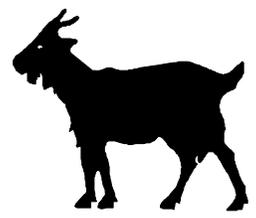


# Nannygoats



Vol. 10, Issue 2

Newsletter of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society

Summer 2012

The following article was written by *Nannygoats'* editor, Tyreen A. Reuter, who lives in Metuchen with her husband, Steve, and two young sons, Samuel and Nicholas, in the ca. 1740 Ayers-Allen House on Durham Avenue. Tyreen and Steve moved to Metuchen in October, 1998, were married on the front steps of their 'new' old home, and soon after were welcomed by and became members of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society.

*"The halls that were loud with the merry tread of young and careless feet..."* begins Joyce Kilmer's poem, *The New School*, published one year before he was killed in action during World War I. While his poem about the 'new school' of battle wasn't about an actual building, the fact he choose a school for his allegory speaks to fact that these buildings of our youth hold a special place in our memories. For many, yearbooks and class photos hold meaning well beyond just sentimental objects, and a simple walk through your old school can resurface memories and emotions long gone.



## A Window to the Past



If you grew up in Metuchen, odds are that you either attended or remember the Franklin School that sat for ninety years on Middlesex Avenue at Center Street. If you could take a walk through the building now, it would probably evoke a whole host of recollections; classmates, teachers, crushes, the smell of your books. And, it was a familiar landmark for those passing through Metuchen as well, a massive brick edifice well set back from the road.

Built in 1909 by Walker & Morris Architects, the Franklin School was a large Colonial Revival building, complete with keystone lintels, quoins, pedimented dormers, a hipped roof flanked with massive chimneys, and a decorative cornice. Additions were made to the building in 1922, 1930, and 1939, and it survived a fire in 1957. But it was eventually retired from service, and sold to make way for the Franklin Square condominiums. It was demolished in 1999.

*Continued on Page 4*

### *Also in this issue*

*Local History & Preservation Updates  
Menlo Park Museum Reopens  
New in the Archives  
Class of 1931 History Continued  
1928 Directory excerpts  
On the Bookshelf  
Upcoming Events and Programs*

**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 of Edison Township.**

**UPDATE:**  
*Short Hills Battlefield  
 National Register Project*  
 by Walter R. Stochel, Jr.

The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society submitted the NJ & National Register Nomination forms to the NJ Historic Preservation Office in February 2012 for the Short Hills Battlefield in Edison.

This nomination is the result of research done in 2010 by MEHS with a grant from the American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP). In June 2012, a staff member from the NJ Historic Preservation Office came out to the site to see the battlefield and get a better understanding of the site.

The next step is for the NJ Historic Preservation Office to comment on the nomination, and then the Society will respond and submit additional documentation as needed. We look forward to announcing sometime in the near future that the nomination is successful.

**NEW IN THE ARCHIVES**

Someone very generously donated the C.W. Fairweather sign below by dropping it off at the archives... we'd love to know who, and a little bit more about where it came from. If you know, or are that special person, please the contact the editor at 732-452-1381.



**Help the Horse Trough!**

The historic “horse trough” that sits in the Oak Avenue triangle on Middlesex Avenue, has been a landmark to travelers for more than a century. It’s not unusual to find artists painting scenes depicting the cast iron



fountain, or photographers stopping to snap a shot. But now, thirty years after its last restoration, it is once again in need of repair, and the Woodwild Park Association, which owns the triangle and fountain, is undertaking the initial steps in the process. The initial estimate is that it will take \$25,000 to fully restore the fountain, so fundraising efforts will begin in earnest soon. If you are interested in being part of this effort, contact the Woodwild Park Association at [info@woodwildpark.org](mailto:info@woodwildpark.org).

*New on the Bookshelf...*

We’ve got our copy, do you? “Marty’s Musings; Tales of the Great Depression, World War II, the Korean War, and New Jersey” by Martin D. Jessen, Outskirts Press, Inc, 2011. Pick it up at your local bookstore, or contact us to purchase an autographed copy through the Society.



**HPC’S ARCHITECTURAL SCAVENGER HUNT**

The Borough of Metuchen’s Historic Preservation Committee (HPC) held an Architectural Scavenger Hunt again this May in honor of National Preservation Month. This year, prizes were awarded in age and group categories as well – thanks to the Metuchen Area Chamber of Commerce and a private donor – and runners-up received copies of the Colonial Cemetery history compiled as part of the Borough’s centennial celebration.



