

## HISTORY of WEST AMWELL

### Introduction

Our West Amwell is the result of division and subtraction of lands and boundaries that during the three centuries from 1664 to the present we will briefly trace.

In 1664 King Charles II sent a successful force to drive the Dutch out of the promising new world. He then made a grant of the territory taken from the Dutch to his brother the Duke of York, who in turn conveyed it to Lord John Berkley and Sir George Carteret on June 23, 1664.

This new land was called Nova Caesarea or New Jersey to use the familiar name. The two owners Berkley and Carteret agreed to pay one peppercorn as rent if so demanded.

In 1672 Philip Carteret who was Governor of the province was forced to flee because of an insurrection of the inhabitants and in the following year, 1673 the English and Dutch were again at war. This time the Dutch won and New Jersey was claimed by them as a part of New York and placed under Governor Andros.

In 1679 Carteret returned and was welcomed by the people in the Eastern part of the province. Sir George Carteret received a second grant of land but apparently the territory held by him and Berkley had already been divided into East and West New Jersey. Berkley sold his interest to two Quakers, John Fenwicke and Edward Byllinge for 1,000 pounds. Byllinge in turn sold to three Quakers, William Penn, Gawen Lawrie and Nicholas Lucas. These in turn sold shares to others who also became proprietors.

July 1, 1676 a new line of division running from the East Side of Little Egg Harbor straight north through the country to the utmost branch of the Delaware marked East and West Jersey.

East Jersey was under the influence of Governor Andros of New York and discontented with taxes, protests and discontent in West Jersey for the same causes led to the abandonment of claims on the West by New York and East Jersey. The claims of the trustees of Byllinge and the heirs of Fenwicke were established. When Sir George Carteret died in 1679 his will directed that East Jersey be sold to pay his debts and the estate was bought by William Penn and eleven others called proprietors.

As we are interested in West Jersey we will follow its development. In 1680 Byllinge commissioned Samuel Jennings as Deputy Governor and in 1681 an

assembly convened to adopt a constitution and form of government for West Jersey.

By the year 1701 neither East nor West had a good working government, and on April 17, 1702 the rights of government returned to the English Queen Anne. The Queen re-united East and West and placed them and New York in the hands of Lord Cornbury. The new government was composed of the Governor and twelve councilors named by the Crown and an assembly of twenty four members to be elected by the people for an indefinite term.

Cornbury lost his commission in 1708 and after a couple of short term Governors held office, Robert Hunter for whom our county is named served for ten years 1710-1720. His administration seems to have been a wise and good one. From 1720 to 1763 there were fifteen Governors all serving as Royal Governors. The last Royal Governor was William Franklin, son of Dr. Benjamin Franklin. As the agitation for independence of the colonies increased he was opposed to such a step for New Jersey and his unpopularity caused him to fear for his personal safety. When Independence was declared July 17, 1776 he was without authority and unpopular besides. He was arrested and sent to Connecticut, from there he sailed to England.

The first Governor of the newly independent state was William Livingstone and the state constitution was adopted July 2, 1776. Trenton became the state capitol in 1791 and it is interesting to note that the Capitol building cost about 4,000 pounds. The Library established in 1804 was supplied with 168 volumes.

The years of the Revolution are filled with events and places familiar to us all so we will continue by briefly tracing the origin of Hunterdon County and so to West Amwell.

### **The Original People**

The first owners of the land we now occupy were the Leni Lenape Indians whose name means "The Original People." Their tribal divisions in this part of Hunterdon County were Turtle and Turkey. There were settlements just South of Ringoes, at Mount Airy Station along the Alexhocken Creek and at Rocktown. The name Delaware was given to Indians and River by early settlers.

New Jersey can boast that she is the only state in which every foot of soil obtained from the Indians was gained by fair purchase and transfer. Perhaps that is why we have no tales of horror in the early days that have been handed down as local history.

