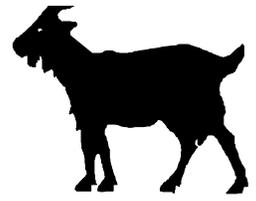


Nannygoats



Vol. 6, Issue 2

Newsletter of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society

Summer 2008

The following story was submitted by Michael Ratcliffe, a staff writer covering crime and emergency services for *The Times* newspaper of Trenton. Although Mr. Ratcliffe currently lives in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, his father, James "Mike" Ratcliffe, spent 40 years as a firefighter in Metuchen and served as fire chief in the early 1990s before passing away in 2005 due to a stroke he suffered while driving a fire engine. Mr. Ratcliffe became interested in the story of the line-of-duty death of Metuchen volunteer firefighter Edward Busch in 1908 through his father, and has begun researching the history of firefighting in Metuchen, both to learn more about what his father did over the years and also to help the members of the Metuchen Fire Department preserve their own history.

Metuchen Firefighters Mark 100th Anniversary of Tragedy

by Michael Ratcliffe

The 100th anniversary of one of the most tragic, albeit nearly-forgotten events in the history of Metuchen, was observed by borough firefighters with a memorial service on Thursday morning, April 17, 2008.

During the solemn ceremony at the Metuchen Exempt Firemen's Memorial, located next to Borough Hall and directly across from the borough firehouse, members of the Metuchen Volunteer Fire Department paid tribute to a comrade who died in the line of duty a century ago.

The fallen firefighter, Edward Busch of the Eagle Hook & Ladder Co., was crushed to death while responding to a blaze on April 17, 1908.

"The traditions of the fire service are a vital part of what we do, and remembering those who did the job before us is one of the most important of those traditions," said Metuchen Deputy Fire Chief Robert Donnan. "To think that 100 years ago, Edward Busch was doing the job we do today is just humbling."



It was about 12:30 p.m. on Good Friday, April 17, 1908, when, according to newspaper accounts of the time, an alarm was turned in for a small fire burning along the Lehigh Valley Railroad line.

Left: The Eagle Hook & Ladder Fire Company, ca. 1900. Leb. Morris is the team's driver, the other firefighters are not named.

Above: Firefighter Ken O'Brien plays the bagpipes while Firefighter John Geib stands at attention during the service marking the 100th anniversary of the death of Edward Busch. Photograph courtesy of Michael Ratcliffe.



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.

The Society regretfully announces that two of its members have recently passed away.

Ellen M. (Wright) Miller, 80, a long-time Edison resident and past Board Member of the Society, died Wednesday, March 26, 2008, at JFK Medical Center in Edison. Mrs. Miller was an avid genealogist, tracing her family history back to 13th century England, and a past chapter officer of the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Mrs. Miller was a frequent volunteer in the Grimstead Room archives and will be deeply missed by the Society.

Charles A. Welsh, Jr., 96, died at the New Jersey Veterans' Home in Menlo Park on June 23, 2008. Mr. Welsh, a long-time resident of Metuchen and Society member, was active in the American Legion Fugle Hummer Post and at St. Francis Cathedral. He began his journalism career in 1929 and retired from the Associated Press Central Desk in New York City in 1977. During World War II, Mr. Welsh served in the U.S. Navy aboard the USS San Francisco, written remembrances of which he graciously shared with the Society.

Members Recognized for Community Efforts



The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society is proud to announce that three of its members have recently been recognized for their volunteer efforts in our community.

Walter R. Stochel, Jr., President of the Society (above left), was honored at the NJ Performing Arts Center in Newark by the *Star Ledger* and the Community Foundation of NJ with a Jefferson Award for Community Service on June 3, 2008. He was one of twenty-five New Jersey residents honored that evening, and was presented the Jefferson Award medal by Sam Beard, co-founder of the Jefferson Award, and Ed Selover of PSEG.

Robert Takash, a current Board Member and former Vice President of the Society (above right), was honored by the Edison Chamber of Commerce as the "Green Citizen of the Year". This award recognized Bob's efforts with the creation of the Middlesex Greenway, his work in the preservation of open space, and environmental protection. Bob was presented with this award at the Chamber Annual Dinner in June.

Nancy L. Zerbe, the Society's immediate Past President, was also honored by the Edison Chamber of Commerce at their Annual Dinner as the "History Citizen of the Year." Nancy was recognized for her work guiding the Edison Memorial Tower Corporation, which is charged with restoring the Edison Light Tower at Menlo Park and developing a new museum at the site.

