

# African American History of the Sourland Mountain Region

## New Jersey

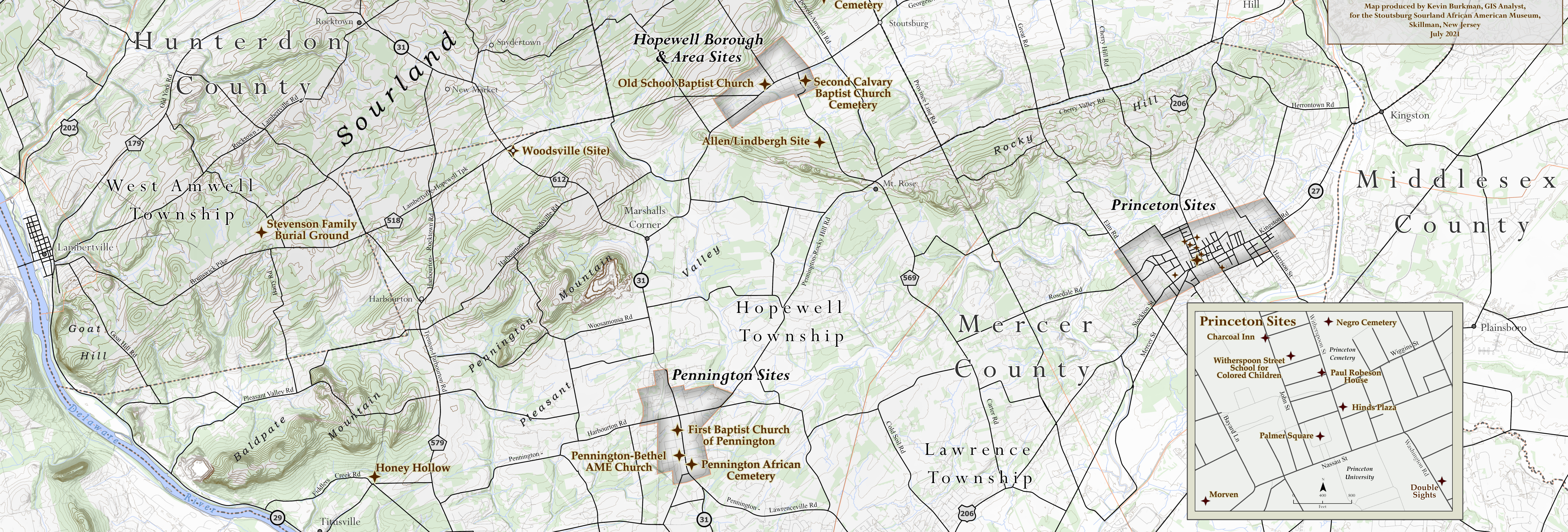


Central New Jersey's Sourland Mountain region extends roughly from the Delaware River at Lambertville, to Hillsborough, some 20 miles away. This 100+ square mile region includes diverse and important natural features, as well as a diverse human cultural history. The Lenape Indians first settled the region, as early as 12,500 years ago. British and Dutch farmers in the region's valleys followed them in the 1600's. By the 19th century, mills clung to the mountainside. Lumber, quarries, agriculture, and pottery production aided in the development of the region.

A large part of that cultural history also includes African Americans, who first appeared as slaves on the farms in the valleys surrounding the mountain, as early as the beginning of the 18th century, and contributed to the area's agricultural economy. During the Civil War freedmen of the region served the Union Army in 1864-65. After the war, many African Americans worked as laborers on local farms in the valleys, as well as peach orchards atop Sourland Mountain, and local quarries, mills, and railroads. In the late 1800's, a peach blight and changing economy led to the dispersal of many African Americans from the region.

The evidence of the African American experience can be found all over the Sourland region. A church where they once worshipped can be seen on Hollow Rd.; the places where they still worship are found in Pennington and Hopewell. The area is home to numerous African American cemeteries and gravesites, including those of soldiers who participated in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. African American villages on Sourland Mountain and in the valleys, long since disappeared, continue to carry their original place-names.

