

# Great Notch Inn has been on Route 46 since it was built

When earth evolved there was man; then there was beer.....and then there was the Great Notch Inn.

Standing as a historical landmark, the Great Notch Inn has been in existence since Route 46 was built. The first owner, the late Greg DiLeo, had many strange habits when it came down to his bar. Forget having proper identification; if you weren't dressed appropriately or clean-shaven, DiLeo refused to even let you walk through the doors.

Entering the Great Notch Inn was literally entering DiLeo's home. If he didn't like you or want your company, find another place to drink. People understood it was a privilege to sit at his bar. Money meant nothing to the owner.

Throughout the 40's, 50's and 60's the Great Notch Inn not only served liquor, but food as well. But it wasn't the food or drink that really caught people's attention of the bar. It was the challenge of two things. One, being let inside the bar, and two, buying a drink. To get a good idea of DiLeo's style, in the past he would let customers in, but once they sat down, kick them right out.

"He did things his way," said current owner and DiLeo's grandson, Rich Hemple. "His health could have been a reason for is erratic behavior, but he was straight old-school and he earned respect for it."

Rich Hemple, a Little Falls resident, has been in charge of the bar since 1988. His sister Gayle is also entitled to ownership. The two became legal owners after their mother passed away in 1999. The Great Notch Inn has been strictly family oriented through its years of reining. From DiLeo to Hemple, the bar remains a piece of Little Falls history.

Besides DiLeo's unpredictable ways, he can be remembered for another peculiar habit. During years of working on the Erie Lackawanna Railroad, DiLeo picked up a remarkable trait. He could make train whistles with his mouth. Yes that's right, train whistles with his mouth.

Dileo studied up to 30 different specific whistles while working on the railroads. His whistles were so exact to the real locomotives it was hard to distinguish between the two. "He made a chord sound with his mouth, I don't know how he did it, but he received a lot of publicity," said Hemple. DiLeo was on television and radio shows for his unique talent. Hemple claims that he was the only person in the world to imitate a train's sound to perfection." It was pretty cool. He would be able to pick a certain train and imitate it. He could do about 30 trains," Hemple added.

Well, you can't hear Dileo's imitation of the Erie Locomotive or test his dress policy anymore, but you can have a drink at his grandson's bar, even if you do have a beard.

The bar crowd ranges from yuppie college students to businessmen to professional athletes to leather wearing bikers. On any given night, you can see the polished chrome of Harley Davidson's, Yamaha's and Kawasaki's parked outside. Not just one or two, the distinguished biker bar fills the parking lot completely with hogs. Hemple said, "I guess you can say it's a biker bar, but we serve everybody. It's more of a music bar." The Great Notch Inn books some of the best blues bands in the state of New Jersey. "The bikers who come in enjoy the open air, they can stay on the porch and see their bikes. That's why they enjoy the bar so much," the owner explained.

Many would be apprehensive to step foot in a biker bar like the Great Notch Inn. According to Hemple, all of his customers are respectful and come in for a good time. "I never had a problem in the twelve years that I've owned it," he said.

What should you look for at the Great Notch Inn? If you're looking for good music six days a week, look no further. "We have the best blues bands around, hands down," said Hemple. "We released an album that is doing extremely well. It contains seven talented bands and we plan