Congratulations to these members, who have contributed so much to both our community and the Society!

New in the Collection...



Many thanks to Carl Paffendorf for his donation, via Marty Jessen, of two Pennsylvania Railroad tickets from the 1940s.

The Society also greatly appreciates Scott B. Zederbaum's donation of information about Camp Kilmer in Edison, including an electronic copy of a ca. 1945 Camp Kilmer booklet, designed for overseas returnees about to be discharged, as well as for the photographs and reminiscences of his father, Zeke Zederbaum, who served in the 100th Infantry Division and passed through Camp Kilmer in 1944. These items will be featured in a future issue of *Nannygoats*.



LOCAL HISTORY MYSTERIES!

The Society often receives local history inquiries from around the country... from genealogists, researchers, former residents, and more. This summer we have received two particularly interesting inquiries, and although we have been able to provide some more information, are asking our members and the public if they have any information for these inquiring minds...

GOT KRIM-KO?

"Mary in Kansas" at Patchword@aol.com inquired about a dairy product called "Krim Ko" bottled by Wood Brook Farms. As Society President Walter R. Stochel, Jr. points out, it is amazing how when we get questions about local history, we end up learning something new. Through Walter's efforts, and those of Society Board Member Fred Wolke's contact with Edison resident Neil Hendrickson, the following information was gathered:

Wood Brook Farms was founded in 1906 by local philanthropists to provide clean milk for the children of Plainfield, New Jersey (at a time before milk was pasteurized). Wood Brook Farms eventually grew into a larger dairy that produced "certified" milk of "excellent quality." Sometime during the 1960s it was renamed the "Middlesex Dairy" or "All Star Dairy."

"Krim Ko" was a branded chocolate-flavored milk drink marketed through Krim Ko Komics, according to mycomicshop.com. For example, comics featured in Issue # 9, dated July 20, 1935, include *Wild Bill* (an airplane adventure strip), *Jim Hawkins* (pirates) by Dick Moores, *Johnny Brains*, *Susan*, *Pinto*, *King of the Range*, *Sammy*, *Great Deeds of Great Americans* by Dick Moores, *Tot and Tom* by Nick Penn, *Mocko the Monk*, and *Lucky Lucas*. The comic books were published on behalf of the Krim-Ko Co., by the Better Cartoons Bureau located in the Wrigley Building in Chicago.



If you have any additional information about Krim-Ko, or know the exact date Wood Brook Farms stopped bottling this product, please contact "Mary in Kansas" at Patchword@aol.com and/or the Society.

Interested in getting previous issues of *Nannygoats*? All of our back issues are available online at the Society's website at www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org

PULITZER PRIZE?

The following was received from Judyann Grant at jagrant@tccenet.net:

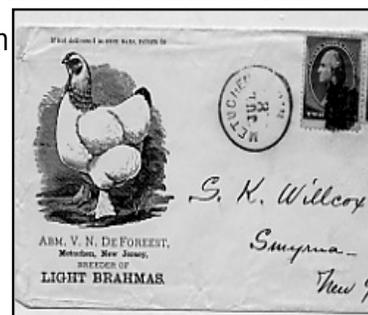
I am looking for information on Florence DeForrest, who was a nine year old girl living in Metuchen, NY in 1885. When Joseph Pulitzer, editor of *The World* newspaper, issued a call for donations to the Liberty Pedestal Fund, Florence answered by sending him her two pet bantams. Do you have any idea/information on how she would have sent her bantams to him in 1885? Any help you can provide about Florence or her family or her gift of bantams will be appreciated.

