

"From the Historian's File"

By far the largest and the most elegant of all the late 19th and early 20th century hotels along Lake Ontario in Greece was the Odenbach Manitou Beach Hotel. It was located at the far western end of the Manitou Beach Trolley. Built in 1888 by the Matthew and Servis Co. of State Street in Rochester, a wholesale and retail liquor and tobacco dealer, it was named for the resort of Manitou Springs, Colorado.

By the mid-1890s it had been taken over by Frederick Odenbach, who already had a modest restaurant on State Street. The Hotel had 25 guest rooms, a well-appointed lobby, a men's bar and ladies salon, plus a restaurant.

The building was lit by acetylene gas lamps from the gas plant on the property. The frontage on the lake was almost 800 feet with an expanse of sandy beach. The Manitou Trolley began frequent daily, seasonal service in 1891.

Along with the trolley, the steamer Rosalie (owned by the Odenbach family) ran from about 1912 through 1916. It docked at a pier that was about 800 feet in length, built of cement piers and steel decking. A round trip ticket from Charlotte was 25 cents.

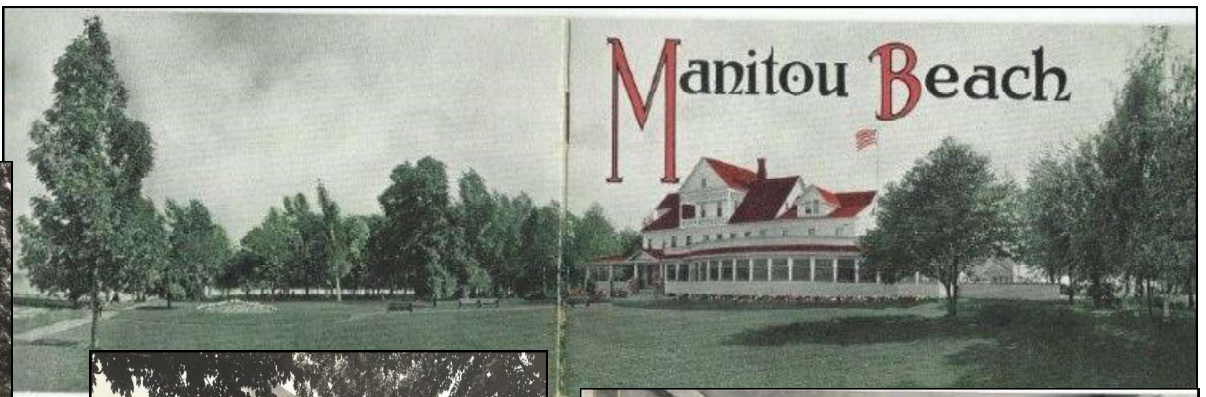
After Fred Odenbach's death in 1919, the hotel passed to his four sons, Fred J., John H., Matthew P. and Charles P. Odenbach. Matthew took over running the hotel from then on, making many improvements through the years. A major renovation was enlargement and enclosure of the front porch. The spacious room could easily seat 500 patrons and included a raised band stand and a dance floor.

From then on, the hotel became famous for its marvelous food, wonderful dance music and a panoramic view of Lake Ontario. Nationally known orchestras of the day such as Vincent Lopez and Tommy Tucker played engagements there, as well as favorite local bands such as Sax Smith and Damon's Orchestra.

By 1925 the trolley had bowed out to the ever increasing automobile traffic and the improvement of Manitou Rd. to a two lane paved road. World War II had begun by 1939 and the United States went to war at the end of 1941. Curtailment of unnecessary travel by car and gasoline rationing brought an end to the 55 year run of the grandest hotel between Charlotte and Olcott Beach to the west.

It closed in 1943, never to reopen. A headline in the Rochester Times Union on May 19, 1955 states: "Famed Lakeside Dining Spot, Hotel Manitou, Coming Down." Matt Odenbach (manager since 1919) was quoted as saying the work had started several weeks before and would be completed by July 4.

The furnishings had been sold and the lumber recycled. The property was still owned by Matt and his three brothers. The land was split into building lots shortly after. Nothing remains as a reminder of the wonderful times that untold thousands of people enjoyed there.....only the expansive view of the lake remains and a faint musical refrain from long ago, whispered by a few remaining popular trees along Manitou Road.



Photos, data supplied by **Alan Mueller**, Greece Historian's Office. If you have any information on our photos, call Alan at 663-1706.