

The Early History of 1051 Lindenhurst Road



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Introduction

The goal of this the research project was to document the construction date of the stone section of the house. That goal was accomplished. One other aspect of the research which involves a lot of additional effort was the attempt to determine if the eastern section of the structure was a log house dating from 1685. The project includes architectural evaluation, historic research and a review of existing studies.

The early history of Newtown Township was documented in a 334 page book entitled *A History of Land Ownership Newtown Bucks County, Pennsylvania 1683-1850* by Thomas C. Mayer and published in 1999.

Thomas Mayer described the house that is now 1051 Lindenhurst Road a “stone and frame house next to the mill on the west side of Lindenhurst Road. The house was described in an advertisement in 1840 as being new; the existing structure may be a second generation house on the site or a major addition to an earlier building.”

Janney - Torbert Tax Parcel Map and Historic Resources

Figure 21-1 shows the Janney - Torbert historic area superimposed on a recent Tax Parcel Map. The tract borders Middletown and Lower Makefield Townships, and is divided by the Newtown Bypass and Lower Silver Lake Road. The historic resources on this land are identified by numbers.

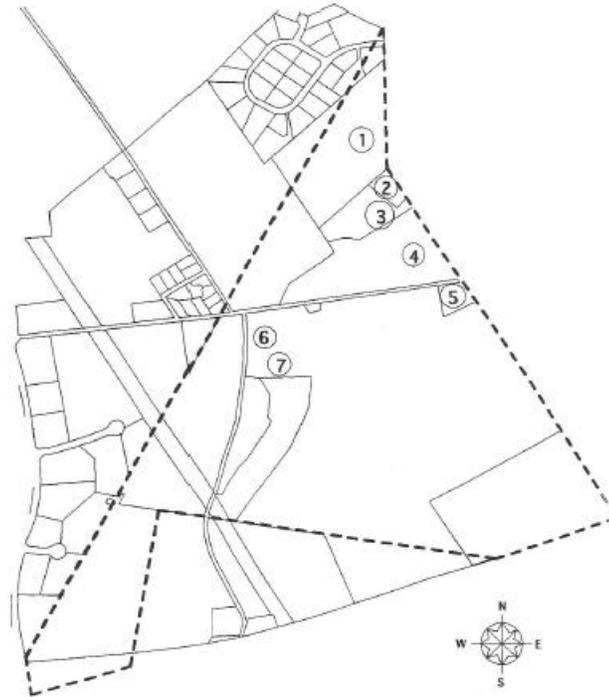


Figure 21-1. The historic Janney - Torbert tract shown in relation to the Tax Parcel Map of the area. Historic resources are numbered.

¹ Mayer, page 268

Architectural Evaluation

The house at 1051 Lindenhurst Road consists of a number of sections. The two sections relevant to this study are the stone section of the house and the frame section attached to the easterly gable end of the stone block. Nineteenth century newspapers describe the structure as a stone house and frame kitchen. The distinction is confirmed by an inspection of the house that revealed the lack of any indication of cooking facilities in the stone section of the house. Functionally, a house could not exist without a kitchen. This indicates one of three common scenarios. One is that both the house and kitchen were constructed at the same time. A second common situation is when the kitchen predates the main house. This is often done when an older house is transformed into a kitchen after the construction of a new house. The final situation occurs when a kitchen postdates the main house. This latter pattern generally occurred when an original kitchen was replaced. This could occur either after a fire or when the kitchen was so old that it had to be replaced due to age and deterioration.

Stone House

The stone section of the house is constructed of fine stonework laid in an ashlar pattern highlighted by ribbon pointing to make the stone look even more formal. The window and door openings have handsome stone lintels with large keystones.



Façade of stone section of house

The first floor of this section of the house is a single room. It was most likely designed as a parlor. Characteristic of a parlor built before the second half of the nineteenth century is the presence of a parlor fireplace with a wooden mantel and surround.



Parlor fireplace

The interior of the stone section is unusual in that the window framing is different on the first floor than on the second floor. The first floor windows have no wooden frames. Instead the jambs of the windows are plastered in a quarter round shape. This is a feature associated with Greek Revival period architect in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. They were a fancier option than the traditional wood window frames. The windows on the second floor are the more typical style. Having less expensive detailing on the second floor where guests would not typically visit, was fairly common.



