

The Cranbury Historical and Preservation Society was organized in 1967 and incorporated on November 17, 1970. The Society operates the Cranbury Museum at 4 Park Place East, open Sunday from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., excluding certain holidays; the Cranbury History Center at 6 South Main Street, open Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.; and the Parsonage Barn, Cranbury Neck Road, open for special events and by appointment. The Society sponsors biennial house tours, group tours of the Museum and the town by request, as well as programs for the public and the school. For information, please visit cranburyhistory.org or contact us at historycenter@comcast.net.



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*The Cranbury Historical & Preservation Society
6 South Main Street, Cranbury, NJ 08512*

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WALKING TOUR



HISTORIC CRANBURY

*Cranbury Historical & Preservation Society
Cranbury, New Jersey*

Township of Cranbury Seal

The Seal of the Township of Cranbury, on the cover of this booklet, includes farmland and a gristmill to represent the importance of agriculture in Cranbury's history. Also included are the Town Hall and a group of Native Americans with David Brainerd, who was a Presbyterian missionary from Connecticut who travelled throughout New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania preaching Christianity to Native Americans. Brainerd worked with the Delaware Tribe, also known as the Lenape. In 1746, he moved a number of Lenape from a settlement known as Crossweeksung, now Crosswicks, to a new settlement, Bethel, near Cranbury in Monroe Township.

29. Site of Dr. Hezekiah Stites House

53 South Main Street

Cranberry Town saw armies rest and pass on during the American Revolution, and, in this colonial village, vital decisions were made. In an earlier house at this location, the Marquis de Lafayette and Colonel Alexander Hamilton quartered on June 25, 1778. General George Washington and his main army arrived at Cranberry Town on the morning of June 26th and established headquarters here. During that hot and rainy day, Washington issued many orders that shaped the Battle of Monmouth. Sometime after sundown, Washington marched his army onward to engage the British, sending his last dispatch from this house at 9:30 p.m.

30. Heritage Park, 1998

This park was dedicated as the finale to the town's Tercentennial celebration. A fountain highlights a millstone calling to mind Cranbury's agricultural heritage. The granite pavers surrounding the fountain bear the names and messages of 400 Cranbury families and friends. A memorial to the late Todd M. Beamer is located in this park.

31. Parsonage Barn, c. 1741

Reconstructed Barn, 2010

This reconstructed barn was once a part of the Parsonage Plantation of the Presbyterian Church of Cranbury. For more than 260 years, the barn, with its hand-hewn white oak timbers, stood at its original location on the north side of Cranbury Neck Road. In 2004, the barn was dismantled and the frame was stored with the NJ Barn Company. In 2010, with funding from Cranbury Township, Cranbury Historical and Preservation Society, and Cranbury Landmarks, Inc., the barn's historic timbers, c. 1741, were repaired and reconstruction of the 24' X 36' Parsonage Barn was completed. The Parsonage Barn was dedicated on November 7, 2010. The Historic Marker on this site was a gift from the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders in 2013.

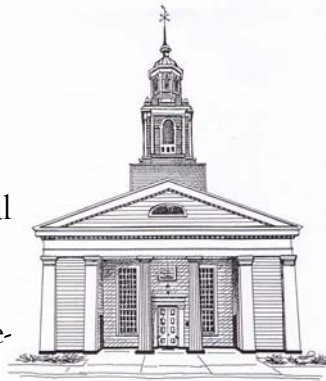
27. First Presbyterian Church, organized 1738

Present Building, 1839

Brainerd Cemetery, 1740

22 South Main Street

In 1738, a Presbyterian congregation formed in Cranbury and built the original church building on a knoll by the early cemetery in 1740. A larger church was constructed in 1788 on the site of the present church building, which was built in 1839 and enlarged in 1859. The church building is an outstanding example of *Greek Revival* architecture.



Brainerd Cemetery includes five acres donated to the Presbyterian Church by James Rohead in 1740. There are more than forty graves predating 1800 recorded. Many interesting epitaphs may be found in this cemetery. Eighty Revolutionary War veterans are buried here. A monument that honors soldiers from Cranbury, Monroe and South Brunswick, who lost their lives during the Civil War, is also here.

