

Report

# HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY OF THE OLD ALBANY POST ROAD

Philipstown, New York

*April 2013*



**FEMA**

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Contract No. HSFEHQ-06-D-0489  
Task Order No. HSFEHQ-06-J-0021 P00002

15708821.00200

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The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) of the Department of Homeland Security has proposed providing assistance to the Town of Philipstown, Putnam County, New York, through the New York State Office of Emergency Management (NYSOEM), to mitigate damage to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-listed Old Albany Post Road-Philipstown Section (Road), which occurred during storms of April 14-18, 2007 (Undertaking). FEMA determined and the New York State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurred that the Undertaking would result in adverse effects on the Road. In April 2009, FEMA, the SHPO, NYSOEM, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Town of Philipstown, as signatory parties, and the Old Road Society of Philipstown, as a concurring party, consulted on and prepared a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that included stipulations to minimize the adverse effects of the Undertaking, in order to satisfy FEMA's responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

As provided by the MOA, this Historic Resource Study includes an enhanced historic context to better understand the thematic trends or patterns of development of the Road over time; assesses the Road's historic integrity; and identifies extant features of the Road that are located on and adjacent to the NRHP portion of the Road. The historic context is included as Section Two and its associated bibliography as Section Three. The extant features of the Road are identified in the appended inventory, aerial maps, and photographs. Photographic documentation of historic features of the Road that may be demolished or altered by the Undertaking will be submitted, as provided by the MOA, under separate cover.

### SECTION ONE PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGY

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) of the Department of Homeland Security has proposed providing assistance to the Town of Philipstown, Putnam County, New York, through the New York State Office of Emergency Management (NYSOEM), to mitigate damage to the Old Albany Post Road-Philipstown Section (Road) that occurred during storms of April 14-18, 2007 (Undertaking). A 6.6-mile section of the Road was listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) on July 8, 1982.

The Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the Undertaking was established by FEMA in its February 21, 2008 finding of Adverse Effect. This finding states:

FEMA has determined that the area of potential [effects] (APE) would include the roadway and the right of way included in the National Register nomination boundary description. Because of the potential for additional work funded by the applicant, the APE has been determined to extend 1100' north of the intersection of Sprout Brook Lane.

The length of the project as proposed was 650 feet. The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) explains in more detail that the APE was extended to 1,100 feet because of the “potential of additional drainage work.”

The width of the APE, as noted in the Adverse Effects finding and the MOA, is the right of way that was identified in the Road’s NRHP nomination. The Verbal Boundary Description section of that nomination states that the Road’s boundary is a:

6.6 mile length of the Old Albany Post Road bounded on the south by a line perpendicular to the center line at Milestone 52, on the west by a line 25 feet west of the center of the road, on the north by the road’s terminus at U.S. Route 9 R.O.W., and on the east by a line 25 feet east of the center of the road. All walls, milestones, engineering components and landscape features within the 50 foot public R.O.W. are considered contributing elements to the nomination.

Therefore the APE is 1,100 long and 50 feet wide (see Area of Potential Effects Map at Appendix B).

The contributing resources of the Road are not specified in the NRHP nomination. However, the nomination indirectly identifies the central elements of significance, appearance, and integrity of the Road at Sections 7 (Description), 8 (Significance), and 10 (Geographical Data/Verbal Boundary Description and Justification).

At the Description section, the nomination describes the Road as a 6.6-mile section of dirt road that is lined by stone walls and mature trees. It states that the Road has maintained its “original route and eighteenth-century dimensions which, together with its rural context, contribute to a distinctive historic atmosphere.”

At the Significance section, the nomination identifies the Road’s Area of Significance as Transportation and its Period of Significance as 1600-1699, 1700-1799, and 1800-1899. It states that the Road has “retained a significant amount of its eighteenth-century character and appearance.” It further notes that the Road’s visual impact is enhanced by “important artifacts, such as stone walls and milestones, and landscape features.” It concludes: “Still narrow, unpaved

and rural; the Old Albany Post Road winds through the hilly upland landscape of Putnam County retaining strong historic character.”

At its Verbal Boundary Description section (quoted above), the nomination identifies all walls, milestones, engineering components and landscape features within the 50-foot right of way as contributing.

In addition to defining the APE, FEMA determined in its Adverse Effects finding of February 21, 2008, that the Undertaking would result in adverse effects on the Road. The New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with this determination. In April 2009, FEMA, the SHPO, NYSOEM, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Town of Philipstown, as signatory parties, and the Old Road Society of Philipstown, as a concurring party, consulted on and prepared a MOA. In order to satisfy FEMA’s responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the MOA includes stipulations to minimize the adverse effects of the Undertaking on the walls, engineering components, and landscape features within the APE. A copy of the MOA is attached as Appendix E to this report.

Stipulation II.A of the MOA provided that, prior to the implementation of the Undertaking, FEMA would photograph all historic features of the Road that may be demolished or altered by the Undertaking. These photographs have been prepared and will be submitted, as provided by the stipulation, under separate cover. Stipulation II.B of the MOA provided that FEMA would conduct a Historic Resource Study (Study) of the 6.6-mile length of the Road that is listed in the NRHP. According to the Stipulation:

The Study will provide an enhanced historic context to better understand the thematic trends or patterns of development of the Road over time; will assess the Road’s historic integrity; and will identify extant features of the Road that are located on and adjacent to the NRHP portion of the Road. The Study will be designed to enhance the community’s understanding of the significance of the Road and the features that make it eligible for listing in the NRHP.

Stipulation II.B further provided, in part, that:

1. The Survey will identify those sections of the Road that have been paved and those that remain unpaved; locate significant components of the Road, such as natural features, stone walls, mileposts, that are within or adjacent to the NRHP boundaries of the Road; assess whether those resources appear to be contributing or noncontributing to the NRHP district that encompasses the Road; and identify other historic properties within and adjacent to the Road’s NRHP boundaries that are listed in the NRHP or have been determined eligible for such listing, along with the listed or eligible boundaries of those resources.
2. FEMA will contact the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians as part of the historical research effort for the Study.
3. FEMA will prepare the Study as a narrative report that will include an historic context, discussion of the Road and its significant historic features, photographs, and maps.

This Study is the product of the requirements of Stipulation II.B. It was prepared by Marvin A. Brown, Senior Architectural Historian with National Infrastructure Support Technical Assistance



Consultants (NISTAC) who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for History and Architectural History.

The methodology for the preparation of this Study included fieldwork, research, photography, archival reproduction of photographs, and submission of materials as provided by the MOA. Historical research was conducted at the Putnam County Historical Society and the Butterfield Memorial Library in Cold Spring in New York; the Desmond-Fish Library in Garrison; the New York State Library and the New York State Archives in Albany; the offices of the SHPO in Cohoes; and the New York Public Library in New York City. The Old Road Society of Philipstown also provided historical information. FEMA contacted the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians as part of the historic research, but received no information from the Band regarding the history of the Road. FEMA also contacted The Delaware Nation and the Delaware Tribe of Indians, as well as the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of the Mohicans again in 2013 to request any information regarding the history of the Road and to coordinate proposed archaeological site investigations that took place in April 30 – May 3, 2013. No information was provided by the Tribes regarding the history of the Road; however, information about Indian use of the Road, gathered from primary and secondary sources, is included in the Study. The Delaware Nation, the Delaware Tribe of Indians and the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of the Mohicans all requested to be consulting parties and be copy furnished, and will receive a copy of the archaeological resources study report.

