Windham in 1833. Greene County itself was erected from the northern part of Ulster County and the southern part of Albany County in 1800.

Lexington still lay within the larger town of Windham when the federal census was enumerated in 1810. The minutes book inaugurated during the first town meeting held in 1813 shows that over the next quarter century the opening and maintenance of highways and district schools occupied most of the town board's time. The records show that highways were opened to high elevation within the first decade. By the early 1830s, there were about 40 highway districts. State legislation mandating common schools passed at about the same time as Lexington formed. No secondary source yet reviewed covers the opening of schools before this, but New Englanders tended to be education-minded, and it seems likely that schools were already opened in what became the town.[11]

Although Lexington was set aside in 1813, the year when Horatio Gates Spafford published his first gazetteer of the state, he had apparently already compiled the entries for this region. The Windham entry describes what became Lexington that year. The entry relies on details compiled in the larger town, but it still provides information useful for developing a picture of the area at the time and also prefigures subsequent development.

Agriculture and nascent water-powered industry drove the economy of the young republic. Spafford said that the entire town of Windham was "mountainous or hilly throughout, but it has much good pasture lands that yield dairy of superior importance." He noted "rich and fertile" alluvial lands along the Schoharie, as well as the Esopus. Of the Schoharie Creek, he wrote, it "rises in the southeast part of this town, and spreads over the central part to the northwest corner, where it enters Schoharie County. This stream has abundance of mill-seats, and several small branches, the largest of which is Batavia creek, on which are mills also." He failed to mention the West Kill, which is of similar size and may already have been turning mills. Soon it also supplied water for a sizable tannery. This may be simple omission, but it may also indicate that this stream remained largely undeveloped in 1810.

Spafford shared with his contemporaries a great eagerness for the "internal improvements" that would open the vast American hinterlands to commerce: "some turnpikes" traversed Windham. Of "villages," Spafford noted only Batavia (later Schoharieville and now Prattsville) and Greenland (now Hunter).[12] Neither of these numbered more than a few dwellings and shops; the hamlets of Lexington and Westkill were apparently too small to mention. "The one to Cairo [the Schohariekill Bridge Company Turnpike] is most used." He doubted, however, that the one recently chartered to connect Delhi and Catskill (much of the alignment of NY 28) that was partially built in the south section of Windham would be completed because it had to ascend to 2,274 feet. The view from this point was "inexpressibly grand, and well merits the attention of those who delight to contemplate the stupendous scenery of nature." It already drew "the notice

[11] Town of Lexington, *Minutes Book, 1813–ca.1838*. A thorough perusal of this volume would undoubtedly reward the effort. It would surely show the development of the town's transportation network.

[12] Horatio Gates Spafford. *Gazetteer of State of New York, etc.* (Albany: H.C. Southwick, 1813): 330.

of numerous parties in summer." This reflected changing sentiments to the Romantic view of wild natural scenery emerging among the well-to-do.

Tanneries on the Mountaintop (1810–ca.1855)

The 1810 census recorded agricultural and industrial statistics, and Spafford provided county-wide aggregate statistics for manufactures in his 1813 gazetteer. It is difficult to tease these apart for details specific to a particular locale in Greene County, but the figures show that industrial endeavor was on a small scale throughout the county at this date. Of distilleries, a common and popular industry in the early republic, there were only four. Eleven carding machines and 12 fulling mills processed wool into cloth on a small scale. Twenty-five tanneries prepared 12,949 hides, probably acquired from the Catskill beef producers. The number of tanneries indicates small sole proprietorships scattered along watercourses.[13]

Tanners used the bark of hemlock trees to cure the hides, and this species throve in great quantities in the deep, damp cloves, or ravines, of the Catsberg streams. Tanning offered the first "cash crop" of the region, and it appears that people in the recently set aside town of Lexington—briefly called New Goshen when erected from Windham in 1813 and almost immediately changed—were among the first to increase the scale of tan works in Greene County. About 1819, John Bray opened a tannery a short distance upstream from the present crossing in the hamlet of Lexington. Bray allegedly employed many men in the tannery and also cutting bark. In 1884, the abutments of Bray's water diversion system could still be seen on the stream bank.[14] About two years later, Captain Aaron Bushnell opened another tan works on the West Kill. This enterprise allegedly employed about 60 hands in the early period and appears to have formed the nucleus of the hamlet of Westkill.[15] While elevation and remoteness from the turnpike make this location seem infeasible economically, it had the virtue of a large water supply drawn from the hillsides of the West Kill valley and proximity to a seemingly endless supply of bark. These two businesses appear to be the "two very extensive tanneries" where "a great amount of leather [was] made in Lexington by 1824 when Spafford published an updated version of his gazetteer of the state.

Spafford's update provides a second window on early development in the mountaintop region of Greene County during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The vast town of Windham was now divided into the towns of Hunter, Lexington, and Windham: each had its own entry. When read as a group and compared to the 1813 entry for "old" Windham, they offer a more nuanced understanding of the region than simply reading the individual entries might. Further, these primary records tell a story different in some important details from that presented in later secondary sources.

Spafford noted that Lexington's settlements were "about 34 years old" and settled by Yankees from Connecticut. In 1810, Windham's population totaled 3,695; in 1820, Lexington

[13] Spafford (1813), 50-51.
[14] Beers, 355.
[15] Beers, 361.

numbered 2,798, while Windham had 2,535, and Hunter lagged behind with 1,023. In the decade elapsed between federal censuses, the population in the area had increased more than 60%. It appears, based on Gordon's 1835 gazetteer of the state, that the academy noted in Lexington was in the hamlet area of Lexington Heights in the northern part of the town.[16] Lexington had two post offices; Windham had one, and it appears Hunter had none. Spafford wrote of the only settlement there, "Greenland is the local name for a "village" of two houses, a store and tavern." He was more curious about Pine Orchard and the hotel proposed for visitors to the nearby falls [Kaaterskill] of 260 and 310 feet.

By 1824, Spafford slightly revised his earlier assessment of the land and noted that farming accounted for the great majority of all residents. Windham counted the largest number of farmers working the greatest number of improved acres. Lexington, on the other hand, was a "rough, broken township...one third of which is so mountainous as not to admit to cultivation, and one third or half of the rest is only fit for grazing, for which it is pretty good, and for apples." He offered a similar assessment of Windham, saying, "It is a poor, barren tract of land...though the hills afford pretty good pasturage and there are some flats along the creeks."

