

The search for the erection date of the Robeson Rolling Mill and the origin of its name.

Naming the Mill: The Robeson Rolling Mill has had several names and purposes. The 1690 supplement to the 1686 lease documents that a “Water Corn Mill” was first on the property on Wissahickon Creek.

Corn was the first grain grown in the area in the early years of Pennsylvania. The corn mill was built between 1686 and 1690 along with a sawmill, and Richard Townsend was the Millwright who led the effort to choose its location and design.

Townsend built the 1st mill on Chester Creek and the oldest section of the Pusey house upon his arrival on *The Welcome* with William Penn in 1682.¹ Townsend built the 2nd mill in the new Colony next to Germantown on Wingohocking Creek c. 1683.²

Philadelphia County’s 1693 tax document refers to the “Robeson & Saunders mill” as being in “Northern Liberties.” Andrew Robeson, Sr., and Charles Sanders bought the lease and property in 1686 and built a new mill upstream by 1702. In the 1720 Will of Andrew Robeson, Jr. (Sr.’s nephew), the property description is “...lands belonging to the **Roxborrow Mill** and Bolting Mill and...” It seems likely that the 1720 “Roxborrow” designation was meant to distinguish the original corn mill on the west side of the Creek from the newer flour ‘Bolting’ mill on the east side.

The mill's purpose as an iron rolling mill first appears in a 1752 deed wherein the property is described as having “**Rolling Mills.**”³ The Robeson family had well-established interests in iron dating back to the early 1700s, and Magdalen, Andrew Robeson, Jr.’s daughter, married Thomas Potts. In Berks County, Robeson Township and the town of Pottsville derive their names from these families.

The Flour Mill eclipsed the Rolling Mill for decades as the latter had three waterwheels under the same roof. The Robeson Rolling Mill was revived as an iron rolling mill by 1816⁴; per the 1820 Census, it was one of the largest such mills in Pennsylvania.

The Colony on the Schuylkill leased the mill from 1877 to 1902 and used it as its headquarters from 1877 to 1887. While it was used as its headquarters, it was referred to as “**Colony Castle,**” that name was used for over a century after that. The Colony on the Schuylkill dismantled and moved their original wooden “Castle” from Rambo’s Rock on the Schuylkill River to Andalusia on the Delaware River in 1887.

The **Robeson Rolling Mill** name gives historical credit to its last primary purpose and owners.

The Erection Date: The description of the boundaries of the fifty-and-a-half acres leased in 1686 to Joshua Tittery & Richard Townsend by Robert Truner starts the journey to determine the mill’s erection date. So far as the author has been able to determine, no prior researchers transcribed the original boundaries of the 1686 lease nor the two endorsements to it in 1690 and 1691. The transcriptions are essential as they document that the Corn Mill was built on the west side of the Creek and before the Bolting Mill on the east side.

¹ [History of Upland, PA \(uplandboro.org\)](http://uplandboro.org)

² [The Settlement of Germantown in 1683.pdf \(gfsnet.org\)](#)

³ [Deeds \(Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania\), 1683-1886 ; index to deeds, 1683-1916; ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSFB-YQ8X-L?cat=227024 \(familysearch.org\)](#)

⁴ [Robeson Rolling Mill - Philadelphia Canoe Club.pdf \(philacanoec.org\)](#)

While Joseph Starne Miles likely did not have had access to the 1686 lease, his map is so well known that plotting its boundaries on it appropriately highlights his gifts to documenting the history of Roxborough.

'First Purchasers' map with the fifty & half acres' East boundary being "Several Courses" down the Wissahickon Creek, perches in white font. A Birch Tree (with arrow) is the start of 8 reaches that bounded the fifty-a-half acres leased to Joshua Tittery & Richard Townsend.



