

MAPPING LEGENDS: MAJOR ANDRÉ AND RIP VAN WINKLE

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ABSTRACT: *Maps are more than mute testimony to environmental features and human constructions. The cartographic information included or excluded in maps provides valuable insights to contemporary cultural and social understandings. When mapmakers depict historic events or people and identify them with specific locales, they help create a “genius loci.” This both influences tourist promotion activities and shapes travelers’ views. This study examines two “historic” figures in New York State cartography. One was real (Major André) and one was fictitious (Rip Van Winkle). Major André was the British spy who met with Benedict Arnold in 1780 and was given information about West Point defenses, but was subsequently caught and executed in Tappan. Rip Van Winkle’s story was invented by Washington Irving in 1819. Later his mythical adventures in the Catskills were specifically located on maps and in tourist booklets. Both figures were major features in New York general reference and tourist maps in the nineteenth century. The use of these two “legends” for place promotion in New York State maps and tourist literature was unusual and remarkable. Imaginary Rip Van Winkle continues to be a major element in promoting tourism, but the historic figure of Major André has faded in importance. These examples show the power of tourism promotion in celebrating historic incidents at a specific place.*

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the appearance and persistence in New York State cartography of two “historic” people. One was a real person (Major André) while the other was a fictional creation (Rip Van Winkle). These two figures are “legends” in the sense that they are both legendary and remarkable in their inclusion and longevity on the mapped landscape. It is seldom that real or imaginary characters appear on general reference maps, except as marginal decorations or in cartouches. These two figures are highly unusual and thought provoking because they appear in the body of selected maps. The anomaly of their emergence and continued presence took place in the changing landscape of nineteenth and twentieth century New York cartography. Understanding that these figures are highly unusual requires a brief review of their historic context.

HISTORIC NEW YORK MAPS

New York State cartography in the nineteenth century reflects the development of a uniquely American style of mapmaking, adapted to a scarcity of data and the need for rapid production (Ristow, 1985). Simeon DeWitt, New York’s first Surveyor-General, served from 1784-1834 and his leadership in state supported cartography was unusual, since the majority of nineteenth century American maps were made by the private sector. DeWitt’s large 1802 map was the first detailed cartography of the State and provided both an example and a template in its elegant and spare method of symbolization. DeWitt’s office also sponsored the production of David Burr’s 1829 New York State Atlas, which mapped each county in detail, and was only the second US state Atlas (Mano, 1998). Cartographic material published in Burr’s Atlas served as the basis for later commercial maps. The second edition of Burr’s Atlas in 1839 was the last New York state sponsored cartography in the nineteenth century. Commercial mapmakers drew on these state sources to create an increasing quantity of New York maps throughout the 1800s.

Map production responded to immediate needs, particularly for travel information, and reflected the historic changes in popular modes of transportation. Traveler's maps were published in a variety of formats, and typically stressed canal and stage routes in the 1820s and 1830s, steamboat itineraries and timetables from the 1830s on, and railroad guides from the 1850s into the 20th century. In the 20th century, an increasing number of auto maps and guides were printed, while other types of transportation brochures declined. These guides were produced by a wide variety of entities and promoted travel by providing tourists with information about local attractions, maps, transportation choices and schedules. Many of these featured handy, folding strip-maps, which folded conveniently into a pocket-sized format. In the latter part of 19th and through the early years of the 20th century, many railroads promoted tourism by publishing maps, guides and informational booklets about lodging, local communities, recreational opportunities, and the benefits of country vacations. While some of these ephemera have been preserved, many others were lost, and so a considerable amount of tourist promotional material and booklets, contemporary maps and guides have escaped notice by geographers and historians. Understanding how past tourists celebrated and visited particular places illuminate the creation and persistence of a "genius loci," and contemporary maps and brochures provide a unique insight to this process. Major André and Rip Van Winkle remain as prime examples of memorable figures evoked in place creation and promotion.

