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# New History Of Old Tinton Falls

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Waterpower was the key to settlement in the North American wilderness three centuries ago and it was this which undoubtedly fostered the community at the Falls of New Shrewsbury — now Tinton Falls.

When settlement began is hard to say but it probably was soon after the first land purchases



from the Indians in 1664. Certainly, by 1676, it was — for that period — a flourishing, well established community.

A remarkably detailed map drawn in about 1676 bears a tiny sketch of each building as if viewed from the air. There is Col. Lewis Morris' iron mill and forge close by the falls, his storehouse, the piles of "cordwood and coles" for the furnace and

the "Negro cellers" where the millworkers lived.

The map shows the mill dam with the road from Shrewsbury to Middletown crossing its top and over the stream from the ironworks "is Apellgate mills and house." Nearby are the houses of James Grover, who built the mills; Henry Leonard, the new England ironmaster who is said to have helped set up the furnace, and John Horabin, one of the original land purchasers in 1667.

It seems probable that James Grover was the founder of New Shrewsbury, the name of the community then, as it is today. The town fathers who renamed it "New Shrewsbury" in 1950 after the withdrawal from Shrewsbury Township apparently weren't aware they were returning to its 17th Century name.

Grover, John Bowne and Richard Hartshorne made the first purchase in this area by a deed of August 24, 1674, from Matapeas, Tawapung and Seapeckne, chief sachems of the Topomese. It covered lands "beginning at certaine appointed place called by the Indians Warumanung and by the English the falls. . . ."

To piece together the early history, it is necessary to examine original records and documents in the Monmouth County Historical Association at Freehold, the Rutgers University library, and deeds on file at the Secretary of State's office in Trenton and the Courthouse in Freehold.

One of the most revealing of these is a December 29, 1675 agreement between Grover and "Col. Lewis Morris of the Island of Barbadoes" by which Grover sold a half-interest in the ironworks company "with the one half of the building thereupon to be completed according to the first agreement."

The initial agreement has not survived the centuries but the existing document indicates Grover and Morris had been sent to the Spanish West Indies by Oliver Cromwell in 1654 to command the British forces and, after amassing a fortune in Barbadoes, came to New York in 1673.

The ironworks was the first built in New Jersey and one of the earliest in the New World, being predated only by the enterprises erected earlier in the Century at Jamestown, Va., and along the Saugus River in Massachusetts. Details of the project are revealed in a 1676 account book of the Tinton Iron Works, at which time more than 25 men were employed. The project prospered and four years later the number of workers had tripled.

The success of the ironworks, however, was bad news for Bartholomew Applegate, who operated the corn mill across the stream. Like James Grover, he had come to the area from Gravesend, L. I. With Bartholomew had come his brother, Thomas, who early records say was a weaver at the Falles of New Shrewsbury.

On January 30, 1683, Bartholomew Applegate, now identified as Wheelwright, turned his property over to Col. Morris in a unique bill of sale in which he declared he had made a contract with the inhabitants of Shrewsbury "about setting up a corn mill to serve the said town. . . but afterward being deprived of the benefit that might derive to me from my mill by reason the river was made use of by the ironworks belonging to Col. Morris by which means my mill became un-serviceable to me." He noted that the people of Shrewsbury had agreed he should have another 200 acre tract nearby.

Just why the ironworks operation put the mill out of business wasn't explained. The 1676 map shows Applegate to have been the operator of the mill at the falls, and though the present mill is of early construction, it is impossible to say whether it is the original 17th century structure.

Col. Morris, obtained huge grants of land along Swimming River and Hop Brook and also was given the right to any of the bog iron ore found north to the Raritan River. But immense quantities of wood were needed for charcoal used in the iron smelting and this apparently led Morris to buy out many of his neighbors.

On February 28, 1679, he purchased about 700 acres from Samuel Leonard that his father, Henry, had bought from the Indian chiefs in 1676. This, Samuel declared in the deed, included "our mansion house or tenement." The tract lay south of the river (now Pine Brook) and took in lands presently occupied by the Tinton Falls School.

A detailed map of this tract, like the 1676 map contains sketches of several buildings, including the impressive "mansion house" which faced the stream along what now is Water Street. Since the earlier map showed no residence for Col. Morris, it was perhaps here that he subsequently stayed on visits from his estate of Morrisania in New York.

It has come to be accepted as fact that Tinton Falls and Monmouth County were given their names by Col. Morris, who was said to have come from a family estate called Tintern Manor in Monmouthshire, England. But no published accounts of this assertion contain authority for it.

Recent research has thrown doubt upon the accuracy of the

claim, however, and none of the early documents examined contain any spelling for the ironworks except Tinton.

Originally, Monmouth County included all the land now in Ocean. And the original boundaries for Shrewsbury Township, as this area was designated in 1693, took in the area from the Navesink River to Little Egg Harbor and west to Freehold and, to the south, the boundary line between East and West Jersey. At the time it was the biggest municipality in the state. Since 1950, however, Shrewsbury Township has included only the Alfred Vail homes and is one of the smallest municipalities.

Col. Morris died in 1691, leaving the ironworks, his Tinton Manor estate and other property to a nephew of the same name who was to become one of Monmouth's most powerful men.

In 1714, the ironworks was noted as not too profitable — possibly since the new owner was more interested in politics — but as late as 1844 mention still is found of an iron works at Tinton Falls. A 1747 map lists as Iron Mill River the stream now called Pine Brook.

