

The Story of Iselin.....Now and Then

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When we think about a time in the past, specifically 1926, we think about major life changing events, such as how Japan got its new emperor (Hirohito), or the creation of liquid fuel rockets (Robert Goddard), even a famous novel, Winnie-the-Pooh (A.A. Milne), anything but ourselves and our community, what we stand for. Let me ask you a question, what were our ancestors, the people who built what we live on today, doing back then? Just starting out with technology, they had to rely mostly on their own experience with the world, something I don't know much about. Let's make this more relative, how about focussing about kids, instead of the adults. What were they doing back then? How were their lives different from ours? Let's find out.

After reading a few articles on the "Woodbridge Leader", I observed that a big way for the kids in the community to get involved was to join a scout group, a way to have fun with the other kids while helping and interacting with the community. As I researched further, I noticed that the scout's activities were pretty similar to the one's done by my own girl scout troop, but with a different twist. For instance, I read that a boy scouts troop was chosen to carry a war veterans coffin to his place of rest. (Woodbridge Leader, June 25, 1926).

The rest of the articles I read talked about the different troops, possibly even from another town, coming together and doing something that includes a little more than just one's own community. For example (Woodbridge Leader, April 23, 1926) the boy scout troops from Colonia and Iselin, both met together at the Iselin local school, so that the troop from Iselin could be inspected by the deputy commissioner from Colonia. The article reported that "He praised the troop for their fine appearance".

Lastly, one of the activities I read a couple times was about the troops (either boys or girls) taking a hiking trip in the mountains, (Woodbridge Leader, April 23, 1926). The article goes on to talk about the long hike up the mountain (5 miles in total, but the girls only walked 3 and a half), After a lot of walking the girls decided to take a break

and eat lunch. After building a fire, they cooked hot dogs and beans, then headed back down.

When I read about all the activities the kids in 1926 did, I felt I could compare and relate it to my girl scouts activities, and I realized that some things didn't change much, just that nowadays new activities are incorporated to keep up with changing times, technology, people, and cultures. The first topic (War Veteran laid to rest) I thought that nowadays people don't show as much of respect or authority to a bunch of young boys. If that were to happen today, the troop would usually be in the back of the ceremony watching with the rest of the crowd. For the second topic (Iselin scouts host Colonia troop) I realized that this is something we have in common, during parades or choral singing, all troops get together to perform. The last activity the troops did (Woodbridge Independent, April 23, Independant) was a little similar to an activity my girl scout troop does to this day, which is a trip to the mountains. We would walk the same amount, but we would usually stay overnight except not leave the same day.

The next article I read that involved the kids in Iselin in 1926 was about a new library, (Woodbridge Leader, August 27, 1926). The article talks about how "The girl scouts of Iselin are very busy assorting and stamping books". The Iselin library has 300 something books so far, it also talks about the donations they are getting, like the most recent one "Donation of 150 books which were donated by Mrs. Ruth R Benton from Perth Amboy". This has to do with the kids of Iselin because back then, they relied mostly on books and other written media, and the use of a library would have been a perfect place to access all kinds of information. Even 90 years later, in 2016, the community is still the same. On March 22, 2014, saturday night, James Monroe Elementary School in Edison burnt down due to custodians cigarette, having lost the whole school, James Monroe Elementary was left with nothing. Thats where the community in, many people donated books, papers, pencils, and other materials. "So students and staff at multiple North Hunterdon area schools went back-to-school shopping for the second time this year, this time to buy items to donate to help fill the

temporary James Monroe classrooms". This an example of how so many years later, we stay together as a community.

Another article that I read not only involved the kids, but the whole community. It was about a time when the Iselin Fire house needed money in order to keep running (Woodbridge Independent, September 28, 1926) . "Due to a peculiar vote in the last election for commissioners and appropriation", the Fire Department ran out of money to provide efficient and effective response to an emergency . They hoped that the meeting on the following Friday would bring in more support from the community. Since an inadequate fire department would put the entire community at risk, this involves the children too. Having a fire department being unprepared during times of emergencies would become a major safety hazard. However something like this is very unlikely to happen in today's society. The economy and times have changed a lot since then, technology has made it easier to respond efficiently and effectively towards the safety of all.

The last article that I read about which involved kids from Iselin in 1926 was about an uproar with the citizens because they would have to pay for water that they were promised was free (Woodbridge Independant, February 5, 1926) .H.Kuntz, the president of the company verbally promised the citizens 375 houses (that he owned) that the water would be free. Now Kuntz is saying that he going to charge them. The citizens argue that 1) He verbally promised them free water, 2) That influenced the buyer's decision, 3) By not giving them free water, Kuntz has broken their implied contract with them. Kuntz argues that 1) He did not promise supplied water for any length of time, 2) He already spent about 25,000 giving the citizens their present supply, 3) His offer to sell water to an organization of house owners was rejected by the latter. This involves kids from Iselin because if their parents couldn't pay for water, they would have to live without water and we all know what that means. I don't think that this could happen today because in today's world all contracts are committed in paper and you are legally bound by it. It is harder to go back on your word.The same goes with other

contracts too. I'm sure that we've learnt from the past, and tend to be more cautious in taking people's word. Similarly, when people go to buy a house, they will make sure that they read what's stated in the contract before signing off on it.

Now that you know more about our history, how do you feel about it?

I am surprised and slightly amused in a way that certain trends still carry on. I didn't think Iselin in 1926 would have a lot in common with us today, especially in this day and age but they do! We share many similarities and common problems, like hiking in the mountains, or having to pay for something that was promised free. At the same time, we have moved on and thanks to technology! Because of which we differ from the past. We are more resourceful than we did in the past. I'm optimistic that if faced with a similar situation today, our fire department will not come to a grinding halt due to lack of funds because I'm sure other organisations will rise up to the situation.

Honestly, it was really a fun learning experience and gave me an insight into the past. Something I don't think I would have learned on my own regarding our ancestors in this community. The past speaks a lot and gives a meaning in understanding the present. I hope we never forget our past because it is our heritage. It is the past that has shaped our present and the present will do the same for the future.