

Early History of
Neptune Township

by

John B. Stout

1967

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The Early Days and The Trap Tavern

In the early days of Monmouth County there were three townships: Middletown, Freehold, and Shrewsbury. Shrewsbury Township then extended from the Navesink River to Little Egg Harbor. In 1844 Ocean Township was formed from a part of Shrewsbury and in 1879 Neptune Township was formed from part of Ocean Township. Our story concerns the western part of Neptune Township.

There is a tradition that the earliest name for this area was "Trap" or "Trap Tavern" This seems to be substantiated by the address on an old letter in my possession addressed: Mr. Wm. Barns

Trap Tavern
Monmouth Co.
N. J.

It is evident from some old shipping receipts that Mr. Barns was a merchant located somewhere in this area.

Some early maps show a Hamlet called Shark River Village. Later this was changed to Greenville, which at a much later period, about 1875, was changed to Hamilton, the name it still retains.

The Village is situated along what was formerly the Indian Trail that ran from the Highlands to the Metedeconk River. This is now known as Jumping Brook Road. Part of Old Corlies Avenue and the Gully Road running through Hamilton are part of the Old Trail. This information was obtained from the township engineer.

Traveling this trail from North to South you pass the site of an old tavern known as Mud Fort, which was located about three hundred yards south of the entrance to the Jumping Brook Country Club and is on our farm at the present time. I have two metal buttons found at the supposed site of the tavern, each bearing a British Crown. A short distance further south there is a curve in the road where it crosses a small brook, and this portion of the road was known locally as "Long Slop". One half mile further on is "Shark River Village", now Hamilton.

The Trap Tavern. Perhaps the most noted building in Shark River Village was the Trap Tavern, known to date before 1812. It stood directly opposite the present Hamilton Fire House which stands on the site of the Tavern Stables. At one time, Richard Davison, "Uncle Dickie", was the proprietor.

About thirty-five years ago the "Trap" was moved about 150 feet east of the old location to make room for a new highway. It has finally been torn down and now a gas station stands in its place.

Many things of interest occurred in and around the Trap Tavern. My father remembered when a group of slaves were tied to the porch posts and flogged on their bare backs and then rubbed with salt and water. He also remembered when the Tavern was a rest stop for the mules hauling loads of iron pipe made at Allaire, New Jersey's deserted village, to be loaded on the boat at Oceanport to go to New York. There were eight mules to each wagon.

It was also one of the stopping places for the coach line running from Oceanport to Manasquan, then known as Squan Village. The line was operated by one E. R. Height, and some of his printed hand bills are still in the Height family.

There were four horses to each coach and each coach could accommodate eight passengers. From Oceanport to Squan Village the stops were Eatontown, Wayside, at the Halfway House, Trap Tavern, New Bedford Tavern, and Squan. The fare was 87½ cents one way. Mr. Height also carried the U. S. Mail.

During the **CIVIL WAR** a weekly newspaper was delivered at the Trap Tavern and at evening of "Newspaper Day" the men for miles around came to the Trap to hear the news read. Someone was selected to read aloud and often that person would be a Methodist pastor named Reverend William Abbott. He would often drop in at the special evening, much to the discomfort of the landlord, as business at the bar was poor when the Dominie was around. The Reverend William Abbott was an Army Chaplain during the Civil War.

The old clock that used to tick away the time in the barroom is now in the proud possession of Mr. & Mrs. Walter Elmer of Neptune. It is an Eli Terry Clock about three feet tall, has wooden works, and still runs.

There is a story that one cold and stormy night a horseman stopped at the Trap for the night. When he went in the barroom he found all seats near the big stove taken. He turned to the hostler and told him he wished his horse to be cared for and also told him to feed the horse a peck of oysters in the shell. He repeated his order three times before the surprised hostler moved. When he did go out, the crowd went with him. The traveler found himself a good seat by the stove and made himself quite comfortable. A few minutes later the men returned and said, "The horse won't eat oysters." So, the traveler replied, "If my horse won't eat them, bring them in and I will."

