

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

**FOR NPS USE ONLY**  
RECEIVED **MAR 31 1982**  
DATE ENTERED **APR 29 1982**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
Dart's Mill Historic District  
AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION** *NE of Flemington on Rt. 523*

STREET & NUMBER  
Route 523

CITY, TOWN *Flemington N.J.* CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
Readington & Raritan Townships *N/A* VICINITY OF 13th

STATE New Jersey CODE 034 COUNTY Hunterdon CODE 019

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
	<i>N/A</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
See Continuation Sheet  
STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN STATE  
*N/A* VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
Hunterdon County Hall of Records

STREET & NUMBER  
71 Main Street

CITY, TOWN STATE  
Flemington New Jersey

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE New Jersey Historic Sites Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
Inventory-Hunterdon County (R - 680)

DATE 1978  FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS N.J. Office of Cultural & Environmental Services  
Hunterdon County Cultural & Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN STATE  
Trenton New Jersey  
Flemington

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

### Introduction:

Dart's Mill is located about 2 miles from Flemington on the South Branch of the Raritan River. Four structures of architectural significance related to this early milling village's history are still present. In addition, there are a number of areas of significant archeological potential. All of these historic resources are located within the boundaries of the Dart's Mill district.

### Location and Environment:

The Dart's Mill district is located on both sides of the South Branch of the Raritan River, just south of the Route 523 (Flemington-Whitehouse Road) bridge, in Readington and Raritan Townships, Hunterdon County, New Jersey (Figure 1). The major portion of the district is in Readington Township, on the east side of the river. The district's four standing structures and the majority of the potential archeological remains are here, all along a vacated section of the old Flemington-Whitehouse Road. This old road now provides access to and from the remaining structures of the district, most of which have been rehabilitated as commercial office space. The potential archeological remains of an additional structure are located across the river in Raritan Township (Figure 2).

The village was located on the river to utilize the available water power to perform various milling functions. While the actual mill buildings were located right on the river, the secondary support structures of the village were located nearby on higher ground, yet still close to the mill. Additional structures related to the farming activities of the village were located further away with proximity to the farm fields being the major concern. The result of these factors was a cluster of structures along the road, starting from the river with the mill and moving up grade with residences, shops, and outbuildings.

The transportation needs of the village were provided for by the Flemington-Whitehouse Road, a major local highway of 18th century origin. Raw materials came to the village along the highway from the fine farmland and forests of the area, and the finished products went back the same way. The road also connected Dart's Mill to Flemington and the other larger villages and towns of this section of Central New Jersey.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES UNKNOWN

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

UNKNOWN

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Dart's Mill district has significance in the areas of industry, architecture, and archeology, all reflecting its history as a rural milling village. There are some additional areas of significance that mostly relate to the Reading ownership of the property. The village has had a long and diverse history which extends from about the time of the Revolutionary War to well into the 20th century.

### Industry:

Dart's Mill is a fine example of a late 18th and 19th century milling village that continued to serve its function well into the 20th century. In addition to its long industrial life, the village was diverse in its industrial capabilities. The primary mill structure performed saw and grist milling functions, and then shifted to textile milling in the 20th century. Across the river a flax and husk milling operation was housed in a separate structure in the 19th century. In addition, the village also contained a store, blacksmith shop, and wheelwright shop at various times in the 19th century.

The milling activities performed here were of both the custom and the merchant type. Dart's Mill was a classic country mill, servicing the farmers of the area in return for a portion of the finished product. These mills were vital to the agricultural pursuits of the surrounding area. However, merchant milling was also done at Dart's Mill. This indicates the size of the operation here, for only the largest of the mills located in rural areas were able to involve themselves in market production.

The longevity of the water-powered milling on the site is also significant. Newspaper accounts of the 1940s told of the continued use of water power here and referred to it as the survivor of past times. Many old mills were converted to other uses or long abandoned ruins while Dart's Mill's turbines were still powering textile looms.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

APR 10 1981

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 5 (approximately)

QUADRANGLE NAME Flemington, NJ

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 514020 4487260  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B           
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See Continuation Sheet

## LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A			
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Richard L. Porter, Historical Consultant

ORGANIZATION

DATE

July, 1980

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

7 Chelsea Way

(201) 722-0385

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Bridgewater

New Jersey

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE X

LOCAL   

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

Deputy

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 3/18/81

## FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Delores Byers  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Entered in the  
National Register

DATE 4/29/82

ATTEST:  
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE

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Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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Inventory—Nomination Form**



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Owners of Property:

Block 72, Lot 6A and Block 73, Lot 14:  
Horace B. & Helen L. Simi  
1555 Coles Avenue  
Mountainside, New Jersey

Block 73, Lot 15:  
Sven Danielson  
Box 242  
Pottersville, New Jersey

Raritan Township Section:  
Eleanor C. Wagner  
RD 3  
Flemington, New Jersey

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Architecture:

The Dart's Mill district includes 4 structures (see Figure 2):

1. 'Hicks House' (Plate 6) - this is a 2-story clapboard structure with a stone foundation and a gable roof with 3 chimneys. Its rectangular plan measures 60' x 20' ('I' form). The structure totals 7 bays, but was built in separate 3 bay and 4 bay sections, with the joining plan readily visible. It has an exposed chimney back in each gable end. The windows are 6/6 and 9/6 sash, and this structure has the finest trim and detailing of all the buildings in the district.

