



# Newsletter of the Middletown Township Historical Society

VOL. III NO. 5

OCTOBER, 1987

## Charles S. Toop

Charles S. Toop has made a large, varied and generous gift to the Society as he prepares to leave his native Lincroft for Florida. Charlie's involvement in developing his neighborhood and participation in civic affairs make him a living legend of Lincroft. He is glad to share this material and preserve memories of the past.

The variety of the donated items makes it likely they will appear as parts of many exhibitions. The largest and, perhaps, most interesting artifacts are farm and horse equipment. They include asparagus shipping crates, a reminder of the time when it was a large cash crop, transported by steamers to the New York market.

Other reminders of market life are numerous bills and receipts from Lincroft's Conover Store from the 1870s and 1880s. They should permit insight into how a village lived. The Lincroft post office recently moved from the Village Shopping Center to a free-standing building west on Newman Springs Road. It was once located in Charlie's store with Mr. Toop serving as postmaster. The Society now has the sign from that office.

Charlie's civic activity included service as a fireman (sustaining a serious injury fighting a fire) and as founding president of the Middletown Area Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber erected "welcome" signs in the early sixties. They all read "Middletown Township" then and the Society is pleased with Charlie's gift of one.

The gift includes many old tools and smaller items too numerous to list. It includes slides which will appear in "Middletown - Then and Now - Part 2".

Charlie had earlier shown an interest in cultivating with the young an appreciation for the past. He made a generous cash contribution to sponsor student essay, photography and logo design competitions.

The Society extends its deepest thanks to Charlie Toop. As a sign of our appreciation, esteem and affection for Charlie, the Society elected him an honorary life member at the July meeting.

Charlie left this advice in the Middletown High School yearbook fifty-five years ago, "It is better to wear out than to rust." We doubt a spot of rust has ever set in on this dynamo and we wish him many years enjoyment of the Florida sun before signs of wear show.

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## Middletown Quiz

31. How did Eddie Schneider, Jr., the youthful aviator and Spanish Civil War veteran, meet his end?
32. What United States senator from Middletown was an amateur heavyweight boxing champion?
33. Which Kings Highway house is purported to be the oldest? Hint: See the June Newsletter.
34. For whom in Middletown did the earth move in Aug 1884?
35. How did Sally of New Monmouth attain fame in the early 1940s?
36. How did the Mad Frump from Lincroft gain distinction in 1932?

## Middletown's Trains and Trolleys (Continued)

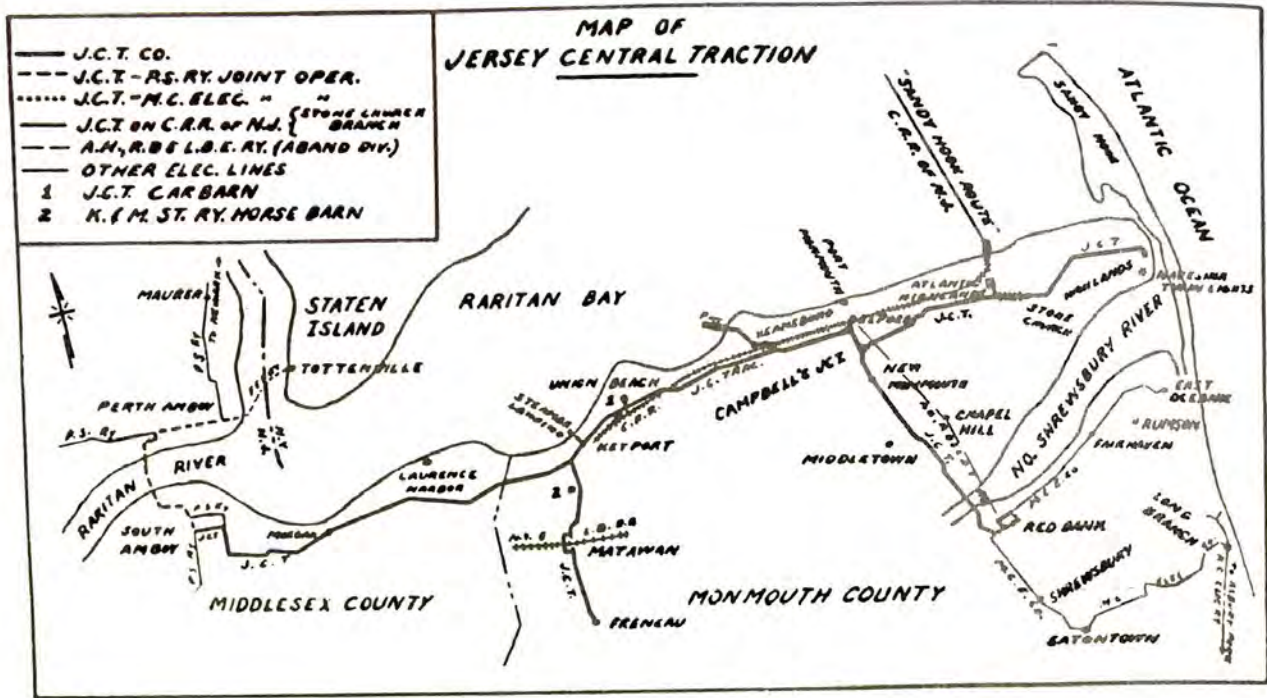
A limited locus transportation article presents fundamental problems. Transportation is a vast subject with many historical inter-relationships. A locality must be considered in its regional context. Both issues are addressed in late 19th and early 20th century Middletown Township rail history.

