

HONORING METUCHEN'S HISTORIC RESOURCES: A MULTI-YEAR EFFORT BY THE METUCHEN HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

June 11, 2013



The Metuchen Historic Preservation Committee was formed in January 2008 to advise the Mayor and Council on steps to strengthen Metuchen's commitment to historic preservation.

*The Committee's goals are to **develop public education** on the benefits of historic preservation, **honor Metuchen's historic resources** by increasing the number of structures in town listed on the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places, and **explore the development of a Metuchen Historic Preservation Ordinance** to formally recognize and protect the town's distinctive historic and architectural character.*

DEVELOP PUBLIC EDUCATION

Celebrate Metuchen Workshop (May 17, 2009)



- Architectural Historian Janet Foster's overview of Metuchen's architectural history
- Architect Elizabeth Reeve's tips for taking care of older homes

Annual Historic Preservation Scavenger Hunts (2011 – 2013)

In honor of National Preservation Month, the Borough's Historic Preservation Committee hosts self-paced Scavenger Hunts during the month of May. The Committee widely promotes the hunts, including coordinating with the Metuchen schools. Winners are announced at a Borough Council meeting, with prizes awarded thanks to the Metuchen Area Chamber of Commerce and an anonymous donor.



Community Outreach

- Provide displays for annual Local History Day.
- Lead walking tours for scout troops.
- Contribute regular updates to the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society's newsletter.

INCREASE METUCHEN'S REPRESENTATION ON STATE / NATIONAL REGISTERS

Number of resources on the National Register?

Metuchen 2; Cranford 2; Chatham 18; Westfield 53; Fanwood 58; Summit 105; Madison 106; Cranbury 219; Highland Park 240; Mendham 271; Glen Ridge 1,958

Townwide Evaluation (Year 1 study, 2009 – 2010):

A professional historic preservation consultant evaluated the entire town and recommended the following areas as having the highest potential for historic district designation:

- Middlesex Avenue Area-Woodwild Park Historic District, including Rector Street, Highland Avenue, and Hillside Avenue: evaluated as Metuchen's strongest district
- Graham Avenue - Thomas Pond Historic District: needs research related to neighborhood history
- Main Street (west side) - Amboy Avenue Historic District: needs research concerning early property owners

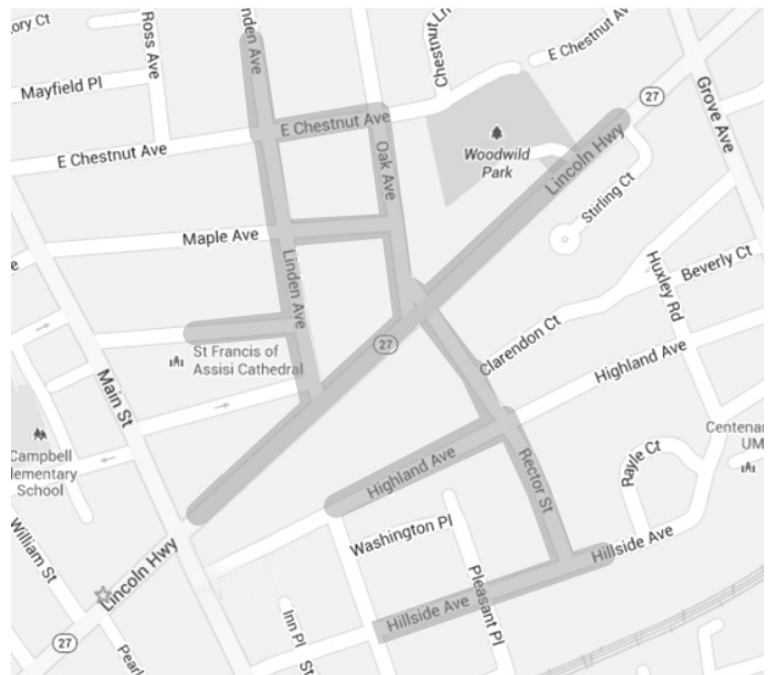
Top Priority Historic District (Years 2– 4 studies, 2010 – 2013):

Historic preservation consultants conducted additional historic research and fieldwork related to the Middlesex Avenue Area-Woodwild Park Historic District, identified as:

“representative of early 20th century Metuchen when it was known as the ‘Brainy Borough.’ Its development ca. 1890–1940 was the major period of growth for

Metuchen as an affluent suburban commuter community. Metuchen in general and this district in particular attracted a wealthy and well-educated population that worked in prominent professional and cultural fields in New York, Jersey City and other centers of commerce while returning to Metuchen to socialize at the clubs and community organizations and lead Metuchen's turn-of-the-century life.”

The district includes Middlesex Avenue, which is part of the Lincoln Highway, the first interstate highway in the United States.



Approximate location of the proposed Middlesex Avenue Area-Woodwild Park Historic District.

EXPLORE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A METUCHEN HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

In 2008, the Committee successfully applied for and received a technical assistance grant from Preservation New Jersey to examine Metuchen's municipal historic preservation program. As part of the evaluation, the Committee explored other towns' historic preservation sections of their municipal master plans. When Metuchen's master plan is updated, the Committee will work with the Planner, Mayor, and Council on Metuchen's Historic Preservation Element.

At this time, the Committee is focusing its efforts on obtaining New Jersey and National Register designation for Metuchen's historic resources. In the future, if the Committee recommends an ordinance to the Mayor and Council, there will be the opportunity for public input.

Grant Funding has been provided by the Middlesex County Cultural & Heritage Commission Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders through a grant provided by the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the Department of State. Matching funds were provided by the Borough of Metuchen.



Metuchen Historic Preservation Committee

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