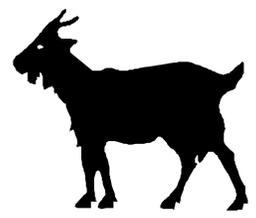


# Nannygoats



Vol. 14, Issue 3

Newsletter of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society

Fall 2016

Most urban legends have at least a kernel of truth to them, some point of departure of the fact from fiction. In the Metuchen-Edison area, there are people who will absolutely insist that Lucille Ball lived here, and most say it was in the house on Clive Street shown below. They know she did, because someone saw her or knew someone who did some job for her. The details about the story change, but it's persistent. Staff at the Lucille Ball-Desi Arnaz Center

in Watertown, New York, say that quite frequently they get the same question from all over the country: "Did Lucille Ball live in my town?" Unfortunately, when this Society inquired, the answer was the same as they have to give to nearly all inquiries. NO. Lucy never lived in New Jersey, not at any time, not in any place. Not in Metuchen or Edison, and not in the house shown below. So where did the story come from? Well, for that, we've got some 'splainin' to do...

## Lucy Was Here!

Yes. She was definitely in the Metuchen/Edison area on at least one occasion. Reputable accounts place this visit at the end of 1960 or in early 1961, between divorcing Desi Arnaz and marrying Comedian Gary Morton. This was when she was about to appear in *Wildcat* on Broadway.

## Which House?

While here, she was in the company of Kenneth Berg, one of the two real-estate selling brothers behind the Berg Agency. She was looking at houses – and did so by limousine. It's believed that one of the properties she saw was the house at 110 Clive Street at the corner of Mason Drive in Edison (see below). But Lucy never owned it, nor did any member of her family. In 1941, Marie Harris sold the house to George F. Smith. After Smith died in 1974, it was sold to Marvin Rosenblum, who then sold it to Elliot Meisenberg in 2001.



## Spotted in Town!

According to long-time resident Chris Crane, "My father walked into the restaurant and was waved over by Mr. Berg to meet Lucy. He asked and was granted a brief interview on the strict condition he never reveal its content. My Dad spoke of this meeting, but never revealed the contents of his interview and took it with him to his grave."

## What Restaurant?

Lucy dined with Ken Berg at the Soo San Chinese-American Restaurant at 431 Main Street in Metuchen. The Eng Family, who were good friends with the Berg family, owned Soo San. It was on the west side of the street, in what is now the southern section of ChangSha House (formerly Meiling's). The photograph of Soo San, at left, is courtesy of Andy & Eddie Eng and the ad below is from a 1969 edition of the *Bulldog's Bark*.



## Do You Know More?

Have more details about her visit? Contact us at [info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org](mailto:info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org)!

**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.**

# Local Youths Highlight Local History

by Walter R. Stochel, Jr.

*This year there have been three Eagle Scout projects that have highlighted areas of local history, as well as one student initiative aimed at bringing awareness to his fellow students.*

On Christie Street in Menlo Park, Steven Zederbaum created a kiosk with information about the Sarah Jordan Boarding House and the Dean House which were located on Christie Street when Thomas Edison had his laboratory in Menlo Park. Steven also outlined the foundation of the Dean house with brick pavers giving visitors to Edison State Park an idea of how big the house was. The Sarah Jordan Boarding House was moved to Greenfield Village in Michigan in the 1920s and the Dean house burned down in the mid- 20th century.

Also at the Edison State Park, Kyle Gordon installed an official State Park sign at the southern gateway to the Park at the corner of Dellwood Road and Lincoln Highway. Nearby is Carman's Pond which Thomas Edison owned and where he occasionally fished. Until this project, there was nothing there to indicate this was part of the State Park. Kyle obtained plans for the sign, built and installed it with his crew of Scouts and volunteers.

Over at Camp Kilmer, Boy Scout Kirk Ianni led his group of Scouts and volunteers to clean-up the Smalley Family Burial Ground. This small cemetery is located behind the soccer fields on Kilmer Road. During WWII, the Army built Camp Kilmer on the land around the cemetery. When Edison Township took ownership of the site in the 1990s, the cemetery became overgrown and hidden. Kirk and his crew cleared the brush and low hanging branches, laid a brick paver entrance, and installed a historic marker about the cemetery.

