Woodstock (845) 679-8217 www.maverickconcerts.org
America's oldest continuous summer chamber music festival, thrives on the love of great music and the spirit of its unique site in the unspoiled woods. The rustic 1916 concert hall, with its perfect acoustics, is ideally suited to chamber music and the intimacy of live performance. Artists and other volunteers built the hand-hewn "music chapel" in 1916 and the Hall is now a multi-starred attraction on the National Register of Historic Places.

While music had always been an essential part of the Woodstock landscape, something quite unique began to emerge in the sixties that would lend the name of Woodstock to an entire generation. The names, of course, are now legendary – Dylan, Hendrix, The Band – to note a few. And, as their music echoed up and down Tinker Street, it also summoned young people and members of the counterculture to undertake their own journey to Woodstock. Though the Woodstock Festival was never held here, the spirit and the energy that gave it birth – from Hervey White's Maverick Festivals to the Sound-Outs of the late 1960's – was certainly conceived here.

Bearsville Theater, Bearsville
291 Tinker St, Woodstock (845) 679-8900; www.bearsvilletheater.com
This 18,000-square-foot theater opened in 1989 and is located in the Bearsville compound — a complex designed and financed by former recording industry giant Albert Grossman, the man behind The Band, Bob Dylan, Janis Joplin, Todd Rundgren and Peter, Paul and Mary. The Bearsville Theater was a work in progress in January 1986 when Grossman died of a heart attack. The Bear Café and surrounding buildings were part of Grossman's never-ending creative projects in the heart of Bearsville. The recording studios on Stange Road and the Turtle Creek barn on Ricks Road were alive with recording projects. The world Grossman created is partially responsible for the widespread growth of rock 'n' roll. He helped bring folk music into the mainstream, electrifying it and turning it upside down into something wholly American. His kingdom, Bearsville, became a breeding ground and mecca for American rock 'n' roll, and exists today through new partnerships and a continued emphasis on embracing new music.

Maverick Concerts

Historic Kingston: Original State Capitol and Revolutionary Stage.
Kingston Stockade District began as the Dutch village of Wiltwijck, founded by Thomas Chambers of Fort Orange (later Albany) in 1652. The site was chosen for the ease with which it could be defended. Other colonists came to the area despite regular Indian raids. Six years later, by 1658, Dutch colonial governor Peter Stuyvesant ordered all settlers to move to the village, behind the stockade whose construction he personally supervised. It was burned in 1663 and rebuilt, remaining until the early 18th century. By then it had established the street pattern along its boundaries which persists today.

The Fred J. Johnston House
63 Main St, Kingston (845) 339-0720 www.fohk.org
Originally built in 1812, this carefully restored residence is an excellent example of the Federal style, and houses an unparalleled antique collection. The Fred J. Johnston collection contains exemplary pieces of furniture such as chests, secretaries, Hudson Valley chairs, American glassware and pottery, and Staffordshire porcelain and pictorial needlework. The building is open to the public.

Old Dutch Church (First Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Kingston)
272 Wall St, Kingston (845) 338-6759 www.olddutchchurch.org
Built in 1852 and located in the core of Kingston's Stockade district, the Old Dutch Church is the fourth building to serve the congregation that has existed since 1659. In 1852, the present bluestone church was designed by Minard Lafever, a New York ecclesiologist. The congregation has conscientiously conserved and restored all of the original church records of baptism, marriages, and minutes. Located outside the church is the congregation's historic cemetery, as well as a monument to George Clinton, a Brigadier General in the Revolutionary War, the first governor of New York State, and Vice President under Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Individual tours and research is available by appointment and on Sundays between 10:30AM and 12:30PM. Self-guided walking tour brochures are available at the Church.

