

NEW MOUNTAIN TRAILS MADE FOR CITY HIKERS

Volunteer Pathfinders in Five Years of Enthusiastic Work Have Crisscrossed Palisades Interstate Park With 100 Miles of Scenic By-Roads

By RAYMOND H. TORREY.

IN the Harriman region of the Palisades Interstate Park, in the Hudson Highlands and the Ramapo, more than a hundred miles of scenic skyline trails, over the hills and through the woods, have been scouted, cleared and marked by volunteer trail makers in the last five years. It was good exercise and good fun and it gave their usual tramps the zest of discovery and of permanent accomplishment. The reward has been the appreciation that walking clubs and other hikers have promptly given to these new paths in making them the routes of their excursions.

This trail-making has been done with the cooperation of the Commissioners of the Palisades Interstate Park, represented by the general manager and chief engineer, Major William A. Welch. Since most of the workers were experienced in trail scouting and clearing, as members of the Appalachian, the Adirondack, the Green Mountain and other clubs, with previous knowledge of such work in the mountains of New York and New England, Major Welch left most of the work to them. He provided transportation and shelter when needed, and also the metal markers and painted signs that were the final touch.

Trails Near Town.

Two strong motives prompted this volunteer work. One was a desire for country by-roads not spoiled for walkers by automobile traffic. The other was the ambition to bring trail development nearer to the city, so that such pleasures as vacation hikers enjoy in the Adirondacks, the Catskills and the New England mountains might be available close about home during the Fall, Winter and Spring months. The automobile has made the roads uncomfortable for hikers, but has done them a service by forcing them to explore the old and largely abandoned wood-roads in our near-by hills, relics of iron mining, charcoal burning and timber cutting of half a century ago.

Since the old roads were made to haul heavy loads and followed the valleys and notches, and most walkers want views and climbs and ledges, the next step was the scouting and marking of new trails along the tops of the parallel northeast-southwest ridges of the Ramapos and the Hudson Highlands, in the thirty thousand acres of the Harriman Park and in adjoining forest and hill country open to campers.

Modern Pathfinding.

The work was begun in the Fall of 1920 by a committee of delegates from the New York City walking clubs, the head of which was Meade C. Dobson, formerly active in the Boy Scouts. It was continued during 1921-24 by the present writer and is now under the direction of Frank Place, President of the Tramp and Trail Club of New York.

The practice adopted was that worked out through long experience by the Appalachian Mountain Club in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. The working parties were divided, according to experience and ability, into scouting, clearing and marking squads. The scouts were those who knew how to lay a trail to include the highest scenic qualities, directness of route, supplies of water in springs or clean brooks and occasional ledge and cliff climbs to make the routes interesting. They went out ahead of the rest and made temporary small blazes or rock cairns. When every one had argued out the best route it was agreed upon and was primarily marked with a line of cotton string, looped over the bushes and trees along the way.

Then came the "elephant squad," the trail clearers. With hatchets and large pruning shears, the most efficient tool for green stuff, they cleared the route, following the string, on United States Forest Service trail standards, four feet wide, and cleared up high enough of protruding branches so that a man with a pack will not run his face into such obstructions. Larger blazes were made on convenient trees, and the temporary cairns, on open ledges, were made large and permanent.

The last touch was the placing on trees of metal markers, which were provided by Major Welch. These are three inches square, with symbols and letters in red, a different symbol for each trail, and initials indicating the names of its termini. The earliest were of galvanized sheet iron, enameled white. After two or three years, it was found, the sap of trees containing strong acids, such as the oaks, disfigured the lettering. Sheet copper was next tried and served somewhat better, but further experiments in weathering and sap action are being made by Major Welch with sheet aluminum markers. The lettering stamped with a die and unpainted, lettered wooden sign-boards are used at termini, road crossings and important junctions.

Tuxedo to Jones Point.

