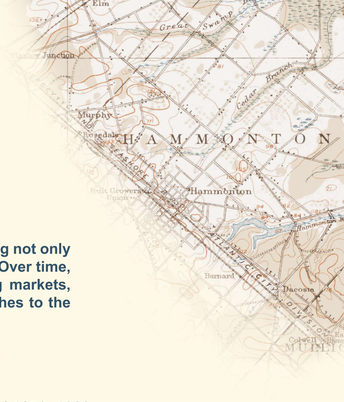


Agriculture

Agriculture has shaped Hammonton since its earliest settlement, influencing not only the land but also the people, businesses, and traditions of the community. Over time, farmers adapted to South Jersey's unique growing conditions, changing markets, new technologies, and new opportunities, from early fruit crops and peaches to the blueberries that would become synonymous with Hammonton.



Hammonton Fruit Growers' Union, 1867.

Farming Takes Root | 1850–1880

Agriculture was central to Hammonton's growth in the 1850s, when inexpensive land and railroad access attracted new settlers. Farmers discovered that the area's sandy soils and climate were particularly well-suited to fruits and berries that could be shipped quickly to urban markets.

1850s - Hammonton promoted as an agricultural settlement

1860s - Grapes, cranberries, plums, cherries and other fruits grown locally

1866 - The great Strawberry Exhibition was held on June 6

1867 - Fruit Growers' Union organized

Hammonton Fruit Growers' Union, 1867
Formed in 1867, the Hammonton Fruit Growers' Union enabled local farmers to work together to market and sell their crops. Believed to be the first cooperative organization of its kind in the nation, it helped establish Hammonton's growing reputation as a fruit-growing community.



Bassett's Nursery, early 1900s.

Berries, Immigration & Opportunity | 1880–1915

Strawberries, blackberries, raspberries and other crops became an important part of Hammonton agriculture. For many Italian immigrants, seasonal farm work provided an entry into the community, while berry production on relatively small plots offered some families a path toward owning their own land and farms.

1880s–90s – Italian immigration expands, Berry farming grows, including blackberries and raspberries

Bassett's Nursery, Early 1900s
Visitors tour the dahlia fields at the Bassett family's nursery in Hammonton. Established in 1868 as Bellevue Nursery and later operated as Wm. F. Bassett & Son, the business was one of several local nurseries that grew flowers, ornamental plants, and other specialty crops. This was an important part of Hammonton agriculture.

1907 – "The Italian on the Land" by Emily Fogg Meade documents Hammonton agriculture and immigration



Hammonton Municipal Market, c. 1930s.

Peaches, Blueberries & Changing Crops | 1915–1950

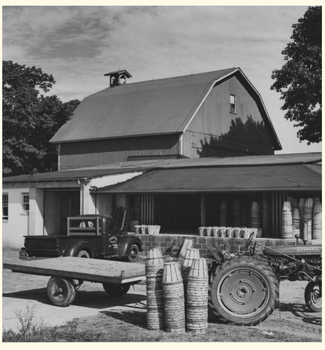
Hammonton farmers continued to adapt what they grew as markets and opportunities changed. Peaches became so important that Hammonton was known as "Peach City," while the development of the cultivated highbush blueberry in South Jersey introduced the crop that would eventually transform the town's agricultural identity.

1916 - First commercial cultivated highbush blueberry crop

Hammonton Municipal Market, c. 1930s
Farmers bring their crops for sale at the Hammonton Municipal Market on West End Avenue, some arriving by truck and others by horse and wagon. Opened in 1927, the market continued Hammonton's long tradition of bringing local growers together to market and sell their produce.

1935–1962 - Peach Parade and Peach Queen tradition

Blueberry acreage expands



Peach harvest at Glossy Fruit Farms, 1960s, Frank Donio, Inc.

The Blueberry Era | 1950–1980

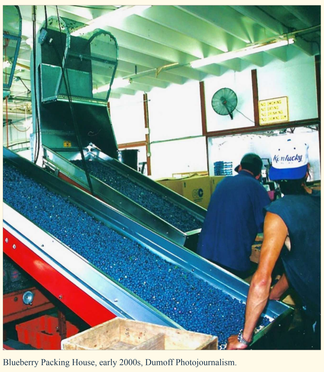
By the mid-twentieth century, blueberries had become increasingly important to Hammonton growers and to the town's identity. New equipment, irrigation, refrigeration, packing methods, improved plant varieties, and agricultural research helped farmers increase production and reach wider markets.

1953 - First Hammonton Blueberry Queen pageant

Blueberry production continues to expand

Farming and packing become increasingly mechanized

Peach Harvest at Glossy Fruit Farms, 1960s
A Frank Donio, Inc. truck picks up bushel baskets of freshly harvested peaches at Glossy Fruit Farms, one of Hammonton's oldest continuously operating farms. The photograph reflects the growing role of local produce companies in moving Hammonton-grown fruits from farm to market.



Blueberry Packing House, early 2000s, Dumoff Photojournalism.

Agriculture Today | 1980–Present

Hammonton agriculture continues to evolve through new technology, changing markets, and a changing workforce. Blueberries remain a signature crop, but today's agricultural landscape also includes peaches, grapes, vegetables, sweet potatoes, blackberries, wineries, farm markets, nursery crops, specialty crops, and agritourism.

Agricultural workforce continues to change

New growing and packing technologies emerge

Farm markets and direct sales expand

Wineries, specialty crops and agritourism add new opportunities

Blueberry Packing House, Early 2000s
Workers oversee blueberries moving through an air-cleaner conveyor manufactured by Blueberry Equipment, Inc. (BEI). Designed to remove leaves, stems, and other field debris as berries move through the packing line, equipment like this reflects the increasing role of technology and automation in Hammonton's modern blueberry industry.

What Hammonton Grew 1984 Figures

Crop	No. of Farms	Acres	Average Yield/Acre (cwt)	Total Production (cwt)	Value (dollars)
Field Crops	6	111	18	1,998	$9,990
Ornamentals	5	40	NA	NA	NA
Apples	12	331	170	56,270	$715,000
Blueberries	38	2,033	44	89,452	$5,546,000
Cranberries	2	65	85	5,525	$303,875
Grapes	5	36	120	4,320	$108,000
Peaches	20	1,361	78	106,158	$3,036,000
Strawberries	8	34	50	1,700	$101,000
Other Fruit	9	106	NA	NA	NA
Snap Beans	5	32	45	1,440	$41,760
Cabbage	2	9	270	2,430	$24,300
Sweet Corn	4	296	80	23,680	$236,800
Cucumbers	16	451	190	85,690	$1,285,000
Peppers	15	83	78	6,474	$136,000
Sweet Potatoes	20	716	125	89,500	$1,074,000
Pumpkins	2	4	NA	NA	NA
Squash	15	456	475	216,600	$2,382,600
Tomatoes	31	321	110	35,310	$424,000
Other Vegetables	9	20	NA	NA	NA

1984 Figures

Number Full-time Farmers: 45
Number Part-time Farmers: 32
Total Acres: 7,182
Information courtesy of Atlantic County Agricultural Agent

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