MAJOR JOHN ANDRÉ

Major John André was a British officer in the American Revolutionary War who was sent by the British Commander-in-Chief General Henry Clinton to meet with American General Benedict Arnold to discuss the plans for a British attack on West Point. André journeyed up the Hudson River on September 21, 1780 aboard the British sloop *Vulture*, and met Arnold just south of Haverstraw. Arnold planned to weaken the West Point defenses, and gave André plans to the fort and the placement of the soldiers there. André spent the following day in hiding at Tory Joshua Hett Smith's house (later termed the "Treason House"). Returning to the

Vulture, which had been forced to move down river by hostile fire, seemed too dangerous, so André was persuaded to cross the Hudson River from near Stony Point. He hoped to reach British lines by land on the eastern shore, with the plans concealed in his boots. Near Tarrytown, André was stopped by three American soldiers, who discovered the hidden documents and turned him over to their commanding officer. André was taken back to Tappan, and imprisoned in Washington's temporary headquarters at Mabie's Inn. Meanwhile, Benedict Arnold evaded capture and escaped to the *Vulture*, and subsequently sailed for Britain. A trial was held in Tappan at the Old Dutch Church and André was found guilty of being a spy and sentenced to be hanged. Although Washington was reluctant to hang an officer, he realized it was important to appear decisive in the face of Arnold's treachery. This incident was regarded as a symbolic moral turning point in the Revolutionary War. The plot of the treasonous Benedict Arnold to hand over West Point to the enemy was foiled and the British spy who was captured with the incriminating plans was executed.

Major André's first appearance on New York maps was in the second edition or republication of David Burr's *State Atlas* in 1839 (Burr, 1839). Both editions showed each of the counties on a separate page, but the second differed from the 1829 version because Burr used local agents to check and submit map information instead of relying on town supervisors' information and input. The 1839 edition of the Orange and Rockland county map added a surprising set of "Explanations" with five tiny symbols. These points located Smith's house, where he first took André to go on board the *Vulture*, Washington's temporary headquarters, the house where André was held prisoner and the place where he was executed. In addition, a minute sketch showed the location of the *Vulture* off Tellars Point. It should be noted that this additional key is in sharp contrast to the rest of the *Atlas*, which includes only a handful of other historical events in the elegant and accurately rendered 52 counties. Most of these notations referred to memorable events in the Revolutionary war or the war of 1812. This second edition of Burr's *State Atlas* provided detailed physical and cultural information subsequently incorporated in later privately produced commercial maps.

Steamboat travelers provided a ready market for tourist maps. Williams Wade's 1846 folding map also highlighted the locations of the André drama. The extraordinary *Panorama of the Hudson River from New York to Albany*, measured 6" wide by 150" long in a pocket-atlas format, and showed highly detailed and hand-tinted sketches of the landscape on both sides of the Hudson River from New York to Albany. Designed for steamboat passengers, this pictorial map was decorated with many different types of vessels and provided a vivid picture of the communities and buildings that could be seen from the river. The information in Wade's map supplied data for many later Hudson River maps, which focused on features visible from and close to the river. *The Hudson River by Daylight* map, drawn by William Link in 1878 had a similar strip-map format within a guidebook and also stressed significant locations in André's story. This map guide was sold on the steamboat lines that sailed between New York and Albany and served as an important tourist handbook. Many other guidebooks were produced by a variety of authors, but these two span more than 40 years and represent the best examples of the genre.

As rail transportation became increasingly available, railroad companies introduced promotional tourist maps and guides that highlighted points of interest along the way. Several railways serviced the places near to André's historically significant locations. Railroads in New York State had a bewildering and complex history and different companies were merged, and leased or shared tracks. Rail companies whose tracks ran closest to historical places made the most of their locations. The east shore Hudson River line published a guidebook in 1851, with two strip maps similar to earlier steamboat maps and detailed descriptions of the places along the route. Since the major historic events took place across the river, here André's story is linked to Peekskill, near where André was captured, and merited three pages of description (*Hudson River and The Hudson River Railroad*, 1851). Mrs. S. S. Colt's informative 1876 *Tourist's Guide Through the Empire State Embracing All Cities, Towns and Watering Places, by Hudson River and New York Central Route* described the train route up the Hudson's east shore. Recounting the André story, she pointed out the approximate location of Piermont and Tappan from across the Hudson River and added a chapter-ending sketch of a stone marker

commemorating André's execution. The West Shore railroad's booklet on the route to the "Haunts of Rip Van Winkle" noted the location at Haverstraw of the infamous Smith "Treasure House," and gave detailed illustrations of the fireplace and staircase, surely a distant connection to history! (*Summer Excursions [on the] West Shore Railroad: Lake, River, Mountain and Seaside Resorts*, 1888.) The New York Central and Erie Railroads were two other railroad companies which produced a number of excellent maps and guides. New York Central, in combination with the east shore Hudson River Railroad, published the free "Four-Track" series of maps, with detailed tourist information on the back introducing travelers to the glories of summer resorts. Only a few of the more than two dozen of these excellent highly colored and detailed maps seem to have been preserved in major cartographic libraries, but they serve as examples of how much influence the rail companies had on shaping contemporary tourist attitudes and itineraries.

