APPENDIX C
Cultural Assessment

WAPPINGERS LAKE
WAPPINGERS FALLS, NEW YORK
APRIL 1993

Wappingers Lake
Wappingers Falls, Dutchess County
New York
Cultural Resources Reconnaissance Report

I. Introduction

In April, 1992, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District (Corps) began a reconnaissance study to determine the extent of the Federal interest in a program to improve water quality, control excess plant growth and insect populations, and restore degraded habitats in Wappingers Lake, Wappingers Falls, Dutchess County, New York. Wappingers Lake, located in and owned by the Village of Wappingers Falls, is a man-made lake that was constructed by damming Wappingers Creek at Wappingers Falls. The lake as it appears today was created by a dam constructed in the early 20th century. Wappingers Creek, which runs through and feeds the lake, is a small tributary of the Hudson River. The confluence of these waterways is located approximately two miles south of Wappingers Falls.

Currently the lake is only 3 to 6 feet deep due to substantial silting. Water quality has deteriorated affecting the lake's aquatic habitat and overall ecology. Rotting vegetation and silt build-up has produced odors and a mosquito problem that may affect the health of the inhabitants of the village.

The Corps' task in this phase was to identify the means by which water-quality can be improved and the lake ecology and habitat can be restored. The study will also determine the extent and magnitude of the problem and consider the ways in which the lake can be managed in the future.

Though the main focus of this study is be on the biological aspects of the lake and the surrounding area, the potential cultural resources underneath and around the lake must also be taken into account when determining what actions are feasible for its restoration. Prior to the 20th century, the lake covered a much smaller area than it does today. Before the 1840s, only Wappingers Creek flowed through the area. The area has been recognized as having a high probability for prehistoric and historic sites. These sites may have been inundated when the lake was created.

This study has been authorized by Section 602 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 as amended by Section 403 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1990, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended, the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Executive Order 11593 and the Advisory Council Procedures for the Protection of Historic and Cultural Properties (30 CFR Part 800).

II. Procedures

The following institutions were consulted for information regarding cultural resources at Wappingers Falls:

The New York Public Library, General Research Division and the Mid-Manhattan Branch Library.

The New York State Museum Site Files, State University of New York, Albany, New York.

The following individuals provided valuable knowledge concerning the potential for cultural resources around the lake:

Victor DeSanto, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Albany, New York.

Jim Bain, Chairman, Wappingers Lake Committee, Wappingers Falls, New York.

Peter Furnari, Chairman, Public Awareness Committee and History of the Lake Committee, Wappingers Lake Committee, Wappingers Falls, New York.

Kay Lyons, Wappingers Falls Historical Society, Wappingers Falls, New York.

III. Project Setting

The project area includes all of Wappingers Lake, the tidal portion of Wappingers Creek, and the surrounding town of Wappingers Falls (Figure 1). The topography of this area consists of numerous small hills and valleys with the land sloping moderately down toward the creek bed. Wappingers Creek flows southwest 30.2 miles from its mouth at the town of Pine Plains to the Hudson River. Wappingers Falls, just to the south of Wappingers Lake, drops approximately 80 feet in less than one mile (Dutchess County Environmental Management Council [hereafter DCEMC] 1982:5). Below the falls, Wappingers Creek is influenced by the Hudson River tides. The creek has always been navigable, however, the current New Hamburg Bridge and a nearby railroad bridge limit the size of boats that can travel the waterway (DCEMC 1982:8).

Wappingers Lake is a man-made, 88 acre lake that was formed by damming Wappingers Creek just above the falls. A dam has been in place since about the 1840s, though the current, larger size of the lake was created by the construction of the existing concrete dam in 1910-11 (DCEMC

