

# Passport to Edison

*A guide to the history, features, and resources  
of Edison Township*

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by

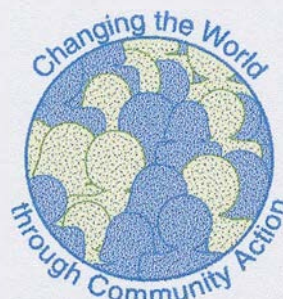
**The Center for Community Renewal**

**April 2001**



***Passport to Edison:  
A Self-Guided Tour of Edison Township***

was created by  
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To find out more about the *Edison of the past*, contact Marie Vajo of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society at

732-985-3127

or visit an Edison Township Public Library reference desk to see copies of

*Welcome to Edison: An Enlightened Community* (1991) and  
*Images of America: Edison* (May 2001)

To learn more about the *Edison of today*, log on to Edison On-Line at

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

If you have additional or updated information that would enhance the value of Passport to Edison materials, please contact The Center for Community Renewal.

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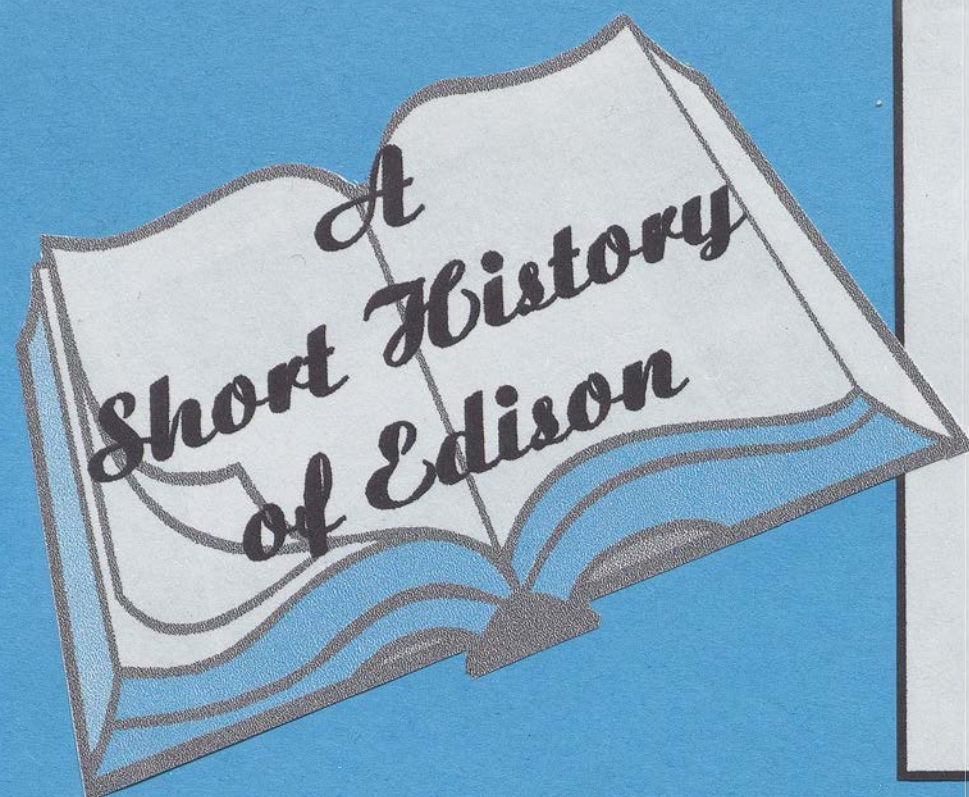
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### How Edison Got Its Start...

The first settlers of what is now called Edison Township were members of the Raritan tribe of the Lenni-Lenape. The first European colonists were Dutch. In 1651, a large tract of land extending from the Raritan River to the Passaic River was deeded by the Dutch king to one Augustine Heermans. In the late 1600s, land grants were given to families such as the Dunhams, Martins, Bonhams, Hulls, and FitzRandolphs. Many of these family names survive as place names today.

The area was not known as Edison then. It was a part of Woodbridge and Piscataway Townships until 1870. On March 17, 1870, it was incorporated as *Raritan Township* because of its proximity to the Raritan River and to honor the presence of the Raritan tribe. Other names considered at the time were "Metuchen" and "Washington."

The boundaries of Raritan Township would not remain stable for long, however. In 1900, residents of the Metuchen area, nicknamed the "Brainy Borough," petitioned the State of New Jersey to incorporate as a separate municipality. A variety of reasons for secession have been advanced, including that the Metuchenites wanted a stronger voice in the operation of their public schools. In 1905, Highland Park incorporated as a separate borough, in part because residents felt they were paying too large a share of the cost of the township government.

### How Edison Got Its Name...

With the loss of the centers of commercial activity provided by Metuchen and Highland Park, Raritan Township struggled for a sense of identity as a community. Residents did not think of themselves as residents of Raritan Township at all, preferring to say they lived in Bonhamtown, Nixon, Menlo Park, Stelton, or Sand Hills. None of the post offices serving the township used Raritan Township as a postmark. In part, this was because other municipalities in New Jersey also bore the Raritan name (one of them still does). There were local post offices in Menlo Park, Nixon, and Stelton, and many residents were served by post offices in surrounding communities.

In 1954, on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the perfection of the incandescent lamp, several citizen activists, led by Mrs. Joanna Wira, organized a petition drive to change the name to Edison Township in honor of Thomas Alva Edison, "The Wizard of Menlo Park." A counter proposal was made to name the township "Nixon" in honor of Lewis Nixon who located in the township in 1913 and developed nitration works here. Nixon also founded the Crescent Shipyard in Elizabeth that built ships for the U.S. Navy, including the first submarine used by the Navy.

The vote was surprisingly close, but the name change to *Edison Township* won in the election of November 2, 1954.



### The Struggle for Recognition...

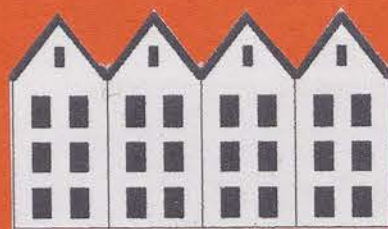
Even with the name change, it took another 14 years for the name "Edison" to gain universal recognition as a township. On October 9, 1968, the Edison Post Office was dedicated--the result of a 10-year struggle by municipal government officials and citizens, including a personal appeal by Mrs. Wira to President Kennedy, to overcome the reluctance of the U.S. Postal Service and the resistance of neighboring towns. Today, Edison is a thriving community of 32-square miles with a resident population of 98,000.



## MILESTONES IN EDISON'S HISTORY

- |             |  |             |  |
|-------------|--|-------------|--|
| 1651        | Land, including what is now Edison Township, deeded to Dutch settler A. Heermans.    | 1923        | Edison Police Department formed with four men and one Model T Ford.                                |
| 1689        | First school established in Oak Tree section.  | 1924        | Raritan Engine Company No. 2 formed.   |
| 1689        | Stelton Baptist Church formed.   | 1925        | H. K. Fire Company established.  |
| 1693        | "Mary Jones" is buried--oldest marked grave in Middlesex County.                     | 1926        | Oak Tree Fire Company founded.   |
| 1724        | St. James Episcopal Church built.  | 1927        | First public library in township opens with 246 books.   |
| 1732        | Col. John Dunham Estate built.   | 1928        | Local government changes from Township Committee to Township Commission.                           |
| 1776-1777   | Revolutionary War skirmishes throughout area.  | 1933        | Middlesex Junior College opens. (Closes 1941.)   |
| 1795        | Raritan Bridge (Albany Street Bridge) built.   | 1937        | Roosevelt Hospital opens.  |
| 1830        | Forman Martin Home built.  | 1935        | Raritan Township Safety Council formed (now known as Edison First Aid Squad No. 1)                 |
| 1849        | New Dover United Methodist Church founded.   | 1936        | Second First Aid Squad formed (now known as Edison First Aid Squad No. 2).                         |
| <b>1870</b> | <b>Raritan Township incorporates.</b>  | 1937        | Present concrete Edison Memorial Tower erected.  |
| 1875        | Bonhamtown Grace Reformed Church built.  | 1941        | Menlo Park Fire House built.   |
| 1876        | Thomas Edison establishes laboratory at Menlo Park.                                  | 1951        | Clara Barton First Aid Squad formed.   |
| 1879        | Thomas Edison illuminates his 45-acre laboratory site with incandescent lamps.       | <b>1954</b> | <b>Township renamed "Edison."</b>  |
| 1881        | Clara Barton forms American Red Cross.   | 1956        | Thomas A. Edison High School opens.  |
| 1887        | Yelencsics Homestead built.  | 1956        | Change from Township Commission form of local government to Mayor-Council form approved by voters. |
| 1900        | First trolley line laid.   | 1964        | John P. Stevens High School opens.   |
| 1900        | Metuchen incorporates as a separate borough.   | 1965        | Raritan Arsenal sold; Raritan Center formed.   |
| 1905        | Highland Park incorporates as a separate borough.                                    | 1966        | Middlesex County College opens.  |
| 1908        | Bonhamtown School built.   | 1967        | John F. Kennedy Medical Center established.  |
| 1913        | Piscatawaytown School built.   | 1968        | Edison Post Office opens.  |
| 1916        | Edison Department of Fire formed.  | 1971        | First codification of local ordinances in 100-year history of Edison                               |
| 1921        | Clara Barton School opens. (Closes 1982.)  | 1979        | <i>Metuchen-Edison Review</i> begins publication.  |
| 1923        | Stelton Elementary School built. (Closes 1982. Now houses Stelton Community Center.) | 1981        | New Municipal Complex opens.   |
|             |  | 1990        | Minnie B. Veal Community Center opens.   |





#### **Late 20th Century:**

In the 1960s, population growth began to be felt in north Edison. By the 1990s, major condominium developments had sprouted up all over the northern half of Edison Township. For almost 300 years, open space had seemed to be an inexhaustible resource. Now it is a scarce commodity.

?



#### **After World War II:**

Camp Kilmer had been a major East Coast assembly point for troops going to and returning from Europe. Upon their return, there was a strong demand for housing. As a result, major neighborhoods of south Edison were developed, including Lincoln Park, Washington Park, Lindeneau and Haven Village.



#### **Early 20th Century:**

Railroads and trolleys emerge as primary modes of inter-urban travel, which opened up Raritan Township as a desirable location for summer homes and recreational sites that provided respite from the noise and heat of nearby cities. The divergence of city and rural life was reflected by the succession of Metuchen and Highland Park. The rest of the township largely retained its rural character, with these neighborhoods emerging:

Nixon      Potter's Crossing      Roosevelt Park

Edison Township:  
From Rural Settlement  
to "Mega-Suburbia"



#### **19th Century:**

Early settlements evolve into villages, and these areas arise:

Clara Barton and surrounding neighborhoods of Bloomfield, Phoenix, Raritan Manor, Sand Hills and Valentine

New Dover  
Menlo Park

Highland Park  
Pumpton & the Dismal Swamp

#### **Colonial Period:**

Within the large geographical area represented by present-day Edison Township, six settlements were important before and during the American Revolution:

Bonhamtown  
Oak Tree

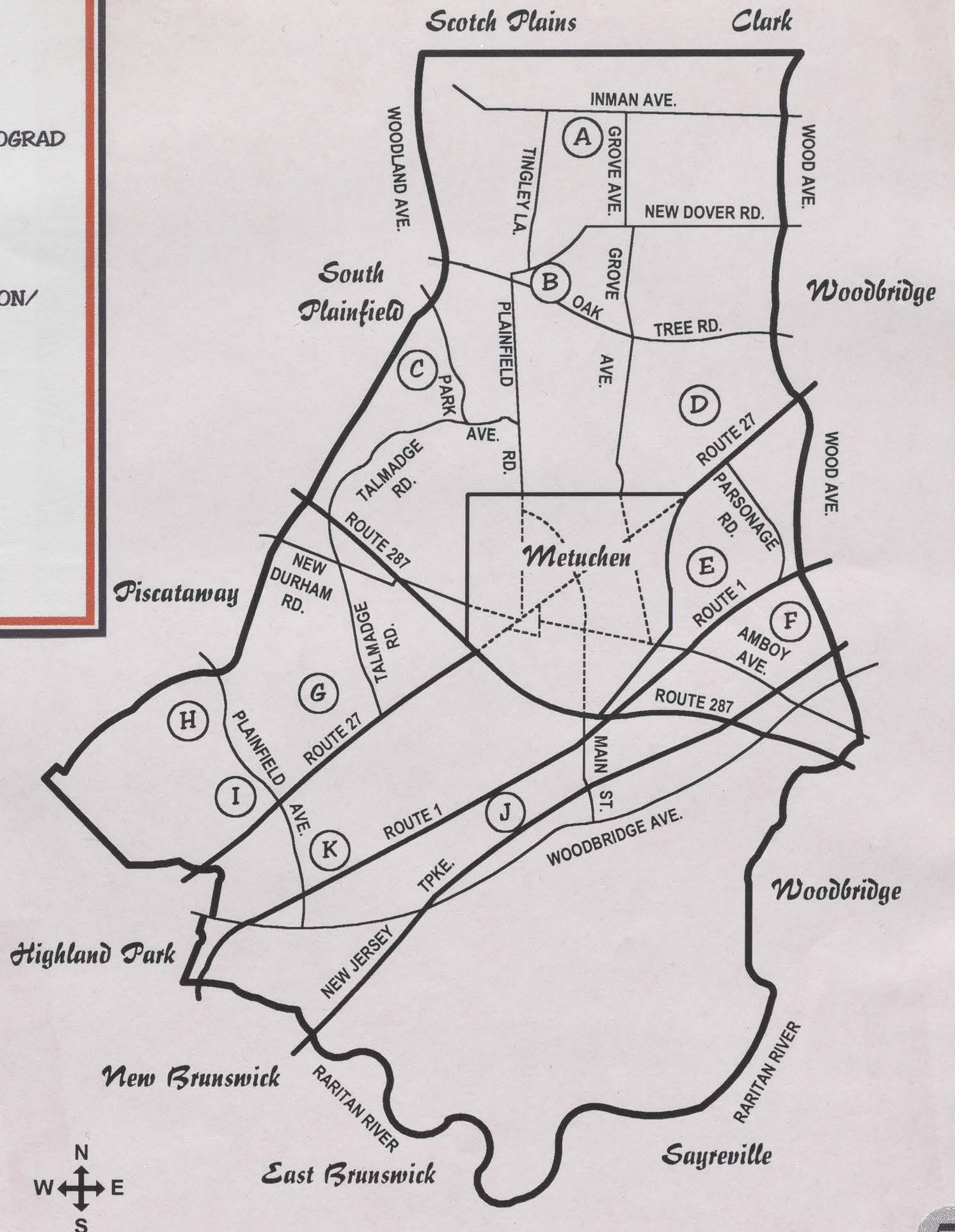
Metuchen  
Piscatawaytown

New Durham  
Stelton



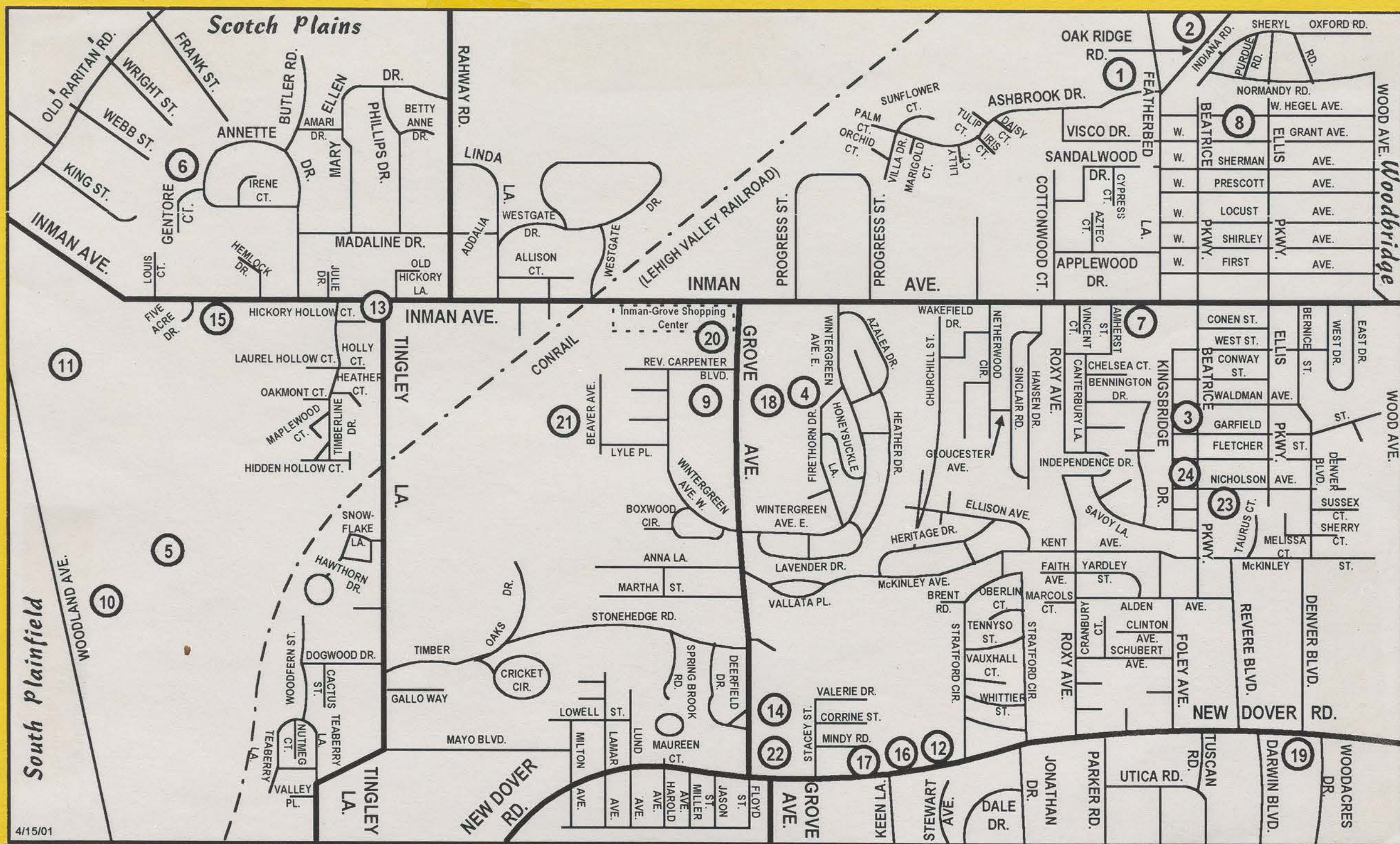
# NEIGHBORHOODS

- (A) POTTER'S CROSSING/NEW DOVER
- (B) OAK TREE
- (C) PUMPTOWN CORNERS/NEW PETROGRAD
- (D) MENLO PARK
- (E) ROOSEVELT PARK
- (F) CLARA BARTON/HEIGHTS OF EDISON/  
SAND HILLS
- (G) LINCOLN PARK
- (H) CAMP KILMER
- (I) STELTON
- (J) NIXON/BONHAMTOWN
- (K) PISCATAWAYTOWN/LINDENEAU





# POTTER'S CROSSING/NEW DOVER



4/15/01

## Points of Interest

- |   |                                |                                     |                                     |
|---|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ① Beehive Oven House                            | ⑧ Lindquist Park               | ⑭ St. Helena Roman Catholic School  | ⑳ Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church       |
| ② Oak Ridge Country Club Revolutionary War Site | ⑨ North Edison Park            | ⑮ Wardlaw-Hartridge School          | ㉑ Mt. Zion Free Will Baptist Church |
| ③ Beatrice Parkway Park                         | ⑩ Edison Arts Society          | ⑯ First Aid Squad No. 2             | ㉒ St. Helena Roman Catholic Church  |
| ④ Elder Park                                    | ⑪ Plainfield Country Club      | ⑰ H. K. Volunteer Fire Co. No. 1    | ㉓ White Rock Baptist Church         |
| ⑤ Edith Stevens Memorial Wildlife Preserve      | ⑫ James Madison School Complex | ⑱ Minnie Veal Community Center      | ㉔ House of Jacob Church             |
| ⑥ Golf Edge Park                                | ⑬ Martin Luther King School    | ⑲ New Dover United Methodist Church |                                     |
| ⑦ Inman Ave. Park                               |                                |                                     |                                     |



## Neighborhood Notes

Potter's Crossing, where the Lehigh Valley Railroad tracks cross Inman Ave., is named for the railroad stop along the property of J. R. Potter, a white farmer, who owned a large farm off Inman Ave. A railroad storage shed along the tracks still marks the location. From the 1920s through the mid-1900s, this was a thriving black community with black-owned businesses providing jobs, its own fire department, community center, and three churches. Mount Zion Unified Free Will Baptist Church on Beaver Ave. is the oldest. Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church was on Grove Ave. The House of Jacob Church relocated to Beatrice Parkway. Minnie Veal ran the community center, located where Burger King is today. Potter's Crossing was known throughout the area for its food, music and summer softball games, familiar to many of the residents who migrated from the South.

