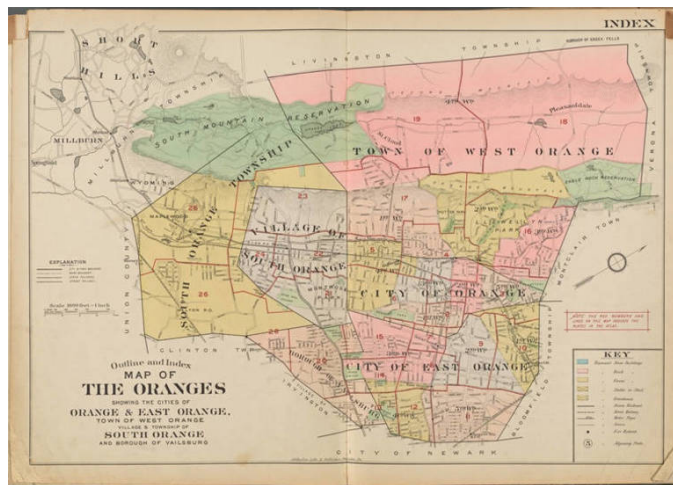




Government

Have You Ever Wondered Why There's No North Orange in Essex County?



A 1904 map of the Oranges shows a visual detail of the surrounding towns of Orange from which the other towns are named in respect to their compass heading from that point.

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The Oranges of Essex County have an interesting and curious name, but it is not associated with a popular vitamin C fruit that makes juice. The obvious question also arises as to why there currently is no town named North Orange.

The answer is not simple or short and dates back nearly three centuries. Most would be surprised to learn that a North Orange actually did once exist in New Jersey but just not in Essex County. Equally surprising is that it pretended to be associated with the Oranges from the next county.

Regardless of geographical location, the name of Orange originally began as the "Mountain Society" that was first used by the settlers of the original Newark settlement of 1666. This land extended west from the Passaic River and, with subsequent land purchases from the Lenni-Lenape Indians, included most of the present-day Essex County, NJ.

The name Orangefield was first used and adopted by the settlers in 1780 for an area of land west of Newark. The Orange prefix is reported to have been derived from the name of England's ruling house, the House of Orange.

It had been suggested that since the terrain included both mountains and valleys that the suffix "dale" be used instead of "field." So, in 1782 the name of Orangedale was first used to designate the place of a church meeting. By 1790 the name was consistently being used in Newark town records and unofficially adopted. But by 1796 the "dale" suffix was dropped without explanation and began to be simply referred to as Orange.

On November 27, 1806, Orange was established as a separate township from Newark under an act of the New Jersey State Legislature. Orange included the territory now encompassing all the Oranges. More towns were eventually separated from the Town of Orange.

South Orange was organized on January 26, 1861; Fairmount (later to become part of West Orange) on March 11, 1862; East Orange on March 4, 1863 and West Orange (including Fairmount) on March 14, 1863. All the towns using Orange in the name were created save one. Collectively, all these bordering towns became known as the Oranges. Noticeably missing from this mix of compass headings from Orange was North Orange.

A few years after the establishment of Orange in 1806 another land separation from Newark occurred. The Township of Bloomfield was created by an act of the New Jersey Legislature on March 23, 1812. Bloomfield originally was a large parcel of land extending west that essentially began a parallel history concurrent with the subsequent land separations of Orange.

The future towns of Belleville, Glen Ridge, Nutley and Montclair eventually were carved out from the Bloomfield land. Today's Montclair was first known as Cranetown and then West Bloomfield. It became the Township of Montclair in 1868 and even though it was geographically located north of Orange it never took on the name of North Orange to link it with the rest of the Oranges. The naming choice might have been a wise decision so as not to be confused with an existing array of town names already associated with Orange.

In New Jersey however there once was a town named North Orange. In the late 1890s, the New Orange Industrial Association (NOIA) purchased land in Cranford and Union in current day Union County. The NOIA intentionally named their town North Orange to be associated with the Oranges of Essex County. They believed if they associated their upcoming town with the well-known Oranges, it could help attract more investors and interest in the development of North Orange.

They subdivided the land into building lots and sought out several large industries to come to their new town. They even convinced Upsala College, which was founded in 1893, to move from Brooklyn with an offer of cash and free land for its campus in North Orange. The scheme worked for a while but eventually caused too much confusion with the real Oranges in Essex County.

In 1907 North Orange was incorporated as a borough and the name was changed to Kenilworth as it remains today. Ironically, Upsala College which relocated to North Orange moved to one of the real Oranges when it came to East Orange in 1924. The college eventually closed due to a declining enrollment combined with financial problems in 1995.

We often take for granted the names of places we know so well, but everything has a beginning. The reasoning of namesakes has three centuries of history which may be lost upon us today. Its enduring impact still survives and is reflected in the names of towns we travel now along the familiar roads of home.