

Historical Sign at Ramsey Village

By David Kagan

If you've bicycled past the village of Ramsey on the Pine Creek Rail-Trail since mid-summer of 2008, then you couldn't help noticing the attractive sign at the access parking area. Professionally done by 21st Century Signs of Williamsport, bolted down, and anchored with two solid, thick wooden posts, it reads, "Circa 1790, Ramsey Village, Settled by Thomas Ramsey, Wagon Master for George Washington's Continental Army."

This was a project of the Ramsey Village Association, under President Walter Braddock and Vice President William Bryan. They first obtained the approval of both Cummings Township and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Then, with the help of Lycoming County Commissioner Rebecca Burke, who has a dwelling in the village, they obtained a \$2000 government grant.

To determine the most appropriate words to go onto the sign, a trip to the Lycoming County Historical Society, under Director Sandra Rife and Curator Scott Sagar, was deemed in order. According to Braddock, these "really helpful" folks researched to arrive at the final selected wording.

When the sign was completed, Braddock and Bryan voluntarily labored themselves to dig the postholes and put the sign in place. With some of the grant money left over, the Association may add a flower box by the sign next spring.

Now, wouldn't it be wonderful to see a sign like this, created in identical style, for every village along the trail up and down Pine Creek? This would include, going from south to north, Torbert Village, Waterville, Jersey Mills, Cammal, Slate Run, Cedar Run and Blackwell.

What might be appropriate historical wordings for each sign? Well, with Torbert, Cammal and Blackwell, something about the person or family each village is named after?

For Torbert Village, it was James Franklin Torbert who took over ownership of 198 acres of the present-day village in 1897. He then lived there until 1913, in the big farmhouse that is still there.

Cammal is a contraction of the word Campbell. In the 1810s a Michael Campbell settled about one mile north of the present-day village, farming and lumbering there his whole life.

For Blackwell, it was Enoch Blackwell who arrived at that location in 1811. Then his son William was actually credited with being the founder of the village.

Waterville was laid out by Captain James Wolf in 1840, although John English, a Revolutionary War veteran, was the first known settler in the area.

Jersey Mills' first recorded white settler was Claudius Boatman, born in France. He built a house at the mouth of Callahan's Run in 1785.

Pioneer Jacob Tomb settled in the Slate Run area in 1791 at the mouth of the run. A marker by the present-day Hotel Manor records this.

An appropriate sign for Cedar Run might be the most challenging, as no clear late 1790s or early 1800s name seems to stand out in the records. The Tomb family was there, at least exploring, including Philip Tome, who wrote the book, "Pioneer Life, or 30 Years a Hunter." And a John Tomb had a sawmill at the mouth of Cedar Run in the 1890s.

Well, anyway, each of these villages (and, perhaps, the "unofficial" Ross Village between Cammal and Slate Run) could also realize their own rail-trail signs through efforts of their own associations or groups of interested residents. Perhaps an initial conversation with Ramsey Association President Walter Braddock could provide the basic knowledge of how to effectively proceed.

Wouldn't it be great to see an historical sign in the near future along the rail-trail at each of the Pine Creek villages? And then, while this Webb Weekly writer and resident of Torbert Village is trying to stir up projects for others to do, how about replacing the many missing mile-markers along the trail? Now let's see. Who could take charge of that, DCNR?