**The Original Inhabitants of Monroe Township – A Local History**

**Correlation to Grade 4 NJ Text: Chapter 2, Lesson 1 (p.33- 37)**

* Lenni-Lenape
* inhabitants
* hunter-gatherers
* settlers
* Squankum

The **Lenni-Lenape** were the original **inhabitants** of **Squankum**, an area which today we know as Monroe Township. The Lenape people were noble, vigorous, and brave. They were **hunter-gatherers**, meaning that they relied on hunting and harvesting plants for their survival. The Squankum area has a number of waterways, which made cranberries a popular crop for the Lenape to harvest. Parts of Collings Lakes and Victory Lakes were originally used by the Lenape as cranberry bogs.

The Lenape lived in well-established villages surrounded by their gardens. A typical village would most likely be located on the northern bank of a river or stream. The entrance to the longhouse would face south, avoiding the cold winds of winter. Lenape people lived together with their families where they passed down their cultural traditions, such as pow wows.

The first Europeans to settle in the Squankum area were Quakers. According to their testimony, the Lenape they encountered here were friendly and peaceful. The Quakers called the Lenape “The Peace Makers” because of how friendly they were. While most Lenape lived separately from settlers, evidence shows that Quakers and the Lenape actually lived and worked together in Squankum. The Lenape people helped these early **settlers** grow food and traded with them.

As more Europeans moved to Squankum, they began to clash with the Quakers and Lenape who lived in the area. Many of the Quakers chose to move west to Pennsylvania. The Lenape chose to leave the area. Some decided to move to reservations in Burlington County, while many of them moved Kansas. Today, there are descendants of the Lenape from Kansas who trace their history back to this area.

**Out of Many, One: The Different Pieces of Monroe Township**

**Correlation to Grade 4 NJ Text: Chapter 3, Lesson 4 (p. 80- 85)**

* post office
* Deed
* Tavern
* Manufactured
* coexistence

**The Beginning of Monroe Township**

Monroe Township was originally formed by an act of the [New Jersey Legislature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Jersey_Legislature) on March 3, 1859. In addition to Williamstown, other areas in Monroe Township include the villages of New Brooklyn, Cecil/Coles Mills, Robanna, and Downer. Monroe Township is located in the northeast corner of Gloucester County. Early history refers to it as one of the “pine townships” because of the abundance of pine timber in the area. The township was named after President James Monroe.

An official seal was created to be the unifying symbol of the township. The images on the seal depict the peaceful **coexistence** of the Lenni-Lenape and the European settlers. In the center top is a glass melting furnace, showing the importance of glass works in Monroe Township. Images of hams are also on the seal, because Williamstown was once nicknamed “Hamtown”. His nickname came about because workers in the glass industry were often paid with hams. The seal also contains a farmer’s plough and a cluster of grain to represent the abundance of food within the township. In 1871, Monroe Township became part of Gloucester County.

**Williamstown**

The first settlement in Monroe Township was Williamstown. Originally the town was called Squankum. This is an Indian name meaning “Place of Evil Ghosts”. It is thought that the “Evil Ghosts” referred to the numerous mosquitoes found in the area. In the 1600s, Lord John Berkeley granted Richard Penn a **deed** covering what is now Williamstown. A deed is an official document showing who owns a piece of land. This land was transferred to Israel Williams in the early 1700s. Mr. Williams owned the original 1,000 acres of land on which the town was located.

Before 1842, residents of Squankum would have to travel to Cross Keys to pick up their mail because there was no post office in town. The residents decided to apply for their own **post office** in 1842. Unfortunately, there was already a post office called Squankum located in Monmouth County. In order to get their own post office, the residents of Squankum would need to rename their town. The townspeople held a public meeting and chose the name Williamstown, in honor of Israel Williams. The town of Squankum then officially became known as Williamstown.

**Cross Keys**

When Williamstown was still a very small settlement, Cross Keys was a thriving village. Cross Keys was named for the intersection of 6 roads in the middle of town. It was located on the stagecoach route between Philadelphia and Cape May, New Jersey. Cross Keys had a post office, several stores, and a **tavern**, where people could rest and eat. The tavern in Cross Keys was open from 1776 until 1876. When Monroe Township was formed in 1859, Cross Keys was divided in half. One half of Cross Keys remained in Monroe Township, while the other half merged with Washington Township.

