
Historic Preservation Committee

— 2022 Update —

Last year: Historic signs at Pitney Park



Summer 2022: Seed House Renovation

- Supplies and labor generously donated by Anatol Siemienczuk
- Interior Work paid for with HPC funds





Seed House: DPW work

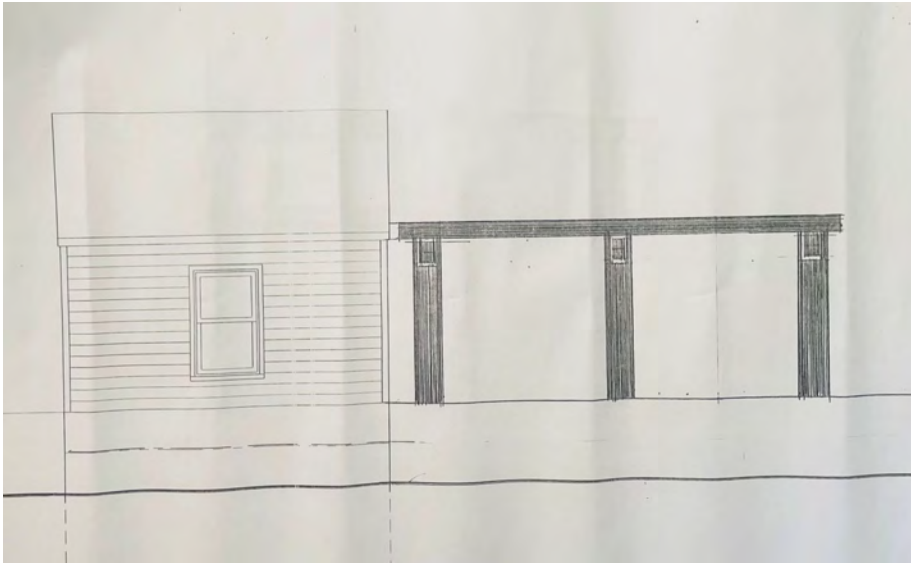
- The DPW responded quickly to our request
- Removed the pipes from the former greenhouse area
- Took down the portion of the wall that had been damaged by a tree

DPW work saved us thousands of dollars!!



Seed House: Future Plans

We want to turn the former greenhouse area into usable space that compliments the park.



- Replace the floor with bluestone
- Add pergola
- Add benches

Next steps: create a budget and
fundraise

Archives Move - Thank you, DPW!



Room to Work

Storage and workspace was generously donated by the Sisters of the Community of St. John Baptist. For the first time, we can catalog, sort, organize, and digitize in one place.



Website

We have developed a website using Wordpress. This platform is free.

We have used the remainder of our budget to hire a designer who will create our pages, connect to social media, enable email and donation options, and secure a domain name.

www.historicmendhamtwp.org

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Welcome to Historic Mendham Township

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About

Mendham Township Historic Preservation Committee

The goal of the Historic Preservation Committee is to preserve and educate the community about the Township's rich history and to encourage its protection. HPC serves as an advisory Committee to Township residents, committees and agencies to increase community awareness and to preserve the unique historic heritage. Traditionally, the citizens of the Township have sought to maintain the residential, semi-rural character of the Township by zoning that excludes uses such as commercial and industrial that are in conflict with the existing environment. Historic preservation is in harmony with this philosophy. Designation of sensitive historic areas within the Township affords some degree of protection from the use of public funds for reconstruction of roads, bridges and other structures.

mendhamtownship.org/historic-preservation-committee

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History

Mendham Township

The township was originally formed on March 29, 1749, from portions of Hanover Township, Morris Township and Roxbury Township. After the Revolutionary War, on February 21, 1798, the township was incorporated by the Township Act of 1798 of the New Jersey Legislature as one of the state's initial group of 104 townships. Portions of the township were taken to create Randolph Township on January 1, 1806. Mendham Borough became an independent municipality when it was formed on May 15, 1906.

The first settlers were attracted to Mendham Township by the abundance of natural resources. Here they found water to power factories, trees for fuel, and rich deposits of ore. By 1748 the area housed iron forges, sawmills, and a gristmill along the North Branch of the Raritan River. This early settlement became known as Ralston, after the enterprising Ralston family. Northeast of Ralston is India Brook. On the eastern side of Mendham Township, brooks that formed the upper reaches of the Whippany River attracted settlers to the valley called Water Street or Waterville, later known as Brookside.

