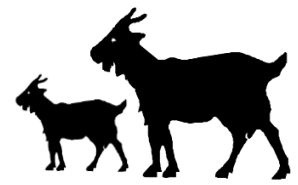




NannyKids



The previous issue of *Nannykids* featured Edison Township public schools and the reasons behind their names. Now it's Metuchen's turn! Enjoy these brief histories about Metuchen's past and present public schools.

Old Franklin Schoolhouse (1807) Metuchen's first school, the one-room Old Franklin Schoolhouse was built ca, 1807. It was named for Benjamin Franklin (1705-1790), as were many schools around the newly formed United States at that time. In 1842, it was rotated on its lot and expanded to accommodate a growing number of students. The building was retired from school service in the 1870s when a new, larger school was built (see below). The Old Franklin Schoolhouse still stands at 491 Middlesex Avenue and is owned and carefully maintained by an all-volunteer non-profit organization.

Franklin Schoolhouse (1870) In 1870, Metuchen's second school building named after Benjamin Franklin, now referred to as the Franklin Schoolhouse, was constructed on Middlesex Avenue, west of the intersection with Main Street. This two-story building was much larger and accommodated all grade levels. When the area's population growth necessitated a new school be built, this building was sold and in 1908 was moved to the corner of New and Pearl Streets where it was used as a public meeting hall and church. It was damaged by fire and demolished ca. 1941.

Franklin School (1909) When the second Franklin Schoolhouse was retired from school service, the Franklin School was built; this is Metuchen's third named for Benjamin Franklin School and the one that many attended and/or remember. It was designed by Walker & Morris, Architects and was completed in 1909 on Middlesex Avenue between Center Street and Central Avenue. It held a variety of grades over the years and after a new high school was built on Grove Avenue in 1958, it served as a middle school. It was demolished in 1999 to make way for condominiums.

Edgar School (1917)

The Edgar School is named for Charles Smith Edgar (1848-1917) and his family, the owners of a large clay mining business who donated the land and funds for its construction (the Edgars also donated the land and funds to build the nearby Metuchen YMCA). Although the school was extensively remodeled in the last decades and no longer resembles the original building, the school is still located on Brunswick Avenue and now serves as a Middle School.

Moss School (1926)

Originally named the Washington School after President George Washington (1732-1799), it was constructed on Simpson Place off Amboy Avenue in 1926. In 1966, it was renamed for Dr. Mildred B. Moss (1896-1981) who was retiring as teacher and principal after 40 years. The main façade of the school is very much the same as when it was built and currently serves as a Kindergarten and offices.

Campbell School (1952)

Initially serving Kindergarten through Third Grade, Campbell School was constructed in 1952 on Durham Avenue. It was named after William T. Campbell (1869-1958) who was also in the clay business and provided the land for the school and playing fields. He loved baseball, and when he could no longer play himself, he organized local teams to play against touring professional teams on his fields. Many notable professional teams played on the Campbell School grounds over the years. It now serves First through Fourth grades.

Metuchen High School (1958)

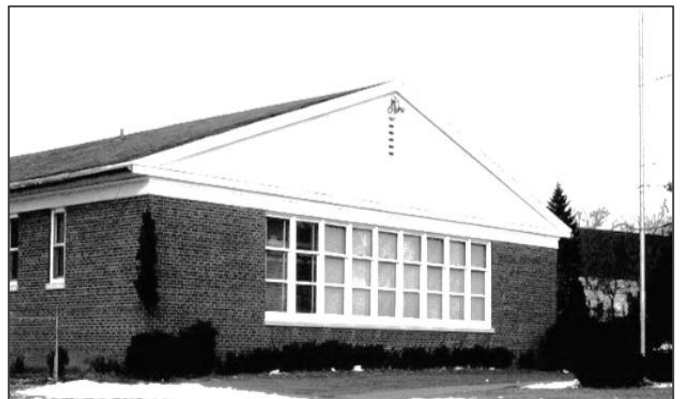
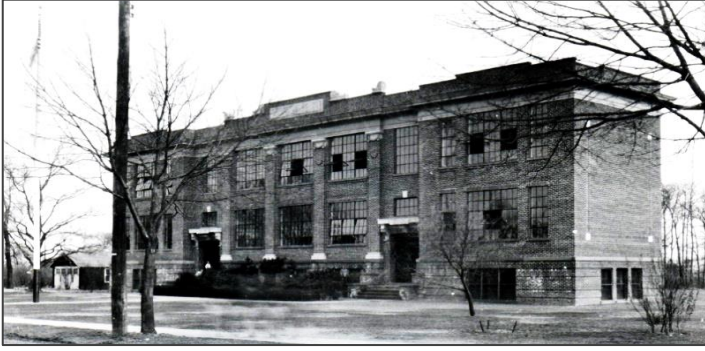
The Metuchen High School, built in 1958 on Grove Avenue, was designed by Mickelwright and Mountford, Architects. It is still in use as a high school.