First floor curved window jambs or reveals



Second floor wooden window frames

Frame Kitchen

This section of the house retains little interior detailing. This is not uncommon for an early house or a section of a house built as a kitchen. Examination of the attic in the stone section reveals the presence of a filled in window in the gable. This window indicates that the frame section of the structure was originally not as tall as it is currently. The window was above the original roofline of the frame section.



The basement reveals that the floor joists were made of flattened logs rather than dimensional lumber. The fact that the house is located adjacent to, and historically associated with, a mill that reportedly dates to circa 1780 is unusual. Log floor joists were used well into the nineteenth century especially for structures not conveniently located near saw mills as it was less work to hew logs flat on one side than transport them to and from a saw mill.

The other feature of significance in the basement is the presence of a stone pier that would have been part of the support system for a kitchen fireplace located on the first floor. There would have been a lintel above the pier that would have been anchored in the front wall. The location of the pier gives an indication of the size of the fireplace that would have been on the first floor. The size of the fireplace is consistent with nineteenth century fireplaces. Eighteenth century kitchen fireplaces were typically larger than the one in the subject structure.



East end of basement under frame wing showing fireplace support pier

The presence of a fireplace on the first floor is corroborated by the termination of the joists holding up the second floor and the presence of a beam along the gable wall. The other floor joists are chamfered and show evidence of lath. Chamfering generally means that the floor joists were originally designed to be exposed. The presence of lath indicates a plaster ceiling had been removed.



East end of kitchen wing showing original location of fireplace and floor joists

Historic Documentation

Early History of Bucks County and Newtown

The first history of Bucks County was compiled by W. W. H. Davis in 1876 (subsequently revised). Davis wrote that it was not known when Newtown Township was laid out, but it was “probably surveyed by Thomas Holme, and it on his map of 1684”. “In 1684 its lands were pretty well apportioned among proprietors, some to actual settlers, and others to non-residents. Some of the parites had land located for them before their arrival. Of these early proprietors we know but little.”²

The other early history of the county was by J. H. Battle and published in 1887. In discussing the early settlement of the county, Battle wrote: “Newtown was probably the only township regularly laid out and entirely disposed of to purchasers prior to the publication of Holme’s map in 1684.” While there are a series of Holme’s maps with names on the various parcels, Battle admits “scarcely anything is known concerning these original owners of the soil.”³



² Davis, W. W. H. *History of Bucks County*.... page 230

³ Battle, J. H. *History of Bucks County*.... page 454



Holmes Map c. 1687



The Holmes Maps were updated through the last two decades of the seventeenth century. Therefore a number of versions exist. Unfortunately many of the versions are not dated. One has to infer the respective dates by the changes in property sizes, shapes and ownership.

indicates that “Shadrach Walley had absorbed the possessions of five of his former neighbors and become the proprietor of one thousand two hundred acres.”⁶

The land that now includes 1051 Lindenhurst Road was part of the 200 acres of land that Shadrach Walley purchased from William Snead, a Philadelphia Innkeeper.⁷ The deed reveals some murky earlier transactions. It states that Snead obtained a warrant (right to purchase land) “about the year 1684” instead of citing a specific reference. The deed states that “formerly sold” the land to Walley “but no deed or conveyance thereof was made”. The deed was dated December 21, 1703.

Shadrach Walley is often credited with being the first actual settler in Newtown. Born in Bickley, Cheshire, England in c1650 he came to America in 1682. Sources state that he married Mary Sharpe “at his home in Newtown”⁸ on March 12, 1688. In addition to his large tracts of land surrounding the village of Newtown, Walley also owned several lots in the town adjoining the Newtown Common.

⁶ Battle, page 454

⁷ Bucks County Deed Book 3, page 197.

