

SECTION 4.0 BACKGROUND RESEARCH

The Stroud site is situated on the west side of one of the state's oldest transportation corridors, the King's Highway (predecessor of U.S. Route 13/DuPont Parkway). This highway was officially laid out in 1762 over an earlier pathway that is visible in early warrants and surveys of the project area (Scharf 1888:991). Another historic roadway, leading northwest from U.S. Route 13, previously known as Hyetts Corner Road, lines the south side of the Stroud site. The portion of this roadway that borders the APE remains in its historic location, but presently functions as a dead-end driveway for the Artesian Water Company. Construction of Route 1/Korean War Veterans Memorial Highway in the early 1990s necessitated the road's truncation. Proximity to historic roadways contributed to the early settlement and development of the project area, beginning in earnest around the mid- to late-eighteenth century.

The site name stems from Jane Stroud's ownership of the property during the early nineteenth century. However, the site could also be called Hyatt-Stroud, as archival research has determined that Jane was a relation of the Hyatt family (also spelled Hyett at times). The Hyatts gained an interest in the property as early as 1787 and kept it within the family until 1846. Another family name frequently associated with this site is Vandegrift (also spelled Vandergrift). The Vandegrifts were some of the region's early settlers, and their descendants resided or owned property in the vicinity of the APE until the early-twentieth century.

The land encompassed by the Stroud site was originally part of land granted to Jacob Vandergrift at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Early land records indicate that in March of 1708, Jacob Vandergrift, Albertus VanZant, and Daniel McCormick were each granted 200 acres (80.9 ha) in the project vicinity by the Proprietors of Pennsylvania (New Castle County [NCC] Land Records, V1 #9 and Warrants & Surveys, V1 #3) (see Appendix C). By 1738, two nephews of Jacob Vandergrift, Leonard and Jacob, inherited this 200-acre (80.9-ha) grant, and requested that the land be resurveyed and formally divided between them. This survey noted 216 acres (87.4 ha) of land, several roadways, and a single dwelling occupied by Leonard's brother, Jacob (NCC Warrants & Surveys, V2 #46a) (Figure 4.1). The survey map clearly depicts the dwelling in or adjacent to the APE. A second survey, dated December 16, 1748, formally divided the 200-acre (80.9-ha) grant between the brothers, allocating 103 acres (41.7 ha) "in Right of Jacob Vandergrift, their uncle," to Leonard Vandegrift (NCC Warrants & Surveys, V2 #46). This portion of the grant was passed onto Leonard's eldest son, Christopher, upon his death just a few years later (NCC Probate Records).

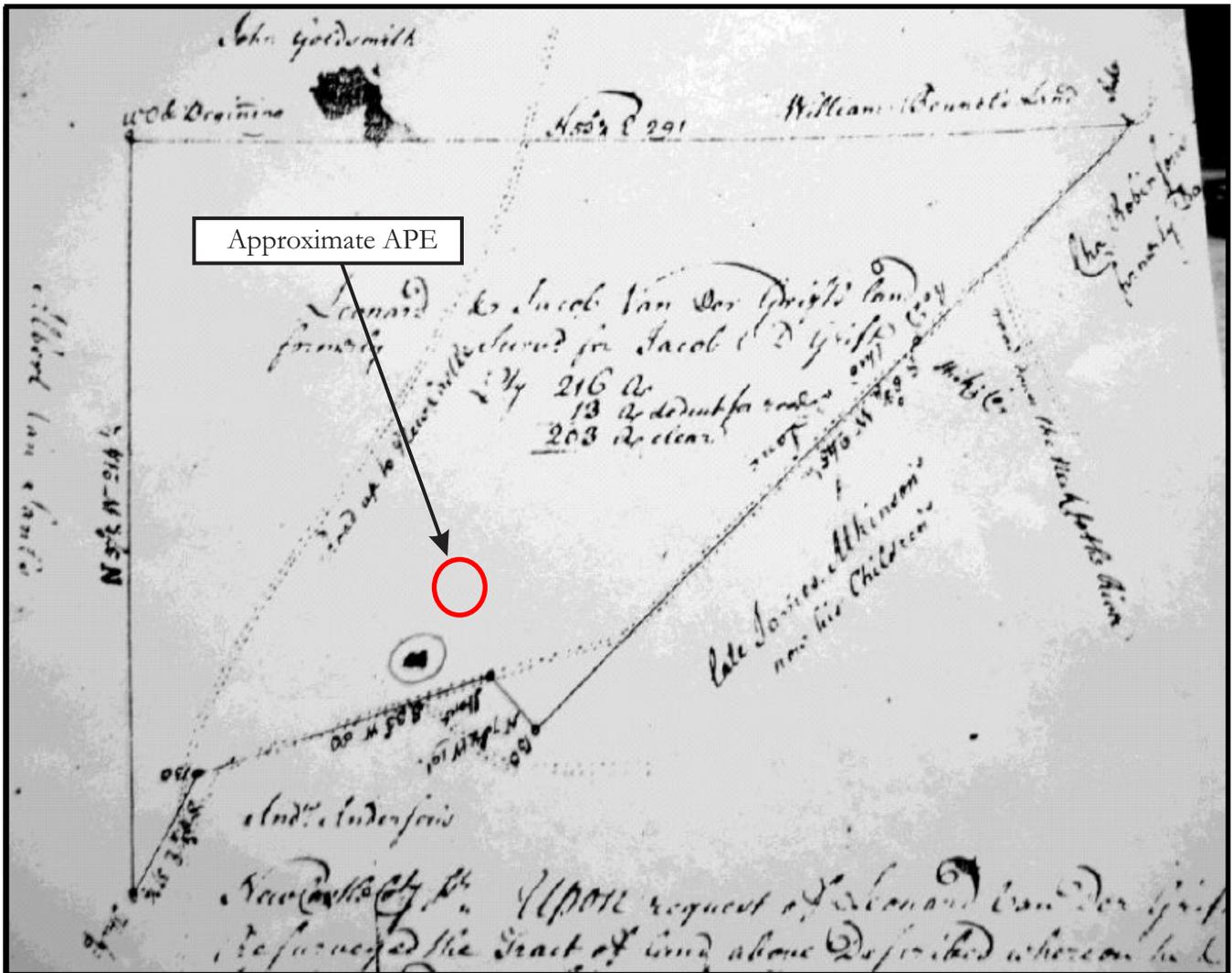
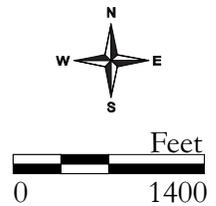


Figure 4.1:

Leonard and Jacob Vandergrift land formerly surveyed for Jacob Vandergrift (NCC Warrants & Surveys, V2 #46a).

