

Spanning the Gap

A Ride Down Old Mine Road Part III: Walpack along Rt. NPS 615 Revised October 2012



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These directions pick up from Millbrook Village.

Drive north on NPS 615 from the bridge over Flat Brook. This is premier trout fishing territory. The tour route will rejoin Old Mine Road north at Peters Valley.



CHADO FARM

Main house built late 19th century
Rebuilt 1930s
Outbuildings are now a maintenance facility



At milepost 6 you will pass the large barns of Chado farm, enlarged for the use of Frank Chapot, a member of the United States Olympic Equestrian Team from 1955 to 1974.

After passing Walpack Inn, a privately-owned restaurant, you will see a large stone building on your left, the Jacob Roe House. The pond on the right of the road is part of the adaption of this farmhouse to a summer retreat.

Just down the road on the right are the buildings of the former Walpack Valley Environmental Education Center. The observatory in the field was part of this center. Continue to the village of Walpack Center,



Jacob Roe House, called Deep Spring Farm, around 1900. (Photo courtesy of Patte Haggerty Frato)



Jacob Roe House. (NPS photo by Ken Sandri)

which is located on a straight street running right (west) towards the ridge.

WALPACK CENTER

Established 1850

The name Walpack comes from a Lenape word meaning "whirlpool" and referred to one in the Delaware River near the Walpack Bend, where Flat Brook swirls into the river. This authentic country village began when Isaac and Jasper Rundle opened the first general store there, and it has followed the same pattern of growth and decline as the other villages. One notable upswing occurred when a resident built a creamery nearby in 1911 in response to a revival of dairy farming in the area. The two houses next to the church were built for creamery workers. The ten structures in the village date from 1830 to 1950.

The house next to the post office was purchased about 1850 by storekeeper Isaac Rundle. It is now the headquarters and museum for the Walpack Historical Society (First Rosenkrans House). Other buildings have been used for business or as private residences. Of the Walpack Post Office, only a transfer box remains. What you see today, however, is only a portion of a once more extensive community that stretched from the Walpack Cemetery, at the east end of the street, to the top of the ridge.



Walpack Center today. (NPS photo by Ken Sandri)



First Robbins House, a typical structure of Walpack Village.

SIDE TRIPS FROM WALPACK CENTER

To reach BUTTERMILK FALLS, drive 1 mile straight through Walpack Center, down a hill, and across a bridge to the intersection at the cemetery. Turn right. Continue 1.3 miles. On your right is Silver Spray Farm, whose pastures in the 1920s were filled with dozens of dairy cows. Continue another .7 miles.

Buttermilk Falls is on your left. Its parking area is on the right.



Farmhouse and springhouse at Silver Spray Farm.

- **BUTTERMILK FALLS**

Tumbling 75 feet, Buttermilk Falls is said to be the highest waterfall in New Jersey. The stone foundation across the road is all that remains of an early barn. An overshot waterwheel fed water from the falls to a springhouse that stood near the base of the falls.

If you are able, climb the steep stairs to the deck at the top of the falls (*below*).



Retrace your route back through the village.

Back at NPS Rt. 615 look across the road for the trailhead to Military Trail, which climbs 1 mile over the ridge to Old Mine Road near Van Campen Inn. You can get to Van Campen Inn more easily though, by automobile along the unpaved road that is the original dirt roadbed of Old Mine Road. From Peters Valley, turn south down Old Mine Road (a left turn when facing the store), and continue after the paving stops for about another 3 miles to the large stone building on the left.

- **MILITARY TRAIL**

Used during the French and Indian War 1750s.

The section of the Military Road from Walpack



An old view of Buttermilk Falls. The building on the left is now gone.



(Above) and (Left) Buttermilk Falls today.

Center to Van Campen Inn has been designated as Military Trail. It covers a distance of one mile each way and takes about one hour round-trip to explore.

There are few easily-visible remnants of settlement along the trail: an occasional foundation, a clearing and orchard, a bit of stone or wood fence, and a few relocated gravestones are all that remain of the farms along this road. Yet this is a landscape that has heard the tramping of soldiers' feet through two wars vital to the nation's survival: the French and Indian War, and the Revolutionary War.

CAUTION! High grasses along the trail can harbor ticks. Wear long pants and light colors. Use insect repellent, and check for ticks after your hike.

- **VAN CAMPEN INN**
Built 1742

Walpack Historical Society opens this house on Sundays in Summer and for the Van Campen Day celebration in October. Hours may vary.

Built and owned by two of the earliest and most prominent local families, the Van Campens and the Rosencrans, this fine colonial home was never intended as an inn in the commercial sense, but it has a long and honorable history of hospitality. By law, certain houses along a major roadway were required to house travelers. During the French and Indian War (1754-1763), the stout stone walls sheltered 150 people against the threat of Indian attack. On the hill above the house stood a small fortification called Fort Johns. During the American Revolution, the inn was often "officers' quarters".

The outbuildings of this "plantation" once



Military Trail today.



Van Campen Inn around 1900. The north (left) section was built around 1742 and torn down in 1917. The large right section dates from the 1740s and 1750s. The porch dates from the 1800s.



Van Campen Inn today, after

stood across the road. They have not survived, leaving the present-day structure somewhat isolated in context. Look for the outline of an old kitchen wing (*shown in the photo*) on the side of the house.

restoration. The 1800s porch, though not original, has been retained.

The tour of Old Mine Road continues with *A Ride down Old Mine Road: Part IV Peters Valley.*

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