RAPID DECLINE

A competitor drops Magilla Falls on the Bottom Moose during Old Forge's annual Moose Fest.

This year's Moose River whitewater race—a test of endurance and class V skill—happens October 13. Learn more at (315) 369-6672 or on the Moose River Festival Facebook page.

PHOTOGRAPH BY NANCIE BATTAGLIA

HOME in the WOODS

MORE THAN A CENTURY OF FAMILY AND FUN AT THE WALDHEIM ON BIG MOOSE LAKE

By NIKI KOUROFSKY
Photographs by NANCIE BATTAGLIA

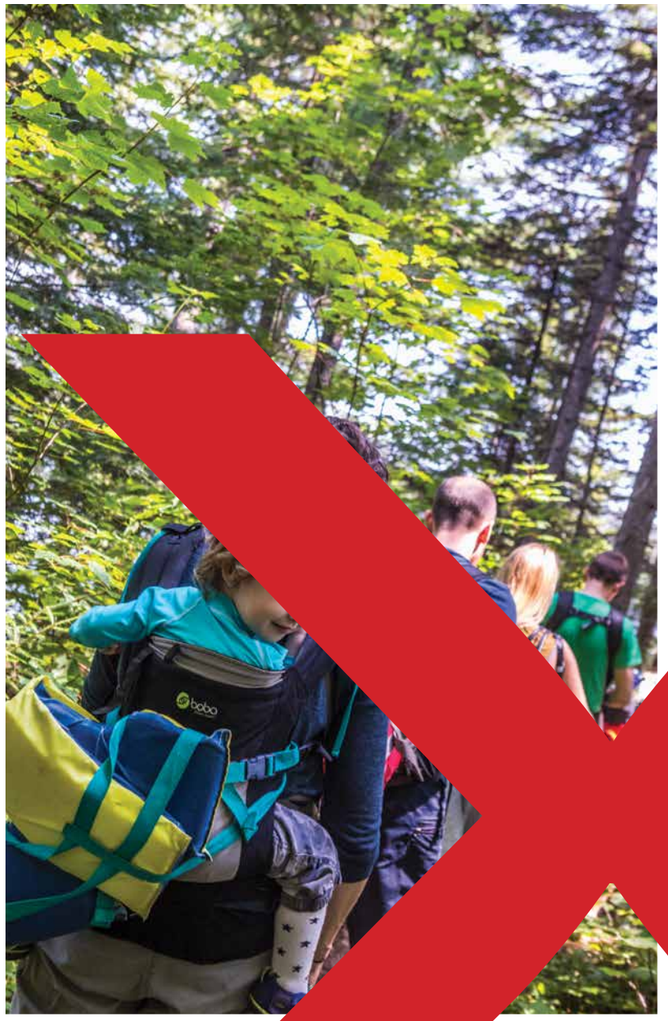
BIG MOOSE LAKE was nowhere near the path of totality for the Great American Eclipse. But the group that gathered at the Waldheim during 2017's touchstone event surely wouldn't have traded places with any of the milling crowds trailing from Oregon to South Carolina. They had their own natural wonder to enjoy: a sparkly August day with just the wisp of a breeze from an Adirondack lake. There was no ignoring the phenomenon that fascinated a nation, but this bunch opted to pass homemade devices from hand to hand rather than swap Instagram images in cyberspace. Along with a pair of those worth-their-weight-in-gold cardboard shades, they traded a soot-smeared piece of glass, a colander and—the crowd favorite—a Frosted Flakes cereal box conscripted as an indirect viewing contraption. It was the kind of low-tech, high-companionship moment that perfectly fits the spirit of this place.

