

A Brief History of this Region and the Ladore Complex

Supplied by Ladore Lodge and Conference Center

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Only Native American's lived in this area up to 1749. In 1749, about 300 Native Americans of the tribes of the Onondaga, Mohawk, Cayuga, Tuscaloosa, with the Seneca, Shawnee, Delaware, and Mohican, realizing that the white race was gradually pushing them away from their ground; they sold what is now Wayne, Pike, and the eight adjoining counties to the Proprietary Government for 500 pounds of Sterling, valued at about \$2,500.00.

The first settlers to this area came from Connecticut in 1775. In 1780, James Wilson, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, established a weaving mill on the banks of the Wallenpaupack River. Linen was woven from flax at his mill. In 1790, Colonel Asa Stanton from Connecticut was the first settler in what is now the Borough of Waymart. His Nearest neighbor was nine miles away. In 1805, he built the first sawmill in the county. It was known as Stanton's Pond. This became the site for what is now known as Lake Ladore. The stone foundation of the sawmill is still visible about 300 feet north of the Lake Ladore Dam.

In 1815, Mathias Keen built a dam below what is now Lake Ladore and created "Canoe Pond" – now known as Keen's Pond. He started construction on a gristmill but was accidentally killed as he pulled his rifle from his canoe.

In 1780, the average population in the region was less than two people per square mile. This would be an area about the size of all Camp Ladore. By 1825, this same acreage probably supported at least 2 families. The old stone foundations of log cabins and the stone walls at Ladore give support to this belief. The many stone walls throughout Ladore served to fence farm animals. Most of the stones used in these walls had to be removed from newly cleared land so that the settlers could plow their fields with oxen – later with mules and horses. The "Big Red Oak", five and half feet in diameter, is believed to be a tree that was left standing near the site of a family cabin and barns. All the other trees were removed to provide fields for cultivation. This tree was over 200 years old. In 1989, this tree was struck by lightning and is no longer standing.

Anthracite coal played an important role in the development of this great country. About 1809, Jess Fell of the Carbondale area, began to use coal in his black smith shop and in his fireplace grate to heat his home. The Wurts Brothers of Philadelphia moved to this region in 1816 and began to mine coal. New York City was getting much of its coal from England at the time. Also, New York City was to become the big market for anthracite coal. The brothers bought land containing coal for as low as \$0.50 cents an acre. They began to think about a canal to transport the coal. In 1823, they contracted to have a survey for a canal to run from the Delaware River to what is now Honesdale. Construction of the Delaware and Hudson Canal began in 1825, and was operational by 1828. There were 109 locks; each was 14 feet, 4 inches wide and 90 feet long.

A section of the Old Bethany Turnpike from Onondaga to the North Amphitheater is part of the present road system for Ladore. An old stone wall can be seen along the west side of the turnpike, which runs northeast toward Keen's Pond.

The Gravity Railroad that connected the coalfields of Carbondale area with the D&H Canal was to become one of the greatest engineering accomplishments of that time. In 1826, the D&H Canal Company decided to build the "Gravity Railroad". It began at an elevation of 1200 feet and rose to 1907 feet at Rix Gap (you can see it from Ladore). Then it descended to an elevation of 985 feet in Honesdale. It was completed in 1827 and was approximately 17 miles in length.

From 1829 to about 1885, many hundreds of thousands of tons of coal moved up and down the 19 planes of the Gravity. Mules along the 108 mile canal towed the 40 to 45 ton capacity boats. The locomotive railroad was completed about 1850 and ran to the Hudson River. In 1885, the Gravity Railroad was abandoned. A section of the old Gravity Railroad is still visible just east of the Hilltop

Cabins descending into Waymart. (See Stream Station north of South Street). Another section can be found west of Van Auken Creek between Keen's Pond and Lake Ladore Dam.

Weigh-Mart – Waymart. In the winter the canal was frozen; so during this time, coal was weighed and unloaded at Weigh-Mart. Huge piles of coal that weighed hundreds of tons would be reloaded and hauled to Honesdale as the ice began to thaw in the canal each spring. Waymart became a thriving small town because of the Gravity Railroad. It was the weight station and coal storage area and home for several hundred people who built, maintained, and operated the tracks and the stationary steam engines that were located at each of the planes. Honesdale, likewise grew as a prosperous town because it was the terminal point for the railroad and the beginning point for “coal boats to tidewater” – Honesdale to the Delaware River and on to the Hudson River and New York City.

Water supply or “feeder” lakes had to be constructed in order to assure adequate water level in the canal. Stanton's Pond (Lake Ladore), 265 acres, was constructed in 1832. The D&H Canal Company had brought 200 Irishmen to mine coal; with the mines not being ready, the company put the men to work building Stanton's Pond. Water from this pond was released to supplement water in the boat basin at Honesdale.

Passenger service was inaugurated in 1877 from Honesdale to Carbondale. Because of the unusual scenic beauty of the Moosic Mountains (Farview Area) and Stanton's Pond, this area quickly gained fame. At this time in history, Stanton's Pond would become known as Lake Lodore (Later changed to Ladore). The Lake Lodore Improvement company developed what was known as an excursionist's delight. Scattered through the shady groves at Ladore were refreshment stands, summer kitchens, swings, and seats. One of major features was the Dance Pavilion, which is no longer standing; and the Carousel, which presently serves as the South Camp Dining Hall. Visitors could get off the open air passenger cars where the Hilltop Cabins are now located and could walk to the Pavilion. Some passenger would unload from below the dam and ride a tern-wheel sightseeing boat from the dam to the dock at the Carousel.

In 1898, the canal saw its last boatload of coal and the Gravity Railroad had given way to the steam locomotive. The “Amusement Park” at Lake Ladore operated from 1901 until about 1918. In 1920, St. Rose Church in Carbondale converted the excursion area into a summer camp named “Camp Coffy”. Then in 1935, two Jewish women acquired the property and began the operation of a summer camp called “Camp With-A-Wind”. The Pen-Del Division of the Salvation Army bought the camp in 1967 and began its first summer camp here in 1968.

In the early 1970's, the Beam Farm land was purchased on the north end of Lake Ladore for the purpose of constructing a conference center, initially for senior citizens and Salvation Army groups. The lodge and conference center was completed and opened for business in June of 1975.