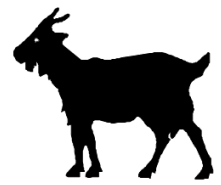




# Nannygoats



Vol. 22, Issues 1 & 2

Newsletter of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society

Double Issue-2024

Welcome to our special Spring-Summer Double Issue for 2024. It's been a busy year so far for the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society as we celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We hope you take a look at all we've done already this year (Pages 12 and 13) as well as what we have coming (Page 14). We've also gathered an amazing array of items for our archives (see Pages 3 and 4).

We're particularly pleased to present this article about Metuchen's most famous celebrity during our anniversary year. Written in 2019, the text and images were shared with us by the author Tom Interval after the subject, David (Kotkin) Copperfield himself, read and commented positively on his research. Mr. Interval's article appears first, then Mr. Copperfield's commentary is presented at the end on Page 11. Future articles could be written about Mr. Copperfield and his time in Metuchen – including about his family's clothing store on Main Street – but we were thrilled to read Interval's research about how his local experiences influenced the Master Illusionist, and Mr. Copperfield's mentioning his use of the Metuchen Library!

With temperatures a bit below average for a February evening in Metuchen, New Jersey, frigid weather was probably the last thing on nine-year-old David Kotkin's mind.

David, a member of Metuchen Cub Scout Pack 70, received an award that night at the pack's annual Blue and Gold dinner, held at the Presbyterian Social Center on Monday, February 21, 1966. But there was more in store for David than just the award.

At the time, David was practicing ventriloquism, inspired by his television-ventriloquist hero, Paul Winchell. However, sometime within the next year, he developed a serious interest in magic.

The stories of his magical origin vary depending on who you ask, but the one his mother, Rebecca, told was that she and David's father, Hyman (known as Hy), brought him to Louis Tannen's magic shop at 120 West 42nd Street in New York City to buy him a new



## **'The Greenhouse Effect' David Kotkin's Early Magic Exposure and Performances**

*by Tom Interval, with  
commentary by David Copperfield*

ventriloquist puppet. During that first visit of many, David succumbed to magic's enchantment and, within a few short years, would perform magic routines, such as the Dancing Cane, better than many professional entertainers, ultimately becoming a household name

and the most commercially successful magician to date.

If you haven't guessed by now, I'm talking about David Copperfield, whose real surname is Kotkin.

Despite Rebecca's claim, David's earliest live exposure to magic

might have been at that 1966 Cub Scout dinner, most likely before his visit to

Tannen's. The evening's entertainers were two 13-year-old boys from nearby Perth Amboy, New Jersey: magician Jack Greenhouse, aka "The Great Jaquini," and his twin brother, Ken, a ventriloquist who called his act "Ken and Clark" (Clark, of course, being the puppet).



*Continued on Page 8*



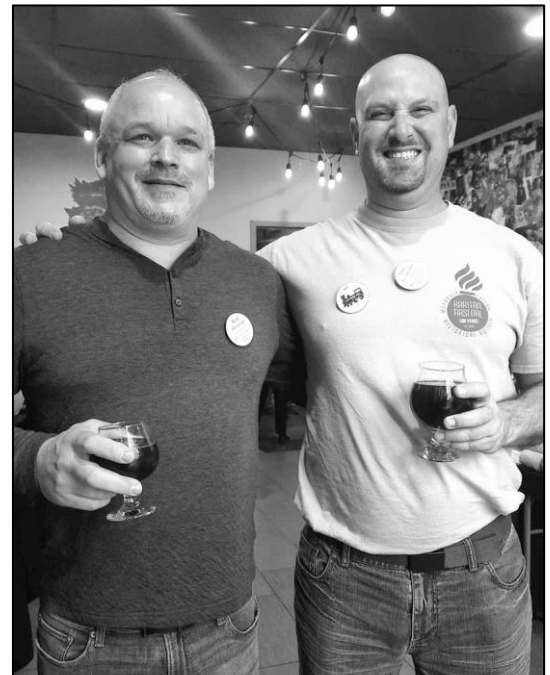
## From the Desk of the President...

Dear Members,

I am extremely pleased and honored to be able to serve you as President of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society during this important 50th anniversary year; along with my fellow Board Members, we have worked hard to plan for it to be a very special one. I have been thrilled with the response so far from our members turning out for our meetings, programs, and more. Thank YOU for helping us "Save the Past for the Future!"

My hope for my term as President is to continue to build on everything the Society has been doing to further the appreciation of our local history. My own family has been here in this area for several generations, and I have multiple lineages that go back five to eight generations and one that extends fifteen in Edison. By preserving my family's own artifacts and history, I have learned just how much knowledge about one's past strengthens the appreciation for it. Knowing the experiences and challenges faced by those who were here before us widens the understanding of community's history and can help us embrace the present and plan for the future. Please contact me if you would like to be more involved with the Society – it's a very rewarding experience!

- Rob Kentos, President



President Rob Kentos (left) and Vice President Dan Granato (right) at the Nixon Nitration Explosion Commemoration at Cypress Brewing, near the site of the 1924 disaster, in March 2024. See Page 12 for more photographs of the event.

## Nannygoats

*Published by*

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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*

## Society Membership is for Everyone!

Our *Nannygoats* newsletter is a way for those who have moved away from our area to keep connected to Edison and Metuchen. Perhaps a child has grown and flown? Gift them a membership as a way to keep in touch with their hometown. Likewise, perhaps your grandparents have moved to Florida, but they have a lot of fond memories here – wouldn't a membership subscription be perfect?

