

TALK ACCEPTING THE NEW YORK STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD IN ALBANY; AT THE DEC. 7, 2017 EVENT SPONSORED BY THE NEW YORK STATE PARKS, RECREATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION.

PATRICIA ADAMS

FIRST OF ALL, I WANT TO SAY WHAT AN HONOR IT IS TO BE A PART OF A GROUP OF SUCH OUTSTANDING ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE COMMITTED TO THE PRESERVATION AND CELEBRATION OF NEW YORK'S HISTORY.

FOR 20 MILES FROM THE HEADWATERS AT BALSAM LAKE DOWN TO THE HAMLET OF ROSCOE, THE BEAVERKILL RIVER IS ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY OWNED BY PRIVATE FISHING CLUBS. *EXCEPT* FOR THE 2 MILE STRETCH BY THE COVERED BRIDGE. ADJACENT TO THE RIDGE IS A CAMPSITE WITH ALMOST 100 CAMPSITES FOR TENT-CAMPING – ANOTHER UNIQUE ASPECT OF THIS PART OF THE RIVER.

THIS PUBLIC ACCESS IS BECAUSE OUR NEW YORK STATE, ALMOST 100 YEARS AGO, HAD THE FORSIGHT TO BUY THIS LAND BY THE BRIDGE FOR PUBLIC USE.

THROUGH GREAT TEAM WORK, THIS BRIDGE IS THE MOST ORIGINALLY RESTORED COVERED BRIDGE IN MEMORY AND IS NOW THE STANDARD FOR RESTORATION. IT WAS BUILT IN 1860 – OVER ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO AND WITH THIS CAREFUL RESTORATION WILL BE HERE 200 YEARS FROM NOW. WE ARE ALL VERY PROUD.

IT STARTED WITH GOVERNOR PATAKI BACK IN THE EARLY 90'S AND OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS MANY DEDICATED INDIVIDUALS HAVE DILIGENTLY WORKED TO RESTORE THIS BRIDGE WITH HISTORICAL INTEGRITY. OUR NEPHEW, MCCRAE BURNHAM, WHO HAS BEEN WITH THE DEC SINCE THE 90'S, HELPED US LIST THE IMPORTANT FACILITATORS IN THE RESTORATION.

After the January 1996 floods, DEC Commissioner John Cahill toured the campground and in February 1998 and started a great tradition of DEC Commissioners protecting this great historic resource. Later Commissioner Erin Crotty and Denis Sheehan worked with the Town of Rockland, Sullivan County and the Department of Transportation to ensure the State took on the responsibility for maintaining the covered bridge through an Intermunicipal Agreement. Then Commissioner Pete Grannis got the Bridge listed on the State and National Historic Register with OPRHP Commissioner Carol Ash. While DOT was

committed to an historically accurate rehabilitation of the structural elements of the bridge, Commissioners Joe Martens and Basil Segos made sure DOT had the additional funds needed to restore key historic elements.

THANKS TO JACK WILLIAMS, REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF DOT AND MATT DRISCOLL, DOT COMMISSIONER, AND *BILL RUDGE REGIONAL- DEC DIRECTOR*

DURING RESTORATION, THIS TEAM GAVE US EVERY POSSIBLE COURTESY THEY COULD. IT'S BEEN OVER TWO YEARS WITH MANY DIFFICULT AND TIME CONSUMING DECISIONS, PERMITS AND ENGINEERING CHALLENGES FOR JEREMY AT DOT AND JOE BORIS AND KEN BOWDREN OF SULLIVAN COUNTY PAVING. WE ARE AWED BY THE WORK OF THE CONSTRUCTION TEAM. BRINGING ON PATRICK KELLY TO DO THE STONE WORK WAS BRILLIANT.

I OFTEN REFER TO JOHN ADAMS, ERIC HAMERSTROM AND RAMSAY ADAMS AS 'THE TROLLS UNDER THE BRIDGE' AS THEY MONITORED WORK THERE DAILY. LES MATTIS, ROGER LAWRENCE AND CARL OBCENY ALSO KEPT A CLOSE CHECK ON WHAT WAS HAPPENING.

