



New Paltz Hamlet Histories: Plutarch

The hamlet of Plutarch was once known as “Cold Spring Corners” or “Grawhow” (“Great Ridge”). It encompasses the area north of Ohioville and the southern border of the Town of Esopus, with Crozier’s ditch forms the boundary between Plutarch and the town of Lloyd. The hamlet of Plutarch is made up of communities along Plutarch, Black Creek and Van Nostrand Roads.

One of the earliest homes that still stands is at 224 Plutarch Rd., near the crossroads of Old Route 299 and Plutarch Road. The 1798 census states that property owner, Stephen Goetchius, had rented the property to Johannis York. The home was part of a 285 acre farm and later owned by the family of Josiah R. Elting and his descendants throughout the 19th century. Today it is maintained as a private residence and was remodeled in 1926 by Henry Hasbrouck. A mile north of the farm at 224 Plutarch Rd. was a house, lot and Blacksmith’s shop belonging to a Mr. and Mrs. DeGross in 1858*. The blacksmith shop was purchased by a Mr. D. Ackerman Jr., after moving his business from Put Corners**. A specialty store existed on the same property at 509 Plutarch Rd. in the mid 19

th century. The original owner, Joseph A. Burger, used to hold “Congress” in his store and was known as a “chief debater and judge in all matters pertaining to the good and welfare of the neighborhood” ***. The building later doubled as a store and apartment by the 1950s**** | *****.

Plutarch also contained public institutions, such as a school church and post office. The school (New Paltz School District #5) was established at 101 Van Nostrand Rd. in 1849 after the property was sold by Abram I. Deyo to the Plutarch School District. It was later sold to the Plutarch Sportsman's Club in 1951, who uses it for their annual meetings†. The Methodist Church was built at 10 Black Creek Rd. on the property of John Vandenburg in April of 1862. In 1871, a "Ladies Aid Society" was formed and organized many charity and social events through the church. Communal gatherings, such as picnics, lawn parties and a "peach and ice cream festival" before the turn of the century were several such events hosted by this group. In 1982, a robbery resulted in the loss of several of the church's original furnishings and \$1,500 worth of goods. However the church continues to be a mainstay of the community and is still in well preserved condition. A post office also existed in the premises at 509 Plutarch Rd.

By the 20th century, public works programs displaced several homes in Plutarch, but life remained relatively unchanged. The Methodist Church's Strawberry Festival, an event that had existed since the mid 19th century, continued to draw people to the small community in the north-eastern portion of New Paltz Town. In 1936 a dude ranch operated by Texas natives, Mr. and Mrs. Butner was established in Plutarch and was "With one exception...the only dude ranch of real Western type in New York State"††.

One of the most prominent individuals to inhabit Plutarch was world famous competitive walker Edward Payson Weston. Weston first gained fame in 1861, when he attempted to walk from Boston, MA to Washington D.C. in 10 days in order to witness the inauguration of President Lincoln and win a \$10,000.00 cash prize. Although he arrived hours after the event, losing the bet, his valiant effort made him a household name as well as gave notoriety to the sport of race walking. Before returning home, the American Civil War broke out and Weston decided to help the Union by disguising himself and delivering a sack of 117 letters to troops stationed at Annapolis, MD†††. Throughout his life he competed in many long distance races and broke several records. One of his most famous attempts involved a race against the famed British race walker "Bulldog" Brown at London's Agricultural Hall on June 16, 1879. Weston covered the 550 mile challenge in over six days††††. In 1910, at age 72, he undertook the monumental challenge of walking from Los Angeles to New York in 100 days in an attempt to beat his walking time from New York to San Francisco the previous year. He arrived at New York's City

Hall in 78 days after suffering many injuries but not after beating his own schedule†††††. In 1914, Weston purchased the Martin Schwedis property on Rifton Rd (now Weston Road). An article from the New Paltz Independent announced “[he] expects to take a walk from his place to New York as soon as the weather gets a little cooler. He plans on walking the distance in one day”†*. In 1924 Weston’s home was raided by “a gang of young men” who resented the movement of city people into the area and thus ruining the illegal trade of selling stolen wood from buildings†**. Several years later, at the age of 88, Weston lost the use of his legs when he was struck by a taxi in New York City while celebrating his 100,000th mile†***. In 1929 Weston died of natural causes at the age of 90 in his Brooklyn residence. Although Weston spent the last two years of his life in poverty, his influence on the world of professional walking continues today in the form of Weston clubs as well as his publications in

Walking For Health and Competition

, the naming of Rifton Road to Westen Road in his honor and his home in Plutarch.

Plutarch’s institutions and festivals continue to draw crowds, ensuring a sense of community well into the 21st century.

* *New Paltz Independent* 12 Dec 1865, Print

** *New Paltz Times* 2 Apr 1868, Print

*** *New Paltz Independent* 9 Jan 1873, Print

**** *New Paltz Independent* 16 Nov 1950, Print

***** *New Paltz Independent* 25 Feb 1954, Print

† *New Paltz Independent* 20 Dec 1951, Print

†† *New Paltz Independent* 23 Apr 1936, Print

††† Wadlin, Vivian Yess. " Payton Weston." *About Our Town: A guide to Gardiner, Esopus, Rosendale, New Paltz, Stone Ridge, High Falls, Highland, Marlborough and Kingston* . 25.95 Print.

†††† *New Paltz Independent* 26 Jun 1879. Print

††††† *New York Times* 2 May 1910. Print

†* *New Paltz Independent* 25 Sep 1914. Print

†** *Walkkill World* 23 May 1924. Print

†*** Sussman, Aaron, and Ruth Goode. *The Magic of Walking*. New York: Simon and Schuster, Print.