

THE WYNANTSKILL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

AND

ITS MEMBER MILLS AND OPERATORS

PRESENTED TO THE SAND LAKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY ON APRIL 10, 1990

BY

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MY STORY TONIGHT IS ABOUT THE WYNANTSKILL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION, ITS MEMBER MILLS AND MILL OPERATORS AND ALSO THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE WYNANTSKILL, THE BUILDING OF DAMS AND RESERVOIRS TO IMPROVE THE FLOW OF WATER FOR HYDRAULIC PURPOSES.

THE WYNANTSKILL CREEK IS A RELATIVELY SMALL STREAM WITH HEAD WATERS AT CROOKED LAKE, FLOWS THROUGH GLASS LAKE AND THE TOWNS OF SAND LAKE, A CORNER OF POESTENKILL, NORTH GREENBUSH AND FINALLY ENTERS THE HUDSON RIVER IN SOUTH TROY.

BEFORE GETTING INTO DETAILS, A BIT OF BACKGROUND MIGHT BE IN ORDER. I AM A RELATIVELY NEW COMER TO THIS AREA LIVING HERE ONLY ABOUT 40 YEARS. DURING THIS PERIOD I KEPT HEARING STORIES OF THE WYNANTSKILL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION LOWERING THE LEVEL OF GLASS LAKE, BUT NEVER ANY DETAILS ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OR ITS PURPOSE. BACK A FEW YEARS AGO THE LAKE ASSOCIATIONS OF BURDEN, GLASS AND

CROOKED LAKES HAD A JOINT MEETING WITH A MR. RIPPLE OF PORTEC. PORTEC WAS THE LAST SURVIVING MEMBER OF THE WYNANTSKILL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION AND THUS OWNER OF THE WATER RIGHTS OF THE WYNANTSKILL. THE DISCUSSION AT THIS MEETING PERTAINED TO THE POSSIBILITY OF ASSUMING THESE RIGHTS BY A LAKE ASSOCIATION, THE TOWN OF SAND LAKE OR COUNTY OF RENSSELAER. NOTHING MATERIALIZED FROM THESE TALKS EXCEPT I CAME INTO POSSESSION OF A COPY OF SOME EARLY MINUTES AND

DEEDS OF THE WYNANTSKILL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION. READING THESE IGNITED MY CURIOSITY. WHO WERE THE EARLY MILL OPERATORS? WHY DID THEY ORGANIZE? HOW DID STEVEN VAN RENSSELAER FIT INTO THE DEVELOPMENT? I HAVE BEEN RESEARCHING THESE QUESTIONS FOR ABOUT 5 YEARS AND STILL DON'T HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS. TONIGHT I WOULD LIKE TO GIVE YOU A BRIEF REVIEW OF WHAT I HAVE LEARNED. PERHAPS WHEN I HAVE FINISHED YOU CAN ADD TO THIS STORY BY SUPPLYING ME WITH SOME OF YOUR OWN INFORMATION AND DATA.

TO BEGIN I HAVE A FEW SLIDES SHOWING SOME OF THE PAST HISTORY OF THE WYNANTSKILL CREEK THAT RELATE TO OUR TOPIC FOR TONIGHT.

(SLIDES)

