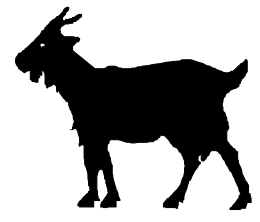


Nannygoats



Stories from the Archives...

Franklin School

(The following excerpts are taken from a talk given by Mrs. Henrietta Peck in 1906 on the Franklin School, transcribed by Madelyn Seiler, and as recorded in Lloyd Grimstead's "Nannygoats." The building, located on Middlesex Avenue near the intersection with Main Street in Metuchen, was erected in 1807 and named for Benjamin Franklin. It was enlarged in 1842 and retired from service as a schoolhouse in 1874. In 1906, the Metuchen Borough Improvement League, B.I.L., bought the building as a clubhouse, and Mrs. Peck's talk may have been given in conjunction with a dedication or opening event. Typographical errors and misspellings are as they appear in Grimstead's record.)

This was I think the first school house in Metuchen, for during the Revolution and till about 1784 there were no schools. The tax upon dogs was appropriated for the education of the children. The old school house was very primitive in style. The desks and benches were hewn out of large timber,



Franklin School with Mr. Markey's cobbler shop in front, 1901.

round underneath and smooth on top for desks and I suppose the poor little heads ached as they puzzled over the rule of three. I have an old arithmetic...printed in 1806 called Dilworth's Improved assistant...Here is a sample of the problems presented. "There were three Jellous husbands with their wives being ready to pass by night over a river do find at the water side a boat which can carry but two persons at once and for want of a water-man they are necessitated to row themselves over the river at several times, The question is. how these six persons shall pass by 2 and 2 so that none of the three wives may be found in the company of 1 or 2 men unless her husband be present."

....At a meeting [of the Franklin School trustees] held March 4, 1842 at the school house it was resolved - that a committee be appointed to solicit subscriptions for repairing the old building and erecting a suitable addition for neighborhood purposes....to raise the sum of \$500. [Those who promised to contribute] are the ancestors of many of our present generation....Those who were pupils in the old building say it was located not far from the present site but facing south, as nearly all of the buildings of that day faced in that direction....When the addition was built to the school house it was turned around so as to face west just where it stands today and the end toward the street was used as a prayer meeting room and many a time I as a little girl went with my aunt...to the old room with a lantern and a few kindlings to make a fire in the little wood stove, to be ready

for the worshipers who would assemble later to ask for the dear Lord's blessing. We might be a little timid to do that now but then we felt as safe with our little twinkling lantern as we would at the present time with our electric lights and well organized police force.

[Some of the old teachers] were....

Miss Abigale Thomas whose grave is in the old cemetery, Mr. Lane, Mr. Tibbets, Mr. Tuller, Mr. Irish, Mr. Merritt, Mr. Horts, Mr. Kellogg, Mr. White, Mr. Kellogg came from Vermont and taught over 50 years....That he had a measure of success is proved by the number of good citizens we have in our Borough today. Corporal punishment is outlawed and out of fashion and I would not recommend some of the old time methods but assure I did have my ears pulled by our old teacher....One day when I was a little girl, two boys accross the room made me laugh....The boys were not discovered but the poor little girl was walked out by the ear and stood in the middle of the room. Years after I told Mr. Kellogg of my grevance and



The B.I.L. building, 1932.

I shall never forget the twinkle in his eye as he answered "If I had only pulled your ears more you would have been a better woman."

A selection of interesting tidbits from the building's past:

- Ø In 1853, school tuition was \$2.00 per quarter, payable in cash or crops.
- Ø Many of the subscribers for the school's 1842 repair and enlargement pledged labor and services in lieu of money.
- Ø In 1917, the building housed World War I soldiers stationed at Camp Raritan (the current site of Raritan Center in Edison).
- Ø In 1922, the first indoor toilet was installed.