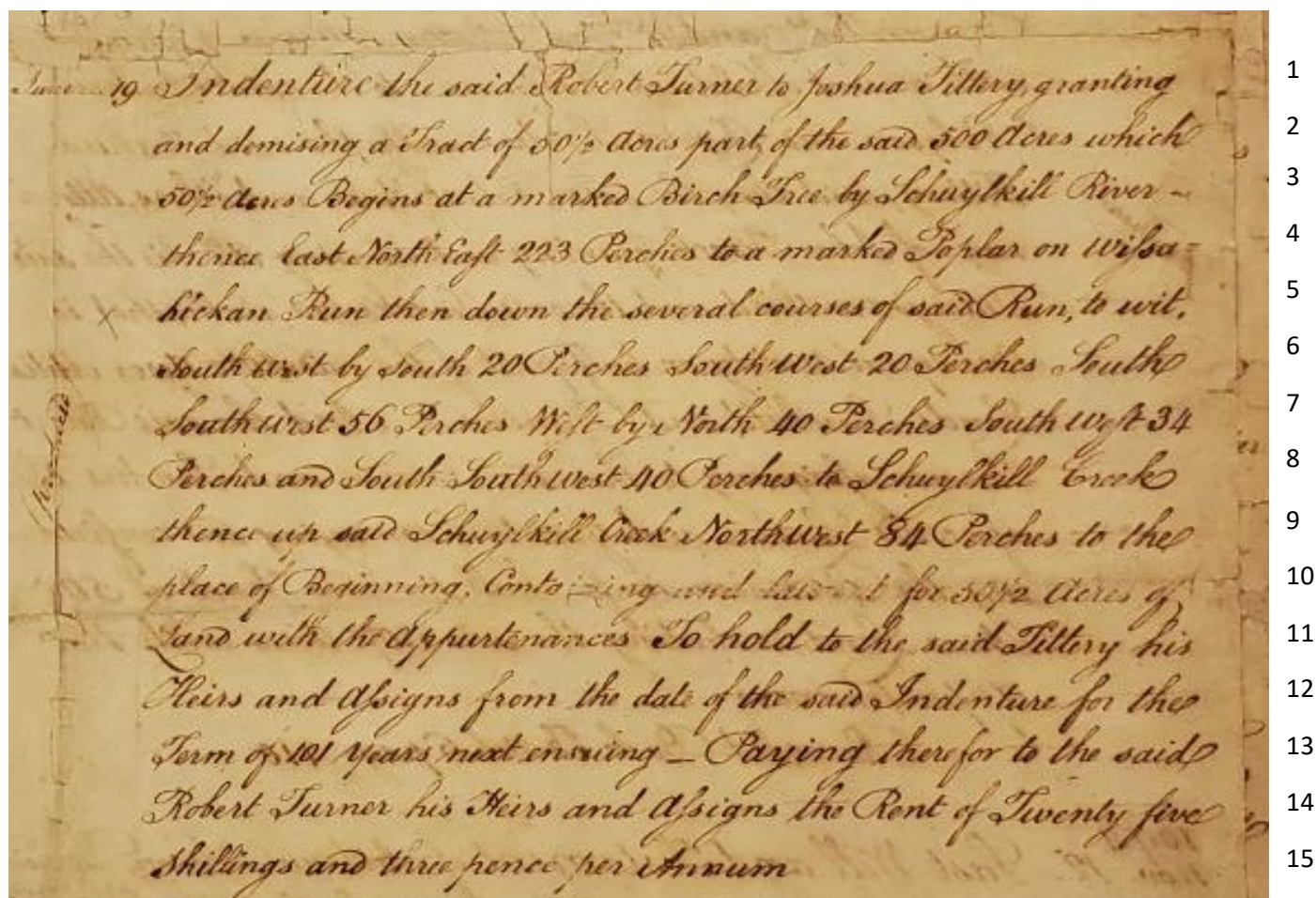
See the next page for the easiest-to-read source of the 1686 lease and above boundaries (the original document is pictured at the end of this paper).

