

# BERGEN COUNTY STONE HOUSE SURVEY

INDIVIDUAL STRUCTURE SURVEY FORM

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GENERAL

HISTORIC NAME: Van Houten-Hillman House

COMMON NAME:

LOCATION: 891 River Road.  
(Block 217B, Lot 1)

MUNICIPALITY: Elmwood Park

OWNERSHIP:  Public  Private

OWNER/ADDRESS: Dr. Bruce and Judy Stamper

REFERENCE

MAP REFERENCES:

Erskine (1778-80)

Hopkins-Corey (1861) A.C. Cadmus

Walker's Atlas (1876) C. Brooks

Bromley (1912) Herman Hillman

Other

RECOGNITION:

National Register  BCHS Marker

HABS  Bailey

Other

ENVIRONMENT

HOUSE ORIENTATION: S 10° W

IMPORTANT RELATED STRUCTURES:

SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:

Residential

Commercial

Agricultural

Open Space

Other

COMMENTS: Near Garden State Parkway.

USE

ORIGINAL: Residence

PRESENT: Residence

THREATS

THREATS TO STRUCTURE:

Roads

Development

Zoning

Deterioration

Other

No Threat.

COMMENTS: Has already suffered from road widening.

CONDITION

CONDITION:

Excellent  Good

Fair  Deteriorated

STATUS:

Occupied

Unoccupied

Work in Progress

ACCESSIBLE:

Yes, Restricted

Yes, Unrestricted

No

The west fireplace was removed and a bay window has been installed. The opening in the partition has been widened and the windows appear to have been enlarged. Apparently, the other original doorway was changed to a window. There are three dormers in front. The old wing to the east has been encircled by a 1901 addition.

PHOTO



MAP



**DESCRIPTION**

**CONSTRUCTION DATE/SOURCE:**  
Probably mid-18th century/  
Architectural evidence

**BUILDER:** Possible a member of the Cadmus Family.

**FORM/PLAN TYPE:**  
Type "A", 2 door, 2 room with a fireplace on each gable end (33'6" x 20'3"), with a 1901 stone and frame addition to the east.