Visit our website or scan the code below for the Membership form. You will be happy you did, and we thank you in advance for helping us "Save the Past for the Future."



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

Listed here are just *some* of our many recent acquisitions. 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](mailto:info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org) with any questions.

- Photographs of Joan Annette's house at 20 Cody Avenue, Edison featuring her young daughter Susan Popp & dog, ca. 1963-1964 (donated by Emily Popp)

- Copy of *Boyhood Days in Old Metuchen* (2nd ed.) by Dr. Trumbull Marshall, © 1930; reprinted 1977 (donated by Mr. & Mrs. J. Cappuccitti)

- A Celebration of Life program for John "Jack" Boeddinghaus, December 29, 2023; "A Charmed Life" Scrapbook about Vivian Hight of Edison, 2005-2008; Your Middlesex Magazine, 2023 Issue 3; House History Research for The Petersen House at 32 Highland Avenue and 73 Hillside Avenue, Metuchen (donated by Tyreen Reuter)

- Folder of items including "Some Facts, Statistics and A Partial History of Camp Kilmer," 1946; "Camp Kilmer, N.J. - The Processing of a Specific Overseas Unit Through a Staging Area" by Lt. Col. Arthur D. Mann, 1943; Newspaper photograph in the *Perth Amboy News* titled "First Local Group Off To World War I," 1965; Milepost list of structures along the New York Division Branch Lines, ca. 1969-1972; Heidingsfeld's New Brunswick (New Jersey) City Directory, 1932-1933; various photographs including the Metuchen Railroad Station, the Metuchen-Rahway Bus parked outside of the Lake Avenue Garage, Montagna's Tavern & Restaurant, and miscellaneous 1920s-1930s Metuchen School Class portraits (donated by Jim Halpin)
- Postcard of the "New" Post Office at 409 Main Street, Metuchen, ca. 1920 (donated by Byron Sondergard)

- World War I Medal from the United States Forces 1917-1918, presented by the People of Borough of Metuchen N.J. in grateful recognition of patriotic services in the World War; the medal found at the estate sale at the property of Peter Coppola &



Charles Bonasorte, 177 Hunter Court, Palm Harbor, FL (donated by Cherlyn French, *see image at center*)

- Transcription of a letter /memoir about the Compton Farm House along Grove Avenue that was saved by one of Joel Compton's family members (donated by Joel Compton)

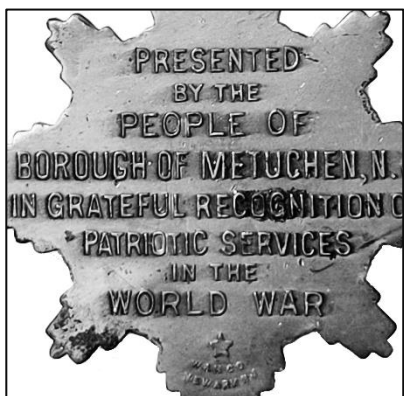
- 1979 Columbia Marketing Corporation Map of Edison; 1971 *Know Your Township: Edison* by the N.J. League of Women Voters; 1999 Yellow Book Map of Edison & Metuchen, and newspaper titled Historic Edison presented by the Jerseyman of Edison High commemorating the Edison Tercentenary celebration, 1964 (donated by Susan Papp)

- Photographs of Daniel Lebar's House at 581 Middlesex Avenue just prior to demolition, and a historic photograph from 1913 of the Public Service Fast Line Bridge over the Lehigh Valley Railroad near Metuchen (donated by Daniel Granato)

- Newspaper articles including a 1918 List of Metuchen Men in the Army of Navy during World War I and the 1919

Fourth of July and World War I Homecoming Celebration in Metuchen (donated by Walter Stochel Jr.)

- Clara Barton School items collected by Mrs. William Aspinwall that include book covers; Clara Barton School Closing documents; a 1971 Founders Day Program; a Clara Barton School PTA 50th



anniversary article; Clara Barton PTA By-Laws, certificates, and information; Clara Barton School buttons and pen; Financial Reports for Clara Barton Teen Dances; and photocopies of the Mother Auxiliary of Cub Pack 25 scrapbook, ca. 1949-1984 (donated by Janet Aspinwall)

- 1946 Metuchen High School Yearbook formerly owned by 1946 MHS graduate Dorothy Louise Kaepernick, and various items related to the Metuchen High School Class of 1946 (donated by her daughter, Wendy Hudson)
- Two keychains, for Korman's Metuchen Esso & Seldow's Stationery, and a 1964 Map of Election Districts for the Boro of Metuchen (donated by Peter Kovalski)
- Cassette recording for the Metuchen Library's 125th Anniversary Celebration, 10/1/1995 (donated by the Metuchen Library)
- Photograph of Metuchen Center, along Main Street, during a Saturday morning, ca. 1974-1975 (donated by Carl Paffendorf, see image below right)
- Digital copies of the complete collection of *The Metuchen Mirror* from June 2017 to May 2021, for digitization on the Metuchen Public Library's Digital Archives (donated by Randy Splaingard)
- Various documents, newspaper articles, posters, brochures, programs, correspondence, and photographs related to Theatre Six and the former Centenary Methodist Church, ca. 1960s-1970s (donated by Grace Shackney and John Downs)
- 1937 Program for The Edison Tower at Menlo Park, 1955 Program for the Dedication of the Flagpole Memorial in honor of Thomas Alva Edison on the 40th Anniversary of the Creation of the Naval Consulting Board at Menlo Park, and an Advertisement Poster for an Annual Bazaar for the Edison Volunteer Fire Company at Menlo Park (donated by Thomas Edison Center at Menlo Park)
- 1937 & 1942 panoramic photographs of the Nixon Nitration Works Annual Outing (donated by Dorothy Mosenthine via Edison Township)
- Digital photographs of Amy Duff's family and childhood home at 455 Wakefield Drive in Metuchen, ca. 1960s (donated by Amy Duff)
- Digital photograph of 47 Christol Street in Metuchen, purchased by George & Ellie Hutchinson in 1950 (donated by Kathy Hutchinson Schwalje)
- Report, photographs, and CD of the Historic

