

CHAPTER 2

THE CONTEXT: TAVERNS AND ROADS IN NORTHERN DELAWARE C.1790 TO C. 1840

A historic "context" is a study that seeks to put a particular site like Tweed's Tavern into its broader setting of time, place and subject. This helps to define what is particularly important about the site and how it can contribute to the understanding of our history. This chapter talks about several aspects of this context: Taverns and their place in early American history; Mill Creek Hundred, the area in which Tweed's Tavern lies, in the 18th- and 19th-century; the regional road system and its importance for taverns; and finally a comparison of Tweed's Tavern with some other taverns in the region using documentary sources.

Taverns have often been romanticized, particularly those having associations with the Revolution, and in some ways they represent an idealized American past when people harmoniously shared hospitality in the democratic atmosphere of the wayside inn. Taverns were however truly important in 18th- and early 19th-century America, providing services and functions that could take place nowhere else. While a lot of less- than-accurate "folk history" has been written about taverns, scholarly studies in the last few decades have enabled us to understand them better. An excellent illustrated introduction to the history of taverns can be found in Amy S. Rice's study "Early American Taverns: for the Entertainment of Friends and Strangers", published in 1983.

Tweed's Tavern lies in Mill Creek Hundred, a roughly rectangular area in the northwest corner of New Castle County. In Delaware, hundreds were the main administrative units into which counties were divided. In the 18th and early 19th centuries it was an overwhelmingly rural area, with a number of grist and lumber mills along its streams. From an early date it was also an area through which wagons loaded with grain passed from the rich farmlands of Lancaster and Chester counties on their way to the Christina River. An 1804 document reveals that most people lived in houses made of logs like Tweed's. Brick and stone houses were much more rare, and the tavern was in no way unusual in being built of logs.

Our study of the road system of northern Delaware emphasizes the importance of the connection between Lancaster County to the Christina River and the milling towns of Stanton, Newport and Wilmington that lay upon it. One main route, coming south from the town of Gap in Lancaster County, divided several times like the fingers of a hand to bring the wagon traffic to these different places. One of these "fingers" was Limestone Road, laid out in about 1710.

In the late 18th century, and even more in the first quarter of the 19th, many of these roads were improved by turnpike companies who raised tolls and used the money to upgrade the highways. Wagons and stagecoaches plied these roads in great numbers, stimulating the need for taverns in a range of styles, quality and size. Limestone Road was never turnpiked, but nevertheless had two good taverns on it: the better known was the Mermaid Tavern. Three miles to the north was the smaller

Tweed's Tavern. The spacing of these two establishments was typical for taverns on all northern Delaware roads, as can be well seen on a road map of 1820 that shows taverns and other important places.

The heyday of taverns as local or regional stops for stagecoach or trading routes lasted into the 1830's. During that decade the railroad began to utterly revolutionize transportation in the country and pulled more and more commercial traffic from the roads, a process that accelerated in the 1840's. Taverns either adapted or closed.

How did Tweed's compare to the other taverns in the region? We investigated this question by looking at historical archives: tax assessment documents and inventories of tavernkeeper's estates when they died. We compared Tweed's Tavern with information from the Mermaid, John Ruth, Springer's, Riseing Son, Yarnall's, Murphy's and Jordan's taverns. While the information is far from complete, it shows that Tweed's tavern was among the smallest of the taverns (judging by the number of chairs and beds it had), but remained a respectably profitable enterprise as late as 1836.

A. TAVERNS IN EARLY AMERICA

The tavern is an American icon. Its basic purpose — to provide drink, food and (usually) overnight accommodation for locals and travelers — is understood and well documented in the historical record. But there is more to taverns than that. Taverns served an important social role in their communities in the 18th and early 19th centuries, largely because in the relatively small-scale societies of that period there was frequently no other sizable building in the community other than the church or meeting house.

A wide variety of activities could take place at taverns, most of which now occur elsewhere (Spitulnik 1972). Depending on their location, taverns could function among other things as polling places, courts, municipal government offices, temporary jails, post offices, public libraries, and stock exchanges, and as venues for political meetings, educational events, public entertainments, theatrical performances, lotteries, auctions, meetings of associations, clubs and societies, bookselling, and insurance brokering. Tavern keepers themselves were often individuals of some standing in

their communities, and frequently held civic offices (Rice 1983:47). When studying the architecture, archaeology and limited documentary history of an individual tavern like Tweed's, the multifaceted nature and great variety of taverns needs to be borne in mind. In addition to discerning this variety in and among taverns, the researcher is faced with another challenge: separating verifiable historical data from mythology and romance. Until quite recently, books and other publications on taverns almost always presented these institutions primarily as participants in important events or revered themes in the history of the country: neighborliness and generous hospitality, grass-roots democracy, and the struggle for independence. Association with events surrounding the Revolution, and particularly any connection with George Washington, were especially emphasized in tavern histories in the former Thirteen Colonies. These associations were at times based on very little hard evidence, but metamorphosed into settled fact in the minds of writers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries who were interested in creating a sense of connection to a fast-receding and increasingly romanti-

cized past. Examples include Earle 1905, Lathrop 1926, and even an M.A. dissertation from as late as the 1960s on Delaware Taverns (Ward 1968).

These accounts were probably often based on or derived from a "folk history" tradition that has its own value as a historical source, but which is often at odds both with documentary records and with the material evidence (see Yentsch 1993 for a review of this subject in relation to historic houses).

Two regional taverns, which will also be discussed elsewhere in this report, illustrate these points. The King of Prussia Tavern in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, was reputed to have been frequented by Washington and other officers of the Continental Army, by British officers, and by Loyalist spies. The Marquis de Lafayette was reputedly inducted as a Freemason in a second floor room at the tavern. Jefferson, Madison and Monroe were claimed to have stayed here during a Yellow Fever epidemic in Philadelphia. None of these stories can be substantiated, and the Lafayette claim can actually be disproved, but they were repeated numerous times (Affleck 2000:7-8).

The Buck or Carson's Tavern in New Castle County Delaware is an interesting example of a site that was indeed used by Washington, but whose precise location has been the subject of contention (Wilkins and Quick 1976). Local residents were convinced that the 18th-century tavern was at a different location from the site usually identified, even though the building they identified could be shown to be early 19th century in date on both architectural and historical grounds. To compound the problem, the archaeological investigations at the more likely site of the tavern were unable to demonstrate the presence of an 18th-century building there either. The standing structure, demolished in 1963, appears to have been a very late 18th- or early 19th-century building, as was an excavated

free-standing kitchen. The 18th-century tavern, in which Washington did indeed sleep, has never been physically identified.

The romantic approach to tavern history began to give way to a more strictly historical one in the second half of the 20th century. Early Canadian inns and taverns were treated in this way (Guillet 1964), and a short overview of the social functions of American inns was published a few years later (Spitulnik 1972). Regionally, a study of the effects of transportation change on a late 18th- and early 19th-century tavern in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania was published in the late 1960s (Reese 1967). This was followed by a series of studies of National Road taverns in western Pennsylvania (Michael 1971, 1973, 1974). These used architectural, archaeological and historical approaches in a way that has since become the norm in tavern studies.

The most accessible study of the social history of taverns and their material culture in the 17th through early 19th centuries remains *Early American Taverns: for the Entertainment of Friends and Strangers* (Rice 1983). Published to accompany an exhibition at the Fraunces Tavern Museum in New York City, this publication assembled a wide range of source material into a well-referenced narrative of tavern history and remains a primary starting point for tavern studies such as this one.

B. TIME AND PLACE

Mill Creek Hundred, in which Tweed's Tavern lies, was the smallest of Delaware's original hundreds, stretching between the Red Clay and White Clay creeks, from tidewater at Stanton on the Christina to the piedmont at the Pennsylvania line (Figure 2.1).

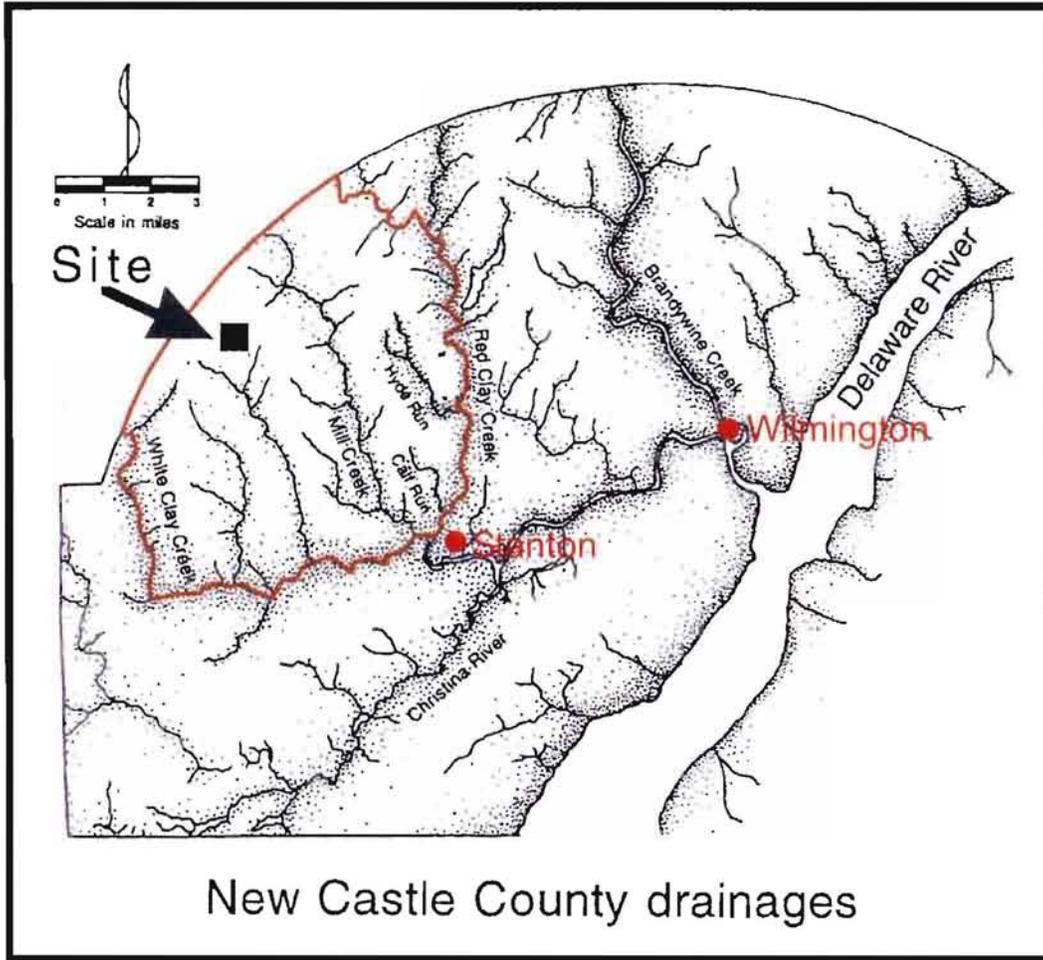


Figure 2.1. Map of New Castle County Drainages. Project Area Indicated with an Arrow. The Boundaries of Mill Creek Hundred are Shown.

Transshipment and milling were major sources of the hundred's considerable prosperity during the early 19th century. Four powerful streams in the hundred drove mills producing flour and lumber, and, to a lesser extent, paper and cloth, but it is the movement of agricultural produce that is of most relevance to the story of Tweed's Tavern.

The Hundred lies downhill from the rich grain-producing countryside of southeastern Pennsylvania, particularly Chester and Lancaster counties, and much of its history is concerned with the transport of this agricultural wealth from the inland regions to the tidal rivers of northern Delaware, and its processing in the mills powered by New Castle County water. Mill Creek Hundred was the home of Oliver Evans, whose inventions automated the flour making process at the end of the 18th century. His own family's mill and the next one down Red Clay Creek were among the first to adopt the new equipment.

Once the conestoga wagons had crossed a high point at Gap, east of Lancaster, it was an easy run to Stanton, Newport or Wilmington along what is now U.S. Route 41. Limestone Road left the main route just north of the Pennsylvania/Delaware boundary and came down the ridge between Mill Creek and Pike Creek to tidewater and mills at Stanton. Route 41 (The Newport-Gap Turnpike) continued southeast to Newport, with the Lancaster Pike (Route 48) splitting off 41 a few miles south of the Pennsylvania line to run into Wilmington. Limestone Road remained a public toll-free road, while the others were turnpiked in the early 19th century (see below).

