

*Thro' a Country Not
Well Settled: The
"Albany Road" of
1752-1773*

Rensselaer County, N.Y.
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*Rensselaer-Taconic Land Conservancy
Rensselaer County Historical Society
Taconic Valley Historical Society*

**"Through a Country Not Well Settled:"
The "Albany Road" of 1752-1773**

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Preface: How did this get started?

In 1976 when I was working for the Rensselaer County Engineering Department, I was asked to determine the locations of the county roads. In my research on roads in Sand Lake and Poestenkill, in particular, an area known as "Middletown" (the first mystery), I kept running into references to the "Old Hoosick Road" (the second mystery). I began to wonder why anyone in his right mind would try to go to Hoosick through Sand Lake and Poestenkill, when a perfectly good and nearly level way was to go through Brunswick and Pittstown.

It was a few years later that I remembered that I had done some work in North Adams for Hoosuck Community Resources, an activist historic preservation organization. Upon investigation in the North Adams Library, I found that two towns were set up in the 1740's as East Hoosuck and West Hoosuck. These later became Adams and Williamstown, Massachusetts. Now I knew why the road took the route it did. What we know as "Hoosick" today was, in the past, known as "Dutch Hoosick." I later found that the valley just east of Grafton, Poestenkill, and Sand Lake and west of the Massachusetts border was called "Little Hoosick." I wondered about the specific location of the road and was able to locate parts of it through those Rensselaer County towns.

In 1977 there was a reenactment of the Battle of Bennington (so called) at the actual site in Walloomsac, New York, (a hamlet in the Town of Hoosick). I read that when General John Burgoyne sent Colonel Baum to Bennington to get munitions and horses, he also directed him to go to Manchester, Rockingham (Bellows Falls) and Brattleborough to get more supplies. Baum was then to meet Burgoyne in Albany, going there by the "Great Road" that cut across the northwest corner of Berkshire County, from Williamstown toward Albany. What "Great Road?" Having lived in both Brattleboro and Albany, I knew there was no "Great Road." Of course, I am going by today's standards.

In order to discover how the road from Brattleboro to Albany went, I wrote to all the town historians and clerks in southern Vermont, requesting any information they might know about. I heard from a few, but the best came from two women in Halifax, Vermont who were also researching the "Great Road." Bernice Barnet and B.B. Woods walked the road and published a book, *Roads in the Wilderness*, in 1993.

About this time I met Doree Cox from Berlin, an avid hiker, who was researching a families that lived along the "Old Hoosick Road" on the top of Berlin Mountain. She in turn involved Warren Broderick of the Rensselaer-Taconic Land Conservancy, and together we have been conducting this research.

Hughes Gemmill

My great grandfather, Kasper Jordan, homesteaded the farm on which we live on West Berlin Mountain. After hearing Hughes Gemmill's lecture on the "Road to Little Hoosick," I realized two things: Little Hoosick was the former name of Berlin, New York and the road he researched crossed the Rensselaer Plateau near my house.

Later, Katherine Wells gave me a copy of an old newspaper article entitled "Wanderings in Rensselaer" by Samuel Streeter. Here he described a hike he took in 1895 over "West Mountain" in Berlin. Streeter wrote in detail about early settlers there, and mentioned that the Eastern Turnpike of 1799-1804 had replaced a yet older road through the area. Through research in Van Rensselaer surveys and other land records, we were able to rediscover a section of the "Road to Little Hoosick" or "Albany Road." We held a Centennial reenactment of Samuel Streeter's hike in 1995.

These facts piqued my interest and culminated in my involvement in this project. It is truly a thrill to know I live in such an historic area. Extending our research to the entire Colonial road from Deerfield to Albany was the logical next step. The results of our research are contained in this portfolio. It has been exciting to be part of this project and discover history in my own backyard.

Doris S. Cox

When I discovered the "Albany Road" on the 1788 Gilbert map of Middletown, stretching across the wilderness of the Rensselaer Plateau, I began to wonder why an early road had traversed this wilderness. Research conducted by Hughes Gemmill indicated this was a predecessor of the Eastern Turnpike that ran from Bath (Rensselaer) to Williamstown, but a document brought to my attention by Paul Huey indicated that this might have been part of a far longer and very significant Colonial highway between Albany and Boston.

I began to search records in Massachusetts for more clues, and unearthed a wealth of additional information on the Albany Road in historical records repositories at Boston, Northampton, Deerfield, Adams, Pittsfield and Williamstown. These original source documents and secondary sources as well revealed a road of strategic importance constructed through the wilderness between Deerfield and Albany during the tumultuous era of the Colonial Wars. It was even more amazing to discover that much of this ancient highway remains either drivable or hikeable today.

Creating maps which show the overall road, as well as various sections in detail, and the various courses it followed over time, was made possible by using the geographic information system (G.I.S.) of the Rensselaer-Taconic Land Conservancy. A selection of G.I.S. layers was employed, and the resulting maps also show the reader which sections of the road are best of hiking and driving today.

Warren F. Broderick

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Introduction: The Old Hoosick Road, also known as the "Albany Road"

The Dutch claimed the territory between the Connecticut River and the Delaware by virtue of the discoveries of Henry Hudson in 1609. Their claim was called New Netherlands and included areas along the Delaware, the Hudson and the Connecticut Rivers. The headquarters was New Amsterdam (now New York City) on the Hudson. Settlement at the site of Albany was begun at Fort Orange in 1624. In spite of the fact that Albany was settled before Boston, the population lagged far behind. Boston was a major port of call and many immigrants arrived there before they spread throughout the Northeast. Albany, on the other hand, was settled by soldiers, hunters and a small number of tenants brought over by the Dutch patroon, more or less under contract. Their incentive was certainly different from the New England settlers, who came because of religious persecution, the "clearances," poverty and political oppression.

Westward expansion occurred early in New England. By the 1670s settlement had moved from the seacoast to the Connecticut River, and by the 1740s it was at the western reaches of Massachusetts. Although there was a small number of New Englanders there were fewer than 10,000 people in all of Albany County, New York, which covered Columbia, most of Delaware, Greene, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schoharie, Schenectady, Warren and Washington counties. The City of Albany had a population of about 1500 persons by the end of the French and Indian War. This was the nearest community of any size to the west of Fort Massachusetts, since Deerfield had only a few hundred persons, and the route was much more difficult.

Settlement was slow and sporadic until England began to insist in 1664 that its claims were based on the 15th century explorations of John Cabot, and a rather large force was sent to the New Netherlands to implement those claims. The Dutch surrendered to the English, who renamed the territory New York in honor of James, Duke of Albany and Duke of York, brother of the king. Little of the status of the settlers was changed, except that a new name applied to the area. In 1678, the patent granted to the Van Rensselaers was maintained, except that Albany was separated from the Patroonship. The entire area north of New York City was divided into 12 counties in 1683 of which Albany County was by far the largest. In 1686 Albany was incorporated as a city.

Over the years the French to the north had been making forays to the south. They devastated Schenectady in 1690 and Saratoga in 1745. This last attack was effectively the beginning of the French and Indian War. In Massachusetts, the English were establishing a line of forts from the Connecticut River toward the New York line. The most westerly was Fort Massachusetts, which was established by Colonel Ephraim Williams at East Hoosuck (the present City of North Adams, Mass.) The Province of Massachusetts had to furnish men and supplies to these forts, and consequently needed to start building roads to do so.

From 1624 to 1710, the most significant communities in English America were New York,

Boston and Albany. Both Boston and New York were important as immigration destinations, and New York and Albany were important trading centers for furs and timber. New York was the main seaport for the upper Atlantic provinces, while Boston dealt mostly with New England.

These communities were at the three corners of an isosceles triangle having two legs each about 140 miles long, and the third leg between Boston and New Amsterdam about 190 miles long. These are straight-line distances.

France had two principal settlements in Quebec and Montreal. These were not easily reached because of the long overland distances from Boston and New Amsterdam. By ship, the distances were even greater since boats had to go all the way out past Nova Scotia and then west up the St. Lawrence River, over 1500 miles. Albany was much closer but there was little there to attract the French.

The route from Boston to Albany passed over some very mountainous terrain with many rivers to ford. Albany to New Amsterdam, both on the Hudson River, was simply a pleasant boat ride, although the tidal flow hindered easy movement. The trails on each sides of the river were mostly at river level and easy going. New Amsterdam to Boston, by land was practically at water level, although if large shipments were to be made, it was more practical to ship them by boat, but it might take a week.

Roads developed readily between Boston and New Amsterdam because of the gentle terrain, but not from Boston to Albany. Colonization was sparse near Albany, which was remote from the ports, since virtually the only attractions were the large number of beavers, that the Indians trapped for the hat trade in Europe. The Van Rensselaers, who were the Patroons, were required to arrange settlement of 50 families per year, but were not able to make their holdings enticing enough to attract settlers.

Although there was good trapping and hunting in the area and there was fine farmland along the rivers, it was hard to get people to settle in the back country. There were concerns about Indians and the French from Quebec, who always seemed to have an axe to grind against the English.

Boston was a major port of call and many immigrants arrived there before they spread throughout the northeast. Albany, on the other hand, was settled by soldiers, hunters and a small number of tenants brought over by the Dutch patroon, more or less under contract. Their incentive was certainly different from the New England settlers, who came because of religious persecution, the clearances, poverty and political oppression.

New York City and Albany were important trading centers for furs and timber. New Netherlands was the main seaport for the upper Atlantic provinces, while Boston dealt mostly with New England. Albany County was created in 1683, and because the settlement of Albany was the most important it became the county seat.

By the late seventeenth century, settlement had progressed some five to ten miles from the river. A purchase about 5 miles east in 1675 of farmland near the farm of Jan Ooms shows that a road had already started to develop to the east. This path to Jan Ooms was later referenced in a report of the Highway Commissioners of the Manor of Rensselaerswyck in 1773 as the beginning of the road from Bath (Rensselaer) to Little Hoosick (Berlin).

Stephen Van Rensselaer II, the sixth Lord of the Manor and the eighth Patroon built a mansion in Albany in 1765 just north of the Bath-Albany ferry. This was the northernmost of two ferries that crossed the Hudson River. The lower ferry went from Greenbush and landed in the south end of Albany. The ferry operators were not permitted to deviate from the direct route across the river to the ferry slip. The tenants of the Van Rensselaers East Manor used the ferry to cross the river with their annual rent of bushels of wheat, fat hens, etc. The Van Rensselaers had docks, stores, and warehouses near the ferry slip. Before 1800 there existed a door and sash factory and an oil mill just north of the ferry. A thoroughfare called Mineral Street ran along the shore, signifying the mineral springs on the slopes away from the river. Mineral Street was an extension of the Farmer's Turnpike which in turn was an extension of the "King's Highway" that ran from New York City to Greenbush (Rensselaer) on the east side of the Hudson River, thence by ferry to Albany.

Settlement of the East Manor started some time prior to 1630 when Gerrit Theusz De Reux established a farm. Saw and grist mills were built early. A bustling community existed across from Albany what with the Farmers Turnpike terminating at Greenen Bosch (now part of the City of Rensselaer), and the ferries that carried persons and goods across the river. Fort Crailo was built by the Van Rensselaers in the early 18th century, as a residence and as protection against the Indians, and later the French.

When, in 1839, Stephen Van Rensselaer III died, he left his estates to the eldest son of each of his two wives. Stephen IV inherited the West Manor, Beverwyck, and William Paterson, the East Manor, Rensselaerswyck.

William began construction of his agents house and office at a site close to the ferry slip. This was probably, also, the site of the beginning of Jan Oom's Pat which was described in the 1675 deed to Dirck Wessels and Cornelis Van Dyck, and also in the 1773 report of the Highway Commissioners of the Manor of Rensselaerswyck. The house is still occupied and is owned by Raymond Hull, a descendant of the Hulls who settled Little Hoosick, and Rensselaer City Historian. About 1795, turnpikes came into vogue. They were creations of the state and authorized construction of a road to certain standards, limited the amount of profit, and had a life of 20 years. After the stipulated period, and because of much heavier vehicles and traffic, plank roads were built with stronger construction.

*Hughes Gemmill
Rensselaer-Taconic Land Conservancy
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TIME LINE RELATIVE TO THE "ALBANY ROAD"

- 1497 John Cabot claims North America for the British Crown.
- 1609 Samuel de Champlain, Lieut. Governor of New France, explores the present northern New York State.
- 1609 Henry Hudson explores the upper reaches of the Hudson River.
- 1629 The West India Company of Holland granted rights to territory along both sides of the Hudson.
- 1630 Killian Van Rensselaer of Amsterdam became a Patroon and acquired the rights to property 24 miles along the river and 24 miles either side of it. (The present Albany County and the southern three tiers of towns of Rensselaer County.)
- 1664 The English acquired the Dutch possessions in North America.
- 1664 King Charles II of England granted the land between the Delaware River and "Connecticut" to his brother James, the Duke of York, and Duke of Albany.
- 1671 Deerfield is settled as an outpost on the western frontier of Massachusetts.
- 1672 The Dutch regain possession of New Amsterdam.
- 1674 The English reclaim the Dutch territory.
- 1683 The first Provincial Assembly of New York divided the colony into counties. Albany County, was by far the largest, covering everything north and east of the river from a point six miles south of Hudson and west of the river from about Catskill to Saratoga, including Albany, the Manor of Rensselaerswyck and Schenectady.
- 1685 The English confirm Van Rensselaer's patent.
- 1686 Albany is chartered as a City.
- 1688 The Hoosick Patent is granted to Maria Van Rensselaer.
- 1703 New York Provincial Legislature enacts a law pertaining to construction and maintenance of Highways.
- 1705 An act of the General Assembly of the Province of New York was passed to give the Manor of Rensselaerswyck representation in the General Assembly, thus permitting the freeholders to elect annually officers necessary to manage local affairs.
- 1724 Fort Dummer is erected on the west bank of the Connecticut River near Brattleboro, in the current State of Vermont.
- 1732 The Walloomsac Patent is granted by New York Colonial government.
- 1735 The "Great Road" is extended west of Springfield leading to Kinderhook and Greenbush.
- 1739 Ephraim Williams, Sr., plans the settlement of towns in the northwest corner of Massachusetts.
- 1740 The King of England determines the northern boundary of the Province of Massachusetts Bay.
- 1741 The boundary line of New Hampshire and Massachusetts was run to a point 20 miles east of the Hudson River, establishing a claim overlapping that of New York.
- 1742 Charlemont is first settled by Moses Rice.
- 1744 "King George's War" breaks out with France.
- 1745 The early road along the Hoosic River in the present New York and Vermont is improved for horses and wagons.
- 1746 Fort Massachusetts is constructed at East Hoosuck (Adams) and then destroyed by the French and subsequently rebuilt.

- 1748 King George's War ceases.
- 1749 Bennington and Meloonscot (Walloomsac) are granted by New Hampshire Colonial government.
- 1749 East Hoosuck (Adams) and West Hoosuck (Williamstown) are established by Colony of Massachusetts.
- 1751 The first settlement in Williamstown begins.
- 1752 In conjunction with a land grant to Ephraim Williams, Jr., Massachusetts government requires opening a "way" to Albany.
- 1753 Elisha Hawley constructs a road from Northampton to Pittsfield.
- 1755 War with France begins again.
- 1755 The Dwight and Lyman expedition follows a road west from Deerfield over the mountains to Fort Massachusetts.
- 1756 Fort Hoosac is established at Williamstown, intended to replace Fort Massachusetts.
- 1760 Pownal is granted by New Hampshire government.
- 1761 The Pittstown Patent granted by New York Colonial government.
- 1762 The course of the Albany Road is altered west of Deerfield.
- 1762 Baker's Bridge is the first to span the Hoosic River in West Hoosuck.
- 1763 War with France finally ends.
- 1763 Governor Colden of New York issues a proclamation declaring the Connecticut River to be the east bounds of the province.
- 1764 Benning Wentworth, Governor of the Province of New Hampshire, rebuts Colden's claims.
- 1764 Samuel Rice is granted land on Hoosuck Mountain and promises to reroute the Albany Road.
- 1764 The King of England determines Boundary between New York and New Hampshire as West bank of Connecticut River.
- 1765 Towns formerly in New Hampshire, but now in New York, petition to have previous status renewed.
- 1765 Bernardston Grant is awarded and mapped.
- 1766 New York Colonial government establishes the County of Cumberland, 150 mile distant by existing roads to Albany.
- 1767 The King of England forbids further New York grants in the disputed "New Hampshire Grant" territory.
- 1768 The Town of Shelburne is incorporated.
- 1770 New York tries to suppress the challenges of the inhabitants of the "New Hampshire Grants."
- 1772 Albany County, Province of New York, is divided into three Counties: Albany, Charlotte and Tryon.
- 1772 The northern part of Albany County east of the Hudson River is divided into districts: Rensselaerwyck, Schaghticoke, and Hoosick.
- 1772 The Hoosick District extended from Schaghticoke to the Cumberland County line.
- 1773 Highway Commissioners of the East Manor lay out a Road from Hudson River to Little Hoosic, following an existing road, at least to Middletown line.
- 1773 The boundary between New York and Massachusetts is established.
- 1773 The road is opened over Bee Hill and Berlin Pass.
- 1774 New York Legislature enacts highway regulations for Cumberland County, and mentions a road from Brattleboro leading to Albany having recently been built.
- 1775 The American Revolutionary War begins.
- 1776 American Independence is declared.

- 1777 The Constitution of the State of New York adopted at Kingston.
- 1777 Vermont declares independence as a state.
- 1777 General Burgoyne sends Colonel Baum on a raid to Bennington, Manchester, Rockingham and Brattleboro. Baum was to then go to Albany by the "Great Road."
- 1779 The Manor of Rensselaerswyck was divided into two districts, the West District, all that part of the Manor west of the Hudson River and the East District the portion east of the Hudson.
- 1783 Peace is declared between England and the United States.
- 1784 The East District of the Manor of Rensselaer is divided into two districts: Rensselaerwyck and Stephentown.
- 1785 Stephen Van Rensselaer becomes "of age" and inherits the Manor of Rensselaerswyck.
- 1788 New York ratifies the Constitution of the United States.
- 1788 The Town of Pittstown is established.
- 1788 The Towns of Rensselaerswyck and Stephentown are founded.
- 1788 The Town of Hoosick is established.
- 1788 Job Gilbert surveys Middletown for Stephen Van Rensselaer.
- 1788 John E. Van Alen surveys Greenbush for Stephen Van Rensselaer.
- 1790 New York agrees to give up its claims to Vermont for \$30,000.
- 1791 Rensselaer County is created from Albany County.
- 1791 The towns of Easton and Cambridge in Albany County are annexed to Washington County.
- 1791 Troy and Petersburg become towns, taking parts of Rensselaerswyck for Troy and part of Stephentown for Petersburg.
- 1791 Vermont achieves statehood.
- 1792 The Town of Greenbush is set off from the Town of Rensselaerwyck, leaving only Schodack as the last remaining part of Rensselaerswyck.
- 1797 The 2nd Massachusetts Turnpike is constructed from Charlemont to the present North Adams.
- 1799 Construction of the Eastern Turnpike is authorized by New York State Legislature.
- 1799 The 4th Massachusetts Turnpike is authorized, to connect the 2nd Mass. Turnpike and the Eastern Turnpike at the New York State line.
- 1801 The road up the Western Summit from North Adams is rerouted.
- 1804 The Eastern Turnpike is completed.
- 1805 The Town of Florida is incorporated.
- 1806 The Town of Berlin is formed from towns of parts of Petersburg and Stephentown.
- 1806 The Town of Nassau (originally called Philipstown) is formed from parts of Stephentown and Schodack.
- 1807 The Town of Brunswick established from part of the Town of Troy.
- 1807 The Town of Grafton formed from parts of the Town of Troy and Town of Petersburg.
- 1812 The Town of Sand Lake is formed from parts of Greenbush and Berlin.
- 1843 Part of the Town of Sand Lake is annexed to Greenbush.
- 1848 The Town of Poestenkill is created from part of Sand Lake.
- 1878 The Town of North Adams set off from the Adams.
- 1912 The Mohawk Trail, the first modern road over Hoosac Mountain, is constructed.
- 1920 The Taconic Trail is constructed over Petersburg Pass.

Thro' a Country Not Well Settled: The "Albany Road" of 1752-1773

Three Roads From the Coast to Albany

Three principal Colonial era roads connected Albany and Boston. One of these roads had two distinct branches, one of which is sometimes considered a fourth major highway. To begin with, let us place the importance of all these roads, at a time immediately preceding the American Revolution, in perspective. A late eighteenth century British intelligence document, dating from ca. 1773, describes all three of them.

B.F. Stevens, *Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives Relating to America, 1773-1783* (1889), Vol. 1, No. 41. contains a facsimile of a document entitled "General Reflexions and Remarks on the State and Disposition of New England and particular Descriptions of Worcester in Massachusetts Bay and other parts of four Provinces, tending to furnish Ideas and Hints towards a Plan for its speedy Reduction to the legal Authority of Parliament." The original manuscript is found in the Auckland Manuscripts, King's College, Cambridge, United Kingdom.

This anonymous, undated intelligence document includes descriptions of some of the primary roads in New England. It describes three roads of importance running from the Portsmouth-Boston area to Albany:

The old great Western or Waggon Road from Portsmouth to Boston about 62 miles, & from Boston to Albany about 200 miles — through Charlestown, Cambridge, Menotomy [Arlington], Waltham, Concord, Sudbury, Marlborough, Westborough, Worcester, Leicester, Brookfield, Western Kingston, E. & W. Springfield, Westfield, Granville, Colebrook, Sheffield, Roeloeff Jansen's Ferry [Hillsdale], Claverac, Kinderhook, Greenbush, Albany.

There are two later Roads, & shortest from Portsmouth to Albany about 130 miles, thro Kingston, Londonderry, Litchfield, Dunstable, Mason, Rowley or Rindge, Winchester, Hinsdale, Fort Dummer, near the Peninsula of Ashulot R., Brattleborough, Marlborough, Draper [Wilmington], Woodford, Bennington, Hoosick, Vanderheyden's Ferry [Troy], Albany.

The other New Western Road from Boston runs nearly parallel to this at no great Distance & is but 150 from Albany, thro Charlestown, Menotomy [Arlington], Concord, Lancaster, Petersham, on East branch R. [Swift River] which falls into Chicabee [Chicopee] R., Sunderland, Deerfield, on Deerfield R. a considerable stream extending to near Hoosick R. & Post or Fort Massachusetts, Greenbush, Albany. These two Roads, however, passing through a country not well settled, afford no great dependence.

The first road described is clearly the "Great Road" to Albany via Kinderhook, the portion west

of Springfield having been constructed in 1735. This was the principal road between Boston and Albany for many years.

A branch of the "Great Road," running through Northampton and Pittsfield, west through the present towns of New Lebanon, Nassau and Schodack, where it joined the Great Road, dates from the 1750s. This road was surveyed by Elisha Hawley of Northampton, and was constructed by Oliver Partridge of Hatfield to accelerate the settlement of Pittsfield and adjoining towns. Construction of this road was financed in part by a lottery authorized by the Massachusetts Legislature in 1752. By June of 1753 the road is described as having been "lately cut . . . from Northampton towards Albany, in order for two Settlements, for the Accommodation of Travellers." It doubtless met at Northampton an earlier road leading to Worcester.

