

# Nannygoats

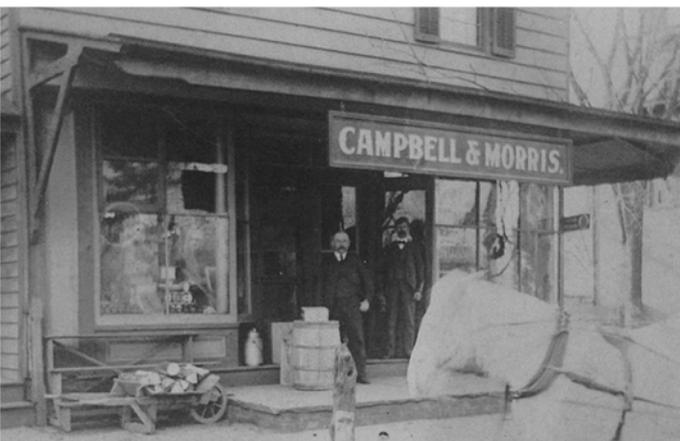


The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society's collection continues to grow and over the last few months has received numerous items, several of which are shown here. There are still many *Local History Mysteries* to be solved, and perhaps

someday they will be solved with the help of new information, items, or images yet to be donated. See Page 7 of this issue for a list of some of the things members and friends are interested in solving. Maybe you have the answer?

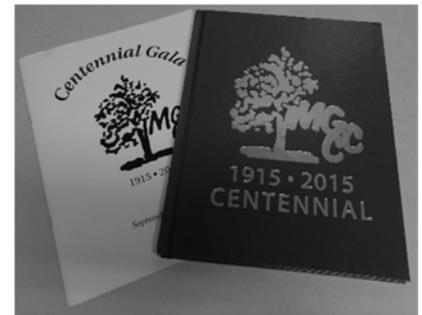
## New in the Archives

Jeff Olson donated this Morris Bottling Co. bottle and stopper in honor of Linda Robinson McBride. Olson found it while working on the site of the current Metuchen Borough Hall. On that site once stood a house that likely dated from about 1735 and a series of outbuildings. Between 1903 and 1910, the house was moved and the lot remained vacant until the first Borough Hall was constructed in 1924. Is it possible that the bottle was sold at the grocery shown below, formerly at the corner of Main Street and Amboy Avenue (where Angie's now is, previously the Corner Confectionery). Note the passing horse 'photobomb.'



John Kozimbo of Westfield donated five service pins and a patch (shown here) from the Roosevelt Hospital Auxiliary in Edison. He also recently donated a bronze plaque from the hospital.

The Metuchen Golf & Country Club recently celebrated its Centennial. In appreciation for providing historical assistance, the club donated a gala program and commemorative book.



Glenn Morton of the McGuiness Family donated a copy of "The Game of Metuchen/Edison," based on Monopoly. It was put out by the Sisterhood of Neve Shalom.

**Continued on Page 6**

**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.**

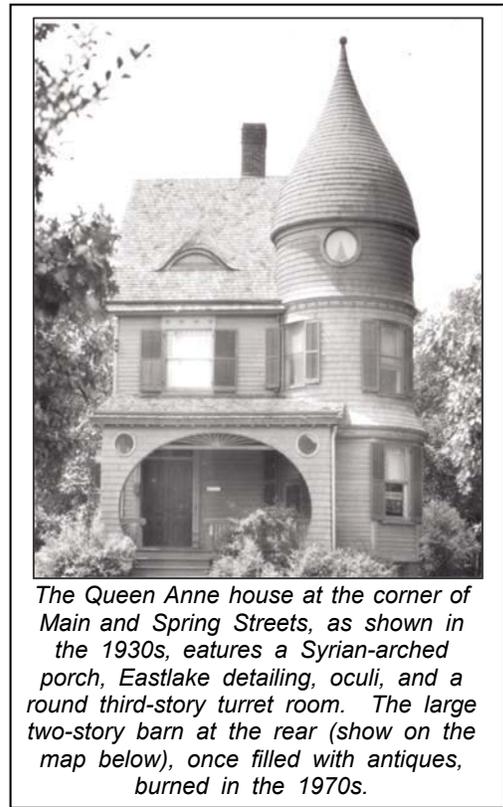
# The Tappen House at 259 Main Street in Metuchen

