

50 B July 4, 1976 SUNDAY RECORD

Rockland

The wiley trout brings thousands to town

By HERBERT MUSSMAN
Town of Rockland Historian

The Town of Rockland probably is most known for its two famous trout fishing streams, the Beaverkill and Willowemoc. Each year thousands of fishermen travel to Rockland to try their luck at catching the wiley trout.

Rockland was established as a governmental entity in 1809 and comprises an area that once was in the Town of Neversink.

The town's first permanent settler was Jehiel Stewart who came from Connecticut by way of Wawarsing. He reached the junction of the Beaverkill and Willowemoc and settled there in 1789. It was known then as Westfield Flats. Stewart was the owner of a lumber mill and proprietor of the first inn.

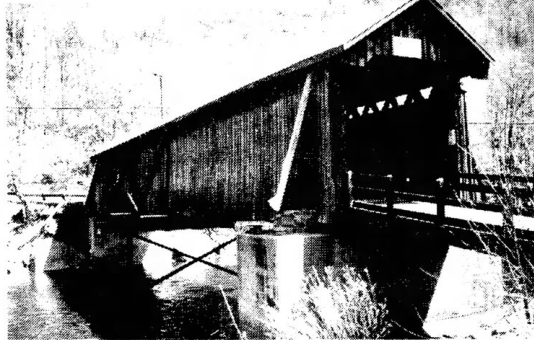
John Hunter, who owned a large tract of land, conceived the idea of making an old footpath, known as Sun Trail, into a highway. He hired Abel Sprague and together they cut the road from the wilderness. Today it is called Hunter Road.

One of the earliest industries in Rockland was the tanning of hides to make leather. Bark of the hemlock tree, so prolific in the town, was used in vast quantities and tanneries were located at several points in the town.

The largest tannery was at DeBruce where 60,000 hides were tanned annually. According to old records, this took a total of 6,000 cords of hemlock bark. Other tanneries were located at Morsston and Beaverkill, with two other in the Roscoe area. The tanneries were at their peak during the Civil War period but gradually declined due to the lack of available hemlock bark.

Many sawmills operated and thousands of acres of softwoods — hemlock, pine, fir, spruce and basswood — were harvested. Some hardwood, primarily maple and cherry, was cut and used principally for furniture.

The lumber industry was so vast that one lumberman, whom history records by only the last name of Burr, cut and harvested more than a million board feet of fir from the swamp land above the Willowemoc River. It was considered to be



The covered bridge at Livingston Manor. —Record photo by Charlie Crist

the finest stand of fir anywhere in the eastern United States. Much of Burr's lumber was used in the making of masts and spars for the queenly clipper ships of that day.

Acid factories were started about the time of the closing of the tanning industry. They used local hardwood timber in the manufacture of charcoal, wood alcohol and acetate of lime, used in making of smokeless gunpowder. The acid factories reached their peak during World War I.

Livingston Manor, originally known as Morsston Depot, was named for Dr. Edward Livingston who settled the region about 1824. He built a manor house on the property where the present Livingston Manor firehouse is located.

The railroad did much to build up the town as a summer resort area. The Oswego and Midland Railroad, later called the New York, Ontario and Western Railroad, reached the town in 1872. The Village of Roscoe owes its existence to the railroad. Originally known as Westfield Flats, it was named for Roscoe Conkling, a U.S. senator.

One of the township's primary attractions is its covered bridges located at Beaverkill and Van Tran Flats over the Be-

averkill, and the Bendo Bridge over the Willowemoc near the hamlet of Willowemoc.

They were built between 1860-65 by John Davidson. The Beaverkill and Bendo bridges are open to auto traffic while the Van Tran Flats Bridge is closed for repairs.

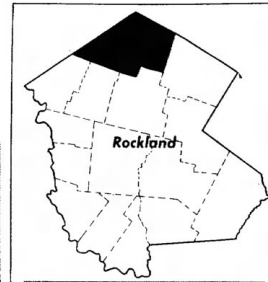
Many noted people live or have lived in Rockland. Lt. Thomas R. Mott, a Revolutionary War veteran, is buried in Mott Cemetery just north of Livingston Manor.

The noted humanitarian, John R. Mott, was born in Rockland in 1865, but moved to Iowa at an early age. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946 and died in Orlando, Fla., in 1955.

Rober S. Ward started the first fish hatchery in the town at DeBruce, now operated by the State Department of Environmental Conservation. Ward's brother, Charles B., was a U.S. congressman from the district in which Rockland is located.

Other well-known people maintain homes in Rockland, song writer Irving Berlin maintains one at Lew Beach and Lazare Kaplan, a diamond cutter, has a farm not far from Lew Beach.

As with most other communities,



our town

First settler: Probably Jehiel and Luber Stewart and their families about 1796. They settled at Big Flats at the confluence of the Beaverkill and Willowemoc rivers. Originally part of the Hardenburgh Patent. Taken wholly from the Town of Neversink and created as a town by an act of the State Legislature on March 29, 1809.
Area: Approximately 92 square miles.
Roads and highways: Approximately 160 miles.
Population: 1,970: 2,919.
Principle industries: Tourists and agriculture.

OFFICIALS

Supervisor—William M. Bills
Clerk—Mae Van Aken
Justice—P. Harold McFarlane
Justice—Richard C. Welch
Councilman—Gilbert Becker
Councilman—Edward Ackerly
Highway Supt.—George Lake
Tax Collector—Nettie Wood
Assessor, Multiple Res. Officer & Zoning Officer—Wayne Gustafson
Health Officer—Dr. Alan R. Fried
Social Services Officer—William M. Bills
Registrar of Vital Statistics—Mae Van Aken
Historian—Herbert Mussman
Dog Warden—Donald Sprague
Planning Board Chairman—Dr. Alan Fried

churches have played an important part in the spiritual development of Rockland. The father of the noted Sullivan County historian, James E. Quinlan, preached at the first established church in the town at a place called Brown Settlement. The church was built prior to 1840. The Presbyterians established a church in the Lew Beach area about 1850.

Dr. Livingston donated the land and \$500 for the building of the Livingston Manor United Methodist Church. Miss Jane Purvis, a resident, is said to have ridden through the area on horseback to canvass the people for donations to equal that of Dr. Livingston's. Her efforts were successful and the church was erected in 1857. Dr. Livingston is buried in the cemetery to the rear of the church.

The Presbyterian Church in Roscoe now stands just about the same as it was when built in the 1860s.