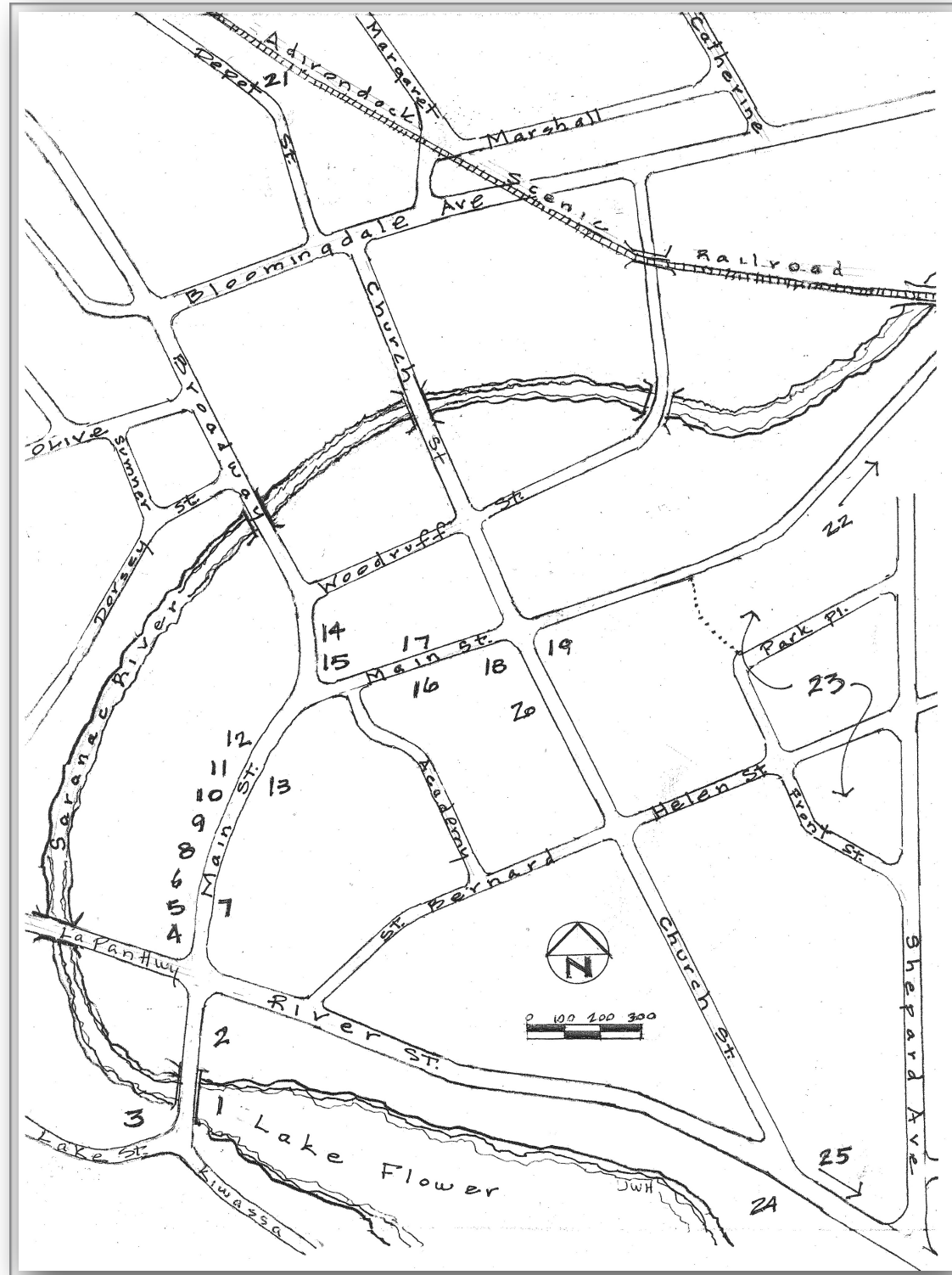


# Historic Saranac Lake, New York



## A Brief History of Saranac Lake

Set in a remote mountain valley, Saranac Lake offered land and seclusion to the pioneers who came to this area in the early 1800s to cut timber and farm. When guidebooks publicized Saranac Lake and the Adirondacks, wealthy city men came to hunt and fish, and hired local residents as skilled guides. Towards the end of the century, people began to come for their health, and a new industry was born.

In 1884, Dr. Edward L. Trudeau founded the first successful sanatorium in the U.S. for the treatment of tuberculosis, establishing a model of treatment based on the value of fresh air, rest, hygiene, good nutrition, and a positive outlook. Ten years later, Dr. Trudeau built the first laboratory in the country for the study of the TB germ. For seventy years, Saranac Lake was known as a world-wide center for scientific research and patient care until the discovery of TB-killing antibiotics in the 1950s.

