



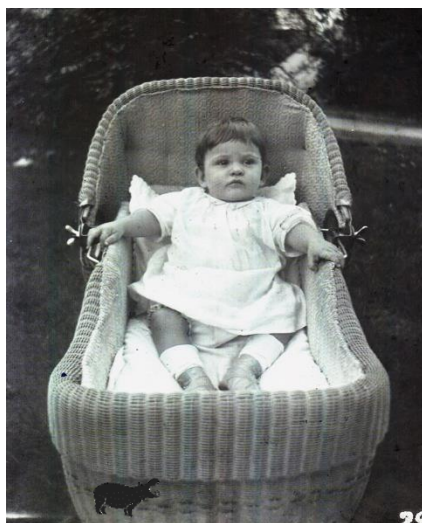
Nannygoats



“I See Wonderful Things”

At the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society’s 2022 Local History Day, a lifelong local resident arrived with an old briefcase of items to be donated to our archives. He was delivering these items on behalf of the donor, Lois Cataldo, whom many will remember as the owner/proprietor of The Brass Lantern store that operated in Metuchen for many years. The Society knew immediately that if these items were something that the discerning eye of Cataldo thought we would be interested in, then we would most certainly peer inside the briefcase and say “I see wonderful things.”

Okay, so the collection isn’t quite on par with the find that made Howard Carter utter those famous words a century ago in the Valley of the Kings, but to the Society, this new donation is indeed a very big deal.



Under the direction of our Archivist, Jennifer Warren, the Society now has an inventory of these newly donated items, and the Board of Directors is working on a plan to share the new images and materials. Critical to this plan will be

fundraising to cover the expense of archival materials to house the items and reproduction costs to print undeveloped negatives, therefore the Society is appealing to its members and friends who are able to support this initiative to please consider doing so. For more about how you may be able to help, please see Page 5.

As for this wonderful new treasure trove, the Lois Cataldo Collection consists of a total of 747



items, nearly all of which originated from J. Lloyd Grimstead and/or his family, so they fit perfectly into our existing Grimstead Collection (which is the cornerstone of the Society’s archives). These new items can be separated into five basic categories:

- Glass Plate Negatives (64 items)
- Photo Album Negatives (98 items)
- Postcard Negatives (421 items)
- Prints of Grimstead photographs, Camp Raritan, etc. (145 items)
- Miscellaneous items owned by J. Lloyd Grimstead, such as report cards, war ration books, etc.



Continued on Page 4

Annual Meeting

The Society's Annual Meeting on January 14 was well attended by both members and guests. The brief business meeting included the unanimous election of the 2023 Officers and Directors (listed below), with notable new additions of Robert Kentos of Edison and Lauren Mastbaum of Metuchen. Following the various annual reports and elections was an extremely enjoyable program presented by Linda Barth about the amazing volume of modern inventions with New Jersey roots.



THE LEAGUE OF HISTORICAL SOCIETIES OF NEW JERSEY

History Happenings

The League of Historical Societies of New Jersey (LHSNJ), founded in 1966, is composed of over 250 organizations representing over 50,000 individual members. The LHSNJ issues an extremely informative weekly email listing public events offered by these organizations.

You can receive these emails by simply signing up at www.lhsnj.org/contact (mention wanting to subscribe in the comments section) or emailing your request to barthlinda123@aol.com.



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.

Eagle Scout Preserves Local Archives

Carson Tramontin, a Metuchen resident and graduating senior at Middlesex County Academy, has earned the rank of Eagle Scout. Tramontin achieved this highest rank attainable in the Boy Scouts of America through his extensive service project consisting of planning, organizing, managing, and leading the construction of a

dedicated archive space at Metuchen's historic St. Luke's Episcopal Church.



The Society was pleased to provide a commendation letter in honor of his achievement, and thanks him for his efforts to "Save the Past for the Future."

New in the Archives

Listed here are just some of the 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.