⁸ Mayer, page 145

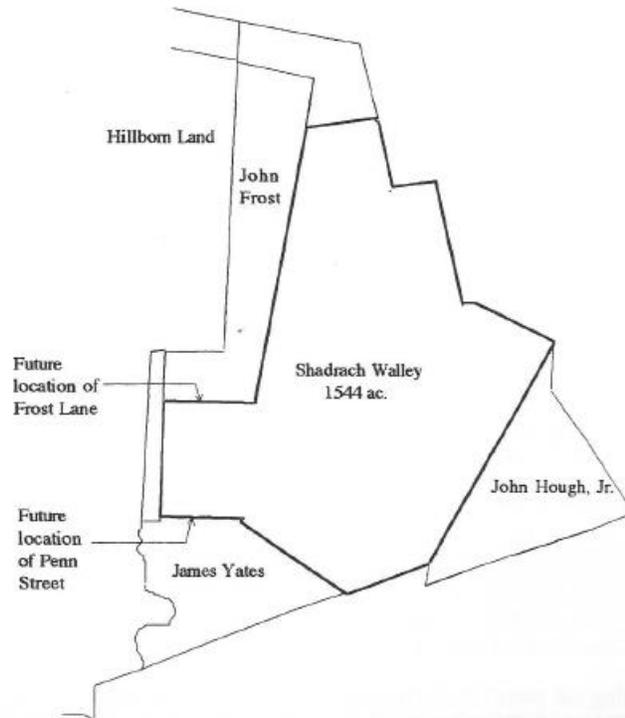


Figure 2. Land of Shadrach Walley, outlined in heavy line, at time of his death in 1721.

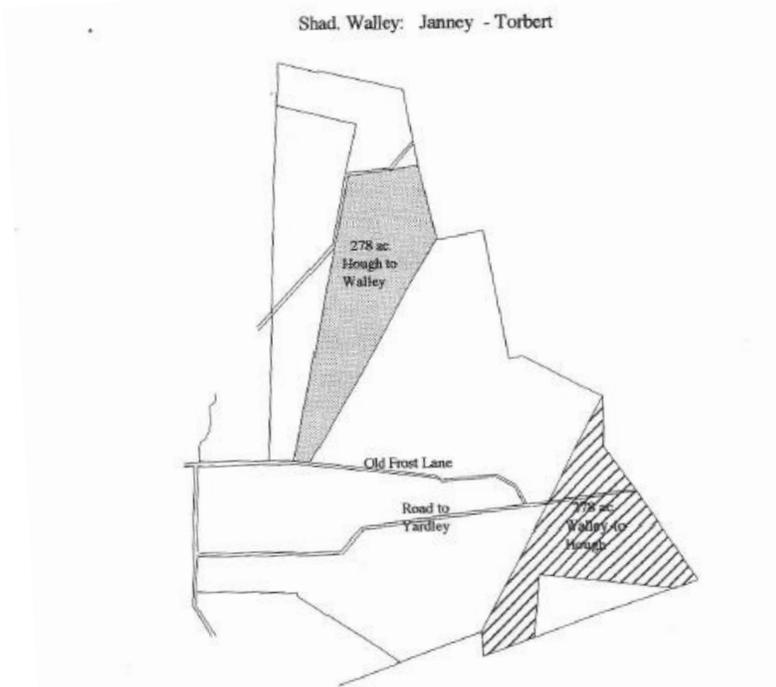


Figure 21-2. View of the eastern part of Newtown Township in 1732 showing the major exchange of land between Walley and Hough. John and Jacob Johnson's land derived from Hough (cross hatch) is in the lower right corner.

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⁹ images from Mayer, pages 146 and 270.

Thomas Mayer speculated that Walley lived at the head of the William Snead tract along the Newtown Common north of what is now Washington Avenue and now occupied by the Brick Hotel. There was a house on the site razed when the current building was erected in 1750.

John Hough, Jr. sold the 278 acres to John and Jacob Johnson in 1729. The two men divided the 278 acres into two equal tracts of 139 acres each in 1729. John Johnson took title to the 139 acres directly related to the subject property. He retained the property for the rest of his life. In his 1731 will, he directed that the executors of his estate sell his real estate.

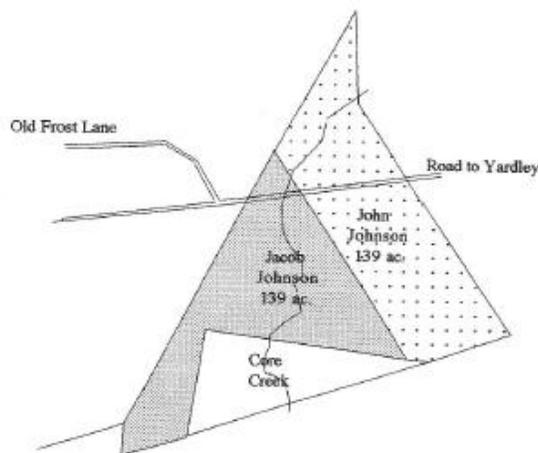


Figure 21-3. Diagram showing the partitioning of land between John and Jacob Johnson in 1729. 10

