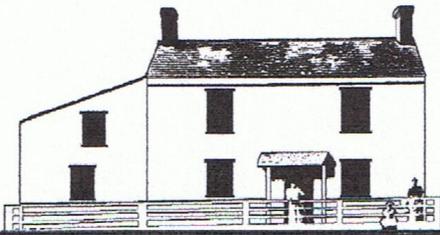


Kingston Historian



Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

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Fall 2013

Two Events Celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Princeton Nurseries.

Two events, one in September and the other in October will celebrate the founding of the Princeton Nurseries in Kingston with the purchase of its first farm here in 1913. Begun as an expansion of the F. & F. Nurseries of Springfield, NJ, founded in 1882, the Flemer's Kingston site became known as the Princeton Nurseries, with a world-wide reputation for the development of many unique species of plants and trees and plant handling techniques its long history.

The first farm located on Mapleton Road was acquired on August 28, 1913 from Jane G. Meyrick at a cost of \$9,000 for 66 acres.



Photo of William Flemer, Jr. taken in 1924 in a Princeton Nurseries hydrangea field. Kingston Greenways website.

September 7th: Celebrate with **Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands (FPNL)** on **Saturday September 7, from 1-4 pm** at the Mapleton Preserve/D&R Canal State Headquarters, 145 Mapleton Road, SB. Visit www.fpnl.org or call 609-683-0483 for more information. See Princeton Nurseries displays and historic vehicles; hear speeches; hear live music by The Bare Root Band featuring Bill Flemer and friends. Refreshments, including a big Birthday Cake, at this free event.

October 9th: **Kingston Historical Society Annual Meeting on Wednesday October 9, at 7:30 pm** at the Kingston Fire House on Heathcote Road. William Flemer, IV will give an illustrated talk about the Princeton Nurseries

Princeton Nursery's Kingston Site eventually contained over 1,200 acres in South Brunswick, Plainsboro and Franklin Townships. The Kingston Site closed in 1995, but over 240 acres have been preserved as a cultural landscape for the benefit of all.



Recent photo of Bill Flemer, IV. Kingston Greenways website.

All are welcome to this free event.
Refreshments will be served.

Princeton Nurseries Display at the Kingston Locktender's House

The celebration of the Princeton Nurseries 100th Kingston location continues with a display of their history here at the Kingston Historical Society's Locktender's House display area open on Weekends until the end of October.

The display will give some idea of the extent of the Princeton Nurseries from its beginnings in 1913 to its expansion in later years. Their operation, development of tree and shrub species and the many who worked for the nurseries over the years is more than can be described here. The display will cover some of the highlights of its long history here in Kingston.

The Flemers and the Princeton Nursery

In 1911, William Flemer, Sr. faced with the need to find land for his growing F&F Nursery in rapidly developing Springfield (NJ) started a search for land suitable for nursery use.

After a thorough two year search of sites in the eastern U.S., William Flemer, Sr. decided to locate in Kingston, south of the recently completed Carnegie Lake. The Kingston location, halfway between New York and Philadelphia and on a branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad and along the D&R Canal, offered great logistical advantages, as well as rich loam soil.

He purchased the first Kingston farm, the 66 acre Meyrick Farm, in September 1913; three other farms followed: the 65 acre Johnty Higgins Farm in 1914, the 85 acre Mathew Van Dyke Farm in 1915 and the 70 acre Missic Farm in 1916. The four adjacent properties totaled 265 acres.

Wm Flemer, Sr. put his young son William, Jr. in charge of the Kingston operation. During World War I, he served in the Princeton Ambulance Corps in France, but even while there he made plans for the nursery; at home his father began construction of a headquarters building,

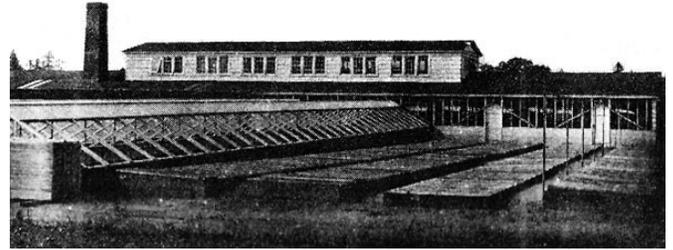


PRINCETON NURSERIES MAIN OFFICE (c. 1918)

After serving with the Ambulance Corps in World War I, Flemer's son William Flemer, Jr. returned and began purchasing additional properties, building the nursery holdings to about 1,200 acres. Wherever possible, Flemer bought both land and houses, in order to provide housing for nursery employees. Many of the houses still remain as part of the cultural landscape.

Influenced by the French countryside he had seen during the War, Flemer checked the landscape with magnificent windbreaks, and lined Mapleton Road with an avenue of plane trees, now some 90 years old.

William Flemer, Jr. was industrious and inventive. He built a system of greenhouses, installed a vast irrigation network, and built a water system that not only provided water for the nursery and nursery houses, but also for the village of Kingston.



PROPAGATION HOUSE and GREENHOUSES (c. 1920)

The former root storage building was replaced with a masonry structure, but the Shipping Building still stands.



BARE ROOT STORAGE and SHIPPING BUILDINGS (c. 1920)



PRINCETON NURSERIES TRUCK FLEET (c. 1920)

In 1930 F&F Nurseries in Springfield and Princeton Nurseries became two separate entities; although for many years the two sites had already been run quite independently.



