1909

HOPEWELL

NEW JERSEY

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E. R. WHITEHEAD

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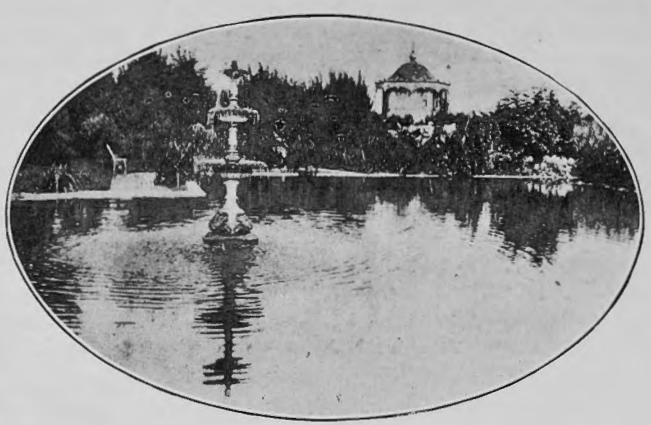


HEALTHFUL PROGRESSIVE

HOPEWELL, NEW JERSEY.

INTRODUCTION.

In these pages we desire to set forth the advantages of Hopewell as a place of residence. In order to attract home seekers a town must possess several decided advantages. Its location must be picturesque and healthful. It must be easy of access. Its homes must be modern in appearance and appointment. Opportunities for education and intellectual culture must be first-class. Its government must be progressive yet economical. All these advantages are possessed by Hopewell in an unusual degree. In addition it has a history of which its citizens are justly proud.

HISTORICAL SKETCH.

The history of Hopewell begins with the removal here from Monmouth in 1706 of Johnathan Stout and family. Three other families arrived about the same time. Much of Hopewell's early history gathers around the First Baptist Church. This church was organized in 1715 in the home of one of the Stout family. For many years the services were held in private houses, but in 1747 a meeting house of brick was erected. The land on which it was built was deeded to the church by John Hart, signer of the Declaration of Independence and one of New Jersey's most illustrious citizens. As a member of the Colonial Legislature, as first speaker of the Assembly of New Jersey after the state had declared its independence, and as a delegate to the Continental Congress he exercised a wide influence in state and national affairs during eighteen years of continuous public service.

Another patriot of the Revolutionary period who resided in Hopewell was Joab Houghton. When the news was brought by messenger that the British soldiers had fired upon the Colonists at Lexington the people were assembled in the meeting house for worship. Joab Houghton silenced the messenger and waited until the close of the service, then, as the worshipers passed out he stepped upon the mounting block, motioning for attention. He delivered the message and then cried, "Men of New Jersey the Red Coats are murdering our brothers in New England! Who follows me to Boston?" History records that every man present answered, "I." The mounting block is preserved as a memorial of those days. Beside it in the burying ground of the Old Baptist Church is the monument erected by the state of New Jersey over the remains of John Hart.

Historic Meeting House of the First Baptist Church. Built 1747; Re-built 1822.

HOPEWELL OF TO-DAY.

Although Hopewell possesses much of historic interest it does not have any of those disadvantages usually associated with ancient towns. In fact it is modern in every respect. Only nine of the houses erected prior to 1872 are standing today. Its development as a residence town has all been subsequent to that date. Its houses are modern and beautiful, and the surrounding lawns and flower gardens are the pride of all residents and the delight of visitors.

The location of Hopewell is most advantageous. It is in the centre of one of the most picturesque and fertile valleys of New Jersey. All around it are delightful views of prosperous farms and beautiful wooded heights. As the centre of this rich agricultural region its markets are well supplied with farm products. As to the healthfulness of Hopewell no better evidence could be given or asked than the fact that Webster Edgerly, President of the Ralston Health Club, after diligent search extending over a period of years, selected Hopewell as the one place in all the East, not only most desirable as his own place of residence, but as the place most certain to attract Ralstonites seeking ideal conditions under which to live healthful lives. On Ralston Heights, part of which is within the borough limits, he has purchased a large tract of land which is being subdivided into residence lots. No one after beholding the views from Ralston Heights, and after breathing its pure air, will doubt the wisdom of his selection.

