

# Maple Shade, a Brief History

On November 14, 1682, land was surveyed between the two branches of Cimsissinck Creek at the Indian town of Pemisoakin for three families of the Society of Friends. They were the Roberts, the Hancocks, and the Matlacks. The area that is now Maple Shade was settled early because the Delaware River and the creeks along it were the routes of travel by boat. Today, Cimsissinck Creek is the two branches of the Pennsauken Creek which name comes from the Indian town of Pemisoakin.

They might have chosen this area for the high hill along the north branch. John Roberts, at least, was said to have lived for a time in a cave dugout. On November 14, 1898 the Roberts family held a memorial meeting to dedicate the Roberts Memorial monument, originally planned to mark the cave dugout hole that a descendant, Joseph W. Lippincott, found, at a younger age, while plowing the field. The Roberts monument was placed at an idea location (at the time) facing "Main Street" on the Mason farm, across from the brickyard house.

Several years later other settlers came to the area, now Maple Shade. Principally among these were the Rudderow and Stiles families. The Rudderow and Stiles families were not Quakers. Some of the Stiles family was later.

On November 6, 1688 the Burlington County Supreme Court formed the townships and the area now Maple Shade, Moorestown, Cinnaminson, Palmyra, Riverton, and Delran was called Chester Township. In Court records, June 5, 1690- February 22, 1699, Chester Township was called Cropwell, presumably after William Matlack's hometown of Cropwell Bishop, Nottinghamshire, England. The south branch of the Pennsauken Creek was also known as Cropwell River. On February 21, 1798 Chester Township was incorporated. Previous to 1688, there were no townships and Maple Shade was in the "London Tenth."

The first graveyard of the area as well as an early place of Friends Meeting was at the home of Timothy Hancock. In 1682, the Kings Highway between Burlington and Salem was laid out. A portion passes through the township of Maple Shade. As the Kings Highway became more established a lot was bought in 1700 at the location of the Friends cemetery in Moorestown from the Adams family and the Adams Meeting house was built from logs.

Early land owners along that ridge there, now Moorestown, were the Adams, the Rodman brothers, and in the 1730s Thomas Moore who sold lots of his land and owned a tavern. Evidently he was popular as the village became known as "Moore's Town."

In 1682, William Penn began the City of Philadelphia. In about 1762 there was laid out the "Old Ferry Road" or "Market Road" from the Kings Highway at Schoolhouse Lane and it went across where the High School now is and about where Rose Avenue goes through Alden Park. It continued over the Pennsauken Creek nearby Samuel Burrough's grist mill and onto Spicer's Ferry and then to Cooper's Ferry which crossed the Delaware River to Philadelphia. This road was used by farmers to take their produce to markets in Philadelphia and Camden.

The area now Maple Shade was right between Moore's Town (Moorestown) and Cooper's Ferry (Camden).

In 1794 a stage road was laid out between the two, replacing the Old Ferry Road. Today it is Main Street in Maple Shade, Camden Avenue in Moorestown, and Maple Avenue in Cherry Hill and Pennsauken. In 1849 it became the "Moorestown and Camden Turnpike," owned and operated by local farmers collecting revenue by several toll gates along it.

During this time period, there were several Stiles family farms about the area, and Benjamin Stiles Sr. being involved in the earlier 1844 planning stages of the Turnpike moved to the corner of it and Fellowship Road. The area by 1860 was called "Stiles Corners."

A blacksmith shop was started in 1847 which was later purchased by Christian Frech, in 1870, who built wagons and afterward continued by his son, William Frech, and a partner John Parker, as the William Frech Wagon Co. They specialized in "cut under" truck shelving wagons. Towards the end they were making truck bodies before a fire destroyed the works in 1940. There was also a period when they made circus wagons.

By 1860 a brick and tile yard was established on the land of "Roberts family heirs"- Thomas Lippincott, his brother Joseph W. Lippincott, and sister Lydia Walton. Thomas was a brick maker and had left to live in Philadelphia. Joseph inherited the homestead and land on the south side of "Main Street." The brickyard was briefly owned by Lydia and Joseph Walton, a cabinet maker. In 1863 it was sold to John Muffett & Son. Later a second brickyard opened in back of it, off North Pine Avenue, owned by the Sauselein family. The front brickyard went through several owners, and went out of business

during the depression. The second brickyard was later run by the William Graham Brick Co. and lasted until 1956.

In 1867 the Camden and Burlington County Railroad went through. The land at Fork Landing Road was purchased for "Stiles Station" in 1869. In June of 1874, there was a new President of the Pennsylvania Railroad, who now owned the Camden and Burlington County Railroad, and that month the railroad authorities renamed "Stiles Station" to "Maple Shade Station." Most all of the Stiles family farms no longer had Stiles families living at them at this time.

