HOBOKEN HISTORY

Special Architecture Issue



Hoboken Architecture ◘ Our Brownstones
The Columbia Club ◘ PLUS Trolleys, 1892-1907

The Magazine of the Hoboken Historical Museum
HOBOKEN NJ NUMBER 5 AUTUMN 1992

HOBOKEN HISTORY

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WHAT THE MUSEUM HAS BEEN UP TO

The Hoboken Historical Museum has had a busy fall season in its fund-raising efforts. We participated in the well-attended River City Fair, the Hoboken Train Festival, and the Hoboken Artists Tour.

We also sponsored two flea markets at Church Square Park. Funds raised at these events will be used to support Museum projects such as our 1992-1993 Exhibit at City Hall opening on November 20. We thank all Museum members who staffed our tables and otherwise helped out.

A new Museum T-shirt has been introduced, designed by Trustees Steve Hefler and Gerri Fallo. It bears the historic slogan of World War I, "Heaven, Hell, or Hoboken." This phrase was coined by General John J. Pershing, commander of the AEF, the United States Expeditionary Forces that sailed by the thousands to France from Hoboken. For those to whom World War I is a faded bit of history, Pershing was optimistically referring to the then-current belief that the AEF would return victoriously by Christmas of 1918. The new T-shirt was a best-seller at the Museum's tables at Hoboken's festivals, and we thank Steve and Gerri for a job well done. Our old Lackawanna Railroad and Baseball T-Shirts are still available, though in severely limited quantity.

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FOR YOUR CALENDAR:

OUR 1992-3 SHOW OPENS 7:30pm FRIDAY NOVEMBER 20

"Pressed Tin and Painted Brick: an architectural survey of Hoboken" is the title of our seventh annual exhibit. It will be on display at City Hall, 70 Washington St. for a year. The opening will feature a lecture by historic preservationist Pat Florio Colrick.
The event is free and open to the public.
Refreshments will be available.

NOMINATIONS FOR 1993 OFFICERS

Museum members are especially urged to attend our December meeting at which nominations will be accepted for the election of officers to be conducted at our January meeting.
The nominating meeting will take place on:
Wednesday, December 9 at 7:30pm
at Traders of Babylon Gallery, 259 First St.
Please attend. This is your opportunity to join in the management of your Museum.

HISTORY LECTURE SERIES DEBUTS IN DECEMBER

"From the Barbary Coast to the High Rises of Hudson Street" is the subject of the first of a series of lectures on the lively and colorful history of our city sponsored by the Hoboken Historical Museum. It will be given by Father Harr, a resident of Hoboken since 1948, who saw the transformation of Hoboken's once-rowdy waterfront from a magnet for the world's seafarers to a residential neighborhood with a magnificent view of Manhattan's skyline.
WHEN: Thursday, December 3 at 7:30 pm
WHERE: The lower auditorium of Sts. Peter & Paul RC Church at 400 Hudson Street.
A donation of $3.00 is suggested. Refreshments will be served.

HOLIDAY SALE & FLEA MARKET

Saturday, December 19, from 11am to 6pm.
The museum will conduct its last sale of 1992 indoors at the Martha Institute (6th Street between Garden Street and Park Avenue).
The proceeds will go toward the November Show fund. If you would like to be a vendor, please call Bob Foster, 656-2240. Space is limited.

Continued on inside back cover

HOBOKEN ARCHITECTURE

The 1992-1993 annual exhibition mounted by the Hoboken Historical Museum in City Hall focuses on the architecture of Hoboken. Our city is distinguished in its architecture, being an oasis among Hudson County communities not noted for excellence in that respect. Only the Van Vorst section of Jersey City comes close.

Where most Hudson County cities are so varied in architectural style, character, and quality as to be nearly able to be called incoherent, Hoboken presents a consistent face, with virtually uniform building heights, and architectural style almost perfectly preserved from the second half of the 19th Century. Many Hoboken streetscapes look today much as they had at the turn of the century, with only the removal of parked cars to make them authentic stage settings for a bygone age. A few inches below the asphalt of Hoboken streets lie pavements of Belgian blocks that once echoed to the clatter of horse-drawn wagons. And in some streets old trolley car rails still peer out of the modern pavement.



1200 to 1206 Washington Street

The architectural texture of Hoboken can credit its origin to the Hoboken Land & Improvement Company established in 1838 by John Stevens. He established it to manage orderly development of the square mile on the Hudson that was to be incorporated in 1855 as the City of Hoboken. The Company laid out Hoboken's gridiron of streets and avenues, and wrote regulations on building heights and construction. It also built and sold most of the homes in Hoboken, which accounts for their uniformity. The Hoboken Land & Improvement Co. was dissolved in 1946.

The economic slumber into which Hoboken fell in 1929 and recovered from only after World War II, helped preserve our city's character, for there was little growth and, possibly because there was no impetus for "modernization" and "improvement," there was little destructive change for change's sake. Now, as a consequence of the slumber, Hoboken's distinctive architectural character has survived to become one of its most attractive assets.

The Land & Improvement Co.'s original plan called for service alleys running north and south mid-block, the only survivor of which is Court Street. Vestiges of this plan can be seen in the occasional ultra-narrow row house squeezed into the width of an alley on some numbered side streets. The standard building lot in Hoboken is 25 feet by 100 feet, but some houses are as narrow as 15 feet and a few are only 12 feet wide. Willow Terrace houses are smallest of all.

Most of the buildings that line Washington Street and Hoboken's residential blocks are what architectural historians classify as "vernacular architecture." They are 19th-Century structures of no particular school of design, merely four-story flat-roofed brick dwellings of a comfortable but ordinary Victorian style. The small commercial buildings on Washington Street contained shops, with apartments for the proprietors' families behind the store or on the floor above.

The commercial and residential buildings, 1200 to 1206 Washington Street, built about 1892, are an excellent example of the work of Charles Fall, a talented and prolific Hoboken architect. He also designed several single-family homes and firehouses in the city. After a destructive fire, the facade and shop fronts of 1200 were authentically restored.



Hoboken City Hall

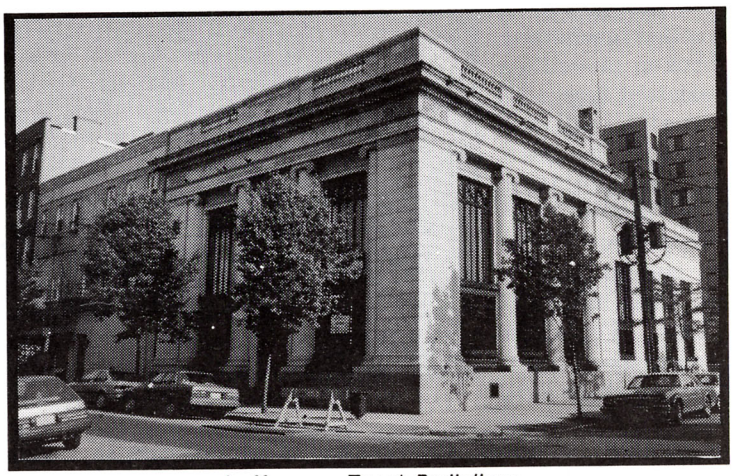
On Castle Point Terrace and upper reaches of Hudson Street are large free-standing mansions built by Hoboken's wealthy families: shipyard owners, factory owners, bankers, merchants. Today, many are no longer single-family homes, but are divided into apartments, and others serve as fraternity houses for students at Stevens Institute of Technology. The west side of Hudson is lined with Hoboken's largest and tallest brownstones, backing on Court Street where their 19th Century occupants had their stables.

