

HISTORY

The Lenni Lenape Indians hunted the woods in Mercer County Park Northwest thousands of years ago. They might have cleared Pole Farm land for fuel, for a village site, or for growing corn or squash.

English settlers arrived in the 1700's, having bought their acreage from a Quaker society. The Quakers had purchased the lands from Dr. Daniel Cox, who owned 45,000 acres in West Jersey.

The land was farmed for the next 200 years. Salathiel Pierson was one of the first settlers in the Pole Farm. He built his home at the end of Van Kirk Road around 1762.

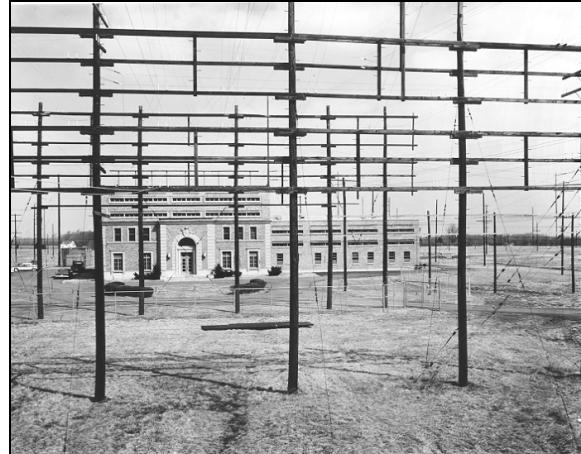


Salathiel Pierson House

The Pierson House was moved to its present location on Cold Soil Road in the 1920's after American Telephone and Telegraph purchased the 800 acre parcel to build a short-wave radio station.

The land was cleared and the AT&T Pole Farm was built. Because of the high voltage equipment the site was closed to the public and rumors flew about the purpose of the transmission towers. In 1965 it was the largest radio telephone station in the world. A 3-minute call from New York to England cost \$45.

By 1975 new cable and satellite systems had made the transmission station obsolete. AT&T shut it down; the poles were taken down (except for the one still standing off



AT&T Main Transmission Building

Federal City Road), and the buildings were demolished.

During the 1980's, AT&T rented the vacant land to three local farmers. On the fields were oats, soybeans and the cows on the last dairy farm in the area.

The early 1990's brought pressure for development when AT&T put the square mile parcel on the market. Hopelawe, a proposed 360 home gated community with a private golf course, was stymied by public opposition to sewer service for it.

In 1995 the Pole Farm was purchased by Mercer County for 8.6 million dollars, as a component in its Northwest Park. Since then it has continued to be farmed and its trails are now used by the public for hiking, biking and birdwatching.

The dairy farm is out of business, but the fields continue to produce--cover crops, a corn maze, and in 1997, one mysterious crop circle.



View to the Northwest