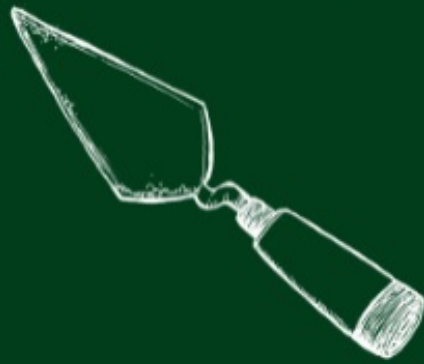




Archaeologists

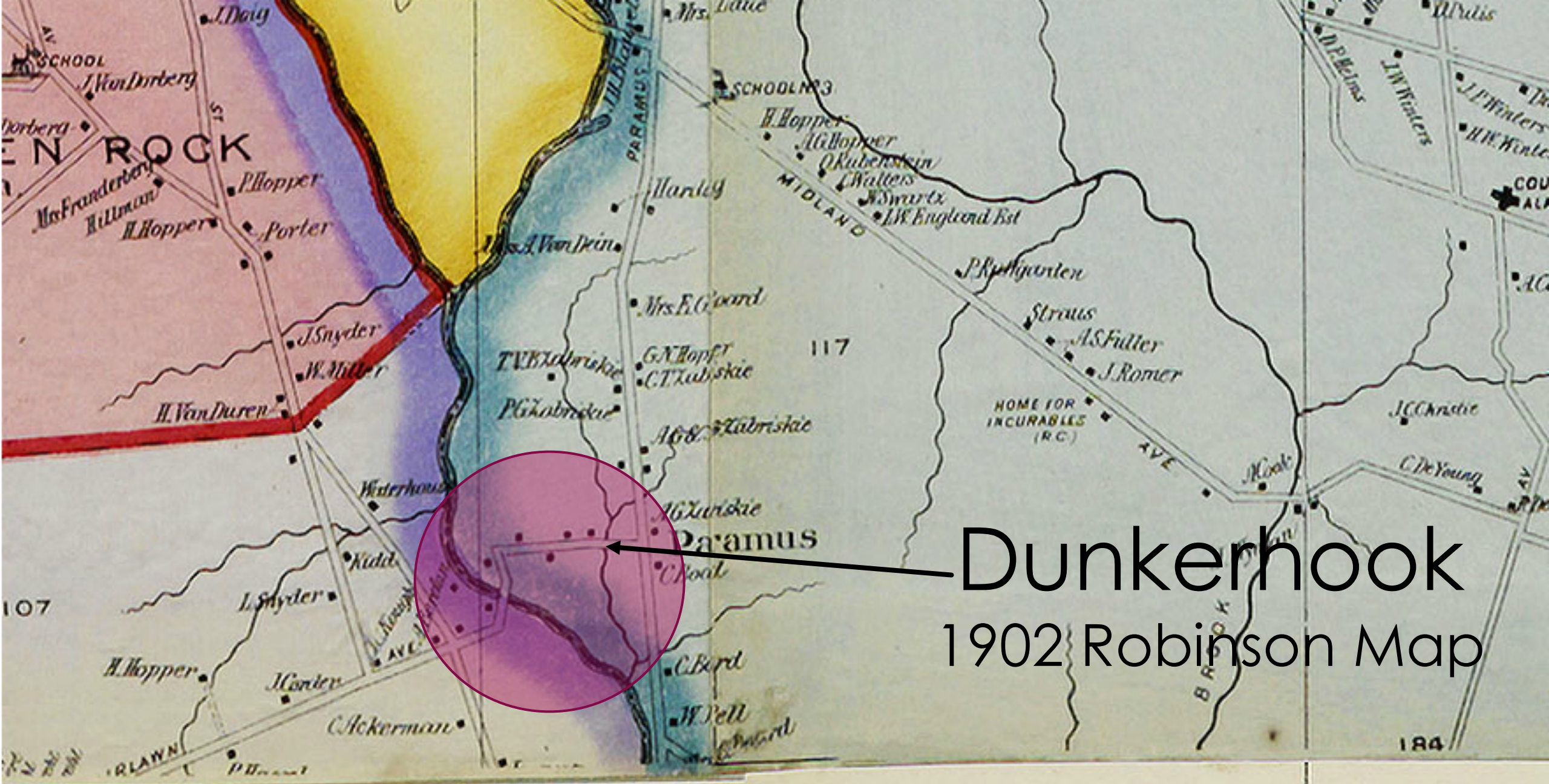


Exposing Erasure

# An Introduction to Dunkerhook: A Free African American Community in Paramus, New Jersey

Peggy Norris and Chris Matthews





Dunkerhook  
1902 Robinson Map





AME Zion Church building on Dunkerhook Road. The original caption from 1961 read: "Familiar Dunkerhook Road landmark was small slave church on the bend of the road north of bridge over the Saddle River."



# Archaeological Field School at the Bennett- Manvell Site, Dunkerhook, Paramus, NJ - 2021







# 2022 Archaeological Research Experience

The Center for Heritage and Archaeological Studies lab at Montclair State



*Darryl Harris (back row, center), a descendant of the historic Dunkerhook community, poses with project coordinators and field school students, May 2021.*





A photograph of a riverbank with large trees and a white text box containing the title and author information. The background shows a river with reflections of trees and a bright sky. A large tree trunk is prominent on the left side. A white text box with a dark border is centered in the lower half of the image.

RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITY HISTORY  
Building a Picture of the Dunkerhook Community

PEGGY W. NORRIS

October 11, 2023



# Location of Bergen County and Dunkerhook in the region





# HELP SAVE THE DUNKERHOOK HISTORY

A National Treasure

Dunkerhook Rd. Paramus, Bergen County N.J. USA

We must stop the demolition of the last standing State and National Historic Registered Dutch Colonial Slave/Tenant house with sand stone walls located at 273 Dunkerhook road. The residence was built mid-seventeen hundreds, occupied by slaves that after freed became tenants/employees. It would be a great injustice to allow any insensitive developers or contractors to erase not only Paramus History but African-American History, New Jersey History and most of all American History.

A message from Eyes on the Dunkerhook Area  
[www.EyesontheDunkerhookHistoricalArea.com](http://www.EyesontheDunkerhookHistoricalArea.com)



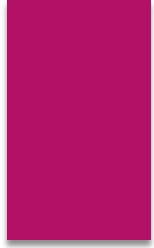
Copyright © E.O.D. 2010

Zabriskie Tenant House, 273 Dunkerhook Road, Paramus, NJ



273 Dunkerhook Road, ca. 1920, collections of the Bergen County Historical Society





Google StreetView 273 Dunkerhook Road, 2023



## Oral History & Secondary Sources

As we begin traveling westward on Donkerhook Road, which was also previously called, by the Dutch, "Donker Vol", both meaning "dark corner", we cross the small Paramus

brook and see on the north side, three homes which were negro slaves. These slaves, it is believed, belonged to and worked on their plantations at the end of Dunkerhook of the descendants of these slaves. One was Ben Bennet, who tended many white families in the neighborhood.

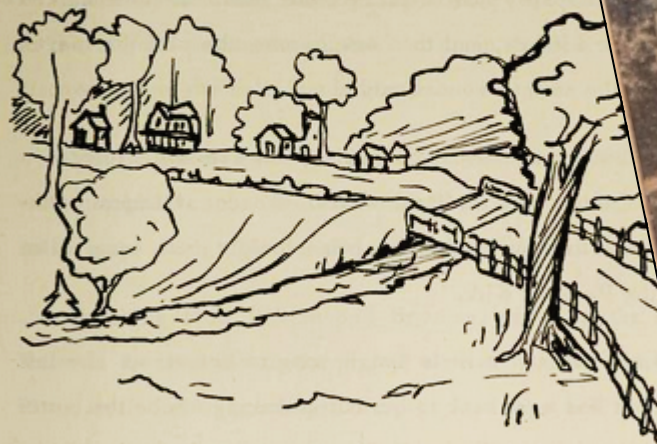
Here also was a small negro church at the far end of right hand side, with a negro school to the left. A song book of the rafters of the little church is in the possession of the Paramus Society. By 1904 other neat little cottages of the colored but have since been torn down.

