

"ASK AT DESK"

Edison: Name
Change

Reference

Several hundred years before the arrival of the white man, groups of Lenni-Lenape Indians lived in settlements overlooking the Raritan River. They called the area "Piscataqua," from which Piscataway comes.

Dutch and Swedes were the first white men in this area, arriving in the middle of the 17th century. In 1651, a large tract of land, from the Raritan River to the Passaic, including what is now Edison Township was deeded by the Dutch King to Augustine Heermans, a Dutch settler.

In 1795, the Raritan Bridge, now known as the Albany St. Bridge, was built, and the area began to develop rapidly. Before 1870, the township was a part of Woodbridge and Piscataway Townships. On March 17, 1870, the boundary lines were drawn, and the area was incorporated as a separate township. The "Raritan", derived from the Raritan tribe of the Lenni-Lenape Indians; it was chosen from three proposals: Metuchen, Washington and Raritan.

In 1900, residents of the area now known as Metuchen, petitioned the state to incorporate as a separate borough. This action put a "hole" in the middle of the township, and reduced the area of 3 square miles.

In 1905, residents of Highland park followed Metuchen's example and incorporated, further reducing the area of the township by about 3 square miles. The total area of Raritan Township is about 32 square miles.

Because several municipalities in New Jersey were named Raritan, at the general election in 1954, the voters approved the change to Edison Township. Instrumental in obtaining this change, were Mayor James C. Forgione and Mrs. Charles Wira, of "Women for Edison."

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20.4/2/79

Reasons Cited for Changing Township's Name to Edison

RARITAN TOWNSHIP, Oct. 5.—Should this township's name be Edison or Nixon after the referendum on November 2?

Mrs. Charles Wira, chairman of the Women For Edison, who obtained the signatures of more than 3,000 persons on a petition to put the Edison name on the ballot, says the name very definitely should be Edison.

Some of the reasons why residents should vote for Edison and against Nixon were cited by Mrs. Wira yesterday.

"In canvassing door-to-door for signatures to be put on the Edison petitions," she said, "we found that a great many individuals were either misinformed or didn't understand why the names of Edison or Nixon were chosen by the two factions representing them.

Honor Great Man

"I wish to submit the following points which I believe will clarify the situation:

"1. The name Edison was chosen mainly to honor a great man who benefited all of humanity throughout the world.

"2. Many individuals in the new developments were unaware that Menlo Park, where Thomas Alva Edison invented the electric light, is in Raritan township.

"3. The prestige of the name Edison will also give prestige to our town of 26,000 and will be recognized more promptly and become nationally known.

"4. There shouldn't have been any differences within the town, but the one name of Edison should have been agreed upon unanimously. It would have been an acknowledgement of the great genius of Edison, especially so since the 75th anniversary of the Light's Diamond Jubilee is being observed this month.

No Postoffice Change

Mrs. Wira continued by analyzing the confusion that exists. She said:

"Nixon was chosen to honor a man by the name of Lewis Nixon who located in Raritan township in 1913 under the name of Nixon Nitration Works. That business concern now is manufacturing plastics. Many individuals were informed that the change of name to any other name but Nixon would affect their mailing systems.

"This is a fallacy. Nixon is not a central post office, neither is Stelton nor Menlo Park. The mail will continue as it has been. Efforts to obtain a central post office will continue until the Post Office Department in Washington, D. C., decides to name either one of the three as a central post office with the other two serving as sub stations.

"The groundwork on the post office is being done by our non-partial group of Women for Edison and will be continued long after the decision of November 2. Our Main purpose for obtaining a central post office is for the unification of our large populace and to bring order to a town which has been burdened with confusion because of its rapid growth.

"Many individuals thought that Nixon was a municipality of its own because it appeared on the maps of New Jersey.

This is not so, because Nixon is but a small area of Raritan township as are Menlo Park, Stelton, Clara Barton, Piscataway, Bonhamtown, Oak Tree, and others.

"The name of Nixon is sponsored by August Nelson, who is an employe of the Nixon Nitration Works. He is also the chairman of the group who solicited for Nixon.

"There is another statement which I would like to reply to and a fact which is little known be made available to the individual.

Town Grew on Own

"A statement was made that

Raritan township is an overflow from Highland Park and Metuchen because these areas were overcrowded. I wish to state that it was not due to this reason that our population increased, but it was due to the number of the million-dollar industries which located in our township which brought the people to our area. Both Highland Park and Metuchen were part of our immense town when the residents of both petitioned the state of New Jersey as independent boroughs. Perhaps another petition by the residents of those boroughs to join their parent who has become successful and fruitful, might complete the family circle once again.

"A fact which is little known is that Menlo Park has a place dedicated to Edison which is known as the Edison State Park. This park has never been developed. Eventually, we shall work on this too so that our historical spot of Menlo Park will be a spot of beauty and pride.

"Raritan township has a history all its own. The residents have a pride and will work toward the end of achieving unity and its well deserved reward of respectful recognition."



FOR NAMESAKE—Mrs. Charles W. Wira, chairman of women's committee which led successful fight to change name of Raritan Township to Edison Township by referendum, presents birthday cake to Brace Eggert, public affairs director, who accepted for town fathers during name-change celebration yesterday.

Farewell Raritan, Hail Edison

Township's Name Is Changed Officially

Staff Correspondent.

EDISON — Raritan Township, Middlesex County, is no more.

At 9:26 o'clock last night township clerk Oscar Kaus read it out of existence, and proclaimed this municipality Edison in honor of

the inventor who perfected the electric light here 75 years ago.

The new name for the sprawling 32-square-mile municipality, which runs from the Raritan River north to the Union County line, was approved Nov. 2 in the general election. A proposal to change the township to Nixon was defeated by voters.

Township officials and citizens who worked for the change to Edison were unanimous in hoping that the new name will bring greater unity to the municipality and reforms in such things as postal service. Residents now receive mail through half a dozen post offices in and near the township.

All business conducted by the Board of Commissioners at its regular meeting after the change was made official was done in the name of the Township of Edison.

Officials believe that the physical changing of Raritan to Edison on buildings, signs and such things as police cars and stationery will be gradual.

