

SITE HISTORY OVERVIEW

SWIFTWATER SITE 120TH ANNIVERSARY



In the early 1890's Richard Slee, a New York bacteriologist who studied with the famous Louis Pasteur, contracted cholera and came to the clean air and quiet surroundings of the Pocono Mountains to recuperate.

While recovering at the Swiftwater Inn, Slee met and fell in love with the innkeeper's daughter, Ella Maginnis. The innkeeper gave Slee and his bride the piece of land that today is the Swiftwater campus.

In 1897, Slee founded the Pocono Biological Laboratories where he began to work on his public health mission. His goal was to make three improvements to Louis Pasteur's smallpox vaccine: make it more effective, with fewer side effects and maintain a longer shelf life. Having developed a better smallpox vaccine, Slee expanded his facility to manufacture human tetanus and diphtheria antitoxin.

The U.S. military was an important early customer due to Slee's work for the U.S. Surgeon General. The smallpox vaccine was important during several conflicts, including the Spanish American War, World War I and World War II. The U.S. Armed Forces continue to receive many necessary vaccines from Swiftwater today.

After several acquisitions and name changes, the labs continued to grow and flourish. Initially the labs only produced smallpox vaccine, but have gone on to produce diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, influenza, meningitis, and other vaccines.

Today, the site produces 12 vaccines; encompasses more than 500 acres; is home to over 2,500 employees; and has more than 50 active buildings.