

IV. REGIONAL POSTCONTACT HISTORY

The postcontact history of the Middle Atlantic region begins with the arrival of the first substantial numbers of European groups to North America. In general, the postcontact historical past of Delaware is divided into six significant time periods that span from the arrival of European explorers to the area, to modern times. These divisions are; Exploration and Frontier Settlement (A.D. 1630 - A.D. 1730), the Intensified and Durable Occupation (A.D. 1730 - A.D. 1770), Transformation from Colony to State (A.D. 1770 - A.D. 1830), Industrialization and Capitalization (A.D. 1830 - A.D. 1880), Urbanization and Suburbanization (A.D. 1880 - A.D. 1940), and Suburbanization and Early Ex-Urbanization Period (1940 to 1960). The following discussion of the regional history of Delaware has been abstracted from De Cunzo and Catts (1990); Catts and Kellogg (2000); and Arnold (2000). **Figure 5** present a series of historic maps of the region.

A. Exploration and Frontier Settlement (A.D. 1630 - A.D. 1730)

In 1609, Henry Hudson, the captain of the “Half Moon”, was commissioned by the Dutch East India Company to discover a water route through North America to East India. On this expedition, Hudson sailed along the coastline of present-day New Jersey and eventually landed at present-day Sandy Hook (Dorwart 1993). According to the journal of Robert Juet, an officer aboard the “Half Moon”, the vessel entered the mouth of the Delaware Bay’ but tides and shoals discouraged Hudson from further exploring the bay (Dorwart 1993; Scott 1991). In 1610, on an expedition led by Samuel Argall, the bay was named after Thomas West, Lord De La Warre, the Governor of Virginia (Dorwart 1993).

Shortly thereafter, Dutch, English, and Spanish explorers sailed to this region in search of potential trading opportunities. Among these first explorers was Cornelius Jacobsen Mey, the Dutch captain of the “Glad Tidings”. Between 1613 and 1624, Mey explored the bay waters between Delaware and New Jersey. During his explorations, he discovered New Jersey’s Cape May, which bears his name, and Cape Hindlopen (Henlopen). Interestingly, the landform that Mey named Henlopen, was not the location of present-day Cape Henlopen but actually Fenwick Island. The name “Henlopen” was later reassigned to its present location east of Lewes.

Between 1624 and 1630, the Dutch established several small trading posts along the Delaware River, then named South River (whereas the Hudson River was “North River). In comparison, colonization of the Delaware Valley area held less interest to the Dutch who focused on more commercial opportunities such as fishing, trade, and fur trapping (Dorwart 1993).

The British also conducted early reconnaissance expeditions of the Middle Atlantic area. In 1634, Thomas Yong reached the Delaware River. In his searching for a northwest passage to the Pacific Ocean, Yong sailed up the Delaware River to as far as Trenton Falls. During his travels, Yong provided Britain with reports on the regional environment (Wacker 1975).

Throughout the first half of the seventeenth century, the Middle Atlantic region attracted the interest of many entrepreneurs, including several directors of the West India Company who intended to develop whaling industries (Dorwart 1993).

In 1631, the Dutch first established a settlement near the port of Lewes, Delaware. Dutch sea captain David Pietersen De Vries started this whaling community and named it Zwaanendael, meaning "Valley of the Swans". The settlers of Zwaanendael, lead by Captain Peter Heyes of the ship "De Walvis" (The Whale), consisted of about thirty individuals from the Dutch town of Hoorn. In 1632, De Vries left and Native Americans allegedly decimated the remaining Europeans in the colony (<http://www.co.sussex.de.us/historical/index.html>).

In 1633, Swedish and Dutch merchants formed the New Sweden Company under the Swedish Crown. The New Sweden Company financed several endeavors including two ships led by Peter Minuit, the Kalmar Nyckel (Key of Kalmar) and her companion the Vogel Grip (Griffin). In 1638, the ships arrived in the Delaware River area (McCormick 1964; Weslager 1987). That same year, twenty-four of the ships' passengers established Fort Christina in present-day Wilmington. Both Fort Christina and the river along which it was built were named after the Queen of Sweden. Between 1641 and 1649, the New Sweden Company continued to pursue opportunities on both sides of the Delaware River. During this time, control of the Delaware Valley remained a continuous competition between the Dutch and the Swedes (Cunningham 1994). Aside from occasional explorers and settlers, the Swedish settlements remained on the Delaware side of the river (Cunningham 1994).

