



Deerpark Diary

Town of Deerpark 1863 School House Museum

Town of Deerpark Historian, P.O. Box 621, Huguenot, NY 12746

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Versage Machine Works

There have been a variety of businesses in the Town of Deerpark. Some of them are of recent history and some from much earlier times. The next few issues of the *Deerpark Diary* will include articles about these businesses. The first company that was researched dates back to 1938 when Vinnie Versage began the Versage Machine Works in Brooklyn, NY. During World War II, he manufactured defense parts.

In 1948, he married Margaret Harrington and they decided to move their home and business to upstate New York. After searching for a suitable



place, they purchased a house and fifty-six acres on Oakland Valley Road, Cuddebackville in 1952. That year, a 2,000 square-foot shop for the business was built behind the house. The firm used machines that performed metal cutting tasks such as creating nuts, bolts, springs, bearings and other items needed in the manufacture of larger tools and machinery. Versage products were used in the manufacture of items such as conveyors, mixers, lathes, levers, milling machines etc. They employed tools that worked on metal or

other materials of high hardness.

At the same time, their house was sorely in need of repairs. Using the natural resources on the property such as timber and bluestone, the house went through many changes over the years: chimneys were added in 1952 and 1953; a front porch in 1962; the interior portion of the second floor was completed; two ponds were drained and filled in; a driveway was moved to the area where the ponds had been located. Several old sheds were demolished. A sawmill was built in 1974 to supply lumber for additional buildings. A cottage was built. Over the years garages and sheds were added to the property. All the building materials came from their property.

Vinnie and Margie shared many interests and



hobbies. Margie had an outstanding collection of antique “daisy and button” glassware. Vinnie's hobbies included collecting vintage machine screws and antique clocks for which he would make replacement parts. He also worked on a replica Whitehead bi-wing airplane. Every year they would host a Labor Day Clam Bake for friends who traveled many miles for this special celebration. For many years Vinnie served his community as a member of the Cuddebackville Fire Department.

Both Margie and Vinnie's health began to decline in the late 1980s. Margie died on May 12, 1993 and Vinnie passed on November 17, 1993. Both are buried in the Cuddebackville Rural Valley Cemetery.

Quarries

A hike through the woods of Deerpark will very often be

met with holes in the ground, squared ledges and piles of slag stone covered with vegetation. These are the remnants of an active bluestone quarrying industry which once thrived in our town. Quarries dotted the landscape in Cuddebackville, Oakland Valley and Quarry Hill now known as Rio.

Bluestone was created from deposits that settled on the ocean floor more than 350 million years ago. It is composed of small quartz grains, feldspar and in some areas traces of iron. Silica was the cementing material which held these grains together. This unique formation of stone was especially favorable for sidewalks and steps as it created a long lasting and rough non-slip surface.

Early settlers of the area found these long parallel ledges and worked the stone into their lives. Early tombstones were roughly cut and trimmed. Sometimes they would add lettering. Later marble and granite took its place. Old homes had bluestone cellar floors, well stones, fireplaces, chimneys and hearthstones made from this readily available stone. Hitching posts, stone walls, carriage steps, grinding stones and even homes and small out buildings utilized this versatile material.

Bluestone became an important commodity. Long before Portland cement was widely used in the building industry around 1900, bluestone provided much of the building material used along the East Coast of the United States. Flagstone for sidewalks, curbing, window sills, door sills and lintels were made from this sturdy stone which could be sawed, ground and planed fairly easily. Stone from Deerpark quarries travelled all over the country. Locally noted sites include Port Jervis, courthouse steps in Newton, New Jersey and the steps of Gracie Mansion in New York City.



Quarry Cutting Tools

Demand was great and many small quarries sprang up. The work was hard and often dangerous. The top layers of soil had to be cleared away, sometimes with dynamite or blasting powder. The rock layers had to be separated by wedges into “lifts.”

Drilling a series of holes along a division shaped the basic size. One man would hold a drill while another man struck it with a heavy hammer. Injuries were all too common. Work took place only nine months a year. When temperatures were too cold the bluestone became too brittle to cut.

