

THE FORKS OF RANCOCAS CREEK: A HISTORY

Rancocas State Park
Township of Hainesport, New Jersey

Prepared For:



Burlington County Board of Chosen Freeholders,

Burlington County Division of Parks

6 Park Avenue

Eastampton, New Jersey 08060

Prepared By:

Paul W. Schopp, Historian

Post Office Box 648

Palmyra, New Jersey 08065-0648

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Introduction

In January 2013, Burlington County Historian Joseph Laufer received a request from the Burlington County Division of Parks for information on the history of the portion of the Rancocas State Park located in Hainsport Township in the area traditionally known as the “Forks of the Rancocas” (or simply the “Forks”) which is formed by the confluence of the North and South Branches of the Rancocas Creek. Mr. Laufer enlisted the assistance of Paul W. Schopp to research the topic for the county. This report is the result of Mr. Schopp’s inquiry into the history of the Forks.

This is not an overall history of the Rancocas and its two branches, nor does it provide information on sail and steam navigation and landings along the creek. The documentation that follows focuses on the peninsula between the North and South Branch and its land use over time from the period of first contact between Native Americans and European traders in the 1600s forward. Mr. Schopp relied on contemporaneous historic maps, other primary documents, and some secondary source material. He conducted only a limited title search of the various tracts of land comprising the peninsula. The report specifically discusses the native village of King Remkokes and then the Breezy Ridge farm of Charles Read, constructed during the colonial period. Scant mention is made of other owners or parcels of land as most of these other parcels served as banked meadows or livestock corrals with virtually no buildings present. The report ends with discussing sand-mining operations that erased the evidence of previous cultures and their occupation of the Forks. Mr. Schopp provides this report as a service to the Burlington County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Division of Parks, which should use the historical narrative contained herein for preparing interpretative materials and to educate the county’s Park Rangers.

Historical Significance of The Forks

The location of the Forks provided numerous advantages that have served diverse peoples over many centuries. Located at the point where the two main branches of the Rancocas meet and well within the navigable tidal waters of the Delaware River system, the Forks enjoyed easy access both downriver to the Delaware River as well as up river into the interior of what constitutes most of northern Burlington County. Navigation flourished on the Rancocas since the Lenape and their predecessors first occupied the shores of the creek. The land at the Forks historically was a high plateau of inner coastal plain soils, which offered those residing there dry ground with commanding views of the waterways.

Three periods or phases in the history of The Forks stand out and illustrate the broad course of American history in this part of the county. First it served as an important Native American settlement site offering strategic and advantages within the region. While documentation of this period is limited and the site itself was later disturbed during mining operations, evidence from maps and early accounts indicates there was, at times, a major Indian settlement at this location in the 1600s and probably long before. The earliest Europeans named the creek for Remkokes, the native king who occupied the surrounding lands. Whether this was the traditional name given to the stream by the indigenous people is unknown. Some scholars view seventeenth-century cartography as more art than science, yet the evidence on maps that are included as figures in this report appear to have a high degree of accuracy in correctly placing the location of native villages and settlements. While a c.1639 map of the area depicts Remkoke's village in the area of Lumberton or Vincentown, the village had relocated to the Forks of the Rancocas by the 1650s according to maps of that period. This Lenape village remained a viable community at the Forks into the 1680s. The West New Jersey Proprietors acquired land that included the Forks of the Rancocas from the Lenape in the fall of 1677 (Nelson 1899:395). European occupation of the Forks, however, began in the early 1690s with Daniel Wills Jr.

The second significant period in the history of the Forks illustrates the development of European-American agricultural practices. During the 1750s, 492 acres, comprising the majority of today's park land in the Forks, came into the possession of Charles Read, one of the most notable citizens of West New Jersey in his time. Born in 1715 to a Philadelphia merchant, Charles spent his formative years traveling abroad before settling in Burlington in 1739. He was admitted to the bar and served in many capacities in the judicial and legislative branches of colonial government. Instrumental in establishing the Brotherton Indian Reservation, Read also constructed four of Burlington County's most famous prerevolutionary ironworks: *Ætna*, *Taunton*, *Atsion*, and *Batsto*. He was a man of means and influence throughout Burlington County and many other locations in America during his lifetime in the Colonial Period. Voted into membership of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia during 1768, Read corresponded regularly with Benjamin Franklin on a wide variety of subject matters. Most relevant to his land holdings in the Forks, Read conducted and recorded many agricultural experiments at his farms there and in Springfield. He also constructed a residence which stood on

high ground above the South Branch. This dwelling remained *in situ* until flames destroyed the structure during the 1920s (Woodward 1941).

The third important period in the Forks history comes in the first decade of the twentieth century and reflects the advances of industrial development in the nation at the time. Philadelphia's unprecedented campaign of erecting buildings and improving infrastructure dramatically increased the demand for construction sand. The land within the Forks contained deposits of sand ideal for construction, making it a valuable mineral resource. Mining operations began in 1905 and continued for six to eight years, eventually resulting in the removal of sand deposits over much of the area, thereby eradicating the earlier native and colonial settlement sites. The peninsula became a veritable wasteland with areas gouged and scarred by excavating machines and mounds containing turf and overburden.

In the years since excavation has ceased, the area has witnessed a remarkable recovery through the process of natural forest succession, returning most of the area to woodland and marsh. This makes the Forks a valuable location for studying and interpreting ecological processes. While the loss of early native and colonial landscape, occupation sites, and architecture due to the sand-mining operations is regrettable, the historical narrative that comes out of this transformation is a powerful one that can be used to educate park visitors about the dynamic changes that have occurred over the past four centuries.

The Forks of Rancocas Creek: A History

Contact Period

During the early seventeenth century, Southern New Jersey hosted settlements by the Dutch and a disparate group of people associated with New Sweden, but the indigenous natives comprised the bulk of humanity living on the landscape. In 1664, Englishman Richard Nicolls sailed a small flotilla of warships into New York Harbor and received the surrender of New Amsterdam from the Dutch without firing a shot (Weslager 1961:237). The Dutch struck back at the English interlopers in New Netherland during 1673 and temporarily won their colony back. However, the recovery was short-lived and Holland forever surrendered any claim it had to New Netherland to the English in the 1674 Treaty of Westminster. Dutch forces withdrew from the Hudson River and the English resumed its rule and ownership (Weslager 1961:252). Four years prior to the Treaty of Westminster, Augustine Herrman, a Maryland resident originally from Bohemia, traveled the region and drafted a map as a result of his trip. Titled *Virginia and Maryland as it is Planted and Inhabited this Present Year 1670* and published in 1673, the map not only depicts the two English colonies of Maryland and Virginia, but also much of West New Jersey:



Figure 1: Herrman, 1673

The map delineates most of the streams and rivers in New Jersey from Monmouth County south. In the Forks of the Rancocas, Herrman depicts a substantial Indian village, which he likely viewed firsthand:

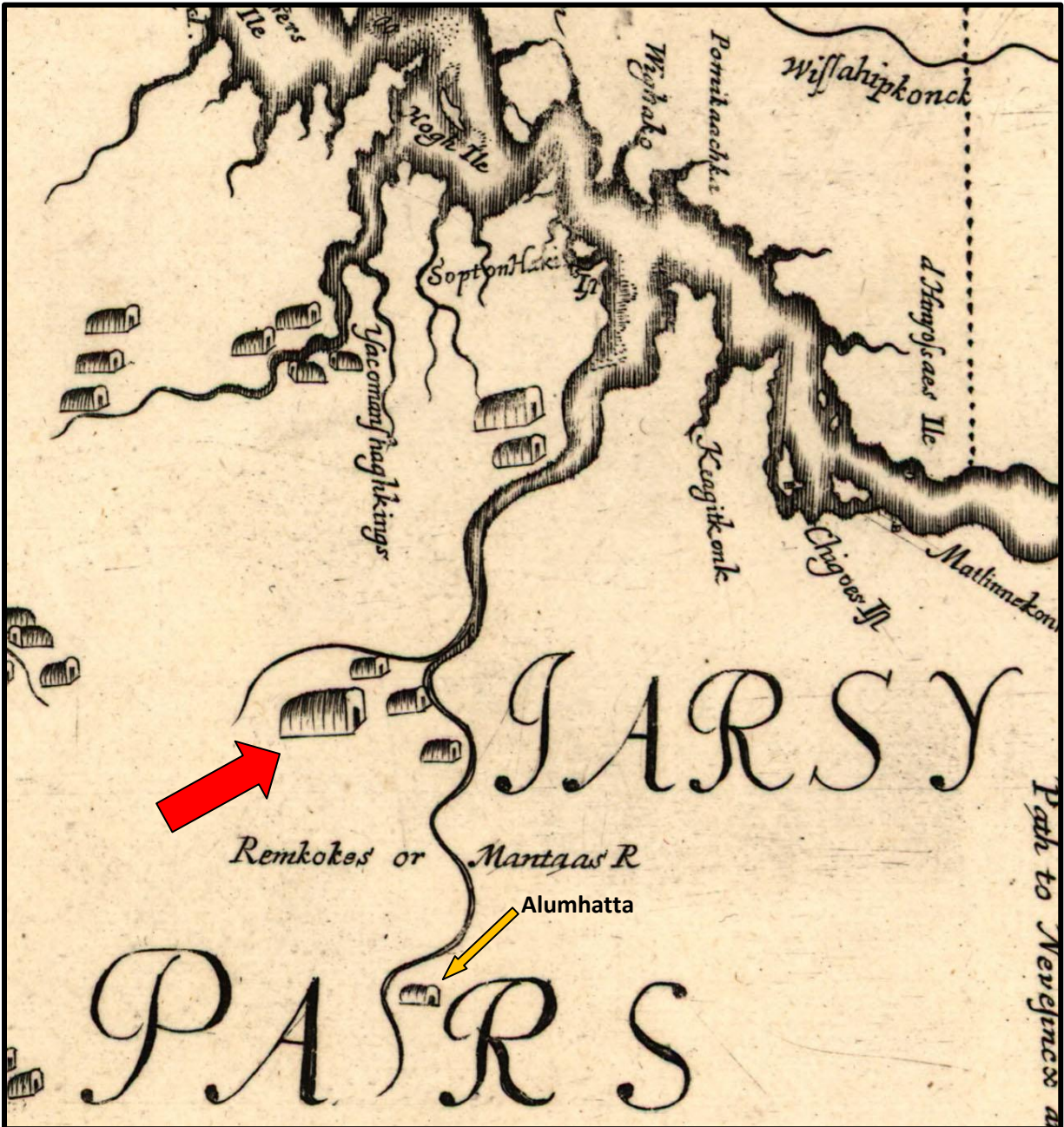


Figure 2: Herrman, 1673

The map also carries text concerning the inhabitants in this portion of New Jersey: “at present, Inhabited Only or most By Indians,” confirming that the indigenous people comprised virtually the entire population at that time, other than the small settlements of Swedes and Finns living along or proximate to the Delaware River (Herrman 1673).

Following the Treaty of Westminster, William Penn involved himself in planning a Quaker colony in West New Jersey. The London and Yorkshire Friends finally arrived here in 1677 and, after reaching a compromise on redrawing the boundaries for the proprietary tenths, joined together to create Burlington (Schopp 2010). As the Burlington London (Second) Tenth inhabitants began to explore their new realm in the late 1670s, a number of them likely sailed and/or canoed up the Rancocas Creek from its confluence with the Delaware River. On these exploratory trips, the intrepid pioneers likely passed up the North Branch and then the South Branch to observe locations for settlement. At the Forks between the two branches, a high sandy plateau projected upwards some 30 feet above the wetlands and creek that surrounded this peninsula, as depicted on this *circa* 1878 New Jersey Geological Survey topographical map:

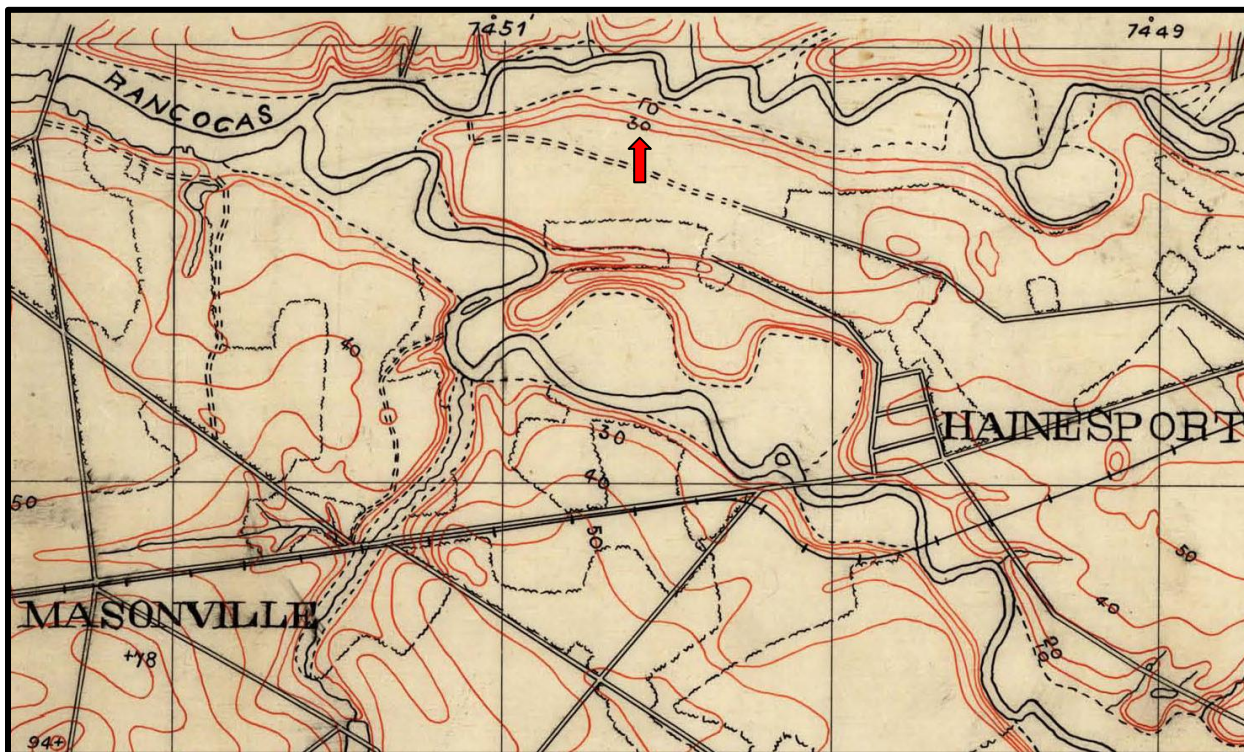


Figure 3: Vermeule, c. 1878

Despite its seemingly strategic location, no proprietor initially laid claim to this land, perhaps in deference to the Indian village there.¹ John Seller’s *Mapp of New Jersey*, published in at least two states or editions between 1675 and 1678, depicts the village. The 1675 edition does not label the village with a name, but the 1678 edition labels this village as “Mispennunck,” as shown below:

¹ In his 1969 pamphlet, *Hainesport: Biography of a Small Town*, author Richard Pedlow states that the native village carried the name “Sandhickney” (Pedlow 1969:6). An exhaustive check of seventeenth-century texts and maps, however, failed to identify a single use of this indigenous toponym, which is actually a derivative of a native name generally associated with the area of New Jersey from Trenton northward. So, Pedlow’s original source of this toponym has not yet been identified.