**FRAMING SYSTEM:**  
 Intermediate Summer Beam  
 Intermediate Bearing Wall  
 Clear Span  
 Other

**EXTERIOR WALL FABRIC:**  
Well coursed sandstone with best work on south front.

**FENESTRATION:**  
32" x 62" sash (2/2) and may have been enlarged.

**ENTRANCE LOCATION/TYPE:**  
Most likely had two twin doors.  
Existing door is 36" x 6'8".

**NUMBER OF STORIES:**  
**CELLAR:**  Yes  
 No

**CHIMNEY FOUNDATION:**  
 Stone Arch  
 Brick Arch, Stone Foundation  
 Other

**FLOOR JOISTS:**  
6" x 10½" @ 31-35" apart with 10-11" wide floor boards.

**FIRST FLOOR CEILING HEIGHT:**  
7'0"

**FIRST FLOOR WALL THICKNESS:**  
22"

**GARRET FLOOR JOISTS:**  
Not visible.

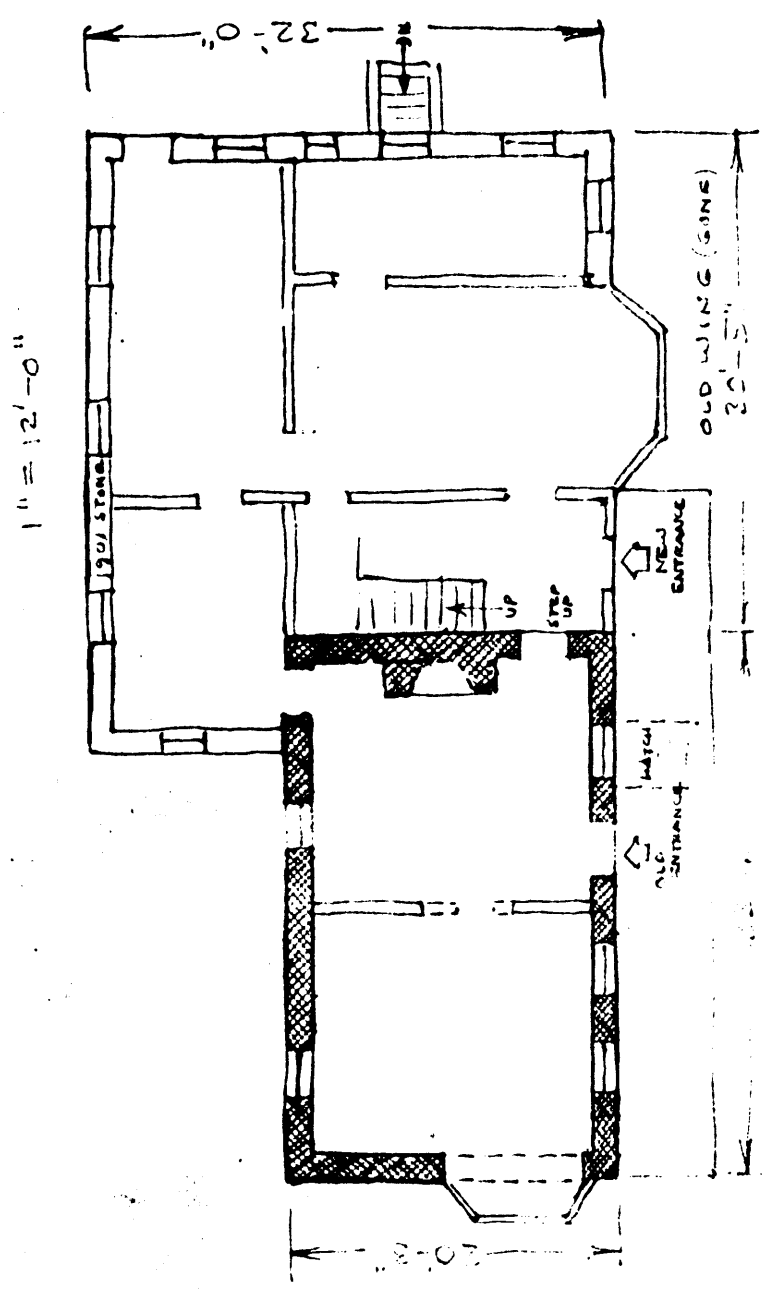
**GARRET:**  
 Unfinished Space  
 Finished Space

**ROOF:**  
 Gable  
 Gambrel  
 Curb  
 Other

**EAVE TREATMENT:**  
 Sweeping Overhang  
 Supported Overhang (Front)  
 No Overhang  
 Boxed Gutter (Rear)  
 Other

This house, while having been altered through the years, still retains a sufficient amount of its original fabric that it should be recognized and retained. We are therefore including it for its architectural significance, for its association with the exploration and settlement of the Bergen County area, and for its remaining historic fabric. As such, it is included in the Thematic Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for the Early Stone Houses of Bergen County, New Jersey.

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This is sketchy at best: 5,320 acres of this land was patented to nine people on March 25, 1687 and they partitioned the tract on May 16, 1692 to be sold off. Thomas F. and Andries F. Cadmus were among the purchasers. John Cadmus was around these parts before the Revolution and was the father of Andrew (c. 1754 to July 28, 1820), who is associated with this property. He and his wife Penelope had a daughter Sophia (c. 1785 to January 1, 1869) and a son Henry (c. 1788 to July 18, 1857). (The above information is from "Harvey" and Howard I. Durie.)

It is believed that this land of about 280 acres came down to Andrew H. Cadmus in part, but since there were about five Cadmus houses along River Road on this tract, we cannot be sure that Andrew was involved here. We are reasonably certain that this house was on an eighty acre parcel belonging to Andrew in 1867 and that he sold in the late 1870's to Herman Hillman (or there may have been a C. Brooks in between, according to the 1876 Atlas).

By 1913 the farm had been reduced to 43 acres, and was sold by the Hillman heirs in the 1970's to a developer, except for the house. Dr. Stamper is related to the Hillman's.

Verbal Boundary Description:

Block 217B, Lot 1 - Elmwood Park Tax Map

Less than 1 acre

U.T.M.

18 573 460 4526 710

Paterson, New Jersey





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# BERGEN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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River Edge, New Jersey 07661

History of the  
VAN HOUTEN-HILLMAN HOUSE  
891 River Drive  
Elmwood Park, N.J.  
By Reginald McMahon

1979

(57)

History of the  
VAN HOUTEN-HILLMAN HOUSE  
Elmwood Park, N. J.  
by Reginald McMahon

This historic house is located at 891 River Drive on the corner of Garden Drive in Elmwood Park, New Jersey. The facade faces south as many old homes do and its west gable end overlooks the colonial road that is River Drive which runs along the east bank of the Passaic River. An architectural study will determine whether the structure was built in colonial days or if it is a "second generation" dwelling erected after the Revolutionary War.