## Maple Shade-

The Benjamin J. Stiles farm went through several owners and then was bought by Charles F. Shuster, who began the development of Maple Shade with the "Shuster Tract" subdivision in 1887. Soon to follow were two more subdivisions- the "Zane tract" and the "Maple Shade Land & Improvement Co." land which was along the north side of the railroad tracks. The latter one had an artesian well owned by Dr. Alexander Mecray which supplied water to the homes.

The Village of Maple Shade increased little in population as evidenced by the lack of Victorian era houses here. It was a rural "Country Town." Nearby the Frech Wagon Works were several stores along Main Street which was Maple Shade's first business district. There was the Klinger's shoe store, Fahr's store, Mennel's Dry Goods store which had the Maple Shade Post Office, and William Myers' barber shop. These families were of German descent and related to one another. There was a few more merchants such as the Larzeleres. Later on, on a Horace Roberts owned subdivision, a street was named "Germantown Avenue."

The Camden & Suburban Railway (later Public Service Co.) started a trolley service between Merchantville and Moorestown in 1901. The tracks went along each side of Main Street. In November of 1907 the Moorestown and Camden Turnpike Company sold the turnpike (Main Street) to the county. The turnpike was a hindrance now to the trolleys. The Federal Street (Merchantville) trolley service ended in January 29, 1928, as the line only then went to Cove Road, Merchantville. The line ended altogether on March 16, 1932, the day before St. Patrick's Day, and was replaced by buses.

The Edward H. Cutler Company of Philadelphia took over the handling of the Maple Shade Land and Improvement Company and the Shuster tract in 1905. Edward Cutler came to Maple Shade in 1906 and lived at 19 East

Linwood Avenue. Shortly afterward he had a real estate field office at the northeast corner of Main Street and Forklanding Road. This small office also became the Police headquarters and was used as such until 1927 when the old Municipal Building at the southwest corner of Main Street and Maple Avenue was built containing both the Maple Shade Police and Fire Departments.

After Edward's death in 1924, his son Charles L. Cutler became the President of the company, and his brother Arthur N. Cutler became the Secretary and Treasurer. Later the real estate business of the Edward H. Cutler Company was taken over by Arthur N. Cutler and after 1939 was known as the Cutler Agency, operating in the newly built "Ferro Building," a store front addition to the old Myers' home, at the southeast corner of Main Street and Maple Avenue.

Arthur N. Cutler was the first President of the Maple Shade Historical Society as he had lived in town since 1910 and saw its development. He was one of the people responsible for restoring the Chesterford School. He used to show a slide show of Maple Shade historical photos which Joe Dugan continued after.

Thomas J.S. Barlow moved to Maple Shade in 1908. He was President of the Maple Heights Land Co., which purchased the John R. Mason farm for the plan of Maple Heights. About 3 years later he became interested in real estate development and formed Barlow & Company with his two sons, Thomas Jr. and Fred Barlow. In 1913 he began developing Maple Shade with a will. Some of the subdivisions were "One Acre Farm" lots. The Barlow Building was Barlow & Company's real estate office and the bungalows were sold as "Barlow Built Bungalows."

John Harned, a Camden attorney, and Horace Roberts, a orchard farmer who owned many farms, had farms subdivided for Barlow & Company. In 1921, Thomas J.S. Barlow retired, and his sons Thomas Jr. and Frederick, and son-in-law C. Fred Vogdes took over the business and it was incorporated.

Thomas Barlow served on the Inter-State Bridge and Tunnel Commission for many years and during that time saw the erection of the Delaware River Bridge (now the Benjamin Franklin Bridge) from Philadelphia to Camden. The first vehicle procession over the "Benjamin Franklin Bridge" before it opened in 1926, was the funeral cortege of forty seven autos crossing the bridge from New Jersey to Philadelphia during the funeral of Annie T. Barlow, Thomas Barlow's first wife.

The population of Maple Shade grew from a few hundred, when the Barlows arrived, to about 5,000 in the mid-1920s. Much of Maple Shade's growth as well as its utilities etc... was through the efforts of Thomas J.S. Barlow. In the 1920s he was referred to as "the Founder of Maple Shade," or as "the Father of Maple Shade." He had the honor of laying the corner stone in the Maple Shade Municipal Building in 1927 before a large gathered crowd.

The "Maple Shade Progress" newspaper was issued for the first time on November 4th, 1916. William Brown, who had a small printing press in his home at what is now 537 Cutler Avenue, was the original owner and publisher. Brown later sold the paper to Frank Gerkins, Sr., and his son carried on after his retirement. Later the paper was continued by a newsgroup publisher.

Part of the progress of Maple Shade involved telling Moorestown we needed more street lights, better roads, and wanted to be hooked up to the Moorestown Water Works. Cinnaminson had separated from Chester Township in 1860 and now there grew a awkwardness of Moorestown, Lenola, and Maple Shade in Chester Township, the latter two a result of real estate interests around the train stations. Maple Shade was growing fast and would soon need more improvements.