by Tyreen Reuter

An iconic historic home in Metuchen recently went on the market, and the enlightened real estate agent listing the home realized not only its significance and value, but also worked with the previous and new owners of the house to host an open house for "looky loo" locals who've always wanted a peek. It was a wonderful event, as generations of families mingled in the house and compared notes as to whose room was whose, where doors used to be, and how many children were raised there. As a companion, the following history was compiled.

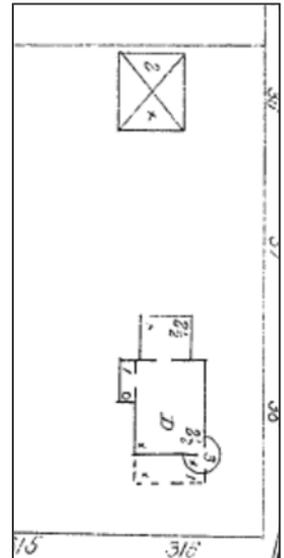
The 1850, 1868, and 1876 maps of the Metuchen area show the lot containing this house as undeveloped and belonging to David Graham Thomas, a prominent resident and large property owner for whom Graham Avenue and Thomas Street are named. The 1850 Otley & Keily Map shows a Luther J. Tappen (1814-1878) living and operating a store in nearby Bonhamtown, in an area that later became the Raritan Arsenal and is now part of Raritan Center. The 1860 census shows Luther J and Susan Tappen living with their children, Luther H (age 19), Ann Adelia (13), Mary (8), Elnora (4), and their farmhands and domestic servants.

Civil War draft records show that by 1863 Luther H., the son of Luther J. and Susan, was married and working as a farmer. It is not clear whether he served or not, although we know many local residents did. Dr. Ezra Mundy Hunt, a surgeon who served during the Civil War, wrote a history of Metuchen in 1870 which mentions the Tappen family as some of the earliest European settlers in the Metuchen area. According to the *History of Middlesex County, New Jersey, 1664-1920* (Volume 2 edited by John Patrick Wall and Harold E. Pickersgill), in 1870 Luther H. was a prominent man in the newly formed Raritan Township (Raritan broke away from Woodbridge in 1870, then Metuchen broke away from Raritan in 1900).



The Queen Anne house at the corner of Main and Spring Streets, as shown in the 1930s, features a Syrian-arched porch, Eastlake detailing, oculi, and a round third-story turret room. The large two-story barn at the rear (shown on the map below), once filled with antiques, burned in the 1970s.

Although a 1977 survey approximates the date of this house as circa 1890, it is most likely ca. 1880. The census from this year lists Luther H. Tappen (1841-1919) and his wife and children living in (then) Raritan Township next to the Conover Family. From deed searches and property records, we know that the property immediately to the south of this house belonged to the Conovers at that time. Unfortunately there are no maps of the area between 1876 and 1900, and 1890 census was destroyed, but we do see the Tappens living in the house in the 1900 census and this is backed up by local directories. The censuses also indicated that Ann and Luther had three sons and three daughters. A 1900 map shows the house and it appears in its current configuration on the 1903 Sanborn Fire Insurance map (see excerpt at right).



It appears that it was Luther H. who was remembered in David Trumbull Marshall's *Boyhood Days in Old Metuchen* (1930):

I never had any money to buy anything, to be sure, but it was always a lot of fun to go and listen to Luther Tappen, the auctioneer, jolly the bidders and with the usual craft of the auctioneer, egg the bidders to bid against each other. It used to interest me to see Mrs. Dimity and Mrs. Murphy and the whole female population of "Dublin" file through the sacred houses of the rich people who had died or gone broke and whose property was being sold at auction. These poor women, and some who were not so poor, were famous bidders at these country auctions. Tappen knew every one of them and would delay the sale of some article until the arrival of one of his old-time clients. ["Dublin" above refers to the south end of Metuchen, which was once known by that name for its high percentage of residents of Irish descent.]