The downtown business district grew quickly to cater to TB patients and their families. Taxi operators, laundries, furriers, and pharmacies were in demand. Specialties such as cure chairs and hot water bottles called stone pigs were marketed here.

The “cure” dominated Saranac Lake’s economy from 1884 to 1954, providing both employment and opportunities for entrepreneurs. The care of patients required many “cure cottages,” distinguished by porches, awnings, and overhanging trees. The construction industry boomed as a result. The vast majority of the town's private sanatoria were run by women, providing a good livelihood for widows and unmarried women. Young people worked as tray boys and tray girls, carrying meals to the sicker, bedridden patients. By 1920 there were at least 166 cure cottages in Saranac Lake – and possibly many more.

With the advent of the antibiotic treatment for TB, Saranac Lake faced the need to reinvent itself. A world famous research facility, two colleges, a regional hospital, and recreational opportunities gave new life to the bustling village. Historic preservation efforts identified the distinctive “cure cottages” and promoted their restoration. Saranac Lake continues to look to the future while respecting its past.

# Walk back in time

A self-guided walking tour of  
historic downtown Saranac Lake



## HISTORIC SARANAC LAKE

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Map by James H. Hotaling.

**1) LAKE FLOWER** ~ The village started here, where the river was dammed to power a sawmill in 1827. The logs were sent down the river to Lake Champlain. The pond was renamed from “Mill Pond” to “Lake Flower” after NY Governor Flower, who gave the money to clear the lake of stumps.

**2) RIVERSIDE INN** ~ This hotel stood where the park and bandshell are today. Mark Twain sometimes sat on the veranda during his visit in 1901. TB patients checked in here when they came to town. It was torn down in mid 1930s.



**3) POWER AND LIGHT BUILDING** ~ Built by Paul Smith's son, Phelps, in 1927, on the site of the town's first electric company. A businessman and guide, Paul Smith built an elegant hotel on the site where Paul Smith's College stands today. The hotel was the most fashionable of the many great Adirondack hotels.

**4) HARRIETSTOWN TOWN HALL** ~ The first town hall burned in the 1920s. Today's tower is modeled on Philadelphia's Independence Hall tower. Note the traffic light on the top. It was once used to alert village police to call in case of an emergency.

**5) TOUSLEY BUILDING** (Madden's) ~ Built with an elevator that fits two cars, it became an important storage facility that held the Crown Jewels of Luxembourg. It has a fur storage vault, and once held copies of valuable records of many major U.S. companies.

**6) MILO MILLER STORE** (Owl's Nest Bar) ~ Built in 1867 by pioneer resident Milo Miller, this is the oldest commercial structure in the village. The old mansard roof can still be seen.

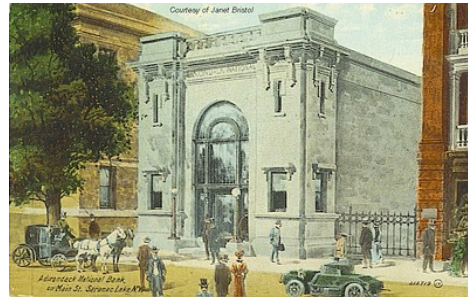
**7) CHARLIE GREEN'S STORE** (Artists' Guild) ~ Charlie Green came from England with TB, and like many others, stayed on after his cure. He ran this grocery store for over 60 years. One patron was Jack "Legs" Diamond, who ran liquor from Canada during prohibition. His brother cured in the village.

**8) POST OFFICE PHARMACY** ~ This was the town's first library building. Robert Louis Stevenson was a patron in the winter of 1887-88. It became a pharmacy in 1936, and is the last of the town's nine original pharmacies.

**9) DONALDSON BLOCK** (China Jade) ~ Owned by Alfred Donaldson, a banker, TB patient and historian, who wrote the two volume *History of the Adirondacks*.

**10) HAASE BLOCK** (Adirondack Bank) ~ Owned by the prominent Hasse family. Mrs. Haase helped start the Village Improvement Society which founded many local parks, including the Riverwalk. She sponsored a summer tent theater behind the building, where Rosalind Russell got her start in 1929.

**11) ADIRONDACK NATIONAL BANK** (Key Bank) ~ Today's bank looked like this before the front was covered in 1963. It was built in 1906 on the site of guide Reuben Reynolds house, where Dr.



Trudeau stayed when he first came to the village.

