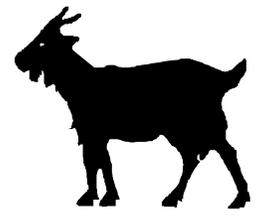


Nannygoats



Humphries Deals Cards Defeat: 10-7

by Steve Reuter

Since moving to Metuchen five years ago, I've found you can often discover history right in your own backyard. The event that has probably interested me the most is the baseball game played between the Metuchen Baseball Club and the St. Louis Cardinals on the evening of July 20, 1936.

While reading through microfilm copies of the defunct *Metuchen Recorder* at the Metuchen Library, I found a front-page article and box score in the July 23, 1936, edition.

According to the article, 4000 spectators watched as the "Metuchen Baseball Club defeated the St. Louis Cardinals, former World Champions, by the score of 10-7 in a sizzling contest under the floodlights." It seemed odd that the famed "Gashouse Gang" would actually come to Metuchen to play a game in July—I never knew teams "barnstormed" (played exhibition games) in the middle of the season.

Long-time Metuchen resident Jim Johnson later told me that this game was played on Durham Avenue, where Campbell School now stands—right next door to my house! An advertisement (*shown above center*) for the game confirms what Mr. Johnson told me, as the places listed to purchase tickets surround the area where the field would have been.

Lots of questions occurred to me. Who were these players listed in the *Recorder's* box score? Where were the Cardinals coming from and where were they headed? Just how amazing was it that Metuchen won the game?

The St. Louis Cardinals had won the World Series two years earlier, and a little more research showed that they were in the middle of the pennant race in July of 1936 when they came to Metuchen. When the season ended, they finished tied for second behind the NY Giants (who ended up losing the World Series to the NY Yankees).

Some controversy exists as to how the St. Louis Cardinals acquired the nickname "Gashouse Gang." One theory is that the players were unkempt with dirty, patched uniforms and unshaven faces and liked to fight on the field and off. A New York writer compared them to the "Gashouse Gang" that was then terrorizing the Gas House section on Manhattan's Lower East Side, at the time the most rough and tumble section in New York City. The *Recorder* article, however, states that "the Cardinal uniforms were a real treat to the eyes, especially to



the ladies, we should imagine." Another theory attributes the nickname to a quote from Cardinal player Leo Durocher that "[t]hey wouldn't let us play in the American League, they'd just say we were a bunch of gas house players." I'm not sure what that means, but I'm sure it wasn't a compliment.

St. Louis had seven Hall of Famers on the team that year: first baseman Johnny Mize, pitcher Jesse Haines, outfielder Joe "Ducky Wucky" Medwick, pitcher Paul "Dizzy" Dean,

infielder and manager Frankie Frisch, shortstop Leo Durocher, and first baseman Walter Alston (who only played one game with St. Louis that year and probably wasn't with the team in Metuchen). Medwick, from Carteret, hit 64 doubles that season, still the National League record.

Only four of the future Hall of Famers played in the game against Metuchen--Mize, Medwick, Frisch, and Durocher. The *Reporter* article states that pitchers "Dizzy" Dean and his brother "Daffy" were injured at the time. The "Cards" started a mixture of regulars and subs that night. One player, listed as "Stanley" in the box score, doesn't even appear on their roster as having played any Major League games in 1936. Perhaps he was a coach or batboy.

The Cardinals had played a double-header in St. Louis against the Boston Braves the day before the Metuchen game and were scheduled to play against the Giants in New York the following day. Considering that teams traveled by train at the time, I'm sure they were less than thrilled to play a non-league

Continued on page 5



The St. Louis Cardinals and local children in front of the YMCA building on High Street, Metuchen, July 1936.

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.



“As I am now, you shall be, prepare for death, and follow me”

A Visit to the Piscatawaytown Burial Ground

by Walter Stochel

The Piscatawaytown Burial Ground, located next to St. James Episcopal Church on Woodbridge Avenue, Edison, is one of the oldest cemeteries in Middlesex County. The oldest readable monument is dated 1693 and marks the final resting place of the Hoopar Brothers. This large gravestone has recently been restored and will be relaid on October 25, 2003.

