

Missing Milestones

by J. E. PETERSON

Sherlock Holmes might have called it The Case of The Missing Milestones. The Plainville Historical Society is somewhat less formal about it than the famous detective would have been but just as persistent.

To date, the society, still less than one year old, has located two of Plainville's 150-year-old mile markers and is scouting around for the third.

The 14-mile marker is back in place on East Street—part of the old Hartford-New Haven Turnpike which was laid out in 1690. The 13-mile marker has been recovered and will be replaced as soon as the ground thaws at Blossom's Corner, the busy intersection of Routes 10 and 72.

Yet to be tracked down is the 12-mile marker.

The ancient, brownstone monuments are survivors of a series of milestones which once stood at regular intervals down a road which was already old when Rochambeau's troops tramped along it on their way to help defeat Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown.

These stones were erected by the various towns along the way a few years after adoption in 1796 of a state statute "obliging the several towns on the post road to erect monuments showing the distance from the several county towns on said road."

The same act provided a \$7 fine for towns which did not erect milestones and a similar fine for persons convicted of pulling them down or defacing them.

Law or no law, few milestones were placed on Connecticut turnpikes after 1820. They were too expensive.

And fine or no fine, many of the old stones disappeared over the years.

The brownstone markers were originally two feet high and a foot wide. They bore the letters H—for Hartford—and M—for miles—and a Roman numeral indicating the distance from that point to Hartford.

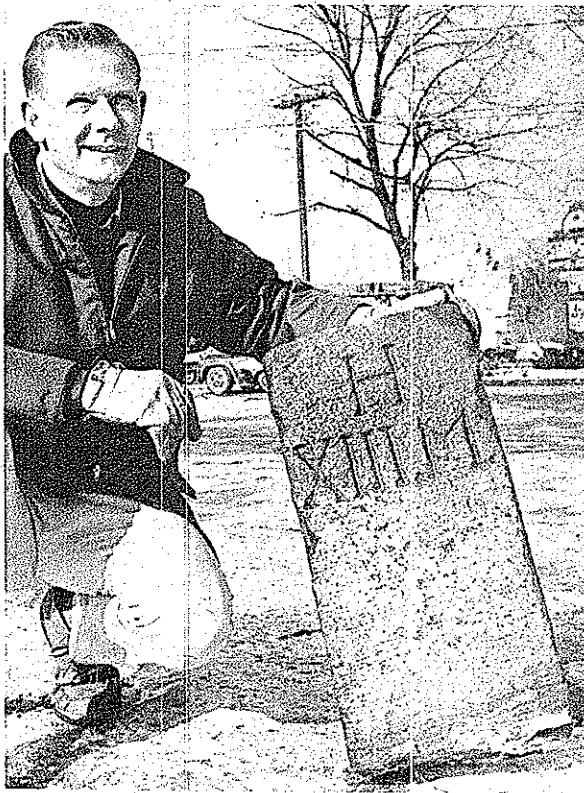
Members of the Plainville Historical Society spotted the 12-mile marker last fall by checking at mile intervals from an existing milestone in Farmington. Broken and tumbled over, the 12-mile stone was half covered with earth and grass.

Subsequently, the Connecticut State Highway Department replaced the top half of this stone so that it is once again visible from the busy College Highway.

Publicity in the Plainville News some weeks later caused Russell Stilwell, proprietor of the Sherwood Service station, exactly one mile up the road, to get in touch with Mrs. Robert Hummel, president of the historical society.

"I've got one of those stones," he said, "holding up a trailer."

Some snow shoveling by Stilwell, some straining by two of his employees and a good wash job with a hose revealed that indeed he did have one of those stones. It



Russell Stilwell, a service station owner, found this 13-mile marker being used to prop up a trailer. In earlier day it stood at the intersection of Routes 10 and 12 in Plainville.

was the 13-mile marker in almost perfect shape.

The 12-mile marker stood as late as 1959 at the intersection Rt. 10 and Betsey Road. Soon after that it vanished.

At about that time the grade on adjoining property was being changed as a preliminary for commercial development. Some say the stone was taken into safekeeping by the State Highway Department with the understanding that it was to be returned when the grading was done.

