



CROSSROADS

Newsletter – Spring 2024

ASSOCIATION NEWS

Spring is here and we made it through the winter months without having to cancel any of our monthly programs due to inclement weather! Our February program featured a most interesting documentary by Perth Amboy city historian and filmmaker John Kerry Dyke: *An American Master in Perth Amboy*. The film explored the art and legacy of F. Luis Mora (1874-1940) who today is regarded as “America’s First Hispanic Master.” Mora was raised in Perth Amboy where he married his childhood sweetheart, Sophia Compton, daughter of the Perth Amboy mayor. The documentary also featured many old photographs of Perth Amboy.

We were treated during our March program with a visit from Clara Barton! Guest speaker Bonnie L. Goldman, Esq. was in full costume during her very informative presentation on the life and times of Clara Barton and the restoration of the Clara Barton Schoolhouse in Bordentown, New Jersey. Check out their website at www.bordentownhistory.org and plan to visit this historic site. (Photo, left to right: Dr. Steven Lederman and Bonnie Goldman, Esq., Co-Presidents of the Bordentown Historical Society; Brenda Velasco, Woodbridge Township Historian; Daniel D’Arcy, Historical Association of Woodbridge Township President.)



We’ve reached a new milestone of 200 association members!



Our April program was presented by Melissa Ziobro, Director of Public History at Monmouth University. What was life like in New Jersey during the period between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of World War I that Mark Twain labeled “The Gilded Age?” Professor Ziobro shared insights into economic changes and class disparities, how powerful and influential families achieved wealth and celebrated it as never before, and instructed us on “Dollar Princesses” – American heiresses who married into European aristocracy. Her energy and enthusiasm during the presentation was contagious and those in attendance were thoroughly engaged in this fascinating program.

Museum Update

Work continues at the Woodbridge History Museum at 86 Green Street. Volunteers are working tirelessly to sort through our collection of artifacts and memorabilia to fill the display cabinets.



HAWT is proud to be operating this new museum – a place to display our historical artifacts and enlighten the public to the township's unique past. We anticipate a Summer 2024 opening!



Donation from Woman's Club of Fords

Historical Association of Woodbridge Township recently received a \$9000 donation from the Woman's Club of Fords. Disbanding after 104 years of service in Woodbridge Township, the Woman's Club worked toward community betterment since its founding in 1920. Among the organization's many accomplishments and charitable projects was operating the Fords Library from 1924 to 1964. Their donation to HAWT is greatly appreciated.

Follow Us on Facebook

We now have TWO Facebook pages! Our main page [Historical Association of Woodbridge Township](#) will continue to provide information about our programs and special events along with historical photo posts and the popular **Where in Woodbridge Wednesday** feature.

Become a follower of our NEW Facebook page [Woodbridge History Museum](#). In addition to updates on museum progress, this page has a new **Figure it out Friday** feature. As volunteers work to photograph and inventory all the items in our possession in preparation for the museum exhibits, there are some items that are a mystery. We share a photo of one of these items on Fridays and ask our followers to help us "figure it out."



Our website continues to be the "go to" place for all association news. Visit the events page, renew your membership online, view past issues of our Crossroads newsletter, or peruse the comprehensive section on Woodbridge Township history. Future links to be developed include an Artifacts Vault and Gift Shop.

www.woodbridgetownshiphistory.org

Spaghetti Dinner/Tricky Tray Fundraiser

There was a large turnout for the Spaghetti Dinner/Tricky Tray event on April 26! Attendees enjoyed an evening of great food and desserts, tricky tray baskets, and a 50/50 raffle.



A special note of thanks to the following donors and supporters:

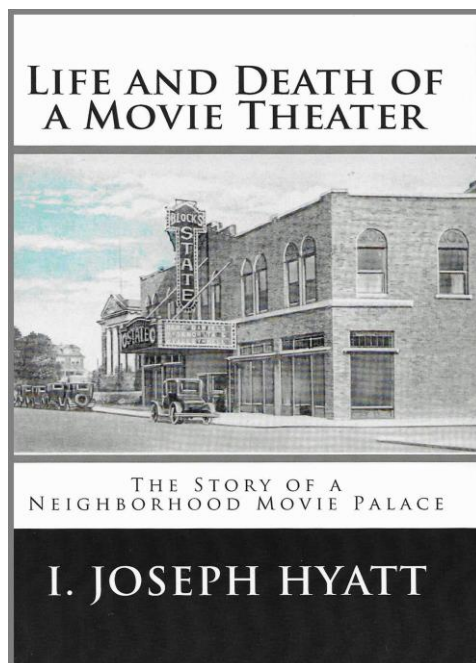
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Thank you to all our members and volunteers – we are grateful for your support and generosity in helping to make this annual fundraiser a success.

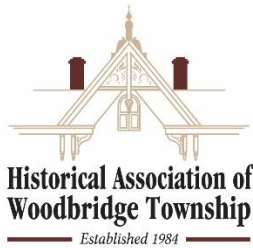
Movie Memories

For almost 45 years Main Street in Woodbridge had the State Theater, which was located next to its Town Hall. This grand movie palace sat over 1150 people. Opening the evening of September 19, 1927, the theater quickly became the “place to go” in Woodbridge Township. Many older Woodbridge residents remember Tuesday night's “dishes for the ladies.” Many generations also recall Thomas “Speck” Coughlin who for almost 4 decades (ending in 1969) tore tickets at the front door. From “West Side Story” to “Doctor Doolittle,”

from “The Three Stooges” to the “Beatles’ Hard Day’s Night,” and from Elvis to James Bond, we grew up looking forward to every Saturday afternoon. There were over 10 theaters in Woodbridge Township and the surrounding area. We were the home to the Woodbridge Drive-in, the Fords and Iselin Theaters, the Fox and Movie Theater Five, just to name a few. We will always treasure our shared local movie memories.



The 2024 updated “Life and Death of a Movie Theater” by local author I. Joseph Hyatt is available on Amazon, both in paperback and now on Kindle.



PO Box 83
Woodbridge NJ 07095

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Email: hawt1669@gmail.com

Phone: 732-634-1669

Website:

www.woodbridgetownshiphistory.org



Woodbridge History Museum
86 Green Street, Woodbridge

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS

May 20, 2024 – Monthly Program

“Ulysses and Julia Grant: Dancing on the Edge of the Gilded Age.”

Born on America’s frontier, Ulysses and Julia Grant were one of the great love stories of the 19th century, and their lives spanned the full experience of America’s transformation from the 1820s to the Gilded Age that emerged after the end of the Civil War. Follow their lives from courtship through parenthood, from failed farmer to triumphant general, and on into their later years. Presented by Ulysses Grant Dietz, Chief Curator Emeritus of Newark Museum of Art and Board Member of the Ulysses S. Grant Association, who is the youngest of Ulysses and Julia’s 41 great-great-grandchildren.

Join us at 7pm in the Parish Hall at Trinity Episcopal Church, 650 Rahway Avenue, Woodbridge. (Note location change for this program.)

June 24, 2024 – Monthly Program

“Leisure Activities in Woodbridge: 1850-1950” presented by the Woodbridge Township Historic Preservation Commission. Leisure is recognized as an important part of public policy – with families, government, religious groups, businesses, and other organizations all having a stake in its development. Join us at 7pm in the Fellowship Hall at First Presbyterian Church, 600 Rahway Avenue, Woodbridge as we learn about various forms of recreation that provided an enriching environment for Woodbridge Township residents.

Historical Association of Woodbridge Township is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit tax-exempt charitable organization.