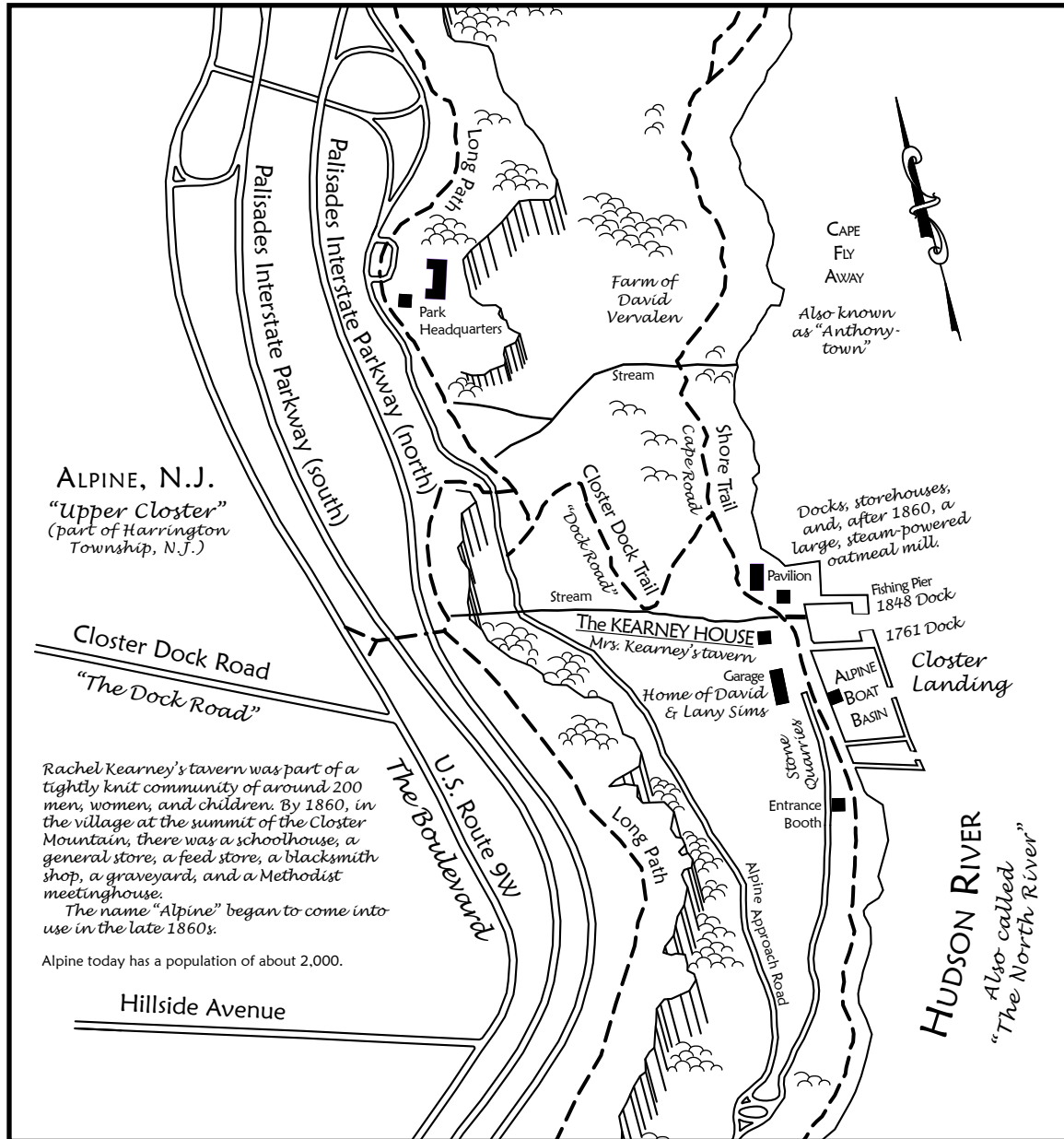


# Now & Then...

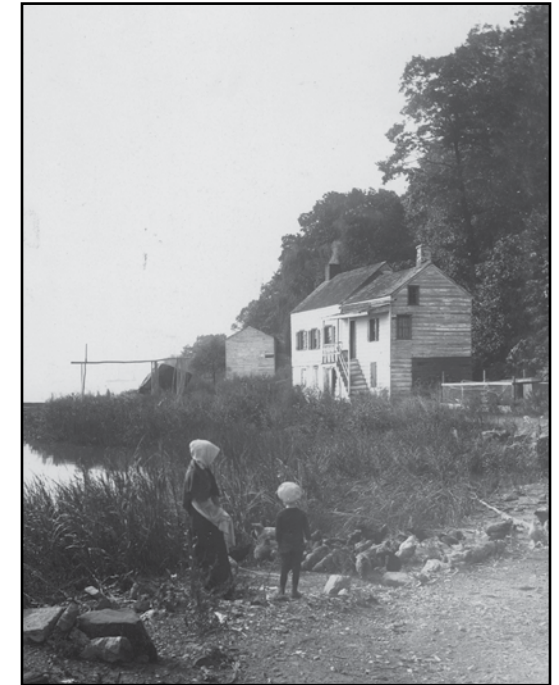
On the map below, the printed text shows present-day features.

The "hand-written" text indicates features from the mid-1800s, the time that Mrs. Kearney kept her tavern at this house.



