

Township of Hillside

1913 to 1963

Prepared by the Staff

of

THE NATIONAL STATE BANK

HILLSIDE OFFICE

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The Township of Hillside has begun preparation for celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of its founding in 1913, as well as participation in the New Jersey Tercentenary Celebration in 1964. A variety of activities is being planned including parades, exhibits, athletic contests, fireworks and dinners.

The area today known as Hillside has been under two foreign nations, Holland from 1609 to 1664 and England from 1664 to the Revolutionary War; controlled by two communities, Elizabeth from 1665 to 1808 and Union Township from 1808 until April 29, 1913; and part of two counties, Essex County from 1675 to 1857 and Union County since 1857. It is bounded by Elizabeth, Union Township, the Town of Irvington and the City of Newark and covers 1,747 acres. It is situated on a hillside with elevations ranging from 21 to 187 feet above sea level.

Geologically speaking the township is situated on the terminal moraine of the glacier age and many varieties of rocks and soil may be found here. Several streams and ponds drain into the Elizabeth River and the Weequahic Park Lake in nearby Newark. All the ponds have been filled in, while most of the streams have been placed in culverts. The ponds included the Town Pond at the junction of the Lehigh Valley Railroad and its Irvington Branch line, Cook's Pond in John H. Glenn Drive near Linwood Place, Drake's Pond

on the Irvington-Hillside line at the Elizabeth River and South America and its companion, North America, on either side of the railroad at the Newark City line. The average temperature is 51 degrees Fahrenheit and the average annual rainfall is 46 inches.

Animals which may still be found are the domestic rabbit, skunk, opossum, chipmunk and gray squirrel. Occasionally a deer or a fox will wander into the area. The most common birds are the robin, starling, English sparrow, blue jay, grackle, sea gull and homing pigeon. Other species sometimes found are the cardinal, thrush, red wing black bird and humming bird. Garden snakes, turtles, frogs and toads are seen. The Elizabeth River once supported a wide variety of fish, but industrial pollution has killed them. The area bounds with both wild and cultivated flowers. The violet is the New Jersey State Flower. Hillside does not have a township flower.

David Lyon, born here 1760, a justice of peace for Essex County for more than 50 years, listed 54 varieties of apple trees found on his property, which was bounded by Liberty, Hillside and Long Avenues and Bloy Street, and on adjacent farms. Other trees were peach, cherry, elm, Norway maple, oak, perisimmon, horse chestnut and hickory. Vegetables and other crops raised in this section were lima beans, tomatoes, okra, peas, pumpkins, string beans, asparagus, carrots, cucumbers, cabbages, pineapple squashes, beets, mushrooms, sweet potatoes, strawberries, gooseberries, raspberries, blackberries, rhubarb, watermelons and muskmelons. A few of these trees, vegetables and fruit have survived the building booms.

United States Census Statistics

The United States Census for 1960 shows a total population of 22,304. Of the 10,896 male population there are six Negroes, five American Indians, one Chinese and five Filipinos. In the total 11,408 female population there are 29 Negroes, two American Indians, one Chinese and one Filipino. All the countries of Europe are represented among the 11,308 persons listed as foreign stock by the census bureau. These include Poland, 2,060; Russia, 2,246; Italy, 1,343; Germany, 1,060; United Kingdom, 770; Czechoslovakia, 648; Austria, 939; and Hungary, 542. Yiddish is spoken by 425 people. Other languages spoken are German, 327; Polish, 392; and Italian, 254.

Of the 6,715 men in the township, 25 years of age or older, in the 1960 census, 732 had had four or more years of college, while of the 7,446 women in the same age bracket, 268 had completed four or more years of college. The average education for both men and women is ten and a half years.

There were 6,445 men in the potential labor force of 6,601 men employed in 1960, compared to 3,120 women of the potential force of 3,326, the census shows. Of the men, 1,537 were employed as foremen or craftsmen, 1,256 as operatives, 957 as managers and officials, 464 in clerical posts, 765 as sales workers, 353 as professional salaried workers, 702 as technicians and only 74 as teachers. The women are employed as follows: Clerical posts, 1,438; professional and technical, 312; operators, 475; service workers, 185; and teachers, 135. The median income for the men was \$5,489 and for the women, \$2,054, the census stated.