In 1666, settlers from Piscataqua, Maine, settled in this area, calling their settlement Piscataway. In 1870, a portion of Piscataway became part of the newly incorporated Raritan Township, which later became Edison Township. “Piscatawaytown” is the oldest neighborhood in Edison.

On March 5, 1695, the Proprietors of the Province of East New Jersey granted a tract of land for a burial ground and a town common. The “Commons” is located behind the burial ground, and is the oldest public open space in Middlesex County. Militia drilled on the Commons and animals were allowed to graze. A town meeting hall and the town stocks were located on the Commons.

Interred in the Burial Ground are members of many of the original families of this area--the Stelles, Bonhams, Randolphs, and Drakes. Also buried here are British soldiers from the American Revolution, American soldiers from various wars, former mayors and other influential residents.

The highest ranking veteran laid to rest in the Piscatawaytown cemetery is Brevet Major General Thomas Swords. Swords was born in New York in 1806, graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1829, and served in Alabama,

Florida, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Kansas. He was a veteran of the Mexican War and the Civil War. Swords was promoted to Brevet Major General on March 13, 1865, the same day that George Armstrong Custer and Abner Doubleday were promoted to Majors General. He retired in 1869 and died in 1886 at age 79.

Another interesting gravestone is that of Thomas W. Harper, killed during a tornado in 1835 that destroyed St. James Church. As legend has it, Harper was standing outside the church as the storm approached. He was urged to go into the inn across from the church for safety, but refused. He was struck by a timber from the church and died four days later.

No story about the Piscatawaytown Burial Ground would be complete without mention of Mary Moore, the alleged witch. Evidence exists that Moore was buried in the cemetery, including a listing of her grave in Dr. Ezra M. Hunt’s “Record of Burials in the Piscatawaytown Grave Yard as of October 28, 1880.” Folk legend has it that Moore’s behavior led to an accusation of witchcraft during Colonial times. The truth remains unknown,

although tales about dire happenings around her grave persist.

Many of the old headstones in the cemetery were cut by Jonathan Hand Osborn, who did his work in the Scotch Plains area. You can see Osborn’s name or initials (JHO) on some stones. Look for the cherubs, winged death heads, and skull and crossbones on his stones. A common saying that Osborn carved on many old stones is the title of this article.

The Piscatawaytown Burial Ground is now owned and maintained by Edison Township.

SPATATERS. UNDER
NEATH THIS TOMB
LIES 2 BOYES THAT
LAY IN ONE WOMB
THE ELDEST WAS FULL
12 YEARS OLD THE YON
GEST WAS V TWICE
TOLD BY EATING
MUSHROMS FOR
FOOD RARE IN A DAYS
TIME THEY POYSEONED
WERE RICHARD HOOPAR
AND CHARLES HOOPAR
DESESED AUGUST ANNO
DOM 1 6 9 3

Epitaph on the oldest marked grave in the Piscatawaytown Burial Ground (“Spataters” means “Spectators”)

Shady Rest Country Club: An Oasis in the Age of Segregation

The Shady Rest Country Club was owned by and provided leisure activities for African-Americans. Located on Jerusalem Road in Scotch Plains, the club operated for over 40 years and served as a beacon for the African-American community, drawing visitors and performers from the metropolitan area and beyond.

For the last Metuchen-Edison Historical Society program of the 2002-2003 year, held on June 6, Dr. Lawrence D. Hogan, professor of history at Union County Community College and a speaker for the NJ Council for the Humanities, spoke about the historic and social reasons for the formation of the Shady Rest.

In the early 1920s, a group of businessmen bought the club from a Whites-only organization and offered golf, tennis, music, social events, fine dining, and dancing. After playing a song about Joe Louis by Paul Robeson, backed by the Count Basie Orchestra, Dr. Hogan spoke about the many entertainers found at Shady Rest on a Saturday evening, including Cab Calloway, Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald and the Chick Webb band, Jimmy Lunsford, Earl Hines, and Lionel Hampton.

The Shady Rest was the “Forest Hills” of Black Tennis, with visiting players such as Althea Gibson and Ora Washington.