After the Declaration of Independence was signed, the 13 American colonies found themselves adrift without any governmental institutions. To remedy this situation in New York, New York patriots chose delegates to a Provincial Congress, which first met in New York City. As the British drew their noose around Manhattan, the New York Congress decided to move north up to White Plains. Calling itself the "Convention of the Representatives of the State of New York," the group was forced to move farther north to safety. The delegates found Kingston to their liking. A "government on the run" for many months, the city welcomed the delegates, opening several public buildings for the Convention's use. For two months, the delegates met in the Ulster County Courthouse, working deliberately on a State constitution. On April 22, 1777, the bells of Kingston's churches announced approval of the State's first constitution.

The Senate House
296 Fair St, Kingston (845) 338-2786 www.senatehousekingston.org
While the Supreme Court remained in the Courthouse and the Assembly met in a local tavern, the Senate convened its first session in the generously-offered old stone home of Abraham VanGaasbeck. Built in 1676 only 12 years after the British assumed control of New York from the Dutch, the house reflects both the building traditions of the original Dutch colonists and the gradual acceptance of English construction styles.

In October of 1777, General George Clinton sent out an expedition force north up the Hudson from New York City. News of this force moving up the Hudson forced the New York State Government to flee Kingston. Looking upon Kingston as a "hotbed of perfidy and sedulous disloyalty to King George the Third and His Majesty's Parliament," the British punished Kingston for hosting the revolutionary State government. Under the command of Major General John Vaughan, the British troops moved into Kingston's Stockade area and set fire to every building, largely succeeding in burning the city to the ground.

Both Kingston and the Senate House were rebuilt after the fire, and over 100 years later, New York State acquired Abraham VanGaasbeck's home to recognize the role Senate House played in the American Revolution. The Senate House quickly became a vital community museum, exhibiting a wide range of artwork, documents and historical objects donated by local residents. The Senate House has been finished and restored to depict the building as it would have looked in 1777. The building and grounds are open to the public. Senate House staff provides guided tours. The Senate House Museum, located adjacent to the Senate House, was built in 1927 as a museum. It is a two story, colonial revival structure faced with limestone, giving it an appearance designed to complement the Senate House. Tours Admission: Adult: $4 Senior (62+): $3 12 & under: free

The Senate House

Hiking Through History; Discover Logging Trails, Quarries, and Ruins
The Tanning Industry was the first extensive human disturbance in the mountain area. The life of the tannery business was relatively short, but its impact on the mountains and its people was great. Hemlock was cut, its bark peeled; the bark was then used to tan leather. Tanning began on a small scale around 1800, but the period 1820 through 1860 saw a huge industry that had a great impact on the forests of the Catskills and the economic growth of local communities. Fifty-nine tanneries operated in the Catskill Mountains in 1835. The last tanneries in the Schoharie Valley closed in the 1860's and, in the upper Esopus, in the 1870's. The hemlock logs were usually a glut on the market and often were left to rot in the woods. Much of the cut area was burned, some accidentally and some deliberately.

Tan Bark Trail
2.3 mile loop. 800 ft elev change. Blue Blazes.
This hike does have some challenging sections, especially near the beginning, but you are rewarded with great viewpoints overlooking the town of Phoenicia. The 2.3-mile loop hike follows portions of a historic tan bark trail and various old quarry roads that once provided access to bluestone quarries and hemlock trees back in the 1800's. Interpretive signage along the route tells the story. The hike has several short, very steep inclines/declines with an overall 800 ft. elevation gain – so hiking shoes/boots are a must. Meet the trailhead by the playground equipment in the Parish Field just off Main Street in Phoenicia. *Turn right out of parking lot. Proceed for 2.5 miles and turn right to follow the large sign into town. At the intersection with Main Street, turn right and park on the road. Proceed back to intersection on foot and follow Mt Ava Maria Drive walking past the grocery store and library (on left), the park is on the right after the post office.*

