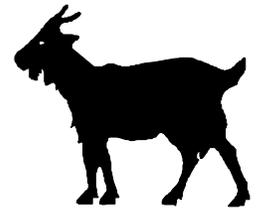


Nannygoats



The following article was contributed by James Halsey, who has lived in Edison since 1964 and has strong ties to Piscatawaytown through his wife, Marie Rolfe, whose family is from the area has several relatives buried in the St. James Cemetery. Retired after a 38-year career as a Licensed Professional Engineer in construction engineering and management, Jim is a long-time member of the Society, has previously served as the Treasurer, and currently serves as a Director and member of the Cemetery Committee. Jim is also very involved with St. James Episcopal Church, having served as Treasurer and member of the Vestry.

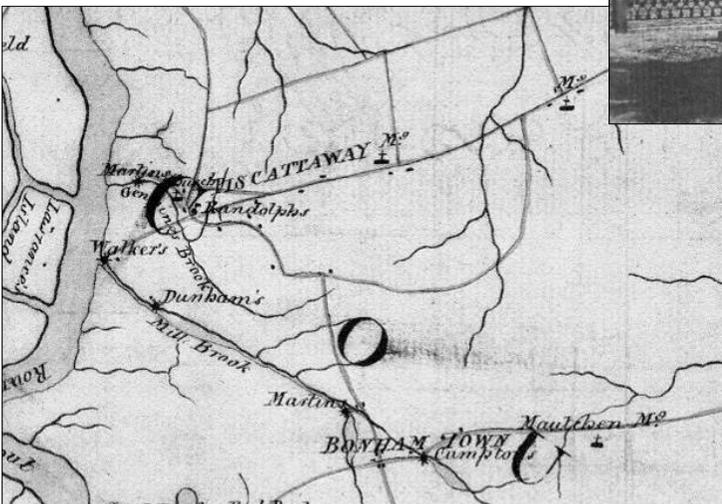
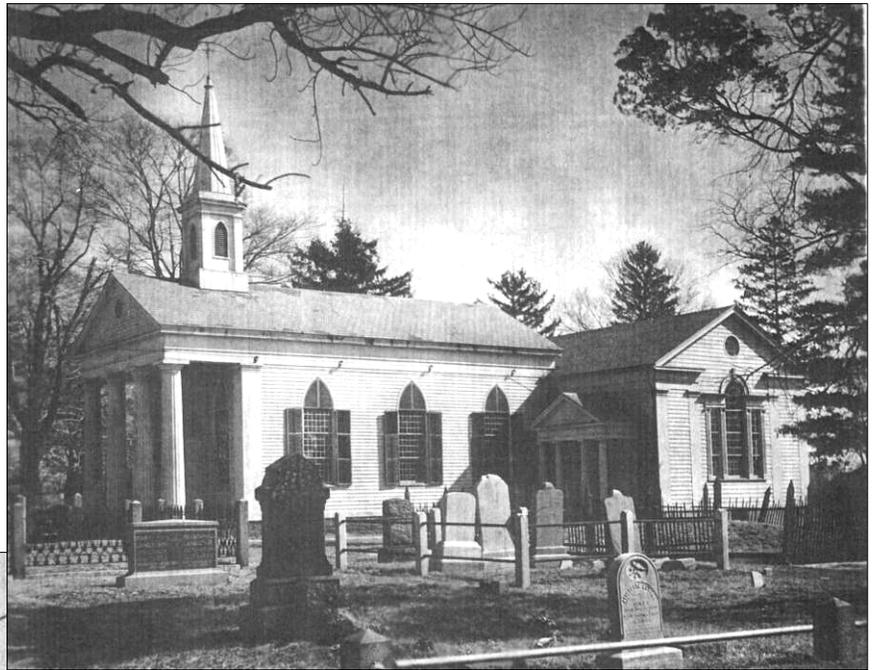
Historic Piscatawaytown

by James Halsey

A small neighborhood, perhaps a 1/2 square mile in area, in the southeast corner of Edison is known as Piscatawaytown to the locals. It is part of Edison Township (not Piscataway Township which lies two miles or so to the west). There are no formal boundaries for present day Piscatawaytown, but this writer thinks of it as mainly South of Woodbridge Avenue between US Route 1 and Meadow Road. The most visible landmark of the current Piscatawaytown neighborhood is St. James Episcopal Church, the "White Church", at 2136 Woodbridge Avenue.

