



The Ramapo Region. circa 1865.

5/85



**WOODSMEN, MOUNTAINEERS  
AND  
BOCKIES:  
THE PEOPLE OF THE RAMAPOS**

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**APRIL 14 - AUGUST 18 1985**

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### **On the cover:**

Ramsey Conklin, 1935

# INTRODUCTION

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On February 11, 1980, the tribal council of a community whose ancestors were among the first to settle the Ramapo Mountains in western Rockland and northern Bergen and Passaic counties was designated by New Jersey as one of the state's tribal groups. A year later, New York lent its support to their quest for Federal recognition.

Elsewhere in the mountains, hikers may have been following a trail through Pine Meadow in Harriman State Park, unaware that less than fifty years before, Ramsey Conklin, patriarch of a family that had occupied the property since the eighteenth century, had gained national attention by refusing to leave the area until workmen dammed a stream, dynamited his potato patch, and flooded his south pasture to make an artificial lake.

Together, these two incidents summarize a major chapter in the recent history of the Ramapos, a section of the Appalachians that extends northeast from the New Jersey-Pennsylvania border to meet the Hudson River at Bear Mountain in Rockland County. One of the most important spots in this local geography is a break in the mountains near Suffern, New York, that has been known variously as the Ramapo Clove or the Ramapo Pass. Both names will be used in the following discussion because "clove" was to the first Dutch settlers in the area what "pass" was to the English.

The Ramapo Clove has more than a linguistic significance, however, for it also defines a recognizable boundary between the two largest groups of mountain families. To the south is the Ramapough Mountain Indian community. In order to highlight the group's long occupation of the area, its members have chosen the colonial spelling, "Ramapough," rather than the more modern "Ramapo."

To the north of the Clove, residents of such nineteenth century mountain settlements as Johnsonstown, Sandfield, and Doodletown were mainly of European ancestry, though some, like Ramsey Conklin, could also trace Indian heritage.

Much has been written about the two groups in the last one hundred years, but unfortunately not all of it is useful in reconstructing their history. The first permanent residents of the Ramapos were

those local Indians who moved into the mountains after being displaced from the lowlands by the arrival of Europeans around 1700. They were soon joined by white and black settlers and by the Revolutionary War era, a number of homesteads and small farms dotted the area.

Major development came in the early nineteenth century with the rise of a local iron industry that continued to thrive throughout the Civil War period. The lifestyles of the three original groups merged in response to the rapid economic and industrial growth in the region. The result was a culture shared by woodsmen north and south of the Ramapo Pass, and a way of life strongly reminiscent of that of many a disenfranchised Indian of the colonial era.

Throughout the nineteenth century, a strong social and racial prejudice developed around the mountaineers. Since then, many a youngster has been taunted as a "mountain child" while adults have been labeled in any number of offensive ways. The words have come to represent the discriminatory attitudes of the past and so have been rejected. Along with the many fanciful accounts of the origins of the Ramapough Mountain Indian community, they are footnotes to history that will not be discussed further.

Instead, the following pages will present a wide range of information on the history and lifestyles of the woodsmen, mountaineers and bockies of the Ramapos. The three names are used interchangeably throughout the discussion, as all were applied to those mountain residents who supplied the cordwood, charcoal, baskets and woodenware that were essential to local industries in the nineteenth century. "Bockies" is derived from the Dutch "bockje," or small basket, and as such is a word that evolved locally to mean basketmaker.

Ramapo craftwork underscores the amount of cultural exchange that flourished in the region. Generally, bockies show strong European influence. Woodsmen did not use forms to shape their baskets, as did most European makers, but neither did they use the crooked knife favored by the Iroquois to make splints. Many, in fact, preferred to use their

teeth to peel strips from a properly prepared log, a method that was later replaced by hunting knives.<sup>1</sup>

Frank Speck, a noted anthropologist who collected from mountaineers on both sides of the Ramapo Pass, stated in a letter to Allison Skinner at the American Museum of Natural History in 1908, that he "was a little surprised to find the old things, they look quite Indian, especially the two soup ladles," and that some of the "square-end bowls" that he had seen were "identical with the Iroquois bowl in the museum." Then again, in a later letter, he noted that "practically nothing on the surface remains of Indian customs, although there is little doubt that much local folk-lore could be obtained after a long period of intimacy with the older people, who bear the name of being very superstitious."

A footnote to his comments is the story of the devil, in flight from Manitou, breaking his apron strings and spilling the rocks that are scattered about the Hoevenkopf.<sup>2</sup> Collected in 1929, it existed in the midst of a widespread Anglo-American tall tale tradition that continues to this day.

Around 1910, a photograph of a dugout canoe on Cedar Pond was taken. Made by "local natives in three days using an axe and an adze," it is a form of transportation that predates the arrival of Europeans in the New World by several centuries. On the other hand, the log cabins that once were everywhere in the mountains, as well as the preponderance of quilts and other household textiles, further underscore the European contribution to the woodsmen's way of life.

A final example indicative of a larger context within which to view mountaineer society is the evidence of a once-widespread Scots-Irish ballad tradition collected by a local folklorist in the 1930's and 40's.<sup>3</sup> As such, the tradition is shared by mountain families throughout the Appalachians. The woodsmen and bockies of the Ramapos are all the more remarkable, then, not as "hillbillies thirty miles from Broadway," as they have been so often headlined in the New York press, but rather as a group of people whose lifestyles and traditions are at once an expression of a unique local situation, as well as a link in the chain of regional folk cultures that extends throughout the Eastern United States.



# THE ORIGINAL INHABITANTS

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The Native Americans who met the first Europeans to sail into the area have come to be known as the Munsee. They had other names for themselves, most of which have been lost in time or were poorly translated by those few Dutchmen who took the time to ask. Those that have survived are largely place names by which the various Munsee bands identified their villages, including many that are still a recognizable part of the greater New York landscape—the Tappans, Hackensacks, Haverstroos (Dutch for "oat straw"), Raritans, Sint-sinks, Canarsies, and Rockaways.

The Munsee are Algonquins, a large group of linguistically related peoples who once controlled most of the Atlantic seaboard from Maine to the Carolinas. Together with their neighbors to the south, the Unamis, with whom they shared a close cultural and historical relationship, they were also known as Delawares or Lenapes. The Munsee differed from the Unamis in that they were strongly influenced by the Iroquois of upstate New York, as demonstrated by the almost identical pottery styles of the early Munsee and the Iroquois-Owasco culture around 1200 A.D.<sup>1</sup>

The Munsee were not the first people to inhabit the area. That distinction belongs to an ancient group of nomadic big game hunters called Paleo-Indians who had arrived at least by the time of the retreat of the Wisconsin glacier around 12,000 B.C. Four sites have been uncovered in the New York-New Jersey border area but, actually, little is known of these early peoples, for all that remains of them are their finely crafted flint weapons.