## SECTION TWO THE OLD ALBANY POST ROAD IN PUTNAM COUNTY, NEW YORK

### 2.1 CONTACT PERIOD THROUGH POST-REVOLUTIONARY WAR YEARS, CA. 1609-1799

As Larson (1993) notes succinctly in his opening paragraph of the NRHP nomination for the Old Albany Post Road in Philipstown, the Road was “the original transportation artery by land between New York City and Albany.” By this, he indicates not only that the Road was the original non-native route between the two Colonial cities, but that its path also served as a Native American trail prior to European settlement. During the Contact period, from about 1600 to 1750, the Indians in the area who would have primarily used the trail were the Munsee-speaking Wappinger. Eugene Boesch (n.d.) notes that, during the Contact period, the Wappingers occupied the lands on the east side of the Hudson River extending north from New York City through Westchester, Putnam, and Dutchess counties, and on into southwestern Connecticut. He references an early account of European contact with Indians in the lower Hudson Valley who may have been Wappingers. Robert Juet, an officer on Henry Hudson’s Half Moon, reported in his journal on September 4 and 5, 1609:

This day the people of the Countrey came aboard of us, seemingly very glad of our coming, and brought greene Tabacco, and gave us of it for Knives and Beads. They go in Deere skins loose, well dressed. Thay have yellow Copper. They desire Cloathes, and are very civill. They have great store of Maiz or *Indian* Wheate, whereof they make good Bread. The Countrey is full of great and tall Oakes.

...This day [September 5] many of the people came aboard, some in Mantles of Feathers, and some in Skins of divers sorts of good Furies. Some women also came to us with Hempe. They had red copper Tabacco pipes, and other things of Copper thay did weare about their neckes.... (Juet 1609 [with the letters U and V regularized]).

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—following dispossession from their lands by Dutch-American merchant Adolph Philipse and failed court battles in the 1760s—the Wappingers left the lower Hudson River Valley for Massachusetts and, ultimately, the Great Lakes region in the United States and Canada (Kriesberg 2008; Boesch n.d.).

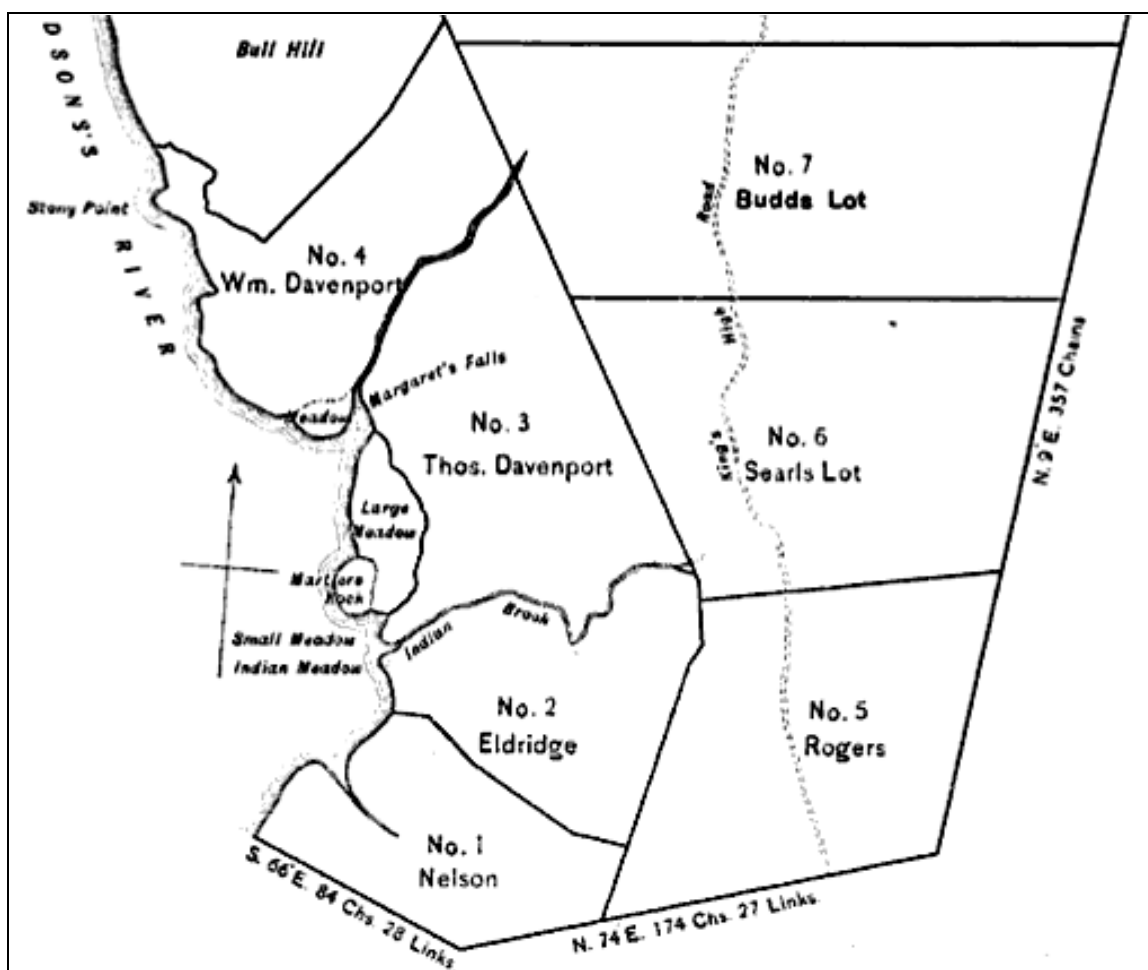
The provincial legislature of New York established a post road between New York City and Albany in 1669. Indians reportedly carried Albany’s winter mail in 1672. In 1703, the legislature passed an act for the current Old Albany Post Road, which called for a route from New York through Westchester County to Albany. The roadway was to be four rods, approximately 66 feet, in width. The Provisional Assembly in 1772 enacted a statute providing that mail be sent by postal rider weekly between New York and Albany, up one side of the river and down the other. In 1785, the legislature established a stage route to Albany along the Road (Hine 1905:1; Floyd-Jones 1923:22-28; Pelletreau 1886:130).

The Old Albany Post Road appears on many maps of the Colonial and immediate post-Revolutionary War period, at times in exceptional detail. Perhaps its first labeled appearances on maps, in which it carried a few different names, are in mid-eighteenth-century images of the vast, Colonial-era Philipse Patent. Hampton’s 1753 map of lands in dispute within the patent depicts the Road just north of the project area and south of the town of Fishkill (Figure 1). North of

Fishkill Creek, the Road is labeled “King’s Road from Albany.” Below the creek, on the Road’s route south through the project area to Manhattan, it is labeled “Post Road to N York.” A map of Lot No. 2 of the Philipse Patent, reportedly drawn by Daniel Lambert in 1769, depicts a single winding track, labeled the “King’s High Road,” passing north-south through western Putnam County and the project area (Roebeling 1903:after 414). Individuals named Rogers, Searl, and Budd occupy portions of the Philipse land through which the Road passes (Figure 2).



**Figure 1: “Draft of the Lands Disputed by Philipse Patent against Beekmans & Rambaults,” Jona Hampton, 1753 (Source: Library of Congress)**



**Figure 2: “Map of Lot No. 2, Philipse Patent,” Daniel Lambert, 1769. (Source: Roebling, The Journal of the Reverend Silas Constant, 1903)**

In a late-nineteenth-century history of Putnam County, Pelletreau (1886:547) commented on the Searl and Budd lands depicted on Lambert’s map:

Another early settler was Thomas Sarles [sic], whose lot appears on the [Lambert] map. His house was north of the mills now owned by James Nelson, near the junction of the Post road and the Highland Turnpike [where the Bird and Bottle Inn now stands]. Some distance north of this [beyond the project area] was the house of Elijah Budd. This is on what is called the Andrew Hill farm, about a mile south of the junction of the Post road and the Philipstown Turnpike, on the west side of the Post road. Gilbert Budd lived at what is called Mckeel’s Corners, the Post road and Philipstown Turnpike.

The Old Albany Post Road appears on other maps of the 1770s and 1780s, including Robert Erskine’s Revolutionary War military maps and the Montrésor map of New York of 1777 (Figure 3). Montrésor depicts it running through the Philipse demesne and Dutchess County. (Putnam County had yet to be carved from Dutchess.) Among the geographic features he includes within and near the project area are Indian Brook and the hills of “The High Lands” shaded in gray.

