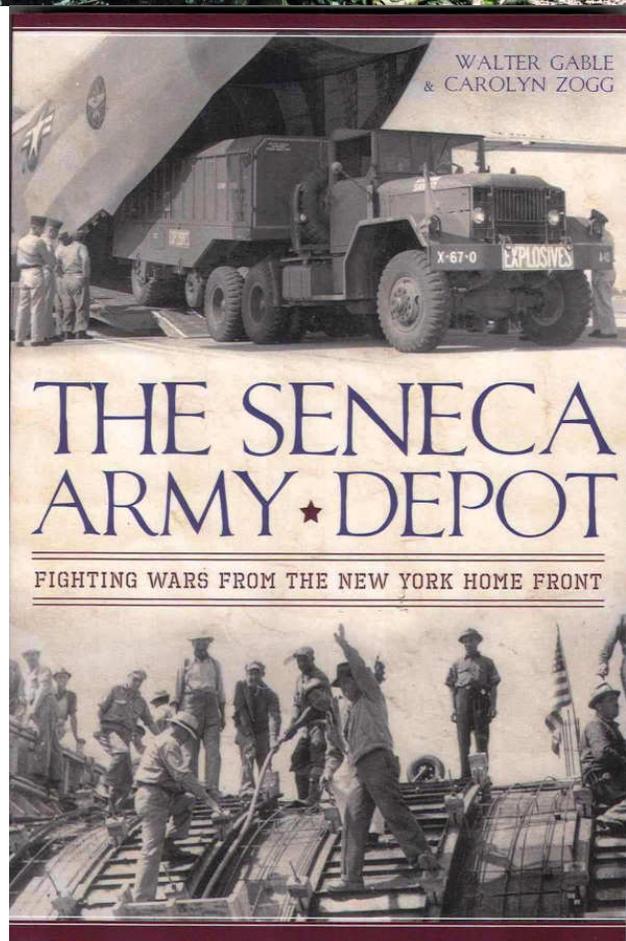


***Down by the Old Mill Stream:
What Connection Is There Between
the Seneca Army Depot and
Reeder Creek Water Quality?***



**Seneca County
Historian
Walter Gable
October 29, 2015**



Verse 2 of the 1908 song “Down by the Old Mill Stream” begins with these words:



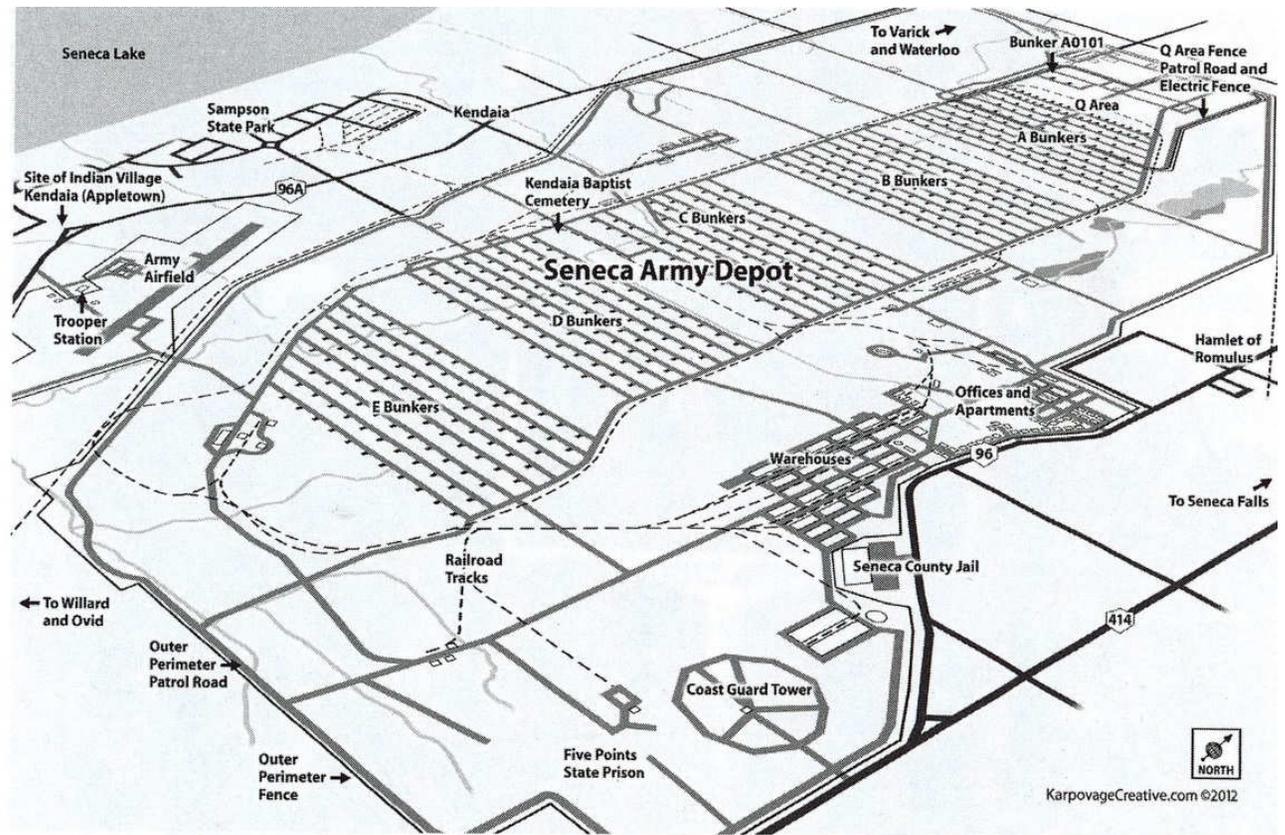
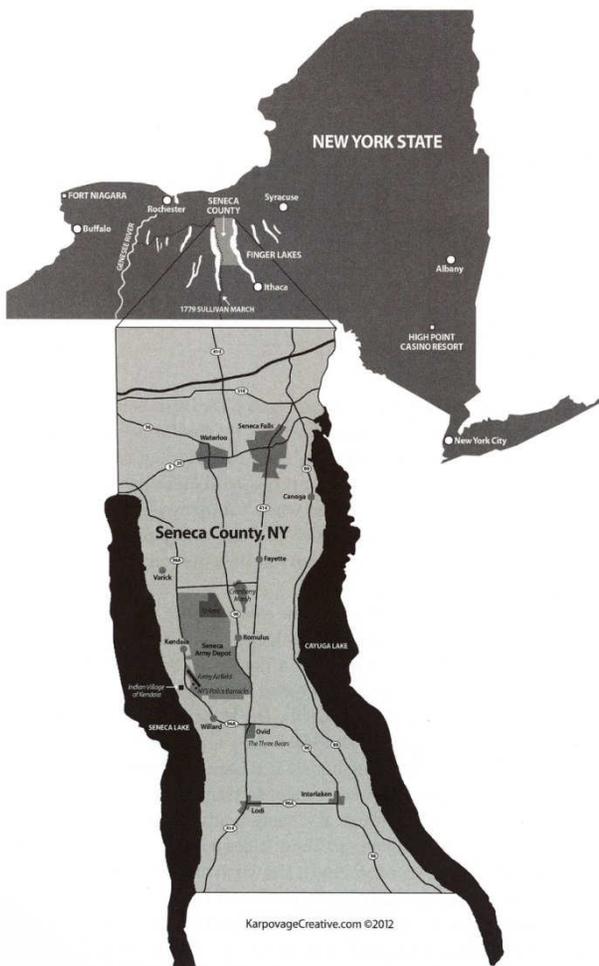
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Question: How much has this seemingly beautiful little Reeder Creek been affected by activities at the former Seneca Army Depot?