Middletown Township's two early railroads were aimed at distant, inter-city traffic. The Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad started at Port Monmouth, but helped build Long Branch. The New York and Long Branch Railroad passed through Middletown, but it remained a quiet, little used station until c1960. This road built the shore south of Long Branch. The 1870 change of the steamer dock from Port Monmouth to Sandy Hook threatened the economic progress of the former. Regional rail needs would result in a road along the bay shore, where the Township's population was centered. It would become a thriving commuter line. Trolley service was developed in the late 1890s. Monmouth County's trolley companies spanned the Amboys and Asbury Park, a run also connected by the railroad. However, trolley service was oriented towards the short, local run. By serving a local populace, the trolley fostered residential development until it was replaced by the automobile. The history in greater detail follows.



A Pennsylvania Railroad K 4 steam engine, the one-time work horse of its motive fleet, in front of the former shelter on the southbound side, opposite old station.

The first railroad in the County was the Freehold and Jamesburg Agricultural Railroad. It opened in 1853, an 11½ mile route from Freehold to the nearest Camden and Amboy connection, Jamesburg. The principal business of Monmouth in the mid-19th century was agriculture. The freight cost of any product, harvested or manufactured,



was a major factor in settlement and prosperity. Less costly means for getting more produce to market spurred most transportation development then. The Monmouth issue was a microcosm of national expansion. This road expanded to Keyport by 1878 and became an active passenger carrier. The lines expansion was accompanied by numerous changes of name. It is a major topic in County transportation history. The line was absorbed by the New Jersey Central and extended from Matawan to Atlantic Highlands in 1889 with Township stations at Port Monmouth and Belford. A Leonardo station followed in 1910. The line became an important commuter carrier. The frequent stops reflected current need. Rail travelers lived in compact settlements near the stations. They walked to the train. Seasonal Houses were converted to year-round use in the early decades of this century. It started the transition of Middletown Township to bedroom suburb.

Growth on the Middletown bay shore in the 1880 period was greatest around Atlantic Highlands, then part of the Township's Bay View section. Steamers provided early transportation, but the town wanted a rail connection as water transport was unreliable in bad weather. Rail links with Keyport and Red Bank were sought.

The Federal government gave Atlantic Highlands a major boost as a rail center in 1891 by expelling the steamships from Sandy Hook and barring use of the railroad there. The Hook had become an extensive gun-firing proving ground for longer range artillery. It was not compatible with public transportation. A steamer dock had been built for the 1879 excursion season, but shallow water and unreliable tides impeded use. A longer dock in 1880 helped, but a railroad was vital. An 1883 rail connection to Red Bank was made by the newly formed Atlantic Highlands and New York Railroad. It placed a spur to the New Jersey Southern tracks at Belford. It gave the town a rail line, albeit an inconvenient one. A longer steamer dock and new railroad station were opened in 1892. A bridge over the Shrewsbury River at Highlands followed and the aforementioned connection with Matawan was made giving the bay shore a first-rate rail network.

