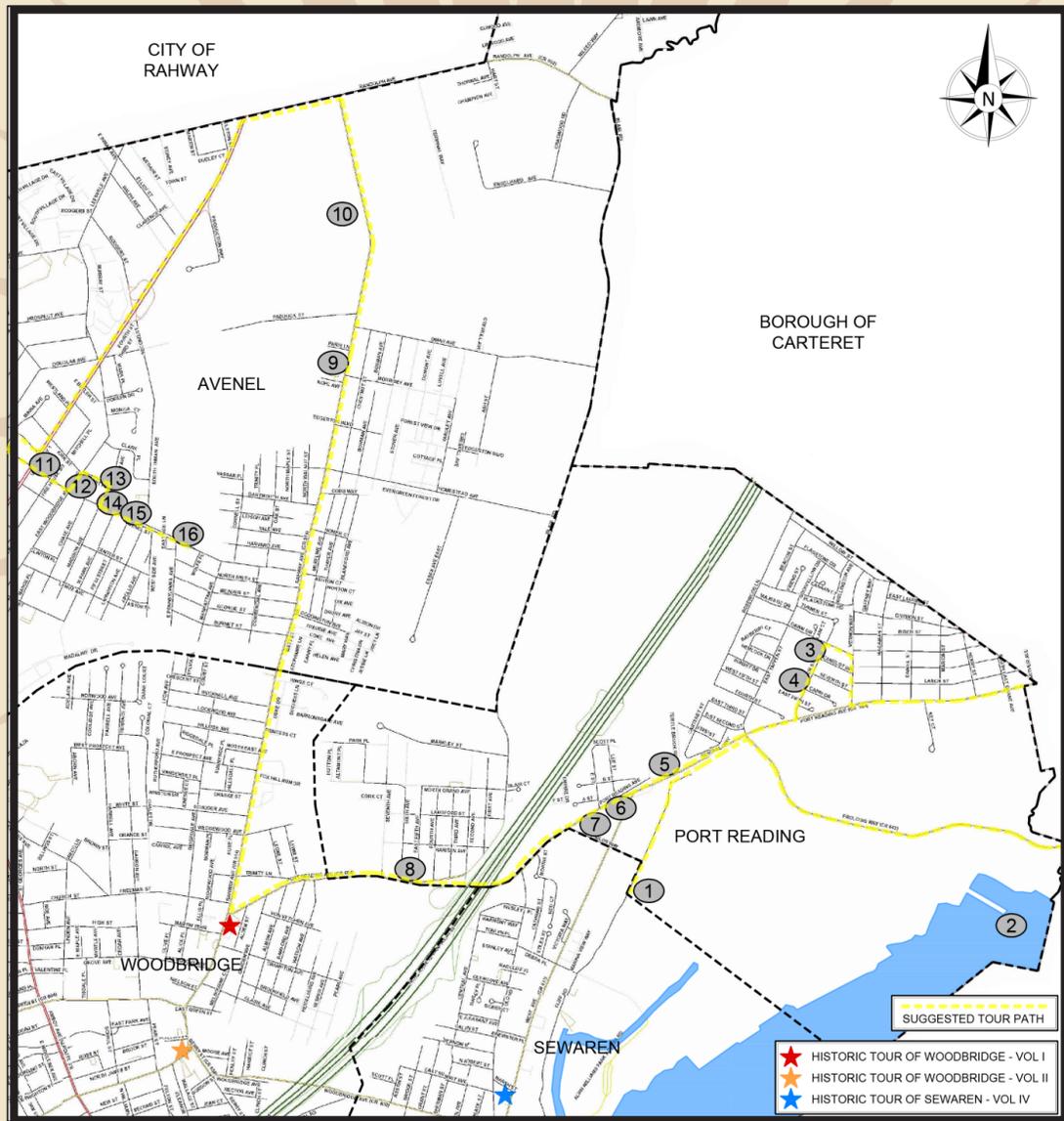


Woodbridge Township Historic Preservation Commission Tour Map of Historic Sites



Avenel

Woodbridge's earliest settlers prized the rich soil and dense woods in an area soon crossed by a King's Highway (St. Georges Avenue) and the trail that became known as Reformatory Road (Rahway Avenue.) At one time the area now known as Avenel was made up of a few large estates owned by the Edgars, the Coddingtons, the Krugs, the Clarks, the Bloomfields, and others. Farmhouses were scattered about the district but for much of its history Avenel was known for its wild places, swimming holes surrounded by weeping willows, rural fields filled with wild flowers and blackberry bushes laden with fruit.

