

Woodbridge Public Library Oral History Interview
John Kreger
WPL15
February 19, 1975
(digital audio)

Narrator: Well I hope you all hear me. This is only second best. Of course the best would have been if John had done it but I will try to do my best.

The Township of Woodbridge – Some of the Early History by John Kreger – February, 1975.

Narrator: We are the oldest township in the State of New Jersey. The earliest history of New Jersey usually is connected with the English speaking people. This however is not true. Although as early as 1498, only six years after Columbus discovered America, Cabot, an explorer in the employ of England, had sailed along the Atlantic Coast of North America and claimed all the land for England. The English delayed over a century of time before taking an action to claim or settle the land. It was not until the so called Age of Expiration that one witnessed action. In this age, in the seventeenth century, three powers, England, Sweden and Holland established settlements in the middle Atlantic area of what is now the United States. The Dutch were the first of the European countries to open settlements or trading spots in 1624 in the present New York City and along the Delaware in what is now Gloucester County. The Swedes, encouraged by their brilliant King Gustavus Adolphus, in 1638, founded Port Chester near Wilmington, Delaware and purchased from the Indians in 1640 fast tracks from Cape May northward towards Salem. In 1643 Sweden's interest was mainly in fur trading and although some farmers took up land New Sweden, as it was called, never included more than four hundred souls or extended more than thirty miles northward along the Delaware. In 1655 Governor Peter Stuyvesant set an expedition that easily forced the surrender of the Swedes. New Sweden became New Netherlands and the Swedes were permitted to retain their land or return to Sweden. The Dutch had possessed New Amsterdam and surrounding territory even into what is now Bergen County for forty years going back to 1624 when the English decided they did not want any foreign power to possess territory between their New England and Virginia settlements. Accordingly in 1664, a task force of four British figures sailed into New York Bay. Peter Stuyvesant pounded his wooden leg against the floor and thrust two pistols in his belt. With cajoler and then anger he pleaded for a stoic defense. His counsel shuddered at the prospect of blood shed and, as we are told, dodging through narrow lanes and alleys, startled at every little dog that barked mistaking lampposts for British grenadiers. Stuyvesant shouted until the veins broke in his forehead. He flashed his pair

of pistols. The Dutch nailed up their doors and awaited the inevitable conquest by the British surrendering without a blow or a tear. Untangling New Jersey's Colonial history, especially after the arrival of the English, is like wandering through a maze. The first King Charles included New Jersey in a vaguely defined emperor he gave to Sir Edmund Plowden in 1634. Plowden called the territory New Albion and himself Earl of Palatine. As proprietor he dreamed of restoring the age of a knighthood. He talked of twenty-three Indian kings who he expected to convert, again an invention of his imagination. Meanwhile about sixty New Englanders, weary of the excessive discipline of the New Haven colony, settled at Salem on the Dowry but were repeatedly chased away by the Swedes. In 1660 Charles II, assent of the English throne, as poor as a royal church mouse could get, paid off his creditors as best he could and was particularly generous to his brother James, the Duke of York, to whom he gave land bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the east and the Delaware River on the west and south. This land was called New Jersey. New Jersey was divided into two sections, East Jersey and West Jersey. East Jersey was that far east of the line drawn from down near Little Egg Harbor in a northwesterly direction up to the Delaware Water Gap. The Duke of York gave East Jersey to his friend Lord George Carteret. The western section was given to Baron John Berkeley. Prior to the coming of Lord Carteret to this area John Bailey, Daniel Denton, and Luke Watson, in 1664, brought the area now known as Woodbridge from the Indians. Payment was made in wampum, brackets, claw, powder, lead and a few burns. Shortly after 1664 Denton & Company made over their purchase to Governor Carteret and John Ogden. In 1666 Carteret and Ogden sold their holdings to Daniel Pierce and a group from New England for eighty pounds, about four hundred dollars. Governor Carteret wanted settlers to come to Woodbridge to journey to Long Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts endeavoring to get settlers from those areas to come here. They much preferred to have families who already had experience in the hardship of settling in a new rare area over inexperienced folks from across the sea. He was successful in his endeavors and pioneered families to New England, especially from Massachusetts, who came down. Woodbridge was named after the assistant minister in New Berry, Massachusetts from which area most of the first settlers came. Reverend John Woodbridge had endured himself to such an extent to his parishioners who came here that they honored him by naming the area after him. Also in 1685 and 1690 many Scotsmen came over to escape religious persecution at home and a considerable number came to Woodbridge. On May 21st, 1666 articles of agreement were signed between Governor Carteret on behalf of the Lord Proprietor on the one hand and John Pike, Daniel Pierce and Abraham Tappan on behalf of themselves and their associates of Woodbridge and Piscataway. In these articles the people were to have liberty to settle one hundred families more or less between the Rahway and Raritan Rivers and begin to settle or farm this land within a period of six months. The proprietors retained the rights to all gold or silver that might be found. Grants of land were made to

