The History of South Brunswick Township 1775-1800

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Section of: 1778 The Province of New Jersey, divided into East and West, commonly called the Jerseys [map]. Engraved & published by Wm. Faden. https://catalog.princeton.edu/catalog/9955758113506421#viewer-container

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THE HISTORY OF SOUTH BRUNSWICK TOWNSHIP—1775-1800

Part A: A Time for War

By 1775, the South Ward, or more specifically the Fourth Ward of New Brunswick, was poised for a downturn in prosperity. The soils of the inner coastal plain region and the piedmont region were being depleted of nutrients, but not at a rate that would make soil depletion the major cause. Hessian fly infestation was affecting wheat production, but this was not the key factor. A spate of foul weather ruined several crops and rendered dirt roads and fording places impassable. But, again, this was not the major factor. The scarcity of laborers at planting and harvesting time was not the key factor contributing to the downturn. The main cause for troubled times was much worse.

The American colonies had had enough of the measures taken by the English Parliament, and approved by King George III, to have them pay dearly for debts accrued during the French and Indian War and military expenses after that war had ended. The colonists had no representation in Parliament and, hence, no say in how they should be taxed. These and many other issues reached the boiling point in 1775 and did not exclude the folks in the South Ward. Troubling news came to them from Boston, even before 1775. Such news was swapped and shared at mills and taverns from Kings Town to Cross Roads, from the Rhode Hall Tavern to Widow Woods Tavern, and from neighboring farmstead to neighboring farmstead. Opinions and predictions were made. It was time to choose sides in the South Ward... a time to prepare for war.

On June 23, 1775, George Washington, the newly appointed commander of American forces, gathered at Cambridge, Massachusetts, and was escorted along the King's Highway (or more commonly called the Upper Road) by Captain Abraham Markoe's Philadelphia Troop of Horse. Most locals who witnessed the new General's train passing through the South Ward cheered and wished the Commander-in-Chief well. Notables who accompanied Washington on that day included Charles Lee, Thomas Mifflin, Philip Schuyler, and Joseph Reed.

Around this time, the Continental Congress in Philadelphia and the New Jersey Provincial Congress in Trenton were formulating plans to structure a military force that included raising militia units in each ward of every county. John Wetherill and other New Jersey members of the Royal Assembly were quitting their tenure and transferring to the Provincial Congress. They helped in formulating plans to prepare for war. On October 9, 1775, the Continental Congress instructed the New Jersey Provincial Congress to raise a pair of battalions, each unit with eight battalions, for Continental troops. A goal of privates in each company was set at sixty-eight, led by a captain, a lieutenant, an

ensign, four sergeants, and four corporals. Privates were to enlist for a year at five dollars script per month. Each private could opt for a felt hat, a pair of yarn stockings, and a pair of shoes instead of the usual bounty. Each man had to provide his own firearm. Very few inhabitants of the South Ward enlisted at this level.

Purchasing items in order to be prepared to fight in this war was a difficult challenge for those who did. American money was measured against the Spanish dollar instead of the British pound sterling. Thus, war inflation rapidly diminished the value of continental script. Bartering became the solution for many locals, whether they joined the military or not.

The Provincial Congress had already been working on regulations for the local militia units as far back as June. One or more companies were to be formed in each township or major district. Committees in each location were to identify those eligible for service between the ages of 16 and 50. The goal was 80 men in each company. Officers were to be elected by the members of each company. The Middlesex County Militia was initially led by Nathaniel Heard and John Neilson. Their colonels were Jacob Hyer, John Taylor, Robert Taylor, and John Wetherill (who soon had to resign his command due to poor health and advanced age). There were 8 Lt. Colonels, 9 Majors, 61 Captains, 72 lesser officers, and nearly 1,000 Privates. Most of the participants in the war from the South Ward served in the militia. Most of them never attained a rank higher than Private.

Initially, in Middlesex County, two militia regiments were formed. The northern reaches of the county on the north side of the Raritan River formed the First Regiment. The areas south of the river, which included the South Ward section later known as South Brunswick, formed the Second Regiment. This was organized at Cross Roads on June 3, 1775. Later, the Third Regiment was formed for the Windsors and the Princeton area. In addition, six companies of “Minute Men” were formed in the county. They had a higher status than the typical month-on-month-off militiamen because they had to serve more consecutive months and were called to arms on short notice. These Minute Men lasted until February of the next year, when they were dissolved and assigned to the common militia units where they lived. There were few “Minute Men” from the South Ward.

Militiamen from the South Ward usually served a month at a time, and rarely for two or more months at a time. This allowed them to return home to pursue their usual endeavors. For example, on July 20, 1776, many Jersey militiamen were dismissed to harvest crops back home. What follows is a listing of all the local men known to have served during the Revolutionary War. This list will serve to provide information as to the

roles South Ward men played during the conflict. Most came through without suffering injury or death. Some were wounded. A few perished.

COMBAT EXPERIENCES OF SOUTH WARD LOCALS DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR, 1775-1783

Benjamin Applegate was one of fewer than a hundred volunteers involved in the capture of Fort Ticonderoga. This was considered the first American victory in the long war for independence. Late at night, Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold led a small force of Green Mountain Boys and others across Lake Champlain to capture the British garrison at the fort on May 10, 1775. Valuable artillery pieces were seized. Applegate spent long hours on guard duty at the fort, as well as performing various menial tasks. He probably had some role in moving the cannon over the snow-covered Berkshire Mountains as directed by Henry Knox. The guns from Fort Ticonderoga were used to force the British to evacuate Boston in March of 1776.

Early in 1776, Col. Nathaniel Heard led 500 to 1,000 militiamen from their encampment in the city of New York to various locations in Long Island. Following Heard were many members of his 1% Regiment from Middlesex County and some from the 2" Regiment. Each man sported a green branch in his hat. The mission was to disarm and arrest loyalists led by Richard Hewlett, a former Ranger Captain during the French and Indian War. His band of refugees was hiding in the swampy woods of southern Queens. Hewlett had his arms and supplies stored there. From this vantage point, he was able to contact British ships offshore. Hewlett's mission, besides raiding patriot stores and homes, was to carry out a plan to capture General George Washington. Heard was determined to spoil Hewlett's game, seize the arms and supplies, and neutralize the Tory followers. Heard and his militiamen, which included Daniel and Robert Applegate, William Bastedo, John Dean, Jonathan Deare, Jeremiah Dey, Lewis Egbert, and possibly other locals, were able to confiscate a thousand muskets as well as many other supplies. They arrested 19 of 26 known Tory leaders. 800 Tories were administered the loyalty oath. However, Heard failed to capture Captain Hewlett and the other top Tory leaders.

William Bastedo, John Dey, Andrew McDowell, Jr., Vincent Wetherill, and a few others from the local area were among the survivors of the ill-fated Battle of Long Island on August 26-27, 1776. The enemy force, led by General William Howe, numbered 24,000 Regulars. Some 3,000+ rebels, led by General John Sullivan and General William Alexander, assumed the enemy force would carry out a frontal assault. Howe had been informed that Sullivan's left flank was weakly guarded; thus, he led his main force in an arcing direction to his right in the dark of night, while General James Grant led his men

in the other direction to serve as a diversionary attack. Hessian forces were left to carry outa frontal assault: This distracted Sullivan enough so that he did not send support for his weak left flank. Sullivan's line fell apart. Alexander (aka—Lord Stirling) ordered a retreat. Two rebel regiments covered the retreat and managed to stall the British advance. Over 300 men were killed. More than 1,000 were wounded. Over 1,000 were captured. For most of the locals who participated in this battle, it was their first taste of defeat.

Andrew McDowell, Jr., Vincent Wetherill, and a number of other locals participated in the Battle of Harlem Heights on September 16, 1776. George Washington's force of 9,000 men tried to hold the highest elevation on the island. On the heels of the British attack, the American General ordered a counterattack in which companies of men made an encircling move to the left and hid in the woods. The plan was to entrap the overconfident redcoats located in a place called the Hollow Way. The strategy failed when the rebels fired too soon. Meanwhile, the main British force of 5,000 marched forward and challenged Washington's main force. After a few hours of battle, the Americans still held their ground. They actually advanced. The British line gave way and fell back. Rebels gave chase, but Washington, fearing a trap, ordered his men back. Estimates of enemy casualties were probably around 90 killed and 300 wounded. American casualties were 30 killed and 100 wounded. This effort has been considered a victory for the American side by some, but, more importantly, a sorely needed morale booster for the rebel soldiers. McDowell and Wetherill may not have seen action in this battle; instead, they probably participated in the raising of double palisades, digging trenches, building redoubts, and star forts before and after the battle

Andrew McDowell, Jr., and a number of other locals saw action at the Battle of White Plains on October 28, 1776. British General Howe's force of Regulars and Hessians advanced on George Washington's position on Chatterton's Hill. Spencer's thousand men were charged with slowing the advance of the more powerful and more numerous enemy force. The ensuing musket fire did not repel or deter the enemy soldiers on foot. The British cavalry struck on the right flank of the American line, which was probably where McDowell and many other militiamen were positioned. The cavalry caused the rebels to retreat in disarray. The enemy gained a decisive victory, but, in the process, lost 300-400 men. The Americans lost 150. McDowell lived to fight another day.