Windham counted 82 mechanics followed by Lexington (45) and Hunter (27). Lexington's mechanics might have worked in numerous water-powered mills, which included 5 potasheries, four grist mills, seven saw mills, two fulling mills, four carding machines, a small wool factory, an oil [flaxseed] mill, as well as the two tanneries. Lexington was the only one of the three "Old Windham" towns with tanneries noted in the 1824 account. In 1830 Philo Bushnell opened a third tannery in Lexington. This was located on the West Kill about two miles above that of Aaron Bushnell's tannery. This large facility extended 300', and was probably one of the three tanneries identified in the 1830 census and recorded in Gordon's 1835 gazetteer.[17]

Not long after Spafford compiled his 1824 gazetteer, Zadock Pratt opened his tannery at Schohariekill, soon to be renamed Prattsville in his honor, near the confluence of the Batavia Kill.[18] This works lay in the town of Windham until the town of Prattsville was divided off in 1833, but its well-documented operation offers insights into tanning in the region. Pratt chose a site with excellent connections to Catskill as well as surrounding bark collection activity. Spafford wrote that the village of Schohariekill (now Prattsville) lay on the "Windham Turnpike"; this route appears to be the Windham & Durham Turnpike connecting the Schoharie valley with points farther east.[19] A map reconstructing the highways of Greene County shows that the hamlet of

[16] Spafford (1824), 282, and Thomas F. Gordon, *Gazetteer of the State of New York, Comprehending its Colonial History, General Geography, Geology, and Internal Improvements* (Philadelphia: T.K. and P.G. Collins, 1836): 473.

[17] Gordon, 474.

[18] Horne, 58. Horne writes that the Pratt tan works opened in 1824. Spafford probably completed compilation of his 1824 updated gazetteer the previous year, so this date may be accurate.

[19] Spafford (1824), 575-6.

Prattsville lay between where the turnpikes of the Schohariekill Bridge and the Windham & Durham companies descended to the Schoharie Creek.[20]

Early on Pratt may have relied on these two routes rather than the Hunter Turnpike, which although chartered by the state legislature in 1814, did not open until 1824. The latter route improved the highway cut in 1793 along the Schoharie Creek, which may have been known as the Little Delaware turnpike that paralleled the Schoharie Creek in the old town of Windham.[21] At its east end, the new Hunter Turnpike connected with the Bristol Turnpike from Palenville to Malden in 1825. In 1827, it connected with the Catskill Mountain Turnpike from Palenville to Catskill. Its opening coincided with an immense increase in the scale of tanneries in Hunter including the enormous New York Tannery opened by Colonel William Edwards a little later.[22] By 1835, there were 32 tanneries in the mountaintop towns of Greene County.[23] Between 260,000 and 300,000 sides of leather worth from $800,000 to $1,000,000 was produced in the county in the mid-1830s.

Alongside the three tanneries in Lexington, millstreams in the town powered 15 sawmills, three fulling mills, three carding machines, and a wool factory in 1835.[24] The hamlet of Lexington encompassed 12 to 15 dwellings as well as a tavern, two stores, and the old Baptist meeting house.[25] Eight years earlier, in 1827, a schism had occurred amongst the Baptists. The very large congregation of more than 300 members disagreed over their aging minister, and a second society formed based in the hamlet of Westkill in 1830.[26] Both buildings survive. Westkill acquired a post office in 1833—an indication of increasing population in the upper valley. By 1835, Lexington Heights on the opposite, north side of the Schoharie Valley was a post village like Lexington on the valley floor.[27]

In years to come, the Greene County tanneries processed millions of hides brought to Catskill from far distant places including Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Uruguay, Argentina, Honduras, Mexico, California, and Buffalo.[28] The Prattsville and Hunter (Tannersville) operations would far exceed the output of the Lexington tanneries. By the mid-1850s, however, both large operations had consumed nearly all the hemlock in their vicinity, and they closed.[29] The industrial schedule of the 1855 census recorded Bushnell Conine & Co. in Westkill still in production. The previous

[20] Horne, xii-xiii.

[21] Spafford (1824), 575-6.

[22] Spafford did not mention this tannery in his 1824 gazetteer. He edited his entries for this section of the state from those of 1813 to reflect the considerable change; if this tannery had been open by 1823 or so, he would not have omitted it.

[23] Horne, 57.

[24] Gordon, 474.

[25] Gordon, 473.

[26] Beers, 362.

[27] Gordon, 473.

[28] Horne, 58.

[29] Horne, 58, says the New York Tannery closed in 1855. Zadock Pratt allegedly speculated in other regions as the local supply was obliterated, and I have not found a firm date when the Prattsville facility closed.

year they used 1,300 cords of bark to tan 200,000 sides of leather from 130,000 hides. The works employed 16 men, nearly all immigrant Irish men, who can be found living in boarding house accommodation in the immediate area in the population schedule. The 1856 Geil *Map of Greene County* shows A. Cornish's tannery on the north bank of the Schoharie Creek east of the hamlet of Lexington. This might have been the site of Bray's earlier tannery. A second tannery was shown just over the town and county line at Bushnellsville, but the one in Westkill had apparently closed in the interim.

French's 1860 gazetteer remarked that, "The result of all this was to facilitate the occupation of the lands by the mountain towns, and in many cases carry cultivation to the summits of the most lofty ranges, thereby opening one of the finest dairy and wool growing regions in the state."[30] This puts a rather optimistic face on the economic impact of the collapse of the tanning industry, which is surely indicated by the decline in population in Lexington from a high in 1840 of 2,813 to 1,657 in 1860.

Agriculture and Resorts (ca.1850–1915)

From the early period, tanning established a boom economy that paralleled the small-scale water-powered industries that processed grain, lumber, and cloth and agricultural endeavor in Greene County. Gordon's *Gazetteer of the State of New York* published in 1835 reported that Greene County produced for the market "large quantities of wheat, rye, corn, oats, barley, flaxseed, neat cattle and other livestock, beef, pork, wool, flour, hay, butter, and cheese."[31] The agricultural schedule for the 1855 state census may indicate which of these were characteristic of Lexington as opposed to other parts of the county where soils, elevations, and transportation opportunities differed. This census showed that hay, a crop required in urban areas where grass was not grown, was raised in considerable tonnage. Oats, a crop in demand in cities as well as at home, and apples were raised in large quantities. Dairying for butter production was also common, with most farms reporting several hundred pounds. No one reported cheese, and in the absence of a railhead, no one sold fluid milk. Wheat was no longer grown in Lexington. Buckwheat and potatoes were grown in domestic quantities.

All over the mountaintop region, farms clung to the narrow corridors created by the watercourses and were located at regular and fairly close intervals along the valleys of the Schoharie and the West Kill. The interval lengthened along the narrower tributaries including the Little West Kill at the western edge of the town, the East Kill, and other unnamed streams north of the Schoharie and in the Beech Ridge section on the east face of Vly Mountain. For a time beginning in 1849, the highway through Deep Notch (1,901'), which is among the lowest of the passes in the Greene County Catskills, was adopted as part of the Prattsville–Shandaken Turnpike beginning in 1849. The date of its charter suggests a plank road. These enjoyed a brief period of popularity in

[30] J.H. French, *Gazetteer of the State of New York, embracing a comprehensive view of the Geography, Geology, and General History of the State.* (Syracuse: G.P. Smith, 1860): 330.