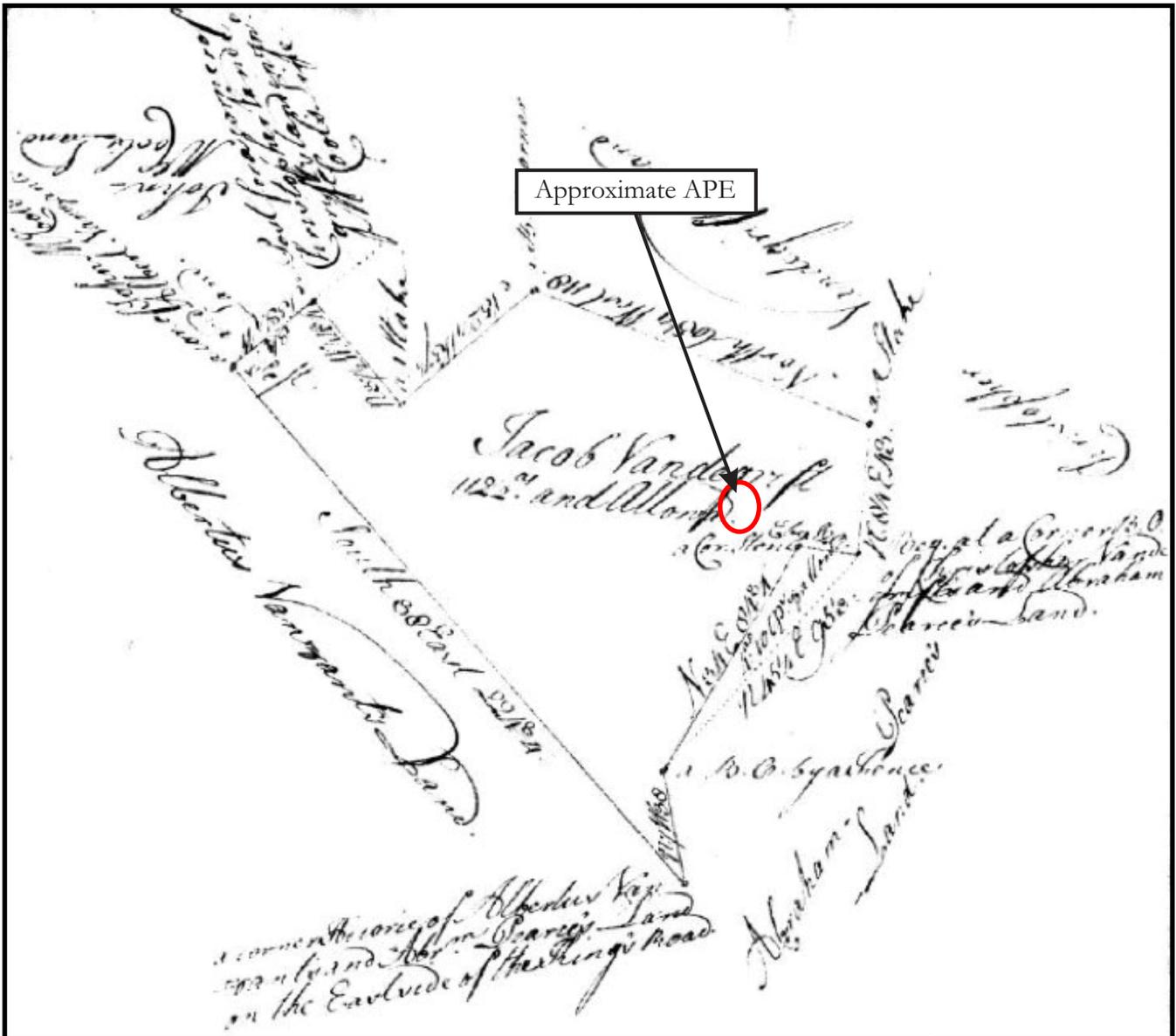


The other half of the original grant belonging to Leonard's brother, Jacob, was not resurveyed until 1752. In pursuance of a Proprietors' warrant, dated May 3, 1752, this survey details 112.5 acres (45.5 ha), including land within the APE, and notes several new landowners along its borders (NCC Land Records, V2 #48) (Figure 4.2). No archival evidence remains of Jacob's direct sale of this land, but a deed dated November 15, 1757, between John See and John Butcher, charts the property's owners since its initial granting - as if the title was in question or well worth noting (NCC Deed Book [DB] T1:64). This indenture describes the land in meets and bounds, in keeping with those courses outlined in the 1752 resurvey. The roadways depicted in the 1752 survey, however, can be deceiving. When this tract is plotted over a 1937 aerial image, it is the "Road thro Land," seen in early surveys, that becomes the basis for the King's Road through this section of St. Georges Hundred (Figure 4.3).

Though a dwelling appears in the 1738 resurvey of Vandergrift's grant and is thought to be situated in proximity to the project area, no other archival evidence has emerged detailing the parcel's occupation in the mid-1700s. John Butcher owned the property until his death in October of 1774, when he willed all of his estate to his wife, Jane, for her natural lifetime (NCC Will Book [WB] K1:74; see Appendix C). In his will, John Butcher identified himself as a "yeoman of St. Georges Hundred," but did not detail any of his holdings. After Jane's death, the property was to be divided between Thomas Butcher, Jr., Thomas Butcher, Sr., and "...as many of my wife's relations as she sees proper to will the other half to..." (NCCWB K1:74). Court records from around the turn-of-the-nineteenth-century indicate that a Thomas Butcher of Kent County contracted with Peter Hyatt, of St. Georges Hundred, for the sale of one-quarter (1/4) interest in the late John Butcher's 112-acre (45.3-ha) tract in early January 1787 (NCCDB U2:542) (see Appendix C).

