

County in 1859. In 1864, Daniel Waldo deeded a plot of land on Woodbridge Road (Green Street) to the Union Society. A modest structure was erected and for over fifty years congregants of the Union Society held services there and opened its doors to the community at large.

In 1920, the Union Chapel itself suffered a devastating fire. The Union Society determined that the existing lot was too small for their proposed new church. Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Hyde donated a plot of their property on Oak Tree Road on the north side of the railroad station. The old site, whose deed reverted to the previous owners when church services ceased after the fire, in 1923 became the home of the newly organized Iselin Fire Company No. 1.

A new church was constructed and dedicated in 1923 as the Union Non-Denominational Chapel of Iselin. By 1931, many worshippers felt the need for affiliation with an established denomination. On May 25, 1933 the congregation officially became the First Presbyterian Church of Iselin.

In 1938 an addition doubled the church's size. More construction in 1940 added Choir and Sunday School rooms, a kitchen and basement recreation room.

In 1951, the Church purchased the balance of the Hyde estate. The Hyde home was renovated for use as the Church Manse and on July 27, 1954 construction began for a new Church and Sunday School building. Consecrated on Easter Sunday, 1955, the new sanctuary seated 200 and the old and new buildings were separated by an adjustable partition.

A new manse was built and five rooms in the school were renovated in 1960.

The First Presbyterian Church of Iselin has continued to be an integral part of the community. Self-described as a multicultural church, First Presbyterian has dynamically evolved along with changing demographics of Iselin. In the 1990s the Man-Making Group began offering programs at the church for the Asian-Indian community and in 2008 First Presbyterian welcomed the Christian Korean congregation The Grace and Truth Church, AG to share their facilities for services.



### 9 St. Cecelia

#### Church, Convent, School & Fair

**45 Wilus** The first Mass, in what would eventually be a new parish, was held in a bungalow on the Charles Freeman estate on New Dover Road in Colonia in 1912. By 1914, the O'Connor sisters were surveying new Iselin residents to identify potential new parishioners. In 1915 the Iselin-Colonia area was designated a mission of St. Mary's Church of South Amboy.

In 1923 the Nurses Recreation Hall from the United States Army Hospital No. 3 was purchased. Cut into sections, it was set on logs and rolled to a lot facing Middlesex Avenue where it was reassembled as Iselin's Roman Catholic Church.

In 1932, the newly created St. Cecelia's Parish covered Iselin, Colonia and northern Raritan (now Edison) Township. The Parish's first Pastor, Reverend William J. Brennan supervised the purchase of the land adjoining the church.

In 1944 the farmhouse of Frank Cooper, chicken farmer, on Middlesex-Essex Turnpike was purchased

and converted into a convent for four nuns assigned to the parish. The seeds of St. Cecelia Catholic School were sown when the nuns began teaching catechism.

In 1946 Reverend John M. Wilus came to St. Cecelia's. Recognizing the need for a place to teach Sunday School and hold parish events, he acquired a Quonset Hut from military surplus and had it erected behind the Rectory. In the summer of 1951, one of the front rooms of the Quonset Hut was converted into a classroom and that September kindergartners were the first class of the St. Cecelia's Parochial School.

Ground was broken for a new Church/School complex in February, 1952 and when school opened in September, 1953, students filled a full grammar school, grades 1 through 8. By 1959 enrollment had reached 2,200 and in 1960 a fourteen classroom addition provided more space.

After the combined Church/School was completed in May, 1953, the Church was consecrated and the old Nurses Hall was razed.

The post-World War II influx of families to the area swelled parish ranks and in 1959 Bishop George Ahr divided St. Cecelia's and the new St. John Vianney Parish was established in Colonia.

A new convent was built in 1964 on the site of the old wooden Church/Nurses Hall on Middlesex Avenue and the old farmhouse was torn down. The convent was converted into offices for the Diocese of Metuchen's Diocesan Center in 1982. The Diocese sold it in 2004 and it is now an office building.

In 1984 a fire destroyed the part of the school where church services were held. On April 9, 1989, the parish realized a 30 year old dream when a new, modern brick-and-wood church was consecrated.

Father John M. Wilus served as pastor for 35 years. Elevated to Monsignor in 1967, he retired in 1981 and the entrance to the church grounds was named Wilus Way in his honor.

Due to declining enrollment and changing demographics, the school closed at the end of the 2012 school year. In 2014 Edison elementary school students displaced by fire started classes in the unused school. When their school is rebuilt, Woodbridge School District plans to utilize the space.