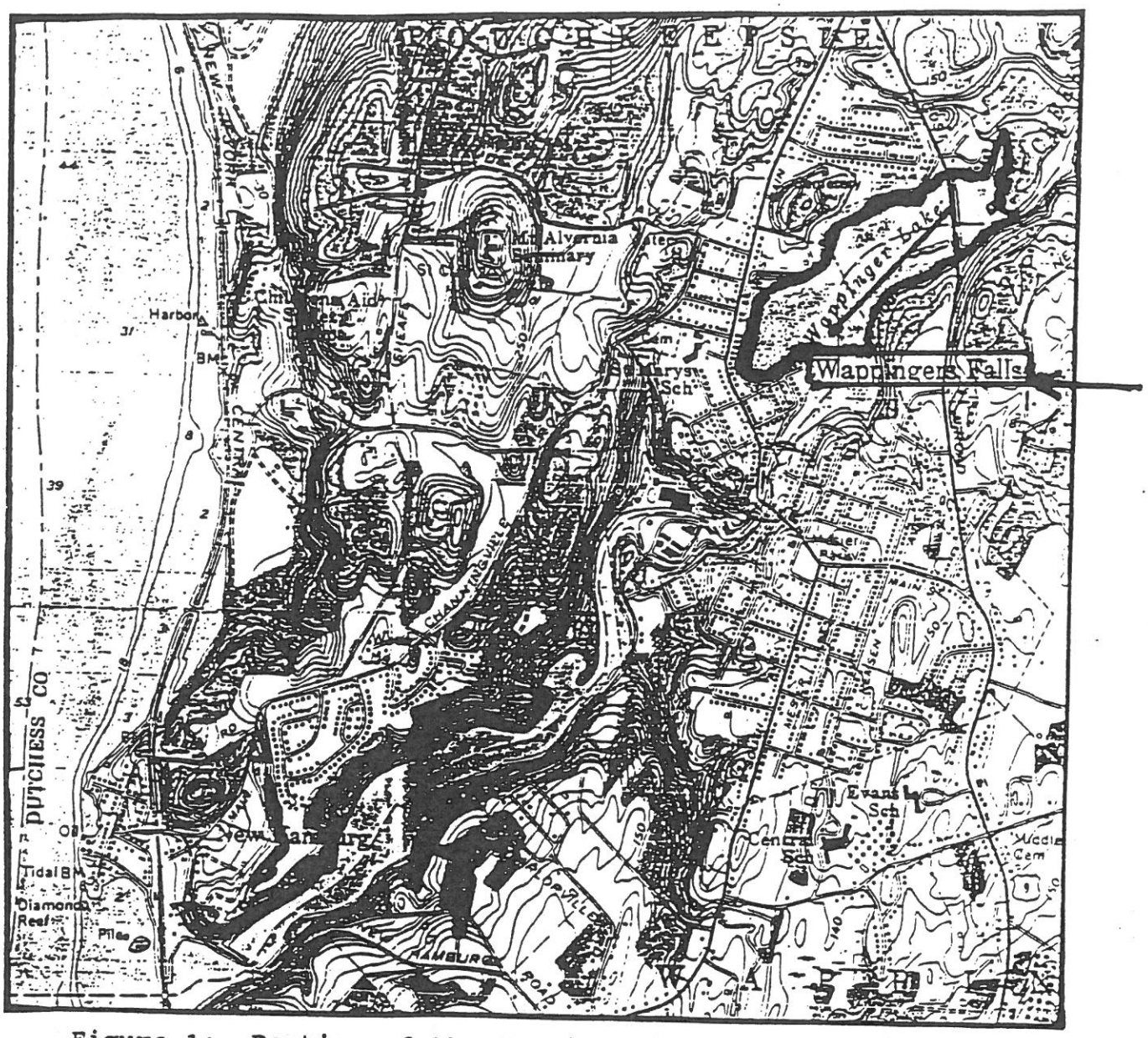


Figure 1: Portion of the Wappingers Falls Quadrangle showing Wappingers Lake, Wappingers Creek, and the Hudson River. Scale 1 to 24,000 (USGS 1956).

1982:8). The Village of Wappingers Falls owns the lake which is a popular fishing and boating spot. The village manages two parks along the lake's shores and the Wappingers Falls Cemetery is situated on a hill on the north side of the lake (DCEMC 1982:15). Private homes are also located on both sides of the lake.

The village of Wappinger Falls was incorporated in 1871. Prior to this, there had been two separate villages on each bank of the creek. The section of the village on the east bank was in the Town of Fishkill and named Wappingers Creek, which was later changed to Wappingers Falls. The section on the west bank was in the Town of Poughkeepsie. It was first named Ednam but it was later changed to Channingville, and finally, Wappingers Falls (Popper 1991:87)

VI. Prehistoric Background

Native Americans have inhabited New York State since the retreat of the last glacier, about 10,500 B.C. Sites dating from this and later periods have been located throughout New York State, New York City, and Long Island. Some of these located nearby to the south of the project area (Ritchie 1969, Funk 1973, Funk 1976).

By the time of the arrival of Europeans to New York State, several Native American groups lived in Dutchess County in the vicinity of the lower portion of Wappingers Creek. The Mahikan, or Mohican, whose territory was located to the north of Dutchess County, had occupied areas along Wappingers Creek. The Wiccopees occupied the area to the east of the Hudson River. The Wappingers, for whom the creek was named, lived on Matteawan Creek and eastward (Parker 1922:546). By the 18th century, the last of the Wappinger Indians lived in the Wiccopee Valley until they left the area for Stockbridge, Massachusetts and later, to Stockbridge, New York (Popper 1990:1).

Many Native American sites were documented by Parker in the 1920s with some situated nearby the project area (Figure 2). These sites include a burial site located to the south of Wappingers Falls, a village site near Milton Ferry to the west, and numerous quarry sites along the lower portion of the creek (Parker 1922:542).

Some historians place the location of the principal village of the Wappingers Indians at the falls, although tradition places their village in other parts of Dutchess County as well (Hasbrouck 1909:25). The location of their burial ground was known to the 19th and early 20th century residents of Wappingers Falls. Native American artifacts were often found along the banks of the creek in the vicinity of the Garner Print Works Company during the early part of

