



Farming Pleasant Valley: 250 Years of Life in Rural Hopewell Township, New Jersey

Larry Kidder

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Pleasant Valley lies in the northwestern corner of Hopewell Township, Mercer County, New Jersey and has been fortunate in not being subject to the type of suburban development that has obscured so much of the farmland and rural communities in the Mid-Atlantic States. A visitor to the Pleasant Valley area can still “read” elements in the landscape and buildings that tell the knowledgeable observer some of the history of the Valley as an agricultural region. For over 250 years farming was the primary activity in the Valley and a sense of community identity developed focused first on the local grist mill and later on the local rural school house. This book tells the story of how life changed over those 250 years both in general and for specific farmers and their families. Drawing on a number of original sources provided by local families, the Howell Living History Farm located in the Valley, and local historical societies, this is a unique story that provides a case study that helps us understand life in rural communities from the late 17th to the 20th century. The Pleasant Valley Historic District was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1991 and this is the story of its history. In this story we meet farmers, blacksmiths, grist mill owners, Revolutionary War militiamen, slave owners, tenant farmers, and baseball players among a host of characters and learn how the land formations, roads, Delaware River, creeks, canal, railroad, and nearby villages contributed to and helped shape their lives.

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