

# GREENE COUNTY HISTORY

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## William H. Edwards & the Amazon

by  
Jim Planck

One of the most famous men of the Catskill Mountains is the naturalist John Burroughs. His numerous volumes of late 19th and early 20th century outdoor observations in prose and poetry – from the large world of weather to the small one of insects – are, literally, internationally recognized among professional and amateur naturalists alike.

But another man of the Catskills put pen to paper and recorded the natural world's beauties and wonders several decades before John Burroughs – in fact, when Burroughs was only nine years old. The work he produced from that effort reveals not only a young man highly trained in the powers of observation, but a man of poetic spirit and in sympathy with nature, whose literary talent still today enables the reader to share his journey with him, bringing alive all the color, vibrancy, and fullness of the outdoor world.

That man was William Henry Edwards, of Hunter. William Henry was the grandson of Col. William Edwards, the Massachusetts man who, with his son, Col. William W. Edwards – William Henry's father – was founder of the Village of Hunter in 1817, and, by creating his New York Tannery company, was the first to bring large-scale commercial tanning to the Catskills.

Grandson William Henry Edwards was born, appropriately enough, in Hunter, on March 15,



*Hoatzin, as seen in this 2010 photo, were but one of the many colorful and distinctive bird species seen and described by Hunter's William H. Edwards on his 1846 trip up the Amazon River. Image courtesy Claudio Dias Timm/Wikipedia.*

1822, five years after his grandfather and father had settled the place. Several years later, apparently about 1825 or 1826, "the Young Colonel" – his father's title, as opposed to "the Old Colonel," his grandfather's – took his family to New York City for the metropolitan life and employment there, but after a few more years, brought them back to Hunter again.

This was in May, 1829, when William Henry was still seven years old, but three years later, at the age of ten, he was sent away to school. Ten years later, at the age of 20, we find him graduating from Williams College in nearby Williamstown, Mass., and four years after that, in 1846, he is admitted to the New York Bar in New York City. However, 1846 was also the year his love of nature first manifested itself to history – when he took the trip

that was to be the subject of his book – so law never again seems to have taken hold, and in later years he instead became, like his father and grandfather, an industrialist.

The place he went just prior to his 23rd birthday was South America – the "eastern mouth" of the Amazon River to be precise – and the book he wrote about it, *A Voyage up the River Amazon, including a residence at Para*, by William H. Edwards, was published the following year, 1847, by the prestigious New York-based publishing firm of D. Appleton &

Co.

William Henry also had a relative on the trip with him as a traveling companion: his 32-year old uncle, Armory Edwards, a younger brother of his father,

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born in 1814 and thus only eight years William Henry's senior, and who had previously lived in South America – although in Argentina, not Brazil.

Like much of the family, Armory had been brought up in the leather business, and when still quite young had been sent by the family's NYC agents, the firm of Howland and Aspinwall, to Buenos Ayres in the position of "supercargo" – a title bearing the responsibility to manage and sell the designated cargo of the ship he was on – and which resulted in Armory living there.

In 1841, in fact, he had been made the United States Consul in Buenos Ayres, an appointment given by America's ninth (and short-lived) President, William Henry Harrison only a month before the president died. It was a position Armory Edwards held until he returned to the U.S. in 1845, only to go back to South America the following year with William Henry on his nephew's exploration of the Amazon.

Armory's field service career for the federal government continued later, however, including his appointment as U.S. Counsel-General for Nicaragua in 1856.

There is a possibility that though the content of William Henry's book is about nature and natives, the trip may have also had an ulterior motive, especially since it was Armory who was traveling with him.

In providing a brief overview and history of the city of Para – its actual name then and now being Belem, but at that time generally referred to by the region's name -- Edwards gives details pertinent to this possibility. "The only event that requires particular mention," he says, "is the Revolution of 1835, and the

following year."

"The President of the province was assassinated, as were very many private individuals of respectability, and the city was in possession of the insurgent troops, assisted by designing whites and Indians. All the citizens who could, fled for their lives; many to Portugal, and many to the United States and England." He adds that after 18 months of anarchy, Brazil's President arrived with sufficient force to recover possession of the city and restore order.

Then, later in the book, when at the rice mills twelve miles from Para, at Magoary, Edwards, in describing a structure there, writes, "The building, a part of which is now used as a rice mill, was formerly appropriated to different purposes, and was the manor house of a vast estate, now mostly unproductive." Edwards notes it was built "in the days of Para's glory, under the old regime," adding, "Those days have passed, and the boundless wealth and the proud aristocracy that surrounded the viceroy's court, have passed with them."

Significantly, he adds, "An American company, formed at Northampton, Mass., purchased the estate, and, for many years, under the superintendence of Mr. Upton, the agent and main proprietor, have carried on a large and profitable business."

Northampton, Mass., was the former home and business location of his grandfather, the elder Colonel, and there were still both relatives and business acquaintances there. It is perhaps possible that Upton's operation at Magoary was of interest to folks back home, although no direct, outside reference has yet been located.