These boundaries are critical to establishing where Tittery & Townsend later erected their [Corn Mill on the West side of the Wissahickon Creek](#). These boundaries are repeated in subsequent updates to the lease in 1690 and 1691, wherein the Corn Mill is referenced. **Documenting these boundaries is the first step in building the case that the Mill still stands at the confluence of the Schuylkill River and the Wissahickon Creek.**

1686 Lease for 101 years by Robert Turner to Joshua Tittery (no mention of Townsend in the abstract)

Taken from the Vanderen/Robeson "Brief of the Title" abstract that is filed in City Archives within the 'Dobson Purchase' files, which contain the property history of the Dobson Mills purchased (annexed) by the City to become part of the Fairmount Park 1869. The Dobsons purchased from the Robesons the large Mill north of Ridge Ave. in 1864).

Documents show that the land is on the west side of the Wissahickon; see the file "Fifty and one-half Acres Mapped."

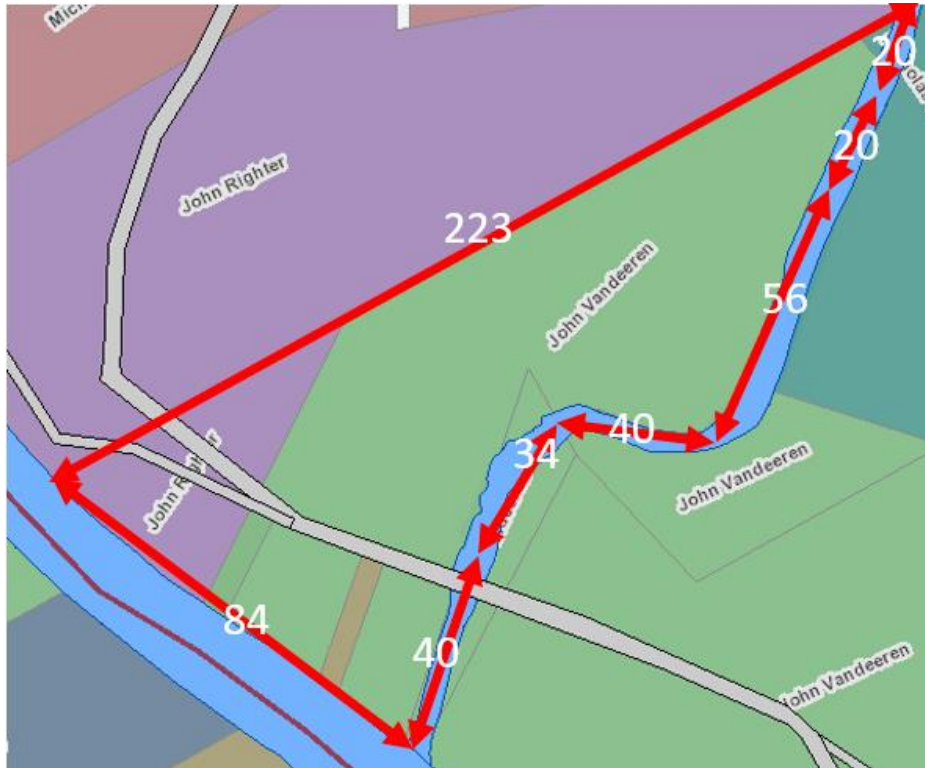


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[line #s in brackets]

- [3] 50 ½ acres Begins at a marked **Birch Tree** by Schuylkill River
[4] thence **East North East 223 Perches** to a marked Popular on Wissa-
[5] hickon Run then down the several courses of the said Run, to wit,
[6] **South West by South 20 Perches** (reach 2),
South West twenty perches (reach 3)
South
[7] **South West 56 Perches** (reach 4), **West & by North 40 Perches** (reach 5), **South West 34**
[8] **Perches** (reach 6) and **South South West 40 Perches** (reach 7) to Schuylkill Creek
[9] thence up said Schuylkill Creek **84 Perches** (reach 8) to the
[10] place of the beginning containing fifty & a half acres ...