On December 25/6, George Washington's remaining forces surprised the Hessian outpost at Trenton. Col. Johan Gottlieb Rall was in command there. He had 1,500 men at his disposal. Most were in the midst of celebrating Christmas when they were attacked. Washington led a force of 2,400 men across the Delaware River during the night. There were probably a few locals among the militiamen who marched on Trenton,

but they have not been definitely identified. Washington divided his men into two main wings in order to reach the city from different sides. He also sent a small force to block the road to Princeton and New Brunswick. The Hessians were late in organizing. They were met with deadly canister fire from rebel artillery positioned at the end of the two main streets. Rall and his second-in-command were mortally wounded. Many Hessians surrendered. 22 had been killed, and 84 were wounded. However, 500 escaped across the Assunpink Bridge to the south. This was because General Cadwalader had been unable to cross the ice-choked river at Bristol, Pennsylvania.

After the first battle of Trenton, Washington's victorious army re-crossed the Delaware River to safety in Pennsylvania. A week later, he and his men returned to find Trenton virtually abandoned. This time, such locals as John Caywood, Coert Voorhees, and Aaron Longstreet accompanied the rebel Commander-in-Chief. Upon learning that General Cornwallis himself was marching down the King's Highway to do battle, Washington moved his men to the far bank of Assunpink Creek. An account of the Second Battle of Trenton was given by an unidentified local: "The troops were placed one above the other, so that they appeared to cover the whole slope from bottom to top, which brought a great many muskets within shot of the bridge. Within 70 or 80 yards of the bridge, as many pieces of artillery as could be managed were stationed. The British did not delay the attack. They were formed in two columns, the one marching down Green Street to carry the bridge, and the other down Main Street to ford the creek. The latter was repelled... the creek was nearly filled with the dead. The other column moved slowly down the street, with their choicest troops in front. When within 60 yards of the bridge they raised a shout, and rushed to the charge. It was then that our men poured upon them from musketry and artillery a shower of bullets, under which, however, they continued to advance, though their speed was diminished; and as the column reached the bridge, it moved slower and slower until the head of it was gradually pressed nearly over, when our fire became so destructive that they broke their ranks and fled. It was then that our army raised a shout, and such a shout | have never since heard; by what signal or word of command, | know not. The British column halted instantly; the officers restored the ranks, and again they rushed to the bridge; and again was the shower of bullets poured upon them with redoubled fury. This time the column broke before it reached the center of the bridge, and their retreat was again followed by the same hearty shout from our line. They returned the third time to charge, but it was in vain..." The local militiamen who witnessed this battle were probably among those, like John Cadwalader's volunteers, who were held in reserve to be used if needed.

Local hero, Coert Voorhees, and a few other militiamen from the South Ward area accompanied George Washington on his night march from Trenton to Princeton on January 3, 1777. On that morning, Lt. Col. Charles Mahood was leading his troops out

of Princeton in order to join Cornwallis in Trenton. He chose the King's Highway for his route. However, a few of his alert subordinates caught sight of Washington's main force marching on the Mill Road that led to Princeton. Mahood turned back and engaged the American rebels in battle on fields south of Princeton. General Hugh Mercer, who had been charged with leading a small force to destroy the bridge on the Upper Road, sought to shift his men into position to protect the left flank of Washington's column. He was able to delay the British attack, but, in the process, fell mortally wounded in an orchard. British Regulars advanced on American soldiers who were unable to hold their ground. General Washington was able to rally his troops while Captain Joseph Moulder's artillery stalled the enemy advance. After a 45-minute battle, the British fell back and fled along the Upper Road... most of them heading for Trenton. The enemy lost close to 90 killed or wounded. Over 200 were captured or went missing. 40 Americans were killed or wounded. Washington entered Princeton, faced little resistance, and stayed only a short time. He led his victorious army along the Upper Road and crossed over the Millstone Bridge in order to reach Kingston. A few locals stayed behind to cart away and bury the dead.

Coert Voorhees and probably several other local militiamen witnessed the council of generals held by George Washington at the top of the hill in Kingston overlooking the Millstone River on January 3, 1777. The leaders of the weary army that had just pulled off a victory at Princeton were meeting to decide their next move. Major General Nathaniel Greene, Major General John Sullivan, Brigadier General Arthur St. Clair, Brigadier General Thomas Mifflin, General John Cadwalader, Adjutant General Joseph Reed, and the Chief of Artillery, Henry Knox, were in attendance. While the council members debated what to do next, Washington's carpenters and engineers sought to sunder the Millstone Bridge in order to impede British General Cornwallis's main force, which had reached Princeton and was heading toward Kingston. Some generals were in favor of marching on to New Brunswick in order to capture the enemy's war chest. Others maintained that their men were exhausted and in no condition to march to New Brunswick. They needed to get to a safe place to rest. Most agreed that a thousand fresh troops were needed to march on the city to the north. But the only fresh troops nearby were a few hundred Somerset County militiamen who were untested in battle. Consensus was reached, and the decisive move was carried out successfully—the Americans took roads through Rocky Hill and Griggstown, crossed the Millstone River, and spent the night at Somerset Courthouse before moving on to Pluckemin. From there, they managed to get to Morristown. Meanwhile, Cornwallis pushed his men to make haste to New Brunswick after struggling to cross the Millstone River at Kingston. He was afraid that Washington would make a move on New Brunswick. He gave up on the idea of chasing the elusive general. Both commanders had made wise decisions.

On the night of January 3-4, 1777, Captain John Stryker led 20 men in his Somerset County Light Horse Troop against a British force of 200 (wagoneers and soldiers) attempting to repair a few supply wagons that had broken down at Ten-Mile-Run along the King's Highway. This road served as the border between Middlesex County and Somerset County. Stryker's men had dismounted, crept through the woods, and formed a half-circle around the site where the crippled wagons sat. They were possibly joined by locals who were of the patriot persuasion. Those with muskets and rifles fired a volley at the enemy and scared off their intended targets. The wagons were captured and repaired. Horses that had also been captured were hitched to the wagons and taken to Morristown. Each wagon contained valuable supplies for the men wintering in the Watchungs. No casualties were reported on either side. The Somerset men in Stryker's troop included Lt. John Bennett, Sgt. David Nevius, Michael Blue, John Voorhees, William Wilson, Abraham Golder, Henry Kennedy, Jacob Van Dike, John Van Dike, Cornelius Van Arsdalen, Conrad Van Wagoner, Red Kettle Skillman, Peter Stryker, James Stryker, Garret Terhune, and Johnny Van Dine. Several of these men had relatives living across the border in the neighboring county. Their Middlesex County neighbors and relatives may have helped to repair the wagons as well as fire on the redcoats. Their last names may have been DeHart, Hagaman, Lake, and Gulick.

The skirmishes at Millstone, New Jersey, where the Somerset Courthouse and Van Nest's Mill were located, occurred on January 20, 1777; June 14, 17, and 19 of the same year; and, once again, on October 28, 1779. Local militiaman John Dey appeared in at least one of these incidents. In the first event, a British foraging party of 500-600 Regulars supported by three field pieces on a hill near the Millstone Bridge took a stand against approaching patriot militia forces. General Philemon Dickinson was informed by scouts of the British force waiting for them. He led 400 militiamen and 50 Pennsylvania riflemen downriver away from the bridge in order to flank the enemy rather than charge at them head-on. His men waded across the ice-choked river at a fording spot and surprised the enemy foraging party. Most of the Regulars were driven off. Close to a dozen enemy soldiers were captured. 25 were killed. 40+ wagons and 100+ horses were seized. 60-70 sheep and 115-118 cattle were retrieved. Dickinson and his men had overcome great odds to pull out a victory.

Early expeditions to Sandy Hook by rebel militia units proved mostly unsuccessful in February and March of 1777. This New Jersey shore location was where the British stationed in New York were taking on needed supplies provided by loyalist farmers and foragers in Monmouth County and beyond. Local militiaman, Andrew McDowell, Jr., was present for at least one of these forays. In the first skirmish, a cargo of rum and sugar was seized, but a Private, John Bruce, was killed. On February 17, 1777, British Major Gordon and his troops from Staten Island landed at Sandy Hook and marched to the

Cedars, where they surprised a contingent of militia rebels. Many Americans were killed, and several were captured. The British lost one man. 50 rebels managed to escape capture. On March 8, 1777, a band of rebels attacked a British-occupied lighthouse. They were repulsed and failed in their mission.