The structure was built into a bank, resulting in a fully exposed front foundation wall which has 2 recessed, ground-level cellar entries. There are also 2 doors on the first floor, with access via a raised porch. In the back the first floor is at ground level, with the rear foundation wall being entirely underground.

The structure was probably the residence of the owner of the mill property and perhaps also the foreman of the mill. It can be dated through superficial architectural analysis to the late 18th or early 19th centuries. It has been restored and is presently used as commercial office space. Some of the interior detailing (mantles, paneling, etc.) has been preserved.

2. 'Dart House' (Plate 5) - this is a 1 1/2 story clapboard structure with a stone foundation and a gable roof with 3 chimneys. Its rectangular plan measures 70' x 25'. The structure totals 8 bays and may have been built in 2 or more stages, but joining locations are difficult to discern. The windows are 4/2, 6/3, and 6/6 sash, and the trim and detailing are plain.

The structure was also partially built into a bank. The front foundation wall is again exposed and 4 recessed, ground-level cellar entries are present. These are the only entries on the front facade.

The structure was probably used as residences for workers at the mill or some of the other businesses located in the village. Superficial examination dates this structure to the late 18th or early 19th centuries. It has been restored and is presently used as commercial office space. Some of the simple interior detailing has been preserved.

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3. 'Millhouse' (Plate 4) - this is a 2-story clapboard structure with a stone foundation (set directly on the shale bedrock) and a gable roof with 1 chimney (the latter a more recent addition). The rectangular plan for the main section measures 25' x 20' ('I' form) and has 2 bays. The lean-to on the south gable and the rear ell are later additions. The windows are 4/4 sash and the trim is plain.

This structure was probably another residence for one of the workers of the village, or may have been a combination shop-dwelling. It has undergone the most extensive alterations of all the buildings in the district. These alterations include those mentioned above and such features as the picture window and the pent roof on the front facade. In addition, the interior has the least integrity of all the district's structures.

4. Mill (Plate 2) - this is a 3 1/2 story clapboard structure with a massive stone foundation and a gable roof with 1 corner chimney. Its rectangular plan measures 50' x 40' and is 3 bays wide and 4 bays deep. The structure also has a small hipped-roof cupola in the roof peak and a hoist overhang in the east gable. The windows are 6/6 sash and the trim is plain. The mill structure can be dated through architectural and documentary analysis to the 1870s.

A number of interior features are worthy of note. The old wheel pit remains, although it is partially filled in. Still visible here is the arched stone forebay entrance complete with gate frames (additional forebay remains are located outside the structure). The original framing with its massive beams and uprights is also present. Certain aspects of the structure's milling functions are still present, including grain chutes, machinery mounts, and other features.

There have been some alterations to the structure. The aluminum siding on 3 of the exterior walls is the most obvious addition. The fourth (south) wall is presently of plywood construction, a result of the removal of a large separate section of the mill that was attached to this wall. The entire structure, most notably the foundation, has been massively re-strengthened, rendering the structure especially sound.

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Archeology:

There are a number of areas of potential archeological significance within the Dart's Mill district:

1. The areas both north and south of the 'Millhouse' are presently used as parking areas. The area to the north of the 'Millhouse' measures approximately 125' (from the north gable to a wooded area) by 40' (from the old road to the bluff behind the 'Millhouse') and is covered with gravel. The area south of the 'Millhouse' is smaller, about 40' square, and is mostly covered with macadam. Documentary evidence and other features including the cut-out appearance of the bluff target these areas as potential locations for some of the additional structures of the village that no longer stand.

2. The area of the mill has been essentially left unaltered except for some grading and dumping south of the building in the vicinity of the old tail race. Most of the areas around the mill are open ground with light vegetation. The area of the forebay still has recognizable features related to its functions in the mill's hydrosystem. These include the trash gate and parts of the gearing system used to open and close the flood gates. Sections of the tail race are also still intact, although, as mentioned, there have been some impacts here related to dumping activities. Large slabs of concrete have been dumped here, and some grading was done to provide access for vehicles carrying the slabs. Additionally, some sections of the tail race have been filled in.

Inside the mill, the wheel pit has been partially filled in, making it impossible to determine if any of the mill's turbines or other machinery still remain. Often the old turbines, or parts of them, were left in the pits, with other machinery possibly tossed in. Wheel pits became preferred dumping areas after they ceased to perform their function, much like wells on domestic sites.

Sections of the old dam, which was blasted a number of years ago, also remain. It was built of stone and later capped with concrete. Additionally, the foundations of the removed south section of the present mill structure are very apparent (Plate 3). This section of the mill measured 60' by 50' and was a 3 story clapboard building with a depth of 4 bays.



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In addition to the features of the present mill, some remains of the original mill located on the site may be present. The area immediately southwest of the foundations of the present mill's removed south section appears to have avoided impact by later activities. This area extends south along the river for about 50' and surface inspection reveals the presence of some cultural material.

3. The island across from the mill, in Raritan Township, is used for only light recreational activity. The vegetation here is fairly heavy in spots, but the southwest section of the island was recently graded and seeded. The island is set off from the 'mainland' of Raritan Township by a small, virtually intermittent channel. Documentary evidence points to this area as the location for the village's 19th century flax and husk mill. The recent grading activity and a walkover reconnaissance both yielded some cultural material in some areas.

The northern end of the island has many remains of the present mill's dam and of the old road and bridge that were replaced a few years ago during the straightening of the Flemington-Whitehouse Road. The east bridge abutment is located a few feet north of the present mill structure (Plate 1).

