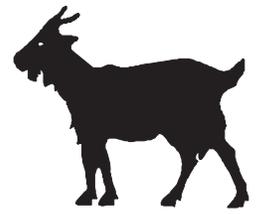


# Nannygoats



Vol. 18, Issue 2

Newsletter of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society

Spring/Summer 2020

Edison (Raritan) Township was incorporated on March 17, 1870. As 2020 marks the 150th anniversary of the Township, the Society is looking back at various aspects of its rich history.

In the early 20th century Edison had a number of one-room schoolhouses. These schools taught children from kindergarten to 8th grade. At the time, Edison (then Raritan) Township was a sprawling 32-square-mile rural community, and the schools were located in the old villages of the Township; New Durham, Oak Tree, Mt. Pleasant, New Dover, Menlo Park, Lafayette, Bonhamtown, Piscatawaytown, and Stelton all had one-room schoolhouses.

Using the internet to research old newspapers such as *The Metuchen Recorder*, oral history transcripts, and information in the Society's archives, the history of these schoolhouses can be uncovered. Surprisingly, in the spring of 2020, four of these schoolhouses still exist: Oak Tree Schoolhouse, Mt. Pleasant School, New Dover School, and Menlo Park School.

Oak Tree Schoolhouse, located at Plainfield Road and Marion Street, is now a real estate office. It was not unusual for teachers to live with families in the neighborhood. In 1889, Adele Harned was the teacher at Oak Tree School and lived with Emma Vanderhoven. Susan Fillips lived with the Blackford family.

Mt. Pleasant School, at Tingley Lane and Inman Avenue, is now a house and is located across from the Martin Luther King School.

New Dover School, at Wood Avenue and New Dover Road, is now a funeral home.

Menlo Park School on Monmouth Avenue is now a house. Before it was completed in 1897, the students attended class in Thomas Edison's old house.

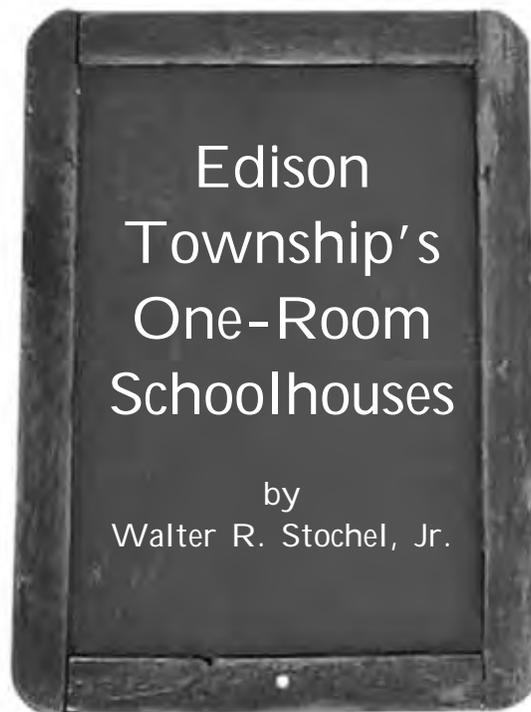
The remainder of the one-room schoolhouses are now gone.

Lafayette School was located at Parsonage Road and Lafayette Avenue, and there is an office building there now. Bonhamtown school was sold and removed, and the new Bonhamtown School was built on the site and has since been converted into an office building.

Piscatawaytown School, where the Commons is now, became the Town Hall, then police headquarters, and even later, the recreation department office. It burned in the 1980s.

Stelton School was near where the Jefferson Middle School now stands.

New Durham School was at the intersection of New Durham Road and Talmadge Roads, where the Quick Check is



*Continued on Page 4*

**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.**

# The "Hero of Fort Haskell" Made Metuchen His Home

By Tyreen A. Reuter



To our great delight, local realtors and prospective homeowners will sometimes contact the Society for information about a property that comes up for sale. Such was the situation earlier this year when resident Melissa Jacobs asked the Society for any information it might have about 179 Amboy Avenue in Metuchen.

We knew the house was of good age; it had been identified in a 1977 survey of Historic, Architectural, and Cultural Resources by Heritage Studies as a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century "vernacular gothic" residence. The resident's inquiry, however, gave us reason to dig deeper and we indeed found buried history treasure.

