

A Twentieth-Century Petroglyph on Horse Pound Brook

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Hawk Rock, located on Horse Pound Brook in the Town of Kent, Putnam County, New York, is described and illustrated. A tall glacial boulder, it contains three carved designs, interpreted as a turtle, a beaver, and a bird. The Hawk Rock Site, long known to local residents, has been a source of speculation regarding its origin for many years. Documentary and oral history research and field analysis have determined that this petroglyph was carved in the late 1920s by local residents.

Hawk Rock is a 25-ft high glacial boulder found in the Town of Kent, Putnam County, New York, on the west side of Horse Pound Brook south of Whangtown Road (Figure 1). The local name of this prominent feature is appropriate; its likeness to a perched hawk is immediately apparent (Figure 2). This name may be twentieth century in origin. It does not appear on an 1867 map of Kent by F. W. Beers on which another rock, "Horse Pound Hill & Rock," is noted (Beers 1867).

Three designs are carved into the vertical north face of Hawk Rock. They are interpreted as a turtle, a beaver, and a bird (Figure 3). The turtle carving is 12 in (31 cm) in length from head to tail, and its body is 5.75 in (15 cm) in width. The bird is 12 in (31 cm) in length from its beak to its tail. The figure of the beaver is 6 in (15 cm) in length and 3.2 in (8 cm) in width. A scale drawing of the designs is shown in Figure 4.

Edward J. Lenik and Thomas Fitzpatrick examined this petroglyph in 1987 as part of a cultural resource survey of the Fieldbrook Subdivision property on which it is located (Lenik and Crichton 1988). The carvings appear to have been cut with metal tools. The turtle is the most prominent symbol, and circular punch marks are visible in the grooves that form its shape or outline. There are also six punch marks placed in a straight line on the back of the turtle. A few punch marks are visible in the grooved outline of the bird and beaver as well. In general, the grooves are 3 mm to 4 mm in width and 2 mm to 4 mm in depth. The turtle and the bird were cut into the hard granite surface with some care while the beaver is somewhat cruder and less distinct.

Oral accounts recorded local knowledge of these carvings in the 1940s when Myron Thompkins of Horse Pound Road recalled seeing the designs. Nick Shoumatoff, then curator of the Trailside Museum, Ward Pound Ridge Reservation, Cross River, New York, photographed and recorded the site in 1971. He referred to the petroglyph as the "Needle" petroglyph and indicated that the area had been a Boy Scout camp. He concluded that these carvings were twentieth century in origin and not associ-

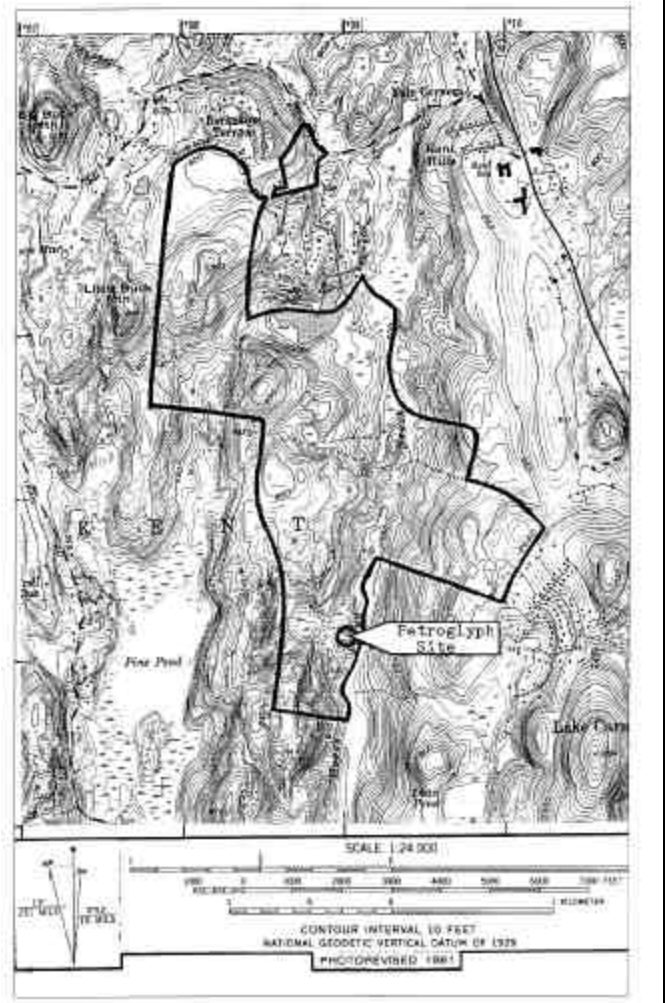


Figure 1 Portion of U.S.G.S. map showing location of Hawk Rock Petroglyph.

ated with the evidence of Indian occupation recovered in a rock shelter just north of Hawk Rock (Shoumatoff 1971).

In 1987, Lenik and Fitzpatrick concurred with Shoumatoff's conclusion. Physical evidence argued against antiquity; the designs appeared to have been cut or recut with metal tools, and there was a lack of weathering and patination to the designs. Land-use history indicated modern activity; the use of the area by Boy Scouts, an organization given to recreating Indian activities, adequately explained the presence of the designs.