The west side of the 1200 block of Garden Street is especially distinguished. It consists of 28 uniform 15-foot-wide brownstone row houses in what is called the Anglo-Italianate style, which were constructed by the Hoboken Land & Improvement Co. about 1892. (See the article on page 7.)

As one walks uptown on Hoboken's Bloomfield and Garden Streets and Park Avenue, it is a stroll through time. Downtown, the homes are earlier, and as one gets above 10th Street, late Victorian brownstones appear, replacing the downtown brick. Facades are more ornate, railings are robust cast iron instead of delicate wrought iron. And as one goes west from Park Avenue, the social and economic scene changes. Single-family homes of 100 years ago give way to five-story tenement buildings with two flats to the floor, and further west, to factories that once employed hundreds of Hoboken families that lived in the tenements. It is a progression that exists in most older cities, but because Hoboken is so compact, it is more swift and unmistakable.

Hoboken's architectural vista is punctuated by many distinguished structures, many of which survive almost intact from before the turn of the century.

The most appropriate starting point is City Hall, on Washington Street between Newark and 1st Streets. It was begun in 1879 and completed in 1883. The land on which City Hall stands was donated by Colonel John Stevens and was originally the site of "Market Square." Its designer was Francis George Himpler, a local architect whose "FGH" initials appear on buildings in Hoboken. City Hall is in the Second Empire Style, and in 1910 was enlarged with two front extensions flanking the entrance. You can see the difference in the brickwork. This year the



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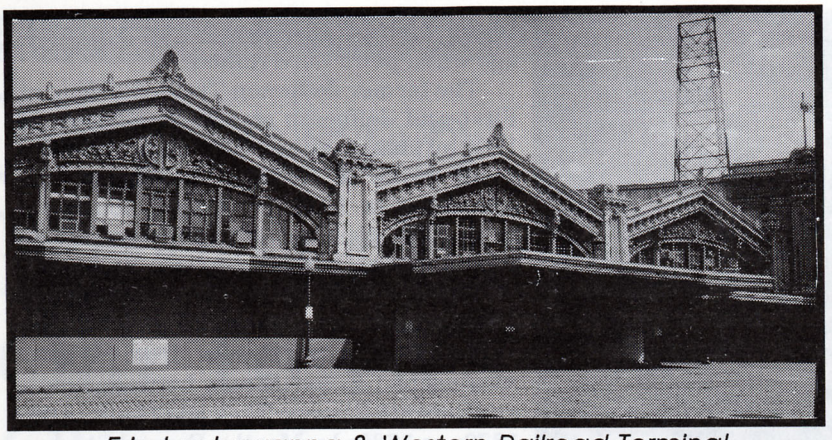
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Erie Lackawanna & Western Railroad Terminal

deteriorating brownstone facade of City Hall was restored to its original elegance and the pigeon-infested scaffolding that obscured the entrance was finally removed. The Hoboken Historical Museum's display cases occupy the first and second floors of City Hall; they are our answer to the frequently asked question, "Where is the Museum?"

Hoboken's most prominent and famous building is the Erie Lackawanna & Western Railroad Terminal at Hudson Place, on the National Register of Historic Places. Its architect was Kenneth Murchison and it was built in 1907. At one time the structure was adorned by a clock tower 225 feet high. The exterior is faced in copper and one of the terminal's most noteworthy features is its grand waiting room. It is 100 feet square, 55 feet high, lighted on all sides by high windows and has a ceiling of stained glass. The terminal is one of the first air-conditioned buildings in the United States, and still serves thousands of commuters each day, even though its battery of ferry slips (abandoned in 1967) gave way to a single modern one in 1989 to successfully renew ferry service to New York.



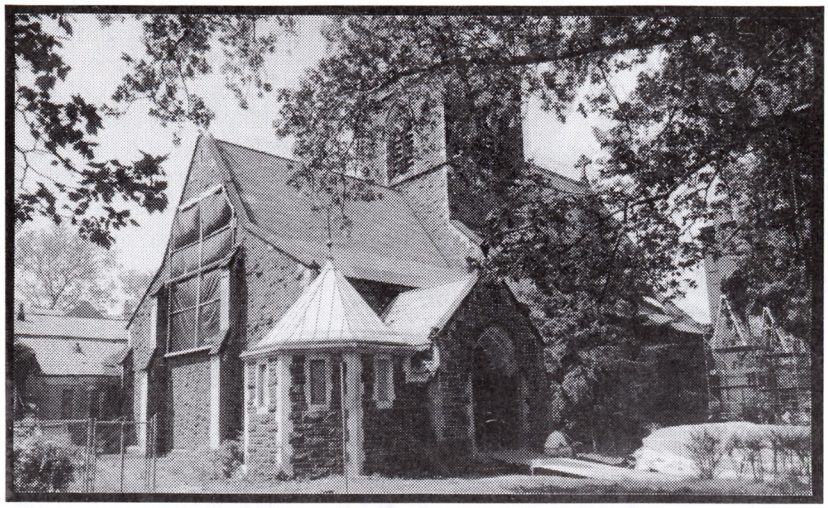
Exempt Firemen Headquarters

The headquarters of the Association of Exempt Firemen at 213 Bloomfield Street today houses a firefighters' museum and was built in the 1870s to plans by Francis G. Himpler who also designed Our Lady of Grace Roman Catholic Church, 400 Willow Avenue, built 1874-78. The Exempt Firemen of the City of Hoboken was established in 1860 as a volunteer fire department. After a period of service, its members would be exempt from public duties and be entitled, if circumstances required, to assistance from funds of the department. Hoboken did not have a paid fire department until 1891.

The Episcopal Church of the Holy Innocents at Willow and Sixth is designed in High Gothic style and is probably the only church in Hudson County built entirely of non-combustible materials. Most of its exterior and interior details are still perfectly intact. It was built in what was then one of Hoboken's poorest neighborhoods by Martha Bayard Stevens in memory of her daughter, Julia Augusta, who died in Rome in 1870. It was begun in 1872 and completed in 1874. Regarded as Hoboken's most beautiful church building, it often serves as a setting for motion pictures. Holy Innocents was built as a "Free Church," where chairs were provided at no

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Church of the Holy Innocents

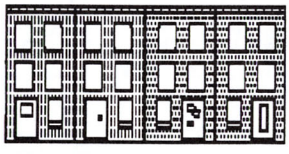
charge instead of pews, to get away from an age when pews were rented.