That spirit has been kept alive by the same family since the Waldheim opened more than a hundred years ago. The retreat was built log by log, stone by stone, generation by generation. Everywhere you look, you can see its past woven into its present. Instead of fronting the road, the office remains at the lakeside, a throwback from an era when guests arrived by boat. Accommodations were added gradually, so a walk along the shore doubles as a tour through the decades. Inside the cabins you'll find original hardware, wavy-glass windows, plaster walls, maybe even an antique phone. Sure, the dining room that was revamped in 2016 is modern Adirondack rustic—vaulted ceiling, peeled timber beams, window after window framing a million-dollar view—but guests are served on the same Syracuse china that's been in service since the early days. The menu for the midweek group hike hasn't varied in a century (bacon, potatoes and steaks carted in packbaskets and cooked over an open flame, with maple-drowned pancakes for dessert), and you'll hear no complaints.

"Nothing much changes around here," said Jenni Blumenthal, who first discovered the resort in 1979. "We came with our kids, and now with our grandchildren. And we'll be back next year." (Guests will take notice—and sometimes umbrage—if something does change in their favorite cabins; a split opinion over the replacement of a claw-foot tub with a shower caused open warfare between one couple.) It's often that promise of consistency—employees tiptoeing into cabins to start the morning's fire, the dinner bell ringing over the lake every evening, children scrambling up the same trees as their parents—that makes families return again and again. The current record holder, the Folts tribe, started vacationing at the Waldheim in 1908. "This is as close to heaven as you're ever going to get," said Ken Johnson, who's more of a newbie. His first berth at the Waldheim was his mother's belly, only 50 or so years ago.

The Waldheim has been run by the same family for four generations. Pictured from left to right: Keriann, Adelaide and Andrew Kaercher; Roger and Nancy Pratt; Jameson, Jason, Liam and Kelly Pratt. *Below:* **The resort, founded by E. J. and Hattie Martin in 1904, features the vertical log construction distinctive to Big Moose Lake.** *Pages 50–51:* **Beach bonfires are a Friday night tradition.**

THE RETREAT WAS BUILT LOG BY LOG, STONE BY STONE, GENERATION BY GENERATION. EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK, YOU CAN SEE ITS PAST WOVEN INTO ITS PRESENT.



EDWARD JOSEPH (E. J.) MARTIN and his brother, Charlie, came to Big Moose Lake in the early 1890s to build camps for wealthy landowners. By 1901, 29-year-old E. J. had saved enough to buy his own stake—almost 100 acres on the north side of the lake—from railroad baron William Seward Webb. He raised a one-room cabin and, the following winter, married a local teacher and waitress, Harriet "Hattie" Brown. While E. J. continued his building business around the lake, he whittled away on his dream, finishing what would become known as the Main House—boasting five bedrooms and a newfangled bathroom—in 1904. He and Hattie named their getaway the Waldheim, German for "home in the woods." (Initially, the inn was a family affair, but E. J. bought out Charlie's share in 1906.) Their first guests were the wife and grown children of Panama's governor general, most of whom stayed all summer.

From that auspicious start, the resort grew steadily. The first cabin, June Cottage, went up in 1905, and a roomy dining room and summer kitchen were added to the Main House in 1909. By 1929 there was a neat row of cottages dotting the shore, with inviting porches and native-stone fireplaces. Each had at least two bedrooms; until mid-century, they were often shared by more than one family at a time. In the 1930s, the Martins absorbed property to the east, adding a converted woodshed, boathouse and playhouse to their cottage lineup. And on it went, as E. J. and Hattie passed the torch to their son and daughter-in-law, Howard and Wanda, who passed it to their daughter and her husband, Nancy and Roger Pratt. Now the elder Pratts

Scenes from a week at the Waldheim. Without clocks, phones, televisions or Internet (there's wifi in the library, but overuse is discouraged), there's more time for family. "People start to remember the old things," said Roger Pratt, "like doing a puzzle together or playing outside."

Clockwise from above: **The midweek group hike features an old-fashioned cookout with pancakes for dessert. Otherwise, three meals a day are served in the newly rebuilt dining room. Cottages—17 in all—range from one to five bedrooms.** *Facing page:* **Big Moose Lake is the ultimate summer backdrop.**

are easing into retirement, turning management over to their successors, son and daughter-in-law Jason and Kelly Pratt and niece and nephew-in-law Keriann and Andrew Kaercher.

