The History of South Brunswick Township 1800-1825

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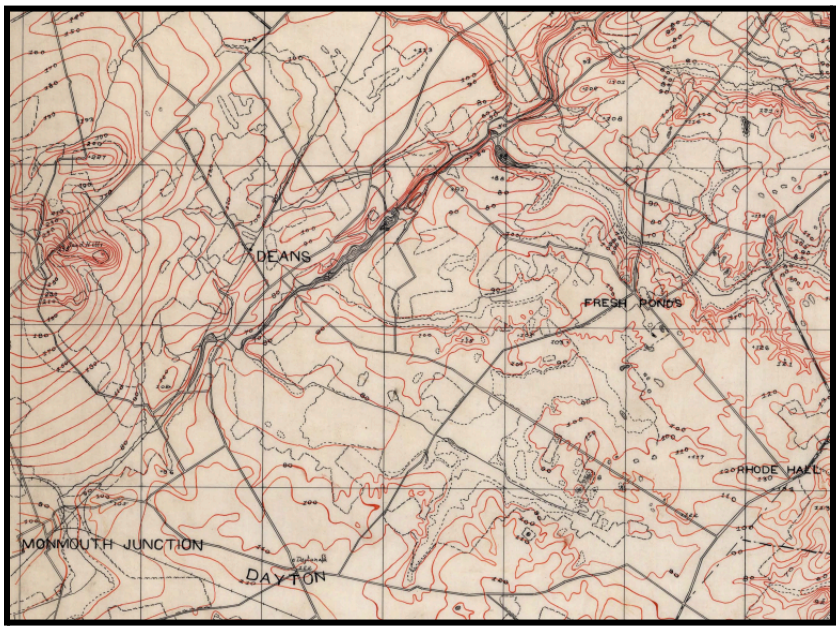

NJDEP - NJGS - Historical Topographic Manuscript Maps by C. C. Vermeule Around 1870-1887, https://dep.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/njgws/enviroed/vermeule/44.pdf

SOUTH BRUNSWICK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Part A: A Decade of Peace

The first decade of the 19th century was a peaceful one in South Brunswick Township, Middlesex County, New Jersey—so named since February 21, 1798. This name change, from the South Ward to South Brunswick, was created by a Legislative Act that specified the new name for 36,000 acres of south Middlesex County land. This made South Brunswick the largest township in the county. Much of this land continued to prove good tillable soil; thus, farming was the major pursuit of most folks who lived in the Township. Kings Town continued to be the leading commercial village there. This was mainly due to the profitable stagecoach lines stopping there at the “halfway” point between Philadelphia and New York. Maple Town, at this time, was being absorbed by Kings Town, soon to be known as Kingston. It contained a grist mill, fulling mill, and saw mill. Cross Roads, later to be named Dayton, served as a wayfarer's stop for those journeying on Georges Road, either heading to or leaving from New Brunswick, as well as for those headed for or returning from points south along the Lower Road all the way to Burlington. By this time, the Barricklo Tavern, owned by William Schenck, was converted into a dwelling and a store. The Wetherill Tavern, run by Thomas Wetherill, was located on the opposite side of Georges Road. Where Abraham Dean built a sawmill in 1810, the area became known informally as Deans. This land lay northwest of Cross Roads along both sides of Georges Road. Fresh Ponds continued as a hamlet in the northeast part of the township. Most locals associated it with nearby Pigeon Swamp, most of which had been inherited by Elizabeth Wetherill Morris from her father, George Wetherill, in 1805. Rhode Hall lay on the eastern boundary of the Township. The center of this hamlet was the Halfway House, known more familiarly as the Rhode Hall Tavern. The name was changed when James Clark and then John Smock ran the place. The current Monmouth Junction section was still known as Long Bridge Farm. Kendall Park was not even a gleam in a future land developer's eye.

Farmsteads, large and small, were scattered across the Township. They were located where the soil was arable and the water in good supply. Benjamin Petty’s farm in the Rhode Hall area is an example of a new plantation started in 1800. Much forested land was being cleared for additional farm fields. Many farmers were able to transition from subsistence farming to market farming at this time. New roads allowed for easier access to mills and markets. In 1803, Beaver Dam Road offered an extension of Fresh Ponds Road. The Straight Turnpike, from New Brunswick to Trenton (aka: U.S. 1), opened in 1804 and served as an early toll road for a time. It impacted Kingston's dominance in stage traffic. Samuel Cruser petitioned for a tavern license at his house in the Sand Hill area in 1806 near this Turnpike. John Beekman Road (aka: Sand Hill Road) was open to traffic in 1806. Black Horse Lane, named after John Van Zant’s tavern, where Oakey’s Brook crosses Georges Road, was opened in 1808. Raymond Road (aka:

Longstreet Road or Gulick's Road) also opened in 1808. Cross Roads-Fresh Ponds Road was completed in 1809. All these roads, save for the wider Straight Turnpike, were two rods wide. The wider roads served as turnpike toll roads, starting around 1801. Also, starting at that time, farmers were finding ways to avoid paying tolls when getting their produce to market. There was a toll house at the corner of Bodine Lane (aka: Finnegan's Lane) and the Upper Road (aka: Rte. 27). A trading post was located south of the toll house at Ten-Mile-Run. In 1802, S. S. Moore and T. W. Jones published a "Traveler's Directory" showing all routes possible between New Brunswick and Princeton. The pathways and byways shown connected farmers to mills, churches, taverns, stores, and the few doctors in the area. Roads were still dirt paths for the most part, but with their number increasing, the ease of moving about and conducting business was improving.

