

THE LABADIE SITE - KENSINGTON METROPARK

Occasionally, history is revealed by chance. In early 1983, I happened upon the Anderson family of Glen Echo, Maryland, walking along one of our nature trails. Mrs. Carlotta Anderson was searching for the former site of her grandfather's summer home, called "Bulling Waters." Her grandfather was Jo Labadie (1850-1933).

Several stone foundations along Aspen Trail were, at the time, shrouded in mystery. Mrs. Anderson, upon viewing the location, believed it to be the object of her search. A subsequent visit to the Livingston County Courthouse to examine land records verified her supposition. With this information the site acquired a new significance.

Jo Labadie summered at "Bubbling Waters" from 1912 until 1933. Charles Joseph Antoine Labadie - known as "jo" - was a prominent Detroitier active in the labor movement. Labeled the "gentle anarchist" because of his opposition to violence, he was an influential and prodigious writer. A huge collection of his work is in the possession of the University of Michigan.

In 1945, the Huron-Clinton Metroparks obtained the land from the family. What remains? Today, can be found two separate building foundations and a living legacy of domestic flowers that continue to flourish. The site, largely overgrown, has been partially opened up by selective cutting of brush.

There remains much to be learned. Can anyone augment our limited knowledge of Jo's residence at Kensington? Perhaps someone visited there or knew the family. In addition, we would also like to learn more of Jo's brothers - Francis, Hubert and Oliver - who were involved in the production of silent movies in the local area. What do you know of them?

Mrs. Anderson is currently researching a book on Jo Labadie and his work. She needs assistance from us. Please contact me if you have anything to contribute or to share. (Bob Hotaling, Kensington Nature Center, (313) 1561 x438)

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