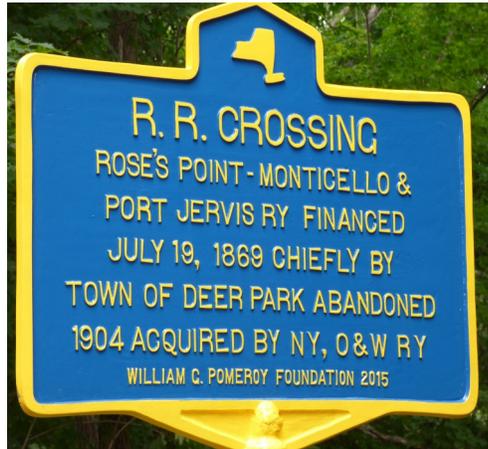


Goble Quarry in Rio

Getting the stone to market required teams of horses pulling very heavy wagons. Teamsters from Quarry Hill and Cahoonzie from the Patterson, Snyder, Goble and Banks quarries, hauled their stone to Bolton Basin to be off loaded onto awaiting D&H Canal boats. The stone then travelled to Kingston to be shipped down the Hudson River to New York. Francis Banks remembers their quarries' stone was sent along with five team caravans. Soft spongy and muddy roads in the area of today's Eckes Auto Body Shop, mired down the wagons and the companion teams were there to haul

them through. This was the main reason the State contracted for a plank road to be built in that area.

Railroads played a large part in hauling the stone to market. Larger quarries took over and edged out the smaller ones because they had easier access to Erie rail flatcars. The quarrying of bluestone in Deerpark was pretty much over by 1930.



Deerpark's Railroad Years Remembered

On Saturday Aug. 22, 2015, a group of railroad fans gathered for the dedication and unveiling of Deerpark's newest Pomeroy Foundation historic marker at Rose's Point, Prospect Hill Rd. in Cuddebackville. The marker commemorates the Port Jervis and Monticello Railroad that ran through our town. Next to the marker and on the original railroad post, museum member



Leonard Merciliott created and mounted a replica railroad crossing sign.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the Monticello and Port Jervis Railroad followed a similar route as the Old Mine Road and the D&H Canal. The Town of Deerpark sold bonds to finance this venture as early



Emma Merciliott

as 1869. The line began operation January 12, 1871. This was a 24 mile "shortline" owned by the Towns of Deerpark, Thompson and Forestburgh. The railroad struggled from the very begin-



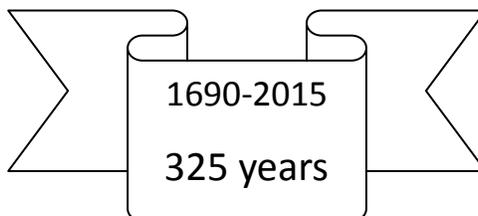
Rose's Pt. at Prospect Hill Rd.

ning and went through numerous bankruptcies and sales.

In 1875, it was recognized as the Port Jervis and Monticello Railroad. Then in 1886, it was changed to the Port Jervis, Monticello and New York Railroad. Adolph E. Godeffroy bought the P. J. & M. & N. Y. in 1899 and ran it until 1905 when it became part of the O&W. The railroad ceased operation March 9, 1957.

On Sunday, Aug. 23rd, the Town of Deerpark Museum presented a program at the Neversink Valley Grange called "Yesterday and Today on the P.J. & M. Railway." Railroad enthusiast, Joe Senese brought tables full of Erie and O&W memorabilia to display and then gave an enthusiastically received program filled with a huge collection of area railroad photos. The photos were from earliest times in our valley and how those areas look today. He followed the routes from Port Jervis through Deerpark and on to Monticello, then Huguenot through Summitville.

The historian's office has just received approval from the Pomeroy Foundation for our next historical marker which will be dedicated in 2016 at the site of the Valley Junction train station in Godeffroy. The William G. Pomeroy Foundation established its Historic Roadside Marker Grant Program in 2006. Bill and Sandra Pomeroy felt that the history of towns and villages in New York State was important to preserve through the use of the familiar blue and yellow markers. These signs educate the public and reveal the unique contributions our community has made to the history of New York. To date the Town of Deerpark has been awarded three historic markers through this grant program. The Town has also received two National Historic plaques from the Pomeroy Foundation. The first plaque is located at the 1863 Huguenot Schoolhouse. The second plaque for the Neversink Valley Grange will be dedicated at the Deerpark Open house on Sunday, September 27, 2015.



Deerpark Museum

Open House

Celebrating 325 Years

**Sunday, September 27,
2015**

11:00 – 4:00

1863 Schoolhouse
Neversink Valley Grange
Grange Rd., Huguenot, NY
12746

Lenape Indian Display
By Frank Salvati
Antique Tools & Colonial
Hand Crafts
Outdoor Woodfire Baking
Demonstration & Sale
Cooking & Medicinal Herb
Lore
Broome Street Fife & Drum
at Noon
Dedication of National
Historic Plaque
Children's Petting Zoo
New "Deerest Deerpark"
Deer & Art Work
Tri-State Veteran Memorial
Information
Viet Nam War
Commemoration
Refreshments

Sponsored by
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For Information Call (845)
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