



# DEERPARK DIARY

TOWN OF DEERPARK HISTORIAN'S OFFICE  
25 GRANGE ROAD, P.O. BOX 621, HUGUENOT, NY 12746 (845) 856-2702

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## Deerpark Road History

This year the Deerpark Diary will be dedicated to roads, past and present. It is amazing that the oldest one hundred mile road in America was the "Old Mine Road", today's Route 209. It was built in the 1600s using little more than shovels and wheelbarrows. This 184-mile colonial road had been slogged through the wilderness from the Pahawurry mines in New Jersey to Esopus (Kingston), New York.

The width and condition of the "deer path" roads of the past would surprise most of us today. Few of the early rod-wide (14 1/2 feet) roads remain. Many were lined with rows of stone fences or tall trees.

We are used to paved roads and multi-lane highways. However, the first roads were built without the use of heavy equipment.

In 1798, when the Town of Deerpark was established, the town council created the Highway Commission and nineteen Road Districts. Each district had a Road Master or Overseer.

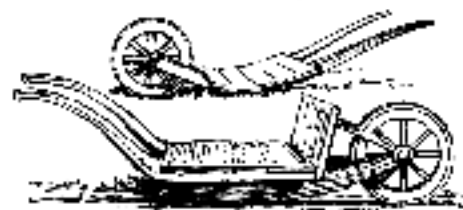
The elected Commissioners were required to determine how many days work would be needed on each road within a highway district in order to maintain it in good and passable condition. After they had decided on the number of days of work necessary to maintain the road, they were required to divide the number of days of work among the residents living on that road, in proportion to the amount and value of the property each resident owned on the road. The Commissioners were also responsible for building additional roads and bridges as needed and keeping them in good repair. They had to make reports to the Town Council when there was a need for major repair.

Elected Road Overseers organized work crews and saw to it that each person actually performed the necessary work. If an owner was unable to work, the overseer would hire a worker and add the cost to the taxes of the owner.



The Town of Deerpark Historian's Office has some of the original Work Orders and requests for new roads, complete with the names of residents and the number of work hours they provided to maintain the roads.

Westfall Road was one of the roads requested in December 1887. The road was to go through the Westfall lands to the Port Jervis village line. The contract approving the building of this road was signed August 27, 1890. All the specifications were spelled out, however there is no map of record to verify where the road is situated. Using old maps it appears that the road ran parallel to Route 209 just outside of the Port Jervis city line. Today there is no Westfall Road listed in the Town of Deerpark. If anyone has information of such a road, please let us know so that we may complete the Town Historian Office records.



*Stone Barrow*

## PLANK ROADS

Traveling on plank roads must have been a very uncomfortable way to travel.

When Charles Dickens visited America he sent home a letter describing a coach trip on plank roads. "A great portion of the way was over what is called a corduroy road which is made by throwing trunks of trees into a marsh, and leaving them to settle there. The very slightest of the jolts with which the ponderous carriage fell from log to log, was enough, it seemed, to have

dislocated all the bones in the human body....Never, never once that day was the coach in any position, attitude or kind of motion to which we are accustomed!"

The only reminders we have today of former plank roads are the roads that still bear the name. One hundred years ago, the whole country was webbed with such paths of logs. Enough wood was used to level forests of pine, hemlock, tamarack, oak and walnut. In 1875 there were close to 3000 miles of plank roads in New York. By 1880, the idea had spread to every other state.

Canadian plank roads introduced the idea of using irregular edges, so that wagons could "climb" back onto the planks after having gone off to the dirt turn-off to pass another wagon. A smooth edge would have prevented the wagon wheels from getting back on the planks. The American plank road adopted the idea of projecting every other plank four inches from the edge. This enabled wheels to climb back aboard again, and also created an effective series of short warning bumps when the wagon got too close to the edge. Wherever a sharp curve was approached, planks were set a small distance apart to produce a rumble and awaken the sleepy driver.