Mills, chiefly producing flour, were the dominant local industry other than farming. The 16 flour mills of Mill Creek Hundred in 1804 were mostly large merchant mills, buying grain and selling flour. Many merchant mills were built or rebuilt after the Evans invention, creating an expanded demand for grain that Pennsylvania farmers would meet. The best-known

mills in northern Delaware were the large stone plants in Wilmington and on the Brandywine, but most of the milling capacity was spread out along the other streams. In Mill Creek Hundred, all but a few of the grain mills were merchant mills, catering to a market beyond the hundred.

The hundred's 24 saw mills in 1804 represented the largest number of industrial enterprises, but many were adjuncts to flour mills, possibly used infrequently for special jobs or local needs.

The 1804 assessment list for Mill Creek describes a community of well-defined economic and social contrasts in the early years of Tweed's Tavern. Table 2.1 summarizes some of the data in the assessment, focusing on the merchant mills and the circumstances of those who owned brick houses. 201 landowners were less than half the taxables; their average holding was a substantial 117 acres. The ten largest landowners held between 256 and 494 acres.

It is important to note, in the context of Tweed's Tavern, that most Mill Creek houses were log, even among the wealthiest landowners. Of the houses on the ten largest land holdings, four were brick and four were log, while one was stone and the other was described as mud walled. All economic classes lived in log houses, which represented 56% of the housing stock. The average acreage attached to a log house was 113, slightly below the overall average. Log was clearly the "typical" vernacular house building material in Mill Creek Hundred during the Federal Era.

Brick house construction was a badge of prosperity; all the brick buildings in the hundred were associated with large farms, merchant mills, or town properties. The 19 brick houses were on 4,308 assessed acres, for an average of 226 acres per owner. Of these, about a third (six), were located on mill properties.

Table 2.1. Contexts of Wealth, Occupation and Building Materials Described In 1804 Mill Creek Hundred Reassessment Records.

Merchant Mills and Their Owners' Houses in the 1804 Reassessment				
Name	Acres	Improved	Unimproved	
Phillips, Robert (est)	4			Stone House, Frame House, Merchant Mill, Saw Mill
Marshall, Joseph	12			Brick House, Merchant Mill
Foulk, William	25	21	4	Stone House Unfinished, Merchant Mill Saw Mill
Stroud, Joshua (est)	30			Half of Brick House and 60 acres and half of a merchant mill
Phillips, John	40	25	15	Log House, Merchant mill
Reynolds, Andrew	66	60	6	Stone House, Frame Barn, Merchant Mill
Reece, John (est)	75			Stone House, Stone Barn, Merchant Mill, Saw Mill
Johnston, Robert	100	50	50	Brick House, Frame Barn, Grist Mill, Saw Mill
Robinson, John	100	80	20	Log house, Frame Barn, Grist Mill
Bracken, Henry	105	65	40	Stone House, Stone Barn, Merchant Mill, Saw Mill
Hersey, Isaac	115	50	65	Frame House, Log Stable, Half of Merchant Mill, Half of Saw Mill
Hersey, Benjamin	115	65	50	Stone House, Half of Merchant Mill, Half of Saw Mill
Hartan, Caleb Sr.	144			Frame House, Frame Stable, Log Tenatable House, Merchant Mill, Saw Mill
Mendinhall, James	197	157	40	Stone House, Frame Barn, Grist Mill, Saw Mill
Stapler, Thomas	205	172	33	Brick House, Frame Barn, Half of Merchant Mill
England, Joseph	394			Brick House and Kitchen, Log Barn, Merchant Mill, Saw Mill
Black, James (est)	494			Brick House, Frame Barn, Sundry Small Tenements, Merchant Mill
Brick Houses in the 1804 Reassessment				
Marshall, Joseph	12			Brick House, Merchant Mill
Thomas, Joseph	23	14	9	Brick House and Kitchen, Small Barn
Stroud, Joshua	30			Half of Brick House, and 60 acres and half of a Merchant Mill
Rumer, Henry and Christian Greenwalt	100	80	20	Brick House, Frame Barn
Johnston, Robert	100	50	50	Brick House, Frame Barn, Grist Mill, Saw Mill
McEntire, John (est)	100	90	10	Brick House, Frame Barn
Chambers, Joseph	145	125	20	Brick House, Log Barn
McKenna, William	165	145	20	Brick House, Frame Barn
Reece, Joseph	200	160	40	Brick House, Small Barn
Stapler, Thomas	205	172	33	Brick House, Frame Barn, Half of Merchant Mill
Reynolds, William	232			Brick House, Frame Barn
Dixson, Thomas	246	188	58	Brick House, Log Barn, Log Tenament, Frame Barn
Dixson, Isaac	250	220	30	Brick House, Log Barn
Justice, Ron (est)	252			Brick House, Frame Barn
Phillips, William	340	200	140	Brick House, Frame Barn
England, Joseph	394			Brick House and Kitchen, Log Barn, Merchant Mill, Saw Mill
Black, Mary (widow)	450	350	100	Brick House, Log Barn, Log Tenament
Black, James (est)	494			Brick House, Frame Barn, Sundry Small Tenements, Merchant Mill

Framed barns were more popular than framed houses, but most of the hundred's barns were still log in 1804. Timber framing was not among the dominant building materials in the hundred until the middle of the 19th century, when frame houses in villages were built.

A disproportionate number of stone houses have survived from the early days in Mill Creek Hundred, for the obvious reason that they are extremely durable. There were 44 on the 1804 assessment, including the well-known Mermaid Tavern. It appears that the other three licensed houses were log, however.

The 44 properties with stone houses generally had a greater acreage than those with log, at an average of 132 acres. Smaller properties with stone houses tended to include mills or shops. Millers evidently preferred masonry houses, since seven of the 16 flour mill properties in the hundred contained stone houses. Two other stone houses were attached to other kinds of mills, one a fulling mill and the other a saw mill. Saw mills were more likely to be associated with log houses than with other types of structure.

If status symbolism was attached to building materials, then brick must have been more up-to-date, stone more substantial, and log more conservative. Certainly economic status was not attached to log as a building material in Mill Creek Hundred at the beginning of the 19th century. The mix would change over the next few generations. There was nothing unusual about Tweed's Tavern as a log building at this time.

C. THE ROAD SYSTEM

The importance of the road system in the life of Mill Creek hundred was alluded to above. One of the objectives of this study was to examine in more detail the history of the road system in the region, and the interaction between the road system and the taverns along it. Waterways and early thoroughfares served as

the region's arteries of commerce. Many of the roads had evolved from aboriginal trails such as the Conestoga-Newport Path that may have originated from a Great Pinquas Indian trail. It extended from Conestoga to Gap in Lancaster County and then proceeded southeastwardly towards Newport in present-day Delaware, running in a similar alignment to present-day Route 41 (Wallace 1993:36). This route became known as the "Grain Road." The corridor was "infested with highwaymen and robbers, since the wagoners carried plenty of money, especially on their return trip. Wagons loaded with grain traveled in convoys..." (Fletcher 1971:261). Several other routes emerged in the colonies of Delaware and Pennsylvania during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Another of Pennsylvania's earliest roads, the King's Highway, was laid out in 1677 and later became known as the King's Highway, the Old Philadelphia Road, the Provincial Road, the Conestoga Road and the Continental Road (Reese 1967:199). This route ran close to the Delaware and linked New Castle with Chester and proceeded towards Philadelphia (Fletcher 1971:246). Among other routes was the Lancaster Road, also known as a King's Highway, completed in 1733, today's U.S. Route 30 (Fletcher 1971:247). Goods arriving in Philadelphia were transported westwardly along this road while agricultural products from Lancaster and the surrounding vicinity were shipped towards the port city.

In Delaware and Pennsylvania, a number of roads became highly traveled channels during the 18th century. Limestone Road itself (the present-day State Route 7) was laid out *circa* 1710, and this highly-traveled corridor was noted for its lack of steep grades (Catts et al. 1986). It had only one ford and was a popular route that led southeastwardly to the mills around the village of Stanton. The name was likely adopted during the Revolution at a time when lime deposits were being quarried in the region. Lime was hauled to nearby kilns that subsequently burned the

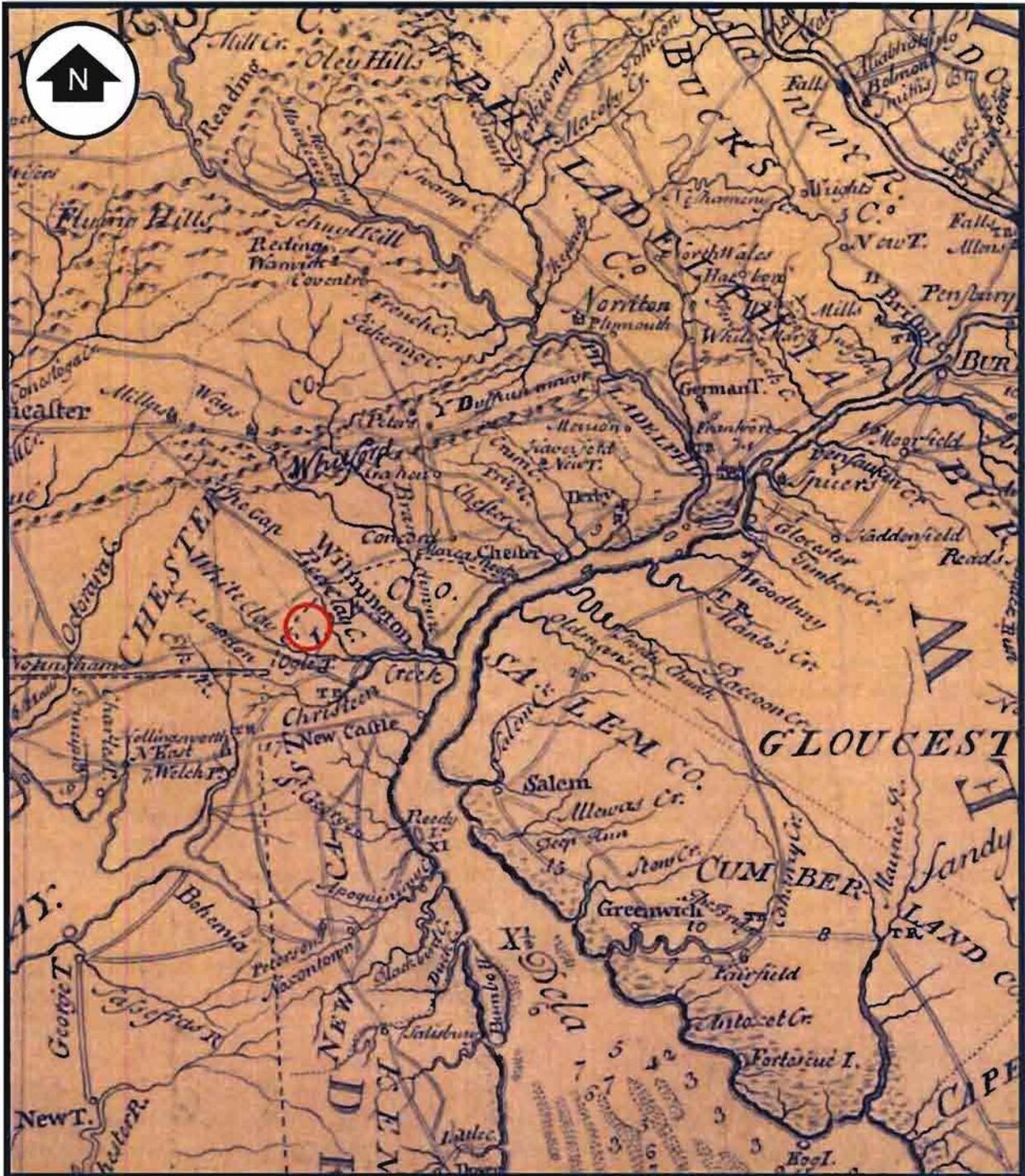


Figure 2.2. Evans, L. *A Map of Pensilvania, New-Jersey, New-York, and the Three Delaware Counties*. 1749. Scale: 1 Inch: 12 Miles (approximately). Project Area Circled.

limestone into fertilizer. The stone was also utilized for building and as a flux in smelting iron ore (Ward 1968:114).