[31] French, 469.

the 1840s and 1850s, but most were abandoned within a decade when the planks rotted. Also like many, this route was divided into highway districts to maintain it. [32] Between the hamlet of Westkill and over the divide to the small mill hamlet of Bushnellsville, which straddles the Ulster County line, there was little development. The 1867 atlas shows the upper reaches of the Esopus tributary were impounded in two millponds at that time. Also by 1867, one more highway, which only partly survives, ascended a tributary of the Esopus in Ulster County into the eastern part of Lexington. The highway crossed the ridgeline and descended to the West Kill. A small hamlet labeled Broad Street Hollow, or Forest Valley, centered on two sawmills and featured a schoolhouse.

As the bark extraction and tanning industry slowed in western Greene County, some Lexington residents sought other income, although Cornelius Connine remained in business. Eight Irish immigrants listed their occupation as tannery workers and lived in Benjamin Noel's nearby boarding house in the Westkill hamlet area. Connine was among Lexington's most well-to-do citizens: he owned $8,000 in real estate. Aaron Bushnell, the Connecticut Yankee who was among those who inaugurated large scale tanning in the region and now age 75, owned $17,000 worth of real estate. A chair factory employed nine men who lived in the house of William Mosier.

The 1850 federal census records early signs of summer resort development in Lexington: John Lament, Martin Lament, and Lucas Van Valkenburgh all listed themselves as hotelkeepers. The 1856 map shows J.M. Lament at the west end of the hamlet of Lexington; a house labeled simply "Lament" was on the highway now designated CR 13 north of the hamlet. There are many Van Valkenburgs, especially along the upper valley of the West Kill, but none appears to be L. Van Valkenburgh. His initial is noted on a large house on the north side of the highway in Lexington in 1867, and this may the Inn labeled on the 1856 Geil map at the east end of the hamlet. The 1867 atlas labeled H.A. Martin's house at the west end of the hamlet; Horatio A. Martin opened his hotel in 1863.[33] D.C. Deyoe's Inn was shown on that map on the West Kill just south of the bend in the watercourse, not far from Deep Notch. While the Inn in Lexington was conveniently sited on the main route through the valley, Deyoe's hostelry commanded a sublime view, which was depicted in Schile's guidebook in 1881.[34]

Surely Lexington hotelkeepers took their cue from places farther east in Greene County, especially the very successful Catskill Mountain House in the Pine Orchard built in the town of Hunter in 1824. By the 1860s, a growing number of varieties of summer holidaymaking were offered in the eastern United States. Such activity remained in the purview of the well-to-do who could afford leisure time, but more rustic offerings emerged alongside the spa culture of large hotels that offered ample dining and comfortable beds. Daytime easy walks, carriage rides, and

[32] Beers, 362.
[33] Beers, 447.
[34] This guide was published by H. Schile.
http://www.catskillarchive.com/illustration_of_the_catskill_mountains/greene.htm#72.

rowing in gentle natural settings, preferably against a background of romantic scenery, contrasted with evening dancing and other entertainments. A few weeks in nature offered an antidote to living and working in urban areas.

Authors like Harriet Beecher Stowe, William Dean Howells, and others described in happy detail holidays based in the rural—as opposed to the truly wild—landscape in the 1860s and 1870s. Alongside this trend, George Washington Sears, writing under the pen name Nessmuck, regaled readers of popular magazines with his sporting adventures in the Adirondacks. A canny reader could see that western Greene County with it high peaks rising above the meadows and pastures of prosperous dairy farms offered something for everyone. Writing in 1884, Holton called those in Lexington who opened hotels and boarding houses "wide-awakes" for being open to this economic opportunity.

During the 1870s, several Lexington residents began offering what was probably fairly simple boarding house accommodation supported by ample board often drawn from the property's dairy and garden. Beers *History of Greene County* listed several with the year they opened to guests. Schuyler Chamberlin opened in 1875 on a 100-acre property on Beech Ridge. In 1884, he could accommodate 50 guests. A. Van Valkenburgh opened his Maple Grove House in 1877 and enlarged it in 1882 to host 30. J.S. Thompson opened the Lexington Heights House a year later in the Faulkner homestead allegedly built in 1790.[35] This appears to have been on the ridge north of the Schoharie. Although Thompson rebuilt the house for 25 guests, he was capitalizing on its ancient pedigree by proclaiming its pioneer roots. This strand in the mythos of summer holidays was especially strong in the years surrounding the nation's centennial—a date made all the more poignant by the recent Civil War.

Lippincott's Magazine of Popular Literature and Science, one of a number of widely read publishers' magazines, offered an article about the Catskills in September 1879 voicing the emerging conservation view of the time. The author wrote with irony that:

> It is a fortunate circumstance for the lovers of Catskill scenery that the present generation of landowners have awakened to the necessity of preserving the beauty of their forests and wooded nooks. The most magnificent forests have been hitherto wantonly sacrificed on every hand to the paltry needs of the hour. The pioneer and early settler is a true vandal, and the instinct of destruction is strong within him, while he has not the discrimination to choose the place he is to devastate, and ends by injuring his own property for generations. It is a strange sight to see the landowner who has relentlessly given over acres of magnificent oaks, chestnuts and pines to the woodchopper, setting out puny saplings to build up shade and beauty again for his possessions.[36]

Indeed, the illustrations associated with guides produced by Walton Van Loan and Harry Howe in the 1880s show hillsides rising to surprising elevations with few trees. The author in *Lippincott's* discouraged the expansion of railroads in the Catskills and mocked the appearance of Tannersville

[35] Beers, 447.
[36] http://www.catskillarchive.com/misc/lippincott.html

festooned with telegraph wires. He decried the open-topped wagons that replaced the old stagecoaches, from which all passengers must step down to allow the horses to draw the load up steep roads.