In the book's preface, written in May 1847 at New York City upon completion of the trip, Edwards, however, justifiably provides the beauty and untrammled wilderness of South America as sufficient reason to have gone, especially in that, he says, when all other places of fancy and interest run out, South America will still remain.

"It has been a matter of surprise to me," writes Edwards, "that those who live upon the excitement of seeing and telling some new thing, have so seldom betaken themselves to our Southern continent."

"The writer of this unpretending volume," he says, "in company with his relative, Armory Edwards, Esq., late U.S. Consul at Buenos Ayres, visited Northern Brazil, and ascended the Amazon to a higher point than, to his knowledge, any American had ever before gone." Not a bad feat for a man from the tiny village of Hunter, Greene County.

"As an amusement, and by way of compensation to himself for the absence of some of the monsters which did not meet his curious eye" – this, a reference to the many school geography illustrations of the time which he said depicted a land "where men riding rebellious alligators form a foreground to tigers bounding over tall canes, and huge snakes embrace whole boats' crews in their ample folds" – "he [Edwards, still speaking of himself] collected as many specimens in different departments of Natural History as were in his power, at the same time chronicling the result of his observations, in the hope that they might not be unacceptable to the naturalist or to the general reader."

"To the science of a naturalist, he makes no pretensions, but as a lover and devout worshiper of Nature, he has sought her in some of her most secret-hiding places, and from these comparatively unexplored retreats, has brought (back) the little which she deigned to reveal to him."

"The country of the Amazon is the garden of the world," Edwards says.

Edwards opens his book with the simple sentence, "It was a cold morning, the 9th of February, 1846, that we left New-York, in the bark *Undine*, Capt. Appleton, for Para," and throughout the remaining 256 pages, he is an avid observer of nature, with the curiosity to seek out as much as he could. For example, on the trip south, he notes, "We had seen sharks and brilliant-robed dolphins. A grampus [a term used alternatively for both a Risso's dolphin and an orca] had risen under the bow, and flying-fish had repeatedly flown on board. Many an hour we had whiled (away) in fishing up gulf weed,



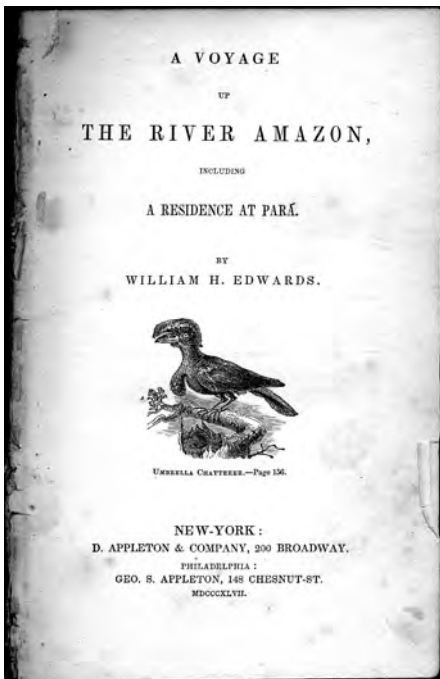
*Born in Hunter in 1822, William Henry Edwards was an avid naturalist and journeyed up the Amazon River in his early 20s, writing an excellent book about everything he saw and did. Public domain image from "Illustrations of diurnal lepidoptera," by A.G. Weeks, 1911.*

and in observing the different species of animals with which it was filled."

Fine nature writing fills every page in the book, such as given here, in describing some of the many birds he saw while at the aforementioned rice mills, at Magoary, near Para.

"Birds of gaudiest plumage," Edwards writes, "flit through the trees. The trogon, lonely sitting in her leaf-encircled home, calls plaintively to her long absent mate. The motmot utters his name in rapid tones. Tucano, tucano, comes loudly from some fruit-covered tree, where the great toucans are rioting. 'Noiseless chatterers' flash through the branches. The loud rattling of the woodpecker comes from some topmost limb, and tiny (curve-billed) creepers, in livery the gayest of the gay, are running up the tree trunks, stopping, now and then, their busy search, to gaze inquisitively at the strangers."

"Pairs of chiming-thrushes are ringing their alternate notes, like the voice of a single bird," he adds. "Parrots are chattering, paroquets screaming. Manakins are piping in every low tree, restless, never still. Woodpigeons, the 'birds of the painted breasts,'



*The title page of Edwards' 1847 book features an illustration of the Umbrella Chatterer, now known as the Amazonian Umbrellabird. Image courtesy J. Planck.*

fly startled, and pheasants, of a dozen varieties, go whirring off.”

“But, most beautiful of all, humming birds, living gems, and surpassing aught that’s brilliant save the diamond,” says Edwards, “are constantly darting by, now stopping an instant, to kiss the gentle flower, and now, furiously battling some rival humble-bee. ‘Beijar flor,’ (meaning) kiss-flower, ‘tis the Brazilian name for the hummingbird, beautifully appropriate.”

