

## CHAPTER 4

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### A. Delaware Historical Overview

European settlement in Delaware commenced in the early 1630s with the creation of a Dutch patroonship on the western side of Delaware Bay in the vicinity of present-day Lewes. A small whaling station known as Swanendael was established here in 1631, but within a couple of years this was abandoned, following conflict with the local Indians. Towards the end of the decade, a Dutch-Swedish trading enterprise established a more permanent presence in the Wilmington area, following the construction of Fort Christina in 1638. While the Dutch involvement in the area initially declined, Swedish and, to a lesser extent, Finnish settlement gradually took root, being characterized by scattered farmsteads along the principal drainages flowing into the Delaware River from below the Christina River to the mouth of the Schuylkill (Munroe 1984:15-25; De Cunzo and Catts 1990:27-29).

In the early 1650s, the Dutch sought to establish their dominance over the Lower Delaware and erected a fort, named Fort Casimir, on the site of present-day New Castle. After sporadic skirmishing and political maneuvering, the Dutch eventually succeeded in exercising control over the Swedish-settled areas in 1655. However, even with Dutch rule, the Wilmington area remained strongly Swedish in a cultural sense. For example, a distinctive measure of Swedish settlement in the area was the preference for log-constructed houses. The period of Dutch control was also short-lived which probably also helped to preserve the Swedish influence, for in 1664, following the fall of New Amsterdam, the English took over all Dutch holdings in the Middle Atlantic region (Weslager 1961; Munroe 1984:24-44; De Cunzo and Catts 1990:29-30).

In the late 1660s and early 1670s, there was a gradual transference of political power from the Dutch to the English. A brief hiatus in this process took place in 1673-74 when the Dutch recaptured many of their former New World possessions from the English during the third Anglo-Dutch War, but the latter soon re-established control of the Lower Delaware Valley region. From the late 1670s onwards new settlement resumed with a stronger English flavor, boosted in 1682 when proprietary rights to Delaware were granted to William Penn. With Penn's involvement the colonization process and economic growth in Delaware became tied more closely to Philadelphia and neighboring Pennsylvania. Wheat, replacing the earlier crops of rye, barley and tobacco, was milled locally and marketed in Philadelphia. Lumber in the Lower Delaware Valley was similarly milled locally and shipped throughout the region. Most farmsteads were situated within eight miles or a half-day's journey of a mill or shipping wharf (De Cunzo and Catts 1990:30-35).

The later colonial period was one of settlement consolidation and intensification of agriculture. Between 1725 and the mid-1750s, large numbers of English and Scotch-Irish arrived in the three Lower Counties, most of these immigrants being Quakers, Presbyterians or Methodists, and many being indentured servants. Other European groups and African slaves were also represented in these population movements. Between 80% and 90% of the Lower Counties population was engaged in agriculture. Philadelphia remained the principal economic hub of the region, but secondary market towns and small port communities also developed. In the project vicinity, both Wilmington (closely associated with the nearby Brandywine mills) and New Castle began to emerge as viable port communities and regional trade centers in the second quarter of the 18th century. Other nucleated settlements developed locally at Newport, Newark and Christiana Bridge (De Cunzo and Catts 1990:41-51).

The social and economic life of Delaware inhabitants was considerably disrupted during the Revolutionary War, with the British blockading shipping and conducting raids along the shores of Delaware Bay. Sporadic skirmishing took place in New Castle County during the fall of 1777. In the winter of 1777-1778, Wilmington was occupied first by British forces and then by American forces. Further military activity occurred in the area in the summer of 1781 when Washington's army passed through New Castle County en route to Yorktown (De Cunzo and Catts 1990:51-52).

In the early Federal period (circa 1780-1810), Delaware history was characterized by a rapid growth in population and a relative decline in agricultural productivity. In an effort to increase their crop and livestock yield, many farmers cleared and improved marginal land, but to little avail, and there was a noticeable outmigration of farmers to the west in the 1820s and 1830s. Many of the smaller less profitable farms in the Upper Peninsula and Piedmont regions of the state thus became absorbed by the larger wealthier plantations. Commerce and industry fared somewhat better than agriculture, and there was an increase and diversification in water-powered milling during this period. Transportation improvements, chiefly the turnpikes and the construction of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, facilitated the process of urbanization in many locations, although the canal, by simplifying shipping of goods between the Delaware and Chesapeake, actually contributed to the decline of a number of the towns in the Upper Peninsula (De Cunzo and Catts 1990:51-64).