Avenel is reportedly named for the daughter of an early twentieth century developer, Mr. Demorest. However, an 1867 map already identifies the area's new railroad station as Avenel. Whatever the origins of the name, Avenel grew quickly. William C. Demorest and his partners of the Realty Trust Company (NY) bought tracts, subdivided and sold lots and homes in the community known for a time as Demorest-on-the-Hill Tops. Maple Realty quickly became one of the area's largest developers and owned and built houses on over 300 acres between Rahway Avenue and Route 1.

Transportation, employment and the desire of residents to move from cities like Newark, Elizabeth, Kearney and Jersey City brought more people to Avenel. In 1940, Mastic Construction Corporation started building and selling low-cost small homes built from standardized plans. Called the Avenel Home development and located between Avenel Street, Park Avenue and Route 1, the approximately 100 four-room bungalow style homes sold for between \$2,695 and \$2,950. Many of these houses, often modified and expanded, are home to Avenel families today.

Avenel, like many sections of Woodbridge, has been dramatically changed, both for good and ill, by advances in transportation. Creation of the Super Highway (now Route 1) in the late 1920s claimed properties with its widening route and physically divided the community. In 1937, in the middle of what many considered the center of the community, Avenel Street, an underpass dropped the roadway below the tracks and cut through the heart of the neighborhood.

Long-time residents fondly remember celebrations at the Maple Tree, Metro Delicatessen on Avenel Street, J. M. Schlesinger's General Store at the corner Avenel Street and Minna Avenue and Charlie's Sugar Bowl on St. George Avenue. Local employers have changed. General Dynamics' whistle no longer sounds promptly at 7:00, RCA has long been a K-Mart and the Woodbridge Developmental Center, which opened on 68 acres in 1965 as a residential facility for persons with developmental disabilities, is about to close. Although businesses and neighbors have come and gone and the Avenel of today is not a replica of Avenel of yesteryear, it remains a wonderful place to work, shop and raise a family. And its sylvan soul remains in spaces and places such as the Ernest L. Oros Wildlife Preserve along Omar Avenue.

871 Rahway Avenue, Avenel Antoni Pichalski and his wife Helen emigrated from Poland and lived for a time in Jersey City as they looked for a safe and welcoming community to raise their growing family. In the early 1920s they settled on Avenel and purchased a farmstead. The property was called The White Star and included a house built circa 1830 and a farm.

Maple Tree Farm soon became a fixture of the Avenel social scene and a destination for area groups. With a picnic grove and an outdoor dance floor, the Maple Tree Farm drew seasonal crowds looking for a family-friendly outing. In the 1940s, dinners could attract more than 200 people and many an Avenel resident celebrated a birthday, anniversary or even wedding at the Farm. Community groups and church congregations from Elizabeth, Bayonne, Rahway and Perth Amboy regularly held picnics there.

Over time the clientele changed, the outdoor facilities closed and the Maple Tree continued as a Tavern, providing a place for neighbors to hang out, play pool and have a drink after work. Guards from the nearby prison also frequented the Maple Tree, as did the occasional prisoner – before being spotted by the guards. Members of the Pichalski family continued to run Maple Tree Tavern after Antoni's death in 1959. In 2001 the Tavern was sold and demolished to make way for a senior housing complex. The name of this Avenel institution lives on in Maple Tree Manor which opened in 2003 and became home for over 80 senior citizens, some of whom remember the good times they had at the Maple Tree.



10 East Jersey State Prison

Rahway Avenue, Avenel In 1895 the New Jersey State Legislature, recognizing the need for an institution for young "first timers" voted to establish a reformatory to house and rehabilitate young men between the ages of 16 and 30 who were first offenders and too large, too old or too "unruly" for the New Jersey State Home for Boys in Jamesburg. The State purchased part of the Edgar Farm in Woodbridge Township and the New Jersey State Reformatory at Rahway opened in 1901. It soon was known as the Rahway Reformatory for Boys.