There is a sign with information about the Civil War Soldiers Monument, the First Presbyterian Church, and Brainerd Cemetery on the church property to the north of the church office, across from the Cranbury Inn.

28. Old Manse of the First Presbyterian Church, c. 1744

10 Symmes Court

The Old Manse was part of the farm that the church purchased in 1759, but was in such bad repair by 1790 that The Reverend Gilbert Tennent Snowden refused to live in it. As a result of his complaints, the home was rebuilt in 1798 and remained the parish's manse until 1914.

A Brief History of Cranbury

Cranbury is one of the oldest towns in New Jersey. Perhaps as early as 1680, European descendants migrated from northern areas such as New York and Massachusetts, as well as Monmouth County. The first recorded evidence of buildings in Cranbury is March 1, 1698, on a deed of sale between Josiah Prickett of Burlington and John Harrison for land "with all improvements." Around that date, John Harrison also received a license to buy more land from the local Lenape Indians, a Delaware Tribe.



In the 18th century, it took three days to travel between New York City and Philadelphia on poorly maintained roads and trails. The first roads in Cranbury followed the trails of the Lenape. At the midway point between the two major colonial cities, Cranbury proved to be a convenient stop for stagecoaches, a place where horses could be changed, beds perhaps shared, and food of an uncertain quality provided.

There have been many questions regarding the town's name, and the origin of both the name and its spelling is unclear. The marshy land near the mill site might have grown cranberries, hence the name. On 18th century maps the name appears as Cranberry and Cranberry Town. In 1857, Rev. Joseph G. Symmes thought the name was incorrectly spelled and suggested it be changed to Cranbury. In Old English, "bury" (burgh) could be spelled bury, bery or berry. In 1869, the town and brook were re-named Cranbury.

On March 7, 1872, Cranbury Township, consisting of the village of Cranbury and outlying areas, which were then parts of South Brunswick and Monroe Townships, was officially created and organized as a separate political subdivision of Middlesex County. On August 9, 1979, Cranbury was named a State Historic District, and on September 18, 1980, it was designated a National Historic District. At that time, it was said to be "the best preserved 19th century village in Middlesex County."

The significance of Cranbury's Historic District is tied to its agricultural setting. The village was built to serve the surrounding farm community and its importance is directly related to that farmland. Cranbury is a participant in the New Jersey Farmland Preservation Program.

Architectural Styles in Cranbury

Within the Historic District, most of the buildings can be described as vernacular—a local or regional version of Greek Revival or Victorian. Styles in Cranbury range from the Federal to the 20th century Bungalow. Since over time, homes are modified by successive owners, absolute purity of style rarely occurs. Buildings often include elements from different styles.

Federal Style, c.1700-1840 Identified by elliptical doorway motif, corner boards and a frieze: wide band of trim beneath the roof line. Examples: Rev. G.T. Snowden House (#1), House of Doctors (#19), and the Cranbury Inn (#26).

Greek Revival, c. 1825-60 The predominant architectural form in Cranbury. Identified by sidelights at the front door, transom light over doorway, simple paneled frieze and corner boards. Examples: Cranbury Museum (#6), 10 Park Place East; Chambers & Clarke Houses (#18), and The First Presbyterian Church. (#27).

Carpenter Gothic or Revival, c. 1840-80 Features can be steep roof, windows with pointed arches, wooden ornamentation around windows and roof lines, finials at roof peaks, all made possible by the invention of the scroll saw. Examples: Bunker Hill School (#3) and 6 Cranbury Station Road.

Italianate, c. 1840-85 Features may include simple square or rectangular 2 to 3 story house with low-pitched hip roof, elaborate brackets under roof line, and highly ornamented windows. Examples: 1 Prospect Street, 9 Park Place East, 95 North Main Street and 39 South Main Street.

Queen Anne, c. 1880-1910 Characterized by creative porches, towers, window arrangements and exuberant use of ornamentation and shingle patterns. Examples: John S. Silvers House (#20) and 46 North Main Street.

Tudor, c. 1890-1940 Reminiscent of English and European medieval cottages with steeply pitched roofs, stucco walls, half-timbering, massive chimneys. Examples: 7 Symmes Court and 13 Bunker Hill.