The Civil War Period and Greenville Guards

During the year 1862, a military company was formed and was first mentioned on their minute book as the "Greenville Union Boys", but later were officially recognized as the "Greenville Guards, Second Regiment, Monmouth and Ocean County Brigade". The drills were held each Saturday afternoon in front of the Trap Tavern, where a tall flag pole was placed.

The minutes book of the company has come into my possession and there-in is listed the following fifty-eight names of the members:

Captain Abraham H. Morris
1st. Lt. Samuel R. Shaftho
2nd Lt. Dewitt C. Shaftho
3rd. Lt. John Tilton
1st Orderly Lockwood F. Morton
2nd Orderly Richard Tilton

Corporals: Samuel Davison
Walter C. Mooney
Peter S. Taylor

Musicians: William Slate
Reuben A. Tilton
Charles Tilton
George Winters
John Bennett

Privates: Amos Tilton
Jackson Davison
John E. Tilton
Jeremiah Bennett
Charles P. White
James Yeomans
Wm. H. Shaftho
Jackson Morris
Albert Wardell
Henry White
John Hunter
Milton Tilton
Halstead W. Cooper
John H. Stout
Augustine Tilton
John M. Rogers
Charles P. Stout
Michael Bennett
Henry Y. Morris
Henry Smith

Privates: Esek Howland
Robert Shaftho
Samuel T. White
Samuel Vanderhuse
Benjamin T. White
Charles C. Mooney
Daniel C. Dangler
Solomon Disbrow
Jobe King
Josephus Davison
Charles Springsteen
Corlies T. Newman
John W. Morris
Nicholas V. White
Charles C. Jackson

Ensign: Michael Howland

Exempt: Samuel H. Leonard
John E. Shaftho
David H. Woolley
Stewart Hall
Jacob Hurley
James Elmer
Garret White
Curtis Yeomans

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The following three letters, written in script, from the Quarter-Master General seems to close the history of the Greenville Guards.

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

OFFICE OF QUARTER-MASTER GENERAL,

Trenton, March 26, 1868

Sir:

The return of arms from Greenville Guards, Second Regiment, Mon. & Ocean Brigade, is deficient to the extent of the enclosed invoice.

You are still held for this property, and unless it is returned to the State Arsenal, or properly accounted for in a reasonable time, recourse will be had to recover its value, the payment of which is secured by the bond of yourself and others, dated the 22 day of February, 1862, in the sum of One Thousand dollars.

Official

Wells.

Very Respectfully,

Your Ob't serv't

LEWIS PERRINE

Quarter-Master General N. J.

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

QUARTER-MASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE,

Trenton, April 3, 1868

Sirs:

Your letter of the 1st inst. is received, and in reply I have to inform you that you can be relieved from liability for the deficiency in the return of the Greenville Guards, Monmouth and Ocean Brigade, upon the receipt at this office of an affidavit setting forth the facts contained in your communication, that the missing articles were in the possession of privates who enlisted in the army, that some never returned and that those who did return could not indemnify you and that you have made every effort to avoid any loss to the State, and that the articles have "been lost or destroyed by misadventure, or in the service of this State or the United States, and without fraud or culpable negligence on the part of such officer or officers, or his or their surety or sureties."

If you are not able to satisfy this office that the property has been so lost or destroyed, you will be required to account for it by paying the money value of same. I enclose you herewith a bill for the articles.

Very Respectfully

Your Obt. Servant

L. Perrine

QMGenl N. J.

Wells.

Messrs J. P. L. Tilton

and Richd. Davison

Sureties Greenville Guards.

Shark River, N. J.

