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Middletown - History



# Newsletter of the Middletown Township Historical Society

VOL. 1 NO. 1

AUGUST 1985

## M.T.H.S.: Past, Present and Future

The Middletown Township Historical Society is a private, not for profit corporation organized with the broad purpose of promoting Township history. The Society was formed in 1968 and has had three phases to its existence.

The Society participated in the restoration of an historic house in its early years. It withdrew from that site by 1976. The second phase consisted of meetings and other historical promotional activity done without the benefit of a society "home" or headquarters.

The third phase was begun in late 1983 with the lease of the ground floor of the former main building of Croydon Hall Academy for the purpose of establishing an historical museum. The museum opened on April 27, 1985 with the picture exhibit "Middletown - Then and Now". Separate commentary of the exhibit appears on this page.

The Society adopted in 1983 a four part guideline of purpose for furthering the aims of studying, preserving and publicizing Middletown Township history. Edited for brevity, they are:

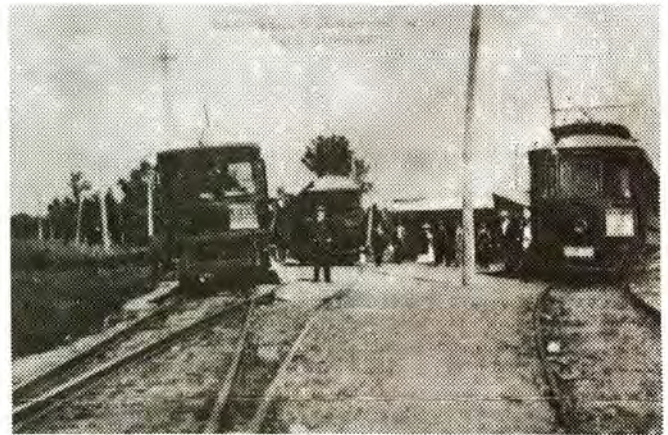
1. Organize and Display Temporary Exhibits.
2. Build a Permanent Collection of Artifacts.
3. Collect and Maintain a Research Library.
4. Publish to further the other aims.

Our small group has ambitious plans. Our size has functioned well during the organizing period. We hope to increase our numbers as we expand our activities. What does this mean to a prospective

member? It means one can develop a meaningful role in a growing organization with an important and pleasurable subject, local history. New Projects and ideas are welcome, particularly from those able to develop them. However, if one has an interest that can contribute to the organization, we hope it can be helped by teamwork and co-operation.

Local historical societies have varied activities. Ours is first a history museum. Building it and pursuing other, serious historical projects will take the talents of many people. We hope you join us.

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CAMPBELL'S JUNCTION IN 1910

## "Then and Now" Continues through October

The Society's first exhibit of 65 pairs of older and contemporary views of the same sites in the Township is scheduled to show through October 27. Critical commentary has been favorable. Many have been impressed on how a simple theme was well-photographed and skillfully displayed.

The exhibit chronicles pictorially an ever-changing area. One scene has

changed markedly since opening day. The Iler Farm pictures on display show an expanding farm. The scene today is a construction site. Perhaps another exhibited site will return to its "Then" state. The Octagon House is shown as a residence 20 years ago and as ruins today. The building has been sold since the exhibit opened, with the owner planning to restore it.

Those interested in the technical aspects of the exhibit may obtain at the museum an article about how the exhibit was made. It notes that most of the older pictures were lent by their owners and copied by the Society. The medium of copy photography permitted making new 8" x 12" pictures from old post cards and snap shots. The Society would like to build its pictorial archives and seeks loans or donations of needed Township pictures.

A checklist of the exhibit follows. The basic organization of the exhibit was by neighborhood. However, some sections loosely combine nearby areas and a few pictures were isolated ones which did not permit a separate heading.

Note - The pictures have been intentionally skip numbered.

#### KINGS HIGHWAY

1. View West from Pondview
2. View West from Church Street
3. View East from Conover Street
4. Site of American Hotel, North Side
5. Conover Street
6. Middletown Railroad Station

#### BELFORD

10. Compton Creek Bridge
11. Main Street - View North, near Creek
12. Main Street and East Road
13. Main Street - View South from Edward Avenue
14. Main Street - View South from Railroad Avenue
15. Langford's Store, Main Street
16. Belford Railroad Station
17. Compton Street - View West from Church Street
18. Octagon House
19. Campbells Junction

#### PORT MONMOUTH

20. Railroad Station

21. Main Street
22. Campbell Avenue
23. Whitlock - Seabrook - Wilson House

#### NAVESINK

30. Maxon's Store, Monmouth Avenue and Navesink Avenue
31. Navesink Avenue - View North at Hillside Avenue
32. Navesink Avenue - View North at Monmouth Avenue
33. Former Baptist Church, Monmouth Ave

#### LOCUST

40. Locust Approach Oceanic Bridge
41. Locust Point Road
42. Kennedy's Store/Locust Antiques
43. Willow Glen Hotel
44. New Amsterdam House
45. Destroyed House - North Side Clay-pit Creek

#### CHAPEL HILL

50. Kings Highway East - View West from Site of Eunice Hall
51. High Point Chapel
52. High Point Cottage
53. General Store
54. Grandjean House
55. Former Mount Tavern
56. Larsen-Palladin House
57. Haskell Mill
58. Chapel Hill Road - Bridge over NJ Southern Railroad
59. Headdens Corner School