Slaves, indentures, and hired help provided a labor force that made some local farms quite profitable. Staple crops continued to be wheat, rye, barley, oats, flax, corn, root vegetables, and beans. At this time, the iron plow was starting to be used more by farmers who no longer believed the iron would poison the soil. The curved mouldboard, to better invert the furrow slice, was also being used. A two-horse plow team could turn an acre in about six hours. After plowing, a harrow was used to smooth the soil. This was done by walking the field. Planting was still done by broadcasting the seeds. The first seed drills made their appearance in this decade, but were a rare sight. Hole making was mostly done with a dibble stick or a hoe. Two acres of seeding could be done in a day. The sickle or scythe was used for harvesting grass and grain. A sickle could harvest half an acre a day; a scythe could harvest more than an acre a day. The addition of the cradle on the scythe allowed for easier binding of straw. Bundling of such crops still had to be done by hand. Rakes and pitchforks had to be used in the hay drying process. By this time, the flail for threshing was being replaced by the threshing cylinder, later known as the ground hop thresher. Seed cleaning was still being done by the winnowing process, but the paddle fan and the fanning mill were becoming more popular. Thus, agriculture at the start of the century in the local area was experiencing greater use of mechanical means to get the job done. Hand tools were improving. Tread mills using horses were driving machinery. More and more farms could transition from subsistence level to profit level due to such improvements. The only negative, at that time, was that the soil of some farms was becoming less fertile, as fewer and fewer fields were left fallow. In some cases, this led to crop failure.

This decade of peace did bring prosperity to many in the area. However, with prosperity came new challenges and dour predictions by some. Prices for goods and services were climbing too high. The wealthy were getting wealthier while many farmers were having trouble staying out of debt. Many folks were leaving and heading west.

Opportunities beyond farming for generation after generation remained narrow. Women were destined to raise children and assume household responsibilities. Only a few profited from their needlework, candle making, and so on. A few found work teaching. Some kept boarders, were hired out as cooks, and a rare few became tavern keepers. Free men worth at least 500 pounds or more ruled the day. Their leisure time, if any could be found, was spent on hunting, horse racing, fishing, boxing, etc. Most folks had only Sunday as a respite from toiling from sun up to sun down. The locals who did not farm found income in servicing the horses and stage wagons along the Upper Road (aka: Rte. 27), the Lower Road (aka: Cranbury/South River Road), and Georges Road. These means of income included Tavern owners, blacksmiths, and wheelwrights. Mill operators were found along waterways, such as the Millstone River, Lawrence Brook, Heathcote Brook, and the runs which crossed the Upper Road. Dean's Mill, which opened for business in 1810, is an example of the growing number of sawmills, gristmills, and fulling mills in the area. Quarries were also in operation at this time in the Mapleton/Kingston area.

As far as politics and government were concerned, local governance in a rural community such as South Brunswick Township was a simple affair at the start of the 19th century. A three-man Township Committee was mainly responsible for the care of roads and the care of the poor. For local elections, a Moderator was appointed by the voters to conduct “running-off” elections. This was often accomplished by having those voting for one candidate stand on one side of a road, and those voting for the other candidate stand on the other side of the road. The side with the majority won the election. No incident of rock throwing or brawling was ever recorded during such elections in the Township. Freeholders elected during this initial decade of the century included Andrew McDowell (served from ~ 1800 to 1810); Christopher Longstreet (from 1800 to 1801); and Aaron Longstreet (from 1801 to 1810). They received one dollar per year for their service. Other governing officials remain unknown due to a fire in Richard McDowell's house on March 31, 1843. He served as Committee Clerk at the time. All earlier records were destroyed in the blaze. Only the titles for the positions remain known—Justice of the Peace; Township Clerk; Assessor; Collector; Committee Member; Commissioners of Appeal; Overseer of the Poor; and possibly a School Administrator.

It appears that Middlesex County remained a Federalist stronghold at this time. There was no John Wetherill to fight for the interests of South Brunswick folks, but the County leaders probably found much support in the new Township. On the state and national levels, the Democratic-Republicans, led by Thomas Jefferson, were on the rise. By 1802 at the state level, the Democratic-Republicans held 19 seats and the Federalists had 20. In Middlesex County, Jefferson was denounced as an atheist and foe to

organized religion. Folks feared he might become President for life with unlimited power. In 1800, all Federalist candidates in the County won for Council and Assembly. These included Ephraim Martin (270 votes in South Brunswick); John Neilson (279 votes in South Brunswick); Gershom Dunn (279 votes in South Brunswick); and William Edgar (277 votes in South Brunswick). Dunn, Neilson, and Erkurius Beatty won in 1801. Dunn, Beatty, and John Combs won in 1802. It was Dunn, Beatty, and James Voorhees in 1803 and 1804. Beatty, Voorhees, and Andrew Elstone won in 1805. Voorhees, Dunn, and James Parker won in 1806 and 1807. Parker, Voorhees, and George Boice won in 1808 and 1809. In 1810, Federalist James Schureman was elected to the Council & Senate. He received 197 local votes. Representatives to the General Assembly were all Federalists—James Parker (196 local votes); James Voorhees (194 local votes); and George Boice (195 local votes). The Federalists retained control of the State Legislature but lost all seats in Congress. A six-seat-at-large Congressional District System lasted well beyond the first decade. :

