

*The Metuchen Historic Preservation Committee Presents*

# *Celebrate Metuchen: Caring for Our Architectural Heritage*



May 17, 2009

2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church Social Center  
270 Woodbridge Avenue, Metuchen

Funding in part has been provided by the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission, Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders, and the New Jersey Historical Commission/Department of State.

## *Program*

### Opening Remarks

**Richard Weber**

Councilman and Chair of the Metuchen Historic Preservation Committee

**The Honorable Thomas Vahalla**

Mayor, Borough of Metuchen

### Guest Speakers

**Janet W. Foster**

*"Identifying and Appreciating Metuchen's Architectural History"*

Associate Director for Urban Planning and Historic Preservation, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, Columbia University

**Elizabeth Reeves**

*"Taking Care of Your Older House: Tips and Techniques"*

Assistant Planner, Facilities Planning and Development, Rutgers University

### Closing Remarks

**Walter R. Stochel, Jr.**

President of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society

### *Mayor's Message*

Welcome, and thank you for joining us this afternoon as we explore the rich diversity of Metuchen's architectural history. The older homes and buildings that line our streets create a special ambiance and make Metuchen unique in this part of New Jersey. They connect us to our past and to the accomplishments of our ancestors, and they remind us that they need to be protected if our Borough is to preserve its historic character. Hopefully, through a renewed appreciation of the architectural significance of our many fine old homes and buildings, you will be motivated to join me, Councilman Weber, and the other members of the Borough Council in our efforts to establish a Historic Preservation Commission for Metuchen. Individually, we can care for the homes we live in; together, we can treasure the architectural legacy left to us and preserve it for future generations.

Thomas Vahalla

Mayor, Borough of Metuchen

## *A Letter from the Metuchen Historic Preservation Committee*

Dear Attendee,

We thank you for joining us today to celebrate Metuchen's architectural heritage. We would like to introduce you to our committee and explain our mission and efforts. Formed in January 2008 by Mayor Thomas Vahalla as an official organization within Borough government, the Metuchen Historic Preservation Committee has been charged with exploring steps to strengthen Metuchen's commitment to historic preservation. To accomplish its mission, the Committee has:

- Taken steps to encourage homeowners to appreciate and properly care for their older homes, including:
  - Applying for and receiving a grant from the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission to fund today's program; and
  - Researching "how-to" books that can be acquired for the Metuchen Free Public Library.
- Applied for and received a technical assistance grant from Preservation New Jersey to assist the Committee with developing Metuchen's "Historic Preservation Element" of its Master Plan. This section of the town's plan would set the foundation for describing what is considered historically important.
- Reviewed past historic sites surveys of Metuchen to determine what resources have been evaluated as historically significant. With only two structures (the Ayers-Allen House at 16 Durham Avenue and the Metuchen Post Office at 360 Main Street) on the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places, Metuchen is greatly under-represented in terms of statewide recognition of its historic resources. However, numerous other individual resources and one historic district were previously identified as being historically significant.
- Researched Metuchen's history through the records of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society.
- Initiated an examination of options for formally establishing a Historic Preservation Commission. Before formally proceeding, the Committee would work closely with the Mayor and Borough Council to solicit public input.

The Metuchen Historic Preservation Committee welcomes your input and participation. If you have any questions or comments – or would like to become involved in saving Metuchen's historic character – please sign up at our display table. We'd love to hear from you.

Sincerely,  
Metuchen Historic Preservation Committee

Councilman Richard Weber, Chair  
Suzanne Andrews  
Lori Chambers  
Tyreen A. Reuter  
Nancy L. Zerbe

## *About Our Guest Speakers*

**Janet W. Foster** is an architectural historian and historic preservation consultant with more than 25 years of experience researching and investigating New Jersey's architecture. After studying in the Historic Preservation Program at the Graduate School of Architecture, Columbia University, she co-founded, with Bob Guter, the historic preservation consulting firm Acroterion, known for its work in historic surveys, design guidelines, and research and investigation.

Ms. Foster has written three books about architecture: *Legacy Through the Lens* (Mendham, N.J., 1986); *Building by the Book: Pattern-Book Architecture in New Jersey* (with co-author Robert Guter, Rutgers University Press, 1992); and *Queen Anne Houses: America's Victorian Vernacular* (Abrams Publishers, 2006).

In addition, she lectures frequently and has written several articles about New Jersey's historic architecture. She has received awards for her work in historic preservation from the New Jersey Historical Commission, the State Historic Preservation Office, and Somerset County. She helped to develop and serves on the faculty and advisory board of the Historic Preservation Certificate Program at Drew University. She now serves as the Associate Director for Urban Planning and Historic Preservation at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation.

Ms. Foster lives with her husband and two sons in Madison, New Jersey, in a house built in 1896.

**Elizabeth Reeves** is an architect/planner with 30 years experience in architecture, interior design, planning, and construction. She earned a BArch from Cornell University and an MArch from New Jersey Institute of Technology. She is field-trained in historic preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation, having been mentored by preservation architect John Bruce Dodd and several "old school" builders. Her focus is primarily 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings and landscapes, 19<sup>th</sup>-century structural framing, and historic stone and brick restoration.

Reeves co-authored the nomination of the Centenary Collegiate Institute to the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places. She also co-authored the historic preservation district ordinances and design guidelines as a Class A member of the Town of Newton Historic Preservation District Advisory Commission.

In 2001, Reeves joined the planning staff of Rutgers University, which owns 88 New Jersey-registered historic properties; only the State of New Jersey itself holds more. She has promoted cultural awareness of Rutgers' historic campuses, buildings, and landscape features and has worked to encourage campus development in concert with historic preservation and respectful rehabilitation of Rutgers' cultural resources. She also serves as the university's liaison to New Jersey's Historic Preservation Office.

## *Many Thanks to Our Exhibitors*

- The Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission
- Preservation New Jersey (PNJ)
- Drew University's Certificate in Historic Preservation Program
- The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society
- The Thomas Edison Center at Menlo Park and the Edison Memorial Tower Corporation
- The Borough Improvement League of Metuchen (BIL)
- Lincoln Highway Association, New Jersey Chapter