The large site, 21 acres behind the walls, included an abandoned clay-pit and brick yard and acres of swamps. In the early years, inmates were employed in grading and draining the property, erecting the buildings, working on the Reformatory farm and fulfilling orders contracted from some of the vocational facilities on site which included print, tinsmith and cabinet-making shops.

While the facility was initially envisioned as a "reformatory" it was also viewed, and constructed, as an intermediate prison, with the emphasis on prison. By the late 1930s Rahway had transitioned to an adult prison. In 1932 "Two Wing" was added to the central structure for dormitories and in 1951 the construction of "Three Wing" increased Rahway's capacity. Over the years renovations, additions and improvements have continued.

Rahway State Prison gained notoriety over the years as the home of three prominent boxers, includ-

ing Rubin "Hurricane" Carter and as the filming location for the 1978 Academy Award winning documentary "Scared Straight." The large dome and imposing metal gates have attracted many movie-makers who have filmed the distinctive architecture for films such as Rounders, Malcolm X, He Got Game, The Hurricane, and Oceans Eleven.

In 1988 the prison was renamed East Jersey State Prison after Rahway residents complained that the town of Rahway was being stigmatized by association with a prison that did not even lay in their borders. The prison continues to provide maximum, medium and minimum security programs for adult male offenders.



11 Avenel Fire Company No. 1

346 Avenel St, Avenel In 1912 a meeting was held at J. B. Edgar's home to appoint Fire Commissioners as part of the formation of a new fire company. In February 1913, the new company was chartered under the name of Avenel Chemical Company No. 1 and on July 12, 1913 the name was legally changed to the Avenel Fire Company No. 1.

The Company built its first fire house in 1919, a hollow-brick structure on the corner of Hyatt Street and Ziegler Avenue.

In the late twenties, the new Route 226-25 (now Route 1) claimed part of the firehouse property. A new plot was purchased and in 1929 a new firehouse was constructed on the corner of Avenel Street and Route 1 where it remains today.

In 1930 the Ladies Auxiliary of Avenel Fire Company No. 1 was formed. Their mission – to cooperate with the Fire Company whenever called upon. Over the years their support has been an important part of the success of the Company.

An addition with three new bays was added to the existing 1929 firehouse in 1955. A project to gut and completely rehabilitate the firehouse began in 1995. Completed in 1996, the updated complex now includes much needed office and storage space, a gear room and fireman's room.

More than 50 years later, 100 since its creation, the volunteers of the Avenel Fire Company No. 1 continue, faithfully and unselfishly, to work to protect lives and property and serve their community.



12 First Presbyterian Church of Avenel

621 E. Woodbridge Avenue, Avenel The First Presbyterian Church of Avenel modestly began in 1871 when area residents organized a Union Sunday School held in the Six Roads Schoolhouse on St.



9 Maple Tree Farm

Georges Avenue.

In 1895, services moved to the newly constructed Demarest Union Chapel, built on land donated by the Realty Company of New York. Congregation needs quickly outgrew that structure and, for a time, Sunday school classes were held in the old Avenel Firehouse on Remsen Avenue. During this time it was voted to change from a union school to a Presbyterian Sunday school under the Presbyterian Board of National Missions.

In October, 1927, Avenel residents petitioned the Presbytery of Elizabeth for the organization of a local Presbyterian Church. A month later, charter members met at the Avenel Public Library and were received into the newly formed First Presbyterian Church of Avenel.

On November 24, 1929, the cornerstone of a new church was laid on Woodbridge Avenue on land donated by Benjamin B. Clark (son of John M. Clark.) The church was dedicated on April 6, 1930.

In 1950 the sanctuary was enlarged and a connecting building was constructed to house the Church school.

A new Christian Education Building was dedicated on September 8, 1963 and in 1964, land on the corner of Woodbridge Avenue and Avenel Street was acquired from the LaBat family for the building of a new sanctuary. That building, the current church, was dedicated on October 31, 1965.

Today, the First Presbyterian Church of Avenel is an active and vibrant neighborhood institution offering ministries and missions to the community.



13 St. Andrew's Church

244 Avenel Street St. Andrew Parish was established on September 4, 1920 as a mission of the St. James Parish in Woodbridge. Prior to that time, Avenel Catholics had to travel to St. James or St. Mary's in Rahway to worship.