In the New Jersey Governor's race in 1801, Joseph Bloomfield, a former Federalist turned Democratic-Republican, won. However, Middlesex County had gone in favor of Richard Stockton, who tied Bloomfield in the next election. Thus, John Lambert served as acting Governor until Bloomfield won again in 1804. Bloomfield ran unopposed throughout the rest of the decade. After the Burr-Hamilton duel in 1804, the Federalist Party started to weaken, but not so much in Middlesex County. Federalist Ephraim Martin continued as Councilman, garnering 236 votes in South Brunswick in 180; 171 votes in 1802; 350 in 1803; 140 in 1804; and 170 in 1805. Federalist Erkurius Beatty ran and won twice, receiving 145 local votes in 1806 and 204 in 1807. In 1808, Federalist James Schureman won and received 275 local votes. It was Beatty again in 1809.

At the close of the first decade, the total population of South Brunswick Township was 2,332. This was an increase of 515 over the total in 1790. Free white males 45 years of age or older numbered 144; males 26 to 44 numbered 206. 16 to 25—110; 10-15—190; and under 10—325. Free white females 45 years of age or older numbered 167. 26-44—194; 16-25—125; 10-15—159; and under 10—350. Slaves totaled 230. The remaining 276 consisted of unfree whites (indentures, servants, etc.) and free blacks. All federal census records for New Jersey (1790, 1800, and 1810) were lost during the War of 1812. The above numbers derive from tax records and other sources.

Notable events at the start of the next decade before the war include George Davison’s takeover of Van Pelt’s Mill. Elizabeth Wetherill Morris deeded her inherited Pigeon Swamp lands to Samuel Dean. Phineas Withington established the Withington Inn in Kingston. Several tavern licenses were applied for and/or renewed —Moses Whitlock for the Sand Hills Tavern; Henry Gray for his tavern along the Trenton-New Brunswick

Turnpike; Thomas Wetherill at Cross Roads; Joseph Chamberlain at Spring Garden; James Clark along the Lower Road; Aaron Longstreet's establishment; and John Bastedo, Jr., petitioned for a tavern in the Sand Hills/Trenton-New Brunswick Turnpike area. Other events that had a minor impact on South Brunswick Township during the first decade of the 19th century included the sale of the Brotherton Reservation for Native Americans in Burlington County. Some of the Lenni-Lenape there who had originally come from the South Ward region had been relocated to Brotherton, and when the reservation was sold, they moved west. Some joined the Oneida Nation in New York. Thus, by the first decade of the new century, there were no Native Americans living in the area.

Part B. Two More Years of Peace then Three Years of War

The second decade of the 1800's started peacefully enough in South Brunswick Township. State-wide events of note, which directly or indirectly impacted the lives of South Brunswick citizens, included a cholera/typhoid epidemic; the opening of Stevens steam ferry service between Hoboken and Manhattan; and the first printing of the New Brunswick Fredonian by James and David F. Randolph.

Local events of note include an increase in the takeover of taverns, with John Stewart taking over Moses Whitlock's house along the Trenton-New Brunswick Turnpike and William Bordine taking over Oakey Van Hise's house at Scudder's Mill. Licenses were renewed by Thomas Wetherill, Aaron Longstreet, Samuel Cruser, Henry Gray, John Bastedo, Jr., Phineas Withington, Joseph Chamberlain, and the Van Tilburghs at the Sign of the Mermaid in Kingston. In 1810, Abraham Dean built a saw mill on property inherited from his father, Aaron Dean. He built a dam at Lawrence Brook to form Dean's Pond. Fresh Ponds Road was dedicated; it ran from Georges Road to Gulick's tavern.

In politics, there was a major change in election outcomes. Andrew Rowan and Ellison Ely were elected Freeholders—no surprise there. However, John James, a Democratic-Republican, was elected to Council & Senate. He only received 64 votes in South Brunswick. Representatives elected to the General Assembly were all Democratic-Republicans—John Brewster (62 votes in South Brunswick); John L. Anderson (63 votes in South Brunswick); and James T. Dunn (64 votes in South Brunswick). Joseph Bloomfield, also a Democratic-Republican, was re-elected to his tenth term as Governor. Thus, the State of New Jersey had shifted dramatically to the Democratic-Republicans, but South Brunswick remained staunchly Federalist.

The main event of the second decade of the Nineteenth Century was the War of 1812. The New Jersey State Assembly supported a resolution defending the Federal

Government's declaration of war against Great Britain on January 11, 1812. Governor Joseph Bloomfield resigned to accept a commission from President James Madison to serve as a Brigadier General in the U. S. Army. He took command of forces along the Canadian border. 6,000 soldiers were from New Jersey, consisting of infantry and cavalry. Militiamen started training at Paulus Hook. Coastal defenses were planned for Sandy Hook and Barnegat Inlet in anticipation of British coastal raids. Plans to build a fort at Somers Point were also set in motion.

