

# The Beginning of Maple Shade Township

Maple Shade is a township in Burlington County, New Jersey. It started as a village in Chester Township in the late 1800s. In 1922 it became Chester Township. On November 6, 1945 the voters of the Township of Chester voted to change the name from the Township of Chester to the Township of Maple Shade.

On November 6, 1688 the Burlington Court formed Burlington County's first townships and the large area now Maple Shade, Moorestown, Cinnaminson, Palmyra, Riverton, and Delran was called Chester Township. On February 21, 1798 Chester Township was incorporated along with New Jersey's other municipalities under the Township Act of 1798.

The Road from Mount Holly to Joshua Cooper's Ferry, also called the Road from Mount Holly to Philadelphia, was laid out in 1794. The straight section from Moorestown to Cooper's Ferry would in 1850 become the Moorestown and Camden Turnpike. It was mostly used as a "market road" by farmers. Part of this road is today Main Street in Maple Shade Township.

Sometime before 1850, Benjamin Stiles Sr. moved from the "Old Place of the Stiles" which was located at the northerly end of Stiles Ave. to the corner of the Mount Holly stage road and the road to the village of Fellowship.

In 1847 a blacksmith shop was established on the property. In 1850 the road between Moorestown and Camden became a turnpike with a toll gate house and gate across from Benjamin's house. In 1860 this area was a hamlet along the Moorestown and Camden Turnpike called "Stiles Corners." There were also other Stiles family farms in the area.

In 1867 the Camden and Burlington County Railroad was completed from the City of Camden to Mount Holly running alongside the road from Mount Holly to the ferries in Camden. In 1869 the railroad bought land at Forklanding Road for Stiles Station. The hamlet now started to be called "Stiles Station" or just "Stiles."

In 1874 the Pennsylvania Railroad, who now owned the Camden and Burlington County Railroad, renamed the railroad station "Maple Shade." It was just a flag station until 1893.

Charles F. Shuster began the development of Maple Shade with the "Shuster Tract" in 1887. It had once been the farm of Benjamin Stiles, then his son Benjamin J. Then came the "Zane Tract" and the "Maple Shade Land and Improvement Company" land which ran along the north side of the railroad tracks. This subdivision had an artesian well on West Park Ave. which was built for Doctor Alexander Mecray in 1893. The remaining Alexander Mecray land not included in the "Land and Improvement Company's tract" then became the "Maple Shade Extension" or "Mecray Extension."

Trolley service began in April of 1901 down "Main Street" which further improved accessibility from Camden and ferries to Philadelphia.

Real estate interest was gaining in living in New Jersey. In 1905 the Edward Cutler Co. took over sales for the Shuster Tract and the Land and Improvement Company and then later the two George Martin tracts.

In 1908 the Maple Heights Land Company purchased the John R. Mason farm for the Maple Heights subdivision. Thomas J.S. Barlow Sr. was the president. In 1912, he formed Barlow & Company. Around this time many farms were purchased for "One Acre Farms."

In 1916 William Brown started the "Maple Shade Progress" newspaper which asked for progress in improvements to the town from Moorestown. This meant better roads, street lights and to be hooked up to the Moorestown water works. The paper was soon sold to the Gerkens family who ran it for over seventy years.

In 1922 many houses would be built in Maple Shade. "Barlow Built Bungalows" were going to be built in the 100s chiefly in the Maple Heights subdivision.

Chester Township only had one governing Township committee and met at the Moorestown Town Hall. Soon voters if increased in Maple Shade could vote and get whatever they wanted or at least show reason for needing the

improvements. Moorestown wasn't interested in this and separated with Lenola in 1922 as "Moorestown Township." Maple Shade was now the last remaining portion of Chester Township and voted to change its name to Maple Shade Township in 1945.

Before Maple Shade became a township, the village had a Post Office. The village had a school built on North Poplar Ave. in 1909, replacing the Little Red Schoolhouse which became a district school in Chester Township in 1894. Also, a school was built on Chestnut Ave. The village had a Chief of Police and a police station which was the old Cutler Real Estate field office. They had a fire department started in the late 1800s and incorporated in 1912.

The early industries of Maple Shade were brickmaking, the Frech Wagon Works and clothing manufacturing.

The township took off with Barlow Built Bungalows in 1922 which proved to be an affordable house to blue collar workers employed in Camden at the New York Shipyard and other companies such as Victor Talking Machine or the Campbell Soup Company. They could use the trolleys and trains to commute to work.

In 1925 Maple Shade had a water works. In 1927 a sewer system. In 1927 it had a new Municipal Building housing the Township Offices, Police and Fire Departments and later a library.

Due to the town's tremendous growth and progress during the early 1920s, Thomas J.S. Barlow Sr. was named the "Father of Maple Shade."

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February 2025