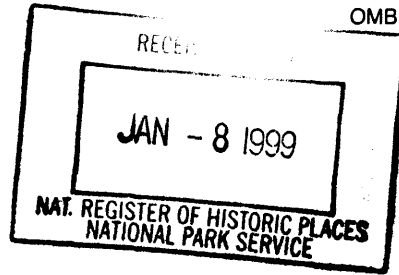


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



85

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Ralston Historic District (expanded)

other names/site number Roxiticus

2. Location

street & number State Route 24 (Mendham Road) & Roxiticus Road ^{NA} not for publication

city or town Mendham Township vicinity

state New Jersey code NJ county Morris code 027 zip code 07945

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Patrick Anderson

2/22/99

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s), district, site, structure, object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing and 4 rows: buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

4

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

- DOMESTIC/single dwelling, INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility, COMMERCE/TRADE/store, EDUCATION/school

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

- DOMESTIC/single dwelling, LANDSCAPE/conservation area, unoccupied land

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

- Other: East Jersey Cottage, Greek Revival, Colonial Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation STONE/sandstone, walls WOOD/weatherboard, roof ASPHALT, other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

- ARCHITECTURE
- COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
- INDUSTRY

Period of Significance
1786-1934

Significant Dates
N/A

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
John Rolston

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Aaron Hudson

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # NJ-357, NJ-339
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:
New Jersey Historical Society,
Newark, N.J.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ralston Historic District (expanded)
Mendham Township
Morris County, New Jersey

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DISTRICT DESCRIPTION

The Ralston Historic District is centered on the North Branch of the Raritan River, which runs southerly through western Mendham Township. The junction of the river and the Roxiticus Road with State Route 24 is an important crossroads, and some of the most historic buildings are located here. Additional development in the area was linear, following both the river and the main road which intersected it, forming a "T" within the valley surrounded by wooded hills. The Ralston Historic District extends from the border of Mendham Township and Mendham Borough, known as the "Ralston Hill", west to the border of Mendham Township and Chester Township, which is formed by the Burnett Brook. Historic resources are also concentrated along the length of Roxiticus Road and Union Schoolhouse Road, which parallel the river for a distance of about two miles. The bridge over the river on Mosele Road, just south of the end of Union Schoolhouse Road, marks the southern edge of the district. Below that point, river and road diverge, and while there are scattered historic resources in this area, they are large farms of a different character than those found in the Ralston Historic District.

The Ralston District has as its historic focus the water-powered industries which grew up on the North Branch of the Raritan, and the related houses, outbuildings, and schoolhouses. The residents of the area carried out their business and public social lives in neighboring towns like Chester and Mendham. But Ralston, first known as Roxiticus, was recognized as a separate place; not a town or even a village, but a locale of distinct character. It was a place of mills, whose pounding or silence marked local economic prosperity. It was a place with a clearly visible hierarchy, with the manor house on the north end, the master's mills within sight of his house, and small houses for laborers and farmers further downstream.

Most of the buildings are in the local vernacular, described as East Jersey cottages. They are one-and-a-half to two-story frame structures, with wooden clapboard or shingle siding. Houses and outbuildings constructed through the 18th and 19th centuries indicate a very conservative architectural taste. The absence of many Victorian-era structures and the architecture of fanciful revival styles reflects the decline of Ralston through the 19th-century as the old water-powered mills were closed. A detailed, building-by-building description follows.

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Ralston Historic District (expanded)
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Morris County, New Jersey

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- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. 301 Route 24 (corner Ironia Road)
Block 108, Lot 17
Contributing buildings: 1
East Jersey Cottage, late 18th c.</p> | <p>Whitlock House and
Blacksmith Shop Site
Contributing site: 1
Good integrity</p> |
|--|---|

A frame, story-and-a-half dwelling banked into the hillside so that the northern and eastern elevations are two stories tall. The house is finished with clapboard siding over a stone foundation. The gable roof has been extended to form a front porch, supported on square piers. Large end brick chimneys punctuate each end of the house. Windows are a combination of 2/2, 4/4, and 9/6 sash, along with knee-wall windows and shed-roofed facade dormers with paired 1/1 sash.

Landscape/Outbuildings: The house is sited close to the intersection of busy roads. A contemporary two-car garage is located to the west of the house. The property includes the site of the 19th century blacksmith shop of William Whitlock, as shown on local historic maps, although there are no above-ground remains.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>2. 303 Route 24
Block 108, Lot 18
Contributing
Vernacular, 19th century</p> | <p>Main barn portion of this structure demolished
August 1, 1996, four weeks prior to State Review
Board Meeting. A single-story frame wing which
was connected to the barn still remains.</p> |
|---|---|

A small barn, built on-grade in a square plan with a gable roof. It is covered with vertical plank siding, and the remains of a painted sign saying "Waffle Shoppe" are visible on the elevation facing the road. The barn was built as part of the Whitlock property (see above). Single-story extension to the east was once an adjunct to the barn. The barn was converted to a residence in 1940. New 6/6 sash windows have been installed on the first and second floors.

3. **Ralston Hill Road**
Block 108, Lot 19
Non-contributing

Currently, a hillside lot on the corner of Route 24 and a new cul-de-sac road containing the pre-fab sales office for the Ralston Hills Estates development. The property is available for construction of a large single-family residence.

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4. **Ralston Hill Road**
Block 108, Lot 22
Non-contributing site

Currently, a vacant lot on the corner of Route 24 and a new cul-de-sac road, available for construction of a single-family residence.

5. **305 Route 24**
Block 108, Lot 23
Contributing buildings: 2
Vernacular cottage, late 18th c.

Widow Ralston House

Good integrity

A banked, frame cottage with a three-bay main block and a lateral wing of an additional two bays, which is reputed to have been the home of Margaret Logan Rolston, the widow of John Rolston, after his death in 1819 until her own death in 1833. The two-story house has knee-wall windows on the facade and a combination of 1/2, 2/2, and 6/6 sash throughout the house. Most windows are flanked by operable louvered shutters. A gable roof, punctuated by two end brick chimneys, covers the house. The fieldstone foundation is covered with cement.

Landscape/Outbuildings: A small gable-roofed outbuilding stands to the rear of the house. It has a galvanized metal roof and wide, hand-sawn clapboard siding.

6. **307 Route 24**
Block 108, Lot 24
Contributing buildings: 1
Vernacular

Leddell Blacksmith Shop Site

Contributing site
Fair integrity

An unpretentious frame house now occupies the site identified on the 1868 and 1887 maps of Morris County as the site of a blacksmith shop owned by Samuel Leddell. The two-story, gable-end facade building is a traditional 19th century building type. Now a residence, it is covered with asbestos shingle siding. The two-bay facade has replacement windows. It is not clear whether this building incorporates part of the blacksmith shop itself or served some other function when the blacksmith shop was operated on the site.

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- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>7. 309 Route 24
Block 108, Lot 25
Contributing buildings: 1
East Jersey Cottage, 1749</p> | <p>Photo 2</p> <p>Non-contributing buildings: 1
Good integrity</p> |
|---|--|

A story-and-a-half frame house in the traditional form of local vernacular architecture of the 18th and early 19th centuries. The house was originally a three-bay, side-hall plan dwelling, the most common vernacular type, which was expanded to form a center-hall plan dwelling at a later date. A gable roof is punctuated by two replacement end chimneys and gable-roofed dormers. A simple shed roof portico shelters the front door. A shed-roofed addition extends to the rear. The 2/2 sash windows are flanked by operable louvered shutters.

Landscape/Outbuildings: The house is sited on the top of "Ralston Hill", in the corner of a sharp curve, which has been the site of many automobile accidents and is continually under scrutiny by the DOT for "improvements." A single story frame garage for two cars stands to the rear of the property.

8. **311 Route 24**
Block 108, Lot 26
Non-contributing building

A mid-20th century "colonial" house, with many of the hallmarks of early 19th century vernacular building. The story-and-a-half house has a gable roof, a high, vertically sided knee wall, and a center entry under a wide front porch. Windows are multi-pane over a single lower sash. It is sited on the side of the hill, well back from Route 24, and so is not immediately visible from the right-of-way. A separate three-car garage is also on the lot.

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| <p>9. 12 Roxiticus Road
Block 108, Lot 2
Contributing buildings: 2
Federal vernacular, ca. 1790</p> | <p>Ralston Manor House
Photo 3</p> <p>Good integrity</p> |
|--|---|

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Ralston Historic District; recorded by HABS (NJ-357), 1937. This was the home of John Rolston during the years he developed the textile mills along the North Branch of the Raritan.

The sheer size of this two-and-a-half story frame "manor house" sets it apart from the smaller surrounding dwellings in Ralston. The five-bay, center-hall house has a simple paneled door at the

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front entry, under a gabled portico. The original windows were replaced with 2/2 sash in the 19th century. Clapboard siding covers the walls above a fieldstone foundation. Massive end chimneys rise above their exposed fireboxes on the first floor of each gable end. The interior is marked by a double-pile plan, complex molded plaster cornices in the front rooms of the first floor, and simple, classically styled fireplace mantels.

Landscape/Outbuildings: A frame carriage house, now used as a garage, stands to the rear (north) of the house. The open vehicle bays on the first floor are topped by a second floor. The carriage house has vertical siding and a gable roof. A split rail fence and a dense stand of evergreens shield the manor house from Route 24.

10. **313 Route 24**
Block 108, Lot 1
Contributing buildings: 1
Vernacular commercial bldg., ca. 1786

Ralston General Store
Photo 4
Good integrity

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Ralston Historic District; recorded by HABS (NJ-357), 1937.

A story-and-a-half frame building, built as a general store and maintained in its original form by the Ralston Historical Association since 1949. The facade is flush-boarded, and accented at the ends by slender applied pilasters. The sides and rear of the building are clapboard, under a wood-shingled gable roof. The roof extends over the facade to form a long porch, with benches at either end. The off-center door is flanked by large multi-paned display windows with vertical paneled shutters which are bolted tight to protect the interior. The well-preserved interior includes the original counters and mail-slots, which served local customers when this building was the Ralston Post Office from 1900-1941.

Landscape/Outbuildings: The store is located directly on the intersection of Route 24 with Roxiticus Road, on a lot barely bigger than the building.

11. **Route 24**
Block 109, Lot 32
Contributing buildings: 1
Grist mill, ca. 1740

Ralston Grist Mill
Photo 5
Non-contributing buildings: 3
Good exterior integrity

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Ralston Historic District; recorded by HABS (NJ-339), 1937.

The stone mill is a two-story embanked structure under a steeply pitched gable roof. The random-coursed fieldstone walls are laid with larger stones as quoins in the corners and roughly shaped

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rectangular stones stood on end to form a "soldier course" over the low relieving arches over first floor windows and doors. Large 6/6 sash windows on the main floor are replacements of smaller multi-paned windows. The attic gable end is shingled. The mill was adapted to a residence in the 1940s.

Landscape\Outbuildings: The mill sits below the level of the present Route 24 and its modern bridge over the North Branch of the Raritan. Turn-of-the-century postcards show a much lower bridge, as well as a frame house immediately east of the mill, which is no longer standing. The mill's head race is visible on the property as a depression in the ground running north of the house and parallel to Roxiticus Road. A sawmill also stood on the property according to deed references and maps from the 18th and 19th centuries.

A collection of single story frame buildings - two garages and a shed - are non-contributing. They stand on the northeast corner of the property, in the location of the former mill pond.

12. 5 Roxiticus Road

Block 109, Lot 31

Non-contributing building - ranch house ca. 1960

Contributing structure - mill race, ca. 18th century & later

This wooded lot north of the Ralston grist mill includes the clearly visible head race for the mill, paralleling Roxiticus Road. Farther back from the road and millrace stands a single story ranch house with vertical wooden siding, and a low pitched gable roof. The house incorporates beams from the interior of the Ralston mill.

13. Route 24 Bridge over the North Branch of the Raritan

Non-contributing structure, 1972

Rough-cut granite blocks with bluestone caps provide a historic look to the bridge. Guard rails along the approach to the bridge are railroad ties set in stone piers. This bridge replaces a stone abutment bridge which was noted on the HABS drawings of the mill.

14. 315 Route 24

Block 109, Lots 33, 34

Contributing buildings: 2

Vernacular farmhouse, ca. 1930

Good integrity

A simple frame house with shingle siding, a gable roof, 2/2 sash windows and concrete

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foundation. The basic two-bay, double-pile form relates it more to traditional dwellings than any innovations of the 20th century. A cemented chimney rises from the center of the roof. A hipped-roof porch extends across the facade, enclosed with fixed-sash multi-pane windows.

Landscape\Outbuildings: A gambrel-roofed barn, contemporary with the house, stands in poor condition to the north of the house. A ruinous outbuilding (originally a chicken house) also stands on the west side of the property. The right-of-way for the Rockaway Valley Railroad (1891-1917) ran along the western edge of this property.

15. **2 Jane Terrace**
Block 110, Lot 11
Non-contributing building

A story-and-a-half, wood shingle-sided ranch house, ca. 1970.

16. **4 Jane Terrace**
Block 110, Lot 12
Non-contributing building

Builder's "colonial" ca. 1970, with a three-bay, two-story main block and a wing to the side.

17. **6 Jane Terrace**
Block 110, Lot 13
Non-contributing building

Builder's ranch house ca. 1970, with wood shingle siding, attached garage, and multi-light sash.

18. **8 Jane Terrace**
Block 110, Lot 14
Non-contributing building

Builder's "colonial" ca. 1970, with a two-story, four-bay main block covered with wooden shingles and a story-and-a-half garage attached to the side.

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19. **10 Jane Terrace**
Block 110, Lot 15
Non-contributing building
Builder's center hall "colonial" ca. 1970, with wooden shingle siding.

20. **12 Jane Terrace**
Block 110, Lot 16
Non-contributing building

A modern "farmhouse", ca. 1985, formed by a two-story main block and flanking stepped-down wings with dormers. The house's irregular plan and profile is accented by clipped gables. The house is sided with wood shingles. It has an attached garage.

Note: in the location of the preceding non-contributing houses, both the 1868 and 1887 Atlases of Morris County identify a limekiln, and in 1887, a lime quarry. There is no above-ground remnant of this activity, and it probably has been greatly disturbed by construction of the houses and landscaping, but the historic significance of the site should be noted nonetheless.