The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society was founded in 1974 with the primary purpose of promoting an interest in and appreciation of the history of the Borough of Metuchen and the Township of Edison.

Name that School!

Below are historic images of Metuchen's public schools... try to match them up to the schools on Page 1.



Did You Know?

- New Jersey, with over 300 miles of coastline and riverfront, is technically a peninsula.
- The highest elevation along the eastern coast of the U.S. is in Highlands, New Jersey.
- High Point is highest point in New Jersey, at 1,497 feet.
- New Jersey ranks 46th in the U.S. in land area, with 7,420 square miles.
- New Jersey was named for Jersey Island, off the coast of the United Kingdom.
- Newark, founded in 1666, is the nation's third-oldest city after New York & Boston.
- New Jersey is home to more racehorses than Kentucky.
- New Jersey ranks 4th in the U.S. in the production of peaches.



“The Cold Winter & the Summerless Summer of 1816”

The following item is transcribed from a document in the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society’s archives. It was written in 1938 by Alfred Mundy, age 90, about his father Ogden Mundy account of 1816’s extreme weather. What Ogden Mundy and the others in the village of Metuchen didn’t know at the time was that the volcanic Mount Tambora in what is now Indonesia had exploded the previous year and for months continued putting millions of tons of volcanic ash into the air. The largest such eruption in recorded history, it led to yellow skies around the globe and the cooling of the northern hemisphere in 1816 which resulted in crop failures in North America.

In 1816 Mr. [Ogden] Mundy lived on the Mundy farm, now a part of the Woodbrook Farms, and which had been in the family ever since it was patented to Nicholas Mundy some time in the 1600s.

In this year there was four feet of snow on the level around Metuchen. Three or four cows had to be dug out of the snow. All of the heating at that time was done by wood burned in open fireplaces, for coal fireplaces had not been invented. The wood was drawn from the woods by sled and ox teams. When they reached the woods, the snow being so deep they couldn’t turn around and the oxen had to be unhitched and hitched to the other end of the sled which after being loaded was drawn backwards to the house and the wood cut for the fire there and another trip was not made until it was used up as they expected a break in the weather which didn’t come.

In the spring when it came time for plowing, they were unable to plow nearer than 20 feet from the fence on account of the snow drifted along the fences. There wasn’t any crop of corn that summer although there was a fair crop of oats, and a good crop of wheat. There was frost every night through the summer, and at harvest time in July it was so cold that they had to do their reaping with coats and mittens on.

You can read more about the impact of world events on local history in the digitized copies of the *Metuchen Recorder* available online on the Metuchen Public Library’s website.

Just for Laughs

What breed is magician David Copperfield’s dog?
A Labracadabrador!

Where do cows go on Friday nights?
They go to the moo-vies!

How do you make an octopus laugh?
With ten-tickles!