During this period Delaware began to experience far-reaching and complex change owing to major forces (industrialization, urbanization, and transportation improvements) that were affecting the United States as a whole. Philadelphia's influence over the state's economy began to be challenged by the rise of Baltimore as a regional and industrial center. Agriculture diversified to include an increased emphasis on dairying and fruit and vegetable growing, and also underwent many important changes in areas such as drainage techniques, mechanization and the use of fertilizers. Towards the end of the period, to maintain profitability, Delaware agriculture became increasingly specialized and export crop production declined substantially. An important factor in agricultural specialization and in the growth of manufacturing in the state

was the development of the railroad network from the late 1830s onwards. The railroads cemented Wilmington's position as the state's pre-eminent manufacturing and commercial center, but also stimulated the growth of towns and villages throughout the Lower Delaware Valley (De Cunzo and Catts 1990:64-77).

From the final quarter of the 19th century through into the mid-20th century, Delaware saw continued population growth, agricultural specialization, an increase in manufacturing activity, expanding towns, and the emerging influence of the automobile on economic activity and settlement patterns. The dominant trends of urbanization and suburbanization affected the northern part of the state in particular, such that New Castle County at the turn of the century contained almost 60% of the population. The two more southerly counties, Kent and Sussex, remained in contrast essentially rural, their economies being based chiefly on market gardening. The produce for the most part was marketed in the regions major urban centers, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Wilmington (De Cunzo and Catts 1990:77-86).

## **B. Historical Overview of Hanby's Corner**

Hanby's Corner derives its name from the Hanby family, members of which began to settle in this section of Delaware in the mid-18th century. Prior to this time the land that contains all four study areas was owned by William Penn and his descendants. In 1753 Thomas and Richard Penn, owners of vast tracts on both the Delaware and New Jersey sides of the Lower Delaware Valley, sold a large parcel of land, including the study areas, to Richard Hanby. This property was centered around the intersection of present-day Naaman's Road and Marsh Road ("Hanby's Corner"), and it is possible that both Naaman's Road and Marsh Road were present as established routes at the time of the sale. The first detailed map to show this area of Upper Delaware is the Varle map of New Castle County, published in 1801 (Figure 4.1). Neither Naaman's Road or Marsh Road are shown on this map, but this does not imply that the roads were not in existence, since the map depicts only the most major roads that were present in the landscape at the time. The course of Naaman's Creek, however, is shown on the Varle map.

Orphans Court records and accompanying survey plats show John Hanby as the principal landowner in the Hanby's Corner area around 1830 and indicate that the Hanby homestead (perhaps the original 18th-century homestead established by Richard Hanby) was located on the west side of Hay Road (present-day Marsh Road) about 2,000 feet south of its intersection with Naaman's Creek Road (present-day Naaman's Road) (New Castle County Orphans Court Book O:165 and O:379) (Figures 4.2a and 4.2b). The Naaman's Road (East) and the Marsh Road study areas are both contained within the limits of the survey plats, but are shown as vacant woodland. The Darley Road study area is shown in the tenure of the heirs of Henry Guest, while the Naaman's Road (West) study area was owned at this time by Isaac Cloud. Darley Road is not depicted on this map because it was not constructed until the third quarter of the 19th-century. The schoolhouse depicted on the 1831 plat in the northwest angle of the intersection is located on a half acre of land donated by John Hanby in 1810 for the purpose of a local educational facility (New Castle County Deed 1-3-475; Cunningham et al. 1986).

After John Hanby died in 1831 his property was partitioned. His wife Charity retained the portion of the property containing the homestead (shown as Lot A on Figure 4.2a) as well as the Naaman's Road (East) study area (shown as Lot B). The Marsh Road study area, contained within Lot C, was sold to John Hanby's son, James G. Hanby. The Rea and Price map of 1849 (Figure 4.3) shows "R. Hanby" owning the Hanby homestead, while James G. Hanby had by this time built himself a dwelling in the Marsh Road study area (see below, Section C for a more detailed history of the James G. Hanby Farmstead). No buildings are shown in any of the three other study areas on the Rea and Price map.

