

THE CLINTON HISTORIAN

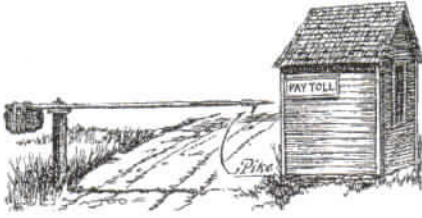
The Clinton Historical Society

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Craig Marshall, Editor 266-5494

December 2003

TOLL ROADS & the SHUNPIKE



A real pike pole turned across the gate to the road.

As soon as goods are produced, a market must be found. Dutchess County was fortunate that the Hudson River made the markets of the world available for her products. The first roads ran to the river landings. Protests over the condition of the roads in the early days were frequent. One answer to this problem was the toll roads.

Local men managed all business in the old days; a group of men would organize a stock company and take over the improvement and maintenance of a specified length of highway, the cost being met by collecting tolls.

The first good road through the county was the Dutchess Turnpike. It ran northeast, meeting the Amenia-Sharon and Dover Turnpike a short distance east of Washington Hollow.

Today we accept our toll roads as a quick and easy way of getting from one place to another as speedily as possible. In the thrifty days of old when "a penny saved was a penny earned", tolls were avoided whenever possible. The farmers in the northeast section of the county where the farms were large and productive, did not take kindly to the tolls. Being shrewd and enterprising, they got together and built "The Shunpike." This road

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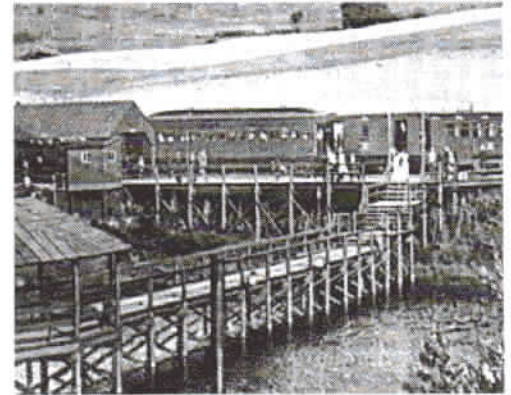
UPTON LAKE'S AMUSEMENT PARK

by Jon Wechsler

When I moved from Poughkeepsie to the end of Grove Way, by what was originally known as Upton's Lake, I often talked about the history of the lake with my neighbor Jim Schulhoff. He related stories of Franklin D. Roosevelt coming to "the grove" and talking to people in what used to be a natural bowl at the southern end of the lake. Jim told about the turn-of-the-century amusement park, located on the southwest shore, and showed me where the railroad from Poughkeepsie used to stop to let off passengers, right across the stream next to my house. He had a picture of the old bridge that went from the passenger drop-off across the cove toward his house.

The 44-acre lake was named for Paul Upton (originally from Massachusetts) who was one of this area's early pioneers. The lake is only a few feet from the Town of Clinton line in the southwest corner of the Town of Stanford.

The Poughkeepsie & Eastern Railroad was constructed in the late 19th century and ran from Poughkeepsie to Pine Plains, with nearby stops in Salt Point, Clinton Corners, Upton Lake and Stanfordville. By the turn of the 20th century, at the height of the summer season, six trains a day ran between Pough-



keepsie and Upton Lake. The fare was 24 cents. Admission to "Upton Lake Park", the new amusement park built by the railroad, was 10 cents. It was a BIG attraction. Included was an open-air amphitheater next to the present-day Schulhoff house. As Edith Allen Webster noted in the 1959 *Town of Clinton Historical Review*, "...there were benches placed in a semi-circle and a stage at the bottom of the depression where vaudeville acts and acrobatic stunts were performed, a merry-go-round, swings and a Wild West Show." Grove Way was hopping in those days!

As automobiles became popular, the attraction of taking the train to the amusement park lessened, and buildings began to decay. In 1903, it became "Camp Victory", a summer YMCA camp. The natural amphitheater was later the site for such visiting speakers as the newly married FDR, who often motored over from Hyde Park.

