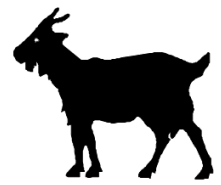




Nannygoats



Vol. 23, Issue 2

Newsletter of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society

Spring/Summer 2025

The year 2025 marks the 125th anniversary of Metuchen's establishment as an independent municipality and several events and initiatives are underway to mark this milestone. As next year, 2026, will be the Semiquincentennial – or 250th anniversary of the United States' founding – these celebrations will roll into next year's nation-wide festivities as well.

Those familiar with Metuchen's history know that it actually stretches back much, much further than those 125 years. Millennia before European colonization it was home to the Lenape and their settlements throughout the region, especially along what is now called the Delaware river. Adriaen van der Donck's 1656 map of New Netherlands depicts some of the indigenous settlements in our area along the Raritan River at that time, in addition to the many villages along the Delaware.

European settlers, particularly those from Sweden, arrived in the 17th century and by the second half of that century an English colony was also established in what is now Woodbridge Township. In fact, Woodbridge, the oldest colonial settlement in the state, was formed in 1669 and initially also encompassed

the areas of what are now Edison, Metuchen, Rahway, Highland Park, and more. Farms were established, villages formed, and transportation routes developed – many from original Lenape routes. The area known as “Metuchen,” with variant spellings, is referenced in European records in the 1680s, although it is likely much older as an indigenous name.

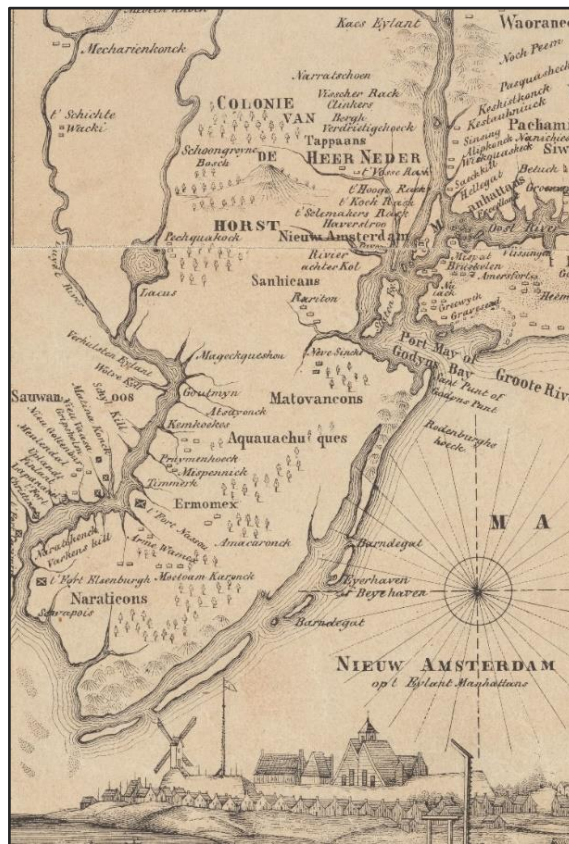
In 1870, Raritan Township (composed of what is now Edison and Metuchen)

separated from Woodbridge Township, and then in 1900 the Borough of Metuchen was formed from the surrounding Raritan Township (renamed “Edison” in the 1950s). In 1900 Metuchen was already a thriving, dense village, but one that was in need of improved municipal services. While Edison Township is now extremely densely developed, it was then essentially still a mixture of farms and undeveloped land (while this is a somewhat complicated progression of settlement and municipal boundaries, it explains our region's shared, intertwined history).

However, glimpses of Metuchen's 18th century history remain. The Colonial Cemetery on Main Street at the foot of Woodbridge Avenue is a stunning example of our area's colonial history and contains numerous grave markers for those who served

Metuchen Marks 125 Years & More

By Tyreen A. Reuter



Continued on Page 4

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 the Township of Edison.

Events & Happenings...

The Society has had a very busy first half of the year participating in and hosting several events. The Annual Meeting and election of officers took place the American Legion Post 435 in Edison with a program about the 80th Anniversary of the End of WWII, a display of Pacific Theatre items, and showings of original war reels. In February, a Black History Month program featuring local history profiles was presented at the Metuchen Public Library and in March Local History Day highlighted ephemera and souvenirs from Metuchen's Main Street businesses, including several rarely seen artifacts. March also saw the release of our "back-by-popular-demand" cemetery tee shirts (\$15 members, \$20 non-members).