Andrew McDowell, Jr., and other local militiamen participated in a raid on Bennett's Island in the Raritan River on February 18, 1777. Major Richard V. Stockton and more than 60 British Regulars and loyalist volunteers were stationed there. Colonel John Neilson led a contingent of Middlesex County militiamen in an attack against the British stockade on the island. Stockton was captured, as were some of the Regulars and most of the loyalist volunteers. This outpost was raided again in April of the same year, but the outcome was not as successful as the first raid. Private William Sodin was killed.

After the victory by American forces at Princeton, a long stretch of sporadic fighting (known as the “forage war”) occurred in New Jersey. One such skirmish took place on March 12, 1777, north of Cranbury on the outskirts of Cross Roads (Ika—Dayton) in the South Ward of Middlesex County. This was the second incident of actual fighting that took place in what would become South Brunswick Township. A band of foragers, labeled “cowboys” because they were mainly interested in stealing livestock, were reported to have been in the area south of Cross Roads. These foragers were either “refugees” (British loyalists) from Monmouth County or, possibly, enemy soldiers from New Brunswick in search of meat to get through the winter. They had successfully stolen cattle and other livestock from John Wetherill’s plantation and from neighboring farms. They were in search of more. Captain Robert Nixon and his Troop of Light Horse, stationed in Cranbury, were alerted to the presence of enemy foragers nearby. Nixon and his men galloped north on Georges Road, dismounted a safe distance away from the cowboys, and crept up on them. They fired their muskets and scattered the foragers. All the stolen livestock was rescued. No fatalities were reported. The locals who lived to brag about their participation in this skirmish included Simon Addis, William Barkalo, Rescarrick Moore, James Segand, William Williamson, William Whitlock, John Van Arsdale, John Vanderveer, Daniel Dey, and Ezekial Dey.

British General William Howe hoped to lure George Washington out of his defensive position in the Watchung Mountains in the spring of 1777. Early attempts, going as far back as February of that year, had failed. One such militia outpost at Ash Swamp discouraged the British on February 23, 1777. Locals William Perrine and William Bastedo saw action there. In mid-June, Howe marched most of his army into central New Jersey, but still Washington refused to come out and do battle. Howe returned to Perth Amboy disgusted. Washington immediately sent Lord Stirling and a Continental force accompanied by units of militia out to shadow the enemy’s movements. Howe

took this ploy to mean that Washington would soon be coming down from his lair. On June 26, 1777, the British General marched two columns of Regulars inland, skirmished with Lord Stirling's troops, then engaged in a pitched battle. Stirling retreated. Washington kept to the Watchungs. He closed off all five mountain gaps, thereby stifling Howe's goal to use the gaps in order to get to Washington. The British fell back to Rahway. A number of local militiamen may have seen action in the Short Hills area, but it is not clear exactly who they were.

There were many militia raids on Elizabethtown ever since the British occupation began there in December of 1776. Aaron Longstreet, Jr., William Williamson, and William Bastedo were among the local militiamen who participated in one or more of these raids. Elizabethtown was poorly guarded by the enemy, and thus a ripe target for harassment. Militia raids started in early January of 1777. Raids continued through the fall of that year, which eventually caused the British to move to Staten Island. The British attempted to return several times, but, by then, Americans were able to defend the town. Much later, on January 25, 1780, Col. Abraham Van Buskirk led 300 Regulars, 60 Dragoons, and some 400 loyalist militia from Staten Island to Elizabethtown. Around 50 colonial soldiers were captured. A church, the courthouse, and a few dwellings were burned to the ground. But the British attackers were forced to retreat back to Staten Island when the American garrison fought back successfully.

Several local militiamen participated in raids and skirmishes in the Cheesequake/South Amboy (fka— Radford’s Landing) area from the fall of 1777 to the start of 1781. These stalwarts included Samuel Bayles, Joseph Brown, Robert Campbell, Jonathan Combs, Samuel Grove(s), James Morgan, Sr., James Morgan, Jr., James H. Perrine, John Van Dyke, and William Davison. The Second Regiment of Middlesex County was charged with patrolling the Raritan Bay beachfront from Cheesequake Creek to Whale Creek. Guard positions and a communications network were set up to monitor the movement of enemy forces on and across the bay. Often the British would attempt a raid on these positions, then slip away. At the end of 1777, one such raid ended in the capture of a number of militiamen, which included the Morgans—James and James, Jr. The last raid ended in a skirmish on January 16, 1781. The enemy was repulsed. The number of casualties remains unknown.

A few days before the Battle of Monmouth, George Washington and his army left Valley Forge and crossed over into New Jersey. They had been alerted that the occupying British force in Philadelphia was on the move. The enemy had crossed over into New Jersey, but much farther south, and apparently was heading to Monmouth County. Washington led his men in a parallel direction through Hopewell and Rocky Hill to get to Kingston on June 25, 1778. The Commander-in-Chief was being cautious. He decided

to send a few thousand men on ahead to support the militiamen and riflemen who had already started harassing the rear of the 12-mile-long enemy train led by General Henry Clinton. Several local militiamen were among those sent ahead to harass the train. They were charged with the tasks of felling trees across roads, sundering bridges, poisoning wells, and picking off enemy soldiers whenever possible. General Lafayette was charged with leading the advance force after General Charles Lee declined to do so. Lafayette, accompanied by Alexander Hamilton, headed for Dr. Hezekiah Stites' house in Cranberry (aka—Cranbury). They used the Mapleton/Plainsboro Road to get to Cranberry, even though it was a miry and difficult path to take. They set up their headquarters at Stites' place. Washington was advised by locals to take a safer, though longer, way to get to Cranberry—take Ridge Road to Georges Road, go through Cross Roads (aka—Dayton), and then head south to reach the Stites house. Local guides volunteered to lead the Continental line of over 6,000 men. The soldiers were ordered to leave behind heavy gear, including tents, when they left Kingston in the evening. They stopped at Long Bridge Farm (the summer residence of the Lawrence family, but managed by Thomas Wetherill in their absence). Here they spent a hot, humid night in barns, outbuildings, under wagons, or under the stars. On the morning of the 26th, the Americans reached Cross Roads. Washington stopped at the Wetherill Tavern to pay Thomas Wetherill 14 dollars for services and supplies rendered at Long Bridge Farm and/or the tavern. From there, Washington took Georges Road to reach his destination safely.

General Henry Clinton had led a 12-mile train, consisting of 20,000 soldiers and loyalists, out of Philadelphia and into New Jersey under stultifying conditions, all the way to Monmouth Courthouse, where his army paused to rest. General George Washington decided to engage the enemy here on June 28, 1778. At this time, the American force had swelled to nearly 15,000 Continentals and militiamen. General Charles Lee was ordered to attack the rear of the British force, which was led by General Charles Cornwallis. Quite unexpectedly, Lee pulled his men back, and Cornwallis took advantage of Lee's error. Washington saw Lee’s men retreating in a panic and sped to confront Lee. Washington dismissed the subordinate general from his command, and then rallied his remaining troops. He sent General Nathanael Greene's division to the right and Lord Stirling's division to the left. He replaced Lee with General Lafayette and kept what was left of this unit in reserve. Artillery was positioned on both flanks. Cannon commenced a withering fire against the enemy. Americans on the left counterattacked and forced the British to fall back. Cornwallis rallied his men and attacked Green's division. But the combination of artillery fire and stiff musket fire forced the British general to fall back. The battle raged back and forth under a hot sun until after six in the evening, when the British started pulling away. Washington, seeing that his men were exhausted, decided not to pursue the enemy. The British slipped away in

the darkness and eventually were able to cross over to New York City. They had suffered almost three times the number of casualties as the Americans had. This battle was considered by those who fought in it to have been a major triumph and a great morale booster. Among those who were proud to have participated in this fray were such locals as Jonathan Combs, James Gulick, John Johnson, William Scudder, Samuel Grove(s), Aaron Longstreet, Jr., Andrew McDowell, Rescarrick Moore, William Perrine, William Van Tilburgh, Jr., William Williamson, Henry Van Dyke, and Peter Wickoff. William Bastedo also claimed that he participated, but that has not been confirmed.

On June 6, 1780, General Wilhelm Von Knyphausen led 5,000 British and Hessian troops from Staten Island over to Elizabethtown and then advanced inland to Connecticut Farms (aka—Union Township). His goal was to eventually reach Washington's encampment at Morristown. The next day, New Jersey militiamen spoiled his plans and put up a stiff resistance. This surprised the Hessian general and angered him. He ordered that houses and barns be burned. In doing so, his soldiers committed other atrocities. This enraged the citizenry in the area. People from miles around came to fight alongside the militiamen. Thus, the battle of Connecticut Farms raged on until the Americans had no choice but to withdraw. Knyphausen, having been delayed in carrying out his plan, decided to spend the night there and continue his march in the morning. Word of the Hessian general's goal got to Washington at Morristown. He decided to let General Greene lead a force against Knyphausen. However, such a move proved unnecessary because a hard rain fell, and this caused the enemy to head back to Elizabethtown the next day. A good number of men from the South Ward probably participated in this battle. Those documented included Samuel Grove(s), Aaron Longstreet, Jr., and Jonathan Combs.

