

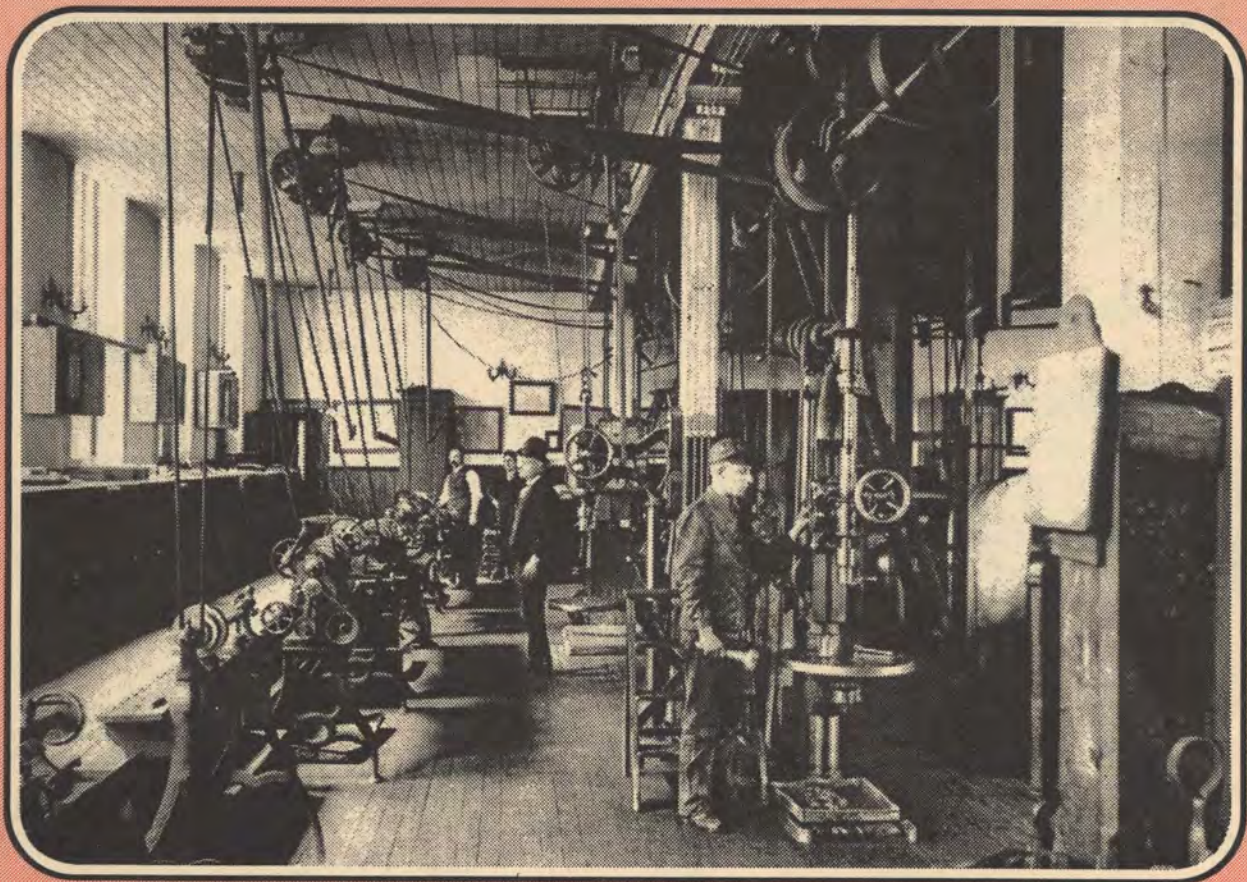
HOBOKEN HISTORY

IN THIS ISSUE:

STEVENS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY: 125 YEARS OF INNOVATION

HISTORY OF THE MARTHA INSTITUTE • BLAZING A TRAIL

THE GOOD OLD DAYS • 1920 CENSUS • MORE NEWS FROM 1895



Stevens Institute of Technology: 125 Years of Innovation
Story on page 2

Issue No. 13 - 1995



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HOBOKEN HISTORY

Published by:
The Hoboken Historical Museum

President: Robert Foster
Editor: Caren Lissner
Design: McKevin Shaughnessy
Advertising Sales: Edward Lepre
Editor & Production: 1990-94
Paul & Barbara Lippman

Museum Founder: Jim Hans

Published four times per year

Hoboken Historical Museum
P.O. Box 707
Hoboken, NJ 07030
(201) 656-2240

Letter from the President

*Dear members, members soon-to-renew,
and members to be:*

You have just opened Issue no. 13 of Hoboken History, the quarterly magazine of the Hoboken Historical Museum. The publication shares with its readers the rich history of our town and its citizens.

I'm sure you'll find this issue impressive, with stories about the anniversary of Stevens Institute of Technology, the Martha Institute, the Hoboken Fire Department, the 1920 census, and much more.

We are proud to offer you a quality publication and hope you will support this and other museum projects by renewing your membership. On the inside back cover you will find information about benefits and renewal. We need and appreciate your continued support.

And don't forget, if you would like to submit material to the magazine, please call Leonard Luizzi, Sr. at (201) 420-1803, the museum at (201) 656-2240, or write to us at the address listed above.

Enjoy the read!

Robert Foster
President/Director
Hoboken Historical Museum

In This Issue...



**Stevens Institute of Technology:
125 Years of Innovation..... 2**
by Caren Lissner

**The History of the
Martha Institute and the
German Evangelical Church 8**
by Otto Hottendorf

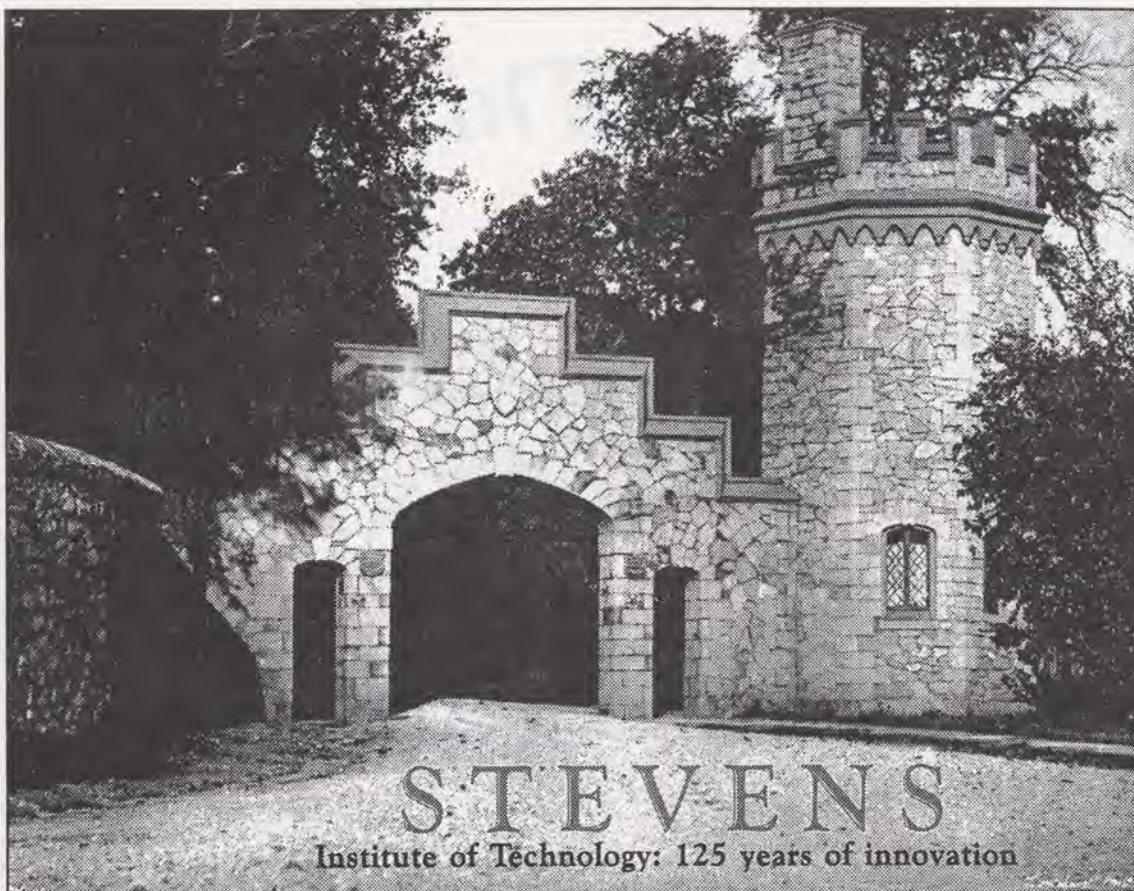
**Blazing a Trail
The History of the
Hoboken Fire Department..... 10**
by Chief Richard Tremitedi

