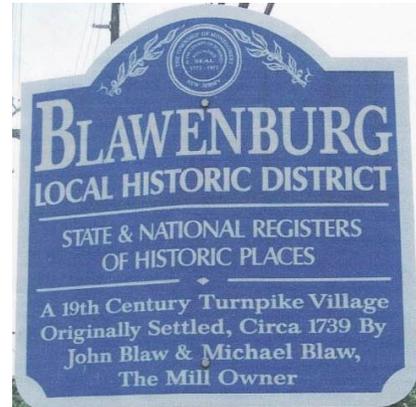


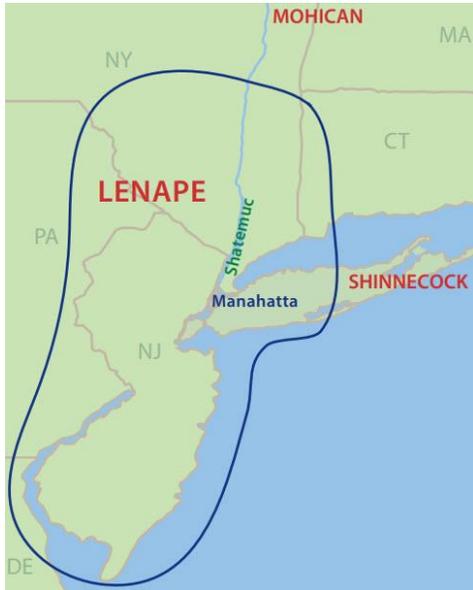
69 Blaw's Mill

By David Cochran

Many of our life experiences occur by happenstance. Circumstances can lead us to random places where unpredicted things happen, and these unplanned events or encounters can have a profound effect on our lives. As you will see in this blog, had it not been for a turn of events, Blawenburg might have a different name.



When the Dutch arrived in the New World, they settled on an island that the Lenape Native Americans living there called Manhatta (hilly island). They renamed it New Amsterdam. There was plenty of land to go around, and the Dutch and Lenape got along fine at first. They shared the land, and the Lenape helped the Dutch learn how to survive. There was good farming in New Amsterdam and surrounding communities such as Brooklyn and Long Island. As the population grew and the Dutch became more accustomed to farming the land, friction grew between the two cultures. The Dutch engaged in fighting with the Lenape and many Native Americans were killed. Meanwhile, the British had their eyes on Manhatta. In 1664, the British took over Manhatta in a bloodless coup. This circumstance led Native Americans and the Dutch to leave New Amsterdam. Central New Jersey, with its rich farmland, became a popular destination for Dutch emigrants.



This map shows the “Lenapehoking” or The Dwelling Place of the Lenape

Out of Manhatta

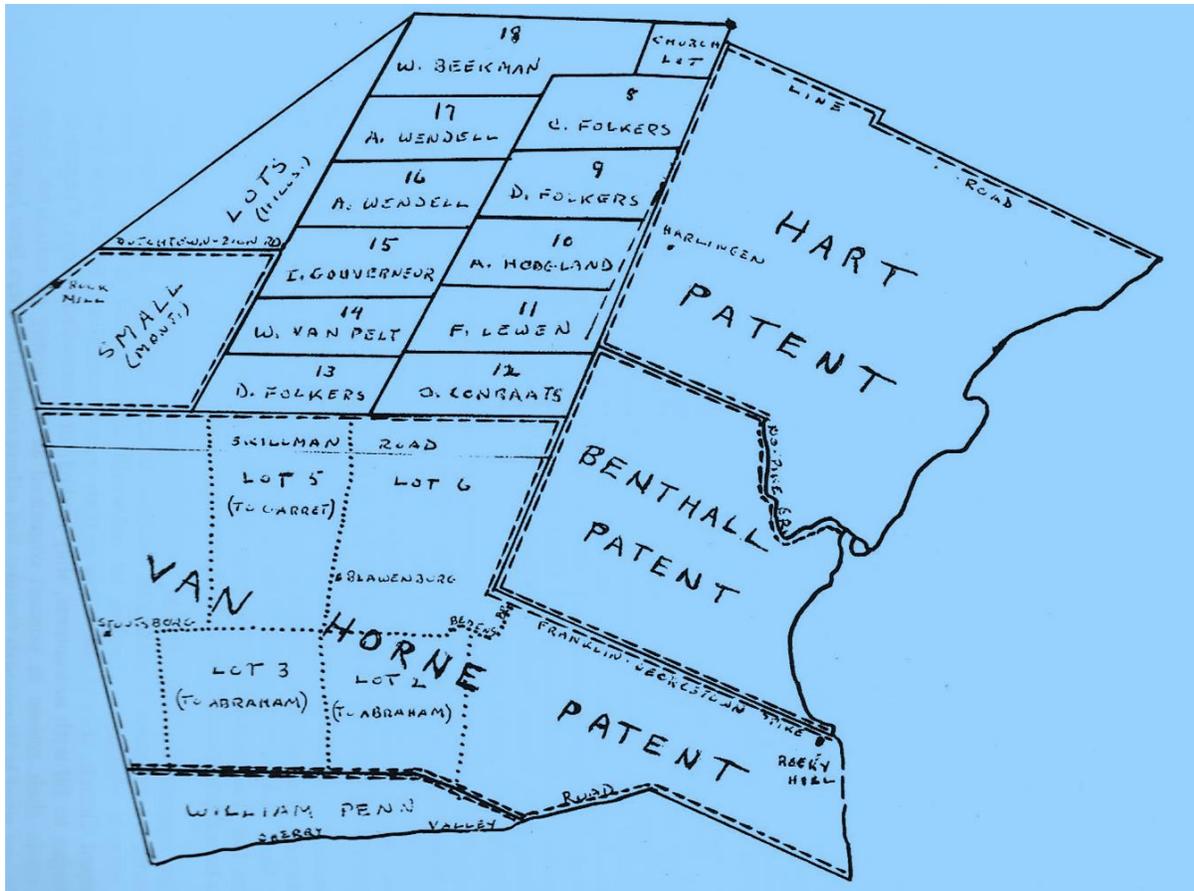
When the Dutch migrated from Manhatta, they moved into areas where the Lenape Native American tribes had lived for more than 10,000 years. The Lenape did not believe in individual land ownership; instead, they shared the land among their tribe members. The Dutch felt that they could lay claim to lands where ownership was not clear. There were many disputes and Dutch takeovers of Lenape land.

