



Newsletter of the Middletown Township Historical Society

Our 35th year of preserving and promoting the history of Middletown Township

Vol. VIII, No. 2

Fall 2003

Twin Lights

A 19th century lighthouse in Highlands, Twin Lights was once a place of scientific innovation, but is now a landmark State Historical Site. The first Twin Lights was a pair of identical frame structures built in 1828, their dual luminaries in the hills designed to distinguish them from nearby shore front Sandy Hook Lighthouse and lightship. The originals were replaced in 1862 by the present brownstone towers, one rectangular, the other octagonal, so they are technically no longer "twins." The structure, which connects the towers with keepers and storage areas was designed by Joseph Lederle.

Twin Lights was the first lighthouse to use the Fresnel lens, installed in 1841, a French innovation using a series of prisms that provided an enormous expansion of light source. A later Fresnel, a nine-foot wide bivalve lens illuminated by a carbon-arc light, installed in the South Tower in 1898, cast a beam visible for 22 miles.

Twin Lights was an early seacoast electrified lighthouse and the first major seacoast lighthouse to have its own generating plant. The Twin Lights grounds were the site of the first successful demonstration in 1899 of the wireless telegraph by inventor Guglielmo Marconi. Early radar devices were also tested there. The lighthouse was decommissioned in 1949; the property was acquired by the State of New Jersey in 1962. A light is now lit for exhibition purposes, although it is no longer a navigational aid.

Randall Gabrielan.

Authors' note: These remarks are the unedited entry for Twin Lights for the Encyclopedia of New Jersey. They present the essential information in a few words for a place that has a rich and deep history, one that justifies a separate visit as well as attendance at the Historical Society's annual August meeting there.



At our annual August meeting at the Twin Lights in Highlands (originally part of Middletown Township) we were treated to curator and keeper Tom Laverty's first ever "digital" presentation. As always, he entertained and updated us with an interesting program on the current activity at Twin Lights and in the New Jersey lighthouse community.

During the restoration of the two towers last year, workers found several initials carved into the walls. With the belief that the stone masons who had worked on the towers in 1862 were from New York and the stones from the Belleville quarry, Tom is eager to discover the identities of these masons who left their mark. Tom also talked about the July visit from Highlands-born movie director Kevin Smith who filmed a segment for the Tonight Show with Jay Leno (see "Local Landmarks on National TV" story).

The evening was capped off with a climb of the South Tower for a spectacular night view. The Historical Society holds its August meeting at Twin Lights every year at 8:00 P.M. Please join us.



Ranger Tom Laverty explaining the renovations to the Twin Lights during the past year

Board of Trustees

At the September 15th meeting, the Board of Trustees was elected for 2003. The officers are Randall Gabrielan, President; Peg Jordan, Vice President; Gail Nelsen, Treasurer; and Laura Poll, Secretary. The Trustees are Ellen Broander, Gail Buchanan, Jim Coughlin, Jess Jordan and Robert Pellegrini.

This issue of the MTHS Newsletter has been sponsored by:

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Local "Landmarks" on National TV

A segment of "Roadside Attractions with Kevin Smith" that aired on the September 26th Tonight Show with Jay Leno, featured the Food Circus Clown on Route 35 in Middletown and Twin Lights in Highlands. Smith, writer and director of the movie "Clerks" which was shot on location in Leonardo and Atlantic Highlands, spoke with Joseph Azzolina Jr. in front of the 30 foot tall "massive and creepy" sign. The Food Circus Super Market company plans to apply for historic landmark status in three years, the 50th birthday of the clown.

Smith then spoke with Brad Campbell of Twin Lights to ask how it turns on and off. Campbell said it was very complex - cut to Tom Lavery at the bottom of the stairs, flipping the light switch!

We want your yearbooks

The Historical Society has strong ties to education in Middletown Township. Melvin A. Rice, a previous owner of the house where our museum is located, donated a large portion of his land and money to help build the first high school in Middletown. Then in 1946, Dr. John M Carr opened a private boys (and later co-ed) school, Croydon Hall Academy which operated for 30 years.