Pioneering trolley efforts were made in Asbury Park in the late 1880s. Effective service developed in the 1890s. Technical problems of power delivery and political problems of franchise securing occupied the trolley builder. The trolley or traction companies often found elected officials more difficult than construction. Traction companies were numerous with short runs, but connecting lines enabled distant trolley travel. One could even take a trolley trip from the shore to Philadelphia. However, the route was long and circuitous and not competitive with train travel. The trolley appealed to the local traveler and built a sizable trade serving nearby commuters, shoppers and schools. The accompanying



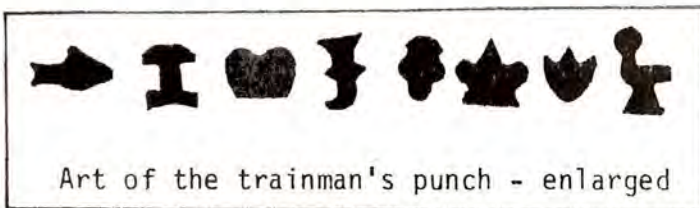
A Pennsylvania Railroad K 4 under the bridge to the old Conover estate. Only the abutments remain.

map illustrates the scope of the network and the number of lines.

The Jersey Central Traction Company served Middletown Township. Its Campells Junction station was an important juncture. It was the terminus for a line to Keyport to the west, another to Highlands to the east and a third to Red Bank to the south. The construction of the Township's lines present a cross-section of typical traction difficulties. The first was route selection, both destinations and placement of track. It was advisable to run along well-populated roads to active, busy towns to maximize business. One destination proved difficult, Atlantic Highlands. Towns franchise terms could be demanding. Atlantic Highlands were so unreasonable that Jersey Central Traction first built around the town by running east of Belford over under-utilized tracks of the New Jersey Southern Railroad. The Atlantic Highlands borough government relented after realizing a trolley system one-half mile from town would be costly to their business. An extension was built. Reaching Keansburg encountered a railroad-created difficulty. The town developed as a popular summer resort in the years around 1905. The trolley tracks were on a south parallel with the railroad. New Jersey Central refused to allow a grade crossing. This necessitated a non-connecting spur,

north of the railroad as the cost of a trestle was prohibitive.

Middletown Township construction obstacles include hills, curves and structures in the right of way. The greatest was leveling Charles Morford's hill on his New Monmouth farm. At least one physical hazard was eliminated after completion. Track was relaid in 1908 on the Route 35 section near Gillville, eliminating a sharp turn at Conovers hill. The aim was a reduction of derailings.



Art of the trainman's punch - enlarged

Private property was used for much of the sparsely populated route from Campbells Junction to Red Bank. The outbuildings on the Charles Tindall farm at New Monmouth were moved across the right of way to the same side as his dwelling. The route followed today's Highway 35 from Five Corners to Coopers Bridge. It was then known alternatively as the Middletown-Red Bank Turnpike or the Kings Highway. A barn on Cornelius Sullivan's farm at Headdens Corner (Fair View) was moved. It was desirable for land acquisitions to be on the boundary of affected properties for obvious reasons. This necessitated at times the tracks crossing the road. The route can be followed on Highway 35 and Leonardville Road by observing the placement of power lines. The best example of an old right of way adjacent to a road is the west side of Highway 35 (south bound traffic) from Field Avenue south towards Navesink River Road.

The rate of progress was unpredictable. Construction continued through winter. Although the work was slowed then, one economy resulted from the hiring of farmers' horse teams at less than usual rates. It was a bargain for both parties as the teams would have been otherwise unused then. Failure to meet a construction schedule could result in a franchise forfeiture.

TO BE CONTINUED

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## We Want You!