Between 1643 and 1653, Governor Colonel Johan Printz ruled Delaware's Swedish colony. In 1651, the Dutch constructed Fort Casmir at the present-day town of New Castle under the direction of the Governor of the Colony of New Netherlands. In 1654, Johan Rising, Printz's successor seized the Dutch post of Fort Casmir. In retaliation, Peter Stuyvesant dispatched a Dutch fleet from New Amsterdam (New York) and took over Delaware's Swedish forts. After reinstating the name Fort Casmir, the Dutch proceeded to make the fort into the principal settlement of the Delaware River. Shortly thereafter, the town of New Amstel (New Castle) developed.

Around this time, the Dutch also became increasingly wary of English settlements around the Chesapeake Bay and Virginia. Dutch concern was justifiable since Lord Baltimore regarded the Chesapeake Bay's eastern shore as well as much of western Delaware to be under his proprietorship (Somerset County). In 1659, the Dutch constructed a small fort named Whorekil (aka Hoerenkil, Horekill, Hoorekill) at the mouth of the Delaware Bay near Lewes to maintain watch on English settlement in the area.

In 1664, English forces seized control of New Netherland. King Charles II subsequently granted New Netherland to his brother James, Duke of York. For several years following,

disputes between the English and the Dutch continued. In 1673, the Dutch regained control of the area and Dutch Governor Colve established the Whorekil (Hoorncill) district court, which encompassed present-day Kent and Sussex Counties. During this time, disputes between the Duke of York and Lord Baltimore over land holdings were also brewing. Interestingly, roughly three years prior, Lord Baltimore also created a new county, Durham, which encompassed most of the state of Delaware and consequently, encroached on the Duke of York's holdings. Although the Dutch did manage to regain control of the area in 1673, their success was only temporary. In 1674, the Maryland government dispatched a force of 40 individuals to attack the fort at Whorekil. The campaign was successful and the area once again returned to English Rule.

In 1680, Governor Edmund Andros removed the land between Cedar Creek and Duck Creek from Whorekil County to form St. Jones County. He also changed the name of the remaining part of Whorekil County to Deale County. Through a series of land grants and promotions, Governor Andros and the Duke of York encouraged settlement of Deale, especially around Whorekil and around the Indian River-Assawoman Bay area.

In 1681, King Charles II granted the Province of Pennsylvania to William Penn. In response to Penn's petition to the crown for land west of the Delaware River and Bay below Pennsylvania, the Duke of York conveyed New Castle, St. Jones, and Deale Counties to Penn. That same year, Penn changed the names of St. Jones and Deale Counties to Kent and Sussex, respectively. In 1683, Penn founded the City of Dover, Delaware.

Under Penn's directorship, a flood of English, Welsh, Scottish, and Scots-Irish settlers entered the lower counties. Dutch, Swedish, and Finnish farmers gradually began to move inland, clearing new tracts along the tributaries of the Delaware (Munroe 1984; Hoffecker 1977; Bridenbaugh 1976; Scharf 1888).

Accompanying this population shift was a shift in the economic base of the region. As the English Empire integrated the Delaware valley more fully into its own vast economic network, area farmers shifted from primarily subsistence activities to market-oriented agriculture. The principal Swedish/Dutch grains (rye and barley) were replaced by corn and English wheat. Even tobacco, which had been the region's cash crop for several decades, was eclipsed by an emerging market demand for wheat (Pursell 1958).

Throughout this period, waterways provided the primary mode of transportation. Since most farms were located adjacent to streams, farmers were able to ship their grain directly to small milling facilities that were located on the tributary rivers and creeks throughout the valley. Two of the earliest such stations were located in New Castle (1658), and along the Red Clay Creek (1679). After milling, wheat flour was transported to Philadelphia or shipped directly to markets in the West Indies, southern Europe, or other parts of North America (Catts and Kellogg 2000; Walzer 1972). Farms remained wholly dependent upon water-based transportation until the first quarter of the eighteenth century, when overland trade routes first began to emerge across the region.

During the early years of Penn's proprietorship, he established a system of "hundreds", which were clusters of farms roughly equivalent to townships in other states (Siders et al. 1991). Within the hundreds, lands were sold in parcels averaging 200-299 acres in size. Farmhouses were usually located on high, well-drained soil, in proximity to a fresh water source (either a spring or brook). Structures were typically earth-fast, log or wood-framed, with a small minority of brick structures in urban areas. Land clearing on farms was minimal, with small lots typically located close to the house and outbuildings, while the majority of the property was kept in wood lot (De Cunzo and Catts 1990).

