

2016 Edition

Recent History of Copake

The Copake Iron Works was established in 1845 along the Bash Bish Brook at the base of the Taconic Ridge. In 2007, the Iron Works site and 18 acres surrounding the area were listed on the State and National Register of Historic Sites. The Copake Iron Works Historic District comprises all of the buildings in the Iron Works area, the historic blast furnace, three workers' houses, and the now-flooded ore pit, as well as the previously National Register-listed Church of St. John in the Wilderness.

Friends of Taconic State Park was established in the fall of 2008. This group works to promote recreational, historical, educational and cultural activities within the Park. There are currently about 300 dues-paying members of Friends.

It is the long-term goal of the Friends of Taconic State Park, headquartered in Copake Falls, NY, to preserve and stabilize the many buildings and structures that comprise the 19th century Copake Iron Works. Much work has been completed to date including the construction of a protective cover over the historic blast furnace; stabilization of the furnace arches and cornerstones; and re-building and securing the foundation and facades of the Machine and Pattern Shop (opened in 2015 as the expanded Copake Iron Works Museum). The Copake Iron Works Heritage Trail, featuring 25 interpretive signs, was also opened in 2015. Future plans include stabilizing the last remaining original condition workers' residence and eventually, re-creating the railroad that once circumnavigated the Ironworks.

In November 2010, the new Roeliff Jansen Community Library opened its doors. Chartered to serve Ancram, Copake and Hillsdale, the new building is located on Route 22 just north of the Roeliff Jansen Central School building. Since its opening, the new Library has become a community center, offering concerts, lectures and community service programs.

In 2010 local residents organized to raise money to repair and refurbish the Copake Memorial Clock. In the space of eight months they raised over \$40,000 - enough to take down the Clock and send it to Kansas, where it was repaired. The clock was re-installed on May 11, 2011. Thereafter, the community raised money to update the Korean and Vietnam monuments at the base of the Clock, adding names of Copake veterans which were originally omitted. On Veteran's Day, 2014, Copake veterans were honored as the Town rededicated its Korean and Viet Nam War Monuments.

In 2011, Copake completed and adopted a Comprehensive Plan. In 2012, the Town created a Copake Hamlet Revitalization Task Force with the mission of bringing business and vitality back to the Copake Hamlet. In 2015, the Town Board unanimously adopted a Hamlet Design and Development Plan. The plan presents a framework for the Hamlet's future growth and development.

In 2014, local residents formed an LLC to open the Copake Front Porch Market. In 2015, Copake Wine Works opened its doors. The Copake Sports Bar will open in 2016, as will a Rapid Care Facility.

In September 2013, the Task Force organized the first Roe Jan Ramble Bike Tour with the goal of encouraging cycling as an economic catalyst. The ride has become an annual event sponsored by Ancram, Hillsdale and Copake and in 2015, attracted over 150 riders.

Efforts are being made to extend the Harlem Valley Rail Trail from Copake Falls to Hillsdale. In 2015, the section from Copake Falls to Orphan Farm was paved and opened to the public.

In 2014, the Copake Farmers Market merged with the Hillsdale Farmers Market. The Copake Hillsdale Farmers Market is located at the Roeliff Jansen Park on Route 22. Open every Saturday from late May until late October, the market draws huge crowds.

In 2015, Copake Falls celebrated its 8th Annual Copake Falls Day. Each year the event attracts many visitors to the Hamlet. Meanwhile, in 2015, the Town of Copake inaugurated a Music in the Park series, featuring music and other events every Saturday of the summer in the Copake Memorial Park.

The center of Copake - the fields behind the Copake Town Hall - is now forever preserved for agriculture. Northeast Farm Access, LLC opened the Copake Agricultural Center in 2014. By the end of its first year, the LLC had purchased 192 acres and three farmhouses, moved 180 acres into conservation easements, and shifted 122 acres out of "conventional" agriculture into organic farming practices.

The past decade has seen the preservation of many properties in Copake. Including the Copake Agricultural Center, Columbia Land Conservancy holds six conservation easements totaling 584 acres. The first such easement was set up in 2003 and included 63 acres. The most recent was in 2015 when 138 acres of High Valley Farm in Copake Falls were protected.

Additionally, Odyssey Farm, totaling 312 acres, is owned and protected by New York State. In 2015 the 639 acres of land surrounding CLC's High Valley Farm easement was placed under a Forever Wild easement by New York State's Office of Parks and Recreation in partnership with The Nature Conservancy. The Roeliff Jansen Park is owned by New York State and also protected by the Office of Parks and Recreation.

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