



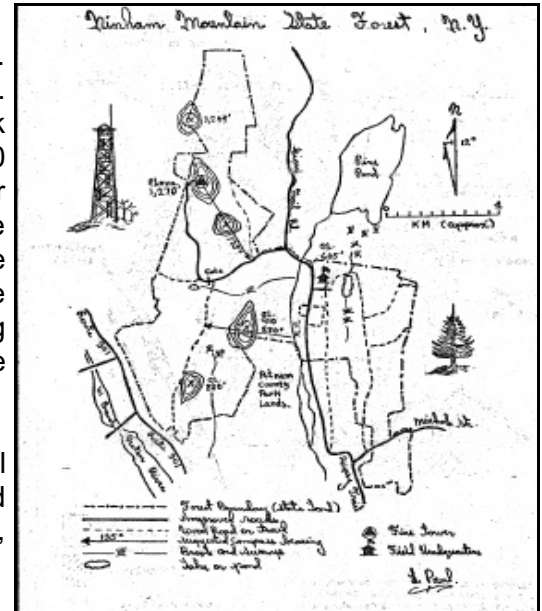
## FALL HISTORY HIKES



Throughout the year we've been featuring hikes from our old schedules, and now that we're nearing the end of 2023 this is the project's final quarter. We hope you enjoy this selection of hikes done during autumns past:

Sunday, October 8 - Mount Nimham Multiple Use Area, Kent, NY. Inspired by an October 1978 outing: "Nimham Mountain State Forest. 10 km, moderately strenuous. A new hike for WTA. In the Fahnestock region, surrounded by lakes and reservoirs, this state forest of 910 acres is a compact area of great natural and historic interest. In clear weather the Nimham Fire Tower, elevation 1270 ft., commands in one grand arc the view of an area extending from New York City to the Catskills. As the few trails in this forest run mainly N and S, some bushwhacking through mostly open woods will be necessary to bring the most outstanding features into a nicely balanced loop. Plan three interpretive stops, including the one at lunch. Leader: Larry Paul."

Notes: The leader of this hike was active in the environmental and conservation communities, as well as being a map maker and land surveyor. Among the maps that he prepared was the one to the right, showing the area where this hike took place.



Sunday, October 29 - Stillman Trail End to End. Inspired by an October 1980 outing: "Death March Revisited - Black Rock Forest. Stillman Trail End to End. Angola Road to Mountain Road via Split Rock, Black Rock Mtn., Mt. Misery, Butter Hill, Storm King. Bring two lunches. Please: experienced hikers only! 10 miles, strenuous. Shuttle. Leader Paul Wilson."

Notes: The route of this hike is similar to the original, but a few changes have taken place within Black Rock and Storm King State Forests. Access to the Stillman trailhead at Angola Road no longer exists, adding a mile or so to the current hike. On the plus side, hikers in 1980 had to run across speeding lanes of traffic on Route 9W in order to go from one state forest to the other. Now, all they have to do is share space with vehicles lumbering through a dark and narrow tunnel under the highway.

Saturday, November 4 - Post-Halloween Hike - Dobbs Ferry to Sleepy Hollow, Following the Legend. Inspired by a November, 2011 outing with the same name, description and leader as the current hike.



Notes: Every few years we feature this hike in early November, so continuing the tradition with a "History Hike" gives us the perfect excuse to do it again. Even if you've read Washington Irving's short story or attended one of the past hikes, the tale keeps getting better and better with each repetition.

Sunday, November 26 - Claudius Smith Circular. Inspired by a November 1939 outing: "Claudius Smith Rock. Interesting round trip over R-D, T-M-I, White Bar and other trails. Magnificent view from the top of the rock. We will visit the haunts of the old Tory horse thief, Claudius Smith. Distance: 8 miles. Leader Eric Togny."

Notes: Claudius Smith's Den has long been a popular destination for hikers in Harriman. But just who was Claudius Smith? According to the Monroe Historical Society, he was the leader of a gang of marauders known as the "Cowboys of the Ramapos" who sympathized with the British during the

Revolutionary War. Their main headquarters was in Goshen, NY, but they also hid in two caves within what is now Harriman State Park. The upper cave was their den; the lower one was for their horses and stolen livestock. Although there were many documented episodes of thievery on the part of the Cowboys, Smith was never pursued because everyone, including the sheriff, was afraid to cross him. But after it was rumored that he committed a murder, a \$1200 bounty was placed on his head and he was eventually captured. Although he was tried for theft and not murder, a death sentence was imposed and he was hanged at the Goshen jail. After his death the town was rife with stories of caches filled with treasure hidden near the caves. No treasure was ever found.



Atop "Claudius Smith's Rock", November 1939

Saturday, December 9 - Bald Mountain / Timp Circular. Inspired by a December 1970 outing: "Bald Mountain Circular - Harriman Park. Marked trails and an old railway bed will lead us to views of the Hudson, the mothball fleet, an unfinished tunnel, a beautiful mountain outlook, and a mine shaft. Leader: Don Derr. 7 miles, moderate."

Notes: As was the case with the October Nimham Mountain hike, the leader of this hike was the cartographer who drew the map of the area (in this case for the NY-NJ Trail Conference). The unfinished tunnel mentioned in the description was the work of the Dunderberg Spiral Railway, a project begun in 1890 and abandoned within a year. Tourists were to ascend to a hotel at the top of the mountain on a steam powered train, with a descent that relied mostly on gravity. The "mothball fleet" was moored in Tompkins Cove from 1946-1971, retained after World War II in case of further need and used to carry food and fuel to overseas allies. The Anchor Monument shown on current Trail Conference maps marks its location just south of the trailhead.

Saturday, December 30 - Elmsford-Tarrytown Circular. Inspired by a December, 1936 outing: "Elmsford. Let us together find 'Farcus Hott' historical rock. Distance: 4 miles. Leader: Julia Crosby."

Notes: The lack of details in the original writeup masks an intriguing tale. An article in Word Press (<https://archivesleuth.wordpress.com/2012/02/02/the-search-for-farcus-hott/>) tells the story of the Farcus Hott "rock" and the author's search for it - a story that involves the same Van Tassel family mentioned in the *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. It seems that Cornelius Van Tassel lived in what is now Elmsford, in an area known during Revolutionary times as a 'neutral ground' between the British and American troops. One winter night Cornelius and his brother were taken prisoner by the British. Cornelius's wife Elizabeth escaped with their young daughter. Their 16 year old son Cornelius Jr. fled through the snow, climbing Beaver Hill to hide in a cave known as Farcus Hott. The next morning Elizabeth was reunited with her half-frozen son, who never regained his health and died two years later. The article then describes the author's search for the Farcus Hott cave. Records showed that Beaver Hill was in the Elmsford/Glenville area, but some sources had it as being south of what is now Route 119, and others had it to the north. It turns out that there are two Beaver Hills. The southerly location was correct, which places the cave in an area of briar and bramble near two condominium developments, bounded by the Thruway, the Saw Mill, and Route 287.

The author visited the cave in 2012. Since the highways and condos had not been built when our earlier WTA leader tried to find Farcus Hott there is no way to know whether she went to the northerly or southerly location. But the current leader has no intention of re-enacting what the author described as "an epic battle through overgrown thorny brambles," so we will visit the northern Beaver Hill and see what we can find.