In mid May we tabled at Middlesex County History Day at East Jersey Old Town. For Memorial Day, Society members marched in both the Edison and Metuchen parades, with a fantastic farm wagon organized by Society President Robert Kentos. On June 26, the Society joined in with the New Jersey Society Sons of the American Revolution and the Township of Edison invite for the annual commemoration of The Battle of The Short Hills Oak Tree Pond Historical Park in Edison. The final weekend of June saw the Society host Preservation New Jersey and Middlesex County for a two-day hands-on conservation workshop at Metuchen's Colonial Cemetery.

Many thanks to all that attended and helped with all these 2025 events and initiatives. Much more to come in the second half!



Top to Bottom: Middlesex County History Day, Edison Memorial Day Parade, Battle of The Short Hills Commemoration, Cemetery Conservation Workshop.

Nannygoats

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The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society
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Board of Directors

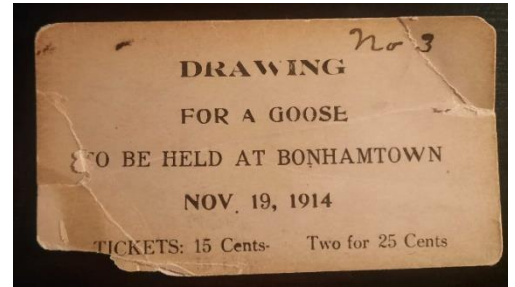
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The name of the newsletter, "**Nannygoats**," is taken from the title of a collection of **anecdotes**, articles, reminiscences, and letters compiled by photographer J. Lloyd Grimstead. He took more than 2,800 photographs of the Metuchen-Edison area, mostly during the 1930s, and make up 80 percent of the 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, tax-exempt charitable organization.
info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org

New in the Archives

Listed here are just some of our *many* recent acquisitions from February through May 2025. While we cannot accept historic items that are unrelated to our local history, we are always interested in acquiring originals and/or copies of photographs, ephemera, books, etc. relevant to our collective past. If you don't want to part with an original item, we'd be delighted to either photograph or scan it. Contact us at info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org with any questions.



- Orange apron with label "Runyon for 5th V.P., Great Choice" and photograph of the Metuchen Police Department standing in front of Borough Hall, April 1927 (donated by Joe Perrino Jr.)
- Original Ticket for a Drawing of a Goose to be held in Bonhamtown, 1914 (donated by Dorothy Winhold)
- Memorandum from the Raritan Arsenal Headquarters regarding Organizations Considered By Attorney General to have Interests in Conflict with those of United States, 10/5/1949 (donated by Jonathan Hollenbeck)
- Printouts of Raritan Arsenal history, Middlesex County College streetlamp, and Cullum's Register of Adam F. Casad as well as flash drive containing the former Raritan Arsenal historic plans, ca. 1931 & 2023 photographs of Middlesex County College (donated by Daniel Granato)
- Photograph of the footing of the old wooden bridge that carried Middlesex Avenue over the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) tracks near the Bridge Street bridge, May 1974 (donated by Dom Walker)
- Badge for the Edison Fire Department from the early 1900s and a modern patch for the Edison Fire Department from ca. 2000s (donated by David Doss)
- Metuchen High School Yearbooks 1939-1942; 1942-1962 Metuchen High School Reunion photo album; 1990s recollections of Mary Ruth Eby; 1930 & 1935 Washington School Grade 1 & Grade 5 Class portraits; photograph of Tom Thumb Wedding for the Metuchen Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star of New Jersey; photograph of unknown play featuring Harry Kramer in a wedding dress; 1942 program for the Metuchen High School Commencement; 1975 program and ticket for The Book of Golden Deeds Award Dinner honoring Donald Hume for The Exchange Club of Metuchen; 1941 program for "Laugh Clown: A Comedy Mirthquake in Three Acts" play by the Metuchen High School Senior Class; 1932 program for A Dance Recital for the benefit of the Franklin Elementary Parent Teachers Association; (donated by Carol Hume Carr)
- Various items of Dorothy Mundy Kreuscher of Edison that include Raritan Township Public Schools certificates and report cards; 1942 Metuchen High School diploma; 1941 Metuchen Recorder Commencement Supplement; Metuchen High School Class Reunion handouts; photo of the Mundy family, the Mundy Poultry Farm, Roosevelt Park, and Jean Mundy's Parsonage Road house; 1927 Lewis Mundy & Gertrude Thompson marriage certificate; and various deeds, contracts, etc. for the Mundy family (donated by Mary Jane Seeman)
- Flash drive containing 2,261 digital photograph files of The Metuchen Mirror from 2017-2021 (donated by Randy Splaingard)
- Digital photographs of Girl Scouts marching during the Christmas Parade, ca. 1970-1975 (donated by Marisa Kravarik)
- 1963 & 1964 Edison High School 'Talon' Yearbooks (donated by April Cormaci)
- Digital photographs of the interior of Video Bazaar at 389 Main Street during the 1990s (donated by Scotty Cooper)
- 54 copies of The Bulldog's Bark from 1955 to 1963 and complete copy of the 1961 Metuchen, New Jersey City Directory (donated by Barbara Zuts Mergler)
- Metal plate label titled "Edgar Quality Clays, Florida - Georgia - New Jersey, The Edgar Plastic Kaolin Co., Edgar Brothers Co., Lake County Clay Co., Metuchen, New Jersey" and a 1942 Forum Theatre Movie Guide (donated by Jonathan Hollenbeck)
- Digital photographs of the Barbara Jean Moss / Alfred Rice family from 223 Woodbridge Avenue and children from the former Washington School in 1958 (donated by Gerry Rice)
- Metal ice pick labeled "Joseph Colojay, 188 South Main St., Metuchen, N.J." (donated by Debbie Finley from the Phyllis Boeddinghaus Estate Sale)
- Round metal coin from 1700s with image of King George on one side found on the hill at the east end of the Metuchen Railroad Station (donated by George McGeehan)
- Digital photograph of Metuchen Day Downtown along Main Street, ca. 1966 (donated by Larry Salerno via Facebook)
- Digital portrait of Elizabeth Brewster Corbin, first wife of Charles Corbin & donor of Woodwild Park, ca. late 19th century (donated by John Bancroft)

