

Sections

News
Editorial
Columns
Feature
Arts & Leisure
Outdoors
Sports
Obituaries
Forum
Photo Gallery
Classifieds

Directories

Government
Events
Links

TRR

About us
Supplements
Archives
Advertising
Photo Reprints
Subscribe
Newsstands
Contact us

featurestory

Ten Mile River opens new local history museum

By CHARLIE BUTERBAUGH

As a result of David Malatzky's original research and Bernie Sussman's design, the Ten Mile River Scout Museum has evolved into a prized collection of local history.

The colleagues' new display of historical artifacts, information and photographs, which relate exclusively to settlements along the Upper Delaware River, is open Tuesday through Saturday.

In addition to the placards that document histories of the tanning, lumbering, pioneer and bluestone industries as well as construction of the Newburgh-Cochection Turnpike, the Delaware and Hudson Canal and the Erie Railroad (all written by Malatzky), maps and photographs present concise stories about early settlements at Tusten, Lava and Beaver Brook, early transportation and the tourism industry.

While there were no major Lenni Lenape villages on the Ten Mile River (TMR) camp property, Malatzky is working on a display that tells of the TMR Rockshelter, a documented Native American site located near the Delaware River on camp property.

"A radio carbon date from the lowest level excavated is 2,500 B.C.," Malatzky said. The Orange County Archaeological Club excavated the site in the 1960s.

Since 1997, the museum, just a few miles east of Narrowsburg, has served as a collection of archives and memorabilia related to the 12,000-acre TMR Scout reserve, purchased in 1927 as the result of a search committee led by Frederic Kernochan and James C. Cropsey.

The museum library also holds letters from Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whose enthusiastic support for the search and purchase of the property was instrumental in the birth of TMR, a more secluded property than the Kanohwahke Scout Camps at Harriman State Park, which had served the Boy Scouts of New York City for many years.

With his McIntosh computer, Malatzky produced a nine-minute video that narrates the history of TMR. The video can be viewed during the museum's hours of operation (Tuesdays from 10:30 to 12:00 noon, 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.; Wednesday through Saturday from 9:00 to 12:00 noon, 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.; and Sundays from 9:00 to 12:00 noon and 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.). The museum is open by appointment only from September through June.

Malatzky found many photos through the Library of Congress, and he received many contributions from Peter Osborne of the Minisink Valley Historical Society. The new display is housed in an addition recently built onto the museum building, originally constructed in 1999.

"The river and its tributaries were literally dotted with sawmills during the early 1800s," Malatzky said. "Lumbering was so important in this area."

But because of the poor transportation in and out of the river valley, men began to construct rafts out of the timber they harvested, and they would float the rafts southward to ports where they would sell the wood.

"It was not as bad as it seems," Malatzky said. "The men would tie their rafts and stay at various places along the river."

Once they sold the timber, they would make their way to New York City, take a ferry up the Hudson River and then walk or take a stagecoach along the Newburgh-Cochection Turnpike back to the river valley. Malatzky said most of the men would take the trip once or twice per year.

The museum not only presents a chronology of local history; it documents the circumstances that led to the end and replacement of each era's primary industries and ways of life.

"We tried to show how it all fits together," Malatzky said.

For example, one display narrates the shift from wood to coal-burning for cooking and heating, and how the shift led to the construction of the Delaware and Hudson Canal, which served as the major artery transporting the fuel commodity from coal-bearing regions in northeastern Pennsylvania to New York City.

The display then turns to the construction of the Erie Railroad, which played an essential role in spurring tourism throughout the Catskills region during the 20th century.

"We're able to say with some certainty what was going on here during the last 200 years," Malatzky said.

He has collected some 7,000 archival documents, which are all available for viewing at tmrarchive.org.

Russ and Florence Hannah, who have been affiliated with TMR for at least 35 years, have found early axes and knives, oxen shoes, buttons made before 1812 and colonial coins, many of which, made after 1722, predate the United States Mint. The artifacts, all found on the TMR reserve, are on display at the museum.

Malatzky and Sussman welcome any contributions of information, photographs or historical documents from the public. They can scan photographs and printed text and return the materials.

The Ten Mile River Scout Museum is located off County Road 26, near the intersection of County Road 23. Follow signs to TMR Museum/Headquarters Camp.

For more information call 845/252-3775 or visit tmmuseum.org.



TRR photo by Charlie Buterbaugh
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TRR photo by Charlie Buterbaugh
David Malatzky completed research and writing for the local history display, a brand new element of the museum. (Click for larger version)



TRR photo by Charlie Buterbaugh
Bernie Sussman explains historical pictures of Ten Mile River Scout Camps, longtime components of the Ten Mile River Scout Museum. (Click for larger version)