

1819 Lower Dublin Township - John Melish Map of Philadelphia County

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Lower Dublin and Upper Dublin Townships were officially established in 1701. Both townships were within Philadelphia County until 1784 when Montgomery County was created, including Upper Dublin Township.

In 1816, the Pennsylvania legislature commissioned Philadelphia cartographer John Melish to produce the first detailed map of Philadelphia County. The map was published in 1819 and included a table in the bottom right hand corner with information on each township noting area, population, soil quality and geographic features. Lower Dublin Township (1819 map detail on preceding page) had an area of 9,500 acres (5 mi x 3 mi) – by far the largest township in Philadelphia County – with “gentle declivities”, “sandy loam” soil, and an 1810 population of 2164. Melish also notes the presence of four post offices within Philadelphia County and their distance from the city: Philadelphia (0 miles), Frankford (5 miles), Germantown (6 miles), and Holmesburg (9 miles).

In 1819, Fox Chase, Bustle Town (Bustleton), and Holmesburg were Lower Dublin Township’s notable villages. All three grew around inns or public houses. By 1768 there was a Busseltown Tavern from which Bustleton would take its name. The village was located where the Welsh Road intersected the Bustleton-Smithfield Road. (The village of Smithfield – later Somerton - was at the border of Lower Moreland and Byberry Townships at Byberry Road.) Bustleton was the polling place for Lower Dublin Township voters. (In the 1828 Presidential election, the township voted 122 for John Adams and 173 for Andrew Jackson - the national winner.) The Bustleton Pike, like the Bristol Pike, is one of Philadelphia’s earliest roads dating back to circa 1690.

Fox Chase took its name from The Fox Chase Inn, built in 1705. The village is situated at Pine Road and the Oxford Pike, another very old road out of Philadelphia. An early Friends Meeting (1685) was located on the Oxford Road about a mile into Oxford Township. In 1698, as a result of the Keithian schism in the Quaker meeting, it became Trinity Oxford Church (the current building dates to 1711), the earliest Church of England in Northeast Philadelphia and mother church of All Saints, founded in 1772 down on the Bristol Pike. Another early Quaker Meeting began in 1685 on Poquessing Creek not far from where All Saints would locate almost 100 years later. The preaching of George Keith disrupted this group of Friends as well and the meeting was moved to Byberry. The Baptist Church was also the recipient of disillusioned Quakers. The Pennepack or Dublin Baptist Meeting was founded on Krewstown Road in 1688 and is the mother church of the Philadelphia Baptist Association. The other noted church on the 1819 map is the Methodist Church in Holmesburg, founded in 1812.

The Welsh Road is another old road, running the length of Lower Dublin Township. Welsh farmers formed the road transporting grain on horseback 20 or so miles down to the Pennepack Mill. Welsh Road became the connection between Holmesburg and Bustleton and was sometimes called the Holmesburg-Bustleton Road.

On the 1819 map, there were nine mills noted on Pennypack Creek as it meandered down the length of the township. The 1775 Verree Mill replaced the ruins of the circa 1680 Gwinn Mill, considered the earliest mill on the creek. Furthest downstream is Lewis’s Mill, the old 1697 Pennepack Mill, next to which was added a saw mill and a cotton factory.

There are four schools noted on the map. The school east of Bustleton is the old Bustleton Academy founded in 1811. The 1798 Lower Dublin Academy, located just off the Bristol Pike on the Academy Road (now Willits Rd), replaced a circa 1723 log school house, which was among the very first schools in Northeast Philadelphia.

The Holmes notation further up old Academy Road is for John Holme, Junior (1770-1825), son of Enoch Holme and nephew of Holmesburg’s namesake, John Holme. An early Trustee of Lower Dublin Academy, he was elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in 1819. He owned the 100 acre Longford Plantation that Holmesburg historian Samuel C Willits would purchase in 1842. Willits would also purchase and operate the cotton factory/mill at the confluence of Wooden Bridge Run and Pennypack Creek, converting it to the manufacture of linseed oil.

Samuel Hazard (1784-1870), curator of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, published *Hazard's Register of Pennsylvania* in 16 volumes from 1828 to 1836. It was "Devoted to the Preservation of Every Kind of Useful Information Respecting the State."

