

TRIP C-6

WALKING TOUR OF HISTORIC FISHKILL, NEW YORK

by

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The village of Fishkill was the scene of a number of important events during the Revolutionary War, and remained a serene rural village until the recent suburban growth of southern Dutchess County. Settled by the Dutch a few years after the granting of the Rombout Patent of 1685, Fishkill soon became an important center of local agricultural activities.

In 1731 the Dutch residents of the nearby area built the First Reformed Church which, during the war, was converted into a military prison for Tories, deserters, and British prisoners-of-war. It was from this prison that the famous patriot spy Enoch Crosby made his "escape"; he had helped capture a group of Loyalists by posing as one of their number. The American writer James Fenimore Cooper's novel The Spy was based on this incident and included scenes using buildings from the Fishkill area.

The strategic value of the Fishkill area was apparent at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. It lay at the junction of routes eastward to New England, across the river to West Point, and connected the Hudson Valley north towards Lake Champlain with New York City through Wicoppee Pass. General Washington fortified this pass just south of Fishkill and established troop barracks and storehouses for supplies. It remained a major supply depot throughout the war.

The English church (Trinity Church) was established in 1768 and also played a part during the war. When the New York Provincial Convention evacuated New York City in August 1776 before the threatened invasion of the British, it came to Fishkill and convened its first sessions on September 5 in Trinity Church. The church was found to be unsuitable so the sessions were moved to the more useful nearby Dutch Reformed Church. Trinity Church was then used as a military hospital where victims of smallpox and men wounded in the Battle of White Plains, October 28, 1776, were cared for. According to the reports of one eye-witness, after the White Plains engagement "the dead were piled like cordwood in the Fishkill street between the two churches."

Early constitutional affairs also took place in the village. The first copies of the Constitution of the State

of New York, drawn up by John Jay, as well as many of General Washington's military orders were printed by Samuel Loudon in the house of Robert Brett, son of Madam Brett. Madam Brett (Catharyna Rombout) was the daughter of the original patentee; her policies of land development and land tenure were unusually advanced for the time. Her grave, formerly in the cemetery, was enclosed under the pulpit of the Dutch Reformed Church when the church was rebuilt and enlarged (1786) due to its active wartime use. Many houses from the Revolutionary period still exist in the immediate area; in them slept such personages as George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Baron von Steubon, and John Jay.

After the Revolutionary War the village grew slowly, but a disastrous fire in 1873 destroyed many of the historic buildings. The village remained a small rural community until a recent spurt of growth in the post World War II period as a result of the location of IBM facilities in the East Fishkill and Poughkeepsie. The population of the village remains at about 1,000 persons, while the town has grown from 7,000 in 1960 to about 12,000 in 1970; East Fishkill's growth was even more dramatic, adding over 6,000 persons during that decade, or a growth rate of over 132 per cent. Present population growth should continue, although at a slower rate, in the area. Under such pressures of development, Fishkill village attempts to retain its "sense of place".

Participants of the walking tour will have a chance to enjoy the human scale of heritage that remains in historic Fishkill.

ROAD LOG FIELD TRIP C-6

<u>Cumulative Miles</u>	<u>Miles from Last Point</u>	
0.0	0.0	START OF TOUR. Skinner Parking lot, Vassar College. Turn left onto Raymond Avenue.
0.1	0.1	Stop light. Turn left on Route 376.
0.5	0.4	Blinking light. Turn right onto IBM Road. Road leads to IBM Development Laboratory, Homestead, and Kenyon House. On right is Vassar Farm, a 541 acre "island" of open space in the rapidly developing area. A concept master plan by Sasaki Associates, 1975, is presently underway to create a conservation area of over 300 acres.
1.6	1.1	IBM Development laboratories on the former Boardman-Kenyon farm.
2.2	0.6	Stop sign. Turn right onto Spackenkill Road. From this height one can view the Catskill Mountains across the Hudson River to the west. As one proceeds west on Spackenkill, note the development of single family dwellings on the left known as Hagantown. Vassar Farm property on right.
3.1	0.9	Cedar Avenue enters on right; continue straight on Spackenkill Road.
3.4	0.3	Spackenkill High School on left. A confusion of architectural styles of the single family dwellings is evident (for example the peculiar "mansard" roof lines), as well as a lack of concern for appropriate front yard plantings along a busy highway. "For Sale" signs indicate continued growth.
4.2	0.8	Oakwood School on left. This school is the oldest private coeducational boarding school in the United States, begun by Quakers in 1796.
4.4	0.2	Spackenkill Road crosses Route 9 (South Road). Keep to right as you cross the bridge. After crossing Route 9, turn right down ramp to enter Route 9. As

Cumulative Miles from
Miles Last Point

you cross the bridge ahead is the South Road plant of IBM, where much of IBM's hardware is constructed. IBM is the largest single private employer in Dutchess County. The summer home of Samuel F. B. Morse, inventor of the telegraph, is just to the north of this plant (see: River Guide).