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries of the Dart's Mill district were designed to include all significant architectural and archeological aspects of the old village. In the Readington Township section, the present block and lot boundaries accomplished this goal. To include the relatively small area of potential archeological significance on the island in Raritan Township, the southernmost lot line in Readington was extended across the main channel of the river, the island, and the small channel to the west bank of the river. The district boundary then followed the west bank to the south side of the new Route 523 bridge, and then went along the bridge to the northernmost line of the Readington section of the district.

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Architecture:

The architecture of the district's remaining structures is a classic example of the combined rural and industrial element involved in the milling village situation. These were not urban industrial complexes, but likewise they were not isolated rural farmsteads. These were small clusters of structures involving industrial functions that were located in and served rural environments. The results architecturally were a class of structures with elements of both the rural and urban tradition. The 'Hicks House' has many features that are the same as those found in farmhouses of this region, but the addition that brought the facade to a symmetrical 7 bays gave the house an appearance somewhat different from those farmhouses. This aspect is seen even more readily in the 'Dart House', which is actually a kind of 'rural row-house'. The structures of Dart's Mill are clustered around the mill and reflect this grouped aspect, yet they also exhibit classic rural vernacular styles.

The key element of the village, both historically and at present, is the mill structure itself. It is of sufficient industrial architectural value as a classic, large, 19th century rural mill structure to stand alone, but the associated structures and features demand that it be considered as part of a whole. It is ironic that it is the only building not yet restored, but its basic structural soundness makes restoration a definite possibility.

Archeology:

Dart's Mill is also an area of high archeological potential. Recent impacts on the site have been minimal, increasing the possibility that subsurface remains might still be intact. Excavation could provide valuable additional information on the age, extent, and diversity of the site. More specifically, archeological exploration could help locate additional structures associated with the village, such as the original mill, the flax mill, and the blacksmith and wheelwright shops. It could also aid in the interpretation of the standing mill structure, shedding light on its hydrosystem through investigation of the wheel pit and raceway areas. A further possibility is that excavation, along with more detailed architectural analysis, could help date the structures yet standing, fill-in gaps left by the documentary evidence. Finally, the possibility of prehistoric aspects in this riverine environment should not be ignored.

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The Reading Ownership:

The early ownership of the Dart's Mill district area by the Reading family adds further significance to the site. Ellis and James Reading were the sons of Thomas, who was the son of John Reading, Jr. John was one of the earliest settlers of this region of Hunterdon County, and he owned the land that his grandsons later built their mill on. There is unsubstantiated evidence that John had a mill on the site prior to the Revolutionary War. John Reading was a high-ranking official in provincial government, a career that included two short terms as acting governor of New Jersey. His father John was one of the earliest settlers in Hunterdon County, playing a large role in the founding and government of said county.

Historical Background:

Dart's Mill is located on the South Branch of the Raritan River in what are today Readington and Raritan Townships, Hunterdon County. Originally this vicinity was part of Amwell Township in Burlington County. Amwell was included in the new county of Hunterdon when it broke away from Burlington in 1714 (Snyder, 1969).

John Reading, one of the first settlers in Amwell Township, was a surveyor, militia colonel, local political officer, and a member of the colonial legislature. He was involved in the purchase of the land from the Indians that later became Hunterdon County. He was a leader in the movement to have Hunterdon set off from Burlington (Snell, 1881; Wittwer, 1976).

Reading's son, John, Jr., was formally educated in England, and upon his return he managed his father's estate and carried on the business of a surveyor. He surveyed much of Hunterdon County for the West Jersey Proprietors, and purchased about 600 choice acres on the South Branch. He was a colonel in the militia and was appointed to the Governor's Council in 1718. He served here for many years, eventually becoming president of the Council. In this capacity he became acting governor of New Jersey after the death of Governor John Hamilton and served two months before the arrival of the new governor, Jonathan Belcher. When Belcher died in 1757, Reading again served as governor. This time he held the office for almost a year until Francis Bernard arrived to take over (Mott, 1878; Snell, 1881; Wittwer, 1976).

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In 1730, the section of Amwell Township northeast of the South Branch was set off and became Reading Township (this became Readington Township in 1798) (Snyder, 1969). That same year John Reading, Jr., purchased a tract of 127.5 acres on the South Branch, adding that to his holdings in the areas (Hunterdon County deed 13/542). Secondary source material dealing with this region notes that in addition to his large landholdings, Reading also had three mills on the South Branch. The present location of Dart's Mills is indicated as the most upstream of the three (Snell, 1881, 301; Wittwer, 1976, 38). However, when Reading died in 1767 neither his will, codicil, or inventory bore any mention of mills (Trenton wills 751J).

The land Reading had purchased in 1730 passed to his youngest son Thomas in 1767 (Hunterdon County deed 13/542). Thomas Reading later served as a captain in both the New Jersey Line and the Quartermaster Department during the Revolutionary War and held a number of local political offices (Nelson, 1916, 207n). In 1769 he sold 64 acres of this parcel to Gershom Lee. This deed contained no mention of a mill being attached to this property (Hunterdon County deed 13/539). In 1778, Lee sold 3.5 acres of this tract back into the Reading family. Ellis and James Reading, sons of Thomas, purchased the tract from Lee, and once again there was no mention of a mill connected with it (Hunterdon County deed 13/542).

