

Hopewell:

270 Years of History, 125 years as a Borough

By David Blackwell

Settlement in the immediate vicinity of the future Borough of Hopewell began in 1696/7. Dr. Roger Parke and Thomas Tindall, two Quakers from south of present Trenton, bought land for occupancy from Stoney Brook

eastward to the edge of the present Borough in that year. A decade later, Jonathan and Ann Stout bought a large tract lying between Amwell - Aunt

Molly Roads and the Province Line. In 1723, when the forest path that became Broad Street was surveyed as a King's Road, the landowners whose farms lay along this road, east to west, at the future Borough were James Hyde, Joseph, Benjamin, and William Merrill, John

Parks, and Jabez Jarvis. They had come here to clear land and grow wheat.

The arrival of Jonathan Stout from Middletown in Monmouth County was significant to the history of the

The arrival of Jonathon Stout...was significant to the history of the Township and the Borough.

Township and the Borough because of his strong adherence to the Baptist faith. On April 23, 1715, he and his wife

Ann, their son

Joseph and wife Ruth; Thomas and Ailse Curtis, Benjamin and Mary Drake, and four individuals, organized a Baptist congregation under the solemn direction of three visiting ministers and their elders. For the next thirty two years, the little congregation met in members' houses at various places in the Township. In 1747, when the membership had grown to 65, they resolved to build a church. Joseph Stout, at whose home the group had been founded, argued for the construction of the church on his land, up the slope of the Sourlands along the Province line. Most of the members objected, preferring a more central and accessible place. It was the outcome of that debate that fixed the future location of Hopewell Borough.



Figure 1: This tablet in memory of Rev. Isaac Eaton, now attached to the northwest corner of the old brick church, was originally inside in the floor of the older church on this site.

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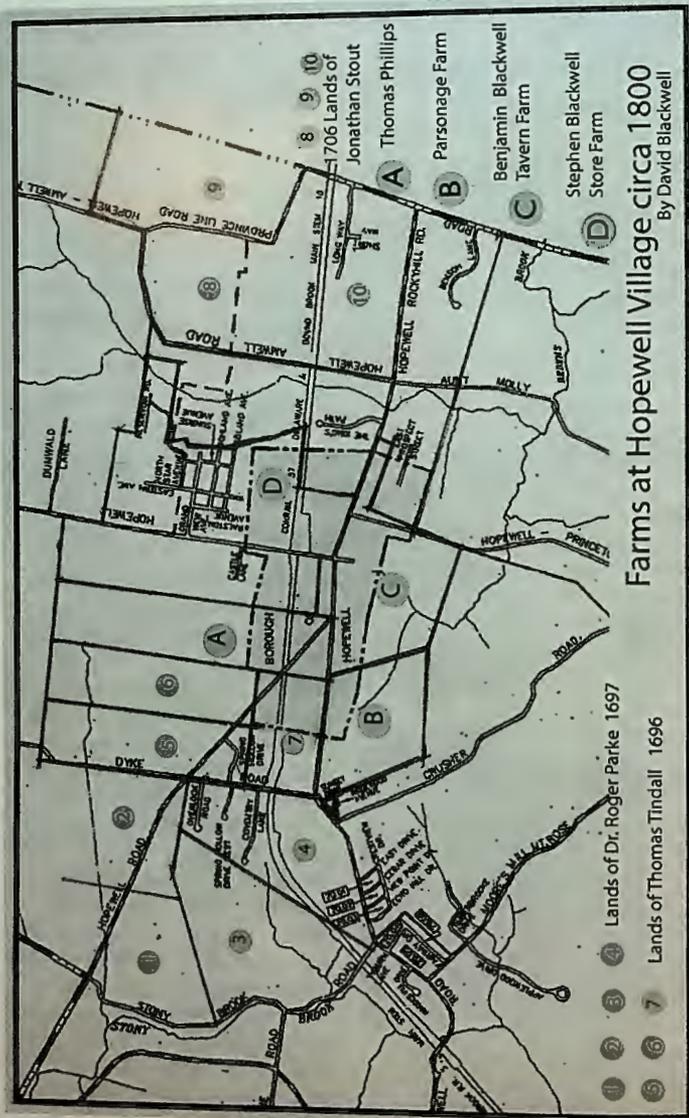


Figure 2: Farms at Hopewell Village, circa 1800.

The land on which the Church was built in 1747 probably belonged to Benjamin Stout, a brother of Joseph Stout. Until 1769 there was no legal means for a church society to own land, so it was not until the law of that year that the church was able to incorporate, get a charter, and receive a deed. John Hart, a future signer of the Declaration of Independence, and then a member of the State Assembly, procured the charter for the church from Governor Franklin, after which the congregation elected Trustees. Hart signed the deed for the $\frac{3}{4}$ acre property on which the church had been built 22 years before. Hart's will of 1779 refers to the land he had "lately" acquired from Benjamin Stout. Hart's original 200 acre farm nearby did not include the site of the church. At the time the church was built, it stood among a loose collection of farmsteads along the country road. There were probably no businesses or small lot residences at the time.

Reverend Isaac Eaton Arrives

In 1748, with a church building under construction, the congregation called upon the Reverend Isaac Eaton to be their settled minister. He accepted and was provided with a parsonage house on six acres, probably within the present Borough. Eaton had married the daughter of David Stout, whose 150 acres lay along the southern side of the road opposite the church, extending roughly from today's Lanning Avenue to Maple Street.

