

Iselin: The Youth of Yesterday
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To us, ninety years can seem like a long time ago. People back then lived their lives very differently than we do today. Nevertheless, parallels between their time and ours can be drawn. Clothing, stories, routines, perhaps even crime! If we focused on one part of the past for the sake of our comparison, would it be so hard to find the similarities? What about the children of Iselin in Woodbridge Township, and how they lived their lives exactly ninety years ago? Allow me to introduce myself. I am a time traveler and I am about to take you into the world as it was in 1926, in Iselin, New Jersey.

It all starts out with these young boys: R. F. Ellison, Jr., R. B. Tiffany, Joseph Greenspan, Alexander Brown, Franklin Green, Edward Katen, John Bieglecki, Richard Dube, Richard Shohfi, Walter Shonle, Stanley Seabasty, and Chas. Hutteman. These are the scouts of Iselin's Boy Scout Troop No. 1 who were selected as representatives, along with others, to sight-see Washington D.C., home of the White House and the President of the United States (at that time), Calvin Coolidge (Woodbridge Independent, January 15, 1926). Even in 2016, children would dive at the opportunity to go to Washington D.C. and meet the President. All of their expenses were paid for, including transportation, food, and exploratory activities such as trolley trips. After their journey on the Pennsylvania Railroad (which was shut down and made obsolete in 1968) and a "special stop in Metuchen", the scouts shall meet the President and present him with a message of appreciation and gratitude as they had planned. The next event is how Iselin looks forward to its carnival week (Woodbridge Independent, July 30, 1926).

We leap forward to later on in the year, when St. Cecelia's Church will be holding their annual carnival which, and I quote, "is an event eagerly looked forward to by the people in general hereabouts". At this carnival, the vendors will be selling and distributing merchandise sold that would

be up to date for them, but very antiquated for us. As you should already think, there was dancing at this event and there would be a specially constructed dance floor. If the children back then were anything like us, then they must have had an amazing time with all of the evening's festivities at St. Cecelia's. This event was suspected to be a success and it probably was, because people seemed to be eager for this event every year, as it says in the article.

People in 1926 were also concerned about safety, just like the people of 2016. One of their safety precautions were to give "No School" signals through the use of the town's fire horns (Woodbridge Independent, October 1, 1926). The Woodbridge Township school authorities set different signals for each of the different schools in the township. Nowadays, when the weather is questionable, students get a call on the phone number that they have registered with their school and HoneyWell alerts. When the supervising principal decided that the weather was questionable some days, he would give the warning and cancel the schooling sessions. If anything could grasp the children's attentions unanimously at school, it would be the blaring fire horns and school-wide announcements declaring a closure.

Of course, since it is a law, children had to go to school back then, too. We have many schools in this day and age, but back then, parents must have been looking for less cramped schools in which they could enroll their children. The population was booming at the time and the overcrowding in schools, particularly in Woodbridge Township, was becoming unbearable. Hence, the "new" school being made for Iselin students was a good thing to happen in 1926 (Woodbridge Independent, January 22, 1926). The school was erected with a whopping cost of \$180,000, but it would be worth it since there would be an expansion of space to expand a child's mind. The same amount of money today, after adjusting for inflation, would be equivalent to 2.4 million dollars!!

As with every town in any time, there were petty crimes committed almost every day. There were different types of crimes back then that still happen today, like stealing gas, which will be our

next time travel experience. Back in 1926, a policeman arrested two youths for stealing gas (Woodbridge Independent, July 30, 1926). It had been going on for a few months, and the culprits could not be found. However, thanks to Patrolman Celeste Romond, their crime spree was put to a stop. They were stealing the gas by transferring it to their car without paying. They had been sucking it out of the pumps with some sort of vacuum tube. Some people were desperate enough to do that in the days of Hurricane Sandy because they needed gas for their power generators and cars. Romond apprehended the youths and stopped the chain of gas tank robberies in the town.

Scouts seemed to be pretty popular back in 1926. In the newspapers, there were articles and articles explaining what the boy and girl scouts had been doing, such as conducting fundraisers, sales, dances, or parties. They seemed to be very active then, just as our Scouts are today. This brings me to our next time travel destination: the aftermath of the Iselin Golden Eaglet Girl Scouts party (Woodbridge Independent, October 29, 1926). After they had their party, it came time to submit the reviews. The girls gave in the reviews of their festivities and their thoughts on the topic. According to these, they had a “wonderful time” at their big party. They had refreshments, dancing, games, and contests. One of the contests was called the “Charleston Contest.” Scouts Ellen Ohiman and Freda Martin won the contest and their prize was a large piece of cake. There were also contests involving having the prettiest costume and the funniest costume, the event being a costume party. There was music with vocal and piano selections. It seems like it was a fun party.

Now, on to the Iselin troop of Boy Scouts. They spent their time taking, and hopefully passing, their Scouting tests (Woodbridge Independent, February 12, 1926). The article tells of the types of tests they had, including Tracking, Cooking, and First Aid. There are more categories and many of the scouts passed. The boys that passed must have been pretty proud and the ones that failed must have learned from their experiences. These tests helped people advance to their second class and some advanced to a class called tenderfoot. It must be pretty rewarding, just as it is today.

The next story will be about Iselin Boy Scouts who used their first aid expertise to help one of their fellow citizens who had a deep scalp wound from getting hit by a stone above his ear (Woodbridge Independent, April 2, 1926). Two boys threw them at the child and the scouts brought him in and treated him. Those scouts became saviors to the child, John Nagy.

Our last time traveling destination is the time before the Scouts Honor Court Rewards Event (Woodbridge Independent, November 16, 1926). This event was for the whole township, so the Boy Scout troops of Iselin joined in. At this event, they presented the Boy Scouts who qualified for the ranks of Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class with badges that they earned. Scouts who earned merit badges in the past qualified to receive special awards. This event, in a nutshell, is an awards ceremony. The boy scouts of all troops, not just Iselin, earned all of their achievements.

Our journey comes to a close as we arrive back in 2016. Now, that we are back in the present day, let's reflect on what we saw during time travel. We saw events, local activities, and concerns such as health and crime. We also learned a lot about how Iselin children, students, youths, and scouts acted and reacted to different situations in 1926. Of course there exist many distinctions between how they lived their lives back then and how we do now. However, we were able to identify several similarities just as easily. In the past ninety years, Woodbridge Township has made innumerable advances industrially and socially, making it seem as though we are very removed from any time before that. But after our journey backward in time, it can be seen that we aren't all that different. In summation, 1926 was a good adventure. The only question that remains is, *when* to next?!