The first tenant slave house is that called the Hastings Tillotsons. This house was built around 1760 and has wainscoted hewn beams in the ceiling. Mr. Hastings and his father

From *Slooterdam to Fair Lawn* by Robert Rogers, 1960

the same winding road, still called Dunker Hook meant Dark Corner.

Also today on the road are three houses which Ben Bennet and the other slaves belonging to the lived in those far-off days when marching feet west and down the valley.



Dunker Hook Road

*Turkey Feathers: Tales of Old Bergen County* by Rosa A. Livingston, 1963

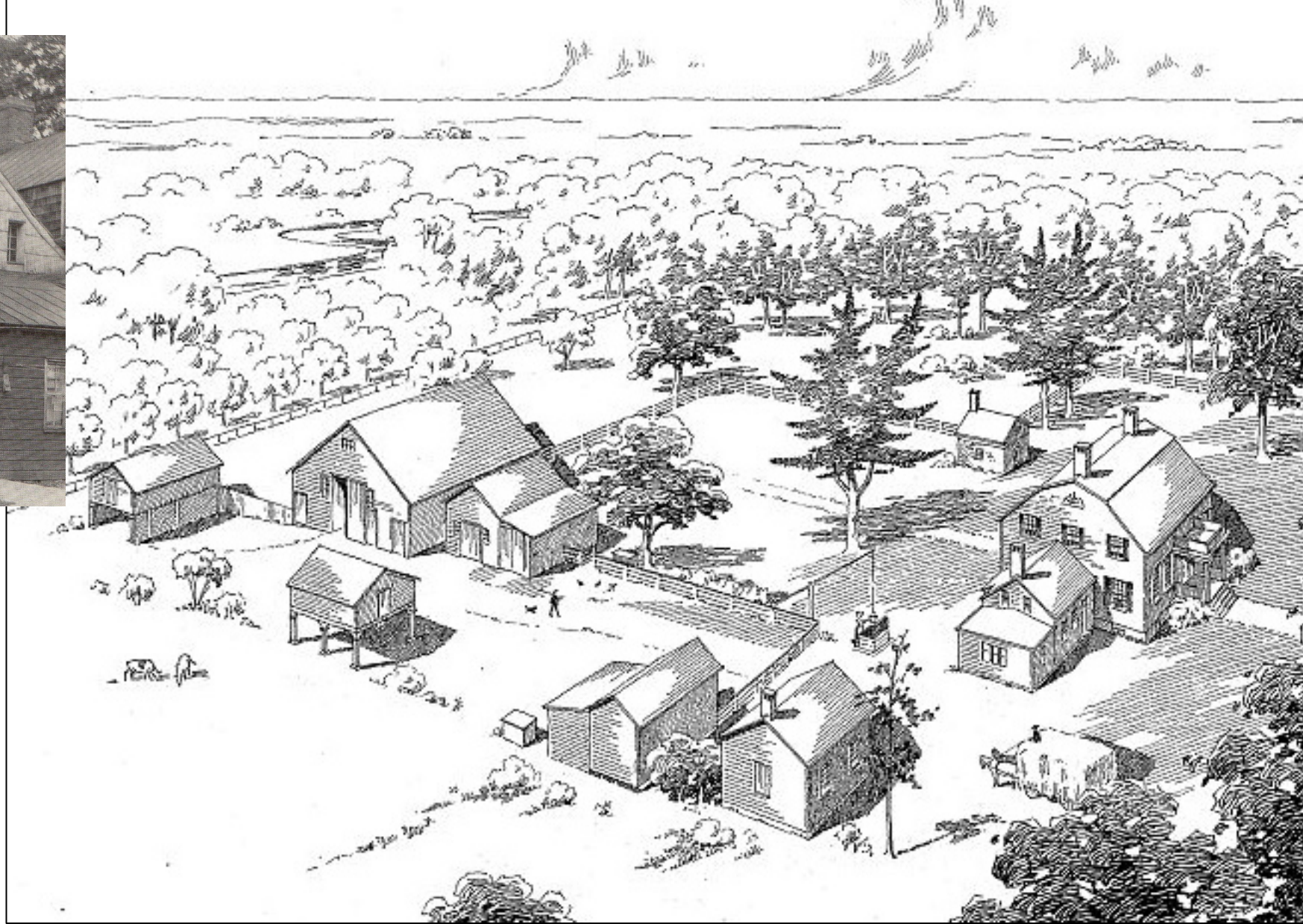


Ridgewood News, 10/13/1957



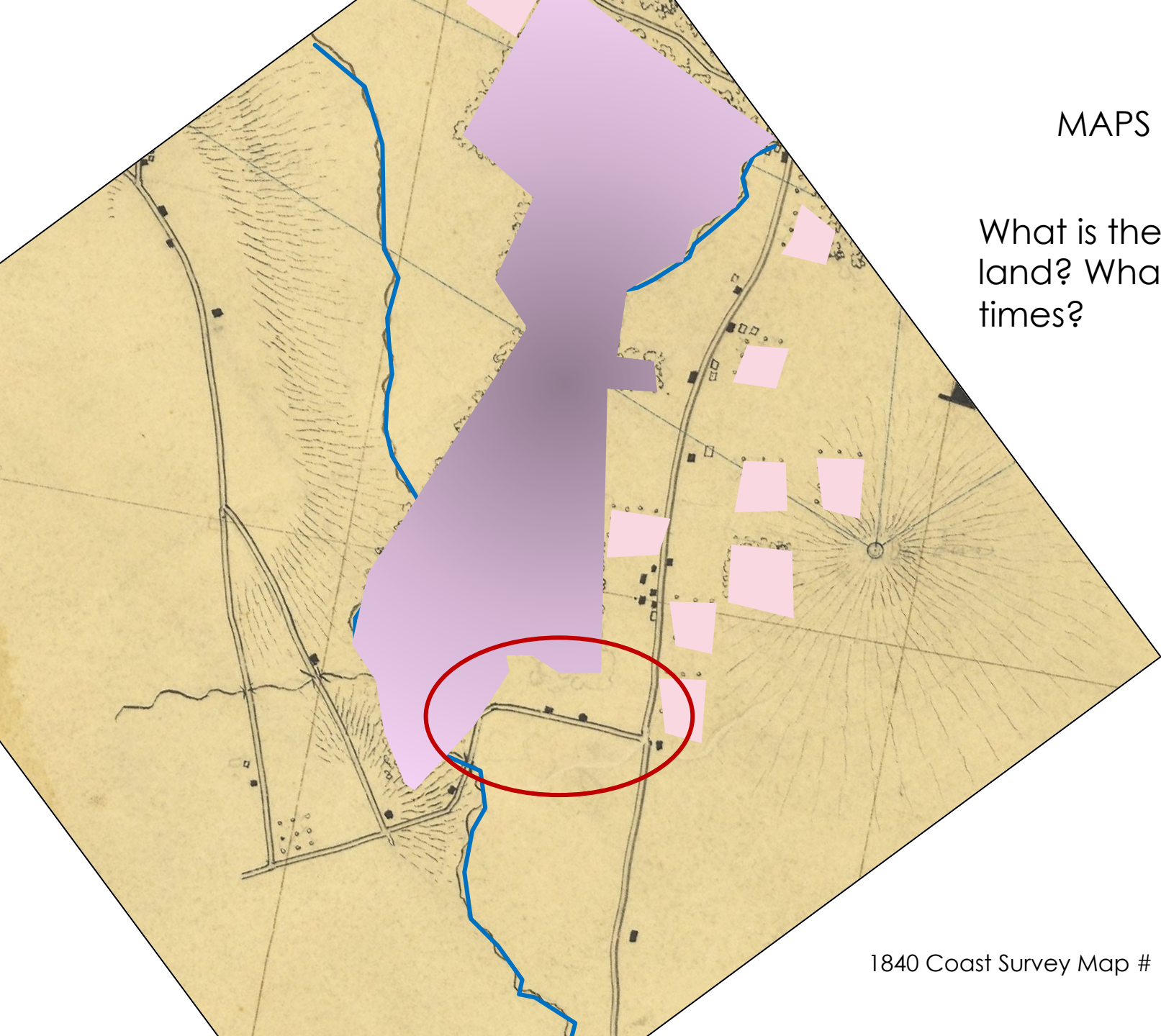


Rosalie Fellows Bailey. *Pre-Revolutionary Dutch Houses and Families in Northern New Jersey and Southern New York*. New York: Dover, 1968, plate 112, p. 379.



