

The Chronicle

NEW JERSEY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
HISTORY AND PRESERVATION SECTION NEWSLETTER

Volume 11, Number 4

Late Spring to Late Summer
2010

Explosion!

Disaster strikes the Morristown and Morris Township Library



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H&P Section

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New Jersey August History Facts:

August 2, 1828: Sam Patch, the "Jersey Jumper," leaps over Paterson's Great Falls.

August 7, 1912: New Jersey governor Woodrow Wilson accepts the Democratic Party's nomination for President.

August 11, 1984: By receiving a fourth Olympic gold medal for track, athlete Carl Lewis of Wil-
lingboro matches the Olympic record set by Jesse Owens.

August 20, 1848: The first New Jersey Jewish synagogue, B'nai Jeshurun, established in New-
ark.

August 21, 1904: Jazz composer and performer Count Basie born in Red Bank.

Source: New Jersey Historical Commission website, 8/3/10.
www.state.nj.us/state/divisions/historical/

Plainfield Public Library: Book Repair Workshops

In May and June, Plainfield Public Library held a series of workshops about book conservation and repair. Master bookbinder and Local History Department volunteer, Leonard Cummings, instructed participants from 13 libraries over three sessions. Students learned to: identify and diagnose needed book repairs, unbind and prepare signatures for stitching, attach tapes and liners, rebuild a case and add protective covers. In the end, students received a formal certificate of completion as well as the book they had completely rebuilt over the course of the series. The workshops were a great success, and we look forward to the next series scheduled in the fall. If you are interested in attending, please contact Mary Ellen Rogan at me.rogan@plfdpl.info or 908-757-1111, Ext 132.

(Leonard Cummings, center, and students at PPL Book Repair workshop)



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Purpose of the H&P Section: *To promote the work of New Jersey libraries involved in the collection, organization, conservation, preservation, publication and interpretation of historical materials*

More from Plainfield Public Library— *2010 Librarian of the Year Award*

At this year's NJLA Conference Joe Da Rold, Director of the Plainfield Public Library, was named *2010 Librarian of the Year*. A longtime leader in the field of history and preservation, Joe has served three terms as President of the NJLA History & Preservation Section (2002-03; 2003-04; 2007-08).

In recognition of his work in the preservation of local history, he has received several prestigious awards. In 2004, the New Jersey Historical Commission honored him with their *Award of Achievement*, "for outstanding service in the preservation of New Jersey history." In 2007 he received the *NJLA Susan G. Swartzburg Preservation Award*.

Under his direction, the Plainfield Public Library has become one of the major local history repositories in New Jersey, recognized in 2006 with the *MARAC Institutional Service Award* for furthering the cause of archives and history in the state. *(submitted by Joe Da Rold)*

Still more from Plainfield Public Library— *Early Newspapers Digitized*

Plainfield Public Library has completed the digitization of two 19th century newspapers, *The Daily Press* and *The Plainfield Daily Press*. The digitization of 110 reels of microfilm was made possible through a NJHC Special Projects Grant of over \$11,000.

These two related newspapers, spanning 1887-1916, document an important era in Plainfield's and Union County's development. Although the library has earlier newspapers on microfilm, *The Daily Press* and *The Plainfield Daily Press* were the first choice for digitization because of the genealogical information they contain and their heavy use. Also, the Plainfield newspapers have never been indexed, nor have obituary indexes ever been compiled.

The digital files have been uploaded to the Library's local history website and are available to all in-house researchers. The major enhancement is the overlay of IDI's keyword searching software *DigiFindit*, which scans all years in a single search.

(Submitted by Mary Ellen Rogan, Assistant Director, Head of Special Collections)

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President's Message:

We are looking forward to an exciting year of activities and learning. It has been a real privilege to belong to and participate in this section. I have wonderful memories of touring the New Jersey State Archives and being shown an original copy of the Declaration of Independence. The behind-the-scenes tour of Liberty Hall provided an illuminating glimpse of the home of our first elected governor William Livingston and who resided in the home for more than 200 years.

Our June 2009 visit to Washington's Headquarters was hosted by Jude Pfister, the curator at the Morristown National Park who took us on a personal tour of the newly renovated facility. Jude is the author of "The Jacob Ford Jr. Mansion: The Storied History of a New Jersey Home. It was thrilling to see original documents from the Revolutionary War period. The archive even included an 18th century door from the Morristown Jail.