IT WAS IN 1609 THAT HENRY HUDSON SAILED UP THE HUDSON RIVER. ONLY 20 YEARS LATER KILIAEN VAN RENSSELAER, THE FIRST PATROON, RECEIVED HIS GRANT, ^{for} THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RENNS~~FLAER~~^{FLAER}WYCK. IN 1656 ABRAHAM PIETERSON VOSBURGH AND HANS IANSEN VAN ROTTERDAM CONTRACTED FOR THE RIGHTS TO THE WATER POWER FROM JAN BAPTIST VAN RENSSELAER ON A STREAM THAT WE KNOW TODAY AS THE WYNANTSKILL CREEK. BUT MY STORY TONIGHT JUMPS AHEAD 164 YEARS TO A LAW SUIT OVER WATER RIGHTS ON THE WYNANTSKILL. IN 1818 JACOB MERRITT RAN A FLOUR MILL ON THE WYNANTSKILL NEAR THE HUDSON RIVER. JUST UPSTREAM JOHN BRINKERHOFF HAD AN IRON MILL. IT SEEMS THAT BRINKERHOFF IN THE OPERATION OF HIS MILL WOULD STOP ^{THE FLOW} AND STORE WATERS OF THE WYNANTSKILL AT HIS DAM WHILE HIS FURNACE HEATED THE IRON TO ROLLING TEMPERATURE. THE WATER WAS THEN RELEASED TO HIS WATER WHEEL, OPERATING THE ROLLERS AND TURNING OUT ROLLED IRON TO BE USED FOR NAILS, SPADES AND OTHER IRON UTENSILS. MERRITT, DOWNSTREAM, REQUIRED A SMALL BUT STEADY FLOW TO OPERATE HIS GRIST MILL. AS THE RESULT OF BRINKERHOFFS OPERATION HE WAS GETTING A NO FLOW - TORRENTAIL FLOW, GREATLY

DISRUPTING HIS OPERATION. THE OUTCOME OF THIS LAW SUIT IS TWOFOLD. FIRST, MERRITT WON THE CASE AND WAS AWARDED DAMAGES FOR LOST PRODUCTION. THIS AMOUNTED TO A LOSS OF 50 BARRELS A DAY, OR 47¢ PER BARREL OR A TOTAL AWARD OF \$700. SECONDLY, THIS IS CONJECTURE ON MY PART, IT SHOWED OWNERS OF MILL PRIVILEGES THAT COOPERATION RATHER THAN QUIBBLING WAS REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN A REGULATED FLOW OF WATER FROM THE WYNANTSKILL. THIS COOPERATIVE SOLUTIONS WAS FIRST CARRIED OUT IN 1820. WHEN THE TWO ANTAGONISTS OF THE LAW SUIT JOHN BRINKERHOFF AND MERRITT JOINED WITH THE TROY IRON AND NAIL FACTORY TO BUILD A DAM AT SNYDERS LAKE. THEY ENTERED INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH HARMAN SNYDER WHO OCCUPIED THE FARM AT THE OUTLET OF THE LAKE THAT TODAY BEARS HIS NAME. FOR A ONE TIME FEE OF \$10., SNYDER ALLOWED THE BUILDING OF A DAM AND FLUME ON HIS PROPERTY, AND FOR AN ADDITIONAL FEE OF \$5., A YEAR, HE AGREED TO TEND THE GATE WHICH CONTROLLED THE WATER FLOW. THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE WYNANTSKILL WAS BORN.

THERE WERE A NUMBER OF MILL OWNERS ALREADY ESTABLISHED AT THIS TIME. STARTING FROM THE HUDSON RIVER AND GOING UP STREAM WE FIRST HAVE MERRITT AND HART, A FLOUR MILL. THE HART SIDE OF THE PARTNERSHIP WAS A NEPHEW OF JACOB MERRITT AND THE SAME RICHARD P. HART WHOSE TROY RESIDENCE IS NOW THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE RENSSELAER HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

NEXT CAME BRINKERHOFF IRON MILL THAT IN 1826 WAS BOUGHT OUT BY A GROUP OF ALBANY BUSINESS MEN INCLUDING ERASTUS CORNING THE FIRST, A NAME WE SHOULD ALL BE FAMILIAR WITH.: THE NAME OF THE MILL WAS CHANGED TO "THE ALBANY IRON AND NAIL FACTORY".

JOHN CONVERSE BUILT AN IRON FACTORY IN 1809 ON THE WYNANTSKILL JUST UPSTREAM FROM THE ALBANY IRON AND NAIL FACTORY. IT WAS TO BECOME THE TROY IRON AND NAIL FACTORY. A SCOTSMAN BY THE NAME OF

HENRY BURDEN BECAME SUPERINTENDENT IN 1822.