Lexington, which remained accessible only by stage line to the end of the era, offered an experience different from the one in places along the Ulster & Delaware Railroad on the far side of Deep Notch at Shandaken.[37] When guides began being published to the western Catskills in the early 1880s, Lexington hotelkeepers offered directions to their patrons that began with a day steamer on the Hudson or a ferry ride across the river from the Hudson River Railroad on the east bank. One might take a stage from Catskill to Lexington, where one would be met by a wagon. A stage line traversed Deep Notch and connected Lexington with the U&DRR, which could be met at Rondout. By 1885, three stage lines had offices in Lexington.[38] Regardless of route and conveyance, holidays of this sort required advance planning and a commitment of time. Such a lengthy journey was only made worthwhile by a sojourn of some time at one's destination. Van Loan's guide encouraged the potential visitor, saying "A ride through the Deep Hollow Notch, whose sides are each more than 1,000 feet high (almost perpendicular) above the narrow roadway, is alone worth the trip to this summer resort."[39]

By the early 1880s, some Lexington entrepreneurs expanded or built newer, larger hotels, which boasted many modern conveniences. Bernhard O'Hara, formerly a storekeeper in the hamlet of Lexington, opened a large boarding house in 1875, which he expanded in its sixth season to accommodate 125. Located about a "ten minutes' walk from the village of Lexington," it offered "bath-rooms, closets, and other modern improvements." O'Hara's advertisement in the Van Loan's *Catskill Mountain Guide* informed prospective guests that the hotel was also a farm of 250 acres "affording an unlimited supply of fresh vegetables, milk, cream, and butter." The place offered a "climate of great salubrity" where "malaria and mosquitoes are unknown." And, it offered a spectacular view of the surrounding mountains from its veranda.[40] Many proprietors boasted of verandas and piazzas, some even stating their dimensions! Open porches can require more upkeep than the rest of a house exterior, but they were important selling points. In Lexington, as in other places of summer resort of this period, a capacious porch might identify a former boarding house or hotel.

Two years later in 1877 John Van Valkenburgh opened the Lexington House on the south bank of the Schoharie just west of the recently built Whipple through-truss bridge. This wrought iron bridge built at a cost of $9,000 replaced an earlier span, which may have been washed away in a spring freshet the previous year.[41] A freshet in 1869 took the woolen factory, a sawmill, and a

[37] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulster_and_Delaware_Railroad.

[38] Harry Howe, *Picturesque Lexington and Catskill Mountains*. (n.p. [1885]): 4.

[39] Walton Van Loan, *Catskill Mountain Guide with Bird's-eye View, Maps, and Choice Illustrations*. (New York: Aldine Publishing Co., 1882): 58.

[40] Van Loan (1882), 59.

[41] Beers, 365.

cider mill in Westkill.[42] The new Lexington House accommodated 50 at the outset. A separate 10' x 100' building offered roller skating and dancing. The main building featured two parlors; a piano and an organ; billiards and pool table; boating; and fishing.[43] The Schoharie Creek was dammed to create Crystal Lake in the center of the hamlet.[44] For at least another 60 years, this little lake offered boating and swimming, apparently not only to Lexington House patrons. On the south bank of the creek, Charles White advertised his Crystal Lake House for 30 guests in Harry Howe's 1885 *Picturesque Lexington and Catskill Mountains.*[45]

Howe listed approximately 25 hotels and boarding houses offering lodging for more than 500 visitors in Lexington.[46] Quite a number of these can be linked to houses mapped in 1867, and they are found throughout the developed areas of the town. The business had spread from the nuclei of Lexington and Westkill onto Beech Ridge and farther up the West Kill to Spruceton, which Howe described as "still in its infancy" in the summer boarding business with two stores, a school, a post office, and several pleasant resorts.[47] Location surely played a role in the type of clientele each served. Most ranged between 15 and 60 guests. Two specified no Jews. Quite a number noted their elevation, which may reflect the work of geologist Arnold Henry Guyot (1807–1884). In the early 1880s, he surveyed the peaks of the Catskills and discovered that the tallest was Slide Mountain in adjacent Ulster County rather than Kaaterskill High Peak as proprietors of the Catskill Mountain House had proclaimed for decades.[48] Recording property elevations may reflect a greater interest in the scientific aspects of nature amongst some visitors.

Despite the amount of ink spilled creating and updating guides for summer visitors and the efforts put into modernizing and expanding summer resorts, census records show that farming formed the economic mainstay amongst Lexington's ever-diminishing population. Holton's 1884 account described all areas as primarily dairying districts. In Lexington, "modern appliances of its production are generally in use." On Beech Ridge maple sugar shared top billing with dairy production. And, in the West Kill valley, "the chief business is dairying, and cows are kept and tended by the scores."[49] Heads of household were almost all farmers regardless of locale; those who were not infrequently reported themselves as hotelkeepers. Instead, they were tradesmen of various sorts. Some of the larger boarding house establishments included a woman—usually unmarried, often not from Greene County—listed as a "servant." These households do not seem especially well-to-do, but nearly all can be identified from guidebooks as boarding houses. How the

[42] Beers, 361.
[43] Beers, 447.
[44] Beers, 447.
[45] Howe, 12. Harry Howe was a penname for journalist George Hastings, who lived in Lexington.
[46] Howe, 10–23.
[47] Howe, 6. The Spruceton post office was opened in 1879 with Walter C. Van Valkenburgh as postmaster.
[48] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catskill_Mountain_House.
[49] Beers, 353, 355, and 362.

Lexington House and the O'Hara House–the two large, comparatively luxurious establishments–were staffed is not indicated in the decadal censuses through 1900.[50]

The census also records the steep decline in population in Lexington from its peak in 1840. It fell to 2,263 in 1850, and then to 1,657 in 1860 and 1,371 in 1870. It fell more gradually over the next 40 years to 1,054 in 1910. The number of households declined less rapidly–a declining birthrate and possibly an increased tendency for younger people to leave home probably both played some part in this statistic. By the time the fieldwork by the United States Geological Survey for the 1903 maps of the region was completed, the decrease in settlement density was very apparent. In the upper West Kill valley, the highway was no longer maintained east of the town line. Only the ends of the road opened between Peck Hollow in Ulster County and the West Kill valley were drawn. Throughout the West Kill valley and at the west end of the hamlet of Westkill, the work of millwrights–dams and the millrace south of the hamlet–went unmapped. Along the old Prattsville–Shandaken Turnpike (now NY 42) descending the West Kill, residential density was far less changed from 1867. This was also generally true along the Schoharie Creek outside the hamlet where farms were still located at fairly regular intervals. The steep upland area north of the creek featured fewer than 20 dwellings in a region with more than twice that number 40 years earlier. There was a similar reduction in density in the steep valley of the Little West Kill and also on Beech Ridge, where the decline was similarly dire.[51] The tiny hamlets of Bushnellsville and Broad Street Hollow straddling the Ulster County border were nearly gone.

The lack of a direct, generally low elevation rail line may have deterred potential summer visitors[52], but its profound effect on the dairy business is surely recognized in the decline of population and the loss of farms in Lexington. As the industry shifted ever more to shipping fluid milk to creameries at railheads or even directly into the New York City milk shed where the milk was turned into a variety of products, individual butter producers suffered unless they could tap into a specialty market. The degree to which Lexington farmers could change from traditional seasonal milking to year-round production is unknown, but the shorter grazing season at higher elevations probably hurt these farmers.

The Catskill Mountain Preserve and the Rip Van Winkle Trail (ca.1904–1965)

When New York State adopted a new constitution in 1894, it was influenced by a variety of political and economic factors to designate a forest preserve to be "forever kept as wild forest

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[50] The census was filed in June. If the record was compiled earlier in the year and these hotels had transient staff as was typical in other summer resorts, staff may not yet have arrived for the season. Alternatively, local people may have worked in the hotels, but did not regard it as important relative to winter occupation.

