

The Tale of the Trapps

By Vicky Klukkert

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Trapps Spring

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The tale of the Trapps

BY VICKY KLUKKERT

While there are many places in the Town of Gardiner where one is reminded of years gone by, there is only one structure left of the old Trapps and Clove hamlet, and to get there one must hike through the woods.

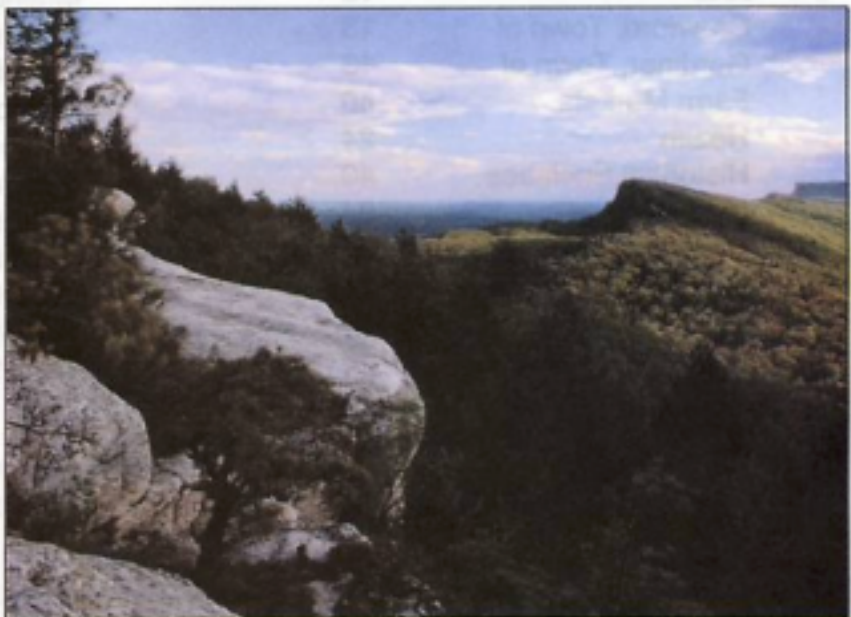
The Trapps and the Clove used to be a community complete with a school, two churches, homes, hotels, and businesses. All that is left is one building, stone walls, a burial ground, and foundations of long-ago collapsed buildings.

In the 1700s only one path led from the Wallkill Valley up the mountains to the notch and into the Trapps. The path became Milton Turnpike and much later Route 44/55. The Trapps section of the hamlet began just after the hairpin curve, while the Clove section started in the dip after the over-

head bridge on Route 44/55.

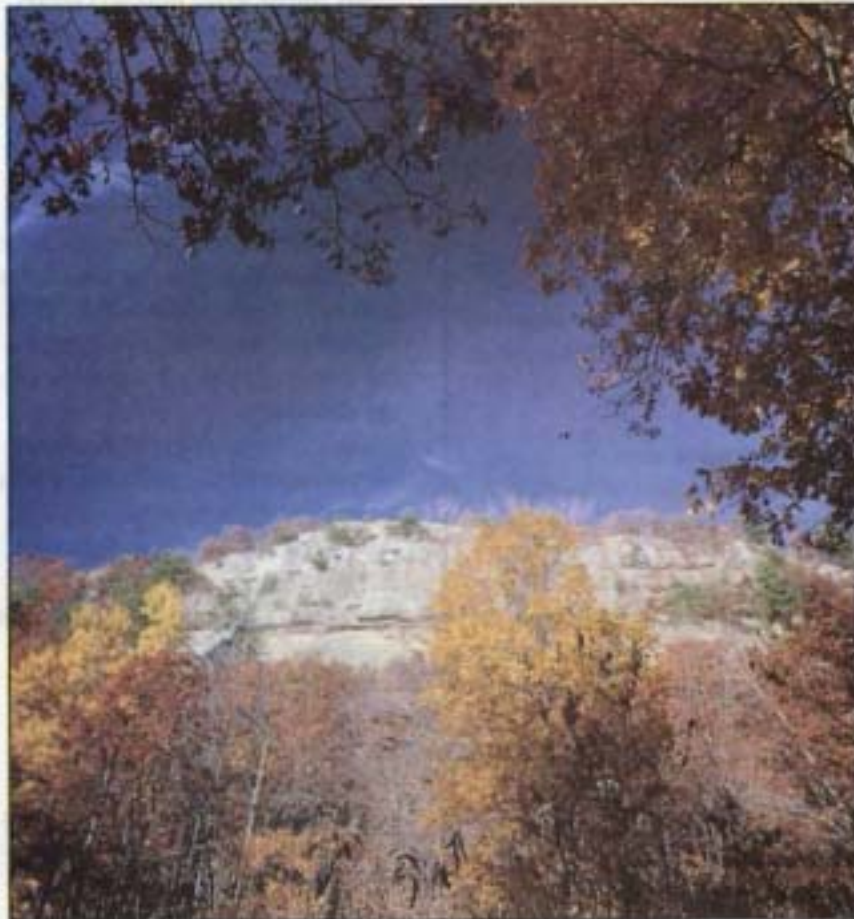
There are several theories as to how Trapps got its name. One is that a group of hunters were trapped and

massacred by Indians, another is that the rock formation of trap rock is found in the area, and the third is that hunters used to trap bear in the area.