The Lake and Beers map of 1860 (Figure 4.4) shows Samuel Hanby as owning both the old Hanby homestead as well as the property containing the Naaman's Road (East) and the Naaman's Road (West) study area. By 1868, according to the maps published in the Beers atlas of that year (Figure 4.5), a new dwelling, labeled "A.R. Hanby" had been erected in the southeast angle of Hanby's Corner. To the south of this building, within the Marsh Road study area, the James G. Hanby farmhouse was now shown as being owned by "R.J. Hanby." The Hopkins map of 1881 (Figure 4.6) is the first map of this area to show Darley Road in existence, indicating that this road was laid out between 1868 and 1881. This road begins roughly 500 feet to the east of the Hanby's Corner intersection and runs in a southeasterly direction through Claymont where it connected with the Philadelphia and Wilmington Turnpike. By the early 1890s Samuel Hanby owned nearly all of Hanby's Corner (Figure 4.7). An aerial photograph taken in 1937 (Figure 4.8) and a USGS topographic map published in 1953 (Figure 4.9) show land use in the Hanby's Corner vicinity to have remained essentially agricultural through the mid-20th century when the suburban outgrowth of Greater Wilmington began to envelop the area.

Today, the former site of the original Hanby homestead is occupied by the Harvey Mill Park housing development. There are only a handful of extant buildings in the area that can be attributed to the Hanby Family. The most visible of these was not initially owned by the family. Located in Hanby Park, fronting Chestnut Street, this house is believed to have been originally constructed by the Cloud family. It was purchased by James G. Hanby sometime between 1860 and 1868. The last Hanby to occupy the premises was Albert T. Hanby and his wife Cecil Hanby. Around 1945 they created the Albert T. Hanby and Cecil Hanby Foundation to protect the property from further development. A second Hanby family structure is located in the southeastern angle of the intersection of Marsh Road and Zebly Road. This house was owned by William Hanby from the early part of the 19th-century into the 1880s. It is shown in the tenure of "Geo W. Hanby" in Baist's atlas of New Castle County, published in 1893 (Figure 4.7). One other remaining farmhouse is located on the north side of Naaman's Road, approximately 1,700 feet to the west of the Hanby's Corner intersection. This house was also initially owned by the Cloud family before it was bought by Samuel Hanby around 1860. Baist's atlas of New Castle County of 1893 (Figure 4.7) shows Jacob Hanby owning the property. It should be noted that the old "Schoolhouse No. 4" that was built on donated Hanby land around 1810 is also still standing, although it has been much altered (Cunningham et al. 1986).

### C. The J.G. Hanby House Site

This section presents a more detailed history of the Marsh Road study area, since this parcel of land contained the nucleus of the small farm property referred to here as the J.G. Hanby House Site. The property in the southeast corner of the intersection of Naaman's Road and Marsh Road appears to have been first occupied during the second quarter of 19th century. This property, like the rest of the area around the intersection, passed from the Penn family to Richard Hanby in 1753, and then to John Hanby in 1803 (see above, Chapter 4.B; Table 4.1). John Hanby died intestate in 1831, and his land holdings were divided among his wife and children by the Orphans Court. This land division was recorded on a pair of survey plats prepared in 1831 and 1832 (New Castle County Orphans Court Book O:165 and O:379; Figures 4.2a and 4.2b). At this time, James G. Hanby obtained a tract slightly in excess of 22 acres, denoted as No. 3 on the 1832 plat (Figure 4.2b). This tract lay at the junction of Naaman's Creek Road (modern Naaman's Road) and Hay Road (modern Marsh Road). Although structures are indicated on adjacent properties, none are indicated on James' tract on either plat (i.e., within the Marsh Road study area).

James Hanby was not listed in the federal population census of 1840, but was recorded as a farmer, 40 years of age, in the census of 1850 (Table 4.2). He would therefore have been 22 years old in 1832 when he acquired the 22 acres from his father's estate. His oldest child, a daughter 17 years old, was born in 1833. James was thus married by that date, and it is possible a dwelling had been or was being constructed on his land within a year or two of his inheriting a portion of his father's property. The Rea and Price map of New Castle County in 1849 depicts a building labeled J.G. Hanby on the 22-acre tract south of Naaman's Road (Figure 4.3) (United States Census of Delaware, Population Schedules, 1850).

The 1850 census also reveals that James and Ann Hanby had eight children ranging in age from 17 years to four months. By 1860 four of these children were no longer listed in the census as part of the household; three were women who may have married and moved away. Two additional children were born subsequent to 1850, and another child bearing the surname Moore lived on the property. The oldest son Robert, a bricklayer, resided with his parents, as did Alfred Hanby, a carpenter, whose relationship to James and Ann is unclear (United States Census of Delaware, Population Schedules, 1850, 1860).

