

NANNYKIDS



The Wizard of Menlo Park

No, we don't mean Harry Potter at the mall, but the *real* Wizard of Menlo Park... Thomas Alva

Edison! Mr. Edison got this nickname because of the amazing inventions that were created right here at his laboratories in the Menlo Park section of Edison.

Although he was born in Ohio and went to school for a short time in Michigan, he built a research and development laboratory – the very first of its kind – in Menlo Park in 1876. Even though this area was very rural at the time, it was easy to get to by train from both New York City and Philadelphia. It was here that Edison and his team designed the first machine that could record and play back a human voice. The public was so amazed that newspapers began calling him by the “Wizard” nickname.



Between 1876 and 1882, Edison's “invention factory” operated in Menlo Park, patenting more than 400 inventions. Not only did he perfect the incandescent lightbulb here, but it's where he built the first electric railroad in the country.

Although neither Edison's labs nor his house still exist, a small museum and a monument (pictured at left) mark their location at 37 Christie Street, off Route 27 in north Edison. You may have already heard about the effort to

restore the Art Deco memorial tower, but did you know that plans are underway for a new and expanded museum with state-of-the-art interactive exhibits and educational programs? While these plans are in progress, the existing museum is open for visitors on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. You can come and see some of Edison's inventions and learn much more about the impact of his work here. Schools and other group tours should call 732-494-4194 to make special arrangements. For more information, you can visit their website at www.MenloParkMuseum.org.



Top: an 1878 edition of The Daily Graphic.
Left: the Edison Memorial Tower in 2007.
Bottom: One of Edison's laboratories, ca. 1880.





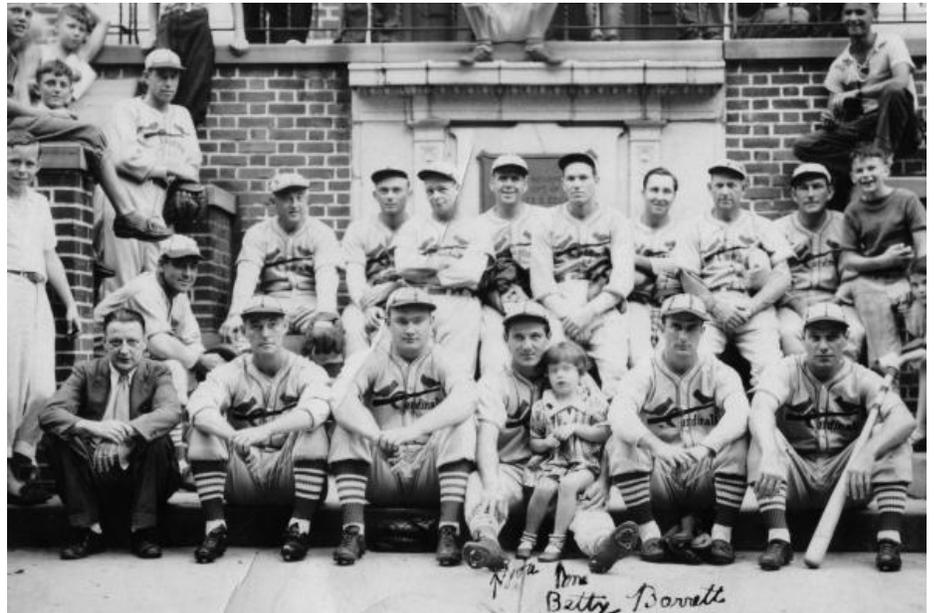
History Mystery



Do you know which Major League Baseball team played the Metuchen Baseball Club in 1936?

The game took place on a field where Campbell School now stands. If you are familiar with back issues of *Nannygoats*, the newsletter for big people, you might know who this "Gashouse Gang" is...

You might also be able to guess by taking a close look at these uniforms, shown here in a photograph taken of the team in front of the YMCA on High Street. See the bottom of Page 3 for the answer.



DID YOU KNOW?

...that bubble wrap and the electric guitar were invented in NJ?

...that Edison is home to the world's largest pickle bar?

...that the famous pirate, Blackbeard, frequently visited the Jersey Shore in the early 1700s? Although we don't know how well he played skeeball, we do know he escaped from the British Navy near Brigantine Beach.