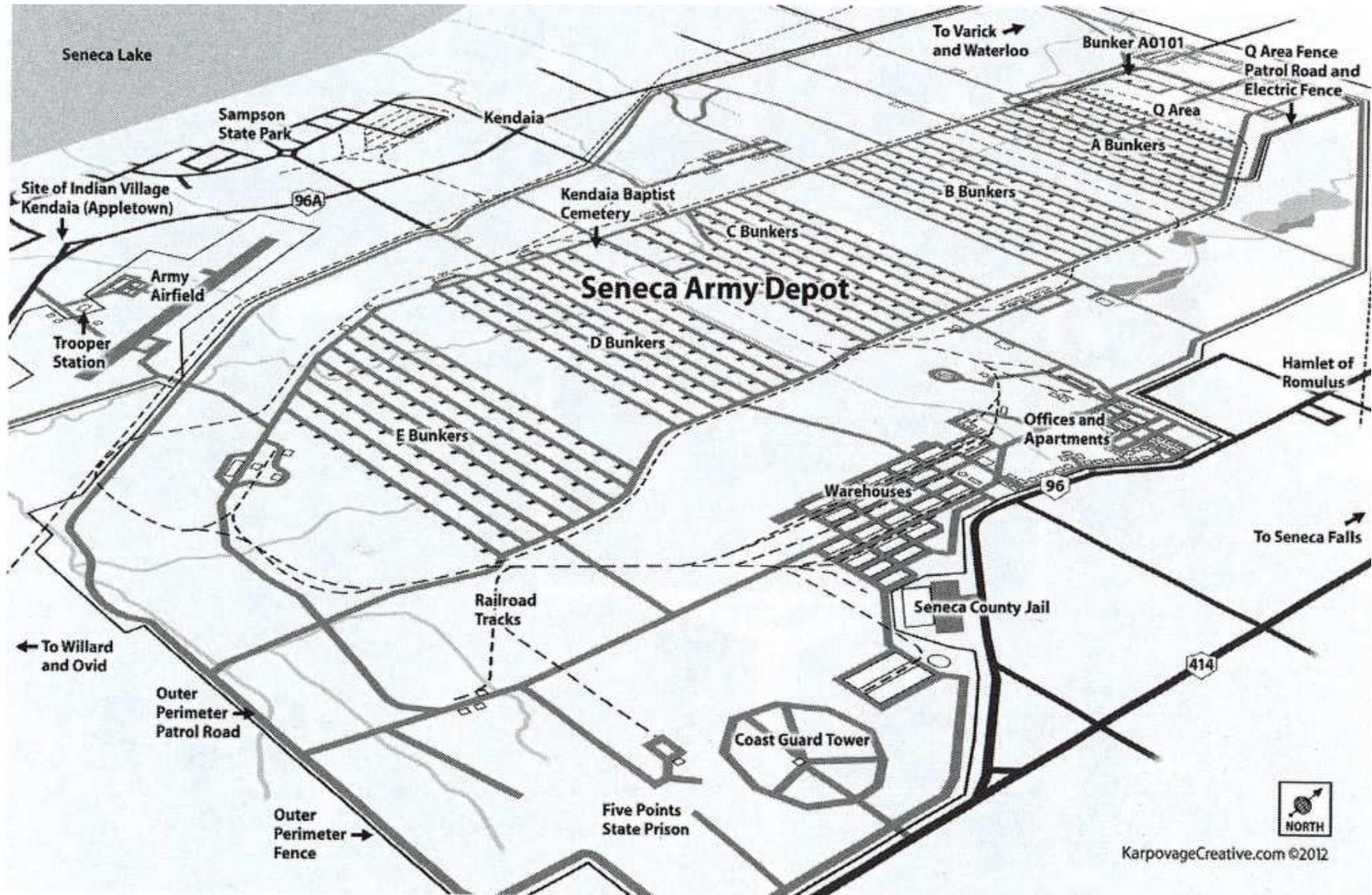


Demilitarization of Obsolete Ammunition



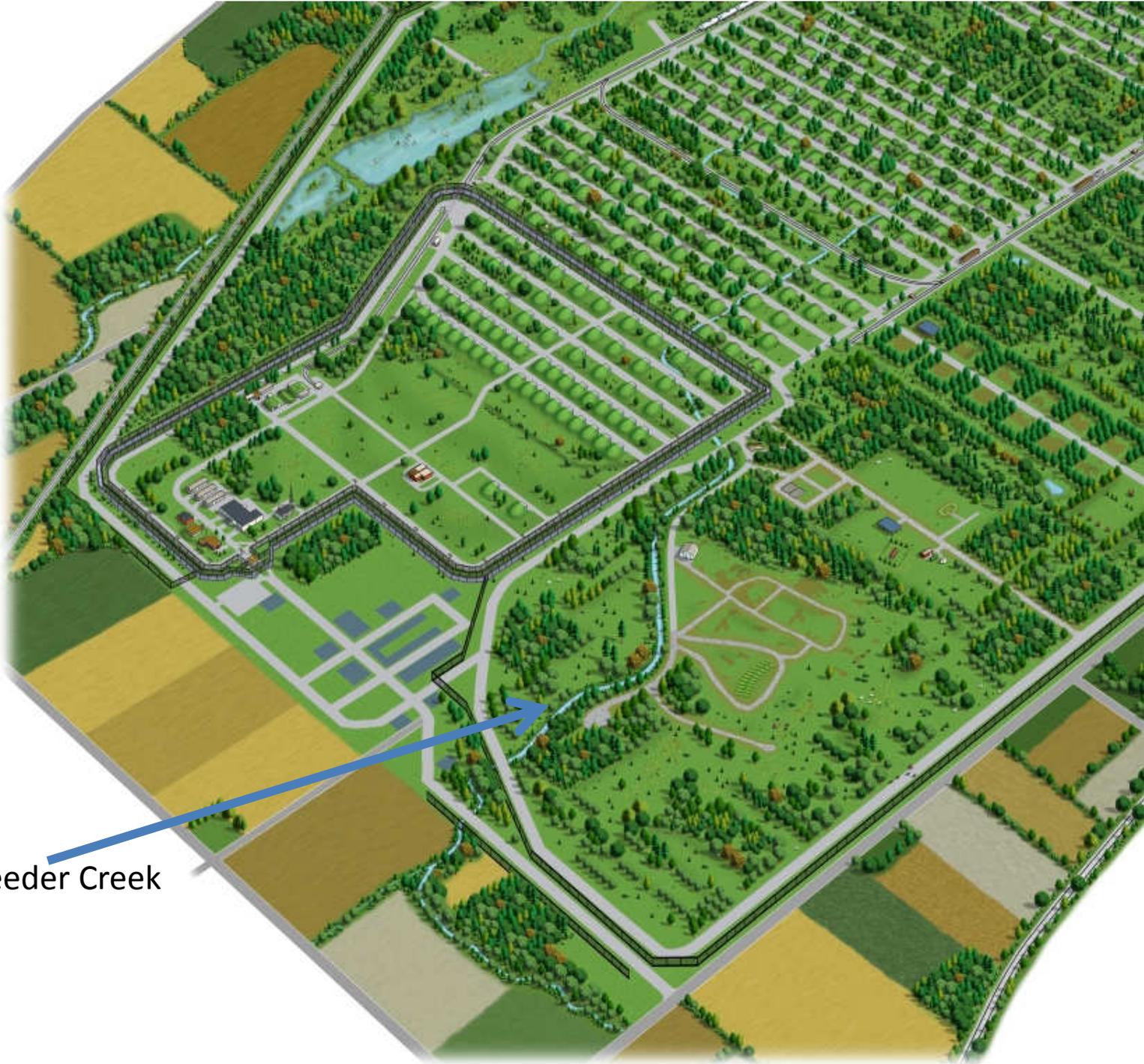


Note the location of the munitions igloos of the depot, the Q area where the “special weapons” activity took place, as well as the location of new operations on the former depot.
Courtesy of Michael Karpovage.



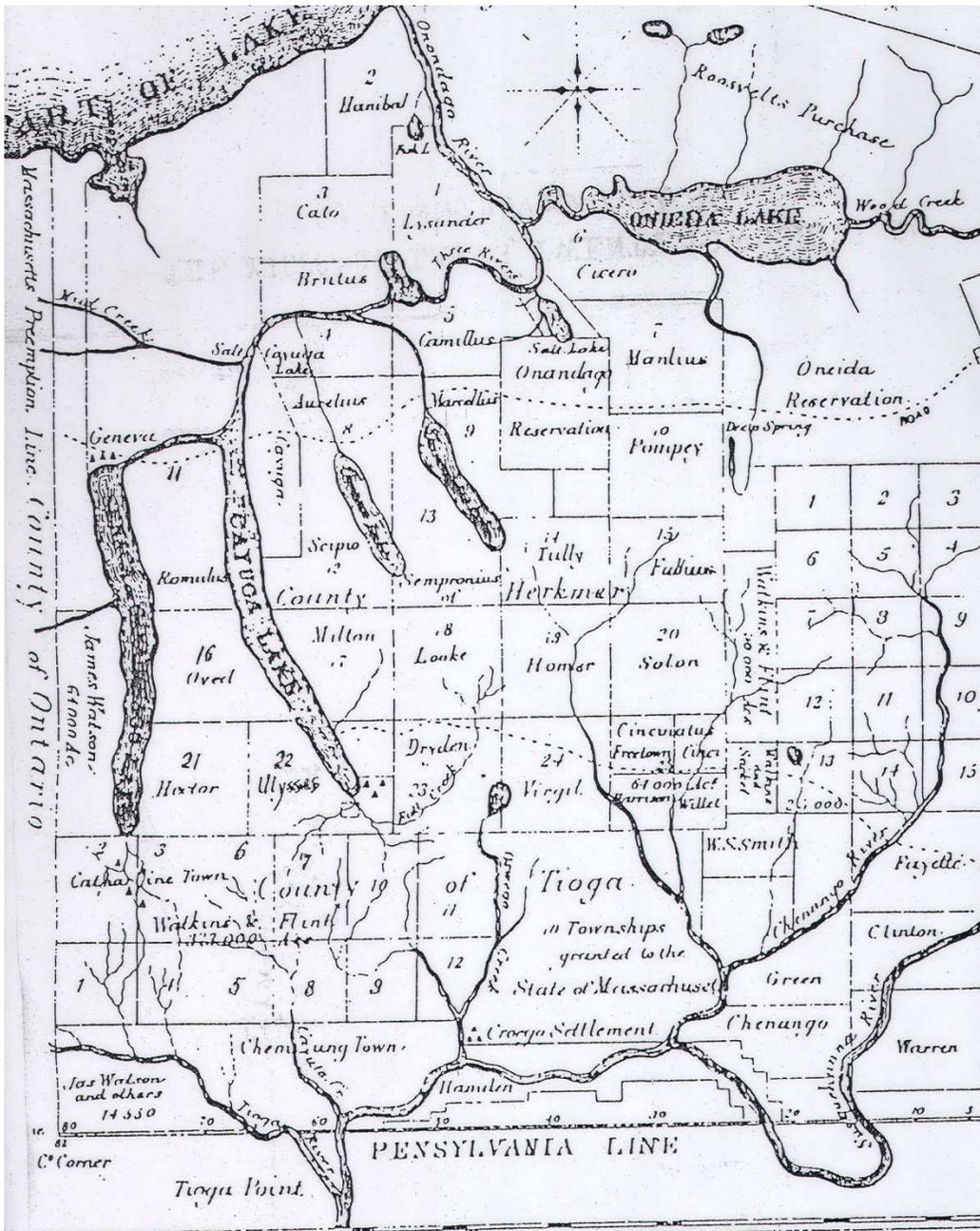
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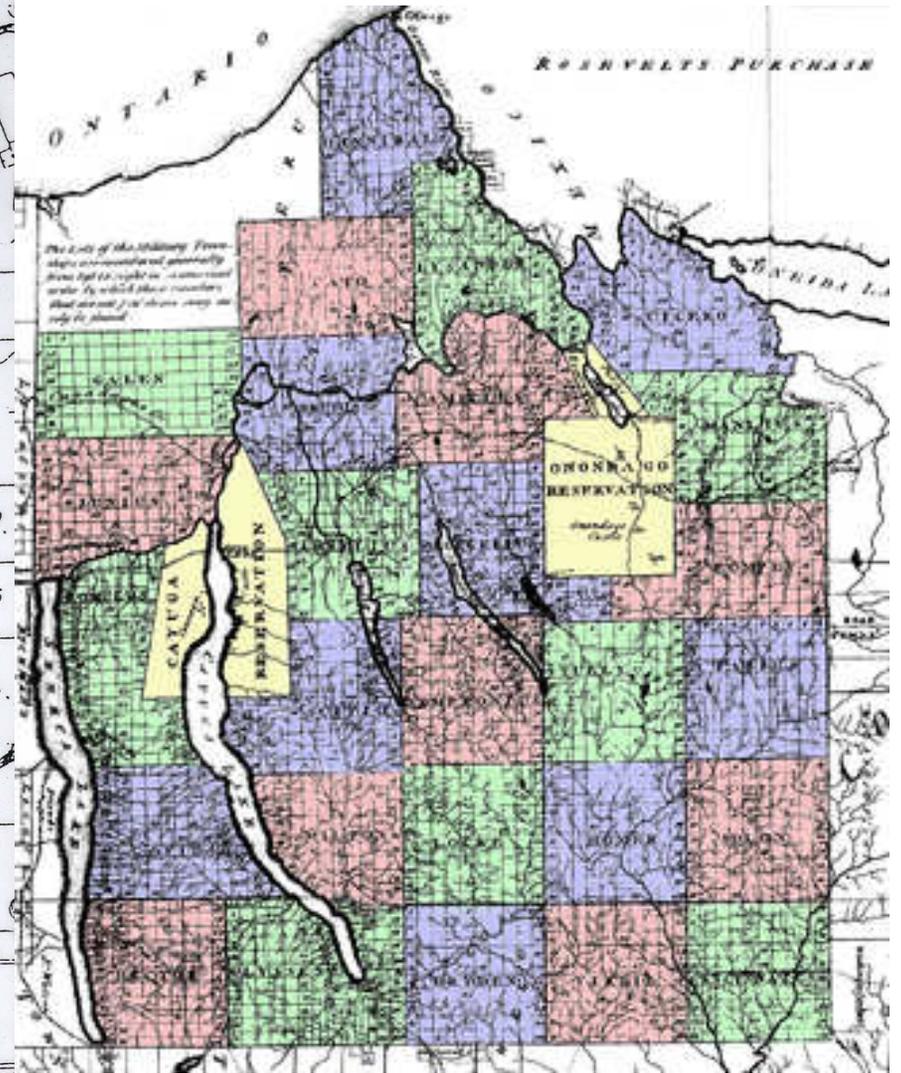


