

Spanning the Gap

A Ride Down Old Mine Road Part IV: Peters Valley NJ Revised October 2012



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(These following directions pick up from Walpack Center.)

Continue another 3 miles from Walpack Center, and note on the left a farmstead with a white frame house. Pull off to the left.



VALLEY BROOK FARM

Private Residence
Barns now house blacksmith studios for Peters Valley Crafts Center

This house is built in the Colonial Revival style popular after the centennial year of 1876. Once an industrialist's country escape, the complex has undergone much remodeling.

Across the road from Valley Brook Farm and on the right is the **Dutch Reformed Church of Peters Valley**. It was built in 1838 to replace an earlier church building that still stands on the triangle of land across from the Craft Store. Although church services are no longer held here, burials still take place. Look for the tree-trunk tombstone of Daniel Rosenkrans, who died in 1891, and for the grave of a Mrs. Victor Bevans, who was murdered in a mysterious crime of 1903.

Continue 0.2 miles on the same road, and turn left at the four-way intersection. Head southwest another 0.4 miles up a hill to a farm complex on your right (with a two-story frame house).



Valley Brook Farmhouse.
(NPS Photos by Ken Sandri)

Pull into the driveway just beyond the house.



Peters Valley Dutch Reformed Church.

HILLTOP FARM

Built early 19th century

Now used as an artist residence and weaving studio for Peters Valley Craft Center.

Private Residence

The nucleus of the main house suggests this may have been one of the earliest homesteads in the area. Note the additions in different architectural styles that were put on at different times. The complex includes a springhouse (across the road), a cottage, and other outbuildings. The "bank"-style barn (constructed into the bank of a hill) shows the influence of German settlers.

Retrace your path towards the intersection in town and pull into the head-in parking spaces alongside the store on your left as you near the intersection. (Further directions will be given starting from these parking spaces.)



Hilltop Farmhouse and barn.
(NPS Photos by Ken Sandri)

PETERS VALLEY

Established mid-19th century



Buildings in use by Peters Valley Craft Center.

This hamlet was originally named for Peter Van Ness, who settled in the area during the late 18th century. Like other villages, it developed during the mid 19th century to serve surrounding farms, declined in the late 19th century, and adapted

(Left) The Peters Valley Craft Store today. The Greek Revival House is just visible to the left. The road to Dingmans Ferry bridge is at the right.



to serve summer vacationers in the early 20th century. For a time the village was called *Hensfoot Corners* because of the way the roads come together in the center of town. Still later, the village was called *Bevans*, after its postmaster.

Architecturally, this is probably the most interesting village in the area because of the wide variety of styles. Unique is the Greek Revival House (built in 1855) high on the hill behind and next to the store. The store, built around the same time, is also Greek Revival in style, though of a vernacular form, and is a rare example of cobblestone construction with a stucco finish.

Today the village is operated by Peters Valley Craft Center as an artist community with workshops offered during the summer months. Participants are housed in the Greek Revival house and other structures. The Craft Store and Gallery is open year-round.

When you pull out of the head-in parking spaces alongside the Craft Store and Gallery, go back to the intersection in front of the store, and make a left turn at the Store. As you leave the buildings of Peters Valley behind there will be a dirt road on the left; this is a cut-off road into the 1870s Smith-Birchenough Farm, which is near the north end of the unpaved section of Old Mine Road. Continue 1 mile on the paved road, called Walpack Road or Peters Valley-Dingmans Road, to a small stone house on a rise on the right of the road. Pull to the side of the road. Note the dirt road leading down to the left. This is the original dirt roadbed of Old Mine Road leading back toward the Smith-Birchenough Farm.

The Peters Valley Craft Store in years past. Note the Greek Revival building behind the store to the left. This building is also still standing today.



The Peters Valley Craft Store and Greek Revival House today.



Smith Birchenough Barn on the unpaved section of Old Mine Road. The barn and its pond can be glimpsed to the left from paved Old Mine Road heading north out of Peters Valley.



Two postcard views of Bevans (today's Peters Valley) around 1919.

(Far left) North Main Street.

(Left) South Main Street.

BEVANS-HELLWIG KITCHEN (FORT CARMER)

Formerly known as Fort Carmer
Built early 19th century

Local tradition has it that the original structure on this site was used as a French and Indian War fortification. The remains of this earlier building may have been used in the construction of the present building around 1770. The property is shown as belonging to James Bevans on an 1860 map.

In the late 19th century, this little stone building was incorporated as a rear kitchen into a large frame farmhouse. The farmhouse was expanded around 1890 and 1930. There has been enough support for earlier origin of the stone kitchen wing that it has been preserved and restored, even as the farmhouse and its large barn were torn down.

A map of the fortifications along the Delaware River in northwestern New Jersey was drawn by quartermaster Jonathan Hampton in 1758; it shows a Fort Carmer at this approximate location. The site commands a good view, and the large farmhouse here was turned effectively to shelter the house from winds.

Continue north on the paved road (away from Peters Valley). Look to the left for additional glimpses of the Smith-Birchenough farm buildings, with the large barn overlooking a pond. You will come to Route 560 (A left turn takes you over the Dingmans Ferry Bridge to Pennsylvania.) Go across the intersection to continue the tour.

The tour of Old Mine Road continues with *A Ride Down Old Mine Road Part V: Dingmans Bridge to Montague NJ.*



Fort Carmer attached to the Bevans-Hellwig House.



Fort Carmer today.



Fort Carmer today. NPS Photo by Benjamin Cohen