The former Jefferson Trust Building at First and Jefferson streets was begun in 1905 by manufacturer Charles Focht and a small group of Hoboken merchants and completed in 1911. No longer housing a bank, this classical structure is host to community activities.

One of Hoboken's most distinctive architectural landmarks is the Willow Terraces, private streets from Willow Avenue to Clinton Street between Sixth and Seventh Streets. They were built in the 1870s or 1880s by Martha Bayard Stevens after she had seen such houses in England for everyday working families with small incomes. The houses were for servants of the Stevens family at Castle Point and employees of the Hoboken Land & Improvement Co. Considerably altered today by their owners, the little houses originally were red brick with two floors and an attic with a dormer window. The pavements of the Willow Terraces are the original cobblestones.

Further descriptions of Hoboken architectural landmarks will appear in future issues of *Hoboken History*.

Photographs by
Robert Foster



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Hoboken Brownstones: Our Town's Charming Row Houses

Virtually all 1- or 2-family homes in Hoboken are rowhouses, the compact urban dwellings that reached their peak of popularity in the 19th Century and which are still highly regarded as among the most attractive and liveable of city homes. In the late 19th Century most of the rowhouses that were built by the thousands in Hoboken, Jersey City, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and other communities in the metropolitan area were faced in brownstone, so these little rowhouses are called "brownstones," even when they are constructed of brick, marble, or limestone.

The brownstone most often used in Hoboken probably came from quarries in Little Falls, on the Passaic River near Paterson. Brownstone is a soft, close-grained triassic sandstone or freestone. When first cut it is pink, but soon weathers to an even, rich, chocolate brown because of the presence of hematite iron ore. Advancing technology of the 19th Century partly was responsible for the widespread popularity of brownstone for rowhouses, according to *Bricks and Brownstone, a history of the New York rowhouse, 1783-1929* by Charles Lockwood [Abbeville Press, New York, 1972].

The 19th-Century invention of steam-channeling or steam-cutting processes lowered the cost of all cut stone and brought the fashionable soft brownstone within reach of even middle-class rowhouse owners. A typical brownstone home in the 1200 block of Garden Street, one of Hoboken's finest concentrations of brownstones, sold when built by the Hoboken Land & Improvement Co. a century ago for as little as $4000!



1200 Block of Garden Street in 1891

Over the years, the brownstone fronts of some Hoboken rowhouses have scaled badly and the elaborately carved doorways and window details have crumbled and occasionally fallen off. The durability of brownstone has long been a problem on Hoboken's rowhouses. Regrettably, some home owners have tried to solve the problem by re-facing the facades with inappropriate imitation brick or fieldstone called "formstone," invented in Baltimore over 50 years ago. To do this, contractors such as Garden State Brickface strip away all the brownstone detail such as lintels and other architectural ornament, and nail mesh to the facade to hold the formstone veneer, which is smeared on as soft stucco, and then shaped or scored to simulate brick or stone when dry. The procedure not only diminishes the characteristic architectural charm and character of Hoboken, but drastically reduces the value of the house.

Also reducing the value of a 19th-century Hoboken rowhouse is removal of its cornice. Not only

does this damage the appearance of the building, the cornice is important in that its overhang shields the building's facade from rain and snow. Today, realtors will agree that much of the resale value of a Hoboken rowhouse is given it by how much of its original Victorian facade detail survives or has evaded this well-intentioned vandalism.

Ironically, formstone re-facing may not preserve the building. Formstone veneer can succumb to time and weather, and eventually crack, loosen, and peel off, leaving behind nothing of architectural value. Aluminum or vinyl siding applied to a brownstone home is also hostile to its appearance and value. The vinyl siding on the Martha Institute's brownstone, for example, does nothing to preserve that landmark building.

Another tried solution is to paint the brownstone facade. This, too is unsatisfactory, as inevitably paint peels and has to be removed or the facade painted again and again. Also, paint does not protect brownstone masonry from the invasion of moisture, and masonry can deteriorate beneath its coat of paint.

In the 19th Century, brownstone rowhouses were referred to as "brownstone fronts," for they actually are brick houses whose street front has a four- to six-inch-thick brownstone facing or veneer. The back-yard walls of brownstone-front rowhouses are ordinary brick. The architectural deception of the brownstone front, Lockwood points out, clearly appears on corner buildings where the narrow street front has the brownstone facing, and the 50-foot-long side wall around the corner is brick.

Brownstone, writes Lockwood, is a soft building material, but if properly cut and laid it does not deteriorate any more than other building stone. However, when cut and laid with the grain, brownstone crumbles and scales, because water seeps into the exposed pores of the thin brownstone blocks and, upon freezing, expands and splits the stone into large, thin sheets. Had the stone been cut and laid across the grain in the first place, the deterioration of most Hoboken 19th-Century brownstone fronts, then and now, would be minimal. This accounts for the phenomenon of adjoining Hoboken brownstones differing so greatly in the condition of their facades.

Deteriorated brownstone can, of course, be restored, but fine and costly craftsmanship is required to replicate the missing detail, and matching the original brownstone color is not easy. But when a homeowner has it done, the value of his home increases as does the beauty of Hoboken itself.

One of the longest and finest surviving rows of brownstone rowhouses in Hoboken occupies the west side of the 1200 block of Garden Street. Erected about 1890, there are 28 nearly identical buildings in the group, Nos. 1200 to 1254, built to an almost identical floor plan. Each is 15 feet wide and 50 feet deep. A unifying cornice, nearly intact except for 1252 and 1254, (the cornice of 1200 is hidden behind aluminum) runs along the entire group.

There are five different types of facades, in pairs, differing mainly in detail of the ornament beneath the parlor windows and the design of the lintels above windows and front doors. One facade type is mainly brick with horizontal brownstone bands, one type uses brownstone and a light sandstone, the others are entirely brownstone. Numbers 1200, 1210, 1252, and 1254 have had their facades stripped and covered in formstone.



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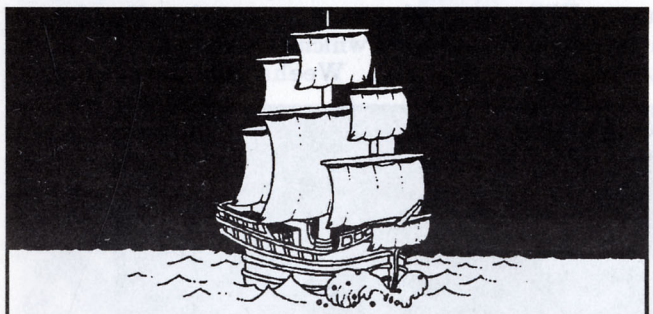
No. 1248 has a bay window cut into its parlor floor. Five houses have inappropriate modern aluminum awnings over their front doors; others have had them removed or never had them. Many of the houses still have their original cast iron railings.

