

Trails through the First Frontier:
History as Inspiration for Recreation and Tourism in the Upper
Susquehanna Headwaters



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Historical Significance of the Headwaters

The Greater Cooperstown area is the center of a successful rural tourism economy that includes such attractions as the Baseball Hall of Fame, the museums of the New York State Historical Association, the Glimmerglass Opera Company as well as specialty shopping and the arts. Nevertheless, the region's abundant natural amenities have not been well organized or marketed, and the region's nationally-significant historical resources have similarly been underutilized. This report explores means of coordinating such activities within the wider tourism economy. It is proposed that a regional trail system aimed at cycling, hiking, and winter sports could be used for local recreation and tourism as well as tie the Susquehanna Trail system in Pennsylvania to the Erie Canal trail.

Cooperstown is part of a broad upland to the west of Hudson River Valley that can be referred to as the Mohawk-Susquehanna Headwaters (Thomas 2013). This region served as the "first frontier" even before the American Revolution: the Dutch referred to the area around Cooperstown as "Canomakers," and Palatine German settlers found their way to the mid-Mohawk Valley as early as 1712 (Greene 1925). After the Revolution settlers who had previously been "bottled up" in the Hudson Valley and New England streamed west into and through the region in search of land and opportunity. Important westward corridors fanned out from Albany in a pattern roughly bound by interstates 88 and 90 today, including the Mohawk Turnpike, the Skaneateles Turnpike, and the two routes of the Great Western Turnpike. In addition, the region is home to the Erie Canal and one of the earliest railroads in the United States, the Schenectady & Utica Railroad. William Cooper, the developer of Cooperstown, dreamed of a canal running from Otsego Lake along the Susquehanna River westward to northern Pennsylvania and, with the Tioga River, stretching to western New York. The Headwaters was home to the first Lutheran Seminary in the United States, the first industrial-scale textile mills outside of New England, and was an important theater of operations during the American Revolution.

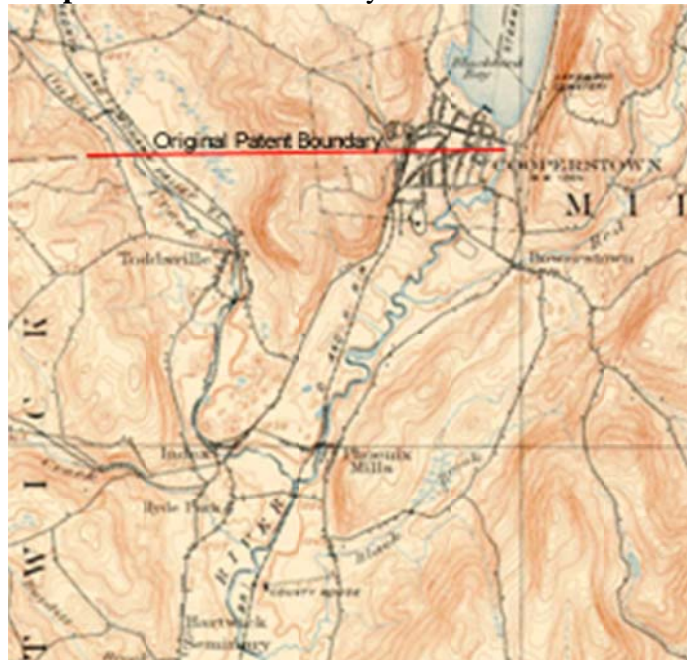
Cooperstown is today best known as the mythological birthplace of Baseball. The Mills Commission on Baseball Origins had in 1903 chosen the village as the site of the reputed "first game" at what is now known as Doubleday Field (Thomas 2003). Although modern scholars see baseball as a modern incarnation of Rounders (a game still played in the British Isles), the story of Civil War hero Doubleday inventing the game in bucolic Cooperstown served as an ideological buttress against an America seemingly under assault in 1903: small towns like Cooperstown were rapidly giving way to cities; farms were losing ground to factories. The myth of baseball origins is itself enough for Cooperstown to claim national significance, but there is much more to the region's history. The Mohawk-Susquehanna Headwaters is the nation's first frontier, and well before anointed a bucolic birthplace for baseball the region had already contributed to the national character.

The account presented here is at times adapted from previous work (Thomas, 2003; 2005). Additional information, particularly more detailed information, can be found in local histories as well (Birdsall 1925; Cooper et al. 1976; Town of Hartwick Historical Society, 2002; Weeks, 1964, 1981).