Volume 5, January-June 1830, pages 137-139, contains the following:

NOTES RELATIVE TO THE HISTORY OF LOWER DUBLIN

In the County of Philadelphia.

Lower Dublin township in the county of Philadelphia, bounds on the river Delaware from Knowles' place opposite Cinnamincene, to the mouth of Poquessink, thence along said creek to its forks at the south end of Byberry, thence a short distance on the western branch of Poquessink to near the south corner of the manor of Moreland; on the western side of said manor to the line of Montgomery county, thence by Montgomery to near the northern corner of Oxford, and from thence by a direct line to the Delaware. It is 5 miles in length and 3 in breadth and contains about 10,000 acres.

Pennepack creek runs the whole length of the township, and near the middle of it, furnishing a great deal of valuable water power, which is generally improved to advantage in grist mills, saw mills and factories of different kinds.

In the census of 1820, the number of inhabitants in Lower Dublin is stated to be 2640.

Several respectable towns and villages are included in this fertile section of the county. The most considerable of which are Holmesburgh and Bustleton; at each of which is a post office, and a daily intercourse is kept up with Philadelphia by public stages.

Holmesburgh is about nine miles from the city, on the Bristol road, and contains about 70 houses. Pennepack creek, which passes it, is navigable for sloops to Lewis's mill, in its immediate vicinity. The houses and other buildings in Holmesburg are finished with taste and elegance, and the streets and footways are kept in decent order. The old mill, which formerly belonged to the Lewis family, is dated 1697;* it is a substantial stone building, and must have been considered a great establishment when the oldest settlements of Pennsylvania had verged but about 15 years from the condition of an entire wilderness. Near the old mill stands a commodious cotton factory of five or six stories, erected 12 or 15 years ago—and in the same neighbourhood are two saw mills—on the scite of one of them, some 20 years ago or more, a saw mill was burnt, as was believed by some evil designing person, because it was employed in sawing mahogany, and thereby was likely to interfere with the demand for labour at manufacturing that article by the whip-saw in the city.

Old Andrew Butler who died 30 years ago, used to relate that he assisted in building the bridge on the post road over Pennepack, in the year *of the hard winter 1740*. In point of style it is much inferior to bridges of modern construction; but the firmness, and durable character of the workmanship, are monuments of the wisdom and patriotism of our ancestors. They built not only for themselves, but for posterity. When the turnpike was run over the bridge, although it was rather too narrow, the managers thought it best to let it stand as it was, being not certain, it was said, that anew one as substantial would be erected in its place.

Holmesburg was laid out as a town by John Holmes, Esq. about 30 years ago. The idea was first suggested to the squire by Joshua E. Pusey, who then occupied Lewis's mill. Previous to that time, the Washington tavern, and the blacksmith shop of old Toby, at the foot of the hill, were the only buildings close to the post road.

Bustleton, three miles northerly, was a noted village of 10 or a dozen houses, a great many years before Holmesburgh was thought of. Upwards of thirty years ago Thomas Paul and other men of energy, turned their attention to the improvement of the town; divers commodious dwellings were erected, and business was lively. The notorious Peter Porcupine, in 1798 and 99, occasionally resided in Bustleton. The general elections for the citizens of the north eastern parts of the county have long been held here. Bustleton has an academy and a valuable public library. The number of dwelling houses in the town is about 50 exclusive of 8 or 10 at Rodmans' factory, a detached settlement on the Pennepack, highly interesting for its romantic scenery.

At Sandy-Hill, two miles from Bustleton towards Frankford, is a pleasant village of about a dozen houses. In the vicinity of this place, Ralph Sandiford the celebrated opposer of slavery, and advocate of the principles of civil liberty, formerly resided. His mortal remains were entombed near the road side, on his own farm, in 1733; the spot was formerly designated by a stone, on which we were told he was the son of John Sandiford of Liverpool, that he had borne a faithful testimony against slavery, and died at about the age of forty years. Hard by the grave of Sandiford, is an old house with a hip roof, marked on a stone in the front "I. A. 1696." This is probably the most ancient building in the township.

The religious establishments in Lower Dublin consists of a meeting of Baptists, who have a house for worship, called Pennepack meetinghouse westward of Bustleton—a congregation of Episcopalians, who assemble at All saints church on the Bristol road above Holmesburg,—a meeting of Methodists, who have a meeting house in Holmesburg—and a meeting of Baptists, who seceded from Pennepack meeting, and assemble at a meeting house in Bustleton.