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| <p>21. 319 Route 24
Block 110, Lot 17
Contributing buildings: 1
Barn, 19th century</p> | <p>Wills-Knox Barn
Photo 6
Non-contributing buildings: 1
Good integrity</p> |
|---|--|

The contributing building on this property is the large frame barn which originally was part of the Wills-Knox farm, but has been subdivided from the lot containing the main house (see # 22). The two-and-a-half story barn was built in two sections. The larger portion is capped by a cupola with a pyramidal roof. The lower section has sliding vehicle bay doors. Both sections of the barn are covered with shingle siding, and have a gable roof.

A new (ca. 1980) house has been built on the property. The additive, two-and-a-half story synthetic-sided house is reminiscent of local vernacular architecture, and suggests an old farmhouse which has been much "gentrified".

- | | |
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| <p>22. 1 Valley View Road
Block 110, Lot 2
Contributing buildings: 1
Vernacular, 18th c. with additions</p> | <p>Wills-Knox Farmhouse
(now "Pine Hill")
Photo 7
Good integrity</p> |
|--|---|

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This rambling farmhouse includes at its core the very early 18th century homestead of the Wills family, with later additions made by the Rolston-Nesbitt family who lived here in the 19th century. The house originally stood close to Route 24, but was moved back on its original property when restored in the 1950s. The oldest section is a story-and-a-half frame wing on the east side of the main block. This wing is a clapboarded East Jersey cottage, with three bays on the facade. The windows are 6/6 sash; dormers have been added in the gable roof and the end chimney with exposed fireback rebuilt in 1958 to match the original. The main block is in the Federal style, two-and-a-half stories tall, with a flush-boarded facade accented by a lozenge pattern and rope molding in the wide frieze. The four-bay facade has 2/2 sash windows flanked by operable louvered shutters. A porch extends partially across the facade. The gable roof is covered with wooden shakes. Rear windows are 6/6 sash. A story-and-a-half wing has been added to the west side of the main block, incorporating a garage.

Landscape\ Outbuildings: The house sits well back from busy Route 24, and looks toward it across a sweeping lawn which includes a pond. A former barn to this farmhouse still stands on an adjacent property (see #21). Access to the house is from a new subdivision road to the north.

23. **321 Route 24**
Block 110, Lot 18
Non-contributing building

A two-story builder's "colonial" covered with rustic-looking wooden shake siding. The house is screened from the road by densely planted evergreens and a fence.

24. **Oak Knoll Road and Route 24**
Block 112, Lot 48
Contributing site

Wills Family Cemetery
Photo 8

A stone-walled cemetery, established on the Wills family farm (see site #22) as a family burial plot. The low, dry-laid stone wall encloses an area 50 by 51 feet, now surrounded by a modern housing development. Only five headstones and two footstones are extant; the only legible headstone records "Rebecca Wells [sic] d. May 13, 1817 age 80". It is of brownstone with a crude urn carved at the top. A legible footstone records the resting place of "S.W." [Samuel Wills]. There are other brownstone headstones, as well as a double-tablet headstone of white marble. The Wills family were among the earliest settlers of the Ralston area in the 18th century.

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- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>25. 336 Route 24
Block 107, Lot 1; Block 112, Lot 44
Contributing buildings: 3
Stone grist mill, 1848
Eclectic Revival house, ca. 1930
Vernacular roadhouse/restaurant, 1930</p> | <p>Nesbitt Mill-Tiger Distillery
Photo 9
Excellent integrity</p> |
|--|---|

The three-story rubblestone mill building is vacant, but in good condition, and contains the mechanical workings from its days as a distillery in 1908 to 1919, as well as remnants of the earlier grist mill machinery which operated here from 1848 to 1908. The exterior was once stuccoed, but most of that stucco has worn off, exposing the stone walls. The regularly spaced windows are 6/6 and 9/6 sash, flanked by louvered shutters. The wood-shingled gable roof is pierced by a stuccoed interior chimney. The stone-lined tail race of the mill is largely intact on the property south of the mill. The millpond lies across Route 24 on property still in the same ownership as the mill; water was brought to the mill, across the roadway, through a 24-inch steel penstock which is still visible in places.

The 1930s roadhouse which sits on the north side of the road, between the Burnett Brook and the mill race, is a simple single-story frame building, still operating as a restaurant.

East of the mill on the same property stands a modest Eclectic Revival style house of the late 1920s or early 30s with multi-colored tapestry brick walls under a hipped roof. The paired 6/1 sash windows and center entry reflect the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement. It sits on the site of an earlier house which was associated with the mill.

- | | |
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| <p>26. 332 Route 24
Block 107, Lot 2
Contributing buildings: 1
East Jersey Cottage, ca. 1800 or earlier</p> | <p>Photo 10
Good integrity</p> |
|--|------------------------------------|

A frame story-and-a-half dwelling house of the regional vernacular type known as the East Jersey Cottage, the core of this house was a three-bay unit with 9/6 sash windows on the first floor and knee-wall windows on the attic level of the south-facing facade. An addition to the west created a five-bay house, with unevenly spaced windows and off-center door. The later section has 6/6 sash windows. Gabled wall dormers have been added to the north facade. The house seems originally to have faced south; perhaps its orientation was changed in 1806 when the Washington Turnpike (now Route 24) improved the old east-west route through Mendham and was laid out north of this house. The house has a gable roof and rebuilt end brick chimney. A simple gabled pediment extends on knee brackets over the front door.

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27. 330 Route 24
Block 107, Lot 3
Contributing buildings: 2
Greek Revival vernacular

Nesbitt House
Photo 11
Fair-good integrity

The original Nesbitt house was the story-and-a-half frame wing which is now to the east of the main block. The main block is a five-bay, center-hall, two-and-a-half story house, originally clapboarded, but now covered with brickface. On the south facade, away from the road but facing the accessory building, a two-story porch on robust piers gives the house the look of a southern plantation. The entry on the north side is flanked by sidelights and a transom, under a projecting cornice with pilasters. The windows are 2/2 and 6/6 sash, with knee-wall windows in the older wing. The gable roof has deep gable end returns, and brick chimneys in each gable end.

Landscape\ Outbuildings: A stone bank barn with stucco parging stands southeast of the house. It has a gable roof. Wooden vehicle bays are on the upper level of the barn, at the top of the ramp; the lower bays open onto a walled barnyard. Several small sheds covered with asbestos shingle siding, most in poor condition, are scattered around the yard.

28. Route 24
Block 107, Lot 33
Non-contributing building
Contributing site

New Ralston Firehouse
Public Park

The Ralston Engine Company 1 and the First Aid Squad share space for storing vehicles and equipment in this large, two-story building with synthetic siding and a concrete foundation. The gable roof is topped by a cupola which includes a siren. The four extra-large vehicle bays on the facade contain the fire-fighting equipment. Assorted tanks and small sheds cluster to the rear of the building. A large paved parking lot extends from Route 24 to the firehouse. The firehouse is on the northwestern corner of the lot. The rest of the 23.76 acre tract, owned by the Township of Mendham, is open space on the west bank of the North Branch of the Raritan River. Near the Route 24 entrance are a baseball field, a small children's playground and a gravel parking area; the rest of the park is land in its natural state. The railroad right-of-way runs the entire length of the western side of the lot.

While most of the mills associated with the early 19th century development of Ralston are believed to have stood on the east side of the river, the changing course of the water and the unverified location of these mills makes this open space significant for its potential archaeological importance relative to the mills. The right-of-way of the Rockaway Valley Railroad (1891-1917) also runs through the park. The park provides a buffer of natural growth which gives an appropriate backdrop to the adjacent historic buildings.

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29. **Route 24** **Old Ralston Firehouse**
Block 107, Lot 23
Non-contributing building
Firehouse, 1942

This structure was built in 1942 by the newly formed Ralston Fire Company to protect the western part of Mendham Township from air raids. A simple frame building, finished with stucco, which has two vehicle bays in the gable end. The gable roof is topped by a cupola. This now houses the equipment for Mendham Township Public Works Department.

30. **9 Roxiticus Road** Photo 12
Block 107, Lot 24 Non-contributing: 1
Contributing buildings: 1
Contributing site
Residence, 1985, with 19th century barn

The contributing building on this property is the 19th century barn now used as a garage. It is two stories tall, with a gable roof, vertical board siding, and original windows and vehicle bay openings. It is in many respects a smaller version of the barn behind the Ralston manor house (See #9).

The core of the main house on this lot is an old building, reputed to be the residence of the miller of the Ralston grist mill, which stands across Route 24 (see site # 11). A complete rebuilding in the mid-1980s removed most traces of the historic structure. What stands is a Post-Modern-inspired cottage with rustic wood shingle siding, modern windows, and large shed dormers in the gambrel roof. A series of decks on the west side of the house link it with the stream below.

This property may be the site of the early 19th century fulling mill, begun by John Rolston. Evidence exists for a raceway which ran out of the grist mill, through a tunnel or penstock across the road, and onto this property; complicated and unnecessary engineering just to return the water to the stream. The raceway logically would have brought the water needed to power the fulling mill, which probably stood west of the present house on this lot. The raceway is clearly documented in the HABS drawings for the grist mill. There is no above-ground evidence for the fulling mill, but it warrants investigation.

31. **11 Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 25
Non-contributing building
Cape-Cod, ca. 1955

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A story-and-a-half builder's Cape Cod with wide aluminum siding, gable roof with end chimney, large picture window, and a shed dormer across the facade. A two-car garage is connected to the house by an enclosed porch.

32. 13 Roxiticus Road
Block 107, Lot 26
Contributing building
Greek Revival style, 1841

Samuel Leddell House
Photo 13

Excellent integrity

This cubical Greek Revival dwelling has a raised basement, three-bay, side-hall plan, and a second floor lighted by small, horizontal windows in the frieze under the low hipped roof. The dignified proportions, and the existence of a nearly identical house in the Borough of Mendham (see Mendham Historic District, National Register Nomination, 1984) suggests that this is the work of the local architect /builder Aaron Hudson. The house has corner pilasters, a plain flat-roofed portico on piers at the front door, and molded belt courses dividing the floors. The frame house is finished with a flush-boarded facade. It was built as a wedding gift for Samuel Leddell (1810-1875) and his bride Margaret Horton, when they married in 1841. Samuel's father, Dr. John Wick Leddell had bought much of the Rolston family's holdings in Roxiticus in 1833. The elder Leddell preferred to practice medicine; although Samuel was schooled to be a physician, he apparently never practiced, but took up operation of the mills his father owned along the North Branch of the Raritan.

33. 15 Roxiticus Road
Block 107, Lot 27
Contributing building; Contributing site
Vernacular Cottage

C.M. Kinsey House

Fair integrity

The 1853 and 1868 maps of Morris County identify this as the residence of C. M. Kinsey who had purchased the Rolston cotton mill and several adjoining properties in the 1840s. At the time of the 1850 census, he was apparently renting this house to George Wilkison, who also listed his occupation as "cotton manufacture." The simple two-and-a-half story house has a four bay facade, with a flushboarded first floor and clapboard upper floor and sides. The high stone foundation shelters a basement lighted by on-grade replacement windows. Upper windows are replacement 1/1 sash. The gable roof is punctuated by a rebuilt end chimney. A porch across two-thirds of the facade is new, featuring treated wood decking and standardized treated lumber supports.

Landscape/Outbuildings: There are no outbuildings. Railroad ties define the driveway and raised planting beds, and detract from the historic integrity of the house.

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A small, single-story frame building with gable-end facade and clapboard siding stood on the southern edge of this property close to the road until 1990. This served as the local Post Office from 1941-1950, when Ralston's mail was incorporated into Mendham's.

Two stone foundations located on this property near the river are probably those of the weaver's shop, which is identified on the 1868 map of Morris County at approximately this location.

34. **17 Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 28
Non-contributing building
Builder's "colonial" ca. 1960

The two-story shingle-sided house has a brick-faced first floor and a front-facing two-car garage.

35. **19 Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 29
Contributing building
Vernacular cottage, 19th c. and later

Fair integrity

An additive house with a story-and-a-half core, gable roof, and gable end entry. The house is covered with wooden shingle siding, and rests on a concrete block foundation. There are 6/6 and 2/2 sash, flanked by batten shutters. A modern wooden deck extends to the rear.

36. **21 Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 30
Contributing building
Foursquare, ca. 1920

Good integrity

A two-and-a-half story house with a square "footprint" and a low pyramidal roof. Without any visible references to historic architectural style, its form and materials put it squarely in the tradition of the American Arts and Crafts movement of the early 20th century. The concrete foundation bears the form marks of having been poured in place. The first floor is covered with stucco above a prominent water table which divides it from the exposed basement level. The second floor is covered with shingles. The front porch is enclosed. A center chimney projects from the roof, which has shed-roofed dormers on each elevation. The eaves of the roof are carried on prominent rafter-ends. The windows are 1/1 sash.

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37. **23 Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 31
Contributing building
Eclectic Revival cottage, ca. 1920s
Good condition

A vaguely English-inspired eclectic revival cottage, with clapboard siding and irregular massing, which may be a renovation of an earlier, two-bay, gable-end-facade frame building. The two-and-a-half story cottage has a prominent exterior brick chimney on the facade. The gable roof is marked by a shed dormer which extends over a garage addition. The 6/6 windows are flanked by wooden shutters with a cut-out pine-tree motif. A beautiful metal sign, with trees and the words "Hewn Hollow" cut out within a square frame, hangs off the southern side of the house, pointing to the neighboring house, to which this was a tenant house for much of the 20th century.

38. **25 Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 32
Contributing buildings: 2
Contributing site: 1
Vernacular building, early 19th century
Ralston Cotton Mill Site and Office
Photo 14
Good integrity

The present structure is a rambling, irregular vernacular house with a fieldstone foundation and shingle and clapboard siding. The window types and their placement vary, but the oldest windows seem to be large 8/8 sash. Plank shutters with a pine-tree motif cut out flank most windows and are identical to those found on the neighboring house (see above). [This house was renovated and named "Hewn Hollow" in the 1920s]. The building has a gable roof with a center brick chimney. Local tradition holds that this building was the office for the cotton mill on the river.