On June 13, 2016, seventh grader Vivek Rallibandi took the entire John Adams Middle School seventh grade on a tour of the Short Hills Battlefield at Oak Tree Pond Historic Park in Edison.

Vivek, who lives near Oak Tree Pond, got interested in the battle a few years ago when he read the historic markers in the park. He then searched the internet for information about the battle. He used the report that the Society produced to place the battlefield on the National Register of Historic Places as the basis of his presentation. His interest in the battle and history prompted him to join the Society, making him our youngest individual member. Vivek then convinced his teachers, and the administration at John Adams to do a field trip to a local historic site.

During this all day event, Vivek walked five classes totaling 260 students from John Adams down New Dover Road to Oak Tree Pond. There he gave an interpretive program about the Battle of the Short Hills and the Oak Tree Engagement that occurred in the neighborhood and the surrounding hills. Many students and teachers never heard of this 1777 battle. By doing this tour, he connected 260 students and their teachers to their local Revolutionary history.

We salute Vivek, Steven, Kyle, and Kirk for their efforts to help preserve and share our local history.



*Zederbaum at Menlo Park.*



*The Sarah Jordan Boarding House at Menlo Park.*



*Edison fishing... although not at Carman's pond!*



*An image of the Smalley Cemetery (findagrave.com).*



*The Oak Tree Pond Historic Park at the corner of Plainfield Road and Oak Tree Road.*

## 1901 City Directory, Columns 3 and 4

Below are the third and fourth columns 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.

Blakely Frank, locksmith, h Rose  
 Bloomfield Charles A. laborer, h New Brunswick ave  
 Bloomfield Joel J. farmer, h New Brunswick ave  
 Bloomfield Joel S. farmer, h New Brunswick ave  
 Board John M. Mrs. widow, h William  
 Bogart Howard, bus. N. Y. h Graham ave  
 Bogart Nicholas, retired minister, h Graham ave  
 Bohl Francis C. florist, Main, h do  
 Bohl Lewis, laborer, h Main  
 Bond Frank W. h Wood ave  
 Boney Francis, laborer, h Main  
 Boney John T. laborer, h Main  
 Bonham Edward, laborer, h Main  
 Bonham John, laborer, h Main  
 Bordo Winchester, lawyer, h William  
 Bradford Mary E. widow Thomas T. h LeGrande ave  
 Branigan Patrick, laborer, h Main  
 Breck George M. bus. N. Y. h LeGrande ave  
 Breece Charles H. farmer, h Durham ave  
 Breece Frank C. mason, h Durham ave  
 Breen James, emp L. V. R. R. h LeGrande ave  
 Breen John W. emp L. V. R. R. h Lake c LeGrande ave  
 Breen William, emp L. V. R. R. h Lake c LeGrande ave  
 Brooles Charles, laborer, h Middlesex ave  
 Brower Van Dyck, h Walnut ave  
 Brown Charles H. boat captain, h Main  
 Bullock A. W. plumber, h LaGrande ave. o Home  
 Burroughs Edward, postmaster, h Middlesex ave  
 Campbell Alexander, bus. N. Y. h Central ave  
 Campbell & Morris (Howard Campbell and William Morris),  
 grocers, Main c Amboy ave  
 Campbell Augustine sr. retired, h Middlesex ave  
 Campbell Augustine jr. clerk, h Middlesex ave  
 Campbell Charles C. real estate, Main, h New Brunswick ave  
 Campbell Edward T. clerk, h Middlesex ave  
 Campbell Howard (Campbell & Morris), h Linden ave  
 Campbell Lewis, retired, h LeGrande ave  
 Campbell William T. clay miner, h Middlesex ave  
 Carter Patrick, h Main  
 Cartwright Henry, gardener, h Main