Following the Civil War, a trend of wealthy industrialists and financiers established country homes in the Morristown area and Bernardsville's "Mountain Colony", including in the Mendhams. The community retains its early character through its carefully preserved homes, farm buildings, and villages. These are living remnants of the township's past. Here people worked where they lived in a natural setting, away from the "dark satanic mills" of the big city, "pursuing economic independence – a portrait of Americana", according to the town's website.

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Places

There are four historic districts in Mendham Township: Brookside, Ralston, Tempe Wick Washington Corners and Washington Valley.

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Brookside

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Ralston

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Tempe Wick
Washington Corners

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Ralston

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Tempe Wick
Washington Corners

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Brookside Historic District



Brookside is an unincorporated village in Mendham Township, Morris County, New Jersey. As its name suggests, Brookside is sited beside a narrow waterway, the upper reaches of the Whippany River. The river runs roughly west to east at this location, and the buildings of the village are strung out along Main Street, which runs parallels the north side of the river. To the south of the river rises a steep hill, which is heavily wooded. This hillside was not developed historically, and even now hosts only a few single family houses, because of the steep terrain. The wide floodplain of the river on the north side of the river serves to distance the houses of Brookside from the river itself, but the gently sloping land implies siting on a riverbank even when the water is not visible.

Gallery



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Ralston Historic District



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 Bumett 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.

General Store

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.



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Founding Families

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Thomas Nesbitt (1760-1819) emigrated from County Armagh, Ireland to the United States in 1784 probably with his brother Hugh Nesbitt. He eventually settled in New Jersey, moving progressively west over the years from Springfield, Scotch Plains, and Plainfield, then probably part of Essex County (now in Union County) to Millstone, Mount Pleasant, Raritan Bridge, and finally Somerville, in Somerset County. He married, had at least one son, Hugh, and operated a general store in Somerville and probably other towns in New Jersey (it is unclear how many stores he had because of changing town names and borders).

On January 27, 1818, Hugh Nesbitt (d. 1827), Thomas's son, married Mary Ann Ralston, the daughter of John and Margaret Ralston, also from County Armagh, Ireland. John Ralston, who lived in Mendham, New Jersey (part of which was later called Ralston), was a merchant and the partner of Hugh Nesbitt, Thomas's brother. Hugh (d. 1827) joined his father's business in Somerville until Thomas Nesbitt's death in 1819, at which time he moved with his family to Mendham where he became a farmer and businessman. Hugh and Mary Ann Nesbitt had three children before Hugh's death in 1827. Their only son was named after Mary Ann's father, John Ralston Nesbitt.

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RALSTON CIDER MILL

SAW MILL

GRIST MILL

BLACKSMITH SHOP

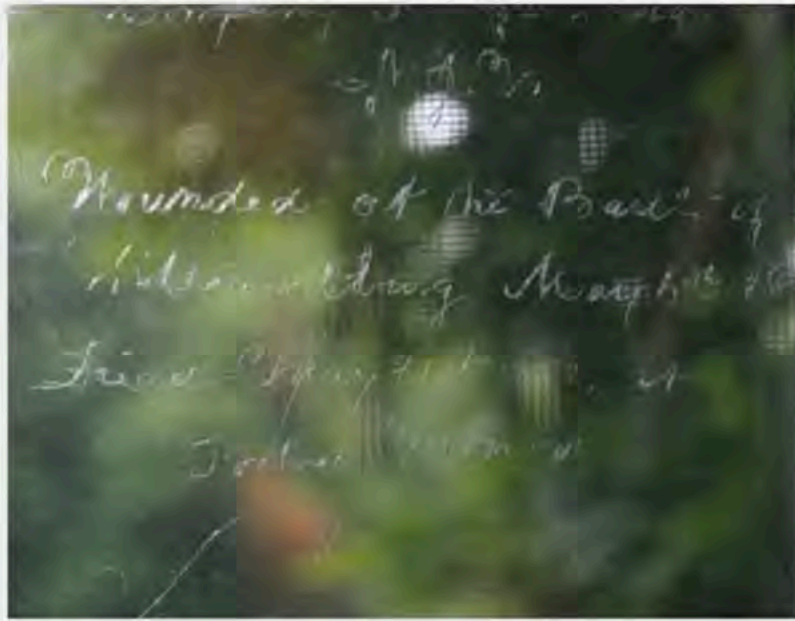
GENERAL STORE

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Tribute to a Civil War Son, etched in glass



Joseph S. Watkins was the great grandson of Mahlon Pitney and the son of Phebe Pitney Watkins (who was the sister of Henry Cooper Pitney). Joseph was born in Mendham in 1843. He fought in the Civil War, enlisting in 1861 and serving as a Corporal in the 7th NJ Regiment. Joseph died of wounds received in the Battle of Williamsburg on March 31, 1862 at the age of 19 years. The record of this sad loss was etched in a windowpane at the farm by his mother and is still visible today.

