

The Stories of

NEW

MILFORD

New Jersey



## Introduction

New Milford's motto is "the Birthplace of Bergen County." The county was founded in 1683, so it might seem puzzling that 2022 marks just the 100th anniversary of the borough's incorporation. Let's clear up that confusion.

New Milford is known as the "Birthplace of Bergen County" because it is the site of the first *permanent* settlement of non-native people in Bergen County. On June 8, 1677, David Demarest Sr., a French Huguenot, signed a deed with the Tappans granting him about 2000 acres of land on the east side of the Hackensack River. That deed is known as the French Patent.

Demarest was born in 1620. His family left France in 1643 and lived in the Netherlands and Germany before joining the Huguenot colony on Staten Island in 1663. Two years later, Demarest, his wife, Marie, and their four children moved to the Dutch settlement of New Harlem, in what is now upper Manhattan.

David Sr. became an active member of the settlement. His time there was not without difficulty or sadness. Legal records show that he was involved in several disputes with his neighbors. A son Daniel, who was born when the family lived in New Harlem, died in an accident. A restless Demarest decided to uproot his family one last time.

Demarest petitioned Sir George Carteret, the proprietor of East and West Jersey, for permission to establish a settlement for French Huguenots. Carteret agreed with the provision that Demarest pay the Tappans for the land.

The Demarests left New York and sailed up the Hackensack to their new home. During the trip, Demarest's wife, Marie, died, possibly of smallpox. One of the first things they did when they came ashore was to bury Marie. She's the first person laid to rest in what is now known as the French Burying Ground.

The family built a house (a log cabin) where the Elks Club now stands, and the first church stood at the corner of what is now River Road and Patrolman Ray Woods Drive. In between these two buildings they set aside a plot of land for a family burying ground.

David Sr. also built another house for himself on River Road. This stone house, known as the Jacobus Demarest house, still stands, and it is



An artist's interpretation of the French Burying Ground with the Old Demarest House in the distance.

the oldest continuously occupied home in Bergen County. Ultimately David failed to attract enough French Huguenots to the area to support a church; however, many Dutch and English settled here.

That explains why New Milford is the "Birthplace of Bergen County."

To get to the 100th anniversary, let's fast forward through history to Bergen County in the late 1800s. Today, the county includes 56 boroughs among its 70 municipalities. The reason is due in part to schools and taxes – and the railroad.

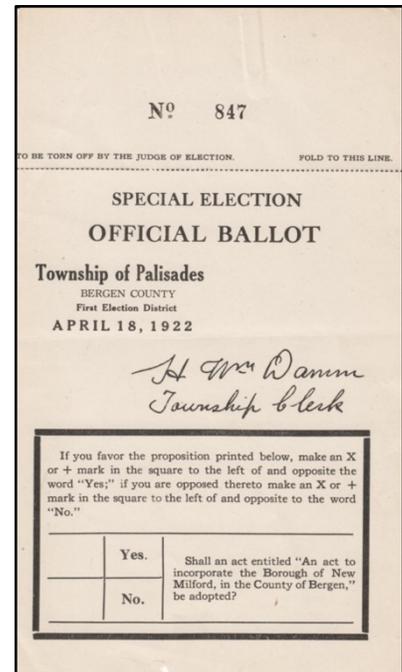
In the late 19th century, Bergen County, like much of New Jersey, was divided into large townships. As the railroad was built, commuter suburbs formed around railroad stations. Tensions arose between the growing number of commuters, who wanted more government services for the new developments, and long-time residents, such as self-sufficient farmers, who didn't want to pay taxes for services they wouldn't use.

A previously little-used law permitted small segments of existing townships to vote by referendum to form independent boroughs. Commuters took advantage of that law. Another law consolidated school districts into one per municipality. That made it easier for dissatisfied communities to form boroughs, to gain a seat on the county board and to keep control of local schools.

Between 1894 and 1895, 40 out of the 70 municipalities in Bergen County were formed. The state, seeing that "boroughitis" was getting out of hand, closed the loophole in the law. Boroughs could still be formed, but the process was controlled by the state legislature.

New Milford was part of Palisades Township, which extended from the Hackensack River east to the Hudson River. When "boroughitis" hit, Tenafly, Bergenfield and others broke away. By 1922, the last remaining unincorporated areas of the township were in what we now know as New Milford. On March 11, 1922, the New Jersey Senate and General Assembly introduced "An Act to Incorporate the Borough of New Milford, in the County of Bergen." However, the legislation could not be enacted without voter approval. On April 18, 1922, residents voted 280 to 36 to incorporate as a borough, effectively putting an end to Palisades Township.

Unlike earlier boroughs that were formed by like-minded groups of people, New Milford was formed by several distinct communities. Peetzburgh, to the north, was a planned suburban development. River Edge Manor (Old



Bridge), which was in the center, was once home to the Demarest's family's mill. New Bridge, to the south, was primarily farms.

There was tension between the communities. For example, the Steuben School (now the Hovnanian School) was built in 1921 on River Road. The architect was John Abram Gurd, a leading citizen of River Edge Manor. That location was selected because residents of River Edge Manor were tired of traveling to Peetzburgh for school and were threatening to secede from the township. At the same time they were frustrated with the folks on the "southside" – the farmers of New Bridge -- who didn't want their taxes to increase to pay for a new school.

During the Great Depression, many farmers went bankrupt. Banks took control of their properties and sold the land to real estate developers. In 1940, the population of New Milford was approximately 3,200. By 1960, the population was slightly less than 19,000. In a space of about 20 years, the population increased nearly six-fold! By 1970, the population topped out at 19,149. Over the next few decades, the number of residents declined. The 2020 U.S. Census set the borough's population at 16,297.

It's this time frame – from the post war period to the present – that is the primary focus of this oral history project sponsored by the New Milford Historic Preservation Commission. The following stories were edited by Nancy Varettoni and are based upon interviews conducted by John Minko, the legendary sportscaster and longtime New Milford resident, as well as members of the commission. We extend our deepest appreciation to John for offering his time and talent, and we thank everyone who participated in this project. Photographs are from the commission's archives and clippings from the website, newspapers.com. We welcome additional stories. If you would like to participate, please contact the commission at [historic@newmilfordboro.com](mailto:historic@newmilfordboro.com).

