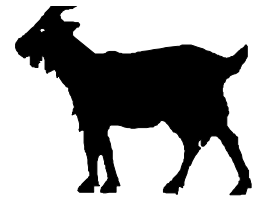


# Nannygoats



In honor of this year's Country Fair theme of "Great Authors, Great Books," we've chosen to recognize one of the many authors who have lived in the area, Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman. During her life she was one of the country's most critically acclaimed authors, known nationally for her numerous books and short stories and for the literary circles in which she traveled. The Society is lucky to have a wealth of information on Ms. Freeman in its collection, including the images and information featured here. In addition, Metuchen has the only extant structure (207 Lake Avenue) that associated with the novelist.

## Mary Wilkins Freeman

*A prolific and critically acclaimed author*



Mary Eleanor Wilkins was born in Randolph, Massachusetts on Halloween, 1852, and her first works were published in the early 1880s. In 1892 she met Metuchen resident Charles Freeman through their mutual association with Harper's

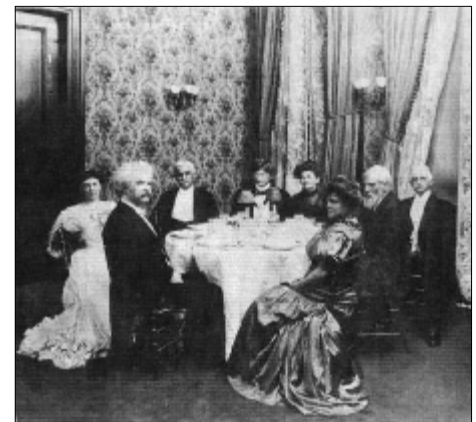
editor and Metuchen resident Henry Mills Alden, and on New Year's Day in 1902 married Dr. Freeman, soon afterwards moving into 207 Lake

Avenue in Metuchen. The couple later built a larger home a block and a half away

automobiles.

During the nearly 30 years that Ms. Freeman lived in Metuchen, she was loosely associated with both the Quiet Hour and Borough Improvement League (B.I.L.) clubs. However, her 1905 book, *The Debtor*, caused a minor uproar as it was thought to be an unflattering caricature of life in the Borough.

At the time of her death in 1930, she had published more than 40 books and many other works, and although her popularity had begun to wane, she had been one of the most famous authors of her day. For more information about the author, visit the Society's Grimstead Archives,



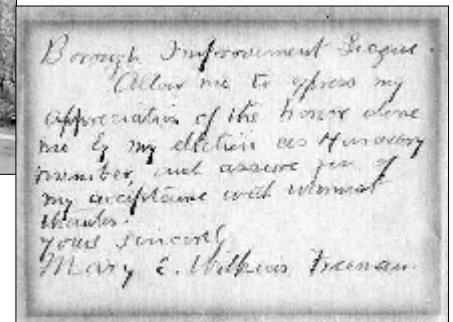
or the Metuchen Public Library to check out one of her many books, a collection of her letters edited by Brent Kendrick Perry (1985), or a biography by Perry Westbrook (1988).



at 159 Lake Avenue, on six-acres of land located almost directly across from Tommy's Pond. The home was named "Freewarren," and housed their many collections: they were known to be a rather eccentric pair, and in 1912 owned a total of six



Top Left: An early image of the author. Top Right: Freeman with Mark Twain at his 70th birthday party on December 5, 1905 at Delmonico's in New York. Also seated are Kate Riggs, Joseph Twitchell, Bliss Carman, Ruth Stewart, Henry Alden, and Henry Rogers. Left: The author's first home in Metuchen, at 207 Lake Avenue (still extant). Middle: "Freewarren," at 159 Lake Avenue (destroyed by fire in the late 1950s). Right: A letter accepting Honorary Membership in the B.I.L.



The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society was founded in 1974 with the primary purpose of promoting an interest in and appreciation of the history of the Borough of Metuchen and of Edison Township.