Clove and cliffs

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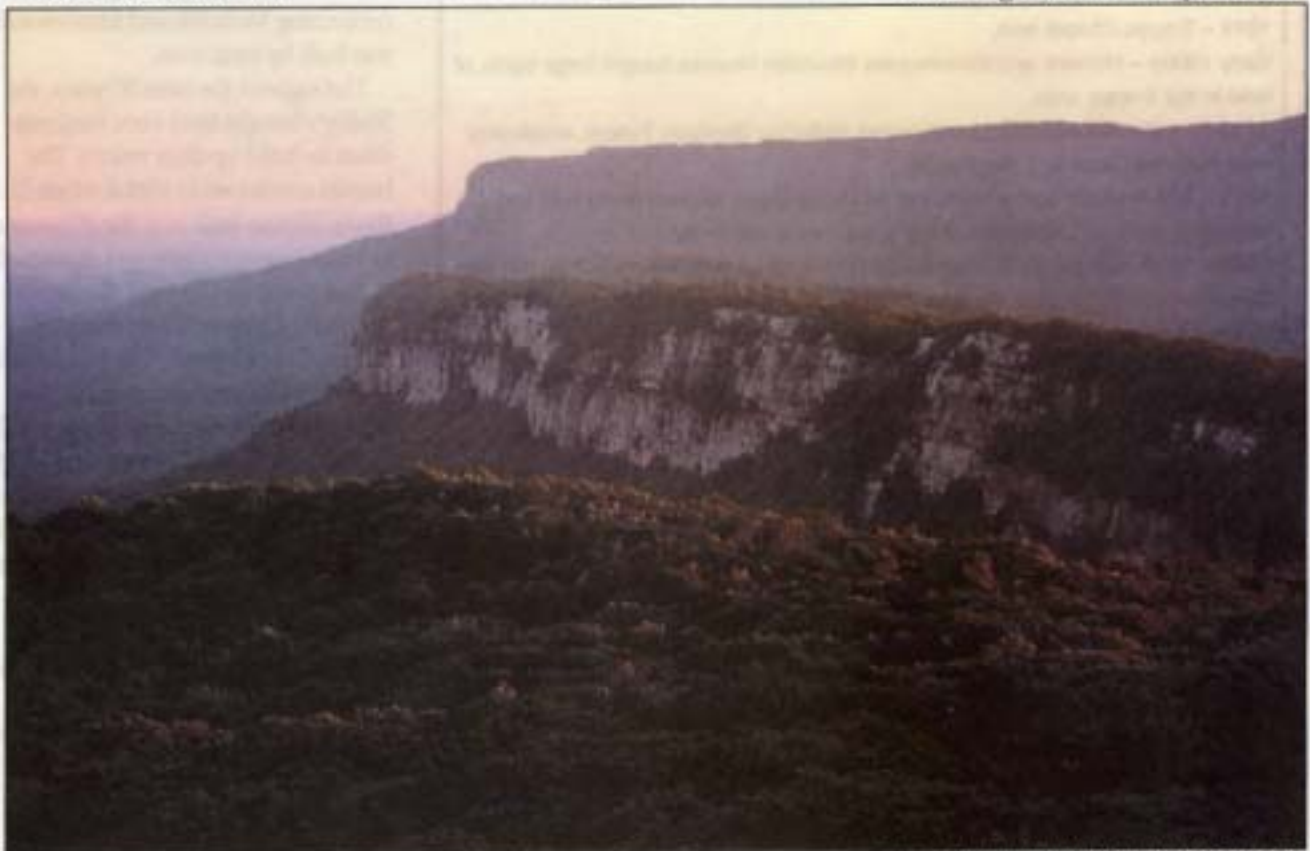
Trapps from under cliff

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The Trapps area was part of a large colonial land grant made in 1730 called "The Groot Transport" which is Dutch for "great land transfer". The first settlers were the Burger and the Schoonmaker families. The Gosling and VanLeuven families followed them. The families had the hard task of clearing the land of rocks and trees for farming.

The small farms were cleared and the rocks were used to make stone fences so that pastures could grow and their animals wouldn't wonder away. In addition to raising farm animals, farmers grew buckwheat, hay, oats and winter rye. To supplement their income of farming, residents of the hamlet picked huckleberries and blueberries in the summer, burned wood to make charcoal, made hoops for barrels, made mill stones, or worked at one of the mills in the hamlet. The hamlet was home to two sawmills - the Davis Sawmill on the Peters Kill, and the Enderly Sawmill on the Coxing Kill.