One of the most important figures connected with the club was John “Ship” Shippen, the first American golf professional. He played and nearly won the 2nd U.S. Open at Shinnecock Hills in 1896, an event from which he was almost banned due to his race. He came to teach at Shady Rest in 1925, after being a golf pro and instructor for luminaries such as J. P. Morgan at Shinnecock, and stayed until his death in the late 1960s. Dr. Hogan showed portions of a video made about John Shippen, the Shady Rest Country Club, and some of the events that took place there.

Shady Rest is now a public golf course--the Scotch Hills Country Club. Since the early 1990s, the Club has hosted an annual tournament in Shippen’s name.

Former members of Shady Rest who attended Dr. Hogan’s program answered questions from members of the audience.

Dr. Hogan closed by stressing the importance of oral history. The history of the Shady Rest Country Club was not documented and would have been lost if not for memories of a few of its former members.

Photo of John Shippen from ourGOLF.com at <http://www.ourgolf.com/history/shippen.html>



Historical & Genealogical Research Using the Internet

by Tyreen Reuter



In the last several years, the methods and tools used to conduct historical research have improved dramatically as resources on the Internet have expanded. Many websites provide valuable information to researchers investigating family histories, significant sites and events, historic buildings and structures, and past social and economic conditions. These sites are operated by libraries, historical organizations, genealogy clubs, preservation groups, and pay services.

Information that previously took hours or days to locate can often be found in just a few minutes by searching the appropriate sites or using the various search engines. The ease and flexibility of researching via the Internet has increased the accessibility of information. Much of the guesswork can be eliminated and wasted trips can be avoided by using the "finding guides" that often accompany large collections.

Be aware, however, that using Internet resources has drawbacks. For example, even if a repository has a searchable catalogue of its collection, there may be valuable

resources that are not listed on-line. Finding guides are not always exhaustive--information about your great-grandparents might be included in the diary of woman who lived in Perth Amboy even if their names are not listed in the resource's on-line description. It takes a certain amount of detective work and taking educated guesses to locate this kind of information.

Do not accept text for truth simply because it is posted on an Internet site. Many genealogy sites, for example, contain information uploaded from researchers who are taking best guesses or are relying on undocumented, anecdotal information. Finally, there are copyright laws that govern the use of many historic images posted on the Internet. These images can generally be reprinted for personal use only, and should be properly cited.

Below are the addresses of selected sites that may be useful in research efforts. Through these and other sites, home computers can be a valuable research tool. The Metuchen and Edison Public Libraries also offer Internet access free of charge.

Useful Internet Sites

Note: Sites are organized according to primary information provided, although the site may contain other kinds of information.

CATALOGUES

<http://www.jerseyhistory.org/>

Operated by the New Jersey Historical Society, located in Newark. Contains a catalogue of the collections and includes a number of finding guides. The Society has a very large collection of personal papers connected with prominent New Jersey families.

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/>

<http://www.archives.gov/index.html>

These official sites of the National Park Service and the National Archives contain searchable catalogues of collections and links to National Register of Historic Places listings, affiliated research guides, and history/preservation bulletins.

GENEALOGY

www.rootsweb.com

The largest free on-line site for genealogists. Contains more than 200 million names, one million surnames, and 100,000 message boards, and links to tens of thousands of specialized websites.

<http://www.phmc.state.pa.us>

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's site. Provides a listing of family papers/manuscripts in its collections and resources for genealogists.

<http://www.dar.org/library/default.html>

Provides a search engine for the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Library, one of the largest genealogical research centers in the U.S.. The library contains more than 15,000 volumes of Genealogical Records Committee Reports compiled by DAR researchers, extensive microfilm collections, unpublished family histories, cemetery record transcriptions, and bible records.

<http://www.archives.gov/index.html>

Pay-subscription site that provides on-line genealogical resources and access to hundreds of millions of searchable individual records, including all available U.S. Census records (1790-1930), many city directories, immigration records, and unpublished histories.

HISTORICAL EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS

<http://www.cultureheritage.org/>

Operated by the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission. Lists local historical events and exhibitions as well as links to cultural sites.

