

"On the frontier of New Jersey..."

In the 1750s, this part of New Jersey was frontier. The flood plain and ridges of the Delaware Valley were home to a decreasing population of Lenape (Delaware) natives and about 800 European settlers, whose numbers kept growing. Tensions turned into war. In 1755, Delaware natives declared their independence from the Iroquois, who were allied with England, and attacked British settlers near present-day Lehighton and Stroudsburg PA. The *French and Indian War (Seven Years War)* had begun, and the Pennsylvania and New Jersey legislatures authorized the building of blockhouses and fortifications. These "forts" were often little more than stone or wood farmhouses strengthened against attack and enclosed by a log palisade.

A Road for War

Military Road or the "Military Supply Road," evolved in 1756-57 to haul supplies 60 miles westward from Elizabeth, (then called Elizabeth Town) through today's sites of Newton and Walpack Center, to Fort Johns here on the Delaware, for distribution to the other forts along the river. The road was the idea of Captain Jonathan Hampton, a New-Jersey-born surveyor and landowner, who served as quartermaster and paymaster at Fort Johns here on Military Trail. Sections of the old route now lie under modern roadways, but the final mile is still a wide path through the woods from today's village of Walpack Center on Rt. NPS 615 to the original roadbed of Old Mine Road at Van Campen Inn.

7/07/07

In soldiers' footsteps

Military Trail is one mile long and climbs steeply, then descends steeply, about 200 feet. The best season to see historic traces along the trail is late fall after the leaves are down. Fall is also the best season to avoid ticks.

USE CAUTION! High grasses along the trail can harbor ticks. Wear long pants and light colors. Use insect repellent. Check for ticks after your hike.

Military Trail is for hiking only: no bicycles, automobiles, or motorized vehicles of any kind are permitted on the trail. Hunting is NOT permitted along the trail but the park recommends that hikers wear orange for safety.



Van Campen Inn around 1900. The north (left) section was built around 1742 and torn down in 1917. The larger right section dates from the 1740s and 1750s. The porch dates from the 1800s.

Begin your hike in front of Van Campen Inn, on the original roadbed of Old Mine Road.

SIGNPOST 1 Van Campen Inn and Farm

Owned in turn by two early and prominent local families, Rosenkrans and Van Campen, this fine stone farmhouse was never an inn in the commercial sense. By law, certain houses along major roadways in isolated areas had to provide a rest-stop for travelers. In November of 1763, the house's stout walls even sheltered 150 settlers against the threat of Indian attack. During the American Revolution, the inn was officers' quarters as troops moved through the valley. Brig. Gen. Casimir Pulaski, a Polish count, wintered here in 1778 with his 250 cavalry, all outfitted in bright European fashion.

The inn once had farm outbuildings that stood across Old Mine Road. In the 1980s the National Park Service extensively restored the house's exterior. Archeological studies at about the same time have unearthed military buttons nearby. *Walpack Historical Society opens Van Campen Inn on Sunday afternoons in summer. Call (973) 948-6671. Van Campen Day, a Sunday in October, often includes military encampments.*

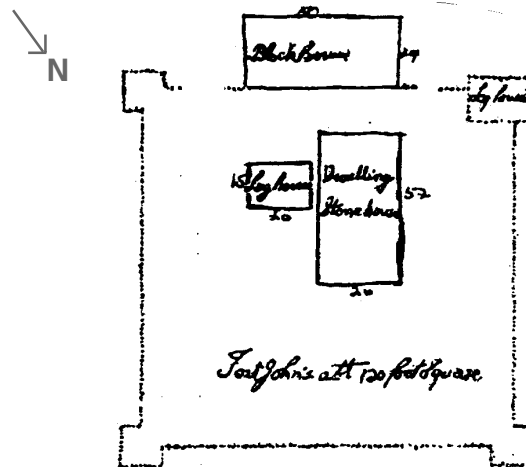
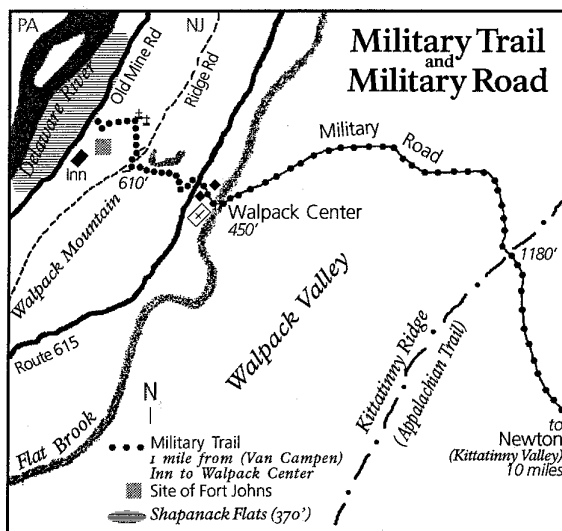
Walk north (left as you face the inn) 200 yards, noting the river flats on the left. Stop at a wide path slanting down on the right. Note traces of modern asphalt on this 250-year old roadway.