American Engineering Record (HAER) Documentation for the Grove Avenue Bridge over Port Reading Railroad, Metuchen (donated by AECOM)

- 150th Anniversary History of Mount Zion Lodge No. 135 of Free and Accepted Masons 1874-2024, Metuchen (donated by the Mount Zion Lodge)
- Wooden children's desk with seat possibly from the Franklin School, Metuchen (donated by Joseph Perrino Jr.)
- Various digital photographs including the 1955 Memorial Day Parade, Girl Scouts marching at the 1960s-early 1970s Memorial Day Parade, residences at 36 Clive Street & 110 Clive Street from the early 2000s, Mr. & Mrs. Harry Hill at Butcher Shop in Metuchen from 1951, McGuinness Children waiting for Memorial Day Parade at Hillside Inn on Main Street during 1920s-early 1930s, the Memorial Day Parades from late 1960s -early 1970s, and the Christmas Parade from mid-late 1970s (donated by Glenn Morton)
- Various newspaper articles, photographs, and biography about Metuchen artist Edith Hodge Pletzner and several newspaper articles about the Metuchen High School's CLEAN environmental group from 1970 (donated by Lauren Pletzner)





## Tropical Petland Memories

The Society frequently receives inquiries about places near and dear to people's childhood memories, and Tropical Petland often tops this list along with the Forum Theatre, Edison Lanes, Danfords, and Metuchen Center.

Tropical Petland's owner/operator, Bruce Jensen retired in 1997 but still lives on Newman Street in Metuchen with his wife, Lee, and several large aquariums. He is now 85 and living with Parkinson's, but a motorized stair lift helps him get to his basement filled with his beloved tropical fish. On May 19, his family organized a celebration of life for him, giving those who knew him – or of him and/or the store – a chance to visit and reminisce. Bruce and his family graciously spoke with Historical Society members during the gathering about his life-long passion and how his father got him started in the business. He also spoke about first operating on Amboy Avenue for five years, with a partner, and then moving to his famous Main Street location on his own for the next 38 years. Those many decades in business fueled his passion for caring for tropical fish, the imagination of many children, and inspired a love of animals in countless others.



Social media comments inspired by the announcement of the Roosevelt Park gathering included those from former and current residents who fondly remembered the store. Many recalled working there, stopping in for supplies, finally acquiring a long-awaited pet, or simply visiting the store on the way home from school. The monkey and "Mac" the parrot are remembered by throngs of Metuchenites who believe Tropical Petland was one of the reasons growing up here was so special.

Do you have any memories and/or photographs of Tropical Petland? We would love to hear, see, and archive them! Please contact us at [info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org](mailto:info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org) if you have anything to share. Shown here are Bruce, Lee, his son Knute and daughter Krista at Roosevelt Park, and an ad for the store from 1992.

## WHEN THE QUEEN CAMPED AT KILMER

The six-season television series "The Crown" has recently concluded, and while it extensively portrayed Her Royal Highness Elizabeth II's life story, not every aspect was covered. If additional episodes are ever made, the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society respectfully requests the addition of in-depth coverage of the events in her life during October 1957; it was then, during a State visit, that she travelled through New Jersey on her way to New York City.

The Queen had expressed a desire to take the Staten Island Ferry and her handlers obliged by arranging special rail transport from Washington, DC. The route went through our area on October 21, stopping for 4 hours and 15 minutes at Camp Kilmer. While uneventful, the stop at Camp Kilmer in Edison took place from 3:00 a.m. to 7:15 a.m. in order to facilitate a more appropriate time for the Queen's and Prince Philip's arrival at the ferry.

For more on this trip, including the exact route, on-board menu, and accompanying rail cars, visit our website's historical miscellany section for a scan of "The Sentinel," the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Historical Society's magazine (Volume 26, Number 4, 2004). If additions are ever made to "The Crown," we feel that a bit about her royal stop at Camp Kilmer would fit in nicely in Season 2, between Episodes 3 and 4. Netflix, take note!

*Shown at right is a press photo showing the couple on the Staten Island Ferry. The Statue of Liberty and the New York City skyline are visible below the dirigible airship.*