Based on directories, it appears that Luther H. lived in the house until his death in 1919. He was predeceased by his wife, Ann, in 1915 and they are buried in Scotch Plains. Upon Luther H's death, the house then seems to have passed to Frederick B. Tappen, their son (born in 1868, so then around 50 years old).

The 1919-1920 directory shows Jane E. and Lillian Canse living in the house along with the Tappens. It was to the Canse Family (sometimes transcribed as Krantz) that the house eventually passed in 1921. A "J. Wagoner" is also listed as living in the house in 1928. A ca. 1930 Grimstead Photograph of the house (shown here) shows its distinctive Queen Anne features, Syrian-arched porch, Eastlake detailing, and oculi. According to Middlesex County deeds, in 1933 Jane Canse died and Lillian inherited the house and sold it in the 1960s to James T. and Kathleen V. Cemprola, who then sold it in 1985.



## Greetings from Metuchen and Edison

A century-long anecdotal adventure in postcards and ephemera

Released in October 2015, this original historical society publication includes more than 300 full color images on 150 pages. The images are entertainingly annotated and provide a lively guided tour through local history by means of postcard views and souvenirs from both the Society's and private collections. Makes an ideal gift for local history fans and deltiologists alike!

### ORDER YOURS TODAY!

Download an order form from  
[www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org](http://www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org)

### Images from the Archives

The Society's collections are not limited to just images of houses and buildings. The photograph of four ladies on a porch, below, was taken at unknown location in 1908.



## 1901 City Directory, Column 2

Below is the second column of entries in the sections relevant to our area of the 1901 *Polk's New Brunswick City Directory*. The Society began reprinting the entirety of this directory in the Winter/Spring 2016 issue.

METUCHEN DIRECTORY.		389
<b>METUCHEN.</b>		
Acken Addie, teacher, h Graham ave		
Acken Albert, bookkeeper, h Spring		
Acken Elizabeth B. widow Jonathan H. h Main c LeGrand ave		
Acken Henry Mrs. widow, h Graham ave		
Acken William C. bus. N. Y. h Spring		
Adams Joseph B. agent, h Middlesex ave		
Alden Henry M. bus. N. Y. h Chestnut ave		
Allen John C. laborer, h Grove		
Allen Thomas		
Almond John J. blacksmith, Middlesex ave. h do		
Anderson Christian A. blacksmith, Thomas, h do		
Anderson E. L. principal school, h William		
Arnold R. O. retired, h Amboy ave		
Atkinson Emily J. widow, h Woodbridge ave		
Ayres Charles, game warden, h Rector		
Ayres Clinton, undertaker, Main, h do		
Ayres Fred. C. bus. N. Y. h LeGrande ave.		
Ayres Henry C. farmer, h Hillside ave		
Ayres Henry E. insurance, h Graham ave		
Ayres Nathan, clerk, h Woodbridge ave		
Ayres William H. bus. N. Y. h Rose		
Badgely John C. emp P. R. R. h Main c Middlesex ave		
Barber George, hostler, h Durham ave		
Barnard F. E. bus. N. Y. h Oak ave		
Barr James A. bus. Jersey City, h Spring		
Bastedo James, laborer, h Pearl		
Becker Rudolph H. prop. Brunswick Hotel, Main, h do		
Becker Frank, h Middlesex ave		
Benner George W. bus. N. Y. h Crystal		
Benner Susan, widow, h Clive c Main		
Bennett Harvey		
Bennett Henry W. mason, h William		
Bennett William H. lineman, h Durham ave		
Blackford Augustus, laborer, h Lincoln ave		
Blackford Jeanette, h Lincoln ave		
Blackford Nathan, laborer, h Lincoln ave		

## METUCHEN AND HER HISTORY, 1870 (IV)

The following is the fourth installment of Dr. E.M. Hunt's "Metuchen and Her History," written in 1870, which we began reprinting serially in issues of *Nannygoats*, beginning in the Winter/Spring 2015 edition. Many thanks to Society Vice President Dominic T. Walker for transcribing this document.