# Short Hills Battlefield Grant Update

In August, Society President Walter Stochel, Jr. and Member Ann Walker attended a full day workshop on implementing the grant we received from the American Battlefield Protection Program. This workshop was held at National Park Service headquarters in Washington, DC, and included 10 other grant winners, including those from Rhode Island and New Mexico.

According to Walter, "It was a very intensive workshop on how the American Battlefield Protection Program works, and how to fill out all the Federal paperwork correctly." Walter also noted that the most interesting portion of the workshop had to do with using KOCOAs military terrain analysis to evaluate battlefields. KOCOA stands for Key

Terrain, Observation and fields of fire, Concealment and Cover, Obstacles, Avenues of Approach. This analysis was developed by the U.S. military and is now being used by archaeologists and battlefield historians to learn how to look at the terrain of a battlefield through the eyes of a soldier. KOCOA is an analytical tool that the Society will use to study and nominate the Short Hills battlefield to the National Register of Historic Places.

The next steps in the process are the creation of a Request for Proposals (RFP), selection and hiring of a qualified historic preservation consultant, and the preparation of the detailed nomination paperwork.

## New Interpretive Signs at the Oak Tree Pond Historic Park

The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society, the Township of Edison, the Save The Oaktree Pond committee, and TD Bank have partnered to create three new interpretive signs at the Oak Tree Pond Historic Park at Oak Tree & New Dover Roads in Edison. The interpretive signs, manufactured by Pannier and installed by the Township this summer, were created by Society President Walter Stochel, Jr. with a cantilevered design. The first sign shows images of the Reuben Ayres house that was on the site from the mid 1700s until 1968. The second sign explains the ecology of Oak Tree Pond, and the third sign includes the history of the Oak Tree neighborhood. This signage is in addition to that previously installed in the park by Commerce Bank regarding the 1777 Oak Tree Engagement. The Society provided maps, graphics, photographs, and limited funding for this project.

### *A Letter from the President...*

Dear Members and Friends,

It is with deep sadness that we inform you of the recent passing of Kevin M. Hale, Recording Secretary, benefactor, and longtime member of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society.

Kevin joined the Society in the 1970's as a teenager, and held various positions on the Board, including Program Chairperson and President. While attending college in the 1980s, he conducted a review of the condition of the MEHS archives. In the 1990s, Kevin helped revise the MEHS bylaws, to bring it up to date with current non-profit law, and again in 2004 he helped revised the by-laws again. In his most recent position as Recording Secretary, Kevin kept accurate notes of our Board meetings, and was always willing to volunteer to help at various Society events, such as the Country Fair, and most recently the May 2009 Walking Tour of Metuchen Architecture.

Kevin was an enthusiastic supporter of the creation and naming of *Nannygoats*, the Society's newsletter, as a way to show the members and public the wealth of information in our collection as well as the latest news about the Society.

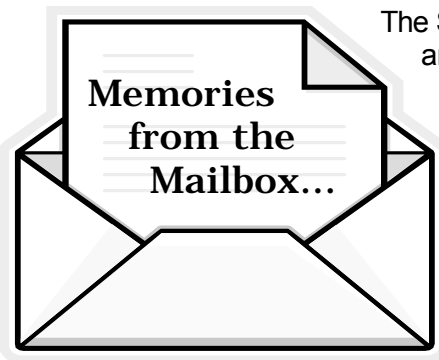
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Recently, Kevin was happily working on research into the Pennsylvania Railroad Station in Metuchen, with the future goal of nominating the station to the National Register.

Kevin was also the Secretary of the New Jersey League of Historical Societies, a supporter of saving the Edison Memorial Tower, a member of the Middlesex Greenway Coalition, and numerous other organizations, all while working a full time job with the State of New Jersey. We will miss his cheerfulness, knowledge, and his support for the preservation of our local history.