St. Cecelia Parish has changed as Iselin has evolved around it but it remains a "faith-filled community global in heritage and tradition."

\*\*\*\*\*

Within weeks of the establishment of the parish in 1932, Father Brennan announced that the church would sponsor a fair in August. Nobody could anticipate St. Cecelia Fair's enormous success and importance to the entire Iselin community.

First held on the church grounds, within a few years the fair moved across the street to a lot the church acquired on Green Street. By 1938, 18,000 people attended the four day festival and it was a major source of revenue for the parish. Later the fair, usually held in July, was extended to six evenings, tens of thousands of fairgoers attended the "Iselin Fair" and the proceeds were used to support the school.

For nearly eight decades, residents of all religions looked forward to the St. Cecelia Fair. Beer tents and motorcycle parking attracted fairgoers from far and wide and local families and teens would attend every night. Put two or more Iselinites together and they will start reminiscing about their favorite rides, fair food and Viktor the Wrestling Bear. Recollections of carnival rides, games, car raffles, 50/50s and live entertainment bring happy memories rushing back.

Crowds began to diminish as other entertainments competed and some of the fair offerings changed. After the 2003 festival, the fairgrounds were sold

and in 2004 the fair returned to its birth place on the grounds of St. Cecelia Church. Eleven large luxury homes were constructed on the former fairgrounds and, with the closing of the school pending, the last fair was celebrated in 2011.



### 10 Iselin Theatre

**1404 Oak Tree Road** Iselin Theatre was the dream of Salvatore A. Limoli. With seating for 600, the building was designed by architect Edward Wizebicki. The day before the theatre opened on March 10, 1928, the Woodbridge Leader proclaimed that the theatre was "distinctly modern in every detail. The seating arrangement, mural decorations, projection room, screen, and beautifully toned Kimball organ would do credit to any suburban community." They declared that the building, with a façade of white columns and buff brick, transformed Iselin's downtown and would "undoubtedly attract more business and additional stores."

Iselin Theatre was initially operated by a company run by Frank Jersten of NY who managed a chain of playhouses throughout the East. But the Depression hit and by the mid-1930s the neglected theatre was sold to the Embassy Theatre chain. The St. Cecelia's Boys' Band played at the grand opening of the refurbished theatre on Friday, August 30, 1935.

The Iselin Theatre entertained Iselin residents for much of the twentieth century reflecting changing economies, cultures and interests. It finally succumbed to the pressures of multiplexes and closed in the mid-1980s. Now the old theatre building is home to Sharda Plaza, a Galleria of stores and services primarily serving the Asian Indian community.



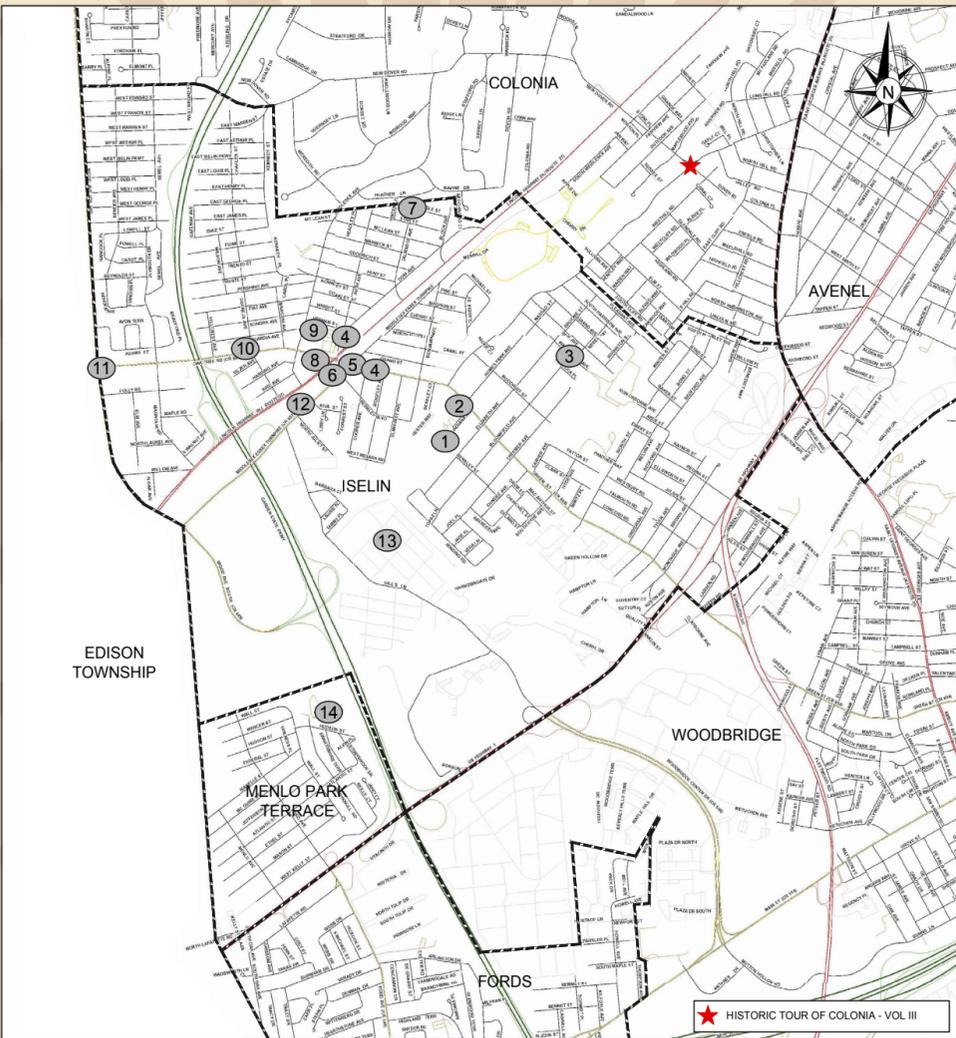
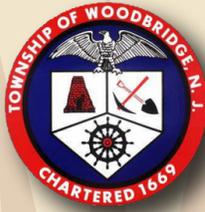
### 11 Shinn-Woodbridge Airport