Not all of them were sold at first and many were rented by their occupants until well into the 1920s. A remarkable roster of Hoboken people lived in that block, among them Joel Woodman (1214), who owned a veneer factory at Clinton and 15th Streets, Joseph Brandt (1212 and later 1216), the high-school principal and school superintendant after whom the Brandt School is named, James Curran, Postmaster (1238), and on the east side, William Keuffel, superintendent of the Keuffel & Esser factory (1215).

It is gratifying to a preservationist to see that a number of the 1200 block homes have had their facades recently restored, cleaned, and brickwork repointed. As it is one of the most architecturally distinguished blocks in Hoboken, the 1200 block of Garden Street deserves to continue to be one of our city's treasures. Its length as a row of matching rowhouses in Hoboken, may be rivaled only by the west side of the 1200 block of Park Ave., lined with brick homes.

Research into who lived where and when in Hoboken is complicated by a house-numbering change that took place about 1895. At about that time Hoboken switched from consecutive numbering to the present system of jumping to the next even hundred at each cross street. So if you are researching your home, its present number may not appear on old deeds and documents. An example: today's 1212 Garden Street was originally 502 Garden Street. Adding to the complication is the fact that in the late 19th Century easterly sections of uptown Hoboken alternated between being part of Hoboken and part of Weehawken.





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THE EARLY ELECTRIC DAYS OF HOBOKEN TROLLEYS, 1892-1907

By Joseph Eid

The word "trolley" was coined by Asbury Park area fishermen who thought of the streetcar with its power pole as trolling for electricity in the way fishermen trolled for fish.

Hoboken, in its usual resistance to change, was late to switch from horse-drawn street cars to electrically powered trams. In 1887, the Orange horsecar line in Newark had wire strung along a mile or so of track. The experiment ended in failure and horses continued to pull streetcars. In the same year Asbury Park's Seashore Electric Railway chose the low-voltage Daft system to build New Jersey's first electric streetcar system. It operated until 1891 when a powerhouse fire forced the company to switch to the now universal Sprague 6500-volt DC system.

Hoboken waited until 1892 for its first electric trolleys, fifteen converted horsecars. The first line to electrify was the Oakland Avenue line, followed by the Washington Street line which had been extended from 11th Street to the 14th Street Ferry, and finally the Guttenberg line. The cable car line along what is now Observer Highway was also changed to from horsepower to electric power that year.

As the more than 150 horsecars were converted and phased out, new electric cars were ordered from the Brill factory in Philadelphia.

In 1892 a fourth trolley line from Hoboken was added. It began at the 14th Street Ferry, ran along 14th Street, turned north on Willow Avenue, west on 15th Street, then left onto a private right-of-way along the base of the Palisades, crossed on a trestle the railway tracks that still skirt Hoboken on the west, then traveled north up the side of the cliff. Halfway up it turned south on a horseshoe curve and continued southward up the cliff to join Palisade Avenue at 7th Street in what is now Union City. The line opened on November 19, 1893.

To obtain control of the North Hudson County Railway, the Palisades Railroad, the Weehawken Ferry & Guttenberg Railway, and the Pavonia Horse Railroad, a man named Miles Tierney chartered the Hudson & Bergen Traction Co. in 1893. This new company was a holding company and operated all of the lines under the North Hudson County Railway. Its 4' 10"-gauge tracks were converted to Standard Gauge, which is 4' 8½".

The Weehawken Ferry &



A Hoboken trolley at the end of its run at a Little Ferry Railroad crossing. Cars could not cross the track and passengers on the car from Hackensack (rear) had to walk across to the car to Hoboken.

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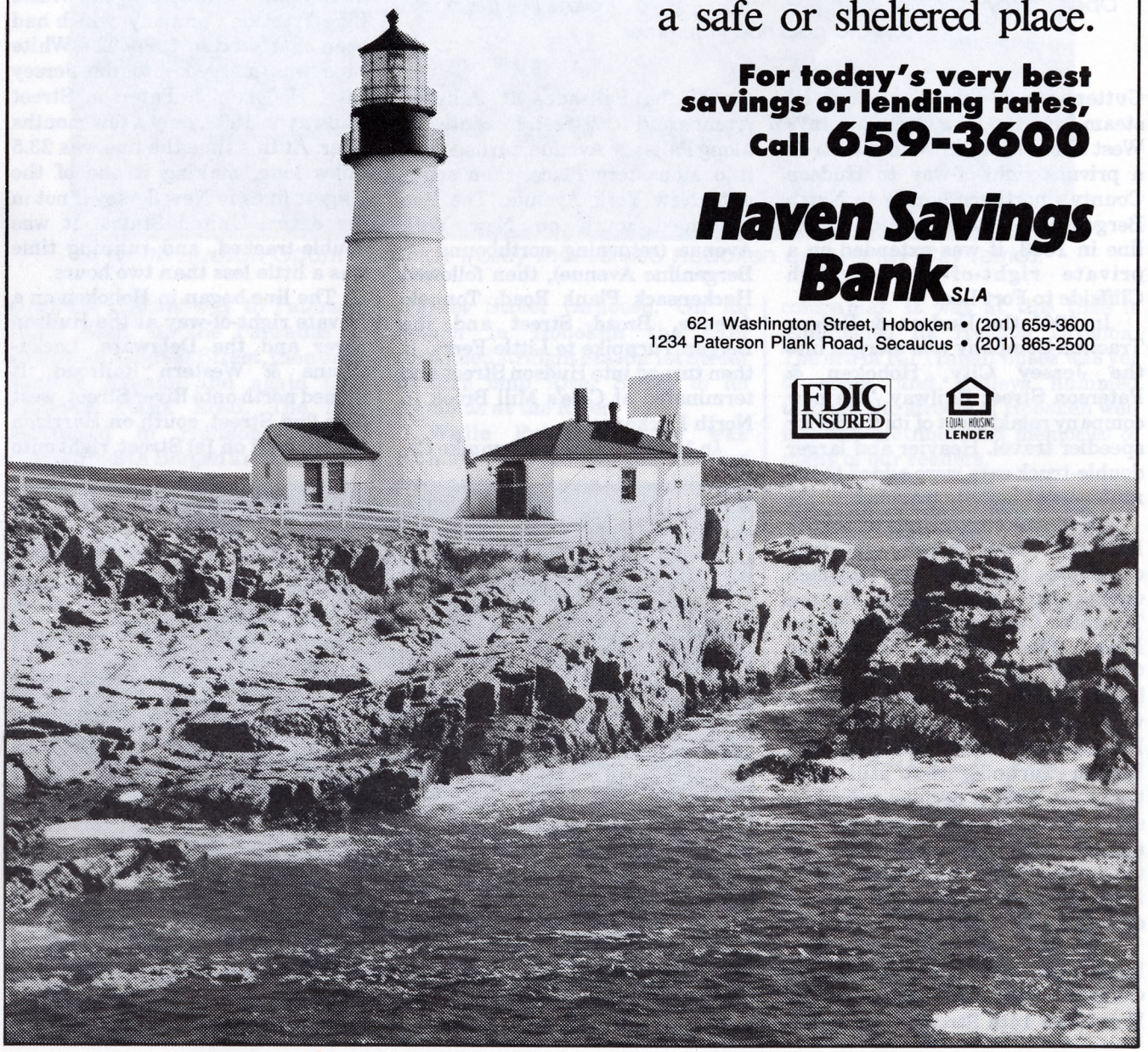
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Open Jersey City, Hoboken & Paterson Railway trolleys like this one offered a cool ride in summer.