Built of stone, the home is situated in the locality once known as "Slotterdam" which stretched along the east bank of the Passaic from Garfield north to Fair Lawn. The origin of the name has been a matter of conjecture among local historians of the past, present - and likely the future.<sup>1</sup> However, the land on which the house stands first came within the bounds of Essex County but by the early 1700's it was part of Bergen County's Township of Saddle River. In later years this section of Slotterdam was known as Dundee Lake, then East Paterson and, finally, Elmwood Park.

The Van Houten family may have been the first of the Dutch settlers to occupy the property where the house stands but land titles are obscure in colonial times due to absence of recorded deeds. There are, however, undocumented statements which may or may not be true concerning the first purchase.

The progenitor of the Van Houten family in our area was Roelof Cornelissen who came from the small village of Houten in the Netherlands in about the year 1638. In later years, some of his children took the surname Van Houten. His eldest son, Helmig, usually went by the name of Helmig Roelofse and it was he who is said to have purchased the land at Slotterdam in the late 1600's.<sup>2</sup> He had many children including son Cornelius.

In any event, it was Cornelius' son, John C. Van Houten, who is the first member of the family who can be documented and known for certain to have lived on the property. The land was owned in common with brother Helmig (2), although the latter apparently did not reside here.<sup>3</sup>

John C. Van Houten was born March 25, 1714, the eldest son of

Cornelius and his wife, the former Aagtje Vreeland. He married at the age of twenty-eight to Jannetje Doremus, daughter of Cornelius Doremus at Acquackanonk (Passaic) on December 9, 1742. According to the church records, both were born and living at Acquackanonk at that time.<sup>4</sup> When they began homesteading across the river in Slotterdam is unknown.

The 1778 tax record for the Township of Saddle River, the first extant, reveals that John was assessed for 150 acres of improved land, 1 horse, 10 cattle, and 9 hogs. Living with him at Slotterdam were two sons, Cornelius and Henry. Nearby neighbors were John Cadmus on Van Houten's north boundary and Phillip Van Bussum to the south.<sup>5</sup>

When the British invaded Bergen County in 1776 during the Revolutionary War, they pursued Washington's Army to the Passaic River. Enemy troops encamped at Slotterdam and raided the farms of Van Houten, Cadmus, Post and Van Bussum. "Liberated" from the homestead of Van Houten was a wagon belonging to son Cornelius which was valued at 17 shillings and 9 pence.<sup>6</sup>

John C. Van Houten did not live to see the final outcome of the American Revolution for he died on April 29, 1781 at the age of sixty-seven.<sup>7</sup> He left no will but heirs to the property were his two sons, Cornelius J. and Henry J. as well as his nephew Cornelius H., the son of John's deceased brother Helmig. On June 25, 1781, the heirs came to an agreement and the house tract was released by deed to Cornelius J. Van Houten. The property then consisted of 160 acres and stretched between the Passaic and Saddle Rivers.<sup>8</sup>

Cornelius John Van Houten was born March 25, 1744 and was thirty-seven years of age when he acquired the property in his own name. He had married Helena, daughter of Johannes Van houten of Pompton and relatives of the Van Houtens of Slotterdam. The couple had many children including a set of twins.<sup>9</sup> All were raised on the Slotterdam farm.

In 1782, Cornelius mortgaged 50 acres of land on the eastern end of his farm along the Saddle River for the sum of 92 pounds.<sup>10</sup> We can only speculate about his need for money at that time but it possibly may have been used to build a new dwelling or the reconstruction of his father's old house. By 1786, Cornelius was taxed for 150 acres, 4 horses, 6 cattle, and one slave.<sup>11</sup>

The farm was enlarged on May 7, 1791 when Cornelius purchased 106 acres on his south boundary for the sum of 600 pounds, New York currency.<sup>12</sup> The tax record of 1791 reflected the increase and Cornelius was assessed for 100 acres of improved (cultivated) land and 100 acres described as unimproved.<sup>13</sup>