Philpot Family

Pursuant to John Johnson's will, 122 acres was sold to Richard Philpot. Richard Philpot died without having any children and the property was inherited by his father William Philpot. The elder Philpot owned the property until his death. In 1740, William Philpot bequeathed his property to his son William, Philpot, Jr. The will described the property as the plantation "whereon he [William, Jr.] now lives in Bucks County". William Philpot, Jr. died owning the property and he willed it to his wife Jane Philpot. When Jane Philpot died, the property was left to her three daughters Mary, Phebe and Jane.

Lamb Torbert

Lamb Torbert married Mary Philpot, one of three Philpot daughters. Lamb and Mary Torbert purchased the interests of Phebe in 1762 and Jane in 1765. Details of the transaction between the heirs dated April 15, 1765 (DB 27 p160). In that deed, Lamb Torbert is described as a carpenter. In addition to the Philpot land, Lamb Torbert also purchased an adjoining tract of land situated partially in Newtown Township, but primarily in Lower Makefield Township.¹¹ Lamb

¹⁰ Mayer, page 271

¹¹ This other tract consisted of 111 acres completely in Lower Makefield Township, purchased from Thomas Morgan in 1762 (Deed book F3, page 181); 8 ³/₄ acres that was part of 30 ¹/₂ acres purchased from Lawrence Johnson and John Johnson in 1756. Torbert sold the remaining 22 acres along Core Creek to Samuel Yardley in 1784 (Deed book 20, page 146).

Torbert developed this adjoining property with the construction of a water powered grist mill in circa 1770¹². A portion of the Philpot land totaling 2 ¼ acres, including the site of the subject structure, was attached to the two tracts noted above.

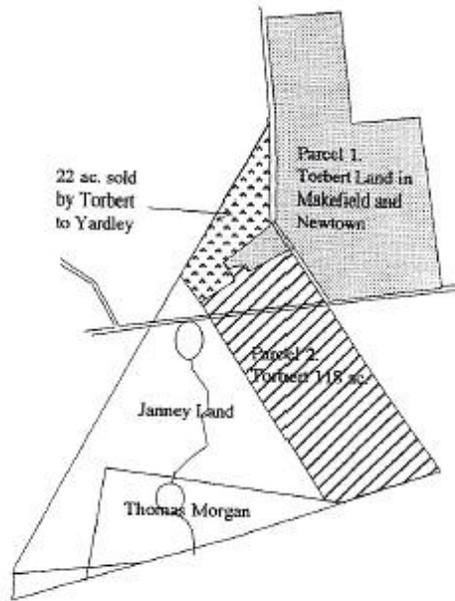


Figure 21-5. Parcels #1 and #2 of Lamb Torbert located in Newtown and Lower Makefield, and sold by Torbert in 1784 to Cornelius Vansant (#1) and John and Nathaniel Burrows (#2).

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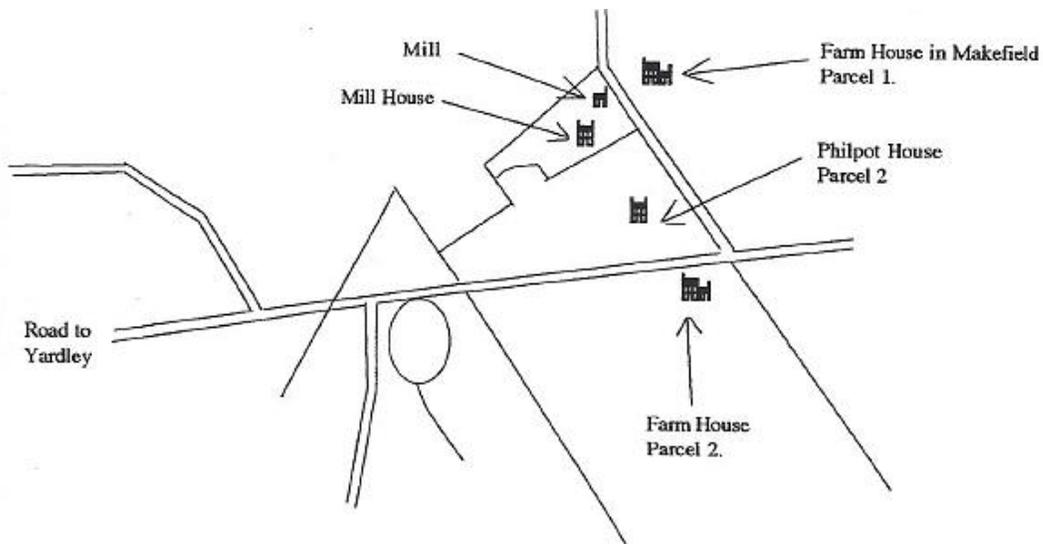