But to an inquiry, J. D'Aquila, district engineer, replied, "... we have checked our storage areas and have interviewed personnel who might have information about the marker which was removed at Betsey Road and Rt. 10 without success."

Plainville is not the only town in which the milestones have suffered indignities. Few, if any, remain south of Plainville's recently restored 14-mile

marker as the traveler crosses Southington.

At least two markers are left in Cheshire, one of which is now on the opposite side of the highway from where it originally stood. One, and possibly more, of the old monuments are still on the job in Hamden.

Of all the towns along the old turnpike, Farmington retains the largest number—four—of the stones.

The 11-mile marker, either broken or half buried, stands at the edge of a hillside housing development. The 10-mile marker is in mint condition and occupies a prominent spot in front of a fence as you enter Farmington Village.

At the oppsite end of this splendid, old, main street is the next milestone, now only half its original height. Farmington's fourth and final marker is found at the intersection of Wolf Pit Road. It is in good condition.

The only remaining milestone between the 8-mile marker at Wolf Pit Road and the Hartford City line is the 4-mile stone which stands at the intersection of Farmington Avenue and Four Mile Road in West Hartford.

Barring major disaster, it should remain at this spot for years to come because it is well protected by a pipe frame built completely around it.

As historical-minded citizens in Plainville search for their final, missing milestone they hope that persons of a similar mind will make an effort to replace some of the other missing links in this ancient highway chain.

"It would be nice to think," one of them said recently, "that these old milestones could go on 'showing' the way for centuries to come."



This stone marks eight miles at Farmington Avenue and Wolf Pit Road in Farmington.

J. E. Peterson of Plainville is a free-lance writer who keeps his eye on the road in his search for the unusual in Connecticut's past.

MYLESTONING in CONNECTICUT, 1757 - 1971

PROLOGUE

As the Autumn foliage disappears from the countryside and before the Winter snows arrive, and, again in the Spring before it reaches full bloom, the observant traveler may note the seasonal reappearance of those familiar landmarks along the Connecticut roads and highways. They are the survivors of some 600 such stones put there back in the latter half of the 18th century and the early part of the 19th, marking the measured mile to the County Court House in the era when the County town was the administrative center of local affairs. The pressures of progress and the attrition of time had so decimated their numbers that up until 1970, they were merely a vanishing footnote to history.

Driving westerly along the beautiful Connecticut Turnpike from Killingly on the Rhode Island (Providence Plantation) line to Greenwich on the New York border, it is very unlikely that one will ever catch a glimpse of these unique milestones, even though this modern toll highway closely follows the route of the "Lower Road," the youngest of the three Old Boston Post Roads. (See chart.)

The "UPPER ROAD," Boston, Worcester, Springfield and Hartford, was the oldest of the three colonial Post Roads linking the Massachusetts capital with New York by way of Connecticut. It was also the route of the first stage line (1785) and the first railway (1849).

Washington, on his way to take command of the Continental Army under the elm at Cambridge, July 3rd, 1775, traveled over the "MIDDLE ROAD," the second of the through highroads. It ran out from Boston to Dedham and Uxbridge where it entered northeastern Connecticut at Pomfret and continued westward through Coventry, Bolton

Notch, Manchester to Hartford. The Middle Road joined the Upper at Hartford and proceeded to New Haven via Berlin (outfitting depot for Yankee Pedlars), Meriden and Wallingford. All three Post Roads merged at New Haven to form the trunk road to the Bowery terminus on lower Manhattan Island. This is the section which might properly be called the Old Boston Post Road, U. S. 1.

~~From the day the first colonial roadside stone was planted,~~ unto this Year of our Lord, 1971, a very persistent legend has grown up around the Honorable Ben Franklin and his contributions to the Connecticut milestone chronicle. For more than two centuries this gratuitous fiction overshadowed the true essence of the milestone record and probably inhibited probative research until 1954. In that year, Yale University began the collation of The Papers of Ben Franklin under the editorship of Dr. Leonard W. Labaree.

