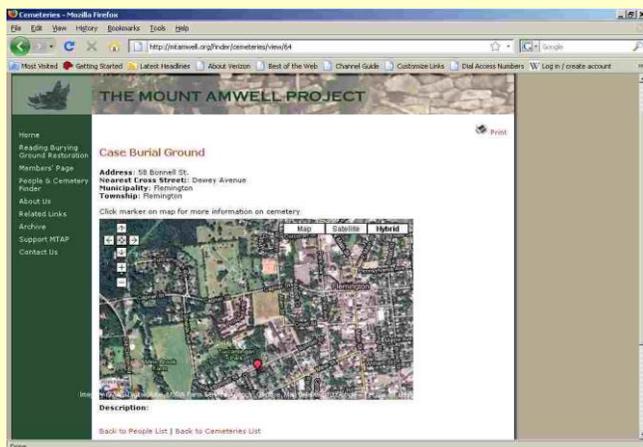


THE MOUNT AMWELL NEWS

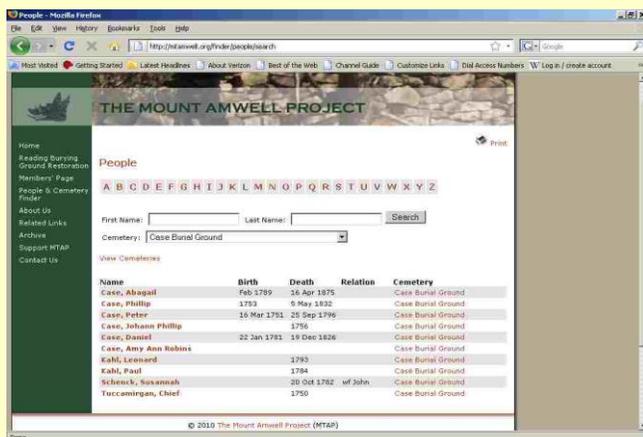
The Mt. Amwell Project, 1673 Hunting Creek Dr., Alexandria, VA 22314
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Dr. Lathrop's Hunterdon Cemetery Database is Online!

By David Reading



The Hunterdon County cemetery database is finally online at mtamwell.org. The screen shot above shows a Google map view of a cemetery (Case Burial Ground) and the one below shows the list of people buried there. Access is currently limited to members. We will open it up to the public when we feel it's sufficiently tested. Just go to the menu at the left of the main web page and click on "Cemetery and People Finder". Enter the member user name and password (member /mtap2008). Please check it out. Send any problems or comments to me at info@mtamwell.org.



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Dart's Mills: Hunterdon Landmark

Submitted by Richard B. Reading IV from *Application to the National Register of Historic Places, 1980*; Richard L. Porter compiler.

This is the second and last part of Richard Reading's article on Dart's Mills. The article is based on significant research documenting the history of the one of Hunterdon County's important landmarks. Ed.

In 1860 a large section of western New Jersey, including Hunterdon County, was depicted on a 'Map of the Vicinity of Philadelphia and Trenton'. Despite its large scale, this map showed a considerable amount of detail at Mettler's Mills. The configuration of structures was very similar to that shown in the Raritan map of 1850, with a total of seven structures being placed on the Readington side of the South Branch. In addition to noting Mettler's combination saw and grist mill, the tiny village now also included a blacksmith shop and a wheelwright shop. Across the river the flax mill was now being called a husk mill, and this structure was shown as having two separate sections. (This map was not reproduced due to copying difficulties.)

Another Industrial Census was taken for the state in 1860. Again Mettler was not listed, and this time the possible operators of his mill could not be readily discerned from the list of Readington millers. But of interest was the listing of one 'Flax and Husk Mill' in Raritan Township, run by Peter Gary & Co. This operation produced 35 tons of 'Tow' from 50 tons of flax and 27 tons of husk from 40 tons of raw husk.

In 1864, Levi Mettler took out a large mortgage (Hunterdon Co. mortgage 31/487). This transaction may possibly indicate some expansion or "renovation" activity at Mettler's Mills.

The Industrial Census of 1870 was the first to list 'Mettler's Mills' by name in Readington Township (no flax or husk mill or any other mill owned by Mettler was listed in Raritan Township). If the Biggs and Huffman operation was indeed present at Mettler's in 1850, the milling capacities here had been greatly expanded by 1870. The 1864 mortgage may have been used in this expansion. The grain mill, listed as a custom (also called country) mill, operated all year round with 2 employees and utilized 2 wheels, 3 run of stone, and 40 horsepower of water-produced energy. The mill's yearly production was about 15,000 bushels. The saw mill here also operated year round, but required only half the power of the grain mill. It had 2 saws, one being circular and the other perpendicular, and it utilized 3,600' of logs and produced 45,000' of plank lumber. A comparison with the Biggs and Huffman operation shows the addition of another run of stone and a new saw.