Edison Township Historic Landmarks

Edison Township is one of more than 100 municipalities in New Jersey that have passed ordinances to protect their significant historic resources. In 2000, Edison created a Historic Preservation Commission to identify structures, objects, and sites related to significant historical events or persons, or that reflect cultural, political, economic, or social history. The Commission makes recommendations to the Township Council and after a review process, the Council takes the appropriate action. Designation as an Edison Historic Landmark ensures that privately-owned property is preserved; this designation often complements New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places designations which only provide protection to public facilities. Three structures in Edison have been designated Edison Historic Landmarks to date: the Stelton Baptist Church, the Thomas A. Edison Memorial Tower, and St. James Episcopal Church.

Stelton Baptist Church

The Stelton Baptist Church, located at 334 Plainfield Avenue, was the first Edison Historic Landmark to be designated.



Formed in 1689 as the First Baptist Church of Piscataway (this section of what is now Edison Township was part of Piscataway until 1870), it is the second oldest Baptist congregation in New Jersey and the oldest in Middlesex County. The church was renamed the Stelton Baptist Church in 1875. It suffered immensely during the Revolutionary War, and was destroyed by fire several times in the following years.

Stelle family members were among the first congregants. Benjamin Stelle, who moved to Piscataway around 1707 from the New York colony, was ordained at age 55 as the second pastor of the Church.

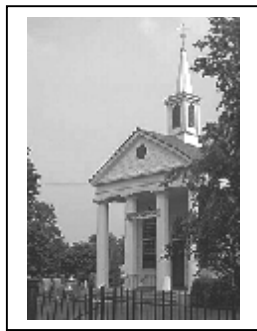
In 1819, 100 years before the 19th Constitutional Amendment, the church gave women "an equal right, in all cases with the brethren, in voting, speaking and governing the church." Prior to 1871, new members were baptized by total immersion in the Raritan River, regardless of the temperature.

The cemetery surrounding the church provides an interesting view of the early history of the area through those buried there.

St. James Episcopal Church

St. James Episcopal Church, located at 2136 Woodbridge Avenue, is the second oldest church in Edison Township. It was designated an Edison Historic Landmark in February 2003.

The church received its charter from Queen Anne of England, and the first official service was held on December 30, 1705. The church bell was cast in Leeds, England, and brought to the building in 1702. A wooden chapel was completed in 1724, at a cost of £100, on the site of an old inn where the first Middlesex County government held meetings.

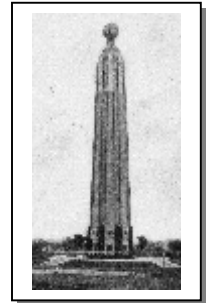


Thomas A. Edison Memorial Tower

The Thomas A. Edison Memorial Tower is located on Christie Street on the site of Thomas Edison's original Menlo Park laboratory. It is made of Portland Cement, one of Edison's many patents. A previous steel tower built in 1929 was damaged by a severe storm and replaced by the present structure built in 1937. A huge lamp surmounting the tower commemorates the invention of the first practical incandescent lamp.

The tower is adjacent to a museum that contains displays of Edison's work and accomplishments from 1876 to 1886, as well as other memorabilia.

The Thomas A. Edison Memorial Tower is on the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places as well as being designated an Edison Historic Landmark.



Tower Facts

Dedication	February 11, 1938
Total height	131 ft., 4 in.
Concrete structure	117 ft., 8 in. high
Incandescent lamp replica	13 ft., 8 in. high
Lamp comprises 153 pieces of amber-tinted glass 2 in. thick, weighs 3 tons, with 9500-watt light capacity	
Construction time	8 months
Cement required	1200 barrels
Steel required	50 tons

Services were discontinued for a time during the Revolutionary War, and the church was used as barracks and a hospital by British soldiers. Destroyed during the war in 1777, it was rebuilt in 1792. In 1789, George Washington visited en route to his first inauguration in New York. The church was again destroyed in 1835 by a tornado. The present structure was built in 1836-1837 using the original pulpit and many of the original pews and other fixtures. St. James is currently preparing for a yearlong 300th anniversary celebration to begin later this year.