In 1664, when the British took over New Amsterdam, James, the Duke of York, granted the lands between the Hudson and Delaware Rivers to Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret. They divided the area, which would later become New Jersey, into two provinces—East and West. The Western province was sold off to the Quakers, Swedes, Finns, and others. The Dutch lived throughout the eastern section, which is shown in white on the map below.



The purple Keith line (1687) divides East and West Jersey.

Many Dutch plantations resulted from the migration from Manhatta, and many wise and wealthy land speculators helped locate, purchase, and resell land to the Dutch farmers.



The original land patents of Montgomery Township

Land was often sold or given as “patents” to people who surveyed and laid claim to the land. A land patent, like a patent for an invention, shows ownership. In Montgomery Township, three land patents were awarded in 1700 to proprietors, Peter Sonmans, Thomas Hart, and Walter Benthall. You can see these patents on the map above.

John Van Horne, a wealthy Dutch merchant and land speculator, bought 6,979 acres in the southern part of what would become Montgomery Township through the patent process. It’s unclear what circumstance led Van Horne to acquire the patent. He then sold some of his holdings to his brothers, Abraham and Garret Van Horne.

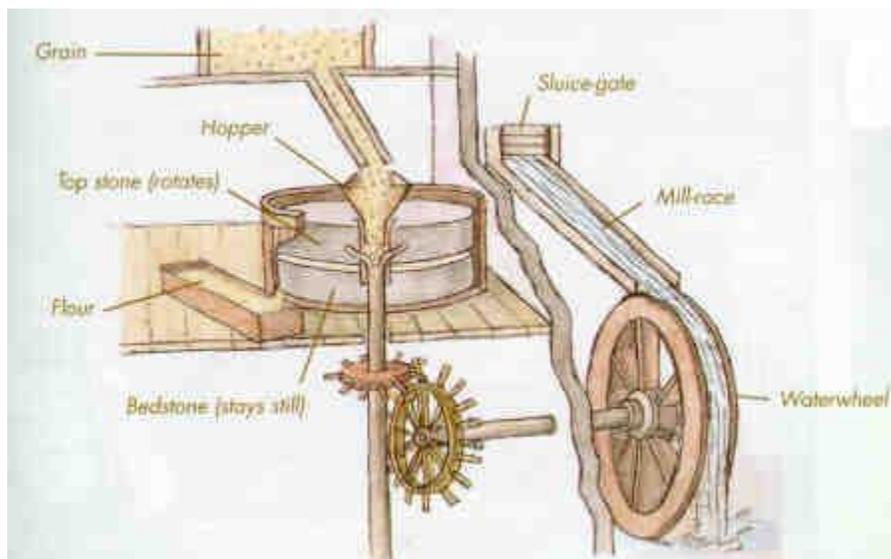
John Blaw lived in New Amsterdam and learned there was land for sale in in East Jersey near the division line, known as the Province Line. We aren’t sure how many properties he considered, but Blaw purchased 400 acres from Abraham Van Horne in 1739. He also purchased another 95 acres from New Brunswick investor Nicholas Lake.

