

Our Town - Its Name | Nutley Yesterday · Today - 1961

OUR TOWN-ITS NAME

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THIS Editorial appeared in The Franklinites, in October 1892. E. F. Bassford refers to the efforts being made by groups of townspeople to combine the settlements that were operating since 1874, as the "Township of Franklin."

Mr. Bassford writes: "Unity of purpose is one of the greatest means of accomplishing ends and without it success seldom attends. We are here a community that should have but one object in view, and that is the common success of our local affairs. We go sailing along under three or four different names, when under one the efforts to improve and increase our popularity would be threefold more effective. Let this thing be considered by those interested in our welfare, and it will be patent to them that the benefits that would accrue would be plainly an inducement for the change. This difference in names begets differences in opinions, produces clannishness, and establishes rivalries that are unhealthy. One portion of the township regards the other as an opposition, and no suggestions are made for improvements but that are received with that thought. Let us do away with it and as a first step agree upon one common name. Do away with sentiment and this spirit of rivalry, and establish ourselves as one happy community banded together for the common welfare of all."

After years of neighborhood "discussions," citizens from Avondale, Franklin and Nutley, finally voted at a meeting on January 17, 1902, to ask the Township Committee to change to the Town form of Government. Assemblyman Robert M. Boyd, of Montclair, introduced the Bill in the State Legislature, and, on March 5, 1902, the Township of Franklin became officially the Town of Nutley.

When, where, and why the name Nutley was first used has not yet been satisfactorily determined. These facts are known:



NUTLEY MANOR, built 1828, purchased 1844 by Satterthwaite family; was located to left of present entrance to ITT swimming pool, on River Road.

The building pictured herein, purchased by Satterthwaite Family in 1844, had long been known to the townspeople as "Old Nutley Manor." County maps, giving names of property owners in 1859, show the name Nutley in the River Road area. The Federal Government had assigned the name Nutley to the township Post Office area, on Feb. 11, 1887. A Souvenir booklet of "Firemen's Day" dated May 16, 1906, gives this historical comment concerning Nutley Manor: "The name Nutley was given it by Mrs. Satterthwaite and was suggested by the numerous varieties of nuts found there - English walnuts, hickory (two kinds), chestnut, beech and hazel."

Mrs. Edgar Sergeant, granddaughter of Thomas Wilkinson Satterthwaite, has made possible a search of family records written by her uncle Thomas E. Satterthwaite. In "Family Sketches" Dr. Satterthwaite records extensive research in family history. No reference is found that any member of the family resided in Nutley, England.

However, to help clear this possibility, correspondence has been carried on with the Vicar of Nutley, England. In letters to Dr. Floyd Harshman, in 1946, the Vicar writes: "Here Nutley probably means field of Nuts; its original form was Notley; ley pronounced lie, being a very common Sussex termination and means field."

In 1951 Mr. and Mrs. Howard W. Stoddard visited Mr. and Mrs. H. P. Walkden at the Nutley Vicarage in England. In a very hospitable visit, Mr. Stoddard and Mr. Walkden reviewed our efforts to determine whether (1) a Satterthwaite family member brought the name from Nutley, England, or (2) a member of the Satterthwaite family, after securing the homestead from James L. Morris in 1844, and having been duly impressed by the fields of nut trees, called the home and surrounding acres "Nutley."

Another question has been asked, and is being investigated: "Was the name Nutley used by former owners of the homestead?" To answer this question research must be carried on in the family records of Peter Crary, a resident of North Belleville, who built the house in 1826-1828. His daughter, Lucretia, married James L. Morris, one of the founders of the Paterson and Hudson Railroad (now the Newark Branch of the Erie Railroad).

On May 4, 1844 James L. Morris transferred to Sarah Sheafe and members of the Satterthwaite family the house and many acres belonging, originally, to the Rutgers, Van Dyks, Rikers, and Speer Estates. These names and many others live to remind us of the settlements made nearly 300 years ago by our ancestors seeking the "American Dream."

In choosing Nutley for our new name, the citizens in 1902 surely shared the appreciation of Nutley's author, Henry Bunner, who, looking at God's Handiwork, wrote the well known poem, "What Does He Plant When He Plants a Tree?"

Researchers could end here !

THE HEART OF THE TREE

What does he plant who plants a tree’?

He plants a friend of sun and sky;

He plants the flag of breezes free;

The shaft of beauty, towering high;

He plants a home to heaven anigh

For song and mother-croon of bird

In hushed and happy twilight heard

The treble of heaven’s harmony

These things he plants who plants a tree.

What does he plant who plants a tree’?

He plants cool shade and tender rain,

And seed and bud of days to be,

And years that fade and flush again;

He plants the glory of the plain;

He plants the forest’s heritage;

The harvest of a coming age;

The joy that unborn eyes shall see

These things he plants who plants a tree.

What does he plant who plants a tree’?

He plants, in sap and leaf and wood,

In love of home and loyalty

And far-cast thought of civic good

His blessings on the neighborhood

Who in the hollow of his hand

Holds all the growth of all our land

A nation's growth from sea to sea

Stirs in his heart who plants a tree.

By Henry Cuyler Bunner