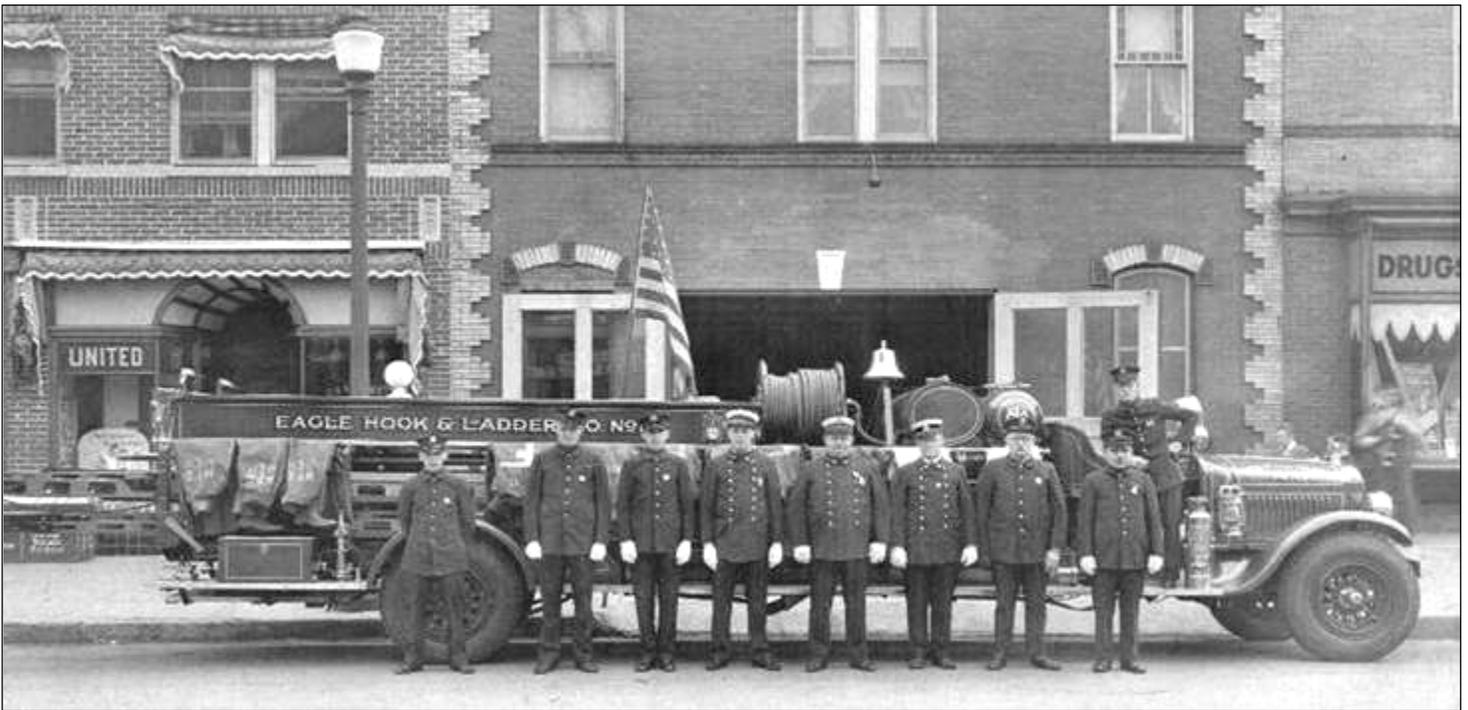
Society Board members confirmed that this inquiry would refer to the DeForeest family in Metuchen, NJ. Census records show that Florence lived with her father, Abraham, in the East New Brunswick census district (which included the Metuchen area) in 1880, and in Metuchen in 1900 and 1910. These later censuses list them as living on Woodbridge Avenue, and show that between 1900 and 1910 Florence's mother had died and she was still at home and unmarried.

Coincidentally, Abraham DeForeest was the subject of a Fall, 2005 article in *Nannygoats*, written by professional philatelist and Society Treasurer Andy Kupersmit. The article, "Ye Olde Metuchen Mail Bag," discussed an 1884 envelope in the author's collection (see image below) that shows Abraham DeForeest advertising himself as a breeder of light brahmas, another breed of chicken.

The Society's Recording Secretary, Kevin Hale, surmises that Florence would have sent her Bantams by train, since his railroad research has revealed that all manner of "goods," including livestock, could be shipped by rail in the 1880s, and that perhaps Mr. Pulitzer, being the publicity whiz that he was, may have included a story in his paper on this incident because of its inherent entertainment value.

Do you have any information about Florence and her pet bantams? If so, please contact Ms. Grant at jagrant@tccenet.net and/or the Society. It's a charming story, now all we have to do is prove it is true!





Above: The Eagle Hook & Ladder Fire Company in 1927.
 Below: Prior to placing a wreath at the memorial, Metuchen Firefighter James Finnerty stands at attention during the Thursday, April 17, 2008 service at the Metuchen Exempt Firemen's Memorial to mark the 100th anniversary of the death of Edward Busch, who died in the line of duty while responding to a blaze along the Lehigh Valley Railroad line on April 17, 1908. Photograph courtesy of Michael Ratcliffe.



Continued from Page 1:

Busch, who owned the Metuchen Inn, was among the volunteers who hurried from their jobs and homes and went to pull the Eagle's heavy hose cart to the fire.

"Busch was one of the first to catch the truck's rope, and he had scarcely run a dozen steps when he tripped and fell in front of the wheels, two of which passed over his chest and instantly killed him," *The New York Times* reported.

