

14. THREATS TO BUILDING: a. none known ☐ b. zoning ☐ c. roads ☐  
d. developers ☒ e. deterioration ☒  
f. other: underutilization

15. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS AND PROPERTY:

- a. barn ☐ b. carriage house ☐ c. garage ☐  
d. privy ☐ e. shed ☐ f. greenhouse ☐  
g. shop ☐ h. gardens ☐  
i. landscape features: \_\_\_\_\_  
j. other: see appendix "B"

16. SURROUNDINGS OF THE BUILDING (check more than one if necessary):

- a. open land ☐ b. woodland ☒  
c. scattered buildings ☐  
d. densely built-up ☒ e. commercial ☐  
f. industrial ☐ g. residential ☒  
h. other: cemetery

17. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS:

(Indicate if building or structure is in an historic district)

The former Glen Springs Sanitarium is the most prominent landmark in the village. The large, rambling structure is situated on the ridge directly above the village and Seneca Lake. Bounding the complex on the west and south are woods and a cemetery. To the north and south are residences which mostly date from the same period as Glen

18. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING AND SITE (including interior features if known): Glen Springs.

Some of the original interior features are intact. For instance, the 1912 wing contains, on the first floor, large classical columns and a proscenium arch over a stage.

SIGNIFICANCE

19. DATE OF INITIAL CONSTRUCTION: Circa 1872 (main section)

ARCHITECT: Pierce & Bickford (alterations between 1890-1920)

BUILDER: \_\_\_\_\_

20. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

George G. Freer began the Lake-View House hotel in 1872 hoping to capitalize on the outstanding location. Built in the Second Empire style with a magnificent three-tiered porch on its facade, the hotel was equipped with a bowling alley and ice house, and had a capacity for 150 people. Despite its location the hotel was never a success, and subsequent to Mr. Freer's death, his wife put it up for sale as early as 1881.

In 1890 the resort was purchased by William E. Leffingwell. Leffingwell had gained experience in running the sanitarium at Dannsville, N.Y., an institution which had been run by members of his family since 1882. In January, 1890, Leffingwell visited the village of Watkins and was impressed with the potential of Lake-View House, so he purchased the building that same year.

21. SOURCES: \_\_\_\_\_

SOURCES: \_\_\_\_\_ (Continued on next sheet)

William Kelly, village historian

22. THEME: Job Book, Pierce & Bickford, architects

Glen Springs Sanitarium, Watkins Glen, N.Y.  
Continuation Sheet.

Equally important as the site with its fine view, was the existence of sulfur springs on the grounds. During this period Watkins contained numerous resort hotels, and Glen Springs became the largest and most successful, although of course it was not just a hotel but a sanitarium.

As soon as he purchased the building Leffingwell made improvements. Architects Pierce & Bickford of Elmira, N.Y., were hired to expand the dining room on the west side of the main section, and to build a three story annex on the north side of the building. The Annex, a Shingle style structure with Colonial Revival-inspired details, is linked to the main section by a serpentine walk-way enclosed with glass windows (photo 1). Originally the walk-way had a Georgian balustrade running along the roof. Also in 1890, Pierce & Bickford designed a house directly opposite the institution for Dr. J.K. King.

In 1898 Pierce & Bickford designed an addition to the mineral baths building, as well as a house for Mr. Leffingwell across the road from the King house. Two years later, the original three-tiered porch on the facade of the main section was replaced with the present broad, one story porch.

Also during this period the grounds were apparently extensively landscaped. This included a wide side-walk running parallel to Lake-View Ave. north to Division St. This paved promenade enabled the patients to take in the view without having to struggle up or down the hill.

Pierce & Bickford were hired again in 1902 to design the north wing. This was followed in 1908 by a cobblestone spring house (photo 2), and in 1910 by a three story sleeping porch built on the roof of the 1900 porch. In 1912 their large south wing was added, complete with an extension to the front porch. This addition involved the removal of an enclosed glass solarium at the junction of the main section and the original south wing, but that was compensated by the roof garden on the top of the 1902 wing. The final job the firm did for the sanitarium was to design an auditorium and picture theater for inside the complex in 1919. However, it is not known if this was ever executed.

