

# *Historic Preservation Plan Element*

## INTRODUCTION

Flemington's long settlement and slow growth in this century have aided in preserving a wealth of architectural styles from the Federal to the present. As interest in the nation's cultural resources has grown, the preservation of historic buildings, structures, and landscapes has increased markedly. The concentration of significant buildings in Flemington is one of its greatest assets and forms an integral part of the cultural realm of the Borough.

Flemington was originally part of West Jersey, divided from East Jersey through actions of the English King in 1676. William Penn, better known for his activities in creating Pennsylvania, was granted this land by the Duke of York along with other Quakers. Flemington was originally owned by Penn and Daniel Coxe, two of the Proprietors of West Jersey. An attempt to survey the boundary between East and West Jersey was undertaken by George Keith in 1687 but foundered when he reached the South Branch of the Raritan River at Three Bridges<sup>5</sup>. This was sufficient, however, to undertake a survey of the Flemington area in 1712 but it was not until the John Lawrence survey of 1745 that the boundaries between the two provinces was finally established and successive land claims settled. The earliest settlers arrived in the general vicinity in the 1730's. Not all of the settlers occupied the land legally and squatter's settlement's were an early problem for the landowners.

This area was also the site of an important Indian settlement. The chief at the time of the arrival of early settlers was named Tuccamirgen for which one of the Borough's parks is named.

Flemington traces its beginning from Samuel Fleming's purchase of land in 1756 and his subsequent construction of a tavern. By 1765, Fleming Castle was built and is the oldest extant building in the Borough. Flemington became an important stop for settlers moving westward into Pennsylvania.

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<sup>5</sup> - This boundary line forms part of the border between Hunterdon and Somerset Counties.

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- 6) Whether the site or district contains elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship which possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- 7) Whether an area is part of or related to a park or other distinctive location which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural, or architectural motif.
- 8) Whether an area has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to pre-history or history.
- 9) Lastly, whether the site or district exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.

This set of criteria was developed by the U.S. Secretary of Interior to aid in the designation of historic sites and districts. The criteria, any one of which may be conclusive in the decision to protect a site or district, constitute a sweeping mandate to preserve the fabric that gave rise to modern day Flemington.

#### **REFINEMENT OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

The historic areas of Flemington include about 40% of its land area in five districts. The main district encompasses both sides of Main Street with significant inclusions along Broad, East Main, and Bonnell Street. Two smaller Districts are located on the north side of Capner Street. Two other small Districts are found on the south side of North Main (*see* Historic Land Use, p. 81). The Districts were resurveyed using the original Register application and reclassified into significant, contributing, non-contributing or modern, encroaching and demolished (since 1980) categories. These are defined as follows:

*Significant:* Historically significant building based on its own unique characteristics with a clearly distinctive type, period or construction method which may include being the site of an important event or residence of an important person during the period of significance.

*Contributing:* Building contributes to the integrity of the historic district through distinguishable architectural characteristics - also built during the period of significance.

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*Non- Contributing or Modern:* Indirectly contributes to the historic district -built during the period of significance, but as a result of additions or alterations no longer has distinguishable historic characteristics *or* not built during the period of significance but attempting to be in keeping with the historical characteristics of the district in scale, materials and style.

*Encroaching:* Clearly detracts from the historic integrity of the district - built within the last 50 years without any relationship to surrounding historic structures and does not attempt to achieve any relationship with the surrounding historic structures.

*Demolished* is self-explanatory.

Based on the resurvey, three of the five historic districts are proposed to be removed. The districts to be removed include the two on the south side of North Main Street and the one at Capner and Allen Streets. These three are the smallest of the five districts and encompass two to four lots apiece. The size of the districts are too small by themselves to sustain historic district status. The state statutes do provide for an historic landmark status for significant buildings, however, all of the buildings in the three districts have only been classified as contributing.

In addition to the de-designation of the three districts, the main district boundary has been refined, with a general reduction in the area encompassed. The northern part of East Main Street the east side of Brown Street near the Rt. 12 circle and the area of Shields Avenue and Bonnell Street are the main parts proposed to be removed from the district. These constitute areas with many encroaching or modern buildings.

In some areas, additions to the main historic district are proposed. Broad Street from New Jersey to Pennsylvania Avenues is the largest area.

#### **GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

Because of the importance of the Historic Plan Element, goals and objectives more specifically tailored to preservation are included. Further, several specific recommendations are enjoined to the goals to promote the preservation of the cultural heritage of the Borough.