



# Deerpark Diary

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Rafting Logs Down the Delaware

In 1763, Daniel Skinner returned to his home on the Upper Delaware River after serving on a West Indies merchant ship. He had spent time in Philadelphia where hundreds of tall-masted ships were being built. Daniel knew that the virgin forests along the Delaware could supply the timber necessary for the boat building industry.

It did not take him very long to start cutting and sending the timbers down the Delaware River to Philadelphia. His first attempt was not successful as he tried to float the logs loose as he followed by canoe. The logs went in all directions and were impossible to control.

The following year he fashioned the large timbers together to form the first log

raft. He fastened an oar at each end of the raft and with the help of a man named Cudosh successfully shipped the cargo down the Delaware River.

News of their success spread quickly throughout the valley. Others followed his lead and a new industry was born. "Admiral" Skinner, as he was known, generously taught anyone, who was interested, how to build and navigate the rafts. Rafts measuring 100 feet long by 35 feet wide and two or three feet deep became common sights in the spring and fall along the Delaware River.

Throughout the year lumber mills and logging camps were in operation. The logs were stacked at Jerry's Eddy and Casky's Eddy in the Sparrowbush area where they were made into rafts to be launched in the spring and fall. Sparrowbush became a logging and rafting center.

The pilot (steersman) had to know how to read the river well. He had to watch for protruding rocks, other rafts and every change in the flow. It was a difficult and dangerous job, however, he was well rewarded, both in terms of money and adventure.



## Bolton Basin

Bolton Basin was located on the Shinglekill where it flows into the Delaware River. It was an ideal place for D & H Canal crews to lay over while waiting to go through the locks or having boat repairs made. A dry-dock, stables for mules and warehouses were built along with a hotel, grist mill and numerous stores. In case of a flood emergency, several waste weirs were built where the Shinglekill entered the canal.

The worst break in the history of the D & H Canal occurred at Bolton Basin. On August 5, 1885, a northeaster went through the area. This storm caused two wash-outs. The first break occurred when brush and driftwood from the storm dammed the waste weirs which had been built to release excess water where the Shinglekill entered the canal. With the howling storm, the Shinglekill became a raging torrent. A number of boats were tied up in the basin and when the break occurred, three boats became wedged together and blocked off the flow of water to the break. The water backed up causing the second break further upstream which created a 200 foot gap in the canal. There were about twenty boats in Bolton Basin at the time of

the storm. Fourteen were so badly damaged that they were worthless. Roughly a half a mile of the canal had to be rebuilt. When the D & H Canal closed in 1898, Bolton Basin became a memory. The remains of this busy commercial hub have since been washed away by the floodwaters of the Delaware River.



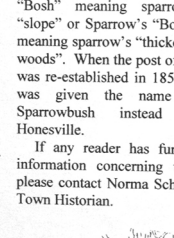
How Sparrowbush Got Its Name

The first records about Sparrowbush date back to 1827. However, the hamlet of Sparrowbush was known as Bolton Basin and Honesville at different times during the course of history.

Bolton Basin was the center of interest during the time of the D & H Canal (1828-1898). The growth in this particular area was due to the locks, boat yard, dry dock and other canal related businesses built on the canal. Bolton Basin was named after John Bolton, the second president of the canal.

The post office at that time was Honesville, named for Philip Hone, the first president of the D & H Canal Company. He later became mayor of New York City. The Honesville Post Office was closed around 1840.

How did Sparrowbush get its name? There is no exact record, but we know that H. L. Sparrow owned extensive timber lands in the area. Mighty hemlock, hickory, oak, white and yellow pine trees were abundant. He harvested these trees and shipped trees for masts and ship knees down river to Philadelphia. His timberland might have been called one of two things. Sparrow's "Bosh" meaning sparrow's "slope" or Sparrow's "Bosk", meaning sparrow's "thicket or woods". When the post office was re-established in 1850, it was given the name of Sparrowbush instead of Honesville.



Ship Knee Sketch

## Ship Knee

Ship knees are supports sawed directly from the broad trunks and branches of trees. An entire tree was cut to produce one or two ship knees. Because of the War of 1812, there was an increased demand for lumber.

Embargoes imposed on the United States by the English and French forced Americans to start manufacturing many things which had previously been imported. H. L. Sparrow provided some of the ship building materials needed by the Philadelphia boatyards.



Pictured is the Sparrowbush Tannery Work Crew. Mr. Hammond is on the left.

## Sparrowbush Tannery

One of the first industries in the Town of Deerpark was the Sparrowbush Tannery. The most inclusive account about the tannery was in the May 29, 1869 edition of the Port Jervis Evening Gazette.

Sparrowbush owes its growth and prosperity largely to the tannery, which not only furnishes employment to a large proportion of the male population, but also contributes largely to the business of the stores, saloon, etc., of the village. The Sparrowbush Tannery was erected by Maurice M. Schultz, in 1850, has been twice destroyed by fire, and each time rebuilt. Two years ago, Mr. Schultz sold out his tannery interests to Messrs. Swasey, Cooper and Co.