# MUSEUM AT MENLO PARK RE-OPENS

by Nancy Zerbe

One of Edison's historic landmarks is open again to the public. On Saturday, June 9, 2012, the museum at the Thomas Edison Center at Menlo Park re-opened after a two-year renovation and development of all new interpretive exhibits. Located on the grounds of Thomas Alva Edison's historic Menlo Park laboratory site, the small museum interprets Edison's accomplishments at the world's first industrial research and development laboratory, including invention of the first practical light bulb, development of a complete electrical generation and distribution system, improvements in communications via the telephone and telegraphy, and invention of the phonograph.

Over 300 people joined the non-profit Edison Memorial Tower Corporation (EMTC) on June 9<sup>th</sup> for the Museum Grand Re-opening Celebration. The day's activities included guided tours of the museum's new exhibits, the unveiling of the site's new logo, and fun educational activities throughout the grounds.

The renovation project, the first major project since the building's construction in the early 1940s, included upgrades to the building's systems, overall repairs and re-painting, and—most important of all—alterations to provide access for persons with handicaps in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The new interpretive exhibits—the first professionally developed comprehensive exhibits in the museum's history—broaden the scope of the museum's interpretation to include all aspects of the site's history, both Thomas Edison's amazing accomplishments and the twentieth century efforts to commemorate Edison and his Menlo Park laboratory.

What can you learn by going to Menlo Park? You can learn why the site has attracted people for over 130 years. In the 1870s, people flocked to Menlo Park first to see Edison's amazing new device to record the human voice and a year later for a spectacular New Year's Eve lighting of Christie Street. Long after Edison left Menlo Park and the buildings fell into disrepair (and, no, Henry Ford didn't take them all out to Michigan—but, you'll learn about that too!), people

continued to come to Menlo Park. In the twentieth century, Edison's followers (the "Edison Pioneers") started a tradition of commemorating the site, culminating in the beautiful Art Deco Edison Memorial Tower. Most important, perhaps, is that you'll learn that Menlo Park isn't just about what Edison invented, but how he invented. While at Menlo Park, Edison developed the world's first industrial research and development laboratory.

Kathleen Carlucci, the site's Director of Interpretation, is pleased at the public's reaction to the new exhibits. According to Ms. Carlucci, "visitation has increased and the guests seem very pleased with the exhibits and the tour they receive." She is also pleased that "for the first time, the museum has a dedicated space for changing exhibits. The first special exhibit, developed by the restoration architects at Mills & Schnoering Architects, LLC, focuses on the restoration of the Edison

Memorial Tower, which has just begun."

Located at 37 Christie Street, the museum is open Thursday–Saturday 10:00–4:00; private group tours can be arranged on other days by contacting the museum. There is no entrance fee; however, there is a suggested donation of \$5.00 per person to help with the non-profit's costs. For more info, see [www.menloparkmuseum.org](http://www.menloparkmuseum.org) or call 732-549-3299.



*The Board of non-profit Edison Memorial Tower Corporation (EMTC)*

When you go, make sure to sign up for the EMTC's electronic newsletter or become an EMTC member so that you'll receive notifications of changing exhibits. There are many facets of Menlo Park and Thomas Edison that the EMTC looks forward to exploring through special exhibits.

*Editorial Note: Following the re-opening, Nancy Zerbe stepped down as EMTC President. Nancy, a former MEHS president, led the EMTC for six years through several initiatives, including major fundraising, the push to get the Edison Memorial Tower restoration under contract, and the two-year museum renovation project. Even though Nancy is leaving her official position, she is still passionate about our local Metuchen and Edison history and will continue to help with preservation efforts.*

That building was in fact the *third* school named for Benjamin Franklin built in Metuchen. The Old Franklin Schoolhouse (built ca. 1807, see right) was the first, and a larger wood frame Franklin School (built 1870) located on Middlesex Avenue at Centre Street was the second. This second school (see below) was later moved to the northeast corner of New and Pearl Streets to make way for the construction of the third school, and was home to the Second Baptist Church for several years before it was demolished.