**Oak Tree Road and Wood Avenue** What might have been the first powered aircraft flight in New Jersey was made by the Boland brothers at the Correja Farm in December, 1908. In 1925, Edward Shinn of Shinn Airways purchased 72 acres of Township property at Oak Tree Road and Wood Avenue. The new airport included two runways and a hangar.

In 1946 airport operations were taken over by ex-army pilot Jim Ruscoe. The new operation catered to privately owned aircraft instead of commercial customers. Ruscoe's Flying Service employed several World War II vets as flight instructors including Bernice "Bee" Falk Haydu who had been one of the pioneering women WASPS, Women Airforce Service Pilots. Haydu, along with eight of her fellow vets, purchased Ruscoe's business and continued to run the airport and school until the State of New Jersey

## Woodbridge Township Historic Preservation Commission

# Tour Map of Historic Sites



- 1 - Indiana Ave School No. 18
- 2 - Iselin Library
- 3 - Adrian Institute
- 4 - Iselin Fire Houses
- 5 - Iselin Hotel
- 6 - Iselin Train Station

- 7 - Star Eagle
- 8 - First Presbyterian Church
- 9 - St. Cecelia Church
- 10 - Iselin Theatre
- 11 - Airport
- 12 - Cooper's Dairy

- 13 - Poor Farm
- 14 - Menlo Park Terrace School No. 19

informed the group that the newly planned Garden State Parkway would take the end off of one of their runways. Forced to relocate to nearby Hadley Airport where there was an existing flight school, Ruscoe Flying Service disbanded.

In 1951, Shinn sold the acreage of the Woodbridge Airport to developer Lester Robbins and Woodbridge Oakes was born. For a time Shop-Rite Supermarket in the Iselin Shopping Center occupied the spot where the airplane hangar once stood. Now India Grocers supplies the neighborhood.



### 12 Cooper's Dairy

**Middlesex-Essex Turnpike** Frank and Anna (Halley) Cooper settled in Iselin in 1858. Their son Edward W. Cooper was born in 1863. In 1902 Edward added a small herd of dairy cows to the operation and continued to harvest edible crops for sale. By the 1920s the farm consisted of 43 acres near the Iselin train station and an adjoining 200 rented acres. After serving during World War I, Edward's son Frank focused on and expanded the dairy business.

For over 50 years, Cooper's Dairy trucks were a common sight as their drivers covered twelve Township routes delivering milk, cream and butter. Cooper's Dairy was a cornerstone of Iselin life and economy. Smaller local farmers brought their milk there for processing and sale under the Cooper's Dairy brand. Frank and his children ran the farm and participated in the community. For years fire calls came to the Cooper's house and they would sound the alarm and in 1970 the Iselin First Aid Squad dedicated their flag pole to Frank in recognition of his considerable support. Cooper's Dairy sponsored enthusiastic bowling teams such as the Dairy Maids of the St. Cecelia Women's Bowling League, whose scores were duly noted in the local sport sections.