Four Square or Prairie, c. 1900-20 Popularized by Frank Lloyd Wright's early work. Hipped roofs with dormer windows, porch across front, prominent eaves. Examples: 8 Symmes Court, 52 and 54 South Main Street.

Craftsman, 1905-30 Also known as Bungalow style. Low-pitched gabled roofs, prominent tapered porch supports. Examples: 6 Symmes Court, 86 and 88 North Main Street.



The outhouse, located behind the Gristmill's House, was a two-family convenience that came from a home at 67 North Main Street and was a gift to the Society

25. Site of General Store, c. 1880-1940

Site of Movie House, c. 1915-1917

On this site stood a general store, complete with cracker barrel and wood stove in the back, around which local men would congregate. The original owner, Isaac C. Hoffman, who lived in the house at 12 S. Main Street, made house calls to solicit orders in the days prior to the telephone. Deliveries were made by using a horse and buggy. Around 1915, subsequent owner Harvey Hutchinson moved the business across the street, and a movie theatre was opened at this location. Hand-cranked moving pictures accompanied by piano were shown on Wednesday and Saturday nights.

26. The Cranbury Inn

21 South Main Street

The present Inn area was owned by Richard Handley, a Colonel of the 3rd Regiment Cavalry, N.J. Militia. In 1800, Peter Perrine built his home next to Handley's Tavern. In 1808, this *Federal* style building was converted into a hotel by Captain Timothy Horner who called it the United States Hotel. The hotel was renamed the Cranbury Inn in 1920. The present owners have expanded the facility with a post and beam barn addition for large functions.