The Society is an open organization of those interested in local history. Its principal source of income is dues. Most members do not attend meetings, though we wish more would. Many consider the newsletter their primary contact and dues a subscription fee. Perhaps that accounts for members in eight states and readership in over half of the counties of New Jersey.

We are generous with sample copies, but hope more readers will become at least dues paying subscribers or, perhaps, even active members! Dues are modest, as little as \$5. annually. Or, in addition to \$10. family memberships, there is a new sustaining category at \$25. for those wishing to help financially.

The possibilities of local history are many as readers of "Doing Local History" series realize. The Society may not now engage in your principal interest, but your participating with the Society may give your topic new direction and meaning.

Join now. Dues are for the calendar year, but one year's dues paid now include all of 1988. Merely send the following information on plain paper if you save your newsletters, or clip this and mail with your check.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIAL INTEREST, IF ANY: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ \$5. INDIVIDUAL \_\_\_ \$10. FAMILY \_\_\_ \$25. SUSTAINING

## Digging in Cemeteries

The Monmouth County Historical Association recently gave the Society a copy of "Middletown Township Cemetery Notes", a collection of typescripts. The key work is the notes of Henry Mc Lean, who copied gravestone inscriptions from numerous private burying grounds in the Township. The Monmouth County Historical Association has an extensive genealogy collection, one unparalleled in the county. Cemetery records can help the search. We are pleased this important aid is now accessible in our library and extend our thanks to the Association.

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## New Members

Andrew J. Burger, Jr. - Severna Park, MD  
 Laurence & Barbara Erera - New Monmouth  
 Edward & Katherine Headington - E.Keans.  
 David & Peggy Knowles - Middletown  
 Richard & Rebecca Reilly - Navesink  
 John F. Rhody - Fair Haven  
 Robert & Diane Riker - Rumson  
 Helen E. Schuh - Tuscon, AZ

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## Shopping at the Museum

The Society has several items for sale that make attractive gifts. Or, treat yourself. A new railroad book is described separately. The atlas reprints are a monumental project in making an understanding of developing Monmouth County readily accessible. With many uses and widespread appeal, they are highly recommended. The Monmouth County Bibliography is offered at a reduced price. It is the key to accessing information about Monmouth County and features an extensive Middletown Township listing. The steamboat book is out of print and a collectors item.

### BOOKS

|                                    |          |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| Atlas reprints - Soft cover        |          |
| Beers - 1873                       | \$ 20.00 |
| Wolverton - 1889                   | 25.00    |
| Jelliffe - A to Z Historical Notes |          |
| on Middletown, N.J.                | 10.00    |
| Reusille - Steam Vessels Built in  |          |
| Old Monmouth                       | 15.00    |
| Van Benthuyzen - Monmouth County   |          |
| Bibliography                       | 7.50     |
| Wood, et al - The Unique New York  |          |
| and Long Branch                    | 25.95    |
| --- Taylor Family Reunion Booklet  |          |
| a 10 page photocopy                | 2.00     |

### PICTURES

|                                      |      |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| Matted print, Barber & Howe View of  |      |
| Kings Highway, hand colored or black |      |
| Members price                        | 2.50 |
| Price to others                      | 5.00 |

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Croydon Hall Academy post cards                                  | 1.00 |
| Society issued landmark buildings post cards, sets of four (2) @ | 1.00 |
| Pewter medallion   | 7.50 |

The Society published postcards should not be overlooked. They feature drawings exhibited in "Middletown: The Artist' Views". A third set will follow, with their growing numbers increasing their collectibility. Add 6% sales tax to all prices.

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## MEETING DATES:

The November meeting is the 23rd at 8:00PM at the Museum. Remember, it is the 4th Monday. November is a five Monday month, which is a potential source of confusion. There is no December meeting, but members will receive an invitation to the annual holiday party.

Judge Labrecque's talk at the October meeting was a big success. We hope to have another railroad speaker early in 1988.