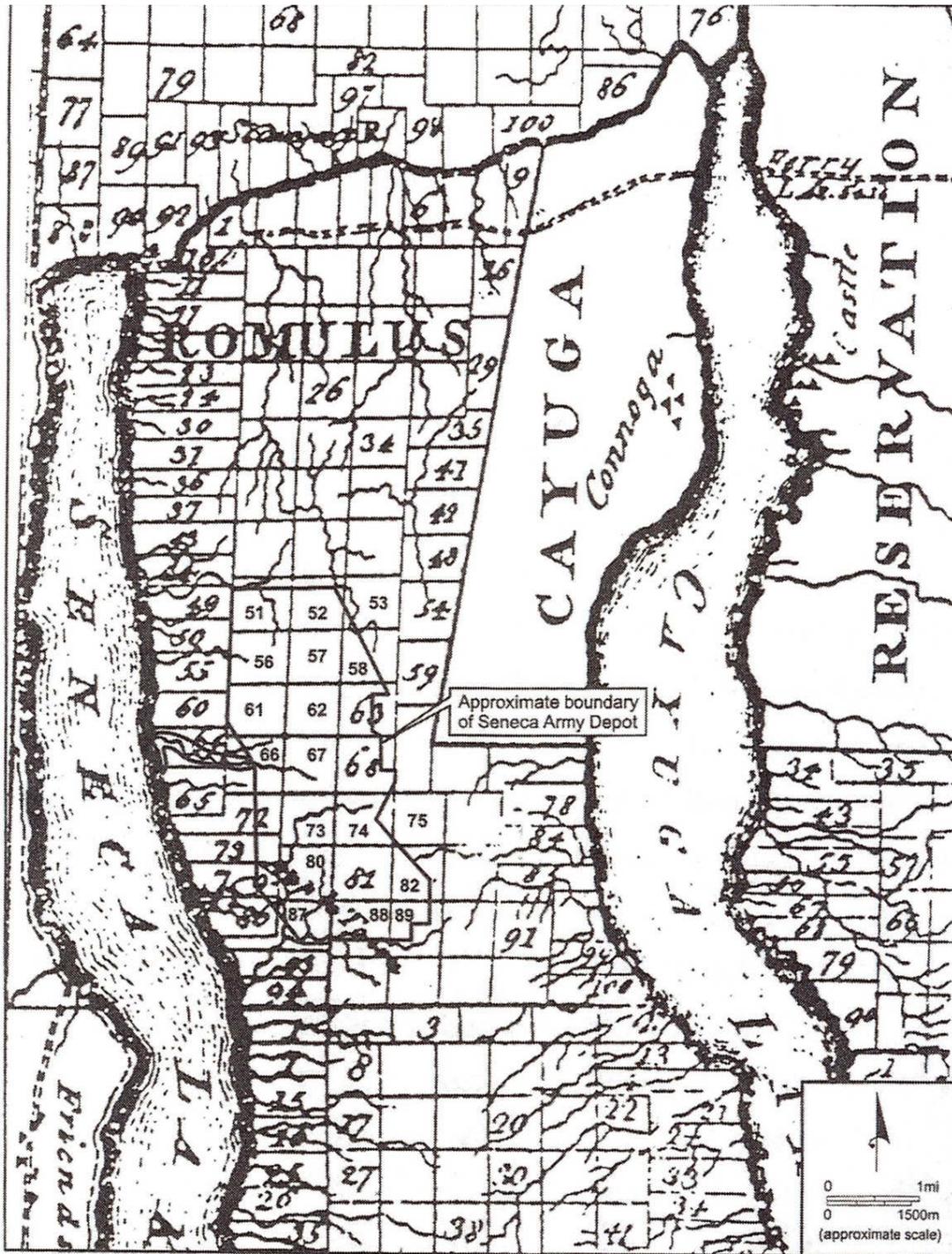
Reeder Creek

The Military Tract

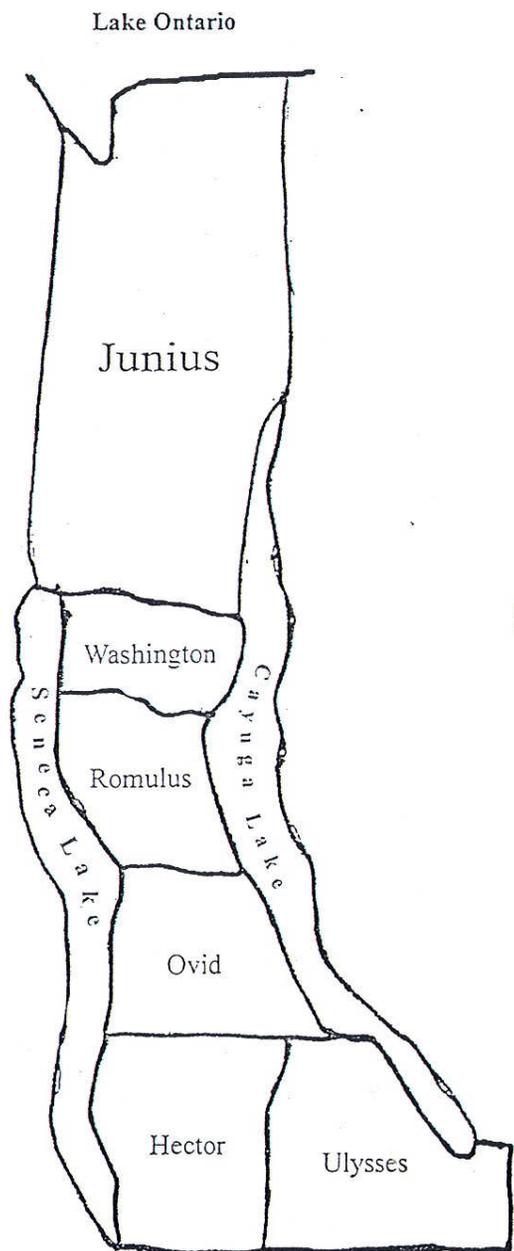


THE MILITARY LANDS, TWENTY TOWNSHIPS, &c.
Of Western New-York State.

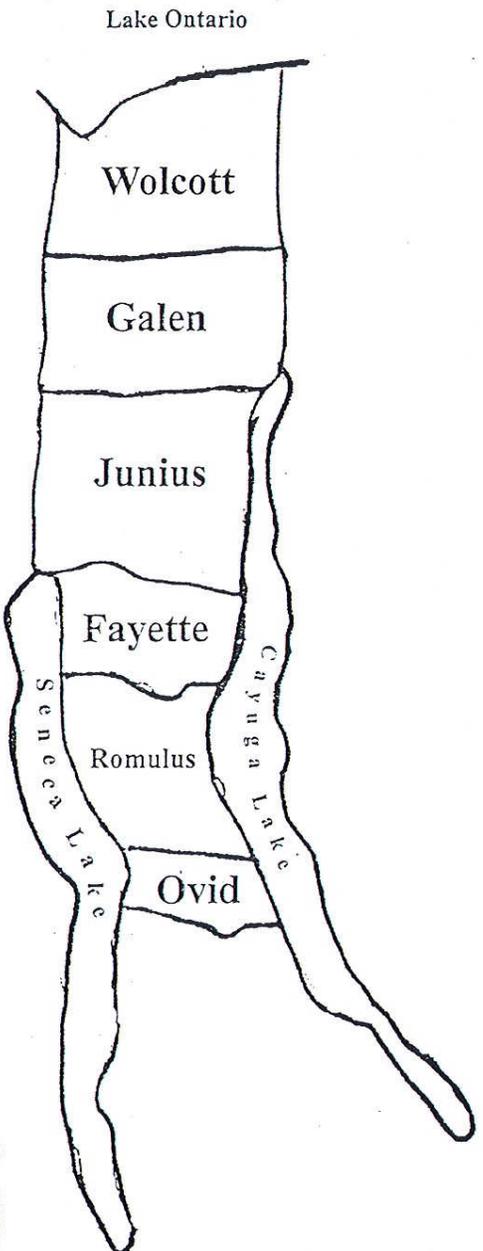




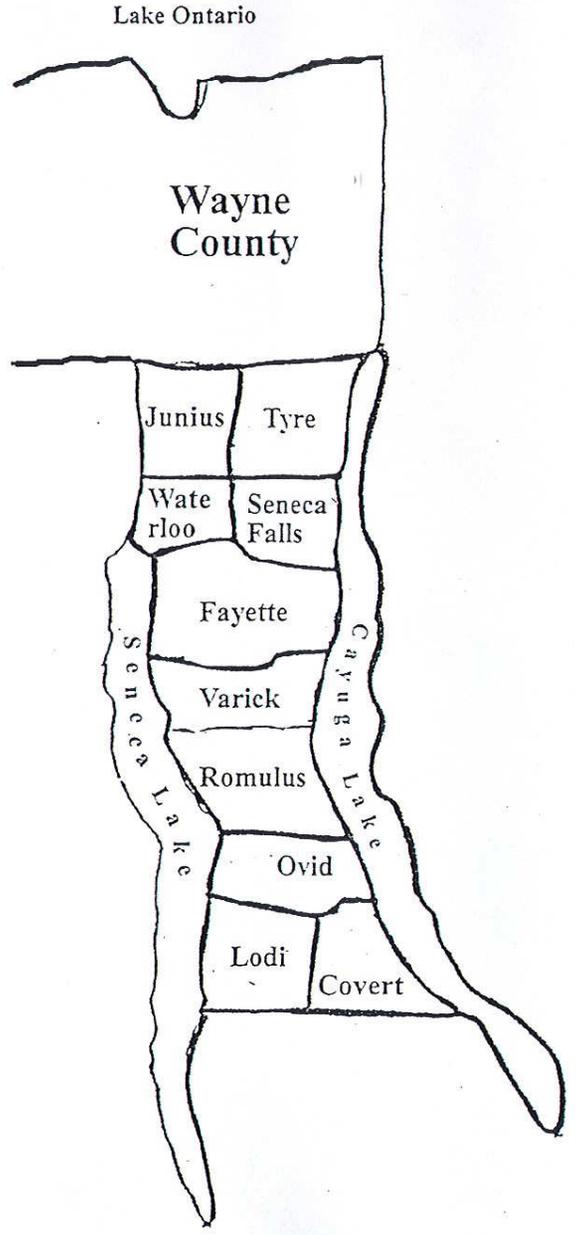
Note the numbered lots of the Military Tract of the towns of Romulus and Varick that became the Seneca Ordnance Depot in 1941. *Courtesy of the Seneca County Historian's Office.*