Their Special Committees were:

President	Abraham H. Morris
Secretary	Milton Tilton
Treasurer	Jackson Davison
Recruiting	Charles White
	John H. Stout
	Michael Howland
Arms	Ely Tilton
	Jeremiah Bennett
	Augustine Tilton
Court Martial	Dewitt Shafto
	Amos Tilton
	Samuel Davison
	Jeremiah Bennett
	James Yeomans

A list of their equipment is as follows:

- 50 guns
- 49 bayonets
- 48 Ram Rods
- 48 Cartridge boxes
- 48 cap boxes
- 49 cartridge straps
- 48 Eagle Plates
- 48 belt plates
- 49 belt straps
- 50 gun straps
- 49 scabbards
- 4 swords - non-commissioned officers
- 4 sword belts
- 3 belt plates

The unit was disbanded in 1868 and at that time the Quarter Master General, New Jersey, charged them with the loss of some equipment, to wit: Capt. A. H. Morris.

1868	To the State of New Jersey	Dr.
January 16	To 1 Bayonet	\$1.65
	To 3 Wilsens	20c .60
	To 7 Screw Drivers	23c 1.61
	To 2 Cartridge Boxes	\$1.07 2.14
	To 2 Cartridge Boxes plates	10c .20
	To 1 Cartridge Boxes Belt	.60
	To 3 Cartridge Boxes Plates	10c .30
	To 1 Bayonet Scabbard	.45
	To 1 Waist Belt	.32
	To 2 Waist Belt Plates	10c .20
	To 2 Cap Pouches	45c .90
		\$8.97

Early Business Sites

On the point of land between Jumping Brook Road and the State Highway #33, just across from the first site of the Trap Tavern, stood a two story brick blacksmith and wheelwright shop. This shop was operated by my Grandfather, Elhanan H. Stout and his brother Samuel C. Stout. They built boats, wagons, and many farm and household implements of that day. Grandfather knew how to temper steel and the shop turned out knives, axes, hoes, plows, and builder's hardware — especially nails. They sometimes armored the plows by protecting the wooden share by covering it with a thin steel plate made from old sawmill saws. During the fishing season, Grandfather Stout and his brother were commercial fishermen.

On the same point of land was a shoe shop operated by an Englishman by the name of George Sculthorpe. It was said that he made about all the boots and shoes for the people of Shark River Village and the surrounding country.

The grocery and dry goods store was situated on the north side of Old Corlies Avenue, about two hundred feet west of the Gully Road. This store was owned by an ex-seaman, Captain Rogers. About seventy years ago this store was destroyed by fire and never rebuilt. The next general store was situated on the before mentioned point of land where the shoe shop had been. This store was operated for many years by Milton Tilton and his daughter and also served as a U. S. Post Office.

Early court case. When my father was a lad, there occurred a murder in the village. One William Woolley shot a man by the name of "Hart" Fleming. Woolley was convicted for the murder and hanged at Freehold Courthouse. His family asked my Grandfather, Elhanan Stout, to see that the body had a decent burial. Grandfather sent my father, John H. Stout, and his cousin, Charles Stout, two young lads, to Freehold with a carry-all wagon to bring the body home. They had to wait for the hanging, then the body was placed in a box and put in the wagon.

On reaching home they were not allowed to bury it in the church yard or cemetery, so they dug the grave and buried old Bill outside of the fence of the old Presbyterian Cemetery. "Bill" was not permitted to rest there forever. A few years ago the spot was bulldozed down for a building development.

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

QUARTER-MASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE,

Trenton, April 17, 1868

Sir:

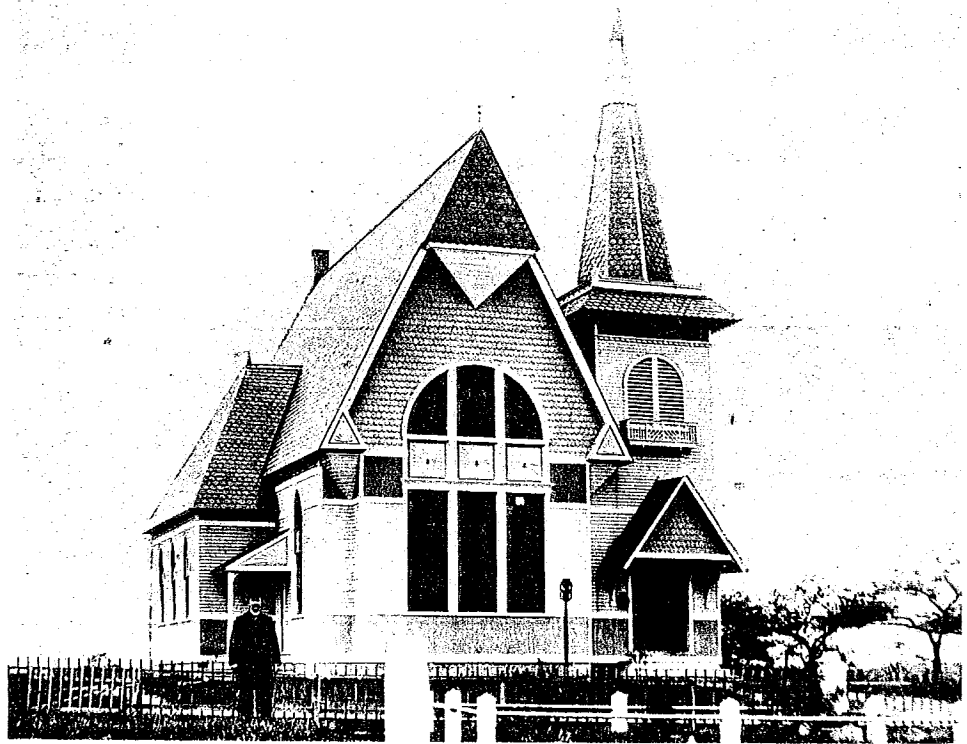
Your letter of the 15th inst. enclosing \$9. in payment for missing articles of the Greenville Guards, Monmouth and Ocean Brigade, has been received.

You evidently misunderstood our letter of the 3rd inst. as it was our intention to relieve you upon your forwarding to this office affidavits to the correctness of the statements made by you and Capt. Morris. We therefore return to you your letter with the amount enclosed.

We herewith enclose to you your letter of the 1st. inst. and Capt. Morris of April 6th with affidavits endorsed upon the backs, which you, Capt. Morris and Mr. Davison will subscribe to before some person legally authorized to administer an oath. Upon the receipt in proper form of these affidavits you will be entitled to be relieved and your bond cancelled.

Very respectfully,
Your Obt. Servant
L. Perrine
QMGenl. N. J.

J. P. L. Tilton, Esq.
Shark River, N. J.



HAMILTON METHODIST CHURCH

1888 — 1940

Early Church History

The first church was a Presbyterian Church located on the south-west corner of Gully Road and Old Corlies Avenue. It would seem that this church was used as early as 1734, during the Revolution, and as late as 1803. On this site is a small cemetery, overgrown with trees, brush, and briars. But, with some searching, a number of gravestones can be found. All trace of names have disappeared. I believe this cemetery belongs to the Presbyterian Church at Eatontown.

Our second church was situated on the north side of Old Corlies Avenue on ground now included in the Hamilton Cemetery. This church, known as the "Shark River Methodist Episcopal Church", was built in 1833. It was founded by Jonathan Youmans and was the only church between Long Branch and Manasquan. Thirty-five years later the Reverend W. B. Osborn of the Hamilton Church founded the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting.

The original deed for the ground was dated February 1833, and was for four acres of land, bought for the sum of forty dollars — twenty-five dollars down and fifteen later.

About the time of the Civil War, the Shark River Methodist Episcopal Church became the Greenville Methodist Protestant Church, and, in 1875, definitely became the Hamilton Methodist Protestant Church. The trustees of the church had the certificate of incorporation recorded in 1882.

