

*Hunterdon County's rural heritage is still evident today, despite the many changes that have occurred since its incorporation, nearly 300 years ago. Villages and small towns remain as proud reminders of its past. Many of the older farmsteads in the countryside still exist today. Archeological remains from its earliest historic period—some 10,000 years ago—are still being uncovered.*

## County Profile—Historic Resources

The preservation of historic resources enriches the landscape and provides important lessons in history, sociology, arts and the sciences. Historic preservation also provides financial benefits to communities. According to a 1997 study conducted by Rutgers University and authorized by the Governor's Task Force on History, the rehabilitation of historic structures, objects and properties produces jobs, fosters heritage tourism, spurs reinvestment, increases tax revenue and provides business income. As such, historic preservation offers many benefits that can be enjoyed by today's residents as well as future generations. The key to continued enjoyment and existence of historic resources is that they be preserved through a comprehensive, planned program. Integral to such a program is an inventory and comprehensive overview of the County's historic evolution and infrastructure.

### *Hunterdon County—A Brief History*

Hunterdon County's cultural evolution and development can be divided into four time frames including the Paleo-Indian, Early Agrarian, Late Agrarian and Industrialization, and Modern Periods.

#### Paleo—Indian Period

Hunterdon County's earliest historic period dates back 10,000 years to the Native American Indians. The Indians remained in Hunterdon County until the early 1700s. At that time, European settlers acquired most of their land and the Indians relocated to other areas.

#### Early Agrarian

The earliest non-Indian settlers came to Hunterdon County around 1700. They built sawmills and gristmills along streams to create lumber for homes. During the early 1700s, the majority of industries catered to the needs of the agricultural economy. By the time of the Revolution, successful mining operations in the County provided ammunition for the War and iron for tools and machinery.

#### Late Agrarian and Industrialization

By 1852, railroad lines had been completed in Hunterdon County, connecting County farmers to markets throughout the East. This was a boom for Hunterdon County agriculture and advanced the fruit tree markets and later on, eggs, poultry and dairy. Farmers also transported their goods locally. Streams and rivers were used for grist mills. Products were carried to and from the mills across locally constructed stone arch bridges and, later on, metal truss bridges. Local merchants and artisans became less specialized during this time period and worked in general stores, notion stores and hardware stores in hamlets and villages. As farmers started to specialize in response to local markets, new industries sprang up

Photo

## County Profile— Historic Resources

providing for home furnishings, clothing and tools. Iron manufacturers were important for tools and bridge building. New homes were constructed for industry owners, merchants and factory workers—mostly in the larger towns and Lambertville, the County’s only city.

### Modern

Agriculture dominated the County in the 19th century. By the early 20th century, sophisticated tools and machines improved the conditions of farming and agriculture was at its pinnacle. Other industries did equally well, such as the rubber factories, local mining operations and several ceramic and pottery plants. But by the late 20th century, virtually all of the County’s industries were gone and replaced with office and retail development. The last quarter of the 20th century also saw a dramatic change in agriculture with its loss of full time farm operations due to the marked increase in land values and competition from large farm operations in other States.

### *Historic Places in Hunterdon County*

The State and National Registers of Historic Places offer protection of historic resources—both districts and individual properties—from public undertakings. Any public project affecting a property listed on the National Register and involving federal funds must be reviewed for its impact on the historic resource in accordance with the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. Those that only appear on the State Register are reviewed if the projects involve State funding. All registered districts and structures in Hunterdon County appear on both State and National Registers. In such instances, the State reviews projects on behalf of both Registers.

