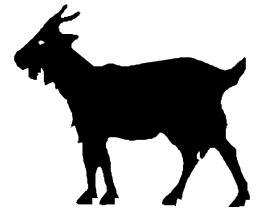


# Nannygoats



Vol. 17, Issue 3

Newsletter of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society

Fall 2019

The first Metuchen Country Fair was undertaken in 1964 as part of a New Jersey Tercentenary celebration. It was such a success that it was decided that it should be an annual event, and has been run by the Metuchen Area Chamber of Commerce ever since. On the first Saturday of each October, nearly 200 booths are set up on Main Street and inhabited for the day by Chamber businesses, organizations, houses of worship, school groups, volunteer services, and more. This year's fair theme is "Broadway" and in honor of this issue being released on "Country Fair Day," we are featuring our own local examples of what makes Broadway and Times Square so iconic – its illuminated signage! Our area's historic signage may not be as bold or bright as the New York City's, but we've got one up on them; it was our most famous resident, Thomas Alva Edison, who perfected the incandescent bulb and made ALL of it possible.



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.



**#ThisPlaceMatters  
Roosevelt Hospital, Edison**

Built during the Great Depression with federal financing as the Middlesex County Tuberculosis Sanatorium, this massive four-story, Colonial Revival structure is built of red brick with limestone trim. It was designed by the noted and prolific New Jersey architect Aylin Pierson, a Metuchen resident. Situated on a majestic hill overlooking a picturesque park, it has a large two-story entry porch and a grand 46-foot high center cupola. Today, Roosevelt Hospital stands as a grand monument to the New Deal, to the history of public health efforts, and to the era when tuberculosis was a menace. The building remained a tuberculosis hospital until the 1950s, when antibiotics decreased the ferocity of the disease, after which the hospital became a long-term health care facility and served as such for the next several decades.

However, at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Roosevelt Hospital's future was unclear as it had been losing money for some time. This led Middlesex County officials to negotiate to sell the property to a healthcare facility operator who would have replaced the hospital with two new 180-bed nursing homes. A group of interested local citizens worked together to save the building from demolition and succeeding in including the property on Preservation New Jersey's 10 Most Endangered List in 2001, and in listing the property in the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places in 2002. In 2004, Middlesex County decided to rehabilitate the original portion of the hospital as a nursing home and demolish a 1960s 100-bed addition on the south side of the building.

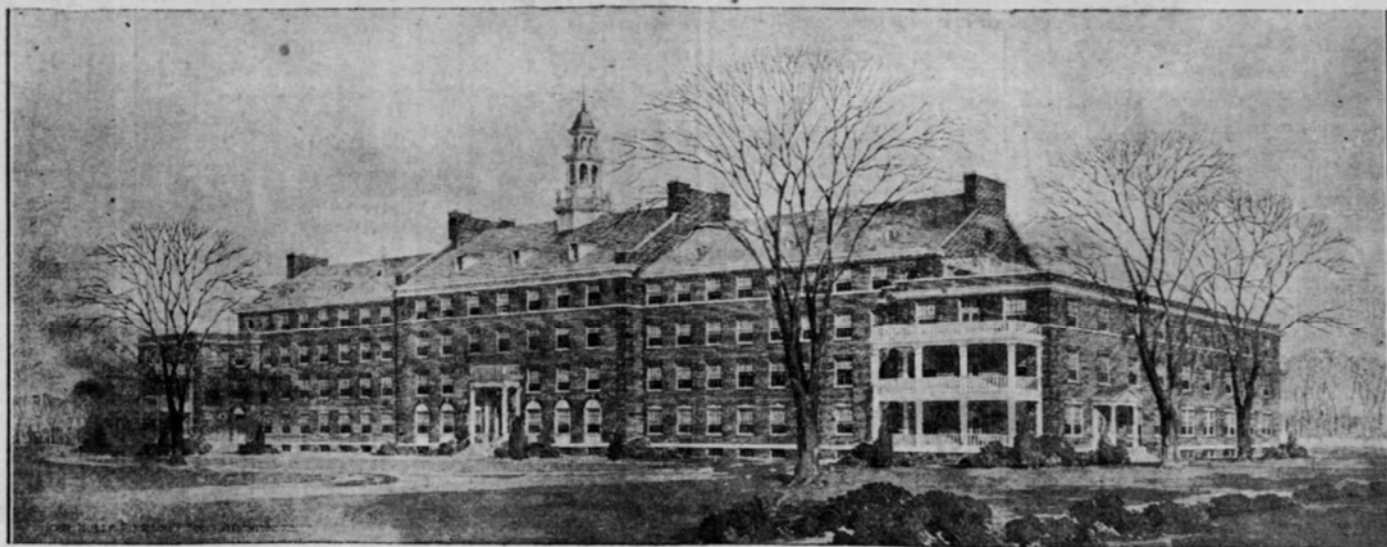
Many thanks to those dedicated citizens who worked to preserve this important historic resource!