In 1812, the Federalists did make a comeback in the Assembly and Council. Aaron Ogden was elected Governor. In Middlesex County, there was much opposition to the war and much support for a peaceful resolution. This was probably the majority sentiment in South Brunswick Township. When Congress called for raising a militia force in April, the Federalist state officials were slow to respond. The Governor admitted that New Jersey was unprepared for war. In the fall elections of 1813, the Democratic-Republican candidate, William S. Pennington, became Governor. In a speech, he declared that the Jersey shore had to be protected and a sizable militia force had to be up to the task of defending it. Up to this point, there had been only minor naval skirmishes off the Jersey shore and not one incident on land. The Governor ordered that a State militia force of 5,000 men be mobilized under Major-General Benjamin Ludlow. This force was to fortify the Hudson and Delaware shores to protect New York City and Philadelphia. Blockhouses were to be erected and a black and white ball system employed for communication purposes. All such preparation had no direct impact on Middlesex County, other than the sailors and soldiers from the County who participated in the war.

Militiamen from Middlesex County served up to three months of active duty. A training base was established at Paulus Hook. A number served at Fort Richmond, Staten Island. Others served at Navesink Highlands and Middletown Point. At all these places, artillerymen and riflemen were short of arms and munitions, but, fortunately, they saw no action.

The military rolls for the Middlesex County—New Brunswick area (which probably included any men from South Brunswick Township) are as follows:

Those men from South Brunswick Township who served during the War of 1812 included the following—Isaac Dunham, George Van Arsdale, James Taylor, Abraham Van Tine, Joshua Ayres, Matthew Rhea, David Ayres, Henry Cortleyou, Richard Rowland, Abraham Van Arsdale, and Jacob Van Tine.

Captain James C. Van Dyke's Company of Horse Artillery, serving as cavalry for the Third Regiment, New Jersey Detailed Militia, probably included a few men from South Brunswick. Captain Joseph Warren Scott's Company of Light Infantry in Brigadier-General William Colfax's Brigade, New Jersey Detailed Militia stationed at Paulus Hook, probably included a Van Arsdale. Captain James Neilson's Company of Volunteer Artillery in Colfax's Brigade at Paulus Hook probably included a few men from South Brunswick. Captain Ephraim G. Mackay's Company of Riflemen, Third Regiment, New Jersey Detailed Militia probably included a Van Arsdale and a Van Tine.

In 1813, Militia companies, including ones from Middlesex County, left the base at Paulus Hook to garrison Fort Richmond on Staten Island. In 1814, the British did raid Barnegat Inlet and managed to hijack a number of trading vessels before being repulsed. The Second Regiment of New Jersey Militia was mustered into Federal service eventually in order to defend Paulus Hook and Sandy Hook. They built a pontoon bridge at Sandy Hook.

During the war, local politics suffered no dramatic changes. Andrew McDowell and Aaron Longstreet returned to the Freeholder position in 1812. McDowell lasted in that position until 1824. John Kev____ served from 1813 to 1818. In 1812, James Schuremen took the Council & Senate seat (291 votes in South Brunswick). James Voorhees (275 in South Brunswick); Erkurius Beatty (289 in South Brunswick); and James Parker (291 in South Brunswick) took the General Assembly seats. In 1813, William Sanford Pennington, a Democratic-Republican, beat Aaron Ogden for Governor. John Neilson took the Council & Senate seat (250 votes in South Brunswick). James Voorhees (247 votes in South Brunswick); Erkurius Beatty (247); and James Parker (250) returned to the General Assembly. In 1814, Erkurius Beatty won the Council & Senate seat (281 votes in South Brunswick). Representatives to the General Assembly were all Federalists—John N. Simpson (282 in South Brunswick); William Edgar (282 in South Brunswick); and Alexander Dunn (282 in South Brunswick).

In 1813, tavern news was lengthy—George Rankin removed innkeeper Peter Wilmot and petitioned for a new license. Joseph T. Thompson applied for a tavern license in his house. Aaron Dean did the same for a house on Georges Road. Benjamin Oppie operated a tavern along the Trenton-New Brunswick Turnpike. David Van Pelt petitioned for a license for his house on Georges Road near Lawrence Brook. He also started a repair service for wagoners. Henry Gray began building houses along the Trenton-New Brunswick Turnpike. Licenses were renewed by Thomas Wetherill, Aaron Longstreet, Samuel Cruser, John Stewart in the Sand Hills area, and Joseph Chamberlain. In 1814, besides the same renewals as in the previous year, John Probasco petitioned for a

tavern in the Rhode Hall area. John G. Bastedo, Jr., took over John Stewart's tavern house in the Sand Hills area.

While the war was going on, there were local events worth noting—In 1812, the Kingston Library (featuring 284 books) established rules and regulations. Dey Road was dedicated. It ran from Scotts Corner to Cross Roads. At the state level, Col. John Stevens proposed a rail line from South Amboy to Camden, which would cut through South Brunswick. There was a National Day of Thanksgiving held on January 1, 1813. The Borough of Princeton was created. In 1814, Joshua Higgins conveyed the original family tract to John and William Gulick and Robert Bayles. The same John Gulick came out publicly in support of John Stevens' idea for a rail line through central Jersey. He petitioned the State Legislature for such. Also, Gulick's Stage Line faced stiff competition from the Union Stage Line, run by Cornelius Vanderbilt and Phineas Withington. And finally, Gerardus Beekman made out his will and declared freedom for Thomas Titus to start in 1817.