Information gathered from historic maps, directories, and publications in our archives revealed that the house was built for Civil War veteran Colonel Charles H. Houghton (1842-1914). It was not uncommon for veterans to move to the Metuchen area and build estates, but Colonel Houghton must have cut quite a figure during the decade or so that he lived in the area – as he had quite notably lost a leg during

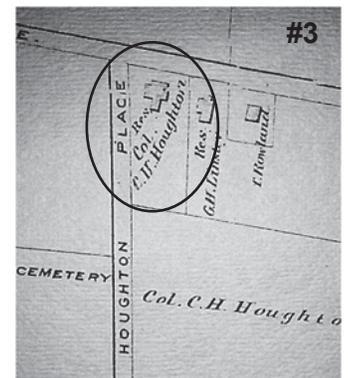
the war – and received the U.S. military's highest decoration, the Medal of Honor.

In his Pulitzer Prize winning three-volume series *Abraham*

#2	POST-OFFICE ADDRESS.	DISABILITY INCURRED.	REMARKS.
	10	11	12
	Metuchen N.J.	Wounded in left femur at Petersburg, Va. and in right hand same battle.	
	Metuchen N.J.	Leg at Bethesda Church June 1864	

*Lincoln: The War Years*, Carl Sandburg's paints a rather dramatic picture of President Lincoln personally attending to the gravely injured Houghton while sobbing "You must live! Poor boy, you must live!" The 11<sup>th</sup> Census' schedule of "Surviving Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines, and Widows" bears witness to these injuries as well; he lost his right leg and suffered head and hand wounds at Fort Haskell, after sustaining wounds in his left leg in battle a year earlier. Houghton is buried in Section 3 of Arlington National Cemetery. His medal of honor Citation reads:

*The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Captain (Field Artillery) Charles H. Houghton, United States Army, for extraordinary heroism while serving with Company L, 14th New York Artillery at Petersburg and Fort Haskell, Virginia. In the Union assault at the Crater, 30 July 1864, and in the Confederate assault repelled at Fort Haskell 25 March 1865, Captain Houghton displayed most conspicuous gallantry and repeatedly exposed himself voluntarily to great danger, was three times wounded, and suffered loss of a leg.*



The Society wishes Melissa – and her husband, coincidentally named Charles – many happy years in this historic house, and we look forward to finding out even more about its history as we continue to dig through the archives.



#1: Cabinet card on file in the Library of Congress. #2: Excerpt of the 1890 Schedule of "Surviving Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines, and Widows". #3: Excerpt of an 1868 map of Metuchen showing Col. Houghton's estate and property. #4: 1930s Grimstead Photograph of the Houghton House at 179 Amboy Avenue. #5: Image from *Deeds of Valor* (Beyer and Keydel, 1901). #6: current real estate photograph of 179 Amboy Avenue. Note that the elaborate cupola and porch have been long removed.

## New in the Archives

The following list of recent acquisitions was compiled by Archives Chair Byron Sondergard.

- A large photograph of the Reading Railroad train near Christol Street in 1964, PRR train schedules, several photographs of trains along the Reading Railroad, and several photographs of railroad and trolley cars from the John Brinckmann collection (donated by David Hutchinson).
- Documents on the Piscatawaytown Burial Ground Cleanup, George Spadaro, the Edison Board of Education, CERT (Community Emergency Response Team), the Edison Water Department, Clark Ellison, Oak Tree Pond, Lindenau, politics, etc. (donated by Clark Ellison).
- A book of poems titled *Because I Love You* by Asa Robert Holliday, Metuchen, NJ (1960), (donated by Vivian).
- A 1940 Metuchen High School Class picture, a First Day Cover for policemen, an ID card for Robert S. Davis (Metuchen police officer), and a program for a dinner honoring James C. Forgione (donated by Carol Volkland).
- Several items for the former Metuchen Savings Bank that include an original ca. 1909 birdseye view map of Metuchen Estates Map (see image at right), framed Main Street images, a box of architectural plans and posters, postcards, greeting cards, Metuchen maps and brochures, a St. Francis Cathedral book, Marty's Musings, Middlesex County books, measuring sticks and banner, framed copy of the 1876 Centennial Map of Metuchen, and Grimstead photographs (donated by the bank via the Metuchen Area Chamber of Commerce). Archival copies of items were inventoried and extra/duplicate items were available for sale on Local History Day.
- A ca. 1983 Metuchen Chamber of Commerce Metuchen Map (donated by Byron Sondergard).
- "History of the Edison First Aid Squad No. 2 (1936-1986)"
- Approximately 27 scrapbook pages from a local printing business that contain advertising materials for Edison and Metuchen businesses (donated by Frank Crowe of the Historical Association of Woodbridge Township).
- Various obituaries and various newspaper clippings about African-Americans in the Edison and Metuchen areas.
- A postcard of the interior of the Sacred Heart Chapel at St. Joseph High School in Metuchen.