The old Baptist meeting at Pennepack appears to have been the first permanent establishment of that profession in Pennsylvania. About 1686 there settled on the banks of Pennepack, John Eaton, Geo Eaton and wife, Sarah Eaton, and Samuel Jones, from Wales; John Baker from Ireland, and Samuel Vaus from England, all of them Baptists. The next year the famous preacher Elias Keach came among them; and baptised Joseph Ashton and wife, William Fisher and John Watts—who with those before mentioned, did in 1688, by mutual consent, form themselves into a church, choosing Mr. Keach to be their minister, and Samuel Vaus to be deacon. Keach, it appears returned to England in 1692. The succession of ministers whom they had from that time to 1814, were, John Watts, Evan Morgan, Samuel Jones, John Hart, assistant, Joseph Wood, Abel Morgan, Jenkins Jones, William Kennersly, assistant, Peter Peterson Vanhorn, George Eaton, assistant, Samuel Jones D.D. After the decease of Dr. Jones, 1814, some uneasiness appearing in the congregation respecting the choice of a pastor, a part of the members withdrew, and established a meeting at Bustleton.

Dr. Jones was an author and a preacher highly esteemed by those with whom he was associated. His printed works consisted of a sermon on the covenants—a century sermon—some devotional hymns—and papers relative to the Baptist interest under various designations.

Lower Dublin has produced many able politicians. The Holmes', the Ashtons, the Pauls, the Lardners, the Jones's and many others, made a distinguished figure in the history of the township. For ingenuity in the solution of mathematical questions, and accuracy in the ad measurement and division of lands, probably the two brothers, Silas and John Watts, have very rarely been exceeded, *The latter* died near 20 years ago at an advanced age.

While John Watts was devoting his time to surveying, conveyancing, and furnishing instruction in the rudiments of learning and the mathematical sciences, Dr. Jones in addition to his clerical vocation was employed in promoting the knowledge of classical literature and learned languages; and it was remarkable what an influence they had in stimulating the genius of the rising generation in Lower Dublin and its vicinity, to pursue those studies which exalt the character, and dignify humanity.

Lower Dublin academy, near Holmesburgh was founded about the year 1796, and most of the time since, it has been in a flourishing state.