The 1873 Beers Atlas of Hunterdon County is somewhat confusing in its handling of Mettler's Mills. The Readington map showed the structural complexity known to have existed, and noted the blacksmith and wheelwright shops, but did not note the presence of a mill on this side of the river. The Raritan map showed a structure where the flax and husk mill was located, but noted it as a grist mill. There are a number of possible explanations for these factors. It may simply be a mistake in cartographic notation. It may also indicate an actual shift in function for the Raritan Township mill, perhaps necessitated by the closing or even the destruction of the Readington Township mills. Whatever the map indicates, the decade of the 70s was certainly one of great change for the old Reading mill.

The changes began with the death of Levi M. Mettler in 1874. He died intestate (Hunterdon Co. Letter of Administration 6/328), but his inventory mentioned that he owned a saw mill, feed mill, and a store (Hunterdon Co. inventory 16/553). His heirs promptly ended Mettler ownership of the mill property by selling out to Isaac Stover for \$15,000 in 1875 (a fifth tract of 38 acres had been added to the original four) (Hunterdon Co. deed 160/151). This began a 26 year term of ownership of the property by the Stover family, and within a short time, the village became known as Stover's Mill.

The present mill structure is claimed to have been built in 1876 (Wittwer, 1976, 38). This may explain the situation explored above in relation to the 1873 maps. The possibility of construction during this time period may also be supported by several large mortgages

taken out by Stover from the Mettler estate in 1875 (Hunterdon Co. mortgage 41/683) and from Samuel Stover in 1877 (Hunterdon Co. mortgages 46/127 & 132). This money may have been borrowed not only to aid in the original Stover purchase of the property but also to help finance construction activities.

The 1880 Industrial Census reflected the change and expansion that the mill had undergone during the previous decade. Henry C. Stover was listed as the operator (perhaps a brother or son of Isaac). The grain mill was in operation year round and now required as many as four employees working 12 hour days. -The grinding was no longer done solely for the custom business, for market milling now took up a third of this mill's capability. The 6 1/2' fall of water now powered 5 iron turbines that ran 5 run of stones. The estimated maximum production capacity was an impressive 1,000 bushels a day. 7,000 bushels of wheat and 18,000 bushels of other grains produced 1,500 barrels of wheat flour, 70 barrels of rye flour and large amounts of buckwheat flour, along with almost 900,000 pounds of corn meal. The capacity of this mill to process grain was greatly increased over that of the mill present here in 1870.

The saw operation had also been enlarged and improved. It operated for only 6 months of the year, but when active employed as many as 5 workers. All the logs required for the mill were purchased in New Jersey, with Stover doing a third of his own logging. The mill was powered by one turbine that ran two circular saws which produced 125,000' of lumber a year. In 1880, Stover's Mills was a large scale milling concern with a large production capacity, employing a large number of workers.

In 1887 Isaac Stover ran into financial problems that nearly caused him to lose his mill. He was sued and his mill property (which now included a very small sixth lot) was put up for sale. On August 30th, the property was advertised in the Hunterdon County Democrat (Vol. 50, # 3) as 'Stover's Mills'. The advertisement described it as containing 'three large dwelling-houses, large barn, sheds, shops, flax mill. It went on to say that 'the mill located on this property is one of the best in the country, having in it the latest and best improved machinery all in good repair and nearly new'. This latter description was certainly of the grain mill. It was further noted that there was also 'a new saw mill in good order and adapted for all kinds of sawing' on the property. Despite this attractive advertisement, Stover was able to buy back his own property for \$10,000 (Hunterdon Co. deed 217/630) but he had to acquire yet another mortgage from Samuel Stover (Hunterdon Co. deed 65/118).

In 1890-91, Cornelius C. Vermeule surveyed the mills of New Jersey for the state geologic survey. Stover's Mills was listed under Isaac's ownership and a flouring and saw mill utilizing a 6' fall of water were listed. Also present was a flax mill which was no longer in use (Vermeule, 1894, appendix 1, p.32).

The Stover tenancy at the mill property ended in 1901. In that year the Wolfe Milling Co. purchased the property by paying \$1,000 and assuming the numerous mortgages the Stovers had acquired (Hunterdon Co. deed 263/126). This purchase began a series of short-term ownerships of the property. The Wolfe Milling Co. lost the property in a sheriff's sale in 1902 (Hunterdon Co. deed 267/36). The next concern to attempt to operate here was the National Cereal Co. who paid \$1,000 and took on the mortgages later that year (Hunterdon Co. deed 267/82). The following year they were sued and the mills were bought by Ezekial Williams, the complainant. The property was described as containing "a four story flour and Grist mill with a three story addition". Williams paid only \$46 (Hunterdon Co. deed 268/603) to do so.