The rural community was destroyed in the late 1970s when 170 acres near Inman and Grove Aves. were taken by eminent domain for renewal by the Edison Housing Authority. Homes and businesses were bulldozed. Unfortunately, the project took 20 years to complete, and many of the original residents moved away. The black community was eventually replaced by a mixed community and the renewal project by single and multi-family housing for low- and moderate-income families and commercial buildings, now known as North Edison.

## Historic Sites



**1** Beehive Oven House - in a wooded area to the west of Featherbed La. at the bend as it turns into Oak Ridge Rd., this house features an outside masonry oven built in the shape of a large beehive, a style of oven fairly common in Colonial times. Unfortunately, the house has fallen into disrepair.

**2** Oak Ridge Country Club Revolutionary War Site - Now the Club House of the Union County Oak Ridge Golf Club, the Homestead Farm at Oak Ridge was involved in two significant events in the American Revolution. The oldest section was built about 1730 as the house of an outer farm serving Woodbridge by the descendants of John Smith of Barnstable, Mass., who was one of the original founders of Woodbridge. The Smith family had a prestigious Quaker lineage including four Colonial governors.

In 1776, the Homestead Farm was tended by William Smith and his daughter Isabel. In early December 1776, as the British marched from Hackensack to New Brunswick pursuing Washington after his defeat at Fort Mifflin in New York, a Hessian officer attempted to ravish Isabel. Hearing her cries for help, William Smith rushed in and killed the officer--in the following melee, Smith was badly wounded. Broadside and newspapers prominently reported details of the attack on at least four different occasions. Reports of British atrocities and American victories at Trenton and Princeton turned public sentiment against the British and turned out the local militia. During the Battle of the Clouds on June 26, 1777, both the Americans under Lord Stirling and the British must surely have fought on the Homestead Farm.

## Parks



**3** Beatrice Parkway Park - at the corner of Beatrice Pkwy. and Garfield St. in the northeast corner of Edison. This small 0.4-acre park provides a neighborhood playground.

**4** Elder Park - between Grove Ave. and Firethorn Dr., behind the Minnie Veal Community Center and near the Senior Citizen Housing on Inman Ave., and named for James D. Elder, a longtime community activist in Potter's Crossing who died in 1983. Elder had a JD degree from Brooklyn Law School, but there was no work for black attorneys, so he worked in a New York post office. He understood the need for improved housing in Potter's Crossing, and was one of the commissioners of the newly created Housing Authority that transformed the area into what we see today. The 11-acre park has facilities for basketball, football and softball, and a picnic grove, pavilion and playground.

**5** Edith Stevens Memorial Wildlife Preserve - in the wooded hills between Tingley La. and Woodland Ave., this 57-acre tract was donated to Edison Township by the widow of John P. Stevens, Jr., as a way to preserve the natural beauty of the area.

**6** Golf Edge Park - at the corner of Annette Dr. and Gentore Ct. in the northwest corner of Edison adjacent to the Plainfield Country Club. This 8-acre park has facilities for basketball, tennis, soccer and softball. It also has a playground.

**7** Inman Ave. Park - at the corner of Inman Ave. and Amherst St. in the northeast corner of Edison. This 9.6-acre park is undeveloped but offers opportunities for nature walks.

**8** Lindquist Park - at the corner of Ellis Pkwy. and W. Hegel Ave. in the far northeast corner of Edison. It is dedicated to the memory of Fire Capt. John Lindquist who died in the line of duty. The park has basketball, tennis, and a playground.

**9** North Edison Park - corner of Grove Ave. and Cleveland Pl. This 2-acre park has a playground.

## Civic/Cultural/Recreational Facilities

**10** Edison Arts Society - founded in 1997 and now housed in the former Smith Farmhouse at 1729 Woodland Ave., the Edison Arts Society organizes and sponsors a rich and diverse program of art, drama and musical events. For more information, go to [www.edisonnj.org/arts/](http://www.edisonnj.org/arts/).

**11** Plainfield Country Club - located on Woodland Ave. in the far northwest corner of Edison, this private golf course lies completely in Edison. The fact that both the Plainfield and Metuchen Country Clubs are in Edison is another sign that Edison was once largely undeveloped open space.



## Schools

**12** James Madison School Complex - 838 New Dover Rd. just east of Grove Ave., adjacent to First Aid Squad No. 2 and H. K. Volunteer Fire Co. No. 1. Actually located on Weinfeld Dr., the complex has three buildings. The Primary School, built in 1971, serves grades K-2. The Intermediate School, built in 1959 and extended in 1968, serves grades 3-5. The third building, built in 1969 and originally called the Franklin D. Roosevelt School, houses the pre-school and Headstart programs for ages 3 and up.

**13** Martin Luther King School - at the corner of Inman Ave. and Tingley La., was built in 1970 and named for the slain civil rights leader. The school serves grades K-8.

**14** St. Helena Roman Catholic School - 950 Grove Ave. at the corner of New Dover Rd. provides parochial education for grades K-8.

**15** Wardlaw-Hartridge School - 1295 Inman Ave., near the South Plainfield border, was founded by John Leal as the Leal School for Boys in 1882. Charles Digby Wardlaw became headmaster in 1916 and the school took his name. The Hartridge School for girls began as the Misses Scribner & Newton's School in 1884. In 1903, Emelyn Battersby Hartridge from Savannah, Ga., bought the school, changing the name to the Hartridge School. After a long courtship, with encouragement from J. P. Stevens, Jr., the two schools merged as a co-educational school in 1975.



## Public Service Facilities

**16** First Aid Squad No. 2 - 836 New Dover Rd. east of Grove Ave. Formed by members of the Menlo Park Volunteer Fire Co. in 1936, it was first housed in a bungalow on Monmouth Ave. in the Menlo Park section. The Squad had several other homes before moving to the present location in 1986.

**17** H. K. Volunteer Fire Co. No. 1 - 834 New Dover Rd. next to First Aid Squad No. 2. Founded in 1925, the first firehouse was on Midwood Ave. on land donated by Henry Kuntz, and is named in his honor.

**18** Minnie Veal Community Center - 1070 Grove Ave. just south of Inman Ave. The Center was dedicated in 1990 to honor Minnie Veal, who was a mother figure to countless black youngsters, and a tireless volunteer who left an indelible imprint on her community.

## Houses of Worship



**19** New Dover United Methodist Church - 687 New Dover Rd., near the Woodbridge border. The sanctuary was built in 1849 at a cost of \$2,700 on land donated by Gussie Wood. Although expanded several times, electricity was not added until 1924, and the two pot-bellied stoves were not replaced by central heating until 1951.

**20** Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church - 1087 Grove Ave. across from the Minnie Veal Community Center. Established in 1928, services were first held in the schoolhouse on west Inman Ave. The original church on Grove Ave. was replaced in 1985 when the Inman Grove Shopping Center was built.

**21** Mt. Zion Unified Free Will Baptist Church - 47 Beaver Ave., accessed from Grove Ave.

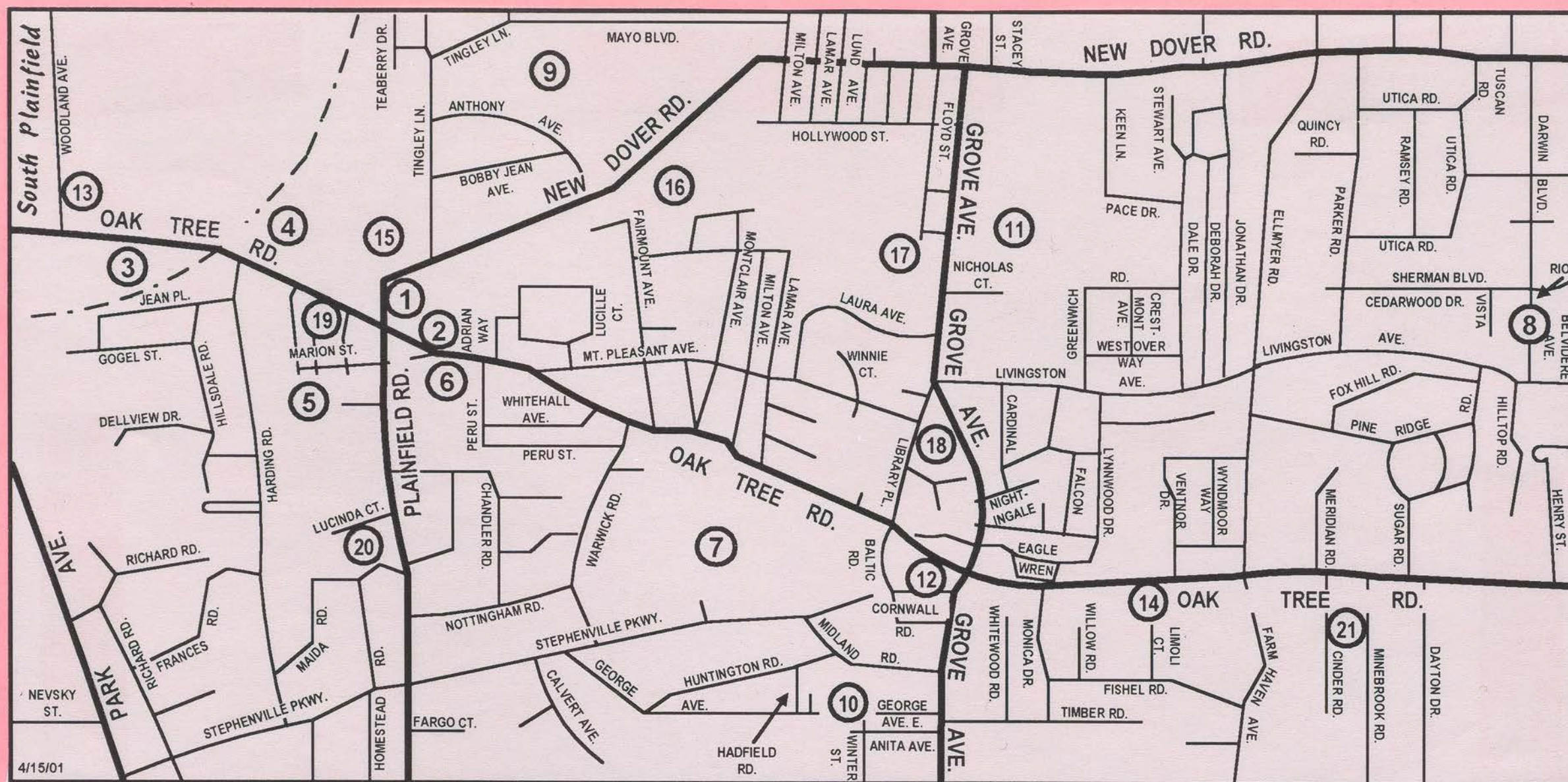
**22** St. Helena Roman Catholic Church - 950 Grove Ave. at the corner of New Dover Rd.

**23** White Rock Baptist Church - 247 Nicholson Ave. in a residential area between Inman Ave. and New Dover Rd., near the Woodbridge border.

**24** House of Jacob Church - 889 Beatrice Pkwy.



# OAK TREE



## Points of Interest

- |                                      |                        |                               |                                   |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ① Site of Battle of The Short Hills  | ⑦ Oak Tree Park        | ⑬ Edison Valley Playhouse     | ⑱ North Edison Library            |
| ② Old Oak Tree School                | ⑧ Sherwood Forest Park | ⑭ Jewish Community Center     | ⑲ Oak Tree Fire Company           |
| ③ Site of Old Oak Tree Train Station | ⑨ Tingley Lane Park    | ⑮ Bishop Ahr High School      | ⑳ Oak Tree Presbyterian Church    |
| ④ Old Oak Tree Firehouse             | ⑩ Winter Street Park   | ⑯ John Adams Middle School    | ㉑ Full Gospel N. E. Korean Church |
| ⑤ North Edison Little League Fields  | ⑪ Woodland Grove Park  | ⑰ John P. Stevens High School |                                   |
| ⑥ Oak Tree Tennis Courts             | ⑫ Buddy Ball of Edison |                               |                                   |



## Neighborhood Notes

Oak Tree, one of four sections of Edison that predate the American Revolution, is centered on the intersection of Plainfield and Oak Tree Rds. Hilly terrain to the north caused by terminal moraine from the Wisconsin Glacier led to the area being called "The Short Hills". The Minisink Trail of the Raritan tribe of Native Americans passed through or near this intersection. The Trail connected what is now New York, northern New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania with the shore and south Jersey.

The section is named after an old oak tree, cited as a landmark in many deeds, that stood in the triangle now formed by Oak Tree Rd., Plainfield Rd. and Marion St. Oak Tree was a colonial trade center. There was a farmers market under the tree, and a store located at the intersection until around 1850. The Oak Tree section later included the communities of Swampton (later called Brookville), Dog Tavern and Pumtpown. Prior to the formation of Raritan Township in 1870, Woodbridge Township extended to Woodland Ave. and included Oak Tree. The tree was cut down in the 1930s when the county realigned Oak Tree Rd. which had previously followed the course of what is now Marion St. Rachel Kelly planted a replacement tree near the one-room schoolhouse. The tree is still growing at the corner of Plainfield Rd. and Marion St. *(The intersection of Grove Ave. and Oak Tree Rd. had two realignments. Further south on Grove Ave. below James St. is another example. Grove Ave. at New Dover is a case of a colonial era road that has not been realigned and straightened.)*

In 1689, James Fullerton established the first school in the area. In 1816, Bethune Dunkin began a 45-year teaching career at the Oak Tree School that stood by the namesake old oak tree. Subsequently, a larger school was built on the site that today is a realty office. An 1882 map shows the Mount Pleasant School on the corner of Inman Ave. and Tingley La., which is now a private home.

## Historic Sites



**1 Battle of The Short Hills** - Early on the morning of June 26, 1777, a British column under Lord Cornwallis left Perth Amboy and marched through Woodbridge to Oak Tree Rd. The column first encountered resistance from Americans under the command of Captain Dark at Strawberry Hill, just outside of Woodbridge. After this skirmish, the British continued west and encountered another group of Americans under General Conway near what is now Wood Ave. Although these Americans retreated west, the British encountered a more significant American corps with cannon on a small hill at the site of the old Oak Tree School. The British drove the Americans off the hill, and the battle continued through the area between Tingley Ln. and Woodland Ave. into Scotch Plains. A crucial result of the delay caused by the fighting was that the main Continental Army was able to retreat to the safety of the Watchung Mountains. Frustrated by their inability to engage and defeat General Washington, the British retreated to Perth Amboy and left New Jersey. In recognition of the massed resistance by American troops, the Oak Tree Pond property on the northeast corner of Oak Tree and New Dover Rds. is under review for listing as a National Historic Site. *For an overview of this battle, see "The Battle of The Short Hills" on page 28.*

**2**

**Old Oak Tree School** - 2050 Oak Tree Rd. just east of Plainfield Rd., this elementary school was built in 1909, with an Annex added in 1950-52. It served well until it was closed in 1982 as enrollment declined throughout the Township and pupils were shifted to newer schools. It now houses the JFK Pediatric Rehabilitation Center and other health-related services.

**3**

**Old Oak Tree Train Station Site** - on the south side of Oak Tree Rd. west of the Lehigh Valley train tracks, this was a regular stop for trains between Allentown and Easton, Pennsylvania, and Perth Amboy and Newark. The site is now accessible through the Faith Fellowship parking lot, although nothing remains of the structure. A picture of the station can be found in the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society archives.

**4**

**Old Oak Tree Firehouse** - on the north side of Oak Tree Rd. across from Harding Ave. After the new firehouse was built (see note 19), the building served as a VFW Post. When the cost of remediating structural problems became too much, the building reverted to the Township. In 1999, it was sold to a local builder who is renovating the building for commercial use.

## Parks



**5**

**North Edison Little League Fields** - at the end of Maryland Ave., behind the present firehouse off Oak Tree Rd., this site was a development known as Oak Tree Park during the 1920s. It is now used for Little League softball games.

**6**

**Oak Tree Tennis Courts** - at the intersection of Marion St. and Oak Tree Rd., near Plainfield Rd. and across from the Old Oak Tree School, this 3-acre park has 8 tennis courts.

**7**

**Oak Tree Park** - between Oak Tree Rd. and Stephenville Parkway, this 30.6-acre undeveloped parkland provides habitat for wildlife and serves to moderate runoff from heavy rainfall.

**8**

**Sherwood Forest Park** - at the end of Belvidere Ave. off of Livingston Ave. near the Woodbridge boundary, this undeveloped 4.4-acre park provides green space in a residential neighborhood. It once had a playground.

**9**

**Tingley Lane Park** - between Tingley La. and New Dover Rd., this undeveloped 73.5 acres with vernal ponds is an oasis of timbered natural space in an area of increasing development.

**10**

**Winter Street Park** - located at what would have been the intersection of George Ave. and Winter St., this 8.4-acre park serves as the social center of the neighborhood and provides basketball and tennis courts and 2 playgrounds for children.

**11**

**Woodland Grove Park** - on Grove Ave. across from J. P. Stevens High School, this 23.4-acre park features a nature walk through a wooded area as well as a softball field and playground.

## Civic/Cultural/Recreational Facilities

**12**

**Buddy Ball of Edison, Inc.** - headquartered at 6 Cornwall Dr., Buddy Ball provides sporting and social activities without charge for children with special needs.

**13**

**Edison Valley Playhouse** - at the intersection of Oak Tree Rd. and Woodland Ave., this regional amateur theater has been housed in the former Marconnier Reformed Church since the 1960s. Marconnier Union Chapel was built in 1895. Due to decreased membership, the church was sold in the early 1960s, its records and religious items contributed to the Oak Tree Presbyterian Church.

