

RUTH KEELER

ON THE KEELER LANE BRIDGE

MJK: At the Keeler Lane Bridge down here. The date is April 2, 1984.

RK: That's right.

MJK: Alright, now you all ask questions and Ruth will tell us....do you have something to start with?

RK: Well,

Unk: Where is this bridge?

RK: Hmm?

Unk: Where is this bridge?

DVM: It's the one we're worried about every time you drive over

RK: It's the one down here at the end of Keeler Lane. And I was going back in history and wondering, if it hadn't been built by a gentleman by the name of Lockwood, who built the Arch, down here. And it too was keystone. Also the fact that Walter Keeler, that's why when you said that came from Walter Keeler's property, he, he was one who wanted to make North Salem pretty important. And he enlarged the Methodist Church, he built the mill, and I think that probably in the building of the mill...you know what I'm talking about when I say the mill? It's down by the.

MJK: Pabst. You talking about Pabst mill?

RK: No, no.

Unk: Powers.

RK: No, No, I'm talking about by the balanced rock down there, by the pond.

DVM: Bed Bug Hollow.

RK: The mill hollow. No, but, that was a grist mill there. And, I know that my grandfather wrote to his father saying what is cousin Walter doing enlarging the mill? Are they growing that much grain now? So, I think it was done for the purpose of selling grain and I think that that's how it came into being. I also think he probably, this gentleman by the name of Lockwood, may very well have built the dry wall dam that is the pond there. And that would be, and I'm really guessing, it would be after the railroad came in. It would be after 1850. That's why I wonder if possibly there might be some record in the town papers of, well, something about the road here, the bridge, the, and possible having

to go by the dam. But, also, in the 30s, the bridge was repaired. It was really quite an experience to get out of here, because you either went up over the top, which was not open, and was very rough going, or you went down through the fields. And you went through the Titicus River down there and you came over by the, where the Kyles are now. And there used to be a bridge across the river but that soon disappeared and you came through the river, and you came up along side the Capasso's driveway. There was an easement there. Until I think, that before this bridge existed down here the Keelers got out onto the highway, on to the main road.

MJK: Through the back; through the Maloy's

RK: Either there, or, just remember, if you, and I've been looking at this, wondering how, how it came about, and they probably had some kind of bridge just as, ...nobody would remember, nobody is old enough. But there was the Miller's house that they used to, there was a foot bridge that went across the pond over to the other side about opposite where Carol Stern lives. And there, the Miller house was there. And if you really take a good look it could have all come together. And they either had footbridges or a wide enough bridge to get a wagon across. Or they went out where the ground was lower.

Unk: Why did the bridge need to be repaired, Ruth?

RK: What's that?

Unk: Why did the bridge have to be repaired?

RK: Oh, it was the top. Just as it is now. The bottom is all, excuse me, the bottom is alright, presumably, I suppose some stones are going to fall out from time to time. I'm not an engineer. I think, I think it is fairly solid, isn't it?

WL: They have a sign on the river, "Look out for falling rocks."

RK: Well,

Unk: There's an old joke about that...

RK: I don't know, but I do know that is was the top just as it is now.

MJK: Had it been paved before that? Or was it just wood or

RK: No, it was, well, it was not paved. It was dirt. It was, ...don't ask me, it had stones on it but it was beginning to. You know, there was no pavement. No macadam.

MJK: That's probably what they did in the 30s, put the macadam.

RK: And, they put macadam on it. But, then too, it was the sides of the bridge that were, you know, to me that's the hazard there, the sides, going off the, you know somebody

pushing you into it. But I do, I just wonder what they are trying to do to Keeler Lane, digging into the sides. I think it is terrible.

Unk: Who, where is this?

RK: Oh, the town plows, digging up all the... Going in so far into the sides of the road and undermining the trees.

Unk: They're trying to make it fifty feet wide all the way.

RK: Brother, and they, and what they

Unk: It's fifty-feet wide for a strip on our land there, there's no reason in the world for it but they do it every day and they scrape it out.

RK: Well, they dug up my, what do you call it when you have the stones, to make your, riprap. They, my gutter, they are trespassing on my land.

DVM: Would you speak about the relationship between Mr. Lockwood and was it your grandfather and Mr. Lockwood's daughter.