The Northampton to Schodack road was possibly not mentioned in the ca. 1773 British intelligence document because it did not constitute a distinct route between the coast and Albany. The author of this document probably considered this a branch of the "Great Road." Nonetheless, this was a very important road in the settling of western Massachusetts, and should be considered separate from the "Great Road" through Springfield.

The second road mentioned in the intelligence document was the route that included the "Hoosic Road" to Vanderheyden's Ferry from Bennington, which dates as early as the 1740s. Settlement along this road occurred in the present Town of Brunswick at this time, and Bennington was established in 1749. This road also connected with Fort Dummer on the Connecticut River south of Brattleboro. The road passed through southern New Hampshire and terminated on the coast at Portsmouth, N.H., which was a major seaport at the time. Because of the steep, rugged terrain it crossed, the portion of this road between Bennington and Wilmington was known to be a poor road for travel for a number of years.

The 150 and 130 mile distances of these newer roads cited in this document are, for whatever reason, considerably shorter than the actual distances between Portsmouth/Boston and Albany using these routes. The other "New Western Road," or rather the portion of this road between Deerfield and Albany, is the subject of our study. When and why was this new western road built, especially considering its proximity to the already existing road from Brattleboro through Bennington to Albany via Vanderheyden's Ferry?

Settling and Protecting the Frontier in Northwestern Massachusetts

Even though much of the road we are studying in detail is located in New York State, we turn to Colonial history of Massachusetts for answers. Interest in establishing a settlement in the northwest corner of the current state of Massachusetts began shortly after 1739, when Ephraim Williams Sr. settled in Stockbridge. Massachusetts Colonial government had received reports of encroachments by New Yorkers into the northwest corner of the Commonwealth, and were desirous that towns be established in this region. Ephraim Williams Sr., along with Thomas Wells of Deerfield, were designated a committee to draw up a plan for the new townships.

Williams and Wells engaged Nathanael Kellogg of Hadley, assisted by Timothy Dwight (who later became the President of Yale College), to conduct a rough survey of two townships, which was submitted to Massachusetts Colonial government.

Apparently the Massachusetts government was not satisfied with the lack of detail of the survey or the proposed boundaries of the townships, and the plan was not approved. In conjunction with this 1739 survey, Kellogg surveyed the course of a road "between the Town of Deerfield and Hoosuck [Williamstown and North Adams], and from thence to the City of Albany." Kellogg made a plan of this survey, which apparently has not survived. Kellogg petitioned the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1742 to be recompensed for the time and cost of this survey, but his request was denied. He petitioned them again in 1744 for such recompense, but was again denied, possibly because no plan for a settlement at Hoosuck had yet been approved.

While the towns were not granted at this time, the impending conflict with France and its Indian allies rekindled the Legislature's interest in the establishment of these new towns for security reasons. In February of 1743 they called for the development of a new plan and survey, but war interceded and prevented any such action. In addition, Richard Hazen was commissioned by the Legislature to survey the line between Massachusetts and New Hampshire, which he completed in 1741. Hazen noted the settlements of New Yorkers spreading up the Hoosic River valley. The impetus for establishment of a settlement in the northwest corner of the Commonwealth was twofold. Such a settlement would have strategic importance for military reasons, lying on the path used by both Indians and armies along the Hoosic River and connecting the Hudson River with the Connecticut. It would be likewise important in establishing that this area was under the control of Massachusetts government, against claims made by the New York Colonial government and settlement by Dutch settlers along the Hoosic Valley in the present Town of Petersburg.

The war with France known as "King George's War" took place between 1744 and 1748. Fort Massachusetts, located in the current city limits of North Adams, was one of a series of forts constructed as a outpost against French and Indian activity in 1745. Governor Shirley had directed a line of forts be constructed about three miles south of Hazen's line. They were, from east to west, Fort Morrison in the present Colrain, Fort Shirley in the present Heath, Fort Pelham in the present Rowe, and lastly Fort Massachusetts, in the western part of the present City of North Adams. These forts were connected by a crude military road, the course of which was more recently plotted by David Costello. This road was never greatly used for civilian purposes, and the new road of 1753-1754 from Deerfield to Hoosuck assumed this function.

Capt. Ephraim Williams Jr., now 31 years of age, was placed in charge of the newly constructed forts. As this war wound to a close, the younger Williams inherited his father's interest in establishing the new frontier towns. In April of 1749 the Legislature empowered a new committee of Nathaniel Dwight and John Choate to survey and present them with a plan for the townships. The newer resulting survey satisfied the Colonial Legislature, which approved the settlement of the towns in January of the following year. Ephraim Williams Jr., still a Captain in the Colonial army, and his associates, were authorized to "project some proper Method for settling the Townships." The committee thus established the towns of East Hoosuck (the current Adams and North Adams) and West Hoosuck (the current Williamstown). The plan of lots in

West Hoosuck was drawn up and settlement began in 1751-1752.

Williams personally received a grant of 190 acres (which later was increased to 200 acres) of land in East Hoosuck, and the Legislature on February 15, 1750 required the construction of two mills, a grist mill and a saw mill, on the Hoosic River "within the Term of two years" in return. Williams submitted the final plan for his grant and it was approved on Nov. 30, 1752. On December 12th, the Legislature confirmed his grant with the added condition that "the Grantee always keeps an open Way two Rods wide on the northerly side of Massachusetts-Fort, leading towards Albany." This requirement of the patent appears to have led to the eventual construction of the "Albany Road" which we are today studying.

The Need For a Road Between Albany and Deerfield

An improved road was needed from Deerfield to Williamstown, where only a very rude Indian trail and possibly a primitive cart road had existed before. The first person to research the history of this road was Judge John Aiken, who delivered a talk on this subject before the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association in Deerfield in 1909. In 1907 Judge Aiken located the course of the first road between the Western Summit and Charlemont, mistakenly believing this to be the route of the earlier Indian trail as well. An Indian trail has been identified leading easterly from the Western Summit area through the present Town of Florida, over Clark Mountain to the lookout at the summit of Todd Mountain. But the principal Indian trail followed the Cold River valley from the Western Summit area to the Deerfield River west of the present Charlemont.

According to some sources, Elisha Hawley was responsible for either constructing or rebuilding the portion over the mountain between Williamstown and Charlemont in 1753. This statement appears, however, to have been erroneous, and to have been derived from William B. Browne's confusing this road with the Northampton-Albany Road of the same time period. This error has been perpetuated in print since the publication of Browne's 1920 booklet, *The Mohawk Trail*, which was reprinted in 1998.

In spite of this erroneous attribution, Browne did conduct serious research on the history of the each of the courses of the road between Deerfield and Williamstown. He exhausted sources of original information, in particular the Massachusetts State Archives, but unfortunately did not provide specific citations to his references. More recently, the late David L. Costello continued this research, and meticulously annotated copies of topographic maps with notes and courses of many early roads in this region. Costello distributed copies of these maps in atlas format entitled *The Mohawk Trail Showing Old Roads and Other Points of Interest*, and these maps have proven invaluable in our research and plotting the courses of the "Albany Road."

Elisha Hawley, a surveyor from Northampton, along with his brother, Joseph, were among the first proprietors of the township of West Hoosuck. Both became army officers, and Elisha was killed along with Ephraim Williams at the Battle of Lake George in 1755. While it seems logical that an improved road over Hoosick Mountain replaced the old Indian trail between East

Hoosuck and Charlemont in the period 1753-1754, no concrete evidence has been located yet as to its builder and specifics of its construction.

At the first meeting of the West Hoosuck proprietors in 1754, a road was laid out, perpendicular to Main Street, running north to the New Hampshire (presently Vermont) line. This short road would have constituted an improvement in the road to Pownal and North Petersburg. This road improvement by the proprietors may very well have been related in some way to the colonial Legislature's requirement that a new road be opened to Albany, and supports the assumption that the "Albany Road" initially reached Berlin by following the Hoosic and Little Hoosic river valleys.

Records of the Hampshire County Commissioners do, however, document the construction of the eastern portion of the "Albany Road" in 1754 from Deerfield as far west as Charlemont. On May 8th of that year a committee met at Deerfield to begin the survey of this new road. The road passed the old burying ground at Deerfield, went south for a short distance before fording the Deerfield River and proceeding westward over hills on a road known as Hawks Road today. The road proceeded over the current Bardwell Ferry Road to Shelburne Center and then westerly towards the present community of Shelburne Falls. Likewise, in 1754 the Deerfield selectmen investigated the feasibility of building a bridge at the location of the ford, but such a bridge was never constructed, and the ford was used for crossing the shallow river instead.

At the western terminus of this road this survey seems to indicate, but does not specifically mention, the presence of a road leading west over the mountain to "Hoosick." Lacking more specific documentation, we can assume that the portion of the "Albany Road" between Charlemont and East Hoosuck (North Adams) was constructed (short portions may possibly have existed as roads already), during this time period. On September 26th and 27th, 1755, Captains Nathaniel Dwight of Belchertown and William Lyman of Northampton marched from Deerfield to Fort Massachusetts with a combined force of 124 men, carrying arms and supplies destined for the Crown Point campaign. Again, while Dwight's journal does not specifically mention the use of a road to cross Hoosic Mountain, it is unlikely that the older, narrow Indian trail could have accommodated this caravan. When completed, the road covered 42.8 miles between Deerfield and Williamstown.

The road proceeded up the Cold River valley to the approximate location of the current public park in Mohawk Trail State Forest, and ascended the steep ridge between Clark and Todd mountains. This road ascended some 620 feet in a distance of only one-quarter mile, at a grade (not allowing for probable switchbacks) of 45%! The road was so incredibly steep that at various times some carts with oxen and horses with wagons fell down the hill to their destruction.

Road Alterations in the 1760's.

In 1762 the first bridge, known as "Baker's Bridge," over the Hoosic River was constructed between Adams and Williamstown on the "Albany Road." This was located at the site of the

present Ashton Avenue bridge, and replaced the earlier ford located a short distance to the east. This constituted only a minor relocation in the course of the road. The earlier course of .4 miles cannot be followed today.

In January of the following year, Charles Wright of East Hoosuck petitioned the Colonial Legislature for the General Court of the newly-created Berkshire County to tender his request for a tavern license. Wright, who later settled in Pownal, Vermont, stated that he had removed his family from Amherst the previous May, "into a House where the old Massachusetts-Fort stood," and "that there is a Necessity for a House of Entertainment there, it being sixteen Miles from any such House." Charlemont was sixteen miles east of his house along the "Albany Road." Shortly thereafter, the Berkshire County General Court granted a tavern license to Charles Wright and Elisha Jones, which cost them £50.

Two years later, in 1764, Samuel Rice of Charlemont petitioned the Colonial Legislature for 200 acres of "Province Land near the Deerfield River." Rice stated that "there is a very Great Necessity of a Highway being laid out up Hoosuck Mountain to accommodate the public, for it is very Dangerous passing the road that is Travelled at Present. Several creatures have lost their lives" there and that he "hath found a better place for a road." Rice was awarded the land grant by the Massachusetts House of Representatives, with the condition that he "make a good Road from Charlemont to the Top of Hoosick Mountain" during the next year. The course of Rice's road of 4.7 miles has been documented and traced on modern maps, and how much this new course constituted an improvement is debatable. This action by the House does underscore the difficulty in constructing and maintaining a decent road over the steep grades of Hoosick Mountain. The new road climbed the mountain at a slightly easier grade directly from the Deerfield River valley at Zoar Gap and did not follow any of the Cold River gorge. It climbed 700 feet in .75 miles, at a 17.6% grade not accounting for any switchbacks. Rice noted in his petition that "several creatures" had lost their lives on the steep climb north from the Cold River, and this may refer in part to oxen which fell down the steep road to their deaths in the Dwight and Lyman expedition of 1755.

The location where the original road climbed Clark and Todd mountains was sometimes referred to as "Ox-Kill Cliffs" on "Forbidden Mountain." A short article in a Mohawk Trail-Taconic Pictorial supplement to the North Adams Transcript in 1957 cited "references" to an Indian named Wichikanki, who supposedly lived near the cliffs, and assisted in laying out the first road up the mountain in 1753. One certainly wonders today what were these mysterious "references" this anonymous author had cited.

The earliest map showing the "Albany Road" on Hoosic Mountain is a 1765 map of "Bernardston Grant" in the Massachusetts State Archives. This grant became the major part of the Town of Florida when that town was established in 1805. The course of the road shown on this map corresponds with the present South County Road in Florida, running parallel to and south of the Mohawk Trail. A landmark known as "Flat Rock" is prominently shown, along with the Cold River, which is called "Money Brook," as well as North Pond.

Later in 1764, the Massachusetts Legislature, interestingly enough, ordered a survey of all roads in the Province, "and the roads leading to Albany . . . provided the whole of the Expenditure do not exceed the Sum of two Hundred Pounds." This survey, however, cannot be located at the

In April of 1771 Joshua Locke of Hubbardston petitioned the Legislature that he "served his Majesty upwards of six years during the last war, the fatigues of which hath greatly impaired his health." Being "frequently obliged" to travel from Charlemont to Williamstown he noted "the extreme badness of the Road over Said Mountain." Desirous of erecting a house of entertainment on Hoosuck Mountain for the accommodation of travellers," Locke was granted 300 acres of unappropriated land on "Hoosuck Mountain . . . on Condition that he erect and keep a House of Entertainment for Travellers on Said Mountain, for the Space of seven Years." This land was located on the present South County road, north of the Mohawk Trail and west of Clark Mountain. The survey refers to part of this grant lying "between the old road and the new one [Rice's]." The journey over Hoosick Mountain on the "Albany Road" must have been tedious and lonely indeed at this time, and the Legislature saw the importance of erecting such a tavern.

The "Albany Road" can be seen today heading west from Main Street in Deerfield past the old burying ground, and ending at the Deerfield River. The road known by this name west of the river is a relocation of the "Albany Road" dating from 1762. Elijah Williams of Deerfield petitioned the Hampshire County court for this relocation, claiming the proposed new course was shorter and crossed "drier and more feasible ground." It was also about one mile shorter than the existing road between these points.

In 1762 the Hampshire County Court approved the alteration of the course of the "Albany Road" west of Deerfield. The relocated road crossed the Deerfield River just north of the burying ground, and proceeded northwesterly for about 6 miles, meeting the earlier 1754 road near Sluice Brook east of Shelburne Falls. West of the Deerfield River the course of the "Albany Road" is lost for a while because of Interstate Route 91, but can be easily followed northwesterly through West Deerfield, a corner of the Town of Greenfield, and into the Town of Shelburne. The detailed survey of this new road, and an expense account for its construction, are preserved in the records of the Hampshire County Commissioners.

The Commissioners' records also reveal that John Hawks, Jonathan Ashley and Thomas Williams of Deerfield received approval in 1762 to construct a "small pound with two small wings" in the Deerfield River "above the Road that leads from sd. Deerfield to Charlemont for the purpose of taking salmon." This may have been located just downstream from Shelburne Falls. The road, having been under the jurisdiction of the county, is not mentioned often in town records of this period. Charlemont Town minutes for March 13, 1769, however, mention the sum of three pounds being allotted for maintaining the "county road" through the town.

Significant Developments in 1773

A considerable portion of the "Albany Road" from Williamstown to Albany, which the Massachusetts Colonial Legislature required be constructed, largely had to be constructed through wilderness, as it led through a mountainous wilderness where few roads already existed. The section of the "Albany Road" running southwest from Williamstown over Bee Hill Road and

Berlin Pass does not appear to have been constructed until ca. 1773. Rather than ascend and descend the Taconic Mountains, the road appears to have initially followed an existing road along the Hoosic River, northwestward through Pownal and into North Petersburg. This was an ancient trail which had been widened in 1745 to allow for easier passage of military and other vehicles.

The road would have then continued southward along the Little Hoosic River as far as Berlin. The Little Hoosic valley was first settled in the 1760s, and possibly earlier. Dwellings near the river's mouth are shown on the 1754 Map of the Hoosic Patent in the New York State Archives. Peter Simmons is known to have settled in the present Town of Berlin, just south of the intersection of Lower Stage Coach Road and Route 22, during the period of 1754-1757. Simmons had the duty of being "Chief Farm Master" for this part of the Manor of Rensselaerswyck.

Nelson Hull, writing in his 1858 *Reminiscences of the Settling of the Valley of the Little Hoosick*, remarks that after his grandfather Daniel Hull settled in the valley in 1770, "in the course of three years a highway opened to Williamstown, Mass. [and] the distance was shortened" to the nearest grain mill. Furthermore, surveys of lots sold in the Eighth Division of Williamstown in 1771, found in the first Town Proprietors' Book, surveys which cover lots crossed by the current Berlin and Bee Hill roads, make no mention of any existing road in 1771.

Probably not coincidentally, a road of nearly 50 miles in length was constructed in 1773 from Cumberland County, N.Y., (part of the present Windham County, Vermont) connecting Brattleboro with Williamstown. This is the road Bernice Barnet and B.B. Woods researched and described in their 1993 book *Roads in the Wilderness*. This new road also provided more gradual ascent and descent of the mountains east of Bennington than the earlier road which passed to the north through Searsburg and Woodford.

Chapter 1671 of the New York Colonial Laws, enacted in 1774, specifically mentions this road:

lately with great Labour and Expense, laid out and opened . . . from the Connecticut River towards the City of Albany running Westward through the Townships and Tracts of Land called Brattleborough, New Marlborough [Marlboro], Whiting [Whitingham] and Draper [Wilmington] in the County of Cumberland, and . . . Readesborough, New Stamford [Stamford] and Pownal in the County of Albany, which Road if well made and kept in good Repair will be very beneficial to all the Inhabitants in those Townships and Tracts of Land, enable them to carry their Produce to Market and raise the Value of their Lands.

The Major Road Alteration of 1787

On March 24, 1786 the Massachusetts Legislature authorized the making of a "Waggon road over Hoosick Mountain," and thus the road was again relocated and a bridge was built over the Deerfield River at Zoar Gap. About 7.3 miles of new road were constructed between Zoar Gap

and the Western Summit. The new road ascended the mountain where Whitcomb Hill Road does so today, and became a turnpike in the 1790s. To avoid the toll house, some travellers used Rice's older road as a "shun pike." The turnpike operated until 1833, and this remained the main road over Hoosic Mountain until the present Mohawk Trail was constructed in 1912-1913. The turnpike climbed 1300 feet in 2.5 miles (a 10.2% grade), steep by today's standards but a great improvement over the two earlier roads. The turnpike, officially the "Second Massachusetts Turnpike" but often referred to as "White's Turnpike" was operated by Asaph White and Jesse King. It was chartered in 1797 to run "from the west line of Charlemont . . . to the west foot of Hoosuck Mountain in Adams . . ." The toll gate was located near the eastern end, hence Samuel Rice's steeper road served as the convenient shunpike. Interestingly enough, the three courses the "Albany Road" followed between Hawk's Fort (near the present Deerfield River bridge on Route 2) and Western Summit — 1753-1754, 1764 and 1787 — were each about 11 miles long, varied greatly in steepness of grades and the routes followed.

The steep descent of the mountain to the present North Adams was improved in 1801 with the construction of a new road from "Perry's Pass" (Western Summit) to the foot of the mountain at Daniels Road. This new road involved three switchbacks, but did not follow the course of the present Mohawk Trail. This constituted the last significant alteration of the course of the road until the modern road we are familiar with today was constructed. While the original road steeply descended the mountain 740 feet over .6 miles (with a steep 23.3% grade), the newer course of 1801 made use of three switchbacks and covered 1.7 miles (with only a 8.3% grade), between Daniels Road and Western Summit.

The Williamstown Turnpike does not have appeared to have altered the course of the road greatly. While this turnpike was authorized by a 1799 Act of the Massachusetts State Legislature, not until 1801 did the proprietors of the turnpike corporation express an interest to the Berkshire County Court of General Sessions in laying out the road. The county appointed a committee to oversee the project, and an 1804 report of the resulting survey describes the road's course in detail, leading from "the end of White's Turnpike in Adams to the line of the State of New York." The road was then constructed (or rather, the older road was rebuilt) and in January of 1805 the committee examined the Turnpike Road and authorized the erection of two toll gates thereon, "one near the dwelling house of Mr. Lott Hall in Williamstown and the other at any convenient place between the Store of Marshall Jones and the Dwelling house of Elias Jones in Adams." Walker's toll house at Berlin Pass was apparently used exclusively by the Eastern Turnpike of neighboring New York.

Depictions and Descriptions of the Albany Road

The "Albany Road" first appears in the current Rensselaer County on the well-known 1767 Bleecker Map of the eastern portion of Rensselaerswyck, traversing the wilderness on the Rensselaer Plateau. After leaving Greenbush, no homes are shown until the road arrives at that

of Peter Simmons in Berlin. This road is described in the Field Book of Highways . . . in Other Counties, 1770-1792, in the Albany County Hall of Records:

. . . beginning at Hudsons River at Jan Ooms Pat or Road thence continued Easterly as the Road now runs to Edward Hogels at the South end of his House as the road now runs and is eastwardly along the North side of Lawrence Rysedorph's fence and continued easterly as the road now runs to the House of Zachariah Feller at the South side of his House and so to the Grist Mill at the North side of the Mill so to the House of Hendrick Siperley at the South end of his House so to the Three Squear Lake [Reichards Lake] from thence to the House of Michael Rucard [Reichard] between the House and Barn from thence to the House of John Carpenter to the North side thereof from thence Easterly to the House of John Kelly to the North side thereof and so continued to the East Side of his Land and from thence easterly in the most Direct and convenient place to strike the Little Hosick Road about three hundred yards Northerly of the House of Peter Seamons at Little Hosick . . .

The path to Jan Ooms, a farm five English miles from the river, followed today's Washington Avenue leading east out of the City of Rensselaer. A 1678 deed mentioned a wet meadow called Taskichenock reaching to or bordering on a piece of woodland called Pamsnenakasick, also another small parcel of land called Kehantick, formerly maize land, stretching toward the river. This path in Greenbush formed the beginning of the Albany Road we are studying.

Two Revolutionary war era maps show the "Albany Road." Sauthier's 1779 now famous "Chorological Map of the Province of New York in North America . . ." shows the road running from Brattleboro to Williamstown, intersecting other roads, and then continuing to Greenbush. Simon Metcalfe's "Map of the Country in which the Army under Lt. General Burgoyne acted in the Campaign of 1777 . . .," drawn for inclusion in Burgoyne's book excusing the latter's defeat at Saratoga, presents a similar but less accurately placed course for the same road.

Burgoyne, in his *State of the Expedition From Canada* (1780), reproduced his instructions to Lieut. Col. Baum, relative to the ill-fated expedition to capture Bennington in August of 1777. Part of Burgoyne's instructions involved a planned but never executed secret expedition to the Connecticut River, after which Baum was, from "Brattlebury" [Brattleboro] "by the quickest march . . . to return by the great road to Albany." At first glance this would seem to refer to the road over the mountain to Bennington, and thence to Albany via Hoosick and Troy. But the new road from Brattleboro to Williamstown had recently been constructed, and was known to involve lesser grades and be in better condition than the older route. If this road were to be used by Baum, his course to Albany from Williamstown would have been over the "Albany Road" of our study.

Thomas Anburey, a Lieutenant in Burgoyne's army, first published a well-known account of his *Travels Through the Interior Parts of America* in 1789. Following his capture, Anburey was escorted to Bennington, and then to Williamstown, and over the "Albany Road" via Deerfield to Boston. Anburey does not describe the road, but his accounts of the "lower class of these Yankees" who lived along its course, and in particular his first hand observations of the practice

of "bundling" are most noteworthy. The map drawn for Anburey's book seems to indicate a road running southeasterly from Bennington to Northfield, Mass., but no such road ever existed, and Anburey himself mentions passing through Williamstown.