**14**

**Jewish Community Center** - at 1775 Oak Tree Rd. welcomes the community to participate in professionally developed pre-school, teen, health, senior cultural and physical education programs, aquatic classes, and social activities for the whole family. The JCC and the Metuchen-Edison YMCA have agreed to develop a joint facility to meet the needs of North Edison's expanding population.



## Schools

**15**

**Bishop Ahr High School** - at New Dover Rd. and Tingley La., this Catholic high school opened in 1969 as St. Thomas Aquinas High School. It shared the building, but not faculty or administration, with Pope Pius X High School for several years until Pope Pius moved to its own building in Piscataway. In 1983, the school was rededicated as Bishop Ahr High School in tribute to Bishop Ahr's 30 years of service to the Trenton Diocese.

**16**

**John Adams Middle School** - 1081 New Dover Rd., built in 1962, is one of four middle schools in Edison for grades 6-8.

**17**

**John P. Stevens High School** - at 855 Grove Ave., near New Dover Rd., is named for John P. Stevens, Jr., a local resident who headed the J. P. Stevens textile mills and was actively involved in local education for many years. It opened in 1964 to serve the growing population of North Edison, with major additions in 1974 and the mid-1990s.



## Public Service Facilities

**18**

**North Edison Library** - at 777 Grove Ave. between Oak Tree Rd. and New Dover Rd., this branch opened in 1971 and was expanded in 1979 and in 1992. Limited library services formerly housed at John Adams Middle School were transferred to the branch when it opened. A large granite monument on the north side of the library is dedicated to the exempt firemen of Edison Township.

**19**

**Oak Tree Fire Company** - on Beverly Rd., behind the Oak Tree Bus Garage on Oak Tree Rd., this company was formed in 1926. Their first truck was a 1917 Model T, housed in the barn of one of their members.

## Houses of Worship



**20**

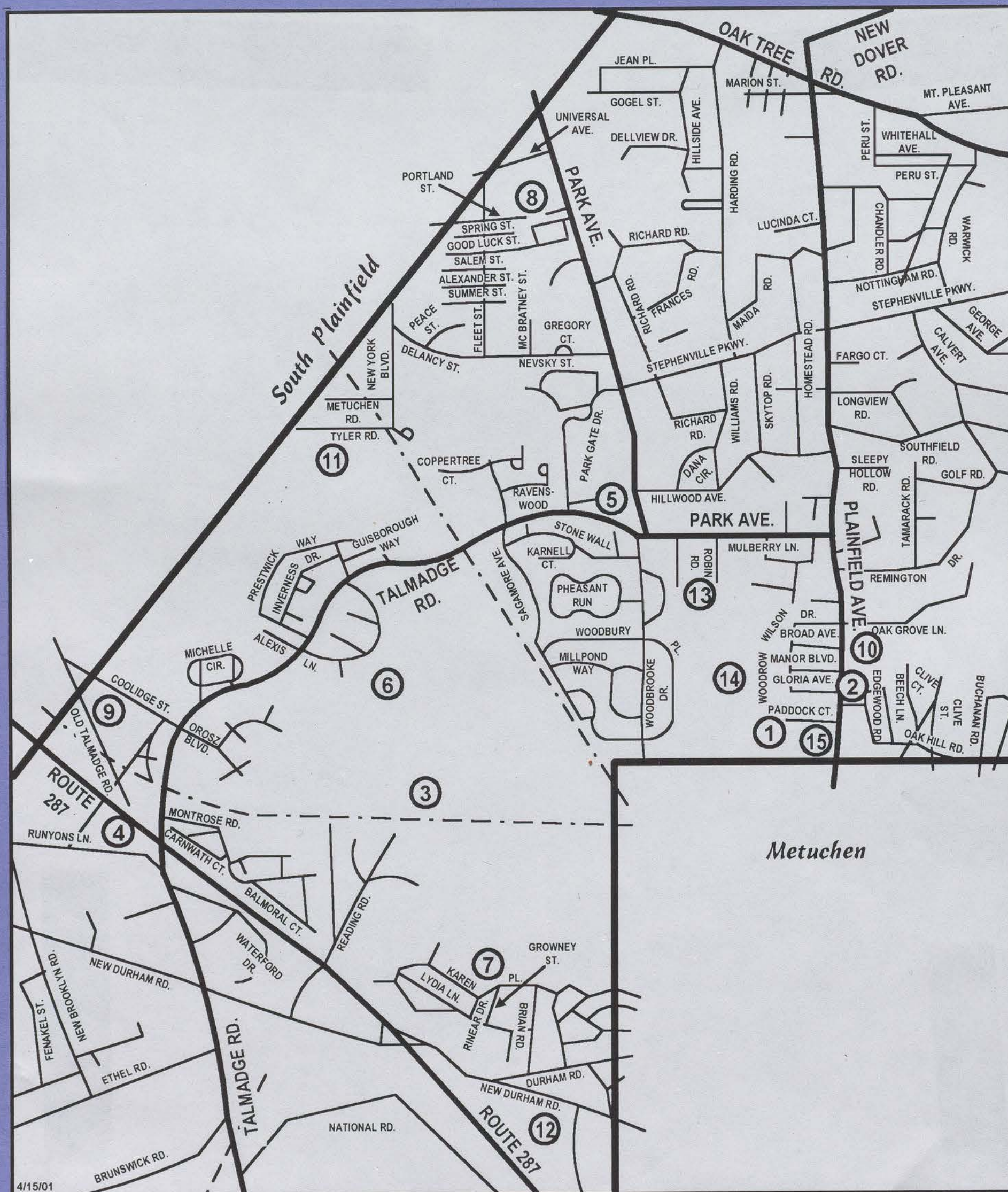
**Oak Tree Presbyterian Church** - 455 Plainfield Rd., started in 1966 as a mission of the Community Presbyterian Church, and merged with Marconnier Reformed Church. Services were held in the old Oak Tree School for 2 years until the new building was finished.

**21**

**Full Gospel N.E. Korean Church** - at 37-B Cinder Rd., off Oak Tree Rd., across from the site of a long-time horse auction.



# PUMPTOWN CORNERS/ NEW PETROGRAD



## Points of Interest

- ① Paddock Court
- ② Pumptown Corners Tavern
- ③ Reading Railroad
- ④ Shotwell House
- ⑤ Woodbrook Farm Site
- ⑥ Dismal Swamp Conservation Area
- ⑦ Edison Woods Park
- ⑧ Portland St. Tennis Courts
- ⑨ Loyal Order of Moose
- ⑩ Metuchen Country Club
- ⑪ Triple C Ranch
- ⑫ Municipal Garage & Recycle Center
- ⑬ Woodbrook School
- ⑭ Woodrow Wilson Middle School
- ⑮ St. Joseph's High School



## Neighborhood Notes

New Petrograd - off Park Ave. on the South Plainfield border, this section was settled by White Russians early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Accessed by either Universal Ave. or Nevsky St., its streets abound with names such as Peace, Hope, Spring, Summer, and Alexander. Nevsky St. was originally called Nevsky Prospect after the celebrated main thoroughfare of St. Petersburg, site of the Winter Palace, now the world-famous Hermitage Museum. A close look around the area will reveal several of the original settlement homes.

New Durham - located along New Durham Rd., south of Interstate 287. Maps from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century show New Durham as one of the settlements in Edison Township. An 1882 map shows there was a New Durham School in the settlement.

## Historic Sites



① Paddock Court - this cul-de-sac off Plainfield Rd. adjacent to St. Joseph's High School, is built on the site of a horse farm that succumbed to development pressures in the 1980s.

② Pumptown Corners Tavern - 222 Plainfield Rd., is now known as Charlie Brown's Restaurant. Pumptown Corners Tavern was a stop for the stagecoach to New Brunswick in colonial times.

③ Reading Railroad - one of several built in the area at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. To provide additional rail access to Camp Kilmer, a branch off the main line was built, starting where the Durham Woods apartments now stand. Reading Rd., the access road to Durham Woods, is the legacy of this branch line.

④ Shotwell House - 26 Runyons La., roughly behind the Gund Co., the house was built by Benjamin Shotwell prior to 1775. His daughter inherited the house and sold it to John Runyon. It remained in the Runyon family until 1946.

Runyon La. and Runyon Ave. in Stelton are named after this family. The house was entered on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. It is still a private family home.

⑤ Woodbrook Farm Site - at the intersection of Talmadge Rd. and Park Ave. where Woodbrook Corners now stands, this dairy farm served the area for many years. Occasionally, Charles Lindbergh flew in to buy ice cream. The farm's location in the Dismal Swamp illustrates the changing human uses of the Swamp--Native American settlements, colonial era farms, and now housing developments.

## Parks



⑥ Dismal Swamp Conservation Area - spanning both sides of the Talmadge Rd. extension viaduct, this 272-acre conservation area is a small part of what has been known since colonial times as the "Dismal Swamp". Residential and industrial development during the 20<sup>th</sup> century has substantially reduced the amount of land still in its natural state. Archaeological digs conducted prior to some of the development projects have yielded a rich lode of Native American artifacts, some of which are exhibited in a display case just outside of the Edison Township Council Chambers in the Edison Municipal Complex.

⑦ Edison Woods Park - located north of Karen Pl. between Growney St. and Rinear Dr., this 3-acre neighborhood park has a playground and a basketball court. It is in the eastern part of the Dismal Swamp. Some refer to this area as the New Durham section of Edison.

⑧ Portland St. Tennis Courts - located on Portland St. close to Park Ave., this 2-acre park has 2 tennis courts for neighborhood use. It is located in the New Petrograd section of Edison.

## Civic/Cultural/Recreational Facilities

⑨ Loyal Order of Moose - located on old Talmadge Rd. just west of Coolidge St., not far from the Talmadge Rd. extension. The lodge is located across the road from the former site of the Edison Animal Shelter, where there is now a sewage pumping station. The Moose support the Edison Sheltered Workshop and other local civic projects.

⑩ Metuchen Country Club - located between Plainfield Rd. and Grove Ave. just north of the Metuchen border, this private golf course lies entirely within Edison.

⑪ Triple C Ranch - located on Tyler Rd in the northern part of the Dismal Swamp, this horse farm was operated for many years by Chris Christensen, and the Triple C Ranch is named in his memory. This farm is reminiscent of the time when Edison was largely a rural farming community. Edison Wetlands Association is currently leasing the property with the intent to purchase it, to rejuvenate the horse farm, and to create an Environmental Education and Nature Center. Edison Wetlands is a grassroots organization dedicated to protecting environmentally sensitive areas of central New Jersey through education, action, and public awareness.

## Public Service Facilities



⑫ Municipal Garage & Recycle Center - located at 745 New Durham Rd., this is the main garage for the Edison Department of Public Works.



## Schools

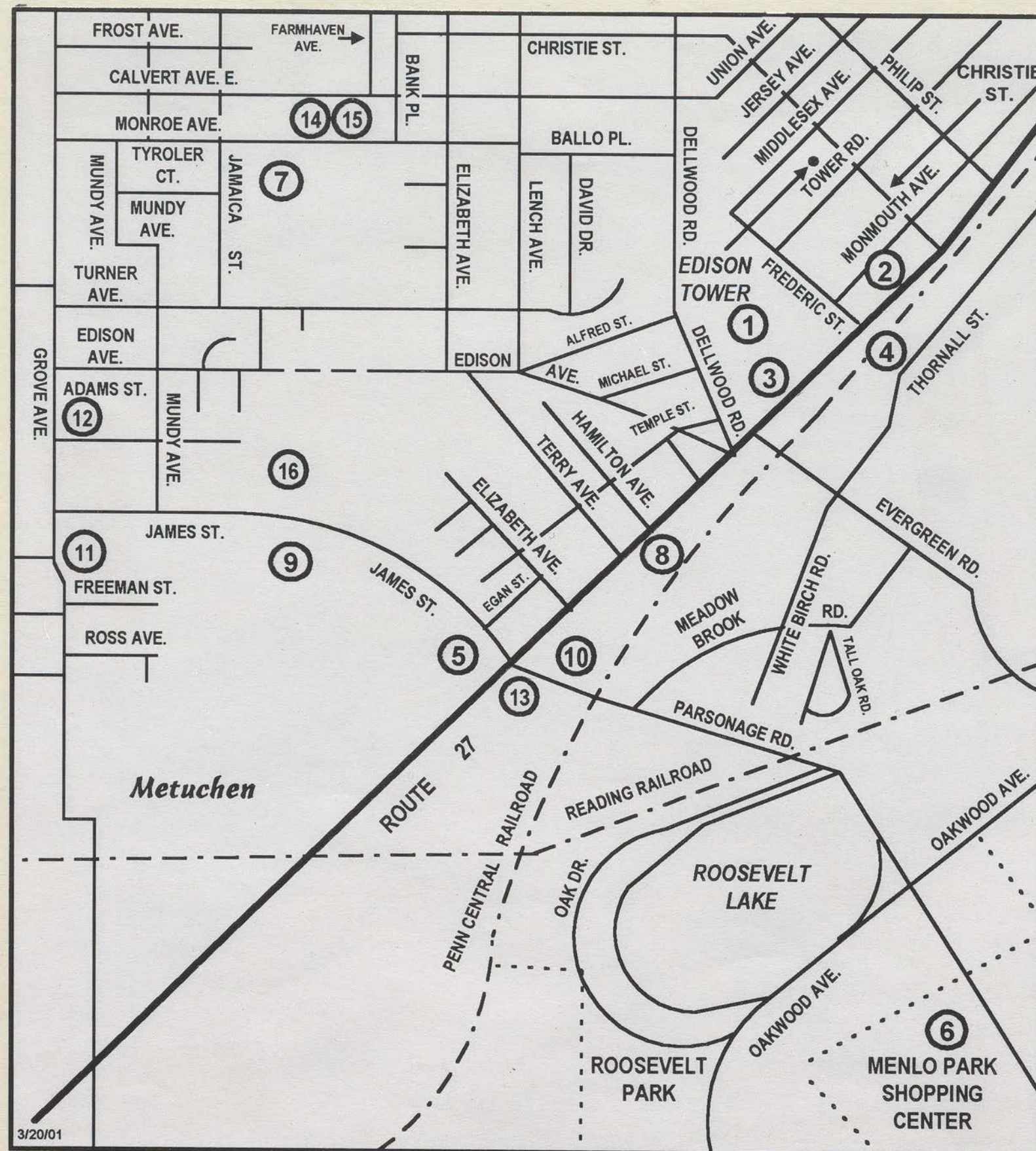
⑬ Woodbrook School - located at the end of Robin Rd. near the intersection of Park Ave. and Talmadge Rd., this elementary school was named after Woodbrook Farms, which formerly occupied the property. Built in 1967, with an addition added in 1970, this is one of the few Edison public schools not named for a President.

⑭ Woodrow Wilson Middle School - located on Woodrow Wilson Dr. behind a residential development off Plainfield Rd., across from the Metuchen Country Club, this school was built in 1972 and serves grades 6-8. It is located in a portion of the Dismal Swamp.

⑮ St. Joseph's High School - located on Plainfield Rd., it straddles the border between Edison and Metuchen. (Note: Plainfield Rd. is called Plainfield Ave. in Metuchen until the first traffic light, and is then called Central Ave.) St. Joseph's was founded in 1902 by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart as a Novitiate after the Brotherhood purchased "75 acres of good arable land on which was a large three story mansion, a carriage house, a stable, a large shed for drying tobacco and a servant's residence". While the Novitiate was only open to young men who wished to study for the Brotherhood, it was a high school in every way. In 1961, a separate high school was formed on the campus.



# MENLO PARK



## Points of Interest

- ① Edison State Park
- ② Former site of Edison First Aid Squad No. 2
- ③ Former site of Menlo Park Post Office
- ④ Former site of Menlo Park Train Station
- ⑤ Site of the Parsonage Diner
- ⑥ Site of the Thornall Farm
- ⑦ Menlo Park School
- ⑧ Edison Volunteer Fire Company No. 1
- ⑨ JFK Medical Center
- ⑩ Middlesex County Mosquito Extermination Commission
- ⑪ Monument to Korean & Viet Nam War Veterans
- ⑫ Chabad of Edison
- ⑬ Eckankar Satsang Society of New Jersey
- ⑭ Korean Presbyterian Church
- ⑮ Our Savior's Lutheran Church
- ⑯ Temple Emanu-El



## Neighborhood Notes

In 1876, Menlo Park was a peaceful area of summer homes belonging to residents of New York City with ready access to New Brunswick and New York via the Pennsylvania Railroad Main Line. This section of Edison is named after Menlo Park, California, which, in turn, was named after a part of Ireland. Residential development began in 1869 after a massive tract of farmland was sold and subdivided. However, the real estate development failed and the location provided some inexpensive space and a remote spot for Thomas Edison to concentrate on inventing.

Edison purchased two parcels, and the real estate sales office at the corner of Christie St. and the Middlesex-Essex Turnpike became the family home. In those days, what we now know as Route 27 was Thornall St., and the Middlesex-Essex Turnpike crossed over the Pennsylvania tracks at the bottom of Christie St. Motorists will note that there is still a jog in the road between Christie St. and Frederick St. as a residue of the early alignment.

## Parks and Historic Sites

- 1 **Edison State Park** - located on Route 27 across from Evergreen Rd., this park encompasses most of the sites associated with Thomas Edison's Menlo Park laboratories, the *world's first research and development facility*.

The location of Edison's laboratory buildings and workshops on Christie St. is marked by the **Edison Memorial Tower**, made of Portland cement, just one of Edison's more than 1000 patents. A previous steel tower was damaged by severe weather and replaced by the present concrete structure in 1937.

Motorists traveling north on the New Jersey Turnpike can still glimpse the remains of Edison's Portland cement plant in South Edison. A tall smokestack is visible on the right as they pass over the Raritan River.

During the period from 1876 to 1886 while working at Menlo Park, Edison received more than 400 patents for his inventions and discoveries, earning him the nickname, "The Wizard of Menlo Park".

For Christmas 1879, Edison and his workers placed lamps on Christie St. and elsewhere on the 45-acre site to demonstrate the viability of incandescent electric lamps. Middlesex Ave. next to the Tower was the location of the railroad tracks on which Edison's patented electric locomotive traveled in 1881. Later, the line was extended from Menlo Park to near Pumptown on the grounds of what is now the Metuchen Country Club.

Copper is an important metal for electrical conductors, so Edison opened a copper mine on property located approximately where the United Skates of America roller skating arena is today. The small **Museum** adjacent to the Tower houses many artifacts from this prolific period of Edison's life. A detailed map of significant buildings and features can be found at [www.jhalpin.com/metuchen/tae/mptoday/nowthen1.html](http://www.jhalpin.com/metuchen/tae/mptoday/nowthen1.html).

Also on Christie St. was Mrs. Jordan's Boarding House, home to many of Edison's workers and the first residence to be illuminated by incandescent lamps.

Edison's home was located on the hill just above the monument on Route 27. On July 4, 1917, the house was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. Carman's Pond is located a few hundred feet south along Route 27. Named after Edison's bookkeeper, Edison intended to build a new home there for his wife, Mary. Unfortunately, she died in 1884 from typhoid fever before the plans were implemented, and the house was never built.

In 1925, the Edison Pioneers, with Edison present, dedicated a stone memorial monument located on Route 27 at the foot of Christie St. In 1928, Edison's close friend Henry Ford purchased the property after Ford became concerned about the severe deterioration of the site. Ford arranged to have the remaining structures dismantled and reconstructed at his Greenfield Village historic recreation site in Dearborn, Michigan. The State Park had its beginning in 1931 when the state legislature created the Edison Park Commission, providing \$10,000 for the preparation and survey of the park.

