

Spanning the Gap

A Ride Down Old Mine Road Part I: Interstate 80 (Worthington State Forest) to Watergate



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By Susan Kopczynski

OLD MINE ROAD

These excerpts cover the section of Old Mine Road from Kittatinny Point Visitor Center, just off Interstate 80 in New Jersey, to Peters Valley, near the Dingmans Ferry Bridge, which crosses into Pennsylvania.

Start at Kittatinny Point Visitor Center. Be sure to pick up a park map.

Turn left out of the parking area along the access road and proceed to the traffic light that controls a one-way road along the river. For the next 5.7 miles, you will be traveling along Old Mine Road through Worthington State Forest. You will pass their campground, and enjoy some fine views of the river.

Old Mine Road was also called the King's Highway, the River Road, or the High Road to Esopus. It followed a Native American trail connecting the Hudson River, Port Jervis, and the Philadelphia area. That path originally crossed the river at a point just north of Milford and roughly followed the East Side of the Neversink River into New Jersey. By 1715, a wagon road existed between the Hudson and Port Jervis. Early settlers then extended and improved the road on the New Jersey side of the river to Walpack Bend and Deckers Ferry around 1744; and to Abraham Van Campen's mill, near Calno School, around 1750.

A rudimentary road or trail probably extended from there southward to the Pahaquarry Mines. While mining was never successful there, the road



The southern end of Old Mine Road (the beginning of this tour) at Interstate 80.



The Delaware River from Old Mine Road near Worthington State Forest today.

remained an important conduit for New Jersey farmers taking crops to Hudson area markets at Kingston, New York.

Old Mine Road has been re-routed throughout its history. Originally, the road was closer to the river. Several realignments occurred before the 1950s, one to route the road around Watergate. Remnants of this re-routing are still visible from Old Mine Road today.

Note your mileage as you pass the sign that you are entering the recreation area. Proceed 1.5 miles to the Coppermine parking area on your left. Now a trailhead for a spur of the Appalachian Trail, this field was once the busy parade ground of Pahaquarry Boy Scout Camp. Imagine the sounds of morning flag-raising here, or the excited scrambling about of scouts putting canoes in for an adventure on the river.

*You can hike the easy 5-minute trail across the road; it parallels a brook through a picturesque glen and, bearing left, reaches the lower mines shaft. The large foundation you will pass over is that of a processing mill built around 1910, and later used by the scout camp. **CAUTION! The mineshafts are unsafe, and they are also critical habitat for nesting bats. Do NOT remove gates or enter the openings.***

PAHAQUARRY COPPER MINES

Old Mine Road has evolved slowly in response to the needs and activities of many people, from the Native Americans to modern-day tourists. As early as 1626, the Dutch explored for minerals and traded manufactured goods for fur pelts with the natives. In the 1750s, three business partners decided to mine for copper. They constructed buildings, dug *adits* (horizontal passages) and sunk inclined shafts. The copper was of low grade, and the operation ceased by 1760. Nor did subsequent attempts in the 1840s, 1860s, and early 1900s prove profitable, despite modern refining methods.

Mining ended here in 1918. The Boy Scouts of America later purchased the land and operated a scout camp on this site from 1925 to 1970, when the



A tour of the Copper Mines in 1988. (These tours are no longer given).

land was sold to the federal government.

Continue another 1.4 miles to a small white frame building on the left.

CALNO SCHOOL

Built late 1870; Rebuilt 1910

Currently unoccupied

A schoolhouse usually indicates that a community lived nearby. By 1881, the Calno school district counted 48 school-age pupils. Only 30 were on the school's register, though, and daily attendance averaged only 15. Teachers, who were paid poorly, boarded with local families and seldom stayed more than a year or two. Most students traveled to school on foot, and schools were placed so that students would not have to walk more than four to five miles. When Calno School was in operation, there was also a school in Millbrook Village, only 5 miles north, which can still be seen today.

In the 1930s, the school's windows were removed from the north side and placed on the south side, apparently to keep the building warmer. By 1940, the district consolidated into a larger one, put in bus transportation, and converted the school to municipal use. Today the school's sign is barely legible, but inside, voting booths, maps, a piano, and a blackboard full of hunting statistics attest to the long service of this compact structure.

*Leaving Calno School, you will come in about 0.4 miles to two houses which are private residences. **(Please respect the families' privacy!)** The home on the right was one of two local farmsteads of the prominent Van Campen family. (You will have an opportunity to see the imposing Van Campen Inn later in this tour.*

*Old Mine Road once passed on the other (river) side of the house on the left. The old roadbed is now part of the house's entrance drive. Immediately after the house is the entrance to Depew Recreation Site, a popular riverside area. **(Editor's note: this site closed due to flood damage in April of 2005.)** Continuing north, you will come to Van Campens Glen, a good place for a short nature hike, and then Watergate Recreation site. At Depew Recreation Site and at Watergate*



The north exterior of Calno School in 2004.



The south exterior of Calno School in 2004.



The interior of Calno School in 2004, with voting district maps. Pahaquarry Township, in which Calno School is located, has been subsumed into Hardwick Township.

Recreation Site, a fee is charged for parking during summer months.

WATERGATE PICNIC AREA

Developed in the 1950s



Watergate represents something of a pinnacle in the fashion, seen all around the recreation area, of manipulating streams of water for scenic enjoyment. Only the stone pillars of the dam remain from the once-extensive landscaping of the 1950s, which featured a hydraulic system of multi-level ponds. Here, as in many other spots in the park, are tall stands of Scotch pines planted

during the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

(Above) Watergate in the winter of 1971.

Leaving Watergate, travel 0.5 miles north to the intersection, and turn left (toward Walpack.) Pull into the parking area for Millbrook Village on your right. A self-guiding booklet of the village is available free just outside the cabin by the parking area.

You can also walk to Watergate from Millbrook Village in about 6 minutes. Follow the road past the schoolhouse, bearing right when the road turns hard left in a small clearing.



Watergate in the summer of 1967.



Sunset at Watergate, summer of 1973.



Watergate around 1973.



Watergate Recreation Site today.