

Shawangunk Watch

Friends of the Shawangunks and
The Shawangunk Conservancy

Winter,
Coxing Kill

Photo by John Hayes

Kayaking in
the Gunks

Members
Meeting

Debunking
Sam's Point

Fall/Winter 2019
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PROTECTING OPEN SPACE IN THE
SHAWANGUNKS SINCE 1963

A Restoration in Progress: The Smiley & High Point Carriage Roads

by Jorge Gomes

In the spring of 2016 Minnewaska State Park Preserve, in partnership with The Open Space Institute, began the most challenging carriage road restoration project to date, the Smiley/High Point Carriage Road Restoration. Minnewaska had completed approximately 20 miles of carriage road restoration work prior to beginning the Smiley/High Point project; undertaking some of the carriage road work with park staff, and the remainder by private contractor. This project would restore a carriage road connection between Lake Awosting and Lake Maratanza, a tremendous undertaking, given the degraded conditions of the Smiley and High Point Carriage Roads.

Built in 1900-1901, the Smiley Carriage Road was constructed in anticipation of the Ellenville Station along the O&W rail line, which was built in 1902. The Smiley Carriage Road was a primary route to transport guests to the Minnewaska Mountain Houses until Route 44 was built in the late 1920's. The carriage road was also vital to the seasonal huckleberry picker community, who used it to reach their summer encampments, and to deliver their berries to market.

Intersecting the Smiley Carriage Road approximately three miles east of Ellenville, and running generally south to Lake Maratanza, is the High Point Carriage Road. Beginning as a rough path to a fire tower which was built in the early 1900's at High Point, it was widened and improved by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930's.

By the late 1950's, many berry pickers had given up their summer residences on the mountain for year-round jobs in the surrounding towns and villages. The Minnewaska Mountain House property had been sold, and like other hotel resorts in the area, it would struggle to remain open and maintain the sprawling estate. For the next several decades, there would be very little maintenance work performed on the Smiley and High Point Carriage Roads. Years of rain eroded the crushed shale surface of the roads, vegetation started



Photo by Eric Humphrey, Park Manager

to grow in the roadbed and drainage ditches and culverts filled with earth and debris. By the 1990's the carriage roads were only passable by foot or all-terrain vehicle.

Fast forward to 2010, when Minnewaska State Park Preserve partnered with the Mohonk Preserve to commission a restoration and maintenance manual for the historic carriage road network that spans both properties. This manual provided an assessment of the entire carriage road network and made recommendations on how to restore and maintain the historic carriage roads, while honoring their original design aesthetic. Minnewaska planned to use this manual to guide its inhouse restoration efforts and to guide the work of contractors on future restoration projects.

The Open Space Institute partnered with Minnewaska, raising private donations and seeking grant opportunities to fund more carriage road restorations. After several successful projects, the restoration of the carriage roads between Lake Awosting and Lake Maratanza began in March of 2016. It was a multi-year, multi-phase project full of challenges not encountered on previous restorations.

Adhering to a historic design, carriage roads are built in layers, with larger stones, approximately four inches in diameter, as the base course. On top of that, a middle course of one-inch stone is spread, and a surface layer of more finely crushed stone tops the carriage road. Many stretches of the Smiley Carriage Road had eroded down to the base course. There was a tremendous amount of vegetation to clear from the roadbed, road shoulders and select vistas along the route. Wooden bridges had rotted long ago and needed replacement. Scores of culverts needed to be replaced or added, and drainage ditches had to be reinstalled to channel the water away from the road surface.

The contractor performing the work, Keith Kortright of Mombaccus Excavation, had completed other restoration projects within Minnewaska, but the location of this project was even more challenging than the degraded starting conditions. The work area was over three miles from the closest public road, and while most materials originally used in the construction of the carriage roads were mined or harvested locally, the

materials necessary for the restoration would all have to be trucked in. A staging area was established at the former Camp Laurel, where thousands of tons of stone were stockpiled and then trucked in over the four-mile section of Smiley Carriage Road under restoration.