The agricultural schedules of the federal census (Table 4.3) permit the farm of James Hanby to be placed within the broader agrarian economic context of mid-19th century Delaware as defined by the research of Michel (1984, 1985). The scientific farming movement of the second quarter of the 19th century had influenced Delaware to varying degrees. Farms in northern Delaware were as productive as any in the country, and the northernmost hundreds possessed the most valuable land. These lands were generally intensively cultivated; three-fourths of the acreage was improved, with the average farmer tilling two-thirds of this improved land. The commercial

**TABLE 4.1.**  
**J.G. HANBY FARMSTEAD: SEQUENCE OF OWNERSHIP**

<b>Ownership Tenure</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Acquisition Citation</b>
-1753	Thomas Penn and Richard Penn	See PADR A-17 342
1753-1803	Richard Hanby	PADR A-17 342
1803-1832	John Hanby	New Castle Co. Will Q-1 342
1832-1867	James G. Handy	New Castle Co. Orphans Court O 377
1867-1870	Robert J. Hanby and Catharine Hanby	New Castle Co. Deed V-8 87
1870-1892	Samuel Hanby	New Castle Co. Deed F-9 108
1892-1925	James W. McCracken and Mary C. McCracken (Formerly Hanby)	New Castle Co. Will O-2 276
1925-c.1945	Albert T. Hanby and Cecil Hanby	New Castle Co. Deed G-33 133
c.1945-	Albert T. Hanby and Cecil Hanby Foundation	New Castle Co. Will 27199

**TABLE 4.2.**  
**J.G. HANBY FARMSTEAD: U.S. CENSUS OF DELAWARE**  
**POPULATION SCHEDULES, 1850, 1860 AND 1870**

Hanby	SEX	1850			1860			
		AGE	PROFESSION	REAL EST. \$	AGE	PROFESSION	REAL EST. \$	PER EST. \$
James G.	M	40	farmer	3000	50	farmer	4000	
Ann	F	36			47			
Hannah F.	F	17			---			
Robert J.	M	16	school		26	bricklayer		400
Margaret	F	14			---			
John A.	M	11	school		---			
Mary E.	F	9	school		---			
Eliza A.	F	7			17	school		
Samuel	M	2			12	school		
Louisa J.	F	0.33			10	school		
Alfred D.	M	---			21	carpenter		400
Amelia F.	F	---			8	school		
Charles P.	M	---			5	school		
James G. Moore	M	---			5	school		
1870								
Hanby	SEX	AGE	PROFESSION	REAL EST. \$	PER EST. \$			
Samuel	M	52	farmer	205000?	3845			
Eliza	F	60	keeping house					
John L.	M	29	farm worker					
Wynfred Samuel	M	20	farm worker					
Rebecca Samuel	F	18	at home					
Charity Hanby	F	16	at school					
James B.	M	14	at school					
Sarah	F	12	at school					
Harriett	F	10	at school					

**TABLE 4.3.**  
**J. G. HANBY FARMSTEAD: U.S. CENSUS OF DELAWARE**  
**AGRICULTURAL SCHEDULES, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880**

Hanby	James G.	James G.	Samuel	Samuel	Samuel
	1850	1860	1870	1880(1)	1880(2)
improved acres	30	31	119	100	70
unimproved acres	10	2	34	20	0
woodland acres			25	14	20
total acres	40	33	178	134	90
% improved	75.0	93.9	66.9	74.6	77.8
acres wheat				13	8
acres Indian corn				10	9
acres oats				0	6
farm value \$	3000	4000	13500	3550	6750
farm equipment \$	150	200	500	200	
wages paid \$			600	400	0
horses	2	2	6	9	1
milch cows	5	7	20	20	20
other cattle	1	0	9	1	0
swine	3	6	4	1	0
other				4	0
% milch cows	45.5	46.7	51.3	64.5	95.2
livestock \$	250	396	1548	911	500
animals slaughtered \$	16	100	270		
calves dropped				20	10
cattle purchased				14	0
cattle sold				13	10
cattle lost, etc.				7	0

**TABLE 4.3. (CONT.)**  
**J. G. HANBY FARMSTEAD: U.S. CENSUS OF DELAWARE**  
**AGRICULTURAL SCHEDULES, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880**