Cassey E. widow Patrick, h Main  
 Castello Patrick  
 Castle Patrick, laborer, h Main  
 Caston George W. P.  
 Caston W. B. G. (Rev.)  
 Chadwick Alvin, retired, h Woodbridge ave  
 Christianson Nelson  
 Clark Edwin M. patent lawyer, h Middlesex ave  
 Clarkson Emma G. widow, h Main  
 Clarkson Fred. W. bus. N. Y. h Amboy ave  
 Clarkson Fritz L. bus. N. Y. h Amboy ave  
 Clarkson George L. bus. N. Y. h Amboy ave  
 Clarkson James E. h Amboy ave  
 Collins Con. laborer, h Main  
 Compton Fred. painter, h Main  
 Compton Joel, retired, h Crystal  
 Compton Morgan, emp L. V. R. R. h Lake  
 Compton William P. painter, h Linden ave  
 Conners John M. bus. Jersey City, h Woodwild pk  
 Conover A. V. N. bus. N. Y. h Main  
 Conover J. B.  
 Conrad N. baker, h Main  
 Conway Con, h Cedar  
 Corbin Charles L. lawyer, h Middlesex ave  
 Corbin Ralph B. lawyer, h Middlesex ave  
 Corl Joseph, bus. N. Y. h Highland ave  
 Cornell John sr. bus. N. Y. h Thomas  
 Cornell John jr. bus. N. Y. h Thomas  
 Cornell Peter  
 Craig Anna T. dressmaker, h Centre  
 Craig E. D. widow Thomas, h LeGrande ave  
 Craig Percy, bus. N. Y. h Lake  
 Craig William O. clerk, h Lake  
 Crampton Charles L. druggist, h New  
 Crowell R. B. retired, h Main  
 Crowell William A. grain and feed agent, h Spring  
 Crowley Cornelius, laborer, h Gravel Track  
 Curtain David sr. flagman, h LeGrande ave  
 Curtain David jr. h LeGrande ave  
 Curtain James, h LeGrande ave



### GRIMSTEAD GUESSER!

Two years ago, in the summer of 2014, the Society started a contest in its Facebook group. Every week we post a photo from our archives and members are invited to guess where it is, with the first person to guess correctly winning a postcard from the Society. The contest is named "Grimstead Guesser" after Lloyd Grimstead, the gentleman who took thousands of photos of our area in the 1930s.

But why should Facebook users have all the fun? Do you know where this building is? Submit your best guess to Society and you may be a winner, too! Mail your answer to P.O. Box 61, Metuchen, NJ, 08840 or email us at [metuchenedisonhistory@gmail.com](mailto:metuchenedisonhistory@gmail.com).

## METUCHEN AND HER HISTORY, 1870 (V)

The following is the fifth 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.

In our early colonial period there is little for extraordinary record. An industrious and moral society followed those avocations which developed the soil and supplied the then existing wants of community, and when great subjects of political bearing came to be discussed, the first printing-press in New Jersey--that of James Parker at Woodbridge--not fail to acquaint the good people of our vicinity with the character of the questions at home. Woodbridge township was even at this period an influential part of East Jersey, and Piscataway town was at one time the county seat of Middlesex and Somerset Counties (see Thomas Gazetteer). In the first legislative assembly held in 1668, Woodbridge township was represented.

You will remember that as early as 1765 a Colonial Congress assembled in New York, and declaring their grievances, protested against the Stamp Act, and claimed the right of regulating their own taxes. It is recorded that the "Sons of Liberty" of Woodbridge and Piscataway took the lead in 1765-6, in several of the prominent measures of the day, and it was through their interference mainly, that William Coxe, of Philadelphia, was led to decline the office of Stamp Distributor for New Jersey. A deputation from them to that gentleman, while instructed to treat him with great deference and respect, bore to him a communication to the effect that, "a week's delay in resigning the office would render a visit from them in a body necessary, and produce results mutually disagreeable."

These and like protests compelled Stamp officers to resign, and the Act itself was soon after repealed.

During the period of our Revolution there is incidental evidence that this region and its people fully shared in all the privations and perils to which New Jersey and its inhabitants were greatly subjected.

It is not forgotten by you that the period of 1776, after the Declaration of Independence, was especially one of disaster and defeat. After the unfortunate conflict of August 27th, 1776, on Long Island, and after the disasters of White Plains and Fort Washington, and the evacuation of Fort Lee. (November 20th, 1776) our broken army hastened its retreat by way of Newark, Bonhamtown and New Brunswick to Trenton, and could afford no protection to our people. We were left at the mercy of the British forces and under these

circumstances had but little hope from the exultant English and the hired Hessians, ready to exercise the rights of victors and to despoil both the land and the people.

So dispirited, broken, and completely routed did Lord Cornwallis regard the American forces at the time of their retreat through the Jerseys, that he considered the rebellion crushed, and proceeded to New York to take the first vessel to England.