Piscatawaytown was first settled by Europeans in 1664. They came from an English speaking colony in Piscataqua, Maine which lies near the present day Piscataqua River that separates New Hampshire and Maine.

The New Jersey settlement was first named New Piscataqua, then Piscataquatown and eventually became Piscatawaytown. There were four original settlers; Charles Gilman, John Martin, Hugh Dunn, and Hopewell Hull. Other families in the early days included the Drakes, Fitz Randolphs, Dunhams, Langstaffs, Runyons, Smalleys, Bonhams, Munday, Mannings, and



Stelles. Streets and neighborhoods in the area are still named after them, and many descendants of these people live in the area today.

The original settlement was located behind the church and was built on the New England model in that it consisted of an open "Commons" surrounded by the village.

Continued on Page 4

Above: A 1938 photograph of St. James Episcopal Church and Cemetery, courtesy of Remson Kentos. Left: An excerpt of the ca. 1781 John Hills Map showing the Piscatawaytown area.

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.

Gregory Costa

The Society regrettably informs its members of the passing of Gregory S. Costa on October 10, 2009 at his home in Edison. Born in Metuchen on April 25, 1912, he graduated from The New York Military Academy and Notre Dame University, received an MBA from Harvard University, and for many years served as President of the Costa Ice Cream Company.

Mr. Costa's oral history was featured in the Winter, 2007 edition of *Nannygoats*, and a reader's remembrances inspired by that article were included in the Fall, 2009 issue. That reader, Jeff Hofmann, recently sent the Society a copy of the photograph at right upon learning of Mr. Costa's death, and plans to share more family recollections and photographs, including on a 50th Costa's Ice Cream Anniversary party thrown for Gregory Costa, Sr. on October 11, 1961.



Mr. Hofmann's grandfather, Andrew, is at the center, holding Gregory Costa Sr.'s left arm as their group strolls the Atlantic City boardwalk in 1938.

Rosemary Crowley

The Society also regrets the passing of long-time member Rosemary Ann Whittaker Crowley on December 28, 2009. Born in Boston, Massachusetts, Rosemary moved to Metuchen in 1965 and soon became a very active member of the community.

In addition to being a mother of five and a Registered Nurse, she was active in the Girl Scouts, PTO, Little League, and Friends of the Metuchen Library. She also taught at the Community Nursery School and served as a substitute school nurse in Metuchen and at The Center School in Highland Park.

As a member of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society, she is remembered well for compiling and editing "Recipes, Remedies and Recollections," copies of which are now housed in the Metuchen Public and Rutgers University Libraries, and for narrating two documentaries on the history of the Metuchen.

Got History? Visit the Archives!

The Society's Grimstead Room archives, containing thousands of local history images and documents, are located in the basement of the Metuchen Public Library and guided access to the collections is available from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon on the following upcoming:

March 6, April 3, and May 1, 2010. For more information, contact us at 732-906-0529 or wstochel@earthlink.net.

Metuchen's Historic Preservation Committee Receives Grant

In May 2009, the Borough of Metuchen Historic Preservation Committee hosted "Celebrate Metuchen: Caring for Our Architectural Heritage," an open event designed to increase awareness of Metuchen's rich architectural heritage and the value of its preservation. Funding for the event came in part from a grant from the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission (MCC&HC).

Since that time, the Committee applied for and has received another grant from the MCC&HC. The project currently being funded is for an independent historic preservation consultant to conduct a survey and assessment of Metuchen's architectural resources. The Committee hopes that this evaluation will help identify whether or not there are any historic districts within the Borough, and that the findings will help guide them with their next steps.

Make sure to check out the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society photographs that were recently installed, as part of a chain-wide redecorating project, in the Applebee's Grill and Bar at Edison Crossroads on Route 1. The restaurant has also joined the Society as a supporting member for 2010.