Figure 2. Hawk Rock. View of north side. Arrow points to location of Petroglyph. (E. J. Lenik, photographer, 1987.)

In 1988, Edward J. Lenik, working with the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, discovered a prehistoric turtle petroglyph carved on a glacial boulder found on the banks of the Bronx River within the grounds of the New York Botanical Garden (Lenik 1988). This find was well publicized by the Botanical Garden, and Carol Reich, formerly of Kent, contacted Mr. Lenik about the Hawk Rock Petroglyph (Reich 1988). Her grandfather, General Leonard Smith, bought the adjoining property in 1906, and she recalled seeing the carvings at least as early as the 1930s. This new information and a similarity in design between the Bronx turtle and the one on Hawk Rock prompted our renewed interest in the origins of the Hawk Rock Petroglyph.

In 1989, Edward J. Lenik and Nancy L. Gibbs visited the Putnam County Hall of Records to read property deeds that might reference Hawk Rock and its designs. Horse Pound Brook, just east of Hawk Rock, was a property boundary from colonial days; its demarcation could have involved carving of the designs. We found no mention of the rock and the carvings in the appropriate deeds.

We next contacted Putnam County Historian Sallie Sypher at her offices in Mahopac Falls. She had no more knowledge of the site other than our 1987 report, but she graciously referred us to two people



Figure 3. Hawk Rock Petroglyph. (E. J. Lenik, photographer, 1987.)

who were able to settle the question of the petroglyph's origin once and for all (Sypher, personal communication 1990). Dick Muscarella, Kent Town Historian, wrote to us to say that he knew some old gentlemen, brothers, who reside on Horse Pound Road and have in their possession a photograph that shows a cabin about 50 yd from Hawk Rock (Muscarella, personal communication 1990). They tell a story that a pine tree fell against the rock and that as young men they climbed the tree and carved their initials on the rock. They were silent when questioned about the animal carvings, but a friend of theirs claims to have carved these.

More details came to light in a letter from Betty M. Light Behr, also of Horse Pound Road (Behr, personal communication 1990). Mrs. Light Behr was born and raised near the site. Her father, Frank B. Light, also native to the area, was a naturalist and photographer, and Mrs. Light Behr hiked the region with him. One of the early families in Kent is the Hunt family, who are related to Mrs. Light Behr. Three Hunt brothers, all in their 70s and 80s, Leroy, Harry, and Gilmore, still live on Horse Pound Road. Mr. and Mrs. Harry Hunt were invited to reminisce at a meeting of the Kent Historical Society in 1988, The Bronx

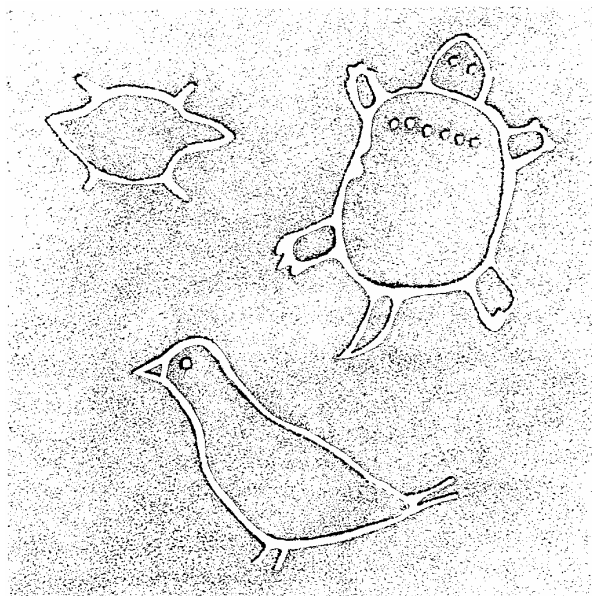


Figure 4. Detail drawing of Hawk Rock Petroglyph. (Drawing by T. Fitzpatrick.) Length of bird 31 cm.

petroglyph was in the news then, and Harry Hunt was asked what he knew about the Hawk Rock Petroglyph. He related that he and his brothers and some school pals made the drawings. This would place the origins of the designs in the late 1920s.

Mrs. Light Behr also recalled that from 1940 to 1966 Colonel Smith permitted use of his land near Hawk Rock by the Order of the Arrow, the most highly ranked Boy Scouts, and those most deeply into ceremonial Indian-like behavior. The designs may have taken on their reputation of Indian origin at this time. The post World War I youth movements from which the Boy Scouts grew in the United States drew much inspiration from a romanticized view of the American Indians. Camping and crafts and outdoor activities were based on Indian lore in which the native people of the North American continent were accorded a respect and admiration lacking in the nineteenth century. The *Book of Woodcraft* by Ernest Thompson Seton (1921), chief of the Woodcraft Indians, has pages of Indian signs and designs for the use of young campers. Twentieth-century children play Indian in the woods, reliving the tales and crafts of the noble savage and sometimes leaving artifacts such as the Hawk Rock Petroglyph, which are almost taken for the real thing. We publish this report knowing that as years go by the Hawk Rock Petroglyph will weather and develop the patina of age it now lacks. Against that day when it is newly discovered again and taken as the real thing, we document the story of its origin noting that it is a twentieth-century tale that has its own charm.

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