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**TURNPIKES and TAVERNS in the SHAWANGUNKS**

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SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## TURNPIKES and TAVERNS in the SHAWANGUNKS

### PREFACE

Webster 1966 defines:

Turnpike (= turn + point) 1. Obs.; a revolving frame bearing spikes and used as a barrier in medieval warfare. 2. toll bar, tollgate. 3. or turnpike road as a toll road; esp. a toll expressway or a free road originally maintained as a toll road, or a paved highway having a crowned surface.

As far as we have been able to determine, when turnpikes were toll roads, they were not public roads in the sense of being owned by towns, counties or the State. Apparently they were built, maintained and operated by a group of individuals or a company. Thus, the project had to be financed by charging tolls, at so much per mile. These were collected at tollgates at intervals along a turnpike.

American Heritage Dictionary 1973 defines tollgate: "A gate barring passage to a road, tunnel or bridge until a toll is collected." Some tollgates functioned on a 24 hour basis, since there was a gate-keeper's home connected to the gates.

A companion word associated with the above was shunpike, defined as "a side road taken to avoid the tollgate on a major artery." Apparently it was not an officially designated route, but was recognized locally on the basis of usage. We know of no highway so named in Ulster County, but there still is in Dutchess County.

In the City of Kingston, a portable tollgate on wheels was used to vary the location of toll collection, in the attempt to thwart the establishment of a shunpike in that area (c. 1870).

### INTRODUCTION

In the days of horse transportation, turnpikes were a significant component of the Shawangunk ecosystem. People, natural resources and the commodities of commerce moved over them.

Taverns (including public houses and hotels) were associated with turnpikes as necessary adjuncts of travel for watering and feeding the animals and for human refreshment. A secondary function of taverns was as a gathering place for local residents, often workmen, within walking distances of their living places, and, later as homes or dormitories for construction projects such as the New York City Aqueduct.

## EARLY ROADS IN THE SHAWANGUNK REGION

Following the precedent established in England, American colonial governments passed laws regarding the management of roads beginning in the 1670's. Road commissioners in each town in Ulster County were empowered to summon property holders (or their slaves or servants) to give annual road service, up to six days a year depending upon the amount of land owned. Every man was obliged to bring his own tools, and was fined for unfulfilled duty.

Not surprisingly, the citizens wanted good roads but felt themselves too busy to do the work. As one source reports, "They did a 'hiphorrah' job whenever they could and spent the rest of the year complaining because the roads were mud and ice half the year and dust and rock the other half." Roads were considered adequate when they enabled the neighbors to get to church, mill and market, and for the passage of the Military.

It became all too evident that dependable roads were very difficult to build and to maintain. At the time of the American Revolution, there were few real roads in the colonies. The impetus for the development of the American turnpike companies in the 1790's consisted of two main factors: the first was dissatisfaction with private efforts to build and maintain passable roadways; and, second, growing local industries had products that needed transporting.

During the 1700's, an impressive list of products needed transportation from Ulster County to New York City. These included corn, wheat, oats, beans, peas, hops, potatoes, apples, cider, grapes, wine, berries, maple sugar and syrup, honey, eggs, milk, butter, beef, pork, lamb and wool. Other early products needing transportation came from the local tanneries, brick yards, grist and saw mills, and quarries of millstone, limestone and bluestone. Asheries made potash for use in fertilizer and soap. Additional products developed during the 19th century which put significant demands on Ulster County transportation. These commodities included powder, cement, iron, ice and paper.

The major early highways of the region, as directed by the State Legislature, were routed according to the traffic patterns of people and products. Two early roads (17th century) ran along the base of the Shawangunks. On the east side of the mountains, the Albany-to-New-York State Road was routed to Kingston, then through Springtown, Canaan, Butternville and Tuthilltown. This was built above the Walkill flats to avoid seasonal flooding. It was used as a stagecoach route, and also by drovers of cattle and sheep going from Lake Champlain to New York or Philadelphia. (Also known Albany Post Road.)

To the west of the Shawangunks ran the Old Mine Road which connected the Hudson River at Kingston with the Delaware River at Port Jervis.

Another major early road ran along the west bank of the Hudson River between Albany and New York City.

