



Newsletter of the Middletown Township Historical Society

VOL. II NO. 4

AUGUST, 1986

Meeting Notice

The fourth Monday dates are August 25 and September 22. The time is 8:00 PM and the place the museum at Croydon Hall. No programs are planned, but come and seek involvement in Middletown Township history.

The slide show "Middletown: Then and Now" will be presented at two locations. A Friday night viewing on September 12 at 8:00 PM will be at the Middletown Reformed Church Fellowship Club meeting, 123 Kings Highway. The public is welcome. The Middletown Library at 55 New Monmouth Road will host a Wednesday show on the 14th at 7:30 PM.

The Society hopes to assemble a sequel to "Then and Now". Additional loans of older pictures will help create it. "Then" slides are made by copying the photographs. "Now" slides are taken at the sites. Contact us at our box number or call Society president Randall Gabrielan 671-2645.

Middletown Quiz

Township information in small fact form attracted major attention with the issuance of "Trifles", the local trivia game. See our December 1985 Newsletter. The society called it not trivial trivia as many questions reveal important historical facts. Others are little known, but fascinating. The Newsletter will present a Middletown Quiz from time to time. Your editor hopes it finds an interested readership and welcomes contributions of questions. See Page 4 for the answers and our address. The first questions:

1. What 19th century New Monmouth resident attained prominence as a local poet and a New York newspaper editor?
2. What was the Middletown Stock Farm?
3. Were there common scolds in the 19th century?
4. What Middletownite operated a circus?
5. What Middletownites of an old historic family bought and edited a local newspaper in the late 19th century?
6. What criminal justice distinction does Jack Beldo hold?
7. What was Alvin B. Hallenbake's 1870s crime?
8. What fate befell the Ezek Hartshorne house, a site in Cooper's "Water Witch"?
9. In what capacity was Alexander Hamilton's son, also named Alexander, in Middletown Township?

10. How did the American Sardine Co. obtain local distinction?
11. What was the first railroad to serve Middletown Township?
12. What was the later name of the first railroad in Middletown Township?

The Railroad at Middletown- A New Station, a New Book, and a Myth Dissolved



A history of the New York and Long Branch Railroad was published about the same time as the new Middletown station opened. The locally current claim that the former Middletown station was the oldest one in use was disproved as the building was being replaced.

The book is "The Unique New York & Long Branch" by Don Wood, Joel Rosenbaum and Tom Gallo. Your editor treats the word "unique" with great caution. The NY & LB had several unusual characteristics, principally it being a major road of short distance with no locomotives or rolling stock of its own. The book is a well-illustrated history of the entire line. It begins with the legal and political climate of the early days of New Jersey railroading that delayed the start of an "all rail" route to the shore. The book's scope continues through current operation by New Jersey Transit. The many pictures, including several in Middletown, are well chosen and cover all periods to the present. The book costs \$25 by mail from Tom Gallo, 55A Fulton Street, Keyport, New Jersey 07735.

Legal and political obstacles were only the lines initial hurdles. Route selection presented problems. Financing and a hostile physical environment provided difficulties during construction. The owners raised capital from the communities served by the line, a practice contrasting many other roads. Local investment affected route selection. The line was placed through

Matawan instead of Keyport due to generous stock subscriptions from the former. The economic results are still felt today.

Construction started in Middletown in 1873 with a massive grading project in the section south of Oak Hill Road. The Monmouth Democrat reported in December 4, 1873 that work on the railroad was "going ahead with an energy and spirit that is exhilarating to the people of the section". The exhilaration was to be proved justified as the same paper reported a year later that "the owners of the sand fields lying on either side of road have suddenly found their heretofore almost worthless property quite valuable". Much of the Middletown roadbed was fertile. Evidence of grading and farm use of the land can be seen near Wilmort Park. An opening under the track, popularly known as the "hole-in-the-wall", was constructed at the insistence of a farmer (probably Josie Field) who wanted a safe passage for his herd.