As to the origin of the name, I think there can be but little question. History acquaints us with the fact that there were many Indian tribes in New Jersey. The early settlers about Orange and Newark purchased the land from the Indians, and the adjacent name of Rahway is quite traceable to an Indian origin. We have it from Mr. Compton, now seventy-eight years of age, that his father told him that in his earlier years there were several Indian families hereabouts, and contemporary history confirms the fact. The Indians of New Jersey were divided among twenty kings, of whom the king of the Raritans was the greatest. His domain reached all along the valley of the Raritan of which our section was regarded as a part.



A mid 17th century sketch by Johannes Campanius of Native Americans living in the area now known as New Jersey.

It is a uniform tradition that a local leader called Metucheon had his camp in this section and is probably buried on the farm now occupied by Lebbeus Ayres {an 1876 map shows the L. Ayers farm located near Stephenville Parkway on Plainfield Avenue, per 1876 Map of Raritan Township}. Indian arrows, axes and utensils from time to time plowed up in this locality seem to attest the fact of a former encampment there. No one is so old as to remember the chief but he probably belonged to the period between 1650 and 1700. The name "Squaw Field," which from time immemorial has attached to a part of the Strong farm, would seem to point to some circumstance in early Indian history; but as at that time the doctrine of homestead Exemption and Female Rights had not become fully developed, we scarcely suppose that the lady aforesaid had a separate dowry. General Ezra A.

Raritans because of its "short hill," undulating character, and that the recognized head Indian of the neighborhood was by them designated by the Indian name of this locality as Metucheon, or elder of the rolling land.

In a pamphlet on Indian traditions, published (1868) by Rev. N. N. Jones, called Indian Bulletin No. 2, kindly furnished to me by George Tait, Esq., there is the following record:

Ma-touch-in, *much.* rise up, *tauch.* hill, from *mach*, *much*, and *tahshinumuk*, lifted up. Or *mut*, from *amut*, a hill, and *ish* or *oush*, intensive, having the sense of high-high hill. It is said to be the highest spot between New York and Trenton. Its natural scenery is the most attractive of any on the route from New York to Philadelphia.

Carman is quite confident that he has seen the name Metuchen appended to a deed among the papers of the N.J. Historical Society. A hypothesis has been entertained that the name is an Indian term for "rolling land," in reference to the undulating character of the country. I have been able to trace this tradition to a branch of Frederick Mundy's family, so that it is not the mere pleasant fancy that it was once viewed by some to be.

It was not uncommon in ancient times, and still is not in formative states of society, to designate a leading individual by the name of his locality, and I am under the impression from all that I can gather, that this section had received its name from the

Mr. Jones, who has visited me since this address was given, informs me that he arrived at his conclusion as to the meaning without at all knowing the opinion here, but simply from a study and analysis of Indian words, and is thoroughly satisfied that it has its origin in the rolling or "short-hill" character of the landscape.

This derivation almost settles the origin of the name as claimed by many, and yet does not contradict the tradition which I have traced very far back, that the local Indian chief was called by the name of this locality.

When I was in the army an odd story as to the name was told me by Col. Josiah Simpson, U.S.A., Medical Director at Baltimore, and he had it from the venerable Col. W. Scott, of New Brunswick. Soon after the Turnpike from New York to New Brunswick was opened, a robbery of a horse and carriage occurred at the Cedars, near New Brunswick, and two men followed in pursuit. After riding three or four miles along this road, they met a traveling Frenchman and inquired of him whether he had met with a man driving a carriage in haste. The poor Frenchman could only understand the word "met," and so replied "met-tu-chien," which in Canada French is "met two dogs." Over and over again did they try to make the Frenchman understand, but his constant and vociferous reply was, "met-tu-chien." Coming at length to a store and a public house with a similar sign, they at once concluded this to be the place about which the traveler had talked. It is what Dickens might call "a remarkable coincidence;" but we are quite sure Metuchen is neither dog-French nor dog-Latin, but genuine Indian aboriginal.