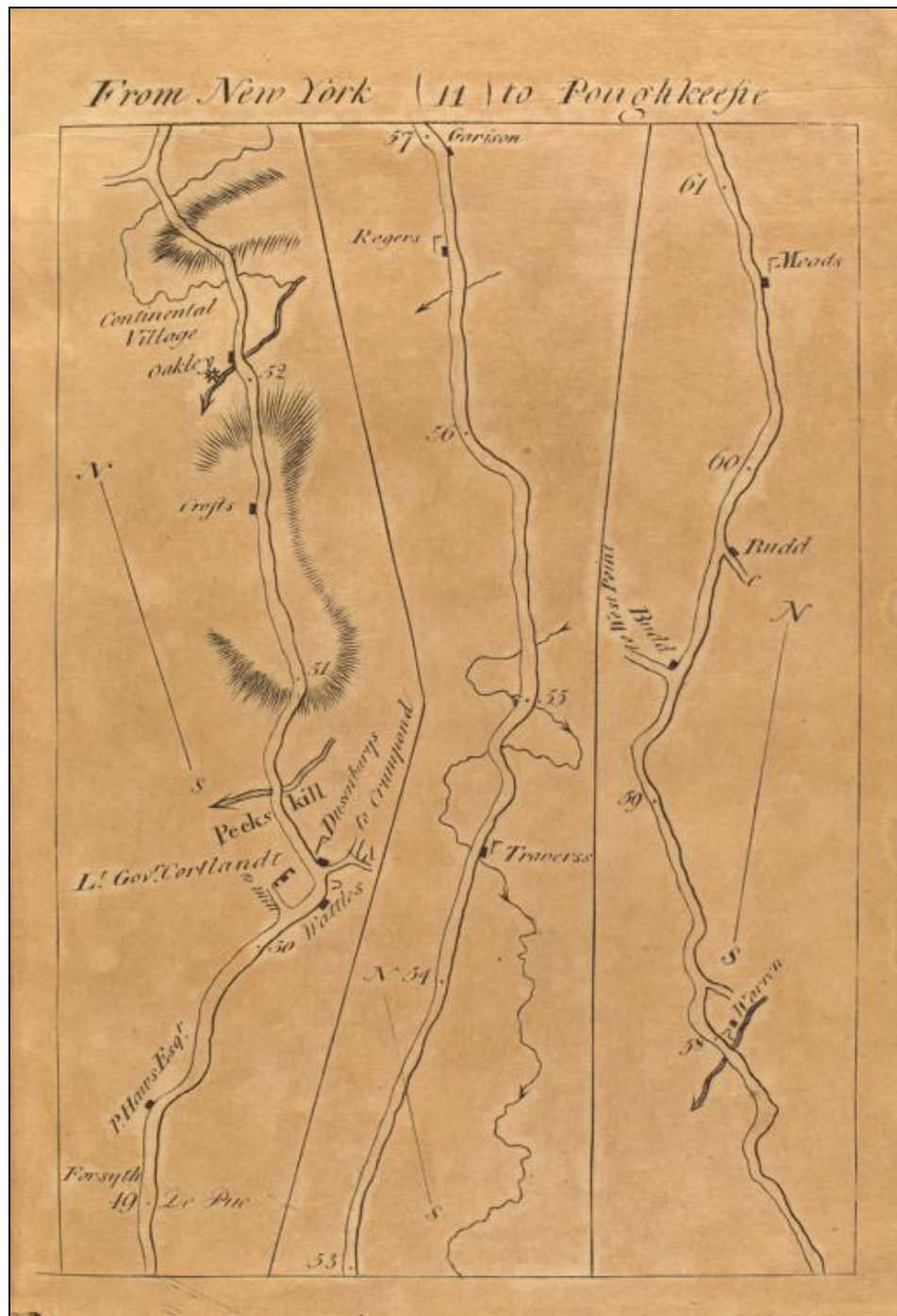




**Figure 3: “Province de New-York,” John Montrésor, 1777 (Source: New York Public Library)**

The Road’s clearest early expression within the project area, however, is found on sheet 11 of Christopher Colles’ 1789 map of the Old Albany Post Road from New York to Poughkeepsie, which labels streams, hills, the milestones, and residences (Figure 4). The map sandwiches three sections from Milestone 49 through Milestone 61 on a single sheet, side-by-side. Near Milestone 52 at the southern end of the project are Sprout Brook, Continental Village, and the Oakley residence. On a meandering creek between Milestones 54 and 55 is the “Traverss” or Travis residence. Another house, owned by a Rogers, stands on the west side of the Road between Milestones 56 and 57. At Milestone 57 is the Garison residence. A mile north, at Indian Creek on the west side of the Road near Milestone 58, is the Warren residence. Between Milestones 59 and 60, north of the project area, are two residences of the Budd family, which had occupied this section of the Philipse patent since at least the 1759 drawing of the Lambert map. Probably only portions of two of the pictured residences are still extant: John Warren’s house and tavern, now the Bird and Bottle Inn, which was reportedly erected sometime after 1783 on the Searles Lot of

the Philipse Patent; and the mid-eighteenth-century John Rogers' house (Larson 1993; Blake 1849:209).

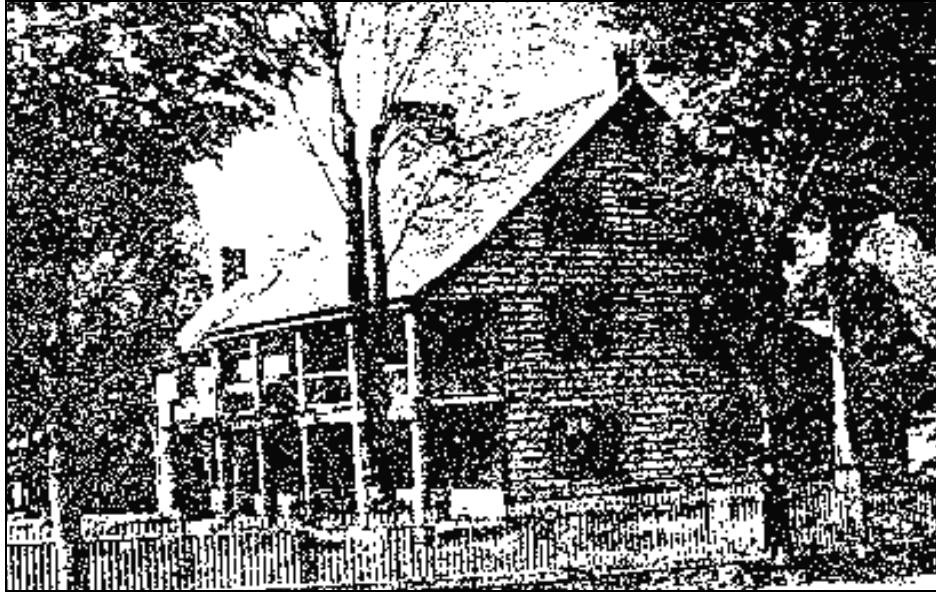


**Figure 4: Christopher Colles' 1789 map of a section of the Old Albany Post Road (Source: New York Public Library)**

Of John Warren and his farm (Figure 5), Pelletreau (1886:556) wrote:



Capt. John Warren (1765-1837), in his early years, lived in a log house, and about 1815 built a mill on a stream that flowed near by, and where the mill of James Nelson now stands. He had a large farm and was noted as a hard-working, honest, frugal man, who began poor and died comparatively rich.



**Figure 5: “Homestead of Capt. John Warren,” undated (Source: Larson’s National Register nomination of Indian Brook Road Historic District)**

In the mid-nineteenth century, Blake (1849:209) stated that the “old house where Cornelius Haight now lives, on the old post-road, about a mile south of Nelson’s mill...was built by John Rogers, and occupied by him during the French and Revolutionary war.” This is likely a portion of the Rogers-Haight House at 855 Old Albany Post Road (Figure 6).



**Figure 6: Rogers-Haight House in 2009**

The Stapf Farm house is reported to contain part of the mid-eighteenth-century Peter Warren house (Van Patten 1976:6). Blake (1849:237) stated that the widow of Peter Warren married Capt. Samuel Jeffords after the Revolutionary War. They had met when Jeffords was quartered in the house during the winter of 1789-1790 (Figure 7).



**Figure 7: Stapf Farm house in 2009; short block on right said to be earliest section**

A few other extant houses within the project may have been standing at the time the Colles map was drawn, although they are not included on it. Based on their forms, houses that may date from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries include the J. Knapp House (Figure 8) at 887 Old Albany Post Road, the R.D. Knapp House (Figure 9) at 824 Old Albany Post Road, and the Mckeel-Nelson House (Figure 10) at 761 Old Albany Post Road. Others, later overbuilt, may survive in part as well.





