

## HISTORY OF FANWOOD

If we were to base our history solely on facts, this chapter would be short and not nearly as interesting. So we have compiled the information from several sources - official records, contemporary newspapers, and the colorful recollections of generations of Fanwoodians.

The Borough of Fanwood lies on a coastal plain at the foot of the Watchung Mountains, about twenty-five miles inland from the Atlantic Ocean and about twenty miles southwest of New York City. Located in Union County, it is 1.4 miles square, bounded on three sides by the township of Scotch Plains and the fourth side by Plainfield.

The early history of Fanwood includes the Turtle tribe of the Leni-Lenape Indians who migrated through and hunted in the area. There was no known Indian settlement in Fanwood proper, although a large village existed near what is now the Schackamaxon Golf Club in Scotch Plains. The land that now comprises Westfield, Scotch Plains and Fanwood was purchased in 1664 from four Indians (one of them was Mindowaskin, whose name is still in local evidence) by Captain John Baker who thus became the area's first white landowner. Records of the earliest settlers speak of "droves of deer, wild horses, wild turkey, beaver, wolves, bear, rattlesnakes and a flea by the salt marshes that is troublesome in summer." The last named was no doubt a pioneer Jersey mosquito. The entire area became part of Elizabeth Town in 1664. By 1703 it was a distinct community known as West Fields, which was set off in 1794 from the Borough of Elizabeth Town by an act of the entire legislature, and renamed Westfield.

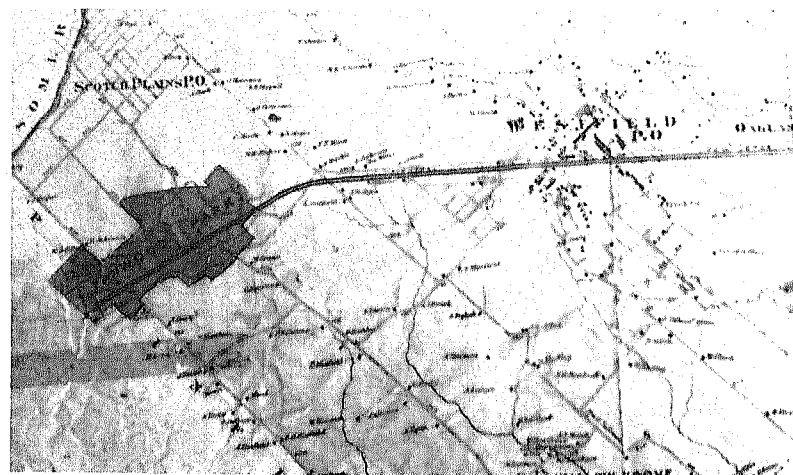
In 1877, the Township of Fanwood comprising the present Borough of Fanwood and Township of Scotch Plains and a now defunct community called Alton, was set off from Westfield.

The boundary description of the township was as follows: on the west and the northwest of this township is Green Brook, being the boundary line from New Providence township. Its head is in Felt Lake, where it is fed by living springs. On the extreme southerly part of Fanwood is Robinson's Brook, a living stream, running through to Raritan township, feeding the farms with water and making it very desirable for dairies, cattle, etc.

Fanwood was the name given in 1867 to the new depot in Fanwood by the president of the Central Railroad, John Taylor Johnson.

Prior to this date, the rail line ran through the community down Midway Avenue. Tracks had been laid in 1831, and it was first known as the Elizabethtown and Somerville Railway.

How Fanwood got its name is always a favorite topic among residents of this suburban borough. It was in the mid 1870s, according to Charles Sheelen's father, the late Fred Sheelen, and descendants of the Kyte family, that Fanny Wood was an annual summer visitor to the borough when it was sparsely



*A 1874 map showed Fanwood as still being united with Westfield.*