Igniting the Burnt Over District

John Christopher Hartwick was a German minister who emigrated to the American colonies in 1746 with the aim of ministering to the Palatine German settlers who had settled the Hudson and Mohawk Valleys. Hartwick traveled and preached extensively throughout the northeastern United States, becoming one of the most important figures in the establishment of the Lutheran Church in America (Arndt, 1937). Over time, he grew critical of the sparsely settled American landscape, convinced that the settlers were losing their piety in the openness of the frontier (Taylor, 1995). Convinced that a return to a Medieval German-style village would help keep his coreligionists on the “straight and narrow,” he turned his attention to building an appropriate community in the hilly frontier south of the Mohawk Valley. In 1754 he purchased the Hartwick Patent from the local Mohawks intent on building “New Jerusalem,” one of the earliest attempts at a utopian community in upstate New York.

Map 1: Northeast Boundary of Hartwick Patent



Source: 1909 Topographic Map, Cooperstown Quadrangle

The original purchase—beginning at the Susquehanna River, west 480 chains, then north, and then east—noted the river as the only eastern boundary and thus included a portion of the village of Cooperstown south of present-day Main Street (see map 1).¹ Hartwick's New Jerusalem would not be a success. Although a dedicated and influential preacher, Hartwick was considered to be most appreciated in small doses. By most accounts, he was a slovenly and irritating man, stubbornly devout and considered misogynistic even by the standards of the late eighteenth century². Birdsall (1925, 29) related the following incident:

On one occasion when disturbed in preaching by a dog, he exclaimed with much earnestness that dogs and children had better be kept at home, and it would not be much matter, he added, if the women were kept there too!

Speaking in 1861, Reverend Henry Pohlman alluded to settlers in the region prior to the American Revolution, but there is no other evidence even of squatters (Strobel, 1867, 20-22).

Hartwick's personality cannot, however, be solely to blame for the comparative lack of growth in his patent, especially as settlers from New England poured into upstate New York in the 1780s and 1790s. Hartwick embodied an older way of doing business: in effect, his dream was a medieval village with him as the local lord. His lease (see Arndt, 1937: 295) demonstrates this point:

That the grantee, be or become, within a year's time from the date of these presents, a Parishner to all intents and purposes; which consists in the following particulars, viz:

- 1) To acknowledge the grantor, or his substitute, for his Pastor, Teacher, and Spiritual Counsellor.
- 2) To behave himself to him, with his family, and dependents, agreeably to this relation.
- 3) To attend regularly, decently, attentively and devoutly, Divine Service, and instruction performed and given, by the said John Christopher Hardwick.
- 4) To aid and assist, according to his ability, in building and repairing Church- Parish- and School- Houses.
- 5) To keep children and servants to school, and catechisation, until they are fit to be confirmed, if baptized, in fancy- and if not, until they are fit to be baptized, and admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

¹ See also the description in Strobel, 1867, pp. 15-17.

² For further reference on this point, see Arndt (1937); Birdsall (1925); Gjernes (1972); Strobel, (1867); and Taylor (1995).

These stipulations were unpopular among settlers. Most of the new settlers were radically democratic and increasingly secular; Hartwick and New Jerusalem represented a return to a European past that few were willing to make.

It was William Cooper who actually settled the Hartwick Patent. Hartwick had named him leasing agent in 1791, but Cooper had actually begun selling the land as early as 1786. The land by the northern border of the Hartwick Patent had been sold to settlers by Cooper, who probably thought that the land was his to sell (Butterfield, 1969). Cooper sold the lands without the stipulations desired by Hartwick, and there was considerable controversy over Cooper's practices. Hartwick had specifically stipulated that his plan be followed, but Cooper ignored this stipulation and sold land to anyone able to make the payments. In general, the settlers were Calvinists from New England and the Hudson Valley who had no interest in living in medieval style cities or the Lutheranism of John Christopher Hartwick. When Hartwick finally realized that Cooper utilized his own methods in settling the patent, nothing could legally be done to reverse the situation. In fairness to Cooper, it is unlikely that the patent could have been settled according to the stipulations Hartwick had attached to the leases. Even so, many of the settlers of the time, as well as Hartwick's surveyor, William Ellison, and his attorney, Jeremiah van Rensselaer, felt that Cooper had purposefully tried to encroach on the Hartwick's wishes. Arndt (1937) stated that "there is a great deal of unpublished material about this question which certainly proves irregularities on the part of the judge [Cooper]" (297). In any case, Hartwick would die not only without creating his New Jerusalem, but having witnessed the indiscriminate sale of his lands by Cooper. Although Hartwick attempted to revoke Cooper's powers a few months after granting them, he was ignored by Cooper, who continued to manage the Hartwick lands until Hartwick's 1796 death.

