

Stratford's History

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Roads Through Stratford – Laurel Road, part 1

By Carole Dadino, Stratford Historian

When the first settlers arrived in the original Gloucester County, West New Jersey, they took advantage of the trails blazed by the Indigenous Peoples. Artifacts found on the banks of Big Timber Creek (often referred to as “Gloucester River”) in Stratford, indicate Indian tribes, including the Leni-Lenape, used the current Laurel Road for access to the waterway terminating at the Delaware River. Once they reached the ports along the river, merchants including The Dutch West India Company, were eagerly awaiting the tribes’ coveted Beaver pelts. The pelts were traded for items they could not produce themselves.

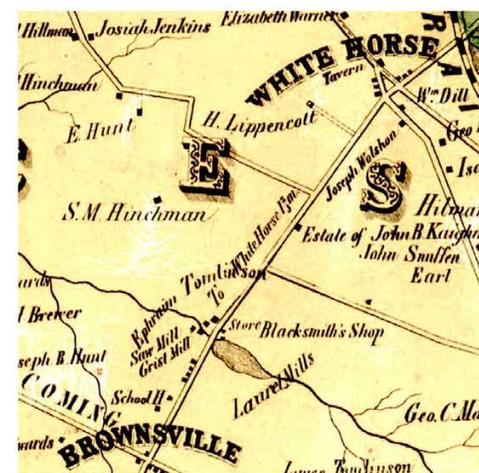


Early settlers improved the trails and soon laid out roads connecting their farmlands to major thoroughfares and waterways. In 1739, road surveyors laid out a road from Blackwood to Haddonfield, “thence following the said [old] road by Segments [Signey’s] Run. The road passed through land originally owned by Major Abraham Porter, a British Provincial Military Agent. About 1730 a portion of the land was supposedly purchased by Thomas Atkinson and Thomas Webster. In 1740, John Hillman purchased 500 acres of land that encompasses the current Stratford. The newly surveyed road passed through his farmland.



On this 1777 map, Laurel Road is only named “Road”. The road in the upper right of the map on the right, is White Horse Pike, formerly named “Eggharbour Road”. Landing Road is the current Blackwood-Clementon Road. As an extension to thoroughfares the relatively short road was referred to by several names. A section of Laurel Road, running from Haddonfield, via today’s Warwick Road, to Landing Road (Blackwood-Clementon

Road) was referred to by some as “Haddonfield-Salem Road”. From Blackwood, it continued to the ports in Salem County. (The main Haddonfield-Salem Road ran through Barrington.) A short section continuing from Haddonfield, via Warwick Road, to the White Horse Pike, was once called “Old Egg Harbor Road”. This section passed through the portion of Hillman’s farmland shown as the John Kaighn and Hinchman/Lippincott farms, on the 1857 map below.



Ephraim Tomlinson family in 1848. (From Laurel Road)

In 1834, Ephraim Tomlinson acquired the land comprising Hillman’s farm and gristmill, naming the road cutting through his farmland and between his lumber and grist mills, “Laurel Mills Road”, after the Laurels surrounding Laurel Lake. It was eventually shortened to “Laurel Road” (A 1922 Laurel Springs Map named it “Laurel Ave.”)



Ephraim Tomlinson’s Grist Mill