Landscape\Outbuildings: The house has a good view down a steep embankment into the valley of the North Branch of the Raritan. Rolston's cotton and woolen mill probably stood along the river within the bounds of this property. A shingle-sided, gable roofed outbuilding of some age standing north of the house is now used as a garage.

39. **27 Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 34
Contributing buildings: 2
Vernacular cottage
Photo 15
Good condition

This embanked cottage perches on a narrow shelf of land between the road and the steep sixty-

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foot drop down to the North Branch of the Raritan River. The fieldstone foundation forms a tall, exposed basement level on the west side of the house, which is covered by a shed-roofed porch. The facade is a single story, covered with wooden shingles. An off-center door with pedimented surround is flanked by small 6/6 sash windows. Three gable-roofed dormers punctuate the gable roof. The house appears on local maps as early as 1853; a sign on the house itself dates it to 1760. It is within the local vernacular building tradition of the East Jersey Cottage, although it has been modified by 20th century Colonial Revival alterations.

Landscape\Outbuildings: A two-story frame building located south of the house has two open bays on the first floor for cars and a studio above. Its pegged construction and stone foundation suggest that it is of some age. The hillside property is extensively landscaped with dry-laid rock walls, forming retaining walls, terraces, and rock gardens.

40. **Publicly owned land along the North Branch of the Raritan**
Block 107, Lot 35
Contributing site

An undeveloped parcel of 9.23 acres owned by the Township of Mendham along the river without any road frontage. The property includes a portion of the right-of-way for the Rockaway Valley Railroad (1891-1917). It is accessible from the public parkland to the northeast (site # 28).

41. **33 Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 36
Non-contributing building
Ranch house, ca. 1960 with later additions

A single-story ranch house with textured clapboard siding, prominent front-facing picture window and windows with false divided lights. The house is fronted by an extensive unpainted deck.

42. **35 Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 37
Non-contributing building
Cape Cod house, ca. 1955 with additions ca. 1990

The five-bay, center entry Cape Cod style house with gable roof, gabled dormers, and end brick chimney has been greatly enlarged with a Post-Modern inspired addition featuring a large round-arched

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window on the front-facing gable. The entire house is covered with vinyl siding and has windows with false divided lights.

43. **Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 38
Contributing site

A privately owned "flag" lot of 4.3 acres which includes a portion of the North Branch of the Raritan River and the right-of-way of the Rockaway Valley Railroad (1891-1917).

44. **37 Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 39
Non-contributing building
Ranch house, ca. 1960

This "raised ranch" features rustic, unpainted wooden siding, and an attached two-car garage. The property is screened from Roxiticus Road by a tall wooden palisade fence.

45. **39 Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 40
Non-contributing building
Ranch house, ca. 1960

A modest ranch house with stucco wall finish and replacement casement windows. A single-car garage with gable roof and stuccoed walls stands east of the house. The property is screened from the road by the same fencing as on the adjoining property (above).

46. **41 Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 41
Non-contributing building
Modified Cape Cod, ca. 1960

An individualistic house, with a brick facade of one story, and a large gable roof punctuated with skylights, creating a two-story house on the rear elevation, a sort of reverse salt-box type. The

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main block of the house is flanked by a single story garage wing and a jalousie-windowed porch.

47. **43 Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 42
Non-contributing building
Builder's Cape Cod, ca. 1950

A frame Cape Cod house with shiplap siding, an exterior chimney covered with cement, and a gable roof punctuated by two gabled dormers on the facade and a shed dormer to the rear. The five-bay, center entry house has no front portico or garage.

48. **45 Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 43
Non-contributing building
Builders' Colonial cottage, ca. 1940

A small frame cottage now covered with vinyl siding. The center bay of the three-bay house projects under a low cross gable, and contains the main entry under a projecting gabled portico. The tiny windows are 6/1 sash, flanked by non-operable shutters. A single story wing extends to the side.

49. Block 107, Lot 44
Contributing site

This privately-owned property of nearly 60-acres includes the right-of-way for the Rockaway Valley Railroad, limestone quarries, and a large limestone kiln. The outcroppings of lime rock on the hillside west of the North Branch of the Raritan were mined and then burned to form lime right on the property. None of the 19th century maps of Mendham identify limestone quarries or kilns at this location; local lore places the activity at this site around the turn of this century.

50. **47 Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 45
Non-contributing building
Ranch house, ca. 1960

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An "L" plan ranch house sited on a steep hillside between the road and the river. The vinyl-sided house is set well below the level of the road, and is not visible from it.

51. 45 Roxiticus Road
Block 107, Lot 46
Contributing building
East Jersey cottage

Pleasant Valley Farm
O'Donnell House
Photo 16
Good integrity

A very small two-bay, story-and-a-half frame house with the gable roof, end chimney, and high knee wall above the first floor facade so characteristic of 18th and early 19th century vernacular architecture of the area. The clapboard-sided house has been a tenant house on the Pleasant Valley Farm since the early 20th century, and thus has not been enlarged or modernized as so many others of its original size. The house is shown on the 1853 map of Morris County as the property of M. O'Donnell. Michael O'Donnell, born in Ireland in 1801, is identified in the 1850 census of the area as living in a household which included his wife and four children. The house remained in the O'Donnell family until after 1910, when it was incorporated into the Pleasant Valley Farm (see site # 60).

Landscape\Outbuildings: The house is built right on a curve of the road, high above the North Branch of the Raritan River. A stockade fence directly in front of the house obscures the features of the house but provides necessary privacy and safety for occupants to walk to their front door.

52. 47 Roxiticus Road
Block 107, Lot 46
Contributing buildings: 3
Contributing site
Greek Revival vernacular, ca. 1840

Pleasant Valley Farm
Willet House
Photo 18, 19, 32, 33
Mendham Forge Site
Good integrity

The story-and-a-half frame house has many aspects of the regional vernacular style, the East Jersey Cottage, in its size, shape, siting, and the bake oven extending from the gable end of the house under a sheltered porch. However, the traditional house type was refined in the Greek Revival style with corner pilasters, flushboarded frieze area punctuated by knee-wall windows, a shed-roofed porch carried on massive piers, and broad, flat moldings surrounding doors and windows. The first floor windows are 9/6 sash, flanked by operable shutters. Like the Greek Revival style Leddell house (# 32), this house has been ascribed to local architect-builder Aaron Hudson. This was the home of the Willet family in the 19th century, who were renowned for their blacksmithing for at least three generations.

Landscape\Outbuildings: There are two significant outbuildings on the property; an embanked shed which may be the Willet blacksmith shop, and a barn. The shed has vertical siding, and three open

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bays on the lower, south-facing level. At the rear of this level is a fieldstone retaining wall which holds back a steep hill. The front part of the barn dates to the early 20th century, probably constructed as part of the creation of Pleasant Valley Farm as a gentleman's farm. It has a concrete foundation, vertical tongue and groove siding as well as plank siding. A cupola tops the gable roof of this "L" plan building. It was appended to a very ancient timber-framed outbuilding, which may be one of the few surviving 18th century barns in the area.

A small unpainted plank-sided shed and corn crib are located on top of the hill "above" the barn and house. The property is still actively farmed and sheep are raised here. The meadows are enclosed with rail fences.

The house is sited on the south side of the hill, overlooking a meadow and the North Branch of the Raritan River. This scenic view is protected from modern encroachment by the wooded hills surrounding it.

North of the house in the North Branch of the Raritan River are pieces of slag, the by-product iron production. There are also visible sections of pegged wooden cribbing within the stream bed, which seem to form part of a wheel pit. A strikingly similar arrangement was found during the preliminary excavations of the Saugus Iron Works in Saugus, Massachusetts. The cribbing and the slag together seem to pinpoint the location of the Mendham Forge, shown at approximately this location on an 18th century map. The archaeological potential of this site is most important, and it should not be disturbed without the attentions of a major excavation.

53. **County Bridge #639 across the North Branch of the Raritan**
Contributing structure, 1934
Determined individually eligible for the National Register in a
NJDOT study in 1992-93 for its technological significance.

Photos 17, 34

This steel pony-truss Pratt-type bridge is in excellent condition, and it is technologically significant as an early example a new technology: welding for all shop and field connections. It is one of the earliest examples of an all-welded bridge in New Jersey. The bridge's date plaque on the upstream side says 1934; this is confirmed by Morris County Engineering Department records. The bridge has not been significantly altered since that date. It rests on the stone abutments of an earlier, probably 19th century, bridge.

54. **47 Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 47
Contributing buildings: 1
Vernacular cottage with additions

Non-contributing buildings: 1
Fair-good integrity

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The core of this now-rambling house is a well-preserved, long, low vernacular building, probably constructed in the first quarter of the 19th century. It has two stories, although the second floor window heads are at the eaves of the gable roof. Massive end chimneys stand at either end of the roof. The four-bay facade has 2/2 sash windows flanked by modern decorative shutters. The house is clad in synthetic siding. Multiple 19th and 20th century additions to the south side and rear are lower in height than the original house; they have modern 6/6 windows and bay windows, but generally contribute to the impression of this being an additive, vernacular house.

Landscape\Outbuildings: A modern single-story three-car garage stands southwest of the house, and is not contributing to the historic district. The house is sited right on a curve in the road, facing south toward the intersection with Union Schoolhouse Road and the river valley. The pastoral setting for this house is enhanced by surrounding properties of significant acreage.

55. **49 Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 48 (partial lot in district)
Contributing site

A privately-owned vacant tract of over 50 acres, approximately ten of which are in the district between Roxiticus Road and a stream-side conservation easement shown on the Mendham Township tax maps. The stream is a tributary of the North Branch of the Raritan River. The open, rolling countryside is part of the setting of the Ralston Historic District, and links two historic buildings (sites 54 & 56).

56. **51 Roxiticus Road**
Block 107, Lot 49
Contributing buildings: 1
East Jersey cottage, 18th century

Photo 20

Non-contributing buildings: 1
Good integrity

An embanked version of the story-and-a-half, three-bay East Jersey Cottage, with a two-bay addition to the west gable end. The on-grade entry for the south-facing exposed basement is sheltered by a screened porch, which provides the base for an open, shed-roofed porch to the main floor. The clapboard-sided house has two end brick chimneys, 6/6 sash windows flanked by operable shutters, and a fieldstone foundation.

Landscape\Outbuildings: The sweeping hillside setting of this house, overlooking a small stream, enhances the traditional architecture of the house, and reinforces the historic character of the district. A small frame single-car garage is the only outbuilding on the property; the many traditional outbuildings which would have been associated with a farmhouse like this are gone.

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57. **Roxiticus Road and Union Schoolhouse Road (S. W. corner)**
Block 100, Lot 37
Contributing building
Barn, 19th century

A sheep barn incorporated within Pleasant Valley Farms, the gentleman's farm created by Arthur Whitney in 1910 (site 60). The single story frame building predates the formation of the estate; it may have been originally connected to the house across the road (site #54). The barn features vertical tongue-and-groove siding, a fieldstone and concrete foundation, and fixed six-pane windows. The gable roof extends past the building on the west side to create an open shed. The barn has one sliding vehicle bay door and one side-hinged vehicle bay door.

58. **Roxiticus Road and Union Schoolhouse Road**
Block 104, Lot 27
Contributing buildings: 1
Vernacular embanked house; 18th c.

Pleasant Valley Farm
Thompson House
Good integrity

This two-story frame house has wide clapboard siding; although now four bays in length, it appears to have been constructed in two episodes. The western section has small, 9/6 sash windows, and had an end chimney on the east side. This became a center chimney with the addition of equal size to the east. The on-grade entry is sheltered by a shed-roofed porch, which is now partially enclosed. In the 19th century, according to maps and census information, this was the home of farmer John Thompson, and his family. In the 20th century, the house and its land were purchased by the Whitneys in assembling their estate, Pleasant Valley Farm, and this has been a tenant house ever since.

Landscape/Outbuildings: The house turns its back to the roads which intersect only a few yards from its walls on the northwest side, to face south toward the North Branch of the Raritan. The road originally passed in front of the house, and the right-of-way is still in use as the driveway.

59. **Union Schoolhouse Road**
Block 104, Lot 27
Contributing site

Pleasant Valley Woolen Mill Site
Pleasant Valley Farm
Photos 21, 22

The dam on the North Branch of the Raritan River on this property marks the location of a 19th century textile mill, last known as Pleasant Valley Mills. Although the upper portions of the mill were regularly rebuilt and repaired after floods, the remaining fieldstone foundation wall with an arched tailrace opening is part of the original structure. The millpond behind the dam has been greatly reduced

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in size as the dam has been breached, but the broad, flat meadow behind it is the site of the pond. When the mill was built in the 1840s, it was a cotton mill, but by the Civil War, it had become a woolen mill. Wool making operations continued to the 1880s. The dam also served a sawmill. There is some evidence that the textile mill also operated as a grist mill for periods. The mill building itself was destroyed in a flood in 1919.

60. **Roxiticus Road**
Block 104, Lot 27
Contributing buildings: 1
Colonial Revival, ca. 1910
over a 19th century core

Pleasant Valley Farm
Whitney House
Photo 23
Good integrity

The frame farmhouse on the hillside was probably a simple, two-story, gable-end-facade vernacular dwelling until the early 20th century. When Arthur Whitney began assembling farmland in the Roxiticus area for an estate or gentleman's farm, he chose this house, with its view of the river, to be his home. The house was greatly enlarged and modified to become a Colonial Revival fantasy of the American country gentleman's house. The three-bay main block projects forward from several stepped-down additions to either side. The main door is surrounded by transom and sidelights. The 6/6 sash windows are flanked by louvered shutters. Dormers, porches, and chimneys are found all around the house, giving it a picturesque quality enhanced by its setting.

Landscape/Outbuildings: The house faces northwest, on a hillside property, overlooking the meadows and valley of the North Branch of the Raritan River. The woods and manicured fields of the property offer a great deal of privacy to the house.

61. **7 Union Schoolhouse Road**
Block 100, Lot 36
Contributing buildings: 1
Federal style vernacular, 1807

Fairchild House
Photo 24
Fair-Good integrity

The tall, two-and-a-half story main block of this house, with its large and regularly spaced 6/6 windows reflects the influence of Federal architecture on the vernacular tradition. The frame house is now covered with wooden shingles. Shallow window hoods covered with wood shingles extend over the main windows. The gable roof is punctuated by an end brick chimney. The three-bay block is now flanked by story-and-a-half wings. The 19th century northern wing is dominated by an oversized gable dormer; the late 20th century southerly wing has a traditional facade carefully juxtaposed with contemporary architecture visible on the side.