The relationship between Hartwick and Cooper anticipated two broad trends that would become evident during the early to middle nineteenth century: religious fervor and the overthrow of the semi-feudal system that dominated economic relations in eastern New York. As a religious zealot intent on building a utopian community, Hartwick was similar to the Puritans of Massachusetts who built their own Calvinist communities. But Hartwick was neither English nor Calvinist, and it is doubtful that he looked to the Yankees of New England for inspiration. There is no extant document by Hartwick describing his attitudes toward the new settlers, but it is possible that his views of the Yankees were similar to that of William Cooper's son, the novelist James Fenimore Cooper. In 1823, Cooper's third novel, *The Pioneers*, introduced Natty Bumppo as a frontiersman highly critical of the new settlers. It is unlikely that Hartwick served as a model for Bumppo but it is possible that the criticism of the settlers expressed by his main character reflect a wider cultural milieu found among the original European settlers of the region, Hartwick included.

Regardless of his attitudes toward the new settlers, Hartwick's basic idea of a utopian community organized around religious tenets was an early example of numerous other such

groups. During about the same time period, the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, known more commonly as the Shakers, emigrated to the region near Albany (in 1774). They believed in the continual revelation of the Holy Spirit, a "charismatic" movement similar to Pentecostal Christians today, and that their leader, Mother Ann Lees, was a female reincarnation of Jesus. Over the next 100 years they built communities throughout the Northeastern and Midwestern United States, growing to over 20 thousand members despite their practice of abstention from sexual relations (Stein, 1994).

Similarly, in 1834, a young minister named John Humphrey Noyes declared himself free of sin on account of Christ's return to earth in 70 AD (the year Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in the First Jewish War). Moving to Putney, Vermont, in 1836 he started the Putney Bible School where he preached a doctrine called "perfectionism:" the idea that Christ's Second Coming meant that people could live without sin and strive for spiritual perfection today. This involved complex marriage—the marriage of everyone in the commune to everyone else. When Noyes was arrested for adultery in 1848, he moved his flock to Oneida where the commune would build the "mansion house" and eventually start Oneida Community Ltd. (now Oneida Limited) (Kanter, 1972).

According to tradition, in 1823 a young Joseph Smith received visions from the angel Moroni instructing him to wear magic spectacles with which he could translate the ancient writing now called the *Book of Mormon*. Although most Mormons today live in the western United States, early Mormon activity started in Palmyra (near Rochester), with extensive preaching taking place in the Susquehanna Valley region.

These forms of religious fervor were joined by other movements. These included the followers of Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, a German immigrant who lived eight years in Albany beginning in 1846 and was influential in the spread of Reform Judaism, as well as the followers of the Christian minister William Miller, who proclaimed that the return of Christ would take place in 1843. Descendants of the Millerites include the Seventh Day Adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses. The Spiritualist Movement began in Rochester during the 1840s and taught that people could communicate with the dead through the use of mediums and séances. In addition, countless itinerant preachers, revival meetings, and other religious groups crowded the landscape of upstate New York: the phenomenon is known to historians as the "Burnt Over District," and Hartwick's New Jerusalem is arguably its earliest incarnation.

John Christopher died on July 16, 1796, but his final resting place is uncertain.³ His tombstone is located at Hartwick College, but his body traveled from its original location in a churchyard at Germantown to the pulpit of Ebenezer Church in Albany to a cemetery that was somehow incorporated into Albany's Washington Park—perhaps he remains there today. Hartwick's will called for his remaining lands to be "laid out into a regular town, closely built, to

³ See the essay by Kenneth Augur in *Town of Hartwick Historical Society*, 2002.

be called the New Jerusalem, with buildings and hall for a gymnasium” (Strobel, 1866, 29). His plans were complicated by the fact that he appointed Jesus Christ as his heir (28). Hartwick College today dates its beginning to a meeting that occurred in 1797 for the purpose of fulfilling his wishes, but because Jesus did not participate in the probate proceedings it took another 15 years for the seminary to actually open in the town. The upstate synod was named in his honor.