“Large butterflies float past, the bigness of a hand, and of the richest metallic blue,” he writes, “and from the flowers above, comes the distant hum of myriads of gayly coated insects.”

“From his hole in the sandy road,” says Edwards, “the harmless lizard, in his gorgeous covering of green and gold, starts nimbly forth, stopping, every instant, with raised head and quick eye, for the appearance of danger, and armies of ants in their busy toil,

are incessantly marching by.”

Edwards collected specimens everywhere he went, including near a rubber plantation on the river Guama, a branch of the Amazon. “We strolled about the woods several hours, shooting birds and squirrels, or collecting plants. Some of the air plants found here produced flowers of more exquisite beauty than we ever met elsewhere, particularly, a variety of Stanhopea” – an orchid genus – “which bore a large, white, bell-shaped flower.”

“This,” he says, “we succeeded in transporting to New-York, and it is now in the green-house of Mr. Hogg, together with many other plants of our collecting. Under his care, they promise to renew the beauty of their native woods.”

Hogg would have been Englishman Thomas Hogg, Sr., who was a prominent and successful florist and nurseryman in New York City of the time. He operated the business with his sons Thomas Jr. and James, both of whom continued it following his death in 1855, eight years after Edwards’ return from the Amazon.

The genus Stanhopea is widespread in Central and South America, and it is unclear which species Edwards is referring to, especially so since scientific classifications periodically change as new information is developed. Thus there is now not only a genus Stanhopea, but also a larger subtribe called Stanhopeinae, which includes not only Stanhopea, but five other genus and their species as well, all of which were probably designated varieties of Stanhopea back in 1846.

One possibility is Stanhopea candida, also called the “Snow White Stanhopea,” which apparently occurs only in the Amazon

River basin – but that reaches through at least four countries. However, it also prefers the elevated lands in the basin, thus finding it near the lowlands of the Rio Guama seems somewhat improbable. Yet research reveals no other species of Stanhopea that is pure white readily surfacing in that area. The genus was named in 1829 for Philip Henry Stanhope, 4th Earl of Stanhope, and at that time president of the Medico-Botanical Society of London.

Edwards also injects humor, when the occasion struck, such as this anecdote:

“Upon one occasion,” he writes, “Armory brought in a sloth which he had shot, and I skinned him, with the intention of preserving his body for some anatomical friend at home, to whom sloths might be a novelty.”

“But our cook was too alert for us,” Edwards adds, “and before we were aware, she had him from the peg where he hung dripping, and into the stew-pan, whence he made his debut upon our dinner-table.”

“We dissembled [masked] our disappointment,” he writes, “and did our best to look with favor upon the beast, but his lean and tough flesh, nevertheless, could not compare with monkey” – which he had earlier described as edible.

To fully capture the flavor of his writing, a more lengthy excerpt follows from when they were well on their way back out, but still about 300 miles up the Amazon.

“When opposite Pryinha, we took an igaripe to avoid the long circuit and the rough channel, and sailed many miles upon water, still as a lake. Here were vast numbers of ducks and ciganas, Opisthocomus cristatus. These

latter” – now called hoatzin – “had lately nested, and the young birds were in half plumage. They seemed to be feeding upon pacovas, which grow in abundance upon the grounds of a deserted sitio, and as we startled them, they flew with a loud rustling of their wings, like a commotion of leaves, hoarsely crying, cra, cra. The nests of these birds are built in low bushes, and are compactly formed of sticks, with a lining of leaves. The eggs are three or four, almost oblong, and of a cream color, marked with blotches of red and faint brown.”

In addition to Armory, three other men traveled with them for part of the trip: a businessman, a saw-mill owner, and a young man from New Jersey.

A description of his boat – a type of vessel called a galliota – is also provided. “The boat in which we were to make our cruise,” Edwards says, “was called a galliota, a sort of pleasure craft, but well adapted to such excursions.”

“It was thirty feet in length, having a round, canoe bottom, and without a keel. Its greatest width was seven feet. The after [rear] part was a cabin, lined on either side and at the remoter end (of the cabin’s interior) with (horizontal) lockers for provisions and other matters.”

“Upon each locker was scanty room for one sleeper, and two could lie comfortably upon the floor, while another swung above them in a hammock.”

“In front of the cabin door was a tiny deck, and beyond this, covering the hold, and extending to within two feet of the extreme (furthest point of the) bow, was the tolda”— a two-sided tent – “covered

with canvass, and intended for the stowage of goods or baggage.”

“On either side of this tolda was a space, a foot in width, and level. Here, in most awkward positions, were to sit the paddlers.”

Edwards’ nature travelogue also mentions the dangers of the trip, such as the following:

“While clearing out one of the lockers this afternoon, we started a brood of scorpions, a kind of reptile [now classified as an arachnid, like spiders] more formidable in ancient story than in modern reality.”

“Still, I should prefer,” he adds, “not to be stung by one of them. We saw them frequently in different parts of the country, and occasionally, several inches in length.”

“They abound in all canoes and vessels, and once, as I opened a letter brought from Para in one of these craft, a nice little specimen dropped from the folds.”