Historic American Buildings Survey. "Jacob Zabriskie Farm Group, South Paramus Roads, Paramus, Bergen County, NJ," HABS NJ, 2-PARA,2- (sheet 1 of 13). Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/hhh.nj0257.sheet/?sp=2> (accessed 10/5/2023)



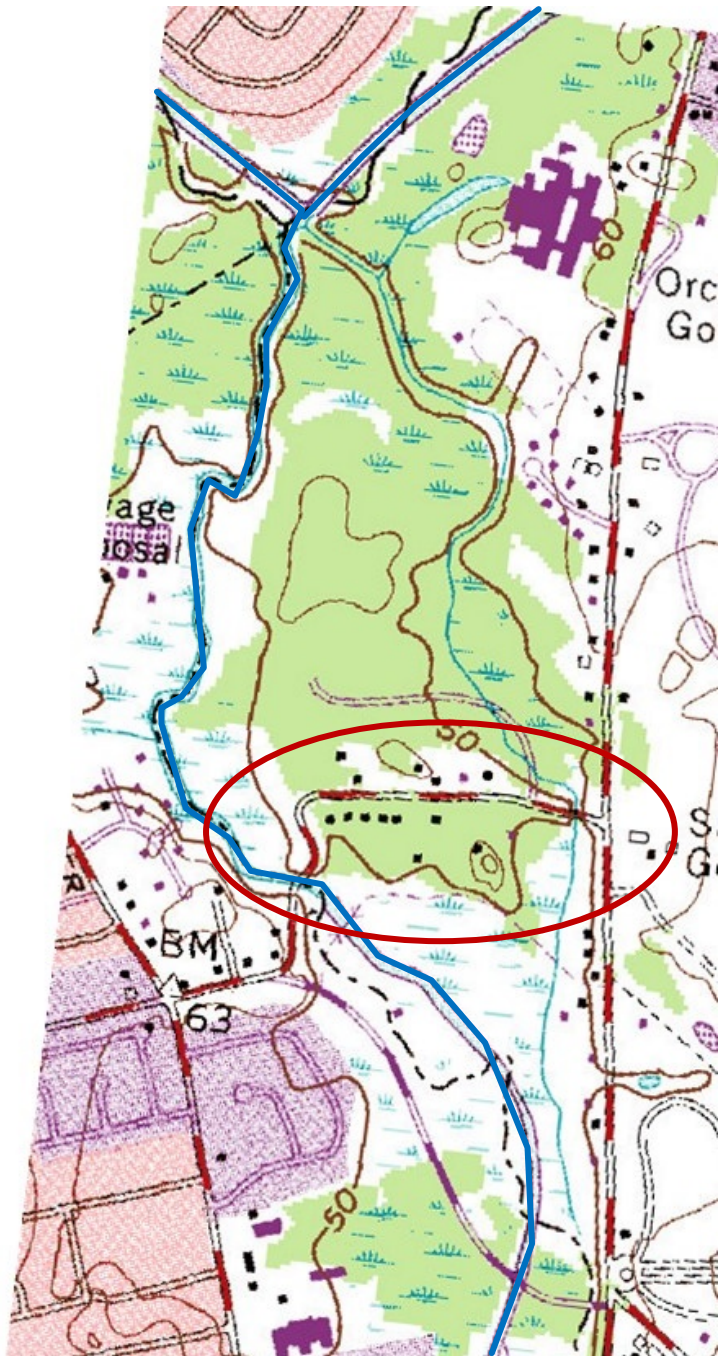


## MAPS

What is the geography of the place? Who owns the land? What infrastructure is present at different times?

1840 Coast Survey Map # 132





## ID land use

- woodland
- farmland
- swamp
- rivers
- streams
- roads
- topography

## ID buildings



*Old slave house that formerly stood on the south side of Dunkerhook  
The only brick room structure was taken down about 1930.*

US Topographic Map, Hackensack Quadrangle,  
1955, 1981



## DEEDS

Bergen County Deeds, Bk 590, p. 482

Deed granting 30' x 60' piece of land for Church purposes. "if it shall cease to be so used said property shall immediately thereupon revert to the grantors..."



Courtesy of Pete Evans

Received in the office and recorded Oct 26th 1904 at 10 A.M.

John R Ramsey Clerk

Book 590 p. 482

Mary B Pell

Widow

Cornelius Z Board and

Sarah R His' wife

Matilda B Blauvelt and

Garret Blauvelt

her husband

Laura W. Bogert and

Frederick D Bogert

her husband

Frederick Z Board and

Anna B Board his wife heirs

of Catharine L. Wessells dec'd

TO

Deed Dated Oct 15th 1904

The Trustees of African

Methodist Episcopal

Church of Dunkerhook

This Indenture made the Fifteenth day of  
October in the year of Our Lord One thousand Nine Hundred and four between  
Mary B Pell widow of the City County and State of New York Cornelius Z Board  
and Sarah R Board his wife Matilda B Blauvelt and Garret Blauvelt her husband  
Laura W. Bogert and Frederick D Bogert her husband Frederick Z Board and  
Anna B Board his wife heirs under the will of Catharine L Wessells deceased