Evidence of the property's habitation is seen in a deed from 1792, when Peter Hyatt purchased Robert Crow's one-half (1/2) interest in John Butcher's land, "...where Hyatt now resides,..." for 120 pounds (NCCDB X2:413) (see Appendix C). This same year, Peter Hyatt contracted with Jane Butcher, John's widow and Peter's second wife. In the contract, Peter Hyatt agreed to set aside 120 pounds in a trust for Jane to receive at the time of his death. If Peter and Jane Butcher Hyatt did reside on the 112-acre (45.3-ha) tract in St. Georges Hundred, their tenure there was short-lived; Peter Hyatt, Esq. died in 1800, and Jane followed in 1802.

According to records of the Sons of the American Revolution [SAR], Peter Hyatt was born in 1728, served in the 3rd Regiment of the Delaware Militia, and was elected to the Delaware State Council from 1777 until 1782 (Ancestry.com 2011). Peter was the son of Thomas Hyatt and came from a relatively wealthy family that began purchasing land in the vicinity of the APE during the mid-1700s.



Approximate APE

Figure 4.2:

Resurvey of a Parcel for Jacob Vandergrift, 1752
(NCC Land Records, V2 #48).

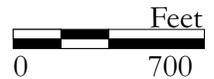
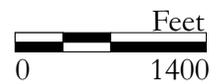




Figure 4.3:

Resurvey for Jacob Vandergrift (1752) and Land Sold to John Butcher (1757) Plotted over CHRIS 1937 Aerial Image (NCC Land Records, V2 #48; NCCDB T1:64).



He married into the Vance family, a group of early Delaware settlers, and had five children that survived to adulthood with his first wife, Martha (1733–1773): John Vance, Samuel, Rachel [Rothwell], Hannah [Sawyer], and Mary [Hickman]. Peter Hyatt, Esq. appears in the Reconstructed Delaware Census of 1782, as head of a household containing one male under 18, two males over 18 and three females over 18. The year of Peter’s marriage to Jane is not certain, but it is possible these women could be his three daughters. He was not found in the census records of 1800, but a “widow Hyett” was noted just above a “widow Sawer [sic]” (US Census 1800). The household of widow Hyett contained 11 people, with no men over the age of 15. One woman over the age of 45 was identified, who could have been Jane Butcher Hyatt. According to information on the Census taken in 1800, enumerators were instructed to report on the population of each household as it existed on August 4, 1800, although tabulations were made through May 1801 (US Census 1800). Peter Hyatt died in December of 1800, and therefore, should have been counted. Since other clusters of Hyatts resided in St. George’s Hundred at this time, it is difficult to be certain if this widow was referring specifically to Jane Butcher Hyatt.

As a lawyer, Peter Hyatt entered into numerous legal indentures between the late 1750s and the late 1790s. He frequently bought and sold land, but appears to have kept little of it. For example, in 1765, Peter Hyatt obtained an interest in High Hook Farm, or at least mortgaged it to cover a debt of more than 500 pounds to George Read, a gentleman (NCCDB X1:185). His estate inventory reflects more of an upper-middling socio-economic position rather than the “Rural Elite” standard of living obtained by several neighboring property owners. Hyatt owned relatively few livestock, no agricultural implements, and four slaves whom he freed once they attained the age of 31. Furthermore, his will made no reference to a plantation or any tenements.

Though Peter and Jane Hyatt were not necessarily a part of the Rural Elite, the land encompassing the APE along the King’s Highway became fairly valuable, lying adjacent to several of the area’s wealthiest citizens on some of its richest soils at the turn-of-the-nineteenth-century. After Peter Hyatt’s death, several court cases erupted during his estate’s settlement. Christopher Vandergrift, executor of Jane’s estate and neighboring property owner, challenged Hyatt’s ownership of the 112-acre (45.3-ha) tract, identifying claimants within the Butcher family. In 1808, Vandergrift began securing a one-quarter (1/4) interest in the property from Thomas Butcher’s heirs for himself (NCC Archived Deeds B6 #103). In March 1812, the tract was resurveyed without the 28 acres (11.3 ha) awarded to Christopher Vandergrift (NCC Warrants & Surveys H3 #135) (see Appendix C; Figure 4.4). This survey depicts a “New Road” (later Hyetts Corner Road), the “State Road” (later Dupont Parkway), and what appears to be a two-story dwelling situated in or adjacent to the APE.

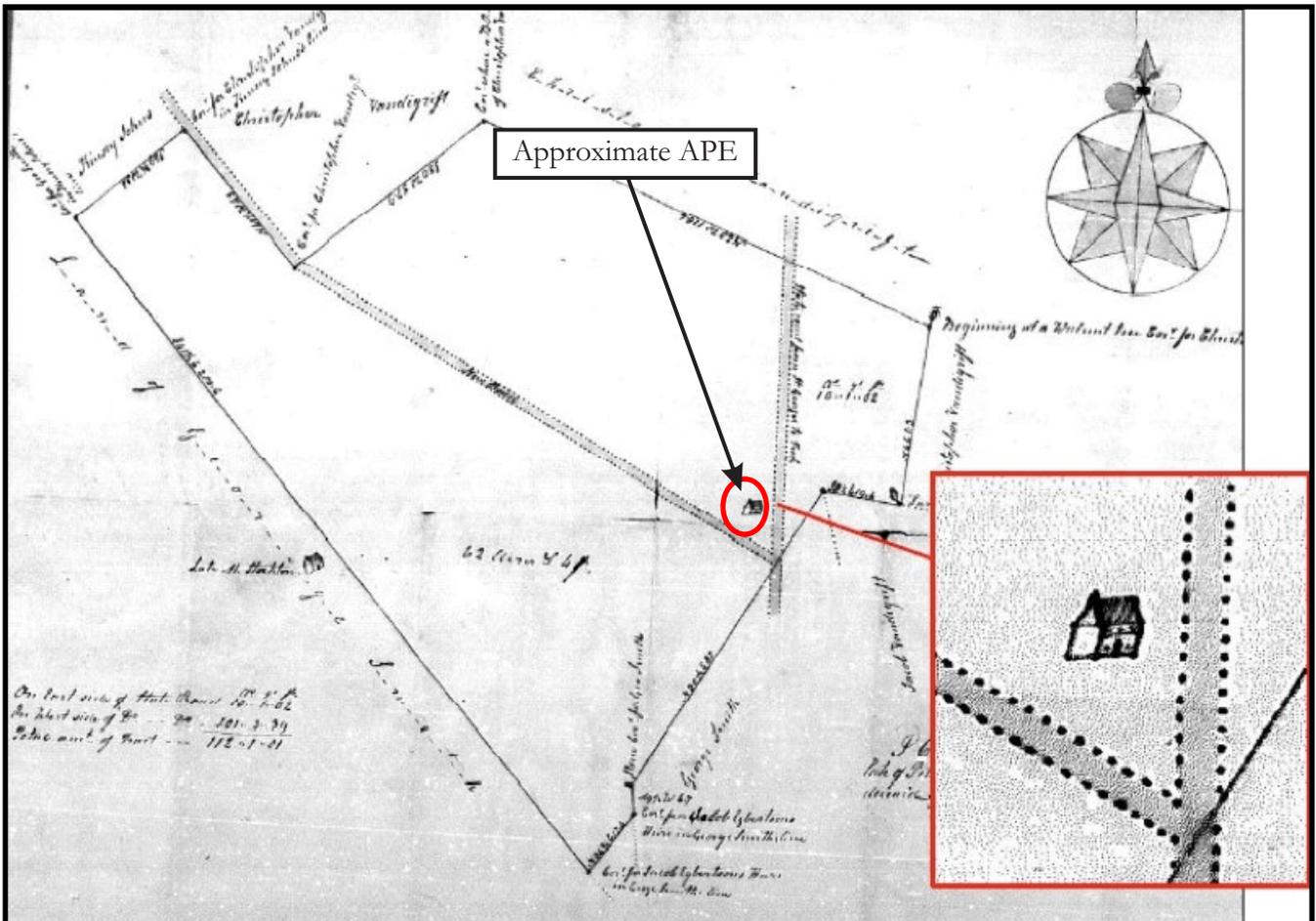
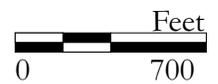