Continued on page 4

Useful Internet Sites (from page 3)



HISTORIC SITES/PRESERVATION

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov>

Operated by the Library of Congress. This searchable site contains text, drawings, and photographs from Historic American Buildings Surveys (HABS) and an extensive collection of birdseye-view maps.

<http://www.preservationnj.org/>

Preservation New Jersey's site. Includes New Jersey's ten most endangered sites, historical events, and links to preservation resources.

<http://www.state.nj.us/dep/hpo/>

The New Jersey Historic Preservation Office site contains preservation information and a listing of all the buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts listed on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places (SR) and the National Register of Historic Places (NR). Also included are resources with Certifications of Eligibility (COE), opinions of eligibility from the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO Opinion), and/or Determinations of Eligibility (DOE) from the Keeper of the National Register.

<http://www.depts.drew.edu/cue/certificates.htm>

Contains information about Drew University's Certificate in Historic Preservation Program and links to other NJ history and preservation sites. While this site does not contain historic information, research and history courses are offered through the program.

METUCHEN-EDISON HISTORY

<http://edisonnj.org>

This official site of Edison Township provides written material and photographs related to the history of the township, with special attention to the Menlo Park area and the inventions of Thomas Edison. Special features are vintage recordings from the Edison era and current recordings made on vintage equipment, and a virtual tour of Edison's Menlo Park complex.

<http://www.jhalpin.com/metuchen/metindex.htm>

Privately maintained site that provides various historic photographs related to the history of Metuchen and Edison.

<http://www.metuchen.com>

This official site of the Borough of Metuchen provides a brief written history of Metuchen.

NEW JERSEY HISTORY

<http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers University Libraries' Information System (IRIS) is an invaluable tool for New Jersey history research. Their Special Collections and University Archives collections catalogue is on-line and provides brief descriptions of the resources. Note that there are items in the manuscript and map collections that are not catalogued on-line, but are available at the library through the card catalogue and hard-copy finding guides.

<http://www.monmouth.com/~mcha3/default.htm>

The Monmouth County Historical Association Library & Archives holds one of the largest collections of printed and original materials on local history in New Jersey. Their site provides a search tool for their collections. Although Middlesex County does not, many New Jersey counties have similar sites.

<http://www.higginsonbooks.com/>

<http://www.ebay.com/>

<http://www.amazon.com>

Booksellers such as the Higginson Book Company often have a collection of rare local history resources for sale. Just knowing that a certain book exists, so you can look for it at libraries, can be extremely helpful. E-Bay and Amazon.com are also helpful for the same reason, and often list historic photos and postcards as well.

SOCIAL HISTORY

<http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/census/>

The Historical Census Browser at this site contains searchable information about the population and economy of U.S. states and counties from 1790 to 1960. If you want to know how many Episcopal churches there were in Middlesex County in 1890, this is the place!

<http://www.accessible.com/>

This pay-subscription site provides searchable, primary source material from 18th and 19th century periodicals and New Jersey county histories. Of particular interest are the 19th Century African-American newspapers and 1728-1800 editions of *The Pennsylvania Gazette*.

Edison History Day 2003 **October 18, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.**

The third annual Edison History Day will be held at the historic Stelton Baptist Church, 334 Plainfield Avenue. Visitors can browse among hundreds of photographs, documents, and artifacts from the archives of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society and memorabilia from the Thomas Edison Tower Museum. Attractions include a typical Revolutionary War officer's trunk on loan from the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission, special displays, and a guided tour of the Stelton Baptist Church cemetery at noon.

St. James Episcopal Church Celebrates 300th Anniversary



St. James Episcopal Church, 2136 Woodbridge Avenue, Edison, begins a year of activities commemorating its 300th anniversary on Christmas Eve. Throughout 2004, the church will hold several special events. You can participate in this celebration of a unique

piece of the history of the area. Below is a list of events being planned that will be open to the public.

- Dec. 24, 2003 – Candlelight Procession & Children's Service
- Feb. 22 – Pancake Breakfast
- April 25 – High Tea & Talk on Church History
- May - Strawberry Festival
- June 27 – Picnic/Gospel Sing
- Sept. – Revolutionary War Encampment
- Dec. 5 – Special Service of Thanksgiving

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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.