The main purpose of changing the name from Raritan, by which the township was known since it was incorporated in 1879, was to differentiate it from two other Raritan towns: Raritan Borough

Electric Light Was Invented There

of the wrong" done the township by establishing its identity clearly. About 75 persons attended the meeting in the commission's new room in the almost completed addition to the Municipal Building.

Name
Change

(Edison
History)

NEWS, NEW BRUNSWICK, N. J., TUESDAY, AUGUST 2, 1955.



CLIMAX OF CAMPAIGN—Edison had its own post office yesterday for the first time. Shown near the new sign in front of the old Stelton post office, now the Edison post office, are: left to right, Col. Alfred R. Matthews, new commanding officer at Camp Kilmer, which is served by the Edison office; Prof. Frank Helyar, chairman of the Edison Planning Board and a strong advocate for an Edison post office; Mayor Thomas J. Swales Jr., a long-time advocate of an Edison office; Postmaster Edward Collins; Mrs. Charles Wira who, as chairman of the Women for Edison, led a campaign that resulted in more than 3,000 signatures on petitions calling for an Edison office, and Sgt. D. J. Pinzino, who is in charge of mail at Camp Kilmer. Yesterday was also Col. Matthews' first day as commanding officer at Camp Kilmer.

Edison Now Has Post Office Bearing Town's Right Name

EDISON, Aug. 2—The black and white sign at Plainfield and Central Aves., unveiled yesterday shortly after noon, now reads "Edison Post Office."

This simple act, performed by Mayor Thomas J. Swales, culminated a year-long campaign on the part of township residents to change the name of the Stelton Post Office to the new name of their municipality.

This post office will continue to serve only the Stelton area, however. The ultimate aim of the citizens' group is a central post office serving the entire township.

Two of the principals in this movement, Mrs. Charles Wira of Little Ave., Fords, and Frank G. Helyar of 4 Rutgers St., Stelton, were on hand at the tree-shaded site of the post office to participate in the ceremony.

Mrs. Wira who headed Women for Edison, a citizens' committee, and Helyar, chairman of the Planning Board, worked actively for the long-sought change.

Town Improvements

The change is a forerunner of several improvements which are expected to increase the efficiency of the postal system in this growing community.

Among other improvements scheduled are the beginning of carrier service in the Stelton section on September 1, construction of a new building for the Edison post office and place-

ment of the Nixon post office under Edison instead of New Brunswick, as it is now.

Another movement under way is the changing of the name of the Pennsylvania Railroad station from Stelton to Edison.

Helyar said the ceremony represented a logical step along the way to transforming the township into a community 20 years hence with double the present population.

He said the municipality and then the post office name-changes were important moves in unifying the 31-square-mile township, which has grown from about 4,000 persons in 1945 to over 30,000 today.

Helyar sees the township developing into a well-planned residential community balanced with industrial concerns. But he said this cannot be accomplished without the concerted efforts of all residents and officials.

If all residents work as have the Women For Edison, Helyar said, the hopes for the future can become a reality.

"Democracy In Action"

Helyar was introduced by Mrs. Wira, mistress of ceremonies, who said the name change showed democracy in action.

She said the movement successfully demonstrated the "voice of free people demanding the change to eliminate confusion." She lauded Helyar for his efforts to have the change brought about.

Helyar presented a flag to Postmaster Edward Collins. The flag was run up on the staff by Collins and M/Sgt. D. J. Pinzino, who is in charge of the postal section at Camp Kilmer. Since deactivation of the camp began, all mail has been routed through the new Edison post office.

Following this ceremony Lt. Col. A. R. Matthews, commandant of Camp Kilmer, spoke briefly and then Swales unveiled the new sign.

Other speakers included former Mayor James C. Forgone and Commissioner Julius C. Engel and Martin J. O'Hara.

Girl Scouts Judy Kruszewski and Joanne Wira of Troop 33 and Barbara Wira of Brownie Troop 88 posted the colors prior to the start of the ceremony.

The Rev. James J. Duffy, pastor of St. Matthew's Church in Stelton, gave the invocation and the benediction.

What once was Raritan now is Edison

Campaign to change township's name to Nixon was 500 votes shy of success

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By David C. Sheehan

EDISON — To many residents of the community, Edison Township has "always" been called Edison. Some old-timers, however, clearly remember it being named Raritan Township.

There are several names which preceded even Raritan Township. Several hundred years before the arrival of the first European settlers, groups of Lenni-Lenape Indians lived in settlements overlooking the Raritan River. These residents called the area "Piscataqua," from which the name Piscataway is derived.

Dutch and Swedes were among the first European settlers in the area, arriving in the middle of the 17th century. In 1651, a large tract of land, from the Raritan to the Passaic, including what is now Edison Township, was deeded by the Dutch king to Augustine Herrmanns, a Dutch settler.

One of the first structures to encourage the growth of our community was the Raritan Bridge (now known as the Albany Street Bridge; Route 27). The bridge forded the Raritan River between New Brunswick and what is now the borough of Highland Park. The first bridge was completed in 1795 and was a welcome relief to the ferry boat used prior to the bridge's construction.

Before 1870, Edison Township was a part of portions of Woodbridge and Piscataway townships. On March 17, 1870, boundary lines were drawn, and the area was incorporated as a separate township. It was given the name "Raritan" because of its proximity to the Raritan River and to honor the presence of the Raritan Tribe of the Lenni-Lenape Indians who first settled here.

The name Raritan, however, was not the only suggestion for the name of this new municipality. Other options offered included Washington and Metuchen.

In 1900, residents of the Metuchen area of the township petitioned the State of New Jersey to incorporate as a separate borough. This petition drive arose, according to old accounts, out of a feeling that those in Metuchen were not given enough voice in the operation of the public schools. Independent of the township, the borough would have complete control over the direction and future of its own educational system.

Following Metuchen's lead, Highland Park incorporated as a separate borough in 1905. Residents there claimed that they were not given a strong enough voice in the governing of the township, historical records indicate. Residents

there felt that their tax assessments were disproportionately high in the Highland Park section and that they were paying "too large a share of the cost of the Township government."

These reports further indicate the idea of a separate borough had been raised on more than a few occasions, but met with mixed results.

By January 1905, opinions seemed to have come into agreement, and "citizens of the Park have taken up the borough proposition ... and as a result, have been encouraged to go ahead. With great speed, petitions were gathered, delivered and verified. The bill, proposed by Counselor Edward Hicks, passed the Senate on March 7, 1905, and the House on March 16. As soon as the bill had passed the House, it was rushed to Governor Stokes who signed it the same day."