Ending Feudalism

The second broad trend prefigured by William Cooper and John Christopher Hartwick was the eventual overthrow of the semi-feudal “patroon” system found in eastern New York. In contrast to Reverend Hartwick, Cooper was, above all, a businessman. His motive was not to hold land but to sell it quickly and turn a profit; for Cooper, landholdings were a source of wealth and income, not parishioners or serfs. Cooper sold land to settlers even while many aristocrats clung to the semi-feudal land lease system, and in doing so helped undermine the system (Butterfield, 29 APR. 1955, 10). In his own village of Cooperstown he sought to develop a thriving commercial city that would attract new settlers and raise property values in the village. He sold large lots to liquidate land quickly, thus allowing him to repeat the cycle again. He developed the Hartwick lands as an agricultural hinterland for his budding city, claiming that his village would prove as important as the mouth of the Buffalo River (Buffalo) and boasting of Cooperstown’s superior construction to Utica (Cooper, 1936 [1810]).

Cooper’s “freehold” system challenged the British Manor System that dominated economic relations in eastern New York. The origins of this system that had become dominant in late-eighteenth century New York can be traced to the conquest of England by William the Conqueror in 1066. William rewarded his supporters with grants of land referred to as feudal baronies (Cannon & Griffiths, 2000). Each Baron in exchange gave the king (William and his descendants) an annual tribute, usually in the form of agricultural products raised in the territory, the service of armed knights, and in later years some form of money. In principle, a hierarchy existed with God as the ultimate authority. The king derived authority (and land) directly from God through the blessings of his representative on Earth, the Pope. (After the Protestant Reformation, English kings instead looked to the Arch-Bishop of Canterbury for God’s blessing). With the blessing of the Almighty, the king thus delegated authority over territory to the nobility through the feudal hierarchy. Baronies were ultimately divided into manors presided over by Lords of the Manor. A Lord of the Manor was considered to be landed gentry but not a member of the nobility like barons and the ranks above them. Lords were required to pay tribute to the barons above them in the social hierarchy (Ganshof, 1996; Reynolds, 1996).

With the precedent of feudalism established by the colonial governments, succeeding governors began to sell off the king’s lands as new estates or “patents.” Although there were episodes of royal disagreements (Ellis, 1946), in general the recommendation of the governor for

a royal charter resulted in the land grant requested. By the time of Hartwick and Cooper, the feudal system was well established in New York, and it is not surprising that Hartwick drafted his lease as he did. But Cooper *sold* his land, passing on future income from leases so that he could make money in the short run to buy yet more land. This not only worked for Cooper, but for the settlers as well. Legally, the major difference was that a freeholder did not owe a landlord (the lord of the manor) a quitrent, but due to the principle of eminent domain rent was still owed to God's representative on earth, the state. In effect, freehold relations took away the middleman: the freeholder paid a quitrent directly to the governor or his agent.

A quick perusal of historical records for the region reflects the predominance of settlers from New England, particularly Connecticut. For many of the new settlers, the goal of settlement was an independent and reasonably prosperous existence. Sheriff (1997) explained:

(When) farmers did exchange goods and services with neighbors, those transactions rarely involved cash—not because cash was in short supply, but rather because they saw no use for assigning monetary values. Instead, they calculated value in terms of social worth, and simply kept accounts of what they owed and were owed. A farmer, for example, might work two days in his neighbor's cornfield in exchange for two chickens, since that was what it would take to feed his family during the time he spent away from his own farm duties. Or he might simply hold the neighbor accountable for two days' labor at some later time. These farmers sought, not to accumulate wealth, but to secure a "competency" that would allow their families to live a comfortable and independent existence in a community limited in geographic reach. (11)

The goal of independence shared by the early settlers was particularly well-served by the freehold system pioneered by land speculators such as Cooper. Faced with a choice between moving to a freehold or a traditional land-lease property, settlers most often chose a freehold property.

The freehold system popularized by speculators such as Cooper would ultimately undermine the land-lease system. After a series of revolts in the Catskills called the "Anti-Rent Wars" during the 1830s, considerable pressure was placed on state government to put an end to the system and by 1845 the state legislature was willing to act against the interests of the landlords. In 1846, a convention to rewrite New York's constitution convened to level the death knell to feudalism by, among other reforms, abolishing all feudal tenures, setting a limit of twelve years on leases, and making the taxes of the estates the sole responsibility of the owners and not the tenants (Cheyney, 1887; Christman, 1945). Within only two decades, the majority of the land in the feudal estates had been transferred to the farmers living there, and the feudal period was over (Christman, 1945).

