



Newsletter of the Middletown Township Historical Society

VF
VOL. II NO. 5

OCTOBER, 1986

N.J.'s Southern Middletown

There is a Middletown in Cape May County. It is neither a municipality nor a post office. However, the New Jersey Highway Department's map displays it with the same six point type used for our Monmouth Middletown. Confusion exists, as your editor learned during a recent visit.

The Cape May County Middletown is at the juncture of State Highway 50 and the Ocean City road. It is in Upper Township (as in Upper, Middle and Lower) and the mailing address is Woodbine. The locale now is little more than the site of the Triton Tavern, owned by Vince Milita. This Middletown was so named because it was midway between Tuckahoe and Petersburg, according to Howard Lloyd. Howard is not old enough to be your traditional "old-timer", but may be taking the title by elimination as he stated the real old-timers are gone. Howard added that Middletown meant something there years ago, but the name fell out of use ten or fifteen years ago.

Multiple Middletowns can be and are confusing. Vinny occasionally greets a very lost traveler who wanted to go to Monmouth. There was general agreement the name should be dropped from the map to prevent confusion. At least the misdirected has a friendly spot for a tall, cold one before the long drive north.



Julia Dodd Gives Watercolor

Julia Dodd gave the Society this watercolor view of the construction site of the Middletown Shopping Center on Route 35. This quick sketch exemplifies a changed township twenty years after its painting. The center was a farm, one of many now commercial or residential property. A stop sign controlled traffic at an intersection now one of the Township's busiest. The highway was not yet divided, but growing traffic had made it dangerous. The site in the foreground took a few years to develop, with Marine View Savings & Loan's main office built there in 1971.



Mrs. Dodd is a skilled watercolorist. See the accompanying article for reference to two better works in the exhibit. She donated this painting to the Society aware of its value for the historical pictorial records. The Society thanks Mrs. Dodd for her generous gift and admires her sense of history.

Middletown Quiz

13. How many real estate developments were there in 1927?
14. What was the "Red Oaks"?
15. What was the first Federal Government public improvement in New Jersey?

The Hunt-- Look Back 60 Yrs.

The first meeting of the Monmouth County Hunt Racing Association was held sixty years ago. Our look back in history portrays a quite different event. It was held later in the year, on November 20, 1926, and was a combination feast of thanks for the local farmers and a series of races.

Wealthy, sportsmen estate owners of the time held "drag hunts" over their surrounding countryside. Much of the area is still large estate territory around the Chapel Hill, Fair View and Navesink River Road sections. The hunters also ran over the neighboring producing farms as the course of such chases were not as predictable as an oval track.

The meeting, then as now, was held on the estate of Amory L. Haskell, near Chapel Hill in Middletown Township. The farmers feast was served under a large tent in all-you-can eat fashion. The farmers were also the focus of the first race, one limited to farm horses of actual dirt farmers who produced crops. Gentlemen farmers, whose principal green crops were produced in a New York City business and were unrecognizable by botanists, were excluded from that race. The distance was one-half mile. The farmers race was won by Edward Bennett, whose horse beat Howard Maxon's by a head. William Larkin was third. The three front runners received prizes of \$25.00, \$10.00 and \$5.00, respectively. All entrants received a souvenir blanket worth \$12.00.

The second race was "The Master's Cup", for four year olds and up that had hunted with the club. The distance was three miles and the winner was Mrs. W. S. Jones' "Attaboy". Riders wore red hunting coats. The third race, the Monmouth County Gold Hunt Cup, was won by Edward E. Marshall's "Hill Top". The winner's prizes were \$300.00, a plate and a year's custody of a gold cup donated by Manton B. Metcalf, Jr. The final race, for three year olds and up over a level mile course, was won by Edward E. Marshall's "Vex".

A contemporary account reflects a thoroughly enjoyable time. Farmers debated the merits of their horses compared with the thoroughbreds. They reportedly held local racing events in the following weeks. The meet also attracted a society following, promptly placing the event on a course it follows to this day.

The 1927 meet was held earlier, on November 5, perhaps to seek good weather. It rained. The farmers feast was the focus with non-farming spectators admitted for \$2.50. Named races included "The Navesink" and "The Shrewsbury". Fort Monmouth provided a band and men to watch the grounds.