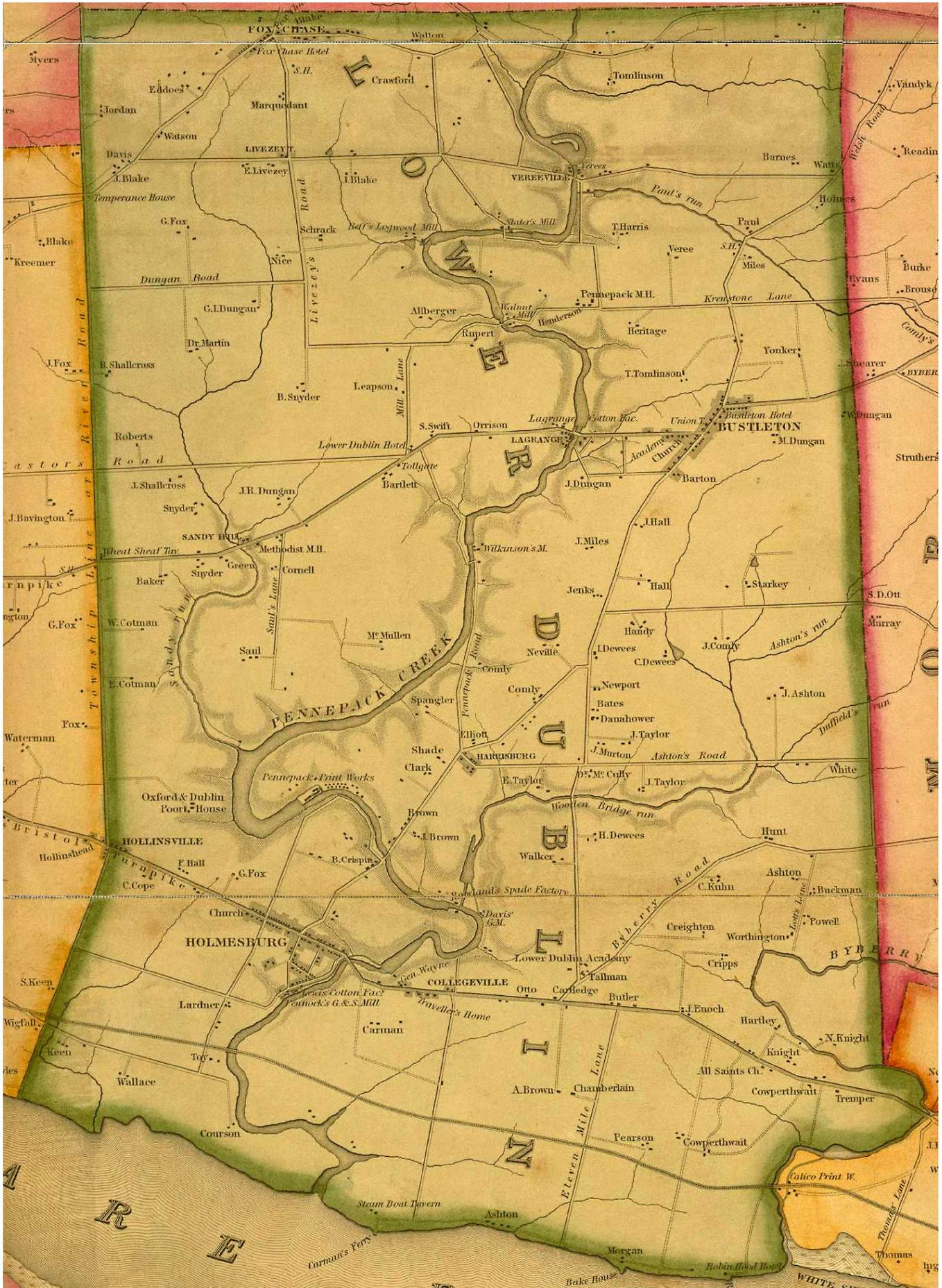
The inhabitants of the township manifest a lively interest in the support of well regulated schools.

In 1805 the citizens of Lower Dublin and Oxford united in the institution of a poor-house and house of employment, in the hope that it would conduce not only to the comfort of the indigent and unfortunate, but eventually prove beneficial to the community more at large by lessening the expense of supporting the poor. The issue, however, does not appear to have realized their prospects of economy. The amount of taxes on account of pauperism in one year recently, we are informed was about 1,000 dollars, for Lower Dublin, making an average of about 41 cents on each inhabitant, when in an adjoining township not concerned in a poor house, the average expense for paupers was only 34 cts. on each inhabitant.

Lower Dublin is conveniently intersected by public roads. The taxes levied in 1827 for repairs of the highways, amounted to about 800 dollars. Two turnpikes which cross the township are supported by their respective companies.

It was on the shores of the Delaware in Lower Dublin, near the place called "the Bake house" that Penn's agents first pitched upon a scite for building a city—the gentle rising of the ground, and the fine front upon the river, made a promising appearance, but on inspection at low water, a large rock and a number of smaller ones were discovered rising near the surface, and presenting dangerous impediments to navigation. The scite was then abandoned for that where the city of Philadelphia now stands. These rocks are sometimes to be seen at low tides, and are usually called "the hen and chickens."

* The stone on which the date is inscribed, and the date itself, were placed there by the present proprietor of the mill. The stone was taken from the old foundation and deposited in a niche which had been left in the wall, apparently for such a purpose; and the date was ascertained from an old letter, which speaks of the completion of the mill in that year; it may have been commenced a year or two previously.—ED.



1843 Lower Dublin Township – Charles Ellet Map of Philadelphia County

1843 Lower Dublin Township

In 1839, the Pennsylvania legislature commissioned a new Philadelphia County survey map. The surveyor was D H Kennedy and the map was drawn by C Cramer under the direction of Civil Engineer Charles Ellet, Jr. The map was published in 1843, the same year Ellet built the bridge over the Schuylkill River at Fairmount - the first large scale suspension bridge in the United States.