Plank-road designs varied, but the design of New York State roads became an average plank-road dimension that was copied throughout the country. The usual road grant was of one chain width (66 feet), with a roadbed of thirty feet and a plank path at least eight feet wide. Ditches were built for drainage, along with earth turn-off tracks of about twelve feet. The finished plank road was covered with sand or wood shavings. Planks, from three to four inches thick and from nine to

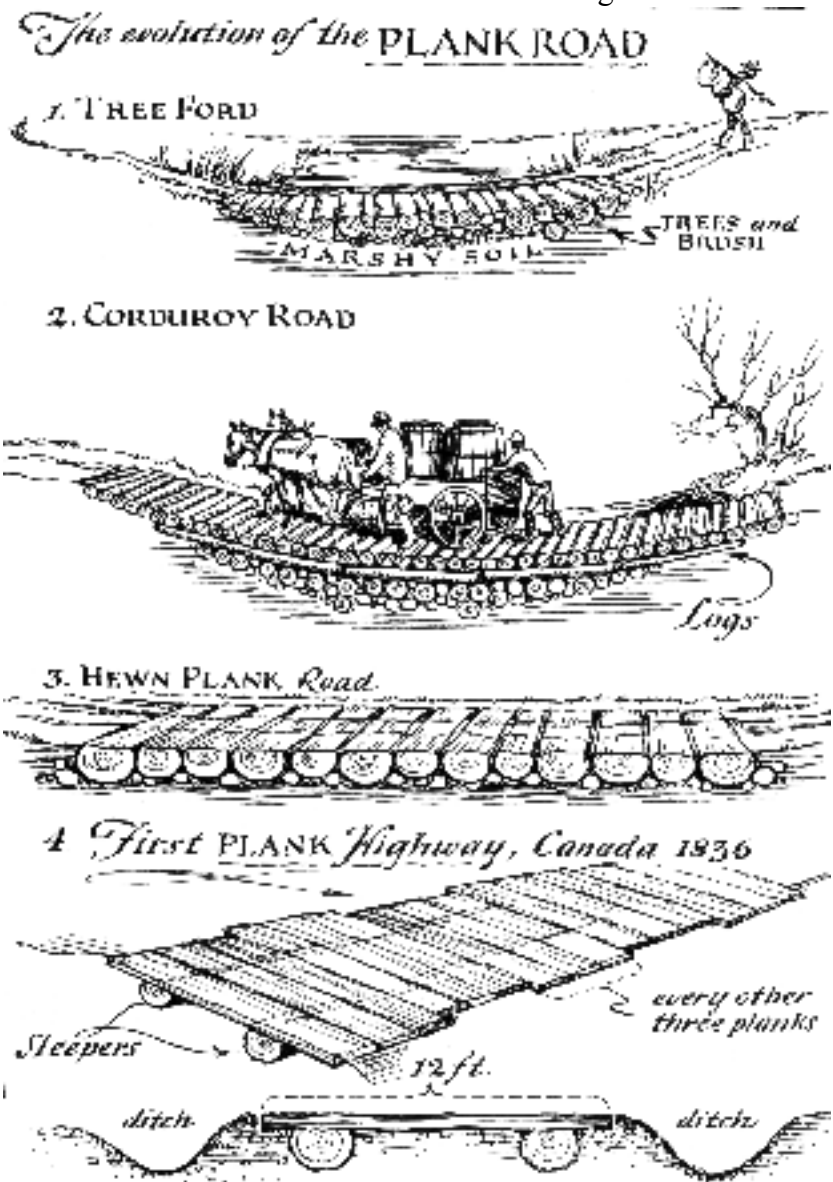
sixteen inches wide, were laid on top of "sleepers". Mostly the planks lay loose and let gravel and their own weight keep them in place. Sleepers varied in size from four by six inches to four by twelve (laid flat). Many small roads left them out altogether. Stonerollers were used to flatten out the road and push sleepers into the dirt before laying the planks on top

Plank roads were originally built for profit by tolls. The New York Plank Road Law established the following tolls in the 1870s:

"Any vehicle drawn by one horse, ¾ cents per mile. For vehicles Drawn by two horses, 1 ½ cents

each extra horse. For a horse and rider, or a led horse, ½ cent. For every score of sheep, swine or neat cattle [Archaic--cattle, oxen, cow or heifer], 1cent per mile."