A number of outbuildings were constructed on the grounds by the 1920's. These included a laundry and heating plant (photo 3), a plumbers and carpenters shop, an auto garage, a greenhouse, a small laboratory (photo 4), and a cabbie shed for the golf course. With these buildings Glen Springs approached self-sufficiency.

The main entrance was located at the small porch on the west side of the south wing. Once inside, the patient could enjoy the advantages of the location without leaving the buildings. The long, deep porch across the front has limited access from the outside, as did another porch on the north end of the Annex. A roof garden was located on the north wing, and sleeping porches were built on the front of the main section. Within the complex was a mineral bath, and small mineral springs could be found both inside and close-by entrances of the buildings. For those well enough to move about outside, the grounds provided sidewalks, trees, more mineral springs, and a golf course.

Leffingwell died about 1928. The sanitarium struggled along through the 1930's, no doubt a victim of both the Depression and the general decline of institutions such as sanitariums. Glen Springs closed on Jan. 1, 1942. After the War married students attending Cornell University lived here and were bused to Ithaca. In 1949 the Franciscans purchased the buildings and founded Padua High School. A gymnasium was added in 1952 (photo 5) and vocational skills were taught as well as religious education. The high school closed in 1968. A private academy was run here for the next few years but failed to prosper. Presently the gymnasium is used for government-funded training programs, and the Annex is used as a friary. The rest of the institution stands vacant.

Glen Springs Sanitarium, Watkins Glen

Appendix A.

List of alterations subsequent to the closing of the sanitarium in 1942:

1. Three story sleeping porch w/central staircase removed from facade of main section.
2. Balustrade on tower roof replaced with platform and cross.
3. Georgian balustrade removed from roof of serpentine walk-way linking Annex.
4. Two story circular porch removed from north side of Annex. Mineral spring located beneath the porch covered over.
5. Enclosed staircase added to north side of 1902 wing, and to south side of 1912 wing. The latter staircase replace a wood platform.
6. One story bakery on west side replaced with cinder block addition and wood shed.

Appendix B.

List of outbuildings, intact and destroyed:

- |                                |                         |         |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| 1. Laboratory                  | intact                  | photo 4 |
| 2. Heating plant               | intact                  | photo 3 |
| 3. Garage and laundry          | south half removed      | photo 3 |
| 4. Spring house                | intact but deteriorated | photo 2 |
| 5. Gymnasium                   | intact                  | photo 5 |
| 6. Green house                 | destroyed               |         |
| 7. Storage shed                | destroyed               |         |
| 8. Plumbers and carpenter shop | destroyed               |         |
| 9. Garage                      | destroyed               |         |
| 10. Caddie house               | destroyed               |         |



ORGANIZED 1960

## Schuyler County Historical Society

108 N. Catharine Street P.O. Drawer 651  
Montour Falls, N.Y. 14865

### PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FOR A BUILDING/STRUCTURE PROPOSAL FOR NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

BUILDING- Glen Springs Sanitarium, So. Lake View Avenue, Watkins  
Glen, New York, Schuyler County

One of the most impressive historical landmarks in Schuyler County was known in the early 1900's as the Glen Springs Sanitarium, the Nauheim of America. Located high on the western hillsides of the village of Watkins Glen, it still retains the most commanding setting in the village and magnificent view of Seneca Lake.

