

FROM "THEY TOOK TO THE WATERS"

by

HARRY B. WEISS and HOWARD R. KEMBLE

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MONMOUTH COUNTY

Tinton Falls Mineral Spring

In addition to its ocean bathing facilities, Monmouth County had its mineral springs which, although much less popular than its beaches, managed to attract attention from devotees of mineral waters. One of the earliest known to the first settlers as well as to the Indians to whom all springs were known, is the mineral spring at Tinton Falls, six miles westward from Long Branch, ten miles northeast of Freehold, and two and one-half miles from Shrewsbury. The original name of this place was Tinturn Falls, from Tinturn Abbey, England, the ancient manor of the Morris family. It was named by Colonel Lewis Morris, colonial governor of East Jersey from 1738 to 1746, whose estate was there, Shrewsbury being the capital of the province. Governor Morris' uncle, Lewis Morris, had owned iron works at Eatontown. Gordon in 1834 described the falls and spring: "The water of the S.E. branch of Swimming river, falls over

a sand rock, filled with animal remains, and forming a cascade of 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."

The spring is actually located one hundred feet or more to the north of the brook. In 1838 Robert Morris opened a boardinghouse, within three hundred yards of the spring, which became known as the Mineral Springs Hotel. It was situated, according to James S. Brown, at the southeast corner of Tinton Avenue and Sycamore Avenue in what was then Shrewsbury Township, now New Shrewsbury Borough. The old portion of the Tinton Falls Fire House on this site is said to have been the stable for the hotel. One of the posts in the plaza of the Mineral Springs Hotel was supposed to have been a part of a large flagstaff set up by the Continentals during the Revolution. According to some, the hotel was burned, but Henry C. Beck states that the hotel was there in 1943 as a dwelling near the corner and opposite the old mill and land owned at present by Geza de Vegh.

(Editor's Note: Recent research indicates that "Robert Morris' Boarding House" was the same establishment as described in Franklin Ellis' "History of Monmouth County" as "the first tavern at Tinton Falls", operated by Nicholas Van Brunt, the sheriff of the county. Over the years, it was variously known as "Tinton Falls Hotel", "Selleck's Hotel", and "John Farry's Hotel". It was located on the property on Tinton Avenue presently owned by John Tector. The Mineral Springs Hotel was situated as stated above.)

However, a much earlier reference to it was called to our attention by James S. Brown. This occurred in "The New York Gazette" of October 17, 1765, where Lewis Morris Ashfield, a grandson of Governor Lewis Morris, offered property for sale in Shrewsbury Township, probably the original Morris property at Tinton Falls. Ashfield wanted to sell the estate on which he lived, a tract of about a thousand acres. He was willing to divide it into lots, and his description of its advantages includes the statement, "as the house is situated near the famous spaw spring, it would suit extremely well a person who would keep a boarding house for the numbers that come to that spring for their health, and might in a little time, become a considerable place of resort for people of the best fashion." Governor Morris' will of 1746 left the property to a son, Robert Hunter Morris, and his will of 1764 does not mention property or Lewis Morris Ashfield. James S. Brown, in a preliminary check, found that Ashfield was the child of a daughter of Governor Morris, not named in his will, and suggests that Robert Hunter Morris may have given or sold this property to his sister because she had been cut out of her father's will.

The Tinton Falls Spring, by reason of its clear, sparkling water, was visited by many summer residents of the shore. Dr. Lewis Sayre is said to have given it his unqualified approval because of its tonic effects. In 1866, Dr. Z. W. Scriven and others became interested in developing it. This resulted in the formation of the Tinton Falls Mineral Spring Company, which was incorporated by the Legislature of New Jersey on April 9, 1867, the incorporators being Frederick W. Downer, E. Boudinot Colt, Francis Corlies, Henry M. Alexander, Z. W. Scriven, and Arthur Wilson. The amount of capital stock authorized was

\$50,000, divided into shares of \$50 each. The period of incorporation was thirty years. The corporation had authority to erect buildings and to sell and ship the water. The spring was purchased, together with three-fourths of an acre of land connected with it, and deeded to Fred W. Downing of New York. It is said that but for the indifference of some persons a summer hotel would have been built near it. It seems strange that the company planned to ship the water, because after standing a few hours the color resembled cider and eventually its other solids would be deposited and colored by hydrated oxide of iron. The incorporators must have known this because the ground over which the overflow ran off was covered by the yellowish hydrated oxide of iron.

Someone was interested enough in October, 1882, to forward a sample of the water to the Museum of Hygiene, United States Navy, Washington, D. C., for analysis, as a reply from Washington dated December 26, 1882, signed by Dr. I. M. Browne and directed to Dr. A. L. Gihon, reported that the reaction of the water was neutral; the water was slightly turbid; "calcic and magnesian carbonate 4.06 grains per gallon, chlorides 1.05 grains per gallon, undetermined 4.15 grains per gallon, total solids 10.26 grains per gallon." The undetermined solids consisted almost entirely of "silicate of alumina, with traces of iron, lime, magnesia, potassa, soda and sulphuric acid." The early writers and observers who decided that the spring was strongly chalybeate could have been influenced by what their eyes saw, not realizing that traces of iron over the landscape could build up over the years into what appeared to be considerable amounts.

At this writing the spring is still in existence, flowing continuously, not far from the picturesque cascade of the Falls, the path of its overflow in the wooded glade marked by the yellowish deposit of hydrated oxide of iron. It is about ten feet in diameter, enclosed by a circular, brick wall to a depth of nine or ten feet or more. Its surface is covered with a yellowish scum and occasional leaves and twigs from nearby trees. Just beneath the quiet surface of the spring, its gentle, clear overflow emerges from a short length of iron pipe and meanders irregularly down a slight declivity leaving a yellow trail in its wake.

We believe that the Tinton Falls Mineral Spring was the one referred to on September 9, 1749, in "The Life of John Brainard, the Indian missionary, written by Thomas Brainard and published in 1865. In John Brainard's "Journal" the entry dated August 22, 1749, reads as follows, "Attended religious duties, and after some time took leave of Dr. Peter Laconte (a pious parishioner of Tennent's) and his spouse and rode about three miles to a medicinal spring, where were a number of my people (Indians) who came there to drink the waters; with these I spent considerable time in conversation and prayer. Took leave of them, and went to several houses in Freehold, where I had business, and in the evening came to Mr. Tennent's (Rev. William Tennent), and after some conversation with him, attended to religious duties and went to rest." Again, on September 9, 1749, his journal recorded, "Attended morning devotions in the family and secret; but had not much life; yet I had some real desire to love and glorify God. May the blessed Lord increase the same! Spent a little

time in reading the Bible; afterwards rode about fifteen miles to visit a number of my people. who were gone to a medicinal spring, being valetudinary. Conversed with them, and then prayed with them, and taking leave of them, called at Rev. Mr. Tennent's, and then came home." Tinton Falls is about twelve miles from Freehold.

The mineral spring referred to by John Brainard on August 22, after he left the Lacontes, as being about three miles distant was, according to the "History of Old Tennent Church" (1904) by Rev. Frank R. Symmes, possibly the one on the farm of Staats C. Stillwell, about three miles from Old Tennent Church. This iron spring, now very much filled in and forgotten, is on the farm of Oliver Stillwell of N. J. Route 9-4, being the first farmhouse north of Gordon's Corner overpass.