With no other changes in the size of the township we know today, Edison continued to bear the name Raritan — that is, until 1954. It was at that time that the community was beginning to "come into its own" as a town. Yet identity confusion reigned over the sprawling, growing municipality because there were several other municipalities in New Jersey which also bore the name Raritan — Raritan Borough in Somerset County and two other Raritan Townships in Monmouth and Hunterdon counties.

Additionally, the township had no central post office at the time. None of the post offices that served Raritan Town-

ship used Raritan Township as a post mark — Nixon, Stelton, Rahway, Metuchen and Woodbridge post offices served Raritan Township.

To compound the confusion, residents never identified themselves as residents of Raritan Township. Rather, they would report that they lived in Bonhamtown or Nixon or Menlo Park or Stelton or Sand Hills.

Mrs. Charles Wira, an active member of several community groups, decided that something had to be done to end the confusion in the rapidly growing community. She felt a change in name would give the township a single, cohesive identity. She was the leader of many youth groups, Girl Scout troops and other community-oriented organizations, and her husband, Charles, was an active member of the township's police reserves.

Wira composed several reasons favoring a change in the name of the municipality, not only from Raritan but to Edison. She formed a group called "Women for Edison." She and the group laid out the

following reasons for the name change:

"The name Edison was chosen mainly to honor a great man who benefited all of humanity; many individuals in the new developments are unaware that Menlo Park, where Thomas Alva Edison invented the electric light, is in Raritan Township; the prestige of the name of Edison will also give prestige to our town of 26,000 and will be recognized more promptly and become nationally known; there shouldn't have been any difference within the town, but the one name of Edison should have been agreed upon unanimously. It would have been an acknowledgement of the great genius of Edison, since the 75th anniversary of the Light's Diamond Jubilee is being observed this month."

The name-change group went so far as to have bumper stickers printed as part of their campaign. These banners read, "LIGHTS ON" Vote For EDISON, N.J., and Change Raritan Township to EDISON, N.J.

Another petition, however, was drawn up encouraging its signers to have Raritan Township adopt the name "Nixon." Even today, many hear the name "Nixon" and assume it refers to then-Vice President Richard M. Nixon. It is further assumed that the name of the Nixon area of Edison was given to honor the vice president.

Such, however, is not the case.

Two men, Anthony Ferrullo and August Nelson, petitioned for the name of Raritan Township to be changed to Nixon. Nelson was an employee of the Nixon Nitration Works in Raritan Township, and the name was to honor Lewis Nixon who located in the township in 1913 and developed the nitration works there.

Many township residents did not, even in 1954 when the names were placed on the ballot, know who Lewis Nixon was.

As part of Nelson's campaign to change the name of the township to Nixon, it was reported that Lewis Nixon "...was born in Leesburg, Virginia, in 1861 into a family that can trace its English and Irish ancestry back to 1390. Lewis Nixon was graduated from the United States Naval Academy at the head of the class of 1882 and was sent by the government to the Royal Naval College in England for post graduate studies. In 1884, he was transferred to the Naval Construction Corps and designed the battleships *Oregon*, *Massachusetts* and *Indiana*. ... In 1895, Nixon founded the Crescent Shipyard in Elizabeth



—Photo by Thomas R. DeCaro

This bust of Thomas A. Edison stands in the Council Chambers of the Edison Township Municipal Building. The decision by township voters to change the name of the municipality from Raritan to Edison was made in part to honor the "Wizard of Menlo Park."

where, in six years, he constructed 100 vessels including the submarine torpedo boat *Holland* and seven other submarines. ... The *Holland* was the first submarine used by the United States Navy."

Other accomplishments noted were Nixon's "receiving a Doctor of Science degree from Villanova University, becoming a Fellow of the American Geographical Society and being a member of the Sons of the American Revolution."

Nelson and Ferrullo concluded, "Lewis Nixon was truly an outstanding man of our country, and equally deserving with Thomas Edison the honor of having this township named after him."

It was not unusual for a community to adopt the name of an industrialist who lived in the town. Tiny Helmetta, in the southern part of Middlesex County, is named for the wife of tobacco and snuff manufacturer George Helme. Helme provided housing and employment for most of the residents of that community, and the name of Helmetta was chosen to honor Helme's wife, Etta.

Neighboring Sayreville is named for the Sayre and Fisher brick works which once provided employment for residents of that community.

Ferrullo and Nelson campaigned hard for the adoption of the Nixon name. Wira took her "Women for Edison" campaign throughout the township and the referendum was placed on the ballot of the November 2, 1954, general election. At the polls, voters were given three choices: Retain the name of Raritan Township, change the name of the town to Edison, or change the name of the township to Nixon.

A heavy turnout of voters — 9,393 out of the 14,000 eligible voters — yielded the following results: "The voters ... approved a referendum to change the name to Edison by a vote of 3,723 to 3,075, and at the same time defeated a counterproposal to change it to Nixon by a vote of 3,060 for Nixon to 3,557 against."

Unhappy with the results of the election, the Nixon "camp" threatened a court battle. They, according to

newspaper reports of November 3, 1954, said, "Wait and see what happens now. We are not licked yet. The double referendum was too confusing and there was not adequate instruction to the voters on how to vote."

The same newspaper report continues, "But Mrs. Charles Wira, chairman of the Women for Edison, said, 'I am indeed very happy with the choice and so are the women who worked so hard to bring it about.'"

Little, apparently became of the court battle threat, and the name Edison was adopted.

A meeting of the Board of Commissioners — the forerunner of today's Township Council — was held on November 11, 1954. It was at that regular meeting, reports show, that the board "began conducting its business in the name of Raritan Township but finished doing business as Edison."

The official changeover was simple. "Oscar Kaus, township clerk, read a notice to the governing body. It recounted the requirements of the law to change a name, referred to the receipt of petitions to put the question on the ballot, gave the official vote on the two name questions and stated that he proposed to immediately notify the secretary of state in Trenton and the county clerk as required by law. Then, he signed the notice. Commissioner Russell B. Walker ... called for a roll call vote." And the name was Edison.

Reporters made note of and reported the time as being 9:26, Wednesday, November 10, 1954.

