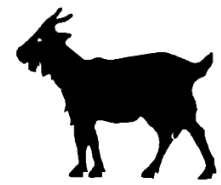




Nannygoats



Vol. 21, Issue 3

Newsletter of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society

Summer/Fall 2023

This past July, Society Director Walter R. Stochel, Jr. presented a program on the history of the Clara Barton neighborhood of Edison Township (bounded by Metuchen to the west, Route 1 to the north, the Fords section of Woodbridge Township to the east, and Route 287 to the south). Held at the Clara Barton Branch Library, the large crowd enjoyed viewing historic photographs, old newspaper advertisements, and historic maps. Although not a complete history of the area, Stochel covered topics from the colonial era through the early 1960s, and attendees shared their stories and knowledge as well. Here is a condensed version of some of the information covered in his wonderful presentation, along with information included in the Society's "Guide to Edison" which covers all of Edison Township's many neighborhoods. This extremely informative book and the equally interesting "Images of America: Edison" are available for sale on our website at www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org.

In 1669, Thomas Bloomfield received a patent for 290 acres of wooded land, all of which is now part of what is considered the Clara Barton neighborhood of Edison Township. Over the next several decades, this land was cleared for farming and initially the area was known as Fords Corner, after the Ford family who also settled there.

The earliest roads through the area were winding and irregular, reflecting the early land use as they were laid around geological features, streams, and early farms. Some examples of these are the Old Post Road (the main colonial road through New Jersey) also known as King George Post Road and Woodbridge Avenue leading out of Metuchen village and following what is now Lafayette Avenue towards Woodbridge.

By the time of the American Revolution, more roads such as those along the Grandview Avenue corridor, had been established. In December 1776, the British Army began their occupation of this area. There was a tavern at Fords Corner and Bonhamtown was a major campsite for the British. The proximity of this area to the British stronghold of Staten Island and the major port in Perth Amboy contributed to British interest in this

region during the time. From December 1776 to June 1777, this area was in turmoil as the British conducted a foraging war, seizing supplies from the local farms. On June 25, 1777, the British army marched through this area to Staten Island, and the next day, during the morning of June 26, they came back to New Jersey and marched through Clara Barton to the Battle of the Short Hills in what is now north Edison.

One of the area's Revolutionary War patriots was Timothy Bloomfield. His tavern, Burnt Tavern, is where the Jersey Blues met and was likely at Fords Corner.

In the early 1800s, the Amboy and Bound Brook Turnpike was laid through the area. A planned road, it was very straight and ran from Perth Amboy to New Durham. Also during this time, the Post Road was

straightened and became what is now known as Woodbridge Avenue. As farming was still the biggest industry in the area, it was primarily farm goods moved by horse and wagon over these roads.

In 1810, the Bloomfield family, descendants of 1669 patentee Thomas and

Revolutionary war Patriot Timothy, began building what eventually became known as Bloomfield Manor,



History of Clara Barton



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.

Ethan Hom's Eagle Scout Project

Metuchen's Colonial Cemetery has once again been the lucky beneficiary of an Eagle Scout service project. Metuchen resident and Eagle Scout candidate Ethan Hom planned and executed improvements to the northern end of the cemetery lot, including a thorough cleaning of the fencing, construction of a new bench, and repairs and upgrades to the cenotaph (memorial marker) honoring the Revolutionary War soldiers buried in there.

Ethan's project required organizing the work of many scouts, several of whom focused on thoroughly scouring the white metal fence that runs along the north end of the cemetery and separates it from the commuter pathway to the NJ TRANSIT platform. A new bench for visitors was created from existing parts as well. The major aspect of the project was improved landscaping around the cenotaph, which was cleaned, and flagpole. The work project has really improved the appearance of this portion of the cemetery. Another Eagle project with another candidate, involving repair of the stairs from Main Street, is coming this Fall.

Images from top to bottom: Revolutionary War cenotaph and flagpole, scouring scouts hard at work, and Society Director Tyreen Reuter with Eagle Scout Candidate Ethan Hom.