Ca. 1909 Birdseye View Map of Metuchen Estates.  
See Page 9 for zoomed excerpts of this map.

Continued from Page 1

now. In 1895 parents protested the closing of the schoolhouse, which then had 22 students. Charles End, a Metuchen-Edison Historical Society member who lived on Talmadge Road, wrote a 1974 recollection of growing up in "western" Edison in which here called his school days at New Durham School:

I started school at age 7. Why not 5? Can't answer that. Anyway, I made all my grammar grades at #8 school. I knew the alphabet and multiplication tables (to 12) - home training.

In the beginning school was just over the hill from the Mundy house. From the farm it was close to a mile. Best subjects English, spelling. Most difficulty with arithmetic. Teachers: Mary B. Dunn, Bessie Crowell, Elsie Wilecki -- all quite young, perhaps 1st assignment for them. There was one older teacher, not certain of name -- Miss Fromm is as close as I can come to it now (a memory jog came up with the name Miss Reames which is correct. Will not vouch for spelling). Miss Bennett occasionally subbed. I recall one walking from Metuchen, probably Miss Crowell. Early arrivals at school could look down New Durham Rd. and spot her a mile away. The road then was comparatively level -- ages before Route 287 put a hump in it.

Before I leave the #8 school to history, I should add some particulars, since, as populations increased, 1-roomers passed from the scene, at least in this area. It was not a "little red schoolhouse" but some lighter color. The seats in the rear were for 2 pupils. The bigger boys and girls occupied the rear. The entrance faced north and a closed vestibule was at some stage added. But on a real wintry day it was a cold building.

The heater was a big pot-bellied or similar type stove, surrounded part way by a galvanized shield to protect the seats in the proximity. The coal bin was under the boy's cloak room, trap-doored, with stair access. On extra cold days we were sent home. The heat was just not adequate. There was no running water -- an iron pump in the yard with a community tin cup supplied the thirsty and washed recess-scrubby hands. "his" and "hers" were toward the back of the lot. Cold or hot according to the season. A high board fence stood between. The boy's facility was decorated inside with inappropriate words, so it is to be noted that 4-letter stuff is not exclusively a product of the naughty 60s and, back inside again -- teacher's desk was in the front (south) end of the room, on a platform 10" or so high. Back of her were storage closets -- books, paper, chalk, erasers, pencils, etc. Supplies were free. Years before I think pupils had to buy their own.



During my attendance at #8 compulsory education must have been enacted or at least enforced. Some big pupils began to attend, first graders, tall and old enough to be in the graduating class. It must have been most unique for them, after years of freedom or working in the fields.

In 1908 the Board of Education decided to build a brand new 20th century school building on Oak Tree Road. It was designed by John Noble Pierson and son. Hans Peterson was



the General Contractor, and Andrew Dahl was the mason.

Opening in September 1909, this large masonry building included classrooms, an auditorium, office, and modern steam heat. This school replaced the one-room schools at Oak Tree, New Dover, and Mt. Pleasant. The Principal, Robert Brooks, lived with the Lupu family on Plainfield Road. Two teachers were Josephine Flanagan and Sarah Rainear.

However, it did not have a piano. So, the Oak Tree neighborhood raised money in 1910 by holding vaudeville and dance programs. The news reported that in the April 22 program, "Gertrude Campbell recited with pronounced ability." Gertrude grew up and lived in a house a quarter mile from the school until her death in 1979. Gertrude had started her schooling at the one-room Oak Tree School.

Mt. Pleasant was put up for sale. The lot where Bonhamtown school remained and a new school was built on the site.

On August 1909, the old one-room schoolhouses at Oak Tree, New Dover, and Mt. Pleasant were put up for sale. The lot where Bonhamtown school remained and a new school was built on the site.

*Images on Pages 4 and 5 are photographs from the Society's Grimstead Archives and are available for reprint: #1. Stelton School, #2. Oak Tree School, #3. Piscataway School, #4. Lafayette School.*



The Oak Tree Schoolhouse was eventually sold back to the Kelly family which owned the surrounding farm.