It is so distinctive, that Methuen, the name of a manufacturing town in Massachusetts, is the only one on our continent at all resembling it.

An effort in 1867 to change it did not meet with public approval, and although the word has in it more of strength than euphony, we will garland it with the poetry of Indian romance, and when we come to be a city will sound it as gracefully as ever does Longfellow his Mandamin and Wenonah, his Hiawatha and Algonquin.

As to the spelling of the name, the authority is manifold but contradictory. The Indian antiquarian already referred to gives the form Matouchin, and this is the more usual evolutionary and early Gazetteer orthography. In the old church books the uniform spelling up to 1800 is Metuching, but afterward there are many variations. Most old deeds seem to have taken the privilege of shortening the "ing" into "en", which quite conforms to the habit if not the idiom of our language. Of words pronounced like this "in" is not the most usual termination, and so if we change it at all we will spell it like Heaven and call it Metuchen.

This form was always used by such good authorities as Simeon Mundy and Ezra Ayres, and as the form of the first post-office register and of the first railroad sign at Campbell's Station, it may well be accepted as the best uniform orthography.

And now having found out what our name is and how to spell it--two of the earliest efforts one can make toward intelligent recognition--we are prepared to proceed to other matters of history.

***To be continued in the next issue.***

MeTochen is a faire and healthy spotte about two leagues from ye bay of Perth Amboy where we landed from our ship. Heare be many little hilles which go uppe and down like ye wartes on a toades backe.

Heare also be many fine trees of oake and a kind of nutte which is in a podde or huske with many sharp spines. Ye Indians calle them "dampsh arps" which in their tounge means "needle-nutt.

MeTochen is called from ye name of ye chief of this place and meanth "slowe-dog" for that chief is lame and goeth slowly. Ye land heare is redde like a foxe and yt is wet yt sticketh lustily.

*-John Ayers, in a letter to his mother in London, dated "Ye tenth of Octobre, 1720."*

# New in the Archives

*Continued from Page 1*

In March of this year, Ken Stephens donated several items from the collection of Paul Stephens. Among the items shown here are an Edison Police K9 Unit Uniform, a Metuchen Taxi Badge, a scrapbook of Police Department clippings and officer 'mug shots,' and a collection of School Safety Patrol pins and a certificate from Lady of Peace School Safety Patrol (then Raritan Township). Not shown is a Robert Heyges autograph.



# IN MEMORIAM

The Society regrets announcing the death of the following members these last few months, including that of former Curator, Marie Vajo. **Florence 'Marie' Vajo** (April 2, 1930 - June 22, 2016), was born in the Middlebush section of Franklin Township, and grew up in the Van Liew-Suydam house in Middlebush. She was employed by Douglas College and later Alexander library at Rutgers University, retiring in 1994. She enjoyed flea markets and antique shows and was a collector of Nippon China and old post cards. She was also a member of the Cedar Grove Cemetery Association in Middlebush, and was Curator of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society for many years. It was because of Marie that the Society has such a robust Historic Postcard Collection, and was in part to her that we dedicated last year's "Greetings from Metuchen and Edison." Several years ago, Marie was made a Lifetime Honorary Member of the Society for her many contributions and tireless efforts to grow, catalog, and share our collections.

**Thomas Francis Clark**, a lifelong resident of Metuchen, passed away in February. He attended Washington School (now Moss), St. Francis School in Metuchen, vocational school, St. Peter's High School and Rutgers Prep in New Brunswick. He received a BS Degree from the University of Alabama, Masters Degrees from Newark State College (now Kean) and the University of Notre Dame, and a Ph.D. from South Florida University. He served with the 101st Airborne and the 28th Div. during the Korean War and was a member of the American Legion (Post 65 in Metuchen) and the VFW Post 2636 in Iselin. Upon completion of 25 years in education, he was the Counseling Psychologist at the VA Medical Center in Lyons, NJ, but is also remembered locally as the owner of the Metuchen Grate & Gift Shop on Main Street for many years. The shop was the home of Bucky Bulldog, and had an illuminated sign and during football season would show the score of every Metuchen High School game.