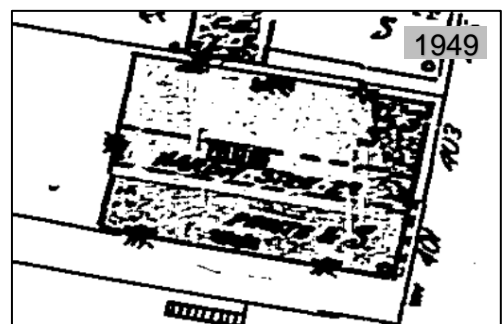
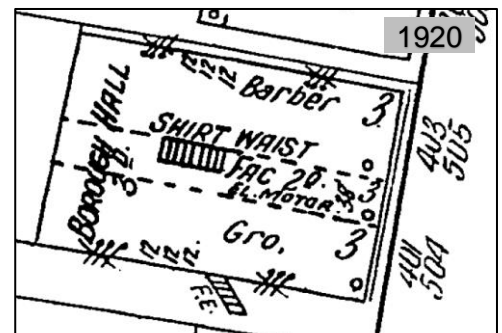
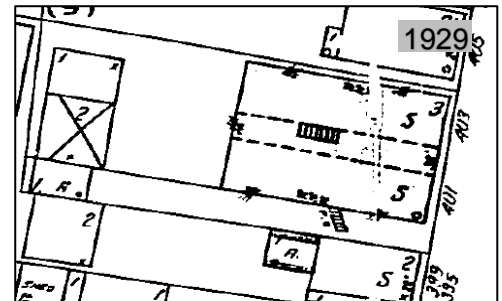
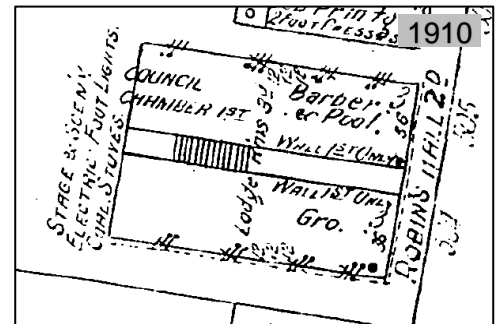
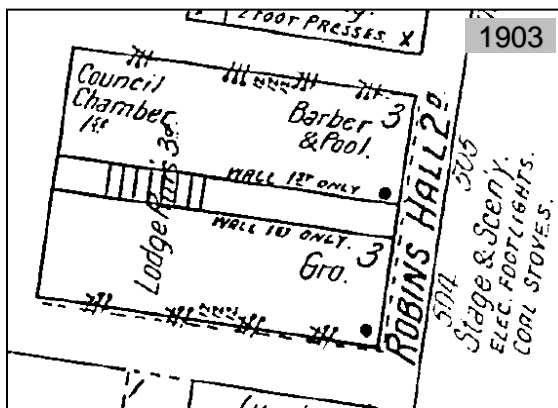
# RESEARCHING OUR LOCAL HISTORY: SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAPS

Several years ago the Society organized a "Researching the History of Your House" workshop and since then we have had many requests to do so again. While it's definitely something we are interested in doing and we truly enjoy helping residents learn more about their homes' histories, this kind of research is extremely specific to individual properties. In other words, covering broad topics and resources can be instructive, but what we often find most helpful for residents is looking at one specific property at a time. Some resources will prove incredibly helpful for some properties but yield nothing for others. In this new series of articles in *Nannygoats*, we will preview some of these resources and what, in a best-case scenario, they may be able to yield in terms of local history information.

For this issue we are highlighting Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. We frequently find they can provide a good idea of a building's construction date, materials, use, and additions over time. However, there are limitations as to what these maps can tell us; only heavily developed areas of a municipality are covered, potentially leaving much of a town's built environment out of range. For primarily rural or agricultural areas, there may have been no map coverage at all.

Sanborn maps were only issued for certain years, sometimes resulting in large gaps between years. For example, Metuchen has maps issued for 1903, 1910, 1920, 1929, 1949, and 1959. The 1903 maps only cover a small portion of mainly the downtown area, but with each successive map, the range of coverage does increase a great deal. Regardless of their limitations, Sanborn maps are still "local history gold" for the areas they do cover. Sanborn maps also note street numbers, which frequently changed as a town developed. These maps can help greatly with tracking street numbers over the years, providing an opportunity to match up with other records such as directories, censuses, and historic photograph archives.

Shown here are excerpts of the maps showing Robins Hall at 401 Main Street in Metuchen. We know from other sources that it was built in 1873, but the Sanborn maps provide additional information about how the building was used. For example, in 1903, the building is shown as a three-story building with two commercial spaces, Metuchen Council chambers, and rooms for the local Masonic lodge.



A complete black & white copy of Sanborn map coverage for Metuchen is available for viewing in our archives and the earliest years can be viewed in color online through links on our website under "Maps" on our "Archives" page. Future resources we plan to cover in upcoming issues of *Nannygoats* include directories, oral histories, historic photographs, deeds, other historic maps, census records, genealogical records, and more.

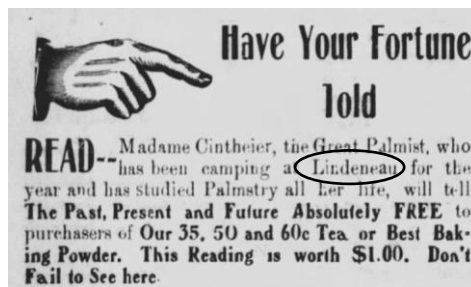
## WHY “LINDENEAU” History Mystery Remains *Unsolved*

A question the Society often receives is “where did the name Lindeneau come from and what are its boundaries?” The Society is not yet sure how the name “Lindeneau” (sometimes spelled “Lindenau”) became associated with the neighborhood in the southern end of Edison around the school by that name, but we have been gathering clues. To add to the confusion, the area has also been referred to as “Blossom,” “Highland Park Terrace,” and “Haven Homes.”

