

Hearths & Crafts

Glitz, Glamor, Gaudy, Graft, & Gelt

by Dr. Richard Craft

Well the cat's out of the bag. Governor Pataki is finally showing his hand, now that the fog has lifted on the issue of Indian land claims. The result of those negotiations shows in the five casinos he now proposes for Sullivan County. This goes contrary to the original three that were proposed... two in Sullivan and one in southern Ulster. Welcome to the world of high-level politics, where money speaks.

For many decades the Hotel-mans' Association ruled Sullivan County. Industry, and its higher-paying jobs, was stopped at the county border and the only other economy allowed was the dairy business. For years now, both have been fading into the sunset. Their legacy has left dilapidated, empty, old hotels and lots of vacant farmland. Even the much ballyhooed Raceway and International Airport failed to deliver Sullivan from its sinking fortunes.

Then along came casinos and "Jobs." For many of the old timers, it promised a return to the former glory years of *Glitz, Glamor, Gaudy, Graft, and Gelt*. In their greed, they wanted all three casinos, and it looks like they'll get their wish, with more besides. It is my opinion that Sullivan will get what they are told since the Governor has said it's all or none.

Even though the Town of Wawarsing enjoys more geographical and cultural ties with Sullivan than we do with Ulster, our forebears decided to put their eggs into more than one basket and welcomed industry into our area. Hence when the bottom fell out of Sullivan, we were not as hard hit as they were. In an ironic twist, southern Ulster can now boast of four healthy resorts and convention centers while I doubt there are four in all of Sullivan County.

I shudder to think of what Sullivan County will look like ten years from now. I envision bumper to bumper traffic, massive housing developments, schools bursting at the seams, skyrocketing divorce, suicide and bankruptcy cases, prostitution, intolerable taxation, the loss of open public space, the purchase of more and more land by the Indians (so they can all add to the five sovereign

nations land claims – all tax exempt).

There will be the need for more police, bigger roads, more infrastructure. Personal financial tragedies and increased addictions will be the norm for the day. In fact, treatment of addiction is already factored in with the cost to the county. Each casino will try to outdo the other and what was once a beautiful county will become the Las Vegas of the East. Money will flow in and out of Sullivan County faster than a speeding bullet to goodness knows where, undoubtedly into the pockets of a select few.

Why should we be so concerned about Sullivan County? For one thing, they are our neighbors and, in many cases, close friends, and what affects them will certainly spill over to us as increased traffic, housing needs, and even school enrollment. There are a lot of nice people in Sullivan County who will be hurt, but where money reigns, people come somewhere down the line. We will end up with nothing for our inconvenience.

We are a world apart from this surreal scene that is being planned for our friends next door. Much of our open space has been, and is being, preserved for posterity. We still do have a varied economic base and fortunately our civic leaders to date are not basing our future on the misery of gambling.

However there is much that should be done, especially in the wake of our recent loss of *Schrade*. When I asked the powers that be in Kingston to come to Ellenville and speak at a *Noonday Club* meeting on the prospects of further industrial expansion here, I was told that they had nothing for us.

Oh yes, Ulster County gives us services for which we are thankful, but it is hope for a better tomorrow that we need. While we sit and wonder what to do next, new firms are locating in the Kingston area on a regular basis. Now that the County owns the hospital, have they been down here and viewed the land available for industrial growth? Not to my knowledge.


I say to our legislators, get them down here.

(I will be submitting material in the future entitled, *Destination: Wawarsing*. It's a play on several articles written by the Middletown Record entitled, *Fifty Reasons to Visit*. I will attempt to portray our assets, and you may be surprised. We have and

will continue to have more to offer of the important things of life in comparison to the *Glitz, Glamor, Gaudy, Graft, Gelt* that so many consider to be the salvation of a faltering economy.)

Life in Wawarsing isn't all that bad. Living in Wawarsing is a privilege. Sure taxes are up; sometimes we get hit with the unexpected and with things we didn't ask for, but we still can chart our own course.

I can still drive from my home to work in five minutes (others can do it in less). I meet and greet hundreds of people, many of whom have been friends since school days. We still call each other by our first names. There are still places in our town where the silence is deafening and the scenery spectacular. There are many organizations in town where caring comes first.

As predicted by yours truly five years ago, Wawarsing is growing, and glad to say, not at a maddening pace. This alone is going to help our tax base. Will there be needs and problems in the future? Of course. I am willing to stay the course. Others can have their Five G's; I'll settle for a nice slice of cherry pie. 

Berger & Solomon Inc.

GENERAL INSURANCE
BUSINESS / PERSONAL / LIFE



Serving the
Community
since 1946

Tel: 845-647-5000
Fax: 845-647-8890
Toll Free: 800-724-1227

129 South Main Street
Ellenville, New York 12428-0391

Visit our website:
www.bergersolomon.com
Se Habla Español