The bridge crossing at the Fly Brook needed to be restored, where the only visible remnants of the prior bridge were abutments. This bridge would serve visitors crossing the stream, but it also needed to be built to support the weight of the heavy equipment and loaded dump trucks that would cross it as restoration progressed towards the intersection with High Point Carriage Road. The bridge would be a blend of engineering and artistry, using steel beams as the main supports, but made of wood decking and milled cedar rails with a native Shawangunk conglomerate block façade. Another substantial bridge was required to span the Stony Kill, along with several smaller bridges in other locations along the road.

By July of 2019, three major phases of restoration were completed: Lake Awosting to the Fly Brook, Fly Brook to Stony Kill and Stony Kill to High Point Carriage Road. Each phase had overgrown vegetation and vistas cleared, drainage improvements made, and stone added to repair and reinstall the base and middle courses along the four-mile section. Once the restoration work on Smiley Carriage Road had reached the High Point Carriage Road, the contractor applied the final surface layer of stone, working back towards Lake Awosting to avoid unnecessarily heavy traffic on the recently applied surface material. The restored section of Smiley Carriage Road opened to the public as a multi-use trail in early August of 2019.

Presently, the Open Space Institute is raising funds through private donations and seeking grant funding to begin work on the High Point Carriage Road restoration. That work will start from the Lake Maratanza end of the carriage road, at the Sam's Point Area of Minnewaska. Once completed, these newly restored carriage roads will offer visitors many new and improved adventures to enjoy at Minnewaska.

Jorge is Assistant Park Manager at Minnewaska State Park Preserve.

ANNUAL FRIENDS HIKE-A-THON, 1992 TO THE PRESENT

by Dava Weinstein

In 1992 the entire Board of Friends sponsored hike-a-thons. Barbara Rubin and Pril Smiley joined in the fun by running around to the start of every hike to distribute attractive F.O.S. pins to all 60 hikers. Barbara also arranged for a pewter pin with the Friends' logo for the person who raised the most money.

Hikers got their friends to sponsor them. It added up to \$3,500 that first year. Since then, partner Dorothy Calvani and I continued to hold an annual hike-a-thon. Hikers donate minimally \$50 and lunch is provided. Recently the hikes are shorter with lunch at our place.

Keith LaBudde and Bob Anderberg were early fearless leaders. We have loads of funny stories...Keith walking us all into the ground, the eldest setting a pace none of us could manage, s'mores and tea on our camping stove, the turkey that started slipping off Table Rocks. Regular participants who didn't know each other have become friends and ask us for the date of the next hike-a-thon.

This October we had the 28th hike-a-thon/limp-a-thon/lunch-a-thon depending on the level of individual participation. We went from Pine Road parking to Duck Pond and back via Farm Road. It was not long at all but we plan with ability of the least able among us. The whole thing took just 2 1/2 hours with all the stopping to ID nuts, trees, plants, etc. It was a celebration of Keith, Tom Nozkowski and yearly hiker Norm Gordon, who are sorely missed, but their presence was definitely with us. Significant donations were given in their memories, totaling \$2,445.

We have the idea that this tradition continue beyond our retirement. If you are interested in replicating this we are happy to have you join us next year on what may be our last hike-a-thon, to show you how easy it is to raise money for Friends and Mother Earth. You can contact us through Friends.

Dava is a former board member.



Photo by Priscilla Derven

Participants in the most recent hike. Left to right standing: Dorothy Calvani, Elizabeth Moffett, Steve MacDonald, Ron Hellman, Stephen Roberts. Seated left to right: Gail Gordon, Dava, Jack Levy



Photo by Eric Humphrey, Park Manager

The Sam's Point Plateau: How The Point Really Got its Name

by Marc
B. Fried

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The Sam's Point plateau, above Ellenville and Cragmoor, is the loftiest region of the Shawangunk Mountains, attaining an elevation of 2,289 feet above sea level in two different places. In the interior of the plateau is Lake Maratanza. Sam's Point itself is the southwestern terminus of all that is truly high, wide and wild in the Shawangunk range.