Under Eaton's preaching the Hopewell (Township) Baptist Congregation became the largest church (200+ members) in the Philadelphia Baptist Association of more than 20 Baptist congregations from New York City to Philadelphia. Eaton first taught in the local log school, but in 1756 he began his famous "Latin Grammar School", the first of its kind for the Baptists in America. It was located on his father-in-law's property across

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Figure 3: Blackwell Tavern built c1800 operated until c1840. Farmhouse thereafter. Portion on right may be older. This was the site of Rev. Isaac Eaton's famous Latin Grammar School founded 1756. Photo Courtesy of HVHS.

from the church. The Association in Philadelphia took collections from the other churches to support Eaton's school here. This school produced a number of young scholars who became noted Baptist ministers, and they in turn spread the Baptist faith throughout the South and West.

James Manning, Eaton's Student, Founds the College of Rhode Island, now Brown University

Among Eaton's earliest students was a young man of "public gifts" named James Manning who completed this first level of study with Rev. Eaton. Manning then attended the College of New Jersey (Princeton), where he graduated in 1763, at the age of 25. He was then appointed by the Baptist Association in Philadelphia the head of a group to establish a Baptist College, a level above Eaton's grammar school here. Without delay, he obtained a

charter in the Colony of Rhode Island in 1764, and began the College of Rhode Island, as its first President, with three students.

Reverend Eaton continued his grammar school here until about 1768. He represented the Hopewell church in the annual Baptist meetings in Philadelphia where he was frequently moderator. His Ruling Elder from Hopewell, John Stout, often accompanied him. Rev. Eaton's life's work in the fledgling village led to significant religious and educational developments in the United States.

Names of the Village

Until our village began to be called Hopewell in 1825, the word Hopewell exclusively meant Hopewell Township. Prior to 1825, the Baptist Meeting House was the area landmark; the village was small, and village and area residents were referred to as living near the Baptist Meeting

House. The village otherwise had no name. It has been written that the village was called Hopewell Meeting House, but this seems doubtful, since the Presbyterian and Methodist Meeting Houses in Hopewell (Township) could also claim the same name. There are many early deeds bordering the road

that refer to it as the road leading to or from "the Baptist Meeting House in Hopewell". Around the time of the Revolution or just after, the village began to be called Columbia, a name with obvious appeal to the patriots of the Revolution. The name was retained until 1825, when the post office was established. There being another Columbia in the state with a superior claim to retain the name, our village's name was changed to Hopewell.

Further Development of the Village

By 1767 the Hobbs family lived on a lot adjacent to the church on the west, and by the will of Mrs. Hobbs, a scholarship fund was established to support students at the College of Rhode Island. Probably by the same time, a tannery had been established between the Hobbs house and the point on the road where Louellen Street now comes in. This tannery utilized the branch of Bedens Brook that crosses Broad Street at Mercer Street.

With the death of Rev. Eaton in 1772, the church was in need of a parsonage

again, because Eaton had owned the David Stout Farm. The trustees purchased in two stages the farm of Moses Hart which lay adjacent on the west of the Eaton property. The present

The village began to be called Columbia... name was changed to Hopewell.

house on this parsonage farm, occupied by Rev. John Boggs for almost 40 years is still standing in a farm setting

at 153 West Broad Street. Adjacent on the east side of the church there were houses owned by Benjamin Stout Sr., and Benjamin Stout, Jr.

The Revolution

In 1775, word of the battles of Lexington and Concord reached Hopewell Township. According to the grandson of Joab Houghton, messengers reached Houghton in the old Church with the news. He urged them to wait outside, and when the service was over, he stood on the "mounting" stone, and exhorted his neighbors to join him to march to Boston to fight in the American cause.

Hopewell Township was briefly overrun by British Troops in December of 1776. It was most likely at this time that several prisoners were taken near the village and John Hart's property was raided.

In June of 1778, the entire Continental Army camped along the Sourland Ridge from Van Dyke Road to the Province Line. 12,000 men, 1,300 horses, and 66 canons with

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Figure 4: First Baptist Church of Hopewell built 1822. Second building on this site. This picture pre 1865. On the left is the hotel, former tavern of Col. Ira Stout, later re-modeled, now the Hopewell House. Photo Courtesy of HVHS.

ammunition wagons were here. The five Continental Army Divisions were led by their Major Generals: Charles Lee, Anthony Wayne, Marquis de Lafayette, Baron DeKalb, and Lord Sterling. The army had marched from Mount Airy in Amwell Township on the 23rd of June, in a train some four miles long, and halted at Marshall's (then Furman's) Corner, an advantageous site for a battle

previously scouted by General Lee. They waited several hours for news of British movements. When it was learned that the British had

moved off toward Allentown, the Americans moved in the night to the vicinity of the Baptist Meeting House.

Washington and his staff of about 20 came to rest at "Hunt House", a Stout property that was being rented by John Price Hunt, a teamster who had carted supplies to Washington at Valley Forge just 6 months before. This house has been called "the House of Decision", though the decisions that lead to the battle of Monmouth four days later were complex. It is probable that many men bivouacked on the broad fields of Samuel Stout east of Aunt Molly Road. They camped also on the farm of John Hart above the Meeting House. The army left on the morning of the 25th.

In 1780 Rev. Oliver Hart, a graduate of the College of Rhode Island, arrived from South Carolina, where the British had displaced him from his church in Charleston. He brought with him his black servant man, Friday, who became a member of the Church in 1799. Hart preached very acceptably until his death in 1795, just as the village was changing.