Constant movement characterized the entire pre-historic period, as new groups of hunters and gatherers entered the region and intermarried with earlier inhabitants. By 5000 B.C., extensive trade networks that reached from New England to the Carolinas and west of the Appalachians had been established.<sup>2</sup>

Increasingly sophisticated innovations in tools and technologies quickened the pace of life until by about 1000 A.D. a radical change in local society had been affected by the introduction of agriculture. The small hunting bands began to settle near rivers and

streams, clear forests for gardens, and establish the patterns of village life, language, and social organization that are identified as Munsee.

Even for this period, however, information is scarce and, in fact, the word "Munsee" or "Minsee" or "Minisink" does not appear in colonial records until 1727, though it has been traced to 1694, when remnants of several displaced Hudson River groups and a number of Shawnees from further south combined with the Minisink band on the upper reaches of the Delaware near present-day Port Jervis, New York.<sup>3</sup> Originally living in small, loosely organized groups of twenty-five to fifty individuals that were scattered throughout the area, they probably never thought of themselves as a united people or tribe until after they had been removed from their traditional homelands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They were never very numerous, either, and it is estimated that at the time of contact there were no more than 8-10,000 people in the entire region. Because they shared a common heritage, however, the term "Munsee" has been projected backwards to include all those bands who once occupied the greater metropolitan New York area, from central New Jersey to the mid-Hudson to western Long Island.

Throughout this period, the Ramapos were probably never the permanent home of any one group. Rather, occupation was seasonal and sporadic, as Indian travelers and hunting parties traversed the mountains seeking temporary shelter in rock overhangs. Village life concentrated in the lowland areas, where it was tied to the rhythm of the seasons, as the hunters and fishermen followed their prey, while the women practiced slash and burn farming techniques that depleted the soil after a few years. Local populations were constantly shifting, as prime village sites were occupied, abandoned, and resettled from one generation to the next.

All in all, though, life was apparently quite stable, and there are no indications of stockaded towns or widespread warfare in the region during the pre-contact era.<sup>4</sup> Whatever balance of power that did exist, however, was totally upset by the arrival of the Europeans in the early seventeenth century, and their

obsession with furs. Beaver was the height of fashion in Europe at the time and, consequently, one of the first impressions that the early explorers took home with them was of the number and variety of fur-bearing animals in the New World. They returned with an array of manufactured goods, and almost immediately established a fur trade that forever altered the patterns of Indian life. In the Hudson River Valley, the Dutch came first and foremost for that purpose and, by 1665, the number of beaver pelts shipped to Holland each year approached 80,000.<sup>5</sup>

The Munsee were soon caught between two expanding powers, the Iroquois to the north and the Dutch at Fort Amsterdam and Fort Orange (Albany), both of which had been major trading posts since the 1620's. Because the Hudson Valley region was trapped out by 1640, the Munsee began to range further and further west to secure the medium of exchange that they needed to obtain the European trade goods upon which they were increasingly dependent. The westward movement brought them into direct competition with other Indian groups, particularly the well-organized Iroquois, who were then rapidly consolidating their position as the middlemen between the Dutch and the more western Indian nations.<sup>6</sup> The Iroquois emerged victorious from a series of brutal confrontations known as the Beaver Wars, and by the mid-seventeenth century had become the major power in the Northeast.

As they extended their control into the lower Hudson region, they exerted further pressure on the local groups who were already experiencing the steady encroachment of Dutch influence. Tensions mounted when Governor Keift sent a ship from New Amsterdam to the Nyack area to exact a com tribute in October, 1639. Four years later, a surprise attack by the Dutch on a large number of Munsee who had come to Manhattan and Pavonia (Jersey City) to escape a recent attack by upriver Mahicans, allies of the Iroquois, sparked a series of confrontations and depredations that lasted until the Munsee suffered a major defeat near Pound Ridge, New York, in the winter of 1644.

Governor Keift's War, as the conflict was named, left both sides devastated, but did little to lessen their animosity toward one another. Only after two more extended confrontations, the Peach War in

1665-67, and the Esopus Wars near present-day Kingston in 1659-60 and 1663-65, did the hostilities end. The Dutch were exhausted by their victories which, incidentally, helped make the taking of Fort Amsterdam an easy proposition for the English in September, 1664, but, all in all, by the end of the Esopus Wars, the European presence had finally overwhelmed the beleaguered River Indians. After 1665, the Tappans, Hackensacks, and Haverstraws no longer participated in important treaties and negotiations and were rarely mentioned in colonial records, except for their periodic visits to Manhattan.<sup>7</sup> The Esopus garrison was disbanded in 1669 and, with it, the last suspicion of an Indian threat in the lower Hudson region disappeared.

In the Rockland area, the widespread sale of land quickly followed these final defeats. From 1671 to 1710, the Munsee relinquished ownership to all but a small tract that included the Ramapo Clove in the extreme western section of the county. By 1737, those lands were sold as well, and the Munsee were, in the eyes of the English, legally dispossessed of all holdings within the boundaries of present-day Rockland.

The seventeenth century had taken a tremendous toll on the Indian population. Besides losses due to warfare, a number of major epidemics decimated the Munsee. In 1690, one estimate placed the strength of the Tappans at only sixty warriors, while the Haverstraws had seemingly disappeared from colonial records.<sup>8</sup> No doubt, many of those who had survived had removed to the Minisinks to join the remnants of other Munsee bands at the forks of the Delaware River. By the mid-eighteenth century, though, after the infamous Walking Purchase of 1737 that defrauded the Lenapes of their lands in the Lehigh Valley in Pennsylvania, and a conference at Easton, Pennsylvania, in 1758, at which they relinquished their rights to lands in northern New Jersey, the main body of Munsee had departed for points west, far from the Ramapos.