**1901 City Directory, Column 13**

Below is the thirteenth 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.

- Smith Thomas S. A. farmer, h Centre
- Smith William A. h Middlesex ave
- Soper Augustine, carpenter, h Main
- Soper Elisha K. livery and exp. Middlesex ave. c Pearl, h do
- Soper George H. h LeGrande ave
- Soper Theodore, carpenter, h New
- Spear E. Holden, bus. N. Y. h Woodbridge ave
- Stevenson Peter, laborer, h Pearl
- Stone John R.
- Strong Arthur T. lawyer, h Woodbridge ave
- Tait Mary, widow, h Middlesex ave
- Tait Thorfin, bus. N. Y. h Hillside ave
- Tansig Charles, plumber, Main, h do
- Tappan Edgar L. h Durham ave
- Tappan Harry T. h Main
- Tappan James, h Grove
- Tappan Luther H. contractor, h Main
- Tappan Neil C. h Durham ave
- Taylor John O. h Pearl
- Thomas George E. bus. N. Y. h Hillside ave
- Thomas Rachel, widow, h Middlesex ave
- Thomas William
- Thompson Charles N.
- Thomall William, mayor of borough, h High
- Tighe William, h Main
- Towle George C. real estate and insurance, 417 George, New Brunswick, h Woodbridge ave
- Towle Henry, retired, h Woodbridge ave
- Trainor Anna, h Spring
- Tynan Thomas sr. h Middlesex ave
- Underwood H. C. tobacco planter, h Woodbridge ave
- Van Brocklin Stephen, h Durham ave
- Vanderhoof John, gardener, h Main
- Van Down John,
- Van Dyke Harry, bus. N. Y. h Middlesex ave
- Van Sickle A. J. blacksmith, Middlesex ave. h do
- Van Sickle Abraham, blacksmith, h William
- Van Sickle Nathan R. h Middlesex ave
- Van Sickle Samuel C. h Middlesex ave
- Van Sickle William J. h Middlesex ave

**MIDDLESEX COUNTY'S AID TO HUMANITY**  
*\$700,000 Tuberculosis Hospital Now Being Built to Be Finest in State*



Excerpt from the August 2, 1935 edition of *The Daily Home News* (New Brunswick, NJ).

## ***New in the Archives***

The following is a list of recent acquisitions, compiled by the Archives Chair Byron Sondergard.

1. A copy of an obituary for Mary Ann Hale (donated by Walter Stochel).
2. A copy of The Schenck Agency real estate advertisement for the Mary Wilkins Freeman house.
3. A roll of blueprint plans for Clive Hills Road, Edison, NJ.
4. A copy of *Metuchen Musings 2010-2011*, Volume 5 and an original copy of *Boyhood Days in Old Metuchen* by David Trumbull Marshall (donated by the Friends of the Metuchen Library).
5. Several NJ TRANSIT train tickets and Metuchen Parking Authority passes (donated by Ann Walker).
6. A Special Telephone Directory of Metuchen and a Lee Seidel & Co. Advertising Blotter (donated by Daniel Jag).
7. A photograph of the actor Charles Vincent "Bud" White, Jr. at Seamans Pharmacy in Perth Amboy and a *Historic NJ in Pictures* book (donated by Cathy Tardosky).
8. Eleven postcards of Metuchen (donated by Frances Porter Black).
9. A ca. 1960s International's Map of Metuchen (donated by the Metuchen Area Chamber of Commerce).
10. A postcard view of Metuchen's Main Street (purchased by the Society).

