



Newsletter of the Middletown Township Historical Society

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East Keansburg. Reflections on the place and name.

The current consideration of a new name for East Keansburg creates an opportunity to examine the origin of that neighborhood and to review place name pointers. The former can be readily traced and described. Place name issues, however, can be given only a brief overview here.

A dock called Brays Landing was established east of Pews Creek prior to 1851, the year it appeared on the Lightfoot Monmouth map. Trade there was dominated by Capt. Thomas J. Carter, a local native born in 1826. Carter bought a small sloop, "Diamond", in 1846, a vessel of seven tons capacity. He acquired over the years a succession of larger ships, retiring when the steamers took over the bay traffic about three decades later.



L-1938 Dolph & Stewart

R-1851 Lightfoot

Brays Landing was named for the farmer who owned the land on which it was built. This was common practice for several bay shore docks. Joseph was probably his first name. The surrounding land was poor for farming. Squatters were at times left there unmolested. There would be little interest in the property until the success of adjacent Keansburg as a resort early in this century.

Keansburg was once known as Granville, a name in use at least by 1843. A post office was established in 1854, but was discontinued the next year. When a post office was re-established in 1884, the authorities insisted on a new name to avoid confusion with Granville, New York. The office and then section of Middletown Township was named for Congressman John Kean, a great-uncle of Governor Tom Kean. The summer trade grew so that by 1904 boarding houses had a demand greater than capacity. By 1906 real estate promoters were selling many lots for summer home construction. A boom was underway.

A small part of Keansburg was in Raritan (now Hazlet) Township. Most was in Middletown, but the Keansburg residents thought they had little influence in either. A borough movement was underway by 1913 and the section

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Middletown's Trains and Trolleys

The history of the railroad in Middletown differs from many other areas of the state, especially the northern suburbs. The first railroad in Middletown was a starting point for other destinations. On the next railroad, the present North Jersey Coast Line, Middletown was a less traveled station on the road to Long Branch and points south. Middletown station delivered more farm produce than passengers for many years. However, after housing replaced the farms, Middletown became one of the busiest stations on the line.



The stage served as a taxi in the early days of rail. This one was serving Navesink c.1890s & early 20th c.

The trolley's span was shorter, both in distance and time. However, it affected local development in an immediate and pronounced way, despite the short distance traveled. The trolley in Middletown lasted little more than twenty years. In that time, it established new growth patterns and helped locate a new high school. The trolley fell victim to competition from the private automobile and the motor bus. The evolution of transportation to those motor forms continued the trolley-assisted transformation of Middletown Township from farmland to suburban bedroom.

Students of rail transport have written many histories, typically by individual line. These comments will focus on the effect of rail on a municipality's development.

The first scheduled passenger railroad in New Jersey was the Camden and Amboy. It was chartered in 1830 and was operating between South Amboy and Camden by 1832. The Camden and Amboy was considered a New York to Philadelphia route. A trip originated by water from New York to South Amboy and ended crossing the Delaware River to Philadelphia. The owners of the Camden and

Amboy were a monopoly on rail service between those two cities. That monopoly gave them wide authority that would shape the development of the state and result in powerful, political influence. The Camden and Amboy prevented the start of other rail lines over a wide area. They were wary that rail lines near New York and Philadelphia could be re-directed to serve that route. The Camden and Amboy protected vigorously its monopoly. Their posture was resented in affected parts of the state, including the Monmouth shore. Their political grip was so strong that New Jersey was sarcastically known as "the State of Camden and Amboy".

The force of public opinion swayed the issue. The New Jersey legislature responded to demands from unserved areas for rail service, particularly the southeastern part of the state. The Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad was chartered on March 3, 1854 to build a line from Port Monmouth to Cape May. The Camden and Amboy did not think the proposed route was a threat to its monopoly as its start and end were more distant from New York and Philadelphia than were South Amboy and Camden. The developers of the new line had a grand

Price" left Robinson Street, New York, at 10 o'clock carrying invited guests. Monmouthites joined them at Port Monmouth for the rail trip to Long Branch, where festivities for the railroad's opening were held. Long Branch had been a resort of modest size for a few decades prior to 1860. It had about three hotels that year. There was serious opposition to the new road which some thought would be injurious to their municipal well-being. Little did they realize that the railroad would help make Long Branch the major sea shore resort of the late nineteenth century.

The views of a New York Herald reporter combined condescension and insight into future mutual gain. At Port Monmouth, he referred to the locals as "favored people in this instance, by being aroused from a sort of lethargic state of stage coach and horse express inaction, to awake to the experience of a first class railroad". He realized "The farmers in that locality are to be the great gainers by the railroad institution and our own city in a great measure will soon feel its benefits".



Local farms were productive and Pt Monmouth was an active outlet for markets.



c.1890 R&DB train at Red Bank. Line then N.J. Southern

plan for a ferry over Delaware Bay, trackage to the Chesapeake Bay, a second ferry there and a direct route to the important southern port of Norfolk. Their actual intentions were quite different. Their road was built in a southwesterly direction to Atison in Burlington County, from where it proceeded in a northwesterly direction to Jackson in Camden County, where it connected with the Camden and Atlantic Railroad, placing Philadelphia in easy reach.