CONTINUING UPSTREAM IN THE 1820s WERE THE HOWLAND PAPER MILL AND RICHARDSONS FLOUR MILL NEAR TODAY'S CAMPBELL AVENUE: TROY WOOLEN FACTORY AND THE TROY WOOL AND COTTON FACTORY WERE LOCATED IN ALBIA.

SKIPPING TO WEST SAND LAKE, WE HAD THE CIPPERLY SAW MILL AND ANDREW ULINES SAW AND GRIST MILL, NAMES THAT SHOULD BE FAMILIAR TO MOST OF US HERE.

AVERILL PARK, CALLED SAND LAKE IN THE 1820s, HAD 5 MILLS. THERE WAS ARETUS LYMAN'S SAW MILL, HEMENWAY AND COLEMAN, A SATINET MILL, COONRAD ALBRIDGE, CLARK HOPKINS & CO. AND JON VAN HOSSEN, THE GLASS FACTORY AT GLASS LAKE WAS THE FINAL MILL UP STREAM. THIS WAS THE LOCATION OF A SAW MILL THAT WAS BUILT PRIOR TO 1791.

SO, AS YOU CAN SEE, A SMALL STREAM LIKE THE WYNANTSKILL CREEK PROVIDED WATER POWER FOR A NUMBER OF MILLS. A DEPENDABLE WATER SUPPLY WAS BECOMING MORE IMPORTANT AS THE NUMBER AND SIZE OF THE MILLS INCREASED. AS A RESULT, THE OWNERS AND OPERATORS OF MILL PRIVILEGES ALONG THE WYNANTSKILL DECIDED TO JOIN TOGETHER IN AN ORGANIZATION FOR THEIR MUTUAL BENEFIT. THIS ORGANIZATION OFFICIALLY BEGAN ON SEPT. 17, 1829, AT WHICH TIME 12 REPRESENTATIVES MET IN THE COUNTING ROOM OF RICHARD P. HART IN TROY TO SIGN "THE ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION". THESE ARTICLES STATED THE PURPOSE "TO CONTROL AND TO DRAW AND TO DRAIN THE LAKES THAT DISCHARGE THEIR WATERS INTO THE WYNANTSKILL IN A WAY THAT WILL MAKE THEM MOST USEFUL TO THE MEMBERS" IT APPOINTED A COMMITTEE AND AUTHORIZED IT TO PURCHASE PRIVILEGES, EXCAVATE DITCHES AND ERECT DAMS AND TO PROVIDE A PERMANENT SUPPLY OF WATER FROM THE LAKES. A METHOD OF ALLOCATING THE COST OF THESE IMPROVEMENTS AMONG THE OWNERS AND OPERATORS WAS AGREED UPON. ACTIVITY BEGAN AT ONCE. AN ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING FOLLOWED IN OCTOBER AT

WHICH TIME HENRY BURDEN WAS ELECTED CHAIRMAN, AND JACOB MERRITT, SECRETARY/TREASURER. THESE TWO MEN APPEAR TO BE MOST INSTRUMENTAL IN THE FORMING AN ORGANIZING OF THE ASSOCIATION AS THEY HELD THESE POSITIONS FOR MANY YEARS.

COMMITTEES WERE THEN FORMED TO OVERSEE THE WORK THAT WAS TO BE DONE AT EACH LAKE. PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BEST IF WE LOOK AT EACH LAKE, ONE AT A TIME, AND SEE WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED BY THE WYNANTSKILL ASSOCIATION.