Starting in the early 1700s, population and development pressures abated and the Delaware Valley entered a period of minimal growth. In the wake of the first thirty years of English colonization, Philadelphia had emerged as the primary economic, political, and cultural center of a broad "hinterland" stretching west to Lancaster, north to the Lehigh Valley, east to southern New Jersey, and south to include all of modern Delaware (Lemon 1967; Walzer 1972).

While New Castle, Kent and Sussex Counties were inextricably linked to Philadelphia's markets, political and cultural ties between the southern and northern counties were strained. For years, the southern counties had bemoaned their lack of a central judicial facility, while the northern counties (Philadelphia, Chester, and Bucks) resented the control that the less populous lower counties exercised over the General Assembly.

In 1704, the three "lower" counties of Pennsylvania (New Castle, Kent, and Sussex Counties) separated to form the colony that would later become the State of Delaware. The newly formed colony of Delaware wanted greater independence from European control and accordingly established its own government, albeit under English rule. The town of New Castle, which had been the regional hub during the first decade of England's rule, became the political center of the "lower counties," and the seat of the new region's General Assembly (Munroe 1984).

B. Intensified and Durable Occupation (A.D. 1730 - A.D. 1770)

Throughout the eighteenth century, various water and land transportation networks continued to arise across the state. As population in the northern part of the state continued to increase, so did ways to transport people and goods. During this period, the settlement pattern evolved to a more inland focus, reflecting the change from tobacco to grain agriculture in the early eighteenth century. After disputes between William Penn and the Calverts of Maryland, the county border was finally established with the drawing of the Mason-Dixon Line in the mid-eighteenth century.

The first quarter of the eighteenth century witnessed an increase in the settlement of inland areas and an attendant growth in the network of connecting roads. Largely, the period 1730-1770 represented an intensification of this trend, driven by a second influx of immigration. Farms emerged throughout much of Delaware. Because of its excellent soils and access to markets, New Castle County evolved into a farm community, characterized by its growing

affluence and the numbers of artisans, professionals, and merchants in its population (Main 1973). Throughout the eighteenth century, farming in New Castle County consisted of a system of mixed husbandry, with grain grown to support livestock (Lothrop, Custer, and De Santis 1987).

During the middle of the eighteenth century, “hamlets” began to emerge at transportation junctures. The largest of these communities had grown from early mill stations along waterways and were typically located at a point where a major road crossed a tributary stream. The fast-flowing Brandywine River, boasted over eight large commercial mills by the 1770s (Cooper 1983). Connected to the interior farms by a nexus of new roads, similar mill stations in Wilmington and the surrounding area drew grain from as far away as Maryland and southeastern Pennsylvania (Lemon 1967).

Accompanying the growth and spread of the internal road system, hamlets also emerged at major road crossings. Generally comprised of no more than a handful of dwellings, these marginal communities thrived because they offered necessary services to travelers enroute to more remote areas. Typically, they centered around taverns and blacksmith/wheelwright shops (Lemon 1967).

The changes that took place in the economy and settlement pattern of New Castle County during this period were driven by a wave of English and Scots-Irish immigrants who arrived in the region between 1725 and 1755. Most of these immigrants were indentured servants, contracted to local farmers for a period of three to seven years of service (Munroe 1984). In addition to these laborers, some Delaware farmers also owned African slaves (Catts and Kellogg 2000). By 1740, the county’s population had ballooned to 6,000 people, eighty to ninety percent of who were involved in some form of agriculture (De Cunzo and Catts 1990; Egnal 1975).

By the middle of the eighteenth century, many of the small communities of northern Delaware, such as Stanton, Newark, Christiana Bridge, and Aiken’s Tavern (aka. Glasgow), reached varying degrees of stability and would contribute in shaping the economic and political growth of the state.

C. Early Industrialization (A.D. 1770 - A.D. 1830)

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Piedmont region of northern New Castle County remained predominately agricultural in character. The valley communities of Brandywine Village and Wilmington, respectively, nascent industries emerged and began to re-shape the economic and social landscape of the lower Brandywine and Christina Rivers (Catts and Kellogg 2000; Blume et al. 1990).