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Map published by E. Robinson in 1887

This map of Mendham Township was published by E. Robinson in 1887.

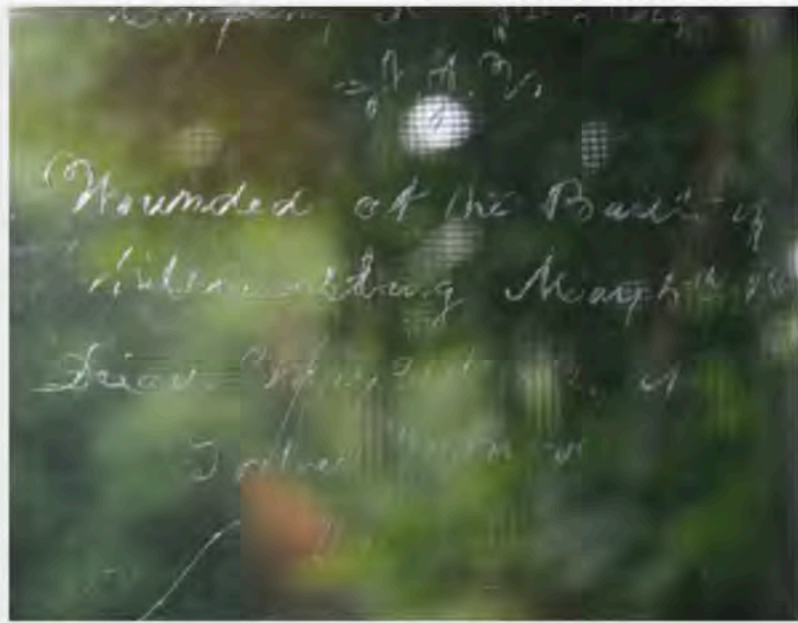
Place your cursor over the map to get a closer look at the various family homesteads. Or click [HERE](#) to open it in a new window.



