

Town of Caroline

Barbara Kone

Town of Caroline Historian

Caroline was originally Town No. 11 of the Watkins and Flint Purchase. In mapping the area, the company owners established roads, and settlement grew. By 1806 the company had identified an area as the Town of Spencer, which contained Town No. 11. In 1811 Town No. 11 was set apart from Spencer, although without a name.

At a meeting held in a schoolhouse many names for the area were suggested, among them Cantine. John Cantine Jr., a major landholder, was reluctant to have the family name honored and he proposed that a spelling book be opened and the first female name found taken as the name of the town. This was done and Caroline became the name of the town as well as the names of the daughters of Cantine and Dr. John Speed, another major landowner.

On March 22, 1823 the state removed the Town of Caroline from Tioga County and annexed it to Tompkins County.

In the Town of Caroline, many roads were first called by the names of the pioneers who settled along them; some were later changed to honor newer families. Even the configurations of some of the roads have changed as land changed hands or new destinations developed. Many of the name changes were not formally made in Town Board meetings, and some names came as a complete surprise, even to the residents in the twentieth century, when road signs appeared. In some cases it took a number of years before the names became commonplace,

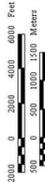
Town of Caroline



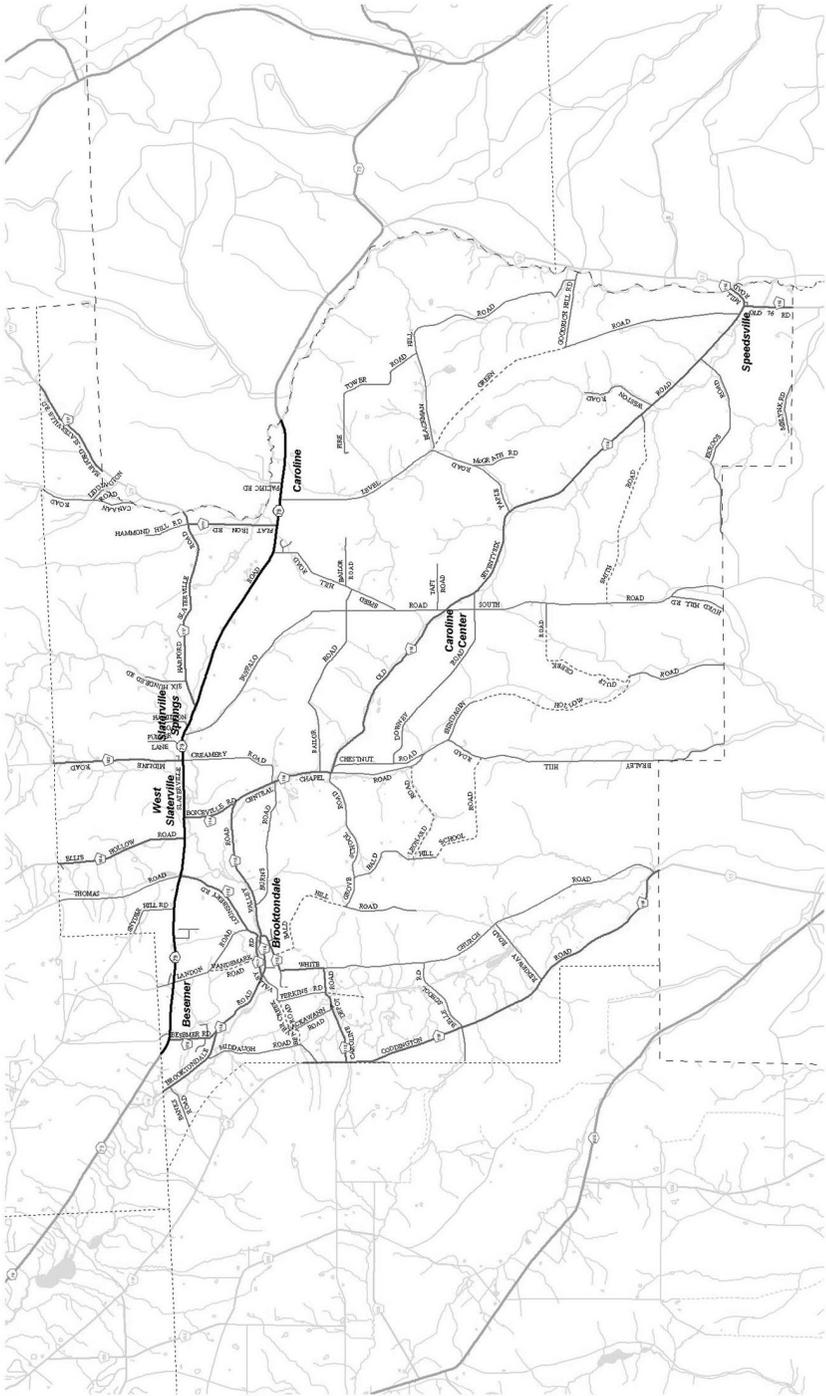
New York State Plane Central
1683 North American Datum

