



UNION COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



December Meeting

The last meeting of the year was held in the Hanson House, as a combined meeting with members of the Cranford Historical Society. Those members provided a singer of songs, who sang songs appropriate for the time.

Very little business was conducted by either society, after which it was "party time", with a large variety of food covering the dining table.

Holidays Long Ago

Now that the holiday season is over, with New Year's Day finally celebrated, it might be worth looking back to how things were done many years ago. Let's go back to Armistice Day, when we remembered that moment on the eleventh hour of the eleventh month of 1918, when the guns of the War to End All Wars fell silent, and the world was at last safe for Democracy.

Parades were held almost everywhere, with marching veterans of that war, and of the Spanish-American War, and even some survivors of the Civil War, riding in open cars. A moment of silence at eleven o'clock marked the occasion.

A few weeks later, the last day of November was always saved for Thanksgiving Day, and stories of the Pilgrims of 1620 filled the newspapers and the classrooms in school, where costumed students

took part in plays of Plymouth Plantation, and the first Thanksgiving, with the Indians as guests.

Not much was said about Christmas until Thanksgiving Day had passed, and then the stores burst forth with all sorts of decorations and displays. Show windows featured many gift items, but the big attraction was the electric train set-up, with miniature trains running through their miniature villages. A close second attraction was the automated elves busy in the workshops of Santa Claus, making the toys he would deliver down the chimneys of the best behaved children.

Finally the Holiday Season ended with New Year's Day, usually a quiet day of thoughts about the new year, after a boisterous celebration the night before, New Year's Eve.

Gains and Losses

As we commence the new year of 2016, it is a good time to look backward through the previous year to remember our accomplishments and our losses.

Our greatest loss was the death of Dick Koles, early in March. He had every expectation of returning to his work in our office, but it was not to be.

Through the years Dick had sorted and filed into the computer the thousands of pictures of events and people

prominent in Union County. Many of them he had taken himself as a newspaper photographer, and could tell many interesting details of the occasion.

Another loss was that of Eleanor Dixon, who attended almost every meeting and supported the society in its endeavors.

On the bright side was a very successful anniversary dinner, where Walter Boright amazed us with the number of state governors and details of their administrations.

Later in the year we were able to provide quite a number of pictures and other material to member John Mazurkiewicz for his program about the hospitals of Elizabeth. His final program contained a fantastic amount of research, and he presented it at our October meeting for all of us to see.

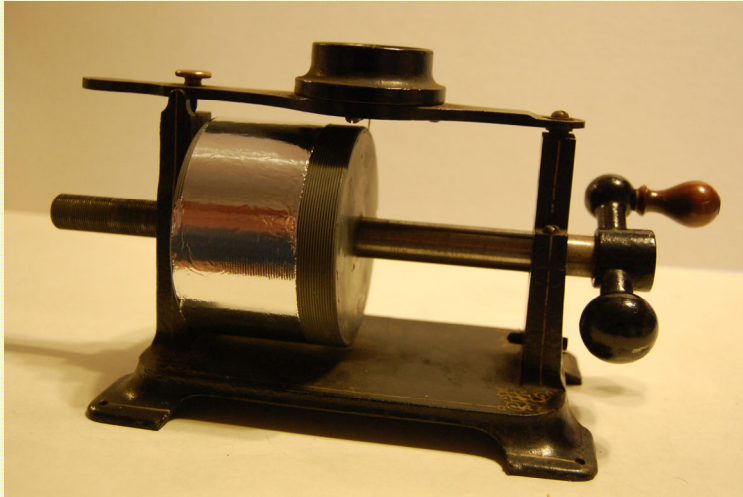
The September picnic and meeting went very well, with lots of good food, and featuring two antique Fords, driven in by Herb Singe and his museum curator.

Late in November just before Thanksgiving, we lost the services of our treasurer, Bill Frolich, who spent the entire holiday season in the hospital and re-habilitation center. However, his is recovering nicely and soon should be back at work.

Our Holiday meeting provided a cheerful way to celebrate the end of the year and the coming New Year.

Pictures From Our Files

Seen here is a replica of the first actual device that could record and play back any sound that had been impressed upon it. This Machine is one of several such replicas made years after its invention.



The talking machine was invented in 1877 by Thomas Edison in his laboratory at Menlo Park, New Jersey. Aware that sound can be produced by vibrations, he made a rough sketch of a vibration recording and reproducing device of which he had conceived and asked his machine shop foreman to have it built. The next day he was presented with the result, a creation almost identical with the replica on display here.

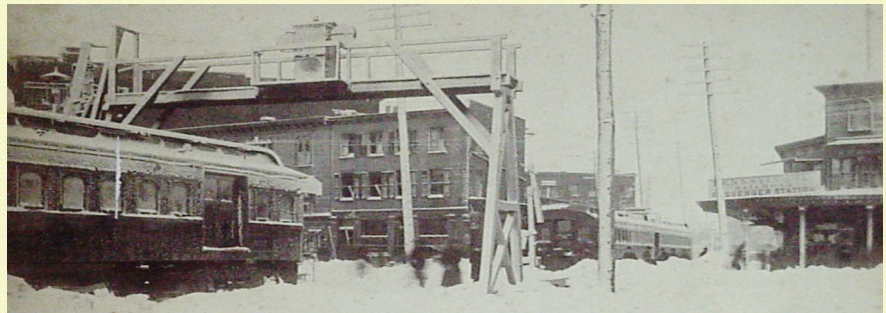
A thin sheet of soft lead foil was wrapped around the threaded drum and the stylus set in place against the foil. Using the small handle to rotate the drum, he spoke the words of the familiar nursery poem, "Mary had a little lamb."

The sound of his voice activated the diaphragm to which the stylus was attached, and its vibrations were impressed into the foil. After re-setting the machine, Edison again turned the handle, and

his words were clearly heard, re-produced by his "talking machine."

Although at first Edison felt that his invention was nothing more than a child's toy, other companies recognized its potential, and the inventor was forced to meet the

competition. Cylindrical and later flat discs soon were available everywhere, and Edison even made some



Unbreakable discs about 1/4 inch thick, which he demonstrated by tossing them out of a window.

His studio recorded most of the popular voices of the day, and in the archives of the museum in West Orange are the masters of thousands of those voices.

It was in such a manner that the recording industry was born. Improvements were soon made by both competitors and by Edison. Cylindrical, and later, flat disc records were made and sold commercially, and before

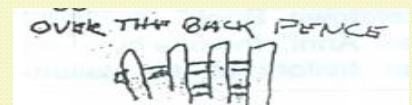
long, music of recorded artists was heard in everyone's home.

Happy New Year

It's that time of the year again when Christmas is over and a new year has begun. It is also the time to renew your interest in the Society and pay the annual dues. The rate is still the same as in last year, and an envelop and sign-up slip are enclosed for your convenience. We expect to have some very impressive programs in 2016, held mostly in the Hanson House. Please note that, after considerable discussion concerning the possibility of foul weather in February, it was decided to move the meeting to March 6, 2016, which will be our next meeting date. We hope to see you there.

There is no guarantee that the weather in March will be any better than it might have

been in February. March 12, 1888 is still remembered for the famous "Blizzard of '88" with its ten-foot high drifts of snow that stalled traffic and even the Pennsylvania Railroad train in the middle of Elizabeth.



According to Bill Frolich, who recently spent some time in the hospital and rehab center things have not changed much since the last time he was there.