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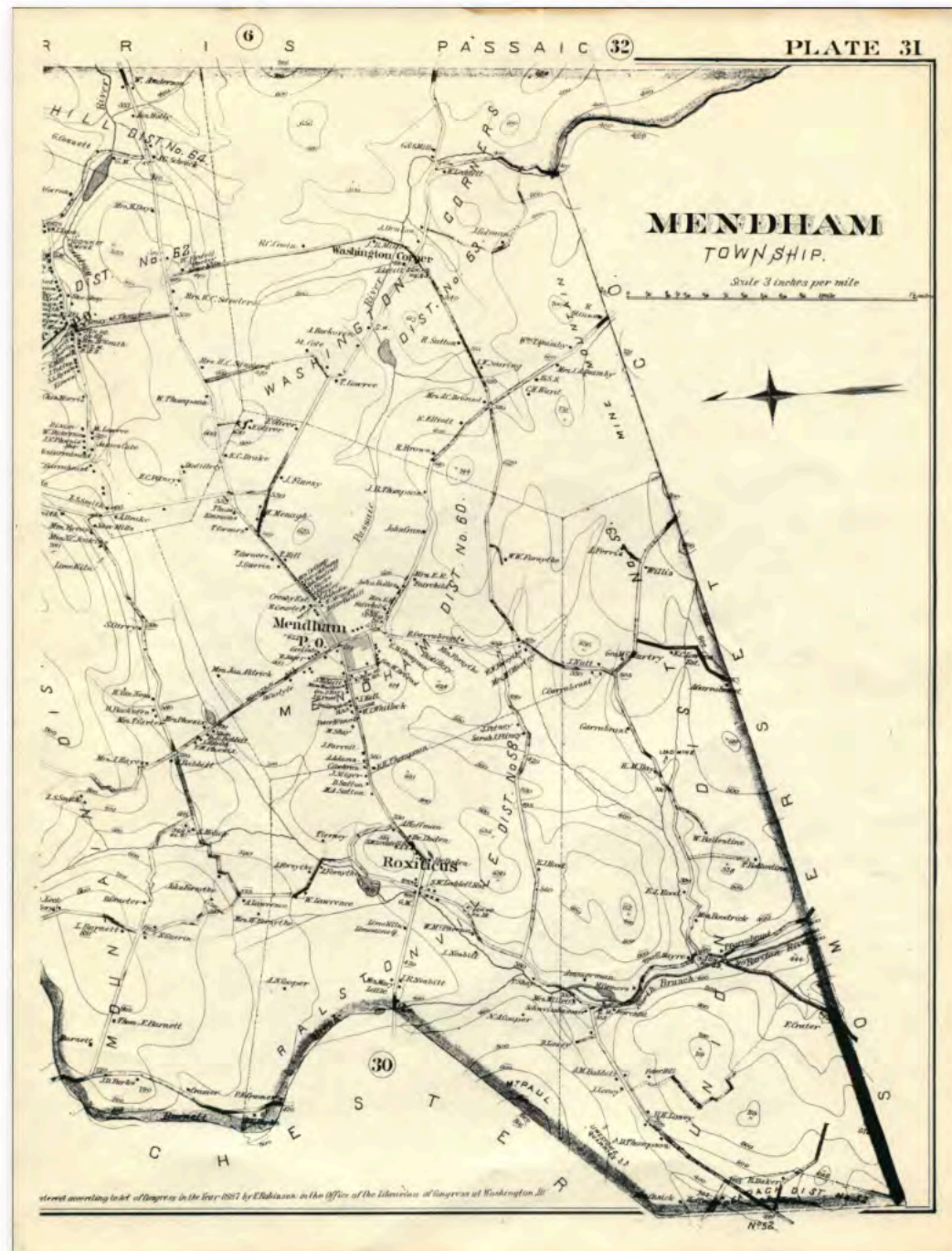
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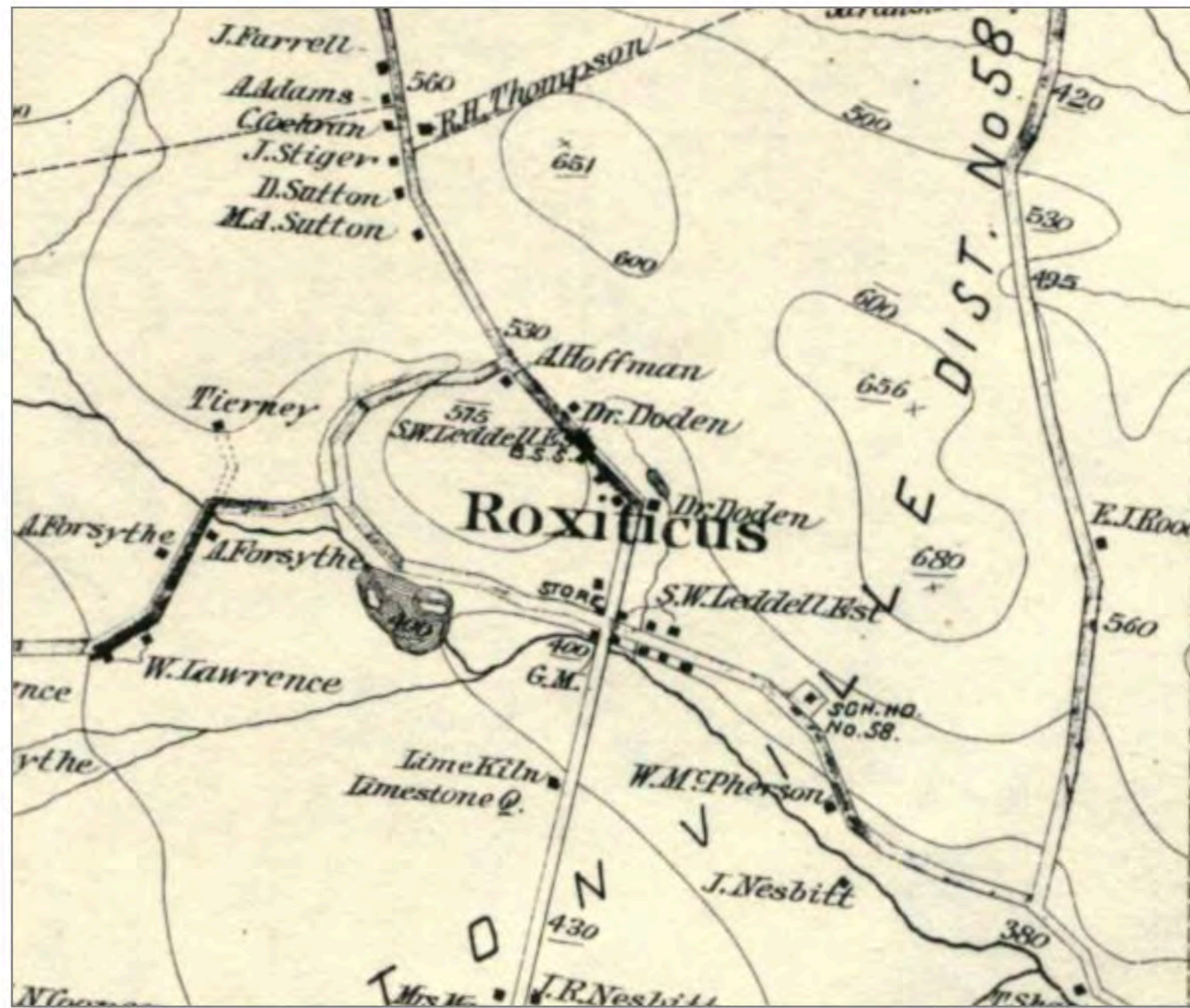
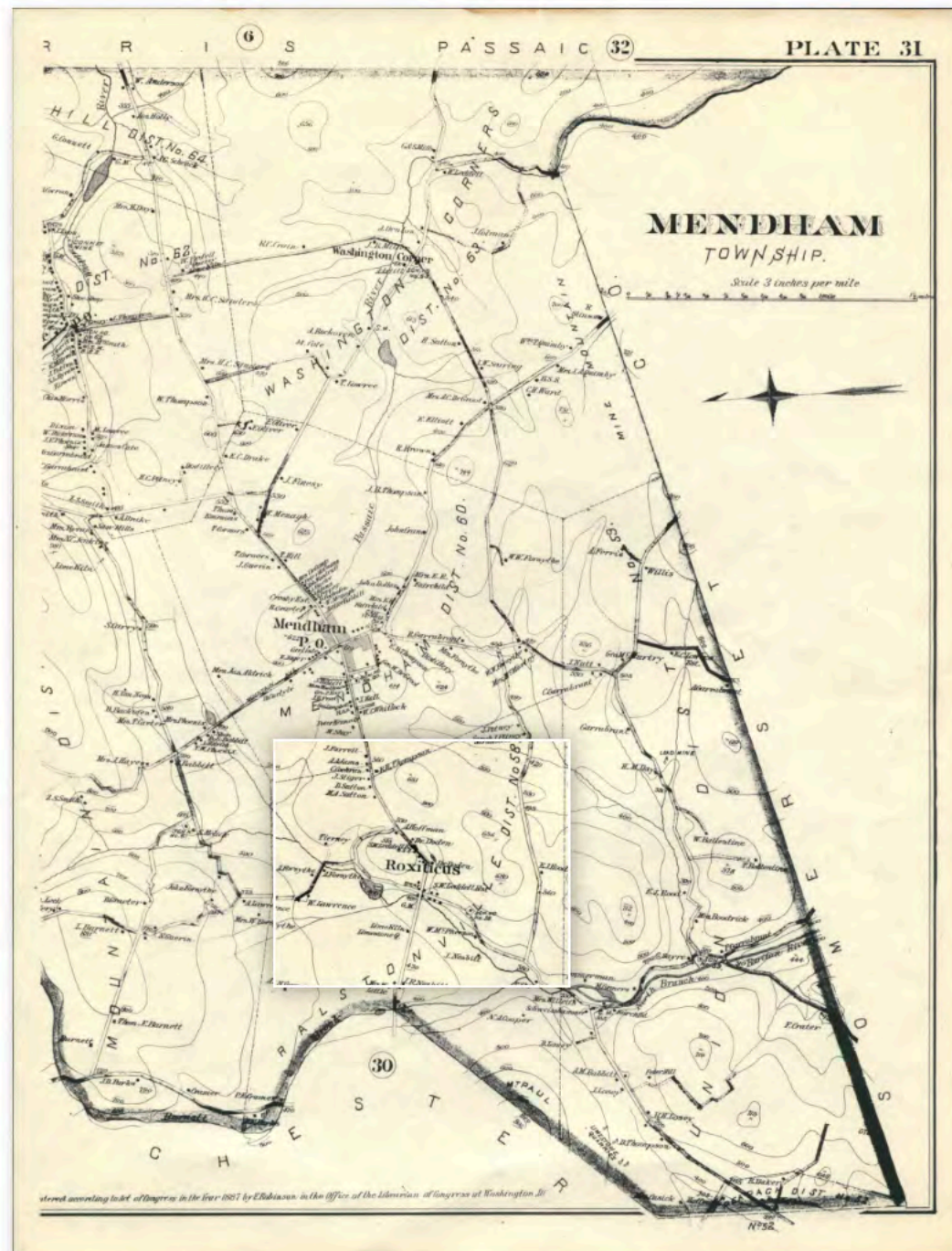
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Contact

Address:

Historic Preservation Committee

2 West Main Street

PO BOX 520

Brookside, J 07926

Meetings: 1st Wednesday of each month, 6:45p

Key Contact:

Melissa Saharko, Chair