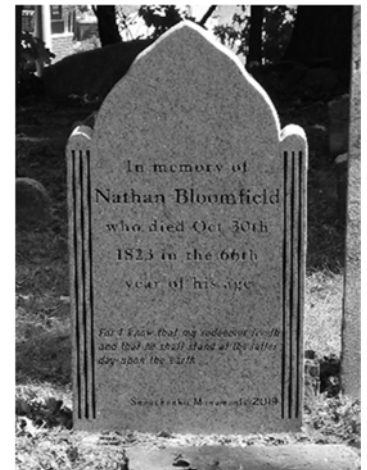
If you have an item you might want to donate to the Society, contact [info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc@gmail.com](mailto:info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc@gmail.com).

***Want to write an article for Nannygoats? Have a History Mystery you need help with? An intriguing photograph to share? Contact the editor... we love submissions from members & readers!***

## **Colonial Cemetery Update**

In recent months more progress has been made in cleaning up and repairing stones in Metuchen's Colonial Cemetery:

- In May, a volunteer cleanup was conducted, assisted by the Borough's Department of Public Works.
- Funded by donations made over the last few years, several more stones were repaired by Robert Myers of Gravekeepers of Pennsylvania and more work is planned for the Fall of 2019.
- Sara Reineke, a TCNJ history student, completed an independent study about the Colonial Cemetery and presented it to the Society (a copy has been uploaded onto our website). Her research provided additional insight into the lives and deaths of many of those buried there, and cleared up several details about the number of extant stones.
- The Society has also created a short brochure/guide to the cemetery for visitors and volunteers, which is available on our website and at events.
- A replacement stone for Nathan Bloomfield, whose original marker was damaged beyond repair, was installed in September (see photograph).



If you would like to volunteer or donate to the Colonial Cemetery restoration fund, visit our website or contact: [info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org](mailto:info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org).



August 22, 2019



Dear Folks:

I found your website and have a special interest in it. I was an army lieutenant assigned at Raritan Arsenal 63 years ago.

If you search online for "Raritan Arsenal", you should find "A Lieutenant's 1955-56 Report on Raritan Arsenal---- Fifty Seven Years Past His Deadline". I wrote this remembering many names and what occurred there; about 50 itemized paragraphs. I did this for the Middlesex County College's 50th anniversary celebration a few years ago.

Your members might find this history useful. Hopefully, someone might be able to help me find some photos of what some railroad historians now call Raritan Arsenal North, at Carteret.

I was assigned as Officer-in-Charge at Raritan Arsenal's additional installation at Carteret. In WWII it was the U.S. Army Ordnance Motor Park to prepare and ship many thousands of military trucks to the New York Harbor. I have useful eye-witness history about it and more from the Army's archives but lack site photos. I do have aerial photos and a Carteret street map that shows the site. I have a copy of a 1942 employee photo ID badge and her written description of how it began.

Do you know of anyone at Carteret who might have old WWII photos of this army truck park at Carteret? I haven't found anything online. When I was there in 1955-56 we still had about 3,000 WWII trucks and rebuilt many of them with 150 civilian employees.

Interesting about these WWII trucks is their most important and critical role in winning the war. This is what the famous Red Ball Express was all about in France. The battlefield out ran the supply lines until enough and the right kind of trucks arrived.

Raritan Arsenal had another outpost called Delaware Ordnance Activity located at Pedrickstown, NJ. I remember it had ammunition there in addition to the 80 powder magazines we had at Metuchen Raritan.

About the Sand Banks written about in *Nannygoats...* One day I was ordered to take four amphibious vehicles to the Sand Banks at Mill Road to help search for a missing child. A diver recovered her body from the water while we were trying to search the wide wetlands area with amphibians. It was a popular little swimming beach but as a former quarry pit the water was treacherously deep.

I lived at the Italian Prison Camp when it was used for temporary dormitory space by Rutgers after the war. It was typical wooden army barracks like a street at Camp Kilmer.