Moorestown wanted to divide the township of Chester. Maple Shade opposed this idea. Moorestown and Lenola tried separating by election in 1917 as "East Chester," but didn't get the votes. In April of 1922 they voted without Maple Shade and separated from Chester Township as "Moorestown." Maple Shade then formed its own Chester Township committee.

Maple Shade soon went to work on a Water Works at East Main Street and the Pennsauken Creek which was completed in 1925. The sewer system was put into operation in 1927. Most of the roads remained as dirt roads for a while giving the town the nickname "Maple Mud." Another township characteristic which was negative, or positive, depending on how you see things, was a solid twenty liquor licenses going on for decades. Bars were all along Main Street with live bands in the early days.

Maple Shade was the last remaining part of Chester Township. On November 6, 1945 the voters of the Township of Chester, also called Maple Shade, by a vote of 1067 to 74, voted to change the name from the Township of Chester to the Township of Maple Shade.

A relic of the old Chester Township School system is the numbers which Maple Shade continued using with each additional school. The "Township School Act" of 1894 changed the school district numbers from county to townships. The Chesterford School, or School No. 27 would later become the Maple Shade School, or School No. 1. When the school on North Poplar Avenue was built in 1909 it replaced the one room school house as "Maple Shade School No. 1"

The Chesterford School district was pretty much the same land of the late 1800s village of Maple Shade. In 1873 the Chester Township tax assessor's book lists 23 residences for the School No. 27 district. Historian T. Chalkley Matlack, in 1897, said that "Maple Shade was a village of 21 scattered residences."

The school was built in 1811 and donated by Joseph Burrough to neighborhood subscribers before the public or "free" school system was started. It was named the "Chesterford School" because it was in the section of Chester Twp. separated on each side by the Pennsauken Creek. You had to "ford" or cross the creek. This and the Chester Brick School, which was on Schoolhouse Lane, were Maple Shade's schools when the area was mostly all farms.

The 1920s brought rapid growth to the town. Mom and Pop operated stores were common all down Main Street as well as out of people's homes. Loose zoning laws also allowed many out of garage run businesses. The main difference today is the absence of chicken houses. It brought a little extra income and pride to take some eggs to your co-workers in Philadelphia. Maple Shade had several textile and clothing factories such as the E.W. Twitchell Co., then the Warick Fashions coat factory, and Brubaker's uniforms.

After the Depression, if you were still here that is, you could work at the N.Y. Camden Shipyard. If you were border line about to lose your property this company was a saving grace as World War Two began and the pay and benefits were great. Victor Talking Machine Co. in Camden was another large employer.

The Great Depression hit Maple Shade hard, as it was mostly built during the 1920s and not yet paid for. In the 1940s came some renewed growth. The early 1950s though would be the next housing boom. The 1950s developments of Alden Park, Maple Park Manor, Poplar Grove, and Park Estates brought many new people to town. In the twenties- mainly bungalows were built, in the forties- cape cods, and in the fifties large developments of ranchers and some split levels. Until the early 1960s Maple

Shade was in the top of Burlington County's 40 townships for population size and taxes paid to the county.

In the late sixties and early seventies, several large apartment and condominiums complexes were built. The Maple Shade High School, on Frederick Avenue, was dedicated in 1972 completing Maple Shade's school system. There grew a shift at this time to malls and department stores along the highways. This didn't help Main Street's business. One large store was Nichols. Now another large store stands on the same grounds it once stood at, a Lowe's store.

The Maple Shade Betterment League formed in 1919 having only 5 members attend its first meeting. In February of 1920 it had two hundred and sixty members. In December of that year it incorporated for "the social welfare and civic betterment of the entire community of Maple Shade." This group would be followed over time by the various housing tract's civic associations, the Lions Club, the Jaycees, etc... as people of the town brought us together for good times and for our good. There are also church congregations of the various denominations.

The American Legion and VFW have a Memorial Day parade and ceremony each year and we remember our soldiers, past and present. Some who have given their lives for our country. On April 6, 1946 there was a "Welcome Home" Day parade with over 800 war veterans from Maple Shade honored. The cornerstone was laid for a Community House at Main Street and Stiles Avenue. The Community House was never built. The President of the Memorial Association of Maple Shade was the Rev. Ralph J. Steinhauer of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. Today a school and a park in town are named after him.

In 1975 Maple Shade changed from a committee-departmental form of government to a council-manager system. The township and police department operates at the new municipal building, opened in 1992, at 200 Stiles Avenue. The library and several activities rooms are also there.

Maple Shade is a suburban community to Philadelphia, located between two large shopping malls. Its development was completing at a time when in some surrounding townships it was just beginning. Today I think that Thomas Barlow "our founder" would be proud.

-Maple Shade Historical Society member Dennis L. Weaver