Figure 4. Buildings associated with Lamb Torbert's land in Newtown and Lower Makefield Townships in 1784. The Philpot house is no longer standing, and the Mill House was new or substantially rebuilt in 1840.

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¹² Torbert is assessed for a grist mill and 130 acres in 1781 which is one of the earliest tax records that specifically mentions mills

¹³ Mayer, page 276.

¹⁴ Mayer, page 277.

Lamb Torbert sold the 122 acre property to Cornelius Vansant¹⁵ in 1784 for 1100 pounds. The next transaction was when Vansant sold the property, then totaling 118 acres in 1795 to Whitson Canby.

Whitson Canby sold the property in 1797 to Cyrus Cadwalader¹⁶. Cadwallader only owned the property for two years. Cyrus Cadwalader sold xxs to David Buckman in 1799.

Nineteenth Century Owners

David Buckman transferred the property to William Buckman in 1804. William Buckman owned the property at his death five years later. The 1809 will of William Buckman divided the property. David Buckman's son Dilworth Buckman received the grist mill and all of the land on the west side of the road in Newtown Township, totaling about 10 acres. Dilworth Buckman then sold the property to Thomas Betts in 1814.

Thomas Betts owned the property for about fifteen years until he sold it to Frederick Ellenger on March 30, 1831 for \$3,700. At that time Betts was described as living in Upper Makefield Township while Ellenger resided in Newtown Township. The deed was for a grist mill and other buildings.¹⁷

Frederick Ellenger advertised the property in the Doylestown Intelligencer on November 25, 1840. "The house is new two story, stone 21 by 18 feet and kitchen adjoining 20 by 16 feet with cellar and vault under, conveniently divided into rooms with a pump of excellent water at the door. Stables, wagon house, hog pen and other convenient out buildings".

¹⁵ Bucks County Deed Book 20, page 105.

¹⁶ Bucks County Deed Book 45, page 30.

¹⁷ Bucks County Deed Book 55, page 555. The deed gives direction and distances of the boundary but does not give a calculation of the acreage.

VALUABLE GRIST MILL, &C. AT PUBLIC SALE.

I will sell at public sale, on the premises, on Saturday the 12th day of December next, at 1 o'clock, p. m. all my Grist Mill, Dwelling House, and other buildings, together with about

12 ACRES

of prime land, the whole situated partly in Newtown and Lower Makefield townships, adjoining lands with Joseph Yardley, Aaron Eastburn, and others, 2 1-2 miles from Newtown, 2 1-2 miles from Yardleyville, 7 from Trenton, and 24 miles from Philadelphia.

The Mill House is stone, 2 stories high, 52 by 30 feet. One overshot water wheel, with 20 feet head and fall, turning 2 pair of stones and a pair of hullers, the whole in good order, having undergone a thorough repair during the last summer. The establishment is well situated for country custom, (of which it has a good run) and also for merchant work, the stream (*Cora Creek*) is one of the most lasting of its size in the county, being supplied by never failing springs, and the whole is surrounded by a region of the best land and *best farmers in old Bucks*.

The House is new, two story, stone,  21 by 18 feet, and kitchen adjoining, 20 by 16 feet, with cellar and vault under, conveniently divided into rooms, &c. with a pump of excellent water at the door. Stables, wagon house, hog pen, and other convenient out buildings, fruit trees, &c.

And to cut the matter short, (for I dislike a long advertisement, nobody buys without first taking a *peep*)- The property is so well known, through the surrounding country and neighborhood, that you have only to make enquiry, and all will tell you it is one of the most desirable establishment for miles around, and no better location can be selected for good *society*, good *soil*, and good *grain*, that I know of.