- 2 **Edison First Aid Squad No. 2** - formed in 1936, the volunteers held bingo parties and dances to raise enough money to buy their first ambulance, a converted 1927 Studebaker hearse from Squad No. 1. In its early years, this squad was co-located with the Menlo Park Fire Company, now Volunteer Fire Co. No. 1. The new ambulance was housed in the second home of the Menlo Park Volunteer Fire Company, a bungalow on Monmouth Ave. between Frederic and Christie Sts. Since the early 1950s, women have played a substantial role in squad activities, and in 1964 elected Lois Logan as Captain. In 1986, the squad moved to their new location on New Dover Rd., next to the H. K. Volunteer Fire Company No. 1.
- 3 **Menlo Park Post Office** - Many sites have served as the Menlo Park Post Office. It began in a little building on Frederic St. (since moved to Greenfield Village), then to Route 27 where Flowers by Maria is now located. Other sites were a private house at the corner of Route 27 and Edison Ave. and across Route 27, at Edison Ave. The Menlo Park Post Office is now located at the rear of the Menlo Park Mall.
- 4 **Menlo Park Train Station** - was situated on the Pennsylvania Railroad Line, now known as the Northeast Corridor Line, on the south side of the tracks at the foot of Frederic St. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, travel by train was the only convenient way to travel between cities and towns. The Menlo Park station allowed New York residents to leave the heat and noise of the city for their summer homes in the country. The station even served as the locale for Sunday School in the 1870s.
- 5 **Parsonage Diner** - located at the corner of James St. and Route 27, this was a favorite gathering spot for high school students and other residents for many years. In 1998, the Diner was torn down and replaced by a pharmacy.
- 6 **Thornall Farm** - located at the site of the Menlo Park Mall, this was just one of many family farms in the area. Thornall St. is named after this early family.
- 7 **Menlo Park School** - located at 155 Monroe Ave., one block south of Calvert Ave. E., this elementary school commemorates this important neighborhood, and the namesake of the Township. The school was built in 1963 and expanded in 1966. Currently, it serves grades K-5.



## Schools



## Public Service Facilities

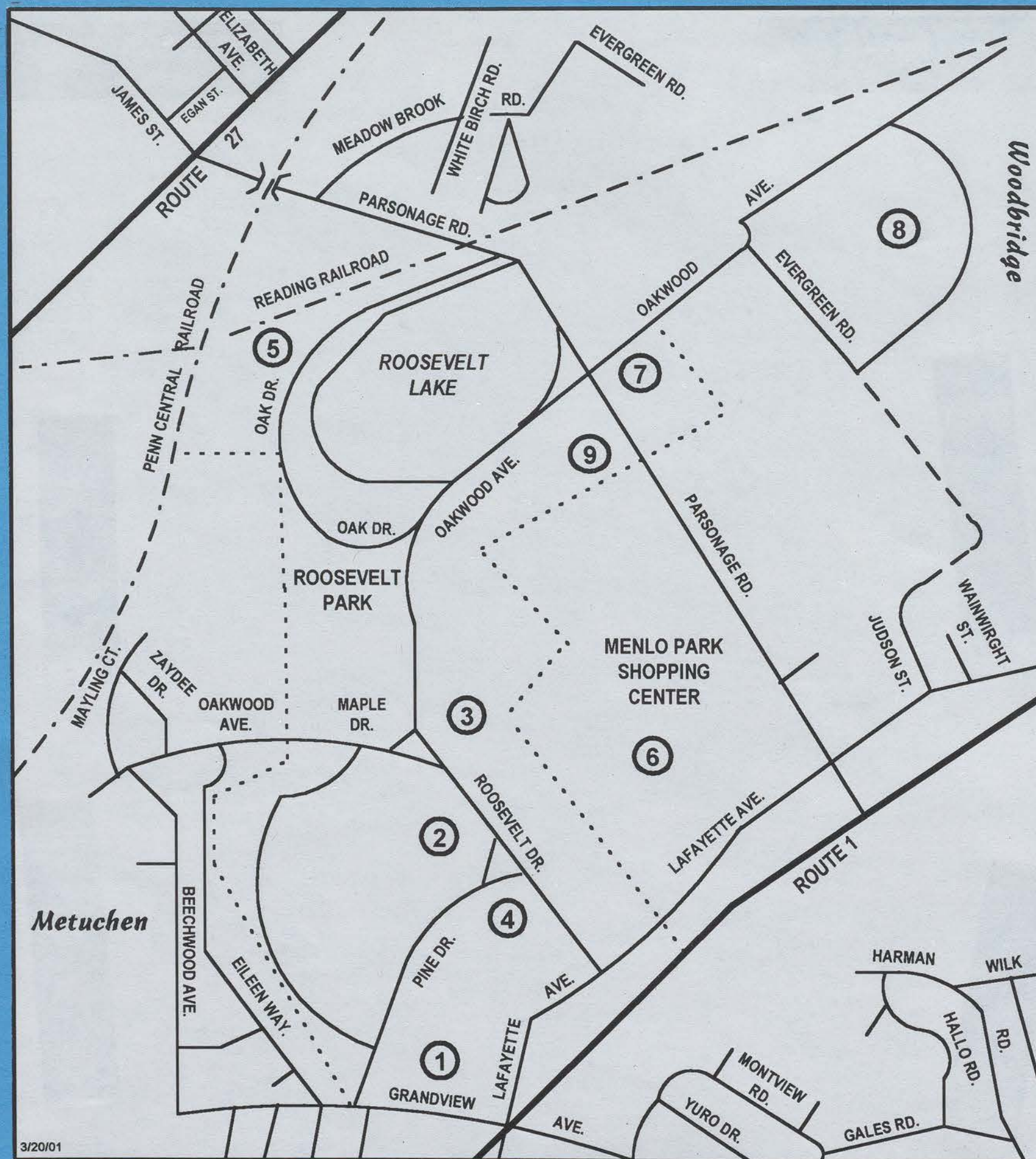
- 8 **Edison Volunteer Fire Co. No. 1** - located on Route 27 at Hamilton Ave. near James St., the Company began as the Menlo Park Fire Co. in 1917 in response to the fire at the Edison Homestead. This all-volunteer unit used one of Thomas Edison's garages to house their hook and ladder apparatus, and made him an honorary member. Each February 11, the Fire Company places a wreath on the Edison monument to commemorate the inventor's birthday.
- 9 **JFK Medical Center** - located at 65 James St., has grown from a 205-bed community hospital in 1967 to one of the largest hospitals in New Jersey. It is now part of the Solaris Health System which also includes Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center in Plainfield. The idea for a hospital to serve Edison's growing population started with a conversation during a coffee break in a Town Council meeting in 1958. At the time, James St. was just a dirt track through the woods. Former Mayor Anthony Yelencsics was a prime mover in the project, and encouraged the formation of the JFK Auxiliary in 1962 to help with the capital campaign, five years before the hospital opened.
- 10 **Middlesex County Mosquito Extermination Commission** - Parsonage Rd. immediately west of the Northeast Corridor train tracks.
- 11 **Monument to Korean & Viet Nam Veterans** - located at the triangular intersection of Grove, Freeman and Cutter Aves., south of James St., a black and gray granite monument is dedicated to those who died in Korea and Viet Nam.

## Houses of Worship

- 12 **Chabad of Edison** - 527 Grove Ave. Chabad House provides outreach, Hebrew Schools, hospital chaplaincy, summer camps, Dial-a-Torah message, counseling, Moshiah Campaign, and holiday programs.
- 13 **Eckankar Satsang Society of NJ** - Located at 3 Route 27 close to the intersection with James St.
- 14 **Korean Presbyterian Church** - Located at 50 Calvert Ave. E., uses the facilities of Our Savior's Lutheran Church.
- 15 **Our Savior's Lutheran Church** - 50 Calvert Ave. E., generously shares its building and facilities with the Korean Presbyterian Church of Edison.
- 16 **Temple Emanu-El** - 100 James St. across from JFK Medical Center. This Reform congregation was organized in 1961. In early years, it held many services in the Fellowship Hall of St. Stephen's Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Clara Barton section. Other services and functions were held in Wesley Methodist Church and the Raritan Engine Co. No. 2 firehouse. When the congregation outgrew the Fellowship Hall, they purchased the old St. Stephen's Lutheran Church Chapel, and in 1966, purchased from the Township the 4 acres of land on James St. where the Temple now stands.



# ROOSEVELT PARK



## Points of Interest

- ① "Light Dispelling Darkness" Fountain
- ② Madame Curie Monument
- ③ Kiddie Keep Well Camp
- ④ Plays in the Park
- ⑤ Lakeview School
- ⑥ Menlo Park Branch Post Office
- ⑦ Middlesex County Public Health Dept.
- ⑧ NJ Home for Disabled Soldiers
- ⑨ Roosevelt Hospital

3/20/01



### Neighborhood Notes

Bounded by Route 1, Parsonage Rd., the Reading Railroad and the Northeast Corridor tracks, this 217-acre county park was created during the Great Depression by men employed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Emergency Relief Administration (ERA), and named in honor of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Roosevelt Lake was created by damming up the South Branch of the Rahway River. The lake and the surrounding picnic groves and open fields have been popular recreational spots for residents for generations. Even today, there are two springs in the Park from which residents collect drinking water.

The park features 7 lighted tennis courts, 4 basketball courts, a softball field, 3 playgrounds, 6 reservable picnic groves, 1 open picnic grove, fishing in the lake, bicycle paths and walkways. Plays-in-the-Park has been a favorite summer attraction since 1963. There is a 1933 stone and mortar monument on Route 1 recognizing the men of Middlesex County who labored to develop the park.

### Monuments



- 1 "Light Dispelling Darkness" Fountain - located in Roosevelt Park close to Grandview Ave. and Route 1, this art-deco fountain is a monument to Thomas Edison and the improvements in people's lives made possible by the invention of the incandescent lamp. The sculptured terracotta and concrete fountain was designed by Waylande Gregory, a New Jersey native. It was built in 1937 by Gregory and 10 other sculptors as a WPA project. While the fountain is not currently working, Middlesex County has set aside funds to restore it so that it can again become a picturesque setting for wedding pictures.
- 2 Madame Curie Monument - located on Elm Dr. off Pine Dr. at the entrance to Picnic Grove 1 across from Kiddie Keep Well Camp, a small granite marker sits in a flower garden with a commemorative tree dedicated in 1938 to the late Madame Marie Sklodowska Curie, co-discoverer of radium. She was born in Poland, married to a Frenchman, and beloved by the entire world.

### Civic Facilities



- 3 Kiddie Keep Well Camp - located at 35 Roosevelt Dr. on a wooded hill in Roosevelt Park behind the Menlo Park Mall, this camp has been in operation since 1924. The camp serves a total of 600 underprivileged boys and girls each summer during four two-week encampments. During the rest of the year, there are 10 weekend encampments with slots for approximately 150 children and 100 seniors. The 13 acres of county-owned land, which predates Roosevelt Park, are leased to the camp for \$1. The camp itself owns the two dozen or so buildings, which include a dining hall capable of producing 800 meals daily, two swimming pools, a row of yellow bunkhouses inherited from Fort Monmouth and adapted by the Telephone Pioneers of America, dozens of birdhouses donated by an earnest volunteer, and a new pine log cabin, built with a \$100,000 state appropriation and the sweat-equity of volunteers. For more information, go to [www.community.nj.com/cc/kiddiekeepwellcamp](http://www.community.nj.com/cc/kiddiekeepwellcamp).

### Cultural Facilities



- 4 Plays-in-the-Park - located on Pine Dr. in Roosevelt Park close to Grandview Ave., Middlesex County's Plays-in-the-Park is a unique partnership that represents an unparalleled combination of government initiative, artistic excellence and community spirit. Plays-in-the-Park started in 1963 with a wooden storage shed in a tree-lined grove. By the mid-1970s, more than 150,000 people came to the theater each year. A fire in the middle of the 1975 summer season burned the wooden building to its concrete foundation. Eventually, county funds were met by dollars from the Green Acres Commission and the new Roosevelt Park Amphitheater opened in 1978.



### Schools

- 5 Lakeview School - located on Oak Dr. overlooking the lake in Roosevelt Park, Lakeview is a private school alternative for children with developmental disabilities. Lakeview incorporates traditional academics including adaptive music and adaptive physical education, life enrichment, family life, self-help, and pre-vocational skills development. The Cerebral Palsy Association of Middlesex County operates the school.

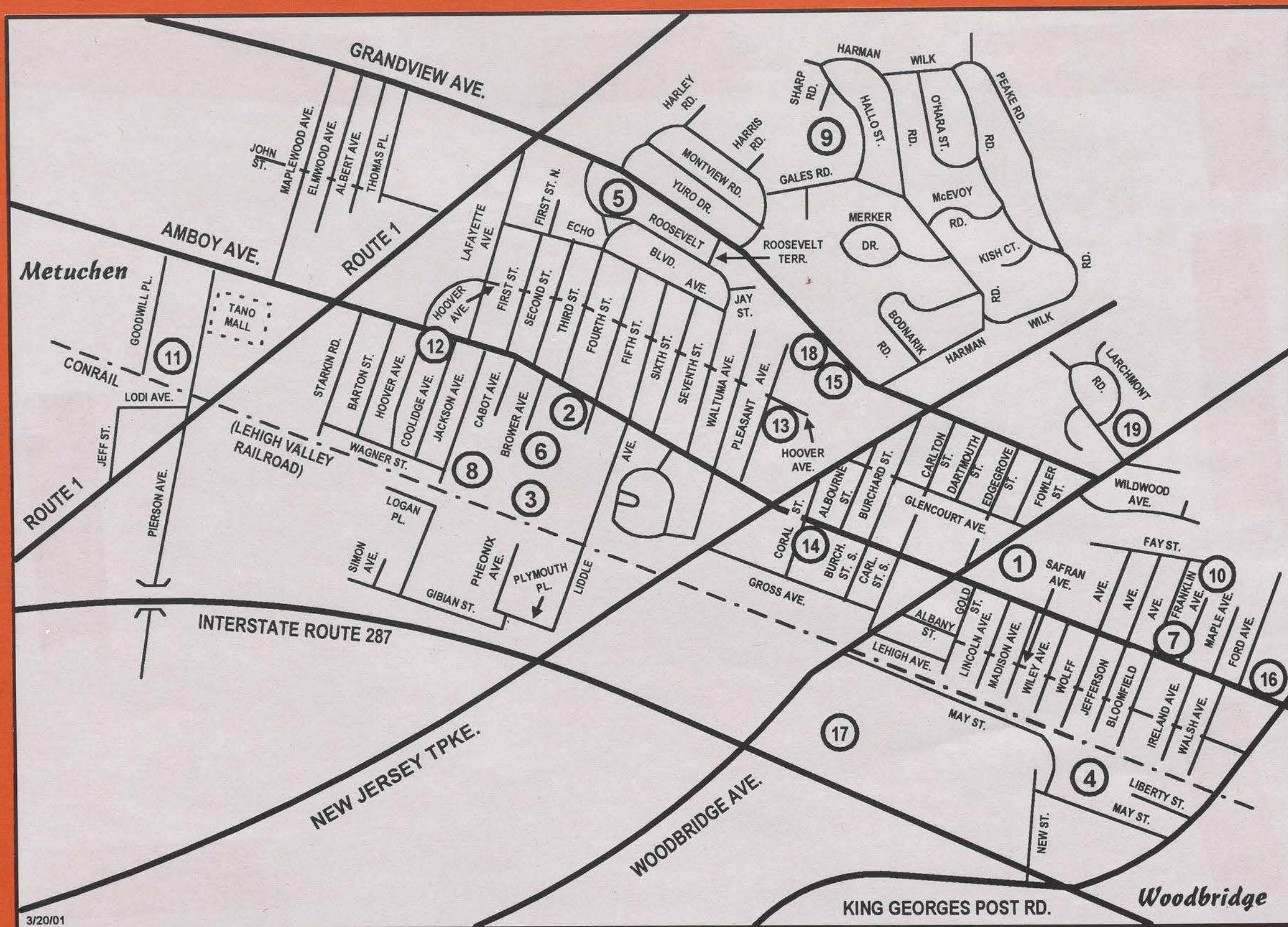
### Public Service Facilities



- 6 Menlo Park Branch Post Office - originally located on Route 27 near Edison's Menlo Park laboratories, the Post Office is now housed in an office building in the rear of the Menlo Park Mall.
  - 7 Middlesex County Public Health Dept. - located in a stately house at 35 Oakwood Ave. just east of Parsonage Rd., the department provides public health services on a contractual basis for 20 of the smaller communities in Middlesex County.
  - 8 NJ Home for Disabled Soldiers - located at 132 Evergreen Rd. just east of Roosevelt Park, the 109-acre facility is one of New Jersey's three state-operated veterans' nursing homes. This 332-bed facility was rebuilt in 1999 around a "town square" core with resident living areas located around the perimeter. A full-time professional medical staff provides around-the-clock medical and nursing care. Rehabilitative services, such as occupational and physical therapies, speech therapy, and recreational activities are also provided.
  - 9 Roosevelt Hospital - located astride Parsonage Rd. at the eastern end of Roosevelt Park, Roosevelt Hospital began as a county facility to treat tuberculosis patients. In 1917, Middlesex County purchased 208 acres in an area "free of population and free of any kind of buildings". However, actual construction of the hospital was delayed by lack of funding until, under the New Deal of President Franklin Roosevelt, money was received through the Emergency Public Works Administration. Construction of the Colonial Revival style building began in 1935, and the first patients were admitted in 1937.
- As the medical needs of county residents changed, the focus shifted to diseases of the chest and chronic illnesses. In the 1960s, a 250-bed long-term care wing and special care unit was added. Since the 1990s, as the cost of health care escalates, the freeholders have struggled to balance the needs of patients and their families against the cost to county taxpayers.



# CLARA BARTON/HEIGHTS OF EDISON/ SAND HILLS



## Points of Interest

- |                                     |   |                                |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---|
| ① Site of Bloomfield Mansion        | ⑥ American Legion Clara Barton Post 324 | ⑪ Edison Board of Education    | ⑬ Our Lady of Peace School                  |
| ② Site of Old Clara Barton School   | ⑦ Jewish Family & Vocational Services   | ⑫ Clara Barton First Aid Squad | ⑭ St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church    |
| ③ Clara Barton Little League Fields | ⑧ Herbert Hoover Middle School          | ⑬ Clara Barton Branch Library  | ⑮ St. Stephen's Evangelical Lutheran Church |
| ④ Dudash Park                       | ⑨ James Monroe Elementary School        | ⑭ Raritan Engine Company No. 2 | ⑯ Wesley United Methodist Church            |
| ⑤ Stephen J. Capestro Park          | ⑩ Our Lady of Peace School              | ⑮ Onnuri Korean Church         |   |
|                                     |   |                                | ⑯ Our Lady of Peace Roman Catholic Church   |



## Neighborhood Notes

Named in honor of the woman who founded the American Red Cross in 1881, the Clara Barton section saw significant development in the early 1900s, including trolley and rail lines between Metuchen and Perth Amboy along, or close to Amboy Ave. There were also several brick works and ceramic manufacturing plants using local clay. What is now known as the Clara Barton section includes sections known earlier as Bloomfield, Phoenix, Raritan Manor, Sand Hills, and Valentine. It covers the area bounded by Route 1, Interstate 287 and the Fords section of Woodbridge. In 1960, a monument on the northwest corner of Amboy and Woodbridge Aves. was dedicated to the memory of all of the deceased members of American Legion Clara Barton Post 324 and of Raritan Engine Company No. 2. An attractive fountain is up in the Heights of Edison in the triangle formed by Third St. and Roosevelt Blvd.