There is no one alive who is old enough to have attended either the first or second Franklin Schools, and the third is now gone. But through a series of fortunate events, a small - but iconic - part of the school was salvaged, has been restored, and is now on display. For those who went there or remember it, perhaps this rescued window, that sat above the double front entrance doors, will evoke some of those school days memories.

The window was salvaged by Metuchen resident Gerry Rice following the school's demolition in 1999. He kept it for a while, with the hopes of repairing and reusing it; he was able to find use for four copper-framed opaque transom windows from the former locker rooms, which he installed in his home on Spring Street for ventilation. The fan window, however, was so badly damaged that he decided to notify the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society that he was putting it at his curb. As eager new residents and Society members, my husband and I took him up on the offer, and enlisted my grandfather, Carroll Thomas Benjamin (1917-2008) to repair it at his home in Connecticut. An old New England carpenter,

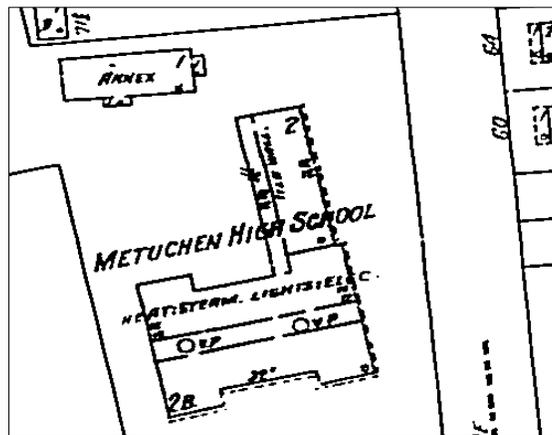


The Old Franklin Schoolhouse was constructed ca. 1807 as Metuchen's first school. The original one-room, 20' by 20' building was built by local residents on donated land. In 1842 the school was repaired, expanded, and renovated with Greek Revival embellishments such as the cornice, dentils, and cupola. In 1870, a new, larger Franklin School was built further south on Middlesex Avenue to accommodate the growing number of students and the old schoolhouse was soon after retired from public service. Records indicate that for a period of time, an Irish immigrant cobbler, Mr. Markey, lived there with his family.

Soon after it's founding in 1901, the Borough Improvement League (B.I.L.) met to discuss their "plans for preserving the Old Academy building" that many had fondly remembered attending, and began the process of purchasing and rescuing it from its poor condition. In 1908, the B.I.L. began the repair work, and on July 14, 1910, the founding members of the B.I.L. officially deeded the property to the club for \$1. The building was surveyed as part of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and awarded a certificate attesting to its historic interest and associations in January, 1942. Efforts are currently underway to have the Old Franklin Schoolhouse, which received a Certification of Eligibility (COE) several years ago, formally listed on the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places.

my “Opa” was successful in repairing the cracked frame and replacing the missing glass and muntins. Unfortunately, Opa’s own home was badly burned by a fire before we could bring it back to New Jersey. Luckily, my grandparents were not physically hurt by the fire and the window, being stored near the Benjamin’s root cellar, survived with only some smoke and water damage. We brought the window back to Metuchen, and after much thought, decided the best home for it would be the Old Franklin Schoolhouse.

Christopher Crane, who was visiting the Grimstead Archives this spring, learned that the window he



remembered so well had been salvaged and volunteered to help repaint it. He and my husband were able to finish the cleaning, painting, and scraping, and Alan Binstein (of Alan’s Enterprises, LLC.) generously donated his services to install it on the south gable wall of the schoolhouse.

On June 14, 2012, we officially donated the window to the schoolhouse to mark the 111th anniversary of the founding of the Borough Improvement League and the 10th year of my service as its president. But in reality it is not a donation, but has always

belonged to the residents of Metuchen, and there is perhaps no better home for the window than the first - and now only - of the Franklin Schools.

Appropriately perhaps, Kilmer’s poem ends; *“And there will be ghosts in the old school, brave ghosts with laughing eyes, On the field with a ghostly cricket-bat, by the stream with a ghostly rod; They will touch the hearts of the living with a flame that sanctifies, A flame that they took with strong young hands from the altar-fires of God.”*



Alfred Joyce Kilmer was born in New Brunswick in 1886, attended Rutgers Prep, Rutgers University, and Columbia University. In 1908, he married fellow poet Aline Murray, Henry Mills Alden’s step-daughter, at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Metuchen. They had five children and lived in Mahwah, while he worked as Latin teacher and writer. His best known work, “Trees,” published in 1914, was dedicated to his mother-in-law, Mrs. Ada Murray Alden, who lived on what is now East Chestnut Avenue in Metuchen. He enlisted to serve in World War I in 1917, and was killed in action in 1918 by a sniper in France. He is buried in the Oise-Aisne Cemetery, Fere-en-Tardenois, France.

