

# A brief history of Fenwick Manor

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- Fenwick Manor was built in the early 1820s.
- The 3½-story main building was constructed as a modest farmhouse, with the rich and ornate detailing such as the decorative doorway and thick, protective eaves being added during a major rebuilding phase in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The farmstead included other structures, of which three survive: a barn, an outhouse and the carriage house. The barn contains both 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century construction elements. The date of construction for the "five-seater" outhouse is unknown, as is the official construction date for the 2½-story carriage house. All of the structures are listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places.
- For more than 125 years, a succession of related individuals owned Fenwick Manor. **Benjamin Jones**, owner from 1827-1844, was a colorful entrepreneur who had an interest in three-iron furnaces and built a railroad. Jones' cousin, **Col. James Fenwick**, the next owner of Fenwick Manor, was a gentleman farmer who experimented in cranberry culture. Upon Col. Fenwick's death in 1882, his son-in-law, **Joseph Josiah White**, acquired the farm and expanded cranberry operations at nearby Whitesbog. White's daughter, **Elizabeth White**, helped develop the cultivated blueberry in 1916 while she was living in Fenwick Manor. After several transactions within the family, the farmhouse and outbuildings passed out of the hands of the Jones, Fenwick and White family in 1953. The 4.5-acre property on which the buildings are located was deeded to **Dr. James Q. Atkinson**, who opened a medical practice there. Much of the remaining 210 acres of the farmstead remains in the possession of White's descendants.
- The State of New Jersey bought the property on November 22, 1978 with the original intention of using it as a correctional facility. But after being left vacant for a year, the property was leased to the New Jersey Pinelands Commission and has served as the Commission's headquarters since 1980. (Prior to moving into Fenwick Manor, the Commission's Planning staff had worked out of an office in Trenton, while the Commission's permitting staff worked out of an office in Toms River.)
- The conditions were vastly different when the Commission first moved into the facilities than what you see here today. The buildings had no air conditioning, no overhead lighting, no window screens and only one Xerox machine. In the early days, some employees would work as late as 2 a.m.
- What's more, conditions were extremely cramped: At one point, a total of 54 people worked out of the farmhouse and carriage house.
- Employees in the Commission's **Administration, Planning, Communications and Business Services** departments were relocated to the adjacent **Richard J. Sullivan Center** before the renovations of the farmhouse, barn, carriage house and outhouse began in 2004. The conference room in the Sullivan Center was converted into office space – complete with desks and partitioned cubicles – for members of the **Planning** department. The Commission's regular monthly meetings were held in the Municipal Building in Southampton while the historic buildings were being

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renovated. Also as a result of the renovations, members of the Commission's **Science department** were moved into office space at Burlington County College.

### **Renovations:**

- The historic buildings needed the upgrades to correct technical problems, ensure historical accuracy, improve functional operations and to address code, safety and environmental issues.
- The first and second floors of the **farmhouse** were completely redone. Repairs were made after extensive termite damage was found. The exterior of the building was repaired according to State Historic Preservation Office requirements. A new roof, an upgraded heating system, a security access system and new electrical and telecommunications systems were installed. The building's windows also were restored.
- In the **carriage house**, workers installed a new tile bathroom, new roof and a new heating system. It also underwent structural reinforcement and window restoration.
- The **barn** was converted from storage space into office space. Workers installed a new workroom, bathroom, heating and air-conditioning systems, a security access system, and communications and data systems.
- The **outhouse** is now used as storage space.
- The \$1.8 million renovation project was completed in October 2005, enabling the Commission staff to move into the newly renovated offices.