the settlers. A Grant of one hundred acres was called a farm. A larger Grant was known as a plantation. Occupancy of a Grant for seven years entitled the occupant to ownership. Quoting from Darwin, about the middle of November of 1667 a sensation was created in a settlement by the arrival of a baby; the first white baby born in the place. The town recognized the event in May, 1717 after the child had grown to womanhood and was married by the following order, "It was voted and allowed that Caleb Campbell shall draw a lock with use in consideration of his wife, the first Christian child has yet born in this town". She was Mary Compton daughter of William and Mary Compton. She married Celeb Campbell January 1st, 1696. On the death her body was entered in the White Church cemetery. The monument marking her grave is still in excellent state of preservation. The population of the town through the years is as follows: In 1672 there were a hundred and twenty families, in 1816 four thousand people, in 1855 six thousand seven, in 1870 three thousand eight hundred and seventeen, 1900 seven thousand six hundred and thirty-one and in 1920 there were thirteen thousand. The decrease from 1855 to 1870 was due to a change in the boundaries and a decrease in the extent of the township. A portion of Woodbridge was given to Rahway and such places as Edison, Metuchen and other areas were taken away from Woodbridge resulting in a loss of population. Religious freedom for all was guaranteed in the articles of agreement though, of course, was an immediate necessity to the settlers. Some provisions had been brought along by the early settlers. Some were purchased from the Indians of the area. These Indians were a friendly cooperative tribe. Game of all kinds, deer, geese, ducks and wild pigeons were abundant as were fish and oysters in the nearby salt water. After the first harvest there was corn, meat, beans, peas, melons and of course beef, pork and lamb. Rules were a matter of concern to the settlers back in those days. A bonus of as much as twenty shillings was given for each and every wolf killed by a settler. This bonus attracted so many hunters and the kill became so great that the bonus per wolf was reduced to a lesser amount. Courts were established very soon after arrival by the settlers. Guilty offenders were punished by being confined to the public gays in the stocks. If the crime was considered of sufficient grievance the ripping post with its lashing was used. For mild crimes the punishment could be a dunking in the nearby pond. The settlers were God fearing and worshipper people and church services were arranged for immediately. The first services were held in private homes or in the town meeting house. This was not an entirely satisfactory arrangement. In 1675 the first church was built on the site of the present Presbyterian Church also known as the White Church on Rahway Avenue on Carteret Road. The church was ready for services in 1675 but the finishing touches were not added until 1681. Actually the beginning of this church group might be pushed back to 1670, the year when the Reverend Samuel Treat first preached here. The first building was small, only about thirty feet square. There was no provision for heat but worshippers were allowed in cold weather to bring foot warmers, usually hot grips, into the church to add

to their comfort. But instructions were given not to leave foot warmers in the church after services were concluded. The first edifice stood for a hundred and twenty-four years or until the year 1803 when it was torn down to make way for the present structure, a much longed for building. This building, of the 1803 era, was completely restored, renovated, and viewed by during the early 1970s. The Trinity Episcopal Church on Rahway Avenue, according to tradition, was organized in 1702 although the first services date back to 1698. In 1713 the first church building was erected upon a portion of the two hundred acres set aside in a town chartered for the use of the established church. It was in use until 1754 when work on a larger structure was begun and finished in 1757. In March, 1858 the church was destroyed by fire. A cornerstone for the replacement church was made on July 7th, 1860 and the new church was consecrated on May 20th, 1861. The dwelling which now serves as a rectory for the Trinity Church was built in 1670 by Jonathan Dunham, the Grist Mill proprietor of brick, said to have been brought over from Holland. Close by the front entrance of the rectory one of the ancient mill grinding stones used in the Dunham Grist Mill remains until this day. It probably will surprise most readers to learn that the Quakers were well established in Woodbridge prior to 1686. On February 16th, 1713 they built a meeting house on the present site of the Methodist Church on Main Street opposite the present post office. This meeting house was thirty feet long, twenty feet broad and twelve feet high from floor to ceiling. By 1722 the meeting room had a gallery as well as comfortable rooms upstairs. In 1784 the Quakers determined to sell the meeting house. An unknown person offered to buy it but negotiations were broken off. Eventually the property was bought by the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Methodist built their first church building in 1832. In 1954 there was a disastrous fire in the building and complete renovations and restoration as well as additions were made in 1956. Many of the earlier settlers were members of the congregational church who had joined with the Presbyterians in church activities. In 1874 the Congregationalists withdrew from the Presbyterian Church and established their own church located at the intersection of Grove Avenue and Barron Avenue. The story goes that one of two brothers, members of the Presbyterian Church, were asked, are you going to leave the Presbyterian Church and join the Congregationalists? I don't know yet was his reply. I'm waiting for my brother to make a decision. You mean he will make the decision for both of you? Oh no, he replied, I'll be a member of the church that he decides not to be affiliated with. In such a manner are decisions made. According to tradition the seeds of Catholicism were locally sown in the very earliest days of the existence of the town. In 1665, when Governor Carteret came to New Jersey he brought with him a Catholic, Robert Van Quillen, as his provisional surveyor. Van Quillen became a resident of our town and he is frequently referred to by Joseph Dally in his historical book Woodbridge and Vicinity. In June of 1685 Reverend Nicholas Bullock, a Jesuit, came from Maryland to Woodbridge to