The building and maintenance of the local roads connecting these longer State thoroughfares is what proved to be a serious problem for the local boards of trustees and inhabitants of each town. Thus evolved the attempt to improve the local roads by means of turnpike companies.

## TURNPIKES

Each turnpike company endeavored to improve relatively short sections of road, usually a distance of ten to fifteen miles. The Farmers Turnpike and Bridge Company was licensed in 1809. This turnpike, sometimes called Milton Turnpike, eventually ran between the Hudson River at Milton, through Modena, Ireland Corners and Gardiner, ending at the Shawangunk Stage Road beyond Tuthilltown. Travellers could then take the Stage Road northeast to the road which went over the gap in the Trapps to the Rondout Valley.

Improvement of the road through the Trapps connecting the Walkkill and Rondout Valleys was undertaken during the 1850's. The New Paltz-Wawarsing Turnpike was conceived of, surveyed (1856), and built by a private enterprise committee. There was urgent need to connect the Rondout Valley with Hudson River tidewater shipping (via the New Paltz Turnpike to New Paltz Landing or the Farmers Turnpike to Milton). This was an attempt to develop overland transportation that could compete with the Delaware and Hudson Canal which had been opened in the 1830's. The New Paltz-Wawarsing Turnpike was built quickly, and immediately began losing money, with the result that it was sold at Sheriff's Sale in 1861. Small portions of it are still in use as part of Route 299. Other portions were superceded by Route 44-55.

Another road connecting the Walkkill and Rondout Valleys crossed the Shawangunk ridge at Mountain Rest. The Alligerville-Butterville Road was improved in 1825 with money raised by subscription. But this appears not to have been considered a turnpike.

## TOLLGATES

Tollgates for the turnpikes ranged from being a simple rod placed across the roadway to being a complete house built on both sides of the road with a connecting part to form a covered gateway. An example of the latter was the "saddlebag house" on the New Paltz Turnpike at Highland. A pole was swung open in the morning and shut at night by the toll keeper. There was a simpler tollgate on the flats west of New Paltz toward Libertyville.

The only tollgate on a road across the mountain that we have found mentioned in local records was located on the New Paltz-Wawarsing Turnpike in the area of the Trapps. Where the overhead bridge carrying the road from Lake Mohonk to Lake Minnewaska crosses what is now Route 44-55, there used to stand a tollgate.

## TOLLS

Toll rates were posted alongside each gate. During the 1840's the rates were:

- 20 cents for every score of cattle, horses or mules
- 5 cents for every horse and rider
- 3 cents for every led or driven horse
- 6 cents for every cart driven or drawn by one horse
- 25 cents for every coach
- 12 1/2 cents for every stage or four wheeled wagon drawn by two horses, mules or oxen
- 6 cents for every sleigh or sled drawn by two horses

One reason that the turnpike corporations turned out to be poor business ventures may have been the lenient regulations regarding exemptions from toll charges. A person needn't pay toll to the corporation if passing to or from public worship, going to or from a funeral, or election for the purpose of giving a vote, or who may be going to or returning from a mill with grain or flour for his family's use, or to or from a blacksmith shop . . . or from any person going for a physician or midwife or returning, or from a juror or witness going to or returning from court . . . , or from any troops in training or service of the State or of the United States.

Tolls apparently were a flat rate per toll booth without any reference to distance travelled.

## TAVERNS

At frequent intervals along the turnpikes, and along local "highways" and "back roads", there were taverns or road houses to feed man and beast. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century record books of the Towns of Rochester and Marbletown (and others) can be found a constant stream of applications from town residents to the Town Commissioners for licenses to operate "an Inn or Tavern necessary for the benefit of Travellers". There was at least one public house in each neighborhood. At one time, there were six taverns between Rosendale and New Paltz along the Springtown Road.

The beverages served at these taverns were often local products, grown (corn or apples) and made by the farmer-owner of the tavern. Some of these Shawangunk taverns were perhaps located to be available to off-duty staff of resorts, such as Mohonk and Minnewaska.

## LOCATIONS OF SHAWANGUNK TAVERNS

### Wawarsing and New Paltz Turnpike:

Dingee Hotel - It is said that I. Dingee was the first to have a hotel in the Trapps.