**The Good Old Days
Hoboken according to Frank Lia 13**

**Roots:
Genealogical Research
and the 1920 Census 14**
by Bob Murgittroyd

**How Dry they Were
More News from 1895..... 19**

**Membership Information
(Inside back page)**



STEVENS
Institute of Technology: 125 years of innovation

*The serpentine-stoned
Castlepoint Gateway (c.
1880's)*

As Stevens celebrates marks a milestone, Hoboken History looks back at the founding of the school and at its namesakes, who helped found Hoboken.

Perched atop a promontory in Hoboken, overlooking the Hudson River, is the 13-story Stevens Center at the Stevens Institute of Technology. The area on which the building sits was once home to the castle of Col. John Stevens, who is linked with various inventions, with the founding of Hoboken, and with giving birth to a son, Edwin, who founded the institute. With the celebration of the institute's 125th anniversary this year, its history and the history of the Stevens family, both of which are intertwined with the genesis of Hoboken, merit a look.

The Stevens family

Before there was a notable engineering school on New Jersey's northeastern shore, an English gentleman docked across the river and started a family that would contribute much to technology and much to the city of Hoboken.

John Stevens arrived in New York in 1699 following a boat trip from England. Stevens, 18, began his service as an indentured law clerk to the Crown Attorney and

Registrar in the state, and after several years, was able to acquire land in New Jersey.

Stevens married Ann Campbell in 1706 and had nine children. One of them, John Jr., bought a fleet of merchant ships. He is credited with determining the original boundary lines between New York and New Jersey. He was eventually elected to the New Jersey Assembly.

John Jr. married Elizabeth Alexander in 1748 and had one son, John III. At the age of 26, John III became a colonel in the Continental Army, much to the chagrin of many of his friends, who remained loyal to Britain. But

THIS LAND WAS A PART OF THE ISLAND OF HOBOKEN WHICH WAS DEEDED ON FEB. 15, 1665 BY PETER STUYVESANT, GOVERNOR OF NIEUW AMSTERDAM, FOR THE BENEFIT OF HIS SISTER ANNA WIDOW OF SAMUEL BAYARD OF AMSTERDAM. IN 1754 THESE 564 ACRES BELONGING TO WILLIAM BAYARD, HER GREAT GREAT GRANDSON, WERE DECLARED FORFEIT BECAUSE HE HAD JOINED THE ARMY OF THE KING OF GREAT BRITAIN. THEY WERE BOUGHT AT PUBLIC AUCTION FOR \$15,360 BY COLONEL JOHN STEVENS, TREASURER ON HORSEBACK OF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY DURING THE WAR OF THE REVOLUTION. IN 1855 HIS SON EDWIN AUGUSTUS WHO HAD MARRIED MARTHA BAYARD DOB OF PRINCETON, A DESCENDANT IN THE SEVENTH GENERATION OF ANNA STUYVESANT BAYARD, LEFT THIS LAND AND AN ENDOWMENT FOR A 'SCHOOL OF LEARNING' WHICH WAS ESTABLISHED IN THE YEAR 1870 AS THE STEVENS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY.

Col. John's choice paid off when the colonies won. The Continental Army confiscated 564 acres of property in northeastern New Jersey called Hoboken from Samuel Bayard, a British loyalist. In 1784, Stevens purchased that land for \$90,000.

In 1804, Stevens remapped the territory and titled it the "New City of Hoboken." He auctioned parcels of it to New York investors. (Hoboken was not officially chartered until 1855.)

"TO BE SOLD," read an announcement, "about 800 lots of ground at Hoboken, on Hudson's river, in the township and county of Bergen, New Jersey, and nearly opposite to the city of New York. As many persons are desirous of obtaining situations, where they may transact business free from the danger of yellow fever, the restrictions of quarantine, the duty on auctions, and the heavy taxes of incorporated cities; the subscriber offers for sale the most advantageously situated part of his estate of Hoboken."

On the land overlooking the Hudson that Col John kept for himself, he built a family mansion, the "Stevens Villa." From there, he continued the family's interest in shipping and went a step further, studying engineering and advancing the methods of transportation that were available. Col. John accomplished the following in his lifetime:

- In 1790, successfully petitioned Congress to establish patent laws.
- In 1791, obtained one of the first patents in the United States for a steam engine he designed.¹
- In 1803, drew up plans for a the steam carriage railroad using a tubular boiler to force steam locomotion. A prototype ran on a circular track on the Stevens Villa at 12 miles per hour in 1825. This was the first successful railroad run in the United States.
- In 1815, convinced the state legislature to pass a bill creating a company to build a railroad from Trenton to New Brunswick along the Raritan River. He received backing in 1830, and son Robert presided over the line for 35 years.

1. He competed with Robert Fulton, another area maritime merchant who is credited with the invention of the steam engine, and the two at times exchanged nasty correspondence. Fulton had secured sole rights to steam travel on the Hudson, so the *Phoenix* was sent to the Delaware River. To get around Fulton's rights, Stevens and others used a "teamboat" ferry – two boats with a wheel in between, powered by eight horses on deck walking in a circle and turning a crank. Stevens' boat, the "*Phoenix*," was, however, the world's first oceangoing steamboat. Its first voyage was steered by Stevens' son, Robert Stevens, 21, in 1808.

Col. John and wife Rachel Cox had 11 children, many of whom married into other famous families and traveled in the most prominent social circles. Spouses included politicians and army colonels, and one of the female spouses was a direct descendant of Martha Washington. Col. John's daughter Mary Stevens Hammond, who died aboard the *Lusitania* in 1915, was the mother of the late 5th district Rep. Millicent Fenwick (R-NJ), who died in 1992.

Son founded institute

It was three of Col. John's male children – Robert, John and Edwin – who followed most closely in their father's footsteps. Robert Livingston Stevens served as president of the Camden and Amboy Railroad, which he helped build from 1830 until its completion in 1834. He invented the cow catcher and T-section rail and hooked spikes, which allowed iron rails from England to be fastened to their ties. Stevens also helped his father invent the "elongated cannon ball," otherwise known as the naval shell, which was used in the War of 1812.

