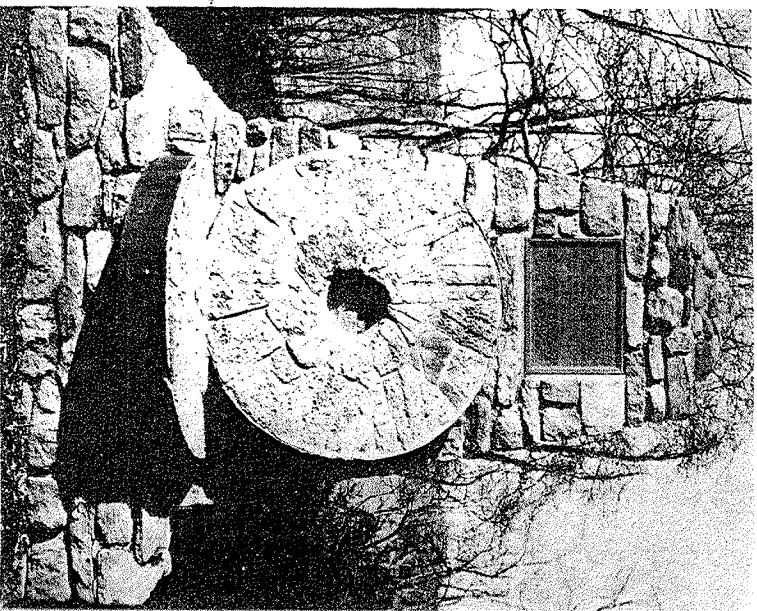


# NORTH CASTLE HISTORY



*Walling Collection*

REUBEN WRIGHT'S MILLS MONUMENT

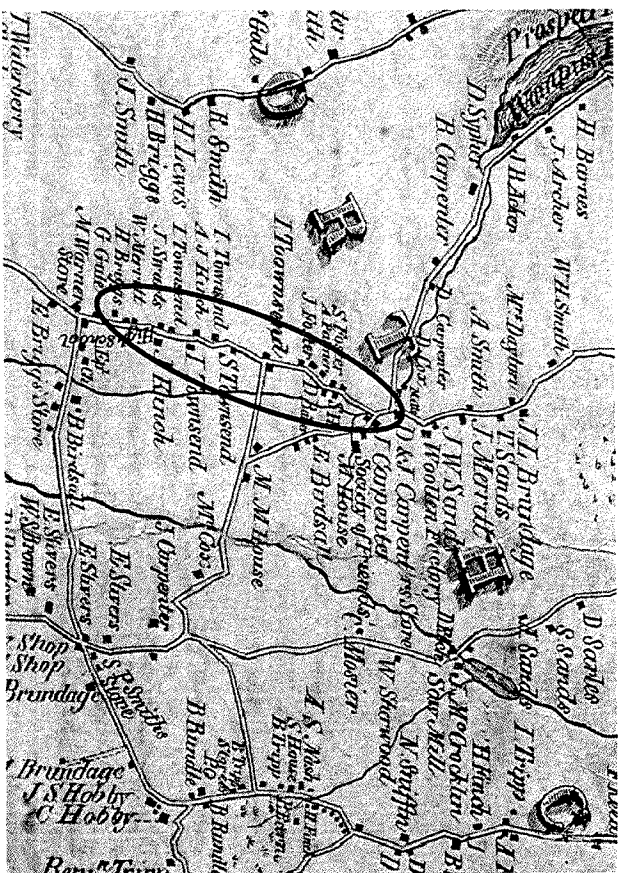
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**REUBEN WRIGHT'S MILLS MONUMENT**

**THE NORTH CASTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Volume 42 -- 2015**

OLD MOUNT KISCO ROAD, ARMONK, NEW YORK  
by Christine Eggleton



1851 Sidney and Neff map

1851 MAP SHOWING OLD ROAD TO MOUNT KISCO

The circled area is present day Old Mount Kisco Road. Perpendicular to it at the center of the circle is present day School Street. Joining it at the top of the circle from the left are Route 128, then High Street and then Cox Avenue joining School Street at the “M. M. House” (Methodist Meeting House). The top of the circle is the Mill location and the sharp turn in the road of NYS Route 128, the present day road to Mount Kisco.

One of the largest early settlements of North Castle grew around the Wannpus River. This settlement was known as Mile Square and was at the cross roads of the Road to Mount Kisco (present day Route 128 and Old Mount Kisco Road) and Cox Avenue/High Street. The historic pre-Revolutionary War Mill first known as Hallocks Mill then Latings Mill then Thomas Wright’s Mills<sup>1</sup>, and then finally Sands Mills influenced the growth of the area. It was Wright’s Barn that held British spy Major John Andre overnight in 1780 during the Revolution. In it’s heyday

<sup>1</sup> Refer to North Castle History, Volume 32, 2005 for further information.

in the 1850s, the mill stood along with the surrounding “town” of stores, hotels, entertainment venues, commercial buildings and homes<sup>2</sup>.