Friday True or Truehart founded a family that was well known in the vicinity of Hopewell. As a slave, he came to a community in which slavery was practiced. The 1778 census of the

Township, which includes only adult male slaves, lists about 50. There were probably no slaves living in the little village. Yet as early as 1755 there were slave members attending the Baptist Church, and many African Americans joined the church during the revival of Rev. James Ewing from 1796 to 1805 as the freeing of the slaves was beginning in New Jersey.

The Village expands to Nine Properties

The national economy was beginning to flourish by 1790 under the new constitution and European credit. The Revolution was behind. Three veteran soldiers bought local farms tightly grouped around the still tiny village. In 1792, Stephen Blackwell,

By 1800, the village was comprised of 7 small properties from Louellen Street to the Mountain Road

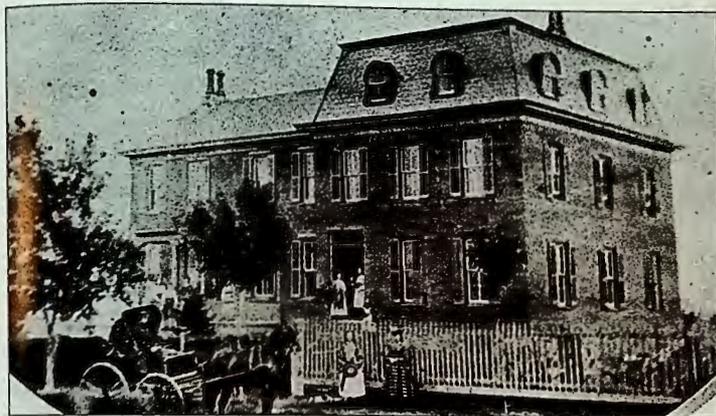


Figure 5: Miss Boggs Female Seminary built 1864. Attended by young ladies from the area and other states. Miss Boggs was the daughter of Rev. John Boggs, Hopewell's Baptist Minister from 1807 to 1846. Photo Courtesy of HVHS.

of Capt. Israel Carle's Troop, Hunterdon County Light Horse, purchased a tract of 260 acres that lay to the east of today's Greenwood Avenue, extending to present Borough Hall on the east, and past Highland cemetery and over the "mountain" to the north. In 1795, Sergeant Benjamin Blackwell, of the same cavalry unit, bought the former Isaac Eaton property of 150 acres that extended almost the entire length of the future Borough on the south side of the road. Stephen Blackwell started a store at his farmstead that would serve the village and section for over a century. Benjamin Blackwell opened a tavern that lasted until about 1840, still standing at 19 West Broad Street. In 1785 young trooper Thomas Phillips of Maidenhead (Lawrenceville) purchased at sheriff's sale the 194 acre homestead of John Hart, the Signer. The eastern boundary of this farm came into Broad Street where Louellen

Street does now. Thomas Phillips also acquired the tannery. It was these families that shaped the future of the village.

By 1800, the village was comprised of 7 small properties from Louellen Street to the Mountain Road (Greenwood Avenue), on the north side of the road. They were the Thomas Phillips tannery with its house west of today's Mercer Street; the Hobbs House where the Hopewell House is now; a small house next to the church which was torn down soon after, the Church, with its cemetery and stone school building; the Rev. Ewing House in the end of the present cemetery; the Abigail Vannoy house; and, at the corner of today's Greenwood Avenue, John T. Blackwell's house. The village was completed by the Blackwell store property on the east, and the Blackwell tavern property along the south side of the road.

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Early Village Life

In 1806, the Hopewell Columbian Library was founded, probably in the village. Reverend John Boggs arrived in 1807, and served the Baptists for 39 years until 1846. The congregation continued to expand, and every Sunday nearly 100 carriages and wagons arrived in the little village from all over Hopewell and Amwell Townships. It was a regional church for the Baptists. Monthly meetings lasted two days, and doubtless filled area houses. The village was also the mustering and training place for one of Hopewell's militia companies. Annual celebrations and militia elections were held in the village at Blackwell's tavern, called the Horse and Groom. The tavern served as a resort after militia business was done, and to celebrate July 4th, Blackwell's canon was ceremoniously fired year after year. Patriotic and political toasts were drunk.

New Jersey militia troops served in the War of 1812, and when Oliver

Perry won his naval battle on Lake Erie in 1813, all the windows in our town were illuminated with candles to celebrate. Legal proceedings were also held at the tavern, and there is a receipt in existence given by the tavern keeper to the foreman of the jury, for the cider royale (alcoholic) that was drunk at the trial.

Before 1820, it was known that a new turnpike between Franklin Township in Somerset County and Georgetown (Lambertville) would be opened. Col. Ira Stout purchased the old Hobbs house by the church and "built around it", in order to open the village's second tavern. The Baptist Church was replaced in 1822, using brick fired by Esquire David Stout, the same as used by Mr. Stout to build a new section on his father's house at Amwell Road (recently opened as The Brick Farm Tavern). In 1825, Columbia changed its name to Hopewell, after gaining a post office.

Before 1830, the Baptist church at



Figure 6: Finney and Fetter Sawmill built 1874. Burned and rebuilt in 1895. Located at intersection of Model Ave and Louellen St. Sawed and planed quality hardwood. Shipped products around the world. Before the fire in 1895 was also a gristmill. Photo Courtesy of HVHS.