baptize a Robert DeCortia. This was the first Catholic baptism in our town. Father Bullock also celebrated his first mass at the same time in the Van Quillen home. The first Catholic Church erected in our village was of the same construction and was completed in 1865. It was located on the south side of Main Street opposite the entrance to Metuchen Avenue. Up to this time mass had been celebrated in the homes of the parishioners by visiting priests. When no visiting priest was in town Catholics who wished to attend mass walked or rode horseback or used some conveyance to Rahway or Perth Amboy. The first framed church, as years past, proved to be too small and a large framed structure was erected on the opposite north side of Main Street a few hundred feet near the center of town. The larger church was dedicated and consecrated in 1888. This large framed structure is moved from its original site on Main Street to the inner section of Amboy Avenue and Grove Street in 1924. This framed structure was demolished in 1968 and a new beautifully designed structure expressing some of the traditional features of Romanesque architecture was erected. Ground for this new church was broken on August 20th, 1966 and Dedication Day was held on June 23rd, 1968. Numerous Christian Churches both of Protestant and Roman Catholic sects are now to be found in numerous parts of the township. The Jewish religion in Woodbridge was officially dated with the signing of a certificate of incorporation in 1913. Prior to 1913, in 1907, the Jews in Woodbridge Proper joined with fellow worshippers from Avenel and High Holy Day services were held in Kendall Hall which served at the present location of the Cloverleaf overpass of Route 1 and Route 35. In 1912 services were held in the Masonic Hall which was located on Green Street near the Pennsylvania Railroad right-of-way. In 1913 services were held in the hall above Morris Choper's Department Store on Main Street. This building is now the location of Sir Jamie's Restaurant. The first synagogue was built in 1923 on School Street directly across from the Woodbridge Fire Department station. The present Jewish synagogue and center on Amboy Avenue had its cornerstone placing on June 30th, 1948. Now from our ancient history of the township, the first gristmill in New Jersey for the grinding of grain into flour was located in Woodbridge by Jonathan Dunham in 1670. His mill was located on the road to Port Reading shortly after passing the White Church where the saltwater creek runs under the road. In those early days the creek was a substantial sized stream and white draft vessels actually sailed up that far from the sound at Sewaren. Jonathan Dunham was a solid substantial citizen of Woodbridge. He was in turn a juror, a magistrate of the court, a member of the vigilance committee, clerk of the court, an assessor and a judge. Woodbridge was singularly honored in that it had the first native born Jersey man serving as a printer. He was James Parker. His print shop in Woodbridge was located on what is now Amboy Avenue on a site now occupied by St. James Roman Catholic Church. Parker was a very close friend of Benjamin Franklin. Both were printers and Franklin assisted Parker in setting up a print shop in Burlington, New Jersey.

Parker, at one time, was postmaster general for the British crown for the Northeast colonies and operated the department at a profit for the crown. He died in 1770 in Burlington, New Jersey where he was engaged in printing history of early New Jersey. He was buried in a cemetery of the White Church in Woodbridge. His funeral services were conducted by the chaplain of a British regimen of foot soldiers. During the Revolutionary War, Woodbridge played an important part in the struggle for independence from England. There were actually fourteen scrimmages between British soldiers and local militiamen fought in our township. General Nathaniel Heard, who would help organize the local militia, rose from the rank of Colonel in this organization to a full general in the Revolution. It was Colonel Heard who, with a group of militiamen, made the arrest of Governor William Franklin when he was judged a trader at the Governor's Mansion, Westminster House, in Perth Amboy. Dr. Joseph Bloomfield, senior physician and surgeon in the hospital of the states, representative in a provincial congress and general assembly as well as an upright magistrate, was a prominent citizen during the Revolution. He was also the father of the only Woodbridge citizen to be elected Governor of the State of New Jersey born in 1755 in Woodbridge. Reverend Azel Roe, pastor of the old White Church during the Revolutionary Period, was a pronounced champion for independence. He actually led a group of local militia against a British force near Carteret. He was later captured by the British and was incarcerated in the infamous British Sugarhouse prison in New York City. Reverend Roe died in 1815. The Pike family was a famous first settler family of Woodbridge. Captain John Pike was one of the signers in 1666 of the Articles Evergreen between Governor Carteret and the first settlers. A descendent, Major John Pike, served with distinction in the Revolution and another descendent, General Zebulon Montgomery Pike was the discoverer of Pike's Peak in Colorado in 1806 and was a casualty in the War of 1812 against the British. The Fritz Randolph family came here headed by Nathaniel from Massachusetts. Nathaniel, in 1693 and 1694, represented Woodbridge in the Provisional Assembly. He died in 1713. A grandson, Captain Nathaniel Fritz Randolph died in 1780 of wounds received in a battle with the British near Springfield, New Jersey. In the White Church cemetery there are between fifty and sixty graves of Revolutionary War veterans. As early as 1673 a group of militia men was formed to control the ravages of foreign Indians from New York State and Pennsylvania. These Indians came to our neighborhood during the summer months to feast on the saltwater fish and oysters that were so abundant here back in those early days. These Indians were exceedingly mischievous and delighted in burning haystacks, cornflowers and stealing from the settlers. This group of militia men later became known as Jersey Blues. Their royal blue uniform was faced and rimmed with scarlet. They wore a red vest and a three cornered blue black bear hat. Their stockings and darters were blue. Buttons on the uniform of the privates were pewter marked with the company's insignia. Officer's uniforms were adorned with blue buttons. The Jersey Blue regimen had substations at