In my 2005 book *Shawangunk Place-names*, I wrote: "The name first appears on a map dated April 7, 1800. Everyone seems to agree that this was named for Samuel Gonsalus (1733-1821), who was born and died in the township of Mamakating. Sam seems to have been a well-known personality, and is described as a woodsman and avid hunter who served as a scout during the French and Indian War. He held public office in Mamakating, and stories were told of his great physical strength and prowess."

The ultimate source of the yarn about the origin of the name Sam's Point is an article appearing in the *New Paltz Times* of March 10, 1865, by a writer demonstrably unreliable for passing down either history or oral tradition without romantic embellishment. Supposedly, in September of 1758, a scalping party of Indians crossed the mountain to Shawangunk and killed three men:

"The country being alarmed, the savages hurried back, but on the mountain met Samuel Gonzales... to whom they gave chase... Sam knew all the paths better than his pursuers, and hastening to the Point, leaped a rocky precipice of some thirty or forty feet, where he felt that he could break his fall amongst a clump of saplings. Thus he made his escape, unhurt, and gave his name to [the Point]."

In *Place-names*, I metaphorically rolled my eyes at this story: "Why someone who 'knew all the paths better than his pursuers' would allow himself to be trapped at the edge of a cliff, with no other choice but a hair-raising and likely suicidal jump into space, is not explained. The cliff at the point appears about fifty feet in height, and where it is somewhat lower, nearby to the southeast, it is also rather broken, enabling any pursuers to climb down and continue the chase, probably not difficult when we consider that someone who had just fallen thirty feet or so into a clump of saplings would likely be limping, if indeed he were still breathing." I noted that the earliest documentary connection of Sam to that part of the mountain was the 1779 map of Claude Sauthier, which shows what we now call Lake Maratanza labeled as "Pond Gonzales."

At the time, I could offer only speculation as to the true reason why the point and pond were named for Sam. But an article by Wendy Harris in 2012, in the *Cragmoor Historical Journal*, refocused

my attention on the question. For a variety of reasons, I felt Harris's article called for a reply.

There have always been problems with the story of Sam's leap, I wrote in my response in the spring, 2013 C.H.J. "James Quinlan [born 1818] was the preeminent collector of biographical and anecdotal information concerning Gonsalus, but even he evidently never heard the story of Sam's legendary leap except for the 1865 article, and he expressed skepticism." And why would a wartime attack resulting in the murder of three individuals go completely unmentioned in any of the documentary sources reporting other Indian attacks of the period? I had searched a wide variety of sources without finding a shred of evidence that the alleged victims, who are named in the 1865 account, ever even existed! All this is aside from the obvious fact that the tale on its face strains credibility. But the important thing is that Harris's article had directed my attention once again to Sauthier's map and the appearance thereon of "Pond Gonzales."

It should be emphasized that the lake now known as Lake Maratanza was not the body of water that originally and authentically bore that name (nor is "Maratanza" the authentic spelling). There is a question that had never occurred to me before: Why is the lake now known as Maratanza even shown at all on Sauthier's map? The map depicts no other lake on the crest of the Shawangunk ridge. "Pond Gonzales" was a tiny body of water (especially prior to damming in the 20th century) atop a mountain wilderness most of which was not even deemed worthy of division into patented tracts.

As I describe in my lengthy discussion of the name Maratanza in *Shawangunk Place-names*, a huge dispute raged through much of the 18th century between the provincial government, which was in possession of the vast former Evans patent (on our side of the Hudson south of the New Paltz patent) and the proprietors of the 1704 Minisink patent, which lay to the west. A certain "water pond Lyeing upon the hills called Meratange" is mentioned as a southwest boundary corner in the 1684 Indian deed to Governor Dongan, forming the earliest basis for provincial ownership of the Evans tract.

