

MOUNT ALLAMUCHY SCOUT RESERVATION

A 4+ MILE HISTORIC HIKE FOR BOY SCOUTS
LEADER'S GUIDE

Prepared by Tom Stoddard, Assistant Ranger



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®
PATRIOTS' PATH COUNCIL

Cedar Knolls, New Jersey

www.ppcbsa.org

Mount Allamuchy Scout Reservation Historic Trail

A 4+ MILE HIKE

The purpose of this booklet was to gather together information from others to provide a guide to some of the interesting historical sites in the area. The area's rich history is to be enjoyed by what I will call the Historic Trail. The information herein is by no means complete but rather an attempt to provide a quick overview of as much information as I have at my disposal. I am sure that there is much more to be learned by delving into research material located in many places throughout the State.

I have prepared the trail for the Boy Scouts who attend the Mount Allamuchy Scout Reservation, but certainly it is open to all who share an interest in history. I would like to make it clear that I am not a true author. I have gathered together the information provided by others and have attempted to give you the flavor of all that information in a shorter version.

THE INFORMATION HEREIN WAS GATHERED TOGETHER BY

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to one who has traveled many trails with me
My wife, Jeannette

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge a woman who has, through her enthusiasm, inspired me
Local historian, Myra Snook

WELCOME TO MOUNT ALLAMUCHY SCOUT RESERVATION

This hike has been developed to provide you with a glimpse of some of the rich history that is to be found here in the camp and near-by areas. Your journey will take you back in time – enjoy.

ALL GROUPS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AT LEAST TWO ADULTS AND MUST CHECK IN AT THE CAMP OFFICE UPON ARRIVAL AT MOUNT ALLAMUCHY SCOUT RESERVATION.

YOUR JOURNEY BEGINS

Here is some information about the immediate area before you start your journey.

THE CAMP SOMERS PARKING LOT

This area once was the seasonal home to Late Woodland Native Americans called the Lenni Lenape. Archaeological explorations in the past have rendered many artifacts left behind by these people. A small example of them is housed in the conference room of Tuney Lodge. Unfortunately progress at the camp around 1963 destroyed or buried many more artifacts when the parking lot was created.

FRENCHÉ'S POND

A small stream flows out of Cranberry Lake and cuts through the Allamuchy Mountains. Dams were constructed along this flow to create 3 ponds. The last and largest of these three was Frenché's Pond. The second or middle pond is what is called the "upper lake" found at Camp Wheeler. The dams were built around 1854 by James Frenché in order to harness the water to provide power for his mills and factory (more about this later). James Frenché was able to gain control of most of the land in the area – even extending his influence to Cranberry Lake.

Follow the camp road towards cabin 5. It is believed that this "road," in part, started as a Native American trail through the mountains. It would seem natural that as time went on and "civilization" developed in the area, it would become a stagecoach road. On your way to cabin 5 you are traveling on what was known as the Allamuchy-Waterloo Road. Behind cabin 5 you will find the remains of a curved stone structure. This was, at one time, a limekiln.

LIMEKILN

A limekiln was used to produce quick lime. Limestone is placed in the kiln and burned. This process, which could take 24 to 60 hours, caused a chemical reaction that resulted in production of the product that we call lime. In the ancient world as well as during the 1800's this lime was often used in the making of mortar that held stones and bricks together. It was also used to "white wash" buildings (Tom Sawyer used it to paint Aunt Polly's fence.). It was also used as a flux to remove impurities from iron ore in the production of iron.

Proceed to the cut-off for sites 10, 12, & the Outdoor Skills/Dan Beard area. Here again you are on a road from the past – Old Waterloo Road (The camp calls it Chapel Road.). Proceed on this road. A short distance before you reach telephone pole "NJ 2161 BY," look for a trail on your right. Take the trail to the stone foundation.