[51] http://docs.unh.edu/NY/phoc03ne.jpg; http://docs.unh.edu/NY/phoc03nw.jpg; http://docs.unh.edu/NY/gilb03sw.jpg; http://docs.unh.edu/NY/gilb03se.jpg.

[52] The Rand McNally guide published in 1899 included a "Map Showing Summer Resorts among the Catskills reached by Day Line Steamers." The town of Lexington was encircled rather than accessed by the recommended routes. https://archive.org/stream/randmcnallycosil01chic#page/n227/mode/2up

lands." The Blue Line designating the Adirondack Park was drawn soon after. A line marking the Catskill Forest Preserve was drawn using a variety of boundaries including Hardenbergh Patent lines, watercourses, and town boundaries in 1904.[53] A sign on NY 42 north of Bushnellsville states that one is entering a part of the forest preserve acquired in 1932; this appears to be land that lay within the 1904 boundary, but was privately owned and later acquired by the state.

The designation probably had little effect on the day-to-day lives of Lexington residents and visitors. In 1911, the *New York Times* remarked:

> "Few of the interior villages throughout the Catskill Mountains possess more natural attractions than the charming village Lexington, which is located in the heart of the prettiest section of the Catskills.
>
> "Crystal Lake, one of the prettiest sheets of water in the Catskills, is the favorite haunt with the people who are summering here, and during the week has been crowded with visitors. Automobile parties from other sections of the mountains show a decided increase in number as the season advances.
>
> "The O'Hara House is having one of the busiest seasons in recent years."[54]

Automobile tourism was altering the way Americans went on holiday. Further, *more* Americans went on holiday. While few could afford the long summer vacation for which the large hotels of the 1800s were designed, a growing number could go for a week or even a weekend to a place within striking distance of their city residence.

For Lexington, isolated as it was from the railroad, auto tourism seemed promising. In an effort to enhance auto tourism in the Catskills and Hudson River regions, the state inaugurated a set of five "trails" along existing highways. These included the Mohican Trail (now NY 23 from Catskill), the Rip Van Winkle Trail (now NY 23A), also out of Catskill; the Onteora Trail (now NY 28), from Kingston; the Minnewaska Trail (now NY 44 and 55) across the Hudson River from Poughkeepsie, and the Shawangunk Trail (now NY 52) from Newburgh.[55] The Rip Van Winkle Trail, named for Washington Irving's character who fell asleep one afternoon in the mountains and awoke 20 years later, was built and paved by convict labor beginning in 1914 and was completed in 1921.[56] It ran from Catskill to Palenville roughly following that ancient turnpike and then followed the old Hunter Turnpike as far as Prattsville, where it connected with the Mohican Trail to form a loop over the ridge through Ashland, Windham, and Acra to Cairo. The route was known for several notable features including the Palenville Curve and its superb panoramic views.

In 1923, the Greene County Chamber of Commerce published a guide to the loop formed by the Rip Van Winkle and Mohican trails called *"The Land of Rip Van Winkle." Greene County*

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[53] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adirondack_Park. The Catskill Forest Preserve is administered by the Department of Environmental Conservation, as is the Adirondack Park. Each is delineated by a "blue line" drawn on the state map. In 1938, the article in the constitution was renumbered Article 14, but the clause survives.

[54] 22 July 1911. *New York Times* online archive.

[55] *New York Record*, "Jesse Brown's Sports Whirl," 14 August 1965, p.12.

[56] NYSED signs funded by the Moutaintop Historical Society and placed on NY 23A.

Catskills. Geared toward summer touring, it detailed places to visit and provided an accommodations list. Of Lexington, Westkill, and Bushnellsville, it described Lexington as a "beautiful village, almost surrounded by mountains, Vly Mountain the highest, reaching an elevation of 3,900 feet. Crystal Lake and Schoharie Creek provide aquatic amusement and excellent hotels bring crowds to Lexington during the summer." It listed the O'Hara House, now managed by Edgar O'Hara, and still able to accommodate 125 guests; and Mrs. M. Herman's Lexington House for 100 guests. Five more places, probably simpler boarding houses offered another 170 beds in Lexington. West Kill valley hostelries included H.C. Flick's Westkill Hotel and W.M. Dunham's Spruceton House. Chamberlain's and Humphrey's could each host 25. Four smaller boarding houses were mentioned in Bushnellsville.[57] A few of the places listed specified that only gentiles were welcome.

During the 1920s, many travel writers published accounts of summer travel on the Rip Van Winkle Trail.[58] During the Depression, it appears that the Catskills offered a comparatively inexpensive holiday, but as the nation began to emerge from financial straits—and before it entered World War II in December 1941—a group of local resort owners formed the Rip Van Winkle Trail Association to help improve business through signage and leaflets. They even planned to take booklets about the Catskills to the World's Fair opened on Long Island in 1939.[59] A few months later, resorts owners in Lexington published a half-page ad in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. The banner featured images of Crystal Lake surrounded by pictures of bathing, boating, dancing, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, and tennis. Five hotels featured ads. Italian-Americans owned the former Lexington House on the south side of the creek near the bridge and the Villa Abbate. The old O'Hara House offered excellent Armenian cuisine.[60] While the town's population had fallen below 900, it appears that its makeup was changing subtly.

How the declining population was reflected in farming, the underlying mainstay of the local economy, is so far not understood in any detail. A handful of barns dating to second half of the nineteenth century can be found on remote properties in the Little West Kill valley, on Beech Ridge, and in North Lexington; none of these appears to have been built after 1900, although quite a number exhibit alterations typical of the first half of the twentieth century. Throughout dairy regions where standards were changing rapidly but the overall economy was in decline, farmers commonly responded by altering existing infrastructure. Banked foundations to shelter stanchion areas and gambrel roofs to enlarge mow space were the most typical changes during the late 1800s. Some built silos in the 1900s, although at very high elevation, the corn that filled them sometimes required a longer growing season than occurred in a given year. The old creamery on

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[57] Barrett, Richard S. *"The Land of Rip Van Winkle." Greene County–the Catskills*. Catskill, New York: The Examiner Print for Chamber of Commerce, [1923].

[58] A search using "Rip Van Winkle Trail" on fultonhistory.com turns up thousands of hits in papers published in New York State.

[59] "Organize New Business Association," *Greene County Examiner-Recorder*, 26 January 1939: p.1.

[60] "Rip Van Winkle Trail," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 4 June 1939, p.44.

NY 42 in the hamlet of Lexington appears to have been built around the turn of the twentieth century. Such facilities gathered fluid milk for bulk shipment or for processing into less perishable products such as butter and a variety of soft cheeses, most commonly cream cheese and cottage cheese. If the condition of buildings and the vintage of improvements is a judge, farms in the Schoharie and West Kill valley enjoyed greater longevity than those in the steep cloves, on Beech Ridge, or in the North Lexington area.