(Note: The following passages from Professor Labaree's letter deal only with the merits of the so-called "Franklin Myth." The evidence is negative and circumstantial, and in no way does it reflect upon the stature of the great and good Franklin.)

The following statement on Benjamin Franklin and roadside milestones represents the conclusions of the editors of The Papers of Benjamin Franklin on the question of Franklin's possible connection with the erection of milestones on roads along which mails were carried during his tenure as deputy postmaster general of America.

On August 10, 1753, the postmasters general in Great Britain appointed him one of two joint deputy postmasters general of America. He served in this capacity until January 31, 1774, almost twenty and a half years. During Franklin's tenure of this office he was in

America from 1753 until July, 1757, and from November, 1762, until November, 1764, a total of only about six years. During the rest of his tenure he resided in England as agent of the Pennsylvania Assembly, or was in ocean transit.

We assembled Franklin's writings, in manuscript or in print, the surviving letters he wrote, and those he received. These detailed studies, therefore, include all his papers written while he was in America prior to the outbreak of the American Revolution. Not one document in this very substantial mass of contemporary documents has been found to contain so much as a single reference to roadside milestones, erected by Franklin or by any other person.

The deputy postmasters general determined the specific routes on which the postriders traveled. The Post Office officials had no responsibility for the building and maintenance of these roads, bridges or ferries. The Post Office did not spend a penny on this work. Milestones, like bridges and other facilities and the roads themselves, would have been the responsibility of the local authorities, not of the postal service.

Milestones were essentially an embellishment, helpful on through roads from one town to another for the private traveler who might not be familiar with the road he was traversing, and who would like to know how far he had come and how far he had still to go before reaching his destination, and who might also want to assure himself that he was on the right road. Milestones were of no particular use to the postal service, for the postriders were thoroughly familiar with the roads they traveled.

The convenience of other travelers, on the other hand, was not

the Post Office's responsibility or concern. There seems to have been no good reason why Franklin should have spent time, energy, or Post Office money in erecting milestones, and, as stated above, there is no documentary evidence that he ever did.

There are, however, long-standing traditions, especially in New England, that connect Franklin directly with the erection of milestones. In some instances these traditions can be easily disproved, for they concern roads along which Franklin never personally traveled, or roads that ran between towns in which there were no post offices during his period of service. Other roads were occasionally traveled by Franklin himself. It is a striking fact, however, that in his letters and papers written during this time he never mentioned milestones.

If Franklin did in fact erect any such milestones on the main road between New York and Boston, there could have been only one occasion when he could have done so: the fall of 1754. He and Hunter, the other joint deputy postmaster, went to Boston on Post Office business in September, 1753, returning during the following January and February, and they might conceivably have erected milestones on the northern journey. Such activity on that northern journey appears to have been most unlikely, because of Hunter's poor physical condition. Traveling southward during January and February as they did, during the coldest part of the year and with Hunter still far from well, they certainly did not concern themselves with any project for erecting milestones. Anyone who has ever tried to do any pick-and-shovel work in the frozen ground of New England during January and February, even when in the best of health, will understand why this southbound trip must also be ruled out as an occasion for planting milestones.

The only other time during Franklin's tenure of the office that he went to New England was a trip with Foxcroft, Hunter's successor, and Franklin's daughter Sarah, June to November, 1763. It has been said that during the northbound trip Franklin set up some milestones on the road between Woodbury and Litchfield, Connecticut. But neither town had a post office at that time, so Franklin and Foxcroft, on a postal inspection trip, would have had no occasion to visit either town. Equally important is the fact, thoroughly established by contemporary documents, that the party went from New York City to Newport, Rhode Island, by water through Long Island Sound, and never set foot on the soil of Connecticut. From his correspondence we can construct a very detailed day-by-day itinerary of the return trip. The rate of travel makes it appear quite impossible that the deputy postmasters general could have taken the time to measure the roads and plant stakes at which workmen, following along behind, would erect milestones. Nowhere in the account are there any entries for the purchase or preparation of milestones, for the wages of workmen who might have done the physical work of erecting the stones, or for the cartage of the stones. It is certain that they erected no milestones during this New England journey of 1763.