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Landscape\Outbuildings: The house is sited on a narrow shelf of land between a steep wooded hillside and the road, although it enjoys a view across the narrow road to the broad meadows of the river valley. The yard is defined by a dry-laid retaining wall, topped on its southern extent by a picket fence. An in-ground pool is located south of the house. The fieldstone foundations of an earlier outbuilding south of the house have been reused to form a two-car garage.

62. **Union Schoolhouse Road**
Block 100, Lots 34, 35
Contributing site

Open space west of Union Schoolhouse Road which includes a section of the North Branch of the Raritan River, open meadows, and woodland. The 46.5 acre property is documented in maps as the location of some 19th century logging roads. The wooded landscape contributes to the setting of the historic district.

63. **County Bridge over North Branch of the Raritan River**
Union Schoolhouse Road
Non-contributing structure
A steel bridge with concrete abutments, 1974.

The old stone abutment for an earlier bridge still exists, although most of the visible bridge structure is non-historic.

64. **Union Schoolhouse Road**
Block 100, Lot 29 (partial)
Contributing site

Open space west of Union Schoolhouse Road which includes a section of the North Branch of the Raritan River running through steep banks thick with hemlocks which may be first growth timber. The acre property is privately owned. The portion of the property in the district contains no man-made structures, but bears evidence of turn-of-the-century logging roads. Much of the property (approximately 25 acres) is protected by a conservation easement. The open space contributes to the setting of the district.

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65. **Bridge over North Branch of the Raritan River on Union Schoolhouse Road, just north of Pleasant Valley Road**
Non-contributing structure, 1974
A steel bridge with concrete abutments.

Morris County Engineering Department records indicate that the bridge was reconstructed in 1974, completely obliterating the 1910 bridge that had stood there.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 66. Union Schoolhouse Road
Block 100, Lot 33
Contributing building
Schoolhouse, 1851 | Union Schoolhouse
Photo 25

Good-fair integrity |
|--|---|

A frame, one-room schoolhouse, in use from 1851 to 1928. The schoolhouse was originally one story; its gable roof is now pierced by oversized gabled dormers. Tall 16/16 sash windows are flanked by operable shutters, and topped by molded window heads. The original double leaf paneled doors are in the gable end, under a sign that says "Union Schoolhouse". The school was renovated to a residence in 1941, and remodelled again in 1988.

67. **Mosele Road**
Block 100, Lot 31, 32
Contributing site

Two adjoining privately-owned empty lots containing 1.3 acres, between the road and the river. A slag heap by the road is evidence for a forge site. This is an important archaeological site, not to be disturbed without excavation.

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| 68. Mosele Road
Block 100, Lot 30
Non-contributing building
Dutch Colonial Revival, ca. 1950 | Contributing site |
|--|-------------------|

A two-story Dutch Colonial with five bay facade, center entry under a fanlight, and multi-pane sash, including two large bow windows on the first floor facade. The main block of the house is flanked by story-and-a-half additions of a sun room and garage. The house is invisible from the road;

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the wooded hillside lot contributes to the enclosure of the Raritan Valley and the historic district.

The 6.3-acre property includes the site of a 19th century granite quarry, and a spring which has a man-made stone pool at its base to catch the mountain-fresh water as it emerges from the rock.

69. **County bridge over the North Branch of the Raritan River at Mosele Road**
Contributing structure, renovated 1983

The historic truss bridge which had crossed the river at this point since its construction in 1910 was removed and replaced in 1983 by the present bridge with steel deck and concrete abutments. It marks the last intersection of the North Branch with a public road in Mendham Township, and forms the southern terminus of the historic district.

An old stone abutment survives downstream of the westerly abutment.

70. **Mosele Road** **Rachel Cameron Hale House**
Block 103, Lot 3
Contributing buildings: 3
Colonial Revival style; **Good integrity**
between 1887 & 1900

The main house on the property is an additive "L" plan dwelling in the Colonial Revival style. It is two-and-a-half stories tall, with regularly spaced 6/6 and 9/6 sash windows. It has clapboard siding over fieldstone foundation walls. The gable roof is punctuated by two large end brick chimneys. This turn-of-the-century house was built for Rachel Cameron Hale on the site of the Garrabrant family's 19th century farm.

The original Garrabrant farmhouse was removed, but the barn remains (altered - see below) as does the original ice house for the property.

Landscape\Outbuildings: The hillside property is largely wooded, screening out neighboring structures. A 19th century stone-walled ice house is embanked into the hillside west of the main house. It has a hipped roof and wooden door; it is in good condition.

71. **Mosele Road**
Block 103, Lot 2
Contributing building **Good integrity**
Vernacular Colonial Revival, ca. 1920

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Close to the road, north of the main house is the former Garrabrant barn, renovated to a house about 1920. The main block is a two-and-a-half story square building with a steep hipped roof, 2/2 sash windows flanked by shutters with a wooden tree cut-out design, and irregularly placed doors. Story-and-a-half high, hipped-roof wings project from the main block on the north and west; together with palisade fencing, a courtyard effect is achieved around which all parts of the building face. The entire building is covered with shiplap siding.

72. **Mosele Road and Pleasant Valley Road**
Block 103, Lot 1
Non-contributing building
Builders' Colonial, ca. 1980

This hilly, wooded lot of 10 acres is privately owned and contains the foundations of an old house, which was demolished prior to construction of the present house. A two-story, frame and brick-face house stands well off the road and is not visible from the right-of-way.

73. **Refer to Page 33 for the description of this site.**

74. **30 Roxiticus Road**
Block 104, Lot 12
Contributing buildings: 1
Schoolhouse, ca. 1839

Ralston School

Non-contributing buildings: 1
Good integrity

A fieldstone building, parged with stucco, under a gable roof. The one-room schoolhouse origins of the building are evident in its large 16/16 sash windows and simple, box-like form. Additions in 1946 transformed it to a residence. These changes included an exterior cobblestone chimney on the north gable end, and a two-bay frame addition to the southern gable end. However, the original, schoolhouse section of the building is clearly visible and largely unaltered on the exterior.

Landscape\Outbuildings: The school is sited on top of a hill, looking down into the river valley. A stuccoed two-car garage stands south of the house.

75. **28 Roxiticus Road**
Block 104, Lot 11
Contributing building
Bungalow, ca. 1920s

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The core of this additive dwelling is a Sears, Roebuck mail-order house, marketed as "The Fairy" from 1925-1933. The single-story, gable entry bungalow has been enlarged with a two-story wing to the south side. The bungalow was offered as a prize at a local fair in the 1920s.

76. **Roxiticus Road**
Block 104, Lot 10
Non-contributing building, ca 1980s

A pair of stone gateposts, an elaborate iron gate, and pebbled drive lead to a secluded house.

77. **Roxiticus Road**
Block 104, Lot 9
Non-contributing building

A pair of stone gateposts, an elaborate iron gate, and pebbled drive lead to a secluded house.

78. **22 Roxiticus Road**
Block 104, Lot 8
Contributing buildings: 1
Vernacular, 19th c.

Photo 29
Non-contributing building: 1
Fair-good integrity

A two-story frame house with a five-bay, center hall plan. The gable-roofed house has one exterior end brick replacement chimney, clapboard siding, and visible rafter ends at the eaves. A wide porch on turned columns runs the full length of the facade. The center bay on the second floor is paired, other windows are replacement 1/1 sash. The front door has a narrow transom and sidelights.
Landscape\Outbuildings: A non-contributing, two-car garage stands to the rear.

79. **20 Roxiticus Road**
Block 104, Lot 4
Non-contributing building
Ranch house, ca. 1955

A stuccoed, "U" plan ranch house with a large picture window in one front-facing gable and a large overhead garage door in the other front-facing gable.

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80. Roxiticus Road

Block 104, Lot 3

Contributing building

Vernacular, 19th c.

Photo 30

Good integrity

This two-and-a-half story frame house has the center entry, five-bay facade, and gable roof of Georgian-influenced vernacular architecture of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The gable roof sags with age between two interior end brick chimneys. The house is on a raised fieldstone foundation; upper walls are clapboard which was recently installed. A shed-roofed wing extends to the south side of the house. The house does not appear on the 1853 map of Morris County, but does appear on the 1868 and 1887 maps as the property of Samuel Leddell, suggesting that it was a tenant house for workers in the mills.

81. 16 Roxiticus Road

Block 104, Lot 2

Non-contributing building, ca. 1960

A ranch house with clapboard siding, low-pitched gable roof and an attached, single car garage.

82. 12 Roxiticus Road

Block 104, Lot 1

Non-contributing building

A ranch house very similar to its neighbor, described above, except that it is clad in wooden shingles. It is screened from the road by a dense growth of evergreens.

83. 318 Route 24

Block 104, Lot 5

Non-contributing building

A ranch house, ca. 1960, with paired windows and low pitch gable roof. It is well-screened from the road by a dense stand of evergreens.

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84. 316 Route 24
Block 104, Lot 6
Non-contributing building, ca. 1960s

A hipped-roof split-level house with synthetic siding and brick face accenting the facade. The house has a large picture window and a garage in the lower level. It is sited well back from the road.

85. 314 Route 24
Block 104, Lot 7
Contributing buildings: 2
Bungalow, 1925

Good integrity

This single-story, L-plan cottage was built from plans and materials sold by Sears, Roebuck and Company. It is the house model known as the "Del Rey" (marketed 1921-1926), which Sears' advertising copy notes was first built in Pasadena, California. The bungalow is notable for its tall, French windows on the facade, and the large brackets supporting the portico over the front door. This Mendham example was built reversed from the plans and elevations published by Sears, a not uncommon variation in catalog-built houses. This house is now covered with synthetic siding, obscuring the original clapboard, but is otherwise unchanged on the exterior.

Landscape\Outbuildings: A square, hipped-roof, two-car garage with side-hinged doors stands behind the house. It, too, comes from the Sears catalog, sold in 1926 as "The Avenue" for \$ 173.00.

86. 312 Route 24
Block 104, Lot 13
Non-contributing buildings: 2
French-provincial style house, ca. 1965

Contributing site

A rambling, additive house with hipped roof, synthetic siding, and 6/6 sash windows, it appears as a modern interpretation of a French farmhouse. Part of the foundation appears to be fieldstone, and may be a relic from an earlier building on the site, the Victorian-era estate known as "Nesbitt's Castle".

Landscape\Outbuildings: The fieldstone foundations of a building from the mid-19th century estate known as "Nesbitt's Castle" have been incorporated into a Modern style house with flat roof, and large expanses of glass overlooking a pond. The pond is apparent on the 1887 map of Morris County; and its stone dam is quite old. The original purpose of the pond and dam are unknown. The site is of historic interest and significance to the Ralston Historic District, and should be investigated further.

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87. **308 Route 24**
Block 104, Lot 14
Contributing buildings: 2
Vernacular house
- Photo 31
Good integrity

This two-and-a-half story, three-bay side-hall plan house is typical of the vernacular houses of the area in the second quarter of the 19th century. Its clapboard siding is finished with cornerboards and the gable roof has broad flat eaves, in the merest suggestion of Greek Revival influence. The 2/2 sash windows are flanked by operable shutters. The north-facing main entry is sheltered under a shed-roofed portico with jigsaw brackets. A single story gable-roofed addition of 20th century vintage extends from the west gable end. Another single-story addition extends to the rear.

Landscape/Outbuildings: The house is sited on a narrow shelf of land between busy Route 24 and a steep hill descending from the rear of the house. A small 19th century frame barn stands at the foot of the hill.

88. **Omitted**

89. **328 Mendham Road**
Block 107, Lot 20
Non-contributing building, ca 1950
- Contributing site

This Cape Cod style house has vinyl siding and a steeply pitched, shake roof. The five-bay facade is defined by 6/1 sash window; casements have been added to the rear. A rustic stone end chimney is on the east gable end.

Landscape/Outbuildings: A non-contributing frame, single-car garage stands behind the house. Old stone walls and ground contours at the north side of the property may be remains of a 19th century lime kiln and quarry noted in approximately this location on maps of the period.

90. **328 Mendham Road**
Block 107, Lot 21
Non-contributing buildings: 2

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This lot, which is part of the adjoining property, is used as a plant nursery known as "Somerset Turf." There are small pine trees growing near the road and larger plants to the rear of the lot. Two non-contributing outbuildings stand on the property, both single-story utility structures made of concrete block with gable roofs.

91. **326 Mendham Road**
Block 107, Lot 22
Non-contributing building

This center hall Colonial style house, constructed ca. 1990, is comprised of a 2-1/2 story symmetrically arranged, five bay center block, with flanking story-and-a-half wings. It is clad in vinyl siding, including the end chimneys. Multi-pane windows and the symmetrical massing provide the only "colonial" styling. The house is set back from the road, in an open lawn.

92. **Block 104, Lot 26**
Contributing site

This tract of undeveloped land contributes to the scenic setting of the historic district.

73. **Union Schoolhouse Road and Pleasant Valley Road**
Block 104, Lot 23
Contributing buildings: 2
Contributing structures: 2
Contributing sites: 3

Brookrace or Schiff Estate
Non-contributing buildings: 12
Photo 28

At one time sites 73, 93, 94, 95, 96 and 97 comprised "Brookrace", which came to be known as the Schiff Estate after being purchased by Mrs. Jacob Schiff in 1932. Recently the acreage has been subdivided, with the result that the various historic buildings, structures and sites are now located on separate parcels of land.

The Schiff Estate is now in the hands of a private developer who has received permission to sub-divide part of the estate for residential development. All the historic buildings mentioned will be preserved, although none have been maintained for some years, and future use and maintenance is uncertain. Over 200 acres of the property will remain undeveloped, the tree-covered hills preserving the setting of the entire Roxiticus area. A sliver of land between Union Schoolhouse Road and the

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North Branch of the Raritan is also part of the property, and is impressive for its dramatic scenery. The hemlock forest rising from the steep banks of the fast-flowing stream makes a sharp contrast with the landscape farther upriver, where the stream is tamed by millraces and ponds, and the valley cleared for grazing land. These scenic resources are important to the setting of the Roxiticus Historic District.