In the first Winter, 1920-21, was completed the principal trail, from Tuxedo, on the Ramapo River and main line of the Erie Railroad, across Harriman Park to the Hudson, at Jones Point station on the West Shore Railroad, at the east end of Dunderberg Mountain. This trail is known as the Ramapo-Dunderberg, and is about twenty-four miles long. Not many make it in one day, for it requires about 3,500 feet of total climbing. The best record, made by George Goldthwaite of the Fresh Air Club, is

five hours and a half. Two women, Miss Helen Buck of the Appalachian Mountain Club and Miss Loretta Buck of the Green Mountain Club, have made it in just under six hours. The first part of this trail from Tuxedo is known as the Tuxedo-Tom Jones Trail, as Tom Jones Mountain was the initial objective of the trail makers before their ambitions became more extensive. It leaves the railroad station at Tuxedo, crosses the Ramapo River on a road bridge, and turns in along a terrace at the foot of Horse Pond Mountain, which rises to the east. In about a mile it crosses a brook, turns up the north side of the stream, crosses again to its south side and climbs up to a third crossing, at the outlet of Black Ash Swamp. This is through territory of the Tuxedo Park Association, to which access will probably be permitted as long as no abuses are committed.

After a third crossing of the brook, the trail climbs a hill which, for want of any previous name, the trail makers called Black Ash Mountain, and on the summit enters the Harriman Park. It climbs over the next hill northeast, Parker Cabin Mountain, where there is a fine observatory, descends to the Old Continental Road, a military route in the Revolution, and climbs to Tom Jones Mountain. It then drops steeply down to the Seven Lakes Drive, the main park highway. The markers on this stretch are white galvanized iron squares, bearing a red square and the initials T-TI.

On the Ramapo-Dunderberg.

Across the drive begins the Ramapo-Dunderberg Trail proper, marked with squares bearing a red dot and the initials R-D. It climbs to the Black Rocks and follows a broad ridge around over open ledges called Bowling Rocks and Ship Rock, to Hogenkamp Mountain, where is another observatory. It descends into a notch, crosses the old Surebridge Mine road and continues along the next ridge northeast, Fingerboard Mountain. About 150 yards northeast of the old road is one of the most notable geological curiosities of the Harriman Park, a large, beautifully smoothed pothole, in hard granite, site of an abandoned waterfall, now a mile from any stream. It was gouged out probably during a period of different drainage, before the last ice sheet of the glacial period changed the face of these ridges.

Near the north end of Fingerboard Mountain, from which views of the Hudson begin to appear, the R-D trail takes to the Arden Valley road, downhill, right to the Seven Lakes Drive again and Lake Tiorati. It follows the Lake Tiorati Brook Road around the north side of the lake for half a mile and then turns in on a wood road, to make for the top of Goshen Hill. All the rest of the way to the Hudson it is through the woods and over summits, the most scenic part of the trail, with new and finer views of the Hudson on every mountain top. It crosses from Goshen to Letterrock Mountain, climbs along the brink of the cliffs of Black Mountain and descends across the old road over which Anthony Wayne marched his Continentals through Beechy Bottom to storm Stony Point in 1779.

Historic Ground.

The R-D Trail next climbs the rugged side of West Mountain, descends into the narrow notch of Timp Pass, through which Sir Henry Clinton pushed his force to the taking of Forts Clinton and Montgomery in 1777, and climbs the steep Six Chins Trail up the side of the Timp, a cliff which bears the features of George Washington when viewed from Bear Mountain northward.

From the top of the Timp, a famous viewpoint, it runs along the Dunderberg massif, including splendid views over the Hudson Gorge and the Bear Mountain headquarters of the park, from the knobs known as Bockberg and Bald Hill, then to the eastern end, Dunderberg proper and down the ledges to the railroad and the river at Jones Point.

The next trail undertaken by the volunteer workers was the Timp-Torne, the most concentratedly scenic of all. It starts in the Timp Pass, climbs to the northern crown of West Mountain and follows its narrow summit ridge with views east over the Hudson and west over the hundred hills of the park. It descends to the old Doodletown Road which echoed to the tread of American, Tory and British feet in 1777, crosses the Seven Lakes Drive and climbs up a chimney in the smooth cliffs on the southwest face of Bear Mountain. It drops off the west side of Bear, through some curious boulders fallen together to make a tunnel, crosses Popolopen Creek, in the gorge known as the Hellhole, and climbs the bare granite knob of Popolopen Torne, the west side of which is scarred by the sites of the mimic battles of the West Point cadets. Its symbol is a square with the initials T. T.

Fingerboard Storm King.

A fourth trail was the Fingerboard-Storm King, intended to run from the Ramapo-Dunderberg trail on Fingerboard Mountain to Storm King Mountain at the northern gate of the Highlands. It descends northward to cross the Arden Valley Road, climbs past the great cave of Bradley Mine to the top of Bradley Mountain, and then turns northeast along the Stockbridge Mountains and Cranberry Hill to the Long Mountain Road. It crosses this road to Long Mountain, which gives one of the finest interior views in the Highlands, and descends at its north

end to Popolopen Creek, near the Forest of Dean iron mine.