On July 20, 1966 the cow barn at the Dairy was destroyed by fire. The family chose not to rebuild, dairy operations ceased and the land was sold. Today the Social Security Disability Office and the Iselin Post Office occupy the land where the dairy barns once stood. The 1931 Frank Cooper house, across the street at 221 Middlesex-Essex Turnpike, remains a single family home.



### 13 Poor Farm

**Gill Lane (formerly Poor Farm Road)** The Township's 1669 charter called for "one hundred acres more for the maintenance of a free school." These became known as the Free School Lands. For decades there were conflicts about the borders and uses of this municipal land. Finally, in 1821, the Town Meeting ordered the Trustees to rent the Free School Lands to the Overseer of the Poor for

\$150.00/year. A farm house and barn built in 1809 became the Poor House Farm or Poor Farm.

Life at the Poor Farm was dimly hard. Provisions were meager, residents were required to work the farm and were sometimes "leased out" to local families and businesses as cheap labor. Censuses from the Woodbridge Poor House in 1860 and 1880 show that many of the residents were elderly.

Until 1920 the Township continued annually to lease the Free School Lands as the "Poor Farm." That year, the Township moved the Poorhouse to a building on Blair Road and left the Iselin lands vacant. In 1941, with the establishment of Social Security, the last four residents were moved to an old age home and the Poor Farm/House era ended. Later the Township sold the house and today it has been converted into apartments.

For over forty years the old Poor Farm building in Iselin deteriorated while legal wrangling over the Free School Lands worked its way through the courts. On January 29, 1966 the farmhouse was destroyed by fire. Later that year the courts permitted the Township to put the Free School Lands up for auction and use the monies to benefit the school system. The former Free School Lands and location of the Township Poor Farm became home to many corporations including Eastern Airlines, Siemens America Inc and Prudential Insurance.

### Menlo Park Terrace

For much of its history, the section of Woodbridge Township that is now Menlo Park Terrace was rural and sparsely populated. In 1870 Raritan (Edison) Township was carved out of Woodbridge and Piscataway Townships. Not long after, railroad executives planned a residential development on the border of Woodbridge and Raritan. They called it "Menlo Park" after the exotic locale of Menlo Park, California. The development failed but the name stuck and when Thomas Edison moved his laboratories from Newark and mined and performed experiments on both sides of the municipal border, he was known as the Wizard of Menlo Park.

In 1933 an inn and tourist cabins were built at the intersection of New Jersey Highway 25 (Route 1) and Ford Avenue. By the late 1930s the White Birch Inn was a place to picnic, hear live music and hold wedding receptions. By 1948 it had evolved into a tavern that was both a stopping point for travelers and truckers and later a popular hangout for Menlo Park Terrace residents until it was destroyed by fire in 1979.

Menlo Park Terrace was born in 1954 when the Sommers Bros. Construction Co. of Iselin began developing an approximately 800 house project. It was named Menlo Park Terrace because it was a terraced, hilly neighborhood that adjoined the well-known (thanks to Thomas Edison) Menlo Park. Advertisements like one published in the New York Times on August 1, 1954 trumpeted the new development's virtues - only 36 miles from Penn Station in NYC and next to Roosevelt Park with its "exclusive greenery, picnic groves and bridle paths." Spacious homes with high ceilings, hardwood floors, three bedrooms, tiled baths, basements, garages and paved driveways also offered deluxe kitchens complete with Westinghouse Electric Ranges. All this and more for only \$14,250 - \$86/month and no money down for veterans.

It was a winning formula and families flocked to the neighborhood. By November of 1954, the Menlo Park Terrace Civic Association was scheduling meetings. In short order an active and close-knit community was formed. The PTA, scout troops, canasta clubs, the Carousel Club, Chatterbox Club,

Terrace Club, White Birch Men's Club, Digna Maters Chapter 2 and many other organizations brought people together. A 1958 article in the Carteret Press introduced Menlo Park Terrace as youthful neighborhood, filled with lots of children, whose residents get their mail through Metuchen, pay taxes in Woodbridge, until recent redistricting voted in Iselin and were on the Edison-Metuchen phone extension, Liberty 8.

In the 1990s, Menlo Park Terrace was included in the list of the "ten towns" that make up Woodbridge Township. Best known today as the neighborhood where Woodbridge Mayor John E. McCormac grew up, Menlo Park Terrace remains a welcoming community and wonderful place to raise a family.