The 1843 map includes an 1840 population table of the county townships showing Lower Dublin Township with a total population of 3,298 made up of 1,615 white and 50 colored males and 1,573 white and 60 colored females. There were 208 people involved in agriculture, 233 in manufacturing and trades, 12 learned professionals and engineers, and 2 in commerce. (The 1820 census showed Lower Dublin Township having 1266 white and 41 colored males and 1341 white and 41 colored females – and 1 male slave and 1 female slave. 307 people were in agriculture, 15 in commerce, and 193 in manufacturing.)

By 1843, smaller hamlets were joining the established villages of Fox Chase, Bustleton, and Holmesburg. Notable among these are Vereeville at the Veree Mill, LaGrange at the LaGrange Cotton Factory east of Bustleton, Sandy Hill further down the Bustleton Pike at Sandy Run, the mill village at the Pennepack Print Works, the African-American settlement of Harrisburg at Welsh Road and Ashtons Road, Hollinsville at the Township Line Road and the Bristol Pike, and Collegetown, named for Lower Dublin Academy, up the Bristol Pike beyond Holmesburg.

In 1834, the Philadelphia & Trenton Railroad opened, running about ½ mile inland parallel to the Delaware River. Actually, it only ran from Morrisville to Kensington and, initially, the Kensington depot was primarily for freight. The plan was for train passengers to board ferries to complete or start the journey to or from the city. Ferries had been operating near the mouth of the Pennypack since the early Swedish settlers. Ferry Lane (today's Pennypack St) had been built to access the Frankford-Bristol Road. Job Bartlett owned and operated the Pennepack House at the ferry. It had become a well known spot for travelers and a popular summer boarding-house. The Philadelphia & Trenton Railroad Company wanted the Pennepack House property as the site for its wharves and train yards. This would have been a huge economic advance for Holmesburg. It was not to be. Bartlett's asking price was too high and the wharves and railroad yards went to the village of Tacony, just over the township line.

Mills continued to drive the economy of much of Lower Dublin Township and, particularly, Holmesburg. The Mill Commons, powered by the mill race emanating from the dam just above the Frankford-Bristol Pike Bridge, now had three mills. The Lewis family had expanded the old 1697 grist mill complex (sold to George Pennock c 1800) to include a large saw mill and cooper shop producing barrels to ship flour from the grist mill to the West Indies and beyond. (The saw mill had also undoubtedly supplied John Holme's Holmes-Burg Lumber Yard.) With the addition of the Lewis Cotton Factory in 1812, a substantial mill community was established down Mill St from the Bristol Pike to the Pennepack.