The first train ran on June 25, 1873 carrying invited guests. Middletown expressions of greeting included ringing church bells and a flag-waiving youth in the steeple of the Baptist Church. The scheduled public opening for July 1 was delayed until the 7th due to a problem with the bridge over the Raritan. Late construction focused on the road itself. The tight rail building schedule was noted in the July 1, 1875 Monmouth Inquirer, quoting the Matawan Journal, "The first rail on the NY & LB Railroad was laid on the 6th of April and the last one on the 12th of June". There were several temporary depots, but likely no permanent ones. The May 5, 1875 Monmouth Inquirer reported that lots for houses were being laid out on Azariah Conover's property "upon which the depot for the NY & LB Railroad is located". There was no mention of a depot building, but any was not permanent as the April 27, 1876 issue stated that there was to be a new and very fine depot that summer. Unfortunately, the Inquirer did not report the opening. The local paper, the Red Bank Standard, cannot be located for that period.

Three large depots of the same design were built by Walter Morton of Red Bank at Matawan, Branchport and Red Bank. Branchport was destroyed by fire and the Matawan building no longer serves as a depot. The Red Bank depot was completed in November, 1875. Thus, it holds the distinction of the longest active station and did so during the old Middletown depot's last years.

The sorely needed 1986 depot differs greatly from the 1876 depot in size and comfort. Safety hazards appear around both. Note the passageway at the older station. It was needed for the baggage handler in olden days when such amenities existed. It also permitted passenger crossings at a dangerous point near a curve. Later regulations required a fence with a gate required to be closed when not in use by railroad personnel. The new depot is too close to the road and passenger traffic. The problem has been well documented in the recent press. One hopes the constant need of caution will never lapse.

The book illustrates the old depot in the 1950's, the then adjacent bridge and the passenger shed once adjoining the southbound track. The scenes are fairly recent, certainly within the memory of older residents. However, the Society does not have similar pictures and would welcome donations or loans.

Facts and figures are interesting in themselves, but are even more useful when used as history's building blocks. The economic and social effects of the railroad would make an interesting study. The Society would be pleased to publish such an article.

New Members

Joining, or rejoining, the Society in May and June are:

Mr. & Mrs. John Davenport - Holland

Helen A. Deaney	- Middletown
Rose Gregerson	- Leonardo
Mr. & Mrs. David G. Hanson	- Middletown
Marian Januszkeski	- Leonardo
Marlene Marsch	- Holland
Evelyn M. Smith	- Middletown
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Weiss	- Leonardo
Florence Zdichocki	- East Keansburg

Municipal Ordinances- Then and Now

An anonymous vendor at the Society's recent flea market gave us a copy of the 1945 Township of Middletown ordinances. It makes a fascinating contrast with the current ordinances. The 1945 version was a pamphlet of business envelope size. It numbered 32 pages, measuring 3 3/4" x 9". The 1985 volume is 2" of loose-leaf law book format. It is a few hundred pages, with the section numbering system defying easy counting.

The 1945 ordinances were divided into two sections, one by the board of health and the other by the township committee. The committee's ordinances included the expected building code, zoning ordinance and fire department ordinance. However, zoning our vast township took only 8 pages. The fire department rules were supplemented by two others relating to fire. Separate ordinances, "Grass Fires" and "Smoking on Navy Pier" existed. A separate ordinance implies major concern with the damage potential of burning grass or weed fields. Outdoor fires now require permits, which one expects are not readily granted. In addition, the present ordinance book points out that the State of New Jersey's air pollution code prevails. They are administrative regulations with the force of law.

One expects Navy regulations carefully control smoking at the pier now. Perhaps the Middletown ordinance was an early seizing of initiative. The caution was wise, as the deadly potential of explosives handling was evident the following year. An explosion on a ship killed 7 persons.

The omissions then may make the comparison striking now. The land was rural, times were simpler and far reaching regulations were probably not needed. One should not conclude they were good old days or speculate on how much government is good government. Time moves forward,

needs change, but it can be fascinating to look back. The old ordinances may be seen at the museum.

Maps of Middletown

(continued from June, 1986)

The first Township street map is not in the exhibit. However, the near identical second edition is. It was published in 1965 and is Item T.