In 1778, John Hills drew a military map that included the vicinity of the village of Flemington. He noted the presence of 'Readings Mill' a short distance away, on the South Branch. It is difficult to say from the map exactly where this mill was or which member of the Reading family owned it. The fact that Hills showed only one Reading mill in a stretch where there were allegedly three casts some doubt on the claim. Further research is needed to determine which South Branch mill this is, but the evidence so far encountered argues against its being at the location now known as Dart's Mill.\*

\* The tax ratables for Readington and Amwell Township for the period 1778-1803, which often enumerated mill owners, were checked. No mill ownership was recorded for Thomas, Ellis, or James Reading or Gershom Lee. Please note, however, that these records failed to record ownership of a mill by Ellis and James during periods when they certainly did own one at what later became Dart's Mill.

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The first concrete evidence of a mill at this location comes from the road returns of Hunterdon County. In 1786 a new road was ordered built over the South Branch at 'Readings Mill', through and along the lands of Thomas Reading and John Huffman (Hunterdon County road return 1/149). A new bridge was ordered to be built at this point. This road became known as the Flemington-Whitehouse Road (later still as County Road 19, and finally as Route 523). This evidence places the probable time of construction for the first mill at Dart's Mills as between 1778 and 1786. The name Readings Mill came either from the owners (Ellis and James) or perhaps from their father, who owned much of the surrounding land.

In 1805 the Reading brothers began to lose control of their mill. James sold his half share of 'Reading's Mills' to Nathaniel Saxton for \$800 (Hunterdon County deed 12/200). In the meantime, Ellis was sued and his share of the mill was put up for sale by the Hunterdon County sheriff. The sale was advertised in the 'True American', a Trenton paper, in June, 1805. In 1806, Ellis' share of the 'Grist Mill saw mill fulling mill' was purchased for \$152 by Saxton (Hunterdon County deed 12/343). This seems a low price for a milling complex with such varied capabilities. The following year Saxton paid Thomas Reading \$40 to give up any rights he might have to the property. This agreement noted that the mills were owned by Saxton and occupied by George Hall. Thomas retained the right to remove sand from the island in the mill pond above the bridge (Hunterdon County deed 14/96).

After fully securing title, Saxton quickly sold the mills and made a fine profit, getting \$3,200 for the same 3.5 acre tract. The new buyer was Samuel Taylor, and the complexity of the mill's hydrosystem was reflected in the deed, which mentioned such landmarks as forebays, gates, dams, banks, causeways, and races (Hunterdon County deed 14/98).

In April, 1810, a petition was filed requesting the vacation of the road that was laid out in 1786. For reasons not given, the petitioners wanted the river crossing moved about 1000' south of its original location near Taylor's mill. This request was approved in May and ordered implemented. A map was drawn up detailing the courses the new road would take (Hunterdon County road return file #20-5-30). But in July of that same year, another petition was filed, this one bearing, among others, the familiar names of Samuel Taylor, Thomas Reading, and John Huffman.

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This petition requested yet another road be laid out that essentially duplicated the road originally laid out in 1786. Hunterdon County changed their minds, voided the May decision and approved the latest petition in September (Hunterdon County road return file #19-3-8). The end result of this, besides the decision on how the Flemington-Whitehouse Road would run, was a fine manuscript map by Thomas Gordon which shows Taylor's mills in 1810 (Figure 3). The mill structure appeared directly below the bridge. Across the street and to the north were two small structures in the area of the present 'Dart House', and further to the north was a larger structure close to where the 'Hicks House' is located today.

In 1812 the lands of John Huffman were partitioned and divided among his heirs (Hunterdon County partions volume 1). This resulted in another manuscript map that included Samuel Taylor's mill seat (Figure 4). This map showed only the mill and its dam, with the mill now depicted as having two large sections. In 1815 the lands of John Reading were partitioned, and yet another manuscript map resulted (Hunterdon County partitions volume 1; Figure 5). Here, in addition to the two sections of the mill and the dam, the three structures across the road appeared in the same configuration as they had on the 1810 map (Figure 3). During the first quarter of the 19th century the mill complex had already grown to include various milling operations and a number of structures.

Taylor also expanded his landholding during his tenure, for when he sold the property in 1816, he sold not only the 3.5 acre mill lot, but also 17 acres of cleared land and 4 acres of woodlot adjoining the mill. The buyer was Mindert Wilson, Jr., and he paid Taylor \$12,000 (Hunterdon County deed 26/455). This price may reflect not only the increased acreage but also improvements made to the mill seat since 1807. Wilson sold the property in 1818, adding a fourth tract in Amwell Township across the river from the other three tracts. (This area of Amwell Township was set off as Raritan Township in 1838). This fourth tract was for 6 acres of land and 25 acres of river bed across from the 'grist mill or fulling mill'. William S. Conover paid \$13,000 for the property (Hunterdon County deed 29/169).

In 1820 Conover was sued and his property was put up for sale. The 'True American' of October, 1820, carried the sheriff's sale notice announcing the sale of Conover's grist and saw mill. The property was purchased for only \$3,350 by William Covenhoven (Hunterdon County deed

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31/604). Covenhoven died in 1823, with his will mentioning that he owned a mill in Hunterdon County (Covenhoven was from Montgomery Township, Somerset County) (Trenton will 1964R). The November 17, 1825, issue of the Hunterdon Gazette and Farmer's Advertiser (Volume 1 #35) has an advertisement offering the mill seat for sale by Covenhoven's heirs. It was described as including a 'Grist-Mill and Fulling-Mill, with a Carding Machine'. The next year the heirs sold the four tracts to Levi M. Mettler for \$2,706 (Hunterdon County deed 40/276). The comparatively low prices of the last two transactions may indicate an amount of deterioration to the property.