Hopewell began its "Great Meeting Days" on the third Sunday of July. This intensified religious meeting soon became corrupted with non-religious arrivals and much drinking. Street vendors and public spectacles

proliferated. Too many made use of the taverns. For several years the church elders protested, and eventually ended the annual event.

It was also the time of the Temperance movement. By 1840, the Blackwell Tavern ceased operation, and Stout's Tavern became a hotel. Blackwell's store stopped the sale of liquor as well.

Growth after Mid-Century

The village still grew slowly. Tradesmen had not fared well due to competition from wheelwrights and blacksmiths at nearby crossroads such as Stoutsburg. In 1855, the Blackwell Tavern farm was sold to Patrick Riley. Until this time, no lots had been sold on the south side of the road. The west end of the farm, between Maple Street and Princeton Avenue was sold by Riley, and Nelson Blackwell erected the large brick house at 35 East Broad Street about 1860. His father Stephen erected the brick store across the road, known as "Wear's Market" in the 20th Century. Before 1860, a new public school was built on the western end of the Riley farm, later to become the Grand Army Hall, and now a residence. Benjamin Leigh was

the wheelwright in 1860. In 1864, The Baptist preacher's daughter Emma Boggs erected her Female Seminary. She advertised far and wide for pupils, and acquired testimonials from important people across the state.

To celebrate July 4th,
Blackwell's canon was
ceremoniously fired

It was now the midst of the Civil War, and at least one third of families throughout the northern states

saw their sons volunteer. The small village had very few young men of the appropriate age to serve, but the surrounding portion of the township, whose families shopped and worshipped in Hopewell, sent many sons to war. Out by the Province Line, in the same place where the Baptist congregation had been founded, the Wear family lived on the old Joseph Stout farm. A son, James Manners Wear, living in North Jersey and studying to be a lawyer, was the first man in New Jersey to volunteer to Lincoln's call for 90 day troops on April 18, 1861. Hopewell's Grand Army of the Republic post was named for him. In the village, it was 20 year old Benjamin Blackwell who would die of wounds received in the battle of Monocacy, defending Washington, DC from Confederate attack.

In 1865, Joseph Moore Phillips, owner of what was once the John Hart farm adjacent to the village, was named chairman of a committee to erect a monument to that Patriot

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HOPEWELL

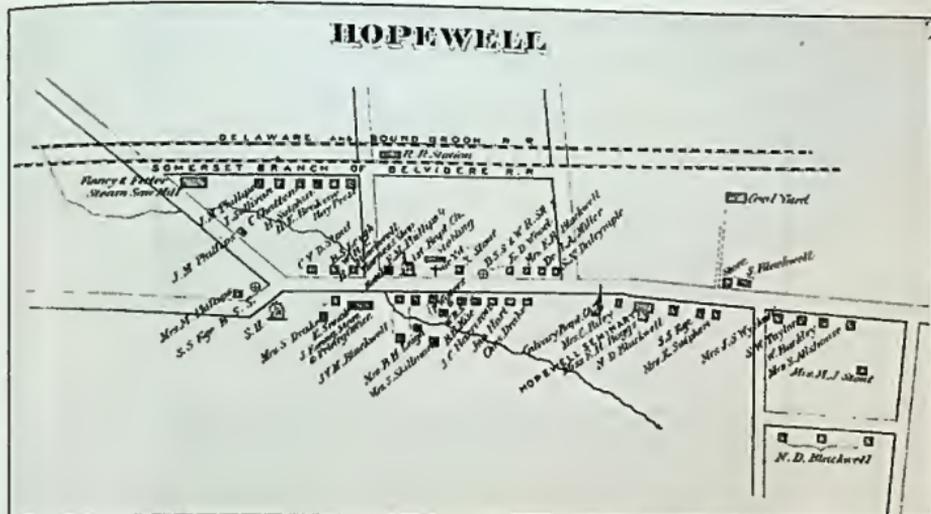


Figure 7: Map of Village of Hopewell from Everts and Stewart, Combination Atlas Map of Mercer County, 1875.

of the Revolution and Signer of the Declaration of Independence. A group of men journeyed to the Hunt burial ground two miles from the village to exhume whatever might remain of Hart's body after 86 years underground in a loose pine box. The monument was erected, and Governor Joel Parker spoke at the event.

Boom Times in the 1870's

Beginning in 1871, the village was transformed. The Mercer & Somerset Railroad had been cut across the north side of the village. In 1874, Anthony Fetter and his partner Finney, erected a steam sawmill and grist mill along the M&S tracks. Hiring up to 25 men, they cut and planed quality hardwood lumber from the Sourland ridge, and ground farmer's grain. They shipped lumber worldwide, including to the Czar in Russia for his carriages. Model Avenue was added along the railroad.

By 1875, a hay press, as well as four new houses were built there near the mills. The Riley farm on the south side of Broad Street was now owned by Charles Drake. Almost 20 new residences and businesses had been built along the south side of the road by 1875. The Calvary Baptist church was built there in 1874. On the north side of the road, from Greenwood Avenue east, there was still only the Blackwell Store Farm. Coal sales had been added to that operation, served by a railroad siding. On the first block of Columbia Avenue to be built there were three double houses. The village now numbered 200 residents. Along with the railroad came a new spirit. Joseph Moore Phillips for all his organizing activity in this period, was called in his 1895 obituary, the "Father of Hopewell".