**Cecil (Coles Mill)**

Cecil was originally called Coles Mill. It was founded around 1750 by Thomas Cole. Mr. Cole built a mill and **manufactured** charcoal. By 1787, Mr. Cole had also constructed a water mill. His family manufactured shingles and planted cranberries.Coles Mills Road is named in his honor.

Later, the Chew family arrived in 1862 and operated a saw mill where Coles Mill stood. The Chew family were quite successful growing and selling cranberries. In 1883 a post office was set up, and the name of the town was changed to Cecil. This was done to honor Lord Cecil, a respected English Official from the town of Exeter where the Coles came from.

**Downer**

The village of Downer was founded by Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Downer, who built a house and started a farm in the area. During the 1864 presidential election, Arthur Downer ran a wagon service to transport supporters of Abraham Lincoln for president to the polls to vote. Their son, John Downer, helped work on their farm. One year, a valuable farm horse died. When the horse was being buried, the family discovered sandy soil that was useful for making glass. This led to many jobs changing from farming to glasswork in the area.

John Downer recorded much of the history of Monroe Township. He felt it was important for people to know what life was like when he lived. He died in 1928 and was buried in the Williamstown Methodist Cemetery. His tombstone bears the simple words “Historian”, which he truly was.

**New Brooklyn**

New Brooklyn was settled by John Marshall around 1831. Originally, this area was called Whitneytown, in honor of a rich businessman from Glassboro. The land was unsettled and only had timber forests. John Marshall purchased the land and built a saw mill and a glass factory. Mr. Marshall’s businesses grew to the point where over one hundred people worked for him. He then built a school and a church for his employees and their families. Mr. Marshall also planned and built the original roads in the town.

**Robanna**

According to local legend, Robanna was named after the wife of Mr. J. Robb. Mr. Robb’s wife was named Anna. Legend has it that someone reversed the two names and called the village Robanna.

For many years Robanna served as a stop on the railroad. Train service travelled from Philadelphia to Atlantic City. These trains carried goods and produce. Passengers could also travel to Williamstown and Glassboro. This service was ended in the early 1930’s.

**Industry and Transportation in Monroe Township**

**Correlation to Grade 4 NJ Text: Chapter 3, Lesson 5 (p. 86- 91)**

* household
* fertilizer
* implements
* company scrip
* blacksmith
* wheelwright
* cold storage
* saw mills
* iron foundry
* Infrastructure
* stagecoach
* toll

Early life in Monroe Township was influenced by the land and natural resources found in the area. As New Jersey’s population grew, many people came to the area looking for jobs. Many of the changes in New Jersey helped transform Monroe Township into the community it is today.

**The Glass Factory**

Before the 1830s, most people living in Monroe Township were farmers. The town saw a huge change in the 1830s, when a number of large glass factories opened in the town. Most jobs changed from farming to glass work due to the sandy soil from Downer. In New Brooklyn, John Marshall opened the Brooklyn Glass Factory. The factory was started in 1831 and operated until 1868.

In Williamstown, the first glass house was built in 1835. This factory was called the Free Will Glass Manufacturing Company. It was located on Chestnut Street, between Main Street and Bluebell Road. In 1839, the Washington Glass Works were built across the street from the Free Will Glass Manufacturing Company. Eventually, these two glass factories merged into one company, which was called the Williamstown Glass Works. The Williamstown Glass Works operated until 1917.

The glass factory owned and operated a company store located on South Main Street. This store sold general merchandise, such as food, clothing, and other items. Customers could also purchase **household** items they needed at this store. Local farmers would come to the company store to purchase items, such as seed, **fertilizer**, and farm **implements**. Instead of paying for their purchases with money, employees from the glass works paid with hams or **company scrip** from the glass company. Scrip is an item given to a company employee for payment instead of cash.

**Other Industries in Monroe Township**

Although the glass industry employed the majority of the town’s residents, there were several other types of businesses in Monroe Township. **Blacksmiths** and **wheelwright** shops were all part of the town’s local **infrastructure**. Farming was also an important part of the local economy. Local farmers grew a variety of crops, especially pickles and tomatoes. These crops could be sold locally or sent to Philadelphia. Other businesses included **cold storage**, sand mining, saw mills, and an **iron foundry**. Residents could shop at various businesses as well for groceries, clothing, and shoes.