Onteora Lake
7.1 miles with 3 loops. Easy Hike.
The old woods road connects to three trail loops (1.1 miles to the first yellow loop) through upland oaks, moist hemlock forests, and many abandoned bluestone quarries. The yellow trail loop is highly recommended as it passes by the beautiful and peaceful Pickerel Pond before returning to the place of beginning. The Red and Blue Loops will take you through interesting rock features and more talus piles, the leftover ruin from abandoned bluestone quarries. *Turn left out of the parking lot and drive 15 miles to entrance on left just after a row of businesses. There is an unmarked trail from the first lot or park at the lower lot closer to the lake.*

Historic Mountain Houses of the Catskills
Clean air, green forests and mountain scenery brought another industry to the area and to the entire Catskills - tourism. Before 1800 there were very few people that visited the Catskill Mountains for vacationing. In the early 1800's steamboats began carrying people up the Hudson to cities along the river. Soon roads developed in the easiest to trek places, often following Native American

trails. The people traveling these roads needed stables, inns, and restaurants to effectively assist them in reaching their destinations. In 1824, the Catskill Mountain House was located atop the eastern escarpment of the mountains, overlooking the Hudson River and soon becoming a most popular tourist destination. This spawned the development of numerous mountain houses, many of which would occupy the interior of the mountains and be reachable by railroad after mid-century.

Overlook Mountain
4.7 mile round trip. 1410 ft elevation change.
Overlook Mountain is among the most prominent peaks in the Catskill Region when seen from the Hudson Valley. The trailhead is located a few miles north of Woodstock at the top of Meads Mountain Road. The red-marked trail is a wide, dirt road for the first two miles. The trail lifts at a steady pace, rising from 1,900 feet at the parking area to just above 3,000 feet at the site of the Overlook Hotel, begun in the 1920's, and now being reclaimed by nature. Although the road continues to the summit, a well-worn foot trail traces the summit's southern contour and is much more inviting. The half-mile foot trail leads to a series of scenic ledges with views to the east, south and west. Carvings in the rock date from the early 1800's when people began visiting this scenic mountaintop. The view from the mountain's restored, 80-foot fire tower is impressive. *Turn left out of the parking lot and go .5 miles to left on Route 212. Go 7.8 miles and turn left onto Reynolds Road. After .2 miles, turn left onto Hutchin Hill Road, then a quick right onto Macdaniel Road. The trailhead is 2.5 miles on the left.*

The Overlook Mountain Houses
The first attempt at putting a summer hotel on Overlook Mountain to compete with the Catskill Mountain House took place in 1833. The first overlook Mountain House was erected in 1871 but, by then, the solitude, peace and beauty that had attracted the early visitors was in competition with the bluestone and charcoal industries. Tourism eventually prevailed. By the early 1900's, Overlook Mountain was well known to the art community and nearby Woodstock's reputation as an art colony was growing thanks to Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead and his assistants in creating the arts and crafts colony of Byrdcliffe. The original Overlook Mountain House accommodated 300 guests in 1873. Destroyed by fire in 1875, it was rebuilt in 1878. It was anchored to the Mountain by cables. It stood 3 stories high and was 200 feet long. But, between the years of 1887 to 1917, it operated irregularly. In 1917 it was sold and subsequently again destroyed by fire in 1924. Resurrected in concrete to become a grand hotel, it was never completed, a victim of changing public tastes and the automobile. Its incomplete ruins still stand on Forest Preserve land. *Turn left out of Emerson parking lot and go 1.0 miles. Take a sharp left onto NY-212 E, after 8.3 miles turn left onto Byrdcliff Road/Glasco Turnpike. Continue 2.4 miles and take a left onto Meads Mountain Road. Take a slight right onto California Quarry Road, go 1.7 miles where road changes to California Quarry Exn. Continue straight for .4 miles to destination.*

www.drive28.com
Download Route 28 Audio Driving Guides to learn more about the history, landscape, food and attractions along the Catskill Mountains Scenic Byway.

The trails listed in this guide are off Emerson Resort & Spa property. The Emerson is not responsible for any change in hours, pricing and/or trail routes.

THE EMERSON

INDEPENDENTLY OWNED AND OPERATED

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