Images included in this article

Front page, top: a 1909 photograph of the newly constructed Franklin School. Front page, bottom: a current image of the window. Page 4, top: An April, 2012 view of the Old Franklin Schoolhouse. Page 4, bottom: a 1929 view of the second Franklin School, after it had been moved to the northeast corner of New and Pearl Streets. Page 5, top: a 1929 Sanborn Fire Insurance map image of the third Franklin School. The one-story annex shown at the rear was later moved and is now the American Legion building on Lake Avenue. Page 5, middle: The Metuchen High School Class of 1923 poses, just as generations of classes did, in front of the main entrance. Page 5, bottom: Alan Binstein and his crew hanging the window on July 6, 2012.

## Metuchen High School's Class of 1931 *History of Metuchen*

The following is continued from the Class of 1931's *History of Metuchen*, which is being reprinted in *Nannygoats* serially (beginning with Volume 5, Issue 2, Summer 2007). While the history contains some known factual & grammatical errors, the document is reproduced exactly as originally written.

### CHURCHES

One of the biggest social and moral influences in Metuchen has been the church. At present there are six located in Metuchen - the Presbyterian, the Dutch Reformed, the Episcopal, the Methodist, the Baptist, and the Roman Catholic.

It was originally planned to treat each church thoroughly but the immense amount of detailed information made it imperative to omit this. There merely the dates of the founding of the churches are given. For more complete information, the reader is referred to the pamphlet on the church of Metuchen by Dr. Ezra M. Hunt, which may be seen at the library.

Presbyterian	1760
Dutch Reformed	1858 ["1857" handwritten]
Methodist	1869
Episcopal	1869
Baptist	[no date provided]
Roman Catholic	1867

*Editor: Please note that in the years since this history was written, there have been several other houses of worship established, and many of their histories have been written and published. The Society would be extremely appreciative to receive historical information about any of these congregations and would be pleased to reprint written histories in future editions of Nannygoats.*



*Above: Alexander Litterst, second Mayor of Metuchen. On file in the Society's Grimstead Room.*

### GOVERNMENT AND ZONING

Two phases of life in Metuchen, not hitherto mentioned, which have had an important effect on the people, are government and zoning.

In the early days Metuchen was a part of Woodbridge Township and was managed by three men who were elected by the people. Because of the small size of the village and the peaceful, rural attitude of the citizens, no complicated governing machine was needed.

Important cases were first held in New Brunswick. Then sometime later, a whipping post established near the present Manning Freeman Lumber Yard. If a person committed a wrong, he was tied to the post and received a certain number of lashes.

Metuchen became a borough in 1900 after much argument among the people who feared a raise in taxes and who believed that Metuchen was too small. The first town officials included William M. Thornal [sic], mayor, Mr. Robinson, clerk, and Squire Moss, who made out the papers and deeds. Five councilmen were elected, and two policemen, Florida and Fouratte, to take care of the town. Court Session was held in Robins' Hall but since 1924 had been held in the Borough Hall.

#### Mayors of Metuchen

Wm. N. Thornal	1900-1902
A.C. Litterst	1902-1904
Ferdinand Van Siclen	1904-1906
A.L. Ellis	1906-1908
Richard Wilson	1908-1910
Washington Wilson	1910-1912
R.C. Burr (see below)	1912-1913
Sam Clark	1912-1913
H.B. Johnson (see below)	1913-1914
Thorfin Tait	1914-1916
Washington Wilson	1916-1924*
Fritz Clarkson	1924-1928**
A.K. Hillpot	1928-1930
Phineas Jones	1930-

R.C. Burr acted as mayor while Washington Wilson was out of town. H.B. Johnson finished out Sam Clark's term (Mr. Clark moved out of town).  
\*four successive terms, \*\*two successive terms

***Next Issue: more from "Government and Zoning," including a description of Main Street and then "Newspapers."***



The advertisement above is taken from a 1923 Library Association booklet on file in the Society's Grimstead Room.