Hopewell is also most favorably located in reference to the great centres of population. It lies midway between New York and Philadelphia, on the main line of the Philadelphia & Reading Railway between those cities. Nine express trains in each direction make regular stops at Hopewell each day. This excellent train service makes it possible for residents who have their business in either city to journey to and from daily. It is also but fourteen miles from Trenton and connected with that city by both steam and electric road. This access to the great commercial centres of the East make it possible for our merchants to visit the large stores in person and by direct observation and buying keep their stocks up to the high standard of the cities.

Ralston Heights, residence of Professor Webster Edgerly.

EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGES.

Interest in education has always characterized the people of Hopewell. As early as 1756 a school for higher education was founded by Rev. Isaac Eaton, who for twenty-six years served as pastor of the First Baptist church, one of the foremost preachers and teachers of his day in America. As his memorial tablet quaintly informs us,

"In him, with grace and eminence, did shine
The man, the Christian, scholar and divine."

This school, called Hopewell Academy, continued only eleven years but during that brief period it numbered among its students men who became leaders in thought and action in their day. About this time the Baptists awakened to the need of a denominational school for collegiate education, but it was felt that in Rhode Island, a Baptist commonwealth, a more liberal charter might be obtained than in New Jersey. Therefore in 1767 Hopewell Academy ceased to exist, or rather was taken over by the denomination and transplanted in Rhode Island where it became Brown University. The proximity of Hopewell to Princeton, where a college had been established about the same time, may also have been a determining factor in the removal from Hopewell. Ministerial education also received encouragement here in those early days. Mrs. Elizabeth Hobbs, who died in 1767, left a legacy of £350 toward the education of pious young men for the ministry of the Baptist denomination, the first Baptist legacy for that purpose in America.

At the present time ample provision is made for the education of the children of Hopewell. Our public school building contains eight large rooms. The eight teachers employed are devoted to their work and are building character as well as giving instruction. The High School, which now offers a three years course of instruction, will next year be extended to the full four years. It is equipped with library and laboratory. Furthermore, students here may secure more advanced education without having to leave home. Pennington Seminary is but five miles away and is reached by trolley. Princeton University is but seven miles distant. At Trenton the State Normal School and two well equipped business colleges receive many students from Hopewell. Our spiritual needs are ministered to by six churches. These churches also draw upon the surrounding country for their membership and support.

Residence of Mayor Theodore A. Pierson, M. D.

PROGRESSIVE SPIRIT.

Hopewell was constituted a borough in 1891. Its leading citizens have always been willing to give unsparingly of their time and talent to civic administration. As a result our local government is at once progressive and economical. Our streets are lighted with electricity. Private residents have their choice between electricity and acetylene distributed from a central plant. A recent borough ordinance requires that granolithic walks be put down by all property owners. Six thousand linear feet of that kind of walk have been completed and much more is under way. The water service is excellent. A new reservoir with a capacity of 229,680 gallons has just been completed on the highest point on Ralston Heights. The water is supplied by two artesian wells of great depth. This reservoir not only gives residents assurance of an abundant supply of pure water for all household purposes but of adequate protection against fire as well. Our fire department is housed in its own commodious building, a cut of which is shown on the last page. The borough officials are: Mayor, Theo. A. Pierson; Councilmen—Amos C. Bond, George W. Thorn, John M. Server, John H. Fetter, Dr. Geo. V. Van Neste and John G. Burton; Clerk, E. V. Savidge.

The above facts give some idea of the desirableness of Hopewell as a place of residence. That its advantages are recognized is shown by the fact that during the past year (1907), notwithstanding the severe industrial depression, six houses have been erected and others are under way. Building is, no doubt, stimulated by the fact that materials may be purchased from local dealers at very reasonable prices and that skilled and reliable workmen are to be had at fair wages.

