Southern New Jersey
SYNAGOGUES

A SOCIAL HISTORY
HIGHLIGHTED
BY
STORIES
OF JEWISH LIFE
FROM THE
1880'S - 1980'S

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Sons of Israel tract and Isles of Pines Village

These two remote Jewish settlements were founded in 1892. These were land schemes that Jewish people from Philadelphia could easily access. These locations were north of the Woodbine Colony along the West Jersey Seashore Railroad. These settlements were situated in Maurice Township and located a few miles north of the Manasquan Railroad station. Further south, would be the Jewish settlements of Halferton and Montefiore.

The land was originally bought by the Fries family who had a mill further East along the Menasquin Creek. This grist mill was owned by John and Mary Fries. They bought the land in 1875.

The Sons of Israel Society originated in Philadelphia. The trustees of the society were Meyer Altsberg and Abraham Trachtenberg. The society was formed to provide a beneficial society which deviated from the usual operation in Philadelphia. Their purpose was not the purchase of mutual aid in the traditional sense but for land ownership. This society was intended to provide a community and solicited membership for those newly arriving Jewish immigrants from the old world. This was truly a utopian adventure into land speculation and settlement.

Newly arriving Jewish immigrants did buy these irregular lots. This represented their future. These lots measured anywhere from four to ten acres. The idea of settlement was centered around both sides of the Railroad and other land which lay away from the tracks.

These lands were specified for individual use. These people could not transfer the land to other people who were not their heirs. The members of the society who bought land from the trustees included some thirty men.

A few miles north of this settlement lie another attempt at Jewish settlement and colonization in the woods of Southern Jersey along the Railroad. This area was called the Isles of Pines Village Tract and was settled by a man. As the train passed on its way from Millville to Woodbine and then onto the shore meant that passengers would see five Jewish settlements along the way.

The Sons of Israel lands were surveyed in May 1892 and laid out by S.M. Sheldon.

Reference Source Credit

While the author was doing research at the Cumberland County Courthouse in Bridgeton on October 10th, 1988, Allen Heyes met Phillip Henson. Mr. Henson referred Allen to the Chelsea Title Agency in Vineland who owned the original maps of the land in that area.

It is likely that the community was inhabited for a short period of time and that the land was put up for sheriff sale in the early 1900's for lack of payment of property taxes. This means that area was abandoned by the Jews.