### Nannygoats will be 10 years old...

It's true – the Winter 2013 issue will mark ten years that the Society has been publishing *Nannygoats*. Want to be a part of that history? We encourage submissions to be considered for the newsletter. A history of your family, house, local event? We welcome a wide range of diverse topics.

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The name of the newsletter, "Nannygoats," is taken from the title of a collection of anecdotes, articles, reminiscences, and letters compiled by photographer J. Lloyd Grimstead. He took more than 2,800 photographs of the Metuchen-Edison area, mostly during the 1930s, which make up 80 percent of the Historical Society's photographic collection. The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society dedicates this publication to Lloyd Grimstead, as a way of honoring him for collecting and recording so much of our local history.

The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

### 1928 Directory of Metuchen, Column 8

Below is the eighth column of entries from a 1928 Directory of Metuchen that includes both addresses and telephone numbers of local residents. The small "r" after the name indicates the entry is for a "residence." The Society began reprinting the entirety of this directory in the Winter/Spring 2010 issue of *Nannygoats*.

Kramer E dry goods 441 Main....Metuchen-40  
 Kramer H r Carlton rd.....Metuchen-203-J  
 Kress J W r 203 Amboy av....Metuchen-293-M  
 Kroeger Aug r 207 Woodbridge av.Metuchen-92  
 Krogh H r 60 Amboy av.....Metuchen-276  
 Krommes J conf Oak Tree rd....Metuchen-599  
 Kromolithic Flooring Co 1 Maple.Metuchen-481  
 Kuntz L F DDS r 467 Midsex av.Metuchen-240  
 Kuntcher J r Amboy av.....Metuchen-263-J  
 La Forge C C r 43 Chas.....Metuchen-323-M  
 La Forge D D 28 Clinton pl....Metuchen-203-W  
 LaForge E L r Fords.....Metuchen-532-W  
 Lage B H Inc Menlo Park.....Metuchen-658  
 Laing Raymond M r 63 Carson av.Metuchen-125  
 Lake County Clay Co Station pl.\*Metuchen-616  
 Lamb L R & W W coal Lake....Metuchen-422  
 Lamparter Geo r Walnut pl....Metuchen-112-R  
 Lamparter Geo O r 38 Thomas.Metuchen-196-J  
 Lamparter O F r 28 William....Metuchen-140-J  
 Landgren E r Albourne.....Metuchen-345-R  
 Langstaff H A r Lincoln hwy..Metuchen-152-W  
 Lankey P & Sons meat & grocer  
 Bonhamtown..Metuchen-490  
 La Roe W r Chestnut av.....Metuchen-632  
 Larsen C r 1 Park pl.....Metuchen-766  
 Larsen A O r Menlo Park.....Metuchen-416-M  
 Larsen V r 5th.....Metuchen-373  
 Larson Ruth Miss r Fords.....Metuchen-532-J  
 Laskowski H r 135 Rose.....Metuchen-145-M  
 Lau J r 20 Sylvan.....Metuchen-392  
 Lawler Edw W off Durham av....Metuchen-245  
 Residence 91 Rock View av NP.Plainfld-4934  
 Lawler Edw W Inc machy  
 Durham av..Metuchen-245  
 Lawless J autos & supps 435 Main.Metuchen-424  
 Lawrence C H r 11 Lincoln av..Metuchen-186-R  
 Lawrence L r 65 New.....Metuchen-635  
 Lawrence Oscar P r 88 Graham av.Metuchen-339  
 Lehigh Valley R R Co  
 Metuchen sta Perth Junction.Metuchen-446-W  
 Leidecker J M r 91 Main.....Metuchen-539  
 Leis J A hdwre Main.....Metuchen-184  
 Leis L Miss r Main.....Metuchen-56-M  
 Lembeck A restrnt Oak Tree....Metuchen-712  
 Letson Chas Mrs r 59 Graham av.Metuchen-6-W  
 Levin Albert r Iselin.....Metuchen-630-J  
 Levine H cigars & Stat 399 Main.Metuchen-758  
 Little E r Fords.....Metuchen-331-M  
 Little Wm P r 64 Elm av.....Metuchen-89  
 Limoli E cks & Suits Iselin....Metuchen-381-W  
 Lincoln Farm Ser Sta Middlesex av.Metuchen-708  
 Lincoln Garage Middlesex av....Metuchen-704  
 Lincoln Inn Lincoln highway....Metuchen-792  
 Lindenthal G Plainfield av....Metuchen-69-W  
 Lindhart H r 16 Lauradale....Metuchen-177-R  
 Linnell Harry r Iselin.....Metuchen-288-W  
 Litterest A C r 36 Middlesex av..Metuchen-646  
 Litterest G W lwyr 494 Main....Metuchen-670  
 Residence 30 Middlesex av.Metuchen-366-W  
 Lockwood W W r Fords.....Metuchen-239-M  
 Long Herbert J r 89 Highland av.Metuchen-359  
 Loomar N r 427 Main.....Metuchen-42-W  
 Lord H W 459 Middlesex av....Metuchen-280  
 Lorraine Oil Co Whitman av....Metuchen-93  
 Lorraine Oil Co ser sta Middlxs av.Metuchen-23  
 Lucey D J r Amboy av.....Metuchen-239-J  
 Luerich Harry L Rev 51 Home..Metuchen-54-M  
 Lund A J r Dartmouth.....Metuchen-627-R  
 Lunden E S r Menlo Park.....Metuchen-351-M  
 Lustig S r Iselin.....Metuchen-556-R-2  
 M & M Machine & Boiler Co  
 339 Water..Perth Amboy-9  
 MacClurg Wm Er r 19 Clinton pl.Metuchen-203-R  
 MacDaniel Rebecca Miss r  
 Bonhamtown..Metuchen-692-J  
 Machat L auto painting Amboy av.Metuchen-590  
 Mack E B Mrs r 55 Christol av..Metuchen-249-J  
 MacLachlan A r 68 Rector.....Metuchen-415  
 MacLachlan J r 204 Chestnut ay.Metuchen-14-J  
 Madison P r 14 Home.....Metuchen-189  
 Madsen Jorgen r Fords.....Metuchen-29-W  
 Magamoll A r Bonhamtown....Metuchen-706-R  
 Maloney D r 36 Cedar.....Metuchen-550-R  
 Maloney E J r 304 Amboy av....Metuchen-223  
 Maloney F A r Pleasant av....Metuchen-536-J  
 Mann H M Miss r 280 Lake....Metuchen-233-J