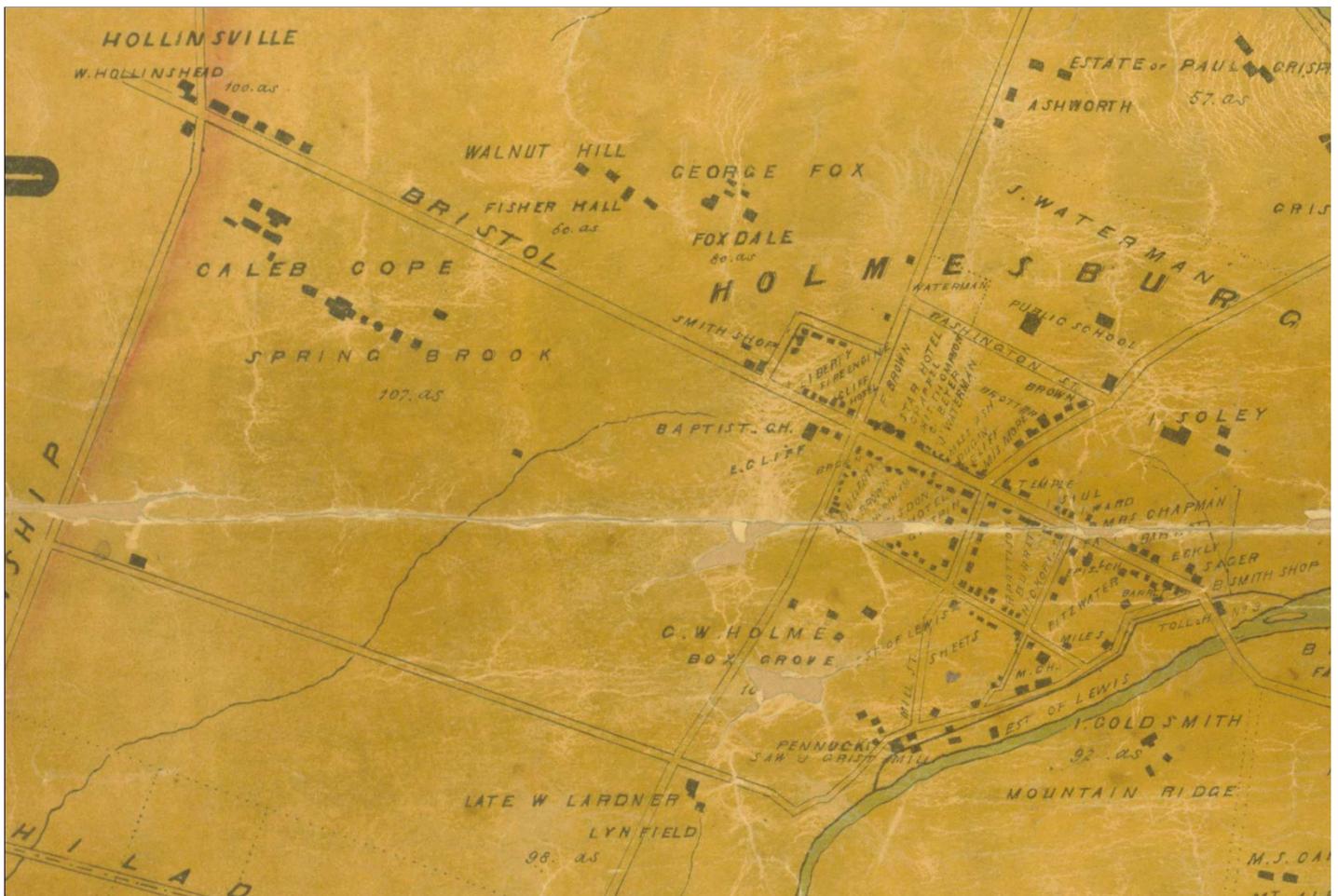
A mile and a half upstream, near the confluence of Wooden Bridge Run and the Pennypack, the Rowland Spade Factory started operations in 1826 from the remains of an 18th century saw mill. The Shovel Works would become one of Holmesburg's major employers during the 19th century and the Rowland family one the primary catalysts and stabilizing influences in the growth of Holmesburg. Before the advent of steam powered earth moving equipment, the shovel was king and the Rowland shovel was nationally recognized as among the best.

Another major employer, the Pennepack Print Works, was established in 1830 a mile and a half upstream, past Welsh Rd and Delaware Ave (today's Rhawn St). Samuel Comly, from Frankford, purchased the circa 1800 Sheppard's saw mill, raised the dam thereby increasing the water power, and built the Calico Print Works. An extensive mill community, Pennepack Village, would form along the creek. Joseph Ripka, a manufacturer from Manayunk, became the owner in 1843. Andreas Hartel, Ripka's nephew and another Holmesburg leader, would take over the operation in the 1850's.