In the 1920s it was bought by Mr. & Mrs. Frank Losey, who converted the schoolhouse into a home. Frank Losey was the Principal at Oak Tree School, and his wife Myra was a teacher. When Frank Losey was removed as Principal for drunkenness, Myra Losey became principal. Later she remarried, and Dr. Myra Biggs lived in the schoolhouse until the 1980s. Her oral history is available on the Society's website.

The last one-roomed schoolhouse in Edison was the Menlo Park School at 38 Monmouth Avenue, not far from the Edison Memorial Tower. It was closed in the 1940 with much objection from the neighborhood.



The Grimstead Room at the Metuchen Public Library contains a wealth of local history information, including thousands of photographs, maps, oral histories, manuscript & subject files, postcards, and ephemera. If you have a specific interest in a particular area of local history, contact us with as many details as possible at [info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org](mailto:info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org). Although our archives are not conducive to browsing, if we have any relevant information, we will be pleased to arrange an appointment to assist you with your search.

***Want to write an article for Nannygoats? Have a History Mystery you need help with? An intriguing photograph to share? Contact [info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org](mailto:info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org)!***

## METUCHEN AND HER HISTORY, 1870 (XIII)

The following is the next installment of Dr. Ezra Mundy Hunt's "Metuchen and Her History," written in 1870, which we began reprinting serially in issues of *Nannygoats* beginning with the Winter/Spring 2015 edition. Many thanks to Former Society President and current Board Member Dominic T. Walker for transcribing this document.

To the period from 1850 to 1860 the general record made as to the former decade, still more fully applies. General thrift and activity became more apparent; more attention was given to real estate and more consideration as to its value and improvement.

That part of the town south and east of the old grave-yard, especially began to improve, and an academy for a parochial school was built (1852) nearly opposite the Reformed Church, but has since been removed (1858) to the present locality.

A demand for stone and gravel on the part of the railroad company gave active employment to many of our farmers and teamsters, and brought considerable money into the place. The company afterward purchased the gravel-pit at Bonhamtown, and built a railroad to it about 1859.

Mr. David S. Thomas either built himself, or induced others to build on portions of his land, and Mr. L. Thomas, who had for a year removed to Newark, returned and (1850) built the house now occupied by Mr. Coleman.

Mr. T.W. Strong, of New York city, soon after purchased the Freeman farm, and about 1854 built his present residence in Woodwild. In the Winter of 1852, the Hay Press was built by Augustine Campbell, and in charge of M. Freeman, soon made an active business.

By the death of John Hampton, Sr., the chief land-owner of this section, a large quantity of valuable real estate came into market, and its sale, May 15th, 1855, passed it into the hands of various persons, who have since improved and developed it. Mr. Ellis F. Ayres the next year built the house now occupied by Mr. Nathan Robins, and some twenty houses during these few years so added to the size and neatness of the village, as to give it a more townly and inviting appearance.

In 1850 Rev. Robert S. Finley had been called to the pastorate of the Presbyterian church, and continued his connection about seven years. The First Reformed Dutch church was built in 1858, and in 1859 called the Rev. J. Bodine Thompson as its first pastor. The Rev. Gardiner S. Plumley was called to the pastorate of the Presbyterian church January, 1868.



A 2001 view of the house at 280 Grove Avenue, built by Lewis Thomas in about 1850. While this lovely residence is still extant, the house constructed by his brother (David Graham Thomas) around the same time on Graham Avenue was recently lost to neglect and demolition.

In 1849, Dr. D. Decker commenced practice here, and in 1851 also, Dr. Lytell, now of Princeton, who remained here but little more than a year. Dr. E.M. Hunt commenced practice April, 1852, and was at first associated with Dr. Decker, who ceased practice in 1854. He, however, resided in this vicinity until 1867, and for a short portion of the time assisted Dr. Hunt, and supplied his place during his absence in the army. Dr. Joseph S. Martin commenced practice here about 1857; but in 1862, having received an appointment as surgeon to a New Jersey regiment, he served for three years, and soon after settled in Elizabethport, N.J. Dr. W. Knight came November, 1862.

The public school continued, as before, under the charge of Mr. Kellogg, and about 1860 Prof. Wm. Hopkins opened a prosperous select school in the academy.

*Continued in the Next Issue*



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# Remembering Metuchen's World War I Dead

By Tyreen A. Reuter



In honor of this past Memorial Day, I noodled around our digital archives and available online sources for a bit more about the Metuchen residents who died in service to our country during World War I. There is much more to be said about them; I was just attempting to put some personal details to their names. When the Library reopens after this current pandemic we are suffering, I bet we can find some yearbook photos of these men as well.