8 Nov 1690 Indenture referencing Tittery, Townsend, Tyzache, and now Robeson & Sanders as half-partners

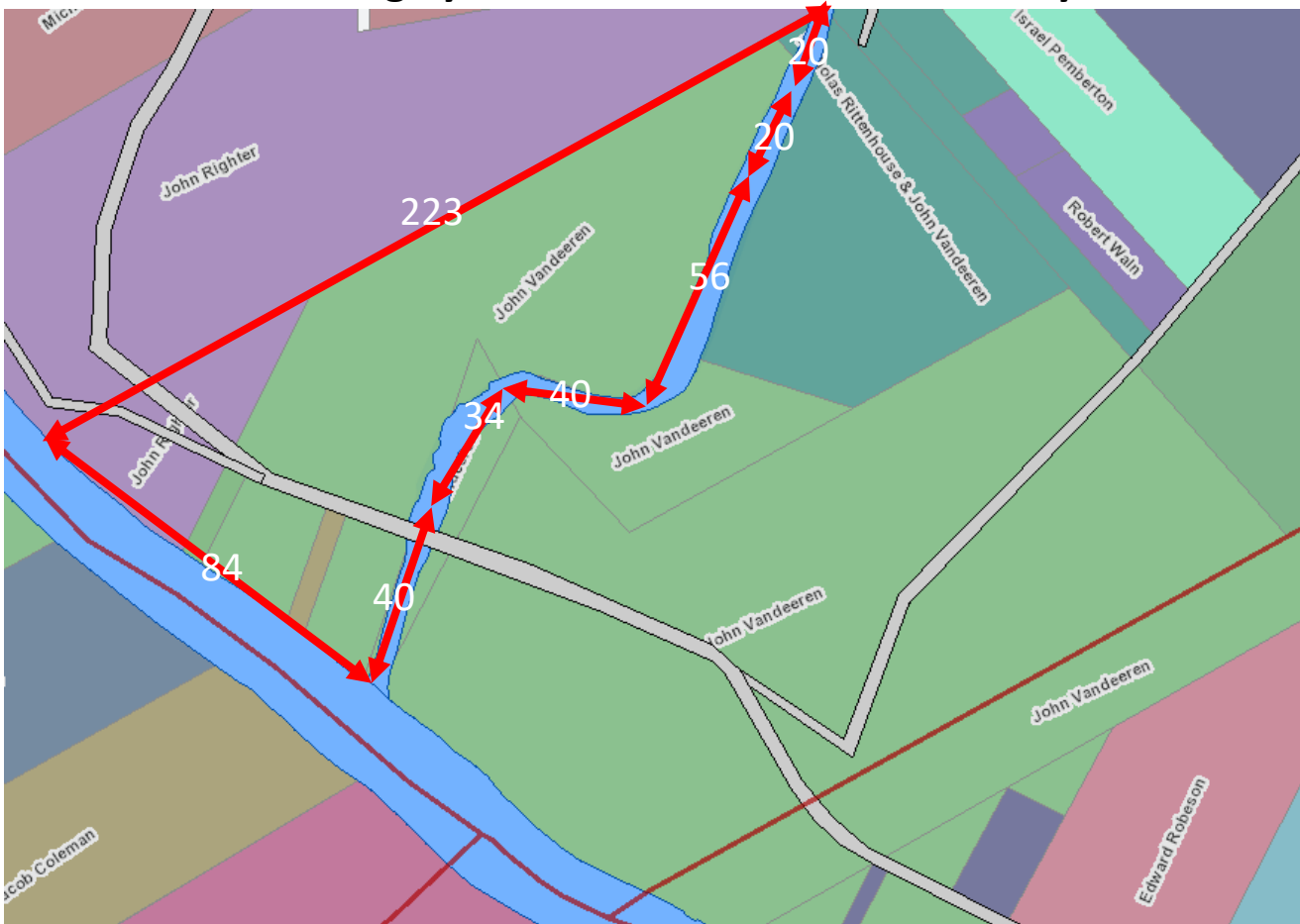


Robeson-Vanderen 'Brief of Title' 8 Nov 1690:

1690
11 Nov 8 Indenture the said Joshua Tittery to Andrew Robeson and Charles Sanders, reciting, That the said Joshua Tittery and Richard

Richard Townsend and John Tisack had entered into partnership in said Land by Indenture dated the 25th day 1689 - and the said Joshua Tittery with the consent of us, said Richard Townsend, grants sells and assigns unto the said Andrew Robeson and Charles Sanders One undivided moiety or half part of the said 50 Acres and an half Leasehold Estate and Premises during the residue of the Term of 101 Years

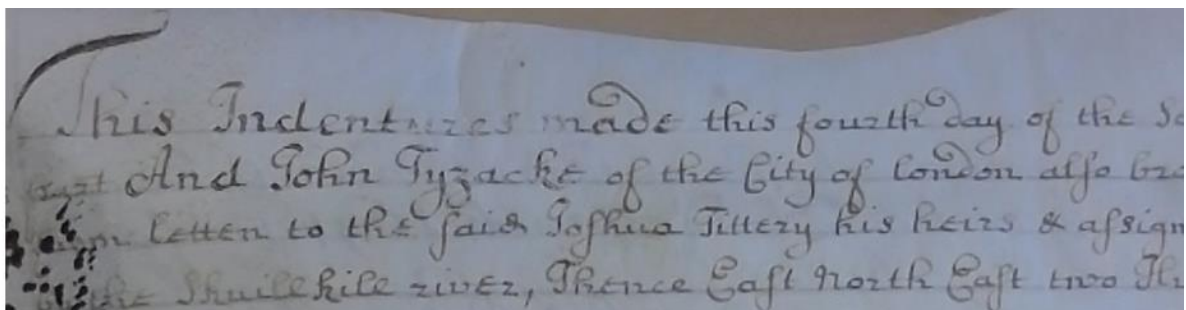
1691 Lease adding Tyzache & Boundaries of the Fifty & Half Acres



4th day of April, 1691 Josuha Tittery to John Tyzache. This Indenture was not in the ‘The “Brief of the Title” to The Tract of Land’

Overlaid on the University of Pennsylvania “1777 Map” Series [Mapping West Philadelphia 1777 \(upenn.edu\)](http://MappingWestPhiladelphia1777.upenn.edu) From the City Archives, **the original document** – one of five snapshots as the Indenture 30+ inches wide; row #s added to read across the five pages of photos. (See last Page.)

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1691: The Significance of the Indenture adding John Tyzache:




From the original document (not from 'The Brief of Title'):
The Indenture includes "...all the tilled land improvements Houses Saw & Corn Mills & all the Iron work timber works, Mill Stones..." Note that both Mills lay on the West bank of the Wissahickon as of 4 Apr 1691.

Transcription: Indenture 4th day of **April, 1691** Josuha Tittery to John Tyzache by Line Number staring at [line #s in brackets] **with key reference to 25th March 1689** 'Copartnership' with Richard Townsend.

Transcription notes: Some paragraph breaks & commas have been added to ease reading; original punctuation is followed unless it seriously hinders are reading. Names are spelled as written, and keywords are emboldened.

[1] "This Indenture was made this 4th day of the second month April *Anno Domi (year of our Lord)* 1691 Between Joshua Tittery of the County of Philadelphia in the Province of Pennsylvania in America, Broad glass maker, of the one part

[2] And John Tyzache of the City of London, also broad glass maker of the other part. Whereas Robt Turner of the said town & County Merchant, by his  hands (?)