### 14 Menlo Park Terrace School No. 19

**19 Maryknoll Road**, Township officials quickly recognized that nearby schools could not absorb the number of school-aged children moving into the new Menlo Park Terrace development and by the fall of 1955 MPT parents were energetically campaigning for a neighborhood school. In 1957 construction began on property set aside for a school by the Sommers Bros. Labor strikes during the summer disrupted construction and the new school finally opened its doors for students on Monday, April 14, 1958.

In 1964 six additional classrooms were built. Menlo Park Terrace School No. 19 was one of five Township schools to benefit from the installation of solar panels in 2010. And 2013 brought the inauguration of a new playground complete with a slide, climbing apparatus, drums and a map of the United States to provide a fun and safe recreation area for all the children of the neighborhood. Today Menlo Park Terrace School No. 19 continues to be the heart of their community and strives to produce "lifelong learners who are responsible citizens prepared to enter the global society."

#### Welcome to Menlo Park Terrace!

As a youngster growing up in MPT, there was a strong sense of community as all of the neighbors and residents shared the same "close-knit" pride in the beauty and comfort of the neighborhood. In fact, my Father, an Irish immigrant and steel plant foreman, and Mother, the daughter of Irish immigrants, bought their first and only home in Menlo Park Terrace in 1960 - and my Mother still resides in MPT. Today, Menlo Park Terrace remains that near-perfect "residential" community with easy access to local business, shopping and entertainment.

*John E. McCormac*

John E. McCormac, Mayor

dents. For a time the School District used the building for storage but by the early 1980s the District sold the site and the school was torn down. Today the location is occupied by a bank and convenience store.

In 1982, due to decreasing enrollment, Pershing Avenue School No. 15 was put up for auction. Single family homes now occupy the site.

Today the three elementary schools, Iselin Middle School (1960) and JFK High School (1964) provide quality educations for Iselin's students.



## 2 Iselin Library

**1081 Green Street** Iselin Free Public Library was first organized in 1926 when a 200 book collection was set up in a corner of Omensky's Hardware Store at Oak Tree Road and Correja Avenue. The Woman's Club of Iselin took over library management about six years later. As the collection grew, the Library first moved next door into the former real estate office of Henry Kuntz. Later it relocated to the former Goose and Gander Sweet Shop on Oak Tree Road near Middlesex Avenue.

After World War II, residents launched a library building fund. By 1952, the community, led by the Woman's Club of Iselin and the Iselin Lions Club, broke ground for a new building on land donated by Alfred Hyde on Middlesex Avenue. For the next dozen years the volunteer-run library circulated thousands of books to eager Iselin readers. In 1964, Iselin trustees turned over the library to the newly created municipal library system and it became the Iselin Branch of the Woodbridge Public Library.

The old building was soon too small and a new branch library built on Green Street opened with much fanfare in April, 1968 and offered residents a collection of 20,000 titles.

In 1974, another community project grew next door and reinforced the library's mission to uplift the community. Co-sponsored by the Woodbridge Garden Club and the Iselin Lion's Club, the Garden for the Blind and Handicapped was designed for equal pleasure of the sighted as well. A cooperative venture, the Library system, Parks Department, local merchants and private citizens donated plants, materials and labor to construct a beautiful garden. Today the Woodbridge Garden Club, with the assistance of the Township and student volunteers, continues to maintain the garden. And the Iselin Branch Library continues to provide essential library services and dynamic children's programs.



## 3 Adrian Institute

(In the area of) Bloomfield and Washington Avenues Adrian Georg Iselin was born in New York City

railroad tracks to pay their respects as the train carrying the casket of Senator Robert F. Kennedy passed through town.

By the late 1960s the Iselin shopping district started to change. Oak Tree Road business owners complained that poor street lighting was hurting commerce. Over the next decade and a half some local businesses closed as their owners retired. Others couldn't compete with the malls and large chain stores. Storefronts went dark and some of the motorcycle-riding clientele at local watering holes threatened Iselin's family-friendly atmosphere.

In the mid-1980s the first Asian Indian store opened on Oak Tree Road and several others soon followed, attracted by low rents and Iselin's prime location. Since that time many East Asians, primarily from India and Pakistan, have moved into Iselin and the Oak Tree Road section has acquired a new nickname "Little India." Indian grocers, restaurants, jewelry, fashion, music and movie stores attract shoppers from all over East Coast. In 2006 Township officials held public meetings to develop a strategy to continue to address the challenges arising from the successful revitalization of the Iselin business district.