Figure 4: Seller, 1678

Typical for map production during this period of time, cartographers and map publishers would assemble as many maps as possible published by others showing the same area for which a new map would be produced (Brown 1949:169-170). No doubt that Seller copied the same number of Lenape longhouses from Herrman's map, published in 1673. Likewise, it appears Seller also had access to an unknown edition of Nicol as Visscher's map, *Novi Belgii Novaeque Angliae Novae et Partis Virginiae* [and other variant titles], published in different versions, with changes and updates, between circa 1651 and 1685. The earliest version of this map, shown below, depicts the village within the Forks as the second-largest native settlement on this portion of present-day New Jersey. The largest village appears to be situated at the forks of Pennsauken Creek, it containing one additional structure as shown on Visscher's map below:

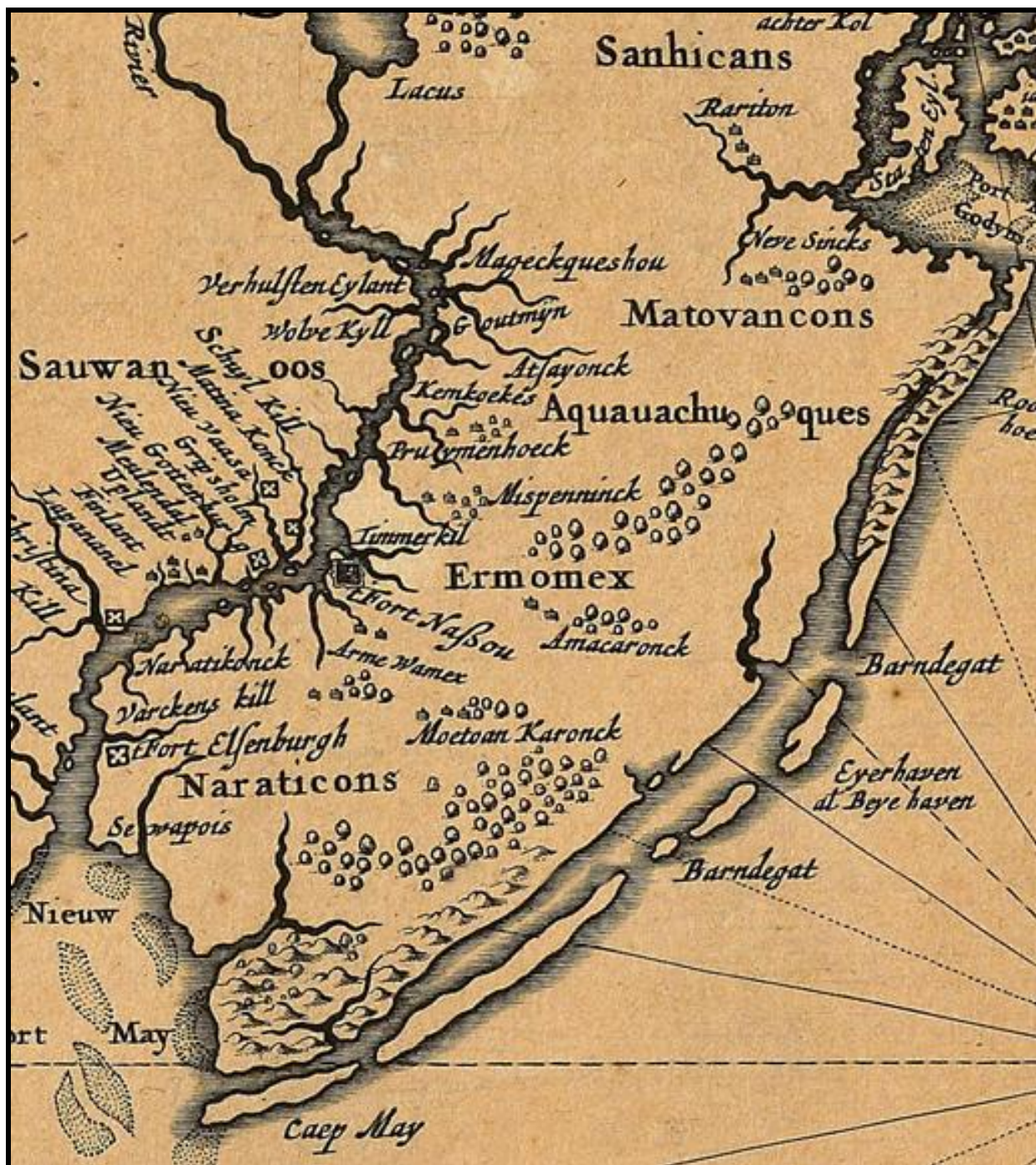


Figure 5: Visscher, c.1651

In turn, Dutch cartographer Visscher likely had full access to Hollander Joan Vinckeboon's *circa* 1639 manuscript map, *Cært vande Svydt Rivier in Nieuw Nederland*. It appears, however, that Visscher misinterpreted the label Vinckeboon applied to the area near the Forks. Vinckeboon wrote the toponym "Alispeynck" between the Rancocas Creek and what appears to be the Pennsauken Creek, but he fails to show a village located within the Forks of the Rancocas:



Figure 6: Vinckeboons, c.1639

Instead, Vinckeboon delineates the native “Rimcokes” village as much further inland, possibly in the area of Lumberton or beyond, illustrated with two longhouses and four huts. Writing about this map, noted Lenape scholar Herbert Kraft states, “A more accurate representation of a Lenape Longhouse is depicted on a 1639 map of southern New Jersey, probably drawn by Johannes Vingboons [sic], cartographer of the Dutch West India Company” (Kraft 1981:121). Whether this is accurate or just “artistic license” on the part of the cartographer is currently unknown, but Native Americans did relocate their villages for several reasons, including

sanitation and defense. In 1634, English sea captain Thomas Yong, set sailed from Virginia in and navigated up the coast. Arriving in what would become known as Delaware Bay, Yong sought to interact with the indigenous people there. On July 27, he finally succeeded in bringing a native onboard his ship, where he questioned the man through an interpreter. In part, Yong states that the native reported the following:

He told me further that the people of that River were at warre with a certaine Nation called the Minquaos [a.k.a. the Susquehannocks], who had killed many of them, destroyed their corne, and burned their houses; insomuch as that the Inhabitants had wholly left that side of the River, which was next to their enimies, and had retired themselves on the other side farre up into the woods, the better to secure themselves from their enimies. (Myers 1912:38, [original spelling retained throughout])

The Susquehannocks sought to gain complete control of trade with the Dutch, and, after 1638, with the Swedes, by shutting out the Lenape through warfare and intimidation. So the threat of an imminent attack from the Susquehannocks might have driven King Ramcockes to move farther inland from the Forks. By 1650, the Suquehannocks and the Lenape had made peace and formed a mutual alliance of protection against the Iroquoian peoples comprising the Five Nations Alliance (Van Zandt 2008:167). So the establishment or reestablishment of a village in the Forks between 1639 and Nicholæs Visscher's 1651 map or Augustine Herrman's visit in 1670 is a distinct possibility due to the cessation of hostilities between the Lenape and the Susquehannocks. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, local residents reported finding many native artifacts on the land comprising the Forks, which reports are highly suggestive that a contact period village occupied this bluff.

