

Cragsmoor's Stone Church

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A variety of hamlets and one village comprise the Town of Wawarsing, each distinct and unique. The settlement at the "top of the mountain" may predate Ellenville, since deeds of the period before 1800 mention some residents' names as owning boundary lands. According to Katharine T. Terwilliger, settlement on the mountain in the area we know today as Cragsmoor began before Ellenville had its first few houses. Early family names included Goldsmith, Fisher, Terwilliger, Farr, and Wilhelm, among others.

As communities came into existence, the need for improved transportation grew. When the plank road connecting Ellenville and Newburgh was dedicated on December 22, 1851, the first part of the program was held at Evensville, the settlement at the "top of the mountain," now part of Cragsmoor. More than 500 people made their way down the "...smooth new plank road to the loveliest village in the valley."

When the railroad reached Ellenville in 1871, the beautiful scenery of the Town of Wawarsing, its good air, and pure water attracted vacationers, many of whom returned to make this area their home, even if only for the summer months. A leading summer colony developed at the "top of the mountain," later to be named Cragsmoor.

Boarding houses flourished, summer homes were built. The 1901 issue of "Summer Homes," a promotional booklet published by the railroad, said that Cragsmoor abounded "in most delightful and romantic walks and drives." *Mount Meenahga* on the **Shawangunk Mountains** (see the August 2003 issue of *Wawarsing.Net*) was the first summer resort of prominence in the Town of Wawarsing. *Mount Mongola* (early 1890s) grew from the Farr homestead into a popular and successful resort; the *Cragsmoor Inn* followed in 1904 (see photo below; the buildings no longer exist). Many smaller and less well-known boarding houses abounded.



Cragsmoor's breathtaking views, natural beauty, and magnificent sunsets drew artists from far and wide. One of the leaders in the development of Cragsmoor as a summer colony was Frederick S. Dellenbaugh, an artist, author and explorer. The noted genre artist, E.L. Henry (much more about him in a future column), and Mrs. Eliza G. Hartshorn, often called a founder of the summer community, collaborated with Dellenbaugh in a variety of projects.

Dellenbaugh was part of Major John Wesley Powell's
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second expedition through the Grand Canyon, serving as historian, mapmaker, and artist. His talents and interests were many, and Cragsmoor benefited. In 1885 he married an Ellenville girl, Harriet Otis, in a home ceremony at which Rev. Henry Ward Beecher officiated. He designed and built their home on the mountain in 1891, the year before he recommended the name Cragsmoor for the community which was to receive a post office.

Mr. Dellenbaugh was a frequent contributor to the *Ellenville Journal*, supplying articles about local history or his many expeditions and many letters of commentary. His design of the *Chapel of the Holy Name* (the **Stone Church**) for Mrs. Eliza G. Hartshorn may be his most significant contribution to this area, which he loved so much. He also donated the land and designed the building for the *Cragsmoor Free Library*, completed in 1925. The building, somewhat modified and expanded, still serves its community as an association library, guided by local residents as trustees.

Mrs. Hartshorn of Newport, Rhode Island, was a summer resident of Cragsmoor and a friend of Dellenbaugh. She built the *Chapel of the Holy Name* as a memorial to her husband, Dr. Isaac Hartshorn. Construction of the chapel, using local stone from the mountain, began in 1895 under the supervision of John Keir, a Cragsmoor resident. The bell in the tower was put in place two years later and the first service was held the next day, August 20, 1897.

Dellenbaugh not only designed the Chapel; he assisted in the design of the rose window that he gave in memory of his wife. The inscription around the window reads, "Her Smile Was Like a Benediction."

Mrs. Hartshorn had given the land and construction funds in the hope that the chapel would be taken over by the Brothers of Nazareth of the Order of the Holy Name and be part of an "ecclesiastical community."

Unfortunately, the Brothers left the Cragsmoor area before the chapel was completed. Father Daniel Odell, who was to have been the leader of the community, owned the Chapel until about 1922, when he transferred it and its contents to the New York Altar Guild of the Protestant Episcopal Church. The Chapel became the property of the Episcopal Diocese of New York.

For many years the Chapel was open only during the summer months, if then, with services conducted by clergy from nearby Episcopal churches or guest clergy.

The Chapel of the Holy Name, more popularly called "**the Stone Church**," is not a parish church. It does not have a membership or ongoing ministry of pastoral care. What it does have is a dedicated nonsectarian group of volunteers operating as the *Friends of the Stone Church* who arrange services and concerts, handle the many weddings held in this picturesque house of worship, and ↗