

Early Life on the Wading River: Part Three

Harrisville – Then and Now

by W. J. Hawthorne

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When the Harrises took over the paper mill and the village, they found themselves owning a very sound business indeed. What the Harrises did not know was that eventually their entire investment would be lost and the town which bore their name would be reduced to piles of stones and scattered ashes. Of the five Harris brothers (John, William, Benjamin, Richard, and Howard) only Richard and Howard lived at Harrisville. There is a distinct possibility that Howard married the daughter of William McCarty. However, there is also evidence that Howard Harris married one Rebecca Cranmer. The following is a list of people who lived and worked in Harrisville:

Richard and Beulah Ogborn, Laborer
Collin and Hannah Truax, Blacksmith
Isaac and Hannah Broome, Carpenter
Borzella and Martha Bower, Laborer
James and Margaret Reade, Papermaker
John and Ann Wilkinson, Laborer
Joseph and Ella Albert, Laborer
John and Caroline Shelling, Laborer
Samuel and Caroline Schnavel, Laborer
Henry and Christanna Kirby, Laborer
James and Sarah Maxwell, Carpenter
Robert and Hannah Whiteby, Papermaker
Jacob and Barbara Wagner, Papermaker
Henry and Hannah Kurtz, Papermaker
Christopher and Catherine Heinman, Papermaker
Howard and Rebecca Harris, Papermaker



Harrisville Paper Mill before 1900 (Eichinger photo)



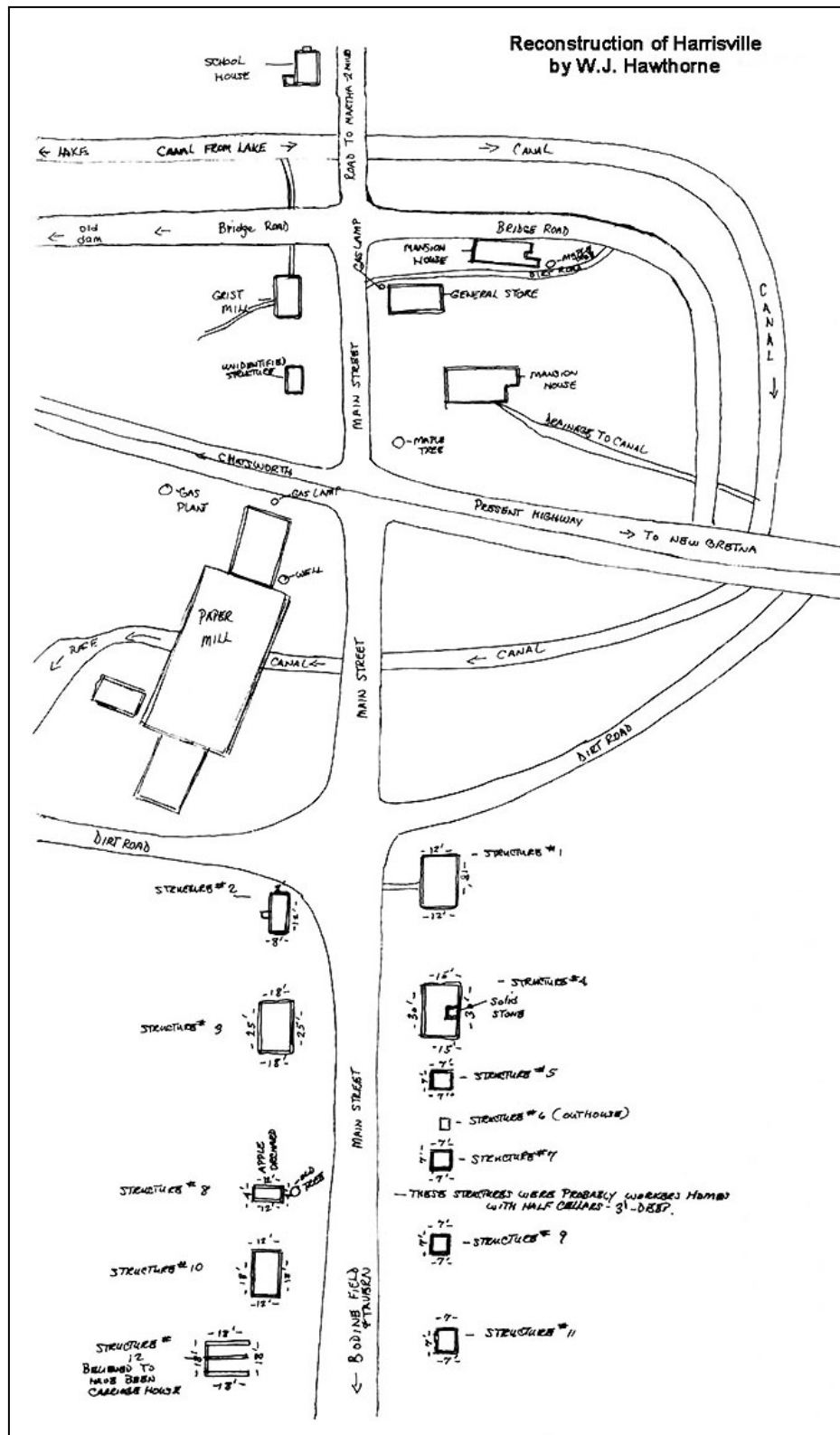
Two identified workers in a salt hay wagon at Harrisville Paper Mill. This Eichinger photo taken before 1900 when the town must have still been in operation.