While the André story showed remarkable persistence, perhaps due to its convenient geographic setting close to both the Hudson River and subsequent rail lines, it pales in comparison to the influence Rip Van Winkle had on shaping the tourists' vision of the landscape of the Catskills.

RIP VAN WINKLE

Washington Irving first captured the American public's attention with Deidrich Knickerbocker's folksy *History of New York*. In 1819, Irving's *Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent* again used a fictional character to spin tall tales, including both Rip Van Winkle's story and the Legend of Sleepy Hollow. Irving had first seen the Catskills from a sloop on the Hudson River when he was a teenager, and visited the east shore Livingston estate with its fine view of the Catskills in 1812. However, his first trip to the Catskill Mountains did not come until 12 years after he wrote the Rip Van Winkle story, which was loosely based on an old German folktale.

The often repeated tale can be summarized quite briefly. Rip Van Winkle was a hen-pecked husband who lived somewhere in the Catskill Mountains. Beloved by the children and sympathetic women of the village, Rip did not enjoy working, and his farm was the worst in the neighborhood. His wife

bullied him constantly, and Rip's only escape was to wander in the woods with his dog and his gun. On one such excursion, he ended up in a "deep mountain glen" with some short Dutch-looking persons, reminiscent of Hendrick Hudson's crew, who were playing ninepins and drinking from a keg of liquor. After a few drinks, Rip fell asleep. Rip finally awoke, and returned to the village to find he had been gone for twenty years. At first no one knew who he was, since his old familiar friends and places were gone, but eventually his daughter recognized him and took him home. The story ended by linking the rumble of summer thunderstorms to the mysterious ninepin bowlers, and the longing of nagged husbands to seek escape in Rip's flagon of liquor (Irving, 1995).

Rip Van Winkle's story was quoted first in Hudson River steamboat traveler's guides, adding local color to the voyage. Later, Rip's adventure became closely linked with the Catskill Mountain House and was specifically located on maps and in tourist booklets. Burr's 1839 Atlas again served as the starting point for this "genius loci" since in this second edition the Catskill Mountain House was added to the map of Greene County, close to the Pine Orchard, previously mapped in 1829. The Pine Orchard was the name given to an area at the crest of the steep eastern escarpment of the Catskills, also known as the Wall of Manitou. The Catskill Mountain House was first constructed here in 1823 and noted in Spafford's Gazetteer of the following year (Van Zandt, 1991). The white building stood out conspicuously against the forest at the edge of a precipitous cliff, and quickly became America's first mountain resort. It launched the tourist era of the "Catskills" a term which until the 1870s or even later referred only to a small area of about four miles radius immediately surrounding the hotel.

The view from the Mountain House was celebrated in James Fenimore Cooper's 1823 bestseller *The Pioneers* with Natty Bumppo's description of this vista as embracing "all Creation" (Van Zandt, 1991). Cooper was just the first of an extensive list of writers who embraced the romantic vision of nature embodied in the Catskills. Painters Thomas Cole, Asher Durand, Frederick Church and others in the Hudson River School documented and embellished the "romantic" scenery surrounding the hotel. The Mountain House was unique, a required stop on the international traveler's itinerary and a summer retreat for high society. C. L. Beach became

the manager in 1839. He later enlarged the building; continually refurbished it and the Beach family's supervision of the hotel and transportation services maintained the hotel's attraction into the 20th century. The Catskill Mountain House sold a booklet published by Beach titled *The Scenery of the Catskill Mountains*. It contained a collection of writings about the Catskills by eminent writers, and included the Rip Van Winkle tale (Beach, c.1845). A footnote alerted the reader as Rip discovered the dwarfs, "The glen here described is passed by the visitor to the Mountain House in the first mile of ascent in climbing the mountain. It begins near the gate and ends at the 'Shanty.'"