Woodbridge, Piscataway, and Perth Amboy. George Washington held the Jersey Blues in high esteem. At winter quarters at Valley Forge the inner line of defense before Washington's headquarters were manned by the Jersey Blues. At Yorktown the surrender of the British ended the war; the Jersey Blues were actively engaged. The Jersey Blues also were active in the war effort in western New York and upper Pennsylvania. According to Colonel C. Malcolm B. Gilman, M.D. of Colts Neck, New Jersey the Jersey Blues are believed to have held meetings in two houses in Woodbridge, the Timothy Bloomfield house near Fords corner and the Joseph Gilman house in Woodbridge. During the Civil War in the 1860s a uniform with blue coat and pantaloons were worn by a unit of volunteers recruited in part from Woodbridge. They were called the Szwabs and they fought with great bravery. They were really the Jersey Blues. The last appearance of this group in their frock and pantaloons was at a firemen's convention at Rahway, New Jersey in 1905. From 1673 until 1905 represents a long growing record for this historic regimen. Benjamin Franklin, noted patriot, in his travels between Philadelphia and New York lodged several times in town. He also visited his friend and fellow printer James Parker. Franklin mentions these visits in his writings. George Washington visited Woodbridge many times during the Revolution. On his trip from Mount Vernon to New York City to be inaugurated as a first president of the United States who came to Woodbridge from Princeton accompanied by the governor of New Jersey, William Livingston and his staff spent the night of Wednesday, April 22nd, 1789 at John Manning's Inn where a receptionist tended him. The Manning Inn stood on the present site of the Knights of Columbus Home on the corner of Main Street and Amboy Avenue. Lafayette, the young French patriot who helped the Americans so much during the Revolution on his tour to the United States in 1824/25, visited Woodbridge. He was tended and welcomed by a committee of citizens, Revolutionary War veterans, and was a guest of honor at a dinner held in his behalf. It may seem strange to most residents that in and about the year 1900 the section called Sewaren provided our township with a summer bathing, fishing, and boating resort. A large three story hotel offered hospitality to visitors, a fine clean beach, and unpolluted saltwater enticed bathers. Very fine fishing and boating was enjoyed in the waters of the Kill Van Cull or as some called it Staten Island Sound. The rare road ran excursions to the park known as Boynton Beach and steamers from Brooklyn brought shiploads of passengers for visits to the pleasure resort. With the coming of many oil refineries and water pollution this one time pleasure area is forever gone. The Shell Oil Refinery now occupies the area once known as Boynton Beach. Woodbridge Township, from the days of the Revolution, was distinguished for its superfine quality of clay deposits. Dally, in his historic book, states that the white Woodbridge clay was unknown to the British soldiers corded in Perth Amboy before and during the war. The soldiers called it foolish earth and used it for cleaning their buckskin britches. For the period from approximately 1840 to 1930 clay mining