But I am resolved to sell, go high or go low, and for this *one* good reason, viz: I have at this time two concerns of the kind, and would like right well to keep both. But I have not quite enough of the "ready" to "plank up" all round. So look out for a bargain, for "off she goes" to the highest bidder. Terms accommodating, and made known upon the sale.

FREDERICK ELLENGER.

November 25, 1840.

N. B. I live upon the property, and will take great pleasure in showing the same upon application, to all desirous of viewing.

Frederick Ellenger advertisement, Bucks County Intelligencer November 25, 1840



1849 Dripps Map of Newtown

Mill Property at Public Sale.

WILL be sold at Public Sale, on **WEDNESDAY** 10th of December next, at 2 o'clock, p. m., on the premises, in Newtown township, Bucks county, situated near the Plank road leading from Yardleyville to Newtown, three miles from the former, and two from the latter place—that large and substantial built **MERCHANT and GRIST MILL**, known by the name of Ashland's Mills, on Core creek. It has recently been put in good repair. There are two run of stones, one of which is superior French burrs, and the other country stones of a superior quality, with all other necessary machinery, such as elevators, hulling stones, grist and merchant cloths, all in good order. The mill house is 50 feet by 30 feet, three stories high, and built of stone. There is 20 feet head and fall, with an overshot wheel: granaries for storing different kinds of grain. Also, one **STONE DWELLING**, near the mill, two stories high, with kitchen adjoining, and finished in the best manner; a well at the door, with a pump therein; barn, wagon house, carriage house, and all necessary out-buildings, with **12 ACRES** of good land. This property is worthy the attention of purchasers, being a first-rate country stand, and now doing a good business, and in an excellent neighborhood for grain. For further information apply to the owner, residing on the premises.

ABNER MORRIS.

JAMES C. ROOK, Auctioneer. [Nov. 18.]

Abner Morris advertisement, Bucks County Intelligencer November 18, 1851

Ten years after purchasing the property, Frederick Ellenger sold the mill and surrounding tract to Abner Morris on April 1, 1841 for \$5,101. The deed was for a grist mill, messuage (dwelling house), tenement (tenant house) and lot of land along with a mill race dam partly in Lower Makefield and partly in Newtown Township. The transaction also makes reference to a second lot that included a mill race¹⁸.

Abner Morris' advertisement focused on the mill. It did describe the house as "a stone dwelling, near the mill, two stories high, with kitchen adjoining, and finished in the best manner". The property was sold to George Gale of Philadelphia on April 1, 1852 for the sum of \$5,000.¹⁹

No advertisements for subsequent transfers were located. The *Newtown Enterprise* did follow the movement of the millers and property owners. In the March 26, 1887 edition there was information indicating that Joseph Hampton moved from his mill in Newtown to a mill he "purchased at Anandale, Hunterdon, Co. N. J." and Samuel Price moved from a mill at Chain Bridge (now Second Street Pike between Northampton and Wrightstown Townships) to Joseph Hampton's mill.

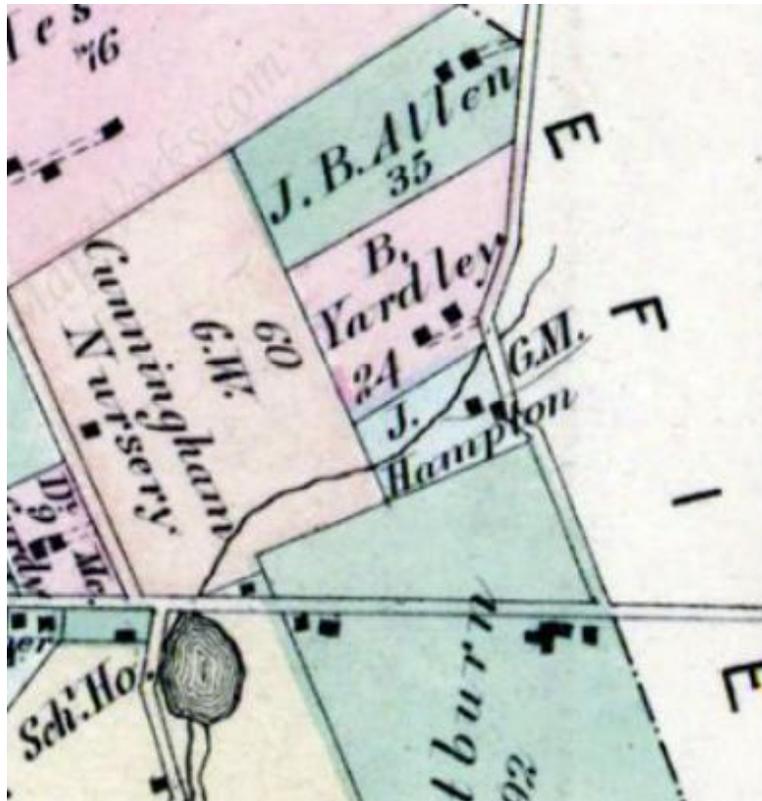
From the November 26, 1887 *Newtown Enterprise*, it can be determined that "Joseph Hampton, now of Annandale, New Jersey, has sold his dwelling and Ashland mill, on Core creek, Newtown township, to Orlenzo C. Reeder, of New Jersey. The information was noted again on December 31, 1887 when the *Enterprise* noted that "Joseph Hampton, now of Annandale, N. J., has sold his Ashland mill, in Newtown township, on Core creek; to O. C. Reeder, of Shoemakertown, Montgomery county, who will move thereto on the 1st of April next."

