


Tauwane


JOE'S HILL AND THE ROAD TO DANBURY

The date 1725, familiar to Danburians, on Judge C. E. Mason's residence near Lake Kenosia, arrests the inquiring mind, - how was it in these parts when that house was built?

Rebuilt a century later and modernized in the 1860's as the Bradley Keeler homestead, the house retains in the size and proportions of its main part a fine colonial distinction.

It was built by Thomas Stevens and may have been ^{at first} originally a story and a half house as it ^{is said to have} had then a roof sloping deeply, salt box style, in the rear. It is the oldest house in Mill Plain, one built in 1720 by Thomas's brother Nathaniel on the site of St. Peter's cemetery, having burned years ago.

Several related Stevenses are said to have settled early on land to the east, - the Patchen, Backer, Brundage, Fowler, Terry places were all Stevens homes. It would be interesting to know their several dates.

The eastern boundary of Mill Plain was Segur Street; the southern, the Fish Weir, now the Still river, to Lake Kenosia; the northern, what has always been Danbury's ~~southern~~ ^{northern} boundary, the old Soupo road, straightened in 1819, now part of U.S. Route 5, transcontinental.

I have interpreted these three boundaries from the quaint description of Mill Plain ^{district} given in Bailey's "History of Danbury" in the 1769 report of the school committeemen on their layout of the township's eleven districts. This description does not mention the northern boundary but that was obviously the same as the southern line of the Boyz district given fifth in the list.

Needs more work?

Mill Plain was then as now the westernmost section of Danbury, but Danbury, "the new towne at Pequag", petitioning in 1687 for "west bounds by York line", was, in the patent of 1702, still limited to its first assigned width of six miles, which left its western boundary considerably further east than now. It started east of Lake Kenosia, then Mill Plain Pond, - and extended northward along the Driftway to Corner Pond, half way over, near the New Fairfield line.

The AirMap of Danbury, to be seen at the City Hall, shows Corner Pond and gives one a fair idea of this line's location.

Mill Plain was named from an early paper mill on the Fish Weir river, below the Segur St. bridge and on what is now U. S. Route No. 7 from Ridgefield. It was located on the property marked on the large map of Danbury in the 1867 Beers' "Atlas of New York City and Vicinity", as belonging to E. S. Hull, - I should like to know who owns it now.

The mill's high dam sometimes caused the water to set back and overflow the flats above, much to the landowners' annoyance. Finally one night some one set fire to the mill and not a man of the neighborhood came to help put out the fire, so the mill burned. It was never rebuilt.

To realize the implications for 1725 of Mill Plain's western boundary it is worth while to spread out one's copy of the tax survey map distributed at the town offices from 1933 on. Lay in the line from east of Lake Kenosia to Corner Pond and mark the location of Thomas Stevens's new house.

The Road to Danbury eastward was the old Scuppo Road of the 1769 School Committee Report. It was originally the trodden path from Scuppo's lodge to Mill Plain Pond.

Scuppo was the outstanding one of a few Indians who chose to remain in Danbury and live on their land as approved by the town. He retained a large tract north of Beckettville but soon sold it to Judah Gregory,

one would like to read that deed! — how did the lawyers phrase Scuppos "consideration" ?

This road eastward from the Thomas Stevens house did not long remain, after 1685, the narrow, shadowy, almost invisible track of the moccasin. The new settlers, expecting to live by the land, soon bought, in every direction from the town center, the plots most desirable for cultivation, especially the old Indian corn fields.

Their practice of returning at night the several miles to their homes on Town Street, greatly hastened a change in the roads traversed. The Scuppo road soon ^{to Scopus St.} became an open ox-way with well defined cart tracks.

But the same road turning westward past the Thomas Stevens house was still a primeval footpath, into a wilderness which white settlers had as yet no legalized right to invade. There stretched across the valley of the present-day Mill Plain hamlet and up over Joe's Hill, a large tract under the jurisdiction of the Connecticut General Assembly, but not yet assigned to planters for purchase from its Indian owners.