Born into slavery on Sourland Mountain, DuBois (right) was born in "Pat's Tavern", owned by her grandfather Harry Putnam, a former slave. The tavern was known for its peach brandy, gambling and cockfighting. When DuBois was in her prime, her size and strength were legendary, and she acted as a bouncer in her grandfather's establishment. DuBois died in the spring of 1888 in her cabin on Sourland Mountain, at the age of 120.



**Legend**

- ★ African American Historic Sites
- 19th Century Communities
- 19th Century - Modern Communities
- Municipality Boundary
- County Boundary
- Roads: Late 19th Century to Present
- Roads: No Longer Existing from 19th Century
- Roads: Mid 19th Century to Present

**Historic Data Sources:**

- Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Pennington, NJ
- First Baptist Church of Pennington, Pennington, NJ
- Hopewell Valley History Project, Hopewell, NJ
- Pennington Historic Sites Committee, Pennington, NJ
- Rutgers University Special Collections and University Archives
- Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum, Skillman, NJ
- Van Harlingen Historical Society, Belle Mead, NJ

**Base Map Data Sources:**

- New Jersey Office of GIS (NJOGIS)
- USGS/National Hydrography Dataset (NHD)
- USGS/National Elevation Dataset (NED)

Scale: 1:30,000

Map produced by Kevin Burkman, GIS Analyst, for the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum, Skillman, New Jersey, July 2021

### Sourland Mountain Sites

**Harry Put's Tavern**  
Catered to people as far away as New York and Philadelphia. Located on the north side of Zion Road in an area called Cedar Summit and Buttonwood Corner. The tavern was owned by Harry Putnam, a former slave and grandfather to the legendary Sylvia DuBois who lived to be 120 years old. The property was passed on to DuBois' ownership, but later was burned to the ground in 1940 by arson.  
Lindbergh Road, East Amwell Township

**Honey Hollow**  
During the mid 19th century, as many as 50 African Americans lived in now abandoned Honey Hollow, which was located near Titusville. Remnants of the community can still be found in the woods that have overtaken it, along Fiddlers Creek Rd.  
Fiddlers Creek Road, Hopewell Township

**Minnietown**  
A community of about 25 African American and Native American during the late 1800's. It may have been named after resident Minnie True, or possibly a Native American tribe, the Minnesipon. The African Americans who lived in Minnietown most likely dispersed after a peach blight in the 1890's.  
Hopewell-Wertsville Road & Minnie Town Lane, Hopewell Township

**Stoutsburg Cemetery**  
One of the oldest African American cemeteries in New Jersey, existing since the late 1700s. Cemeteries were segregated during this period, and sites like Stoutsburg were the only places African Americans could be buried. Many African American veterans are buried here, dating to the American Revolution and the Civil War.  
Province Line Road, Hopewell Township

**Truehart Site**  
Friday Truehart was a slave purchased by old School Baptist preacher Rev. Oliver Hart. Friday was brought to Hopewell from Charleston, SC at the age of 13. Hart later resided in a log cabin in the Sourland Mountains.  
Mt. Church Road, Hopewell Township

### Pennington Sites

**First Baptist Church of Pennington**  
Originally built in 1857 and served as a Pennington school for 40 years. It was then moved across the street to its current location. From 1898 until 1904 it was used by a men's athletic organization. In 1902, the First Baptist Church of Pennington was formed. Two years later, the church bought the building and the land that now is on the corner of Cranley and Academy Aves.  
5 Academy Avenue, Pennington

**Pennington African Cemetery**  
Established in 1863, making it one of the oldest historical landmarks in the area. Created for African American residents who were prohibited from burial at nearby white cemeteries. Many African American Civil War veterans are buried here. The cemetery is included in the Pennington Crossroads Historic District.  
South Main Street, Pennington

**Pennington-Bethel AME Church**  
Founded in 1816, the church was the first African American church in Pennington, as well as the entire Hopewell Valley. The first pastor Rev. Elijah Hamlet and the original members met in different homes for 31 years. In 1847 land at 246 South Main St. and shortly after the church was built. In 1867 the church was enlarged, and in 1950 the current edifice was built within the old church walls.  
246 South Main Street, Pennington

