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written and
- Researched
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History of the Title of Land in Salisbury, New Hampshire
which William and Eleanor Dorsey purchased from William
Dunlap (1955)

The English colonies in North America were "discovered" by John Cabot in 1497 and 1498 for King Henry VII. In 1620, James I chartered the "Council for New England," giving it the right to establish settlements, sell land and license traders and fishermen in the area now known as New England. In the 1620s, the Council granted to Captain John Mason, one of its leaders, several large tracts of land covering much of present New Hampshire, which name he gave to his holdings. Mason's grants conflicted with grants given to others, and Massachusetts asserted jurisdiction over some of his claims. His land rights were the subject of much litigation after his death in 1635. In 1741, the boundary between New Hampshire and Massachusetts was finally established by royal decree, and, shortly thereafter, the still disputed Masonian land claims were settled in favor of John Tufton Mason, a great-great grandson of Captain John Mason. In 1746, these land claims, approximately two million acres, were purchased by a syndicate of twelve Portsmouth gentlemen known as the Masonian Proprietors.

The Masonian Proprietors granted several dozen towns in southern New Hampshire. They typically did not sell land; they made their profit by retaining a portion of each township to sell at a later time after the settlement of the town, which greatly increased the value of their retained shares. The towns were granted to prospective settlers or to land speculators who hoped to sell to prospective settlers. The settlers were required to fulfill certain conditions or else their lands would revert to the Proprietors. These conditions typically included clearing land, supporting a preacher of the gospel, and building roads, dwellings, a mill and a meeting house.

Salisbury was granted in 1749. It was divided into four ranges of lots. Each grantee was assigned by "lottery" a share consisting of a 30 acre lot, a 60 acre lot, an 80 acre lot and a 100 acre lot scattered randomly around the town to make each share as equal as possible. The arrangement of ranges and lots looked something like figure 1.

The land that the Dorseys purchased from Dunlap consists of those parts of the 80 acre lots numbered 74, 73, 72 and possibly 71, in the fourth or north range, to the north and west of the Blackwater River, except for a small piece of lot 74 on the west sideline of the lot and on the north bank of the river. The actual size of these lots appears to have been closer to 100 acres. The original grantees of these lots were James Toppan (74), Samuel Solley and Clement March (73), Tristram Sanborn, Ter's (72) and David Greely (71) as shown in figure 2.

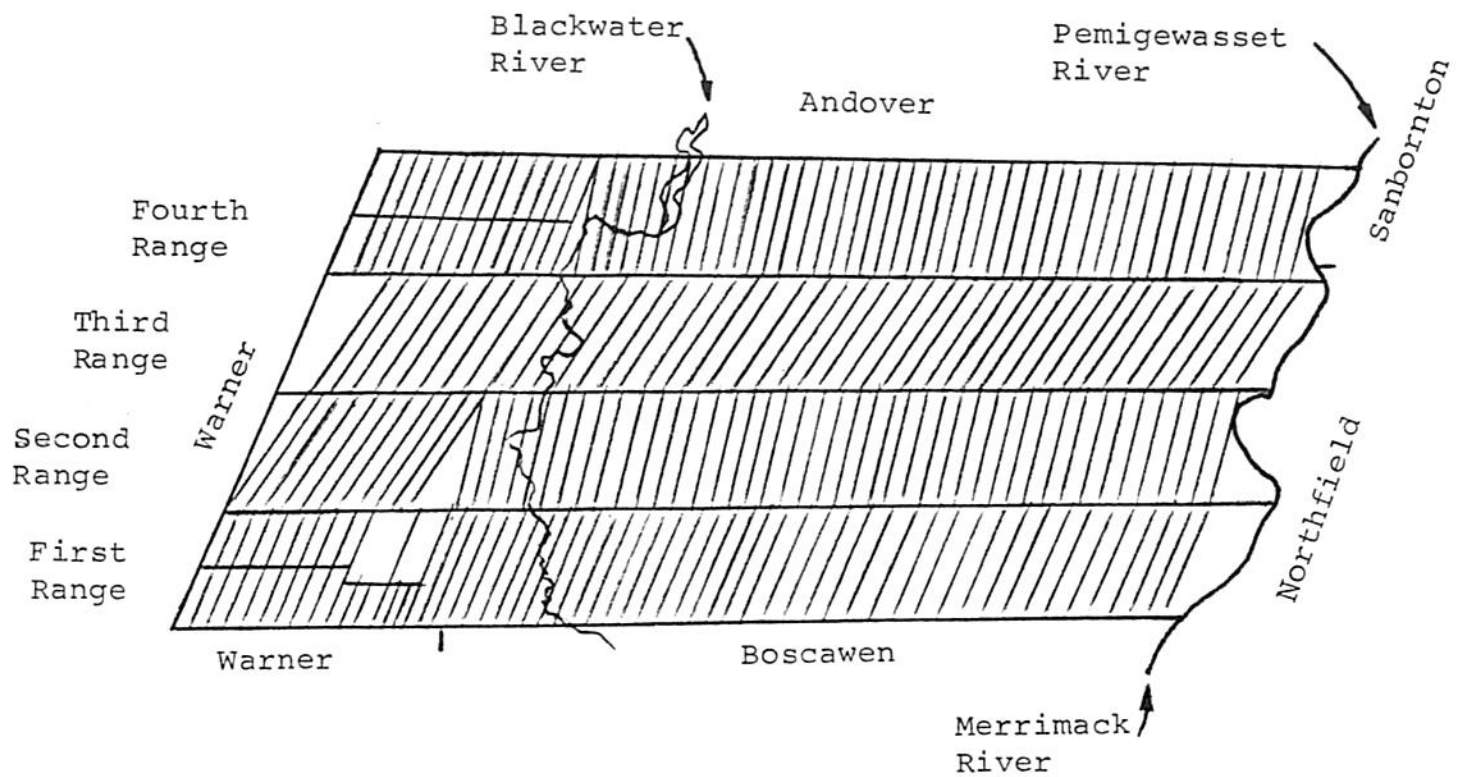


Figure 1: Salisbury, New Hampshire, showing adjoining towns and a general indication of the original division of the town into ranges and lots.

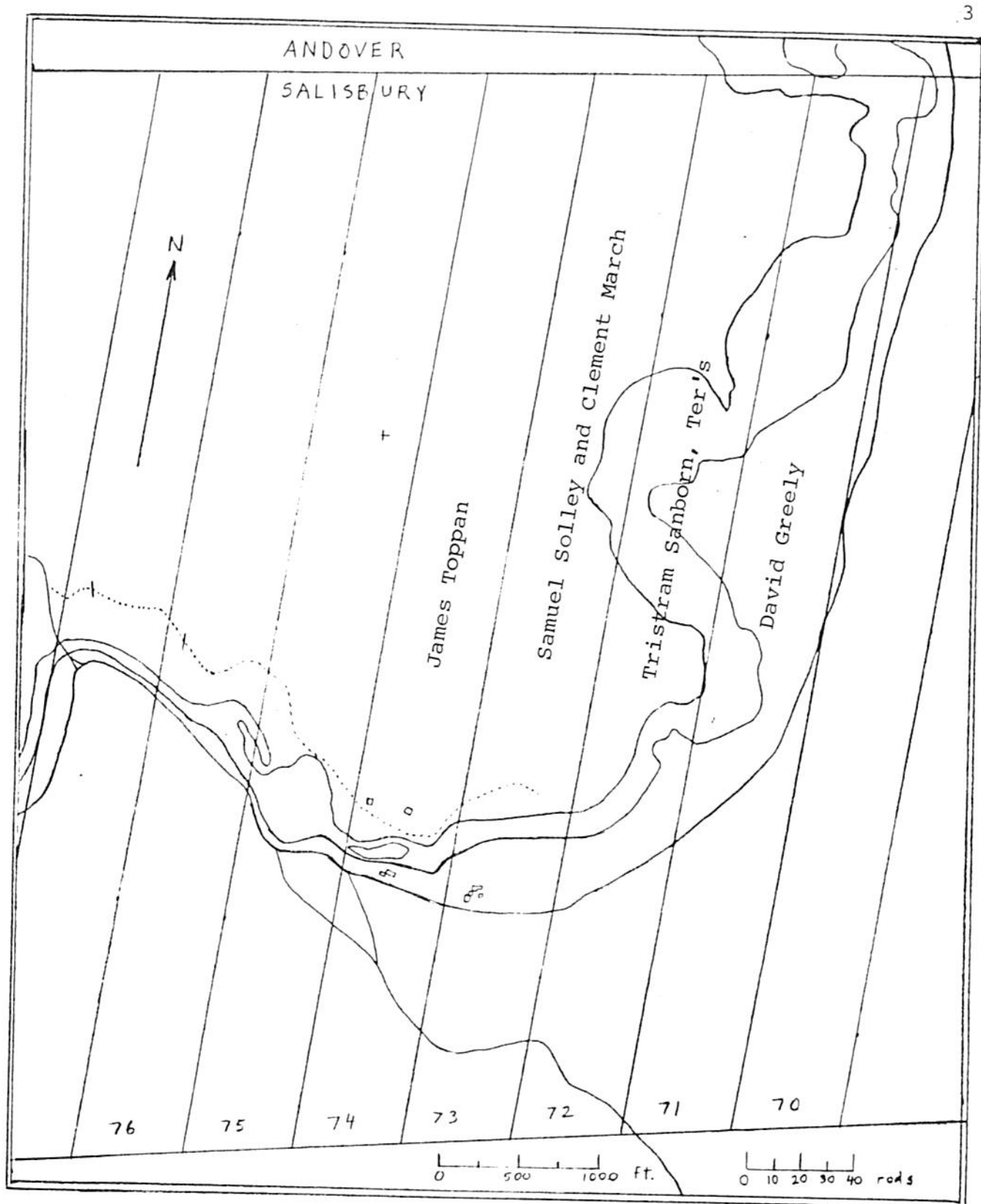


Figure 2: Original grantees of lots 71-74, North Range

In 1753, James Tappin of Kingston sold to John Webster of Kingston "one right or share in that tract of land called Major Stevens's Town....the right or share that is mine original," as shown in figure 3. (New Hampshire Province Deed 44/422, Feb. 1, 1753) The name "Salisbury" was not adopted until 1768. Before then the town was named for Major Ebenezer Stevens who was prominent among the original grantees.

In 1755, Tristram Sanborn of Kingstown sold to his brother-in-law Francis Bachelder of Kingstown "a certain parcel of land situate in that tract of land Major Stevens's Town in the Province aforesaid, it being one full right (so called). That is to say the one eightieth part of said tract, it being also that particular right or share that is allotted to me, the Tristram Sanborn," as shown in figure 4. (NH 68/263, Apr. 29, 1755) And on the same day, Francis Bachelder sold to John Webster of Contoocook the same "particular right or share that is allotted to Tristram Sanborn," as shown in figure 4. (NH 49/211, Apr. 29, 1755)

I could not find any record of lot 72 from 1755, when it was purchased by John Webster, to 1787, when it was sold by John Fifield. Nor could I find any record of lot 73 between 1749, when it was originally granted to Samuel Solley and Clement March, and 1788, when it was sold by Richard and Mary Smith. One possible explanation of these apparent gaps in the record is that the revolution disrupted the keeping of public records.

In 1787, John Fifield sold to Abraham Fifield "a certain 80 acre lot of land in Salisbury, it being the lot no. 72 in the fourth range of lots in said town and was laid out to the original right of Tristram Sanborn Tertius," as shown in figure 4. (Hillsborough County Deed 127/588, Aug. 6, 1787)

In 1788, Richard and Mary Smith sold to John Webster, Jr., and Stephen Webster "all our interest right or title to the following lot of land in the township of Salisbury aforesaid, said lot was laid out to the original right of Samuel Solle & Clement March & is N. 73 and lyes in the north or fourth range of lots in said Salisbury and is butted and bounded as on the proprietors book of records of said Salisbury may fully appear," as shown in figure 5. (Hills. 38/499, Feb. 24, 1788)

In 1794, Stephen Webster sold to John Webster his interest in lot 73, as shown in figure 5, giving John Webster full ownership of lot 73. (Hills. 38/496, May 27, 1794)

In 1794, John Webster sold to James Currier "certain land lying and being in Salisbury aforesaid containing two eighty acre lots, the one No. 73 and was laid out to Solly and Marsh, and the other No. 74 and was laid out to the original right of James Top-pam, and both of said lots lay in the fourth range of lots in said town,....and also the mills and privileges of mills," as shown in figure 6. (Hills. 38/329, May 27, 1794)

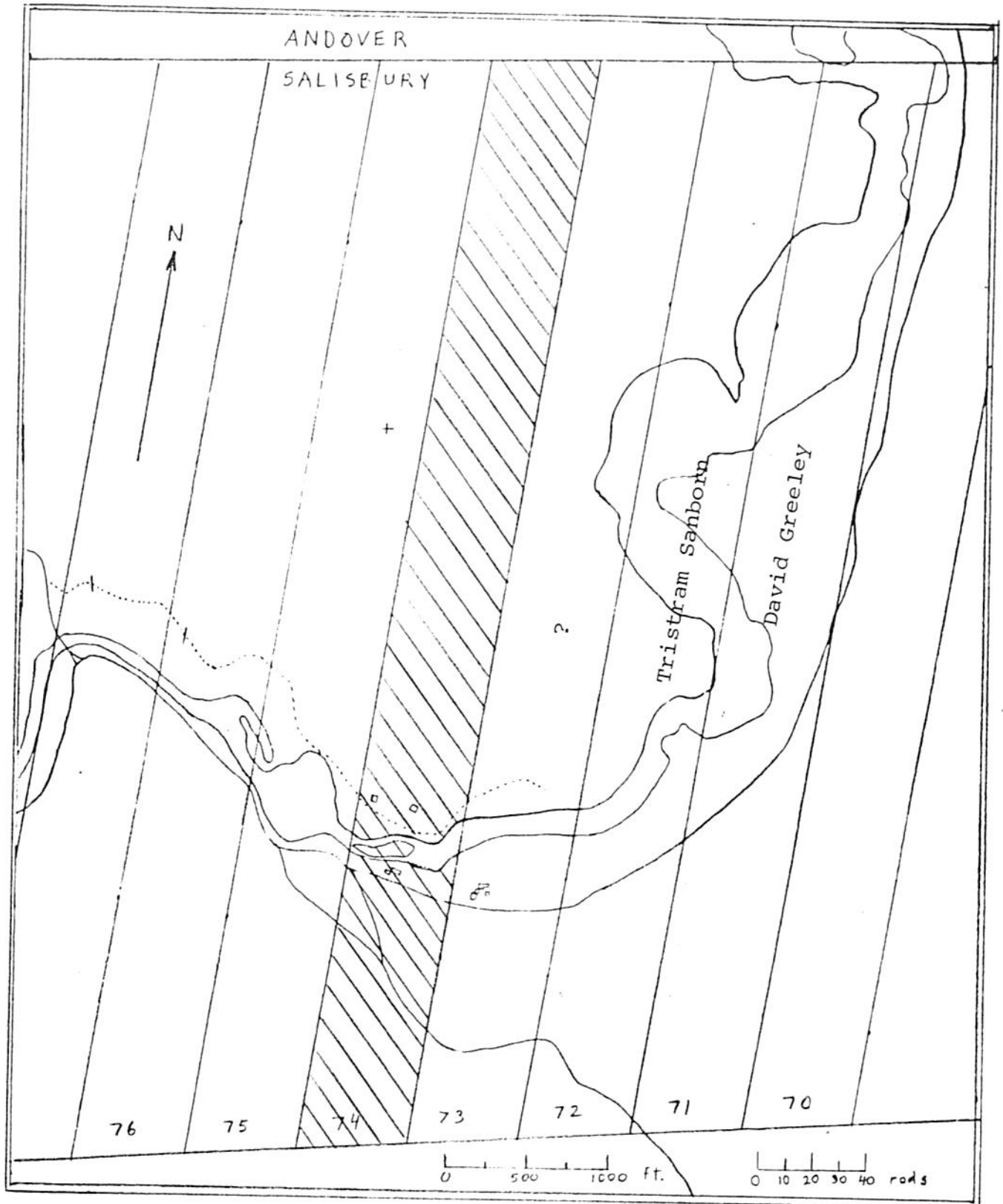


Figure 3: James Tappin to John Webster, 1753



Figure 4: Tristram Sanborn to Francis Bachelor, 1755
 Francis Bachelor to John Webster, 1755
 John Fifield to Abraham Fifield, 1787
 Abraham Fifield to Samuel Fifield, 1817
 Samuel Fifield to Peter Fifield, 1819

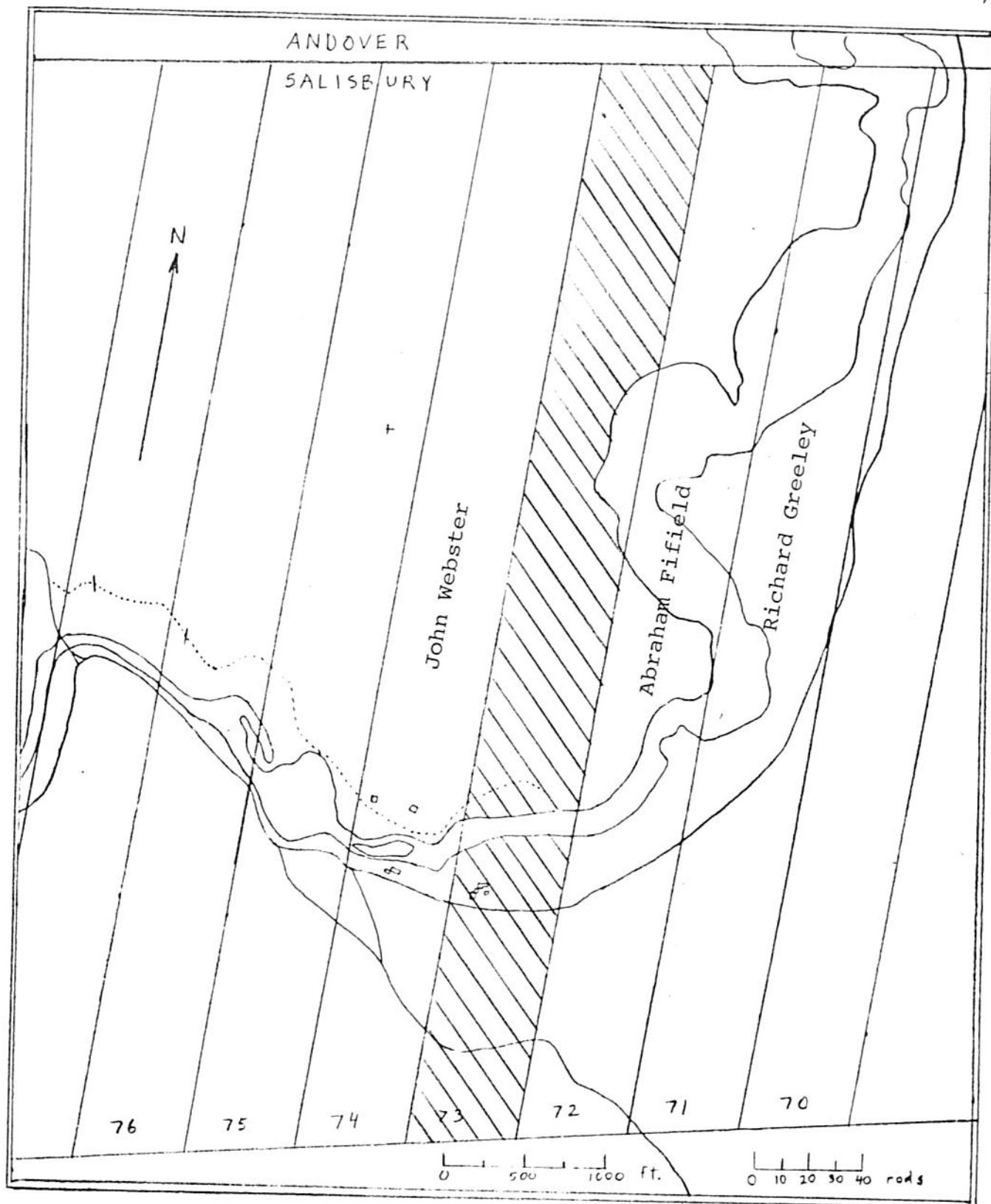


Figure 5:
 Richard and Mary Smith to John and Stephen Webster, 1788
 Stephen Webster to John Webster (half interest), 1794