Guttenberg Railway operated by steam from the New York Central's West Shore Ferry in Weehawken on a private right-of-way to Hudson County's northern border in North Bergen. With electrification of the line in 1893, it was extended on a private right-of-way through Cliffside to Fort Lee.

In 1901 the Hudson & Bergen Traction Company was merged into the Jersey City, Hoboken & Paterson Street Railway. The new company relaid most of its tracks for speedier travel. Heavier and larger double-truck cars were added to the routes most heavily traveled.

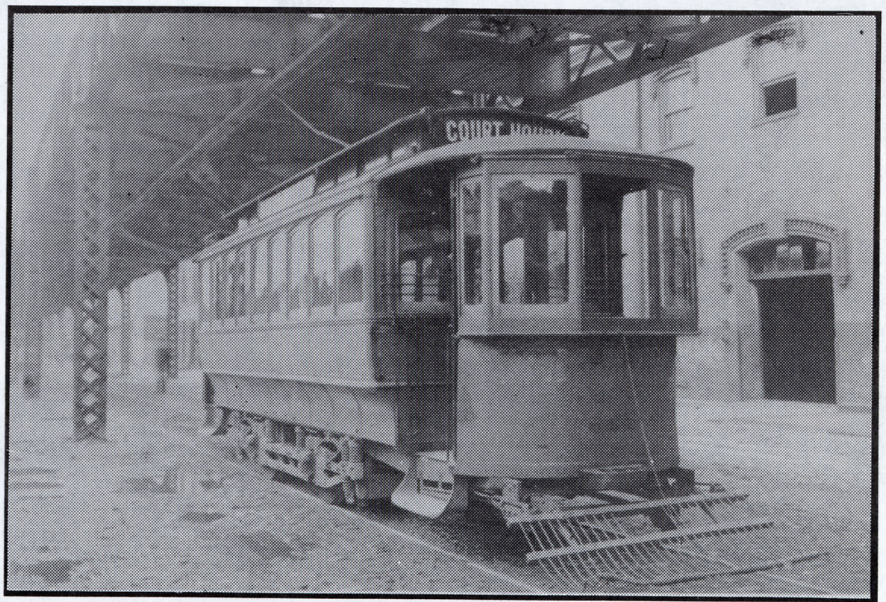
Beside the North Hudson County Railway, two other streetcar companies operated in Hoboken during this period: the Bergen Turnpike Company and the White Line. The Bergen Turnpike Company was chartered in 1802 to build, operate, and collect tolls on a wooden road. Its route was on the Hackensack Plank Road and the Bergen Turnpike that still exist today. In 1902 it decided to build a single-track trolley line over its aging roadbed. For trolley cars on the same track in opposite directions to pass each other, 19 passing sidings had to be built.

The Bergen Turnpike Company leased the former North Hudson County Railway tracks from Hoboken's 14th Street Ferry to the top of the Palisades at Palisade Avenue and 7th Street. Its route ran along Palisade Avenue, turned west into Monastery Place, then south onto New York Avenue. The line continued south on New York Avenue (returning northbound on Bergenline Avenue), then followed Hackensack Plank Road, Tonnele Avenue, Broad Street and the Bergen Turnpike to Little Ferry. It then turned into Hudson Street and terminated at Cole's Mill Brook in North Hackensack.

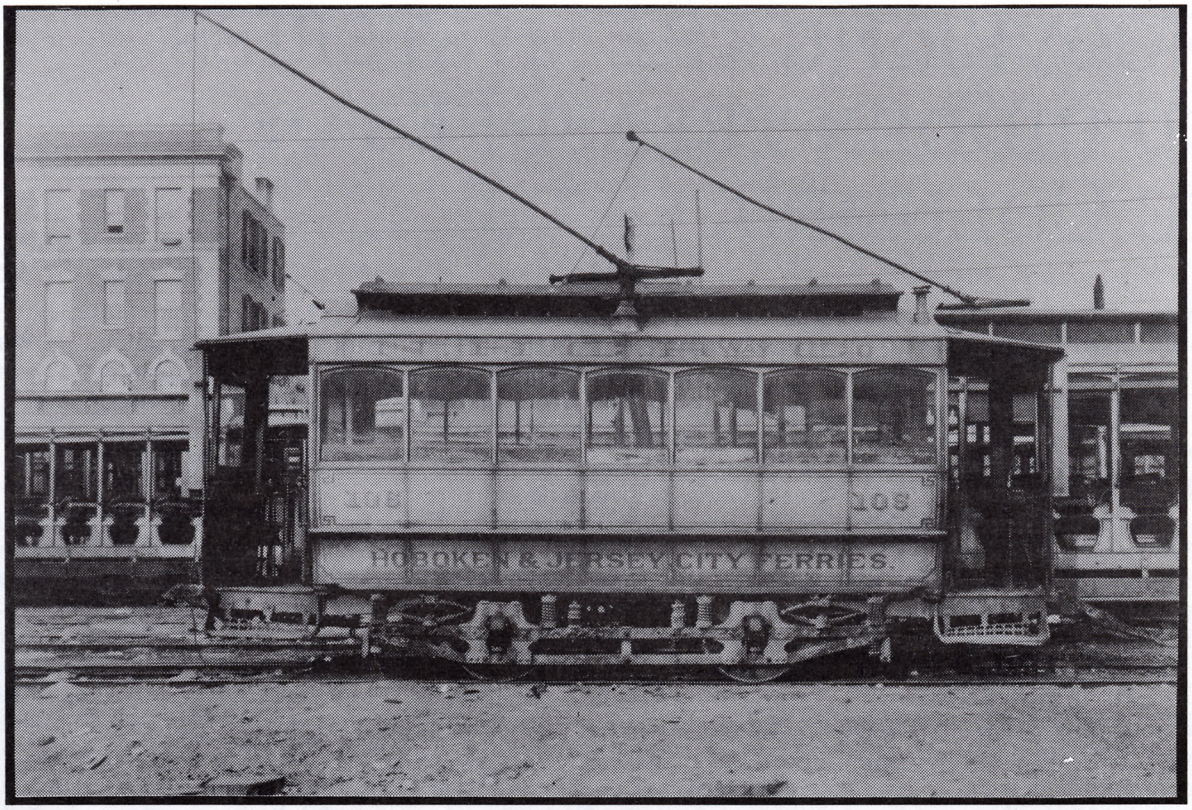
In 1908 the Bergen Turnpike Co. was leased into the Public Service Railway and became the Hudson Division's Bergen Pike Line. The company was finally merged into Public Service Coordinated Transport in 1937, years after trolley service was replaced by buses.