These were a friendly tribe of Ramapos known in the early history of the York Line section as the Ridgefield Indians. For Ridgefield, settled from Norwalk in 1708, had begun in that year, with the sanction of the General Court, its series of eight purchases of land from the Indians.

By 1725, when Thomas Stevens built his house, Ridgefield had completed its third purchase, extending its holdings consistently northward.

We owe much to the local historians for reprinting these quaint Indian deeds. George L. Rockwell makes the first one the frontispiece of his "History of Ridgefield" and whoever were Indians here in historic times, had better examine the list of nine names precisely written by the law clerk and pointed out to each brave to sign in turn with his mark:-

Catóonah(Sachem), Woquapómick, Waspáhchain, Wáwkamáwwee, Náranéka, Cawwehórin, Góotquas, Máhke, Tawpórnick.

The mark of nearly every one of the nine was a serpent, coiled in a distinctive threatening pose and presumably of the deadliest local breed,- Early American or Tercentenary descendant thereof.

*This
comes
later*

~~It was the engaging trait of the Ramapos to withdraw in good faith from lands they had sold,- they were no Indian givers. But some of the tribe still lived as owners, probably quite scattered, north of Ridgefield, in the part not yet opened to settlers, including Ridgebury, Mill Plain as we know it, and parts of Joe's Hill,- from east of Mill Plain Pond to York Line, then nearly two miles further west, way over north of Peach Pond.~~

In 1725, the road from the west through the valley was just an Indian trail. Why did it not continue from what is now Mill Plain Corner , straight on eastward, as does its modern counterpart, Route No. 6?

Because the center of attraction for all local Indians was Lake Kenosia. The tax survey map again, in its open western spaces, shows clearly how this lovely sheet of water, nestling deep in hills, acted as a magnet to make the straight road dip to its shores. Or, the map suggests another figure,-that of a funnel, to discharge travelers from west and east at once, on the lake.

Indian encampments from an undated past had been numerous in summer along the Fish Weir river above and below Mill Plain Pond. This is shown by the number and character of the Indian relics found there and in the vicinity, within the four or five decades since Connecticut began to encourage the scientific study of its early Indian life.

Walter Fanton of Danbury, sponsored by the management of the

Connecticut Archaeological Collections of West Hartford, to which he, and his father have supplied hundreds of specimens of the exacting museum standard of perfection, has shown me his own collection of local Indian remains fairly bewildering in the number and variety of its items.

Dec. '36

The smaller pieces are in boxes of several hundred each, graded in

Walter

in quality, the first box containing the most perfect arrowheads, knives,

Fanton

drills, needles, awls, triangles, scrapers, etc. They differ much in

has now

the color, luster and texture of the stones from which they were cut,

handsome

contrast often producing very pleasing rich effects.

cases that

Indian quarries near and far supplied the materials for these fas-

display

tidious tool carvers. The rich dark flints, brown, green and black

his

came from Coxsackie, N. Y., - red and yellow jasper from Farmington, Co

collection

Conn.

most

Still River beds furnished the sandstone; the quartzes, red, yellow

effectively

glassy, milky and smoky, were found in local gravels; Labradorite, with

Mr. Henry

whitish, with stains of pale blue, pink, or yellow, abounds in Dan-

Belts of

bury, having been brought in ^{by} glaciers, as were also prehistoric

Story Hill,

worked flints.

Pocumtuck Farm,

Numerous larger pieces, spearheads, hammers, celts, axes, corn

the best

grinders, rollers, gouges, pestles, - and mortars too large to house

informed

inside, - all enhance one's interest in these swart predecessors of ours

local

on the soil of Connecticut. And we are thrilled to see in the Fanton.

authority

collection pieces of clay pottery baked right here in Mill Plain,

I have

herring-bone pattern etched with a fish's backbone, and other designs

met on

basic in decorative art.

the early

The anthropologists, comparing the specimens found here with

history of

those of the classified Indian cultures, have put together a fascinating

Danbury,

prehistoric West Danbury. Geology, too, has had a hand in the picture.

values the Fantons,

work highly,

He has shown

it at the

Grange. It should

be shown at

the schools.

