



Deerpark Diary

Town of Deerpark Museum, 1863 School House

25 Grange Road, P. O. Box 621, Huguenot, New York 12746

Face Book—Town of Deerpark 1863 Schoolhouse Museum

Website—1863schoolhouse.org

Phone—845-856-2702,

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Welcome to Fall

The leaves are changing colors and the air is crisp and cool. You've swapped your shorts and tees for jeans and sweaters, but then a warm spell comes barreling in. Guess it's Indian summer.



We tend to refer to Indian summer as anytime we get an unseasonably warm burst of weather in the fall. But

there's an official definition of Indian summer according to the Old Farmer's Almanac.

It can't just be any warm spell. The atmosphere also has to be hazy or smoky with no wind. The barometer must be standing high, and nights should be chilly and clear.

The haze and temperature swing between day and night are caused by a moving, cool, shallow polar air mass converting into a deep, warm stagnant high pressure system.

The warm days must follow a burst of cold weather and a good hard frost, but before a snowfall.

The northeastern United States is a prime spot for an Indian summer, so enjoy this special time of the year.

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Historic Marker Introduction

Quite often residents and visitors stop to read the historic markers throughout Deerpark and ask for additional background

information. In this issue of the Deerpark Diary additional information will be presented to expand the knowledge available about three of the markers.

The first marker deals with the Indian village which was located on Neversink Drive.

Fortunately three local Port Jervis newspapers reported the work which was undertaken by the New York State Museum in 1909. An additional story about this burying ground was located within the archives of the Minisink Valley Historical Society. An Evening Gazette news article dated June 5, 1869, entitled "An Indian Burying Ground" reported the story about a young man, who, while walking along the Neversink River on the Van Etten farm, discovered parts of skeletons.



Historic information about the second marker about the Hermanus Van Inwegen Homestead located on Route 209 in Huguenot was available from the 1891 issue of Old Church Life. The information dates back

to April 11, 1745, in the presence of the Consistory of Mennissinck, when he was received on confession of faith. These records demonstrate how important the Old Dutch Church, Kingston, NY was in the lives of the early settlers in our area.

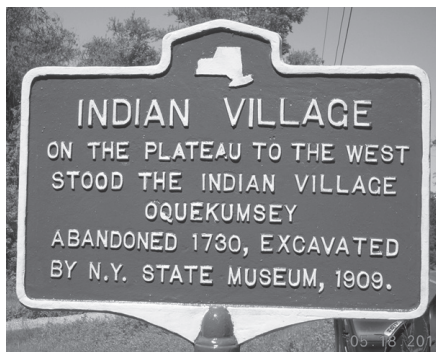
The third article refers to the Old Mine Road marker which is located on Rt. 209 in Hurley, NY. With recent historical studies available, it would be wise to have a similar historic marker installed in our area.

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Indian Village Historic Marker

The Indian village of Oquekumsey was located on the east side of the Neversink River until 1730. A historic marker on Neversink Drive marks its location. In 1909 NYS archaeologists unearthed numerous skeletons of the habitants of this Indian community.

Three articles relate the history of the exhumations of the skeletons which were located on the Van Etten farm.



Tri-State Union
16 September 1909 page 1
Unearthed Four Indian Skeletons
“The archaeologists from

Albany, who are making exhumations in the old Indian burying-ground on the Van Etten farm along the Neversink River, Town of Deerpark, have already unearthed four skeletons. They are in perfect condition. One is that of a woman. They were found about two feet below the surface. One skeleton has been sent to Albany, the other three are being dried preparatory to being sent away. The search continues.”

Tri-State Union
September 19, 1909

An Indian Burying Ground

“A large number of people are journeying on foot, bicycle, wagons and automobiles to the Levi Van Etten farm Sunday afternoon to see the skeletons that Evritt A. Burmaster has unearthed for the State Archaeology Department. All of the 12 graves that have thus far been opened were viewed with interest. Eight specimens, four men, one woman and three children are entirely exposed and undergoing the whitening and hardening process of sunlight and air. The dirt has not been completely brushed from the other four skeletons as great care must be exercised so the bones will not be damaged any more than necessary. Mr. Burmaster and assistant are living in two tents at the scene and it necessary for them to be there constantly in order to guard the skeletons from relic hunters and photographers. One day last week, an absent minded gentleman touched the jaw of one skeleton with his cane, causing the teeth to fall out. This diminished the value of the specimen just that much. It is the plan this week to do some reconnoitering farther

toward the river and before Mr. Burmaster leaves the scene.

“The Indian burying ground was discovered 19 years ago, by a man named Clark, who was employed on the Van Etten farm. He was digging a hole for potatoes, when his spade came in contact with a hard object, which proved to be an Indian skeleton and gave the man a bad fright. In later years, skeletons in whole or in part and many Indian relics were found after the high water in the Neversink River had washed away portions of the bank. There was one time when there was a pile of skulls in the Van Etten barn, but they have all been carried away as souvenirs.

“Dr. W. L. Cuddeback has a very interesting relic found at this burying ground. It is a curiously carved pipe, on one side of which is the figure of a wolf, the totem of the Wolf or Minsi tribe of the Indians and on the other side is a rattle snake. Some years ago an iron box was found in one grave, they had been filled with tobacco for the happy hunting grounds and in the same grave another box was found with a handkerchief of Indian design.”



Indian Village
Port Jervis Union
September 29, 1909
Unearthing Skeletons
“Indian Bones resurrected
at the Van Etten Farm.