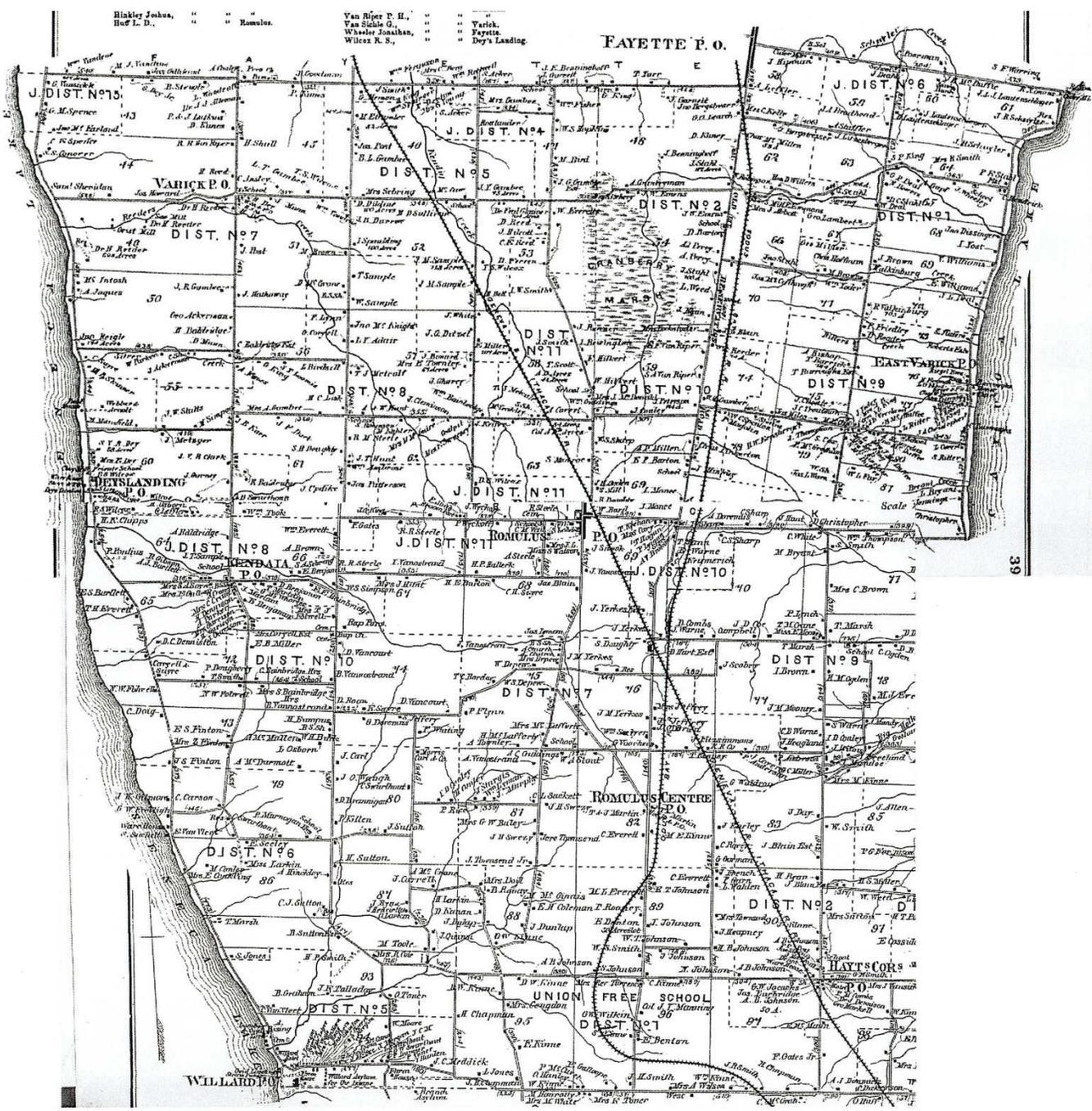
SENECA COUNTY
1804



SENECA COUNTY
1817



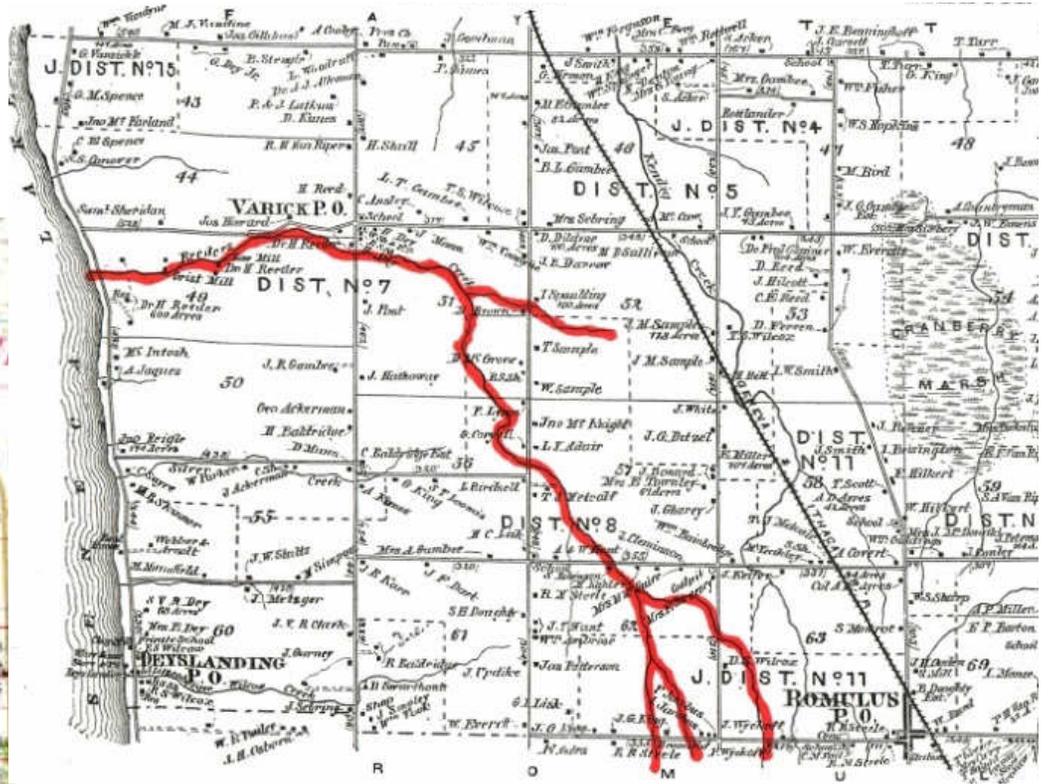
SENECA COUNTY
1830



**1874 maps of
Varick (all)
and western
portion of
Romulus**



Reeder Creek



Early History of This Area

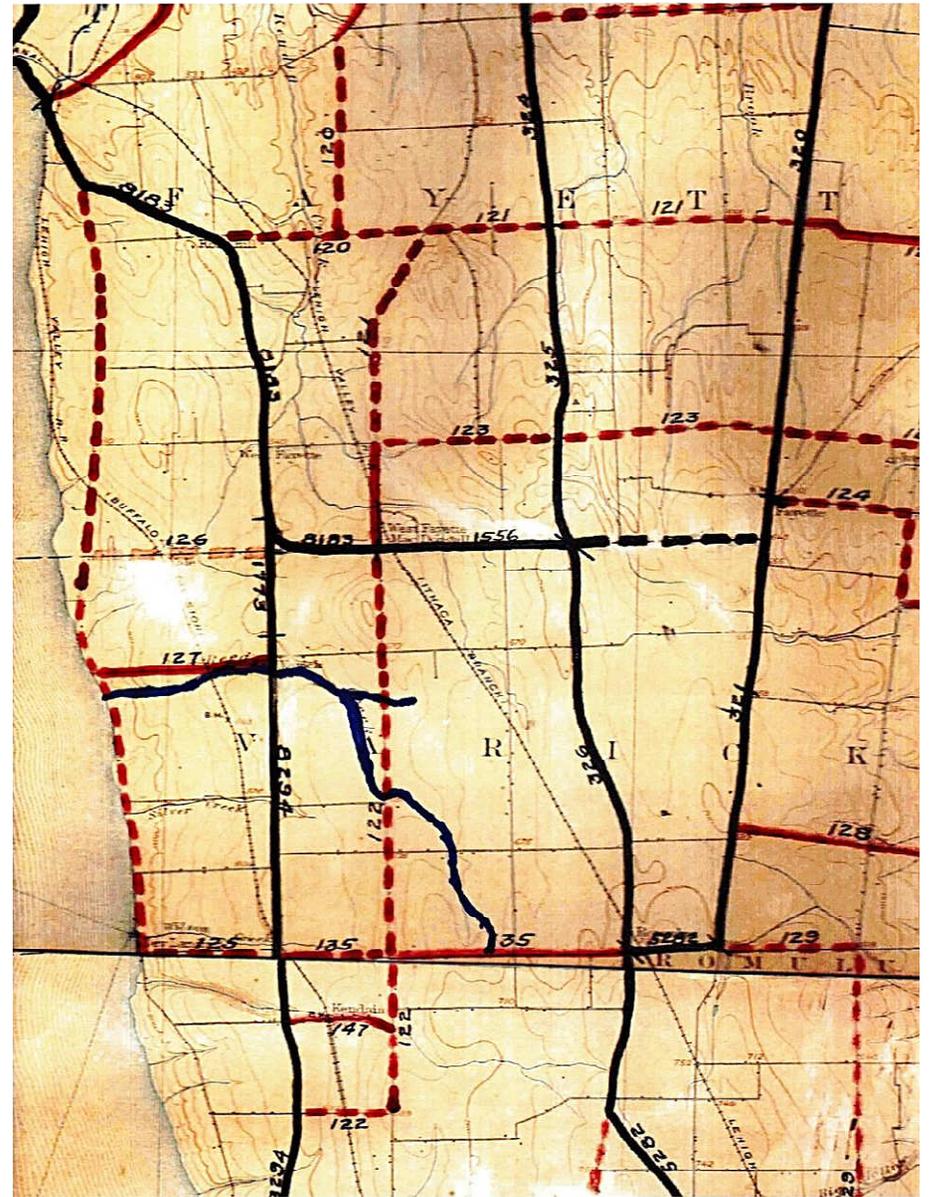
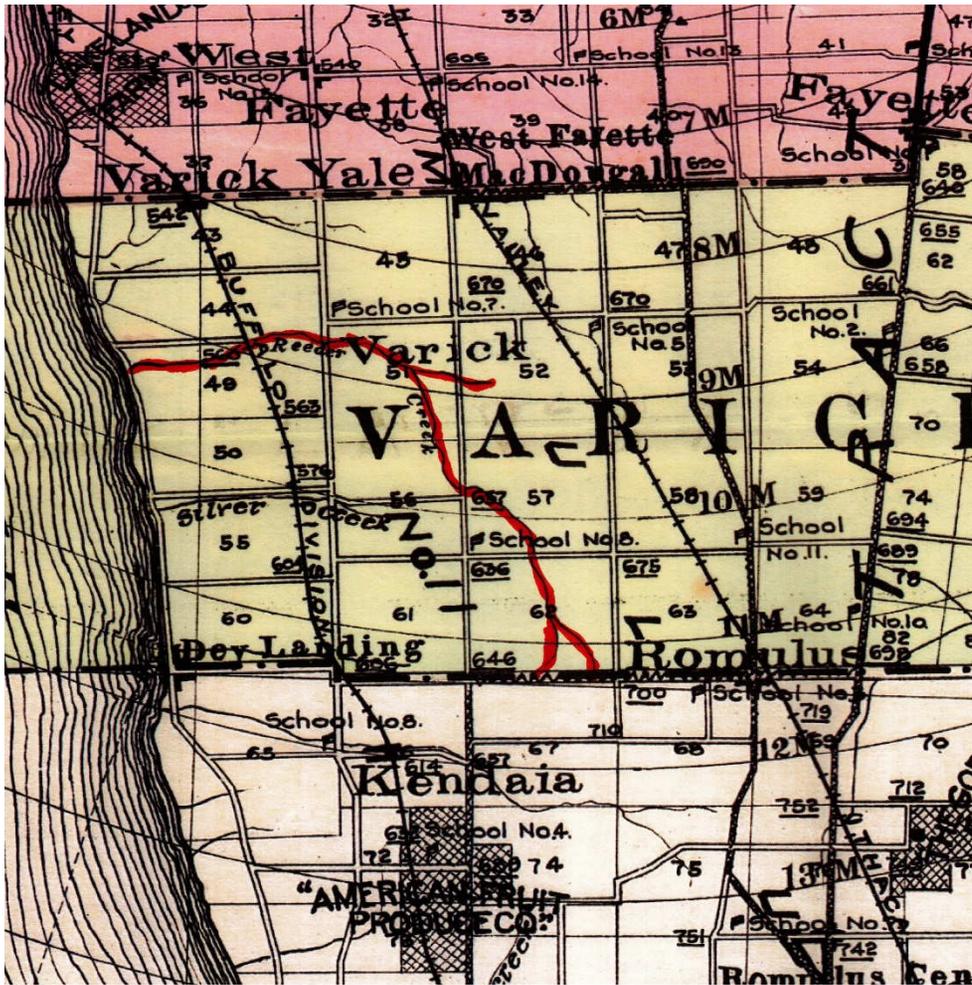
- c. 3500 to 1300 BC -- Lamoka culture – people were primarily hunters, fishers, and gatherers
- 1656 – group of Jesuit missionaries visited the Cayugas, establishing a mission near Savannah
- 1750—Moravian missionaries, Cammerhoff and Zeisberger, visited the Cayugas on their way westward to meet with the Senecas
- 1765—Rev. Samuel Kirkland lived with the Senecas
- September 1779—Sullivan Expedition drove Iroquois Indians out of the area and destroyed their orchards, crops, etc.
- What is today Seneca County was the western-most portion of the Military Tract that was surveyed and given to NY veterans of the Revolutionary War
- First settlers in what is today Seneca County
 - 1786 – Horatio Jones temporarily set up trading post in Waterloo
 - 1787 – Job Smith temporarily in the Flats area of Seneca Falls
 - 1789 – Lawrence Van Cleef, George Faussett, Dunlap brothers (Andrew, William & George), James Wilson, Peter Smith
 - 1792 – Samuel Bear in Waterloo (Skoi-Yase)
 - Town of Romulus – David Wisner (Lot 95 in 1789), John D. Coe, Jr., Anthony Swarthout, Isaac Johnson, Haynes Bartlett, Alla McMath and James McKnight