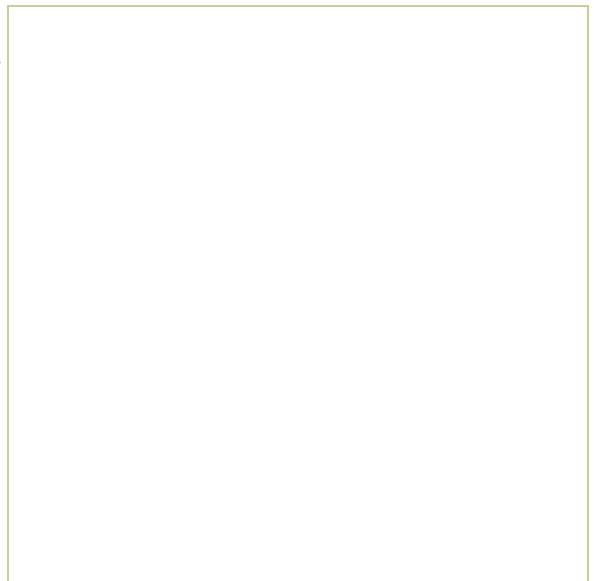
As of January 2002, 40 historic districts in Hunterdon County are included on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. (Map \_\_\_). Eighteen individual buildings and structures, including four bridges, are also listed. The largest districts are the Delaware and Raritan Canal District, extending approximately 62 miles from Bulls Island State Park in Kingwood Township through portions of Hunterdon, Mercer, Somerset and Middlesex Counties. Listed historic districts occur in every municipality in Hunterdon County, with the exception of the Boroughs of Bloomsbury, High Bridge, Lebanon and Milford.

### *Locally-Designated Historic Districts*

The primary difference between a local historic district and a State or National District is the nature of government oversight. Any type of private or public project can be regulated in a local historic district; only public projects are regulated in State and National Districts. In New Jersey, the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) gives municipalities express authority to regulate private encroachments on designated historic properties. It identifies the municipality’s role in historic preservation and outlines the necessary procedure for creating a local historic district and reviewing development activity within the district. Hunterdon County contains a few local historic districts, however most of them pre-date the current MLUL requirements.

### *Historic Buildings and Structures in Hunterdon County*

In 1980, the Hunterdon County Planning Board adopted the Hunterdon County Sites of Historic Interest, an inventory of historically significant structures throughout the County as well as sites of interest. In 2000, the Freeholder Board adopted the Hunterdon County Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund Plan



*Photo. National Register Historic District*

## County Profile—Historic Resources

which lists all County-owned buildings and structures (100), noting those that are on the National Register (18) and those that are considered eligible (68).

### County-Owned Farm Buildings

Through its land acquisition program, the Hunterdon County Park System has acquired several farms containing farmhouses, barns and other outbuildings. While most of the farmhouses have undergone significant modern renovations, many of the barns have retained their historic integrity. Wooden barns in Hunterdon County are becoming scarce. The old wooden barn is being replaced by modern metal structures that are resistant to fire and are large enough to accommodate a variety of equipment and products. Barns are of historic interest because they are a mark of individuality and hand-craftsmanship. They were constructed of local materials and designed specifically for the farmer's needs. As farming has changed over the last 100 years, so has the appreciation for these older structures and their place in the County's agrarian history.

### The County Seat of Flemington


Flemington has been the County seat since 1790. Still owned and maintained by the County are several important historic structures, including the Hunterdon County Courthouse and Jail, the Choir School, the Southard Building, the Hall of Records and the former Democrat building. These buildings are all located in the downtown section of Flemington, which is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

### Bridges

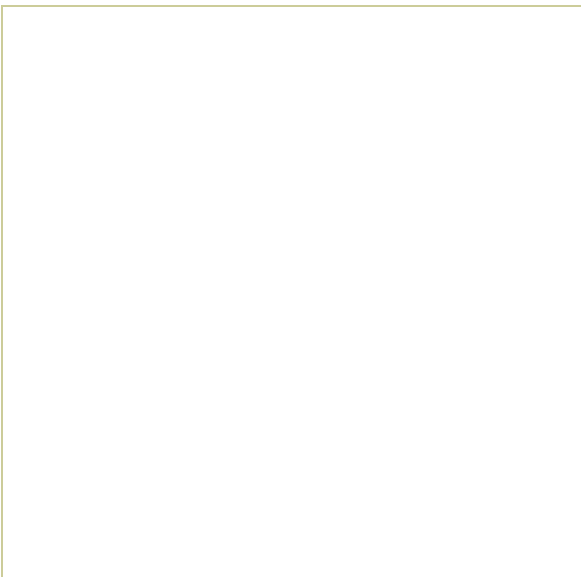
Hunterdon County owns and maintains a wealth of historic bridges, due to the number of stream crossings, the success of agriculture, and the materials available to construct the bridges. Over several dozen metal truss bridges, dating mostly from the 19th century, have been deemed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places by the NJ Historic Preservation Office. Additionally, the County owns over 100 stone arch bridges, the largest concentration of stone arch bridges in the country, according to Thomas Boothby, a Pennsylvania State University professor and bridge preservation consultant. Many of these stone arch bridges have been deemed either eligible or potentially eligible for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

### ***Historic Architecture in Hunterdon County***

Hunterdon County boasts a large collection of historic architecture from its colonial past to the 20th century. Examples of pure Federal and Victorian styles are plentiful in the County's older towns and villages. Colonial Revival styles are evident in towns and countryside alike.