Amazonian freshwater porpoises were also seen. “Upon the morning of the 30th [of June, 1846], we were called out to observe a school of porpoises, that were blowing and leaping all around us.”

“This fish resembles much the sea-porpoise in its motions, and is common from Para up. Its color is pinkish, upon the belly, and a number of them gambling about is an exceedingly beautiful sight.”

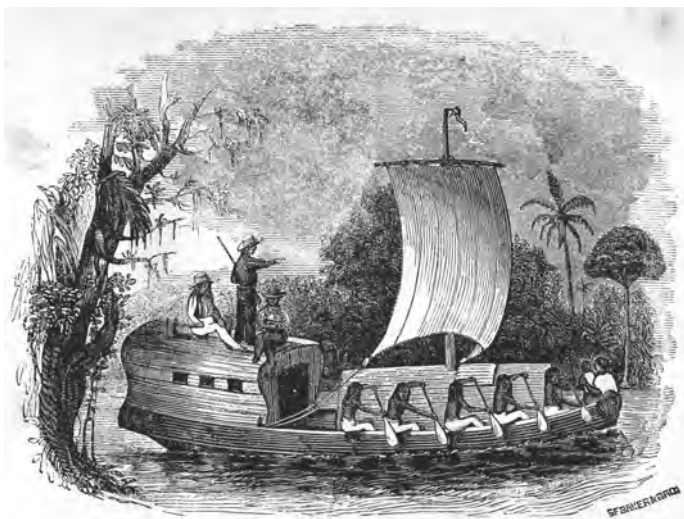
Space, of course, precludes presenting as many excerpts and anecdotes of his travel to best show the adventure, excitement, and enjoyment of going along, via armchair, with Edwards on his trip, so he bids good-bye in a final excerpt.

“It was a delightful morning in the latter part of October, when, in the good bark Undine, we bade adieu to Para,” he writes.

“We had come from (New York City’s) winter into summer,” writes Edwards, “and were now returning to winter again – and although the thoughts of home were pleasant, it was very hard to part with kind friends, and to say a farewell, that was to be perpetual, to this land of sunshine, of birds and flowers.”

Edwards was not, however, done with his nature writing. He became, in fact, one of America’s earliest and foremost entomologists, with specialty as a lepidopterist – a butterfly expert. He wrote huge scientific reference volumes, the first and foremost of their time, for identifying all butterfly species found in North America.

Nor does his place in history rest solely upon his fondness for nature. As an early industrialist pioneer in the coal fields of southern West Virginia, he has a permanent and prominent place in the annals of that



*The frontispiece of "A Voyage up the River Amazon" depicts the type of boat -- a galliota -- that was used by Edwards and his companions. The standing man, with gun, may well represent Edwards watching for specimens to collect. Image courtesy J. Planck.*



state's history, with a large manuscript holding in the West Virginia State Archives. His home, Bellefleur, in Coalbergh, Kanawha County, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1990.

Additionally, he was also a Shakespeare scholar, and authored a book about who, and who did not, really write the plays.

He also helped write, produce, and print the life memoirs of his grandfather – Hunter's founder, Col. Edwards.

But these are all topics for other articles about him, so we leave him now at age 24, in the fullness of the



return from his Amazonian experience, in New York City.

*Voyage Up the River Amazon*, by William Henry Edwards is readable in multiple versions on-line at [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org). Select the copy digitized from the New York Public Library, which includes the illustrations.

*"Voyage Up the River Amazon" is how Edward's 1847 book was identified on its spine, and bears the standard gilt-leaf printing on black, with brown-and-white marbled boards, of the time. Image courtesy J. Planck.*

## The History Quiz

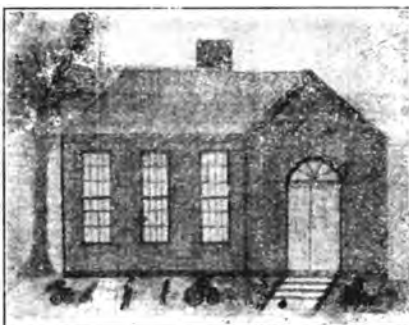
**Q:** *The Methodist Episcopal Church in America was formed in 1784 and Bishop Asbury helped to spread the message of John Wesley's Methodism across the Eastern seaboard's original 13 States. The itinerant preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church found much success in the new United States. Where was the first Methodist Episcopal church on the west side of the Hudson built in 1791?*

**A:** In 1784 at a conference in Baltimore, Maryland, the Methodist Episcopal Church in America was founded. In 1789 the Methodist Church sent Reverend John Crawford to the Coeymans Patent. He was to find and serve the ten Methodists in the area, and create more followers. After much searching he could not locate the ten Methodists in the Coeymans Patent. Tired and discouraged, Crawford found a place within the forest where he prayed to God for a solution. His prayer was not a quiet one and he was overheard by several women passing by on the Kings Road. They listened intently to his praying and then asked him to come to one of their homes. There he began to preach to them and their friends. He soon began to attract large crowds to his services.