- 1824—Benjamin Dey passed away & property willed to son Alexander H. Dey
- Alexander Dey sold property to Dr. Henry Reeder
- Dr. Henry Reeder
 - Born Sept. 19, 1796 in East Sheffield, England
 - Studied at University of Edinburgh, graduated in 1820
 - Member of the Royal College of Surgeons of London
 - Came to U.S. in Oct. 1840 but did not practice medicine here
 - Apparently married twice and had 4 children:
 - a) Isabella married Jacob Hathaway of New Jersey
 - b) William married Elizabeth Spoon of Fayette and was farmer in Varick
 - c) David married Elizabeth Miller of Varick and passed away in New York City
 - d) John married Roxana and lived in Varick until 1909 and they had 4 children
 - Dr. Reeder died November 14, 1880 and is buried in the West Fayette Cemetery



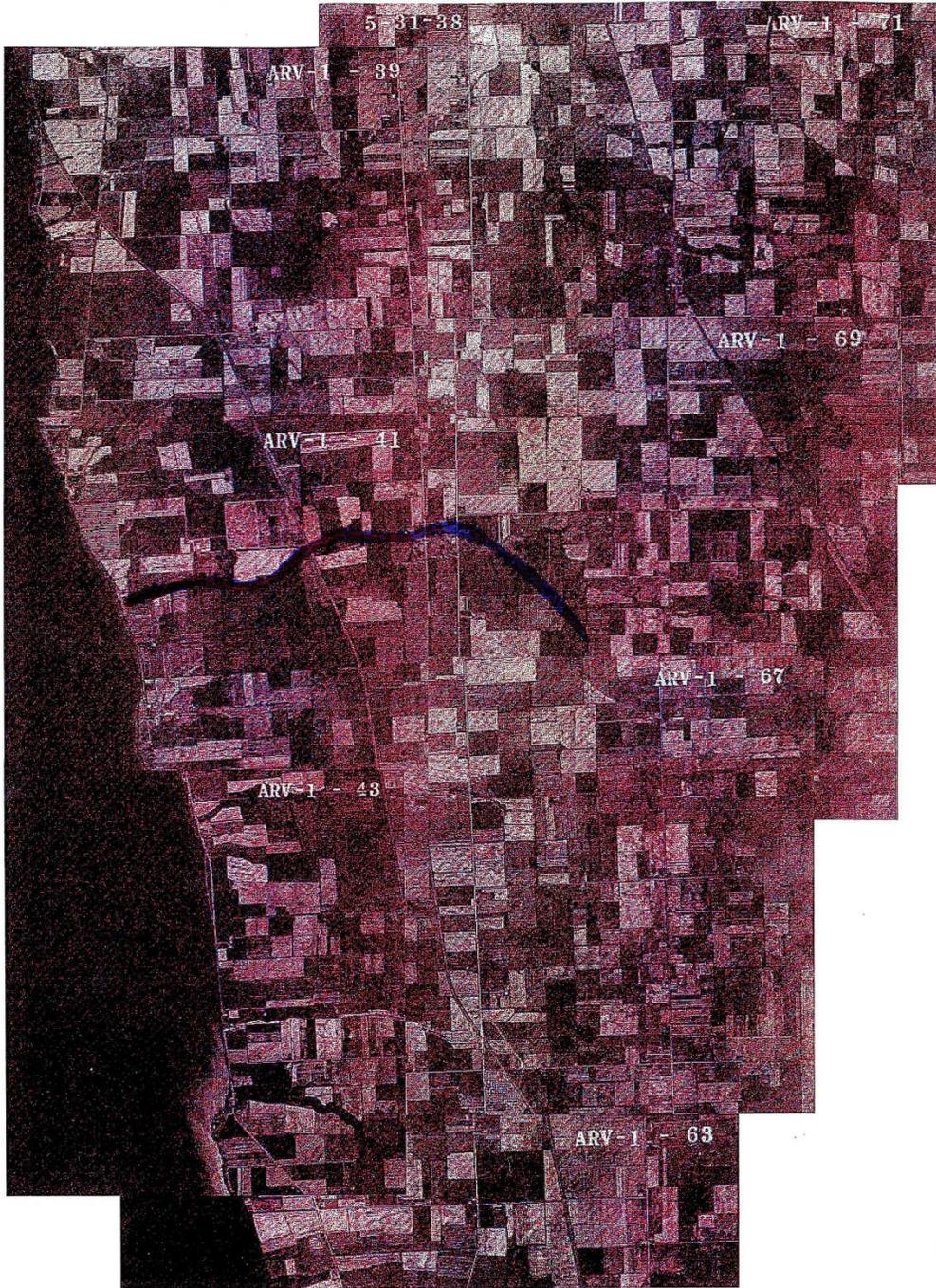
2nd Highway crossing East of Yale, N. Y.

View No.44: Camera located on South side of track in center of traveled highway 85'
from near rail No.2 track. View East.



Above left—c. 1915 map of area

Right—1929 highway map of area



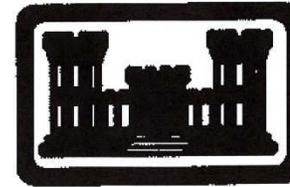
Composite of various
1938 aerial maps, with
Reeder Creek in blue

**EPA Superfund
Record of Decision:**

SENECA ARMY DEPOT
EPA ID: NY0213820830
OU 02
ROMULUS, NY
06/14/1999

The 1999 study that presents U.S. Army's selected remedial action for soils at the Superfund site known as the former Open Burning Grounds located within the Seneca Army Depot Activity (SEDA).

Goal—ensure that potential human health & ecological risks from hazardous substances in soils & groundwater are with acceptable criteria established by the EPA and NYSDEC.



FINAL

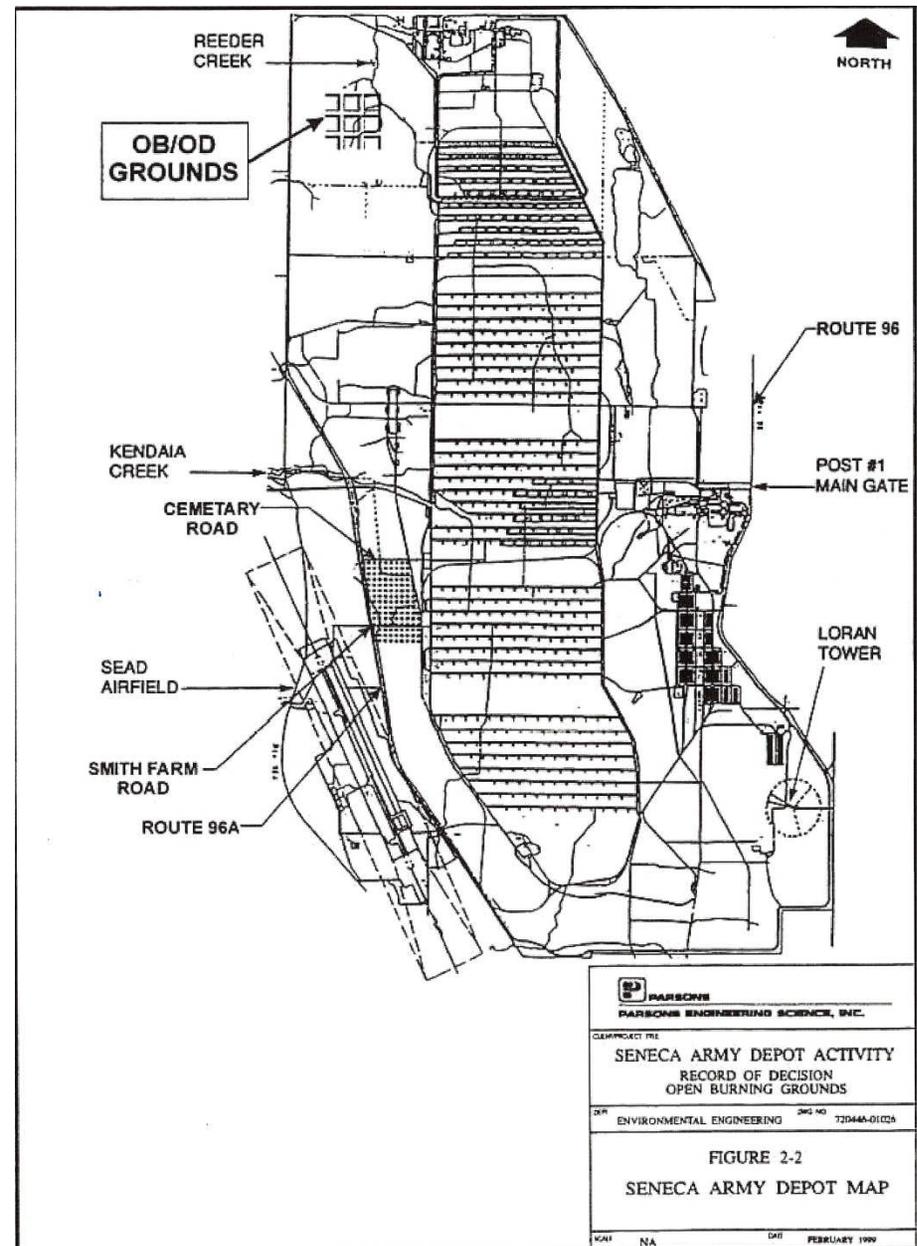
**OPEN BURNING (OB) GROUNDS
RECORD OF DECISION (ROD)**

SENECA ARMY DEPOT ACTIVITY (SEDA)

FEBRUARY 1999

What was this Open Burning (OB) Grounds?