Fowler Hotel - The second hotel was operated by Benjamin Fowler at his farm south of the Trapps school, east of the Coxing Creek. The hotel is mentioned in the novel "Hardwood" by Arthur O. Friel.

McGidney's Hotel and the Laurel Inn - McGidney's was located on the south side of the New Paltz-Wawarsing Turnpike about 1/4 mile west of the Peterskill. This was a good sized hotel, run by John H. McGidney. The ballroom was quite large, and it is said that ten sets might be formed for dancing. The hotel was destroyed by fire, and Benjamin Walker bought the land and built the Laurel Inn. At the death of Walker, the Smiley family purchased the property.

#### Clove Road:

Public houses in the Clove presumably were patronized by millstone cutters from the ridge to the west, charcoal burners from the upper valley, and teamsters hauling these products to High Falls and Alliverville. One of these taverns was located at the intersection of the Clove Road and the (no longer maintained) Rock Hill Road. Another was in the stone house which stands at the junction of Clove Road and Old Clove Road.

#### Stokes Road:

Stokes Tavern - In 1859, John F. Stokes opened a small tavern he had built at the north end of Mohonk Lake. The following account of it is from "The Story of Mohonk" . . . 'At the time of this first visit of Mr. Smiley, the lake and adjacent property were owned by Mr. John F. Stokes, a farmer in the valley, an excellent man, who had already built a small rude structure where he could entertain picnic parties and, for those who were courageous, could offer lodging. Mr. Smiley described it graphically: There was a little house here in which a man kept a barroom, right under the corner of the present parlor (of Mohonk Mountain House). One room was for dancing, and people came up from the valley and danced all night for which he charged them one dollar a couple. This man, and an old lady and an Irish boy, ran the establishment. He sold liquor also though he tried to keep folks from drinking too much. When people, however, really got drunk and hard to manage, Mr. Stokes used to chain them to trees and in that way maintained order. Over the large dancing room were ten bedrooms, each seven feet long by five feet wide. Each bed was a bunk a foot and a half wide with a straw mattress, one sheet, one quilt and a hen-feather pillow, and each room had one chair. If anyone wanted to wash, the lake was handy. When a visitor demanded dinner, the Irish boy would catch a chicken, kill it in front of the house, and pass it over to the woman to cook. On one occasion - when there were no chickens to catch - they caught the pet peacock and old woman prepared it for the guest. This showed the good nature of Mr. Stokes. He thought a great deal of the peacock but the guest had to have some dinner - though the visitor confessed it was the toughest morsel he ever tackled.' Clearly, John Stokes provided his customers with far more than the usual amenities found at the ordinary tavern or road house.

#### New Paltz-Alligerville Road:

Barranca - This picturesque name means 'cliff' in Spanish, surely a romantic name for a mountain tavern in the Shawangunks, located at Mountain Rest.

#### Mossy Brook Road at 27 Waterbreak Road (recently misnamed 27 Knolls Road):

Mossy Brook Hotel/Tenedini's - We have not discovered a date for the beginning of this establishment. Circumstantial evidence suggests that it may have begun about 1905 when New York City was acquiring land for the north end of Bonticou Tunnel. Presumably there were bunkhouses for the laborers nearby. A 1936 deed records the transfer of this land from Esther Grove and Sarah Cooper to Ada and Yolanda Tenedini. In the memory of D. Smiley, Mohonk staff knew the place as Tenedini's.

Sparky's Tavern - A hundred yards up the road below the Bumbleberg ridge was where Sparky, a prostitute, lived. In the 1920's, a counterfeiting operation was discovered to be in production in an adjacent building.

**Pine Road:**

**Pine's Saloon - The following reference appeared in Minutes of the Smiley family conference of 20 September, 1912: Tom Pine "has rented his place to an Italian, who keeps a saloon at the foot of the mountain, which caused two of our farm men to get drunk the other night, they got into a fight and made a lot of trouble." It seems probable that Pine's was started about 1911, probably to take advantage of the patronage of the Degnon contractor's laborers on the New York City Aqueduct. We believe that they were housed in nearby bunkhouses. Apparently the militia guarding of the aqueduct (during World War I) followed almost immediately after its completion along the east side of the mountain. According to Peter Harp's letter (Appendix No. 2), the soldiers were bivouacked in bunkhouses on Pine Road, perhaps the same buildings as had been used by the laborers.**



## Appendix No. 1

### Further Details

#### Fowler Hotel --

In a 1921 deed from Edwin and Mary J. Davis to George H. Smiley, reference is made to the former conveyance of this land from Benjamin Aldrich and Wyntze Aldrich, his wife, and Tryphena Jansen to Benjamin Fowler bearing date the 29th day of December 1859.

