

Five Fast Facts About Timbuctoo



Where and what is Timbuctoo?
Timbuctoo is an unincorporated community in Westampton Township, Burlington County, NJ.¹ Timbuctoo was settled by formerly enslaved and free African Americans, beginning in 1826.

Early Settlement in Timbuctoo, N.J.

Original Property Sellers

- 1st-William Hilyard
- 2nd-Samuel Atkinson
- 3rd-Abigail Haywood
- 4th-Thomas Grissom Sr. & Jr.
- Peter Quire subdivided his lot in 1834 to help establish the African Union School
- John Bruer subdivided his lot in 1841 to help establish the Schoolhouse & Place of Divine Worship

- 1 Peter Quire, 1831
- 2 African Union School, 1834
- 3 Major Mitchell, 1830
- 4 John Bruer, 1829
- 5 John Bruer, 1831
- 6 Schoolhouse & Place of Divine Worship, 1841
- 7 David Parker, 1831
- 8 Samuel Parker, 1831
- 9 David Parker, 1826
- 10 Wardell Parker, 1826
- 11 Hezekiah Hall, 1826
- 12 George Wilmore, 1826 or earlier
- 13 Ezekiel Parker, 1826
- 14 Mary Hugg, 1838
- 15 Zion Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal African Church (& Cemetery), 1854
- 16 Joseph Hargrove, 1834
- 17 Henry Simmons, 1834
- 18 William Hill, 1839
- 19 Joseph Parker, 1833
- 20 David Parker, 1842
- 21 Levi Griffin, 1840
- 22 Gillis Parker, 1842
- 23 Joseph Hargrove, 1834
- 24 Alexander Armstrong, 1842



*note: prior to 1834, this section of Haywood St was a part of a parcel owned by Edward Gilles.

Source: Guy Weston
Rutgers Cartography 2018

1826

Ezekiel Parker, Wardell Parker, David Parker and Hezekiah Hall purchased parcels of land from a Quaker farmer named William Hilyard for prices ranging from \$8.33 to \$24.05. These men had escaped enslavement in Maryland, but were already living in the area for several years.

1830

The name Timbuctoo first appeared in a deed. Where did this name come from?
Early nineteenth century African American and antislavery publications described Timbuktu in Africa as a great African civilization, a place of commercial wealth and opportunity, and a place where African youth were sent from great distances to further their education. These descriptions contribute to our opinion that early Timbuctoo settlers may have chosen this name to reference their aspirations for the new community they were developing.

1834

Land was purchased to build the African Union School.

This deed says "whereas, in the Settlement of Tombuctoo...and in the vicinity thereof, there are many people of Colour (so called) who seem sensible of the advantages of a suitable school education and are destitute for a house for that purpose. And the said Peter Quire and Maria, his wife in consideration of the premises and the affection they bear to the people of Colour and the desire they have to promote their true and best interests are minded to settle, give, grant and convey...said premises to the uses and intents hereinafter pointed out and described." The deed further describes some rules of operation, such as the requirement that any future Trustees be people of Colour who live within ten miles of the premises.

¹ United States Geological Survey Geographic Names Information System

1854

Land was purchased to build the Zion Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal African Church.

The deed stipulates that the premises are to be used “as a place of religious worship and a place to bury the dead.”...“according to rules and discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in America.” It further stipulates that interment was limited to those authorized by the trustees. From this we conclude that US Colored Troops (USCT) were buried in the cemetery because of their affiliation with the church and not because it was a military cemetery. We also know that there are as many as 100 + unmarked graves in the cemetery. USCT had stone grave markers provided as a benefit of military service. By contrast ordinary citizens frequently has wooden grave markers that would not survive time. However, there are 3 civilian gravestones and the oldest one is dated 1847, 14 years before the Civil War.

1860

Battle of Pine Swamp



George Alberti, well known for kidnapping Black people and returning them to enslavement, sought to capture Perry Simmons, who lived near Timbuctoo.

Alberti traveled with several associates. Simmons had lived in the area for a decade or more and had a strong network of supporters. When news of the attempt to capture Simmons reached his allies, a large group rushed to Simmons aid yelling and screaming, wielding weapons and scared the smaller raiding party off. In 1100 words, the New Jersey Mirror uses words like “kidnapers” and “invaders” to describe Alberti and his associates.

“Old Alberti, at one time, started up the stairway, but as he turned round, so that the top was visible, he saw that muzzle of Perry’s musket was but a short distance from him, and he came down something quicker than he went up.” “They ...concluded that ‘discretion was the better part of valor’ and hastily retreating to the carriages left the scene of their brilliant achievement as though Old Satan was after them.”

Copyright 2023 Timbuctoo Historical Society.

Additional information, including the full text of the 1100 word Battle of Pine Swamp article, as well as middle and high school curricula and materials and various research and feature articles and presentations, is available on www.TimbuctooNJ.com