Nannygoats

Published by

The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society
P.O. Box 61, Metuchen, NJ 08840
Tyreen Reuter, *Nannygoats* Editor
metuchenedisonhistory@gmail.com
info@metuchen-edisonhistsoc.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, 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.

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 with any questions.

- 1947 Metuchen High School Class Ring of Walter Tkachuk (donated by Linda Stevens Ginn, Patricia Stevens Kane, & Deborah Stevens Burke)
- Handout for the Clara Barton School's Washington DC Trip via the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1965 (donated by Barbara Surina)
- Photograph of 115 Rutgers Street from 1942 (donated by Hugh C. Young)
- Photograph of Santa Billy (aka William Van Doren) at 1980 Christmas Parade along Main Street in Metuchen (donated by William Van Doren)
- Reprint of the Boyhood Days in Old Metuchen (2nd ed.) by Dr. Trumbull Marshall, 1977 (donated by Jane Lubben)
- 3 photographs of the Iron Horse Ramble steam locomotive for the Reading Railroad Ramble (fan trip) at Talmadge Road in Edison, June 23, 1962; Postcard of "View of Hillside Avenue, Metuchen," ca. 1900 (donated by Byron Sondergard)
- Slides of locomotives & trains (No. 607 & 561) passing through Metuchen in 1964, and a copy of The Reading Company's Port Reading Branch by David G. Hutchinson, printed in May 2023; Oval "END OF BLOCK" wood sign for the Reading Railroad that was formerly located at the Port Reading SN Tower at the beginning/end of Camp Kilmer from 1942; 101 photographs of the 1991 Metuchen Memorial Day Parade honoring Lt. Robert Wetzel and troop returning from Gulf War; 10 photographs of the construction of the new Borough Hall from May 2023; panoramic photograph of the 1961 St. Francis Cathedral School 8th Grade Class; "POLICE DEPT." license plate of former policeman George Hutchinson; Copy of the Flags, Diamonds & Statues Magazine titled "The Perth Amboy Branch, Pt. 1 / Thurston St. Tower" published by the Anthracite Railroads Historical Society, Inc., 2023; General Track Diagram for Edison - Stelton - Park & New Brunswick showing the Kilmer Interlocking near the Stelton Passenger Station, 1951; Track Sketch of the Lehigh Valley Railroad & Port Reading Railroad through Metuchen, 1963; 3 photographs of the Durham, NJ Reading Branch to Camp Kilmer and the Kilmer Tower (donated by David Hutchinson)

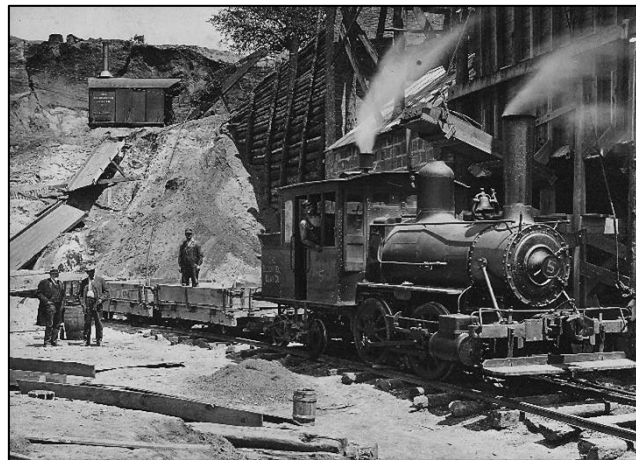


Continued from Page 1

a grand mansion at the northeast corner of Amboy and Woodbridge Avenues. The Bloomfield family's long history in the state isn't limited to just this area; Gen. Joseph Bloomfield was twice Governor of New Jersey, and the town of Bloomfield in Essex County carries their family name.