was one of the principle industries of our township. It was a profitable business. The many fine old homes still stand and other torn down on Green Street attest to the nature of the monetary turn from the clay industry. Actually Woodbridge clays were shipped out of town as early as 1820 exploiting to numerous areas in the U.S. and continued for almost one hundred years. As last as 1920 an organization called the Middlesex Clay Mines Association existed. It had thirty-three members most of whom were engaged in mining clay in our township. Today there is no association and neither are there any clay miners. The clay, at that time, was dug by hand and moved around by horse drawn dump trucks and/or wagons to railroad cars for shipping. It is estimated that fifty to seven-five horses were used locally in the clay mines. Originally there was estimated potential clay productivity in our township eighty million tons and quite conceivably more. In the New Jersey Geological report of 1855 the statistics show that over two hundred and fourteen thousand tons of clay annually was being taken from nearby pits. The clay was used locally or sent to other areas for the making of firebrick, fine pottery, sewer pipe, terracotta ware, retorts, facing for wallpaper and so forth and so forth. The demand for Woodbridge's clay decreased rapidly from 1920 on. Some local clay is still being used particularly for high grade firebrick but the most of Woodbridge clays, still underground, are covered by the Turnpike, the Garden State Parkway and Routes 1 and 9. Clay mining has become a lost industry. To give you an idea of the cost of living in Woodbridge here are prices posted in a local tavern in 1748; a hot meal with meat was twenty cents; a cold meal with meat was fourteen cents; four ounces of rum was eight cents; four ounces of brandy was eight cents; thirty-two ounces, one quart of wine, was forty cents; thirty-two ounces, one quart, of strong beer was six cents; thirty-two ounces, one quart, of cider was eight cents. The first schoolteacher in Woodbridge was selected in 1689. For many years the early schools were one room buildings without heat or plumbing. In some cases water from a nearby spring was carried by bucket and a common tin drinking cup served one and all. As times moved on a huge potbellied stove, located in the center of the room, supplied heat. The one room school serviced all grades from the first through to the eighth. The first multi-grade school was built in 1876/77 on School Street and was known as School No. 1. The first high school was built in 1910 on Barron Avenue. Today we have thirty grade schools, three junior high schools and three high schools. With our geographical location, in regard to larger cities, efficient means of transportation, our most modern communication facilities, modern fire department, our nearness to huge shopping centers, lack of ghettos and high crime rates, the Township of Woodbridge is a good place to call home.

Man in Audience: Back in the 1600s aren't those the same Tappens that lived in Sewaren? The Tappens that were mentioned early in the history are they the ancestors of the present Tappens that are in town?

John Keger: Yes, they don't know them unfortunately but that's true. The

last one was Howard Tappen.

Lady in Audience: He's talking about the Tappens in Sewaren. I don't know whether they were the Howard Tappens from Edgar Hill which would have been part of.....

Man in Audience: I think there's a difference in the spelling. One was Tappan and the other was Tappen.

Man in Audience: Also Tappon.

Lady in Audience: Did you find the history of the local town government? How long did they have a town meeting and that sort of thing?

Mr. Keger: Well, they continued for a number of years. Actually not the regular stated periods but they had them right up to the Revolutionary times. And you had the colonies and there was a committee called the Community of Correspondence and this committee communicated with the various states to the happiness and particularly the concern that unfavorable acts by the people representing the crown in those days. That was very efficient. It was surprising how quickly the news of Lexington got down to New Brunswick. That was something like within forty-eight to fifty hours after the actual Battle of Lexington news was brought to New Brunswick by a horseback rider. There are many, many interesting things about Woodbridge that were not covered by the paper. For example, Woodbridge despaired about getting a minister after having unsuccessful experiences with the first one or two. One was engaged for a period of three months by the town fathers. Back in those days the church was supported by the entire community until the Quakers revolved it and said that there is no reason why they should pay for a church in Woodbridge when they had their own church and had to take care to pay the church tax. Then the taxes for general purposes was stopped but this particular pastor who was engaged for a period of two months, contacted by the town fathers, was advised that at the end of the first month he may chose to go wherever he wished. His services were no longer required. They almost despaired of getting a minister. They tried to get a Reverend Pierson from Newark who was assistant pastor to his father who was an aged gentleman at that time and the younger Pierson refused to come because of his father's health condition. By a strange work of faith Woodbridge's White Church acquired a Reverend Pierson early in 1700 who was the son of the president of Yale University and he was an administer here in Woodbridge for a period of forty-two years. It was through his efforts that his son, who was a physician, a Dr. Pierson, that the White Church, the Presbyterian Church, received this Charter from King George II. I am told, by reliable circumstance, that when our White Church celebrated its 250th Anniversary back in 1925 that the Charter was sent to New York City to be refurbished and cleaned and brought up to date. In due time it was returned here but no one looked at it for quite a period and when they did they found that the signature of George II had been clipped off. Further about that Charter, for years after it was received and I think it was received back in 1756 not much attention was paid to it. Probably twenty or thirty years later a safe that the church owned was sold at an auction and the party that bought

the safe neglected to open the safe for eight to ten years after they acquired it and when they did in the safe was the Charter of the First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge. Then, of course, it was returned to the church.

Man in Audience: Those are the little things that make it all very enjoyable.

Mr. Kreger: And the town fathers despaired that they could even get a minister. They tried quite a number of times and many of the people at that time thought that the town was hoodooed by a witch or a wizard. They actually passed a Resolution, the Town Council at that time, that anyone who was suspected of being a witch or a wizard and the proof would be dealt with very severely. In other words, they would be put to death.

Man in Audience: Gee John, there was no connection between that and the Jersey Devil were there?

Woman in Audience: According to that Charter Mr. Duvaney wrote to King George VI and he very kindly sent his signature to the (inaudible).