The earliest references we have found for “Lindeneau” are from shortly after 1900; in 1904 it was referred to as the “quiet neighborhood” in which Adolphus Cornelius, heir to a Prussian estate, lived. From around 1906 onward, it was frequently referred to in advertisements for real estate and in news articles about marriages, chimney fires, and more. A 1909 development map shows “Lindeneau Terrace” owned by William A. Spencer of Perth Amboy. From around the mid-1910s onward, there are even more frequent print references to the name with regards to local sports teams, businesses, and transportation routes.

The best we can guess without definitive proof is that it was named by an early resident or builder, and may derive from ‘Lindenau,’ a town located between Berlin and Leipzig in Germany, an area known for its woods, wildlife, and 800-year-old castle. Perhaps a German or Prussian landowner or builder – possibly the Adolphus Cornelius mentioned above – was thinking of their homeland, started calling it by that name, and it stuck. There have also been stories about a Hungarian picnic grove and “gypsy” campground in the area, so perhaps the connection is there somehow.

We have found some comfort in our not knowing for sure in a 1949 news article that addressed the vagaries of neighborhood names and Lindeneau’s in particular. Maybe we will know for sure someday, but for now it remains an *unsolved* History Mystery.



## Sgt. Uhrin’s Marker Installed

On Veterans Day, November 11, 2023, the stone marker for Staff Sgt. Michael Uhrin was unveiled in a small ceremony at Hillside Cemetery in Metuchen. Sgt. Uhrin was laid to rest in May 2023 (see *Nannygoats* Volume 21, Issue 2 for more about his service), but the marker was fabricated and sent later from the Department of Veterans Affairs.



## *We Will Always Love Lucy!*

*Nannygoats* readers will remember our feature issue on the (untrue) local legend that Lucille Ball once lived in our area, and perhaps they will also remember our follow-up article with additional information from the gentleman in whose company she was seen during her visit to the area.

A recent social media post led to even more information about the Queen of Comedy; while visiting Kenny Berg in Edison Township, she stayed at his home at 6 Moraine Road. While that neighborhood may not exactly be the Hollywood Hills, it’s close – in addition to be an extremely lovely home, it is only a block away from the childhood home of Nancy Shevell, who married Sir Paul McCartney in 2011. We also learned that the Berg and Shevell families were friends!

Continued from Page 1

I found no written account of which magic routines Jack performed that particular evening, but it's fascinating to visualize young David—a future magic superstar—in the audience watching the magician instead of being the magician.

The *Central New Jersey Home News*, dated Thursday, February 24, 1966, reported the dinner a few days later, mentioning not only the Greenhouse boys but also David.

It's not clear what effect the Greenhouses' performance had on David or if he was friends with them, but it wouldn't be too long before he, himself, would entertain publicly as a magician. According to John MacIver, a Clementon, New Jersey, resident who grew up in Metuchen the same time David did, Hy's friend, Mr. Webb, drove David to his first show at the Kiwanis club when David was around 11 or 12.

Although John doesn't remember more precisely when that show occurred, on February 22, 1969, 12-year-old David performed as

"Davino the boy magician" at Watchung Hills Regional High School for a program called "Magic and Movies," sponsored by the American Field Service (AFS).

While David must have done several more gigs throughout 1969 and 1970, the next record of Davino performing appears in the same newspaper almost two years later, announcing a show he would give on

## Cub Scouts

PACK 70

METUCHEN — The annual blue and gold dinner of Cub Scout Pack 70 was held Monday at the Presbyterian Social Center. Entertainment was provided by "The Great Jaquini" and "Ken and Clark", a ventriloquist act. Jack Greenhouse was the magician and his twin brother Ken, the ventriloquist. The 13-year-olds are the sons of Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Greenhouse of Perth Amboy and have been performing since they were nine.

Peter Seyffart, cubmaster, presented awards to Frank Curran, John Gazda, David Kotkin, Douglas Robinson, Bradford Deter, Jeffrey Kays, Douglas Sutton and Richard Seyffart. In addition the webelos arrow of light award was given to Jerry Natowitz and Robert Schultz who were then welcomed into Boy Scout Troop 70 by David Hamilton, scoutmaster.

Mr. and Mrs. William Cummings and Hamilton were guests. The invocation was given by Dr. A. H. Behrenberg, pastor of First Presbyterian Church. Mrs. Charles Augustine was in charge of dinner arrangements.

December 5, 1970, at Metuchen's Franklin School, now the site of a residential development:

Seven months after his show at the Franklin School, "the Great Davino," now 14 years old, performed at Port Reading School #9 in nearby Woodbridge Township, as recorded in the *Courier-News* on July 19, 1971.

Four months later, on November 21, 1971, "Davino and his Magic Doves" performed pro bono at the Rutgers College Student Center for a charity hosted by a local Kiwanis club. The *Sunday Home News* announced it two weeks earlier:

I assume the paper copped the phrase from the business card David used around that time: "The entertaining magic of Davino and his Magic Doves." On the next page is an image of the card, courtesy of MacIver.

The following year, David, a 15-year-old junior member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians (IBM), attended Ring 200 meetings between at least January

and June at a church located at 1212 Livingston Ave. in North Brunswick, New Jersey. (For the uninitiated, a "ring," derived from the classic magic trick, the linking rings, is the IBM's term for a local branch or chapter of its

### AFS Will Sponsor Childrens' Movies

WARREN — A program of "Magic and Movies," featuring Davino the boy magician, will be held for area children Saturday at 10 a.m. at Watchung Hills Regional High School by the American Field Service.

Applying its theme of peace through understanding, the service will show two French films, "Martin and Gaston," and "Bird Island." Other films to be shown are: "Dragon's Tears," "Taro," "Dick Waittington and His Cat," "Country Mouse, City Mouse," and "Sorcerer's Apprentice."