Whatever the condition of the mills, Mettler apparently knew the potential of the property. During his 50 year tenure as owner the area known as 'Mettler's Mills' grew in size and complexity. The map of Raritan Township in 1850 showed this expansion. Mettler was listed as owning a grist and saw mill on the Readington side of the South Branch and he also had a flax mill on the Raritan side. In Readington, at least seven separate structures are shown in the complex, with structures in the areas of the 'Dart House', the 'Hicks House', and the 'Millhouse'. Since this map was detailing Raritan Township, the structures on the Readington side of the river are not individually described. (This map was not reproduced because a suitable copy could not be made.)

In 1850 an Industrial Census was taken for New Jersey, providing detailed information on many industrial activities, including milling. There is no flax mill listed in Raritan Township for that year, perhaps indicating it was under construction, or perhaps simply not operating. There is also no listing under Mettler in Readington, indicating that he was renting the property. Examination of these operating grain mills in Readington yielded the partnership of 'Biggs and Huffman'. Two men of these names lived very close to Mettler's Mills (see Figure 6) and operated the only unaccounted for combination grist and saw mill in the township. From earlier evidence it is known that Levi Mettler's mill had this dual capability. The census recorded that their grain mill had 2 run of stone and 1 employee, and manufactured 1,000 barrels of flour from 4,000 bushels of wheat, 1,000 barrels of flour from 5,000 bushels of rye, 360 tons of feed from 17,000 bushels of corn and oats, and 50 tons of flour from 4,000 bushels of buckwheat. The saw mill and 1 saw and 1 employee and converted logs into 45,000' of board and stud and 20,000' of lath.

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In 1852 a large map detailing all of Hunterdon County was published (Figure 6). Perhaps due to the greater extent in area covered, there was less detail shown at Mettler's Mills than was shown on the 1850 map of Raritan Township. However it did show Mettler's 'mill and store', with a flax mill across the river. Other structures appeared in the vicinity, notably in the areas where the 'Dart House' and 'Hicks House' are today.

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 7 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 not being called a husk mill, and this structure was shown as having 2 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 County 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 'Mettlers 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 have 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.



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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 (Figure 7). 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 County Letter of Administration 6/328), but his inventory mentioned that he owned a saw mill, feed mill, and a store (Hunterdon County 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 has been added to the original four) (Hunterdon County deed 160/151). This began in 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 County mortgage 41/683) and from Samuel Stover in 1877 (Hunterdon County mortgages 46/127 and 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

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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 (Volume 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 County deed 217/630), but he had to acquire yet another mortgage from Samuel Stover to do so (Hunterdon County mortgage 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. 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 County deed 363/126). This purchase began a series of short-term ownerships of

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the property. The Wolfe Milling Co. lost the property in a sheriff's sale in 1902 (Hunterdon County 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 County 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 County deed 268/603).

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 County deed 272/545). In 1909 Agnes and her husband Henry C. Dart formed the Dart Cereal Co. (Hunterdon County deed 293/193). However, the Darts Cereal Co. went bankrupt, with a number of very large mortgages overdue. Courtney Hyde of NewYork 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 County 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 County 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 County 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 seal 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 County mortgage 150/377).

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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 County deed 447/101 and 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 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 County 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.

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Maps

- Beers, F.W. 'Readington' and 'Raritan'. In Atlas of Hunterdon County. 1873.
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- Gordon, Thomas. 'Map of the Road laid out by Return of May 19'. In Hunterdon County Road Returns. File No. 20-5-30. 1810.
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Hunterdon County Deeds  
Hunterdon County Mortgages  
Hunterdon County Partitions  
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 Advertisers

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Geographical Data:

Verbal Boundary Description (See Figure 2).

Readington Township Section - Block 72, Lot 6A and Block 76, Lots 14 and 15.

Raritan Township section - Beginning at the point where the southernmost boundary line of Block 73, Lot 15, meets the east bank of the South Branch of the Raritan River; then in the same course as said boundary line, across the main channel of the river, the island in the river, and the smaller channel of the river to the west bank of said river; then northwest along the west bank to the south side of the new Route 523 bridge; then northeast along the south side of the bridge to the east bank of the river where it meets the northernmost line of Block 72, Lot 6A.

SCALE: 1" = 400'

MARCH 1, 1964

to Feb 8, '55, to Oct. 6, '66, to 4/1/68 to 11/1/68, to 1/15/70, 12/1/70, 1/1/71  
REVISIONS

ROBERT C. BOGART & ASSOCIATES  
ROUTE 31 & EMERY AVE, FLEMINGTON, N.J.