Edward Oscar Fugle (1894-1918, shown at left) died in battle at St. Mihiel when he was only 24 years old. He had moved to Metuchen a few years before the war and lived at 20 Carson Avenue (still extant). After war was declared, he volunteered and trained with the Army as an engineer. He was badly wounded at St. Mihiel on September 23, 1918 and died in a field hospital the following day. His body was brought back to the United States in 1920 and interred at Alpine Cemetery in Perth Amboy. Fugle is one

of the men for whom Metuchen's American Legion post is named.

Harry Morris Hansen (1887-1918) died October 13, 1918 at St. Catherine's hospital in Brooklyn from Influenza. He was one of the estimated 45,000 soldiers who died due to the pandemic, more than from combat itself. Harry was the eldest child of Abel & Caroline Hansen, a wealthy Danish couple who lived at "Maplehurst," a large estate on Woodbridge Avenue in Metuchen. He had enrolled at Rutgers before going to war, and would have graduated in the Class of 1920. His fraternity brothers honored Hansen with a bronze plaque at their house on College Avenue in 1920 (shown to the right).



Hummer, Frank	1,748,102	*White *Caucasoid
Residence:	252 Durham Ave., Metuchen, N.J.	
Entered U.S. Army: <del>U.S. Army</del>	Inducted at:	Metuchen on Apr 25 1918
Place of birth:	Metuchen	
Age or date of birth:	22.1/12.78	
Organizations served in, with dates of assignments and transfers:	13 Co 4 Bn 153 Dep Brig to May 13/18; Co I 309 Inf to death.	
Grades, with date of appointment:	Pvt	
Engagements:		
Served overseas from:	5/19/18	to death from:
Reason for death:	*Died of wounds rec'd in action Sept 19/18	
Other wounds or injuries received in action:		
Persons notified of death:	Mrs. Georgiana Hummer, Mother, 252 Durham Ave., Metuchen, N.J.	
Remarks:		
<small>*State not worth not applicable.</small>		<small>*Date of departure from and arrival in the U. S.</small>

Frank E. Hummer (1896-1918), the other resident for whom Metuchen's American Legion post is named, also fought at St. Mihiel and died there from wounds suffered on September 19, 1918. He attended Metuchen High School, and lived at 252 Durham Avenue, approximately where the Gulton site is now. He was survived by his mother, Georgianna, and five siblings; Harry, Willis, Nelson, Archie, and Mabel. Before serving, he worked at Kramer's

Department Store (where Café Paris is now) and the Nixon Nitration Works. Did Hummer and Fugle fight side by side at any point at St. Mihiel, or know each other in

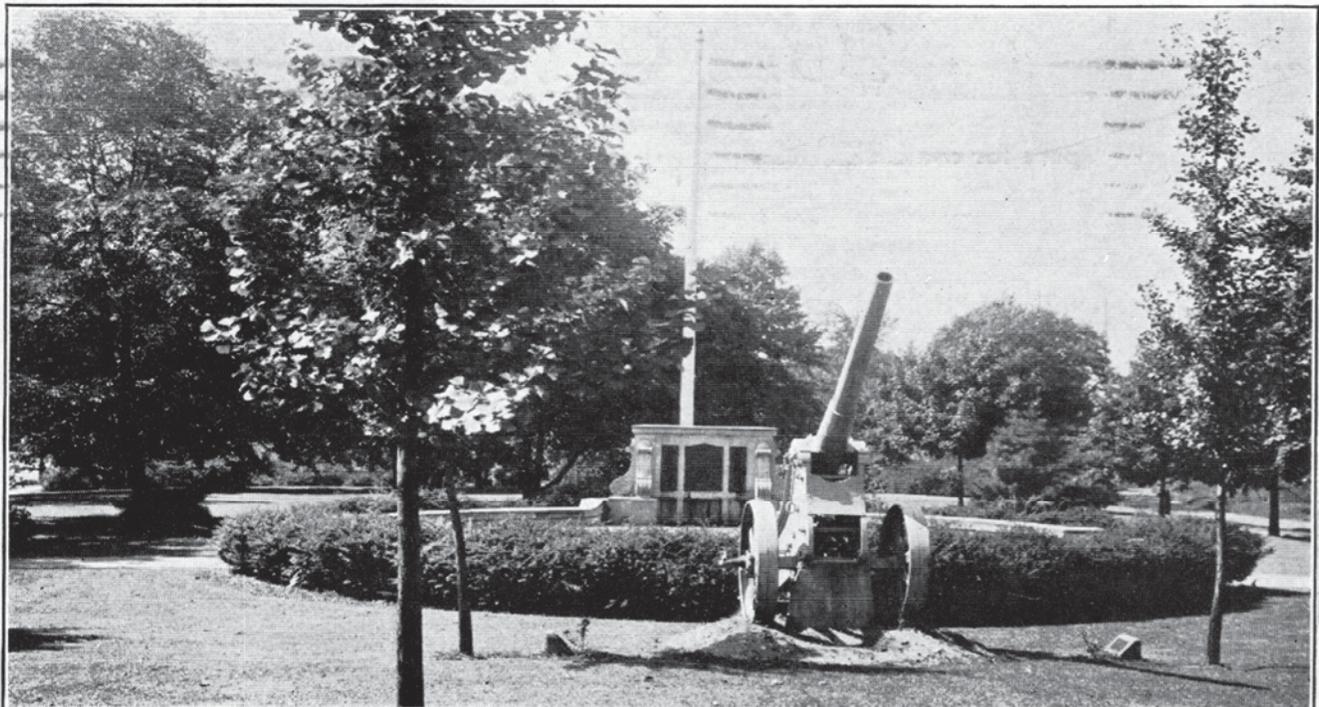
Metuchen? Perhaps our friends at the American Legion know. Army statistics indicate more than 4,500 Americans died there. Unlike Fugle, Hummer's remains are still in France.