The main building of this institution was built in 1872 by Judge George G. Freer. Judge Freer was born in Marbleton, New York, January 1809. An Ithaca lawyer at the time, he first became involved with the history of the area when he came to Watkins Glen in 1851 to defend the will of Dr. Samuel Watkins, The village's founder. After having successfully proved that Dr. Watkins' wife, Cynthia Ann Cass Watkins, was the legal heir, he soon married the widow, who died shortly thereafter in October 1853, leaving Freer the sole recipient of the vast estate. He became the wealthiest man in the village during the 1850's. He held several offices-Village Trustee, President of the Village Board, Town Supervisor of the Town of Dix in 1863, and became Judge and Surrogate of Schuyler County in 1869. He was instrumental in making the choice of Watkins Glen over Montour Falls as the County Seat of the newly formed county. He also was the first publisher of the Watkins Republican, (now the Watkins Express) in the 1850's, founder of the First National Bank of Watkins, etc. Judge Freer died on April 17, 1878. (see 13B in Biblio.)

One of Freer's greatest ambitions was to open up the beautiful areas of the local Glen to the public. Under his ownership, the Glen at the southern end of the village, began operation as Freer's Glen, a tourist attraction. It was later sold to Morvalden Ellis for \$25,000 and opened to the public in 1863. Ellis, born in Fairfield County, Connecticut in 1828, was a newspaper writer who came to Watkins in the 1850's. In 1906 it became the first New York State Park with no admission charge. In 1924 it became one of the Finger Lakes State Parks under the control of the Finger Lakes Parks and Recreation Commission.

This Glen State Park adjoined the area where Freer, in 1872, built his "Lake View Hotel" to attract the Glen tourists and village visitors. This beautiful Second Empire Styled structure was to be the nucleus of the famous Glen Springs Resort and Sanitarium. But Freer's Hotel venture was never successful. (see 24A)

(1) Jan





ORGANIZED 1980

-2-

## Schuyler County Historical Society

108 N. Catharine Street P.O. Drawer 651  
Montour Falls, N.Y. 14865

In the search for oil on his property, the results led to the opening of the Glen Springs. In the sinking of the first shaft at a depth of 1600 feet, a black brine water was struck, a disappointment to the drillers, but advantageous for the future of the Mineral spring baths. (see 24A, biblio)

Newspaper accounts of this famous spring, whose strong brine water, under careful analysis, exceeded in curative qualities the famous Nauheim Springs of Germany, came to the attention of William Elderkin Leffingwell. Associated with his cousin, Dr. James A. Jackson, in the management of the Jackson Health Resort, Dansville, N.Y., he had for two years been searching for a more desirable site for a new sanitarium. When he came to Watkins to investigate the property in 1890, he was convinced of the suitability of the place for a health resort. Within a short time he formed a company and purchased the Lakeview Hotel, the springs, and surrounding twenty acres. This Hotel still stands as the central part of the Glen Springs. (see 25A) *Leffingwell*

In March 1980, the Glen Springs, opened and established as a hotel and sanitarium, soon became a world famous health resort and mecca for tourists. The principal reason for its fame was the possession of several mineral springs, famous since the time of the Seneca Indians for their medicinal properties. They were found to be equal to any of the kind to be found on the continent of Europe. There were five of these located on the grounds. Their contents were used for drinking and general use in the hotel, and others for baths, namely Senega Spring and Deer Lick Springs, both of which flow freely today), Neptune Spring, Vulcan Spring, and Salubria Spring, the water from each of which was useful in different ways. Bath facilities were constructed in a two story building of brick with tiled floors and marble wainscoting and partitions, directly connected to the main building. They enabled the management to give all the various forms of iron and salt baths comparable to those given in Europe. (see 4A, 5A, 19A) *Deerlick*

Mention should be made of the Deer Lick Spring and the relationship of Deer Licks and Salt wells. The Deer Lick Spring, located on the north end of the north annex building, with its sparkling saline taste, occupied the site of an ancient Deer Lick. This has long been known to the residents of the town, who had for many years made use of its marvelous healing powers. Early settlers and the Indians looked upon salt as a luxury, its use limited to weddings and special occasions. They and the wild animals came to this spring to quench their thirst. Such springs contained a small amount of salt and the deer came there to lick the salt from the surrounding earth, thus known as "Deer Lick" springs. (see 22A)