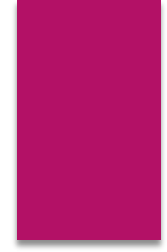
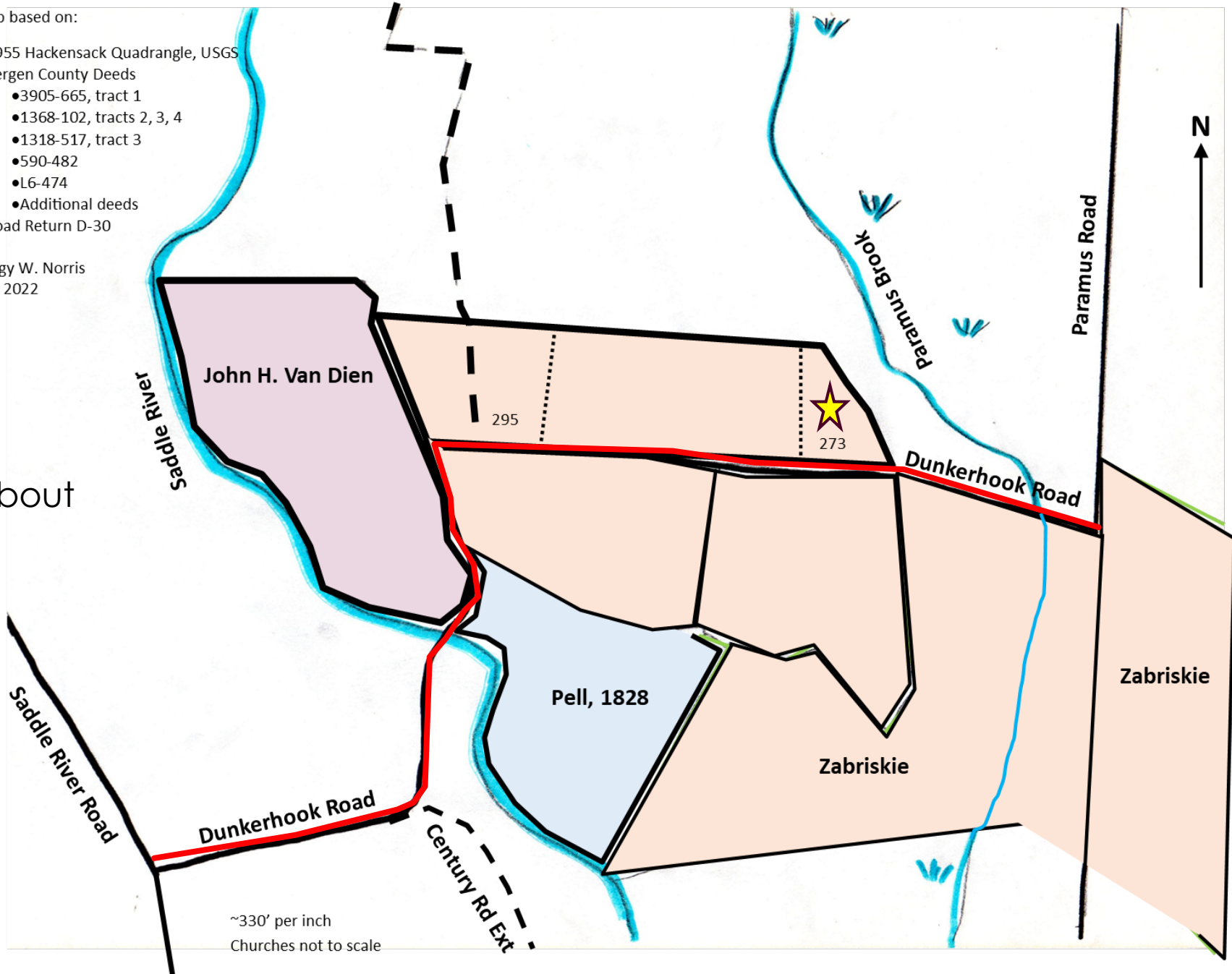


Map based on:

- 1955 Hackensack Quadrangle, USGS
- Bergen County Deeds
  - 3905-665, tract 1
  - 1368-102, tracts 2, 3, 4
  - 1318-517, tract 3
  - 590-482
  - L6-474
  - Additional deeds
- Road Return D-30

Peggy W. Norris  
July 2022

Landowners about  
1850





## Catherine Bennett.

(Communicated.)

The little, though old settlement of Paramus, Bergen county, and particularly that part of it known as "Dunker Hook," was thrown into a condition of gloom last week when it became known that Catherine Bennett, more familiarly called "Marm," "Aunt Kate," and, by the older residents, "Kate," had passed into life eternal. Nor was the announcement of her demise a greater shock to the people of "The Hook" than to the entire county, for no one, high, low, rich or poor, was better known or

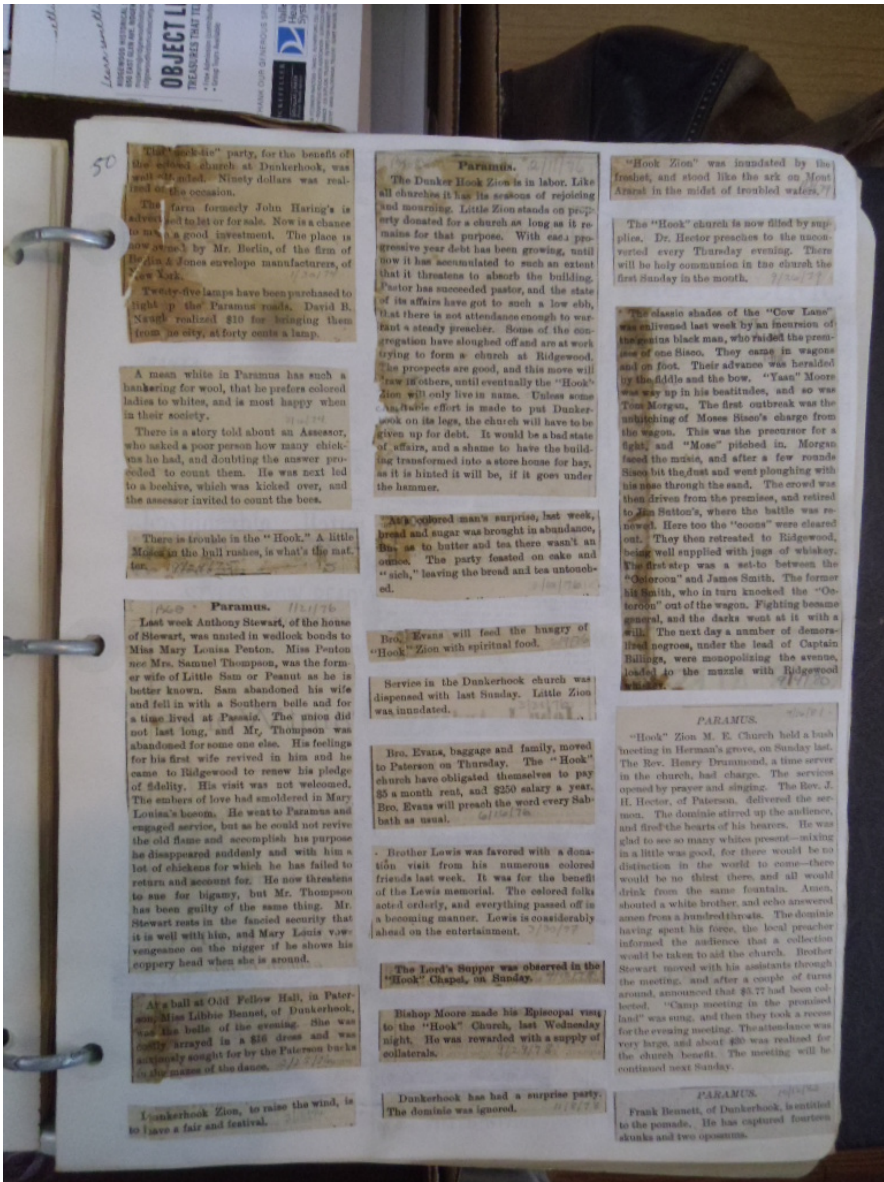
more highly respected and loved than Catherine Bennett.

Born in Belleville, N. J., in 1841, she early in life came to Paramus and married Benjamin Bennett, whom she survived by nearly five years, and with whom she lived happily for nearly fifty years in the same house in which they both died.

In a larger community, or perhaps under different conditions and environment, she might have accomplished more in her long, active life—for the cause of humanity—for her sex and race—for Christ. But, notwithstanding the limited field with which she was environed, notwithstanding the cares and responsibilities of motherhood which she herself so cheerfully and loyally assumed, she gave liberally and (in most instances) gratuitously of her time, skill and the meagre means at her command, to the education and training of her sex, in the wonderful and sublime mysteries of successful motherhood; and the statistics of the county bear record of more than 650 births which her skill in her profession made possible. Nor was her practice confined to her own race. Nine-tenths of her patients were Caucasians, and hundreds of people (many of whom were too poor to compensate her) in Hohokus, Ridgewood, Paramus, Fairlawn, Garfield, Rochelle, Hawthorne, Westwood, Warren Point, etc., can bear testimony to her marvelous skill as a nurse.

By her race she was recognized as a leader in everything that tended to their elevation and enlightenment. Be-





Beatrice Cannon Notebooks, Ridgewood Historical Society

**For House Telling Paramus's History, the End May Be Near**

DIANE CARD WELL

*New York Times* (1923-); Jun 28, 2011; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times  
pg. A21

DIANE CARDWELL

**For House Telling Paramus's History, the End May Be Near**

PARAMUS, N.J.

Along **Dunkerhook Road**, things look much as they do in many other American suburbs. Neat beds of flowers and much punctuate green lawns. Cars sit idle in the driveways. Children play in a cul-de-sac, and adults jog down to the river nearby.