Busch was just 43 years old. Unmarried, he was survived by his mother and sister.

News of his death spread quickly and "a shade of gloom spread over the entire borough," the *Metuchen Recorder* reported, noting that "Mr. Busch was a quiet man, a good citizen, and will be missed by his many friends."

Exactly 100 years to the day of Busch's death, members of the Eagle Hook & Ladder Co. and Washington Hose Co. stood at attention before the borough firefighters' memorial and held a moment of silence in Busch's memory.

Donnan recited the "Fireman's Prayer," while George Wallace, a past borough fire chief and current Eagle company president, read aloud *The New York Times* account of Busch's death.

After Washington Hose firefighters James Finnerty and James Guinane placed a wreath next to the memorial, bagpiper Ken O'Brien concluded the service with "Amazing Grace."

"Edward Busch lost his life while serving the citizens of Metuchen," Wallace said. "That sacrifice cannot be forgotten."

The author, Mr. Ratcliffe, would appreciate hearing from Society members or anyone who might have any advice, information, stories, photos, etc., to share about the Metuchen Fire Department and old fires in the borough over the years. He can be contacted via email at firerat22@verizon.net.



Above: An early postcard image of the Metuchen Inn. This view was taken sometime after Edward Busch's death.

Above Right: The April 18, 1908 New York Times article about Mr. Busch's demise. Copyright The New York Times.

Right: Firefighter Ken O'Brien plays the bagpipes during the 100th Anniversary Memorial service held in honor of Edward Busch. Also pictured are Metuchen Deputy Fire Chief Robert Donnan, George Wallace, president of the Eagle Hook & Ladder Co., and Metuchen Firefighter James Guinane. Photograph courtesy of Michael Ratcliffe.



KILLED BY HIS FIRE TRUCK.

Edward Busch of Metuchen, N. J., Run Over Responding to an Alarm.

Special to The New York Times.

NEW BRUNSWICK, N. J., April 17.—Edward Busch, proprietor of Metuchen Inn at Metuchen, N. J., a famous automobile headquarters, was instantly killed this afternoon at Metuchen by the hose carriage of the Hook and Ladder Company of which he was a member.

The company was called out to extinguish a couple of railroad ties of the Lehigh Valley Railroad, an alarm for which some extremely zealous person had turned in. Mr. Busch was one of the first to catch the truck's rope, and he had scarcely run a dozen steps when he tripped and fell in front of the wheels, two of which passed over his chest, and instantly killed him.

Mr. Busch was formerly employed at Sherry's and the Waldorf-Astoria. Then he opened Metuchen Inn. He was single, and lived with his mother and sister. He was 43 years of age.

For on-line access to the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society's newsletters, membership information, program announcements, historic photographs, merchandise, and more, please visit our website at www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org.

Class of 1931 History

The following text is continued from the Class of 1931's *History of Metuchen*, which is being reprinted in *Nannygoats* serially (beginning with Volume 5, Issue 2, Summer 2007). Please note that there are known factual and grammatical errors, but the document is reproduced exactly as written.

Another of Metuchen's authors was Doctor Chester S. Lord, a newspaper man. Doctor Lord was the son of Reverend E. Lord, pastor of the Reformed Church from 1870 to 1881, who followed Reverend N.I.M. Bogart as Pastor.

Doctor Lord received a journalistic education at Hamilton College* and after that went directly into newspaper work. After two years on the *Oswego Advertiser*, in 1872 he joined the staff of the *New York Sun*. He remained with *The Sun* for forty-one years, the last thirty-three being Managing Editor. His book "The Young Man and Journalism," which incidentally may be obtained at the Metuchen Library, states some of the opportunities in journalism, and presents some technical facts of the newspaper game.

William Dinwiddie, a newspaperman with a brilliant career behind him is another famed man who has made Metuchen his home in the past. He was born in Virginia in 1867 and after receiving a good education and the experience of such positions as Assistant Electrician at the National Museum at fourteen, and Inspector of Customs at Corpus Christi at seventeen, he started in with newspaper work in 1895. During those wars which followed in the next few years, the Russo-Japanese War, and the campaigns of South Africa, Cuba, Porto Rico [sic], Mr. Dinwiddie acted as War Correspondent. He is an ex-governor of the Province of Lepanto-Bontoc, Philippine Islands.

In his newspaper work Mr. Dinwiddie has held important editorial positions on large New York newspapers. He has also been connected with several magazines. To his credit are several books, most of them dealing chiefly with what he saw and heard as a War Correspondent.