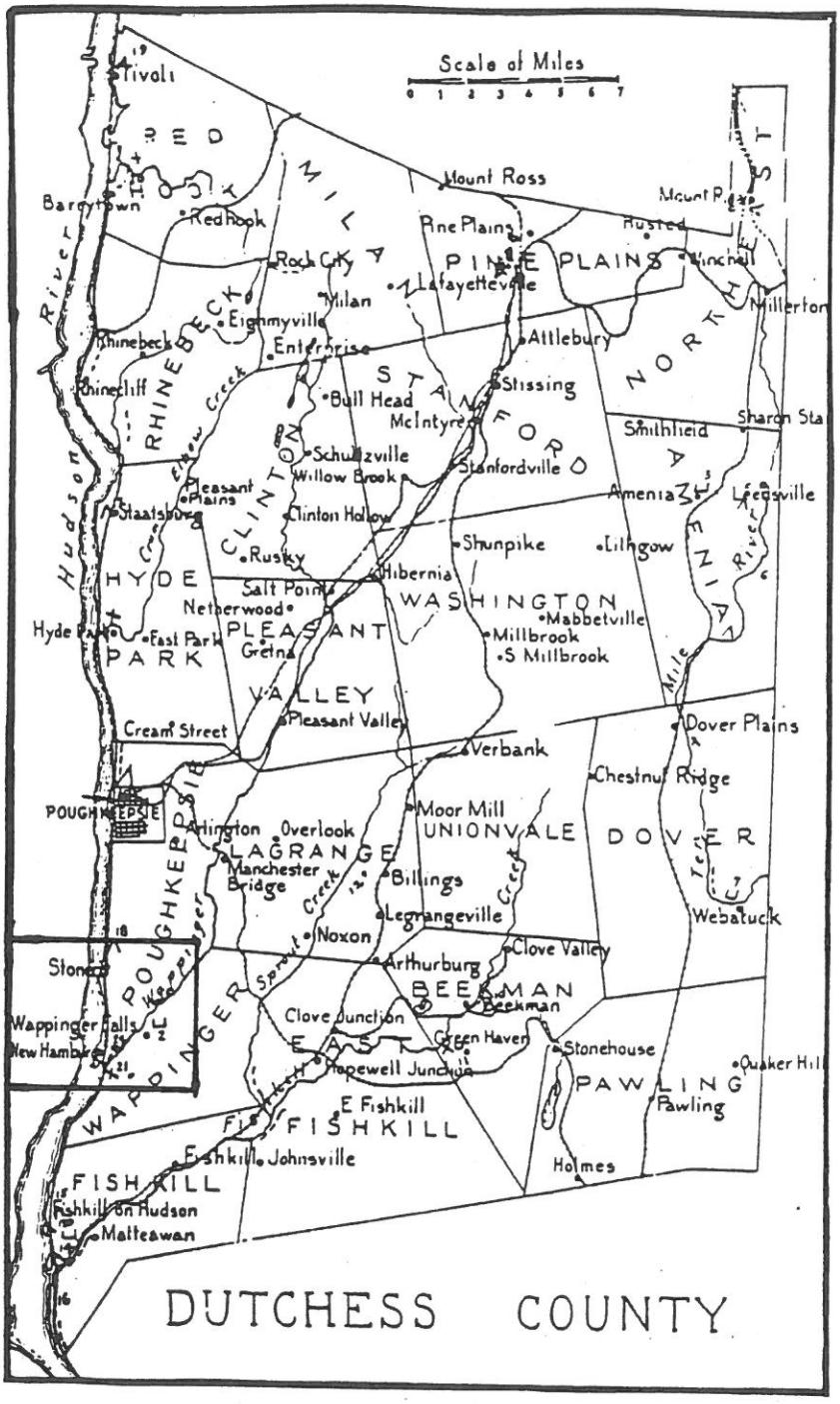


Figure 2: Map showing prehistoric sites in Dutchess County with the Wappingers Falls area highlighted (Parker 1922:Plate 167).

this century (Hasbrouck 1909:25). A map of Indian encampments in Dutchess County shows an encampment along Wappingers Creek along what was now the south shore of Wappingers Lake (Roberts and Reynolds 1938 in DCEMC 1982:23; Figure 3).

In conducting a cultural resources survey of the area to the southeast in the town of Wappinger, Hartgen Archaeological Associates, Inc. located nineteen prehistoric sites to the south and west of Wappingers Lake. (Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc. [hereafter HAAI] 1990: 6, map 2a). This area, including the project area, is considered by the New York State Museum to have a high probability of producing prehistoric archaeological data (New York State Museum, personal communication; HAAI 1990:6).

According to Kay Lyons of the Wappingers Falls Historical Society, no artifacts have been recovered from around the lake in recent years (personal communication). Also, Jim Bain, Wappingers Lake Committee Chairman and area resident, has not heard of anyone discovering any finds along the lake when the level drops about two feet, annually (personal communication). There is, however, the potential for locating prehistoric remains on the original ground surface beneath the silt that has accumulated since the lake's creation. The depth of this silt has not been determined at this time and the area has not been dredged.

V. Historic Background

The historic period of Wappingers Falls begins in the middle of the 17th century when Francis Rombout, a successful Huguenot merchant based in New York City, formed a partnership with Gulian Verplanck, a trader, to purchase land in the Hudson Highlands. In February, 1682, they received a license from the Governor of New York to purchase a tract of land from the Wappingers Indians. The area included in this purchase, called the Rombout Patent, incorporated the present towns of Fishkill, East Fishkill, Wappinger, the westerly portion of LaGrange, and the southern section of Poughkeepsie. Rombout and Verplanck agreed to pay the Wappinger Indians and the Governor a total of $ 1,250 in grain and "useful items" for the land (Popper 1991:1).

A map of the Rombout Patent was reproduced in Popper (1991:2) and Hasbrouck (1909:36; Figure 4). It shows Wappingers Creek and the land on either side. Included on it are drawings of houses and "wigwams" that indicate the presence of several Indian occupations in the vicinity of Wappinger Creek as well as small Euro-American settlements in the area.

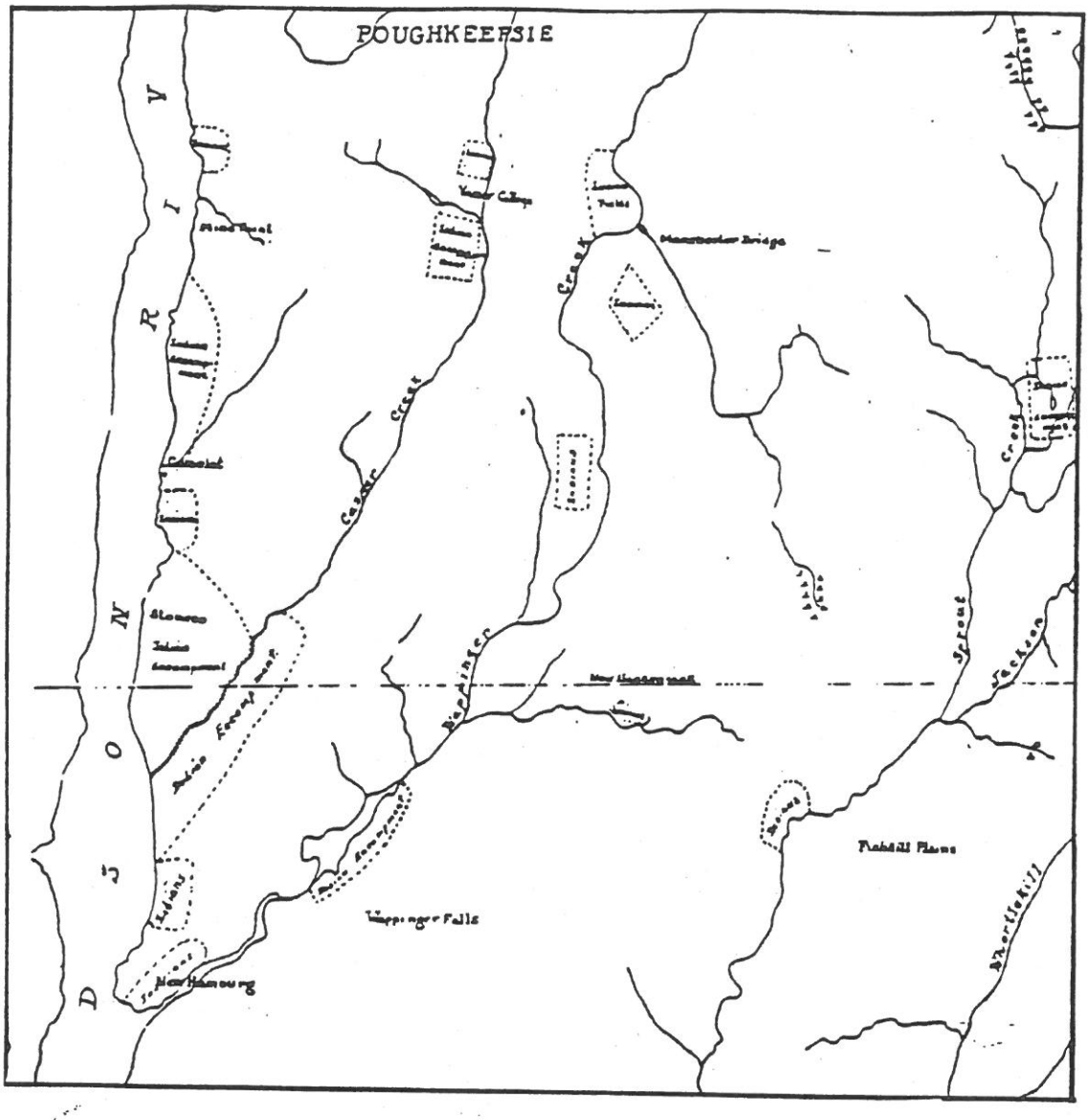


Figure 3: Map showing Indian encampments on the east side of the Hudson River. No scale given (Roberts and Reynolds in DCEMC 1982:23).