*Sincerely, Walter R. Stochel, Jr.*





The Society was recently contacted by an on-line reader in Connecticut in response to the article, photographs, and oral history we published about Costa's Ice Cream in the Winter, 2007 edition of *Nannygoats*. The reader, Jeff Hofmann, was born in Somerville in 1962, and is the younger son of Raymond and Marion Hofmann, formerly of Bridgewater. Mr. Hofmann now lives in Hartford area of Connecticut, and is a Mechanical Engineer working for United Technologies Corp., Pratt & Whitney Power Systems Geothermal business, and is the founder and President of Walker Turner Serviced Machinery LLC, specializing in vintage woodworking machine sales and service. He wrote the following remembrances, and hopes to contribute some photographs and additional remembrances in a future edition of *Nannygoats*.

The interview with Gregory Costa, Jr. really hit home for me. My fraternal grandfather (known in my family as Pop Pop), the late Andrew P. Hofmann of Somerville, worked for Costa's Ice Cream dating back from the mid 1930s through 1962 when he unexpectedly passed away at the young age of 62. My Uncle Andrew also worked for Costa's from the early 1940s after serving in WW2 as an Advanced Combat Training pilot, through 1970 when he and family moved to Largo, Florida.

Having been born myself 10 days after my grandfather's passing, I've grown up to very much admire a man I've only had the pleasure to know from the memories of others. My grandfather was mechanically gifted, and worked as a truck mechanic at Chimney Rock quarries in Watchung before working for Costa's in Metuchen. He also had a successful side business working with his own father, building & leasing houses in the Bridgewater area. His time at Costa's was first as the lead mechanic for the fleet of Costa's delivery trucks, than later transitioned to refrigeration equipment servicing for the Costa's owned Frigidaire ice cream freezers and coolers deployed over so many shops in NJ. His GMC Panel Truck was equipped with a wireless telephone, state of the art for that time, to allow the office communicate with the service truck - how convenient! My dad recollects restaurants like Palace Tea Garden on Broad Street in Newark, and the Canary Cottage in Florham Park (lots of service calls there - Dad thinks that was a country club).

Service calls after hours were common - melting ice cream was not pleasant, so you had to be on call to fix the old Sulphur Dioxide and later Freon 12 compressor equipment. To this day I have a collection of old motors and even a 1920s Sulphur Dioxide Frigidaire Model-K compressor that came from my

grandfather's days at Costa's, converted to an air compressor - still works great after 90 years!

My grandfather was also a friend to Gregory Costa, Sr., having traveled with him to his vacation home in Miami, Florida during



*A Costa's employee using the Direct Expansion Freezing Machine, ca. 1928. This is one of the many photographs donated to the Society by Gregory Costa.*

the late 1930s, serving as a driver, boat mechanic, and all around friend. Mr. Costa, Sr. had lost his 1st wife sometime in that period. My dad recollects how he would help the Costa's with their boat at Point Pleasant, NJ.

The stories of "Joe Gregor" stopping by the house in Somerville to drop off a couple quarts of Costa's Ice Cream used to fascinate me as a kid - imagine that - the guy from the Ice Cream company dropping off ice cream just because he liked my grandfather - where have those days gone? Ralph Manverse was a fellow mechanic at Costa's whom Pop Pop was a good friend of. Mr. Greco was the cake designer, he was from Italy and didn't speak much English - but was an artist when it came to ice cream cakes. He made a Harley Davidson ice cream cake for my Uncle's birthday in the early 40s. Bill

Zang was the salesman, Bosch was the accountant (no one remembers his 1st name - he always went by "Bosch").

Mr. Costa had three children from his 1st marriage, my father remembers Sal the oldest (I think Sal is Gregory, Jr.), Joe Costa and daughter Marie. Joe Sweeney married Marie, and Joe Sweeney was given the shop foreman job at the factory. Pop Pop was always disappointed that he was never given that responsibility, but was wise to understand that family businesses like Costa's sometimes meant family first. I'll stop here, and look forward to sharing more stories and photos for the next issue.

