

History of Lakewood
<http://www.lakewoodnj.gov/history.php>

Millionaires and common folk, pivotal events and everyday happenings - they're all threads running through the colorful tapestry of Lakewood Township's history.

[The remnants of Lakewood's vibrant history have been preserved at these historic sites.](#)

When the first settlers came they found the Lakewood of today a dense forest, situated on off beaten Indian trails, during the days when Freehold, Tennent and Toms River were focal points in the American Revolution. The settlers gradually cleared the land, built their homes and created small hamlets, which they named after families or events which identified the particular localities. The first recorded history of present Lakewood began with the "Three Partners' Mill," an area running parallel with the present State Highway 88, in the area of the South branch of the Metedeconk River. In this area, three Skidmore brothers John, George and Henry, settled. They dammed the stream and built a sawmill; in fact, lumbering continued to be a main source of income for the settlers until it was discovered that the soil was rich in ironstone, a brown lumpy ore, hard and studded with gravel.

In 1814, Jesse Richards moved here from Washington Township, Burlington County. He came from a family of blast-iron furnace operators and with a partner, William Irwin, organized a company to develop ironstone. They purchased large tracts of land to get water sheds for their mill ponds, ore for their smelters and timber for their fuel and built a blast furnace. Soon the settlements of "Three Partners' Mill" became known as "Washington's Furnace." In addition, Richards organized Lakewood's first mail service. He employed one man, who drove to and from Freehold with letters and other valuables where they were picked up by the stagecoach, which ran between New York and Philadelphia.

The iron ore business of Richards and Irwin was very successful until 1832 when it began to fail and was finally purchased by Joseph W. Brick, another resident of Burlington County. Brick revived the blast-iron furnace business and organized the Bergen Iron Works, and within the next several years, the iron works business grew rapidly. By 1884 the population of "Washington's Furnace" had grown to 200. Almost all of the inhabitants of the community were employed in one way or another by Brick. Rows of log huts, housing employees, extended along Clifton Avenue from First Street to Main Street and between the two lakes, which had no names at this time. In fact, the community changed the name of the settlement to "Bergen Iron Works".

The Bergen Iron works conducted its own store and issued its own currency. Since the railroad had not yet come to the area, products of the blast furnace were hauled by six team wagons over a plank road to Furnace Dock, now Cedar Bridge, in the Laurelton section of the present Brick Township. The heavy planks, laid over the sand, made it possible for the horses to pull the heavy loads. At Furnace Dock, the products were loaded into scows, which carried them down the Metedeconk River to Bay Head, where they were placed aboard schooners bound for New York and other parts, by way of Barnegat Inlet. The foundry was located south of Main Street, between Hurley and River Avenues, at the site of the present FirstEnergy Park, and Joseph Brick

conducted a successful business until his death. Shortly thereafter, the settlement changed its name from "Bergen Iron Works" to "Bricksburg" in his honor. A close friend of the Brick family, Henry Alexander, named the two lakes adjacent to the FirstEnergy property. The largest lake in the village was named "Carasaljo" after Brick's three daughters, Carolina, Sarah and Josephine, who were known to the town folk as Carrie, Sally and Jo. The small lake was named "Manetta" for Brick's wife, Margaret.

From its earliest beginnings, Bricksburg and its predecessors in name were a part of Monmouth County. In 1850, Ocean County was created when the southern townships of Jackson, Plumstead, Stafford, Union and part of Dover were severed from Monmouth County. The then settlement of Bergen Iron Works became a village of the Township of Brick. The County Seat was established in Toms River and the original Court House was built at a cost of \$9,966.50.

In 1863, the New Jersey Southern Railroad was built and the rail facilities were excellent between New York and Philadelphia.

Two years later, the first Episcopalian Church for the community was erected at the site of the present Baptist Church on First Street and Clifton Avenues. This structure now stands on First Street, opposite the No. 1 Fire House and was given over for services of the African Zionist Methodist Episcopal Congregation. It is probably one of the oldest remaining landmarks of our community.