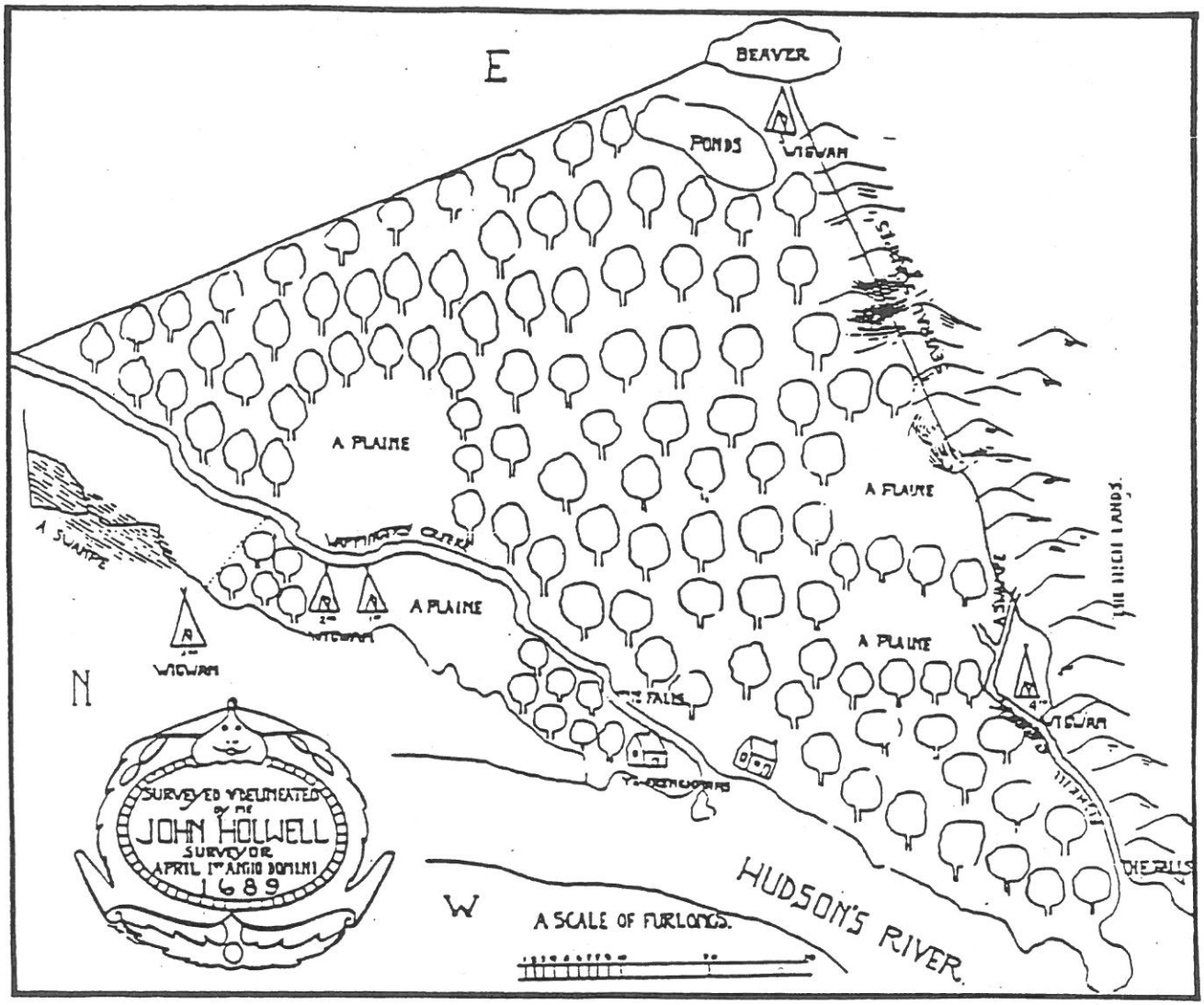


Figure 4: Plan of the Rombout Patent (Hopper 1991:2).

In 1707, the lands of the Rombout Patent were divided by the descendants of Rombout and Verplanck into three long, narrow parcels. Each parcel had a section of riverfront on the Hudson River to the west as well as water privileges on Wappingers Creek to the east. Wappingers Falls was part of Lot No. 1 located on the southern end of the original patent and controlled by the Roger Brett family. This land was located on the east and west sides of Wappingers Creek and included the gorge and falls (Hopper 1991:1).

When the Rombout Patent was purchased, much of the area was still covered with forest (DCEMC 1982:22). A characteristic of Hudson Valley settlement by Euro-Americans is the utilization of water power to process raw materials. Initially, sawmills and later gristmills were the first industries to harness the creek's energy (Rutsch 1980:2). Sources indicate that by the end of the 18th century, six to ten grist- or sawmills were operating around Wappingers Falls (DCEMC 1982:24; Popper 1991:3). The first operating gristmill in the Wappingers Falls area dates to 1738 and was owned by Aldolphus Brewer. Brewer and his brother, Nicholas, were Dutch millers who purchased 750 acres of land, including what is now Wappingers Falls, from William Skinner and his wife in 1741 for about $ 3,000 (Popper 1991:1; Rutsch 1980:3). Some of these early mills were located in the area where later, larger cotton mills, such as the Dutchess Print Works were located (Popper 1991:3). As a result, traces of these saw-and gristmills may be difficult to recover or non-existent because of the subsequent disturbance in the 19th century.