In 1749, Lewis Evans mapped the area (Figure 2.2), noting the region's waterways as well as the cities of New Castle and Wilmington. The cartographer also depicts several early thoroughfares that closely follow the routes of present-day Route 40 and Route 13. The Route from Gap to Wilmington is prominent. Another road faintly shown on the map links Ogletown with Gap in Lancaster County, possibly in part the present Polly Drummond Hill Road.

The early roads were often not straight since they were laid out following the contour of the land as well as fences that demarcated property lines. Considering that the shipment of goods relied heavily on the navigable waterways, roads were often neglected and were allowed to deteriorate (Ward 1968:67). By the mid-1770s, travelers complained about the dangerous and impassable King's Highway and petitioned for a turnpike road, although the first turnpikes in the region were not built for another generation. Merchants recognized that an improved road would expedite the transport of goods to market (Fletcher 1971:254).

By 1775, several roads connected Wilmington, New Castle and Newport with areas in Chester and Lancaster Counties in Pennsylvania (Figure 2.3). Some of these appear to follow current-day Route 52, Route 13, Route 9, Route 41 and the Limestone Road, and the overall impression of network of highways extending north from the Christina River valley to the Baltimore-Philadelphia Road and beyond is very striking.

Two other Revolutionary War maps provide views of the region. The less-detailed 1776 a map of the area between the Delaware River and the Chesapeake Bay identifies only the major routes: the road from Lancaster to Philadelphia and the early route that

linked Wilmington and New Castle with Philadelphia (Figure 2.4). The 1777 Revolutionary War map of the region provides a view of the infrastructure (Figure 2.5). The map clearly identifies hamlets as well as the commonly known thoroughfares, including "the Limestone Road", the "Road leading from Newport towards Lancaster," the "Road leading from Wilmington towards Lancaster" and the "Road Leading from Wilmington to Kennet." The cartographer also makes note of bridges and taverns including the Riseing Sun at Stanton, Ogle's Tavern and Hendrickson's Tavern along the Wilmington and Kennet Road.

In 1792, the Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike was chartered in order to remedy the poor state of the King's Highway. This significant accomplishment improved of the old King's or Conestoga road (Sachse 1912:10). The macadamized road, the first toll road in the United States, was completed in 1794 and was traveled by stagecoaches that provided transportation to and from major cities. The stages not only conveyed goods but also carried passengers and mail and circulated local tidings. Along turnpikes, taverns were among the first businesses that emerged. Sixty were established along the sixty-two mile route of the Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike alone (Reese 1967:202). These establishments, discussed later in this chapter, each catered to specific classes of people.

The 1804, *Traveller's Directory* describes the network of roads in Delaware that linked the villages and towns of Newport, Christiana, Stanton and Wilmington. By this time, the roads were already traveled by covered wagons, a mode of transportation introduced in the 18th century. Also known as freighters, these wagons hauled goods across Pennsylvania and Delaware to the port cities including Philadelphia and Wilmington.

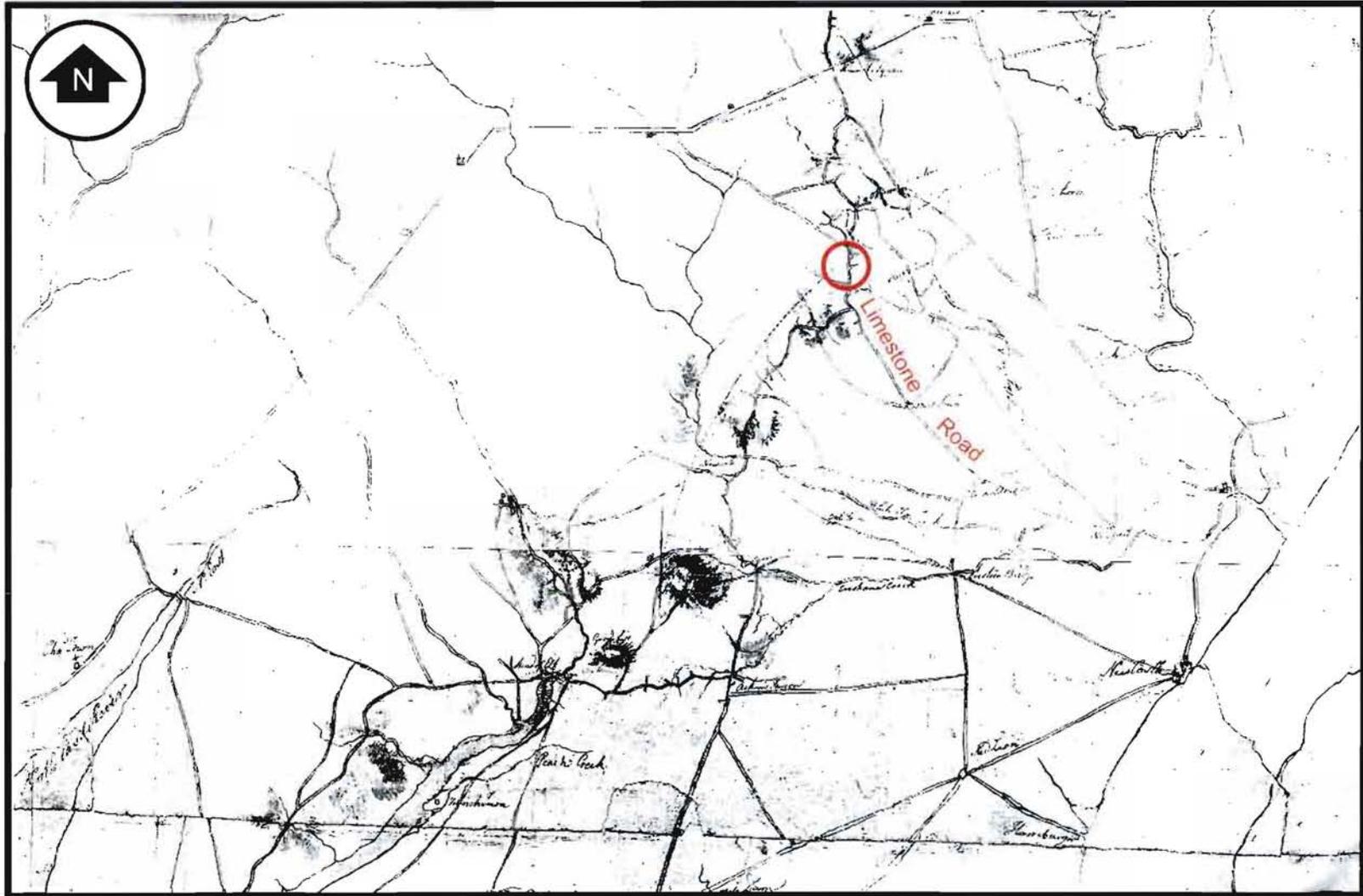


Figure 2.3. *Revolutionary War Map of Part of Modern Counties of Philadelphia, Bucks. 1775. Scale: 1 Inch: 8.75 Miles (Approximately). Project Area Circled. Note the radiating network of roads extending northwest from Newport and Wilmington. This road system is still recognizable today and includes Limestone Road.*

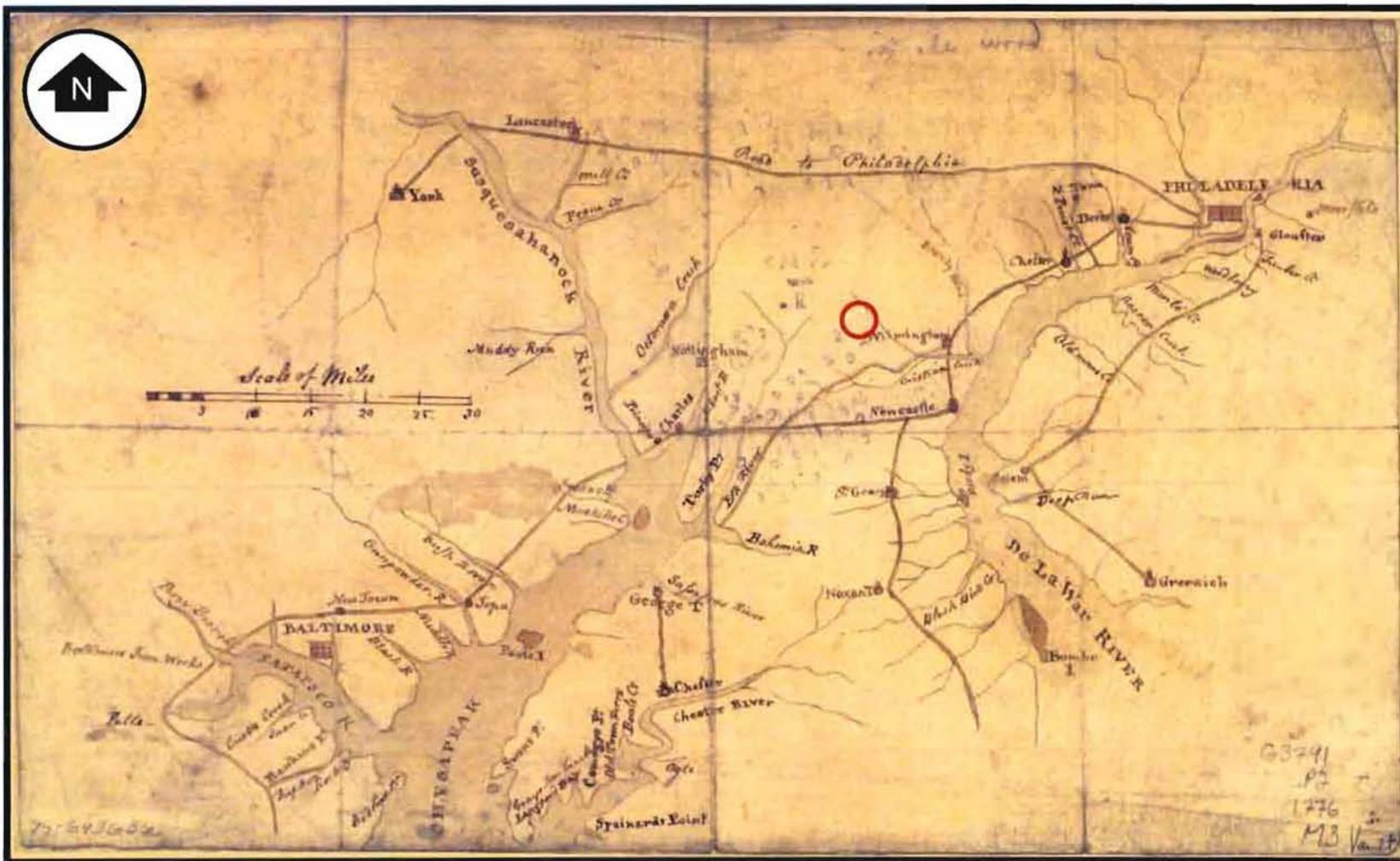


Figure 2.4. Map of the Country Between and Bordering the Delaware River and Chesapeake Bay, Showing Roads to Philadelphia and Localities, 1776. Scale: 1 Inch: 14.5 Miles (Approximately). This much less detailed map shows only the major regional routes. Project Area Circled.