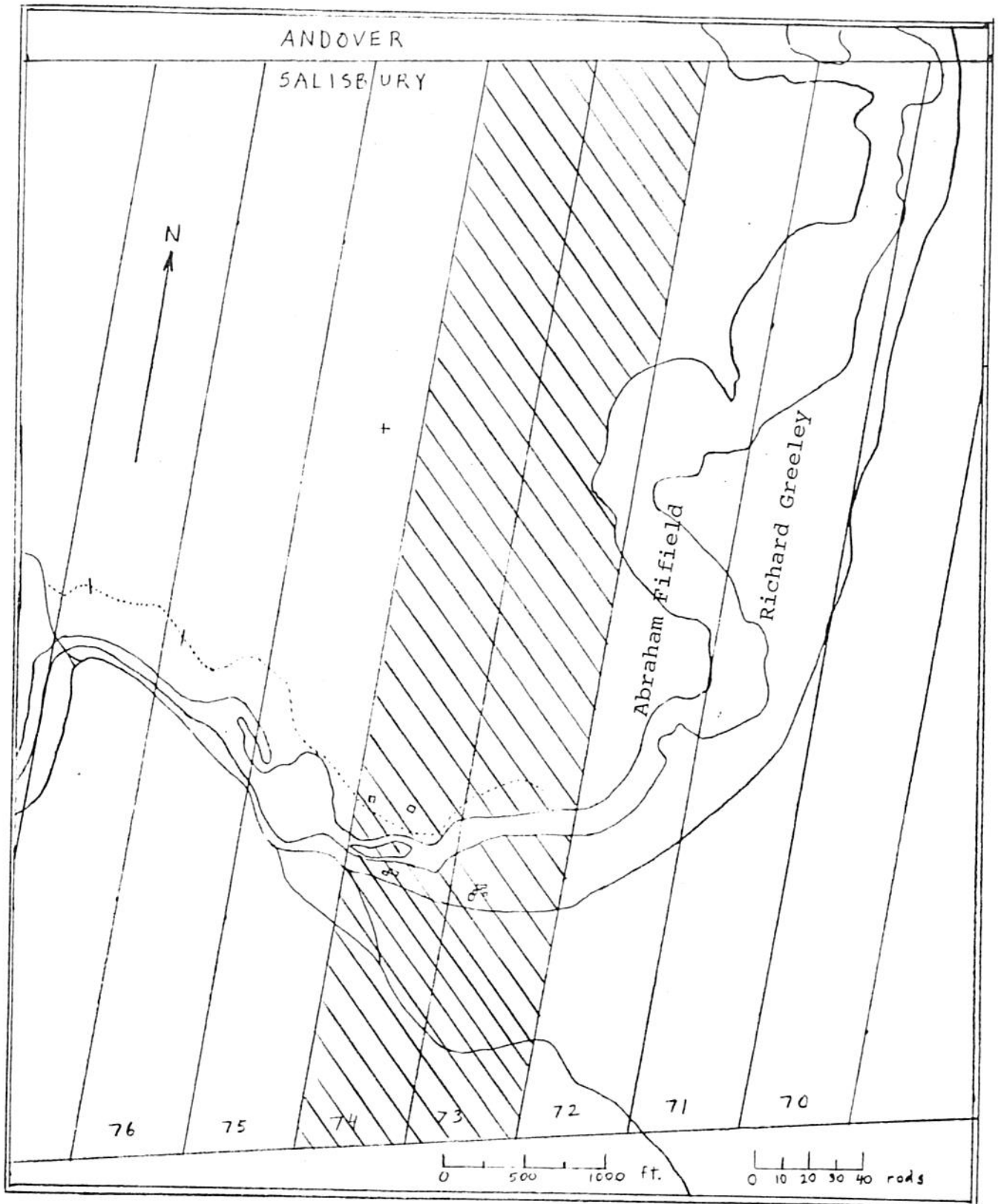


Figure 6: John Webster to James Currier, 1794

In 1807, James Currier sold to his son, Gideon Currier, "the greater part of the eighty acre lot No. 74 in the fourth range....beginning at the southeasterly corner bound of said lot running northerly on the easterly side line of said lot to the northeasterly corner bound of said lot, thence westerly on the range to the northwesterly corner bound of said lot, thence southerly on the westerly side line of said lot till it comes to Blackwater River at low water mark, then east eighteen rods, thence southerly a straight line to strike the southerly side of the rangeway ten rods easterly from the southwesterly corner bound of said lot, thence easterly on the southerly side of said range way till it comes square off against the bound first mentioned, thence across said range to the first mentioned bound....to contain eighty acres more or less. Also eleven twelfths of a saw mill standing on the aforementioned lot," as shown in figure 7. (Hills. 74/336, Jan. 1, 1807)

In 1809, Gideon Currier sold to John Bailey of Andover "sixty acres of land by measure, being part of that eighty acre lot in said Salisbury numbered seventy four in the fourth range to be taken off the north end of said lot," as shown in figure 8. (Hills. 84/4, July 21, 1809)

In 1815, Gideon Currier sold to Amos Pettengill the greater part of lot 74 as purchased from his father, James Currier, in 1807, as shown in figure 7. (Hills. 104/238, Jan. 25, 1815)

And on the same day, John Bayley sold to Amos Pettengill the 60 acres at the north end of lot 74 that he had purchased from Gideon Currier in 1809, as shown in figure 8. (Hills. 104/239, Jan. 25, 1815)

In 1816, Gideon Currier sold to Amos Pettengill land "beginning on the side line of John Dunlap's land on the northerly side of Blackwater River at low water mark, near the saw mill now in my occupancy, thence running east four rods, thence northerly to the north bank of the gully or gutter extending from the river at the outlet from the river, thence on the northerly bank of said gully or gutter to the line of John Dunlap's land, thence by said Dunlap's land to the bound first mentioned, containing by estimation one quarter of an acre," as shown in figure 9. (Hills. 109/614, Apr. 5, 1816)

In 1816, James Currier of Enfield sold to Richard Currier, 2nd, of Enfield lot 73 and part of lot 74 "adjoining John Dunlap's land and Samuel Dunlap's land and Deacon Amos Pettengill's land and James Currier's land and extending south to the rangeway. Also one other piece of land joining the aforesaid piece of land called the Bowing lot....," as shown in figure 10. (Hills. 111/385, Apr. 27, 1816)



Figure 7:
James Currier to Gideon Currier, 1807
Gideon Currier to Amos Pettengill, 1815

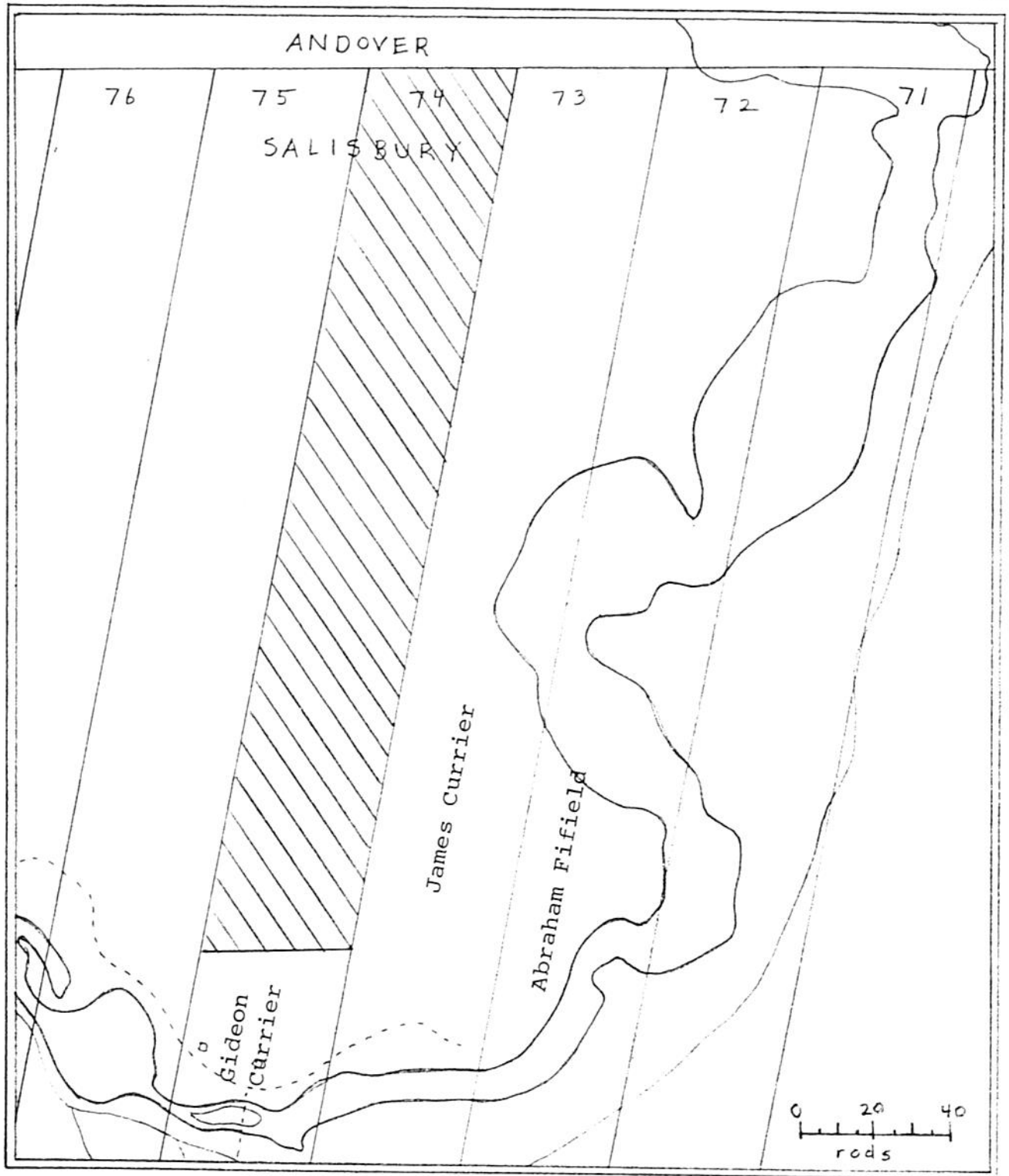


Figure 8:
Gideon Currier to John Bailey, 1809
John Bayley to Amos Pettengill, 1815

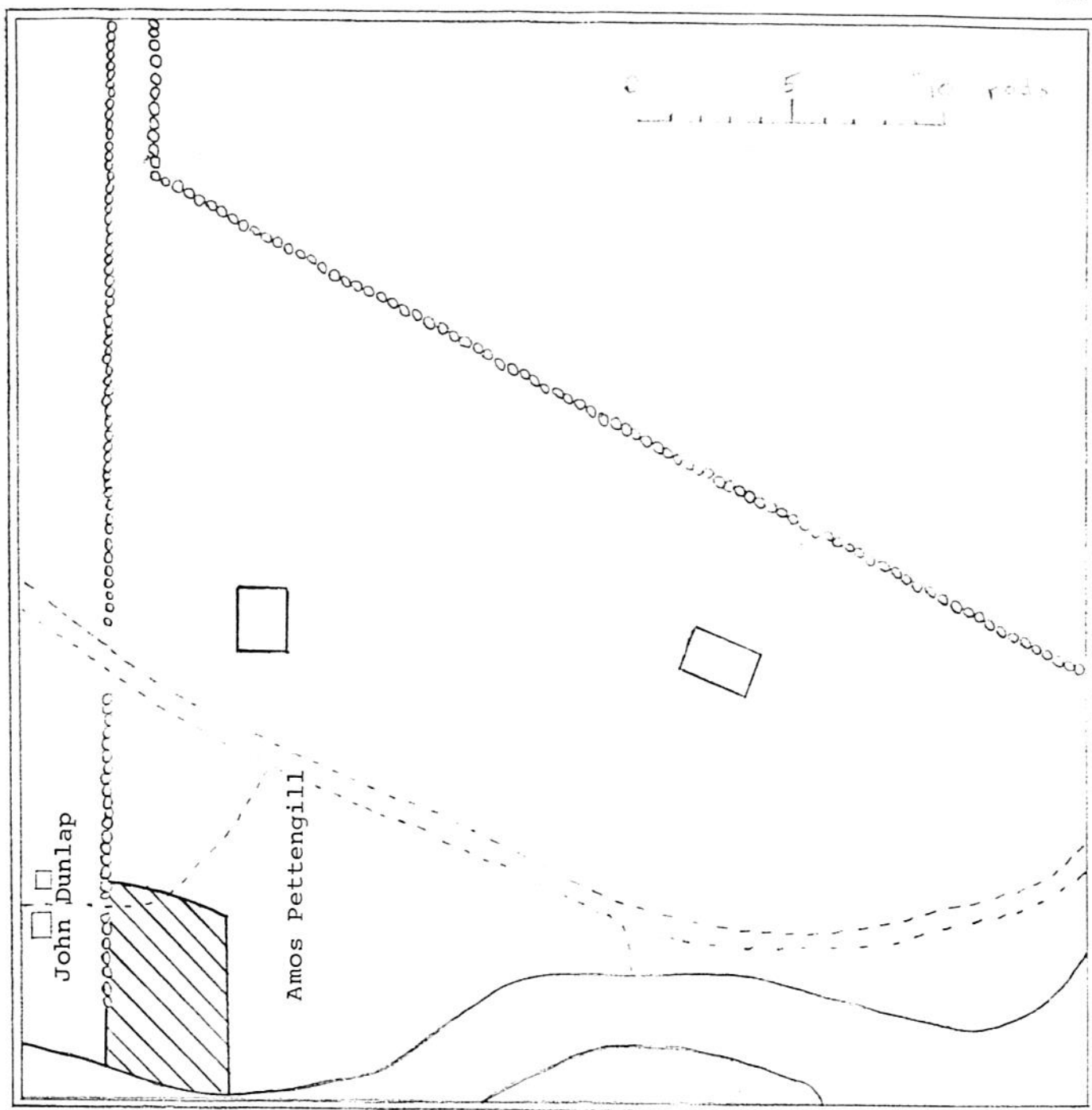


Figure 9:
Gideon Currier to Amos Pettengill, 1816

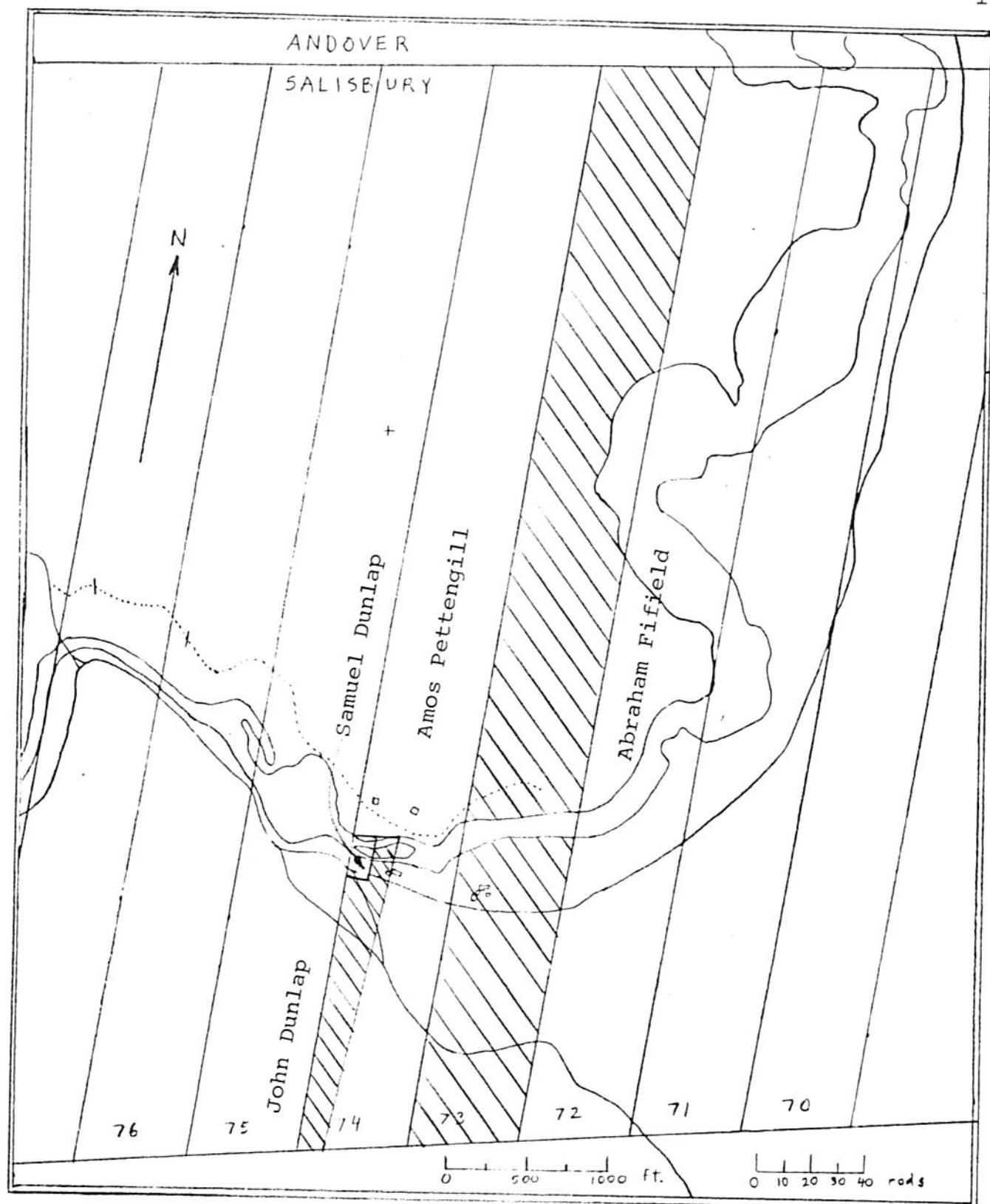


Figure 10:
James Currier to Richard Currier, 1816

In 1817, Abraham Fifield sold to Samuel Fifield "the whole of a certain 80 acre lot No. 72 in the fourth range of lots in said Salisbury excepting the road which crosses said lot and about two acres which I conveyed to Reuben True by deed off of the southwesterly corner of said lot," as shown in figure 4. (Hills. 114/432, June 28, 1817)

In 1819, Samuel Fifield sold to Peter Fifield "an eighty acre lot No. 72 in the fourth range of lots in said town and was laid out to the original right of Tristram Sanborn," as shown in figure 4. (Hills. 127/587, Nov. 19, 1819)

In 1821, Richard Currier sold to Amos Pettengill land "beginning at the north end of lot numbered 73....and on Andover line, thence running southerly carrying the whole width of said lot til it comes to Blackwater River containing about 50 acres," as shown in figure 11. (Merrimack County Deed 37/90, March 28, 1821)

In 1834, Amos Pettengill sold to Pelatiah, David C. and Cyrus Gookin "the greater part of lot numbered 74, an eighty acre lot in fourth range" as purchased from Gideon Currier, "Also the sawmill standing upon Blackwater River....Also one other tract of land....adjoining the above described premisesbeginning at the north end of lot numbered 73....thence running southerly carrying the whole width of said lot til it comes to Blackwater River," as shown in figure 12. (Merr. 37/217, May 8, 1834) David and Cyrus Gookin were Pelatiah's sons, and Cyrus was Guy Gookin's grandfather.

There is no record of the disposition of Pelatiah Gookin's interest in this property, but he apparently conveyed it to his sons sometime between 1834 and 1843, because, in 1843, David and Cyrus Gookin split this property and other common holdings between themselves. Cyrus deeded to David the gristmill, a piece of land between the Bay Road and the River now owned by Peter Merkes and "one other tract of land lying on the westerly side of the river beginning on the bank of the river at a stake and stones one rod west from the abutment of the bridge above the mill, thence northerly $2\frac{1}{2}$ rods to a stake and stones, thence northwesterly 10 rods to a stake and stones, thence northerly 6 rods to a stake and stones, thence west to land owned by David Dunlap heirs about 10 rods, thence by said land to the river, thence by the river to the first mentioned bound, supposed to be about one half acre," as shown in figure 13. (Merr. 73/344, Nov. 16, 1843) The house that Dorseys bought from Dunlap was later built on this piece of land. And David deeded to Cyrus the remainder of the land they owned in common on the north side of the river along with the sawmill and some land to the south of the river as shown in figure 14. (Merr. 198/470, Nov. 16, 1843)

