

## **General Assembly Mandated Roads, 1756-1783 \***

The first mention is of a road proposed by the Proprietors of Windsor in May 1756, when they appointed a committee to “run a line round said Colebrook and erect proper monuments and lay out a highway six rods [99 feet] in width northward through said town as near the middle thereof as they shall judge most convenient for ye accomidating [sic] traveler and the inhabitants that may thereafter settle in said town.”

May 1760 – The General Assembly described the so-called Greenwoods Road from Simsbury [but now Canton] to Canaan and ordered the committee responsible for its construction have it passable by team and horse by the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1761.

1762 – The survey of the route of Highway #3 was done. [The actual entry in the Colebrook Proprietor’s Book, page 258 (red), is June 16, 1767; five years had passed before the entry was entered. The reason for the designation “red” in reference to this book is that two or three systems of numbering have been used over the years, none of which agrees with another. The system written in red ink is considered to be the most comprehensive.]

Using today’s terminology, Highway #3 begins at the convergence of the Old North Road and 268 Smith Hill Road. It goes northward to Colebrook Center, where it becomes Connecticut Route 183, and remains on that route until it comes to Prock Hill Road in North Colebrook in front of 2 Prock Hill Road (Phelps Tavern). Number 3 followed up Prock Hill Road to the Massachusetts state line, where it continues on as the Old New Hartford Road in Sandisfield, Mass., until eventually meeting up with Mass. State Route 57.

Although today it may seem strange to see the name “Old New Hartford Road” applied to a road in Sandisfield, Mass., Remember that in the 1760s, New Hartford, Connecticut was the last frontier town before entering the wild lands to the west. Once up in these hills in those days, if you found that you absolutely had to have something that could only be purchased, the nearest town was New Hartford.

Sept. 18, 1764 – A committee consisting of Erastus Wolcott, Josiah Phelps, Nathaniel Filley and James Rockwell to lay out all necessary roads in Colebrook and to exchange the common lands on [paper] roads in said township for the purchasing thereof.

Agreed and voted that the lots in the several divisions of land in Colebrook shall lie parallel with the line betwixt the township of Colebrook and the township of Winchester.

The term “paper road” is a geographer’s term that describes a non-existent road, but which has been inked onto a map so that the area necessary for a road can be accounted for at a later date. For example, let’s say that the page this is printed on, before any words are printed, is known to require 15% to be left blank upon completion. You don’t know at first where the blank spaces will be, but if you had left a margin along one side, which occupied 15% of the surface, when you were done, the text, which occupies 85%, could be moved anywhere on the page. 100% of the page would then be utilized.

Oct. 7, 1765 – Asked the General Assembly in New Haven to accept the laying-out of Highway #3. [They did.]

1772 – The re-alignment of the supply road from Salisbury to Richard Smith's forge in Colebrook was accomplished. Page 13 of our town records reads: "A committee approached the General Assembly in Hartford and presented a petition from Richard Smith praying for a new highway to be laid out and to repair to the several townships and places where and through which said road is appointed to be laid and consider whether it be necessary that a new highway be laid out to accommodate the publick and to depart from the old road in the best and most convenient place between the dwelling house of Jonathan Merrils in New Hartford and the west bounds of Barkhamsted. From there to ye iron works of Richard Smith and to meet with the old road near ye dwelling house of Joseph Rockwell in Colebrook." [Modern terminology defines this location as 250 Smith Hill Road. The road referred to here is Deer Hill Road. Prior to its construction, pig iron from Salisbury had to travel down the Old North Road (Smith Hill) to the present gasoline station at the junction of Conn. Routes 8 and 20. Then they turned northward along Route 8 to Robertsville Road, and so on to the forge site.]

"And on finding it necessary and convenient that a new highway should be laid out to proceed to lay out the same, and a report made in pursuance of your honor's instructions, we having by Maj. Erastus Wolcott notified all parties concerned, did on the second day of instant time repair to the Town of New Hartford and be viewed and heard all parties concerned, B---?—to report that in our opinion there is great need of a new highway to be laid from the old road near the dwelling house of Joseph Rockwell in Colebrook, eastward by the iron works of Richard Smith and passing on the east side of the Farmington River to meet with the old road east of the bridge in New Hartford a little west of the dwelling house of Jonathan Merrils, [Satan's Kingdom Bridge today]and have proceeded to lay out the same as followith *viz*:

"Beginning at the east side of the road about 8 rods [132 feet] north of Joseph Rockwell's house, then running eastward by a number of marked trees as the proprietor's committee have surveyed. This is about one mile and three quarters to a maple tree marked standing about 10 rods [165 feet] west of the iron works. Then S-E, passing Sandy Brook about 10 rods north of where it enters Still River, then down on the bank of said river [leaves Colebrook here] about one and one-half mile to near where the place where Farmington River and Still River meet. Pass over Farmington River West Branch in the most convenient place for building a bridge within 50 rods [825 feet] of the place where that and Still River meet." [Note that apparently there were no buildings where Riverton now stands; otherwise mention would have been made to them,]

For the complete text concerning this road, see the chapter entitled Richard Smith's 1772 Highway.