Earlier in the American Revolution, Col. Benedict Arnold used the "Albany Road" between May 3rd and 6th, 1775, leading a force of Massachusetts volunteers heavily laden with horses, wagons, and supplies on a journey from Cambridge, Massachusetts to Williamstown. Arnold would join forces with Ethan Allen and his "Green Mountain Boys," as well as volunteers from Connecticut, all of whom succeeded in the now-famous daring capture of Fort Ticonderoga on the 10th. Arnold's march from Cambridge was a hasty one, and he had no time to record any observations of the road or the country it passed through. Arnold is documented as having lodged at Nehemiah Smedley's tavern, which stands today on Main Street in Williamstown.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, writing in his journal on August 11, 1837 while on a visit to North Adams, described the road up Hoosic Mountain as "cut zigzag, the mountain being generally as steep as the roof of a house." He noted:

Houses scattered here and there up the mountain-side, growing poorer as I ascended;—the last that I passed was the meanest log-hut that I ever saw, rough, rude and dilapidated, with the smoke issuing from a chimney of small stones, plastered with clay; around it a garden of beans, with some attempts at flowers, and some green creeper running over the side of the cottage. Above this point there were various excellent views of the mountain scenery, far off and near;—and our village lying below in the hollow vale. Having ascended so far that the road seemed to go downward, I retraced my steps. There was a wagon descending behind me, and at sometime catch a glimpse of the wagon almost perpendicularly above me; at the same time looking almost perpendicularly down to the log hut . . . Trees thick on either hand—oaks, pines, &c. Marble occasionally peeped up in the road; and there was a lime-kiln by the wayside, ready for burning.

Hawthorne also describes a journey to Charlemont and back over the mountain on August 31st. He describes a "small homely tavern" located on the mountain top in Florida (which he calls "Lerida") and the spectacular views before the "plunge" down the road into the Deerfield valley. He was struck in particular by the awesome ruggedness of the scenery and the long distances one could see from the summits. Below Zoar Gap he travelled on a "road on a level with" the Deerfield River, "now there was a sheer descent down the from roadside upon it, often unguarded by any kind of fence, except by trees that contrived to grow on the headlong interval." Passing Charlemont, Hawthorne noted a "curious rock," hollowed out by water, along the shore of the Deerfield River. He stayed at a wretched tavern in Shelburne Falls, sharing the miserable fare with a rowdy group of students from the Rensselaer School in Troy, who were on a geology expedition. Later, on September 7th, he provides possibly the best contemporary description of an operating lime-kiln, which he visited one night by walking up the Hoosic Mountain from North Adams.

Rev. Washington Gladden provided an excellent description of the ride up Hoosic Mountain from the Deerfield River valley in the 1860s in his book *From the Hub to the Hudson* (1869).

The coaches needed over 40 minutes to climb the steep mountain road, and Gladden was awestruck by the spectacular scenery of the steep, rugged Deerfield gorge. The Hoosic Tunnel was at that time still under construction:

The road creeps cautiously up the mountain side,——much of the way through the forest, but often revealing the rugged grandeur of the hills. Now you begin to get some idea of the depth and sinuosity of the Deerfield Gorge. Half a mile from Rice's [the hotel of Jenks and Rice at Hoosac Tunnel station] is Puck's Nook, where the road makes a sharp turn to the north, crossing one of the Twin Rivulets, which here comes gurgling out of a dense thicket above the road, and leaps merrily down a steep ravine on our right. A little farther on, we emerge from the woods, and climbing a steep pitch, look down into the valley out of which we have ascended.

Over the crest of the mountain, westward, swiftly down into the valley of the Cold River, which divides the eastern from the western summit. The stunted beeches on the left, barren of branches on the north-west side, show how fierce the winter winds are, and from what quarter they come. The summit is two thousand one hundred ten feet above tide water, and the west summit is four hundred feet higher. Over the hill in the west we catch our first glimpse of Greylock. . . . On this bleak, rough mountain top, lie all that is inhabitable in the Town of Florida. There are a few good grazing farms, but grain has a slim chance between the late and early frosts. The winters are long and fierce.

The "Albany Road" bisecting Rensselaer County

The year of completion of the road to Albany, especially the portion which had to be constructed over the wilderness of the Rensselaer Plateau is uncertain. Hostility between England and France may have very well played a part in delaying the road's completion.

War broke out again in 1754 following a six year hiatus. Because of its strategic location, Fort Massachusetts and the entire Hoosic valley was the scene of many raids by the French and their Indian allies. Such military matters would have clearly taken precedence, if necessary, over public improvements such as new road construction. In November of 1754 Massachusetts Colonial government, interestingly enough, considered the construction of a fort "built about half Way from Fort-Massachusetts to Hudson's-River in the most convenient Place for erecting the same." Such a fort was never constructed (possibly because it would have clearly been located in New York), but one wonders if a site was considered along the existing or not yet constructed road between Williamstown and Albany.

To further complicate matters, now Col. Ephraim Williams was killed at the Battle of Lake George in 1755. Although Williams had promised the Commonwealth not only to open the road

to Albany, but also to build grist and saw mills near Fort Massachusetts, some time may have passed before both goals were accomplished. As late as June 11, 1765 Nathan Jones, one of the later proprietors in East Hoosuck, sought compensation from the Legislature for expenses he had incurred in the construction of these mills. Jones had purchased East Hoosuck in 1762 and had apparently expended his own funds keeping the mills in repair. In his petition, Jones inferred that the requirement of construction of the road to Albany had also been met. While improvements on eastern sections of the new "Albany Road" had begun as early as 1753, completion of the western link through the Rensselaer Plateau wilderness may not have occurred until after the cessation of war with France in 1760.

The Albany Road apparently followed portions of existing roads, or at least connected established farms, in western Rensselaer County, running easterly to the farm of Henry Jacobs on Snake Hill, and then followed a relatively straight course through the wilderness to the Little Hoosick valley. This would explain the winding course of the road until the top of Snake Hill was reached. No other explanation can be offered for the road following a steep grade up the west side of Snake Hill.

Whether or not any homes or other improvements existed between Snake Hill and the Little Hoosick valley at this time, or whether they followed the construction of the road, is not known. By the time of the Middletown survey of the late 1780s, a settlement pattern following the "Albany Road" across the Rensselaer Plateau was evident.

Evidence suggests that a direct road from Berlin to Williamstown did not exist until ca. 1773. Neither the Bleecker map nor the above survey indicate the earlier existence of such a road over Berlin Pass and down Bee Hill into Williamstown. The older course of the road through Pownal and North Petersburg made the journey nearly 48 miles from Williamstown to Albany, but with the construction of a highway over Berlin Pass, this distance was shortened to 34.1 miles. In comparison, the route from Albany to Williamstown north to Vanderheyden's Ferry, and via the "Stone Road" to the Hoosick River, thence southeasterly through Pownal, was over 42 miles in length.

However, the grades over Berlin Pass were rather steep for roads of this era, and this new road also passed over stone ledges. Heading easterly, from the head of Greene Hollow to the pass, the road climbed 711 feet in 1.4 miles, a 9.6% grade. Heading westerly, from the intersection of the current Bee Hill and Berlin roads to the pass, the road climbed 1137 feet in 2.2 miles, a 9.8% grade.

In 1785 young Stephen Van Rensselaer inherited the family rights to the Manor, and it became necessary to determine the extent of these land holdings. In order to complete this task, surveyors John E. Van Alen and Job Gilbert were hired to survey and map the entire Manor. Job Gilbert surveyed "Middletown," which included chiefly the eastern portions of the present towns of Poestenkill and Sand Lake and the western portion of Berlin. John E. Van Alen and his son, Evart, surveyed "Little Hoosick," which encompassed the present Town of Petersburg and the eastern portion of Berlin.

Their maps and surveys frequently contain references to the road, usually called the "Hoosick Road" by Gilbert and the "Albany Road" by Van Alen. The portion east of Berlin is merely

referred to as the "road," and in one 1788 document two rods wide in Greene Hollow are reserved "for a Publick Road." A survey map for land leased to John Barber Babcock in Little Hoosick (the current Sedgwick Inn), interestingly enough labels this the "New Road to Albany." It is unclear what older road to Albany was used for comparison, though this may have meant the road between Bennington and Vanderheyden's Ferry. On the same and other maps, the present Route 22 is referred to as the "Great Road." Babcock appears to have settled here ca. 1775, and such a tavern, if he did operate one, would have been strategically located at the junction of these two major roads.

Particularly revealing is Job Gilbert's wonderfully detailed and accurate 1788 map of Middletown, found in the Cherry Hill Papers in the New York State Library. The course of the "Albany Road" was carefully drawn as it crossed the entire area of Middletown. Because of this map's clarity as well as geographical accuracy, a scanned image of the map in the Rensselaer-Taconic Land Conservancy's (R-TLC's) geographic information system (G.I.S.) has permitted the plotting of this section of the road on a modern-day map.

Information contained in the two surveys has likewise permitted the mapping and analysis of lots along the road which had homes or some improvements on them at the time of the surveys. As one might expect, improvements in this wilderness region tended to be found on lots along or near the road. The surveys for lots 111 and 112 in Middletown, leased to Elijah Trumbull and Anthony Eymer respectively, indicate improvements and the presence of a house on lot 111 as early as 1791. These house foundations were located and are visible today.

The 1790 Bypass and the Eastern Turnpike

About 1790 a new five mile portion of the road was constructed between Reichards Lake and the apex of Snake Hill. This new road was slightly shorter than the older course, and bypassed the steep climb up the west side of Snake Hill. Both sections of road are shown on the "Map of Hoosock old and New Road," drawn ca. 1791 by Peter Bishop Jr., in the Cherry Hill Papers. Use of portions of the bypassed stretch was discontinued in the early and mid-nineteenth century. The original road climbed from 815 to 1200 feet to the apex of Snake Hill (385 feet in one mile, a grade of 7.3%), while the bypass only ascended from 810 feet to 1230 feet at its highest point (420 feet in 2.1 miles, a grade of 3.8%).

The ca. 1790 map of the east half of East Manor of Rensselaerswyck in the Van Rensselaer Manor papers, New York State Library, shows the "Albany Road" crossing Middletown and Little Hoosick. Also drawn on this map a few years later was the course of the Eastern Turnpike, constructed between Bath and Berlin Pass in 1802. The portion of this turnpike in Massachusetts, between North Adams and the state line, was known as the Williamstown Turnpike and followed Bee Hill Road from the village to the state line near Berlin Pass. The David Burr *Atlas* of 1829 likewise shows both the old "Albany Road" and the newer Eastern Turnpike in this region. A 1795 map of Williamstown in the Massachusetts State Archives shows the "Albany Road" leading easterly to Adams as the "Road to Adams and Boston — County Road." This map also clearly shows the "Albany Road" heading over Bee Hill and

Berlin Pass into New York State.

The Eastern Turnpike roughly paralleled the "Albany Road" and used two portions of the old road. East of Dutch Church Road, the Turnpike joined the old road for .9 miles, utilizing the stone bridge across a small stream (sometimes known as Cross Brook or Hammond Brook) south of Kendall Pond. The turnpike headed north from the old road on the present Lower Stage Coach Road and descended the mountain to Berlin where the Plank Road (County Route 40) does today. The Eastern Turnpike then followed the course of the "Albany Road" again up Greene Hollow and over Berlin Pass. The total length of the Eastern Turnpike, including the short portion in Massachusetts as far as Main Street in Williamstown, was 30.65 miles in length. The Eastern Turnpike utilized 16.23 miles of the old "Albany Road," except for the small stretch mentioned above, mostly west of Reichard's Lake and east of Berlin.

Later nineteenth century maps (the Rogerson maps of 1854-1855, the Beers and Lake maps of 1860-1862 and Beers' 1876 *Atlas of Rensselaer County*) indicate the abandonment of portions of the old "Albany Road." As mentioned above, the Snake Hill portion which was bypassed was abandoned in favor of the new course which followed the current Wisner and Oak Hill Roads. These maps also indicate that the portion of the "Albany Road" east of the present Legenbauer Road in East Poestenkill was now little used. Immediately west of Dutch Church Road, crossing wetlands rendered the road difficult to maintain, and highway records of the Town of Berlin indicate abandonment of this portion in 1856. The abandoned portion was described at that time as extending "from the Sand Bank west of Streeter's place on the mountain and running west to the Town line."

East of Dutch Church Road, the section of the "Albany Road" running north of and closely parallel to the Eastern Turnpike also fell into disuse, except to access two homes. Samuel Streeter mentioned in his 1895 letter that as early as 1810-1820 that traffic west of the Sanford Wheeler tavern mostly followed the new Eastern Turnpike rather than the old "Albany Road."

Conclusion

As a general rule, traces of colonial-era roads are often obliterated with the widening and modernization of roads which followed the same general course. The route of the "Albany Road" across eastern Rensselaer County is an exception. The short stretch of the old road between Route 66 and Snake Hill, and the longer portion east of Bermas Road all the way to Route 22 in Berlin, were for the most part abandoned by the late nineteenth century in favor of newer roads such as Plank Road between Poestenkill and Berlin. As a result, major portions of the old "Albany Road" have survived largely intact into the modern era. On the average, about 90% of the course of this two-centuries-old road is readily recognizable, and can be walked or driven.

The "Albany Road" as of 1773 (between the present Rensselaer and Williamstown) covered about 34.1 miles. Today 20.4 of these miles are followed by modern (maintained) state, county or town roads, 10.3 miles can be hiked (as trails, woods or logging roads), and only 3.4 miles are "lost" (either in woods or wetlands, or obliterated by modern construction.) Following the

bypass of circa 1789 the statistics for the "Albany Road" are similar. Today 21.7 of these miles are followed by modern (maintained) state, county or town roads, 9.1 miles can be hiked (as trails, woods or logging roads), and only 2.9 miles are "lost" (either in woods or wetlands, or obliterated by modern construction.) Given the fate of many colonial-era roads, these statistics are quite remarkable.

Between Williamstown and Deerfield, much of the original road of 1753-1754 and the various alterations are still in use, either by Route 2 or secondary roads, with a few exceptions. About a mile is lost between the Route 2 bridge west of North Adams and the place where Massachusetts Avenue follows the old road on the north side of the river, and another small portion where the original ford was replaced by Baker's Bridge. The short but very steep .3 mile section of road down "Ox-kill Cliffs" was, as previously stated, abandoned at an early date. In Charlemont about one mile of the old road fell out of use when the road (Main Street) was relocated to its north, away from the Deerfield River.

Between Charlemont and Shelburne Falls much of Route 2 follows the old course, except for a mile in the Oxbow Road area and another .8 mile approaching the westernmost Deerfield River bridge near Shelburne Falls. Because of the modern-era construction of the hydroelectric plant and road relocation northwest of Shelburne Falls, about 2.5 miles that followed the big bend in the river was abandoned. West of Deerfield, a little over a mile of both the original 1754 course and the 1762 alteration were abandoned because of the construction of Interstate Route 91.

While large portions the present Route 2, the Mohawk Trail and Taconic Trail alike, opened new roads to the public in the twentieth century, as the accompanying guide and maps of the "Albany Road" demonstrate, portions of the old road can be driven and/or hiked today, and reward the traveller with attractive pastoral and mountain scenery. We encourage the public to follow the "Albany Road" and recall its important place in the military, social and economic history of eastern New York and western Massachusetts.

*The Albany Road leads on to the West,
Up and down, a symbol of quest;
On to the future and back to the past —
While the fateful years are flying fast —
Leads the Albany Road.*

*Honor to him whose painstaking hand
Wrote the true tale of our fair valley land;
Through the dim past shines the light of today
For seekers after the light are they
Who travel the Albany Road.*

[from "The Albany Road" by Isabelle Williams, read at the annual meeting of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association in 1909]

Warren F. Broderick
Rensselaer-Taconic Land Conservancy
October 23, 1999

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Exploring The "Albany Road" Today

Rensselaer to Defreestville (Maps 15 & 16)

The Albany Road (also known as the "Road to Little Hoosick" or the "Old Hoosick Road") begins at the house of William P. Van Rensselaer's agent for the East Manor. The house which still exists is opposite the east end of the ferry route and the west end of what is now known as Forbes Avenue. It proceeds northeasterly, up the hill, past some housing for the elderly, and the Van Rensselaer Elementary School at the corner of Rensselaer Street (now Forbes Avenue) and Washington Avenue. Beverwyck Cemetery is located opposite the end of Forbes Avenue and contains burials from before 1780.

Heading east from here along Washington Avenue one passes, on the right, a two story brick house that was the office of the Plank Road Company. Shortly, the road crosses over the newly constructed Interstate 90 Highway. Some distance further, a long driveway to the left goes west to the Beverwyck Manor constructed by William P. Van Rensselaer, who in 1839 became the Patroon upon the death of his father. The title of "Lord of the Manor" had disappeared upon the formation of the United States of America after the Revolution. The Manor was sold in about 1850 to Paul S. Forbes of New York City and finally to the Franciscan Order of St. Anthony-on-Hudson in 1911 which continues to occupy it to this day.

The road follows generally the line of Washington Avenue until it reaches Rockcut Road where it turned north for about half a mile to avoid a large outcropping of rock. It turned south immediately and returned to Washington Avenue after approximately a fifth of a mile. Continuing east a few hundred feet, the new State Route 43 crosses Washington Avenue. Presently this road turns east and crosses US Route 4 near where the old road once ran. This road was known as "New City Road" and led to Lansingburgh in the very early days of settlement. This is also near the junction of the Albany Road (State Route 43) and the Best Road. Just after the new crossing, on the right, is the house of John Van Alen, surveyor and congressman, who purchased it in 1778. Van Alen and his son Evert, were involved in surveying and laying out a significant portion of Van Rensselaer's East Manor.

Defreestville to State Route 66 (Maps 16 & 17)

By and large the old road follows State Route 43 for the next five or six miles. Several of the properties referred to in the 1773 report of survey of the Highway Commissioners are crossed but there is little to identify the individual tenants. At Higgins Road, the old path turns southerly and proceeds to Orchard Lane.

It follows Orchard Lane past the site of an early church to the West Sand Lake-Best Road. Then it turns northerly to meet the old road (State Route 43) near the present hamlet of West Sand Lake. Approximately half a mile further east of the junction of State Routes 43 and 150, the Albany Road turned north (present Reichards Lake Road or State Route 351) and passed "Drei Kante Lackie" or "Three Cornered Lake," now known as Reichards Lake. Several old houses

from the late 18th and early 19th century are located along this road.

State Route 66 to Tymeson Road (Maps 17 & 18)

Shortly after crossing State Route 66, the Albany Road turns southeast and travels past the Minnick cemetery and the site of a six foot diameter maple tree. The road climbs through the Henry Hudson Fish and Game Club grounds until it reaches Vosburgh Road where it turns south until it reaches State Route 66 where it intersects the line of what was then Greenbush and Stephentown and the West line of Middletown. The house at this junction was once a Toll House on the Troy Sand Lake Turnpike. This location is the end of the detailed listing of tenants through whose holdings the road passed. From here on the 1773 report of survey calls for using the best route finishing up about 300 yards north of the house of Peter Simmons in "Little Hoosick."

The road continues easterly up Miller Hill Road (State Route 66) then sidles to the north until it comes to Snake Hill Road about 500 feet north of State Route 66. Crossing Snake Hill Road the road goes up the spine of Snake Hill along stone walls until it reaches a point near an old house that is just about the peak of Snake Hill. This is the end of a road coming from the east called High Meadow Road (formerly Lynn Road.) Proceed along High Meadow down hill then up until it meets Lynn Road. Continue east until the old former schoolhouse at Oak Hill Road is reached. Continue on Oak Hill Road to Bermas Road and Catlin Road, then on Bermas Road to Tymeson Road.

Tymeson Road to Hicks Pond Road (Map 18)

Continue on Tymeson Road to the site of St. Mary's in the Woods Roman Catholic church and cemetery. Across Tymeson Road from the Saint Mary's in the Woods Cemetery, the Albany Road enters the woods currently owned by Ed Showers. Immediately on the north side of the road the remains of the St. Mary's Church carriage shed are visible. The road rises gently between stone walls, past an old farm site with a large rock probably placed there by the glacier. A less distinct road bears southeast but continue on the main or left one. In .5 miles Hicks Pond comes into view a short distance east of the Albany Road. A 1850 map of Poestenkill names this pond "Huck's Pond" and in the 1876 Beers *Atlas of Rensselaer County* it is called "Jacks Pond." A small cellar hole lies east of the road.

Hicks Pond to Legenbauer Road (Map 18)

Joining Hicks Pond Road bear east in front of the home of the Redingtons, past another cellar hole in the east and up a short rise to a four corners. This is New Road which connects Legenbauer Road via Bailey Road to the Eastern Turnpike in Taborton. Continue straight and on the crest of the knoll reinforced embankments are visible on the downhill side of the Albany Road. Continue between stone walls until you pass between the barn and home of the Piazzas

beyond which you meet Legenbauer Road which ends at the homes of the De Filippis families who do not wish the public to cross their property.

Legenbauer Road to the "Four Corners" (Map 18)

At De Filippis' property the Albany Road again enters the woods. The J. Milhizer home site on the south side is noted by an old well. The road rises gradually for .8 mile and crosses a stream just prior to a four corners. The old road to the left (north) leads to "Sugar Rock" near the home of the Dombroskys. The old road to the right (south) leads to the cabin of Farano and eventually to the Eastern Turnpike near Perigo Hill, the highest elevation in Poestenkill.

"Four Corners" to "The Swamp" (Map 18)

Continue easterly past a round flat area which was one of the many "coal bottoms" found in this area. Charcoal making was a lucrative cash crop for the early settlers as both the glass and iron industries depended on this fuel in their production. Charcoal was also used for home heating and cooking.

The Albany Road rises gradually and meets the Round Top Ski Trail of Pineridge Cross Country Ski Area owned by the Kersch. An area on the road identified as "Stoney Knob," and other stone structures on the property, are currently under investigation by New England Antiquities Research Association to determine their origin.

Just down from the crest of the hill on the south side of the road is a spring laid-up with stone. To date no house foundations have been discovered nearby so it is assumed that the spring slaked the thirst of man and beast climbing the hill.

The road descends north and joins a ski trail aptly named "Stage Coach Road" by Walter Kersch. This, as well as the spring, is located on Middletown Lot # 91 which was leased in 17893 to Joseph Perrigo for whom Perigo Hill was probably named.

Adjacent Middletown Lot # 92 was leased to Joseph Amidon Jr., and Rensselaer Baker. Both a survey of the Berlin-Poestenkill Turnpike in the Rensselaer County Clerk's Office and an Amidon family history refer to a tavern on the Albany Road owned by a Mr. Amidon. It was also in this area that the hamlet of Rogers Bridge was located. This contained a store, several sawmills and in 1847 land was conveyed in Middletown Lot #75 to establish Poestenkill School District #18. A Mr. Feathers also had a hoop factory using the willows that lined the banks of the Poesten Kill.

Following the Poesten Kill closely, a mill site with its millrace intact is clearly visible. Follow the Beavers Folly Trail to the junction of East Flat Trail. Here you cross an old beaver meadow and just before you cross the Poesten Kill on the other side of the meadow bushwhack south along the bank and pick up the Albany Road again near the Austin house site. The road rises gently and on the crest there is a very large cellar hole. Across the road are small paddocks

outlined with stone walls.

