

Sullivan's Expedition  
in  
Tobyhanna Township  
Coming to the Pocono Plateau....  
...The First Road over the Poconos



Rick Bodenschatz, Presenter  
A Local History Conference  
April 26, 2013



# Sullivan's Expedition in Tobyhanna Township

Coming to the Pocono Plateau



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## The Revolutionary War

### The Threat and a Formulated Response 1778-1779

- British, Tories and the Six Nations of the Iroquois at Fort Niagara
- The Wyoming Massacre and Cherry Valley Massacre  
***“A shocking sight my eyes never held before of savage brutal barbarity.”*** ...Captain Benjamin Warren
- *The Dismal Swamp* and *“The Shades of Death”*

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- General Washington envisions a threat to National Security and the division of the Colonies
- General John Sullivan appointed to command the response against the 6 Nations of the Iroquois
- Washington's orders include....
  - “ ***...the total destruction and devastation of their settlements.... It will be essential to ruin their crops now in the ground and prevent their planting more.***”



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## Sullivan's Army

- Easton & NJ: Almost 3,800 men in 4 Brigades
  - Eastern NY: Clinton's 2,100 men in 5 Regiments
- A total of 5,865 men participated  
Equaling 1/3 of the entire Continental Army.

## The Road Builders

- Van Cortlandt's 2<sup>nd</sup> NY Regiment
- Spencer's 5<sup>th</sup> NJ Regiment
- Cilly's 1<sup>st</sup> New Hampshire Regiment

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## The March to Construction

- Van Cortlandt's 2<sup>nd</sup> NY Regiment marched from Ulster, NY via Ft. Penn in Stroudsburg. Arrived Learns Tavern May 15
- Spencer's 5<sup>th</sup> NJ Regiment marched from Easton, arriving at Learns Tavern on May 16.
- Captain Benjamin Lodge, Geographer  
- chief surveyor & mapper
- Combined force of 500 men began construction immediately
- On May 17 the first camp was established 6 miles deep into the forest at White Oak Run
- Construction work was done in both directions

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## The 500 Road Builders.....

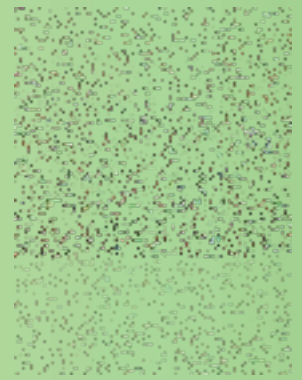
- Officers
- Engineers
- Infantry
- Axmen
- Cooks
- Surveyors
- Riflemen
- Hunters
- Laborers
- Craftsmen
- Drummers and Fife Players

With wagons, pack horses, tents, tools, guns and ammunition, baggage and provisions. *No chainsaws, jackhammers or graders.*



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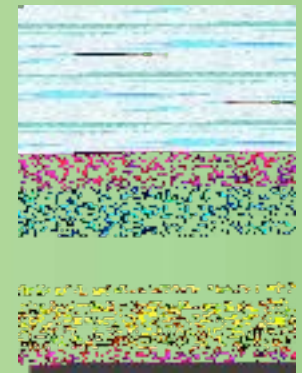


## The Conditions

- Mid-Spring...of the era....cold, rainy, high water
- A steep climb in elevation from 883 feet to 1900+ feet
- A footpath from Learns Tavern to Wyoming Valley
- Dense forest of 200 feet tall pine, thick mountain laurel
- Swamps, Swamps, .....and more Swamps
- Excessively rocky- the Wisconsin Glacier terminal moraine
- Rattlesnakes & bears
- No Wawa's or Walmarts

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## Climbing the Mountain- From Pocono Point to TT

- 1,000 feet over first 6 miles, with half being treacherous
- Dense forest, rock formations, outcroppings & immense boulders, sharp curves in ascent, and small streams.
- The camp at White Oak Run was named Rum Ridge, later renamed Chowder Camp, now known as Dry Sawmill Run
- Lt. Charles Nuberck of the 2<sup>nd</sup> NY recorded in his journal for the period May 18-22:

***“Much rain during this time-  
notwithstanding which worked  
the Road some distance in front.”***

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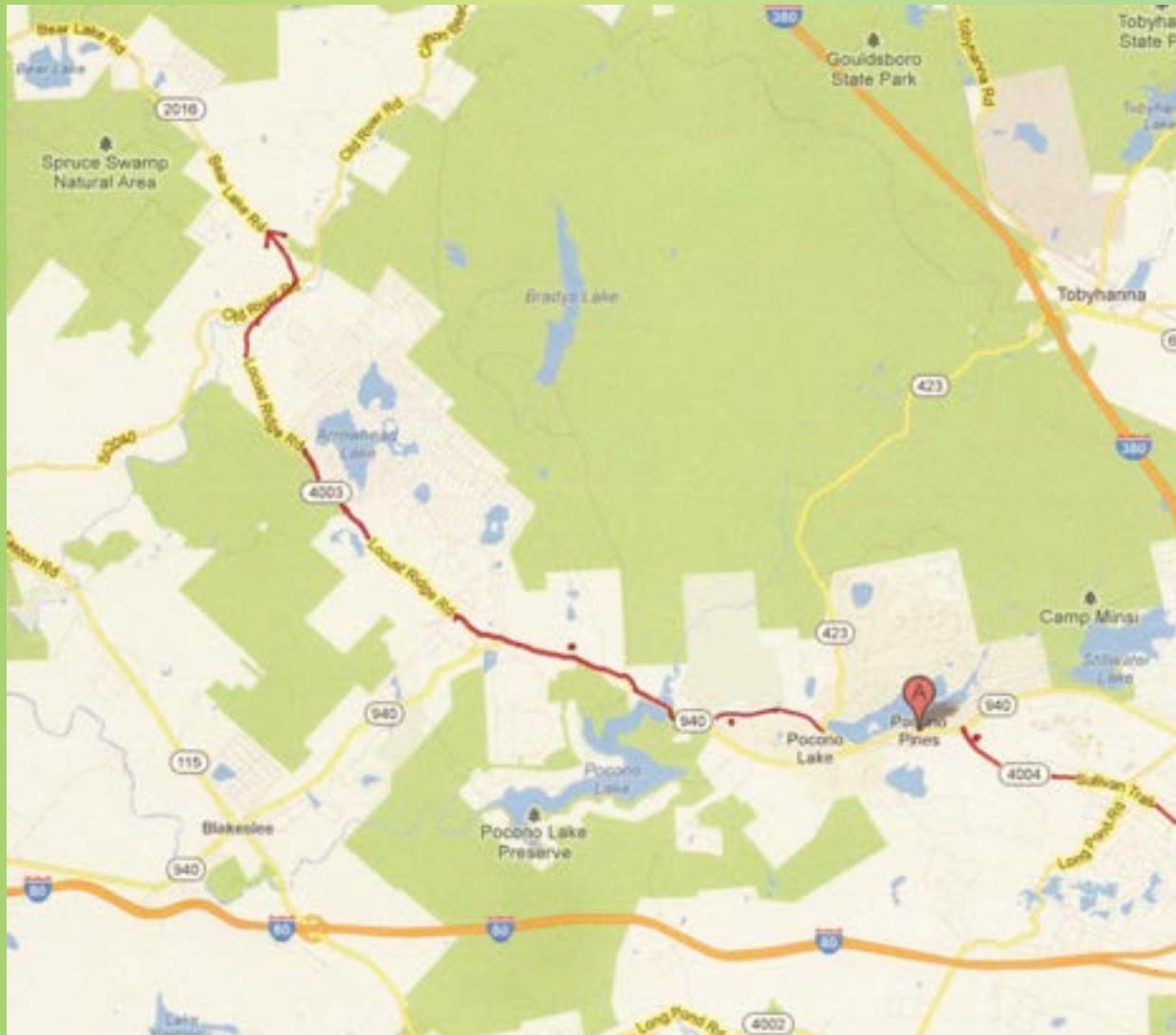


## Approaching Tobyhanna Township

- After the first 6 miles, approaching TT, the elevation started to level onto the Plateau
- At about 7 miles they enter the vicinity of TT
- Elevation no longer a challenge, BUT everything else still is
- Observing the area while marching with the main army en route through the area, Sgt. Thomas Roberts, 5<sup>th</sup> NJ, wrote.... ***“A hous nor fense nothing but Rocks and mountains and Grate part of it was Dark after the Sun down When it was noon Day..”***

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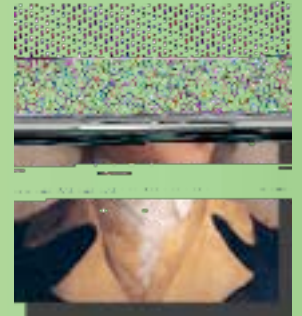


## Tobyhanna Township and the *Great Swamp*

- Significant glacial swamps make the objective more complicated.
- TT was then known as “*The Great Swamp*”
- Road building now becomes more complicated
- Between mile 7.5 and 9.0, The Great Swamp consumes the Energies of the the construction teams.
- So significant were the challenges, two sites there have earned the names “**Hungry Hill and Hell’s Kitchen**”