In 1790 or 1791 at the spot where he had prayed about his problem, Reverend Crawford built the first Methodist Episcopal Church west of the Hudson in New York State. In 1795 a crowd of 1,000 was in attendance when Bishop Francis Asbury visited the Church. The Methodist Society in Coeymans Patent grew and eventually 28 Methodist Societies were organized under the Church jurisdiction in places such as Coxsackie, New Baltimore, Greenville and South Bethlehem.

By 1833 the Old Stone Church building was beginning to fall apart. Reflecting the growth of the area, a new structure was erected in Coeymans, now a larger community. The stones used to build the Old Stone Church began to disappear into other structures in the area.

Fast forward about 125 years when Atlantic Cement is purchasing land for their cement quarry and production operation. The site of the Old Stone Church is purchased as part of their property. In 1974 the company restored the historical marker for the Church, landscaped the area and marked the space where the Church had stood.



*Built in the early 1790s, the Old Stone Church was in use until the early 1830s. No known paintings survive, but we do have these two line drawings of the structure. Although they present obvious differences, they also contain common elements that assist us in trying to envision how the church looked. For example: both drawings show a central chimney, and three separate windows, left to right, on the sides of the building. While one image separates the upper and lower halves of each window set, and the other shows all the panes set together to create a tall effect, we can take away that the church contained three window sets on the long sides of the building.*

# Nineteenth Century Transportation in Greene County

by

Wanda West Traver

– Part One –

As the 1800s began, Greene County officially became its own county. Soon after, in 1806, Catskill became an incorporated village. Let us take a look at transportation before the era of the automobile. If we had lived then, how would we have gotten around the area? Riding horseback, or using a horse and wagon, of course, comes to mind. Within village limits road responsibility was clear, but who would build – and then maintain – roads linking villages one to another? Thus began the era of the toll roads.

## THE SUSQUEHANNA TURNPIKE

The first in Greene County was the Susquehanna Turnpike, which had its eastern terminus in Salisbury, Connecticut. As it came west to the Hudson River, it traversed the Ancram Turnpike. Construction on the Greene County leg of the Susquehanna began in 1800 and was completed August 20, 1801. The road offered transportation from Catskill Landing to what was then Wattles Ferry, now Unadilla, at the Susquehanna River in Otsego County. Former Town of Catskill Historian Ruth Houghtaling tells that the Susquehanna Turnpike was a toll road, and provided for milestone markers which noted the distance from the Catskill Landing, and had toll gates approximately every ten miles. The specifications stated that the roadbed was to be of wood, stone, gravel and other hard substances, and was to be not less than four and no more than six rods wide.

The road began at the Catskill Landing, ran close along the east side of the Catskill Creek along a road then parallel to what is now paved Main Street, turning back to Main at Green Street. It used Main Street to the top of the street, turning west from there. It turned left at the foot of Jefferson Hill, taking it past today's Suburban Way, and then on to today's Route 23B.

It is interesting to note that the first milestone was placed 3½ to 4 miles from the Hudson, and was located where the modern Route 23 exits into Route 23B. The old road did wind around a sharp

## RATES OF TOLL,

ESTABLISHED BY THE LAW,

RELATIVE TO THE

## *Susquehanna Turnpike- Corporation.*

FOR EVERY score of sheep, or hogs, eight cents.

For every score of cattle, horses or mules, twenty cents ; and so in proportion for any greater or less number of sheep, hogs, cattle, horses or mules.

For every horse and rider, or led horse, five cents.

For every fulkey, chair or chaise, with one horse, twelve and an half cents.

For every cart drawn by one horse, six cents.

For every chariot, coach, coachee, or phaeton, twenty-five cents.

For every stage-woggon, or other four wheel carriage, drawn by two horses, mules or oxen, twelve and an half cents ; and three cents for every additional horse, mule or ox.

For every cart drawn by two oxen, twelve and an half cents ; and for every additional horse or ox, three cents.

For every sleigh or sled, six cents, if drawn by two horses or oxen ; and in like proportion if drawn by a greater or lesser number of horses or oxen.

*The legally-established rates of toll on the Susquehanna Turnpike. In the early 1800s, it was still common practice to use an "f" with a half-crossbar to designate an "s," except when it ended a word. Then they'd use what we would identify as a normal "s."*  
*Collections of the Durham Center Museum.*

turn where the Thruway exit now sits. The old turnpike returned approximately to Route 23B just east of what's now Forest Avenue in Leeds.