Roads through the hamlet were the Wawarsing-New Paltz Turnpike, now



Summer sunset

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Trapps Timeline

- 1730 – The Town of Rochester granted a land patent called The Groot Transport. (The Trapps lies in the northern portion of this patent.)
- 1764 – Henry Harp granted a land patent in the Trapps
- 1770 – "Nineteen Partners Tract" land granted. It lays in the Clove on the northern edge of the Trapps Mountain Hamlet.
- 1799 – The "Nineteen Partners Tract" partitioned. The partition map shows a public road up through the Clove and Trapps, through the "notch" and down into the Walkill Valley. A house is shown at the site of the Enderly Mill. The name on the house is unclear, but looks like Roosa.
- c. 1850 – George Davis Mill built on the Peters Kill.
- 1850 – First school in the Trapps built at the site of present ruins.
- 1853 – The Trapps area became part of the newly formed Town of Gardiner.
- 1856 – The Wawarsing-New Paltz Turnpike built, the route traveling through the Trapps Mountain Hamlet.
- 1859 – Ben Fowler Hotel established in the Trapps.
- 1860 – The Enderly Mill, a water-powered sawmill built on the Coxing Kill; it may have been a mill site at a much earlier date.
- 1869 – Mohonk Mountain House founded; Albert K. Smiley bought the original 300 acres, including Mohonk Lake, from John Stokes.
- 1873 – Abe Billingham's store established in the Trapps. The Clove Chapel built at the northern end of the Clove.
- 1877 – George Davis of the Trapps Mountain Hamlet sold his land at Coxing Pond (today Lake Minnewaska) to Alfred Smiley.
- 1879 – Lake Minnewaska Mountain House opened. Minnewaska Carriage Road built, connecting the two Mountain Houses. Trapps and Clove men were employed in the road building.
- 1881 – Trapps Chapel built.
- Early 1900s – Mohonk and Minnewaska Mountain Houses bought large tracts of land in the Trapps area.
- 1909-10 – Catskill Aqueduct constructed, including Bonticou Tunnel, employing men from the Clove and the Trapps.
- 1913 – The Smileys built a fire tower on Dickie Barre (Stone House Hill) and employed Sam Schoonmaker of the Trapps as a watchman.
- 1929 – State highway (U.S. Route 44/55) completed over the mountain, the first paved road to the Trapps Mountain Hamlet. Some Trapps home sites destroyed by the highway.
- 1930s-50s – Some Trapps families continued to live in the Hamlet, including members of the Van Leuven, Lyons, and Otis families.
- 1956 – Irving Van Leuven died – the last Van Leuven and old-time resident of the Trapps Mountain Hamlet.
- 1964 – The Mohonk Trust (today Mohonk Preserve, Inc.) founded, acquiring lands of the Mohonk, Mountain House in the Trapps and the Clove.
- 1970 – Minnewaska State Park Preserve established, acquiring for New York State, lands of Lake Minnewaska Mountain Houses. Part of the Trapps Hamlet area constitutes a portion of the park's 12,000 acres.
- 1999-2000 – Mohonk Preserve renovated the Van Leuven Cabin and created walking path from West Trapps Entry to the cabin.

Printed in Trapps Mountain Hamlet – An Interpretive Walk Through a Vanished Shawangunk Community, by Robert A. Larsen.

called Trapps Road, the Van Leuven Road, which is no longer in use, and Clove Road. Travelers on these roads were able to spend the night at Ben Fowler's lodging house and tavern. The hamlet also had a store, church and school. The Clove Chapel was built in 1873, while the Trapps Chapel was built in 1881. The first school was built in 1850 and was rebuilt in 1897. While there are no children living in the district any more, it was never official dissolved.

The formation of the Mohonk and Minnewaska Mountain Houses had a permanent affect on the residents of the Trapps and the Clove. Before the Smiley brothers developed the area it was a part of the Trapps and the Clove hamlet.

In 1869 Albert K. Smiley bought 300 acres, including Mohonk Lake from John Stokes and using local labor, built the Mohonk Mountain House. Eight years later George Davis sold his land at Coxing Pond – today Lake Minnewaska – to Alfred Smiley. In 1879 the Lake Minnewaska Mountain House opened and a road connecting Mohonk and Minnewaska was built by local men.

Throughout the next 30 years, the Smiley's bought land from local residents to build up their resorts. The hamlet continued to shrink when US Route 55 was built over the mountain, as homes were bought and destroyed to make way for the road. Route 55 divided the hamlet near where the Trapps Chapel stood. The hamlet continued to lose residents steadily throughout the early part of the 1900s. In 1956 Irving Van Leuven died, marking the last resident of the hamlet. The Appalachian Mountain Club and rock climbers used his cabin as an informal campsite until 1998, when the Mohonk Preserve renovated it. The cabin is a focal point to the preserve's Trapps Hamlet Path, which can be accessed at the Trapps Visitors Center on Route 44/55.