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TOWN OF AMENIA

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To: Town of Amenia Planning Board
From: Arlene Iuliano, Town Historian
Date: September 18, 2014

Re: Silo Ridge Amended Development Plan, 2014

Enclosed you will find some copied information that I submitted to the Planning Board in 2008. My original presentation was extensive and I hope still a part of that file.

I have also enclosed a copy of material I wrote this year for the Conservation Advisory Committee of which I am a member: "Viewing Amenia".

And, a 2009 pamphlet whose theme includes DeLaVergne Hill, it's viewpoint and mile markers as well as it's Foliage Spot significance per DC Tourism, and a current Millerton News special in June, 2014.

The DeLaVergne Hill view has and continues to be highly significant to the Town of Amenia. And the mile markers that can be traced from Route 343 through Pleasant Valley are indeed "on the mile". Your preservation of the viewpoint on the curve would be most appreciated, including the stone that was there and is pictured in the pamphlet with two original markers.

Yours in History, Arlene Iuliano

Cc file

Arlene Iuliano
Town Historian

George Fenn, Chairman, & Members
Town of Amenia Planning Board
36B Mechanic Street
Amenia, New York 12501

August 7, 2008

Re: Silo Ridge Development

I am a resident of the town of Amenia and currently President of the Amenia Historical Society. I respectfully take this opportunity to make some additional comments on the Silo Ridge Development Project currently before the Planning Board. I submitted a letter in March 2008 on the DEIS sections 1-5 that included my doubts about the developers claim that it would have a "minimal visual impact". At this time I would like to note some history of the ownership of the DeLaVergne Hill land area, the long-time use of the name, and the significance of the view-shed bearing this name to us local folks, and other folks, for over 300 years.

The land and the Family Delavergne.

The actual land in question may date back to the French and Indian War, also known as the Seven Years War (1756-1763), which resulted in France ceding all of its land east of the Mississippi River to England. When in power the French had awarded land grants to their Army officers and other emigrants, although many returned to France despite official efforts to discourage them, according to Taylor in his book American Colonies. However when the Huguenots, a religious group whose faith had been outlawed in France in the late 1600's, came to British America, they stayed. In the 1700's they were among the diverse group of early settlers in Amenia.

In 1697 Amenia land was a part of the Great Nine Partners Patent whose boundary lines were determined "by geographical nearness and personal interest" according to MacCracken author of Old Dutchess Forever. The early settlers, he said, often gave personal names to an area, its hills and its roads, in the spirit of neighborliness, citing the names Amenia and Delavergne, as examples. A Patent was a method of describing large tracts of land at that time in Dutchess County before the formation of townships.

According to an article in the June 13, 1974 edition of the Harlem Valley Times, land was awarded to the Vergne family around 1765 and "**included the famed DeLaVergne Hill with its beautiful view of the Harlem Valley**". It also said that the family operated an Inn at the bottom of its hill. This Inn was last known as the DeLaVergne Farms Hotel in the 1970's before it burned down, the subject of the article. Ghee and Spence, authors of Harlem Valley Pathways, say that the name Delavergne was given to the hill by the Huguenots adding that the landscape's "**natural beauty has always been one of the attractions of Amenia**".

Newton Reed in his book Early History of Amenia wrote that a Lewis Delavergne came to Amenia from the DC town of Washington and purchased one thousand acres of land. His ancestors were "of a superior family in France". His brother was Dr. Benjamin Delavergne who "took a prominent part in the beginning of the Revolutionary War and was a Major in the Fourth regiment of the Dutchess County Militia". The names Joseph and Lewis Delavergne were among the Amenia signers of a 1775 Pledge opposing the oppressive acts of the British government. The end of the Revolutionary War saw changes to land use due to the awarding of land grants and the splitting up of estates into small farms. MacCracken claims that such actions were attractive to "Dutchess folks" and that half of Amenia was split-off as an outcome of the Federal Constitution of 1788. Amenia's boundary with the newly named town of Washington became a few miles to the west of Delavergne Hill as a result that year, and has not changed.