"Local History Day" Draws Hundreds

Where was the Rosemont Estate? Do you have any information on the Revolutionary War in this area? Is one of the soldiers with a marker at Memorial Park buried in Arlington National Cemetery? These are just a few of the questions posed by visitors to the 15th annual Local History Day, held on February 2 at the Metuchen Public Library.

Hundreds of people studied old maps and examined artifacts such as a British cannonball from the Revolutionary War. One of the most popular displays was a recently acquired 1950s map of the Oak Hills development in Edison. Many people looked through albums filled with historical photographs, and residents of Metuchen purchased 29 early photographs of their homes.

From the Photo Album...



Historical Society members and guests enjoy the atmosphere, the artifacts, and the refreshments at the Winter Party, held on January 12, 2003, at the B.I.L. building in Metuchen. See "Stories from the Archives..." on the front page for a peek at the history of the building.

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

Curator's Notes

Recent additions to the Historical Society's archives include:

- ◆ Photos of people and residences on Delancy Street, Edison. *Donated by Darvene Adams.*
- ◆ Photos of the Yelencsics Homestead, built in 1887 in the Bonhamtown neighborhood of Edison, immediately preceding its demolition earlier this year. *Donated by George "Red" Ellis.*
- ◆ A map of the Oak Hills development in Edison, from the 1950s. *Donated by Marion Stone.*
- ◆ Two current patches from the Washington Hose Co. and the Eagle Hook & Ladder Co. *Donated by the Metuchen Fire Department.*

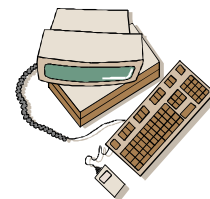
The Society gratefully accepts photographs, documents, personal histories, and artifacts. If you prefer to retain the original, the Society will make a copy for the archives, recording your name as donor. It is only through your contributions that the archives can truly represent the vibrant and unique history of the area.

Call 732-985-3217 if you would like to donate materials or visit the archives.

Local History on the Net!

Can't get to the Historical Society archives? Looking for information and photographs related to the history of Metuchen and Edison on the Internet? Check out:

- Ø www.jhalpin.com
- Ø www.edisonnj.org
- Ø www.metuchen.com



Correction: In the Winter 2003 issue of *Nannygoats* - "Curator's Notes": "Postcards and photos around Metuchen and Edison collected by the late Chuck Peters" should read "Postcards and photos around Metuchen and Edison collected by the late Chester (Chet) Peters."

The name of the newsletter, "Nannygoats," is taken from the title of a collection of anecdotes, reminiscences, articles, 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.

Upcoming Programs

“A Visit with George Washington”

Sunday, April 6, 2 p.m.

Metuchen Library,

480 Middlesex Avenue, Metuchen.

Presented by the American Historical Theater.

“The Effects of World War II on American Women”

Friday, May 2, 7:30 p.m.

Centenary United Methodist Church,

200 Hillside Avenue, Metuchen.

Speaker: Dee Garrison, Ph.D.

“The Shady Rest Country Club, a Black NJ Cultural Oasis in the Age of Segregation”

Friday, June 6, 2 p.m.

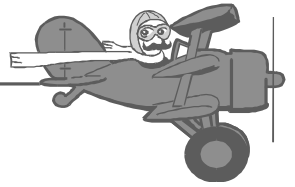
Metuchen Senior Citizens Center,

15 Center Street, Metuchen.

Speaker: Lawrence Hogan, Ph.D.

For information, call Walter Stochel
at 732-906-0529.

Where Was It?



These pictures are part of the collection of photographs taken by Lloyd Grimstead in the 1930s. The Society is looking for information on their past (or current) location, who built them, and who lived in them.

If you can help, please call
Curator Marie Vajo at 732-985-3217.

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