**Figure 8: J. Knapp House in 2009**



**Figure 9: R.D. Knapp House in 2009**

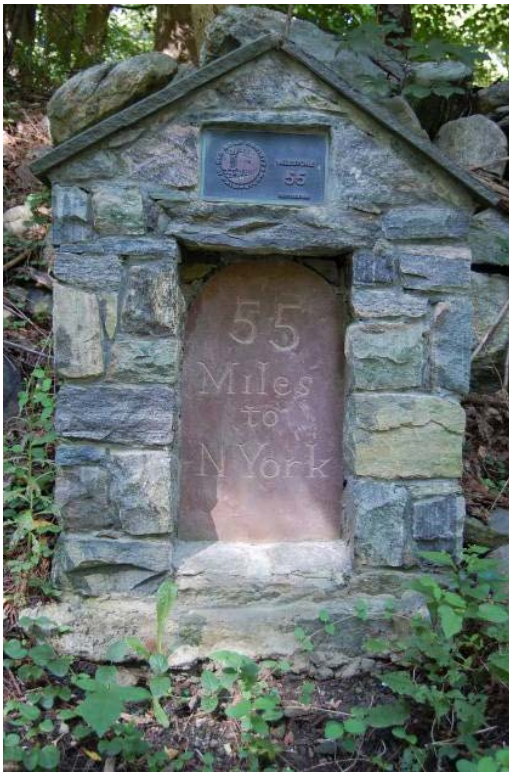


**Figure 10: Mckeel-Nelson House in 2009**

Six milestones stand within the project area—markers 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, and 58. (Milestone 56 is no longer extant.) It is not clear when these were erected. One account states that the first milestones were erected on the southern end of the Road, which would be well south of the project area, in 1769. It further states that the milestones were originally located on the west side of the Road going north, as they are now, to assist travelers with their orientation (Floyd-Jones 1923:29, 34).

Research conducted by members of the Old Road Society of Philipstown could not determine a precise date for the milestones. A marker erected at the intersection of the Old Albany Post Road and Travis Corners Road by the Town of Philipstown in 2003, with the Society's input, carefully states, "Benjamin Franklin had milestones placed to determine the charges for mail service." Whether those are the milestones that remain today is not known (Kropf 2009); however, they do appear to date from the eighteenth century or the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Putnam County Historical Society encased at least Milestones 52, 53, and 58 in brick enclosures in 1981. In 1990, the Old Road Society restored and set or reset the other surviving markers within the NRHP-listed historic district—markers 53, 54, 55, and 57—in stone and slate enclosures. Reddish stone slabs that are perhaps six feet long (Kropf 2009), the enclosures have varying degrees of integrity. The most intact following restoration is Milestone 55 (Figure 11). The least intact is the illegible Milestone 52. The others retain portions of word or numbers. At Milestone 58, the deepest sunk of the five, only the number is visible above ground. At Milestone 57, one can make out "to New York." The topmost part of that marker, carrying the number, appears to be a replacement. Traces of "iles to" are visible if one looks closely at Milestone 54. At Milestone 53, the letters "le" and "to" remain discernable (Figure 12).





**Figure 11: Milestone 55 in 2009**



**Figure 12: Milestone 53 in 2009**

An image of Milestone 54 taken in 1981 as part of the Old Albany Post Road NRHP nomination shows the size and condition of a marker prior to enclosure. The marker was legible then, while now only a few of letters can be read (Figure 13). Another image from 1981 depicts Milestone 53 in its earlier brick enclosure (Figure 14).

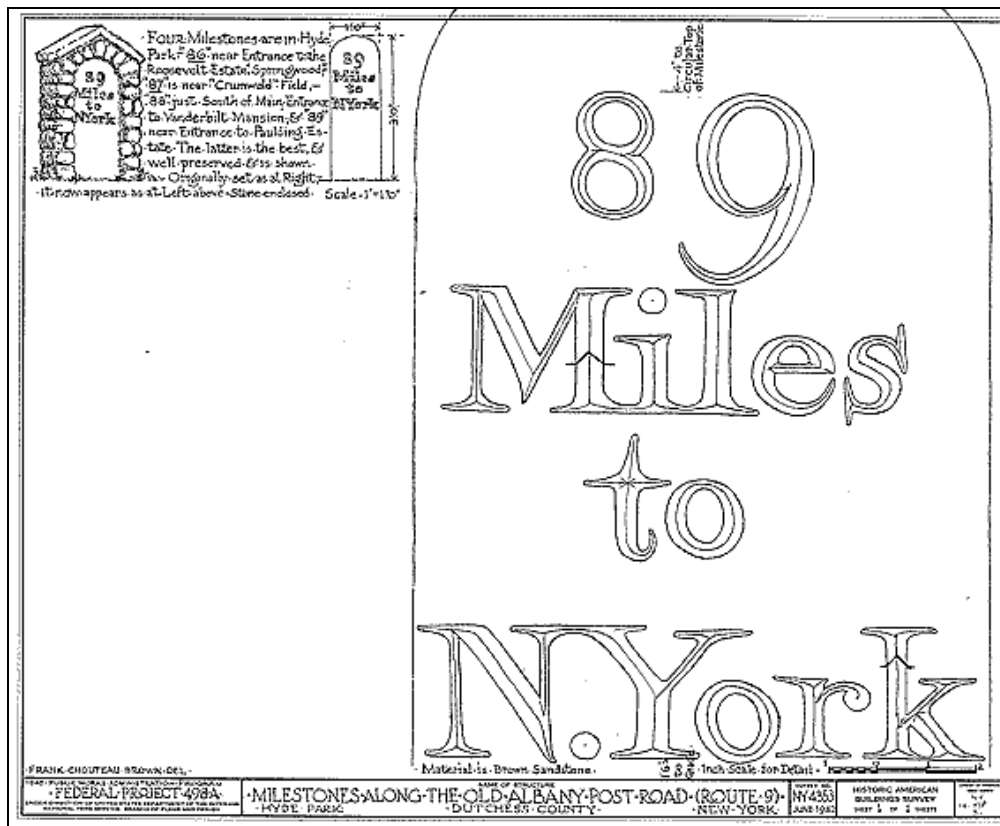


**Figure 13: Milestone 54 in 1981 (Photographer: Robert Beckhard)**



**Figure 14: Milestone 53 in 1981 in earlier enclosure (Photographer: Robert Beckhard)**

Other post road markers survive between New York City and Albany. A 1942 Historic American Buildings Survey rendering of Milestone 89 in Hyde Park in Dutchess County is a good representation of what the stones looked like prior to extensive decay (Figure 15).



**Figure 15: Measured drawing of Milestone 89 in Hyde Park**  
(Source: Library of Congress “Built in America” collection at [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs\\_haer/index.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/index.html))