The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society's Grimstead Room contains thousands of documents, maps, and photographs, related to our local history.

At right is the first 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." Beginning with this column, the Society will reprint the entire directory in several ensuing issues of *Nannygoats*.

Below is a news article that appeared in the *New Brunswick Daily Fredonian* on June 27, 1888, about the opening of the current Metuchen Train Station.

NETUCHEN'S BIG TIME.

The Inhabitants Celebrate the Change in Railroad Depots.

(SPECIAL TO THE FREDONIAN.)

METUCHEN, June 27.—There was a big celebration here last night when the men in the employ of the Pennsylvania Railroad transferred the property of the company from the old to the new depot building. They began the work at 11 o'clock and finished at 1 o'clock this morning.

The Cornet Band was engaged by the citizens to furnish music for the general celebration, which took place while the work of moving was going on. This morning all travelers east and west took trains at the new station at Main street.

The old station will be torn down this week and one of the four tracks will be laid where it now stands.

Interested in reading previous issues of *Nannygoats*? All of our back issues are available online at the Society's website at www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org.

- Abell C R r 77 Rector.....Metuchen-87
- Aborn Development Corp rl est
Menlo Park..Metuchen-297-W-1
- Acken Wm C r 68 Spring.....Metuchen-559
- Acs M r Morris av.....Metuchen-312-M
- Adams M r 10 Carlton rd.....Metuchen-442
- Aggerholm K r Fords.....Metuchen-332-W
- Ainslie Thos D r 81 Rector.....Metuchen-191
- Albertinus Brother r St Jos College
Metuchen-315
- Alcan R r Elm av.....Metuchen-621
- Alessi Mary Mrs r 527 Main...Metuchen-633-R
- Alessi S r 6 Maple av.....Metuchen-689-M
- Allien O S r 364 Middlesex av...Metuchen-571-J
- Allison A r 93 Hillside av.....Metuchen-148-W
- Amer Railway Express Co Station pl
Metuchen-68-W
- Anderson A r 62 Myrtle av.....Metuchen-653
- Anderson A J Mrs confe Plainfield av
Metuchen-749
- Anderson Eliz Miss r Fords...Metuchen-269-R
- Anderson Geo M r 181 Maple av...Metuchen-247
- Anderson Soren P r Fords.....Metuchen-173-M
- Andrews L G r Iselin.....Metuchen-352-R-2
- Anthony S lunch Iselin.....Metuchen-566
- Antonides A r Fords.....Metuchen-269-M
- Applegate H r 247 Main.....Metuchen-231-M
- Applegate J Arthur r
344 Middlesex av..Metuchen-344
- Aquila A r Iselin.....Metuchen-194-R-3
- Ardolino E r 38 Rector.....Metuchen-43-W
- Armbrust E Miss r Thomas.....Metuchen-322-J
- Arnold A S counsellor-at-law
407 Min...Metuchen-460
- Residence 947 Middlesex ave...Metuchen-257
- Arnold A S lawyer 407 Main.....Metuchen-500
- Ashley M r Iselin.....Metuchen-91-M-1
- Asproclas Jas r Fords.....Metuchen-475-J
- Atkinson E J Mrs r 283 Main..Metuchen-121-W
- Atwood W r Spear av.....Metuchen-624
- Ayers Chas r 20 Rector.....Metuchen-148-R
- Ayers Chas F r 56 McPherson av..Metuchen-388
- Ayers Fred C r 312 Amboy av..Metuchen-120-W
- Ayers Nathan Mrs r 279 Wdbrge av
Metuchen-11-J
- Ayers W H r 104 Hillside av...Metuchen-148-J
- Babcock H M r 32 Home.....Metuchen-82-W
- Bacha Chas r 91 Amboy av.....Metuchen-29-J
- Baker Thos W r 51 Carson av...Metuchen-7-M
- Balch B T R r Kempton pl.....Metuchen-771
- Barit M J r Woodbridge av.....Metuchen-335
- Barr Jas A r 76 Spring.....Metuchen-34-W
- Barri J G r 77 Amboy av.....Metuchen-546
- Bartos Leon r 24 Sylvan av.....Metuchen-271
- Barwell J W r 100 Hillside av...Metuchen-609
- Bates F W r 61 Grove av.....Metuchen-462
- Batsford H E r Middlesex av...Metuchen-59-M
- Baty A r Amboy av.....Metuchen-274
- Baumann E K r 20 Clarendon ct..Metuchen-510-J
- Bayer J F r 12 Carson.....Metuchen-743
- Beaudoin P garage Lincoln hwy..Metuchen-729
- Beck J r Dartmouth.....Metuchen-627-J
- Bedell E W Dr r 60 High.....Metuchen-45-R
- Beckman S V W Miss nrs 33 Thomas
Metuchen-196-W
- Beistle Chas P r 1 Graham av...Metuchen-423
- Benjamin P Jay r 77 Spring...Metuchen-90-M
- Bennett H Mrs r 32 William...Metuchen-106-M
- Bennett J Miss r 111 Rose.....Metuchen-145-J
- Bennett W r 543 Middlesex av...Metuchen-651
- Berg C r Grove av.....Metuchen-36-W
- Berrien Wm C r 277 Lake.....Metuchen-292-R
- Beutel F C r 68 High.....Metuchen-607
- Bidmead Jas r Oak Tree rd..Metuchen-264-R-2
- Bilgray Peter r Fords.....Metuchen-432-J
- Birdsall A J grge 550 Middlesex av..Metuchen-65
Residence William.....Metuchen-140-M
- Black W B r 31 High.....Metuchen-142
- Blanchard I Mrs r 34 Bounty...Metuchen-293-J
- Blanchard W S r Talmage rd..Metuchen-733-W
- Blook M B r Oak Tree rd.....Metuchen-286
- Bloomfield Charles A r Amboy rd..Metuchen-209
- Blyer N r 15 Charles.....Metuchen-134-R
- Rodger E G r 252 Grove av...Metuchen-246-R
- Rodnar Jos r Main.....Metuchen-706-J
- Bogan W Jr r Lafayette rd.....Metuchen-1-J