*Photo. Historic farm building*



*Photo. Historic Courthouse*

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### *Historic Preservation Organizations in Hunterdon County*

#### Hunterdon County Cultural & Heritage Commission

The Cultural & Heritage Commission is appointed by the Board of Chosen Freeholders and is responsible for promoting local cultural and historic programs. Among its numerous activities, the Commission teamed up with the Hunterdon County Planning Board to prepare the *Hunterdon County Sites of Historic Interest* and collaborated on the preparation of an historic stone arch bridge inventory (see *Hunterdon County Planning Board* below). It also offers small grants to municipalities and nonprofit organizations for cultural and historic preservation purposes.

#### Municipal Historic Preservation Commissions

Municipal historic commissions are created pursuant to enabling legislation in the Municipal Land Use Law. Commissions are responsible for reviewing development activity within a designated historic district. Permitted activities within these designated areas vary and are restricted in accordance with the ordinance. Typically, local ordinances require that new development be compatible with historic structures by incorporating specific architectural and design elements into the new construction. The removal or destruction of historic structural elements of a building may also be restricted.

#### Municipal Historians

A municipality may appoint a person(s) to be the Local Historian, pursuant to the Local Historians Enabling Act of 1979. This volunteer position is responsible for acquiring and documenting information regarding local history. The Local Historian works cooperatively with other historic organizations and assists in the preparation of grant in aid applications. There are approximately 17 municipal historians and one County Historian.



*Federal Style, 1800—1840.* This early style typically features a low-pitched roof, simple, symmetrical box-like exterior, and sidelights or windows surrounding the front door.



*Greek Revival, 1820—1860.* The large massive columns and pedimented porches are the signature of this style, reminiscent of ancient Greece's monumental buildings.



*Italianate, 1835—1880.* The Italianate style is the earliest form of Victorian architecture and typically includes long, vertical windows, heavily bracketed cornices and eaves, cupolas and porches.



*Gothic Revival, 1830—1890.* Representing a transition from the classical styles to the Victorian age romantic styles, this style often includes bargeboard (gingerbread), steeply pitched, gabled roof lines, and sometimes pointed or arched windows.

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### Historical Societies and Museum Associations

Historical societies and museum associations are nonprofit organizations that have historic preservation work programs tailored to the needs of their community or museum. Examples of such organizations include the Hunterdon County Historical Society and Hunterdon County Museum Association.

### Hunterdon County Planning Board

The Hunterdon County Planning Board maintains a small library of historic preservation materials, ordinances and maps and lists of registered districts and structures. In addition to its role as a central repository of historical information, the Planning Board also engages in a variety of related planning projects. For example, in the early 1990s, it coordinated with the Hunterdon County Roads, Bridges and Engineering Department and the Cultural and Heritage Commission in the preparation of an historic stone arch bridge inventory and anticipates development of a preservation plan to follow. The Planning Board also anticipates greater involvement in historic preservation projects following the Freeholder Board's adoption of the Hunterdon County Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund Plan in 2000. The Plan recommends spending approaches and procedures for a newly adopted dedicated tax, a portion of which may be annually allocated toward preservation of county-owned historic structures. Recommendations for eligible projects are to be prepared by the Cultural and Heritage Commission in consultation with the Hunterdon County Planning Board.

*Second Empire, 1840—1875.* The signature element of this style is the mansard roof. Other architectural elements include dormers, classical columns, paired windows, arched “surrounds” and brackets under the eaves.



*Queen Anne, 1870—1890.* This romantic style is the epitome of Victorian architecture. Note the corner towers, complex massing, and bay windows.