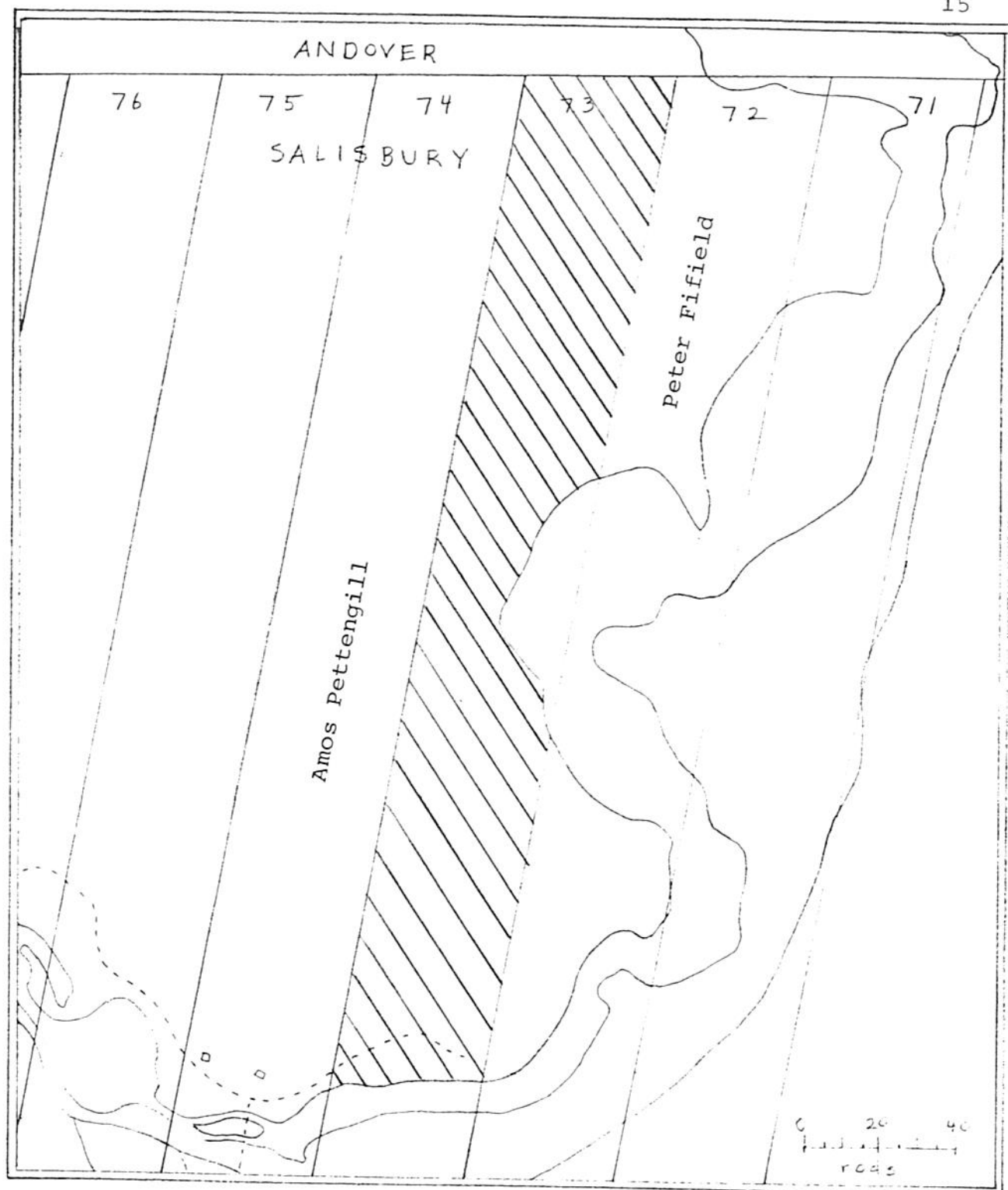


Figure 11:
Richard Currier to Amos Pettengill, 1821



Figure 12:
Amos Pettengill to Pelatiah, David C. and Cyrus Gookin, 1834

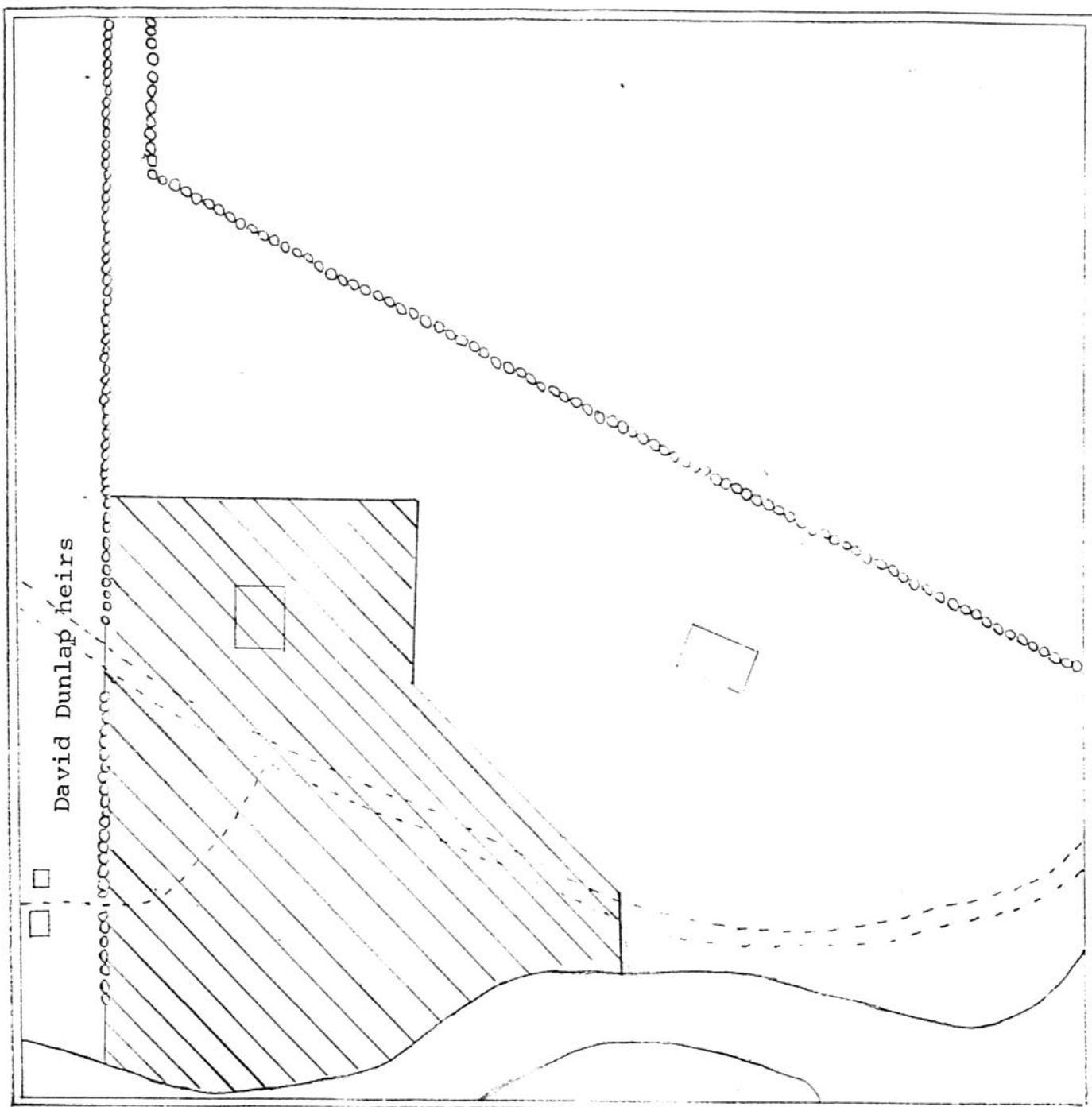


Figure 13:
Cyrus Gookin to David Gookin, 1843



Figure 14:
David Gookin to Cyrus Gookin, 1843

In 1848, Peter Fifield sold to Cyrus Gookin "a part of an 80 acre lot No. 72 in the fourth range of lots in Salisbury.... beginning on the north side of Blackwater River, taking all the land between the west side of said lot and the Blackwater River, estimated at 25 acres," as shown in figure 15. (Merr. 94/166, Jan. 31, 1848)

In 1858, David Gookin sold to George W. Scribner a piece of land on which the Dorseys' house now sits "beginning on the west bank of the outlet, so called, on land owned by David Dunlap heirs, thence northerly by said heirs land to land of Cyrus Gookin, thence easterly by said Gookin land about 10 rods, thence southerly and easterly by said Gookin land to the river, thence westerly by said river to the outlet, thence by said outlet to the first mentioned bounds, meaning to convey all the land north of the outlet deeded to me by Cyrus Gookin, reserving to myself and my heirs all the privileges necessary at all times for passing and repassing to and from and across said land to make and repair the mill dam opposite south to said land," as shown in figure 16. (Merr. 144/260, Jan. 21, 1858) The small piece of land between the outlet and the river at the north end of the mill dam was sold by David Gookin to Francis Stevens along with the gristmill across the river (Merr. 144/439, Apr. 1, 1858) and is now owned by Paul Shaw.

In 1858, Cyrus Gookin sold to George Scribner a half interest in the saw mill and "also a certain piece of land situated on the west side of Blackwater River, beginning at the northeast corner of land deeded to G.W. Scribner by David C. Gookin, thence northerly about 15 rods to a stake and stones, thence westerly to land formerly owned by David Dunlap about 17 rods to a stake and stones, supposed to be about one acre....meaning to convey all the land south and west of said lines that I own on the west side of the river," as shown in figure 17. (Merr 144/259, Feb. 15, 1858) A little over a year later, George Scribner sold this same piece of land back to Cyrus Gookin along with the half interest in the saw mill as shown in figure 17. (Merr. 154/354, Apr. 19, 1859)

In 1859, George Scribner sold to Thomas Whittaker the land he bought from David Gookin bound by the outlet, David Dunlap heirs' land, Cyrus Gookin's land and the river "meaning to convey all the land north of the outlet deeded from Cyrus Gookin to David C. Gookin, reserving all the privileges the same as in D.C. Gookin deed to me to pass and repass at all times for the purpose of repairing the mill dam south of said outlet on the river," as shown in figure 16. (Merr. 329/568, June 20, 1859) I believe that George Scribner built the house on this piece of land before selling it to Whittaker, although the deed does not mention any buildings.

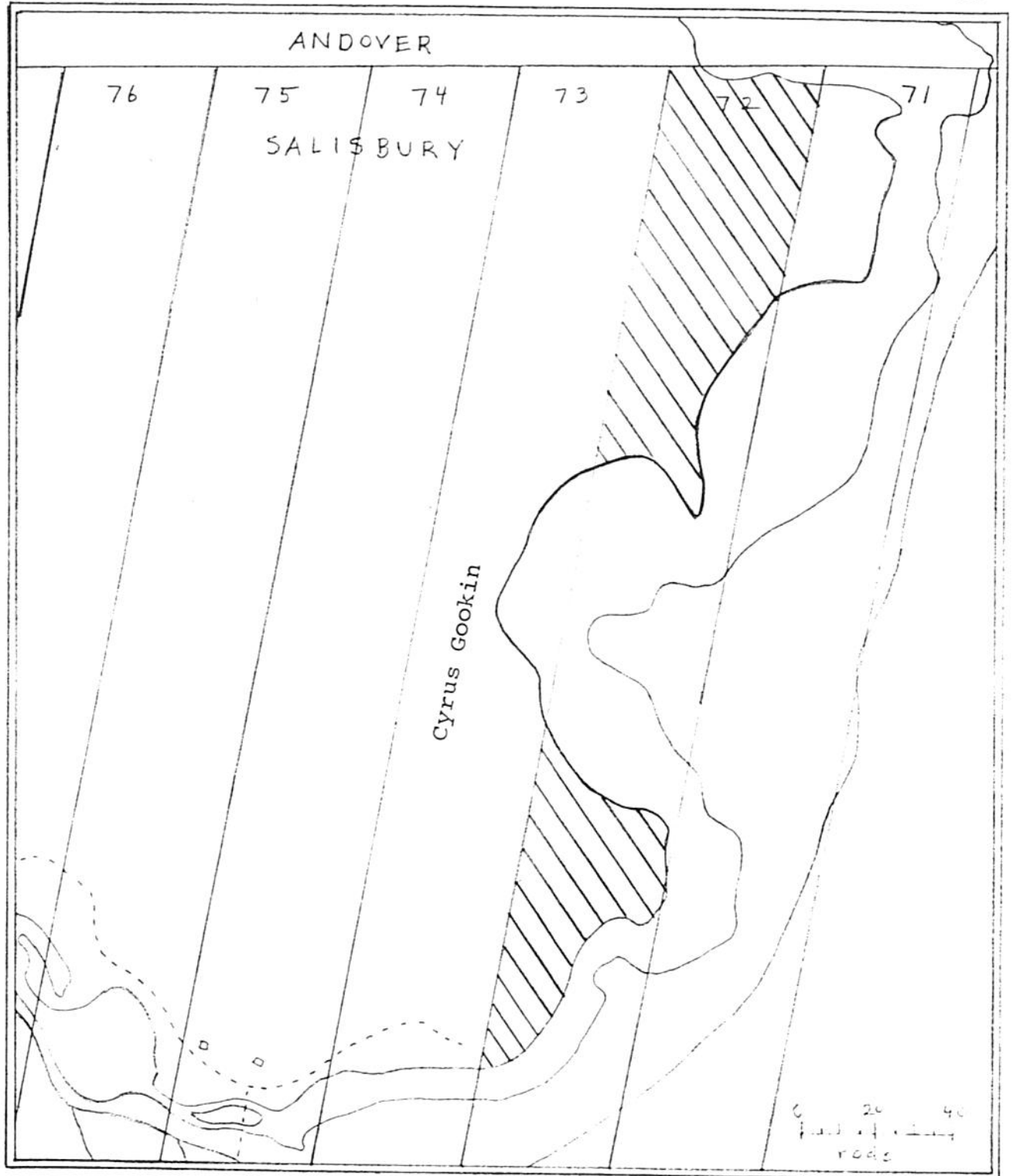


Figure 15:
Peter Fifield to Cyrus Gookin, 1848

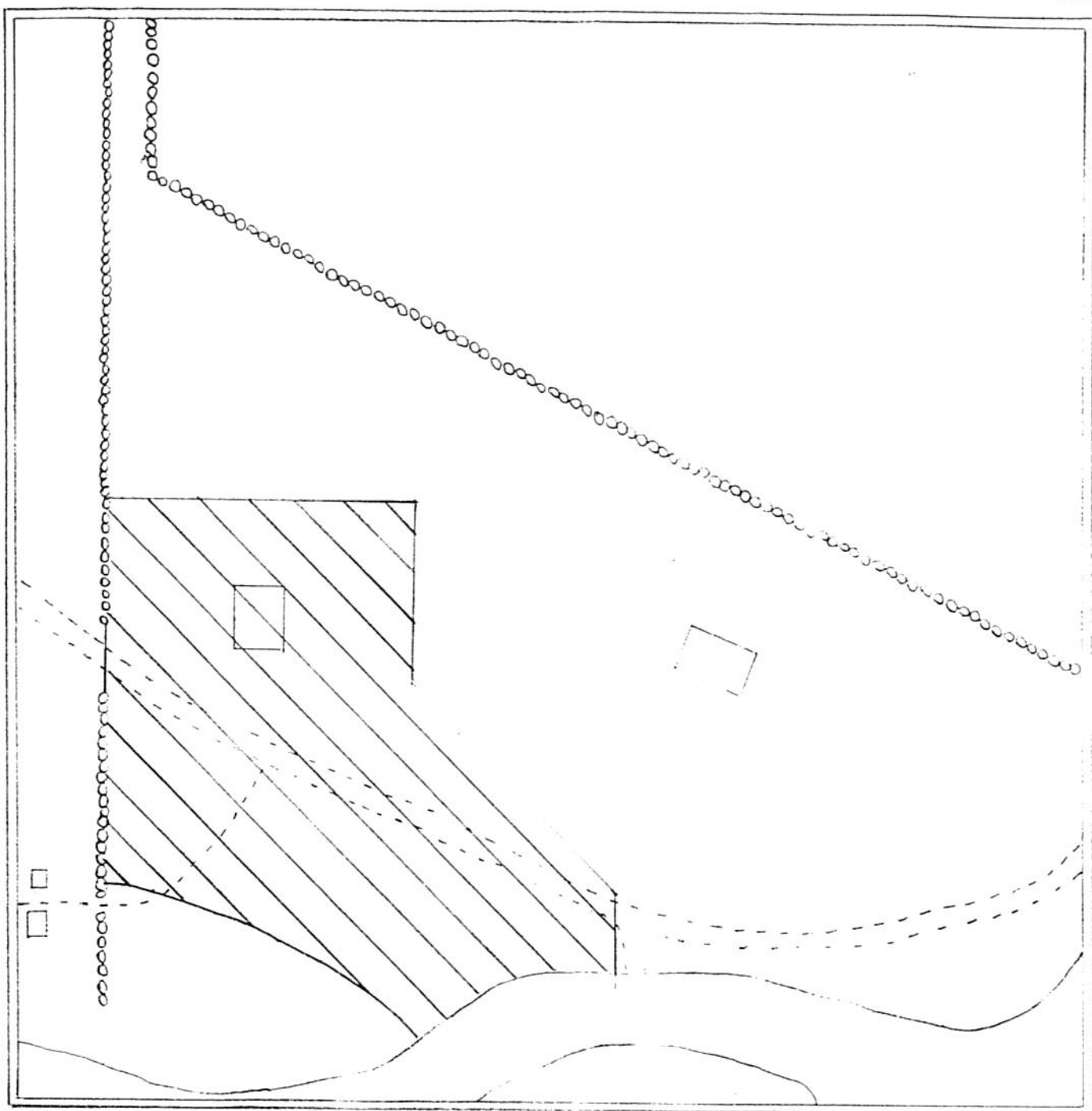


Figure 16:

David C. Gookin to George W. Scribner, 1858

George Scribner to Thomas Whittaker, 1859

Frank and Alma Baker and Olive Whittaker to Samuel A. Minard, 1899

Samuel Minard to Ulysses S. A. Minard, 1905

Ulysses and Mary Minard to Guy Gookin, 1909

Guy Gookin to Mary Shampney, 1937

Mary Shampney to William B. Dunlap, 1940

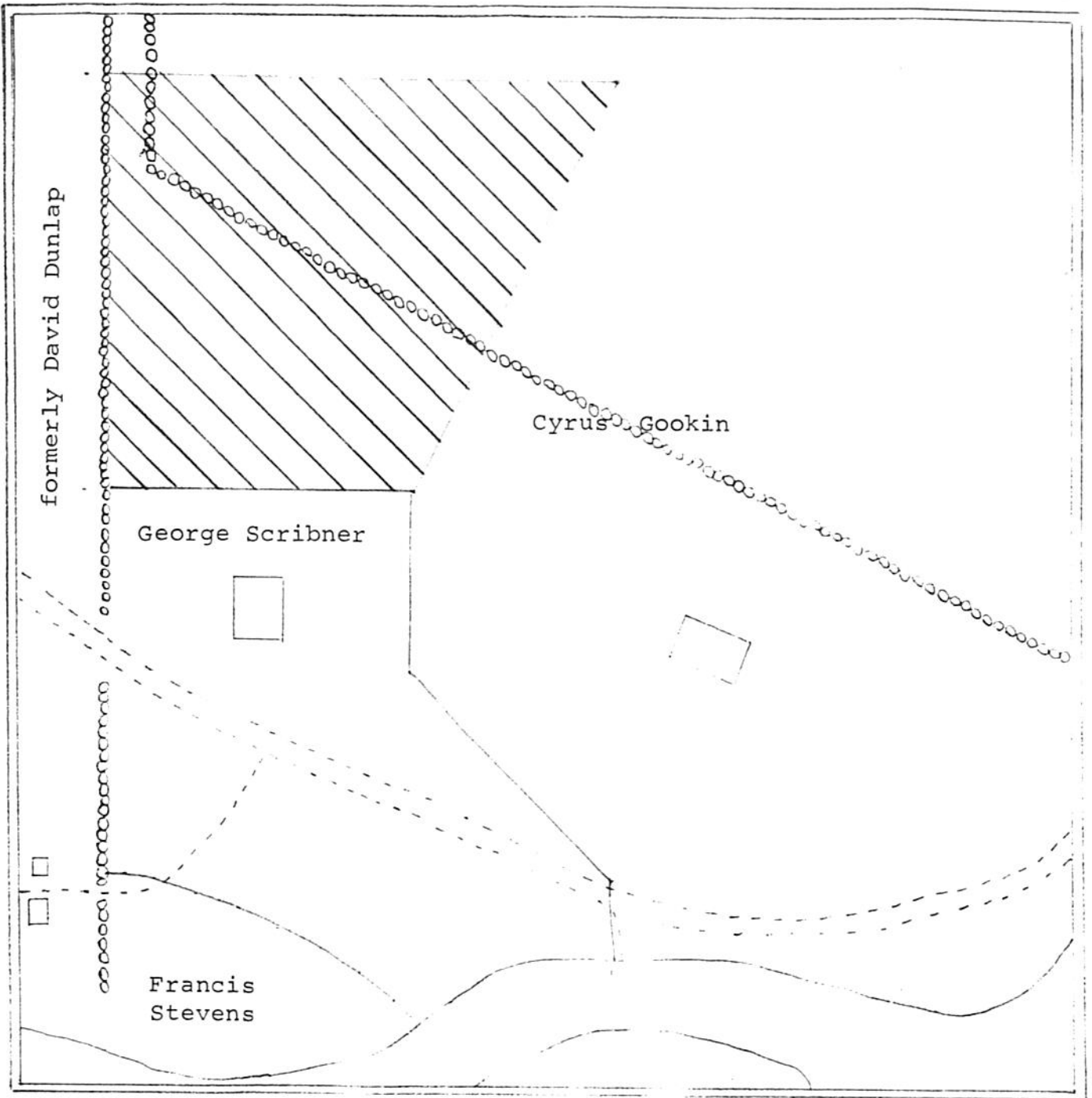


Figure 17:

Cyrus Gookin to George W. Scribner, 1858

George W. Scribner to Cyrus Gookin, 1859

Cyrus Gookin died in 1873, leaving no will, and still owning the property shown in figure 14 and other real estate. In 1877, Flora G. Shaw (Cyrus Gookin's daughter) and her husband Francis C. Shaw deeded to Martha C. Gookin (Cyrus' widow) and Myra Gookin (Cyrus' daughter) "all our right, interest and share in all the real and personal estate of which the late Cyrus Gookin of said Salisbury siezed and possessed wherever the same may be situated or however described." (Merr. 230/149, Feb. 19, 1877) In 1888, Hamilton Gookin (Cyrus' son and Guy's father) and his sister Myra deeded to Fred S. Sargent "all our right, interest and share in all the real estate of which the late Cyrus Gookin of said Salisbury siezed and possessed wherever the same may be situate or however described." (Merr. 280/489, Apr. 6, 1888) Fred Sargent was Cyrus' son-in-law as he was married to the former Georgianna Gookin. After the execution of these two deeds, all the real estate that Cyrus owned when he died is now owned by his son-in-law, Fred Sargent, his daughter, Georgie Sargent and his widow, Martha C. Gookin.

Thomas Whittaker died around 1899. That year Frank Baker, Alma Baker and Olive Whittaker (Thomas Whittaker's two daughters and his son-in-law) sold to Samuel A. Minard "a certain tract of land in Salisbury aforesaid bounded and described as follows: On the north and east by land of Fred Sargent, on the south by the Blackwater River and on the west by land of the estate of John Colby, deceased. Also all the interest of said Whittaker, deceased, in the blacksmith shop at West Salisbury," as shown in figure 16. (Merr. 328/391, Feb. 27, 1899)

In 1902, Fred and Georgie Sargent sold to Chester B. Pratt of Reading, Mass., two small pieces of land on the north side of the river. The first was described as "beginning at a white oak tree standing opposite gate to said lot of land leading to road across the river, thence westerly about 6 rods to a marked beech tree, thence northerly about 6 rods to a stake and stones which is 16 feet from stone wall, thence easterly about 6 rods to a marked beech tree, thence southerly to first mentioned bound, containing one fourth acre more or less. Also to convey right of way from said lot of land on the northerly side 16 feet wide, by wall leading to the river, also to use farm road leading from gate in said wall to road crossing Blackwater River. Parties occupying said lot of land to bear expenses of fencing same if he wishes it fenced," as shown in figure 18. (Merr. 346/567, June 17, 1902) And the second was described as "beginning at the southeast bound of land owned by Chester B. Pratt running easterly about 7 rods to a stone marked "P" beside the farm road of Fred Sargent, thence northerly about 7 rods to a stone marked "P" in end of wall, thence westerly by said wall about 14 rods to a stone marked "P" in wall, thence southerly 16 feet to a stake and stones which is the

northwest bound of land owned by Chester B. Pratt, thence easterly and southerly by said Pratt's land to first mentioned bound to contain one half acre more or less, with a gate right and privileges to use farm road leading to the road crossing the river bridges. Said wall on north side to constitute Fred S. Sargent half of fence," as shown in figure 19. (Merr. 351/34, Aug. 22, 1902) (Note: Martha C. Gookin, Cyrus' widow, never conveyed her interest in these two parcels.)

In 1905, Samuel Minard sold to Ulysses S. A. Minard land described the same as purchased from Thomas Whittaker's heirs, "also all the interest of said grantor in the blacksmith shop at West Salisbury," as shown in figure 16. (Merr 368/97, Nov. 7, 1905)

In 1909, Ulysses and Mary Minard sold to Guy Gookin land described the same as in the 1858 deed from David Gookin to George Scribner "reserving hen house, stove wood and manure now upon said premises," as shown in figure 16. (Merr. 391/268, Apr. 19, 1909)

In 1932, Fred and Georgie Sargent sold to their son-in-law, Herman E. Colby, land in Salisbury "on the north side of the Blackwater River....beginning at the Gookin Bridge running west by land of Guy Gookin until it strikes land owned by William Dunlap, then folling Dunlap land to Andover line, thence north to the Blackwater by said Andover line, thence along Blackwater River to high water mark to point of beginning," as shown in figure 20. (Merr. 523/421, Sept. 23, 1932) (Note: Martha C. Gookin, Cyrus' widow, never conveyed her interest in this land.)