*Funding has been made possible through grant funds administered by the Bergen County Division of Cultural and Historic Affairs, Department of Parks, through a General Operating Support grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the Department of State.*



**New Milford Historic Preservation Commission**  
(2021)

Nancy Varettoni, chairperson  
Al Carbone, vice chairperson  
Vivian Davis  
Cynthia Forster  
Lou Macario  
Darlene Minko

Lisa Purcell  
Bob Ryan  
Alex Tsakalis-Rey  
Thea Sirocchi-Hurley, council  
liaison

# Josephine Aparri

Interviewed April 2021 by John Minko

*Josephine Cabildo Aparri was born in the Philippines and moved to New York City in 1967 to work as a nurse at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital (now New York Presbyterian Hospital). In 1974, she and her husband, the late Leo Siruno Aparri, moved to New Milford, where they raised their family of three sons and one daughter. Ms. Aparri concluded her career at as a nursing educator, training practical nursing students and operating room technicians.*

When she was just 5 years old and living in the Philippines, Josephine Cabildo Aparri already knew her life's plan: she wanted to move to the United States and pursue a career as a nurse.

New York City was the most logical destination since her aunt and uncle lived on 136<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan. She wrote them a letter, and told them she was on her way.

"It cost an arm and a leg to do a phone call way back in '67," she recalled.

She was also impressed by Columbia Presbyterian Hospital.

"I saw it in the *American Journal of Nursing*. I wrote to the director of nursing ... because it was just so beautiful, you know, a garden and the hospital and all that," she said. "I was able to stay at the apartments, which were just across the street on 168th Street."

She already held a bachelor's of science in nursing from the University of the Philippines, but wanted to further her education. She enrolled in the master's program at Columbia University's Teachers College. She worked full time and took classes part time - and was exhausted all the time. She wonder how her classmates could afford to be full-time students.

"Oh, we have a scholarship, the Federal Trainee Scholarship," they told her. However, when Ms. Aparri asked the tuition aid officer if she could apply for the scholarship, he told her he didn't know if that would be possible.

"We haven't given to immigrants," he explained.



Undeterred, she asked him: "You tell me if American nurses and immigrants like myself from the Philippines pay a different kind of tax rate... (If) they have a higher tax rate, and I have a lower tax rate, then by all means, but then if it's the same tax rate, then I think I'm entitled to apply for a trainee scholarship."

The tuition aid officer was on his way to a meeting in Washington, DC, with the program's administrators and promised to raise the question of her eligibility with them. He returned with good news.

"So I was able to go full time, just like my classmates, and finished in one year," she said. "So that's like a lesson where you have to advocate for yourself; do not wait till somebody hands something to you."

In 1974, the young Aparri family was looking to leave the city for the suburbs. A realtor told them that many Filipinos had relocated to New Milford.

"I thought it would be easier for me to acclimate to the community when I know people from the Philippines, that there are Filipinos, here in town," she said.

Her children attended Berkley School and the middle school. Three children graduated from the high school, and one son graduated from Regis High School, an all-boy's high school in Manhattan run by the Jesuits.

"They had such good programs and curriculum in the elementary school, and then they got involved in CCD at Ascension Church," she said.

Her children also participated in an enrichment program at the middle school called "Saturday Fun Shop."

"That was the start of the technological age," she said. "We didn't have a computer, but they were exposed to the computer."

She and her neighbors would take turns carpooling their children to the middle and high schools. Ms. Aparri worked nights for seven years so she would be available for her children.

"The kids grew up, I would say, in a very healthy atmosphere," she said. "We had very good teachers, and they interacted with students so well. They also had afterschool programs that my kids were involved in. And that to me, just was very enriching and helped to develop the kids socially, emotionally and academically."

At the time, the borough's Asian-American and Pacific Islander community was growing, but it was still relatively small. Ms. Aparri

said her children did encounter some name calling, but the bullying was kept to a minimum.

When a brother-in-law and niece from the Philippines joined the family, the Aparris left their home on Princeton Street for a much larger house in Paramus. When it was time to downsize, they set their sights on returning to New Milford. It took them two years to find the right house.

"I just trusted God that, you know, wherever he puts us, is where we belong," explained Ms. Aparri, who said she became born-again Christian at a 1991 Billy Graham Crusade. "And as I said, I'm glad that we came back to New Milford.

"Some of the parents that I knew before were still here. So it made me feel at home again. And the Senior Center, I registered right away. And sure enough, I saw some retired nurses there that I knew. So it was like fitting in so fast."

When she returned, she noticed that the community had changed - in a good way.

"New Milford seems to be much nicer in terms of infrastructure, like this ball field now with the artificial turf," she said.

She continued, "I think that this town caters to all generations. And I find that very noticeable, because I'm a senior now. I'm 76. And when we moved here the second time, I was 72."

Ms. Aparri added, "I noticed too, that there's more diversity here." Her neighbors include families of Irish, South American and Filipino heritage.

She said her experience of living in New Milford has been overwhelmingly positive: "Very, very positive. I would advertise New Milford to friends who are looking for a place to move to."

# Roger Lane

*Interviewed October 2021 by John Minko*

*Roger Lane served as New Milford's mayor from 1987 to 1989 and was also on the borough council. He was born in Harlem and lived in the Bronx before his family moved to New Milford. He attended Berkley School and New Milford High School, and earned a degree in political science from Fairleigh Dickinson University. He and his wife, the former Kathleen Belthoff, live in Wyckoff.*

Roger Lane inherited his love of politics from his mother, who would tuck a transistor radio under her pillow so she could listen to the news at night.

"Why don't you want to know what's going on in the world?" she would ask her son.

Mayor Lane, an only child, was born in Harlem and lived in the Bronx just up the hill from Yankee Stadium.

"I actually could see the glow of the lights of the stadium," he recalled. "If somebody got a hit, you could hear the fans cheer."

When he was 9 years old, his parents moved to the Brookchester Apartments and enrolled their son in the fourth grade at Berkley School. One of his first memories of his time in New Milford is the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in November 1963. He remembers someone walking into the classroom and whispering to his teacher, who then started to cry. The class was dismissed for the day.

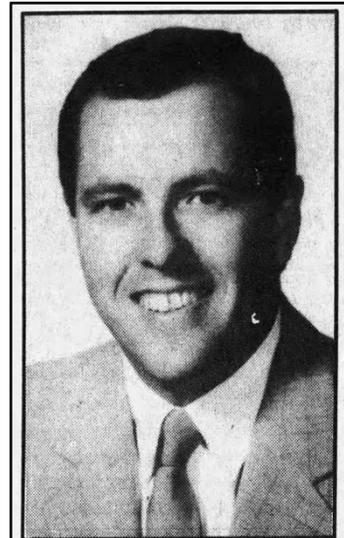
"They didn't tell us in school," he said. "I found out when I got home."

In the 1960s, New Milford schools were filled to capacity, and they operated on a "split schedule" to accommodate all the students.

"I started going to the high school in eighth grade because they were building the middle school at the time," said Mayor Lane.