Most of the lands were sold prior to the 1758 treaty with the Indians and at that time all their titles were extinguished except for the right to fish in all bays and rivers south of the Raritan and to hunt on un-inclosed land. 3,000 acres were bought in Burlington for the resettlement of Indians. About sixty Delawares were settled there and in 1802 were moved again to New York State. Several years later they and the remnants of other tribes were again moved to a location on the Fox River in Wisconsin. In 1832 the N.J. Legislature paid them \$2,000 to relinquish their fishing and hunting rights. We now see little or nothing to remind us of these first settlers of West Amwell but we should think of them every time we travel the Old York Road. It follows very much the same route that the Indians used traveling from the Neshaminy in Pa. to their camps along the Raritan. The settlement at or near present day Rocktown called WISHALMENSEY had a trail leading to the WICHCHEOKE CREEK and that may have become the Rocktown-Sergeantsville Stockton Road. Old records show that the trails from the south passed through or near Mount Airy going to Ringoes where trails from and to the north crossed one another. York Road was completed in and followed to a great extent the original Indian trail Naraticong. By reference to early records and maps we can locate West Amwell of the present on early tracts bought by Winder, Stevenson, Bull, Wheeler and Calow among others. These tracts were a part of 150,000 acres bought from the Indians in 1703 for 700 pounds and sold in turn to various proprietors. This was the beginning of divisions and sub-divisions.

John Reading was perhaps the first to buy large acreage and in John Holcombe became owner of a large tract. It was his son Richard who was host to General Washington at the time of the Revolution, in the house on the edge of Lambertville and still known to us as Washington's Headquarters. Samuel Holcombe another son of John Holcombe built a store and dwelling at Mount Airy in 1743 on the earliest traveled route from the Delaware to the Raritan. It is perhaps the oldest building still standing and in use in the Township.

Emanuel Coryell built the first storehouse in what is now Lambertville and owned land along the river and on Goat Hill. At the time of the Revolution Coryell's Ferry played an important part in the several crossings of Washington and his troops.

We will not go into the period of the Revolution except to note that in 1778 Washington and his men numbering between 11 and 12 thousand with their equipment crossed at Coryell's Ferry on the way to the Battle of Monmouth fought on June 17, 1778. They broke camp at Valley Forge and between June 17 and 23 marched to the Delaware, crossed the ferry, marched

through the Township to Hopewell and camped there the night of the the 24<sup>th</sup>.

It was during the Revolution that General Washington who was staying at Brownsburg, on the Pennsylvania side of the river, crossed to Jersey and was taken to Goat Hill by Cornelius Coryell. Here he used "Washington's Rock" as a point from which he made sure that his boats hidden on the Pa. shore were so well hidden that spies sent by Cornwallis could not see them. There is not even a suggestion that Washington ever slept there, but he is said to have eaten a meal on "Washington's Dining Rock." On the same hill but a little to the south stands Pinnacle Rock with a magnificent view up and down the river and across to Pennsylvania.

We take our roads and modern transportation very much for granted now and our complaints are loud and long but we have come a long way from the old Indian Trail. It was in 1765 that the York Road was completed. At about the same time the Swift-Sure Stage Line began to carry passengers between Philadelphia and New York. Again we find Mount Airy of importance as a stage stop. There are references to mud holes along the route so deep that they were marked with poles set in the middle. There were also men and extra horses stationed at bad spots to pull the coach through. The first scheduled service combining Ferry (Coryell's) and stage is recorded for 1769. The stage wagon became the stage coach and except for the period of the Revolution the Swift-Sure carried passengers and mail until the Railroad reached Somerville. Service between Lambertville and Flemington continued until the building of the railroad, between those two points about 1854.

The Georgetown (old name for Lambertville) Franklin Turnpike leading through the Township to New Brunswick was incorporated in 1816. Its opening followed the building of the bridge at Lambertville in 1814 and as a toll road was used extensively by farmers carrying produce to the river. The Toll Road was not a moneymaker and in 1841 it became a public road.

Deeds and records found at Flemington show the building of numerous roads in the Township. They were both public and private and were either abandoned or taken over by the Township. West Amwell records show that in April 1851 it was decided that the York Road be kept free.