“Piscatawaytown,” *Continued from Page 1*

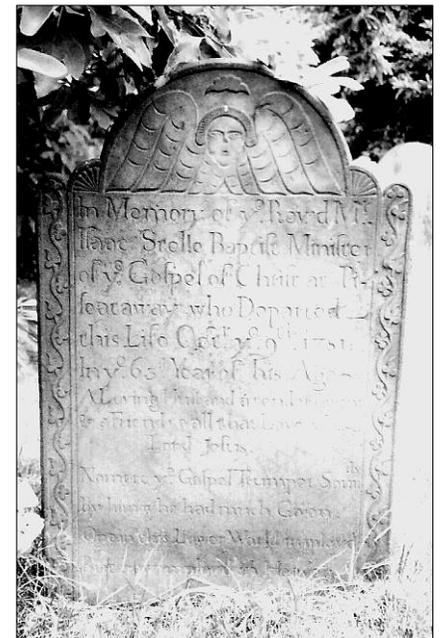
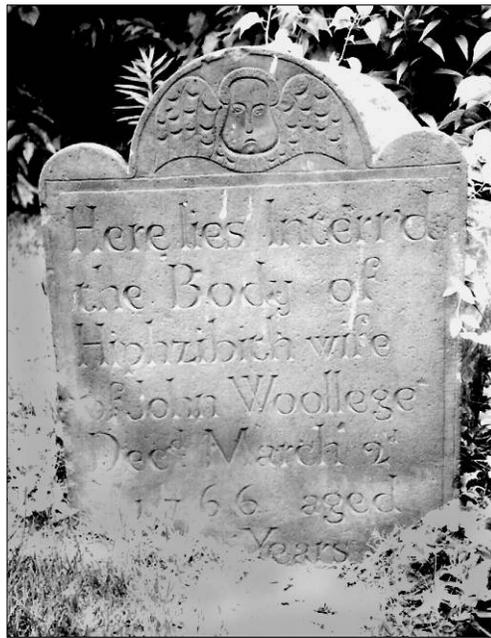
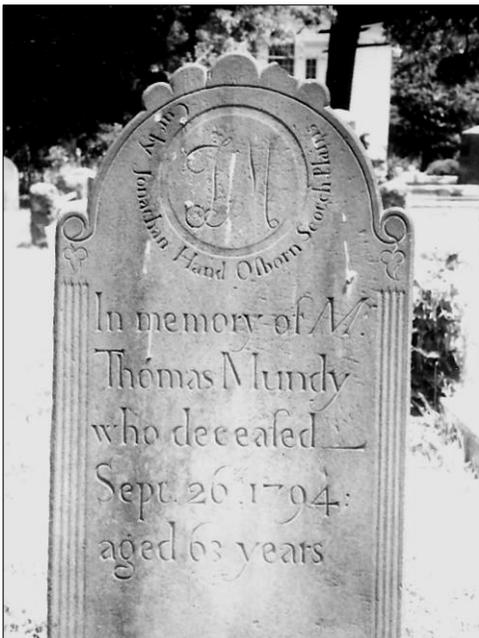
The Commons was for community use such as grazing of animals, drilling of militia, meetings, and recreation. The Piscatawaytown Commons was the only such feature in all of New Jersey and it still exists today. It is a unique, picturesque and historical treasure which is well worth visiting and easy to find: just look for the white church and its steeple, and what remains of the Commons is immediately behind it.