Initial English Settlement Period

English settlers soon arrived along the banks of the creek to establish plantations. The Rancocas, known in the early days as Northampton River for the surrounding township, served as a convenient thoroughfare of commerce for these tidewater farmers. Dr. Daniel Wills had emigrated to the New World at Burlington on the good ship Kent in 1677 and remained a resident there for approximately four years. In the fall of 1681, Dr. Wills requested the West New Jersey Board of Proprietors to locate 500 acres of his proprietary share along the north shore of Rancocas Creek before the Forks, situated on a tract of land between John Borton, John Paine and a small creek. The Proprietors issued a warrant for the Surveyor General to locate the land and return a written survey of the land, which he accomplished in 1681 (DeCou 1949:8-9, 237-239). Daniel Wills then relocated to this property from Burlington to establish his farm. The Wills Plantation included the land that, today, comprises Henry Rowan's former "Stone Bridge" property, located off the east side of Bridge Street just north of the Centreton Bridge. Wills resided on this farm until his death in 1698 (Newkirk 2001:97).

In May 1691, he gave to his son, Daniel Wills Jr., by deed of gift, 520 acres of unlocated land from his proprietorship. In September of the same year, Daniel Jr. submitted a request to the

Board of Proprietors, who issued a warrant to the Surveyor General for locating 480 acres of the unsurveyed land. Deputy Surveyor Symon Charles surveyed the land at "...the Forks of Ancokus." Daniel Jr. became the first Englishman to hold title to the peninsula, or a portion of it, between the North and South Branch of Rancocas Creek (Newkirk 2001:109).

Daniel Wills Jr. added to his land holdings in November 1697 when he purchased an additional 100 acres from Henry Mosley, the landowner to the east of Will's Forks land. Daniel remained tenured in the full 580 acres until February 1715, when he gave his son, James Wills, 200 of the original 480 acres on the peninsula by deed of gift (Newkirk 2001:109). It is unclear whether Daniel Jr. ever constructed a house at the Forks or whether he just employed the wetlands for grazing cattle and sheep. At the age of 69, Daniel prepared his will, dated 25 January 1728. The document lists him as a "husbandman of Northampton Township," suggesting that he raised livestock as part of his agricultural pursuits (Newkirk 2001:109-110). Daniel's Will is somewhat vague on the disposition of his land in the Forks and without a thorough title search, the history of the land between 1728 and 1758, a span of thirty years, is unknown.

Colonial Period and Charles Read's Tenure

Notable Burlington County resident Charles Read began acquiring land along the north side of the South Branch in the area of the Forks as early as 1747, purchasing 40 acres there. He added greatly to his holdings between 1754 and 1758, purchasing two large tracts in 1758 comprising:

...256 acres of loamy upland and black meadow from Andrew Conarro for £163; and 234 adjacent acres from John Erwin for £400. Together these two places comprised the plantation he called Breezy Ridge. From the limited evidence at hand it appears that Breezy Ridge was a pretentious establishment. The substantial hip-roofed house looking southward across the stream stood on an eminence exposed to the breezes that swept up the Rancocas Valley. Nearby stood a boathouse marked with the initials C.R. There is mention of "Read's Dam," also, on the South Branch of the Rancocas which may have been nearby. Five islands in the Rancocas, totaling 6½ acres in area, also were acquired in 1756—one by purchase, the others by survey under one of Read's proprietary grants.

Although the precise place of Read's residence through these years is not certain, there is evidence that for a time he lived at Breezy Ridge—he is referred to in deeds given in 1760 as "Charles Read of Breezy Ridge." Perhaps he maintained his Burlington home and Breezy Ridge simultaneously, using the latter as a summer retreat.

The entries in Read's notes indicate unusual agricultural activity from 1756 to 1758. Presumably Breezy Ridge was the locale. Experiments as diverse as the seeding of millet, the grafting of fruit and the feeding of cattle were recorded during these years. That stumpy grafts were superior to slender ones he found to be "strickly [*sic*] by Experim[en]t."

On selling 20 cattle he had fattened on grass, he made a profit of £57. On harvesting his hay crop in 1756, he noted the capacity of his barracks, and also computed the weight of hay per cubical unit. When he butchered his hogs in 1757,

he noted carefully the lost in weight of the dressed carcasses. No step in the day's work on the farm was too small to escape his attention.

Again at Breezy Ridge, Read experienced the common vexation of runaway servants. In the *Pennsylvania Journal* for August 17, 1758, appeared an advertisement offering 20s. reward for an Englishman named Joseph Dealy—who ran away June 7 “from the plantation of Charles Read, Esq., at Breezy ridge in Burlington County.” The advertisement was signed by Hugh Dunn, who may have been Read's tenant, or the superintendent of the plantation.

...Much of the soil on Breezy Ridge was light and sandy, not so suitable for the growing of grain and grass crops as for sweet potatoes and other vegetables. Coveting for the cultivation of crops the rich but undrained marshlands that bordered the plantation, Read engaged on Thomas Rakestraw to ditch and bank the meadows on the north side of this branch of the Rancocas. The terms of the agreement reveal a creditable knowledge of agricultural engineering, which is evidenced also by the description of the water engine in Read's notes. The bank was the kind “Commonly Called twelve by Four” (presumably 12 feet wide at the base and 4 feet high), “the ditch to be Out side and a five-foot Drain behind the Bank with the necessary Sluices, and always hereafter shall be repaired made and amended and Skoured & Other necessary work Done for keeping the Same Dry.” In 1761 Read sold Breezy Ridge to Thomas Bispham of the town of Gloucester. (Woodward 1941:76-79)

The following map depicts Woodward's interpretation of Breezy Ridge farm during Charles Read's tenure:

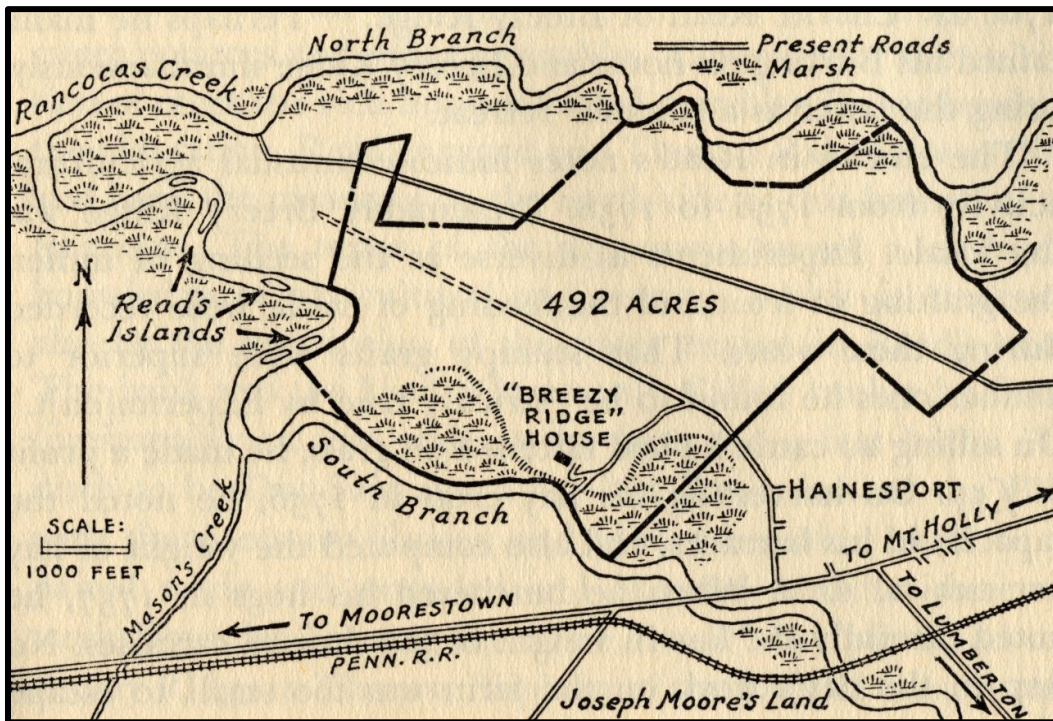


Figure 7: Woodward, 1941:77

Subsequent Ownership in The Forks

Thomas Bispham remained tenured in the Breezy Ridge property until his death in 1776. In September of that year, Bispham's executors sold the plantation to John Woolman's younger brother, Uriah, for £1450—a substantial sum of money at that time (DeCou 1949:1751; Burlington County Deed Book F:401).