Woman in Audience: The story about the Jersey Blues they were such a bunch of farmers that were used to plowing and just comfortable farmers. When they were sent to Yorktown they didn't know how to conduct themselves properly to accept the weapons of the British and they had to be taught the night before how to drill and how to conduct themselves in the proper way to make it look very dignified. They said that the French that were there they were so well drilled that they had a big laugh over the Jersey Blues and their conduct. But they conducted themselves very fine and every war we ever had from then on up to 1905 they took part in and they were the first Americans that were sent out of the country, I think, to an uprising in Jamaica at one time, the Jersey Blues were sent; that was very early. But they were a great group of young men.

Man in Audience: I think this one area was one of the areas.....did they say anything about the French living in New York?

Mr. Kreger: Well, there isn't much recorded as far as the French was concerned. It created quite a controversy that at the French and Indian War the British government found themselves so badly in debt that that was when they started to impose the taxes on the colonies which was really the prime reason there was a Revolution. That's when the expression "Taxation without Representation" came to the floor and the British decided that they were going to maintain a standing army of ten thousand troops in the colonies and for a hundred and fifty years the colonists had protected themselves without British help against the Indians and the French. The colonists thought it was very strange that after a hundred and fifty years the British decided they were going to station ten thousand men in the colonies and they wondered why it. It was simply because the colonists had become fed up with it, the "Taxation without Representation" Policy of the Parliament and the feeling was beginning to run so high that the British thought that they better have troops here for any emergency that might develop.

Man in Audience: I'm trying to recall the person's name who was actually employed as what was called a ranger. The ranger specifically was the only person in town to be informed as to what the French were doing so they

employed as what was called a ranger. The ranger specifically was the only person in town to be informed as what the French were doing so they employed the main safety of all. It was reported that the last time they saw them they were in some pub in New Brunswick and that was Woodbridge's involvement in the French and Indian war.

Mr. Kreger: There are so many interesting stories about Woodbridge. The first cup of tea that was consumed in Woodbridge was consumed back in about 1730 and 1740 in the residence of a Mrs. Campion. It stood where Lucas's parking lot is on Green Street and it was quite a session as to how to prepare the tea whether to brew it, steep it or boil it. They finally decided it should be steeped and that was the beginning of the drinking of tea in Woodbridge. It apparently made a very favorable impression. It's very interesting about the physicians in Woodbridge. It's surprising how many there were particularly the Freeman family. The Freeman family provided doctors in the Township of Woodbridge for one hundred years. There were five different Dr. Freemans and the Freeman homestead stood directly across the street where the apartment is there now. Some of us may remember it as the Clara Martin home. That was a big homestead. There is a sixth Dr. Freeman and he is now practicing in Florida. And one of the Dr. Freeman had not only his office but he was also the town pharmacist thereabout where Jannie's Place is on the corner of Green Street and Rahway Avenue. He was the town doctor, he was a pharmacist and he was also the postmaster; he had all three jobs at the same time. The only thing he missed he was not the undertaker.

Man in Audience: An interesting follow up to this is if we could get a hold of this Colonel Gorman, we had entered the Clark's Society about three years ago and he gave us the history of the Jersey Blues because.....

Woman in Audience: Oh yes, he's written a whole book about it.

Man in Audience: He's from down near the Colts Neck area. The only thing this Colonel Gorman, I think, he's one of the guards on the Jersey Blues but I think but I think he makes (inaudible) about Woodbridge. He has John Woodbridge coming to Woodbridge and John Woodbridge could not have possibly ever come to Woodbridge.

Man in Audience: Is that the same one you're talking about?

Woman in Audience: Yes.

Man in Audience: Then you said he did.

Man in Audience: The reason why the gentleman was bringing John Woodbridge into Woodbridge is he sold a piece of property on Rahway Avenue to a tailor and his name is on the necessary documents.

Man in Audience: I thought I was paying for the restricted papers.

John Kreger: I think one time the organ blower, in 1883 or 1884, around there, that they took the space. They had about ten to thirteen cents left in the tray there and if they had twenty cents they would have a great big celebration. They decided to let go of the organist, they had to let the organist go, that's how bad things were. After a while things improved and they rehired the organist again at sixty-five dollars a year annual salary.

Out of this sixty-five dollars they had to blow up the blower. That was hard work; that was rough job.

Female in Audience: They were just usually young boys that did that.

Man in Audience: They would probably pay them ten cents apiece.

Then the first thing, I've never seen them but maybe you older folks have, the first loader they got was a water loader. They'd put a bucket of water in it and turn it on. Then they finally got a water motor and it was so clean with the water motor.

Man in Audience: And another thing they wound it up.

Mr. Kreger: To play the organ, to provide air for the organ.

Man in Audience: I've never heard of such a thing.

Mr. Kreger: Like a small (inaudible); you should know things like that.

And another very interesting thing about it is how many years they opposed the placement of electric poles and telephone poles. Seven years they fought that.

Woman in Audience: When did they put in the trolley tracks?

Mr. Kreger: '21 or '23.

Woman in Audience: No, when were the trolley tracks put down, I wonder, and the trolley running? Does anybody know?