Hanby	James G.	James G.	Samuel	Samuel	Samuel
bushels wheat	40	30	250	200	90
bushels Indian corn	100	200	250	500	400
bushels oats	40			0	225
bushels buckwheat	20	30			
% Indian corn	50.0	76.9	50.0	71.4	55.9
bushels Irish potatoes	40	35	150		
pounds butter	750	1050			
gallons milk			9000	9000	8000
tons hay	12	6	30	30	12
tons straw				10	5
farm products \$			3200	1000	800
orchard products \$	5	40	300		

production of wheat was concentrated in the northern part of the state. A sample of farms within the northernmost hundreds taken from the 1850 census revealed that five percent produced more than 500 bushels of wheat. The percentage was considerably higher (40%) in St. George's Hundred, slightly to the south within the "Wheat Belt." Crop production was secondary, however, to capital intensive dairying and feeder cattle production in Brandywine Hundred and the other areas which bordered along Pennsylvania. Indian corn was the basic source of fodder throughout the state, although this was often supplanted by hay and oats in the northern tier farms (Michel 1984, cited in De Cunzo 1992:22, 23).

James Hanby had indeed improved 75% of his acreage by 1850, and increased the relative percentage still further in 1860, evidently by selling some his unimproved acreage. He maintained a diversified agricultural base; production of Indian corn equalled the total for all other grains. His wheat production was well below the maximum for the northern farms. As with his neighbors, his hay production of 12 tons probably provided fodder for the cattle and horses. Milch cows accounted for slightly less than half of the livestock (United States Census of Delaware, Agricultural Schedules, 1850, 1860).

In the third quarter of the 19th century, it is clear from historic maps and land transactions that the extended Hanby family was spread among a number of properties in the Hanby's Corner area, with the properties changing hands quite frequently between family members. James sold 17 of the original 22 acres to his son Robert in 1867 for the sum of \$3,000 (Table 4.1). The Beers map of 1868 (Figure 4.5) indicates that Robert occupied the home purchased from James, who had in turn moved to a house standing southeast of the property. A house owned by A.S. Hanby stood at the corner of Naaman's and Marsh Roads, on the five acres which were not included in the sale to Robert. Samuel Hanby owned a house west of Marsh Road; Samuel purchased the 17 acres and house from Robert in 1870, also for the sum of \$3,000.

The 1870 census reveals that Samuel was a farmer 52 years old. He and his wife Eliza shared their dwelling with five children, and with another couple who were probably a daughter and son-in-law. This dwelling is evidently the one lying west of Marsh Road, so it is unclear who occupied the former dwelling of James and Robert (United States Census of Delaware, Population Schedules, 1870). Around this time, the 17 acres formerly owned by James and Robert Hanby were appended to Samuel's existing estate, resulting in a total of 178 acres (Table 4.1).

Two-thirds of the Samuel Hanby estate was improved land, on which grain production was evenly divided between wheat and Indian corn. The 30 tons of hay produced served as fodder for the cattle and horses; milch cows accounted for slightly more than 50 percent of his livestock. Although the dairy farm maintained by Samuel was larger in scale than that of James and Robert, it was probably relatively small compared with others in northern Delaware. One notable change in economic activity is indicated between 1860 and 1870. The farm of James produced 750 pounds of butter in 1850, and 1,050 pounds in 1860. By 1870, dairy farmers

were evidently no longer producing the finished product, but sending milk to butter and cheese factories. Samuel sent 9,000 gallons of milk to such factories in 1870. These data reflect the increasingly specialized nature of dairy farming during the third quarter of the 19th century (United States Census of Delaware, Agricultural Schedules, 1850, 1860, 1870).

Samuel's will of January 31, 1887, granted to his daughter Mary the "Robert J. Hanby Farm" of 17 acres, and to his son Albert the "James G. Hanby Farm" of 17 acres (New Castle County Will O-2:276). Samuel purchased the latter farm after 1881, as James is still indicated as owner on the Hopkins Map of that date (Figure 4.6). Samuel died on January 14, 1892 (New Castle County Deed G-33:133) and Mary and her husband James McCracken received as her inheritance the farm once owned by Robert Hanby. The 1893 Baist Map (Figure 4.7) marks several dwellings under the ownership of Samuel's estate, but the former Robert Hanby dwelling is not shown. Albert and Cecil Hanby purchased the farm, once again for \$3,000, from the McCrackens in 1925, and the Albert T. and Cecil Hanby Trust became titleholders around 1945. The former Robert Hanby dwelling is visible on a 1937 aerial photograph (Figure 4.8) and a 1953 USGS topographic quadrangle map (Figure 4.9).