A municipality map is issued to show that community's features with special detail. The Chamber's current map, issued by The Garden State Publishers, contains a guide to the Township and highlights public facilities. It is Item U. A copy is available free at the Chamber's Route 35 office or from the Middletown Library.

One of the exhibit's most fascinating maps is rare and of obscure origin. Item Q is part of a 1938 wall map published by Dolph & Stewart in New York City. It has a large scale of approximately 2,200 ft. to the inch and it shows not only streets in clear detail, but owners and size of the many large estates and farms still then intact. The Dolph & Stewart will be an invaluable research aid. See fig. 9.

The Federal Government became the nation's major map maker. Their beginning was slow and difficult, but the current product is technically amazing. Satellites collect information which is computerized. Each inter-continental ballistic missile stores a computerized map of the globe which aids its guidance to a target.

Congress authorized a survey of the coasts in 1807. Ferdinand Rudolph Hassler was hired to head the new bureau, funds were authorized in 1811, but it took Hassler until 1815 to return from a European equipment buying trip. In 1816, he started a triangulation network of the coast, a system of measuring the relationship of points whose location with respect to neighboring points is precisely known by distance and direction. Sandy Hook was a Township location in the system. Maps first appeared in 1834. They were accurate, though they contained little detail. An early example is not in the exhibit, but a version from circa 1860, Item W, shows the rough example of stylized terrain.

The Government's map making organization became the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey. Their maps became detailed, illustrating terrain with a high degree of accuracy and readability. A new survey was made in 1854. A map made from it is Item Y, the Sandy Hook Quadrangle mapping the entire Township. Many of today's

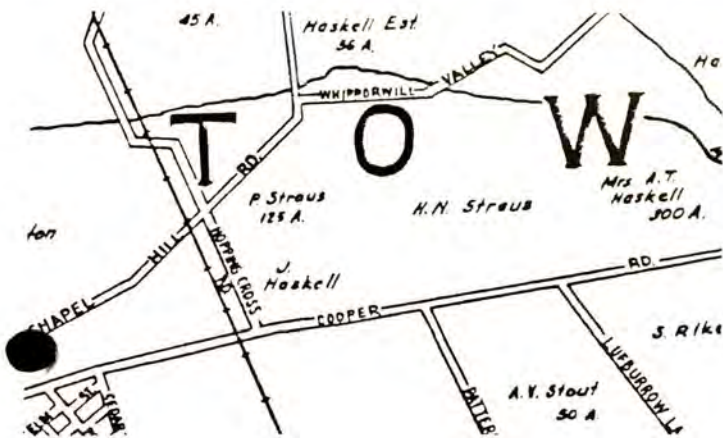


fig. 9

U.S.C. & G.S. map characteristics had been adopted by then including place names, the inclusion of major roads and, most importantly, contour lines to indicate elevation. Item X, a 1908 revision of a 1901 map based on an 1888 survey shows subtle changes. An excerpt of the hilly area around our Museum is fig. 10.

The current U.S.C. & G.S. maps have a larger scale, so each shows a smaller area, 7.5 minutes of latitude and longitude compared with 15 minutes earlier. Color is a major aid to easy reference and man-made objects are identified in great detail. Parts of Middletown Township



fig. 10

now appear on four quadrangles with Item Z an assemblage from four maps. New editions are infrequent due to great cost and developing areas are quickly outdated.

Maps previously described have generally portrayed roads and terrain for the purpose of guiding the traveler. Some maps have other purposes. Property surveys are intended to illustrate ownership of land. Many later have great historical interest, such as the exhibit's Item AA, 1740 Kings Highway area and Item GG, 1829 Chapel Hill. Some show how the land may have appeared if not for intervening circumstances. Item FF shows the Leonardo-Chapel Hill section of the Earle Naval Depot platted for streets. However, the Navy bought the property in 1943 and the streets will not be built.

Much mapping today is done by aerial photography. Comparative views of high elevation photographs and their corresponding maps can be striking. Item EE is a photograph of an expanded Fair View Cemetery from circa 1955 with its center section identical to Item K, a map published in 1873.

