

Spanning the Gap

A Ride Down Old Mine Road Part I: Worthington State Forest to Watergate Revised October 2012



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Tour excerpts for *A Ride down Old Mine Road* will cover Old Mine Road through the park from Kittatinny Point Visitor Center to Montague NJ, in five parts. Part I will cover from Kittatinny Point Visitor Center, just off Interstate 80, to Watergate Recreation Site.

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 under the highway 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.



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

OLD MINE ROAD

In use since at least the 1750s

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.



Along the unpaved section of Old Mine Road.

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



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

PAHAQUARRY COPPER MINES

Mining since at least the 1750s.

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 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.**

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*



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

(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, Camp Pahaquarry on this site from 1925 to 1970. Just north of scout camp Camp Cowaw had its waterfront at Poxono boat launch. The land of both camps was sold to the federal government in the 1970s.

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



Abegg Lodge at Camp Cowaw once stood on the steep slope above Copper Mines Parking Area and Poxono boat launch.

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. Pahaquarry Township, in which Calno School is located, has



The north exterior of Calno School in 2004.



The south exterior of Calno School in 2004.

been subsumed into Hardwick Township.

Leaving Calno School, you will come in about 0.4 miles to a white house on the right and just across the road, a grouping of red barns on the left. (You can pull in on the left in the driveway just past the barns and drive back to the barns.)



The interior of Calno School in 2004, with voting district maps.

VAN CAMPEN FARMSTEADS

James Van Campen Barn and corn crib 1812
Abraham Van Campen House Built early to mid 18th century
Benjamin B. Van Campen House circa 1830

These are remains of two separate local farmsteads of the prominent Van Campen family. Columbia-Walpack Turnpike once passed on the other (river) side of the red barns; the barns' entrance drive is a section of the old roadbed .

These homestaeds were originally farms, taking advantage of the fertile river valley. The house of the James Van Campen property was built in 1812 on the foundation of a 1768 house. The house became a summer home; it burned in 2012. The Abraham Van Campen House was named after its builder, an early Dutch settler who owned more than 1600 acres; he was the uncle of Isaac Van Campen, owner of Van Campen Inn. (You will have an opportunity to see the imposing Van Campen Inn later in this tour.) The stucco is overlain on stone. Descendants farmed the property until it was purchased for a summer home in 1932.

Behind the house on the right (there is a grassy road for walking in just south of the house) is yet another Van Campen House and another set of barns. Benjamin B. Van Campen House became a summer boarding house called Honeysuckle Retreat from 1915-1922. This house has an unusual exterior wall of slate.

After taking in the Van Campen holdings, continue north about



Abraham Van Campen House. NPS Photo by Ken Sandri



Detail of B.B. Van Campen House. NPS Photo by Ken Sandri

2.1 miles to the sign for Watergate Recreation Area and turn right into the entrance. Be advised that in season (February through October) there is a fee to park at Watergate, but you may drive in to take a look without paying a fee. Stay with your car.



Barn at James Van Campen farmstead. NPS Photo by Ken Sandri

WATERGATE PICNIC AREA

Developed in the 1950s



Watergate is 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 system of a hydraulic multi-level ponds. Tall stands of Scotch pines were planted during the 1930s by the CCC -- Civilian



Conservation Corps.



(Below, left) Watergate in the winter of 1971.



Watergate in the summer of 1967.



Watergate Recreation Site today

(Far left) Sunset at Watergate, summer of 1973. (Left) daytime at Watergate, around 1973.

Leaving Watergate, turn right and travel 0.5 miles north to the intersection with Route 602, and turn left (toward Walpack.) Pull immediately into the parking area for Millbrook Village on your right. Weekends in summer the village is staffed with costumed rangers and volunteers. You can download a map and guide to the village from this park's website.

The tour of Old Mine Road continues with *A Ride down Old Mine Road Part II: Millbrook Village.*