

A rustic wooden building with a porch, an American flag, and a large stack of firewood. The building is made of dark wood and has a porch with a railing. An American flag is hanging from the porch. A large stack of firewood is piled up in front of the building. The building is surrounded by trees and greenery.

From the Back Door

**A set of hikes and walks centered around
Camp Nawakwa in Harriman State Park**

**A Centennial Publication of the
Nawakwa Outdoor Association of New York, Inc.
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Introduction

Harriman State Park, along with Bear Mountain State Park at its north end, forms one of the largest State Parks in New York. Within their combined 50,000 plus acres are myriads of trails (official and unofficial), and numerous lakes and ponds.

The observant hiker will find woods roads, stone walls, and cemeteries that remind us of the early inhabitants of the area. More hidden, are caves and areas used by the Native American inhabitants. Many of the trails we have today no doubt follow the earlier Indian trails and game trails from centuries past.

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference (with volunteer help from various individuals and hiking clubs, including members from NOANY) is the organization that oversees and maintains the system of trails we enjoy. Early members of our club and of other clubs, who were already used to “tramping” through the woods and roads of the area, helped establish and blaze some of the first trails in the park, trails which we still use.

This group of hikes we are presenting is published as part of our 100-year anniversary celebration. We are calling these hikes, which are centered around Camp Nawakwa, hikes “*From the Back Door*” to emphasize the easy accessibility to trails that are ours to enjoy around camp. Happy hiking!

The Hikes and Outings Committee

Glen Nison, Chair

Ingrid Strauch

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September 23, 2023

Around the Block (loop)

Head north on the camp trail along Lake Sebago. When you reach the intersection with the Yellow Triangle trail, turn left, and follow the Yellow Triangle trail to the second camp trail (the 'Back Door'), turn left, and return to camp.

Note: This hike can also be done in the opposite direction, by following the 'Back Door' camp trail to the Yellow Triangle trail and turning right. When you reach Lake Sebago, turn right to follow the lake trail back to camp.

Mileage: About $\frac{3}{4}$ mile

Elevation gain: Negligible

The Yellow Triangle trail was first marked in 1939 as the Yellow Bar trail. It was blazed by Kerson Nurian, with yellow bands around the trees, starting from the woods road along Black Ash Brook, the former route of the R-D trail. Nurian and this trail were caught up in the 'Trail Wars' of 1947-48. See the book: Harriman Trails: A Guide and History by William J. Myles and Daniel Chazin, pp 133-134 for a fuller recounting of this trail's history.

The Dam Walk (out and back)

Note: This hike is traditionally done in the evening, in the dark, without headlamps or flashlights. For safety reasons, you should bring a light with you in case you feel disoriented or unsafe.

Walk down the camp road toward Seven Lakes Drive. Linger at the dam to take in the night sky and stars.

Mileage: About 2 miles roundtrip

Elevation gain: Negligible (ups and downs on the road)

Lake Sebago was created by the construction of Dam #10 where Johnstontown Road crossed Stoney Brook. The dam was begun in 1923 and completed in 1926. A 1,000-foot wingdam was also built at the time. When the dam was built, the old bridge [which crossed Stoney Brook] was removed. At the same time, the Park improved the old Johnstontown Road from Sloatsburg and renamed it Stoney Brook Drive. It crossed the top of the new dam and went along the wingdam. See page 309 of Harriman Trails: A Guide and History.

Lake Skenonto (out and back)

Head north on the camp trail along Lake Sebago.

When you reach the intersection with the Yellow Triangle trail, turn right, and follow the Yellow Triangle trail about half a mile to the intersection with the Victory trail (blue V on white blaze).

Bear right on the Victory to enjoy views of the lake or follow one of the social trails to the edge of Lake Skenonto for a break.

The far end of the lake has a rocky outcropping that makes for a good lunch spot.

Return to camp by retracing your steps.

Mileage: About 2.5 miles roundtrip

Elevation gain: About 60 feet

After Lake Sebago was finished in 1926, there was still a "Big Swamp" just over the hill on the western side. This swamp became Lake Skenonto. Available records say very little about the construction of this lake - we know only that the dam was built in 1934 and that the lake was filled with water by 1936. See page 314 of Harriman Trails: A Guide and History for more information.

Lake Skenonto – White Bar Loop

Head north on the camp trail along Lake Sebago. When you reach the intersection with the Yellow Triangle trail, turn right, and follow the Yellow Triangle about half a mile to the intersection with the Victory trail (blue V on white blaze).