The full history of the Meeting remains to be written, a project The Society would like to help record. It is an important Township event, though often not recognized as such as the Haskell estate has been generally and incorrectly described as in Red Bank. Do distant travelers get lost on the south bank of the Navesink?

This year's fifty-sixth annual meeting will be held on October 18. The cause is still marked by generosity and helping others. The event is a large fund raiser for local non-profit organizations. Perhaps you would like to help a fellow historical organization with your ticket purchases. They are sold by the Monmouth County Historical Association at 70 Court Street, Freehold. Hilltop and estate parking, each admitting one car and up to six occupants, cost \$130.00 and \$90.00, respectively. Several local businesses also sell tickets for MCHA including the Brokers Lounge, Dorns Photo Shop and Haagen-Daz Ice Cream Shoppe in Red Bank and the Fair Haven and Little Silver Book Stores, or call MCHA at 462-1466.

Precancels of Middletown Twp.

This issue of the newsletter was mailed with a precancelled stamp. A precancel is a stamp to which a postmark has been applied prior to mailing by a device designed and used solely for that purpose. Precancels are used on third and fourth class mail, which do not require date postmarks, and help expedite postal handling.



Precancels are an important stamp collecting specialty. There are many ways to collect them. Town collecting is simple, but popular, requiring one stamp showing each precancel issuing entity, generally a separate post office. The Township has five precancel towns, including Middletown, New Monmouth, Port Monmouth, Belford and Lincroft. Precancel type collecting is more complex and interesting, requiring one stamp from each style of precancel imprint used by each town. Prior to this mailing each Township office had only one type. The earlier Middletown precancel was made by a handstamp, as are most precancel types. This new precancel is printed by letterpress and is Middletown's second type.

MIDDLETOWN	MIDDLETOWN	MIDDLETOWN
NJ 07748	NJ 07748	NJ 07748

The typeface is microgramma. The size is eight points with a six point body. It was designed around 1900 for general use, intended as an updated replacement for copperplate gothic. A common use is stationery. Microgramma has given use to a family of typefaces.

Save this stamp, or preferably the entire envelope. It will have a collector interest. Precancels are not often used now. The Society would like to see or have complete envelopes with precancels from any of the five offices. These comments are very elementary. Further collecting information is available from the Precancel Stamp Society, the national organization of precancel collectors.



Quiz Answers

- A surprising 140, many of them small. Some of their names assumed general use such as River Plaza and Ideal Beach. Others have become obscure such as Glenmary Park and Ocean View. Real estate development is a major Society research subject. We would be pleased to hear from anyone who has developer brochures or maps.
- A hotel and boarding house opened in 1932 in the former mansion of Isaac B. Hosford at Chapel Hill.
- The revenue office at Sandy Hook, for which funds were provided in 1833 - all of \$719.31. The first structure of substance was the Newark custom house. The authorization was \$162.00 in 1854 with construction starting in 1855.

Society Organizes Art Exhibit

N.B. THE PLANNED OPENING OF OCTOBER 4 IS DELAYED AS WE AWAIT COMPLETION OF A SECURITY IMPROVEMENT. WATCH FOR NEWS ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Society has organized the exhibit "Middletown Township: The Artist's View". It will be displayed for six months with a planned opening of October 4. Its two sections consist of a gathering of approximately 24 works, principally, paintings, in various media and a collection of drawings in pencil of historical buildings by Irwin J. Kappes.

Art and history have had a long relationship, sometimes unintentional, sometimes by design. Once only artists recorded the look of a building or place. Their ages-old role was replaced by photography in the mid-nineteenth century. However, the artist's vision and interpretive hand can still show us much and serve as a guide to looking. The exhibit's earliest scene is a c.1840 view of Middletown village by itinerant artist John W. Barber, whose name may be better recognized when linked with historian companion Henry Howe. The work is a contemporary wood engraving by artist William Child, but it clearly portrays Barber's Kings Highway. Barber and Howe traveled the entire State, engraving many town centers while making extensive notes on their makeup and history. Barber and Howe's "Historical Collections of New Jersey", published in three editions in 1844, 1852 and 1868 is one of the most important books on New Jersey. A detail from its Middletown view appears in the newsletter's masthead.