- “The OB Grounds was used for surface burning of explosive trash and propellants.”
- “The OB Grounds site occupies approximately 30 acres with the 10,587 acres of land that comprise SEDA in Romulus, New York.”



SELLING OF SENECA

A Cold War relic for rent

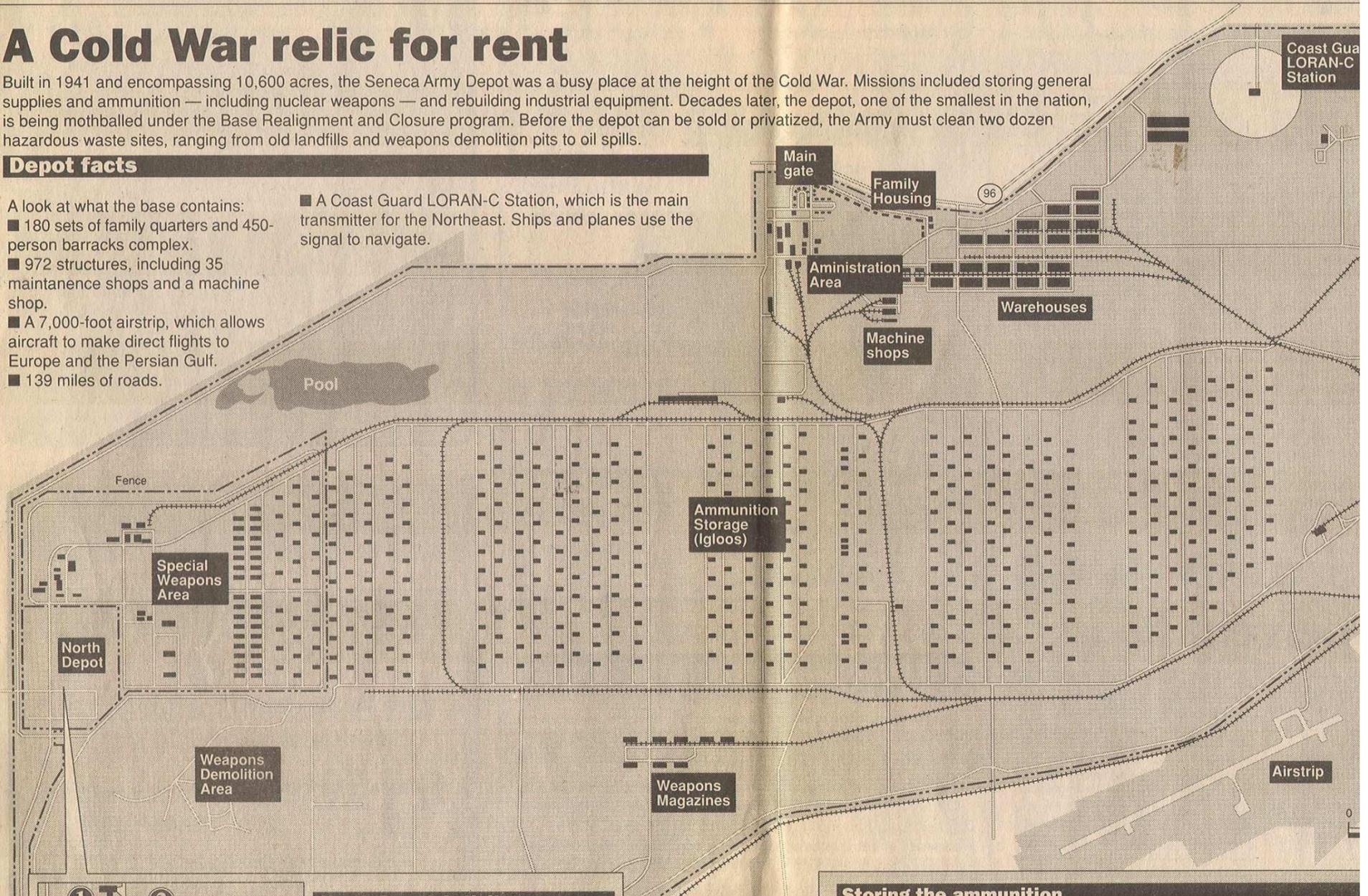
Built in 1941 and encompassing 10,600 acres, the Seneca Army Depot was a busy place at the height of the Cold War. Missions included storing general supplies and ammunition — including nuclear weapons — and rebuilding industrial equipment. Decades later, the depot, one of the smallest in the nation, is being mothballed under the Base Realignment and Closure program. Before the depot can be sold or privatized, the Army must clean two dozen hazardous waste sites, ranging from old landfills and weapons demolition pits to oil spills.

Depot facts

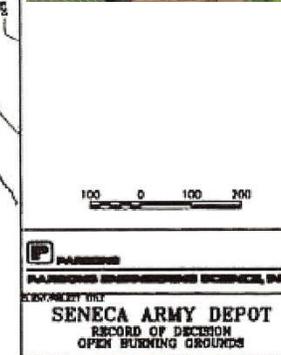
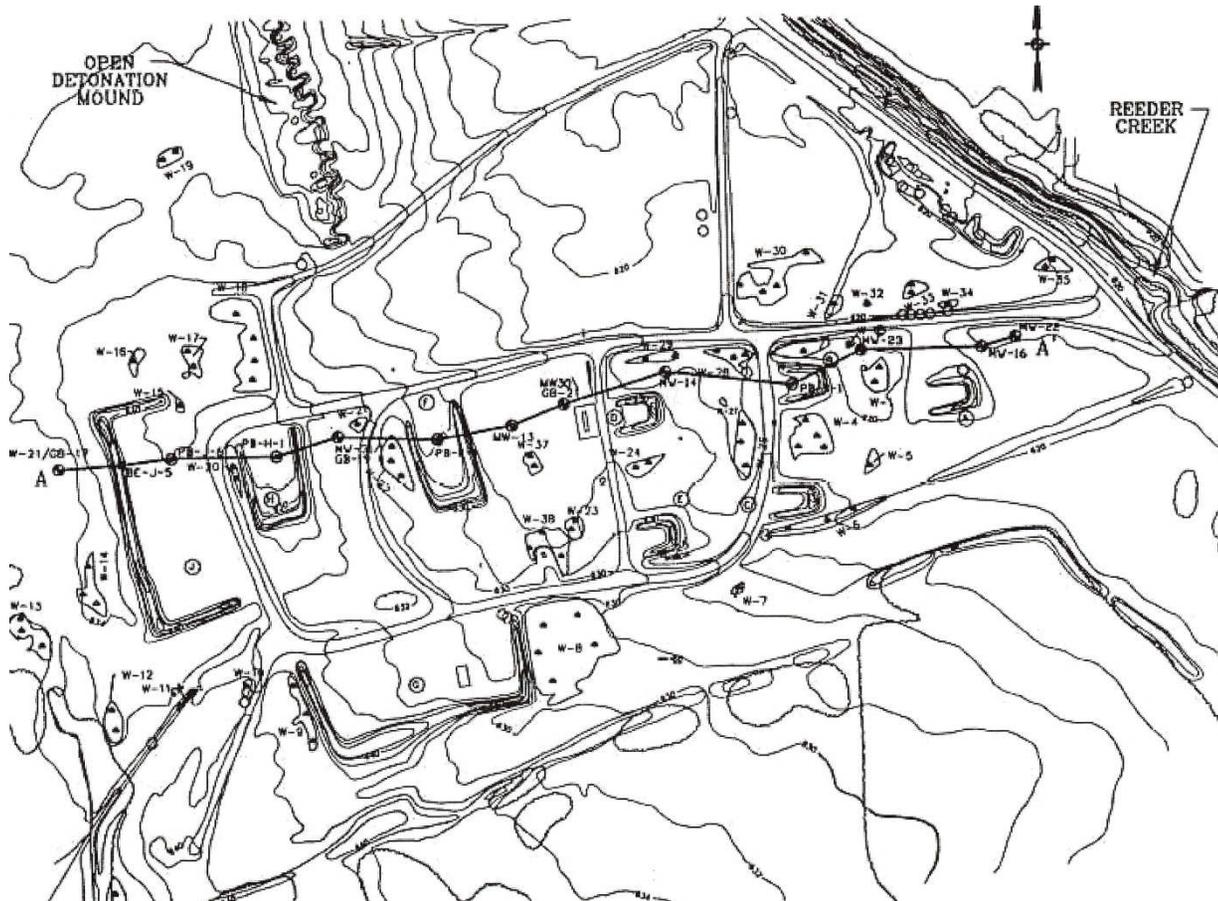
A look at what the base contains:

- 180 sets of family quarters and 450-person barracks complex.
- 972 structures, including 35 maintenance shops and a machine shop.
- A 7,000-foot airstrip, which allows aircraft to make direct flights to Europe and the Persian Gulf.
- 139 miles of roads.

- A Coast Guard LORAN-C Station, which is the main transmitter for the Northeast. Ships and planes use the signal to navigate.



Storing the ammunition



Until 1987

- “The open burning procedure involved the preparation of combustible beds of pallets and wooden boxes on the pads followed by the placement of ammunition or the components to be militarized on the beds.”
- 9 burning pads ranging size from 100 by 100 feet to 300 by 800 feet
- These pads are “built on top of the natural glacial till soils”
- “poor drainage characteristics of the soil” so “individual burn pads built up with crushed shale and soils” (0.5 to 2 feet of crushed shale)

After 1987— “munitions were destroyed by burning them within an aboveground steel tray to minimize the impact of the burning on the environment.”