Although he is a few years younger than Ed Marinaro, the New Milford football star who played for Cornell and in the NFL before pursuing an acting career, Mayor Lane recalls that everyone knew Marinaro was destined for success.

"He was a legend in the school," he said.



**Roger Lane, 32**, a Republican, is seeking a four-year term as mayor. Lane, of 690 Cypress St., is borough council president and is finishing the second year of his second three-year council term. He has been with Standard Telecommunications Inc. of Hackensack for five years, serving as the company's northeast regional sales manager for one year. He was graduated from Fairleigh Dickinson University in Teaneck with a bachelor of arts in political science. He lives with his wife, Kathy, and two daughters.

Mayor Lane was also part of another impressive accomplishment in New Milford sports history. He was a member of the undefeated track team coached by Bill Monaghan.

"From the time I got into high school until the time I became a senior, the New Milford High School track team never lost a dual meet," he said. What made the accomplishment even more improbable was that the team didn't have a track where they could practice.

"We used to run on the water works road straight behind the car spewing exhaust with Bill Monaghan driving," he recalled. "Everybody was like, 'Oh my gosh, he's trying to kill us!' But we had no track, so from a historical perspective the track team was a tremendous team."

His dream was to attend the U.S. Air Force Academy after high school graduation and was extremely disappointed when he didn't receive an appointment from U.S. Sen. Harrison A. Williams. Instead, Mayor Lane enrolled at "Harvard on the Hackensack," Fairleigh Dickinson University, where his mother supervised the mailroom.

At that time, Richard Nixon was president, and Mayor Lane, a political science major, recalled one course in particular where he gave two, half-hour presentations in defense of Nixon.

"I was a big Nixon supporter," explained Mayor Lane. Nixon's accomplishments, he acknowledged, have been overshadowed by his controversies.

In 1979, Lane entered his first campaign for council with his friend and another future mayor, James Battaglia.

"We knocked on just about every single door, and we kind of upset the applecart at the time," said Mayor Lane. "Both of us won."

Although he lost two consecutive bids for re-election, Mayor Lane returned to office on the third try.

"It was very painful at times," he recalled. "But you know, (when) you put yourself up for public scrutiny, you win sometimes, you lose sometimes."

Among his accomplishments as mayor, he cites the installation of the Veterans Monument and the relocation of the Jewish War Memorial on the grounds of borough hall.

"We thought it would be great to have all of the veterans' monuments located right at borough hall," he said. "We can honor everybody in one spot at one big ceremony."

The relocation of the public library to the old Williams (formerly New Bridge) School is another significant achievement, he said. Although there were conflicting proposals on where the library should be located, Mayor Lane believed that the Williams School site was most beneficial to the community. The land across the street from the school was sub-divided for housing, which gave the borough more

rateables, and the spacious building gave New Milford one of the biggest libraries in terms of square footage in the area.

"I think it's one of the larger libraries in Bergen County, and better yet, we maintained the entire field property that still exists for recreation purposes," he said.

Additionally, Mayor Lane noted improvements made to the Department of Public Works as well as the repaving Boulevard that was funded by a grant obtained by the late Marlene Casey.

"She worked extremely hard, and we got a lot of benefits in New Milford because of her efforts," he said.

The redevelopment of Oser's Farm on Henley Avenue was major issue during the 1980s. The farm had been sold to a private developer, and there was speculation that the property might be used for commercial or mixed use purposes.

"We felt that (area) was really strictly residential," he said. "I mean, not me personally, but the planning board ... wanted it to be residential. And that's what it is. And it worked out fine."

Mayor Lane believes the essential character of New Milford has remained the same over the years although some things have changed - in many cases for the better.

"If you look at the town just from an infrastructure standpoint, I think it's very similar," he said. There's still a shopping center across from Brookchester Apartments, although some of the stores are different. The apartment community itself is still standing and well maintained, he said. Ball fields and other recreational facilities have been upgraded.

"I look at those improvements there now and I think it's tremendous, you know, they did a wonderful job," he said.

Mayor Lane is mindful that decisions made by public officials can have lasting impact - sometimes in the most unexpected ways. One such decision involves the late Mario R. LaBarbera, a long-time mayor and former borough attorney.

"If you go down River Road, you see the Burger King," he explained. "Burger King's motto was, 'Home of the Whopper.' Mario LaBarbera, who was Italian, was not keen at all about the word 'whopper' because it was a bad word referencing Italians."



Mayor LaBarbera told the developer that he could build a Burger King on one condition: the restaurant's sign could not include the motto.

"If you have 'Home of the Whopper,' it will not be built!" Mayor LaBarbera threatened. "That's offensive to me as an Italian."

Several years later, Mayor Lane was having lunch with some friends after a round of golf at the Arcola Country Club in Paramus.

"I'm telling this story about the Burger King, and the guys at the table thought I was lying," he recalled. "I said, 'No, this is true!'"

"All of a sudden a voice in the back corner of the room says, 'He's absolutely right.'"

His friends asked, "How do you know?"

"I own the Burger King," the man replied. "I was the one that was told no 'Home of the Whopper.'"

"What are the odds?" asked Mayor Lane.

To this day, the sign at the Burger King on River Road doesn't have a motto.

## Dianne Linne Conklyn

Interviewed June 2021 by Lisa Purcell, Nancy Varettoni and Thea Sirocchi-Hurley

*Dianne Linne Conklyn was born in New Milford and attended Berkley School and David E. Owens Middle School. She graduated from New Milford High School in 1979 and earned a degree in nursing from William Paterson University.*

Growing up in New Milford, Dianne Linne Conklyn considered herself a "music person," and she still has her childhood clarinet to prove it.

"I tried softball - not too good with the eye-hand coordination. And I was usually in left field swatting gnats," she recalled.

"My nickname was 'Peanut'... by the time I got to high school, everybody else got taller and I didn't, so I just stuck with the music, dance (and) chorus stuff."

The Linne family lived on Bulger Avenue. Their cousins lived across the street. The neighborhood was filled with children - as were the local schools.

"It was just so many," she said. "We (Berkley School) had four kindergarten classes, because you had the morning and afternoon session. And Steuben had one as well. So if you count all the schools, there were like 10 kindergarten classes going on. And there were at least 25 of us... I was still in Berkeley, when they built the middle school."

"It was overwhelming," she continued, "going from little Berkley School to the middle school with kids from all (public) schools plus whoever might have come from the Catholic schools. It was it was amazing, though. I think my graduating class of high school (was) just shy of 200, which doesn't sound like much compared to some of the regional schools, but considering the size of our town."

Ms. Conklyn fondly recalls the teachers who nurtured their students' musical skills: band directors Herbert Knutson and Roger Blaine, and choral teachers Veronica Mitchell, Carol Colts Pickering and Wilbur Huyler.