Woman in Audience: 1800s.

Man in Audience: No, it couldn't be 1800s.

Woman in Audience: They called it the Fast Line. It went to Newark.

Woman in Audience: No, no, no, I'm talking about the trolley from Amboy to.....no, no, that was the Fast Lane that was out.....

Man in Audience: I thought it was '21 or '23.

Woman in Audience: It couldn't have been that. It was early than that.

Woman in Audience: Because I rode on the trolleys and I was young before that.

Woman in Audience: The tracks are still there but they paved.....

Woman in Audience: It was the early '20s.

Woman in Audience: They were here before 1910 but I don't know whether they were here by.....

Woman in Audience: I took the trolley up to that bridge in Sewaren and it stopped there then they had to go across if they wanted to for the new boat.

Woman in Audience: No, because you would take the trailer to go to Perth Amboy.

Woman in Audience: No, no, I'm talking about the trolley that went across where the Town Hall is.

Woman in Audience: Yea, well that's the one you took to go to Perth Amboy.

Woman in Audience: Yea, but there was some kind of a thing about that bridge or something and it didn't go over the bridge and if you wanted to go to Sewaren you went as far as the bridge. I remember I have a.....

Woman in Audience: Unless that was in the very, very beginning of it because in my recollection it wasn't that way.

Woman in Audience: Because I have a paper that McAvoy gave me and they had to go as far as the bridge and then they walked across and then there was a

trolley on the other side.

Woman in Audience: Well, there might have been in the very beginning, I don't know. But I know as a child if I went to Rahway to the dentist or if I went to Perth Amboy you got on the trolley and you went and you got off at State Street and Smith Street in Perth Amboy.

Man in Audience: At least they plowed the sidewalks but not the roads. You had big horse drawn sleds coming from the clay area and coming from the bricks in the backyard.

Woman in Audience: When I was a kid they had those horse drawn things in the 1930s.

Man in Audience: Does anybody know when the first concrete highway was built in this area?

Woman in Audience: Do you mean highway or do you mean street in Woodbridge?

Man in Audience: Street; poured concrete.

Woman in Audience: No, not poured concrete. I remember, and just the other day I was trying to recall whether it was Green Street or Main Street, that was done first; a block that was about the size of an asphalt block.

Man in Audience: No, I'm talking about poured concrete. I think Avenel Street was done about in 1924 and it went from St. Georges Avenue all the way down to the railroad. But I was wondering if there was anything older than that.

Woman in Audience: Amboy Avenue was concrete and that was concrete when I grew up. I came here in 1930 and that was concrete then.

Man in Audience: No, this was 1924.

Woman in Audience: But I mean it was a good many years before that.

Man in Audience: This is from the horse's mouth. In the first decade of the twentieth century the church bowed to the advances of technology. First of all came the telephone poles in 1902 and in the same year electricity for the church. The town had electricity before that but the church was a little bit behind time in doing it. In 1903 came the trolley cars.

Man in Audience: Anyhow, the trolley cars were here before me, that much I can say.

Female in Audience: Can I move that all this go into our potential archives?

Man in Audience: Yes, Miss Morrow wants to move that the papers presented tonight be put in our archives if we ever get a place to keep them.

Female in Audience: I second that.

Man in Audience: I imagine if there were an objection or if anyone wants to comment or have a question on this. Okay, at such time as we have a place to keep them we'd be honored to have it in our archives.

Man in Audience: I don't know how this gets around. I've already had requests for copies of it.

Man in Audience: All in favor of Miss Morrow's motion that was made and seconded say I.

All in Audience: I

Man in Audience: Opposed? So we'll look forward to the day when we can have a place to put them. Okay, there are just two or three things that I would like to mention in tonight's regular business. We had a meeting of the Executive Committee supposedly the first week of February but between activities and illnesses we ended up with only three of us there so we weren't able to accomplish too much. We expect to have another meeting the first week in March but we'll skip March as far as our all member meeting and start again in April and have an April and May all member meeting about which you'll be notified. What we have to look forward to in the spring, May and April, will be elections. I think according to the Constitution we have to elect a nominating committee at one meeting and then have elections at the following meeting. So probably in our main meeting we'll decide whatever program we'll have and then try to elect a nominating committee. Then that nominating committee will come back with candidates for the officers at the May meeting. We did talk about a few things, the three of us that were there, Dave and Freddie Novak and myself at our meeting the other night and we just kicked around some ideas as to what we could do to get all of us together in some activities and one thing that we mentioned was, we'd like to get your reaction to it, could we try, perhaps in the summer months, to have an excursion or an outing? Perhaps if there were enough of us we'd hire or bus and if not we could get two or three cars and go to some historic place in New Jersey preferably just for a visit and spend a half a day or a day whatever it would be. Would this be of interest to you? Just raise your hand just not as a commitment but just if you think you might be interested in such a thing should we pursue it further. We have no definite plans or any of that at this point but if you want us to pursue it and come back with some particular ideas, definite ideas, just say if you would be interested in taking a trip for a day in the summertime, July or August perhaps.