Photo by
Renée Zernitsky



The identity and location of this pond became crucial in the ongoing dispute concerning the boundary, such that the Minisink proprietors went so far as to file maps on which the name of the "water pond" was removed from its true location, on a southeastern shoulder of the ridge, overlooking the Wallkill Valley, where I84 now crosses the ridge, and was bestowed upon the hitherto anonymous Sam's Point pond—thus vastly enlarging the supposed extent of the Minisink patent, at the expense of the tract held by the colonial government. According to testimony, they even "marked several Trees and a Rock at the said... pond with the... Initial Letters of the Name of the said John Evans... which may in future Times... be considered as marked by the said John Evans... as the real Southwest Bounds of his said Grant."

Claude Sauthier, working closely with Governor Tryon (1771-74), could not possibly have been unaware of this dispute, which had reached a legal and political climax in 1765. So why not show the Sam's Point lake, which had been claimed by the Minisink proprietors as the true Meratange, and give it a name—any name—as a way of further discrediting the adversaries' earlier toponymic chicanery? It makes perfect sense as an explanation for why Sauthier chose to depict and name this minuscule and remote pond on his map of New York. In fact, it is the only credible explanation.

Which brings us back to Sam Gonsalus. We can only surmise he may have been an acquaintance of the Governor or Sauthier, or, more likely, of some intermediary who suggested his name as an appropriate one for the pond. For all we know, Sam might even

have been the one to suggest naming the pond after himself! And so, "Pond Gonzales" was included on Sauthier's map, in confirmation and support of the provincial government's rightful claim that the true Meratange Pond of 1684 lay elsewhere.

And here we come to the point of this whole discussion: More than two decades elapsed between publication of the map and the first documentary appearance of the name "Sam's Point." **Might it be that the real reason Sam's name became attached to the Point was simply the latter's proximity to the pond already bearing his surname?** It would have been a short leap from naming the pond to naming of the nearby point after the same man—and a far less perilous and problematical leap than the one with which our eponymous hero is traditionally credited.

I rest my case.

Marc Fried's most recent book, *Notes from the Other Side* (2015), is an edited compilation drawn from his long-running *Shawangunk Journal* column of that name. The Sam's Point column appeared in the August 16, 2018 issue of *The Journal*.

Float The Gunks! Some Canoeing/Kayaking routes in the Shawangunks

by Anka Angrist

Our craft bobs in the small waves as we watch a great blue heron stalk between the cattails that line the bank of the stream while a muskrat sidles by, its long tail undulating as it heads for succulent marsh grass on the other bank.

A Canadian wetland? An Idaho river? An Adirondack lake? No! It's the Gunks! Many outdoor enthusiasts don't know that the Gunks offer a number of destinations providing the chance to enjoy an outdoor venue other than rock climbing, hiking, biking or cross-country skiing.

While most Gunks waterways mentioned here don't provide the stomach-churning thrills of running a Western river, the challenge of a ten-day lake chain excursion in the Canadian wilderness or the rush of big rapids, they offer the chance for a quiet day on the water, wildlife sightings other than those encountered on woodland trails and relative solitude. Most local waterways ban gas powered watercraft but allow electric motors.

Note that local waterways are not without certain hazards. One fine spring day Burt and I set out on an exploratory paddle in one of the larger wetlands. It had rained heavily the previous day, so log jams and small grass hummocks could be floated over. Suddenly, a large form roared up from behind a tall hummock and hovered over Burt's head. A Canada Goose had adopted his male protective role and was threatening a human male approaching his nest and egg-incubating female partner. Like a feather island, the goose continued to hover over Burt's head until we managed to proceed a short distance and reduce our threatening appearance. I was laughing so hard I wasn't much help.