Part C. The Post-War Years

After peace was declared, officially ending the War of 1812, the wartime economy ended, and the peacetime economy began with a promise of prosperity. That promise was deferred. In 1816, the “year without a summer” led to massive crop failures due to the effects of the eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia in 1815. This resulted in snow and ice in early summer and frost in late August the next year. The result was crop shortages and higher prices. The panic of 1817 extended the pessimism. In England, wages fell as the cost of manufactured goods fell. Cheaper goods were dumped on American markets, causing a glut especially in urban markets. Manufacturers in New York, Philadelphia, New Brunswick, and Trenton could not compete. Business stagnated. Shipping vessels lay empty at wharves. Banks were issuing unrestrained paper money and lending money they did not have. Many folks were spending money they did not have—much of it on speculation schemes involving public lands. Hardest hit were farmers in rural communities such as South Brunswick. Difficulties mounted as agricultural profits dropped and bankruptcies and foreclosures increased. Several local farmers were left to do subsistence farming. Some opened shops of various kinds to make ends meet. Sons of the old-time families were leaving South Brunswick and heading west to try their luck on cheaper land and better soil.

After a national financial panic in January of 1819, it appeared that better times were looming. The “Era of Good Feeling” did arrive and lasted until the bitter presidential election of 1824. The United States was transitioning to an independent economy generated by a wealth of new ideas, new means of transportation, new methods of

manufacturing, and new products. Many local farmers were applauding the new machinery that was easing the dependency on manual labor. As a result, the end of slavery was in the offing in New Jersey. There was a flood of immigrants—mostly English, Scottish, Irish, and Germans—to provide a cheap labor force. Mother Nature also cooperated during the “Era of Good Feeling”. The only severe weather came in 1821 with “The Great September Gale”, which dumped 4 inches of rain from Cape May to New Brunswick. This was the first of three hurricanes that year, which caused much damage in New Jersey.

Innovations and improvements led to some progress in South Brunswick. Old roads were straightened and widened. New roads were dedicated. The South River-Rhode Hall Road was widened in 1819. Bodine’s Lane (aka: Finnegan’s Lane) became the boundary between North Brunswick and South Brunswick in 1820. It connected with the Straight Turnpike (aka: Route 1). Dunhams Corner-Fresh Ponds Road from Davidson's Mill to Rhode Hall was completed in 1821. Stouts Lane was also opened in 1821.

Canal construction was in the offing. The New Jersey Legislature had started granting charters to build a canal across the State as early as 1804. The route for such a canal was surveyed in 1816. The Kingston area of South Brunswick Township, along the Millstone River, was to be one of the key links that would connect the Raritan River to the Delaware River. A canal company was incorporated by the New Jersey Legislature in 1820. However, actual construction was still some years away.

Development of a railroad line through the State got its start about the same time as the canal. The first rail charter, meant to connect the Raritan River to the Delaware River, was granted to Colonel John Stevens in 1815. He was able to get his steam locomotive to pull a train on the tracks in Hoboken in 1824.

On the negative side, canal building and railroad construction posed a threat to stagecoach operators, road repair gangs, tavern owners along stage routes, and so on. South Brunswick, especially on the Upper Road (aka: Route 27) and the Straight Pike, had been doing good business in this means of transportation. Soon the roads and stagecoaches would be in fierce competition with canal traffic and rail traffic. Folks in South Brunswick were not looking forward to losing their status as the “halfway point” for stagecoaches running from Philadelphia to New York. Right after the war, stage lines and ferry services reigned supreme in the transportation industry. The hundred miles between Philadelphia and New York could be traversed in less than two days, such as starting on day one before noon and arriving on day two after noon by utilizing a ferry boat from Philadelphia to Trenton (except when winter ice blocked the way); a stagecoach to Kingston; another stagecoach to the Hudson River; and a ferry across to

New York. In the era of the “Flying Machines,” the stage coaches had been improved by the use of metal springs and straighter roads, but overland travel was still rough, especially in bad weather on dirt roads. Travelers also complained of excessive rates and bad service along the way. With improvements in the coaches and turnpike fees, fares were increasing. For example, the Trenton-New Brunswick Pike through South Brunswick took on average $2,500 in fees from stage lines per year. Taverns and inns in rural areas such as South Brunswick, catering to weary travelers, were by no means 4-star quality. There was much to complain about in getting from here to there. However, the canals and railroads were about to change all that for the movement of great quantities of goods as well as people.

In politics, a big change occurred at the state level but not at the local level. In 1815, Mahlon Dickerson, a Democratic-Republican, ran unopposed for Governor. Middlesex County remained Federalist, with Princeton’s Erkurius Beatty elected to Council & Senate. He received 216 votes in South Brunswick. Representatives to the General Assembly were John N. Simpson (217 local votes); William Edgar (216 local votes); and James Parker (217 local votes). The next year, Mahlon Dickerson ran unopposed for Governor again. Erkurius Beatty won again for Council & Senate, garnering 169 votes in South Brunswick. Representatives to the General Assembly were James Parker (174); Hezekiah Smith (171); and Allison Ely, Jr. (173). Also, in 1816, Democratic-Republican James Monroe was elected President, receiving over 90% of the vote in New Jersey. In 1817, the State Legislature picked Democratic-Republican Isaac Halstead Williamson for Governor. Beatty returned to the Council & Senate, with 145 local votes. Allison Ely, Jr. (142) returned to the General Assembly. Federalist Frazee Ayres (139) and Democratic-Republican James T. Dunn (37) won the other two County seats. In 1818, Isaac Halstead Williamson ran unopposed for Governor. John N. Simpson, a Federalist, took the Council & Senate seat with 142 local votes. Federalists took all three General Assembly seats—James Parker (140); Allison Ely, Jr. (143); and Frazee Ayres (119).