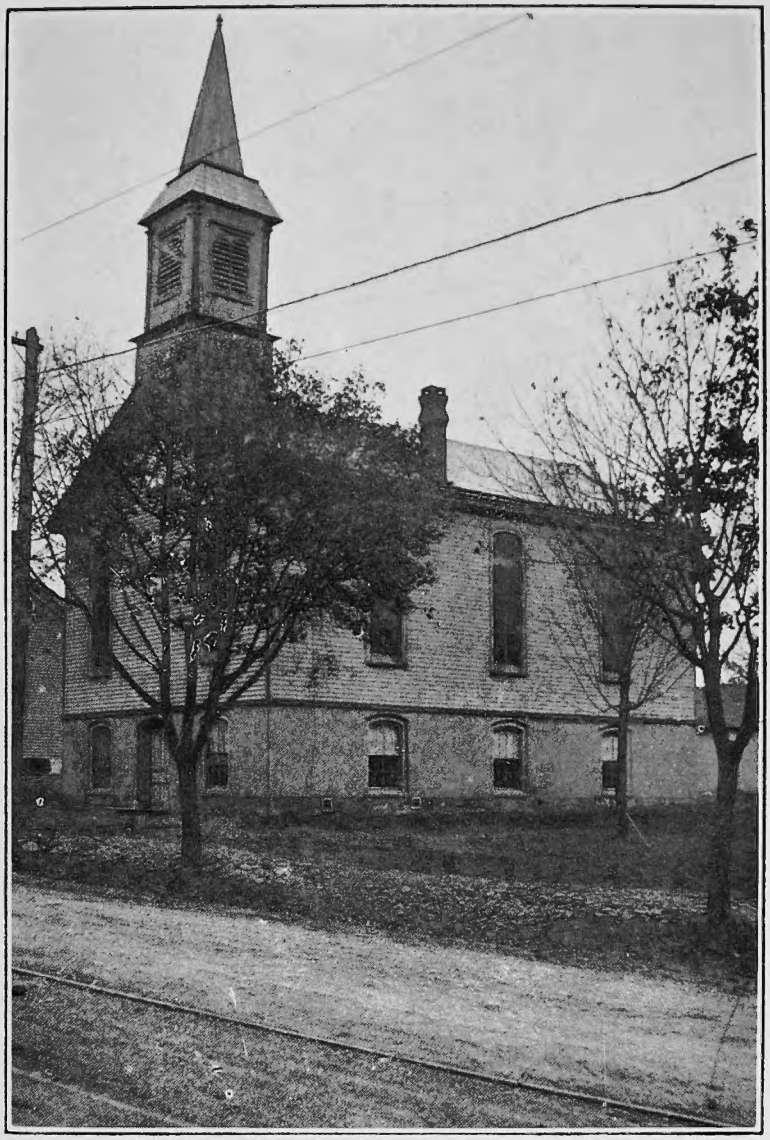
Manufacturers seeking a place to locate would do well to consider the advantages of Hopewell in that respect. Situated midway between New York and Philadelphia it offers easy access to all the great markets. The facilities of the great Reading system are at the disposal of shippers here. Through the enterprise of our business men manufacturing sites may be secured without cost. Those having capital to invest are ready to listen to any reasonable proposal from manufacturers. An intelligent class of working men and women dwell here and would all prefer to work here. At present many of them find employment in Trenton and other nearby industrial centres. Others, some of our most energetic and intelligent young men and women, go away to the great cities for employment. Manufacturers would do well to consider these facts before locating in the great cities, where building is expensive, where taxation is excessive, and wages are at the highest, and where the workers are often of a low degree of intelligence. No industry that marred the beauty of Hopewell or destroyed its charm as a place of residence would be welcome, but industries that can be conducted in a quiet and cleanly manner are certain of encouragement.