Today there is still one Plank Road in the Town of Deerpark, located in Rio. A hundred years ago the entire stretch of road from the Port Jervis village line to the Sullivan County line was a plank road. The northern section followed present-day Rt. 42 and the southern section followed Main Street in Sparrowbush. The following is an excerpt about the road from an article in the March 14, 1903 issue of The Evening Gazette.



per

This drawing is from the book "our Vanishing Landscape" by Eric Sloane.

### **The Old Cahoonzie Plank Road**

*The good roads committee of the Board of Supervisors, accompanied by Supervisor W. H. Nearpass and Highway Commissioner E. B. Crane, yesterday looked over the proposed road from Port Jervis to the Sullivan county line at Quarryville...*

*The road looked over is the old Cahoonzie Plank Road, extending from Port Jervis to Sparrowbush, thence through the Cahoonzie region to Rio, and thence to the Sullivan county line near Quarryville.*

*The line is nine miles from Port Jervis, and thirteen from Monticello.*

*The committee is much pleased with the grades of the Cahoonzie Road, and will recommend it to the state engineer to be surveyed, and this will doubtless be the route accepted by the state. It is not probable, however, that the survey can be begun before next fall, so that the work on the road can not begin within a year.*

This road would become part of Route 42. Another name for the road was the Sullivan and Orange Plank Road.

## **TURNPIKES**

The turnpike age was a colorful part of America. It brought towns closer and made some men rich. The name comes from the past when a pike was turned or raised to admit travelers past a tollhouse. A company built turnpike roads and charged admission, payable at tollgates along the way. The rates were

variable, because the laws were inconsistent until the early part of the nineteenth century when turnpike commissioners appointed by the House of Representatives regulated rates.

Tolls were complicated. The collector had to have math training to survive. A percentage was added during the winter, yet sleighs went by for a cent less than wagons. The width of wagon tires regulated the admission to turnpikes because narrow wheels caused ruts while wide wheels helped to flatten the road.

Private road fortunes disappeared overnight when the government took an active interest. The success of the turnpike business was short-lived. People preferred railroad travel, which were more dependable than muddy turnpikes.

### **Mount Hope and Lumberland Turnpike**

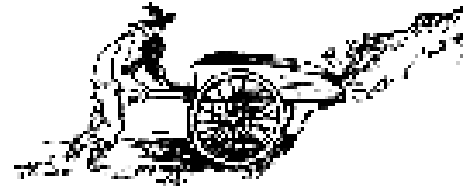
The section of Route 211 in Deerpark (Cuddebackville) was part of the original Mount Hope and Lumberland Turnpike. The Mount Hope and Lumberland Turnpike Road Company, was established by the New York State legislature, on June 8, 1812. A historic marker commemorating the turnpike is located in front of the Cuddebackville Post Office.

The capital of the company was established at \$35,000.00. Members of the original company were James Finch Jr., Elisha Reeve, William A. Cuddeback, William Young Jr., Richard Penny, Charles Murray, Thomas Everson and Lebius Goderrey.

The turnpike road was to begin on the Minisink and Montgomery Turnpike between the house of Dr. Benjamin Newkirk, and the store of Benja-

min Dodge, in the Town of Wallkill, cross the Shawangunk Mountains, near Jonathan Sares, in the Town of Deerpark to the Basha Kill, landing on the Neversink River, in Sullivan County, thence to Big Eddy or the Narrows on the Delaware River.

Work was not started on the turnpike until after the War of 1812, the turnpike was completed to Narrowsburgh, on the Delaware River.