Another person who worked at Harrisville was Alfred Adams. He was born at Martha Furnace in Burlington County, in 1833. His parents were Uriah and Rebecca Adams. Uriah worked in the old Martha iron furnace. Alfred and his two brothers, Joseph and Jere, attended the little old school house in the woods until they were old enough to work in the paper mill at Harrisville which was only several miles below Martha.



A deserted Harrisville Paper Mill (circa 1913). Photo by Harold Feyl.

According to one of my sources the houses in Harrisville were almost identical to those houses located at Batsto. I have included in this article several maps which show the locations of these houses, the mills and other buildings which comprised Harrisville.



**HARRISVILLE PAPER
MILL AS SURVEYED
BY E. HEXAMER, 1877
Copied from plan
#1151**

Owner: Richard C. Harris

Superintended: By the owner

Name: Harrisville Paper Mill

Location: Situated at Harrisville formerly McCarthyville], Burlington County, New Jersey

Construction: good

Communication: Buildings adjoining communicate by openings, Wooden and iron doors, as shown on plan. The window in stonewall between Boiler and Bleach Houses will be bricked up. There will be an iron door between the Boiler and Paper Machine Houses.

Age: Buildings erected 30 years ago.

Power: Machinery propelled by water power, ample supply of water throughout the year.

Height: Main Mill, 15'-15'-10' and 25'. Paper Machine Rooms, 12' and 30'. Boiler House, 12' and 18'. Rotary Boiler House, 10' and 9'.

Length: See plan
Walls: of stone, from 20 inches to 36 inches thick.

Cornice: of Main Mill of brick; other buildings no cornices.

Gutters: None

Columns: of iron

Roof: As per plan.

Scuttle: In roof of Main Mill and ladder to it.

Floors: Stone floor of Lime brick floor in Boiler House, other floors of 1¼ inch pine flooring boards, not arranged for flooding

Ceilings: of part of Attic of Main Mill, lathed and plastered; Paper Machine Rooms, boarded ceiling: others not finished.

Ladders: None permanent, several wooden movable ladders on hand for reaching to the roof of Main Mill.

Lightning rods: Numerous points on roof of Main Mill, none on stack.

Elevator: Small elevator in Main Mill from First to Second floor at [a].

Hoisting: Outside of Main Mill at .

Porch: none

Transfer of Ownership of Harrisville

From	Date	To
Harrisville Manufacturing Co.	March 24, 1869	Catherine Crowley
Catherine Crowley	March 26, 1869	Lumin Wing
Lumin Wing	Nov. 30, 1874	Eliz. Wildey & Charles Wing
Wildey and Wing defaulted and the property was again picked up by the Burlington County National Bank.		
Burl. Co. National Bank	March 1879	Howard P. Harris
Former mortgage lien caused sheriff sale to Howard P. Harris on December 8, 1879.		
Richard C. Harris	July 27, 1888	John W. Harris
John Harris	Nov. 1, 1888	Harris Paper Company
Sheriff's Sale	Feb., 1891	Maria Robbins
Maria Robbins		Alexander Harrington
Alexander W. Harrington (½)	Feb. 20, 1893	Joseph Scheider and Emanuel Ettenheimer
Alexander Harrington (½)	April 20, 1893	N.J. Manufacturing and Improvement Co.
Joseph Scheider and Emanuel Ettenheimer (½)	April 20, 1893	N.J. Manufacturing and Improvement Co.
Court sale (½)	Dec. 23, 1895	Levi French
Levi French (½)	Dec. 23, 1895	Joseph Wharton
N.J. Manufacturing and Improvement Co. (½)	Dec. 27, 1895	Levi French
Levi French (½)		Joseph Wharton