By 1819, the Federalist Party collapsed, and the Democratic-Republican Party took control at the federal level. Isaac Halstead Williamson ran unopposed again for Governor. Beatty lost the Council & Senate race to James T. Dunn (received only 38 votes in South Brunswick). The General Assembly seats went to all Democratic-Republicans for the first time—Charles Carson (77); Samuel Edgar (38); and James Cook (43). Abraham Gulick served as local Freeholder. In 1820, James Monroe won again and took New Jersey. Andrew Kirkpatrick, a Federalist, took the Council & Senate seat (153). The General Assembly seats went to Democratic-Republican James Cook (40); Federalist, Erkurius Beatty (152); and Federalist, John T. McDowell (155). Isaac Halstead Williamson ran unopposed for Governor in 1821. Council & Senate featured Dunn and Beatty. Representatives were

Federalist, John T. McDowell (203); and two Democratic-Republicans—James Cook (104) and Samuel Edgar (75). It was Williamson again for Governor in 1822. Erkurius Beatty in the Council & Senate (181). Cook, McDowell, and Edgar in the General Assembly. In 1823, Williamson ran unopposed for his 7th term as Governor; Democratic-Republican Robert McChesney took the Council & Senate seat (43). John T. McDowell repeated in the General Assembly (132). Two Democratic-Republicans took the remaining seats—James F. Randolph (32) and David Schenck (49).

In 1824, the new Whig Party ran Henry Clay against Andrew Jackson (Democratic-Republican) and John Quincy Adams (Federalist). Deadlocked results led to a vote in the House of Representatives, resulting in Adams being picked as President. The majority of folks in the South Brunswick area favored this outcome.

Also in 1824, Williamson ran unopposed again. The Council & Senate seat went to Robert McChesney (57). General Assembly seats went to John T.McDowell (168); James F. Randolph (45); and David Schenck (93). Abraham Gulick ended his service as Freeholder. In 1825, Williamson ran unopposed for his 9th term. William Edgar took the Council & Senate seat. Representatives were John T. McDowell (Federalist); Charles Carson (Dem.-Rep.), and James Cook (Dem.-Rep.). Samuel Gulick and Joseph McChesney served as Freeholders.

Notable post-war events in 1815 included the publication of a map of New Jersey by Samuel Lewis, which featured the latest county boundary lines. The New Brunswick Times and General Advertiser was established by Deare and Myer on June 1%. In 1816, a few local notables passed away—Henry Van Dyke; Isaac Van Pelt (a Revolutionary War veteran); Peter Johnson, son of William Johnson; and Abraham Dean, son of Aaron Dean, Sr. John Stout, Sr. purchased Peter Johnson's Ridge Road homestead. Also, in 1816, Robert Priest boarded workers in his “Old Dutch House” while they worked on the new Six Mile Run Church.

In 1817, Thomas Titus and his family established residence on 11 acres at the end of what is now Benson Road. The following year, Thomas Titus received his official manumission. Isaac Van Pelt deeded his mill to Jonathan Davison in 1818. Thomas Wetherill passed away, and his daughter, Ann McDowell, took over running the tavern. John Schureman also passed away; he was the son of U.S. Senator James Schureman. Stryker Rowland was born on October 25%. The Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E. Union Church) of Little Rocky Hill (on what is now known as The Old Road) was founded. A major scandal was exposed this year—the trafficking of enslaved people by Judge Jacob Van Wickle and his son-in-law, Charles Morgan, from his base in South River to Louisiana. The Judge falsified documents on

close to 200 African Americans (several of whom were sold to Van Wickle by farmers in New Jersey. Due to an outcry by influential Quakers, the New Jersey legislators passed a law prohibiting the removal of slaves out of the state.

In 1819, John Miller, the founder of the Miller Church and controversial Presbyterian minister, was born. Local farmers hailed Jethro Wood's iron plow featuring interchangeable parts. In 1820, Militia Captain John Stryker died. John Bayles also passed away. Isaac Chandler Withington was born. The population of South Brunswick Township reached 2,489. The Underground Railroad started using the Upper Road (Route 27) to get escaping slaves from Trenton to New Brunswick—stations included the Red Maple farm and the A.M.E. Church. New Brunswick hosted the New Jersey Cattle and Agricultural Fair. The New Jersey tomato was deemed safe to eat.

In 1821, freedom was granted to slaves born after July 4, 1804, for males when they reached the age of 25 and for females, the age of 21. ~ In 1822, John Davison passed away. The taverns of Simmons Smock: Phineas Withington, Ann McDowell, Aaron Longstreet, John Stewart, and Joseph T. Thompson were doing a thriving business. H. C. Carey and Lea published an improved map of New Jersey with county boundaries being refined. In 1823, the Kingston Post Office was established. Thomas Lawrence passed away. Christopher C. Beekman was born.

