

## 20's Teens in Iselin

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*1926. Many assume it's time for hardships, despair, and glimpses of a shadow of the past war, and a beginning of a new revolutionary bloodbath. This is merely just the truth, there are many buried secrets under the dirt we call Woodbridge Township. The county of Iselin rests on the upper west side, creating the essence of protection from surrounding states and giving the township its boundaries. Now, with the new technological advances and modernized, effective solutions we have built our town to be successful and eliminate uprising issues along with meeting the necessities of each district. But, what about the 1926 life? What started our district to a strong start? Digging through the past we shall see if we can piece together our answers that lay between pages of newspapers and the town itself.*

*"Children are our most valuable natural resource." these words were uttered by a wise man, also referred to as Herbert Hoover, our thirty-first president preceding the current president of 1926. This quote holds true, the children follow their parents and models, walking in the paved paths and succeeding their previous holder of their position, bring light to the future. One element of the children of Iselin still hold true is their entertainment and childish behavior, even at times when a smile is hard to form. They didn't let scarcity of water or unsatisfactory meals ruin their day, the children found their own sort of amusement. As an example, printed in the Woodbridge Leader on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1926, it has been reported "Little Jean Hooban Celebrates Birthday", "An exhibition Charleston was given by Jean Hooban and Elizabeth Dunigan, Robert Hooban at the piano. Little Jean received many attractive gifts. Refreshments were served in the dining room which was decorated in pink and white for the occasion." This article shows how the children who could afford such a celebration, embraced it with pride, inviting their friends and family for a fun time and solely entertainment. Whether it's a birthday or a store opening, they always try and find a reason to party or celebrate with what they own. In those days, it must've been quite hard to earn and pay off these expenses, especially when they had more pressing matters to address and pay for, such as electricity or water usage. Since the children weren't exposed to technology just yet, they found their happiness in the smallest of things and appreciated many sources of entertainment we overview nowadays, such as the radio and novels.*

*Athletics and sports were also seen as an honor and praised event for being a part of. The friendly competition taught the children sportsmanship and to work hard to earn your own identity in society. The children still have the fire in their eyes to defeat and win against the opposing team. Especially the boys, they idea of an everyday conversation consists of arguments on which team or player is the best, or perhaps retelling their own experiences being in the games. After viewing many newspapers I've noticed the only way to learn and communicate about these sporting events, is verbally or from the actual newspaper. Many newspapers stated the score and the author of the articles wrote in a biased format, clearly showing who they root for, despite being a children's match, even the adults took the games seriously. I can conclude through this that even the adults of 1926 found their way to pass time through their children, they formed a bond where they would try their hardest to raise their children to the top spot. Mostly the boys would take part in these games, though, but the girls*

were't less active. The girls joined and formed girl scouts, similar to those that exist today, they helped the community and took action. This can be seen through the article on August 27<sup>th</sup>, 1926 in the Woodbridge Leader, "Iselin Library Organizers Meet on September 3<sup>rd</sup>", "state librarian to be present. Many large donations received from residents of Perth Amboy. Girl Scouts doing wonderful work in collecting books." This showed the scouts and sports in those days were tense and serious, even if it consisted of young people.

Though the children and teens led a fairly happy and interesting life, they faced many struggles and concerns. Especially in Iselin, where water scarcity is a major problem. Stated in the Woodbridge Independent on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1926 it has been printed: "To Have Private Water System at Iselin School", "The Board of Education will have to install its own water system and its own well...the present water system in Iselin, owned by Sam Foster, is inadequate. Foster's pump is continually out of order...also, the two-inch mains now in Iselin will not carry enough water for school purposes." The children probably dealt with many diseases and medical issues, due to the lack of water and nutritional foods. The newspapers showed advertisements explaining of the prices and ingredients for certain foods and necessities, along with these were also job opportunities for children. Piecing these together, I can infer that the children also had to work and earn money in order for the family to buy proper foods and lead a healthy life. Today, children and teens don't have to take stress over working for money, our prospering township makes it easier for our parents to earn the needed wages and if this can't be accomplished there have been many organized societies which help you maintain a family with no problems. Another concern the children of 1926 faced were the deaths of loved ones due to the previous World War. The newspaper Woodbridge Independent printed on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1926 "Scout Circles Mourn Death of One of Iselin's Leaders", "Mr. Squires died on July 17<sup>th</sup> from the effects caused through his service to his country in the World War." Since the war had recently subsided, the aftermath of the casualties started to show and deteriorate over time. The medical issues caused probably consisted of disease and broken bones, with no cure. The Board of Health also added an announcement in the December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1926 edition of the Woodbridge Independent regarding children missing school due to the current issue of measles and other diseases.

All in all, the teens and children shared and contradicted many concerns and forms of amusement. The differences came from the fact that technology was evolving and science was explaining many things as well as finding cures for diseases, and prices went up higher because the wages now are at a higher and many more people can afford to buy the food and essentials they need without their children to earn extra money. But, before during the 20's the children had to work outside of school to pitch in and earn enough for the entire family. This taught them determination, how to prioritize, appreciate, and many other life skills at a very early age, which we aren't even exposed to yet today. 1926 led a strong base for Iselin and the Woodbridge Township to grow and build upon. The teens of 1926 still had a childhood filled with amusement, entertainment, and their own perks of living in the 20's such as witnessing technology form, from radios to models of cars.