ORGANIZED 1980

## Schuyler County Historical Society

108 N. Catharine Street P.O. Drawer 651  
Montour Falls, N.Y. 14865

As soon as Leffingwell purchased the building and site, he immediately made plans to expand the Sanitarium and its environs. In 1890 he hired Architects Pierce and Bickford, Elmira, N.Y. to build a three story annex on the north side of the main building, also on the south and west ends. This north annex of shingle style Colonial-Revival period, contained rooms "en suite" with private baths, to accommodate the overflow of guests. Also it was linked with the main section as were later annexes by a long wide corridor or solarium enclosed in glass. The original veranda along the roof is now gone. They expanded the dining room, as well as building a house opposite the Institution for Dr. J.K. King of the medical staff.

In 1891, in addition to Pierce and Bickford, Architects, he hired George R. White, a contractor from Watkins, Durland, Smith & Co. of Watkins for the plumbing and heating work, and Abel Hodgkins of Watkins for the masonry jobs. Neighboring cottages were also built during these years, a few of which are still occupied by village residents. Originally, they were occupied by the Glen Springs staff. They were named Hathaway Cottage (Liston Coon), Shandon Cottage (formerly Walsh), Leffingwell Cottage (now occupied by Thomas), Gurteen Cottage (Paradiso), and Skibberee Cottage, now demolished. (see 9A, 13A)

In 1898 they built an addition to the mineral baths building. In 1900 the facade of the main section was replaced by a wide one story veranda. A wide board sidewalk running parallel to Lakeview Avenue to Division Street has now been removed. In 1908, they built the Cobblestone Spring House. This still stands, although beginning to deteriorate. In 1910 a three story sleeping porch was built on the roof of the 1900 porch. In 1912 the large south wing was constructed, extending through to the front porch by removing the enclosed glass solarium and a roof garden on top of the 1902 wing.

The main Building originally had four large parlors on the first floor, a library, a billiard and smoking room, a reading room, large dining room, kitchen and pantries. On the south and north sides of the pantries were located the separate dining rooms for about 70 female and male employees. All the woodwork used was of southern pine.

In the 1920's a number of outbuildings were built, including a laundry and heating plant, carpenter shop, greenhouses, garage, small laboratory, and a cabbie shed for the golf course. Only the heating plant and the laboratory buildings remain intact today. (see 25A)

Leffingwell purchased more acreage to take advantage of future possibilities of large model farms, for their produce, cattle ranges of pure guernsey cattle, vegetable and poultry farms. In addition he drilled eight gas wells from which he



ORGANIZED 1960

## Schuyler County Historical Society

108 N. Catharine Street P.O. Drawer 651  
Montour Falls, N.Y. 14865

could obtain a generous supply of natural fuel for heat, power, and electricity, resulting in a great savings for the Springs. His original twenty acres was to become an extensive holdings as he planned. Today, comprising over 270 acres of prime development lands, it is one of the best directions in which the village of Watkins Glen could expand in the future.

In 1928 Leffinwell died and the Glen Springs continued to be managed by his family, but the resort gradually declined in prominence, and affected by World War II woes, it had to close its doors January 1, 1942. For three years it remained unoccupied except for the Friary. All the elegant furnishings were sold at public Auction in 1943.

The buildings were not left unoccupied for long. In 1946 Cornell University used the Springs for its overflow G.I. married students. They commuted to Ithaca daily for classes. The buildings were remodeled by the State of New York. They replaced electrical systems, and improved the plumbing and heating in both the main building and the anne. They continued the use of the complex until 1949, when the Franciscans Order of Pulaski, Wisconsin, purchased the entire holdings with intentions of starting a High School and Novitiate Seminary. They, also, made many renovations and alterations. They added paneling, changed the bath facilities, made new offices and library and suitable classrooms. The lobby and music rooms were converted into a chapel. The dining room was redecorated with new flooring and celotex ceiling. and the structure was made fireproof. The high tower above the main building was replaced with a copper clad cone. (see 20A)