The View from DeLaVergne Hill

The definition of the word view (as of a landscape), according to Webster, is a sight regarded for its pictorial quality. The Delavergne Hill view-shed appears to meet, and to always have met, that definition. Pictures of the view taken over the years have graced the covers of books and pamphlets including the 2007 Draft Amenia Comprehensive Plan Update of the 1991 Master Plan.

In 1762 the Precinct of Amenia had been formed by an act of the Colonial Legislature and the name- which means **pleasant to the eye** in Latin-, was given at about the same time by Dr. Thomas Young. Dr. Young was a poet who lived in the section known as the Oblong Valley. He also noted at this same time that: "though so suitable a name, and agreeable, it had not been given to any other town in the country". However, long before the first European settlers came to the region, the Scatocook tribe of Indians who lived and hunted in the region had called the area Weebutook which meant **Beautiful Hunting Grounds**. The district's school was named Webutuck in 1957. Views from sections of these grounds are spectacular.

The road that first "served this part of the town came from Smithfield across to, and down to the foot of Delavergne hill" according to the 1991 Master Plan. Traveling about, other than by walking, was by horse and wagon, or by horseback. As the population increased in the area and the stagecoach became a method of transportation, there was a need for improved roadways to facilitate both the movement of people and of commercial products, especially to- and -from Poughkeepsie and the Hudson River. The Dutchess Turnpike, built in 1805, was one of these new roads across Dutchess County. In Amenia, it followed the Delavergne hill roadway on its way to the Amenia hamlet area. Later construction "swung it out" in the wide curve we know today. When the automobile appeared in the early 1900's DeLavergne Hill was a fine place to try out a new car as well "**as attractive to a photographer then as now**", according to SH Benham, Jr. in his book titled Rural Life in the Hudson Valley 1880-1920, and his picture of a car on the hill. Ghee and Spence also make note in their caption under the picture taken in the 1930's of a car traveling up the hill that it is: "**a landscape seemingly unchanged**" since named.

In 1988, the Amenia Historical Society (AHS) prepared a presentation to the Amenia Town Board. On March 17th of that year, two representatives of AHS-Robert Law and Leslie Hoss- appeared with a replica of the highway marker found on Route 22 entering the town, saying the following:

"We hope that the Town Board will elect to place this marker in a prominent place in our town hall to remind all citizens who attend public meetings here as to what is the true meaning of our town name. It is a unique name with a rich heritage. It is the legacy of our forefathers which not only conveys the spirit of what our town was for them but also implies an obligation and responsibility we have as a community to live up to the present: being "pleasant to the eye". It is in this spirit that we hope that the Town Board will elect to accept our humble gift and display it with the same pride with which we give it."

The Town Board accepted their gift and it has hung on the wall of the board's meeting room since.

In 2004 the Amenia Historical Society sponsored the printing of a Cookbook in commemoration of the 300th anniversary of the first settler of the town, Richard Sackett. An introductory statement included the following: "**over the centuries one thing has remained constant, the physical beauty of the area. The gorgeous valleys, hills and hamlets are still attracting people from near and far**" The picture on the cover is of DeLaVergne Hill looking east. AHS was organized in 1968 and presently maintains an active level of community participation.

And then there is the 2007 Comprehensive Master Plan Update date mentioned above. That update included a section titled: Community Character, Open Space, and Historic Resources, which was almost identical to the 1991 section titled Scenic Roads. The following is a quote about the view from DeLaVergne Hill:

“One of Amenia’s greatest views is from De La Vergne Hill. As US-44 curves around the hillside, a vast panorama of the Harlem Valley is visible. From this high point, hills, farms, fields and forests can be seen stretching east to Connecticut and south to the hamlet of Wassaic. The view is especially spectacular with seasonal foliage and atmospheric conditions. A local church along this hillside holds Easter sunrise services to take advantage of the early morning scene. Visitors are often struck by the beauty of the foothills and valley as they enter the “Gateway to the Berkshires”

The Silo Ridge Developers have claimed that their community will have minimal visual impact. The townspeople have tended “as a whole” to say otherwise, especially when it comes to the DeLaVergne Hill view shed. Please try to retain the view in the vicinity of the roadway as unobstructed as possible. To us it is a historic treasure that has been described as Beautiful since the time of the Indians and first settlers until today.