During this period, Lexington centralized its school districts, probably in response to incentives offered by the state to improve the quality and level of public education in rural areas. In the 1867 atlas, there were approximately 15 one-room schoolhouses. The 1903 USGS maps shows three rural schoolhouses in Lexington, although there appears to have been one missed that still stands in Spruceton, and there were surely schoolhouses in both of the larger hamlets. The remaining schools were closed, and schoolchildren attended classes in the new centralized district school—a handsome Moderne brick building near the foot of NY 42 at the edge of the hamlet of Lexington. In this period, newly centralized districts generally chose between designs based in the neoclassical tradition and the new streamlined Moderne taste. The choice of taste might indicate how a community viewed its future.

In a different part of Greene County, the Catskill Mountain House closed for good after its 1941 season. The age of the large frame hotel lay at death's door; the era of the less costly farm-based boarding house was not far behind. Further, post-war prosperity engendered rapid changes in American tourism by the end of the 1940s. Automobile technology increased the speed of travel; highways were redesigned to allow people to travel farther and to bypass the tourist cabins, tent grounds, and boarding houses that once were the stage for family vacations not very far from home. The Lexington House, which had changed hands a few times beginning in the late 1800s, became an arts and music camp for Jewish children in the 1940s and 1950s before closing altogether.[61] Writing a generation later in 1968, one author remarked that the automobile "has in general adversely affected [Greene] county's tourist industry as it has increased competition from the country's other tourist areas."[62] The Catskills, one of the founding locales of the American tourism industry, was having trouble holding on.

At the same time the increasing scale of farming in the post-war era was bypassing the region's economic mainstay as Lexington farms could simply not compete. In 1950, Lexington's population dropped to 698 persons. Statistics published in the mid-1960s recorded that less than 30% of Greene County acreage was cultivated. This is eerily close to Horatio Gates Spafford's belief expressed 150 years earlier in 1824 that only about a third of Lexington's land could be

[61] https://cris.parks.ny.gov/Uploads/ViewDoc.aspx?mode=A&id=27881&q=false. Item 8, page 8.

[62] "Greene County: Resort-Oriented Area Aims to Extend Vacations," *Albany Times-Union*, (18 February 1968): 28.

farmed. About a half the county's farms were dairying. Like the county's population, the number of acres in agriculture was falling fast, from 136,459 acres in 1959 to 118,203 just five years later.[63]

Nevertheless, in 1952, Arrowhead Publishers, based in nearby Haines Falls, brought out an extensive new guide to the Greene County Catskills.[64] And, the state opened the Belleayre ski area on NY 28 to the north. It was hoped this would lengthen the traditional 10-week summer season to include a winter season. Two privately owned ski areas, Hunter and Windham, opened before the decade was out.

Reimagined Region of Resort, post–1965

Since the mid-1960s, Lexington's population has stabilized around 800. A few farms in the Schoharie valley engage in sugar production, logging, and cattle raising. There may yet be some small crop and hay operations in the West Kill valley. Tourist accommodations appear to be limited to two motels built at the end of the historic period, one in the West Kill valley between Westkill and Spruceton and one on NY 23A west of the hamlet of Lexington, and some bed and breakfast operations. The 2000 census recorded a population of 830 living in 375 households. The same census counted 854 housing units. The latter figure suggests that a majority of housing units in Lexington are seasonal—either rental properties or second homes for people who live somewhere else.

Some portion of tourism in Lexington is oriented to the pattern of wilderness recreation established long ago in the high elevation boarding houses. The New York State Department of Conservation maintains trails at the east end of the West Kill valley (these are accessed from Lexington, but lie mainly in the adjacent town of Hunter) and oversees woodland and water resource management in much of the town. Outdoor recreationists continue to use the high peaks of the Catskills, although apparently not to degree enjoyed by the Adirondacks in the northern part of the state. One writer notes that it's a common expression to say that the chair of the commissioner of the DEC faces north from Albany.[65]

Throughout the town, at the ends of ancient roads reaching high into the cloves, some people began building modest frame houses tucked into the surrounding forest. Most appear of these appear to date to the 1960s and later. Some of these houses may be remodelings of much older ones. In North Lexington and on the north side of the West Kill valley, especially, new housing is being constructed on suburban-style subdivisions at high elevations. These houses range in scale from modest to large and ostentatious; most are surrounded by acres of lawn that offer the owner a view, but also makes these houses visible for miles around. The cleared sections

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[63] "Greene County: Resort-Oriented Area Aims to Extend Vacations," *Albany Times-Union*, (18 February 1968) p.28.

[64] Eric Posselt, owner and publisher of Arrowhead Publishers in Haines Falls prepared *The Rip Van Winkle Trail. A Guide to the Catskills.* It provided maps and illustrations in its 208 pages. It is a difficult book to find. Googlebooks turned up a single copy at the University of Michigan, and so I have not reviewed it.

[65] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catskill_Park. Norman Van Valkenbergh repeats this in his Centennial article for the Catskill Mountain Association.

dotted with houses tend to diminish the majestic scale of the surrounding mountaintop landscape as the houses provide a familiar size reference for their setting. This kind of development embodies another example of clearing the land not unlike the wholesale collection of tanbark during the 1830s and 1840s. There is also new housing, some of possibly predating World War II, on NY 23A. These newer houses are generally spread out on house lots carved from older farms.

Conclusions

The town of Lexington is located in a section of the mountaintop region of the Greene County Catskills drained mainly by the West Kill, the largest and most important of several tributaries of the Schoharie Creek in the town. These two watercourses define much of the geography of the town, although there are additional smaller tributaries of the Schoharie valley and also of the Esopus valley, that form the topography of steep hillsides cleft by streams forming deep cloves and cascades. In the 1810s and 1820s, people in Lexington opened roads to what seem surprisingly high elevations throughout the town. These reached remote house sites long ago sunk back into the earth. The narrow tracks and miles of stone fences running through second growth forest are the sole reminders of the labor exerted to clear fields high above the Schoharie valley. While the majority of Lexington settlers were New Englanders, who had a timber frame building tradition, some were of Dutch or Germanic descent. A stone dwelling house constructed in the 1780s on the south side of the Schoharie Creek is an unusual survival and has been previously determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Schoharie Valley defines a low elevation route connecting the Hudson and Mohawk river valleys through this section of the Catskills. While the Schoharie Creek itself carried little or no waterborne traffic, it offered mill seats and, in this region, an ample water supply for tanning leather using the bark stripped from the abundant hemlock trees cloaking the hillsides. Mills and tanneries were also seated in the long L-shaped valley of the West Kill, especially in the gradually descending upper valley. As the bark was depleted during the 1830s and 1840s, the cleared hillsides in Greene County supported grazing for dairy cattle and hay and oat production. For a time, water-powered mills made chairs and bedsteads and continued to process woolen cloth woven locally, the product of Lexington sheep. But, by the post-Civil War, manufacturing was shifting quickly to steam power centered in urban ports; rural water-powered mills ceased operations. In Lexington, the long millrace that wrapped the back lots of the hamlet of Westkill can still be traced, but of other buildings and other operations, the evidence is largely archaeological.