**Trains and Trolleys** - There were several railroads and electric trolleys serving Edison in the 1920s. The Perth Amboy trolley ran along Amboy Ave. from Metuchen to Perth Amboy. Another trolley started from the intersection of Main St. and where Route 1 is today, crossed the Perth Amboy line and ran north towards Avenel and on to Carteret and Elizabeth.

## Historic Sites



**1 Bloomfield Mansion** - The Bloomfield family has a long history in New Jersey. In 1665, Thomas Bloomfield II moved to the part of Woodbridge that became part of Edison in 1870. General Joseph Bloomfield was twice Governor of New Jersey. The family grew wealthy from local businesses such as the Bloomfield Clay Co. incorporated in 1911, located on the Raritan Ridge near Metuchen. Charles Bloomfield and his wife Eleanor built a grand mansion on an estate situated on the northeast corner of Amboy and Woodbridge Aves. While the family is no longer active in the area, Bloomfield Ave. in the far eastern section of Edison, and the town of Bloomfield in Essex County carry on the family name.

**2 Old Clara Barton School** - on Amboy Ave. at the intersection of Fourth St., this school was turned into a senior citizens residence in 1984 and has now been converted into an assisted living facility called Heritage at Clara Barton. Clara Barton School opened as an elementary school in 1921, and within 3 years was rated as the best school in the country. In 1935, a junior high school level was added. For 18 years, Clara Barton was a teacher and organized New Jersey's first public school in Bordentown in 1852, so it is fitting that a school was named for her. During the Great Depression, teachers were paid on an irregular basis, often in script that was accepted by some local merchants. Teachers sometimes accompanied their neighbors to the tax collector to receive some of the tax payment as back salary.

## Parks



**3 Clara Barton Little League Fields** - behind Herbert Hoover Middle School, the fields can be reached from either Liddle Ave. or Jackson Ave. The fields abut the abandoned Lehigh Valley Railroad right of way that is scheduled to be converted into a linear park called the Middlesex Greenway.

**4 Dudash Park** - on May St. off King Georges Post Rd., this 6.5-acre park was completed in 1998 with 2 basketball courts and a playground. It is named after the first Edison Police Officer to die in the line of duty.

**5 Stephen J. Capestro Park** - located between Grandview Ave. and Roosevelt Blvd. in the Heights of Edison, this 1.6-acre park is named after a former Mayor and Freeholder Director, and has basketball courts and a playground.



## Civic/Cultural Facilities

**6 American Legion Clara Barton Post 324** - located on Brower Ave., off Amboy Ave.

**7 Jewish Family & Vocational Service** - located at 10 Franklin Ave. just off Amboy Ave. near the Woodbridge border. The Jewish Family & Vocational Service provides counseling (individual, family, and group), education, information and referral, case management, emergency food pantry, adult social day care, refugee microenterprise, vocational counseling, training and placement, advocacy, outreach, and home delivered meals.



## Schools

**8 Herbert Hoover Middle School** - located on Jackson Ave. south of Amboy Ave., this school has served the eastern part of the Township since 1967, and now is used for grades 6 to 8.

**9 James Monroe Elementary School** - located at 7 Sharp Rd. in the Heights of Edison, this school has served the general Clara Barton area since 1963 and is now used for grades K-5.

**10 Our Lady of Peace School** - located at the end of Franklin Ave., just off Amboy Ave., 2 blocks from Our Lady of Peace Roman Catholic Church, the school serves the needs of the parish for grades K-8.

**11 Board of Education** - In 2000, the Board relocated to 312 Pierson Ave. in the former HIP building.



## Public Service Facilities

**12 Clara Barton First Aid Squad** - at the intersection of Amboy and Coolidge Aves., the squad was formed in 1951 to serve the needs of the growing Clara Barton section. This, like the other two Volunteer First Aid Squads, had its roots in the Raritan Township Safety Council formed in 1935. Originally housed in the Raritan Engine Company No. 2 firehouse, the squad moved to its own building on Gross Ave. in 1962. Within a few years, expansion of the NJ Turnpike required that the squad move again, to its present location.

**13 Clara Barton Library** - at Pleasant and Hoover Aves. The library was originally at 76 Pleasant Ave. in a building formerly used by St. Stephen's Evangelical Lutheran Church and Temple Emanu-El. The present building was built in 1969 and improved in 1971.

**14 Raritan Engine Company No. 2** - located on Amboy Ave. across from Albourne St. just east of the NJ Turnpike, the company was formed in 1924 with "about 20 men and a Stutz Bearcat holding a chemical tank." A 1918 Model-T pickup truck holding a water tank and a hose was soon added.

## Houses of Worship



**15 Onnuri Korean Church** - at 120 Pleasant Ave., this church uses the facilities of St. Stephen's Evangelical Lutheran Church and reflects the diverse population of Edison.

**16 Our Lady of Peace Roman Catholic Church** - Amboy Ave. at the intersection of Ford Ave.

**17 Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church** - at 215 May St., is Edison's newest church and is distinguished by its gold-foil-covered dome.

**18 St. Stephen's Evangelical Lutheran Church** - at 120 Pleasant Ave. in the shadow of Grandview Ave. The church has moved several times since its founding in Perth Amboy in 1872. Started by Danish immigrants, most services were conducted in Danish before 1934. The congregation had three churches in Perth Amboy before opening a facility in 1940 in Edison (then Raritan Township) on donated land.

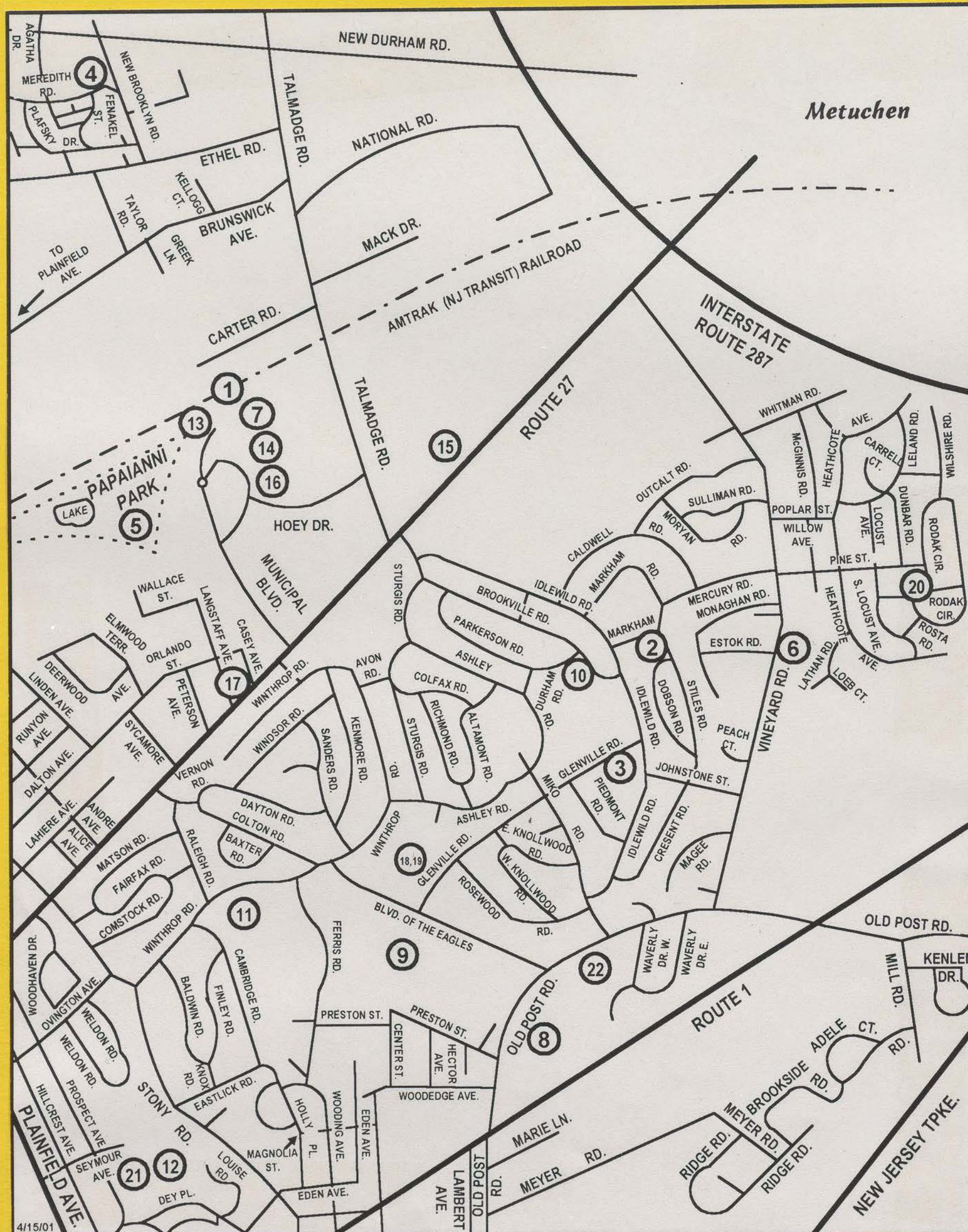
In 1947, a Chapel was built at 76 Pleasant Ave. In 1957, with the membership increasingly moving to Edison, the church in Perth Amboy was sold. The present structure was built in 1960. The Chapel was sold to Temple Emanu-El who later sold it to Edison Township for use as the Clara Barton Library.

**19 Wesley United Methodist Church** - at 5053 Woodbridge Ave. east of Grandview Ave., this church was also founded by Danish immigrants in Perth Amboy who were attracted to the revival services in the Simpson Methodist Episcopal Church.

As their numbers grew, they organized the First Danish Methodist-Episcopal Church in 1874. A modest frame church erected in 1876 was followed by a handsome brick church in 1989 seating 250. Services were conducted in Danish until 1925, and, in 1941, the name was changed to the Wesley Methodist Church. Prompted by a change in demographics, and a fire in the Perth Amboy church in 1957, the present building was erected in 1960. In 1963, a disastrous fire destroyed the interior of the new church. On a happier note, the mortgage to the church was burned in 1987.



# LINCOLN PARK



## Points of Interest

- ① Camp Kilmer Balloon Track
- ② Idlewild Park
- ③ Midtown Little League Field
- ④ New Brooklyn Rd. Park
- ⑤ Papaiani Park
- ⑥ Vineyard Rd. Park
- ⑦ Edison Youth Service Corps
- ⑧ Elks BPOE Lodge 2487
- ⑨ Edison High School
- ⑩ Lincoln Elementary School
- ⑪ Washington Elementary School
- ⑫ St. Matthew's Roman Catholic School
- ⑬ Edison Animal Shelter
- ⑭ Edison Health Dept.
- ⑮ Edison Main Post Office
- ⑯ Edison Municipal Complex
- ⑰ Raritan Engine Company No. 1 House No. 2
- ⑱ Community Presbyterian Church
- ⑲ Lord of Hope Korean Presbyterian Church
- ⑳ Polish Christian Center
- ㉑ St. Matthew's Roman Catholic Church
- ㉒ St. Paul's Lutheran Church



## Neighborhood Notes

**Lincoln Highway** - Route 27 in Edison is just one small segment of America's first transcontinental highway. The brainchild of Carl Fisher, who built the Indianapolis Speedway, it runs 3300 miles from New York City to San Francisco. Dedicated in 1913, the gravel highway was a vast improvement over 2.5 million dirt roads that were bumpy and dirty in dry weather and impassable when wet. Built before the federal government assisted highway construction, the Lincoln Highway Association named the road after Abraham Lincoln to encourage government support.

## Historic Sites



- 1 **Camp Kilmer Balloon Track** - located on the Northeast Corridor Line close to where the present Municipal Building stands, this track was constructed during World War II to allow troop trains coming from the south to loop around to take the branch track to Camp Kilmer. Viewed from above, the loop looked like a hot air balloon. The embankment for the south side of the balloon track was removed in 1980 to make way for the new Municipal Building.



## Parks

- 2 **Idlewild Park** - Idlewild Rd. across from Lincoln School, this 2.4-acre park is also the site of the Dr. William Toth Memorial Health Center. The park has 2 handball courts.
- 3 **Midtown Little League Field** - nestled in the middle of a residential block with access from Glenville Rd., the 3.2-acre park has 2 baseball fields.
- 4 **New Brooklyn Rd. Park** - at the intersection of New Brooklyn Rd. and Meredith Rd., this 4-acre park is presently undeveloped.
- 5 **Papaian Park** - adjacent to the Northeast Corridor Line and extending from Stony Rd. to the Edison Municipal Complex, this 60-acre park includes Lake Papaian and the former Central Ave. Park. Dedicated to the memory of Police Officer Frank Papaian who died in the line of duty in 1971, it is marked by a granite marker by the lake.
- 6 **Vineyard Rd. Park** - Vineyard Rd. north of the Ford plant, this 9-acre park has facilities for basketball, handball, tennis, and a playground. Vineyard Rd. was named for the many vineyards in the area in the 1930s. A 1762 map shows what is currently Vineyard Rd. coming off a bump on Old Post Rd., extending past Route 27 to New Durham Rd.

## Civic Facilities



- 7 **Edison Youth Service Corps** - Founded in 1994, the Corps is a non-profit, community-based organization that strives to engage Edison youth in full time, meaningful community service. Through two initiatives, Alternative Spring Break and Summer Corps, members are urged to learn about their community through volunteering, and about their peers through team building and leadership training. Offices are in the Edison Municipal Complex at 100 Municipal Blvd.
- 8 **Elks BPOE Lodge 2487** - Located at 375 Old Post Rd. next to the ShopRite Shopping Center, the Lodge features an Olympic-size swimming pool.



## Schools

- 9 **Edison High School** - 50 Blvd. of the Eagles (reflecting the school mascot), off Old Post Rd. The school was designed for 900 students and opened in 1956 to 1300 junior and senior high school students on a split-shift basis. Despite an addition in 1963, split shifts continued until 1964 when J. P. Stevens High School was opened. Edison high school age students previously attended schools in Metuchen, Highland Park, Rahway, Perth Amboy and Woodbridge. The school now covers grades 9-12.
- 10 **Lincoln Elementary School** - 53 Brookville Rd. at the intersection with Parkerson Rd., this school provides grades K-5 for the Lincoln Park section of the Township. The school was built in 1951, and expanded in 1956 and 1963.
- 11 **Washington Elementary School** - 153 Winthrop Rd., west of Edison High School, this school provides grades K-5 for the Washington Park section of Edison. Built in 1953, the school was expanded in 1957.
- 12 **St. Matthew's Roman Catholic School** - next to St. Matthew's Roman Catholic Church at 81 Seymour Ave., the school opened a full 8-year program in 1954.

## Public Service Facilities



- 13 **Edison Animal Shelter** - at the end of Municipal Blvd. across from the main Municipal Complex, the shelter is part of the Edison Health Dept. To see featured Pets of the Week, go to <http://www.edisonnj.org/animals/>.
- 14 **Edison Health Dept.** - in the Edison Municipal Complex at 100 Municipal Blvd., the department provides many services to Edison residents, including animal control, rabies clinics, health education, environmental services, housing services, maternal care, medical transportation, public health nursing services, substance abuse resources, and the Bureau of Vital Statistics (which officially records all births, marriages and deaths in Edison). For more information, go to <http://www.edisonnj.org/health/>.  
*Environmental services* handles public health inspection programs and responds to citizen complaints in such areas as: food safety, rodent infestations, air, water and noise pollution, solid waste disposal, and property maintenance.  
*Housing* responds to complaints from tenants of rental units ranging from single-family homes to multiple dwellings, and conducts inspections of apartments, hotels, trailer parks and laundromats.  
*Transportation* is also provided for Edison residents to and from the offices of physicians, dentists and chiropractors with offices located in Edison or Metuchen.  
*Public Health Nursing Services* provided by the Dr. William Toth Memorial Health Center, 80 Idlewild Rd., include chronic disease prevention, immunizations, communicable disease control, and maternal and child health services.
- 15 **Edison Main Post Office** - Route 27 near the intersection of Talmadge Rd. The primary postal facility in Edison, with branch post offices in Menlo Park, Nixon and Raritan Center. Interestingly, "Edison" was not a valid mailing address until the present main post office opened in 1968. Before then, mail was handled through neighborhood offices or surrounding towns.

16

**Edison Municipal Complex** - 100 Municipal Blvd. near the intersection of Route 27 and Talmadge Rd., the complex was dedicated in 1981 to replace a smaller structure at the corner of Plainfield and Woodbridge Aves.

The Complex houses the Mayor's Office, Council Chambers, the Township Clerk, the Township Attorney, Depts. of Finance, Technical Services, Public Works, Health and Human Resources, Public Safety (including the Division of Fire and the Division of Police), administrative offices, the Municipal Court and Violations Bureau. Edison Police have come a long way since 1923 when the force was comprised of 4 men and a Model-T Ford.

Monuments surround the Complex. One in the Memorial Circle on Municipal Blvd. honors those who served in World Wars I and II, and the Korean Conflict, while two in front of the building memorialize past police and fire officers and firefighters.

An interesting display of pre-historic artifacts from the Dismal Swamp is on view outside the Council Chambers.

17

**Raritan Engine Company No. 1, House No. 2** - on Route 27 at the intersection of Langstaff Ave., the firehouse is a branch of the first fire company organized in Edison in 1916.

## Houses of Worship



18

**Community Presbyterian Church** - 76 Glenville Ave. near the Blvd. of the Eagles, the church began with a survey of the needs of Nixon Park and Lincoln Village in 1950. In spring 1952, a store in the Nixon Shopping Center was rented for services. Started in 1953 on farmland and wooded marshes, the Church was dedicated in 1954. The church successfully bid \$5 for pews being auctioned off for firewood from a chapel at Camp Kilmer. The Christian Education wing was added in 1964. The pews were replaced in 1990.

