

History of the Pocono Mountains

The first inhabitants of the Pocono Mountains were the Delaware, Iroquois, Shawnee, Minisink, Lenape and Paupack Indians. The Dutch established settlements in 1659 near the famous Delaware Water Gap, but were forced to leave the area by the English in 1664. The first permanent residence was established in 1725 by Nicholas Depui at Shawneeland by 1742, English and German settlers began to arrive and

The first boarding house hotel was built in 1829 by Anthon Dutot in the Delaware Water Gap. By 1857, the hotel became the center of a flourishing resort industry. By 1900, the high altitudes brought thousands of visitors from the growing cities of Philadelphia and New York for summer vacations. The Monroe County Publicity Bureau (an early forerunner to the Pocono Mountains Vacation Bureau) began encouraging vacationers to visit "Pennsylvania's Playground" in 1927. In the upper regions of the Poconos, Pennsylvania's Power and Light Company began the construction of what is now the third largest man-made lake in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Lake Wallenpaupack. In 1926, PP&L dammed the creek and built a hydro-electric plant and in doing so, a 5,600-acre lake was created with 52 miles of uninterrupted shoreline.

Water is an important part of the Poconos' landscape, development and recreation. The natural splendor of the rivers include the Lehigh and the Delaware, as well as the remnants of the canal systems. The lakes formed in glacial depressions and several man-made lakes created in communities and from rivers as a result of the Pocono dam system, provide a myriad of opportunities to pursue fishing, boating, rafting, such as jet skiing, and swimming.

During the prohibition era, resorts of the Pocono Mountains retained a Puritanistic aura and described themselves as "Friendly Mountain Resorts" which boasted that card playing or games of chance were not allowed, and golf, tennis and other sports were not permitted on Sundays. However the passage of the 1967 Farm Winery Act, allowed Sunday sales of bottled wine in once forbidden retail outlets to fuel the growth of the fifth largest wine producing state.

During World War II, many GI's often took their leaves with their girlfriends and families in the Poconos right before they went overseas. The Poconos then took on a romantic appeal for these young people, many of whom returned after the war as honeymooners. It was the 1940s when the Poconos began its climb to becoming the "Honeymoon Capital of the World."

In 1945 Rudolf Von Hoevenberg opened a rustic operation consisting of some cabins and a main lodge called "The Farm on the Hill", the first honeymoon resort of the Pocono Mountains. Plush resorts for the honeymooners in the 1940s and 1950s spurred the growth of a flourishing resort business in the Pocono Mountains.

The four season appeal of the Pocono Mountains was enhanced with the opening of the first commercial ski area in Pennsylvania, Big Boulder, in 1946. In 1950, the first patent application for the making of snow by blowing water through a nozzle was filed, and by the winter of 1956, the system was perfected and in place at Big Boulder Ski Area. This first helped to establish the Pocono Mountains as a ski destination.

Beginning in the late 1950s and continuing into the late 1960s, Interstates 80 and 81 were constructed in the Poconos' four county regions. The opening of these major interstate highways made the Poconos easily accessible by motor vehicles. Thus the Poconos became an