

Broadway Hill Toll House

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Place name are from January 2025

The Pierson family of “Old Rotterdam” owned a house at the top of Broadway Hill where tolls were collected for passage of horse drawn wagons in the mid to late 1800s. According to historian David Newkirk, the Pierson toll house and property



was located at the intersection of Guilderland Avenue and Broadway --- familiar landmarks in 2025 are Key Bank and the former Westinghouse Mansion, now Bond Funeral Home.

Toll roads have been around for at least 2,700 years, as tolls were paid by travelers on a Babylonian highway in the seventh century BC according to French historian Gilliet. Toll are familiar to many of us who have an EZ-Pass transponder on our windshields for travel on the NY State Thruway. Not too long ago we stopped to pay cash at toll booths similar to Pierson's gateway.

Recently the Town of Rotterdam received a donation of photos and toll gate records dating from the 1860s that gives us an interesting glimpse into our past. The toll keepers kept monthly records of every passage using a tally for each trip through the gate. Apparently tolls were collected at the end of the month as the tally marks are totaled with an amount opposite each person's name.

Figure 1. Toll Gate Record page from February 1878

Name	Tally	Amount	Name	Tally	Amount	
Abra Veeder	+	11	66	Southard		5 20
Wm Veeder	+	15	90	Ben Vanpatten		6 36
Z Veeder	+ +	30	1.50	J. B. Schuchert	+ + + +	50 2.00
Abra Veeder		5	30	W. B. Schuchert		8 48
J. Wimple	+ + +	27	1.62	Joh. Vanso		12 48
W. Danner		5	30	Mr. Keegg		
Sam Westcott	+	13	65	Wm. T. Talk		6 30
Wm. C. Watson		10	20	P. Phil. Allen		10 60
Lewis Finn		11	66	Jarome Van D		5 30
H. Vermiller	+	15	90	Wm. A. Coonice	+ + + + + +	42 1.68
A. Vandycr		6	36	N. Dendick		2 12
James Bouary	+ +	12	72	Sebas. Peetman		
S. Maus	+ + + + +	35	1.40	J. Bonds		1.00
P. Miller	+ + + +	30	2.40	Calver		6 20
Anthony		5	25	Top. Holton	+ +	16 96
Nemick Peon		5	30	Abra Coonice		2 8
Cal. Rob		4	20	Fred Mondetson		2 12
Geo Jeffers		3	18	D. Catmon	+ + +	22 1.32
Ben Temple		3	18	G. H. Pulluck		
Peetman		7	42			
James Rob		5	30			
Frengson Veeder	+ + +	18	54			
			1454			7.72

The monthly toll record totals for 1877 & 1878 below shows the year round ebb and flow of commerce up and down Broadway Hill. These two years happen to be the most complete and readable sets of data among the records provided.

	1878	1877
January	\$34.29	\$23.63
February	\$30.98	\$27.85
March	\$32.04	\$34.24
April	\$28.78	\$27.42
May	\$25.24	\$ ND
June	\$34.17	\$23.64
July	\$23.73	\$24.86
August	\$21.73	\$29.75
September	\$37.48	\$30.20
October	\$26.83	\$29.50
November	\$26.92	\$30.95
December	<u>\$41.47</u>	<u>\$37.42</u>
Totals	\$363.66	\$319.45

Tollgates were busy places. Available records provide details about traffic in and out of Rotterdam on Broadway which served as a main southern thoroughfare in the area. Figure 1 shows how records were kept. Names of travelers, number of passages using tally marks and cash total, which appears to range between \$0.04 and \$0.06 per trip. The difference in cost may be attributed to the size of the wagon or carriage.

For the two years with fairly complete records fourteen of the most frequent users account for 2,536 passages in 1877 and 3,455 passages in 1878. Several of these frequent travelers had property located on Broadway or Guilderland Avenue according to a 1866 map of "Old Rotterdam." The Veeder families held property within a mile south of the tollgate and accounted for 618 trips in 1877 and 1,009 in 1878. Peter Miller family held property several miles south on Guilderland Ave. and in 1877 made 139 trips; 220 in 1878.

The Veeders and Millers may have been farmers, a common occupation in the area. They may have been transporting produce to and from a well known marketplace in the last half of the 19th Century located in the abandoned structure near Marcella's Appliance store and the City Parking Garage on Lower Broadway.

Newkirk, David, Gloversville historian-at-large

Gilliet, Henri 1990, "Toll roads—the French experience. *Transports Internationale*, Saint Quentin-en-Yvelines."