Russ Patton, Jr., writing in a *Kaatskill Life* article on a "trip" on the Turnpike all the way to Unadilla, noted that the road used Route 23B through Leeds (formerly Madison), Wolcoft's Mill (now South Cairo) and on to today's State Route 23 at Cairo, passing a cemetery in Cairo and then

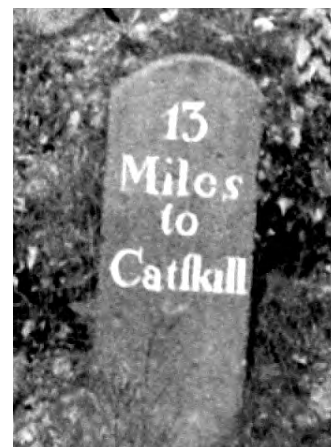


connecting with Route 145. From there the Turnpike went west to Durham, turning left on County Route 20, past the Susquehanna church in Durham and climbing the steep hill to the west, an area known as Princk Hill.

Brooks Atkinson, who lived in Durham on Princk Hill, also wrote of the Susquehanna. His notes state that in 1928 the road through there was known as West Durham Mountain Road, or Princk Hill. An original, brown, weather-worn relic of a milepost on his land, written in old fashioned script, read 23 miles to Catskill. Over the years that milestone has “disappeared” but “22, 24 and 25 miles-to-Catskill” milestones still remain on Princk Hill.

Continuing with Mr. Patton’s account, the road dropped down into Manorkill in Schoharie County (Durham Road) and turned left at Manorkill, onto today’s State Route 990v at Conesville. The Turnpike went through the old village of Gilboa – before the reservoir was built, of course.

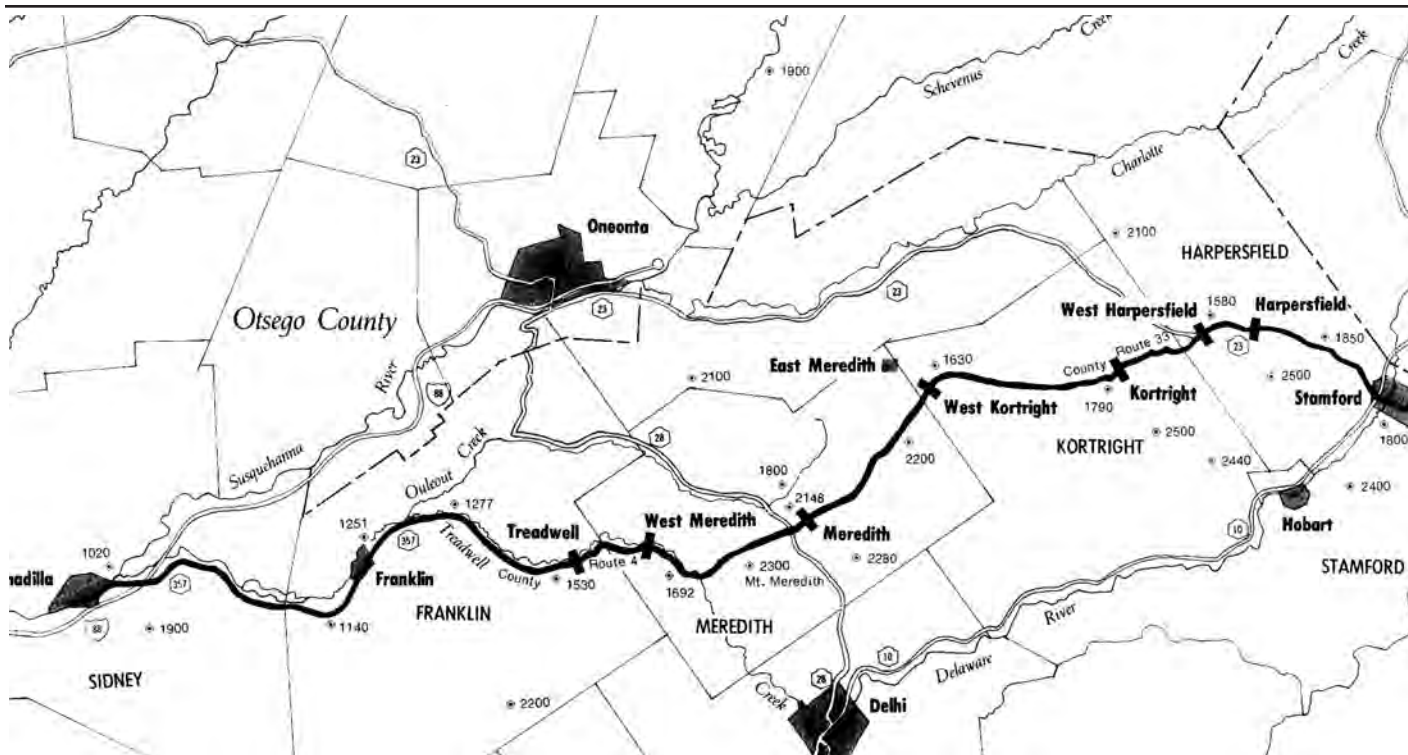
State Route 990v crosses the Schoharie Creek just north of the dam and then intersects with State Route 30. The turnpike continues westward as Schoharie County Route 14, and then back to Route 23 through Stamford and Harpersfield. At West Harpersfield the road heads up a hill as Delaware County Route 33 toward Kortright and Meredith, past the church at West Kortright and



*These two mile markers along the route of the Susquehanna Turnpike are a couple of the survivors, still standing today. These items courtesy of Special Collections, New York State Historical Association Library, Cooperstown, N.Y.*

State Route 28 at Meredith, the turnpike now continuing on Delaware County Route 14.