Indented under his hand & seal, hath demified (*sic*), granted & to

[3] (*tbd 'his'?*) letter to the said Jousha Tittery his heirs & assigns a piece of land in the said county (being part and parcel of his (*R Turner*) five hundred acres of land and called Shoemack park. Beginning at a corner marked **birch tree** standing (*Same as 1691 deed with a Birch is on River NW corner of property*)

[4] (*reach 1*) on the Shuillhill (*sic*) river, thence **East North East two hundred and twenty three perches** to a corner marked popular standing upon Wessahickon Runn (*sic*)⁶, from thence down the Severale (*sic*) Courses of the said run Viz: (*to wit*)

South West [5] & by South Twenty perches (*reach 2*),

Thence **South West twenty perches** (*reach 3*),

Thence **South South West fifty six perches** (*reach 4*),

thence **West & by North forty Perches** (*reach 5*),

Thence **South West thirty four perches** (*reach 6*).

Thence **South South West fourty** (*perches*) (*reach 7*) [6] perches unto Shuillhill Creek,

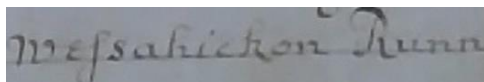
Thence **North West** by the said Shuillhill Creek **eighty four perches** (*reach 8*) to the said first marked Birch tree being the place of the beginning containing fifty & a half acres of land With all its Improvements [7] & appurtenances therein..."

Line [10] "... And Whereas the said Joshua Tittery, Richard Townsend & the said John Tyzache have entered into a Joint Copartnership in the said land (*50.5 acres*) & in other things in Manner in the said Indentures [11] of **Copartnership** Mentioned dated the **25th day of March 1689**. Now these present Indentures witnesseth that the said Joshua Tittery with consent of the said Richard Townsend for & in consideration of the [12] sum of fifteen pounds lawful monie (*sic*) of the said Province to him in hand paid or Secured to be paid by the said John Tyzache & his Attorneys the receipt whereof the said Josuha Tittery doth hereby acknowledge & thereof with [13] acquit exonerate & discharge the said John Tyzache his heirs estates & (?) for ever by their presence hath given granted & aliened, bargained, sold, enfeoffed confirmed demified & assigned & by these presents doth give..."

Line [14] "grant, alein, bargain, sell, enfeoff confirm of the said fifty & a half acres of Land Leases & premises with the Line [15] full equal & undivided Sixth part of all the tilled land improvements **Houses Saw & Corn Mills** & all the Iron work timber works, Mill Stones, tooles & Implements now belonging, unto, or which are Intented to [16] belong unto..."

As of 1691, all "improvements" were on the **West side of Wissahickon Creek and included a Saw Mill and a Corn Mill!**

⁶ From the document:

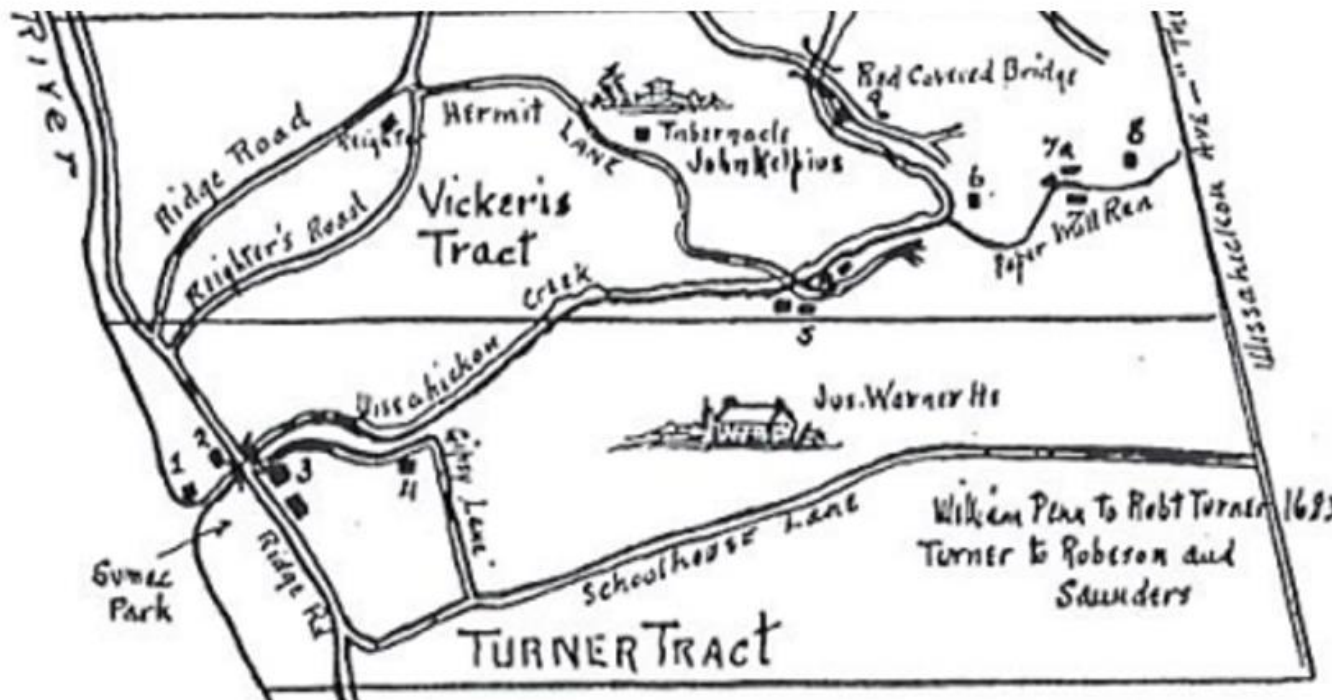


Recap of Indentures and Dates

Dating the agreements is difficult as many are recorded after the agreement date and some refer back to agreements not recorded. This recap ends with the 1691 sale of the lease and 500 acres of land to Andrew Robeson, Sr., and Charles Sanders.

Year	Name &/or Building Use	Robeson's Rolling Mill, References in Deeds & Wills, Maps, Pictures, Names and its Uses 1686 – 1905 Source and Notes	Key Links for Endnotes
1684	Original Land Grant	1684 William Penn "grants" 500 acres to Robert Turner	Turner 1684 signed by Wm Penn.pdf (philacano.org)
1686	<i>See Sources & Notes</i>	19 Jun 1686: 101-Year Lease 50.5 acres from R. Turner to J Tittery with boundaries land all on West side of the Wissahickon Creek	1686 Fifty and one half Acres Mapped.pdf (philacano.org)
1690	" Corn Mill " (On the West side of Wissahickon Creek)	8 Nov 1690 Indenture - Lease addendum adding C. Sanders & A. Robeson. West side of the Creek based on stated boundary lines and states that it contains a Saw Mill and a Corn Mill.	1690 Nov 8 J Tittery and R Townsend to A Robeson Word to Pdf.pdf (philacano.org)
1691	" Corn Mill " (On the West side of Wissahickon Creek)	4 Apr 1691 Indenture adding J Tyzache <u>as of 1689</u> (addition of Tyzache predates Robeson/Sanders agreement) and states that it contains a Saw Mill and a Corn Mill.	1691 Apr 4 Tittery and Townsend Lease to Tyzache.pdf (philacano.org)
1691	" Corn Mill "	11 Jul 1691 Indenture from R. Turner, Tittery et al. land & lease to A. Robeson and C Sanders; it states that it contains a Saw Mill and a Corn Mill.	11 July 1691 Deed.pdf (philacano.org)
1691	" " "	" " " (Different version, official transcription than above.)	https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSF1-91Y9?i=499&cat=227024

Robeson Rolling Mill: One of the three “Wissahickon Mills” - Douglas Macfarlan’s 1932 map



1932 Map drawn by Douglas Macfarlan, author of The Wissahickon Mills. Mills #1 and #2 were built by Richard Townsend et al. between 1686-1691.