The M&S was a property of the Pennsylvania Railroad, but the

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Reading Company would not be left behind in gaining the chance to carry northeast passengers to the upcoming Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876. Its Delaware and Bound Brook tracks were laid throughout 1875, but the completion required a "frog", a device that would allow the second track to cross the first. The location was just west of Hopewell, and

the citizens of the village were well acquainted with the D&B workmen. The young engineers were well liked by the marriageable ladies of the town. On January 6, the event came to a head. The Mercer & Somerset engine that was kept parked over the place where the frog was to be inserted, was moved to a siding for an M&S

The M&S "monopoly was broken", and the townspeople cheered.

train to pass. The D&B crew quickly blockaded the engine from returning, and blocked the path of the oncoming train. They worked quickly to insert the frog. Rival railroad gangs seethed, 1500 spectators appeared, as well as

the State Militia. A Court order was read barring the M&S from resisting. The M&S "monopoly was broken", and the townspeople

cheered. The D&B's grand station, the symbol of our town, was built soon after. The M&S station on Model Avenue was converted to a public hall, after that railroad failed by 1880.

In 1874, Ross Slack founded the Hopewell Herald newspaper, guaranteeing a wonderful record of the

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Figure 8a: Hopewell Train Station. Built c1880 by the Reading Company for its Delaware & Bound Brook branch line. This line superceded the earlier Mercer and Somerset line. Hopewell tripled in size in the two decades after the railroads came. Photo Courtesy of HVHS.

town. In 1877, both St. Alphonsus and the Presbyterian Churches were built.

The 1887 aerial view of the town shows additional growth up Greenwood Avenue and north of

the railroad, and several more houses near the saw mill. Four new houses by then were built on the Blackwell Store

farm, including Randolph Stout's in 1876, now the Hopewell Museum. By 1880, a second store had been built, and was soon after operated by the Holcombe brothers from Mt. Airy. In 1888, a new public school was built on Model Avenue.

Hopewell Incorporates

In 1890, Hopewell was described as a thriving town with 600 inhabitants, having tripled in 19 years since the railroads were built. The Hopewell National Bank was opened in 1890 with J.M. Phillips as its President, and \$40,000 in subscriptions. Its first building was the present Public Library. By 1890 the interests of the village citizens had become distinct from those of the Township farmers, who weren't interested in better sidewalks, streets and street lights for the townfolk. It became necessary to create a separate municipality to provide tax income for these needs. Under a state law of 1878 allowing the creation of Boroughs, the citizens of Hopewell voted by a somewhat narrow

margin of 95 to 57 to implement the change. The vote was taken on March 21, and the first Borough Government was installed on April 15. John M. Dalrymple was elected President of

Within a month the first
nine Borough ordinances
had been passed.

the Borough Commission, Charles H. Blackwell the first Clerk, and John N. Race, the first Treasurer. John S. Van Dyke,

Esq. advised the Borough pro bono, and allowed the use of his office. Committees were immediately formed to implement street light and sidewalk projects. Within a month the first nine Borough ordinances had been passed.

Business Developments Continue

The existence of the railroad continued to spark new business as well as changes in agricultural business. A private water company was in service by February 1892, and the Hopewell Canning Company was formed in March that year, in a building previously built for the purpose. The Hopewell Improvement Association was created in June, 1892, with \$4,000 in capital. Its first task was the construction of a shirt factory. A brick building 100' x 36' was built, now known as the Hopewell Dainties building, to be filled by 100 sewing machines operated by 100 girls. Water was run down Model Avenue to serve both buildings from the well at the saw

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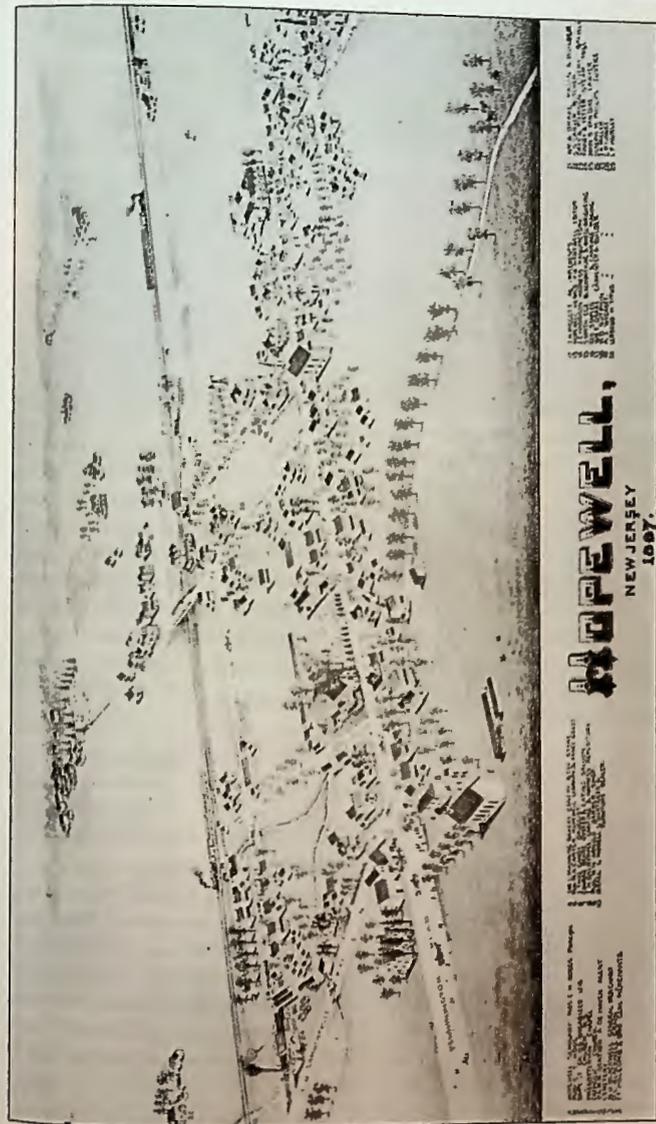