The artist's respect for the old and revered is a constant theme. No work in the exhibit is very old. However, many appear steeped in time. A c.1970 view of Sandy Hook painted by midwesterner Virginia Bove from the Mount Mitchell area portrays a scene similar to what Indians may have observed when Henry Hudson dropped anchor in 1609. Subtle changes occur at the seemingly timeless Navesink Country Store. The Mike Barkman painting reminds us it was once the post office. Similar reminders of the past appear in Tonimonk's Cedar Hill Farm and the old Middletown railroad station. At times the artist's work later becomes a document of a lost building. The Octagon House was long a popular Belford landmark. Although this architectural oddity may have lacked artistic merit, its octagonal shape was unique to the area and reflected an interesting chapter of mid-nineteenth century building. More importantly, it was here and we loved it. Its recent demolition leaves us with only graphic reminders, few as touching as Dorothy Senk's watercolor.

The development of farm land is a constant theme in Township history. See the page 1 article about Julia Dodd's donation, for the exhibit's best reminder. Adaptive use is reflected in another Dodd watercolor. A photograph of the Conover Store hangs in the museum as a reminder of old Lincroft village. The building was moved elsewhere in Lincroft and is the home of our member Charles Toop. Mrs. Dodd's painting shows it now as a residence.

Artistic re-creation of the past can pose problems of historic accuracy. A painting of our museum commissioned by New Jersey Bell for the June, 1985 "Tel-News" is on exhibit. The foreground figure represents Woodrow Wilson, a frequent visitor when the building was Melvin Rice's home, whose use of the house following his 1912 presidential nomination is documented local campaign lore. Placing him on the lawn is reasonable artistic license. However, one can imagine the small likelihood of a governor, his office then, taking a visible outdoor posture at his "get-away-from-it-all" retreat. A real concern existed, though, on how the building should have been represented for 1912. It was built in the Queen Anne style and the date of its alteration in a non-descript classical mode has not been determined. However, a long time local resident assured us after it was painted that the remodeling occurred in 1910 or 1911. That assured us of an historically accurate facade.

The variety of its landscape and lifestyles contribute much to the merits of our township. Our maritime industry is time-honored and deep-rooted. The port at Belford has long attracted artists and photographers. Still, many Township residents have never seen it and do

not know its appeal. Four Belford port views are on exhibit, three by Belford resident Tom Dunn. Tom's long and varied career has brought him national recognition. His affinity for the area is reflected in the words of a local waterman who remarked that many came to Belford to paint, but when the fisherman want a painting, they go to Tom Dunn. A Dorothy Senk watercolor also captures the vitality of the fleet. West of the port are salt marshes, bridged at Church Street by a small wood structure. The sketch by Donald Voorhees, another nationally recognized Middletown artist, captures the feeling of its title "Rustic Bridge". Few would realize the closeness of active life.

All of Middletown's Henry Gulick's paintings are charming; some are great. The exhibit proudly displays a painting of the former Kings Highway library. The December newsletter will chronicle his work in depth.

Marion Dziezyc Carlson has a special feeling for her land, apparent to anyone viewing the flowers at her Red Hill Road home. The pride of place is reflected in her painting of her preserve. Time has altered the scene only slightly. The precious touch of Mrs. Carlson's hand can be equally appreciated on canvas or in the ground.

The exhibit's second section, Irwin Kappes' sketches of Middletown architecture, will be featured in the December issue. They present a new opportunity to view Middletown buildings. They are a large number drawn by the same hand in a consistent style, in monochrome, thus emphasizing line and form. They are a viewing experience by themselves, but can serve doubly so as an entree to viewing the actual buildings.

Holland--Road to Remember

By Marie Davenport

The original strip of Holland Road runs westward in gentle curves from Red Hill Road to Laurel Avenue. Laurel is the main access to the new AT&T building. It continues west through deep-shaded woodland towards Telegraph Hill. This road is woven into the earliest history of Middletown, and indeed of New Jersey. It takes its name from the "Holland area" settled by Dutch-speaking farmers in the 17th and early 18th Centuries, including such well-known pioneers as Hendrickson, Luyster, Wyckoff and Van Schoick.