Wira attended the ceremonies and presented the attendees with a homemade birthday cake. The cake was surrounded by small replica electric light bulbs and was topped with a stork holding a sign which read, "Happy Birthday, Edison!"

David C. Sheehan is co-founder and president of the Edison Township Historical Society. This article is one in a series for the Metuchen-Edison Review by society members on the history of the area.

"LIGHTS ON"

Vote For

EDISON, N. J.

More than 35 years ago, voters in what is now Edison Township decided to change the municipality's name from Raritan. One group — "Women for Edison" led by Mrs. Charles Wira — used these bumper stickers and other forms of campaigning to convince voters that the name of Edison would be best for the township. Another group — led by Anthony Ferrullo and August Nelson — campaigned for the name of Nixon, after the Nixon Nitration Works. It was a hard-fought campaign, voter turnout was rather heavy and the results were close.

Change Raritan Township to

EDISON, N. J.

WARMING UP

Fair and milder today.
Mostly fair and not as cold
tonight, low near 34. Partly
cloudy and warm tomorrow,
high near 62.
Temperature by hour today:
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
29 29 28 27 26 26 35 43 46 50
Yesterday: Max. 53; Min. 27

Founded in 1879.

THE DAILY I

For a Greater

NEW BRUNSWICK, N. J., THURSDAY

Raritan Is No More-- It's Edison Township Board's Action Makes Name Official Immediately CHANGE ENDS LONG AND BITTER BATTLE

EDISON, Nov. 11 — The name Edison is now official.

Raritan township ceased to exist at 9:26 o'clock last night during a meeting of the Board of Commissioners.

At that same moment the township of Edison came into legal being.

The change was made by the will of the people as shown at the polls on November 2. The voters approved changing the name to Edison by a vote of 3,621 to 3,033 and at the same time defeated a counter proposal to change it to Nixon by a vote of 3,059 for to 3,450 against.

The changeover came during a meeting of the governing body that started out conducting business in the name of Raritan township but finished up doing business as Edison.

Birthday Cake

A ceremony complete with a three-decker birthday cake for the new municipality was held at about the middle of the meeting that started at 8 p. m. and ended at almost 11.

The official changeover was simple.

Oscar Kaus, township clerk, read a notice to the governing body. It recounted the requirements of the law to change a name, referred to the receipt of petitions to put the question on the ballot, gave the official vote on the two name questions and stated that he proposed to immediately notify the secretary of state in Trenton and the county clerk as required by law.

Then he signed the notice. Immediately Commissioner Martin J. O'Hara Sr. moved that the governing body concur in the action of the clerk and record the change in the minutes. Commissioner Julius C. Engel seconded.

Commissioner Russell B. Walker, who was serving as acting mayor, called for a roll call vote. All voted yes.

And the name was Edison. Mayor James C. Forgione, who had to attend another meeting, arrived just in time to cast a yes vote.

The ceremony started. Mrs. Charles Wirs, chairman of the Women for Edison, the group that obtained the names on the Edison petition, introduced the Rev. James H. Martin, rector of St. James Episcopal Church, who asked the invocation. Mrs. Wirs put the cake on the table around which the governing body meets.

It had small electric light glowing around its base and a stork on top. The stork, a white plastic bird with red legs and beak, had around its neck a small sign with the wording "The Birth of Edison, N. J."

Mayor Forgione said he is
Continued on Page Thirty-one

HOME OF ELECTRIC LIGHT ADOPTS NEW NAME—EDISON



This paper changed the name of Raritan township to Edison township when Oscar Kaus, township clerk, standing, signed the document during a meeting of the Board of Commissioners last night. Commissioner Russell B. Walker, who presided as acting mayor, gives the name-change papers a final check.

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Reference

Edison:
Name Change

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Reserves Elect Charles Wira

RARITAN TOWNSHIP—The Raritan Township Police Reserves Association last night at its meeting in the Oak Tree School reelected Charles Wira of Liddle Ave. as president.

Other officers elected were Kenneth Henderson, vice president; James McDonnell, recording secretary; Gustav Bergman, treasurer; Robert Hirner, financial secretary; Michael Ferchie, sergeant-at-arms; Joseph Toth, quartermaster, and John Nemeth, chaplain.

William Porter, election chairman for the association, conducted the balloting.

The following chairmen of committees were also appointed: Robert Hanson, by-laws; George Ainscow and William A. Conerty, public relations; John Atkins, entertainment; John Fullajtor, recreation; Patrick Roach, historian; George Vincz, welfare; Franklin Wood and Salvatore D'Amico, auditing.

Capt. Charles Bartow announced that members of the local police reserves will canvass the township to register all dogs as provided by state law.

First aid classes were completed by the reserves last night under the direction of Capt. Bartow and Lester Russell.

Officials Told Of Action To Change Name

RARITAN TOWNSHIP—The proposal to change the name of this township in order to end the confusion caused by the existence of several Raritan Townships in the state was formally brought before the Township Commissioners at their meeting last night in the Municipal Building in the

(Picture on Page 23)

form of a petition, which, when it has been filled out with the necessary 3,000 signatures of local voters, will place the question on the ballot in November.

The petition was submitted by Mrs. Charles Wira of Liddle Ave., Clara Barton section, and Mayor James C. Forgione became the first signer. In addition to proposing that the township's name be changed it also offers "Edison" as a new name for the township in honor of the late Thomas A. Edison, whose invention of the electric light took place here.

The current name-changing movement was launched last month when it was suggested by the Raritan Township Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce did not suggest any alternative name but soon after it made the name change suggestion, civic groups and individuals began efforts to have the name Edison adopted. Included in the endorsers of the Edison title were the Forum Club, Mayor Forgione and various other social, political, civic and fraternal organizations.

Also endorsing the change of name, although unofficially, has been the local Planning Board. Its chairman, Prof. Frank Helyar of Rutgers University, last night, speaking as an individual, urged that the name Edison be adopted.

The current movement represents the most advanced stage that any suggestion of this type has reached in the past. In other years, a campaign to have the township's name changed was conducted by Michael Germak of the Clara Barton section, also favoring the name of Edison, but it did not advance to the point the current drive has reached.

Some Opposition

The proposal to use the name Edison is not without some opposition. August Nelson of Nixon last night asked that the name Nixon be used for the township as a whole and said he would circulate petitions for that purpose.