ACID/CHEMICAL WORKS

The information about this structure is somewhat cloudy. It is believed that James Frenche started an acid works here. The area was rich in oak and hemlock trees. The bark of the hemlock was boiled (the oak was used for fuel) to produce a mash from which tannic acid was produced. The acid was used to tan cow hides for the making of leather. Once the hides were scraped, treating them with the acid caused a reaction that gave the properties we know as leather. It is believed that the "acid" was shipped from here to tanning mills in England and other locations.

Proceed as follows: If you face the stone structure with your back to Frenche's Pond, you will find a narrow pathway to your right which goes along a water/slucice way up the hill to a walkway bridge. Cross the bridge and turn left. Follow the path along this waterway (built by Frenche to bring water to his "acid" works) to the second pond ("Upper Lake" also known as Chemical Lake).

CHEMICAL LAKE

The name "Chemical Lake" undoubtedly came about because of the nearness to what was called the "Turmeric Swamp." Turmeric is a plant used in the making of dyes and is also used in medicines (This is why there is some confusion as to whether it was acid or chemical that was produced by Frenche.). This pond now serves as the boating/fishing place for Cub Scouts attending Camp Wheeler during the summer.

Proceed along the Wheeler Road toward the main entrance road to the reservation. Upon reaching the main road, turn left and proceed down the hill to Waterloo Road at the camp entrance. Turn right. Proceed under Rt. 80 and continue until you come to the end of the guard railing.

Looking across Waterloo Road, you will notice a "driveway" at the end of which is a house. The house sits along what used to be Waterloo Road (The road was moved when Rt. 80 was constructed.). The "driveway" is the remains of the road that served as entrance to the camp. If you visualize that "road" crossing present day Waterloo Road, follow it on your right into the wooded area. You can see the roadbed. Note the raised earth on the left and the small brook on your right. If you poke under the dirt and leaves upon which you walk, you will find the original road paving.

Continue on this roadbed for a short distance. As you walk, watch carefully and you will find evidence of some man-made stonework on both sides of the brook. These stones are what remains of a bridge which was part of a driveway that led to Frenche's "Castle." It was not really a castle, but because of its appearance the locals gave it its name.

Making your way further up the old camp road (and over fallen trees), watch for further man-made stonework on the far side of the brook. This represents the remains of Frenche's carpet mill (The mill later was used to make bumpers for the canal boats.). Perhaps it is time to stop and offer some information about this area and the areas that you will visit next.

BYRAM VILLAGE

I will call the area Byram Village but it has also been called Stourport and Starport. The area was developed because of a good source of waterpower. The small industries that developed along with the farms in the area gave rise to this small settlement. Workers needed a place to live so cottages sprang up as well as a boarding house. The Morris Canal encouraged trade and tradesmen. In the end an active village was born.

In 1834 Royal Hopkins bought land along the Morris Canal. In 1835-37 he sells off 1200 acres. In 1840 John Humphreys came to the area from England and bought land on which he planned to build a factory to produce Brussels Carpets. He selected James Frenche to be his manager. We do not know a great deal about the day to day early life of Mr. Frenche; however, he must have been rather resourceful. We know that in 1853 Frenche bought property from his boss. This property included buildings, waterpower, the factory, 4 cottages, and a mansion (later to become his "castle"). He was given the right to cut wood on about 1150 acres and leased a storehouse on the canal.

Make your way back to Waterloo Road. The stone remains found at your right are reported to have been a store. It later became a one-room schoolhouse. (YOU MAY FIND A MEMORIAL AT THIS LOCATION – PLEASE RESPECT IT.)

CAREFULLY cross Waterloo Road and proceed along it toward the Morris Canal. As you walk, watch for a "road" coming from your left. This was the original Waterloo Road. Continue until you come to the canal on your left. The "path" is easily found. The canal is on your left and a stream is on your right. You are now on the canal towpath. It was on this path that the mules and their driver walked as they pulled the canal boats. Note the stone work at the sides. Those stones were placed by the men who dug the canal BY HAND – about 1100 in all! It is important at this point to provide some information about the canal.