The White Line's early history, which began in 1892, is a tangled web winding through many short-lived companies, as well as through the streets of Hudson County. In 1894 the New Jersey Electric Railway was chartered to operate the line between Hoboken and Paterson. It went into receivership in 1897 and was sold to the White Line Traction Company which had been chartered in 1899. The White Line was merged into the Jersey City, Hoboken & Paterson Street Railway in 1899, only a few months later. At this time the line was 23.5 miles long, making it one of the longest lines in New Jersey if not in the entire United States. It was double-tracked, and running time was a little less than two hours.

The line began in Hoboken on a private right-of-way at the Hudson River and the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad. It turned north onto River Street, west onto 2nd Street, south on Harrison Street, west on 1st Street, right onto



A Jersey City, Hoboken & Paterson trolley under the elevated structure on what was Ferry St., now called Observer Highway.



A North Hudson County Railway trolley that served Hoboken and Jersey City ferries.

a private right-of-way to Paterson Plank Road, up the Palisades to turn onto Congress Street, then onto Summit Avenue and again into Paterson Plank Road. The line continued in Hudson County through North Bergen and Secaucus where the carhouse was located. The line crossed the Hackensack River and traveled through East Rutherford, Carlstadt, and Wallington. Then crossed the Passaic River into Passaic and finally into Paterson to end at the Market Street carhouse. On its return in Hoboken the cars continued straight east on 1st Street to turn onto River Street to its terminus at the River.

While Public Service was founded in 1903 as the holding company, the Jersey City, Hoboken & Paterson Street Railway continued as the operating company in Hoboken and elsewhere. The Public Service Railway was founded in 1907 to take over all the operations of its many leased companies. It was at this time it established its Hudson Division. The era of NJ Transit buses was yet to come, and trolleys hummed through the streets of Hoboken well into the lifetimes and memories of many of our readers.

The final article in this series will cover the last years of trolleys in Hoboken.

Photographs in this article are courtesy of the North Jersey Chapter collection, National Railway Historical Society, Inc.

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UNCOVERING THE MYSTERIES AND HIDDEN TREASURES OF THE COLUMBIA CLUB

by Ed Wise

Lurking in the far corners of a forgotten attic, buried behind false walls, nestled far above dropped ceilings, architectural treasures of the lost opulence of Hoboken's Victorian heyday lay hidden. Their fortunate finds helped return the 19th-Century grandeur of the Columbia Club to the building that is now The Columbia, a modern four-apartment residence.

Erected in 1891, the structure was built to house an elite men's society that included in its membership more than one hundred of the most prestigious citizens of Hoboken and New York city. An original member was Col. Edward A. Stevens, founder of Stevens Institute, and long-time president of the club was William H. Macy, Jr., a banker and close friend of the Stevens family.

The Columbia Club held its early meetings in a house at 903 Washington Street donated for its use by Col. Stevens. After this property was sold, the club moved temporarily to 1204 Garden Street, when it secured a parcel of property at 1101 Bloomfield Street and began planning its club house. The members chose an architectural style known as Richardson Romanesque, after the famous 19th-Century architect Henry Hobson Richardson [1838-1886].

Richardson was a major exponent of romanticism in American architecture and was noted for his revival of Romanesque architecture, the prevalent style throughout Europe from the mid-11th to the middle of the 12th Century. After employment in Paris, he began practice in New York, but moved to Brookline, Mass. in 1874. Trinity Church in Boston (1872-1877) was his first monumental, and finest, work; its French Romanesque design was a departure from the Gothic revival which controlled American architecture of the time. In this and subsequent works Richardson developed a free and personally strong interpretation of Romanesque design. The style, known as Richardson Romanesque, spread and won many followers, exerting a great influence upon the building arts of the period, especially in the young and growing cities of Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and St. Louis.

The building's style is notable for its fortress-like conical tower and rounded archways, and its facade is characterized by a series of continuous masonry horizontal bands and arches and windows of varied sizes and shapes, typical of Richardson's work.

Ground was broken September 11, 1891. The building was to have three stories, standing 74 feet to the peak of the tower, and costing just over $27,000. The first floor had an office, two parlors, a reception room, a billiard room, and cloak rooms. In the basement, there were bowling alleys. On the second floor was a ladies' parlor, reception room, library, two card rooms, and a hall for concerts and entertainment that also served as a gymnasium. On the third floor was a banquet room that could accomodate 200 guests.

Expressed in the architecture of this dramatic structure was a vision of a grand organization that was meant to endure. But the Columbia Club disbanded only 19 years later. The reason is uncertain, but it is said that its members gradually moved out of Hoboken and were not replaced. The vision gone, the building was sold to the Euclid Masonic Lodge in 1910.

As a Masonic lodge, the Columbia building went through a number of changes. Fireplaces were hidden behind walls, elaborate moldings painted over, the Gothic beamed ceiling in the former gymnasium lowered and converted to a vaulted ceiling of ornate plaster. The gym, in its conversion into a hall for Masonic ceremonies, was enlarged to seat 400 spectators and an Odell pipe organ was installed.

The Columbia changed hands once again in the early 1970s when a dwindling Masonic membership forced sale of the structure to a Hispanic Protestant congregation. Again, more structural changes were made, driven understandably by heating costs and to create a six-room living space for the pastor. The last incarnation of the building was into a children's day-care center.

Morgan Cline, a long-time resident of Hoboken and a neighbor of the Columbia Club, became interested in the structure in the 1970s. These were the early years of the "Hoboken Renaissance," when residents prowled the streets with pliers and screwdrivers, looking for discarded pieces of architectural and historic significance, and, as some Hobokenites still do, checking every curbside dumpster, Cline was shocked to discover a pair of three-inch thick hand-carved solid mahogany doors, each at least ten feet tall and four feet wide, that had been discarded by the owners of the Columbia Club building in favor of smaller, more heat-conscious modern doors. People were stopping



to examine the doors, and shake their heads. They all watched regretfully as the doors were carted away to a dump. But a new interest in preserving the structure was born in Cline's mind.

When the day-care people looked to sell the building in 1987, the newly formed Columbia Group, which included Cline, made an offer for the building. Not only were the front doors and half the original windows missing, but gone too were all records and plans of its original construction. So in 1988, when the Columbia Group, now bought out by Cline and his partner Ben D'Onofrio, both Museum members, set about to restore the structure with the assistance of Hoboken architect Dean Marchetto, imagination and intuition took the place of original blueprints.

In 1988, reconstruction of the Columbia building began with its de-construction. Every door, ceiling, molding, and decorative element was dismantled, numbered, and cataloged for restoration and reassembly. Every ceiling was rebuilt to comply with modern fire regulations, original interior walls reconstructed and soundproofed. The Columbia's Victorian woodwork was refinished, hidden original fireplaces rediscovered and restored to their former magnificence.