Mayor Forgione, Prof. Helyar, Mrs. Wira and others pointed out that the new name could not be one that already exists for one of the township's sections. They declared that such a move would only inflame sectional interests and would see similar drives to have the township named "Stelton," "Oak Tree," "Clara Barton," or any one of the many sectional names that are now in use. The need for a "neutral" name that is not now in use here was stressed as being of paramount importance in order to obtain the support of all township residents in behalf of a proposal for a changing of the municipal title.

It was pointed out that an alternate name must be incorporated into the public question should it appear on the ballot in November. The mere voting on a change of name as such, without offering any specific name, would not be permitted by law, Thomas L. Hanson, township attorney, declared.

Hanson also pointed out that there are two procedures available for changing a municipality's name: First, by petition and the placing of the question on

Continued on Page 24
Township Government

Mayor First Signer Of Name-Change Petition



Mayor James C. Forgione of Raritan Township, right, places his name as the first signer on a petition designed to place the question of changing the name of Raritan Township to Edison on the ballot in the November election. The signing, which took place last night in the municipal building, launched a drive to obtain enough signatures to place the question before the voters. Leading the petition campaign is Mrs. Charles Wira, left, of Liddle Ave., Clara Barton section. Looking on is Commissioner Brace Eggert. Evening News Photo

Edison: -
Name Change
Reference
1918
"ASK AT DESK"

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County Has New Township Named Edison

Raritan Township Voters Favor Name Over Nixon In Referendum

By HERBERT P. BRYANT
EDISON TOWNSHIP, Nov. 3
—This municipality was born at the polls yesterday.

From 1870 until yesterday this area was called Raritan township.

But the voters yesterday approved a referendum to change the name to Edison by a vote of 3,723 to 3,075 and at the same time defeated a counter proposal to change it to Nixon by a vote of 3,060 for Nixon to 3,557 against.

Thus the township people removed this community of 26,000 population from the confusion of two other Raritan townships in the state, one in Monmouth county and one in Hunterdon county, and a borough of Raritan in Somerset county.

A total of 9,393 voters from the 14,000 eligible went to the polls.

See Court Fight

But the vote may bring on a court battle.

Last night August Nelson and Anthony Ferrullo, who had been closely connected with the Nixon movement, refused to comment on the outcome. But another Nixon supporter, who asked not to be identified, told a Home News reporter:

"Wait and see what happens now. We are not licked yet. The double referendum was too confusing and there was not adequate instruction to the voters on how to vote."

But Mrs. Charles Wira, chairman of the Women for Edison, who originated the Edison petition and worked to get out the vote, said:

"I am indeed very happy with the choice and so are the women

Continued on Page Twenty-nine

Edison

Continued from Page One

who worked so hard to bring it about."

Oscar Kaus, township clerk, said that after the unofficial totals are confirmed he will certify the name Edison to the county clerk and the secretary of state in Trenton in accordance with state law.

Nixon Area for Nixon

Polls in the area served by the Nixon post office, which is a branch of the post office in New Brunswick and not an independent station, gave majorities to Nixon. But the outlying areas gave their majorities to Edison.

As placed on the ballot the two referendums were independent. Thus, had both been carried, the township would have two names. Or, if both referendums had been defeated, the name would still be Raritan township.

The vote followed a campaign that took on the aspects of a major battle between two political parties. It was the only local issue on the voting machines here.

To put the referendums on the ballots, petitions were presented by each group. Each of these contained the names of more than 3,000 voters.

Menlo Park Tips Scale

While the returns were coming in at the Municipal Building, the two names ran close. After 17 polls had reported, advocates of both names admitted the remaining two could determine the outcome.

They did. They were both polls serving Menlo Park, where 75 years ago Thomas Alva Edison made many of his most famous discoveries.

The vote is the first in the state involving a double referendum. In all other name changes the voters had only the choice of one new name or no change.

With the name changed, a drive is expected here next to untangle the mailing address problems. At present the area is served by eight post offices, none of which bear the name Raritan or Edison. Many advocates of the new name contend it will pay the way for a central mailing system that will coincide with the new municipal name.

Voting by Polls

The voting by polls on the two names were:

Poll 1, Nixon, 47 yes, 171 no; Edison, 165 yes, 133 no.

Poll 2, Nixon, 40 yes, 384 no; Edison, 396 yes, 156 no.

Poll 3, Nixon, 22 yes, 298 no; Edison, 382 yes, 44 no.

Poll 4, Nixon, 40 yes, 241 no; Edison, 262 yes, 87 no.

Poll 5, Nixon, 47 yes, 268 no; Edison, 334 yes, 113 no.

Poll 6, Nixon, 60 yes, 157 no; Edison, 196 yes, 101 no.

Poll 7, Nixon, 41 yes, 206 no; Edison, 276 yes, 79 no.

Poll 8, Nixon, 119 yes, 345 no; Edison, 258 yes, 233 no.

Poll 9, Nixon, 142 yes, 285 no; Edison, 244 yes, 191 no.

Poll 10, Nixon, 224 yes, 76 no; Edison, 71 yes, 155 no.

Poll 11, Nixon, 218 yes, 75 no; Edison, 74 yes, 143 no.

Poll 12, Nixon, 284 yes, 91 no; Edison, 86 yes, 228 no.

Poll 13, Nixon, 341 yes, 134 no; Edison, 133 yes, 236 no.

Poll 14, Nixon, 206 yes, 99 no; Edison, 106 yes, 160 no.

Poll 15, Nixon, 195 yes, 90 no; Edison, 98 yes, 153 no.

Poll 16, Nixon, 281 yes, 127 no; Edison, 131 yes, 211 no.

Poll 17, Nixon, 256 yes, 178 no; Edison, 167 yes, 233 no.

Poll 18, Nixon, 307 yes, 168 no; Edison, 163 yes, 254 no.

Poll 19, Nixon, 190 yes, 164 no; Edison, 181 yes, 175 no.

Nov. 1, 1954

Township

Heavy Voting Is Expected

RARITAN TOWNSHIP—The referenda on the proposed change of name in this municipality is expected to attract a heavy turnout of voters here tomorrow.

This township is without an election for public office but voters will express their choice on county, state and national offices. Ordinarily in a year without a local contest an average vote would be expected but because of the interest and the argument over the proposed changing of the township name a heavy total vote can be anticipated.