One mystery: when was Mill #3 built?

The boundaries section of the original 1686 lease in the Philadelphia City Archive's "Oversize documents" related to Fairmount Park Purchases.

This Indenture made the Nineteenth day of the first
James the second of England & King Between Robert Turner
sylvania in the parts of America West of the one part & Joshua Tittery of said Province
Robert Turner [for & in Consideration of the yearly rent & other Covenants & Assurances to be
Assigned in manner underwritten] hath demise & granted and to farm Lett
to the said Joshua Tittery his heirs and Assigns a certain piece or parcel of Land in the sa
Land Called Shomack's park] Beginning at a Corner marked Birch-Tree standing by the e
marked poplar standing upon Washehickan Run, from thence Down the severall Courses of t
Downe South South West fifty six perches, thence West & by North forty perches, thence
hill Creek & thence North West up the said Still-Creek eighty four perches, to the said
fifty & a halfe acres of Land, with fire-boat, drudge-boat, key-boat and plow-boat, & with
possession & Occupation of the said Robert Turner by vertue of a patent of Confirmation
named by Wm Penn Proprietarie & Governour of the said Province bearing date the 24
29th of the 5th Mo: July thereafter To have & to hold the said fifty & a
Assigned from the day of the date hereof for during and unto the full end and Terme of
years Yielding & paying therefore the said Joshua Tittery his heirs or Assigns
City of Philadelphia for the Time then being the sum of six pence Current Money of the
years, during the said Terme of one hundred & one years, (Amounting in the whole to the
Two Terms in the year By equall portions, Viz Twelve Shillings & seven pence half penny
 ensuing in this instant year 1686 & Twelve Shillings & seven pence half penny Money a
 in full of the said first years rent, & so forth yearly & each year for during and unto the
 between the said parties to these presents, And the said Joshua Tittery for him self

the nineteenth day of the fourth Month June in the year 1686 Being the second year of the Reign of x & x
Robert Turner of the Town and County of Philadelphia in the Province of Penn
the County of said Town & County heoman of the other part **Witnesseth** That **doe** the said
After mentioned to be paid & performed to him his heirs & Assigns by the said Joshua Tittery his heirs and
and to farme Letter, & by these presents for him his heirs & Assigns do demise grant & to farmelett &
of Land in the said County, [being part & parcell of his the said Robert Turner his five hundred Acres of
Standing by the Skunk Kill river, thence East-North-east two hundred & Twenty three perches to a Corner
berall Course of the said River, Viz South-west & by South Twenty perches, thence South-west Twenty perches
the perches, thence South-west Forty four perches, thence South-South-west Forty perches unto Skunk
erches, to the said first marker Spring Tree, being the place of beginning, containing and lends out for an
two-hundred & sixty all other its rights members, Improvements and appurtenances, Now in the Tenure and
of Confirmation of the said five hundred acres of Land granted to him his heirs & Assigns the said
y date the 24th of the 4th Mo June 1684, Recorded in the Patent Office at Philadelphia the
said fifty & a halfe Acres of Land & promised aforesaid to him the said Joshua Tittery his heirs and
and Term of One hundred and one year, from hence next ensuing and fully to be Completed &
heirs or Assigns unto him the said Robert Turner his heirs or Assigns at their dwelling house in the
Money of the said Province for each one of the said fifty & a halfe Acres of Land yearly & each
two shillings to the sum of Twenty five Shillings and Three-pence Money aforesaid yearly) and that at the
ence half-penny Money aforesaid at or upon the first day of the Eleventh Month (January) next
enny Money aforesaid at or upon the first day of the fifth Month (July) the next in the year 1687
and unto the full end and Term of the said One hundred & One year And it is Covenanted
ery for him his heirs and Assigns to and with the said Robert Turner his heirs and