But amid the large tan-and-brown homes of stucco and stone and the older ranches is something older still: two houses built around the nation's birth, remnants of a Paramus that existed long before it became home to the vast malls that have made it one of the country's leading retail destinations.

The two houses, at 273 and 263 **Dunkerhook**, and a third one down the road and just over the line in Fair Lawn, were originally built, historians say, by one of the founding families of Bergen County, the Zabriskeys. (The house at 273 **Dunkerhook** dates to around 1790, the one at 263 **Dunkerhook** to 1803.) As the Paramus houses passed from the Zabriskeys to black farmers believed to be former Zabriskey slaves, they helped seed a thriving black settlement of several houses and a church that lasted into the 1930s.

No. 263, a frame house with a 19th-century addition, has been significantly modified over the years, but No. 273 is considered to be important because, according to a Bergen historic sites survey from 1983, it is the best of a few remaining examples of early



PHOTOGRAPHS BY...



Ted M... behin... in Pa... which... ment... left, at... spond... made t... erly ar... suppo...

pristine conditions are not a prerequisite for protection. Earlier this year, the commission designated as landmarks three 19th-century buildings in Sandy Ground, on Staten Island, even though they "didn't look so hot," she said, because they had been part of a settlement of black oystermen who had moved from Maryland when they could not make a living there.

"They were constructed in this vernacular style that was common then, and you don't see many examples of that style, so they did have some architectural significance," Ms. de Bourbon said. "But, more so, it was the historical and cultural associations that tipped things into the 'let's designate' column."

**But Is It Art?**

By FRANCES STRAUSS

**A Leader in the Modern Group To Vivisect Modern Art**

The New School for Social Research, No. 465 West Twenty-third street, Manhattan, announces as its first offering in the fall curriculum for 1928 a series of lectures on modern art by Ralph M. Pearson. Mr. Pearson will attempt to explain the principles underlying the new art trend, its meaning and its application to modern life.

The lecturer is a noted etcher, author of several books on art and a recognized leader in the modern group. He served as a one man jury for the modern section of the Fifty Best Prints of the Year exhibition of the American Institute of Graphic Arts in 1925. At present he is conducting a summer school in pictorial analysis on **Dunker Hook** Road, near Ridgewood, N. J. His New York studio is the center of a group of fifteen modern artists who are attempting to impress their conception of design on the American rug-making industry.

In accordance with the policy of Dr. Alvin Johnson, director of the New School for Social Research, Mr. Pearson's classes will be open to all, regardless of previous training, or lack of it. Stimulation of the adult mind to learn for its own increased enjoyment, and for application of intellectual progress to modern life, is a basic purpose of the school, which will begin its tenth

New York Times, 6/28/2011, p. A21, ProQuest Historical Newspapers

**NEWSPAPER SOURCES**



DATE	Dunkerhook Church
	Previous church?
<b>1867</b>	Church build and Land purchased from Van Dien
<b>1875</b>	"Dunkerhook Zion is not prospering"
<b>1876</b>	"Little Zion was inundated." [they had no service]
<b>1879</b>	"'Hook Zion' was inundated by the freshet, and stood like the ark on Mont Ararat in the midst of troubled waters."
<b>1881</b>	bush meeting
<b>1884</b>	refitted and undergone repairs, 1
<b>1885</b>	Hook bush meeting
<b>1886</b>	camp meeting
<b>1889</b>	AME Zion camp meeting 7/19/1889
<b>1889</b>	strawberry festival and singing books donated by Mrs. Wessels and Pell
<b>1893</b>	"The A.M.E. Zion church of Dunkerhook will have bush meetings . . . every Sunday afternoon and evening during September . . ."
<b>1901</b>	11 am and 8 pm services; Sunday School at 3; Rev. W. S. Bouden
<b>1904</b>	Sale of lot by heirs of Catherine Wessels
<b>1905</b>	Only the Ridgewood church is mentioned in the newspapers
<b>1923</b>	Permanently abandoned and building sold by the trustees; land reverts to heirs
<b>1928</b>	Ralph M. Pearson sets up summer studio in the church
<b>1930</b>	Rear of building burned
<b>1944</b>	Old pews from Dunkerhook being used in Ridgewood





This 1908 photograph shows the enrollment of the Midland Avenue school at that time. Standing at the top of the steps at the left is Edna Bennett, the teacher. The black children were primarily mem-

bers of the Stewart and Watkins families that lived in the area of Dunkerhook Road. The school later served as the first



African American farm laborers at the intersection of Midland Avenue and Paramus Road

# People of Dunkerhook



# Households at Dunkerhook, Bergen County, NJ, 1840-1930



Based on Table 1: Dunkerhook Census Data Summary in Eric D. Johnson and Christopher Matthews, "Dunkerhook Archaeological Survey: Report on Dunkerhook Area of Saddle River Park, 2020," 2020, p. 7



# NJ's Act for Gradual Abolition of Slavery, 1804

## AN ACT

### For the Gradual Abolition of Slavery.

SEC. 1. **BE** it enacted by the Council and General Assembly of this State, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, That every child born of a slave within this state, after the fourth day of July next, shall be free; but shall remain the servant of the owner of his or her mother, and the executors, administrators or assigns of such owner, in the same manner as if such child had been bound to service by the trustees or overseers of the poor, and shall continue in such service, if a male, until the age of twenty-five years, and if a female until the age of twenty-one years.

2. *And be it enacted,* That every person being an inhabitant of this state, who shall be entitled to the service of a child born as aforesaid, after the said fourth day of July next, shall within nine months after the birth of such child, cause to be delivered to the clerk of the county whereof such person shall be an inhabitant, a certificate in writing, containing the name and addition of such person, and the name, age, and sex of the child so born; which certificate, whether the same be delivered before or after the said nine months, shall be by the said clerk recorded in a book to be by him provided for that purpose; and such record thereof shall be good evidence of the age of such child; and the clerk of such county shall receive from said person twelve cents for every child so registered: and if any person shall neglect to deliver such certificate to the said clerk within said nine months, such person shall forfeit and pay for every such offence, five dollars, and the further sum of one dollar for every month such person shall neglect to deliver the same, to be sued for and recovered by any person who will sue for the same, the one half to the use of such prosecutor, and the residue to the use of the poor of the township in which such delinquent shall reside.

3. *And be it enacted,* That the person entitled to the service of any child born as aforesaid, may, nevertheless within one year after the birth of such child, elect to abandon such right; in which case a notification of such abandonment, under the hand of such person, shall be filed with the clerk of the township, or where there may be a county poor-house established, then with the clerk of the board of trustees of said poor-house of the county in which such person shall reside; but every child so abandoned shall be maintained by such person until such child arrives to the age of one year, and thereafter shall be considered as a pauper of such township or county, and liable to be bound out by the trustees or overseers of the poor in the same manner as other poor children are directed to be bound out, until, if a male, the age of twenty-five, and if a female, the age of twenty-one; and such child, while such pauper, until it shall be bound out, shall be maintained by the trustees or overseers of the poor of such county or township, as the case may be, at the expence of this state; and for that purpose the director of the board of chosen freeholders of the county is hereby required, from time to time, to draw his warrant on the treasurer in favor of such trustees or overseers for the amount of such expence, not exceeding the rate of three dollars per month; provided the accounts for the same be first certified and approved by such board of trustees, or the town committee of such township; and every person who shall omit to notify such abandonment as aforesaid, shall be considered as having elected to retain the service of such child, and be liable for its maintenance until the period to which its servitude is limited as aforesaid.