According to the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Union County, there were 6,741 households in 5,350 residential units in 1960. The per capita buying income was \$2,681 and the income per household was \$8,922.

Hillside's industrial zones follow the Lehigh Valley Railroad and the railroad's Irvington Branch line, making a band of industry through the center of the community shaped like an inverted letter T. The chamber lists 132 industries in 1961. They are widely diversified and include toy trains, drugs, airplane parts, electric transformers and fixtures, tin cans, insulated paper bags, cork products, cables, stainless steel castings, tanks and truck bodies, plastic articles, yeast and baking malt, printing inks, chocolate, frozen foods, jewelry, sprinklers, asbestos pipe covering, Telestar communication satellite, metalized ceramics and brass products. There are numerous tool shops serving all major industries, two large dairies, telephone directory and book distributors, steel fabricators, liquor, tire and automobile parts warehouses.

Six of the industries employ more than 500 persons: Lionel Corp., 2,000; American Can Co., 1,000; Hatfield Wire and Cable Co., 700; Kraft Foods Co., 600; Bristol-Myers Co., 554; and Westinghouse Electric Corp., 541.

Fourteen others employ more than 100 or more persons. They are Aeronautical Tool Manufacturing Co., 476; Airborne Accessories Corp., 400; Amersil Quartz Division of Engelhard Industries, 120; Baker and Taylor Co., 235; Ceco Steel Co., 175; Chicago Bridge and Iron Co., 100; Cooper Alloy Corp., 450; Edgcomb Steel and Aluminum Corp., 150; General Brass and Machine Works, 205; The Heil Co., 213; Hi Hat Foods, 100; Mundet Cork Corp., 300; and Western Electric Co., 195.

Many of the 10,000 employees of the industries reside here. The northside is the most densely populated area and contains a number of multi-family dwellings and apartments, while the Westminster section is the most sparsely settled. In general Hillside is a community of one-family dwellings.

There is no central business district. Most of the 281 commercial properties are along Maple Avenue, Liberty Avenue, North Broad Street, Coe Avenue and Hollywood Avenue. There also are scattered neighborhood stores.

Municipal Buildings

Municipal public buildings are the Municipal Building, two firehouses, an auxiliary firehouse, a road department garage, a maintenance garage and the sewerage pumping station. Three other buildings stand on property provided by the township and are the Little League Fieldhouse in Gurd Avenue, the Hillside PAL Building at 274 Hillside Avenue and the U. S. War Veterans Memorial Building in Liberty Avenue at Memorial Drive.

Hillside has seven schools. Buildings and grounds are as follows: Hillside Avenue School, 2.9 acres; Calvin Coolidge School, 5.3 acres; Hurden-Looker School, 2.1 acres; Saybrook Annex and Board of Education Administration Building, .7 acres; George Washington School, 4.2 acres; Abram P. Morris School, 3.4 acres; and Hillside High School, 10.3 acres. The school system also controls Woodfield Stadium, 3 acres.

Efforts are being made by the Board of Education to acquire an additional 2.1 acres in Maple Avenue to enlarge the Hillside Avenue School property. A referendum will be held from 2 to 9 p.m. September 25, for \$69,500 to provide for the purchase and improvement of the property.

The board also hopes to erect a modern \$25,000 fieldhouse at Woodfield Stadium.

All of the school areas except the Saybrook Annex property are operated by the Board of Recreation Commission as playground areas. In addition to the school property, there are three municipal playgrounds: Fire Chief George P. Dorer Playground in Race Street, 1 acre; Police Chief Norman L. Sanford Playground in Hillside Ave., 3.5 acres; and Police Chief Paul F. Korlesky Playground in Central Avenue, 7.1 acres.

There are two small parks: Russell Looker Park at the intersection of Mertz Avenue and Clark Street dedicated July 4, 1919, and an unnamed park at the intersection of Sanford Avenue and Fairview Place.