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## Crossing the Tunkhannock Creek

- Turning more Northwesterly, skirting and crossing 'The Great Swamp'
- Near *Indian Field* the road crossed today's Upper Tunkhannock Creek in Pocono Pines.
- Creek was forded at a low, wide area with good bedrock
- Sunday, May 23 Lt. John Hardenbergh, 2<sup>nd</sup> NY, recorded:

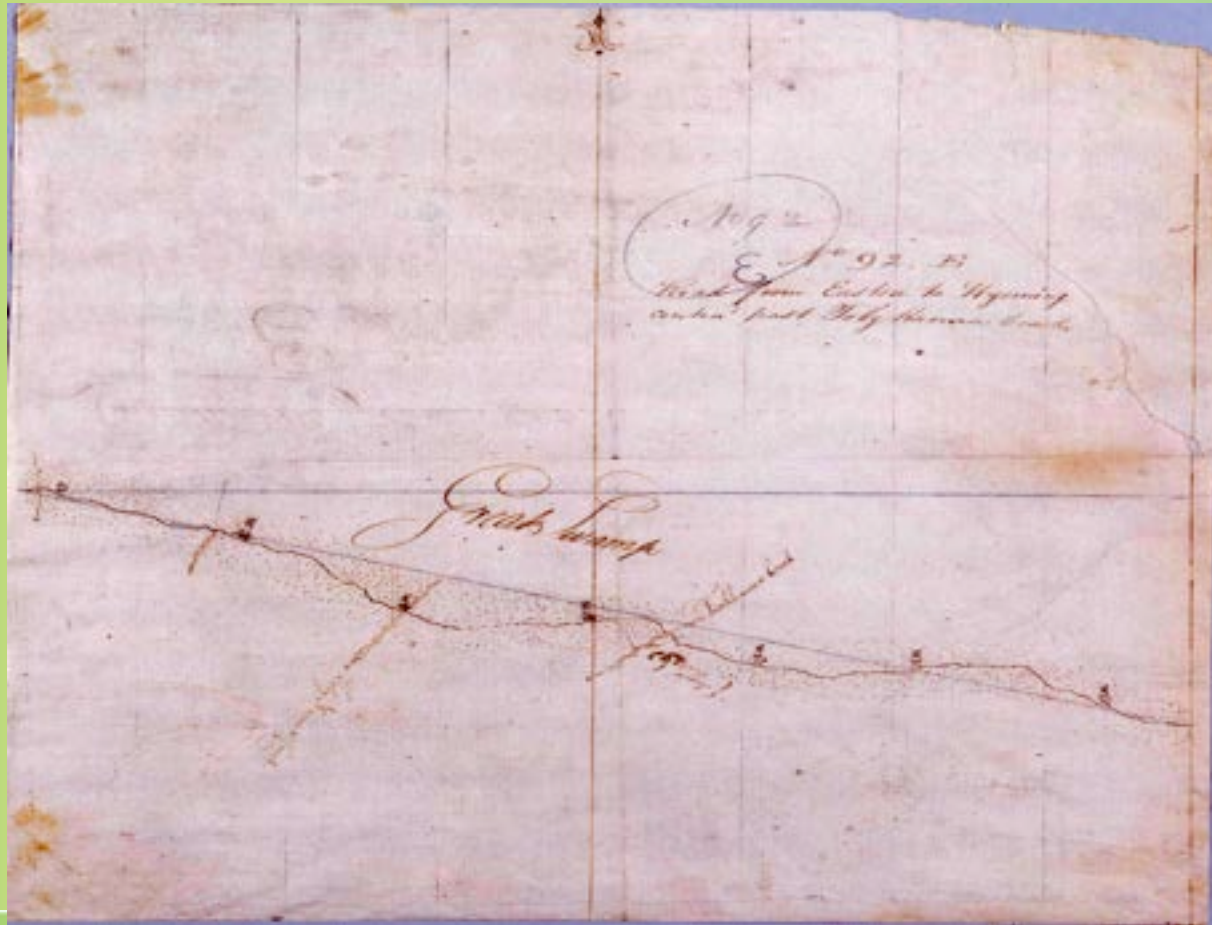
***“The morning was fair and clear. Received orders to march. At 8 o'clock the General beat; struck tents, proceeded on our march till over the creek in the Great Swamp called Tackhanack, the road very bad, the baggage could not come up; went back to mended the road and encamped where the baggage was.”***