At the age of eighty, Cornelius J. Van houten died on November 23, 1824.<sup>14</sup> On January first of the following year, an inventory was made of his personal estate which amounted to \$783.33. More than half of the total was credited to the ownership of three slaves whose combined value was \$450. Other items on the inventory worth noting were a loom and spinning wheel and one "lot of books". It is also revealed that he had sheep as well as cattle and that some of the crops which grew on the Slotterdam farm were rye, corn, oats, hay, buckwheat, and flax. It is interesting to note that an appraiser of the estate was Andrew C. Cadmus who would own the homestead in the not too distant future.<sup>15</sup>

The will of Cornelius J. Van Houten was probated January 18, 1825 and had been drawn some eight years previously. Wife Helena, who would follow him to the grave eight years later, was given her husband's personal estate and their two daughters received \$500 each. Two sons, Helmig C. and Henry C. received property but the bulk of the Slotterdam farm went to two other sons, John C. and Peter C. The latter received that portion which his father had purchased in 1791 but it was now reduced to 80 acres.<sup>16</sup> (It would later be acquired by brother Henry).

The eldest son, John Cornelius Van Houten (2) was bequeathed the homestead farm to the north and where the present house stands. It also contained 80 acres at this time. He was also devised ten acres of woodland. It may be of interest that the eastern boundary of the farm was then known as the "Stone Hole".<sup>17</sup>

John C. Van Houten was born June 18, 1771 and was fifty-three when the house legally became his. He had married at Acquackanonk, on January 22, 1797, to Antje Post, daughter of Adrian J. Post.<sup>18</sup> Even before marriage, John was sharing the tax burden with his father and by 1820 was assessed for owning a slave.<sup>19</sup> He and his household of three other persons, unidentified, are listed in the Federal Census of 1830. Of the two, one was likely his wife, Antje, and the other his aged mother Helena, to judge by the age groupings given in this census.<sup>20</sup>



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At the age of 61 years, 10 months, and 11 days, John C. Van Houten died on April 29, 1833 and was buried in the Acquackanonk Church Cemetery.<sup>21</sup> He left a personal estate valued at \$1462.15 $\frac{1}{2}$  but failed to leave a will.<sup>22</sup>

His surviving heirs were two daughters: Caroline, wife of John A. Cadmus, and Ellen who had married Andrew C. Cadmus. Andrew became administrator of the personal estate which was settled between the two families.<sup>23</sup>

Since John and Caroline had settled in upstate New York, they sold their right in the homestead to ANDREW and Ellen Cadmus on May 29, 1833 for \$2000. The property remained the same as it had been inherited earlier by John C. Van Houten in 1825.<sup>24</sup>

Andrew C. Cadmus was a descendant of the family who were the northern neighbors of the Van Houtens in Slotterdam for generations. Andrew was born in 1803 and wife Ellen Van Houten was two years his junior. They remained on the farm for over three decades.

The Federal census of 1860 recorded the Cadmus household at that time:<sup>25</sup>

Andrew C. Cadmus age 57. Farmer. Value of real estate \$20,000; personal estate \$2500. Born New Jersey

Ellen Cadmus age 55. Born New Jersey.

(Children)

Cornelius Cadmus age 15. Born New Jersey. (Probably named for his paternal grandfather although his maternal grandfather carried the same name.)

Ellen Cadmus age 11. Born New Jersey and attends school. (Probably named for her mother).

(Employees)

Thomas Sisco age 40. Black. Farm Laborer.

Francis Sisco age 14. Black.

Isabella Sisco age 80. Black.

In 1858 construction began on Dundee Dam on the Passaic River which formed Dundee Lake and likely flooded much of the Cadmus waterfront property. The name eventually supplanted Slotterdam as the local designation of this area.

The Cadmus' sold the homestead in 1869; it has not been determined where they resided afterwards. Ellen died September 25, 1877 at the age of 71 years, 8 months and 13 days and husband Andrew on March 14, 1884 after a life of 80 years, 6 months and 21 days. Both were buried in the Acquackanonk Churchyard.<sup>26</sup>

The new owner of the homestead, which was purchased on October 9, 1869, was Maria Louisa Brooks and her husband Clarence Brooks of the Township of Acquackanonk in Passaic County. Title was invested in the wife's name. The farmstead still consisted of 80 acres and the consideration was \$3000. It is of interest to note that the north boundary was now owned by the "heirs of David Cadmus" and the south line was that of Henry C. Van Houten,<sup>27</sup> brother of John C. who died in 1833. In the following year, 1870, Mrs. Brooks purchased the latter farm from Van Houten.<sup>28</sup>

The United States Census of 1870 recorded the Brooks family in the Township of Saddle River:<sup>29</sup>

Clarence Brooks, age 44 and born in New York, was a "varnish manufacturer". Real estate was valued at \$4400 and personal property at \$5000.