It should be shown at the schools. I should like to have you send me with a description of the remote Danbury. See also N.Y. Herald-Tribune, Dec. '36, fascinating description of what Starr Sherwood of Bethel found recently in a rock shelter.

The Fantons have provided me with their description of the remote Danbury past that has served them as a background in their studies of Indian material. The paper is entitled " Prehistoric Lake Kenosia " and reveals how rich and varied a by-product through the years the farms of Mill Plain have yielded to science. It was certainly an eye-opener to me and I am quoting it in full, believing its vivid details will add greatly to the interest of my paper.

BEGINNING OF QUOTATION

"Long ago a vast body of water covering the site of Lake Kenosia, extended easterly to Fish Weir bridge. A relic of this remained, up to the advent of the railway in the 1850's, in a beautiful glen whose rushing waters and cool shade made the spot a favorite resort for Danburians. One still meets occasionally an elderly person who remembers seeking recreation there in his youth.

There was also in ancient times a waterfall near Belmont and West Terraces where the Algonquin Indians dwelt, forerunners of more recent tribes.

To the south the water extended to Sugar Hollow Lake and westerly to Sanford, or Andrews, Pond, beyond the village of Mill Plain. Thus Kenosia was about four miles in length until slowly but surely ~~in prehistoric times~~ the water broke through the barrier below Segur St.

The receding waters left for the enjoyment of the white man only the deeper areas of old Kenosia as follows: Wolf Pond; Sugar Hollow Lake, or Bradley's Pond; the present Lake Kenosia, or Mill Plain Pond; and Sanford, or Andrew Pond.

After the disappearance of the Algonquins, the stone age men from the far north, there came from Maine and Labrador many Indians driven here by the ice and floods of the glacial period. These people were of a more advanced culture and made implements and utensils better adapted to conditions of living as they found them here.

For some reason these tribes also passed into oblivion and the third and last tribes of aborigines appeared. These men fashioned arrows for war and hunting with needle sharp points; drills and awls with taper forms; spearheads long and lance-like to be hurled at their foes; beautiful polished axes with grooved hefts; gouges and tools for tanning: ornamental bowls of fire burned clay; stone crocks and funeral urns of soapstone with designs as artistic as those of to-day.

A check-up of the camp sites as they are to-day reveals the above facts, also the fact that the Indian population outnumbered the present population in the same area.

The camp sites are as follows: Humphries' farm, where a great battle must have been staged as several thousand Indian relics have been found there. These arrows were of a variety of shapes, color and materials, some of which were from west of the Hudson river and some from as far away as Lake Champlain.

The Terry farm was a large camp site, also the farm of Arthur Patchen.

Next in order is the Judge C. E. Mason property where a large village of Indians were located who were evidently great travelers as a wide variety of flints of mound builder types have been found there.

The Robinson, Ellis and Harkness farms were ancient camp sites of the Algonquins, the relics found being of the old stone age.

On the western end of Lake Kenosia there was an Indian village and on the west shore great council fires burned as shown by the fire stained stones plowed up there. Cultivation also was carried on as large numbers of hoes, diggers' knives and other agricultural implements have been found.

A large camp was on the site of the old amusement park, which has yielded wonderful specimens. The Danbury Fair ground also was Indian ground of a very odd culture, as were the airport and Charles

Ferris farm. Some of the **finest** specimens in the Connecticut Archaeological Collections were found there within the past fifty years.

Thus we visualize the Indian paddling a silver birch bark canoe on the mighty Kenosia, with primeval forests and glowing camp fires; we hear the cry of wild animals and birds on a moonlight summer night. Those bygone years will never return, but the memory of them will live in the hearts of men. The Indian of Lake Kenosia has gone to the land of the great spirit, but he will not be forgotten.

Dedicated to the memory of Mary and John, the last of the Kenosia tribes.