THE MORRIS CANAL

In the early 1800's canals proved to be an easier means of moving goods from one place to another. Roads were poor and wagon travel was slow and costly. Pennsylvania had rich deposits of coal. Northern New Jersey had rich deposits of iron ore. New York was a busy port of call and a vast center for trade. How to get the three together?

A study of the feasibility of creating a canal was authorized by New Jersey. The big problem to be faced was the terrain of the State. After all was said and done, the State decided not to carry out the project. The task of building a canal was taken on by private investors. In 1824 a charter was granted to the Morris Canal and Banking Company that allowed for the building of the canal.

The Morris Canal proved to be a unique challenge when compared to the typical canal of the day. Its builders would have to find a way of conquering the New Jersey terrain – that is: How was it going to climb over mountains? I will take this up shortly but for now let's take a look at some other facts/history of the canal.

The canal utilized many sources for its water. Lake Hopatcong was dammed to increase its size. The lake sits at the summit of the elevation differences to be encountered by the canal. From Jersey City to the lake the land rises 914' and from it to Phillipsburg on the Delaware River the land falls 760'. The lake was able to supply water for travel in both directions. Other sources of water were the Musconetcong, Rockaway, Passaic and Hackensack Rivers. (The canal utilized the valleys of some of these rivers to cross the State.) There were other holding areas for water and for boats to wait (basins) their turn at a lock or inclined plane. Lake Musconetcong was built as a reservoir for the canal. If one visits the end of the lake at RT. 183, you find the remains of Lock 1 West. There was once an inclined plane (#2 West) in this area as well. (Locks and inclined planes were numbered and labeled E or W depending on which side of Lake Hopatcong they were located.)

The canal opened in 1831 between Newark on the Passaic River and Phillipsburg on the Delaware River. At this point the Delaware River could be crossed to Easton, Pennsylvania (A cable ferry was used to take canal boats across.) where connection could be made with the Lehigh Valley Canal for further travel into the depths of that state. By 1836 the Morris Canal had been extended to Jersey City on the Hudson River. The total distance was 102 miles with a change of elevation of 1674 feet!

The canal was 32' wide and 4' deep. It was later enlarged to 40' wide and 5' deep. Not only did it move the coal and iron products but it also provided a means of transport for farm products, timber, limestone, etc. The trip from end to end took 5 days! The canal did freeze in winter and so it was shut down during that time.

IT IS NOW TIME TO LOOK AT THE MEANS BY WHICH THE CANAL WAS ABLE TO CONQUER THE TERRAIN OF NEW JERSEY.

LOCKS

Most people are familiar with canal locks. Boats are raised or lowered over changes in land/water elevation. They were primarily used to deal with elevation differences of up to 10 feet. Generally, it took 15 minutes to go through a lock. Originally built 9' x 75', they eventually were enlarged to 11' x 90' to meet the demands for larger boats (10.5' x 87.5') that were needed to carry more goods. These boats were flat bottomed, steered with a tiller, and were powered by 2 mules that were led by a young drover.

CONQUERING THE MOUNTAINS: THE INCLINED PLANE

What made the canal unique was its ability to eliminate time-consuming locks in areas of huge differences in elevation. It did use 23 locks but for the rest it used an improved method called the inclined plane. These devices were used to conquer height changes of over 20'. The structure consisted of a cradle car that went up and down on rails. They would be built starting at the water's edge and go up the incline to the end at the other waterway. The canal boat would be floated onto a wooden cradle car and the car would be pulled up the rails. This pulling was accomplished by the use of a cable that was wound or unwound around a drum that was driven by a waterwheel at first but was later replaced (1848-1860) by what was called a Scotch Turbine. The turbine worked similarly to a lawn sprinkler. Water from above was dropped 40-50' to the turbine. The water shot out of the arms of the 12.5' turbine (like water coming out of rotating sprinkler head) that caused it to turn. As it turned, it wound or unwound a chain. (The chain was replaced with a 2" cable.) that lowered or raised the car. When the boat reached the new level, it was simply floated off. The canal used 23 of these planes (7 alone in Warren County). As you can imagine, a busy canal required waiting for your turn at both locks and planes. These "waiting" places very often gave rise to businesses in the areas to meet the needs of the canal boat operators. These areas then led to the development of towns and villages. Waterloo Village is a prime example. The Smith Store and Tavern were opened to help supply the needs of canal boat operators. This was a perfect spot because here was located a lock and an inclined plane. While they waited to use either one, the store was a welcome establishment. The place also was the home of a sawmill, blacksmith, gristmill and forge.