Demilitarization of Obsolete Ammunition

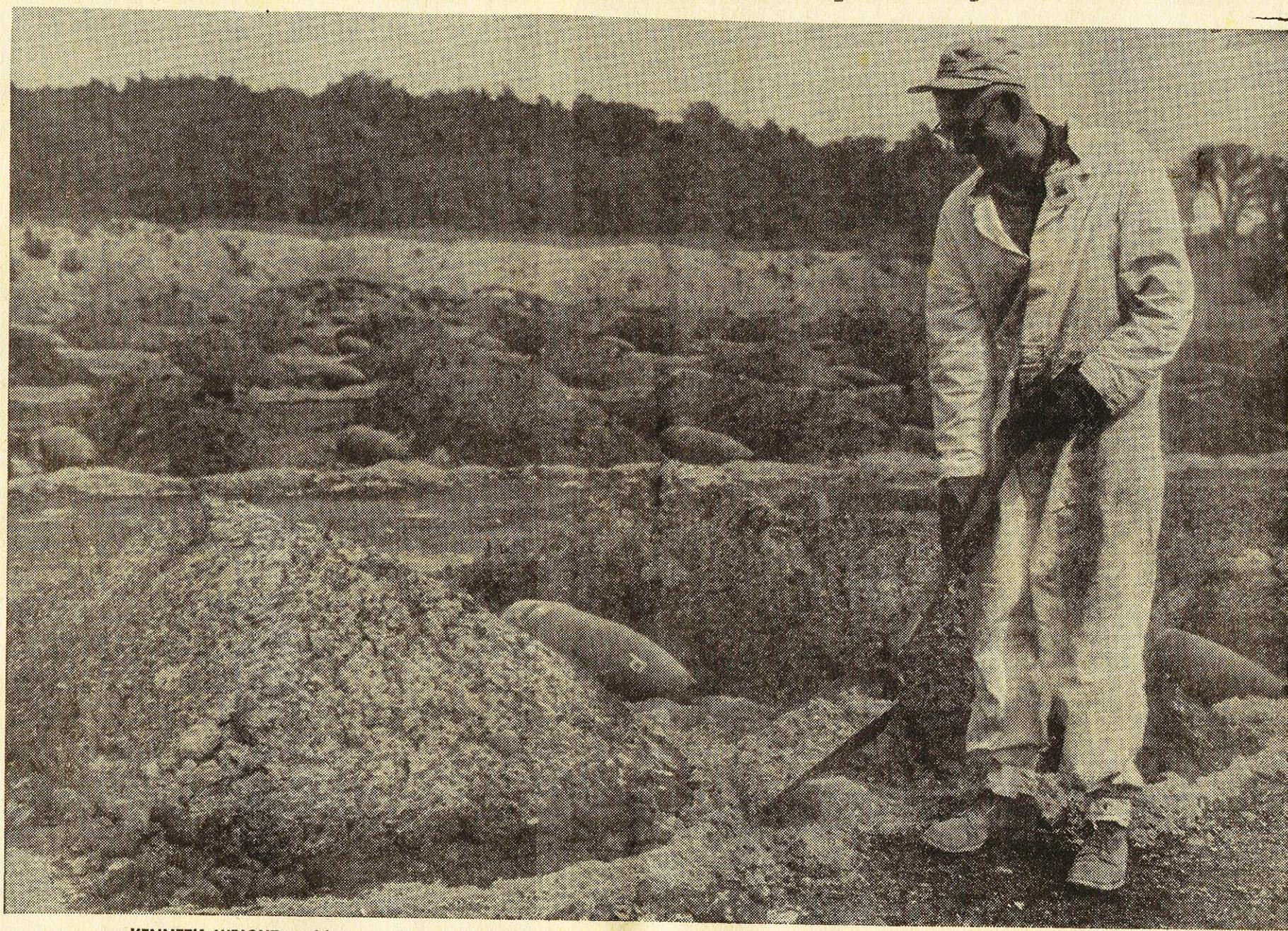


Above—preparing pits for demolition

Above right—receiving ammo at the demolition area

Right—readying 3.5 inch rocks for detonation





KENNETH WRIGHT positions a mixture of sawdust and fuel oil to burn the explosive filler from unserviceable 240mm projectiles.



*Burn-out of Explosive Filler from
240 MM Demo Grounds*

Steel tray burning



EPA's Involvement at this Site

- The Incinerator Building was built in 1974. **Between 1974 and 1979, materials intended for disposal were transported to the incinerator.** The incinerator was a multiple chamber, batch-fed, 2,000-pound-per-hour capacity unit that burned rubbish and garbage. The unit contained an automatic ram-type feeder, a refractory-lined furnace with secondary combustion and settling chamber, a reciprocating stoker, a residue conveyor for ash removal, combustion air fans, a wet gas scrubber, an induced draft fan and a refractory-lined stack. **Nearly all of the 18 tons of refuse generated weekly at the Depot were incinerated.** The source for the refuse was domestic waste from Depot activities and family housing. Large items that could not be burned were disposed of at the NCFL. The NCFL is southeast of the Incinerator Building, immediately south of the SEDA railroad line. The NCFL was used as a disposal site for non-combustible materials, including construction debris, from 1969 to 1977.

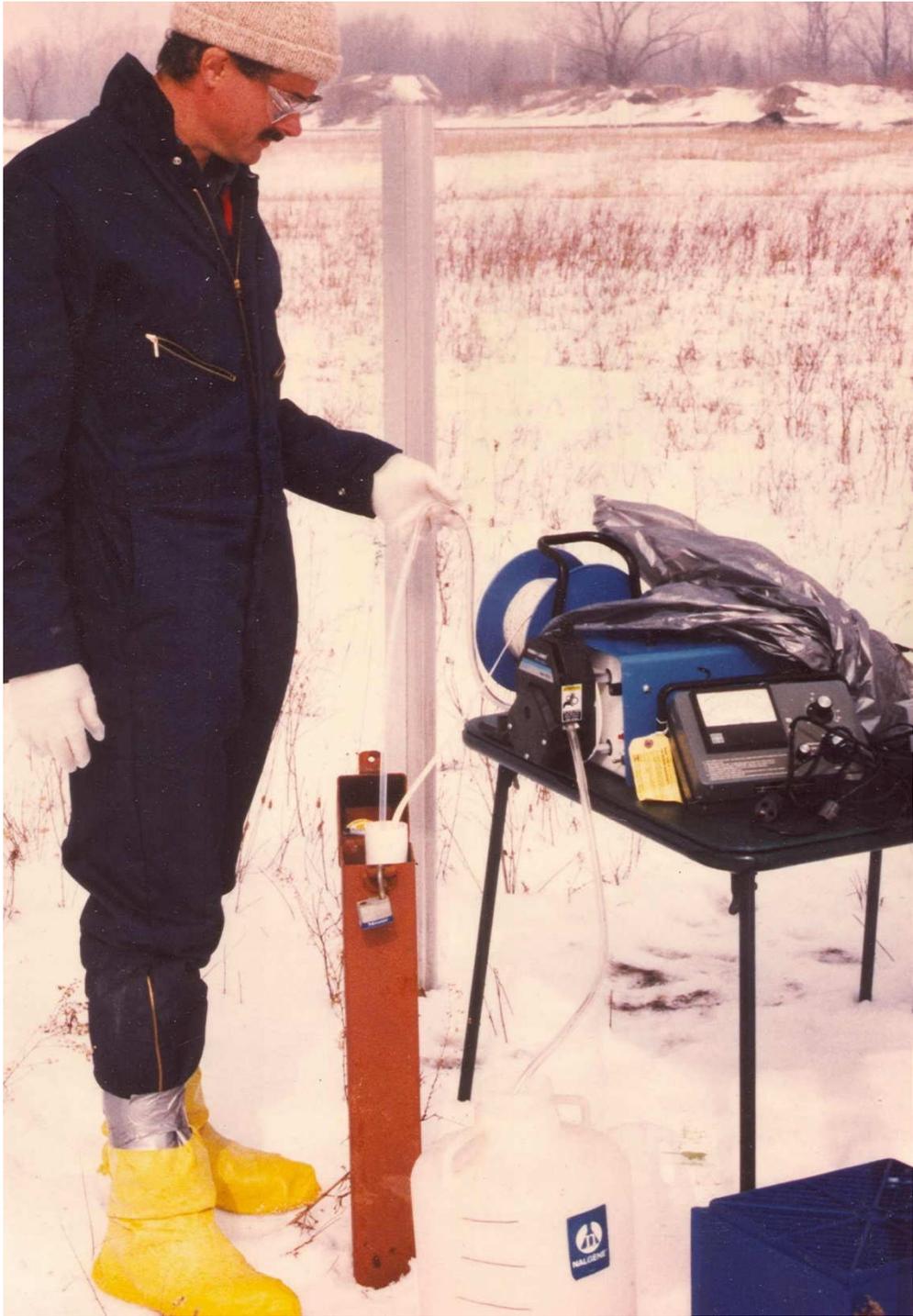
(con't)

- **Ashes and other residues from the incinerator were temporarily disposed of in the Incinerator Cooling Water Pond immediately north of the Incinerator Building.** The Incinerator Cooling Water Pond consisted of an unlined depression about 50 feet in diameter and about 6 to 8 feet deep. **When the pond filled (about every 18 months), fly ash and residues were removed, transported and buried in the adjacent Ash Landfill.** The refuse was dumped in piles and occasionally spread and compacted. **No daily or final cover was applied during operation.** The active area of the Ash Landfill extended at least 500 feet north of the Incinerator Building, near a bend in a dirt road. **A fire destroyed the incinerator in May 1979. The landfill was subsequently closed.** A vegetative cover composed of native soils and grasses was observed on the Ash Landfill during the remedial investigation. A grease pit disposal area near the eastern boundary of the site was used for disposal of cooking grease.
- After site investigations, EPA placed the site on the Superfund program's National Priorities List in August 1990.