To ladies canoeing solo: Chivalry survives in the Gunks! Even though I have a small and very light canoe,



Kayaking on Tillson Lake; photo by Virginia Blaisdell

males of the human species are eager to demonstrate their prowess and usually offer to put the canoe on or in the car. A smile or nod of thanks suffices in compensation.

Whether traveling solo or in tandem, expect to be observed as much as observing. Otters have reared up out of the water to have a look at us human territorial invaders, beavers have startled us by slapping their tails on the water as we approached their lodges, and avian lookouts, gulls, osprey, and swallows to name a few, announce our arrival.

You will, no doubt have comparable experiences as you explore local waterways.

Some of the accessible areas include:

Minnewaska State Park allows canoeing/kayaking on Tillson Lake and Lake Minnewaska for those who observe Park boating regulations. These include purchase of daily or seasonal fees and boat inspections by Park personnel prior to use. Details are available online or by contacting the Park.

The Rondout The village of High Falls offers easy canoe/kayak access to the Rondout Creek. While the put-in is close to the Falls there is no danger to paddlers as the Falls is amply protected by various barriers and there is virtually no current in this part of the river. Heading left (upstream) will take boaters past farms, private homes and a golf course. It is easy paddling until the river becomes a shallow and rocky rapid, when most paddlers will want to turn around. At very high water, it is possible to proceed over the shallows. Up river from High Falls there is another put-in off Berne Road between Kerhonkson and Accord, adjacent to the Rail Trail.

The Walkkill There is a put-in and parking at Sojourner Truth Park on the Walkkill River across from the Walkkill Valley Rail Trail in New Paltz. There is also access to the river off Rte 213, near two bridges, Perrine's Bridge, an old covered bridge and the bridge over the Thruway. From here, it's an easy paddle to the dam above Sturgeon Pool in Rifton. A third put-in is available on Springtown Road near Rosendale. A DEC sign marks the spot.

The Bashakill The Bashakill Wildlife Preserve near Mamakating provides access to approximately 3000 acres of DEC Wildlife Management area as well as the Basherkill stream. There are several access points. From Rte 209 take Otisville Road to a left turn at South Road. Another put-in can be reached via a left turn from Rte 209 onto Haven Road. This area is best paddled in the Spring or Fall as in Summer months aquatic plants frequently clog the water.

Many paddlers will use these notes as suggestions and discover new or additional route variations and log different observations.
Enjoy!

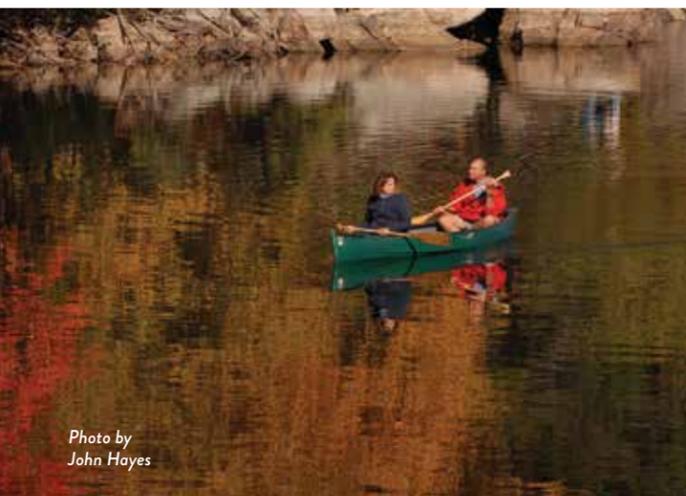


Photo by John Hayes

THE MEETING OF THE MEMBERS

Heartly FOS members who turned out for our annual meeting on October 20 were rewarded with a bonus tramp in the fall woods to our latest purchase, the Brooks Parcel.