19

**Lord of Hope Korean Presbyterian Church** - Uses the Community Presbyterian Church.

20

**Polish Christian Center** - 10 Rodak Circle close to the intersection with S. Locust Ave.

21

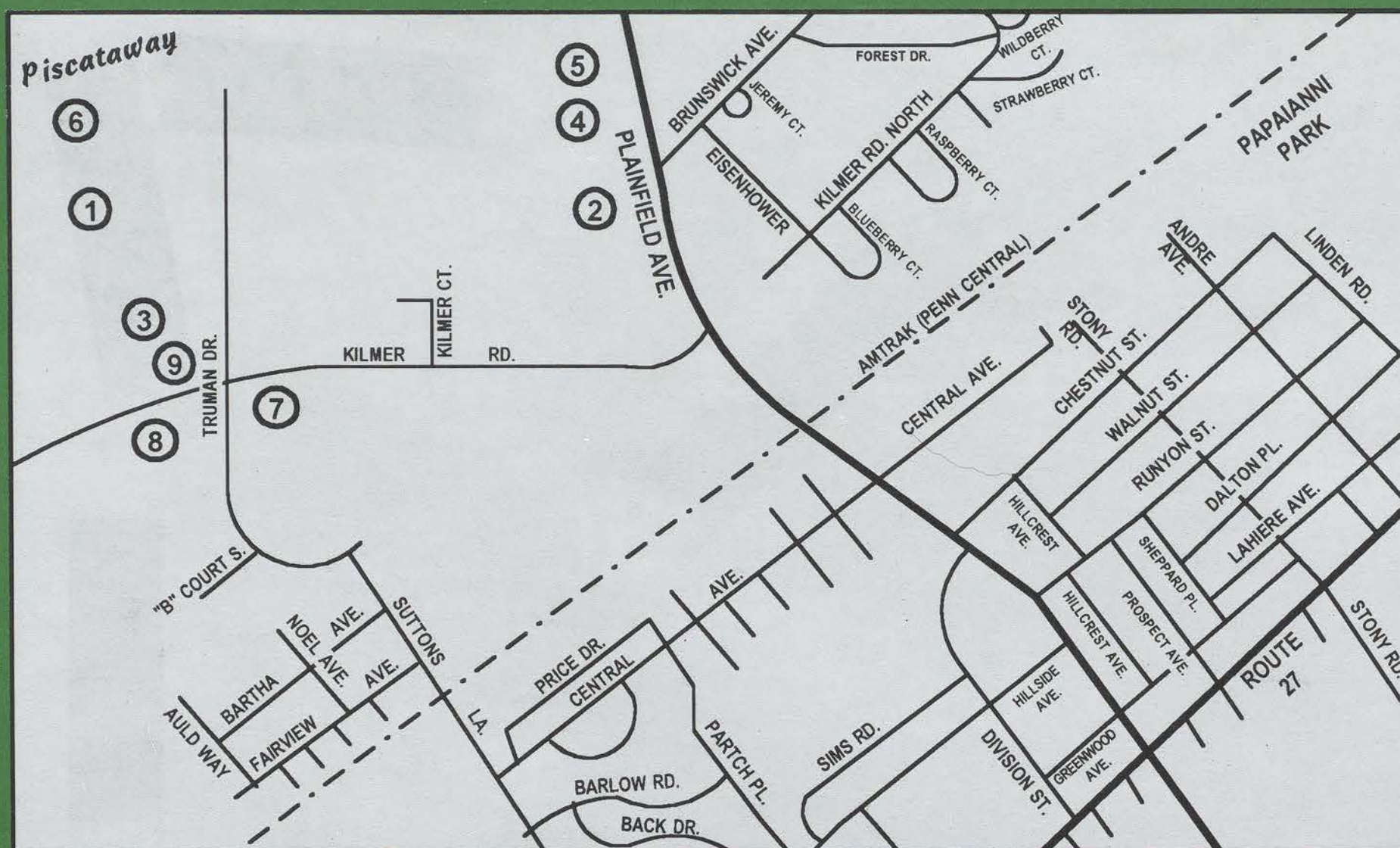
**St. Matthew's Roman Catholic Church** - on Seymour Ave. near Plainfield Ave. The church was formed in 1949 during the housing boom in southern Edison after World War II. Before dedicating the present church in 1954, many diverse locations were used for services including the Stelton School auditorium; St. Margaret Mary Church, Bonhamtown; St. Francis Church, Metuchen (now St. Francis Cathedral); the Linwood Grove in Stelton; and the cafeteria of the Westinghouse plant on Route 27 (now the Frigidaire plant).

22

**St. Paul's Lutheran Church** - 445 Old Post Rd. near the Blvd. of the Eagles, the church was founded in 1954. The church is also used by the multi-ethnic Fisherman's Presbyterian Church.



# CAMP KILMER



## Points of Interest

- ① Smalley Burial Ground
- ② Kilmer Field
- ③ Edison Angels Girls' Softball field
- ④ Edison Job Corps Academy
- ⑤ Middlesex County Academy High School
- ⑥ Rutgers University - Livingston College
- ⑦ Kilmer General Mail Facility
- ⑧ NJ Motor Vehicle Inspection Station
- ⑨ NJ National Guard



### Neighborhood Notes

This land located on the Edison-Piscataway border was primarily farmland and vacant acreage prior to 1942. Approximately 11,400 civilians worked 4 months to transform the site into Camp Kilmer, consisting of 1100 buildings--wooden barracks, a 1600-bed hospital, a post exchange, chapels and a garbage incinerator. This became the **staging area for almost 5 million soldiers** departing for Europe and returning home at the end of **World War II**. What is now the Edison train station was part of a system of spurs and switches for the trains that served the Camp during the War. The Camp was deactivated in 1949.

In 1956, the Camp became home to 40,000 refugees who fled during the **Hungarian Revolution**. The Camp was deactivated again in 1957 as the refugees settled throughout Middlesex County.

In 1965, Vice President Hubert Humphrey reactivated a large portion of the Camp as the Kilmer Job Corps Center, now called the **Edison Job Corps Academy**.

In the mid-1960s, 549 acres of the Camp Kilmer property was given to **Rutgers University** for the Livingston College Campus. Rutgers and Livingston College offices and classrooms still occupy old Army buildings.

A portion of the camp is now the Piscataway campus of the **Middlesex County Vocational-Technical School System**. Another 149 acres of land was given to Edison Township, a portion of which is now the **Edison Angels softball field**. Other parts of the Camp are now an **industrial park**.

Joyce Kilmer - Camp Kilmer is named after New Brunswick poet, Joyce Kilmer, who was killed in France during World War I. It was the first Army installation to be named after an enlisted man. Christened Alfred Joyce Kilmer after his sponsor, the Rev. Alfred R. Taylor, and the presiding minister,

the Rev. Elisha Brooks Joyce, Kilmer later discarded his first name. He was born at 17 Codwise St. in New Brunswick, now known as Joyce Kilmer Ave., and the house now serves as a museum. His most famous poem is "Trees".

### Historic Sites



- 1 Smalley Burial Ground - within the borders of the original Camp Kilmer, the Smalley family cemetery is a reminder of one of the families that settled in what is now known as the Piscataway-Edison area. Located on the U.S. Army Reserve Center near the Livingston Campus, the burial ground is not easily accessed today.



### Parks

- 2 Kilmer Field - located on Plainfield Ave. across from Brunswick Ave., this 8-acre park has a handball court and a backstop.
- 3 Edison Angels Girls Softball Field - located on Kilmer Rd. just west of Truman Dr., this park has 4 softball fields on what was part of Camp Kilmer.

### Schools



- 4 Edison Job Corps Academy - 500 Plainfield Ave., just north of Brunswick Ave. This residential program provides basic education, vocational skills training, work experience, counseling, health care, and related support services. The Academy, opened as the Kilmer Job Corps Center in 1965, assists young people who both need and can benefit from the wide range of services provided. These students are typically from such debilitating environments that they must be relocated to a residential setting to benefit from this intensive program. A special Job Corps student project is the construction of a facility for the Edison Mounted Patrol that was acquired from the Middlesex County Park Police.

5

Middlesex County Academy High School - co-located with the Edison Job Corps Academy on Plainfield Rd., the Middlesex County Academy High School is a county-wide alternative education program designed to provide at-risk and classified students the opportunity to earn a high school diploma in a supportive, individualized learning environment. Students are scheduled in an academic program that meets the credit requirements of their resident school district. Specialized instructional approaches, support services, and individualized self-pacing assist students to develop responsible patterns of behavior.

6

Rutgers University - Livingston College - located on a campus between Metlars and Cedar Lns., Livingston College, founded in 1969, is the first co-educational, liberal arts college of Rutgers University to study issues of diversity. The college's primary concern has been to foster an understanding of and involvement with complex social issues. Today, more than 3,000 undergraduates continue that tradition.

### Public Service Facilities



7

Kilmer General Mail Facility - located on Kilmer Rd. just east of Truman Dr., the Kilmer General Mail Facility handles all mail in the 088xx postal region.

8

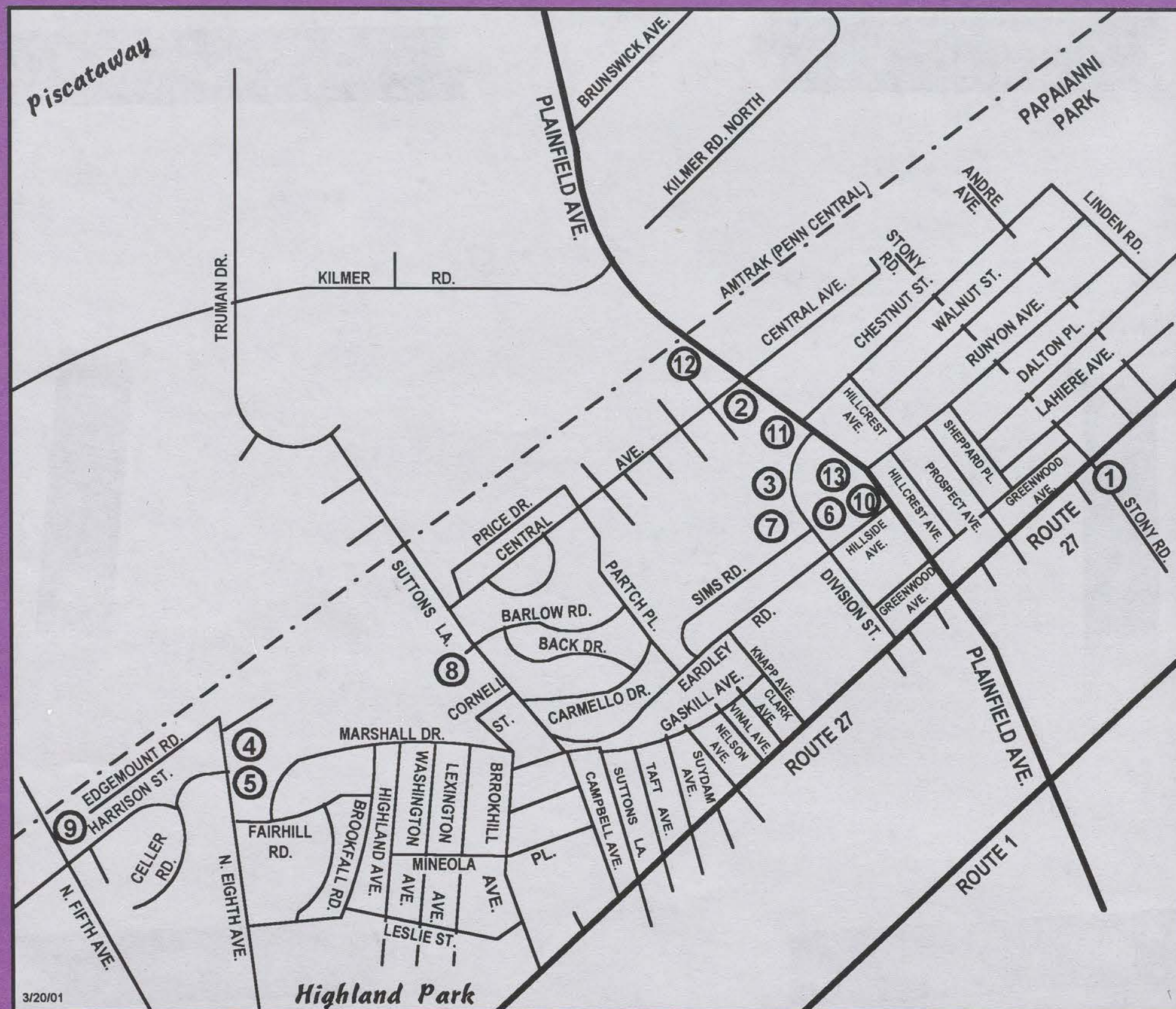
NJ Motor Vehicle Inspection Station - located on Kilmer Rd. just west of Truman Dr., the facility has 3 lanes to conduct mandatory bi-annual inspections of motor vehicles.

9

NJ National Guard - the Sgt. Joyce Kilmer U.S. Army Reserve Center on Kilmer Rd. and Truman Dr. was formerly the headquarters of the 78<sup>th</sup> Division of the National Guard. The building is now vacant.



# STELTON



## Points of Interest

- ① Site of former Linwood Grove
- ② Site of former Stelton Post Office
- ③ Site of first school in Stelton
- ④ Edgemount Park
- ⑤ Earl Schenck Miers Park
- ⑥ Stelton Community Center Park
- ⑦ Thomas Jefferson Middle School
- ⑧ John Marshall Elementary School
- ⑨ Rabbi Pesach Raymon Yeshiva
- ⑩ Dorothy Dwral Community Center
- ⑪ Edison Main Library
- ⑫ Edison Train Station
- ⑬ Stelton Baptist Church

3/20/01



## Neighborhood Notes

Centered on Plainfield Ave. and Route 27, Stelton dates to colonial times. The neighborhood is named after the Stelle family who settled in the area in 1707, and who were active in the formation and growth of the First Baptist Church of Piscataway (renamed the Stelton Baptist Church in 1875). Like many early roads, Plainfield Ave. was named for the destination town, and becomes Stelton Rd. after entering Piscataway, indicating the opposite destination point. Other early families also left their mark on the neighborhood. The Runyon Homestead stood on the corner of Plainfield Ave. and what is now Runyon Ave. East of Plainfield Ave., a more recent residential neighborhood is known as the Lahiere section. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Stelton was advertised as a good place to spend a vacation.

## Historic Sites



1 Linwood Grove - located on the south side of the Lincoln Highway (now Route 27) at Stony Rd. The Ainscow family started a hot dog stand in 1924, which later expanded into the Linwood Grove Amusement Park & Tourist Camp. After World War II, the enterprise evolved into the Linwood Grove Ballroom, a nightclub and lounge. The Ainscow family also operated the Lincoln Inn that later became the Lincoln Garage with the fleeting distinction of pumping more gas than any other garage between New York and Philadelphia.

2 Stelton Post Office - located at the corner of Plainfield Ave. and Central Ave., the Stelton Post Office name changed to the Edison Post Office in 1958 as one step in providing a central post office so that all residents could have an Edison address. It is now a private home. Built beside the railroad in 1875 as a combined house, store, post office and railroad depot, the building served as the Stelton Railroad Station until the 1950s.

3 Original Schoolhouse - The first school in Stelton was a one-room schoolhouse on Division St. on the site of the present Thomas Jefferson Middle School behind the Stelton Baptist Church.



## Parks

4 Edgemount Park - located at the intersection of Edgemount Rd. and N. Eighth Ave., this park includes a basketball court, a football field, 2 tennis courts, a backstop and a playground.

5 Earl Schenck Miers Park - located at the intersection of N. Eighth Ave. and Celler Rd., this park has 4 tennis courts and is named in memory of the former chief librarian of the Rutgers Press and author of 34 books.

6 Stelton Community Center Park - located behind the Dorothy Drwal Community Center on Plainfield Ave., this 4-acre park contains a playground. Thomas Jefferson Middle School located across Division St. has additional facilities for outside sports activities.



## Schools

7 Thomas Jefferson Middle School - located at 450 Division St. behind the Dorothy Drwal Community Center (commonly referred to as the Stelton Community Center), this was the first of the four middle schools now serving Edison. It was built in 1959 and opened on a split-shift basis. It was expanded in 1968.

8 John Marshall Elementary School - located at 15 Cornell St. close to the intersection with Suttons La., this school was built in 1961 and now serves grades K-5.

9 Rabbi Pesach Raymon Yeshiva - is located at 2 Harrison St. on the Highland Park border.

## Public Service Facilities



10 Dorothy Drwal Community Center - located at 328 Plainfield Ave., next to the Stelton Baptist Church and south of the Edison train station, this building was originally the Stelton School. Built in 1923-1925, the school closed in 1982 and was converted into the Stelton Community Center. The Stelton School was the first school in the U.S. to provide hot lunches, and the first in New Jersey to immunize students. The Center was later renamed the Dorothy Drwal Community Center in honor of an Edison woman who played a pivotal role in the development of Edison. The Edison Sheltered Workshop and the offices of the Edison Dept. of Parks & Recreation are in this Community Center.

11 Edison Main Library - located at 340 Plainfield Ave., near the Edison train station and the Dorothy Drwal Community Center, the library is the outgrowth of the Raritan Township Free Public Library Association that first met in 1926. The library opened in 1927 at the corner of Woodbridge Ave. and

Thomas St. with 246 books. The present building opened in 1965. A Bookmobile garage and a meeting room were added in 1975, and a second addition opened in 1987. The Friends of the Edison Public Library, volunteers who raise funds for the library, was formed in the early 1960s, and was largely responsible for arousing enough public interest to have the new main library constructed. They raise funds for items that cannot be funded by the municipal budget.

12 Edison Train Station - located on the Northeast Corridor Line at Plainfield Ave., this was originally called the Stelton train station. (See note 2 above.) Following the change of name from Raritan Township to Edison Township in 1954, Mrs. Johanna Wira and the Women for Edison prevailed upon the Pennsylvania Railroad and the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities to rename it the Edison train station. The station was part of the railroad complex transporting soldiers and equipment to and from Camp Kilmer. The station has just been renovated and now features stained glass windows and murals.

## Houses of Worship



13 Stelton Baptist Church - located at 334 Plainfield Ave. between the Dorothy Drwal Community Center and the Main Edison Library, the church was formed in 1689 as the First Baptist Church of Piscataway. (This section of the Township was part of Piscataway until 1870.) It is the second oldest Baptist congregation in New Jersey, and the oldest in Middlesex County. The Stelle family was among the first members. Benjamin Stelle, who moved to Piscataway around 1707 from the New York colony, was ordained at age 55 as the second pastor of the Church. His son succeeded him. The congregation first met in the Town Meeting House off Woodbridge Ave.

The church suffered immensely during the American Revolutionary War, and over the following years, fires destroyed the church several times. In 1819, 100 years before the 19<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment, the church gave women "an equal right, in all cases with the brethren, in voting, speaking and governing the church." Prior to 1871, new members were baptized by total immersion in the Raritan River, regardless of the temperature. The cemetery surrounding the church provides an interesting view of the early history of the area.