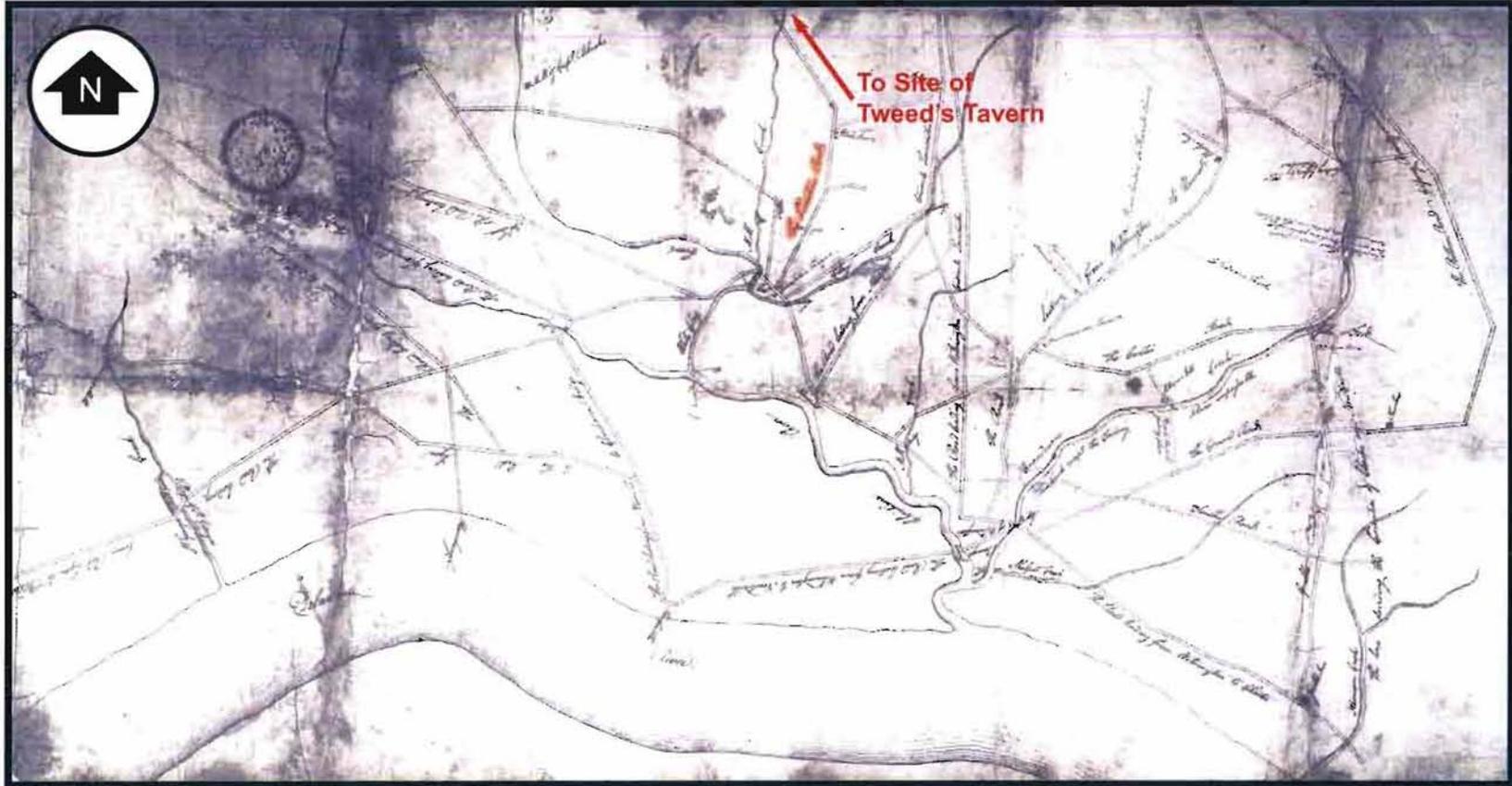


Figure 2.5. Broom, J. *Map of New Castle County*. 1777. Scale: 1 Inch: 3 Miles (Approximately). Even more detailed than Figure 2.3, this map shows a well-developed network of roads. Unfortunately it does not extend far enough north to show the Mermaid Tavern (already in existence at this time) or the site of Tweed's Tavern.

The most famous of these vehicles, the Conestoga wagon, was developed in Lancaster County circa 1725 and brought produce "to Market from the remotest part at a small expense" (Fletcher 1971:258). Grains from Lancaster County and the surrounding area were carried down in the Conestogas to merchant mills along the creeks and subsequently shipped to such varied places as Antwerp, Java or Calcutta (Ward 1968:19). An observer in nearby Delaware County in Pennsylvania recalled the "long procession of heavily-laden Conestogas...The farmers traveled together because the roads were bad and they could be mutually helpful..." (Fletcher 1971:286). Later, they were commonly referred to as "turnpike schooners" and were capable of carrying thirty barrels of flour. Many wagoners later joined companies who offered stations where horses could be changed thus providing more rapid travel. By 1823 there were eleven stagecoach lines servicing the Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike (Reese 1967:204).

The success of the Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike provided an impetus towards the construction of toll roads in the surrounding area. Many existing thoroughfares were turnpiked after 1800 and have since evolved into highways (Figure 2.6). A number of toll roads were established in Delaware during the early 19th century. The first of these was the Gap and Newport Turnpike (1807) which ran from the Gap tavern in Lancaster County, near the Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike, to Newport on the navigable Christina River. This route closely followed the Conestoga-Newport aboriginal trail and the later Grain Road. The success of the Gap and Newport Turnpike generated a surge of turnpike construction in Delaware (Gray 1960/1961:310).

In 1809, the Wilmington Turnpike Company was organized and a turnpike was completed in 1817 from Wilmington through Christiana Hundred to Mill Creek Hundred, joining the Gap Road. This turnpike was also known as the Lancaster Pike, not to be mis-

taken with the Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike. The Lancaster Pike operated until 1877 when its charter was repealed (Scharf 1888:417). The New Castle and Frenchtown Turnpike (Route 40) was chartered the same year as the Wilmington Turnpike (1809). The road ran westward from New Castle to the state boundary and on towards Frenchtown in Maryland. The route would connect with steamboats in Maryland at Elkton (Scharf 1888:417).

In 1811, the New Castle Turnpike Company was organized to connect New Castle with Clarke's Corner (later known as Hare's Corner). The toll road company was authorized to utilize the New Castle and Red Lion State Road to its intersection with the Wilmington Bridge road at Clarke's corner. This length of road was finished in 1813 but was later abandoned by the turnpike company (Scharf 1888:417-418). Also in 1811, the Wilmington and Kennet Turnpike Company was incorporated to build a road from Wilmington through Christiana Hundred into Centreville and just past the state line into Pennsylvania. Prior, this route was known as the Kennet Road, a "very serpentine and inconvenient," almost impassible, road that citizens petitioned to have straightened in 1809 (New Castle County Road Records). Another toll road, the Wilmington and Great Valley Turnpike was constructed after 1813, running from Wilmington into West Chester and on to the Great Valley in Pennsylvania (Scharf 1888:418).

The Wilmington and Philadelphia Turnpike, chartered in 1813, was surveyed from the eastern side of the Brandywine Bridge at Wilmington to the city of Philadelphia. That same year, the New Castle and White Clay Creek Turnpike Company was incorporated and was intended to traverse the state towards the Maryland state line. This road, however, was not constructed. The Elk and Christiana Turnpike was also organized in 1813 and connected the village of Christiana with Elk (Elkton) in Maryland. Two years later, the Wilmington and Christiana Turnpike

Company was chartered. Completed in 1821, the route commenced in Wilmington and proceeded to Christiana near the bridge over the Christina River.

A later turnpike, connecting the villages of Stanton and Newark, was organized in 1816 (Scharf 1888:418). Yet another turnpike in the region, the Philadelphia and West Chester Turnpike, was incorporated at a relatively later date in 1848. The approximate locations of the routes have been reconstructed on Figure 2.6. In 1822 it was noted that “good turnpike roads have been made from Wilmington in every direction” (Melish 1822:228). Every major road except one running from Wilmington was a toll road by this time (Gray 1960/1961:311).

The Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike, and others in the region, experienced the greatest level of traffic during the 1820s. During the 1830s, a new mode of transport emerged as a strong competitor to the turnpike. The dismayed stagecoach drivers vehemently opposed railroads. They asserted, correctly, that the iron horse would decrease the demand for hay and straw along the turnpikes since the railroads would eliminate the need for the pack animals that consumed these products. Railroads surpassed the toll roads and dominated the region’s infrastructure by the mid-19th century. In 1831, the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore railroad was chartered and was the pioneer rail line in the region. Delaware was later traversed by the Wilmington and Northern Railroad (chartered in 1869) and the Wilmington and Western (1872, later to become the Baltimore & Ohio in 1886) (Conrad 1908:464). During this time, the latter of these railroads was utilized to transport items that had otherwise been conveyed along roads (Heite 1999:2). The Philadelphia, Lancaster and Columbia rail line established another link between Lancaster and Philadelphia. Transporting goods by rail took half the time required by stagecoach and wagon (Fletcher

1971:270). This major change in transportation patterns and technology had a profound impact on taverns.

D. TAVERN KEEPING IN MILL CREEK HUNDRED AND SURROUNDING AREAS

1. General Background

It is apparent that taverns were frequently established in direct response to developing road traffic. On the road from Wilmington to Elkton, for instance, inns could be found approximately ten to twelve miles apart from one another. In 1795, the Irish traveler Isaac Weld commented that the taverns were built “much in the same style, with a porch in front the entire length of the house. Few of these taverns have any signs, and they are distinguished from the number of handbills pasted up on the walls near the door.” (Quinn 1988:48). A view from Weld’s travels depicts a stage wagon departing a tavern along a cleared road (Plate 2.1). Often, if a person was traveling on a turnpike and found the gates shut, he or she would need to find a place to stay until the gates opened the next morning (Heite 1999:5).

These wayside inns supplied meals and lodging as well as shelter and water for horses. The Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike significantly promoted wayside inns since the high level of traffic along the routes more often than not reduced the number of vacancies at existing taverns (Spitulnik 1972:36; Chester County Historical Society, Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike newspaper clippings file). It is significant that early tavern licenses were often granted to a petitioner only if his home was sufficiently distant from another establishment. However, Salinger notes that by the 18th century, officials paid less interest to controlling the density of inns (Salinger 2002:203). Interest in regulating these establishments remained, however. In 1797, the New Castle County Court

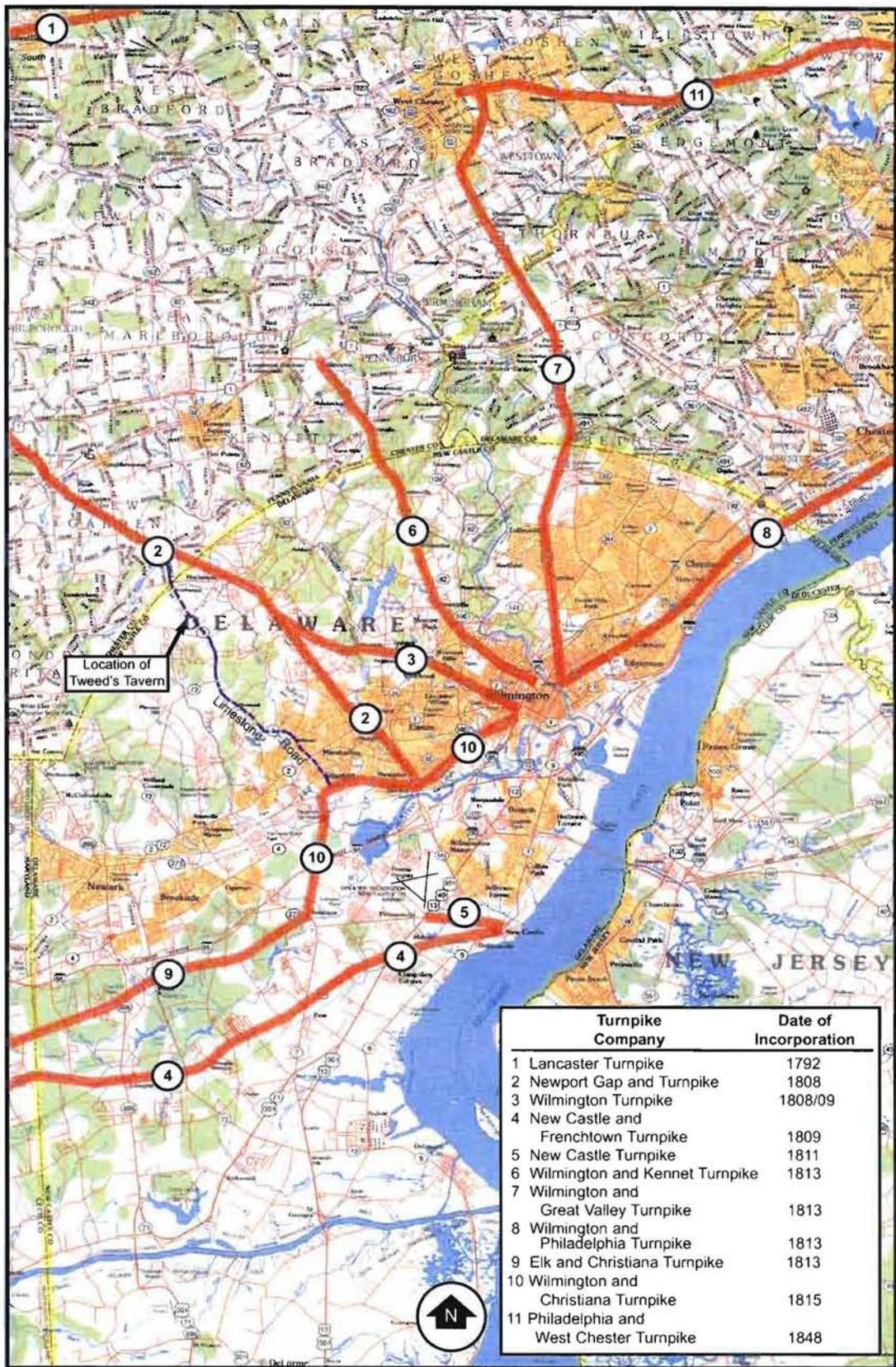


Figure 2.6. Map Showing Present-Day Road Network and the Approximate Routes of 18th- and 19th-Century Turnpikes. Scale: 1 Inch: 2.5 Miles.