Lord Howe was also in New York, and with British and Hessian troops scattered through New Jersey from the Hudson to the Delaware, was waiting for the freezing of the river for the purpose of crossing, and, as Cornwallis termed it, "bagging the fox in the morning."

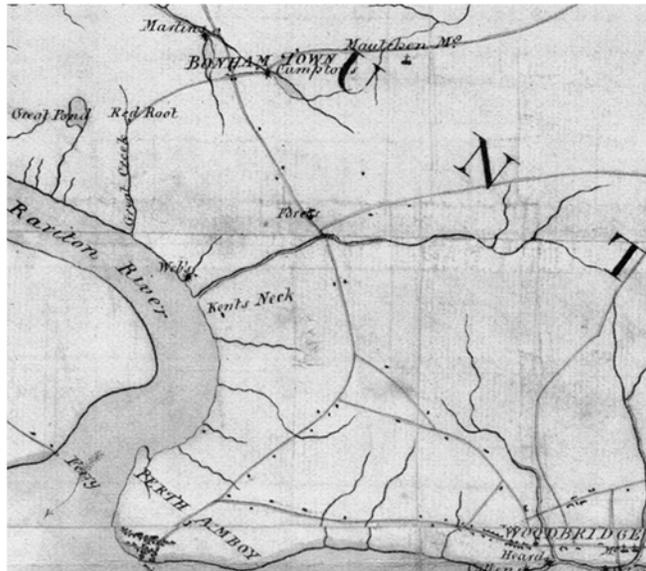
But it was our own glorious band of patriots that did the bagging and by the capture of the Hessians near Trenton, (December 25th, 1776) and the battle of Princeton a few days after, revived the drooping hopes of our fathers. British troops were now stationed at Perth Amboy, in those old buildings of colonial times still known as "the Barracks" and for a time there was also a camp at Bonhamtown, now so much a part of our own village.

After the successes of Trenton and Princeton, it was the policy of Washington to retrace his course through New Jersey, and May 28th, 1777, he took position with his army in the rear of Plainfield and along the line of hills so plainly seen to our north and from points such as Washington Rock he and his officers, with vigil eye, watched the whole region of country reaching toward the encampments of the British forces at and adjacent to Perth Amboy.

The entire road through Woodbridge, Bonhamtown and Piscataway was guarded by British troops, and from various points scouts were sent out and raids were made. The crossing and the re-crossing, and the skirmishing of detachments of either army through this immediate neighborhood occurred with alarming frequency, and our people suffered much from fear, foraging and personal molestation.

Five regiments of British troops were stationed at Bonhamtown, the officers taking possession of a house where Mr. Benjamin Tappen now lives, and, without due notice, dispossessing its owner, the grandfather of Jerome Ross.

At one time we have the record that "Lord Howe, for the



purpose of drawing Washington from the heights, crossed from Perth Amboy to Staten Island, while part of the Continental army hung on the rear of the British and inflicted considerable loss on the retiring foe. Howe suddenly re-crossing (June 5th, 1777), and marching rapidly to gain the Short Hills, General Sterling struck his forces at Matouchin Church, and detaining the enemy, skirmished with his entire line. Lord Cornwallis pressed forward with another detachment, but his advance was disputed at Quibbletown, (now Dunellen) and again on the Westfield road, and the feint at Bonhamtown proved a failure. The British commander, again outgeneraled, and his army again outmarched, fell back to Amboy. A marauding party sent out by Cornwallis was routed at Spanktown, (now Rahway) and indeed almost every cross-road within a circuit of twenty miles from this spot was the scene of conflict between the American forces and the common enemy--Elizabethtown, Springfield, the Short Hills, etc., witnessed the valor and triumph of our forces."

My maternal grandfather, Ezra Mundy, who was born near Oak Tree school- house, and who, after retiring from business in New York City, settled in this section, used to love to amuse me by stories as to some of these chasings and encounters; and not unfrequently the loyal farmers, by watch and plot, helped to decoy and entrap the cavalry of the enemy. He has told me that he well remembered, when a child, being in an old barn near Oak Tree school-house with numbers of women and children who had fled there for safety while a detachment of British troops was passing from the shore toward the mountains. His father being in service, he was taken thither by his mother, and while playing with other children his attention was arrested by a woman who said to another, "How little these children know of our danger." Soon after a cannon-ball passed through the building and hushed even them to silence. The hiding-place was not discovered, and so they escaped unharmed.