#### Barranca --

The 10 acres of land on which the building stood appeared on the Assessment Rolls of the Town of New Paltz for the years 1914 to 1918, inclusive, on which a house and barn stood, against which the name "George Drew" appears. In 1922, this land was conveyed in a tax deed from James A. Wendell, Comptroller of the State of New York, to LeGrand Gue.

LeGrand Gue had started working at Mohonk in 1917 and continued his employment there till 1924, mostly in the paint crew. I (D.S.) recall hearing that Grandfather tried to buy the land from LeGrand, whether because a tavern was in operation there that late or whether he felt there was some potential problem from there being an inholding on a public road. In 1927, Jerome Kidder bought the land from LeGrand Gue. Two months later, Kidder sold it to Daniel Smiley. Our surmise is that for whatever time there was a tavern at this location, its patronage was not primarily from through-traffic but chiefly depended on off-duty employees of the Mountain Rest boarding house under J. Irving Goddard until the latter was destroyed by fire in 1907.

#### Pine's Saloon --

The widow of Thomas Pine sold the land to Glennie P. VanAken in 1921. Four years later the farm was bought by George J. Young on behalf of Daniel Smiley.

## Appendix No. 2

**A bit of history**

In 1914 New Paltz Village, with a census of 1,492, was located in a valley fair and beautiful, guarded well by mount and hill. Milk sold for 8 cents a quart delivered, apples \$2 a barrel of two and three-fourths bushels and potatoes at 75 cents a bushel. The leading products were school teachers and bricks, all of high quality.

Clouds were gathering before the war.

The Kaiser and German war lords alarmed the City of New York to protect its water supply, the aqueduct, which had a few previous years been completed. The New York 10th Militia was selected to guard the dam and water lines.

The top brass officers, Colonel Klein, Chaplain Kelly, Judge Advocate Percy Decker and others, were quartered at the Tamney House located at the junction of Plattekill Avenue and Main Street, opposite the old Huguenot Bank.

The soldiers were bivouacked in bunkhouses on Pine Road, the former residence of Thomas Pine, the local undertaker, located just east of Kleinkill Farm, owned by Mohonk, along Mountain Rest Road. The presence of the soldiers added greatly to the social life of the community, to the delight of the local maidens and some married women. It was near Kleinkill Farm that the first soldier was shot and killed in 1917.

New Paltz was opposed to the war. When President Wilson ran for a second term in 1916, the theme song of the Democrats was, "He kept us out of war." New Paltz was dominated by the Republicans over 4-to-1. The local election vote was lost by four votes in favor of Charles E. Hughes, who lived in Kingston during part of his life.

The sinking of the Lusitania, with the loss of many U.S. citizens, outraged our people and we went to war in April 1917. Our local community meeting was held at the Town Hall, located at the corner of North Chestnut and Academy Street. John C. Bliss told the crowd about the seriousness of the situation, that they should gather every egg and work for victory.

The Dutch Arms (mens club) met in the basement of the Reformed Church on election night to hear the election results. Election news was relayed over the telegraph at the railroad station. I was paid 75 cents for the night to carry news bulletins from the station to the church every half hour until 3 a.m. The vote was close and undecided for many days until California went for Wilson by a few votes.

PETER H. HARP  
Attorney at Law  
New Paltz

# New Paltz-Wawarsing Turnpike

By Peter H. Harp

On March 22, 1855, a meeting was held at the hotel of P. D. Smedes to organize the New Paltz-Wawarsing Turnpike. A committee was appointed to investigate and reported that the Ulster Tannery at Lackawack processed 225 tons of skins a year, 14 saw mills produced 20,000,000 board feet of lumber a year. The Napanoch Ax Factory made 9,910 axes in the month of January. The Ellenville Glass Factory produced 80,000 units per year and the Napanoch Iron Co. produced 800 tons of iron per year with coal, 350 tons with charcoal and 500 tons of Salisbury Iron.