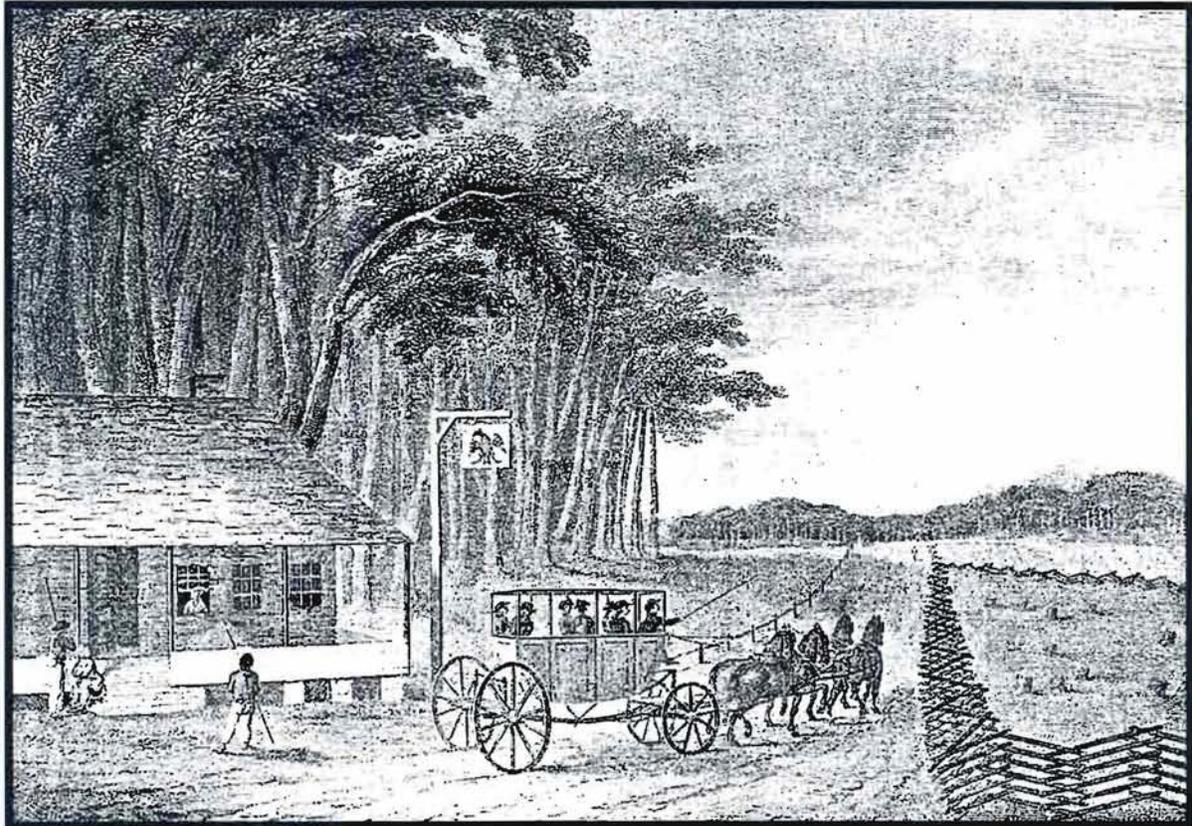


Plate 2.1. Etching of a stage wagon departing a tavern *circa* 1795 (Source: Weld 1800).

[NEWCASTLE—S. & J. ADAMS, printers.]

LIST OF RATES,

For INNKEEPERS in the County of New-Castle, as
settled by the Justices of the Court of General Sessions of the
Peace, at New-Castle, in the May Sessions, One Thou-
sand Seven Hundred and Ninety-seven :

<i>Gin, Spirits, and Brandy, of the first Quality,</i>		
<i>Pr. Gill,</i>	-	<i>£ 0 0 11</i>
<i>Do. do. do. inferior Quality,</i>		
<i>Pr. Gill,</i>	-	<i>0 0 9</i>
<i>Lisbon, Teneriffe, Fayall, and other inferior</i>		
<i>Wines, Pr. Bottle,</i>	-	<i>0 5 0</i>
<i>Sherry and Port Wine, Pr. Bottle,</i>	-	<i>0 6 0</i>
<i>Madeira Wine, Pr. Bottle,</i>	-	<i>0 8 3</i>
<i>Claret, Pr. Bottle,</i>	-	<i>0 7 6</i>
<i>Porter, Ale, and Cyder, Pr. Bottle,</i>	-	<i>0 1 10</i>
<i>Dinner,</i>	-	<i>0 3 0</i>
<i>Breakfast and Supper, each,</i>	-	<i>0 2 6</i>
<i>Lodgings,</i>	-	<i>0 1 0</i>
<i>Oats, Pr. Gallon,</i>	-	<i>0 1 0</i>
<i>Corn, Pr. do.</i>	-	<i>0 1 4</i>
<i>Hay or Fodder, and Stabling,</i>	-	<i>0 2 6</i>

By Order of Court,

Clk. of the Peace.

Plate 2.2. List of rates for services provided by inns and taverns issued by the New Castle County Justices of the Peace in 1797, and required to be posted in taverns (reduced).

issued a list of rates for innkeepers (Plate 2.2). By law, proprietors were obligated to hang the poster in their establishments (Heite 1999:8).

Although a traveler could find approximately one public house per mile on the Philadelphia and Lancaster turnpike, these establishments were of varying status and quality and catered to different social groups to some extent (Reese 1967:202). An informal hierarchy of inns and taverns seems to have existed. At the lower end of the scale, the tap house provided inexpensive beverages to the lowest class of traveler and retained whimsical names such as "The Fiddler". Succeeding the tap house, the drove stand accommodated, as the name implies, drovers and their animals and often carried a name which indicated the nature of the establishment, such as "The Bull's Head." Wagon stands bore common names such as "The Wagon" and served wagoners and teamsters. Surpassing these taverns was the stage stand which offered lodging and refreshment for stagecoach travelers. The stand was often named after prominent figures such as generals or Presidents (Spitulnik 1972:36; Chester County Historical Society, Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike newspaper clippings file).

Taverns along secondary roads probably did not fare as well as those on recently turnpiked roads. Although the Limestone Road was still being used for the transshipment of goods, taverns were affected once nearby roads were assumed by turnpike companies, although it might be surmised that people wishing to avoid the tolls might use these unturnpiked routes if they were convenient (Heite 1999:9). These taverns often therefore evolved and changed in order to adapt more to the needs of the local community. They served as the hub of social and political life. Auctions, lotteries, meetings and dances were commonplace events.

By the 1830s, demand for stagecoach travel was decreasing even on the turnpikes (Chester County Historical Society, Lancaster and Philadelphia

Turnpike newspaper clippings file). By 1840, nearly all turnpike construction had ceased and most existing turnpikes were sold or abandoned by the fourth quarter of the 19th century. With the ever-increasing influence of the railroad, the turnpikes became desolate, often treacherous, highways serving only local traffic (Sachse 1912:12).

During this period of turnpike decline, most wayside taverns ceased to operate. Persons opted to travel on the faster modes of transportation, on the canals and railroads which linked cities rather than villages. Long distance road travel was greatly reduced and nearly eliminated the need for overnight accommodations on these routes. Hotels near railroad depots, however, found prosperity (Heite 1999:9). Some tavern keepers strove to maintain the inns, at times converting them to boarding houses or a lower class of tavern (Sachse 1912:12). Some, such as the Mermaid and Tweed's were converted into residences while others were demolished. The number of tavern licenses issued annually in New Castle County fell from eighty-four to fifty-six in 1850 (Heite 1999:9).

2. Analysis of Historical Data from Selected Taverns

The 1820 Heald map provides an excellent snapshot of roads and taverns, as well as workshops, meeting houses, schools, manufactories, in New Castle County (Figure 2.7). Along the toll-free Limestone Road, Heald shows the Mermaid and Tweed's Tavern. Others inns along turnpikes include: Twaddle's, Blue Ball and Buck on the Wilmington and Kennet Turnpike; Murphey's and Springer's on the Lancaster Pike; and Yarnall's and Jordan's on the Gap and Newport Turnpike. In most cases the taverns are about three to four miles apart. Mill Creek Hundred itself had at least six taverns operating in this period (Table 2.2).

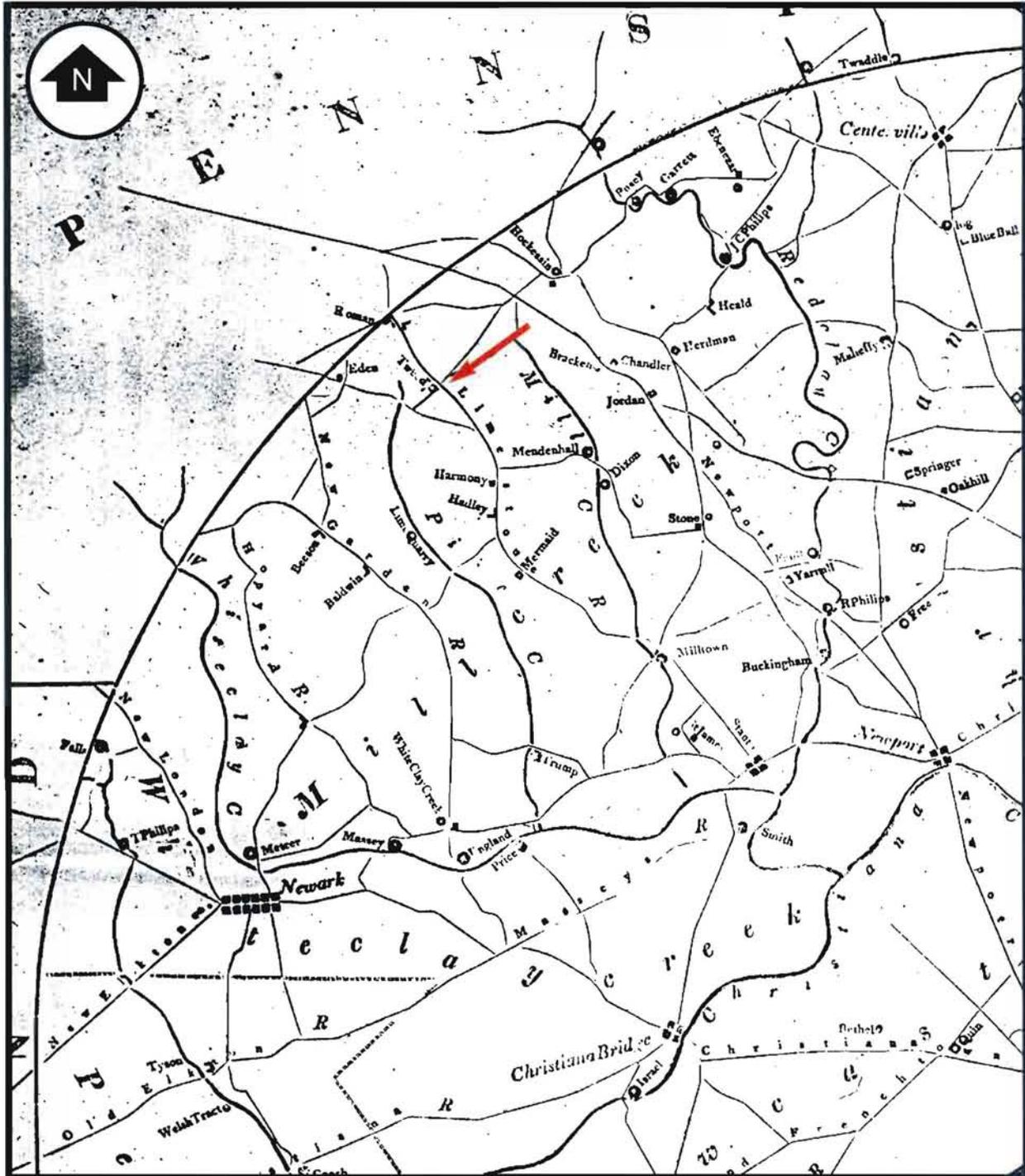


Figure 2.7. Heald, H. *Roads of New Castle County, Delaware*. 1820. Scale: 1 Inch: 1.75 Miles (Approximately). Project Area Circled.

