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Historic Ridge Road, circa 1810

BY C.W. LATTIN

In the year 1810, DeWitt Clinton rode on horseback along an Indian Trail through what was to become Orleans County. The trail as we know it today is the historic Ridge Road (Route 104). This is what he had to say about it.

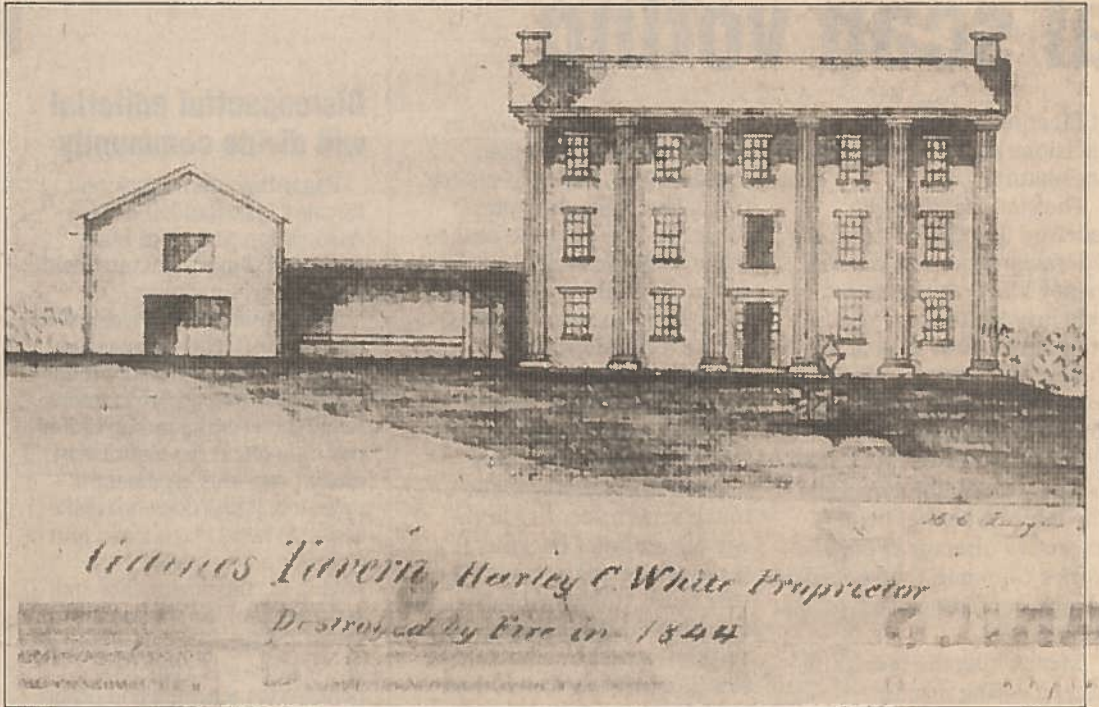
"From the Genesee near Rochester to Lewiston on the Niagara River there is a remarkable ridge or elevation of land running almost the whole distance which is 78 miles, and in a direction from east to west. Its general altitude above the neighboring land is 30 feet, and its width varies considerable, in some places it is not more than 40 yards."

Its elevation above the level of Lake Ontario is perhaps 160 feet, to which it descends with a gradual slope; and its distance from that water is between 6 and 10 miles."

This remarkable strip of land would appear as if intended by nature for the purpose of an easy communication."

It is in fact, a stupendous natural turnpike, descending gently on each side and covered with gravel, and but little labor is requisite to make it the best road in the United States."

In 1815 the Ridge Road was surveyed through Orleans County by Philetus Swift and Caleb Hopkins, and resurveyed in 1852 under the supervision of John LeValey, Grosvenor



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Daniels and William J. Abbitt, who employed Darids W. Cole of Medina, to do the actual surveying. The Ridge Road is six rods wide an adjacent property deeds to the edge of the road.

It was also at this time the New York Legislature appropriated \$5,000 to make improvement to the road. Consequently, between 1816 and 1850, stagecoach lines ran along the route from Canandaigua to Lewiston.

Our illustration shows the Caines Tavern which burned in

1844. Such taverns or rest stops were located every few miles along the way for weary travelers and the exchange of horses for coaches. The Village Inn at Childs remains as the last stagecoach stop.

Although Clinton recognized the wonderful landscape along the old Indian Trail, he also realized the importance of linking the entire state with a canal.

Consequently when he later became our governor, he pushed for the Erie Canal. This ultimately pulled people away

from early settlement along the Ridge Road to the canal towns, which grew up over night.