Though running an Adirondack resort can be the greatest gig in the world—just ask Nancy about the view from her office—it's not exactly the life of Reilly. A lot of elbow grease goes into making wilderness fantasies come true. The modern spread stands at 300 acres, with 17 cabins welcoming as many as 88 guests a week. That can add up to more than 1,800 meals cooked up and cleaned up per week, dozens of sheets and linen tablecloths washed every Saturday—the old-fashioned way, dried on a line and pressed in a mangler—loads of towels and soap delivered daily, woodpiles stocked and garbage toted away. "To keep something like this alive, it's a job," said Kelly. "You have to be able to fill in everywhere."

The real work starts weeks before the season opens. There are about 100 cords of wood to be stockpiled, cabins opened and trails cleared, plus painting, raking and never-ending maintenance. The new water treatment system that went in last year—during an especially wet spring—guaranteed head-to-toe mud for days. Finishing the dining room in time for its big reveal meant 12-hour workdays, just about seven days a week, for more than a month. (Jason said he'd let the crew knock off at five p.m. on Sundays, "to give the guys a break.") And, inevitably, there's mission creep. When one cabin's leaky porch needed attention, Jason said, "We thought, If we're doing that, we might as well...." A new bathroom followed, then a fireplace fix, then they finished the interior in board-and-batten. Like E. J. and Howard before them, Roger and Jason do much of the carpentry, masonry, plumbing and electrical work themselves—Roger can even point to the exact rock in June Cottage that gave him his hernia.

Still, the family couldn't keep such a sprawling heirloom afloat without the help of a crackerjack team, 25-plus strong at high season. "Year after year we get such amazing staff," said Kelly. "I think it's this place. Being a part of this. We're just really lucky." Many are local kids who come back every summer, some from families that have worked here for generations. The boys live above the kitchen, the girls above the laundry. And they all—extended family and employees alike—gather for dinner in the resort's original dining room, in the Main House, at five p.m. (Despite the name, the Main House no longer serves as the family roost; Keriann and Andrew now live in Wanda and Howard's old home, which was added to the row of cottages after World War II, while the rest of the clan settled on adjacent land.)

RUNNING AN ADIRONDACK RESORT CAN BE THE GREATEST GIG IN THE WORLD—JUST ASK NANCY ABOUT THE VIEW FROM HER OFFICE—BUT IT'S NOT ALL THE LIFE OF REILLY.

Although Roger and Nancy are "retiring," they'll still be on hand to field a phone call or swing a hammer. Half-hearted retirement is a family tradition dating back to E. J., who spent his later years building furniture for the resort and, according to his daughter-in-law Wanda, offering "all the advice he deemed necessary." He was a fixture until 1973, when he died at the age of 101.

Jason's sister, Gail, who opted for civilian life near Saratoga Springs, pitches in toward the end of *(Continued on page 75)*

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the summer, when the college kids start trickling off to school. "It's just part of who we are," she said. After all, she grew up here—just like her mother, and her brother, and her cousin—doing "every job there was to do" around camp. Sometimes Gail brings along her husband, Dave, who "fits right in."

The Martin spouses may not have been born into this lifestyle, but they seem to take to it naturally. "This is really the place I belong," said Roger. "You can see, day to day, the effect you're having on people's lives."

That bond between hosts and guests is deeply rooted. "The people who come are wonderful," said Nancy. "On Saturday mornings we're sad our friends are leaving. On Saturday afternoon, the next set of friends arrive." And the feeling is mutual. Guest Ken Johnson has been "blessed to know every generation" of the Martins. He remembers E. J. greeting incoming campers and Howard and Wanda visiting cabins for evening chats. "You can see the love the family has for this place," he said. "It's so nice to see the next generation coming up. With luck, I'll get to see one more."