It will eventually be carried northward, past Long Pond, across the Central Valley-West Point Road, to the Black Rock Forest plateau and Storm King. Obvious routes, not yet marked, will take the hiker there now. The markers for this trail are sheet-copper squares, with a cross and the initials FB-SK.

A short trail connects the Fingerboard-Storm King route with the Timp-Torne. It is called the Long Mountain-Torne Trail, is marked with the letters LM-T and crosses from the FB-SK at the north end of Long Mountain, over Turkey Mountain, and across the Popolopen Creek Valley to the Torne.

Next, a crossing of the Ramapo Plateau, in the south end of the park, was made as the Tuxedo-Mount Ivy Trail, from the main line of the Erie to its New Jersey-New York division. It leaves the Tuxedo-Tom Jones Trail about half a mile from the Tuxedo Station and turns sharply to the right up the north face of Horse Pond Mountain. It passes the famous Claudius Smith's Den, the cave where that revolutionary bandit stored his log, crosses Blauvelt Mountain to the valley of Spring Brook, and a lower ridge to the dam of the new Lake Sebago, the last artificial lake built by

Major Welch. It next climbs Halfway Mountain, passes along it northeast to an old road which crosses the plateau and leads downhill to Ladentown and the road to Mount Ivy Station. Its copper markers bear a straight red line and the initials T-MI.

The Arden-Surebridge Trail leads east from Arden, on the Erie, mostly by old wood roads, to Lake Tiorati, over Echo Mountain, past Island Pond, over Surebridge Mountain, through the "Lost Road," a route long obscured by dense rhododendron and re-

opened as a narrow trail arched over by these evergreen shrubs, and through the notch between Hogenkamp and Fingerboard Mountains, to the Seven Lakes Drive. It is marked with a triangle and the letters A-SB.

The Appalachian Trail.

The trail workers also built the Interstate Park section of the Appalachian Trail, the great path which is the dream of hikers from Mount Katahdin, Maine, to Stone Mountain, Georgia, and Lookout Mountain, Tennessee. It starts on the Erie Railroad, half a mile south of Arden sta-

tion; climbs Green Pond Mountain, crosses the Arden Surebridge Trail in the Lemon Squeeze, a remarkable cleft on the south end of Echo Mountain; crosses Surebridge Mountain to the Surebridge Mine Road and the old iron mine, and enters the R-D on Fingerboard.