Another of Col. John's sons, John Cox Stevens, helped found the New York Yacht Club in 1844. He also beat England in the first ever America's Cup competition around 1851. He had built his own 102-foot schooner and raced a British ship around the Isle of Wright.

A third son, Edwin Augustus Stevens, ended up marrying – interestingly enough – Martha Bayard, a granddaughter of Samuel Bayard, the Tory whose land his father had come into possession of 70 years before.



View looking southwest from the Castlepoint Gateway (c. 1880's). The building on the left, now the Edwin A. Stevens Building, comprised the Institute. To the right stood the Stevens School.

But Edwin Stevens made a more important contribution to society by sowing the seeds for one of Hoboken's most prominent historical landmarks: the Stevens Institute of Technology.

Edwin Stevens left a \$500,000 endowment and a patch of land worth \$150,000 in his will to establish an "institution of learning." He died in 1867.

A charter for the Stevens Institute of Technology was obtained in 1870. The institute opened in 1871.

Institute Opens

On February 15, 1870, Stevens' executors – Martha Stevens, Rev. Samuel Dod, and relative William Shippen – obtained a charter from the state for the Stevens Institute of Technology. These three trustees selected Dr. Henry Morton, a University of Pennsylvania chemistry professor and former secretary of Philadelphia's Franklin Institute, as president of the university. They also hired architects to draw up plans for the buildings.

In the summer of 1871, the school was ready to open.

The first student body contained 21 undergraduates: two juniors, three sophomores and 16 freshmen. There were seven professors on the faculty.

The institute's first catalog set forth seven ways in which the institute would provide "general and not merely industrial training." They included:

"1. To afford a thorough training in the elementary and advanced branches of mathematics.

"2. To give a thoroughly practical course of instruction in physics.

"3. The subject of mechanical engineering, in reference to the theory and practice of construction of machines, will form a distinct department.

"4. The subject of mechanical drawing will likewise form a separate department.

"5. The subjects of chemistry and metallurgy will likewise be thoroughly taught ...

"6. The French and German languages will be an essential part of the course ...



Lecture Room – Engineering (c. 1880's)

"7. A department of belles-lettres will furnish the means of acquiring that cultivation of literary taste and the facility of graceful use of language, both in speaking and writing, which is as desirable in the engineer and man of science as in the classical student."

Their mechanical lab was built in 1875. The institute was the first school in the country to offer a mechanical engineering degree, and that was the only degree it offered for several decades. However, civil, electrical and chemical engineering rounded out the curriculum, as well as the economics of engineering.

In 1883, professors of Marine Engineering and Applied Electricity were appointed.

At the school's 25th anniversary, in 1895, Martha Stevens donated two plots of land at Sixth and River streets. (In addition to donating land to the school, she also donated much to the city of Hoboken. See "Deeds, in deed," p. 5.)

The institute's second president, Dr. Alexander Crombie Humphreys, was a 1881 graduate of the school. He took over when Morton passed away in 1902 and served until he died in 1927. Humphreys was credited with adding the economics aspect of the curriculum.

The students, of course, had time for fun in between exams. In 1878, they began the tradition of burning textbooks. First, it was an English book, but they soon preferred calculus books. The "Cremation of Calculus" became an annual ritual that continued for decades, and bills

were posted before each cremation to inform students of the impending sentence.

They also founded their first fraternity, Theta Xi, in 1874; a lacrosse team in 1884; a student newspaper – the Stute – in 1904; an Honor Board in 1908 and the Student Council in 1912.

The gymnasium was completed in 1916.

By 1910, about 1500 students had graduated from the institute. By 1945, the school's 75th anniversary, 4,700 students had graduated.

In 1958, the school added a science curriculum.

In 1971, the school began admitting women, and Lenore Schupak became the first female graduate of the institute when she graduated in three years. She went to work for an environmental consulting firm.

In 1983, the institute began requiring all incoming freshmen to have a computer.

Campus life in war and peace

As the institute expanded, it began planning a system for housing its growing population on campus. Two new dormitories – Palmer and Jacobus – were constructed in 1937 and still house undergraduates today.

Three years later, as America found itself embroiled in an overseas war, the engineers of Stevens were called upon to assist with technical operations. Dr. Harvey Nathaniel Davis, the former Harvard professor who had succeeded Humphreys as president, feared that his students' expertise would be wasted in combat and began making speeches encouraging the military to ensure that they stay in technical positions.

Davis' advice was heeded, and he devised a system to

Deeds, in deed

The Stevens Institute was not all that the Stevens family gave to Hoboken. The residents of Stevens Castle occasionally threw parties for their neighbors and sponsored plays and parades. There was an annual strawberry festival for the children, and in 1907, Richard Stevens, son of Edwin Stevens, gave a Christmas dinner to 250 newsboys. Martha Bayard Stevens, wife of Edwin A. Stevens, was known in particular for always helping the poor.

Several family members also bequeathed land to the city for religious worship, health care, and education.

Martha Stevens gave land to the city for St. Mary Hospital and also endowed St. Martha's Ward. After her 7-year-old daughter Julia died of Typhoid Fever in 1870, she built the Church of the Holy Innocents at Sixth and Willow streets and dedicated it to her memory in 1872.

Edwin A. Stevens deeded the land for school buildings – Public Schools 1 and 2 – to the city in his will. P.S. 1, located near Garden and Second streets, no longer exists. P.S. 2 was located on Garden Street between Ninth and Tenth streets, a block from where the Brandt Middle School exists today.

Edwin Stevens also donated land for the German Evangelical Church at Sixth Street and Park Avenue in 1866.

In 1895, Richard Stevens donated \$26,000 for the Free Library at Fifth Street and Park Avenue, which cost \$62,000 to build. Martha Stevens laid its cornerstone in 1896.

Stevens Preparatory School, formerly at Sixth and River Streets and then at Fifth Street and Willow Avenue, was established by Stevens Trustees in 1870. It was closed and replaced by a bank building in the 1970's.

The family also donated the land for the Stevens-Waldheim Forum at Ninth and Garden streets, where dances and other social events were held until the 1960's. A Girl Scout House was built behind it in 1927. In the 1960's, the city razed the forum to build a health department.

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keep such positions filled while at the same time allowing his students to finish school on schedule. The "Accelerated Service Plan" gave students three terms with no summer vacation, and each third term would involve filling a technical job in a defense plant. Students were rotated through 171 available jobs so that the military's needs were always filled.

From 1943 until the end of the war, the Navy paid the school to house and train 505 servicemen.

After the war, the school continued to expand. In 1968, the admissions office underestimated the size of the incoming freshman class, and the school had to build a "floating dorm" on the Hudson for \$130,000.

Several notable events occurred at the school since the war. In 1953, Marlon Brando toured the campus while filming "On the Waterfront." In 1985, Frank Sinatra accepted an honorary degree from the institute, which he had dreamed of attending as a boy.

The Stevens class of 1998 is 390 strong. Their average SAT score is 1200. About one-fifth of them are women. Two-thirds are New Jersey residents, and the rest come from 18 other states and 11 countries.

Stevens currently has 1,400 undergraduates all together and 2,200 graduate students who are aspiring to the Stevens family's success and trying to live up to the school's motto, "Per Aspera Ad Astra," which means "To the stars through striving." (See list of famous alumni, at right.) They offer baccalaureate, master's and doctoral degrees in engineering, science, computer science and management, and a B.A. in humanities.