These shifts in the region’s mode of production occurred against a backdrop of fluctuating agricultural markets and periods of conflict with England over taxation and trade-restrictions against American farm-products in the British West Indies. Both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 resulted in boycotts of American goods and blockades of American shipping

centers by British forces (Lindstrom 1978). These political and economic conflicts resulted in profound changes to the cultural fabric of the entire Delaware region (Catts and Kellogg 2000).

The most significant and enduring effect of the Revolutionary War on Delaware was the British blockade of the Delaware and Chesapeake Bays. The blockade forced regional manufacturers and agriculturalists to shift from ocean-based international trade to land-based regional trade in the Philadelphia - Delaware - Baltimore corridor. The emergence of this trade network facilitated the growth and diversification of manufacturing and agricultural goods throughout the region. In northern Delaware, much of this growth was localized to the Piedmont region, where commercial growth surged from 1790 through 1810 (De Cunzo and Catts 1990; Shaffer et al. 1988; Welsh 1956).

During the American Revolution, Iron Hill was the site of the only armed conflict in Delaware. Known as the battle of Cooch's Bridge, the two-hour battle was fought around Iron Hill. The battle pitted a small force of American soldiers, about 800 men, under the command of Brigadier General William Maxwell, against an English and Hessian army of up to 20,000 men under the command of Lord Cornwallis (Catts 2005). The American force harried and delayed the much larger force of British troops, which had landed at Elkton, Maryland and was enroute to Philadelphia. The battle began southwest of the hill and continued around the hill before the American forces broke off contact with the British. A portion of the British force then camped on the hill for five days before proceeding to Chadd's Ford on the Brandywine River (Owen and Owen 1973; Vidal 1988; Catts 2005).

In contrast to the strides being made in local industry, agriculture was beset by crises. Following a century of extensive farming, farm productivity dropped dramatically during this period. Across New Castle County, eroded and exhausted fields failed to produce significant yields, and as a result, many smaller, marginal farms were abandoned or left fallow. A great many such properties were consolidated into large estates by wealthy landowners.

In the early 1800s, national financial crises worsened prospects for local farmers. Hard-pressed to support themselves even on a subsistence level, a considerable portion of the working agrarian population either moved west to clear new areas or was absorbed into the emergent industrial sector in and around Wilmington (De Cunzo and Catts 1990; Herman et al. 1989; Lindstrom 1979; Hancock 1947). While population and agricultural growth leveled in the period between 1810-1830 (Hancock 1947), by the end of the period, some local agriculturalists had made productive in-roads by diversifying crop species. The popularity of this technique increased during the following period (Lindstrom 1978).

D. Industrialization and Capitalization: 1830 to 1880

The years between 1830 and 1880 encompass the most complex and dynamic period of social and economic development in the history of northern Delaware. Improvements in local and regional transportation, the continued expansion, and diversification of industrial activities, the rise of Baltimore as a trading center, and the revolution in agriculture taking

place across the region all contributed to a shift away from market-dependence on Philadelphia and a movement towards a more locally-based economy (Lindstrom 1978).

In 1839, the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad reached Newark. The Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, which was begun in 1809, was completed in 1829. These two major regional transportation improvements greatly contributed to the transport of people and goods to and from northern Delaware.

Bolstered by new transportation routes, a large native and immigrant labor pool, and a ready supply of raw materials, northern Delaware's industries grew and diversified at an unprecedented rate during this period. Having devoted much of its resources to industrial development, by the start of the Civil War, New Castle County boasted 380 manufactures (De Cunzo and Catts 1990; Lindstrom 1978). Local facilities included grain mills, textile mills, paper mills, powder mills, ironworks, slitting mills, wheel rights, cooperies, and tanneries. By the 1860s, Wilmington emerged as the state's most densely settled urban region. In addition to its textile mills, the city was also becoming a leading manufacturer of transportation-related equipment such as carriages, railroad cars, and iron ships (Hoffecker 1977).

These dramatic changes in industry were paralleled by important shifts in agricultural practices in the region's hinterland. After abandoning its market reliance on wheat exports to Philadelphia during the first quarter of the century, the farm economy of northern and central Delaware restructured itself around a diversified and locally consumed produce base in the middle of the century. By providing fruits, meat and dairy items to the new urban markets in Wilmington, farmers in New Castle County rebounded from the stagnancy of the past decades. In the Piedmont region, dairy farming supplanted livestock raising as the principal agricultural activity (Bidwell and Falconer 1941).