In 1870, Raritan Township was created from portions of Woodbridge Township and included the village of Metuchen as well as all of what is now Edison Township. Railroads began crossing this area when the Easton & Amboy came through in 1872. While passenger service had begun much earlier in the nearby village of Metuchen, the later line through what is now Clara Barton was widely used to transport coal from the docks along the Arthur Kill.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Fords Corner was still primarily farmland, but clay mines, brickworks, and ceramics manufacturing were being developed as well. The area between the Raritan River, Woodbridge Avenue, and Amboy Avenue was largely a salt marsh that covered an extensive deposit of clay. Gravel and sand deposits were also mined here, giving rise to the Sand Hills place name. Immigrants from Ireland, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia were attracted to work in the clay pits where they were paid about 10 cents an hour. Charles Bloomfield's Bloomfield Clay Company (located on the Raritan Ridge, later part of the Raritan Arsenal) bought several railroad trucks, coaches, and cars from Thomas Edison for use in his clay pits. At least five other companies mined and shipped fire clay and sand including two firms owned by the Valentine family, giving



rise to that place name as well. The first trolley line in the area, laid in 1900, provided service between Perth Amboy and Metuchen, making it easy for residents to travel to industries in Perth Amboy and the Pennsylvania Railroad station in Metuchen. By the 1920s, trains and trolleys were common with several serving Raritan Township. The New Jersey Short Line Railroad (the "Fast Line") between Newark and Trenton ran along the west side of what is now Clara Barton. This line bed was later used for the construction of Route 1.



Waltuma Park, Grand View, Pleasant View, and Pfeiffer Terrace between Lafayette Avenue and Seventh Street were other such developments. The trolley line was a major marketing point, and buyers could purchase a lot and build their own house or buy a pre-built home.

The Jackson Terrace development was plotted in 1910 around Jackson Avenue and the Lehigh Valley Railroad line (now the Middlesex Greenway) but became known as the Phoenix section after Phoenix Ceramics Company, makers of porcelain sinks, tubs, and toilets, was built there in 1911. Much of the Phoenix neighborhood was later demolished by large construction projects

THIRD AVENUE EXTENDED CORNER, RARITAN, MAY 8, 1914

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Every lot in RARITAN MANOR is restricted, thus making it the ideal residence section adjacent to Perth Amboy, with all the modern conveniences such as trolley service, gas, electricity, water and telephone immediately available. There are many living in the crowded city who have been waiting for just such an opportunity to get back to nature...NOW IS THE TIME.

The character of RARITAN MANOR is already established, as evidenced by the magnificent homes already built there and the others in contemplation.

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Afternoon

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Agents on Property
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such as the Raritan Arsenal, NJ Turnpike, and Route 287.

Developers advertised the area as heavily deed restricted with low taxes and having water, telephone, electricity, and trolley service. However, there was no school and little in the way of emergency services.

In 1920, when a school was finally being constructed, it was major news that the historic Bordentown schoolhouse that had been established in the 1850s by

Clara Barton (educator, nurse, founder of the Red Cross) had recently been saved by a statewide effort of children donating pennies. Newspapers reported widely

about this successful preservation effort, leading to a letter from the State Board of Education being sent to all local Boards asking, "What school in New Jersey would be the first to be named Clara Barton?" Discussion ensued at the Raritan Township Board meeting, and they voted to do so, making the Clara Barton School in Raritan Township the first public school in the country to bear the name.