The P&E Railroad was also used in the late winter to haul Upton Lake ice blocks into Poughkeepsie. A short spur of track was added to the line, in front of the present Burkowske east shore homestead. Thousands of ice blocks were 'harvested' every winter and stored for hot summer days in two huge ice houses built at the cove. Jean Burkowske remembers, as a child, the long conveyer belt run by a gas engine that took

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Preserving Clinton's Heritage

Toll Roads *(Continued from page 1)*

provided a shorter route to the river by way of Hibernia and East Park to the fine landing at Hyde Park. Poughkeepsie was by-passed completely.

Most of us now use the Salt Point Turnpike when we go to Poughkeepsie. This road was operated as a toll road until 1896. One toll-gate was located a short distance above the railroad bypass at St. Peter's Cemetery. The second one stood about a half mile above the intersection with the Netherwood-Pleasant Valley road. By the tollgate was a tiny dwelling where to toll gatekeeper lived.

Recollections of the Turnpike, by Herbert S. Knapp (aged 90 years): "When my grandfather, Amos B. Knapp, was a young man, he drove the stage over the Dutchess Turnpike for a short time from Poughkeepsie to Amenia. The old hotel that stood at the east end of Washington Hollow was the halfway house and stage stop. Man and beast could have their dinner there. When I was a young man, I paid many tolls on the Salt Point Turnpike. Walter Travis' father was the collector then, at the first gate, and Dan Robinson, an uncle of O.D. Robinson, was the collector at the second gate.

I well remember one bitter winter night when I was driving from Poughkeepsie to Willow Brook. I had forgotten to put my toll in my mitten before leaving town (3 cents for a horse & wagon--5 cents for a double team). It was so cold I didn't feel like removing my mittens and unbuttoning my overcoats, so I thought I would drive through and pay when I came that way again. I had wrapped the lines around the whip and was sitting on my hands to keep them warm. Jessie could drive herself. That was the only time I can recall that the bar was left across the road, so I had the surprise of my life when Jessie crashed into it and broke it. Dan Robinson came out and I offered to pay the damages, but he wouldn't take anything for it. I heard afterward that the bar was not supposed to be down. Jessie seemed to suffer no ill effects. A great horse was Jessie and a fine roader. I could see my girl home safely anywhere in the county. Then I could wrap the lines around the whip and go completely to sleep knowing that Jessie would see me safely home."

From the "Party Wire", 1960, by Mabel Burhans.

Upton Lake *(Continued from page 1)*

the ice blocks into the icehouses. Horses had previously pulled the heavy blocks, but there was always the danger that they might fall through the ice.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, all the land around Upton Lake was open to grazing and farming. Now, the only open land is on the south end where there are two horse farms. However, if you go out on the lake, you still can see remnants of the amusement park and the ice business. One way to do this is to purchase a boat rental from the Historical Society's *Promise Tree* at Community Day!

Jon Wechsler is a CHS Member and 32 year Millbrook High School history teacher.



A New York General

Benedict Arnold was one of the greatest generals America ever produced. He fought during the Revolution, America's longest war until Vietnam. From 1775 to 1777, his victories at Ft. Ticonderoga, Lake Champlain and Saratoga prevented the British from splitting New York and the rebellious colonies in half. He is also the only American major general ever to have committed treason.

Arnold's defection to the British in 1780 was the result of his being upset over a reprimand from the politicians and he also wanted to be compensated for his injured leg (which was shattered at the battle of Saratoga). However, his was more than a personal change of allegiance. He planned to hand over the fortress of West Point, which he then commanded and was the key to the lower Hudson Valley, thus giving over to the British all that he had once defended. Had his treasonous plan been successful, the enemy would have captured General Washington and his staff, who were scheduled to arrive at West Point. Due to the carelessness of Arnold's British handler, Major John Andre, the plot was exposed.

Arnold spent the rest of the war fighting for his new British masters and clamoring vainly for the compensation he believed he was owed. He died in London, a disappointed man, in 1801.



HELP THE BIRDS!



HELP THE CREEK MEETING HOUSE!

We are looking for young artists and woodworkers (8-13 years old) to assemble and paint Creek Meeting House pre-cut birdhouses. The workshops will be held on two Saturdays after the holidays. Each child will go home with his/her own birdhouse and others will be sold to benefit the Society.