# NIXON/BONHAMTOWN

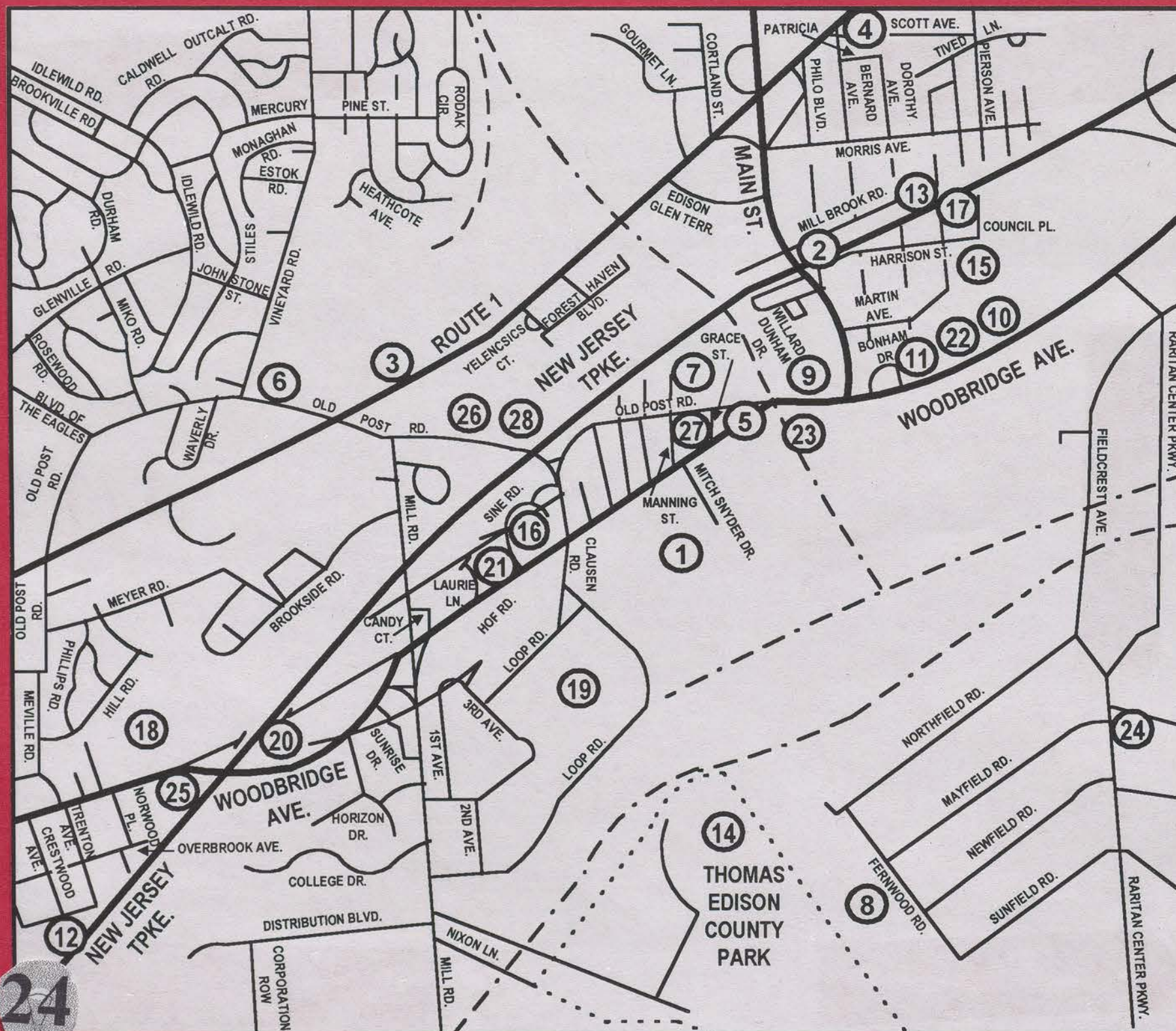
## Neighborhood Notes

The Bonhamtown section surrounds Main St. below Metuchen in the southern part of Edison. The hamlet is said to have been the site of a Native American village. It was one of five colonial settlements in what is now Edison, and derives its name from Nicholas Bonham, one of the first six European settlers in the area and a freeholder from 1682 to 1683. Bonhamtown served as the seat of justice for Middlesex and Somerset Counties as early as 1683.

During the Revolutionary War, the Continental Army camped there, and it was the site of a skirmish with the British. Manning St. is named after Hannah Manning, a member of the Stelton Baptist Church who organized the first Sunday School in the Bonhamtown School House. Her Sunday School played an integral role in the formation and development of Grace Reformed

Church. Clausen Rd. and Westervelt Ave. are named for original members of the Church.

The Nixon section lies along and south of Woodbridge Ave. between Bonhamtown and Piscatawaytown. Developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, it honors Lewis Nixon who located in the township in 1913 and developed nitration works here. Nixon also founded the Crescent Shipyard in Elizabeth that built ships for the U.S. Navy, including the first modern submarine used by the Navy. In 1954, when Raritan Township voters were considering changing the name, "Nixon" was offered as an alternative to "Edison". Choosing the name of a local industrialist had been followed in Helmetta and Sayreville. The vote was very close, but the change to Edison won in the election of November 2, 1954.



## Points of Interest

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| ① Camp Raritan                       | ①⑦ Knights of Columbus Council 4885                   |
| ② Edgar's Mill                       | ①⑧ Ben Franklin School                                |
| ③ Fast Line                          | ①⑨ Middlesex County College                           |
| ④ Lafayette Union School             | ②⑦ Army Reserve Center                                |
| ⑤ Old Bonhamtown School              | ②① NJ State Police - Edison Station                   |
| ⑥ Old Post Road                      | ②② Senior Citizen Center                              |
| ⑦ Original Bonhamtown School         | ②③ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency               |
| ⑧ Raritan Arsenal                    | ②④ U.S. Postal Service - Raritan Center Branch Office |
| ⑨ Union Hotel in Bonhamtown          | ②⑤ Bochasanwasi Swaminaryan Sanstha                   |
| ⑩ Yelencsics Homestead               | ②⑥ First Chinese Baptist Church                       |
| ⑪ Bonhamtown-Nixon Memorial Monument | ②⑦ Grace Reformed Church                              |
| ⑫ Crestwood Park                     | ②⑧ Raritan Valley Baptist Church                      |
| ⑬ Gateway Park                       |   |
| ⑭ Thomas Edison County Park          |   |
| ⑮ Yelencsics Park                    |   |
| ⑯ Almahdi Foundation                 |   |



## Historic Sites



- 1 **Camp Raritan** - During World War I, Camp Raritan was a major embarkation point for troops headed to Europe, as Camp Kilmer was in World War II. Located where Raritan Center is now, it was the precursor to Raritan Arsenal.
- 2 **Edgar's Mill** - located in Bonhamtown close to Main St. along the current Mill Brook Rd., the mill was driven by a millpond where local youngsters swam. The New Jersey Turnpike now runs through the site.
- 3 **Fast Line** - In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, most people traveled between cities by train and within urban areas by electric trolley. An extensive network of privately owned rail and trolley lines criss-crossed the state. Building on this network, the new Public Service Railway Company gained control of most street railway systems in central Jersey. While it was possible to travel throughout the state by rail, long-distance routes were often circuitous and time-consuming. By 1913, a direct, high-speed line had been constructed from Elizabeth to Trenton Junction, with a stop in Bonhamtown. Called the "Fast Line", it was quickly extended to Newark and Trenton proper, with connections to Philadelphia. It ran on a private right-of-way that later became Route 1 through this part of New Jersey.
- 4 **Lafayette Union School** - An 1882 map of Raritan Township schools indicates the Lafayette Union School was located in Bonhamtown, apparently close to where Route 1 and Interstate 287 intersect.
- 5 **Old Bonhamtown School** - 2825 Woodbridge Ave. in the triangle formed by Woodbridge Ave., Old Post Rd. and Grace St., the school was built in 1908 in a neoclassical Colonial revival style using brick from local brickworks. The school served the Bonhamtown and Nixon neighborhoods until 1971 when it was converted for use by the school superintendent and administrative staff. In 1981, when the staff moved into the new Municipal Complex, the old Bonhamtown School was sold for use as commercial offices. It now houses the Bonhamtown Academy for Little Learners.
- 6 **Old Post Road** - The current Old Post Rd. and Woodbridge Ave. combination follows the path of King George's Old Post Road, the oldest road in eastern NJ. It was constructed in the early 1700s to carry mail between Perth Amboy, the home of the Royal Governor, and New Brunswick, and later extended to Trenton. A 1762 map shows the road had three branches. The first branch corresponds to the current Vineyard Rd. that formerly extended from Old Post Rd. past Route 27 to New Durham Rd. The second turnoff heading north appears to match present day Main St., which starts in Bonhamtown and proceeds north to Oak Tree Rd. and beyond to Ash Brook in Scotch Plains. The third road seems to follow the same path as Amboy Ave. today from Woodbridge Ave. in Clara Barton/Fords heading to Main St. in Metuchen.
- 7 **Original Bonhamtown School** - An older school existed in Bonhamtown as shown by an 1882 map of schools in Raritan Township. This one-story school, only 20 x 27 feet, was sold at auction in 1909 when it was no longer needed after the "new" school was built in 1908.
- 8 **Raritan Arsenal** - between Woodbridge Ave. and the Raritan River, this vast tract was purchased by the U.S. government during World War I. It first served as Camp Raritan, an assembly area for troops heading for Europe. Later it was converted into Raritan Arsenal, primarily for the storage and transfer of military

munitions. The Arsenal had its own fire department, security, housing, supermarket, theater, bowling alleys, golf course, and sewage and water-treatment plants. In the early 1960s, the government announced the closing of the arsenal. Part of the land and buildings were made available to Middlesex County for its new college (See note 19). The county converted another large tract into Thomas Edison Park (See Note 14). Other government users include the Environmental Protection Agency and the General Service Administration. In 1965, two Visceglia brothers purchased almost 4 square miles to create Raritan Center. In 1975, ownership was split equally between Summit Associates and Federal Business Centers. Today, the daytime population of Raritan Center is estimated at 50,000. The Raritan Center Exposition Hall is close to the Raritan River. In spite of this extensive commercial activity, the undeveloped areas still teem with wildlife, especially the marshlands.

- 9 **Union Hotel in Bonhamtown** - located at 2863 Woodbridge Ave. on the site now occupied by the Victorian Manor. Built in 1812, the Union Hotel later became Jedak's Tavern and then Bo's Tavern before being destroyed by fire.
- 10 **Yelencsics Homestead** - located at 2965 Woodbridge Ave., adjacent to the Edison Senior Citizens Center. The Yelencsics Homestead was built in 1887 and was the birthplace and family residence of the late Anthony Yelencsics, a longtime mayor of Edison.



## Parks

- 11 **Bonhamtown-Nixon Memorial Monument** - located adjacent to the Senior Citizens Center in Yelencsics Park on Woodbridge Ave., this gray granite monument is dedicated to "the men and women of this community who served in World War II". Among the listed names, 39 family names appear more than once.
- 12 **Crestwood Park** - located at the end of Crestwood Ave., this 5.4-acre park contains a softball field and a playground.
- 13 **Gateway Park** - located on Howard Ave. near Morris Ave., this 1.8-acre park contains a basketball court and a playground.
- 14 **Thomas Edison County Park** - located off Mill Rd. behind Middlesex County College in the former Raritan Arsenal, this 161-acre park has 16 lighted tennis courts, a lighted baseball field, 2 lighted softball fields, 4 soccer fields, a lighted quarter mile track, a model airplane field, and running paths.
- 15 **Yelencsics Park** - located between Woodbridge Ave. and Martin Ave. next to the Senior Citizens Center (Martin Ave. provides the easiest access), this 8.8-acre park contains a basketball court, 2 bocci courts, 2 horseshoe pits, a pavilion and picnic grove, 2 shuffleboard courts, a softball field, and a volleyball court. It also is the locale of the Yelencsics Homestead.

## Civic/Cultural/Recreational Facilities

- 16 **Almahdi Foundation** - located at 2757 Woodbridge Ave., this nonprofit Moslem foundation focuses on outreach and support for the growing Moslem population in the Edison area.
- 17 **Knights of Columbus Council 4885** - located on Council Place behind the New York Times plant. This is one of the leading Councils in New Jersey in raising funds through their annual Tootsie Roll Drive to support a variety of organizations working with retarded citizens, including the Edison Sheltered Workshop.

## Schools



- 18 **Ben Franklin School** - located at 2485 Woodbridge Ave., this elementary school that now serves grades K-5 was built in 1961 and expanded in 1966.
- 19 **Middlesex County College** - located at 2600 Woodbridge Ave. at the intersection of Mill Rd. In 1933, Middlesex Junior College was founded with campuses in New Brunswick and Perth Amboy. Financial pressures of the Great Depression and World War II forced it to close in 1941. In 1962, Governor Hughes signed a bill authorizing the establishment of county colleges. Middlesex County Freeholder George Otlowksi, a graduate of Middlesex Junior College, chaired a committee that recommended establishing a two-year county college. In 1964, the county acquired 156 acres from the closed Raritan Arsenal. Middlesex County College opened in 1966, using many of the existing buildings from the arsenal. The College is now one of the largest county colleges in New Jersey.

## Public Service Facilities



- 20 **Major General William Weigel U.S. Army Reserve Center** - 2550 Woodbridge Ave.
- 21 **NJ State Police - Edison Station** - 2667 Woodbridge Ave. across from Middlesex County College.
- 22 **Senior Citizen Center** - 2965 Woodbridge Ave., but more easily reached from Martin Ave. This focal point for Township services for senior citizens was dedicated in 1992. It is located next to Yelencsics Park.
- 23 **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Region II Office** - Woodbridge Ave. across from Grace St. on the former Raritan Arsenal.
- 24 **United States Postal Service - Raritan Center Branch Post Office** - 400 Raritan Center Parkway, Suite H.

## Houses of Worship



- 25 **Bochasanwasi Swaminaryan Sanstha** - located at 2500 Woodbridge Ave. immediately west of the NJ Tpke. overpass, it is the temple of a strictly vegetarian, orthodox Hindu sect. One of their early activities was to organize the Cultural Festival of India at Middlesex County College in the summer of 1991.
- 26 **First Chinese Baptist Church** - located at 592 Old Post Rd., this church is a mission of, and shares the facilities of, the Raritan Valley Baptist Church.
- 27 **Grace Reformed Church** - located at 2815 Woodbridge Ave. on the corner of Grace St., behind the old Bonhamtown School. The Sunday School was established about 1800, meeting in the homes of members. In 1876, Grace Chapel was built, debt-free because of the leadership and generosity of the Westervelt family. For many years, religious services were provided by the Presbyterian, Reformed and Methodist-Episcopal Churches of Metuchen. In 1954, Grace Chapel was organized as a congregation of the Reformed Church of America. The name was changed to Grace Reformed Church in 1955.
- 28 **Raritan Valley Baptist Church** - located at 592 Old Post Rd. about half way between Mill Rd. and the NJ Tpke. overpass. Started by two Southern Baptist families in 1961, a small group formed and called themselves the New Brunswick Baptist Chapel. The Chapel quickly became a mission of the Madison Baptist Church of Madison, NJ. In 1963, they changed the name to Raritan Valley Baptist Church, and in 1966, built the present church on Old Post Rd. In the 1960s, they sponsored missions in Lincroft and East Brunswick, and in 1990, sponsored the First Chinese Baptist Church, a Cantonese language congregation, in their church building.



# PISCATAWAYTOWN/LINDENEAU

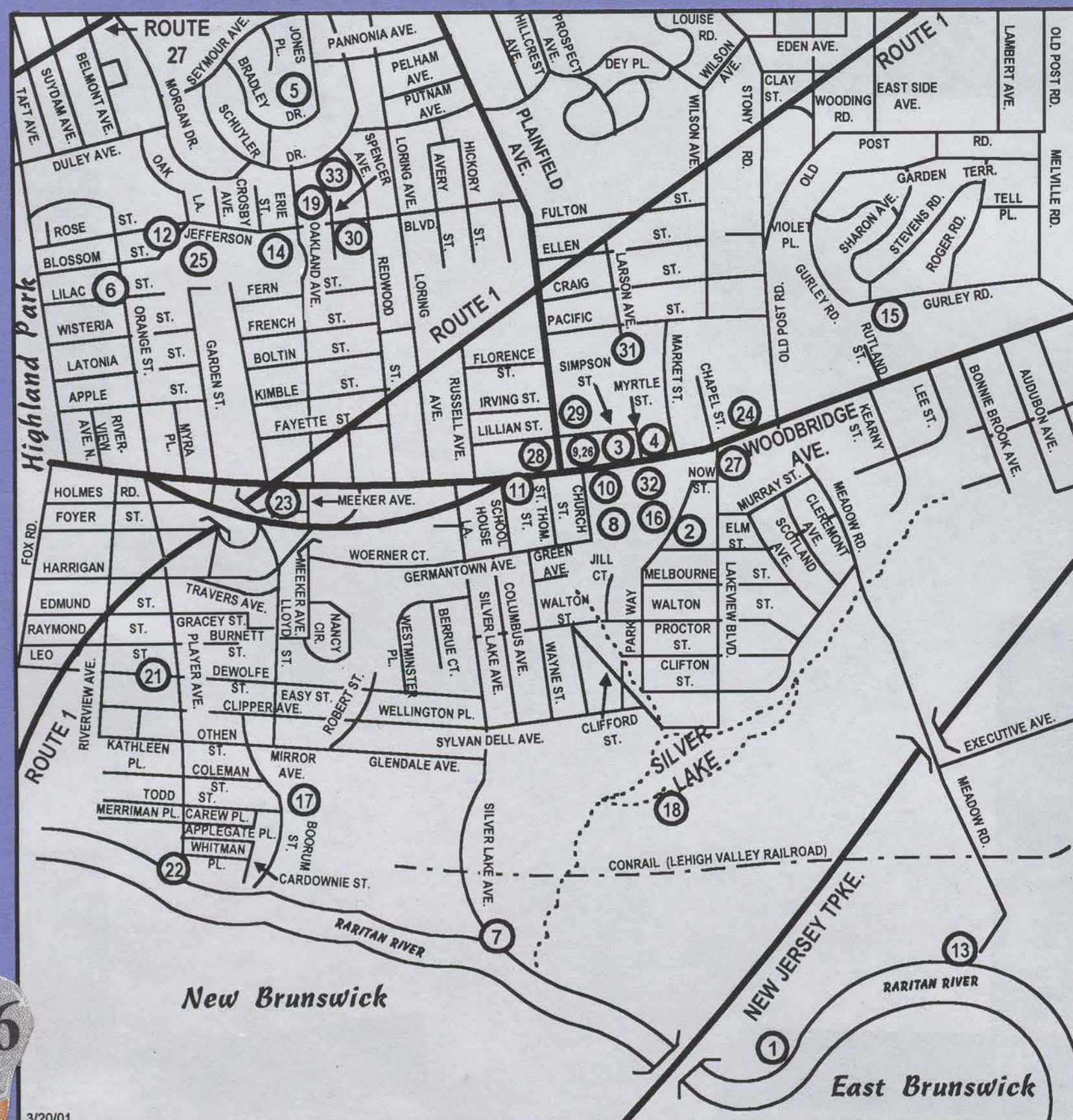
## Neighborhood Notes

Piscatawaytown is the area of Edison where Plainfield Ave. meets Woodbridge Ave. It is the oldest settlement in what is now Edison Township, with origins in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In colonial times, the area was part of Piscataway Township. Located on high ground above the Raritan River, it was safe from floods and yet had access to the river that was the major "highway" of the period. In order to attract settlers, Lord John Berkeley and Sir John Carteret, who held title to what is now New Jersey, provided for religious freedom. Attracted by this promise, many of the early settlers relocated from New England. They named the area "Piscataway" after the Piscataqua River, a broad navigable river similar to the Raritan, that flows into the Atlantic Ocean between present day Maine and New Hampshire.

In 1681, a group of settlers bought 10,000 acres from the Lenni-Lenape and established a ferry across the river to New Brunswick near the present day Albany Street bridge. When Somerset County was created out of Middlesex County in 1683, Piscatawaytown became the seat of the court for both counties. In 1685, every inhabitant of the town agreed to pay nine pence in silver to buy nails to erect a Town House close to where St. James Episcopal Church now stands.

In 1702, New Jersey became a united royal colony administered by the Governor of New York, with Perth Amboy chosen as one of its capitals. King George's Post Road was constructed to carry mail between Perth Amboy and New Brunswick. It ran through the middle of Piscatawaytown. Now called Woodbridge Ave. in this section, elsewhere in Edison it is called Old Post Rd. and King Georges Post Rd. George Washington used the road to travel to New York for his inauguration in 1789.