Woman in Audience: Historical?

Man in Audience: Yea, some historical place in New Jersey. Well about half of you anyway so it might be worth for us to pursue the idea and come back with some plans.

Woman in Audience: I'll tell you, I want to be careful on what you pick because a couple of years back the Business of (inaudible) had their national convention over in Atlantic City. There were about three thousand women there and among the things I had for them was a trip to Gladstone and I had never been there so I went along. I tell you I was never so ashamed in all my life after all the other conventions and all the trips we had at other places. There was nothing there. It was unbelievable.

Man in Audience: Well, we'll look into something. If we feel that it might be worthwhile and see what we can come up with and bring back some definite possibilities for you at another meeting in another few months. Another thing is that we're always asking what we can do for our bicentennial, how can we as an organization or a society, get involved in it and do something. We sort of thought we could work with the town committee in plans for the Parker Printing Press reproduction but we don't seem to have any definite things to

request for us to do in connection but we were thinking and wondering whether we heard that some groups for instance will have a mug or a dish or something with a historical scene on it made up and so we were wondering whether we could have a little booklet made up of pictures of not only the historical places in Woodbridge but also important places. For instances, a building like the City Hall or something of this sort along with some of the historical buildings. Whether it would be worthwhile or whether we should try to do something like that as a united effort within our group for this bicentennial. It might present some historical significance and also it might be that we could plan to sell it and raise some money which we could in turn pass over to the Parker Printing Press activities if they get to the point where they really come and do something. So these are two thoughts that we passed back and forth at our supposedly Executive Meeting the other night. Is there anything else that's pending our next meeting?

Woman in Audience: I think the placing of marketing signs around the homes and such.

Man in Audience: Yes, we talked about that as another possible project placing signs or marketing of some kind either at some historical places or older buildings in the town.

Woman in Audience: Well, at one time there was an idea of having a map of the Township of Woodbridge and having all the historical places put on that map but nothing ever came of it.

Woman in Audience: What did I read in the paper that the young people at school are doing or something? Do you know what I'm talking about?

Man in Audience: Yes, I heard that. The county was talking about that having maps of each township. I went to about two or those meetings but I never was able to follow through on them and I also felt that probably we as a group couldn't really get in on a county or statewide activity and we should try to do something here in Woodbridge. But there was a plan. They had a special committee appointed I remember out there and they were trying to get people from each township to come in with a map of that particular township but I never heard if they actually did it. I believe these were just thoughts to see what these people would like us, as a committee, to try to pursue further and develop and bring back to you for approval. I'm just throwing these ideas out today. However it's not to try to decide anything tonight definitely. Dave, do you remember anything else we spoke of the other night?

Dave: Well we kicked around the idea of going to some of these tiles?

Man in Audience: Well we started with tiles and we went from tiles to a dish and then we went to the picture books and instead of having one picture have a group of pictures so this was all up in the air.

Woman in Audience: I wonder if the township is planning to do that for the bicentennial because we did that when we had the three hundredth anniversary; the thing were expensive. We had beer mugs and coffee mugs and different sized plates.

Man in Audience: Excuse me Ruth, where were these bought?

Ruth: Over in Carteret and they gave us an awful good price. We sold

hundreds of them. We ran out of the dinner plates; we never did have enough of them.

Man in Audience: Apparently the bicentennial committee are planning the equivalent of a directory that will be financed largely by donations from various clubs and by merchants and industry in the township. I will probably show some photographs and also give a history of Woodbridge very much like the paper that was read this evening. I plan to have twenty thousand of them printed and one delivered to every home and apartment in the township so that the people of Woodbridge know something about the early history of Woodbridge. When you consider that the paper stated this evening that in 1920 we only had thirteen thousand people here and now we got a hundred and thirteen thousand people. I would say that a hundred and ten thousand of our population know very little about the early history of Woodbridge. In this booklet, that the bicentennial committee are considering and working on at this time, I'm hoping that they will correct that situation and have most all the people in Woodbridge know something about its early history.

Man in Audience: If we would go back to this little booklet of pictures that we mentioned earlier this would be a duplication of most of what they were doing.

Man in Audience: This book that they are planning would cost in the neighborhood, for printing alone, twelve to fifteen hundred dollars.

Woman in Audience: You know what is very profitable too is we had these coins made and it only cost us about fifty cents. I think it was only two hundred dollars.

Man in Audience: I don't think that the bicentennial committee is planning to buy or sell anything.

Woman in Audience: I had requested those coins from all over the United States and even some from Canada.

Man in Audience: We'd like to invite all of you to peruse, at your convenience, our historical room. We feel at the present time that we are proud that we do have archives, the first archives in the Township of Woodbridge.

Woman in Audience: Which is located?

Man in Audience: You got to get inside the church to get into the historical room. You just walk in and walk up the balcony and you'll see the sign that says historical room.