1:60000

One Inch represents 5,000 Feet



Tompkins County
Information Technology Services
GIS Division
06/15/2009



and some roads and places are still known by their “old” names and not by those on our current maps.

Bailor Road was named for Daniel Bailor, whose farm in 1880 was located on the west end of this road, which went from Seventy-Six Road (now Central Chapel Road) to Buffalo Road. In the 1849 Pathmaster’s Book, Bailor Road was shown as Chestnut Road, but by 1923 it appears as Bailor on the Town of Caroline highway map with no indication of when the name changed. Bailor Road Extension was part of what was known as Line-of-Lots Road, and it crossed Level Green Road and continued easterly up the hill to a spot close to the present day Fire Tower Road. For nearly 100 years it was a well-traveled shortcut from one hill to the other.

Bald Hill is sometimes called Bald Mountain. On U.S. topographical maps it is shown as being 1,884 feet high. The Widow Jemima Van-DeMark Personius was one of its early settlers, arriving in 1813. The road was known for its main industry, a skunk farm, and also for a four-story barn built by Camp “Doc” Reed that featured a “barn-bridge,” a ramp-like entryway to an upper floor that went over the road.

Besemer Station. The Elmira, Central & Northern Railroad (EC&N) built a water tank approximately six miles southeast of Ithaca, near the home of Josiah Besemer, whose family had settled the area before 1820. Mr. Besemer sought a station near the water tank, but when the railroad refused to build one, in 1875 Besemer and his son Willis built it themselves. It was known as Besemer’s Depot until January 1883 when the name was changed to Besemer (pronounced Bees-mer).

The railroad ceased to operate in 1935, but Besemer Station had become the center of community activities, and Willis Besemer had served as station agent for 60 years. Besides being used as a passenger terminal for the health resorts in Slaterville Springs, the building was used to store coal, lime, flour, and feed. The old Catskill Turnpike, now State Route 79, passes through the settlement.

Blackman Hill Road was named for Abraham and Lemuel Blackman, and their sister Sarah, and her husband, Ezekiel Jewett, all of whom came to Caroline in 1804 from Berkshire County, Connecticut. In 1810 they were joined by another sister Martha and her husband, James Tracy, and later by other family members including Lydia, Levi, Esther, and Eli Blackman.

Boiceville. *See* West Slaterville.

Brearley Hill was originally called Hart Road, but many persons by the name of Brearley (or Brealy, Brealey or Braley) are buried in the cemetery and the area takes its name from the Brearly family resting there.

Brooktondale was once called Cantinesburgh, after John Cantine Jr., who settled in 1798 on land given to him by his father, Colonel John Cantine, the owner of large tracts of land known as “Cantine’s Great Location” and “Cantine’s Little Location.” These were awarded to Cantine for his service in the state militia during the Revolutionary War and his service as a land-claims judge. Some parcels Cantine acquired from other Revolutionary Militia land grantees.

The area that became Brooktondale has also been called Cantine’s Mill and Cantinesville, and later took the name Mott’s Corners, after William Mott, who bought Cantine’s Mill in 1830 and converted it to a plaster mill, then added a sawmill and a furniture factory specializing in fine tables. Before long he had six sawmills and several stores. Other names given to the place were Mottsville, Mott’s Hollow, and Mott’s Mill. When the Mott family left the area, the name was changed to Brookton, which the post office adopted in January 1883. Because of the similarity of spelling of Brookton to Brockton and Brooklyn, the Post Office Department changed the name to Brooktondale in February 1926.