Figure 4.4:

Survey of Peter Hyatt Estate, 1812 (NCC Warrants & Surveys H3 #135). Detail of Hyatt-Stroud house at bottom right.

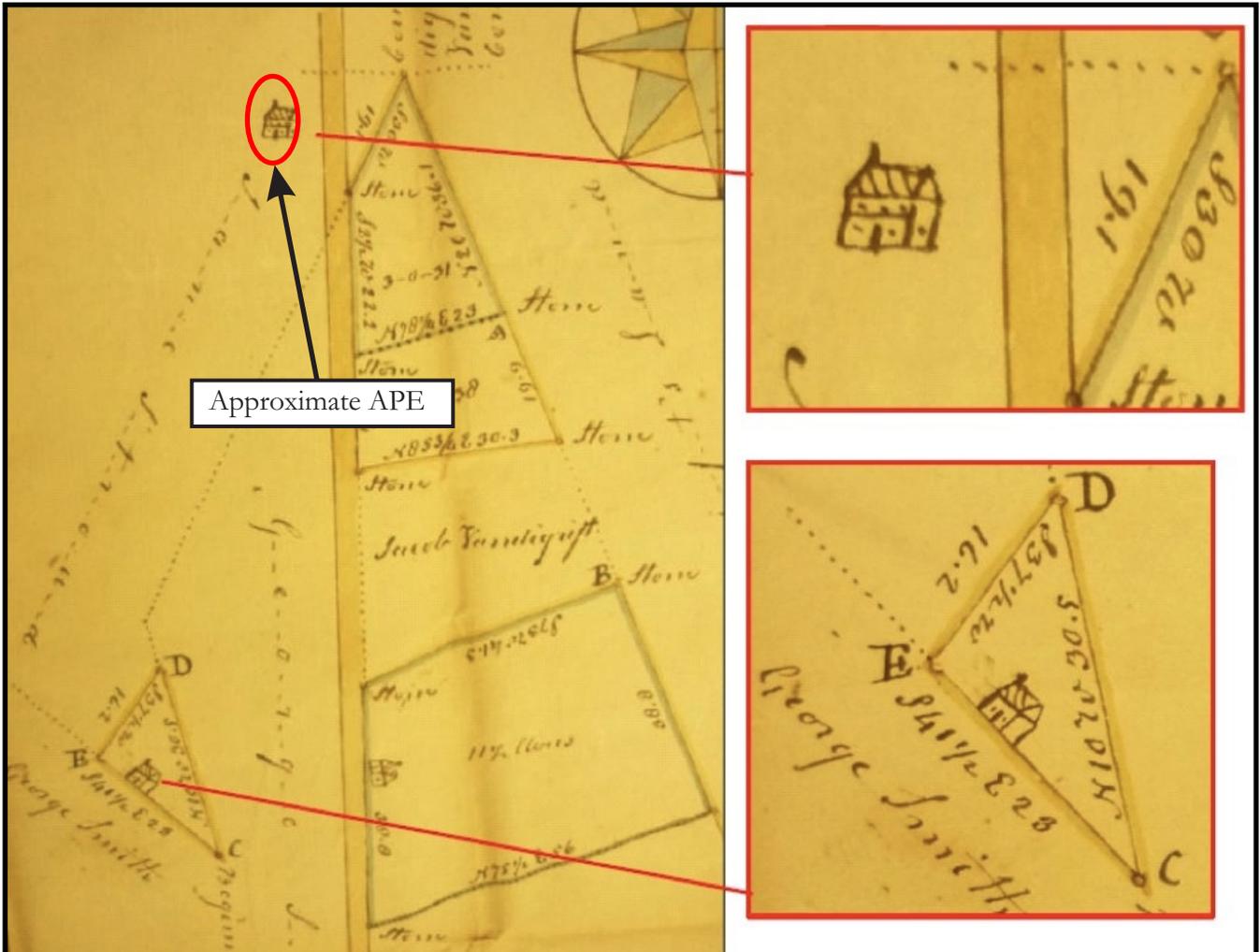


Peter Hyatt's will stipulated the sale of his property once certain grand-children were "fit to bind out," and therefore, Samuel Hyatt, appointed administrator of Peter Hyatt's estate, became legally obligated to fulfill his father's wishes. On December 21, 1813, Samuel sold the remaining 84 acres (33.9 ha) and 11 perches to Jane Stroud, a widow from Brandywine Hundred, who also happened to be his mother-in-law (NCCDB D4:360). Married around March 1793, Mary Stroud and Peter Hyatt appear to have spent much of their early years together in Brandywine Hundred (Wright 2000:252). Census records from 1800 reveal that the couple was actually living next door to her mother, Jane (US Census 1800). The couple's household was shared with six other people of varying ages, indicating that they might have been renting a room, or living with boarders.