Pre-estate-era buildings:

River House: A two-and-a-half story vernacular frame house stands on the southwest corner of the Schiff Estate, near the intersection of Pleasant Valley Road and Union Schoolhouse Road. It is identified as a residence as early as the 1853 map of Morris County, and it was later incorporated into the estate. The gable-roofed, clapboard-sided house has a four-bay facade, 2/2 sash windows, and a shed-roofed porch on simple posts across the facade. Nestled between a hill and the stream, the house faces south, looking toward the Union Schoolhouse. It is a contributing building.

Chamberlain Saw Mill: The stone walls of the saw mill shown on the 1910 Mueller map are evident between the house and barn foundations. The depression of the mill race which provided the water to operate this sawmill can be traced from below the dam of Lake Therese to this foundation, along the north side of the stream which flows across the southern edge of this property. It was this mill race paralleling the stream which gave the estate its name, "Brookrace". It is a contributing site.

McVicars Brook Bridge: The bridge across the brook carries a driveway into the estate from Pleasant Valley Road. It has high abutment walls, with rough-hewn granite blocks and false-arch construction. (Photo #28). It is a contributing structure.

Old Stone Barn Foundation: The stone foundation and ruined walls standing well east of this house may be the remains of an outbuilding contemporary with the farmhouse. The fieldstone walls are banked into the hillside, like a barn might have been, with the opening facing south. The remaining mortar appears to be lime-based, rather than cementitious, further supporting a 19th century date for the foundation. It is a contributing site.

Estate-era outbuildings:

Pump House: A small, square, stone-walled, hip-roofed building with original side-hinged wooden doors stands near the southwest corner of the property. It was constructed to house a pump which brought water from a spring located north of the pump house up to a reservoir on top of the property, and from there was fed by gravity to the buildings of the estate. It is a contributing building.

Bridges: There are two small bridges on the property, constructed in the estate era. Their distinctive stonework in local pink-hued granite uses massive voussoirs as a decorative device, although most of the bridges' structure are not truly arched construction, but of steel plates. The rough-hewn rock gives a distinctive identity to the bridges, which harmonizes with the stonework of the manor house. They carry the estate roads across two ditches farther up the hillside. They are contributing structures.

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Boy Scout-era buildings: During the years the Boy Scouts owned the property (1932-1979), numerous cabins, platforms, rec halls, and storage buildings were constructed around the 454 acre property. None have historic significance for this historic district; most are scheduled for demolition as part of a new development. Of most interest, although falling outside the period of significance for this historic district, is the Dan Beard Cabin. Created by the Boy Scouts of America as part of their exhibit at the 1939 World's Fair in New York City, the cabin was moved from New York at the close of the fair to the Schiff Reservation, as this property was then called, and used as a meeting hall for scout camp-outs. It is currently slated to be moved to a near-by location on the same lot, and preserved.

The most permanent non-contributing buildings are eight frame houses, ca. 1965, with vertical siding, concrete foundations, and a shed-roofed "modern" style. They are sited on the hillside behind the main house, although they are not visible from it due to thick tree cover. Some are occupied. Near the intersection of Roxiticus Road and Pleasant Valley Road stand three concrete block buildings, which housed maintenance equipment for the Boy Scouts.

93. **Block 104.01, Lot 3**
Non-contributing site

Site of new sewerage treatment plant.

94. **Block 104.01, Lot 4**
Contributing building

Photo 27

The former carriage house southwest of the main house is a charming, two-story building with slate tiles on a steep gable roof with flared eaves, hipped dormers, and end chimneys. Its picturesque, medieval appearance compliments the turreted manor house. The carriage house was modified to a residence by the infill of the side vehicle bays with stucco and small multi-paned windows. The gable end walls are made of rough-hewn, local stone. Copper roof ventilators on the roof ridge are remnants of the building's carriage house use. It is a contributing building (Photo 27).

95. **Block 104.01, Lot 5**
Contributing building
Eclectic Revival manor house, 1914 -1918

Photo 26
Contributing structure
Good integrity

In 1914, Richard H. Williams had a massive English Tudor Revival house built as a wedding gift for his son, the centerpiece of an estate known as "Brookrace". It is one of the last of the

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Morristown area's "great estates", which were built from the late 1880s to about World War I. The house is two-and-a-half stories tall, with hipped and gabled roofs covered with slate. Gabled dormers and eight tall arch-topped stone chimneys give a picturesque roofline, as does the three-story conical-roofed tower which dominates the facade. Windows are multi-paned casements and sash. The first floor of the house is largely granite blocks; the upper floors are stuccoed with half-timber detailing. An arched passageway connects the original block and a wing added in 1918, over which was built Mr. Williams' private study with a view of the formal gardens and stables. The north wing of the house features a ballroom, dominated by a 16th century French mantelpiece, which was brought to this country by the architect Stanford White. After White's home became the Princeton Club in 1919, Williams purchased the fireplace mantle and had it installed in his own ballroom. The wing and main house form two sides of a courtyard, which is walled on the other two sides and paved in pink granite.

In 1932, Mrs. Jacob Schiff purchased the property and donated it to The Boy Scouts of America, in memory of her son Mortimer L. Schiff, who at the time of his death in 1931 was its president. The house served as offices for the Boy Scouts from 1932 to 1970. It is a contributing building within the Ralston Historic District (photo 26).

Landscape\Outbuildings: A man-made lake, known as "Lake Therese" is located at the southern side of the property, toward Pleasant Valley Road. It was created as a feature for the estate, although it enlarges the location of an older mill pond. The stepped concrete dam to Lake Therese has three sluiceways; the original wooden gate in the center survives; the flanking gates are of metal and are replacements. The dam is a contributing structure.

96. **Block 104.01, Lot 6** (Lot 6 no longer exists. It has been merged with Lot 5.)
Contributing site

This tract of undeveloped land contributes to the scenic setting of the historic district.

97. **Block 104.02, Lots 18 & 18.01**
Contributing site
Contributing structure

Contributing building

Bridge at Lake Therese: This is a large, true stone-arch bridge made of the same rough-hewn granite blocks, located just west of the Lake Therese dam and north of the present concrete bridge. Apparently the bridge was constructed before the lake was created, and brought the estate driveway over the old millpond and mill race. After the lake and dam were completed, the south side of the stone arch bridge was sealed up, creating a man-made stone grotto. This contributing structure is overgrown with vegetation, and is no longer visible as a bridge except on to the north, just beside the dam.

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Boat Barn: A one-and-a-half-story shingle-sided bank barn facing Pleasant Valley Road with high stone foundation on the exposed north side, facing Lake Therese. Its hipped dormers and clipped gable roof, banded windows, and vehicle doors with small multi-paned lights in them relate the barn to the current Arts and Crafts movement in American architecture. It is known as the "Boat Barn" for its use during the Boy Scout occupancy of the property, although it seems to have been constructed for grounds maintenance for the estate. It is a contributing building.

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Ralston, in western Mendham Township, Morris County, New Jersey, is an unincorporated area with its focal point at the intersection of the North Branch of the Raritan River and State Route 24 (Mendham Road). There stands the mill, store and manor house which mark the center of the community first called Roxiticus. The name was changed in the 19th century to honor its most prominent citizen, John Ralston (or Rolston). A Ralston Historic District, consisting of four buildings, is already on the National Register of Historic Places, but this nomination extends the historic district to include the larger river valley, which is also considered by local residents to be part of Ralston. Most of the 18th and 19th century inhabitants of Ralston lived along the river valley, and the mills, quarries, houses, barns, and shops in which they worked supported the store and manor house at the crossroads.

The Ralston Historic District is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A, because of its association with "events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history", specifically the development and subsequent decline of water-powered industry in the 18th and 19th century. It is eligible under Criterion B for its association with John Rolston (now generally spelled Ralston), an early American industrialist whose woolen and cotton mill along the river was one of the earliest of New Jersey's successful textile industries. It is also eligible for the National Register under Criterion C, for the well-preserved domestic architecture which characterizes the river valley.

Settlement

Much of the area known as Roxiticus in the 18th century was purchased from the West Jersey Proprietors in 1713 by John Wills. His descendants established a comfortable farm west of the river (sites #21, 22, 24) and they were soon joined by other settlers. The progress of settlement along the North Branch of the Raritan River can be marked by the fact that sometime before 1738, a log church was built in Roxiticus and visited by itinerant preachers; in 1738 the Presbyterian congregation at Roxiticus was established and admitted to the New Brunswick Presbytery.

The old log church is described on a mid-18th century map in the Stevens Collection of the New Jersey Historical Society as a "Meeting House". It stood on the low hill between the North Branch of the Raritan River and the present boundary between Mendham Township and Borough. Today there is no trace of this small but important building for the early community at Roxiticus.

After several years, the growing congregation called their first full-time minister, a young graduate of Yale named Eliab Byram. When he and his family moved to this area from Massachusetts, they brought with them the name Mendham from their old village, and gave it to the new settlement they helped shape. In 1745, Reverend Byram spearheaded a move of the congregation to a new house of worship uphill and east of the river valley, placing it a short walk from the tavern his father

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established in the same year. Thus, the "city on a hill" became the village of Mendham, while deeds to land west of the village, along the river valley, were identified by the name Roxiticus throughout the 18th century.

The Iron Industry

It was iron that proved the main attraction for early investors and settlers in Morris County, New Jersey. In 1722 John Jackson built a forge near the present-day town of Dover, on land that was part of Mendham Township at the time. After 1740, there was a proliferation of documented forges in Morris County.¹

The hardwood forests on the riverbank provided the material for charcoal, and outcroppings of iron of varying degrees of purity were plentiful in northern Morris County. Early settlers set up simple bloomeries, using a hot charcoal fire to separate iron from gross impurities. The resulting "bloom", or slab of iron would be refined through reheating and hammering many times. Water power could be used to operate both the bellows and a heavy hammer to pound the iron as it was heated. Bloomeries produced iron which needed still further refinement by a blacksmith, but this first crucial process greatly reduced the bulk of the usable material, making it easier to transport.²

The first documented iron forge in the Roxiticus area is shown on "A Map of Rocksiticus", now in the Stevens Papers of the New Jersey Historical Society. The undated map seems to show Roxiticus about 1745, based upon research correlating the names mentioned and the buildings depicted. Along the water, identified as the "Peapack River" (from Roxiticus, the North Branch of the Raritan flows south toward Peapack) is shown "Peter Slattor's Iron Works". Later in the 18th century, this same area was known as the site of the "Mendham Forge". The precise location of the forge may be identified by slag in the stream bed, and the recent discovery of hewn wooden timbers which seem to mark a wheel pit (site 52). A listing of John Rolston's taxable property for 1790 and 1792 includes two forges in Mendham. An 1824 map of the proposed route of the Morris Canal indicates the water-powered "Mendham Forge" along the North Branch of the Raritan, although by that date, the forge was described as being "in ruins". The forge location is an important archaeological resource within the

¹ D'Angelo, James J., Den Brook Forge and Mill Sites: An Archaeological Study. Masters Thesis, Drew University Graduate School, 1980, p. 4.

² W. David Lewis, Iron and Steel in America, (Greenville, Delaware: The Hagley Museum, 1976), p. 10.

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Roxiticus Historic District. (See map of industrial sites).

Locally produced iron was transformed into the hardware, tools, farm implements, and nails necessary for the inhabitants by local blacksmiths. Along the North Branch of the Raritan, a particularly skilled family of blacksmiths and toolmakers named Willet lived and worked (site #52). James Willet's account book for 1818 to 1828, in the possession of the Ralston Historical Society, records the transactions of the agricultural and industrial community around him. He mended scythes, shod horses, and made andirons, as well as making and mending cotter pins and breast chains, which were part of the early 19th century mills along the North Branch.³ His sons, David and Calvin, carried on the blacksmithing business at the family home well into the 19th century. A second blacksmith, at the eastern end of the historic district (site # 1) was operated by William Whitlock in the mid-19th century. Yet another blacksmith worked through the 1880s on land belonging to Samuel Leddell (site # 6).

The Ralston Gristmill

The third important building noted on the Stevens Collection map from the 1740s is "Martin's Mills", next to "Martin's House." As early as 1742, Edmund Martin is thought to have been operating both a grist mill and a saw mill here in Roxiticus.⁴ During the American Revolution, the grist mill (site #11) was operated by Jonathan Logan, who supplied the Continental Army with flour and animal feed during their encampment at Jockey Hollow. Logan's bankruptcy after the war was probably a direct cause of his wartime involvement with the debt-ridden Continental Army.

Logan's interest in the mill was purchased in 1786 by his son-in-law, John Rolston. Rolston had been born in Ireland, and emigrated to America, working as a merchant in Philadelphia during the years of the American Revolution. It is unclear what brought him to Roxiticus, but investment opportunities and Jonathan Logan's "well-beloved"⁵ daughter Margaret insured that he stayed.

³ "Willet Forge Book 1818-1828". Records of the Ralston Historical Association.

⁴ Dahle, Margaret, Neighbors to the Winter Camp, Brookside Woman's Club, 1977, p. 17.

⁵ Jonathan Logan wrote his will in 1783, several years before his own death, and two years before his daughter's marriage to John Rolston. Logan's will follows the conventions of the time, but the phrase "well-beloved" in describing his daughter Margaret, and the absence of any other affectionate terms for his other children, suggests a special relationship between the two. The relationship was supported by generous bequests by Mr. Logan, including L 200, 23 acres of

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The grist mill proved to be the longest-lived "industry" of Roxiticus, operating more or less continually from the mid-18th century to about 1892. The stone gristmill is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Ralston Historic District. Although converted to a residence in the mid-20th century, its exterior appearance and siting right on the river at the crossroads give it a historically appropriate appearance. The mill was also recorded by the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1936 (NJ-339), and those drawings include details of the machinery which was still extant at that time.

John Rolston was not himself a miller by trade, and he had some difficulty keeping his gristmill staffed. Advertisements in 1810 and 1816 in the Morristown newspapers made a plea for a miller who "understands the business".⁶ Rolston's stated preference was for a person with a family, perhaps hoping that a family man would be less inclined to leave.