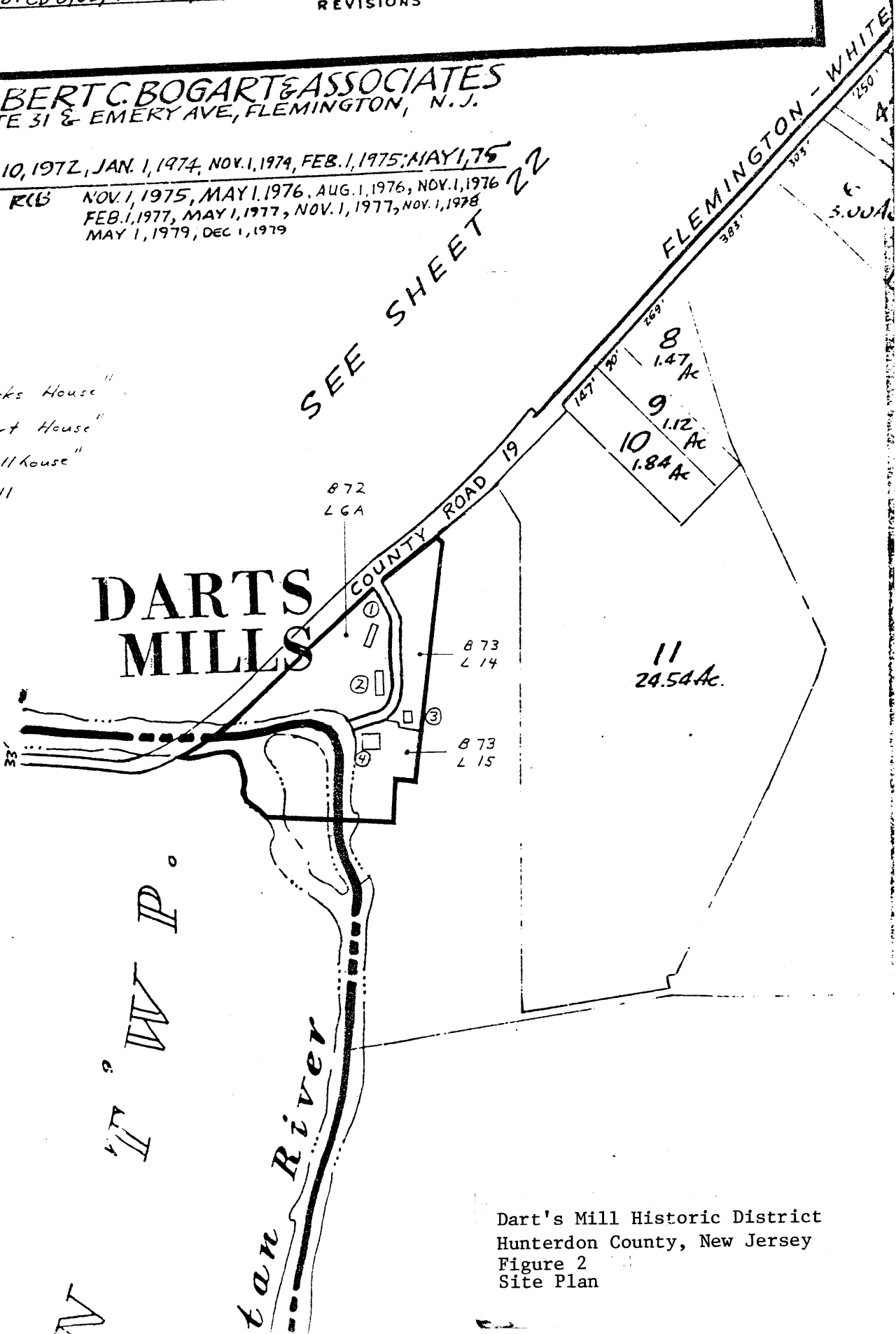
REVISED:

OCT. 10, 1972, JAN. 1, 1974, NOV. 1, 1974, FEB. 1, 1975, MAY 1, 1975

RCB NOV. 1, 1975, MAY 1, 1976, AUG. 1, 1976, NOV. 1, 1976  
FEB. 1, 1977, MAY 1, 1977, NOV. 1, 1977, NOV. 1, 1978  
MAY 1, 1979, DEC 1, 1979

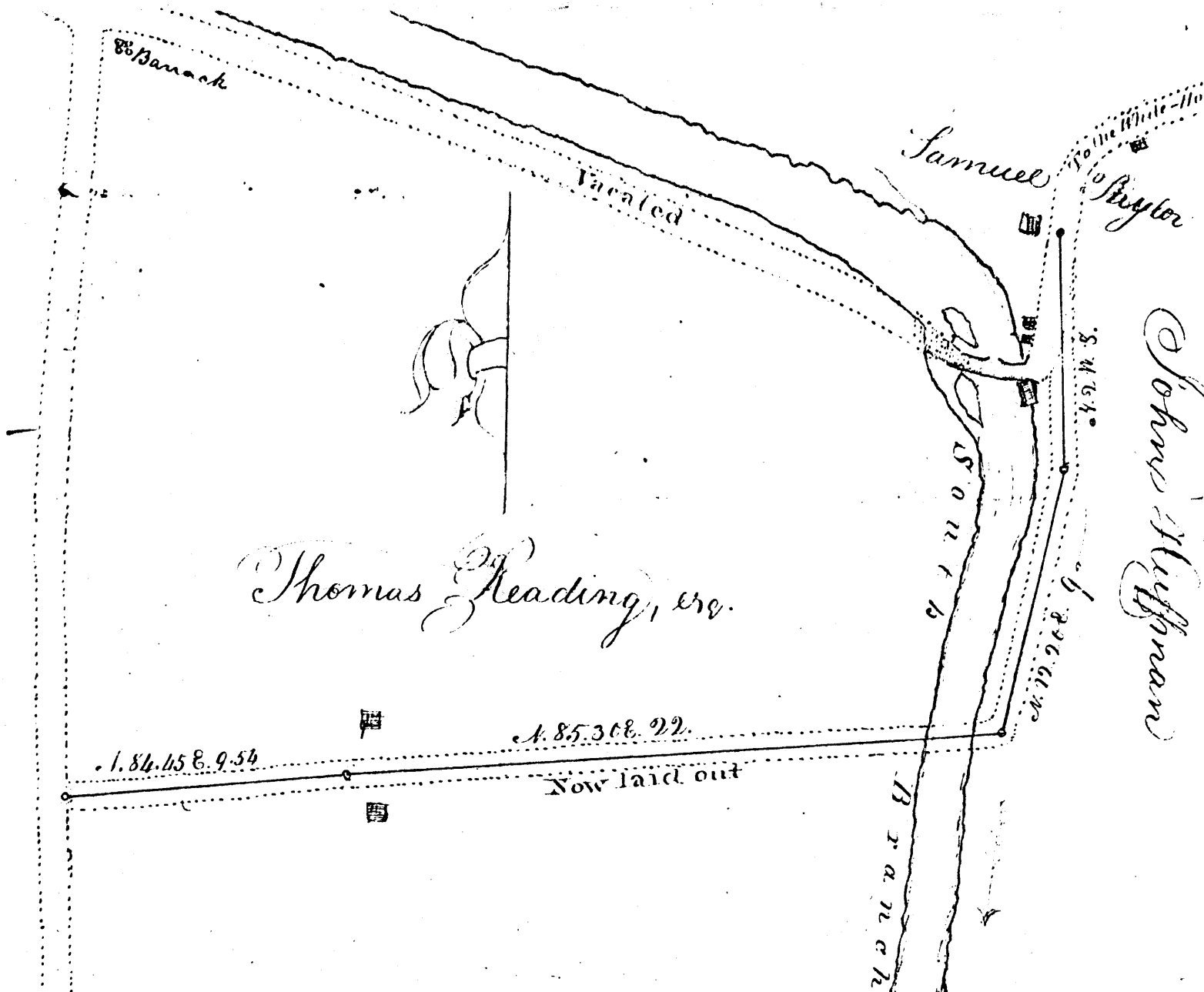
- 1 - "Hicks House"
- 2 - "Dart House"
- 3 - "Mill house"
- 4 - Mill