Shortly beyond this point you encounter a crossroad. North leads across the Poesten Kill to the Ross home. South leads to the Eastern Turnpike. Continue straight (bearing east) until you come to the Schroeder farm site. The Albany Road runs between the house and barn foundations and downhill until it dead ends at a large swamp. Between this point and Dutch Church Road, one mile from the corner of Plank Road (County Road #40) the Albany Road is lost in the swamp. Back at the Schroeder house site a road south leads to the Eastern Turnpike and this may have been an early bypass. The section from "Four Corners" to "The Swamp" is 1.7 miles long and is a pleasant hike.

Dutch Church Road to Route 22 (Map 19)

One mile south on County Road 41 (Dutch Church Road) the Albany Road again enters the woods on land owned by W. J. Cowee, Inc. It rises sharply to the first cellar hole on the north side. The last family to live here were the Otts but when Job Gilbert surveyed Middletown in 1788 Elijah Trumbull was already living on this property. In 1805 the Streeter family and relatives came to live here. Their 14- by 24-foot log cabin housed twelve persons. [A complete documentary portfolio of the Streeters' early life and this area is available from Rensselaer-Taconic Land Conservancy for \$5.00; it represents true testament to fortitude and hard work of these early settlers.]

Past remnants of an apple orchard and between stone walls the Albany Road rises in .7 mile to the second cellar hole known as the Eymer Place. It is in Middletown Lot #112 leased by Stephen Van Rensselaer in 1794 for the rent of 9½ bushels of wheat per year. The Albany Road, in some documents called the "Hoosick Road," went past this place but because of recent logging is lost until we reach the Stone Bridge over Cross Brook. To rejoin the Albany Road it is necessary to bear south a short distance until you come to the Eastern Turnpike at a large log landing. Here you again bear east until you come to a prominent cellar hole on the north side and stone paddocks on the south. Locally it is known as the Cushine Place, anglicized from the German surname Kirkheim. It was originally leased to Elisha Oviatt but in 1822 Sanford Wheeler bought the property and opened a tavern.

At this point the Eastern Turnpike starts its descent from the Rensselaer Plateau. In about a mile, just before the rebuilt stone bridge over Cross Brook, the Albany Road and the Eastern Turnpike meet and follow the same course down the mountain. On the south side of the roads are two large stones set up in the stone wall. The standing stone is chiseled with the initials "B S" and the fallen one is marked "1814." Barzaleel Streeter was a stone mason who could lay up four rods (66 feet) of wall per day, and for this he received \$1.00 pay including board. It was while he was building this wall that he witnessed the Berlin Militia on their way to Troy to repel the British from Plattsburgh, New York in the War of 1812. He noted his accomplishment nearby his house by his initials and the date. From the Eymer Place to this spot is .9 mile on easily recognizable old roads.

Turn south on the recent logging road and in a short distance the Albany Road and the Eastern Turnpike descends east. This is difficult to find but look for a narrow, rocky gorge that

resembles a brook more than it does a road. Erosion has rendered it difficult for hiking.

From the stone bridge to the three corners it is a 1.3 mile hike. At this point the house southwest of the corner is the former home of Daniel Rhodes. The Eastern Turnpike completed in 1804, and a link in the Albany to Boston Post Road, bears north through the settlement of Berlin via Green Hollow Road and over Berlin Pass into Williamstown, Massachusetts. The Albany Road passes by the south side of the Madden House, and down hill to the William Waterman home. His modern home, with spectacular views of the Taconic Mountain range, was built on the foundation of the Langford Weaver home. Weaver's nearby gravestone indicates he fought in the American Revolution. This stretch of old road is lost in a swamp, requiring one to walk along the south edge of adjacent woods.

From here it is about one-half mile to the junction of State Route 22 and Lower Stage Coach Road and it is drivable. At the south side of the junction is the site of a cheese box factory. This was the starting point of "Wanderings in Rensselaer" by Samuel S. Streeter (included in the Streeter history portfolio.)

Further south is the Stephens' home on whose land lived Captain Peter Simmons (or Siemon), who was the chief farm master of this part of Rensselaerswyck. He settled in the Little Hoosic valley between 1754-1757, later lending his name to the Town of Petersburg. On the 1767 Bleecker Map the Albany Road is shown and the road probably used by the tenants in the Manor to take their annual rents from the valley to the Patroon's store house in Bath, where we started our journey.

The Sedgwick Inn is at the north side of the junction of Route 22 and the Albany Road. When John A. Van Alen surveyed Little Hoosick in 1790, this was the home of John Barber Babcock who arrived in the valley circa 1775. It is believed to have been an inn at this time and its location at the junction of two major roads would seem to bear this out.

State Route 22 to Williamstown (Maps 20 & 21)

From State Route 22 and Lower Stage Road we drive north on Route 22, 1.4 miles until we meet the south end of Main Street. We follow Main Street to the intersection of Plank Road and Elm Street rejoining the route of the Eastern Turnpike at an 1806 tavern, now known as the Colonial Inn. Here we turn east, cross State Route 22 and follow Elm Street as it becomes Green Hollow Road. The small house on the northeast corner of Green Hollow Road and Cold Spring Road was the Berlin District #4 School House.

Continue on Green Hollow Road for 4.6 miles until you come to an early farmhouse on the north side. On the 1802 map of the Eastern Turnpike this farm is shown as belonging to Jonathan Green, a Revolutionary War soldier who migrated from Rhode Island to the Little Hoosic valley after the war. He received his Van Rensselaer lease in 1792 for the rent of 13 5/12 bushels of wheat. As shown on a map of his property, he is allowed a deduction of 29 perches (478.5 feet) for a highway which ran east and west just south of his house. This was an alleged to be a stop to change horses before or after climbing the pass. Jonathan Green had a son, Samuel, who married Amy Comstock. She is probably the "widow Amy Green"

mentioned below.

In David Mattison's diary March 23, 1821, now in the possession of Katherine Wells, he writes on March 23, 1821, "I went to Hammonds to meet the Commissioner of Roads on the request of Samuel Green and others on the Old Turnpike to Williamstown in consideration of the alteration of Road District #30 which had caused considerable uneasiness in that neighborhood on which we decided should remain according to the former bounds." Perhaps his request fell on deaf ears as the Road Book of the Town of Berlin states, "Survey of the laying out a new road up Williamstown Mountain on the bed of the old Eastern Turnpike and begins at the junction of said Turnpike and the public highway a little east of the widow Amy Green and runs hence . . . due east."

From the old Jonathan Green house continue a bit farther to a small parking lot located on the north side of the road. From here the Albany Road/Eastern Turnpike climbs steeply east until it reaches Berlin Pass, where it crosses the Taconic Crest Trail. This trail follows the Taconic Ridge from US Route 20 on Lebanon Mountain to Prosser Hollow and Route 346. The Taconic Crest Trail was first developed in 1948 and is now marked with white diamonds and the access trails by blue ones. A short hike south leads to Berlin or Macomber Mountain, the highest point in Rensselaer County, with spectacular views in every direction.

Just down from the pass the home site of the Briggs farm is seen on the north side of the road. This was later the Alexander Walker farm and toll house. The Eastern Turnpike ended just beyond this house site at the Massachusetts line, and from here the Williamstown Turnpike continued to North Adams mostly following the course of the older Albany Road. After a steep descent over the pass you meet the Berlin Road and a large parking area. The relatively steep hike over Berlin Pass covers 2.24 miles. To the south the trails of the former Williams College ski area are clearly visible.

Drive along Hemlock Brook until the Albany Road leaves Berlin Road and bears east up a steep grade on an abandoned road for .7 mile until it crosses Massachusetts Route 2. The house on the southeast corner is the Hickox House built in 1799 and formerly was used as a stage coach inn. Continue down Bee Hill Road 1.6 miles through Flora Glen or "Mallady Gully," where S.W. Burdick recalls his grandfather meeting a runaway slave pursued by his owner. His grandfather persuaded the slave's owner to return to New York alone and the slave, Prince Jackson, to remain on his farm and work for Mr. Burdick. Some time later Mr. Burdick built Prince and Electra Jackson a house on the hillside of the Glen.

Bee Hill Road crosses Flora Glen Brook and meets Cold Spring Road, Massachusetts State Route 2 and US Route 7. As you continue north past Thorliebank Road, the modern road follows a new course which dates to the establishment of Field Park. A short portion of the original Albany Road is lost south of West Main Street. Circle around Field Park (this is one-way traffic) before heading east on Main Street (State Route 2).

West Main Street was laid out in 1750 for Ephraim Williams Jr. If you take a short detour to the west, the original Nathan Smith House built in 1765 can be seen at 1385 West Main Street. At times this house served as a tavern and as a school. Some evidence suggests that the original Albany Road joined West Main Street at this point, rather than following the present course of

Bee Hill Road to Cold Spring Road.

While passing Field Park, stop at the Williamstown Information Booth, at the intersection of Routes 2 & 7. Here you can pick up *Points of Historical Interest*, describing many building in this historic town. In front of the new Williams Inn, a bronze plaque marks the site of Fort Hoosac. In Field Park, across from the site of Fort Hoosac, an example of a regulation house was constructed in 1953 for Williamstown's Bicentennial with tools and construction methods identical to those of the first settlers.

Ephraim Williams Jr. and his family followed his father to Stockbridge, Massachusetts in 1739 to aid in Christianizing the Indians. Ephraim William Sr. brought with him a commission to lay out two townships on the Hoosic River which his son inherited. In West Hoosac 63 house lots, containing ten acres each, were laid out along an east west Main Street and intersected by North and South Streets. Col. Ephraim Williams Jr. commanded the northern line of defense in the French and Indian Wars and was killed in 1755 at the Battle of Lake George. In his will he left money to found a free school in West Hoosuck providing the name is changed to Williamstown. The school opened as an academy in 1791 and became West College in 1793. As you drive east along Main Street, you pass many of the buildings that now comprise the well-respected Williams College.

In .7 mile east on State Route 2 from the Williams Inn you see a large white colonial house, constructed in 1772, on the north side of the road. This is the Nehemiah Smedley House and when it was purchased in 1775 he was allowed 18¾ acres for a highway. This house operated as a tavern and Benedict Arnold lodged there on the night of May 6, 1775. When Capt. Smedley was at the Battle of Bennington, bread was baked in the large oven in the basement and delivered to him in Bennington by his thirteen-year-old son, Levi.

From Smedley Tavern travel east 1.4 miles on State Route 2 to Ashton Avenue on the north side. Here the 1762 road crossed the Hoosic River over Bakers Bridge. From the bridge eastward the road has been obliterated due to modern construction of the railroad and other roads. Return to State Route 2 and drive another 1.5 miles to the Price Chopper parking lot. Here in the back corner is a reproduction of a stone hearth and plaque that marks the site of Fort Massachusetts.

Its western position made it a prime target for the French as they marched south from Fort St. Frederick, Crown Point, and in 1746 General de Vaudreuil commanding an army of 700 to 800 Canadians, Abnakis, Nipissings and Iroquois attacked the fort on the 30th of August 1746. Sergeant John Hawkes and twenty men held the fort until they ran out of ammunition and surrendered on the 31st. Fort Massachusetts was burned to the ground. General de Vaudreuil's journal describes in detail the taking of Fort Massachusetts and the destruction wrought by the French and Indians as they marched their captives back to Canada. The route taken is described in *Redeemed Captive* by the Reverend Mr. Norton, Chaplain of Fort Hoosac. The following year the fort was rebuilt but about 1760 it was finally abandoned.

Fort Massachusetts to Charlemont (Map 22)

If it were possible to follow the south bank of the Hoosic River from Fort Massachusetts eastward, the original course of the Albany Road would rejoin Main Street in North Adams after the second crossing of the Hoosic River. Continue on Route 2 east for 3.3 miles then turn left (north) on Daniels Road. Instead of rejoining Route 2 as it does today, the original road lay west and parallel to the third road. About halfway to the hairpin turn, a steep driveway on the east is the probable route of the 1754 road. It is the steepest route to the Western Summit.

The second road zig-zagged up the steep western side of the Hoosac Mountains and the third stage road takes a long traverse and reversed direction at the hair pin turn. All three roads converged at the Western Pass. This was later named Perry's Pass, for Arthur Perry, Professor at Williams College and author of *Origins of Williamstown*.

Not far from the summit at the Adams-Florida Town Line, the original Albany road bears south on the current Stryker Road. It rises gradually past old hunting camps and modern homes and in 1.7 miles meets Central Shaft Road. Turn south at this point for about one-half mile until this road meets South County Road. Turn east on South County Road. It is three miles to State Route 2. This road, however, is closed between Burdick Road and Church Road South County Road in the winter. It is a delightful summer or autumn drive. South County Road crosses State Route 2 at Drury (which has its own zip code but no post office.) Continue east as the paved road becomes dirt and in three-quarters of a mile Torrey Mountain Road comes in from the north.

At this point you are in land granted to Joshua Locke in 1771. He was given a 300-acre tract on condition he erect and keep a house of entertainment on Hoosuck Mountain. The original road ran through this grant but, to date, no one has been able to locate the site of his tavern.

In .7 of a mile from Torrey Mountain Road, the 1765 Samuel Rice Road, no longer drivable, goes straight ahead. For now, bear right on South County Road around the pond and between the house and barn of the Brules. Parking near the Mahican-Mohawk Trail sign is permitted. The original road skirts a meadow and shortly an abandoned cellar hole and chicken house foundation appear on your right. The Tower family lived here in the early 19th Century. Families by the names of Billet, Gillet, and Wheeler previously lived in the area and their cemetery is located on the former Wheeler Road which leads South to the Cold River. Soon the trail leads into a second-growth birch forest which quickly turns into oak and hemlock forest with dense undergrowth of mountain laurel. Arbutus, early or mountain azalea and wintergreen are scattered under the laurel. The trail arcs north around Clark Mountain between cellar holes and reputedly a former trading post. The trail dips along the ridge to the saddle where the Mahican-Mohawk Trail turns north and the blue triangular marked trail plunges south down over Ox-Kill Cliffs, which is the path of the original road.

A short side trip continues east over Clark mountain to the Indian Lookout on Todd Mountain. The ridge narrows and views both north and south are constantly visible and spectacular. At the pinnacle one can view both the Deerfield and Cold River valleys.

Back at the saddle the original road drops precipitously to the Mohawk Trail State Park over the aforementioned Ox-Kill Cliffs. It drops down to the Cold River, formerly called Money Brook, and follows the northern bank past the junction of the Deerfield River, the site of a ford, and

an old Indian encampment. The first road parallels State Route 2 and rejoins it at the famous Indian Spring. Just past the bridge over the Deerfield River is the Hawks Cemetery. This site has been developed as a picnic area with views of the Deerfield River.

The second road down the eastern slope of Hoosac Mountain is the Samuel Rice Road, constructed in 1765. It met the earlier road west of Locke's Grant and zig-zagged southward and eastward down the mountain to meet the Deerfield River. Here it forded the river near where the present Florida Bridge crosses the Deerfield River to the Zoar Road, south of the Hoosac Tunnel. This was the road used by Benedict Arnold in 1775 on his way to Williamstown. When White's Turnpike was built in 1797 the Rice Road was used as a shunpike to avoid paying tolls.

The third road was the Second Massachusetts Turnpike and Stage Road, built in 1785 and known as White's Road. It descended the mountain .5 mile east of Whitcomb Summit, on Whitcomb Hill Road to the hamlet of Hoosac Tunnel and followed the banks of the Deerfield River to Rice's Ford in the area of the current Florida Bridge. This road is the only one of the three roads that can be driven today.

From the hamlet of Hoosac Tunnel to the Florida Bridge is 2.4 miles along a scenic section of the road with a picnic area just past the bridge. Follow the road for one mile to the intersection of Rowe Road and continue on Zoar Road for 2.6 miles to the junction of State Route 2.

Just east of this junction Hawks Cemetery lies on the south side of the road. There are several Revolutionary War veterans buried at this site. Just east is the Shunpike historical marker explaining that this was once a ford across the Deerfield River, which allowed travelers west to avoid paying a toll on the turnpike. Just east is the site of Hawk's Fort, which was built in 1754. Further east on the north side of the river is the headquarters of the Zoar Outfitters, which offers white water rafting trips down the Deerfield River among many outdoor activities. Their headquarters was the home of Capt. Moses Rice who first settled here in 1743.

Charlemont to Deerfield (Map 23)

From Hawk's Fort to Deerfield, the first road was laid out by the county in 1754. It followed the packhorse and Indian trail along the northern bank of the Deerfield River. In general it followed State Route 2 eastward to the Shelburne line where it still followed the river north and forded the North River where later a bridge was constructed to connect River Road and State Route 112. At this point the 1754 road dropped south to Shelburne Falls, crossing State Route 2 and continuing south on Maple Street, which then joins Route 2. The falls and their glacial potholes can best be viewed today by following the signs for Mole Hole Candles. A historical marker is on the building on the southwest corner of the lane.

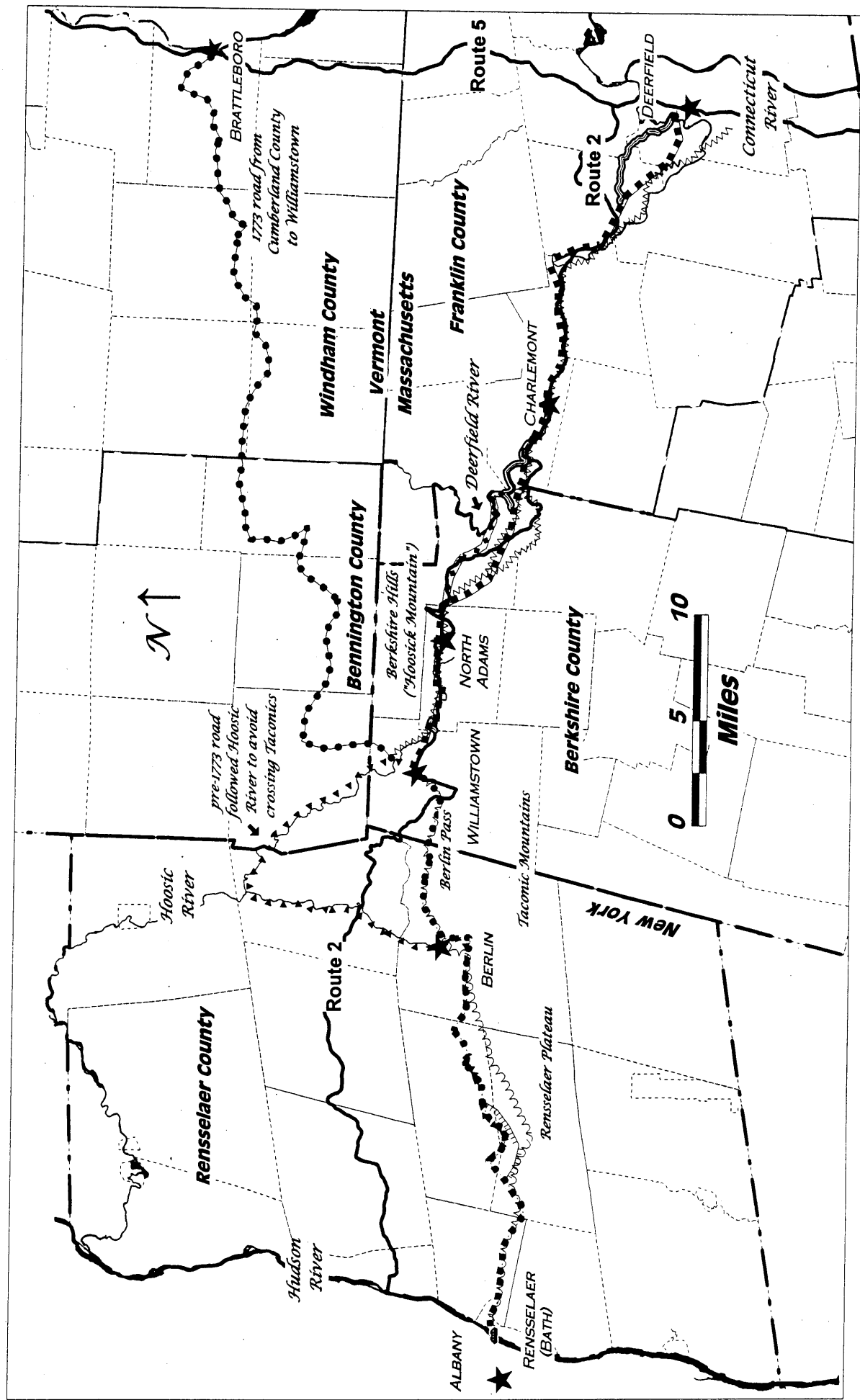
From Shelburne Falls, the 1754 road lies parallel, on the south side, to the modern Mohawk Trail. At Shelburne Center it veers southeast over Bardwell Ferry Road to Hawks Road, crossing Albany Road and Lower Road in Deerfield. It forded the Deerfield River and went north on the current Mill River Village Road, then east on the Albany Road to the Deerfield town commons.

In 1762 Nathaniel Dwight and others altered the road between Charlemont and Deerfield. Beginning at Sluice Brook where Shelburne Cemetery Road leaves the Mohawk Trail and following this road to Allen Road and to South Shelburne Road, crossing Zerah Fiske Road, passing Lucy Fiske Road to the north and Taylor Road to the south. The Old Albany Road bears southeast through a bit of Greenfield and meets Upper Road in the town of Deerfield. The middle portion of this narrow, rocky dirt road is closed during the winter. At Upper Road, go south to Albany Road West just past the West Deerfield Cemetery where it goes east until it is blocked by Interstate Route 91. At Lower Road it continues east to the ford on the Deerfield River and connects with the Albany Road past Deerfield Academy to the Town Common, where it originated.