AS NOTED BEFORE, SNYDERS LAKE WAS FIRST DAMMED AND REGULATED IN 1820. SNYDERS LAKE BEING THE FIRST LAKE UP STREAM AND THE CLOSEST TO THE MILLS IN TROY AND ALBIA, RECEIVED IMMEDIATE ATTENTION. HENRY BURDEN AND JACOB MERRITT, ALONG WITH J. RICHARD SON AND GILBERT REILAY OF THE TROY WOOLEN FACTORY, WERE APPOINTED TO AN OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE. HOW HIGH THE WATER LEVEL WAS RAISED IS UNKNOWN, BUT PROBABLY NOT MUCH IF ANY. IT WAS PROBABLY DAMMED TO ITS EXISTING HIGH WATER MARK AND THE DAM AND THE FLUME WERE USED TO RETAIN THE WATER DURING NIGHTS AND SUNDAYS AND RELEASING THE WATER DURING MILL OPERATIONS TIME. HARMAN SNYDER WAS THE FIRST GATE KEEPER AND WAS PAID \$5. A YEAR FOR HIS SERVICES. IT IS SHOWN THAT THE DAM AND FLUME WERE USED THROUGH 1848 AND THE ASSOCIATION SPENT JUST OVER \$1,000.00 BETWEEN 1829 AND 1848 FOR ITS UPKEEP. I FIND NO RECORD OF USE AFTER THAT DATE.

SAND LAKE, NOW CRYSTAL LAKE IN AVERILL PARK, WAS ALSO DEVELOPED AT AN EARLY DATE. THE ACTUAL DATE OF THE FIRST DAM AND FLUME IS NOT KNOWN. IT WAS PRIOR TO 1829 AND WAS PROBABLY BUILT BY ARETUS LYMAN, AN OPERATOR OF A LOCAL SAW MILL. THE WYNANTSKILL ASSOCIATION IN 1829 APPOINTED THREE LOCAL MILL OPERATORS TO SUPERVISE THE DEVELOPMENT OF SAND LAKE. THEY WERE ARETUS LYMAN, WARREN COLEMAN

AND GEORGE CIPPERLY. WE HAVE ALL HEARD THE NAME CIPPERLY BEFORE.

IN THE CASE OF CRYSTAL LAKE, THE ASSOCIATION NEGOTIATED WITH SHORE OWNERS FOR THE RIGHT TO OVERFLOW THEIR LAKE SHORES. RECORDS SHOW THAT OVER THE YEARS THE LAKE LEVEL WAS RAISED 7 FEET. THE REGULATION OF THE LAKE LEVEL ENDED FOR GOOD IN 1978 WHEN THE CRYSTAL LAKE ASSOCIATION, CLAYTON JOHNSON, PRESIDENT, REMOVED THE OLD DAM, VALVE AND GATE HOUSING AND INSTALLED A 24" CORRUGATED CULVERT. THIS WORK WAS DONE FOR \$600. OF WHICH \$187.62 WAS CONTRIBUTED BY PORTEC CO.

CROOKED LAKE WAS FIRST DAMMED UP IN 1835. RICHARD J. KNOWLSON AT THAT TIME OWNED THE LAND BETWEEN CROOKED LAKE AND GLASS LAKE HOUSE. HE WAS PAID \$75. BY THE WYNANTSKILL ASSOCIATION FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF COMING ONTO HIS LAND, BUILDING A DAM AND DIGGING A DITCH TO CARRY THE WATERS TO GLASS ^{HOUSE} LAKE HOUSE. THE DAM WAS PROBABLY REBUILT IN 1845 SINCE AT THAT TIME THE WYNANTSKILL ASSOCIATION MADE AGREEMENTS WITH THE OWNER OF THE SHORE LINE TO OVERFLOW THEIR LAND. NOTE THAT FOR CROOKED LAKE AND SAND LAKE THE WYNANTSKILL ASSOCIATION BOUGHT THE PRIVILEGE OF FLOODING THE SHORE LINE. THEY DID NOT OWN THE LAKE BOTTOMS.

