



ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP MATTERS

The Race Track's Geological Evolution

The rocks of the Tuxedo Park region were formed more than a billion years ago. Subsequently, through a series of collisions between continent-sized landmasses, the rocks were folded into the intricate and often-beautiful designs we see today. Erosion has planed off the once towering mountains formed by these collisions; the hills we see now consist of rocks more resistant to erosion than those underlying neighboring valleys.



The final sculpting of these hills and valleys is owed to vast glaciers that covered them as recently as 15,000 years ago. The Race Track basin probably once hosted a tongue of glacial ice that flowed into the Ramapo Valley. The action of this tongue steepened the walls of the Race Track valley by plucking away large boulders. An example of this plucking is a huge banded boulder on the right side of Fox Hill Road near the southeast end of the Race Track. (Photo on page 2.) Other boulders, similarly torn from the bedrock and some carried great distances by the ice, are now common on the

floor of Tuxedo Park's forest. When the glacial ice melted, it left behind deepened valleys with steep walls and piles of rock rubble that disrupted the drainage of streams and formed lakes.



The flatness of the Race Track suggests it was once a lake that could have been a watering place for mastodons. The lack of trees is evidence that, after the lake was filled with sediment and became a marsh, it remained too wet to become forested. This flat open space must have encouraged the early residents to use it for horse shows but much work was needed to drain the marsh and prepare it for this use.

The last horse show took place in 1941. The Race Track had since been abandoned and uncared for – until 2016, when the Village Board of Trustees voted to transform the space into a community nature preserve. The extensive drainage system created by Lorillard's son had collapsed. Consequently, a good part of the basin, especially at the southern end, is again dominated by marsh, swamp and seasonal wetland.

James D. Hays, Professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences, Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, Columbia University, and Tuxedo Park resident

For more information on the Race Track Nature Preserve, please visit www.tptreeboard.org