In 1824, Henry Van Dyke' lands were divided up among his sons—242 acres—by John, Jacob, Simon, and John. Daniel Barricklo took over the running of the tavern at Cross Roads from John Barricklo. Margaret Nevius Van Dyke, writer of her memoirs of life in Mapleton, was born. The Marquis de Lafayette visited in the summer and passed through New Jersey. The New Jersey Colonization Society was formed in Princeton, New Jersey, to assist the American Colonization Society in allowing African Americans to return to Africa. Warren County was created, but it had no impact on the borders of South Brunswick.

In 1825, Garret Snedeker passed away. William L. Schenck petitioned for a license to run a tavern at Cross Roads. Queens College was renamed Rutgers College. By this time, the population of South Brunswick Township had reached 2,600. It was 84% white, 11% slave, and 5% free African American.

Part D. The Status of African Americans in South Brunswick Township, 1800-1825

For most of the 280 or so slaves in South Brunswick during the 1800-1825 time period, freedom was a dream deferred. True, there were roughly 120 or so free African Americans in the Township during these years, and there were signs that the number of

manumitted individuals was increasing. But this implied no trend that freedom was imminent for the majority of the Township's slaves. That population remained at or close to 11% of the total population throughout the time period and close to 5% for those who were free.

The status of the black population can be found in a listing of the New Jersey statutes pertaining to slavery from 1800 (when the state's slave population was near its peak at 12,442) to 1825 (when the number of free blacks was increasing dramatically).

1. Every enslaved black, Indian, or mulatto slave was enslaved for life unless set free in a manner described by law.

2. It is unlawful to bring enslaved blacks into the state for sale or servitude (N. J. slavers who held blacks outside of the state were exempt from this provision).

3. Enslaved blacks could not serve as witnesses in court unless against another slave.

4. It is unlawful for any person to buy or sell goods from or to a slave.

5. Persons found guilty of harboring or concealing enslaved persons were to pay a penalty of 4 dollars to the slave master for every 24-hour period a slave was concealed, provided that such a penalty did not exceed the value of such a person. :

6. If a black who was wrongfully concealed died or was injured, or rendered unusable, the responsible person was to pay the owner the value of such person.

7. The reward for persons who captured a slave 10 miles from his home without a pass was 1 dollar.

8. Enslaved blacks who entered New Jersey without a license from their owner were to be jailed. The reward for the capture of such a person was 2 dollars, to be paid by the master.

9. Blacks and other slaves were prohibited from assembling together in a disorderly manner. Constables and others had the right to order enslaved persons to disperse and return to their owners. If slaves refused to obey, they were brought before a justice of the peace and jailed. Owners had the right to direct that such slaves be whipped 20 lashes at a cost of 1 dollar for each slave whipped.

10. Unlawful for enslaved persons to be away from their dwelling place after 10 o’clock at night unless they had permission from their master. This statute also prohibited blacks from carrying a gun on Sundays.

11. Prohibited owners from allowing enslaved blacks to beg for food, clothing, money, or other necessities. Penalty: 8 dollars to be split between informer and overseers of the poor of the township.

12. Unlawful to sell or dispose of aged or decrepit enslaved persons to persons unable to care for them sufficiently. Such sales were void, and sellers were fined 40 dollars.

13. Unlawful to import into the state, either for sale or for servitude, any black or other slave. Penalty: 140 dollars. The Act did not extend to travelers or residents bringing their slave property into the state.

14. Citizens of New Jersey had the right to bring their slave property into the state for service, but not for sale.

15. Persons could be indicted for cruel treatment of those enslaved. Penalty: 40 dollars.

16. Any enslaved person who had lived in New Jersey since 1788 was to be taught to read, while under the age of 21. The penalty for neglecting this duty was 30 dollars.

17. Persons who prepared vessels for engaging in the slave trade between Europe, Asia, Africa, and America would be liable to lose their ship and face prosecution. Persons who resisted arrest for such charges were to be fined 130 dollars.

18. It was lawful for owners of slaves to manumit their slave property between the ages of 21 and 40 if they were of sound mind and body. The law required owners to file a certificate with the county clerk's office.

19. Enslaved persons under the age of 21 or above the age of 40 could be freed if the owner secured a bond of 500 dollars in order to prevent the former slave from becoming a burden on the community. If the bond was not secured, the manumission was void.

20. Enslaved persons not manumitted according to law were to remain under the protection of their owners. If owners were unable to maintain their slaves, the township would be responsible.

21. Free blacks from other states were prohibited from traveling, residing, or working in New Jersey without a certificate. Persons who harbored such free blacks were to be fined 12 dollars.

The free African American who was well off did enjoy the same rights and privileges as free European Americans in New Jersey. They had the right to vote until 1807, when their suffrage right (as well as for women) was revoked. Most free African Americans continued in occupations they had learned as slaves. Many continued to work for their previous masters or the children of their masters. Most stayed in the area where they had been slaves. Total black populations in each New Jersey county stayed about the same from 1800 to 1825.