Initially 125 individuals joined the new parish. At first Sunday Masses were celebrated in the fourth grade classroom on the second floor of Woodbridge School No. 4. After the school was expanded in 1923, the new auditorium was used as a church.

By October 3, 1923, the parish which had grown to 205, had raised enough money to purchase a plot of one and one half acres for \$1500.00 from John B. and Mary D. C. Labat.

The Great Depression stalled construction plans and it was not until 1938 that the building project resumed. The cornerstone, a gift from Woodbridge Monumental Works, was laid on October 1, 1939 and the new church, with seating for 350, was blessed on December 17, 1939. In 1941, St. Andrew the Apostle Church became an independent parish.

As the Township population grew exponentially over the next decades, so did the parish. A larger church was constructed and blessed on May 12, 1957. In 1966, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart arrived to oversee religious instruction. In 1967 a new convent was constructed for the nuns however by 1976 it was converted to the Parish House before it

became the rectory in the early 1980s.

Today St. Andrew's continues to serve the Avenel community and minister to staff and patients at the Woodbridge Developmental Center and to the incarcerated at East Jersey State Penitentiary.



14 Free Public Library of Avenel

238 Avenel Street Avenelians began raising money and soliciting pledges for book donations throughout the early 1920s. In 1926, Mr. and Mrs. John Labat donated land on Avenel Street and in 1927 a 14 x 20 foot wooden building was constructed. Mr. Labat served as the first President of the library's Board of Trustees.

The tiny wooden structure was rumored to be the smallest public library building in New Jersey but it served the growing community for nearly 30 years. On March 28, 1957, ground was broken for a new building. Designed by Board of Trustee member Arvid Winquist, the new building opened on June 22, 1958. Furniture was donated by the Security Steel Corporation.

1,230 borrowers were immediately registered, 278 adults and 952 children. The library had 4,500 books on the shelves and was open 13 1/2 hours a week. In 1964, the Avenel Library joined the new municipal library system as the Avenel Branch Library. By 1968, borrower registration was up to 2,370, 193 adults and 1,457 children, 8,875 books lined the shelves and the library was open 40 hours a week. By 1992, branch usage had dropped as more users visited the nearby Main Library for their library needs and it was closed. Today the building is utilized by the YMCA.



15 Avenel Schools No. 4 & 5

224 - 236 Avenel Street, Avenel In January of 1907, a delegation from Avenel appeared before the Woodbridge Board of Education to request better school facilities for their neighborhood. But it was not until 1912 that the Board began evaluating plot offers for a new Avenel school. Eventually they accepted a proposal from J.B. Edgar to sell the Board two lots on Cedar Street for \$500 and to donate adjoining lots on Avenel Street. By September of that year, construction on School No. 4 was completed.

School No. 4 provided a civic center and public meeting space for the community and many neighborhood institutions, including St. Andrew's, First Presbyterian Church of Avenel and Avenel Public Library. As Avenel continued to grow, so did the school population and in 1921 an annex was added to

School No. 4. By 1930, Avenel parents were clamoring for better facilities for their children and more than 200 signed a petition begging the Board of Education for improvements or, preferably, a new school "at some convenient location east of the Pennsylvania Railroad on Rahway Avenue between White Star Farm and Avenel Street." But the Great Depression and a World War intervened and it was not until 1948 that more permanent steps were taken to relieve the overcrowding. By the start of school in September 1949, a large addition was completed and named School No. 5.

In 1968 another almost 10,000 square foot annex was added to become Schools 4/5, also known as Avenel Street School. Today the two-schools-in-one continue to educate the students of Avenel.



16 General Dynamics

Avenel Street, Avenel In 1916 the Security Steel Office Furniture Corporation purchased the twenty-seven acre site across from the train station and began construction on a large manufacturing plant.

The first plant was completed mid-1916 and within ten years, additions expanded the facility to nearly 200,000 square feet devoted to the manufacture of steel office furniture. Office buildings throughout the country were furnished from the Avenel factory.