Stevens has been celebrating its anniversary with technical conferences around the country, and will have an anniversary bash on campus next fall. ♦

Famous names

The following are alumni of the Stevens Institute of Technology:

- Walter Kidde, 1897
Manufacturer of the fire extinguishers that bear his name.
- Alexander Calder '19
Famous sculptor and designer of mobiles.
- Eugene McDermott '19
Founder of computer/business machine company Texas Instruments.
- Edmund F. Martin '22
Worked his way up to CEO of Bethlehem Steel, which ran a shipyard in Hoboken for a number of years. He graduated from Stevens at the age of 19.
- Al Fielding '39
Invented "Bubble wrap" for mailing fragile items (and for popping for stress relief.)
- Leon Febres Cordero '53
Eventually served as President of Ecuador from 1984-1988. Made his fortune manufacturing cardboard boxes to ship bananas.
- Mervyn D. Weich '59
Founder of BJ's Wholesale Clubs

Source: Stevens' Office of Marketing, Media & Public Affairs and the Office of Alumni Relations

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STEVENS CASTLE

In 1785, Col. John Stevens built a 20-room "Villa" on Castle Point. It burned to the ground in the mid-1800s, and Steven's son, John Cox Stevens, replaced it with Stevens Castle in 1853.

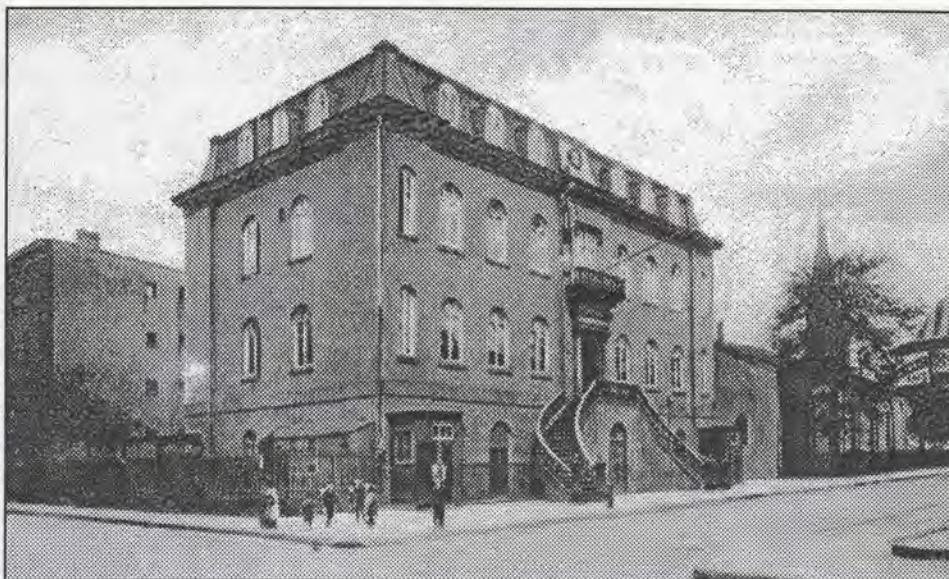
In order to obtain relief from Hoboken's high taxes, Edwin Stevens convinced the state legislature in 1859 to declare the castle and the neighboring Elysian Fields to be a part of Weehawken, as had a few other well-off citizens in the region. In 1875, there was a fire in one of Stevens' barns, and the Hoboken Fire Department was on the scene, but could do nothing because they were not allowed to trespass on Weehawken property. The barn burned to the ground before the Weehawken firefighters could arrive.

Shortly afterward, the land was re-annexed to Hoboken. The castle was donated to the institute in 1911.

One of the most interesting aspects of the castle was the three tunnels it contained. One, located at the building's southeast corner, led to an opening in the side of the hill. Through this tunnel, men would transport supplies from the waterfront without disturbing the residents. A second tunnel led from the northwest corner to a greenhouse. It was heated with pipes that led to the castle, allowing the gardener to comfortably carry flowers to the castle in the winter. A third, shorter tunnel led to a cellar.

Stevens Castle was regrettably demolished in 1959 despite some protests from the townspeople. The 13-story Stevens Center administration building was built for \$4.5 million in 1962.

But the Castle's original stone gatehouse, which was the entrance, still stands at the eastern end of Sixth Street. It is how students and vehicles enter the southern central end of campus. ❖



THE HISTORY OF THE MARTHA INSTITUTE AND THE GERMAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH

by Otto Hottendorf

During the 1850's and the 1860's, there was inadequate education available in Hoboken. In addition, there were 3,000 Germans living in West Hoboken (now Union City) and the rest of Hoboken, necessitating the creation of bilingual educational programs and religious services.

The religion problem was solved when Edwin A. Stevens donated land for the German Evangelical Church (now the Community Church) at 600 Garden St.

The English-speaking problem was solved when Stevens gave to the church a plot of land measuring 50 by 100 feet on Sixth and Meadow streets (now Park Avenue.) The church then built the Martha Institute on that land in order to teach students in German and in English. (There was bilingual education in Hoboken even in the 1860's.) Stevens also loaned the church \$3,000 for the erection of that building. The Martha Institute was named for Stevens' wife, Martha.

Stevens also helped build the Number One School, Number Two School and the Stevens Institute of Technology.

The Martha Institute went on to serve a diversified educational purpose for the people of Hoboken for more than a century. It first taught the German immigrants, as was its primary

objective. It was later used as a Normal School to teach and train teachers. In addition, Hoboken rented the institute as a high school before the Demarest School was built at Fourth street and Garden streets.

While the Martha Institute was being used as Hoboken's high school, the Hoboken Board of Education objected to the loud noise made by horses and wagons passing in the unpaved road, so they filled Sixth Street from Garden Street to Park Avenue with wooden blocks to muffle the noise.

For a period of time, the building was leased to the Stevens School. Later, it was sold to the Hudson School, which serves Hoboken to this day.

As for the German Evangelical Church, now the Community Church, the thing that makes it stand out is hidden. You can pass that small church every day of your life, and it looks nondescript, but inside it is the finest art in the world. When the Germans built the church, they installed some stained glass windows from Germany that are so beautiful that they defy description. But you can't see the beauty from the outside; you must see it from the inside.

My favorite picture is the one of the ascension of Christ, which gives me so much hope. The lesson that the history of that church teaches you is that you can only learn spiritual lessons from the inside. ♦



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BLAZING A TRAIL

THE HISTORY OF THE HOBOKEN FIRE DEPARTMENT

by Chief Richard Tremittedi

IN 1847, due to a lightning storm that destroyed many homes and business properties, the Hoboken Village Volunteer Fire Department was organized. Fire Company One was the first unit. On February 28, 1849, an act to incorporate the department was approved. The act said that all male residents of the township between the ages of 21 and 55 were eligible to serve.

Applicants filled the ranks of two volunteer companies: Hoboken Fire Company No. 1, also known as Oceana No. 1, and Excelsior No. 2. Both companies had their headquarters side by side on the corner of Washington and Sixth streets. Later, the Washington Hook and Ladder Company occupied a building on the corner of Washington and First streets before the construction of City Hall. Soon, Fire Company No. 3, "Meadow," was formed to cover the western section of the city.