Bear left on the Victory and walk for about half a mile. At intersection with White Bar trail (horizontal white blaze), turn left, and follow White Bar trail for 1.25 miles to intersection with Yellow Triangle trail. Turn left onto the Yellow Triangle trail and follow for it about a quarter of a mile to the camp trail. Turn right on the camp trail to return to camp.

Mileage: About 3.5 miles

Elevation gain: About 60 feet

The Victory Trail: Before 1930, hikes from Tuxedo often went north on an old woods road known as the Black Ash Swamp Road In 1942, J.A. Allis, then Chairman of the Conference Trails Committee, proposed to make Black Ash Swamp Road a Conference Trail. In October 1942, Bernard Landau, President of the C.C.N.Y. Hiking Club, volunteered to blaze the trail, but he was recruited into the Army. On April 4, 1943, the trail was cleared and marked with the blue V's by a group led by Abe Shecter. See page 143 of Harriman Trails: A Guide and History.

Claudius Smith Den (out and back)

Head up the hill toward the women's outhouse and continue beyond it onto the southern camp trail (the Back Door). Follow the camp trail to the intersection with the Yellow Triangle trail and turn left.

Follow the Yellow Triangle trail about a quarter of a mile, then merge onto the White Bar trail, continuing in the same direction (SSW), to the intersection with the Tuxedo-Mount Ivy trail (red dash on the white blaze), just beyond the Dutch Doctor shelter (up the hill, on your left).

Look for an old fireplace structure on the right side of the WB to identify the intersection of the WB and TMI trails.

Turn sharply right onto the TMI and follow it about 1.25 miles to Claudius Smith Den, which is a large rock structure directly ahead of you. Enjoy the view from the top, and if you have time, follow the TMI around to the bottom of the structure to see the cave like "den."

Return to camp by retracing your steps.

Mileage: About 4 miles roundtrip

Elevation gain: About 250 feet

During the Revolutionary War, Claudius Smith, along with several members of his family, allegedly terrorized the New York countryside in an area formerly known as Smith's Clove (presently Monroe), Orange County, New York, where David Smith and his family had moved about 1741 from Brookhaven.

All accounts agree that Claudius was a Loyalist and took part in Tory raids alongside the Mohawk Indian Chief, Joseph Brant.

Though he gained a fearsome reputation among the Patriots, Claudius is not actually known to have killed anyone. He was even viewed by some as sort of a Robin Hood, helping to defend the Loyalists in the area.

At one point, however, when one of Smith's men did apparently rob and kill a Patriot leader, Major Nathaniel Strong, on October 6, 1778, New York Governor George Clinton posted a reward of \$1,200 for Smith's arrest.

Claudius was soon captured and was hanged on January 22, 1779 in the town of Goshen, New York. [Excerpt taken from [Wikipedia](#)]

Sebago View From Diamond Mountain

Note: This hike requires brief scrambling (using hands as well as feet).

Walk down the camp road toward Seven Lakes Drive. Locate the intersection with the Tuxedo-Mount Ivy trail (red dash on the white blaze) as it crosses the camp road and turn sharply left onto the TMI. Follow the TMI as it goes around the base of Lake Sebago, crosses Seven Lakes Drive, and crosses a small stream.

Look for the beginning of the Hilburn-Torne-Sebago trail to your right (three orange blazes). Follow the HTS steeply up the hill for a little more than half a mile. At the top of the ridge, stop and enjoy the view of Lake Sebago, behind you (north). You should be at an intersection with the 7 Hills Trail (blue square on white blaze), on which you want to turn east. (To the west, the HTS and 7H trail run together; to the east, the 7H trail runs alone.)

As you follow the 7H trail for about half a mile, you'll have several other viewpoints featuring Lake Sebago and points north.

At the intersection with the TMI, turn sharply left and follow the TMI back to the stream where you picked up the HTS. Continue on the TMI across the stream, across Seven Lakes Drive, and back to the camp road.

Mileage: About 4 miles

Elevation gain: About 400 feet

The 1923 edition of the New York Walk Book showed Diamond Mountain as Halfway Mountain. Then in 1927 the Park's large topographical map named the higher eastern end Diamond Mountain, while the western end remained Halfway Mountain.

A steel fire tower, which had been on top of Bear Mountain, and which was replaced there by the Perkin's Memorial Tower, was re-erected on Diamond Mountain in 1935. It was dismantled in 1987.