Just for Laughs...

Q: Why couldn't the ghosts in the house museum stop laughing?

A: They were simply too historical!

If that joke makes you say "Boo," then contribute one to the next *Nannykids* via email to ayersallenhouse@msn.com.

Congratulations on a Quarter Century!

A hearty congratulations to locally-based Family Friends, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary as a non-profit volunteer organization this year. Founded in 1984, Family Friends provides playgroups and more for families with young children - meeting to network, play, and socialize in a safe environment. To find out more about this quarter-century-old organization for families, visit familyfriendsinc.com.





Invitation to a Party



The following story is an excerpt (a fancy word for “taken from”) from a chapter entitled “A Fete Champetre” in David Trumbull Marshall’s 1930 book, *Boyhood Days in Old Metuchen*. This book, which is in local libraries and available through the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society, is full of stories about what Mr. Marshall remembers about growing up in the area.

Some time about 1880 my younger brother Bruyn was working at the Edison laboratory at Menlo Park, having charge of the small telephone exchange located on the second floor of the Laboratory.

One day he came home and announced that he was invited to attend a “fete champetre” at the Edison house. This was a new one to us so we had to scurry round and find out what kind of an animal was a *fete champetre*. After all it turned out to be a party held for the most part out of doors. I was not invited, not being acquainted with the Edison children. The first group of Edison children comprised two boys and a girl. The party was given in honor of the girl Dot, then a child of about eight or ten. The children had a wonderful time.

Mr. Edison had his house wired for electric lights, the current being supplied from the Laboratory. It was told as a most wonderful thing that after dark Mr. Edison sneaked in and threw the switch and for some minutes cut off the light. I did go to the Edison house some two or three years later to a party given by the Stillwell girls, sisters-in-law of Mr. Edison. Mr. Edison was not there at the time. The old platinum-clamp lamps were still attached to the fixtures but the current for lighting them was no longer supplied. Even at that time the Stillwell girls pointed out the lamps as wonderful antiques.

I remember the Edison children at that party. The little boys were young enough to sit on my lap and were much interested to have someone tell them about the pictures in their books.

In those days Mrs. Edison used to drive around Menlo Park behind a big iron-gray horse by the name of Major. About ten years afterward I had to drive Major around Morris County, N. J., going from one mining property to another. As I remember Major was then pretty fat and heavy and withal did not have the lightness nor the pep suited to a buggy horse. My friend and co-worker had an invariable adjuration which he made to that old horse: “Get up, Majority, or you will leave us in the minority.”

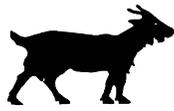
It used to be said that Mr. Edison, in order to induce his wife to move out to Menlo Park, had told her that there was a lake out in front of the house. That there was a lake about 800 yards in front of the house was strictly true and just so at times. In the spring the low land way down in the valley in front of the Edison house was sometimes flooded, but the lake never lasted many days at a time.



The Edison home, ca. 1880. Later destroyed by fire, it was located not far from the Menlo Park laboratories.



What exactly is a *Nannykid*? J. Lloyd Grimstead, a local historian who took almost 3000 pictures of the Metuchen-Edison area during the 1930s, collected anecdotes, articles, and reminiscences about our local history. Instead of “anecdotes,” he called them “nannygoats,” which has a similar sound. So, the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society calls its newsletter *Nannygoats* in honor of Mr. Grimstead. Since young goats are called “kids,” these editions are called *Nannykids*.



Colorful History



Try your hand at coloring this beautiful and historic Victorian-era home on Graham Avenue... the real house is painted with shades of green, red, and tan, but you can “paint it” with whatever combination your imagination can come up with.



Word Find

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| Act | Graham | Pen |
| Aunt | Group | Player |
| Bruyn | Historic | Shutters |
| Cardinals | House | Sir |
| Champetre | How | Size |
| Color | Invention | Sons |
| Dot | Lake | Sore |
| Edison | Metuchen | Team |
| Family | Menlo | Tour |
| Fete | Museum | Train |
| Few | Nannykids | Victorian |
| Fore | Nap | Wizard |
| Friends | Oreo | YMCA |
| Fun | Paint | Yum |
| Ghosts | Party | |

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