The dramatic location, perched on the edge of a steep cliff was an essential element to the unique setting and superlative views. However, getting to the Mountain House was a major challenge when the stagecoach was the main transportation method. The road to the famous hotel ran for about nine miles inland from the steamboat landing at Catskill village and then zigzagged for three miles up the steep Wall of Manitou escarpment, providing a memorable and grueling four hour journey for the many travelers who flocked to the increasingly famous resort. Less than halfway up the steep old mountain road was a horseshoe bend at the head of a glen, which became the "legendary" site of Rip's meeting with the bowling dwarfs. Van Zandt, in his meticulous study of the Catskill Mountain House, notes that "commercial expediency" probably located Rip's adventure here. The bend was a convenient resting place for the horses and riders before the final climb to the hotel. Travelers reported there was a rough shanty, and a refreshing spring. This location became known as Sleepy Hollow, the authentically attributed place of Rip's long sleep. In later years, a Rip Van Winkle Boarding house was erected, and the rock on which Rip reputedly slept became yet another tourist site (Van Zandt, 1991). Most tourist guides perpetuated and reinforced the Van Winkle associations. Some critics like Ernest Ingersoll, author of the Rand McNally local guide, argued persistently that Rip was an imaginary character, in an indefinite location, and Irving's description of the setting could not be correlated with the topography or the views (Ingersoll, 1893-1910). This astute assessment was less appealing than the mystery and romance of Rip's legend and the dream-like view of the Catskills. Travelers' memoirs of this period

repeat the saga of the laborious mountain road climb and recount the Rip Van Winkle story places along the way.

The first map celebrating Rip's sleeping location is probably the large roll map made by Samuel Geil of Greene County in 1856. This map was typical of a series of large scale roll maps of New York State counties made in the mid-nineteen century, and contained detailed, accurate physical and cultural cartographic information. The unusual notation "Sleepy Hollow Rip Van Winkle's Bed of 20 yrs" identified Rip's glen. The small feature, hidden in mountain folds, was too far from the Hudson to appear on the popular tourist river strip maps like those of Wade and Link, although the Catskills were shown in these as a background feature. The widely distributed Beers Atlas of Greene County, published in 1867, also has *Rip Van Winkle House* and *Sleepy Hollow* noted in large letters.

Walton Van Loan, probably the premier local Catskill Mountain tourist guidebook author, published his *Catskill Mountain Guide* annually from 1876 to 1921. This book contained a map of the area around the Mountain House, which showed Rip Van Winkle's House and Sleepy Hollow, both on the route of the old mountain road. The guide included a map of the surrounding counties and a perspective view of the surrounding peaks. The maps were updated periodically over time, but the guides retained the same cover format and much of the original text.

The railroads used Rip Van Winkle as a marketing tool. Several different railways serviced the Catskills, but the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad, the West Shore Railroad, and the Ulster and Delaware were the most important. All these railroads published informative booklets of the area with high quality maps from the late nineteenth into the early twentieth century. For many years the West Shore Railroad guides titled their substantial booklet promoting local hotels and boarding houses "*Summer Excursions [on the] West Shore Railroad: Lake, River, Mountain and Seaside Resorts.*" For at least the 1888 through 1899 editions (and probably more) the frontispiece showed Rip with the lengthy subtitle *The Haunts of Rip Van Winkle in the Catskill Mountains grow in Popularity from year to year as the most attractive region for SUMMER HOMES AND TOURS in the vicinity of New York, Mountain Air and Ruddy Health.* Sleepy Hollow is identified in

the well drawn and topographically detailed map of *Map of the Catskill Mountains prepared expressly for the West Shore Railroad*, which was folded in to each book. As rail lines reached the top of the mountain by the end of the 1800s, each railroad vied for the honor of being the only "All-Rail Route." However, transfers between rail lines and steamboats were possible and encouraged. Excursions that combined steamboat and railway journeys became increasingly popular as newly constructed rail links eliminated the exhausting stage connections, and were advertised widely by both the Hudson River steamboat and railroad companies.

More scientific renditions of Sleepy Hollow followed. By now, the toponym had become firmly associated with the "glen" linked to Rip. When the United States Geological Survey mapped the 1892 Kaaterskill topographic quadrangle as part of the 1:62,500 series in New York State, Sleepy Hollow achieved official recognition. In 1907, the American Geographical Society sponsored the production of a smaller scale, detailed topographic map based on the USGS version and created by the highly respected German cartographic firm of Wagner and Debes of Leipzig (Heilprin, 1907). This map also located and identified Sleepy Hollow.