The Industrial Revolution

The region was settled primarily by settlers from New England. In the Blackstone Valley of Rhode Island of Massachusetts—the region from which many local settlers emigrated—the first stirrings of the American Industrial Revolution had begun in the 1790s in the form of water-powered textile mills. Beginning in England in the mid-eighteenth century, the new technologies spread rapidly after their introduction. The Arkwright System, first opened by Richard Arkwright in 1771 at Cromford, England was smuggled to the United States by his engineer, Samuel Slater. Slater built the first American water-powered cotton mill at Pawtucket, Rhode Island in 1793². In 1808 one of Slater's engineers, Benjamin Walcott, built the first cotton mill in New York State, aptly named New York Mills³. Only a year later, however, a similar mill for wool was opened in Toddsville, a New England-style mill village two miles from Cooperstown⁴.

The concentration of the textile industry in the Headwaters Region extended to the Cooperstown area as well. As early as 1810, settlers from New England were building a substantial complex of mills along the Upper Susquehanna River and Oaks Creek near modern Cooperstown. The areas of the most intense manufacturing activity in textiles and other industries by around 1870 were the Utica Metropolitan Area and the hinterlands near Cooperstown. A tertiary area of intense industrialization was found in the Canajoharie-Fort Plain area as well, and in the triangle created by these communities could be found the full infrastructure of urbanization: settled communities, manufacturing for trade, and an agricultural hinterland producing for both local consumption and export. This region centered on the fast-running streams leading from the “top” of the Appalachian Plateau (near present-day U. S. Route 20). Early in the region’s history—before the building of the Erie Canal and the railroads—Fort Plain functioned as a major river port from which travelers and goods could be moved further up the Mohawk Valley to Utica or up the Otsquago Valley to Otsego Lake and the “Susquehanna Gateway.” Preliminary research indicates that this is the reason for the pattern of industrialization found in the region. By 1870, the region was home to not only textile manufacturing but to a variety of consumer goods as well, and both Utica and Cooperstown functioned as financial centers for these industries.

The building of water-powered mills extended to the entire region, and in a sense the textile mills were really just an application of existing saw and grist mill technology to a new product. Unlike saw and grist mills, however, textile mills were often producing for export to other regions as opposed to a purely local market. In a nine-county study area⁵, water-powered mill technology was widespread from an early period: a water-powered saw and grist mill had been built as early as the 1770s in Canajoharie.

⁴ This section adapted from Alexander R. Thomas (2015), *Urban and Rural Industrial Sites of Central New York: A Surface Survey*.

⁵ The counties included in the study area include: Oneida, Madison, Chenango, Herkimer, Otsego, Delaware, Fulton, Montgomery, and Schoharie.

Table 1: Industrial Sites by Setting, ca. 1870

Settlement	Number of Settlement Types	Number of Ponds	Number of Industrial Sites
Rural	--	736 (75.6)	1,640 (64.2)
Hamlet	266 (74.1)	146 (15.0)	437 (17.1)
Village	85 (23.7)	73 (0.07)	312 (12.21)
City	8 (0.02)	19 (0.02)	165 (0.06)
Total	<i>359 (100)</i>	<i>974 (100)</i>	<i>2,554 (100)</i>

Table 1 gives an overview of the data from around 1870. Although industrialization is often considered to be an urban phenomenon in the popular imagination, industrialization was very much a rural phenomenon here as it was in New England. Nearly two-thirds of the industrial sites found circa 1870 were found in rural locations. Industrialization did create conditions for the intensification of land use as evident by the fact that there were only 736 water systems serving the 1,640 mills in rural settings: the average millpond served over two mills.

Table 2: Select Industries by Setting, ca. 1870

Settlement	Banking	Lumber	Textiles	Miscellaneous
Rural	0	968 (82.7)	37 (31.2)	41 (22.4)
Hamlet	0	122 (10.4)	38 (33.6)	24 (13.1)
Village	33 (66.0)	67 (5.7)	28 (24.1)	53 (30.1)
City	17 (33.0)	13 (0.01)	13 (11.2)	65 (35.5)
Total	<i>50 (100)</i>	<i>1,170 (100)</i>	<i>116 (100)</i>	<i>183 (100)</i>

Table 2 shows the data for selected industries in the region. Not surprisingly, the lumber industry was primarily a rural phenomenon: less than 20 percent were located in an even minimally urbanized setting. In contrast, banking was an exclusively urban phenomenon during this same time period, found only in cities and larger villages. As late as 1870, however, even the textile industry was found primarily in smaller towns and rural areas. What the data conceal in this regard, however, is the difference in scale between such mills: urban, steam powered mills were often considerably larger than the earlier water-powered mills. Miscellaneous industries, primarily related to consumer goods (such as carriages, jewelry, and breweries) were somewhat more common in urbanized settings, but it is perhaps noteworthy that such were more numerous in cities than textiles.