By the latter part of the nineteenth century, agriculture formed the mainstay of Lexington's economy. Despite its far greater economic importance, in writing of the time, it was resort development that distinguished this region from other farming districts. The broad agricultural landscape at lower elevations (generally below 1,700' and mostly below 1,500') provided a pleasant middle ground for summer holidaymakers as the summer resort industry—still centered farther east nearer the Hudson River—spread westward into the more remote mountaintop region of the Greene, Ulster, and Delaware counties. Many simply relaxed and socialized on verandas in the open air and enjoyed the gustatory pleasures of fresh local butter, milk, cream, and garden produce. The venturesome could clamber up the hillsides to peaks where the forest was rapidly cloaking the devastation of the bark cutting industry of the 1830s and 1840s.

Automobile tourism and a growing middle class expanded patronage of Lexington hotels and boarding houses in the early 1900s. The improvement and paving of the Rip Van Winkle Trail—the former Hunter Turnpike and the main route through the Schoharie valley—was completed by New York State in the early 1920s. Auto tourists tended toward peripatetic holidays: they drove and stopped along the way for short visits to local attractions and spent each night in a different place. This pattern differed greatly from the earlier summer stay in a single place for weeks or even months. These travelers favored tourist cabins, campgrounds, and simple eateries.

For roughly a century from the 1850s through the 1950s, people in the town of Lexington responded to tourist demands by opening a variety of accommodations. Farm families opened boarding houses throughout the town. Those on Beech Ridge, in North Lexington, and in the upper West Kill valley vaunted their high elevations as healthful and visually pleasing. Those at lower elevations tended to advertise convenience to stage routes, churches, telegraphy, and, after the mid-1880s, the pleasures of the newly impounded Crystal Lake in the hamlet of Lexington.

Quite a number of farm boarding houses can be identified throughout the town by large, plainly built wings and ells designed for summer patrons. The greatest number of these survives in the valleys of the West Kill and Schoharie Creek. Three entrepreneurs opened larger hotels in the hamlet of Lexington: all survive with good or very good historic integrity although in varying states of deterioration. These include the Queen Anne-style O'Hara House, the plain Italianate Lexington Hotel, and the picturesque Lexington House. The last is previously NR listed, as is the former St. Francis de Sales Catholic church at the east end of the hamlet. The Crystal Lake dam was broken by the mid-1960s, but for three or more generations, it offered boating, fishing, and swimming.

Many boarding houses and the big hotels remained in business throughout the auto tourism period extending into the 1960s. A few built motels, a new type of accommodation that replaced the tourist cabin popular in the pre-World War II period. Of the latter type, Lexington appears to retain a few isolated examples. Ski tourism developed in the Schoharie valley in the 1960s with the opening of Hunter Mountain in the adjoining town of Hunter, but it is unclear how much effect this had on the accommodations business in Lexington where virtually all such buildings were designed for summer use. On the whole, the town retains far more evidence of the earlier summer resort pattern rather than the later auto tourism period.

In addition to auto tourists and the hotel-boardinghouse clientele, a few people chose to Lexington as a country home. Some constructed houses like the elaborate Echo Farm estate on the Ulster County line and possibly the former Nelson farm in the West Kill valley, where the front portion of a rambling boarding house was remodeled as a fashionable bungalow. A handful of remodeled houses can be found in addition to the diminutive and highly intact bungalow on Mark Drive on Beech Ridge. Additional bungalows on tiny lots line the Chamberlain and Howard roads, the old alignment of the Deep Notch road along the West Kill, and Bushnellsville Creek in that hamlet. A few more modest, apparently seasonal, dwellings stand on small, heavily wooded parcels at the ends of high elevation roads.

By the early 1900s, fluid milk increasingly dominated the dairy market. Refrigerated rail cars were essential to move milk in bulk to creameries for processing and markets for sale. At the same time that dairy farming in the Schoharie valley suffered from the lack of a railroad, the market for hay and oats—both important in urban horse-drawn economies—fell rapidly as steam and gasoline engines replaced horsepower. Even a booming summer resort season, which had functioned on the mountaintop much a cash crop might in other agricultural economies, couldn't make up the difference. High elevation farms were abandoned, and lower elevation farms including ones in the upper West Kill valley struggled to hang on.

Agricultural buildings in Lexington represent this chronology although not in very large numbers. A small number of pre-1860 barns, some set on later banked stone foundations are found in the upper West Kill valley and in the Beech Ridge and North Lexington sections. A few larger, later gable-roofed and gambrel-roofed barns built to serve dairy and commodities farms can be seen in the West Kill and Schoharie valleys. Another example survives in North Lexington, and yet another at the end of Kipp Hill Road. A few are associated with silos, mainly concrete block but also at least one wood stave example. These represent the introduction of ensilage in the early 1900s. A few separate horse barns dating mainly to the last quarter of the nineteenth century are associated with farm buildings at all elevations up to about 1,500' in Lexington. In all, these buildings illustrate vernacular forms and virtually no details beyond corner and frieze boards.

Suburban-style housing subdivision is the most recent pattern evidenced in Lexington. A variety of strip lots, cul-de-sacs and loops are platted, mainly at fairly high elevation, frequently in sections that were abandoned by the early twentieth century. Examples are found on Beech Ridge, at the top of the Little West Kill valley, and throughout North Lexington. None of these subdivisions is fully developed, and some are so wooded that only a tax parcel map reveals their existence. Two more subdivisions are platted on old farmland on the north slope of the West Kill valley, one just west of Spruceton and the second about two miles west towards the hamlet of Westkill. These are similarly underdeveloped.

It remains to mention changes in historic transportation infrastructure carried out after the historic period in Lexington. In 1977, six iron bridges were documented in Lexington, most of which were later replaced. These included both Pratt through-truss and early "pony" truss examples, four over the Schoharie Creek and two over the West Kill. There are several more recently built spans over the West Kill, both in the upper valley and north of the bend. It is unknown when these were built; historic mapping indicates they must also have replaced historic crossings. The Whipple through-truss bridge built in 1870 in the hamlet of Lexington was replaced in the first half of the twentieth century by the present plate-and-girder through-truss bridge. Both state highways in Lexington feature realignments. A short segment of NY 42 was straightened in the mid-1900s; Howard and Chamberlain roads formed the earlier alignment. In the Schoharie Creek valley, NY 23A was rerouted to bypass the hamlet of Lexington. This allowed the state to widen the route—an impossibility without removing buildings from the narrow main street lined on both sides—but it may have reduced the number of visitors in the hamlet.