There are promising signs. Waiting in the wings is another generation of cousins, including Jason and Kelly's sons, Jameson, 14, and Liam, 12; Gail and Dave's son, Charlie, 13; and Keriann and Andrew's daughter, Adelaide, two. Like their parents and their parents' parents, they'll have summers overflowing with goodbyes and hellos, with work and with play. Whether these kids will embrace or reject their inheritance remains to be seen. But the day of the eclipse, while squealing kids were hauled around the lake on a water-ski float, Jameson opted to lend a hand on the mail boat, a chore dating back to his great-grandfather's day.

IF YOU GO

The Waldheim (315-357-2353, www.thewaldheim.com), on Big Moose Lake in Eagle Bay, operates from late June until Columbus Day. Cottages can be rented, all meals included, by the week.

A DAIRY NO MORE

THE TURKEY FARM WHERE FORMER FARM CREATURES LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER

by **SHANE MITCHELL**

photographs by **NANCIE BATTAGLIA**

A PLANK CARVED WITH THE WORDS "JERSEY SHORE"

was nailed to a gated pen in the gambrel-roof barn. A gathering of old souls snuggled in fresh hay, seeking shade on a hot summer day.

"This is where our retirees live," said Lorraine Lambiase, a short, 62-year-old farmer wearing barn boots and a black Nettle Meadow T-shirt.

"Why Jersey Shore?" I asked.

"I'm originally from Hoboken."

The rust red barn, built for draft horses in 1903, is the second-oldest structure at Nettle Meadow Goat Farm and Cheese Company, in the town of Thurman in western Warren County and a world away from North Jersey. The property dates to the late 18th century, when the woodland was first cleared for farming in a wilderness area defined by Crane Mountain and the boulder-strewn tributaries of the Hudson River. Leading into this glen from Route 8, houses visible from the winding road sat next to stacks of firewood and pickup trucks plastered with NRA bumper stickers. Chain-saw black bears squatted on lawns. Maple sugar houses and a turkey farm lay over the next hill. "Don't Tread on Me" flags, faded Trump slogans, VFW halls festooned with true blue bunting—the southern Adirondacks wearing politics on its sleeve. An odd place, perhaps, to find two aging pacifists who have "Lady Liberty is Crying, End the Madness, Stop the Hate" scrawled on the back windshield of their van.

We walked through the barn to inspect the "bachelor pad," where rams and bucks hang out when not in service, and paused at a stall occupied by a wooly black llama with gorgeous lashes. Foonzie gave us a wicked side-eye. The sign on his gate read: "Caution. I am not friendly. I may spit and bite." Lambiase explained he has "berserk male syndrome," but she and her partner, cheesemaker Sheila Flanagan, still raised him from birth.

A black-and-white barn cat calmly licked itself and then erupted in a hacking cough.

"You OK, Willard?" asked Lambiase. "You going to hurl? You ate another chipmunk?"

Feline nature, red in tooth and claw.

For the past 12 years, Nettle Meadow has been home to the Joseph F. Kemp Memorial Animal Sanctuary for abandoned and retired farm animals, presently including a trio of miniature horses, a Vietnamese potbellied pig named Hamilton, and a rescue turkey that thinks she's a goat. Not just because the farmers have a soft spot for their livestock—the refuge is part of a greater life-cycle mission at this 50-acre Adirondack cheese processing plant, respecting animals from first breath to the last, often long past their working years. Strays might be adopted from down the road, or in the potbellied pig's case, liberated from an apartment in Queensbury.

Lambiase led me to a triangular pen at the center of the barnyard.

"This is Assisted Living," she said. "Our oldest girls are in here. I can see them from my living room window."

She indicated two sanctuary goats among the others.

"Crabcakes was born with deformed front legs. He walks on his forearms. His first winter I was so worried he was going to tear himself up that I talked to my friends about getting him some chaps. But he wouldn't have any of it. And Frosty lost one of her back legs to frostbite."