George Rosco Conklin Smith (1886-1918, at right) was the oldest of those killed from Metuchen, and the only one married. He and his wife, Euritha, lived at 31 Pearl Street, where the Plaza is now. He was born in Virginia but had moved to Metuchen while still young, and his father was employed as a Gardener. His service card indicates he died from Tuberculosis, and a letter from his wife explains that he had become very sick while on duty and was sent home in June of 1918 to convalesce. He never recovered, and was never discharged, and eventually died on December 7 that year. Euritha applied for a headstone for his grave in Hillside Cemetery, and it was shipped and placed in 1931 (see below right).



Note: when you run a search for "Metuchen" in the *World War I Casualties: Descriptive Cards and Photographs* on the New Jersey State Archives' website, you also get two more names: Louis Victor Balint and George Peney. The attribution to Metuchen may arise from their having surviving relatives who lived in Metuchen, as doesn't appear that either Balint or Peney themselves resided in the borough when they died.

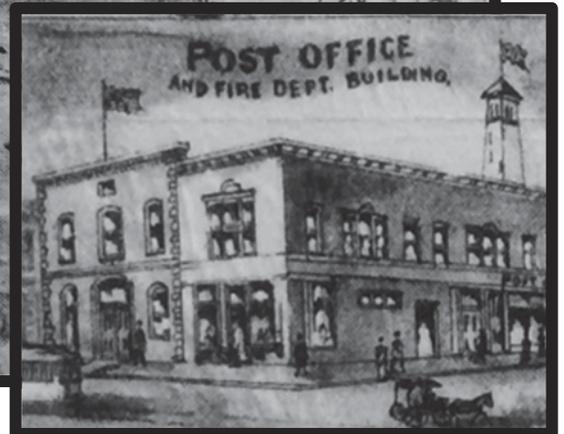
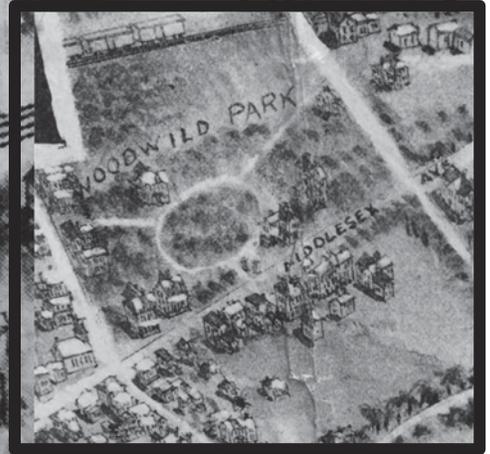
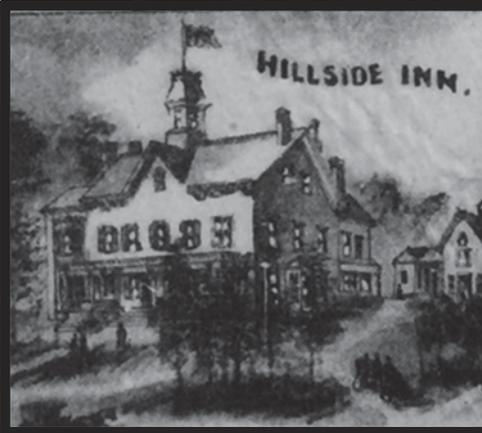
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF WAR		APPLICATION FOR HEADSTONE		52554	
PLEASE FILL OUT AND RETURN IN DUPLICATE					
Name	Rank	Company	U. S. Regiment, Army Organization	Date of Death	
George R.C. Smith	Sgt	350th	350th Inf. Art. Co.	Dec. 7 <sup>th</sup> 1918	
Name of Cemetery	Location in or near	State	Division	Section	Grave
Hillside Cemetery	Metuchen	N.J.	92 Div	718	
TO BE SHIPPED TO: Mrs. Euritha Smith Jewell, Metuchen, Monmouth County, N.J.					
POST OFFICE ADDRESS OF CONSIGNEE: 31 Pearl Street, Metuchen, New Jersey					
APR 1 1930					
DO NOT WRITE THESE					
I hereby agree to accept the headstone at above destination, freight prepaid, and properly place same at decedent's grave.					
This application is for the UNMARKED grave of a Soldier. It is understood the stone will be furnished and delivered at the expense of the applicant, and that the Government will not be responsible for the cost of the stone, or for the cost of the transportation, freight, or other charges.					
Worked PROCTOR, VT. SEP 15 1930					
197466 Mrs. Euritha Smith Jewell					
Shipped JAN 10 1931 31 Pearl St Metuchen N.J. April 9 1931					