SIGNPOST 2 A Crossroad of War: Old Mine Road and Military Road

This is the western terminus of Military Road, where it meets *Old Mine Road*, once known as "The King's Highway," or "The Great Road." This valley landscape is little changed from when it echoed to tramping of soldiers' feet through two crucial colonial wars: the French and Indian War (1754-1763) and the American Revolution (1775-1781.)

In a December snowstorm in 1776, several regiments under General Horatio Gates marched south via Old Mine Road past this point and camped overnight on Shapanack Flats in front of Van Campen Inn. They then continued south to join General Washington in the Battle of Trenton — perhaps marching over Military Trail and south through Kittatinny Valley east of here. In May of 1779, Colonels Van Cortlandt and Spencer led regiments past this crossroad and down Old Mine Road past Van Campen Inn to Decker Ferry in Flatbrookville, 4 miles south, to cross the Delaware.

Turn right (east) up Military Trail for 150 yards to a pair of gravestones on your left with an old orchard clearing on your right. From fall to early spring, you can turn right and walk 50 yards into the clearing to the north edge of the knoll. Below you on the slope is a ruin which may be the blockhouse. (See above right.)



"Fort Johns about 120 foot square"

This sketch from Capt. Hampton's undated map of frontier forts shows a large log palisade (dotted line), but it is uncertain if the fort was ever built on this scale. The opening just to the right of the block house (at top) may have led south down to Van Campen Inn.

SIGNPOST 3 Fort Johns (Headquarters)

In late 1755, New Jersey authorized 4 fortifications along the Delaware River, manned by 250 local militia (not British soldiers.): Fort Reading at Philipsburg; the blockhouse Fort Van Camp near the residence of Col. Abraham Van Campen, about 13 miles south on Old Mine Road; Fort Walpack at Walpack Bend 7 miles south of here; and *Fort Johns* here at Shapanack.

By 1757, the county reported 6 fortifications. In 1758, Capt. Hampton dated a letter "*Headquarters, on the Frontier of New Jersey, May 17*" in which he mentions 7 forts. Eventually, there more than a dozen "forts" and "ranging posts" in northwestern New Jersey. The largest fortification was *Fort Johns (Headquarters)*, here near the west end of Military Road. The fort may have been built on this slope around the home of John Rosencrans, then a captain in the local militia. According to the Capt. Hampton's sketch (*above*), a 120-ft. square palisade enclosed two log houses and a blockhouse as well as Rosencrans' 57 x 26 ft. dwelling. Certainly, the slope commands a view over the Shapanack Flats to the Delaware River, but archeological investigation has not proven that Fort Johns was exactly here.

Retrace your steps to the pair of gravestones.

Discovered along the river near the Van Campen Inn in the 1950s, these gravestones were relocated here as the Hulls owned this land from at least the 1840s until the 1920s. (The location of the actual graves is uncertain.) The prosperous family's farmhouse may have stood on the foundations of Rosenkrans' fortified "dwelling."

Turn right and walk 150 yards farther, over a small rise. Above the meadow on the left stands the Pocono Plateau, a mile away across the river.

SIGNPOST 4 At rest: Slave and Free

Follow the small path at the left of the trail for 60 yards into the woods, as it bends right and then climbs a slight rise to a flat area. Look carefully for uncarved, foot-high, stones propped up in the soil, a low berm of earth encircling the area, and traces of wire fence.

You are on the 1700s property of the Rosenkrans, Dutch immigrants who began farming here around 1730. They held land along Military Trail and down across the flats to the river. Capt. John Rosenkrans and his brother, Harman, farmed the upland (where Fort Johns may have been built around John's home,) and the flats along the river. Harman built the early section of Van Campen Inn, which is named after his brother-in-law Issac, who bought it in 1754.

