

Haddonfield during Colonial and Revolutionary Times



Colonial Beginnings

The story of Haddonfield begins with Francis Collins, an English Quaker and bricklayer. On October 23, 1682 Mr. Collins became the first settler within the boundaries of what is today known as Haddonfield, New Jersey. Mr. Collins built his home, "Mountwell" on a 400 acre track which was then known as West Jersey. Mr. Collins farmed his land, but was not involved in encouraging settlement in the area.

In 1698 a friend of William Penn's, John Haddon, who was a wealthy businessman from London, England, purchased land in West Jersey. Upon acquiring additional land in the area, he was required to take physical possession of the land within six months. Being unable to make the trip, Mr. Haddon sent his 20 year old daughter, Elizabeth Haddon, to claim the property. She arrived in June 1701. She named the new property "Haddonfield", in her father's honor.

Elizabeth Haddon would see this new land turn from a wilderness into a new and prosperous town during her 62 years in Haddonfield. Elizabeth would live in the area until her death in 1762. She was 82 years old at the time of her death.

Elizabeth's life is hard to image by today's standards, let alone the standards of a young lady of position at the turn of the eighteenth century. By the standards of the new twenty-first century, Elizabeth would be considered a successful entrepreneur and visionary. By the standards of her day, Elizabeth's life was nothing short of amazing.

Elizabeth Haddon was an English Quaker. In 1702, she married a Quaker minister and missionary, John Estaugh. John was renown for his missionary work prior to coming to the area and adding to the story of Haddonfield. The new couple's first task was to establish themselves, and run the large mansion and land holdings of Elizabeth's father, John Haddon. In 1713 the couple built a large home and named it "New Haddonfield Plantation". The home was built for Elizabeth's parents, neither of whom ever saw this new world or the mansion built by their daughter. Many in Haddonfield consider the building of this home the "founding" of Haddonfield.

Sometime after the construction of "New Haddonfield Plantation", Elizabeth Haddon Estaugh traveled back to England to visit her parents. In 1721, when she returned home to Haddonfield, she carried with her a gift to the local Quaker community. This gift was a deed for an acre of land for a Quaker Meetinghouse and burial ground near the intersection of the present day Haddon Avenue and King's Highway.

Shortly after Elizabeth's return, a log structure was erected as the Friends Meetinghouse. In 1760, it was replaced by a brick building. For 97 years this site was the only place of worship in the town.

Elizabeth and John Estaugh did not have any children of their own, but raised Ebenezer Hopkins, Elizabeth's nephew, as a son. Elizabeth became a widow in 1742 when John died while on a missionary trip to Tortola in the West Indies. After John's death, Elizabeth continued to live in Haddonfield. She served as clerk to the woman's meeting for nearly fifty years and was well known for her charity to the sick and the poor.



Revolutionary Times

By the time of the Revolution, Haddonfield was the largest village in the area. It lay on an advanced road system leading to what is now Camden and Gloucester Cities as well as being connected to Salem and Burlington. The addition of good transportation via boat on Copper's Creek further advanced commerce in the area. This good fortune allowed the growth of such businesses as blacksmiths, tanneries, general stores, taverns, and in 1764, the establishment of the second oldest volunteer fire company in continuous existence in the United States, Friendship Fire Company, now known as Haddon Fire Company No. 1.

All this activity left Haddonfield with a growing problem once Independence from England and the British Crown was declared. Being a Quaker community, many in Haddonfield did not believe in violence or war as a method of solving problems, but because of its location, the size of the village, and the large amount of commerce in the area, Haddonfield could not avoid the revolution.

Quaker Haddonfield tried to limit its involvement in the American Revolution, but because of its location as a crossroads, the town was unable to avoid being impacted by the war. In 1777, the New Jersey Assembly and Council of Safety, fleeing from the British, met in session at the Indian King Tavern. It was during this time that the Assembly declared that New Jersey was no longer a "Colony", but was now the State of New Jersey. In addition, the Great Seal of the State of New Jersey was adopted by the legislature while at the Indian King. Additionally, both British and American forces encamped at Haddonfield plus more troops marched through here during various campaigns. During 1778, the British army passed down King's Highway, while retreating from its defeat in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

General Lafayette, General Morgan, General Greene, General Wayne, and the Polish Count Pulaski are said to be among the leaders of the Revolution who stayed in Haddonfield during the war. At various times leaders of the British military, Sir Henry Clinton, Lord Cornwallis, and the Hessian Commander, Colonel Donop also passed through the village. In 1904, the Indian King Tavern became the first historic site purchased by the State of New Jersey.

The Indian King Tavern in Haddonfield is also known for the crucial roll it played in the battle for Fort Mercer during the Revolutionary War. In 1777, the Hessians and British were camped in the area and used the basement of the Tavern as a jail cell for those arrested after curfew. Eighteen year old Jonas Cattell was one of those held in the basement. He overheard the officers planning an attack on Fort Mercer while he was confined. Upon his release, Jonas ran the ten miles over back roads to Fort Mercer, warning the out numbered American Militia to plan and win the battle when the Hessians and British later attacked.

Many of the sites from the period of the revolution still exist in Haddonfield and can be visited today.