

METUCHEN WALKING TOUR

THE OLD FRANKLIN SCHOOLHOUSE TO THE FORUM THEATRE

#1	Old Franklin Schoolhouse, built ca. 1807. A Key Contributing site in the Middlesex Avenue-Woodwild Park Historic District in 2017.
#2	Metuchen Club (now YMCA) constructed in 1899 under guidance of New Brunswick architect George K. Parsell. A Contributing site in the Middlesex Avenue-Woodwild Park Historic District in 2017.
#3	Metuchen Public Library. Built 1935-1937 with donations and WPA funds. A Key Contributing site in the Middlesex Avenue-Woodwild Park Historic District in 2017.
#4	Washington Hose Company, built 1897 and issued a Certificate of Eligibility in 2009. This is the second of Metuchen's two original Fire Companies.
#5	Clarkson's Store (Picture Perfect Studio), built ca. 1808. Although heavily altered, it's likely the oldest extant commercial building (in continuous use) in the Borough. Originally sat at the corner of Main & Middlesex.
#6	Metuchen Borough Hall, site of the original Borough Hall, built 1924 and listed in the National Register in 2001.
#7	Danford's Corner. Built 1905, after Clarkson's store was moved east off the site. Probably Metuchen's most iconic commercial building besides The Forum Theatre.
#8	Metuchen Theatre Building (now Wade Appraisal) at 460 Main Street, built ca. 1912. Several of the managers & staff of this business became part of the group that constructed and operated The Forum.
#9	Metuchen Inn site. The bank, and the mid-century commercial buildings here were constructed on the site of the former Metuchen Inn. Also known as the Hillside Inn, it was built by local businessman Nathan Robins. In 1913, the Woman Suffrage Hike from New York to Washington, DC passed through Metuchen, and most of the participants spent the first night at the Metuchen Inn. The Jewel Shop is the oldest continually operating retail business in Metuchen.
#10	Kramer's Department Store, built 1907 by Edward Kramer. He began selling dry goods in the later 1870s after working as a laborer for Thomas Edison at Menlo Park, and credited that first job with giving him the courage to open his own business.
#11	The former Albany Hotel, where Metuchen's visits. It was in Soo San Chinese Restaurant (now Pink Lotus) that Lucille Ball was spotted getting lunch with a local realtor in about 1959, leading to rumors ever since that she lived for a time in Metuchen (she didn't).
#12	Morris Stores (now The Greek on Main and surrounding businesses). A mainstay of Metuchen's retail businesses for decades, Morris Stores closed in 1995. Since then it has been converted into several restaurants - retail-to-restaurant is extremely common in Metuchen.
#13	Costa's/Lucca's (now Artevino). Built in 1914 by the Costa family for use as an icecream store on the first floor, while the family lived upstairs. Costa's Ice Cream was widely served, and for many years was manufactured at the Costa's factory on Pearl Street (recently converted into short-term office space).
#14	National Bank Building, constructed in 1895. Prior to the construction of the Public Library on Middlesex Avenue, the second floor housed the borough's book collection for a period of several years.
#15	Eagle Hook & Ladder (Cachet Boutique). Built 1885 and moved in 1888. This was Metuchen's first Fire Company and was established in 1880 near the train station.

#16	Robin's Hall (Bagels For You), constructed in 1873 by Nathan Robins. The building now has apartments on the upper floors, but all three levels originally served public & commercial functions, including meeting rooms for the Borough prior to the construction of Borough Hall, etc. In the second half of the 20th century it was a hardware store.
#17	The Burroughs Building (Quick In Food Store), constructed in 1901 by Edward A. Burroughs (1859- 1948). Burroughs held a variety of offices locally, including Borough Clerk and Postmaster, and was a successful businessman, pharmacist, and prolific builder in the area. He was also a founding member the Metuchen Golf & Country Club. For several years the building served as Metuchen's Post Office.
#18	Edgar Clay Company, built 1925. The locally prominent & wealthy Edgar family donated land and funds for the construction of the Metuchen YMCA and the Edgar Middle School. In the 1910s and 1920s, they were the one of if not the entire area's largest employer and housed immigrant laborers in vacant estate houses in the area. Tensions surrounding these workers were one of the factors for the Klan activity in Metuchen in the mid 1920s.
#19	Colonial Cemetery and site of the Metuchen Meeting House. Established between 1715 and 1730 as the burying ground associated with the Presbyterian Church, it contains approximately 500 marked graves and 60 unmarked graves, with those marked ranging from 1731 to 1892. In 1974, the Presbyterian Church donated the cemetery to the Borough. A recent study revealed a large spike in burials in the late 1820s and early 1830s, with the largest in 1831. The author surmised the spike may be due to the Cholera epidemics, but that noted that it predates the known spread of the disease in this area.
#20	Metuchen Train Station, built 1888 by the Pennsylvania Railroad using the standard design #2665B, Brick Station and Dwelling." Originally, the station had a slate roof, cresting, and an exterior with half-timbering, brick, clapboard, and scalloped shingles. It received a Determination of Eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places in 1977, was renovated in 1979.
#21	First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen, founded in 1717 as the Second Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge.
#22	Metuchen Post Office, built and listed in the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places in 2007 and 2008, respectively.
#23	Victorian Office Rentals. These residential building along the west side of Main Street and along the north side of Amboy Avenue are owned by the Jessen Family and operated as an office park, with the interiors split up into offices, often several in a building. Most of them date from the mid 19th century, but the large building on the northwest corner of Main & Amboy (marked #23) is a mid 18th century home that was extensively renovated in 1875.
#24	The Forum Theatre opened in March 1928, and was constructed for local businessmen James Forgione and H.A. Rumler.

NEARBY NOTABLE SITES OUTSIDE THE WALKING TOUR

A	Ayers-Allen House. Ca. 1740 East Jersey Deep Cottage listed in NJ & National Registers in 1985.
B	Mary E. Wilkins Freeman House at 207 Lake Avenue, listed in the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places in 2019 and 2020, respectively.
C	St. Luke's Episcopal Church. Carpenter Gothi church built 1868. Henry Mills Alden was one of the founders, Joyce Kilmer married Alden's stepdaughter there, and NJ Governor Silzer was a prominent parishioner. A Key Contributing site in the Middlesex Avenue-Woodwild Park Historic District in 2017.