The Holmesburg Quadrangle

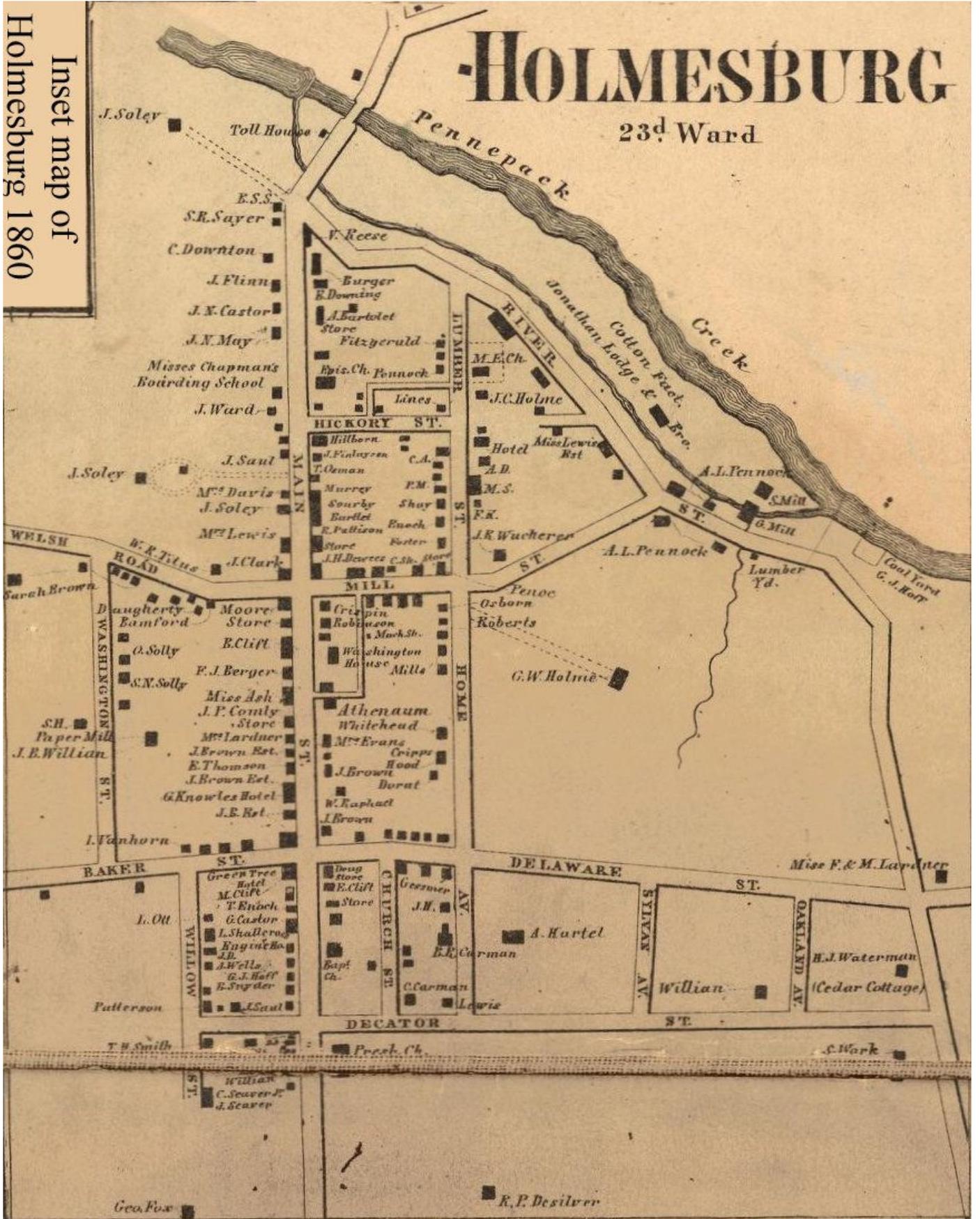
The old 1696 Peter Dale 240 acre tract acquired by John Holme II upon his marriage to Dale's widow, Martha, is still very recognizable on the 1843 map, running along the Bristol Pike from near the bend in Township Line Road to Pennypack Creek and bordered on the east by Keen's Road (today's Ditman St). John Keen or Kyn was an early Swedish settler with land on the Oxford Township side of Township Line Road, thus the road name. There was much intermarriage between the Keens and Lower Dublin Township families such as the Ashtons, Holmes, and Crispins.

Below is a portion of the 1850 J C Sydney map of Lower Dublin showing the 240 acre Holmesburg quadrangle just prior to city consolidation. By 1850, Caleb Cope is the primary land holder with 107 acres at the Township Line. (Most of this Spring Brook property had actually been sold by John Holme to David Lewis around 1800.) The original Holme family holdings have been reduced to 102 acres with George W Holme, nephew of John and son of Thomas, the patriarch. By 1886, it would be completely dissipated save for the Box Grove mansion property (now 8047-49 Walker St). But the distinctive quadrangle remains and can be easily identified on today's maps, though Ditman St no longer continues to Holmesburg Ave, which, in turn, is little more than a path from a block east of Mill St to Torresdale Ave.



1850 Holmesburg Section of Lower Dublin Township – J C Sydney Map

Some notable features on the 1850 map are the black smith shops on the Bristol Pike at either end of town, the Liberty Fire Engine down from the Cliff Hotel (aka the 1799 Green Tree), the Star Hotel in the next block up, and across the Pike the Risdon Hotel (aka the old Washington Inn). The Public School on Washington Ave (now Moro St) is the Columbia School, Holmesburg's first public school, built in 1846. It was three stories high, 40 ft by 55 ft deep, and able to accommodate 300 students.