Today's Iselin is a vibrant, dynamic community where historic institutions such as the First Presbyterian Church co-sponsor India Independence Day celebrations in conjunction with the Indo-American Cultural Society and the Man Making Group in a blend of cultures, history and traditions.



## 1 Indiana Avenue School No. 18

**256 Indiana Avenue**, Built in 1955, Indiana School No. 18 is the oldest of the still operating elementary schools in Iselin.

In 1861 the Trustees of the newly created Union Town School District arranged for the building of a one-room school house at the northwest corner of Middlesex Avenue and Green Street. Railroad expansion a few years later forced the relocation of the school a block southeast on Green Street next to the Union Chapel.

In 1894, the Township renamed the Union Town School, School No. 6. The one-room schoolhouse served area students from 1861-1910. In 1910 the school was expanded to include two classrooms but was destroyed by fire in 1916. The Union Chapel next door hosted classes until September, 1917 when the new brick school was built on the same site. In 1924, two portables were erected but class size continued to rise and parents whose families lived on the west side of the railroad worried about safety as their children crossed the tracks.

In September 1927, Pershing Avenue School No. 15 opened and the portables at No 6 were dismantled. However by 1929 School 15 was full and a two room portable was purchased.

In 1955, Indiana School No. 18 was constructed. Kennedy Park School No. 24 opened in 1960 and by 1964, when the Benjamin Avenue Robert Mascenik School No. 26 was built, the aging School No. 6 was no longer needed and in 1965 it was closed to stu-

## Iselin

Long before the arrival of Iselin's first colonial settlers, the area once known as Perrytown then Uniontown and ultimately as Iselin, was traversed by Native Americans on their way to and from the waterways that border Woodbridge Township.

The evolution of Iselin from a colonial patchwork of farms to a vibrant community enlivened by local houses of worship, schools and businesses, is inextricably entwined with the development of the railroads. In 1836, a mere six years after the start of construction of New Jersey's first railroad at Bordentown, residents of Perrytown observed the first trial run of a train traveling from Jersey City to today's Highland Park.

From that time forward, the railroad and its tracks helped shape, define and develop the Iselin community. Farmers shipped their produce to the city via the rails and city relatives would hop on a train to get some fresh air in the "country." Passers-through and locals alike recognized the desirability and potential of homes and businesses in an area so livable and yet so easily accessible from nearby cities. And the danger from the grade level tracks dividing the town contributed to the development of two elementary schools and two fire departments on opposite sides of the tracks.

Planned housing developments too have contributed to Iselin's transformation. In 1869 Edwin A. Bloomfield and Thomas Barclay entered into a real estate venture and subdivided their land. Only seven families bought into the development and the speculation failed but the trend was set for Iselin's development.

In the 1890s several other subdivisions were attempted including "Iselin Hills," "Iselin Park" and "The Lidalia Land and Improvement Company." None were successful initially. It seemed that Iselin's seeming remoteness could not be overcome by the sirens' song of suburbia.

After World War I, the real estate market changed and at least twelve subdivisions were carved out of Iselin's farmland and forests. During the 1920s some referred to Iselin as "Bungalowtown" on account of the large number of small, affordable homes that were built.

While farms like Weir's Farm, Miele's Circle M Ranch, Frank Cooper's chicken farm and Cooper's Dairy provided milk, produce and poultry to the community, over time other local businesses made their mark on Iselin's quality of life and economy. Mom and Pop establishments like Rose Retkwa's grocery store at the corner of Correja Avenue and Trento Street (now home to Murphy's Deli), Petoletti's Pharmacy, Leo Murphy's Butcher Shop, Maglione's Italian Ices and others serviced the neighborhood. Companies such as Ronson and Miele's Excavating and Grading provided employment.

Recreational opportunities abounded in Iselin. In addition to the annual St. Cecelia's Iselin Fair, bowling, baseball and Pop Warner leagues drew many participants and the creation of Merrill Park by the County in 1948 provided playing fields and picnic spots close to the town center. In 1965 the Coopers, Miele's and others formed the Central Jersey Pony Trotting Club and ran harness races on County land on Elizabeth Avenue behind the Indiana Avenue School. Taverns such as Oliver's, Flip's and The Pioneer were popular spots to have a drink with friends after a hard day of work or play.