In the early decade of the twentieth century, the automobile became increasingly important and tourist promotional literature reflected the shift. Soon "auto-route" maps picked up the theme recited by the railroads, and road maps of the area were titled as showing the Land of Rip Van Winkle. Rip's haunts now embraced a broader area, for the term "Catskills" expanded in the late nineteenth century to include a far more extensive region than the immediate neighborhood of the Mountain House. The slick 1932 New York State Hotel Association pictorial map highlighted in green both the Adirondacks and the Catskills, with brightly colored vignettes noting the State's tourist hot spots: "*The Empire State offers to tourists and vacationists the greatest variety of attractions in America.*" Rip Van Winkle dominated the northern Catskills area. The southern Catskills, mostly lying in Sullivan County, became popular as a resort area later in the 19th and into the 20th century. The 1958 road map drawn by a Kingston surveyor, F.W. Hathaway is simpler and maps only different types of roads, but it is titled *Land of Rip Van Winkle Catskill-Shawangunk Region*. These two are just more recent examples of

the many different tourist maps and brochures that continue to invoke the haunting legacy of Van Winkle.

Perhaps the most unexpected recent appearances of Rip in New York cartography are in two maps produced by entities that are respected for their precise and scientific approaches. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's latest *Catskill Forest Preserve Official Map and Guide* is beautifully illustrated, highly informative guide with historical, geological and natural resource data combined with a wealth of important information for visitors. The reverse side features a brightly colored and well-designed map which uses plastic contour shading, highly effective in showing the topography as well as hinting at the GIS program used to create it. The map folds neatly into a compact format and on the front is Rip Van Winkle, painted by Thomas Locker in 1987. The other example is much harder to find. DeLorme's 2001 edition *New York Atlas and Gazetteer* is a wonderful atlas of 80 highly detailed topographic quadrangles covering the whole state, complete with latitude and longitude grids for GPS use. On page 52, just northeast of High Peak in the town of Hunter, is a tiny bearded figure with "zzz"s that must be Rip Van Winkle. Although Rip has moved around in the Catskills, and is claimed by several communities as their native, he has been an enduring and commercial tourist asset.

Major André has not been so successful recently, although the house where he was tried is still a historic tavern, now with its own web site. Mrs. S.S. Colt's 1836 guide made a wry comment which is thus still relevant:

Not far from Piermont lies the old town of Tappan, where Major André was tried, condemned and executed. Washington often made this place his headquarters during the Revolution. The house of the commander-in-chief and the jail in which André was imprisoned, may be seen here, although the same practical spirit which in Salem has transformed the courtroom where the terrible death sentence was pronounced upon the luckless witches of that day, into a grocery store, has in Tappan converted the jail into a public house known as the Seventy-Six House.

It is tempting to wonder about why these two figures made such unexpected and repeated appearances in New York State's historic cartography, but unfortunately there is little evidence on which to ground such speculation. Major André represented a superb example of treachery brought to justice, and as a vivid reminder of America's triumph in the Revolutionary war. A mere historical figure, his appeal was greater in the nineteenth century, and has faded with time. On the other hand, Rip Van Winkle's story embraces several archetypal themes which have perennial and enduring fascination, particularly for tourists. Rip's tale has the romantic themes of escape from the daily grind to a magical place of recreation, a lengthy transforming sleep, the passing of many years, and finally, a return home to find his problems gone. Rip Van Winkle emerges as the essential embodiment of the journey as a refreshing vacation from ordinary life. It is not surprising his enchantment persists.

CONCLUSION

The use of two legendary figures for place promotion in New York State maps and tourist literature provides a fine example of how tourist and general maps have nourished a "genius loci" and even created toponyms. Tracing the emergence and persistence of "historic" figures on the mapped landscape reveals how that landscape is influenced by contemporary cultural perception. Tourists in New York from the nineteenth through the early twentieth century experienced their travels with and through maps and brochures which catered to the stagecoach, canal, steamboat, rail and finally, automobile trade. These materials shaped the vision of the traveler by imbuing particular places with historic significance. The imaginary Rip Van Winkle persists as a dominant feature in regional Catskills promotional campaigns, but the real Major André is now only a local attraction. This study illustrates the power of tourism promotion in celebrating historic incidents at a specific place.

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ENDNOTES

References to maps cited in the text have been omitted from the list of references for brevity. Map repositories and libraries typically catalog maps by title, or region, and date, since other data relating to author or publisher may not be available. Researchers can access cited maps, where available, through this approach.

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