Washington Hook & Ladder Co. No. 1 (prior to 1880)

IN 1854, the Hoboken city charter provided for the forming of as many fire companies as necessary to protect life and property, but not more than one fire engine company for every 3,000 inhabitants. It

Hoboken Public Library Picture Collection



Meadow Engine Co. No. 3, Second Street near Adams

also decreed that each company be comprised of not more than 50 men. Additionally, it allowed for one hook and ladder company or hose company of not more than 25 men for every 6,000 inhabitants.

The early fire equipment was hand-pumpers which could pump up to 300 gallons per minute with about 50 men on the handles. A riveted leather hose was the first type used to carry the water from the pump to the fire. In the late 1800's, rubber lined cotton hose became available.

IN THE 1860's, a public water system was used and this provided firefighters with a handy source of water. The wooden mains could be tapped by boring a hole in them. Each pumper carried a short pipe that could be pushed into the hole to deliver water to the pump. Around the same time, the steam fire engine pumper was developed. These steam pumpers, splendid creations with large, spoked wheels and shiny metal work, were horse-drawn, in a three-abreast hitch, creating a spectacular sight as they raced to the fire.

On July 18, 1889, the Hoboken Land and Improvement Company donated the land for a firehouse on the east side of Washington Street between Thirteenth and Fourteenth streets. In June, 1891, the paid fire department was started. In 1892, there were six companies. In the early 1900's, the motor-driven fire apparatus was introduced to the department. These piston-type pumpers could pump from 250 to 750 gallons per minute. Instead of hand ladders with hooks, motor-driven wood aerial ladders, which were spring activated, were put into service and could reach up to 75 feet.

IN THE 1950's, the centrifugal pump was available and Hoboken had pumpers which could pump 1,000 gallons per minute. The new 100-foot

Hoboken Public Library Picture Collection

aerial ladders were now made of steel and were lifted by a hydraulic system. Equipment of similar design is in use today.

FROM 1973 TO 1982, a rash of fires – several of which were determined to have been arson fires – claimed the lives of 55 people including children. Near the end of that period, the city passed a smoke detector ordinance which several members of the department helped formulate and which became the model for the subsequent state law. There is no doubt that many lives have been saved due to this law.

Today, the Hoboken Fire Department is comprised of five companies with 103 officers and firefighters. They operate with three modern 1,250-gallon-per-minute fire pumpers and two 100-foot aerial ladders. The companies are housed in four fire stations.



Engine Co. No. 2, Washington St. near Fourteenth Street (1927)

Modern equipment now includes five-inch diameter hoses and hand-held infrared heat imagers that can spot fire hidden in walls and can locate people trapped in smoke. Computers also assist in planning and passing crucial information to the forces fighting the fire.

Evolution has changed the original mission of the department, which was, in the beginning, to deal only with fires. Now, the department is trained and equipped to protect the City of

Hoboken in many types of emergency situations. ♦

About the Author: Richard Tremitedi was appointed to the fire department in 1960. Topping the promotional lists each time, he rose through the ranks. In 1965, he was promoted to Fire Captain, and in 1976 he became Deputy Fire Chief. In 1990, he became chief of the department after placing first in two examinations for the position. Chief Tremitedi also serves in the capacity as Fire Official/Fire Marshall and commands the Bureau of Fire Prevention and Investigation.

The fearless leaders:

In 1891, the city of Hoboken named one of its best volunteer firefighters, Ivan Applegate, to head the fire department. Applegate was the principle architect of the department's transition to a multi-faceted emergency department. He was the first of seven chiefs. They include:

Ivan Applegate:
1891-1906

Michael Dunn:
1906-1918

John Gilday:
1918-1944*

George Bonin:
1949-1957

Patrick J. Carmody:
1958-1977

James Houn:
1977-1990

Richard Tremitedi:
1990-present

**Note: Fire Captain Martin Smith served as Acting Chief from August of 1944 through 1948.*



The Engine Co. No. 1 (photo taken in 1927)

Today's department has a Bureau of Fire Prevention and Investigation with an Arson Squad whose members received 13 weeks of training at the state police academy. The Bureau makes safety and occupancy inspections of all places of assembly.

All firefighters are involved in a training program that includes drills involving hazardous material and high-angle rescue procedures.

IMPORTANT FIRES IN HOBOKEN'S HISTORY

- 1897** A fire in a blacksmith shop at Adams and Newark streets causes the death of three people.
- 1900** • A fire at a pier warehouse spreads to three ships of the North German Lloyd Fleet, burns for three days and kills 300 people. It causes \$5 million in property damage.
- Fire claims thirteen lives at Adams and First streets.
- 1905** The Lackawanna Ferryhouse and the famous Duke's House Restaurant and Tavern are destroyed by a fire. The ferry boats Hopatcong and Binghamton are also destroyed.
- 1908** A gas tank at the corner of Twelfth and Clinton streets burns for six days.
- 1915** The famous Hexamer's Riding Academy at 215 Hudson St. is destroyed.
- 1921** • Thirteen people lose their lives at the Palace Hotel on Newark Street.
- Fire totally destroys Pier 5, with damage estimated at \$3 million. However, the contents of the pier- 5,795 bodies of United States Servicemen being returned from France - are saved.
- 1937** A blaze destroys the entire block east of Hudson Street between Eleventh and Twelfth streets, including the R.G. Mathews Corporation.
- 1944** Pier 4 is destroyed with damage exceeding \$4 million.
- 1967** A tenement house fire kills five people at 415 Monroe St., the birthplace of Frank Sinatra. (Incidentally, Frank's father, Anthony, had joined the fire department in 1927 and was promoted to the rank of captain in 1944.)
- 1973** An arson fire at a tenement at Eleventh Street and Willow Avenue claims 11 lives.
- 1979** An arson fire at 131 Clinton Street claims 21 lives.
- 1981** An arson fire claims 11 lives at a tenement at Twelfth and Washington streets.
- 1982** An arson fire at Pinter's Hotel at Fourteenth Street claims 12 lives.
- 1985** A fire starts at the old Ferguson Furniture Factory on Monroe Street between Eighth and Ninth streets and destroys 30 businesses, eight industrial firms and 92 cars. It also damages 14 homes. Two-thousand jobs are lost, and the estimated damage is \$10 million.
- 1994** A tenement fire at 308 Madison Street claims three lives. The fire alarm system was not in operation at the time of the fire.



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THE GOOD OLD DAYS

A nonagenarian talks about growing up – and getting knocked out – in the mile-square city

Hoboken, according to Frank Lia, is the “best little town in the world.”

Lia has been here long enough to know. He was born at 458 Sixth St. in 1900, and lived there for the next 82 years until he moved to senior citizens’ housing. Now, at the age of 95, he leaves that apartment each morning to work for four hours sorting the mail in City Hall. He got that job five years ago through a city social service organization.