The property was sold to Jane Stroud in 1813 and divided into two parcels: Lot 1 contained more than 22 acres (8.9 ha) with buildings, and Lot 2 contained more than 62 acres (25.1 ha) without improvements (see Appendix C). The two-story house depicted in the 1812 survey and purchased by Jane Stroud in 1813, appears again in a circa-1814 survey of Jacob Egbertson's estate, which also depicts Jane Stroud's property and house, along with other buildings in the project vicinity (NCC Orphans Court [OC] records) (see Figure 4.4; Figure 4.5). Jacob Egbertson, a blacksmith, had obtained approximately 70 acres (28.3 ha) of land bordered by Jacob Vandergrift, Samuel Hyatt, and Canno Branch (St. Augustine Creek) in 1790 (NCCDB I2:221), but died intestate in 1808. In an aggressive push to amass property in the area, similar to the actions of Christopher Vandergrift, neighbor George Smith purchased an interest in Egbertson's land from one of his heirs, and petitioned the Orphans Court for the division of Egbertson's estate in 1813. George Smith was undoubtedly a member of the Rural Elite, and had accumulated more than 440 acres (178.1 ha) of land in the project vicinity by 1825, including the 62-acre (25.1-ha) Lot 2 previously owned by Jane Stroud. A comparison of Egbertson's and Smith's estate surveys, conducted in 1814 and 1828, respectively, speaks to the landscape changes that occurred within the project area during this period (Figure 4.6).

Despite the transfer of title to Jane Stroud, tax records from St. Georges Hundred in 1813 indicate that a Samuel Hyatt received "84 A from the estate of Peter Hyatt" with two buildings, valued at \$252. Increased property values in the area are reflected in the change of tax rates from 1813 to the 1816–1817 assessment when a Samuel Hyatt was listed with 20 acres (8.1 ha) and one old wood dwelling (likely Lot 1), said to be worth \$600.

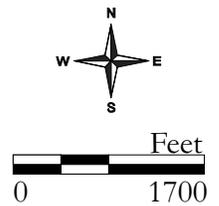
After 1817, it becomes difficult to speculate on the occupants of the Stroud site. Tax records from 1819 and 1825 report just one Samuel Hyatt living in St. Georges Hundred, who is assessed only a personal tax. This rate seems to suggest that Samuel, Sr. and Mary [Stroud] Hyatt were no

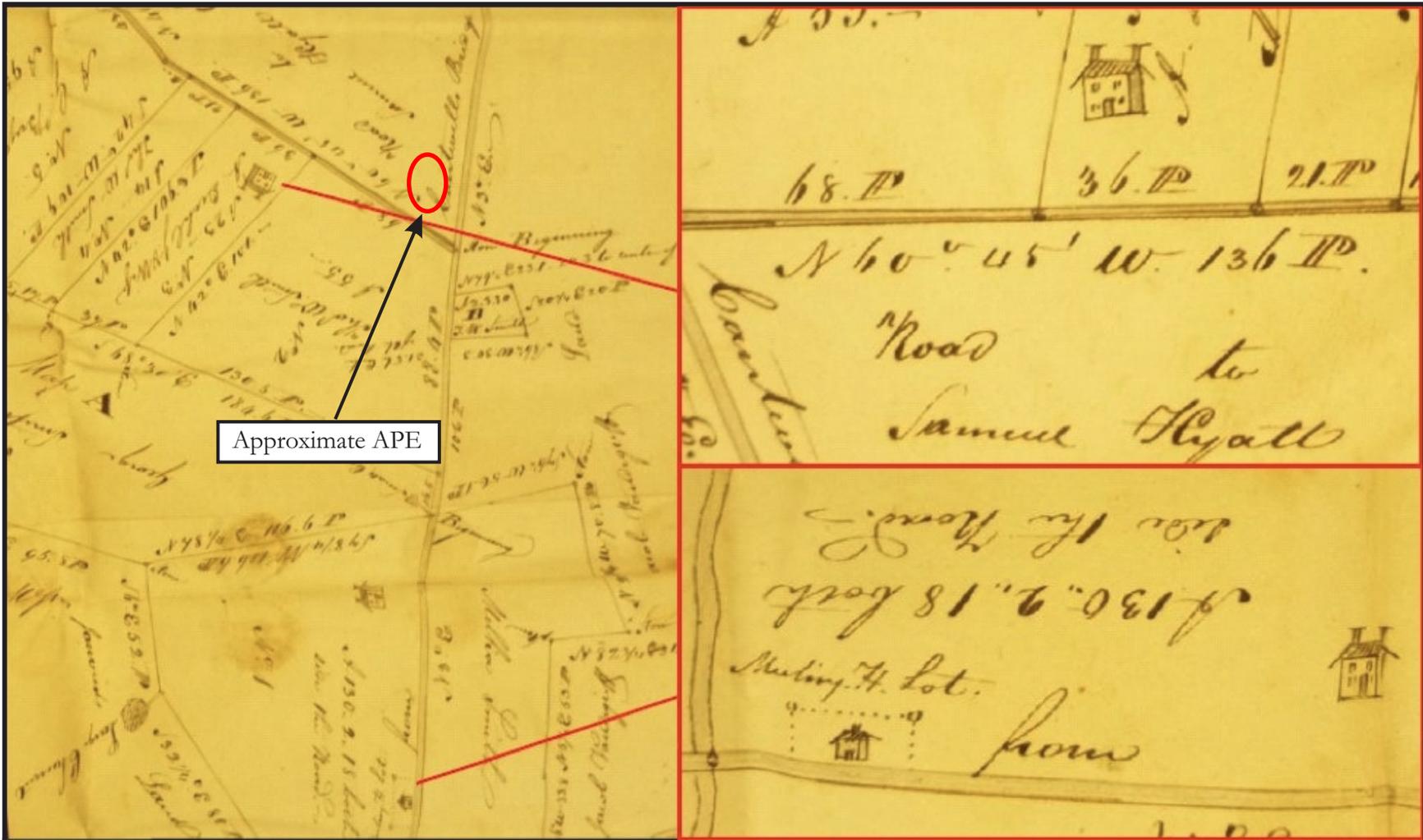


Approximate APE

Figure 4.5:

Excerpt from Jacob Egbertson Estate Survey, 1814 (NCC Orphans Court Records). At top right, detail of Hyatt-Stroud house; at bottom right, detail of Jacob Egbertson house.