"Those are some of my fondest memories," she said. "The performances, the rehearsals, the band trips!"

Band trip destinations included Orlando, Massachusetts, Virginia and Maine. For senior year, the band participated in an exchange program.

"We were assigned to stay with families, and then they came to stay with us," she explained. "The big tourist attraction for the Massachusetts exchange was that Paramus Park had opened. We had an indoor mall with a fountain! It was a big deal."

Being in marching bands also meant that Ms. Conklyn participated in numerous parades.

"The New Milford Elks had a Fife and Drums Corps," she said. "We would wear those little triangle hats, and we had vest with big gold buttons."

She also marched in the Memorial Day parade as a Girl Scout - her mother was a troop leader.

"Memorial Day parades were big," she said. " And then it was four years of marching with the high school. It's so funny. I remember being so specific, even when we were Girl Scouts and Boys Scouts, about how to properly hold the flag."

Other fond memories include shopping at Vay's supermarket, the opening Burger King, and working at Dairy Queen and Woodcrest Center.

"I remember the wood floors (at Vay's)," she said. "The sound that people's feet made on it; the sound that the shopping cart made on it." On one particularly memorable trip to Vay's with her mother, a fire broke out. "I remember her leaving the grocery cart and high-tailing it out of there!"

On Saturdays, her grandfather would take her to the bowling alley in the basement of the Brookchester Shopping Center. On a recent visit to a restaurant that now occupies the space above the bowling alley, she asked the staff if the lanes still existed. They weren't sure what she was talking about.



She was too young to remember President Kennedy's assassination, but she does recall the profound impact the Vietnam War had on her.

"Most of the stuff that went on during my childhood was related to the Vietnam War," she said.

"*Time, Life, Look*, magazines.

The news on TV made a lasting impact on my psyche. I remember we used to get these POW bracelets. You were supposed to wear them until they came home, and you had to check the newspaper. I



remember seeing footage of the protests and the shooting at Kent State.

"It's so weird because when you're 10 years old, a college student is a grown up. And then as adult, you look back. Oh, my God, they were 18,19? They were babies."

Dairy Queen was only open during the summer, she explained.

"I worked at Dairy Queen one summer. That was fun. It was just such an experience, you know? And it was something that you looked forward to because it wasn't open in the winter. Ice cream was a treat."

A job at Woodcrest Center started her on a career path to become a nurse. She struggled during her first semester at William Paterson University, and her parents advised her to get a full-time job and take college classes part time until she had a better idea what she wanted to do. She was already working part time as a dietary aide.

"I went from being a dietary aide at Woodcrest Center to being a nurse's aide because there were no full-time openings in the kitchen. And that's what led me into nursing. So see it was all part of the plan."

While she cherishes childhood memories of the freedom she felt while riding her bike along Boulevard all the way to the Oradell Reservoir, the excitement of scoring an invitation to the Swim Club or

the fun of helping her mother work the concession stand at the Little League Field, Ms. Conklyn also treasures the lasting bonds she formed with friends from New Milford.

"We actually we just had our 40th high school reunion in 2019," she said. "So we got that in before the pandemic. So that was nice."

One friend has been living in Florida for many years, but they stay in touch and visit one another. Another friend has died, but Ms. Conklyn touches base with her younger sister and her mother who is turning 90.

"A lot of the stuff we did instilled a real sense of civic duty and community, and regardless of what faith you were -- or no faith -- it didn't matter," she said. "You know, it was about community."

# New Milford Volunteer Fire Department

Interviewed October 2021 by John Minko

*Bill Drew and Rich Nuener Sr. are former chiefs of Fire Company No. 1 on Center Street. Bob Ryan is a former chief of Fire Company No. 2 on Trenton Street.*

They joined the New Milford Volunteer Fire Department because they wanted to give back to their community. They have remained members because of what they have received in return: enduring friendships that have helped them through the good times and the bad.



**From left: Rich Nuener, Bill Drew and Bob Ryan.**

For Bill Drew, a lifelong resident, community service is the family business. His father was a member of the New Milford Police Department.

"I lived about five blocks from Fire Company No. 1," Drew explained. If there was a fire, the steam whistle at the waterworks plant would sound, alerting volunteer firefighters to head over to the Center Street station. Bill Drew would follow.

"I remember as a kid, hearing the fire whistle, jumping on my bicycle and riding the bicycle up to the firehouse just to watch the fire trucks go in and out," he said.

"There's something about service to the community that I enjoy," he continued. "But there's another side of firefighting. It's the brotherhood and a camaraderie among members. That was a big draw as well.

"Yes, we go out there, and we put out fires. We serve the public. We do fire education," he explained. "But you also enjoy each other's company... and it's grown over the years."

He added, "There was a time in this town when if you told me where you lived, I could name a neighbor within 10 houses of you ... I knew everybody."

Drew became a junior firefighter while he was still in high school. If a fire alarm sounded during the school day, junior firefighters could leave class to assist at the call - provided the school had a permission slip on file from their parents.

Like Drew, Bob Ryan also joined the fire department while he was still in high school. Ryan's family moved here from the Bronx when he was 6 months old, and he grew up on Lafayette Street.

"It was nothing but farms, from the Boulevard all the way up to Concord, all the way to the Oradell reservoir. Nothing but farms," he said. Ryan recalls picking rhubarb for the farmers and explained why locals call the night before Halloween "Cabbage Night."

"They (farmers) had the ... cabbage that they would not pick or leave the rotting, and the kids would go get the cabbage and throw it at your house," he said.

His interest in firefighting came from his mother, whom he described as a fire buff. When she heard the fire whistle, she'd head out to see what was going on.

"They didn't have radios or dispatchers or anything like that," Ryan said. And you would go with the fire department to try to see where the smoke was or who was asking for help."

Ryan completed his training at the Fire Academy in Mahwah before he graduated from high school.

"I found my fire department card saying I graduated the Fire Academy and completed basic training in 24 hours," he said. Now, he added, the training is far more extensive as volunteer departments are dealing with larger, more intense fires.

Ryan attended high school during the Vietnam War, when the Selective Service System of the United States instituted a lottery system to determine the order of call to military service. Young men with lower numbers were called first. Ryan drew a higher number. That's another reason why he wanted to join the fire department.

"I wanted to give back to the community," he said.

Rich Neuner, who was born in New Milford, said he remembers when the Boulevard was just a gravel road.

"My parents have pictures of me sitting in the middle of Boulevard and no cars coming," he said.

Neuner attended New Milford Middle School and took the bus, affectionately known as the "Brown Bomber" because of its color, to

high school in Hackensack. On the way home, he'd sometimes hitch a ride back to New Milford on one of the freight trains that ran on what is now the Pascack Valley commuter train line.