RICHARD KNOWLSON BOUGHT THE GLASS FACTORY AT A SHERIFFS AUCTION IN 1825. THIS PURCHASE INCLUDED THE FACTORY, THE EAST BANK OF GLASS LAKE FROM THE WATER LINE TO THE ALBANY AND SAND LAKE PLANK ROAD - ROUTE 66 TODAY, AND THE ENTIRE LAKE ITSELF. IN THE TIME OF STEVEN VAN RENSSELAER THIS WAS AN UNUSUAL SITUATION. DEEDS ISSUED BY THE "GOOD PATROON" FOR FARMS WERE KNOWN AS QUARTER SALES. THAT IS, THE FARM WAS SOLD TO A FARMER WITH CERTAIN

RESTRICTIONS. IF, IN THE FUTURE, THE FARM WAS TO BE SOLD, THE VAN RENSSELAERS HAD FIRST OPTION AND COULD BUY BACK THE LAND AT 75% OF ITS VALUE. IF THEY DID NOT BUY BACK THE LAND IT WOULD BE SOLD ON THE OPEN MARKET BUT THE PATROON WOULD RECEIVE 25% OF THE SALE PRICE. ALSO, WATER RIGHTS WERE RETAINED BY THE VAN RENSSELAERS. THEY WERE NOT SOLD BUT WERE RENTED, USUALLY FOR 14 YEARS AT A SET YEARLY RATE. IN THE CASE OF THE GLASS HOUSE PROPERTY, THE LAND WAS SOLD TO THE ORIGINAL GLASS FACTORY OWNERS OUTRIGHT AND WAS NOT ENCUMBERED BY ANY RESTRICTIONS. SO, THEN RICHARD KNOWLSON OWNED GLASS LAKE, THE EXISTING OUTLET DAM AND FACTORY BUILDINGS. HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE WYNANTSKILL ASSOCIATION FROM 11829, AND FROM THEN UNTIL THE EARLY 1840s CONTROLLED HIS DAM AT THE OUTLET OF GLASS LAKE. SSINCE HE OWNED THE DAM HE WAS NOT ASSESSED ANY EXPENSES. IN 1842 THE ASSOCIATION CONTRACTED WITH R. J. KNOWLSON TO BUILD A NEW DAM AND RAISE THE WATER LEVEL TO PROVIDE MORE STORAGE. IN THIS CASE KNOWLSON BUILT THE DAM AND CHARGED THE WYNANTSKILL ASSOCIATION \$200.00 A YEAR FOR ITS USE. THE NEW DAM WAS BARELY IN OPERATION WHEN IT WAS WASHED OUT BY A STORM. AN EMERGENCY MEETING WAS HELD AND A DECISION TO REBUILD THE DAM WAS MADE. NO TIME WAS WASTED AND THE NEW DAM WAS IN PLACE BY SUMMER. AN INTERESTING SIDE NOTE TO THIS WORK IS THAT THE SAND LAKE COMMISSIONERS VOTED TO CONTRIBUTE \$152 TO THE DAM CONSTRUCTION FOR THE PRIVILEGE TO USE THE DAM AS A ROADWAY. THE TOTAL COST OF THE DAM WAS \$807.50.

WHEN THE WYNANTSKILL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION WAS COMPLETING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SAND (CRYSTAL) LAKE, CROOKED LAKE, GLASS LAKE AND SNYDERS LAKE, THEY WERE ALSO LOOKING AT A SMALL LAKE IN NASSAU CALLED MARTINS LAKE, THIS LAKE, LOCATED IN THE AREA WE NOW CALL THIRD BURDEN, FLOWED NORTH THROUGH A STREAM INTO THE WYNANTSKILL AT GARNER ROAD. IN 1831 \$1000. WAS VOTED BY THE ASSOCIATION TO INSTALL A DAM AND GATE AT THE OUTLET OF MARTINS LAKE. THE AIM WAS NOT TO RAISE THE LEVEL OF THE LAKE BUT RATHER DAM THE LAKE TO ITS HIGH WATER LEVEL AND TO RELEASE THE WATER DURING THE SUMMER OR LOW LEVEL SEASON TO THE WYNANTSKILL. TO MARK THE HIGH WATER LEVEL HOLES WERE DRILLED IN A LARGE ROCK AT THE WATERS EDGE LOCATED AT BRISTOLS FARM.