Franklin left for England the following year and when he got back to Philadelphia in the spring of 1775, the war was on. The Continental Congress soon appointed him postmaster general of the United Colonies, but then he was sent as emissary to France in October, 1776. He had no occasion to travel the roads and plant milestones, even if roving bands of British soldiers or armed Loyalists had permitted him to travel in safety.

It should be clear from the above why the editors of The Papers of Benjamin Franklin feel compelled to reject completely, as contrary to all historical evidence, the pleasant but unsupported tradition that Benjamin Franklin, as deputy postmaster general for America, ever had anything directly to do with the measuring of distances on colonial roads or the erection of milestones at suitable points along their courses.

LOGUE

So often these silent vestiges of another era are, themselves, the sole witnesses to why and by whom they were emplaced, and, one must look elsewhere for clues to their genesis. Any clear understanding of their unique history must relate to the contemporary scene at the time they were planted on their original sites.

From the beginning in 1635, every Connecticut crossroads village or town has grown up around its own green, its own church, and its own town meeting. In this "land of steady habits," they soon developed into self-contained "worlds in the little." This independent turn of mind was to have some significant effects on the milestone story.

Previous to the Enabling Act of 1767 of the Colonial General Court, predecessor to the General Assembly, and prior to the advent of the Turnpike companies, a "heap of stones" was the usual indicator of a known distance, as well as a guide to curves in the road. Crude as these cairns were, nevertheless, they were objects of pride to the townsfolk, and to the stranger they seemed as reassurance that he was on a passable road to somewhere. Acceding to the demands of the traveling public for more orderly road markings, the law of 1767 was passed. Conditions improved even though very little was done about it until the rush for highway franchises by the newly-organized turnpike companies precipitated plantations of stones all over the State.

The 1767 Statute "ordering that milestones, at least two feet high, be set up by the Selectmen of the towns near the side of the

common traveling roads and on the Post roads in every County marking the distance to the County town" proved to be merely declaratory of the intent of the General Court as no funds were appropriated for its implementation. The generality of the enactment left the final detail to local tastes and fancies, and the rule of uniformity, other than the "two feet high" and the measured mile, was defeated from the outset. To revolutionary and non-conformist Connecticut this was an acceptable regulation. Everybody got into the act.

Quarried markers of every size, shape, cut, and description appeared along the highroads of the day. Rock was immediately at hand and every geologic stratum, be it igneous (granite), metamorphic (marble), or sedimentary (sandstone), was used. Connecticut sandstone, the famous brownstone, the hallmark of early 19th century mansions in New York, became the more suitable choice for the stonecutters. This type is seen more often than marble and granite landmarks, but so-called fieldstone was also employed whenever the situation warranted.

This transition from the uncertain "heap of stones" to the regular milestone was undoubtedly a boon to the saddle-sore horseback rider, the weather-beaten stagecoach driver, and the foot-weary itinerant. It has been no such boon to the latter day recorder's attempt to reconstruct the history of these relics of two hundred years ago.

Unlike the Golden Stone in ancient Rome, whence all roads led, Connecticut had no single zero bench mark. The colonial market town and the county seat were the hub of all highroads in their district. The third smallest state had two capitals (New Haven and Hartford)

until 1375, long after the last series of roadside stones had been put in place. While these multiple centers exercised some influence over the style and cut of the stone used, the piecemeal and peripatetic planting of the mileage markers was not of their design.

Anyone attempting to classify the unique will quickly discover the unwieldy dimensions of the task. In his splendid pictorial survey, "Ye Mylestones of Connecticut" (New Haven Historical Society Papers, Volume X, 1951), the late Dr. Henry P. Sage of New Haven separated all the stones into three main groups according to time, Colonial (up to 1775), Intermediate (1775-1795), and the Turnpike era (1795-1825) with a few examples of the proprietary. Vintage periods have a built-in tendency to overlap one another; perhaps a new tack will aid delineation.