### Magician to perform

METUCHEN — "Davino, Boy Magician," Dave Kotkin, will give a magic show Saturday from 2-3 p.m. in Franklin School sponsored by TAP, teen action program of the March of Dimes. Tickets are available in advance from March of Dimes headquarters or at the door.

### Library presenting children's show

WOODBRIIDGE—"Variety '71," will be presented by the Free Public Library July 28 at 7:30 p.m. at School 9, Port Reading.

The program for school-age children will feature a Punch and Judy Show, folk songs and a magic act by the Great Davino, boy magician. Free tickets may be picked up in advance at the Barron, Sewaren and Port Reading libraries.



organization.)

Between April and September, David's name appeared in Ring 200's ring reports, published in The Linking Ring, the IBM's membership journal. His ring performances included such feats as "a flashy 'rope to cane' effect," a murder-mystery routine by Tony Spina called "Room for Doubt," a comedy routine called "W.C. Fields Does A Card Trick," the "Gypsy Thread," and Karrell Fox's "The Magician's Helping Hand." David's performances at the ring prompted Jim Angelo, Ring 200 secretary at the time, to write, "Very ingenious, these young [magicians]!" and "A very funny idea, presented well," referring to the Fox effect.

So it's easy to see that even from his earliest days as a teenage magician, David preferred doing magic routines with stories—a performance style he honed to perfection and ultimately parlayed into artistic and financial success. However, for the time being, he would continue as Davino, but not for very long. The final published announcement I could find of him performing under that name appears in *The Courier News* of December 10, 1973, a few weeks before his library "Christmas magic show" on December 28.

Only a few months after that holiday show, in the spring of 1974, 17-year-old David placed an ad in *Variety* as "Magician-Actor David Copperfield," probably one of the first printed uses of his new stage name, borrowed from the Charles Dickens character. That ad would lead to his first big break.

A producer in Chicago needed a young magician to play the lead role in a new musical called "The Magic Man." He saw the ad and auditioned David. Before graduating from high school in

A20 THE SUNDAY HOME NEWS  
NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J., SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1971

## UNICEF to Benefit

# Circle K Smiles Are for Charity

NEW BRUNSWICK—The Circle K Club of Rutgers College hopes to spread at least 500 fresh smiles around the city this week.

The 21-member service organization, the college counterpart of Kiwanis of New Brunswick, will be selling smile buttons as part of its celebration of National Circle K Week.

The club already has sold 200 buttons, and hopes to sell the remaining 300 this week. With another 700 buttons on order, the club looks toward a sizeable donation to UNICEF. Button sales are made on a donation basis.

Mel Kramer, a Rutgers junior who is this year's Circle K president, said the group also plans to begin its newest project—helping Muscular Dystrophy sufferers—this week.

Hospital, Edison, and the college students hope to "adopt" him soon.

On Nov. 21, Circle K will host a magic show for dystrophic children of Central Jersey in the Rutgers Student Center on College Avenue. David Kaskin, a Metuchen High School student whose magic act is entitled "Davino and his Magic Doves," has offered to perform without charge.

Circle K's "Smile Buttons" project will provide the children and their parents with free lunches.

Circle K, organized at Rutgers in 1962, is a nationwide organization with some 100,000 groups in the United States and Canada.

In its nine years here, the service group has assisted many efforts.

Kramer, of 330B Crowell Road, Highland Park, said most recently the group

"We felt the boys needed a positive male image," Kramer said. Since the baseball trip, Circle K has taken the youngsters swimming in the YM-YWHA pool in Highland Park, and to the Rutgers-Lehigh football game on Oct. 9. Rutgers assisted in that project by providing tickets and a bus, while Carrol's joined in by donating 100 free lunches.

Last weekend, five Circle K members joined the "Run! To Help Retarded Children," a marathon sponsored by Douglass College sophomores and Rutgers juniors. More than \$4,000 was raised for the N.J. Association for Retarded Children.

Circle K entrants ran 65 miles, Kramer said, contributing \$356 in pledges.

A new element in Rutgers' Circle K is the addition of seven female members, students from Douglass and Livingston. At the first international convention, Circle K



The entertaining magic of

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**Davino**  
and his  
**Magic Doves**

June, David negotiated the part. Later that year, after teaching "The Art of Magic," a class for the Watchung Hills Adult School enrichment program, he moved to Chicago to begin rehearsals.

The musical, in which David sang and danced as he performed a variety of original illusions, opened on December 12 at the First Chicago Center. During this time, the show was well-received, and David even attracted the attention of producer Norman Lear, who expressed interest in having David play the part of a magician in a sitcom, which apparently never materialized. "The Magic Man" ran for eight months, and David returned to New York, where he "starved for a few years," as he put it in one interview.

That was probably a slight exaggeration because less than a year after "The Magic Man" closed, he starred in his first prime-time television special, *The Magic of ABC*, appearing with celebrities as they promoted the ABC lineup for 1977. The rest of David's career is, as the idiom goes, history. For those too young to know that history, David went on to make a total of 18 annual prime-time television specials from 1977 to 1995, star in his own nightly show at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, assemble one of the largest magic collections in the world, purchase 11 resort islands in the Bahamas, earn 38 Emmy nominations with 21 wins, and become one of the highest-earning celebrities in the world.