In 1935, Herman E. Colby sold to William B. Dunlap the land he bought from Fred and Georgie Sargent described as "beginning at the first Gookin Bridge....subject to the rights and privileges of Chester B. Pratt and Guy Gookin, adjoining land owners," as shown in figure 20. (Merr. 544/267, June 6, 1935)

In 1937, Guy Gookin sold to Mary Shampney land described the same as in the 1858 deed from David Gookin to George Scribner "reserving the workshop, one hen house and bee houses now upon said premises," as shown in figure 16. (Merr. 581/349, March 29, 1937)

In 1940, Mary Shampney sold to William B. Dunlap this same piece of property as shown in figure 16. (Merr. 581/350, Nov. 13, 1940)

In 1942, Chester B. Pratt sold to his son Daniel C. "Charlie" Pratt the same two pieces of land he bought from Fred Sargent in two separate deeds as shown in figures 18 and 19. (Merr. 594/171, May 19, 1942, 598/188, Nov. 12, 1942, and 598/272, Dec. 7, 1942, executed in correction of 598/188)

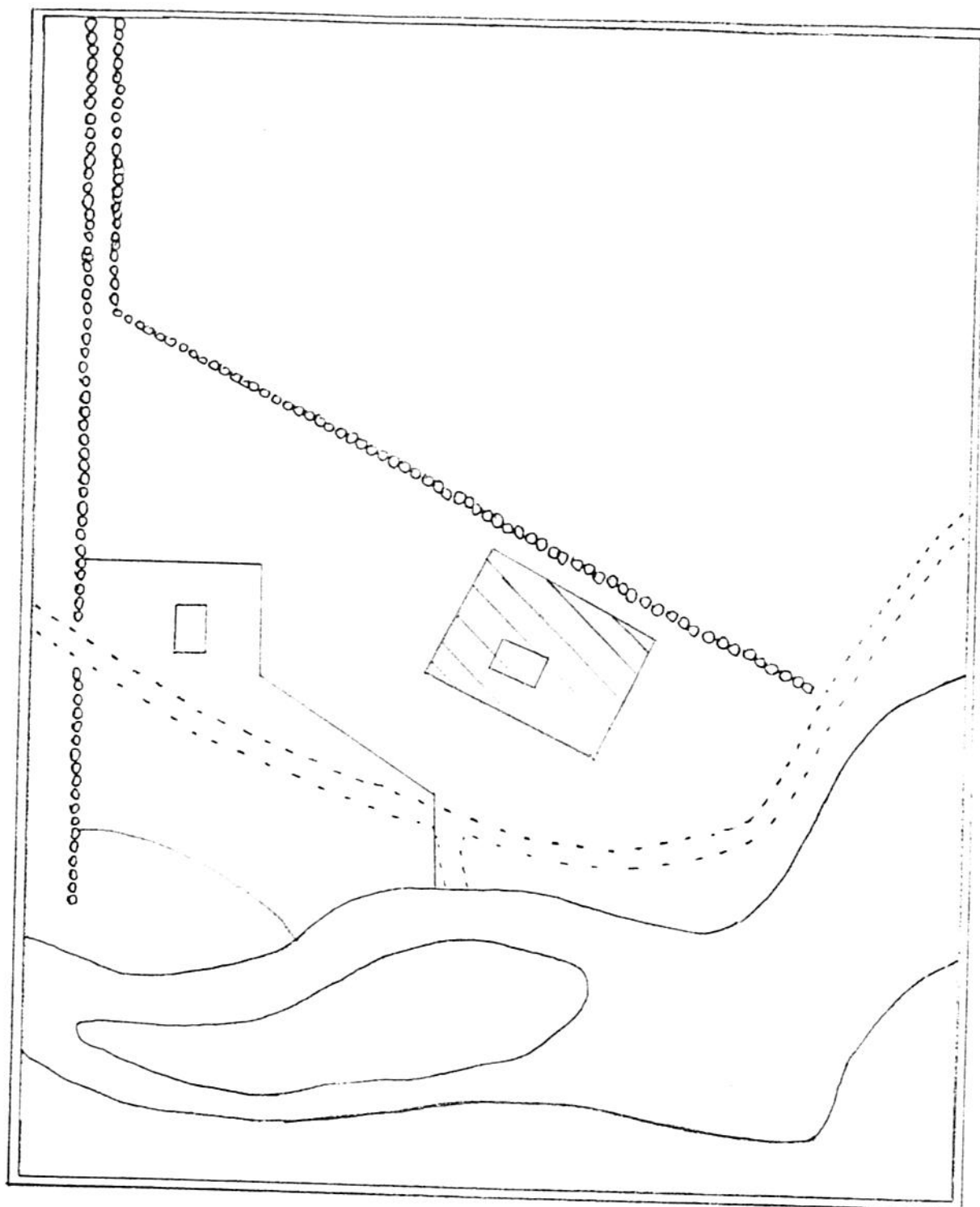


Figure 18:

Fred and Georgie Sargent to Chester B. Pratt, 1902

Chester B. Pratt to Daniel C. Pratt, 1942

Daniel C. Pratt to William and Eleanor Dorsey, 1984

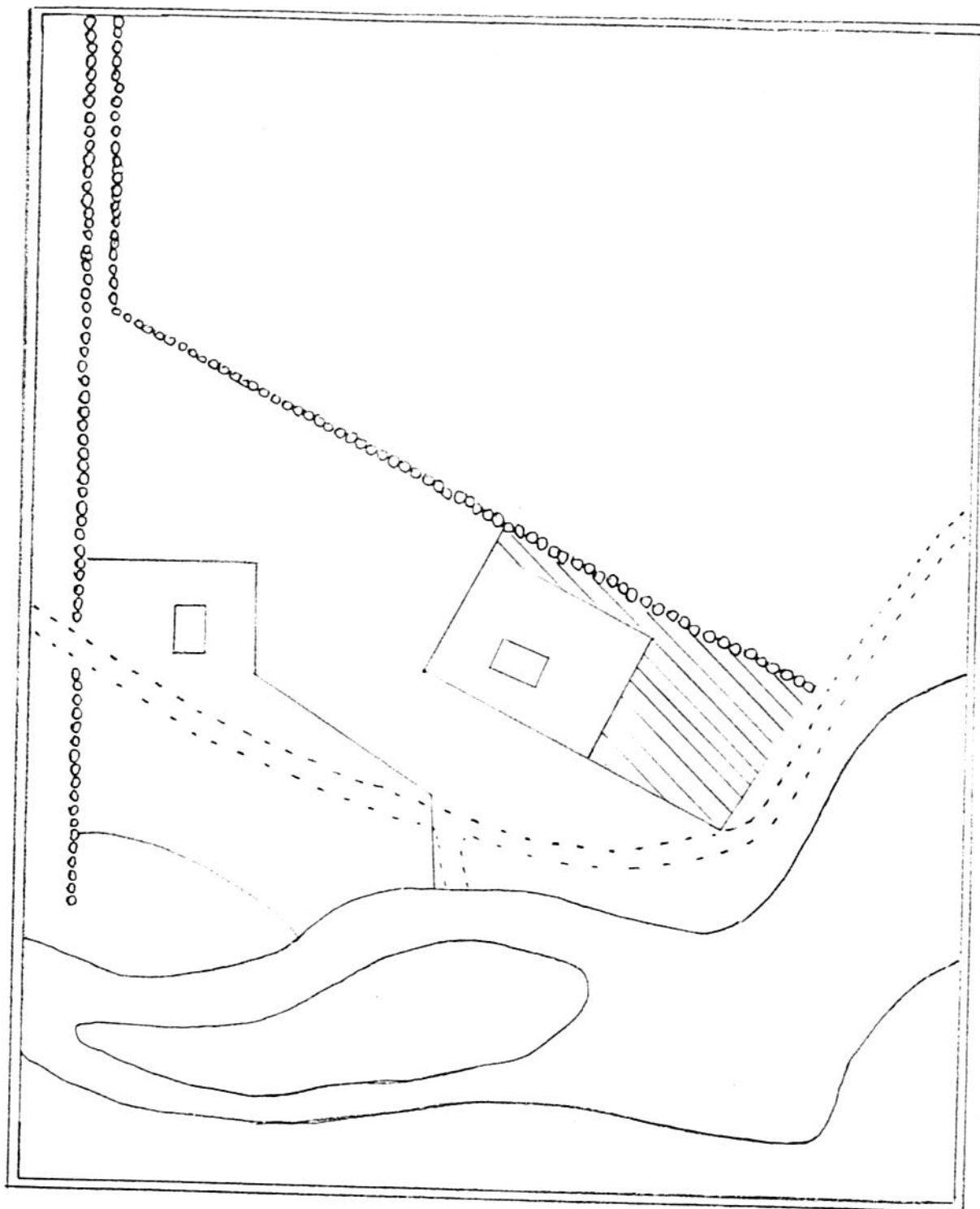


Figure 19:

Fred and Georgie Sargent to Chester B. Pratt, 1902

Chester B. Pratt to Daniel C Pratt, 1942

Daniel C. Pratt to William and Eleanor Dorsey, 1984

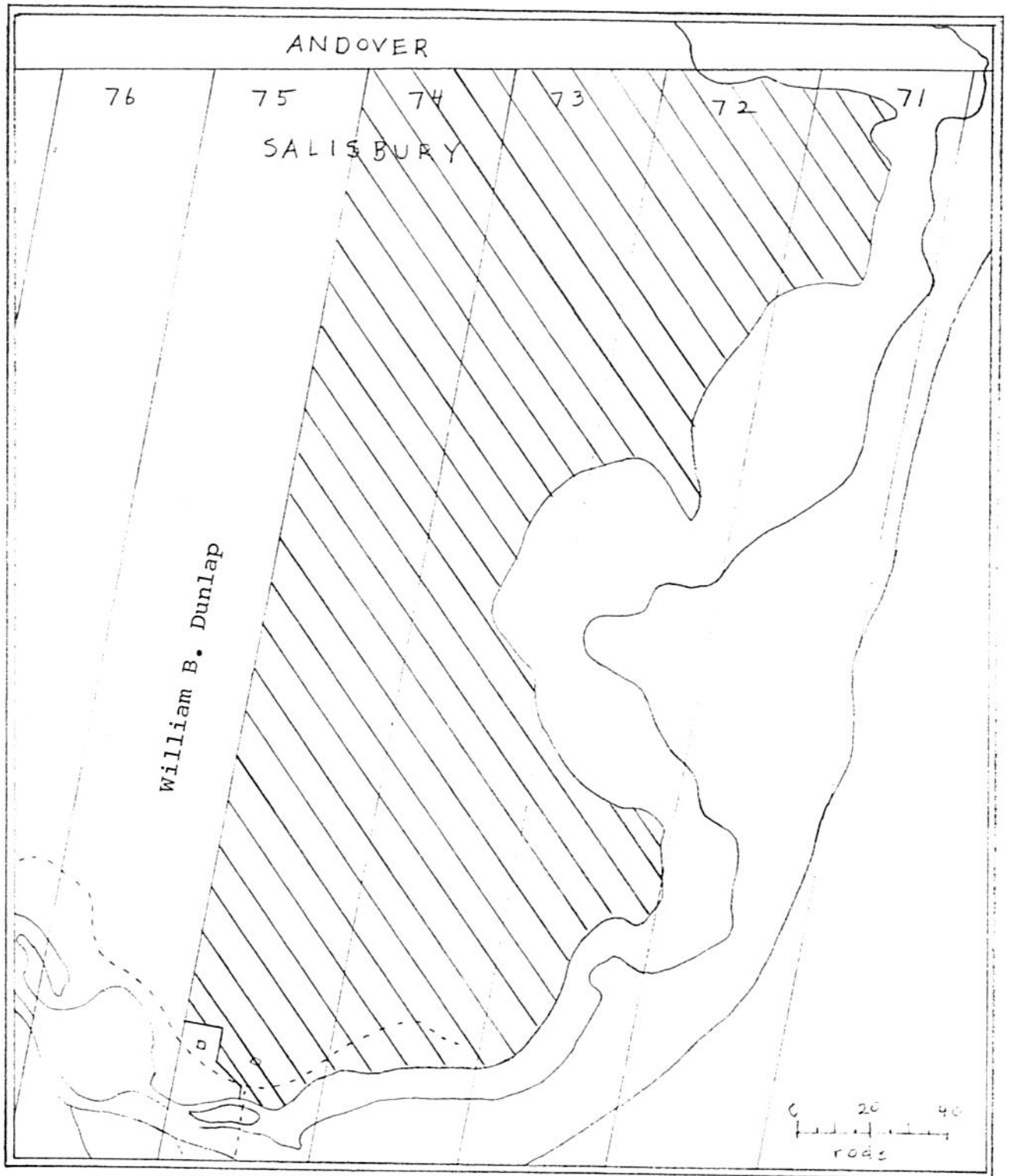


Figure 20:
Fred and Georgie Sargent to Herman E. Colby, 1932
Herman E. Colby to William B. Dunlap, 1935

In 1955, William B. Dunlap sold to William R. and Eleanor P. Dorsey the land he bought from Herman Colby in 1935 and the land, with buildings, that he bought from Mary Shampney in 1940 as shown in figure 21. (Merr. 770/331, June 6, 1955)

And the Dorseys lived happily ever after.

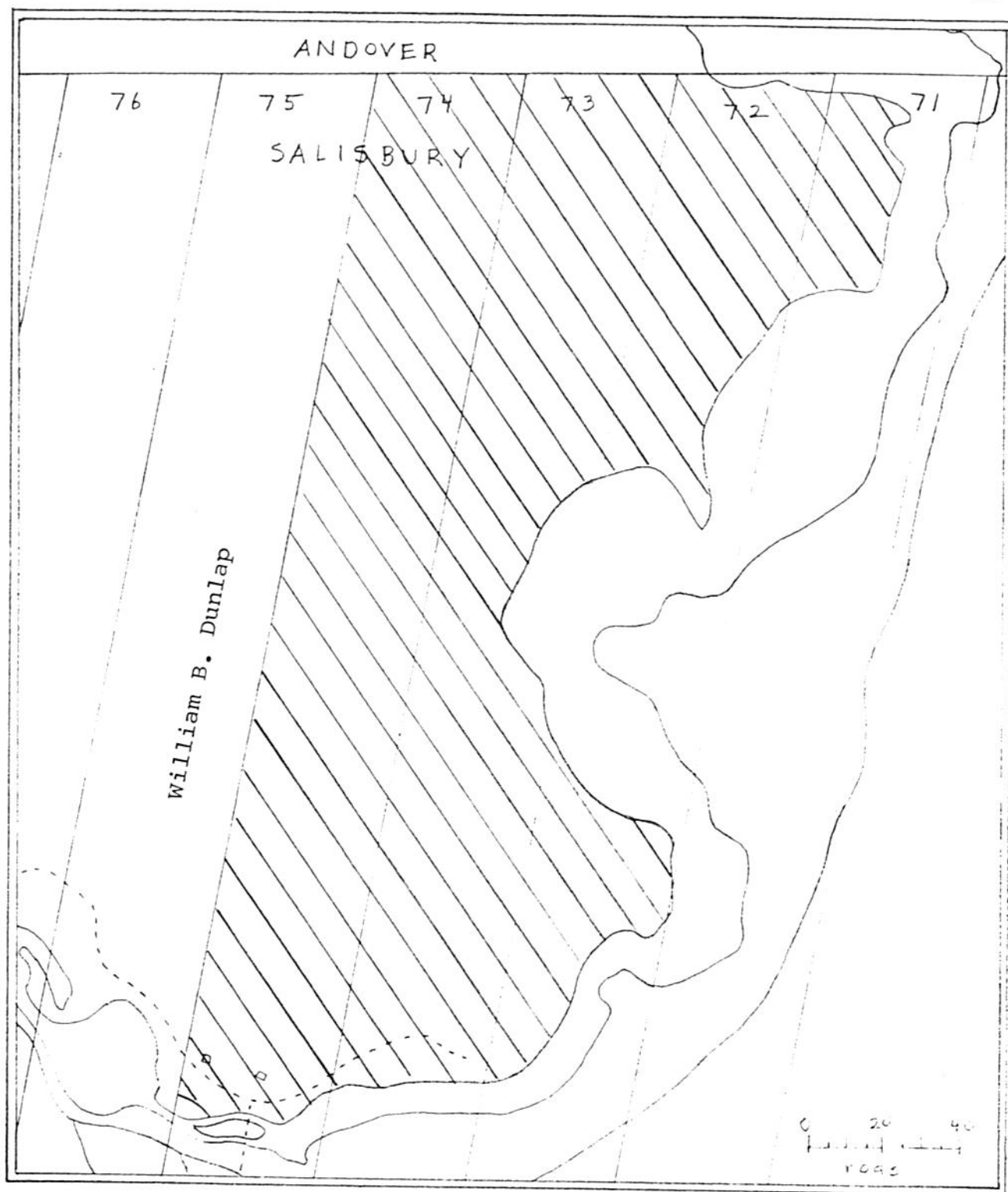


Figure 21:
William B. Dunlap to William and Eleanor Dorsey, 1955

Lot 71

The foregoing discussion of the land that the Dorseys bought from William Dunlap does not trace the title to that part of lot 71, north range, on the west side of the Blackwater River. It is possible that none of lot 71 was to the west of the river, but only appears to have been due to a mistake in my maps. I made the maps by tracing aerial photographs. The only lot line I am certain of the exact location of is the line between lots 74 and 75, because the stone wall which is now the boundary between Dorsey and Stearns, and which was built on this lot line, is visible in the photographs. These lots were approximately 40 rods wide, so, knowing the approximate scale of the photographs, I was able to roughly locate the other lot lines. Possibly enough errors may have been introduced in this process to mistakenly make it appear that part of lot 71 was to the west of the river. Possibly, but I don't think it very likely.

At any rate, lot 71 was originally granted to David Greely. In 1773, David Grele sold lot 71 to Richard Grele. (Hills. 11/273, Oct. 25, 1773) In 1803, Richard Greely sold the southern half of lot 71 to Humphrey Webster. (Hills. 70/233) In 1814, Richard Greeley sold to John Sanborn "the north end of lot 71 in the 4th range....beginning at the north end of the lot and running south carrying the whole width of said lot til it comes to that part of said lot which I sold to Humphrey Webster, excepting a right to flow a certain part of said land according to a lease which I gave James Currier, he retaining said right agreeably to the tenor and effect of said lease." (Merr. 13/247, Oct. 24, 1814)

I was unable to find a record of any subsequent conveyance of any part of lot 71 to the west of the river. It is possible that John Sanborn or other owners were unaware that part of lot 71 was on the other side of the river from the main part. Or if they were aware, they might well have considered the part to the west of the river worthless, because it was small, marshy and pretty inaccessible.

To approach the question from the present and heading back in time, the Dorsey title to this part of lot 71 is derived from William Dunlap. Dunlap got it from Herman Colby. Colby got it from Fred Sargent. Sargent bought all of Cyrus Gookin's real estate. But this part of lot 71 was never conveyed to any of the Gookins, according to recorded deeds.

The question is of academic interest only. The chance that someone would ever appear and make a supportable claim to this part of lot 71 based on ancient titles is infinitesimal.

The House and its Inhabitants

The house poses many questions. When was it built? By whom? Who lived here? What were they like and what did they do? What was life like long ago in West Salisbury?

The architectural style and construction methods suggest that the house was built around the middle 1800s. The small piece of land on which the house sits was first subdivided from the larger piece and conveyed separately by a deed from Cyrus Gookin to David C. Gookin dated November 16, 1843, but the deeds for this small piece do not mention any buildings until the 1909 deed from Ulysses and Mary Minard to Guy Gookin. The map of Merrimack County published in 1892, which shows most houses, does not show this one. These omissions from the deeds and the map must be oversights or mistakes.

The house is shown in the 1858 county map, and the name next to it is G. W. Scribner. George W. Scribner bought the piece of land the house is on from David Gookin in 1858, and Scribner sold the land to Thomas H. Whittaker in 1859. Scribner bought the land for \$25 and sold it for \$400, which strongly suggests he built the house, for it is highly unlikely that anything else could have caused the value of this land to increase so much in one year. He may have lived in the house briefly, or he may have just built it to sell it. He was listed as a farmer in the 1850 census, as were most men. According to the geneology section of the Salisbury town history, he was born in 1824, married Betsey Fellows in 1851 and later moved to Wisconsin. He briefly owned a part interest in Cyrus Gookin's sawmill in 1858 and 1859.

Thomas Whittaker apparently lived in the house from when he bought it from George Scribner in 1859 until his death around 1899. According to the town history, he was born in 1827 and "remains on the homestead, following the occupation of his father, that of a shoemaker, with shop adjoining the store of William B. Dunlap. He was chosen town clerk in 1868, holding the office for five successive years, and was also elected selectman, continuing until his resignation in 1881-2." He mortgaged the house at least twice. He apparently owned an interest in the blacksmith shop at West Salisbury. He was listed as a shoemaker in the censuses of 1850 and 1880 and a miller in 1870 and 1870.

From 1899 to 1909, the house was owned first by Samuel A. Minard and later by his son, Ulysses S. A. Minard. They also owned an interest in the blacksmith shop. Various Minards were listed as carriage manufacturers and carriage painters in the censuses of 1870 and 1880.

Guy Gookin (1869-1950) owned the house from 1909 to 1937. He did not live in it during the latter part of this period; he lived in the house he inherited from his father, Hamilton Gookin, on the other side of the river. However, he might have lived in it before his father died in 1924. Guy had a workshop and kept bees and chickens nearby, using the house to store chicken feed and make home brew. He probably planted the small apple orchard. He could typically be found lying in his yard at ten in the morning in an unconscious alcoholic stupor.

Mary Shampney owned the house from 1937 to 1940. Her husband, Will, worked as a farm laborer for William B. Dunlap. He tore the ell of the house that used to extend toward Mt. Kearsarge, and he installed the narrow-strip vertical wainscoating in the living room and kitchen, reducing the size of the kitchen in the process. The Shampneys found access to the house difficult, because the bridges washed out in the 1936 flood. They tried to purchase a right of way from Dunlap, but he refused to sell, so they ended up selling him the house in 1940. He already owned most of the land surrounding the house, hundreds of acres in all.