From the late 1890s through the late 1920s New York State and New York City began to focus a lot of attention on this area of town. During this time drinking water became a big concern for a growing New York City and cars were becoming mainstream. Some roads that were okay for horses and carriages were hazardous for the growing numbers of drivers. Ultimately New York City bought and condemned the properties surrounding Sands Mill that were polluting the Wampus River. At the same time NY State began standardizing State roads, ensuring they were of a standard width, were named using a standard nomenclature and were as safe as possible, eliminating as many curves as possible and increasing the distance between structures and traffic. In those efforts, most of the original structures along the Sands Mill section of the Wampus River were torn down and the Armonk-Mount Kisco State Road (State Route 128) was “straightened” as the old timers like to say. This left a curious little road known as Old Mount Kisco Road that continues to intrigue people as they pass through that road today. This article will begin to unravel the mysteries of Old Mount Kisco Road and though it is far from complete, research continues and a future article will bring more details together.

What was it about this area that drew North Castle’s earliest settlers? The Wampus River was ideal for a mill (there were quite a few mills in North Castle in the early days) and south of Sands Mills the Wampus river runs through a fairly flat valley area. This was very suitable for farming and there were many sources of water between the river and numerous springs. Early residents logically built into the steep hillside of this valley with most of the properties terraced from front to back or back to front, to be close to the source of business and away from the wet river area. Very old timers referred to this very steep hill along Old Mount Kisco Road as Chemung Mountain.

The following highlights the history we know at this time about the old structures along the Old Mount Kisco Road beginning at the fork in the road at Route 128.

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to North Castle History, Volume 7, 1980 for further information.

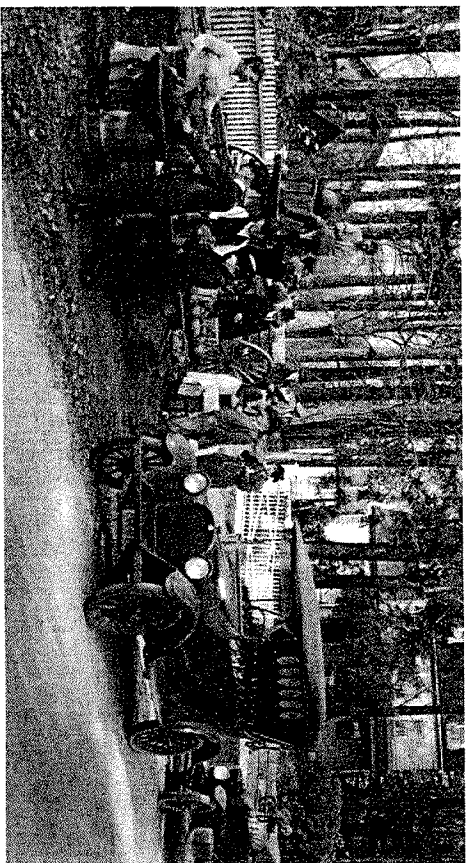
*We are fortunate to be able to walk through history down Old Mount Kisco Road and see so many buildings so close to their original settings. Please come by some time and see for yourself!*



Google maps screen shot

#### **THE FORK IN OLD MOUNT KISCO ROAD TRAVELING NORTH**

The left fork is the Old Mount Kisco Road (sometimes referred to as OMK Rd in this article) and to the right is the new Mount Kisco Road formally known as State Highway 128, which was created around 1920. Let's take the left fork and travel back in time and set the stage in your mind... We're going back to 1850... Imagine a time when people got around on horses, there was no electricity and homes were heated with fireplaces and wood stoves. The air always had an aroma of fireplaces and animals. The sounds were different too – imagine no airports or highways and the clip-clop of horses bringing people and goods from place to place. Imagine a lot fewer trees as many were cut down for fuel and to open farmland. Likely the homes on Old Mount Kisco dating to the 1850s were built using local timber cut at the saw mill up the road. The narrow road was unpaved until the 1920s. Just beyond the fork on the left is Eden Hunt Place, named for the house that once stood there.



Courtesy of Joyce Hergenhan, daughter of Goldie Wago and John Hergenhan

### **WAGO FARM STAND ON OLD MOUNT KISCO ROAD AS IT APPEARED AROUND 1920<sup>3</sup>**

The Eden Hunt house appears in the background on the right. Among local shoppers were the throngs of Sunday drivers taking out their new-fangled cars for a drive on the new Bronx River Parkway and up to North Castle to spend the day, shop at farms stands such as this one and picnic at the Armonk Airport, watching the airplanes take off and land.



Google maps screen shot

### **PRESENT-DAY 75 OLD MOUNT KISCO ROAD, ARMONK SITE OF THE FORMER FOUR PINES TEA HOUSE, aka COTTAGE**

<sup>3</sup> Screenshot taken from North Castle Councilman Barbara DiGiacinto campaign video.