- Photographs of Metuchen DARE car, May 1997; flooded Main Street Bridge; Patrolman Michael Dudash on police motorcycle, ca. 1923-1924; Edison Police Department for 1958 Memorial Day; and Metuchen Police Chief Edward Leiss, Edward Tackach, & Fred Hall, pre-1975 (donated by Dolores Hall, the widow of Chief Fred Hall).
(donated by David Hutchinson).
- Photographs of the Piscatawaytown Baptist Church including the church building, 1908; memorial plate for the church, 1984; children enacting a Tom Thumb wedding, ca. 1935; and church parishioners, ca. 1935 (donated by Neil Hendrickson & Robert John Kentos via MEHS Facebook).
- 1962, 1963, & 1964 Metuchen High School Yearbooks (items belonging to recently deceased Robert F. Risola and donated by cousin Barbara Jones-Landry).
- 1945 Soldiers of Supply: A Handbook of Information for Employees, Raritan Arsenal, Metuchen, NJ (donated by Metuchen Public Library).
- Program for the Commencement Exercise of Franklin Public School No. 1 of Raritan Township, Metuchen, NJ, June 28, 1900 (donated by Richard Governale).
- Bound compilation of *The Metuchen Mirror* (2017-2021) (donated by Randy Splaingard, editor & publisher of The Metuchen Mirror).
- Digital photographs of 1970 Plymouth Cuda convertible purchased from Rossmeyer Metuchen by David Hutchinson
- *The Catholic Spirit*, A Commemorative Edition, 9/4/1997; Commemorative book for St. Francis Church 100th Anniversary, Metuchen, NJ (1874-1974); two programs for St. Francis of Assisi Church 100th Anniversary Dinner Dance, 11/15/1974 (donated by Joseph Perrino Jr. on behalf of his father Joseph Perrino Sr.).
- 1962 *Edison Township & Metuchen, N.J.* Map by L.H. "Bill" Hart (donated by Art Flaherty Jr. on behalf of Art Flaherty Sr.)
- Copy of "My Memoirs" by Edison resident John Mezey, ca. 1922-1950s (donated by granddaughter Alexandra Tabibnia).
- Items from the Anthony White Collection including 22 ledgers from Forman Martin, who had a cider mill on Old Post Road (1857-1872); Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders books (1877-1878, 1883-1884); 1877 List of Voters at Piscatawaytown School; 1878 book of Gospel Hymns No. 3; 1924 handbook on Electric Motor Drives in Power Plants; *The Pioneers of New York* booklet by C.F. Hoffman (1848); *American Agriculturalist* newspapers (1867-1870); *The American Sabbath* booklet; handwritten notes and receipts of the Martin family (ca. 1856-1864); Raritan Township political tickets (ca. 1881); 1906 wedding invitation for May Virginia, daughter of Fielding G. Lucas; and miscellaneous newspapers (donated by Virginia White from late son Anthony White's Collection).

STAFF SGT. MICHAEL UHRIN (1921-1943)

In early 2015, the Society was contacted by a military representative who was attempting to positively identify the remains of a young soldier he believed was Staff Sgt. Michael Uhrin of Metuchen. Uhrin had been killed in action over Germany in October 1943 when his airplane was shot down during a heavy bombing raid. His remains were initially buried near where the plane crashed, then were moved to Normandy after the war. However, they had never been *officially* identified by the military, even though survivors of the crash had witnessed Uhrin's death, primarily because the military relied on dental records which were incomplete.

Society Board Member Tyreen Reuter helped connect the military investigator to one of Uhrin's siblings who still lived in New Jersey; the investigator hoped that DNA analysis would confirm the strong case he had made for this to be Uhrin's remains. Although it took several more years, and his surviving sibling has since passed away, Uhrin's remains were finally officially recognized in May of 2022, and will be returned to Metuchen for burial sometime in early 2023. Eighty years after his ultimate sacrifice in service to our country, Staff Sgt. Michael Uhrin will finally be coming home.