William Dunlap owned the house from 1940 to 1955, when he sold it to the Dorseys with about 180 acres of land. He never lived in it, but perhaps he used it to house farmworkers. He used the surrounding land to pasture livestock and harvest timber.

The Bridges

At the lower end of the Bay on the north bank of the Blackwater River in West Salisbury stands a bridge abutment, or foundation, constructed of massive granite blocks. This section is titled "The Bridges" (plural) because the abutment is opposite an island in the river, so there would have been two bridges, one on either side of the island, to give passage across the river. Photographs from the early part of this century, indeed, show two bridges at this site. Who built these bridges? When? Was there ever a public right of way across the river here? Is there still? Some of these questions can be answered, at least in part, by examining public records.

The bridges are not shown in the maps of Merrimack County published in 1858 and 1892. The only clue to be found in the Salisbury town history published in 1890 is: "James Currier early erected a grist mill on Blackwater river opposite the John Shaw mill, the canal being in front of Thomas Whittaker's. A plank walk was built across the river to give access to the mill." (page 340) James Currier purchased the land at the site of the bridges and the John Shaw mill in 1794, but his deed strongly suggests that a mill was already there. Currier sold this land in 1807. It is impossible to determine if the "plank walk" mentioned in the town history was built at the exact site of the present abutment.

The earliest reference I could find that places a bridge on this exact site is in a deed from Cyrus Gookin to David C. Gookin dated November 16, 1843. This deed included a piece of land, on which the Dorsey house now sits, described as "also one other tract of land lying on the westerly side of the river beginning on the bank of the river at a stake and stones one rod west from the abutment of the bridge above the mill...."

The next reference is in a deed from Fred and Georgie Sargent to Hamilton Gookin dated April 7, 1888. This deed is the earliest deed to the Guy Gookin house and land and it reserves "the right of way leading from the homestead barn to the farm across the river." Fred Sargent lived on the south side of the river, near Bud Prince's sawmill, but he owned farm land, most of the present Dorsey land, on the north of the river, which was made accessible by the bridges.

If you stand near the Guy Gookin house and try to determine exactly where the road across the bridges would have run, you will see that it would have run through part of the house! The little shed on the end of the house is standing on the old roadway and must have been added on after the bridges were washed away and the road no longer used.

The New Hampshire Highway Department right of way source records contain the following extract from Book 5, Page 469, of the original Salisbury town records:

"May 10, 1895. Petition of Thomas H. Whittaker to the Selectmen of Salisbury, that he is deprived of all means of reaching a public road from his residence, therefore he requests, begs and implores that you will lay out build and construct a highway commencing at the highway 100 feet easterly of the house of Hamilton Gookin thence running northerly and westerly on land of Hamilton Gookin and land of Fred S. Sargent to land of Thomas H. Whittaker.

"July 29, 1895. Agreement, between the town of Salisbury, by its Selectmen, and Thomas H. Whittaker of said Salisbury. -

"That whereas said Whittaker has filed a petition for a highway in said Salisbury across the Blackwater River and said Selectmen have declined to lay out said highway and said Whittaker has the right of appeal from said decision, and both parties are desirous of saving the expenses incident to an appeal which might be more than the expense of said highway, - it is therefore agreed that in consideration that said Whittaker and the petitioners for said highway, will take no appeal from said decision of said selectmen not to lay out said highway, said Selectmen in behalf of said town agree to pay the sum of \$75.00 toward the construction of a bridge across said Blackwater River, where desired by said Whittaker and said petitioners, and to furnish the plank for said bridge; Said plank to be furnished and said money paid upon the demand of said Whittaker at the completion of said Bridge which is now in process of construction under this agreement, - and said Whittaker in consideration aforesaid agrees to complete said highway and and bridge with out further expense to the town. It is further understood and agreed, that the payment made by the said town as aforesaid is in the nature of a compromise settlement to save expense and is not intended to be an admission by said town that there is a public necessity for said highway, or to be construed in any way as a laying out of a public highway."

Chester B. Pratt bought two small pieces of land from Fred Sargent in 1902. One is described as "Beginning at a white oak tree standing opposite gate to said lot of land leading to road across the river.....," and includes the right "to use farm road leading from gate in said wall to road crossing Blackwater River." The other piece included the "privalege to use farm road leading to the road crossing the river bridges." To further ensure his access, Pratt purchased a right of way from Hamilton Gookin in 1916, the deed stating in part, "I, Hamilton Gookin... for....the sum of twenty five dollars; said money to be used for the building of the large bridge ove the Blackwater river...

do hereby....convey unto the said Chester B. Pratt....a certain right of way on and over my road leading from the town line of the Bay road, so called to the line of Fred S. Sargent's land wherever that may be." (Merrimack County Deed 561/608, July 22, 1916)

In 1932, Fred and Georgie Sargent sold Herman E. Colby a piece of land, most of the present Dorsey land, described as "beginning at the Gookin Bridge...." The same land was described in a 1935 deed from Herman E. Colby to William B. Dunlap as "beginning at the first Gookin Bridge...." and in a 1955 deed from William B. Dunlap to William and Eleanor Dorsey as "Beginning at the Gookin abutment...."

According to Charlie Pratt and others, the bridges were washed out in the great flood of 1936 which struck a large area of New Hampshire. This flood and flooding caused by the hurricane of 1938 gave impetus to the United States Army Corps of Engineers to construct the flood control dam on the Blackwater River in Webster in the early 1940s and in other locations around the state. Charlie says that after the bridges were washed away in 1936, several attempts were made to construct small suspension foot bridges, but these were soon abandoned.

Mills in West Salisbury, NH

While researching the ownership history of my family's property in West Salisbury, NH, I came across many references to water-powered mills. These references are listed here in chronological order for the benefit of others who might be interested. The mills referred to were located beside the rapids just upstream from the swimming hole known as "Little Bay." I believe that there were other mills located just downstream from the Little Bay and near the "Pingree" Bridge leading to Mountain Road, but these mills are not included here. Sources consulted are: New Hampshire Provincial Deeds, State Archives, Concord; Hillsborough County Registry of Deeds, Nashua; Merrimack County Registry of Deeds, Concord; United States Census records, State Archives and State Library, Concord; Maps of Merrimack County published in 1858 and 1892; and "The History of Salisbury New Hampshire", John J. Dearborn, 1890.

The location of these mills is in the 80 acre lot # 74 in the fourth or north range of lots as originally laid out in Salisbury. Lot # 74 was originally granted to James Toppan (or Tappin).

In 1753, James Tappin of Kingstown sold to John Webster of Kingstown "the right or share that is mine original" in Major Stevens Town (Salisbury). (NH Provincial deed 44/422, Feb. 1, 1753)

In 1794, John Webster of Salisbury sold to James Currier of Salisbury two 80 acre lots in the fourth range, # 73 and # 74, "and also the mills and privileges of mills exclusive of those granted to certain persons by a certain bond to them given may appear which bond was given by my honored father John Webster." (Hillsborough County Deed 38/329, May 27, 1794) I have been unable to determine the nature of the bond referred to in this deed.

"James Currier early erected a gristmill on Blackwater River opposite the John Shaw Mill, the canal being in front of Thomas Whittaker's." (Town History, p. 340)

In 1807, James Currier sold to Gideon Currier "the greater part of the eighty acre lot No. seventy four....Also eleven twelfths of a sawmill standing on the aforementioned lot which is all I the said James Currier own in said mills. Also a privilege of lying boards and logs etc. and all the privileges and appurtenances belonging to said mill that I am now the owner of." (Hills.

In 1810, James Currier and James Currier, Jr., sold to Samuel Dunlap, Jr., "all our right, title, claim and interest to the gristmill in Salisbury aforesaid on Blackwater River on the west lot (i.e. lot 74) which James Currier purchased of John Webster together with one half the mill dam which saves the saw mill as well as the grist mill aforesaid." (Hills. 88/145, Oct. 8, 1810)

In 1813, James Currier sold to Samuel Dunlap, Jr., "part of the eighty acre lot No. seventy four in the fourth range....to contain one hundred and fifty three rods of land (on which a sawmill and gristmill now stands) with all the privileges thereon excluding all those I have heretofore conveyed by deeds." (Hills. 96/297, Feb. 6, 1813)

"Samuel Dunlap, Jr., purchased the Deacon Amos Pettengill saw mill and built a small gristmill on the site of the John Shaw mill, making extensive repairs on the dam." (Town history, pp. 340, 543)

In 1813 and 1816, Gideon Currier sold to Amos Pettengill "the sawmill standing upon Blackwater River in Salisbury upon lot # 74. Also the privilege of laying boards, logs and other lumber adjacent to said mill, and all the privileges and appurtenances belonging to said mill which I now own." (Hills. 98/504, May 20, 1813 and Hills. 109/613, Apr. 2, 1816)

In 1816, Gideon Currier quitclaimed to Amos Pettengill about one quarter acre "beginning on the side line of John Dunlap's land on the northerly side of Blackwater River at low water mark near the saw mill now in my occupancy...." (Hills. 109/614, Apr. 5, 1816) It is unclear from most of the deed descriptions which side of the river the mill conveyed is on. This is the only description I have seen that places a mill specifically on the north (or west) side of the river.

"Amos (Deacon) before his marriage bought the old Currier mill privilege,...and with unusual foresight purchased all the land about the "Bays," as far up as the C.J. White farm in Andover.* By this means he controlled all the flowage. He soon erected a mill and later built the sawmill on the site of the Gookin sawmill, just previous to the August freshet of 1826." (Town History, p. 698)

In 1834, Amos Pettengill sold to Pelatiah, David and Cyrus Gookin "the greater part of lot numbered 74....Also the sawmill standing upon Blackwater River....standing upon the lot numbered 74....Also the privilege of laying boards, logs and other lumber adjacent to the saw mill...." (Merr. 37/217, May 8, 1834)

In 1834, Samuel Dunlap sold to Pelatiah, David and Cyrus Gookin "a parcel of land in Salisbury with buildings on Blackwater River called Lower Mills embracing the grist mill and mill privileges, the same formerly owned by James Currier and James Currier,

Jr., - all the land, mill stones and mill privileges conveyed to me by James Currier and James Currier, Jr., containing 9 by 17 rods of land....meaning to convey....all the lands, buildings and mills I own in Salisbury on which I now live called Dunlap's Lower Mills." (Merr. 37/216, May 10, 1834)

"Samuel Dunlap, Jr., purchased the Deacon Amos Pettengill saw mill and built a small grist mill on the site of the John Shaw mill. In May, 1834, he sold the property to D.C. & Cyrus Gookin, who removed the old mill and erected the present convenient flour mills. For many years it received patronage from the neighboring towns.... David Carter (Gookin) by occupation a cloth manufacturer and millerIn May, 1833, he removed to Salisbury, (although still owning a mill in Webster, with his brother Cyrus) bought out the Dunlap mill, and with Cyrus built the present John Shaw mill, which was completed in the following November. They industriously prosecuted the flouring, grist, and saw mills for many years. The flour had a wide reputation, not only for the good quality of flour made but for the small waste and large capacity for grinding." (Town History, pp. 340, 599)

There is no record of the disposition of Pelatiah Gookin's interest in these mills, but in 1843, David and Cyrus Gookin split the mills up between each other. Cyrus sold to David "all my right, title and interest in the gristmill and privileges." (Merr. 73/344, Nov. 16, 1843) And David sold to Cyrus "all my right, title and interest in the....sawmills and privileges....The sawmill is to have the same privilege of laying lumber as described in deed from Pettengill to Gookin and shall have all the privileges as now situated excepting two feet from the gristmill on the north and east side and shall support its own floom and one fourth part of the dam at all times and shall draw water at all times when the water is sufficient to carry both mills and have the dam full to the top within six inches." (Merr. 198/470, Nov. 16, 1843)

The 1850 census listed David Gookin's occupation as miller and Cyrus' as farmer.

The 1858 map of Merrimack County shows a saw and grist mill on the south side of the river just upstream from the Little Bay.

In 1858, Cyrus Gookin sold to George Scribner "the one half of the sawmill and privileges situated in Salisbury with the tools and millyard belonging to same. Also the one fourth of the shingle and clapboard mill belonging to me." (Merr. 144/259, Feb. 15, 1858)

In 1858, David Gookin sold to Francis Stevens "my grist mill and one half of the shingle and clapboard mill and all the tools and privileges belonging to the same....Also one other piece of land on the west side of the river." (Merr. 144/439, Apr. 1, 1858) The land on the west side of the river was located at the north end of the dam.

"Francis Stevens bought out the Gookins in 1858."
(Town History, p. 340)

In 1859, George Scribner sold back to Cyrus Gookin the half interest in the saw mill and the quarter interest in the shingle and clapboard mill that he had purchased from Gookin the year before. (Merr. 154/354, Apr. 19, 1859)

The 1860 census listed Cryus Gookin's occupation as farmer, and Hamilton Gookin (Cyrus' son) and Thomas Whittaker were millers. Cyrus Gookin had a water powered saw mill and shingle mill which sawed 150,000 board feet of logs the previous year.

In 1863, Francis Stevens sold to Hamilton Gookin "the one undivided half of the shingle and clapboard machine formerly owned in common by David C. Gookin and Cyrus Gookin and deeded to me by David C. Gookin." (Merr. 197/466, Apr. 2, 1863)

The 1870 census listed the following people with their occupations: Francis Stevens (miller), Hamilton Gookin ("works in clapboard mill"), James Shaw (miller), Thomas Whittaker ("works in saw mill") and Cyrus Gookin ("saw mill business"). The Stevens and Shaw grist mill was water powered, drawing 68 horsepower. It had one employee, ground 12,000 bushels and produced 240 barrels of flour and 6,300 bags of meal. Cyrus Gookin's saw mill drew 50 horsepower, employed four, sawed 150,000 board feet of logs and was equipped with a gang saw, a shingle mill, a clapboard mill, a planer and a threshing mill.

In 1872, Francis Stevens sold to James and John Shaw "my gristmill and privileges." (Merr. 216/547, Apr. 1, 1872) John and James were brothers. James died in 1873. His share of the grist mill was inherited by his widow, Frances Shaw, who sold it to his father, Sanborn Shaw, in 1874, describing it as the "undivided half of the Gookin grist mill....bounded northerly by the Gookin saw mill, easterly by said saw mill yard." (Merr. 219/101, March 31, 1874) And on the same day, Sanborn Shaw sold to his son, John Shaw, "an undivided half of a gristmill situated in Salisbury," bringing the whole mill into John Shaw's ownership. (Merr. 216/550, March 31, 1874)

"Francis Stevens....run the works until 1867, when James Shaw went into partnership with him. In 1872, John Shaw bought Stevens's interest. The Shaw Brothers continued it until the death of James, in 1873. Since that time it has been run by John Shaw." (Town History, p. 340)

Cyrus Gookin died in 1873, still owning an interest in the saw mill.

The 1880 census listed John Shaw's occupation as miller and said of Hamilton Gookin, "works in saw mill."

In two deeds, the heirs of Cyrus Gookin transferred ownership of his real estate, including the saw mill, to Fred Sargent. (Merr. 230/149, Feb. 19, 1877 and 280/489, Apr. 6, 1888)

In 1888, Fred Sargent and Georgie Sargent (Fred's wife and Cyrus Gookin's daughter) and Martha Gookin (Cyrus' widow) sold to Hamilton Gookin "a certain piece of land with saw mill thereon situated in Salisbury....Meaning to convey the saw mill machinery and privileges belonging thereto." (Merr. 280/416, Apr. 7, 1888) Four days later, Hamilton Gookin sold back to Fred Sargent this same piece of land with the saw mill "also including the water wheels, shaftings, giers and drums in said mill." (Merr. 288/274, Apr. 11, 1888) And on the same day, Fred Sargent sold this same property with the saw mill to John Shaw. (Merr. 282/229, Apr. 11, 1888) This saw mill property is described in all three deeds as surrounding the grist mill on three sides.

"Hamilton (Gookin) is a wheelwright by trade, and runs the sawmill." (Town History, p. 600) This is the last reference I have found to the saw mill. I don't know how long it continued to operate or what finally became of it.

"John (Shaw) left the farm and engaged in milling, at the old "Gookin mills," where by attention to business and keeping alive to the times he has gained a good reputation throughout the surrounding towns. It is said "He can grind more flour, and of a finer quality with a given amount of wheat, than any flour mill in the state." He certainly does a large business, and our citizens have confidence in his ability and integrity." (Town History, p. 785)

The 1892 map of Merrimack County shows a grist mill on the south side of the river just upstream from the Little Bay.

John Shaw sold the gristmill to his son, Lewis, in two deeds. (Merr. 422/61, Aug. 8, 1914, and 451/282, Jan. 6, 1921)

According to Paul Shaw, son of Lewis Shaw, the gristmill operated until about 1918. The building which had housed the mill collapsed around 1935.

In 1963, Lewis Shaw sold to his son, Paul Shaw, the property on which the gristmill had been and "also all rights of dam construction and flowage rights as conveyed by early owners." (Merr. 947/475, March 21, 1963)

Today (1989) the gristmill foundation remains. Broken remnants of the mill machinery, including mill stones and turbine, may be seen. Wooden dam timbers embedded in the river bed near either bank have been preserved by constant immersion.

The Old Mill

The old mill was built in 1834 by Cyrus Gookin, an energetic businessman of that period, hence the name of this quaint New England village, for a time: Gookin's Mills.

The frame is of massive beams, every one of which was hewed by hand with a broad axe, and very nice work it was. They have now turned a rich brown color from age. The trees from which these timbers were hewed were the finest old growth, regular monarchs of the forest. None such exist here today.

The hinges on the door were nicely forged by a local blacksmith, who must have been an artist in his line. The whole structure is broad and square, a veritable model of solidarity. The Old Mill in Concord (Mass.) town immortalized by Thoreau and noted for its cobwebs does not surpass ours in any respect.

When I first became acquainted with this old mill thirty years ago, John was the miller. He kept it spick and span as milady's kitchen and had a reputation for grinding the finest meal for miles around.

I can remember John just as he looked that first morning, thirty years ago, sitting at the door looking out on a world of sunshine, while the rumble of the stones denoted that somebody had come to the mill. I can hear his hearty "Good morning, gentlemen. Come right in. Well! Want to go coonin' do you?" (For John was a famous coon hunter and had a dog surpassed by none in New England.) "Well, I will go Wednesday night or send someone with the old dog." And he did, but that hunt is another story. Then he showed us over the old mill.

"In the old days," said he, "They used to grind wheat and corn, and there would be a string of teams from here to the lane, waiting their turn. Then they ran the mill all day and into the night. Now we grind corn only, but that keeps us pretty busy."

The small stone on the left was for wheat, and that odd shaped structure was the bolter. The large stone in the center was for corn and is made of lava. A number of times since then I have seen this stone lifted out and dressed, and as John said, it is an odd looking specimen, but as fine a stone as ever ground grist. The stone on the right, a smaller one, was also for corn and oats. Upstairs were great bins of oats and yellow corn. In the winter time the bluejays, becoming hungry, would dash through the glass to get at the corn, and some of them paid dearly for their lack of temerity.

Many a day afterwards did I go down there to listen to John's stories of fox and coon hunting. Later on John's son, Lewis, was the miller. Then we used to have great times in the old mill.

The ten pin alley in the attic was a great rendezvous on stormy days, and many a hard fought match was rolled here. The croquet balls would go rolling down over those hemlock boards, bumpity bump, and strikes were scarce. The balls were light and would bounce off the pins frequently, but they served our purpose. I spy, too, was a great game around the mill. Out of the back door, into the cellar, through a hole in the wall, and so on by devious ways, all through the old structure.

But the mouse hunts! Those were exciting times and generally occurred on rainy days when business was dull otherwise. The place was alive with them, and we would take our .22 rifles and see who could bag the most. If we got one on the run, it was almost as exciting as deer hunting. One of us would shake up a pile of meal bags, and out would go a regular stream of mice. Then there would be a fusilade of shots, and we would go and pick up the pieces. Spectators were kept well in the background on these occasions, and no one was ever wounded that I remember of.

From the upper windows we could look down into the clear depths of the mill pond, and sometimes see a large bass or great turtle. Then we would get a rifle, or the old "lighthouse gun," as it was called, and take a shot at them. Then a rush downstairs and out onto the dam to recover our prize, should we be lucky enough to score a hit. Not very sportsman-like, perhaps, but great fun for the boys in those days. This old lighthouse gun has a local reputation of being the longest and hardest shooting gun in the township, and came from nobody knows where, but it still reposes in the old mill.

One day in the winter the miller stood by his trough shovelling out the newly ground meal with his wooden paddle. Suddenly there was a great commotion overhead in the meal bin. A rat appeared, followed by two others, and as they came down the ladder single file, the miller struck them one after the other with his paddle and killed them all. Then appeared a mink in pursuit of the rats. The miller secured his rifle and shot the mink. Weasels and mink frequently came into the mill in the winter time, and did not seem to be afraid of human beings or the noise of the machinery.

Shooting leaves from the topmost branches of the maple on the point was another sport indulged in from the west window. He who could cut the stem was the crack shot of all.

Sometimes we shot at ducks or muskrat in the little bay. There was always something to drive dull care away at the old mill. While hunting on the surrounding hills, the rush of water and the low rumble of the stones could be faintly heard, and it was pleasant music in that still atmosphere. "And the sound of the grinding was low." I would that we might hear it again.

Last spring the dam went out with the ice. There is now no water in the flume, and the wheels turn no more.

I was privileged to enter the old mill again this summer. The old ten pins were there, and the battered croquet balls, asleep like Rip Van Winkle. The lighthouse gun lay on the floor, no longer a dangerous weapon, and against the wall, covered with dust, stood the low seat of Thomas Whittaker, cordwainer. Just such a bench as was used by Uncle Lisha Pegs. All these old friends, and many others, give rise to a flood of pleasant recollections. The Old Mill, long may it stand as a monument to honest industry, and a pleasant retreat for those old boys who return from time to time. As fine a lot of fellows who ever drew a bead or cast a line.

Franklin Journal Transcript, August, 1921

Written by Chester Pratt, who spent many hours in the mill and was the only marksman in the group able to pick the stem off a leaf on the tree as described.

Lewis Shaw's Story - excerpts

I was born (1878) and raised in the west part of town, known as West Salisbury, or Gookin's Mills, so named for the sawmill and later a grist mill erected by Cyrus Gookin and his brother, David.