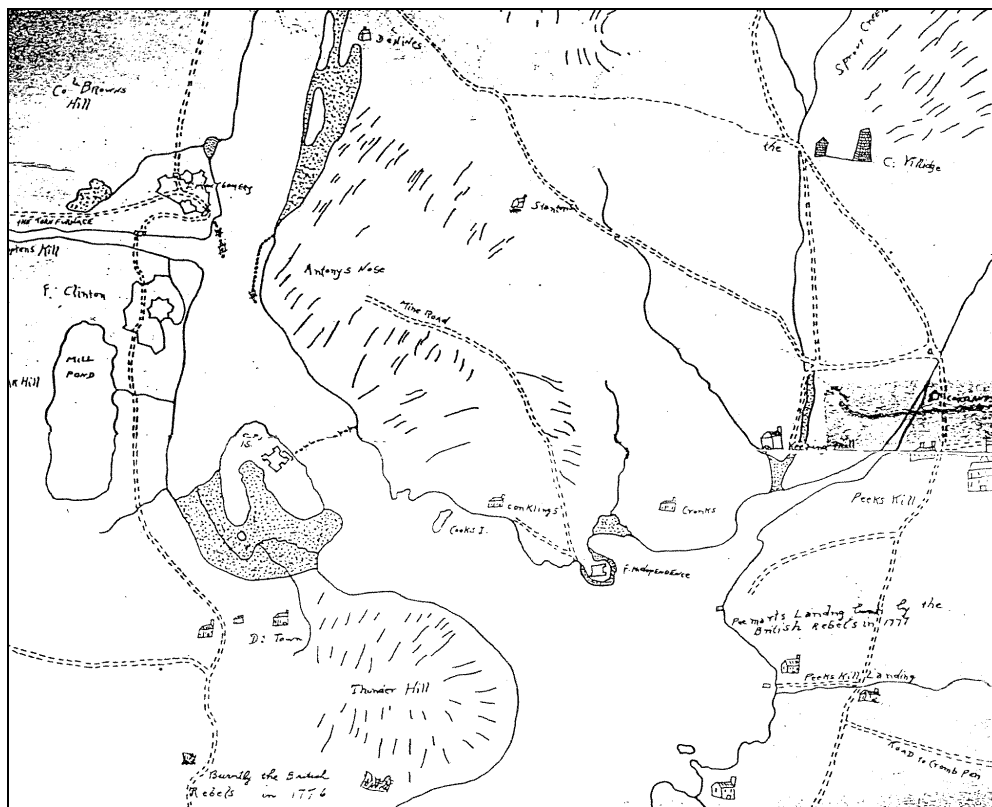
As a major route through the lower Hudson River Valley, the Old Albany Post Road was strategically important throughout the Revolutionary War. At the onset of the war, the tiny hamlet of Continental Village stood immediately south of the project area. In about 1762, Col. Beverly Robinson built the first gristmill in Philipstown in Continental Village, as well as a sawmill and a fulling mill. Continental Village was used by Colonial troops as a storage depot and it also held barracks (Pelletreau 1886:355). As part of attacks along the lower Hudson, on October 9, 1777, the British destroyed the materiel held there, seven months after they had burned the nearby town of Peekskill to the south (Figure 16). Hine (1905:37-38), in his history of the Old Albany Post Road, recounts the village’s sacking and its aftermath:

The British destroyed the stores the Americans were unable to take with them and burned the village, leaving, it is said, only one house standing.... General Sir William Howe, in his dispatches to Sir Henry Clinton, dated at Fort Montgomery, October 9, 1777, says: “Major-Gen. Tryon, who was detached this morning with Emmerick’s chasseurs, fifty yagers and royal fusiliers and regiment of Trumbach, with a three-pounder, to destroy the rebel settlement called the Continental village, has just returned and reported to me, that



he has burned the barrack for fifteen hundred men, several store-houses and loaded wagons. I need not point out to your excellency the consequence of destroying this post, as it was the only establishment of the rebels on that part of the Highlands, and the place from whence any body of troops drew their supplies.” The place was soon reoccupied by the Americans as a point at which to collect stores, and various military encampments were strung along both sides of the road from here north.

The British broke a chain the Continentals had stretched across the Hudson below West Point at this time, but are not reported to have made any further incursions north along Old Albany Post Road into the project area (Blake 1849:162; Curran 1998).



**Figure 16: Lieut. Thomas Machin's January 4, 1778, sketch map of Peekskill-Bear Mountain Area; note Old Albany Post Road on right extending north through Peekskill and Continental Village or "C. Village" at upper right  
(Source: Curran, *The Attack at Peekskill by the British in 1777*)**

A historical marker, placed by the Van Cortland Historical Society in 2006 at the intersection of Old Albany Post Road and Old West Point Road East, notes the location near there of two redoubts on either side of the Post Road. As the marker indicates, the Continental Army held the Post Road for the remainder of the war, after the burning of Peekskill and sacking of Continental Village. En route from West Point, General Washington and his staff traveled the Road often during the winter of 1779-1780 (Scofield 1961:98).

In 1785, three years before the formation of the town of Philipstown, an act was passed that established a stagecoach route between New York City and Albany along the Road. One of the

stops along the route was the old Warren Tavern, now the Bird and Bottle Inn. The next 50 years likely saw the height of activity along the Road (Van Patten 1976:2-3; Larson 1982; Smith 1877:462).

### 2.2 GROWTH AND DECLINE, 1800-1899

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, in the bloom of the post-Revolutionary War period and with a regular stage passing along its length, the Old Albany Post Road in Philipstown and elsewhere must have been a busy route. The bloom likely faded a bit, however, in 1806, when the Highland Turnpike was built. Current Route 9 in Philipstown, tellingly also known as the Albany Post Road, follows the route of the turnpike. The turnpike paralleled the lower part of the Old Albany Post Road to the west until it angled to the northeast along current Indian Brook Road to Nelsons Corners, at which point it merged into the older road running north. The turnpike eventually subsumed the position of the Old Albany Post Road and, in doing so, protected it. As Larson (1982) notes:

The Highland Turnpike became a public highway in 1833 and was subsequently improved as the major thoroughfare in the western part of the county leaving the Old Albany Post Road untouched by modernizations and development. U.S. Route 9 also followed the route of the turnpike, thereby contributing to preservation of the integrity of the earlier post road.

The final blow to the supremacy of the Old Albany Post Road occurred mid-century. In 1849, a train running north from New York City arrived in Peekskill. By 1851, the rail line was completed through to Albany. At this time, the stages along the Highland Turnpike and the upper part of the Old Albany Post Road in Philipstown ceased running. The removal of telegraph lines from the old Road in 1865 emphasized its transformation from important regional thoroughfare to local country road (Van Patten 1976:3; Hine 1905:39).

Although it had lost its prominence, the Old Albany Post Road was far from moribund in the nineteenth century, according to a series of historic maps. In particular, three detailed maps from mid-century and one from its close depict a regular concentration of houses and farms, and a few tiny crossroads communities along the Road's Philipstown length.

O'Connor first captured Putnam County in detail in his map of 1854. Figure 17, from the map, depicts Continental Village and the southern extent of the Road within the historic district. Figure 18, also from O'Connor's map, depicts the northern extent of the Road within the district around Nelson's Corners. The southern map includes the former Continental Village Schoolhouse (1 Old Albany Post Road) at its center (Figure 19). Just northeast of the school is the site of a Revolutionary War redoubt, labeled "Fort," and northwest of the redoubt is the "J. McCoy" house, which is the McCoy House at 36 Old Albany Post Road (Figure 20). (The redoubt site may retain archaeological components [see for example Thomas 1921].) Extant resources depicted on the northern portion of the O'Connor map include Milestone 57; the "M. Griffin" property at 1076 Old Albany Post Road; the John Warren Tavern or Bird and Bottle Inn (1123 Old Albany Post Road) at the northwest corner of the crossroads (Figure 21); and the "S. Jefferson" house (1180 Old Albany Post Road) to the north (Figure 22).



Figure 17: Southern section of Old Albany Post Road in Philipstown on R.F. O'Connor's "Map of Putnam County" of 1854 (Source: New York State Archives)



Figure 18: Northern section of Old Albany Post Road in Philipstown on R.F. O'Connor's "Map of Putnam County" of 1854 (Source: New York State Archives)





