

Happy Birthday, Holland Township!

Holland Township has a long history. But before we get to Holland Township, let's start with some other information. Bethlehem (New Jersey) was first mentioned in official records around 1730. Over time, Kingwood Township, Alexandria Township, Union Township, Junction (Hampton), Bloomsbury, and Glen Gardner were separated from Bethlehem. When Alexandria township was formed in 1765, it contained the present day Alexandria and Holland Townships, Milford, and Frenchtown.

The very western portion of Alexandria Township in the late 1700's was part of the Barker Tract which contained 30 parcels of land. These lots were leased to tenant farmers. In tract surveys, one group of lots was referred to as the "Holland" or "New Holland" lots. These parcels bordered the Delaware River from the approximate area of the present generating station downriver to the Crab Apple Hill Road area. One can only suppose that this name came from early Dutch tenants. Over time, the Holland area had its own post office, mills, and a train station. It is from this area that Holland Township received its name.

As early as 1840, application was made to the New Jersey Legislature for the division of Alexandria due to its size. In 1841, it was reported that it was inexpedient to grant the division and it was ordered to "lie on the table". In 1872, it was again recommended that a new township be set off from Alexandria, to be named "West Alexandria", bounded on the west by the Delaware River, the Musconetcong Creek, and the Warren County line. According to the *Lambertville Record*, dividing the township with an east/west line would benefit the Republican party, placing another Republican on the County Board of Freeholders. A north/south dividing line would benefit the Democrats. Although this bill passed in the House, it lost in the Senate. Not to be deterred, in March of 1873, a new bill was introduced to create a new township of Holland out of Alexandria. Unfortunately, this failed to become law due to the Governor refusing to sign it. However, in March of 1874, the creation of Holland Township was passed again, overriding the Governor's veto. This would include the present day Holland and Milford. There were allegations of bribery in the press. The *Clinton Democrat* called it the "dismemberment" of Alexandria. And, it turns out that it was a Republican township. The Nov. 11, 1874 *Lambertville Record* called Holland "the [Republican] oasis in the great Democratic desert". The new township, which was created March 27, 1874, held its first town meeting in the Gibson House in Milford. William Angel, Albert Opdyke, and Aaron Stover were appointed judges of election and Jesse Sinclair was appointed town clerk. In 1875 Jonas Rapp, the assessor, reported the total population of Holland was 1,852.

On March 13, 1878 the *Lambertville Record* reported "The act repealing the act forming the Township of Holland was passed by both Houses of the Legislature last week. It was a Republican township, and this fact, the *Republican* says, was sufficient cause for our Legislature to abolish it, no matter whether the wishes or convenience of its inhabitants were consulted or not." To make a long story short, in 1879 an act was passed again which permanently set Holland Township off from Alexandria Township. In 1911, Milford Borough separated from Holland, leaving Holland Township's boundaries as we know them today.

This brings us to the exciting part. Next year, **Holland Township will be 150 years old and events are being planned for a celebration!** Although things are still in the planning stages, it appears that the 5K race will be back after a break. There will be historical displays at the Riegel Ridge Community Center and an anniversary book will be prepared. Other events are still being considered. And, by the way, if you have any historical stories, photos, or publications that you would like to share with the township, please contact the township clerk. We would love to see them and they can be returned if you wish. Please come out and help celebrate this milestone.