Not all the Munsee chose to leave their traditional homeland, of course, and though the evidence is somewhat scarce, it is apparent that the Indian presence in Rockland remained throughout much of the eighteenth century. Field notes from a survey of the disputed New York-New Jersey border in 1719 record several Indian encampments in the Ramapo area,

# THE BEGINNINGS OF MOUNTAINEER SOCIETY

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Local Indians were not the only homesteaders in the Ramapos in the colonial era. Both white and black settlers also moved into the mountains, though again, initial occupation was sporadic and slow, particularly in the first half of the eighteenth century. In his 1735 survey, George Clinton did not record a single family living in the Great Mountain Lots of the Cheesecocks Patent, an area that included most of the Ramapos north of the Clove.<sup>1</sup> Haverstraw residents had been cutting cedar in the vicinity of Cedar Ponds, now Lake Tiorati, for a number of years, but evidently none found reason to remain there permanently. As the Reverend David Cole noted in 1884:

The high hills and mountain ranges of this region seem to present no attraction to the new settler, and as late as 1739 the only inhabitants were a few squatters who had taken possession of small tracts and built their log houses on the hills that overlooked the Crom Patent.<sup>2</sup>

The date referred to relates to Clinton's survey of the area, and the location was near present-day West Haverstraw, only two or three miles inland from the Hudson River. The names of these squatters are of interest, however, because several, including John, Samuel, and Deliverance Conkling and Jeremiah and John Yeomans, are those of prominent nineteenth-century mountain families. Another early Haverstraw settler was Hendrick Hogencamp, and further north in Stony Point were Jacob Rose and a number of Junes, three more families who were among the first to move into the Ramapos. These names also spread throughout the surrounding lowlands in the nineteenth century, thereby obscuring any attempt to trace direct lines of descent.

The situation was similar in the area around the Ramapo Clove. In a deposition taken in 1769 at hearings relating to the New York-New Jersey border dispute, Johannes Issac Blauvelt stated that "west of Paschack, the hill country is rough and not well settled," and that thirty years earlier there were no more than two or three settlements in the Ramapo area. At those same hearings, Daniel Hennion testified that Lucas Kierstead was the only settler in Ramapo when he arrived in 1710, and that while presently

the area around the Sterling Ironworks to the west of the Clove was "fairly well settled," forty-five years earlier, around 1725, there were no settlements at all.<sup>3</sup>

Of these few original homesteaders in the Ramapough Tract in western Rockland and northern Bergen counties, several were free blacks. Clinton recorded in 1742 "a cleared field belonging to Caspar, a free negro settled here by Henrick Vandelinda," as well as "Samuel Francisco, a free negro who settled the place for John Sobrisco under a Jersey title;" and "the settlement of Solomon Peterson and northeast is his brother Jacob Peterson's settlement, both free negro men settled by Mr. Falconiere."<sup>4</sup>

Blacks played an important part in county history even earlier for two freedmen, Claes Manuel and John DeVries, were among the original shareholders in the Tappan Patent, and so could possibly have taken possession of their land as early as 1681. Other freedmen soon joined them, and along with some of their descendants, gradually moved north to Clarkstown and west to Paschack, on lands contained in the Kakiat Patent.

The first mention of black settlers in the Ramapos comes in 1771, with Clinton's mention of "Negro Guy's Improvements" in the mountains near present-day Hillburn. Seven years later, Robert Erskine drew a map that labeled a pond in the general vicinity "Negro Pond," indicating that there was possibly more than one black family in the area.

If in fact a number of blacks were living in the Ramapos at that time, then the question arises as to why they would choose to move onto less-desirable mountain lands when others, including perhaps some friends and relatives, had lived on and farmed lowland properties for at least seventy years. A reasonable response is that they were probably squatters, or that, because they were culturally Dutch, they followed the custom of dividing their lands among their offspring, rather than leaving the entire holding to the eldest son, as in the English tradition. Within a generation or two, plots were often too small to support a family, and other property had to be acquired. Throughout the eighteenth century, lowland acreage was readily available and so, all things being equal, tracts in Kakiat or Ramapough

would seem to have been a more logical choice.

Obviously, though, all things were not equal between blacks and whites in colonial America. The institution of slavery played a vital role in New York's economy and, in fact, in 1742, the adult slave population was 9,000, or 15% of the total, the largest of any colony north of Maryland. Due to a chronic labor shortage that plagued New Netherlands from its inception, slavery was extremely important to agricultural development in the Hudson River Valley in the seventeenth century. In order to maintain their self-sufficiency, estate owners were dependent on skilled slave craftsmen and artisans, while, by the mid-eighteenth century, slaves in New York City were working in every conceivable trade, from shoe-making to goldsmithing.<sup>5</sup>

With this importance came a small measure of independence and, until about 1715, slaves could own property, as well as save enough money to eventually buy their freedom. Discrimination was a social reality, but not yet a legal fact and, even though a black was legally presumed to be a slave unless he could prove otherwise, freedmen were treated as the equals of whites in the courts. Several had substantial estates that included white indentured servants and black slaves.

The institution solidified as the century progressed, and a black man's social and legal standing changed radically. After an aborted slave uprising in New York City in 1714, and a sensational case in 1741 in which a white indentured servant successfully accused scores of blacks and whites of plotting another rebellion, paranoia struck the white community and new restrictive legislation was quickly enacted. The pattern escalated until, by 1798, New Jersey had passed a law that severely limited the rights of black freedmen to cross county and state boundaries.<sup>6</sup> Small wonder that some families chose the relative isolation and freedom of the Ramapos over the increasing discrimination in the more populated lowland areas. In many ways, their situation was not unlike that of their Indian neighbors.

Not everyone entered the mountains to seek refuge or independence. The first major development in the Ramapo region was the result of a totally different type of quest. In 1736, while searching the area for gold, silver, and other precious metals, an Englishman named Cornelius Board uncovered a

number of outcroppings of iron ore. Together with a partner, Timothy Ward, he soon formed the Sterling Ironworks, establishing an industry that was vital to American interests during the Revolutionary War, and an important supplier of iron ore and products throughout much of the nineteenth century. It is also an integral part of the history of the peoples of the Ramapos.

The most famous of the colonial ironmasters was the previously mentioned Peter Hasenclever, an enterprising German who, in 1764, became the superintendent of the Ringwood Ironworks. Though the operation had been founded in the 1740's by Board and several members of the Ogden family, it had languished for a number of years prior to his arrival. Undaunted, Hasenclever proceeded with a resolve to make Ringwood successful, and a vision of creating an iron empire in the Ramapos. Within two years, he had acquired nearly 50,000 acres of land. He also brought over 500 German workers into the mountains, and supervised the construction of three new furnaces, as well as numerous roads, dams, houses, and other related structures. In spite of his efforts, his operations were constantly beset with problems and never generated a profit. Given the difficulties of moving men, machinery, and materials through the wilderness, his project was, by his own admission, too large an undertaking for the mid-eighteenth century. He was removed from the position of manager in 1767 and left for England two years later, never to return.<sup>7</sup>

In 1771, Robert Erskine arrived to assume responsibility for the works but, before long, operations were again interrupted, this time by the war that was raging throughout the countryside. After the British took Manhattan in the summer of 1776, Bergen and southern Orange counties became what historians have called the "neutral ground," a no-man's-land that was ravaged by both sides, but controlled by neither. For seven years, the reality of the Revolution was an ongoing series of skirmishes, raids, and ambushes fought between neighbors who were already deeply divided over a passionate split in the Dutch Reformed Church. Fueled by suspicion and betrayal, the war was marked by the frequent confiscation of property, and the looting of homes of those suspected of harboring sympathies with whichever side happened to be in retreat. Then, too, there were the constant foraging parties

organized by both British and American troops that seasonally emptied the farmer's barn of his meager wartime harvest. In all, the Revolution devastated the area, and hardly a soul remained untouched by tragedy.<sup>8</sup>

On the edge of the main focus of the conflict, the Ramapos nevertheless played a central role in its outcome. If British strategy was to force and take the Hudson, then that of the Americans was to contain them within the perimeter formed by the Ramapos and the Highlands. The Ramapo Clove was fortified and manned throughout the Revolution, while forts at Stony Point and in the mountains to the north were alternately occupied and abandoned. The strategy was generally successful, and patriot forces held the mountains for the duration of the war.