By 1866, the discovery of anthracite coal near large iron deposits in Pennsylvania spelled the end of the bog-iron industry in this area. It was at this time that the **Bricksburg Land and Improvement Company was formed**. The Executor of the Brick Estate and the heirs who owned the balance of the holding of Brick in the village comprised the newly organized company and placed the land on the market, advertising five and ten acre tracts in various New York City newspapers. The village was laid out in streets by Samuel Shreave, a civil engineer. **The first agent of the Land Company was Major William J. Parmentier, grandfather of one of Lakewood's former Tax Collectors, Amory J. Parmentier.**

In the 1860's, several prominent bankers came to Bricksburg to invest in the real estate. Among them were Charles H. Kimball and Samuel B. Davis. They, together with Captain Albert M. Bradshaw, the leading real estate man in the village, and J.M. Leavitt, acquired all of the stock of the Bricksburg Land and Improvement Company.

In 1865, Riley A. Brick, the son of Joseph W. Brick, erected a two and a half story building on Main Street, east of the present Post Office. This architectural wonder was originally known as the Bricksburg House and later became known as the Laurel House. The "Romantic Laurel House" as it was then known was host to the Vanderbilts, Goulds, Rockefellers, Astors, Tilfords, Rhinelanders, Kipps, Arbuckles and scores of other families of social prominence. Oliver Wendell Holmes and Rudyard Kipling would sit on the floor by the fireplace and recite poems and tales to the children, who would gather around to listen.

Because the name of the town did not suit the visions its promoters had for it, Samuel D. Davis suggested the name "Brightwood." Erastus Dickinson suggested "Lakewood" and the Times and

Journal conducted a house-to-house canvass of the citizens, who voted for "Lakewood" by a large majority. On March 20, 1880, the Post Office officially recognized the name of the village as "Lakewood." Soon Lakewood became known as the resort in the heart of the pines.

Several magnificent hostelrys were constructed during the ensuing decades, among them were the Laurel-in-the-Pines and the Lakewood Hotel, both of which opened their doors in 1891. The Lakewood Hotel was once the winter headquarters of Tammany Hall, in the days of Richard Croker. It stayed open long after the season closed, to enable President Cleveland to pass his dying days as peacefully as possible. In addition, it served as a rest and rehabilitation center for the wounded of World War I. The hotel was built by a syndicate headed by Nathan Strauss and its structures covered 14 acres between Clifton Avenue and Lexington Avenue. In addition to the great hotels, Lakewood saw the establishment of a large number of magnificent homes, including the John D. Rockefeller Estate, now Ocean County Park; and the Grover Cleveland Cottage, formerly located on Lexington Avenue, north of Carey Street. Socialites, such as the Packs, the DeForests, the Willocks and the Lynches, settled here.

By 1891, the village of Lakewood was the largest in the Township of Brick. However, the surrounding villages of Greenville, Herbertsville, and Bethel (Southard) produced most of the governing officials. As a result, the village of Lakewood received little attention. This led to the movement to establish the village itself as a Township and on March 23, 1893, the Township of Lakewood was created and incorporated by the State Legislature pursuant to Chapter CXXXI, Laws of 1892. The initial Township Committee was composed of Luke Johnson, Chairman, Charles Dix and John Lane. The Township Clerk was John B. Peters. The Freeholder Representative was William J. Harrison; the Assessor, Richard B. Robbins; the Overseer of the Poor, Isaac K.L. Hyers; Surveyors of the Highways, Frank Housen and Joseph A. LeCompte; Justices of Peace, Abner Gant and Thomas J. Sprowl; Constables, Charles W. Crane and John D. Fogarty.

Up until 1902, the Township of Lakewood had no town hall. The Committee met in the various stores and offices of its members. However, in this year, Captain Alfred M. Bradshaw furnished the Township with its first Town Hall, a brick building located on the corner of Ocean Avenue and the railroad. This building served as the Township Hall until 1924, when a brick structure was erected in the place of the present Municipal Building (which itself was erected in 1969).

