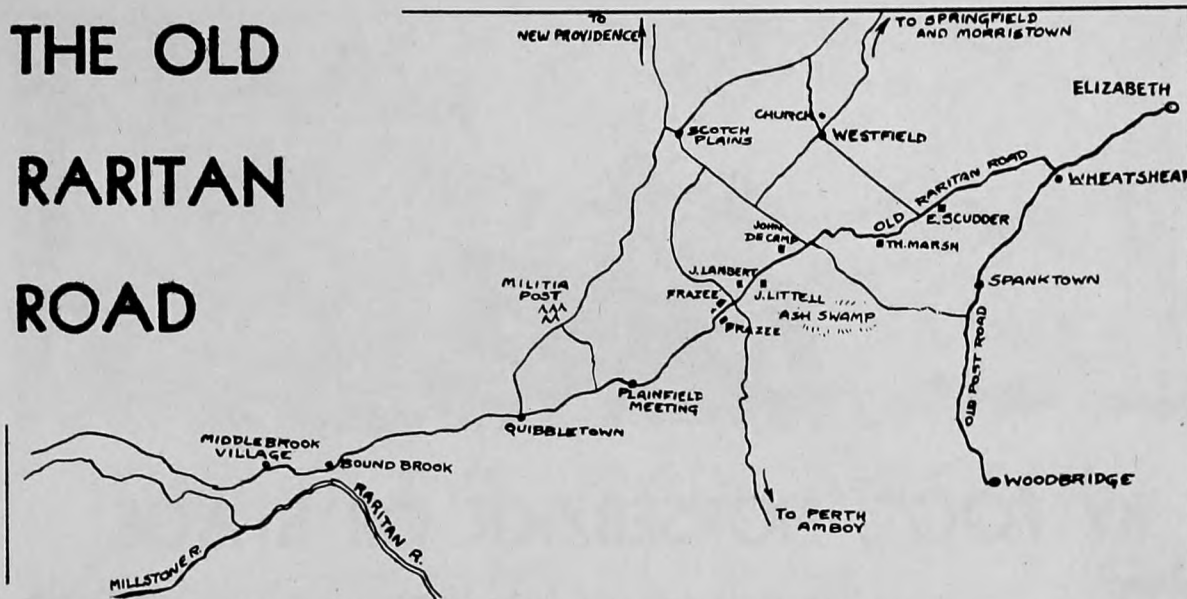


THE OLD RARITAN ROAD



In olden days, an adventurous pioneer, seeking a home site in the western plains beyond Elizabeth-Town, turned off from the Post Road at Wheat-Sheaf and made his way through field and forest, marsh and stream, to the upper bend of the Raritan. A few days later, this lone traveler returned by the same path to tell his associates of the fine farm and grazing country he had seen. Then began the migrations which resulted in the establishment of trading posts in the West Fields.

The trail over which these pioneers journeyed soon was known as the Old Raritan Road—the oldest highway within the limits of the old township. It was in use many years before the Connecticut Yankees founded a village and established an independent religious society in the West Fields. It crossed the trail which Thomas Gordon and his seven Scotch brethren blazed when they traveled “either on foot or horseback” from Amboy Point to the plains at the foot of the Blue Hills. Its course led through the ancient Quaker settlement of Plainfield Meeting, to Quibbletown and Bound Brook. From it stemmed crossroads through the Scotch Plains; to New Providence, Blue Hills Plantation, West Fields Village, Springfield, Bottle Hill and Morristown, on the north; Spanktown, Woodbridge, Amboy and Inian’s Ferry (New Brunswick) on the south,

The first settler on this road, in the West Fields, was Roger Lambert, a blacksmith, who came from Wilt-

shire, England, and was one of the sixty Associates of Elizabeth-Town. He was of Norman extraction and signed his name Roger Lambert. With him came his son, John, also an Associate, and a member of the County Committee, in 1717. They were followed by the Frazees, Littells, Terrys, Marshs, Scudders and many others. By 1750, nearly half of the sixty pioneer families of the old town lived on this and nearby roadsteads. Many of the houses which they built are still standing.

The road was of great strategic value to the Colonial armies of the Revolution because it provided a short-cut from Elizabeth-Town to the convergence of the Raritan and Millstone Rivers, near which General Washington had his headquarters and the armies of Greene and Wayne were encamped, in the winter of '78 and '79. It was an important link in the chain of communications with outlying military posts; foraging and scouting parties of both armies skirmished along its rim.

Old Raritan Road, a much-traveled route for more than 150 years, today is a mere tributary to the streamlined highways that transect the modern towns and the Plains to the north, but that is probably an undisguised blessing to the folks who reside on the southern border. They delight in the quiet of the countryside and in the historic traditions and associations which old and familiar landmarks recall.