A tour of the building today reveals the detective work that went into the reversing of half a century of neglect and thoughtless "improvements." Starting with the exterior of

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the building, the original colors of the trim paint were determined from the bottom layer of paint on the surface of the highest levels of the building's fabric. The facade was chemically cleaned of nearly a century of grime and coats of peeling paint. The facade's terra cotta design elements had begun to erode and crumble and were restored, including the coin-like bas-relief portrait of Columbia at the facade's southwest corner. An epoxy-based cement was used to recreate the original color, texture, and overall effect of the missing and damaged original decorative stonework, right down to the chisel marks of its 19th-Century sculptors.

One of the surviving interior front doors featured a large, ornate bronze escutcheon around its doorknob. Months later, the plate that was missing from the other door, and the original center-hall chandelier were found in a dark corner of the attic, refurbished and restored to their rightful places.

The central hallway contained all the original woodwork. The intricate tongue-and-groove mahogany paneled ceilings and walls were painstakingly restored.

The first living space is to the left of the entryway, in what was originally the billiards room. Here fireplaces were revealed from behind false walls, and an intricate mahogany ceiling was discovered above a dropped acoustic ceiling. Each piece of the original ceiling was disassembled, numbered, and refinished. Then the thousands of individual mahogany parts were reassembled like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle to recreate the original beauty of the billiards room ceiling.

To the right of the entrance foyer are two sets of twin parlors, one on a floor above the other. Unfortunately, only one of their mantels was intact. The surviving cherrywood mantel served as a model for new ones, which were faithfully recreated.

The third living space is up the central stairway in what was once the Masonic installation ceremony hall. The plaster ceiling of this large open room with its wedding-cake opulence features an intricate grating as a centerpiece. Above this was a monstrous "air-cooling" engine – a predecessor to industrial air-conditioning. The ponderous old machinery was removed by a cargo winch, and now the grating, freshly painted, serves primarily as an architectural accent and secondarily as an intake for the modern air-conditioning system that replaced the old one.

The former dining hall, kitchen, and attic have been transformed into the fourth living space, which includes the most dramatic and distinctive feature of the Columbia: the library turret, with a 360-degree panoramic view of Hoboken.

Precisely why the one hundred distinguished members of the Columbia Club dissolved their organization and abandoned its luxurious home we may never know. But we do know that our city's precious architectural grandeur is once again alive and well at The Columbia.

07030 LETTER FROM A READER

As one who lived in Hoboken for many years during the 30s and 40s I enjoy reading about the place and frequently go back to eat at my favorite restaurant, Helmer's. I graduated to its sliced steak from malts at Schnackenberg's.

I liked in particular Joseph Eid's fine piece on the street cars. One day in the mid or late 40s I was on my way to Journal Square to take in a movie. Our trolley had just pulled out of the terminal and was slowing to stop at the Washington Street station to pick up passengers when we were struck in the rear by another trolley.

The operator, who drove from a sort of standing seat in the front, was thrown from his perch and the three or four passengers were suddenly jolted forward. Except for the glass and wood splinters that showered the men in the last rear seat, I don't recall any visible injuries. However, the rear platform was torn apart by the impact and was open to the air.

While we were waiting for the trolley to be pushed back to the station so we could leave, I walked around talking to the other passengers. I eventually went back to stand in the rear platform area. As it happened, *The Observer*, which was just around the corner, had gotten wind of the accident and as I stood there, I saw a man taking photos. The next day the paper's coverage of the story featured a photo of me standing on the platform. I remember the caption as reading: "A passenger views the wreckage." I would guess the brakes failed, but I don't recall hearing of the accident's cause.

I also enjoyed Jason E. Davis' article on "Dead Man's Cave." Your publication is well done and edited and, as I mentioned, agreeable reading.

I wish my father were still alive. He came to Hoboken in the early part of the century and, in fact, left for France with the AEF from there during World War I. He would have gotten a kick out of the articles. He and I used to walk around town and he would tell me stories about various places and the people associated with them. On my last visit I noticed his building and place of business at 5th and Bloomfield was for sale.

Jack Fitzpatrick
Summit, NJ

THE BOYS OF HOBOKEN

Back in the days of "Spaldeens" and "Boxcar Football"

by John P. Fitzpatrick

In his autobiography, Former Hoboken resident G. Gordon Liddy, a classmate of mine at Sts. Peter and Paul School, described how we played as youngsters along the docks of Hoboken. He also noted that he and Peter Smith, another pal of ours, enjoyed jumping from rooftop to rooftop along the houses across Hudson Street from Elysian Park.

While Liddy saw these activities as a frightening "test of manhood," Peter and I enjoyed taking advantage of such natural opportunities available to boys in a city like Hoboken. In that square mile there seemed limitless places that attracted when sports were not involved. However, even sports offered their adventures.

We lived and played in a part of town bounded, roughly, on the east by Stevens Institute and the then-thriving docks along the Hudson River, to the west by Jersey City Heights, and to the north by the Weehawken line.



FOUR FRIENDS IN 1947
John Kelly, John Fitzpatrick, John Conway, Charlie F. X. Poggi

And the roofs were indeed a significant part of our lives. One could gain access through unlocked doors and enjoy a private playground a city block long. Tossing from the roofs matchhead-filled, glue-soaked model airplanes to their flaming ends was always popular. A secret we kept to ourselves was the forays over the roof of the YMCA at 13th and Washington, using the fire escape next to the firehouse, and down to the unlocked window of the punching bag room.

We had to share basketball time with adults and females so some extra time on the sly was always appreciated...until we were as usual discovered by Mr. Moore, a YMCA administrator who chased us out. I recall he was never mean about our infractions. And the firemen never told, although wire mesh today closes off our former access.

One habit the firefighters never appreciated was our practice of rushing into the station and sliding down the poles whenever they were out on an alarm and we could get away with it.

But as we played on top, we also played beneath the buildings. It was possible then to enter the cellars of the "Yellow Flats," – where many of us lived at 12th and Washington – at 1219, emerge at 1211 (there was no access to 1209) for a breath of air, and plunge back into the dark underground area – dimly lighted by an occasional 40-watt bulb – to reach 1207, where the public washing machines were. Among the locked apartment storage areas, passageways, and dead ends known only to us, we held childhood "club" meetings and escaped from neighborhood bullies as well a tough superintendent who chased us when noise from our ball games in the back yards drew complaints from neighbors.

He was not a kind man and used the cellars to corner us and then, in a sudden rush, run out and confiscate our bats. He usually turned them over to be burned in the furnaces in the central boiler room by Fritz, who stoked them with coal to steam heat the block. A kindly old German, he would refuse and return the bats pending another scrap with the super.