Garret Van Horne sold portions of his land to other farmers on or near the land that would become the Village of Blawenburg. The Nevius farm (later acquired by the Van Zandts) and the Covenhoven farm (Greenflash Farm today) encompassed all the land in what became the village. Ironically, the Blaws did not live in the village we call Blawenburg!

Blaw's Mill

If the Blaws didn't live in Blawenburg, you may wonder how it got its name. Towns and villages get their names for a variety of reasons. Often, they are named after a founder, a famous person, or a geographic feature. Blawenburg is named after the Blaw family. Before there was a village, Blawenburg was totally farmland—no stores or residential homes. But there was one business that served the local farms—Michael Blaw's mill. He operated his mill along the south side of Bedens Brook, east of what is known today as Great Road. Just three years after John Blaw's land purchases, he sold half of his property to his second son, Michael, and half to his son, Frederick. It is because of Michael's business that people got to know the family name.

Milling was an important trade in the days before modern technology made it a corporate venture. A mill was used to grind grains such as wheat or corn into flour.



The inner workings of a grist mill

Mills used water as a source of power, thus they were always along streams or rivers. The water turned a paddle wheel that turned a shaft with a large millstone, known as a runner stone, on it. The runner stone turned on stationary stone, known as a bedstone. The wheat or other material to be ground was called grist, and it was put in a hopper and fed between the stones to be ground to the size and texture that the customer wanted. Millers often diverted the water from a stream to control volume of water to turn the paddle wheel, making it go faster or slower.

Farms needed to have their grist ground into flour to make bread and other food products or to sell to others in the area who did not have a wheat crop or a stream for a grist mill. A local miller was a farmer's friend.

It didn't take long for Michael Blaw to see the need for a mill. The Blaw family could use his services, and the other farms in the area could, too.

Soon, Blaw's Mill became a known destination. It is believed that by the 1760s, locals started referring to the area near Blaw's Mill as Blawenburgh. Attaching "burgh" to the Blaw name suggested that it was a city, town, or village.

Ironically, when people started mentioning Blawenburg, it wasn't a city, town, or village. It was just farmland, and it didn't have its first non-farming residence until 1818, when Blawenburg Tavern was built.

What If?

If Abraham Van Horne didn't acquire his patent, John Blaw bought a different property, or Michael Blaw decided just to farm and not build his mill, it's likely that we would know this historic village by another name. Since the Covenhovens owned most of the land that became the village, it could have been Covenhoven or Covenburg. If the Nevius family name was used, it might have been Neviusboro or Neviusstown. It might even have become Van Zandtville. The Blaw name that people had used for many years prevailed, and though the Blaws left the area fairly early in its history, their name has given this small village an identity for many years. Happenstance matters.





The stones forming a wall on the south side of Bedens Brook are believed to be remnants of Blaw's Mill.

Interesting Facts

1. According to Ursula Brecknell in *Montgomery Township, An Historic Community, 1702-1972*, most Dutch farms had two to five slaves. The Quakers did not believe in slavery, so there was little slavery in the Quaker sections of West Jersey. New Jersey was the last northern state to abolish slavery.
2. In most communities, there were several mills. Another mill in Montgomery Township was Opie's Mill in the Bridgepoint section. It was both a grist mill and a saw mill, and it preceded Blaw's mill by two decades. Today it is a private residence. The miller's cottage was heavily damaged by water from Hurricane Ida.



Opie's mill was at the building on the left and the miller's cottage is on the left.

3. Within one hundred years of the Dutch migration to New Jersey, the Lenape tribes were greatly reduced through fighting, illness, and westward migration.
4. Originally, Blawenburg was spelled with an "h" at the end. As time went on, the h was dropped from the spelling.



Do you know a Blawenburg ghost tale?

Please share the tale, even if details are sketchy. We'd like to publish some tales in our Halloween edition.

Send your tale or other ideas to blawenburgtales@gmail.com.

Sources

Information

Brecknell, Ursula C., *Montgomery Township, An Historic Community, 1702-1972*, Van Harlingen Historical Society, Montgomery Township, NJ, 2006.

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Pictures

Lenapehoking—<https://americanindian.si.edu>

Keith line dividing NJ—http://westjersey.org/wj_line.htm

Map of original land patents—original drawing by Ursula Brecknell

Grist mill - <https://www.angelfire.com/journal/millrestoration/addendum.html>

Pictures of the remnants of Blaw's Mill—Ted Blew, the 5th generation grandson of Michael Blaw

Opie's Mill—Jim Miller/ <https://millpictures.com/mills.php?millid=1014>

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