From a productivity standpoint, the most important change to local agriculture was the adoption of progressive farming techniques. Local farmers incorporated modern farm machinery, fertilization, and drainage measures to significantly increase productivity while simultaneously employing less human labor. These methods also helped to bring marginal regions that had been abandoned during the last period back under cultivation. By the end of the period, New Castle farmers had managed to cultivate over ninety percent of the county's total acreage (De Cunzo and Catts 1990).

During this agricultural revolution, roughly half of the farms in New Castle County were worked by tenant laborer families. Tenancy took many forms, but it can be defined generally as the working of a plot of land in exchange for a rent and/or a portion of the yield. Begun in the late-eighteenth century, its practice became pervasive after the crop disasters and economic crises of the previous period concentrated large tracts of land into the hands of wealthy landowners who were either unable, or disinclined, to work the land by themselves (Siders et al. 1991).

While tenancy left no clearly recognizable farm "type", its effects upon the agricultural landscape of the late nineteenth century were profound (Siders et al. 1991). Most notably,

tenancy, or rather, the concomitant rise of an agricultural class-system, led to a rebuilding of the local landscape that reflected the ideas, values, and beliefs of the landed elite. By examining the layout of farms of this period, researchers have demonstrated that while the size of the average farm in northern New Castle County shrank to 79 acres during this period, farmhouses and outbuildings virtually doubled in size (Siders et al. 1990; Herman et al. 1989). This was especially true for old “landed” families, whose rebuilt or remodeled hall and parlor homes, stone bank barns, and corn cribs communicated, “the new values of the agricultural reform movement” (Herman et al. 1989).

E. Urbanization and Suburbanization: 1880 to 1940

General census figures from the turn of the century show that, for the first time in its history, agriculture ceased to be the predominant occupation in the state. While a number of trade occupations rose in importance during the years between 1870 and 1900, the largest shift occurred between industry (rising from 23.5% to 31% of the state’s work force) and agriculture (declining from 39.5% to 26%) (De Cunzo and Catts 1990).

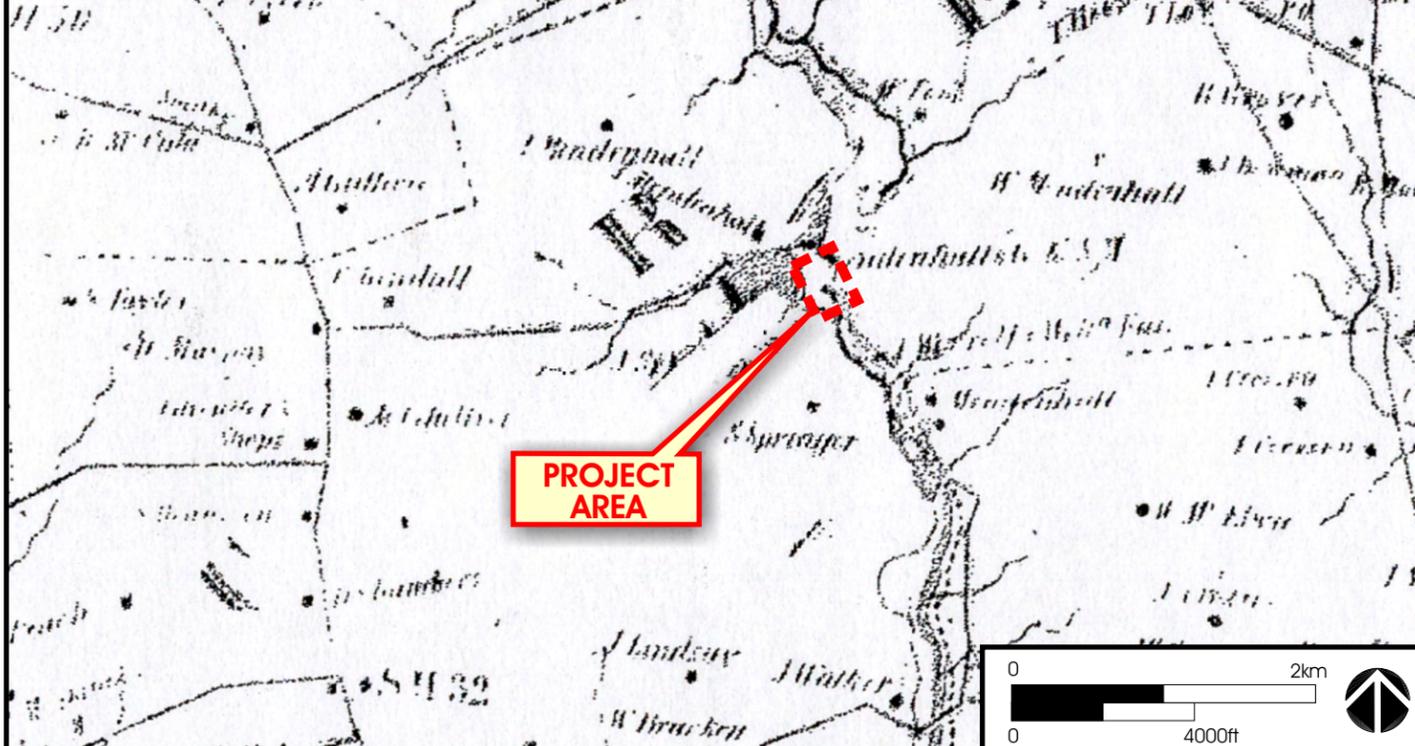
Nonetheless, agriculture continued to play an important role in the regional economy. The trend towards non-staple crops, perishables, and truck farming initiated in the second quarter of the nineteenth century continued in much of New Castle County, as new transportation routes connected the region to emerging urban areas throughout the northeast. Wilmington has continued growth insured continued demand for dairy products from the Piedmont, allowing this form of agriculture to thrive well into the twentieth century. Agricultural tenancy and sharecropping held even, with over half of all farms engaged in some form of tenant arrangement at the turn of the century (De Cunzo and Catts 1990; Shannon 1945).