Iselin's history has not been without drama. In 1937 the whole nation followed the tragedy of the "lady in red," Margaret Drennan, who was indicted then acquitted of the murder of the father of her unborn child. And in 1968, Iselin residents stood at attention at the

## Woodbridge Township Historic Preservation Commission

The mission of the Woodbridge Township Historic Preservation Commission is to inform, educate, advise and unite public officials and the community at large as an advocate for the preservation of the rich history of Woodbridge Township.

### Commission Members

Dr. Dolores Capraro-Gioffre,  
Chairperson  
Courtney Lowry,  
Vice Chairperson  
Kathy Jost-Keating,  
Secretary

Bruce Christensen  
Dan D'Arcy  
Miguel Martin  
Kevin Rossi  
Wenda G. Rotweiler  
Jane E. Sinnott

Mayor John E. McCormac

Special Thanks to

Susan Summers Wentzel, June Polanski Onder, Elaine Polanski Bolger,  
Carl S. Christensen, Frank Lapenta, Jean & Jerry Retkwa



This program is made possible by  
**Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders**  
with funding in part from  
**New Jersey Historical Commission**  
a Division in the Dept of State

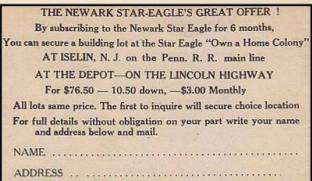
www.woodbridgehistory.com

WTHPc1669@hotmail.com

Brochure design by Brandon Powell  
Photographs courtesy of Kathy Jost-Keating, Bruce Christensen, Frank & Audrey Lapenta and Woodbridge Public Library

choice was based on Iselin's location and highway access.

On November 14, 1971 the new station was dedicated and Amtrak Metroliner service through Iselin was launched. Local NJ Transit service was reassigned to the Metropark stop. State and federal officials asserted that it was too confusing for passengers to have both Iselin and "Metropark at Iselin" stops and local residents complained that trains were blowing their whistles twice, once for each station, while passing through the area. In June, 1972, the old Iselin train station was closed and was destroyed by fire in 1976. Today Metropark Train Station is one of the busiest stations in the state and a village of office buildings have been built at the transportation hub.



## 7 Star Eagle Section

**Star Street, Eagle Street, Auth Avenue, Block Avenue** Promoters of local developments extolled Iselin's many advantages including clean air, transportation, fine schools and a convenient business district. But perhaps no developers were more inventive than the staff of Newark's Star Eagle newspaper.

Henry J. Auth purchased land that was part of the old Lidalia property in an attempt at real estate investment. When his speculation failed he sold the land to investors who then sold subdivisions to the Newark Star Eagle.

What a deal! In 1928, as part of a newspaper subscription promotion, the Star Eagle sold lots at bargain prices. If a reader agreed to subscribe for just twelve months to the daily paper, they could purchase a lot for \$76.50 with a \$10.50 down payment and a \$3.00 a month payment thereafter. Lots and subscriptions sold though no one knows exactly how many. City water and sewer lines had not yet reached the section and few building codes existed so shacks and lean-tos were thrown up next to "proper" houses and vacant lots until after World War II. Lots unsold in the Star Eagle promotion were resold to Louis Bamberger and Company for reselling to its employees.

Eventually homes were built on every lot in the Star Eagle section and families realized their dreams. However for Henry Auth and the Star Eagle, the promotion was not successful. It failed to stabilize the paper's bottom line and in 1939 the Star Eagle, in print for 108 years, was forced to merge with the Ledger.



**8 First Presbyterian Church of Iselin**  
**1295 Oak Tree Road.** The Union Society, a non-denominational Protestant assemblage, began meeting in the 1850s and registered their Trustees with the

and a meeting space.

Increasing traffic congestion on Route 1 worried Menlo Park Terrace residents about response times and in 1980 voters approved funds to construct a second firehouse in District 9. Construction for the two-bay Firehouse #2 was finished in 1983. Modernizing renovations and the addition of a second story on the Green Street Firehouse were completed in 1990.

For nearly 100 years, the dedicated volunteers of Iselin Volunteer Fire Company No. 1, District 9 and Iselin Chemical Hook and Ladder Company, District 11 have made innumerable contributions to the community and have put their lives on the line to keep us safe.

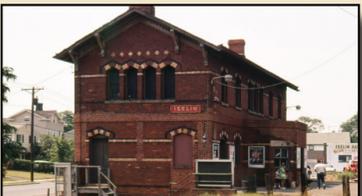


## 5 Iselin Hotel

**Corner of Green Street and Middlesex-Essex Turnpike** Long before MetroPark became a waypoint for East Coast travelers, stagecoaches were traversing the local countryside. In the 1880s the Uniontown Hotel, later known as the Iselin Hotel or Iselin Inn, was a scheduled stop on the route of Tallyhoo stagecoaches on their way from Newark to New Brunswick. Rail travelers too found the Hotel a convenient facility.