In retrospect, if all the original 600 stones were to be reclassified and catalogued as to their *raison d'etre* at time of plantation, a much clearer picture of their historic evolution would emerge. The new headings would read: Colonial, Act of 1767, Stage Coach, Turnpike, and Proprietary.

The custom of erecting some form of wayside marker along the highroad and on the village green or common had its antecedents in Anglo Saxon Britain and was brought to the New World by the first emigrants. The tradition flourished briefly in all thirteen colonies, but the plantations were spotty, usually along the Post Roads, and, except for Connecticut, the practice of systematic emplacements declined after the Revolution. The odd half dozen colonial stones scattered about the state are typical reminders of the rural character and insularity of mind that dominated the early settlements.

All the colonial stones were placed on their original sites as the result of some action taken by the local town meeting.

At this period it was seldom that anyone had business beyond the purview of the village green. However, the common was not always to be the only marketplace, since a nearby town located on an accessible highway or post road might provide a better outlet for local produce. While all community activities centered around the village green, some folks ventured outside to get to market. The new market place reached the dignity of "Market Town" when the village folk indicated their acceptance of the fact by putting in a mileage marker giving the distance to the new center. In cases where the Market Town was on one of the established colonial roads, the village stone might give the distance to a more remote market place, but usually the distance inscribed on the milestone represented the limit of local horizons. These singular landmarks were to be the precursors of the Connecticut milestone tradition, and the rule was fixed then that: "He who ordered roadside stones set, settled for them.

In the days when the traveled highway was little more than a single-lane trail cut through the wilderness, the issue of "To" or "From" incised on some wayside marker was of small concern. On the other hand, in compliance with the 1767 Act, the decision of the local Selectmen to put the roadside stones on the right side of the traveled highway had a very significant effect on the future course of the milestone saga. One may only speculate as to whether the American tradition of "keeping to the right" was imbedded with these 18th century roadside monuments. The colloquial "from," meaning merely distance, is still part of the New England dialect, but it

lacks a sense of direction, and, therefore, was unsuitable for a symbol cut in stone.

The wording of the 1767 Law read: "Selectmen of these towns to erect and keep up milestones, at least two feet high, near the side of the common traveling road marked with the distances from the County Town of the County where such Town lies." This statute was revised to read "County Court House." From the outset, the inscriptions on these statutory stones substituted the word "to" in place of "from" as in the Act. For instance, a series of milestones would

have "2 Miles to
Hartford
Court
House"

(See picture) The "to" conveys the element of direction if the traveler is oriented. Later the inscriptions would only give the number of miles in Roman or Arabic and the initial or monogram of the County town. (Note: The stone in the picture is called the Silver Lane Stone. It formerly stood on the right side of the old Revolutionary Road coming up from Lebanon through Bolton Notch to the ferry landing in East Hartford. It was renamed Silver Lane in honor of the French under Rochambeau, who passed this way and paid for their forage and rations in silver coin, something unknown to the colonists during the sixth year of the War, 1781. Rochambeau was to cross Connecticut by way of Hartford and Danbury to join up with Washington at Yorktown that October.)

If the Enabling Act of 1767 failed to induce an immediate and colonywide planting of roadside markers, it succeeded in fixing the ground rules for all subsequent milestone programs in Connecticut. From this date on, the official sanction of the Establishment extended to any mileage stone that indicated the distance to the

County Court House. Whether this injunction was spelled out or implied, the emphasis was on the directive "to." (Note: The colonial stones along the old Post Road out of New York City give the distance "from" N. Y., possibly a mile to mile warning to the traveler to turn back?) Some Connecticut mileage stones give two distances in the inscription; the old Hartford, Litchfield, Danbury roadstones give the distance to both Hartford and New York. In the eastern part of the state, the Wyndham stones tell the mileage to Wyndham and Boston.

By the time the turnpike stones were to appear in such profusion, four decades after the 1767 Act, the American tradition of traveling on the right side of the road had been firmly entrenched throughout Connecticut, and it should come as no surprise to learn that the interpretation of "to" as the correct intent of the 1767 Act led to the adoption of the custom of keeping to the right on American roads.