The J.V. Sharp Canning Company was a local business which packed tomatoes for sale in stores. At the time, vegetables were packed in tin cans. Some people claimed the cans changed the taste of the food. Mr. Sharp used glass jars instead of metal cans to save the taste and let people see the food inside. More than 150 people worked at the factory, and they produced 25,000 cans of food a day. Mr. Sharp sold his factory to the Scalfani family, who changed the company to the Violet Packing Company.

**Transportation in Monroe Township**

Before automobiles, the only way to travel around Monroe Township was on foot, horseback, or stagecoach wagon. In February 1874, Tuckahoe Road was built on an old **stagecoach** route from Camden to Cape May. In 1853, another road was built that connected Woodbury and Philadelphia. Many of these early roads were **toll** roads. A toll is a fee someone pays to use a road. People using these roads would pay their money at the toll gate. There was once a toll gate on North Main Street in front of where Holly Glen Elementary School is now located.

In 1872, the first railroad came into Williamstown. This railroad connected the towns of Atco and Williamstown. In 1888, the rail line was extended to surrounding towns like Glassboro and Mullica Hill. This rail line also ran through Williamstown Junction, which connected the rail line to the main line of the Reading railroad to Camden. This railroad was called the Atlantic City Railroad.

Trains were important to the residents of Monroe Township. These railroads allowed products to be shipped in and out of the township. They also allowed residents to travel more easily. Trains even made sure students got to school on time. Before Williamstown High School was built, students attended Glassboro High School. Students would take a train to go to school until 1930!

**Our Modern Community**

**Correlation to Grade 4 NJ Text: Chapter 7, Lesson 1 (p.186- 191)**

* Schoolmaster
* hand-drawn
* peace officer
* Congregation
* Superintendent

Monroe Township has gone through a number of changes since it was founded in 1859. As our nation and our state have changed, so too has our community. The members of our community who shape our daily lives are an important role in keeping our community safe and healthy.

**Schools**

The first schoolhouse in Monroe was built around 1750. It was located on the South Main Street where the Washington Hotel now stands. The first **schoolmaster** on record was Major John Tice. He served in the Continental Army during the American Revolution and worked with George Washington at Valley Forge. Major Tice’s home was on Main Street. He built Washington Avenue and named it in honor of George Washington.

At the time, most children did not go to a formal school. They learned basic reading and writing at church or at home with their parents. Otherwise, they were expected to work on their family farm or business. Some children took jobs at the glassworks. If families wanted their children to have more schooling, their family was expected to pay for more education.

When Monroe Township officially formed, one of the first acts of the town was to establish formal schools. From 1849 to 1872, the children of Monroe were taught by Mr. and Mrs. H.K. Bugbee. Mr. Bugbee taught the older students, while Mrs. Bugbee taught the younger ones. By 1874, there were six schools in the township. There was a total of 451 students in all six schools. In 1887, a one room kindergarten school was built on Hall Street. The Hall Street School was used to educate students in Monroe from 1887 to 1981. The township opened its first high school in 1958.

Today, Monroe Township has six schools. The schools are run by a **superintendent**, whose office is located at Maple Grove. Maple Grove was built in 1906 and originally housed 6th-8th Graders. The four elementary schools are Whitehall, Holly Glen, Oak Knoll, and Radix. Williamstown Middle School was built in 1958, and was originally the Township’s first High School. Williamstown High School was built in 1997 and was expanded in 2007 to handle the town’s growing population.

**Free Reading Room (Library)**

On February 8, 1878, a group of township residents met at the town hall to form a free reading room for all. This room was located on the corner of Main and Library Streets. It officially opened on the evening of July 29, 1878. John Marshall, Jr. was appointed to take care of the room and property. The Reading Room was a popular part of the Monroe community.

After many years of use, the town decided to update its library. Citizens of the community banded together to raise funds for a new library building as well as books and magazines. In 1974, the Municipal Library was built on Main Street. The library there operated until the 2000s, when a new library was built on Marsha Avenue. The new library offers a variety of books and services for members of Monroe Township.