In 1904 Williams sold the property to Agnes Dart of New York City for \$2,500, and the mills gained the name that has continued to the present (Hunterdon Co. deed 272/545). In 1909 Agnes and her husband Henry C. Dart formed the Dart Cereal Co. (Hunterdon Co. deed 293/193). However, the Darts only held Dart's Mill for about 10 years, for in 1911 the Dart Cereal Co. went bankrupt, with a number of very large mortgages overdue. Courtney Hyde of New York purchased Dart's Mills for \$100 and the assumption of mortgage responsibilities included in Hyde's purchase was the right to use the name of the Dart Cereal Co. and a number of enumerated items that give an idea of the mill's early 20th century functions. These items included over 300,000 pounds of flour, 11,000 pounds of lentils, 900 pounds of peas and beans, 3 platform scales, all the corn in the crib and 10 acres of feed corn, 5 tons of rye, 6 tons of hay, 15 acres of oats, and various other types of mill machinery, both fixed and loose (Hunterdon Co. deed 300/545).

Hyde held the property for only a couple of years, and after he sold out it went through a quick succession of short term owners until 1919. In that year Robert C. Hicks acquired Dart's Mills by assuming the heavy mortgages (Hunterdon Co. deed 329/481). Hicks borrowed additional money, apparently to both meet the old mortgage payments and to finance the alteration of the mill to a textile concern. In 1921 Hicks formed the Readington Textile Co. (Hunterdon Co. deed 340/607), Hicks maintained control of the old mill property for over 20 years. In 1930 his textile company was cited by Readington Township for overdue taxes.

The township threatened to sell the company's property holdings, which were described as including a 'cottage, tenant house, factory, machinery, store building, ...'. The back taxes were paid in 1935 (Hunterdon Co. mortgage 150/377).

In the early 1940s Hicks began to sell off his Dart's Mill property. In 1945 he sold the mill and about 9 acres to John Clossen (Hunterdon Co. deeds 447/101 & 102). On April 19th of that year, the Hunterdon County Democrat carried an article on Clossen and the old mill. In the article, Clossen stated his belief that he was running the only water powered lace plant in the East. Clossen had been working at the mill for about 20 years, and his father had worked there before him. The mill's earlier history was reflected in what remained in the structure in 1945. Clossen noted that there was some partially dismantled flour milling machinery on the upper floor and other grain milling equipment elsewhere. Likewise, dyeing vats and other items remained from earlier textile activities. Hicks had begun the manufacture of lace here, and Clossen was continuing in this, although his primary product was veiling. During World War II, Clossen produced mosquito and camouflage netting for the military at the mill (he had been leasing it for a number of years before all he purchased it). Clossen and 5 employees used only 2 rooms in one section of the huge building, with the rest of the structure standing idle. The mill was still functioning on water power, with a water wheel (meaning turbine) powering the looms and providing the building's electricity.

In 1946 Clossen sold the mill to the Raritan River Lace Mills Co. (Hunterdon Co. deed 461/275). This ownership change was covered by the Democrat of November 16, 1946. The new owners were a large concern with a number of plants in New Jersey. They intended to manufacture lace at Dart's Mills, and planned to greatly expand the operation to eventually involve the entire building. New looms would be put in that would use more conventional power sources, but the old looms would continue to be water-powered.

Dart's Mills continued under the ownership of a textile concern (the Raritan River Lace Works was followed by the Towle Lace Works) until 1973.

Primary Sources

Trenton, State Archives: Industrial Census of New Jersey, Newspapers - The True American, Surrogate Records for Hunterdon County Hunterdon Tax Ratables for Reading and Amwell Townships, Hunterdon County

Flemington, Hunterdon County Hall of Records: Hunterdon County Deeds, Hunterdon County Mortgages, Hunterdon County Partition, Hunterdon County Road Returns, Hunterdon County Surrogate Records

Flemington, Hunterdon County Historical Society: Newspapers - Hunterdon County Democrat, Hunterdon Gazette and Farmer's Advertiser, the Democrat Advertiser

Project Progress

Reading Burial Ground

A stone has been purchased delivered and installed with the plaque acquired last year. Much thanks to Jen Ellsworth and Allan Reading.

JR's diary

Progress on the diary has been steady over the last six months. Dorothy Stratford, who hand copied the original entries, has given us a written copyright release. A printer has been found, and the draft is being reviewed. The diary, written by Gov. John Reading over the last 21 years of his life (1746-1767), will be about 200 pages in book form. It will contain a complete name index, glossary, end notes, and list of referenced works. Hopefully, the diary will available in the fall for purchase.

Announcements

Welcome New Member

We welcome new member Marfy Goodspeed. Marfy is a prominent Hunterdon County historical researcher and previously Delaware Township historian. Her website is <http://hunterdonfamilies.blogspot.com/>

Web site Members Access

Reminder - The MTAP web site now includes a member's only page. Content includes current newsletters. To access simply click on the members page and enter user: member, password: mtap2008.

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Membership

Help grow the Mt. Amwell Project. Show this newsletter to your friend and acquaintances with an interest in historical preservation. Tell them becoming a member is easy. Send \$10 for annual membership or \$125 for a lifetime membership to the Mount Amwell Project, 1673 Hunting Creek Drive, Alexandria, VA, 22314. Remember all membership dues and donations are tax deductible. The Mt. Amwell Project is a 501 (c) (3) charity. Members receive all MTAP communications including this newsletter and the members' page on the website.

We're on the Web! Visit us at:
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