

# Monmouth Junction, A Railroad Center

*Monmouth Junction Railroad station-North side 1890*



*Unlike many of its neighbors, Monmouth Junction, whose “center” was located on an old Indian trail now known as Ridge Road, is neither old nor historic. It did not begin as a grist mill, a blacksmith shop, or a tavern in pioneer days.*

*Maps of 1745 identify a few homes in the area but it was not until around 1840 that anything resembling a settlement had begun. When a rail center was created at the junction of three rail lines, the hamlet had a church, a store, a post office, a railroad station, a hotel, and fourteen dwellings.*

*Monmouth Junction came into being as a railroad junction and a very lively one at that! It accommodated traveling and vacationing people as well the shipping of produce and products such as rock from the Rocky Hill Quarry.*

*The land on which the village grew was originally part of the Long Bridge Farm, an 805-acre tract conveyed to Thomas Lawrence by Peter Sommans in 1733. Lawrence acquired more land until he had 1,860 acres stretching along the Piscopeck Creek (which he later re-named “Lawrence Brook”) and going approximately from Stouts Lane to Kingston Lane.*

*An 1896 map shows how I.B. and J.E. Rowland and Mrs. C.C. Groves became the first “developers” of Monmouth Junction. Their properties, bordered by the rail lines, Walnut and Hillside Avenues, and New and Pierson Roads, were divided into 53 lots of approximately the same size and on which were built homes and commercial buildings. Mechanics Hall, a social center, was on Ridge Road; Emens Store was on the corner of Walnut and Railroad Avenues, and the popular and famous Monmouth House Hotel (built in 1871 but destroyed by fire in 1922) was on Railroad Avenue, a one-lane road running directly along the rail line.*

*The railroad stations were built across the tracks and people got to them by “crossing carefully” !*

*As the village began to enlarge, the number of children did also and, so, education became a concern. Scattered across South Brunswick were 12 little schools that had been in existence for decades but it was not until 1889 that Monmouth Junction opened its own one-room schoolhouse. In 1902, the “new” school was built on New Road and it had four rooms ! This school served Monmouth Junction until the original present school was built in 1957 and the 1902 building was bought by the M.J. First Aid Squad for its use.*

*Once a favorite stopping place for salesmen, travelers, vacationers, and revelers from Princeton University, having a famous restaurant and a boisterous tavern, Monmouth Junction may have been the last village to awaken but, within its borders today, is an elementary school, the township high school, the governmental center, and the public library.*

*Ruth Spataro  
Ellen Gambatese  
May, 2001*

*Note: the scrollwork shown on this page is a copy of what appeared between posts on the porch addition to the original Long Bridge Farmhouse which is still standing today at the end of Walnut Avenue but now altered.*

*P.R.R., Monmouth Junction, NJ*