The report goes on to say: "These few statements your committee makes of the already established business and trade which is now, if it be fairly estimated, sufficient to warrant the enterprise. Besides, the opening of a road of nearly 50 miles in extent by connecting the New Paltz Turnpike road with the Lackawack Turnpike road and the Napanoch Denning Plank Road will bend materially to develop the resources and enhance the trade, not only of the extremes of the route but also of the whole country thru which it passes. They would further state that they consider the road proposed to be the natural thoroughfare for the trade and travel before named; it having a decided advantage both in point of grade and distance over any other route from western Ulster to tide-water.

Distance from Ellenville to Newburgh 32 miles.  
Distance from Ellenville to New Paltz 28 miles.

Distance from Wawarsing to Newburgh landing 36 miles.  
Distance from Wawarsing to New Paltz landing 23 miles.

E. S. Elting, Lloyd Calvin Hornbeck, Wawarsing, N. LeFevre, New Paltz Committee).

It was estimated that the turnpike would cost \$1,000 per mile to construct. The promoters hoped to take the trade from the D. & H. Canal. This plan was never accomplished. The canals paid no taxes.

This Turnpike was surveyed in 1856 and Map filed in the Ulster County Clerk's Office, being Map No. 165. This map is one of the finest and best preserved documents in the County Clerk's office. This road ran from the west end of the bridge across the Walkkill River at New Paltz to the pass in the Shawangunk Mts., now used by the Minneawaska Trail, thence passing along the southerly end of the Trapps across the Coxen Kill, Saunder Kill, Peterskill and Stoney Brook to Port Hixon (now Kerhonk Brook) on the D. & H. Canal.

This was a business venture to make money but it never got out of the wrong side of the ledger and finally was sold at Sheriff's Sale on April 1, 1861.

The original plans called for the construction of the road southerly of the route finally selected. The original plans passed through the Reformed Church Parsonage lot located on the west side of the Butterville to Libertyville Road about 1500 feet south of the present residence of Ben & Rachel Matteson, being the house that Bruyn DuBois sold to Smiley and for a

long time occupied by Lester Harvey. According to the records in the minutes book of the Turnpike kept by Easton Van Wagenen and loaned to me by Irving Millham, his grandson, the Reformed Church received \$109. for this right of way on June 11, 1856. The road was finally located along the route just north of the Smiley Gate House thence to the residence of Matteson and continuing in a southwesterly course over the road now abandoned to the farm of George Jenkins, near the junction of the original Lake Mohonk Road by Old Shaft No. 1 just east of Leuken's orchard.

About half way up the east side of the Shawangunk Mts. was a watering trough for the horses and oxen. About 1900 George Enderly was traveling down this road and stopped his team to let his horses drink. He stepped out on the pole between his horses to loosen the hitch, the better to drink, when the horses became frightened and ran away down the road. Mr. Enderly fell and the farm wagon passed over his body which resulted in his death. Later the "Flu" of 1918 killed six of his children. On the west side of the Coxen Kill along this public road was a small settle-

ment. The territory between the two mountain ridges extending northerly to the Clove Church just west of Mt. Rest was known as the Trapps. The products of this mountain territory were timber, charcoal, hoopoles and huckleberries. There were frequent man made Mountain fires to clear the land and condition it for the huckleberry pickers.

About the turn of the century Abe Billingham was postmaster and ran a small county store. He also dealt in huckleberries and purchased and repacked them for transportation by wagon to the dock at the Highland Landing for the city trade.