The doings of the second Lewis Morris provided one of the most controversial phases of New Jersey political history.

Young Lewis, though just turned of age, had been made a county justice of the peace in 1687. By 1692 he was presiding Supreme Court justice in Monmouth and in ensuing years became thoroughly hated in many quarters for his ruthless political methods.

Indicted for offenses ranging from sedition against the governor to "running of races and playing at nyne pins on ye Sabbath Day," Morris as judge simply dismissed the charges against himself and had his accusers arrested.

During a period of 60 years, Morris became president of the Governor's Council and held a variety of other high offices despite occasional dismissals by his superiors. Scheduled to be named Governor in 1702, he was bypassed in favor of Queen Anne's cousin, Lord Cornbury, who promptly became a new political foe.

But finally, in 1738, the lord of Tinton Manor realized his ambition and became Governor of New Jersey, an office he held until death in 1746.

No one was more candid about his reputation than Gov. Morris himself. Remaining to the end a practical politician, he ordered that no sermon be paid for at his funeral, declaring: "Those who survive me will commend or blame my conduct in life as they think fit and I am not for paying of any man for doing either."

Despite the ironworks at Tinton Falls, the area scarce could have been rated as a metropolis, judging from these accounts:

The New England Weekly Journal on Jan. 13, 1730 reported that residents of Shrewsbury rewarded an Indian who shot and killed a "montrous large phanter, the like never seen before in these parts."

And a writer in 1845 noted that "When this country (about Tinton Falls) was first settled, deer and wolves abounded. . . wolves were caught in pits covered by brush with meat on the top as a decoy."

Among the early buildings remaining in Tinton Falls are the Old Mill, two houses on the Allen Crawford property, and residences of Anson W. Peckham, William Barrett, and Geza DeVegh, all in the area covered by the early maps. Construction indicates that parts of several of these buildings date from the late 1600s.

A 1797 deed mentions a Negro burial ground at the rear of the

Allen Crawford property. Presumably it was here that men from the ironworks were buried.

Many of the early deeds for property in the area are the despair of present-day surveyors and title searchers with their references to such boundary points as "a large black oak", a stone on the side of the highway", and "the point where the Liberty Pole formerly stood."

There were numerous grist and saw mills in the area during Colonial times, possibly inspiring the raids on the village made by British troops and Tory sympathizers during the American Revolution.

Residents of Monmouth County were sharply divided by the war for independence and in some instances, brother fought against brother.

There is record of three raids on Tinton Falls. On April 26, 1779, some 700 British made raids at Middletown, Red Bank, Tinton Falls, and Shrewsbury, taking some prisoners and large quantities of supplies.

The principal raid at Tinton Falls, however, came on June 9, 1779, when some 50 men surprised Colonials at Col. Daniel Hendrickson's grist mill, which was being used as a magazine for powder, arms and military stores for the American army. The raiders broke the guns, threw the powder into the millpond and then rounded up all the horses and wagons in the area.

When they left, they took with them Col. Hendrickson, Lt. Col. Wyckoff, Capt. Chadwick and Capt. McKnight, several other prisoners and quantities of stores.

In the last reported raid on April 1, 1780, seven prisoners were said to have been taken but no other details are given.

Properties of a number of Tinton Falls residents were sold because of their sympathies toward England. At an auction

in 1779, the lands of the Rev. Dr. Samuel Cook, Shrewsbury Episcopal minister, Judge John Wardell, and Refugee Capt. Richard Lippincott all were sold. Lippincott gained the hatred of the Colonials when he hanged Capt. Joshua Huddy of Colts Neck, one of the most active of the American militiamen.

Two descriptions of Tinton Falls are to be found in early books. Gordon's Gazetteer, published in 1834, lists:

TINTON FALLS, village, and mill site of Shrewsbury Township, Monmouth County, upon a branch of the Navisink river, 9 miles east from Freehold; contains from 15 to 20 dwellings, a grist mill and saw mill, 1 tavern and 2 stores. The water of the southeast branch of Swimming River, falls over a sand rock, filled with animal remains, and forming a cascade about 30 feet high. From this rock flows a copious chalybeate spring, which is frequently visited by those who seek health or amusement at the boarding houses near the coast.

Eleven years later, in Barber and Howe's "Historical Collections," appears this description:

TINTON FALLS, 2½ miles southwest of Shrewsbury, is on a branch of Navisink river, and

contains about 25 dwellings, a furnace, a grist mill and saw mill, 2 stores. In its vicinity is a Methodist church. It is named from the cascade in the river. Below, the stream winds for some distance through a romantic dell overhung by trees of variegated foliage. At the village is a chalybeate spring, once held in high repute by the Indians, who on selling out to the whites had reserved the spring and a small strip of surrounding land for public benefit. The water is composed of iron, copper, sulphur and c. When taken from the spring it is clear but on standing a few hours it assumes the color of cider, and discolors glasses in which it is placed.

No record has been found of any arrangement with the Indians for use of the chalybeate spring, which is referred to in early deeds as a spa spring and elsewhere as a mineral spring. However, one deed made in 1750 does require payment yearly upon demand of the Proprietors of the Eastern Division of New Jersey of one pint of spring water.

The Falles of New Shrewsbury has played many roles in the history of the state and nation covering almost the full span of settlement in New Jersey.