Civilization Arrived

The nineteenth century brought a change in status to the first frontier. Western New York and the Ohio Country beyond beckoned farmers still intent on an independent existence and having little luck in the rapidly filling Otsego Country. The Upper Susquehanna Region seemed a good place to make a new start, but it was not on an easy transportation route. William Cooper had dreamed of a westward route leading from Cooperstown down the Susquehanna, then turning west on the Tioga; such pride in his first creation apparently blinded him to certain geographical realities. At the western end of the Mohawk Valley, the land opens onto the Great Lakes plain and continues for hundreds of miles. The land was, in contrast to the Otsego Country, relatively flat and very fertile, and not surprisingly became the preferred route west.

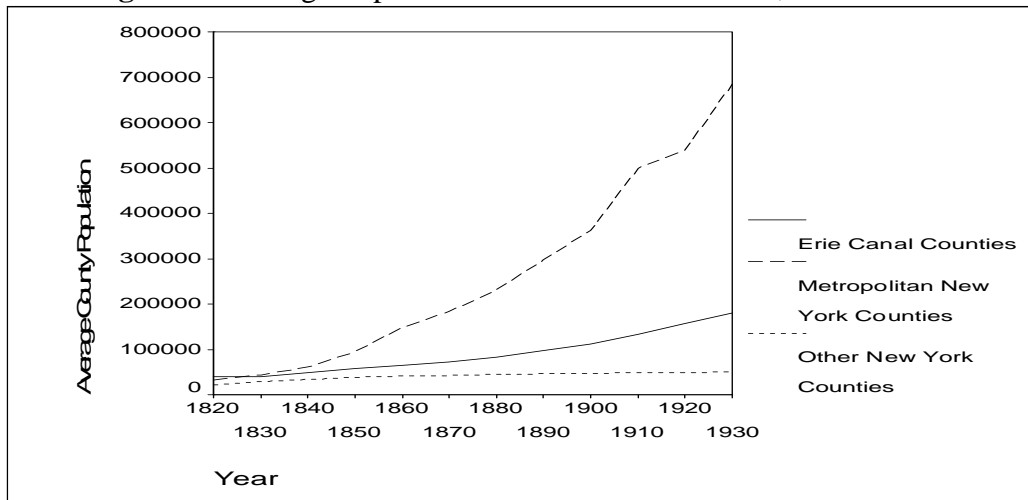
Although the Iroquois had left a network of trails throughout eastern New York, they were typically not appropriate for the wagons and coaches that many settlers took to the west. Shortly after the Revolution, a number of private companies proposed improving the existing trails and charging a toll for the upkeep (Klein & Majewski, 1992). Beginning in the 1790s, the state granted turnpike companies the right to build the roads. The Turnpike Movement resulted in many roads being built, including the two Western Turnpikes (today's routes 20 and 80), the Skaneateles Turnpike between them, and the Catskill Turnpike in Delaware County. These turnpikes faced competition from other companies operating in the Mohawk Valley that offered routes with fewer hills and more towns. As the nineteenth century matured, the major transportation corridors would be permanently shifted away from the Susquehanna Headwaters as even the greatest turnpikes faced stiff competition from new technologies.

As early as the American Revolution there was discussion of making the Mohawk more navigable by building canals around its major rapids, especially at Little Falls and Cohoes, and creating a water link between that river and Wood's Creek. The result would be a continuous water route from New York City to Lake Ontario. There were some early attempts, but it took the urging of the state, specifically Governor DeWitt Clinton, to build a canal that would work. The plans were grand, as the Erie Canal would be built not simply to Lake Ontario near Oswego along the obvious route, but to Lake Erie at Buffalo. In 1817, work started on the Erie Canal in Rome along the flatlands near the meandering Mohawk to Utica fifteen miles away. In 1825 the Erie Canal was opened. For the opening ceremony, a bucket of Lake Erie water filled in Buffalo was transported to New York City via the canal and the Hudson River and dumped in the harbor (Larkin 1998).