LET ME GO BACK NOW TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WYNANTSKILL ASSOCIATION ITSELF. SINCE ITS ORGANIZATION IN 1829 THROUGH ITS DEVELOPMENT UNTIL 1848 IT HAD BECOME MORE COMPLEX. IT REQUIRED A MORE FORMAL STRUCTURE. FIRST, IT WAS NECESSARY TO INCORPORATE. THIS WAS ACCOMPLISHED BY "ACT OF INCORPORATION" THAT WAS PASSED BY THE NEW YORK LEGISLATURE IN 1846. THIS ACT OF INCORPORATION ALLOWED THE CREATION OF A TRUST TO HOLD REAL PROPERTY FOR THE BENEFIT OF PERSONS OWNING OR OCCUPYING MILL PRIVILEGES ON THE STREAM CALLED WYNANTSKILL. IT ALLOWED THE ASSOCIATION TO FORM RESERVOIRS, CONSTRUCT DAMS AND GATES, INCREASE THE HEAD OF WATER AND REGULATE THE FLOW. THE ASSOCIATION AT THE SAME TIME REVISED THE ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION AND CHANGED THE NAME TO THE WYNANTSKILL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION. THERE WERE EIGHT MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION AT THIS TIME. THEIR FIRMS WERE WELL KNOWN IN THE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT OF TROY. PROBABLY BEST KNOWN WAS HENRY BURDEN, FIRST SUPERINTENDENT OF THE TROY IRON AND NAIL FACTORY,

THEN PART OWNER AND FINALLY, WITH HIS SONS AND GRANDSONS, OWNER OF THE BURDEN IRON CO. THIS IS THE SAME BURDEN WHO BUILT THE LARGEST WATER WHEEL IN THE WORLD. SO, YOU CAN SEE HE WAS VITALLY INTERESTED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WYNANTSKILL. THE TROY IRON AND NAIL CO. WAS ASSESSED 35% OF THE COST OF IMPROVEMENTS ON THE WYNANTSKILL. JOHN WINSLOW AND ERASTUS CORNING REPRESENTED THE ALBANY IRON WORKS, WHICH FIRM WAS ASSESSED 30% OF THE COSTS INVOLVED. SO THE TWO LARGER IRON MANUFACTURING FIRMS, BOTH LOCATED IN SOUTH TROY, CONTROLLED 65% OF THE WYNANTSKILL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION. THE REMAINING 35% WAS DIVIDED AMONG THE REMAINING SMALLER MILLS. MERRITT AND HART AT THE MOUTH OF THE WYNANTSKILL, WAS ASSESSED 10%: HOWLAND PAPER 6%, RICHARDSON FLOUR MILL 3%. IN ALBIA, THE TROY WOOLEN CO AND THE ALBIA COTTON FACTORY WERE ASSESSED 4% AND 9% RESPECTIVELY. THE SAND LAKE FACTORY OF ARNOLD AND WIGHT WAS ASSESSED 3%. THERE WERE ADDITIONAL MILLS ON THE WYNANTSKILL THAT WERE NOT MEMBERS OF THE WYNANTSKILL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION..

WITH THE REORGANIZATION, MORE PLANNING WAS BEGUN. IT WAS NECESSARY TO ENLARGE THE LAKES AND THUS INCREASE THEIR HOLDING CAPACITY. LAND WAS PURCHASED AND FLOODING RIGHTS WERE OBTAINED BUT IT WAS NOT UNTIL THE 1860s THAT ANY REAL PROGRESS WAS MADE.

A DECISION WAS MADE TO RAISE THE LEVEL OF GLASS LAKE. RAISING THE LAKE LEVEL PRESENTED ONE PROBLEM. IT WOULD FLOOD THE HOMES THAT WERE LOCATED BETWEEN THE OUTLET AT THE EXISTING DAM AND THE PRESENT ROUTE 66. TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM BURTON THOMAS OF WEST SAND LAKE WAS ENGAGED. THOMAS AND HIS SON JEFFREY WERE CIVIL ENGINEERS AND SURVEYORS. AFTER MAKING COMPLETE SURVEYS AND STUDYING OPTIONS,

