



**TOWNSHIP OF
HILLSIDE, N.J.**

HILLSIDE

Formed as Township: 1913
1970 Population: 21,636
Land Area 2.70 square miles

The initial settlement of the township now known as present day Hillside followed shortly after the Elizabethtown Tract purchase in 1664 and the subsequent settlement of the neighboring Newark colony in 1666. Attracting families from both Elizabethtown and Newark, this area was choice farm and pasture land for these new settlers outside their original village settlements. Accordingly, familiar family names such as Lyon, Woodruff, and later Winans and Tichenor, began to move into this farming area. In fact, it is after these early families that certain sections of this township derived their name. For example, the southerly sector of Hillside Township, south of Baker Street, was known at one time as Woodruff Farms. (This area extended into portions of North Elizabeth.) Similarly, by the time of the Revolution, much of the present day Hillside Township was known as Lyons Farms. This family drew land grants in both the Elizabethtown and Newark settlements in the 1600's.

Situated on the prominent thoroughfares connecting Elizabethtown and Newark, Lyons Farms or Hillside was the scene of constant American and British troop movements during the Revolution. For instance, the main road through this community known as "the upper road from the stone bridge to Newark" (presently North Broad Street), was at one time an Indian trail. It later became an overland passage between the Dutch colonies in Manhattan and West Jersey in the early 1600's. It may be interesting to note that Hillside, or Lyons Farms, played an historic role in early Colonial transportation since it was the headquarters of the main stagecoach line between Newark and Philadelphia in the late 1700's. This line, known as the Swift-Sure Stage Line, traveled over the old York Road which connected the present day municipalities of Elizabeth, Westfield, Scotch Plains, and Plainfield.

Basically the area of Hillside was a farming and dairy region until the latter part of the 19th Century. Then in 1891, the construction of the Lehigh Valley Railroad through this town attracted a number of new residents and development which began to change the landscape of this area. Although not a separate township until 1913, (previously a part of Union Township) Hillside's historic location between Elizabethtown and Newark gave this area a heritage which can be seen in a number of remaining buildings constructed during the town's evolution through the 18th and 19th centuries. Local efforts toward cataloging and disseminating information on the many landmarks located throughout this township should be encouraged. In addition to a number of private citizens consulted for this inventory, other sources utilized are a number of pamphlets published by the Hillside National Bank (now known as the National State Bank) which include "Eight Colonial Homes" and "Hillside Landmarks" and are listed in the appendix of this report.

UNION COUNTY HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY

HILLSIDE

1. The Enos Woodruff House – located 866 Salem Avenue. Local sources indicated the original structure was erected in 1743 by Timothy Woodruff and was partially destroyed after the Revolution. The smaller two story westerly section of this house was rebuilt on the original sandstone foundation by Enos Woodruff before 1800. This 18th Century Hillside landmark remained in the Woodruff family until 1960-62. Enos Woodruff, who rebuilt this structure, was an officer in the Revolutionary War and was an ancestor of many of the Woodruff families in the Hillside vicinity. The larger two and a half story section of this structure with a gambrel roof was added at a later date. This structure still contains many interesting original building traits such as brick-filled and hand-split lath walls, hand hewn beams, wide pine floor boards and original window glass. This structure was acquired by E. J. Grassman around 1960 and was restored to its present condition.

2. The Francis Woodruff House – located 186 Conant Street. This red, two and a half story structure was built around 1845 by Francis Woodruff, a descendant of Enos Woodruff.

3. The Earl House – located at 178 Conant Street. This large white, two and a half story Victorian type house was built around 1850 by William Earl whose descendants today still occupy this home. Local sources report that this dwelling was one of the last operating farms in Hillside and was known during the 1870's for its tomato canning operation.

4. The Schorr House – located at 158 Conant Street. According to local sources, this gray Victorian home was at one time part of the Earl Farm (located next door) and was erected some time around the middle of the 19th Century.

In addition to those homes noted above located along Conant Street, there are a number of additional structures built on this street shortly after the Civil War. These Victorian structures built by J. Edwin Conant during this realty boom in Hillside reflect a distinct architectural style of that period worthy of note.

5. The Kulish Residence – located at 215 Conant Street. This massive two and one half story green Victorian building exhibits vertical siding on the upper levels of this building, in addition a large tower-like spire and large pointed roof arch. Built in 1870.

6. The Anderson Residence – located at 223 Conant Street. This large gray Victorian type home is another well preserved Hillside landmark.