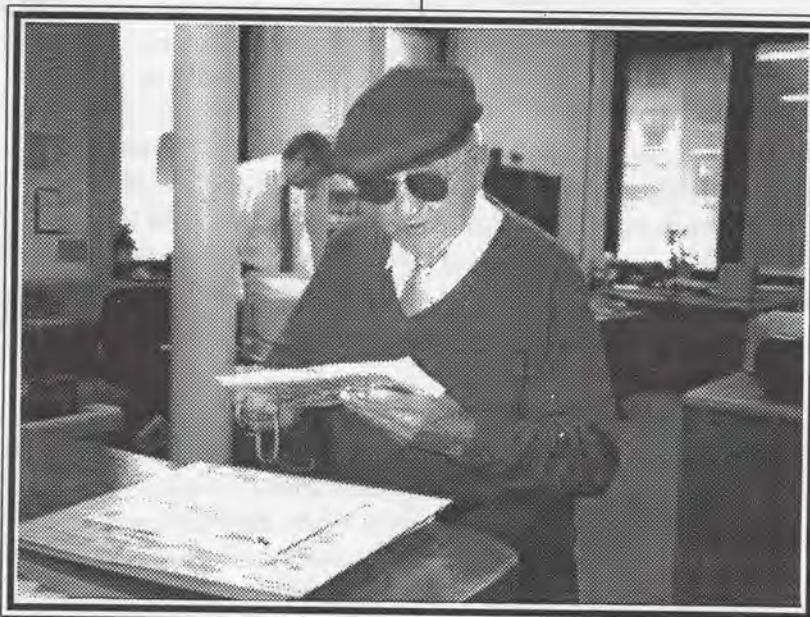
Lia’s first job involved working with paper as well. As a boy, he sold German-language newspapers for five cents a piece. Back then, Lia says, Hoboken had “every nationality in the world.”

Lia also shined shoes for five cents per shine, and later sold the *Jersey Observer* for three cents. He had to quit school and dedicate more time to working at the age of 14, when his mother died. He had three younger brothers and a sister to help care for.

In his twenties, Lia began working in the boiler room of a shipyard for \$7 to \$8 per week. He was lucky to have a job during the Great Depression.

“Things were bad that time,” Lia said. “I had to bring up two kids, and there were no jobs.”

Yet, Lia remembers, people were poor but proud. “Everybody was happy,” Lia says. “They all got along, helped one another.”



Lia’s father earned \$1.25 a day for laying bricks to build houses.

— *Not all work* —

But Lia did have time for fun. He played ball and took excursions to Palisades Park. He bought his first car, a black Model A Ford, in 1923. It lasted “a couple of years,” and he took it to the Jersey Shore as well as to Staten Island. He remembers the rides in Keansburg were five cents per ride.

Lia also remembers people staying out in the summertime until 3 or 4 a.m. “singing old time songs.” He remembers Frank Sinatra singing in taverns.

There were plenty of bars on River Street, and even a casino. During Prohibition, Lia says, people had to make their own liquor in bathtubs.

But Lia says that he doesn’t remember getting in trouble in his youth. “There were no fights, or anything,” Lia says. “Everybody was good.”

— *Except for the paid ones* —

Lia was, actually, in a few fights – but that was only to make money. About \$19, to be exact. As a feather-weight boxer, Lia earned 50¢ per amateur fight, of which he fought 38. He lost every one, but says he never got hurt badly.

In the 1940’s, Lia helped found a Liar’s Club. The men would sit around a stove and make up lies. Lia, the president, won a trophy for one of his.

Lia has no secret for his long life. He is, apparently, following in the footsteps of his father, who lived to be 97.

“It’s God,” Lia says. “God’s will.”



Roots: *Geneological Research and the 1920 Census*

by Bob Murgittroyd

Bob Murgittroyd's hobby is genealogical research. Over the next few issues, Murgittroyd will advise Hoboken History readers on how to trace their family tree.

I collect people. I have friends who collect stamps, coins, sports memorabilia and many other imaginable items, but I prefer names. While my friend the coin collector spends his time searching for mis-minted nickels, I spend my time looking for great-great grandparents, second cousins, and uncles twice removed.

The numismatist tells me that there is a story behind each coin in his collection. I tell him that there is a life behind each name in my collection.

If you have not already guessed it, my hobby for the past 15 years has been genealogy. This month, I begin a series of articles discussing how to use basic genealogical sources in the Hoboken area to research your family tree.

Start with the census

I would like to begin with the area that I believe is the second best place for new genealogists to begin their research – the federal census. As a starting place, this resource is second only to information provided by your own family. It is also the only genealogical source mandated by the United States Constitution. Section Two of Article I of the Constitution states that “An enumeration shall be made within three years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of the Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct.” This enumeration was directed to provide for the apportionment of Representatives to the Congress by the several States. In compliance with the Constitution, the first Federal census was taken in 1790 and a new census has followed each ten years thereafter.

The original 1790 federal census was the first attempt to record the population of an entire nation. While the purpose of the first census was intended only to count the population, it was later used for other purposes. In 1810, for example, a manufacturers' census was taken, listing companies, owners and goods. Each successive population census gathered more information about individuals. Pre-1850 censuses listed only heads of households. Later censuses enumerated each member of the household.

Not all federal censuses are available for every state in the country. For example, all of the 1790, 1810 and 1820 census schedules for New Jersey are missing. Sadly, most of the federal census for 1890 was so badly damaged in a January, 1921 fire that it was discarded. (Interestingly, while a total of only 6,160 entries out of 62,947,714 remain for the 1890 census, a good part of the surviving entries are for Jersey City.)

Since each census varies in the amount of information and ease of use, I would like to concentrate at this time on the most recent census available for research, that of 1920. To protect the privacy of the American people, federal law requires that census information on individual Americans in each census not be released for 72 years after the date of the census. Due to that restriction, the 1920 census first became available for research in March, 1992 and is the most recent available for your use. The most convenient depository to research the 1920 census in the Hoboken area is the National Archives Northeast Region Branch at 201 Varick Street, New York. This branch can be reached by taking the PATH train to Christopher Street and walking south on Hudson Street three blocks to West Houston Street. The large building on the southeastern corner is the federal archives building. The branch library is on the twelfth floor. The library is open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and is also open one Saturday per month. This depository maintains microfilm copies of all

available federal censuses and many other important genealogical sources that I will cover in later articles. (For more information on the archives, call 212-337-1300.)

For an idea of the information you will be able to discover about your ancestors in your research, see the list of information contained in the 1920 census (p. 18). Before I begin to explain the "how-tos" of using the 1920 census, I would like to cover some of the advantages and disadvantages of using the census for genealogical research.

Pros and cons

Since America has always been a nation in motion with citizens moving freely about from place to place, it is often difficult to track an ancestor at any point in time through sources more local than the national census. The census is usually the only genealogical source in which you will be able to find an entire family group listing of your ancestors, providing information on each member of a family group. Most importantly, the census provides important guidelines about where to look for additional information about your ancestors. For example, the census may tell you in which state and year your grandfather was born, providing you with a location and time period for further research.

Unfortunately, there are also many potential problems and pitfalls in using census information. The first problem with the census is completeness. It is not unknown for the census to have entirely missed families and in some cases entire blocks. The problem is not only with the census enumerator, but also with the camera operators who may have missed pages during the microfilm-

ing of the census. For those reasons, it is possible you may not be able to find your ancestors in your research even though they may have in fact been in residence at the expected location.

Besides problems with completeness, there are also potential problems with the accuracy of the information contained in the census. The census-takers were not required to speak to each individual citizen and often relied on information provided by neighbors or even small children. Ages listed by census takers are those provided by the individuals and are often not accurate. Experience has taught me to never rely solely on ages provided in the census.

Another problem with the census is that names were often badly mis-spelled by the census takers, especially with newly-arrived immigrants whose English could be difficult to understand.

Finally, census records can often be difficult to read due to the handwriting of the enumerator or the age and condition of the census page as well as the quality of the microfilming.

