

# A Centennial History of East Orange

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# Chapter 1

## The Roots

The American city has had a variety of origins. Some were created by the accident of geography: the confluence of rivers, the port, the watering place, the hub, the crossroad, the jumping-off place.

Some were created by political expediency: the artificial choice of legislators, like our own national capital.

There is one type which came into being because of the indomitable desire of a group of families to be masters of their own fate, developers of their own civic order. It is from this last group in our history that has come the innovations, the modulations, the establishment of mood and spirit which has contributed, in large measure, to that municipal virtue we have come to call "good government."

East Orange is a city which was founded in March, 1863, by just such people, for just such reasons, with just such spirit. This spirit was a force from the first. On March 4, 1863, when the State Senate in Trenton passed the bill which meant the establishment of East Orange as a separate municipality, a newspaper of that day, echoed this feeling with the statement:

"East Orange has triumphed and today the inhabitants of all that district, set off by their bill, are free to govern themselves, in their own way, and can henceforth, under their own vine and fig tree, manage their township affairs as they please."

This desire to seek out the best in self-government, this refusal to abide with the shoddy, the makeshift, the expedient, was deeply rooted in the early settlers. It has persisted, from generation to generation, to this very day.

### The First Settlers

The early settlers, the pioneers in the community which was to father East Orange, were Puritans. They were not the Puritans of blue noses, dour dispositions and incapacity for joyous living that some legends have made them out to be. These were a people with zest, with strong convictions, with hot tempers.

Some years after they had settled in the New Haven Colony, these Englishmen living in Milford became dissatisfied with the union of the New Haven and Connecticut Colonies. They rejected the thesis that men not connected with their Church be permitted to vote in civil affairs, while the civil authorities were not prevented from interfering with the affairs of the Church. They didn't relish either, the so-called Half Way Covenant, which extended the privileges of the Church to those not in full communion.

They spoke out, and when their protests met with no redress, they sent two scouts, Robert Treat and John Gregory, to seek that better place to which they aspired. Treat and Gregory returned in 1666 and reported that they had found a land with immense areas of meadows, forests of timber suitable for building purposes, pure water, fur-bearing animals and game of infinite variety. This was the place we now call Essex County.

About 30 families decided to leave the New Haven Colony and migrate to this promised land. The new land was originally the domain of the Duke of York, who, two years before, had handed it over to the Proprietor, George Carteret, for settlement. Since Carteret had been Governor of the Isle of Jersey back home, this parcel in the New World was to become known as New Jersey.

Before the 30 families left Milford, they had their pastor, Rev. Abraham Pierson, arrange an agreement with Carteret. The terms of this agreement are rather obscure, as they may have been even then, for they led later to severe disagreements with the Proprietor, disagreements which led to civil disobedience, riots and the flame of feeling which led the colonists to be among the first to support the battle for freedom from Britain.

The "town on the river" to which the 30 families came extended from the Pesayak (now Passaic) River on the north to Weequahic Creek on the south; from the bay on the east to the foot of what later became known as Orange Mountain. Its purchase from the Indians was accomplished with a little more generosity than that by which Peter Minuit acquired Manhattan Island. Still, even in those days, it was a bargain. The price paid was "four barrels of beere, two ankors of liquor or something equivalent, fifty double hands of powder. One hundred barrs of lead, ten swords, twenty axes, twenty coates, ten guns, twenty pistols, ten kettles, four blankets, ten pair breeches, fifty knives, twenty howes (garden hoes), 850 fathoms of wampum, three troopers' coates."

The first form of government was decided upon by a Fundamental Agreement, one of whose provisions specified that none could be classified "freemen" but those who were members of some congregational church. Voting and office holding was thus restricted to church members, but all others were permitted the right to hold property and enjoy the civil liberties and privileges accruing to freemen. The settlement was given the name "Newark," in honor of the Rev. Mr. Pierson, who had come from the old country town of Newark-on-Trent, England.

These were an industrious people, and soon the land to the west of what we now know as Newark was being used for common pasturage and for the quarrying of stone with which to build houses. It was an attractive place and the population pressure forced a drawing for land in the western area of the town in 1675. The parcels in the drawing were from 20 to 40 acres in size and one of the restrictions imposed forced the owners to fence them to prevent common usage.

This expansion to the west soon proved insufficient for the prolific colony and, in 1678, more land was bought from the Indians. Immigrants began arriving from England and Scotland and fanned out to the mountain areas in the west. These people became known

as the Mountain Society, although technically, they still belonged to the Newark Town Meeting. Failure to attend these Town Meetings, by the way, was cause for a stiff fine.

Travel back and forth to town meetings, to see friends and relatives and to church soon became a regular occurrence and a network of roads began to appear. By 1705, the town fathers voted to layout a road “from town to the foot of the mountain, or Wheeler’s, as the path now runs, as straight as the ground will allow.”

This was to become Main Street, from Newark to what is now Northfield Avenue, West Orange. The curves you now traverse are due to the early road builders’ efforts to avoid the swamps that existed in places. Other roads often followed paths made by wild beasts, trails deepened by the Indians and widened by the horses and wagons of the settlers. Definite east-west arteries began to develop. Market Street was another such roadway extending westward through what is now Bank and Warren Streets, all the way to the foot of the mountain. The Cranetown Road veered off from Main Street at Park Street, then to what is now Washington Street, and on to Orange Road in Montclair.

### **The Beginning of Schism**

Rev. Abraham Pierson, pastor and leader of the community since its emigration from Connecticut, died on August 9, 1678, to be succeeded by his son and namesake. On the death of the younger Pierson, several ministers held office in quick succession. With the constant changeover, two patterns of worship began to emerge. One was staunchly Puritan in practice, committed to the tenets which were the basis for the colonists leaving the England of their birth. The other was more liberal in its strictures.

In 1718, when the Rev. Jedidiah Buckingham left his pastorate, many of the people of the Mountain Society broke off from the parent church in Newark and began to “collect a congregation” nearer their homes. This same Rev. Buckingham would trudge out each Sunday morning to conduct services in the Mountains. The first meetings were probably conducted in homes, but soon these Mountain people began thinking of building a church.

### **The Copper Strike**

In the midst of the talks of a new church came the news that copper, in plentiful quantity and of pure form, was being mined on the land of John Dodd. Dodd had entered into an agreement early that year with two Newark entrepreneurs to prospect for and mine copper or any other metal found on his farm, for a period of 25 years.

The Dodd mine was on the north side of the present Dodd Street, just east of what is now Brighton Avenue. The Bethel Presbyterian Church stands on the site. Nothing remains of the mine now, since the shaft was completely filled in during the 1930’s, when a portion of Dodd Street began caving in.

Frenzied activity, such as accompanies any boom, followed the Dodd discovery. Prospectors applied for digging rights in the immediate area. Several mines yielded enough ore to interest British capital. New residents arrived. The Mountain area became the mecca for the landless and the land hungry.

John Dodd had another source of income, besides his mine, one which was to last longer than the veins of copper. He had a gristmill, to which settlers brought their grain to be ground into meal. The water from the Second River kept the wheel turning. The millpond was filled with fish. A mile below the mill, a cousin of John Dodd's, Samuel, built a sawmill after damming the river. Samuel was a carpenter and house builder and his mill was primarily for his own raw materials.

Thoughts of a new church had been temporarily shunted aside by the copper strike, but when the first flush of discovery had waned, the Mountain Society began to plan anew. Twenty acres of land were acquired on the south side of Main Street, east of Parrow's Brook, across from the military common in what is now Orange. The First Meeting House was completed in 1720, a frame building, erected mainly by Samuel Pierson and his five sons with lumber planed at Dodd's sawmill. Three new lanes were hacked out for easier access to the church: Harrison Lane, Center Street and Scotland Lane.

Nine years later, Samuel Harrison, who had a sawmill in what is now West Orange, began cutting wood for the first schoolhouse. This was to be established at the intersection of what is now Main and Washington Streets in West Orange.

The last of the original settlers of the Mountain community, Nathaniel Wheeler, died in 1726. His death led to the consideration of a burial ground, land for which was set aside on the southwest corner of Main Street and Scotland Lane, Orange. This cemetery still stands today, its scarred and blackened headstones faintly outlining the names of Revolutionary dead, patriot, Redcoat and Hessian alike.

### **Rebellion**

The fierce independence of these Mountain people was put to the test in 1744. Jonathan Pierson was the keeper of the original deeds to the lands the settlers had bought from the Indians. In that year, Pierson's home was razed by fire and the deeds went up in smoke.

The Indians willingly supplied new deeds. The New Jersey Assembly, however, found its chance to assert a right over which it had been wrangling for years. The Assembly had denied the authenticity of any land purchases made directly from the Indians, rather than through the Crown. The colonial government demanded that all new grants of ownership be supplied by the Governor, with a penalty of 40 shillings for each acre thus acquired. As long as the old deeds were in existence, there was still room for judicial argument. This dispute did not involve the old Newark holdings, which had been acquired from the Indians under agreement with the Proprietor. For the Mountain folk, however, it meant paying an extra 40 shillings per acre for the land they had held as their own.

The Mountain people went about their business for an entire year without paying attention to the demands of the Crown. In 1745, the Proprietors made the first move by jailing Samuel Baldwin for not paying his 40 shilling tax per acre.

