

## **Immerse Yourself into Scenery and Culture As**

### ***You Walk Thru History!***

By Linda Morzillo

The Empire State Capital Volkssporters are looking forward to hosting the first post-convention walk by showing off the lovely Village of Cooperstown. Situated in central New York's Leatherstocking Region, the historic village is located in Otsego County at the southern tip of scenic Otsego Lake. This beautiful lake, also known locally as Cooperstown Lake and Glimmerglass, is nine miles long and finger shaped, but not considered a Finger Lake. The drive from Albany to Cooperstown is about 75 miles and takes approximately 90 minutes. The scenic route passes small towns, hills, valleys and farms, where, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, hops and brewing made vast fortunes in the area until a 1910 mildew blight obliterated the industry.

Native Americans lived in the Cooperstown area before European settlement. Walkers will view the burial mound where the remains of several Iroquois are interred and marked with a plaque: "WHITE MAN, GREETING! WE, NEAR WHOSE BONES YOU STAND, WERE IROQUOIS. THE WIDE LAND WHICH NOW IS YOURS WAS OURS. FRIENDLY HANDS HAVE GIVEN BACK TO US ENOUGH FOR A TOMB."

On August 9, 1779, during the Revolutionary War, General James Clinton opened a dam he had built at the outlet of Otsego Lake, which are the headwaters of the Susquehanna River. This allowed the river level to be raised and become navigable, thus allowing about 2000 men and 200 bateaux to meet General John Sullivan in Tioga, New York. Together, on August 29<sup>th</sup>, they defeated the Tories and Indians at the Sullivan-Newton Campaign, also known as the Battle of Newtown, New York (near Elmira). Walkers will see the dam site commemorated by a historic marker.

Perhaps the best-known resident of this village was James Fenimore Cooper, born on September 15, 1789 in Burlington, New Jersey. James' father, William, had purchased a patent of 10,000 acres in 1786. In 1790, the family moved to the frontier that became Cooperstown. After a time at Yale University and many subsequent adventures, James became a prolific American writer of over forty fiction and nonfiction books as well as journals and letters. Many people have read the Leatherstocking tales of Natty Bumppo: *Leatherstocking*, *Hawkeye*, *the Trapper*, *Pathfinder* and *Deerslayer*, as well as *The Pioneers* (or *The Sources of the Susquehanna*), a book where concerns about environmental stewardship prevail today. Cooper's 1826 book, *The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of 1757*, was adapted into a movie in 1992. Besides Cooper's gravesite at the Christ Episcopal Churchyard, there is a stately statue of him on the Cooper Grounds (or Park). Walkers will be able to see both as well as enjoy viewing the statue of the Deerslayer overlooking the Otsego Lake.

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum is the most well-known of five museums in and near Cooperstown. Just a three-minute walk (0.2 miles), from the museum is the location where fans gather each summer to see Baseball's Hall of Fame Game at Doubleday Field. People also visit Cooperstown to enjoy the Farmers' Museum, built on land once owned by

James Fenimore Cooper. Set in 1845 with living history and a carousel, it is the home of the Cardiff Giant. The Fenimore Art Museum and the Smithy are also located in or adjacent to Cooperstown and walkers will see both along the walk route. A fifth museum, Hyde Hall, is located several miles away on the north end of Otsego Lake within Glimmerglass State Park.

Walkers will see the yellow buildings of Clark Farms. Edward Clark owned half of the patent for Singer Sewing Machines. Two of his grandsons, Stephen Carlton and Robert Sterling Clark, used their fortune to promote art in several places including Cooperstown, Williamstown, Massachusetts (The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute is viewed on our seasonal walk in this college town), New York City and Yale University. Today, the non-profit Clark Foundation continues to promote art and assists various educational community, and environmental organizations. In fact, scholarships are awarded to deserving graduating seniors in thirteen nearby school districts.

Besides the books written by James Fenimore Cooper, our visitors may enjoy reading *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* by Alan Taylor, *The Clarks of Cooperstown* by Nicholas Fox Weber and *The Story of Cooperstown* by Ralph Birdsall. Many baseball-themed books are listed on the internet. Two are *The Road to Cooperstown* by James F. Vail and another of the same name by Thomas Stanton.

Those are just some of the highlights you will see in Cooperstown; this will be a memorable *Walk Thru History* with culture and scenery! After your walk, we hope you will visit these notable museums!