Figure 9: The 1887 aerial view.

mill. Two bottling establishments were planned. A stove and tin ware business was started. A second hay press was built. Large quantities of fertilizer and coal were brought in by rail. In 1891 property owners donated existing streets to the new borough to support new lot sales. In 1898 and 1900, the Methodist Church and the Methodist Parsonage were built.

Around 1895, black families began to arrive, many from Virginia, to take jobs as laborers on farms and in households. Among them was Rev. Thomas Johnson. Under his leadership, they bought a lot on First Street, and built the "First Colored Calvary Baptist Church in 1898. By 1920, the black community had grown to about 20 families, including local families, and many working for the railroad.

In 1895 the saw mill burned, and was rebuilt without the grist mill. A great deal of grain was lost. In 1898, the St. Michaels orphanage opened nearby. In 1900 it was managed by 11 nuns, and cared for over 200 children. New business was created in the Borough as a result.

Changes after the Turn of the Century

At the turn of the century and shortly after, modern utilities were brought to Hopewell, including electric and

telephone. A macadam road was to be built in 1906, and the name of the road would change from Main Street to Broad Street. Hopewell's original Fire Company, founded in 1877 celebrated its 31st anniversary in 1908. Dissatisfaction with the Hook and Ladder Company had caused the founding of the Union Company in 1895. Then, in 1911, the Hopewell Fire Department was organized as a third company. Among the founders was Dr. Theodore A. Pierson, a four time mayor of the Borough, and half century physician and booster of the Borough. All three companies finally merged in 1921. New resident J. G. Burton was installing probably the first hot water heating system in his house on Front Street, as well as electric lights, in 1909. The Borough took over the private water company in 1907.

The stone High School Building was built on Columbia Avenue in 1910.

After 1900, James Pierson and Amos Bond, among others, were importing

well-bred cattle and horses by rail for the local farmers. On one occasion 4 or 5 of Bond's horses escaped and ran eastward down the tracks. The shirt factory by that year had given way to the candy company, and the businesses of Hopewell Dainties and Burton's Stair Factory had a reach far beyond the town.

In 1915, the Presbyterian congregation built its new church to accommodate

... the name of the road would change from Main Street to Broad Street



Figure 10: Known as Gebhardt's Hotel in 1932 when the Lindbergh Baby was kidnapped, the present Hopewell Bistro was the hub for authorities, newsmen and the curious public during that dramatic spring.

its growing congregation. 1915 also marked the expansion of the borough to its current configuration, and 1916, the entrance of the U.S. into WWI. At home, this year was characterized by food and clothing drives to help the suffering in Europe.

In 1922 a donation of Stout family furniture caused the expansion of the library to include a museum. Two years later the present home of the Hopewell Museum was purchased. The Smith Manufacturing Company came to town, and in 1929 the Rockwell Manufacturing Company built along Hamilton Avenue. Thereafter, it provided a great many in Hopewell with employment. Elmer Weart established his grocery and hardware businesses in Blackwell's old brick store. He did an extensive business, and used a fleet of about 8 delivery automobiles. Meanwhile,

Spencer Moore operated the other store in the western section of town. A small store had started up opposite the train station. At first just a tobacco store, it was taken over by the Mrs. Mary Pierson Von Steeg and converted into a small grocery serving commuters and railroad workers.

The Lindbergh Kidnapping

The quiet of these years abruptly ended. On March 1, 1932, the alarm went out. The Lindbergh baby had been kidnapped from his remote home near Hopewell. Almost instantly, police were searching every house, barn, and well in the vicinity. Twenty telephone lines were run from the Lindbergh house two miles down to the train station. Hopewell's two hotels and all spare rooms were filled to capacity, and serving as many meals

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as they possibly could. Airplanes were thick overhead. The frenzy continued for 10 weeks until May 12th, when the baby's body was found along the Mount Rose hill a mile out of town. The excitement picked up again with the trial that took place in Flemington in 1936.

In 1934, the Borough accepted Railroad place from the Reading Co. which had previously owned

it. In 1937, Hopewell was running a WPA sewing project which gave employment to up to 20 impoverished women. About the year 1939/40, the borough entered into a 20 year contract with Princeton High School to accept the older students. The borough owned three school buses that it used to get its scholars to Princeton and back. More than 200 younger students used today's elementary school, occupied in 1925. This change enabled the Fire Company to make se of the old High School, and its previous site across the street was redeveloped as a movie theater.

The Second World War came upon us, with rationing as a result, along with young men and women gone, some not to return. At home, food tickets allocated purchases in the stores. Tin foil and grease were saved, and gasoline was allocated on the basis of how much driving each family was allowed. At war's end the service men and women came home, and Hopewell's active VFW post began its

significant career in the community, still continuing despite the recent sale of its building on Van Dyke Road. For some time after the war, the veterans made a habit of attending church services on the Sunday before each Memorial Day parade. They

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particularly liked the Colored Calvary Baptist Church on First Street due to the music. The WWII veterans ran the

Memorial Day Parade for many years, as the Civil War veterans had done long before.