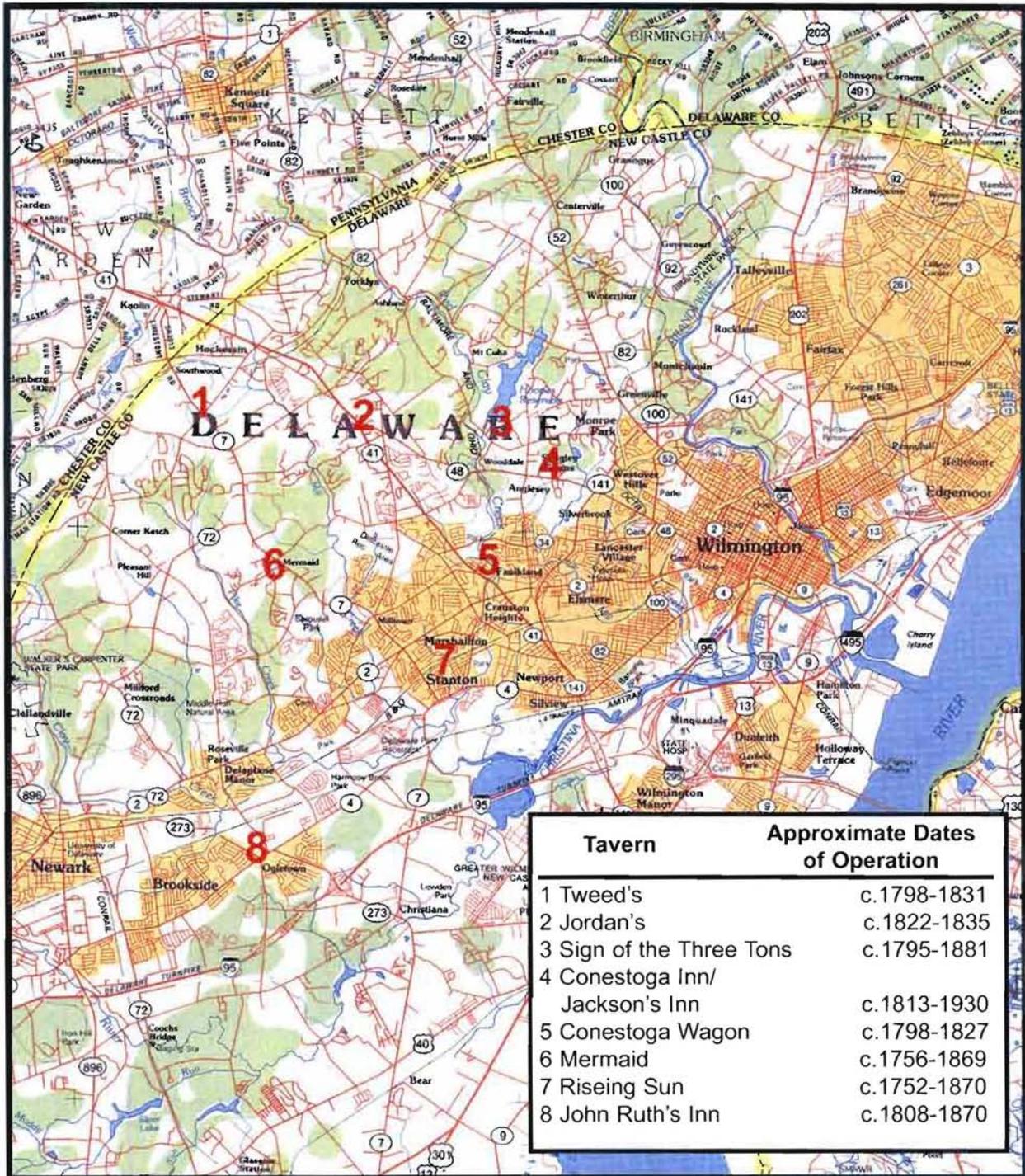


Figure 2.8. Locations of Selected Taverns in Mill Creek, Christiana and White Clay Creek Hundreds. Scale: 1 Inch: 2.5 Miles.

	Stanton	Mill Town	Tweed's	Mermaid	Mount Pleasant	Brackenville	Elsewhere?
"former"	Peter Springer	Mrs. Herdman	Isaac Wilcox	James Rice	Robert Montgomery		
1797	Peter Springer			John Robinson	Robert Montgomery		
1798	Peter Springer		Isaac Wilcox		Robert Montgomery		Thomas Evans
1799	Alexander Forrest (gone away)	Margaret McDonald	Ezekiel Reece	John Bracken	Robert Montgomery		
1802	Peter Springer	not on list	James Harvey	William Ball	Robert Montgomery		
1803	Peter Springer		Samuel Johnston	William Ball	Robert Montgomery		
1804	Peter Springer		John Tweed	William Ball	Robert Montgomery		
1805	Hannah Springer, Widow		John Tweed	William Ball	Robert Montgomery		
1806	Hannah Springer		John Tweed	William Ball	Robert Montgomery		
1817	Joseph Phipps		John Tweed	William Ball	John Robinson Jr.		Holton Yarnall
1818	Solomon Hershey			John Chapman	Samuel Miller	William Bracken (new)	
1824 new applications only			Curtis Tweed	Thomas Dixon			
1827				William Beeson		William Bracken	Charles Stanley William Herdman Swithin Chandler Benjamin Porter John Robinson Ward Wilson David Johnson
1830	Abraham Boys		Curtis Tweed	George Walker		William Bracken	William Beeson Gen. James Wolfe James H. Page Henry Stidham
1834				George Walker		William Bracken	Ephraim Yarnall Rachel Reeder William Beeson Swithin Chandler Jacob Craig
1843	Springer McDaniel			Rebecca Walker		William Bracken	Jordan Dixon Thomas Pierce Ann Yarnall Ann Craig Jordan Dixon

Several of these taverns in Mill Creek, Christiana and White Clay Creek Hundreds were investigated through tax assessment and inventory data in order to compare Tweed's Tavern with establishments on turnpikes and on the Limestone Road itself. The site locations are shown on Figure 2.8. Data was examined for the Mermaid, John Ruth, Springer's, the Rising Son, Yarnall's, Murphy's and Jordan's taverns

a. Beds and Furnishings

The quantity and types of furnishings listed in inventories can provide a clue to both the function and size of a property, and beds, bedsteads and chairs have been used in this way (Bragdon 1981). In 1823, John Tweed's inventory listed a total of seven chairs and three beds (New Castle County Common Pleas case file #40). Thirteen inventories of known tavern keepers between the years of 1805 and 1856 were examined and data for the quantity of chairs (excluding benches) and beds and bedsteads was extracted. Only the number of chairs and beds clearly itemized were included, since an appraiser at times wrote "bar room furniture" or grouped items together without providing an exact number of furniture pieces. The data presented here is therefore likely to contain omissions due to indistinguishable inventory categories.

As shown on Table 2.3, the average number of chairs was eighteen. John Tweed's and Joseph Springer's (1831) inventories listed the lowest number of chairs while some wealthier innkeepers' inventories such as Robert Galbreath (1827), William Herdman (1843), Thomas Springer (1824) and Henry Schmaltz (1805) owned more than twenty pieces of seating furniture (New Castle County Probate Records).

Comparing beds (comprised of a bed and bedsteads) and also bed frames, the average of the seventeen inventories amounted to six beds and bedsteads per tavern. John Tweed's and Joseph Springer's (1831) both listed three beds while William Brackin (1851)

and William Herdman (1843) owned between eight and fourteen beds. The number of chairs and bedsteads listed in John Tweed's inventory closely resembles Joseph Springer's (the Rising Sun at Stanton) inventory of 1831 which lists nine chairs and three bedsteads. It is clearly at the lower end of the range and this suggests that Tweed's was a small establishment in comparison to other inns, like the Mermaid three miles down the road.

The table also shows the median numbers of chairs (5.5) and bedsteads (15) and the ranges for the two types of furniture among the estate inventories selected (New Castle County Probate Records).

b. Tavern Keepers' Estates and Tax Assessments

The estate value of seven tavern keepers has been charted on Table 2.4. Interestingly, the data places the value of John Tweed's estate in 1823 at the higher end of the graph, although much of the value is derived from crops and farming equipment. This is an important reminder that many of these establishments had more than one function, and that the importance of "keeping tavern" might wax and wane over time. Of the taverns used in this analysis, the value of John Tweed's estate was surpassed by one other tavern keeper's estate, William Ball's inventory of 1818 (New Castle County Probate Records).

Selected tax assessments for Mill Creek and Christiana Hundreds for the years 1798, 1818, 1825 and 1836 were also examined (Tables 2.5 -2.8). These key years were selected since they provide values prior to roads being turnpiked, after routes became toll roads and following initial railroad construction. Due to omissions and incomplete information, it was not possible to include the owners of the same taverns on each table. In most instances, data pertinent to total value of real estate was extracted from the tax assess-

Table 2.3. Analysis of select 19th century tavernkeeper's inventories in Brandywine, Christiana, Mill Creek and White Clay Creek Hundreds (excluding Wilmington)

Data extracted from 17 inventories (1805-1856)		
	Chairs	Beds and Bedsteads
<i>Mean</i>	18	6
<i>Median</i>	15	5.5
<i>Range</i>	33	11

Note: John Tweed's inventory, dated 1823, listed seven chairs and three beds.