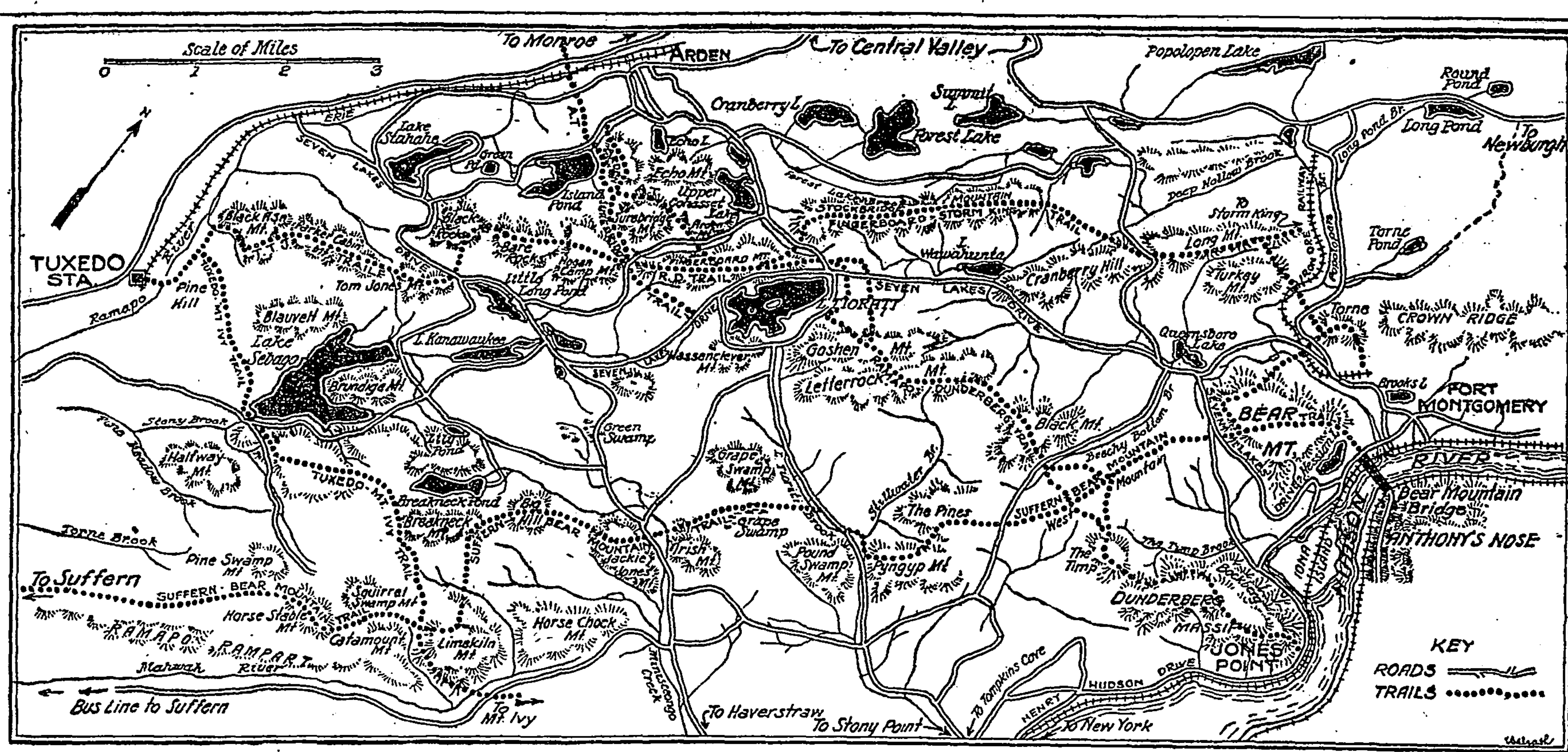
It uses the R-D to the Arden Road, follows a slightly different route to Goshen, picks up the R-D again over Goshen, Letterrock and Black Mountains, climbs the north crown of West Mountain, uses the Timp-Torne to the top of the southern cliffs on Bear Mountain and follows its own route

over the summit of Bear and down to Bear Mountain Bridge. It is marked with copper squares stamped A-T.

The Harriman section of the Appalachian Trail, made by permission of W. Averell Harriman over the Harriman estate, is being marked westward from Arden toward Greenwood Lake, and has been scouted to High Point State Park on Kittatinny Mountain and along that ridge to Delaware Water Gap.

This Winter the trail makers, under Mr. Place, are marking a new trail which will surpass them in all scenic

MOUNTAIN TRAILS BETWEEN HUDSON AND RAMAPO



quality. It runs from Suffern along the Ramapo Rampart to Bear Mountain. It will be ready by Spring and much of it is now completed. It extends along the skyline, northeast over Pearson, Horsestable, Squirrel Swamp and Linscheln Mountains, with fine views over the lowlands eastward, then crosses to the next northeast-trending ridge, Breakneck Mountain, and continues over Big Hill and Jacks Jones Mountain to the Gate Hill Road. Crossing Irish Mountain, this trail will reach the Lake Tiorati Brook Road, then climb the steep cliffs of Fynegyp Mountain, cross the next elevation, known as The Pines, and reach the Ramapo-Dunderberg trail at the foot of the cliff on the south end of West Mountain. It will then use the Timp-Torne and Appalachian trails to Bear Mountain Bridge.

Boy Scout By-Roads.

The Boy Scouts of America have also made about seventy miles of marked paths, mostly on existing wood roads, in their White Bar Trail, in the form of a wheel, the hub being the headquarters at Kanohwahke Lakes.

The new trails are not yet shown on the trail map published by the Palisades Interstate Park, which does present, however, hundreds of miles of old woodroads which are delightful hiking routes. This map may be obtained at the office of the commission, 25 Broadway, and the writer will be glad to mark in the new trails for any reader of THE TIMES who will send a copy to him, with return postage.

The Boy Scouts issue a map of their White Bar Trail, which may be obtained for five cents at the New York headquarters, 200 Fifth Avenue, or at the Kanohwahke Lakes camp. The Ramapo, Schunemunk and West Point sheets of the United States Geological Survey are also useful for this region, used with the other maps, and with allowance for errors in early surveys and for recent changes. They may be obtained of the Survey in Washington at ten cents each and of map stores here for fifteen cents.