**12) T. F. FINNIGAN'S** ~ Once a candy store, it still has the original cabinetry and woodwork. In 1923, it was bought by T.F. Finnigan and it is operated by his grandson today. At one time there were ten independent clothing stores in business in downtown Saranac Lake. Finnigan's is the only original one still in business.

**13) COULTER BLOCK** (Liz and Company) ~ William Coulter was a master architect who came for the cure and established his office here. He designed many of the greatest of the "Great Camps," as well as this block in 1899. Kollecker's photography store was one of the storefronts. The large building to the left (Surgical Eye Care) once housed Leonard's Department Store.

**14) PONTIAC THEATER** (Parking Lot) ~ During the boom years, the theater played to a full house nightly. It had, at one time, the largest screen in central NY and a \$12,000 orchestral organ. Al Jolson performed a benefit here. The world premiere of the 1954 film, *The Silver Chalice* was held here, hosted by Art Linkletter. It was Paul Newman's film debut.

**15) BERKELEY HOTEL** (park with bandstand) ~ Built in 1875 to take TB patients. It was expanded several times, but burned to the ground in 1981. U. S. President Benjamin Harrison stayed at the Berkeley in September of



1890 when he was in town to dedicate the new high school, where the Hotel Saranac stands today.

**16) HOTEL SARANAC** ~ Designed by local architects Scopes and Feustmann, the hotel was built in 1927 and is listed as an Historic Hotel of America by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It was taken over by the hotel management school of Paul Smith's College in the 1960s. It boasts a grand ballroom on the second floor which served as the site of dances, wedding receptions, conferences, dinners, balls and other celebrations. It is under restoration, to be reopened in 2017.

**17) SARANAC LAKE FREE LIBRARY** ~ Founded in 1907, today the library houses an excellent archive in the Adirondack Room. Vest Pocket Park was once the site of the Study and Craft Guild which provided education, job training and enrichment courses for TB patients and the community.

**18) DR. E. L. TRUDEAU HOUSE** ~ Dr. Trudeau's first house in the village was built on this site in 1884, but was destroyed by fire. This was his second home and the site of 3 generations of medical practice by the Trudeau family. E. L. Trudeau's great-grandson, Garry, is the creator of the comic strip *Doonesbury*.

**19) SAINT LUKE CHURCH OF THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN** ~ Saranac Lake's first church, it was designed by architect R.M. Upjohn and built in 1878. The congregation held their first services in the Berkeley Hotel. Dr. E. L. Trudeau led the fund drive to complete it. He served as treasurer and warden for 38 years.

**20) SARANAC LABORATORY** ~ Built in 1894, this was the first lab built in the U.S. for the study of TB, designed by E. L. Trudeau's cousin, J. L. Aspinwall. It is open to the public as a museum, operated by Historic Saranac Lake.

**21) UNION DEPOT** ~ Built in 1904, by the D&H Railroad, the station was instrumental in the growth of Saranac Lake into a health resort. The depot handled 18 to 20 trains per day, and was the largest station on the line north of Utica.

**22) STEVENSON COTTAGE** (44 Stevenson Lane) ~ Where the great author spent the winter of 1887-88, under the care of Dr. E. L. Trudeau. Now operated as a museum, call 518-891-1462 for hours of operation.

**23) HELEN HILL NEIGHBORHOOD** (East of Church St.) ~ The neighborhood with the greatest concentration of cure cottages.

**24) MARTHA REBEN MARKER** ~ This marker commemorates the TB patient who sought her cure in the wilderness with local guide, Fred Rice. She became an acclaimed author of *The Healing Woods* and *The Way of the Wilderness*.

## OTHER SITES OF INTEREST

**TRUDEAU SANATORIUM PROPERTY** (East end of Park Ave.) ~ Many of the grand houses on Park Ave. were built by wealthy families for a curing family member. At the end of the street is the former Trudeau Sanatorium. Privately owned by the American Management Association, the main road is open to drive through.

**LITTLE RED** (Trudeau Institute, Algonquin Ave.) ~ The first cure cottage at the Trudeau Sanatorium, later moved to the Trudeau Institute as a memorial. Trudeau Institute is private property. Call Historic Saranac Lake to arrange a tour.

**BARTOK CABIN** (58 Riverside Drive) ~ Where the great composer spent the last summer of his life. The cabin is private property, located behind a private home. Call Historic Saranac Lake to schedule a tour.

**PINE RIDGE CEMETERY** (Off Lake Flower Ave.) ~ A microcosm of the history of Saranac Lake from its earliest settlement, through the village's busy years as a health resort, to the present day.

**WILL ROGERS** (78 Will Rogers Drive) ~ Once a Sanatorium for Vaudeville workers, it has been restored to serve as a senior living community. Call to schedule a tour, 518-304-5032.