As a consequence of the custom of planting milestones along the right side of the traveling road, the wayfarer could reach the County town, if he kept the mileage markers on his own right side, and, like his 20th century counterpart, he was more interested in where he was going to than where he was coming from. The modern, all-purpose, illuminated highway sign has very little in common with the isolated stone landmark standing beside the old high road.

It would be very difficult to estimate the number of milestones planted in accordance with the Act of 1767; the Law was directory rather than mandatory, leaving the emplacement policy up to the individual villages and towns. One of the best examples of stones

still remaining on their original sites is to be seen in the Town of Farmington. Four of the original series, Nos. XI, X, IX, and VIII, are to be found on the right side of the College Highway and Route 4 in the center of the town. They stand two feet above the ground and are of the sandstone material.

At one point in the research for this study, it was truly believed that some general distinction might be drawn between the use of the classical Roman numerals or the Arabic. It was thought that the 1767 stones might carry the former, and the turnpike stones the latter; however, the unique character of the stones precluded any such simple formula, each plantation was a rule unto itself.

Despite an inbred Custom and the encouragement of a new Law, the milestone population increased very slowly in the latter half of the 1700's. No sense of urgency developed until the local (intra-state) stagecoach companies saw in the mileage marker a convenient method for computing coach fares. The through stages (interstate), Boston, Hartford, New Haven, and New York, paid no attention to local milestones in their arithmetic; their unit charges were adjusted to a principal-town-to-principal-town schedule.

Around the turn of the century, 1800, Thaddeus Sikes of Suffield operated a local stage line from the Massachusetts border to Windsor via New Hartford. Some years ago an invoice from the Town of Suffield to Sikes was found, dated October 20, 1812.

Against the background of time this rare document sheds some light on two important aspects of the milestone legacy. First, it illustrates the fact that the placing of mileage stones was a secondary matter in the operations of both the stage lines and the

turnpike corporations. These highway users were in business long before they got around to erecting milestones along their rights of way. Carriage rates and toll charges had been fixed from the inception of the enterprises. Had it not been for the existing milestone tradition, these entrepreneurs might have chosen some other symbol to dignify their *raison d'etre*.

Secondly, the Suffield invoice provides the first official record as to the actual cost of a milestone plantation. Previously, Provision 2 of the 1767 Act had imposed a penalty of \$7.00 for each stone the local selectmen of the towns had failed to put in place; however, this stricture met with characteristic indifference, and the plantations were not made until they "got good and ready."

The Sikes bill listed the amount of \$11.34 for seven stones, at 8 shillings each plus an overall charge of \$2.00 for cutting and painting. The 8 shillings (\$1.33) per stone raises the question of the date of emplacement. The U. S. Silver Dollar was authorized in 1792 and minted in 1794. How long after this date the shilling remained legal tender is not recorded, but it would seem to indicate that the plantation occurred before the year of the invoice, 1812..

The records of the old Middlesex Turnpike Company (Old Saybrook, Chester, Middletown, and Wethersfield) disclose that it paid \$216.00 for 36 stones (41 to 6 inclusive), this cost broke down to \$158.00 for the actual stones, \$26.00 for cutting and painting, and \$32.00 for measuring and planting, or \$6.00 each. The placements were made in 1822, twenty years after the corporation was formed in 1802.

The most prolific planting of milestones probably occurred during the years 1800-1840. It is estimated that roughly seventy

per cent of the "original 600" stones were set in place on orders of the turnpike companies during this period.

The turnpikes in that era were located at the company's principal place of business, the toll house or toll booth. These pikes, which either raised like those at the modern grade crossing, or swung as a gate, barred progress along the road from both directions until a fixed toll had been exacted. The unit tolls were set by the companies themselves and were usually based on the principle of "all the traffic will bear."

Turn their pikes as they would, nothing could stay the spread of the Connecticut "shunpikes," (literally, shun the pikestaff.) These coarse and uneven back trails led away from the main highroad some distance ahead of the toll gate, and, plunging through the wilderness, circled the toll booth, rejoining the highway at a respectable distance beyond and out of sight of the gatekeeper.