In 1936, Hans Knudsen, formerly of Hans' Beer Garden in Fords, purchased the establishment and at the Grand Opening of the Iselin Hotel he served a free turkey supper while diners listened and danced to live music provided by Ernest Christopherson and His Famous Jazz Orchestra.

In 1944, Angelo "Flip" D'Alessio took over the Iselin Hotel and renamed it Flip's Tavern. Mr. D'Alessio operated the Tavern for 18 years until his death in 1961. Flip's remained in the D'Alessio family, a popular Iselin watering hole and meeting place until the Tavern closed in the mid-1990s. Iselin Volunteer Fire Co. No. 1 purchased the building around 1995. In March, 2010 the once stately structure was torn down and a park, enjoyed by children and families, was built.



## 6 Iselin Train Station & Metropark

For decades the train stop was a simple wooden platform. Then, circa 1873, Adrian reportedly financed the construction of an ornate train station to provide the proper impression to the high society families of girls considering attending the Adrian Institute.

Travelers used the Victorian station for nearly 100 years. In 1967 the State of New Jersey announced that it had selected a nearby location for a railway stop for the Pennsylvania Railroad's planned high-speed train service between Washington D.C. and New York City. State representatives noted that their

in 1818. A hard working and entrepreneurial man, Iselin started and invested in many successful companies and was a prominent philanthropist.

Iselin and his wife Eleanor O'Donnell employed a governess, Mrs. L. H. Mathews, to help raise and educate their seven children. When the children were largely grown, Mrs. Mathews wanted to establish "an exclusive finishing school for young ladies." In 1872 Adrian Iselin purchased property and staked Mrs. Mathews funds to start her school. In appreciation she named the school the Adrian Institute.

The Institute's curriculum aimed to educate young ladies to fit into the upper crust of New York Society. An advertisement in the New York Times in 1874 proclaimed that the school, a seminary for young ladies, offered "A complete course of instruction in English, French, German, Music &c. Pupils taught to think." The commencement in 1876 included "essays, recitation, German conversation, piano solos, vocal solos, and duets, a German play and a French play."

The Institute was destroyed by fire in 1877. Arson was determined and the trial of John C. Raymond, an architect accused of orchestrating nine fires in New York and New Jersey as part of an insurance fraud was a cause celeb in 1879. In the Institute, thankfully no one was hurt but the damage was so severe that the Iselins chose not to rebuild and sold the property in 1884.



## 4 Iselin Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 District 9 & Iselin Chemical Hook and Ladder Company, District 11

**1222 Green Street** After devastating fires at School No. 6 in 1916 and the First Presbyterian Church in 1920, residents worried about their dependence on neighboring fire companies. On February 22, 1922, Iselin Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 was incorporated and on January 31, 1923 the Township Committee created Fire District 9 to cover all of Iselin, Colonia and a part of Clark Township. The first firehouse was built at the current location, a site formerly occupied by the Union Chapel.

It was soon realized that responses to fires on the "other side of the tracks" could be blocked by long, slow moving trains. In 1924, Iselin Fire Company No. 2 was formed and then renamed the Iselin Chemical Hook and Ladder Company. Their first firehouse was located at 1396 Oak Tree Road. A year later, in 1925, a new firehouse was constructed at 10 Harding Avenue. In 1929, responsibility for the fire company was assumed by the Commissioners of the newly created Fire District 11.

By 1956 the Harding Avenue location was too small and a new Headquarters was built at 20 Auth Avenue. 10 Harding Avenue was sold in 1963 and a one bay Substation was built at 2 New Dover Road to serve the north end of the District. Renovations and additions enhanced Headquarters in 1986 and 1993.

In 1945 District 9 purchased lots adjacent to the firehouse. Fire Company members supported the formation of the Iselin First Aid Squad in 1950 and in 1952 construction began on the Firehouse expansion. A meeting hall was added in 1960. In 1972, the original Firehouse was razed and a new four-bay station was built. The old hall was adapted into offices

Chartered 1669



Historic Tour of

# WOODBIDGE

Volume VII

Iselin and Menlo Park Terrace

Farming to Fusion



Compiled by the

Woodbridge Township Historic Preservation Commission

First Edition — 2015