Every one takes the name of Mount Airy very much for granted without actually knowing its origin. We would like to be able to prove a connection with Mount Airy in Pennsylvania. That is located between Chestnut Hill and Germantown and is mentioned in connection with the Battle of Germantown on October 4, 1777. It is possible that early travel and settlements by Quakers in that area and this have a definite connection. It is also beyond doubt that it is a high and "Airy" point in the Township. We can attest to the

latter as it was on a particularly windy day that we visited the old church yard. It was in 1754 that the Second Amwell Church was established by early Presbyterians who wanted to lessen the distance members had to travel to the "First Church." The oldest decipherable stone we could find is dated September 25, 1760 and marks an infant's grave. There are also stones bearing the Ringo name dated 1776 and 1777. On some stones which may be even older the inscriptions are no longer there. The loss of early church records makes them impossible to trace unless there are family records available to descendants.

The old stone building in Mount Airy familiar to us all was built around 1743 by Samuel Holcombe son of John. The house next to it was a tavern which served as a Stage Coach stop in the early days of the Swift-Sure Line. It was bought by Solomon Holcombe in 1814 and turned into a dwelling, as such it is now, occupied by the Runkles.

### **More About Mount Airy**

In the search for the origin of the name Mount Airy we find its location marked on a map dated 1777 as Amwell Meeting. The church is the only site marked.

In 1795 it is marked Amwell *Mg H* with the small symbol used to designate a church. This map appears in an early Geography. By 1828 a map shows a small group of buildings but no name at all which makes us wonder if there was some doubt as to the proper name of the settlement.

Six years later in 1834 the same location is marked Amwell. But among the road records in Flemington the laying out of the Rocktown Road in 1829 states that after crossing certain lands the road was to go "To the road leading from MOUNT AIRY to HARBERTOWN" and finally to the Trenton and Sussex Road at Rocktown.

The next printed reference to Mount Airy that we have found appears in a History published in 1844 and to quote, "Mount Airy, Rocktown, Snidertown and Clover Hill contain each a few dwellings."

A map of Hunterdon published in 1851 locates our elusive settlement but spells the name Mount Airy. This same spelling was carried over when the map was republished in 1852.

### **West Amwell in Hunterdon County**

Hunterdon County was named for General Robert Hunter a Royal Governor of New York and New Jersey in the years from 1710 to 1720. For the troubled period in which he lived his ten year term seems to have been a good one, possibly because the men he chose to help his administration were men who cared about the needs of the people they served.

The County went through a formation period being first a part of Monmouth and Burlington Counties until 1713 when it was set off from Burlington by an enactment of the Assembly. It originally included all or nearly all of what are now Morris, Mercer, Warren and Sussex Counties.

Amwell was an original Township formed in 1708 when we were still a part of Burlington and it became a Township in the new County of Hunterdon. The name AMWELL seems to have been taken from Mount Amwell-the home of John Reading who was probably our first land owner. He named his home in memory of Amwell in Hertfordshire, England from which he had come to the colonies. A more amusing if not accurate story of the name Amwell concerns the brothers David and Jonathan Stout who used on meeting one another to say, "I hope you are well, David" to be answered by "I am well Jonathan."

Amwell Township originally included Flemington. When Flemington became the County Seat in 1785 it was located in Amwell. It remained so until 1838 when the Townships of Raritan, Delaware and Amwell were formed. At that time Hunterdon yielded southern land to Mercer County.

We have at last arrived at the formation of *West Amwell Township*. It was formed from *Amwell* by an act of the State Legislature, February 27, 1846 and went through its last change in 1854 when "the portion of Ringoes which lay in West Amwell S. of Old York Road and west of the road from Rocktown to Ringoes Station was annexed to East Amwell."

The City of Lambertville was a part of West Amwell until 1848 and we share a joint history from the earliest times. Washington's Headquarters was in the Township originally and we still share pride in it.

Early residents of the Township were self sufficient. They raised sheep for wool and there were plantings of flax for linen to be woven at home or in a Lambertville mill. Grain was ground in local mills and surplus goods exchanged for things not produced locally.