During the first decades of the 19th century, economic conditions gradually forced the gristmills along the Wappingers Creek out of business. Lower production and transportation costs in the western part of the country made the cultivation and processing of grain in the East unfeasible (DCEMC 1982:24). Also, as forest was cleared and kept clear for agriculture or for the construction of towns, sawmills were moved upriver into the less forested areas (Rutsch 1980:6). These grist- and sawmills were replaced with textile mills. In 1819, John Givens had built a cotton factory on the west bank of the creek. By 1829, James Ingham had established a cotton print works on the east side of the falls. This mill was later razed and rebuilt as a much larger complex (Rutsch 1980:11).

In the 1840s, Benjamin Clapp, a manufacturer who had worked in Lowell, Massachusetts and New York City, constructed a factory along Wappingers Creek near the falls. When he had first visited the area in 1828, Clapp purchased 200 acres of land on both sides of the creek at Wappingers Falls from Peter Mesier, a prominent landowner and miller. In 1844, Clapp purchased an additional 200 acres of land to the south of the present stone bridge where he had a second

factory constructed (Popper 1991:5-6).

The first of Clapp's factories, the Clintondale Mill, contained a wood veneer mill on the first floor. The second floor, and later the third and fourth floors, were rented to the Cook and Low Comb Factory (Popper 1991:5). The mill was destroyed in 1855 and was never rebuilt (Popper 1991:19). Clapp's second mill, the Franklindale Cotton Factory, became a substantial employer in the Wappingers Falls area and Clapp built housing on Mill and Market Streets for many of his employees (Figure 5). During the Civil War, the shortage of raw cotton in the North forced the lay-off of many workers from the Franklindale mill. Clapp, unable to keep the factory open, sold his interests to the Garner Print Works, which later became part of the Dutchess Print Works (Popper 1991:6). In 1908, this factory also purchased the Clintondale Mill property for the penstock to their hydroelectric plant (Popper 1991:19).

Benjamin Clapp is attributed with building the first substantial masonry dam across Wappingers Creek near the falls for his mills. This dam created a small lake behind the dam (DCEMC 1982: 25). Several dams were constructed during the 19th century as floods damaged or destroyed previous ones. Each of these dams allowed waters to collect behind it, forming a lake (Figures 5, 6, and 7, Note the lake's size). In 1910-1911, the present concrete dam was built by the Dutchess Bleachery and the lake attained its current size (DCEMC 1982:27).

Throughout the 19th century, numerous textile industries were located in and around Wappingers Falls. The Franklindale Manufacturing Company, the Sweet-Orr Company, the Dutchess Print Works, and John F. Eagan and Company owned much of the Wappingers Falls area and employed many of the townspeople (DCEMC 1982:24; Figures 5, 6, and 7). Along the tidal portion of Wappingers Creek, just below the second dam in the gorge, river barges and passenger boats frequently travelled up and down the river between Wappingers Falls, New Hamburgh, and New York City, shipping Wappingers Falls textiles to market (DCEMC 1982:24).

During the 20th century, many of the textile industries in Wappingers Falls failed or moved away. Their buildings have since been taken over by small businesses. The village of Wappingers Falls purchased Wappingers Lake and two dams: the upper dam and the dam in the gorge below, in 1967 (DCEMC 1982:27). Today, the lake is used for recreational sports, primarily boating and fishing. However, it has gradually silted up so that vegetation growing in the spring and summer have covered much of the lake, hindering its use by townspeople and visitors to the area (Popper 1991:37).

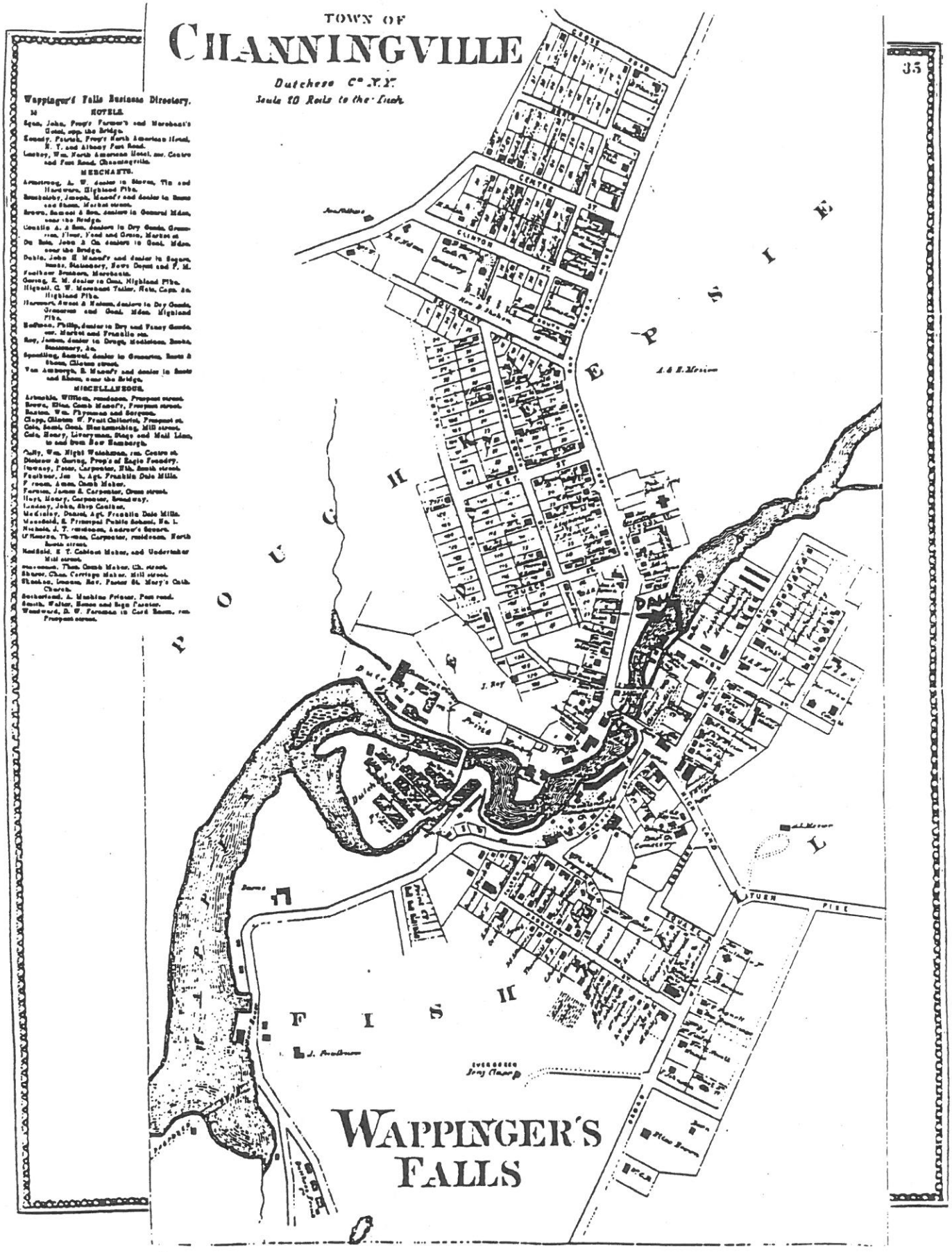


Figure 5: The 1867 Beers Atlas showing Wappingers Falls, Channingville, and Wappingers Creek (Beers 1867).