Buffalo Road was named for a Mr. Leonard, who first appeared in the 1870s but became a recluse after the turn of the century. He was known

to go into Slaterville only for supplies. Roughly dressed, he reminded the citizens of “Buffalo Bill Cody,” and so the road on which he lived was unofficially named Buffalo Road. It had begun as Speed Road.

Burns Road was originally Bush Road, but it was renamed for Mr. Thomas “Tommy” Burns who emigrated from England to Canada and then Caroline in the late 1800s. His son, “Tom” Burns, married Gladys Crispell, and was well known in the area for his fiddling at community gatherings. In 2001 some residents wanted to rename the road “Tommy Burns Road” to distinguish it from the other Burns Roads in Tompkins County, but officials decided against making a change because it would cost residents an unneeded expense and emergency crews already knew how to respond when summoned.

Canaan was originally in the Town of Dryden and settled by the Isaac Hunt family. It was known as Union Valley, but on December 5, 1885, nine lots (91–100) were transferred from the Town of Dryden to the Town of Caroline, of which “Canaan” and “600” were part. Canaan, the biblical “land of milk and honey,” is an often-used place name in New England and the Midwest. There is another New York Canaan, in Columbia County.

Caroline. The hamlet of Caroline was called Yankee Settlement because of the many people who came from New England, starting in 1794, and it is the oldest settled part of the town. It was later called Tobeytown after Nathaniel Tobey, an early pioneer. The Tobeytown Post Office was established about 1819, after Dr. Speed’s “Speedsville Post Office” moved to Caroline Center, and continued until August 1902 when Rural Free Delivery replaced the local office and the hamlet came to be known as Caroline.

Caroline Center was first called Centreville because it was just east of the center of the town. The spelling of the hamlet’s name has never

been officially changed, but has evolved to “Center” as the use of American spelling became more prevalent than the English version.

Caroline Depot was a station established in 1855 by the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad (DL&W), running between Ithaca and Owego. A post office was established in May 1860, and the train depot served the DL&W and also the EC&N which converged there before running parallel through White Church Valley. In 1901 there were two stores, a feed mill, and an apple evaporator at Caroline Depot. By 1940 the businesses were gone.

Cecil Keane Lane was named for a well-loved schoolteacher (1890–1970) who lived for a time in the Tobey Tavern. She taught three generations of students in the same school, including her own children and grandchildren.

Centerville. *See* Caroline Center.

Central Chapel is a scattered community named for a Methodist chapel that was torn down in 1940. In 1933 the Federal Resettlement Project removed several farm buildings from the area. Central Chapel Road was originally Judge’s Road.

Creamery Road. R.G.H. Speed opened the Caroline Cheese Factory in 1869 in Slaterville on a track or road that had no name. The road became known as Creamery Road, probably in preference to Cheese Factory Road.

Dutch Settlement. *See* Slaterville.

Fire Tower Road leads to the 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps lookout tower on what had been known as Allen Road on Blackman Hill. The tower was of steel construction, and 68 feet high. Because the tower was an identifiable point, the road became known as Fire Tower

Road. In 1977 the tower was dismantled and moved to the New York State Fairgrounds in Syracuse.

Flat Iron Road is a one-mile flat and straight road that was also known as “The Cross Road” because it was used as a shortcut. The road represents the heel or base of a “flatiron”-shaped parcel of land bounded by three roads including Mud Bridge.

Fuller Lane is a newly created roadway in Slaterville named in honor of Lena Fuller, a schoolteacher, and her son, Ralph, a former Town Supervisor. The road is the entry to a small housing development on what had been the Fuller farm.

Guideboard Corners marks the crossing of roads between Brooktondale and Caroline Center where Seventy-Six, Grove School, and Central Chapel roads converge. Until the late 1940s or early 1950s a signboard indicated distances to Brooktondale, Caroline Center, Speedsville, Slaterville Springs, Willseyville, Candor, Owego, and Ithaca. There are no records to indicate when the sign was removed.

Hardscrabble Hill, now known as Taft Hill, was a difficult place to farm or to make a living; it was a hard scrabble. The first known use of the term hardscrabble comes from the Lewis and Clark journals in 1805.