We are also looking forward to our upcoming joint meeting with the NJLA Reference Section on Monday, August 23rd at the Princeton Public Library at 9:30 AM. After the meeting we will walk over to Princeton's Mudd Library for a tour of their Archives, which will be hosted by Daniel Linke.

(submitted by Nancy Madasci)



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NJLA H&P Section meeting, June 18, 2010:

Washington's Headquarters, Morristown NJ.

On Friday, June 18, the History & Preservation Section of the New Jersey Library Association held their last business meeting of the year at Washington's Headquarters, Morristown National Historical Park. Before the meeting, the group was given a tour of the recently renovated facility by MNHP's Chief of Cultural Resources, Jude Pfister and archivist technician /museum educator, Sarah Minegar.

Washington's Headquarters, the first such site to be designated a national park in 1933, is both a museum and a library/archives. The library and archives were formed from a combination of two separate collections: the Washington Association of New Jersey Collection (WANJ) and the Lloyd W. Smith Archival Collection. Both collections deal with "multiple facets of the Revolutionary War era, [while] both...are strong in the non-military realm as well".

The WANJ collection consists of not only many aspects of our country's fight for independence it also contains legal manuscripts on the US Supreme Court Justices and chronicles of the early legal development of New Jersey. The collection includes reference materials, microfilm holdings and periodicals as well as the original library of the WANJ, the Lidgerwood Hessian Transcripts, the Ford Papers, and a collection of Early New Jersey Iron Industry Papers.

The Lloyd W. Smith Archival Collection contains over 1400 manuscripts and thousands of rare books documenting "the social, political, military, cultural, and domestic developments of the past five centuries". This collection has been incorporated into the Primary Source Seminar, an archival tutorial that offers instruction on primary document care and handling, and first-hand experience with authentic, unedited historical documents, as well as other aspects of fundamental, archival principles. (*source: MNHP pamphlets*)

(*submitted by Mary McMahon, Morristown Library*)

*Jude Pfister, Chief of Cultural Resources at
Morristown National Historic Park*



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Parking lot Book Drops immediately post-explosion



Miller Avenue entrance—original wing built 1917

MMT PL
Images -
Disaster
aftermath



Back Door entrance
located off parking lot.

Since May 3, this is the
only entrance into the
building. The asbestos
clean up crew parked
an R.V. just outside
this back door en-
trance!



1917 wing on left—1933 wing on right—asbestos carts in
front. South Street side of building.



88 South Street—temporary location of library—located in
store front building that also houses Dublin Pub

The Day of the Disaster

May 3rd, 2010, started like most Mondays: springtime showers slowed our morning commute, but promised to clear out as the week progressed. Downstairs in the North Jersey History & Genealogy Center, staff began arriving with dripping umbrellas. Having worked for many years in our old building, we were accustomed to its quirks and barely paid attention when the lights began to flicker. But when the phone lines went dead and the computers shut down, we knew this was something more than storm-related. With no phones to communicate within departments, our Interim-Director was in the process of gathering staff in the Circulation room on the first floor when the fire alarm sounded.

Most library staff would have chalked this up to old wiring or storm-related power surges, but the staff of the Morristown & Morris Township Library had lived through a similar event in 1994.

When the fire alarm sounded, we got out of the building. Standing at the Miller Road entrance to the library's parking lot, Interim-Director Maria Norton and I stopped to look at the smoke billowing up from a manhole cover when an underground explosion ripped through the library, shattering glass windows and blowing steel fire doors right out of their frames.

It was many hours before we realized the full extent of the damage. And it took many more days for staff to fully grasp the seriousness of this event. Thirty seconds more, and people would have died.....not just gotten hurt, but died.

The explosion caused water pipes in the library to burst, which in turn flooded the North Jersey History & Genealogy Center. Crews worked through the night and into Tuesday, May 4th, removing saturated carpet and setting up fans and dryers to dry out our department. And here's where the second miracle occurred: we lost no collection material. A few items came in contact with the water and are receiving conservation treatment, but overall the staff of the North Jersey History & Genealogy Center proved we practice what we preach: we do not store or shelve collection material any lower than 4"-6" off the floor.

The damage to our building was severe and will take many months to repair, but the worst structural damage was confined to the original wing of the library. With some rearranging, we plan to re-open all of our departments in the new wing after Labor Day. In the meantime, staff are working harder than ever: indexing newspapers, scanning photos, and handling research questions. We invite you to check in with us for updates on construction, and of course you are welcome to visit us in our temporary "library" at 88 South Street. *(Christine Jochem, NJH&GC Department Head)*