Recommendations and Eligibility Considerations

This survey was undertaken as part of the comprehensive planning process in the Town of Lexington in Greene County, New York. The fieldwork undertaken in the survey reviewed the town's historic resources with an eye to a sense of historic context. Rural historic landscapes are better reviewed as groups of resources considered in the aggregate because their components work together to generate a feeling of history or sense of place. As a group they are associated with the historic development and use of a place, and it is in their collective associations and physical relationships that the greatest degree of historic meaning can be understood. By and large, the architecture tends to be vernacular rather than high-style. The buildings function as tools for varying purposes that support the use and development of the land. Thus, the spatial organization of the land and even its vegetation play roles in defining a rural landscape. Lexington's built environment and historic setting preserve a notable amount of this kind of historical meaning. Virtually all of its historic resources have greater potential meaning when considered as a group rather than individually.

While many people may not know all the historical details, they feel the sense of place these resources engender. This report endeavors to document the historic context in which the resources might be more fully understood. Such understand can aid in in the planning process, where decisions might be made that encourage Lexington citizens to consider the impact of types of subdivision, the reuse rather than the demolition of older buildings, and possibly events expanding local knowledge about the town's resources and their significance.

The survey findings may also be useful in the review process for state and federally funded or permitted projects under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and Section 14.09 of the State Historic Preservation Act of 1980. A context statement such as the one provided here and the presentation of properties for eligibility for inclusion in the State and National Registers of Historic Places helps SHPO to determine potential impacts on resources. In rural areas, where the resources often are not individually eligible for listing, it is especially helpful to have a document that discusses the larger picture. While New Lisbon retains historic architecture dating to nearly all periods of its development, many of these resources have lost a degree of integrity that may render them individually ineligible for listing through renovation using non-historic materials, but they may be eligible as part of a larger setting if they retain aspects of integrity of feeling, location, association, and location. These aspects of integrity are important components of a sense of place—an important part of designating districts and possibly large properties such as farmsteads.

A determination of eligibility (NRE) does not list resources in the National Register, but it affords more detailed review in advance of work that might have an impact on identified eligible properties. Such context statements encourage a harder look at the effect on resources and can also be useful tools for local environmental reviews under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) of 1974.

The National Preservation Act of 1966 accords review for eligibility for inclusion in the National Register to cultural resources having passed their fiftieth anniversary. This section of the report presents a property list divided by type of resources that may be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRE). The list is compiled by type and location of resource. The primary steps in constructing such a list include applying the four NR criteria to resources and establishing themes of significance of which they are representative. All, or nearly all, eligible resources in Lexington meet Criterion C. This criterion acknowledges resources that are representative of broad patterns in American history. Eligibility also depends upon how well a resource or group of resources preserves aspects of historic integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Applying the NR criteria is a subjective task. This survey may be lenient in applying the criteria in some cases. And, as a town-wide review taken from the roadside, it may miss some resources. It aims to identify a broad set of properties that both define and represent the character of Lexington.

While eligibility offers some protections from state and federal actions, nominating individual properties and districts to the State and National Registers of Historic Places affords opportunities for tax credits and also grant funding for properties owned by 501(c)3 corporations and municipalities. District nominations open up these benefits to more owners than individual property nominations. Lexington encompasses two hamlets, Lexington and Westkill, that appear to be eligible as National Register Historic Districts. The latter might be better considered, however, as part of a larger district encompassing the upper section of the West Kill valley. There are additional properties throughout the town that might also be eligible individually or *via* a Multiple Property Document that identifies non-contiguous properties sharing themes of significance. Preparing National Register nomination forms takes some time and expertise, although a group of volunteers with guidance can successfully do this task.

Before the onset of this survey, the Lexington House hotel and the former St. Francis de Sales Roman Catholic church were listed in the State and National registers. Two additional properties, the stone house on Van Road and Echo Farm on Echo Farm Road were previously determined NRE, although neither has been listed. I have not provided photographs of this property because it is amply documented. An additional six bridges were assigned Unique Site Numbers (USNs) and added to the New York State inventory in 1977. These are all gone. A list of these is provided in Appendix 4 of this report.

In addition to these previously identified properties, this report presents more properties and districts that may be eligible for listing. The following annotated property list provides location and photographs of each property. Each section is preceded by a brief discussion of how the criteria have been applied for the type of property in that section.

Historic Hamlets/Districts

The Town of Lexington incorporates two hamlets, Lexington and Westkill, both strongly representative of hamlet development patterns during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the Greene County Catskill region. Lexington is located on the Schoharie Creek just above its confluence with the West Kill. The hamlet of Westkill parallels the latter watercourse farther upstream.

The hamlet of Lexington represents regionally significant patterns of transportation, community development, and resort development during the period ca.1800 through 1965. The hamlet is set within the larger agricultural landscape embodied at the east end by two large farm properties. One hosted the O'Hara House, one of the large resort hotels; the second retains two houses, one or both used as boarding houses.

The hamlet of Westkill located at the sharp bend in the West Kill where it leaves the upper valley and descends to the Schoharie Creek is a characteristic mill hamlet of the first half of the nineteenth century. It features houses, a post office, and one church built in the mill and tannery era. Later, in the resort era, many houses were remodeled as boarding houses; the second church was built; and more houses and at least one store were added. Westkill might be best considered, however, within the larger landscape context of the upper West Kill valley where there are several additional examples of boarding houses, the hamlet of Spruceton represented by its church, and a number of generally intact farmsteads. Open, formerly agricultural, land rises several hundred feet above the valley floor to wooded Forest Reserve lands managed as part of the Catskill Park. This setting provides the landscape context in which agriculture and resort development supported people in the West Kill valley as well as the hamlets of Spruceton and Westkill from the mid-1800s through the mid-1900s.

While the methodology is well-established for preparing hamlet and village nominations, larger landscape district eligibilities are more difficult to evaluate, possibly because reviewers tend to focus on individual buildings rather than the representative and largely intact patterns in which they are set. In such eligibilities the individual buildings and outbuildings are the smallest components in a larger landscape defined by its spatial organization, circulation systems, and use patterns. These are very clearly shown in the tax parcel maps, and a study boundary is proposed in the mapping included in this report.

In addition to maps indicating study boundaries in the hamlet of Lexington and in the upper West Kill valley, photographs detailing individual properties and some representative views are provided. These are organized by area, and then alphanumerically within each group. These show that both areas present a strong sense of place. In both places, owners have added non-historic building materials to their dwellings, and relatively few buildings retain the materials and comprehensive plan of workmanship that would make single properties seem obviously eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, but as assemblages forming districts representative of National Register themes of significance both appear eligible.