In 1952 the Franciscans built a new two story gymnasium at the south end of the golf course, 510'x 90'. At the present time the Schuyler County ARC group and the New York State Developmental Disabilities Group (Sonyea) are using this building for their workshops and offices. The edifice includes large locker room, several offices, very large workshop room, Beauty Salon, Dining hall, and kitchen on the lower level. The gymnasium with its stage balcony and other offices are on the second floor. (see 3A)

Since 1949 the Springs had been used as the Padua High School until 1968, when it, too, ceased operations. For a few years the Glen Springs Academy, a private school, used the buildings until they closed in 1972. (see 7A)

Over the years, the community received many benefits from the existence of such a famous enterprise. The local doctors had the assistance and counsel of highly skilled and professional medical staffs, the use of the X-ray technology and laboratory, the use of the facilities for public meetings and social gatherings, enjoyed the well kept 9-hole golf course on the grounds. The resort gave steady employment to scores of residents for inside and outside work, and the village was a ready market for its farm products.



ORGANIZED 1960

## Schuyler County Historical Society

108 N. Catharine Street P.O. Drawer 651  
Montour Falls, N.Y. 14865

In spite of the many changes that have taken place over the past century at the Glen Springs, and although some of the buildings have been long gone, the remaining complex still retains a considerable degree a flavor of a by-gone era. The grounds are well kept and the vast acreage contains most substantial farming operations.

The Glen Springs Sanitarium will always commemorate a way of life in the 1900's that the villagers, many of whom earned their living there from its existence, do still recall the elegance and splendour of this Health Resort. They often recount the times when John D. Rockefeller (with his 10¢ tips), Franklin D. Roosevelt, Adolph Menjou, Frank Gannett (newspaper), John J. Pershing (World War II fame), Jack Dempsey, Bing Crosby, and many more notables traveled to the head of Seneca Lake and found healing, health and happiness.

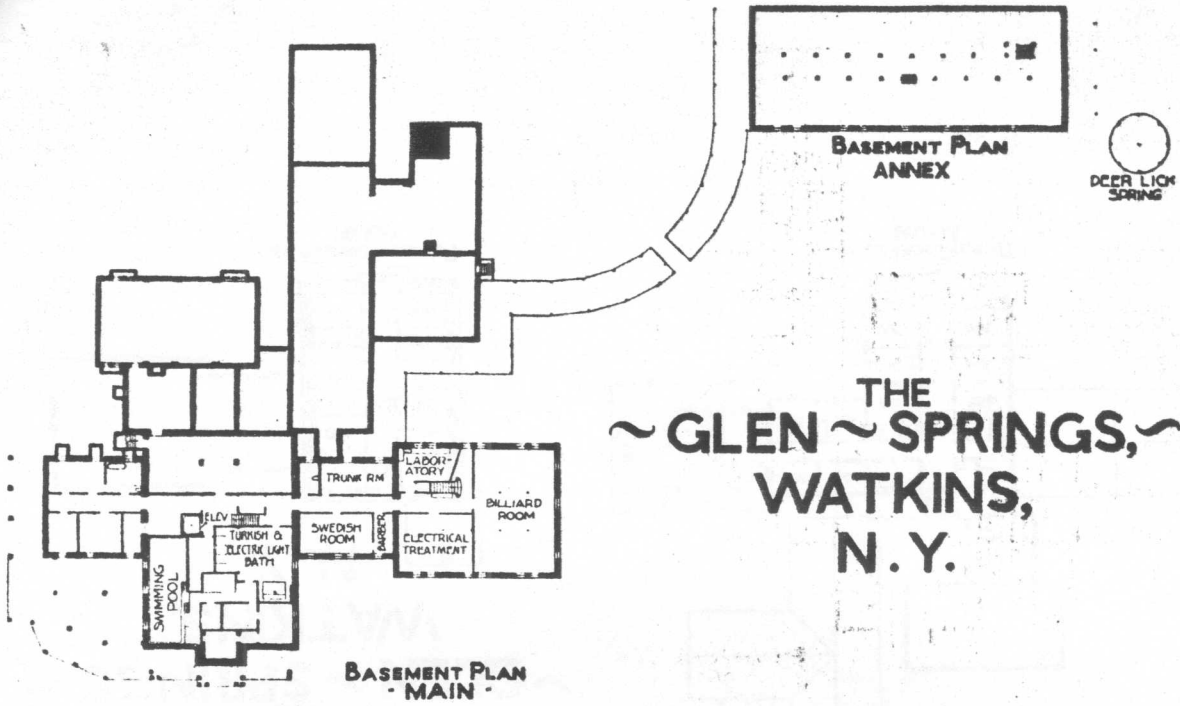
There is no landmark comparable to the Glen Springs Sanitarium in style of architecture, historical background and significance, and importance of location in the village or the County!