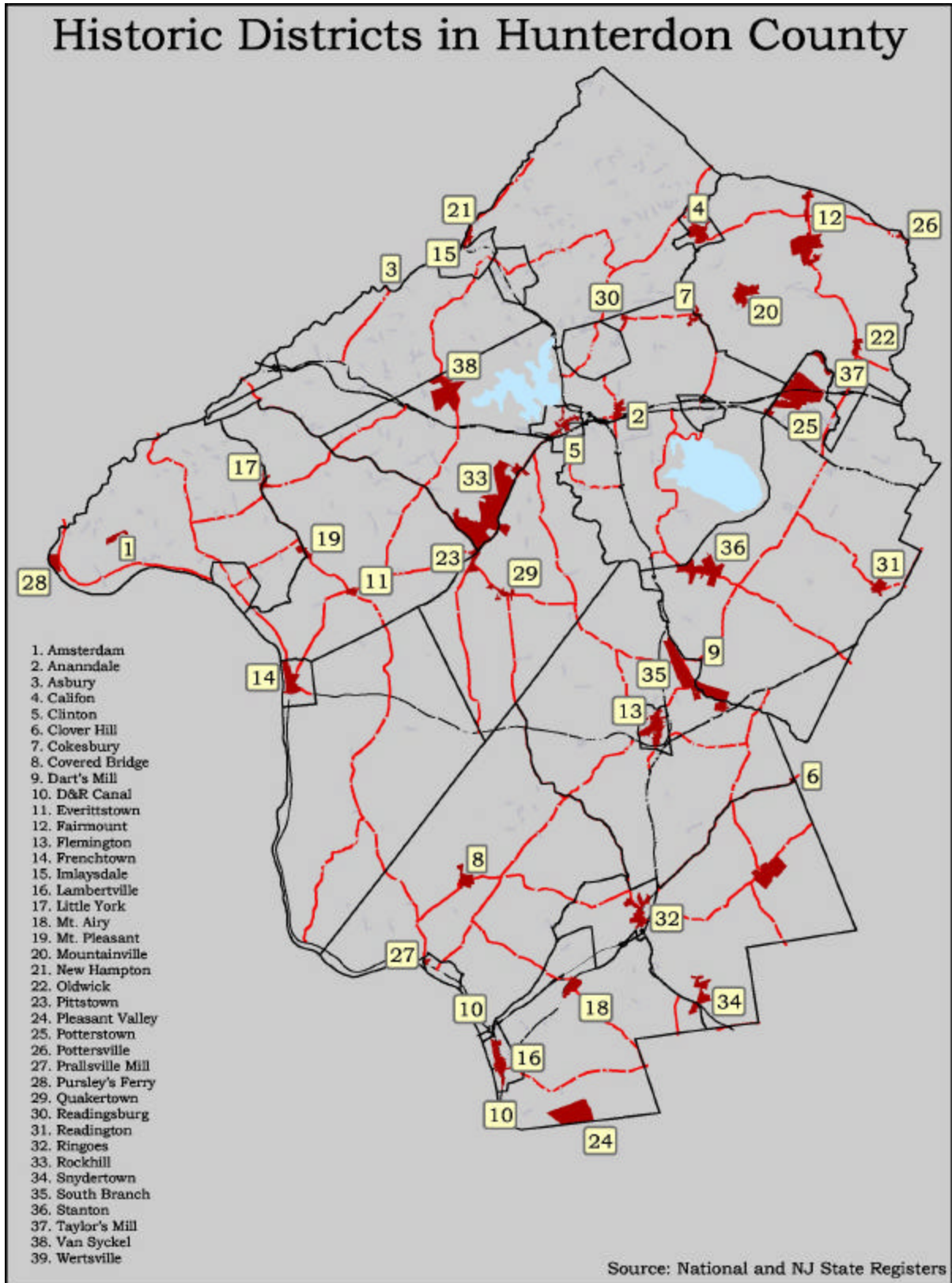


*Colonial Revival, 1890—1940.* The colonial home was revived in the late 19th and early 20th century. Note the pediment and sidelights (windows) around the front door and the box-like building shape, similar to the earlier Federal style buildings.



*American Four Square, 1895—1935.* The American Four Square's sub-style of Colonial Revival, was popularized in the early 1900s by pattern books and Sears catalog kits. Note the typical simple boxy shape, full width porches and large central dormer.

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Map 1— National/State Registered Historic Districts.  
 Primary data source: SHPO.