Polls will be open from 7 a. m. to 8 p. m. and Raritan Township voters will be asked to choose between changing the municipality's name to Edison, or Nixon, or keeping the name of Raritan Township.

In the past several weeks, the township has been divided with Edison and Nixon proponents splitting into separate camps and doing a great deal of campaigning for their choice.

There have been claims from both sides of the issue that confusion will result from choosing either new name and arguments from both sides have been generally similar.

The choice will be left up to the voters tomorrow.

It was announced today that for the convenience of voters, baby sitters will be available at the Clara Barton School from 9 a. m. to 4 p. m. All are members of the Intermediate Girl Scout Troop No. 33 and are known as the Aides to Voters. The girls will care for children to permit parents to vote. They will be in charge of Mrs. Charles Wira.

The aides are Mary Donaldson, Barbara Leone, Joanne Wira, Barbara Ann Nemeth, Judith Kruszewski, Gail Denison, Carolyn Borup, Evelyn Mikusi, Sandra Gottlieb, Mary Saviers, Rosemary Mezarous, Beverly Michkowsky.

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Edison: Name Change - 1994
"ASK AT DESK"

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THE DAILY HOME NEWS

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Testimonial Dinner For Edison Planner

This newspaper chronicles the holding of many testimonial dinners, honoring politicians and industrial leaders and retiring executives. But last week this newspaper reported the happenings at a rather unusual testimonial dinner.

This dinner was in honor of a planner. Not too long ago, planners were regarded as visionaries, as dreamers. Today they are held in high respect, and are those chiefly responsible for orderly development in communities which are fortunate enough to be enjoying orderly development.

This planner is not a professional, but he has been chairman of the Planning Board in Edison for the last decade. He is Prof. Frank G. Helyar, retired Rutgers professor and one of the key men in the development of Edison. Over 100 Edison people turned out for the testimonial, sponsored by the Women for Edison. And many notables attended, including Dr. Mason W. Gross, Rutgers provost, who most likely talked on the philosophy of planning. It was a gay, enthusiastic affair and the deserved praise heaped upon the honored guest was returned by him to his colleagues on the Planning Board and to municipal leaders, his partners in civic accomplishment.

We add our praise to that given Helyar at the testimonial. In civic planning lie the hope and future of our area today, and in no field of public service is it more vital that we recruit top talents than in planning.

'Edison Township' Petitioners Lauded by Inventor's Grandson

RARITAN TOWNSHIP, Sept. 17 — Township residents who want to change the name of this municipality to Edison in honor of Thomas A. Edison have received a thank-you from Mr. Edison's grandson.

The thank-you letter was sent to Mrs. Charles Wira, chairman of the "Women For Edison," who obtained signatures on a petition to put the proposed name change on the ballot for referendum.

It was from John Edison Sloane, who said:

"Both as a descendant of Thomas A. Edison and as secretary of the Edison Pioneer, I want to express my appreciation for the efforts of the many public spirited citizens of Raritan township who are seeking to change the name to Edison."

"Naturally, I am certain that my grandfather would be as hesitant as I am to attempt to persuade persons to honor his memory by changing the municipality's name. On the other hand if it is the desire of Raritan township citizens to change the name to Edison, I feel equally certain that he could not help but be pleased by such a show of friendship and respect."

The letter was dated September 14.

Offered Membership

The Edison Pioneers is organized to, in its own words, "pay tribute to the transcendent genius of Thomas A. Edison and to memorialize his achievements."

Because of her "demonstrated desire" to fulfill the aims of the organization, Mrs. Wira has been invited to become a member by N. R. Compton of Maplewood, vice president.

Somerset county.

Want One Post Office

Both groups consider the name change as a necessary step toward getting the township a central mailing address which will coincide with the name of the municipality. At present the township is served by seven different post offices.

But the post office department has warned that the change in name will not bring the central post office or a uniform mailing address. That was explained last May by A. W. Sweet, a postal inspector, who addressed a rally at the Stelton School sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce.

It was restated yesterday by William Hand, postmaster of the Nixon post office, who said that no matter what the name of the municipality may be, "there will still be a Nixon post office." Mr. Hand made it clear that he is keeping out of the name battle and is strictly neutral.

"But," he pointed out, "the name change will not alter the established policies of the post office department. The largest mail circulation in the township is from the mailing address Metuchen and the second largest is from Nixon."

He said that a central post office would require too much "dead heading" to be economically sound or efficient. The township is so scattered, he said, that some sections can best be served from the fringes.

He explained "dead heading" as the time wasted by men going to the outlying areas from a central point and the time wasted in delivering the mail in bulk to distribution points where mailmen can get to it on their routes.

The plants in the industrial area around Metuchen will continue to have Metuchen mailing addresses, he said. These coincide with the phone numbers in that section of the county and with the railroad address because the sidings that serve the plants branch from the Pennsylvania Railroad at a post-war million-dollar siding at Metuchen.

Serves 4,200 Homes

The Nixon office, Mr. Hand said, now serves about 4,200 township homes with door-to-door delivery, a service which for many reasons cannot be given from smaller post offices. Changing the name, he said, won't eliminate the smaller post offices nor enable them to give the service the township residents demand. Nor will it change the established delivery from Metuchen, he said.

It is this expectation, that the Nixon post office will continue, that gives the advocates of the name Nixon their main argument. With so many homes in the new housing developments now served by this post office it would be simple to change the name of the township to Nixon.

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Edison: Name Change

DESK

**Change Raritan Township
to**

EDISON, N. J.

“LIGHTS ON”

Vote For

EDISON, N. J.



Edison: Name
Change

Edison Twp. Pub. Library
340 Plainfield Ave.
Edison, N. J. 08817
ASK AT DESK

CHANGING THE NAME OF THE TOWNSHIP OF RARITAN TO EDISON

QUESTIONS TO BE ANTICIPATED FROM PETITIONERS AND THE ANSWERS

Q - Why do we have to change the name of our township ?

A - Because there is constant confusion due to the fact that there are three Townships of Raritan and a Borough of Raritan in the State of New Jersey. We are not on the map and are the subject of ridicule in the editorials of the newspapers as the "Town that is lost". Changing the name to EDISON will also help us to eventually obtain a Central Post Office and also a Township telephone exchange.

