

UNION COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



May Meeting

The May meeting of the Society was held on the 17th of that month in the Hanson House. During the course of the afternoon we had intended to present to Alice Holzapfel a Certificate of Appreciation, but she was unable to attend. She is retiring from her many city, state, and society activities, and has sold her house and will be moving shortly out of New Jersey. The certificate was given to her at home on a later date. We regret her departure from the Society, but wish her well in her new life.



Jewish Educational Center in Elizabeth. Their awards also included copies of the Society's books by Jean-Rae Turner and by Valentine

by our president, Charles Shallcross, and the Awards were presented by Michael Yesenko, chairman of the Society's Award Selection Committee.



What was, perhaps, the most important part of the meeting was the awarding of some financial support to two graduating students of Union County high schools as they prepare to enter college.

The awards were made to Elise Morano, of Union Catholic Regional High School in Scotch Plains, and to Michael Glaser, of the Rav Teitz Mesivta Academy of the

Fallon, as well as copies of the large poster about the centennial of the Union County Court House.

As a part of the program a slide show was presented about the city of Elizabeth and its 350 years of existence since 1664. The show was produced from some of the many pictures in our files of the early years of the city.

The meeting was conducted

Independence Day

Once again the birthday of our country, July 4th, is upon us, and we will celebrate this great event of the Declaration of Independence of the 13 English colonies that became our country with parades and fireworks, as it should be.

However, there are a few interesting but little noted details about this moment of history. The writing of such a declaration was assigned to five members of the Congress but almost all of the wording is that of Thomas Jefferson. The finished document was delivered to Congress on the 28th of June for debate and acceptance. A resolution of independence had been made earlier, but postponed until July 1, and was now taken up, and passed on the 2nd of July, which is the actual date of independence.

The debate of acceptance of the written Declaration was begun on July 3rd and passed on July 4th, and signed by John Hancock, the president of the Congress, who is said to have written large, "so that John Bull can read it without is glasses." With his signature the written declaration thus became a legal document and the official birthday of our country.

However, it was several days before the other 55 members signed. On July 19 Congress ordered that the Declaration should be engrossed on parchment, and it was then on August 2, 1776, that fifty-three members added their signatures. The other two members signed later, with the last member so doing on November 4, 1776.

Pictures From Our Files



On the south-west corner of Chestnut Street and First Avenue once stood the Tiernan Building owned by Frank Tiernan. Built around 1870, and torn down in 1938, it was the site of many historic events in the town of Roselle, New Jersey.

A three story building, its first floor contained a variety of small businesses through the years, including a laundry

and a drug store. When a telephone system came to town, the first switchboard was located in the drug store.

This was long before any automatic equipment had been invented, and when one of the few subscribers lifted up is receiver and cranked up the instrument, a light lit up on the switchboard and a bell notified the operator that someone wished to make a call. When the operator cut in, the caller simply asked to be connected to the required telephone of some other party. This was done by the operator plugging in a wire to the appropriate jack in the switchboard. When the call was terminated, the indicating light went out and the wire was unplugged by the operator. This system could be used twenty-four hours a day, because the operator and the druggist lived on the

second floor or the building, which was residential.

The third floor was a wide open area that was used for meetings, including the Acacia Lodge of the Masons. When electricity came to Roselle, this lodge became the first such lodge in the world to be so lighted.

That third floor became the meeting room of the village leaders and other residents,

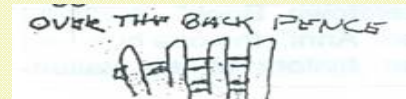
although it shared that duty with the Wheatsheaf Tavern at the south end of Chestnut Street, at St. George's Avenue. When the issue of independence from Linden Township came to a head, an election was ordered, and both the notices of the election and the later actual voting were held in these two buildings. This vote resulted in the establishment of the Borough of Roselle on the 20th day of December, 1894.

The date of when this picture was taken is unknown, but there are a few clues. It is the wintery time of the year as there are no leaves on the trees, and the street light and power wires suggest about the 1900s. The flag on the pole is at half-mast, indicating the death of some important person. Who could it be?

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the society will be held on September 13, 2015 at the Hanson House at 2 PM. This will be our annual picnic, held in the backyard of the house.

The society does not meet during the summer months, but there will be a meeting of the Executive Board on August 23, 2015 at 1:30 in the Hanson House, where plans and details for the new year will be determined.



Alan Zimmerman says that he's feeling much better since he got a grease job on his knees. Keep it up, Alan.

Walter Boright says that he has received a number of compliments about his slide show program about the many governors of the State of New Jersey.