West Amwell's industries were those that catered to the needs of the local people and were located on Alexauken Creek to make use of the water power. A trip with the late Mr. and Mrs. Paul Holcombe began on the Old Mill

Road where traces of old dams and mill races are still to be seen. First came a saw mill and flax seed mill run by Andrew Larason. A bit further down stream a dam and grist mill were located. The mills processing flax seed often burned because they were so saturated with oil. There are the remains of a dam on the Alfred Runkle farm Fackenthal. This dam supplied water for the Jim Fackenthal grist mill of which there is now no trace. It opened in November 1876.

The only mill now standing with its race is found across Rt. 202 on the Western end of the Mill Road. This mill's specialty was buckwheat flour. A wheelwright ran his shop on the creek where it now runs under Rt. 202.

A small home style industry remembered by Mr. Holcombe's grandfather was that of Hedda Large who wove summer hats of rye straw, probably on order and while her customers waited, as she lived in a remote spot.

Families used a portion of their own property to establish "Family burying grounds" and there are several to be found locally. Johann Peter Rockefeller an ancestor of the Rockefeller family was an early plantation owner. Although a monument erected in 1906 by John D. Rockefeller stands in the cemetery at Larison's Corner, it does not mark the actual family ground, which is a half acre set aside by will and mentioned in successive property transfers. It is located on the original "Plantation" now owned by Mr. Irving Grace. Hunterdon County maps of the 1850s show its location but it is seemingly forgotten by the family and unknown to many of us. The late Mr. Edgar Hunt told of family ground where slaves were buried near their masters. Their graves were marked by small stone blocks rather than more elaborate stones. There is also a spot where a number of "Guinea Negroes" are said to be buried, victims of a cholera epidemic. Exact details are missing but we can guess that it was the epidemic which raged in 1832 at the time the canal was being built. There were many deaths and hasty burials at that time.

New Jersey was a slave owning state in spite of the contrary beliefs of the Quakers and in 1798 there were 11,428 slaves in New Jersey, by 1860 there were only 18 left in the state. The Hoagland family owned a farm on Rock Road and were slave owners. The late William Lauderdale, a subsequent owner of the property, testified that there were traces of slave cabin sites with a few flowers still bravely coming up each year. Slave owning was considered desirable from a land owner's viewpoint for a bonus of acres of land was given to a man who bought a slave above the age of 14. A barracks at Perth Amboy housed the slaves brought to the country and they were bought from there. In 1820 a law was enacted which made every child born to slaves after July 4, 1804 free, males when they became 25, females

at 21. This law and one in 1846 ended slavery in New Jersey well before the Civil War. Old records show that Thomas Wilson who had been a slave owned considerable land in Amwell, but having been a slave he could not will it and it was sold at public sale.

## 1864

One hundred years ago we were in the midst of the Civil War. The Township records show how deeply we were involved and the constant need for money.

In 1861 a private soldier received \$13 a month and in 1864 it had been raised to \$16 a month. Pay day was sometimes six months late and there were many problems for families left behind. The Draft of August 1862 had disappointing results and in 1863 a more severe law was enacted and on August 8, 1863 there was a special Township meeting at The Public House of John Stevenson, Mount Airy where the raising of a Bounty was discussed. This money was to be paid to volunteers for military service. The following week they met again to consider raising \$200 for each volunteer and hoped the County would pay most of it with the Township making up the balance. In December it was voted to levy a Poll Tax of \$2 a man to make up a bounty of \$400 for each volunteer.

In 1864 the quota of men from the Township was 22 and there were 120 men liable to draft. In May a bounty of \$300 was voted for each man accepted in the service, the money was to be assessed and collected as State and County taxes. The Committee was authorized to borrow the money and Poll Tax of \$5 was levied on every man single or married. In August 1864 it was agreed that every man liable to the Draft should pay \$20 Poll Tax within 10 days to the Township Collector. Each man drafted or accepted as a volunteer or placing a substitute to the credit of the Township would receive a bounty of \$425 for the 3 year period of service. Those who did not pay the \$20 would receive no benefits. The ledger showing the \$20 payments records one man as paying only \$16. There were two more meetings in August concerned with the bounty and the sum was raised to \$550 or \$600 if needed. There didn't seem to be enough money in any case and on April 3, 1865 the Township borrowed \$15,940 from 22 men to defray these heavy costs. Those whose ancestors were draftees and volunteers doubtless know of the hardships of the families left at home and the men in the service.

