

# THE MOUNT AMWELL NEWS

## Is This a Lenape Burial Mound?



On September 22nd, October 6th and Oct 20th volunteers cleared approximately 35% of brush and fallen trees of the one half acre Howell/Rittenhouse graveyard. Over 100 head and foot stones were counted with one discovered about 200 feet from the north side of the 300 year old graveyard. Volunteers include Stockton Borough Council members Paul Bergquist and Don Vandergrift, MTAP members Ray Simonds, Bob Leith, and Dave Voorhees, and Mark Wells, facilities manager at the Prallsville Mill complex. The work was performed compliant with The Mount Amwell Project lease signed with Stockton Borough in June which assigned responsibility to the MTAP to preserve and protect this important historical graveyard.

During the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of clearing the mound pictured above was revealed and tentatively identified as a possible Indian Burial mound by Bob Leith and Dave Voorhees. It was similar to the mounds recently discovered by Gregory C. Herman, Ph.D. on Cushtunk Mountain in Readington Township. He presented the results of his first phase of research into the nature of the ancient stone cairns upon Cushtunk Mountain in Flemington, NJ at an event sponsored by the Hunterdon County Historical Society and the Hunterdon 300th initiative on September 15, 2018.

Dr. Herman has written, that “Historical research shows that the Cushtunk stone mounds may represent a cultural overlap between Late Archaic or

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Early Woodland mound builders and the Lenape. There is good evidence the Cushetunk mounds share a common ancestry with stone mound builders occupying the Susquehanna Valley of Pennsylvania and adjacent parts of western NY. Probable sepulchre mounds on Cushetunk Mountain are reported to contain a lineage of warrior chiefs spanning at least seven generations and contain artifacts unlike the Lenape at the time of colonial contact.”

At this time it has not been determined the date or history of the Howell mound, but there is some evidence that the hill above the Delaware River near Stockton was a Lenape burying place. There are several places on the hill containing what appears to be remains of stone mounds. The fact that they are placed in a scattered fashion is consistent with Lenape burying practices described by Herbert C. Kraft in his book *The Lenape-Delaware Indian Heritage* where he describes on page 344 the practice

as “The placement of graves was more or less haphazard; sometimes the remains were located close together, but most often they were located here and there across the site.”

The graveyard is located on 1440 acres of land acquired by West New Jersey Proprietor Col. John Reading in 1709. About 1710 his daughter Elsie married Captain Daniel Howell and he gifted about one square mile of land west of the Wickecheok Creek which includes present day Stockton to the couple. Daniel Howell died in 1733 and Elsie probably in 1732. In his will Daniel leaves the land to his six children as “Item, I give and bequeath unto my said sons Daniel and John the Cornor [sic] Grist Mill ... together also with 60 acres of land... Item, I give and bequeath unto my said sons Joseph and Benjamin the remaining part of the Plantation...divided between them share and share alike according to the Quality thereof.”



Upon the deaths of their parents the Howell children, Elizabeth, Daniel, John, Joseph, Mary, and Jacob were not yet of age and therefore did not assume ownership of the properties. John Reading, Jr., a senior member of the colonial Governor's council and a surveyor like his father, surveyed the entire tract and reissued deeds to the Daniel, John, Joseph, and Jacob. The survey map identifies three parcels. The left parcel is referred to Mill Tract consisting of 73 acres for John and Jacob, the center tract for Joseph consisting of 250 acres. And the right side tract of 80 acres, the Ferry Tract, for Benjamin. Benjamin also is given 250 acres above Joseph's land. The survey maps clearly shows the western side of the Graveyard proving that graveyard was established by the Howell family prior to 1744.



**Figure 1: Paul Berguist, Don, & Dave Voorhees clear debris from the Howell graveyard.**

John Reading deeded Joseph Howell the land (250 acres) containing the graveyard dated December 23, 1749. "Whereas John Reading of Amwell aforesaid in and by his deed bearing the date the twenty third day of December in the year of our lord one thousand seven hundred and fifty nine ...did grant and convey

to Joseph Howell ... containing 250 acres..." (HCD 2-39). The Howell/Rittenhouse graveyard is located on the division line separating property inherited from Capt. Daniel Howell by his sons Benjamin and Joseph. The graveyard was probably established by Daniel Howell between 1710 and 1730 and the burial mound may provide be a clue as to why the graveyard was placed in that location.

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### Reading Burial Ground Farm Sold at Auction



The Tullamore Farm near Rosemont in Hunterdon County and owned by Jean-Marie Mitchell since 2000 was sold at auction on September 20 2018. The 200+ acre property is the location of the Reading Burial Ground, the historic cemetery maintained under an oral agreement with Ms. Mitchell for the past 12 years. The Mount Amwell Project will negotiate a new written agreement with the new owners to continue maintenance uninterrupted. Whole 9 Yards landscaping in Sergeantsville will continue to mow the site in 2019.

### Woodschurch

The Readington Township Committee approved an amendment to the Historical Cemetery Maintenance Agreement for the Haypress Cemetery (3/17/18) that would include the Woodschurch cemetery on West Woodschurch Road. They agreed that "maintenance of the Woodschurch Road Cemetery is a proper and necessary public purpose to preserve the character of the land and its history, in harmony with the goal and objectives of the Readington Township Committee."

## Boy Scouts

The Mount Amwell Project has met with Tony Woods, Scoutmaster of Boy Scout Troop 168 in Three Bridges to discuss Scout projects related to historic cemeteries. Some of the potential projects that the MTAP could provide include clearing abandoned cemeteries, resetting, repairing, and cleaning gravestones, transcribing and mapping gravestones, making and installing signs, making and installing fencing, and researching genealogy.

## Web site

John Reading has re-hosted the Mount Amwell Project web site from GoDaddy to Bluehost because of reliability issues. We have also engaged Phil Deenen of Denver, CO to review and refresh the site with new and more user friendly navigation and appearance. The cemetery and burial databases will have a new cleaner user interface.

Beverly Kirby-McDonough will continue to improve the content of the databases concurrently with the upgrade. She is checking the cemeteries against the Hunterdon County Historical Society's master list and updating the burial source references.

## Site Steward Program Established

We now are responsible for maintaining six historic cemeteries in Hunterdon County with the real possibility of adding more in 2019. It is becoming increasingly difficult to monitor each site consistently so we have established a volunteer position of "Site Steward." Each Steward will be responsible for checking on their site on a regular schedule and report any condition issues to the Executive Director. Current Stewards are: Pat Barber for Swackhammer, Mark Wells for Howell, and Dennis Graney for Woodschurch.

## Make a gift to of Appreciated Securities to the Mount Amwell Project, Inc.

We will soon begin our fund raising campaign for 2019. This year in addition our very successful letter campaign we have established a securities account for accepting donations of appreciated securities. You may now transfer appreciated stocks, bonds, or mutual fund shares that you have owned for more than one year to The Mount Amwell Project, Inc. and claim an income tax deduction for the value of the securities on the date of transfer, no matter what you originally paid for them, and you will pay no capital gains tax. For information on how to execute this charitable gift giving idea contact:

Dave.reading@mtamwell.org or

Call (908) 801-3125.



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