Their control was never absolute, however, as they were constantly challenged by gangs of loyalist outlaws who operated out of the Ramapos. The "cowboys," as they were known locally, were supported by the British high command, for not only did they cause all manner of disruption behind American lines, but they also stole and delivered cattle, horses, oxen, and other valuable commodities to British troops on Manhattan.

The most famous of the cowboys was Claudius Smith, member of a mountain family that gave its name to Smith's Clove near Monroe in Orange County. For a time, Claudius' gang roamed almost at will, robbing travelers, stealing horses and cattle, breaking into homes and, in some instances, murdering their chosen victims. After committing their crimes, they retreated into the Ramapos to seek refuge in rock shelters such as one near Tuxedo that is still known as Claudius Smith's Den. Eventually, Governor Clinton appropriated a substantial sum for his capture, and he was arrested, tried, and hanged in Goshen in January, 1779.<sup>9</sup>

Several other outlaw gangs were based in the Ramapos during the war, and their depredations not only terrorized local residents, but also intimidated an industry that was vital to the American cause, the ironworks at Ringwood. A group that included members of Smith's gang raided the works in November, 1778, adding to the many problems that were plaguing the operation. Besides losing many of his men to service in American regiments, Erskine was also deserted by most of his woodcutters, who

chose instead to seek more profitable employment supplying cordwood to the British in Manhattan.<sup>10</sup> Eventually, the drain on his labor force, combined with the slowness of payment for the ordnance that he was producing for the patriot cause, as well as his exhausting effort as Surveyor General to map the entire area for General Washington, proved to be overwhelming. By 1780, Ringwood had virtually ceased production and Robert Erskine died in the autumn of the year.

The Revolution brought development to a halt in the Ramapos, as it did elsewhere in the region. Those homesteaders who already had a stake in the area may have remained, but it is unlikely that many new settlers entered the mountains during the war. Others who were less committed to the area left, including, no doubt, most of Ringwood's German workmen. Arriving under contract, the majority probably departed upon the completion of their terms of service. Then, too, runaways were a constant problem, as indicated by the many notices posted by Peter Hasenclever in New York and New Jersey newspapers.<sup>11</sup> Those who chose to stay may have joined a German Lutheran community that was founded in nearby Mahwah in the 1720's but their numbers were probably small. Hasenclever's vision barely survived the Revolution and, as noted by the Marquis de Chastellux during a visit two months after Robert Erskine's death, "Ringwood is little more than a hamlet of seven or eight houses, formed by Mrs. Erskine's manor and the forges which she operates."<sup>12</sup>

Local tradition, on the other hand, identifies Hessian deserters as an important element that was introduced into mountain society during the course of the war. Though difficult to interpret, the legend is probably more a memory of the German presence in the mountains in the colonial era than a record of runaway mercenaries.

At the close of the Revolution, the Ramapos were still largely under-populated, except for those Indians, whites, and blacks who had cleared garden plots in the forests or who had built homes along the narrow roads that traversed the area. The stage was set, however, and the mountains mapped in anticipation of the widespread development that would soon sweep the entire region.

# LOCAL INDUSTRY AND MOUNTAIN SETTLEMENTS

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With the turn of the nineteenth century, the nation entered a period of economic expansion that had, within a few decades, radically altered the lifestyles of many Americans. Though residents in rural areas such as Rockland County were much slower in feeling the effects of the new pace of progress, they, too, witnessed the rise of several important local industries and a steadily increasing population. Development entered the Ramapos as well, as the revived colonial iron industry attracted any number of homesteaders, laborers, and skilled workmen to the area.

The workmen and mountaineers who are the main focus of this discussion have always been considered to be those who lived lives removed from the mainstream of this activity. They were not the owners of the ironworks nor even, for the most part, the crew foremen, mechanics, or shopkeepers who inhabited mountain settlements. Rather, as indicated by the somewhat romanticized passage that follows, they have been characterized as independent souls who chose a different way of life. In 1853, N. P. Willis, a popular writer of the day, offered his description:

The inhabitants of these Many-Lake Alps are principally woodsmen. They farm but little, even where they have strips of meadow on the water-courses which traverse their land. With the state of mountain roads, they prefer crops to which customers help themselves, or which can both grow and find legs to walk to market—cattle to graze, sheep to browse, and colts to board (at pasture), for a dollar a month....At five dollars an acre, the average freehold price of the land in this region, and, with four dollars which they promptly get for the cord of wood, a mountain farm is soon paid for, even without stock grazing. The larger wood renews itself every twenty years, and it is very much bettered, meantime, by the constant thinning of the prolific and profit-

able hoop-saplings. There are various incidentals by which the children can turn a penny; such as cranberries, hickory nuts, chestnuts, black-walnuts, and wild-cherries; and as we seemed to start up partridges everywhere in riding along, and wild rabbits are "as plenty as blackberries," there can be no lack of good feeding hereabouts—to say nothing of the lakes full of perch and pickerel within sound of every man's dinner hom.<sup>1</sup>

In a large part, Willis' characterizations are correct. Throughout the nineteenth century, a sizable number of woodsmen and their families lived in the Ramapos, continuing to pursue the largely self-sufficient lifestyles of those settlers who pioneered the area in the colonial era. At the same time, they also supplied a number of important services to local industries, and so were an essential part of the regional economic network. Their lifestyles were, in turn, influenced by the increased opportunity afforded by these ready markets, as well as the realities of the larger society that surrounded them. Richard Parrott, a descendant of the owners of one of the major ironworks of the period, described the situation in his memoirs:

An important branch of the business was the cutting annually of ten thousand cords of wood and turning it into charcoal. The hauling of this coal from the pits and storing it in sheds for use during the winter required a great deal of labor. Numerous baskets were needed and these were made at their homes by the mountaineers or so-called "bucky-makers"...The free use of land for grazing cattle; the opportunity for securing free wood for domestic use as well as for making baskets, spoons, ladles, and trays; the unrestricted use of the woods and the ponds for shooting and fishing, all tended to make the mountaineer indifferent to discipline. His labor was irregular owing to his independence.<sup>2</sup>

The first two tracts, the Queensboro and the forest of Dean, on which are erected the Iron-works, consisting of a fumace and forge, with two fires, both in compleat repairs, and provided with all the buildings necessary for carrying on the said Manufactory, viz. coal houses, carpenter and blacksmith shops, a convenient two story house for a manager, built last summer, and a number of other frame and log houses, with gardens, for the accommodation of the workmen—there is besides, a saw mill erected near the fumace, which supplies the establishment, and the market, with a considerable quantity of lumber; and a farm improved on the Queensboro tract, equal for grazing to any in this state, with all necessary out houses.<sup>5</sup>

Queensboro and Forest of Dean were important sites until mid-century, but, even so, they never rivalled the size and scope of the area's three major works: Ringwood, Southfields, and Greenwood.

Of these, Ringwood is by now certainly the most familiar, and so, merits first mention. After Robert Erskine's death and the subsequent shut-down in 1783, the works remained idle until they were purchased by Martin Ryerson in 1807. He operated at a profit for several years, but his sons were evidently not as successful as he, for in 1842 they filed for bankruptcy.

Ringwood again ceased production until, in 1853, the works were acquired by Peter Cooper, one of New York's major industrialists and financiers. Abram Hewitt, then manager of Cooper's Trenton Iron Company, assumed responsibility, and moved to Ringwood in 1857. The operation was particularly successful during the Civil War when, under contract with the Union Army, it supplied a wide range of ordnance, including mortar carriages, gun-barrel iron, and plating for the celebrated Monitor and other armored gunboats.

Production slowed after the war but nevertheless Hewitt was able to continue operating until the financial panic of 1873, when the works were shut down for the last time. Some of the most important mines remained active, however, producing ore on a fairly steady basis until well into the present century.<sup>6</sup>

The community that developed around the works at Ringwood and Long Pond has as long and varied a history as the Ringwood Company itself. With the exception of a few chance remarks recorded by visitors such as the Marquis de Chastellux, little information is available until the late 1850's, when Abram Hewitt and his wife moved onto the property.

Upon their arrival, they found the manor house surrounded by the evidence of a century of iron-making. Slag heaps and cinder piles were scattered everywhere around the site, as were a number of buildings, some long since vacated. The main road from the mines passed close to the house, and along it was the general store that had served the community since the Revolutionary War era. Nearby was "Logtown," a group of frame and log houses that were occupied by company workmen and their families.<sup>7</sup>

From this description, recorded by Edward Ringwood Hewitt from the recollections of his mother, it appears that the settlement was at that time a haphazard collection of buildings, constructed for any and all utilitarian purposes relating to business operations. With little attention to appearance or planning, the main house had not been distanced from the works but was, in fact, central to it. Ringwood was no manor in the mid-nineteenth century, then, but was instead a property devoted entirely to the expedencies of iron production.

A similar situation occurred at the Greenwood Ironworks, located approximately twenty miles north at present-day Arden, Orange County, New York. Founded in 1810, the fumace produced ordnance during the War of 1812, but did not become a major site until after Robert Parrot acquired it in 1837. Together with his brother Peter, he developed a successful operation that eventually included 10,000 acres of mountain land. The Parrotts are most famous for the Civil War artillery piece that bears their name. Designed by Robert Parrott, the Parrott Gun proved to be such an effective weapon that Greenwood was in full production throughout the war. It continued on a smaller scale for a number of years after the armistice but finally, in 1871, Fumace No. 1, the last charcoal-burning fumace in the Ramapos, was shut down, followed by Fumace No. 2 in 1885.<sup>8</sup>

being commonplace. He would have said that much of the charcoal escaped being fed into the furnace for it was being wafted about in clouds of dust, settling on everything that couldn't get out of the way—including the face of the visitor. By nature the local color was green, but, artificially, black was a good second and more generally worn. The visitor would have asked "Why this noise, in an otherwise perfectly good village?" He would have been told that it was the stamping-mill and, though loud, was thought to be harmless by the natives.<sup>9</sup>

This description is confirmed by an 1860 survey map of the property which locates more than fifty buildings in the immediate vicinity of the furnaces. Peter Parrott's mansion, "The Greenwoods," is situated squarely in their midst, a short walk from the store and schoolhouse.<sup>10</sup>

Although the arrangement was apparently typical, Mrs. Hewitt, at least, was not content to see it remain as such at Ringwood. Determined to create an estate that she considered worthy of the name, she ordered the removal of Logtown and several other extraneous structures. She then embarked on a twenty-five year building and landscaping project that transformed the manor grounds from an industrial complex to her concept of a gracious country property.

In the 1870's, the workers' settlement was relocated closer to the mines, on a hillside well-removed from the manor house. A number of substantial buildings were constructed, including several frame houses, a school, general store, blacksmith's shop, and carpenter's shop. Many of the houses are still standing, and the "Mine Area," as the neighborhood has come to be known, remains the home of many of those members of the Ramapough Mountain Indian community whose relatives came to work for the Hewitts in the 1860's.

Due to a lack of company records, it is difficult to determine whether or not any of the mountain families lived on the property and worked as laborers at the mines and furnaces earlier in the century, although it seems reasonable to assume that, as local woodsmen, they supplied the Ryersons with cordwood, charcoal, and other services. By the

1860's, however, Ringwood Company payroll lists record a number of mountaineer names, including DeGroat, Defrease, Milligan, Morgan, Suffern, and Dunk. Most worked several different jobs during the course of the year, chiefly as miners, laborers at the furnace, team drivers, woodcutters, and charcoal-burners. Others worked on the Hewitt farm, which supplied the entire settlement, from manor house to general store. Self-contained communities, Ringwood and Long Pond, later Hewitt, were totally dominated by the company, and by the latter part of the century, almost everyone in the immediate vicinity was connected to it in one way or another.<sup>11</sup>

The other major ironworks in the area operated in much the same manner. Southfield Ironworks, in the Ramapo Valley a few miles south of Greenwood, was founded in 1804, probably as an extension of the well-known colonial works at nearby Sterling. Both sites were owned in part by members of the Townsend family, and together they remained important throughout most of the nineteenth century. The Sterling furnace, in fact, has the distinction of being the last in the Ramapo region to cease production, going out of blast in 1891.