The Blackwater flows down through Andover from its source in Wilmot, New London and Danbury, and makes a natural large bay or reservoir of some 350 acres, at the outlet of which, at West Salisbury, there is a gradual descent of falls for nearly a mile, which affords excellent water power for mills and manufacturing.

At West Salisbury a wooden log dam 125 feet long and 10 feet high was constructed across the river, and a sawmill and grist mill were constructed here by the Gookin brothers in 1834. They continued to saw lumber and grind home grown grain raised by the farmers in the region until 1858, when they sold to Francis Stevens of Northfield, who was joined in partnership by his brother-in-law, James S. Shaw (son of Sanborn Shaw), and it was run as Stevens and Shaw until 1872, when my father, John Shaw (brother of James), bought out Mr. Stevens. The Shaws continued for a year until James Shaw was taken sick and died. Then my father, John, took over the entire business.

My father remodelled and equipped the entire plant, putting in new buhr mill stones to grind wheat into flour, and silk screens and sifting equipment to sift a fine grade of bread flour, graham and bran.

To increase his output of custom grinding of corn, oats and wheat for the farmers, he put in the largest French buhr stone in the state. The top stone, or runner, weighed 5500 pounds, and came from the lava beds of France. It was fitted up for operation in Boston and installed here in 1882. Most of the grinding of corn on the ear, as raised by the farmers in the area, was ground into meal by "stone grinding." The grinding stones were either granite or buhr, but the buhr stones were much harder and reduced the corn to meal of more superior quality than the softer granite could possibly produce.

My father owned and operated the grist mill, and with one man to help, was busy all day grinding grain for most of the farmers of Salisbury and neighboring towns from October to June, and by purchasing shelled corn, oats and wheat in carload lots from the west, which came to Andover Plains by rail, and hauling it over the road from there to the mill by horse power, where it was ground into meal and feed to be sold to the same customers during the rest of the year after their home grown grain crops were exhausted. This furnished a year round necessity

to the hundreds of farmers, lumbermen and poultry raisers which abounded in our part of the country at that time.

It might be interesting to say here that corn and home grown grains ground into meal and flour in a local grist mill were subject to a tax, or cost price of manufacture, established by law. The cost of manufacture was established here in New Hampshire and based upon a per bushel basis. 1/16th of the total ground was allowed as toll for grinding grain by the miller. So, as 32 quarts make a bushel, 2 quarts would be allowed for toll, and as an ordinary cotton bag would hold 2 bushels, the usual toll was about 4 quarts per bag, or, if paid in money, would average about 10 cents per bag.

Those were the days before burlap was used very extensively to ship bran, cottonseed meal, gluten and dairy feeds, and those were shipped in bulk by rail. In order to transfer it from freight car to mill it had to be shovelled into cotton bags at the car, tied up with strings, loaded into oxen or horse drawn carts, and brought up to the mill and dumped into bins for the retail trade.

This old water development, with its 10 foot high dam, is the best water power on the Blackwater River. With the dam maintained at that height, it makes a natural reservoir of 400 hundred acres, and flows back to the bridge on the 4th New Hampshire Turnpike in Andover. The main branch of the Blackwater comes from a large watershed in Wilmot, Danbury, Andover and New London. Other branches are the overflow of Lake Pleasant in New London, Elbow, Hopkins and Horseshoe Ponds in Andover, with numerous brooks in the watershed.

A survey by Stone and Webster of Boston in 1910 showed that the natural flow of the river would fill a 4 foot penstock 365 days a year. Less than a mile downstream from our old mill is another dam at the bend of the river, a development which has furnished water power for a sawmill known as Prince's Mill for over a century.

If the Shaw dam were maintained as before stated at about a 630 foot level, a penstock laid to the low point below Prince's Mill at 580 feet, a 50 foot fall would be available and a wonderful source of water power created for manufacturing of electricity or any other commercial development.

The Island

The Whole Island

The island in the Blackwater River, just above "Little Bay" in West Salisbury, NH, is in the 80 acre lot # 74 in the fourth or north range of lots as originally laid out in Salisbury.

Lot # 74 was originally granted to James Toppan (or Tappin).

In 1753, James Tappin of Kingstown sold to John Webster of Kingstown "the right or share that is mine original" in Major Stevens Town (Salisbury). (NH Provincial deed 44/422, Feb. 1, 1753)

In 1794, John Webster of Salisbury sold to James Currier of Salisbury two 80 acre lots in the fourth range, # 73 and # 74, with mill privileges. (Hillsborough County deed 38/329, May 27, 1794)

The Island Divided

The island was apparently divided into three separate ownerships by the following two conveyances:

In 1807, James Currier sold to his son Gideon Currier "the greater part of lot 74, fourth range, beginning at the southeast corner of said lot running north on the east sideline to the northeast corner, thence west on the range to the northwest corner, thence south on the west sideline til it comes to the Blackwater River at low water mark, thence east 18 rods, thence southerly a straight line to strike the southerly side of the rangeway 10 rods east from the southwest corner, thence east on the south side of the rangeway til it comes square off against the bound first mentioned, thence across the rangeway to the first mentioned bound" to contain about 80 acres. Also 11/12 of a saw mill and mill privileges. (Hills. 74/336, Jan. 1, 1807) (figures 22 & 23)

In 1813, James Currier sold to Samuel Dunlap, Jr., "part of lot 74 in the fourth range....beginning at the northerly side of Blackwater River on Gideon Currier's land, also on the westerly side line of said lot, thence running easterly on said Currier's land 9 rods, thence extending southerly upon the westerly side line (carrying the 9 rods in width) 17 rods to contain 153 rods of land (on which a saw mill and grist mill now stand)" (Hills. 96/297, Feb. 6, 1813) (figure 24)

East Island

In 1815, Gideon Currier sold to Amos Pettengill "the greater part of lot 74" as described in Hills. 74/336. (Hills. 104/238, Jan. 25, 1815) (figures 22 & 23)

In 1834, Amos Pettengill sold to Pelatiah, David C. and Cyrus Gookin "the greater part of lot 74" as described in Hills. 74/336. (Merrimack County deed 37/217, May 8, 1834) David and Cyrus were Pelatiah's sons. (figures 22 & 23)

At some point between 1834 and his death in 1858, Pelatiah Gookin apparently conveyed his interest in this property to his sons David and Cyrus. There is no record of this conveyance in the Registry of Deeds, but this assumption is consistent with all the facts on record. Pelatiah's will did not mention any real estate. In 1845, a piece of land between the Bay Road and the river just west of the East Island property was sold by Robert Whittaker to David Gookin (Merr. 81/74). This piece is described as "adjoining land of Cyrus Gookin on the east" rather than "land of Pelatiah and Cyrus Gookin."

In 1843, David Gookin sold to Cyrus Gookin "all my right, title and interest in the farm, farming tools, sawmills and privileges, and all the property now owned in Company except such parts as deeded from him to me as described in the deed (Merr. 73/344) from Cyrus Gookin to David C. Gookin. The sawmill is to have the same privilege of laying lumber as described in deed (Merr 37/217) from Pettengill to Gookin...." (Merr. 198/470, Nov. 16, 1843) The exceptions mentioned in this deed do not include the East Island. (figure 25)

Cyrus Gookin died in 1873 intestate. He was survived by his wife, Martha, his son, Hamilton, and his daughters, Myra Gookin, Flora Shaw and Georgianna Sargent. The inventory of his estate in the Probate Records lists the following real estate: "Homestead farm, D.C. Gookin farm, Dwelling house occupied by H. Gookin, Saw mill and machinery belonging to C. Gookin, 1/4 blacksmith shop, and 7 acres of land on And-over plain."

In 1877, Flora G. Shaw and her husband, Francis, sold to Martha C. and Myra Gookin "all our right, interest and share in all the real estate and personal estate of the late Cyrus Gookin" without any description of the real estate. (Merr. 230/149, Feb. 19, 1877) (figure 26)

In 1888, Hamilton and Myra Gookin sold to Fred S. Sargent, Georgianna's husband, "all our right, title and share in all the real estate of the late Cyrus Gookin" without any description of the real estate. (Merr. 280/489, Apr. 6, 1888) (figure 26)

With the previous two deeds (230/149 and 280/489) all of Cyrus Gookin's real estate is owned by Fred and Georgianna Sargent and Martha C. Gookin, Cyrus' son-in-law, daughter and widow.

In 1888, Fred and Georgie Sargent sold to Hamilton Gookin land in Salisbury adjacent to the island, with a house, "beginning at a stake and stone near the wall on the road leading from Salisbury to Andover, thence running easterly by the wall on said road to the stone gate post on the old farm road leading from said homestead barn, thence northerly to a spotted maple tree on the bank of the river, thence westerly by said river to a stake and stone, thence southerly to the first mentioned bound." (Merr. 280/417, Apr. 7, 1888) This house is the "dwelling house occupied by H. Gookin" listed in the inventory of Cyrus Gookin's estate, and this house and land have since been conveyed to the Dorseys in a straightforward chain of title. (figure 27)

In 1932, Fred and Georgie Sargent sold to their son-in-law Herman E. Colby land on the other side of the river adjoining the East Island "beginning at the Gookin Bridge running west by land of Guy Gookin until it strikes land owned by William Dunlap then folling Dunlap land to Andover line, thence north to the Blackwater by said Andover line, thence along Blackwater River to high water mark to point of beginning." (Merr. 523/421, Sept. 23, 1932) This land has also been conveyed to the Dorseys in a straightforward chain of title. (figure 28)

Since the land in the preceeding two deeds (280/417 and 523/421) on both sides of the river, adjoining the Island, and now owned by the Dorseys was described in both cases as bounded by the river, it appears that the Island was not conveyed to the Dorseys (or anyone else) and is now owned by the heirs of Martha Gookin and Fred and Georgianna Sargent.

There is no record of Martha Gookin in the Merrimack County Probate Records.

Georgianna Sargent died in 1936 intestate. The inventory of her estate in the Probate Records shows no real estate. Her heirs were listed as her daughter, Gladys M. Colby (wife of Herman E. Colby), and her husband, Fred S. Sargent, "incompetent and confined in Boscawen house of correction."

There is no record of Fred S. Sargent in the Merrimack County Probate Records.

Center Island

In 1816, James Currier sold to Richard Currier, 2nd, part of lot 74 "adjoining John Dunlap's land & Samuel Dunlap's land & Deacon Amos Pettengill's land & James Currier's land and extending south to the rangeway." (Hills. 111/385, Apr. 27, 1816)

In 1831, Richard Currier, 2nd, sold to Nathan Currier part of lot 74 described as above. (Merr. 28/201, Nov. 19, 1831)

In 1839, Nathan Currier mortgaged to Jonathan P. Webster a piece of land on the Mills Road in Salisbury, part of lots 73 and 74 in the fourth range estimated at 120 acres, with a complicated description, bounded by land of Gookin among others. "Also two small pieces of land westerly of said Gookin's land." (Merr. 55/529, Mar. 2, 1839) (figure 29)

In 1842, Benjamin Pettengill sold to Robert Whittaker land described as in the previous deed (55/529). "Also two small pieces westerly of said Gookin land....Meaning to convey all the land conveyed by Nathan Currier to Jonathan P. Webster, being a part of lots # 73 and 74 in fourth range." (Merr. 71/197, Nov. 18, 1842) (figure 29)

In 1845, Robert Whittaker sold to David C. Gookin one of these small pieces, land "in Salisbury lying on the north side of the road leading from the Gristmill to the Centre Village and adjoining land of Cyrus Gookin on the east, running to the river, thence by the river to the mill yard, thence by said yard to C. Gookin land, meaning to convey all the land I own on the north side of said road, supposed to be about 3/4 of an acre." (Merr. 81/74, Feb. 21, 1845) (figure 30)

Does the preceeding deed convey the Center Island? On one hand the land conveyed runs only to the river, but on the other hand it includes all the land north of the road. The resolution of this question might lie in the possibility that the Island was not always an island. The succession of mills on this site suggests the possibility that the minor river channel running on the south side of the Island was originally dug as a spillway to carry water to a mill and has since been enlarged by erosion. The Island is not specifically mentioned as an island in any deed until 1981 (Merr. 1407/1095). The map of Merrimack County published in 1858 shows the Island.

Robert Whittaker died in 1848. If he did not convey the Center Island to David Gookin in the preceeding deed, his heirs sold it to his son: in 1849, John H. Potter and his wife Hannah (Robert Whittaker's daughter) and Louise Whittaker (Robert's daughter), heirs of the estate of Robert Whittaker, sold to Thomas H. Whittaker "a certain tract of land situated in Salisbury, meaning to convey all our right, title and interest in the estate of Robert Whittaker." (Merr. 92/540, Sept. 6, 1849) The Center Island

was never granted by Thomas Whittaker and presumably would now be owned by his heirs. He died around 1898, and there is no record of him in the Merrimack County Probate Records. His heirs were his daughters, Alma C. Baker and Olive M. Whittaker.

But if Robert Whittaker did convey the Center Island to David Gookin, then David Gookin apparently conveyed it to his brother Cyrus sometime between 1845 and 1858. There is no record of this conveyance, but this assumption is consistent with all the facts on record. All the land between the river and the Bay Road, and adjacent to the Island, came into the possession of Cyrus Gookin's heirs and was subsequently granted by them. In 1858, David Gookin sold to Francis Stevens several items of described real estate, none of them lying between the river and the road and adjacent to the Island, "meaning to convey all my real estate situated in Salisbury that I own at the date of this deed." (Merr. 144/439, Apr. 1, 1858) Since Francis Stevens never subsequently granted any land between the river and the road and adjacent to the Island, the assumed conveyance of this land from David to Cyrus Gookin must have occurred before 1858. (figure 31)

After Cyrus Gookin died in 1873, all his real estate came into the possession of Fred and Georgianna Sargent and Martha Gookin by 1888 as previously discussed under "East Island" on page 2. And the disposition of the Center Island property is the same as previously discussed for "East Island" on page 3.

West Island

In 1834, Samuel Dunlap sold to Pelatiah, David C. and Cyrus Gookin "a parcel of land in Salisbury with buildings on Blackwater River called Lower Mills embracing the grist mill and mill privileges....conveyed to me by James Currier and James Currier, Jr., containing 9 by 17 rods of land." (Merr. 37/216, May 10, 1834) (figure 24)

At some point between 1834 and his death in 1858, Pelatiah Gookin apparently conveyed his interest in this property to his sons David and Cyrus as previously discussed under "East Island" on page 2.

In 1843, Cyrus Gookin sold to David Gookin "all my right, title and interest in the gristmill and privileges. Also my right in the land and buildings purchased of Samuel Dunlap." (Merr. 73/344, Nov. 16, 1843) (figure 32)

At some point between 1843 and 1858, when he sold the grist mill to Francis Stevens, David Gookin apparently sold the West Island property to his brother Cyrus as previously discussed under "Center Island" on page 5.

After Cyrus Gookin died in 1873, all his real estate came to be owned by Fred and Georgianna Sargent and Martha Gookin by 1888 as previously discussed under "East Island" on page 2. And the disposition of the West Island property is the same as previously discussed under "East Island" on page 3.

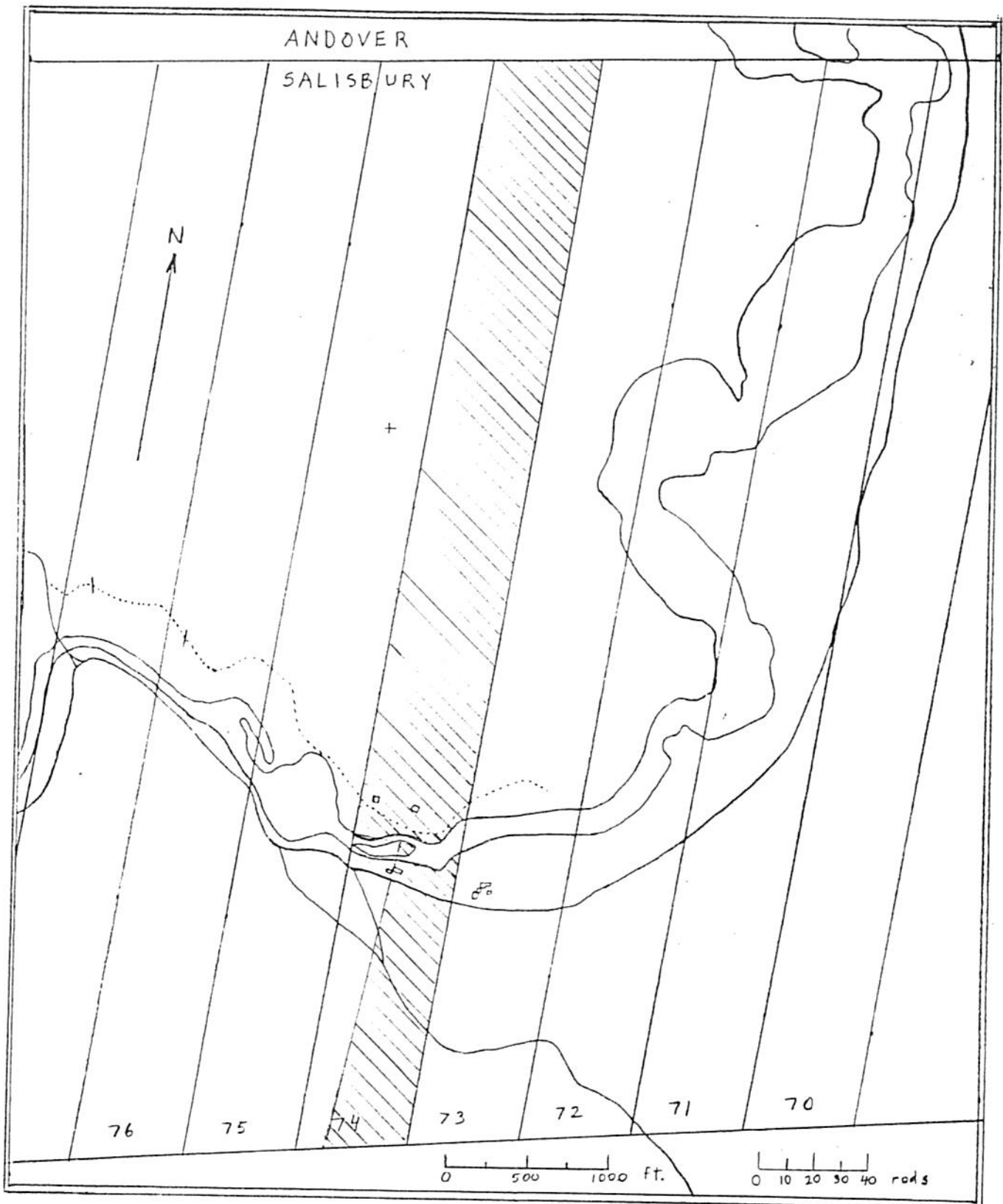


Figure 22

- 1807: James Currier to Gideon Currier (H 74/336)
 1815: Gideon Currier to Amos Pettengill (H 104/238)
 1834: Amos Pettengill to P., D. & C. Gookin (M 37/217)

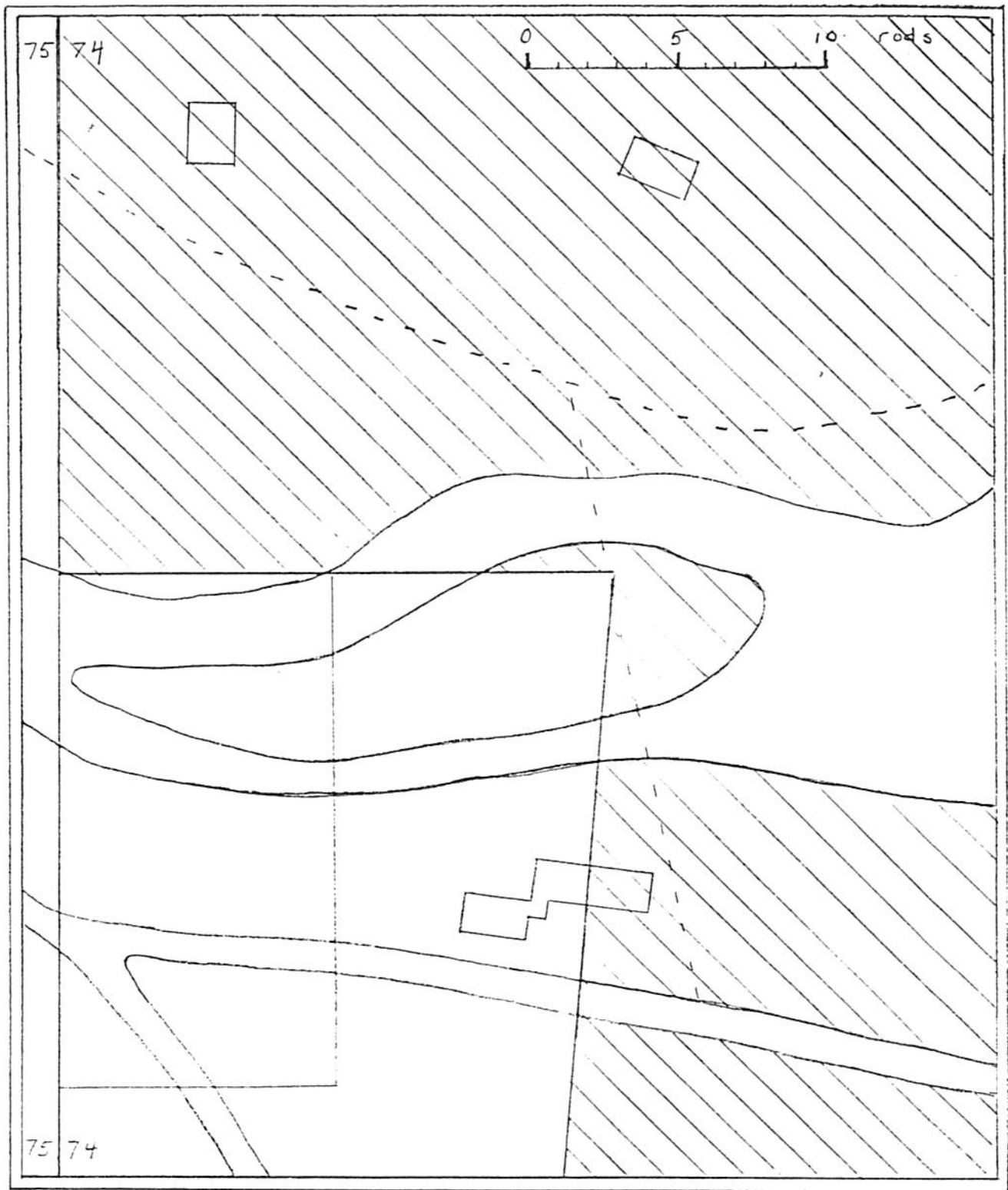


Figure 23 (enlargement of figure 22)