Q - What do you mean by confusion in the Township ?

A - With three Townships of Raritan and a Borough of Raritan in our State, mail, deliveries of all kinds and people, especially strangers, have gone astray trying to locate the right Raritan. This has made it so inconvenient for our local large industries that they have in many cases established Metuchen as their home address. It has caused a great deal of inconvenience to individuals living in different sections of the Township who do not have a Post Office as do Stelton, Menlo Park and Nixon.

Q - I'm satisfied with my mail delivery. I get it from Nixon, Menlo Park or Stelton. This change of name doesn't concern me.

A - Well, you shouldn't be satisfied and it does concern you. This is your town, your city, the place where you have your home. There are a number of areas in our Township where the people receive their mail through Fords, Metuchen, Highland Park, Plainfield, South Plainfield and Rahway and not one section in our town is served by our own General Post Office. The problems of other areas such as Lincoln Village, Stephenville, Haven Homes, Washington Park, Clara Barton, the northern parts of the Township and others section concerns all of us. Because in unity there is strength. If each section is only interested in itself, it's problems are not solved, and the homes which we bought and of which we are proud, the home which is the root of a man's life, becomes deteriorated. If we do not take care of the section and of our community, in which we live, sections such as yours can become downtrodden and disreputable. In having pride in your community you will safeguard your own home and your family.

Q - Will this effect your taxes ?

A - No. There will not be a change in the form of our government. We are going to maintain the same commission form of government instead of changing to a new form which would entail a great expense to the taxpayers.

Q - Is the name of EDISON going to be a township ?

A - The name is EDISON, N. J. We are omitting the name township to give dignity and stature to the name.

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ASK AT DESK

Q - How is this action going to effect the mail delivery service ? Will we get better service ?

A - Plans are being made to obtain a general Post Office when the name EDISON is adopted by the people. We expect eventually to have a central post office with zones to cover the various sections of our city.

Q - Why not the name of Menlo Park, Stelton or Clara Barton ?

A - Because we would creat dissension among the other sections of our township. In choosing a name, it was considered that not only is it to honor EDISON but it is a neutral name.

Q - Why was the name EDISON chosen ?

A - To honor Thomas A Edison, the man who made it possible for you to have clean and safe light in your homes. Edison invented and developed the electric light in our town, at Menlo Park. It was in our township that a great monument was erected in his honor, the EDISON LIGHT. People from all over the country come to this shrine. We will be honoring a man who has done much to lighten the burdens of the people all over the world.

Q - Why not use the name of Nixon ?

A - Nixon's fame is limited in our township to that of an industrialist and he is in the same category as Westinghouse or Johnson of Johnson and Johnson. If we are going to name our township after an industrialist, we may as well name it after Westinghouse or Johnson.

Name Change (Edison History)

EDISON TWP. FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

SIR:

We also request that the General Post Office be located in the Township of Edison and operated by the residents of the Township of Edison.

[illegible]

rapid growth.

Many individuals thought that Nixon was a municipality of its own because it appeared on the maps of New Jersey.

This is not so, because Nixon is but a small area of Raritan township as are Menlo Park, Stelton, Clara Barton, Piscataway, Bonhamtown, Oak Tree, and others.

The name of Nixon is sponsored by August Nelson, who is an employe of the Nixon Nitration Works. He is also the chairman of the group who solicited for Nixon.

There is another statement which I would like to reply to and a fact which is little known be made available to the individual.

A statement was made that Raritan township is an overflow from Highland Park and Metuchen because these areas were overcrowded. I wish to state that it was not due to this reason that our population increased, but it was due to the number of the million-dollar industries which located in our township which brought the people to our area. Both Highland Park and Metuchen were part of our immense town when the residents of both petitioned the state of New Jersey as independent boroughs. Perhaps another petition by the residents of those boroughs to join their parent who has become successful and fruitful might complete the family circle once again.

A fact which is little known is that Menlo Park has a place dedicated to Edison which is known as the Edison State Park. This park has never been developed. Eventually, we shall work on this too so that our historical spot of Menlo Park will be a spot of beauty and pride.

Raritan township has a history all its own. The residents have a pride and will work toward the end of achieving unity and its well deserved reward of respectful recognition.

NIXON

BY MRS. M. CALLAMONERI
(As Told to Herbert Bryant)

Voters go to the polls and vote to rename this township Nixon to honor one of the nation's foremost citizens.

The name Nixon would honor an American who is equal in importance to Thomas Edison but not as well known. The man is Lewis Nixon, one of the nation's foremost naval architects who designed many of our early battleships and built the Navy's first submarine.

Also, Mr. Nixon founded two of the township's pioneer industries, the Nixon Nitration Works and the Raritan River Sand Company. Both are still operating, and over the years have given employment to hundreds of township residents.

Thus Mr. Nixon still has roots

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Edison-

"ASK AT DESK"

Name Change -

(Edison History)

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TO THE HON. OSCAR KAUS, MUNICIPAL CLERK OF THE TOWNSHIP OF RARITAN,
COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY.

SIR:

We, the undersigned, legal voters of the Township of Raritan in the
County of Middlesex, respectfully petition that the name of said municipality
be changed from the TOWNSHIP OF RARITAN, COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX, to the name of
EDISON, COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX, and respectfully petition that said proposed
change of name be submitted for approval or disapproval, to the voters of said
municipality at the next general election to be held on November 2nd 1954.

Signature of Petitioner

Residence

P.O. Address

Edison Twp. Pub. Library
340 Plainfield Ave.
Edison, N.J. 08817

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Name Change

1978

Thursday, October 14, 1954

RECORDER

Nixon or Edison? Voters to Decide

Nixon or Edison?

That's the big question in Raritan Township this month. What should be the township's new name—or should it keep its present name? (See editorial, "Nixon or Edison," on the Forum Page of today's Recorder.)

Nobody seems to be campaigning in favor of retaining the name Raritan Township. To acquaint voters with the position of each group, The Recorder here prints arguments by advocates of the name "Edison," and of the name "Nixon."

EDISON

BY MRS. CHARLES WIRA

In canvassing door-to-door for signatures to be put on the Edison petitions, we found that a great many individuals were either misinformed or didn't understand why the names of Edison or Nixon were chosen by the two factions representing them.