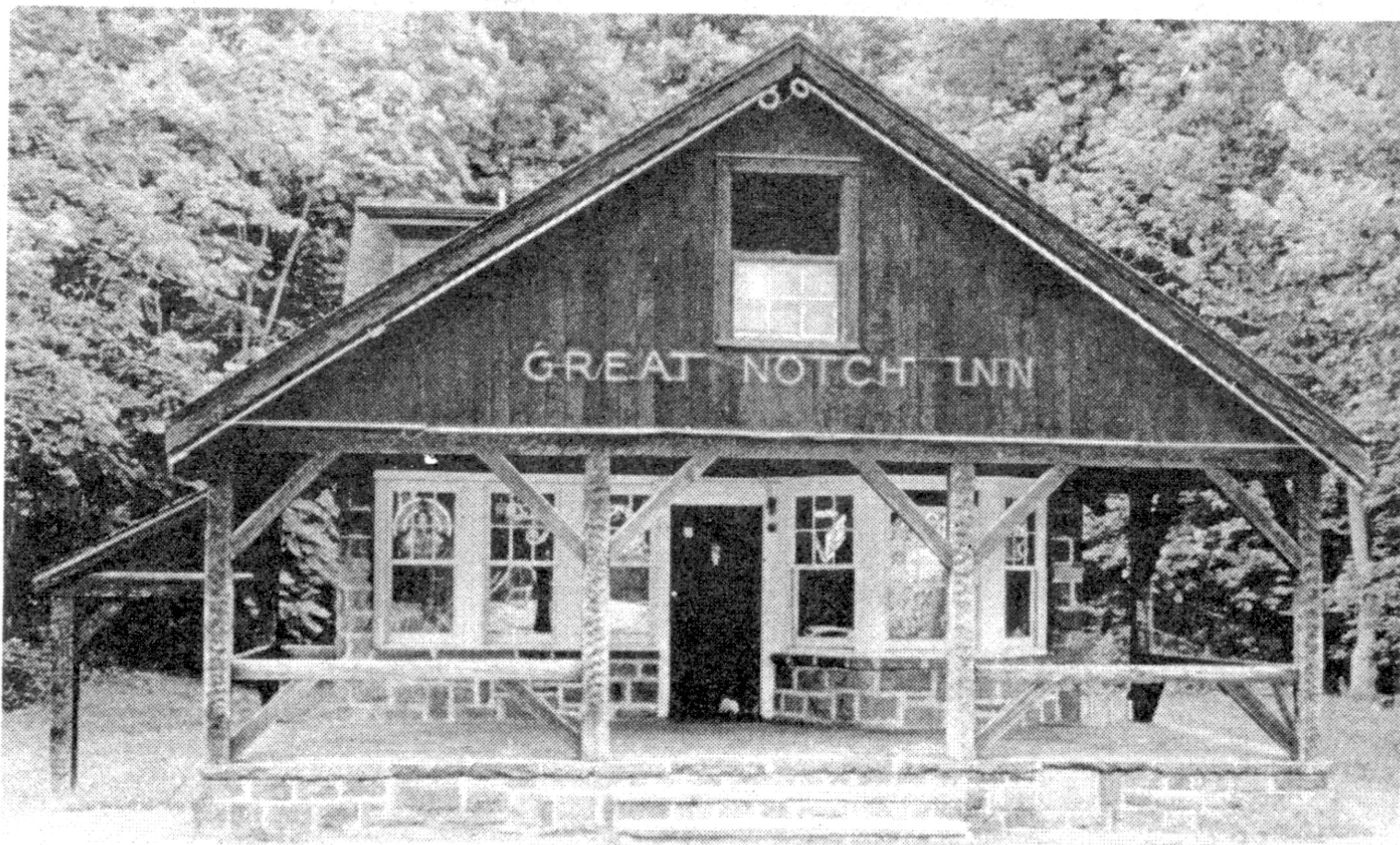
to put out more in the future." The Great Notch Inn was recently covered in The Blues Reviews Magazine as one of the premium roadhouses left in New Jersey.

You can't get a blender drink at the bar, but you can work your fix with 30 different beers and 100 various liquors. They also serve take-out liquor until 2:00 am every night, 364 days a year. Even Hemple needs a day off. In addition to the bands, Hemple never enforces a cover charge.

However, trouble waits for Hemple and the future of the Great Notch Inn. The State has been fumbling with the idea to increase Route 46 to a ten-lane highway. In doing so the Great Notch Inn would be banished, along with the generations of family ownership. In truth, Hemple has

been hearing the question for twelve years. "Bottom line, I haven't had any offers, so who knows. If the State were to do so, I would expect to be compensated heavily," said Hemple. And rightfully so: closing down the bar would be like tearing a page out of the history books. "My Grandfather did a lot to make this place established," he added. Rich Hemple is planing to pass the bar to his son, the third generation.

The Great Notch Inn of Little Falls has come along way. Rich Hemple has carried the torch and plans to pass it on one more time. From the days of train whistles and a dress code to blues and bikers, the Great Notch Inn is an established bar to cut it up with the blues bands, or sit back and relax with your buddies. Cheers.



## GREAT NOTCH INN

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