

NUTSHELL CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF WESTFIELD AS PUBLISHED IN 1923

BY THE WESTFIELD LEADER

Westfield was originally known as the "Westfields of Elizabeth." It was first settled in 1720 by a few hardy folk from Elizabethtown who believed Elizabeth was "too big" and crowded. There were Indians all around at that time and they could be hostile at times as the whites, or some of them, were not overscrupulous in their methods in getting the lands from the simple (and at first trustful) redmen.

Every settler kept a musket handy. Some of the Indians sold their land for less than 1¢ for 10 acres.

With the advent of the Revolution, Westfield was quite a settlement and 33 Revolutionary soldiers who enlisted from Westfield, lie buried in the old Revolutionary Cemetery on Mountain Avenue, opposite the Presbyterian Church. Gen. (Mad) Anthony Wayne's Brigade of Revolutionary troops were stationed in Westfield, which was a military post. The arsenal was between Stanley Oval and N. Chestnut Street, near the present tennis courts. An army hospital was located near what is now Fairview Cemetery.

Maxwell's Brigade was also encamped in Westfield (1780). Westfield's soldiers fought at the battle of Springfield and there was a skirmish at a point east of the junction of Benson Place and East Broad Street, in which a British officer was wounded and a cannon, famous after as "Old One Horn" was captured. It is now at Fairview Cemetery. In this fight, the Continentals were, however, compelled to retreat and the British carried off the bell from the Presbyterian Church in retaliation for the alarm that had

been sounded by it when the British came into sight.

Morgan, a sentinel, murdered the Rev. Jas. Caldwell on Nov. 24, 1781, and suffered the death penalty on Gallows Hill on East Broad Street near the old Scudder homestead. Caldwell was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church at Elizabethtown and a fiery patriot. His slayer was tried in the Presbyterian Church here by a jury of 22 men and found guilty of murder.

The Township of Westfield set apart from Elizabethtown township in 1794. There was only a small cluster of houses in the town, the center of which was at the junction of Mountain and Central Avenues — Baker's Inn, the Meeting House and parsonage and residence of Dr. Philemon Elmer. Charles Clark's store was at the corner of Jerusalem Road (now Prospect Street) and Broad. In all, there were 15 houses, a smithy, tavern and a school with twenty pupils. It is

worthy of note that Westfield was settled before a single residence was erected in Plainfield, which was Scotch Plains, and

the Mexican War, Westfield Township had less than 40 dwellings but it was quite a trading point and had twelve small stores, a paper factory, several flour and grist mills and two academies to which students from miles around came for instruction. The factories were not located in what is now the town but in Scotch Plains and elsewhere.

Sheep raising was an important industry. Copper was discovered in the Watchung Range of hills but little in paying quantities was taken out.

Before the advent of the railroad, which was in 1838, passengers were transported by stage coach. Samuel Downer's store was the stopping place and the line ran from Elizabethtown to Easton, Pa. George Tingley of Westfield was the coach driver for 50 years. The first railroad had one track, made of beams, on top of which were placed iron strips for rails. There were two trains a day, one in the morning, the same train returning at night.

The first station was at a point just west of Irving's coal yard. This was later destroyed by fire and the second station was at Clark and Broad streets. The eastern terminal was at Elizabethport, where passengers took a ferry to New York. The train going west ran only as far as Somerville and three coaches comprised the train. At first the company had only two engines and the capital stock was \$200,000. Traffic increased slowly, but after 1880 there was an accelerated increase and the population trebled between 1880 and 1890.



COMMUTERS CROSSING THE HUDSON RIVER FROM MANHATTAN TO JERSEY CITY ON THE FERRYBOAT "WESTFIELD." FERRY SERVICE WAS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF CENTRAL RAILROAD OF NEW JERSEY, LINKING ITS LINES TO THE WEST AND SOUTH WITH MANHATTAN. TRANS-HUDSON SERVICE BEGAN WITH THE OPENING OF THE NEWARK BAY BRIDGE IN 1864 (PHOTO CIRCA 1940).

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