Records of Township meetings for the period from 1849 through the War tell of the constant need for money. In 1864 there were 269 scholars enrolled in the West Amwell Schools and the sum of \$1 per pupil was allowed for school purposes. By 1870 \$2 was needed and a glance at the newest school budget

will certainly bring home the fact that times have changed in 100 years. West Amwell farmers had large herds of sheep and old records again show bills for sheep killed. In earlier times there were panthers and wild cats to blame but in 1864 the blame probably rested on sheep-killing dogs and in that year the Township paid \$265.50 to various owners whose sheep were killed.

### **Mail Delivery**

Mail delivery in the Township first depended on the Stage Coach drivers who carried messages which went out of Trenton after 1730 when a P.O. was established there. During the Revolution service was disorganized and people traveled to Trenton to receive mail from England and to send messages abroad and to the other parts of the Colonies. In 1794 a Federal Postal Law was passed and thereafter new offices were established in Lambertville and Ringoes. The mails were slow and expensive, in 1831 it cost 6¢ to send one thin sheet of paper 30 miles with payment made to the coach driver. It wasn't until 1847 that stamps (prepaid) came into use. Rocktown had a P.O. as did Mount Airy and after the R.R. was built mail was put off the train at the Mount Airy station and carried on "The Queen's Road" to the P.O. Rural delivery was established in 1905 in Hunterdon with one route from Flemington and one from Stockton. The Township's first Rural Carrier was Jim Wilson.

### **Taverns**

The Taverns were important in the early days as public meeting places and stop overs for travelers. Mount Airy was a stage stop on the SwiftSure Line. When we became a Township in 1846 the first Township meeting was held at the "Inn of John Menagh in the Village of Mount Airy." In April of each year an election was held for public offices, money collected and spent for items ranging from care of the poor to building and repair of roads. In 1815 notices for a meeting to consider building a road were ordered posted in "the three most public places in the Township of Amwell, Pidcock's Tavern at Georgetown, Hoppock's Tavern and WyLoff's at Rocktown."

### **Rocktown**

Rocktown is frequently mentioned in early Amwell history, first as the probable site of an Indian village and later as having a store, a tavern and later a P.O. It was there that a Confederate flag is said to have been flown during the Civil War, one of two places in the County showing such sympathies.

Rocktown has behaved in a much more sedate manner appearing when and where it should on early maps and in books of early days. In a Gazetteer of the state of New Jersey which was published in we read the following: "Rock/own-Small Hamlet of Amwell Township-Hunterdon County, mi. S. of Flemington, contains tavern, store and some or dwellings. It lies in the pass through the Rock Mountain and is named for the abundance of large rocks around it."

Although it does not equal the founding date of the Second Annual Church "Old Rocks Methodist Church" was built in 1843 and stands in its shaded yard with the graves of the early members close beside it.

For those interested in our past visits to the cemeteries at Old Rocks, Mount Airy, Larason's Corner and best of all Pleasant Ridge will make it all seem very real. The names on the stones are so familiar and reading them makes our History vivid and personal.

### **Texas**

The trouble between Mexico and the U.S. which ended in the annexation of Texas in 1845 must have caught the imagination of the people living in that period...There is a document which refers to Wilkinson Holcombe (commonly called Texas) and a house known as "Little Texas", having been built for a daughter of the family when she married. Farmers referred to their grazing lad as "Texas" and there is a portion of un-used land still called by that name.

### **Pirate's Treasure**

The late Harry Holcombe at the age of 93 rewarded visitors to his cottage on Goat Hill with delightful stories of the past. One tale concerns a Pirate who is said to have buried a fortune somewhere on Goat Hill Road. He fled from New York, crossed New Jersey, chose the spot to hide his money and was caught and hung in Mercer County, without revealing the hiding place. It is said to have been between two great oaks whose shade met at noon.