A second grist mill (site #25) was built in the Roxiticus area in 1848, along the Burnet Brook, on the border of Mendham and Chester Townships. It was built for John Nesbitt, a grandson of John Rolston. The three-story stone mill building was a far more substantial building than any other mill in Roxiticus. The 1870 and 1880 Industrial Censuses both note J. R. Nesbitt's grist mill, although it only employed one person. Using an overshot wheel, the grist mill ground wheat, oats, and corn.⁷ In 1908 it was converted to a turbine-powered distillery, which operated until Prohibition, and a cider press, which carried on through the Depression. During the 'teens, it produced spirits under the trade name "Tiger Apple Jack", which were sold at an outlet in Newark. The mill has been idle since the 1930s, although it retains its workings from both cider mill and distillery days, including the turbine, presses, choppers and grinders, wooden pulleys for sack tackle, and wooden vats. The wooden water wheel shaft and the carefully laid stone arched tail race survives from the grist mill era.

land, livestock, a feather bed and bedding, and, in perhaps a clue to the activity which bonded father and daughter, "the bay mare and a hunting sidesaddle."

⁶ Advertisements from the Palladium of Liberty, Morristown, N.J., March 13, 1810, and March 18, 1816.

⁷ United States Census of Industry, Mendham Township, 1870.
United States Census of Industry, Special Schedule of Manufacturers, Grist mills, Mendham Township, 1880.

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John Rolston

John Rolston (ca. 1750? - 1819), who took over the gristmill from his father-in-law Jonathan Logan, was ambitious and forward-looking. Surviving records of his business dealings, in the collections of the Ralston Historical Association and the New Jersey Historical Society, indicate that he used his position as owner of the gristmill as a springboard to other business ventures. In 1799, a description of a real estate sale located the subject property as "Near Mr. John Ralston's mills", implying that there was already more than one mill operative.⁸ He established a store (site # 10), located directly east of his mill on the old east-west road which was to become, in 1806, the Washington Turnpike. He lived with his wife and five children in a manor house overlooking the store, mill and river (site #9), from where he corresponded and traveled to business ventures around the countryside. Rolston bought and sold real estate throughout western Morris County, Somerset, and Hunterdon Counties. He owned several farms, which were worked by tenant farmers, with the assistance of slaves, which Rolston owned throughout his life. Like many other American entrepreneurs in the days before banks and credit markets, Rolston borrowed money from relatives and friends, was forced to sell property and possessions at sheriff's sales to meet debts, and mortgaged his own house several times to cover expansion in his business ventures. By all accounts, the net result of his business dealings was not great wealth for himself or his family, but a comfortable life, and a contribution to the growth of New Jersey's manufacturing abilities in the early 19th century.

Textile Manufacturing

Rolston's most enduring interest lay in textile manufacturing. He established a cotton spinning factory and a woolen fulling mill in Roxiticus in the early years of the 19th century. The first known notice of the cotton mill is in an advertisement in the February 26, 1807 edition of the Genius of Liberty, a weekly Morristown newspaper.

Mendham Factory

The subscriber respectfully informs his friends
and the Public, that he has for sale, at his
Factory in Mendham, a great variety and constant

⁸ Notice of the sale of the Samuel Wills estate (which John Rolston bought) appeared in both the December 19 and December 26, 1799 editions of the Genius of Liberty, published in Morristown, N.J.

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supply of Cotton Yarn, suitable for every kind of country use, particularly for Bed-tick. Also, a large assortment of Cotton Checks, Stripes, Fustians, Jeans, Cotton Cashmeres, Tickings, Counterpanes, Coach Lace, and numerous other articles, made at his factory, of superior quality and lower price than any imported from Britain; all which he will sell on the most reasonable terms for cash or country produce of any kind: at the same place, store-keepers will find a good assortment of all or any of the above articles, on good terms to supply their stores.

He also has a vacancy for four or five active boys of good character, and of from 11 to 14 years of age, as apprentices to the branches of Carding, Spinning, and weaving Cotton, in all its varieties, under the best workmen. To them good encouragement will be given.

Also wanted, a careful Miller; none need apply who will not be well recommended.

Also, a Blacksmith, who can be placed in a good stand for business; - men with families will be preferred.

John Rolston
Mendham, February 16, 1807

The request for so many boys to labor in the mill suggests that Rolston was expanding his venture, but the full inventory on hand leads one to believe that he had been in operation for some time. The type of fabrics sold were generally used for bed linens and household uses; the description of them as suitable for "country use" acknowledges their coarser yarns and weaves. The advertisement suggests that Rolston established a factory where raw cotton was spun into yarns, and then woven into cloth. How much was done by hand and how much by machine is a matter of speculation.

Most early 19th century textile mills specialized in spinning or weaving; it was not until the development of the great New England textile mills of Lowell in 1823 that spinning and weaving were completely mechanized in one factory. Rolston's ability to establish such a complex factory suggests

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that he had experience in English textile mills before arriving in this country, since in 1807, there was only a rudimentary American textile industry from which to garner experience.⁹

He did have local competitors, for the Morristown newspaper Genius of Liberty published advertisements for a cotton manufactory "newly opened" in 1808 in Whippany. The rival paper, Palladium of Liberty carried notice of William Cartwright's cotton mill in Whippany in 1817, and also advertised a wool carding machine in Rockaway. There was room for industrial growth and experimentation, as noted in an article in the Morristown newspaper in 1817. It reported:

The late advices from Europe contains the interesting fact that provisions are falling and manufactures of almost every description rising in price. A corresponding effect will no doubt be produced in this country...a prudent foresight into these operations may be interesting to the farmer and manufacturer.¹⁰

Rolston was no doubt aware of the inter-related nature of trade. Although Rolston sold some of his wares at his small store, more were sold through his extensive business network, which reached from Boston to New York to Augusta, Georgia. Rolston shipped iron and peach brandy to Georgia,

⁹ American cotton and woolen manufacturing developed slowly after the Revolutionary war, largely with English immigrants who brought a knowledge of machines and methods with them. England expressly prohibited the export of textile manufacturing equipment; America's "home-made" technology took a great leap forward when Englishman Samuel Slater recreated from memory an Arkwright spinning machine in a Rhode Island cotton mill in 1790. American textile manufacturing was incubated in New England, where by 1809, one source reports that there were 87 cotton mills in operation. (Little, p. 117) In 1792, an attempt was made to establish a textile industry on the Passaic River at Paterson, New Jersey, but it was out of business by 1800. Thus, John Rolston's establishment of a cotton mill in New Jersey in the first decade of the 19th century is notable not only for its early date, but for its relatively long-lived success.

¹⁰ "Auspicious Prospects for Manufacturers", Palladium of Liberty, Morristown, N.J., October 30, 1817, p. 3. In the column adjacent to this article on American manufacturing prospects is a notice of a meeting of the local Mechanic Society.

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while molasses, cotton, and indigo were shipped north.¹¹

The indigo was used in another Rolston business, a fulling and dyeing mill, which was established about 1808 (site #30). Like the cotton factory, this was an early venture into textile manufacturing for New Jersey. The Early Fulling Mills of New Jersey, by Grace Zeigler and Harry Weiss, notes that John Rolston's fulling and dyeing mill was one of a handful in New Jersey in the 1810s, most of which were concentrated in Morris County. Fulling, or finishing wool cloth, was an important activity in the economy of early 19th century New Jersey. Mechanization of spinning and weaving, through water-powered machines, was naturally linked to fulling and dyeing, so that home production of textiles was almost completely taken over by local factories in the first quarter of the 19th century.¹² Rolston's first known advertisement of the woolen business appears in the Genius of Liberty for June 6, 1808, when he announced that he had "commenced the wool-carding business at his cotton manufactory." Apparently carding soon lead to fulling, dyeing, and even weaving of wool cloth.

Rolston's factory received an unexpected boost by the War of 1812, which started a blockade of American ports. No woolens from England's prodigious textile mills could be imported, and this stimulated domestic textile manufacturing.¹³ An Act of the New Jersey Legislature on November 14, 1814, incorporated "The Mendham Cotton and Woolen Factory", "in order that the business may be conducted with more facility". It was incorporated for a period of fifteen years, and with capital of up to \$150,000.¹⁴ It was only after the incorporation of the business that a "T. [textile] Mill appeared on the listing of John Rolston's taxable property in Mendham, although the cotton and woolen mills had certainly existed for several years before 1814.¹⁵

¹¹ Martha Hopley, Edward Roessler, Wallace West. The Mendhams (Brookside, N.J.: The Mendham Township Committee, 1964), p. 86-87.

¹² Harry B. Weiss and Grace M. Zeigler, The Early Fulling Mills of New Jersey (Trenton, N.J.: New Jersey Agricultural Society, 1957), p. 58 - 63.

¹³ Harry B. Weiss and Grace M. Zeigler, The Early Woolen Industry of New Jersey, (Trenton, N.J.: New Jersey Agricultural Society, 1958), p. 36-39.

¹⁴ Hopley, et.al. The Mendhams, p. 88.

¹⁵ This information is gleaned from a review of the surviving tax documents for Mendham Township between the years 1785 and 1816.
New Jersey Tax Ratables 1785-1816, Morristown and Morris Township Public Library.

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The only known description of Rolston's woolen operation comes from a newspaper advertisement of June 3, 1819 in the Palladium of Liberty, published in Morristown.

CARDING, FULLING, dyeing & Manufacturing

The subscribers respectfully inform the public that they have their works in complete order for business and are ready to receive Wool for Carding, and Cloth for Coloring, Fulling, and Dressing. They will receive the wool, and manufacture the same into cloth, completely finished, agreeably to directions, or they will execute any one of the above branches, in the most complete manner, and on the most reasonable terms. They intend coloring the best and most permanent Indigo Blue this season, for such as desire it, and any other colour required, as usual. One of the subscribers having been regularly bred to the business, and worked at some of the best Factories in the Eastern States, they flatter themselves that under the firm of Rolston & Youngs, people may rely upon receiving perfect satisfaction. All orders will be thankfully received, and punctually and faithfully executed by

John Rolston, S.H. Youngs
May 27, 1819

Rolston died in 1819, shortly after the advertisement appeared in print, and his executors sold the mill. The deed includes a list of the machinery:

1 picker	5 carding engines
1 roving frame	1 stretching frame
2 reels	1 mule
76 spindles	One other mule
134 spindles	144 spindles

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1 stove and pipes
1 throstle and 96 spindles

1 winding block
One other mule¹⁶

This inventory is for a cotton spinning mill of some size¹⁷; the equipment for the woolen mill was either not included in this sale, or was located in a different structure. A mule was one of the most sophisticated machines known to man in 1819, and none were made in the United States until the 1820s.¹⁸ Therefore, Rolston's imported machines, which could produce fine cotton yarn and spin it onto spindles, represented a high level of investment and technology. In addition, the inventory lists only one throstle, which was a somewhat less sophisticated piece of equipment, used largely for the manufacture of warp threads for power looms, because it made a hard, coarse yarn very cheaply. This suggests that by 1819 Rolston had developed his textile mill from the production of coarse yarns for "country use" advertised in 1807 to the production of finer goods.

An enterprise such as Rolston's cotton mill must have occupied a building of some size. The schematic drawing appended to the nomination from Anthony Wallace's Rockdale, shows a typical water-powered textile mill of the 1830s, and identifies the relative size and location of the machines listed in Rolston's mill inventory. Surprisingly, for a building of such probable size and importance, there is no visible remnant of the Rolston cotton mill, although a frame house on Roxiticus Road (site #38) is reputed to have been the mill office, overlooking the stream and mill site. The site is within the district, along the North Branch of the Raritan River. (See map of industrial sites). A separate building (site #33) was known as the weaver's shop, and it stood between the cotton mill office and the grist mill.

The 1820s were a decade of confusion for the Rolston family and its enterprises. After John Rolston's heirs sold the mill in 1819, the new owner defaulted on his payments, and the Rolston family found themselves once again owners and operators of the mill. Operations were apparently scaled back; an 1821 advertisement in The Palladium of Liberty indicates that Thomas Rolston, one of John's sons, was running the mill, although only for wool carding and spinning. Perhaps operation of the cotton manufactory was suspended by the necessity of attention to the unpaid debts owed the estate.

¹⁶ Hopler, et.al., The Mendhams, p. 88.

¹⁷ Anthony F. C. Wallace, Rockdale (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), pp. 124 - 164.

¹⁸ Wallace, Rockdale, p. 140.

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In 1824, a map of the proposed Morris Canal Route was drawn, which shows industries in communities from the Delaware River to the Saddle River. It identifies a water-powered factory or mill, called "Rolston" (for its owner's name) west of the village of Mendham. The map symbol places the mill on the north side of the Washington Turnpike, where the present gristmill stands. There is no indication of a textile mill along the North Branch of the Raritan. Other cotton and woolen mills are identified by name to the northeast, marking the industrial hamlet of Brookside, also in Mendham Township. But it seems that John Rolston's cotton mill lay idle, its future uncertain in 1824.¹⁹

A resolution was finally achieved in 1833 with the sale of much of Rolston's Roxiticus property to Dr. John Wick Leddell (1783-1865). The Leddell family operated a grist and sawmill on the headwaters of the Passaic River in Mendham Township, so the new owner was prepared to take over both the property and the businesses established by John Rolston. The cotton mill was sold separately. It remained in operation until the 1850s, producing cotton yarn, but not complete textiles.²⁰

The woolen business along the Raritan North Branch continued, and by 1850, had become an enterprise separate from the old Rolston Cotton and Woolen factory. The 1853 map of Morris County shows the cotton mill south of the old grist mill. Well downstream from it, south of the intersection of Roxiticus Road and Union Schoolhouse Road, stood Woodhouse's Wool Factory (site #59). The wool "factory" included a water-powered fulling mill and looms of some type, for the factory produced blankets and flannels.²¹

¹⁹ In 1824 the mill may have been idle because it was undergoing renovations. In 1825, the mill was "retooled" by one John Baxter. This information was revealed in recent correspondence from a descendant of John Baxter seeking genealogical information from the Mendham Township Historic Preservation Commission.