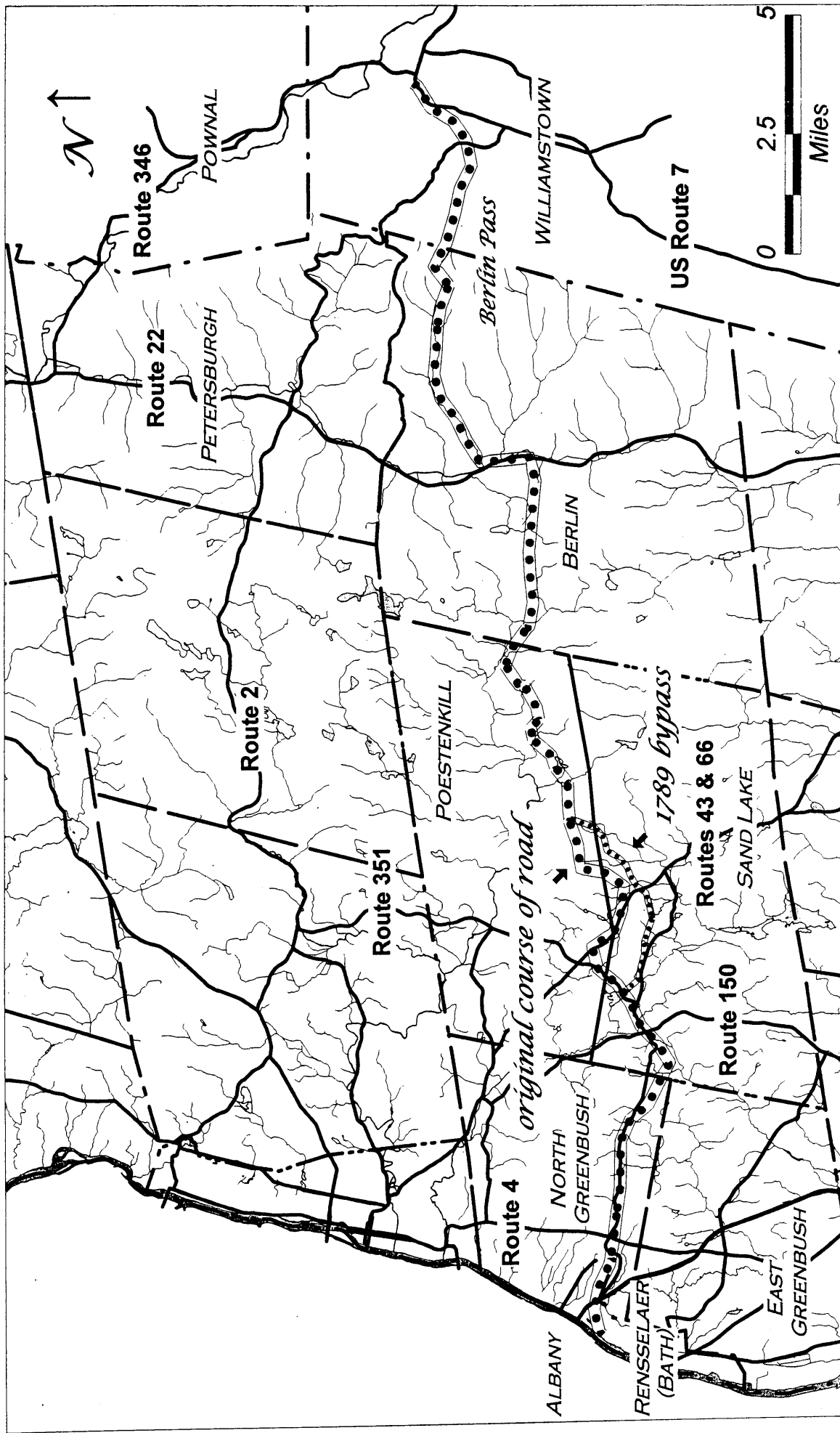
In order to drive this section it is necessary to go north at the junction of the Old Albany Road and Upper Road for .7 mile, then east on Wisdom Way for .2 mile crossing over Interstate Route 91, then south on Lower Road 4.1 miles. The long barns you pass are tobacco sheds used to cure the tobacco which for many years was a lucrative crop in the Connecticut River Valley. After passing Stillwater Bridge turn east for one mile on Stillwater Road to the junction of Mill Village Road. Take this road north for 2.2 miles to Old Deerfield Street. At the Common the Albany Road leads west for .3 mile toward Rensselaer where we started our journey.

computer-generated maps showing the "Albany Road"

1. Bath to Deerfield — the entire "Albany Road" (65 mile scale)
2. Bath to Williamstown — 1773 course and 1789 bypass (30 m. scale)
3. Williamstown to Deerfield (42 mile scale)
4. Bath to Williamstown, showing probable course before 1773
5. Bath to Williamstown, showing portions that can be driven, hiked or are lost (1773 course)
6. Bath to Williamstown, showing portions that can be driven, hiked or are lost (1789 course)
7. The "Albany Road" and the Eastern Turnpike
8. Hoosick Mountain east of North Adams (3 mile scale)
9. Clark Mountain area of Florida (5 mile scale)
10. computer-generated image of Middletown map (8 mi. scale)
11. computer-generated image of Middletown map with "Albany Road" highlighted
12. Middletown area showing actual course of road and Job Gilbert's 1788 depiction of course (7 mi. scale)
13. Middletown area showing "improved" lots and course of road (10 mi. scale)
14. Middletown area showing lots with homes and course of road (10 mi. scale)
15. detailed map of Bath (Rensselaer) (1 mi. scale)
16. Bath to Reichards Lake (8 mi. scale)
17. Reichards Lake to Bermas Road (includes 1789 bypass) (5 mi. scale)
18. Bermas Road to Dutch Church Road (6 mi. scale)
19. Dutch Church Road to Berlin (4 mi. scale)
20. Berlin to Williamstown (10 mi. scale)
21. Williamstown (6 mile scale)
22. North Adams to Charlemont (13 mile scale)
23. Shelburne Falls to Deerfield (13 mile scale)
24. Bath to Williamstown, showing portions recommended for hiking
25. Bath to Williamstown, showing portions recommended for driving
26. best sections for hiking and driving, east of North Adams (6 mile scale)
27. best sections for hiking and driving, west of Deerfield (6 mile scale)



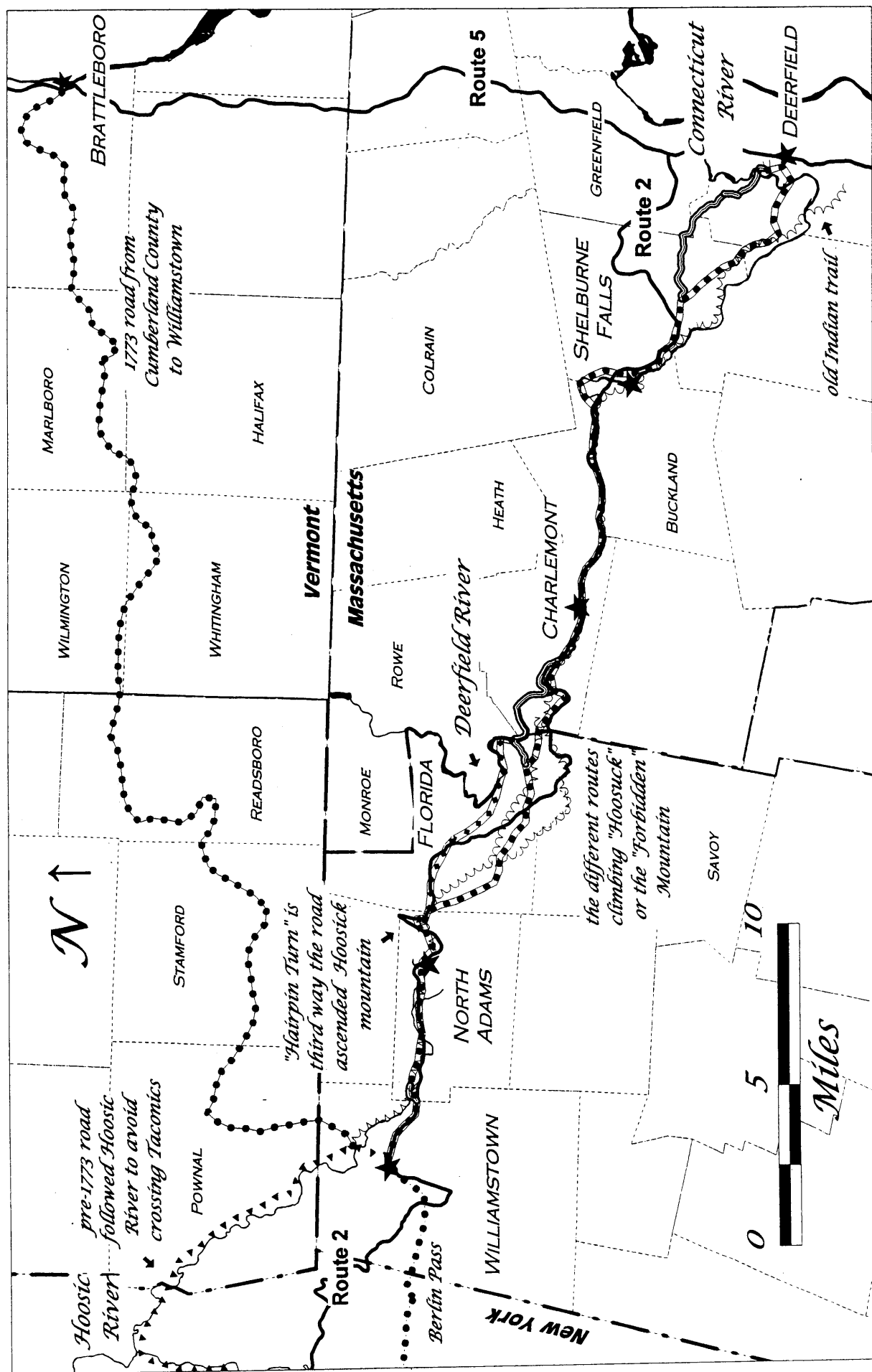
The "Albany Road"
Bath (Rensselaer) to Deerfield
showing the 1753-1754 road with
alterations of the 1760s, 1780s-1790s



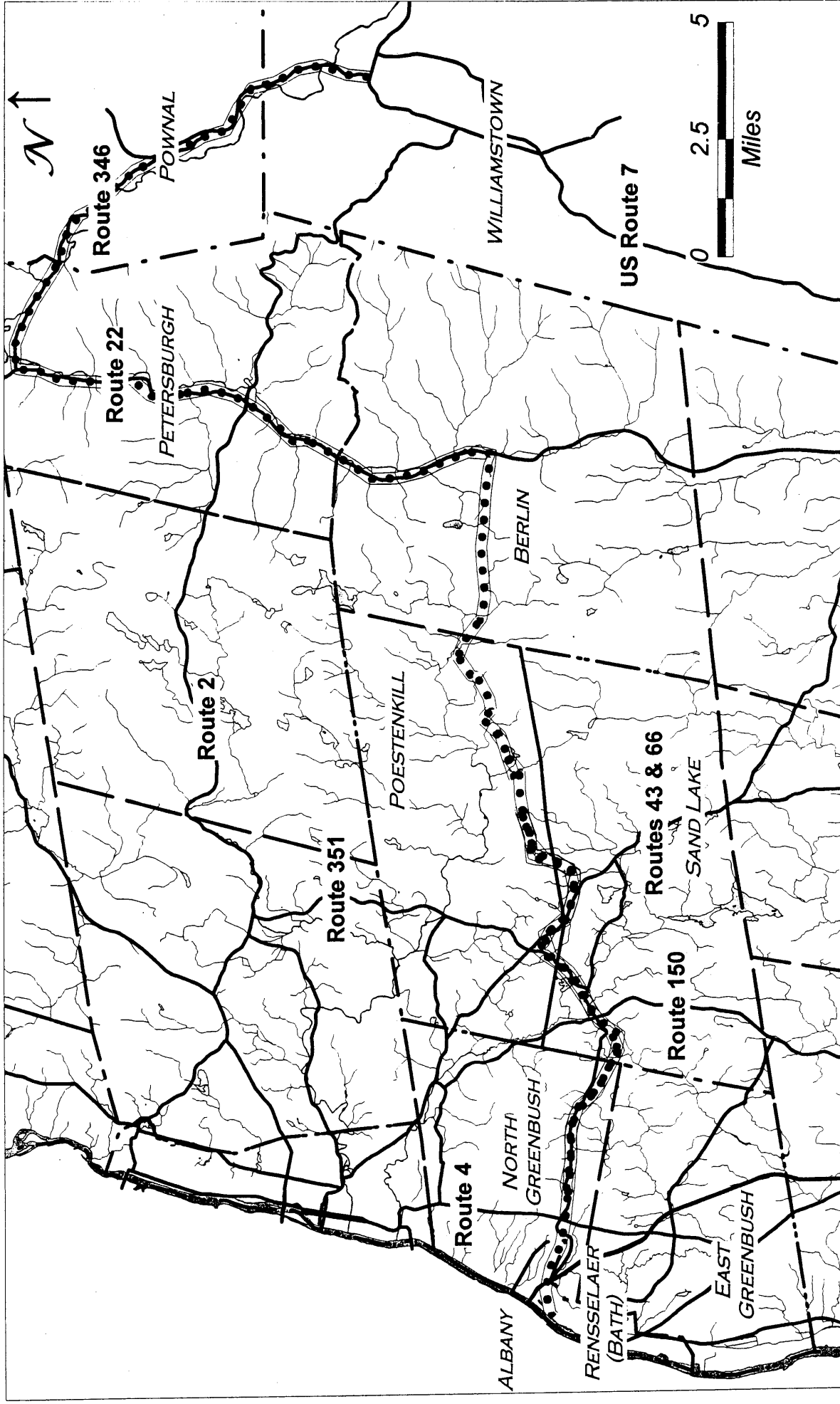
The "Albany Road" (1752-1773)

Bath (Rensselaer) to Williamstown

1773 course (with 1789 bypass)

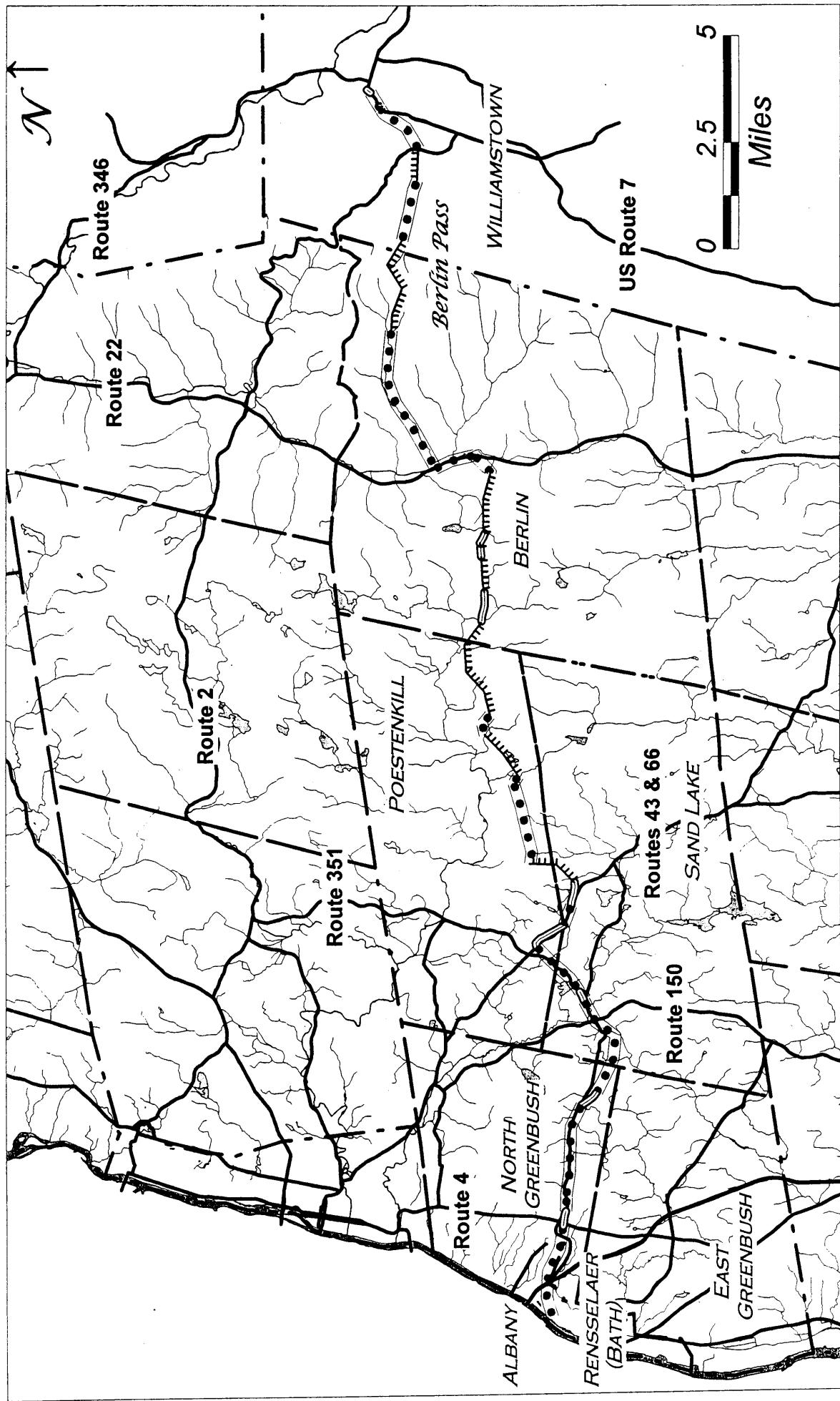


The "Albany Road"
Williamstown to Deerfield
showing the 1753-1754 road with
alterations of the 1760s and the 1780s-1790s



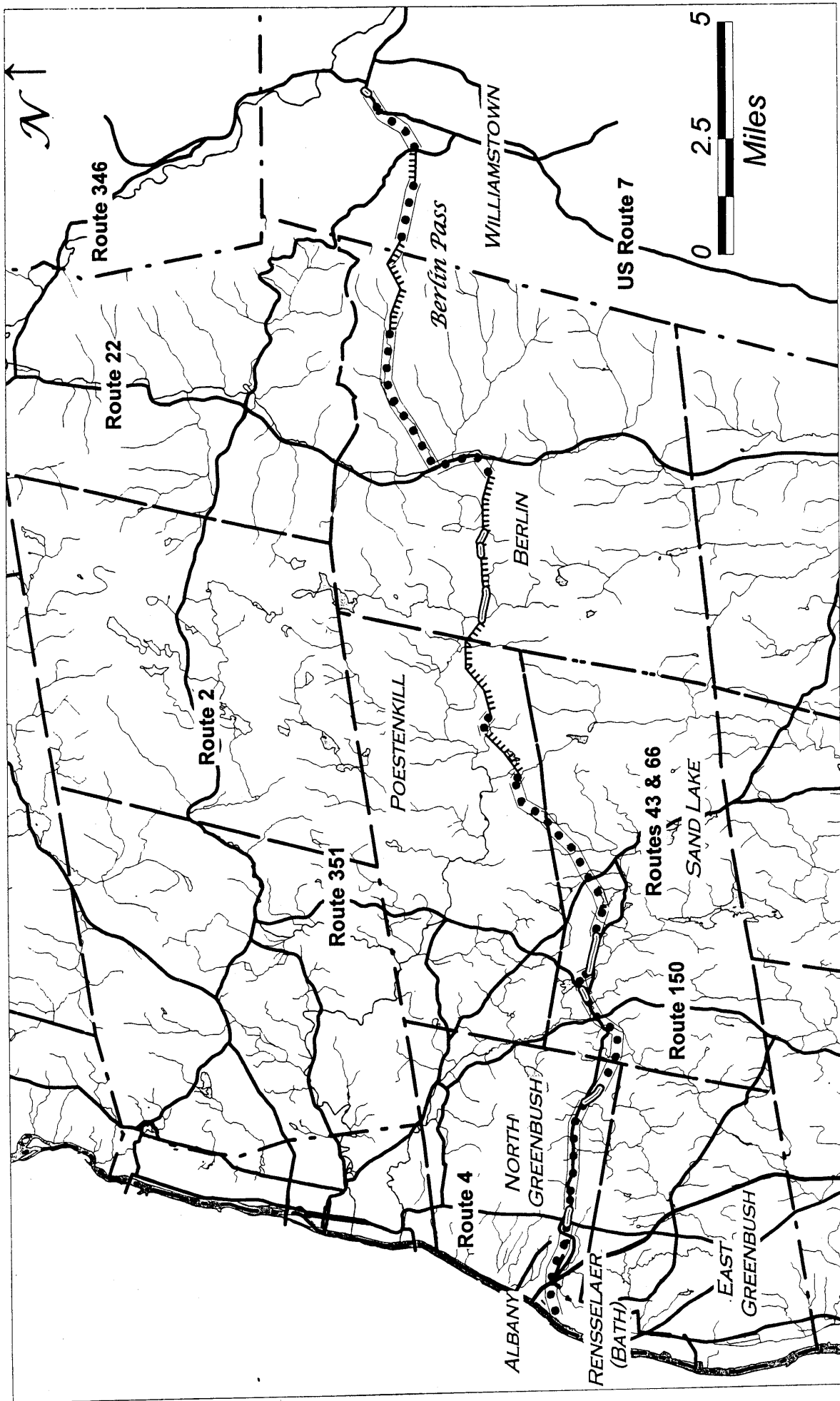
The "Albany Road" (1752-1773)

*Bath (Rensselaer) to Williamstown
probable pre-1773 course*



The "Albany Road" today (1773 course)

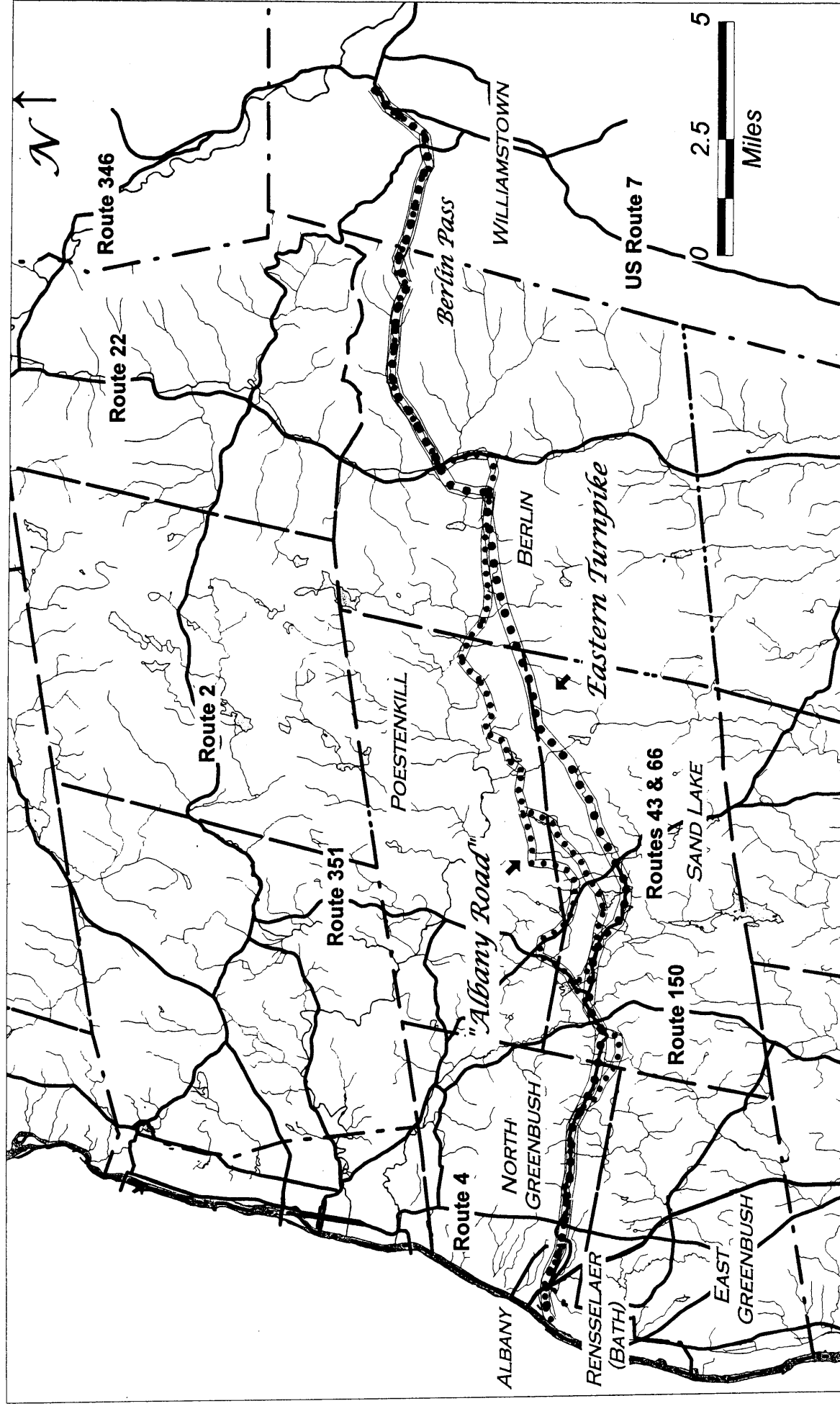
- drivable portions
- — — — — hikable portions
- lost portions