Two Luyster farmsteads are on the north side of Holland Road just east of Laurel Avenue. Closest to Laurel is the Johannes Luyster home dating from 1680, according to the Middletown Tercentenary Commission. Its curving eaves and front "stoop" for weather protection mark it a typical Holland design. Another Luyster house, distanced a long stone's throw to the east along Holland Road, was built by Peter Luyster who came to the Holland area about 1790. He brought with him four sisters whose good Dutch husbands bore the names of Swart, Smock, Wyckoff, and Couwenouwen. The latter was simplified to Conover. Both homesteads were in Luyster hands up to the middle of the twentieth century.

A third Luyster farmstead is known as the Van Schoick House. It lies on the other side of Holland Road, close to Mahoras Brook. Further West on Holland, beyond Laurel is the Hendrickson House. It was in Middletown Township when built but is now in Holmdel. The Hendricksons' accomplishments were several. Besides being exceptional farmers, they held public office, were benefactors of education, and when need be, soldiers. A Major Hendrickson served in the Revolution. Middletown owes a particular debt to the Hendrickson family because they built a school just behind the family house for the children of the area. Some 60 children from the Holland Area School District (#54) attended school there by the end of the 19th Century. The Hendricksons were well known right into the 1970s for their model orchard on King's Highway in Middletown. As Franklin Ellis referred to the Dutch in his authoritative history of Monmouth County, "As farmers they had and have no superiors".

Editors note: Mrs. Davenport is a member of the Township's Landmarks Commission. This is the first of an expected series on Middletown's historic districts and structures, and the work of this important regulatory body.

Our New Look

A Township Buildings Department crew recently completed two repairs which improve our appearance and help preserve the building. A lesser one is the patching of the wall at a non-public entrance to the kitchen. An eye-sore was removed. Major work was the repair of the roof on the East wing, which stopped a leak. New ceilings in the hall and a small room increase potential exhibit space. Much work remains, but an important first step has been taken to preserve this important historic building. The Society thanks the Township.

Year-End Membership Drive

Dues are an important source of Society revenue. They are willingly offered by those wishing to support our efforts. Thus, we do not think of membership "bargains". However, those joining in September through December have their dues cover the balance of that year and the entire following year. If you like the newsletter and/or the museum, join now. Dues are only \$5.00 individual or \$10.00 family.

We see two extremes on memberships. One museum visitor donating \$5.00 while leaving the museum politely declined a membership when reminded his donation equaled a year's dues. Please note membership brings no obligations. We welcome "subscriber" members. A museum worker notes that new active members are few compared to the number of names joining. We are an open society and welcome greater participation by newcomers.

Other Activities

The Society seeks to broaden its historical work with one aim an appeal to wider membership participation. Consider the following:

GENEALOGY

A two hour talk including question and answer periods was given by Paul Bremer on Friday afternoon, September 19. Timing did not permit prior newsletter notice, but the event was extensively announced in the press. Mr. Bremer visits the East twice a year from Salt Lake City, also holding all-day Saturday seminars. Please write us if interested in a Spring 1987 session.

ARCHEOLOGY

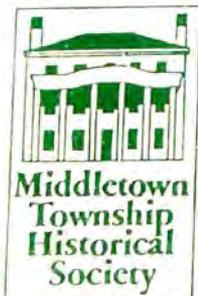
The Society is looking for a good site for a dig. Our archeologist will organize a professional, systematic method. Let us know if you would like to help.

ORAL HISTORY

The value of this interesting pursuit is well-known. Less widely appreciated are the skills and preparation of the interviewer. A training program at a meeting may be available. Give us your thoughts, either as potential interviewer or interviewee. A typist to transcribe the tapes is also needed.

MEETING DATES:

The next two meetings are October 27 and November 24 at the Museum at 8:00. No program is planned. See the article on other activities for possible future programs or suggest one. Your voice is needed and sought.



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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.

MEMBERSHIP DUES PER CALENDAR YR.

Individual — \$5.00
Family — \$10.00

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