

## MUNICIPAL OVERVIEW: RIVERDALE BOROUGH



**“PROGRESS WITH A PURPOSE”**

**TOTAL SQUARE MILES: 2.1    POPULATION: 2,498 (2000 Census)**  
**TOTAL SURVEYED HISTORIC RESOURCES: 33**

**SITES LOST SINCE 1986<sup>1</sup>: 1**

- 1433-0005, *Van Ness Gristmill*, Paterson-Hamburg Turnpike. Destroyed by fire ca. 1997.

**RESOURCES DOCUMENTED BY HABS/HAER/HALS: None**

**RESOURCES LISTED IN OR DETERMINED ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER BY NJHPO<sup>2</sup>: 3**

5 Mathews Avenue SHPO ID # 3397	Slater’s Mill, 96 Paterson Hamburg Turnpike SHPO ID # 2237/ NR ID # 75001154
------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Reeve Homestead, 2 Mathews Avenue SHPO ID # 3398	Van Ness House, 211 Paterson-Hamburg Turnpike SHPO ID# 4411, COE: 3/18/2005
-----------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**RESOURCES NOTED IN THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION ELEMENT MORRIS COUNTY (HPEMC):**

The Borough of Riverdale is in “Region A,” with 4 sites:

**A17** Slater’s Mill – 96 Paterson Hamburg Turnpike

**A18 & A19** Ryerson House and Mill (aka Van Ness House and Van Ness Gristmill). Van Ness Gristmill has been demolished.

**A20** Post Lane Corner, which includes numbers 41, 44 and 46 Post Lane.

**MUNICIPAL HISTORICAL COMMISSION: No.**

**LOCALLY DESIGNATED/REGULATED RESOURCES: No.**

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION ELEMENT IN MUNICIPAL MASTER PLAN? No.**

**HISTORICAL SUMMARY:** The area now known as Riverdale was originally part of the Pequannock land patent owned by the Dutch government and given to local settlers. Riverdale has been known as New Greenwich, Old Greenwich, Townsha, Pequannock, and Pompton, but the borough’s name was officially became Riverdale in 1923; it is thought that the origins of the name “Riverdale” come simply from its location, surrounded on two sides by the Pequannock River.

Early settlement in what is now known as Riverdale began in the south, and was generally focused around major roads. Riverdale played a role in the American Revolution, as a fort site chosen by General Washington in 1777 to guard the river crossing, though no evidence of this fort has survived. The establishment of the Paterson Hamburg Turnpike and the Newark Pompton Turnpike seems as though it would have virtually guaranteed residential and commercial activity in Riverdale, but more than anything else, the opening of the Montclair and Greenwood Lake Railroad train line influenced development in Riverdale. Though some development occurred in Riverdale through World War II, the extent of

<sup>1</sup> Any documentation gathered, including completed investigative memorandum *will be found in a “Lost Sites Documentation” binder.*

<sup>2</sup> Resources with National Park Service and/or NJ Historic Preservation Office determination.

development did not greatly impact the borough's character; the more mountainous western portion of the borough remained largely undeveloped until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Residential subdivisions are currently under construction. Interstate 287 through Riverdale did not open until the 1990s, when a connection was finally opened between a portion of Route 287 in New Jersey and one in New York State. This construction greatly affected the borough, requiring a portion of its downtown area to be demolished.

**ADDITIONAL FACTS:**

- George Washington visited and passed through Riverdale several times on his way to Trenton during the Revolutionary War.
- January 2, 1781, the "Pompton Mutiny" takes place among New Jersey troops.
- Boxer Joe Louis held an exhibition bout to raise money for Riverdale's first ambulance ca. 1935.
- George "Babe" Ruth donated baseball uniforms to the Riverdale School's baseball team in 1944.

**LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY:** No.

**MUNICIPAL WEBSITE:** [www.riverdalenj.com](http://www.riverdalenj.com)

**SOURCES:** Carol Murphy, Local Historian, Riverdale Volunteer Fire Department website, Acroterion survey, Riverdale website, NJ Historic Preservation Office website ([www.state.nj.us/dep/hpo/1identify/lists/morris.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/dep/hpo/1identify/lists/morris.pdf)), Morris County Department of Planning, Development, & Technology, KSK Survey.