Indian Mary so-called died about fifty years ago in an old farm house near St. Peter's Cemetery and is now at rest in an unmarked grave in Mill Plain cemetery, near Lake Kenosia. "

END OF QUOTATION

To return to the Ramapos of 1725,- it was their engaging trait to withdraw in good faith from land they had sold,- they were no Indian givers. But some of the tribe still lived as owners, probably quite scattered, north of Ridgefield, in the part not yet opened to settlers, including Lake Kenosia, Ridgebury, Mill Plain as we know it and along the sun-warmed slopes of Joe's Hill range, ~~now~~ parallel-ing the railroad ^{now} in the Danbury-Brewster valley.

This unassigned land west of Danbury and north of Ridgefield, extended over north of Peach Pond to the old Patterson road through Southeast Center.

Scattered through it among the Ramapo owners some whites were living,- hunters, adventurers, self-exiles from the restraints of the settlements, as tenants of the Indians,- who could not sell land as individuals,- or as just tolerated squatters.

There were no real roads in this wild tract, only trodden paths of

unrecorded antiquity. Travel was mostly on foot, sometimes on horseback. The Road to Danbury here was just an Indian trail, but all sooner or later, -like all of us in our day, -must have had the urge to take it, - imagine the motley pile that passed Thomas Stevens' "oblong and short roof colonial" at the date still memorializing this oldest house of Mill Plain.

In 1725, New York was urging Connecticut to readjust its boundary in compliance with an agreement made in 1683. England at this date, on taking over from the Dutch the rule of the New Netherlands, had promised York colony a boundary twenty miles east of the Hudson river and paralleling it.

New York laid out Dutchess County at this time and along its eastern border, the York-Connecticut Colony Line, set markers two miles apart at a surveyed twenty miles' distance from the Hudson. These so-called monuments were piles of stones around a stout stake firmly planted.

I am assured by old residents along the Danbury- Brewster road that one ~~one~~ of these markers can still be seen south of the highway and east of Cedar Swamp along Peach Lake Outlet.

This north and south line should actually have started at the Sound, but the obvious encroachment of Norwalk, Stamford and Greenwich along the shore made this of course impossible. The line began only six miles below the Peach Pond marker at a point in the side of the out jutting Wilton (then Norwalk) angle paralleling Verplanck's Point on the Hudson.

It was a reasonable demand that this important area should be made up along Connecticut's western border and a strip of land two miles, less sixty rods, wide, from the point in Norwalk to Massachusetts Colony Line, was agreed upon as a satisfactory adjustment. This was known as the Equivalent Lands, or the Oblong.

Connecticut long before had agreed to provide such a boundary and in 1725 surveyed from the mouth of the Byram River to the point in Norwalk

twenty miles east of Verplanck's. There the work stopped. Some York colonists held that their "their right little, tight little" neighbor would not accept the point as she said it involved her ceding more than an equivalent area. The real reason was probably lack of funds.

Prospective settlers all around impatiently awaited through several years the opening of this important addition to Dutchess County. The tenants of the Indians, in particular, living on the land, were troubled about the uncertainties of their tenure, -was Connecticut or New York responsible for these delays, which threatened the security of their claims, now grown so important?

Finally one of their number, ^{Thomas Hauley,} with a subtlety in real estate ^{seemingly} almost anachronistic ^{for} in those days, got the backing of some New York City capitalists for a scheme of his devising. He organized the tenants, who petitioned to have as patentees 50,000 acres of the Oblong along Dutchess County, they to meet the cost of finishing the boundary north to Massachusetts and to sell the land to settlers for their reimbursement.

In 1731, Connecticut ran a straight line from the Norwalk angle to Massachusetts, adjusting it at the corner in a way to make the jog in serve as a monument, on every map printed, to this too little publicised historic act.

When the work of measuring and marking the new boundary, -which, ^{due to the manner of laying it out} ~~strange to say,~~ was not a straight line, reached Ridgefield, the Hauley company's offer was accepted.

The strip of land eastward left to Connecticut, was assigned the same year by the Colonial Assembly to Ridgefield under the name of the New Patent. This was largely the eastern slope of Joe's Hill, and Mill Plain west of Lake Kenosia, and was to make up to Ridgefield for its

part of the Oblong ceded on the west. The New Patent extended from the present New-York-Connecticut state line over to the Driftway and east of Mill Plain Pond.