Crossing today’s State Route 357, the Susquehanna passes through the village of Franklin. Along Route 357 is the homestead of Sluman Wattles, who settled there in the late 1700s. He traded with the Indians and operated a ferry across the Susquehanna at – you guessed it, what was then Wattles Ferry. Now passing Interstate 88, we cross the bridge over the river to State Route 7 at Unadilla and reach the western end of the



*Laid over a modern map, this was the route of the Susquehanna Turnpike. This map of the Susquehanna Turnpike appears courtesy of Hanford Mills Museum, East Meredith, NY.*



Turnpike.

The Susquehanna Turnpike Company continued to use part of the route until 1901. Of course, inns sprang up along the Turnpike, and were frequented by drovers. The local Catskill ones included Donnelly's Tavern (on Water Street, at the point where the stages started), Caleb Street's (Main Street, Catskill), J. W. Gleason & Son's Farmers' and Drovers' Tavern (at the upper end of the town, near the Hans Vosen Kill), and the Bull's Head Inn (at the foot of Haight's Hill – e.g., Jefferson Hill).

### THE ALBANY-GREENE TURNPIKE

The Albany-Greene Turnpike was chartered April 7, 1806. The Turnpike ran from the Greene County boundary at Albany with the Albany & Bethlehem Turnpike through Coeymans Landing, as near to the river as possible, to Warner's Bridge over Murderer's Creek in Athens, along today's Route 385, and on to the drawbridge at Catskill. The drawbridge was erected in 1802. The turnpike had four tollgates: one at Coeymans Landing, one at Coxsackie, one at Athens and the final one at Catskill.

In 1809 the Athens section was extended from Market Street, Athens, westward to intersect with the Susquehanna Turnpike between the half-toll gate and the bridge – our Old Leeds Bridge – near Martin G. Schuneman's. Also of note is that the

Albany-Greene Turnpike, running on today's Route 385 at Athens, passed a hotel, the Henry O. Nichols Store, and later the tenant houses of the railroad workers, the area known today as Brick Row.

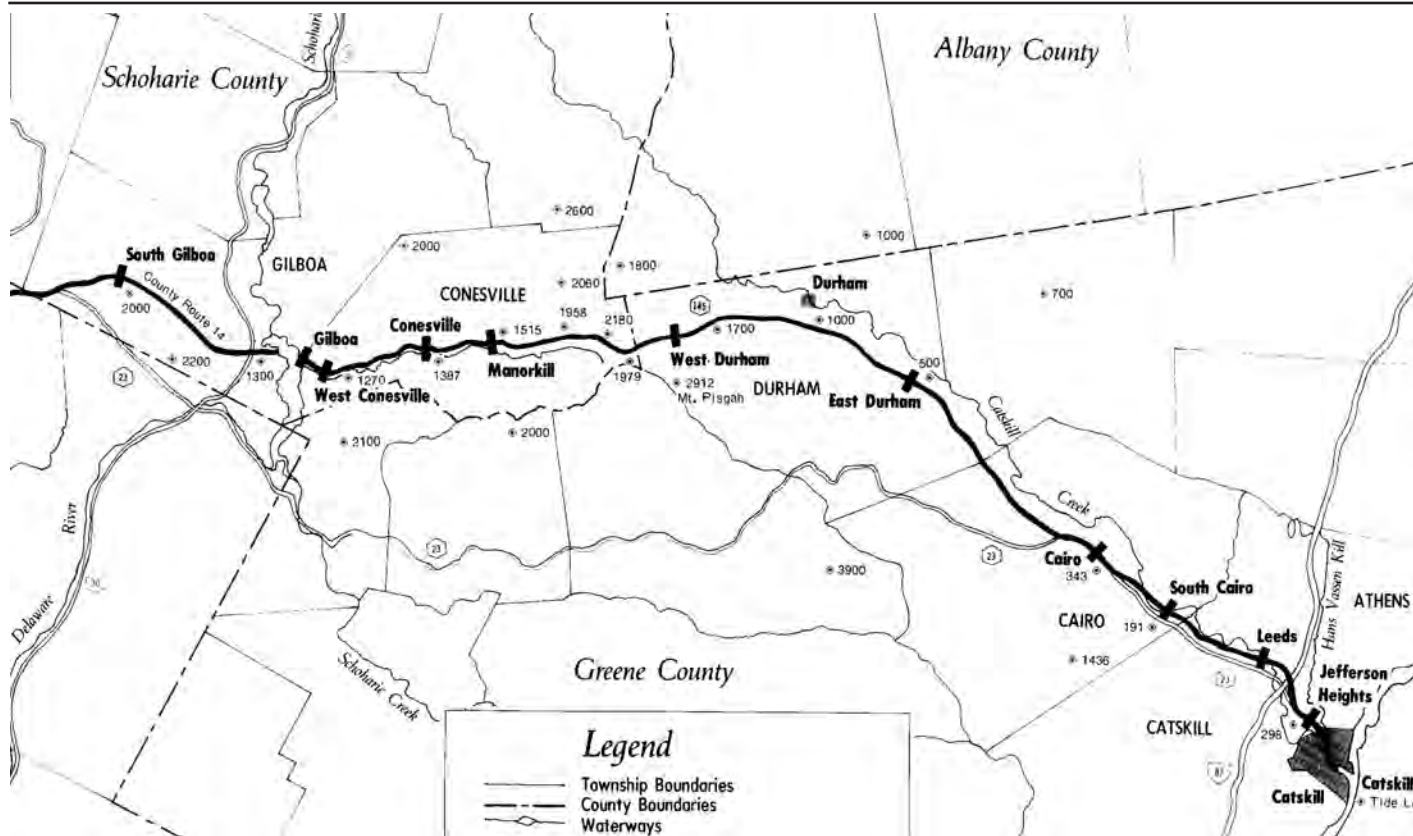
In 1838 a section of Albany-Greene Turnpike between William St. and Catskill's old Uncle Sam Bridge was transformed into a public highway: the part of the turnpike within the corporate limits of the Village of Catskill was abandoned in 1857 by the turnpike company and taken over by the village.