24. Gristmill's House, c. 1860

Cranbury History Center

6 South Main Street

Cranberry Mills Historic Marker, 2009

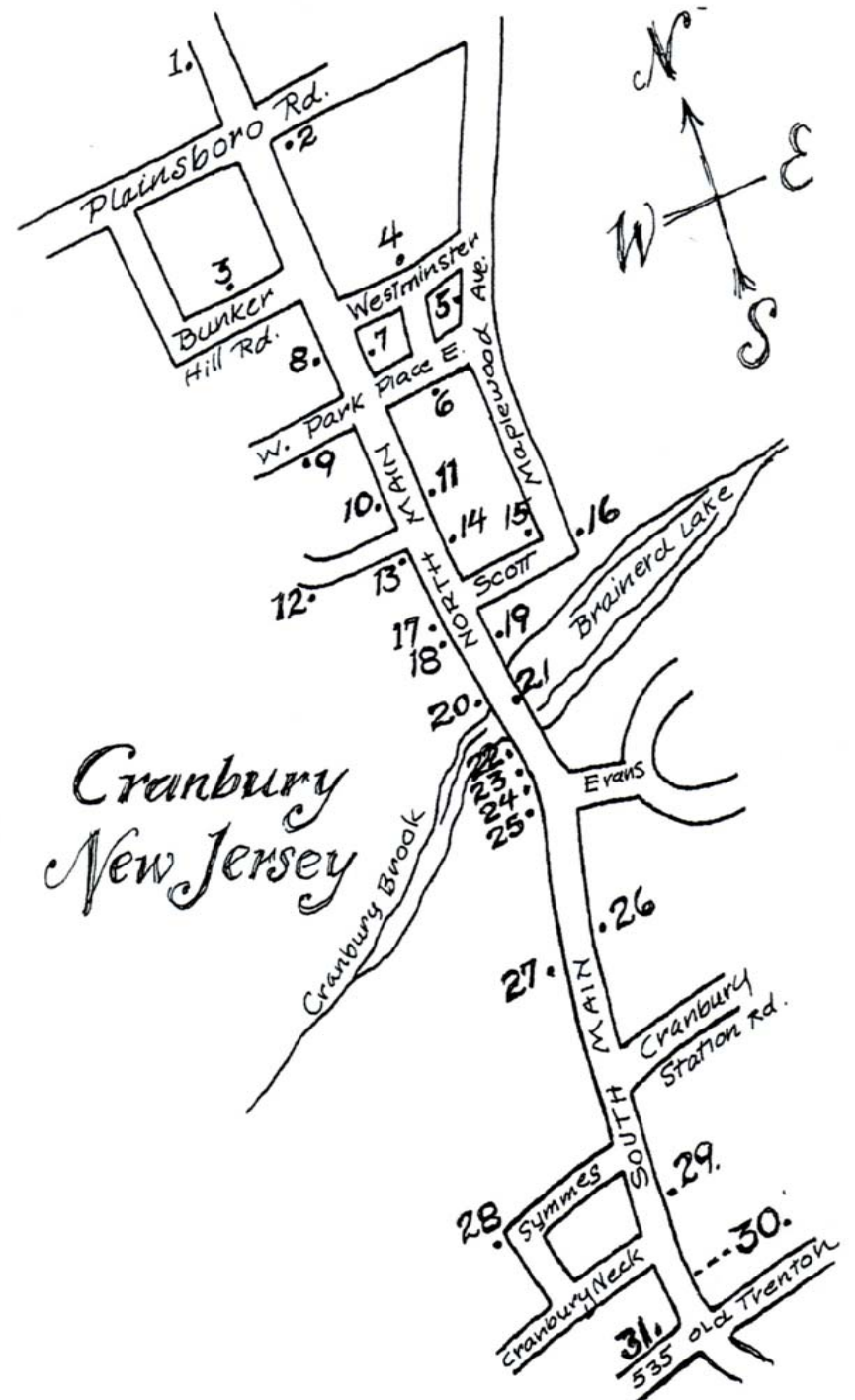
Outhouse, c. 1842



The land now occupied by the Gristmill's House and the 1921 Firehouse was purchased for a gristmill in 1736. The mill burned in 1860, but was reconstructed. It is believed that the present Gristmill's House was built at that time.

Cranbury Township acquired the Gristmill's House from an early Cranbury family, and from 1968 to 1985, it served as Cranbury's Police Station. After the relocation of the Police Department, the building was threatened with demolition. The Cranbury Historical and Preservation Society leased the building from the Township, and with the help of a matching grant from the New Jersey Historic Trust and the generous support of Cranbury residents, friends and businesses, the restoration of the Gristmill's House was completed in the spring of 1993. The house now serves as the Cranbury History Center and is open to the public for research.

The Cranberry Mills Historic Marker, north of the Gristmill's House, was a gift from the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders in 2009. It recognizes the mills that were once part of Cranbury. The millstone by the Historic Marker is a replica of a 19th century millstone.





Numbers refer to the map on the previous page.

**1. Home of the Rev. Gilbert Tennent Snowden, 1794
107 North Main Street**

This house was built in 1794 on Rev. Snowden's 200+ acre farm and was enlarged later by his son. In 1808, Commodore Thomas Truxtun, a naval hero and former commander of the USS *Constellation*, made changes to the *Federal* style house and lived there with his large family until 1812. In 1804, Aaron Burr was driven to Cranbury by Commodore Truxtun and changed horses in on his way south after he fatally wounded Alexander Hamilton.

**2. Brainerd Institute, 1865
96 North Main Street**

Currently an apartment house, the Institute opened in 1865 as a private co-educational boarding and day school for higher education and college preparation. At the turn of the century, it was used as a home for the developmentally disadvantaged and was named "The Larches." In the 1920s, it was a "healthatorium" and, in the 1930s, it became known as "The Tall Oaks Apartments."

**3. Bunker Hill School, c.1850
6 Bunker Hill**

In 1850, George and Sophia Bunker Horton gave the lot for the construction of the school. A two-room schoolhouse was built in

22. Memorial Park, 1949

Marker for Colonial Army encampment, June 25-26, 1778

Site of the 18th and 19th century Gristmill and Sawmill

A monument in memory of Cranbury citizens who served in World War I and subsequent conflicts was dedicated here on June 3, 1949. A Civil War monument, in memory of those from the area who served during that war, was dedicated on June 11, 2011.

In a dispatch sent to General Washington on June 25, 1778, the Marquis de Lafayette reported, while enroute to what would become known as the Battle of Monmouth, that the detachment was in the woods by Cranberry Brook.