As a matter of fact, finding a place to play ball was always a problem because the grassed areas of Elysian Park, unlike today, were fenced and off limits. We climbed the fences but the area was too public, someone complained, and our games didn't last long. The fencing was true also of the plot between 12th and 13th Streets, behind the Flats, where we played on the walkways with the results described above. And so we became nomads, Bedouins travelling to play until chased. The limited time at the "Y" was great, but sometimes we hankered for spontaneous games or pickup, unstructured sports played under our rules made to fit where we played. And we had some favorite spots around town.

Stevens was close, and boy, did it have some open, grassy areas we coveted, many more than today. One was the lawn of the Beta house at the top of Castle Point



Some of the boys in 1947. From the left: Peter Smith, Ray Fiore, Jack Sheey, Louie Terminello, Freddie Mollo, Charlie F.X. Poggi, Dick Rush, John Moriarty, John Conway, and Jimmy Reilly.

Terrace and 9th Street. On the north side of the fraternity house, extending a short way toward Hudson Street, we played touch football, trespassing as we did, and usually in the summer and during vacations and holidays when students had left the campus. We played, of course, until chased. Today trees grow right down the middle of our gridiron.

When it snowed, Castle Point from the top of the street to the Park became a hill for sledding, where we made pests of ourselves with our Flexible Flyers and our noise, although I do not recall complaints. The trick was to stop before hitting the fence at the bottom. For some of the guys a sled ride down 9th toward Hudson was faster, but with traffic crossing at the bottom, was dangerous.

We engaged in another dispute with Stevens and the Institute won that one too. One block east of the fraternity house, toward the River, and just inside the gates of the campus, was a circular plot of grass perhaps a quarter of a football field across. We named it "The Bowl." Here we played tackle football and usually got in a half hour or so before the grounds keeper came to run us off. To make some scores, games tended to be fast. It was a short-huddle, passing game all the way. The college eventually put a couple of roads through The Bowl, although some open area survives today.

(In passing, I must note that we took no offense at being chased, it was a part of life. In fact, we later received permission to use a court and locker room in the Stevens field house for basketball.)

One of the places we played touch and stickball the year round is today the location of the Sinatra Drive (*nee* River Road) entrance to the Maxwell House plant. The site then was an asphalt-paved loading and marshalling yard for freight trains. Home base was to the east where, believe it or not, one or two sluggers could loft the hollow rubber "Spaldeen" to the second and third floor of the buildings on the west side of the 1000 block of Hudson Street. I am told, but never did it myself since I could never hit the ball with a broomstick bat, that a homer once was hit over the rooftops.

My game on the asphalt, such as it was, involved what was supposed to be touch football. However, I can recall a few of us with patched and darned trouser knees earned by scrapes along the ground while trying to stop one of the few running plays we had. One of our most successful calls was a pass between two boxcars, which was not out of bounds if the ball was caught. Naturally, we called the game "boxcar football." We played in and on top of the boxcars as well.

Leonard A. Luizzi's fine article [Memories of Sybil's Cave by Leonard A. Luizzi, Sr. *Hoboken History*, Summer 1992] reminds me that we also played on the path along what we called the "Green Mountains," above Sinatra Drive. The pipe he climbed we knew as the "Monkey Pipe," and we scrambled up and down many a time. We had a few scraps with various other groups of boys who used to claim the path as their own, but the squabbles tended to be limited with no one the worse for wear.

But Liddy was right about the waterfront where ships came and went for repairs, taking on and discharging passengers and freight, or just refitting. Until World War II closed the area for security reasons, we really had more or less free rein to come and go until, of course, we were discovered and would take off. I can remember the day we boarded one of the Erie Railroad's harbor tugs and somehow escaped notice of any of the watchmen. About six of us became seamen for an afternoon, two on the bridge giving orders to the "deck hands" and to me and my pal in the engine room. The engine room was deep in the hull of the ship, however, with no view of the River and I was one of the first to call a halt to the game. If I couldn't be on the bridge, I was on my way home.

Another, not particularly smart, pastime for many of the young boys was swimming sans clothes in the River. "It was dirty and it stunk," to quote Rudyard Kipling in other context, but some swam from the railroad pier just off Elysian Park. The pier rots away there now and it's just as well. Those in the swim cooled off in the summer but returned home trying to explain to their moms tar spots on their clothes and skin. None of our gang swam, perhaps because several girls we knew lived up on Castle Point and rumor was that they shared a powerful set of binoculars, or so the story went.

I guess our experience as boys in Hoboken wasn't much different from those of city kids in other places. As we grew older, high school and college facilities opened to us and we found other places to play. And, of course, we discovered girls. Or did the girls of Hoboken discover us?

Well, that's how I remember it. It wasn't Mark Twain's Hannibal on the Mississippi, but it was our Hoboken. Hoboken on the Hudson.

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Continued from inside front cover

FUTURE MEETINGS

The Museum's Board now holds its business meetings on the second Wednesday of each month:

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 9
WEDNESDAY JANUARY 13.
WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 10
WEDNESDAY MARCH 10

Meetings are held at 7:30pm at Traders of Babylon, 259 First Street. All members are welcome.

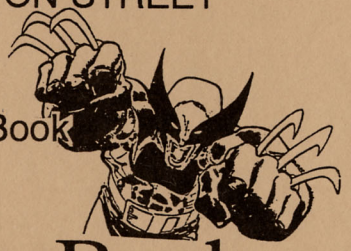
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MILLICENT FENWICK
1910-1992

Museum member Millicent H. Fenwick, a retired Republican Congresswoman renowned for her political independence and championing of liberal causes, died of heart failure on Wednesday, September 16 at her home in Bernardsville.

Mrs. Fenwick was a daughter of Mary Stevens of Hoboken's Stevens family.

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By Ken Schultz:
commemorative medal for 50th anniversary of incorporation of Hoboken, 1905, "compliments of Martin Daab Jr.," proprietor of the Duke's House.
Black & white unmounted photograph circa 1920s, taken from ship alongside the Holland-America pier at 4th Street
Tobacco advertising card from a Yacht Club series, picturing Annie Sommerville of the Hoboken Yacht Club, circa late 19th C.
Sheet music of *Society Belles Yorke Dance*, cover imprinted "To Robert E. Meyer, Hoboken, N.J."

By Dave Marsch of People's Photo Service, 510 Washington Street:
Paperweight with image of St. Mary Hospital, Hoboken
Pamphlet for *Farmers Almanac*, cover imprinted "Compliments of Steve Cappiello."

By Frank Janse:
Painting, 11x17, depicting cargo vessel Export Banner loading at Pier B, by A. Brenet, 1963

By Kevin Houghton
Bound volume of the *Hoboken Standard* newspaper, 1859.
Bound volume of the *Hudson County Democrat*, April 1862 to April 1863.

PURCHASES

Two black & white photographs depicting the edge of Hoboken Cemetery in North Bergen circa 1920.

Commemorative sterling silver spoon from Trinity Church, circa 1890.

Leather barber's razor strop embossed "Geo. E. Lohrman, Hoboken, N.J.", circa 1890s.

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