Table 2.4. Values of Tavern Keeper's Estates

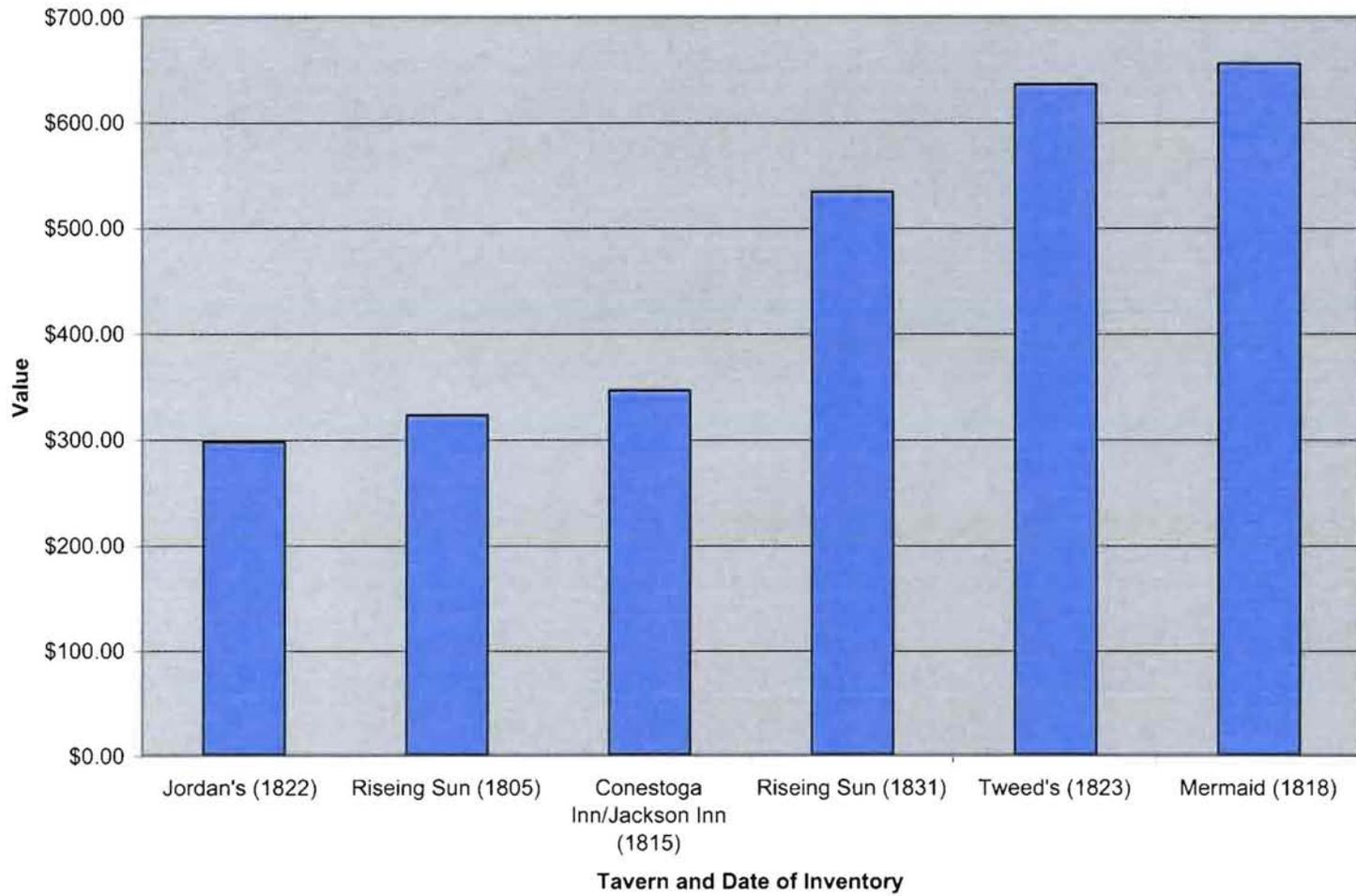


Table 2.5. Real Estate Tax Assessments in 1798

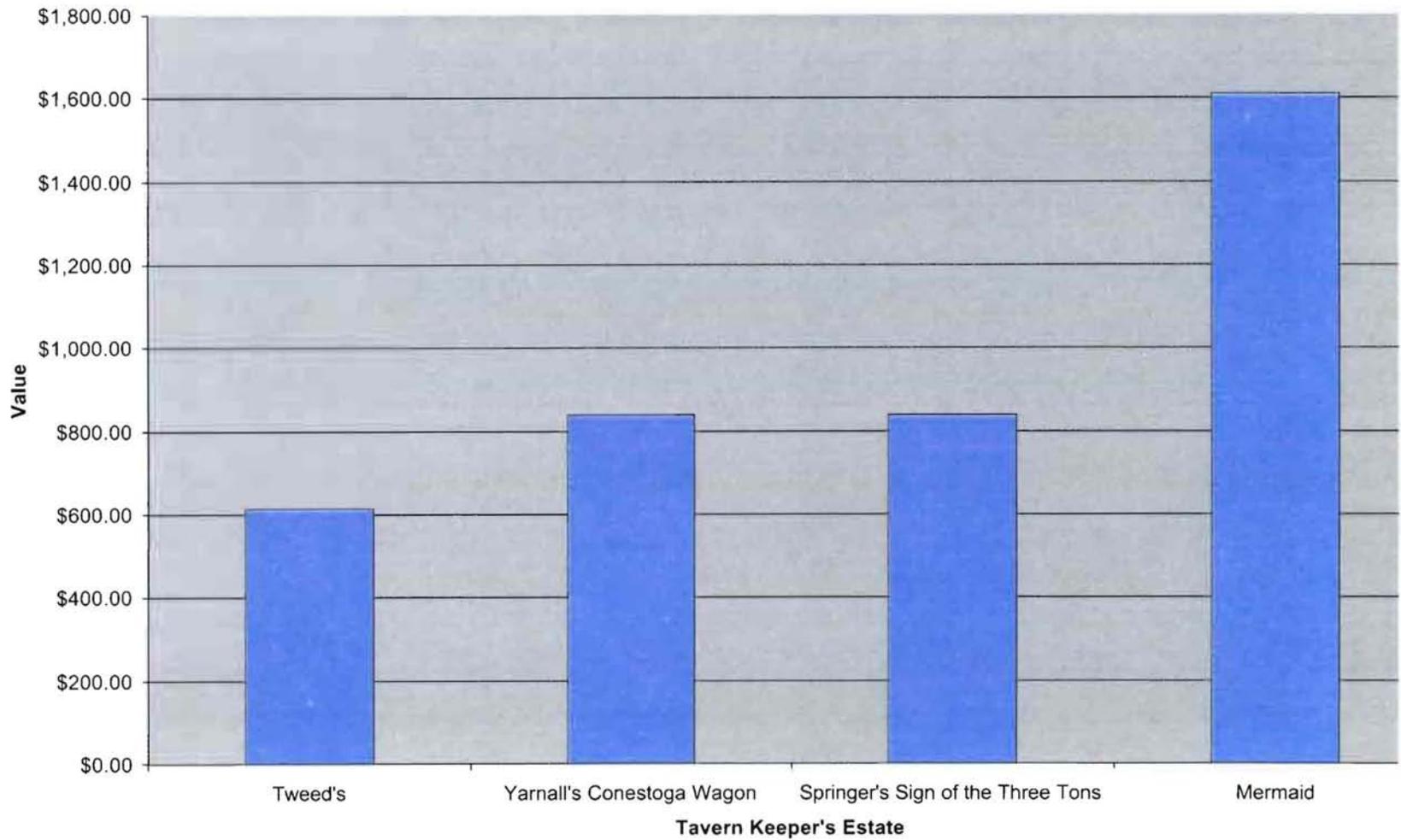


Table 2.6. 1818 Tax Assessments

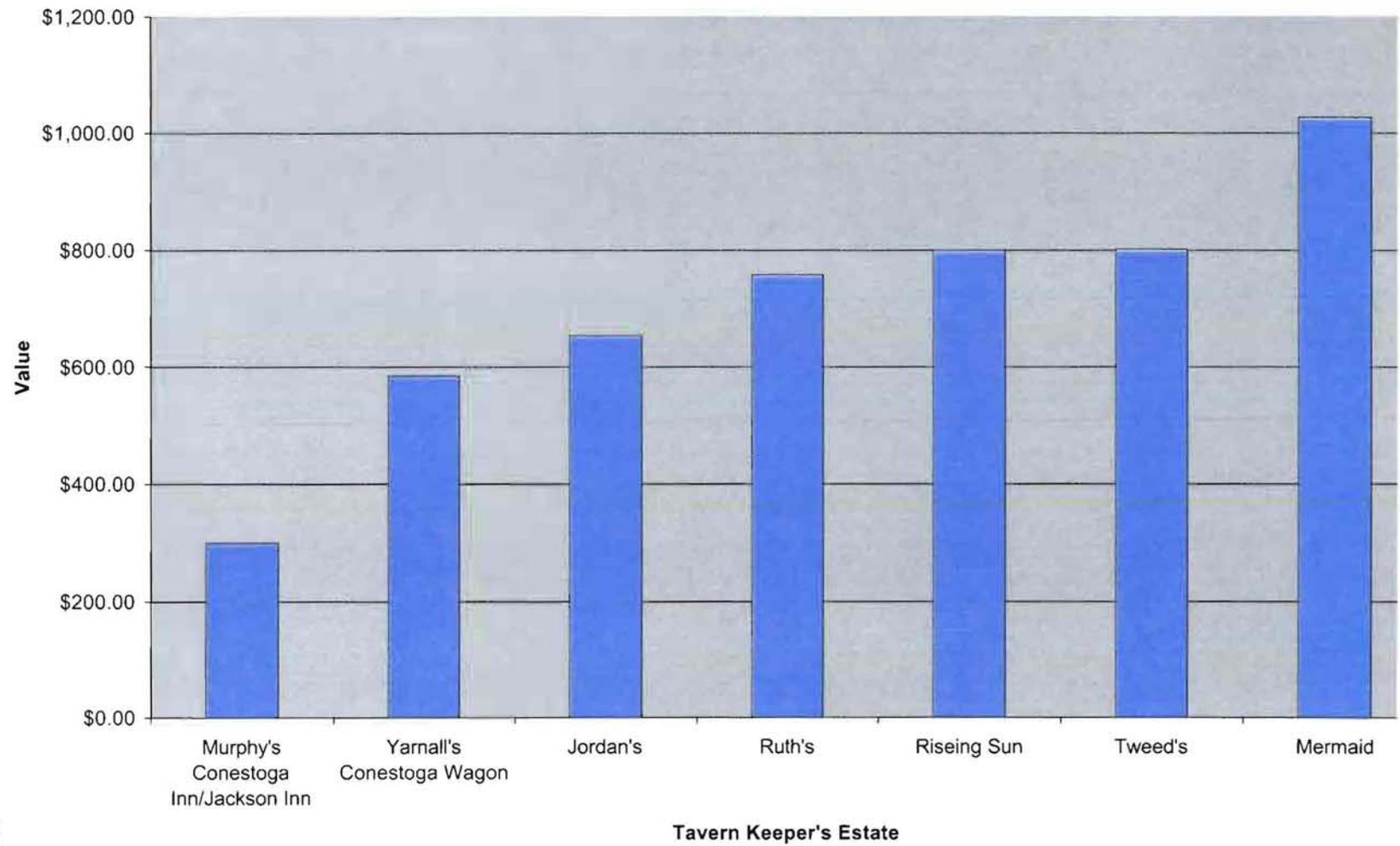


Table 2.7. Real Estate Tax Assessments in 1825

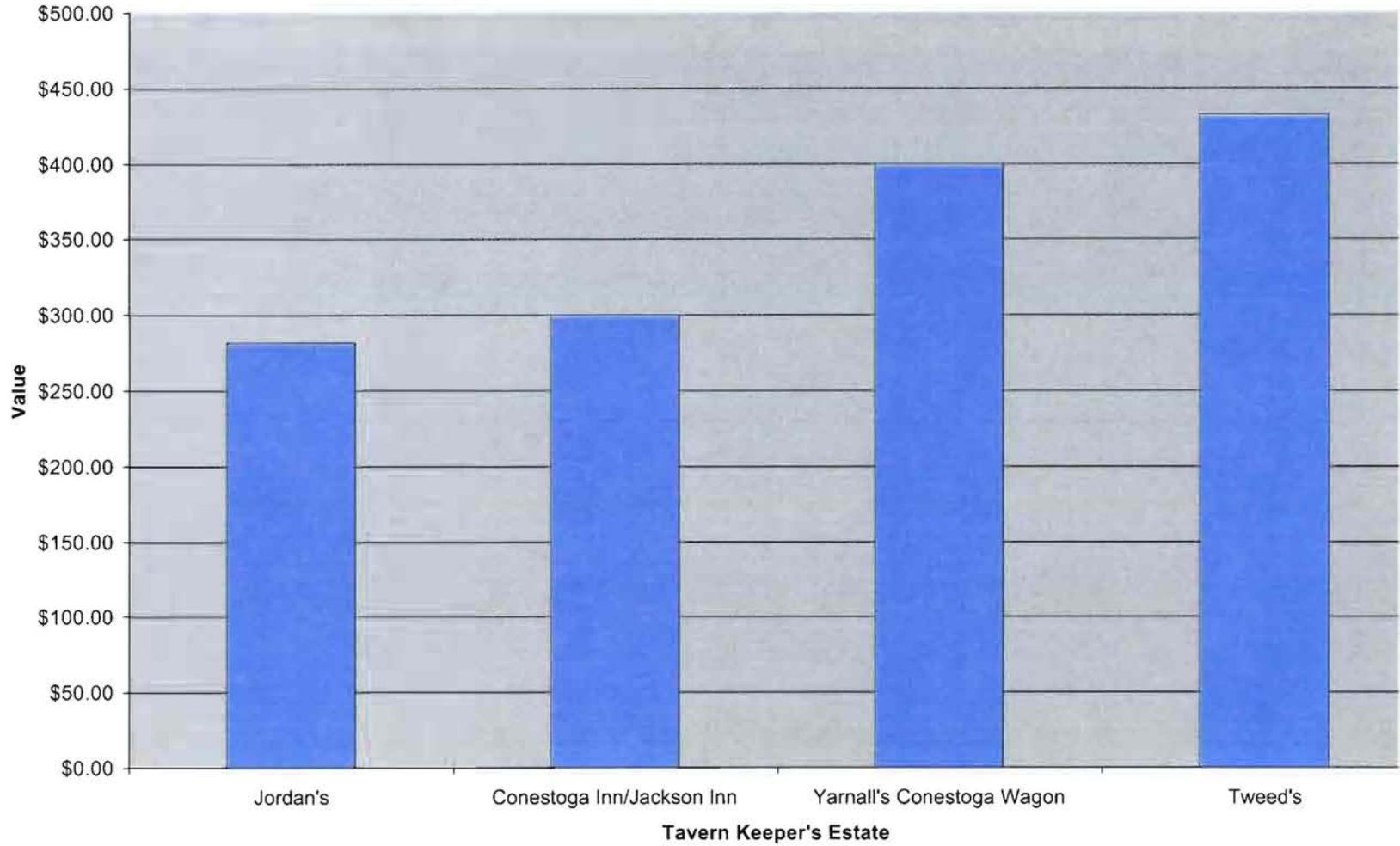
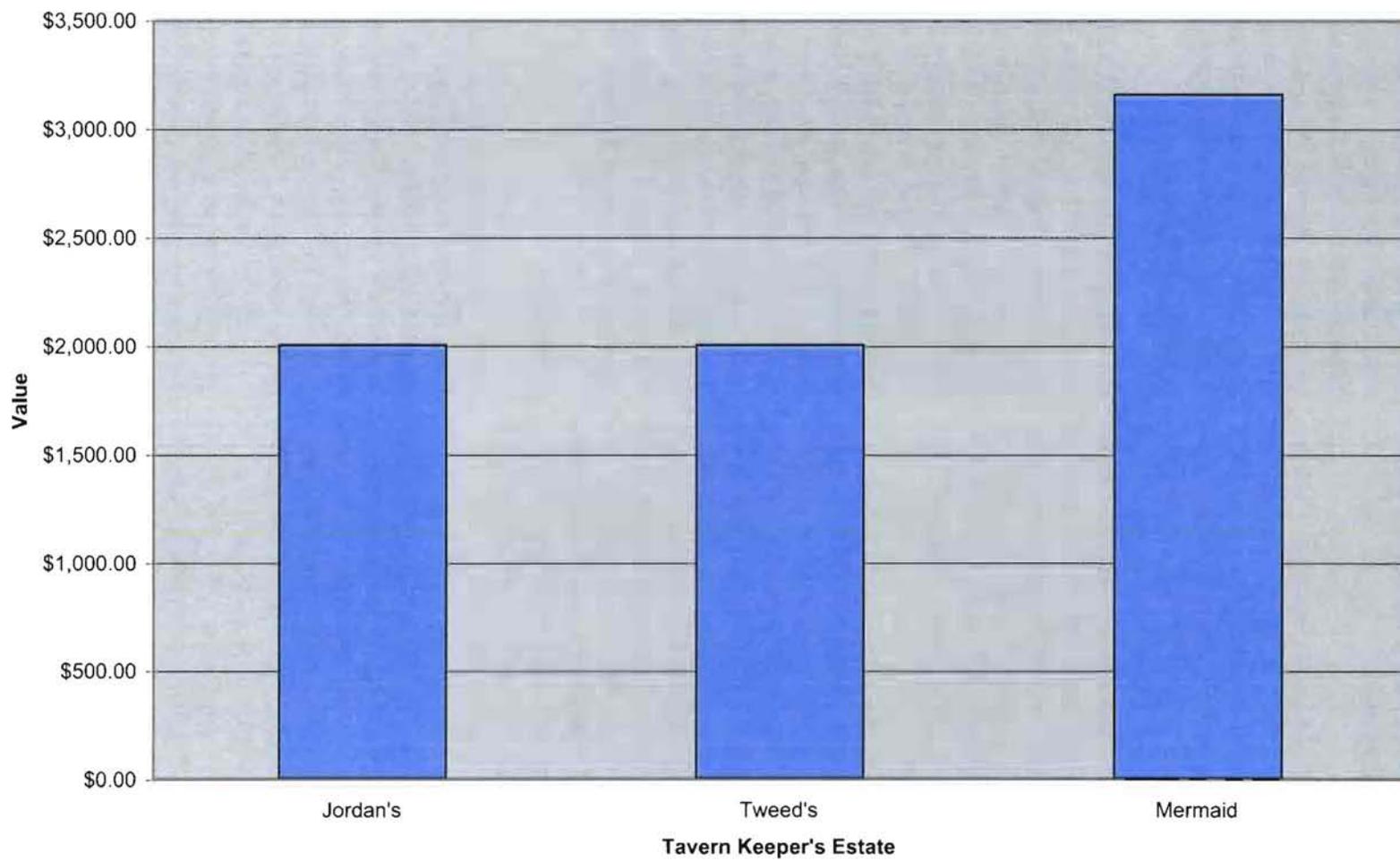


Table 2.8. 1836 Tax Assessments



ments. However, some years of tax lists do not delineate this information and hence the total tax amount was utilized as a comparison.

In 1798, the property under the ownership of Stephen Foulk (purchased by John Tweed four years later) was comprised of a log house, barn and tenement valued at \$613. Ephraim Yarnall's Conestoga Wagon estate comprised of a stone house, log barn and log tenement, in the possession of his widow was appraised at \$840. The same value was recorded for Charles Springer's Sign of the Three Tons Tavern property. The data for the highest valued property, Joseph Ball's Mermaid Tavern, is however skewed since Ball was assessed for two houses (Christiana Hundred Tax Assessments 1798; Mill Creek Hundred Tax Assessments 1798).

Twenty years later, the tax assessments of 1818 do not provide a detailed assessment of real estate value. Therefore, total tax information was used to graph values. James Sharkey, owner of the Conestoga Inn/Jackson Inn, possessed the least valuable property while William Ball (The Mermaid) remains at a high value and was assessed at \$1,028 (Christiana Hundred Tax Assessments 1818; Mill Creek Hundred Tax Assessments 1818). The data for John Tweed's tavern also places the property towards the higher end of the chart at \$800, suggesting perhaps that the property was doing well as a tavern (Table 2.6).

In 1825 a more limited number of properties still shows Tweed's Tavern doing respectably, continuing to be more highly valued than several of its rivals (Table 2.7). William Jordan's 107 acre estate, containing two or more buildings, was valued at \$282. James Starkey's (Sharkey's) property, comprised of one building and lot amounted to \$300. The records note that Yarnall's forty-eight acre property had been transferred to the Brandywine Springs Company and was valued at \$400. The Mudford (Tweed's) Tavern, possessed by Elizabeth, Curtis and James Tweed was

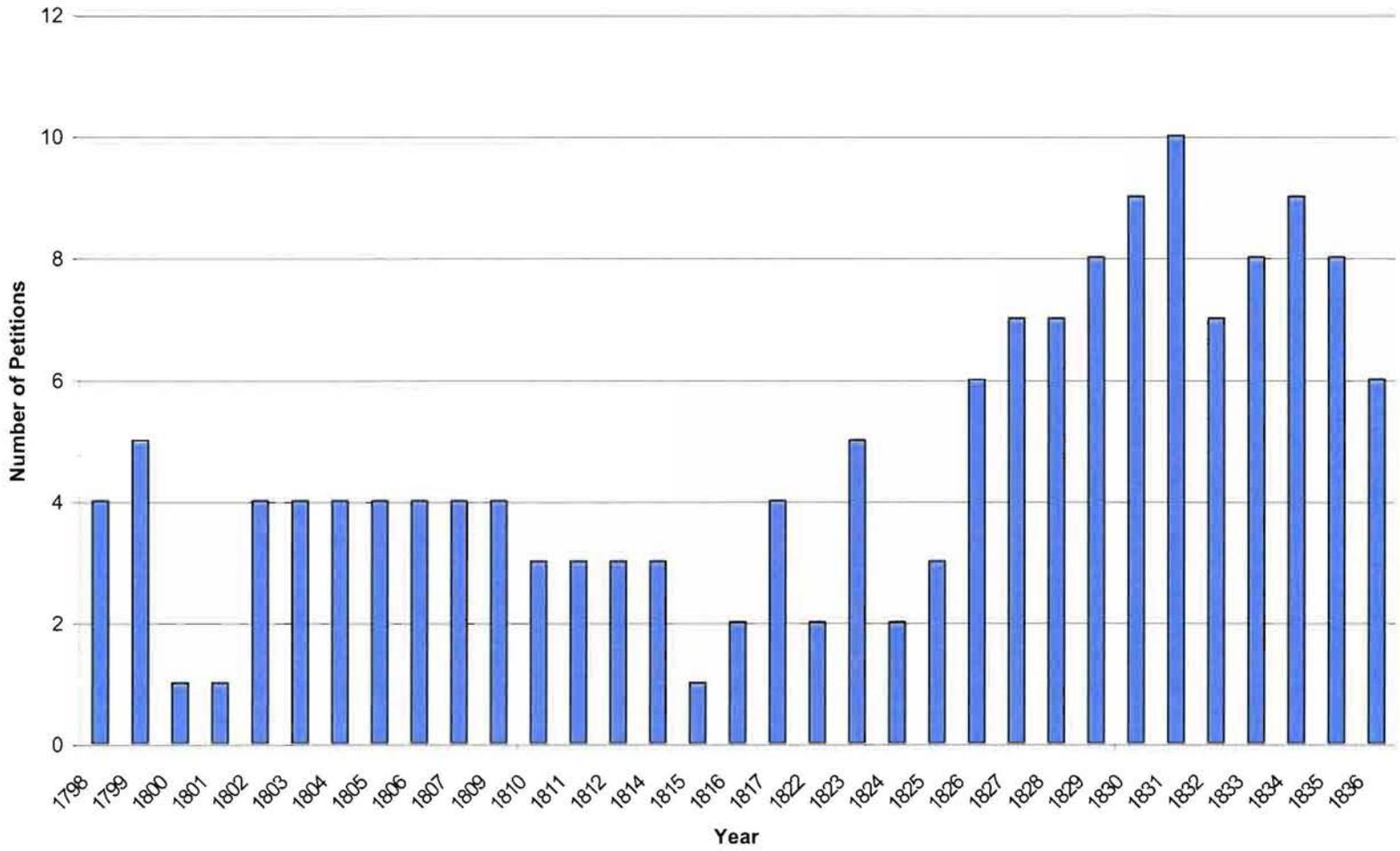
assessed at a slightly higher figure of \$432 (Christiana Hundred Tax Assessments 1825; Mill Creek Hundred Tax Assessments 1825). Acreage and number of buildings differed for each innkeeper. However, it is worthy of note that the Tweed's tavern property, situated on a road that had not been turnpiked, was valued higher than the three others with which it was compared. Times were evidently still good and the tavern moderately prosperous.