Approximate APE

Figure 4.6:

Excerpt from George Smith Estate Survey, 1828 (NCC Orphans Court Records). At top right, detail of newly constructed house of Adam Diehl; at bottom right, detail of George Smith manor house, superseding that of Egbertson, and newly constructed Meeting House.



longer living in the area, and that this Hyatt may be their son, Samuel Hyatt (Jr.). Since Jane Stroud was not listed in any of St. George's Hundred tax records at any time during her ownership of the property, it is clear that taxes were not always paid by the landowner.

The 1820 Census reports a household headed by Samuel Hyatt in St. Georges Hundred, but it is not clear if this identifies the elder, the junior, or both of them. The household contained 15 people, with six white children under the age of 15, three slaves, one white male over the age of 45, and two white females over 45 (US Census 1820). Samuel Hyatt (Sr.) died in 1824 (Ancestry.com; NCC Probate Records).

It is possible that Samuel Hyatt (Jr.) remained at Lot 1 for some time after his father's death, but this is not clear. He did, however, receive title to Lot 1 in 1826 from his mother, Mary, who was listed as a resident of Wilmington at that time (NCCDB D4:415). Mary Stroud Hyatt was the sole issue and heir of Jane Stroud, thereby inheriting Lot 1, as well as other property in Brandywine Hundred, sometime in the early 1820s. Samuel Hyatt (Jr.) retained ownership of his grandfather's lot, and began adding to its acreage soon after this acquisition. The 1828 survey of George Smith's land to the south of the APE indicates that Hyett's Corner Road was constructed between 1814 and 1828 along the south side of the APE and the former Butcher/Hyatt/Stroud dwelling in or adjacent to the APE was razed, dismantled, or moved during the same period (see Figures 4.5 and 4.6). It is possible that the absence of the house on the 1828 map may also suggest an interim period between structural improvements (i.e. older house removal and new home construction) on the property. In 1828, the property in the APE is listed under Samuel Hyatt's (i.e., Samuel Hyatt, Jr.) ownership, who received the property (Lot 1) from his mother in 1826 (see Figure 4.6). In 1846, he and wife, Mary T. Hyatt, sold more than 105 acres (42.5 hectares) in the project vicinity, including Lot 1, to William Newbold of Philadelphia (NCCDB S5:432). Within six months, Newbold resold the land to a neighboring property owner, George H. Smith, who transferred the 105 acres (42.5 ha) to Daniel Corbit in February 1849 (NCCDB Z5:467). The Rae and Price map of New Castle County depicts a dwelling owned by George H. Smith at or adjacent to the Stroud site in 1849 (Rae and Price 1849). Within the year, Daniel Corbit repacked the property and added acreage, to sell approximately 150 acres (60.7 ha) of land to his neighbor, James M. Vandergrift, in October of 1849 (NCCDB D6:144) (see Appendix C).

During these frequent changes in property ownership, it is unclear as to who is residing in the old dwelling in or adjacent to the APE. James M. Vandergrift retained possession of Lot 1 for 40 years, during which time the house and lot were presumably rented by a tenant farmer (likely one of numerous, neighboring "Laborers" identified in Census records). Tax records from this period do not reveal as much information as in some of the preceding assessments, making identification of

this tenant, or tenants, more difficult. As a descendent of multiple “Rural Elite” families, James M. Vandergrift inherited and purchased a number of farm properties in Central Delaware in his lifetime. According to Scharf’s *History of Delaware* (1888:988), James M. Vandergrift had been living and farming with his father on the “mansion” farm since he was eighteen years old and finished with school, putting him on the site of what became known as “Retirement Farm” from about 1831 until 1860, when he moved to his 200-acre (80.9-ha) “Elm Range” estate near Macdonough. When James M. Vandergrift wrote his will in 1895, he mentioned two other farms: “Sackford Hall,” a 500-acre (202.3-ha) farm between Macdonough and Odessa which he purchased from Thomas Foard, and “High Hook Farm,” a property previously owned by his brother and George Foard.

Pomeroy and Beers’ map of 1868, Hopkins’ map of 1881, and Baist’s map of 1893 each denote the Hyatt-Stroud house as belonging to James M. Vandergrift (Figures 4.7-4.8). The two later maps also indicate that a 127-acre (51.4-ha) farm was associated with the house. Deed records indicate that Vandergrift had actually sold the house and land that was Lot 1 to his neighbor, and distant relation, Thomas J. Craven, in March 1889 (NCCDB U14:253) (see Appendix C).

Thomas Craven had inherited more than 200 acres (80.9 ha) north of James M. Vandergrift’s property in 1887, land that historically belonged to Christopher Vandergrift, noted as being in the tenure of John Vail at that time. Thomas Craven then returned to St. Georges Hundred and began consolidating and expanding his holdings. After obtaining the land from James Vandergrift, Craven reorganized the property that he later named “Diekl Farm.” Craven removed a 21.5-acre (8.7-ha) parcel from “Blackthorn Farm,” containing much of the land that Christopher Vandergrift had previously acquired from the heirs of Thomas Butcher in 1811, and combined it with the acreage from Vandergrift. In 1888, Craven added another 95-acre (38.4-ha) tract on the south side of Hyetts Corner Road that he purchased from Rachel Mifflin (NCCDB L14:195), and thereby reconfigured the land into a 136-acre (55-ha) farm property. The location of three tracts are roughly plotted over an aerial photograph 1937 aerial (Figure 4.9).