Whether or not David's first exposure to magic was Jack Greenhouse's performance at the Cub Scout dinner on that cold February night so many years ago, one thing is clear: He spent unfathomable amounts of time during his early years honing his unique style and working harder and smarter



**SOUTH PLAINFIELD — Entertainment for children highlights Christmas holiday week activities at the South Plainfield Free Public Library.**

**"Santa Claus Conquers the Martians," an 80-minute film, will be shown Dec. 26 at 2:30 p.m.**

**On Dec. 27 at 10:30 a.m., children 3-8 may attend a presentation by Stephen Knight and his "Nifty Puppeteers."**

**Children of all ages are invited to a Christmas magic show by Davino on Dec. 28 at 11 a.m.**

**The library will be decorated for the Christmas holidays on Dec. 18 by the Cherry Dell Garden Club.**

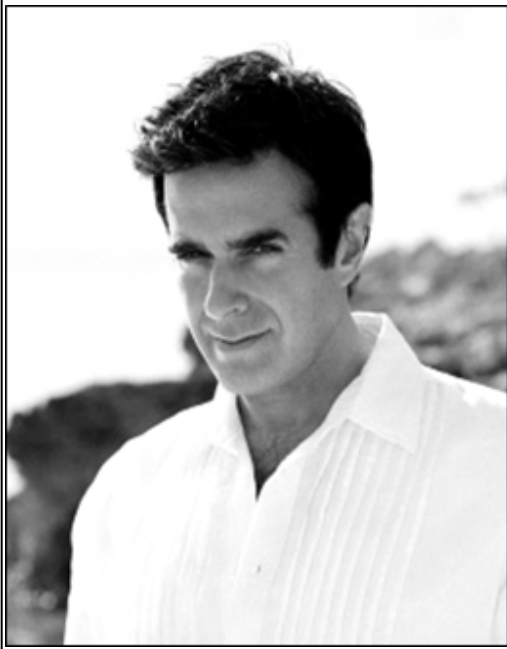


**DAVID COPPERFIELD, illusionist, Sleight-of-Hand artist, and Magic Consultant, who will conduct a Magic Course at the Watchung Hills Enrichment Program.**

than most magicians of his day. While he's done everything from performing film-inspired vignettes to making the Statue of Liberty disappear, David's greatest feat of magic was transforming himself from a shy, lanky, adolescent ventriloquist into arguably the world's finest modern

illusionist.

David Copperfield retweeted this article, thanking me and referring to it as "Amazing detective work." He also offered his own memories, clarifications, and corrections in the Twitter thread. See below for Mr. Copperfield's commentary.



**Thanks to Interval Magic for amazing detective work... It means a lot. My first introduction to learn the art (besides the book in the Metuchen Library) was from Danny Tsukala who sold magic at Macy's. We were looking there for a better vent[riloquist] figure, Tannens came soon after.**

**At Tannen's I was befriended by Ed Mishell. [He] reviewed magic for Genii magazine, illustrated Tannen's catalogs, and drew the blue Davino card (my second card). I drew my first one. Ed would sneak me into adult SAM meetings. I was not of age.**

**Inventing magic seemed to be natural for me. In a few years, Harry Lorayne put one of my creations in the legendary "Tarbell Course in Magic." Tarbell 7, Page 53 (I think). I was 12 years old. I don't recall teaching in Warren. I do remember teaching at NYU at 16.**

**In the beginning, the Greenhouse Twins truly had an impact. It was my first experience with childhood envy. They were hired to perform at my temple **INSTEAD OF ME!** My temple!!! They were very good. I guess I needed to improve. I hope to meet them again someday.**

*-David Copperfield, via Twitter to Tom Interval, 2019*

### **Images**

**Page 1:** David Kotkin, aspiring ventriloquist, circa 1966. Jack and Ken Greenhouse via *The Sunday Home News*, May 8, 1966.

**Page 8:** *The Central New Jersey Home News*, February 24, 1966. *The Courier News*, February 17, 1969. *The Courier-News*, December 5, 1970. *The Courier-News*, July 19, 1971.

**Page 9:** *The Sunday Home News*, November 7, 1971. "Davino" business card, ca. 1971. Davino, boy magician, ca. 1972.

**Page 10:** *The Courier News*, December 10, 1973. *Echoes Sentinel*, September 5, 1974. David Copperfield, via ABC Television.

**Page 11:** David Copperfield (Photo: Homer Liwag). Tom Interval, via [www.intervalmagic.com](http://www.intervalmagic.com).

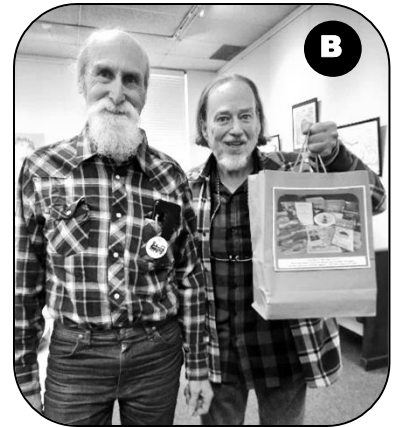
San Diego Magician Tom Interval, owner of Interval Magic, provides magic entertainment and training to private and corporate clients locally and nationally.

A member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians (IBM), Society of American Magicians (SAM), and the Academy of Magical Arts (AMA), Interval has captivated tens of thousands of people at numerous venues, including Busch Gardens theme park in Williamsburg, Virginia. With a BA in professional writing and minors in communications and business administration, Interval writes magic-related e-books, magazine articles, and blogs and produces tutorials and related videos. For more information, visit [www.intervalmagic.com](http://www.intervalmagic.com).