Whatever useful purpose these shunpikes served, they were notice to the turnpike companies that their corporate image was in need of a new profile. Something had to be done to allay the rising resentment against the unfettered private monopoly of the public way. Many users felt that they were not getting their "two bits worth," the bit was a small coin, value 12½¢, based on the 1785 Dollar, pieces of eight.) It cost one bit for a single horse and surrey to pass through the turnpike and another bit for the return trip, no discounts, fringe or no fringe. The public relations officer, probably the gatekeeper, had a ready answer at hand, milestones. The idea of roadside mileage markers caught on and the period of turnpike company plantations was under way.

Hopes were high that these novel, well-shaped, and clearly-incised stones, standing along the right side of the road marking off the measured mile, might create a mystique that would justify a continuation of the turnpike franchise. In truth, they were little more than window dressing and status symbols, as they had nothing to do with the calculation of the corporations' already-established toll charges. For whatever reasons the turnpike corporations may have had for erecting these landmarks, Connecticut history has been enriched by these public gestures.

Litchfield County, situated in the northwest section of the old colony, has the largest number of the remaining Proprietary stones. One hesitates to ascribe any particular reason for this crop of unique markers, but when it is remembered that the county was settled by families from other parts of Connecticut, the traditional pattern emerges; the first colonists merely continued the custom of milestone emplacement.

Planted at personal expense and bearing the individual's name and a date, these Proprietary stones are to be distinguished as a class from the Colonial and other miscellaneous markers in that they conform to the general design and are integrated with other stones in the county.

One of the finest milestones in Connecticut belongs to this class. This stone made of white marble can be seen in the front wall of the Litchfield Savings Bank bearing the inscription:

33 Miles to
Hartford
102 Miles to
New York
J. Strong
A. D. 1787

The haphazard plantings led to diversity in size, shape, choice of stone used, and a disregard for any attempt at uniformity. Thus, there is no so-called Connecticut milestone in the sense that one would see the same kind of mile marker throughout the State. If there is a Connecticut type of milestone, it would have to be of the red sandstone from the quarries around Portland, Connecticut. These are usually about 40 to 50 inches long with 20 to 30 inches above ground level. They are, as a rule, 9 to 11 inches across the face and about 3 to 6 inches thick. The inscriptions vary from planting to planting. Some use Roman numerals, some have the Arabic with the "M" for miles and letters of similar size for the initials of the Courthouse or Town ahead. All milestones were put in on the right side of the road depending upon the direction of the County town. On some series the initial of the County town would be found at the top centre of the stone. On others it might be the number of miles inscribed in that top centre position. However, often the information was all on a line midway between ground and top with the mileage at the left side, "M" next, and then the initials of the particular County town.

This red sandstone, really a reddish brown, weighing from 100 to 300 pounds, was kept in an upright position by buttressing with other rock below ground level. It was not easily removed from the original site, unless a deliberate attempt was made to displace it. Floods caused some losses, otherwise it would require a block and tackle operation.

Back in 1800 it was predictable that water seepage might cause some of these chunks of sandstone and granite to subside, but the

effects of lateral vibration set up by the pounding of heavy traffic on the highways was entirely unforeseeable. During their useful period, no doubt, steps were taken to arrest the sinking process, but after 1850 and up to the present day, their preservation has been left to individual exertions. Others have disappeared forever, although some may be rescued one day. The Silver Lane Milestone now in the Old State House Museum at Hartford was fortunately rescued by Dr. Howard Haylett from complete subsidence on its original site in East Hartford.

By 1840 milestones had come of age and they were important, yet the end was near as to their useful life. Public reaction to feudal toll practices and indifference to road maintenance of the turnpike corporations, combined with the coming of the "steam car" and the steamship, brought about a shift away from-highway travel. From this time on, the rugged symbol of the measured mile began to lose its importance and to vanish from the public scene, but there are scores of them still resting on the original sites, a steadfast reminder of their place in the scheme of events. The erosion by exposure to the four seasons during the past generations has defaced some, the attrition of time has ravaged others, but disastrous floods and the action of man and machines have brought about the greatest dispersal and removal from their ancient implacements. Man and his machines can be partially absolved of blame, because it is the nature of the stones themselves that lies at the root of the mysterious disappearances.