1807: James Currier to Gideon Currier (H 74/336)
 1815: Gideon Currier to Amos Pettengill (H 104/238)
 1834: Amos Pettengill to P, D & C Gookin (M 37/217)
 ? P Gookin to D & C Gookin

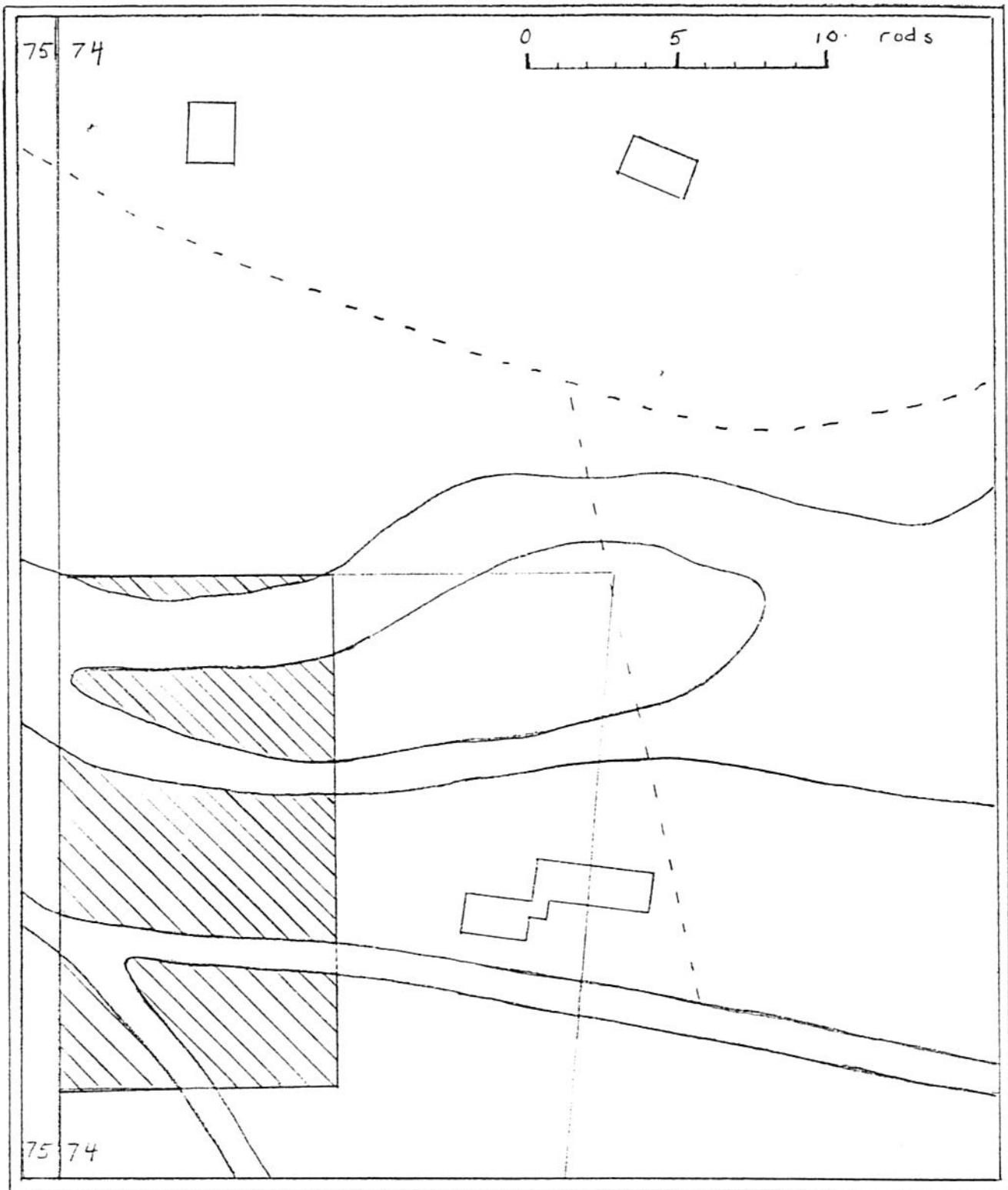


Figure 24

1813: James Currier to Samuel Dunlap (H 96/297)
 1834: Samuel Dunlap to P, D & C Gookin (M 37/216)
 ? P Gookin to D & C Gookin

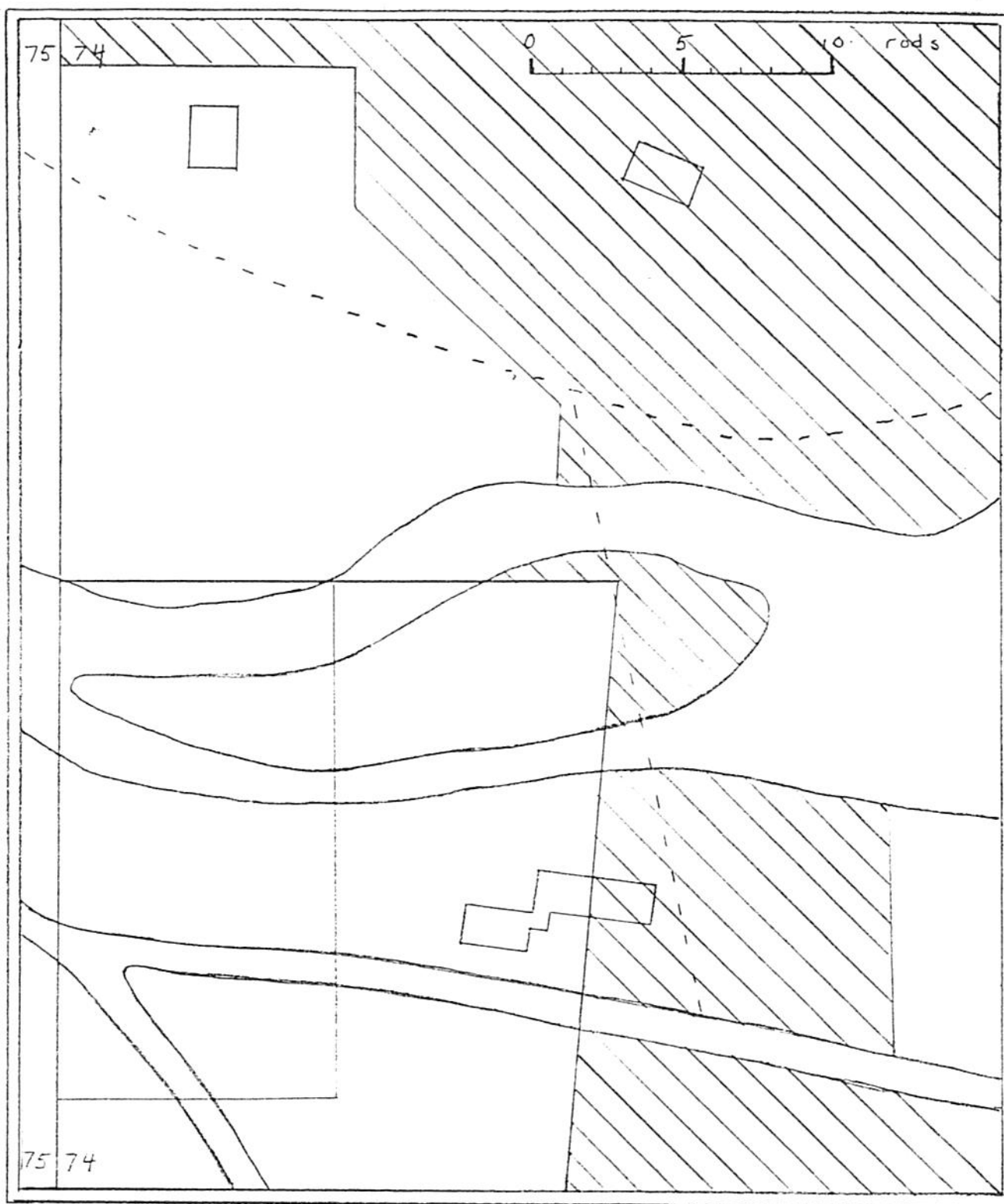


Figure 25

1843: David Gookin to Cyrus Gookin (M 198/470)

(should also include sawmill)

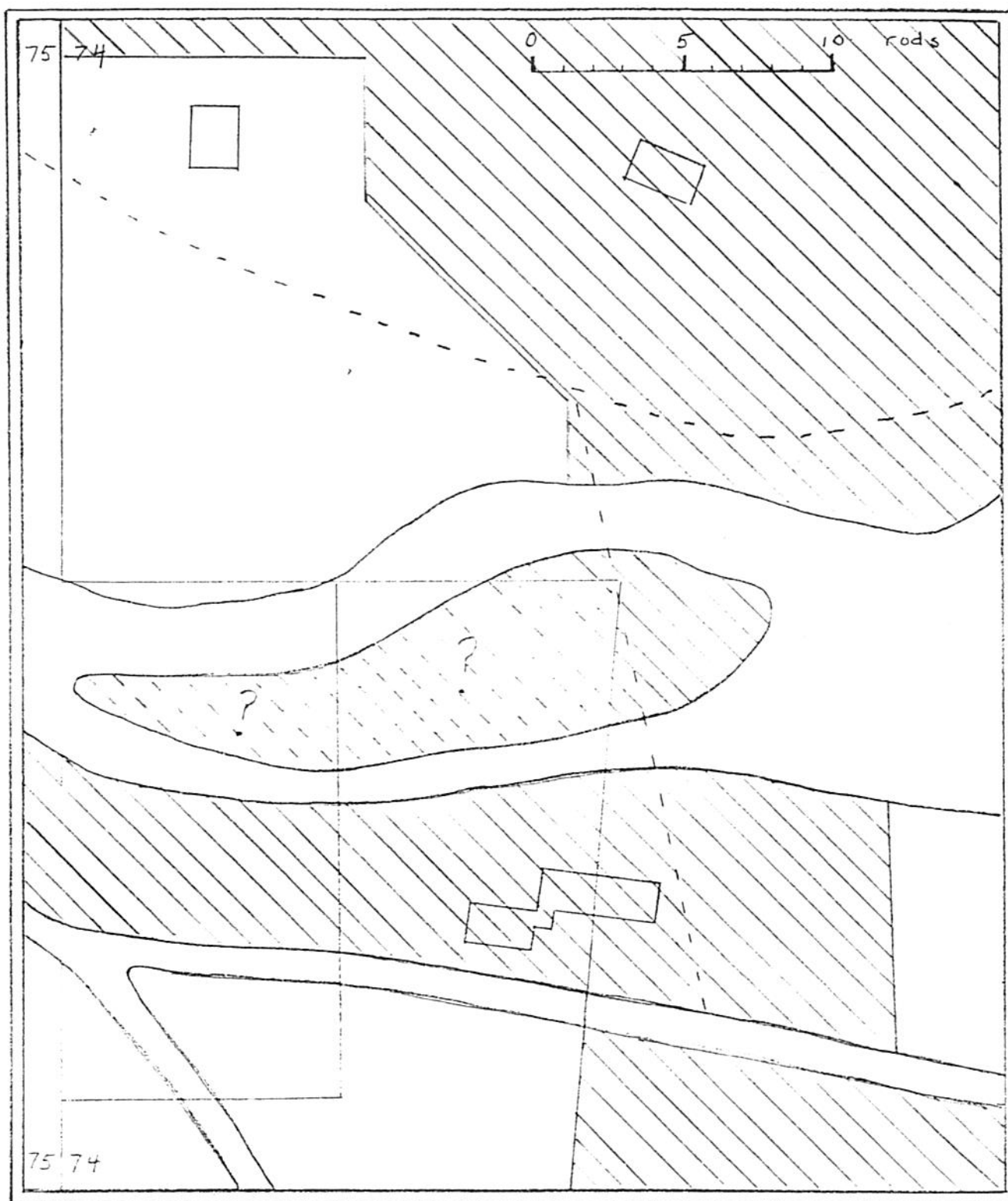


Figure 26

1877: Flora & Francis Shaw to Martha & Myra Gookin (230/149)
 1888: Hamilton & Myra Gookin to Fred Sargent (280/489)

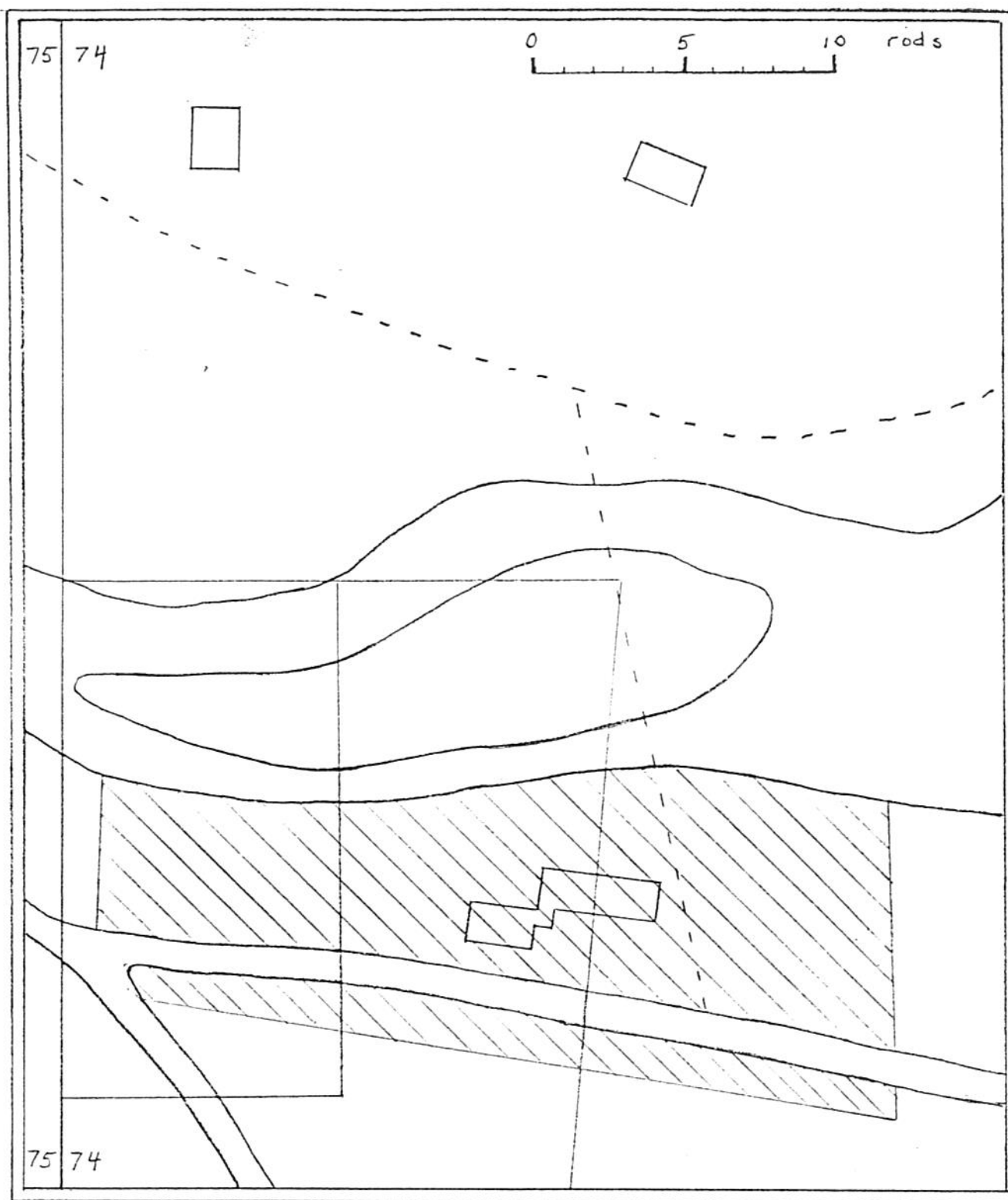


Figure 27

- 1888: Fred & Georgie Sargent to Hamilton Gookin (M 280/417)
- 1932: Hamilton Gookin heirs to Guy Gookin (M 508/551 & 520/582)
- 1951: Guy Gookin estate to Frances Casey (M 696/348)
- 1969: Frances Casey to Robert Bentley (M 1063/473)
- 1980: Robert Bentley to Dorseys (M 1378/124)
- 1981: Dorsey to Dorsey (M 1407/1095)

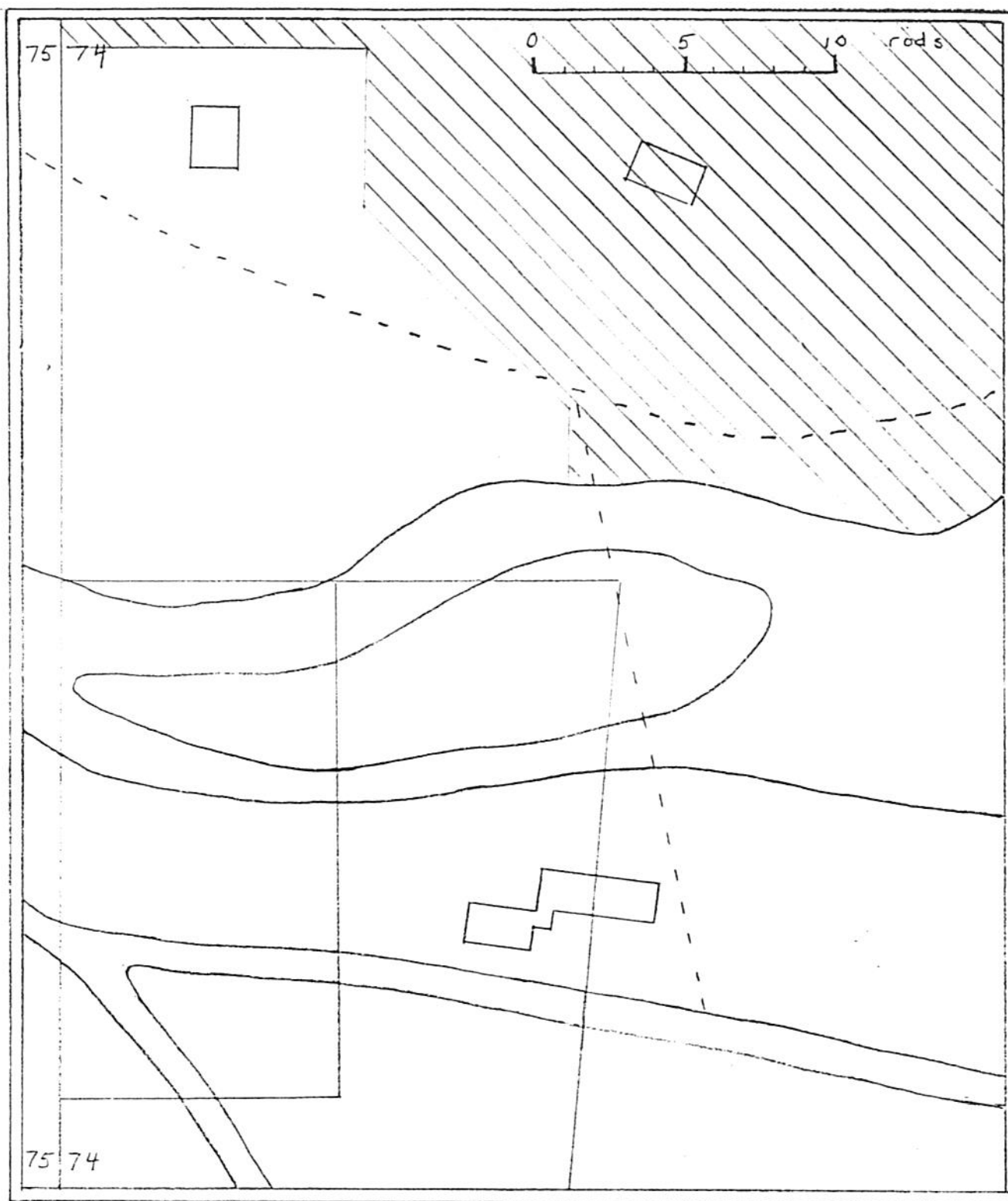


Figure 28

1932: Fred Sargent to Herman Colby (523/421)

1935: Herman Colby to William Bunlap (544/267)

1955: William Dunlap to Dorseys (770/331)