For decades Security Steel was an important employer in the Township and through company sports teams, corporate picnics and charitable contributions, an economic and social focal point for many Avenel families. In July 1960 Security Steel was purchased by Art Metal Inc. Art Metal, at the time the country's largest manufacturer of metal office furniture, was headquartered in Jamestown, NY, gradually began moving out of the Avenel plant and by 1963 had put the facility up for sale.

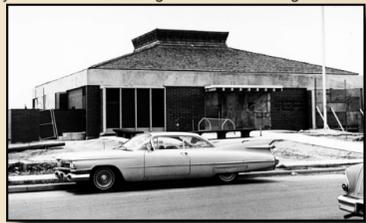
In April, 1963 the Bayonne facility housing the Electro Dynamic Division of the General Dynamics Corporation was destroyed by fire and their Board of Directors decided against rebuilding. General Dynamics purchased the Avenel plant from Art Metal Inc. and refitted it for the manufacture and assembly of mechanical components for industrial and military equipment including submarine motors, generators, turbine fans, etc. While many of the key personnel at General Dynamics came from other locations, the company committed to hiring many of the Security Steel/Art Metal employees who were already working at the Avenel plant.

In the 1980's, the peak of General Dynamics' local operations, they employed nearly 1,100 workers but by October, 2000, the plant closed and has been largely vacant since. Seeking redevelopment and environmental remediation of the large site, the Township has researched options and is currently considering a proposal for an Avenel Arts Village which would create housing, an arts center and retail space in the area once dominated by industrial manufacturing.

As Avenel continued to grow, so did the school population and in 1921 an annex was added to

In 1951 a raging fire damaged the coal dumper but repairs were made and operations resumed. As demand for coal waned, work at the coal pier diminished. For six bleak months between July 1972 and January 1973, work ceased when a breakdown at the only generating station burning coal at the time put everyone at the coal dumper out of work. Production resumed for a time but never regained the volume of the past and in 1982 the dumper shut down for good.

The six-story high dumper at the eastern terminus of the Reading Railroad now sits on property owned by the ProLogis Corporation. Placed on Preservation New Jersey's 2004 list of most endangered historic sites in the state, the rusting monolith stands as a reminder of the coal industry and railroad that gave Port Reading its name.



3 Port Reading Public Library

Turner Street, Port Reading The first library in Port Reading was established in 1929. Located in Gurka's store opposite the old firehouse, the library was closed when the store's owners reclaimed the space.

In 1945, Rev. Milos of St. Anthony's RC Church spearheaded efforts to reopen a local library. Another storefront was rented (at the corner of Port Reading Avenue and Tappan Street) and limited library hours resumed.

Plans were made for a more permanent location and Father Milos and community leaders secured donations of building materials and volunteer labor from Port Reading and other Township residents. Community construction of the small brick building on West Avenue was a labor of love and the building served as Port Reading's library until the creation of the municipal library system in 1964. Then, due to legal restrictions, the library was moved to School No. 9 on Turner Street until November, 1968 when the newly constructed Port Reading Branch of the Woodbridge Public Library opened next door to the school. In 1992, the library system closed the Port Reading Branch. Woodbridge Township Television WTT-35 occupied the space until the station moved into the new Municipal Building in January, 1996. School No. 9 took over the building, which housed their school media center until 2012. The Turner Street building now provides additional classroom space for School No. 9 students.



4 Port Reading School No. 9

77 Turner Street, Port Reading In 1899, the people of Port Reading petitioned the Woodbridge Board of Education for a school in their neighborhood. The



1 Hess

Cliff Road, Port Reading In 1933, 19-year old Leon Hess reorganized his father's Asbury Park oil delivery company and started Hess Incorporated. In 1938, he built an oil terminal facility in Perth Amboy to unload and store oil from barges and later from tankers.

Hess continued to expand his business by increasing the company's storage and distribution capacity and the company purchased their first tanker in 1948. In 1957 Hess built an oil refinery in Port Reading. The facility added a fluid catalytic cracking unit in 1961.

Difficulties in the plant's early production stages resulted in an explosion and fire at the facility in early 1961 and discharges from the plant's smokestacks concerned all nearby. By October 1961, the company took steps to increase plant safety and compliance with the New Jersey Air Pollution Control Code.