SEE SHEET 22



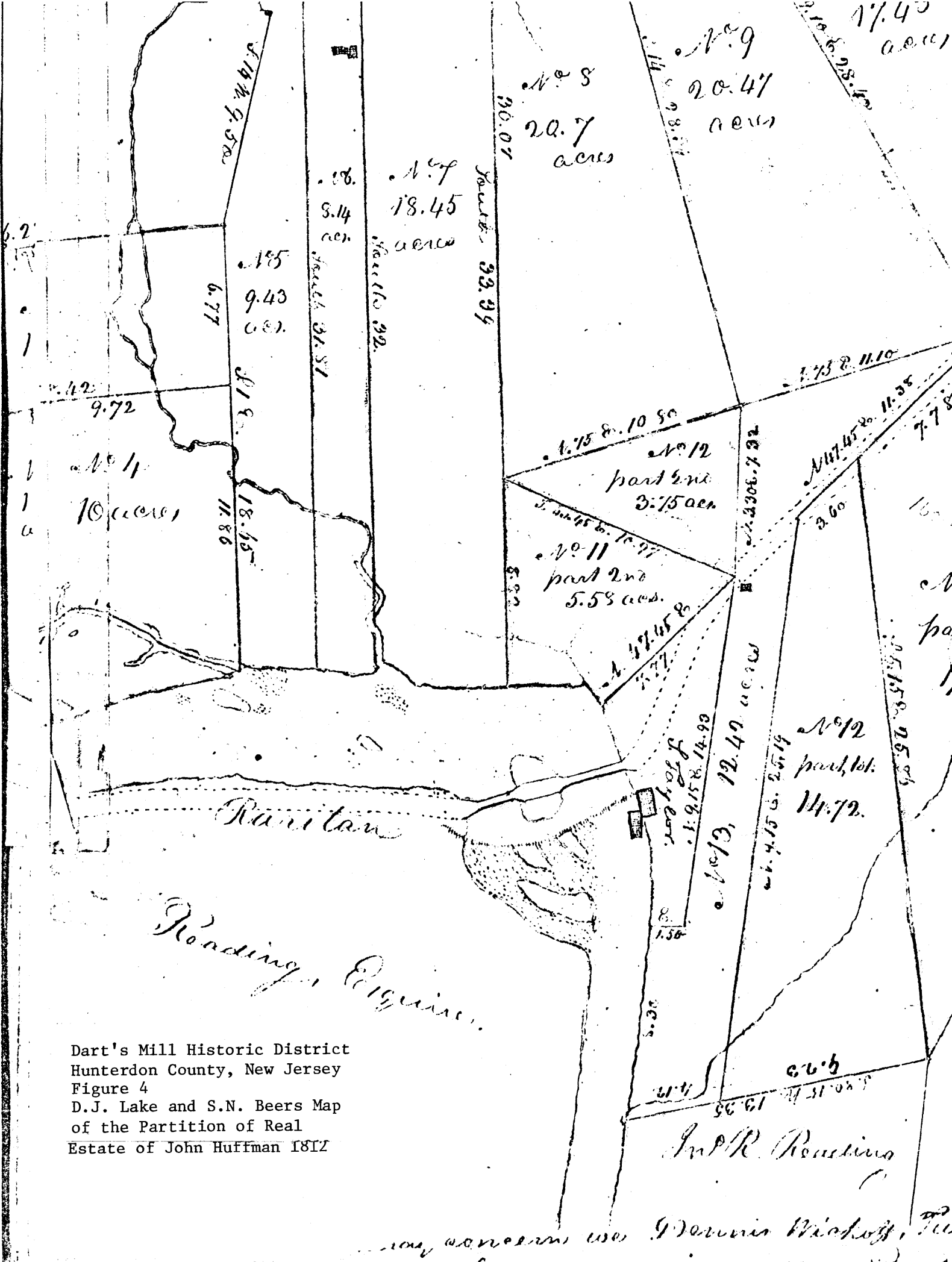
Dart's Mill Historic District  
Hunterdon County, New Jersey  
Figure 2  
Site Plan