The "Albany Road" today

(1789 course)

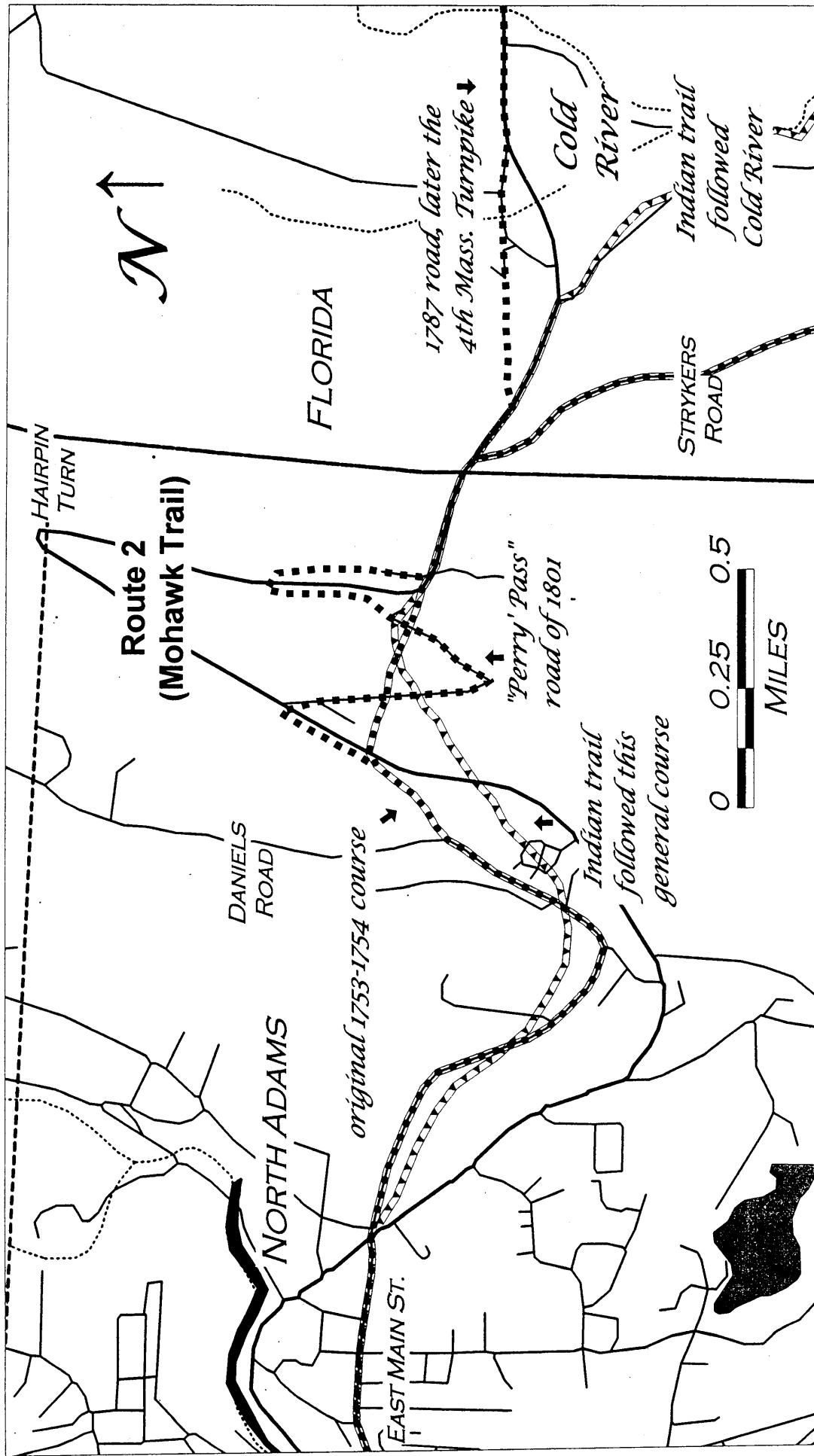
- drivable portions
- ~~~~~ hikeable portions
- lost portions



The Eastern Turnpike (1802)

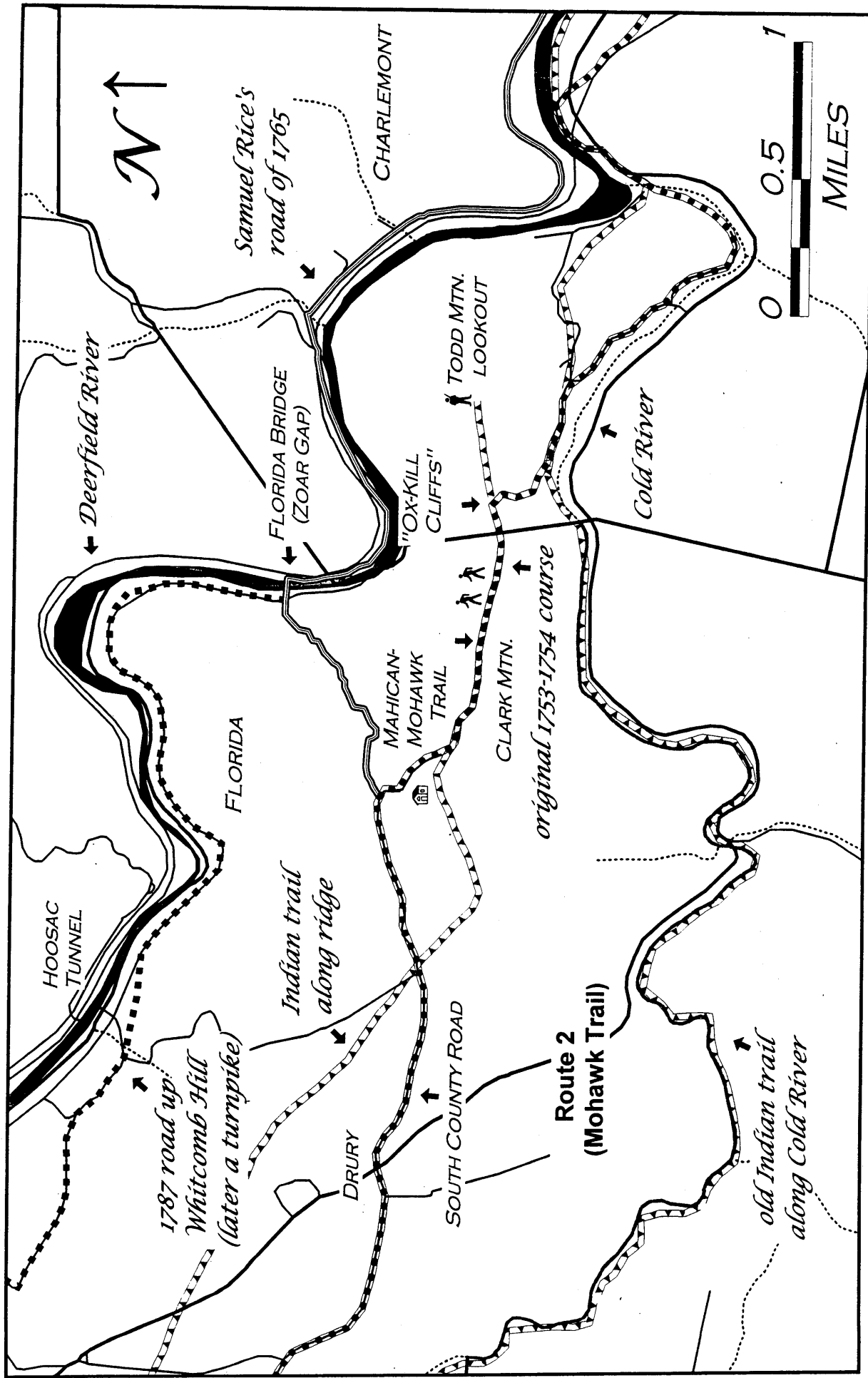
Bath (Rensselaer) to Williamstown

showing sections of the "Albany Road" not used by the Turnpike

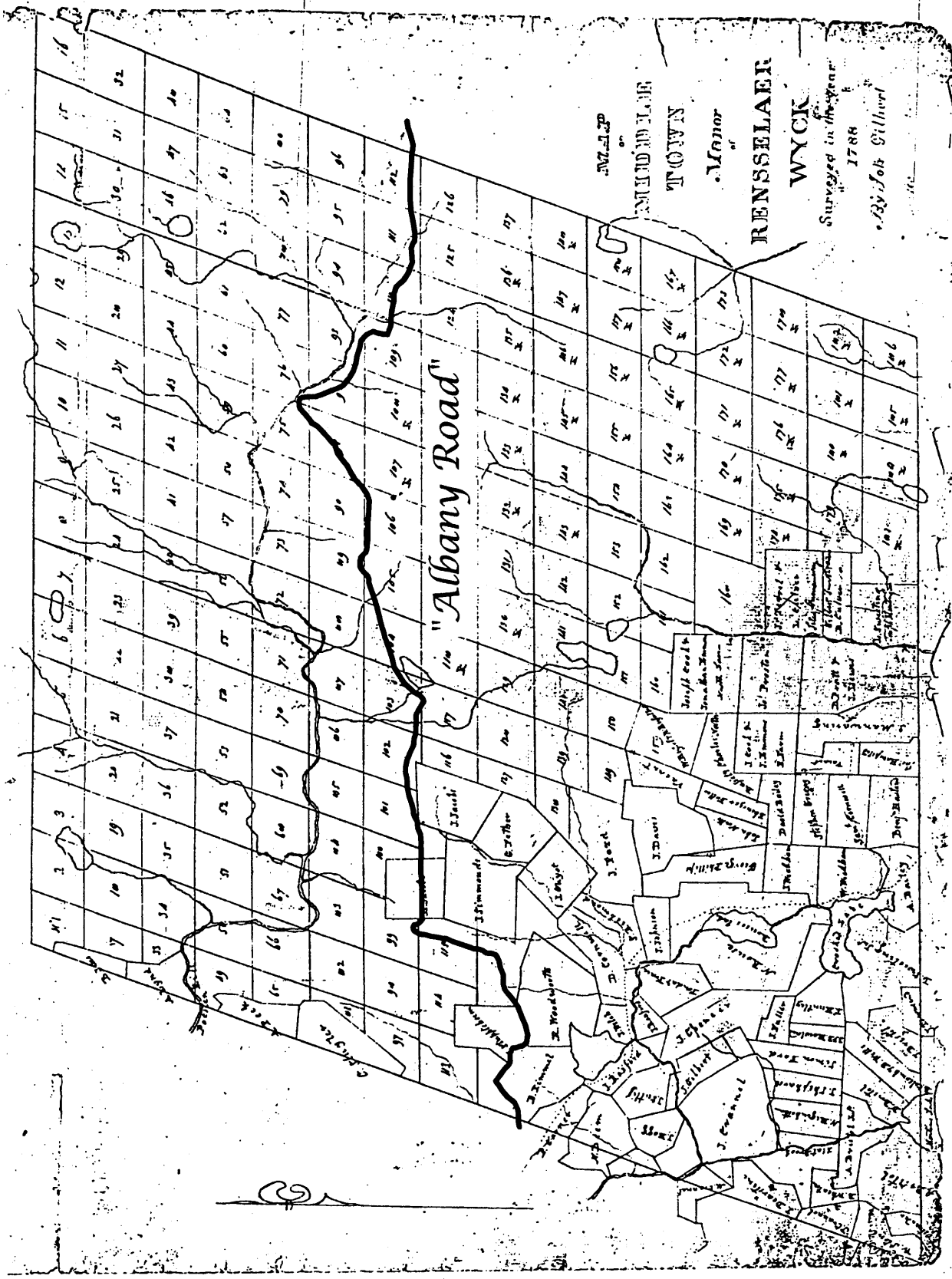


The "Albany Road"

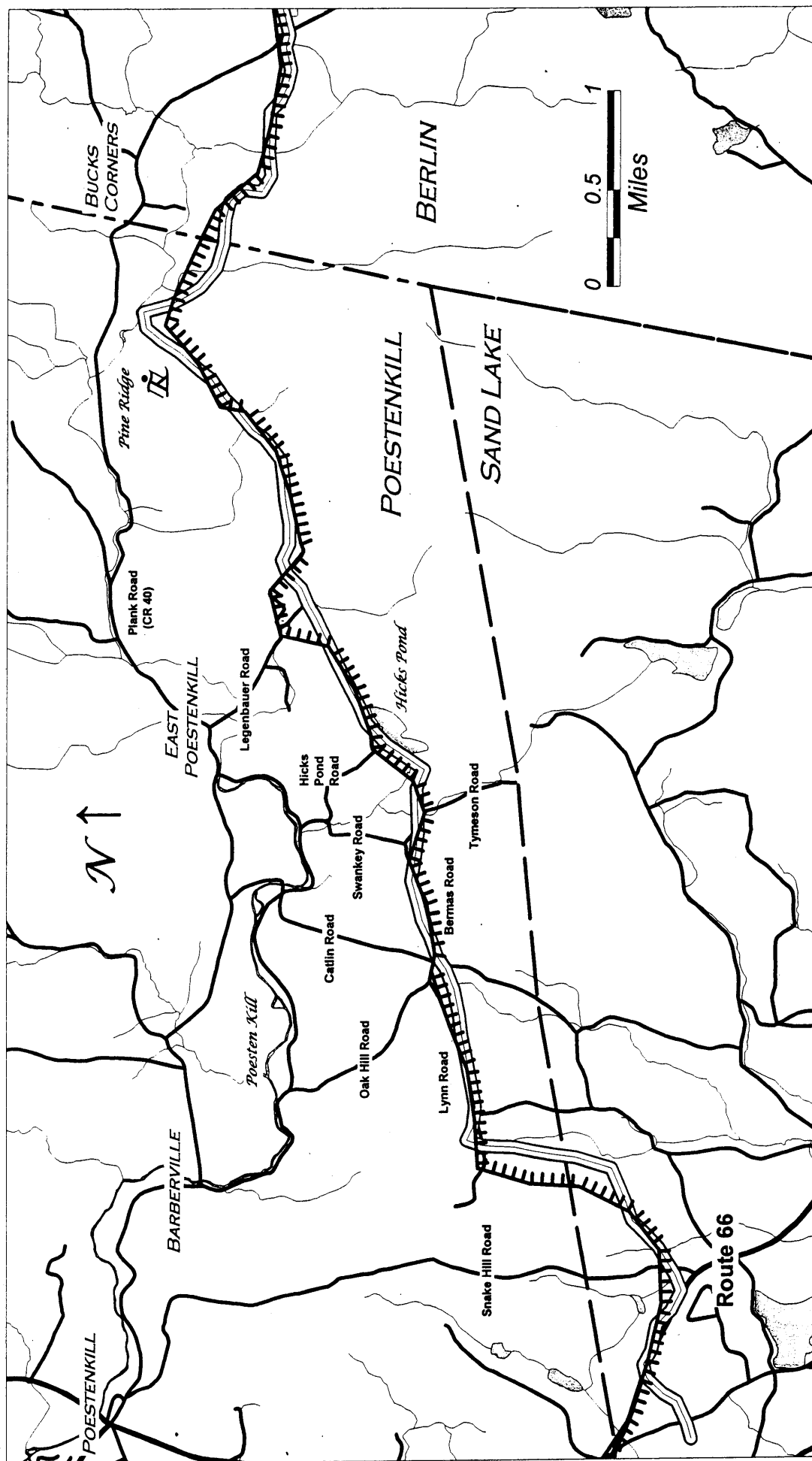
various routes used to climb the mountain east of North Adams



The "Albany Road"
 routes that Indian trails and various roads climbed
 Hoosick Mountain from the Deerfield River valley



Job Gilbert's depiction of the course of the "Albany Road, crossing in part the wilderness of the Rensselaer Plateau, is highlighted on this computer-generated image of his 1788 map of Middletown.



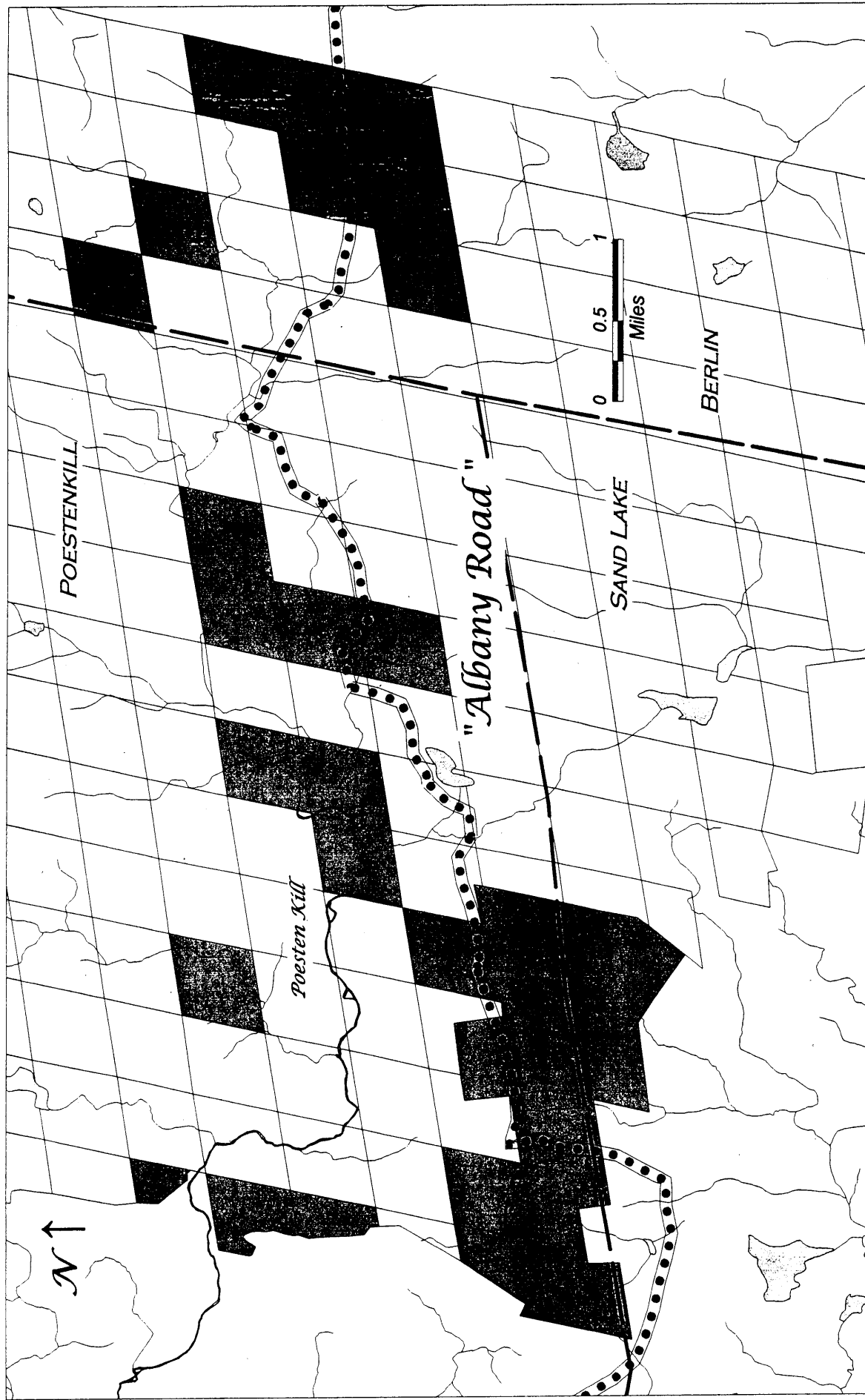
Mapping the "Albany Road"