F. Suburbanization and Early Ex-Urbanization Period (1940 to 1960)

Landscaped suburbs grew in popularity with the introduction of the automobile into mainstream life. While subdivisions and commercial properties have replaced much of the farmland of the county, especially along the Route 7 and Route 41 corridors, portions of northwestern New Castle County still manages to maintain some of its rural character.

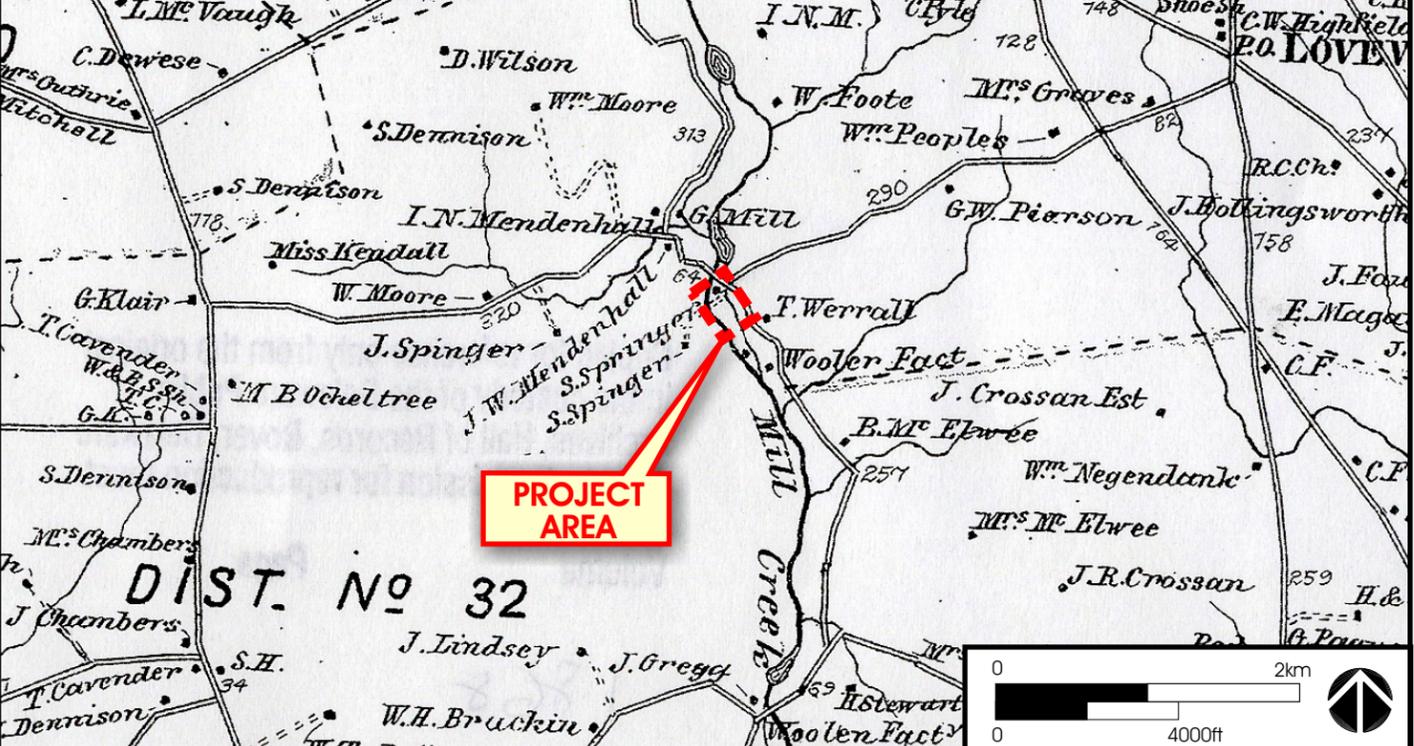
REA & PRICE (1849)