In 1949, the Borough began discussing zoning for the first time, with the intent to identify commercial zones enough for the town business to grow, and still protect residential areas. In that same year a new Chrysler Automobile dealership was built at Princeton Avenue and Broad Street, where specialty automobiles are now sold. In 1955, the Hopewell Herald was sold to the Princeton Packet, and was folded into the Packet. Just months later in 1956, Harry Richard accepted the requests of village merchants to start The Hopewell Valley News. It continued under its publisher until it was sold to the Princeton Packet in 1987, but remained a separate publication.

In 1951, Jim Hall took over the little market near the train station, which he operated until 1971. During this time, Hall's store was the top seller in New

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Jersey of Dolly Madison Ice Cream. 1959 marked the building of a new church. Black families joined together to build a larger church on Columbia Avenue, now called the Second Calvary Baptist Church.

In 1965, the High School arrangement with Princeton came to an end, and the Hopewell Valley Regional School District was organized. In 1966 Hopewell's high school population entered the new school west of Pennington, and its elementary school continued as one of those in the district.

Sewers had been discussed for many years, beginning at least in the 1940's. In the 1970's the topic became pressing. The Princeton Regional Sewer Authority had the leadership role, but many questions of engineering and organization remained. By 1977, half the pipe had been laid in Hopewell's streets, and by 1982 it was in full operation. In 1973, St. Michaels Orphanage was closed and torn down. In 1975, Rockwell Manufacturing closed, but Kooltronic



Figure 11: Volunteer Bandstand at Hopewell Borough Park.

soon occupied the building. In 1983, the Borough moved to create an Historic District, with a Commission that would advise the Planning Board on changes to buildings with historic character. In 1986 the Hopewell Harvest Fair was founded. It was the successor to Community Day and the previous annual Hopewell Carnival put on for years by the Legion.

The Search for More Amenities

Following the creation of the Historic District, the impulse to create a better town for living grew. In 1993, the opportunity to purchase the Train Station was acted upon. Town funds and a generous gift enabled the acquisition. The building was to be used as public space on the first floor and income producing space on the second floor. Over the next 7 years the restoration was completed, along with a Scout project to restore the freight building. The 1997 Master Plan identified the lack of park and recreation space within the Borough



Figure 12: Ribbon cutting at Hopewell Borough Hall.

boundaries, and therefore the need to provide such opportunities outside the Borough. The Hopewell Park was created, and when the adjacent Ruhland Tract was proposed for development, a successful effort was made to preserve it as open space, which was accomplished in the late 1990's.

Out of this line of thinking came the concept of a greenbelt around Hopewell. In 2000, a vote in favor of an Open Space tax in the Borough was accomplished. This qualified the Borough for increased grant potential from the State Green Acres Fund. In 2003, the Historic District was augmented by placing the rest of the Borough in an Historic Buffer Zone, recognizing that Hopewell's special character was important to its residential and commercial success.

Leading up to late 2005, discussions had been advancing that the St. Michael's Orphanage property of

336 acres adjacent to the Borough might be developed by the Diocese for general housing. Not only would that require the use of Hopewell's remaining sewer capacity, but it would diminish the greenbelt potential. With the D & R Land Trust in the lead, area municipalities joined with Hopewell to raise the funds, estimated at \$8 million, to buy the property from the Diocese. The \$8 million was secured. After a lawsuit with Hopewell Township was settled which affected the value of the land, the property was formally appraised. The new number was \$11 million, and a new drive to privately raise another \$3 million was necessary. The Diocese gave the hopeful citizens until March 15, 2007 to complete the work, after which, if the goal was not met, they would begin the development application. A committee was formed with a great deal of Borough participation, and the

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work began with six months until the deadline. The funds came in slowly at first, but as the time ran out, more donations appeared. In the end, 800 private donations were received, and the amount was met and exceeded, just a week before the deadline. The result was an exceptional open space resource very accessible to the Borough.

In 2006, The Borough of Hopewell purchased the Masonic Temple to serve as its Borough Hall. Three Federal Street Scape Grants have been received, which, along with the addition of businesses and restaurants, have made Hopewell exceptionally pleasant for its citizens, and attractive to its visitors.



The author wishes to thank Ruth Luse for her very helpful information found in the pages of the Hopewell Valley News of which she is now Editor Emeritus. Thanks also to Jim Hall and Elaine Weidel Zeltner, for their recollections. And Elaine Buck for sharing her African American research. Thanks also to Joe Klett for his proof reading and suggestions.



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First Years of Hopewell Borough

The vote to create the Borough of Hopewell was legally taken based on State enabling legislation first passed in 1878. By 1891, the interests of the Hopewell townspeople had diverged from the interests of the Township farmers. We can determine these issues by looking at the first committees formed – those addressing streets and street lamps – and also the first nine Ordinances.

The vote on Incorporation was taken on March 21, 1891. Its outcome was uncertain at the time. Pro and Anti parties contended, and the tone wasn't always cordial. In the end, the Borough was approved by a somewhat narrow margin of 97 to 59. The editor of the Hopewell Herald suggested that the "minority" party be represented in the new board of Commissioners.