The Mountain Society took up the battle. Armed with clubs, axes and crowbars, they attacked the county jail in Newark, broke it open and freed Baldwin. They left a calling card, a boast that the next time, they would come in even greater numbers, bringing 100 Indians to help out.

The Proprietors, insisting that the Indians had no right to sell the land, arrested 27 of the rioters. This led to greater riots. As quickly as the Proprietors clapped a few settlers in the clink, they were freed to the accompaniment of “merry celebrations, followed with gay marches back to the mountains.” A truly exuberant people.

The Governor decided it was time to back off a bit. He offered a stay to all further proceedings against land holders, provided they would agree to abide by provincial law and sign an agreement. As quickly as each settler refused to sign, he was arrested. This time, the rioters freed the jailed Mountain people with a slight departure from custom. For the first time, during and after a riot and jailbreak, the mob failed to cheer the King’s name. Portents, harbingers, food for thought this was, that the King’s messengers obviously didn’t recognize.

More settlers were forced from their lands when they didn’t pay the tax. John Cundict (this name was later spelled Condit) and Daniel Lampson were sent to London as emissaries, to seek an audience with the King. They could accomplish nothing.

The battle was transferred to the chancery courts, there to run as “the longest case on record.” The verdict was bleak. All who held only Indian titles to their lands, lost their home sites if they could not pay the Proprietors the value placed on their property. Some couldn’t raise the cash, and lost their homes. This saddened and angered their neighbors and helped develop a deep antipathy towards the Crown, which smoldered, later to erupt when the call to arms by the Revolutionaries trumpeted throughout the Colonies.

### **The Name Orange**

Life resumed its normal course with the court decision, and in 1757, a classical school was established, taught by the minister, Rev. Caleb Smith. In writing to a friend about the school, he may have given the name “Orange” to the location “in honor of the immortal memory of the glorious King William the Third,” of the House of Orange and Nassau. Could this have been a subtle slap at the reigning monarch, the unpopular George III?

### **Revolution**

While the Crown was fighting the French and Indians, the people of the Mountain area paid their taxes without grumbling. With the end of hostilities, they expected relief. In this they were much like their counterparts today.

England and its king saw a fat land, however, a fertile source of income for the Crown. Why give up a good thing? The colonists were living high, too high for colonials. Tax 'em! Taxes were levied on the importation into the colonies of silks and calicos, on sugar and molasses. The people of Essex were incensed. They struck back. They formed societies which advocated boycotts on all taxed items. Women abandoned their foreign goods and returned to carding their own wool and flax. To dress in homespun became a mark of distinction.

With all the agitation over taxes, the Mountain Society continued to grow and prosper in this period just before the start of the Revolution. Dr. Matthias Pierson was the village physician. John Condit kept a well-paying tavern near the Meeting House on the Main Street. Samuel Munn had a public house where Main Street now intercepts Park Street. The Mountain folk saw expansion, prosperity, growth, all overlaid with the haze of anger and despair at the machinations in the home country.

The storm clouds darkened as the Townshend Acts were instituted. All taxes were repealed, except that on tea. British soldiers sent to collect the tax were actually quartered in the Mountain area, rubbing salt into the already wounded pride of the settlers. By September, 1773, in answer to an appeal for aid, 900 militiamen from the Mountain area were on their way to New England. Then came the Boston Tea Party and the closing of the Port of Boston in 1774.

The inhabitants of Orange Mountain were called to a meeting on June 11, 1774, to pass resolutions protesting the closing of the port and affirming their support of the people of Massachusetts. The Continental Congress, assembled in Philadelphia, asked the people to band together and refrain from importing any goods from Great Britain, Ireland or the West Indies until the Crown should relent against the Bay Colony. Committees were appointed in each colony to make sure that these resolutions were carried out. There were six Mountain men on the Newark committee, all veteran oppositionists to the Crown: Bethuel Pierson, John Range, Matthias Pierson, Daniel Cundiet, John Peck and Ichabod Harrison.

On April 23, 1775, riders raced through the Mountain community, carrying the electrifying, sobering news: "The Redcoats have fired on Boston!"

The aroused patriots of the Mountain area, with a heritage of mistrust against the Crown, the memory of the Governor's jailings still rankling in their breasts, didn't take long to declare their choice.

The day after the shots at Lexington and Concord, a meeting was called by the Mountain Society. It was voted unanimously that:

1. The members of the committee on observation appointed in the community were willing to risk their lives and fortunes in support of American liberty.
2. All possible support must be pledged to the brethren under fire in Massachusetts.
3. The captains of militia must exercise their companies at least once a week.

4. Each man should be provided with arms and ammunition.
5. All heads of families and masters of apprentices were to encourage their charges of proper age to learn the “military exercise” and allow them time off for training.

On May 4, 1775, there was a mass meeting in Newark, at which a committee was named to carry out the provisions agreed on by the Continental Congress. Appointed from the Mountain area were Isaac Ogden, Capt. Philip Van Cortland, Bethuel Pierson and Caleb Camp.

By August, two regiments of militia and six companies of Minute Men were on their way to the Continental Army, as the contingent from Essex. These men saw their first action in February, 1776, when 300 of them were called upon to assist in arresting Tories on Long Island and Staten Island. Whether they were chosen for this special task because they had a special ability to tell a Tory from a patriot cannot be ascertained.

### **The War Comes Here**

The war in its starker form came to the Mountain area when the British and Hessians descended on the community after Washington’s retreat southward through New Jersey in the fall of 1776. The Redcoats ranged over Orange Mountain, elated over the prospects of food and loot.

Several incidents took place in what is now East Orange. As the Redcoats foraged in the neighborhood, several of the local farmers decided it was time to defend their property with their arms. A platoon of Highlanders, intent on provender, were met at Peck Hill, now the intersection of Main Street and Maple Avenue, by just three of the home guard. John Wright, John Tichenor and Joshua Shaw outfought the British and drove them off, but Wright was wounded seriously and had to be evacuated by sled to his home on the Cranetown Road.

This same John Wright owned the property which was later to become known as the Soverel Farm. A flock of his geese had wandered away when the family fled at the appearance of the Redcoats. The British captured the geese, killed all but the gander and had themselves a feast. After gorging on Yankee geese, the soldiers placed 18 pennies with the letters Georgius Rex in a pouch and tied it around the gander’s neck. Four lines of poetry were also included:

“Dear Mr. Wright, we must bid you good night, It is time for us to wander.  
We have paid for your geese a penny apiece And left the change with the gander.”

They were the enemy, you see, but they were all of them, Redcoat and patriot, still English.

Perhaps the best remembered story concerns the storage of whiskey in a barn belonging to Caleb Baldwin on a lane leading north from Main Street. The barrels were hid, sparsely covered with hay. Hessian soldiers on a foraging trip chose this selfsame barn to



catch 40 winks. The hay appeared a mite hard to the Hessians and true to the curiosity of private soldiers in all ages, they did a little poking around. The discovery of whiskey was greeted with shouts of delight.

A second detachment, this one made up of Britishers, stumbled on the Hessians the next morning, all sleeping off a fearful drunk. The latecomers quickly absorbed their own share of the whiskey. They did one more neighborly job. They rolled the remaining barrels out for all to see. It is easy to understand why the lane was called Whiskey Lane, an appellation in use as late as 1850. On that date, the Revolution almost 100 years in the past, the more formal name of Grove Street was adopted for Whiskey Lane.

The Mountain people, outside these skirmishes with soldiers seeking food and drink and a night's entertainment, never experienced actual fighting in these parts. The menfolk, however, possessed such fighting qualities where they did serve that even General Washington came to call their behavior under fire such as would "do them honour and entitle them to the warmest approbation."

Lafayette passed through late in the campaign and in 1780, Washington camped at Crane town (now Montclair) for a brief period, hoping for an important military movement. It never came off, however, and the Father of his Country moved on.

### **A New Name**

The Revolution and the part they were playing in it gave the Mountain Society even greater cause to consider themselves a separate entity. They had enrolled their own militia. They had been maintaining their own Town Meeting. They had fought for their homes and bled. The name Newark Mountain, tinged as it was with the tag of colonialism, did not satisfy the prouder ones and they began casting about for a new one.

Orange seemed to figure prominently in records of that period. Orange Dale, Orange Fields and finally Orange alone made its appearance. On June 7, 1780, the New Jersey Journal reports that "at a meeting of a number of respectable inhabitants of the place commonly known by the name of Newark Mountain, it was agreed that the name of the place was both improper and inconvenient, as it was long, hard and very dissonant with the natural appearance of the place. Voted unanimously, that the name of Newark Mountain be forever rejected and that it be known in the future by the name of Orange."

In the first year of peace after the Revolution, 1783, the Mountain Society as a religious body, applied to the General Assembly for permission to incorporate. This was granted on June 11, 1783. Trustees were chosen. Officially, though, the name of Orange was not used until later. It wasn't until 1798 that the designation was spelled out, when the Town Meeting voted that "the next Annual Election for the State Legislature be opened at the house of Samuel Munn at Orange."

It wasn't until November, 1806, that the old Township of Newark as a municipal body was divided by an act of the Legislature and a new township created, to be known officially as Orange.