7-170

American Legion Memorial Park, Metuchen, N. J.

Excerpts from the recently donated ca. 1909 map of Metuchen (see Page 3).



The Society is very sorry to share the news of the passing of George Muha, a frequent contributor to *Nannygoats*, including "Tending a Gravesite" (Summer 2009), Metuchen's World War II Aircraft Observing Tower (Summer 2010), Metuchen YMCA Radio Club (Summer 2011), and The Sand Hills of Bonhamtown (Summer 2018). The following was graciously shared with us by his daughter, Laura Muha.



## George Muha, A Life Very Well-Lived

By Laura Muha

George Muha, a professor emeritus of chemistry at Rutgers University and a frequent contributor to *Nannygoats*, died February 13, 2020 after a long illness. He was 88.

George was born in Fords but grew up in Metuchen, where he spent his boyhood ice skating on Tommy's Pond, swimming at the Clay Pits (Bonhamtown's

Sand Hills), playing baseball in Edgar Park, and roaming the woods at Red Hill (wooded area at the end of Walnut Street). He also frequently reminisced about Gondola's Market at the corner of East Walnut and Main streets, insisting that their rye bread and jelly donuts have never been equaled.

George's parents ran a photography business, Muha's Photo Service, out of the family home on East Walnut Street, and even as a small child, George helped out, mixing the chemicals necessary to develop the photographs and laying the newly developed pictures on screens to dry.

He attended the Edgar School, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School, and Metuchen High School, and was a member of Boy Scout Troop 14, achieving the rank of Eagle Scout. After his 1949 high school graduation, he enrolled at Lehigh University where he majored in chemistry, graduating Phi Beta Kappa in 1953. He then spent two years as a radar-repair specialist in the U.S. Army, achieving the rank of first lieutenant. Upon reentering civilian life, he earned a doctorate from Rutgers and worked briefly for RCA and Esso before joining the faculty at Rutgers, where he taught chemistry for nearly 30 years.



Though George raised his family in Piscataway, Metuchen held a special place in his heart, and he frequently took his children back there to show them the places he'd loved as a boy. He also joined an amateur radio club run by the Metuchen YMCA, where he volunteered to teach Morse Code to high school students interested in obtaining their radio

licenses, even though he'd never gotten around to getting his own. When students called him out on it, he sat for the test on the spur of the moment and passed all three levels on the same day, a feat so rare that it made the newspaper. He remained an active ham operator until a few weeks before his death.

George had always been interested in history and genealogy, and after he retired, he traced his family back to its roots in pre-World War I Hungary, compiling the information -- along with transcripts of extensive interviews he conducted with relatives -- in a three-volume set that he had printed, insisting that the family would be glad to have it someday. (He was right.)