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

### **“1888” Crumbs of Comfort Dinner at Hailey’s Harp & Pub Tuesday, August 21, 2012**

Please join us on Tuesday, August 21st for a historical dinner based on the 19th century recipes contained in the "Crumbs of Comfort" cookbook compiled by the 'Ladies Aid Society of the Presbyterian Church' of Metuchen in 1888. The event will be hosted by Hailey's Harp & Pub at 400 Main Street in Metuchen, in collaboration with and featuring history presentations by the Society. Seating is limited, and reservations are required by calling Hailey's at 732-321-0777. The event is \$50 per person, and includes the following menu and special beer pairings with each course.

~ Menu ~

**Mrs. Emery's Chow-Chow**  
**Mrs. Gilbert's Chicken for Supper**  
**Mrs. Emery's Filet of Beef**  
**Mrs. Rowland's Pickled Blackberries**  
**Mrs. Emery's Lobster Rolls**  
**Mrs. Mason's Trifle**

### **Window Dedication - September 2012**

*Details and date to be confirmed.*

Members and special guests will be invited to a reception event at the Old Franklin Schoolhouse in Metuchen to officially dedicate the Franklin School Window.

### **Metuchen Country Fair - October 6**

The ever-popular Metuchen Country Fair will be held on Saturday from 10am to 4pm, and the Society will be there with merchandise, historical displays, a new edition of *Nannygoats*, and more.

### **To Cast a Freedman's Vote - November 4**

Join us on Sunday, November 4, 2012 at the Old Franklin Schoolhouse for a special presentation by noted New Jersey author, Gordon Bond, who will present "To Cast a Freedman's Vote" about Metuchen-born Thomas Mundy Peterson, who made Civil Rights History as the first African-American to vote in an election under the 15th Amendment. Learn about the truly remarkable convergence of circumstances that made that moment possible.



**Metuchen-Edison Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 61**  
**Metuchen, NJ 08840**

### ***Interested in back issues of Nannygoats?***

All back issues are available for download from our website at  
[www.metuchen-edisonhistoc.org](http://www.metuchen-edisonhistoc.org).



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