### **Minisink and Montgomery Turnpike**

Shin Hollow Road was part of the original Minisink and Montgomery Turnpike, established by Chapter 30 of the laws of 1809 and gave the directors of the turnpike company permission to run a turnpike road from the New Jersey line near the house of Benjamin Carpenter, in the Town of Minisink, across the Shawangunk mountain to the house of David G. Finch in the Town of Deerpark, to or near the house of Benjamin Woodward, in the Town of Wallkill, thence on the most direct and eligible route to intersect the Newburgh and Cochection Turnpike road in the village of Montgomery. The capital of the company was to be \$35,000 with shares at the value of \$25.00 each.

## **HARD TOP ROADS**

We think that the hardtop road was the result of the automobile age. However the first hard-top roads were designed for the use of bicycles. Bicycle clubs had organized into powerful groups sponsoring hardtop roads, even paying to have them built. The League of American Wheelmen was the first



organized group of American voters to demand better roads and also included in their demands that automobiles be barred from improved bicycle roads. Automobiles were to travel on adjacent gravel roads.

At the end of the 19th century, people were spending over a hundred dollars for a bicycle. Factories were turning out over a million bicycles a year. Many households had four or five bikes at a time. At that time one could purchase a fine buggy for \$50.00.



Road Scraper used by oxen

## DEERPARK ROADS

The following information is compiled from many contradictory records, maps and reference materials. If anyone has additional information, we will be very happy to hear from you. This additional information will be published in subsequent newsletters. Please contact Norma Schadt or Toni Marion, Town of Deerpark Historian's Office (845) 856-2702.

### Brandt Road, Port Orange

Many residents believe that this road was named after Joseph Brant, the Indian Chief who attacked our valley in 1778 and 1779. However, the road is named after George Brandt (note the different spelling of the last name), who owned the land which today is known as Camp Deerpark. At one time Camp Deerpark was a working farm and boardinghouse. The second half of the 1800s saw as many as 22 boardinghouses and hotels in Deerpark.



Camp Deerpark in the 1930s, from left to right, Bill Flieger, Lillian Flieger and George Brandt. (Courtesy Images of America Deerpark by Brian Lewis)

### Boehmler Road, Sparrowbush

Boehmler Road was named after the Boehmler family. The brothers Bill and Frank owned about 1000 acres in Sparrowbush, building their own homes, working a dairy and sawmill.

Quoting an article in the Union Gazette from the 1970s, *"Fiercely independent, shaped by the land he loves, "Uncle Will" Boehmler, 83, is one of the last of the "mountain men" and a local legend in Deerpark. He churns his own butter, chops his own wood-- and welcomes visitors."*

He bequeathed the land and pond for Boehmler Park to the Town of Deerpark.



William Boehmler

### Cashdollar Road, Huguenot

The newly named Cashdollar Road, formerly Taxi Drive was dedicated on August 18, 2007. The name change was requested by Ross Decker to honor Harry Cashdollar who grew up in Huguenot, graduated from Port Jervis High School and went on to achieve extraordinary accomplishments.

He joined the U. S. Marine Corps., earned a BS in physics from Tullane University, and his MS in Control Theory and Physics from U.C. L.A. and San Diego State.

Mr. Cashdollar was an aerospace engineer working on navigation systems and anti-satellite weaponry for Lockheed and Douglas. He then played a major role in the Apollo Space Program as the Senior Engineer and Group Leader for NASA's Saturn V rocket. Mr. Cashdollar culminated his career by working on intelligence systems for the Navy and private defense contractors in developing their intercontinental missile guidance systems.



From left to right, Joyce Bierne, Kathy Olenick, Marge Cashdollar Engelhart-Dedication of Cashdollar Road (Photo by Brian J. Lewis)

**Town of Deerpark Museum  
1863 Huguenot Schoolhouse  
2008 History Lecture Series  
Sundays 3:00**

**March 16--D & H Canal  
April 20--One-Room Schools  
May 18--Railroads**