

Amacaron County, New Jersey

Don't bother; it's not on the map. It's not on **any** of the maps, or at least the ones that are publicly available. Turns out, somebody in the late 1930s went through the records under the guise of a Civil Works Administration program, and amended, altered, defaced, and in a couple of places outright replaced the relevant entries. And they did a thorough job; the only documents and maps left to the public that still mention the existence of Amacaron County between 1684 and 1785 escaped notice only because they had been misfiled previously.

What's left is tantalizing. The remaining records only vaguely describe Amacaron County, but it seems to have been somewhere near the border of present-day Burlington and Atlantic Counties in New Jersey's Pine Barrens. Most of the old county is now part of the Wharton State Forest, and it was never heavily populated; the county 'seat' of Ungstead was barely a hamlet, and the population was mostly the descendants of displaced Swedish and Finnish colonists from the former New Sweden colony to the west. There is a suggestion in the records that the latter, at least, were heavily encouraged to

settle in the middle of the Pine Barrens -- whether they wanted to, or not.

It should also be noted that none of the records remaining give any suggestion that the inhabitants of Amacaron County were well-liked, or indeed liked at all. This may be an artifact of what material survived; there still remains a list of formal petitions against the county to the Royal governors, mostly involving general complaints about brigandage, disorder, impiety, licentiousness, inciting riotous behavior among the remaining Indian tribes, and other vague but sinister accusations. But the catalyst for the elimination of the county was the Revolutionary War: Amacaron county apparently picked the Loyalist side, but did so in a way that thoroughly alienated the British while simultaneously infuriating the Patriots. Once the Revolution succeeded, Amacaron County was politically eliminated during the anti-Tory reprisals that followed. No massacres, but a fair amount of reprisals.

Again, none of this is readily available to the public; finding out the above would require a good, solid few man-days worth of research among state records, once somebody found out about the existence of Amacaron County in the first place. It's unclear why the state government of New Jersey felt the need to erase an entire county -- and it's

even more unclear why the federal government felt the need to erase the evidence of the erasure. As for tracking down the remains of the county itself; well, good luck. The Pine Barrens is one of the most underpopulated sections of the country, and almost insanely so when you contemplate that it's part of the Boston-Washington Corridor. The location of Ungstead itself is thoroughly lost, but it's probably moldering away in a protected wildlands somewhere, and most of the local population have never heard of the town to begin with.

And the ones that have heard of it, *don't* care to speak of it. Those people tend to keep to themselves, not care for strangers, and *definitely* not care for either noisy or nosy ones. And they all seem to carry short little belt knives that are clearly descended from the Finnish *puukko*, too. But that's just probably a lingering cultural thing. Just like all those stories about the Jersey Devil -- which, hey, are part of the rich folkloric tradition of the New Jersey Pine Barrens! Funny coincidence, that.

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