Note: The name Harlem Valley dates to the time of the expansion of the NYC Railroad into eastern Dutchess towns from the Harlem section of New York City in the mid 1800’s. The spelling of DeLaVergne has varied over the years, but has retained its pronunciation. I have listed my literary sources below, and attached pictures from them and other sources. Good viewing!

Very truly yours,

Arlene Iuliano
5103 Route 22
Amenia, NY 12501

SOURCES;

Allison J. & S. Steinberg, Unit Outlines in American History, 1944, CEBCo., NY.
Benham, S.H. Jr., Rural Life in the Hudson Valley 1880-1920, 2005, Hudson House.
Ghee, Joyce C. & Joan Spence, Harlem Valley Pathways, 1998, Arcadia Pub. GB.
MacCracken, Henry Noble, Old Dutchess Forever, 1956, Hastings House, NY.
Reed, Newton, Early History of Amenia, Fourth Edition, 1985, Harlem Valley Times Pub.
Taylor, Allan, American Colonies, 2001, Penguin Books, USA.
Wallbank, Walter T. & Alastar M. Taylor, Civilization-Past and Present, 1942, S.Foresman & Co., USA.

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Lana Anguin-Cohen
Town of Amenia Planning Board
PO Box 126
Amenia, NY 12501

October 24, 2008

Re: Silo Ridge Development –FEIS

I would like to submit a copy of my comments made on August 7, 2008 to the Amenia Planning Board as I did not find them in the current FEIS at the Amenia Library. I have included the illustrative material I used, too. If I missed this material in the FEIS, I apologize.

By this letter I am making some additional comments and including some additional illustrative material following my review of the current materials that relate to the deadline response date of October 24, 2008; and the visual impact of the project on the DeLaVergne Hill view-shed.

- I do not find an appreciation of this view-shed by the developer, as to its history and significance to the people of the town and the region.
- I am of the opinion that the Silo Ridge owners have not maintained appropriate management of the tree growth on both sides of the hairpin turn area of DeLaVergne Hill/Route 44. Tree Growth over the years has basically been controlled, most likely by the farming of the area: i.e. mowing of the hay, cutting of the corn. This tree growth as seen today on that stretch of roadway tends to block some of the view-shed as one rounds the turn. Some of the pictures I have included show this change from “the past”.
- The pull-off area on the descending portion of the hill as you round the turn heading into the Amenia hamlet area is a mile marker site when the road was a stage route to Poughkeepsie. It is one of many such sites as the route proceeds east to Amenia from the Town of Washington and is a mile from the one before it on the same side of the road near the Route 44/83 intersection. A stone marks the pull-off site while a marker stands at the other. I have included pictures of both.

I also stand by my comments made regarding the project in a letter I submitted on March 18, 2008 which is included in the FEIS. While there has been some mitigation of some issues, I suggest that the DeLaVergne Hill view-shed area continues to be an issue of concern as does the presence of a winery. That area, in my opinion, should remain as open space out of respect for its historical significance.