**Figure 19: Much-altered former Continental Village Schoolhouse in 2009**



**Figure 20: Altered and extended McCoy House in 2009**



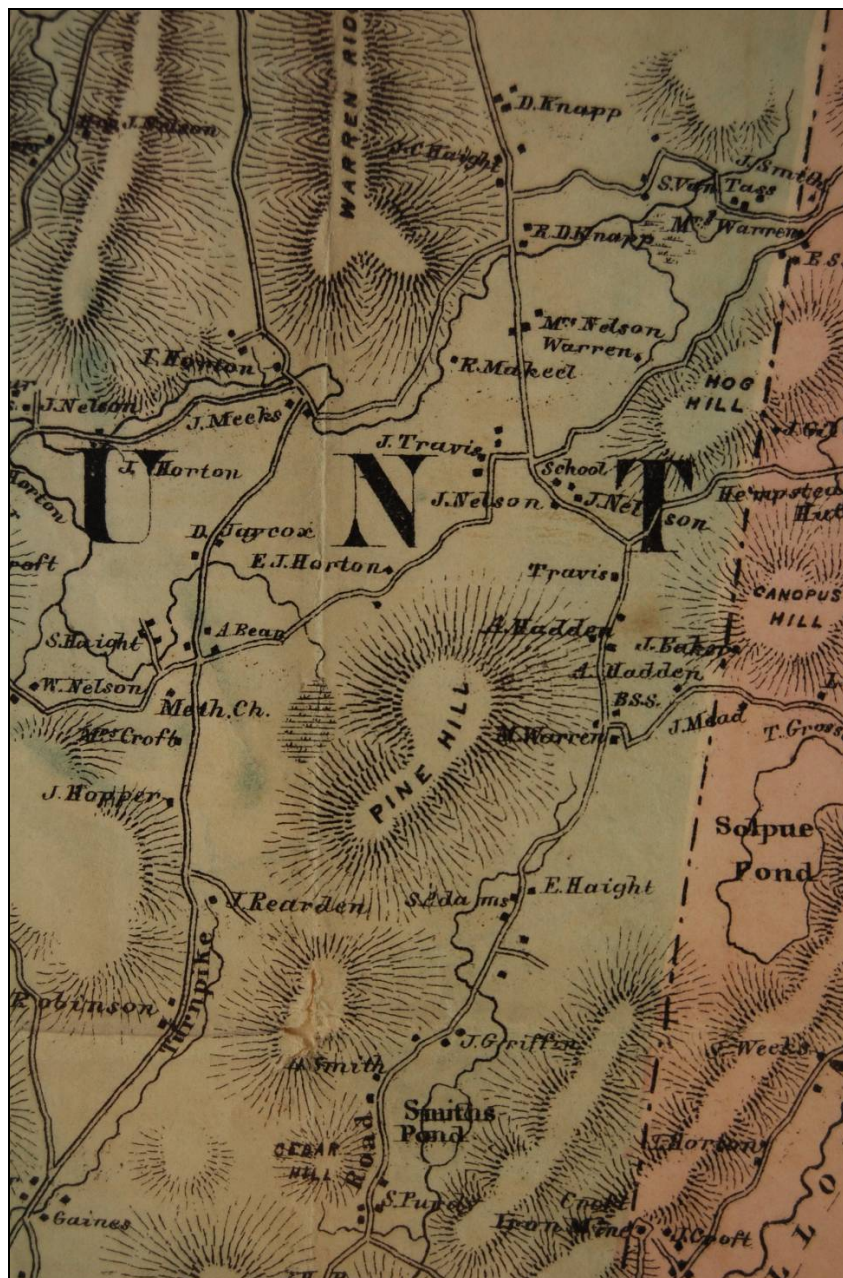


**Figure 21: John Warren Tavern or Bird and Bottle Inn in 2009**



**Figure 22: S. Jefferson House in 2009**





**Figure 23: Central section of Old Albany Post Road in Philipstown on Lloyd's 1864 "Topographical Map of the Hudson River" (Source: New York State Archives)**

Lloyd's map of the Hudson River of 1864, a portion of which is depicted in Figure 23 above, is equally detailed and little changed. Most properties remained in the same families, though perhaps in the hands of widows or a later generation of children. Surviving houses depicted on the map include the J.C. Haight, R.D. Knapp, and Mckeel-Nelson houses (Figure 6, 10, and 9, respectively, above) at the top, which may date from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. Near the map's center, where Travis Corner Road took its former northern jog to Old Albany Post Road, is a property labeled "J. Travis," which is the Travis-Fish-Forster House at 741 Old Albany Post Road. This 1852 dwelling is an excellent example of a vernacular Greek



Revival-style mid-century house (Figure 24). Just southeast of the Travis-Fish-Forster House is the J. Nelson House (699 Old Albany Post Road), which stands at the current intersection of Travis Corner and Old Albany Post roads. It too is a well-maintained dwelling that neatly represents the even-more-fashionable, mid-century, Italianate- and Gothic-Revival styles (Figure 25).



**Figure 24: Travis-Fish-Forster House in 2009**



**Figure 25: J. Nelson House in 2009**

The third of the highly detailed maps is the Beers' "Atlas of New York and Vicinity" of 1867. It shows little that is not on the two earlier maps, although it appears to pay more attention to natural features. On the top of the central section of the map (Figure 26), it depicts an "Iron Mine" that had escaped the notice of the two earlier mapmakers. It also assigns some different

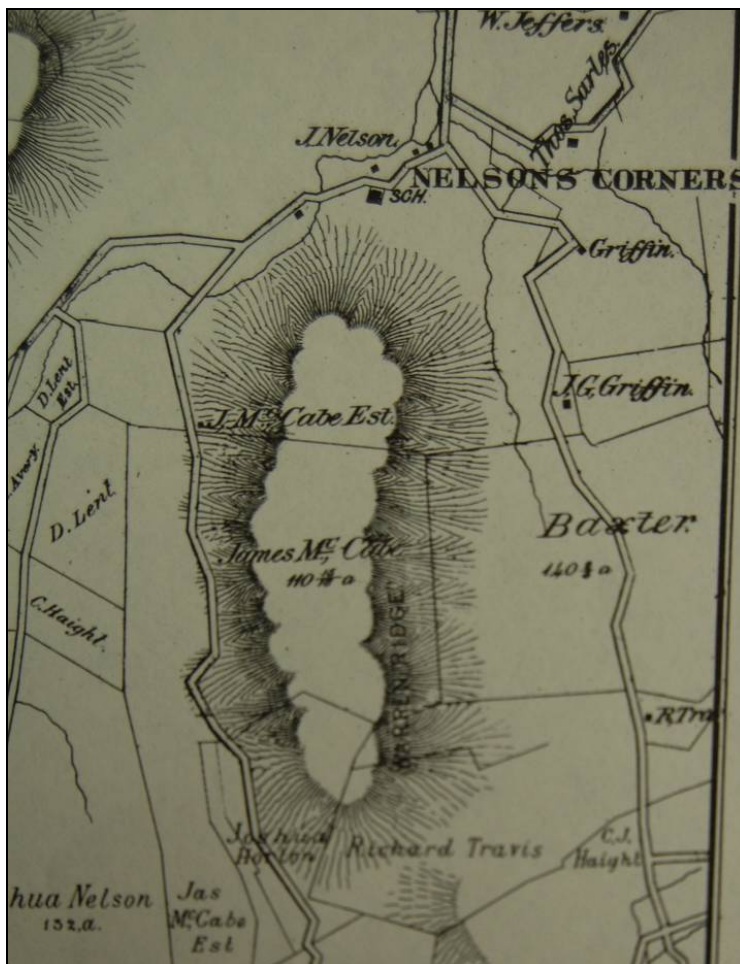
names to natural features, for example, identifying the pond near the center of the map as “Round Pond” while earlier maps refer to it as “Smith Pond.” It is now called Lake Celeste.



Figure 26: Central section of Old Albany Post Road in Beers' 1867 "Atlas of New York and Vicinity" (Source: New York State Archives)



The Beers' "Atlas of the Hudson River Valley from New York City to Troy" of 1891, which barely takes in Old Albany Post at its easternmost edge, adds little in terms of buildings, but does update geographic features and include property lines with acreage. Where Lloyd's 1864 map shows Warren Ridge south of Nelson's Corners as bone-shaped (top of Figure 23 above), Beers depicts it without extended ridges at the bottom (Figure 27).



**Figure 27: Central section of Old Albany Post Road, at far right, in Beers' 1891 "Atlas of the Hudson River Valley from New York City to Troy" (Source: New York Public Library)**

The minimal changes to the detailed maps of the Old Albany Post Road area from the mid- to the late nineteenth century are reflected in county census data and in the buildings that survive along the Road. At its first census in 1820, Putnam County's population was 11,268. By 1850, it had climbed to 14,138, where it remained basically unchanged for better than 80 years. In 1870, the population peaked at 15,420 and then it dropped through the century to 13,787 in 1900 (Historical Census Browser 2004).

There do not appear to be any notable houses on the Road from the last third of the century. Building activity may have largely been limited to additions to houses and perhaps the construction of new outbuildings. At the Rogers-Haight House, for example, a second-floor dining room was added over the original kitchen wing in about 1890 (Figure 6, above). A tractor

barn/shed may have been erected around this time as well (Figure 28) (Division for Historic Preservation Inventory Form No. 079-04-0166).