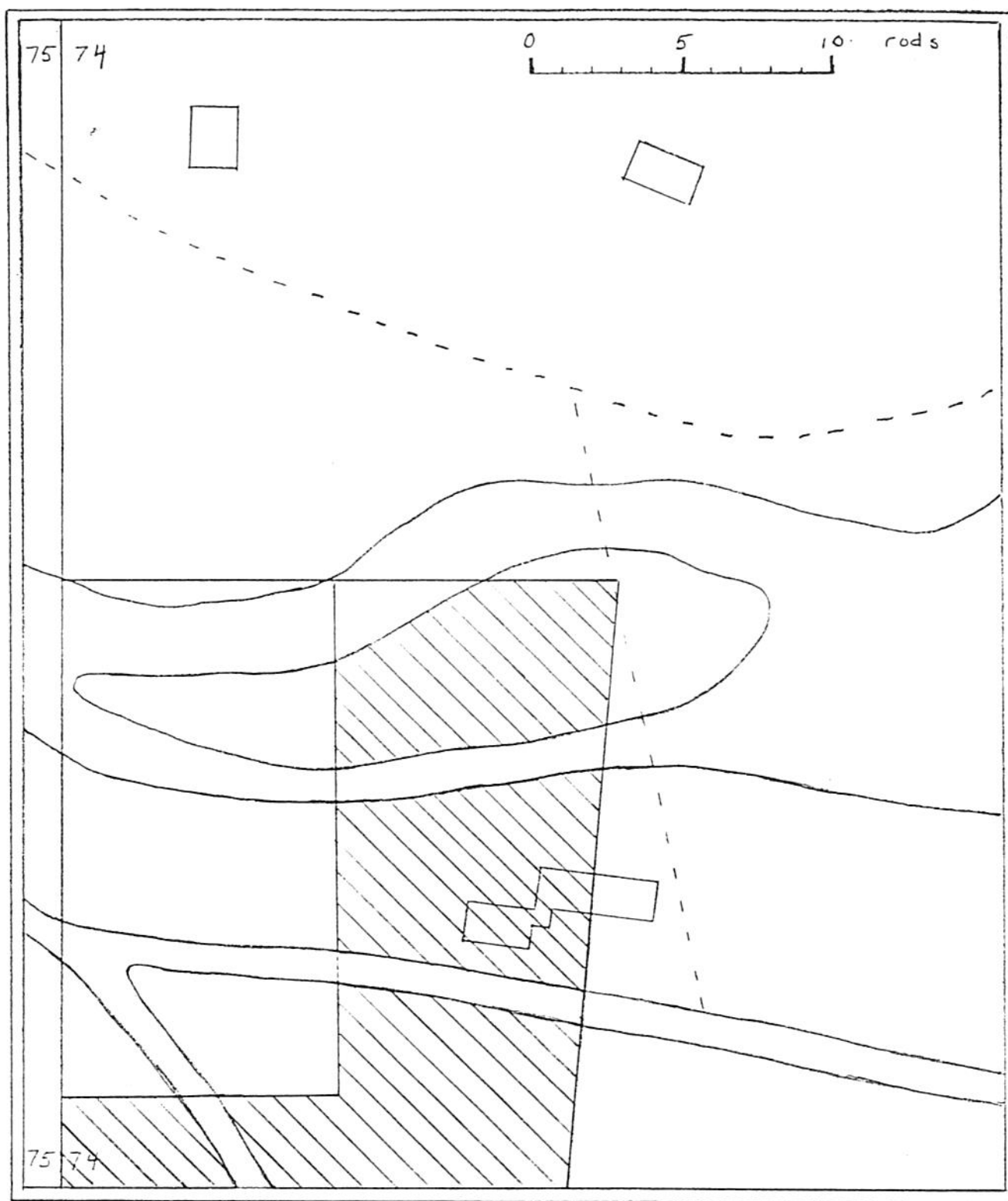


Figure 29

- 1816: James Currier to Richard Currier, 2nd (H 111/385)
- 1831: Richard Currier, 2nd, to Nathan Currier (M 28/201)
- 1839: Nathan Currier to Jonathan P. Webster (M 55/529)
- 1842: Benjamin Pettengill to Robert Whittaker (M 71/197)

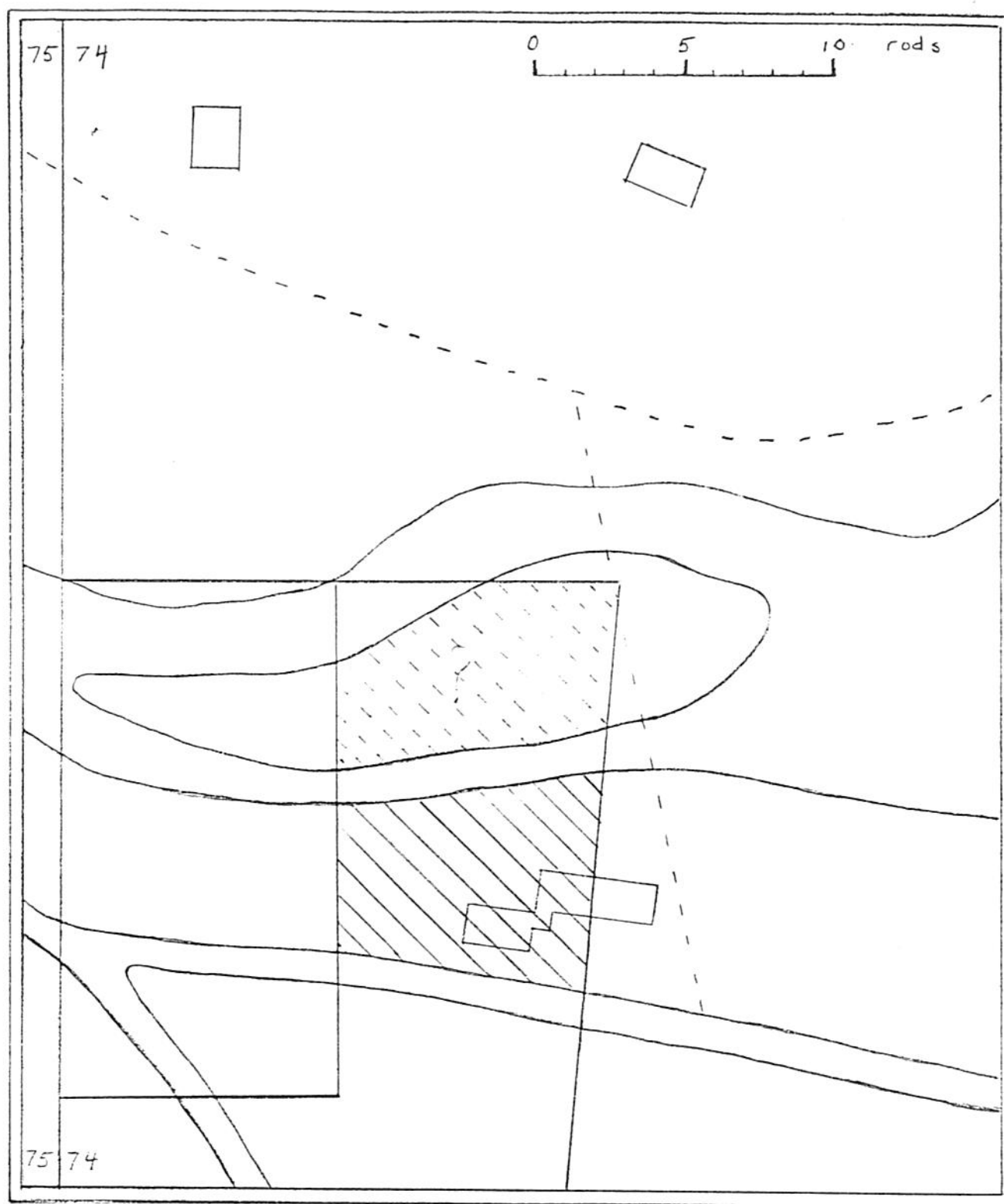


Figure 30

1845: Robert Whittaker to David Gookin (M 81/74)
? David Gookin to Cyrus Gookin, 1845-1858

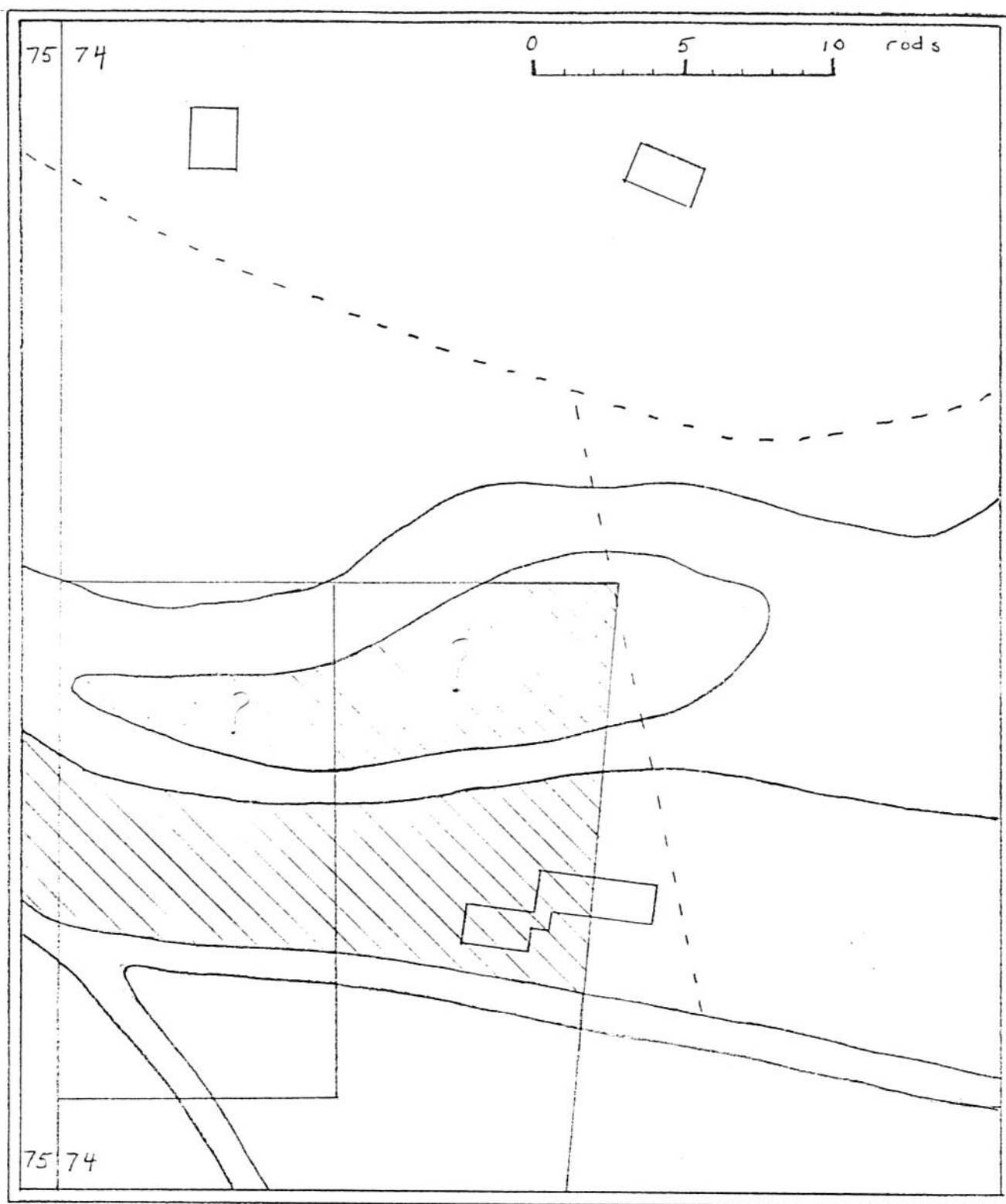


Figure 31

? David Gookin to Cyrus Gookin, 1845-1858

(part of this possibly conveyed with sawmill in 198/470, 1843)

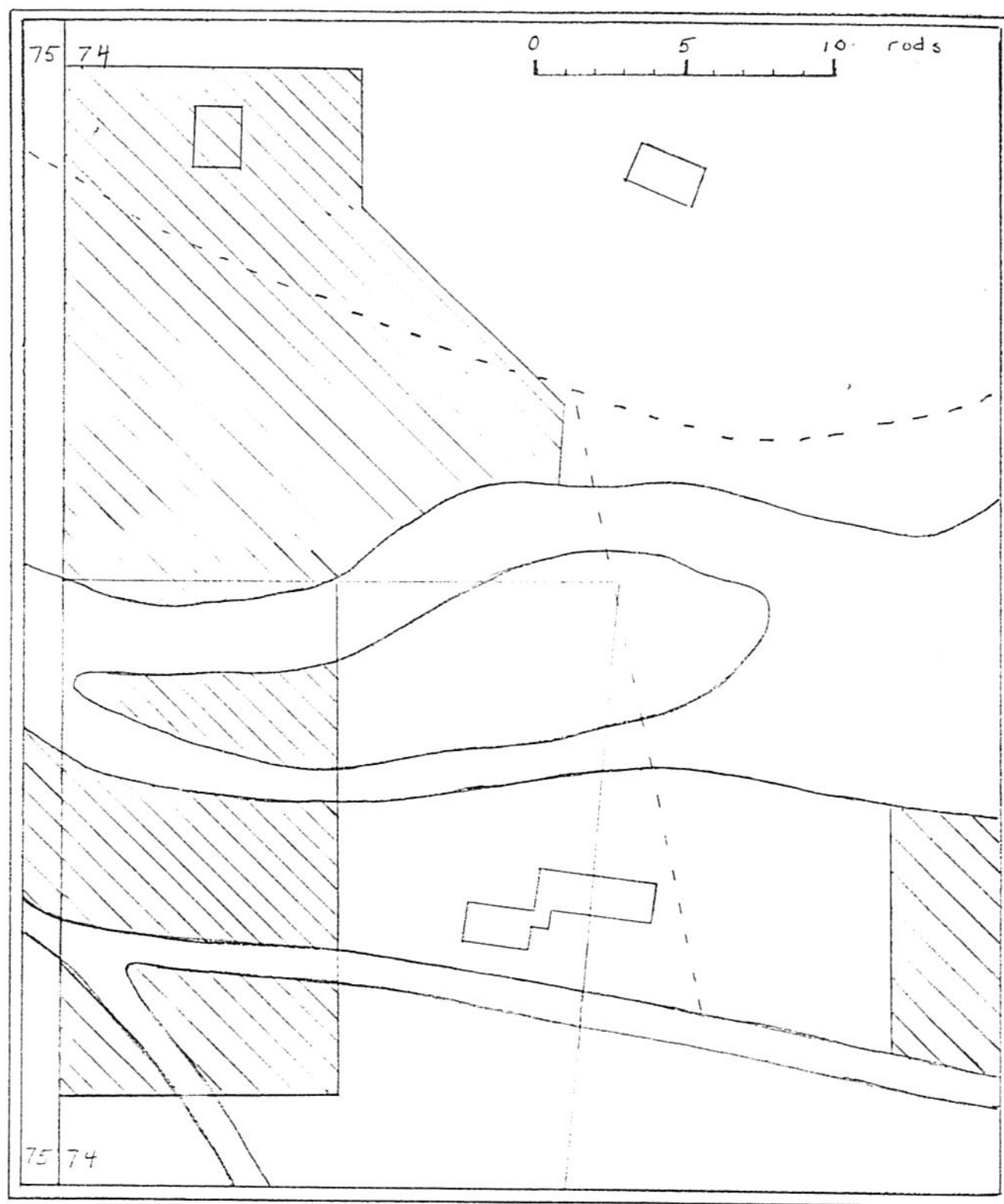
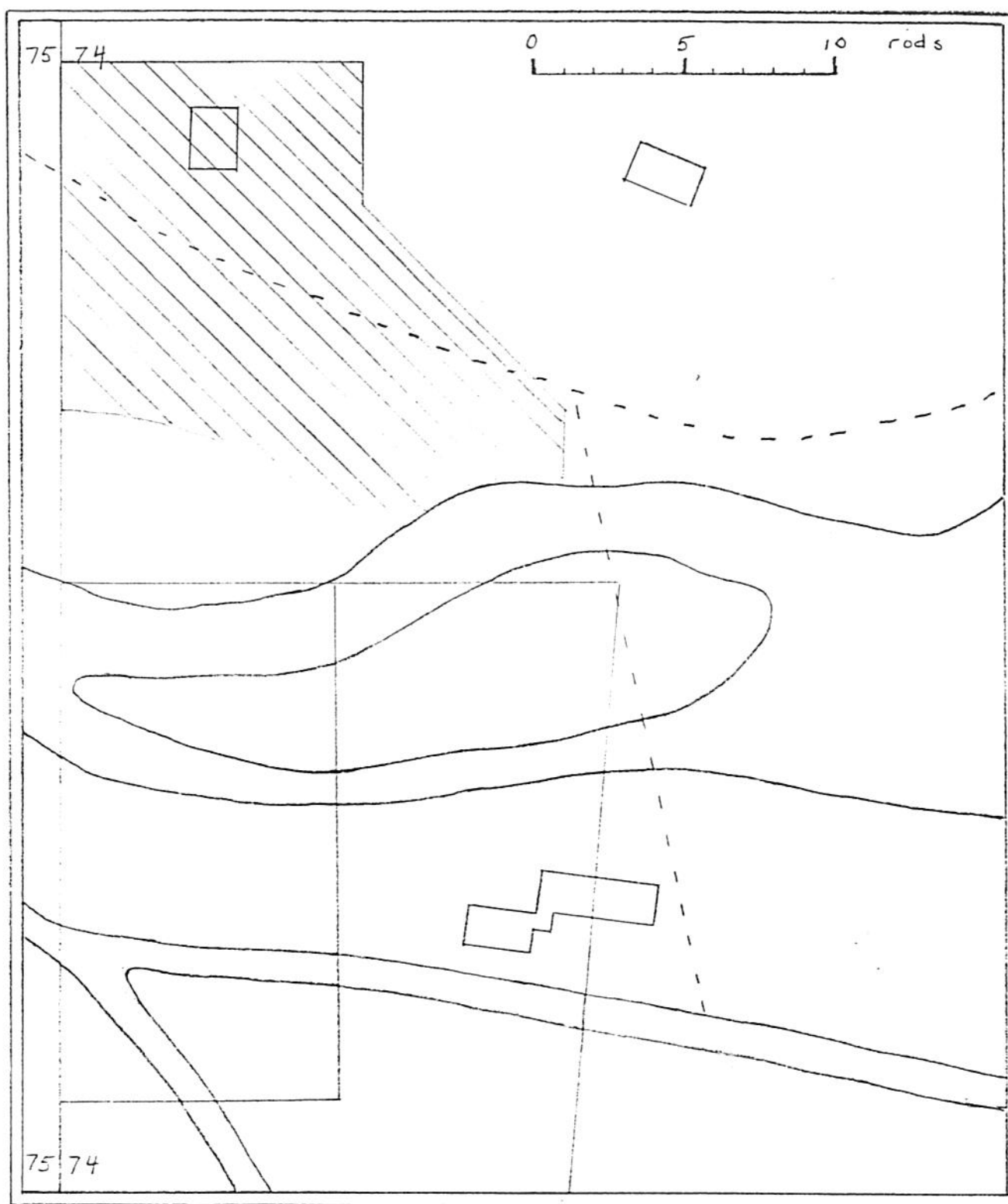


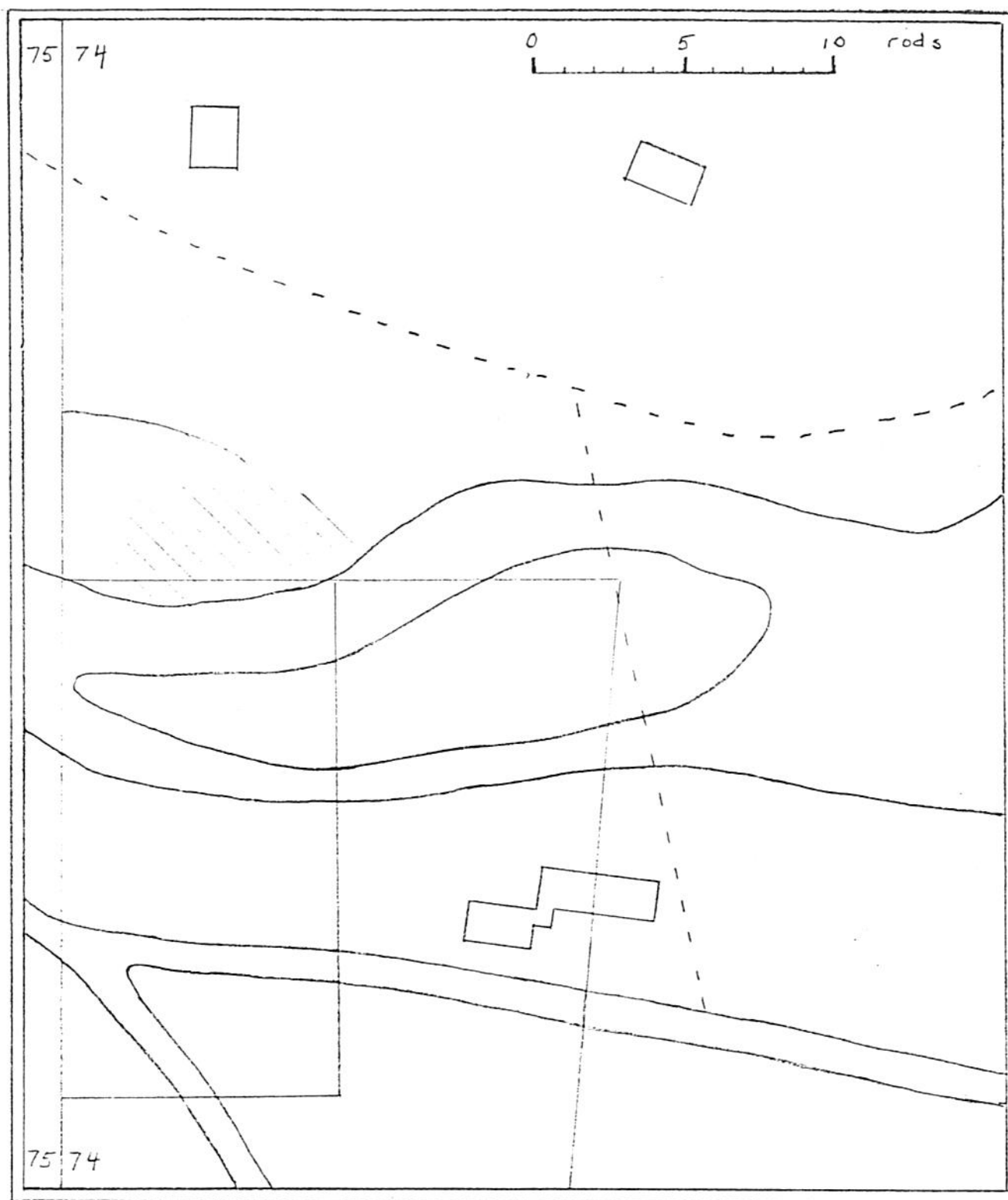
Figure 32

1843: Cyrus Gookin to David Gookin (M 73/344)

(saw mill not included)



- 1858: David Gookin to George Scribner (144/260)
- 1859: George Scribner to Thomas Whittaker (329/568)
- 1899: Thomas Whittaker heirs to Samuel Minard (328/391)
- 1905: Samuel Minard to Ulysses & Mary Minard (368/97)
- 1909: Ulysses & Mary Minard to Guy Gookin (391/268)
- 1937: Guy Gookin to Mary Champney (581/349)
- 1940: Mary Champney to William Dunlap (581/250)



- 1858: David Gookin to Francis Stevens (144/439)
- 1872: Francis Stevens to John & James Shaw (216/547)
- 1874: Frances Shaw to Sanborn Shaw (219/101)
- 1874: Sanborn Shaw to John Shaw (216/550)
- 1914 & 1921: John Shaw to Lewis Shaw (422/61 & 451/282)
- 1963: Lewis Shaw to Paul Shaw (947/475)

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