Arlene Juliano
Arlene Juliano
5103 Route 22
Amenia, NY 12501
845-373-9088

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All notes for [unclear] 10/29

Attachments

- Copy of Aug 7, 2008 comments made to Dept A Planning Board (3 pages)
- Enclom - DeSalleigne family
- pix DeSalleigne Hill, 1890 (Cookbook p12)
- front page of *Emerging America* pamphlet (political) 2005
- pix (2) DeSalleigne Hill 1930 (Shuey Spence)
DeSalleigne Hill/Route 44 - view 1910-20 (Benson)
- pix view of H.V. Parkway (Shuey Spence)
- Copy Times 1931 + comment - HV one of nature Beauty Spot -
- pix (2) view from DeSalleigne Hill looking South, looking East (1988) bottom
E p1-2 + top of 3 attached.
- AHS presentation to Dept A 3/17/88 (1 page)
+ pix of mile marker taken 9/10/88
- Pok Journal pix of ^{road} top of DeSalleigne 1996
- from the DC Bureau Guide P 2000
Bureau Guide page
- pix from Ditches, morphology - M/A 2008 -
Trombe Press, P 35 (Arthur J. Dreyfus)
- pix 2 of "road" at pull-off DEVAAC to Amherst
+ mile marker w/ # P 83/44 - + copy of ^{Travel + Post} _{Route P. 200}

VIEWING AMENIA

The Pequot Indians who hunted here before any settlers arrived called it "*Weebutook*", or "Beautiful Hunting Ground". They were of the Scatacook Tribe and it was Eunice Mauwee, grand-daughter of Chief Gideon Mauwee, who interpreted the meaning, says Newton Reed in his *Early History of Amenia* .

In 1762 the name Amenia was suggested by Dr. Thomas Young, who came into the area in and about 1750 as a practicing physician, a poet, a scholar and a radical thinker, and derived it from the Latin word *Amoena-Pleasant*-as to place. At that time it was the Precinct of Amenia under Colonial Rule (In 1788, after the Revolutionary War, it became the Town of Amenia). The name was accepted by the people who had turned to Young "as a doctor/wordsmith", wrote David Parker in a Nov, 2009 AHS Newsletter article. No other place in the whole country was given this name at that time, "Though so suitable", noted Reed. Time eventually changed that when the 10/2/1969 HVT published a picture of Amenia SD that was "founded by settlers from Amenia NY." In the 21st century Amenia NY is still seen as most beautiful to view. On 10/3/2010 the Poughkeepsie Journal included DeLaVergne Hill, Route 44, Amenia on a list of the "Top 10 foliage spots" in Dutchess County.

Early records of the town's "history" were sparse due to the absence of municipal unity Reed says; and, those first kept were by religious institutions . His book was not written to describe the physical features, "which are unchanged", he wrote . But as history began to be written in book format, scenic view features were often included. James H Smith says in his 1882: *History of Dutchess County 1683-1882*: "The county occupies one of the most picturesque portions of the Hudson Valley;" adding that: "Generally the slopes are gentle but, steeper upon the west than the **opposite side**" whose hills can be cultivated to their summits. Henry Noble MacCracken in his *Old Dutchess Forever*, 1956, writing about Dutchess County Neighborhoods, notes that the Harlem Valley Railroad gave its corporate name "to the whole beautiful valley". That was in the 1850's. And when Lady Bird Johnson, a known advocate for beautiful highways, and wife of President Lyndon Johnson, visited the area in the 1960's she was known to have remarked about the beauty of the view of Amenia (my two daughters readily confirmed that to me, from their school-day recollections).

Other sources have also documented the view and scenic beauty of the town and area.

- Vail's 1870 Dutchess County Directory writes in an Historical Sketch introductory, that eastern parts of the county are noted for the purity of their lake waters "and the beauty of the scenery immediately about them".
- Benson J. Lossing in his "The Hudson-From the Wilderness to the Sea" originally published in 1866 wrote: "around, within an area of 20-30 miles-(from the Hudson and Poughkeepsie)-spreads out a farming country, like a charming picture, beautiful in every feature.

Viewing Amenia (cont.)