### THE OLD MOUNTAIN TURNPIKE

Another important turnpike was the Catskill Mountain Turnpike, the "Old Mountain Turnpike," which carried traffic up the steep Wall of Manitou to Beach's Catskill Mountain House Hotel. Today this turnpike is a horse trail in the State Park.

You would begin your travel on this turnpike at Bogart Road in Lawrenceville, off Route 32, halfway between Route 23A and the former Catskill Game Farm Road. Here sit the remnants of the Old Mountain Turnpike, which crosses Bogart Road, and is the old carriage and stage coach route taken by the Mountain House Hotel guests before the era of the Otis Elevating Railway.

There was a rest stop halfway up the road called the Rip Van Winkle House, so called because both



## The History Quiz

In Catskill in 1874 at Thanksgiving time a group of people gathered around a water reservoir at the intersection of Main and Thompson Streets. Someone asked what

happened. The response was a dog drowned. The members of the sanitary committee were called to fish out the dog. That dog is still with us today. How is that possible?

The answer to this question will be found in the next edition!

the carriage drivers and the proprietor wove tales for the tourists, linking the place with the legendary Washington Irving character.

Around another bend and stop was the “Little Pine Orchard.” Beyond that point, the road became steeper and narrower, and passengers sometimes had to get out and walk. Other anecdotes of the era abound with stories from tourists who held their breath, fearing that the stage horses might slip and send horses, coach and passengers down the ravine the hard way, but in truth no coach ever met that fate.

Reaching the summit, however, all the travail would be forgotten once the travellers beheld the wondrous view.

### STAGECOACH LINES

The saying goes, “If you build it they will come,” and the concept applies to much more than just baseball. Once the turnpikes were laid out for travel, the more people wanted to travel. Unlike today, however, very few people had the wherewithal to provide their own transportation. And so enter the formal stagecoach lines. By a legislative act of February 26, 1803, Terrence Donnelly, William Tremble, Hiel Brockway, James Bennet and Israel Ransom were granted exclusive rights to run stages for seven years. One stagecoach line began operating as early as October 1, 1803, and ran 200 miles between Albany and northern New Jersey.

On March 28, 1805 a stage-

## GREENE COUNTY HISTORY

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coach line from Catskill Landing to Wattles Ferry (Unadilla) began its run. This line ran 80 miles once every eight days, carrying passengers through Cairo, Windham, Roxbury, Stamford, Kortright, Delhi, Meredith and Franklin. The stage would leave Catskill on Wednesday morning, arriving at Unadilla on Friday evening. The return leg would leave Unadilla on Sunday, reaching Catskill on Tuesday. The charge was 5 cents a mile for each passenger but – unlike today’s airlines – that passenger was allowed to bring 14 pounds of baggage free of charge!

Subsequently a stage line from Catskill Landing to Unadilla was granted to David Bostwich, Stephen Benton, Lemuel Hotchkiss and Terrence Donnelly for seven years.

N. Steele & Co. opened up a competing stage line at Catskill Landing, running the same route as the one above. About this time H. Walkins & Co. opened a route from Catskill to Cairo, Durham, Broome, Blenheim, Harpersfield, Stamford, Meredith, Franklin, Sidney, Unadilla and Ithaca. Their fare was 4 cents a mile.

These stages traversed the Susquehanna and privately-owned turnpikes marked with mileposts and gatehouse. Tolls were collected on all of these turnpikes, as well as at the drawbridge over Catskill Creek. The mail was carried by stage with regular runs from New York City to Albany, passing through Catskill on Tuesdays and Fridays.

*Coming in Part Two:  
The Railroads & the Trolleys*