In 1804, the New Jersey State Legislature passed a gradual abolition act, which the state's Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery had helped to bring about. This law provided that each child born of a slave within the state of New Jersey was to be "nominally" free after July 4, 1804, but should remain the servant (apprentice) of the owner of the mother until the age of 25 if a male or 21 if a female. The effects of this law moved many slaveholders to band together to petition for its repeal. They were alarmed at the serious and dangerous consequences of such a law, considering it unconstitutional and unjust. The rights of slaveholders were being infringed upon. They had an unlimited right to the services of the offspring of their slaves, for they clothed, protected, and supported them in their youth. Supporting the children of slaves who were to be freed would constitute an excessive tax on the slaveholders.

Thirty-six slavers from Salem County put it this way: "Your memorialists reside in the midst of a population which contains within it a large number of that unfortunate race who are to be affected by the provision of that bill, and we believe that the most serious evils will result to this community from its passage. In this county, as well as in all western Counties of New Jersey (and ones such as South Brunswick in eastern counties), there is no white laboring population sufficient for the farming interest, and we do seriously believe that the passage of the law will cause so much difficulty that the farmers will not be able to procure workmen for their farms. Your memorialists need only remind your honorable body that the black population is exceedingly ignorant and prejudiced and cannot be expected to yield that regard to the law which is evoked from the white citizens of the state."

Other complaints by petitioners included the position that the new law would take a considerable portion of a slaver's property without consent; that a slaver would be taxed for the support of children born of slave parents—a tax not felt by the community at

large. Also, the law did not free a slave, but merely demanded his services for a number of years.

There was, however, a provision in the 1804 law that benefitted slavers. The abandonment clause (a scheme to compensate owners) allowed slave masters to maintain children of female slaves for just a year, then abandon them to the public overseers of the poor, like the one in South Brunswick Township. Once they were declared paupers, they could be bound out to service, with the state paying new masters 3 dollars per month for maintenance of each child. In most cases, the original master received the child that had been declared a pauper. This clause was repealed in 1811.

The illegal slave trade continued in the State of New Jersey during and after the Abolition Act of 1804. Slaves were easily smuggled from New Jersey into Delaware or Maryland in rowboats or small sailing ships. Evidence of such illegal trade was brought to the attention of the State Legislature by petitioners from Middlesex County. The high price for which prime field hands could be sold in the Deep South was the cause for this illegal traffic (as exemplified in the Van Wickle/Morgan case in 1818).

The Act of 1820 was the second law in the time period to contribute to the gradual abolition of slavery in New Jersey. It strengthened the previous Act of 1804, and made manumission a simpler process. However, the new law did not abolish slavery. It did result in an increase in the free African American population and a decrease in the slave population.

The free black in South Brunswick Township found himself or herself in an agricultural society built by a tradition of free whites and black slaves since 1700. Thus, there was a degree of hostility directed toward the free blacks in the Township, but there were no known incidents of violence recorded during this time period. Most of the negativity remained unspoken, and life went on. There were a small number of free blacks in the 18th century, but their numbers started to increase dramatically after the Act of 1820, and even more so in other parts of the state.

A typical freedman, such as Thomas Titus, got his start with the help of his former master and help from neighboring farmers. He was loaned some money, received tools, and had access to some good land. He also may have been given some starter livestock, clothing, and furniture. In turn, he probably hired himself out to neighboring farmers during planting and harvesting seasons.

This section concludes with an examination of a New Jersey State Supreme Court case in 1824 involving the Overseers of the Poor in South Brunswick vs. the Overseers of the Poor in East Windsor. Two Justices of the Peace of the County of Middlesex, at the instance of the Overseers of the Poor of the Township of South Brunswick, removed a negro man named Jack as a pauper from that Township to the Township of East Windsor, in the same county. East Windsor appealed to the General Quarter Session, by whom the order of removal was quashed.

Jack, the pauper, was the slave of John Mount, who at, and prior to, the year 1802, resided and had a legal settlement in the Township of East Windsor, from which in that year he removed into the state of New York, “where he now resides, and is of sufficient ability to provide for and maintain the said slave . . . on the part of South Brunswick, it is shewn that the settlement of John Mount, the owner of jack, was in the year 1802, when he left this state, in the Township of East Windsor, and it is contended that the legal settlement of Jack is therefore in that township, for that the settlement of the slave follows the settlement of the owner . ... it is clear that unless a settlement can be shewn in East Windsor in this case ... the slave not having been manumitted, no settlement exists . . . every person unable to provide for and maintain himself is, prima facie, a pauper entitled to relief. And although some other township, or some person as in the case of parent and child provided for by statute, may be subjected to his maintenance, yet the township, in which he may be, must provide for him, and permanently, or at least until his disability is removed, unless they can find some other township or some person legally chargeable.

... In ordinary cases the township must provide for a pauper needing assistance, though he may have no other claim than his poverty on their bounty—so in the case of a slave. If his owner is of sufficient ability the law requires him to afford support and thus relieve the township where he may chance to be; if not of ability, from insolvency, the law gives the slave a settlement and thus relieves such township; but that such township must in the one case seek out the owner and in the other, the place of settlement, is no more duty than on ordinary occasions they find themselves obliged to perform . .. Thus, on the whole, the slave, Jack, had no legal settlement in East Windsor. The order of removal was unduly made. Let the order of the sessions, quashing the order of removal, be affirmed, with costs.”

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