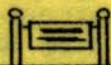
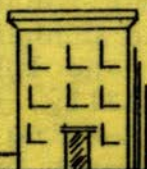


Walking/Driving Tours (Edison - History)

1983

A Walking/Driving Tour of Edison **REFERENCE**

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



ASK AT DESK

SPONSORS

**Edison Historical Society
Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission
Middlesex County Coalition of Historic Organizations
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*For more information, call the
Cultural and Heritage Commission
(201) 745-4489.*

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS AND SITES

1. STELTON BAPTIST CHURCH

334 Plainfield Avenue

The Stelton Baptist Church was formed in the spring of 1689. The church was formerly known as the First Baptist Church of Piscataway, through 1875. The church is the second oldest Baptist Church in the State of New Jersey. Six men founded the church: Hugh Dunn, Edmund Dunham, John Smalley, John Drake, John Randolph and Nicholas Bonham. Originally, the congregation met in the Town Meeting House off Woodbridge Avenue. The church buildings on Plainfield Avenue have been replaced several times due to destructive fires. The Sanctuary was rebuilt in 1825, 1821 and 1925. Currently, the Church is under the direction of Reverend Richard Cook, the 23rd Pastor of the congregation. In 1989, the congregation will celebrate their 300th Anniversary.

2. STELTON COMMUNITY CENTER

Plainfield Avenue

The Community Center was formerly the Stelton Elementary School. Built in 1923, it was closed as a school in 1982. This school is known to have been the first to provide a school lunch program.

3. PISCATAWAYTOWN SCHOOL

2060 Woodbridge Avenue

This school was built in 1913 and was designed by noted architect L. Merchant. This class will be the last graduating class of this school as it is being closed due to declining enrollments. Piscatawaytown was the first school in the town to be equipped with a telephone.

4. E.G. GOUGH HOME

2111 Woodbridge Avenue

A three-bay, two story clapboard home, this house was constructed in the first half of the 19th century as the home of the Fitzrandolph family - one of the first families in the area.

5. ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH

2136 Woodbridge

Chartered by Queen Anne of England in 1714, this church was used as a British Barracks during the Revolutionary War. The first parish was established in 1694, and published records of sermons date back to 1703. The original structure was built in 1724 and was destroyed in 1835 by a tornado. It was restored and rebuilt at the expense of Joseph Foulke, using as much of the original fixtures and fittings as possible. St. James Church is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

6. THE CEMETERY AT SAINT JAMES CHURCH

The graves in this cemetery date back to 1693, that being of Mrs. Mary Jones. This is the oldest marked grave in Middlesex County. Some of the more unusual tombs chronicle the death of two brothers, the Hoopers, who died from eating poisoned mushrooms. Reference to this gravestone is made in the Library of Congress. The wrought iron fence surrounding the cemetery was erected in 1910 at a cost of \$1,000. To this day, conjecture reveals confusion regarding the responsibility of title and upkeep of the land.

7. "OLD TOWN HALL", On The Commons.

Erected in the 1800's, it has been used for many purposes, such as municipal business and common meeting area for the small agricultural community. It served as the Raritan

Township Municipal Building until the 1930's when the present-day Rabbi Jacob Joseph School was built as the new municipal building with \$200,000 of WPA funds. It is still used by the township as a group meeting place.

8. EDISON COMMONS

This area, now a municipal park, had its origins as a common meeting place for the original settlers in the area. Additionally, the militia once mustered here to practice and drill using cannons and other weapons during the Revolutionary War.

9. COL. JOHN DUNHAM ESTATE

Pukash Home, 33 Park Way-Circa 1732

This was the home of the pioneer Dunham family. Please note the receipt in the entrance foyer given to Alexander Hamilton, dated July 10, 1778, representing the tare for 9 breakfasts, hay for the horses and a gill of bitters:
£2: 4/ 9p.

10. PISCATAWAYTOWN BAPTIST CHURCH

2195 Woodbridge Avenue

In 1875 the Piscatawaytown Chapel was constructed to accommodate the growing Sunday School of the Stelton Baptist Church. The congregation of the Stelton Baptist Church donated \$2,500 to erect the chapel. Church services were held in the chapel three out of every four Sundays. However, the mother church was the Stelton Baptist Church. The land on which the chapel was built was the gift of Mrs. N. Martin, a former resident of Woodbridge Avenue. The congregation formed as a separate church group in 1964.

11. OLD POST ROAD This is the earliest public road in eastern New Jersey and was used by President Washington when he went through Bonhamtown on his way to

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS AND SITES, Con't.

the nation's first inauguration in New York.

12. FORMAN MARTIN ESTATE

Sheehan Home, 30 Old Post Road
This estate overlooked the vast apple orchards used in the production of brandy and cider at Martin's Mill. Built by Forman and Hanna Martin in two periods, 1830 and 1850, this home had been occupied continuously by the Martin family until the 1960's. It features Carpenters Gothic scroll work on the eaves and porches and is highlighted with Italiante detailing.

13. BONHAMTOWN GRACE REFORMED CHURCH

Woodbridge Avenue and Grace Street circa 1875. This building is a good example of vernacular gothic architecture as evidenced by the steep gable and the pointed windows.

14. YELENCISICS HOMESTEAD

2965 Woodbridge Avenue
This building, built in 1887, was the family residence of our present mayor, Anthony Yelencsics. The site was used by the Army during WWII, and had been used as offices of Parks and Recreation Department. It is presently used by the Edison Township Senior Citizens groups.

15. EDISON TOWER AND CHRISTIE STREET

In 1937 a 131 foot tower was built on the exact spot where Thomas A. Edison invented over 500 of his patented items. The tower is made of Portland Cement (created by Edison) and has a replica bulb 13 feet in diameter atop the structure. A light bulb in the base of the tower burns continuously in honor of

Edison's accomplishments at this site. In 1979, it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Christie Street became the first street in the world to be illuminated by incandescent lamps. This was done on New Year's Eve, 1880 by Edison and his co-workers. Over 3,000 visitors came here on special trains to witness this new invention. More than 60 bulbs were strung on poles along the street.

HISTORY OF EDISON TOWNSHIP

Named for its most famous resident, Thomas A. Edison, the community has existed as an independent municipality for over 100 years. People have lived in the area since prehistoric times. Skulls and bone fragments from the Stone Age have been discovered in the Piscatawaytown area. In 1666, a grant was made to the Dunhams, Martins, Bonhams, Hulls and others. Some of the land and homes occupied by these settlers are part of this tour.

Revolutionary War skirmishes took place in Bonhamtown and along Woodbridge Avenue. After the Revolution, the entire area developed rapidly. Small villages developed around new train stations in Stelton and Menlo Park. In Menlo Park, Thomas Edison was at work in his laboratory where he perfected the incandescent lamp in 1879.

In 1954, a group of citizens proposed a change in the name of the town, partially because of confusion arising over several "Raritan" named towns in the state. The name the voters selected was "EDISON". The motto of our community carries the theme through: "LET THERE BE LIGHT!"

Published in celebration of Middlesex
County's Tercentennial