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| Compare the rules of the Reading Room to library rules today. |
| **Reading Room Rules**   1. *It shall be open every weekday from 4:00pm-9:30pm from April 1st to October 1st, and then be opened from 4:00pm-9:00pm the rest of the year.* 2. *No paper, periodical, or pamphlet belonging to the reading room shall be taken from the room.* 3. *Books may be borrowed from the library upon payment of five cents per volume for two weeks, books must not be kept out longer than two weeks without renewal.* 4. *Tearing or in any way mutilating paper, periodical, book, etc. of the reading room or library is forbidden. Anyone violating this rule will be required to pay for the loss.* 5. *Any noise of conversation which would disturb persons reading is forbidden.* 6. *Smoking in the room, spitting on the floor, or in any way defacing the furniture is forbidden.* 7. *The superintendent in charge of the room will be held responsible for all these rules.* 8. *No children under eight years of age will be admitted into the room unless accompanied by a parent.* |

**Fire Department**

Before 1909, only the glass factory had its own fire brigade. As the township grew larger, residents saw a need for a township fire brigade to protect themselves and their property. The first pieces of fire-fighting equipment were two **hand-drawn** carts. Mr. Donlevy Loughlin was the first fire chief of Monroe. When there was a fire, the steam whistle at the glass factory served as a signal to the fire brigade.

As time passed and the township grew, more equipment was added to the fire department to help protect the residents of Monroe. The town’s old railroad station was changed into Williamstown Fire Department Station 1. The township also added Cecil Fire Department and other volunteer units. Today, Monroe Township has a variety of fire and rescue vehicles.

**Police Department**

Before the 1900s, there was no official police force in town. Monroe Township appointed its first **peace officer,** Bill Singer, around 1910. A peace officer is an official who makes sure laws are being followed. Mr. George Ormsby was hired in 1925 as the township’s first police officer. He eventually became the chief of police. In 1975, the police station on Virginia Ave. was built for the township. Today, the police force has about 100 officers and staff members, along with K9 units and other modern equipment.

**Churches**

Religion was an important part of life for early settlers. As different ethnic groups moved to Monroe Township and settled the land, they brought with them their own religious beliefs. The growth in town led to a large number of churches being built throughout the township.

Quakers were the first religious group to be present in Monroe Township. While they lived peacefully with the Lenape, they clashed with members of the Methodist community. This caused the Quakers to leave for Pennsylvania.

In 1796, the first Methodist church opened in Squankum. Since then, a large number of Methodist families settled in Monroe Township. Early Methodists would meet in a variety of places, including the old schoolhouse on Main Street. In 1804, the **congregation** purchased the lot where Williamstown Methodist Church now stands. The cemetery there has graves dating back to the early 1800s. In 1844, the church built a new structure. Due to the large Methodist congregation in Monroe Township, the town clock was placed in the church’s steeple.

In 1840 Williamstown Presbyterian Church had organized. It’s cornerstone was laid in 1841. After years of growth, a new building was was completed in 1913 on the spot now occupied by the First United Presbyterian Church.

A large number of Ukrainian immigrants settled in Cecil in the 1800s. These immigrants built a Ukrainian church on Whitehall Road, close to where Whitehall school is located. This church served their community for a number of years. While the church recently closed, its cemetery is still in use.

St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized in October of 1897 by a group of German settlers. The first church was located on what is now the Black Horse Pike at Corkery Lane. St. John’s Cemetery remains at the site. In 1928, the New Jersey State Highway Department planned the Black Horse Pike. As a result, the church had to be demolished to make way for the highway. In 1929, the congregation built a new building on its present location on Main Street.

The Roman Catholic Church celebrated their first Mass in Monroe Township in 1903. Members of their church originally met in the old Town Hall. Soon after, the congregation opened a new church, called St. Mary’s of the Assumption. Their first building was located at the corner of Washington Avenue and New Brooklyn Road. It occupied this site until 1923, when the congregation moved to the church’s present location on Main Street. In 2015, the church changed its name to Our Lady of Peace Parish.

**Local Landmarks**

**Ireland-Hofer House**

The lot on which the Ireland-Hofer House is currently located was once part of a much larger piece of land, which was sold to Edward Ireland from John Watson in 1857. In 1941, the house was sold to Dr. Hofer. In 1978, the township bought the house and it now serves as the location for Monroe Historical Society.

**The Washington Hotel**

The Washington Hotel was built around 1866 on South Main Street. It was built to provide travelers a place to eat and rest. From the 1930s to the 1970s, people came from all over to eat Sunday dinner in the plush dining room. The hotel also had a stable for horses.

