

Following the Revolutionary War, at the time the township of Westfield was carved out of Elizabeth Town, Scotch Plains started its growth. A reading society was formed in 1800. The local post office opened its doors on December 8, 1804.

In 1838, the Elizabeth Town and Somerville Railroad had reached Westfield, and offers to purchase rights of way in Scotch Plains were made. But the townspeople would have no part of this new-fangled contraption. And so the railroad passed east of the community's center to Plainfield, spurring the latter town's growth.

It was not until 1851 that the three private schools in Scotch Plains were augmented by a public school system. The earliest private institute of learning was the Baptist School Society, founded in 1768.

By the time of the Civil War, Scotch Plains included a church, an academy, a tavern, two stores, five mills, seventy dwellings, and many farms within its borders. The Central Railroad right of way was on what is now Midway Avenue. In rainy seasons the roads were rivers of mud. There were no sidewalks or street lighting. The town could boast of no doctor.

Following the Civil War, two other churches opened their doors—the Methodist in 1868 and the Episcopal in 1873, both of which are still active.

It was in this post-Civil War period that the Central Railroad established its depot on Martine Avenue and called it Fanwood, in honor of Miss Fanny Wood, authoress and daughter of one of the railroad's officials.

Scotch Plains continued to be a predominantly rural community. The literary giant of the late Nineteenth Century, William Dean Howells, and President Garfield were among those who spent summers in the woods and fields of Scotch Plains. The family of Hiram S. Maxim of machine gun fame, lived here, and the noted Hearst editor, Arthur Brisbane, was one of the town's schoolboys.

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By the time Europe was embarking on World War One, Scotch Plains was becoming a more modern community. Paved streets had replaced mud roads and the residential area had grown substantially with the coming of modern improvements.

In 1917, the name of Fanwood Township, which had replaced its former name with the advent of the railroad depot, was limited to Fanwood Borough, and Scotch Plains became not just a designation of a residential area but the name of a legal entity.

PETERSON-RINGLE-NEWMAN, Inc.

REALTORS — INSURORS

362 Park Avenue, Scotch Plains

FAnwood 2-5800
