KINGSTON: CROSSROADS TO HISTORY

1675  Earliest mention of Kingston found in traveler’s journals

1683  Dr. Henry Greenland, one of the earliest settlers, built a house and operated a tavern near the Kingston bridge

1700  Assunpink Trail is cleared and widened for stage travel

1705  A wooden bridge is built over the Millstone River at Kingston

1709  Jedediah Higgins acquires 1000 acres from the Lenni Lenape Tribe. The Higgins House is built sometime before 1714

1723  Original Presbyterian Church built near today’s Presbyterian Cemetery location

1738  A stone bridge was built to replace the wooden bridge over the Millstone River

1777  George Washington convenes his famous “conference on horseback” in the Presbyterian Cemetery

1778  George Washington wrote to Lafayette from Kingston, just before the Battle of Monmouth

1804 - Route 1 is built by the Trenton and New Brunswick Turnpike Company. (Originally called The Straight Turnpike, It was operated as a toll road until around 1900)

1830  Delaware & Raritan Canal ground breaking begins in Kingston

1834  Delaware & Raritan Canal officially opened by Governor Vroom

1835  Kingston Locktender’s House near Lock Number 8 on the Delaware & Raritan Canal was first occupied by George Allen and family

1852  Presbyterian Church built where it stands today on Main Street

1858  Withington Estate built, now known as Heathcote Farm

1871  Kingston Free School built

1878  Kingston United Methodist Church is established

1888  Old Kingston Mill burns; rebuilt in 1889 and still stands today on the Millstone

1913  The Kingston Town Improvement Association is formed

1920  Kingston Laurel Avenue school built

1924  The Kingston Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 is formed

1966  Current Kingston Post Office is dedicated on Route 27

1973  Kingston First Aid Squad answers its first call
A Brief History of Kingston

The village of Kingston is mentioned in travelers’ accounts as far back as 1675, but the first settler was probably Henry Greenland, who established a tavern on the Millstone River in 1683. In the early 18th century, other families arrived and by 1723, the Presbyterian Church was built in the present site of the cemetery.

By 1750, Kingston had a saw mill, a blacksmith shop, and at least two inns for travelers along the “King’s Highway”. The road between New York and Philadelphia became the most popular route for travel and for delivering the mail. The stage coach lines stopped in town for fresh horses. Van Tilburgh’s Inn and the Beehive Inn provided overnight accommodations for travelers.

After the Battle of Princeton on January 3, 1777 during the Revolutionary War, General George Washington held his famous “conference on horseback” in front of the Presbyterian Cemetery to decide whether to lead his tired troops to New Brunswick or in the direction of Rocky Hill to Morristown. The route north brought the bedraggled troops to the river in Rocky Hill and on towards Griggstown.

During the 19th century, Kingston became a thriving transportation center. Overland travel on the improved turnpike brought many stages through the village. The Delaware and Raritan Canal was completed in 1834, linking Trenton to New Brunswick, and the Camden and Amboy Railroad was extended through the town in 1839. Town development was rapid in the coming years with a new Presbyterian Church built in 1852, a schoolhouse in 1871, the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1878, the Withington Inn, and a quarry. Commercial development in the village prospered and attracted speculators, immigrants, and small businesses.

By the advent of the 20th century, the automobile was replacing other forms of travel and the King’s Highway was renamed the Lincoln Highway in 1913. Commerce slowed down as a residential building boom took over. Canal and railroad transportation ceased and the town has now evolved into a rural village. The main street is the historic center of the village and has now become Route 27, which includes South Brunswick Township, Franklin Township, and Princeton Township.