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## Woodbridge: Past and Present

A town is a town not because of how big or small it is, but how connected its members are. In order to analyze a small town such as Iselin, one must address community-wide events and key areas in town that help tie the community together. Further, students must be able to appreciate the town library, which coordinates its events with that of the school district. The library acts as an extremely helpful environment for students to focus on their work. In addition to ensuring that children are able to go to the library to broaden their horizons, Iselin has from the beginning of time itself, provided a wide variety of extracurricular activities. No wonder children from the 1920's were athletic and well rounded! Newspapers from the time support this, for the journalists constantly wrote articles expressing their impression of Iselin's love of sports. Children were, and still are, brought up to work together as a team and glorify the town of Iselin. Iselin's love of community does not end there, particularly because of its wide scale of community-organized events. All holidays, from New Year's to Christmas are celebrated with great joy. Thus, children have grown up with great memories, memories that were shared with those who lived there almost a whole century ago.

Iselin, home to many children, places a great deal of emphasis on their young citizens' reading levels and literacy skills. In order to ensure that children were able to engage themselves by reading a book, the Iselin library used to hold regular meetings which tested the accuracy and functioning of the library. According to the October issue of the 1926 Woodbridge Independent,

“Iselin’s Free Public Main Library Association held their regular weekly meeting on Thursday evening at the home of Mrs. Charles Omensky (temporary president of the association) and discussed ‘considerable important items.’” Here, one is able to affirm that Iselin’s agenda focused heavily on education and the advancement of such. It is possible that children spent a great deal of time in the library. Without technology, children probably valued quiet evenings reading classic forms of literature in their town’s library. I personally love learning, and gaining information and going to the library. After all, the library is the quietest place in town, and it allows children to peacefully pursue their studies in an engaging manner. It must be noted that the library is not only a place where town members can gain valuable information, but it is also a place where residents can help spread the love of reading by donating books. As reported in the August 24, 1926 issue of the Woodbridge Independent, “The committee had been gratified at the response accorded their request for donations of books.” Hence, it is evident that the town of Iselin harbored a deep love of reading, particularly because its residents, both young and old, seek to spread literacy by donating precious books.

In addition to working towards improving the reading levels of children, Iselin community members also ensure that children are able to pursue extracurricular activities. It was common for children to enroll in several clubs and activities at once. This made children 90 years ago more adaptable to social life. By being well rounded, Iselin’s children of the past were able to refrain from sitting at home watching television. Instead, they joined clubs such as Girl Scouts, which allowed children to explore the world around them. The Woodbridge Independent on August 10th of 1926 explained, “Scouts on Tuesday of last week plans were made for a hike to Holly Park on Thursday next.” Here, one is able to learn the extent to which sports and activities

engaged children of various age groups. I play girls basketball, and karate, and I hope I can join Girl Scouts. I believe this group is a very productive one, and helps girls learn more about their environment and focus on using their resources wisely.

Pursuing this further, children also were well aware of the importance of community-oriented programs and events. Several times, newspapers have reported community based events that helped bring members of Iselin together during important holidays. In doing so, children were always connected with their peers, and helped organize wonderful events to make the holiday season even better. According to Woodbridge Independent dated from November 30th, 1926, “The following program was given by the Iselin Public School for Thanksgiving. Several guests were present at the numbers were so interesting that much applause was given.” The newspaper not only recorded community-wide events, but also shared some insight on as to how the event was organized. Not every town enjoys get-togethers. After all, Iselin is a unique town which commemorates holidays via plays, and entertains listeners with songs as well. It is evident that the town cherishes art and culture. Moving on, the Woodbridge Independent, dated from 28th of December, 1926, also gave an example of a community-organized event celebrating Christmas. Readers learned, “After a crowd of about 300 kiddies had gathered in the firehouse the lights were lowered and to the music of sleigh bells Santa Claus appeared laden with packs of toys and things good for the eyesight of young ladies of young folks.” Not only that, but “After all the gifts were given out, the floor was cleared and the young people enjoyed the music and dancing.” Here, one learns of the great sense of dedication and pride that allowed people to organize such events. It was an amazing moment that was wonderful and full of warmth. I can only imagine that such events occur on an even grander scale today. Growing up, I always

enjoyed participating in the Thanksgiving and Christmas parades around town. These events allowed me to connect to other members of the community. One can only hope that such events continue to occur in Iselin, thereby allowing everyone to be more connected.

In conclusion, Iselin is a town which encourages the creation of wonderful memories. All of these memories serve to be great aspects of everyone's lives. The memories range from sport games, library visits, and town events. Of course, this can only serve to explain the level of happiness and extent of adoration which is present in the young hearts of children today as well. I hope that the great memories that have been engraved in my mind will continue to thrive in the minds of children today. The town of Iselin has helped raise wonderful and caring children, and continues to do the same today! Children still enjoy reading books at the library and are eager to participate in upcoming events, such as carnivals. Children today even love to participate in various sports. Therefore, the children of both the past and today, are proud to be the children of Iselin.