Historical map re-creations examine the past make-up of the land. James Steen's map of Kings Highway (Item HH) illustrates Middletown village's original 1678 division of lots, though it was drawn in the 19th century from written property descriptions. Its novel approach compares earlier ownership with 1878 owners. Historic maps can take an arbitrary manner to illustrate specific points. The 1976 Middletown Bicentennial map (Item CC) denotes landmark buildings from varying periods still standing in 1976 in the context of contemporary borders and historic districts. Another example of super-imposing the present on the past is Item II, which inserts present roads on a 1676 drawing of the Lincroft-Tinton Falls-Colts Neck area. Early travel routes are often obscured by changing road patterns. Such maps give excellent insight into the history of travel. However, their existence and preservation occurs by chance. Their wide-spread familiarity exists only through infrequent publication. Historic re-creations can illustrate an event, such as Item BB, Capt. John Montrossor's (British) journal entry describing naval forces off Sandy Hook in July, 1778 following the Battle of Mornmouth.

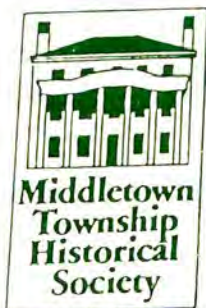
This survey of Middletown maps is an overview, keyed to the Society's exhibit. More comprehensive surveys can be made only as other maps are discovered. The Society hopes the article and exhibit will direct additional maps to its attention.

Quiz Answers

1. Henry Morford
2. A late 19th century horse farm owned by J. D. Willis
3. At least one. Mrs. Mary E. Patterson was convicted as a common scold in 1875 and sentenced to 30 days in the county jail.
4. G. C. Murray kept his horses (and perhaps other animals) on his Middletown farm over the winter, but the circus was a New York operation.
5. Benjamin M. Hartshorne purchased and Edward M. Hartshorne edited the "New Jersey Standard". Benjamin bought the paper in 1879. It was published in Red Bank.
6. He was the last man whipped at Middletown's whipping post c.1836, convicted of stealing chickens. Per the Monmouth Inquirer May 18, 1876.
7. Default on handling municipal funds in his position of Township Collector.
8. It was destroyed by fire October 4, 1875.
9. He was in command of the fort at Sandy Hook during the War of 1812.
10. Their packing plant was located in Port Monmouth. They did a considerable export trade.
11. The Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad which originated at Port Monmouth, receiving New York passengers by steamer.
12. The New Jersey Southern Railroad.

Notice

The Newsletter is now mailed under bulk rate regulations. This helps the Society run economically as there is a considerable postage savings. However, there is at least one inconvenience to recipient and mailer - bulk rate mail is not forwardable. If you plan a move, please send us your new address, in advance, if possible. Another rule is for all bulk rate items to be of the same thickness. Thus, some may receive enclosures not appropriate for them, such as a dues notice to a Newsletter exchange recipient.



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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.

Give Dues their Due Please Pay Dues Promptly

A few of you have still not paid for 1986. Your cooperation will be appreciated. Thank you.

Thanks

The Society thanks the following for their thoughtful donations:

- Yolande Lanni Allen -
for three old postcards of Belford
- Olga Boeckel -
for a copy of an old map
- Mrs. Ralph Eilbott -
for a Port Monmouth First Aid commemorative cup
- Middletown Reformed Church -
for three church publications, one for their 125th anniversary, one for a building dedication and their 1986 pictorial directory
- Marcia S. Rissland -
for a collection of very large (approx. 22" x 42") negatives of 1959 aerial views of the Township

The Rissland negatives are an important pictorial guide to Middletown as it was over 25 years ago, even in negative form. They present interesting exhibit possibilities if they can be printed in a desirable format.

An exhibit at the Reformed Church's 150th anniversary celebration in June included many publications. The Society would welcome donations of that type material to its library.

MEMBERSHIP DUES PER CALENDAR YR.

Individual — \$5.00
Family — \$10.00

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