**Figure 28: Tractor barn/shed at Rogers-Haight House in 2009**

One final ubiquitous feature of the Old Albany Post Road historic district likely dates in large part from the nineteenth century: the stone wall. The more than 47 stone walls along the length of the Road, where not heavily rebuilt or constructed as retaining walls, follow a basic pattern. (Forty-seven walls were surveyed during the inventory, but others, because they were hidden beneath undergrowth or survived only in small part, were not recorded.) According to a recent field guide to the stone walls of New England by Robert Thorson (2005)—from which the following terms and concepts are taken—Old Albany Post Road’s walls are double walls. That is, they were built from both sides rather than simply stacked up. In addition to fencing, double walls served such functions as stone disposal, boundary marking, and aesthetics. The double walls along and extending off the Road at T- or L-shaped junctions served all of these functions: they resulted from the clearance of rocky fields that flank the Road; they marked lot lines; and they were a handsome addition to the landscape. A few of the Road’s double walls are very wide, allowing for the disposal of large quantities of smaller rocks between their walls. The Road’s walls are built of two-handers or occasionally assisted stones. Two-handers are stones that are too large to lift with one hand, but possible to lift with two. Assisted stones are too large for one or two people to move, but small enough to be shifted with mechanical or animal assistance. The walls are stacked, a method of construction that falls between dumping stones on the one hand and carefully fitting them on the other, as is done at a laid wall. The stones in the walls, which come from the adjacent fields or, in a few instances in all likelihood, from the original roadbed itself, are a native fieldstone mix. Most of them are rounded, but many are angular in part or, as Thorson terms it, slabby. The majority of the rocks appear to be granitic, although at the southernmost stretch of the Road there are a few outcrops of black traprock, a basaltic material that becomes much more common farther south on the Hudson River at the New Jersey Palisades. Finally, the Road’s stone walls that predate twentieth- and early twenty-



first-century reconstruction or new construction are dry laid, with neither chinking nor mortar. A few examples of walls along Old Albany Post Road follow (Figures 29-33).



**Figure 29: Wall 3 just south of the (former) Griffin Barn (1058 Old Albany Post Road) in 2009; note double wall construction with space between and two-hander granitic stones**



**Figure 30: Wall 10 just north of J. Travis House (912 Old Albany Post Road) in 2009; note double-walled, stacked, two-hander, fieldstone mix with some slabby stones**





**Figure 31: Wall 22 south of J. Nelson House (699 Old Albany Post Road) in 2009; note unusually widely spaced double walls that allow for disposal of numerous additional stones**



**Figure 32: Wall 28 just south of Milestone 54 in 2009; note use of large assisted stone**





**Figure 33: Wall 42 just south of junction of Adrienne Lane in 2009; note typical double, two-hander, stacked, slabby fieldstone mix wall; note large residual boulder left in place on side of Road**

## 2.3 FROM GRASS-GROWN TRACK TO CITY RETREAT, 1900-2009

The early twentieth century saw Old Albany Post Road's continued quiet slide into obscurity. While Putnam County's population had climbed well over 14,000 by 1910, it dropped to a historic low of 10,802 in 1920. From there, it began a steady climb again, from almost 14,000 in 1930 to over 20,000 in 1950. Since the 1960s, the county's population—more and more a bedroom community for urban areas made more accessible by highway improvements—has soared (Historical Census Browser 2004; U.S. Census Bureau 1995). These county figures are reflected by the number of residences and walls along Old Albany Post Road.

C.G. Hine took a “jaunt on foot” along the entire length of Old Albany Post in 1905. He describes the section within the project area in colorful detail, capturing its backwater status at the turn of the century:

For the space of some two or three miles [north of Continental Village] the road is a grass-grown track through a rough country. As one proceeds he can appreciate the difficulties that beset the retreating soldiers, laden with such stores from the village as they could carry with them on the retreat. Now and then an unkept farmhouse appears, but there is little life; it is possible to walk as far as Nelson's Mill, some eight miles, without passing a team of any sort and hardly any one on foot.... Joe Pie weed, as heavy-headed as a sleepy child, alternating with the straight stemmed goldenrod, while every wall is adorned with snapdragon or Virginia creeper, the scarlet product of the deadly nightshade, or the silvery remains of the clematis—this in August or September. If one

goes this way in the Spring there is the wild azalea against the edge of the woods, and the woodland flowers come trooping down even to the wheel tracks. It is forty years since the telegraph abandoned this abandoned highway, and the tramps left with the telegraph poles. One old inhabitant says it used to take a considerable part of her time each day to feed the gentry who applied, for she, being afraid of them, never refused. To-day, over this part of the road, the tramp is as scarce as the stage coach (Hine 1905:38-39).

An account written in 1923 also describes the Road in the early twentieth century, and back into the late nineteenth century as well, as a poorly maintained secondary track:

After leaving Peekskill the road turns sharply to the left across the valley. It was a rough road in stage-coach days as it is a rough road now, like most mountain roads. It was to this road a traveler of some years ago refers, when, not sure of his route, as he walked along, he asked an old man sitting at his kitchen window to direct him. "Want the post-road, eh? Well you're on it. When anybody asks me for the post-road, I alles say, look fer the narrest, steepest, stunniest road ye can find and that is the post-road (Floyd-Jones 1923:33).

Photographs of Old Albany Post Road in Fishkill, about 10 miles to north of the historic district's terminus, capture it at the opening of the century (Figures 34 and 35). Even in that much larger town, it was a dirt road with grass growing within its margins in spots.



**Figure 34: Postcard of Old Post Road in Fishkill, n.d. (Source: Library of Congress)**



**Figure 35: Old Post Road in Fishkill, 1907 (Source: Library of Congress, “Touring America Turn of the Century” collection at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/touring/index.html>)**

A portion of Old Albany Post Road and the surrounding area saw renewed activity in the 1910s, with the construction of the Catskill Aqueduct, which runs beneath the Road a tenth-of-a-mile north of its junction with Old West Point Road East. Van Patten (1976:8), in his account of the Philipstown section of the Road, writes:

According to an old-time resident, Annie Stapf [owner of the Stapf Farm], now deceased, that when the Catskill Aqueduct was being constructed between approximately 1911-17 there were many shacks for the working men to live in, bars for drinking, and one hotel she remembered was called the Apple Tree Hotel because of apple trees growing in front.



These buildings sprawled along the old post road. This area, just north of the junction of Old West Point Road with the Old Post Road must have been a scene for years of hard working and drinking men. If only the hills could speak of the many tales of the past. One such story is a drunken worker that entered a local house, now the Wegel estate, and shot and killed one of the owners.

The Road did receive electrical service relatively early for a rural area. Ms. Stapf recalled that when government rural electrification efforts brought the cost of installation down to five dollars, she gathered her neighbors together to accept electricity, which, in about 1925, was installed at her farm. During the first part of the 1920s, the farm's electricity had been supplied by a Westinghouse generator that Ms. Stapf cared for and ran. It may have been housed in the privy-like building that still stands on the former farm (Figure 36).