The Elizabeth River Parkway being developed by the Union County Park Commission follows both sides of the river along the township's entire westerly boundary between Hillside and Union from Irvington to Elizabeth. When completed Hillside residents will have 437 acres of park land available for recreation purposes. A total of 325 acres is now completed with 115½ of these in Hillside. Sections developed are Woodruff Area in Conant Street, Salem Section at Salem Dam in Liberty Avenue, Rutgers Avenue Field and Ursino Lake.

Religious institutions are the Sinai Congregation and its separate building for the Sinai Hebrew School and Youth Center, the Conservative Congregation, the Immaculate Conception Ukrainian Catholic Church, the St. Catherine's Church and its neighboring school in Elizabeth, the Church of Christ the King and its school, the First Baptist Church, the Calvary Lutheran Church, the Hillside United Presbyterian Church, the Assembly of God, the Faith Tabernacle, the Lighthouse Gospel Mission and the Parish House of the Westminster Presbyterian Church, Elizabeth. The rectories of both the Franklin Memorial Methodist Church, Newark, and the Westminster Church also are in the township, while the Elizabeth Avenue Presbyterian Church and the Church of Mary Magdalene, both Newark, also serve the community.

Pingry School for Boys, the only private school, serves Essex and Union Township.

Old Lyon's Farms

Hillside was unsettled until early in the eighteenth century when sons of the first property owners from Newark and Elizabeth began to move into the area. By the time of the Revolutionary War, most of the section was called "Lyon's Farms" and was described as a "bit of transplanted New England." Hessian soldiers stationed on Staten Island made frequent raids during the Revolution and Governor William Livingston, General George Washington and other men of the time were seen frequently.

The area was little changed until 1891 when the Lehigh Valley Railroad was constructed except for the organization of the Evergreen Cemetery Association on March 23, 1853. The cemetery located in North Broad Street covers 112 acres of ground on the Hillside, Newark and Elizabeth border. The most famous graves in the cemetery are those of Mary Mapes Dodge and Stephen Crane, authors.

The railroad brought a New York commuter population to the section formerly occupied only by dairymen and farmers. The new residents demanded modern conveniences such as electricity, water supply, paved streets, sidewalks, a sewer system and other improvements. The remainder of Union Township, still occupied by farmers, did not want to pay for these improvements. The separation movement began about 1905 and became successful when Governor James F. Fielder April 3, 1913 signed a bill permitting a referendum on April 29. The referendum was carried by 222 to 32 votes. The new community was composed of Lyon's Farms on the North, Saybrook on the East and West Newark or "Little Italy" and Salem or West Lyon's Farms on the West. There were about 1,600 persons, mostly of Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic extraction with a few Italians.

A three-man Township Committee form of government was selected. In 1915, the committee was increased to five members. Politically the township traditionally was Republican from 1913 to 1952 except for a coalition government from 1933 to 1935. Only Democratic candidates have been elected to the committee since 1950 except in 1956 when Hyman M. Schulman, a Republican, was selected in the closest election in the township's history.

The nine-member Board of Education has been organized under Chapter Seven of the State Laws and is an elected body. Since 1938, when Mrs. Ruth M. Walling was elected there has been at least one woman member on the board.

The erection of the Irvington Branch of the railroad in 1904-06 opened new industrial lands. The first major company to locate was the Bristol-Myers Company in 1919.

The greatest population growth was from 5,267 persons in 1920 to 17,601 persons by 1930. Population in 1940 was 18,556 and in 1950, 21,007. Between 1958 and 1960, 12.3 per cent of the current population moved into the township.

The United States Census also lists 3,245 veterans including 281 of World War I, 2,146 of World War II and 470 of the Korean Conflict. One man was killed and one died in service in World War I. The memorial plaque at the U. S. War Veterans Memorial Building lists 87 killed in World War II and one in the Korean Conflict.

There are four veterans organizations and their ladies' auxiliaries: The Hurden-Looker Post 50, American Legion; the Davenport-Dill Jr. Post 1722, VFW; the Charles Wernicke Jr. Chapter 55, DAV, and the Col. Norman Meranus Post 78, JWV. They all meet at the veterans' building.