Early the following spring, representatives from Newark and Orange met to set boundary lines. These lines followed roughly the streams that ran through the new village. Eagle Rock was used as a starting point. From there, the town line ran roughly southeast to Phineas Crane's bridge, continued southeasterly to Silas Dodd's bridge, south to Boiling Spring, south to Peck's bridge, then southwest to Sayres Robert's bridge, at Camp Town (Irvington) over to the Elizabethtown line and west again to the mountains.

The division committee also allotted the town's poor, with 17 being given to Orange. The Treasurer's funds were divided, with Orange receiving as its final allotment the sum of \$23.72.

### **Orange Begins to Grow**

Itinerant peddlers were the main suppliers of goods and services to the people of the original Mountain Society. They plied their trade by wagon and on foot, bringing a bit of gossip along with the utensils, a bit of news along with the thread. By the early 1800's, however, Main Street in Orange had its goodly share of shops.

That part of Main Street now in the city of Orange had its cider mills and its distilleries, its tailor shop, hat store and general stores. Commerce also flourished in the part of Main Street that now lies in what we call East Orange, and with greater vigor. Besides the blacksmith shop of Daniel Rowe, there was Cyrus Jones and his hatting factory, Abiel Hedden's tombstone cutting business, the weaving place of Edward Gruet, Ebenezer Canfield's stone tavern, the wagon factory of Timothy Mulford, Silas Condit's general store, Alexander Dean's shoe factory and store and Aaron Condit's carpentry shop.

There was a Public House on the corner of Prospect and Main, extremely popular. The first floor was used as a taproom, the upper floor as a dance hall. This was the main watering place for the hay riders in the summer and the sleighing parties in the dead of winter.

In the same general neighborhood of the Public House were the slaughterhouse belonging to Col. William Williams, the hat factory of Joel Harrison, another hat factory in the rear of Major Daniel Harrison's pretentious stone house, Stephen Stetson's hat factory (which was to give its name to generations of Wild West headgear), John Skinner's tobacco shop and Mrs. Nixon's store, which was most popular with mothers and children. Here were supplies of candy for the children and notions for the women.

The manufacture of hats, as can be noticed from the number of such factories in one small area, had reached an important stage in the commerce of the Orange people. Cyrus Jones had built this factory near Main Street and North Munn Avenue when he was but 21 years old. His first supply of fresh pelts came from the arch trader, John Jacob Astor,

with whom he was to do business for years to come. Jones had several apprentices, Viner VanZant Jones, Israel Hedden, Samuel Tichenor and Lewis Williams, each of whom went into business for himself as soon as his period of learning was ended. James Condit and William Pierson had their hat factories in what is now Orange, at Parrow Brook. Where the brook crossed Main Street, near what is now Military Common and Oakwood Avenue, was a large, sloping rock. Here it was that town hatters washed their stock after taking it from the dye tubs.

The Dodd sawmill supplied the planed boards for new buildings. The Dodd grist mill on the Second River, and another belonging to Capt. Thomas Williams, ground the grain. The farmers needed tools, bringing scythe-makers, nailers and metal workers to the Mountain. Even silversmiths found a sale for their products, an indication of the prosperity of the area. So heavy did traffic become that new streets began to be laid out, to facilitate traffic into the shopping area. Does it sound modern?

With commerce, comes banking. In 1826, a group of substantial Citizens met in Kilburn's Tavern and organized the Orange National Bank. Its first site was the home of Ephraim Perry, but brisk business soon dictated a more accessible site. The corner of Main and Cone Street was selected, but this angered the businessmen from the eastern end, who wanted the bank closer to their places of commerce.

This anger didn't get the east enders a bank, but it did get them a new church. The dissident few, thwarted in commerce, struck back with displeasure at worship. They severed their relations with the older community church and made plans for the establishment of a second Presbyterian church. This was later to be known as the Brick Church. Rev. Dr. Hillyer, pastor of the First Church, must have approved of the idea of separation, or, he was happy to rid his church of the dissidents from the east, for he lent them his assistant, Rev. George Pierson, a native son, as their new minister.

The first meetings of the Second Church were held on the second floor of the White Schoolhouse, which stood at the corner of Washington and Main Streets. In 1804, it was decided that a new church would be more appropriate, but the practical members decided to house the school in the same building. It wasn't until 1830 that additional land was bought and a separate, new church building planned for the area fronting on Main Street, the present site of Brick Presbyterian. The old church, fully converted into a schoolhouse, was pushed back from the street. It was this new brick church which gave rise to an entire neighborhood's name, the Brick Church section.

### **The Quickening Tempo**

Business brings traffic. In the early 19th century, merchants; were just as conscious of this axiom as they are in today's high-speed era. In those days, transportation was a vexing problem because of the sheer difficulty of getting from place to place. Even the principal thoroughfares were in poor condition much of the year, impassable part of the time. To facilitate overland hauling, turnpike companies were organized as a means of keeping the long haul roads open. In 1809, the first turnpike serving Orange was opened,

coming up from Newark through Main Street, Valley Road, Mt. Pleasant Avenue and over the mountains to Morristown. Funds to maintain the paved roads were received from tolls collected at toll gates placed every four or five miles. Sound familiar?

Stage coaches, too, served the traveling public. The first stage line serving Orange, the Eclipse Stagecoach, was in business earlier than 1830. An independent line organized by Erastus Pierson, struggled along for a short time, but couldn't compete. Trips were run on a one-a-day schedule-one day up from Newark, the other day back.

About the time the stagecoach was struggling up the Roseville hill that once a day, the talk of a horse-drawn stage riding on iron rails captured the imagination of the forward-minded and a group of local citizens were among the first to invest in the newly-chartered Morris & Essex Railroad in 1835. Two vehicles were put into operation on November 16, 1836 running between Orange and Newark. The horses experienced difficulty drawing the cars up this selfsame hill from Broad Street to Roseville Avenue, just as did the stage horses.

The investors appealed to inventor Seth Boyden, asking him to design a cable which could pull the cars up the hill. Boyden had a better idea. He built a steam engine which could run on the tracks, pulling the cars with greater strength and more assurance than horses. This first engine, called the "Orange," went into service on October 2, 1837. A second engine was built soon after, named the "Essex" and helped extend the train service to two a day. By 1838, the booming line had been extended all the way to Morristown, ran six days a week, carrying freight and as many as 100 passengers on each trip.

### **The First Commuters**

The depression of 1837 hit Orange as it did the rest of the rural East. The farmers weathered the storm. Some merchants, without far-flung trade, went under. One such unfortunate was Amos Condit, who ran a general store on Main Street at Washington Lane. When his business failed, one of his creditors was the firm of Halsted, Haine & Co., of New York. To liquidate his debt, Condit offered his 100-acre farm, which lay east of the store, fronting on Main Street. Matthias Ogden Halsted took title to the land. On it, he built the handsomest house the community had seen to that day.

Halsted's handsome house led to the first real estate boom in what is now East Orange. Halsted's friends came out from New York to visit the fine house, stayed to admire the beautiful countryside. Enamored of the life of a country squire affected by Halsted, his friends bought land from him, built homes and initiated a community of commuters.

The Morris & Essex Railroad soon found the steam cars were doing a brisk business transporting the new homeowners to their places of business in Newark or down to the ferry to New York on the days that they "went to business." Since Halsted was the instrument of this new prosperity and a regular commuter himself, the trains often stopped to let him and his friends off at his home. In recognition of this courtesy, Halsted

had a depot built at his own expense, placed it in charge of a custodian and conveyed the property to the railroad without cost to the company.

This was the first Brick Church station. The original building was in use until 1864, when a new brick building was erected.

Halsted's real estate venture led to further developments, like that of Llewellyn Park in 1853, for instance. The years between 1850 and 1863 marked the gradual transition from a country town of descendants of the early settlers to a new, bustling, business-minded community boasting industrialists, capitalists, prosperous farmers-and immigrants, come to work in the factories that were springing up.

Orange found another source of exploitation-its natural wonders. Doctors lectured far and wide on the health-giving properties of the local mineral waters, advertising the township, inducing investors to build spas. Fruit-laden orchards provided trainloads of produce to be shipped to the city. By 1859, it was generally acknowledged that none of the suburbs of that "great commercial metropolis of New York" presented greater attractiveness in accessibility, health climate or beauty and variety of scenery than did the township of Orange.

### **The Railroad Battle**

The rebellious spirit, the readiness to resist an invasion of their rights that characterized the people of the Mountain Society in the early battles against the Proprietors, was handed down, obviously, to later residents.

Take their attitude towards the Morris & Essex Railroad. In 1858, the railroad decided to raise the commutation fare. In no time at all, the commuters were assembled, opposing the move. They didn't just talk. They sent a delegation to the railroad with a message. Either lower our fares, they warned, or we'll start a stage line in opposition.

The Railroad, possibly not conversant with the temper of these people, called the bluff and rejected the petition of the commuters. In a matter of days, a public subscription of \$10,000 had been raised and the Orange and Newark Omnibus Line was in business. It took just two weeks for the new line to go into operation. Fares were five cents less than those charged by the Morris & Essex. At the end of the first year, the new line had carried 104,454 passengers. The Morris & Essex, in the same period, carried 75,000.