Clockwise from above: **Lorraine Lambiase with miniature donkey Arthur, one of the animals that live at the Kemp Sanctuary at Nettle Meadow farm. The farm's 260 milking goats and sheep help produce award-winning cheeses.** Pages 40–41: **The 1903 red barn that houses the sanctuary was renovated after it was damaged in Tropical Storm Irene.**

EIGHTEEN YEARS AGO, Lambiase and Flanagan bought four Nigerian dwarf goats to produce tiny batches of cheese as an after-work hobby on their suburban plot in Oakland, California. Tired of their jobs at a law firm, they eventually left the West Coast in 2005.

"We wanted to do something creative and sustainable that involved animals, and we found this farm on the internet," said Lambiase.

"Had you ever been to the Adirondacks before?" I asked.

"No, and this was a real leap of faith. But something just clicked and we sold everything. Cashed in our retirement, loaded up two vehicles; Sheila had the four Nigerian dwarf goats in the back of an Element, I had the four dogs and two cats in another car, and across the country we went. Boy, we were the hit of the rest stops."

"So you didn't know about blackfly season or Adirondack winters?"

Lambiase grinned.

"The biggest mistake of our lives."

With 260 milking sheep and goats, Nettle Meadow is relatively small compared to the factory farms that have emerged in northern New York to supply the wholesale milk sector, but Lambiase and Flanagan also grapple with the issues that have put dairy in the recent news. The milk-price crisis can impact even independent creameries such as theirs: while Nettle Meadow produces all its own sheep and goat milk, the cow milk in some cheeses is sourced from Amish farms in the Mohawk Valley, south of the Blue Line, where many generations-old operations are going bust and auctioning off their herds. And the "right-to-farm" debate has also landed on their doorstep, with a neighbor who has erected a highly visible protest sign on his property opposite the farm. (A state right-to-farm law protects grandfathered properties from encroaching development, as well as all attendant nuisance complaints regarding standard agricultural practices.) Of course, in typical North Country fashion, the same neighbor helped corral horses when they busted out and escaped the farm.

IN THE MILKING PARLOR, farm manager Desiree Morgan filled feeder bins with grain and hooked pumps to the swollen udders of goats waiting in the rapid-exit stalls. The milk sucked with piston precision through pipes leading to a bulk tank, before being transferred to the pouring room in another converted barn. Morgan called each goat by name as it left the stalls, horns and hoofs clattering on the metal ramp and gates. Then others hurriedly took their places.

Flanagan, an apple-cheeked 51-year-old in a lab coat and hair net, greeted us outside the pouring room, where three more of her staff were scooping soft white curds from the hundred-gallon pasteurizing tank. (Nettle Meadow employs a total of 18 cheese-plant workers and farmhands.) She rises at 2:30 in the morning to process the chêvre resting overnight, and although she no longer works full-time as a toxic tort attorney, Flanagan also serves as

the Thurman town justice.

"To keep a part of my brain active that wouldn't be otherwise," she said, dumping sweet-smelling whey from a smaller tank of sheep milk. "I have the perfect schedule for it, I'm always working here, so if the sheriff calls me at one a.m. on a Saturday for an arraignment, he can probably catch me."

The curds were scooped into molds to drain and set.

Nettle Meadow produces 35 farmstead cheeses, including a dozen semi-aged and seven washed-rind varieties—all poured, molded, covered in ash or salted by hand. Pasco's Ration is named for the local lumberjack and outlaw Alvin "Sam" Pasco. Cheesemaker's Folly is washed with Irish whiskey and stout. Briar Summit is an earthy blend of sheep, goat and cow milk infused with raspberry-leaf tea. Flanagan's Kunik triple crème has won gold medals at the World Cheese Championship, blue ribbons at the New York State Fair and even a Good Food Award, one of the socially conscious food world's toughest accolades to achieve.

"We tried to win that for 10 years," said Flanagan. "They look at how healthy the cheese is, what ingredients go into it, what you feed and how you care for your animals, how you treat your employees. It's a holistic award."