The canals of New York faced competition very soon after their development in the form of the railroad. The major railroad was the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad. The New York Central, as it was called, was initially a series of short line railroads that was consolidated later in the nineteenth century by Cornelius Vanderbilt and his son, William Henry Vanderbilt. The main line went to Chicago by way of the route of the Erie Canal and Great Lakes plain. The

canal cities of the state all had the presence of the canal and the New York Central, as well as numerous spurs off the main line and competitors, such as the West Shore Railroad. As a result, the major cities of the state were major transportation hubs where canal, rail, and stagecoach lines all met. In general, rail lines were the choice of passengers and time-sensitive goods, such as many agricultural products, due to the speed of the trains, whereas the slower canals were better for durable goods, such as lumber and stones. Simply stated, the corridor that ran north through the mountains from New York along the Hudson, west through the Mohawk Valley and along the Great Lakes plain to Buffalo did not simply have the canal, but an array of competing transportation options in regard to speed and price. Figure 1 examines the growth of counties in the New York metropolitan area, those in the Erie Canal corridor, and those not in either region.

Figure 1: Average Population of New York Counties, 1820-1930



SOURCE: Thomas, 2005, 87

In the Utica area the number of textile mills was so high that prospective workers immigrated to the city by the thousands. Many of the immigrants were from the surrounding rural areas not directly in the corridor. For instance, from 1840—the beginning of the steam age in Utica—through 1940, the population of the city of Utica increased from 12,782 to 100,518, and Oneida County (of which Utica is part) grew from 85,310 to 203,636 (Shupe et al, 1987). In surrounding counties, however, the population remained steady or even declined despite birth rates that without emigration (people moving out) would have insured very rapid growth rates. The population of Otsego County hovered between 47 and 52 thousand during the same time period, illustrative of a general pattern in other rural counties near Utica and other major upstate cities (Thomas, 2005).

The relative population stability of New York's rural counties is due to several factors. In fact, many rural counties lost population after 1840. By the 1840s, much of the arable land in upstate New York had been brought into production, and thus a potential farmer could not easily find new land for development. As a result, as the children of farm families came of age they often could not find a farm of their own. Because a farm needs a certain amount of land in order to be productive, it was common for only one child to inherit the farm. This left the other children, and there were often several, to fend for themselves. Some could perform services in the local towns but, as with the farms, there were only so many ministers and doctors (for example) necessary for a community. The result was that many moved to the cities out of necessity. In addition, such counties often failed to attract large numbers of newcomers because of the same lack of opportunity that forced so many of their young to move away.

Rural counties did have a certain amount of manufacturing, but found that they faced basic economic limitations when compared to the cities. For instance, northern Otsego County was well south of the Hudson-Erie Canal corridor and did develop a small textile industry, particular in woolens. Textile mills were found in Toddsville, Clintonville, Index, and Phoenix Mills, just to name a few. Unfortunately, they faced a difficult trip to bring their products to market towns along the canal for shipment, and so their products were typically more expensive than those of companies that produced directly along the canal. In time, several of the mills in the county were bought by Utica area firms who within a generation closed them. Besides the inefficient shipping, the flood of immigrants to Utica made for a less expensive and more reliable workforce when compared to the young farm girls who typically operated the factories in Otsego County. The city itself also provided its own market for products that rural Otsego simply did not have, and so by 1900 much of the industry had consolidated in the metropolitan area (Thomas, 2003; Bohls, 1991).

Fond Memories

The son of William Cooper, James Fenimore Cooper, looked to his experiences on the First Frontier for inspiration for his many novels. He had grown up in Cooperstown as his father settled the village, but spent much of his adult life in Albany before returning to Cooperstown in his later years. His first novel was published anonymously in 1820, but it was *The Leatherstocking Tales*, inspired by his frontier childhood, that drew him fame. The first novel, *The Pioneers*, was published in 1823. Many townships in Otsego County hit the nineteenth century population peak around this time, the county population maintaining an unsteady stability until slow growth resumed during the 1960s (Thomas 2005).