Sincerely, William S. Coffin

*Mr. Coffin can be reached at 328 Deepspring Drive, Chittenango, NY 13037 or wmscoffin2@gmail.com.*

## FIFTIES FLASHBACK!



The former Boro Hardware building on Middlesex Avenue in Metuchen, currently the location of Leonardo Jewelers and several franchises. If you can peel your eyes from the classic cars to look beyond, you will spy SeeMore Television, Boro Launderette, and GEM Cleaners.

# METUCHEN AND HER HISTORY, 1870 (XII)

The following is the next installment of Dr. Ezra Mundy Hunt's "Metuchen and Her History," written in 1870, which we began reprinting serially in issues of *Nannygoats* beginning with the Winter/Spring 2015 edition. Many thanks to Former Society President and current Board Member Dominic T. Walker for transcribing this document.

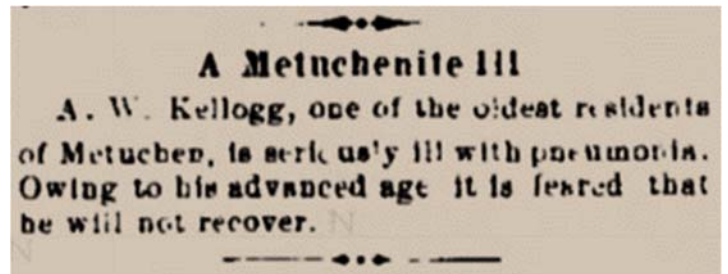
[Regarding the period of the 1830s]

These were years, as some of you will remember, of financial uncertainty and of much speculation in country and city. Metuchen, like many other small towns, was laid out in building lots, and nothing but the absence of sufficient purchasers prevented sales. I have seen a full map of Upper Metuchen about Campbell's Station, with its streets and building plots as located at that time. But although business was generally depressed by unrealized anticipations, and by the financial crisis through which the country was passing, these were not sleepy days in Metuchen.

The Campbells, the Thomases, the Mundys, the Freemans, the Rosses, Van Sicklens, D.S. Voorhees and others, in their activity and clear sightedness, would favorably compare with the most of those who have succeeded them or are still their contemporaries.

Besides the store in Upper Metuchen, L. Thomas opened one in the house now occupied by J.J. Clarkson. Farmers labored hard, and brought remunerative produce more in this direction. Board varied from one to two dollars: men and women were shrewd for bargain or trade, and if real estate was less buoyant than now, personal property, cattle, wares and merchandise of all descriptions frequently changed hands, and increased thrift was apparent. Monsieur Beaumont built the large Tilby House, and waked up the natives by his lavish expenditures. The Debating Society flourished in the Franklin school-house; singing schools were popular; Horace Greeley discoursed on politics to an interested audience and when the "log cabin and hard cider" campaign fully set in, a great big meeting in Upper Metuchen called together the whole country round, and enthusiasm was unbounded. The great "Salt Water Day," as the Harvest Joy day and the great washing time, came off in August then as well as now, and no inhabitant is so old as to remember the origin of the custom. Metuchen was the chief town on the route, and its people joined with the dusty crowds that hastened to the bay. It was oft a time of good cheer and pleasant meeting in pic-nic style, and as a live relic of the olden time, is not likely soon to disappear.

The Wood Bee, or Minister's Frolic, as it was then called, came off yearly about October, when with oxen and horses the good people made general turn-out to fill up the pastor's wood-pile. And truly a frolic it was. There was brushing about and log-rolling in abundance, and when the work was done, over chicken pot-pie and good coffee, and diverse other good things, all endeavored to give practical evidence that active labor was promotive of good appetite.



A news item from October, 1895. Kellogg (1812-1895) was living with the Marshall family in Metuchen when he died, and he is remembered in David Trumbull Marshall's *Boyhood Days in Old Metuchen*.

The old school-house still continued to be the spot where young ideas began to shoot, and manifold teachers, mostly from New England, sought to guide and model the rising race. The names of Miss Abigail Thomas, Mr. Lane, Mr. Tibbitts, Mr. Fuller, now a leading citizen of Peekskill, and many others, are still familiarly recalled by our earlier citizens.