A. Passed at Trenton, Feb. 15, 1804.



sealed and delivered

in the presence of  
Christian Zabriskie

David S. Christie

Commiss. C. Zabriskie



State of New Jersey, Bergen County ss: Personally appeared before  
me Christian Zabriskie one of the Judges of the inferior Court of  
Common Pleas in said County Commiss. C. Zabriskie the  
owner and master of the said slave Sam, who did ack  
nowledge that he had manumitted his man slave named  
Sam, and set him free at full liberty to act for himself  
as the law directs. Acknowledged before me this 7<sup>th</sup> March 1838.  
Christian Zabriskie



680

John M "	2	M	B	
Benjamin Bennett	30	M	B	Coachman ✓
Kate Bennett	20	F	B	Washer Woman ✓
Frank B "	2	M	B	
John Stewart	43	M	B	Labourer ✓
Mary Stewart	40	F	B	Mistress
Thomas "	18	M	B	Footman ✓
Samuel "	15	M	B	Waiter ✓
Nancy "	12	M	B	
William M "	10	M	B	
Anthony M "	8	M	B	
Mary "	2	F	B	





The will of Catherine L. Wessels in 1892 notes “to Benjamin Bennett and Bartholomew Westerhaven (both of my service)...to each of them to be held and enjoyed by him during his natural life the cottage or dwelling now occupied by him at Paramus on the road leading to Paterson” (Wright 1995:16).



# Bennett- Manvell Site

The last historic  
structure on  
Dunkerhook  
Road and the  
site of our  
archaeological  
survey









# Catherine and Benjamin Bennett

Household	Name	Sex	Age	Relationship	Occupation
129 141	Zabriskie John J	W	40		Blacksmith
	Susan	W	39	Wife	Keeping House
	Anna	W	16	Daughter	
130 142	Gardner John J	W	12		Farmer
	Eliza	W	116		Farmer
	Mrs H	W	26	Son	Farmer
	Mrs W	W	21	Son	Farmer
131 143	Druffy Catherine	W	26	Servant	Servant
	Leanne	W	6	Servant	Servant
	Pell Mr J	W	57		
132 144	Sarah C	W	44	Wife	Keeping House
	Ellsworth M	W	23	Son	Farmer
	Mrs W	W	22	Daughter	
133 145	Sadie	W	19	Daughter	
	William	W	18	Son	
	William	W	10	Servant	House Laborer
	William	W	10	Servant	House Laborer
137 146	Board Peter	W	70		
	Sarah Z	W	42	Son	
	Sarah R	W	22	Daughter	
	Matilda B	W	16	Granddaughter	
138 147	Laura W	W	10	Granddaughter	
	Frank Z	W	10	Grandson	
	Joseph	B	43	Servant	
139 148	Phoebe	B	18	Servant	
	Smith Phil	W	23	Servant	Team Laborer
	Messels Catherine	W	62		Keeping House
139 149	Pell John H	W	49	Son	
	Mary B	W	35	Daughter	
	Bennett Benj	M	57		Coachman
	Catherine	M	39	Wife	
140 150	Benjamin	M	22	Son	Wagoner
	Phoebe	M	19	Daughter	Servant
	Wm Van R	M	17	Son	Wagoner
	Henry B	M	15	Daughter	Servant
	Ida C	M	12	Daughter	
	Rosetta R	M	10	Daughter	
	John C	M	4	Daughter	