A NEW DAM AND EXTENSIVE DYKING WERE PROPOSED. FIRST, MR. THOMAS ERECTED A 5 FOOT STONE MONUMENT ON AN ISLAND IN GLASS LAKE. THE TOP OF THIS MONUMENT WAS TO BE THE NEW HIGH WATER LEVEL OF THE LAKE. NEGOTIATIONS WITH LAND OWNERS CONCERNING THE RIGHTS TO OVERFLOW LANDS AND ERECT DYKES WERE TIME CONSUMING BUT EVENTUALLY IN 1864-1866 AN 1107 foot LONG DYKE WAS CONSTRUCTED AND THE LEVEL OF THE LAKE WAS RAISED TO ITS PRESENT DAY CONDITION. THIS DYKE, OF COURSE, IS STILL IN PLACE TODAY AND INCLUDES NOT ONLY THE LAKE SHORE BETWEEN THE DAM AND ROUTE 66, BUT EXTENDS IN LAND ON BOTH SIDES OF THE STREAM THAT ENTERS THE LAKE AT THE GLASS LAKE HOTEL. THE FILLING OF THE LAKE RAISED THE WATER LEVEL 18FEET ABOVE THE ORIGINAL LEVEL. I HAVE WITH ME THE THOMAS DRAWING SHOWING THE WORK THAT WAS DONE. IT SHOWS THE DYKE AND ALSO A DITCH ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE DYKE TO DRAIN THE LAND THAT WOULD BE BELOW WATER LEVEL.

THE CREATION OF THE BURDEN LAKES WAS ANOTHER MAJOR IMPROVEMENT. COMPLETED BY THE WYNANTSKILL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION, BUT IT TOOK A LONG TIME IN THE MAKING. AS EARLY AS 1841 THE ASSOCIATION VOTED \$12,000. TO BUILD A 10 or 12 FOOT DAM AT MASONS BRIDGE AND TO BUY LANDS THAT WOULD BE FLOODED BY THE PROPOSED RESERVOIR. THEY ALSO CALLED ON WILLIAM VAN RENSSELAER REQUESTING HIS HELP IN CLEARING TITLES AND RELEASING WATER RIGHTS. THIS WAS THE TIME OF THE "RENT WARS" AND I ASSUME THERE WAS VERY LITTLE COOPERATION. IT WAS NOT UNTIL THE 1860s THAT ANY PROGRESS WAS MADE.: HERE AGAIN BURTON THOMAS AND HIS SON JEFFREY WERE GIVEN THE RESPONSIBILITY TO SURVEY THE AREA AND DESIGN THE PROJECT.

ON A SPRING DAY IN 1864 HENRY BURDEN MET WITH THE THOMASES ON THE OLD BRISTOL FARM. TOBY TABOR, A LOCAL FARMER, POINTED OUT THE HOLE IN THE ROCK THAT WAS DRILLED IN 1831 BY JOE BRISTOL. THIS HOLE MARKED THE HIGH WATER LEVEL OF MARTINS POND. FROM THIS POINT A LINE WAS LAID OUT RUNNING NORTH TO THE WYNANTSKILL. THE CORNER OF BURDEN LAKE ROAD AND GARNER ROAD WAS WHERE THE ^{TOMPKINS} ~~THOMPSON~~ PAPER MILL WAS. ^{STATES TOMPKINS} ~~THOMAS-THOMPSON~~ OWNED THE LAND ALONG THE WYNANTSKILL. THE ENGINEERING PLAN WAS TO BUILD A DAM ON THE WYNANTSKILL SO AS TO DIVERT ITS WATER INTO THE PROPOSED RESERVOIR. THE HEIGHT OF THIS DAM WAS CALCULATED SO AS TO RAISE THE WATER TO WITHIN 2 FEET OF THE TAIL RACE AT THE PAPER MILL, PROTECTING THE HYDRAULIC POWER AT THE PAPER MILL. WITH THIS LEVEL SET, IT WAS CALCULATED THAT THE NEW LAKE WOULD BE RAISED 8 FEET ABOVE THE ORIGINAL LEVEL OF MARTINS POND. CONSTRUCTED WAS STARTED IN 1865. THE DIVERTING DAM WAS CONSTRUCTED ACROSS THE WYNANTSKILL. FROM THIS POINT A DYKE WAS BUILT TO FORM A CANAL TO CARRY THE WATER SOUTH TO THE NEW LAKE ROAD BETWEEN GARNER ROAD AND BURDEN LAKE. TO CONTAIN THE LAKE A LARGE DAM WAS BUILT AT THIS POINT WHICH WAS THE POINT WHERE THE SMALL STREAM RUNNING NORTH FROM MARTINS POND TURNED WEST TO FLOW INTO THE WYNANTSKILL ABOUT 3/4 OF A MILE BELOW THE DIVERTING DAM. THIS DAM INCLUDED A GATE HOUSE AND VALVE THAT WAS USED TO CONTROL THE OUTLET FLOW OF WHAT WE NOW KNOW AS BURDEN LAKE. THIS WORK WAS COMPLETED AND THE WATERS OF THE WYNANTSKILL WERE FIRST TURNED INTO THE NEW RESERVOIR IN THE SPRING OF 1866. I DO NOT KNOW HOW LONG IT TOOK TO FILL BURDEN LAKE TO ITS CAPACITY, BUT DURING ITS FIRST FILLING