However, in 2012 the state again took Hess to task over concerns that the company had made modifications to the refinery that had increased emissions. Hess settled with the state and federal governments, agreed to spend \$45 million on pollution controls and pay \$850,000 in penalties. In January 2013, Hess suddenly announced that it was closing the Port Reading refinery and laying off 170 of the location's 217 employees. By October 2013, Buckeye Partners L.P. had purchased 20 of Hess's storage terminal properties on the East Coast and St. Lucia, including the Port Reading terminals. The Hess Corporation continues to operate a corporate office on Route 9 in Woodbridge.



2 McMyler Coal Dumper

Coal Pier, Middlesex Avenue, Port Reading In 1917 the Reading Railroads' ability to efficiently unload and redirect the coal coming from Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania to New York and vicinity was increased dramatically. Prior to the improvements to the coal pier, three high-type gravity trestles required 175 men to handle a top capacity of 600,000 tons a month. After the \$1,000,000 upgrade which included another pier, additional yard tracks, and a thawing plant, as well as the car dumper, only twelve operators were required to handle the same amount of coal over the dumper. The trestles continued to operate so capacity doubled.

Over the next 70 years, Port Reading men risked life and limb to execute the delicate ballet necessary to operate the coal cars up the track, put on the air brakes and jump off at just the right time prior to the car flipping the coal into the barge waiting below.

Port Reading

One of the oldest roads in Woodbridge Township starts at the mouth of the Papiack (Woodbridge) Creek and runs northwesterly towards the Arthur Kill. The land surrounding today's Port Reading Avenue was occupied and farmed by some of the Township's earliest settlers including the Pierce, Tappen, Fitz Randolph, Haddon, Crowell, Bunn, Brown and Blair families.

The area's development took a different track – literally – in 1890. Reading Railroad determined that the Woodbridge land fronting the deep waters of Staten Island Sound would be an ideal location for their coal terminal facilities. The Railroad's real estate department began quietly buying up many little tracts at farm rates and acquired over 300 acres before their purpose was realized. Construction commenced and the coal pier was completed by 1892. "Port Reading" was born.

Reading Railroad built shacks near the docks, established a post office and quickly set about turning Port Reading into a company town. Immigrants were recruited, sometimes directly off of Ellis Island. A number of Port Reading's Italian families can trace their roots back to Piestrastornina, a small village in the Avellino province of Italy near Naples and others to Monte Sant'angelo in Foggia.

The new port's business boomed. Reading Railroad also recognized that Woodbridge's clay industry was an economic opportunity and added branch lines directly into the Mutton Hollow Fire Brick Co., M. D. Valentine and Co. and Hampton Cutter clay pits.

In 1912, Reading Railroad, in conjunction with the Central Railroad of New Jersey, added a 67 acre crescent complex to its holdings in order to produce their own supply of preserved railroad ties and timber. In 1917 the mammoth McMyler Coal Dumper was installed to increase production.

Other companies recognized the advantages of valuable waterfront property and transportation options and moved into the area. In 1947 Public Service built a large generating station on the border of Port Reading and Sewaren. In 1956 the Koppers Company developed an immense plastics plant and in 1957 Hess Oil built an oil refinery.

Life in Port Reading was never all work. Fierce bocce competitions, gardening, visits to D'Alessio's store, public service, parish work, political activity, the Port Reading Fire Company No. 1 and other organizations, made life full. The Pop Warner league, the Port Reading Saints Football and Cheerleading Association has engaged children and families since 1967. And St. Anthony's was, and is, woven through the fabric of the community.

Port Reading continues to evolve. In 2013, Hess announced the closing of their Port Reading refinery. ProLogis, an industrial real estate developer, has purchased many acres including the McMyler coal dumper and the PSEG plant and are developing and remediating 315 acres of brownfields between Port Reading and Carteret into the Port Reading Business Park, a modern warehousing and distribution hub. The old Acme is now a worship space, the Gurudwara Singh Sabha Sahib, for the local Sikh population. Woodbridge Township has created a redevelopment plan for the Port Reading Avenue area to provide commercial services and to enhance the quality of life for area residents. Local industries are changing the face of Port Reading but, at its heart, it remains a community of hard-working families.