The railroad saw the light. Fares were reduced. The new stage line, its object accomplished, retired from the arena.

### **The Final Break**

By 1860, Main Street was a crowded thoroughfare. Many of the older homes sheltered scads of immigrant families, drawn to the town by its growing importance as an industrial center. These larger houses, the forerunners of today's tenement slums, were called

“rookeries” or “hives.” They created dreadful fire hazards. And they sheltered, besides the decent, honest, hardworking immigrants, a prize collection of cutthroats, thieves and swindlers.

After several severe fires, plus a sharp increase in petty crime, the townspeople felt the need for a permanent, paid fire and police force. Assemblyman Amzi Dodd made the first move in this direction by presenting to the State Legislature an application for the incorporation of the town of Orange, after the Township Committee had issued its approval.

Not all of Orange was in favor of this plan. The people in the eastern section, especially, did not relish the idea. For the most part, they were owners of large farms. Their homes were spaced well apart. They had their own wells for water. When they went visiting, lanterns supplied them with enough light to trod the well-known, well-worn paths. Fire and police protection, street lights, paved paths, these were frills which could increase a property owner’s taxes.

More than that, the conservative villagers in the east end did not approve of the easy, liberal habits of the newcomers to Orange. They favored improvements, yes, but improvements as they were needed, not those designed merely to save the skins of the slothful, the improvident.

In spite of the vigorous objection in the eastern part of the town, however, the State Legislature passed the incorporation bill on January 26, 1860. The town was divided into three wards. The First ward stretched along the Newark boundary to Harrison and Center Streets, then north to Park Street and on to Crane town. The Second ward ran westward from Harrison Street to Mt. Pleasant Avenue. The Third ward went west to Livingston.

There was one more arena for the people of the east to do battle in, a local election in which the issue was to be voted upon. With the loss of the skirmish in Trenton, the main fight was transferred to the local scene.

The Orange Journal, the local paper, supported the action of the Legislature. Editorially, it held that “the question to be decided at this election is whether we shall longer wallow in roads with mud up to our carriage hubs and grope our way through streets shrouded after nightfall in a gloom worse than Stygian darkness-whether we shall nightly be exposed to the attacks of the burglar and the incendiary-or whether we shall have gas lit and passable streets, an efficient police and a well organized fire department.”

Two well attended mass meetings were held. The feeling at these meetings seemed about equally divided. But when the 1,300 votes were tallied, the leader of the Incorporation Party, Dr. William Pierson, was the winner with a slim majority of 62 votes. The First ward count was the tip-off. Although this was Dr. Pierson’s home ward, he received only 149 votes there, to 369 for his opponent, James Smith. The handwriting was on the wall.

The town government was inaugurated on March 27, 1860 at Willow Hall. After Dr. Pierson's inaugural address, the members of the Common Council were installed. But it didn't take long for the battle to shape up.

The people of the First ward, the east enders, were upset by their defeat. They objected to "incorporating farmlands." They could see little need for "all the frills of a town that was trying to act like a city." Defeated at the polls, they still retained that old rebellious itch for redress.

Their appetite for separation was whetted in 1861, when South Orange won separation from the town of Clinton and again in 1862, when Fairmount (now West Orange) was granted the territory for a separate town west of the First Mountain. This last move crystallized the sentiment for secession. The First warders prepared a law for the reduction of the corporate limits of the town of Orange, which, if passed, would free them from the "tyranny" of the incorporation.

The Orange Town Committee and the people of the Second and Third wards didn't take this move kindly. No political body can stand still when dissolution stares it in the face. Besides, the First ward was the wealthy ward. Its loss would put a special crimp in the operation of the rest of the town.

A mass meeting was called for January 29, 1863. Liberty Hall was filled and the audience roundly cheered the passage of a resolution which expressed Orange's sentiments: "Resolved, that we do protest in the strongest terms which the English language supplies against the dismemberment of the town or the cutting of a single inch of our territory, whether on the east or on the west, the north or the south."

A committee was named to carry the fight to Trenton.

There were few First warders at this meeting. If they were present, they did not make their presence felt.

The separation bill was presented in the State Legislature on February 3, 1863. More than 100 people traveled to Trenton to be on hand for the preliminaries. Lobbying for and against was vigorous. A hearing was granted by the Committee on Municipal Corporations of the General Assembly. John G. Truesdell and William King of the First ward defended the act. Mayor Pierson and David N. Ropes spoke for Orange.

The separation bill passed on first reading on February 12, 1863. It was scheduled for second and final reading on February 17. The Orange delegation panicked, suggested a compromise which would allow the residents of the entire township to vote on the repeal of the original incorporation act of 1860. They offered to make the town over into two election districts and allow each its own town committee.

It was too late. The easterners smelled the sweet taste of victory and rejected compromise. They pressed hard for passage of their bill on second reading.

On March 4, 1863, the bill was made law and the First ward was permitted to separate from Orange.

And so East Orange was born.



# Chapter 2

## The Growth

Agitation to acquire the right to govern yourself takes one kind of action. Once you get the right, organizing your community along the lines you dreamed of and making it work is quite another barrel of eels.

In 1863, when Orange's First ward was given the right to become East Orange, the nation was locked in a horrible, fratricidal war. Total mobilization as we know it now was then unknown; still, the burden of war pressed on the menfolk of the town. In the election of April, 1863, out of a population of 3,000, only 112 ballots were cast. This was not disinterest. Many men were away fighting and the women, God bless 'em, hadn't the right to vote.

The only polling place that first election was at Timothy W. Mulford's wheelwright shop on the south side of Main Street, just east of Burnet. Elected that day was a Township Committee consisting of William King, John M. Randall, Aaron B. Harrison, Charles Crane and Elias O. Doremus. Chosen assessor was Moses H. Williams. George Condit became receiver of taxes; Stephen M. Peck, overseer of the poor. James Peck and Calvin Dodd were selected to serve on the Board of Freeholders.

The first Township Meeting was held on April 16, in the office of Moses Williams at 251 Main Street. William King was chosen chairman. Joseph L. Munn was elected clerk and Amzi Dodd, that doughty battler for separation from Orange, was selected to serve as Township counsel.

The marking of official boundaries was tinged with a humanity and deference one would find singularly lacking in today's unsentimental, legalistic government ordinances. A boundary might be established after an owner in the west end of town, let us say, was given the opportunity of deciding for himself to which town he wished to pay taxes. Such amenities were observed until a township finally emerged with an area of 2,400 acres, roughly four square miles in size. It contained 300 houses. The first budget called for raising \$8,488.60 through taxation.

This first budget of less than \$8,500 was to come from ratables calculated at \$1,042,350. And this was mainly farmland, in the year 1863, remember. No wonder the town fathers of old Orange fought so hard to hang on to this choice morsel!

With the passing of the national draft act which conscripted citizens for the first time in the country's history, rioting broke out all over the East. New York City, especially, experienced terrible, bloody days in July, 1863. Not so in East Orange. Whether it was because East Orange men were more patriotic, or whether it was the generous bonuses handed out by the town, the county and the state, enough volunteers signed up here so

that conscription was held to a minimum. As a matter of fact, local men were so patriotic that in 1864-65, the two Oranges together had to ante up a total of \$5,400 in bounties.

The national election of 1864 was of more than passing interest for local voters. General George B. McClellan, commander of the Army of the Potomac until sacked by President Lincoln, was a resident of West Orange. When he was nominated by the Democrats to run for the Presidency against Lincoln, a delegation of local partisans marched up to his home on Mountain Ridge to greet "Little Mac." East Orange, however, was staunchly Union, and Republican. It gave Lincoln 354 votes to 109 for neighbor McClellan. This despite the fact that New Jersey was one of the three Northern states to go for McClellan. Local sentiment was expressed most eloquently by Cyrus Jones, aged 94, who proclaimed for all to hear at the polling place that he "had cast his first vote for General Washington and now have registered my approval of the second greatest President of the United States." Jones may have been electioneering too close to the polls, but he was a model citizen. In 73 years, he had voted in every annual election.

The end of the Civil War brought shortlived joy to East Orange. The assassination of President Lincoln caused deep sorrow in the community, a sorrow not matched until 98 years later, when the city was stunned by the killing of President Kennedy.

Church bells tolled through the morning hours when the news reached here. Emblems of mourning appeared as if by one thought, as a chastened populace expressed its sorrow. Flags which had been happily displayed since the day of victory were slowly drawn from their proud position and left at half mast. Draped portraits of the beloved President appeared on homes, churches and public buildings, the draping swaddling the community in its emblems of woe.

Grief over Lincoln's death lasted its dignified time. But growth was in the air, not death. The town had the feeling of flowering; growth tugged at its roots.

More people were settling to the north and south of Main Street. Halsted Street was developed, all the way south to Central Avenue. G. Thorpe bought the old Condit farm, cleared the ground, laid out streets and began developing the area between Washington Street and Springdale Avenue. David N. Ropes, a former Mayor of Orange, did the same for the area along Park Avenue, from the Orange line to Washington Street.

