**Brooksyde Inn of Oakland**

The next time you are traveling up Franklin Avenue approaching Franklin Lakes, look to the right and you will see Allen Drive. While it is a very nice neighborhood, did you know that this street has a very interesting history? Specifically, from about 1900 to 1914 it was the home of the venerable Brooksyde Inn owned and operated by Emma and Gus Allen after whom Allen Drive is named. Read on for a brief history of the Brooksyde Inn, what happened to it and where it went.

 The Brooksyde Inn began life in the late 1800s in a large 3 story wood building on Allen Drive during a time when the rich and famous were flocking to Oakland to build their mansions and mingling among the local farming peasantry. Driving the speculation of the date are 3 considerations. First, the original building was built literally in the middle of nowhere and it was designed and built for the purpose of being a hotel. To be certain, it wasn’t a converted farmhouse. Also, it was well over a mile from the railroad. Third, it had a mansard roof which was all the rage in the late 1800s. The only purely recreational opportunity was Hubers Crystal Lake which would not be developed for several decades into the future. Essentially, why it was built where it was built is something lost to history.

Regardless, the Brooksyde Inn was an elegant hotel in the Oakland woods catering to the discriminating traveler. Emma and Gus Allen spared no expense in catering to their visitors as in the late 1800s these were luxuries expected by and appreciated by a discerning and well heeled clientele. This aspect is illustrated by a lift below from its brochure.

 ***“The Inn is steam heated, lighted with gas, hot and cold water in every room and baths on each floor. Public and private dining rooms. We make a specialty of automobile and transit parties. The finest wines, liquors and cigars with modern café. Meals are reasonable hours. Service table d’ hote or a la carte.”***

Unfortunately, no photos of its interior elegance survive.

All was well until March 31, 1914 when disaster struck in the form of a fire which consumed the entirety of the Brooksyde Inn. It burned completely to the ground leaving only the foundation masonry. Apparently there were no causalities as Emma and Gus Allen took up residence in the barn on the property. And business was good as the Brooksyde Inn was rebuilt shortly after on the original foundation. The only difference between the original building and it’s replacement was the roof which was changed from the mansard style to a more traditional sloped roof line. Otherwise, they were identical on the exterior.

Life and business for Emma and Gus seemed to be humming along until the mid 1920’s when a photo of a new Brooksyde Inn appears. It seems that they bought a larger, existing hotel in Pompton Lakes located on a rise to the immediate right of the end of the Pompton Reservoir along Hamburg Turnpike. The name of the previous hotel was Cedar Crest.

That’s where our story about the Brooksyde Inn ends. What happened to the Brooksyde Inn rebuilt in Oakland, why they moved their business to Pompton Lakes and what happened to that building all remain an historical mystery.