Over the years many of the taller and thinner stones were broken by accident and cast away, because no one recognized what they

represented. Yet there is no record of any deliberate destruction. More often they were used to repair building foundations, since they were most suitable for such purpose, and there must be numerous instances of other such deployment.

The exigencies of road realignment, highway construction along the old turnpike, and other relocation of the main stream of travel have been the greatest disruptive factor in the dislodgment of these ancient monuments, but many still remain on their former sites. It may be a revelation to many that in the face of inevitable extinction the Connecticut Bureau of Highways has been the most constant and consistent protector and guardian of these old landmarks. Charged with the duty of creating new public roads and maintaining the old, it has been the least-heralded conservator of these historic roadside markers.

So many of the milestones have been removed for one reason or another that it is hard to foretell just where they are today. In sections of the State where super-highways or floods have overtaken the older roads, the educated guess is little help and the local resident remains the better informant. Patriotic groups have saved some of the markers by imbedding them in historic memorials. For instance, the Sabra Trumbull monument in Vernon, Connecticut, marks the site of the "6 Mile, Tolland Courthouse" stone. The number of unrecorded individual conservators is legion and a genuine effort is now being undertaken to canvass the entire State to learn and acknowledge the locations of these footnotes of the past.

This story begins and ends in the Constitution State. Connecticut families emigrating to the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania,

New Connecticut (Vermont, the 14th State), and the Western Reserve and Fire Lands of Ohio had more pressing considerations. The traditions of mile stone plantation and the village green were left behind.

EPILOGUE

Tradition in Connecticut has a tenacious quality that outlasts the winds of change. Acting upon the Statute of 1784 (Milestones to be Reset, Revised, 1963, Public Acts 226. Section 37), Governor Dempsey in June, 1970, authorized the State Highway Department to conduct a statewide census of all the maimed, broken and missing milestones within its jurisdiction. Lucille M. Fox, Liaison officer, Division of Conservation and Preservation, was given the overall direction of the restoration and replacement program.

The Norwich District (No. 2) was the first of the four areas to be surveyed. This district covers all of eastern Connecticut, and it was discovered that 168 out of the original 240 would have to be replaced. Time had taken its toll, particularly along the Old Middle Road. By the end of August last year, 45 replica stones had been delivered and were ready for resetting. In the Hartford District (No. 1) the recent survey reveals that only 44 of the 166 stones are left in place, several in very poor condition. New Haven District (No. 3) and Litchfield (No. 4) are scheduled to be surveyed in 1972 and 1973 with restoration carried out the same years.

When the Highway District Engineers and Mrs. Fox drew up specifications for the replacement milestones based on an inventory of markers existing or missing, it was decided that the preservation of the integrity of the colonial design should outweigh all other factors. After a prolonged search for suitable stone materials and a quarry to supply them, the Highway officials settled on pink and gray granite as the most practicable material for the statewide restoration program. With modern cutting tools, replications on the rock of

ages are preferable to reproductions on the less permanent sandstone.

The Milestone story might be said to have come full circle on December 4th, 1970, when the missing Hartford County zero bench mark was replaced with a brass disc 3 inches in diameter, with the actual bench mark in its center. It was fastened to the floor of the courtroom of the 1796 State House. It is now affixed to a spot in front of the old Two Milestone of the Silver Lane series in East Hartford. Both occupy a corner together in the old Court House, now the Old State House Museum, Main and Asylum Streets, Hartford.

By the autumn of 1973, all the replacement milestones should be resettled as nearly as possible on the original sites in the four districts of the State. Highway realignment, service stations, and other occupiers of the land may interfere with some of the restoration, in which event, the stone will be implaced near the former site. A most lasting testament to the integrity of the whole program comes from a lady in Higganum, who, upon seeing the new (21 Hartford Milestone), declared, "I thought the culprit who had made away with it had returned it." And, that is what makes "mylestoning in Connecticut" so delightfully rewarding.