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Captain  
Benjamin  
Lodge  
Map



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## The Next Camp, at Tobyhanna Creek

- Monday, May 24<sup>th</sup> a full camp was established ½ mile east of Tobyhanna Creek.
- The first and only bridge was constructed, taking 5 days to complete the bridge, road and causeway.
- On Tuesday, May 25<sup>th</sup> Lt. Hardenberg stated ***“...built a bridge and causeway of one hundred and fifteen paces in length. The creek is considerable large and abounds with trout. Some good land along the creek; the road very difficult to make.”***
- Written in Harding's Sullivan Road in 1899, ***“...still the original name, the “Sullivan Bridge” yet remains, and doubtless will remain as long as history lasts.”***

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## The First Booze Party in Tobyhanna Township

Lt. Hardenbergh writes on Saturday, May 29<sup>th</sup>:

***“John Curry and Michael Sellers were tried and convicted at the drum-head for stealing rum from the commissary, found guilty, and sentenced to receive, Curry seventy-five lashes, and Sellers fifty, which was directly put to execution.”***

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## Middle Creek Encampment

- About a mile west of the Tobyhanna's "Sullivan Bridge"
- Later known as the the "Branch" and today known as "Wagner's Run".

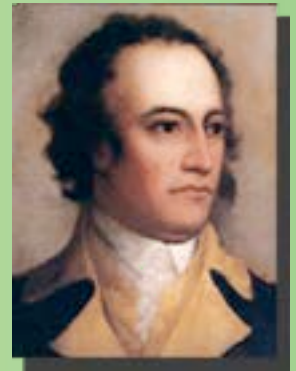
## The Largest Encampment....."Locust Hill Camp"

- Sunday & Monday, May 30<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup> was moving day
- Dr. Jabez Campfield, Spencer's 5<sup>th</sup> NJ reported On May 31:

*"The hill is covered with small locust trees. While the detachment remained at Locust Hill the first New Hampshire Regt. joined us, but at the same time a detachment of near 200 men under Col. Smith were sent to Wyoming so that we gained very little by the Hampshire men's coming up."*

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## The Road to the Lehigh River

- Last 3 miles steep and rocky, descending Locust Hill diagonally due to the intense slope.
- Lt. Hardenberg further details the road-building:

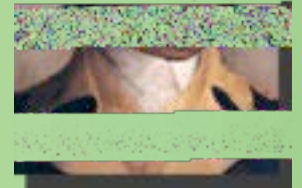
***“Thursday, June 3d.- The troops did not work for want of provisions”***

***“Friday, June 4<sup>th</sup>.-The camp remained on Locust Hill. Captain Graham, myself, and two other officers were ordered to inspect pork which was chiefly Condemned on account of being spoiled.”***



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- Lt. Hardenberg writes in his journal on Thursday, June 3:  
***“John Ten Eyck, soldier in Captain French’s company of light infantry was drown in the Lehi by accident.”***
- The main construction group left TT on Monday, June 7.  
As further reported by Hardenberg:  
***“ at about 8 in the morning decamped from Locust Hill, crossed the Lehi and encamped on the side of the Swamp called the Shades of Death, about six miles from Locust Hill”***
- *“Camp Fatigue”* appropriately named, in the Thornhurst, Lackawanna County area.

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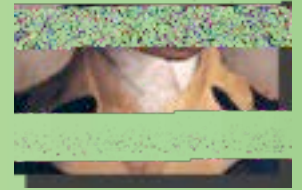


## Sullivan's Forced March through Tobyhanna Township

- Friday, June 18<sup>th</sup>- 3 AM- broke camp at Easton
- Saturday pm, June 19<sup>th</sup>- reached Learns Tavern
- June 20<sup>th</sup>- made only 5 miles, to Chowder Camp
- June 21<sup>st</sup>- made 20 miles through Tobyhanna Township and the Great Swamp, to the Shades of Death
- June 23<sup>rd</sup>- arrived at the Wyoming Valley

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## Observations during the March....