In 1888 a new church was built on the opposite side of the road from the first location. This building was contracted for and erected by one John Dey for an amount of a little over \$6,000. On November 6, 1940, this church was destroyed by fire and now a third building is in use.

Mr. Abraham H. Morris was a lay preacher of some renown and served the Hamilton Church for over sixty years in that capacity. Although he served this village, his home was in a small hamlet to the south called "Chapeltown" on the map, better known as "Bobby Town" to the old residents, but is now Glendola.

Seventh Day Baptists. Sometime before the year 1740 a religious group called the "Seventh Day Baptists" settled in the area between the Manasquan River and Shark River. The first settlements were at the mouths of these rivers,

According to tradition, they were the founders of "Squan Village" now known as Manasquan, an indian name meaning "Squaw Town". Tradition also has it that the Seventh Day Baptists had a ship builders yard on the Manasquan River, owned by the Maxsons, a name often found in the history of this church. Also, the name of Davis was prominent.

The making of salt was one of the industries and "Salt Works" were

established at the inlets of the before mentioned rivers. These were destroyed by the British soldiers during the Revolutionary War.

Their first church was situated near Glendola, west of the Glendola School, on land donated by one Zebulon Maxson and built about 1775 near a place known as the "Cranberry Bog" (probably Hurley's Pond) and was called Shrewsbury Church. Shrewsbury Township then included this territory. The second church was built on the site of the present Methodist Church of Glendola and it is said some of the original timber is in this building.

In 1789 the church voted to sell this building and put the proceeds of the sale in the treasury of the church, and migrated to West Virginia.

These facts were taken from a history of the Seventh Day Baptists in West Virginia, written by Corliss Fitz-Randolph, chairman of the Committee on Denominational History of the Seventh Day Baptists General Conference.

Within the past two years, several other churches have joined our community. One the Holy Innocents Roman Catholic Church on West Bangs Avenue and the Redeemer Lutheran Congregation at Route 33 and Jumping Brook Road.

Early Mill History

In early days no village was complete without a mill or two, and Shark River Village had several. The last mill to be operated in this vicinity was Kisner's Mill, built about 1825. This was a grist mill, that is a mill to grind grain, make flour, etc., and was in use as late as 1890 or so. It was located where the Monmouth County Consolidated Water Company has their pumping station on Jumping Brook at the present time.

The public road at Kisner's Mill used to lay where the Water Company's settling basin now is, and passed between the mill and the mill pond. There was just enough room for a wagon to pass around a sharp turn at that spot.

One dark night a man of the village by the name of Slocum, drove his team of horses into the mill pond. His cry, "My God, Save Charlie" (this was one of his horses), was heard. But help came too late. Slocum and the team were drowned.

Further up the stream on Jumping Brook was located Garrabrant's Saw Mill, just a short distance above the athletic field of the present Summerfield School. Still further up the same stream, just below Highway #66, was another saw mill known as the Frenchman's Mill. No one seems to know much about the Frenchman or his mill, but years ago I can remember seeing some of the old timber still standing.

Remsen's mill was situated about a mile above the head of Shark River. John C. Everson has loaned me some old deeds and papers found under the old foundation of the original Woolley homestead on Old Corlies Avenue, Neptune.

One of these papers is an agreement between Hubbard Woolley and William Remsen wherein they agree to arbitrate a dispute between them involving the sum of \$300. They named as arbitrators Peter Davison and John P. L. Tilton, who could name a third man if they failed to agree. The meeting place was to be at the mill of William Remsen. The date of this agreement was the 24th day of April, 1865, and was notarized by Peter D. Knieshern, Justice of Peace. This paper also bears a two-cent Internal Revenue Stamp with the face of George Washington thereon.

Two more mills were to be found near the village, both on Shark River Brook on the road now known as School House Road. The saw mill was on the south side of the stream and the grist mill on the north side.

Thirty years ago some of the saw mill timber could be seen, and one of the grinding stones from the grist mill now, and for many years, has served our family as steps to our front doors. The stone was cut in half.