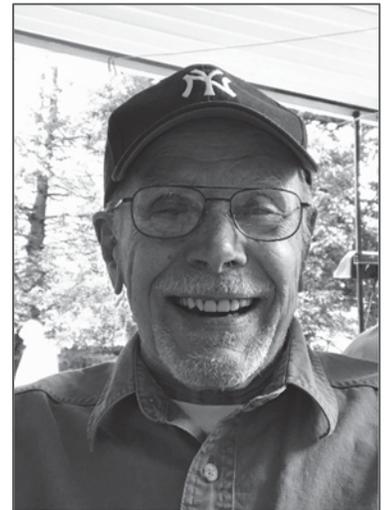
He also toured the country photographing non-directional beacons at regional airports, arguing that these radio transmitters, used as navigational aids for aircraft, should be documented for the historical record before satellite systems made them obsolete.

The hobby got him into occasional scrapes, such as the time he attempted to photograph a beacon at a government airport and found himself surrounded by police cars. (He charmed his way out of the situation, but never did get a picture of that particular beacon.)

George is survived by his wife of 61 years; his daughter and two sons; his son-and daughter-in-law; his son's partner; his brother, sister and brother-in-law; numerous nieces and nephews, and his grandson, who should probably come first

on this list, since he was all George talked about.

Memorial contributions may be sent to the George Muha Research Fellowship, established in 2015 to support promising chemistry students at The College of New Jersey, 2000 Pennington Road, Ewing, NJ 08628, or to the Deborah Hospital Foundation of the Deborah Heart & Lung Center, 212 Trenton Road, Browns Mills, N.J., 08015, where the nurses in the intensive care unit are angels who greatly eased his final days.



*Top:* Young George in his Boy Scout uniform, 1943. *Middle:* George at his Eagle Scout Court of Honor. *Left:* Muha at Red Hill (the wooded area at the end of Walnut Street). *Above:* a recent photograph of Mr. Muha.



# Nannygoats



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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 preserving so much of our local history.

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

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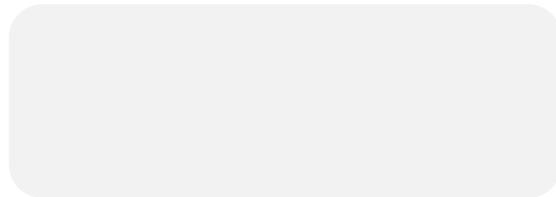


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Help the Society *Save the Past for the Future* by becoming a member! Visit [www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org](http://www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org) to download a membership form or join online.

## Clara Barton?

What came first, the chicken or the egg? Luckily, the question of whether the Clara Barton school was named for the Edison neighborhood, or vice-versa, is easier to answer.

In 1920, the school (now the Heritage at Clara Barton) was under construction in then Raritan Township. At the same time, a statewide campaign, consisting of school children donating pennies, was underway to preserve the original 1850s schoolhouse established by Clara Barton (educator, nurse, founder of the Red Cross) in Bordentown, New Jersey.

According to Deliverance Force "Dillie" Thornall (1874-1943), the school's first principal, the State Board of Education sent a letter to all local Boards in New Jersey asking "What school in New Jersey would be the first to be named Clara Barton?" Raritan Township school took them up on the suggestion, and the "Clara Barton School" in Raritan Township was the first public school to bear the name.

Afterwards, this section of the township became commonly known by the name of the school built there.

## Beacon Hill?

Real Estate developers will often assign lofty, upscale names to the neighborhoods they build, ignoring original place name that don't fit an ideal. That was NOT the case with Metuchen's Beacon Hill neighborhood of generously proportioned split-level homes; there really WAS a beacon!

Many have heard about Beacon Hill's Aircraft Observing Tower, constructed for civil defense during the 1940s (see the lead article in the Summer 2010 issue of *Nannygoats*, written by George Muha). This structure, however, replaced an earlier rotating *beacon* at the site. This beacon light was an aircraft navigational aid, and sat at the high point of land at the bend in Beacon Hill Road.

It was described in a 1931 Air Commerce Bulletin as "New Site No. 74 – a 36-inch 1,000,000-candle-power rotating beacon light, showing six flashes per minute, is operating within the city limits of Metuchen. Red course lights flash characteristic: Dot, dot, dot, dot (...)."

For images and more information about Clara Barton and Beacon Hill, visit our Facebook Page and use the "Search this group" function on the side bar.