Holdings of this size—large homes and 700 to 1,000 acres—required labor, and slaves supplied at least some of that labor. A 1773 tax record shows that John Rosenkrans owned a slave. In an 1801 will, his neighbor and brother-in-law Isacc Van Campen listed 8 slaves, whom he freed. *This cemetery is probably that of slaves,* and, later, of free citizens of African descent. (In the 1890s, a white diarist noted the burial of an African American woman here.) New Jersey abolished slavery entirely by 1846, and the 1860 census for Moses Hull's household shows "one black *servant*, age 21." Deep in the woods across the trail are the remains of a cabin that may have been home to a few slaves. Today, those foundations and these austere markers are the only and silent reminders that the labor of this valley, and its prosperity, were not shared equally. 7/07/07

Retrace your steps to Military Trail, turn left, and continue 250 yards to an unpaved road.

SIGNPOST 5 Walpack Mountain

You are on the spine of *Walpack Mountain*, 240 ft. above Shapanack Flats behind you, and 160 feet above *Walpack Valley* ahead of you. Intermittent streams that pass through culverts *behind* you flow west down to the Delaware River. *Ahead*, streams flow east into Walpack Valley and Flat Brook.

The unpaved road you are intersecting is *Ridge Road (Thunder Mountain Road)*, which runs north-south along the spine of Walpack Mountain. A mile north, it reaches *Thunder Mountain*, a vacation spot that is now a facility of Peters Valley Craft Center.

Turn right onto the road, left about 30 yards later, and 100 yards more to a signpost on the left for *Walpack Ridge Trail*. (Also called *Thunder Mountain Trail*, this trail has two branches that skirt a swamp ahead on the left, and link to Thunder Mountain.) **Note the large field on your right. Descend 100 yards to an evergreen grove on the right, where a low stone wall runs about 40 yards southward from the trail.**

SIGNPOST 6 A mountain farm

A century ago, this was the outskirts of Walpack Center. Today, several clues tell of the mountain farmstead that once used this trail, then known as "Walpack Center Road," as the road to town.

The stone wall delineates what was once a graceful driveway to a farmhouse nestled in an evergreen grove (look for ledges built into the wall.) To the right of the wall and atop the ridge, now hardly visible from the trail, is the large field. About 20 yards farther along Military Trail on the right is the remnant of an orchard—look for short evenly-spaced trees with low branches. Traces also remain in the woods of a dairy barn that stood along the left edge of the trail. Note the utility poles. The Haulk family lived and farmed here in the 1960s until the federal government bought out the farmstead for the proposed Tocks Island Dam project.

Continue 450 yards, passing the swamp on the left and a second signpost for Walpack Ridge Trail. Descend a sharp swing to the right, then left, to tupright metal posts that once held a pipe gate.

SIGNPOST 7 Walpack Center

With a steeply descending swing to the right then left, Military Trail approaches the village of *Walpack Center*. The small path on the right at the old pipe gate leads to an abandoned cistern that supplied water to the village. The embankment beneath you at the end of the trail once sheltered Walpack's first "fire department"—two ash cans on a hitch trailer. Ahead on the left atop a flat area is the foundation of a summer home demolished in the 1960s for the Tocks Island Dam project. Artifacts found on the property may date the land's original use by white settlers to the 1700s.

Descend 100 yards more to a working pipe gate at the end of the trail at Route 615, where a plaque and a stone bench honor a longtime president of Walpack Historical Society.

Across the road is today's Walpack Center. The village once stretched across and along Route 615, down Main Street (the path of Military Road), past the 1872 Methodist church, and across Flat Brook to a cemetery. Since its heyday, the village has endured the decline of rural villages prevalent throughout the country, as well as the buying out of properties for the Tocks Island Dam. The buildings now left in the village date from 1850 to 1950. Of the post office, only a transfer box is still in use. "Walpack Center Road"—the Military Trail you have just walked—closed to vehicles in the 1960s. *Walpack Historical Society maintains offices and a small museum in the village. Call (973) 729-7392.*

This is the end of 1-mile Military Trail,

Eastbound soldiers on Military **Road** continued over the next ridge to the east, Kittatinny Ridge, and along roads that now run through Mecca Lake, Myrtle Grove, Balesville, Halsey, Newton, and on to Elizabeth NJ.

Cover Photographs: (Top left) Hull gravestone, SIGNPOST 3; (Middle right) Haulk Farm SIGNPOST 6, (Middle left) Walpack Center c. 1900 SIGNPOST 7; (Bottom) Shapanack Flats and (Background) Van Campen House, SIGNPOST 1.