#### LEONARDO

60. Rice House - Croydon Hall - Front
61. Rice House - Croydon Hall - West, Rear
62. Rice House - Croydon Hall - Sunken Garden
63. Railroad Station
64. Leonardo High School/Bayshore Junior High School
65. House - 11-13 Leonardville Road

#### LINCROFT

70. Lincroft Inn
71. Conover Store/Touch of Class
72. Newman Springs Road - View East
73. Newman Springs Road - View West
74. Swimming River Road - View North
75. Middletown-Lincroft Road - View North from Junction
76. House - 3 Swimming River Road

## NEW MONMOUTH AND ELSEWHERE

- 80. Original St. Mary's Church
- 81. New Monmouth Church
- 82. Murray Farm House
- 83. Iler Farm - Middletown-Lincroft Rd
- 84. West Farm - Kings Highway East

## RIVER PLAZA - EVERETT - RED HILL RD

- 90. Quigleys Bridge - Hubbard Avenue
- 91. Hubbards Bridge - West Front Street
- 92. Tramp Hollow - Navesink River Road
- 93. Sunnyside Deli
- 94. Store and Tannery - Red Hill Road
- 95. Deep Cut/Red Hill Road
- 96. Clinton A.M.E. Chapel

**Museum in "Tel-News"**

The June 1985 "Tel-news" illustrated the museum building and featured a story "Wilson's Hideaway". "Tel-news" is New Jersey Bell's bill-insert newsletter. Each copy features an historical article and telephone information.

The "Tel-news" write-up told of then Governor Woodrow Wilson's visit to our site during the 1912 presidential campaign. The building was at the time the home of Melvin A. Rice, a friend of Wilson's and an important confidant during his presidential years. Mr. Rice's portrait also appears in that issue.

The article was based on one titled "Woodrow Wilson at Croydon Hall", which appeared in the Spring 1984 newsletter of the Monmouth County Historical Association. Readers desiring a copy of the earlier article may request one when visiting the museum.

**Future Exhibit**

The Society is planning an exhibit on local Indians under Barbara Schafelin's direction. Much of it will be borrowed from the New Jersey State Museum. We would like to give our exhibit an added local flavor by including artifacts from Middletown Township. Please let us know if you are willing to lend such material or know someone who may. The exhibit is expected to open in late fall following the closing of "Middletown: Then and Now".

**Society Receives Grant from New Jersey Historical Commission**

The New Jersey Historical Commission gave a Public Programs grant of \$1,000.00 to the Society for making a slide program and traveling version of the exhibit "Middletown: Then and Now". The Commission is an agency of New Jersey's Department of State established in 1966 to advance public knowledge and preservation of the history of New Jersey. The grant is a significant one, reflecting the support of one of the state's major cultural organizations. The Society is quite thankful and hopes the award will serve as an incentive for other prospective supporters.

The slide program will be available for showing to various community groups starting in the fall. It will consist of many of the same views in the museum exhibit, but will be enhanced by others. Write the Society or contact Randy Gabrielan 671-2645 if your group is interested in a showing. The show will be made without charge to eligible non-profit organizations in the Township.

The traveling show will be installed in places of public gathering. Sites have not yet been obtained. The pictures will include 3½" x 5" views of many of the same pictures shown in large format in the museum exhibit. It, too, will be supplemented by additional scenes. It should be noted that the small picture, traveling version will not be the same as the museum exhibit. The Society hopes to make the exhibit available to more viewers this way, but will not make the museum experience available elsewhere. Facilities to be considered are schools, banks, and various places of public accommodation where the exhibit stand can be appropriately shown. The stand requires only a small space, approximately 4' x 8', plus space for viewers. Interested facilities may contact the Society at the address on page 4 or Randy Gabrielan at 671-2645.

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## An Editor, not an Author

Most new editors of similar publications remind readers that the editors job is primarily to arrange or revise the work of others, not to write it in its entirety. The plea is probably heeded only slightly more often than the instruction to "Please Save Wrapper to Dispose of Gum Properly". One persists anyway. Please consider contributing to make the newsletter a forum for the members and not solely a message from the officers. If you have information that needs help in its writing, please let us know. We shall try to assist you. If you have access to important, but unfamiliar material previously published, in a newspaper for example, please bring it to our attention. It may be worth repeating and the story developed. Most of our information about Melvin Rice come from previously published, but forgotten sources. We hope to hear from you.

## Meeting Notice

The next two meetings are August 26 and September 23 at 8:00pm. Meetings are generally scheduled for the fourth Monday in the month and are held at the museum at Croydon Hall.

## Thanks

We have many thanks to acknowledge publically for donations to the museum. They will appear next month.

An early word of thanks goes to William Clapper as our thank you letter was returned as undeliverable. Mr. Clapper planted the marigolds on the museum porch.

## Membership

One prospective member cried in alarm when asked about joining the Society, "How many meetings would I have to attend?". The answer is easy, "None". We welcome new members at meetings, of course. However we recognize there are three types of members, the passive who read their newsletter, the meeting attendees and the active workers. Each kind is needed. If you can not attend, we hope you still join. Perhaps you can become more active as opportunity permits.

Meetings now are primarily business sessions for continuing the activities of the Society. Perhaps they will become more varied as membership increases and as our resources grow. Use the membership application or if you wish to keep your newsletter intact, merely send us the requested information with either \$10.00 family or \$5.00 individual dues.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

AREA OF SPECIAL INTEREST, IF ANY \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_



P.O. BOX 434

MIDDLETOWN, NJ 07748

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.