The "extravagant" paving of roads had been one of the bones of contention which led East Orange to separate from Orange in 1863. The new Township, however, soon realized that it could not stand against the swirl of progress. The growing population created growing needs and demands. The Township Committee in 1869, arranged for Main Street to be macadamized. This was following in swift order by the paving of Washington Street, Munn Avenue, Prospect Street, North Park, Dodd, Grove and Harrison Streets, and Cherry Street, which was soon to become Arlington Avenue.

The idea of street lights, so frivolous to the farmers of East Orange in 1863, became more appealing and necessary to the separated brethren of 1868. That was the year the

Township Committee received permission to install gas lamps for street lighting. Actually, the streets of the city had been piped for gas lighting in homes as early as 1859. This, of course, was never brought up in the discussions of separation.

First to benefit from street lights was Main Street, followed by Arlington Avenue, Harrison and Washington Streets in 1872.

The passage of the 15th Amendment, which forbade any state from abridging the “right of any citizen to vote on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude,” was greeted with a public celebration on March 31, 1870. A group of citizens, white and Negro, marched to the home of Capt. Frederic Reimer, the city engineer, borrowed the brass cannon parked on his lawn and marched off to the Military Common in Orange, where a salute of 37 shots was fired. This was still a people who cherished liberty.

### **First Decade**

In its 10th year, East Orange had grown to be 17th in the state in population, 4,115 souls according to the 1870 census. In keeping with optimistic estimates so popular in later years, this figure was jumped to 5,000 in all discussions of growth. The town’s ratables had grown to almost \$5,000,000. The first locally published newspaper, the East Orange Gazette, made its appearance. It was owned, appropriately enough, by a real estate agent, Stephen M. Long. We say “appropriately” because the whole town was in the throes of a real estate boom. Doddtown was growing almost overnight. Assemblyman Moses Williams laid out an area south of Central Avenue and west of Clinton Street, to be called Williamsville. It was quickly developed. A group calling itself the Elmwood Home Association bought property to the east of Williamsville and began selling lots. Other streets were laid out closer to the Newark line.

There was one snag, however, in the plans for further development. Orange and the communities to the west had been irked for years by the fact that there was no public transportation allowed in East Orange on Sunday. The horse cars just stopped running. Since no public vehicle could move through the corridor which was East Orange, the other towns protested, cajoled, entreated, ranted, all to no avail-until April, 1873, when the demands of its own growth melted the stony resolve of the town fathers and a majority vote on the committee started the cars rolling.

With gas street lights, paved roads, real estate booming and Sunday transportation, East Orange had caught up with the “progressives” in Orange and the apostles of progress had still another suggestion. Why not form a “big city” by consolidating all the separated brethren into one, big Orange again? The idea was tested at a mass meeting. The Township Committee got the message quickly - it voted to spurn the idea of consolidation.

Celebrations of a civic character were the people’s entertainment then. When the United States marked its 100th anniversary on July 4, 1876, it was the signal for joy unconfined, locally. It began at 10:30 a.m. with a citizens’ meeting in National Hall, at Main and

Grove Streets. The Hall was packed. The Declaration of Independence was read, in full, as was a poem written for the occasion. At 2:30 p.m., a praise service was held in Lyric Hall. In the afternoon, there was a big parade, wending its way several miles through the streets, watchers at every curbside, hanging from windows. Floats stretched as far as the eye could see. The blare of bands reverberated through the streets. At night, lawns and homes were lit with paper lanterns. Fireworks rose into the sky, delighting the children. Food was distributed in quantities sufficient to feed an army. Those were the days before television and our endless modern distractions. A parade was an occasion. A celebration was a day to remember.

Progress continued to pursue East Orange, as others began to recognize the town's potential. In 1876, the Erie Railroad made its move to offer service as a competitor for the D.L.&W. The Watchung Branch was extended from the Greenwood Lake line to a station serving Park Avenue, West Orange. Depots were established at Prospect Street and Brighton Avenue. Real estate development of the northeastern part of the town followed, but it was cut short. A strike on the Lackawanna resulted in the shift of riders to the Erie, for a short while, but the lack of sufficient revenue forced suspension of regular service in August, 1877.

In 1883, the Lackawanna opened its station at South Arlington Avenue and Main Street, ostensibly to defer mounting criticism of poor service to the town. So disgruntled were riders that one group, bent on getting better service through ridicule, dubbed the letters of the road to stand for "Delay, Linger & Wait R.R." and popularized the slogan. The Erie, burned once, saw in this irritation an opportunity to attract more passengers and began running through trains to New York at commutation hours. It set up stage lines leaving Main and Prospect Streets to connect with these trains.

This shuttle worked for some time. Passengers in the southern part of town found the transfer and extra ride an inconvenience, however. When the Lackawanna learned its lesson from competition and began offering better service, it regained most of the traffic it had lost to become the important line serving the town.

### **Reorganization**

Steady growth led to a reorganization of the Township in 1886. It was divided into four wards, each with two representatives elected to the Township Committee. One committeeman was elected by the township as a whole. In 1892, a fifth ward was added, setting the stage for future Councils.

In its 30 years of existence, the Township was administered and meetings were held first from the office of Moses Williams, then in the Ashland School and later in the Commonwealth Building, after it was erected at Arlington Avenue, near Main Street and the Railroad. These makeshift arrangements proved inadequate for a growing, burgeoning administrative machinery. In 1892, a contract was given out for the erection of the first Municipal Building on the north side of Main Street, between Winans and Walnut

Streets. The land cost \$5,000 and the building, \$5,204. Besides the township administration, the police department was allotted space in the new structure. The move into the new headquarters spurred the talk of becoming a city which had been a topic much discussed in the days when consolidation was a burning issue. In 1895, after the Fifth ward had been created, an act of the State Legislature allowed the Township the authority to elect a President, with all the powers of a mayor. Joseph P. Thompson was the first elected to this new office, followed in successive two year terms by Col. Abraham Ryan and Edward E. Bruen.

Still, the township form of government irked the efficiency minded town fathers. Mindful of the population, which had by now grown to 30,000, one civic figure characterized the local situation as “a man, endeavoring to array himself in boy’s clothing.” A special election was decreed for December 9, 1899, at which voters were asked to approve the idea of incorporating East Orange as a city. This they did, with eyes glowing at a look into the future.

A city deserves a new headquarters. East Orange, already earning a reputation for being one step ahead of events, had planned for a new City Hall. It was to be built in front of the existing structure. Not only was the idea anticipated, and plans for it already in existence, but the city went one step further. Anticipating also a big “yes” vote for incorporation as a city, the government had laid plans for occupying the new building on December 11, 1899, two days after the election.

The new structure was directly in front of the old one, cost \$29,000 and was, in truth, ready for business on the day the city’s first Mayor, Edward E. Bruen, was sworn in. The Township Committee altered its name to the East Orange City Council and sat right down to business. It elected Edward R. Crippen as its first chairman. Judge John Franklin Fort was selected City Counsel.

### **A New Century**

East Orange entered the 20th Century a city of well-appointed homes and prospering businesses, one of the state’s wealthier communities. Some streets and many of the homes were lit by electricity. The telegraph and the telephone were readily available to those with the means of paying for them. Phonographs and kinetoscopes provided family entertainment. Steam trains and electric trolleys had taken the place of the old stagecoach and horse car. The automobile was beginning to make its appearance, frightening the horses.

In this same period, the southern part of the city, especially that part south of Central Avenue, between Munn Avenue and the Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, began to develop rapidly. Watson Whittlesey had bought the area known as Peck’s Woods in the late 1890’s and had built single family homes with from six to nine rooms in each. Over the next 20 years, homes such as these were to be snapped up as quickly as they could be built.

Main Street had always been the center of the city's civic development. In the early years of the new century, the rapid development of the area to the south had focused new attention on Central Avenue, once a playground for fancy horses and carriages and the inevitable bicycle. Public Service Transportation was one company which paid a lot of attention. Realizing the potential of the street, Public Service was irked by the fact that its service on Central Avenue ended at the 14th Street terminus. It wanted its franchise extended westward.

This desire for a franchise extension flared into another of those minor civil wars made famous by the independent citizens of East Orange. The owners of the fine mansions on the avenue and on Munn and Harrison, joined forces with the small home owners and the horse fanciers. Whatever their social status, they were united in their desire to keep the trolleys off Central Avenue.

The battle was long and bitter. City Council withstood the onslaught of these determined citizens, however, and passed the ordinance granting the franchise extension on May 2, 1902. It was one of the stormiest meetings ever held by this body until the days when the end of rent control would be debated.

As the disgruntled patrons of Central Avenue walked out of Council Chambers that night, the sentiment heard expressed most often was "they'll regret this step." These were not the idle words of the loser. They led, three months later, to a Citizens' Union, dedicated to the purpose of "driving every man who voted for that ordinance out of office."

This organization did more than that. It opened the door a little later on to the election of a Democrat as mayor, for the first time in the history of the city. East Orange was staunchly Republican, as witness the plurality for Lincoln and other Republican Presidents. But because of the trolley fight, the Citizens' Union elected one of its own, Julian Gregory, to the Board of Education. Gregory happened to be a Democrat. So popular did he become in his nine years on the Board that in 1911, he became the city's first Democratic chief executive. He served two terms, the last of his party to hold that office until James W. Kelly Jr. was elected in 1958, 44 years later.