After being discouraged with the outcome of the Battle of Connecticut Farms on June 7, 1780, Lt. General Wilhelm Knyphausen decided to try again. He joined forces with Lt. General Henry Clinton and attempted to carry out a two-pronged attack through Connecticut Farms and Springfield in order to get to Hobart Gap, by which they hoped to make their way through the Watchung Mountains in order to reach Morristown, where Washington's main encampment was located. Before dawn on June 23, 1780, Knyphausen’s 6,000 men advanced to Elizabethtown and overwhelmed the American outpost there. Then, the enemy advanced to Connecticut Farms. Confronting them were Major General Nathanael Greene’s 1,500 Continentals and 500 New Jersey militiamen organized into four lines of defense. Among the militiamen were the following locals: Simon Addis, John Caywood, John Dey, Samuel Grove(s), Aaron Longstreet, Jr., Andrew McDowell, Rescarrick Moore, Abraham Terhune, Coert Voorhees, William Van Tilburgh, Jr., Willian Williamson, and Robert Campbell. These men followed Brigadier

General Philemon Dickinson and were positioned behind Colonel Israel Shreve at the bridge over the west branch of the Rahway River. The enemy had much difficulty taking Connecticut Farms this time. Eventually they progressed to Springfield and drove the Americans back to Short Hills.' Knyphausen decided to concentrate on capturing territory northwest of Springfield. This gave time for the militia to regroup at Short Hills. They were able to shore up defenses and block the enemy from getting to Hobart Gap. Knyphausen had no option but to call off the attack. He gave orders to burn down Springfield. The enemy then withdrew under heavy sniper fire from the Jersey militiamen. By midnight, Knyphausen's men were aboard boats headed back to Staten Island. This was the last time the British and Hessians engaged in a major battle in New Jersey. The enemy suffered more than 200 casualties and the Americans, more than 100. George Washington praised the Jersey militia for their heroism: "They flew to arms universally and acted with a spirit equal to anything I have seen in the course of the war." This was, indeed, the finest moment for the local militiamen from the South Ward.

Eleven regiments, numbering 2,400 soldiers from the Pennsylvania Line under General Anthony Wayne's command, insisted that their three-year enlistments had expired as of January 1, 1781, and that clothing and provisions promised to them were not forthcoming. Conditions at Morristown were, indeed, deplorable. They had demanded better housing conditions and heard nothing on the matter. They demanded the pay that was owed to them. Again, they gained no response. They demanded better pay if they were to remain in the military. After slaying at least one officer in a drunken brawl during a New Year's celebration, most of the angry soldiers abandoned their winter camp at Morristown. When George Washington and Joseph Reed, the Pennsylvania Council's President and Chief Negotiator, heard of the situation, they feared that the angry men might defect to the British side. British General Clinton had actually sent agents to make them an offer to defect. By January 4%, the mutineers reached Princeton. Reed was at Maidenhead (aka—Lawrenceville) preparing to negotiate with the leaders of the mutineers. Local militiamen were summoned to Princeton to restore order. Among them were Jonathan Combs, Cornelius Gulick, Samuel Grove(s), Aaron Longstreet, Jr., Andrew McDowell, Rescarrick Moore, Coert Voorhees, and William Davison. Negotiations were held, and the issues were resolved. Many soldiers were discharged. 1,150 men re-enlisted. Two British agents who had been captured were summarily hanged.

On October 16, 1781, Col. Nathaniel Scudder was killed defending against a refugee raid at Shrewsbury.

There was an indirect connection between the South Ward of Middlesex County and Rockingham of Somerset County. This occurred after Cornwallis had surrendered at

Yorktown in 1781 and hostilities had ended in New Jersey by April of 1783. It occurred shortly after Congress was moved from Philadelphia to Princeton as a precautionary measure against revolt by idle, unpaid troops. A number of local militiamen were called upon to join others in maintaining peace in the college town. Just south of "the South Ward, Princeton had become the capital of the new United States. Congress, twenty-two members strong, convened on June 30, 1783. One of the first matters to attend to was to summon General Washington to Princeton. Colonel George Morgan, a farmer in the Princeton area, was appointed to find suitable lodging for the Commander-in-Chief. He found that Rockingham, the estate of the late Supreme Court Justice John Berrien, was up for sale. The widow Berrien was approached by the Colonel, and she agreed to rent her house for as long as Washington wished to stay in the area. The honored guest and his entourage—Martha Washington, several servants, three aides, and a company of a score of soldiers—arrived on the 23" of August. They most likely had taken the Upper Road (aka— Route 27) to get to Rockingham. No doubt, folks in the South Ward hailed the hero of the Revolution as he passed by. While peace negotiations dragged on for three months in Paris, the Washingtons enjoyed their stay in Rocky Hill. The General had to ride his horse to Princeton on August 26, 1783, to attend a Congressional ceremony thanking him for his service to the new country. No doubt, he took the road from Rockingham into Kingston in order to get to Princeton. Probably, many folks from the South Ward also ventured to the college town to celebrate their hero's accomplishments. Washington most likely took the same route from Rockingham into Princeton on all the other occasions he had to do Congress's bidding. He did invite several dignitaries to Rockingham during his stay there, and they also used the roads on or near the Middlesex County border. General Nathanael Greene, Thomas Paine, and several others paid a visit. Artists also came to paint portraits of Washington. These included William Dunlap and Joseph Wright. In the middle of the stay at Rockingham, an illness spread among the soldiers stationed there. Those taken ill were transported to John Vantilburgh’s Inn, the Sign of the Mermaid, in Kingston—a place visited often by Washington himself. A room was set aside for the sick soldiers to recuperate. Mrs. Washington also came down with the fever and left Rockingham in the fall. Congress pulled out of Princeton and headed for Annapolis. On October 31, 1783, news reached Rockingham that the peace treaty had been signed between Great Britain and the United States. Again, the Upper Road served as the way in which Colonel Matthias Ogden, from Elizabeth, delivered the good news. Washington gave his farewell orders to all the military under his command, attended various celebrations, and left Rockingham for further celebrations in New York, no doubt using the Upper Road to get there. George Washington reached his beloved home in Virginia by Christmas Eve.

Part B: A Time for Peace

By 1784, the new nation was free of British rule. It is true that Middlesex County, as well as many other counties, had suffered greatly from enemy occupation and the ravages of war. The South Ward, soon to be named South Brunswick Township, was not excluded from the misery. However, prospects for a peaceful and prosperous future looked good. Much work needed to be done to recover from the damages and setbacks caused by the war. Many resources had been destroyed or depleted. Trade and commerce needed to rebound. Agricultural pursuits could not afford another poor planting season, summer drought, or poor harvest. Debt was a harsh reality for many citizens. Lawlessness had to be wiped out, and laws had to be enforced. The system of local governance had to be reconstituted and refined. Much that needed to be changed and improved in the South Ward depended on how the rest of the county of Middlesex, the state of New Jersey, and the new federal government were going to address recovery and remediation issues. Much of what was to occur at the local level was a reaction to what had to happen in these greater theaters.

At the May 25, 1787, federal convention, Governor William Livingston and William Paterson represented all of New Jersey. John Neilson, of New Brunswick, failed to attend the convention. John Wetherill was not picked to take Neilson's place. It was Paterson, who had lived for a time in Princeton and later in New Brunswick, who introduced the New Jersey Plan, which was also known as the State Sovereignty Plan. This led to a compromise between large states and small states. Both Livingston and Paterson contributed much to the success of the convention. The Federal Constitution was ratified by the New Jersey State Convention on December 17, 1787. Thus, the foundation for law and governance in the South Ward was set. It is unclear whether or not John Wetherill attended the State Convention.

It did not take long for the game of politics to be played in Middlesex County. George Washington was, of course, quite popular in an area he had passed through several times. So were John Adams and Alexander Hamilton, who followed on the coattails of the great war hero. Thus, the founders of the Federalists rose to prominence and gained favor in the South Ward as in most of the other communities in the county. For most of the remaining years in this time period, the Federalists were the dominant party. However, around 1798, negative reaction to the Alien and Sedition Acts and the prospect of another war caused some locals to favor candidates of the Democratic-Republican Party. This political organization was led by Thomas Jefferson, whom the majority in Middlesex County did not favor. He was viewed as an agnostic.

Folks feared the man might become a dictator for life. But the two-party stage had been set, and the political battles began.

By the end of this time period in Middlesex County, the Republican candidate for Council was James Morgan. He opposed the Federalist, Ephraim Martin. For Assembly seats, the Republicans ran John Heard, Phineas Manning, John Morgan, and Joseph Randolph. The Federalists countered with John Neilson, Gershom Dunn, William Edgar, and Benjamin Manning. All the Federalist candidates were victorious. None of the newly elected officials lived in South Brunswick Township. The days of old John Wetherill representing and protecting his neighbors were over.

