

Chetola Backstory

The property that is now known as Chetola was first purchased by Lot Estes in 1846. Estes bought the land at five cents an acre and purchased a total of 100 acres. The Estes were among some of the first to settle in the Blowing Rock area and Lot was even related through marriage to Blowing Rock's first permanent white settlers, the Greenes. Only two buildings were on the Chetola property at the time of Lot's purchase, a horse stable and a way station (for mail, freight, and passengers).

Following the Civil War (1861 - 1865) Lot's son, Len Estes, began to get to work on the property. Len constructed a dam, a mill, installed a pond, and expanded upon the home his father built, eventually turning this into a boarding house (popular among those summering in Blowing Rock). Len went on to erect multiple summer guest cottages behind the family home and the resort gained the name "Silverlake." Silverlake became a popular spot for locals and tourists alike. The Estes owned the only grist mill in the area during the late 19th century leading folks from miles and miles to come to Silverlake to have their corn ground into meal. The Estes did not charge money for this service but would take a small portion of the meal as payment. During the winter Silverlake again provided a much needed commodity to townsfolk, ice! One hundred pounds of ice could be purchased for only a mere ten cents.



In 1892 the property was sold to William Whittingham Stringfellow and his wife, Susie Stringfellow of Anniston, Alabama. The Stringfellow's gave the area the name we know it by today, Chetola. The word "Chetola" in Cherokee translates to "haven of rest" and that is exactly what the Stringfellows were seeking in their Appalachian refuge. William Stringfellow suffered from tuberculosis and his wife hoped that the cool mountain climate would help his condition. Thankfully, William Stringfellow's health did improve during their time in Blowing Rock and he would go on to add numerous features to Chetola throughout his time there including a smokehouse, a servant's house, a much larger horse stable, a caretaker's home, and a springhouse. (Image on left: William Stringfellow)

The Stringfellows had a deep love for Blowing Rock and continuously gave, donated, and created organizations to assist the people of Blowing Rock and Watauga County. One interesting fact that many might not be aware of is that the Stringfellows organized the very first boy scout troop in the area in 1914 and

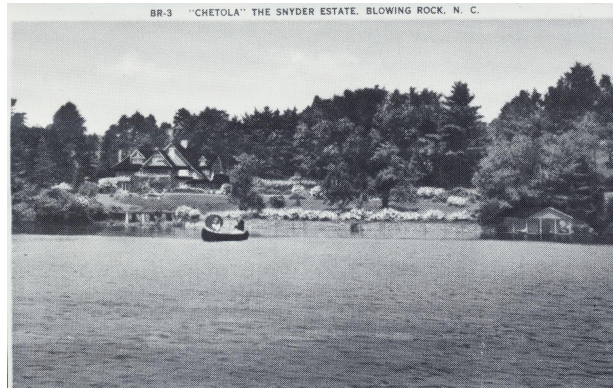


held regular boy scout meetings at Chetola. (Image above: Susie Parker Stringfellow, third from left)



In 1919, William Stringfellow sold Chetola to the Holt family of Burlington, North Carolina. The Holt's sold the estate in 1923 to Walter L. Alexander of Charlotte, Alexander is known for being the developer of Mayview Park. The estate changed hands again in 1926 when it was sold to James Luther Snyder (pictured left) for \$36,000. Snyder, a.k.a. the "Coca-Cola King of the Carolinas" owned and operated ten Coca-Cola bottling plants in the state. After purchasing Chetola, Snyder increased the property from 100 to 126 acres, added a bowling alley for his family, and

created interconnecting horse trails that would meet up with those on the Moses Cone Estate. The Snyders had a total of six children and hosted and entertained frequently on the Chetola estate. These parties and get-togethers were



community-wide celebrations and the Snyders were beloved throughout the town. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Snyder hired local stonemasons to build a rock wall separating Chetola from what is today Highway 321. He paid the stonemasons a total of 50 cents an hour, a significant sum at the time as a way of giving back to the

community. Snyder would also hire several men to work with churches each summer during a time when work of any kind was incredibly hard to come by. (Image above: A postcard noting "Chetola: The Snyder Estate". Left image: Chetola circa the 1980s)



James Luther Snyder passed away in 1957 at the age of 83 but Chetola would remain in the Snyder family until 1972. The grounds were purchased by a group of businessmen in 1982 who sought to transform Chetola into a more accessible resort that could accommodate

a much larger number of guests. During this time Chetola gained condominiums, the lodge, as well as meeting facilities for large groups. The estate was sold again in 1997, this time to Rachael Renar and her son, Kent Tarbuton of Norfolk, Virginia. Rachael and Kent have both strenuously worked to keep Chetola's historic charms. Throughout the last few decades Chetola has continued to grow and add numerous features to its enchanting grounds all the while maintaining the natural beauty of the estate. (Image on right: Chetola circa 2023. Photo via GetLostInTheUSA.com)