The grandfather of Henry Compton, and brother of Samuel Compton's father, lived by the brook between here and Bonhamtown, and soon after the British made encampment there, finding that he had two sons in the army, they took possession of his six horses, thirty head of cattle, and fifty sheep, gave him the venerable old grey horse and a wagon, and telling him to put on board his bed, furniture and family, gave him just time to leave before setting fire to the buildings.

The father of Henry Campbell, Sr., then lived where the grandson now lives, opposite the house of Mr. Greason,

and by one of these scouting parties he was taken from a sick bed, placed on horseback behind a cavalryman, and conveyed to the encampment at Bonhamtown. Soon after, the British were compelled to make sudden retreat toward New Brunswick, and as they were going through the cedars this side of the bridge, he escaped and found his way to the house of a friend in Piscataway town.

Just after Mr. Campbell was captured, some of the neighbors went out as a spy corps, to see if they could in any way get trace of him. They were on foot, and being discovered by the British cavalry, were chased to what is now the corner of the old grave- yard lot, but there leaving the main road, they cut across the low ground, where the horses of their pursuers mired, and they being out of rifle-shot made good their escape.

Annoyances such as the presence of hostile armies and frequent skirmishes always inflict, continued until nearly the close of the war, detachments of both armies being often in this section.

So late as June, 1780, we have a record of an attack upon General Greene, who was stationed among the Short Hills, and soon after the British retreated from Perth Amboy, Woodbridge, Rahway, Elizabeth and New Jersey generally, by way of Staten Island.

We need seek no further into our portion of home Revolutionary history than thus to know that the citizens generally were loyal to the interests of freedom, and bore with fortitude the many molestations to which the proximity of armies subjected them.

Our forefathers no doubt welcomed the return of peace with all the more gladness because of these exposures-

-really more harassing, and requiring more patriotism than that active participation in conflict which some of them shared. They seem soon to have set themselves, with manly industry, to the replenishing of their empty purses and the improvement of their foraged farms, that the homes for which they had suffered might be adorned with thrift and comfort, and that by vigorously adding to the material productions of the new nation, they might secure the highest blessings of a blood-bought and peril-endured freedom.

*Images*

Page 4: Excerpt of a 1781 John Hills map of Middlesex County. Note the prominence of "Bonhamtown" and the reference to "Mautchen" meeting house.

Page 5: Oak Tree School #6, located on the southeast corner of Plainfield Avenue and Oak Tree Road in Edison.

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

# Cemetery Vandalized

The Summer 2015 issue of *Nannygoats* featured the preservation efforts and study of some of our local historic cemeteries. One of the sites featured was the "Old Colonial Cemetery," one of the most important historic sites in the Metuchen-Edison area. It was established between 1715 and 1730 as the burying ground associated with the Presbyterian Church and contains 1045 marked graves and 60 unmarked graves. Of these, 59 are graves of Revolutionary War soldiers and 7 are "Patriots" who contributed to the cause. As a 300-year-old site, many stones have been damaged by natural causes over the years, but several of those were repaired in the July, 2015 Cemetery Preservation workshop hosted at the site.



Sometime during the evening of Thursday, August 18th or early morning on August, 19th, several stones on the cemetery suffered intentional damage. Most were large stones that were pushed over and broken, some were pulled out of their settings and thrown. Below is a list of the stones damaged:



- Abigail Bloodgood (Hampton), d.1869. (*shown above*)
- Rachael Thornal, d.1829.
- Group stone for Jeremiah Compton (d. 1892), Catherine Compton (d. 1882), Ester Compton (d. 1883).
- Charles Compton, d.1838.
- Nathan Bloomfield, d.1823. (*browntone shown below*)
- Mary La Forge (Bloomfield), d. 1852. (*marble shown below*)
- Henry Freeman, d.1835.
- Mary (5 months and 20 days), Daughter of Neil & Prudence Campbell, d. 1800.
- Elizabeth Freeman, d. 1796.
- Margaret Freeman, d. 1806. (*shown left*)
- Josiah (age 11) and Thomas (age 6), sons of Azel and Mary Freeman, d. 1807.

