

Chapter 10

Villages and Towns of 19th Century Monmouth County

When Isaac grew up in 1830s Eatontown village had two country stores, which sold glass bottles, printed books, almanacs, horn combs, thread, calico, flannel cloth, worsted stockings, ribbons, crepe cloth, shirts, farm utensils, tobacco, snuff, pipes, cigars, rum, brandy and whiskey, chocolate, powder and flint, furs, soap- which was made in loaves and then sliced, pots and pans, medicines, tea, sugar, salt, pepper, butter, flour and other grains, chamber pots, dishes and glassware, ginger, slate pencils, splint brooms, spectacles, screws and nails, hardware, razor straps, garden seed, toothbrushes, buffalo robes, figs, candy, nutmeg and spices, soda, raisins, linseed oil, whale oil, kerosene, lanterns, lamp chimneys, corn poppers, horse collars, harnesses, whips, hay forks, rosin, clocks and a potpourri of other merchandise.

Storeowners made cider and applejack, mended shoes, boarded horse, drew up mortgages, notes and bonds, wrote letter and performed services for those with little education. On Saturday nights the entire family carried chickens, butter and eggs to the BC White store on Broad Street to exchange for supplies. The store had a front porch where several benches rested and there were meeting rooms upstairs. The store was the post office and bank, and center for church messages, auctions, elections, notices for horse thieves, raffles, turkey shoots and other community events. A liberty pole stood at the intersection of Broad and South Street until the progress of trolley tracks connecting Eatontown with Red Bank caused its removal.

During this period Monmouth County shore communities consisted mainly of

farmers and fishermen. Many streets and avenues still bare the names of the early settlers. 19th century Eatontown tax records and Ike's account ledger record business dealings and services that were available in small villages. A business notice advertises the local services in Eatontown village:

George Applegate, carpenter and builder;

John Buckingham, marble worker and manufacturer of monuments;

Henry Clayton, attorney;

Henry Corlies, farmer and realtor;

Edward Field, resident;

Fey and Lippincott, wholesale and retail meat;

Johnston and Morris, dealers in dry goods, groceries, hardware, paints, oils;

Dr. W. S. Kimball, physician and surgeon;

Charles Little , carpenter and builder;

Rev. Loop, Rector of St. James Church;

D W Lafetra, dealer in dry goods, groceries, medicines, crockery, iron,
agricultural implements, fertilizers;

Wm. McDonald, manufacturer of carriages;

J. Richmond, miller, grain, feed;

R.Roxby, picture framing, looking glasses;

William Stout, carpenter and builder;

Tonkings and Co, confectionery and oyster saloon;

Benjamin White, dealers in wood, lumber coal,

Jno Wheeler, Eatontown Hotel;

D. F Wolcott, dealer in dry food, hats, capes, boots, shoes, goods; and

Robertson Wolcott and Thomas White, farmers.

In the 1860s, property for a one-mile racetrack off Broadway was bought from the Corlies and Fielder families of Eatontown. The seven hundred foot grandstand and clubhouse of Monmouth Park Race Track became a gathering place for presidents and celebrities. Horse races started with the roll of a drum. Due to the popularity of the horse races, the track was moved east three miles to Oceanport. The opening day stakes were \$31,000.

As more gamblers visited the racetrack, the village called The Branch (Long Branch), slowly developed along the cliffs overlooking the ocean. In 1828, ships and ocean vessels unloaded visitors at the pier. Hotels, charging \$4.00 per day, and boarding houses were built along Ocean Avenue to house the streams of sporting crowds and vacationers, who bet at roulette, faro, cards and dice tables. Mutuel pools, imported from France, ran up the odds and increased the number of gamblers.

Vacationers were served breakfast at 8:00 A.M., dinner at 2:00 P.M., tea at 6:00 P.M. and supper at 9:00 P.M. An English visitor in 1830 was surprised that ladies did not follow the practice of being wheeled into the water in a bathing machine (a portable bathhouse for changing clothes). Hotels hired brass bands to perform concerts throughout the day and provide music for hops and balls which lasted through the night.

Businessmen persuaded Congress to construct a lighthouse at Highlands to aid ships into New York Harbor. Gordon's Gazetter of 1834 mentions Long Branch, located

on a millstream of the Shrewsbury River, as having a dozen houses, one tavern and two stores. Long Branch became a well-known first-class sea bathing resort was serviced by countless vessels from New York City.

The area experienced rapid growth when the Delaware Bay and Raritan Railroad connected it to the cities. Another description mentions a steamer coming around Sandy Hook in 1840 and entering the Shrewsbury River through an inlet at Sea Bright. Wealthy families kept their yachts at Pleasure Bay, then road stagecoaches to Long Branch village. By 1850 Long Branch was nicknamed the Playground for Presidents, as it became a resort mecca of well-to-do families escaping the summer heat of New York and Philadelphia.

Mrs. Abraham Lincoln visited Long Branch for ten days during the Battle of Bull Run. After the Civil War, Long Branch took on the appearance of inexhaustible money, making it the preeminent resort among the wealthy. In 1869, a new six hundred foot long pier was constructed and lined with benches and refreshment booths. Constant sea erosion of the five-mile bluff wore away four feet of sand a year, eventually washing the pier into the sea in 1881. Vacationers started to avoid the area as residents were forced to move their houses back from the sea. Residents numbered 3,800 in 1880. By 1890 residents had grown to 7,200 and by 1900 it was the largest shore town with 8,800 residents. This Golden Age of Long Branch lasted until about 1893 when laws forbidding gambling, bookmaking and horseracing were passed, causing its decline as a resort. The racetrack was closed and the buildings razed.

The population growth moved south to the uninhabited and undeveloped wilderness of Deal Lake, Wesley Lake, Asbury Park and Ocean Grove. Isaac and his sons decided to moved with the new development by purchasing fifteen acres of land west of a new town being laid out, Asbury Park, New Jersey.