²⁰ The last notice of the cotton factory is in the 1850 census. In the population census for that year, William Hilton is noted as a "cotton manufacturer". While address cannot be precisely determined, he is listed among other residents of the Roxiticus area of Mendham. The industrial census for the same year clearly shows that William Hilton's Cotton Manufactory was the largest business in Mendham, both in terms of capital invested (\$11,500), number of employees (eight), and value of its annual product (\$7480). There is no mention of Hilton or any cotton manufacturing in the 1860 Industrial Census of Mendham Township.

²¹ United States Census, Products of Industry, "Mendham Township", 1860. Morristown and Morris Township Public Library.

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The woolen factory is noted in both the 1850 and 1860 Industrial Censuses for Mendham Township. It employed only five men in 1850, and was down to three employees in 1860. Most of these were members of the Woodhouse household, according to the 1850 population census. Irish-born James Woodhouse was 46 in 1850, and the owner of the woolen mill. His sons, John, age 19, and James, age 17, were each identified by the census as a "manufacturer", and Mahlon Whitehead, age 16, who also lived with them, was identified as a "W. Manufacturer". Presumably, these three adolescents were primary operatives at the woolen mill, which is clearly visible on the 1853 map of Morris County along with its attendant mill pond.

Later known as the Pleasant Valley Mill, the water-powered woolen factory continued in operation to the end of the 19th century. The old mill building was destroyed in a flash flood in 1919. Only a portion of its carefully crafted stone tailrace beside the dam wall is still visible to mark its location.

Quarrying and Lumbering

Besides the heavily capitalized milling industries along the North Branch of the Raritan, there were other important economic activities in the neighborhood. Limestone rock, in outcrops near the river, was quarried and burned in limekilns to produce the lime needed to fertilize agricultural fields and prepare the mortar for masonry construction. Barber and Howe's 1844 descriptive geography of New Jersey had this to say about Mendham:

"Limestone is quarried to a considerable extent on the North Branch of the Raritan...There are 2 grist [mills], 1 saw [mill], 1 fulling mill, 1 woolen [mill], 1 cotton factory."²²

Two lime quarries with kilns nearby stood in the Raritan North Branch valley in the 19th century; the site of two are within the boundaries of the district. (sites # 20, 49).

Trees were cut on the steep hills above the river, although the only evidence of human activity is the trace of logging roads. These are evident on the west bank of the river along Union Schoolhouse

²² John W. Barber and Henry Howe, Historical Collections of the State of New Jersey, (Newark, N.J.: Published by Benjamin Olds for Justus H. Bradley, 1857; reprint of 1844 edition), p. 382.

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Road (sites # 62, 64), and through the hillside now owned by The Trust for Public Lands (site #73).

Transportation

The quarries and mills which operated along the North Branch of the Raritan were dependent on overland transportation to receive raw materials and haul away their finished product. The river is not navigable; a railroad did not reach Roxiticus until 1891. It is thus no surprise to learn that John Rolston was an original subscriber to the Washington Turnpike, incorporated in 1806. This important east-west route had been in existence since colonial times, and it is still a vital local artery, known as State Route 24. The turnpike reverted to a public road in 1840, although a toll gate still stood along the turnpike just west of the Ralston gristmill as late as 1853.²³

The old stone arch bridges which took the roads over the streams and rivers of this area are all gone or thoroughly subsumed in new construction. The only well-preserved bridge in the district is along Roxiticus Road (site #53), where the stream meanders south to the remains of the woolen mill site. This steel truss bridge, erected in 1934, is the last survivor of its type in the Raritan North Branch Valley. It is technologically as well as visually important, as it is an early example of a all-welded construction. Its construction marks the close of the period of historic significance in the Ralston Historic District.

The Rockaway Valley Railroad was completed through the valley in 1891. It was built primarily to bring the agricultural products of north-central New Jersey to urban markets. It did not carry many passengers, and so the communities along the bumpy railroad, affectionately known as the "Rock-A-Bye-Baby", did not experience the suburbanization that so many railroads brought to New Jersey towns. The tracks passed west of the North Branch until they crossed the Burnet Brook and headed west, away from the southerly-flowing river. The Rockaway Valley Railroad, never a profitable enterprise, was closed in 1917, and the tracks torn up and sold for scrap for the war effort. The right-of-way for the railroad is still visible (sites # 14, 28, 40, 49) as it is maintained as a public footpath; part of the Morris County Park Commission's "Patriot's Path".

²³ The "Gate H[ouse]" is clearly marked on the 1853 Map of Morris County. A boundary description of a property sold in 1823 to Abraham Cooper locates one point of the lot at the "bridge over said brook [Branch of the Raritan River] where the toll gate stands...along Washington Turnpike." From the files of the Ralston Historical Association.

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At least one road has been abandoned in Roxiticus since the 19th century. The 1868, 1887, and 1910 atlases of Morris County indicate an east-west road intersecting with Roxiticus Road approximately halfway between the roads now known as Route 24 and Pleasant Valley Road. The hilly terrain did not lend itself to development either before or after those dates, and the road through open countryside was abandoned by 1950.

The Development of Ralston

In the 19th century, the old name of Roxiticus was gradually abandoned in favor of the name "Ralston" or "Ralstonville" for the crossroads hamlet, in honor of John Rolston. The 1844 Barber & Howe descriptive geography of New Jersey mentions "Ralstonville" as a "small collection of houses in the township".²⁴ The 1868 Beers Atlas of Morris County identified the area as "Rocksiticus", while the Robinson's 1887 Atlas of Morris County labeled the school district "Ralstonville" and the crossroads settlement "Roxiticus". Despite the fact that the prominent Leddell family owned the manor house, gristmill, and store for nearly twice as long as the Ralstons, the old name, modified from the spelling used by the founder, persisted. John Rolston's grandson, John Ralston Nesbitt, builder of the large stone gristmill on Burnet Creek, was instrumental in establishing a post office at the general store, and in naming the western end of Mendham Township for his grandfather.²⁵

The early 19th century community of Roxiticus or Ralston focused on the mills and the store. Since the removal of the first Presbyterian Church in 1745 to the village of Mendham, there had been no house of worship in Roxiticus. However, in 1828, a local preacher named Father Lovell conducted worship services in the cotton mill and on the wooded hillsides above the mills; services which led to the founding of the Methodist Church in Mendham in 1829.²⁶ The church grew quickly, supported by mill hands and laborers who felt a gulf between themselves and the established Presbyterian Church, to which the Rolstons, Leddells, Nesbitts, and other ruling families belonged. The Methodist congregation did not stay in Roxiticus, however, but built a church in Mendham village in 1833.

The first schoolhouse was said to have been built in Roxiticus in 1793, with contributions of

²⁴ Barber and Howe, Historical Collections of the State of New Jersey, p. 383.

²⁵ Hopler, et.al., The Mendhams, p. 89.

²⁶ Hopler, et.al., The Mendhams, p. 57.

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labor and materials from neighbors, including John Rolston, who provided boards, shingles, window sash and glass, and John McCarter who provided nails and glass.²⁷ It is unclear where this building stood; it was not extant by 1853. After New Jersey adopted legislation which provided for public education in 1829, another school was set up on land donated by Dr. John Leddell. This was the stone schoolhouse (site #74) which served local students until 1940, when it was converted to a residence. The stone one-room schoolhouse overlooked the river valley and the cotton factory and grist mill where some members of the pupils' families undoubtedly worked.

A second one-room school was built at the southern end of Roxiticus in 1850 (site # 66), on land donated by Mary Ann Rolston Nesbitt and Eliza Rolston Arrowsmith, daughters of John Rolston. A clapboard structure, it was named the Union Schoolhouse, reflecting the public mood in the ante-bellum years. This school was operated until 1928. In 1941, it became part of the Schiff Scout Reservation, and was remodelled into a dwelling.²⁸

The Twentieth Century

The closing of one school in the Roxiticus area in 1928 reflected the demographic and economic changes occurring in the valley in the first third of the 20th century. The number of houses in the district actually remained nearly the same during the latter 19th century, with virtually no new construction between 1868 and 1910.²⁹ By the time the railroad came to Roxiticus in 1891, the traditional water-powered industries it might have served were in decline. Farming was more profitable in Mendham Township at the end of the 19th century than in many other parts of Morris County, but agriculture alone could not make up for the fact that within the Township "there is neither commerce, mining, nor manufacturing."³⁰ Mendham Township went into a period of economic somnolence.

²⁷ Hopler, et. al. The Mendhams, p. 97-98.

²⁸ Hopler, et. al. The Mendhams, p. 104.

²⁹ This is determined by a comparison of the 1868 Beers Atlas of Morris County, the 1887 Robinson's Atlas of Morris County, and the 1910 Mueller Map of Portions of Morris County.

³⁰ W. H. Munsell, History of Morris County, (New York: Munsell and Company, 1883), p. 246.

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But the old houses, the lack of new roads and railways, and the pastoral vistas made Mendham interesting to those whose vision of the world was not limited to technological progress. Interest in colonial history and architecture became increasing popular as the 20th century dawned. At the same time, Morristown had become a center for estates and residences for the very wealthy. Morristown and vicinity was noted for its scenery and its proximity to New York, allowing newly rich entrepreneurs to build expansive (and expensive) houses on properties of some acreage. Mendham was touched by the ripples of this phenomenon by the 1910s.

In Ralston, Arthur Whitney (1871-1942) assembled a "gentleman's farm" along the North Branch of the Raritan which he named "Pleasant Valley Farm" (site # 60).³¹ Whitney made a modest fortune as a partner in the New York brokerage firm of Goadby & Co. from 1902-1916. Upon retiring from business, Whitney entered politics, as a State Senator from Morris County. In 1925, after being defeated in his run for governor of New Jersey, he left public life to tend to his Mendham farm.³² The estate effectively preserved several vernacular houses as tenant houses (sites # 51, 52, 58), as well as open space with its views of the "pleasant valley", and the mill pond and dam of the former woolen mill (site #59). The estate is still in private hands.

The other local estate of note was assembled by Richard Williams, in hillier lands south of the Whitney property. There, Williams built a manor house in an Eclectic Revival style, overlooking the man-made Lake Therese, as a wedding gift for his son in 1914 (site # 73).³³ The chateau-like stone house is the centerpiece of one of the Morristown area's last "great estates", which were built from the late 1880s to World War I.

In addition to the manor house, the 450-acre estate included a substantial stable and a carriage house. The Williams property incorporated an earlier vernacular farmhouse, and a small brook and old mill race, which gave the estate its name, "Brookrace". In 1932, Mrs. Jacob Schiff purchased the Williams estate and donated it to the Boy Scouts of America in memory of her son Mortimer, who was president of that organization at the time of his death in 1931. During the years the Boy Scouts owned the property (1932-1979), numerous cabins, platforms, rec halls, and storage buildings were constructed on the 454 acre property, retaining the manor house as a conference center for scout leaders. In 1980,

³¹ A. H. Mueller Atlas of Morristown and Vicinity, (New York: A. H. Mueller, 1910).

³² "Arthur Whitney", obituary, The New York Times, Nov. 20, 1942, p. 23.

³³ The Mortimer L. Schiff Scout Reservation, undated pamphlet in the Morristown and Morris Township Public Library, Local History Room vertical file on Mendham.

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part of the land was deeded to The Trust for Public Land to protect it in perpetuity; other acreage once part of the estate has been approved for residential development. More recently, in 1994, an agreement was reached between the developer and the Township in which several of the significant buildings on the estate would be restored, in exchange for the right to develop a larger percentage of the property.

Architecture

The most substantial buildings in Roxiticus are the stone grist mills, one dating to the mid-18th century (site # 11), and the other to 1848 (site # 25). A barn (site # 27) and schoolhouse (site # 74) are also built of stone. These structures are well-built, functional and handsomely proportioned, but like many buildings in the district, they have no claim to architectural style. Rather, they represent the type of vernacular building which filled a need, and derived its appearance from building traditions which were passed from generation to generation.

The earliest surviving buildings in the district (sites # 1, 5, 7, 26, 51 & 56), are well-preserved examples of the heavy-timber frame dwellings which formed the basis for much of Morris County's domestic architecture in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Known as "East Jersey cottages", they are characterized by three bays on a side-hall plan, gable roofs over a high knee wall, and an internal chimney on the gable end. Despite the use of stone for some of the important buildings in the community, wood was by far the most common building material in the Roxiticus settlement.

There is little architectural difference between the 18th century houses and the 19th century houses built along the North Branch of the Raritan. Earlier houses were occupied by yeomen farmers and tradesmen; but some of the later houses were constructed expressly as tenements for workers in the developing mills.

This 1818 advertisement in the Morristown newspaper, the Palladium of Liberty, suggests the origins of several houses along Roxiticus Road as being tenant houses for the mills:

To Sell, or Rent

The Cotton Manufactory establishment of the subscriber, being now all in complete repair, together with out houses, sufficient to contain several families, near the Manufactory, Possession will be given on the 1st of April next. John Rolston.

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The Kinsey House (site # 33) may be one such house. A simple two-story, frame dwelling of four bays, it stood on Rolston family land in the early 19th century. By 1850, it was the property of C.M. Kinsey, who was the last owner of the cotton factory, but the house was occupied by George Wilkison, who listed his occupation in the census of that year as "cotton manufacture". Across Roxiticus Road, a large, five-bay frame house descended from Georgian architectural precedents (site # 80), was part of the holdings of Samuel Leddell, the mid-19th century owner of the grist mill. Leddell, like John Rolston before him, provided housing for the families who worked the lands and mills around the "manor".

The Ralston manor house, built for John Rolston in the late 18th century, is a fine example of the local interpretation of Federal architecture. Characterized first by its gambrel roof, the manor house (site # 9) has a wide center hall containing a staircase with square-section tapered balustrades. The many fireplaces have mantles with simple, classical moldings, but the exuberant gouge-carving which is associated with late Federal mantles in this area is absent. Rolston's daughter and her husband, Hugh Nesbitt, enlarged and remodelled the old Wills farmhouse (site # 22) in the early 19th century, and added an unusual Federal style cornice with lozenge shape design.