**Figure 36: Possible early 1920s generator house on Stapf Farm in 2009**

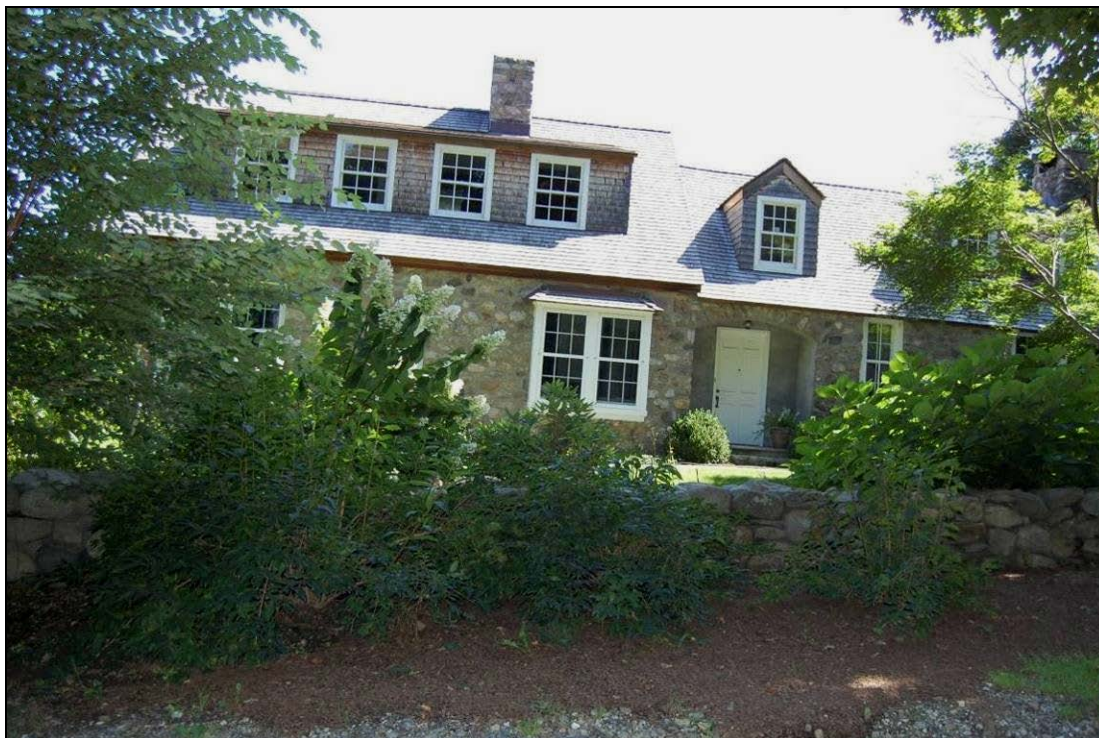
A brief online history by the county historian encapsulates the almost contemporaneous decline and rebirth of Putnam County in the early twentieth century:

In the early twentieth century, improved roads brought a new sort of “summer people” to the County. Small bungalow colonies sprang up, and cheap vacant land was laid out in large developments of summer homes, like those in Lake Peekskill, Lake Carmel, and Putnam Lake. “A place in the country” was now accessible and affordable for many New York City residents...Putnam County’s natural beauty made it a desirable summer resort area. Its many lakes and reservoirs were attractive for fishing and water sports. The abandoned iron mines and farms in the northwestern part of the county reverted to nature

and became the nucleus of forested Clarence Fahnestock State Park [just northeast of the junction of Old Albany Post Road and Indian Brook Road] in 1929. While Putnam's population doubled during the summer months, the year-round population, which had reached an all-time low in 1920, began to grow. Apple, egg and poultry farming gradually replaced many of the dairy farms of the nineteenth century. Construction trades and the service industry were stimulated by the explosion of the summer population. People discovered that they could summer in Putnam County and still commute to New York City to work. A new Putnam County was in the making on the eve of World War II (Putnam County Historian, 1991).

Again, the buildings and walls of Old Albany Post Road reflect broader county patterns. As in the late nineteenth century, there was apparently little building activity along the Road in the early twentieth century, other than occasional additions to houses. The Rogers-Haight House (Figure 6 above) was again improved in 1915, with the addition of spacious sleeping sun porches above flanking wings (Division for Historic Preservation Inventory Form No. 079-04-0166). A wing and sun porch were added to the D. Smith House (321 Old Albany Post Road) in the 1920s. As elsewhere in the county in the 1930s, a small bungalow colony began to develop along Lake Celeste (Kropf 2009).

By the 1940s, permanent and summer residences began to be built along the Road. They were occasionally built of stone, a rustic material that was apparently never used in the older houses along the Road. The Sorenson House (1941) and Revkin House (1945) date from this period (Figures 37 and 38). Houses were also expanded in the 1940s and later. The mid-nineteenth-century J. Travis House at 912 Old Albany Post Road, for example, received a two-story wing in 1941 and a one-story wing in 1960 (Division for Historic Preservation Inventory Form No. 079-04-0155) (Figure 39).





**Figure 37: Stone and shingled Sorenson House (1000 Old Albany Post Road) in 2009**



**Figure 38: Stone and shingled Revkin House (758 Old Albany Post Road) in 2009**



**Figure 39: Mid-nineteenth-century J. Travis House (912 Old Albany Post Road), with post-World War II wings, in 2009**



Late twentieth and early twenty-first-century growth, building, and rebuilding is apparent in the residences along Old Albany Post Road and, even more notably, in its stone walls. A sprawling modern house built in the early twenty-first century across from Lake Celeste stands out among the Road's more modest houses, as does its carefully laid, mortared, and chinked wall. Heavily rebuilt, essentially modern walls along the Road, crafted by skilled stone masons, also stand out for their neatly laid appearance (Figure 40 and 41).



**Figure 40: Modern house and wall opposite Lake Celeste in 2009**



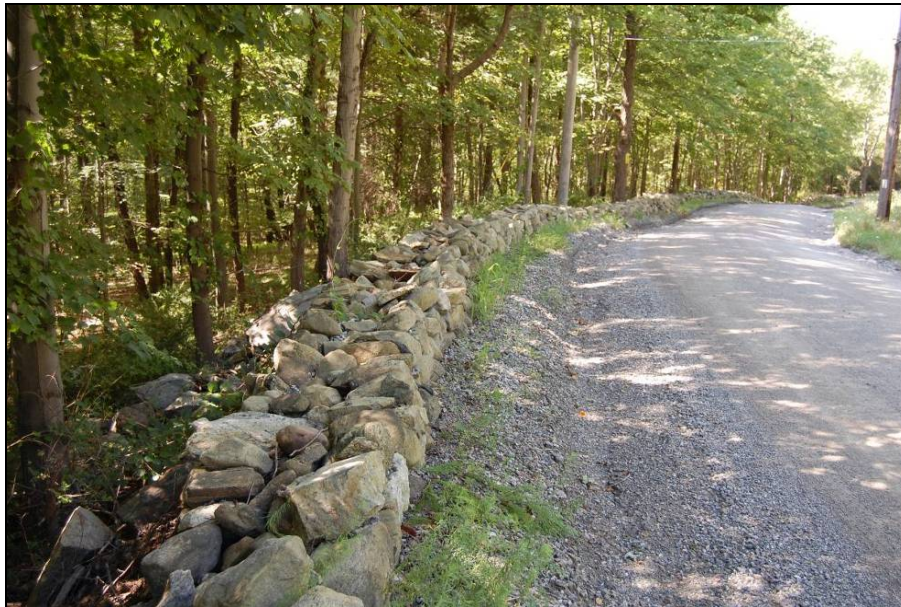
**Figure 41: Modern laid and capped wall, complete with advertisement, just north of Milestone 53 in 2009**



One constant of the Old Albany Post Road historic district is, of course, the Road itself. It remains narrow, winding, and almost completely unpaved, and continues to be flanked by residual boulders, stone outcrops, dry-laid walls, mature shade trees, and early houses. It has been paved likely less than 200 feet, at its southern merger with Sprout Brook Road and northern merger with Route 9. And even at these junctions, the Road is distinct from these two paved, wide-shouldered, regular roads. Though not the “narrowest, steepest, sunniest road ye can find” of a century ago, it would still be easily recognizable by many generations of earlier residents (Figures 42-48).



**Figure 42: View looking south down Old Albany Post Road from just below junction with Route 9, with paved asphalt at uppermost section, in 2009**





**Figure 43: View looking north on Old Albany Post Road from just above Travis Corners Road in 2009**



**Figure 44: View looking south on Old Albany Post Road from north of Milestone 55, with boulders and outcrops in place, in 2009**



**Figure 45: View with large deciduous trees looking south from below Chapman Road in 2009**





**Figure 46: View of Old Albany Post Road south of Deer Trail, with stacked, double walls to either side, in 2009**



**Figure 47: View looking north up Road from paved intersection with Sprout Brook Road in 2009; note Mothers of the Revolution Memorial Marker at right, Bridge at center, garage of former Continental Schoolhouse at left, and boulder at center distance**





**Figure 48: Boulder depicted in Figure 47, looking south toward the end of the Road**

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