Despite all these potential problems, the census is still a rich source of information about your family and must be consulted in any family tree research.

Using the Soundex system

The 1920 federal census began on Jan. 2, 1920 and was to be completed within 30 days in rural areas and two weeks in places with populations of 2,500 or more. Influenza epidemics and severe winter weather caused many delays. The original 1920 census schedules were disposed by order of the 83rd Congress. But the census records were

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reproduced on microfilm by the National Archives and Records Administration. It is this microfilm that you will be using to conduct your search.

The microfilm is arranged by state, county and town. The names of individuals are listed in the order in which they were visited by the enumerator. For that reason, you must know the name of the person and his or her state of residence in 1920. Since the names of individuals are not listed alphabetically within the census, finding an individual would be very difficult if not for the "Soundex system" compiled by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930's.

The Soundex is an indexing system based on the sound of a name rather than the actual spelling which compensates for various spellings of the same name (i.e. Smith and Smyth). With the Soundex system, a surname is identified by a code consisting of a letter followed by three numbers. Only the heads of households are indexed under the Soundex index in the 1920 census, so I recommend that you start your search with such an individual.

Please see the Soundex Chart (Fig. 1, at right) to understand how to determine an individual Soundex code. The archives in New York also has a computer that runs a special program that will automatically give you the Soundex for the name you enter.

After you have determined the family member's Soundex code, you should consult a book at the archives called the "1920 Federal Population Census." This publication will give you the reel number for microfilm that contains index cards that will give you further information to assist with your search.

At that point, retrieve the correct reel and proceed to a microfilm viewer. The microfilm contains productions of index cards that were prepared for each household contained in the 1920 census. Fig. 2 (p. 17) shows what an individual card looks like. The cards will give you information so that you

may find your census sheet (Fig. 3, p. 17).

The Soundex cards are arranged on the microfilm in Soundex coding order and then alphabetically by the first name of the head of the household. It is important to keep in mind that not all surnames are grouped together by name. For example, Murgittroyd and Murdock have the same Soundex code (M-623), but the names are intermixed within first names on the film. For that reason, it may be necessary for you to go through all of the first names of the Soundex code of the person you are researching. For example, to find George Murgittroyd, I may need to look at each Soundex card for all individuals with the first name George under the Soundex code M-623. In the case of the common names, the cards are often also grouped under first name

Fig. 1

SOUNDEX CODING GUIDE

<i>Number</i>	<i>Letters represented</i>
1	B P F V
2	C S K G J Q X Z
3	D T
4	L
5	M N
6	R
(Disregard the letters A, E, I, O, U, W, Y and H.)	

The letter is the first letter of the surname. The numbers are assigned by the above guide to the remaining letters in the surname. Double letters, or letters of equivalent sounds, are coded as one letter. (Example: Kelly = K400.) The three-letter code is completed with zeroes when you run out of Soundex letters. (Example: Lee = L000.) Names with prefixes such as Van should be coded with and without the prefix since they may be coded under either Soundex. (Example: Van Devanter = V531 or D153.) Mc and Mac are not considered prefixes.

S320

Sitz (HEAD OF FAMILY)

NEW JERSEY

VOL. *67* E. D. *255'*

SHEET *11* LINE *39*

W (COLOR) *42* (AGE) *New Jersey* (BIRTHPLACE) _____ (CITIZENSHIP)

Hudson (COUNTY) _____ (CITY) *Cambridge ave* (STREET) *217* (HOUSE NO.)

OTHER MEMBERS OF FAMILY

NAME	RELATIONSHIP	AGE	BIRTHPLACE	CITIZENSHIP
<i>Sitz, William</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>Pennsylvania</i>	
<i>Katie</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>New Jersey</i>	
<i>Louise</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>New Jersey</i>	
<i>Joseph</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>New Jersey</i>	
<i>William</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>New Jersey</i>	

1920 CENSUS-INDEX
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

1 sheet 2
(see Sitz 070.)

A-1a
U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 17007075

Once you find the correct Soundex card for your family, copy down all the numbers listed in the upper right corner of each card, making sure to include the sheet, the sheet number, the line number and the county name. To determine which microfilm reel to consult next, return to the booklet entitled "1920 Federal Population Census." This time, open to the section that lists the counties for each state. Find the county listed on your Soundex card. Then find its enumeration district and look for a corresponding reel number.

At that point, you can get the correct reel from the 1920 census microfilm drawer and return to your viewer. Proceed to the correct county and enumeration district and then, looking at the top right-hand side of each census sheet, look for the sheet number from your Soundex card. Then go to the left-hand column of the census to find

the line number from your Soundex card. Congratulations! You should now be at the listing for your subject.

Keep a copy

I recommend that you make a photocopy of the census sheet for your records. It is also a good idea to search the surrounding few pages for other possible family members. It was common to have relatives living in the same general area during a census. You may be able to find some additional relative in the same census. Be particularly aware of possible mis-

spellings of surnames you have not been able to find in the Soundex. I found my great grandfather in the 1870 census living near his in-laws under a badly misspelled name that I could never find in the index.

You have now completed a key step in the research of your family tree. You may now know more about your ancestors than you have ever known. More importantly, you now have clues to continue your research. For example, you may have learned from the 1920 census that both your grandparents were born in New Jersey and had their first child around that time. If you are able to find that record, you will be able to

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE - BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

FOURTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES - POPULATION

NAME OF INCORPORATED PLACE Young City

ENUMERATED BY ME ON the 3rd DAY of January 1920

SUPPLYERS' DISTRICT NO. 9

ENUMERATION DISTRICT NO. 255

WARD OF CITY 12

Anthony V. Beach ENUMERATOR

Place of birth of each person and place of birth of parents of each person. If born in the United States, give the date of birth. If of foreign birth, give the place of birth.

SEX	AGE	COLOR	MARITAL STATUS	PLACE OF BIRTH	DATE OF BIRTH	FATHER		MOTHER		PLACE OF BIRTH	DATE OF BIRTH
						NAME	PLACE OF BIRTH	NAME	PLACE OF BIRTH		
M	17	W	Married	New Jersey	1892	John	New Jersey	Anna	New Jersey	New Jersey	1892
F	15	W	Single	New Jersey	1904	John	New Jersey	Anna	New Jersey	New Jersey	1892
M	13	W	Single	New Jersey	1906	John	New Jersey	Anna	New Jersey	New Jersey	1892
F	11	W	Single	New Jersey	1908	John	New Jersey	Anna	New Jersey	New Jersey	1892
M	9	W	Single	New Jersey	1910	John	New Jersey	Anna	New Jersey	New Jersey	1892
F	7	W	Single	New Jersey	1912	John	New Jersey	Anna	New Jersey	New Jersey	1892
M	5	W	Single	New Jersey	1914	John	New Jersey	Anna	New Jersey	New Jersey	1892
F	3	W	Single	New Jersey	1916	John	New Jersey	Anna	New Jersey	New Jersey	1892
M	1	W	Single	New Jersey	1918	John	New Jersey	Anna	New Jersey	New Jersey	1892
F	0	W	Single	New Jersey	1920	John	New Jersey	Anna	New Jersey	New Jersey	1892

identify the names of your great-grandparents and push your family tree back another generation. How to accomplish this next step will be addressed in later articles.