Samuel Price did not occupy the Newtown Township mill for long. It was announced in the February 18, 1888 newspaper that "The Chain Bridge Mill property, in Northampton township, belonging to the estate of the late John V. Hall, deceased, was sold at public sale on the 10th inst., by Warner C. Thompson, administrator, to Samuel C. Price, of the Ashland Mill, on Core creek; Newtown township, for \$10,000. Mr. P. will remove thereto on April 1st next."

The March 24, 1888 edition noted that Samuel C. Price moved from Ashland Mills to Chain Bridge and that O. C. Reeder moved from Shoemakertown to Ashland Mill.

¹⁸ Bucks County Deed Book 66 page 114.

¹⁹ Bucks County Deed Book 119, page 299.



1876 J. D. Scott Atlas – “J. Hampton G.M.”



1891 E. P. Noll Atlas “O. C. Reeder Grist Mill”

Conclusion

It has been impossible to determine the construction date of the frame section of the house with certainty. From a historic documentation perspective, it is generally difficult to ascertain what specific improvements were located on any property in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. With regards to this property's history, this is made more difficult by the immense size of Shadrach Walley's land holdings and the fact that there is indication that he lived on another portion of his property. It is highly unlikely that any part of the current structure dates to the seventeenth century. Most sources indicated that the documented houses in Newtown of the period were located around the Newtown Common.

Tax records in the eighteenth century are scarce. There are no tax records that mention buildings for the township that mention houses until 1784. Neither Lamb Torbert or Cornelius Vansant appear on the Newtown Township tax list. Both men do appear on the tax list for Lower Makefield Township. Torbert had 107 acres with no improvements while Vansant had 172 acres with two houses.

Documentation for the construction of the stone section of the house has been established. It is unclear on whether the frame section of the house was built at the same time as the stone section of the house or predates it. It is unusual for the residential part of the house to be constructed of stone while a kitchen wing was of frame construction. Generally, due to the precaution against fire, the kitchen wing would also be built of stone. In many instances, *only* the kitchen wing was built of stone.

Frederick Ellenger's 1840 advertisement states: "The house is new two story, stone 21 by 18 feet and kitchen adjoining 20 by 16 feet with cellar and vault under, conveniently divided into rooms with a pump of excellent water at the door." This citation suggests that both the stone house and kitchen (which was not stone construction) were new.

The 1851 advertisement focused on the mill. It did describe the house as "a stone dwelling, near the mill, two stories high, with kitchen adjoining, and finished in the best manner". The reference to "new" was replaced by a description of the house as "finished in the best manner".

The property sold on March 30, 1831 for \$3,700. Ten years later on April 1, 1841 it sold for \$5,101 suggesting that the property had been improved in the intervening ten years.

Architecturally, the frame section of the house has little detail to provide dating. The cooking fireplace has been removed. The house has log floor joists that possibly can be dated through dendrochronology. Otherwise there is little in the way of architectural features that can be dated through style.

At this point, it has been determined that the stone part of the house dates to circa 1830 - 1840 and that the frame section may have pre-dated the stone section, but no documentation of its construction date has been located.

TINKER TOY FARM - LINDENHURST RD.

1970
1685.0041.0221



2007 Historic Sites Survey