Many famous figures in the world of entertainment and sports worked and trained in the Township of Lakewood by the early 1900's. Richard Dix starred in a motion picture set in Lakewood, and the Laurel-in-the-Pines Hotel was the scene of Charles Evans Hughes' discovery that he had lost the presidential election.

In addition, James J. Corbett, Kid Mc Coy, Benny Leonard, Max Schmeling and Joe Louis trained in Lakewood. The New York baseball Giants used Lakewood as their training base during World War II.

The building boom that followed the close of World War I increased the population of Lakewood to 8,000. Many hotels were built with the added tourist trade, the population during the winter months rose to 35,000. Lakewood, by this time, was well established as a meeting place to the

elite and a renowned winter health resort. Many modes of transportation brought visitors from all parts of the country; among them the Jersey Central Railroad's famous "Blue Comet", the Public Service, Greyhound and Capitol Bus Lines. In addition, a private bus line operated by Pillion and Shibla made several daily runs between Lakewood and Asbury Park.

Subsequently, during the 1920's the original four hundred began to leave Lakewood, and with their exodus the complexion of the town changed. The poultry and egg business developed and became one of Lakewood's biggest industries. Many immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe settled in the Township and, at one time, there were approximately 60 poultry farms in Lakewood.

In 1943, Rabbi Aaron Kotler, Dean of Beth Medrash Govoha, a School founded in Eastern Europe (Belorussia) in 1898 for the study of the Torah and Talmud, purchased a building in Lakewood and reopened his Yeshiva with 13 students. Today there are over 4,500 and full and part-time students in this world-class institution.

Toward the end of the depression, in the early 1930's still more changes occurred. The Rockefeller Estate on Ocean Avenue was offered as a gift to the County of Ocean by its trustees; the Gould Estate, along the northern side of Lake Carasajlo, had long since become the site of the present Georgian Court University; the Pack Estate would soon house St. Mary's Academy. Estates and mansions were converted into hotels and apartment houses. However, the second World War brought a temporary boom to Lakewood's hotel industry. In addition to serving its vacationers, it became a center for servicemen from Fort Dix, Lakehurst and Camp Evans. Nevertheless, by the mid 1960's, Lakewood saw the end of most of its largest hotels, and by 1967 the Lakewood Hotel, Grossman Hotel and Laurel-in-the-Pines Hotel were no longer in existence.

Lakewood, however, has always had the ability to change with the times and adapt to new social and economic conditions. Progressive minded public servants from Lakewood took the lead in the State of New Jersey in condemning vast tracts of land through the Blight Act leading to the establishment of large, clean industrial parks. In the past 25 years, these efforts have resulted in the creation of one of the largest industrial park facilities in the State of New Jersey; consisting of over 1,800 acres and over 8 million square feet of building space. The parks contain over 350 local, national and international companies providing ratables of over \$105 million and approximately 11,000 jobs for Lakewood and the surrounding area.

Furthermore, in the late 1970's Lakewood saw the need to revitalize its historic downtown area and, accordingly, over a period of several years embarked upon a major redevelopment and beautification project which has resulted in a rebirth of the downtown area.

Apparently sensing the energy, vitality and spirit of the Lakewood community, the town has seen its population grow from approximately 20,000 in 1960 to over 60,352 at the present time.

On April 11, 2001, Lakewood became the home of the Lakewood BlueClaws, a Class A affiliate of the Philadelphia Phillies Major League Baseball Team. Home games are played in beautiful

FirstEnergy Park located at Cedarbridge and New Hampshire Avenues. The team has become the most successful minor league operation in the State of New Jersey.

On the horizon are improvements to the Garden State Parkway, construction of a first class hotel, further redevelopment of the downtown area and improvements to the Industrial Park, all of which will continue to keep Lakewood what its founders considered it two centuries ago: "The Garden Spot of the Garden State."

Written by Charles Mandell, Esq.