**Irene Pocklembo** passed away on January 17, 2016, at JFK Medical Center, in Edison, NJ. She was born on February 1, 1930, in Perth Amboy and graduated from Perth Amboy HS in 1948. She enjoyed attending her high school reunions, including her 65th, in 2013. She worked as a secretary at the Shell Oil Company, in Sewaren, where she met her husband David. She later became secretary for the housing developer Harry Rieder, who named the street Irene Court, in Edison, after her. Irene and her husband settled in Edison nearly 60 years ago, and was involved in many community groups, such as STOP (Save the Oak Tree Pond), and was also an avid supporter of the arts. She loved to paint, draw, read, and attend concerts, especially those where her daughter was performing as a violinist.

#### Published by

The Metuchen-Edison  
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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 organization.*

## INQUIRING MINDS ...

*Below are Local History Mysteries submitted via our Facebook group. We have a wealth of knowledge in our archives, but we don't know everything! If you have info or an image that helps, please let us know! Be on the lookout for any answers we receive in forthcoming issues and in our Facebook group.*

??? I've never seen a photo or any info of my former house at 67 Oak Avenue in Metuchen. I was told there were 3 owners before me, but one was just a few years in the 80s. I owned it from 1984 to 2014, before that was Kvam, who owned for years in the 50s on, but who the first was is also a question. {from Dottie}

??? I'm interested in the origins of the Radio Section development where I now live. So many of the houses are being taken down. Were there any zoning regulations in place back in the 1920's? So many houses squeezed onto such small lots. It is particularly a problem now as the smaller houses are replaced by larger ones. {from Grace}

??? Does anyone have any old photos of the Clive/Mason/Norris/Grove area (and "old" means anything before 1980 at this point). {from Joe}

??? I've been looking for a photo of the house that used to sit on the corner of Durham and Main, next to my house. It was built in the 1700s and I heard was once painted black. {from Tyreen}

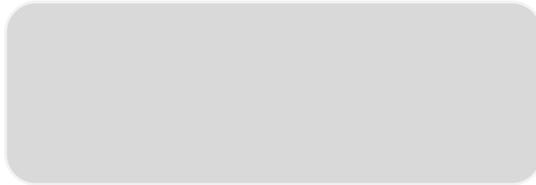
??? Anyone have pictures before Thomas Street existed? On old maps, Thomas isn't there. Any photo evidence? {from Clare}

??? Anyone have a photo of my grandfather's butcher shop? It was on Main Street and just called, according to some old invoices I have, B. Wittnebert. I am also interested in finding a picture of their house at 561 Middlesex Avenue. {from Sue}

*Answers? Email us at [info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org](mailto:info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org).*



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



***Want to write an article for Nannygoats? Have a History Mystery you need help with? An interesting photo or memory to share? Contact the editor... we love submissions from our members and readers!***

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 Metuchen or Edison history, contact us at [info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org](mailto:info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org) with as many details as possible. Although our archives are not conducive to browsing, if we have any relevant information we will be pleased to arrange, by appointment, for one of our Board members to assist you with your search.

## 53rd Annual Metuchen Country Fair "Classic Television"



Make plans to attend the Metuchen Area Chamber of Commerce's Metuchen Country Fair on Saturday, October 1, 2017. The Society will have a booth on Main Street - stop by and pick up some merchandise and view our special displays.

**Our biggest annual event, LOCAL HISTORY DAY, will be held on February 12, 2017. View our photo albums, special exhibits, and order reprints.**

## Society Merchandise

Thanks to CafePress.com, the society sells a number of products with local history graphics on them, all online! Browse and buy from the comfort of your home or office any time... and, as with sales at the Country Fair and Local History Day, all net proceeds go to support the society's mission.

**Tote Bags, Mugs,  
Shower Curtains,  
T-Shirts, & More!**



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