The site of the village's 18th century gristmill is first mentioned on a 1745 map of the area. A sawmill is mentioned in a deed dated 1847 and on a map of 1876. The gristmill was destroyed by fire in 1860 and rebuilt. The sawmill was built behind the gristmill in c. 1860. When the mill ceased operation, the building was used as a musical string factory, employing eight to ten Cranbury women. Later, the building was used as a church by African Americans in the area and finally, it was used as storage. The building was demolished in 1939.

23. Old Firehouse, 1921

New Firehouse, 1995

2-4 South Main Street

The Old Firehouse currently serves as a Museum. Beside the present firehouse is an early alarm system. It is a locomotive



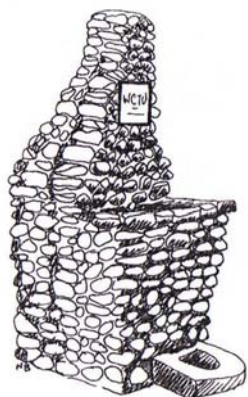
wheel rim donated by the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1900, which was struck to sound the alarm. The first Engine House was built in 1898 and is presently located at 10 Maplewood Avenue.

21. Brainerd Lake

WCTU Fountain, 1907

Site of Bandstand, 1915-1932

In the 1700s, a narrow sluiceway along the brook powered the large wooden paddle wheel of the gristmill and sawmill that were in the vicinity of the Old Firehouse. In the early 1800s, a dam was built to replace the sluiceway forming a millpond that in 1905 was named Brainerd Lake for David Brainerd, a missionary who preached to the Lenape Indians in the area from 1745-1746.



An arched sign was erected at the lake, c. 1905. In 1997, to celebrate Cranbury's Tercentennial, the sign was reconstructed, based on early photographs, as a tribute to Cranbury's first 300 years and to its future.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union, hoping to promote and encourage the drinking of water instead of liquor, erected this fountain. Along with providing water for townspeople, it provided water for wagon drivers, horses, and even dogs. The fountain

was renovated in 1979 with slight alterations.

A bandstand was erected over the lake in 1915 and provided Goodwin's Band with a picturesque venue for concerts on summer evenings. It was razed in 1932. A gazebo, built in 1979 in Village Park, as a United States Bicentennial project, celebrates the spirit of that early bandstand and is now the location for concerts, weddings and other gatherings.

A sign, "Remembrances of the Lake Area," highlights lake area events and structures from the past.



the *Carpenter Gothic* style. The teachers boarded with families for a week or two at a time during the school year. The building was sold at public auction in 1896, when the new brick consolidated school, currently Town Hall, was built. It is now a private home.

4. Site of the Second Presbyterian Church, 1838-1935

Westminster Cemetery

The Sexton's House

3 Westminster Place

A monument and sign mark the location of the Second Presbyterian Church. The building was demolished in 1936, following the merger with the First Presbyterian Church at 22 South Main Street. Westminster Cemetery continues to be a burying ground and is administered by the First Presbyterian Church.

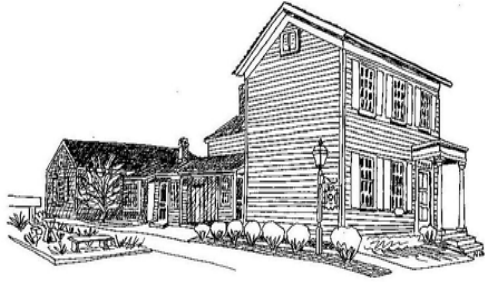
The house at 3 Westminster Place, known as The Sexton's House, was originally a small two-room structure. The Sexton was in charge of the maintenance of the Second Presbyterian Church and Westminster Cemetery. The house has seen many changes and is an example of the *Federal* style of architecture.



5. Drill Room, c. 1860

27 Maplewood Ave.

In colonial times Maplewood Avenue was part of a highway, Lawrie's Road, and later the Burlington-Amboy Turnpike. Previously known as Monroe Street and Washington Avenue, it was renamed Maplewood Avenue in 1913 because of the maple trees that lined the street. Soldiers used this site to practice drills during the Civil War.