Federalists did not prevail in the presidential race. Thomas Jefferson won the special House vote on the thirty-sixth ballot. The Republicans also succeeded in getting their New Jersey candidate for Governor in office right after Jefferson's inauguration. At least, the new Governor hailed from Middlesex County.

The Constitution of 1787 did little to change the "aristocratic rule" by a few affluent men at the local level. Only those who owned at least one thousand acres of land (in what was called a "freehold estate") and/or held five hundred pounds worth of personal property could hold office. Those chosen or elected to office in the wards of New Brunswick had to be from the landed few in order to be a Freeholder, such as George Wetherill. At this time, there were only a hundred or so freeholders, but over 7,000 free persons and 1,000 slaves in Middlesex County. Thus, a large number of souls who voted during the war could no longer vote or hold office after the war

Decisions on maintenance of roads and bridges, regulation of firearms, observance of the Sabbath, curfew regulations, taxation, regulation of bartering and selling in markets, fire prevention, and so on were made by a few locals. An important local matter was the move by some wealthy West Jersey landowners to get the new legislature to draw up a new boundary line to replace the Province Line boundary at the southern edge of the South Ward. A change in this boundary would have resulted in West Jersey gaining ground that would include part of the South Ward. There was also a regional conflict over the "soft money" issue, which East Jerseyans tended to favor and West Jerseyans did not. During the last two years of the war, there was an economic boom for some in New Jersey. Illegal trading with entrepreneurs in New York City garnered much "hard money" and needed goods for New Jersey. After the war, this boom collapsed. Credit was restricted, and circulating specie became scarce. Many locals complained about currency shortages, burdensome taxes, and economic stagnation. This led most folks in the South Ward to favor soft money.

Another problem was that local farmers persisted in using traditional agricultural methods. Thus, crop yields could not keep up with the profits needed to pay off debts and pay taxes. In 1786, the wheat crop was devastated by the infestation of the Hessian fly. The farmers who were renting property owned by wealthy landowners could not or would not pay up. Many in the local area pulled up stakes and moved west.

Many of the veteran political leaders had also left. The new leaders in the Assembly had to resolve the problems of currency, debts, and taxes. Amazingly, they did come up with some clever remedies. New monies based on landed security were issued. These held their value and provided a stable currency. Laws were passed to liberalize bankruptcy procedures, allowing debts to be paid in public securities. The new legislators also came up with a tax plan that assured creditors of income from investments. New Jersey was on its way towards resolving its financial woes and servicing its debts.

By 1787, there was evidence of recovery from the damages of war. A post-war economic depression was almost over. Currency and debt challenges were being met. Confidence in state government was rising. Locals wished they could have said the same for their federal government under the Articles of Confederation during the years leading up to 1787. They would soon be able to. Folks in New Jersey generally felt their federal government should have more power than the Articles of Confederation offered. Continental Congress should be able to regulate trade, levy tariff duties, and control western lands. As early as 1778, New Jerseyans were calling for changes in the Articles. They saw that the requisition system, whereby Congress requested funds on a quota system from the states, was failing. Congress could not secure unanimous consent to levy import duties. By 1783, the New Jersey Legislature declared that the state would not contribute to the Confederation until Congress was given the power to collect tariff duties. This was because New Jersey was getting squeezed out by New York and Pennsylvania on imports.

Folks in New Jersey were also angry over certain large states laying claim to western lands. New Jerseyans felt Congress should manage all western lands and gain revenue from western land sales. In South Brunswick alone, several farmers and/or their sons wanted to move west if they could get fair and equal access to western land. By 1787, a group of prominent New Jersey businessmen—John Cleves Symmes, Elias Boudinot, Jonathan Dayton, Elias Dayton, and Joseph Bloomfield—were able to purchase a large tract of land in southwestern Ohio along the Great Miami River. Some South Brunswick locals joined Symmes in 1788 and headed to Ohio. One of the areas settled by New Jerseyans was named Dayton, as was the settlement at Cross Roads in the old South Ward, later on.

Many locals liked the idea of keeping the Confederation's capital in New Jersey. It had been here since 1783, when the Continental Congress left Philadelphia in favor of Princeton—half of which was in Middlesex County at the time and technically part of New Brunswick's old South Ward. In that same year, Congress voted to build two capitals—one at Annapolis and one at Trenton. By October of 1784, delegates were already gathering in an already crowded Trenton, which was housing the state legislature at the same time. It was decided that Congress would move to New York City until money had been appropriated for one capital at the falls near Trenton. However, nothing came of the plan to make Trenton the singular capital. In 1787, it was decided to locate the federal government on the Potomac in order to appease the southern states. Thus, the old South Ward lost out big time in not being able to reap the economic benefits of having the capital of the United States nearby.

Strengthening the powers of the central government appeared inevitable. New Jersey sent Abraham Clark, James Schureman, and William Churchill Houston (a professor at Princeton) to the Annapolis Convention. One matter considered was the extension of congressional power over trade. However, the main accomplishment at this poorly attended convention was to call for another convention. In May of 1787, that was held in Philadelphia. New Jersey was represented by William Livingston, David Brearley, William Paterson (a graduate of Princeton), and Jonathan Dayton. Houston had to bow out due to poor health. The New Jersey Plan was put forth; it gave small states equal representation in the Senate. Other changes were also favored by the majority of locals. Their representatives from Middlesex County went to Trenton to ratify the changes in December of 1787.

Local governance after the Revolution is difficult to cover fully because of a fire at Richard McDowell's house in 1844. All records of governance, from the 1780's to 1843, were destroyed. Thus, the names of those who served as clerks, assessors, collectors, committeemen, commissioners of appeals, school committeemen, overseers of the poor, constables, and so on are lost to history. There is, however, a list of Chosen Freeholders from the area—David Williamson (1778-85, 1788-91, 1793-97); Joachim Gulick (1780-82); William Williamson (1778); James Abrahams (1782); John Wetherly (?) (1784-85, 1788); John Wetherill, Jr. (1783, 1786-92); Andrew McDowell (1793-94, 1798-1800); John Bailey (1796-97); and Christopher Longstreet (1798, 1800). The Board of Freeholders was run by Middlesex County. The members served on grand juries, which were held in New Brunswick. The Court of Oyer and Terminer was held in New Brunswick. The county gaol (jail) was also found in the Hub City.

Voting at the local level was called “running off” back in the day. Voters would gather at a chosen place, appoint a moderator, and have the candidates for a position stand in a conspicuous place on either side of a road. Voters would then stand with the candidate they favored, and the number standing with the candidate would determine who won and who lost. Such elections were held at least once a year for such committee positions as maintenance of roads and bridges; care for the poor, orphans, and widows; tax collecting; and so on.

At this time, horse stealing was the most serious crime committed in the area. If a horse thief was caught and found guilty in a court of law, he was summarily hanged in a public place—preferably at a crossroads. Public whipping was used for lesser crimes. An example of one accused of petty larceny would have been to tie the accused to a post or a wagon wheel, administer a number of lashes to a bare back, and have the one whipped pay a fine for his or her crime.

Church leaders played an important role in the governance of moral behavior and public decency. At the end of the Revolution, there was a scarcity of local clergymen, but those available led in restoring the churches and re-establishing the pre-war moral tenor. Presbyterian and Dutch Reformed clergy led the way in the area that came to be known as South Brunswick Township. Other faiths did the same. Most citizens’ untoward behavior was held in check by the religious customs of the day. Rules against secular activities on Sundays—the days of rest—were strictly enforced by church and state. Misbehavior during the rest of the week was also dealt with in like manner. Strangers “just passing through” were watched carefully and always deemed suspicious. The local God-fearing citizenry held little tolerance for non-believers, scofflaws, shirkers, vagabonds, hucksters, and the like. Penalties for bad behavior were harsh, fines stiff, and misdeeds not unpunished. Most of those caught and accused of misbehavior carried scars and tattoos on thumbs and cheeks (and elsewhere) to identify their foul deeds.

Another avenue for restoring the peace and maintaining order was through education (if one could afford it for their children). This was accomplished through tutors or attending a church-affiliated school. Reading and writing were essential for learning scripture and going through catechism. The most significant progress was made by the number of Dutch locals whose dominant language became English by the 1790's.

Part C: Post-Revolution Farming Lifestyle

In the old South Ward, farms were modest in number and widely spaced. They were located where the soil was fertile, a water source was available, and the forest cover had been removed. Each farm (aka— plantation) operated as an independent unit. Paths and rough narrow roads connected neighbors and led to wider roads leading to churches, mills, and centers of commerce such as New Brunswick and Trenton. Getting about was done on horseback or in wagons pulled by one or more horses. A gentleman farmer might have been able to afford a fancier vehicle. Whichever means was used, travel remained difficult throughout the time period. However, towards the end of the time period, metal springs on vehicles were gaining favor over wooden springs. This, at least, made travel less difficult.

