

### THINK I'LL JUST SIT HERE AND WATCH THE NEIGHBORHOOD FLOW ...

**Editor's note:** *Hilary Ann Lambert is a person with a driven curiosity; which makes her someone who gets things done. She's also executive director of the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network. When tinytowntimes.com asked Lambert if there was any reasonable count of the number of creeks, streams, freshets, rivulets and intermittent runs in Cayuga Heights alone, she contacted an associate who provided the map of the Cayuga Heights area you see below ... Whew. That's not easy reading.*

*Why, you may ask, do we care how many of these hillside latrines exist? Visit us at our uptown office on North Sometimes Sunset Road during a gully washer (or, regional, "warsher"). The entire area transforms from a quiet wooded suburb with a few trickly creeks into a gigantic hillside seep. It's a wonder the whole place isn't in the lake. Maybe it is and we're in denial (no Egypt jokes, please).*

*To witness with eye and ear the torrents unleashed by a sudden heavy downpour is to feel unstable; an instinct to seek higher ground pervades the self until the storm passes and even the driveway into my garage apartment is a puddle of silt and vehicular toxins oozing mysteriously around my abode seeking its own level as water does.*

*So it's amazing to us that no ready count is available. Some ravines run dry for months. Add a little water and they'll pull down an oak and wash it across Remington Drive.*

*Our office is perched in a precarious geological and atmospheric zone. Several hundred feet up from the flats yet oddly the target for windstorms that veer from the north to the northeast or just come blowing in from the west. In our first week here a tornadic storm darkened the neighborhood for 48 hours straight; The Admin fell down stairs at night tracking what he thought for sure was a bobcat and suffered a concussion he never recovered from. That's another story.*

Here then, is Hilary's story; while she offers the caveat "I am not a hydrologist or map-reading expert," we think she's being modest.

What you see here is the first private citizen's rough count of almost every (visible) watercourse

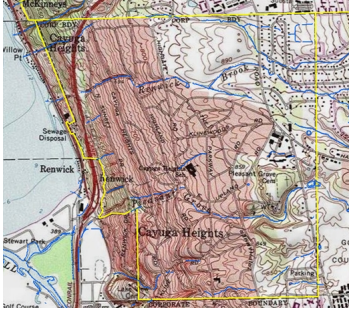
## Holy Seeping Suburban Watershed: It's all downhill from Cayuga Heights

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 06 January 2016 15:07 - Last Updated Thursday, 07 January 2016 13:43

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in this neck of the woods. Get out yer magnifying glass and scuba gear, Mabel, it's a fuzzy science.



**From intrepid Researcher HL:** "I have stared at this wee map until my eyeballs rolled back into my frontal lobes. I am counting the waterways that make it down the final steep slope to Rte. 13 and thus, one assumes, to the lake."

So goes:

**1. BLUE-LINE:** See the creeklets with blue lines? That means they are permanent, year-round, officially recognized as such by the authorities, and can be used to fight off permits for development etc.

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**2. INTERMITTENT:** Dotted line streams means “intermittent,” part-timers, which flow when it rains, snowmelt etc. You can see that several of the blue liners are marked as intermittent further up the slopes, but gather enough water from the tiny side trickles in people’s backyards to be full-time at the final drop to the lake. Often when you actually check out intermittents in person, you will find that they run most of the year, but they are harder to protect in court (I did this stuff a lot in Kentucky, trying to protect streams from a landfill expansion, coal mines, quarries and highways). Except on the upper slopes, I do not see any dotted line streams. I do see the indentations – a sort of line of scallops – in the contours down the final steep slopes to the lake, which means they are places where the water has carved a small channel at one time or another. So I count them as intermittents.

## RESULTS

**Very fuzzy – approximate – !**

- NINE year-round brooks and streams.

These all reach the bottom of the final slope and make it directly to the lake via stream-channels or culverts.

- NINE intermittent brooks and streams.

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- **COUNTLESS RIVULETS** The perhaps hundreds of tiny rivulets and future Grand Canyons that grace people's backyards, joining the named/counted bigger waterways further downslope.

### Named brooks, origins

Only two of the full-time waterways have names on the map, and are both "brooks" (smaller than "creeks"):

**Renwick Brook** – Its headwaters are in two wetland areas along Sapsucker Woods Road. From them, two small brooks flow downslope through Lucente-land and join into one bigger brook between Hanshaw Road and Kendal, and head downslope into the heart of Cayuga Heights along the steep W. Remington Road, under Route 13 to the lake at East Shore Park, near the CU Merrill Family Sailing Center.

**Pleasant Grove** – Its headwaters are in the ponded area just west of the Cornell Thoroughbred Horse Farm buildings around Bluegrass Lane (not so great for water quality). Crosses Pleasant

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Grove Rd by the cemetery (not so great for water quality!) and heads down into the heart of steep-sloping CH. Its final mini-gorge fall down the steep slopes is not marked in blue, which is strange because its upslope course is all blue (full-time brook). Maybe the waterfall was routed into a culvert to keep it off Route 13? One way or another, the blue line starts up again at the bottom of the slope on the west side of Route 13, where it gets mingled in with the engineered waterways and cricklets and drainage ditches, and makes its way to the lake next to the Visitors Center/Chamber of Commerce.

### **Likely names, origins for other blue-liners**

At the north end of Cayuga Heights is a noticeable brook or small creek, perhaps named McKinneys Creek/Brook – it wanders downslope from Lansing to CH and finally arrives at the lake in the Town of Ithaca in one of the dense lakeside cottage areas.

At the south end of CH are two significant brooks that flow in steep, significant small gorges next to the tortuous routes of Klein and Wyckoff Roads. These gorges/brooks bracket the prominence/hill occupied by Carl Sagan and pals at the Lake View Cemetery (not so great for water quality). The more southerly of these two brooks is the longer one - has its headwaters in ponds/low spots on the east side of Pleasant Grove Road in the Robert Trent Jones Golf Course (not so great for water quality).

I would venture that the Lansing brook and the two southerly brooks are the natural boundaries

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of Cayuga Heights. I bet Carol Kammen or someone like that knows the history.

### **Not named on the map but is a biggie**

The blue-line brook that reaches the lake at Willow Point, which travels downslope just inside CH at its north end, is a significant brook, competing with Renwick Brook for prominence. Its headwaters are the open areas among the houses just south of the Trip Hotel at Triphammer Market, and I bet was a bone of contention when that neighborhood was built. It flows around the north side of Kendal and graces many a backyard in the bigger-property area on the north side of Cayuga Heights as it heads downslope to the lake at Willow Point. Bet it has a name. (EDITOR: Let's NAME IT! TripMall Crick?).

### **Jurisdictional note!**

All the named waterways start in the Town of Ithaca, excepting the one that starts in Lansing (possibly named McKinneys). They travel through Cayuga Heights, and all emerge for their final plunge to the lake back into the Town of Ithaca. I am sure there are meetings and agreements between CH and Ithaca for their management, protection and upkeep.

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OK more detail than you needed or can possibly use.

Peace,

Hilary Lambert

Thank you Hilary, what an insanely detailed answer to my question: Are we all gonna die in a mudslide? – The Admin