Samuel Conklin, a Southfield workman whose name is notable because it is shared by many mountaineers, pursued as many different trades for the company in the 1820's as did his counterparts at Ringwood later in the century. He is listed in the ledgers as a woodcutter, sawmill operator, team driver, ore washer, and general laborer on the roads and the company farm.<sup>12</sup>

Evidently, then, members of mountain families had ample opportunity to work at the area's many forges and furnaces and to live in the company's settlements. Other important operations that deserve mention include the Ramapo Works and Dater's Works, both of which were located in the Ramapo Clove between present-day Suffern and Sloatsburg. Of the two, the Ramapo Works was the larger, founded in 1795 by Josiah, Jeremiah, and Issac Pierson to manufacture nails, for which Josiah Pierson had recently patented a successful machine. By 1814, the company was producing 500 tons of nails annually, as well as a large volume of barrel hoops from its rolling and slitting mill, and had given rise to a thriving village, carefully planned, constructed, and controlled by the Piersons.

Nicholas Conklin's property included an upland area known locally as Pine Meadow. His descendants remained on the land, and within a generation or two, almost everyone in the immediate vicinity was a Conklin or related to one. The pattern was common at the time, not only in the mountains, but also in many of the less densely populated lowland areas as well. Often these locales were named after their most prominent family, and so nineteenth-century maps of the Ramapos indicate such spots as Woodtown, Call Place, Bulsontown, Mott Place, and Kile Place. Hardly settlements, they were rather a group of houses within reasonable proximity of one another, some lining a mountain road, others accessible only by footpaths through the woods.

Several of the roads through the Ramapos were quite active, however, particularly those that linked the mines, sawmills, and related operations with each other. As a result, some fairly substantial settlements developed at several of the key intersections. One of the largest of these crossroads communities was Johnstontown, most of which was flooded in the 1930's by the construction of Lake Sebago. Founded around the turn of the nineteenth century by two Johnson brothers who came to the area in search of trees for masts and ship timber, Johnstontown had grown by the 1870's to include about thirty houses, three stores, a school, and a Methodist meetinghouse. Its heart was the junction of several smaller woodroads with the main road from the Ramapo Valley village of Sloatsburg.

Johnstontown was well known throughout the century as a major center of activity for the surrounding area. Then again, some visitors were not as impressed with its importance as were many of the local residents. Witness the following story, filed by a reporter from the *NEW YORK SUN* in 1898:

The *SUN* man had been searching for Johnstontown for a long time, but had seen no houses. He met a woodsman in a wild valley.

"Where's Johnstontown?" he asked

"Here," replied the man. "You're about the middle of it now."

Twenty homes scattered loosely over a square mile, and no one visible from any other, is regarded as a centre of civilization.<sup>16</sup>

Following the Johnstontown road a few miles to the northeast, the traveler soon reached Sandfield, or later Sandyfield, at Beaver Pond. By the 1850's, there were about ten houses in the Sandfield area, along with two stores, a school, and a meetinghouse. The community apparently developed around the intersection of the Johnstontown road and the Monroe-Haverstraw Turnpike, a toll road incorporated in 1824. In comparison with other mountain roads, the turnpike was well maintained, and so was a much-frequented route from Orange County across the Ramapos to the Hudson landings at Haverstraw. Its main toll gate was at Sandfield, a memory of which survives today as Gate Hill Road and Route 210.

At another important crossroads, five miles south-east of Sandfield, was Ladentown. Though not actually located in the Ramapos, the community never-



Mountaineers taking baskets and woodenware to market, from *APPLETON'S JOURNAL*, 1872.

theless became a major center of mountain life. In 1816, Michael Laden left his job at the Ramapo Works and opened a store and tavern mid-way between present-day Suffern and Haverstraw. The spot soon became a well-known stopover for the ironworks traffic from the Ramapo Clove to Haverstraw. Ladentown was also situated near an important point of entry into the mountains, where a shorter, if more rugged, road from the Ramapo Works through Pine Meadow and Woodtown joined the main road to Haverstraw.

Michael Laden soon developed a brisk trade in woodenware, baskets, and brooms, and before long, was sending wagons into the mountains to exchange groceries and dry goods for the woodsmen's craftwork. Business was so profitable that he sold his property in 1836 and moved to New York

City to establish a major woodenware outlet.<sup>17</sup>

The community flourished without him, and though the Furman family store a few miles down the road in Furmanville offered serious competition during the middle of the century, Ladentown continued to send quantities of woodenware to local and urban markets until after World War I. It also supported a large cordwood business and, from about 1850 to 1890, a small industry of its own, Anderson's File Factory. At the height of its prosperity in the 1870's, Ladentown included twenty houses, three stores, a Methodist church, and a post office.

Further north, at the point where the Ramapos merge with the Hudson Highlands at Bear Mountain, Doodletown continued as the largest settlement in the area. Founded before the Revolutionary War, it can probably lay claim to being the oldest mountain community north of the Ramapo Clove. As indicated on Robert Erskine's 1778 map of the region, Doodletown was strategically located at the intersection of the road north to West Point and the main route to the west that passed by Queensboro and Forest of Dean and on into Orange County. General George Clinton recorded a skirmish at "a place called Doodletown" in October, 1777, a prelude to the British attack on nearby Forts Clinton and Montgomery. The incident may have been the origin of a local tale with several versions that relates the name of the community to the tune "Yankee Doodle," played by either British or American troops on the day of the battle. More likely, however, "Doodletown" is a place name that dates to the earliest settlers in the area, as the Doodletown Bight, an inlet a few miles away on the Hudson, was well-known to sloop captains long before the Revolution.

Doodletown remained important throughout the nineteenth century because its major resource had become indispensable to another of Rockland's major industries, the brickyards at Haverstraw. Attracted by large, readily accessible clay banks, brickmakers began operating in Haverstraw around 1810. Five years later, a recently arrived Englishman named James Wood invented a process that revolutionized production, and Haverstraw quickly became one of the largest centers of brick manufacturing in the country. With New York City as an eager market, business boomed until after the turn of the present century.<sup>18</sup>



allowed them to settle the property. No one contacted Rutherford's office in Perth Amboy to verify the claim.

By the 1820's, recognizable mountaineer names began appearing in the records with a frequency that suggests that a community was already well-established. James DeGrote bought ten acres near Split Rock from Garrett W. Hopper in 1825.<sup>21</sup> Five years later, the federal census locates a number of families in the vicinity, including those of Richard, Joseph, James, William, and Ellen DeGroat; Elias, Peter, and Julianna Mann; and John and Samuel Vandonk. In 1846, James DeGrote increased his holdings when he purchased fifty-eight acres from Mary Rutherford.