No major battles were fought in Piscatawaytown during the American Revolution, although both the British and American Armies crossed and recrossed the area. Several British regiments were stationed in the Piscatawaytown-Bonhamtown area. St. James Church served as a barracks for British troops and as a hospital for their injured. Thirty British soldiers are buried in simple graves around the church. Several slaves are buried in the cemetery behind the Parks & Recreation Dept. garage. In 1795, after the Revolution, a bridge replaced the ferry across the Raritan River.



## Points of Interest

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ① Cement Plant                            | ⑱ Silver Lake                                  |
| ② Col. John Dunham Estate                 | ⑲ American Legion Father & Son Post            |
| ③ E. G. Gough House                       | ⑳ Middlesex Greenways Group (not shown on map) |
| ④ Site of former Edison Main Library      | ㉑ Player Ave.                                  |
| ⑤ Haven Village Section                   | ㉒ Raritan River Boat Club                      |
| ⑥ Lindeneau                               | ㉓ VFW Post 3117                                |
| ⑦ Martin's Dock                           | ㉔ Abundant Life Christian Academy              |
| ⑧ Site of Old Meeting House               | ㉕ Lindeneau School                             |
| ⑨ Old Municipal Building (same as ㉖)      | ㉖ Rabbi Jacob Joseph School                    |
| ⑩ Piscatawaytown Burial Ground            | ㉗ Edison First Aid Squad No. 1                 |
| ⑪ Former Piscatawaytown Elementary School | ㉘ Edison-Nixon Post Office                     |
| ⑫ Blossom St. Park                        | ㉙ Raritan Engine Co. No. 1                     |
| ⑬ Edison Boat Basin                       | ㉚ Church of the Nazarene                       |
| ⑭ Ellmyer Park                            | ㉛ Guardian Angels Roman Catholic Church        |
| ⑮ Old Post Park                           | ㉜ St. James Episcopal Church                   |
| ⑯ Piscataway Commons                      | ㉝ Temple Beth-El                               |
| ⑰ Raritan River Ravine                    |  |



## Historic Sites



- 1 **Cement Plant** - located in a marshy area along the Raritan River, the smokestack of Edison's Portland Cement plant is visible from the northbound NJ Tpke.
- 2 **Col. John Dunham Estate** - located on Park Way behind St. James Church overlooking Piscatawaytown Commons. The Dunhams' were original settlers in the area, and may have built the estate as early as the late 1600s. Records indicate that the estate was active in 1732. The estate hosted General George Washington, Alexander Hamilton and seven soldiers on July 10, 1778. The house remained in the Dunham family until the 1920s. Plumbing and electricity were installed in the early 1960s. Today, it is a private home.
- 3 **E. G. Gough House** - at 2111 Woodbridge Ave. directly across from St. James Church. Built in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century for the FitzRandolph family, one of the first families in the area, today it is a private home.
- 4 **Old Edison Main Library** - The first library was opened by a civic group in 1927 with 246 donated books in a rented store at Woodbridge Ave. and Thomas St. After the November 1928 election, with voter approval, it became the municipal library. In 1931, the library moved to Woodbridge Ave. and Mrytle St. Library service was extended to the Clara Barton and Oak Tree Firehouses in 1932, and the Henry Street Firehouse and Menlo Park section in 1937. The library moved to the second floor of the Municipal Building at the corner of Woodbridge Ave. and Plainfield Ave. in 1938. It remained there until 1959 when it was moved to quarters at 238 Plainfield Ave. until the present library was built in 1965.
- 5 **Haven Village section** - located south of the intersection of Route 27 and Plainfield Ave. Also called Haven Homes, this is one of the developments built before World War II.
- 6 **Lindeneau** - on the Highland Park border, east of Duclos Lane between Route 27 and Woodbridge Ave. This is sometimes called the Blossom section because the streets are named for flowering trees or shrubs.
- 7 **Martin's Dock** - located on the Raritan River at the foot of Silver Lake Ave. Oral history tells that the dock was originally used to ship apples and cider from Martin's orchard and cider mill next to the Forman Martin Home at 30 Old Post Rd. Built in 1830 and 1850, Martins lived there until the 1960s.
- 8 **Old Meeting House** - The 1685 Town House proved too small and "insufficient to keep people from the injuries of the weather." A new Town Hall was built behind St. James Church on Piscatawaytown Commons in the 1800s. It served as the township municipal building and police headquarters until the 1930s when the Municipal Building on the corner of Plainfield and Woodbridge Aves. was built. It eventually fell into disuse and was destroyed by arsonists in the late 1980s.
- 9 **Old Municipal Building** - on Plainfield Ave. at the northeast corner of Woodbridge Ave., the building housed the Township government, Police Dept. and Municipal Court until 1980 when the new Municipal Complex was built. It housed the Public Library from 1938 until 1959, and in 1981, the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School purchased the building.
- 10 **Piscatawaytown Burial Ground** - this cemetery surrounds three sides of St. James Church but was deeded to Piscataway in the 1680s. The oldest marked grave is for Mary Jones, dated 1693. A tombstone dated 1695 tells of two boys who died from eating poison

mushrooms. Mary Moore was buried here after being burned as a witch. In addition to the graves of Revolutionary War soldiers, a mound marks the gravesite of six British soldiers killed in a skirmish nearby.

- 11 **Piscatawaytown Elementary School** - 2060 Woodbridge Ave., half a block west of Plainfield Ave. Built in 1913, it was the first school in Edison with a telephone. Additions were made in 1916 and 1921. In 1984, it was closed and sold to the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School. In the late 1700s, several schoolhouses had been built in Piscatawaytown. One was completely destroyed by a tornado in 1835. Residents built a new, two-story schoolhouse in 1837 with funds raised by subscription.

## Parks and Open Spaces



- 12 **Blossom Street Park** - at the intersection of Blossom St. and Jefferson Blvd., this 0.8-acre park contains a playground.
- 13 **Edison Boat Basin** - at the end of Meadow Rd. on the Raritan River, this is the only public access to the river in Edison. Recently renovated, there is a floating dock, boat launching ramps, and a parking lot.
- 14 **Ellmyer Park** - on Jefferson Blvd. at the corner of Oakland Ave., this 4.7-acre park has 2 basketball courts, a hardball court, and a playground.
- 15 **Old Post Park** - located at the intersection of Stevens and Gurley Rds., this 1.7-acre park has a playground.
- 16 **Piscataway Commons** - behind St. James Church, this 5.4-acre park dates back to colonial times when militia mustered to drill with cannons and muskets.
- 17 **Raritan River Ravine** - immediately east of Player Ave., this picturesque ravine has two arms. The easternmost extends behind Nancy Cir. almost to Woerner Ct. The other arm extends up to Burnett St.
- 18 **Silver Lake** - located at the end of Lakeview Blvd., this former millpond is a quiet oasis in a busy area.

## Civic/Cultural/Recreational Facilities

- 19 **American Legion Father & Son Post** - at the corner of Oakland Ave. and Jefferson Blvd. in Lindeneau.
- 20 **Middlesex Greenways Group** - works with county government to convert abandoned railroad rights-of-way into linear parks. For more information, go to <http://edisongw.webspace.dellnet.com/>.
- 21 **Player Ave.** - located off of, and just east of, Route 1 down to the Raritan River. About 1910, lots on lower Player Ave. near the river began to be sold. After the first acre was sold to a retired actor, realtors approached other stage artists every time they came to New Brunswick to perform. Artists purchased land for summer homes. Gradually, these summer homes were converted into permanent homes. In the early 1900s, the *Player* newspaper was the equivalent of *Variety* today, and "Player" became the name of the street. Other streets in the neighborhood were named for notable actors and directors. For example, Coleman St. is named after a director of many Broadway hits of the era.
- 22 **Raritan River Boat Club** - The riverbank at the end of Player Ave. was a natural place for summer recreation. In the 1920s, Ed Tierce developed the shoreline for swimming. There was a playground, a small luncheon area and a hall for dancing to recorded music. Gradually, Tierce's Tea Pot Inn took shape, but the depression and the ravages of winter took their toll--the Tea Pot Inn went bankrupt in 1935. The Raritan River Boat Club had been operating at Martin's Dock on Silver Lake Ave. In 1937, they voted to buy the Tea Pot Inn.

- 23 **VFW Post 3117** - on the east side of Route 1 to the right of where the Woodbridge Ave. overpass begins.



## Schools

- 24 **Abundant Life Christian Academy** - 2195 Woodbridge Ave. east of Plainfield Ave., this school is affiliated with the Abundant Life Christian Center.
- 25 **Lindeneau School** - located at 50 Blossom St. near Jefferson Blvd., this school was built in 1966 in former wetlands with a creek where people caught frogs and crawfish. It serves grades K-5.
- 26 **Rabbi Jacob Joseph School** - uses both the old Municipal Building and Piscatawaytown Elementary School.

## Public Service Facilities



- 27 **Edison First Aid Squad No.1** - on Lakeview Blvd. just below Woodbridge Ave., the squad traces its origins to the Raritan Township Safety Council formed in 1935. The Council comprised of seven members of the Raritan Fire Dept., raised funds to buy a used hearse they converted into an ambulance. The primary mission was to transport sick residents to New Brunswick hospitals. In 1960, the squad moved from the side-bay of the Fire Dept. headquarters on Plainfield Ave., and was known as the Lakeview First Aid Squad. Today, it is known as First Aid Squad No.1.
- 28 **Edison-Nixon Post Office** - located at the corner of Woodbridge and Plainfield Aves., this office served the area before the Township was renamed Edison and Edison was a recognized postal address.
- 29 **Raritan Engine Company No.1** - on Plainfield Ave. just north of Woodbridge Ave., the company was started in 1916 by volunteers with equipment borrowed from Highland Park hitched to their own horses. Members purchased their own fire bucket and had to have it with them at all times. In 1917, the fire alarm gong was moved to Ruth Swales' front lawn. She would ring the gong whenever there was a call on a dedicated phone. In 1922, an air horn atop the firehouse replaced the gong, and in 1923, two new trucks were purchased. The first paid member was hired in 1926 as a driver.

## Houses of Worship

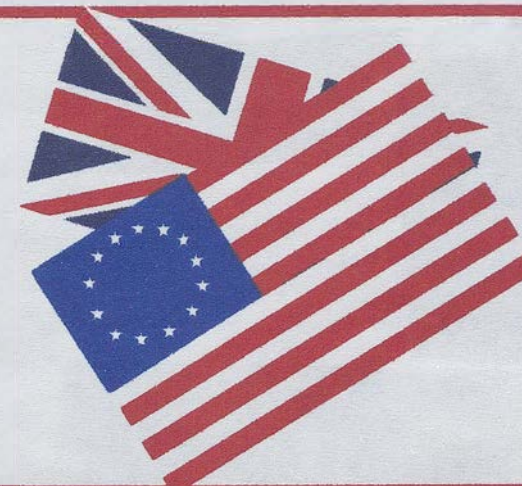


- 30 **Church of the Nazarene** - 80 Jefferson Blvd.
- 31 **Guardian Angels Roman Catholic Church** - located at 37 Plainfield Ave.
- 32 **St. James Episcopal Church** - 2136 Woodbridge Ave. at Plainfield Ave., this is the second oldest church in Edison. A charter was granted by Queen Anne of England in 1694, although the church was not fully organized until 1714. The church bell was cast in Leeds, England, and brought to the church in 1702. A handsome wooden chapel was completed in 1724 at a cost of £100, on the site of an old inn where the first Middlesex County government held its meetings. Services were discontinued for a time during the war, and the church was used as barracks and a hospital by British soldiers. The building was destroyed during fighting in 1777, rebuilt in 1792, and again destroyed in 1835 by a tornado. The present structure was built in 1836-37 using as many of the original fittings and fixtures as possible, including the pulpit and pews.
- 33 **Temple Beth-El** - at 91 Jefferson Blvd., this congregation was formed in 1952 by 12 couples. Religious services during the early years were held at such diverse places as Raritan Engine Co. No.1, Raritan Engine Co. No.2, and the Linwood Grove Ballroom. In 1954, the congregation bought the land on Jefferson Blvd. and construction of the temple began in 1955.



# The Battle of The Short Hills

*June 26, 1777*



## Late 1776

Most of 1776 had not been favorable for the Americans. After the loss of Fort Washington on Manhattan Island on November 16, 1776, the Americans were forced to retreat through New Jersey and across the Delaware River into Pennsylvania. Morale was not high either among the troops or among the patriots. However, as an invading army, the British and Hessians began making enemies among the colonists. General William Howe put his British troops in winter quarters and left 1,400 Hessian soldiers in Trenton.

Sensing that the Hessians were unsupported, General Washington determined to attempt their capture. At that point, Washington had a force of about 6,000 soldiers. On the night of December 25, he was able to get 2,500 soldiers across the Delaware and surprise the Hessians before they could form effectively. Over 900 Hessians were captured, and their Colonel was mortally wounded. Washington crossed back over the Delaware with his troops and prisoners. Eager to further harass the British, Washington recrossed the Delaware on December 30 and occupied Trenton. In response, General Charles Lord Cornwallis marched with 7,000 troops and drove the Americans to the banks of the Delaware. Having no boats available to cross back to Pennsylvania, Washington undertook a bold maneuver to escape an attack by the British the next morning. Quietly breaking camp, he took a byroad to Princeton, planning to break through any resistance and push on to the safety of the hills of northern New Jersey. He encountered three British regiments that held him at bay for a time, but the British regiments eventually were either driven back to Trenton or retreated towards New Brunswick. Washington marched to Morristown where he was on the flank of the British communications with New York. With these two successes,

Washington was well positioned to recruit new soldiers, and in a good defensive position. It is important to recall that there are few passes through the Watchung Mountains, and these could easily be defended by a few hundred men.

## Summer 1777

The British were anxious to quell the rebellion, and sought to control New Jersey so they could march overland from New York and capture Philadelphia, site of the Continental Congress. However, emboldened by the American successes of the past winter and reports of British atrocities, patriots and local militia harassed British parties sent out to gather supplies. American troops were in constant skirmishes with the British, threatening significant movements of British troops across New Jersey.

About the same time, it became obvious to the Continental Congress that the United States could not remain part of Great Britain. While earlier American flags had been based on the Union Jack, on June 14, 1777 the Flag Resolution was passed that established the Stars and Stripes as the standard.

Unwilling to attempt a frontal assault on the Americans in their defensive position, the British decided to lure Washington out into the open where their superior numbers could be effective. First, on June 14, 1777, the British moved out to the Middlebush area and onto Somerset Court House trying to get the American army to come out of the Watchung Mountains behind Bound Brook. The Americans and British fought a battle at Somerset Court House. The British then returned to New Brunswick, and on June 21, 1777, began to withdrawal to Perth Amboy. Washington came



out of the mountains and moved his main body of the Army into Quibbletown in present day Piscataway. From Quibbletown, American forces harassed the British withdrawal. The weather between June 22 and 23 was very wet making the movements of the armies difficult. Fearing an attack on his rear, Howe had to develop a new plan, where he would fake his final withdrawal to Staten Island, recross the Arthur Kill, and move to get behind the American army, and cut off their retreat routes into the Watchung Mountains.

At 4 p.m. on June 25, 1777, Howe issued the orders and began to implement his plan. Wisely, during the night of June 25, 1777, Washington had posted Lord Stirling with about 4,000 American troops and militia in The Short Hills from Ash Swamp to the Metuchen Meeting House to keep an eye on the British withdrawal and to protect the passes into the Watchung Mountains.

#### **June 26, 1777 - The Battle of The Short Hills:\***

Suddenly, the entire British Army of about 12,000 troops on Staten Island began to return to Perth Amboy. Delays in assembling the army pushed back the start of the march until 6 a.m. The intent was to get behind the American army and cut off its retreat route into the Watchung Mountains. Then the remaining British troops would catch Washington in the open ground around Quibbletown, and destroy the American army, ending the American Revolution. That, at least, was the plan.

The British army advanced in two columns. The right column under Lord Cornwallis marched through Woodbridge to Oak Tree Rd. and then towards the "Road to Scotch Plains." The left column under General Howe proceeded from Perth Amboy to Metuchen Meeting House, and moved north toward the "Road to Scotch Plains" to get around the Dismal Swamp and be in a position to engage Washington in the open. About 1,500 British troops were left in Bonhamtown to guard against an attack on their rear by General Anthony Wayne, then active in the area.

Both columns encountered nearly constant gunfire from local militia along the way. The right column encountered significant resistance at Strawberry Hill, just outside of Woodbridge, by Americans under the command of Captain Dark. This skirmish slowed them down and alerted the rest of the Americans that the British were on the move.

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*\*The hilly area extending north of Oak Tree Rd. is the result of terminal moraine from the Wisconsin Glacier. This area of hills, some as high as 60 feet, gave rise to the name "Short Hills."*

The right column continued westward on Oak Tree Rd., encountered another group of Americans under General Conway near what is now Wood Ave. The Americans retreated westward. The right column then came across a corps of American forces on a small hill. This small hill was located at the site of the Old Oak Tree School near the intersection of Oak Tree and New Dover Rds. The American cannons fired upon the British right side. The British drove the Americans off the hill, and the battle continued through the area of The Short Hills between Woodland Ave. and Tingley Ln., northward into Scotch Plains. The left column under Howe and Vaughan marched through Metuchen, up Plainfield Rd. to the "Road to Scotch Plains" where they met up with the right column just outside of Scotch Plains.

At Short Hills, Lord Stirling, even though he was heavily outnumbered, was able to delay the British for about 40 minutes. When he perceived that the Hessians were going off to the right through Ash Swamp trying to out-flank him, he managed a controlled retreat toward the Scotch Plains Gap. Sometime in the afternoon, in a response to British looting and burning, American volunteers under the command of General Maxwell skirmished with the Redcoats at Little's Tavern outside of Westfield. Washington was able to observe the action from Washington Rock, now a State Park, and pulled his troops back into the mountains before they were caught in the open. This was the first battle that took place after the Stars and Stripes was adopted as the national flag.

Failure of their plan so frustrated the British that they plundered and looted Scotch Plains and Westfield before camping for the night. On June 27, they moved into Clark and Rahway. On June 28, they retreated through Woodbridge, and back to Perth Amboy with hundreds of head of plundered cattle, horses, hogs, and loot stolen from the residents of the area. By the end of the June, they had abandoned New Jersey to the Americans and moved their troops by ship to Maryland for an attack on Philadelphia from the south. They captured Philadelphia, but the Continental Congress moved to other locations in Pennsylvania.

Rather than quell the rebellion, the British actions in 1777 only served to raise enmity against British rule and solidify support among the colonists for independence.

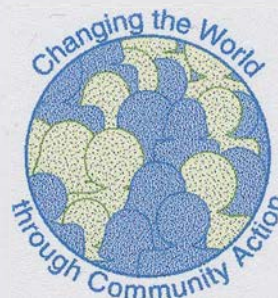


This summary could not have been prepared without the expert knowledge of William Fidurski of Clark, NJ. His contribution is much appreciated. Also information from *Report on the History of the Oak Tree Pond Site, and the Battle of Oak Tree, A part of the Battle of Short Hills June 26, 1777* by Walter R. Stochel Jr., and N. Ann Walker.



***Passport to Edison:  
A Self-Guided Tour of Edison Township***

was created by  
**The Center for Community Renewal**  
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To find out more about the *Edison of the past*, contact Marie Vajo of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society at

732-985-3127

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*Images of America: Edison* (May 2001)

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