Why was it called the Elmheart Hotel?

Back in the early 1890s, Frederick Odenbach, a Rochester liquor dealer, bought land on Manitou Beach and started to build a hotel. The newly built Manitou Trolley from Charlotte had finally been extended over a trestle across Braddock Bay to just beyond the Odenbach property. The Skinner family that owned property just to the east of the partially built hotel claimed it was on their property. A court trial in 1890 ruled in favor of the Odenbachs; however, that did not end the dispute. Odenbach ran his new hotel for several years, but the Skinners did not accept the court's decision, so they filed an appeal in May 1894, the plaintiff being Faulding W. Skinner (father of Albert, Sheriff of Monroe County 1930s to 1950s). Faulding's father had purchased the land from Nathaniel Rochester in the very early 1800s. After a long trial with many witnesses, the deciding evidence would be the surveyor's marks put in a tree when the land had first been surveyed in 1802. After much controversy and subsequent new surveys, the tree was found, cut down, and indeed the faint markings on the trunk* indicated the original surveyor's marks. The authenticity of the marks were proved by the growth rings. This proved the plaintiff’s appeal should prevail. The Skinners had a new hotel and in honor of the fact that a tree proved the point of their ownership, the hotel was called "The Elmheart Hotel" from then on.

The Skinners ran the hotel until about 1903 when they sold it to a Mr. Johnson who resold it to Michael O’Laughlin and George Weidman (they were related) of Rochester and the Weidmans ran the hotel. After the early nineteen-thirties rooms were no longer available. Only the bar was open after 1933 and light refreshments and ice cream was served. George Wiedman (the way he spelled his name) ran the bar only, usually on weekends and other times when "regulars" and friends might stop by. George died in 1986 and the aged hotel was sold to several investors in 1988. They had hoped to restore the hotel and run it as a lounge, restaurant and inn. The town granted them a permit in December, 1988 for one year. By the end of 1989 no action had been taken and it remained a shuttered ghost from another day. A few years went by with several break-ins and minor damage reported by Greece Police. The end was at hand in the early morning hours of September first, 1992 when a spectacular fire burned the hotel to the ground. Saved from the fire was a nearby dance hall (built in the 1930s by Wiedman) which was also torched by arson in May 1995. What happened to Fred Odenbach after his loss to the Skinners? The larger Hotel Manitou (just west of the Elmheart and built by the Mathews and Servis Company) was purchased by Odenbach. He and his sons operated it until it closed in 1943 and never reopened after World War II. The Odenbachs had an auction of the contents in 1955 and tore the hotel down. Manitou Beach (Hick’s Point) is now residential, it’s past glory days faded almost beyond recall.

For more insight about George Wiedman go to our website, greecehistoricalsociety.net - click on the library site. Click on the last entry for a 1977 interview with Wiedman by the late, former historical society members, George Caswell and Ed Spelman.

*Two sections of the Elm tree (actually an Oak) were given to the Greece Town Historian. They have been on display from time to time here at the Greece Historical Society Museum.

See pictures page 7.
Dave Ruch from Buffalo entertained over 110 guests with historic music of New York at our first program of the season.

Upcoming Programs/Events

JANUARY 10, 2012 “Agriculture & County Fairs in Western NY” - Lynn Belluscio

FEBRUARY 14, 2012 “The 140th N.Y. Civil War Regiment” - Brian Bennett