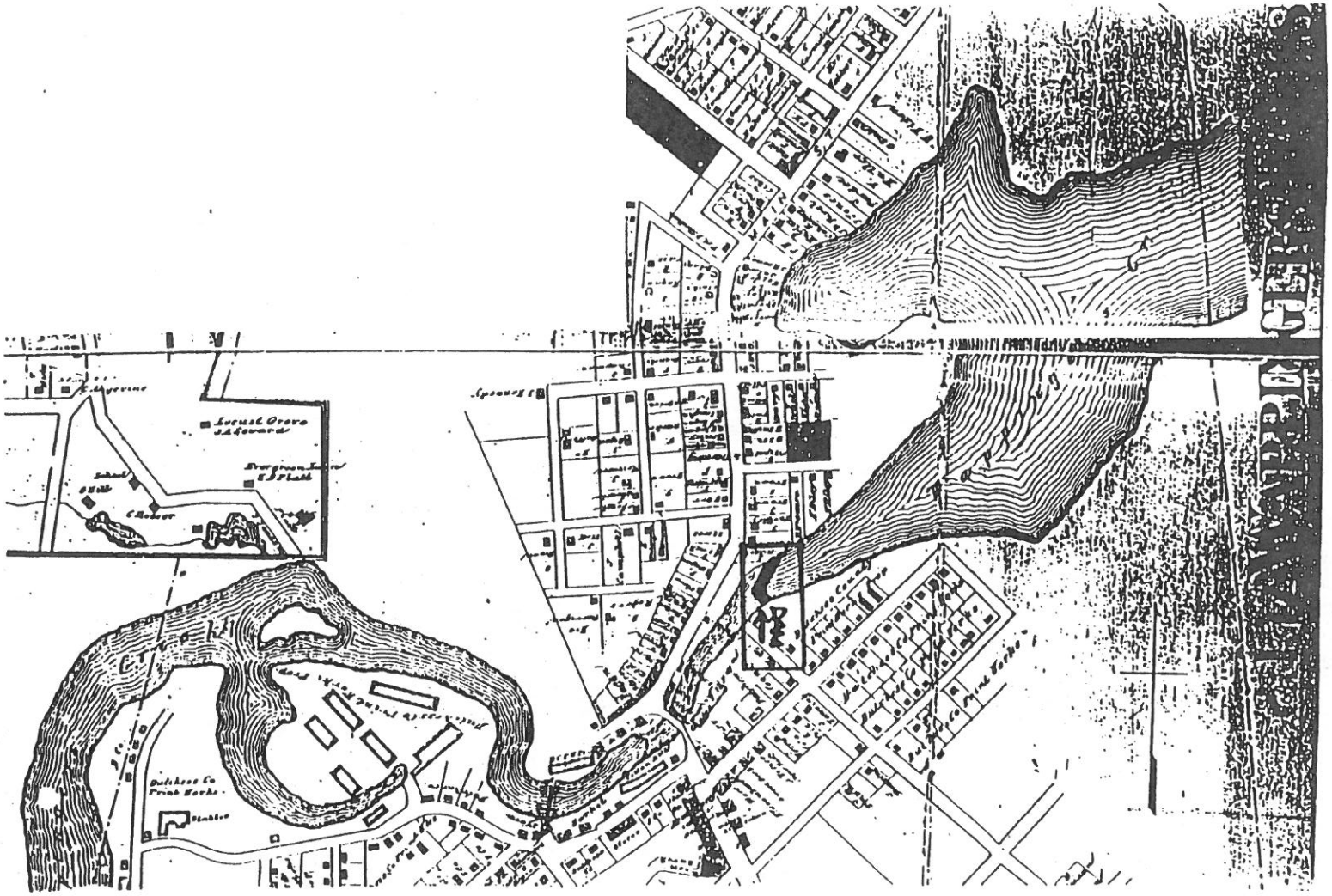
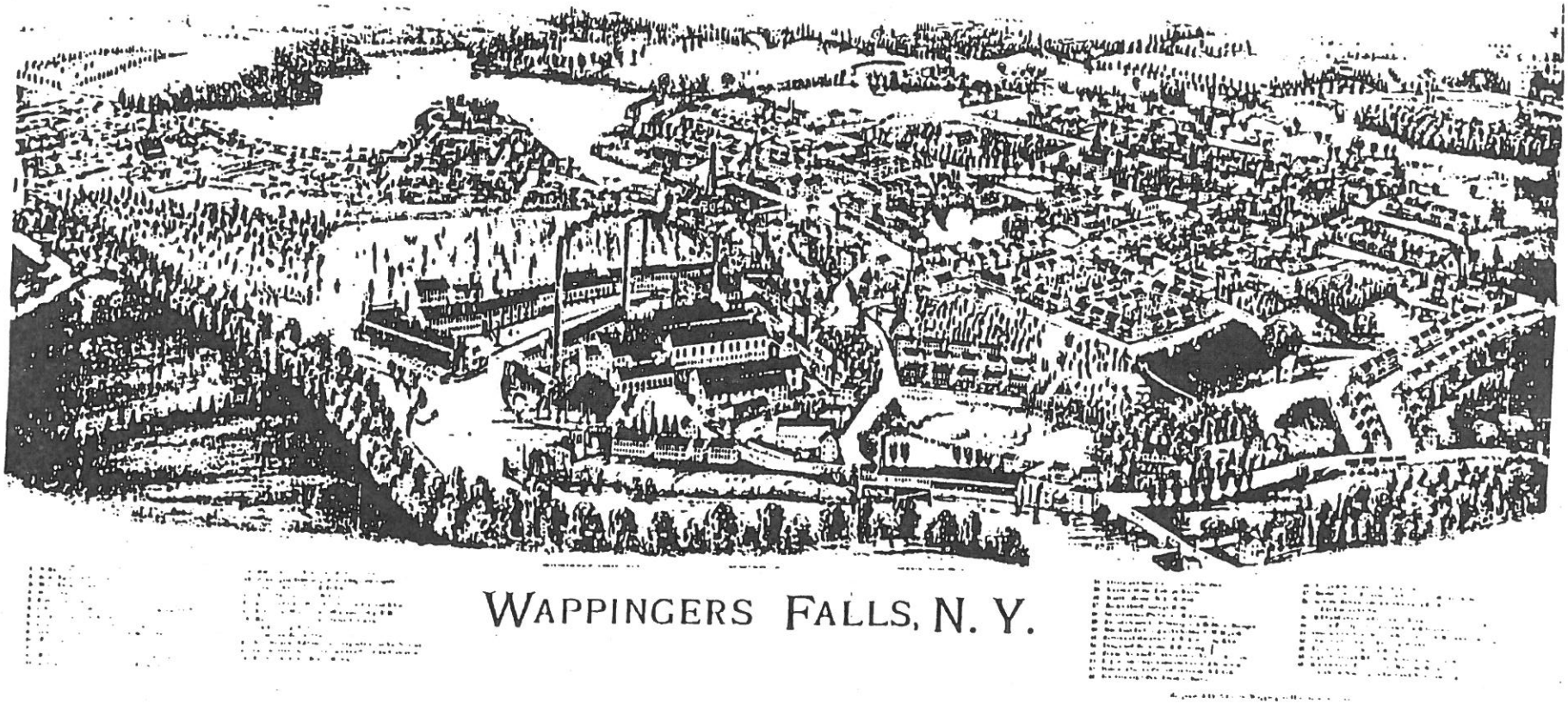