Submitted by: Louise V. Stillman  
President, Schuyler County  
Historical Society  
Village and Town Historian  
Montour Falls

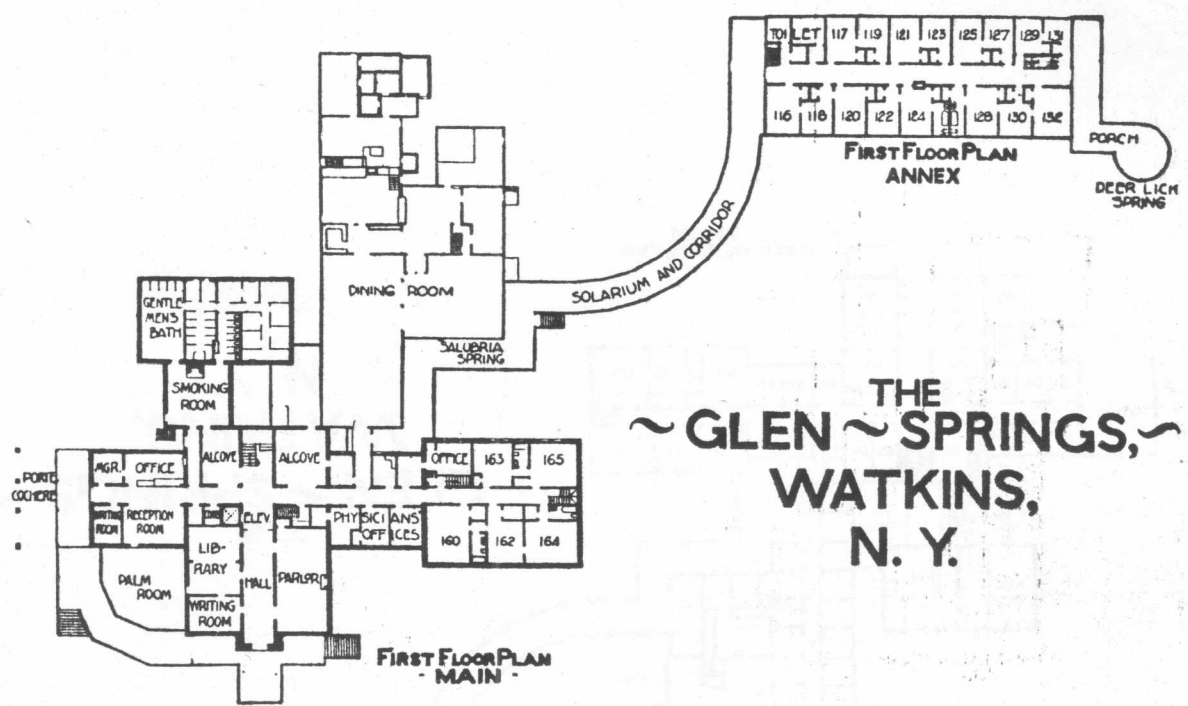




Floor Plans 1905



THE  
~ GLEN ~ SPRINGS,  
WATKINS,  
N. Y.



THE  
~ GLEN ~ SPRINGS,  
WATKINS,  
N. Y.