A present day writer, who contributes non-fiction to the current periodicals is Helen Christine Bennett (Mrs. B.F. Maupin) who lived in Metuchen several years ago but who now resides in Plainfield. Mrs. Maupin, who has also taught, writes regularly for the *American Magazine*, the *Pictorial Review*, *McCall's*, *Collier's*, and other magazines. She is the author of the a book called "American Women in Civic Work," published in 1917.

Peter Edward Burrowes, an editor, who lived at Elmwood Farms, Metuchen, is another local resident prominent in writing circles. Mr. Burrowes came to this country in 1885 after a life of much travel, to work as a literary associate of Frank Smith in the reorganization of the Salvation Army. Later he left that work to become a lecturer, essayist, and poet to Socialist propaganda. He is the author of "The Crime of Richard Ruby, and "Revolutionary Essays."

Miss Dorothy Richardson, a Metuchen resident some years ago, was well known in literary and newspaper circles. After receiving a classical education she went into newspaper and magazine work. At the time of her residence in Metuchen she was a special writer on the *New York Sunday Herald*. In 1905 she published her one book "The Long Day."

*Coincidentally, also the Alma Mater of *Nannygoats'* editor!

Future issues of *Nannygoats* will continue reprinting the Class of 1931's *History of Metuchen*, including more from *Prominent People*, and several successive chapters.

Interested in Becoming a *Nannygoats* Contributor?

Do you have an interesting story, fact, or image that you think would make a good addition to a future issue of *Nannygoats*? If so, please contact the Editor... If your submission is published, we'll send you a complimentary copy of the 1888 "Crumbs of Comfort" history and cookbook! The submission deadline for the Fall 2008 issue is September 22, 2008.

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Grimstead Room Hours

The Society's Grimstead Room archives, containing thousands of local history images and documents, are located at the Metuchen Public Library and guided access to the collections is available from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on the following upcoming Saturdays: September 13, October 11, November 1, and December 6. For more information, contact Tyreen Reuter at 732-452-1381 or ayersallenhouse@msn.com.

Borough Improvement League

Founded in 1901, the "BIL" is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization, affiliated with the GFWC and NJSFWC Womens' Clubs, devoted to community service & preserving the ca. 1807 Old Franklin School on Middlesex Avenue in Metuchen.



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The Society was delighted to have Girl Scout Troop #81751, Crosstown/ TriTowne/ Carteret Service Unit, host a booth at our last Local History Day at the Metuchen Public Library in February, 2008. The Scouts, under the leadership of Society Board Member & Troop Leader Marilyn Langhoff and Assistant Leader Jennifer Spatz, researched and created a display on the importance and methods of preserving important historic documents, such as photographs, letters, clippings, and more. Pictured above from left to right are Ashley-lynn Chrzaszcz, Caitlin Spatz, Awo Osafo, Carmen Figueroa, and Melissa Langhoff.

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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 collecting and recording so much of our local history.

The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Upcoming Programs & Events

100 YEARS OF HISTORY: FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

**SEPTEMBER 6, 2008
2:00 P.M.**

The Society is co-sponsoring a program with the First Baptist Church of Metuchen, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. Please join us at the church, located at 225 Middlesex Avenue in Metuchen, for an informative program about the church's founding in 1908, remembrances of its development over the past century, and displays of original church documents (some 100 years old) and memorabilia.

COUNTRY FAIR

**Saturday, October 4, 2008
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

The Society will again be participating in the Country Fair on Main Street in Metuchen this October. Stop by our booth for interesting historical displays, merchandise sales, and the next issue of *Nannygoats*.

Special merchandise this year includes a 2009 Society Calendar (October 2008 to January 2010), with the transportation theme of 'From the Metuchen Shuttle to the Space Shuttle'.

Any Society volunteers who would like to staff the booth and meet and greet our visitors, please call Phyllis at 732-548-1391.

Freedom Quilts & The Underground Railroad

**October 16, 2008
1:30 p.m.**

The Borough Improvement League invites Society members and the public to the Old Franklin School, 491 Middlesex Avenue, Metuchen, for this presentation, performed in period costume by professional speaker and published author Trish Chambers, discussing the history, legends, African story cloth traditions, and oral histories that make up the rich heritage of the Underground Railroad.

For more information about these programs, please call Steve at 732-452-1381.



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

Not yet a member? Members receive program announcements, invitations to special events, a subscription to this newsletter, and the satisfaction that their support helps to preserve our local history by "Saving the Past for the Future."