Neuner didn't join the fire department to be a hero. He liked the work and the people he met.

"I like the camaraderie," he said. "I made an awful lot of friends. And the great thing about those friends is that if you had a problem of any kind, we had plumbers, we had carpenters, we had bricklayers. You all worked together. Are you able to build something for me? Okay. Well, I was an engineer so I could engineer something for you."

Ryan added, "I lived in the area of New Milford that flooded. Twice, the floods totally destroyed my house, and these brothers came and redid my house."

Neighbors working together for the benefit of the community has been a guiding principle of the fire department since its inception, Neuner said.

"Back in those days, the townspeople usually worked in town," Neuner said. "So the hardware store guy, the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker all came out to go to fire calls. They all joined the fire department."

Fire Company No. 1 started in 1906 when the northern area of New Milford was known as Peetzburgh. The fire department shared a building on Center Street with the police department and other municipal offices. Residents of the River Edge Manor (Old Bridge) section of Palisades Township organized their own fire company on Trenton Street in 1915. When the borough was incorporated in 1922, the companies combined to form the New Milford Volunteer Fire Department.

Some of the most significant events in a community's history are often told through fire department records, and New Milford is no exception. Many of these stories have been passed down from one generation of firefighters to another.

For example, in 1948 the fire department was on the scene when an Army surplus plane, a DC-3, encountered mechanical problems and was forced to land on Ferdinand's Farm, which was right about where Berkley School now stands. The plane was repaired in place and took off after they cleared the fields to create a runway.

On Memorial Day, May 30, 1964, a fire destroyed the original New Bridge Inn.

"Gus Schmidt was a former chief here," Ryan said. "He was trying to advance a hose line, and no one was helping them. He was in the

staircase going upstairs, and he couldn't get the hose to move. And then it wrapped around his leg."

It wasn't a hose; it was a snake owned by one of the inn's residents.

"The snake was trying to escape coming down the steps," said Ryan.

On March 24, 1982, the Perrone farmhouse on River Road caught fire. It took nearly three hours and 80 firefighters from New Milford and surrounding communities to bring the fire under control. Pretty much anyone who lived in town at the time came down to watch the fire.

"I do remember that house was insulated with newspapers," said Drew. "I also remember getting thrown out ... by the police." Reportedly, there were some guns stored in the house, and the police department had to clear weapons before they exploded.

One of the most tragic incidents in New Milford occurred Jan. 17, 1983, when borough hall caught fire, and 21-year-old firefighter William Entwistle died responding to the call. The fire started on the second floor.

"I was on the first line in," Drew recalled. "It got so hot and then we had to back out. It was just too hot.

"Apparently as we came down the stairs, a second team came up," he continued. "Unbeknownst to anybody, Billy Entwistle was with them.. Twenty minutes later, we heard that there was a firefighter down and subsequently we heard who it was and what happened."

A section of Center Street in front of Fire Company No. 1 has been named for Entwistle, and a memorial service is held every Jan. 17 in his honor.

Other events evoke happier memories. For 14 years, starting in 1966, the New Milford Volunteer Fire Department handled the lines for the Smokey Bear balloon in the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. A member of Fire Company No. 2, Bob Granger, who worked for Macy's, made the arrangements.

"It was a fun day," said Ryan. They met at the fire station at 5 a.m. for breakfast before heading by school bus into New York City.

"Macy's fed you breakfast over there too," he said. "And you got to sit in the hall with the cast of 'Bonanza.' Lorne Green. Hoss (Dan Blocker). Jackie Gleason one year."

They resisted the urge to ask for autographs.

"I don't want to say we were on the same level," added Drew. "We were there for the same reason ... to entertain."

When the responsibility for guiding the balloon was transferred to employees, Macy's showed their appreciation for the fire department's service by asking members to march in full uniform as Smokey Bear's honor guard. Additionally, the U.S. Forest Service presented the department with its Fire Service Award.

"And we're the only volunteer fire company ever to get the award," said Ryan.

Other memories involve how the system for alerting firefighters to respond to a call have changed over the years. The earliest alarm was a fire ring fashioned from the brakes of an old locomotive. (A fire ring stands as a monument at Fire Company No. 2.) The steam whistle at the water company also sounded the alarm. A map of New Milford was divided into numbered grids and the sequence of blasts on the whistle indicated where the fire was located. With the installation of the call box system, alarms would go directly into the firehouses.

Despite the improvements in technology, what hasn't changed over the years is that firefighters are still called out in the middle of the night to help a neighbor in need.

# Florence "Peggy" Saslow

Interviewed April 2021 by Nancy Varettoni

*Florence "Peggy" Saslow was born in Boston, where she earned a degree in nutrition and diet therapy from Simmons College. She and her husband, Sidney, lived in Queens, NY, with their young family until they moved to New Milford in 1949. Mrs. Saslow was involved in the New Milford educational community for nearly 50 years as a teacher and board of education member.*

Peggy Saslow says she never dreamed that she would live in New Jersey. She was content living in an apartment in Jackson Heights, Queens, on a street with young families like hers. She was close to LaGuardia Airport, so she could easily fly home to Boston. Tickets were only \$11. As her family grew, the apartment got smaller, and it was time to look for a house.

In the years following World War II, housing was at a premium. Their search took them to New Milford, where much of the farmland in the New Bridge section was being converted into housing developments.

"The Boulevard was all woods," she recalled. "My children played in the woods that are now the Boulevard and Floral Court. There was a pond where my son fished in the summer and all the children skated in the winter."

When they moved to Ridge Street, many of New Milford's school were not yet built. The construction of the New Bridge School (now the public library) in 1952 was a dream come true.

"The place was ideal," she said. "Four tenths of a mile from my house!"

Mrs. Saslow, a trained dietician, said her change of careers was "kind of an accident."

With three children in the school system, she volunteered for various activities. Her sister-in-law, a physics teacher, saw her potential as an educator.

"Enough with all the volunteer work," her sister-in-law said. "Why don't you substitute? You'll love it."

That wasn't the first time someone asked Mrs. Saslow to consider being a teacher. Her mother also wanted her to teach.

"I really liked it because when I went to the high school, I drove my children to school," she said. Soon she was substituting in all the schools. She was reliable and conscientious, and in high

demand. The with school population booming, there was a shortage of teachers.

When an English teacher at Berkley School was in an accident a few days before the start of school year, the board of education needed to find a replacement quickly. They turned to Mrs. Saslow. Her husband wasn't thrilled with the idea.

"My husband said, No, no, no, no, no, no, no!" she said. However, he was outnumbered. Mr. Saslow, who was very active in community organizations, was friends with Pastor Fleming of the New Milford Presbyterian Church. Pastor Fleming's wife, Annie, was the chair of the home economics department.