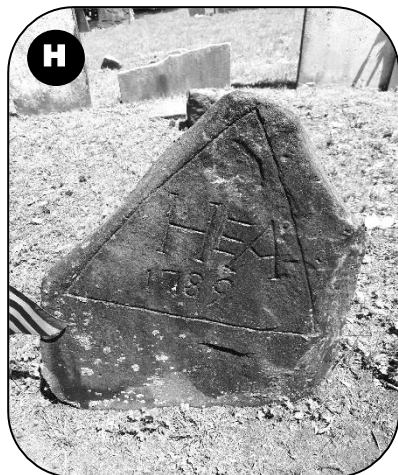


# 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year for the Metuchen-



**A:** Ralph Heiss presented a program on the Lehigh Valley Railroad at the Annual Meeting and Elections in January. **B & C:** Director Gerry Rice presents a Door Prize to Member Keith Coffin and visitors take in the displays and merchandise at February's Local History Day. **D, E, & F:** The Commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Nixon Nitration Works Disaster hosted at Cypress Brewing was held in March with displays, merchandise, and a specially brewed beer for the event. **G:** We hosted a table at Tri-County History Day in early May at the Plainfield Library.

# Edison Historical Society Filled with Events



**H:** Several grave markers were cleaned at the Metuchen Colonial Cemetery Cleanup on May 11. **I & J:** The Society received a Proclamation in honor of our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary from Metuchen Borough Council on May 13, where Mayor Busch used the first Mayor's gavel and showed off the top hat worn at the first Borough Council meeting in 1900. **K:** We staffed a table at Middlesex County History Day on May 18 at East Jersey Old Town. **L:** Society members marched in the Edison Township Memorial Day Parade on May 25.



Metuchen-Edison Historical Society

And we're not even halfway through 2024! As it's our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year, we're not stopping the celebrations now... we've got a full roster planned for the rest of the year, too. See the next page for a list of what is still to come!





## UPCOMING EVENTS

### 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year



#### PISCATAWAYTOWN HISTORY DAY

**Saturday, June 23 from 11:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

Edison First Aid Squad #1 and St. James Church & Burying Ground, Edison  
Walking tours of the neighborhood and cemetery, door prizes, displays,  
merchandise, and 1942 Memorial Day Parade Slide Show

#### BATTLE OF THE SHORT HILLS COMMEMORATION

**Wednesday, June 26 at 2:00 p.m.**

Join us at Oak Tree Pond in Edison to commemorate the 1777 Battle

#### HISTORIC CEMETERIES PROGRAM

**Sunday, June 30 at 3:00 p.m.**

Presented by Dr. Richard Veit, co-hosted at the Metuchen Elks Lodge #1914

#### FIELD TRIP TO THE DANISH HOME/DANE IN EDISON

**Sunday, August 11 at 2:00 p.m.**

Join the Society for a Tour of the Museum and Grounds

#### METUCHEN STREET FAIR

**Sunday, August 18 from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

Stop by the Society's booth for information and merchandise

#### TOUR OF METUCHEN'S FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CEMETERY

**Sunday, September 22**

Join for a guided tour of the cemetery, highlighting historic burials

#### AYERS-ALLEN HOUSE HALLOWE'EN OPEN HOUSE

**Sunday, October 27 at 2:00 p.m.**

Members-Only Tour of the historic "haunted" house from ca. 1740

#### METUCHEN COLONIAL CEMETERY FALL CLEANUP

**Sunday, November 10 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

Stone cleaning tutorials! Scouts/Service Hours Welcome!

#### 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY GALA CELEBRATION – DECEMBER 15

Join Members & Guests as we celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year

#### THE BOROUGH IMPROVEMENT LEAGUE OF METUCHEN



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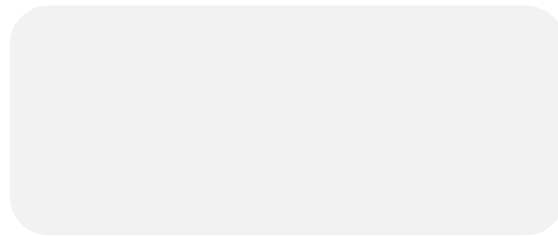
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**Metuchen-Edison Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 61**  
**Metuchen, NJ 08840**



### **Join Us!**

If you haven't already, please consider joining the Society as a dues-paying Member... this income provides the primary support for everything we do and allows us to "Save the Past for the Future." Visit our website or scan the code below.



### **Facebook Group**

Our active, informative, and carefully moderated Facebook group is loaded with images and historical miscellany. Search us on Facebook or scan below.



### **View Our YouTube Channel!**

Check out our growing video collection on our dedicated YouTube channel. Search for us or our username @metuchen-edisonhistoricals1744.

## ***Upcoming Events***

Our full roster of events for 2024 continues with the following events. For more details, see Page 14 of this newsletter or visit our Facebook Group and/or Website.

**Piscatawaytown History Day – June 23**

**Battle of the Short Hills Commemoration – June 26**

**Historic Cemeteries Program – June 30**

**Field Trip to the Danish Home/DANE – August 11**

**Metuchen Street Fair– August 18**

**Presbyterian Cemetery Tour – September 22**

**Ayers-Allen House Open House – October 27**

**Colonial Cemetery Fall Cleanup – November 10**

**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Celebration – December 15**

***[www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org](http://www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org)***

Missed an issue of our newsletter? All back issues of *Nannygoats* are available on our website at [www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org](http://www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org)