The Pioneers told the story of the settling of "Templeton," a pseudonymous name for Cooperstown. The central character was a gruff frontiersman named Natty Bumppo who represents the wild yet civilized frontier ethic. Cooper laments the coming of the Yankees from

New England with their civilizing influence, the enclosure of frontier lands, and wasteful ways. The book opens with a dispute about the ownership of a deer—does the buck belong to the hunter or the one who owns the land? Cooper had himself feuded with many of the Yankees who settled his father’s village, particularly over the ownership of Three Mile Point—now a village park. His disdain for his neighbors is evident in *The Pioneers*. In one scene, a flock of (now extinct) Passenger Pigeons was shot for sport by the villagers, eradicating the birds in a wasteful display of arrogance; in contrast, the hero Natty Bumppo shoots one for food.

The ghosts of James Fenimore Cooper’s characters appear all over the region. Natty Bumppo’s cave rises above Otsego Lake a few miles north of the village, and Glimmerglass State Park is named after Cooper’s description of the lake. James himself is buried in the Episcopal Church grounds, his grave as much a pilgrimage site for the literati of the nineteenth century as Doubleday Field is for Baseball lovers today.

Historical and Recreational Trail Development

The history of the region lends itself to cultural tourism, and this theme has been explored in the past as the Headwaters History Trail (Thomas & DeAmicis) and the Downtown Utica Walking Trail (DeAmicis & Thomas). It is likely that the Cooperstown Area is the largest tourism draw in the region, however, and it is advisable to examine options for expanding the current tourism economy. The current system based on museums and the arts—particularly the Baseball Hall of Fame and related attractions and camps—continues to be successful. There are, however, benefits in diversifying the industry to include a stronger emphasis on historical tourism and recreational trails (Thomas et al. 2003). The current system is centered on Cooperstown with the result that the benefits of tourism are not spread across the entire region; the village itself can become quite overcrowded at certain times of year. Diversification of the attractions would spread the visitors out over a larger area that would allow for more visitors annually without further overburdening the existing infrastructure. Similarly, tourism diversification could spread the season further into spring and fall—possibly into winter. A system of trails organized around the important historical traits of the “first frontier” could not only serve as an attraction for a new type of tourism economy, but also link the tourism economy of the entire region around a central theme.

One type of trail could be oriented toward “road cyclists,” bicyclists who enjoy touring the countryside on manicured trails and roads. This system could be perhaps most easily implemented by creating bike trail designations along historically significant routes. In time, designated bicycle lanes and way-stations with historical displays could be added.

Clinton Road Trail: A Clinton Road Trail connecting Cooperstown to Canajoharie would run along the “East Lake Road” in Otsego County and Clinton Road in Montgomery

County. This road is the approximate path of Revolutionary War General Clinton who marched his troops to Otsego Lake and built a dam in order to flood the Susquehanna. This event is today celebrated in the General Clinton Regatta.

Cotton Trail: Pending further historical research in 2015, a similar “road bike” trail could be designated along New York Route 80 between Cooperstown and Fort Plain. The history of early industrialization and of transporting cotton could be told along the route.

Erie Canal Trail: This trail is already being built by the State of New York. In addition to finishing a circle between Cooperstown, Fort Plain, and Canajoharie, it runs from Albany to Buffalo, and a “Trolley Trail” (see below) could meet this trail in Mohawk as well.

Trolley Trail: This trail would follow the route of the Southern New York Railway from Oneonta to Mohawk, with a spur into Cooperstown as the original “trolley” had as well. The current right-of-way has multiple areas currently maintained by Snowmobile Clubs, particularly in the Otego Valley between Oneonta and Hartwick. Current plans for the Hartwick Recreation Area in that hamlet include a park through which the trail would pass on its way to Cooperstown.

Susquehanna Trail: This trail would extend along the Susquehanna River from Cooperstown and potentially connect with the Pennsylvania trail system leading to Chesapeake Bay. By meeting with the Trolley Trail in Oneonta, it would also be part of a fifty-mile loop extending from Cooperstown to Oneonta, Hartwick, and back to Cooperstown.

Oneonta Greenway: This proposed trail would become part of the Susquehanna Trail.

Another type of trail is that designated for mountain biking and hiking. An existing network of trails exists in and around Cooperstown, including the trail leading to Star Field. Another system with great potential for expansion surrounds the Center City neighborhood of Oneonta, starting from Table Rocks in the west, running through the College Camp trails, and potentially ending in Wilbur Park.

Designed properly, a trail system would attract not only cyclists and hikers, but also those interested in such winter sports as cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling. The region would benefit from the resulting diversification of the tourism economy and increased integration with other communities in the Mohawk Valley Economic Development Region.

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