Maria Brooks, age 44 and born in New York. "Keeps House".

Ella L. Brooks, age 12 and born in New York.

Warren W. Brooks age 6 and born in New York.

Sarah Brooks, age 19 and born in New York.

Anthony Vreeland, age 60, born in New Jersey. Black. "Farm Laborer".

The house is noted as "C. Brooks" in the 1876 "Atlas of Bergen County".<sup>30</sup>

By 1887 the Brooks family had returned to New York City and on October 19th of that year, the parents gave title to their twenty-three year old son, Warren W. Brooks. The deed conveyed several properties including the adjacent farm to the south formerly owned by Henry C. Van Houten.<sup>31</sup> Exactly one year later, in 1888, Warren Brooks and "Lizze" (Elizabeth) his wife sold that portion of the property which included the old homestead.

The next owner of the former Van Houten premises was Herman Hillman. At the time of purchase, October 19, 1888, he was a resident of the "Town of Riverside in the County of Passaic". He bought the house and fifty acres of land for the sum of \$3000.<sup>32</sup>

In 1901 he rebuilt the house, chiefly by the addition of a new wing, marked by a dated cornerstone, and remodeled the interior of the older home. It was long known in the area as the Hillman farmhouse and the tract with numerous outbuildings is recorded as that of "Hillman & Son" on a 1913 map.<sup>33</sup>

Herman Hillman died on May 13, 1940 at Orlando, Florida. By will

he devised the farm to his youngest son, Fred C. Hillman.<sup>34</sup> There have been subsequent title changes and the house is now owned and occupied by Herman Hillman's great-grandson.

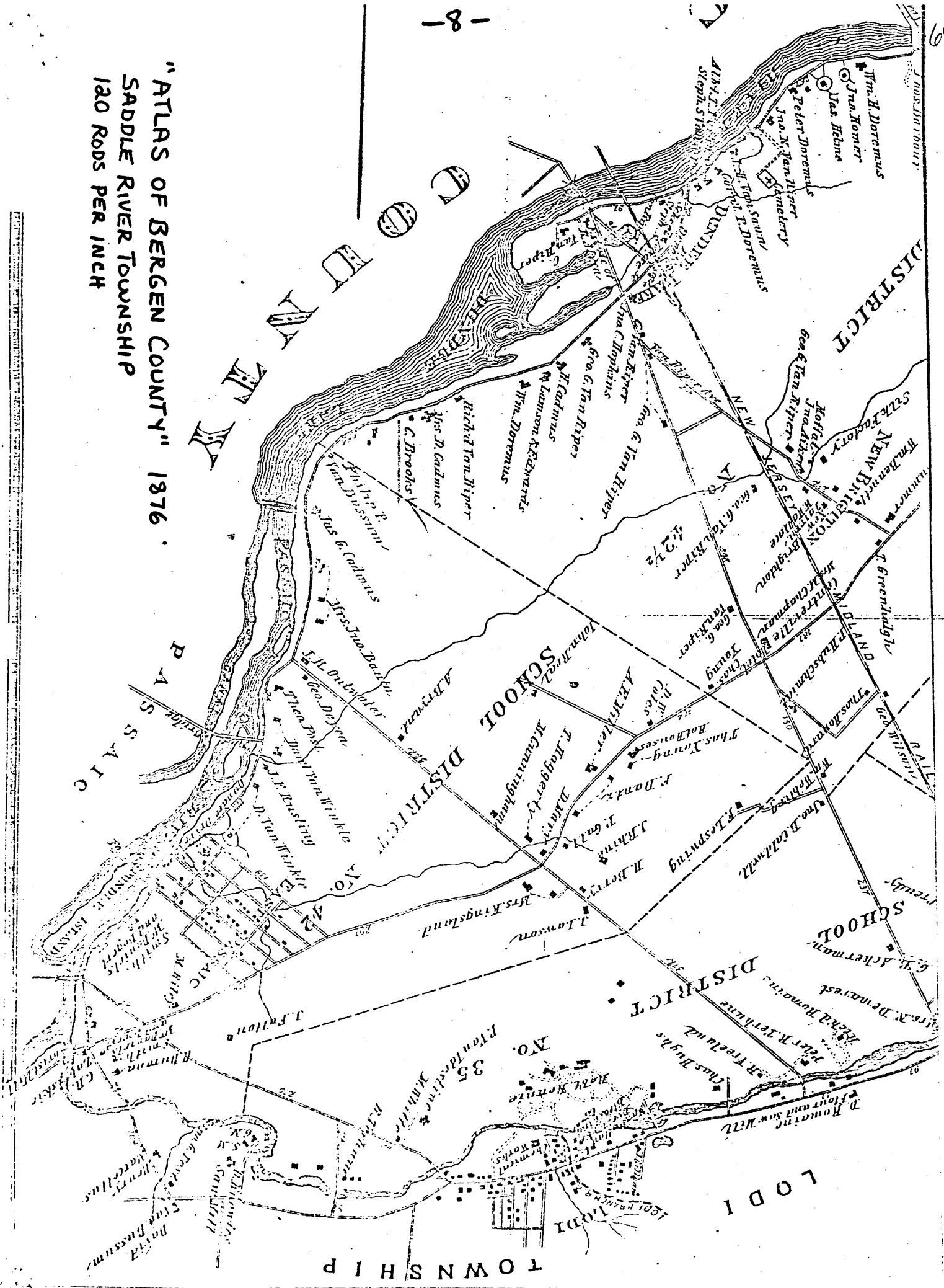
Reginald McMahon  
River Edge, N. J.  
March 1979