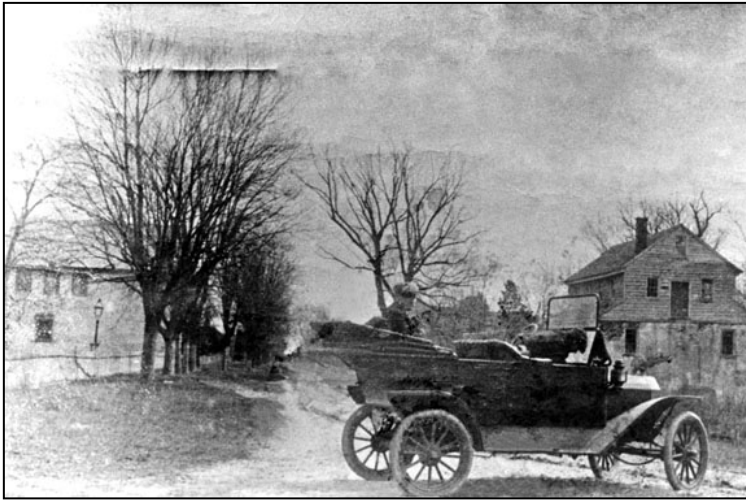
The Harrisville property remained in the name of Joseph Wharton until his estate turned it over the State of New Jersey. Today this property is part of the Wharton Forest.



Front view of Paper Mill before fire. Circa 1913.
Feyl photo.

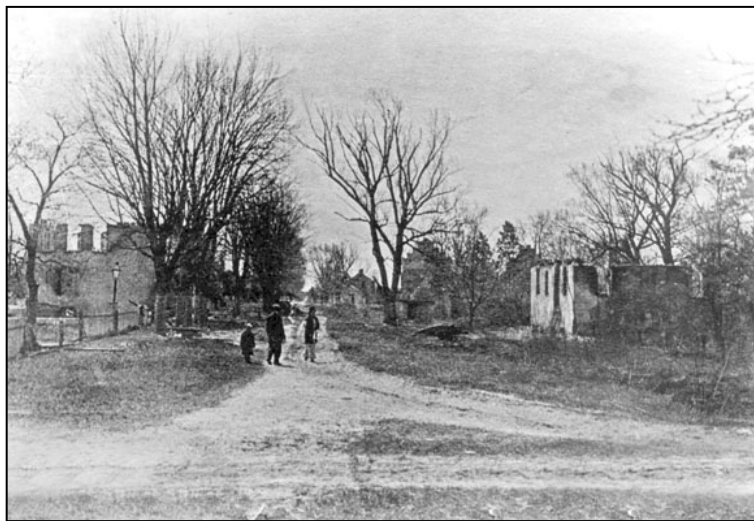
Boat house on canal (dug by McCarty)
at Harrisville. Circa 1913.
Feyl photo.





Harrisville Circa 1913, looking down Main street. General Store I son left, Grist Mill on right. Notice gas lamp by General Store. Feyl photo.

Same location as above photo, in 1914, after the fire. Remains of General Store on left and Grist Mill on right. Houses and Paper Mill in distance. Feyl photo.



Newspaper Articles about the April, 1914 Fire at Harrisville

**Thursday – April 23, 1914, Page 6
Vol. XLIV – No. 85
The Evening Union, Atlantic City, N.J.
“Mysterious Blaze Wipes Out Village”
Harrisville on Border of Atlantic County is
Destroyed.
Mount Holly, N.J. April 22**

All that was left of Harrisville, which at one time was a thriving and active community with a paper manufacturing plant as the industry around which the village was built, was destroyed by a fire of unknown origin on Sunday night, word to that effect having reached here today. Harrisville is not far from Batsto and near the line between Burlington and Atlantic Counties.

The fire consumed the mill property, the general store building, two large houses, and numerous small buildings surrounding them. All were unoccupied, uninsured and belonged to the Joseph Wharton Tract.

**Atlantic City Review
Atlantic City, N.J.
Saturday—April 25, 1914
Vol. XLII, Number 177
“Camp Lyon Burned Out”
All Tents Owned By Y.M.C.A.
Swept Away By Flames At Harrisville.
Started In Old Mill.**

“Last Sunday evening, April 19, at 6 o’clock, Harrisville, N.J., was swept by a fire that started in an old paper mill from an unknown cause, burning every tent owned by the Atlantic City Y.M.C.A. Boys’ Camp. H.C. Knight, Boys’ work director, and George C. Draper, physical director of the local association, visited Harrisville yesterday and found the village in ashes, tents and all gone.

This means a loss of about \$300 to Camp Lyon, which is conducted for the boys of the Y.M.C.A. In order to conduct the camp this year, which opens

June 25 and closes July 16, it will mean that friends must help to secure new equipment.