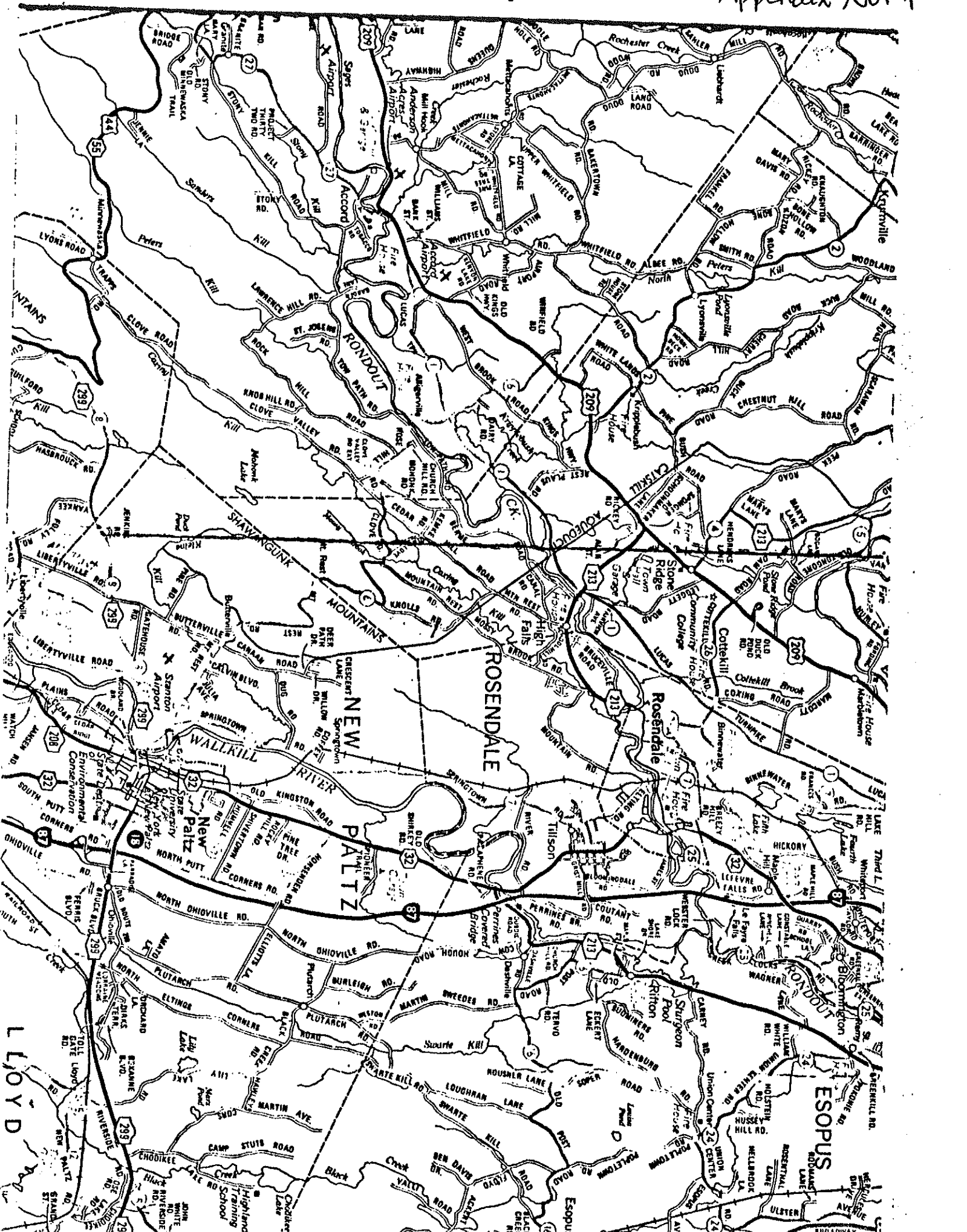
Abe Billingham was referred to as the King of the Trapps. A few years before he died I frequently saw him sitting on his daughter's porch opposite the post office in St. Remy, where he lived his sunset years.

Occasionally he would loan small sums of money. Toward the end of

his long life, his eyesight was not too good. He had a request for a loan of \$100. for 2 months. As his eyesight was bad he asked the borrower to write the note. But the borrower substituted the word death for date, and the note read "2 months after death I promise to pay to . . ." Abe did not discover the change until 2 months later when he requested payment and then was informed that the note was not due.

Peter H. Harp.

Dec. 22, 1965.  
Next: Dr. Coddington



LLOYD

ESOPUS

ROSENDALE

PALITZ

WALLKILL

NEW

MOUNTAINS

ROSENDALE

ROSENDALE

ROSENDALE

ROSENDALE

ROSENDALE

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