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from Troy, New York, who have abundant capital, enterprise and experience to carry on the business on a large scale. The firm consists of three partners, of whom Messrs. George W. Swasey and Charles Cooper attend to the business here, and the remaining member of the firm at Boston, whither all the leather is sent as fast as finished.

The Tannery buildings are five in number, and consist of the beam-house, size 36x94 feet; leach-house, 28x85 feet; splitting-room, 30-45 feet; tannery proper, 36x173 feet; and a new currying-shop nearly completed on the site of the one lately destroyed by fire, which is 40x150 feet, four stories in height, and is built in the most solid and substantial manner. The work of the building is under immediate supervision of Mr. Sylvester Cooper, a brother of one of the proprietors. The roof of the building is covered by Mr. S. J. Wood's celebrated cement and gravel roofing which forms one of the most substantial roofs against the action of the heat and weather of anything yet devised. A twenty horse power steam engine, built by Ray & Co., of the Port Jervis Steam Engine Works, will drive the machinery in this building.

On the completion of the building, the firm expects to conduct the business on a

much larger scale, although it is now larger than any tannery in this section of the country, the number of men in their employ being over one hundred, exclusive of those employed in the erection of the currying-house. An idea of the extent of their manufacturing operations may be conveyed by stating the fact that their sales the last year amounted to over \$400,000; number of sides of leather turned out \$80,000; cords of bark annually used 4000.

The main building contains 100 bark and 50 beam vats, the former containing the liquor used in the tanning process, and the latter a solution of stone-lime in which hides are thrown to remove the hair and dirt. After the hair is removed then the hides undergo a washing process, and are then thrown in the bark vats. When hides are half tanned they are taken to the splitting room, where they are split and again thrown in vats until sufficiently tanned, when they find their way to the currying shop, and are then finished and made ready for the market. The old leaches formerly used in the establishment have been discarded, and three new ones of Allen & Warren's patent are used instead; each holds twelve cords of bark. The water conveyed to the leaches, and sprinkled on the bark by the new and

complicated process, somewhat after the French mode of making coffee. It is altogether the most complete and extensive establishment in this section of the country.

After the tannery was closed for a number of years, it was re-opened in 1900 by the Hammond brothers. Then the Norris Leather Corporation took over, succeeded by the Crowhurst Leather Company. The tanning business closed again around 1920.

In 1921 the business opened once more as a shoe black and patent leather factory. In 1932 the factory burned to the ground. The land on which the factory had been built became part of the Patterson Estate.



**Railroad/Canal Accident**  
Evening Gazette October 31, 1882 "This morning at 5:50 o'clock an accident took place at bridge number two on the Erie Railroad. Two flat cars loaded with large walnut logs, broke from the fastenings that held them and the logs projected over the car, stripped the railing along the bridge. The weakened bridge gave way and fifteen cars were hurled into the canal. The train was composed of 71 cars, all

heavily loaded, drawn by Engine 332. Linn Havens engineer.... Ten were loaded with wheat and oats, two of flour, two of walnut logs and one of oil cake."



## Tomorrow's History

The Sparrowbush Engine Company Ladies Auxiliary compiled a cookbook which will be for sale after the first of the year.

Recipes for soups casseroles, main dishes, breads and desserts are included. There is even a meatloaf recipe to serve 500 people. To order a copy, call Jamie Swingle at 856-2738. The books will be available from any member of the Auxiliary or at the Sparrowbush Engine Company's Breakfasts.



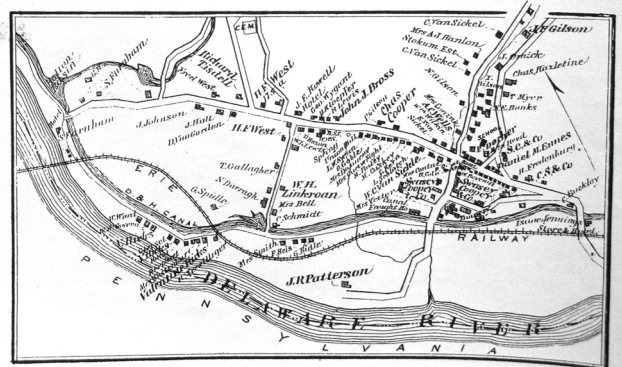
## Advertisement in Port Jervis Union Gazette February 9, 1929

AMUSEMENTS--MODERN AND OLD FASHIONED DANCE will be held at Redmen's Hall, Sparrowbush, Saturday night Feb. 9th. Good music Wurzel's Orchestra, Gents 50 cents, Ladies 35 cents.

## SPARROWBUSH P.O.

TOWN OF DEER PARK

Scale 75 feet to the inch.



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