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, **Courtesy Lowry, Secretary**
 Chairperson **Bruce Christensen**
 Fr. Robert L. Counselman, **Dan D'Arcy**
 Vice Chairperson **Kathy Jost-Keating**
Audrey LaPenta, Historical Association of Woodbridge Township
Miguel Martin
Kevin Rossi
Wenda G. Rottweiler
Jane E. Sinnott

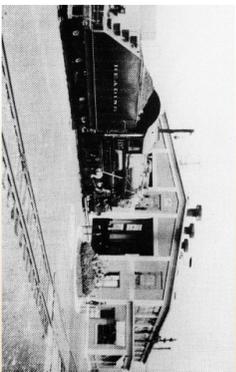
Special Thanks to

Mayor John E. McCormac

John Mitch, Anna Pichalski, Judy Potyrala, MaryAnn Jasper, Lisa Molis



"The Cloverleaf" at the intersection of Routes 1, 9 & 35 in part in Avenel. First cloverleaf in U.S. Span opened in 1929. Removed in 2006. Engine and engine house of the Reading Railroad. It was located on Port Reading Avenue at about Tappan Street.



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.wthpc.org
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 Brochure design by Brandon Powell
 Photographs courtesy of Kathy Jost-Keating, Bruce Christensen and Woodbridge Public Library and the Woodbridge Patch.

916 West Avenue, Port Reading The Port Reading Fire Company No. 1 informally came together to fight local fires in 1894 but officially organized in 1904 and date their inception from that time.

The new company took out a \$2,000 mortgage to purchase a lot at the corner of West and Port Reading Avenues. The first firemen were summoned to emergencies by the ringing of a metal rail with a sledgehammer and raced to put out fires using a wooden cart laden with water and a hand pump and pulled by two horses named Munk and Punk.

In 1923, at a dinner held, in part to celebrate the purchase of a new siren, area Fire Chiefs complimented the Company on the turnout (56 of the 60 firemen were present), the high standards of the Port Reading department and the need for continued municipal support. Chief O'Brien of Woodbridge toasted the Company:

*Here's to Port Reading
 And the new fire horn:
 Here's to their firemen
 All fire fighters born.
 And here's to Woodbridge
 Where I live now,
 Here's hoping they never buy another
 \$3,000 cow.*

From the beginning, the firehouse has been a focal point of the community and many families in Port Reading can name generations of relatives who have been Fire Company or Ladies Auxiliary members. For many years there was a waiting list to join.

Given the surrounding industry, today's Port Reading firemen are specially trained in fighting oil and chemical fires. Port Reading Fire Company No. 1, staffed by both professional and volunteer firefighters, continues to protect and serve their community.



7 St. Anthony of Padua

436 Port Reading Avenue, Port Reading On Sunday morning, August 21, 1904, in the Danish Brotherhood Society Hall, Father Clemente Cardarelli offered Mass for the first time to a small congregation of Port Reading Catholics. The new parish, consisting of about fifty Italian and twenty-five Irish families, soon moved to a small building on Woodbridge Road that was rented for \$5.00 a month.

In 1911, Reverend Columbino Galassi became the rector at St. Anthony's. Father Galassi guided the young parish for twenty-two years until his death in 1933. Two projects dominated his time in Port Reading. The rented structure was far too small for the growing congregation and Father Galassi worked to raise money to build a permanent church. In 1913 a plot was purchased near the corner of School Street and Woodbridge Avenue and on October 25, 1914, the church was dedicated.

Father Galassi was not only concerned for the state of his parishioners' souls but for their general welfare as well. Many of his Italian congregants had been recruited directly from Ellis Island to work for the Reading Railroad. Nearly enslaved by the padrone system of labor, the employees were forced to pay exorbitant rent to live in squalid wooden shacks and

to pay inflated prices at the company store. Father Galassi fought the exploitive system in the courts and by 1920 the padrone system was eliminated.

St. Anthony's parish continued to flourish and grow and in 1947, Father Stanislaus Milos began his 32 year pastorate. During that time Father Milos saw his parish grow from about 100 families to nearly 1000 and throughout the decades he worked tirelessly to improve the lives of Port Reading's residents. He helped establish the Port Reading Fire Department and First Aid Squad and served as their chaplain. During World War II he erected a memorial to honor those who had served in the armed forces. Father Milos started the St. Anthony's Fire and Drum Corps. He was responsible for the construction of basketball and handball courts and a recreation hall where neighbors would gather. Father Milos was one of the driving forces behind the reorganization and reopening of the Port Reading Public Library in 1945 and construction of a new brick library in 1951.