For the most part, a South Brunswick farmer had to lead a self-sufficient lifestyle. Goods and services were usually miles away. Occasionally an itinerant peddler might happen by. Thus, someone on a farm had to be a carpenter, butcher, tanner, weaver, cobbler, distiller, and much more. A workday lasted from sun up to sun down. Sunday, the day of rest, was a welcome relief for a husbandman who could afford to acknowledge it. Another respite from the usual farm tasks came from hunting with an heirloom musket and a hunting dog or two.

The typical local farm back in the day featured wheat and rye for human consumption. Barley and oats were mainly for animal consumption. Livestock may have included horses, cows, oxen, hogs, sheep, chickens, ducks, and geese. Dogs were used for hunting and guarding property. Cats were used for reducing the number of rats and mice. Other crops may have included flax, potatoes, carrots, squash, beans, corn, beets, and herbs. Pumpkins, buckwheat, maple tree syrup, and honey from tree beehives were other possibilities. Production of all these things increased during the post-revolutionary years, as long as the soil remained fertile and the weather cooperated. By 1800, the average local farmer's land was yielding enough produce to feed three to four large families.

Crop preparation started with plowing in the spring. Most local farmers used wooden plows during this time period. - A few added a strip of iron to allow the plowshare to last longer. By the end of this time period, Charles Newbold of Burlington had introduced a cast-iron plow; however, most locals rejected the improved plow because they feared that iron tainted the soil. After plowing several acres, harrows were used to smooth the soil. Weeding was done with a hoe.

Planting was accomplished by throwing (aka—broadcasting) seeds and then covering them with a brush harrow. Hole-making for planting seeds did not catch on until the end of the time period. Corn was planted using a dibble stick or hoe. Many other crops were started in the same way. Back then, a farmer might be able to plant two acres per day.

The sickle and the scythe were used to harvest grasses and grains. A farmer employing a sickle could harvest less than an acre a day. A scythe could yield at least twice as much. However, the sickle was preferred because it could lay stalks in bundles. The cradle, developed from the scythe, was introduced in the 1790's. This device oriented stalks for easy binding and allowed for harvesting close to three acres per day. A corn knife was used to harvest corn. Stalks were bundled and stacked for drying. Cobs were husked, and stalks were chopped for cattle feed. Scythed hay was raked and set in hay-cocks to dry. The hoe-back rake was not introduced until the late 1700's. This device was hitched to a horse team and pulled through mowed hay in order to gather up to three acres of harvest per hour. Root crops were harvested by plowing or hand-digging with a heavy fork.

The flail was used to separate kernels from the fruiting heads of grains. Mechanization of threshing came late in the 1790's. Such devices were not available in the local area until the next time period. Seed cleaning was done by winnowing, allowing breezes to blow away the chaff after tossing the material in the air. All of this plowing, planting, and harvesting was long, tedious, back-breaking work. The farmer, his family, his laborers, and his slaves all had a hand in producing a bounty that contributed to New Jersey being called the Garden State.

The farmer's wife had many responsibilities that went beyond garden planting and harvesting. She washed and scrubbed with home-made soap. Swept with a home-made broom. Dusted with a feather duster. Made candles by dipping wax or using molds. Washed and carded wool, spun wool, and knitted wool. Many had a spinning wheel, and some had a loom. They made cloth and turned it into garments for the whole family. If flax and/or hemp was harvested, the fibers had to be soaked, combed out, and woven into cloth. Feathers had to be stripped from slaughtered geese, ducks, and carrier pigeons; layered between sheeting material; and turned into bedding. Sheets were made from homespun linen. Bedspreads and quilts were made from calico, calamanco, durant, or lute string. Blankets and rugs from homespun, wool, or flannel. Poor farm families and slaves slept on straw ticks or corn husks. They wore patches on their clothes, and, in many cases, patches on their patches.

A woman was usually in charge of the fall butchering. She made head cheese, prepared entrails for casing sausage, ground meats, salted meats, smoked meats, and rendered

lard for cooking purposes. All this had to be done in addition to preparing the meals for the family. Thus, a farmer's wife spent much time and effort at the cooking hearth. She roasted meats on a spit; maneuvered dog irons, chains, hooks, and smoke jacks for various cooking chores; employed long-handled fry pans and waffle irons; used racks for toasting, kettles for boiling, and on and on. She raised cooking fires by using long logs, turf, or charcoal. Those lucky enough to have a Dutch oven found baking much easier. Very few had the Franklin stove. No matter what devices a farmer's wife employed, her life was by no means an easy one.

The farmstead during this time period was much the same as the previous period. Hand-hewn ceiling beams, clapboard siding, wide floorboards, at least one brick fireplace sporting a mantel, painted walls, and possibly Dutch doors were features. Barns consisted of massive wood pillars, foot-square beams, kept together with pegs and hand-forged nails. Hinges (such as the popular Dutch strap variety) kept the doors in place. The houses ranged from two-room cabins to large mansions of brick or stone. Cedar shingles probably crowned the roofs. Most of these farmsteadings were somewhere between small and large—one-and-a-half stories high to save on taxes; a modest count of windows; water from a dug well; an outhouse; and additions as a family expanded. There was no running water, no plumbing, no toilet, no central heating, no fans, no lighting other than candles and whale-oil lamps. Life was indeed rustic, but, if anything, instilled a sense of independence.

In most situations, families ate well. Barrels of beef, pork, and other meats were usually on hand. In addition, there were sides of beef, flitches of bacon, venison, mutton, gammons, roasting ducks, turkeys, and geese. Much meat was smoked or pickled. Included were wild fowl, raccoon, and bear. Shad and herring were available in season and barreled for the winter. There was always a supply of butter and lard, and frequently molasses, sugar, and honey. Besides meats and fish, food sources included wheat, rye, buckwheat, corn, potatoes, beans, turnips, beets, apples, cherries, peaches, and pears.

Drinking more than well water was a cherished endeavor down on the farm. Tea, coffee, cocoa, and chocolate were luxuries to be savored. Cider was abundantly available. Hard cider, brandy, gin, rum, and wine were kept in barrels and flasks. These were usually consumed at special occasions. A farmer's silver tankard (inherited or purchased) was used on such occasions. Tobacco and snuff were usually reserved for grown men to use—especially among well-to-do gentlemen farmers. Tobacco was usually smoked in pipes, or wads of it were chewed.

Clothing for farmers in those days was meant to be practical and utilitarian. Their best outfits were set aside for church attendance on Sundays and special occasions such as funerals. The rest of the time, males wore breeches of leather, buckskin, worsted, homespun, or broadcloth. Shirts, blouses, and such were made from linen, cotton, homespun, or tow. Stockings were made of wool, cotton, linen, or yarn. Coats were made of animal skins, homespun, denim, wilton, or broadcloth. Vests were made from linen, cotton, dimity, serge, broadcloth, or something more expensive and exotic. Boots and shoes were usually made from animal hides.

Farmers' wives dressed for modesty and practicality, but often added ornamental touches to show individuality or to draw attention. Caps and aprons were necessities. These were made from cambric, taffety, millinet, gauze, linen, muslin, check, homespun, or tow. Bonnets and hoods were from similar materials. Short gowns and regular gowns were made from kersey, linen, worsted, wilton, calamanco, check, homespun, lindsey-woolsey, and so on. Shawls were popular. Shifts and petticoats were ubiquitous. They were made from homespun, muslin, linen, linsey, tow, flannel, kersey, dimity, bombazine, or calamanco. Handkerchiefs, kerchiefs, and hair ribbons of various colors were also popular.

Farmhouse furniture was utilitarian, stout and strong, built to last. Tables and benches were sturdy. Chairs were straight and high-backed. Beds, chests, drawers, cupboards, dressers, and stands were seldom made from rare wood such as mahogany. Most furniture was crafted from lesser woods such as pine. Other woods such as bilsted, gum, walnut, cherry, or red cedar were put to use. Cedar was also popular for making pails, tubs, piggons, lye-casks, slaw-banks, and clothes presses because of its pleasing odor and a belief that it repelled insects and vermin. Tableware was made of wood, pewter, copper, even iron. Plates, bowls, servers, platters, pots, trenches, utensils, basins, ewers, mugs, porringers, ladles, kettles, and so on were usually made from metals. Fancier, delicate items were made of clay, porcelain, or china. Glass items on a farm were a luxury. These would include drinking vessels, serving vessels, salt-cellars, tumblers, and so on. A clock was found in the more genteel homes, as was a looking glass. Books were a luxury, as scarce as items of silver and gold. A typical farmer's library consisted of a family bible and possibly a psalm-book. Reading was usually accomplished in the evening by candlelight before retiring after an exhausting day focused on the challenges of post-revolution husbandry.