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## Doing Local History: VIDEOTAPING

Videotapes of the Middletown Township landscape could form the ultimate "Middletown: Then and Now" base for future generations. They will not be able to build a file of old views unlike the Society's print and slide presentations on the comparative view theme. Videotape technology for the consumer is new and few or no tapes of the Middletown scene exist. There is likely one exception, a tape of the Kings Highway area made by Thorne students recently. It may be a start (particularly if the Society can get a copy), but it would represent only the tip of the project. The Middletown Village area is the Township's most important historic district and the best preserved pictorially. Its changes will be likely few and one can expect a similar appearance twenty-five years from now.

Videotaping the Township can be done anywhere. The wisest starting points are those threatened with change. The Neuberger estate, for example, is a great property threatened with extinction. It is also representative of the old Middletown when one could stand in the midst of a farm and see nothing but farmland. Similar landscapes once existed on every major road in the Township. Pictorial preservation is preferable to a vanished memory. Presentations may be of at least two types, a portrayal of a section or neighborhood, or edited tapes of topical subjects. The former may be preferable. Slides can show a succession of subjects, but can not "flow" continuously over a landscape.

editor have videotape equipment. This is an excellent subject for a video fan to pursue a personal interest and help an organization. Easy copying enables the photographer to keep a tape while filing one with the Society.

The future exhibit value of these tapes will be great. However, there may be an immediate appeal. The popularity of travelogues should extend to our Township. Middletown is so vast that few are familiar with it all. Any volunteers? Call Randall Gabrielan, 671-2645, see a museum guide or write the Society at PO Box 434, Middletown 07748.

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## The Unique New York & Long Branch Railroad

The line is "unique" because it is a railroad without rolling stock, which operates no trains of its own. It was built with the support of the New Jersey Central, operated jointly by them and the Pennsylvania Railroad for many years and is now controlled by New Jersey Transit.

This is the title of an illustrated history of the railroad written by Don Wood, Joel Rosenbaum and Tom Gallo. It starts with the line's mid-19th century conception in New Jersey's highly politicized rail environment. The book continues with the railroad's development of the shore and the line's evolution to a major commuter carrier. It also peers into the future by describing current improvements.

The book is well illustrated and includes several Middletown pictures including the two station views printed herein. The Society extends its thanks to Mr. Wood for permission to include them.

Buy the book at the Museum. Its price is \$ 25.95 plus tax. It will give any rider a greater appreciation of this fascinating line. Any local historian will gain deeper insight into a key factor in the growth of Monmouth County

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## Quiz Answers

- In an air crash at Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn in 1940 while on an instructional flight with a stu
- In an air crash at Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn in 1940 while instructing a student.
- W. Warren Barbour. He held the title in 1910 and 1911, declining to start what some thought could have been a promising professional boxing career.
- The Richard Hartshorne homestead at the rear north-east corner of Kings Highway and New Monmouth Road. It is claimed the building dates from 1671.
- Apparently the entire populace. An earthquake was recorded then.
- Sally, a hen owned by Mrs. William Morford, laid an egg nearly every morning on their kitchen table. So don't believe us. Check with Universal Films, which recorded Sally's act.
- This Frump was a horse, which won the Endurance Handicap at Bowie Racetrack in Maryland.

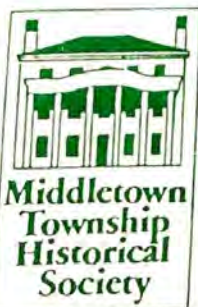
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PHONE: 291-8739 during museum hours.  
EDITOR: RANDALL GABRIELAN

DEDICATED TO RESEARCHING, COLLECTING AND EXHIBITING THE HISTORY OF MIDDLETOWN TOWNSHIP.

Museum: In the main building at Croydon Hall on Leonardville Rd. between Chamone and Bellevue Aves. in the township's Leonardo section. Open Saturdays & Sundays.

Meetings: 8:00 PM at the museum, generally on the fourth Monday with occasional exceptions for major holidays.

Donations of historical materials: Please see a museum guide or write to the Society.



MEMBERSHIP DUES  
PER CALENDAR YR.

Individual — \$5.00  
Family — \$10.00

Dues for new members joining after Oct. 1 include following year.