The largest Plane was at Port Warren (#9 W). It lifted boats 100' in 12 minutes. The length to the summit was 1510' but its total length was 1788'.

As boats grew larger in order to carry more goods, a problem developed – How was the boat to go over the crest at the top of the incline? The solution was to make the boat in two sections and then hinge them together (1845). Boats normally were able to carry 10 tons of material but by 1860, because of various improvements, they were capable of carrying 70 tons. This increase in tonnage was invaluable during the Civil War period.

Continue along the towpath until you come to the house on the far side of the canal. (This is the house that you saw earlier at the end of that "driveway.") Note the stonework remains at the edge of the canal. These are the remains of a footbridge over the canal. Just past those stones in the bank

to the right of the house and near the water, you will note some further stonework (look carefully). These are the remains of a storehouse that once stood here.

Walk back and face the walkway bridgework. If you turn directly around and look carefully, you will just make out a pathway used by those who crossed the bridge. (You will note that both sides of this pathway have water.) If you follow this path (careful – many briars), it will bring you to a branch of the Musconetcong River and the scattered remains of yet another bridge. Crossing this bridge in the past, you would have made your way to the station of the Sussex Railroad.

It is interesting to note that James Frenche built the footbridge so that he could walk this very path on his way from his “castle” to the train station. He traveled daily to his native home of Hoboken.

Here our journey ends. Unfortunately, the canal, being a private endeavor, lost out to the railroads. It closed in 1924. Most of it was sold off and filled in; however, as you have just experienced, remnants of the canal can still be found. A visit to Waterloo Village will provide a rich experience. Further explorations on Waterloo Road will bring you to sections of the Morris Canal Trail that utilizes the still remaining sections of the towpath (This is part of the Greenway Project which is attempting “... the protection of the remains of the Morris Canal by promoting a greenway corridor and preserving the historic remains of the Canal as an important part of the County’s [Warren] transportation history. The vision is to have this greenway extend across Warren County with the canal as a link to recreational, cultural, and historic areas including state parks and trails, plus municipal and county public open space. This greenway will extend between the proposed New Jersey Transportation Heritage Museum in Phillipsburg and the historic Waterloo Village – a restored canal town.”)

It is sad to realize that the area had a rich history – but much of it has been wiped away by progress and time. Many of those who lived during the latter part of the area’s history are now gone. James Frenche left the area in 1903 and died in 1917. His daughter, Susan Caulkins, inherited her father’s property. His other daughter and a son had died. He also had an adopted son. Susan sold about 1000 acres to the Boy Scouts. Around 1951 she sold another parcel of land to developers. Their plan was to build a housing development on this property near the canal but it never happened because of the construction of Route 80 through the area. One house was built as a model; you saw it; it’s that house on the canal.

Carefully make your way back to camp. As you go up the present camp road, built to replace the old road by the builders of Rt. 80, you will find, where the road bends, (near the fence) the further remains of the original camp road.

I hope that you have had an enjoyable journey. If any of what you have experienced has aroused your curiosity for further investigation, please do so. You will not be disappointed.

A PATCH IS AVAILABLE FOR THIS HIKE FROM RANGER TOM STODDARD 973-347-5428.