### **West Amwell in the Scientific World**

A small item in The Beacon for September 1, 1876 commented on the fact that many people were visiting The Observatory on Goat Hill. Naturally we wondered where the Observatory had been and what they went to see. In another issue of The Beacon we found that The U.S. Coast Survey was establishing signal stations in New Jersey and Pennsylvania to use in making topographical surveys and maps and to establish latitude and longitude of certain points. Our tower station was on the "southerly crest of Goat Hill", on

lands of Mr. William Bainbridge. He was an ancestor of the late Mrs. Marion Mullholland who lived on Goat Hill all her life. The total height of the tower was given as 495 feet based on sea level calculations and its platform was 37 feet. It was reported that a marvelous view was to be had for many miles in all directions. Unfortunately there was very heavy smoke reported for the Lambertville area that September and we imagine some disappointment among the people who climbed the tower. There were other towers in New Jersey and the line extended to Doylestown and Newtown, Pennsylvania. Our modern maps use information gained from the observations made from these towers.

In March of 1876 there was an eclipse of the sun visible all over the United States and in August the Planet Venus created an "Astronomical Event" when at 4 A.M. on the 18th it approached "a star of the 4th magnitude" a mere 40,250,000 miles away. We like to think that Goat Hill offered a fine view of these events and that observers made the climb with somewhat the same feeling of wonder that televised launchings from Cape Canaveral now give us.

### **The Sporting Life**

The Music Circus is not the first amusement area in the Township according to The Beacon of September 14, 1877 "The First Exhibition of The Delaware Valley Farmer's and Mechanics Agricultural Society" opened its fair. The Fair Grounds were located on the present James Lambert farm and featured a 1/2 mile track, grand-stand, stables and space for exhibitors of hand work, produce and live stock. The Fair opened on a Tuesday with poor attendance because of bad weather. However, on Thursday the attendance was reported as between 8,000 and 10,000 with visitors coming by train and carriages. We quote that "the horse department was very full, in which could be found many fast nags of good blood." In 1880 the fourth Fair drew even more horses and there was "a grand Cavalcade of Horses and Military:" Twelve of Booser's Cadets gave an exhibition drill. These cadets were boys organized by J. Fennemore Booser of Lambertville and trained in drill by a veteran of the Civil War. In this 1880 Fair a local horse Ben Bolt owned by Andrew Holcombe won his race, beating his mother Black Maria to do so. Other reminiscences of the Fair Grounds include the use of "Devilina Whistles" by the cheering section and the fact that the grounds were used for live bird shoots until such meets became illegal. Birds escaping the guns of the paying customers became free to the crowd of bystanders when they flew beyond a certain point. There was even a bar license for race meets. The track was popular with local drivers of fast horses and they held friendly competitions among themselves on Sundays (all after church we hope). In later years the oval became a truck garden remembered by "boys" who

worked there and to relieve the boredom of picking peas used to jog around the track. When James Lambert's grandfather bought the farm he brought in Indian boys from Carlisle, the college for Indians in Pennsylvania, to do summer farm work. They too used to trot around the track. The grand-stand was taken down, the barns along York Road burned one snowy night and the track itself was plowed under.

The late Mrs. Lambert, the Grandmother of Mrs. Stanley (Cora) Matthews who is her namesake, remembered "Fair Time" of her childhood days when she was Cora Larason. For the children it was a time to ride the merry-go-around, see circus acts, pet the colts and calves in the stock show and best of all eat the enormous meal packed into the wagon with the family. The various family groups met to eat together and she remembered that often some unlucky family would find that the "chicken dinner" had been stolen from a wagon and the losers would then share the meal prepared by generous friends. In those days of hearty appetites and bountiful provisions there was no doubt plenty for all. She also remembered the blacksmith shop the wheelwright and chair maker who did business on Alexauken Creek at Herring Point where the creek now passes under York Road. Among the bits and pieces of information we learn that Ed Larue was the last man in the Township to drive oxen; that Tom Hunt developed a variety of strawberries called "The President" which needed only 11 berries to fill a quart basket; that brick yards in the Township supplied building material used locally; that paving blocks were quarried from our bountiful supply of rock and that the blasting powder used for the quarrying was stored in a shack just off the Georgetown-Franklin Turnpike.