ENTRANCE TO PRINCETON NURSERIES (1970s)

Starting in the 1950s the sons of William Flemer, Jr., William Flemer III and John Flemer, took an increasing role in the operation; they continued to nurture the business, overseeing the propagation of new cultivars of ornamental trees and shrubs and bringing the nursery to greater national, even international, prominence. Princeton Nurseries was granted dozens of patents on trees including the ‘Shademaster’ locust and ‘Village Green Zelkova’ elm.

In its 85-year history here, Princeton Nurseries introduced important plant varieties including the legendary, disease-resistant Princeton Elm, the ‘October Glory’ Maple, and the ‘Snow Queen’ Hydrangea, many of which still grow on former Princeton Nurseries property. The Flemers also developed innovative horticultural practices and technologies still used today, and fabricated the prototypes for many of their tools in the nursery workshops on Mapleton Road. At its peak, Princeton Nurseries farmed considerable land in South Brunswick, Plainsboro, West Windsor, and Franklin Township-1,200 acres in all.

As development increased in the Kingston area, Princeton Nurseries started purchasing land in Allentown, NJ in 1962 and moved its entire operation there in 1995. The company closed operations in Spring of 2010; fortunately, its land in Allentown has now preserved as farmland and open space.

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In 2005, through a partnership including South Brunswick Township, Princeton Nurseries, Princeton Nurseries and NJ DEP’s Green Acres Program, over 240 acres of the Former Princeton Nurseries Kingston Site have been preserved; the 53-acre property known as Mapleton Preserve, the heart of the former Princeton Nurseries Kingston Site, is now owned jointly by the New Jersey Green Acres program and South Brunswick Township. The restored former Princeton Nurseries main office has now become the D & R Canal State Park Headquarters. The Site includes several other historic buildings and many interesting and unusual trees dot the grounds.

Today, more than 240 acres of the former nursery lands have been preserved, mostly in South Brunswick Township, little changed in character from the days when Princeton Nurseries employed three hundred men and women at its Kingston operation--and provided the village’s water supply!

The Mapleton Preserve Commission, a joint South Brunswick Township and State of New Jersey DEP Commission, has oversight over the Mapleton Preserve.



D&R CANAL STATE PARK HEADQUARTERS (2013)

Wm Flemer, Jr. had the office building renovated, with designs by Princeton architect Rolf Bauhan, from his father’s “Bavarian Hunting Lodge” style” to that of a Colonial Revival style.

Lincoln Highway Stop and Lunch in Kingston, June 22, 2013.

Beautiful sun, beautiful day, and pleasant temperatures and KHS members showed the way for a great LHA stop. We could not have had a better day or better turnout for the stop of the Lincoln Highway Association 100th Anniversary Tour. The signs made for the KHS lined the route through the area, the Eno Terra made a great lunch for the tour members, and the D&R Canal State Park personnel made the Locktender's area available for the duration of the LHA's stop. The vintage cars provided a splendid look back at cars of the past (in excellent condition no less). The Ford Model T in front of Eno Terra got a lot of viewers (and photographers) as did the rest of the cars.



Some LHA tour cars parked in the Eno Terra Parking lot and some parked in the D&R Canal State Park Lot.

KHS president, Robert von Zumbusch receiving Certificate of Appreciation from the LHA representative in the Locktender's House. While others visitors reviewed the KHS exhibit on the Lincoln Highway in the same room.



Holiday Open House

Just a reminder that are all invited to the annual KHS Holiday Open House and Tree Lighting **Sunday December 1, 2013**. With refreshments and holiday cheer we will greet the month of December enjoying your company as we meet together at the Locktender's House from 3:30 to 5:30 pm.

History refresher from *Old Princeton Neighbors*.

In a recent review of this publication that describes some Kingston history it was noted that as well as being written by the Federal Writers Project, it was sponsored by the Borough of Princeton. Thanks to them both, we have a document that gives us some view of our past.

- Kingston became important due to its location between New York and Philadelphia and that by 1701 the Indian trail was being widened and cleared to allow for horse drawn stages.
- In 1704 the area was know as Kingstown. and in 1705 the first bridge over the Millstone River was built of wood. Innkeepers were attracted and the first Inn was the Black Lion in 1744 run by a Mr. Leonard.
- Some of the early residents were Higgins, Greenland, Bastedo, Bayles, Gulick, Hays, Hight, Lake, Van Note and Woolf.
- The Bayles family can be dated to 1762 when John Bayles offered his plantation of 420 acres for sale. The Lakes and Gulicks may have been friends in Holland and that may explain why they both came here. The Lakes, Bayleses and Gulick's intermarried.
- In 1939 Raymond F. Woolf's grocery store occupied the site of the Van Tilburgh tavern, now Main Street.
- The Kingston Methodist Church was created in response to a revival meeting at Rocky Hill in Feb. 1878 by Miss Lizzie Sharp, an evangelist. by January 1879 the KMC building was dedicated.

2013 Kingston Historical Society Officers

President – Robert von Zumbusch,
Vice-President – George Luck,
Treasurer – Tom Jacoby,
Secretary – Ceil Leedom.

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The Kingston Historical Society now has a website that you can visit at khsnj.org. There are plans to expand the information about Kingston – so look it up from time to time. Currently we will keep you informed about KHS activities and Kingston history.