WATER PERCOLATED THROUGH THE GROUND NEAR THE DAM AND WEST OF THE ROAD. THIS LEAK WAS REPAIRED.

BEFORE THE FILLING OF BURDEN, TIMBER WAS CUT OFF. THE REMAINING ROOTS AND STUMPS WERE SO INTERLACED THAT WHEN THE WATER RAISED, THE STUMPS AND ROOTS ROSE WITH THE WATER AND FLOATED AWAY BECOMING FLOATING ISLANDS.

the wynantskill improvement association remained active after the completion of the dams at glass and burden lakes. the number OF MEMBERS FLUCTUATED AS TIME PASSED. ITS MAIN DUTY WAS THE CONTROL OF THE FLOW TO BENEFIT ITS MILLS. IN 1898 THE NIAGARA OF WATER WHEELS, THE GREAT BURDEN WATER WHEEL, WAS TAKEN OUT OF SERVICE AND THE UPPER WORKS OF BURDEN IRON WERE CLOSED. BURDEN CONTINUED AS A MEMBER OF THE WYNANTSKILL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION UNTIL 1940.

THERE WAS AN INCREASE IN ACTIVITY STARTING AROUND 1910 WHEN A NUMBER OF MILLS BUILT HYDRO ELECTRIC STATIONS TO POWER THEIR EQUIPMENT. THEY INCLUDED FAITH MILLS IN AVERILL PARK, THE KNITTING MILL IN WEST SAND LAKE, A SMALL HYDRO ELECTRIC PLANT BUILT BY THE HASTINGS AND A PLANT THAT SUPPLIED POWER TO ALBIA BOX AND PAPER CO. IN TROY.

THERE IS A LOT MORE TO THE STORY OF THE WYNANTSKILL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION, BUT TIME RUNS OUT. THE MILLS ALONG THE WYNANTSKILL WERE NO LONGER PROFITABLE AND ONE BY ONE CLOSED THEIR DOORS.

BURDEN IRON IN 1898
TROY YARN IN 1949

ALBIA BOX AND PAPER IN 1947
FAITH MILLS IN 1954

UNTIL THERE REMAINED BUT TWO MEMBERS: REPUBLIC STEEL AND PORTEC. IN 1972 republic steel closed leaving only portec.

FINALLY ON SEPTEMBER 26, 1989 THERE WAS A SAD CELEBRATION.
IN THE SAME BUILDING THAT ALBANY IRON AND NAIL FACTORY BUILT IN 1849
PORTEC ROLLED THE LAST INGOT OF STEEL AND THE PRODUCTION OF RAIL
JOINTS AND TROYS GREAT IRON AGE CAME TO AN END.