In the year 1839 Mr. Alpheus W. Kellogg was recommended to us by Mr. Hastings, of New York City, as an educated gentleman and a good chorister, and for many years took charge of the school, and of the music of the Presbyterian church from thence onward to this date. He has accomplished much for the training and culture of the children of our community, and in fostering and culture of the children of our community, and in fostering musical taste, and I rejoice that I had the honor of graduating from the public school under his tuition. In his voluntary retiracy, we are glad to claim him as a permanent citizen, and to recognize his earnest interest in all that relates to the welfare of our town.

***Continued in the Next Issue***



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 local history, contact us with as many details as possible at [info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org](mailto:info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org). 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.



## Summer Field Trip to the Drake House

On Sunday, August 25, a group of Society members visited the historic Drake House at 602 West Front Street in Plainfield for a special group tour guided by Nancy Piwowar.

The original portion of the house was built in 1746 for Nathaniel Drake and was used as George Washington's headquarters during the Battle of Short Hills, in June 1777.

In 1864, John S. Harberger, a New York City Bank president, enlarged and embellished the house in the Victorian style, making it his summer home during Plainfield's development as a commuter suburb.

Period rooms portray both the farm life of the Drakes and the suburban life of the Harbergers. Significant American paintings, folk art, period furniture and decorative pieces make this site a museum of both history and art.

The museum is open most Sundays from 2pm to 4pm. For more information, visit their website at [www.drakehouseplainfieldnj.org](http://www.drakehouseplainfieldnj.org).

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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.*

## Many Thanks to our Newsletter Sponsors



Public Hours  
Thur., Fri., Sat.  
10 am–4 pm  
37 Christie  
Edison, NJ

The **Thomas Edison Center** museum offers guided tours to individuals, families, corporations, scout programs, schools, summer camps, and senior groups.

We book private tours for groups of 12 or more on other days in advance when available.

Visit our website for more information about other programs, volunteering, memberships, and much more.

[www.menloparkmuseum.org](http://www.menloparkmuseum.org)  
732-549-3299

## The Metuchen Mirror

We're pleased to be writing  
the first draft of history.

Don't miss a thing.  
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Go to [metuchenmirror.com](http://metuchenmirror.com) or call 732-395-7838.

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1807, AS AN INCLUSIVE PLACE FOR THE CULTURAL  
ARTS & COMMUNITY SERVICE.**



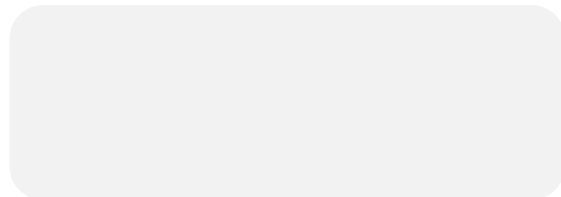
**METUCHEN  
BANK**

*A division of MANASQUAN BANK  
est. 1874*

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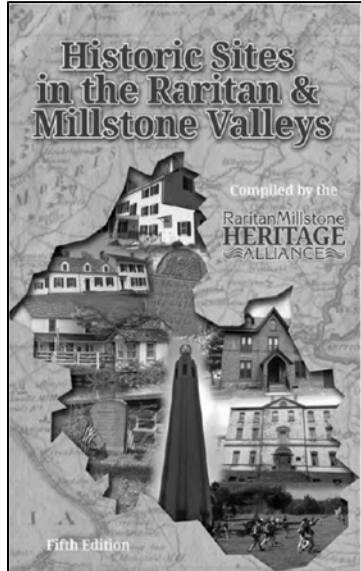


**Metuchen-Edison Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 61**  
**Metuchen, NJ 08840**



**Save the Date!**  
**ANNUAL MEETING**  
**Sunday, January 13, 2020**

*More information will be sent with membership renewal notices.*



**GOT HISTORY?**

*Pick up a FREE copy of the newly released guide to historic sites in the Raritan & Millstone Valleys at the Edison Memorial Tower or any upcoming Society meeting.*

**SAVE THE DATE!**  
*for*  
**METUCHEN-EDISON LOCAL HISTORY DAY**  
*on*  
**FEBRUARY 9, 2020**  
(Sunday, 1pm to 4pm)

**Come view our photo albums and special exhibits, order reprints, purchase Society merchandise, and commune with fellow history fans at the Metuchen Public Library.**

**This year's theme is the**  
**19<sup>TH</sup> AMENDMENT!**