The settlers from Maine came due to economic pressures and religious issues in New England. At the time, the English decided to encourage settlement of their claimed lands in what is now New Jersey by offering land and religious freedom. The site for the village of New Piscataqua was chosen because it was reportedly near a Native American village and a busy Native American trail that crossed the region from East to West. The tribe was known as the Raritangs and was part of the Lenni Lenape nation which extended across New Jersey into Pennsylvania and up into New York state. Of equal importance was the fact that the Raritan River was nearby. Given that there was no overland transportation in the area at the time, access to a navigable river was essential for connection with the outside world. From the village, settlements spread up the Raritan River valley and out into Somerset County.

Piscatawaytown was the seat of Middlesex County government well into the 1700's. Freeholders met there as well as did the County Court. These functions took place in a timber building formerly in what is now a cemetery to the west of St. James. Although that building no longer exists, but its foundation has been found in the Skewes cemetery plot which is located in the west end of the cemetery.

An interesting sidelight to this history stems from quarrels between the English and the Dutch in the New York area. Both claimed sovereignty which led to armed conflict from time to time. In July, 1673, the Dutch besieged New York, then occupied by the English, with several warships and 1500 soldiers. The greatly outnumbered English quickly saw the logic in the Dutch argument and agreed to give up their claims. As part of the agreement, New Piscataqua came under Dutch rule and was renamed “Piscataqua Dorp.” The citizens of the village were flexible and quickly swore allegiance to the Dutch Crown, some were even named to municipal jobs by the Dutch. However, six months later, on February 9, 1674 at the Peace of Westminster, Piscataqua Dorp reverted back to English sovereignty and became New Piscataqua again. The citizens of the village were apparently again quite flexible in their loyalty and quickly swore

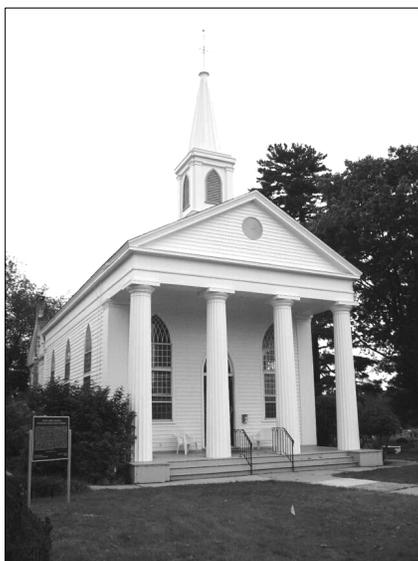


fealty to the English Crown. But it is interesting to note that the Dutch flag did fly over the village for six months.