Base Mapping Source: DE State Historic Preservation Office, 9/10/2006



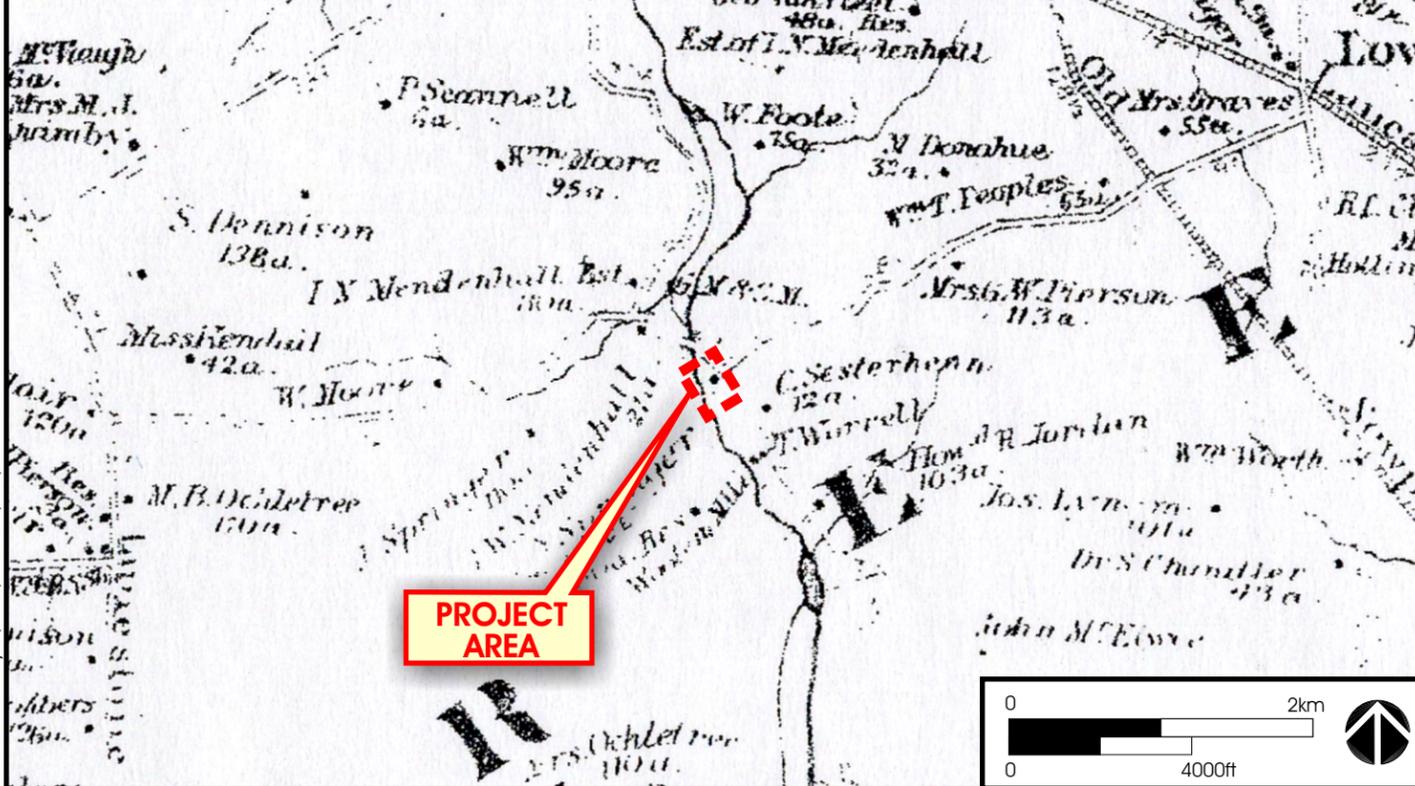
BEERS (1868)