Our yearbook collection contains copies of "Odranoel" dating from 1922, but there are some gaps we hope someone will be able to fill in. We need the following years: 1935, 1941, 1944-49, 1953-54, 1956, 1958-62, 1966, 1972, 1974-75.

By the way, did you know that "Odranoel" is "Leonardo" spelled backwards? Middletown's first high school was located at what now is the present site of Bayshore Middle School on Leonardville Road in Leonardo. High School North kept the yearbook name until they changed it to "Polaris."

Acquisitions

Life Member Patch, Middletown Township Fire Department, Middletown Township Fire & Police Departments 75th Anniversary commemorative medallion and program from June 14th, 2003 ceremonies - gift of Joe McCarron, Navesink Hook and Ladder Company.

2002 - 2003 class yearbooks donated from Middletown Village Elementary, St. Leo the Great, Bayshore, Thompson and Thorne Middle Schools, Christian Brothers Academy, and Middletown High Schools North and South

A scrapbook of sports clippings owned by George Scott, a Leonardo High School football team player in the early 1940's - gift of Howard Johnson's Inn, Middletown.

Information Request

Does anyone know about sources of information on Mrs. Nicholas Rutgers' house on Navesink River Road designed by the architect William Lawrence Bottomley? The house is an early - to mid 20th century structure, believed to be part of the LaMarche Tract. You can see a picture of it in the Gottscho-Schleisner Collection (call #LC-G612-40518) in the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/pphome.html>)

Name Our Newsletter Contest

We are still looking for a few more good ideas on a name for our newsletter. Thanks to everyone who sent in suggestions. Any others? Let us know - winner will receive a Middletown Township Historical Society T-shirt.

Thanks So Much!

Special thanks go to Pete Brady for the copy machine; Ray Veth of Beacon Awards & Signs (732-747-9588) for the bright yellow "Museum Open Today" banner; Dominic Koehler of Home Renovation & Repairs (732-291-5610) for two boxes of envelopes and other office supplies, a window air conditioner, Christmas tree with decorations; and Kathy Carragher and the Red Bank Regional High School Library for the set of "Who Was Who" books.

Wish List

If your company is upgrading its equipment or if you have some items around the house no longer in use, and the old equipment is still in working condition, please consider donating it to us for a possible tax deduction and the satisfaction of helping us improve our operations. We could use the following: small refrigerator, map case, dehumidifiers, legal size filing cabinets, display cases, long folding tables, color television and VCR player, vacuum cleaner.

October 20th - Randall Gabrielan will speak at "Dating Post Cards and Using Them for Local History." Actual examples from Middletown and elsewhere in Monmouth County will be shown. At the Museum, 8:00 P.M.

November 17th - Gail Hunton will speak on "The Seabrook-Wilson House (formerly known as the "Spy House")" at Port Monmouth Road and Wilson Avenue, Port Monmouth, 8:00 P.M.

December 15th - Our annual holiday party - join us for a few hours of mingling with others interested in Middletown Township and the Bayshore. At the Museum, 7:00 P.M.

Middletown Day

Thanks to everyone who visited the MacLeod-Rice House on September 20th for Middletown Day. 540 visitors signed our guest book! We enjoyed talking to everyone about the Historical Society and the history of the Township. Local artist Richard Sass and author Randall Gabrielan were on hand discussing their pictures and books, respectively, on local topics. The winner of the Classic Car Best in Show trophy sponsored by the Historical Society this year was a sleek blue 1963 Cadillac, owned by William Nemcik of Holmdel, Congratulations to all our raffle winners.



Society members Ellen Broander, Gail Nelsen, Peg Jordan, Laura Poll, and Arn and Ed Weichel at Middletown Day

Calendar of Events



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

EDITOR: LAURA POLL

Meetings: 8:00 P.M., the third Monday of every month at the MacLeod-Rice House, Croydon Hall. At the intersection of Leonardville Road and Chamone Avenue, Leonardville.

MEMBERSHIP DUES PER CALENDAR YEAR

Individual	\$5.00
Family	\$10.00
Sustaining	\$25.00

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