

The Byway

A Former Loop of Forest Home Drive

Bruce Brittain, Community Historian

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Note: *The Byway is not a Town road. We are on private property. Please be respectful.*

Road Alignment This former alignment of Forest Home Drive was established and then bypassed in the early 1800s. The Byway extended upstream into driveway for 145 FHD, and may have continued on this side of creek, rejoining current alignment of FHD at Wildflower Garden parking lot. FHD was adopted (or re-adopted) as a Town road in 1831, became a State highway around 1910 (first as Rte 13, then Rte 392); the Town took over ownership in 1974.

Downstream Bridge Oldest Warren pony truss bridge in Tompkins County, built 1904 by Groton Bridge Company. Replaced previous bowstring arch bridge, which replaced a covered pony truss bridge. First official Town-owned creek crossing at or near this location c. 1796.

Concrete Mill Dam Built 1913, replacing previous wooden dams. Sluices carried water down both sides of stream, to mills at each corner of bridge, and to others along the Byway.

Credit-Bool Furniture Works Originally built c. 1830 by Isaac Credit, washed away in a flood and rebuilt. Later owned by the HJ Boole Company, becoming a major furniture manufactory, employing 20 workers and providing cabinets for the Singer Sewing Machine Company and for the Baker Chemistry Lab. Furniture produced here was also sold at Boole's Furniture in downtown Ithaca. The operation was purchased and demolished by Cornell c. 1926.

Manning-Brown Saw & Cider Mills Built c. 1825, the mills supplied lumber for the construction of local houses and pressed cider for local farmers. The sawmill continued as an up-and-down sash saw, rather than converting to a circular saw mill, confusing local history. Cornell students staged annual fall raids on the cider mill. The mills were demolished c. 1900.

Leather Tannery Operated c. 1850 to 1875. Bought hemlock bark and hides, sold tanned leather. Owners McKinney and Slocum also operated a leather retail shop in downtown Ithaca.

Mill Between Bridge and Empire Grist Mill Little is known about this mill. Footings carved into bedrock of creek (visible at times of low water) indicate where the Hurst frame once stood.

Empire Grist Mill Built c. 1840, this mill was the same size and shape as mill at Upper Treman (Enfield Glen), with an 80 HP waterwheel powering four sets of stones. Was a major "production" mill, buying grain from farmers, then shipping out flour in barrels. Burned to the ground on Dec 31, 1886, despite efforts of community bucket brigade to quell the blaze.

Cooper Shop "Production" grist mills required a nearby cooper shop to supply the barrels.

20 the Byway Built c. 1825 as worker housing, the original 1½ story structure is still evident. Larger than it looks, house's rear façade now takes advantage of creekside location.

16 the Byway Originally built c. 1825 as a warehouse for the adjacent woolen mill, it is said to be of plank construction, with white pine planks 3 in thick and 30 in wide. Converted to a dwelling c. 1870. Note wide frieze band marking former height of front façade.

11 the Byway Mill owner's house, built c. 1830. Contrast this to the workers' cottages. The front entrance was formerly on the south, facing away from the mill and creek. The carriage house dates from the 1880s. The well served as the community's water source for many years.

Woolen Mill Built c. 1825, closed 1893 when owner David Edwards died. Employed 20 men and processed 30,000 lbs of wool per year. Thought to have been the first use of steam in FH.

12 the Byway Originally constructed as a 1½ story industrial building c. 1840. Associated with the adjacent woolen mill, it served as a dye house, warehouse and office. Converted to dwelling c. 1906. In 2018 it was further remodeled: the roof was raised and the ridge reoriented.

Road Alignment The Byway continued its sweep along the creek. We will rejoin it later. This cross-street, also from the early 1800s, connects to the current alignment of FHD.

10 the Byway Built c. 1825 as a 1½ story Greek Revival, modified c. 1907 to be 2 stories tall. Major renovations in 1936 altered its appearance to the Colonial Revival style.

6 the Byway Built c. 1825. Note original size of building. When roof was raised, original frieze band windows were not enlarged. Three-quarter height pillars are not original to building.

4 the Byway Built c. 1825 as a 1½ story house incorporating some Dutch architectural elements, including a closet-bed. Extended repeatedly to the rear, then the roof was raised and the ridge reoriented. First house in FH with a telephone, running water and a bathroom.

2 the Byway Built c. 1825, this house was owned by three generations of the Slocum/Force family for over 100 years. FH historian Albert Force ran an antique shop out of his house here. Force had acquired an object from every mill in FH; when he died his collection was dispersed.

130 Forest Home Drive Constructed 1911. William H. Miller, Architect; Wm. McElwee Sr, builder. Originally a grocery store on one side, and ice cream parlor and dining hall on the other. Converted to tea room in 1915, then to furniture store in 1935, and to offices in 1958. Tea room was run by Martha Van Rensselaer and Flora Rose to train students in the management of tea rooms and restaurants. Town offices once located here. Brazilia designed here.

Lover's Leap Lucy Criddle (16, daughter of local undertaker William Criddle, living at 300 FHD) and Montgomery Cornell (19, son of Ezra's brother Elija, living at the Judd Falls/Pine Tree/Rte 366 intersection) were sweet on each other, but Elija did not approve of relationship. On evening of June 25, 1861, the two lovers carried out murder-suicide pact. Her body was found shot to death in his buggy, and his body was found drowned in the gorge at this spot. Elija did not allow the two to be buried together. After the level of Beebe Lake was raised 8 ft, this became a popular (but not particularly safe) jumping-in spot for swimmers.

Gunpowder Mill Powered by rope drive across the creek. 300 lbs of black powder in drying room exploded Sept 20, 1849, shattering windows and sending parts of mill up to ½ mile away.

Road Alignment Fences mark the centerline of the previous sweep of the Byway. Roadway continued downstream along current alignment of footpath.

Red Grist Mill “Custom” mill, built c. 1855 by Arnold McIntyre, closed c. 1900. Powered by turbine fed from flume supported on gorge wall. Excavation best seen from other side of creek.

Mills and Businesses Along Creek Between Woolen Mill and Lover’s Leap Mills include: hemp factory, telescope shop, turning shop, paint shop, foundry, plaster mill, and a forerunner of the Ithaca Gun Company. Excavation for turbine house is visible from other side of creek.

Early Bridge Across Fall Creek Probably in this general vicinity. Creek is at its narrowest here, with good rock walls. Simply drop two trees across the creek. Would help explain Pine Tree Rd - Judd Falls Rd - Pleasant Grove Rd - Triphammer Rd - N. Triphammer Rd alignment.

USGS Gaging Station Provides historical and near-realtime information on flow rate in creek. <https://waterdata.usgs.gov/ny/nwis/uv/?site_no=04234000&PARAMeter_cd=00065,00060>



Bool Furniture Works *(The History Center)*



Saw/Cider Mill *(The History Center)*



Empire Grist Mill *(Cornell Archives)*



Red Grist Mill *(The History Center)*

Note: Ongoing research is continually revising our understanding of the past. Thus, while the above information is believed to be true and accurate, it is subject to change without notice.