

The land of western Monmouth County that is now Manalapan Township and Englishtown Borough was originally part of Freehold Township. Manalapan Township was established in 1848 when Freehold Township was divided. The village of Englishtown can be traced back to the early 1700s and was incorporated in 1888 as a Borough. The new township included an area of 30.85 square miles and 19,744 acres. According to the 1850 census the population of the township was 1,910.

Manalapan gets its name from the Lenape meaning "good bread" and "good land." Englishtown was the commercial center for exporting agricultural products, and Manalapan was a major farming community. The farms played a significant role in the development of surrounding villages which became thriving trading and commercial centers with mills, blacksmith shops, and taverns.

The new township could aptly be described as a farming community. Its products at the time were grains (wheat, rye, barley, corn and oats) and a variety of vegetables. Beers 1873 Atlas of Monmouth County lists 28 businesses. These included farmers, grain and saw mill owners, carpenters, fruit growers, horse and mule dealers, blacksmiths, wheelwrights and distillers of apple whiskey. At that time seven mills were operating, both grist and saw mills, as well as two woolen mills. Sadly, only the building which housed the grist mill at Millhurst still exists since roads became public.

Manalapan Township was officially formed on March 9, 1848 when leading citizens met in Phoebe Perrine's tavern in Englishtown. The second meeting of the residents was held on March 24 at the same location and township officers were elected. In addition to electing officers the following actions were taken: "To raise the same amount of school money as the State appropriation, five hundred dollars to be raised for highways, three hundred dollars to be raised for the poor. Resolved that there should be five road districts, each district to elect its own overseer"

The offices of the Township were established in Englishtown and remained there until 1888. At that time Englishtown signaled its intention to become a separate borough and elect its own officials. When this occurred, the Township moved its offices to Tennent, a small community within the township.

Are you aware that Manalapan was the site of the Battle of Monmouth, a Revolutionary War engagement held on June 28, 1778, involving 30,000 British and Continental troops? On the two hundredth anniversary of the Battle, in 1978, the State opened the 1,520-acre Monmouth Battlefield State Park. Eighty percent of the Park is in Manalapan Township. A reenactment of the Battle is held annually on the nearest date to June 28.

During the Township's 175-year history a Civil War training camp was established in 1862 and 1863. The site was located on the southerly side of the Freehold and Jamesburg Railroad off Route 522. It was identified as Camp Vredenberg, and a part of the site was where portions of the Battle of Monmouth were fought. The population of the Township grew very slowly as farms tended to be handed down from father to son. However, great growth occurred between 1960 and the present day when developers bought farms and built houses.

This is just a brief glimpse into our historic past. If you are a history enthusiast or would just like to know more about the town you live in, please visit or join the Manalapan Historical Committee. We meet monthly, each third Monday at 6:45 pm in town hall.

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