*-Jeff Hofmann, 2009*

**Interested in reading previous issues of *Nannygoats*? All of our back issues are available online at the Society's website at [www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org](http://www.metuchen-edisonhistsoc.org).**

## Leonard F. Hill 1919-2009

The Society regretfully announces the passing of long-time member Len Hill on July 31, 2009.

Mr. Hill attended the American Institute of Banking, Rutgers University, and New York University Graduate School of Business, and rose through the ranks to become Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of the National Bank of New Jersey in 1972. His professional successes and contributions extended outside the bank, where he served as Trustee, Director, and President of Middlesex General Hospital, and as a Director of the New Brunswick Development Corporation, where he was influential in furthering the rebirth of the city. He was a confidant and advisor to a number of Johnson & Johnson executives, and a Charter Trustee of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, serving as Trustee Emeritus at the time of his death.

Mr. Hill received numerous accolades and awards throughout his life, including the United Fund Outstanding Achievement Award, Middlesex County College Paige D. L'Hommedieu Outstanding Citizenship Award, the Monsignor James A. Harding Medal for Outstanding Leadership in Banking, and Theodore Cardinal McCarrick Distinguished Partner in Catholic Education Award. Mr Hill was a member of numerous local organizations and, in recognition of his contributions to local history and service on the Society's Cemetery Committee, was made an Honorary Member of the Society several years ago.

## New in the Collections...

Many thanks to Helen Rak for her recent donation of numerous Edison Township political items from the 1970s and 1980s. Also, the Society gratefully received the files of the Edison Volunteer Fire Company # 1, based in Menlo Park, from the Edison Memorial Tower Corporation. Also of note is the research the Society has been conducting with members of the Sons of the American Legion, who are looking for further information on Ed Fugle, Frank Hummer, and other veterans.

Also, thanks again are due to George M. Muha, of Cream Ridge, NJ and Waverly, TN, who recently donated copies of three short filmed events to the Society. Mr. Muha, who contributed the lead article in previous issue of *Nannygoats*, converted the films taken by his father, Michael G. Muha, to DVD format. The films include a 1952 Memorial Day Parade along Main Street in Metuchen (see image at top right), a 1952 Armistice Day parade, also along Main Street (see middle right), and a 1960s reenactment of a U.S. Airmail Plane landing at Hadley Airport in South Plainfield (see bottom right).

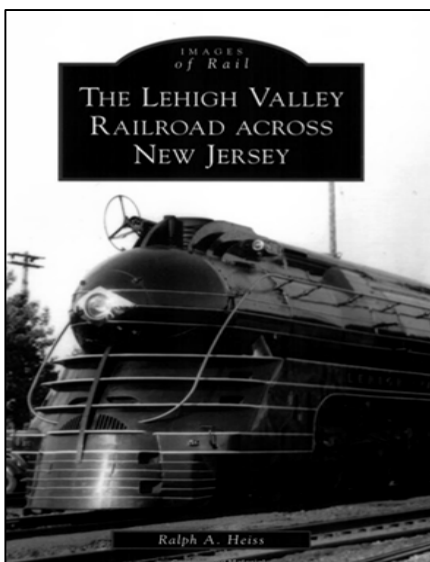


## New Release Available for Sale!

*The Lehigh Valley Railroad Across New Jersey*, by Ralph A. Heiss and released by Arcadia Publishing at the end of August, is now available for sale for \$20 through the Society. A resident of South Plainfield, Mr. Heiss has had an interest in railroads since childhood, and has lectured and authored numerous articles on various railroad topics.

The Lehigh Valley Railroad (LVRR) was instrumental in developing the commerce and communities of central New Jersey through which it once ran. Originally built to haul unending trains of "black diamonds" from Pennsylvania to Perth Amboy, the LVRR became more than a conduit for shipping coal, as it became instrumental in not only hauling produce to New York City markets but also for providing service to companies like Johns-Manville.