RK: Oh, yes, my great-grandfather.

DVM: Your great-grandfather, beg your pardon.

RK: Who had, oh, dear, I came across it today, should have brought it, it's like an indentured servant. The little girl was eleven or twelve years old and she came to work for Floyd and Jane, and she was to be given, she was to go to school, she was to be taught manners, and how to cook. And at the age of eighteen, she was to be given a cow or twenty-five dollars, or a bed and bedding. Her name was Sarah Lockwood and there were Lockwoods who, where Gonella is, no, where Auberge Maxine is. Is where the Lockwoods were. And, I've forgotten what his first name was.

DVM: Did you say Ray?

RK: Abraham Lockwood, did I? He had a first name. But anyway, he built a great many of the stone walls in North Salem and he would be of the same age and era as my great-grandfather who was, let's see. He died in 1880. So, and he was born in, and he was 65 when he died. So, it was 1820s. So that, he could very possibly have built the dry wall dam, the bridge here and he had done a lot of stonework. And in his old age he always wanted an arch. And that arch, he built that arch and it went nowhere. The house behind it wasn't even connected to it. It stands just as it is today. But the house was a saltbox and it burned. And, but the arch is still there.

Unk: That was Lockwood that built that arch?

RK: Umhum

PvS: That arch has rebuilt; it was knocked down a few years ago.

RK: Well, I know that. I know, but it is basically, it's not Lockwood's arch, but it was kind of shook apart. That's just like the bridge is kind of shook apart, too, and the dry wall dam; that is a drywall dam.

Unk: Where is that?

RK: Where the pond.

Unk: Kudner.

RK: What used, Kudna's there. You know what I'm talking about when I talk about the pond down here and the mill. Because

PvS: The pond is not anymore because it's filled in with silt.

RK: I know that

Unk: Where was the mill?

RK: Well the mill was, well, Sky Kudner

DVM: It's gone, isn't it?

RK: No, no. No, no.

DVM: Further down.

RK: It's the house. No, Further up.

Unk: Is that where Bud Fowler lives now?

RK: No, that was the barn. That was a barn.

Unk: Shonberg.

RK: Hmm?

Unk: Shineburg or Shonberg, who owned it. ?? Shineberg or Shonberg?

RK: No, no, Stein. Isn't it Howard Stein who owns it?

Unk: Oh, yes. Shonberg lived in

Unk: Is it further down in the hollow?

RK: Howard Stein. What?

Unk: The mill.

RK: No, no. It's the one up.

Unk: The first one.

RK: The first one. It's the house.

DVM: You mean Kudner's house.

RK: Yes,

DVM: Oh, Kudner's house was the mill

RK: Yes, that was the mill.

MJK: So, Ruth, when do you estimate that this bridge, I mean just guess work, could have been built?

RK: I'd say after the 1850s, I'm guessing. I, I, you know, it might have taken a while to build.

MJK: Do you know if the Keelers commissioned it?

RK: I have no, I still have quite a few Keeler papers, but, you know, letters of my ancestors, of sorts. And it might be mentioned at some time. I do know Nathan, let's see he goes back to the third Jonah. He was born in 18, 17-something. It, I can't keep my generations straight. Jeremiah was born in 1775, and he was the father, he had six children. One was Nathan, the other was Jonah. And they really go back. But the, there's no real mention of the, anybody...

Unk: You think the town might have said we need that bridge?

RK: Well, there might well have been some record on the, about the roads, because.

Unk: When the town rebuilds it we'll send you the bill.

RK: No, the thing is, you know, the Vermont stagecoach road came down around 121, 116, that curve came through and the old road was higher than the current 116. I think.

MJK: It must have been quite a dip down to that bridge, then.

RK: Well, the point is this. They had to fill in order to make use of the water. I think they probably, I think Water Keeler was probably following the Purdys who had their, used all the water power there for the mill.

Unk: But Keeler Lane was built to accommodate the Keelers.