The aim of this little book is to set forth the manifold advantages of Hopewell. It's views, though limited in number, are yet representative. The business directory included will give an adequate conception of the comprehensiveness of Hopewell's industrial and mercantile interests.

Residence of Wm. N. Skillman.

Hopewell High School.

Residence of G. A. Thatcher.



Calvary Baptist Church.

Residence of S. V. Van Zandt.

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Oldest house in Hopewell. Here the first Baptist School in America for higher education was opened in 1757. Now Brown University of Providence, R. I.

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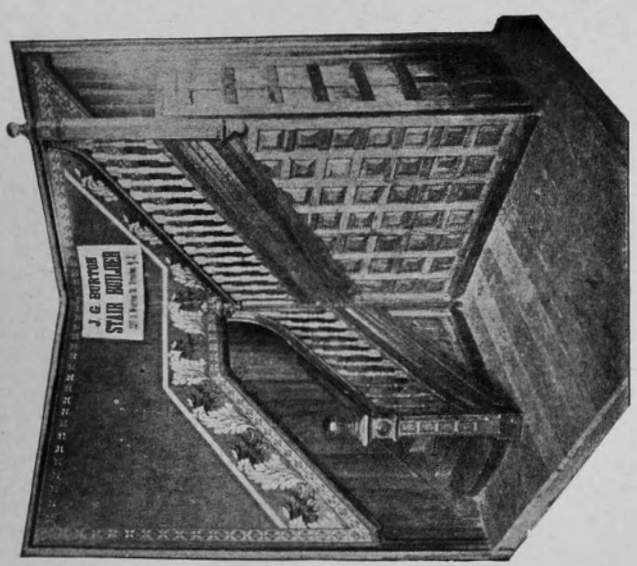

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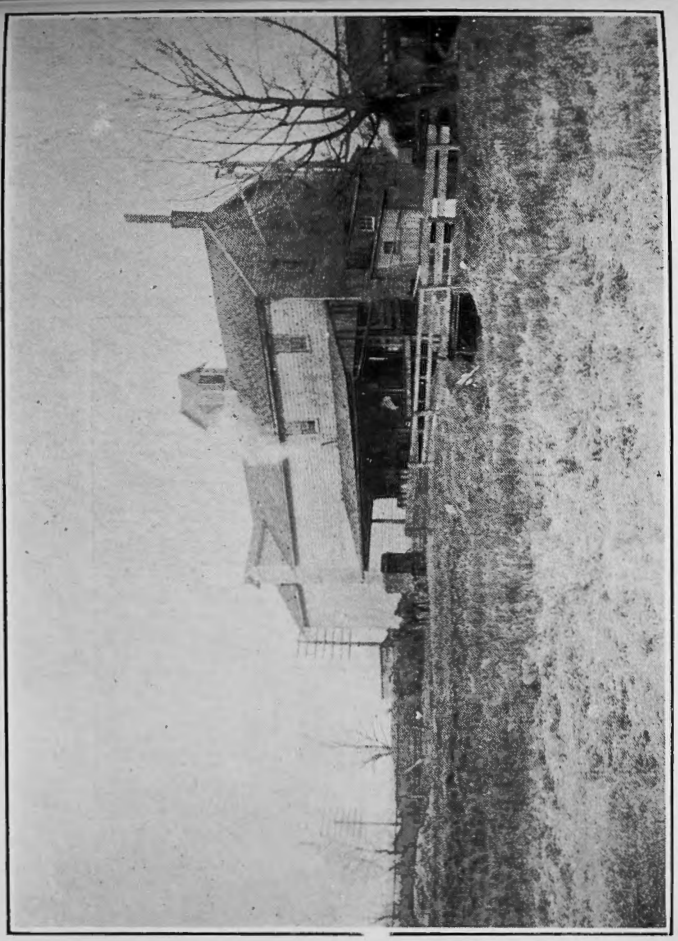

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