### **Apartments Come**

The clangor of the trolleys on Central Avenue soon produced other changes. There was a huge boulder on a hill at Munn and Central Avenues, which could be tipped easily if the right spot was touched. This was carted off as a safety measure, with enough soil to level the entire corner. On this site was erected the first luxury apartment building in the city. There had been a building on Main and Grove Streets which housed several families, but this had been built originally for stores and an Assembly Hall, and then converted to living quarters.

The building permit for the new luxury building was issued April 12, 1911, to E. N. Potter, who owned the property. The architect was F. A. Wright. The building was five

stories high, containing deluxe accommodations for 36 families. Large, divided windows reached from floor to ceiling. The latest in bathroom and kitchen facilities were installed, plus paneled dining rooms, doormen at all entrances and admission could be gained by identification only. The building cost \$85,000, an astronomical sum at that time, yet hardly enough to raise one story at today's (1964) prices.

This forerunner of the city's many quality apartments maintained its position of eminence until 1928, when business began encroaching on homes in the area and the basement of the apartment house was converted to house a book store, a beauty shop and a drug store, which is still in existence today.

The period between 1912 and 1925 saw the further development of upper Central Avenue as a modern shopping hub, which later was styled "the Fifth Avenue of the suburbs." It was East Orange which was to become the first suburb to see the great New York stores establish branches in it. This was the forerunner of today's exodus of the fashionable stores from the central city to the suburban areas. Leaders in this development of Central Avenue were the Baldwin brothers, who erected many of the buildings still housing Central Avenue's finest shops.

The township form of government had given way to the incorporation of East Orange as a city. But the mere adaptation of this title wasn't enough, according to those most concerned with the city's administration. The demands of the 20th Century and the special needs of East Orange cried out for something more, something special. This was a job for specialists.

By direction of the City Council, Jerome D. Gedney, then City Counsel, and Edward M. Colie, hired for this specific purpose, were asked to draw up a new charter, taking note of the needs of East Orange. This was then submitted to a committee of citizens, who represented the various civic organizations most concerned with government efficiency in the city. This new instrument was studied carefully, and it was well that it was. It followed no stereotyped path. It was not derivative, neither was it so radical as to leave doubts as to its feasibility. It was tailor-made for the kind of city East Orange was becoming, for the kind of people expected to help run it.

The pros and cons of the new charter were debated thoroughly. Changes were made, suggestions adopted and finally, the charter was presented to the Legislature in the form of a bill to be introduced in the winter term of 1908. It passed both houses and would become the effective instrument of governing the city on January 1, 1909-if! First, the voters had to approve the whole idea at the polls in November. They did.

The new charter took effect January 1, 1909 and continued until the election of November, 1963, when the voters again approved changes. These were mainly an extension of the term of office for the Mayor and the Councilmen, from the two years they had been serving, to four years. In addition, the Mayor was designated the chief administrative officer, an oversight in the original charter. As if to mirror the temper of the times, a new code of ethics for city officials was spelled out.

The charter of 1909 was unique. Its main features were the Boards and Commissions charged with the responsibility of overseeing various city departments as non-paid directors. It was this feature which was to give East Orange a state-wide reputation as a well-governed municipality. Through the years, the men and women serving on these Boards and Commissions were of such calibre as to make many a private enterprise envious of the talent so fruitfully put at the city's disposal for nothing - talent which would have commanded fabulous fees elsewhere. Through this pool of talent, the city was able to draw on the background and experience of experts, men to whom other communities would have been happy to pay goodly sums for their knowledge and advice. In 1913, when East Orange was marking its 50th anniversary, a minister of the First Congregational Church said a few words which characterize the city even today:

*“East Orange was not created by one man nor by one group. It was created by the people themselves. Though we may pay tribute to scores of men and women who were leaders of the past) we cannot single out one man and give him credit for the blessings that surround us today. It is a real tribute to the courageous foresight of our forefathers that East Orange retains the same cheerful friendliness and honesty today that characterized the old-time farm village. Perhaps most noteworthy of all is that never in the history of the township or the city has there been one charge of graft or corruption in the government of the community-a fitting tribute to the true greatness of our people.”*

Those words are just as applicable today. In the era of the quick squeeze, the easy morality surrounding so many in the old “courthouse gang,” this testament is the city's most precious asset.

This 50th year, by the way, was marked with a banquet on March 4, 1913. The committee for the celebration, appointed by City Council, consisted of Council Chairman Frederick Saxelby as chairman, assisted by Councilmen T. McCurdy Marsh and P. H. Lawless, David L. Pierson and five citizens from each of the city's wards. Mayor Julian Gregory presided at the banquet and speakers were Governor John Franklin Fort, Judge Frederick Adams, Rev. Fred C. Baldwin and Thomas R. Creede. One item of interest-the city has had two Democratic mayors in 100 years. One was mayor at its 50th anniversary, the other in office at its 100th year.

The climax of the 50th anniversary celebration was a huge parade held in June, in which floats representing the city's industry, commerce and civic activities made the grand tour. Special guests were invited-the surviving citizens who lived in East Orange in 1863. These included Richard Coyne, V. J. Hedden, J. Cook Culberson, Bethuel S. Williams, Winfield S. Williams, Jeremiah P. Ball, Joseph L. Munn, William P. Condit, Abram M. Baldwin, John Thatcher, Philip Harrison, Viner Van Zandt Dodd, Cyrus Harrison, Joel W. Hatt and C. Milton Harrison.



# Chapter 3

## The Flowering

If the period up to 1863, when East Orange broke away from Orange, represents the city's roots; if the next 50 years represents the early growth, then the period up to the beginning of the Great Depression in 1930 was the flowering of the community.

The city's outer garments began to change; at the same time, the tempo began to step up. The single family home, with its expanse of lawn, began to give ground to the apartment house. The resident who worked, as well as lived, in the city, began to meet the commuter and the renter. The busy, small shops watched as the department stores grew, then the supermarket and the chain variety store.

### War Clouds

East Orange had just marked its 50th year as a community when the clouds of war began darkening the horizon. But this was no fratricidal struggle, such as had attended the city's birth. This was the first World War, sucking in nation after nation as it progressed from assassination in a small place called Sarajevo to the envelopment of almost the whole civilized world.

Before the United States itself was committed, however, the sympathy for the Allied cause here was already marked. Benefits for British War Relief were on the calendars of many local organizations. On April 6, 1917, we were in it. The first volunteers - organized even before we were in the fight - to enlist actively in the service of the Allies, were a group of East Orange High School students who became associated with the Presbyterian Hospital in New York. They embarked on May 14, 1917 from New York, successfully negotiated the dreaded submarine zone and arrived in England, where they were assigned to the British Medical Department. After a brief training period, they joined surgeons in French hospitals as assistants.

As usual, when the war came, East Orange did its part with alacrity. Camp McClellan, Alabama, a great staging area in the first World War, was laid out in 1917 by Major Frederick A. Reimer, the East Orange city engineer. It was later to serve as a training center in World War II, as well. It was at this camp that the city's 5th Regiment of National Guardsmen were merged into the 114th Infantry, which was sent overseas to St. Nazaire, France, in June, 1918. There the local soldiers were assigned to the famed 29th Division which wrote a record of valor second to none, in its brief commitment to action. The Selective Service Act came into being on May 19, 1917 and 3,610 men between the ages of 18 and 45 had registered by June 8. East Orange was the first city in the state to file its returns, with its registry far exceeding its quota. A parade of all registrants was held on June 17.

On the home front, too, East Orange was busy selling and subscribing to Liberty Bonds. The city raised \$4,501,200, which was almost two and a quarter times the amount requested as its share. During the closing days of the final drive, in October 1918, a captured German machine gun was auctioned off. It was won by a combine of William F. Oatman, Jerome D. Gedney, Paul F. Gerhard, School Commissioner Edmund D. Walker and Playground Commissioner W. Nelson Knapp. The combined bid was \$15,000. The gun itself was awarded to the Public Library, a rather strange resting place. It's still in the library basement (as of 1965).

The end of hostilities came to East Orange as it did to the rest of America-with wild rejoicing, receptions for the returning soldiers, memorial services for those who would lie forever on foreign soil and sobering preparations for resuming disrupted lives. Of the more than 3,000 who served, 72 did not return.

The passage of the 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote. It did not mean the end of stable government here, as some calamity howlers had prophesied. In East Orange at least, the female of the species had always maintained an avid interest in civic affairs, even if she couldn't vote. Her voice was loud, not strident. Her choices were dictated as surely as if she had stepped into the voting booth, though she used other places, probably for making them known. With the added incentive of having the vote herself, the interest of the women of the city bloomed.

She jumped into politics right up to the top of her, in those days, very short, skirt. Yet, strangely, it wasn't until the election of 1961, 40 years later, that the first woman was actually elected to the City Council. This distinction went to Mrs. Margaret McLoughlin, named as representative of the First ward after she campaigned on the Republican ticket.

### **Utility Problems**

A growing city needs a plentiful and pure water supply plus an adequate sewage system. Without these two assets, growth remains stunted at the level of the cesspool and the backyard pump.

