

Fall 2019

KING OF PRUSSIA NEWS

Information for
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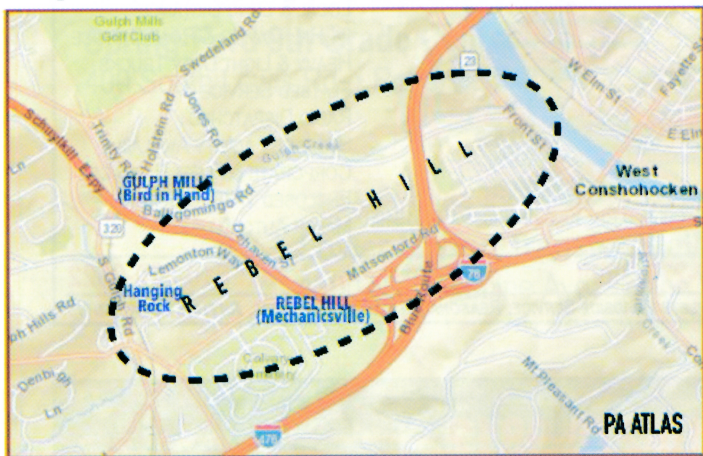
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REBEL HILL VILLAGE (MECHANICSVILLE)

est. 1953
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The construction of the Schuylkill Expressway in the 1950s had particularly dire consequences for one community in Upper Merion Township. Rebel Hill Village was one of the oldest settlements in the township, but the expressway doomed the neighborhood in two ways. First, it ripped through the hill, dividing the community in two. Second, it helped to shift the population center from the lower parts of the township to the King of Prussia area.

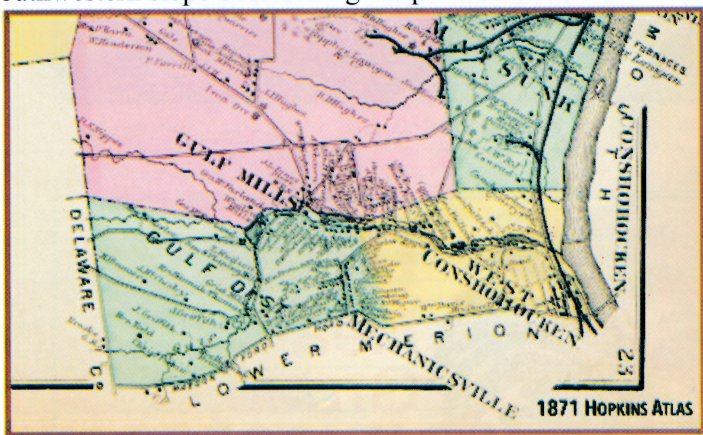


Geographically, Rebel Hill is an elongated prominence in Montgomery County that rises up from the west bank of the Schuylkill River in West Conshohocken and extends southwestward about 1 ½ miles to the east bank of Gulph Creek in Upper Merion Township. The hill is about half a mile wide for its entire length. Matsonsford Road traverses the hill's entire eastern base and Ballingomongo Road does the same on the West.

Most people believe that Rebel Hill acquired its name due to the patriotism of its residents during the



Revolutionary War when the Continental Army spent almost a week camped there before moving on to Valley Forge. The famous Hanging Rock, under which George Washington's army marched on their way to their winter encampment, protrudes from the southwestern slope overlooking Gulph Creek.



Historically, Rebel Hill Village was located on the eastern slope of the hill from the West Conshohocken border to Old Gulph Road. Because almost no one resided on the western slope, the citizens of Rebel Hill often referred to Ballingomongo Road as "the back road."

On December 8, 1952, the Schuylkill Expressway was completed between Valley Forge and West Conshohocken, effectively cleaving Rebel Hill Village and creating two neighborhoods where there once was only one.

Prior to the construction of the expressway, Rebel Hill Village was the kind of neighborhood where no one locked their doors at night and where every adult was the surrogate parent of every child. Dogs ran free, kids rode bikes in the street and grandfathers liked to wile away their days sitting in a rocking chair in the shade of an old apple tree. Kids spent their summer days swimming in Balmoral Lake, camping at Griffie's Rocks or fishing in Gulph Creek. Favorite winter activities included sledding on Hillside Avenue and ice skating on Balmoral Lake. Any time of the year was fine for hiking through the woods along the crest of the hill to the West Conshohocken Water Company's reservoir at the corner of Zielinski's Field. Although Rebel Hill Village was still intact in 1950, it was the eve of the neighborhood's destruction.

The above is an edited excerpt from a 2017 three part series, *The Demise of Rebel Hill* by John Hagan published in the *King of Prussia Gazette*. The *Gazette* is the quarterly publication of the King of Prussia Historical Society. All members receive a copy via post.
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