Please call Glenda Schwarze (266-5203) for more information.

WIN!



The first 200 members to pay their 2004 dues before January will win our heartfelt thanks.

If you haven't been paying your dues on time, we know it's not because you don't care about the Society. You're busy and you just forget. But your dues are very important. First, they offer moral support to the core group of members who do much of the work. And second, they help pay for the monthly newsletter, special events and presentations, and the Society's on-going research. As you can see, when everybody pays dues, everybody wins. So please do it now while it's on your mind. Fill out the enclosed membership form, attach a check for \$10 for an individual membership or \$15 for the whole family, and mail them to the Clinton Historical Society, P.O. Box 122, Clinton Corners, NY 12514. Thanks!

Did you know...



In the 1800's, to preserve meats without refrigeration, poultry (cooked and boned) was stored for months beneath a covering of lard or butter. Roasts were kept fresh for up to a week by immersing them in cold running water and when the meat began to float it was time for it to go into the oven. Fish would be kept fresh by replacing the innards with a lump of charcoal.

1777 Creek Meeting House



From the Trustees:

The Progressive Dinner was a resounding success. Everyone had a wonderful time. Isn't it great that we can play together and still raise money for the Society! Many thanks to the chairmen-- Glenda, Edna, and Eliot--and to the hosts, bakers, and all of the 145 enthusiastic attendees.

The heating system at the Masonic Hall is being upgraded.

Our two historic buildings are available to the public for exhibits, cultural events, historical research and educational programs.

Many projects are underway and more hands are needed. All are welcome to share their talents. Come enjoy the fun. Call Bill at 266-3819.

For the Holiday Party auction, we request that members bring wrapped gifts of consumables (breads, jams, candles, etc.) or other quality gifts.

New volunteer Bibi DeFelice has begun to create a database, archiving the recently donated Austin McEntee Railroad Collection. Her past experience includes the Museum of the City of New York and the Huguenot Historic Society.

We wish to again thank our Wednesday morning volunteers, past and present, who have given of their time for ten years, working diligently at our Society's Creek office.



1865 Masonic Hall

RARE SPECIMENS

A Mixed-Media Show Featuring Six Artists



Opening Friday, Nov, 28, 5-8 PM.
Weekends 11 AM-4 PM, through Dec. 21.

Exquisite Gifts:

Paintings, Drawings, Photographs, Tropical Butterflies

THE CREEK MEETING HOUSE

2433 Salt Point Turnpike, Clinton Corners, 266-3819

Sponsored by the Clinton Historical Society

**OPEN MIC
LIVE
MUSIC**

Coffee House at the
1865 Masonic Hall,
Schultzville, NY



**No Open Mic in
November
or December**

**Look for Cabin Fever
in January**



*Did
you know...*



Before electricity and central heat, people kept fires burning in their homes in the evening for light and warmth. Because of the high risk of a fire starting and spreading to neighboring buildings, it was forbidden for fires to remain unattended while residents slept. In France, there was a certain time designated for people to "cover the fire". In French the expression is "cuevre fue". The phrase became associated with bedtime and often had a specific signal such as a bell or horn, and it was eventually assimilated into the English language as "curfew".

December Meeting

Friday, December 5, 6:30 pm,
Masonic Hall,
Schultzville

**HOLIDAY DINNER
and AUCTION!**

Don't miss our annual fun Holiday Dinner and Auction event on Friday December 5 at the **Masonic Hall** (new location this year).

The mood will be enhanced by candle-lit tables adorned with holiday decorations. Bring your favorite covered dish. Dessert and beverages will be provided. Also be sure to bring a wrapped gift for the fun auction. (No "white elephants" this year please.) Consumable gifts, such as home baked bread, jams or candles, are encouraged. We start at 6:30!

DATED MATERIAL - PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY

The Town of Clinton Historical Society
2433 Salt Point Tpk
PO Box 122
Clinton Corners, NY 12514
(845) 266-5494

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**DECEMBER
PROGRAM**
**Friday
December 5th
6:30 PM**
**New Location this
year
At the
Masonic Hall,
Schultzville**