Construction was underway by the spring of 1858. Early worksites included the Shrewsbury Cut, the bridge over the Navesink River between Middletown and Red Bank and the cut near Headdens Corner. The latter job was a lengthy, major project. Work began July 1, 1858. The cut was forty feet deep, fifteen feet wide at grade and one hundred feet across the top. Parts of the cut are still visible, especially from Chapel Hill Road and Conover Lane.

The pier at Port Monmouth was started in the spring of 1859. Its completed length was about 4,800 feet. Tides and weather would become problems. Ice carried away half the pier in January 1860, but the wreckage was saved. The pier was reconstructed with an ingenious device enabling use of the rails on the remaining part of the pier to support a pile driver, which could not be used on the heavy winter seas. An ad that month announcing times of connecting steamship departures was changed to note that the tides at Port Monmouth would be a factor in ship sailings. Tidal problems would eventually cause the railroad to move its bay terminus.

Work progressed and the line was opened June 18, 1860. Two steamboats, the "Rip Van Winkle" and "Alice



The Belford Wreck

The principal measure of the effect of a railroad on growth of a residential area is the erection of housing. Northern New Jersey railroads were active in stimulating residential construction, which will be viewed in greater depth later. In Middletown Township, however, the first decade of the railroad would be marked by unreliable tides, competition to the east and financial and legal difficulty. The Long Branch and Sea Shore Railroad, chartered in 1856 as the Long Branch and Sandy Hook Railroad, made its first run, a trial, between those points in July, 1865. It was a competitor for the Raritan and Delaware Bay. Its straight path down the shore would shorten the time between docking

and arriving at Long Branch. After leaving Port Monmouth-Middletown, the Raritan and Delaware Bay passed through Red Bank, Shrewsbury and Eatontown, an indirect route. The most potent opposing force was the legal might of the Camden and Amboy. They barred by injunction the Raritan and Delaware Bay from westwardly diverged route, claiming the Raritan and Delaware Bay violated its state-granted charter by not adhering to its intended route.
to be continued



East Keansburg. continued

separated from the two townships by a 142 to 88 vote in an election April 18, 1917. A development on the Middletown side of the border was East Keansburg Park. It was developed in 1914 south of Port Monmouth Road and east of Ocean Avenue. This appears to be the earliest use of the name. A map for a small tract near Pews Creek was filed in 1915, called East Keansburg Manor. The naming can be readily inferred: Keansburg was very popular and promoters near, but over, its borders wished to take the appeal of the name.

Barrett Beach was the name of the community north of Port Monmouth Road and west of Pews Creek. It was developed from a 50 acre plot purchased by Bertha Barrett around 1907. The Ideal Beach Realty Company sold about 1,200 lots in the early nineteen twenties in the same area. Two communities of interest arose around the beach issue, with Port Monmouth Road the dividing line. The realty developers retained the waterfront property. It offered the beachfront to either the Township or the Ideal Beach lot owners after its lots were sold. The beach went to the lot owners as a typical municipal issue arose - who would pay and who would benefit most from the expenditure. Inland East Keansburgers objected to special assessments that would have paid for improving the beach. A civic association was formed by 1924 through stock subscription among the East Keansburg lot owners. A clubhouse was built and the beach improved.

A storm wrecked the boardwalk in February 1927, flooding much of Ideal Beach. The idea of public ownership was again raised. There was vocal opposition, however. The township assumed ownership by ordinance in 1929, helped by State aid.

A place name arises from public use of a name for a natural, geographic or manmade place or geographic or topographic feature. The naming of a municipality can often be traced to an act or ordinance. A municipality, such as Middletown Township, may have dozens of places with which people identify. Some names were created or changed when post offices were established. The post office has its own criteria for moving and delivering mail. They change over the years and can be the subject of a separate study. Belford is a name selected when Port Monmouth was divided into separate postal delivery areas. Everett was named when Morrisville was given a post office, as there was another postal Morrisville in New Jersey. The post office shortened Locust Point to Locust because two word office names were in disfavor in the 1890's. The post office may be discontinued, but the names often remain. A neighborhood without a post office may seemingly be called whatever the locals choose. Fairview was known as Headdens Corners until thirty or thirty-five years ago. The change seems unwise as there are nine Fairviews in New Jersey, including a post office in Bergen County. The matter could be described ad nauseam. In short, those wanting mail delivered accept the direction of the postal service.

East Keansburg has a strong historical similarity with Keansburg. They were developed in the same period with the same character - small lots intended as sites for summer homes or recreation. They both changed to year-round residential communities as transportation facilities, especially highways, changed acceptability of commuting distances. Their linkage was even closer in the nineteen-twenties over a key public issue - water. East

Keansburgers initially had to secure water from the Ideal Beach Water Company. It maintained service only from May 1 to October 31 and charged high rates. The state's utilities commission seemed little swayed by the price issue, but permitted access to Keansburg's municipal system after Ideal Beach failed to provide ordered year-round service. Keansburg was eager to serve East Keansburg. Presumably higher volume would have lowered Keansburg's costs.