There is little to be seen of the original village of Piscatawaytown today save for one home, the Dunham House on Park Way, on the east side of the Commons. A violent tornado in 1835 destroyed much of the village, including twenty some odd homes and St. James Church. In its path through Middlesex County, the tornado also touched down in New Brunswick where it caused much destruction and several deaths.

After the tornado, St. James was quickly rebuilt with funds from a generous benefactor and timber salvaged from the original structure. The church had been chartered by Queen Anne in 1704 as a parish of the Church of England. During the American Revolution, it was occupied by the 42nd Royal Highland Infantry Regiment for six months during 1777. Two sharp actions between colonial troops and the Highlanders were fought at or near to the church, resulting in significant casualties to each side.

The church is surrounded by a large cemetery containing some 1500 graves that



date back to the earliest settlement time. One headstone, for a Mary Jones, is dated 1683 and is reputed to be the oldest surviving headstone in New Jersey. Some British troops slain in the actions noted above are buried in the cemetery. The location of their grave is known but there are no markers.

Finally, it should be noted that St. James fronts on Woodbridge Avenue, which in Colonial times was known as the Post Road. It connected Philadelphia and the New York area and was the only such road at that time. It was a very important artery and saw much history unfold. Many famous people traveled it, including George Washington. Both the American and British armies marched up and down the road as they maneuvered for position and fought battles along it. Piscatawaytown was witness to it all.

Images on Page 4: *Above Right*, Joseph Barres' 1781 rendering of the Piscataqua River between New Hampshire and Maine. *Bottom*, Three gravemarkers in the St. James' cemetery. Images on Page 5: *Above*, a 1932 Grimstead Photograph of the Dunham House. *Left*, St. James Church as it appears today.

Interested in Becoming a *Nannygoats* Contributor?

Do you have an interesting story, fact, or image that you think would make a good addition to a future issue of *Nannygoats*? If so, please contact the Editor, and if your submission is published, we'll send you a complimentary copy of the 1888 "Crumbs of Comfort" history and cookbook! The submission deadline for the Summer 2010 issue is **May 31, 2010**.

Nannygoats Editor
Metuchen-Edison Historical Society
P.O. Box 61
Metuchen, NJ 08840
ayersallenhouse@msn.com
732-452-1381

Class of 1931 History

The following text 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). Please note that there are several known factual and grammatical errors, but the document is reproduced exactly as originally written.

About fifty years ago some box cars, which had been used for immigrants were discarded by the railway and shifted to the old gravel track in the vicinity of the present Lorraine Oil Co. buildings. These cars were bought for a small sum by immigrants from the track and used them as living quarters. Many of the women earned a living by doing washing for people who lived nearby.

There is an amusing story told of the time of the Civil War when the soldiers were being transported by rail through Metuchen. As they went through the town they shot at passing objects for target practice. One day while passing through the section up by the High Bridge one of the soldiers killed a cow (accidentally, if you will) which was grazing peacefully in the field. Consider the thoughts of the owner when arriving upon the scene of the crime, he found the victim weltering in its gore and realized the killer was miles away.

Long before the advent of the railroad, cattle being taken from place to place were driven in great herds along the roads. The passing of these herds through Metuchen was quite an event and whenever the thunder of hoofs was heard in the distance all the male population of the town gathered to watch them pass. Circuses likewise passed in this way and the mere hint of an approaching show was almost enough to proclaim a general holiday. The elephants were greatly opposed to crossing bridges and it is said that when the old wooden structure was the only bridge between New Brunswick and Metuchen one particularly obstreperous old beast absolutely refused to cross until blindfolded!!!

One of the most outstanding events of the past was the immigrant wreck of 1872. At that time immigrants were being transported by freight trains and one night when a train (part passenger, part freight) was passing through Metuchen several cars of immigrants left the rails, doubling up other cars and stopping travel on all of the tracks. No explanation for the wreck was ever found, but the damage was very great. A young girl had her left arm cut off and was later found with her engagement ring still on the finger. Another man's leg was crushed. Student doctors from New Brunswick were called to dress all wounds. This story was obtained from an eye witness of the wreck who said that he had never seen a stranger site than those numerous immigrants scattered about the field below the wreck, each frantically searching for his own baggage among the piles strewn over the ground.