WE ALSO WANT TO RECOGNIZE ERIK KULLESEID , FROM OSI, FOR HIS STEADFAST SUPPORT AND VISION FOR

THE FUTURE WHICH HAS ENHANCED THIS PROJECT. WE LOOK FORWARD TO CONTINUED WORK WITH ERIK AND BILL RUDGE.

THE COVERED BRIDGE IS ONLY PART OF THE STORY. A TANNERY WAS HERE IN 1830 – AND WAS TANNING HIDES 30 YEARS LATER WHEN THE BRIDGE WAS BUILT. THEN, BEAVERKILL WAS A TOWN—WITH 3 CHURCHES, A SCHOOL, BLACKSMITH SHOPS AND STORES AND POST OFFICE. .

WHEN THE HEMLOCK RAN OUT SO THERE WAS NO MORE TANNIC ACID TO CURE THE HIDES HERE, BEAVERKILL BECAME A FARM TOWN WITH FARMERS OPENING THEIR HOMES TO SUMMER VISITORS – PRIMARILY FISHERMEN. BUT ALSO GOLFERS – THERE WAS A 9 HOLE GOLF COURSE JUST DOWN THE RIVER HERE, WHICH WAS PART OF TROUT VALLEY FARM, A MAGNIFICENT VICTORIAN HOTEL.

IN THE 1930'S, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT, HUNDREDS OF YOUNG MEN CAME TO THE CATSKILLS WITH THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORE. THEY BUILT THE CAMPSITE, PICNIC AREA AND MANY OF THE CABINS.

IN THE EARLY 1990'S, WHEN ATTENTION WAS BROUGHT TO THE BRIDGE BECAUSE OF FLOODING, THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF CONTROVERSY ABOUT WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE TWO HISTORIC BRIDGES ON THIS PART OF THE RIVER. THEY HAD BECOME UNSAFE AND UNABLE TO CARRY THE HEAVY LOADS OF MODERN DAY TRAFFIC. SOME WANTED THEM IMMEDIATELY REPLACED AND BROUGHT UP TO CODE, OTHERS WANTED TO SEE BOTH MADE SAFE BUT ALSO RESTORED WITH HISTORICAL INTEGRITY.

OUR COMMUNITY WORKED TOGETHER TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES. WE FORMED *THE FRIENDS OF BEAVERKILL COMMUNITY*. WE HAD FOUR EARLY GOALS. THE COVERED BRIDGE WAS IN DANGER OF BEING TORN DOWN AND REPLACED WITH A MODERN ONE. THE CAMPSITE, ALSO AN HISTORICAL PLACE, NEEDED ATTENTION.

THE BEAVERKILL METHODIST CHURCH NEEDED EXTENSIVE REPAIRS AND THE SMALL METAL BRIDGE WAS SLATED TO BE TORN DOWN AND REPLACED.

THE FRIENDS RAISED MONEY FOR PAINTING AND ROOFING THE ONE-ROOM CHURCH. IT IS NOW OWNED BY THE COMMUNITY.

**THE METAL BRIDGE DOWN RIVER IN CRAIGIE CLAIR,
WAS REPLACED WITH A BRIDGE THAT IS SAFE FOR
LARGER VEHICLES BUT IS AESTHETIALLY PLEASING.**

AND THE COVERED BRIDGE IS SAFE FOR YEARS TO COME.

**SO TODAY WE ARE NOT ONLY CELEBRATING THE
BRIDGE, IT'S NOT JUST A BRIDGE – IT'S A PARK – A PARK
OPEN TO ALL FOR FISHING, SWIMMING, PICNICING,
CAMPING. IT IS A PLACE FOR ALL TO FIND QUIET AND
BEAUTY – A PLACE TO GET CLOSE TO NATURE.**

**WE THANK YOU FOR THIS NEW YORK STATE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD, A RECOGNIZATION OF
THE COMMITTED WORK OF SO MANY.**