today's mapping of the road

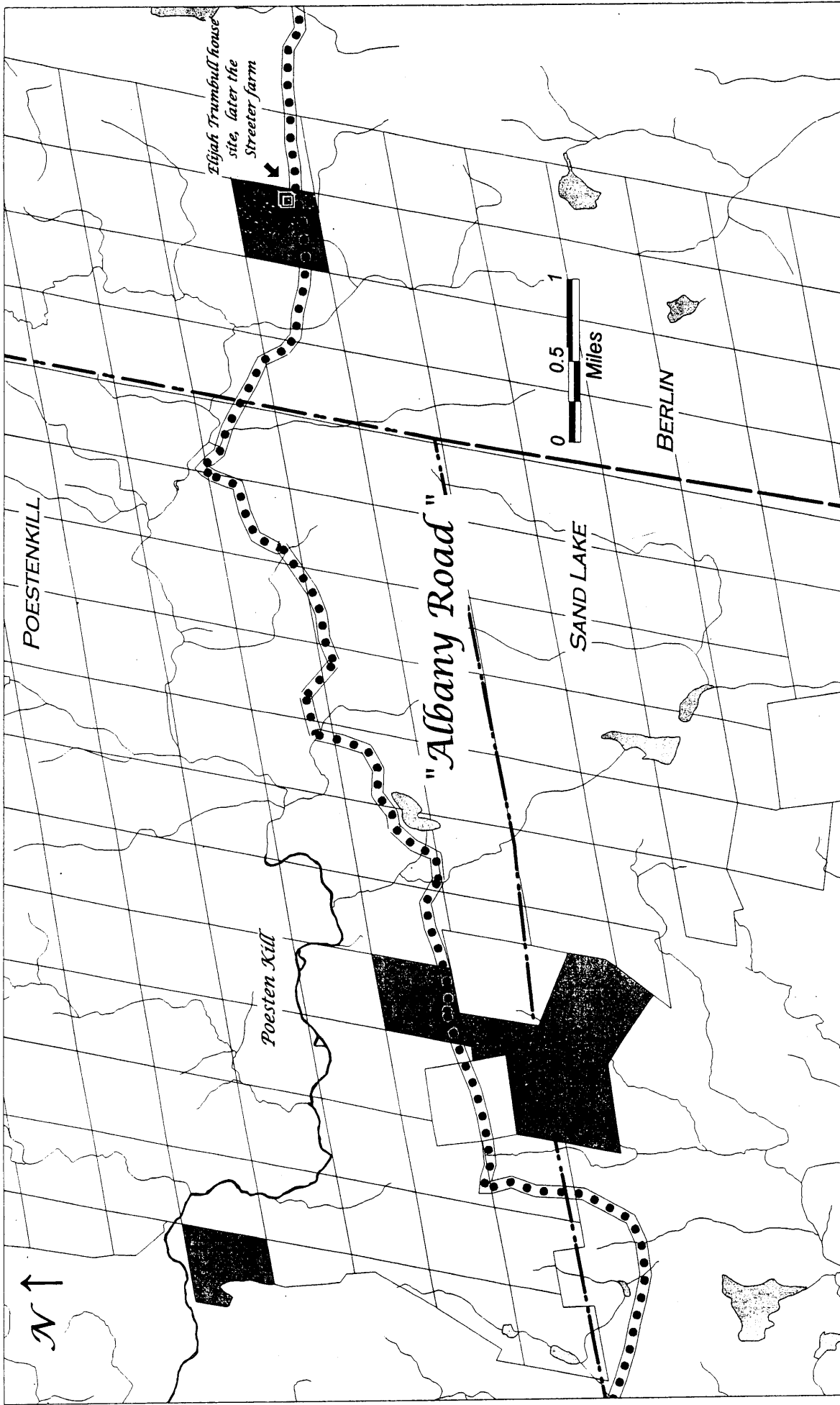


Job Gilbert's 1788 road course

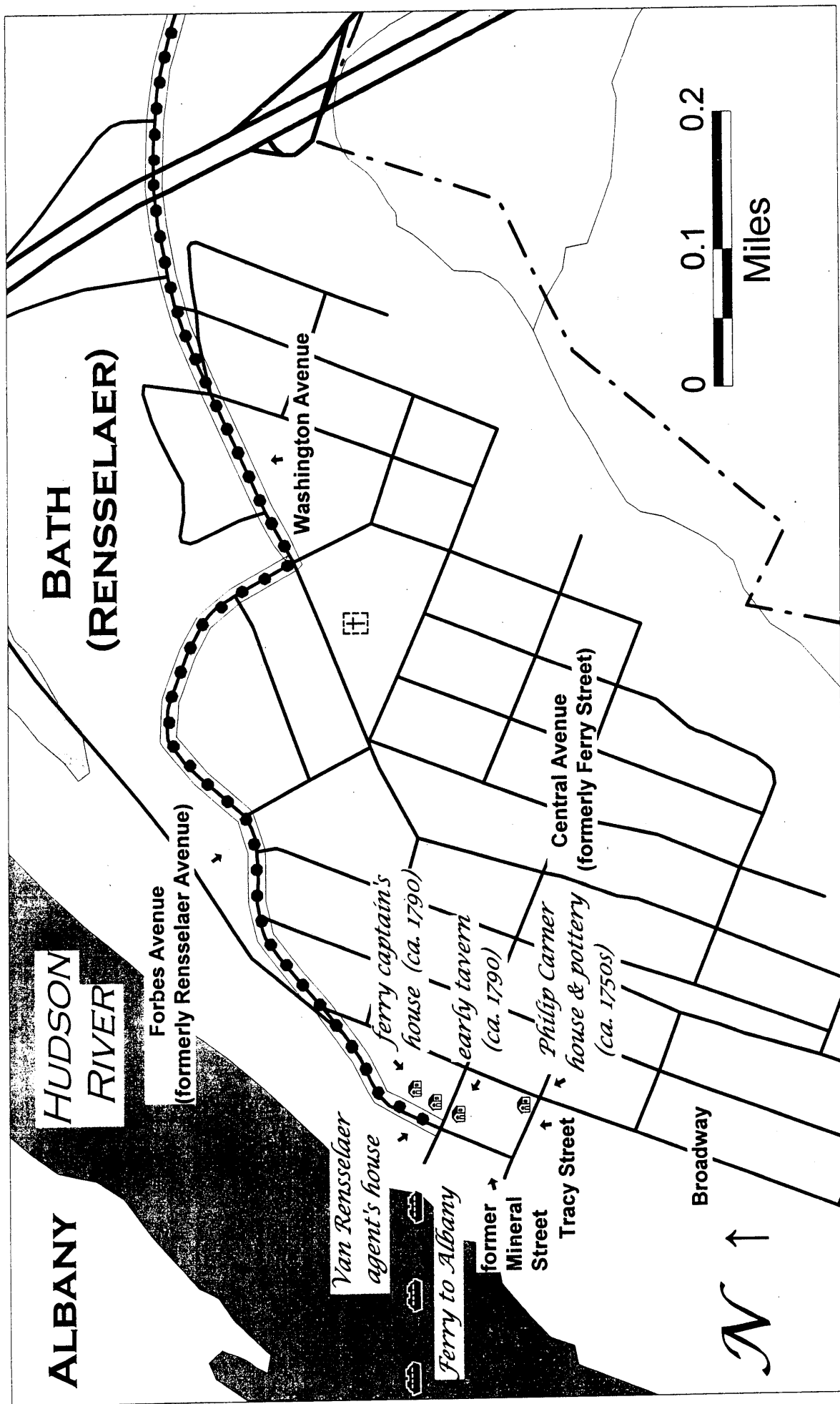




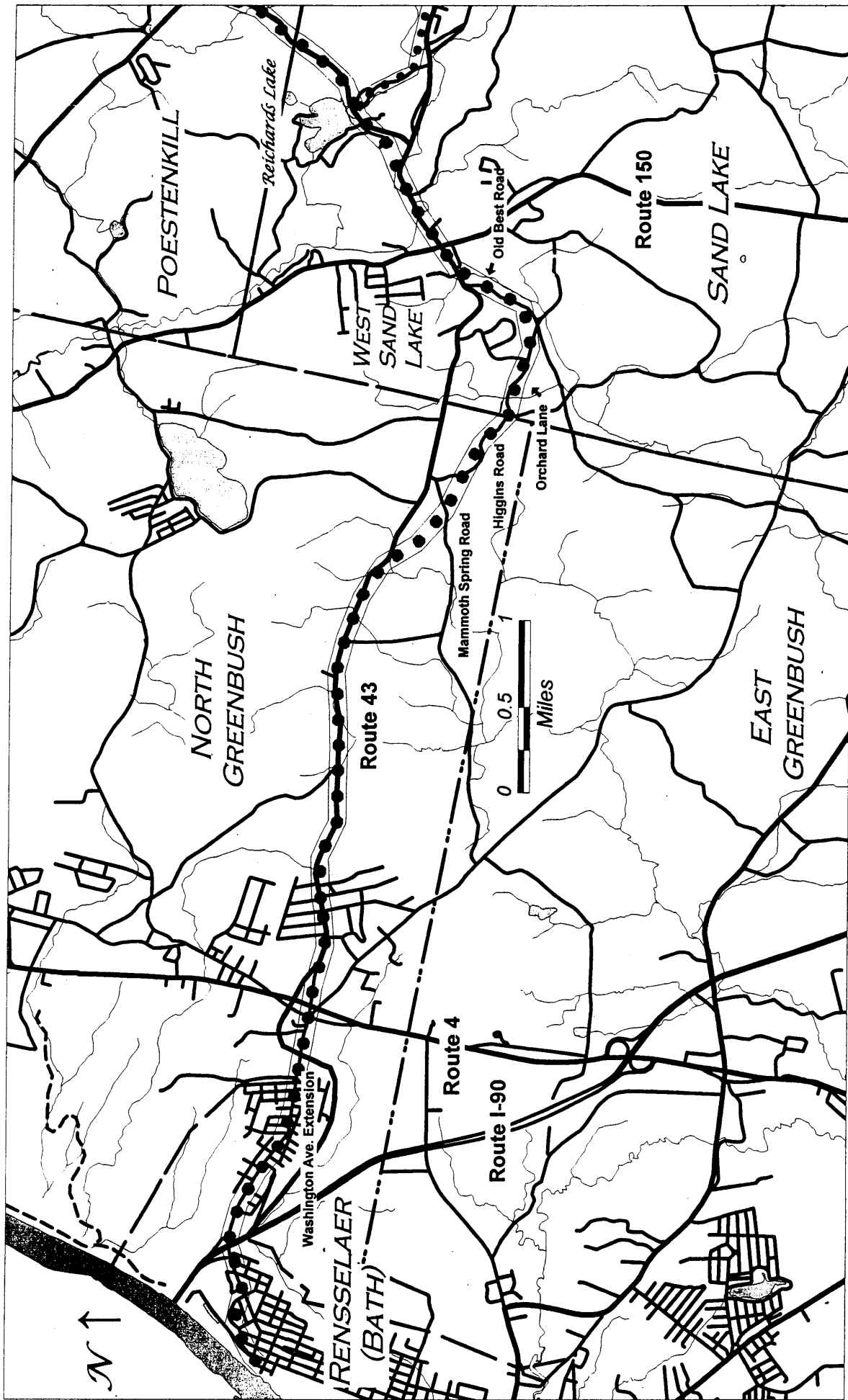
"improved" lots along the "Albany Road"
from ca. 1788 Middletown survey



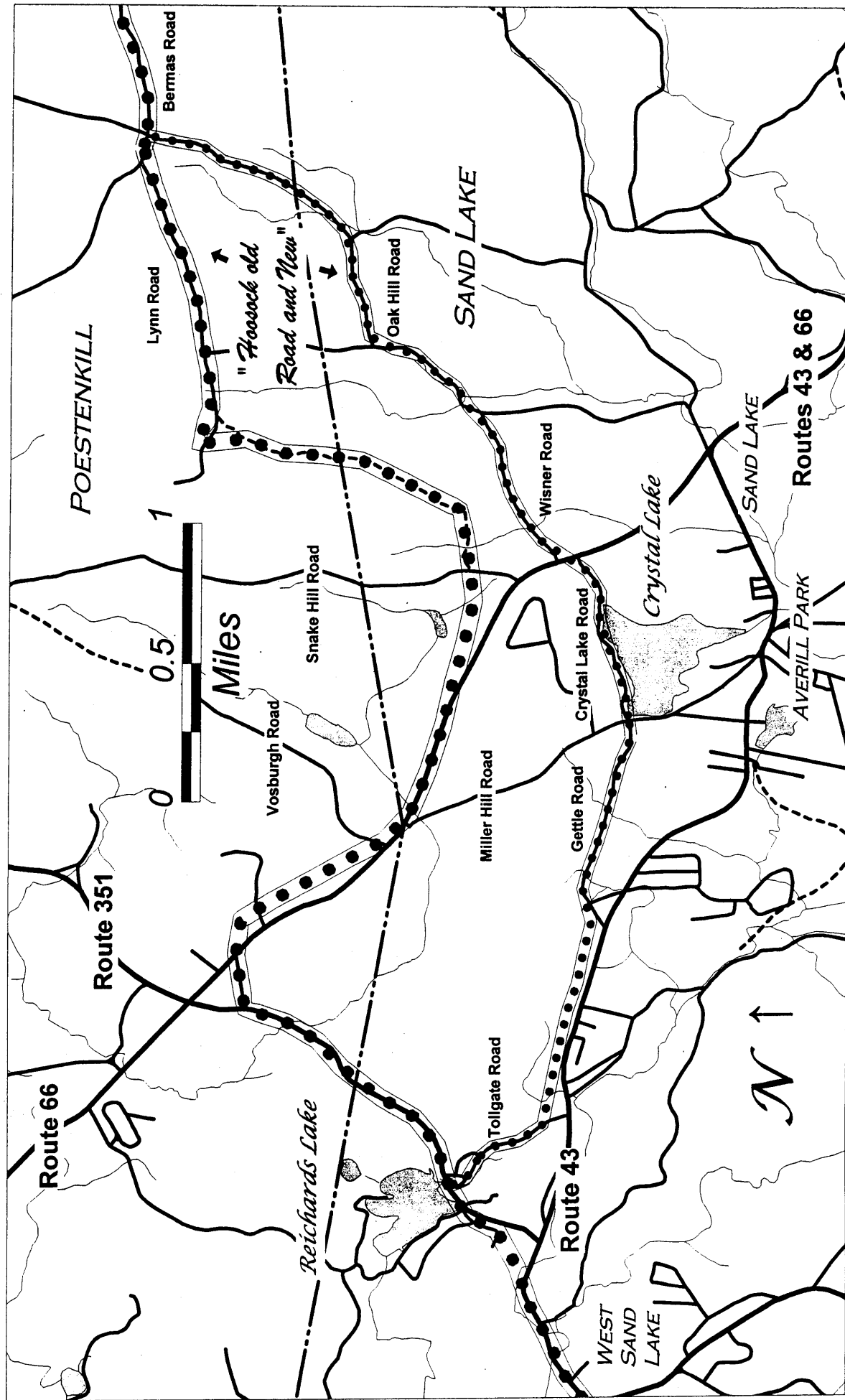
*lots with homes along the "Albany Road"
from ca. 1788 Middletown survey*



The "Albany Road" (1752-1773)
(detail of Bath - Rensselaer)



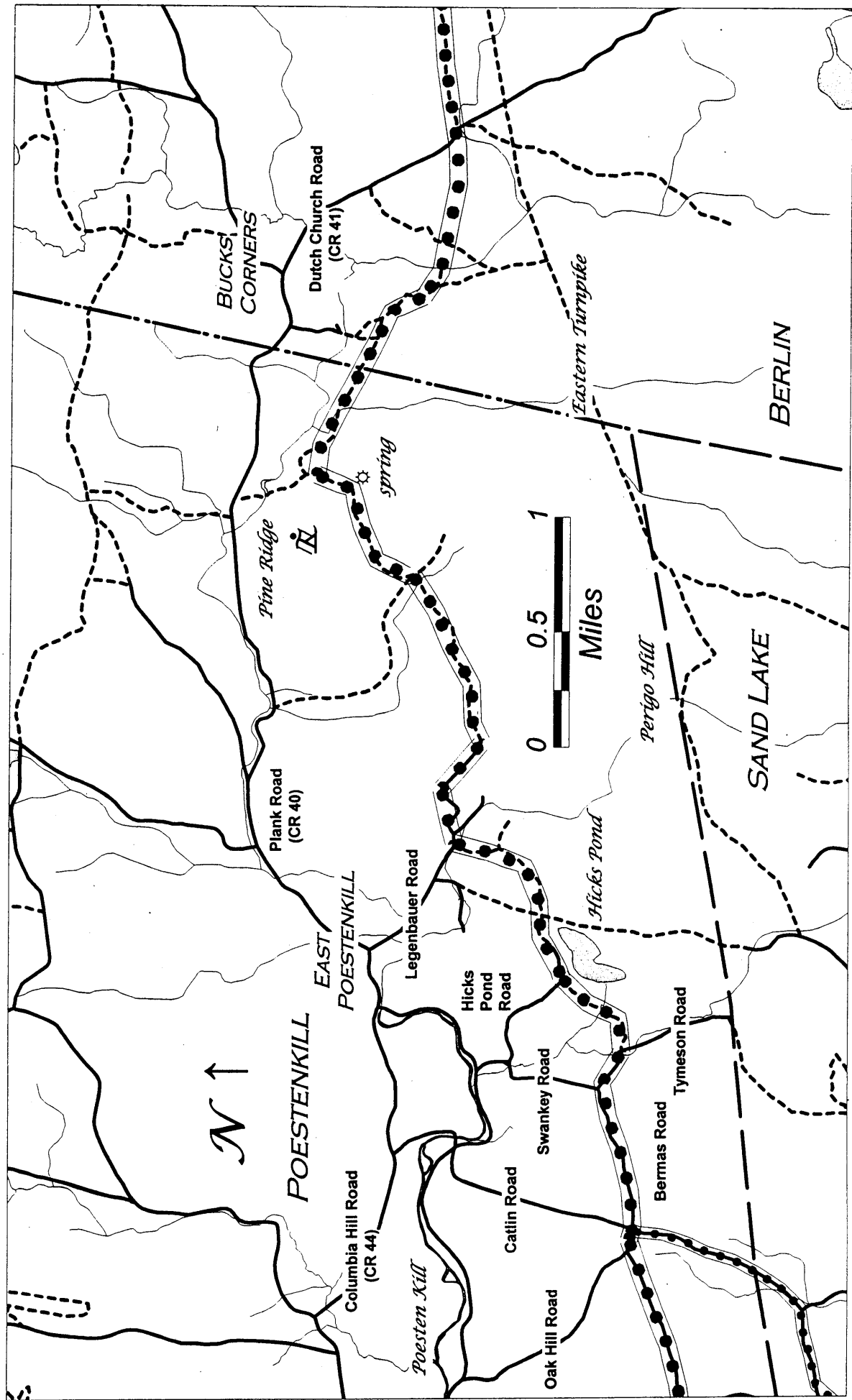
The "Albany Road" (1752-1773)
(Bath to Reichards Lake)



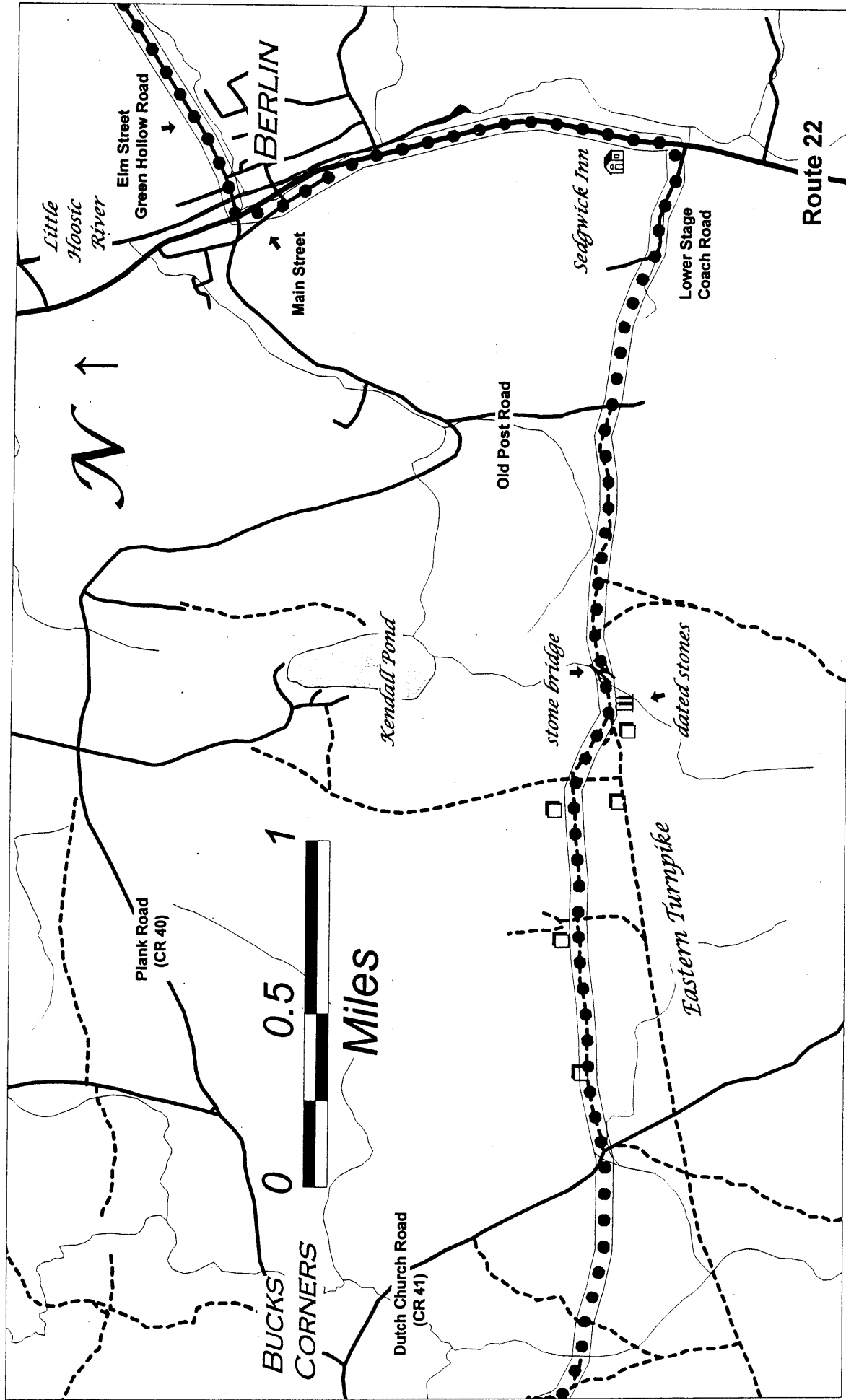
The "Albany Road" (1752-1773)

(Reichards Lake to Bermas Road)

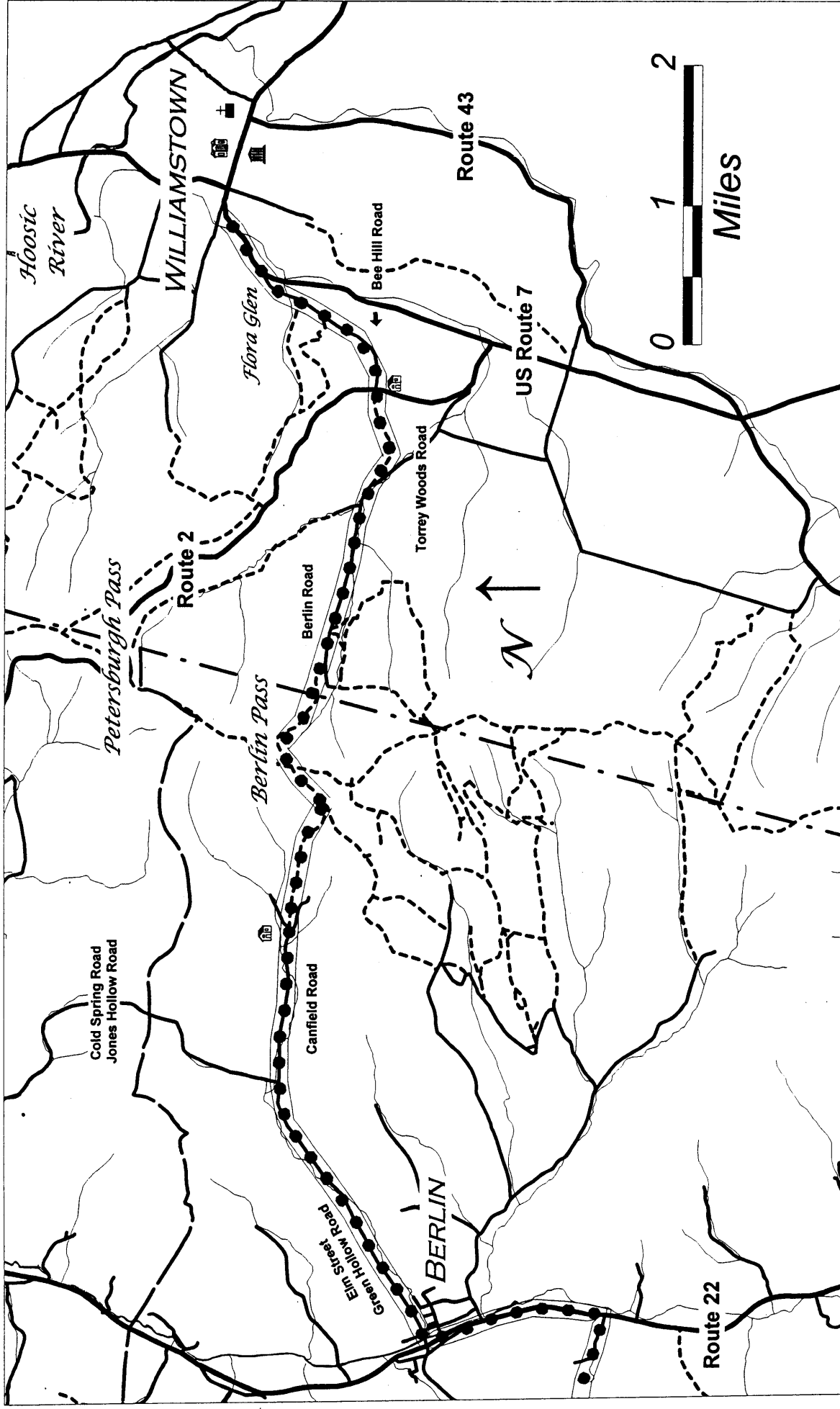
1773 course (with 1789 bypass)



The "Albany Road" (1752-1773)
Bermas Road to Dutch Church Road



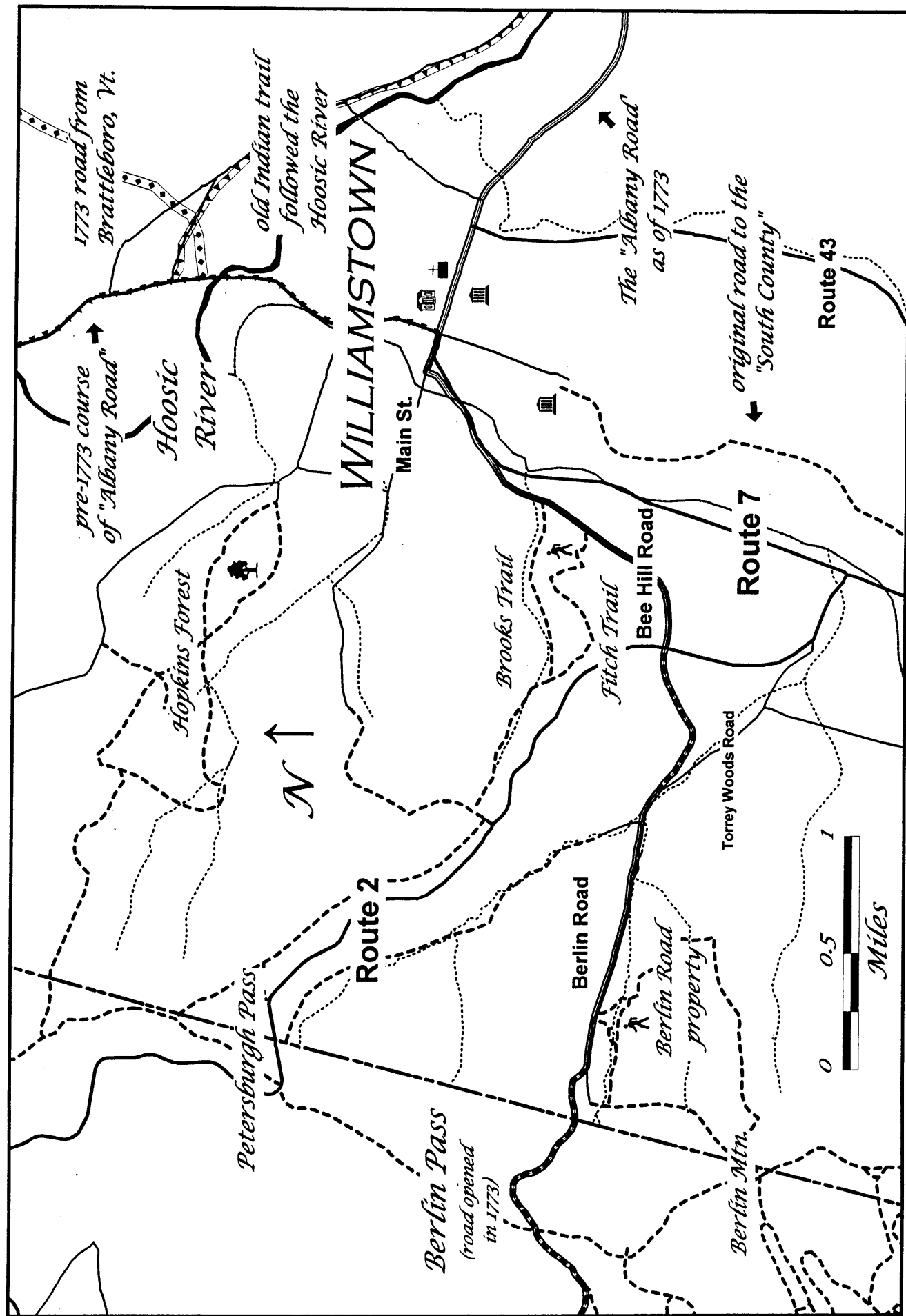
The "Albany Road" (1752-1773)