Figure 6: Portion of the 1887 Atlas for Wappingers Falls showing the lake, industrial areas, and dams (New Illustrated Atlas of Dutchess County, New York 1887:66-67).



Bird's Eye View Map Drawn 1889

Figure 7: The 1889 Birds Eye View showing the village of Wappingers Falls and the lake facing the southeast (Hopper 1991).

VI. Archaeological Potential for Cultural Resources

A. Prehistoric Archaeological Potential

Prehistoric sensitivity of the area beneath and around Wappingers Lake is based upon:

1) the New York State Museum high probability rating for the presence of prehistoric sites in the area.

2) a documented site located to the south of the project area.

3) historic documentation detailing the occupation by Native Americans along Wappingers Creek.

4) the analysis of a model for determining the sensitivity for submerged sites in the New Jersey and New York Highlands area as discussed below (Boesch and Pickman 1991:161).

During a previous Corps study at Greenwood Lake in the New Jersey Highlands-Hudson Valley region, project archaeologists identified several environmental characteristics of known Hudson Highlands' sites and subsistence-settlement patterns from previous cultural resources surveys and published archaeological literature. This research revealed that these sites exhibit similar locational characteristics. These characteristics could then be used to indicate the potential for prehistoric sites in areas that were now underwater.

The report found that most highlands' sites are located near major stream drainages or their tributaries, especially if swamps, ponds and lakes or stream confluences were located nearby. Preferred site locations are well-drained areas, such as ridge tops, hill and knoll crests and valley terraces, which overlooked water sources, the valley floor or other low-lying areas. These sites would have been chosen for habitation or for activities such as hunting and procurement, as they allowed for the observation of the surrounding area for game and were rich in other subsistence resources (Boesch and Pickman 1991a:161).

These locational characteristics reflected several variables which could be considered as site indicators:

1) the terrain should be level to gently sloping, with little or no bedrock exposures or inclusive rocks. Rockshelters, however, would be the exception (Boesch and Pickman 1991a:161).

2) soils should be well-drained or permeable (Boesch and Pickman 1991a:161).

3) a close proximity to water for subsistence and transportation (Boesch and Pickman 1991a:162).

4) a variety of environmental zones that would give individuals access to a many types of resources (Boesch and Pickman 1991a:162).

5) shelter or protected areas such as coves for cover during harsh weather (Boesch and Pickman 1991a:162).

The Wappingers Lake study area as part of the Hudson Highlands area, shows many of the identified variables and characteristics for the location of prehistoric sites. Prior to its inundation, the project area was a low-lying area consisting of a substantial waterway, Wappingers Creek, and its drainage bed. Wappingers Creek ran roughly through the center of the present Wappingers Lake. To the west the land rises gently, then somewhat steeply, approximately 20 feet from the creek bed. On the east, the slope is more gradual and does not reach the same height. The land prior to inundation was not described as being poorly drained or swampy. The creek provides access to the Hudson River located approximately two miles downstream.

The land on the hills to either side of the creek would have provided the area's inhabitants with an abundance of subsistence resources and firewood which would have been balanced with foodstuffs derived from the creek. Shelter may have been sought at the base of the hills to the east and west where a series of protected cove-like areas exist. The characteristics exhibited by this portion of Wappingers Creek would indicate that Native American sites may be located in areas that are now beneath and alongside Wappingers Lake.

B. Historical Archaeological Potential

The determination of historic archaeological sensitivity is based upon historic maps, secondary sources, and interviews with local historians. Early Wappingers Falls history has documented the presence of grist mills along the creek, especially in the area adjacent to the falls. Later, the area along the creek, now under Wappingers Lake, was used a ball field and racetrack (Peter Furnari, personal communication).

A much smaller lake was created around 1840, when Benjamin Clapp constructed a dam across Wappingers Creek, just above the falls, to insure a year-round, steady flow of power to his mill, located on the east bank of the creek. The water retained by this dam flooded the low-lying lands immediately to the north of the dam. During the last quarter of the 19th century, a larger dam was built which flooded more of the adjacent low-lying area, creating the lake as it

appears today. Because the present lake size was not achieved until sometime later, historic sites, dating from 1840 to the late 19th century, may also be present beneath the current lake bed. In addition, it may be possible to determine the early boundaries of the smaller lake created by the earlier dams.

VII. Field Reconnaissance

During the fall of 1992, the lake was drawn down several feet to facilitate the repair of the dam. Project Archaeologist, Nancy Brighton, visited the lake at this time to determine

1) if there were any exposed historic or prehistoric sites, and

2) the depth of the silt and mud deposits covering the pre-inundation ground surface by taking soil cores.

