

I Remember ...

## The Hotel on the Bagtown-Jugtown Trail

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By ASA P. STOTELMYER

**H**IKERS exploring the Appalachian Trail stop at Black Rock on South Mountain, one of Maryland's finest views. They say that from that spot, on a clear day, one can see four states.

Some stumble across the curious old pile of stones and rubble which has been covered with weeds for many years. It is a mystery to most people, including some who live around Wolfsville. I can answer some questions about it because I was involved with it.

That pile of rubble is all that is left of at least three big dreams.

Let's go back first to the view from Black Rock. A hundred years and more ago, people liked to hike up the steep old Bagtown trail, spread a picnic, and enjoy the view. There were people up there every nice summer weekend, especially in the hot spells, because it was always cool at the mountain top. The air had the clean, good smell you get only around an unspoiled forest. Nearby were two clear, cold natural springs.

The place swarmed with people on July 4th, because the folks around here held their holiday celebration there. Somebody always read the Declaration of Independence, and a public speaker would be brought in to deliver an oration.

Afterward, while the children played and their mothers chatted, the menfolks uncorked jugs of rye whisky brought over

first floor, eight rooms on the second, and nine on the third. A wide porch ran across the front and one side of the building.

As with the first hotel, Mr. Wolf hoped to establish a prosperous summer resort. Accordingly, he filled it with good kitchen equipment, furniture and carpeting. Once again, the bad road beat him. The Bagtown-Jugtown road was an easier way to the hotel than the old trail, and both were improved. Even so, the hotel remained too remote and hard to reach for customers to bother with it.

**B**LACK ROCK remained a pleasant place for picnickers to gather on weekends, and in visits up there through the years we watched the old hotel fall into disrepair. It gave you a weird feeling, the kind of feeling you'd get in a haunted house, to wander through the deserted building. The beds and other furniture was there, but no human sounds. Finally vandals began breaking the windows and hauling away what furnishings they wanted.

I don't know what Mr. Wolf's financial arrangements were, but there was a foreclosure on the hotel and the 500 acres around it. I bought it at the foreclosure sale. Later I sold some of the acreage back to the Wolf estate, and some to the state of Maryland. I still hold the timber rights on the property.

A fellow from New York city, a lawyer named Walsh, came to examine the hotel and thought it had great possibilities as a summer resort. He also was

impressed by the two natural springs. He had the water analyzed and said he was sure he could bottle the spring water and sell it all over the country.

He made some initial arrangements to buy the place, cleaned up the hotel, replaced the broken windows, and furnished it again.

Then one day he went back to New York city, and nobody around here ever saw him again. The hotel began falling into ruin again.

It seemed to be a natural jinx. In the late 1920's it got hit by not one, but two fires. Some boys are supposed to have built a fire nearby and let it get away from them. At the same time, on the other side of the hotel, a fire started by berry pickers did the same thing. Soon the hotel and the woods around it were burning, and a hundred firefighters were doing their best to keep the flames from spreading to Jugtown, Bagtown, Ponds ville and other nearby communities.

The wind dropped on the second day and the firefighters were able to start back-fires. That plus a heavy rain stopped the fire. It had destroyed 2,000 acres of woods, including some fine stands of oak, and left the hotel a pile of steaming wood char and blackened stones. You can still see the hotel foundation.

It is still cool and peaceful up at the Black Rock on hot summer days. It is still a nice place to go for a picnic. Maybe that is all it was ever supposed to be.