A Letter in the Beacon

### **West Amwell, March 1, 1876**

Mr. Editor: The Commonwealth of West Amwell has been engaged in a disgraceful little law suit for the last two years, all about a small road drain and what has it amounted to? Echo answers, a nice heap of cost for the Twp. to pay. What next? Why the Town Committee by order we presume, of the illegal adviser has entered a caves against the new road which was recently laid out through Mr. Hall's place. The road has long been needed and will be considered a public necessity.

### **Evening Star**

A portion of a letter to The Beacon, March 17, 1876 concerning moving the Capitol from Mount Airy to the center of the Township. "So we think the Township will stand a little while yet, whether the road through Mr. Hall's property becomes permanent or not. Or whether the Capitol is moved or

not; and as for Mount Airy we have no fears. While she has the Town Clerk, 1 of the Town Committeemen, Judge of Elections, Freeholder, Collector, either in or near the vicinity we think she is safe.

### **Commodore**

### **Mini-Walking Tour of Mount Airy**

Historic sites are abundant throughout West Amwell Township. One concentration of historically and architecturally interesting structures occurs in the area known as Mount Airy and is an excellent example of a nineteenth century agricultural service community which still retains much of that character. To view these outstanding buildings (none are open to the public), the following map may be used as a guide for this mini-walking tour. Vehicles may be left in the parking lot at the West Amwell Township Municipal Building, indicated as number one on the map. On foot one would proceed north to number two, following the numbers in sequence to number sixteen which is adjacent to the parking lot and ends the tour. The tour will take about fifty minutes, walking at a leisurely pace.

1. West Amwell Township Fire Company. Parking facilities.

Start of walking tour.

2. Dwelling.

Frame, two-story five-bay hip-roofed dwelling, with a hip dormer, stone foundation and rear elf. It may be an earlier house which was extensively reworked in the early twentieth century. With a two-story, gable roofed wagon house.

3. Mount Airy Cemetery Annex.

A cluster of headstones and small stone blocks mark the graves of some blacks who had lived in West Amwell. This roadside plot, next to the parsonage, includes the resting place of Elijah Moore who died in 1866 and served as a private in the Civil War, 1864-65, and that of Prime Moore who died in 1898 at the age of 81 years.

4. Mount Airy Cemetery.

Directly to the south of the church, the cemetery is bordered by a low stone wall with wrought iron gate. It has been in use since the mid-eighteenth century and includes headstones marked as early as 1760.

#### 5. Second English Presbyterian Church of Amwell.

A Gothic Revival structure with a tall, slate octagonal spire and point arched and triangular gable windows. The congregation dates to 1754, however the present church, the second to be built, was erected in 1874. A parchment dated 1786 is still in existence which recorded the swearing of church trustees renouncing ties to the King of Britain.

#### 6. The Mathews House.

A simple gable front, one story frame building with molding surround at the central front entry. Built in 1876, replacing an earlier octagonal school, it was used as a township school until 1954. Owned by the church, it has been remodeled, dedicated to township residents Cora and Stanley Mathews and is now used for church school classes and other activities.

#### 7. Dwelling.

A frame building, five bay H type with gable end chimneys, clapboard siding and built-up box cornice with brackets. The three bay porch is supported by wooden posts on pedestals with foliated gingerbread. Built circa 1860-73, it shows Italianate and eclectic Victorian influences. With a garage/wagon shed and English barn outbuildings.

#### 8. Runkle's Corner Farm.

Farm outbuildings composed of: 1) a two story wagon house with gable end entries, built-in corn cribs on the side walls, overhanging eaves and clapboard siding. 2) a small frame English barn with shed appendages on the west gable end and a modern stable ell perpendicular to the southeast corner. Built circa 1850-1890, the Runkle's have in their family a table which incorporates a board found here with the date 1852 incised on it.