NOTES

1. Also spelled Slooterdam and Slaughterdam.
2. W. Nelson and C. A. Shriner, "History of Paterson and Its Environs" (N.Y., 1920) 3 Vols., Vol. II, p. 50-61. See also "Descendants of Roelof Van Houten" by H. S. Ackerman (Ridge-wood, 1945), genealogy #2. The latter work specifies the date as November 2, 1696. It must be emphasized that the deed was not recorded and therefore unavailable for evaluation. It is possible, however, that the original or a copy was once in a private collection and, hopefully, may someday surface again.
3. See notes 5 and 8.
4. Nelson; Ackerman, genealogy #4-23; Acquackanonk Church Records.
5. Saddle River Township Tax Assesment Records, microfilm, Bergen County Historical Society Collections, Johnson Library, Hackensack.
6. Nelson, Vol. I, p. 215.
7. Ackerman, genealogy #4-23.
8. Deed Book F, p. 19, Bergen County Courthouse.
9. Nelson, V. II, p. 50-61; Ackerman, genealogy #5-81. Conelius' middle initial "J" is sometimes given as "I" in the old manner.
10. Mortgage Book C, p. 184, Bergen County Courthouse.
11. Tax Record.
12. Deed Book F, p. 327; Mortgage Book B, p. 95, Bergen County Court-house.
13. Tax Record.
14. Ackerman, genealogy #5-81.
15. Inventory Book D, p. 330, Bergen County Courthouse.
16. Will Book C, p. 72, Bergen County Courthouse.
17. Ibid.
18. Ackerman, genealogy #6-211.
19. Tax Record.
20. Census Records, microfilm, Johnson Library, Hackensack.
21. Ackerman, genealogy #6-211.

22. Inventory Book D, p. 324, Bergen County Courthouse.
23. Surrogate records, Releases and Discharges, Book A, p. 49, Bergen County Courthouse.
24. Deed Book K3, p. 156, Bergen County Courthouse.
25. Census Records.
26. Acquackanonk Church Records.
27. Deed Book M7, p. 367, Bergen County Courthouse. On the same date Brooks acquired other property from Cadmus for \$2200. The lands did not adjoin the homestead and some were meadow lots near Berry's Creek in the Township of Union. Deed M7, p. 371.
28. Deed Book T7, p. 532, Bergen County Courthouse.
29. 1870 Census Record.
30. A. H. Walker, "Atlas of Bergen County, 1776-1876" (Reading, Pa., 1876), p. 133.
31. Deed Book H12, p. 158, Bergen County Courthouse.
32. Deed Book O12, p. 331, Bergen County Courthouse.
33. G. W. and W. S. Bromley, "Atlas of Bergen County" (Phila., 1912-13) 2 Vols.
34. Will Book 141, p. 51, Bergen County Courthouse. It may be of interest that Herman Hillman fought against pollution of the Passaic River. In 1915 he won a suit against the City of Paterson for "discharging into the Passaic River through its sewerage system, sewerage and other polluting matters" above the homestead. He was awarded over \$3000 in damages and an agreement that pollution would cease by 1917. See Deed Book 915, p. 652, Bergen County Courthouse.