Local events of a non-military nature that occurred in 1775 include the probating of Aaron Dean's will, which granted his son, Abraham, land at the Lawrence Brook bridge. Also in this year, the Van Dyke farmhouse in Mapleton was used for meetings held by local Masons and the Sons of Liberty. Dr. Hezekiah Stites of Cranbury was selected President of the Middlesex County Medical Society. John Probasco, a farmer and carpenter of note, settled in the Rhode Hall area. On August 8, Col. Johannes Godfried Krause from St. Croix died at the Rhode Hall Tavern. He was buried on Probasco land.

In 1776, the Province of New Jersey was officially named the State of New Jersey. The same year, New Jersey adopted its first state constitution by which women, aliens, Native Americans, and free African Americans whose wealth was 50 pounds or more gained the right to vote. The first schoolhouse in the South Ward was built in Kingston on Academy Street. Thomas Leonard's grist mill burned down in December.

In 1777, construction of the Vanderveer house was completed. The local area was served by only one newspaper printed in the state—the New Jersey Gazette. Philadelphia newspapers could still be obtained in parts of New Jersey.

In 1778, the local Committee of Safety met in Kingston to direct the confiscation of tory estates, administer oaths of abjuration and allegiance, apprehend tory criminals, and send disaffected persons over to enemy lines. The term "South Brunswick" was mentioned for the first time in the New Brunswick Township's Freeholder minutes.

In 1779, John Wetherill, John Terhune, Isaac Gulick, and David Williamson petitioned the New Jersey Legislature to pass a bill opening a ditch and water course to drain Pigeon Swamp and Fresh Ponds area. Proprietors of these areas were to be taxed to cover the cost of the project. William Van Tilburgh obtained a tavern license for his public house in Kingston. The renowned horse, Bay Richmond, imported from Europe by Lewis Morris, was advertised as available for stud service at Long Bridge Farm.

Severe winter weather plagued the local area in 1780. Construction of the "Great Ditch" in Pigeon Swamp began in the summer. Taxes were levied to cover the costs of drainage and maintenance. A distillery was built by Samuel Combs at Fresh Ponds. James Abrahams was appointed Justice of the Peace. John Martin built the first of several houses along Georges Road. William Rowland was born.

In 1781, Dr. Hezekiah Stites of Cranbury helped to revive the New Jersey Medical Society. William Bastedo was born.

On January 12, 1782, John Wetherill, alleged to have turned 86, wed Mary Mesler, 25 years old. John Lawrence, Samuel Tucker, and Robert Armstrong put a 235-acre Saplin Ridge plantation up for sale. It was located along Georges Road near Van Pelt's mill. Jehu Pierson, one of the first teachers at the Rhode Hall School, was born. Isaac Snedeker was born on October 2.

Joseph Van Pelt completed construction of a mill house in 1785, at the site of the mill which would eventually become Davison's Mill. Peter Ridley, a slave born at Long Bridge Farm in 1761, was declared freeborn and never should have served as a slave.

In 1786, the New Jersey Abolition Society received a charter from the State Legislature. Thus, the movement to abolish slavery in New Jersey gained in popularity. John Fitch provided steamboat transportation on the Delaware River. Simon Van Dyke died, leaving 300 acres to be divided between his two sons, Hendrick (Henry) and John.

In 1787, Beekman and Major Roads were opened and dedicated. New Jersey became the third state to ratify the Constitution of the United States. The signers representing New Jersey were William Livingston, David Brearley, Jonathan Dayton, and William Paterson.

In 1788, John Gulick received a tavern license to run a public house located between Ten-Mile-Run and Kingston. A movement began in the state to abandon the inhumane punishment of African Americans. James Whitlock renewed his tavern license on March 20th.

In 1789, George Washington passed through South Brunswick Township on the Upper Road (aka—Old Stage Road) in order to spend the night at the Cross and Key Tavern in Rahway before going on to New York for his inauguration. New Jersey became the first state to ratify the Bill of Rights. A curious law was passed by the State Council and General Assembly that forbade the picking of cranberries from June 1st to October 10th.

In 1790, Phineas Withington, the future proprietor of the Withington Tavern in Kingston and the Union Stage Line, was born on April 13th at Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts. The 1790 Federal Census included those living in the South Ward, but the records were lost during the War of 1812.

In 1791, a fire destroyed the original Presbyterian Log Cabin Church in Kingston. John Davison's house, located on Georges Road, was robbed on December 20%. Nicholas Schenck petitioned for a tavern license to operate a public house originally run by

Richard Handley. Moses Whitlock took over operation of the tavern at Cross Roads, which was also his residence. William Van Tilburgh renewed his tavern license, as did John Gulick. Garret “Gentleman Garret” Snedeker died.

In 1792, William Johnson granted in his will 285 acres on the north side of Ridge Road to his son, Peter Johnson. McGhee’s Mill Road from Princeton-Cranbury Road to the Kingston Turnpike was dedicated.

In 1793, David Williamson sought to renew his license for the Rhode Hall Tavern on the Lower Road in the area of the South Ward referred to as Rhode Hall.

In 1794, John Barricklo leased his house at Cross Roads to be used as a tavern. A license was applied for and granted. David Williamson renewed his tavern license. Samuel Disbrow applied for a tavern license in order to operate his business in Cranbury.

In 1795, Peter Sparling completed work on a two-story house at Cross Roads and applied for a tavern license. David Williamson renewed his tavern license at Rhode Hall.

In 1796, Lemuel Scudder sold his mill tract to John Gulick, which was added to the purchased Greenland tract along the Millstone River. David Williamson renewed his tavern license, but, in the same year, ended his tenure as mine host at the Rhode Hall Tavern. New Jersey adopted a general criminal code that provided no distinction of punishment based on race. The first school in Kingston was torn down and construction on a second school on the Middlesex side of the village of Kingston was begun. Peter Cortelyou was born on September 27th; he later became a Township Freeholder.

In 1797, Thomas McDowell was granted a tavern license to run the Boat Hill Tavern located near Sand Hill. Thomas Wetherill applied for renewal of a license to operate the Wetherill Tavern at Cross Roads. New Jersey legislators required that tavern license applicants provide recommendations from six or more freeholders from the area. They also put a limit on the number of taverns in any one area. Tavern owners were required to provide at least two spare feather beds in each public house. John Gulick purchased more land along the Millstone River. This purchase encompassed Skillman’s grist mill.

In 1798, Aaron Dean, Sr., died. By an act of the State legislature, on February 21%, the South Ward was henceforth called the Township of South Brunswick. At this time, the township consisted of 36,000 acres. The first Township Committee meeting was held. A Federal direct tax, highly unpopular among locals who called it the “window tax”, was enacted. It was based on each house’s window size and the materials used for

construction. Shortly after its enactment, it was repealed. The stone four-arch bridge over the Millstone River at Kingston experienced major repairs. Schalks Station Road leading to Josiah Skelton's mills in Plainsboro was opened.

SLAVERY (1775-1800)

Dutch and English farmers predominated in plantation ownership in the South Ward during this time period, as they had done in the previous time period. They had come to rely more and more on slave labor in order to survive the war and make their farms profitable. Farms ranged from ones with hundreds of acres to ones with thousands of acres. Back in those days, a plantation was defined as a large farm that required at least two slaves. However, each farm required certain numbers of free, indentured, and/or slaves at planting and harvest times. During the war, more help was needed when young men went off to fight, with most taking their monthly turns at militia duty. Farm families back then tended to be large, but small children were not used for hard manual labor. Most farmers could not afford to pay free laborers, nor could they rely on indentured servants to stick around to fulfill their contractual obligations. Both slaves and indentures disappeared at alarming rates during the war years. Here are three examples of runaways associated with the local area at the time:

"ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD —Ranaway from the subscriber, living in New Britain, Bucks county, the 20TM instant, (Dec) a Negro man called Tom, well made, about 6 feet high—Had on when he went away, lightish surtout coat, a brown close bodied coat, a fine hat half worn, a pair of leather breeches with bootstraps, behind, and a pair of boots with him; he also took a fiddle with him and plays with his left hand. Said negro was bought from one William Brown at or near Ten Mile Run, in New Jersey, where he, the negro says he is well acquainted, and imagines he is gone that way. Whoever secures said negro, so that his master may have him again, shall have the above reward, paid by me.— Tobias Shull—December 22d, 1778."

"30 DOLLARS REWARD—Ranaway from Benjamin Vancleave's Esq. in Maidenhead, the 26th instant, (Dec) a Negro wench named Dinah, 28 or 30 years of age, five feet six or seven inches high, black and very lusty. She was lately bought of Parson Van Arsdall at Springfield, and lived formerly at Rocky-Hill, and hath a brother living with Colonel Scudder, in Freehold, and it's likely is gone there. Any person apprehending said wench, and applying to Mr. Phillips, innkeeper, in Maidenhead, shall be entitled to the above reward and reasonable charges, paid by—William Crab—1778."

"ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD—Ran away, A NEGRO MAN, named Caesar, about twenty-five years of age, about five feet eight inches high, marked with the

small-pox, had on a blue camblet coat worn out at the elbows, a pair of new buck-skin breeches, straps without knee-buckles, old pumps with a hole in one of the toes or a new patch, a small felt hat lopt. Whoever apprehends the said negro and delivers him to me, shall have the above reward, paid by—JOHN DENTON—Dec. 27, 1780."

The reliance on slave labor on the local farms increased the demand for slaves, and, in turn, raised the cost for purchasing slaves. Such a purchase was initially expensive, but, over time, it proved to be the labor source that could last a lifetime, rather than a specified number of years as in the case of apprentices or indentures. Slaves who did not run away toiled in the croplands, in the pastures, and in the swamps and woodlands. They tended to all sorts of tasks in the steadings, barns, and outbuildings. They cleared and plowed land; planted and harvested crops; herded cattle and sheep; tended horses and vehicles pulled by horses. Some slaves were assigned a myriad of household tasks. Winter was a time for repairing tools and equipment. Harvest time was especially rough, and more so during the war Years. Slaves of one master were often loaned to another master at certain times of the year and worked long and hard.

Slaves were considered a farmer's most valuable property. For example, John Van Dike at Ten-Mile-Run possessed eight able-bodied adult slaves in the late 1700's. His inventory always listed the worth of each slave: males—London (90 pounds); Tom, the elder (80 pounds); Jack (80 pounds); and Tom, the younger (50 pounds) . . . females (referred to as wenches back then)—Cate (80 pounds; Little Cate (40 pounds); Inde (40 pounds); and Bet (20 pounds). These slaves were most likely still alive in 1800 when the total number of souls in bondage was close to 230—roughly 13% of the total population of the South Ward and 14% of the slaves in Middlesex County.

During the Revolutionary War, concern grew regarding the viability of the institution of slavery. The majority of those in rebellion, bent on gaining liberty, were unfortunately adamant about keeping slaves in bondage. However, there was a minority of patriots who viewed slavery as evil and pernicious, as well as hypocritical. New Jersey's first Governor spoke his mind on the matter: "Slavery is utterly inconsistent with the principles of Christianity and humanity . . . odious and disgraceful." Livingston's sentiments fell on deaf ears. For most folks fighting for independence, freeing the slaves was not even a secondary issue. The State Constitution of 1776 provided groundwork for civil rights but did not outlaw slavery. In 1778, Livingston proposed that the Assembly representatives free the slaves. John Wetherill was with the majority that did not concur. The great fear was that freed slaves would join enemy forces in droves. Interestingly enough, from the start of the war to its end, only one slave was manumitted.

A number of African Americans did participate in the war on the American side. The Militia Act of 1777, after being amended, allowed free blacks to enlist. This restriction did not prevent slaves from joining also. A meager number of slaves did bear arms while a larger number served as teamsters and in other non-combatant roles. An example of a slave's participation was Samuel Sutphen (Sutphin), who took the place of his master, Caspar Berger of Readington. Sutphen served in New Jersey and New York from 1776 to 1780. He bore arms, drew guard duty, served as a guide for Continental soldiers, and was wounded once. He saw action along the Millstone River and probably marched through the South Brunswick area on several occasions. After serving with honor, Sutphen returned to slavery for another quarter of a century. He served several masters during that time and gained his surname from his last master.

The New Jersey Assembly decided to postpone debate on the slavery issue until the war was over. After Pennsylvania enacted legislation to abolish slavery in 1780, New Jersey abolitionists felt emboldened to push for the same. They were not successful. By the end of the war, every northern state except New Jersey and New York passed legislation against slavery. New Jersey abolitionists did garner some success in 1786 when a law was enacted that stopped the import of slaves into the state. In 1789, laws were passed regarding a slave’s removal from the state without his permission; a master’s responsibility to teach his slaves how to read; and consequences for abusing slaves. Some voting rights for slaves were gained in 1794. In 1796, slaves acquired official acknowledgment of legal residence in the state.

Despite ardent calls over many years by Quakers and some like-minded individuals to end slavery, this time period experienced steady growth in the number of souls in bondage. The struggle for “freedom” from British tyranny had failed to terminate the evil institution of slavery. Beginning with the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787, the issue was debated and dealt with through compromise. The law of supply and demand, along with the gospel of greed and the insistence on cheap labor, left moral principles forfeit when it came to addressing the issue of slavery. The Union of states had to be preserved at all costs; hence, compromise was the best to hope for.

While the Quakers were pushing to abolish slavery in West Jersey, and gaining some momentum in the process, there was not a modicum of success in East Jersey after the war. Those few slaves who gained the right to vote during and after the war lost it by 1790. The movement to abolish slavery in the entire state that started in 1793 met with very little progress and much resistance in East Jersey. Hypocrisy was glaring in the posturing and protest by God-fearing slave owners in the county of Middlesex. At the local level, several masters had their slaves baptized in Presbyterian churches in Kingston and Cranbury, and in the Six-Mile-Run Dutch Reformed Church. A sizable

number ofslaves were wed in these same churches. Yet, even though they were baptized and married, they were still considered nothing more than property. Their children were treated the same. Any chance at freedom came from running away or being released from bondage via their master's will.

The State Legislature continued to turn down bills of emancipation—one in 1792 and one in 1794. However, those who had started the Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery in 1793 were undeterred. By 1797, abolitionists were circulating petitions requesting the Legislature to abolish slavery. Their call was for gradual emancipation, starting with the abolition of slavery for the unborn. The road to freedom for African Americans was going to be a difficult one.

A local example of the complexities involved in gaining one's freedom was the case of Peter Ridley (aka"Negro Peter"). Peter was born on Long Bridge Farm around 1761. At this time, John Lawrence, son of the original owner, Thomas Lawrence, accepted that the lad was born free and allowed him to be raised in the household of the Lawrences' overseer, Samuel Okeson. This overseer was a Tory during the war and fled to British-held Long Island. He took Peter with him, but left behind a large debt still owed to Lawrence. Okeson's Jersey holdings were confiscated. However, John Lawrence was never able to collect on the debt. After Okeson died, Peter returned to New Jersey, probably hoping to reunite with relatives who lived close to Long Bridge Farm. In 1784, the Supreme Court of New Jersey considered the lawsuit John Lawrence had brought against the executrix of Okeson's estate. In doing so, the status of Peter Ridley came into question—whether or not Ridley belonged to the estate of the deceased Samuel Okeson, as claimed by his widow, Jeanne Okeson, the person being sued by Lawrence. On November 16%, a writ of habeas corpus was issued by Chief Justice David Brearley to Benjamin Applegate, a constable in the South Ward, to have "Negro Peter" apprehended and taken into custody in order to have him appear in court. Peter was put in Applegate's custody. It was not until April of the following year that the court heard the case. A series of five affidavits were taken before Justice Isaac Smith relative to Ridley's status as a free man. On the basis of those affidavits, the court ruled that Peter Ridley was free-born. The order was given to release the man from detainee status.

The backstory of Peter Ridley's quest for freedom is revealed in the affidavits that led to his gaining the freedom he should have never lost in the first place. John Stoniker, who lived at Long Bridge Farm when Peter was born, maintained that an indentured servant to John Lawrence, named Will Ridley, was the father of the person in question. "Black Will", as he was commonly referred to, was around thirty years of age at the time of Peter's birth. He was not a slave, but had not yet finished his time as an indenture. While still at Long Bridge, Will purchased his wife, Diana, from Dollis (Dolans) Hageman

(Hagaman)—the champion of land rights for local farmers during the riotous 1750s. Hageman''s property was situated along the Upper Road at Ten-Mile-Run. Will had borrowed 45 pounds from John Lawrence in order to pay for his wife—a more than reasonable price to pay for a female slave in those days. When Will completed his indenture, he paid back Lawrence in installments. Thus, his wife, now indentured, remained at Lawrence's plantation for three years until the interest on the loan had been paid. Will had left Long Bridge to find work elsewhere during these years. His wife went to live with him after the interest on the loan had been paid in full. However, Peter Ridley stayed behind with Samuel Okeson, who had purchased Diana’s last years of indenture from John Lawrence. Thus, Will actually ended up paying Okeson to get his wife back. This account was confirmed by affidavits from Eleanor Stoniker, Robert Armstrong, David Gilliland, and James Hageman, son of Dollis Hageman. At the time of the payment of the debt, it was understood that the overseer could not keep Peter beyond his coming of age to be declared freeborn. Okeson did not live up to that understanding. Thus, the courts had to decide, and they did—in favor of granting Peter Ridley his freedom—at last.

Compiled and updated in 2026 by Kelan Amme, Local History Librarian. Some details and original sources may be unconfirmed. If you have questions, please email **kamme@sbpl.info**.