"Do something!" Mrs. Fleming told her husband.

"Well, it worked, and I went back full time. Not only went back full time, but I had to take credit," explained Mrs. Saslow, who noted that since she only had a provisional certification for substituting, she needed to take courses to obtain her permanent license. "I worked very hard, but I found I loved teaching. I loved it." Thus began a 25-year career as a home economics and science teacher. Her students included her own daughter.

"There were two years when she didn't fit into anyone's schedule, but mine," said Mrs. Saslow, adding that her daughter followed her footsteps and became a dietician.

"As it turned out, and I learned a lot about this later on, I know a lot of her friends would go to her with a question that they didn't want to ask me!"

For Mrs. Saslow, school was much more than a place of employment. The building was a second home, and her colleagues were her support system especially as she dealt with her husband's illness and death in 1981.

"It was the teachers at the high school who rallied around me and were my family as well," she said. "And they had been wonderful to my husband. He was ill for a long time. They would pick him up and bring him to the high school when anything special was going on... They were very caring of him and of me."

One story in particular sums up her deep love for the New Milford school system:

The family had taken a vacation to Jamaica. They were supposed to return home on Sunday so they could get back to school and work on Monday. However, the plane was delayed, and they didn't arrive home until 7 a.m. on Monday.

"My husband and children said, 'We are going home to sleep,' and I said, 'I am not missing school.' " She called the school to alert them that she would be a little late for her first class.

"I remember walking into that building," she recalled. "And feeling overwhelmed... I'm home again. And that is exactly the way I felt about that building. It wasn't a building to me, it was home, I still have very strong feelings for that building."

Following her teaching career, Mrs. Saslow served for 20 years on the board of education, from 1995 to 2015.

"Initially, I had no intention of running for the board," she explained. "And one of the board members got ahold of me and said, 'Peggy, we need a teacher on the board. We really need teacher on the board. Why don't you run?' "

Mrs. Saslow said she brought a unique perspective to the board.

"I presented a very different point of view: the point of view of a teacher," she noted.

"And all I can say is that the combination worked. I have to admit, I had a line of information, which is natural, between the teachers and myself."

She also became involved with the New Jersey School Boards Association, which honored her in 2014 as its Member of the Year for her distinguished service to the educational community on the local, state and national levels.

When she reached 90, Mrs. Saslow decided not to run for re-election to the board. However, her impact on her students' lives has not been forgotten.

For her 96<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2020, her family gathered in the backyard for a COVID-safe party. Someone suggested that they move into the front yard, and Mrs. Saslow couldn't understand why. Reluctantly, she relocated herself.

"And then horns started blowing," she said. "It was a parade of over 50 cars. My board members. Friends. It was half the town that had turned out to say 'hi' to me from their cars. And there was a policeman who happened to be one of my students at the high school. I have to call it an honor."

## Trustee of the year

N.J. honors New Milford school board member

By HANNAN ADELY  
STAFF WRITER



SASLOW

Florence "Peggy" Saslow, a 19-year member of the New Milford school board, has been named the New Jersey Board of Education Member of the Year.

The New Jersey School Boards Association, which announced the 2014 award on Wednesday, said Saslow was chosen for her years of dedication and advocacy for education.

"As a former teacher and longtime board member, most of her adult life has been child-centered. Her decisions center around what is best for kids," said Lawrence Feinsod, the association's executive director.

Saslow, 91, was elected to the New Milford board in 1995, after retiring as a home economics teacher at the borough high school. She has also been a delegate to county and state school boards associations and represented New Milford at the National School Boards

Advocacy Institute in Washington, D.C.

She said her proudest accomplishment was encouraging New Milford parents to become active in their children's education.

New Milford Schools Superintendent Michael Polizzi said Saslow has shown insight and attention to detail and is known throughout the community. "Peggy attends more school functions than I care to count, and does so with tremendous energy, commitment and aplomb – all at the enviable age of 91," he said.

Saslow will not seek another term in the school board election next month but said she plans to remain active in the community. The Member of the Year award, which honors board members with strong commitment and involvement, will be presented to Saslow at a school boards conference on Oct. 28 in Atlantic City.

Email: [adely@northjersey.com](mailto:adely@northjersey.com)

# Ann Subrizi

*Interviewed October 2021 by John Minko*

*Ann Killilea McCartan Subrizi served as mayor from 2011 to 2018. She is the second woman elected to that office. Previously, she served on the borough council. Born in the Bronx, Mayor Subrizi attended St. Joseph's School, New Milford/Oradell, and graduated from Paramus Catholic High School. She worked for the Bergen County Special Services School District. Mayor Subrizi and her husband, the late Dennis Subrizi, are the parents of two sons.*

Ann Subrizi's first lesson on recycling came when she was about 10 years old. Her teacher was a local farmer. A small stream flowed through the fields of Klinger's Farm and across River Road. It continued behind the historic Jacobus Demarest House and eventually made its way to the Hackensack River. She and her friends often would sit by the bridge on River Road that spanned the stream to watch the passing cars. One day, she observed that Mr. Klinger was piling chunks of concrete along the banks of the stream.



**For Mayor  
Ann Subrizi**

"What are you doing?" Mayor Subrizi asked him. He must have welcomed the interruption because he stopped what he was doing and walked over to the bridge. The materials were left over from a sidewalk replacement project undertaken by the borough, he explained, and he was breaking the discarded materials into smaller pieces that he could use to build up the banks of the stream to control the direction of the water.

"This is the first time I heard the word recycling," she said. "What he was really doing was repurposing, but it was all so very interesting to me, and to this day I am very interested in recycling and repurposing and reusing."

Mayor Subrizi, one of six siblings, moved to the Peetzburgh section of New Milford from the Bronx when she was 2 years old. The family's first home was a house on Summit Avenue, behind Fire Company No. 1, and they later moved to River Road. She grew up in New Milford at a time when children didn't have to walk very far to encounter woods or farms and main streets such as River Road and Boulevard had dirt and gravel gutters rather than being neatly edged by concrete curbs and sidewalks.

She and her siblings would pass woods on the water company property on their way to St. Joseph's School on the New Milford/Oradell border. If they headed east toward Boulevard, they'd encounter Lembke's Farm, with its chicken coops, bee hives and corn field.

"It (the corn field) looked big to me, but it was really quite small," she said.

Mayor Subrizi said she "begged" her mother to let her attend New Milford High School; however, Mrs. McCartan insisted that her daughter attend Catholic high school. The family still became very much involved in community life. Her mother coached softball. As a teenager, Mayor Subrizi earned money as an umpire for the softball program, receiving \$1.75 per game. She used the money to buy a ticket to Woodstock.