1950 the rectory was built and in 1959 the church was expanded. In 1964, the diocese purchased old School No. 9 and opened St. Anthony's School but by 1987, the parochial school population had fallen and the school was closed. In 1989 construction was begun on the current church building. Built at a cost of \$2.6 million, it was funded in part by selling the old parish hall and school on West Avenue to the Amerada Hess Co. for \$1.2 million. The cornerstone and four bricks from the old building were built into the new church and the two original cast iron bells were incorporated into the new carillon. Today St. Anthony's continues to be the heart and soul of the Port Reading community.



8 Prall House

205 Port Reading Avenue, Port Reading This home is the site of the homestead of the Prall family. The first Isaac Prall associated with Woodbridge was born in Staten Island in 1710. He is listed on the 1748 roster of Woodbridge freeholders (and died here in 1774) yet his son Isaac was born in Richmond, Staten Island in 1753. That Isaac married Charity Dissosway of Staten Island in 1775 and died in Woodbridge in 1789. Their son, Isaac, was born 1789 (location unknown but probably Woodbridge) and married Mary Freeman in Woodbridge in 1806. Mary and Isaac's son, Cornelius Dissosway Prall, was born in this house in 1809 and farmed the surrounding area for many years until his passing in 1887. His son, James Palmer Prall, born in 1843, was responsible for the Prall name being associated with another Woodbridge landmark, the Italianate Cutter-Prall House on Strawberry Hill, now home of the religious order "The Little Servant Sisters." After beginning his working career in the family profession of farming, James worked developing clay beds for mining and in clay shipping. In 1883 he married Emily Cutter, daughter of Woodbridge clay magnate Hampton Cutter. This extensively remodeled structure is now a two-family dwelling.

Historic Tour of WOODBRIDGE Volume VI Avenel & Port Reading Roads & Rails



Compiled by the
 Woodbridge Township Historic Preservation Commission
 First Edition – 2014

Sewaren Land and Improvement Company donated a lot at the corner of School Street and West Avenue and the Board authorized the construction of a brick schoolhouse, not to exceed \$5000, including furnishings. The school opened in the fall of 1900.

In 1907 the school reached capacity and a second-story brick addition containing two rooms was built.

By the school year 1917-1918, enrollment at No. 9 was 364 students, served by eight teachers, and by the late 1950s the building was antiquated and again too small. Given the school's high upkeep expenditures and parents' concerns over the truck traffic and industry near the old school, Turner Street was chosen as the site for a new school which opened in the fall of 1963. Old School No. 9 was sold in 1964 to St. Anthony's for \$15,000 for use as a parochial school. In 1987 that school closed and the parish sold it to Hess, who later tore the building down. Port Reading's elementary school children still attend school at No. 9 on Turner Street today.



5 Bowtie District

Port Reading Avenue, Port Reading In 1960, the Township identified a section of Port Reading as one of the Township's rehabilitation priorities. The Woodbridge Redevelopment Agency stated that the area, called "Bowtie" because of the shape of the area on the map, was essentially a fine neighborhood but that it was showing signs of decline perhaps "due to poor street and building layout, inadequate facilities, poor zoning regulations, [and] effects of neighboring heavy industry."

In April of 1962, the Urban Renewal Administration approved Woodbridge's application for the survey and planning of Bowtie and in 1963 granted the Township \$2,600,000 to begin the 106.4 acre project.

Operation Bowtie was not without controversy. Some residents feared that improvements would raise property taxes and rents or resented the implied criticism of the reports and possible demolition of their homes. To this day, some long-time residents miss the landmarks and neighborhoods of their childhood.

It took five years and nearly \$3,377,400 in federal and local aid but Project Bowtie was widely considered an urban renewal success. Existing homes were rehabilitated, substandard homes and buildings were torn down providing land for new homes.

Public services were also improved. New curbed streets and sidewalks were created. A new post office was built and a modern branch library was erected next to the new School No. 9. Storm drains were installed, trees planted and the Bowtie Pool was constructed – a recreational facility that is still in use today.



6 Port Reading Fire Company No. 1