"ATLAS OF BERGEN COUNTY" 1876  
 SADDLE RIVER TOWNSHIP  
 120 RODS PER INCH

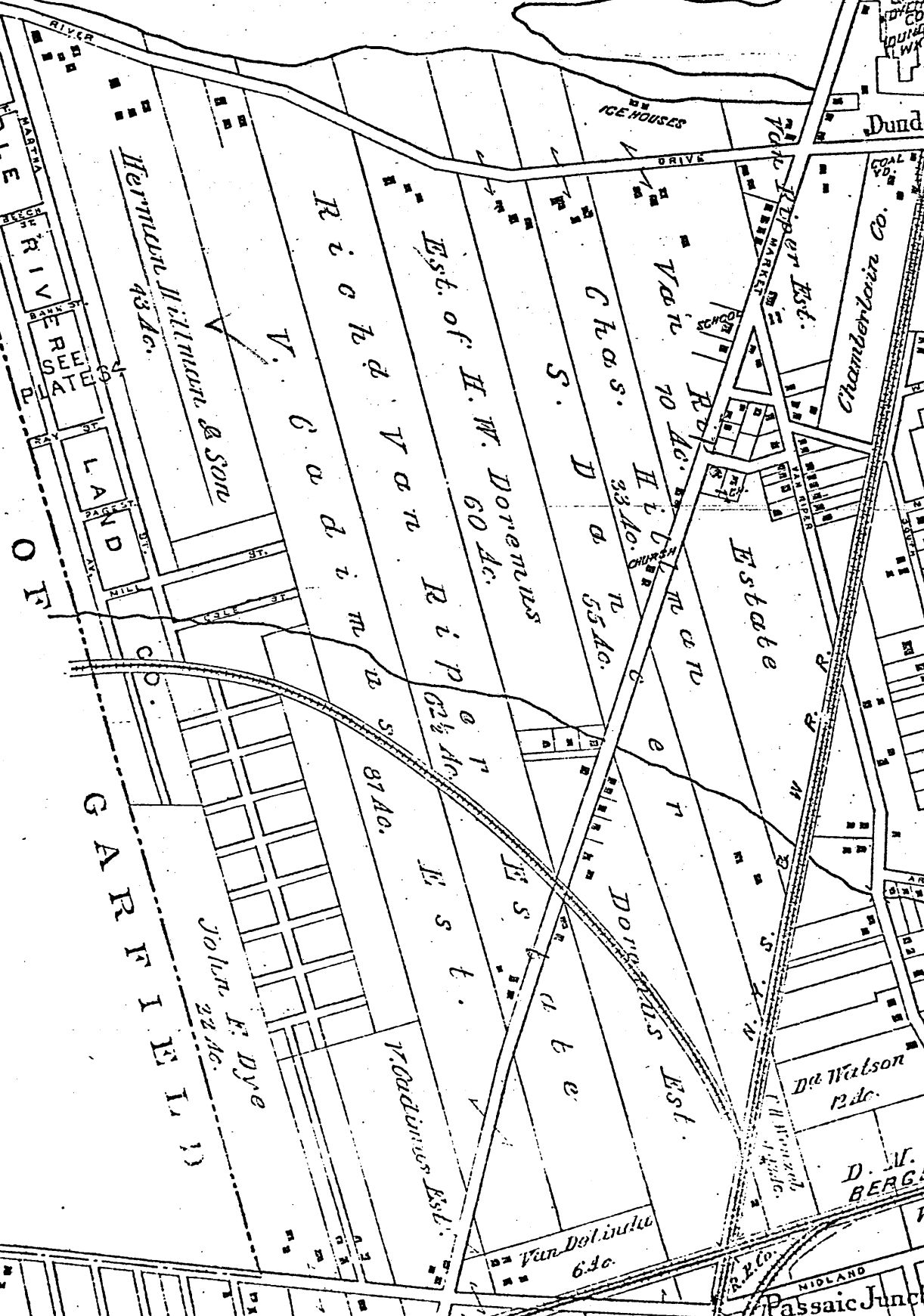


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P A S S A I C

SADDLE RIVER  
BOROUGH



"ATLAS OF BERGEN COUNTY" 1913  
 Saddle River Township  
 800 feet = 1 inch

ryville

Passaic Junction