The Oblong henceforth, - its resident Indians and white settlers, old and new, - was under the rule of York Colony; the New Patent owners, Indians ^{also tenants, if any} only, were under that of Connecticut as before.

Two years earlier ^{had} 1731, Ridgefield's seventh purchase brought it up to the New Patent's southern line. One of the deed's signers was "Captain Jacob Turkey of Narrahawtong, obviously a leader among the few Indians left. The land sold was his south of the line.

Eight years later, in December, 1739, Ridgefield concluded its eighth and last purchase ^{by buying all the} "ye sum of ~~with the~~ New Patent, ^{for} six pounds five shillings money to us in hand paid." ⁻⁻⁻

~~"Know all men by these presents that we, Betty ye mother of Jacob Turkey, Capt. Jacob Turkey, Moquaroose, for and in consideration of ye sum of six pounds five shillings money to us in hand paid"---~~

This was not much, even at depression prices, for around 2,000 acres in this section, but it would have gone far in those times towards buying what Master Roger Ludlow, in 1640, gave the Norwalk Indians for their land, namely: "Eight fathoms of wampum, six coats, ^{tenn hoes,} tenn hatchets, tenn knives, tenn scissors, tenn jewes harpes, tenn fathoms Tobackoe, three kettles of six hands about, tenn looking glasses.

^{value ?}
^{can be}
^{figured}
^{from}
^{Cent. Dict. as}
^{around a}
^{few pounds} The sale of the New Patent was not ^{as} spectacular, ^{ac} but it was both exceptional and picturesque. A woman led the file of three signers and drew in the space below the clerk's finger tip a neat little cross, - "Betty x ye mother of Jacob Turkey," followed by Captain Jacob Turkey and Moquaroose, the other signers of the deed.

The old place names of this locality still hold up for the antiquarian, the fame of Squaw Betty. The abandoned road on top the hill

called the old Betty road, rising sharply south along Lake Kenosia, is still open to the still recognizable Betty's Corner, where it joins the Mill Plain- Ridgebury road and where Betty's barn ~~still~~ stood within the memory of many.

(I really think, of course, the ~~stone list~~ of Ludlow is one of the most precious items of early American history)

Betty walked ahead of Indian males because she had taught them to honor her as wise and efficient. She knew the value of money and preferred a few pounds in the ^{belt} pocket to a whole ox cart of early American cheap Indian truck and plunder.

I have long called Betty the first feminist of Mill Plain, and and, believe me, she carried the money on the long trek down the Harlem Valley to the " great meadows of Bedford ", It was there in those days that the Ramapos were assembling in camp, for their final tribal withdrawal from the Colony of Connecticut.

NEXT TOPIC

under:

JOE'S HILLS AND THE ROAD TO DANBURY

also of Early White Settlers of the New Patent; the Oblong,

i.e., the eastern part of Dutchess Co.

* what was the Indian's, pocket, pouch, poke, pouch, poran, or reticule, corresponding to the gypsy's bandanna, in which he carried personal valuables?
Buckskin pouch

Rev. J. Clark Beers
Jessie's mother was Harriett Wilder, ^{Rev. J. Clark Beers} Rev. Joseph Wilder a Methodist minister at Dutch Reformed church Tarrytown in their cemetery - his father Lars Wilder (1773-1857) buried near Plains, Oct 28, 1776 and whose name is on the Rev. Monument in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery Tarrytown - near Washington Irving.
His grandfather Richard Wilder went from Eng to Holland and came to N.Y. with the Dutch and d. 1688. He owned what is now a good portion of the land now occupied by city of Brooklyn. The deed is recorded in Dutchess Co. L. 9.

WYOMING WORTH KNOWING

State Board of
COMMERCE and INDUSTRY
Capitol Building Cheyenne, Wyoming

TO Miss Hannah H. Morrison
Librarian-Danbury Library
Danbury, Conn.

22,261

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Joe's Hill and the Road
to Danbury.

by
Lydia V. H. Potter.

1935

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+ legends of Danbury
From N.Y. Daily Tribune
May 11, 1902