1880 Federal Census

1. John Zabriskie
2. Eliza Gardner
3. William Pell
4. Peter Board
5. Catharine Wessels
6. The Bennetts(?)

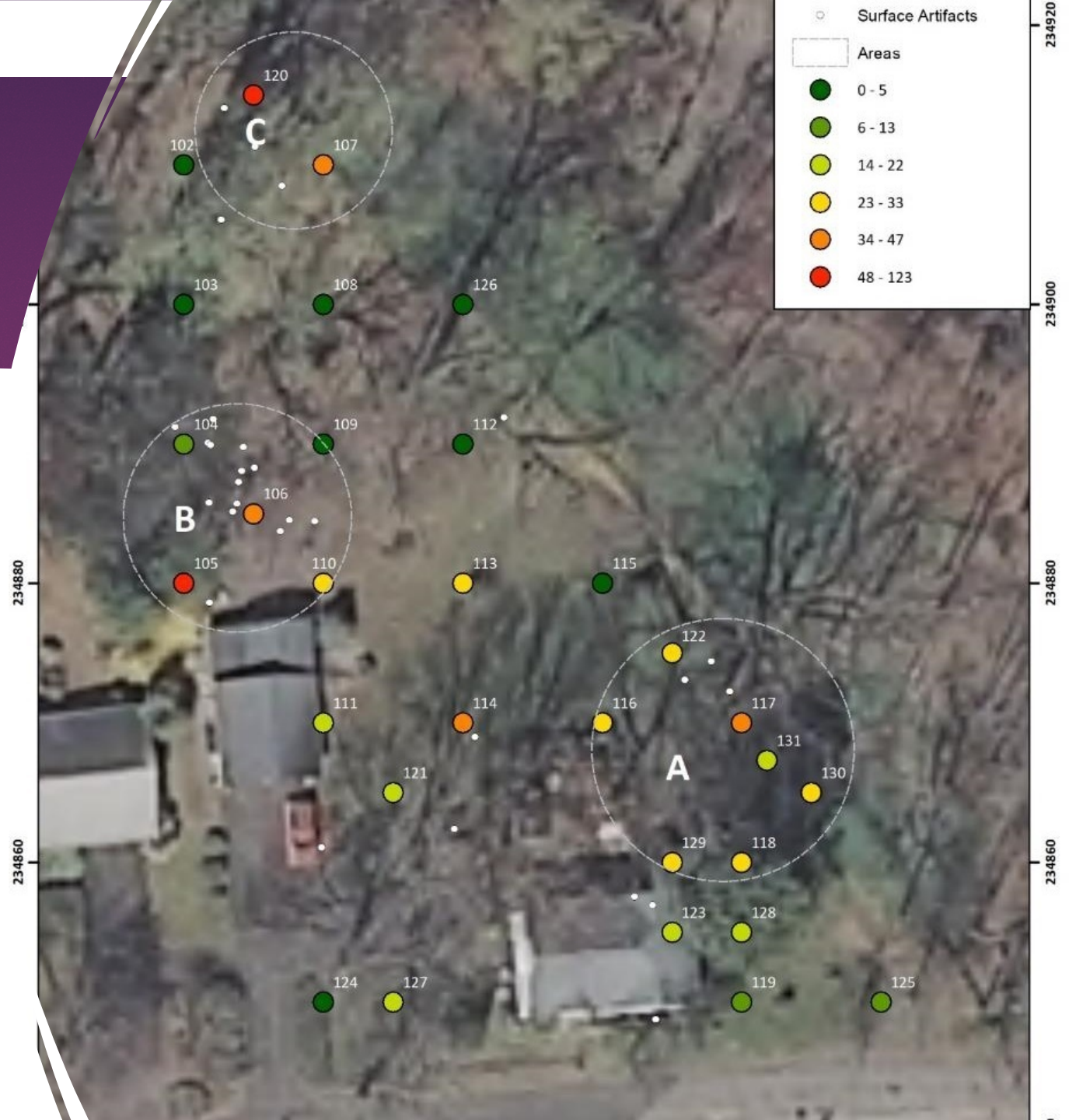


1876 Walker Atlas



# Archaeological Survey of Bennett-Manvell Site

Map indicates STP locations and artifact clusters



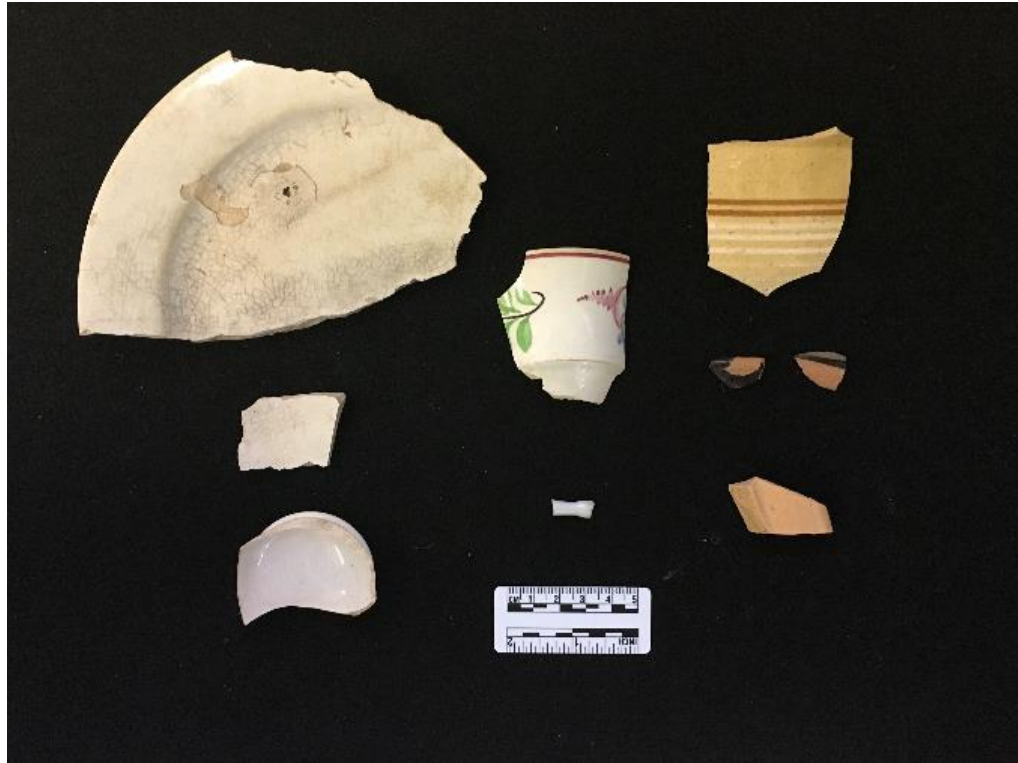




# Area A excavations

EU1 and EU9





## Sample of ceramic artifacts recovered from Excavation Unit 1, CXT 142

- White granite plate (top left), creamware sherd (middle left), pearlware cup base (lower left), London shaped, pearlware teacup with hand painted floral design (top center), porcelain doll hand (bottom center); banded yellowware sherd (top right), glazed red ware sherds (center right), unglazed redware sherd (bottom right).



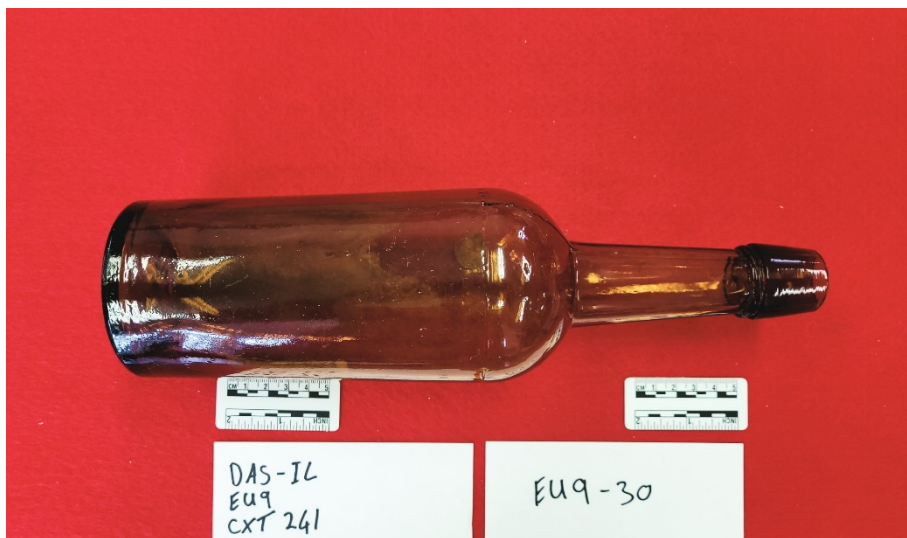
## Other artifacts from EU1, CXT 142

- Cow molars and clay tobacco pipe fragments



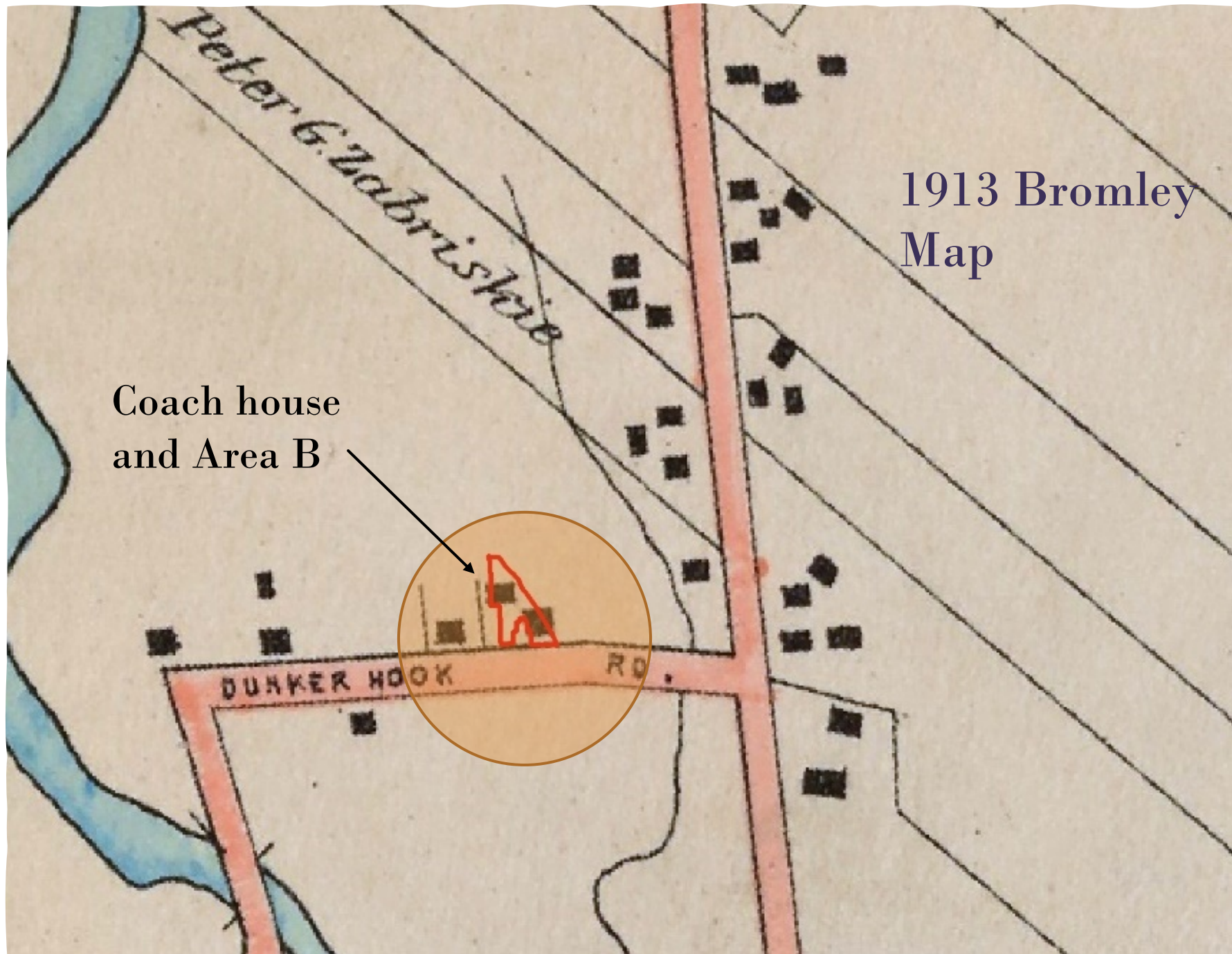


(above) stoneware inkwell and (below) 3-piece molded wine/liquor bottle from EU9, CXT 241