**6. Dr. Garret P. Voorhees
House, c. 1834
Cranbury Museum
4 Park Place East**

Presently the Cranbury Museum, this *Greek Revival* structure dates back to 1834, when Dr. Voorhees built the

original two rooms. The Isaac Snedeker family added more rooms from 1850 to 1862. The Cranbury Historical and Preservation Society acquired the property in May, 1972 and, through work, mostly by volunteers, the house was transformed into a museum in six months' time. The Perrine Wing, with meeting and exhibit space, was added to the back of the building in 1975. The many original architectural elements, including window sashes with early glass; wide pine floorboards and original paint; the collections of 18th and 19th century furnishings; Indian artifacts and local memorabilia radiate a sense of Cranbury's past. The Museum, in large part, is furnished with gifts from Cranbury families and friends. Many items are descended from Cranbury's earliest families.

The initial landscaping around the Museum was planted by long-time residents Sara and Bill Hoffman, both of whom were born in Cranbury. Another resident, Anne Berger, planted herbs. When Sara retired as the Museum's first Curator in 1984, the enlarged herb garden was dedicated as "Sara's Garden." Plantings in the back of the property have been added to evoke the delicacy of a Victorian garden. The finial from the Historic Cranbury Water Tower, razed in 2009, is in the garden behind the Museum.

**7. Site of Nelson Petty's Harness Shop, 1893-1944
North side of 66 North Main Street**

Early Cranbury was largely self-sufficient. Its downtown was mix of residential and commercial buildings. Blacksmiths, a carriage

Loan Association. It was the home of *The Cranbury Press* for 99 years.

**18. David Chambers House, c. 1790, 11 ½ North Main Street
Benjamin Clarke House, c. 1825, 11 North Main Street**

The c. 1790 building and its c. 1825 home addition were, for many years, the hub of activity in the Village. The home at 11 ½ North Main was best known as a barber shop throughout the 19th century. It has also been a general store, a pool hall, and home to the First National Bank of Cranbury. Currently a private residence, the building incorporates elements of the *Federal* and *Greek Revival* styles.

**19. House of Doctors, c. 1800
6 North Main Street**

Doctors Clow, Hunt, Sanbury, Lott, Voorhees, and Symmes all practiced here. Doctor Symmes added the frame side addition with separate patients' entrance in 1911. This house is notable in Cranbury for its elaborate cast iron grillwork on the front door and as one of only three pre-20th century brick homes in town. At the turn of the 20th century, Doctor Symmes charged \$1 for house calls and \$8 for delivering babies.

**20. Home of John S. Silvers, c. 1886
1 North Main Street**

Built by one of the owners of J. S. Silvers Bro. in the *Queen Anne* style, it was the first house to have a flush toilet, installed in 1900 before the advent of town water; to have a porte cochere over the driveway; and to have a carriage house with living quarters for the groom. Note the marble carriage mounting block at the curb, one of several still to be found around town.



carriage house, and then a cabinet shop where coffins and furniture were made. The lamp outside the front entrance is a reproduction of one of Cranbury's original gas streetlights.

15. American Hotel, c. 1850

1-5 Scott Avenue

This building was first known as William M. Carson's Tavern and was located at 14 North Main Street. It was called the American Hotel from 1869 to 1904. A popular hostelry, its front porch provided front row seats for horse races down Main Street. After 1904, the American Hotel became the Temperance Inn, having lost its liquor license because of its proximity to the Methodist Church. In 1910, the hotel was moved to its present location and became an apartment house. At one time Cranbury's first free public library was housed in the hotel.

16. Site of Peter Bergen's Carriage Shop, c. 1861

2 Maplewood Avenue

Beginning as a wheelwright shop in 1861, Bergen expanded his business using new equipment and managerial techniques. By 1882, he employed half a dozen workers and was building a complete line of light wagons and carriages.

17. Cranbury Press Building, c. 1810

13 North Main Street

Known as the Cranbury Press Building and designed in the *Greek Vernacular* style, this building served and continues to serve a variety of commercial uses. Built about 1810, it was the private home of Samuel Disbrow, Jr. It was then a blacksmith's shop, tinsmith's shop, tavern, lodge room, Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company store, a library, and the office of Cranbury Savings &



factory and stores of all kinds thrived. A marker indicates the location of Nelson Petty's harness shop that was taken down in 1945. The business began in Cranbury in 1877. It operated at this location for over 50 years, making it one of the town's longest ongoing businesses.