We descended a steep flight of stairs with low overhead to the subterranean aging rooms in an 18th-century, stone-foundation butter cellar. Metal racks held hundreds of bloomy rind cheeses, some round, others shaped like miniature pyramids of Giza. Flanagan shuffled racks blocking access to her washed rind room, tucked behind a wall of plastic sheeting, her mad scientist laboratory with a pungent aroma produced by thistle rennet, citrus vodka, sea salt brine, locally brewed porter and hard cider. On one rack rested Flanagan's experiment called "sheechego," wheels gorgeously scored and browned like sections from a downed red cedar.

"It's pretty but do I like the flavor?" she wondered aloud. "Because cheese is a living creature, it tastes so different on the first day when sellable as opposed to the last day, three months later, when it's got multiple layers, which some people appreciate or others are disgusted by."

Clockwise from top left: **Summer "Cheese Jams" raise funds to care for the retired and abandoned animals that live here. The sanctuary is named for Lambiase's late brother. Sheila Flanagan pours curds to make one of Nettle Meadow's 35 farmstead cheeses.**

IF YOU GO:

Find Nettle Meadow Farm and the Joseph F. Kemp Memorial Sanctuary at 484 South Johnsburg Road, Thurman. The cheese shop is open daily from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Learn more at (518) 623-3372, www.nettlemeadow.com or www.kempsanctuaryatnettle meadow.org.

Flanagan returned to pouring curds—she rarely leaves the farm, except to attend an occasional fancy food show or cheese competition. (When Eleven Madison asked Nettle Meadow to make a special-order cheese, Flanagan initially refused, because she'd never heard of the world-famous Manhattan restaurant.) Back outside, Lambiase checked on the hospital barn, where sick animals were quarantined. An elderly doe, frail and panting, rested in the hay. Despite her distaste for firearms, Lambiase admitted to taking matters into hand whenever the veterinarian couldn't visit the farm.

"The biggest problem I had up here was I didn't like guns. Nobody cared that I was gay, but they cared that I didn't like guns, and now here I am, I own a gun, because I have to take care of my poor little animals," she said, scratching the beard of a buck peering over the fence.

"Some limp, some look emaciated. But they're not suffering and I'm not going to put an animal down because it's difficult for a visitor to see. You know what I mean? Over the years I've learned when they look at you with a certain faraway look and a sunken eye, that's when they're ready. Those girls gave me all of their productive years, and these boys too, and I'm not going to get rid of them because I'm done using them. It's a collaborative effort and they're a major part of it. All I do is process the milk."

At least twice a year, Nettle Meadow hosts charity Cheese Jam concerts to defray expenses for feeding its 120 sanctuary animals. The acoustics are spectacular in the horse barn's converted hayloft. Indian Lake–based barn restorer Andy Leblanc and volunteer carpenters fortified the unusual roof, designed by turn-of-the-century architect Edmund Barber, after it sustained severe damage during Tropical Storm Irene in 2011. One by one, they repaired the gambrel roof's intricate timber trusses and purlin beams, held together with wooden pins, as well as floors and windows. The concerts have been a big hit in the community. Other occasions for outreach include the annual Thurman Fall Farm Tour and tastings in the cheese shop during regular hours.

While Flanagan and Lambiase have themselves adapted to the Adirondacks, farming never gets easier in this harsh northern climate. Last winter, the mercury hovered at 30 below zero for a long stretch in early February, and they lost older livestock too weak to survive the bitter cold, including some of the goats that first traveled across the country with them. The freeze also wreaked havoc in the plant, wicking moisture out of aging cheeses. Ultimately, they threw out about $20,000 worth.

"There's only so much macaroni and cheese you can eat," said Lambiase, shrugging.

Shane Mitchell is contributing editor at Saveur *magazine. She is the author of* Far Afield *(2017, Random House) and recipient of the James Beard Foundation's 2018 M. F. K. Fisher Distinguished Writing Award.*