If you have any questions, feel free to write me at P.O. Box 8291, North Bergen, NJ 07047. Please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Information contained in the 1920 census

Name

Relationship to head of household

Whether home is owned or rented

If owned, whether it is free of mortgage

Gender

Color or race

Age at last birthday

Marital status

Year of immigration

Whether naturalized or alien

Year of naturalization

School attending as of Sept. 1, 1919

Whether able to read

Whether able to write

Place of birth and mother tongue

Father's place of birth and mother tongue

Mother's place of birth and mother tongue

Whether able to speak English

Trade, type of work

Industry in which employed

Number of farm schedule

In urban areas: street name and number of residence



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HOW DRY THEY WERE

MORE NEWS FROM 1895

In 1895, three decades before Prohibition, excessive drinking appeared to be the root of all evil in Hoboken. Several stories appeared per week in the local papers about men and women who got into fights or neglected their children because of a weakness for the bottle.

That year, the town council debated cutting back bar hours on Sunday or closing the bars that day altogether. What follow are several tales of woe caused by alcohol, and a story of the measures the city tried to take to stem a proliferation of bars.

Stories are compiled from 1895 issues of the Evening Journal—currently the Jersey Journal.

JUNE 1, 1895

ALAS! POOR CHILDREN.

Forced to Suffer for Their Parents' Shortcomings.

SLEPT OUT AT NIGHTS.

The Whole Family, After Being Evicted, Camped in a Yard – Raided by the Police – The Father Escapes – Rest to Be Sent to Snake Hill.

A pitiful case of destitution and suffering, the natural result of a fondness for alcoholic drink, was brought to light by Officers Kennedy and Peters, in Hoboken, at 2 o'clock this morning, by the arrest of a drunken mother and three poorly-clad, barefooted, hungry little children, two boys and a seven month-old baby girl.

Timothy McDonald and his wife Bridget were ejected from 113 Harrison Street last Monday. Instead of using the little money they had to secure shelter for their little ones, they sought drink with it, and when night fell, all hands went to sleep in the back yard. This program was continued for four nights, greatly to the annoyance of the neighbors....

JUNE 9, 1895

BONNER'S TALE OF WOE

He Induced a New Friend to Walk the Jag Line with Him.

HIS FRIEND LOVED HIM.

Embraced Him in a Street Car and Collared His Boodle – Then the Passengers Were Treated to a Free Fight, Which Ended When the Police Gathered the Fighting Friends.

Adam Bonner, formerly a saloon keeper on Willow Avenue, had a lively experience in Hoboken yesterday while he was engaged in painting the town. When he arrived in that city he had two or three hundred dollars in his pockets and proceeded to make merry with it. Bonner is an unselfish man, and did not wish to spend the money alone, so he induced Frederick Elermann, a strapping longshoreman, of 125 Willow Avenue, to make a tour of the town with him.

Along in the afternoon the two men boarded a Washington Street horse car. Bonner was happy in the belief that he had at last found a friend who was worth cultivating. Probably the same thought passed through the mind of Elermann. At any rate he made up his mind that he was a "good thing" and not to be lost in the shuffle, so he snuggled up close to Bonner in the car, and without asking his permission, went through his pockets and robbed him of all the money he had at the time, which amounted, so Bonner said last night, to \$148.

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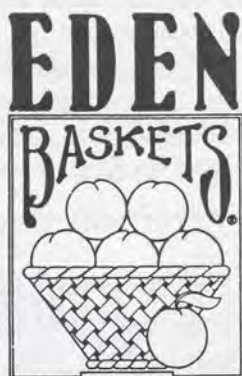
FIGHTING A SALOON.

Sound and Solid Arguments
Offered Against It.

NOTHING IN FAVOR OF IT.

Still the Committee Hesitated to
Decide Against It - Common
Council May Not Dare to Grant a
License.

Dick Ruroede, a good looking German, with long mustaches, a pointed beard, and an expansive bald spot, has applied to the common council of Hoboken, for a license to maintain a saloon at the corner of Eighth and Bloomfield streets in a block which is purely residential and free from nuisances.



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Property owners to the number of sixty-four, living in that vicinity, some of them among the best men in the town, sent in a petition to the council vigorously protesting against the granting of the license. The matter was referred to the license committee, consisting of councilmen Michael J. Murray, Harry Snyder and Joseph S. Weinthal, which gave a public hearing last night to those opposed, and those in favor of the establishment of a saloon on that corner.

The objections advanced are these: The neighborhood is purely residential; there are four saloons within 200 feet of that block; two churches are located on Bloomfield Street, at Seventh Street, and between Eighth and Ninth streets; it is a promenade for ladies, and a playground for children; property owners do not want their houses and lands depreciated in value by the existence of a saloon, etc., etc.

August R. Howard, of 724 Bloomfield Street, complained against Emil Bergman's saloon, at Seventh and Bloomfield streets, which he claimed was noisy and open on Sunday, in violation of the law.

Lawyer Aleck C. Young, counsel for Ruroede, was granted permission to cross-examine the objector, although some of the gentlemen objected to such a proceeding, and thought that he had no right to question them.

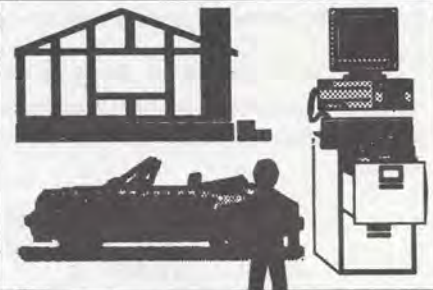
Young asked if Mr. Howard believed that Ruroede would keep a nuisance, and that gentleman replied; "All saloons open on Sunday are nuisances."

E. J. Gardinier, of 732 Bloomfield Street, said that pains

had been taken to keep that block nice. WHe objected on general principals, and said he hadn't any use for a saloon anyway.

Councilman Weinthal said that somebody had said something to the effect that other saloonkeepers had started the movement against the granting of the license to Ruroede, but none of the signers knew anything about that. They signed because they didn't want the ginmill there.

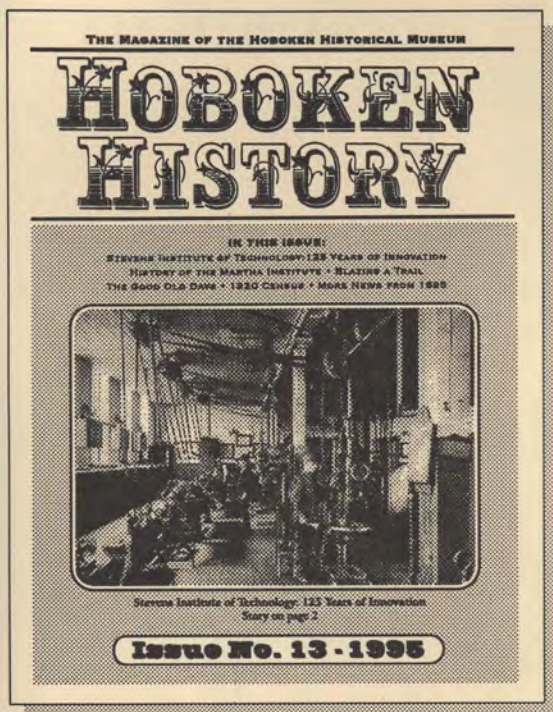
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We also invite you share your own memories of Hoboken history with us. If you have some stories to tell or wish to submit an article for the magazine, please call Lenny Luizzi, Sr., vice president and chairperson of *Hoboken History*, at (201) 420-1803.

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