### Hopewell Borough & Area Sites

**Second Calvary Baptist**  
The first African American church in Hopewell Borough founded in 1897; its cemetery is located at this site. There are 8 headstones which represent 12 marked graves. Church history indicates that there are also 10 to 12 unmarked graves. Members and their family were buried here as early as 1899 and the final burial was in 1954.  
First Street, Hopewell Borough

**Allen/Lindbergh Site**  
On May 12, 1932, African-American Pennington resident William Allen found the body of Charles Lindbergh, Jr. along Hopewell-Princeton Rd., seventy-two days after the child's world-famous kidnapping.  
Hopewell-Princeton Rd, Hopewell Township, Unmarked site

**Old School Baptist Church**  
Erected in 1747. In 1790 Reverend Oliver Hart of Charleston, South Carolina, received an invitation to become pastor of the church. When Hart arrived, he brought with him an enslaved thirteen-year-old African American boy named Friday Truehart. Hart remained pastor until his death in 1795. Prior to his arrival and during his tenure several African Americans were received as members. These Black colonials, however, were generally only listed by their first name such as Bontura, Black or Jude, a slave of Jacob Blackwell.  
West Broad Street, Hopewell Borough

### Skillman Sites

**Camp Meeting Site**  
Camp meetings were religious revivals held on Sundays during the summer months, starting in the mid 1800's for the benefit of the Mt. Zion AME Church. The site was located at the intersection of Camp Meeting Ave. and Hollow Rd.  
Camp Meeting & Hollow Roads, Skillman

**Mount Zion AME Church, Current Site**  
One of the most historic buildings in the Sourland region. Original church was constructed before 1850 on Zion Rd. near the Province Line on Sourland Mountain and served the black population of the East Mountain area. When a peach blight at the turn of the century took away their livelihoods on the mountain, the congregation moved here.  
189 Hollow Road, Skillman

### Princeton Sites

**Palmer Square**  
Center of Princeton's original African American neighborhood. Original residents were moved to Birch Ave. in 1920, to make way for the construction of Palmer Square.  
Nassau St.

**Morven**  
Built in mid-18th century for revolutionary and Declaration of Independence signer Richard Stockton. Part of a greater plantation, Morven utilized slave labor for several generations.  
55 Stockton St.

**Paul Robeson House**  
Famous African American scholar, athlete, artist, and activist was born here in 1898.  
140 Witherspoon St.

**Double Sights**  
Dedicated in 2019 on the Princeton University campus, the sculpture illustrates the complex legacy of Woodrow Wilson. It was designed by African American landscape architect Walter Hood, a 2019 MacArthur Fellow and Gish Prize winner.  
Fountain of Freedom, 2 Washington Rd.

**Hinds Plaza**  
Plaza at Princeton Public Library, dedicated to African American resident and civic leader Albert Hinds (1902-2008).  
65 Witherspoon St.

**Colored Cemetery**  
Segregated burial ground, part of the larger Princeton Cemetery. Historic gate for this section of cemetery on Witherspoon St., across from Mt. Pisgah AME Church. Former slaves and Paul Robeson's parents are buried here.  
Witherspoon and Wiggins Sts.

**Witherspoon Street School for Colored Children**  
National Register of Historic Places designated building. Educated African American children from 1858 until the Princeton Public Schools were integrated in 1948. The school was originally located at 184 Witherspoon St. An enrollment increase it moved in 1909, to this location.  
35 Quarry St.

**Charcoal Inn**  
Owned by African Americans William Teague and William Green. The inn was also known as the meeting place of the "Numbers" - "Colored Men" spelled backwards. Primarily a social club where new members joined by invitation only. It was listed in the Negro Motorist Green-Book.  
184 John St.

The following sites on the map have been identified, but require further research:

- Mount Zion AME Church-Original Site  
Zion-Wertsville Rd  
Hopewell Township
- Higgins Farmhouse/Underground RR Site  
Spring Hill Rd.  
Montgomery Township
- Stevens Burial Site  
Brunswick Pike  
West Amwell Township
- Woodsville African American Village  
Harbourtown-Woodsville Rd.  
Hopewell Township