Born near Rancocas in 1728, Uriah Woolman was a successful Philadelphia iron and steel merchant for many years until he decided to retire to Breezy Ridge in West New Jersey (Swank 1892:178). Uriah retained title to his farm until his death in May 1804. In his Last Will and Testament, Uriah, who had no children, devised Breezy Ridge to twelve nephews: William Woolman, Samuel Woolman, Joseph Woolman, Charles Woolman and Burr Woolman (sons of brother, Jonah, dec'd); Granville Woolman, Samuel F. Woolman, and Asher Woolman (sons of brother Asher, dec'd); and Eber Woolman, David Woolman, John Woolman and Rubin Woolman (sons of brother, Abraham, dec'd) (Hutchinson, ed. 1946:518).

Based on a brief review of deeds, it appears the twelve cousins sold off portions of the tract to various individuals. Other property owners in the Forks at this time included Dr. Granville Haines, Hugh Costill, Revel Elton, and the Engle family (Burlington County Deed Book X:301). Many of these parcels owned by these men served as banked meadows² with no standing structures. Sometime subsequent to the heirs of Uriah Woolman selling their deceased uncle's property, John Bishop acquired approximately 174 acres of the Breezy Ridge plantation, including the dwelling house facing up the South Branch that Charles Read constructed. It appears he acquired the property sometime between 1804 and 1820. In 1813, John also purchased the Ogston farm, located in Mansfield Township near Columbus (Haines 2962:94-95). Upon removing to this farm, he allowed his son, Joseph Ridgway Bishop, to occupy Breezy Ridge (Burlington County Will Book K:286).

In 1849, Philadelphia map publisher Smith & Wistar produced its *Map of Burlington County*, surveyed and drawn by cartographers J.W. Otley and R. Whiteford. This map shows only one dwelling in the forks, labeled as "J. Bishop," which could be either for Joseph Ridgway Bishop or his father, John Bishop, the latter being the *bona fide* property owner. A detail of this map is shown below, which also provides some indication that the bluff in the Forks featured tree cover:

² Banked meadows entailed surrounding a marsh or meadow with earthen dikes or banks along a tidal stream. Sluice boxes placed in the bottom of the earthen bank would allow collected water to run out into the stream at low tide, but block the introduction of any new water as the tidal flow returned through the use of a automatic gate device that closed via water coming up the sluice. The alluvial soil within the meadow provided a rich medium in which to grow crops and grazing grasses.



Figure 9: Parry, Sykes and Earl, 1859

Joseph R. Bishop died on 21 March 1861, but his father, John, made no changes to his own Will. On 2 December 1863, John Bishop died and Hannah Haines Bishop, Joseph's widow, gained full ownership of Breezy Ridge farm, devised to her by her father-in-law (Haines 1961:94, 269).

Less than three months later, in February 1864, Hannah conveyed the farm to her daughter, Lydia:

For and in consideration of the sum of one dollar and the natural love and affection she hath for her daughter," Hannah Bishop deeded to her daughter "The farm, plantation or tract of land called and known by the name of Breezy Ridge situated in the Twp. of Lumberton Burl. Co., Containing 165 79/100 acres more or less. Also another tract of land containing 8 acres more or less. Subject never the less, the 8 acres to the following conditions, that is that Hannah Bishop in during her natural life to have and occupy and enjoy the 8 acres of land as may seem to her best without any hindrance or molestation from her, Lydia Van Sciver, or any other person acting under the authority and not suffer for the use of

any firewood or any other thing while living or to any incumbrance to her other daughter Ann Johnson, wife of William Johnson by reason where of that Anna Johnson is to suffer any loss or expense incurred for Hannah Bishop's good and comfortable maintenance. (Miloszar 1976:98)

This transaction provided Abraham and Lydia Bishop Van Sciver with a place to live and raise their family. The marriage produced five children: Joseph Bishop Van Sciver; George Dobbins Van Sciver; Abraham D. Van Sciver; Annie Van Sciver; and Mary Carlisle Van Sciver (Miloszar 1976:98-99). Abraham contracted pneumonia and died in January 1871 (Miloszar 1976:97). Subsequent to Abraham's death, Lydia remarried to William Amos. The couple had two children together: William and John Amos. The J.D. Scott 1876 *Combination Atlas Map of Burlington County* depicts not only Lydia with her new married name, but also the presence of a second dwelling in the Forks: the home of William A. Johnson and his wife Ann, Lydia's sister (Haines 1961:270).

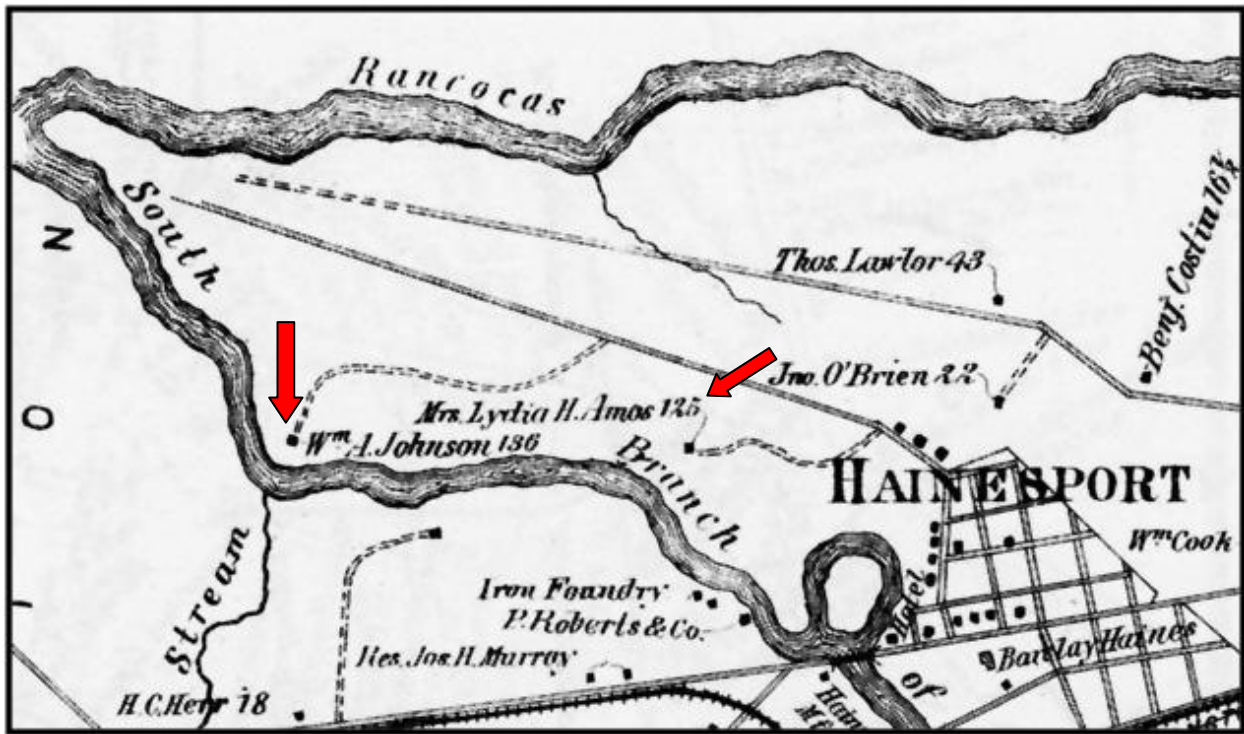


Figure 10: Scott, 1876

Riverdale

During the second half of the 1880s, a group of investors purchased the central eastern portion of the peninsula formed within the Forks and platted a new subdivision named "Riverdale." The company prepared a map of their holdings, which delineates streets and building lots and labels Lydia's house as the "Amos Residence," as shown in the detail below from the development map:

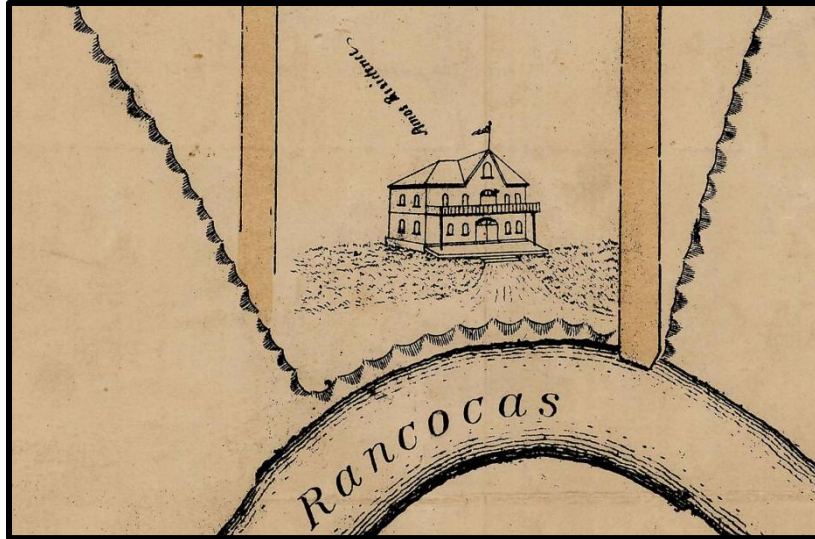


Figure 11: Stokes, 1887

The map also featured a statement confirming the high bluff overlooking the creek:

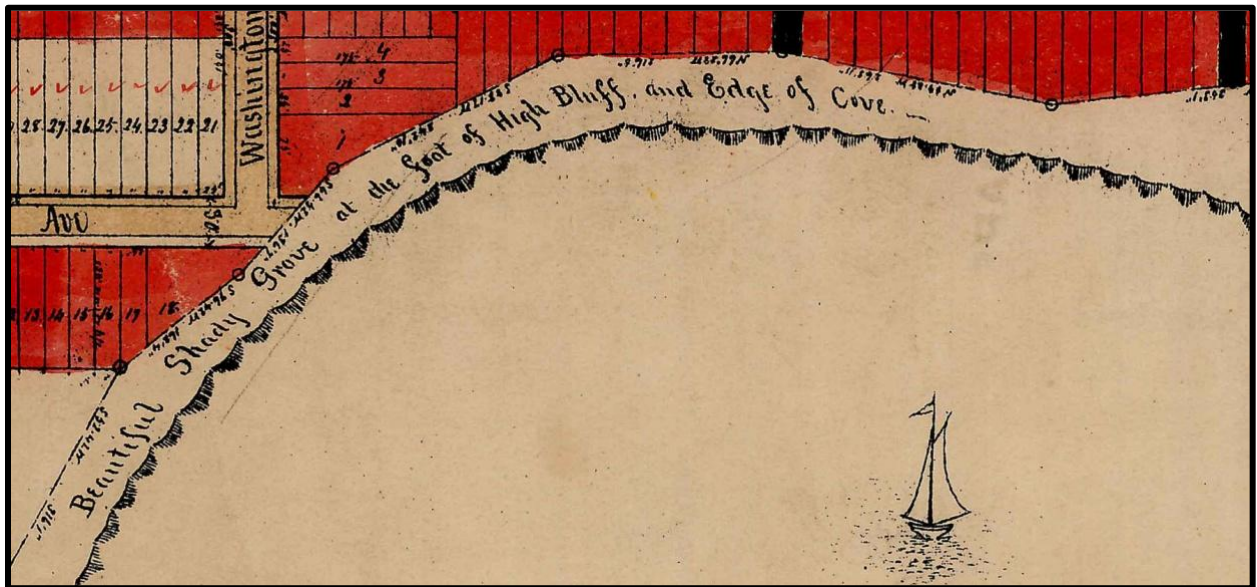


Figure 12: Stokes, 1887

The center section of the map illustrates that the building lots lay above Breezy Ridge Farm and nearer to the North Branch as well as two planned lakes for the recreational use of the prospective residents:

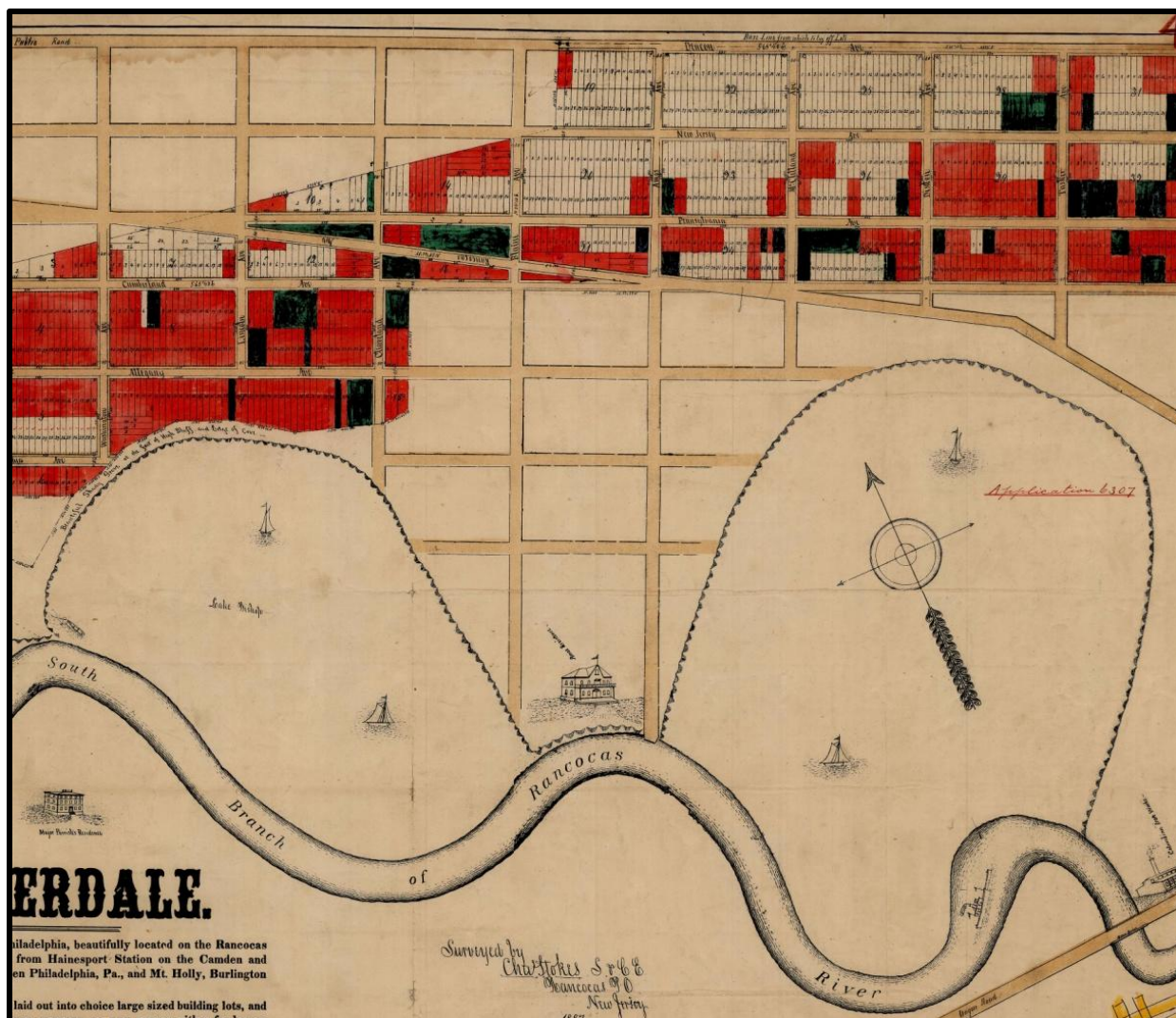


Figure 13: Stokes, 1887

While potential householders did purchase building lots, development at the Riverdale site grew very slowly. Grading efforts in December 1894 uncovered two Indian skeletons buried long ago (*New Jersey Mirror* 1894:3). Lydia remained in possession of her Breezy Ridge Farm until her death in February 1902. She died intestate, so the Burlington County Orphans Court determined her children would share and share-alike in their mother’s landholdings.

Sand-mining Operations

The year before their mother’s death, J.B. and his brother, George, formed the Hainesport Mining and Transportation Company on 22 March 1901. This company sought to profit from the construction sand and gravel lying along the banks of the Rancocas. Mined by various companies since at least the 1880s, the lands surrounding Rancocas Creek contained a variety of sand types ranging from water filtration and building sand to foundry molding sand. The Van Sciver brothers began business with \$50,000 in capitalization, but a year later, they doubled that amount. The rising hikes in capital continued through at least 1909, when the corporation issued

stock valued at \$600,000 (New Jersey Secretary of State 1914:281). Among other sand-bearing lands, the Hainesport Mining and Transportation Company acquired all of the land at the Forks. J.B. Van Sciver served as his administrator for his late mother's intestacy and in August 1905, J.B. and all of the other heirs of Lydia Amos's estate sold multiple parcels of land in the Forks, including building lots in Riverdale, to the Hainesport Mining and Transportation Company for the nominal price of \$1.00 (Burlington County Deed Book 399:444, 454). The company then began sand-mining operations and, in the space of six to eight years, destroyed the lofty 30-foot-high Breezy Ridge plateau, creating a virtual moonscape across the area. Many Indian artifacts from the village that once occupied the bluff in the Forks disappeared into the sand scows belonging to the company, never to be seen again.

In a 1910 report to Congress concerning conditions and the need to expend improvement funds on the Rancocas Creek, the United States Army Corps of Engineers states the following:

The banks of the Rancocas and of both of its branches contain immense deposits of building, filter, and molding sand. The deposits along the main stream and the Lumberton branch have been largely developed, while those up the Mount Holly branch have been hardly touched, owing to lack of navigation. The sand for some of the filtration works of Philadelphia, to the amount of 268,000 tons, was secured from beds located much more conveniently for shipment by water via the Mount Holly branch than by rail, but followed the latter route as scows and tugs of sufficient size could not go above the forks. It is estimated that the amount of sand transported from the Lumberton branch and from below the forks amounts annually to over 600,000 tons, of an average value of \$1. (Rand 1910:5)

The same report contained letters of testimony from various businesses that would benefit from improving navigation on the Rancocas, including one from George D. Van Sciver of the Hainesport Mining and Transportation Company:

...Letter of the Hainesport Mining and Transportation Company

Hainesport, N.J., April 5, 1909

We believe that the river should be deepened at various places and straightened at some points above what is known as the forks or the junction of the south and north branches of the river. We find it very difficult to get our lighters and tugs to our sand banks at Hainesport, N.J., on an average run of tide, and on a very low run of tide impossible at times for a period of one to three days to move them at all. This condition makes the cost of getting material to Philadelphia and other points greater on account of increased freight charges.

Below you will find the quantity of gravel we carried out of the river, and its cost, during 1908: 867 boat loads carrying an average of 300 cubic yards each at 40 cents per cubic yard, which includes the cost of material, making \$104,040. Carried to Hainesport from Philadelphia, 4,000 tons of pig iron at 43 cents per ton, \$1,892.

Our business as well as others should be largely increased should we have a deeper waterway and a straighter channel. We believe that if this were to be accomplished manufacturing plants would be erected on the banks of the river as they would be able to avail themselves of the low rate which could be provided.

Hainesport Mining and Transportation Company,
Geo. D. Van Sciver, President. (Rand 1910:10-11)

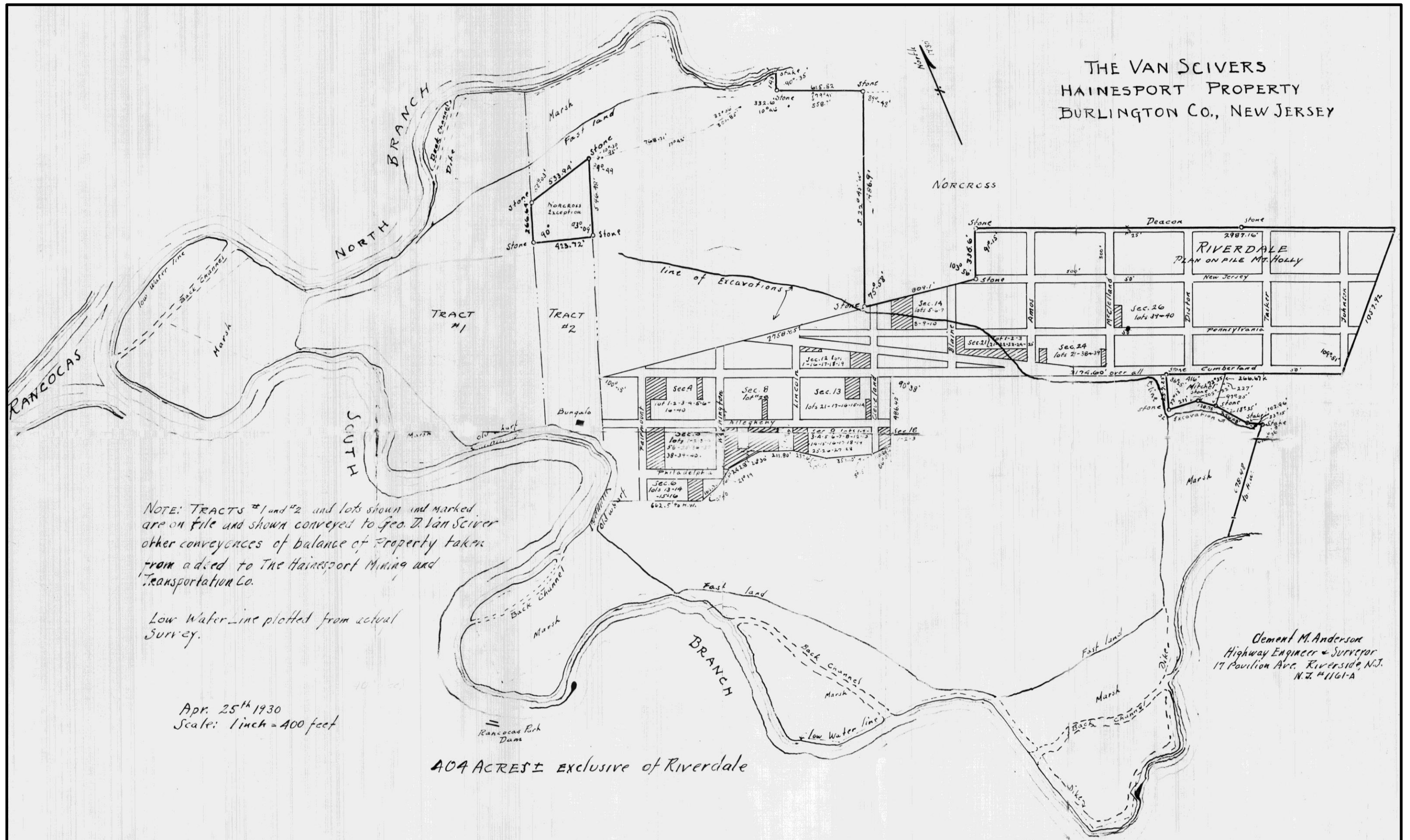
It appears sand-mining operations in the Forks ended between 1911 and 1913. Van Sciver's company had already acquired sand-bearing lands elsewhere along the creek, principally in Chester and Willingboro townships (Burlington County Deed Book 482:341; 495:65, 140; 506:1; 571:368; 572:36). A 1931 aerial photograph of the Forks provides a view of the scars remaining in the physical landscape from the mechanical equipment used in the mining operations:



Figure 14: New Jersey Geological Survey, 1931

In 1932, George D. Van Sciver contracted with Riverside surveyor Clement M. Anderson to draft a map of the peninsula within the Forks, shown in its entirety on page 18. After mining the sand from the land, Van Sciver took title to most of the tracts comprising the peninsula. The map provides information about the excavation line, the placement of Riverdale, the wharves once used for loading sand barges, and the location of marshlands along both branches of the Rancocas Creek. The only standing structure indicated on the map is a bungalow, the old Read dwelling having burned in the 1920s.

During the 1960s, the State of New Jersey acquired land in Westampton, Hainesport, and Mount Laurel townships to create the Rancocas State Park, including the land in the Forks. The state retains title to this land today as part of its statewide park system, although New Jersey has failed to develop the land for recreational activities or as a Wildlife Management Area. Today, the land within the Forks remains virtually as the Hainesport Mining and Transportation Company left it, except for the vegetation that has grown during the intervening years. Mounds dot the landscape in various locations around peninsula, formed when the sand-mining operations removed the overburden and turf to expose the underlying sand. Plate 1 of the Township of Hainesport tax parcel map set depicts the present layout of the peninsula in the Forks and can be viewed on page 20 of this report.



THE VAN SCIVERS
HAINESPORT PROPERTY
BURLINGTON CO., NEW JERSEY

NOTE: TRACTS #1 and #2 and lots shown and marked are on file and shown conveyed to Geo. D. Van Sciver other conveyances of balance of Property taken from a deed to The Hainesport Mining and Transportation Co.

Low Water line plotted from actual Survey.

Apr. 25th 1930
Scale: 1 inch = 400 feet

Clement M. Anderson
Highway Engineer & Surveyor
17 Pavilion Ave. Riverside, N.J.
N.J. #1161-A

404 ACRES ± exclusive of Riverdale

Figure 15: Anderson, 1932

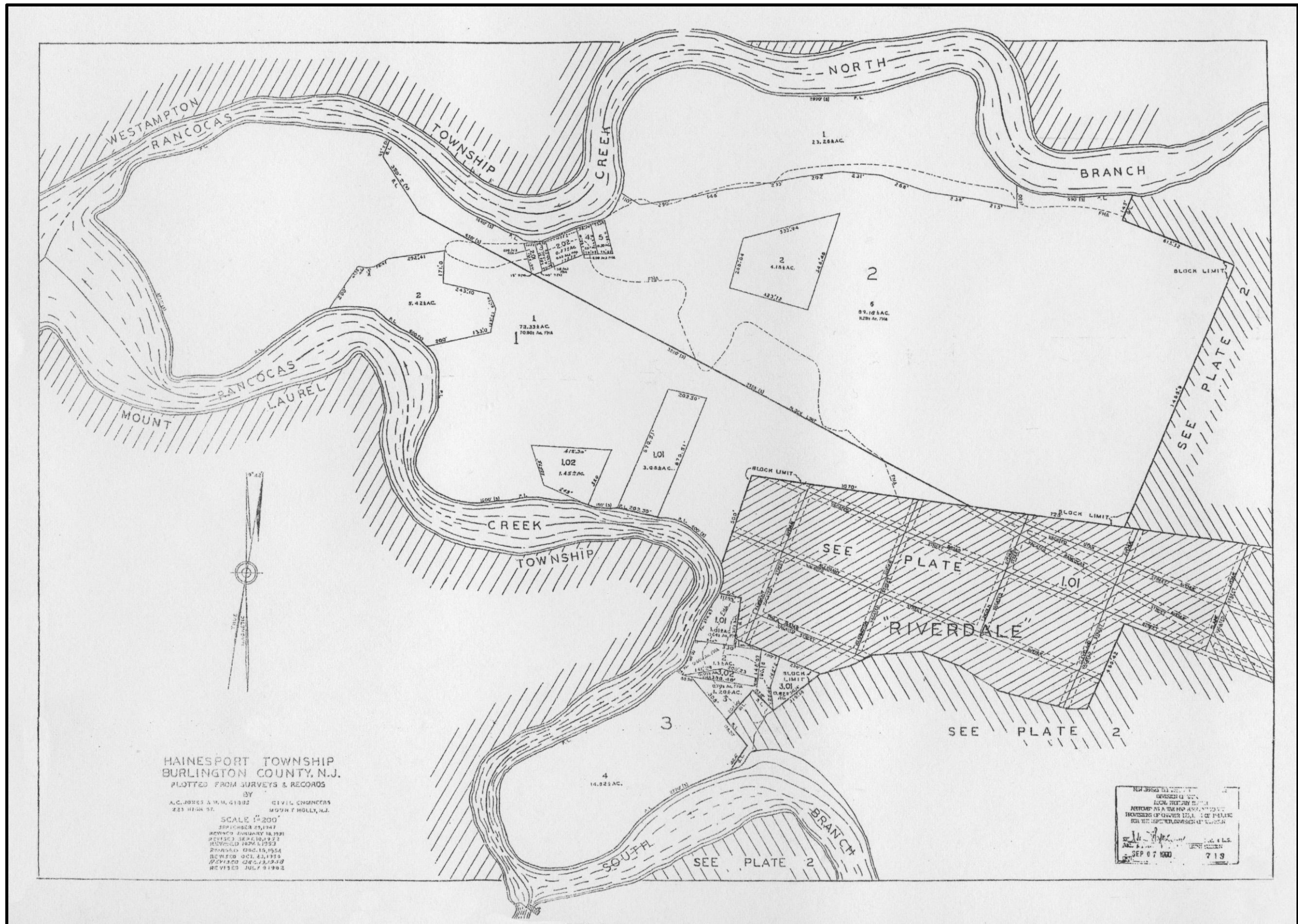


Figure 16: Township of Hainesport, Revised to 1988

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