- When the Dutchess Turnpike was completed from Poughkeepsie to Amenia in 1805 it included a sweeping curve on the top of DeLaVergne Hill. As a result it brought into full focus a panoramic view of the town and the surrounding scenic country-side that spawned the phrase “gateway to the Berkshires” (1920’s Lake Amenia -Vacationland pamphlet, 1985 Welcome to Amenia pamphlet); and “foothills of the Berkshires, with superb views and scenic country side” (Welcome to Amenia New York 2001/2013 pamphlets).
- A 6/13/1974 HVT article about the DeLaVergne Farms Inn says that the land dates back to a grant given to the family in 1765 and “included the famed DeLaVergne Hill with its beautiful view of the Harlem Valley.”
- Joyce Ghee and Joan Spence in their chapter on Amenia, in their 1998 Harlem Valley Pathways series, have a picture of a car ascending DeLaVergne Hill in 1910 with a broad view of the landscape “seemingly unchanged,” including its natural beauty.

Government documents at both the local and county levels have included statements, pictures and, in 2007 identified a potential Scenic Protection Overlay District. In 1988, as example, Amenia Town Supervisor Peter Bavis, by action of the Town Board at their organizational meeting on January 3rd, authorized the establishment of a Master Plan Committee to revise the 1969 Amenia Master Plan. Coordination with the Dutchess County Planning Department and the hiring of a professional Planning Firm was a part of the overall process. The final document was adopted in 1991 and it included references to the scenic views and vistas. In a paragraph titled: *Amenia’s Open Space Resource’s*, the view on DeLaVergne Hill from Route 44 was identified as a view of county-wide importance. It is also specifically referenced, along with other historic features and scenic views, in this section which is titled: Community Character, Open Space and Historic Resources.

In the year 2000 the Greenway Compact Program became a significant resource for local communities. It is described as a: “voluntary partnership between the Greenway Council and local communities” in land use planning, including grant funding. Amenia was the first Dutchess County town to join in 2001. Their sourcebook, *Greenway Connections*, has a beautiful picture of an easterly view from DeLaVergne Hill in a pictorial section titled: “Greenway Guides—Protecting the Countryside.”

In 2007 the Town of Amenia adopted a Comprehensive Plan Update to their 1991 Master Plan. This update has brought the town’s planning concepts into the 21st century and includes a potential Scenic Protection Overlay District whose dialogue section states: “One of Amenia’s greatest views is from DeLaVergne Hill”. And, it’s front cover has a picture looking south from DeLaVergne Hill; a similar picture that was on the screen on March 24, 2014 at the Town Hall auditorium when an informational presentation was made to the public on current development plans for Silo Ridge.

Arlene Iuliano, Town Historian,
April 17, 2014

• SOURCES-VIEWING AMENIA

Books

- Ghee, Joyce and Joan Spence. *Harlem Valley Pathways Through Pawling, Dover, Amenia, North East and Pine Plains*. SC, Charleston. Acadia, 1998. p63.
- Lossing, Benson J. *The Hudson from the Wilderness to the Sea*. NY, Jones (?) 1866 p189.
- MacCracken, Henry Noble. *Old Dutchess Forever*. NY:New York 1956 p89.
- Reed, Newton. *Early History of Amenia*. NY. Harlem Valley Times, 4th ed. 1985, p4, 10, 29-30, 45.
- Smith, James H. *History of Dutchess County, New York*. Syracuse, NY D. Mason & Co. 1882, p62, 75.

Documents

- Amenia Master Plan, Town of Amenia, New York*. Buckhurst, Fish, Hutton, Katz Inc. New York, NY. Dec. 1991, p49, 52
- Comprehensive Plan Update, Town of Amenia, New York*. Greenway Conservancy, Greenway Council, Dutchess County Planning and Development, 2007, p 52.

Newspapers, Periodicals

- Parker, David. *Who Named Amenia?* Amenia Historical Society Newsletter. Nov. 2009 Vol 4, No. 4, p 3.
- It Was Amenia S.D.* The Harlem Valley Times. Thursday, October 2, 1969, p4.
- Fire Destroys—The Harlem Valley Times*. Thursday June 13, 1974, p24
- Top Ten Foliage Spots*. Poughkeepsie Journal. Sunday October 3, 2010, p21.

