



Marker #16

French's Hollow was one of the oldest settlements in the Town of Guilderland and the site of Guilderland's earliest industries. Noted for the mills operated by water power from the falls of the Normanskill, it takes its name from Abel French whose knitting mill thrived in the beginning of the 1800s. Already established in 1795 was Peter Broek's clothing factory. A button factory, a grist mill, and employee housing all congregated near the necessary water supply.

These industries flourished for about 50 years. Guilderland Center's growth, at that time, was due in part to the proximity of the mills. When the Saratoga & Hudson River Railroad arrived through the area in 1865 making it possible for goods to be transported from distant towns, the mills went out of business.

A covered bridge spanned the Normanskill at French's Hollow on the same location where the sealed-off bridge is today. The last visible signs of the aged settlement disappeared when a new dam and a pumping station for the Watervliet Reservoir were built in 1915. Until a few decades ago, Guilderland youth used the abandoned mill site as an "ole swimming hole," until it was posted as dangerous.

A weathered blue and gold historic marker once informed travellers on French's Mill Road of the pioneer industrial settlement. Though the settlement has long since disappeared, the marker, restored by the town highway department, will once again mark the place of Guilderland's earliest industrial enterprise.