in the Revolutionary War. Roughly a dozen 18th century homes and buildings are spread throughout the Borough, often disguised by later homes infilled over time.

In the 19th century, the Metuchen area began to develop quite rapidly following the development of the railroad in the 1830s. Commercial concerns along Main Street and Lake Avenue flourished. Late 19th century maps show this thriving community and its many stores and services. By the end of the 19th century, there were 26 passenger trains to New York daily: 18 on the Pennsylvania Railroad and 8 on the Lehigh Valley (the track bed of which is now the Middlesex Greenway recreational trail). Almost one quarter of Metuchen's residents commuted to work.

The borough's easy accessibility to urban centers and availability of fine homes made it attractive to bankers, engineers, writers, authors, editors, illustrators, and artists. A real estate brochure from the time, entitled "Why Metuchen is a Desirable Home," stated that Metuchen was attractive "...to those desiring a home, a dwelling place, among worthy and cultivated people... Display is ridiculed; equality is the rule; and the exclusiveness is directed against bad manners and bad morals."

This growth and demand for development, as referenced earlier, required supporting municipal services, and resulted in the area's leaders

working to form its own municipality. On March 20, 1900, the Borough of Metuchen was officially incorporated, with William Thornall – a descendant of one of the area's earliest European settlers – as its first Mayor.

Metuchen's reputation as the "Brainy Borough" came soon afterwards. Notable intellectual luminaries bought homes here and numerous literary societies formed. A strong case can be made for the Brainy Borough nickname arising from the arrival of author Mary Wilkins Freeman to the Borough in 1902. A household name at the time, she had been a frequent visitor and moved to a home on Lake Avenue upon her marriage to a local man (much more about her – and other notable "Brains" – can be found in the "The Brainy Borough" booklet available on the Borough of Metuchen's website).

Metuchen in the 20th century saw the advent of the automobile, dense suburban development, and increased commercial activity along its downtown corridors. It is these last 125 years that the Borough currently seeks to commemorate, but as noted, those years are built upon the foundation of both 350 years of European history as well as the much, much earlier Lenape settlement.

As part of Metuchen's 125th commemoration, the Borough worked with the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society to create a series of historical banners displayed downtown, each with an image relevant to our history. QR codes on the banners lead to descriptions of persons, places,





and events that have impacted and formed our community's history. While placement was limited to 57 banners, there are even more stories to tell, and the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society has been compiling even more for eventual publication. From shopkeepers who got their start working with Thomas Edison to the inventor of Sesame Street's Big Bird, and from one of the nation's first professional women landscape painters to the first Hindu temple in New Jersey, these banners tell a story, not as a chronological narrative, but in a truer sense as it is the people who lived here who form the history of a place. Please take a stroll along our vibrant downtown or visit the Borough of Metuchen's

website for both the images and histories that go along with them. I guarantee you will find some surprising history!