Copies of *The Lehigh Valley Railroad Across New Jersey* will be available at all upcoming Society functions and via mail order by contacting Walter at 732-906-0529 or [wstochel@earthlink.net](mailto:wstochel@earthlink.net).



## Class of 1931's *History of Metuchen*

The following text is continued from the Metuchen High School's Class of 1931's *History of Metuchen*, which is being reprinted in *Nannygoats* serially (beginning with Volume 5, Issue 2, Summer 2007). Please note that there are several known factual and grammatical errors, but the document is reproduced exactly as originally written. The accompanying images have been added by the editor. Continued from Volume 7, Issue 2, Summer 2009.

### **A LITTLE LOCAL COLOR**

During the times of our fathers and grandfathers there occurred in Metuchen and its vicinity many amusing and curious little incidents, the facts of which may or may not have been gleaned correctly from various sources. Nevertheless, they are set down here for whatever value they may have in showing the more personal side of Metuchen life years ago.

When the police force was first organized, Enos Fouratt, one of the charter members, used to meet people stepping from New York night trains at the Metuchen Station and demand to know who they were, this being done for fear of New York burglars upsetting the peace of the town.



*An undated view of Metuchen's Police Department and Fire Marshals.*

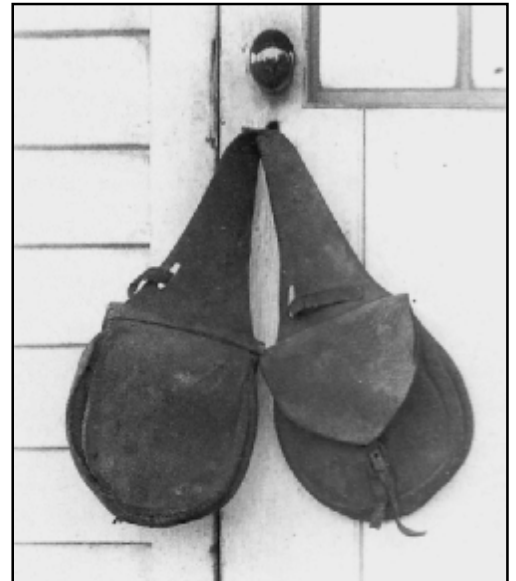
When the present Mook home was being moved from its old location, Mr. Upjohn gave a tea while the house was in the middle of Linden Avenue. This remains something quite new in the way of entertaining. [editor's note: this house, later known as the Stagecoach House, was eventually moved to East Chestnut, but was lost to demolition a few years ago.]

In the days when the mail coach used to drive through Metuchen, the mail was well guarded. When the driver stopped at the Compton's house to eat, he gave one of his two pistols to a man whom he asked to watch his surrey while he ate his meal.

Many years ago, Mr. Will Lundy's home was robbed and detectives were brought from New York to run down the thief. A man by the name of Hullfish was suspected, and the detective upon his arrival in Metuchen speedily became friendly with him. They were seen together constantly and finally the detective suggested robbing a house. Hullfish agreed and they again decided on Lundy's home. The night of the robbery, the men in town, warned by the detective, hid behind the doors in the house. As Hullfish entered the room, they seized him. He was convicted and sent to prison for a long term, never suspecting that his partner in crime was a detective.

Down on the Old Post Road opposite the Manning home a large hollow tree about four feet in diameter used to stand. A man who lived in this vicinity had a severe case of smallpox, and as the neighbors refused to go near him, he lived in this hollow tree until he recovered. Meals were brought to him daily and for a time he was a real hermit in the true sense of the word.