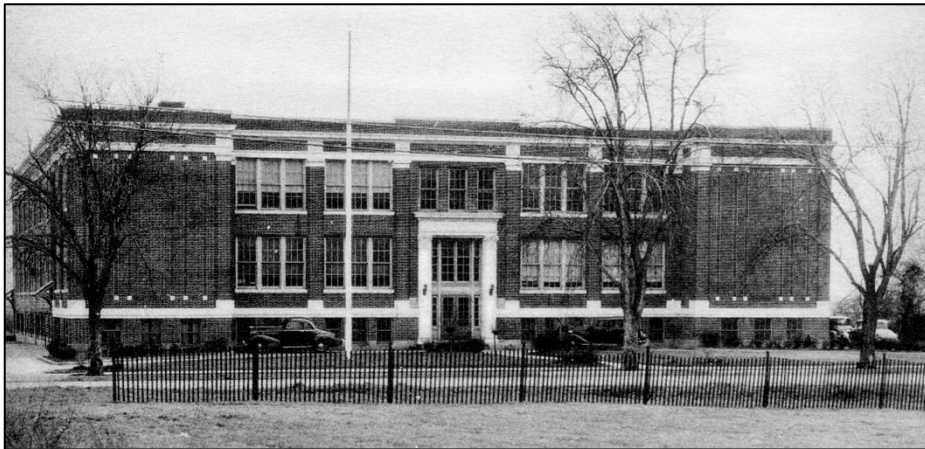
Over time, the neighborhood became known as Clara Barton after the school, and the old name, Fords Corner, became exclusively associated with the current Fords in neighboring Woodbridge Township. The Clara Barton school building school was retired from service in 1984 and has since become a senior living facility, The Heritage at Clara Barton.

During the early part of the twentieth century,

residential development continued, and by 1931 the eastern street grid of Clara Barton was fully laid out. It was an ideal location for housing workers at Raritan Arsenal and for workers at industries important to the war effort during World War II as well. The Runyon Park development was specifically marketed for war workers, but had deed restrictions limiting sales to Caucasians.

Demand for residential housing continued to build and by the mid 1950s Clara Barton was essentially

filled in, and another school was constructed. Portions of Clara Barton were demolished to make way for construction of the NJ Turnpike, then even more when Route 287 was constructed as well. Hemmed in as it is by these



roadways and Route 1, Clara Barton's basic footprint has had little change, but in 2002, Edison township launched a program to create a "downtown" feel along Amboy Avenue with vintage looking streetlamps, signs, benches, and planters. The zoning ordinance was modified to promote a neighborhood atmosphere and curbs were bumped out to encourage those driving through to stop for pedestrians.

Images

Page 1, 1932 views of Timothy Bloomfield's Burnt Tavern and Bloomfield Manor at Woodbridge and Amboy Avenues. **Page 4**, the Bloomfield Clay Company Pits (date unknown), a 1933 view of the Pfiffer House on Amboy Avenue near Waltuma Avenue, and a 1914 real estate advertisement. **Page 5**, The Clara Barton School, ca. 1940.

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SOCIETY MEMBERS TOUR ROSE HILL

On May 19th, Society members were invited to a special open house reception and tour of 96 Rose Street, the former home of longtime Society Member Ann Watts who passed away last year. Ann's children worked with Society Member and Metuchen Realtor Angela Sielski to host this special event for members of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society, Garden Club of Metuchen, and Borough Improvement League. It was a lovely evening for this elegant event and everyone, many of whom remembered the Watts family well, enjoyed touring the historic home and lovely gardens.

Moses Bloodgood Martin purchased the land on which the home stands in 1821, and it was likely then that a residence consisting of the original portions of this home was built.

In the 1860s, the house and its extensive property became home to the Pattison family (sometimes misspelled as "Patterson"). Thomas (1834-1892) was a Civil War Veteran from New York and later a stockbroker. He and his wife Mary Ames Hitchcock (1839-1919) had two sons, Charles Edward (1864-1928) and Frank Ambler (1867-1946). Both sons studied Engineering at Rutgers and then began working for the Edison Electric Luminating Company.

The brothers formed the Pattison Brothers Company in 1891, a successful and prolific engineering firm responsible for electrical and heating systems in many notable buildings throughout New York City, including the New York Public Library. Frank, prior to entering Rutgers, had also worked at Thomas Edison's Menlo Park laboratory.