The year 1881 was the turning point, actually, for East Orange. A long drought had played havoc with wells and springs. The exigencies of this dry spell turned the thoughts of the citizens towards less capricious water supplies. In 1865, some enterprising citizens had formed a water company for the purpose of serving East Orange. Lack of interest on the part of prospective purchasers had resulted in this franchise lying dormant. But the 1881 drought revived the project. A corporation was formed. Borings were taken at Boiling Springs, which lay on the Bloomfield line at Grove Street, and a large underground current of pure water was tapped. A contract was entered into with the Township Committee, in which the company agreed to supply five hydrants for firefighting, while reserving the right to sell water to those citizens desiring it. Three artesian wells were bored and six open wells tapped. Later, five more artesian wells were added. Ten miles of street mains were laid. Over 100 acres of land were bought by the company, to insure its supply.

By 1902, these wells were supplying 2,200 families. Equipment and additional land were bought to yield 1,400,000 gallons a day. Still, this wasn't enough. Water had to be bought from Newark. The township, foreseeing problems, decided it was time to buy the assets of the company to insure itself an adequate supply by going into the water business on a larger scale. The Water Department was organized on January 1, 1903, and within the next two years began laying the foundation for a municipal water system that is unique. From that day onward, the city has never suffered a water shortage, no matter how quickly it grew, nor how dire the straits of its neighbors or the rest of the area.

The backbone of the water system is the land which was bought in 1905 at White Oak Ridge in Millburn and Livingston. Subsequent purchases in this same area gave the city a reservation containing 2,300 acres, with 12 wells able to supply 10,000,000 gallons of water a day. This capacity has been increased through the years, always steps ahead of even the most optimistic estimates of growth in commerce and residences. All this growth, also, has been accomplished to the merry ringing of the Water Department's cash register, which continues to pile up surplus after surplus. The citizens, at this same time, enjoyed one of the lowest rates in the state for this excellent service.

The problems of sewage disposal paralleled the need for plentiful water. In 1885, resolutions had been adopted favoring a public sewerage system. Three referendums were put on the ballot and three times the public showed it wasn't ready to spend the necessary funds. By 1896, the problem became acute enough for the Township Committee to begin laying pipe for a chemical disposal plant. This plan was abandoned five years later, without the plant ever being erected, due to lack of funds. Instead, the city joined its sewer pipes to the Newark lines. The problems were settled permanently by the building of the Passaic Valley trunk sewer, the creation of the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission and the city's inclusion in these plans in 1920.

Post-World War I also saw the development of yet another section of town. Just before the turn of the century, the building of the Crocker-Wheeler plant in the northeastern section of town had spurred that area's development. It was given its name, Ampere, by Dr. Schuyler S. Wheeler, one of the company's founders, who revered the French scientist, Andre Marie Ampere. He made sure that, when the D.L. & W. built a station in the section, it was named Ampere, thus giving the appellation to the entire neighborhood.

When World War I came, it spurred other companies to locate in Ampere. General Electric came first, but this plant was later sold. The Ward Baking Co., located just across the line in Newark, but drew many of its workers from East Orange. When Crocker-Wheeler decided to leave East Orange, there was a feeling of great depression, soon to be replaced by elation when the Worthington Company announced it was taking over the property for its air conditioning and refrigeration division. Worthington has found East Orange an ideal location and has been producing some of its world renowned machinery here.

## After the War

The period following World War I saw unprecedented growth all over the city. New residents literally poured into the city. Every available piece of open space was eagerly snatched up to be converted into housing. No thought of overall planning was entertained. The mad rush to build in any fashion was inhibited by only two factors. One was the stubborn insistence on standards by Building Inspector John Scott, who diligently nullified the shoddy. The other was the determination of the Board of Recreation Commissioners to retain park and playground space. This was a fortunate circumstance with far-reaching implications for the future of the city. Without this tenacity, the presently excellent system of playgrounds, now nationally famous, might never have been allowed to come into existence. Open space is at such a premium at this stage that it would have been financially impossible to secure enough property now to provide for anything but the barest minimum of playgrounds.

Into the midst of this mad scramble for limited building space crept the brief depression that followed the war boom. Almost unnoticed at first, the nationwide crisis began pinching the populace in the years between 1921 and 1923. There had been other depressions before, and the Great Depression of the 30's still lay ahead, but the post-war slump was the first to have any deep effect on the city itself. Heretofore, times of crisis had been softened by the city's home-built economy, its farm lands and its small local industries, which were better able to withstand the shock of recession. This time, it was different. The farms had gone. East Orange was a salaried city, or the home of the small investor. As business everywhere suffered, so did the people of East Orange who depended on commerce. The industries that had come into town lost their markets and people here lost their jobs.

But it wasn't all depression in the depression years and recovery began soon. In 1924, the city acquired an asset - Upsala College. The school, supported by Lutherans of Swedish descent, had its beginnings in Brooklyn in 1896. A move to Kenilworth came in 1898. By 1924, the college had acquired the old Charles Hathaway mansion at Springdale Avenue and Prospect Street and came to the city. This initiated a happy association which has seen the college grow, physically and in prestige, until it has become one of the finest small schools in the east. It has given East Orange an asset for which there is no exact accounting. Presently, it sits on more than 40 acres and has embarked on a building program which will replace some of the old buildings, formerly private homes, with modern structures, giving its physical plant an opportunity to match its intellectual attainments.

In 1926, the Homeopathic Hospital of Newark opened its doors on a site at the corner of Munn and Central Avenues. With the addition of several departments later on, its name was changed to the East Orange General Hospital. It has since grown even further and is looking forward to greatly expanded facilities.

Gradually, the country's pendulum swung once more, from gloom to optimism. Soon boom was in the air again. As the entire nation moved upwards out of the morass of

despondency, East Orange seemed to run ahead of the national awakening. Bulldozers once more began making their appearance in the city, tearing down old mansions and scraping the brush off vacant lots. A new city began to arise-this time vertically. East Orange soon exhibited a face unheard of among suburbs.

The tall apartment building, which had made its first appearance in 1911 and in the intervening years only sporadically, began to dominate building plans. This phenomenon, now expanding into other suburban areas, reached its peak here after World War II. At present (1965) there are 460 apartment buildings in the city, providing shelter for more than half the population.

The stalks of growth reached right into the municipal administration. The old City Hall on Main Street was bulging at the seams. In 1924, City Council had set aside funds for the purchase of land at Arlington Place, from North Munn to North Arlington Avenues. A municipal complex was designed to house the city administration, the Health Department and a police headquarters and court. Before these buildings were erected, the United States opened a new post office at Munn and Arlington Place, thus creating the semblance of a Civic Square. In 1928, the City Council got around to finding the money for the erection of the municipal buildings.

The entire complex was dedicated at public ceremonies held on September 29, 1929 and was open for business the next day. Today, the imposing neo-classic City Hall, facing the East Orange station, serves as a dignified advertisement for commuters barreling by on the Lackawanna. Especially at night, when it is floodlit, does the structure give some symbol of the ageless integrity with which the city is governed.

The year 1928 saw another college settle in the city. Panzer College of Physical Education, on Glenwood Avenue, offered courses to prepare young people for careers in teaching physical training and hygiene. It remained part of the local scene until 1958, when it was merged with Montclair State College.

Census-taking time in 1930 saw a prosperous city with 68,000 inhabitants, up nearly 18,000 from 1920. From its original assessment roll of a little over \$1,000,000 in 1863, the city's ratables now stood at \$126,000,000. A piece of property on Main Street which would have sold for \$8,000 in 1863, now was worth more than \$100,000.

Two famous New York stores decided East Orange was the place for new branches. Best & Co. moved its specialty merchandise to a small but elegant building at William and Washington Streets in October, 1930. The next March, B. Altman & Co. came to Central Avenue with a complete branch store. This same year, Muir's, the homegrown department store with a loyal following all over Essex County, marked its 50th year. The Great Depression was lurking in the wings, however, ready to take center stage in this city just as it did all over the world.

By August, 1933, its pinch had reached into City Hall. That was a payless month for city employees, the first in the history of East Orange. Emergency relief, under state support,

was instituted, with an office in City Hall's basement and Mayor Charles Martens as its director. The federal government instituted a Civil Works program, with a minimum wage of \$18 a week. A woman's sewing project was one of its aspects, with one group of unfortunates making clothing to be distributed to other welfare clients.

The 1934 budget was sharply reduced as the city limped through the early 30's. City employees had their salaries cut anywhere from 5 to 20 per cent. The weather, as if reflecting the fridity of the era, took this occasion to heap its woe by setting a new low of 15 degrees below zero on February 8.

It took more than two years for the effects of recovery to begin thawing the city; municipal employees, as a matter of fact, had received only half their reductions back by that time. The inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt didn't seem to have any appreciable political effect here, the city remaining staunchly Republican. Mayor Martens was re-elected. He had first taken office in 1918. He was to be re-elected for 17 consecutive terms, becoming almost an institution in City Hall until illness forced his retirement in 1952. He was followed by former Councilman William M. McConnell of the Fifth ward, also a Republican. It wasn't until 1956, as a matter of fact, that the Democrats even elected their first Councilman, James J. Fitzsimmons, Jr. of the Third ward. Since that time, however, the Democrats have made steady inroads on the GOP majority until today, with every ward in the city except the Second enjoying hotly contested campaigns, the issue usually in doubt for either party until the last few votes are counted. Even the Solid Second has recently begun to feel the inroads of the two-party system. This new development, however, seems not to have caused any appreciable deviation in the undeniably superior government the city has always enjoyed.