The blizzard of 1888 was another of the most important events of the past. It started one day in March and the snow fell heavily with a terrific wind for three days. Snow was up to the door tops and it was necessary to tunnel one's way out. All trains were stopped for three days and one engine attempting to ride through a drift went

right to the top of the mound. Passengers of these trains of course needed food and Metuchen did business such as it had never done before. John Robinson's store being completely sold out. Some ambitious boys bought bread and rolls cheaply and sold them for outrageous prices, thereby realizing a neat little sum. This storm was so severe that the blizzard of '88 remains a byword in Metuchen as well as the East.

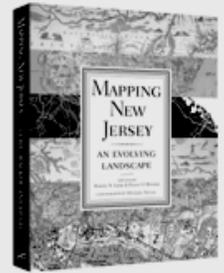
Somewhere in the vicinity of Linden Avenue there is what is traditionally known as the "bloody rock." According to the story, in the time of the Indians there were two braves who lived the same Indian maiden. One day one of them chanced upon the other seated on a large rock with the girl. He, being insanely jealous, crept up from behind and tomahawked them both. This rock is said still to be there.

NEW ON THE BOOKSHELF

Looking for a great gift for a NJ history lover? Check out *Mapping New Jersey*, published in 2009 by Rivergate Books, a new imprint of Rutgers University Press (edited and with an introduction by Maxine N. Lurie and Peter O. Wacker; Cartographer, Michael Siegel).

Mapping New Jersey is the first interpretive atlas of the state in more than one hundred years.

This impressive oversize volume includes stunning historical maps from the 16th century to the present, as well as hard to find graphs, analysis, and diagrams that help interpret the causes and effects of New Jersey's changing landscape.



Metuchen's PRR freight station, as it appeared ca. 1917. This photograph is part of the Interstate Commerce Commission's (ICC) records on file in the National Archives at College Park, MD.

Future issues of *Nannygoats* will continue reprinting the Class of 1931's *History of Metuchen*, including "Social Life" and several successive chapters.

A Letter from the President...

Dear Members and Friends,

First, I would like to congratulate all of the officers of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society who were elected at our Annual Meeting of January 9, 2010:

Frederick Wolke, President
Russ Gehrum, Vice President
Andy Kupersmit, Treasurer
Walter Stochel, Recording Secretary
Tyreen Reuter, Corresponding Secretary

I would also like to congratulate the following Directors who were elected for a 2 year term: Phyllis Boeddinghaus, Lynne Braine, Catherine Langholff, Steve Reuter, Tyreen Reuter, Robert Takash, Marie Vajo, and Frederick Wolke.

I look forward to working with the Board of Trustees of the Society and our members during the coming year. I also look forward to our continuing efforts to add to the Society's collection of memorabilia and making it accessible to the general public on Local History Day, during the Grimstead Room's open hours, through our news publication, *Nannygoats*, and on our website.

During the coming year, we will be working on an exciting new project pertaining to a Revolutionary War battle fought in our general area. We have obtained a grant from the Federal government for this project known as the "Short Hills National Register Nomination Project."

We are planning a number of interesting programs for 2010, including an updated walking tour of Metuchen and will keep you advised on all our activities. These continue to be challenging times and we remain dedicated to keeping the Society a vital institution in our communities.

We thank you for your past support and look forward to your continued support during the coming year.

Sincerely, Frederick Wolke

Published by
The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society
P.O. Box 61, Metuchen, NJ 08840
Tyreen A. Reuter, Editor
732-452-1381
ayersallenhouse@msn.com

Board of Trustees
Frederick Wolke, President
Russell Gehrum, Vice President
Andrew Kupersmit, Treasurer
Walter R. Stochel, Jr. Recording Secretary
Tyreen Reuter, Corresponding Secretary
Phyllis Boeddinghaus
Lynne Braine
Jim Halsey
James Hebenstreit
Catherine Langholff
Marilyn Langholff
Fred Primich
Steve Reuter
Bob Takash
Marie Vajo

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.