The community that had developed by the 1850's was neither a crossroads settlement like so many of those north of the Ramapo Pass, nor did it include any schools, post offices, or other public buildings. Rather, it was a site chosen for its distance from the larger society and, generally, development consisted of homesteads and small farms linked by foot paths and wood roads. Many residents worked elsewhere by day, as woodcutters, charcoalburners, hired hands on valley farms, or laborers in area shops and factories. For those necessities that could not be grown, raised, or gathered, they had accounts with merchants in neighboring villages and company towns. Their lifestyles were similar to those of woodsmen like the Conklins at Pine Meadow but, all in all, the settlement at Green Mountain Valley was much less diverse than that at either Johnstown or Doodletown. Neighbors bound by a common ancestry, together they formed one of the area's first true mountaineer communities.

Throughout this chapter, a wide range of information pertaining to the Ramapos has been presented, with the intent of underscoring the extent of development in the region, as well as the diversity of mountain society in the nineteenth century. Upon close examination, it is often difficult to determine who was and who was not a mountaineer at the time, not only because of a lack of documentary evidence, but also because of a necessary openness in the definition of the word. The mountaineers were the chief woodcutters, charcoalburners, and bockie-makers, but, for the most part, their lives were not

unlike those of other mountain residents. They also shared much with their neighbors in the lowlands, for, to a large extent, the entire region remained rural until after the turn of the twentieth century. With the exception of the main Hudson River towns and a few inland villages, Rockland was primarily a county of single-family farms and crossroads settlements.

The woodsmen lived more independently than other county residents, but they certainly were not isolated from them. Many had relatives throughout the area with whom they maintained contact. Others traveled about selling their wares door-to-door, echoing Indian lifestyles of the previous century. Even in the early part of this century, Emeline Stalter of Doodletown was a familiar figure as she walked county roads smoking a pipe and carrying a load of baskets to relatives in New City, the county seat.<sup>22</sup>

A final example of the pace of progress and change in nineteenth-century Rockland is seen in the usage of a local dialect known as "Jersey Dutch." A combination of Dutch, English, and Munsee words, it was universally spoken in the first half of the century. John Calvin Blauvelt of Blauveltville reported that all county residents were familiar with it when he was growing up in the 1830's and 40's, but that he had never learned it because he was discouraged by his parents.<sup>23</sup> By the Civil War era, its use was fading rapidly, but in 1880, it was still more frequently heard than English in the most rural sections of the county. By 1910, however, only members of the Hoevenkopf community commonly spoke Jersey Dutch.<sup>24</sup> As the woodsmen and mountaineers continued the lifestyles of their forefathers, they increasingly became reflections of an earlier era.

## THE END OF AN ERA

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The growth of the ironworks, which brought such rapid development to the Ramapos in the first half of the nineteenth century, ended abruptly after the Civil War. Orders for guns, ammunition, and iron plating, the source of war-time prosperity, inevitably ceased with the armistice, and though most of the works survived by reducing the size of their operations, competition from foundries in the Midwest and South had soon compounded their problems. In light of an emerging national economy, the difficulties of mining and transporting ore and iron products that had always plagued the Ramapo ironworks eventually proved insurmountable. By 1891, all of the furnaces in the area had ceased production, and only a few mines at Ringwood and Sterling were being worked with any regularity.

With the closings, many of those connected with the iron industry left the Ramapos. The company settlement at Greenwood was the first to be abandoned, and, while the others continued to support miners and their families, they were much reduced in size. Only at Ringwood and Hewitt did substantial communities remain, as many of the mountain families whose lives were so closely tied to the area stayed to work on the Hewitt estate.

In all, the woodsmen's traditional lifestyles were much less affected by the closings than those of other mountain residents. To the north, the Haverstraw brickyards remained in full production, and the demand for vast quantities of cordwood continued unabated. Cities like Newark, Paterson, and New York were also ready markets for the woodcutter's products, as were the railroad companies that eagerly sought ties of Ramapo chestnut. The large, sturdy coal baskets began to disappear with the lost art of charcoal-burning, but other types of mountain craftwork, including grain shovels, dye ladles, boat bailers, and fruit baskets, continued to be a steady source of income.

For the most part, major landholding patterns were not affected either, though much property changed hands. Some families, like the Piersons in Ramapo and the Snows in Hillburn, retained their mountain woodlots, but others were forced to sell. Edward Harriman, the railroad magnate, bought

most of Peter Parrott's 10,000 acres at Greenwood, and eventually acquired almost 20,000 more. Meanwhile, Pierre Lorillard of Tuxedo was buying much of the surrounding property on both sides of the Ramapo Valley, while several Rockland families, including the Sherwoods, Furmans, and McKennys, made sizable purchases in the mountains between Lidentown and Suffern.

The new owners continued to tolerate squatters in exchange for woodcutting and other services. By the closing decades of the century, most of the permanent residents in the mountains were either landless woodsmen or small farmers. As one visitor noted around the turn of the century:

On the eastern slopes small farmhouses abound. You also find them scattered all over the mountains, but at greater intervals as you get inside...Farming is the poorest-paying industry in the mountains, and the farmers do not attempt to raise more out of the scanty soil than enough to supply the needs of stock and family, and perhaps a little over to sell at the mountain stores. The chief business of these farmers is chopping off the wood from their barren hillsides and carting it to market. In this work, they employ large numbers of the other residents of the country, the woodsmen and the basket makers. (Many of these farmers are accounted very well to do by their less fortunate neighbors.)... There is only one type of people in the mountains. The landed proprietors and farmers come of the same stock as all, which is American. They have acquired property; the others haven't. That is all the difference.... And go where you will throughout the region you will find everybody related in some way or other to everyone else.<sup>1</sup>

As a close-knit group of farmers, woodcutters, and basketmakers who continued the lifestyles of a previous generation, the mountaineers were far from universally admired, especially by the more progres-

From his vantage point in the 1880's, Green could differentiate between Ladentowners and mountaineers, but his opinion of the latter differs little from Dwight's earlier generalizations.

As the lines were more firmly drawn, outsiders from a greater distance began to take increased interest. "A Community of Outcasts" appeared in APPLETON'S JOURNAL OF LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART in 1872, after a reporter's visit to the Hoevenkopf area. The title alone indicates that discriminatory attitudes were not restricted to mountain families north of the pass. The article was one of the first in a long series of misguided reports in the New York press that reflected the larger society's prejudices against people of color. Only in the last decade or so have editorial opinions about the Ramapough Mountain Indian community begun to change.

The situation north of the pass was different in that the mountaineers shared a common ancestry with the surrounding population, and so could not be easily identified by racial differences. Eventually, though, the social discrimination indicated by Green accomplished the same purpose. Recent interviews with long-time Ladentown residents indicate that the villagers did not consider themselves woodsmen either, even though one of their principal occupations was woodcutting.<sup>4</sup> The only identifiable fragment of Ladentown's beginnings as a tavern town survives in the much-disputed location of "Egypt Road," a once-notorious stretch of highway of which older residents recall mention by their parents and grandparents.