From Harriman Trails: A Guide and History, page 106 and page 349.



Parker Cabin Mountain (lollipop)

Head north on the camp trail along Lake Sebago. When you reach the intersection with the Yellow Triangle trail, turn right, and follow the Yellow Triangle about half a mile to the intersection with the Victory trail (blue V on white blaze).

Cross the Victory and continue on the Yellow Triangle for about another mile, to the summit of Parker Cabin Mountain. Turn around and enjoy the view of Lake Sebago to the southeast.

From the Parker Cabin Mountain summit, bear right on the Ramapo-Dunderberg trail (red dot on white blaze) for about half a mile. At the intersection with the Victory trail, bear right (down the hill) and follow the Victory for about 2 miles, back to the intersection with the Yellow Triangle.

Turn left, follow the YT for about half a mile back to the camp trail, and take the camp trail back to camp.

Mileage: About 7.5 miles

Elevation gain: About 400 feet

From the Nyack Evening Journal, May 23, 1928: *“A fourth tower of wooden construction on Parker Cabin Mountain, four miles northeast of Tuxedo, has proved effective in aiding the discovery of fire in Harriman State Park during the hazardous Spring season just past, it was announced today by the Interstate Park Commissioners.”*

Hikes to Camp Nawakwa From Public Transportation

From Tuxedo

From the Tuxedo train station, pick up the Ramapo-Dunderberg trail (red dot on white blaze) and follow along the train tracks to East Village Road. Cross the tracks, cross the Ramapo River, and bear right to continue on East Village Road to the intersection with Grove Drive. Turn left on Grove and follow up the hill to the trailhead.

Follow the RD for a little less than a mile to the intersection with the Tuxedo-Mount Ivy trail (red dash on white blaze), just past a gas line. Bear right on the TMI and follow about a mile and a half to the intersection with the White Bar. Bear left on the White Bar, follow 0.2 mile, then bear right onto the Yellow Triangle and follow another 0.2 mile to the camp trail. Turn right onto the unblazed camp trail and arrive at camp in about half a mile.

Mileage: About 3.5 miles

Elevation gain: About 700 feet

"The historic occupants of what is now the town of Tuxedo were the Lenni-Lenape, a branch of the Algonquin language family of Native Americans...The Lenape named the largest lake in the area 'Tucsedo,' meaning either place of the bear or clear flowing water. European-American colonists later adopted that name for the town they develop.," (Wikipedia)

From Sloatsburg

From the Sloatsburg train station, cross the train tracks onto Ballard Avenue, follow Ballard to Academy Ave, bear right, then bear right onto Seven Lakes Drive. Just after the thruway (overhead), cross Seven Lakes Drive and bear left on Johnstontown Road.

Follow Johnstontown Road to its terminus (about a mile walk) and pick up the White Bar trail at the far end of the parking circle. Follow the White Bar trail for about 1.5 miles, past the Dutch Doctor shelter, to the intersection with the Yellow Triangle trail, follow the Yellow Triangle trail for about 0.2 mile to the camp trail. Turn right onto the unblazed camp trail and arrive at camp in about half a mile.

Mileage: About 4 miles

Elevation gain: About 430 feet

The village is named after Stephen Sloat, an early European landowner. The land that would become the village of Sloatsburg was part of the hunting ground of the Minsi band of the Leni-Lenape Indians, whose people occupied much of the mid-Atlantic area at the time of the European encounter. The area was the site of a major Indian path through the Ramapo Mountains. The path was later improved as the New York to Albany road and, in 1800, the Orange Turnpike. (Wikipedia)

Resources

Harriman Trails: A Guide and History by William J. Myles and Daniel Chazin

Published by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference

New York Walk Book (and its companion, **The New Jersey Walk Book**)

Published by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference

[When first published in 1923, these two books were one comprehensive volume. By 1997, “our trail lands have expanded so greatly that it was necessary to publish companion volumes – the *New York Walk Book* and the *New Jersey Walk Book*” (Jane Daniels, Editor, *New York Walk Book*, 6th edition). Raymond Torrey and Frank Place wrote the first edition in 1923, with Robert L. Dickinson providing the illustrations.]

Harriman-Bear Mountain Trails Map (2023)

Two-map set, map #s 118 & 119.

NYNJ Trail Conference (nynjtc.org)

The Harriman-Bear Mountain Trails map is also available for Android and Apple users through the Avenza Maps app.