**Hall Street School**

[Hall Street School](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hall_Street_School) was built in 1887 and was added to the [National Register of Historic Places](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Register_of_Historic_Places) on September 27, 2006. This is the building that the Bugbees used to teach students in before the larger town schools were built.

**Pfeiffer Center**

The Pfeiffer Center is an important part of Monroe Township. The building is used for community events like dances, elections, and important meetings. It is also used as a food pantry and community center. The Pfeiffer Center was completed in 1971 and was named after Dr. Damon B. Pfeiffer.

Dr. Damon Pfeiffer was born in Williamstown on December 23, 1878. He grew up in Williamstown and went to medical school, where he became a doctor. Dr. Pfeiffer was a successful surgeon, working at many respected hospitals. He also donated money to Monroe Township for schools, parks, and other needs. The Pfeiffer Center was named after him to honor his many contributions to our community.

**American Legion Post 252**

The Raymond Cline/ Leon Rennebaum American Legion is located on Sicklerville Road. The American Legion serves as a meeting place for Veterans from Monroe Township to meet and spend time together. They also work to remember community members who served in the military.

The American Legion is named after two different men. Private Raymond Cline grew up on Oak Street in Williamstown. He joined the Army and went to France in 1918 to fight in World War 1. He died while fighting in France and is buried with other American soldiers there.

The American Legion is also named after Captain Leon Rennebaum. Leon grew up in Williamstown and was inducted into the Glassboro High School Hall of Fame as an accomplished athlete. He fought in the Army in World War II. While fighting, he earned the Distinguished Service Cross for Heroism as well as the Purple Heart for being wounded in combat. His uniform and medals are on display at the Ireland-Hofer house today.

The American Legion proudly maintains the Veteran’s Memorial Park on Main Street. In that park you will find a Wall of Honor for residents of Monroe Township who served in the military. There is also a monument for Christian Sharp, a Williamstown resident who fought in the U.S. Civil War. The park serves as a proud memorial for all of Monroe Township’s military members.

**Civics in Monroe Township**

**Correlation to Grade 4 NJ Text: Chapter 7, Lesson 3 (p. 200- 205)**

* Voting ward
* at-large
* mayor

Participating in our local government is an important part of living in our community. Monroe Township is led by a town council. Council members are chosen from the town’s four **voting** **wards.** A voting ward is a specific part of the community that votes for an elected official. Citizens in Monroe Township choose one member for each district. They also elect three **at-large** representatives. An at-large representative can represent any part of the community. When elected, council members serve a 4 year term.

Along with the town council, Monroe Township also will elect a **mayor.** The mayor is an elected official who makes daily decisions for the community. Being the mayor of Monroe Township is a full time job. Our mayor is elected to a four year term.

Monroe Township residents have not always been able to choose their mayor. For over 100 years, citizens in town would vote for their town council members. The town council would then decide on who would be the mayor of Monroe Township. Members of the township wanted to change this system, and in 1970 a vote took place to change Monroe’s system of government. After this vote, citizens in Monroe Township were able to choose thier own mayor directly.

Monroe Township has a diverse history of its elected leaders. Monroe Township’s first mayor was John Sharp, elected in 1971. Helen Reed was the first female town council member. She was elected in January of 1983. Monroe’s first female mayor was Mary ‘Mazza” Duffy. She served as mayor from 1999-2002. The first African American council member, Warren Wallace, served from 1991 to 1992.

**Links for Extending Learning**

<https://allaboutwilliamstown.wordpress.com/2009/10/24/a-glimpse-of-7-historic-sites-in-williamstown/>

**Veteran’s Issues**

<http://www.nj.com/gloucester-county/index.ssf/2015/04/pvt_raymond_cline_died_in_battle_during_world_war.html>

http://valor.militarytimes.com/recipient.php?recipientid=22596

<http://www.courierpostonline.com/story/news/local/2017/06/02/korean-war-pow-remains-identified-coming-home-south-jersey/360646001/>

<http://www.philly.com/philly/news/new_jersey/nj-soldier-killed-korean-war-frank-piper-buried-20170602.html>

<http://www.nj.com/gloucester-county/index.ssf/2017/06/nj_man_killed_on_korean_war_finally_coming_home.html>​

**A Nazi Spy from Williamstown?!**

<http://www.mcall.com/news/nationworld/pennsylvania/mc-nazi-germantown-book-20150103-story.html>