Rockingham teapot with classical male profile cameo, EU9 CTXs 241 and 243





1913 Bromley Map

Coach house and Area B



Base of ca. 1900 'MacLaren's Imperial Cheese' jar showing molded company mark



# Aerial overview of Area B excavations

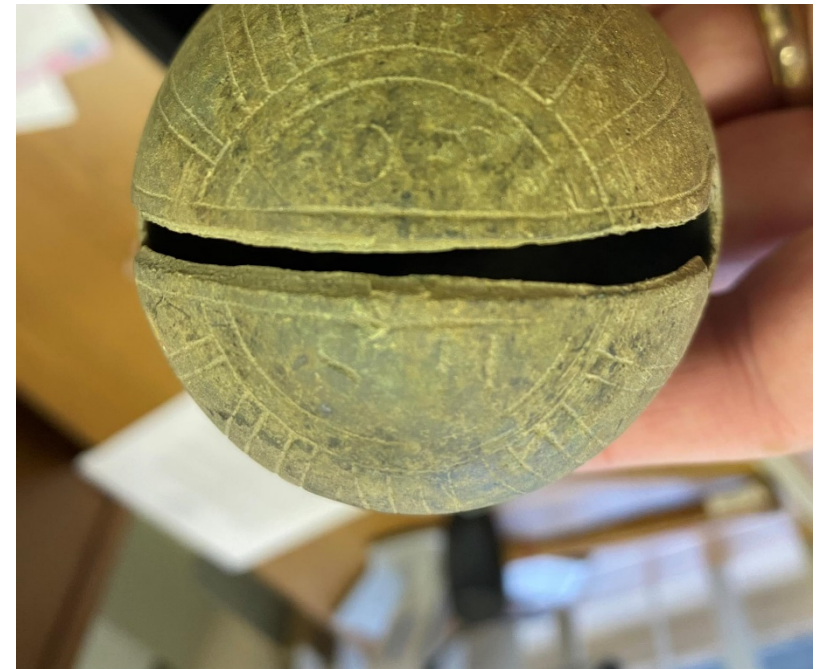
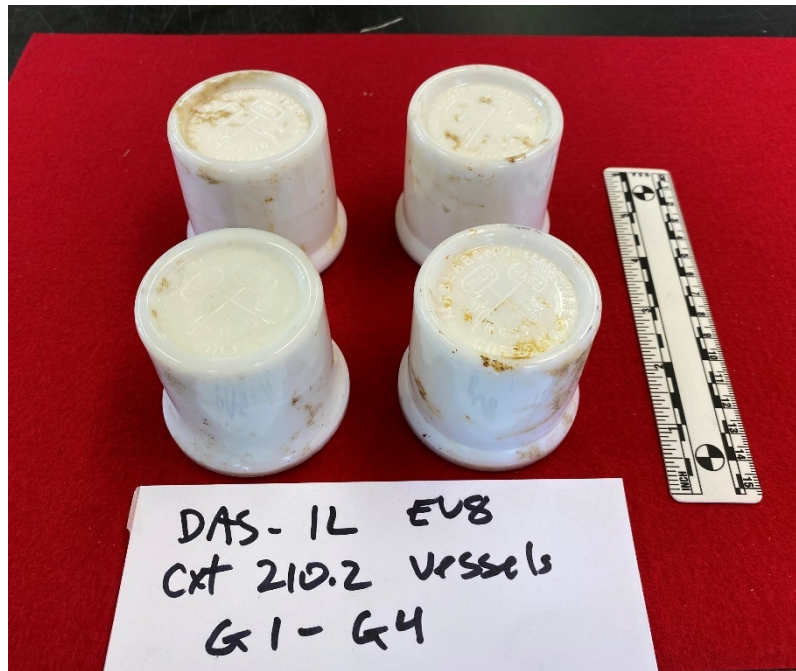
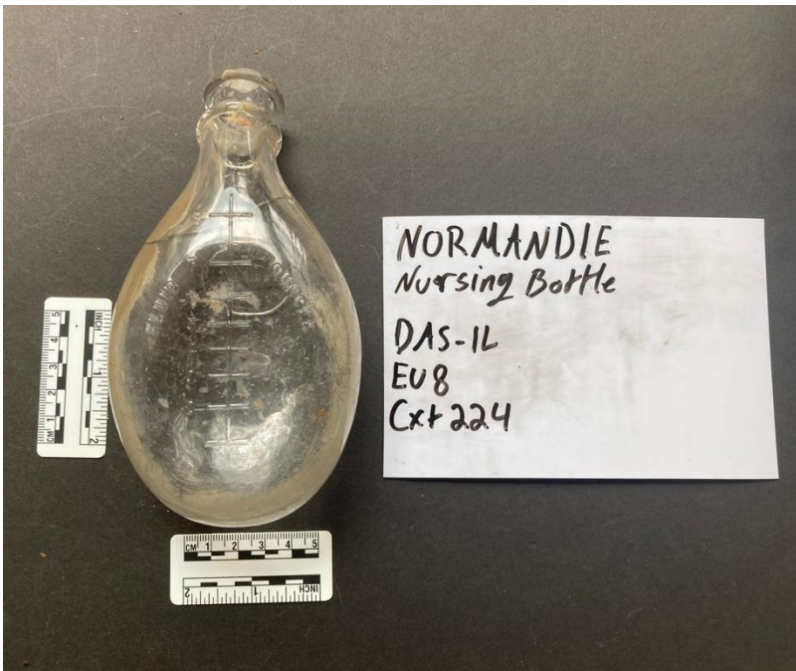






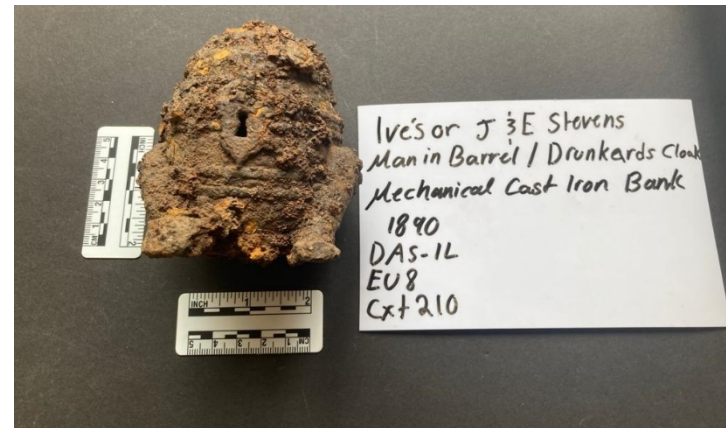
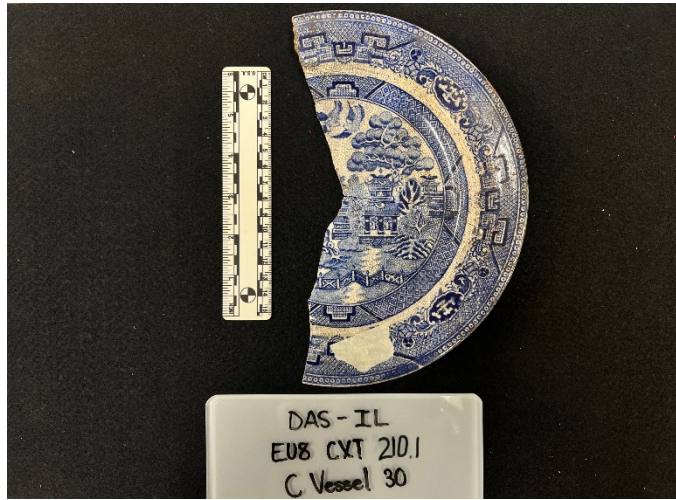
Excavation Unit 8 in progress







# Artifacts from Area B excavations





## Community Engagement

- ▶ Patricia King-Butler from the Teaneck Enslaved Memorial Committee (right)
- ▶ Darryl Harris, a descendent of the Dunkerhook community (below)