The Hopewell Herald issues that would have explained the views of the contending parties have not been found. We don't know how the first commissioners were chosen. We do know that on April 15, 1891, they met at the Law Office of John S. Van Dyke, whose office and legal services had been given pro-bono throughout the process. At the motion of David L. Blackwell, John M. Dalrymple was chosen the first President of the Borough Commission, and at the motion of Louis Labaw, Charles H. Blackwell was chosen the first Clerk,

and John N. Race was chosen the first Treasurer. The Clerk and Treasurer were directed to order appropriate stationery for their two tasks. Those mentioned above, as well as John C. Reid, were all Commissioners.

At this first meeting, a committee of three commissioners was chosen to address the condition of the streets. Another two men were appointed a committee to put the street lamps in order. Last, the group resolved to make a note, payable to the Hopewell National Bank, not to exceed \$200, to finance the activities of the Commission.

Soon after, the streets were scraped and stone was applied. The lamps were painted and oil for the lamps was purchased. In June of 1891, Borough landowners dedicated three new streets – Seminary Avenue, Blackwell Avenue, and most of Columbia Avenue. These streets were already in use, but now could be owned by the new Borough.

The Treasurer was replaced twice in 1892, and the Commissioners spent a great deal of time on sidewalks and drainage piping. There was by this time, a Borough Hall. A police officer, George Carver, and a Pound Keeper, James Titus, were appointed. Lamp lighting cost the Commission \$7.80 per month. It was performed by Walter Savidge.

In 1893, the Board of Health Ordinance was replaced to conform to State law. S. V. Van Zandt and Dr. E. P. Hawke were elected to three year terms. Three others were elected for shorter terms. C. H. Blackwell, a Civil Engineer, surveyed the Borough boundaries and filed the map.

In April 1894, the Borough advertised for an officer to kill unregistered dogs. Many citizens complained about the flooding in front of Van Fleets Hotel (Hopewell House). It was agreed to raise the sidewalk across the street

in front of Holcombe's store. The name of Main Street was changed to Broad Street. In February of 1895, the Borough organized a snow shoveling crew to start at the Railroad Bridge and get the Borough Streets open. Hart Avenue was given to the Borough.

In 1896, the Commission began to be called the Council, and in the fall it was found that a certain bottler in town was illegally selling malt and spirituous liquors. The Ordinances were given a general overhaul, and a new one was added for fast driving.

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Congratulations and Thank You to the Hopewell Volunteer Fire Department (1911- 2016) for 105 years of service to Hopewell Borough

In 1877, the town of Hopewell consisted of 35 dwellings, two general stores, a harness-maker, a safe-maker, a millinery establishment, a carriage and wagon manufacturer, a flour mill, a few grain warehouses, a hotel, a resident physician, and about 200 people.

On May 18, 1877 a portion of the citizens met to consider the formation of an organization for the protection of person and property from fire. They met again one week later on the 25th, and at that time adopted a constitution and approved members. A few months later, on July 24, 1877, the group

ordered a \$200 truck from Weber Bros. of Ringoes. November 16, the name, "Hopewell Hook and Ladder Company No. 1" was chosen. The truck was first housed in a building on a lot located next to the Calvary Baptist Parsonage. In 1893 the Trustees were directed to purchase a lot on Greenwood Avenue and erect a building. This "Mirror of America" is the building that the fire company still occupies today. On March 25, 1895, a number of borough citizens were not satisfied with the fire protection being provided and held a meeting to organize another fire company. They named themselves,



"The Union Fire Company," and they ordered a fire engine at a cost of \$500. On April 7, 1911, a meeting was held for the purpose of organizing yet another fire company. A motion was made that the name of the new company would be, "The Hopewell Fire Department," and that this company would be permanent. Invitations were sent to both fire companies in town to join this new company.

An application was made to the borough council in August of 1911, for the Hopewell Fire Department to come under Borough authority. On July 1, 1921, The Union Hook and Ladder Company joined with Hopewell Fire Department and the rest is history.

Congratulations and Thank You



Hopewell Borough's First Ordinances

Adopted May 12, 1891

(Here we see the most pressing issues the Borough faced after the streets and lamps were addressed.)

Ordinance No. 1 — An Ordinance for Preserving the Peace and Good Order and Enforcing the Ordinances of Hopewell.

Ordinance No. 2 — An Ordinance to Remove from or Prevent Nuisances in the Borough of Hopewell.

Ordinance No. 3 — An Ordinance to Prevent the Breaking of Lamps, Windows or Doors, Destroying Trees, Shrubs, or Plants in Gardens, Defacing Buildings, Porches, Fences, Writing or Cutting Obscene or Indecent Language or Offensive Words on any Premises, Trees, & etc.

Ordinance No. 4 — An Ordinance to Prevent Horses, Mules, Cattle, Swine, Sheep, Goats, Dogs, and other Animals from running at large in the Borough of Hopewell.

Ordinance No. 5 — An Ordinance defining the Duties and Powers of the Board of Health of the Borough of Hopewell.

Ordinance No. 6 — An Ordinance to Prevent Disorderly and Immoral Conduct.

Ordinance No. 7 — An Ordinance to prevent the Obstruction of the Sidewalks of the Borough.

Ordinance No. 8 — An Ordinance Concerning Dogs.

Ordinance No. 9 — An Ordinance Concerning Trimming Trees — (required to trim trees sufficiently high along the sidewalks to allow the free passage of persons carrying umbrellas.)

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