

The Story of Albert Music Hall

www.alberthall.org



Photo Courtesy of Pinelands Cultural Society

Patrons enjoy a Saturday Night Show at Albert Music Hall

It was over five decades ago, deep in the woods of Waretown, NJ, that the Pinelands Cultural Society (PCS) found its roots. Every Saturday night, in Joe and George Albert's small, secluded deer cabin in the Waretown pinelands, a handful of musicians would gather to pick and sing until the wee hours of Sunday morning. New songs, old songs, and original songs would ring out to a few friends who would venture down the long sandy lane through the pines. Their cabin was known as the "Home Place" by the few lucky people who went there. In the summer, the cabin windows were opened and wild deer wandered around the yard. In the winter, you would find a roaring fire in the old cast iron cook-stove and plenty of hot coffee and homemade cake. The cabin was lighted by several gas lamps, and water was provided by an old hand pump in the kitchen. There was no electricity.

The "Home Place" soon became widely known by word-of-mouth. Hundreds of people were finding their way to the cabin. It was not unusual to find musicians entertaining outside while waiting their chance to get inside.

Fiddle player George Albert died and Joe Albert, still living in the cabin, was finding it hard to handle the growing crowds. And so it was... the music stopped at the "Home Place." Everyone missed it. After a lapse of six months or so, a few pickin' pineys decided to rent a big bare room at the Waretown Auction Hall. They gathered up some of the "Home Place" musicians, charged a small fee to the public, and Saturday night's "Sounds of the Jersey Pines" once again belonged to the folks of Waretown and the surrounding areas.

The Pinelands Cultural Society, an all-volunteer organization, formed around the original few from the "Home Place", was the outcome of this venture. The Society's goals include preservation and stimulation of interest in our pineland's musical heritage. To meet this goal, the PCS planned to build a new music hall for aspiring musicians, young and old, to learn and perform. The building would be called **Albert Music Hall**, after the two Albert brothers who opened their hearts and home to a handful of musicians so many years ago.

The "Sounds of the Jersey Pines" has rung out every Saturday night since November 1974. When the Auction Hall was destroyed by a disastrous fire in July 1992, Saturday night performances continued uninterrupted, first in the parking lot in front of the ruins and then in the Frederic A. Priff Elementary School in Waretown, NJ.

Ground for the Pinelands Cultural Society's own Albert Music Hall was broken on May 18, 1996 in Waretown, NJ and was officially opened on January 5, 1997. Joe and George Albert's dream has come true! A 600 square foot Pickin' Shed is

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The original Albert brothers' cabin in the woods in Waretown.

adjacent to the main building. It provides “no charge” heated and sheltered pickin’ space with access to restroom facilities when the Hall is open.

Well over 200,000 persons have visited the “new” Albert Music Hall building since its 1997 opening. So, come join the fun of the traditional musical gatherings of the NJ Pinelands. Old time songs and recent hits, played on a wide variety of musical instruments, can be heard. Bring the whole family for an evening of live

music each Saturday night! Doors open at 6:30 pm.

If you are a musician, bring your instrument and enjoy swapping songs with others on the porch or in the “Pickin’ Shed.” Come help us to continue these unique and beautiful Pinelands music traditions!

This article has been provided by the Pinelands Cultural & Historical Preservation Society (PCS). PCS/Albert Hall is registered in the American Folklore Center, Local Legacies Collection Archive in Washington, DC.