Dutch Church Road to Berlin



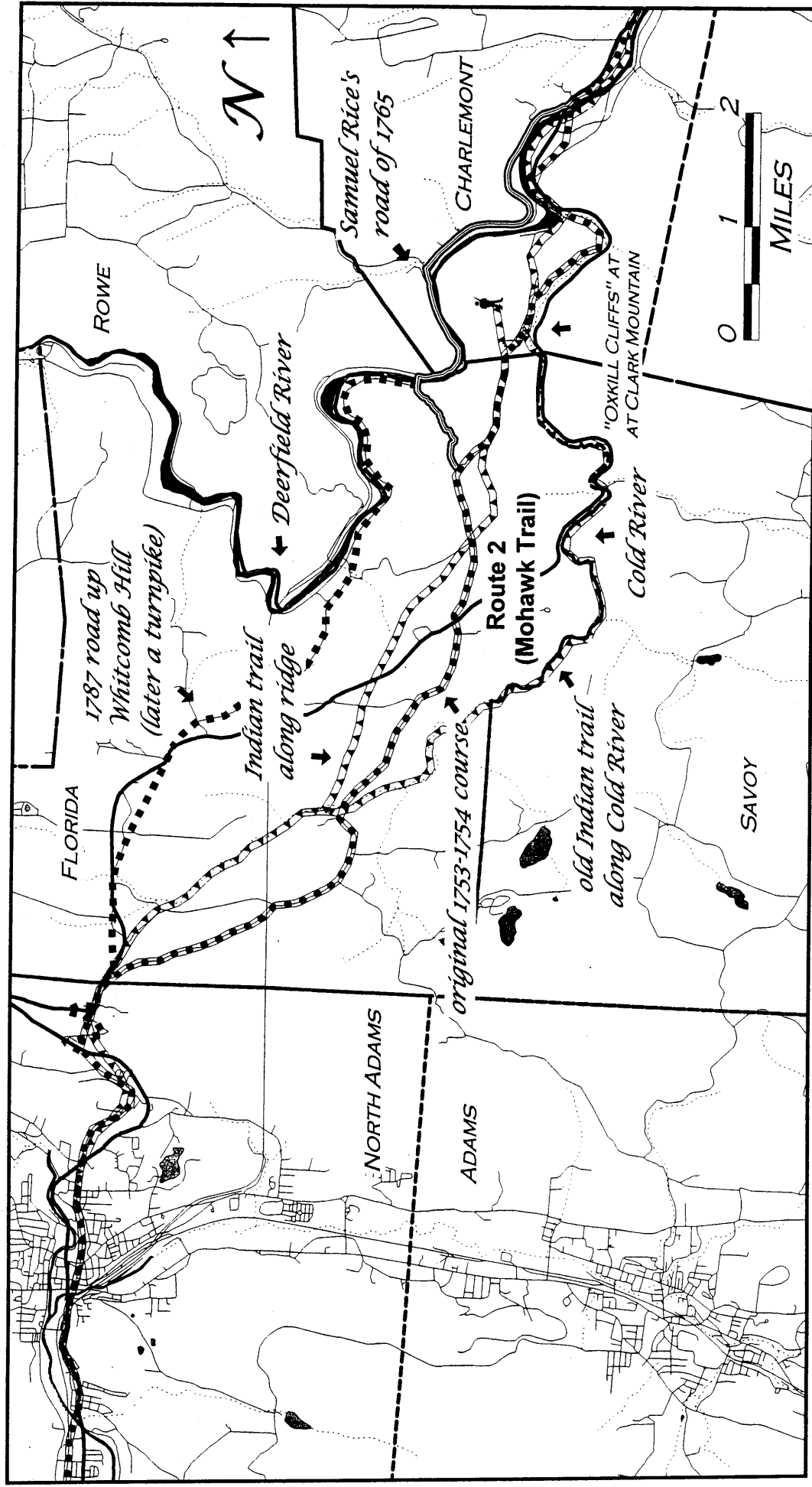
The "Albany Road" (1752-1773)

Berlin to Williamstown

(also route of the Eastern Turnpike)



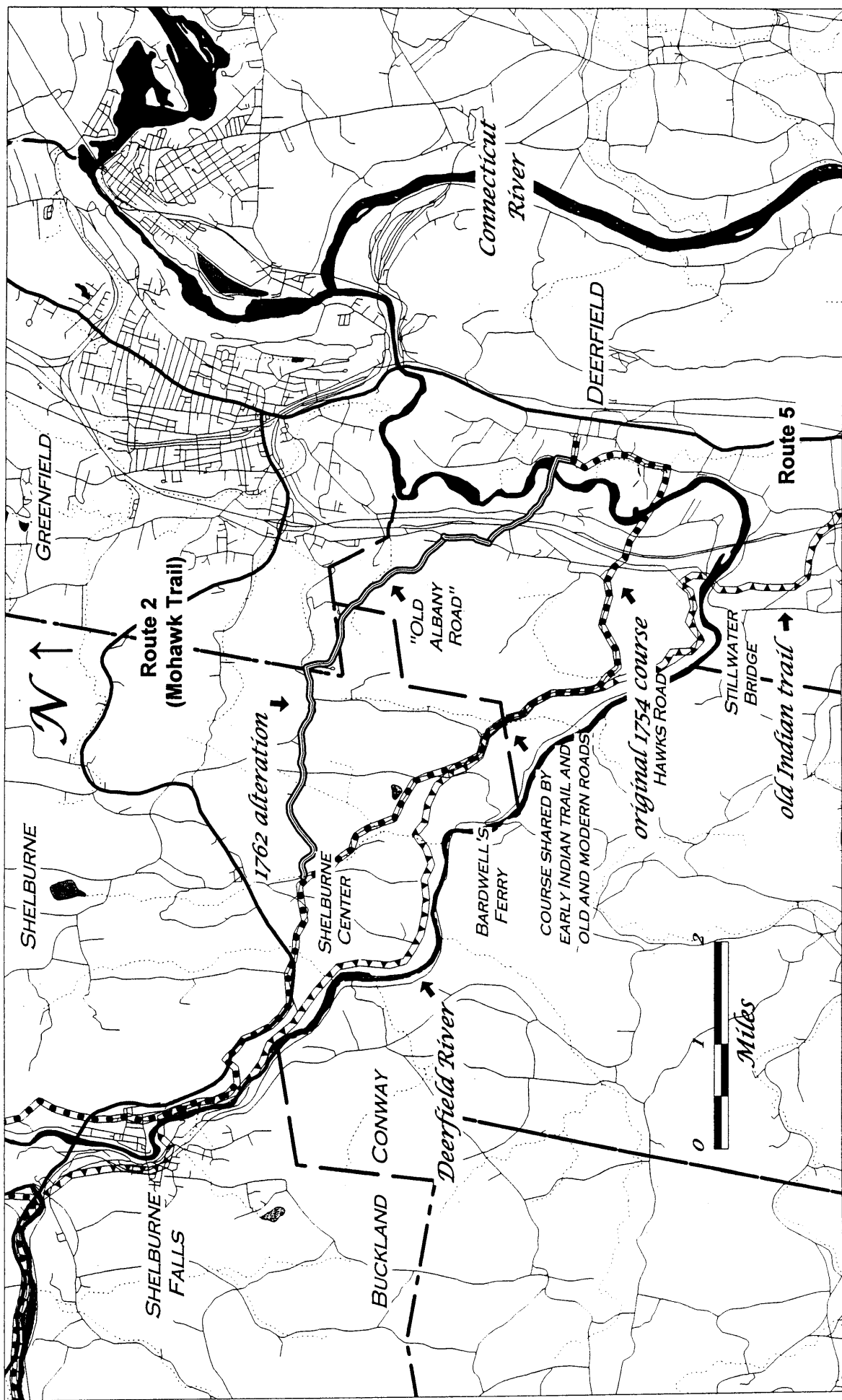
*The "Albany Road" of 1753-1773
its course through Williamstown, Mass.*



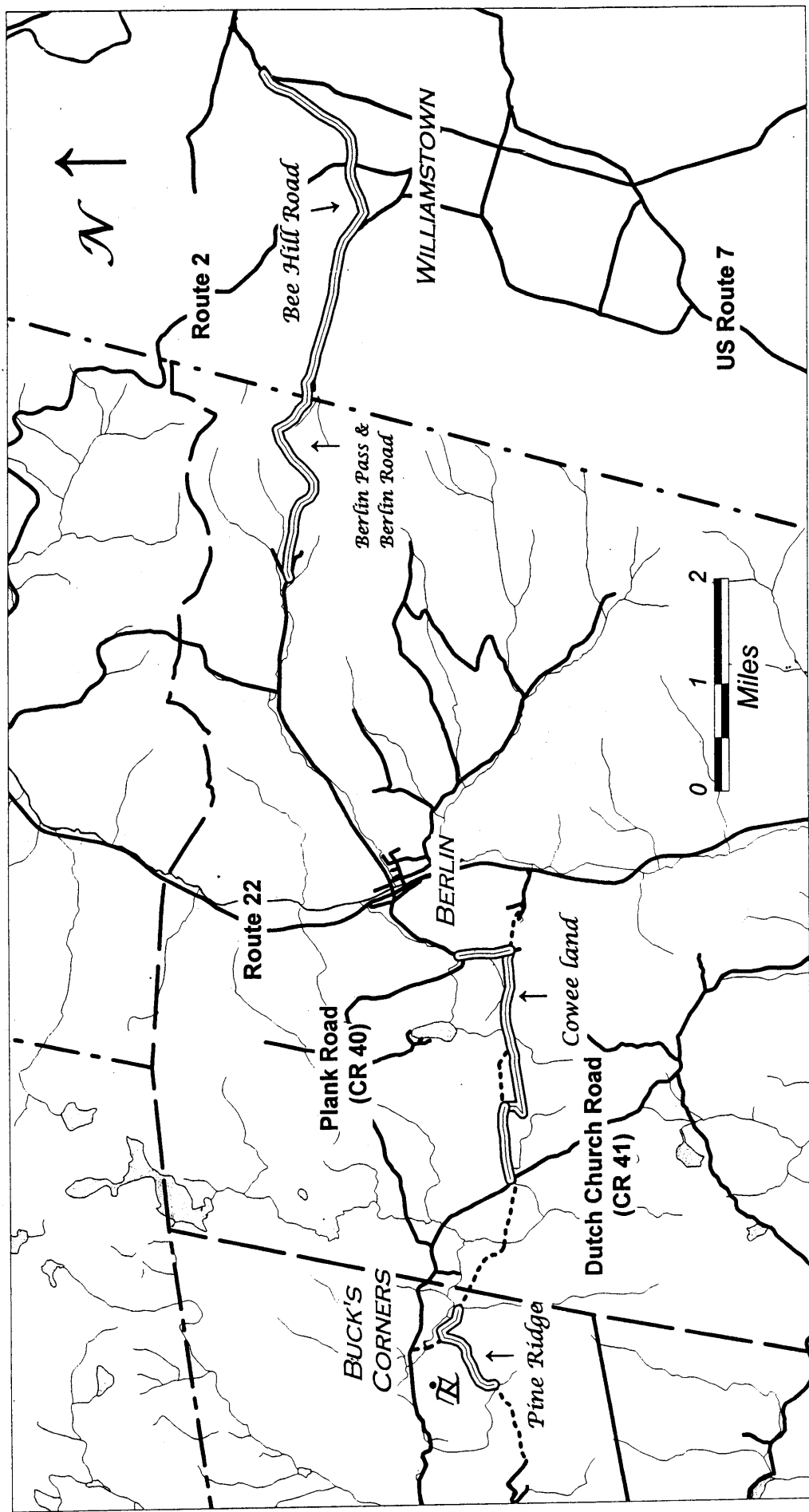
The "Albany Road"

North Adams to Charlemont

*showing the 1753-4 road with
1765 alteration, 1787-1801 alterations,
and two old Indian trails*

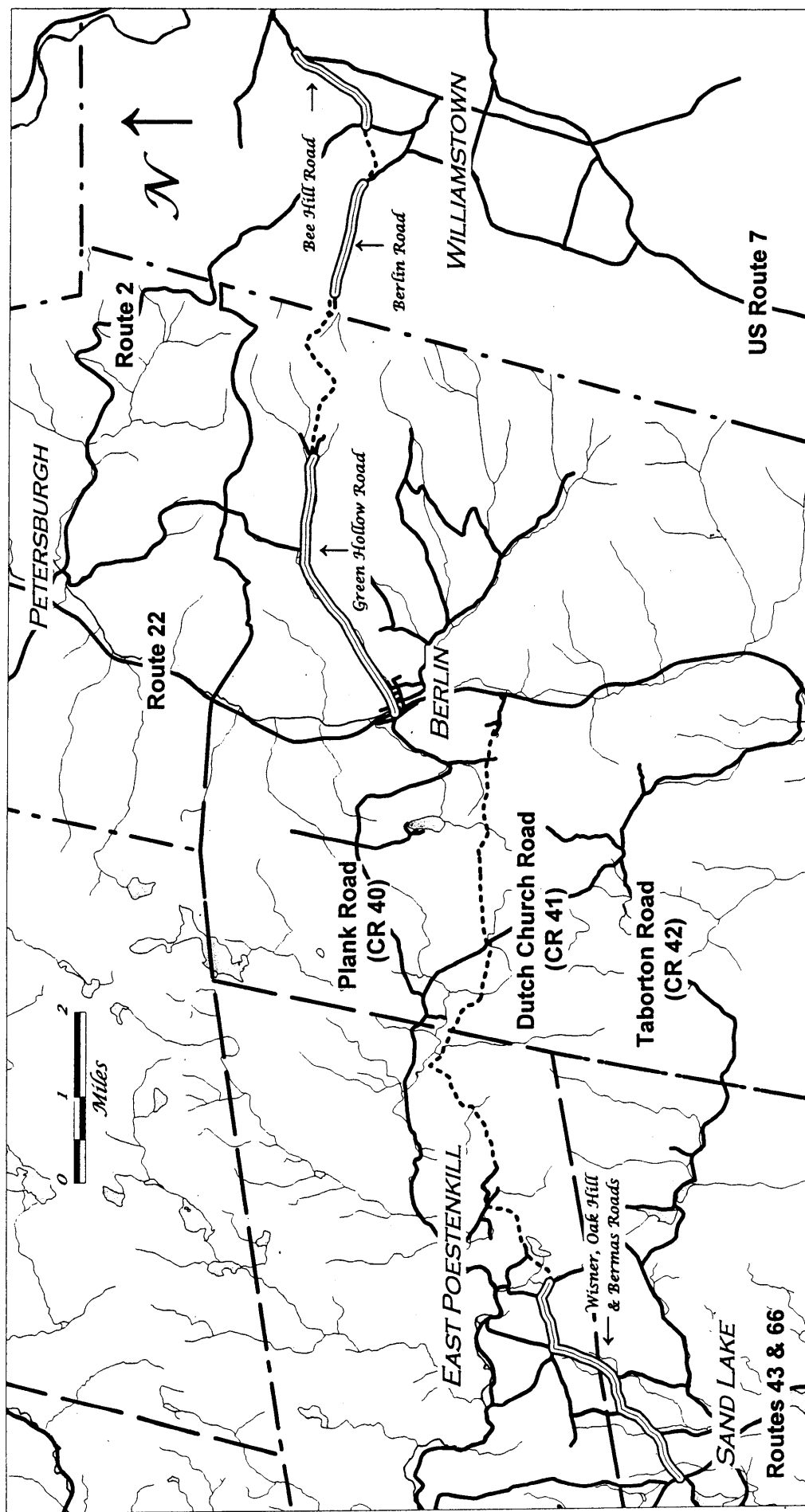


The "Albany Road"
Shelburne Falls to Deerfield
showing 1754 road with
1762 alteration and old Indian trail



The "Albany Road" (1752-1773)

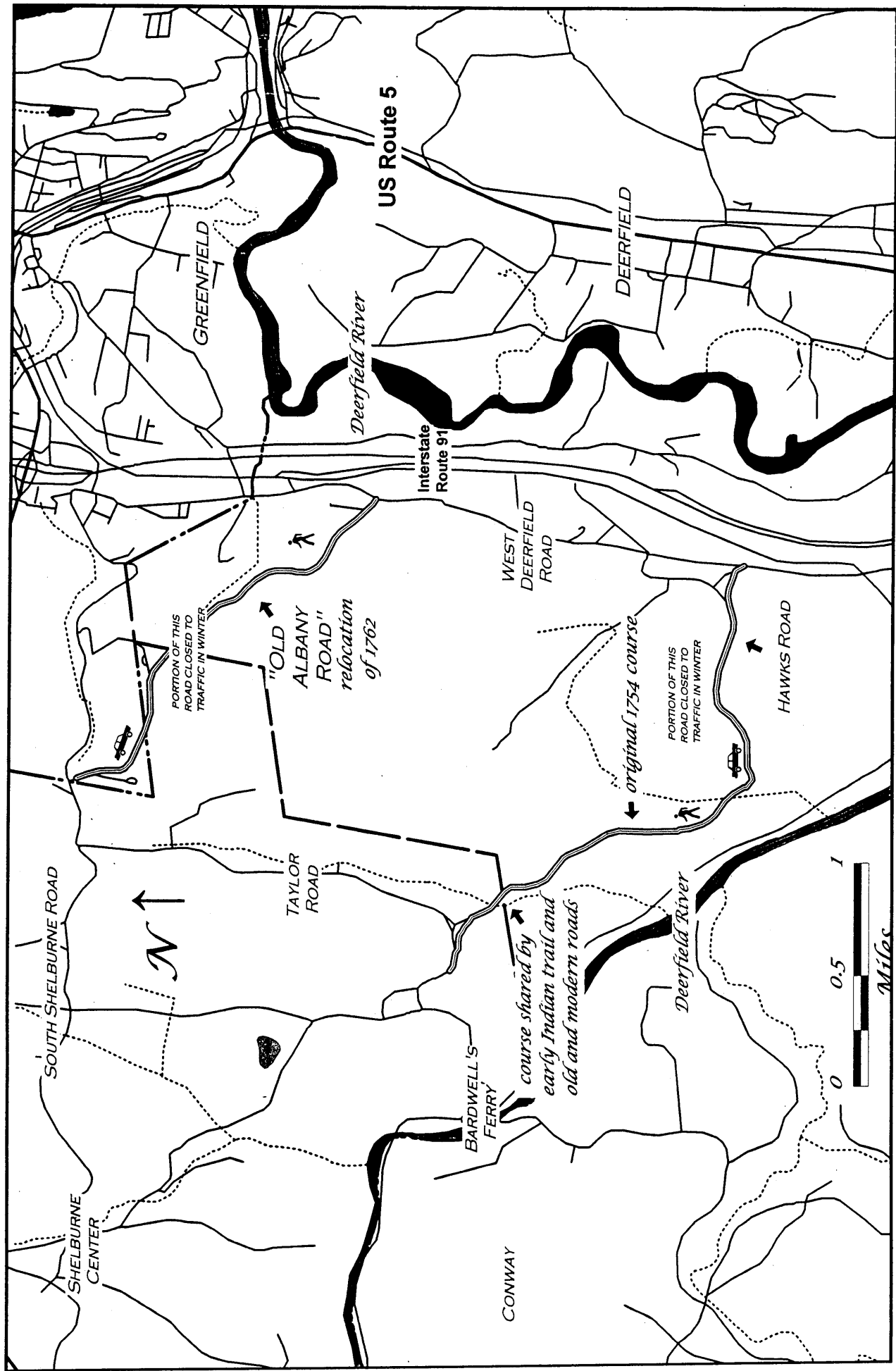
Best sections for hiking today



The "Albany Road" (1752-1773-1789)

Best sections for driving today





The "Albany Road"

best sections for driving and hiking, or for both