Victorian Office Rentals



MARTIN D. JESSEN
President

351 Main Street • P.O. Box 489 • Metuchen, NJ 08840
732-548-6400 • FAX 732-548-9188 • victorianofficerentals@yahoo.com
www.victorianofficerentals.com

METUCHEN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

323 Main Street, Suite B, Metuchen, NJ 08840
www.metuchenchamber.com



Office Phone: (732) 548-2964
Office Fax: (732) 548-4094
Office E-mail: metuchen.chamber@verizon.net

Looking for a Reverse Mortgage?

Call or Visit

METUCHEN SAVINGS BANK
— ESTABLISHED 1897 —

50 Pearl Street, Metuchen, NJ 08840
(732) 549-4452
www.metuchensavingsbank.com



Thomas Edison Center at Menlo Park

Visit our current museum – and learn about our plans for a:

- New education facility!
- New community resource!
- Restored Edison Memorial Tower!



37 Christie Street
Edison, NJ 08820
www.MenloParkMuseum.org
732-549-3299 • 732-494-4194


Applebee's™
It's a whole new neighborhood.™

Edison
Edison Crossroads - Route 1 South at I-287
732-516-0040

If you are interested in becoming one of *Nannygoats'* advertising supporters, please contact the Editor.

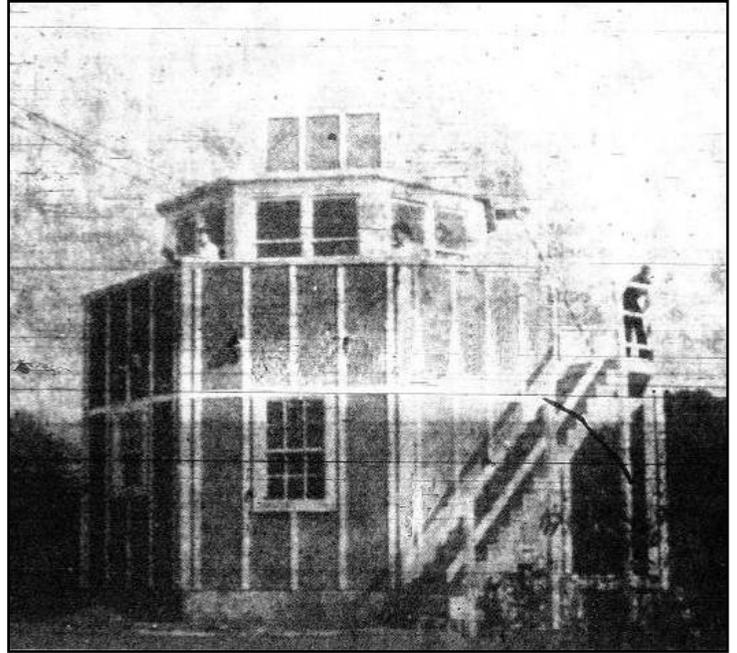
New in the Grimstead Room Collection...

Many thanks are once again due to George M. Muha, of Cream Ridge, NJ and Waverly, TN, for his contribution of text and photographs about Metuchen's World War II Aircraft Observation Tower.

Readers will remember Mr. Muha's recent donation of three short filmed events (1952 Memorial Day and Armistice Day Parades along Main Street in Metuchen, and a 1960s reenactment of a U.S. Airmail Plane landing at Hadley Airport in South Plainfield), as well as the lead article "Tending A Grave Site" in our Summer 2009 issue of *Nannygoats*.

The Society plans to feature Mr. Muha's article about the observation tower (shown at right in a photograph from the February 3, 1943 edition of *The Metuchen Recorder*) in an upcoming issue.

If you have any information, photographs, or remembrances of this tower, located on Beacon Hill between 1942 and 1944, that could be included in this upcoming issue, please contact the *Nannygoats* editor at 732-452-1381 or via email at ayersallenhouse@msn.com.



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

Have you renewed your membership in the Society for 2010? It's never too late! Renew now and receive program notices, information about special events, and a continued subscription to this newsletter. Visit www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org or contact 732-906-0529 for more information.