"The three-day ticket was \$33," she said.

Her interest in taking a more impactful role in community affairs was piqued when she and her husband bought their first home.

"We looked specifically for a house in New Milford, and we were lucky to find one," she said. "I was very happy to raise my family here... I feel like it was a natural progression of things."

When the young couple put a deposit down on the house, they were told the annual taxes were \$1,700; however, by closing the taxes had increased to \$2,300.

"I started to get very worried about the taxes," she explained. "This is didn't just happen in New Milford; it happened in all of Bergen County."

Mayor Subrizi said that as mayor one of her goals was to minimize the impact of taxes on the average citizen. During her time in office, she said, the average annual increase of the municipal portion of a homeowner's tax bill was \$25.

The redevelopment of the United Water Co. property on River Road was an extremely contentious and divisive issue for New Milford during the early 2000s. The company was looking to sell the land, where filtration beds for the old waterworks were located, to recoup the money it spent cleaning up the site. One of her first big issues as mayor was whether the borough should buy the property, which had a multi-million dollar asking price.

"It was a brownfield," she said. "It was not a pristine, untouched piece of property. It was remediated by the water company, but it was not useful at that moment as a field or as a trail. I'm not sure if that purchase price was ever going to make it worthwhile."

Equally challenging were the devastating floods from Hurricane Irene (2011) and Super Storm Sandy (2012) that damaged homes on low-lying streets near the Hackensack River. Mayor Subrizi said she supported the borough's participation in the Blue Acres program. Through the program, homeowners accept buyouts funded by the state Department of Environmental Protection. The houses are razed, and the property becomes state-owned open space.

"It was too much of a strain for them (the homeowners) to believe they could continue to live there," she said. "But they would have had to sell their house to somebody else who would have inherited that problem. So the Blue Acres plan to me seemed like the best way to help flooding.

"I was always trying to find the answer," she continued. "A lot of people would say: dredge the river, sell the houses, drain the reservoir artificially before storm. There were a lot of plans that were presented, but I always felt that getting the houses out of harm's way was the best way to protect people."

Also under her watch, the Police Department's outdated headquarters were replaced with a new facility dedicated in 2018. The project was completed on budget and ahead of schedule.

After having spent the majority of her life in New Milford, Mayor Subrizi has observed many changes in New Milford. Some are obvious, such as more traffic and development; others are more subtle, such as the way neighbors interacted with one another. In years past, there was no Internet or social media to keep children glued to computer screens or cell phones.

"We kicked the ball around," she said. "We invented games. There weren't as many cars so there was the opportunity to play in the street. I don't think people who came 30 or even 40 years ago remember that."

Each street was a neighborhood unto itself, and children had no need to leave the block to find friends. Mayor Subrizi recalled that former Police Chief Frank Papapietro grew up on Bergen Avenue, but it wasn't until they were adults that they realized they lived two blocks away from each other.

"I think that's what people don't grasp ... the neighborliness of it," she explained. She described the borough being as "self-contained." There were plenty of stores to choose from so, for example, if Food Fair was out of an item, you could easily head over to Vay's.

She said, "You didn't have to leave New Milford for anything."

## New Milford Senior Citizens

Interviewed April 2021 by John Minko

*Anna Ferrante, Helen Gunther and Josie McEwan are members of the New Milford Senior Citizens Center. Anna and Helen arrived in New Milford as newlyweds. Josie and her husband were looking for a community where they could raise their young family.*

Many newlyweds have started their lives together at New Milford's Brookchester Apartments, the sprawling complex on River Road built after World War II to provide housing for returning veterans and their families. That was the case for Helen Gunther.

Helen moved from Brooklyn to Brookchester in 1959 and lived there until 1965, when she and her husband bought a house in Paramus. Four years later, the marriage ended. Looking to start a new chapter in her life, Helen returned to a familiar place.

"I came back (to Brookchester) in 1969, and I've been here ever since," she said, adding that she has no intention of leaving. Her status as one of the complex's longest tenants means that her apartment hasn't been updated with modern amenities such as a dishwasher.

"Now, when everybody moves out, they're remodeling," she explained. "They're putting in a shower stall and everything.

"I am perfectly happy there," she continued. "I know they would love to get me out so they could redo the apartment!"

One of the advantages of living at Brookchester is its proximity to the shopping center of the same name. Since Helen's arrival, the line-up of stores has changed

"I remember getting my first set of dishes in the hardware store in Brookchester."

Helen recalled. "They sold dishes, and I got a whole set of kitchen



dishes in the hardware store." A Food Fair supermarket and a Ben Franklin 5 & 10 Store were also among the shopping center's tenants.

"You could find anything you wanted," she said.

Anna Ferrante was working as an interpreter for Olympic Airways when she and her husband moved to the Dorchester Apartments in 1968. Six years later, they bought a house in town. When her marriage ended, Anna was determined to stay put.

"I loved this town from the beginning," she said. "I love the people in the town. I never had any problem at all. Everything was very, very easy for me here."

Anna appreciated having several supermarkets, including Vay's, A&P and Food Fair, where she could purchase groceries. She also enjoyed the Italian food at Roman's as well as the thin-crust pizza from Hannah's restaurant, where many residents went on Friday nights to usher in the weekend.

Jose McEwen, her husband and their two sons moved to New Milford in 1965 after a friend told them there was a house for sale on Trotta Drive.

"It was Halloween when we moved here," she said. "My husband and I were scraping wallpaper off the walls and the kids were ringing a doorbell asking for a trick or treat."

Her sons loved playing at nearby Kennedy Field.

"This was like freedom for them to move here from Queens," she said. One day, her sons got a little too adventuresome, and she couldn't find them so she called the police.

"I went out looking for them, and I couldn't find them," she recalled. "I had to call the police, and they were right on the ball. They found them (and) brought them home to me."

Josie's daughter was born after the family moved to New Milford. Her children attended Ascension School as well as the local public school. She said the town was and remains a great place to raise children.

"They have so much recreation here," she noted.

Another advantage to living in New Milford, she said, is its proximity to New York City.

"My husband worked in the city, so that was one of the assets," she explained. "That was the basic thing, but also we loved living

here. And the people in the town, everybody was just very nice, very gracious and very helpful, and it's just a great town."

The longtime residents noted that the town has changed significantly since the 1960s.

"The town is more built up now than it was years ago when I first moved here. It was more suburban," Josie said. "River Road is so built up, and they just recently built an apartment house on River Road, which I was not happy to see. And a lot of banks that we never had before."

Anna misses her longtime neighbors.

