

Scotch Plains

The Township of Scotch Plains was known originally as “Scotsplain” and derived its name and early heritage from Scottish settlers reaching this area in the last part of the seventeenth century. Some historians report this township was actually named after George Scot who wrote “The Model of Government of the Province of East Jersey,” a description of the early settlement and life of colonists in New Jersey. In fact, it was felt that this book may have encouraged many Scots to emigrate to this area.

Scotch Plains remained a part of Elizabethtown until 1794 when Westfield Township was created, and in 1877 the Township of Fanwood was formed, in which Scotch Plains was included. In 1895, the one-square mile Borough of Fanwood was separated from the township with the two Fanwoods existing side by side until 1917. Finally, on March 22, 1917, this town received its original colonial name of Scotch Plains.

In pre-Columbian times and during the exploration era, Unami (Turtle Backs) Indians, a subtribe of the Lenni Lenapi nation, a small branch of the Delawares, inhabited these lands. Their totem to the turtle was located in the heart of the Ashbrook area. A Dutchman, Peter Sonmans, was the first owner until the English conquest ended Dutch claims in 1664. In 1684, the first group of Scottish immigrants found their way to the “the large plain under the blue hills.”

Ownership of the area was disputed between the East Jersey Proprietors and the Elizabethtown Associates for over 150 years. It has since been settled that the East Jersey Proprietors have title to all unclaimed land.

The first building of any significant size was erected at the corner of Park Avenue and Front Street and was known as Ye Olde Stage Coach Inn; it has been the historical center of Scotch Plains for over 200 years.