Tax assessments for 1836 (Table 2.8) do not provide a detailed appraisal of real estate value. Rachael Reader, who purchased Jordan's tavern, and Thomas Baldwin who acquired Tweed's tavern, were both taxed for \$2,000 of property. Heite, however, believes that Tweed's tavern likely stopped operating in 1831 (see below, Chapter 3) and it is not clear whether Reader continued to run Jordan's establishment after she had filed a petition in 1835. George Walker, proprietor of the Mermaid, was levied for \$3,153 worth of real and personal property, again emphasizing the larger scale of the operations at this tavern (Christiana Hundred Tax Assessments 1836; Mill Creek Hundred Tax Assessments 1836). By this time, Yarnall's Conestoga Wagon had been replaced by the Brandywine Springs Hotel (Ward 1968:100).

c. Tavern Petitions

Lastly, the number of tavern petitions issued in Mill Creek Hundred during the years of 1798 and 1836 was summed and tabulated (Table 2.9). A minimum of four taverns operated during most of the first decade of the 19th century. The number reached a peak in 1830 when ten licenses were granted and dropped to six by 1836 (New Castle County Tavern Petitions 1796-1836). Whether these numbers reflect the actual number of operating taverns is uncertain. Although licenses were supposed to be applied for each year, it is likely that this often did not occur and there may actually have been more taverns functioning than the

Table 2.9. Number of Tavern Petitions Issued in Mill Creek Hundred Per Year



documents show. What the data does reveal however is that the popularity of tavern keeping peaked in the 1825-35 period and then declined.

E. CONCLUSIONS

The road system connecting Lancaster County with the Christina River is clearly of major importance in the history of New Castle County in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. A series of roads converged on the pass in the Lancaster County hills at Gap, and these were all in place before 1776. Turnpiking affected many of these and other routes in the early 19th century, although Limestone Road was not one of these. Taverns were established at regular intervals of about 3-4 miles along these roads, clearly meeting both the passing wagon and stagecoach trade and local needs.

Tweed's Tavern was built of the prevailing building material of the time. Log structures predominate in the 1804 assessment of the Hundred, brick and stone being much rarer, and the latter commonly associated with mills. The tavern, though small, seems to have been modestly prosperous in relation to the seven other taverns with which it was compared.