"To me, the biggest change is my neighbors," she said. "When I came as a young bride, the neighbors were wonderful. And we were the youngest couple on the block. Today, those people have passed away. Their children got married; they sold the houses; and I missed the people that were there."

She continued, "They were always there for you - always."

## The History Committee

New Milford established a history committee to plan events celebrating the State of New Jersey's 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1964. Perhaps the most lasting legacy of this effort was the publication of the book, "The Story of New Milford, New Jersey - Birthplace of Bergen County."

In the years following World War II, New Milford experienced unprecedented growth. According to US census records, the population in 1940 was 3,215. By 1960, the number of residents had increased to 18,810. The committee feared that New Milford's history would be forgotten.

"New Milford is an old town in spite of its name," wrote historian Craig Mitchell in the book's foreword. "People have made their homes here ... longer in an unbroken line than in any other town in Bergen County. Yet more than three-quarters of our residents have lived here less than 15 years, and no more than 10% have been here more than twenty-five years. New Milford's present character is being shaped almost entirely in the past dozen years.

"A town needs roots and traditions to make it a true community of neighbors ... It is our hope that this history will bring a sense of pride to those old New Milforders who have been here for generations, and to the new New Milforders, we hope it brings an awareness of the heritage they now share."

To research the book, Leon Smith, the editor, invited several longtime residents to gatherings at his home where they shared memories of New Milford's early days. He had the foresight to record their conversations for posterity. Participants included Robert Stucke, Sam Cosney, Howard Hague and Teresa Martin, among others.

The following is based upon their discussion of the events leading up to the borough's incorporation.



A SCHOLARLY GESTURE—Writers and researchers of "The Story of New Milford - Birthplace of Bergen County" turn over tape recordings and their original files of scholarly delvings into the Borough's recent and past history to the Public Library last night. The volume was recently published by the history division of the New Milford Tercentenary Committee. From the left are Richard L. Waterfall, Mrs. Nelson Reitman, Mrs. Theodore A. Gerken and Craig Mitchell. (Staff photo.)

"Welcome to Chesterbrook, the Birthplace of Bergen County!"

That sounds odd, but if the NJ legislature approved a proposal by Senator William B. Mackay over the plan offered by Assemblyman William DeLorenzo, New Milford would be very different from the community we know today.

In February 1922, DeLorenzo introduced legislation to incorporate the remaining areas of Palisades Township into the Borough of New Milford. Geographically, his plan made sense; however, it called for the merger of communities with very distinct characters.

Peetzburgh, at the northern end of the township, was a planned development built in the late 1890s by a German-born developer, Gustav Peetz. Adjacent to Peetzburgh was River Edge Manor, where Bergen County's founder, David Demarest Sr., established his homestead. The expansion of the railroad made this area accessible for New York City commuters who could cross the "old bridge" on River Edge Avenue to the railroad station on the other side of the Hackensack. At the southern end of the township were the farms of New Bridge.

According to a story in the Bergen Evening Record, "another faction ... is not agreeable to this idea and wants a Borough of Chesterbrook created out to the southern part of Palisade Township including River Edge Manor." Mackay introduced his bill in the state Senate. When the two bills were reconciled, DeLorenzo's plan prevailed.

The New Milford history book, published in 1964, skims over the controversy. However, interviews with longtime residents that were recorded by the book's researchers, reveal that tensions ran high. And newspaper accounts from that era indicate that the construction and dedication of the Steuben School was a very divisive issue.

Residents of River Edge Manor were frustrated that there was no school in their neighborhood. The closest elementary school was on Washington Avenue in Peetzburgh. According to longtime resident Robert Stucke, citizens were "agitating" to secede from Palisades Township.

Stucke recalled that after discussions between River Edge Manor residents and members of the Palisades Township Board of Education,

**PALISADES IS RIVEN BY THE BORO PLANS**

Trenton, Feb. 24.—With the borough fight in Midland Township in Bergen county happily ironed out by the agreement to have the Borough of Paramus carved out of the northern half of Midland Township the Bergen county legislators today were facing new complications over conflicting borough projects.

The scene of the new battle is in Palisade Township where clashing borough plans are engaging the attention of the citizens.

Assemblyman De Lorenzo has introduced one borough bill for this section, namely a bill to create the present Township of Palisade into the Borough of New Milford.

Another faction in Palisade Township, however, is not agreeable to this idea and wants a Borough of Chesterbrook created out of the southern part of Palisade Township including River Edge Manor.

A Chesterbrook Borough bill was introduced last winter but it did not get very far.

The Chesterbrook Borough bill has not yet been put in but rumors have it that it may be offered next week in the Senate.

John T. Bird, Republican Lieutenant in Palisades Township, is classed as an advocate of the Borough of New Milford.

"Mayor" Yeardsley is credited with favoring the Chesterbrook Borough idea.

More light is likely to be shed on the situation next week, or the week after at a hearing which is to be given on the subject by the Assembly Committee on Boroughs.

most of whom lived in Peetzburgh, the board agreed to build a school on River Road if residents dropped their threat to secede from the township. There is more to the story than that..

The friction intensified over the naming the school after Baron Von Steuben, the German military officer who helped train troops for George Washington. The board said the name would honor a Revolutionary War hero with local ties. (The state presented the baron with property, now known as the Steuben House at Historic New Bridge Landing, in recognition of his service.) River Edge Manor residents said that the school should be named for an American-born citizen, and they claimed that the board ignored their wishes.

A week before ceremonies to lay the cornerstone in July 1921, River Edge Manor residents, led by Thomas Yeadsley, who represented that area on the township board, made an unsuccessful, last ditch effort to persuade the BOE to change the name. Protestors attended the ceremonies and afterwards adopted a resolution condemning the board for its actions. The school was built as planned and named for Steuben.

When the Bergen Evening Record reported in February 1922 that the state Assembly Committee of Boroughs would be considering a plan to incorporate New Milford, a familiar name surfaced.

First, DeLorenzo introduced his proposal in the Assembly. In an unexpected move, Mackay countered in the Senate with his plan for the "Borough of Chesterbrook." The new borough would include River Edge Manor and all the area south to the Teaneck border.

"Mayor Yeadsley is credited with favoring the Chesterbrook Borough idea," the paper reported. "The opposing factions are then to come together in the Senate and try to reach an amical settlement."

DeLorenzo's plan prevailed, but there's no indication of whether Yeadsley considered the settlement "amical."

Why did they choose "New Milford" as the new borough's name? Longtime residents say the name was inspired by the area near Van Buskirk's mill on the Hackensack River. The mill was located at the foot of the hill where Main Street crosses the river and becomes New Milford Avenue, Oradell. Many buildings on the Oradell side carried the name "New Milford" including the train station and a general store. On the opposite side of the river, the Main Street business district was also known as East New Milford.