In 1893, Frank married Mary Stranahan Hart (1869-1951). Her family had moved to Metuchen when she was still young, and although they kept a home in New York City, they first "summered" and then spent nearly all their time in the "Pattison Homestead atop Rose Hill" with his widowed mother; census records show them living in the house on Rose Street along with three domestic servants. Mary, sometimes called Molly, later recounted the sheer volume of domestic work required to operate a family household, and how it prevented her and other women from being more productive in more important pursuits. This experience perhaps inspired her to pursue one of the most notable aspects of her public life, one which led her to being



described as "one of the most remarkable women of the twentieth century."

As noted in many biographical sketches, Mary was a "Domestic Engineer," singer, noted leader of the Progressive Party, and agitator for social justice. She served as President of the New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs, working to address poverty, poor working conditions, prison reform, abolition of child labor, and voting rights for women. She also served as district chairwoman of the Women's Peace Party, Secretary of the New Jersey Branch of the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage (a radical wing of the national suffrage movement) and as Vice-chair of the New Jersey Woman's Party (NJWP).

On the eve of President Wilson's second inauguration, Pattison was among a dozen other NJWP members who picketed the White House, later to be joined by nearly one thousand women from around the country. Locally, Pattison was instrumental in the founding of the Borough Improvement League and the "rescue" of the Old Franklin Schoolhouse, as well as the establishment of the Metuchen Public Library and High School.

Frank, Molly, and their children moved to Colonia in 1908 and used the new home they built there as a "Housekeeping Experiment Station" where she tested concepts of scientific housekeeping with modern machinery. In 1914, she authored *The Principles of Domestic Engineering* outlining many of these techniques. The house at Rose Hill was sold in 1916, and more details about the history of the house and the succeeding families (all of whom are very interesting as well; Gallaghers, Tiptons, Metzgers, Kinyons, Moores, Isons, and then Watts) are available on the Society's website.



Historic Home Seeks New Owner

A wonderful historic home has come up for sale in Metuchen. Located at 82 Spring Street on the corner with Lake Avenue, it was built in 1931 for Dr. Carlyle Morris (1896-1958) and appears to be designed by renowned architect Clement Fairweather! Born in Rocky Point, North Carolina, he served in WWI as an ambulance driver shortly after graduating from Harvard Medical School. He came to Metuchen, built this house and office, and practiced as an

internist before serving again, this time as a Major and medical doctor in the Pacific during WWII. Back in Metuchen after the war, he was married in 1950 to Virginia Granholm of Spring Street. Interested in being its new owner? Contact listing agent Alessandra Herzog-Cherry at (732) 735-7905.

Many Thanks to our Newsletter Supporters



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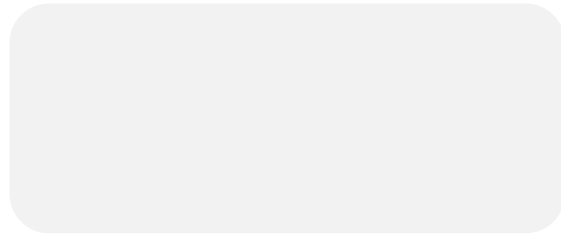
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Missed an issue of our newsletter? All back issues of *Nannygoats* are available for download from our website at www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org

Save The Date!

Danish Fall Festival

Join the Historical Society as we host a booth at the DANE (Danish Archives North East) Fall Festival, starting at 12pm.



Saturday, October 21, 2023
855 New Durham Rd, Edison

Metuchen Colonial Cemetery Cleanup

The Fall cleanup for the Metuchen Colonial Cemetery is scheduled from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Bring your own rake! Service Hours Welcome!

Saturday, November 11, 2023
Metuchen Colonial Cemetery

Why “Nannygoats”?

The name of our newsletter, “Nannygoats,” is taken from the alliterative nickname of a collection of *anecdotes* (articles, reminiscences, and letters) compiled by J. Lloyd Grimstead. During the 1930s, he took the nearly 3000 photographs of the Metuchen-Edison area that make up the bulk of the Society’s photographic collection. For preserving so much of our local history, we have dedicated this publication in his honor.

Become a Member!

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.



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