RK: Not necessarily. No, there were a lot of people up on the hill. It was one of the very early roads. Hunt Lane, Keeler Lane and Hawley Road were the early roads that were required from the deeds that they, the quit claim deeds that they all got. It was divided up, this ten thousand acres of land, that was divided up among 22 or 3 people. And it was Hawley, Hunt, Keeler who were three of the 22 or 23 who got their piece. And one of their requirements was that they had to set aside five acres for roads, they had to cultivate, five acres out of a hundred for roads, and three acres had to be cultivated out of a hundred, inside of three years. And those are the very early roads; they had to. Hawley Road is far superior to them all because Mr. Anderson, who was the lawyer for the people who bought the property that became the Port of Missing Men. He was in a hurry to get to town so he based that road so he could get out of there like that. And that's what they are trying to do to Hunt Lane and Keeler Lane, but they've got to base it a dam side better than it is now, you get stuck and.

Unk: Where does the road go, Hunt, when I go up Keeler Lane

RK: Oh, yes, but it went up and it went over. Well,

Unk: Into Ridgefield.

Unk: Hilltop

Unk: It did go over into Ridgefield?

RK: Oh, yes, it went to Ridgefield, it went down to South Salem. It connected up with the Port of Missing Men property.

Unk: In other words if you went into the town park, that was part of this road?

RK: Oh, yes.

Unk: I thought the town might have built that.

RK: Oh, no, no, no. That went up and it, I've always thought of Keeler Lane and Hunt Lane as sort of like a sprung horseshoe. Going up like this and then across the top. It's very hard to know where Keeler Lane ends or starts, or Hunt Lane ends or starts. But, no, no, that went up and around and there were a lot of people. Remember they face south on the other side of that. Those were the spots there, that was well populated up there, believe it or not.

Unk: That map of 1849 shows there were several houses up there.

RK: Yeah,

Unk: With the names of people who lived in them.

RK: No, and the roads were there. It was the Port of Missing Men. Have you ever been on those so-called Port of Missing Men roads?

DVM: Are the old roadbeds there now? Can you see them if you go up in there? Roadbeds?

Unk: Oh, yeah.

Unk: Oh, yes.

RK: Oh, yes. It's up in the Mountain Lakes Park.

MJK: Well, that's where we went to see Sarah Bishop's cave.

RK: That's right.

They are all part of that.

RK: That's right.

PvS: There's a road off of Hunt Mountain, which, back in the 60s, we took a Volkswagon to Ridgefield until we got onto this guys property.

RK: That's the Sib Road.

PvS: No, not Sib Road.

Unk: No, there's another one. You can't get to it now

Unk: Barrett's Road.

Unk: The trees are grown in now.

PvS: Back in '65 you could drive over into Ridgefield.

RK: Well, you know the Port of Missing Men. The last thing to go was the Inn up there. And that was, didn't you used to go?

Unk: Most of us hated to see it go.

RK: I know, everybody did.

Unk: It was right across from the Port of Missing Men. That's the Barrett's Hill Road.

Unk: Yeah.

RK: But it, no, no, it's these, but these old roads are, have really taken such a beating at the present time. Of course the Jones have retired now. They used to come up here when they were like that.

Unk: Gas now

RK: No, but there is a great temptation as you start down from the top there.

MJK: You get rolling and you can't stop.

RK: But the thing that bothers me, I don't know how you can say anything or do anything, I just wish they wouldn't plow the roads so wide.

Unk: Send

RK: Hmmm?

Unk: Send

RK: Oh, yes that's right, really, I'm going to get into all kinds of trouble.

MJK: We'll report you.

RK: I know. No, no, but I just think it is a shame, because we're going to have, and there's a certain amount of heavy traffic. I always thought when, oh god, those loaded trucks with all those rattling 40 quart milk cans. They were heavy, too.

MJK: I bet they were.

RK: And,

MJK: Well, maybe it's just time that is doing it to the bridge.

RK: Of course it is

MJK: Time and wear.

Unk: The average car today weighs so much more than even some of the trucks in the old days. Tested it to fit right here

MJK: But if you had a lot of gallons of milk that was pretty heavy too on a truck.

RK: And then when the tank trucks came in the milk tank trucks and the fertilizer, the lime trucks going all through. That's taking quite a beating. But what I'm getting at is they didn't drive quite as fast as the people are now. I mean everybody tempted to do it, they all do it.

Unk: Let that be a lesson to everybody going home tonight that way.

MJK: I'm walking. Can anybody think of anything else they would like to ask Ruth? Well, we thank you Ruth.

Monthly trustee meeting April 2, 1984. End