References and Images

- *Van Der Donck's Map of New Netherlands, 1656* (New York Public Library)
- *Fulton Plan of Metuchen, 1875* available via Rutgers University Cartography Lab.
- *Lenape Country: Delaware Valley Society Before William Penn* by Jean R. Soderlund, 2015.
- *Metuchen (Images of America)* by Stacy E. Spies, 2000.
- *Metuchen, The Brainy Borough* by the Metuchen Historic Preservation Committee, 2015.

Many thanks to Blue Parachute of Metuchen for their excellent work fabricating the banners and for printing our quarterly newsletters!



News and Notes

PLACES TO GO, PEOPLE TO SEE, THINGS TO DO...

History and culture fans are never at a loss for things to do in our area. Here are a few **FREE** offerings we think might be of interest to our members and readers.

Indigenous Identities: Here, Now & Always

*Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University
71 Hamilton Street, New Brunswick*

This exhibition, running through December 2025 and curated by Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, provides a provocative survey of contemporary Native American art. Featuring over 100 works by living artists from nearly 75 Indigenous nations, it includes painting, works on paper, photography, ceramics, beadwork, weaving, sculpture, and video.

Hometown Pride: The Power of Sports

*Cornelius Low House Museum
1225 River Road, Piscataway*

Capturing nearly 100 years of Middlesex sports history, this exhibit showcases sports memorabilia from local high schools, Rutgers University, and Middlesex College, and collectible items from professional sports teams and individuals. Relive Middlesex County's rich sports history and experience sports' profound impact on our community. The exhibit includes Metuchen items and runs through December 2025.

Four Centuries in a Weekend

Sites throughout Union County

Saturday, October 18 and Sunday, October 19, 2025

More than 30 historic sites across Union County are open to the public for Four Centuries in a Weekend, an annual fall tradition. Visitors learn about life and local history over the course of four centuries, with docent tours plus special activities ranging from colonial games and open-hearth cooking to re-enactors, live music, and new exhibits.

The Semiquincentennial

On July 4, 2026, the United States will commemorate and celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The journey toward this historic milestone is an opportunity to pause and reflect deeply on our nation's past, honor the contributions of all Americans, and look ahead toward the future we want to create for the next generation and beyond. To learn more, visit the official site, america250.org.



Nannygoats in the Hopper

Here are some of the future lead newsletter articles under development. If you have something to contribute, please contact metuchenedisonhistory@gmail.com.

- *President Carter's Visit to Edison*
- *The History of Metuchen's Hillside Cemetery*
- *The Pines Manor, from bicyclers' woodsy biergarten to swim club and now Edison's modern banquet facility*
- *The Amazing Innovations of Gulton Industries*
- *Memories of the Forum Theatre*

THOMAS EDISON CENTER AT MENLO PARK

Hours:
Thur., Fri., Sat.
10am - 4pm

37 Christie St.
Edison, NJ



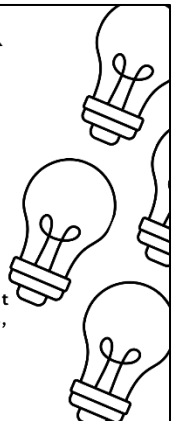
The Thomas Edison Center museum offers guided tours to individuals, families, corporations, scout programs, schools, summer camps, and senior groups.

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.

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www.menloparkmuseum.org



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**Want to write an article for
Nannygoats? Contact us at
metuchenedisonhistory@gmail.com**

SAVE THE DATES!

Metuchen Street Fair
Sunday, August 17, 2025

Stop by our booth for information, merchandise, and free giveaways! 11am to 5pm, downtown Metuchen.

Metuchen Colonial Cemetery Fall Cleanup
Sunday, October 19, 2025

Scouts/Service Hours Welcome! 9am to 3pm

Lincoln Highway History
Sunday, October 26, 2025

Presented by William Bodycombe and hosted by the Mt. Zion Masonic Lodge (Metuchen)

Trolley Tours & House History Workshops

Planning is underway for these upcoming offerings; dates and times to be announced!

www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND!

Cemetery Tees

\$20 each (Members \$15)



***Small through XXXL
In "Slate Gray"***

Scan or contact us at metuchenedisonhistory@gmail.com

Missed a newsletter issue? All back issues of *Nannygoats* on our website at www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org.