“Messrs E. R. Buhmaster and J. J. Mulkins, of Irving, Chautauqua County, NY under the direction of State Archeologist Arthur C. Parker, of Albany, are still at work on the Levi Van Etten farm on the bank of the Neversink River near Black Rock, digging up the bones of Indians in the old Indian burial ground. The men have two large tents on the grounds where they make their headquarters.

“Up to Tuesday afternoon, 19 skeletons have been found of which 17 were determined to be males, one a female, and one identity is uncertain. They were found in the soft sandy soil in depths from two to four feet, and are fairly well preserved. In one case the teeth are nearly perfect and not one was missing.

“It is estimated that they have been buried from 150 to 175 years and they evidently are of two different races or classes of Indians, evidenced in the two different positions in which they were buried.

“The work will be continued as long as bones can be found and the ground is not frozen.”

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Hermanus Van Inwegen
Historic Marker

The original Peenpack settlers in the 1690s were Jacobus Cuddeback, Peter Gumaer, David Jamison, Anthony Swartwout, Bernardus Swartwout, Thomas Swartwout, and James Tyse. However David Jamison and James Tyse did not stay in the area. Their interest in the Peenpack patent was transferred to

Hermanus Van Inwegen. He built his homestead in today’s hamlet of Huguenot. An historic marker is located along Rt. 209 designating the place in which he built his homestead.



Fortunately, the Old Dutch Church located in Kingston was important in the lives of the Peenpack settlers. Many records, such as births, marriages, baptisms and family information are available about the lives of these early settlers. The information about Hermanus Van Inwegen comes directly from the Old Dutch Church records.



Old Dutch Church, Kingston, NY 1662

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Old Mine Road
Historic Marker

The Town of Deerpark has over 60 historic markers designating historic events which have

occurred since the early 1700s. Missing is a sign designating The Old Mine Road because there has been contradictory information about the origins of the road. Because of recent research about the Old Mine Road route, it is now possible to place an Old Mine Road marker correctly.



Old Mine Road Marker
Hurley, NY

The Old Mine Road

There has been increased interest in the history of Route 209, closely tied to the history of the Old Mine Road, the oldest 100+ mile road in America. Throughout history this road has also been known as: “Trade Path”; “Road to Esopus”; “King’s Road” and “Queen’s Highway”. The entire length of the Old Mine Road is 184 miles between Kingston, NY and Pahaquarry, NJ.

For many years many thought the road was built by the Dutch Pahaquarry copper miners who worked there in the 1600s. However, over the years the mines proved to be unprofitable, so most people dismiss any possibility that these old stories are valid. Historical records show that the road was built southward from Esopus, the original name of Kingston, NY. The name change occurred in 1669.

Few historians contest the fact that the road began as an old

Indian trail used by the Lenape Indians for trade, hunting and fishing expeditions. Early European traders used this same route to explore the frontier. In the late 1690s, Dutch and Huguenot settlers traveled along this road from Kingston.

In today's Town of Deerpark, there were two settlements in the 1600s: Peenpack (Upper Neighborhood in the north); Maghagkamik (Lower Neighborhood in the south). The wagon road between the two neighborhoods was the Old Mine Road.

The Old Mine Road would have crossed where there was a natural ford on the Neversink River at Huguenot and gone along the east side of the river to Carpenter's Point, settled ca. 1690, by Benjamin Carpenter.

Forts were built along this route during the French and Indian War: Fort Westbrook (Westbrookville); Fort Dewitt (Cuddebackville; Fort Gumaer (Godeffroy); Westfall Fort (Huguenot); on the west side of the Neversink River. Decker Fort and Fort Van Auken (Tri-States) on the east side of the Neversink River. It was also the route that Joseph Brant followed, during the American Revolution, for each of his raids on the valley in 1778 and 1779.

In the early 1700s Kingston was the major trading center for this entire region. Local settlers had to travel to Kingston to sell their surplus goods, purchase supplies, and register all marriages, baptisms and special religious services in the Kingston Old Dutch Church.

Over the years this route changed from an Indian trail to a wagon trail to a hard surfaced road.

There have been some changes in its route and name. The following are some Route 209 history facts including the sources located in Town of Deerpark Historian Office:

Old Mine Road was built in sections from Esopus south in the 1600s.

Ancient Highways of the Neversink Valley & Vicinity Page 6 paragraph 2—Main Street, Port Jervis, is a branch road from the Old

Mine Road.

Economy, Community and Law— The Turnpike Movement in New York 1707-1845 The road was called "King's Highway" in 1770

Information from the Federal Highway Administration:

Mid 1900s—NY 50

1926-1928—US 6

1928-1933—NY279

1933—US209—The Old Mine Road was incorporated into Rt. 209 at Huguenot.

Route 209 was one of the original highways in the U. S. Highway System Plan.

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Museum Fall Programs

John Roebling
and the D & H Canal
September 21, 2025
3:00

Bill Merchant, Historian and Curator of the D & H Canal Museum will present an illustrated lecture entitled, "John Roebling and the D & H Canal", at the Town of Deerpark Museum, 1863 Huguenot Schoolhouse, 25 Grange Road, Huguenot, N.Y. 3:00 p.m. John Roebling, engineer, was famous for designing the Brooklyn Bridge. He was responsible for the construction of four suspension aqueducts on the D.& H. Canal.

Ghostly Tales
October 12, 2025
3:00

Michael Worden will keep us in suspense with his wonderful