Afterwards, the incident was reported on television, radio, in print, and on social media, and many people asked how they could contribute. For many years the Society has had a Cemetery Fund, and we spread the word that donations could be made towards that existing Cemetery Fund to be used to restore the damaged stones, stabilize and improve conditions of others, and repair & preserve as many other grave markers as possible in this very important, historic cemetery.

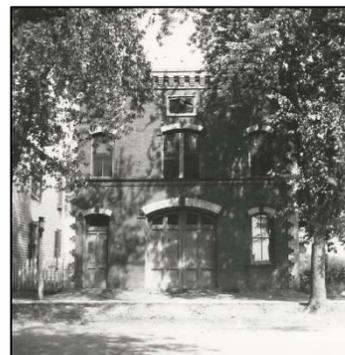
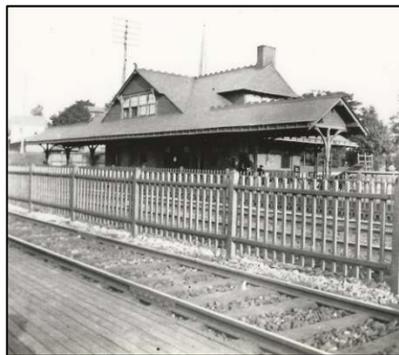
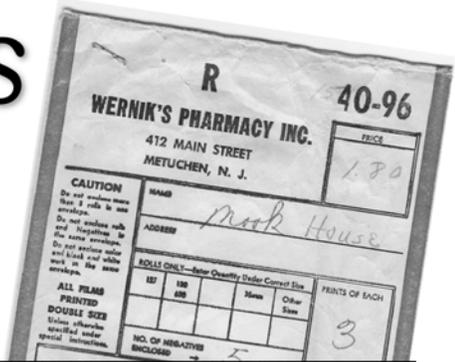
If you are interested in donating, you may do so by check or online. Click on the link on our website or Facebook page to donate online at various levels. If by check, please note "Cemetery Fund" in the memo and make it out to the "Metuchen-Edison Historical Society" and mail it to PO Box 61, Metuchen, NJ 08840.



# New In The Archives

History may be in the past, but that doesn't mean new things aren't likely to be pop up. This summer Metuchenite Rich Dana donated the photographs shown here – images we've never seen of some iconic local sites; Robins Hall, Eagle Hook & Ladder, the Metuchen Train Station, and the Elmwood Farm. Note the Wernik's Pharmacy developing envelope marked "Mook House" that came with the several images of the farm. The Elmwood Farm, later known as the Herron Farm, was later home to Buck Mook.

Quiet coincidentally, New Hampshire-based researcher Cindy Ringer had recently donated scanned copies of a couple dozen letters written to Margaret Haile, several referencing the Herron Farm. It's quite an interesting story that will be featured in *Nannygoats* in the future! In 1902, Haile was the first woman to run for legislative office in Canada – and no, she wasn't even allowed to vote at the time! Fortunately, the Elmwood/Herron/Mook House is still extant, although it no longer sits on 100 acres. Best of all, you could own your own piece of history; this house, at 4001 Park Avenue in Edison, is currently for sale and is listed for \$749,000.



## Images

Above: Wernik's Pharmacy envelope and photograph of the Mook House (Elmwood Farm/Professor Herron Farm).

Left: Robins Hall at 401 Main Street.

Middle: The Metuchen Train Station on Woodbridge Avenue at Main Street.

Right: The Eagle Hook & Ladder at 398 Main Street.

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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.

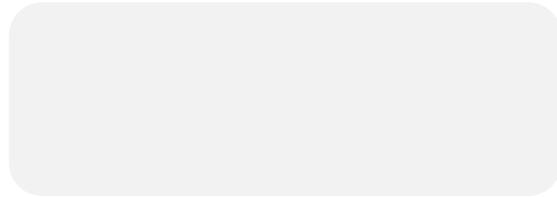
*The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.*



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.



**Metuchen-Edison Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 61**  
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*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!*



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### **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)**

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# **LOCAL HISTORY DAY**

will be held on

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Library to view our photo  
albums and special  
exhibits, order reprints,  
purchase Society  
merchandise, and  
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history fans!**