I wish to submit the following points which I believe will clarify the situation:

1. The name Edison was chosen mainly to honor a great man who

benefited all of humanity throughout the world.

2. Many individuals in the new developments were unaware that Menlo Park, where Thomas Alva Edison invented the electric light, is in Raritan township.

3. The prestige of the name Edison will also give prestige to our town of 26,000 and will be recognized more promptly and become nationally known.

4. There shouldn't have been any differences within the town, but the one name of Edison should have been agreed upon unanimously. It would have been an acknowledgement of the great genius of Edison, especially so since the 75th anniversary of the Light's Diamond Jubilee is being observed this month.

NIXON WAS CHOSEN to honor a man by the name of Lewis Nixon who located in Raritan township in 1913 under the name of Nixon Nitration Works. That business concern now is manufacturing plastics. Many individuals were informed that the change of name to any other name but Nixon would affect their mailing systems.

This is a fallacy. Nixon is not a central post office, neither is Stelton nor Menlo Park. The mail will continue as it has been. Efforts to obtain a central post office will continue until the Post Office Department in Washington, D. C., decides to name either one of the three is a central post office with the other two serving as sub stations.

The groundwork on the post office is being done by our non-partisan group of Women for Edison and will be continued long after the decision of November 2. Our main purpose for obtaining a central post office is for the unification of our large populace and to bring order to a town which has been burdened with confusion because of its rapid growth.

Many individuals thought that Nixon was a municipality of its own because it appeared on the maps of New Jersey.

This is not so, because Nixon is but a small area of Raritan township as are Menlo Park, Stelton, Clara Barton, Piscataway, Bonhamtown, Oak Tree, and others.

The name of Nixon is sponsored by August Nelson, who is an employe of the Nixon Nitration Works. He is also the chairman of the group who solicited for Nixon.

There is another statement which I would like to reply to and a fact which is little known but made available to the individual.

A statement was made that Raritan township is an overflow from Highland Park and Metuchen because these areas were overcrowded. I wish to state that it was not due to this reason

in the township while the Edison industries do not.

Many township residents do not know who Lewis Nixon was, and do not realize what his contributions have meant to the township.

HE WAS BORN in Leesburg, Va., in 1861 into a family that can trace its English and Irish ancestry back to 1390.

Lewis Nixon was graduated from the United States Naval Academy at the head of the class of 1882, and was sent by the government to the Royal Naval College in England for post graduate studies. In 1884 he was transferred to the naval construction corps and designed the battleships Oregon, Indiana and Massachusetts.

He resigned from the Navy and became superintendent of construction for the Cramp Shipyard in Philadelphia.

In 1895, Mr. Nixon founded the Crescent Shipyard in Elizabeth where in six years he constructed 100 vessels including the submarine torpedo boat Holland, seven other submarines, the monitor Florida and the cruiser Chattanooga.

The Holland was the first submarine used by the United States Navy.

He was associated with other shipbuilding firms. In 1898 Mr.

Nixon was appointed president of the East River Bridge Commission in New York. He was a trustee and president of the Webb Institute of Naval Architects and served as Commissioner of Public Works in the Borough of Richmond of New York City.

MR. NIXON HELD several positions by presidential appointments.

He was a special envoy to represent the United States at the Chilean Centenary in 1910 by appointment of President William Howard Taft. He was made delegate to the fourth Pan-American Conference at Buenos Aires, a member of the Board of Visitors to the United States Naval Academy and a Commissioner of the St. Louis Exposition by President Theodore Roosevelt.

Mr. Nixon received a Doctor of Science Degree from Villanova University, was a Fellow of the American Geographical Society and a member of the Sons of the American Revolution.

He held memberships in numerous clubs of national reputation as well as the Union Club of New Brunswick.

Lewis Nixon was truly an outstanding man of our country, and equally deserving with Thomas Edison the honor of having this township named after him by the voters on November 2.

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8

THE DAILY HOME NEWS, NEW BRUNSWICK, N. J., FRIDAY, SEP

Question of Raritan Township Name Change Will Go on Ballot

Continued from Page One

tered voters equal to 30 per cent of the total vote cast in the last general election. That was 9,178 votes, so the legal minimum is 2,754.

If both petitions are valid, the name change will inject a local issue into the November campaign. As the municipal elections will not be held until May, the general election would involve only national, state and county officers.

Plan Campaigns

Already both sides have announced plans to plunge into a full-scale election campaign to get the voters to the polls to support their name.

Plans are being made for speakers to address civic groups, service clubs and rallies to "sell" the merits of each name.

The Edison group will distribute large photographs of Thomas Edison bearing the wording "Change the name of Raritan Township to Edison."

Both groups agree that the name should be changed to get away from the confusion of three Raritan townships in the state and one borough of Raritan. The other Raritan townships are in Hunterdon county near Flemington and in Monmouth county near Keyport. The borough of Raritan is near Somerville in Somerset county.

Want One Post Office

Both groups consider the name change as a necessary step toward getting the township a central mailing address which will coincide with the name of the municipality. At present the township is served by seven different post offices.

But the post office department has warned that the change in name will not bring the central post office or a uniform mailing address. That was explained last May by A. W. Sweet, a postal inspector, who addressed a rally at the Stelton School sponsored

and both municipal and mailing address for many persons will coincide.

They also say the name will honor Lewis Nixon, who founded the Nixon Nitration Works, one of the township's first industries, and who was a generous contributor to many township causes.

One of these, Mr. Nelson has pointed out, was the Democratic party. Thus the name issue has already taken on a political tinge.

But the Edison advocates say the name is only the beginning of a long-range campaign to improve mail service. They favor changing the name also to honor Thomas Edison, who made the first successful electric light in a laboratory in the Menlo Park section 75 years ago.

In October the diamond jubilee of his discovery will be observed throughout the world. It may bring President Eisenhower to the township. What better name could be chosen, than to honor the township's first citizen and at a better time? That is the basis of the argument offered by the Edison advocates. The petition indicates that more than 3,000 citizens find this a convincing argument.

EDISON PETITIONS PREPARED FOR FILING



Change the name of Raritan township to Edison is the request of these petitions displayed by Mrs. Charles Wira, chairman of the "Women for Edison." The Edison petition and one asking that the name be changed to Nixon will put the question up to the voters in November.

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