Most of these items date from the 1930s to 1958, but there are also a few original photographs of Grimstead family members from the late 19th century. The postcard negatives are quite interesting; there are many photographs of the General Ceramics Plant (located east of Metuchen in then Raritan Township.) There are also images of the cornerstone layings of the Metuchen Public Library (1936) and the First Presbyterian Social Center (1948), as well as the construction of the current Metuchen Post Office (1939).

One particularly interesting envelope contains images dedicated to what Grimstead describes as Metuchen's "building boom" in 1947, and includes residential construction along Bridge Street, Kentor Street, the end of

Lake Avenue, Redfield Village, Robinvale, and apartments at corner of Main and Christol Streets. Railfans will be delighted to learn that there are also two images of the grade crossing at Robinvale, neither of which our Archives Chair nor Archivist have seen before.

Unfortunately, several of the images have not yet been identified, particularly those in the Glass Plate Negatives category, and we hope that we can enlist the public's help in identifying these photographs via our Facebook page, *Nannygoats*, and at our public events. These Glass Plate Negatives are in very poor condition and need the appropriate archival materials to prevent their continued deterioration.

Later this year, through the work of the



Archivist and Archives Committee, the Society will finally have a master list of every single Grimstead photograph that is now known to exist, where it is archived, and if it has been digitized. This monumental task, once accomplished, is a true milestone in the history of our archives.

It is important to note that during organizational work in the archives during the last several years, we have identified many negatives in the existing Grimstead Collection that have not yet been developed. These images range from additional views of houses to unidentified persons or unknown places. Between these previously undeveloped negatives and the new negatives we have received in the Cataldo Collection, there are approximately 1000 new images that we hope to develop and share with the public. Sure, that number is perhaps a few shy of what Tutankhamun's tomb yielded (5000+ artifacts), but it's still pretty spectacular to us.

Images

Page 1, Top Right: James Grimstead with his children (James) Lloyd Grimstead and Pearl Grimstead Meade standing in front of their house at 576 Middlesex Avenue in 1891. Middle Left: Unidentified child, 1931. Bottom Right: 280 Grove Avenue, Metuchen, 1937.

Page 4, Top: Main Street in Metuchen, 1954. Bottom: Roosevelt Hospital, 1936.

Page 5, Top: Eleanor Connor with lilies with Woodwild House in the background, undated. Bottom: Undated view of 756 Middlesex Avenue.



ARCHIVES FUND APPEAL

In order to purchase archival supplies to stabilize items in both newly acquired and existing collections - and to fund developing the 1000 undeveloped images in the archives - the Society is asking for any additional support members and friends may be able to provide. As a 501c3 non-profit, tax-exempt and charitable organization (Charities # CH2946200), donations are tax-deductible.

Checks made out to "MEHS" (with "archives fund" in the memo) can be sent to PO Box 61, Metuchen, NJ 08840, or you can also give online by visiting the "Donate" page on our website: www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Hidden Hippo Hunt

In keeping with the Egyptian theme of our lead article, we've placed a number of hippopotamuses throughout this issue.

The first five people to contact us with the total number and all hippo locations wins a prize.

Found them? Email us at metuchenedisonhistory@gmail.com



HISTORY MYSTERY: SOLVED

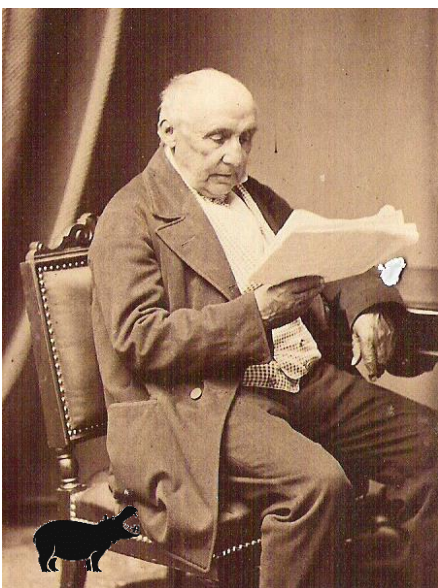
The elusive case of an unknown school ledger
by Walter R. Stochel, Jr.