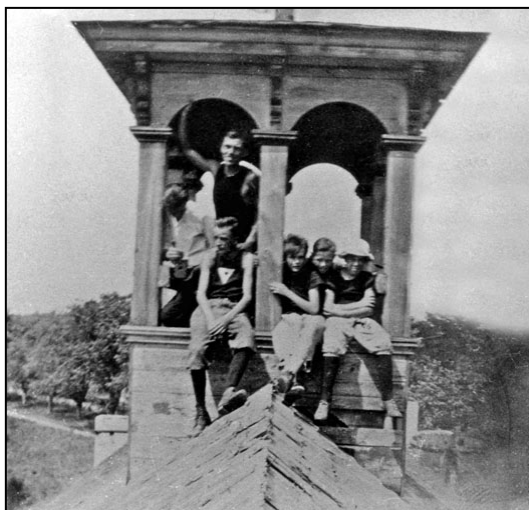
At least seventy-five boys are definitely planning to go to camp this year, and unless the equipment is secured, they will be denied this privilege. It is conceded by Associations all over the country that a month in camp is more beneficial to a boy than the other eleven months of the year in the Association building.

A tent with complete equipment will cost \$25. and any friend wishing to donate one will have it named in honor of him. The order for the equipment must be placed within the next few days in order to secure them in time for camp; and the Association trusts that a great many of its friends will come to its assistance and donate a complete tent. Make checks payable to A.T. Bell, Treasurer, Y.M.C.A., and send to 1315 Pacific Avenue.

**The Evening Union,
Atlantic City, N.J.
Saturday—June 20, 1914
Vol. XLIV.—No. 134
Will Pitch Tents for Y.M.C.A. Boys**

The advance guard of the Y.M.C.A. left this morning to establish the summer camp of the Association at Lake Harris, Wading River, N.J. The "Huskies" of the association, who were detailed to pitch the camp, embarked on the power cruisers "Maine", Captain McDevitt, and the "Wilhelmina." About two tons of canvas and other camp material with provisions were taken along.

Dr. Lyon was in charge of the advance guard with aides in Scout Master McKnight and Physical Director Draper. The boys chosen to pitch camp were Hobard Ireland, Arthur Ripley, Warren Summers, Jr., George Lyon, Arthur Albertson and Chief Cook John Deaver."



YMCA Scouts from Atlantic City on roof of Paper Mill. Circa 1913

HARRISVILLE YMCA CAMP FEYL PHOTOS



Cook house, cook, and scouts.



Cook house and mess tent by Lake Harris.



YMCA Scouts inside cook house by lake, writing letters home. Only known interior shot of Harrisville area.

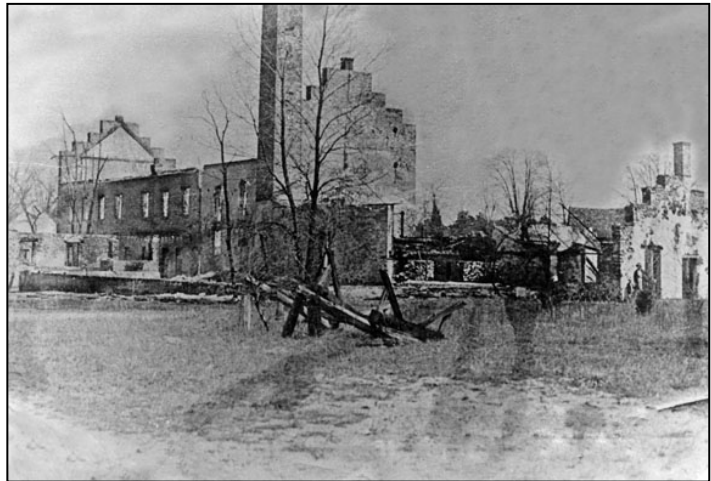
The last person to live in Harrisville was the caretaker whose residence was the mansion house. He had been by himself for so long that when he was confronted by people from the city he didn't know what to talk about.

It was a Mr. Broom of Jenkins' Neck who carted the boy scouts' luggage from the landing at the town of Wading River to Camp Lyon at Harrisville Lake by horse and wagon.

Most of the houses were daubed with a red paint which acted to preserve the wood. The stone parts of the houses and mills were covered with white stucco.

In most of the accounts that I have read about Harrisville I read that the town was totally destroyed. This is not really so. I know that at least three houses survived. One of these stands today not more than five minutes away from Batsto.

Harrisville is almost totally gone now. The fact that wood, iron, and paper were made in this area is well known. Harrisville site is still in fairly good condition. As I see it, people have several choices concerning the future of this area. One of the choices is to excavate the town to learn as much as possible and to preserve those objects which form a visible heritage for all of us. The other choice is to leave it as it is now and let people come in and cart away our heritage a weekend at a time. Which will it be? I wonder.



In the Feyl photo above, we see a back view of the Paper Mill after the 1914 fire.



Paper Mill after 1914 fire.
Feyl photo.



Richard C. Harris mansion ruins after fire. Canal in background. Feyl photo.



Photo right:
Interior view of Paper Mill after fire.
Feyl photo.