*continued on following page.*



*A 1932 Grimstead photograph of saddlebags said to be have been used as Metuchen's first mailbags.*

### **Interested in Becoming a *Nannygoats* Contributor?**

**Do you have an interesting story, fact, or image that you think would make a good addition to a future issue of *Nannygoats*? If so, please contact the Editor... If your submission is published, we'll send you a complimentary copy of the 1888 "Crumbs of Comfort" history and cookbook! The submission deadline for the Winter/Spring 2010 issue is December 31, 2009.**

*Nannygoats* Editor  
Metuchen-Edison Historical Society  
P.O. Box 61  
Metuchen, NJ 08840  
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732-452-1381

(Continued from previous page)

About fifty years ago, Ben Ford's father owned the hardware store in the old wooden building on the corner of Amboy and Main Street which was recently torn down and which about five years ago was known as John Robinson's grocery store [editor's note: from early 20th century Sanborn maps, this appears to have been where Vinnie's Pizzeria now stands, on the southeast corner of Amboy and Main Street]. One day a man drove up in his horse and wagon and entered the store. Several men were inside examining some revolvers and he joined the group. A minute later one of the guns accidentally exploded and the newcomer was killed. This caused quite a stir in Metuchen's peace and quietness and was the main topic of conversation long after.



An early view of Main Street in Metuchen, one of the many historic images of Metuchen that can be found in the Society's Grimstead Archives.

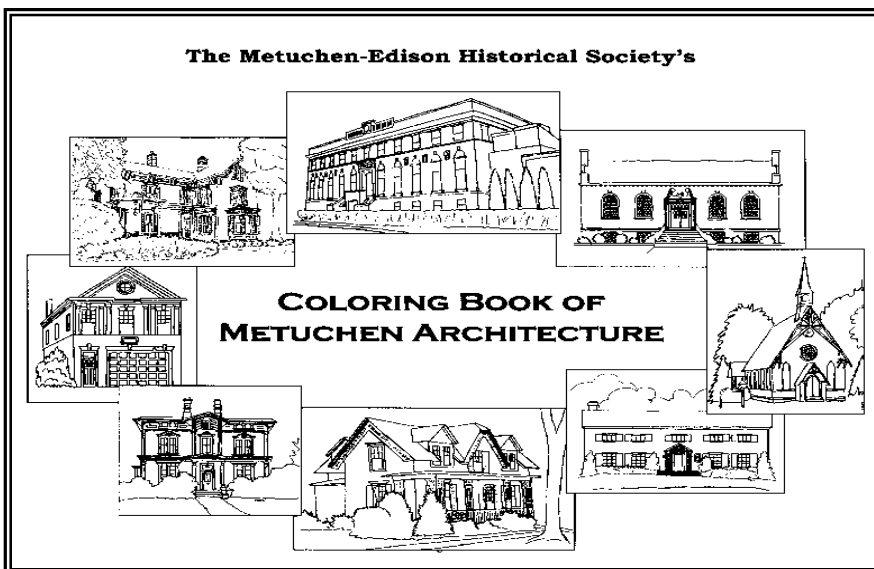
One of several old customs still retained is the habit of New Year's calling. Every New Year's day the men and boys of the community put on their best bibs and tucks [sic] and with special New Year's calling cards in hand started out early in the morning to visit their friends and neighbors where refreshments were served by the ladies of the household. Usually this calling from house to house took all day, depending upon the number of one's friends.

Many years ago when kerosene lamps lighted up the streets it was a common sight to see Harvey Martin, the official lamplighter, drive up to a street corner with his horse pulling a barrel of oil on wheels, stop, place his ladder against the post, light the lamps and move on to the next corner. He made two trips a day; one in the morning where the lamps were cleared and filled, and the second at night when he lit them. In those it was a daily occurrence, but how strange it would seem today to see Mr. Martin driving down Main Street.

Future issues of *Nannygoats* will continue reprinting the Class of 1931's *History of Metuchen*, including more from "A Little Local Color" and the successive chapters.

### Mini Golf on Main?

A resident recently contacted us, saying that as a child he remembered there being a miniature golf course on Main Street, across Bissett Place from the FORUM theater. Do you remember this? If so, please contact us, as we have nothing about this in our files!