Honeypot is the area between Candor and Caroline Center named because of the bee trees located there, or possibly because of the illegal refreshments produced there from 1910 on. In Tioga County it is still known as Honeypot Road, but in the late 1960s in Tompkins County it was renamed Smith Road. It was originally Speed Road, then Speed Road South until Mr. Speed’s post office was moved from Caroline Center to Jenksville.

Jenksville. *See* Speedsville.

Level Green Road is only level for a short stretch in the Caroline valley. It was first known as South Road.

Line of Lots Road was named because it ran on a section line dividing lots 1–9 and 22–29 from lots 10–15 and 40–44.

McGrath Road was named to honor the McGrath family, who settled there from Ireland. The name is pronounced “Mc GRAUGH,” close to McGraw. The southern part of the road has been abandoned.

Midline Road was originally called the Dryden Road because it connected Slaterville Springs with Dryden.

Mott’s Corners. *See* Brooktondale.

Mud Bridge crosses Flat Iron Road over a muddy culvert that drains a swamp. The Roundsvell family owned the property on both the north and south sides of Mud Creek. It is believed they built a wooden bridge across the creek in the very early 1800s so they could have easier access to the north side of their farm.

The Narrows occurs along the Seventy-Six Road as it follows the creek through a narrow winding gorge. In the early 1980s the road was widened. The road became less treacherous, but it is still referred to as “The Narrows.”

Pacific Bridge crosses Owego Creek and is now a culvert. Miss May Tobey (1847–1915) named the road because of the quiet (or pacific) beauty of the view. This bridge was on Elishaburg Road. Owego Creek divides the Town of Richford in Tioga County from the Town of Caroline. The road on the Caroline side of the creek has been known as Pacific Road since 1966 when New York placed a road sign where Route 79 intersects. When the road crosses the bridge into Tioga County, it is known as Elishaburg Road. Even though the people in

Tioga County live on Elishaburg Road, in the town of Richford, their official address is Pacific Road, Brooktondale, because their mailboxes are located on the Town of Caroline side of the creek.

Pugsley's Depot was named for Abraham B. Pugsley, named postmaster in 1850 and serving until 1860 when the post office was moved to Caroline Depot. In 1834, the depot was located on the old Ithaca & Owego Railroad and the railroads that came through later, the DL&W and the EC&N, adopted the name. People who live in the area of the old Depot use the term among themselves.

Rawson Hollow was named for Lyman Rawson, who came from Vermont and was the first settler in an area on West Owego Creek. Mr. Rawson kept a tavern and at a town meeting in 1816 it was "Resolved, That Lyman Rawson be prosecuted for retailing speerits without a license." There was a post office at Rawson Hollow from August 1856 to December 1861.

Roseybone is the name of the ridge that runs along the north side of State Route 79. It was known as Roseybone because of the warm glow cast by the setting sun. Many older people in the area still refer to "the Roseybone," and folklorist Carl Carmer mentions it in his book *Listen for a Lonesome Drum: A York State Chronicle* (New York, 1936).

Seventy-Six Road. Augustine Boyer laid out the Seventy-Six Road from Boiceville (now West Slaterville) to Jenksville (now Speedsville). The road was built by the local settlers and named by Boyer on July 4, 1808, in honor of the generation who fought in the Revolutionary War. Today it is known as Boiceville Road, and from Guideboard Corner is known as Central Chapel Road. It is often called the old "Seventy-Six" road and the road signs that replaced the original ones state it is the "Old Seventy-Six" road, but the name has never officially been changed and it remains "Seventy-Six" (not "Old Seventy-Six") Road.

Shindagin Hollow or “Shindagen” is a corrupted form of Shandaken. Early settlers from Shandaken, Ulster County, called this Prospect or Shandaken Valley. In Tioga County the valley is called Prospect Valley.

Six Hundred refers to the 600 acres of undeveloped land that included the headwaters of Six Mile Creek and was mostly in the Town of Dryden. A number of residents of South Dryden petitioned to have lots 91 to 100 transferred to the Town of Caroline because it was too difficult a trip into Dryden, and the Town of Caroline was much more convenient. The Dryden Town Board granted the transfer on December 5, 1885. While much of the property was improved and mostly farm land, the undeveloped portion became known as “600.”