8. Post Office, dedicated July 10, 1971

Historic Cranbury Mural, 1983

65 North Main Street

A 4'x15' oil mural, created by the late artist Lee Stang Harr, illustrates the story of Cranbury from its earliest days in 1697 to the 1980s. An accomplished portrait artist, Lee worked in fashion design and advertising and had a custom portrait studio on Main Street at the time she completed the work. The mural was her gift to Cranbury in commemoration of the Middlesex County Tercentennial. Materials and supplies were paid for through donations.

In 2002, the Post Office Building was named in honor of Todd M. Beamer, a Cranbury resident who lost his life while trying to stop the terrorist hijacking of United Airlines Flight 93 on September 11, 2001.

9. Site of Baptist Church, 1745-1785; Site of American Steam Coffee and Spice Mills, J. S. Silvers Bro., 1865-1927

A Baptist Church was founded in the vicinity of Park Place West at Main Street in 1745. John Hight of Hightstown was one of the 17 original members. The congregation moved to Hightstown, where the first meeting was held on November 11, 1785.

The American Steam Coffee and Spice Mills was established by John S. Davison in 1865. John S. Silvers became a partner in 1866. After Davison's death in 1890, John Silvers' brother, William, was made a partner and the business became known as J. S. Silvers Bro. American Mills. While the mill operated, a delightful fragrance of spices and ground coffee wafted throughout the village. The wooden mill was destroyed by fire in 1927.

The John S. Silvers family built the home at 1 North Main Street and his brother and partner, William and family built the home at 46 North Main Street.

10. Home of George Morris, c. 1834

31 North Main Street

This home contained the village post office from the mid to late 1800s until 1910. With mailboxes visible from the street, it was not necessary for people to go inside or step down from their wagons to check their mailboxes. Harry Moore's watch repair shop was in a rear room. The front sidewalk was a favorite spot for shooting marbles every spring.

11. Odd Fellows Hall, 1889

30 North Main Street

This hall was the venue for medicine shows, election caucuses, and stage shows of local and traveling thespians. The lodge rooms were on the second floor. The hall housed the post office from 1910 until 1971, when the present post office was built.

12. The Old School, 1896

Dedicated as Town Hall, 2001

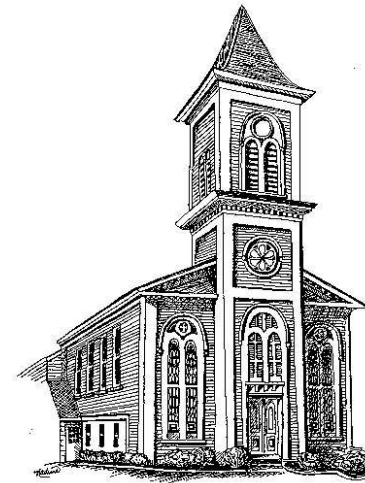
23 North Main Street



Built in 1896, and saved from demolition nearly 75 years later, the Old School consolidated five schools in the area.

Although the traditional red brick building had separate entrances for boys and girls, the school and classrooms were always fully integrated racially and by gender. In 1964, a group of citizens formed the "Save the Old School Committee." The committee's

successor, Cranbury Landmarks, Inc. was formed in 1973 to restore the Old School and make space in the building available for non-profit organizations and activities. In 1974, the Old School was put on the National Historic Register. On October 14, 2001, it was dedicated as Cranbury's Town Hall.



13. United Methodist Church, c. 1848

21 North Main Street

In 1772, Bishop Francis Asbury, organizer of American Methodism, made his first visit to Cranberry Town to spread the Methodist creed. In 1817, a society was formed and members met in homes. Construction of the Methodist Church at 21 North Main Street began in 1848, and a lower level room opened for worship the following year. The upper level was added later along with a steeple. In 1977, four teenage members used fragments to restore the rose window that had been destroyed by a hurricane in the 1960s.

The house at 6 Westminster Place, built in 1840, became the parsonage for the Methodist Church in 1867 and was used as the parsonage until 1919.

14. A. S. Cole Son & Co., 1858

22 North Main Street

The oldest business in continuous operation in Cranbury, A.S. Cole began as a cabinet shop and developed into a funeral home. The 1840 barn behind A. S. Cole was, at various times, a hay barn, cattle barn,