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| 4.6 | 0.2 | Turn right onto Route 9; travel south. |
| 5.4 | 0.8 | I.B.M. Country Club on left, followed by Hudson Valley Block aggregate. |
| 6.3 | 0.9 | Turn Right onto Sheafe Road, just past Camelot Inn on left; sign on right to Camelot Village, low cost modular homes. |
| 7.0 | 0.7 | Poughkeepsie Asphalt, Inc. (bituminous concrete) on right. |
| 7.4 | 0.4 | Lone Star Industries, New York Trap Rock Corporation Clinton Point Plant; Dutchess Quarry and Supply, on right. Major source of crushed stone (dolomite) (see: River Guide); also mentioned as potential site for nuclear power plant, although small earthquakes have been noted here. |
| 7.8 | 0.4 | Entrance to estate owned and occupied 1804-1812 by George Clinton, then vice-president of the United States. No longer existing; owned by Lone Star Industries. |
| 8.4 | 0.6 | Turn Left onto DeLavergne. Note Mt. Alvernia seminary of the Franciscan Friars on the right. |
| 8.5 | 0.1 | Left turn onto Merrywood. |
| 9.0 | 0.5 | Right turn onto Sherrywood Drive; drive to end. |

STOP 1

View south. View of Fishkill plains nestled at foot of Highlands; a strategic staging and transport center for the Continental troops.

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| 9.2 | 0.2 | Retrace back to Merrywood. Turn left onto Merrywood. |
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<u>Cumulative Miles</u>	<u>Miles from Last Point</u>	
9.7	0.5	Turn right onto DeLavergne.
9.8	0.1	Turn left onto Sheafe Road. Continue south on Sheafe Road.
10.3	0.5	Dutchess County Park on right. Recently purchased by the county from Children's Aid Society in New York City, it was known as the Bowdoin-Vanderbilt Camp. During the past year geography students from Vassar College, landscape architecture students from Cornell, and ecology students from S.U.N.Y. Purchase studied the environment and social uses and created plans for the consideration of the county legislature. The work was coordinated by the Dutchess County Cooperative Association and County Planning.
11.0	0.7	Stop sign. Turn right onto Channingville Road. Channingville Road becomes Main Street.
11.6	0.6	Stop sign. Turn left onto Bridge Street. Bridge Street becomes New Hamburg Road (Dutchess County Road #28).
11.9	0.3	Cross bridge over Wappingers Creek. On right is Wappingers Creek estuary; across railroad tracks and Hudson River see Danskammer power plant. The mouth of Wappingers Creek was an important loading dock for produce from the farms of Dutchess County during the period just before the Revolutionary War. Dutchess County supplied much of the wheat for the Continental army.
12.1	0.2	Immediately after crossing the bridge over Wappingers Creek, turn left onto Market Street. Follow Wappingers Creek up towards the falls.
13.4	1.3	Stop cars on Market Street just before entering East Main Street.

STOP 2

Walk from cars to bridge on E. Main Street overlooking Wappingers Falls. The falls was a major source of power for textile dying firms (the bleachery); the village retains many fine nineteenth century facades.

Cumulative Miles from
Miles Last Point

Return to cars. Turn right onto E. Main Street. Travel south, up hill through village.

13.5 0.1 Mesier Park. Turn left into parking area at sign for police station. Mesier Homestead, c.1750. Peter Mesier, a New York City merchant, bought the grist mills originally built by the Brewer brothers in 1777. Because Mesier held Tory sympathies, his store (operated from part of this house) became the scene of several "Wappingers Tea Parties" where Whigs and patriots broke into Mesier's house and store and "protested" his price of tea by "consuming large quantities of liquor."

13.7 0.2 Exit back onto E. Main Street; turn left and continue south to Route 9.

14.0 0.3 Red light at Route 9 and E. Main Street. Turn right onto Route 9 and travel south.

14.6 0.6 Red light intersection Route 9 and Myers Corners Road. Continue south on Route 9.

15.3 0.7 Red light intersection Route 9 and New Hamburg Road. Continue south on Route 9.

17.3 2.0 Enter Village of Fishkill. Note view south from rise of village center.

18.4 1.1 Red light, intersection Route 52 and Route 9 in center of Village of Fishkill. Drive through the green light on Route 9 and immediately turn right into parking lot behind King Kone.

STOP 3

Assemble for "Walking Tour of Historic Fishkill" (approximately 1½ hours).

Of the many interesting buildings, two are of greatest interest: the First (Dutch) Reformed Church and Trinity Church.

The Dutch Reformed Church was originally built in 1731 although it was substantially rebuilt in 1786 after its active use during the Revolutionary War. During

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Miles Last Point

the Revolutionary War it served as the seat of the Provincial Congress from September 1776 to February 1777, after it had fled from New York City and White Plains, making Fishkill the capital of New York for that period. Later in the war the church was used as a military prison and was the scene of the "escape" of Enoch Crosby, patriot spy, which became the basis for John Fenimore Cooper's novel The Spy.

Trinity Church, built in 1768, is the county's oldest church building still in use. During the Revolutionary War it was first used for a meeting of the Provincial Congress; later it became a military hospital.

At end of walking tour, reboard cars and proceed to the last stop. From the parking lot, return to Route 9; turn right and drive south on Route 9.

18.6 0.2 Cross railroad tracks. Continue south on Route 9.

18.9 0.3 Traffic light at entrance to IBM plant. Continue south on Route 9.

19.3 0.4 Holiday Inn on left. Continue south on Route 9. Drive under Interstate 84.

19.5 0.2 Turn left into Van Wyck Homestead, immediately after the entrance ramp to I-84 eastbound.

STOP 4

Van Wyck-Wharton House, at Interstate 84 and Route 9, was built in 1733, with a major addition twenty years later. During the Revolutionary war the house was used by the Continental army and quartermaster department officers stationed at the Fishkill camps, and was also the scene of several courts martial. Built by the

Van Wycks, it has also had the name Wharton attached to it as it was the inspiration for the Wharton House in James Fenimore Cooper's novel The Spy.

End of tour of historic Fishkill.