Six Hundred Road was known until 1885 as Yates Road but when the lots from the Town of Dryden were transferred to the Town of Caroline, the road along this section of 600 acres became the Six Hundred Road. It was the site of “Bottom Mill,” a sawmill built in 1808 by Elijah Powers.

Ski-Jump developed in the early 1940s when Tar Young gave a parcel of land on Webb Hill to Cornell University. The existing buildings were dismantled and removed, and Cornell University built a ski center with a rope tow on the hill. After the opening of Greek Peak in Cortland County in the 1960s, the “Tar Young Ski Center” gradually closed down. It was used as a polo field for a very few years before it was sold to a developer. The flat field on the north side of the hill was the site of the Vickery and Tobey Taverns. The larch trees planted to designate the ski trails can still be seen.

Slaterville was originally called Dutch Settlement, because many of the settlers were of Dutch ancestry, mostly from Ulster County. In 1823 the post office was named Slaterville in honor of Levi Slater, an early settler and the first schoolteacher. By 1866 there were 171 residents in the area. The period of greatest prosperity was between 1871 and

1900. In 1871 Dr. William Gallagher discovered that the water of Slaterville had a high content of various minerals. The “water cure” was believed to be of medical value, and summer guests at Slaterville hotels totaled as many as 200 at a time.

Slaterville Springs. On August 2, 1890, the name of the Slaterville post office was changed to Slaterville Springs. The 275 permanent residents of the hamlet welcomed this name change because it helped to promote the resort business. At one time there were three large hotels built for the “rest and water cure” trade. This business started to decline by 1920 when the water cure fad faded.

Speed Road/Speed Hill Road honored Dr. Speed and his family. One section, from Caroline Center to Candor, was later known as Honey-pot, and the section from Caroline Center to Slaterville was known as Buffalo Road. The road that ran from Slaterville to Harford was named Speed Road, but is now Harford Road until it crosses into Cortland County where it becomes Slaterville Road. In 1966, when the Slaterville Road (Route 79) in Caroline was improved, “Speed Hill Road” signs appeared on Webb Hill Road, also known as Caroline Center Hill Road or Rounsville Road.

Speedsville was originally owned by Laban Jenks who bought 400 acres known as “The Corners.” In 1800 it became known as Jenksville. Between 1832 and 1835, the citizens of Jenksville wanted their own post office and Speed was willing to move his “Speed Post Office” from City Lot near Caroline Center, to Jenksville if his name would be retained. Speed’s influence prevented the name of the post office from being changed, but in a compromise Speed resigned the office and another postmaster was appointed. Thereafter, the hamlet was known as Speedsville. It thrived in the mid-1800s with a gristmill, feed store, woodworking shop, barrel and crate factory, jug and crock potters, two general stores, a creamery that produced 500 pounds of butter a day, a cheese factory, blacksmith shop, bowling alley, and cider mill.

The Speedsville Common was incorporated in 1863 and the park

commissioner reported to the school district. When the school closed, the Speedsville Community Association assumed the supervision of the community park.

Terryville was named for Willet Terry, postmaster in 1832. A year later, the office was moved to Mott's Corners, due to the influence of William Mott. The area was known as Terryville only as long as the post office existed.

Tobeytown Road is at the site of the Tobey Tavern.

West Slaterville is a small community one-half mile west of Slaterville Springs on the Catskill Turnpike (Route 79) and was named first for Abraham Boice who came from Ulster County in 1816. The community extended westward to the Dutch Reformed Cemetery and included a tavern where the first town meeting was held, a tollgate, blacksmith shop, livery, and a school.

White Church took its name from "The Old-School Baptist Church of Caroline" established in 1843 but destroyed by fire in the mid-1800s. The nearby station on the Cayuga-Susquehanna Rail Road (later the Delaware Lackawanna & Western) was also called White Church. The station was a stop for passengers, milk pick-up, and the school children attending school in Candor. A post office was established there on July 19, 1876, and discontinued December 31, 1902.

Willow Bridge crosses the West Owego Creek and divides Tompkins County from Tioga County on State Route 7. It was named for the willow trees that grow there. In some older records there are citations to other areas in the county called Willow Bridge but none have survived.

Yankee Settlement. *See* Caroline.