7. The Hotchkiss Residence – located at 165 Conant Street. Another one of the large Victorian type homes erected by J. Edwin Conant which has subsequently been remodeled.

8. The Jacob Woodruff House – located at 111 Conant Street. This two and a half story white Colonial house may be one of the oldest dwellings still standing today in Hillside. Local sources report that the small easterly section of this structure was erected prior to 1700 and was used as a shelter by members of the Woodruff family working in the fields here while still residing in Elizabethtown. The higher, two and a half story westerly section of this building was erected some time around 1806, and around 1900 a country store was added to the front of this dwelling. Exterior features of this landmark, such as irregular window heights and clapboard siding may be original construction features.

9. Tichenor House – located at 1230 North Broad Street. Local sources report this white, two story Colonial structure was erected some time around 1812. Although remodeled, the exterior of this structure still reveals the steep roof line of early American buildings. Occupied by six generations of the Tichenor family, this structure was erected near the site of an earlier dwelling built in 1752. It may be of interest to note that nearby this site was located a camp site of the Lenni-Lenape Indians. An interesting review of Hillside's early Indians can be found in a pamphlet "First Settlers of Lyons Farms" which is included in the appendix.

10. Evergreen Cemetery – located on North Broad Street. Organized in 1853, this cemetery covers over 100 acres in Hillside and borders the Newark and Elizabeth city lines. As an interesting historical note, the two most famous graves located here are those of Mary Mapes Dodge and Stephen Crane, authors. According to local sources, a portion of this cemetery was at one time part of a land grant of the Lyon family who settled this area in the late 1660's.

11. Lehigh Valley Railroad Station – located off Ridgway Avenue at its intersection with North Broad Street. This red, wooden frame structure constructed in 1890 at one time served as a passenger shelter for Hillside commuters on the old Newark-Roselle Railroad, the first rail line to service this area in the 19th Century. Later consolidated by the Lehigh Valley Railroad in 1891, this structure served as a service freight office. Local Girl Scouts, in an effort to refurbish this local Hillside landmark, recently conducted a work program and repainted this structure.

12. The Hillside Fire House Museum – Hillside Playhouse – located on Maple Avenue at its intersection with Oakland Terrace. Originally utilized as offices in 1921-1922, this structure was acquired two years later by the Hillside Fire Department and used as such until 1956. Using municipal labor and volunteers, this structure was renovated into a theatre in the round and dedicated in 1971 as a museum and dramatic arts center. This structure is presently the only Hillside landmark listed in the State Inventory of Historic Places.

13. The "Doc" Winans House – located at 295 Shelon Terrace (at its intersection with Liberty Avenue). Local sources reveal this gray two and a half story duplex was erected some time after 1840.

14. The Bloy Farm – located at 1196 Liberty Avenue. Although remodeled, this gray Colonial structure is believed to have been built some time before 1800. The sagging or depressed roof line of this structure may attest to this building's age. Local sources report this structure was purchased by Mr. Robert K. Bloy from William Baker in 1898.

15. The Meeker House – located at 593 Conant Street (near Liberty Avenue). Local sources report this early 19th Century farmhouse was built by Joseph S. Meeker in 1803. The westerly two story section was added around 1830. Resting on a stone foundation, this yellow Colonial home with skewed chimneys rests on an elevated bank overlooking Conant Street. Wide floor boards, brick filled walls, and exposed wooden ceiling beams, reflect original construction features of this dwelling.

16. The Old Stone School House – located at 43-49 Washington Avenue in the Newark Museum Gardens, City of Newark. Although not presently located within the Township limits of Hillside, this structure at one time did serve as a school house for people of Lyons Farms area in the late 1700's. Constructed in 1783 from hugh boulders quarried locally, this school house was located at Chancellor Avenue near Elizabeth Avenue in present day Newark. Local sources report this structure may have been visited by George Washington while passing through the community. In 1938, this red sandstone school house moved to its present location at Newark Museum Gardens by the Works Project Administration.

We thank the Union County Planning Board for conducting this research and compiling an inventory of historic landmarks and sites in our community for inclusion in a county-wide Historic Landmarks Inventory. The purpose of this study is to provide a brief history and individual municipal landmark listing, as well as to highlight various attempts and problems in preserving this county's significant historic landmarks. In addition, this report will provide a useful supplementary guide for further research on historic landmarks throughout the county.