Humphries Deals Cards Defeat: 10-7 (from page 1)

game late on a Monday night (even if the Metuchen team may have treated it as the biggest game of their lives). The ad for the game says the entire 23-man roster would be there. Perhaps some of the players went ahead to New York for a rest (or to live up to the "Gashouse Gang" name), as there are only 15 or so players shown in a photograph taken that day in front of the YMCA. Still, the Cardinals found time to pose for the photo and give high praise to Metuchen pitcher Bert 'Bud' Humphries, saying he really had "something on the ball."

Information on the Metuchen team is hard to find. According to the *Recorder*, Humphries tried out for several Yankee farm teams including the Newark Bears. At the time of the game, he was 26 years old and had graduated from Metuchen High School. He was the son of George Humphries, who served as Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Metuchen for 17 years during the Depression. In 1930, Bert lived in the Parsonage House at 260 Woodbridge Avenue with his parents and sisters (one of whom may have been his twin). He went to Brown University and received a Bachelor of Divinity Degree from Union Theological Seminary in 1939. He then moved to Syracuse where he served as a pastor.



The manager was Ed "Blackie" Regan. In 1930, there was a plumber, Joseph E. Regan, living at 197 Woodbridge Avenue and who would have been 41 at the time of the game. "Hall", the left fielder listed in the box score who had 4 hits, may have been 36-year old Ferdinand Hall who lived around the corner from Humphries and Regan at 52 Kempson Place. Third baseman Ernie Sabo and catcher "Gresch" are possibly truck driver John E. Sabo from Woodbridge and Joseph Gresch (a hat flanger) from Perth Amboy. The 1930 census indicates that they were both of Hungarian heritage and lived a mile and a half from each other. That John E. Sabo and Joseph Gresch could have known each other could help establish their connection to the team. One last player, shortstop "Gavrian", is not listed in census records of the time.

As for the game itself, 14 doubles were hit (none by Medwick), but there were no home runs. The game was tied 4-4 until the bottom of the 6th inning, when the Metuchen team erupted for 5 runs off the Cardinal's relief pitcher, Flint Rhem, to break the game open. Metuchen ended up winning the game by 3 runs. Even though the Cardinals may not have been up for the game, it is still impressive that a local team could beat four future Hall of Famers on a Major League team that had just won the World Series two years prior. I would have liked to have been there on what was possibly the greatest night in Metuchen's sports history.

The field on which this historic baseball game was played was sold by William Campbell to the Borough of Metuchen in 1944, and the Campbell School was built in 1952.

If anyone has more information or pictures of the players, the game or the field, please contact the Historical Society.

The photo and advertisement shown in this article are courtesy of www.jhalpin.com. The photograph of the St. Louis Cardinals was donated to the website by Kris Sullivan.

Upcoming Programs

Tour of St. Luke's Episcopal Church & Lecture on Its History

Monday, October 6, 7:00 p.m.
St. Luke's Episcopal Church,
17 Oak Avenue, Metuchen

"Listening to the Past: Oral Histories from the Archives"

Thursday, November 20, 7:30 p.m.
Old Franklin School House
491 Middlesex Avenue, Metuchen

*Joint program with the Metuchen
Borough Improvement League.*

A Poem...Untitled and Undated... About Thomas Edison

The inventor spent many long years
At work in his laboratory,
But not everyone, it appears,
Knows the rest of the story.

For uncounted hours he toiled each night
As he struggled to invent an electric light.
But tonight, at last, as you might have guessed,
The time was right for its very first test!

He worked without ceasing or thought of a letup,
And with trembling fingers, he adjusted the setup.
Each step in his mind he calmly rehearsed
As he hoped for the best while fearing the worst.

'Twas the moment of truth as he turned the lamp on.
It burst into brightness—the darkness was gone.
The relief in his heart we can safely assume
As its glorious brilliance flooded the room.

In the flush of triumph, he happily rested
But found his patience sorely tested
As he heard the voice he had come to dread,
Turn off that light, Tom, and come to bed!"

This charming little ditty was found in the Historical Society Archives. If you know anything about it, please call Curator Marie Vajo at 732-985-3217.

Metuchen-Edison Historical Society
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