The Rev. William Rogers, D.D., Brigade Chaplain of the Pennsylvania Line, observed on June 21<sup>st</sup>,

*“This day we marched through the Great Swamp and Bear Swamp. The Great Swamp, which is eleven or twelve miles through, contains what is called on our maps the ‘shades of death,’ by reason of its darkness; both swamps contain trees of amazing height, viz., hemlock, birch, pine, sugar maple, ash, locust, etc. The roads in some places are tolerable, but in other places exceedingly bad, by reason of which, and a long march through, three of our wagons and the carriages of two field pieces were broken down.”*

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## The Battle Is Won

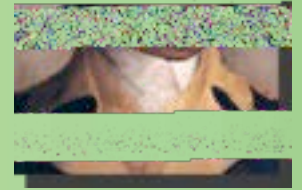
- 40 Towns Destroyed, and many houses in-between
- 160,000 bushels of corn

General Sullivan's report to General Washington:

*“Every creek and river has been traced, and the whole country explored in search of Indian Settlements, and I am well persuaded that, except for one town situated near the Allegana, about 5 miles from Chinesee there is not a single town left in the country of the Five nations.”*

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## The Victors Return

- Lt. Erkuries Beatty of the 4<sup>th</sup> PA Line...

Tues, Oct. 12:

***“Entered the Great Swamp which is a very bad road....a great many horses Died in the Swamp to day and a Great many wagons broken to pieces.*”**

- Lt. William McKendry, of the 6<sup>th</sup> Mass Regiment, a survivor of the Cherry Hill Massacre, penned on Oct. 12:

***“Got through the Swamp 4. 0 clock P.M., the route very stoney and muddy this day.”*”**

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**Oct. 8, General Washington sends a courier....**

....as noted by Major James Norris:

***“General Sullivan Received an Express This Evening from General Washington Informing him that Count De Easting is on the Coast Near New York with a fleet and Army- In Consequence of Which General Sullivan’s is Ordered to March the 16<sup>th</sup> Instant for Head Quarters”***

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Major Norris summed up the return trip march.....

***“Arived their Army was March’d from Tiago to Easton (156 Miles through a Mountainous Rough Wilderness) in 8 Days with the Artillery, and Baggage, a Most Extraordinary March indeed-”***

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## Time Line:

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| May 15-16  | Road builders arrive Learns Tavern          |
| May 17     | Establish first camp, began construction    |
| May 23     | Temp. camp at Hungry Hill area              |
| May 24     | Establish camp at Tobyhanna Creek           |
| May 30-31  | Establish camp at Locust Hill               |
| June 7     | Establish <i>Camp Fatigue</i> across Lehigh |
| June 14-15 | Road completed to Wyoming Valley            |



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## What it meant to the region?

- The opening of commerce to Northeastern PA and Upstate NY
- Development of the Pocono Mountain Region
- Capturing of the region's natural resources

***“The new road does its projectors great credit, and must in a future day be of essential service to the inhabitants of Wyoming and Easton.”***

.....Rev. William Rogers, D.D. June 21, 1779

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### Sources:

- Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission [www.portal.state.pa.us](http://www.portal.state.pa.us)
- Monroe County Historical Association
- Journals of the Military Expedition of Major General John Sullivan, State of New York, Knapp, Peck & Thomson, 1887
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- The History of Wilkes-Barre, Oscar Jewell Harvey, A.M., 1909
- An Illustrated History of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, William H. Egle, M.D., De Witt C. Goodrich & Co., 1876.
- History of Luzerne County Pennsylvania, H.C. Bradsby, Editor, S.B. Nelson & Co., Publishers, 1893
- The Sullivan Road, Garrick M. Harding, Wyoming Valley Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, Press of The Wiles-Barre Record, 1899-1900.



## HUNGRY HILL

THIS ENCAMPMENT SITE WAS NAMED BY GENERAL SULLIVAN'S EXPEDITION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR, 1779, EN ROUTE NORTH TO AVENGE THE WYOMING MASSACRE. THEY CALLED THE ADJACENT SWAMP HELL'S KITCHEN. ARMY ENGINEERS BUILT THIS FIRST ROAD ON THE POCONO PLATEAU, ACROSS THE DESOLATE AREA KNOWN AS THE GREAT SWAMP. MEAGER PROVISIONS REQUIRED SOLDIERS TO LIVE OFF THE LAND, AND ONE DIED HERE.

MONROE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS 2013





# HUNGRY HILL

1779 1943

IN 1779, A BATTLE OF PATRIOTS DEFENDING BY KANSAS  
OF THE NEW YORK AND THE SON, JESSE BROWN, IN  
THE CONTROVERSIAL LIFE WHO HAD FIGHTED WITH  
BRITISH, & HE HAD BEEN THE 1779-4 MALLARD ROAD  
TO LIVE THE NEW YORK BROTHERS INVENTION, A BATTLE  
THE BATTLE OF HUNGRY HILL IN THE REVOLUTION  
AND BATTLE FIGHT.

SPONSORED BY  
MARINE CORPS  
RETIRED, 1943

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**[www.TobyhannaTwpHistory.org](http://www.TobyhannaTwpHistory.org)**