It was hoped that the lake bottom would be dry along the edges and for several feet toward the center to allow an individual to walk on it. This, however, was not the case. The lake levels were not kept down continuously, but were raised on the weekends and on some weeknights. This periodic raising of the lake prevented the mud from drying. As a result, a walk-over survey could only be conducted just off the shore of the lake. In some areas, the water in the lake reached the shore. These areas were not examined.

A portion of the southwest side of the lake was examined (Figure 8). This section had the easiest access to the lake and the bottom was somewhat dry. A soil core with a 13 inch long bore with a two inch bore diameter was used to explore the bottom deposits. A visual inspection of the bank and the lake bottom was also conducted.

For the most part, the mud and silt deposits along the edge of the lake are very deep, in some areas at least two feet deep. They were gray to gray-black sandy silt, and, naturally, very wet. In some shallow areas this was on top of a yellowish brown or tan clay. These soils were probably deposited by the creek as it flowed through the lake. Several mid- to late 19th century artifacts were located within the lake sediments in the area of the Dutchess Print Works on the southwestern shore (Figure 8). These consisted of burned brick, blue transfer printed whiteware, and glass. Other areas along the edge of the lake in the vicinity of the various 19th century factories may also contain cultural debris from their use. No other pre-20th century artifacts were discovered at any other point in the survey.

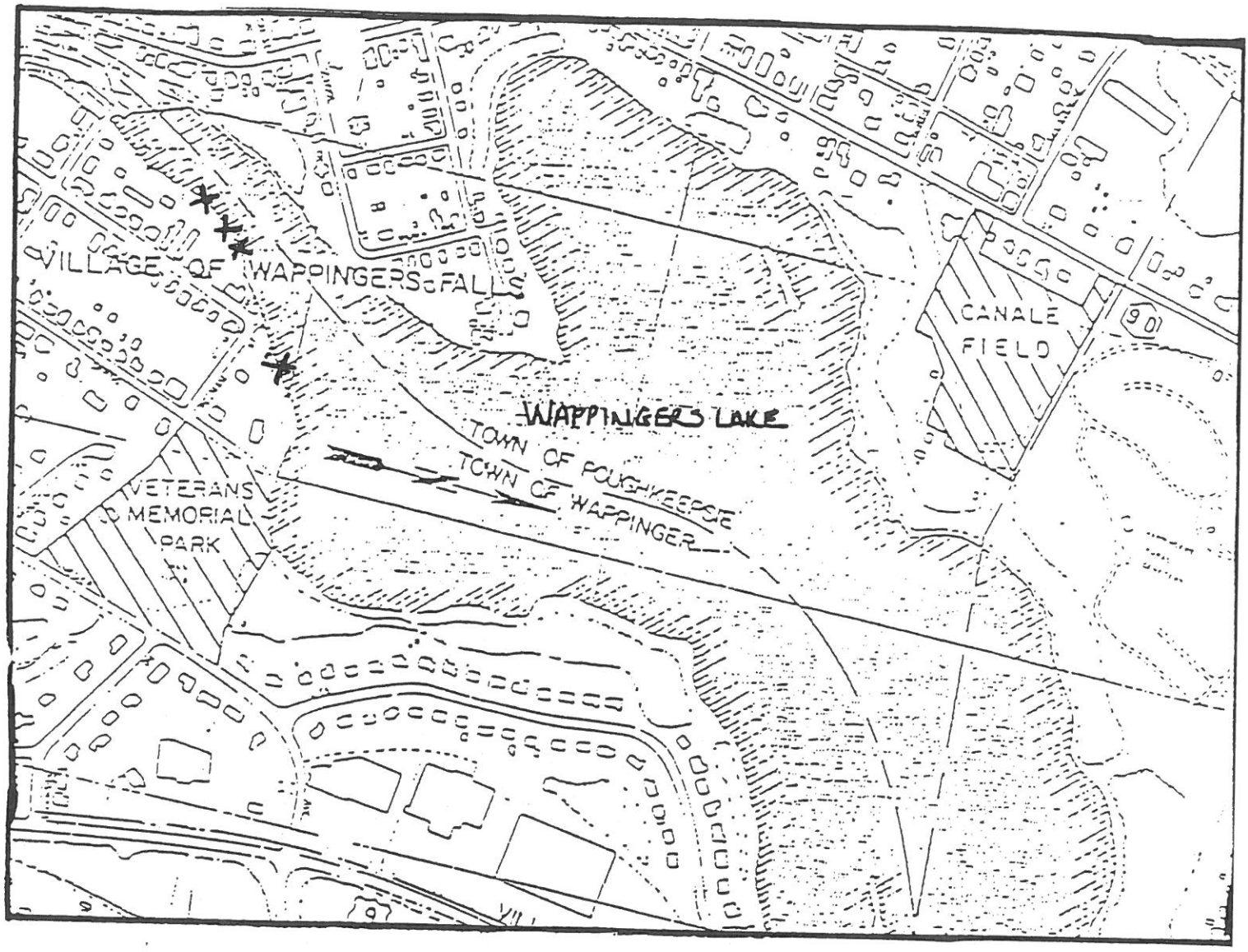


Figure 8: Map showing a portion of Wappingers Lake above the dam. The areas where mid- and late 19th century artifacts were located on the bottom of the lake are indicated with an X. Scale 1" = 500' (New York State Department of Transportation in Village of Wappingers Falls 1989:Figure 5).

VIII. Recommendations and Conclusions

Based upon documentary evidence, previous research, and a field visit, the area beneath and immediately adjacent to Wappingers Lake has a high potential for cultural resources that may be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Any project plans for the restoration of the lake must take into account the effects such a project may have on these properties. For the past 100 years, silt and mud have been deposited on top of the pre-lake ground surface, possibly preserving prehistoric and historic archaeological remains. Dredging the lake or other activities that would disturb the lake bottom may impact these deposits.

If a project to restore the lake's ecology were undertaken, then it is recommended that additional studies be conducted to determine the location of potential NRHP eligible sites and the impacts such a plan might have on these resources.

1. Geomorphological studies, including the examination of cores from the lake bottom, to determine the depth of the original ground surface and the location of the original creek bed. Coring below this depth may also locate archaeological sites beneath the lake.

2. Inundated areas in the vicinity of the Franklindale/ Garner/Dutchess Factories and the Clintondale Mills should be tested to recover material related to their use.

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