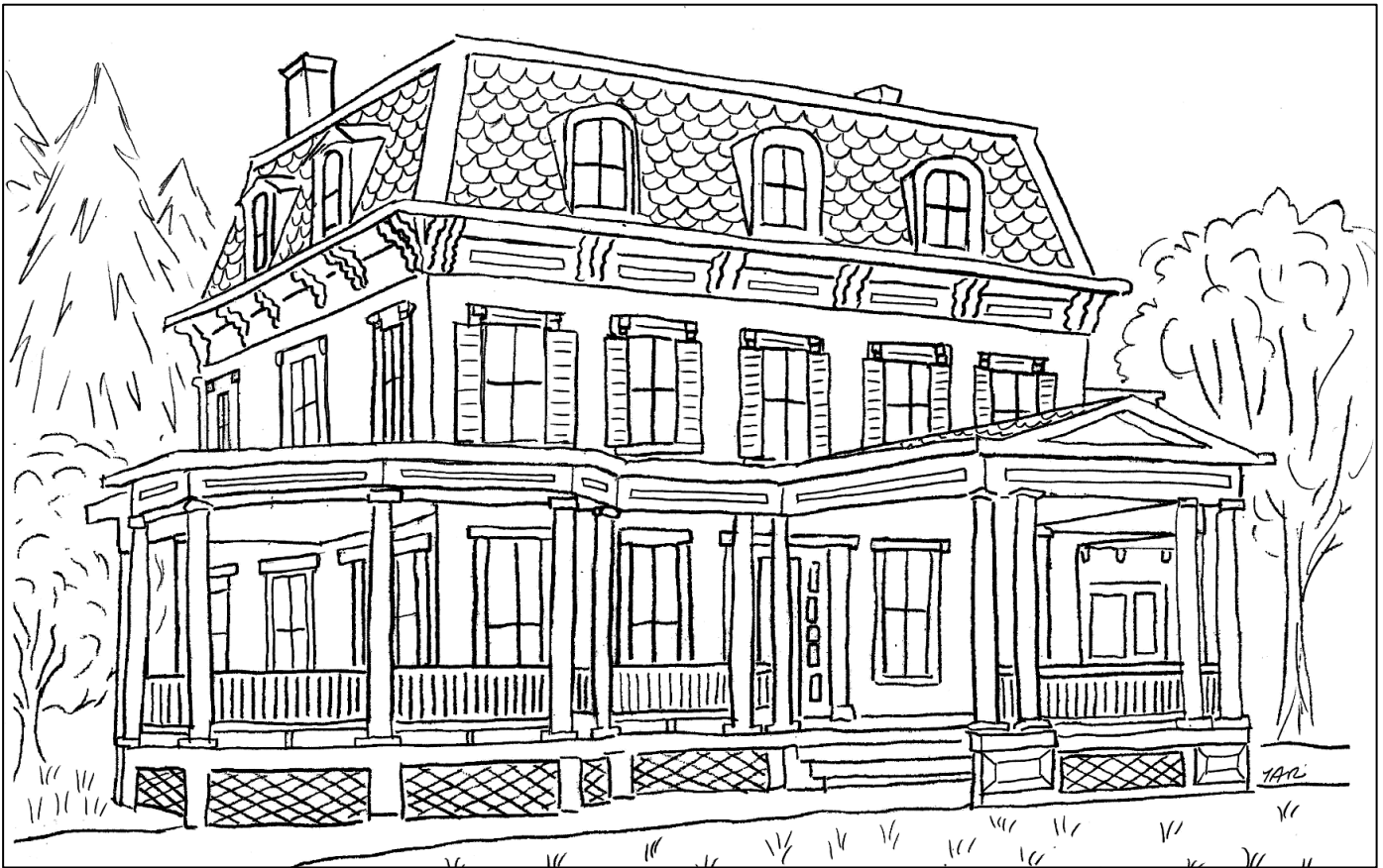
How do you keep a bull from charging?
Take away its credit card!

Join Us!

Consider joining the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society as a dues-paying Member and help us to "Save the Past for the Future." Visit our website at metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org or scan the code below.



Colorful History: Danish Home of Edison



The century-long history of the Danish Home began in 1914, when a Victorian house with a 72-acre tract of land was purchased by Danish Lodges. The Victorian house (shown above) is identified in then-contemporary postcards as being the Danish Home for Aged, in Metuchen. It was to be a self-sufficient retirement home for members of the Danish Brotherhood and Danish Sisterhood of the Eastern United States. By 1917 a farm manager was hired, wheat and vegetables were being grown, and livestock provided meat and eggs. A 1917 farm “census” listed 4 horses, 4 cows, 2 calves, 3 pigs, approximately 80 chickens, and 10 ducks.

The Danish Home for the Aged continued to serve its intended purpose well, and in 1949, across the street from its original location, and now with an Edison address, a new and larger building was constructed. In the shape of a traditional Danish house, much of the labor was contributed by members of the Danish Lodges, many of whom were, by profession, carpenters, masons, and plumbers.

Behind the Danish Home a mausoleum was built (*Mindehoyen*) to be made available to the Brotherhood and Sisterhood Lodge members. During the ensuing decades parcels of land were gradually sold off, most notably for what became route 287.

The Danish Home stopped serving as a retirement home in 2002, but it continues to serve the Danish community in many capacities. The Danish Home Board continues to meet monthly, as do the Brotherhood and Sisterhood groups. DANE (Danish Archives North East), a genealogy research group, has offices in the building. The site now serves as a cultural and heritage center, with a museum, to honor those Danes and their families who emigrated to the United States.

Nannykids, the occasional newsletter for “kids” is an off-shoot of *Nannygoats*, the quarterly newsletter published by the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society, a 501(c)(3), nonprofit, tax-exempt charitable organization. The name “Nannygoats” is the title of a collection of *anecdotes* (articles, reminiscences, and letters) compiled by photographer J. Lloyd Grimstead; he humorously rhymed *anecdotes* with *nannygoats*. Grimstead also took more than 2,800 photographs of the Metuchen-Edison area, mostly during the 1930s, now in the Society’s archives. For questions or submissions to future issues, contact Tyreen A. Reuter (editor) at metuchenedisonhistory@gmail.com.

www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org