Listed on the National and New Jersey State Historic Registers as the "Blackledge-Kearney House," but more familiarly known as the "Kearney House" or the "Cornwallis Headquarters" (it was once thought the British general stayed here for a night in 1776), this house has been a Hudson River homestead, a riverfront tavern, a police station, and a "historic shrine." Today it helps bring to life two centuries in the story of the Hudson River and the families who depended upon it for their lives and livelihoods. The Kearney House has been preserved by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission with the ongoing assistance of the New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs.

# THE KEARNEY HOUSE



Open most weekend & holiday afternoons, May through October.

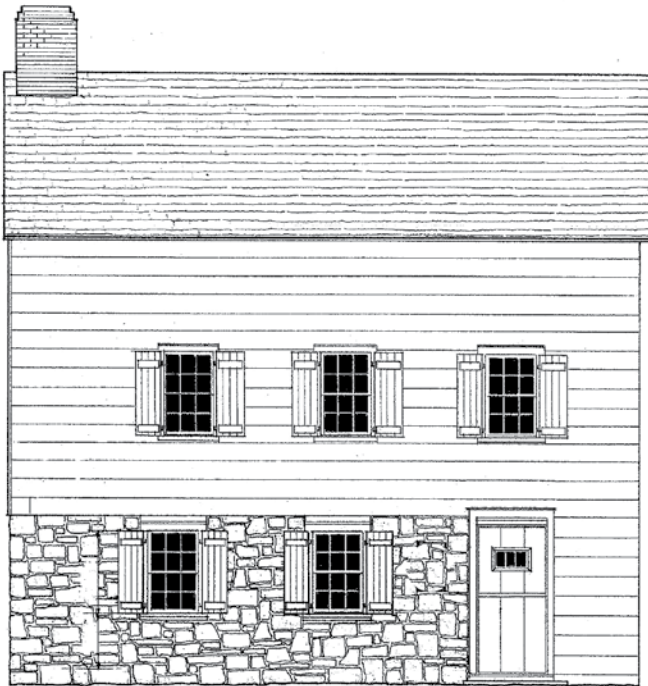


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The southern part of the house was built around 1761, when the farmers of Closter, on the other side of the Palisades, built the Closter Dock Road through a pass in the cliffs to the Hudson River. From here they shipped goods to New York City's markets by sailboat.

The house was most likely built to be a dockmaster's house, to supervise the busy river landing.



In 1817, James and Rachel Kearney moved into this house. With them were three children from Rachel's first husband, Abraham Powles, who died two years earlier. James and Rachel had five children of their own before James died in 1831, and Rachel also adopted a daughter.

After James died, Rachel kept a tavern at the house.

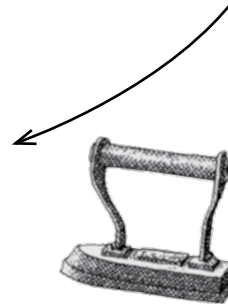


Perhaps when they were old enough to get up and down the stairs, the children would have slept in the attic. In the winter, they may have stayed downstairs for warmth. In either case, it would have been unusual to have a bed to yourself.

Even though it seems to have holes in it, the roof does not leak in the rain.

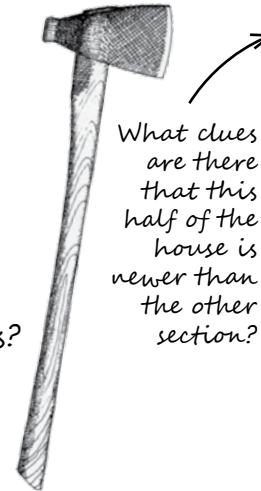


We use this room as our "Park History Room," where we present the story of the early days of the Palisades Interstate Park in New Jersey.



In the 1930s, a modern bathroom was installed upstairs. The bathroom was later removed—though we still have the 19th-century equivalent of a "bathroom" in the bedroom (but not everyone recognizes it...).

The stone walls of the old part of the house are a foot-and-a-half thick and made from Palisades stone. The mortar between the stones was made from Hudson River mud, with an outer coating of limestone. (A deed from 1802 called this part of the house a "cellar.") The beams above the stone wall were made from tulip trees. The front wall collapsed during Hurricane Sandy in 2012 and needed to be reconstructed.



What clues are there that this half of the house is newer than the other section?

Although many of the furnishings in the house are as old—or older—than the house, few are original to it. Many were donated in the 1930s by Women's Clubs from all across New Jersey. Other furnishings are reproductions.

Why does the house have such low ceilings?  
Hint: It's not because "people were shorter back then"...



The cover photograph, taken around 1897, is a gift of the Lamb family. The diagram of the house is from the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), 1935. The images of household goods are from *Forgotten Household Crafts* by John Seymour, 1987.

The northern addition was probably built around 1840, to make room for the tavern.

Besides offering food and spirits, Mrs. Kearney's tavern served as a meeting place for the captains and crews of the sailing vessels that arrived and departed daily from the docks here, and for the local workforce of quarrymen, dock workers, and tradesmen. Gossip, strongly argued political opinions, the latest joke—all would have been shared within these walls.



The upstairs room in the new addition may have been for lodgers staying at the tavern.

The Palisades Interstate Park Commission bought the house in 1907, and in 1909 had the big porch built as a grandstand for a dedication ceremony for the new park. Through the 1920s, the Commission used the house as a police station.