Brochures, Directory

- Lake Amenia, New York's Vacationland. Beekman & Beekman, Inc. circ 1920's, Amenia Historical Society reprint.
- Welcome to Amenia, Gateway to the Berkshires, Harlem Valley Times Printer, 1985.
- Welcome to Amenia New York. Located at the Crossroads of Eastern Dutchess County. Fountain Press, Amenia, 1st 2001, 4th 2013.
- Vail's Directory for 1870-71. Poughkeepsie. JPA Vail 1869 (Source: Google).

Arlene Iuliano, town Historian
April 13, 2014

SAVE
The View

IN AMENIA FIRE



THE HARLEM VALLEY TIMES, JUNE 20, 1974

The Amenia Theatre burned down on June 15, 1974.

Continued on page 16



Silo Ridge Field Club is being developed by Discovery Land Company and local partner, Stoneleaf Partners, whose core philosophy is to enhance the natural character and cultural heritage of Silo Ridge in order to create a unique sense of place that captures the innate spirit of the land. Within this environment, Discovery Land Company will offer exceptional lifestyle and recreational experiences to create memories that will last throughout their Members' lives. These cherished moments generate traditions that will be passed from generation to generation, making Silo Ridge a truly one-of-a-kind heirloom community.



For inquiries: info@siloridge.com
or (866) 937-8756

IMAGES
of America

HARLEM VALLEY PATHWAYS

THROUGH PAWLING, DOVER,
AMENIA, NORTH EAST,
AND PINE PLAINS

Joyce C. Ghee and Joan Spence



DELAVERGNE HILL. This 1930s photograph shows Delavergne Hill, a landscape seemingly unchanged since the early Huguenot settlers gave their name to the hill. Its natural beauty has always been one of the attractions of Amenia. In the bowl-shaped valley, there is a golf course, restaurant, and banquet facilities, and a conference center is planned for the future. It will also be the site of the summer program series of the Hudson Valley Philharmonic. (AML.)

Ghee and Spence p 63



Top 10 foliage spots

Top Ten Fall Foliage Spots from Dutchess County Tourism:

1. DeLaVergne Hill, Route 44 East, in Amenia.
2. Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, Route 9, in Hyde Park.
3. Staatsburgh State Historic Site off Route 9 in Staatsburg.
4. The Taconic State Parkway, in southern Dutchess.
5. Route 9D between Hughsonville and Putnam County.
6. River Road from Rhinebeck north to Red Hook.
7. Millbrook Vineyards and Winery, Millbrook.
8. DEC Hudson River Research Reserve in Tivoli, 1,700 acre reserve.
9. Ferncliff Forest's 79-foot fire tower, River Road, Rhinebeck.
10. Smithfield Valley Hamlet, Amenia.

Foliage outlook

The Weather Channel fall foliage outlook enables users to access everything they need to know about fall foliage — from regional foliage maps to beautiful fall color images. The fall foliage outlook features include:

- Peak viewing times across the country for fall foliage.
- Extensive information on scenic drives across the nation.
- Facts on why the leaves change colors.

Foliage outlook is accessible at www.weather.com/fallfoliage.

of Lloyd. Karl Rabe photo

GE CAMPUSES OFFER GREAT VIEWS



ground but your head in the sky? Then head to Mount Beacon.

Rising from the nearby Hudson River to a height of 1,540 feet, Mount Beacon, originally a signal tower in Colonial times, offers impressive views, with autumn amplifying the colors.

"It was significant in Revolutionary War history and that's how it got its name. Colonial militia would light signal fires or beacons, along the river to alert Washington's headquarters that the British were coming up the river," said Sandy Piccone of the Mount Beacon Incline Railway.