But before that, we gathered in the historic 1872 Clove Chapel for coffee, bagels, and news about what's going on on the Shawangunk Ridge. After opening remarks by our board president John Hayes, assistant park manager Jorge Gomes from Minnewaska State Park gave a very detailed presentation on all aspects of the new visitor's center that is being built above Lake Minnewaska, and the enhanced parking arrangements that are under construction. This is the first significant upgrade to the park since its inception in 1987. Interestingly, some people commented on how the building reminded them of the old Ski Minni.

Grace Woodard, co-founder of Deerpark Rural Alliance (DRA), spoke with great passion about the enormous development pressures that have recently confronted her formally sleepy, rural home town. Just a few years ago Deerpark was totally unprepared to deal with the well-financed, experienced developers who have descended on the area. With the assistance of the Basha Kill Area Association and other organizations (including FOS) DRA has become an effective voice for promoting smart growth and sustainability in the southern Gunks. Note that donations intended for DRA should be sent to the Basha Kill Area Association, P.O. Box 1121, Wurtsboro, NY 12790. We encourage members to join, and to visit the BCAA facebook page, where there are many stunning photos of the wetland and wildlife.

At the close of the meeting, most of the attendees drove to Rock Hill to follow Bob Anderberg on a short but steep hike to the newest Friends' acquisition, the Brooks parcel. The Brooks family lived from one end of Rock Hill Road to the other over five generations. The land that we purchased functioned as a wood lot for the family, providing fire wood for the long winters. A light drizzle didn't deter our stalwart members from reaching the summit and taking in an extraordinary view of Copes Lookout and Skytop.



John Hayes; photo by Loretta Hayes



Jorge Gomes; photo by Gary Kitchen



Photo by Georges Millet



Grace Woodard; photo by Janet Bachant



Photo by Georges Millet

TILLSON LAKE DAM PROGRESS

The following is excerpted from the PIPC agenda for 9/16/19

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation had approved moving ahead to engage an engineering consultant to update the design concepts and repair estimates that would bring the dam into compliance. Staff has received an updated engineer's report on Tillson Lake Dam, that has been reviewed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, who are in general agreement with the findings.

...
this...reduces the construction cost estimates from the \$5 million range to the \$3-4 million range.

The project is now awaiting a funding decision by OPRHP Executive Staff as to whether to fund the repair or removal. Construction cost estimates from this design place the repairs at approximately \$3.2 million versus \$1.7 million for removal, and other soft costs will need to be added for both alternatives. A decision on funding needs to be made to proceed with final engineering plans for removal or repair.

...
Staff continues to monitor the dam and remains prepared to drain the lake if weather events require such action.

Note: FOS has not taken a position on removal or restoration of the dam due to the lack of a comprehensive environmental report on which to base a decision.

FOS WEBSITE GETS A NEW LOOK!

Members, please check out the "new & improved" FOS/TSC Website. The website, <http://shawangunks.org>, is brimming with all the essential information about this organization. Not only will you find all the latest news about land protection and FOS activities, but also newsletter archive, history of FOS conservation efforts, and more.

The website is an easy way to convey to your friends why you support Friends of the Shawangunks!

THANK YOU MEMBERS!

A big thank you to this year's donors. We succeeded in saving a piece of the Gunks (The Brooks parcel) and are looking forward to saving more land from development in 2020. As we close out the year we'd also like to thank you in advance for any year-end giving you are planning, as we strive to protect our precious landscape.

Happy Holidays.

JOIN US! DEVELOPMENT THREATENS ALL PARTS OF THE SHAWANGUNKS. JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP.

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AMOUNT \$ _____

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Shawangunk Watch

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Friends of the Shawangunks The Shawangunk Conservancy

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Friends of the Shawangunks, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization working to preserve open space in the Shawangunks.

The Shawangunk Conservancy, Inc. is a not-for-profit land conservancy.

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The latest financial report of Friends of the Shawangunks and The Shawangunk Conservancy may be obtained by writing to the Office of the Attorney General, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271, or by writing to us at the above address.



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Preserving Open Space Since 1963