Further into the Ramapos, Johnsonstown, which by description and location would seem to have been at least partially a mountaineer community, was also not perceived as such by many of its residents. Members of the Johnson family in particular differentiated themselves from woodsmen by at least the turn of the present century.<sup>5</sup>

At some point, even those who identified themselves as mountaineers developed a class consciousness, as evidenced by the prevalence of the term "Mountain Woodchucks," used in the Sandfield area around 1890 to describe those who lived in more inaccessible areas.<sup>6</sup> Then, too, Elias Pitt, one of many family members who lived in Pittown, a spot in the mountains between Ladentown and Suffern, often spoke of the "no-goods" in the vicinity.<sup>7</sup>

The development of these attitudes is difficult to trace at this point in time, and their interpretation is perhaps debatable but, at the very least, they would seem to indicate the strength of the social isolation that gradually surrounded the Ladentown-area mountaineers. One possible explanation is that as the pressure from the outside increased, even the small mountain landowners began to sever their connections with their woodsmen neighbors and relatives.

Further evidence of this process of exclusion is offered by the many nineteenth-century missionary efforts launched on behalf of the mountaineers. The first men of the cloth to preach in the Ramapos on a regular basis were Methodist circuit riders, who were visiting the area before 1800 as a part of a much larger route known as the Bergen Circuit. Their normal itinerary began in Belleville, New Jersey, and included Bloomfield, Caldwells, Hook, Fairfield, Long Pond, Ringwood, Ramapo, "Mrs. Sherwood's House" (Sherwoodsville), Paramus, Hempstead, Drummonds, Johnsonstown, Thiells, Babcocks (Willow Grove), DeCamps (Stony Point), Haverstraw, Nyack, Slote (Piermont), Taylors (Palisades), Fort Lee, and Spring Garden.<sup>8</sup> This rather lengthy list contains several of Rockland's and Bergen's principal villages, indicating that even though all the communities on the route were not equal in size, none was large enough at the time to support its own Methodist ministry. The woodsmen at Johnsonstown, therefore, heard the same message as the farmers in Paramus.

By mid-century, however, Methodism had gained a much larger following, and the county, many more residents. Several river towns and farming villages had built Methodist churches, and the old circuit was, for the most part, reduced to the round of the mountain meetinghouses. The travelling preachers were still very effective, though, and almost every crossroads community offered at least a cabin for their use. The Mountville Church in Doodletown, which, as previously mentioned, was converted by local residents from a Presbyterian to a Methodist church soon after its construction, is another testimony to the mountaineers' dedication to the faith.

Methodism remained largely unchallenged until 1869, when the Reverend Ebenezer Gay, the pastor of Trinity Episcopal Church in Haverstraw, estab-

Ringwood, and gradually, as traditional lifestyles were updated by the post-war boom, the community feeling that had been such an integral part of mountaineer society began to fade.<sup>7</sup>

Along with the new ideas came a new perception of the local situation, and a resolve to resist the discrimination that for so long had overshadowed relationships between mountain families and the surrounding population. In 1943, a boycott of Hillburn's segregated school system was organized with the help of the NAACP. Brook School, built for mountain children in 1889, was by then overcrowded and inadequate, while a larger and more modern school in the center of town was underutilized by the children of the village's white residents. Thurgood Marshall, then with the NAACP in New York City, led the protest and, by the end of the year, Brook School was closed, and the Main School was successfully integrated.

In the decades since then, members of the various mountain communities have formed several civic groups to promote the general welfare of local residents. The first was the Stag Hill Civic League, organized in 1956 to persuade Bergen County to improve the neglected county roads from Mahwah to the Mountain. Throughout the 1960's, the League continued to sponsor other community improvement projects, including the construction of a firehouse.

The Ringwood Neighborhood Action Association is another civic group formed in recent years. In the late 1960's, with the help of low-cost mortgages from the Federal government, several new homes were built in the Mine Area to replace some of the company houses that dated to the Hewitt era in the 1870's.

The most active of these organizations is the Ramapough Mountain Indians, which, as mentioned, was incorporated in 1978 to administer State and Federal funds. From an office in Mahwah, the group offers a number of social programs to the community, including counseling and job placement services.

For the past seven years, they have also conducted workshops in the Mahwah and Ramapo school systems on Native American history, culture, and arts and crafts for eligible students from the community. A separate Title IV, Indian Education program has

been offered to the Ringwood area since 1981 through the E. G. Hewitt School. Together, these two programs seek to highlight Indian heritage, and to forge a positive cultural identity among mountain children by reinforcing an important aspect of their long-standing traditions.

The arts and crafts that are being taught in the classrooms are not necessarily those of the Munsee. Too much of the original culture of the area has been lost in the past 300 years for any truly accurate reconstruction to be possible. Rather, the Ramapough Mountain Indians have chosen a course similar to that adopted by other groups of Native American heritage across the country. Cultural traditions that reinforce the concept of "Indianness," regardless of their exact point of origin, are being preserved and perpetuated with the understanding that it is Indian consciousness that will, in the long run, give strength and meaning to a local situation that is constantly challenged by contemporary American society.

For the descendants of the old mountain families, rapid suburbanization and increased mobility are the latest threats to the group's survival. Successes on a local level, combined with changing attitudes within the larger society, have resulted in a lessening of discrimination and social isolation in recent years, and, consequently, some of the outside forces that caused a strong sense of group cohesion are disappearing. Education and employment opportunities are drawing some away as well, particularly the young, who, like their counterparts across the country, are increasingly more interested in contemporary, media-oriented mass culture than in the traditions of their ancestors. Then, too, for everyone who leaves the area, at least one or two arrive from the outside, as the ever-increasing expansion of greater metropolitan New York reaches further into the Ramapos.

One of the community's responses to this accelerating pace of change is the Ramapough Mountain Indian organization. Their efforts to maintain a sense of continuity with the past are important for, not only are they the descendants of the original peoples of the Ramapos, but, as the link to the lifestyles of the woodsmen of the previous century, they are also the inheritors of the traditions of the first settlers of the New York-New Jersey border area.

## The End of an Era

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5. Interview with Ruth Momi, New City, N.Y., October 18, 1984.
6. Interview with Anne Lutz, Ramsey, N.J., October 4, 1983.
7. Interview with Julian Salomon, Suffern, N.Y., September 15, 1984.
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9. Howell.
10. "Ramapo Basketry May Come to Life." *NEW YORK TIMES* (August 16, 1949), p. 18.
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