In the 1990s, the Society Curator, Marie Vajo, found an 1856 school tuition ledger book from an unknown school. She professionally conserved the ledger in an acid-free box, and put it on a shelf.

In the Fall of 2022, while doing research on Edison schools, I opened up the box and looked through the ledger. The fancy handwriting with distinctive letters indicated whoever wrote it had fine penmanship. I recognized some of the names in the ledger as being from the Oak Tree neighborhood: Mundy, Ayres, Shoemaker. Also, Oliver Kelly who lived at the corner of Oak Tree and New Dover Roads. Could this be the tuition list from Oak Tree School, or is it from a school in Metuchen, where they also could have gone? Nothing on the pages in the ledger indicated what school it was from, but there was a piece of paper tucked into the ledger. This paper contained mathematical figures and what appears to be an eviction notice. The notice informs recipient to leave the premises on or before the first day of April 1856, and written below that is "Oak Tree Dec. 31st 1856." On the back is a memorandum, dated December 22, 1855, on the cost of wood bought from Samuel Ayres, divided by 41 scholars.

I then recalled the one-roomed Oak Tree School during that those years had a teacher named Bethune Dunkin. Dunkin (often referred to locally as "Duncan") taught for many years and, as was the practice, lived with local families. The 1850 federal census shows him living with the Mundy family. Looking in the archives, I found the file on Dunkin, and in it was a handwritten note. I compared the writing on the note to both the piece of paper and the ledger, and found that the handwriting matched! Later, the Society's Archivist, Jennifer Warren, found an additional item written by Dunkin that confirms the handwriting match. Warren then relabeled the box as "Oak Tree School tuition ledger." The mystery was solved!



The Society receives donations of many items, but sometimes their direct connection to local history is not clear. However, over the past 25 years of researching and organizing items in the Grimstead Room into searchable files, we are often able to "connect the dots" of local history. Your membership dues help us do this by allowing us to purchase archival material and enlist professional archive assistance.

Bethune Dunkin (1787-1870). Dunkin was born in, and died and was buried in, Waltham, Massachusetts. He taught at the Oak Tree School for 45 years, from 1819 to 1864. His brother, with whom he corresponded regularly, served as the Chief Justice of South Carolina. He was described by those who knew him as "elegant in penmanship" and the favorite guest at every wedding.

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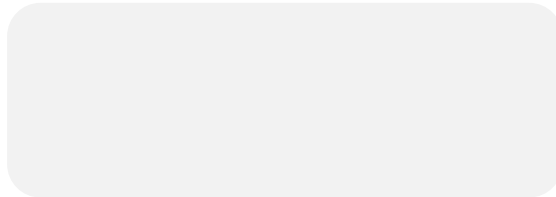


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Are you a Facebook user? Join the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society group! Also, visit the Society's YouTube channel (link under Archives on our website)!

TRI-COUNTY HISTORY FAIR

Saturday, May 6, 2023

11:00 A.M. TO 3:00 P.M.

The Tri-County History Fair for Middlesex, Somerset, and Union counties offers a fun day of historical discovery, resource sharing, raffles, speakers, programs, and exhibit tables on the lower level of the Plainfield Public Library at 800 Park Avenue in Plainfield. Entrance is free.



MIDDLESEX COUNTY

HISTORY DAY

Saturday, May 13, 2023

10:00 A.M. TO 4:00 P.M.

History lovers of all ages are invited for a free, site-wide celebration filled with demonstrations, displays, performances, and other family-friendly activities at East Jersey Old Town Village, 1050 River Road in Piscataway, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Local History Tent will feature exhibits and displays from 20+ historical organizations. For more information, call 732-745-3030, ext. 311.