A desire to change borrowed names as older ones go out of fashion is not unusual. East Detroit, Michigan wants to change to East Pointe, now wishing to borrow from Grosse Pointe, the Rumson of suburban Detroit. They, too, are accustomed to "East", but East Detroit is northwest of Grosse Pointe. East Paterson changed its name to Elmwood Park. Surely no one will ask why.

These comments outline the historical link between East Keansburg and Keansburg. They also suggest that postal delivery is in the Postal Service's hands and is a matter that cannot be changed by local action only. East Keansburg is not even a separate office with a name to change. The matters of fashion and local naming are left to others.

New Members

Laurence & Barbara Erera - New Monmouth
June Methot - Navesink
John F. Rhody - Fair Haven
Judith Stanley - Locust

Middletown Quiz

26. What Middletown High School student fought in the Spanish Civil War as an aviator for the loyalists?
27. How was the Township's first Town Hall and when was it opened?
28. Who were Middletown's first six volunteers in the Civil War?
29. How is "Brother Wolf" by Milly Johnstone a Middletown book although it never mentions Middletown?
30. Who was John Eldridge?

Personal Participation

The accompanying article on rubbings is the first of a series that will outline a variety of topics that may appeal to readers not now active with the Society. The series' aim is the encouragement of wider participation in local history by showing its variety and the ability to appeal to many tastes. Join us and see what the Society is about. Visit the museum and ask a guide or call Society President Randall Gabrielan at 671-2645.

Doing Local History: RUBBINGS

by Irwin J. Kappes

Rubbing is a form of printing in which you place the paper on a carved or incised stone or brass plate and rub it with pigment, usually a hard wax, to pick up the design underneath. Unlike press printing, the impression you make is not a reversal and the stone is not touched by ink or pigment.

Most children are acquainted with the primitive form of the art as a portrait of Lincoln made by rubbing a pencil on paper over a penny. Rubbings can be made from almost anything done in bas relief having design interest, including headstones, historical markers, manhole covers and even leaves with strong veining.



A rubbing is a collectible. Collectors covet such prizes as a rubbing of the resplendent art deco manhole cover found at the Los Angeles Federal Court, or an impression from the tombstone of Dick Whittington, thrice Lord Mayor of London. Only two rubbings of the latter are known to exist.

No artistic talent is required to do rubbings. The process is simplicity itself. You need only paper, preferably strong, thin and smooth, like shelving or drafting paper, black wax or lithographic crayons, masking tape to hold the paper in place, a hand brush to clean the surface to be rubbed, and a plastic eraser to lift inadvertent smudges.

So far, so good. But what does rubbing have to do with the history of Middletown Township? We happen to have in our 18th and 19th century cemeteries some of the finest examples of the stonecutter's art. The freehand

chiseling of fine Roman lettering on stone is virtually a lost art. Moreover, many of the stones were relatively soft to begin with and are decaying due to weathering and pollution. Therefore, any interested society member who decides on stone rubbing as a hobby can perform a service of importance to future preservationists or restorers. They will, when these minor masterpieces have become incipherable, welcome important help from "way back in the late twentieth century". Some of the finest examples are to be found in the Old Presbyterian Cemetery on Kings Highway at Kings Court and in the tiny cemetery directly behind the Ivy House on Kings Highway.



4 Rubbing is new in the U.S., although it has long been a popular hobby in Britain. There it is most often done on brass tablet portraits on church floors. A dependable guide to the subject is "How to Make Rubbings" by Michael Kingsely Skinner, Van Nostrand-Reinhold Publishers, 1972. The detail used to illustrate this article is from "Early New England Gravestone Rubbings" by Edmund Vincent Gillon, Jr., Dover Publications, 1966, 195 plates, paperbound, \$3.00.

N.B. One of a series aimed at encouraging participation with the Society by outlining the variety of local historical matters.

Quiz Answers

26. Eddie Schneider, Jr., born in 1911 at Locust Point
27. It was the former Middletown Village School at the corner of Kings Highway and Route 35, still standing in front of the present Town Hall. The school had been damaged by fire, was rebuilt as a hall and was dedicated January 6, 1941.
28. John S. Herbert of Harmony, George Marley of Middletown Village, Edward Jamison of Centerville, W.M. Foster of Port Monmouth, Elisha La Forge of Chapel Hill and William Ryan of Headcens Corner. The latter two were killed in battle. Marley deserted to the rebels and was never heard from again. This is according to an army man commenting to an Atlantic Highlands Journal representative in 1898 and reprinted by the Red Bank Register May 25, 1898.
29. It is the personal recollections and beliefs by the former Mrs. Holton, mother of the boy killed by the zoo wolf in July 1927. See the February 1987 newsletter.
30. A Middletown Revolutionary War hero. He fought with Joshua Huddy and was hand-picked by him to participate in the defense of the Toms River block house. Eldridge survived the war.



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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.