Base Mapping Source: DE State Historic Preservation Office, 9/10/2006



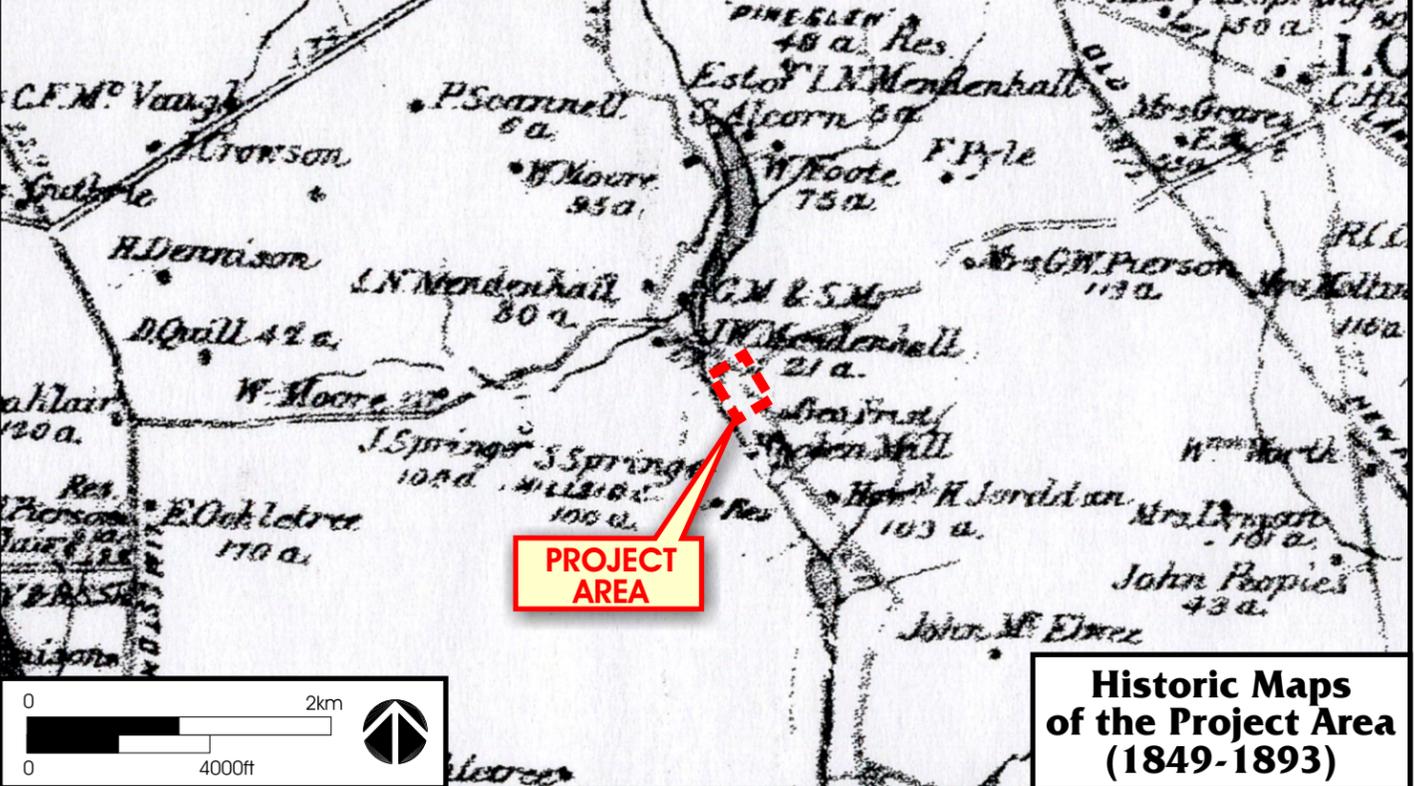
HOPKINS (1881)

Base Mapping Source: DE State Historic Preservation Office, 9/10/2006



BAIST (1893)

Base Mapping Source: DE State Historic Preservation Office, 9/10/2006



Historic Maps of the Project Area (1849-1893)

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FIGURE 5