Maps from the early twentieth century do not depict the Hyatt-Stroud house at Hyett’s Corner Road, suggesting that the dwelling was likely demolished in the late-nineteenth century (U.S.G.S. 1906). It is probable that Thomas Craven was responsible for the home’s demolition, as his reconfiguration of the property supplied “Diekl Farm” with a substantial tenant house - the circa-1820 masonry dwelling constructed by George Smith’s son-in-law, Adam Diekl, also known as “Fairview,” (N-5244), which remains standing to date. The land that previously filled Jane Stroud’s Lot 1 was actively farmed by subsequent owners of Diekl Farm, until Mary Louise and Frederick W. Haas sold it, along with additional acreage, to Van Wingerden Associates in 1983 (NCCDB I

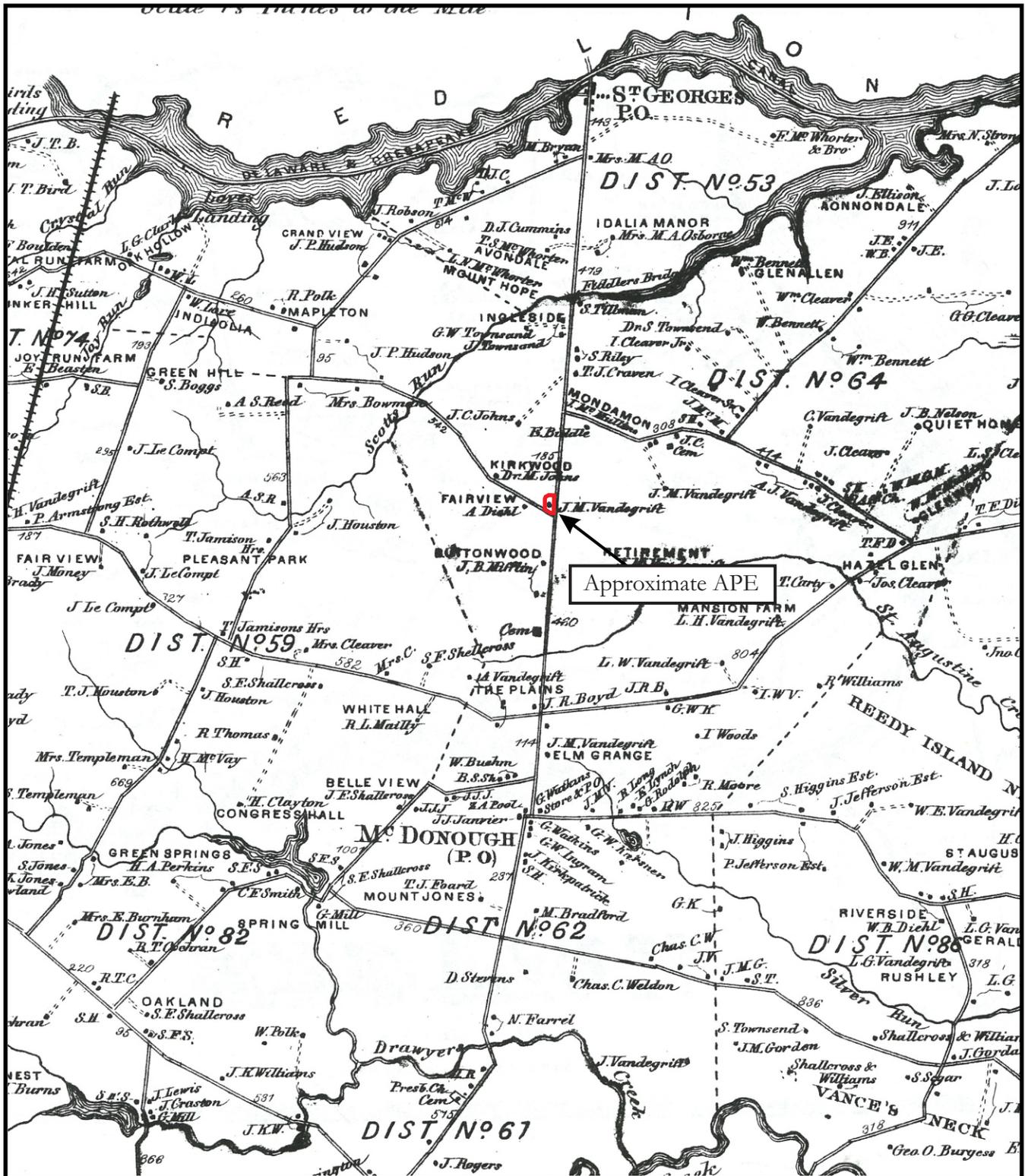
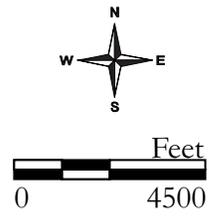


Figure 4.7:

1868 Pomerooy and Beers, *Atlas of the State of Delaware, New Jersey.*



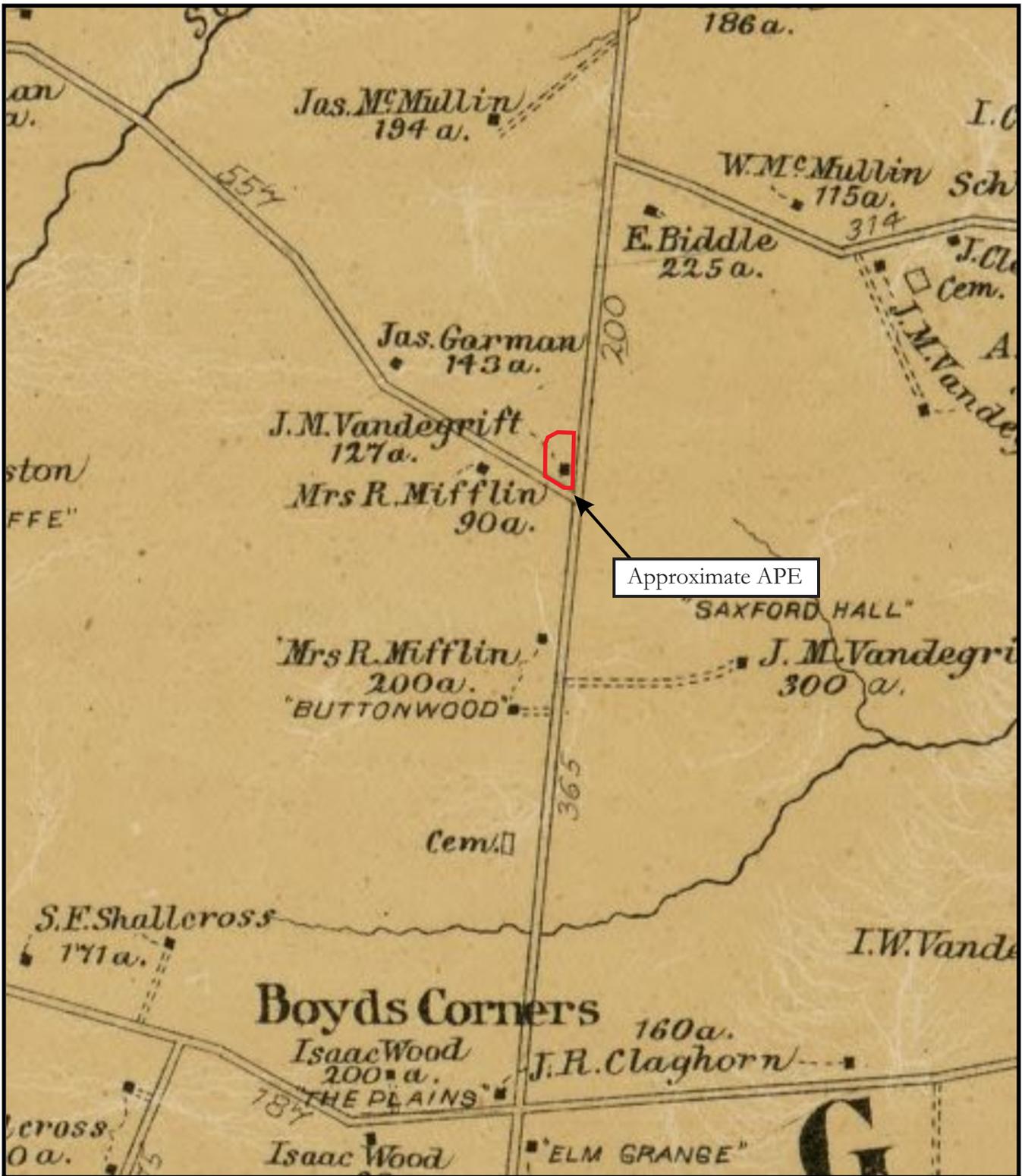
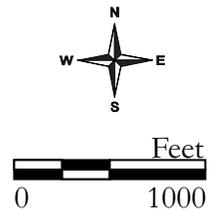
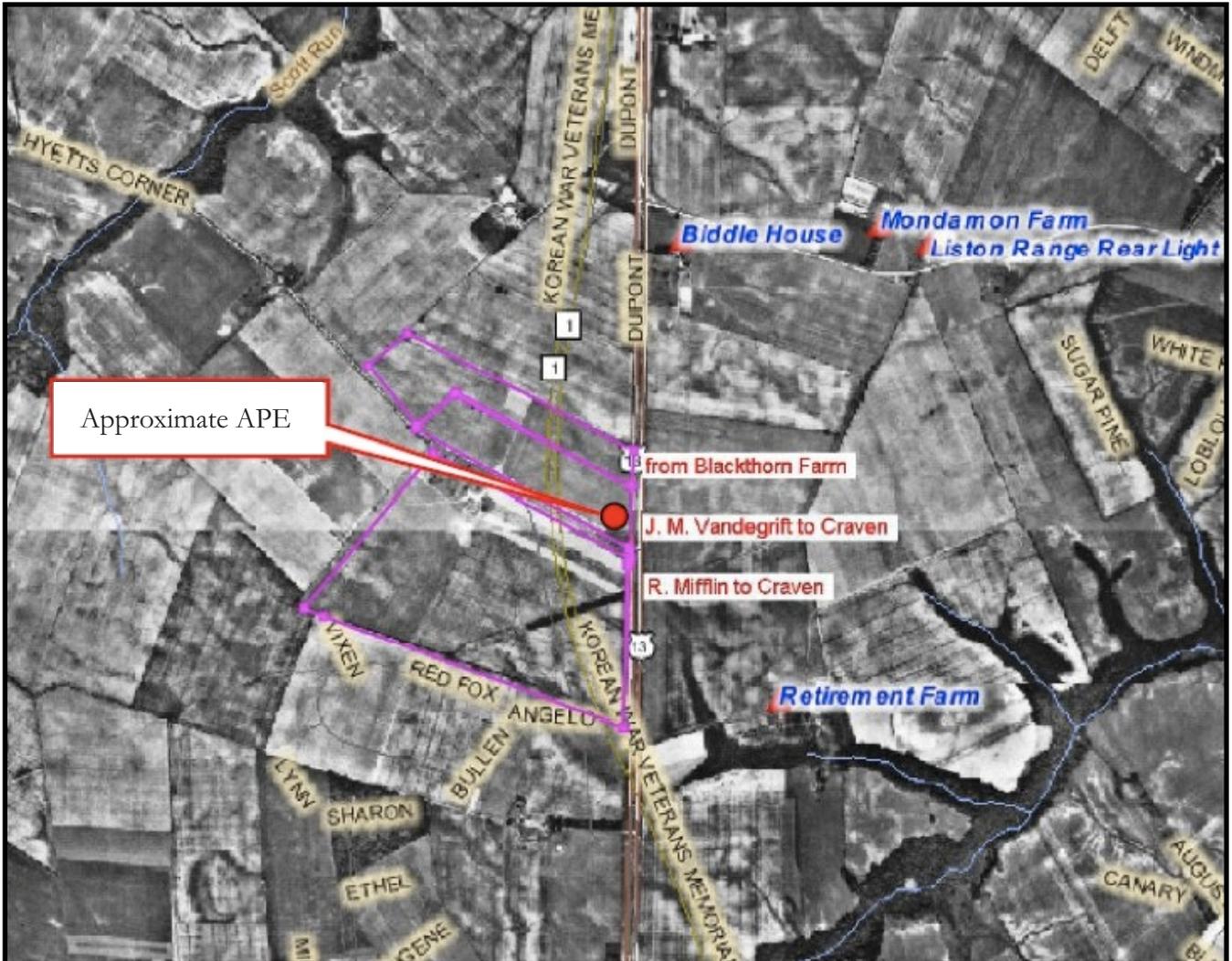


Figure 4.8:

1881 G. M. Hopkins and Company, *Map of New Castle County, Delaware.*

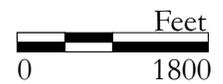




Approximate APE

Figure 4.9:

1937 Aerial Image (CHRIS 2011) with Plotted Parcels of Craven's "Diekl Farm" (Dovetail 2011; DataMIL 1937).



121:10). Van Winderden Associates divided the 278 acres (112.5 ha) they received from Haas in anticipation of the construction of the Korean War Veterans Memorial Highway, creating the 10.3-acre (4.2-ha) parcel, currently owned by the Artesian Water Company, Inc. A water tower has since been erected on the lot; however, much of the land in the APE appears to have been continually used for agricultural purposes.