Map of the Road laid out by the foregoing  
 Return of — Surveyed May 19, 1810, by  
 Thos. Gordon, Surveyor

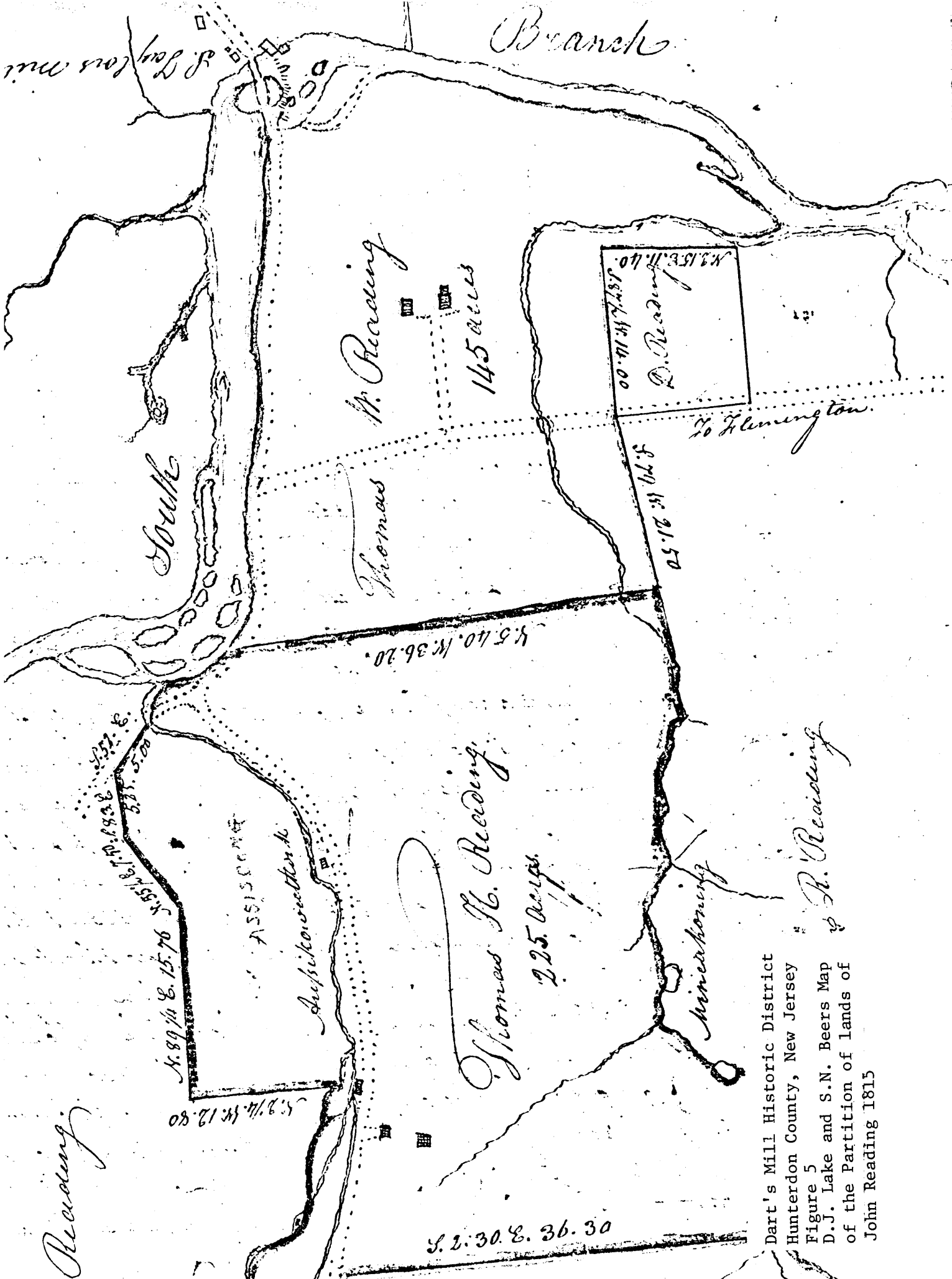
Dart's Mill Historic District  
 Hunterdon County, New Jersey  
 Figure 3  
 Thomas Gordon's Map of the  
 Road laid out by Return of  
 May 19, 1810



Dart's Mill Historic District  
 Hunterdon County, New Jersey  
 Figure 4  
 D.J. Lake and S.N. Beers Map  
 of the Partition of Real  
 Estate of John Huffman 1812

And R. Reusing

Morris Wickoff, Jr.



*Reading*

Dart's Mill Historic District  
 Hunterdon County, New Jersey  
 Figure 5  
 D.J. Lake and S.N. Beers Map  
 of the Partition of lands of  
 John Reading 1815



Dart's Mill Historic District  
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 Figure 6  
 Samuel C. Cornell's Map of  
 Hunterdon County, 1852



Dart's Mill Historic District  
 Hunterdon County, New Jersey  
 Figure 7  
 F.W. Beers 'Readington and  
 Raritan' 1873