The most high-style 19th century building in the district is Samuel Leddell's house (site # 32), built in 1841 in the Greek Revival style. This cubical house has a raised basement and low pyramidal roof, emphasizing the corner pilasters and severe geometry of the entry portico. It was probably built by Aaron Hudson, an architect-builder who lived and worked in Mendham in the mid-19th century. Hudson is also credited with the Willet House (site # 52), which melds the traditional East Jersey cottage form with Greek Revival details in its attic story and porch.

The Raritan North Branch valley was largely bypassed by industrial development after the Civil War. The architecture of the Romantic Movement and Eclectic styles bypassed the area as well. Only one Victorian-era house, known as "Nesbitt's Castle" was built, supposedly by Aaron Hudson. It stood on the hill at the eastern end of the district (site # 86), but it was demolished in the 20th century.

Interest in colonial arts, crafts, and architecture helped to redefine Mendham in the 20th century as a place of interest and charm. The Whitney estate was formed around a collection of small, frame houses and a pastoral valley. The "seat" of the estate is a vernacular 19th century dwelling, greatly enlarged and improved in the Colonial Revival style (site # 60). The smaller houses on the estate were not restored as much as preserved. Their status as tenant houses has prevented the additions and alterations so common to colonial houses which have been repeatedly bought and sold through the 20th century. Another Colonial Revival style house is the Rachel Cameron Hale House (site # 70), also built as a country seat in the early 20th century.

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The last houses of importance built in Ralston were the French-inspired manor house, tenant house, and barn of the Williams estate (site # 73). The Eclectic Revival styles of the early 20th century are also represented by two other small houses in the district. A brick house combines the single-story plan of the bungalow with English cottage-inspired detailing for a unique, and rather "hand-made" looking building (site #25). The other is also a bungalow in type, built directly from the pages of the Sears Roebuck Catalog of Houses of 1926 (site #85). The model, known as the "Del Rey" was considered by Sears' copywriters to "reflect a touch of Italian and Spanish architecture". French windows prominently located on the facade added to the eclectic mix on this catalog house, which survives in Ralston along with its original garage, also from the Sears catalog. Bungalows, and their contemporaries, the Foursquare, are not well represented in Ralston. This is to be expected, since the early 20th century suburban development which promoted these house types so well in other parts of New Jersey did not occur in Ralston. Only one Foursquare, very much influenced by the American Arts and Crafts movement, stands within the district (site # 36).

Ralston's architecture does not provide an overview of American architectural history, but rather, reflects the persistence of vernacular tradition and the rise and fall of economic prosperity in the community. The threat to the existing historic houses is not from demolition, but from homeowners, who feel the need to expand, enlarge, and "beautify" what were once very simple, vernacular buildings created for farmers and millhands.

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BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Ralston Historic District is outlined on the accompanying map. It includes all of the following properties in Mendham Township, Morris County, New Jersey, listed by block and lot.

Block 100, Lots 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37

Block 103, Lots 1, 2, 3

Block 104, Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 23, 26, 27

Block 104.01, Lots 3, 4, 5

Block 104.02, Lot 18, 18.01

Block 107, Lots 1, 2, 3, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32,
33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49

Block 108, Lots 1, 2, 17, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26

Block 109, Lots 31, 32, 34

Block 110, Lots 2, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 44, 48

The following block and lots are included in the district in part:

Block 100, Lot 29: All land west of the North Branch of the Raritan River to a straight line running north-northwest across the property between the southwest boundary line of Block 100, Lot 30, and the northerly lot line of Block 100, Lot 29.

Block 107, Lot 48: All land north of Roxiticus Road to a distance of approximately 290' from the road to an unnamed stream, including the stream and the 30' wide conservation easement along the stream.

Block 108, Lot 18: All land north of Route 24 to a line west across the property which is a continuation of the northerly property line of Block 108, Lot 18, approximately 354' from the right-of-way.

Block 110, Lot 33: All land north of Route 24 and west of the North Branch of the Raritan River to a line extending across the property which is a continuation of the northerly property line of Block 109, Lot 31 westerly, for a direction of approximately 100 feet, to the intersection of the westerly property line of Block 110, Lot 33.

The district includes a portion of the North Branch of the Raritan River, and portions of State Highway 24 (Mendham Road), Roxiticus Road, Pleasant Valley Road, Union Schoolhouse Road, and Mosele Road, as depicted on the accompanying map.

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UTM REFERENCES

1	18	530580	4513600
2	18	530920	4513820
3	18	531060	4513800
4	18	531160	4513600
5	18	531440	4513420
6	18	531660	4513360
7	18	532120	4513520
8	18	532140	4513400
9	18	531940	4512020
10	18	531800	4511880
11	18	531860	4511740
12	18	532120	4512540
13	18	532120	4512260
14	18	532080	4511900

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15	18	532020	4511860
16	18	531520	4512180
17	18	531580	4511780
18	18	531700	4511740
19	18	531640	4511280
20	18	531740	4510180
21	18	531980	4510540
22	18	532120	4511600
23	18	532100	4510960
24	18	531360	4510560
25	18	530900	4510520
26	18	530400	4510880
27	18	530460	4511220
28	18	530640	4511300
29	18	530540	4511760

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30	18	530300	4511720
31	18	530280	4511920
32	18	530300	4512680
33	18	530680	4512700
34	18	530860	4512560
35	18	531280	4513200
36	18	530600	4513380

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BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The expanded Ralston Historic District is centered on the North Branch of the Raritan River, which runs through western Mendham Township. The junction of the river and Roxiticus Road with Route 24 is an important crossroads, but it never developed into the center of a town. Rather, development in the area was linear, following both the river and the main road which intersected it.

The Ralston Historic District has as its focus the water-powered industries which grew up on the North Branch of the Raritan, and the related houses, outbuildings, and schoolhouses. The residents of the area carried out their business and public social life in neighboring towns like Chester and Mendham. But Roxiticus, or later, Ralston, was recognized as a separate place, and was identified by name on 19th century maps of Mendham Township. All of the remaining buildings which once were included within the area of Ralston or Roxiticus on these maps is included in the historic district, thus greatly expanding the territory from the existing Ralston Historic District which focuses on the crossroads buildings.

The historic district includes resources concentrated along Route 24 from the hill at the border of Mendham Township and Mendham Borough, known as the "Ralston Hill", west to the border of Mendham and Chester Townships, which is marked by the Burnett Brook. The boundary of Mendham Township-Mendham Borough, which is also the eastern boundary of the property known as the Schiff Reservation, forms much of the eastern boundary of the district. The district includes all historic resources along the length of Roxiticus Road and Union Schoolhouse Road, which parallel the river for a distance of about two miles. The western boundary along Roxiticus Road is drawn along the property line of the last house of historic significance, an 18th century cottage. Beyond that property, new (1970s and '80s) developments of large, single family houses on five-acre lots have departed from traditional landscape and architectural features. These properties are visually not part of the historic district. The bridge over the Raritan River on Mosele Road, just south of the end of Union Schoolhouse Road, marks the southern edge of the district. Beyond that point, river and road diverge, and the land rises in a gentle hill, giving a sense of enclosure to the southern end of the district.

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PHOTO IDENTIFICATION

Name: Ralston Historic District (expanded)

Location: Mendham Township, Morris County, New Jersey

Photographer: Acroterion, Janet W. Foster

Date: March - June 1992

Location of Negatives: Acroterion, Historic Preservation Consultants,
382 Springfield Avenue, Suite 414, Summit, New Jersey 07940

<u>Number</u>	<u>View</u>	<u>Location and Property Number</u>
1	SW	View south along the North Branch of the Raritan River from the Route 24 bridge, near site of the Ralston Fulling Mill (site #30)
2	N	309 Route 24 (site # 7)
3	N	Ralston Manor House (site # 9) 12 Roxiticus Road
4	NE	Ralston General Store (site # 10) 313 Route 24
5	W	Ralston Grist Mill (site # 11) Route 24 (corner Roxiticus Road)
6	SE	Wills-Knox Barn (site # 21) 319 Route 24
7	N	Wills-Knox Farmhouse (site # 22) 1 Pine Hill Road
8	W	Wills Family Cemetery (site # 24) Oak Knoll Road
9	S	Nesbitt Mill - Tiger Distillery (site # 25) 336 Route 24

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<u>Number</u>	<u>View</u>	<u>Description and Property Number</u>
10	S	332 Route 24 (site # 26)
11	NE	Nesbitt House (site # 27) 330 Route 24
12	NW	Miller's house (site # 30) 9 Roxiticus Road
13	SW	Samuel Leddell House (site # 32) 13 Roxiticus Road
14	W	Ralston Cotton Mill Office (site # 38) 25 Roxiticus Road
15	NE	27 Roxiticus Road (site # 39)
16	SW	O'Donnell House (site # 51) 45 Roxiticus Road
17	NE	Bridge across the North Branch (site # 53) Roxiticus Road
18	W	Willett House (site # 52) 47 Roxiticus Road
19	NW	Willet Barns (site # 52) 47 Roxiticus Road
20	N	51 Roxiticus Road (site # 56)
21	NW	Arched tailrace and foundations of the Pleasant Valley Woolen Mill (site # 59) Union Schoolhouse Road

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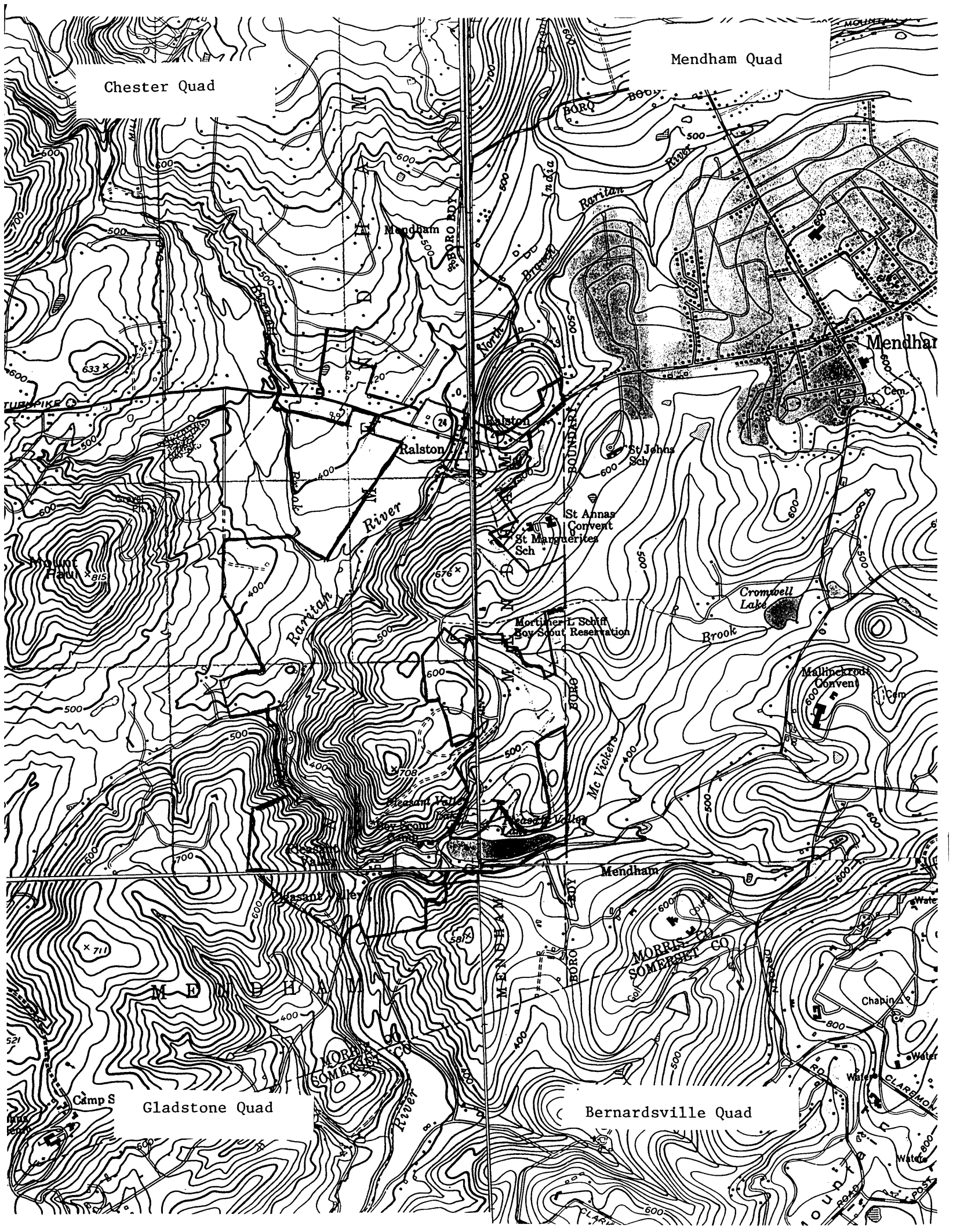
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<u>Number</u>	<u>View</u>	<u>Description and Property Number</u>
22	N	View across remains of dam and millpond for Pleasant Valley Woolen Mill (site #59) toward barns of the Willet Farm (site # 52)
23	E	Arthur Whitney House (site # 60) Roxiticus Road
24	SW	Fairchild House (site # 61) 7 Union Schoolhouse Road
25	W	Union Schoolhouse (site # 66) Union Schoolhouse Road
26	N	Main house at "Brookrace" (site # 73) Union Schoolhouse and Pleasant Valley Roads
27	S	Caretaker's cottage at "Brookrace" (site #73)
28	W	Bridge carrying the main driveway to "Brookrace" (site #73) off Pleasant Valley Road
29	E	22 Roxiticus Road (site # 78)
30	E	Leddell's worker housing (site # 80) Roxiticus Road
31	E	308 Route 24 (site # 87)
32	W	Willet Forge (site # 52) Now attached to rear of newer barn
33	SE	Hewn timbers forming a wheel pit in the bed of the North Branch of the Raritan River, marking the site of the 18th century Mendham Forge (site # 53)
34	W	County bridge 639 over the North Branch of the Raritan River (site # 53)

Chester Quad

Mendham Quad



Mendham

Ralston

Raritan River

St John's Sch

St Annas Convent

St Marguerites Sch

Cromwell Lake

Mortimer L Schiff Boy Scout Reservation

Malinckrodt Convent

Mendham

MORRIS SOMERSET CO

Gladstone Quad

Bernardsville Quad