1860 D J Lake & S N Beers Map of the Vicinity of Philadelphia - Holmesburg Inset

HOLMESBURG DIRECTORY			
W. S. Kinsey	Prop ^r	Washington Ho.	Main St.
J. W. Crispin	"	Crystal Spring Hotel	Baker
J. B. Peale	Physician		Main St.
E. Arthur	"	"	"
Y. May	"	"	"
H. J. Waterman	Teacher	Res.	River St.
Tho ^s Heveston	Alderman	Off.	Main "
Rob ^t Pattison	Deal. in Gen ^l	Merchandise	" "
J. H. Dewees	"	"	"
J. P. Comley	"	"	"
Alfred Bartolett	Drugs, Groceries & Prov ^l	"	"
G. J. Hoff	Coal Deal ^r		River St.
L. Shallcross	Merchant Tailor		Main "
G. M. Castor	"	"	"
Jno. Fowler	Sawyer & Lumber Deal ^r		River "
R. H. Tresler	Merch ^t Miller & Farmer	"	"
S. R. Sayer	Blacksmith		Main "
Ja ^s M ^r Cormick	"	"	"
Jno. M ^r Ginnis	Wheelwright		Main St.
T. Enoch	House Carpenter		" "
Tho ^s H. Smith	Coach Painter		Decatur "
B. R. Carman	Mason	Res.	Home Av.
Clayton Seaver	Shovel Mkr.		Willow St.
Jn ^o Seaver	"	"	" "
I. Vanhorn	Carter		Baker "
E. J. Burger	Victualer		Main "
J. C. Holme	Silver Plater		Lumber "
J. R. Wucherer	Citiz ⁿ c.		Lumber & Mill "
Sam ^l Work	Residence		River "
G. W. Holme	"		Home "
R. P. DeSilver	"		Main "
Tho ^s Shallcross	"		" "
Geo. Fox	"		" "
W. Raphael	"		" "
W. E. Evans	"		" "

1860 Holmesburg Directory from the Lake & Beers Map

After city consolidation in 1854, the townships of Oxford, Lower Dublin, Moreland, and Byberry, comprising Northeast Philadelphia (Frankford/Tacony Creek to Poquessing Creek – the border with Bucks County), became the 23rd Ward.

The 1860 Lake & Beers business directory and inset map of Holmesburg are wonderful documentation of the village's growth during the first half of the 19th century from a simple mill crossroads consisting of little more than a blacksmith shop and an inn on the main street to a well populated, mature commercial center with numerous stores and services. There are now five hotels noted, a sure sign of Holmesburg being a stopping place. There is also a victualer (food and drink provider – usually a public house or tavern) appropriately named Burger on Main St near the bridge.

The names of early settlers to the area such as Holme, Crispin, Enoch, Waterman, Comley, Shallcross, Knowles, Lardner, Lewis, and Evans abound. Along with these are newer arrivals who will play important roles in the second half of the century; Peale, Pattison, Castor, Clark, DeSilver, and Fox.

Some notable buildings make their first appearances. The Athenaeum, built in 1850, is south of the Washington House. The Crystal Springs Hotel at Baker St and Pennypack Creek (off the map) is in operation. Emmanuel Episcopal Church, built in 1858, is across from the Misses Chapman Girls Boarding School. There is now a full complement of churches. Besides Emmanuel there are the Presbyterian at Decatur and Main, the Baptist a half block north on Main, and the Methodist on Lumber St north of Hickory. St Dominic Catholic Church is about a half mile up Main past the bridge.

Very few of the street names are in use today – 150 years later. Main St is now Frankford Ave. Baker and Delaware Sts west and east of Main have become Rhawn St. Hickory St is now Stanwood St. Lumber and Holme Sts north and south of Mill St will be Erdrick St. River St along the creek is now Holmesburg Ave. Washington St is Moro St and Willow St is Craig St. Sylvan St will become Cottage St and Oakland St will be Jackson St. Church St is now Charles St. Only Welsh Rd, Mill St and Decatur St have retained the old names.