### New Coloring Book for Sale!

The Society is proud to present its new "Coloring Book of Metuchen Architecture," compiled from drawings of more than 40 local sites by past member Marjorie Weber Longobardo and current member Tyreen Anne Reuter.

The Society hopes children of all ages will enjoy putting their own creative touches on these local sites, and in the process develop a greater appreciation for how these places make our area a very special place to grow up. Along with past and future editions of our newsletter for children, *Nannykids*, the book will help share a love of our local history with younger generations. Copies are available through the Society for \$6 each, and are free with a new Family Membership.

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## Borough Improvement League

Founded in 1901, the "BIL" is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization, affiliated with the GFWC and NJSFWC Womens' Clubs, devoted to community service & preserving the ca. 1807 Old Franklin School on Middlesex Avenue in Metuchen.



### Old Franklin School Rentals

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[www.boroughimprovementleague.org](http://www.boroughimprovementleague.org)



In September, members of Edison's Terra Nova Garden Club helped beautify the grounds at the Thomas A. Edison Memorial Tower and Museum, in order to give a 'friendly' welcome to the many visitors from all over the world who come to this important historic site. Pictured here are two of the Garden Club members, Kay McCormack and Margaret Inglese, who helped with the improvements.

#### Published by

The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society  
P.O. Box 61, Metuchen, NJ 08840  
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The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

The name of the newsletter, "Nannygoats," is taken from the title of a collection of anecdotes, articles, reminiscences, and letters compiled by photographer J. Lloyd Grimstead. He took more than 2,800 photographs of the Metuchen-Edison area, mostly during the 1930s, which make up 80 percent of the Historical Society's photographic collection. The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society dedicates this publication to Lloyd Grimstead, as a way of honoring him for collecting and recording so much of our local history.

## Boro Ace Home & Garden Center

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**Steve Epstein**  
President

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If you are interested in becoming one of *Nannygoats'* advertising supporters, please contact the Editor.

## Upcoming Programs & Events

### **THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT: HOW WOMEN WON THE VOTE**

**Thursday, November 19, 2009 at 1:30 p.m.**

Society members and the public invited to attend Charles McSorley's presentation about the struggle for women's voting rights, hosted by the Borough Improvement League of Metuchen and sponsored by the New Jersey Council on the Humanities. The free program will take place at the Old Franklin School at 491 Middlesex Avenue in Metuchen, and will be followed by a reception of light refreshments. Parking is available across the street at Borough Hall and along Main Street. Please call Phyllis at 732-548-1391 with any questions.



### *Grimstead Room Archives' Open Research Hours*

The Society's Grimstead Room Archives, containing thousands of local history images and documents, are located in the basement of the Metuchen Public Library and guided access to the collections is available from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon on the following upcoming Saturdays in 2009: October 10, November 7, and December 5. For more information, contact Walter Stochel at 732-906-0529 or [wstochel@earthlink.net](mailto:wstochel@earthlink.net). If you are planning to visit the archive on these days, let us know in advance what you are looking for so we can make sure we have it in our files!



**Metuchen-Edison Historical Society**  
P.O. Box 61  
Metuchen, NJ 08840

*Interested in becoming a member of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society?*  
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Kevin had a great interest in Historic Preservation and community planning. Over the years he took many courses at Drew University (completing their Historic Preservation Certificate program), and attended many conferences and seminars. He had a curious mind, and was always learning. One of the results of his historic preservation education was his successful nomination of the Metuchen Post Office to the National Register of Historic Places in 2008.

Recently, Kevin was happily working on research into the Pennsylvania Railroad Station in Metuchen, with the future goal of nominating the station to the National Register.

Kevin was also the Secretary of the New Jersey League of Historical Societies, a supporter of saving the Edison Memorial Tower, a member of the Middlesex Greenway Coalition, and numerous other organizations, all while working a full time job with the State of New Jersey. We will miss his cheerfulness, knowledge, and his support for the preservation of our local history.



*Sincerely, Walter R. Stochel, Jr.*