#### 9. Storehouse. (Presently a dwelling).

A sandstone, two and a half story, gable roofed, three bay structure built in the late eighteenth century. It still retains the overhanging gable hoist complete with pulley and rope which surmounts the west gable-end principal facade. Probably the only storehouse of this kind remaining in the county. Farmers used such community storehouses to store their farm products until spring when they could be carted to the Delaware River and floated during the high water season down to Philadelphia and other coastal markets. This structure also served as a general store for many years, as it was noted in "Rural Hunterdon" by Hubert G. Schmit that the "Holcombe store was

charging only fifty cents per bushel of plaster in 1824" and in January 1869, "Solomon Holcombe paid three cents each for eggs."

10. Mount Airy Tavern. (Presently a dwelling).

A frame, four bay building with west gable-end chimney with overhanging eaves and gable dormers. Built prior to the Revolutionary War, this house was enlarged and remodeled in the Craftsman style in this century and renovated again more recently. It is one of the oldest and one of the few remaining taverns or stage houses of Revolutionary War days. At one time it was connected with the adjacent stone storehouse. In 1814 the tavern was converted into a private dwelling.

11. Dwelling.

A frame, five bay H type dwelling with a shed-roofed rear elf. Boxed overhanging eaves, clapboard siding. Italianate influences, circa 1850-74.

12. Dwelling.

A frame two-story gable roofed four bay barn/wagon house sited perpendicularly to the road on a field stone foundation. With overhanging eaves, vertical siding and a batten-doored left entry on the west side. Circa 1830-70.

13. Mount Airy Tavern. (Presently a dwelling).

A classic five bay, two story frame building, gable roofed, with clapboard siding and a porch running across the front. Circa 1817-36, possibly earlier. A successor to the tavern directly opposite on the Old York Road, it also served as both a tavern and a stage house. It appears to have remained a hostelry for some years as when the New Jersey State Legislative Act creating West Amwell Township was passed in 1846, it was specified that the new municipality's first town meeting was to be held at John Managh's Inn in Mount Airy.

14. Dwelling.

A frame, two story gable roofed double-pile building. Three bay, L type unit to the east and a two-over-three bay extension to the west. Clapboard siding, with modern shed roofed porch across front. Greek Revival and eclectic Victorian influences, circa 1830-1860, and enlarged 1870-85.

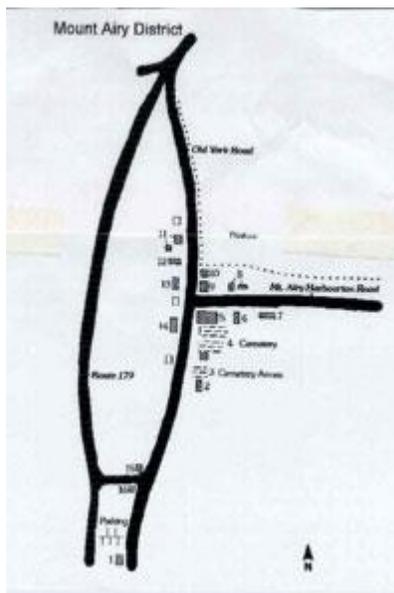
## 15. Dwelling.

A frame, five bay, H type structure. Central entry with two light transom and panel door. Italianate influences, circa 1850-70. Originally consisting of six rooms it has recently been extensively renovated.

## 16. Wagon House

This two-story wagon house of frame construction with shed appendages was the home of Prime Moore, a freed black man, who purchased the one-half acre lot in 1806 for \$25.67.

### Map of the Walking Tour



### Acknowledgements

Mrs. Van Syckle co-authored with Mrs. Emily Abbott Nordfeldt a brief history of our Township which was included in a Report to the Taxpayers in 1963. Henrietta Van Syckle was one of the original members of the West Amwell Environmental Commission when it was first established. She devoted much time and enthusiasm to the Commission over the years, but perhaps her greatest contribution was her special knowledge and interest in the sites and structures that are historically important in the Township. The Environmental Commission produced and dedicated this revised edition of an earlier Report in memory of Henrietta Van Syckle and Emily Nordfeldt. The brochure was transformed to this computer file in 1997, by Fred H.

Bowers, Ph.D., the grandson of Marion Mulholland (spelling corrected) (nee Harbourt), mentioned in the section "West Amwell in the Scientific World."