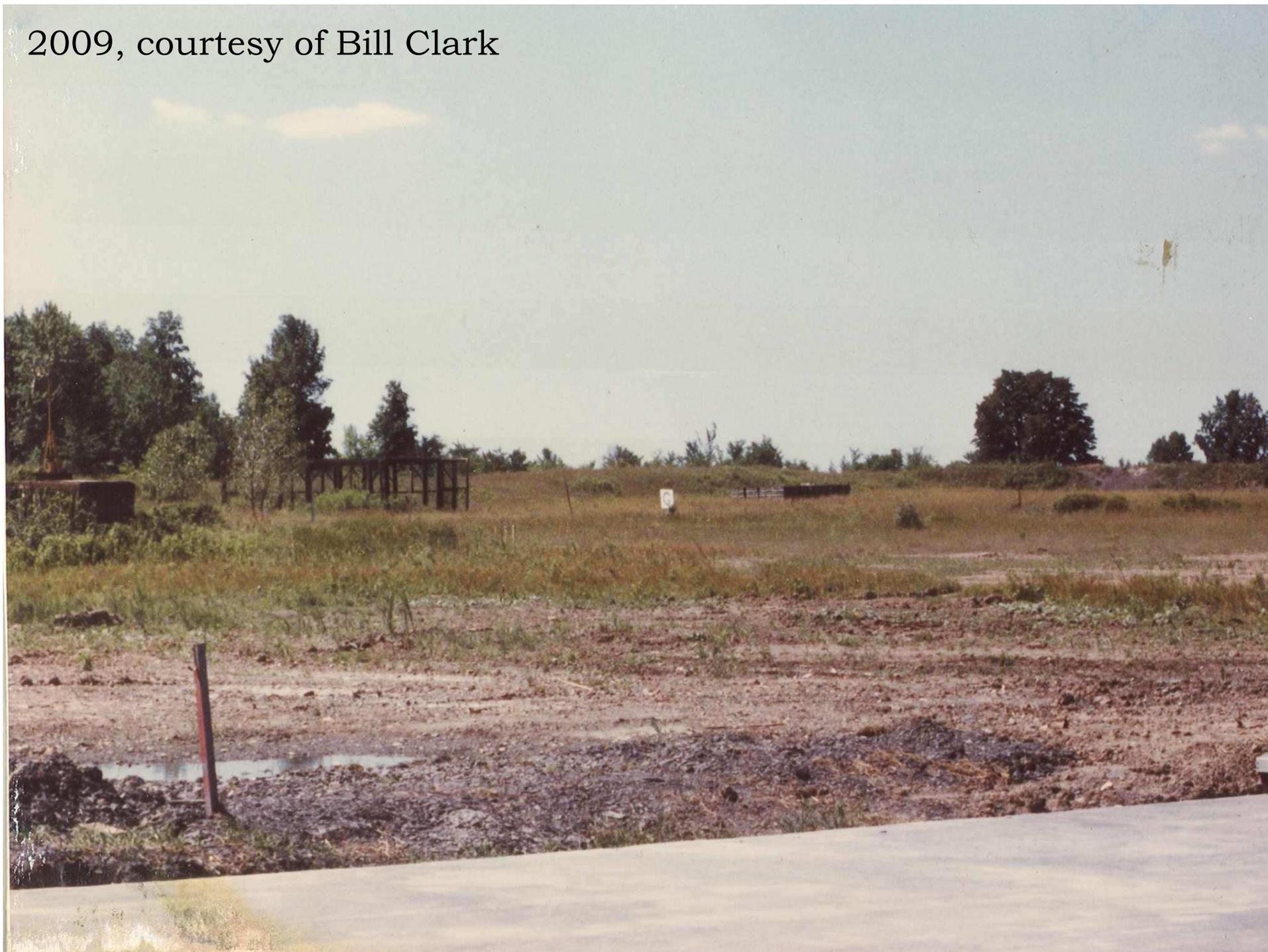
2011 photo, courtesy of Dennis Money

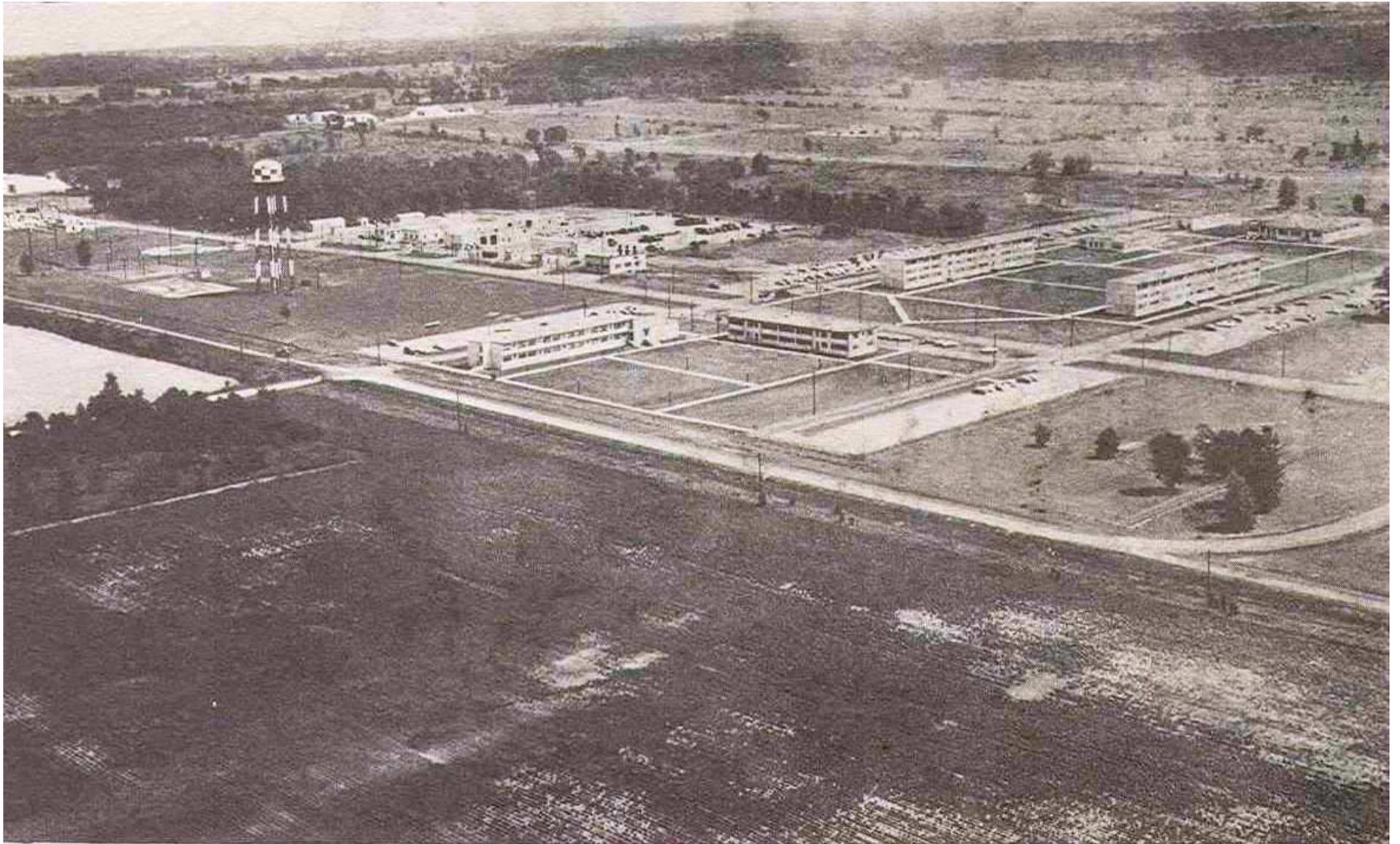






2009, courtesy of Bill Clark

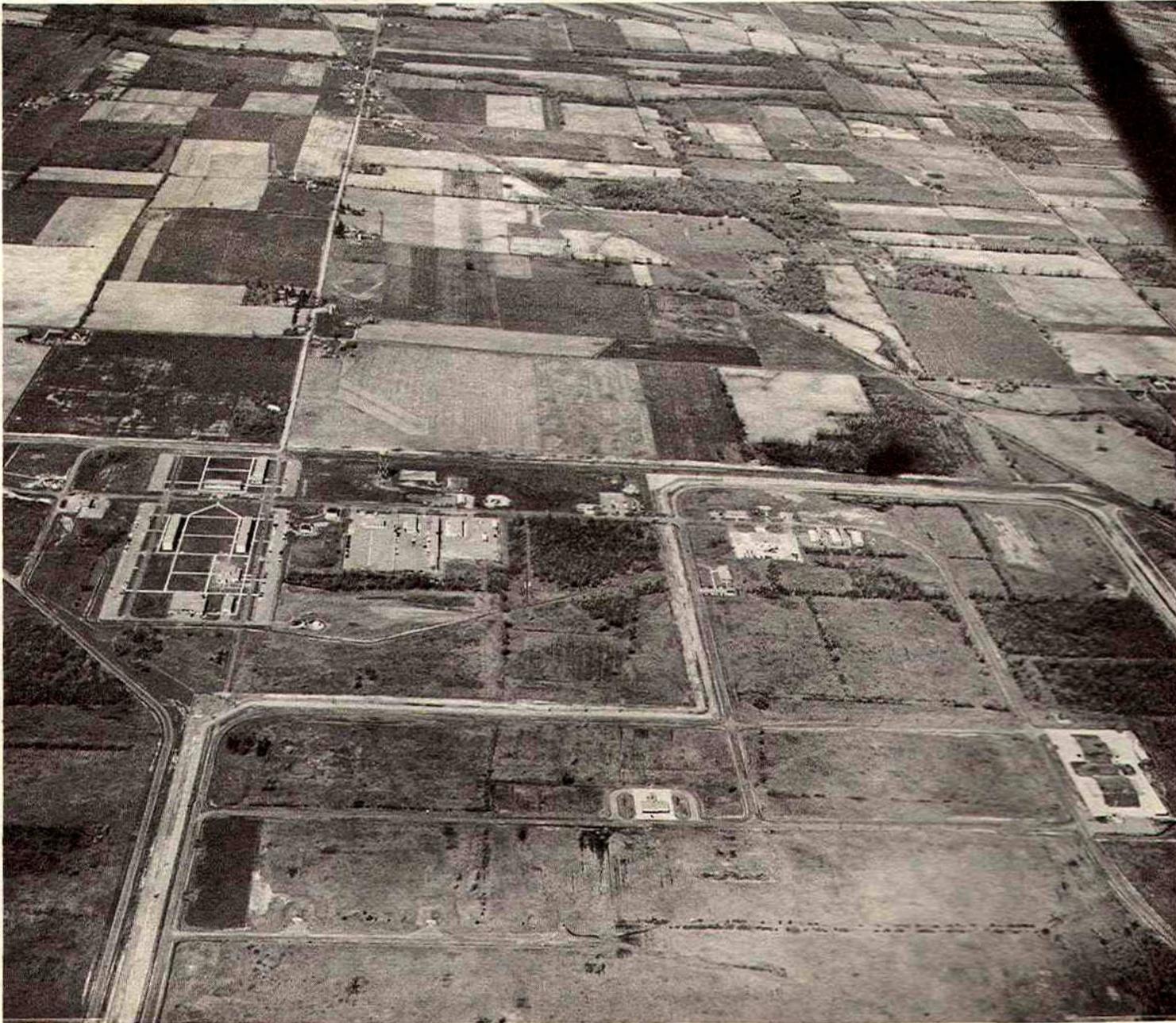




Aerial View of the North End of Seneca Army Depot

from a 1967 SEAD booklet

Aerial View of Special Weapons Activity



from a
1967 SEAD
booklet

Aerial View of Igloo Areas and Standard Magazines



from a
1967
SEAD
booklet



Photos courtesy of
John Zammett, Jr.



April 5, 2011 special tour

Verse 2 of the 1908 song “Down by the Old Mill Stream” begins with these words:



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The old oak tree has withered and lies there
on the ground*

Question: How much has this seemingly beautiful little Reeder Creek been affected by activities at the former Seneca Army Depot?



Demilitarization of Obsolete Ammunition



For further information, contact Seneca County
Historian Walter Gable as follows:

wgable@co.seneca.ny.us

315-539-1785

County Historian's Office, 1 DiPronio Drive,
Waterloo, NY 13165