The last saw mill to operate was owned by Monroe Shafto and was about two miles up stream from Shark River Village and near Shark River Station.

Evidently William Remsen also dealt in the dry goods business in addition to operating a grist mill. This is evidenced by a copy of a dry goods bill which was made out to a John Stout and dated March 13, 1826. A copy of this bill follows.

March 13th, 1826

Mr. John Stout

Bot. of W Remsen & Co.

2¼ yards Superfine Blue Cloth	\$7-87½
3¼ yards Con Cloth 5/	0-47
2 yards muslin ½	0-29
¾ yards wrapping ¼	0-12½
14 Buttons 5/	0-73
½ lb. Soap 10	0-05
1 Stick trist	0-04
	\$9-58c

Recd. Payment By

Amos Tilton

Wm. Remsen & Co.

Carhart Stout

½ Doz. plates	0-37½
	\$9-95½



HAMILTON SCHOOLHOUSE
Neptune's First School

Early School History

The date of the building of the first school house is very uncertain. It was located on what is now known as School House Road and State Highway #33 and was known as Ocean Township School #1. My father was born in 1842, and as a lad went to school there. He said the building was old then; so old that at the end of one school year the older boys were asked to pull it down to make room for another building. What a work of joy!

The second building was a one room frame structure. A real country school. At one time the teacher had ninety pupils on roll. The older boys and girls would attend school in the Winter time and drop out when Spring came. The small fry came in the Spring and Fall. The courses of study ran from the A, B, C's, to Navigation.

As a young graduate from the Young Women's Seminary in Freehold, my mother came to teach in this school about the year 1877. After seven years of teaching, she married my father, John H. Stout. In due time I came along and also attended the same school. This school was abandoned when a new two room school was built in 1894 in the Summerfield section of Neptune Township. About twenty years ago this building was sold to the Neptune Sportsmen's Club. In 1929 a new fourteen room school was dedicated with Harry C. Mauch as Principal. It has now been enlarged by twelve additional rooms.

The County Poor Farm, or Alms House, was an interesting but sad feature of our area. It was established to care for all those who were unfortunate enough to become public charges. All were herded together, young, old, wise and otherwise — in fact, anyone not violently insane.

The man who farmed the Poor Farm had free use of it for caring for the inmates. This system left much to be desired. Mr. & Mrs. Cyrus Low were the last people to operate the place and they did everything in their power to make life comfortable for the people in their charge.

The farm consisted of all the land now included in the Asbury Park Golf Course, all of Shark River Hills and a little more, giving a total of 728 acres which were acquired in 1801 at a cost of \$4,000. This land was bought by the Monmouth County Board of Freeholders, and was managed by a board of trustees, one from each township in the county, and one each from Brick and Dover Townships of Ocean County.

The Road To The Sea

From Shark River Village to the sea, the road comprised what is now known as Old Corlies Avenue, as far as Brighton Avenue, then followed what is now Sylvania Avenue to Shark River Inlet, passing through a wooded area called Key East. This comprised the area of Avon and eastern part of Neptune City. It was not until Ocean Grove and Asbury Park began to grow that the road from Brighton Avenue to Main Street, Neptune, was opened. It is now part of our principal highway, Route #33. The project of a new road was backed by the late Dr. Hugh Kinmonth, a prominent physician in the new and fast growing summer resorts of Ocean Grove and Asbury Park.

The passing of the years did not change much the way of life in our community until the opening of the Long Branch Railroad along the shore in about 1873. From that time on, the past was soon put behind, and the age of the shore resort began to grow.

A number of our older citizens can remember when the railroads began operations. At that time Sunday trains were not allowed to stop on Sunday at the Asbury Park and Ocean Grove station as it was considered to be too close to the Camp Meeting resort of Ocean Grove.

Now the shore has become commercialized and times and customs have changed. This is life and progress — but thinking back you wonder if the old days didn't have something this generation is missing.