Land Use

About 95 per cent of the community's land is developed, leaving only a few scattered lots for additional construction. A study is being made by the Township Committee of the municipal sewer system installed in 1926-28 to determine whether the lines are adequate to handle potential apartments.

As the township approaches its fiftieth anniversary it finds that its school and municipal costs are almost equal with the school costs set at 42.90 per cent and the township costs at 42.61 per cent of the tax dollar. Additional revenue is needed to meet rising costs, according to the Township Committee.

Other problems facing the township on the eve of its fiftieth anniversary in addition to the lack of vacant land for future building to increase ratables and rising costs are need for flood control basins on the Elizabeth River, public parking areas in Liberty Avenue, permanent paving

of about 117 streets which cost an estimated \$50,000 annually to maintain; the continued threat of the realignment of Route 78 Freeway from Ramsey Avenue to another location and the loss of industrial ratables in Ramsey Avenue if the highway is constructed through that street; and traffic problems caused by 3.5 miles of State highways including North Avenue, State Highway 22 and Garden State Parkway.

The fifty year period has seen the transformation of Hillside from a small remote rural area to a thriving residential and industrial community. During that period the people have become a unity and have ceased to think of themselves as being from Saybrook, Lyon's Farms or West Newark .It has advanced from a community of volunteer firemen and a couple of constables to a community with well-equipped, well-trained firemen and policemen with excellent ratings of fire prevention and law enforcement. The school system has developed from one of a few rooms to one of the leaders in education in the state and industries have gained world-wide recognition for their achievements.



Saybrook Volunteer Fire Company



The old Lyon's Farm School now in the Newark Museum Garden



David A. Jackson on Hillside Avenue
Site of the new Municipal Building



Children in front of Hillside School



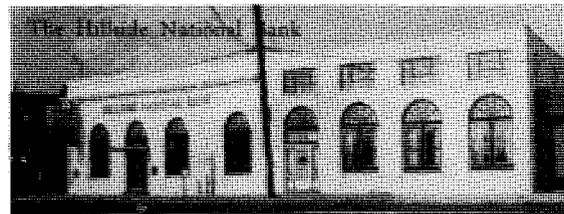
Groundbreaking for the Central Branch for the Hillside National Bank



The New Municipal Building
Dedicated September, 1936



Yoke of oxen, Union Township, about 1840-45



The Hillside National Bank



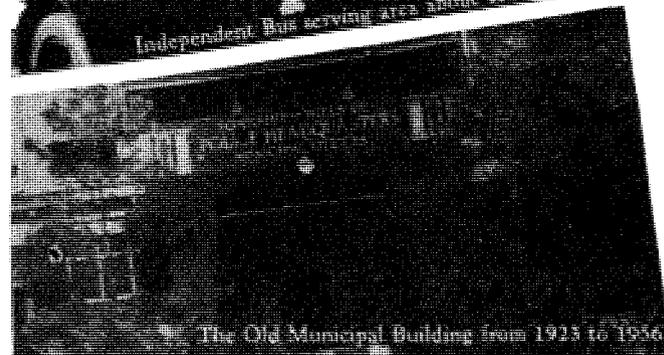
Independent Bus serving area about 1912



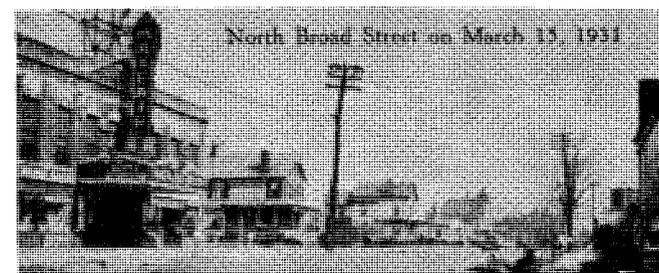
Children in Saybrook School



The Elizabeth River, 1903



The Old Municipal Building from 1925 to 1936



North Broad Street on March 15, 1931



Dedication of John L. Loker School, 1928