On March 24, 1938, more than 250 citizens met in City Hall to plan the celebration of the city's 75th anniversary. The festivities were scheduled to begin on June 6. Mayor Martens was honorary chairman and Fred T. Dugan the regular chairman. Names like Doremus, Condit, Pierson, Baldwin, Williams and Van Brunt, familiar from the founding of the old Mountain Society, were still much in evidence as members of the celebration committee, providing an unbroken link with the past which lent poignancy and drama to the entire proceedings.

The 1930's also saw another significant "first" for East Orange. In May 1933, Mayor Martens named Alice I. Webster as City Clerk, the first woman to hold this post in the state, perhaps in the nation. Miss Webster had been a stenographer in the City Clerk's office beginning in 1907. She became deputy clerk in 1910. When she retired in 1957, she had devoted 50 years of faithful service to the city in which she had been born. Her much lamented death occurred in 1960.

### **The Second World War**

World War II crept up on the city like a slowly incubating disease. First, events were read about, watched in newsreels, talked about in clubs. Some became involved through close association with British fraternal groups. The opening of the Rose Gardens in front of

Memorial Field in June 1941, was used as a means of aiding British War Relief. It was no secret where the city's sympathies lay. Yet, neutralism was not yet a nasty word.

All this was shattered at Pearl Harbor on Sunday, December 7, 1941.

Within several months, 3,000 local men and women were serving in the armed forces. Relief work became more immediate. The city mobilized for total effort.

In 1943, a step was taken which brought the war home directly, even to those without near ones serving. The Water Department entered into a contract with the federal government for the felling of 1,343 trees on the city's water reserve lands. These would provide roughly 231,000 board feet of lumber for PT boats and Destroyer Escorts. On hand to witness the felling of the first trees were Mayor Martens and Roswell Roper, water engineer, both of whom had planted these selfsame trees as seedlings in 1918. Perhaps one of these trees provided the lumber for the deck of PT109, to become world famous later.

The year 1944 was a bleak one. Many of the sons of the city died in battle in far lands. The war reached into all homes in another manner. Meat, butter and sugar were rationed, as was coal, oil and gasoline. Coal, especially, was in short supply. Local dealers tried their best to distribute dwindling stocks as equitably as possible. Nevertheless, in February, over 1,000 homes were without heat. The Civilian Defense organization made efforts to send coal to those homes where there were sick children, distributed through the city's firehouses. The Shade Tree Commission offered wood for sale from felled shade trees.

As spring came, Victory gardens were planted on every city owned lot. While all this gardening and tree cutting went on, one resident of North Walnut Street was preparing supplies of still another kind. Neighbors could hardly believe their eyes, when they read one morning that a huge illicit whiskey distillery had been uncovered at 155 North Walnut Street. The interior of a large old home had been gutted to make room for a still capable of producing immense quantities of alcohol.

One of the first residents to be honored in the war received his glory posthumously. In February 1944, Mrs. J. J. Gilligan was invited by the Navy Department to christen a destroyer, the U.S.S. Gilligan, in honor of her son, Pvt. John J. Gilligan Jr., a Marine who had died of wounds received in action at the battle of Tulagi, in the Solomon Islands. Young Gilligan had been a hero several times over, before his untimely death.

The first woman resident to die in battle was Pvt. Marian Gillis, a WAC killed in a plane crash in New Guinea on May 13, 1945. Pvt. Gillis was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Linwood C. Gillis. Mr. Gillis had been the longtime publisher of the East Orange Record.

## The War Ends

The end of World War II saw East Orange on the verge of a new adventure. Postwar reconstruction meant development in new directions. The first few years of readjustment to peacetime pursuits were merely a hiatus, a staging area for the leap into future greatness. Portents of what was to come began appearing in 1946 and 1947. One such move was the purchase of the Hotel Suburban on Harrison Street by the firm of Frank H. Taylor & Son.

The Taylor Company was closely associated with the growth of the city from post-World War I days. Frank H. Taylor, the founder, had come to East Orange as a young man of 16 back in 1885. He took a position as an office boy in a real estate firm and by 1908, was the sole owner of that business.

After the first World War, Taylor was joined by his son, Harry, and the name of the company changed accordingly. At first, the firm dealt mainly in the buying and selling of property for clients. Gradually, however, it began branching out into the field of realty development, with an eye towards attracting top-rated businesses to settle in the city. One of the first of such deals was the assemblage of land for the Bell Telephone Company building on Baldwin Street. This was followed by assemblages for national chain stores, then the land for the expansion of Upsala College. With the era of the branch store, the Taylors were successful in luring Best & Co., and B. Altman as well as Black, Starr & Gorham and Wiss & Son, all to East Orange.

With the end of World War II, the Taylor firm embarked on a program with even more far-reaching consequences for the city's economy. It induced the Colonial Life Insurance Company to open its home offices on Prospect Street. This coup was the forerunner of the establishment of East Orange as an insurance center, beginning to attract national attention. More than 50 insurance companies eventually settled in the city, between the arrival of Colonial in 1949 and the opening of the new home office of Great American Life on Park and Glenwood Avenues in 1963.

With the coming of the insurance companies, allied commercial firms began finding the city an attractive and profitable site. Law firms, title and mortgage companies, stock brokerage offices, all sought space here. Then came Dun & Bradstreet, Otis Elevator Company and the Aluminum Company of America, with office structures. Whole sections of the city have been rezoned to take care of this surge. An acre of land in this commercial zone is now worth upwards of \$100,000. Asking price for land in Evergreen Place is currently \$6 a square foot.

This flood of commercial structures had a concomitant effect on apartment house construction. Executives of the companies settling here found not only a pleasant city in which to work, but an attractive one in which to live. The quiet, treelined streets, the excellent shops, the recreation facilities, the school system, all served as magnets. From a bedroom community, East Orange began developing into something else again, a self-contained suburb with luxury accommodations for the executive class.



Still a second trend cropped up. Store owners were the first to spot this. They saw the return of old customers who had moved further out into the country as their families began to grow. Now that the children were grown up, these old timers began to feel the nostalgic pull of their old hometown. They began returning, making their new homes in the apartment houses.

This desire for comfortable living in rented quarters has given rise to some of the finest apartment buildings anywhere, complete with swimming pools, health clubs and other extra frills, all at prices well below comparable quarters in New York City. In 1963, for instance, these facts were so widely advertised that over \$15,000,000 of privately financed apartment construction was planned.

East Orange pioneered the idea of unlimited height for apartment buildings, unheard of in suburbs until that time.

The 1950's saw an end to an era, as well. Mayor Martens had been elected to his 17th consecutive term, beginning January 1950. This was a record number of years for a mayor anywhere in the country, at that time. Now, after 34 years, the mayor announced he would not seek re-election. The citizens of East Orange had a fondness for this man which defied explanation. He was curt, forbidding of mien, not particularly convivial, the antithesis of a backslapping politician. He was elected to fill a part-time post, according to the charter, yet he spent every day of his 34 years in office as a full time executive running the city. He had no avocations, few other interests but the welfare of the city. The citizens recognized his earnestness, his absolute integrity, his devotion to them, by returning him again and again with healthy majorities.

When Martens announced he would retire, almost at once it was decided he would be honored while he was still in office. March 8, 1952 was declared "Martens Day." A mile-long parade was held. The New York Times and the New York Herald Tribune printed editorials extolling his virtues. Former President Herbert Hoover sent a telegram: "It is a notable event when an elected official is kept in office by the community for one third of a century. Not only is this a record, but vivid proof of the character of Charles Martens. To honor him, honors the whole nation."

As a further tribute, Ashland Stadium, where school games and events are held, was renamed Martens Stadium. Besides cheers, plaques, resolutions and written tributes, a more tangible evidence of the love of the city came in the form of a check for \$5,000 representing contributions from citizens. Marten had not long to live after his retirement. He died in September 1955.

### **The Crossroads**

The Garden State Parkway arrived in the city in 1954 to the accompaniment of a chorus of boos. Differences of opinion between the local government, led by Mayor McConnell, and the Parkway officials, created hard feelings. Highhanded tactics by the state agency

irked local officials, who, at one point, barricaded the access roads to keep automobiles from entering or leaving the Parkway.

The Parkway had opened a new avenue of north-south communications for the city, but some of the initial planning was poor, causing traffic bottlenecks at important city junctions. Following the route of the old Oraton Parkway, the Garden State Parkway dumped traffic on Central Avenue. This, in turn, caused monumental jams at the height of the east-west rush hours. This legacy of bad feeling was not entirely forgotten when the State Highway Department announced it was going to build, at long last, the East-West Freeway. The idea of an east-west artery from Newark to the western part of Essex County had been on the drawing boards of the state for at least 30 years.

Originally designated Route 10, it was written about, talked about and mulled over for years, yet nothing happened. But when Congress passed a highway act which guaranteed 90 per cent of the cost of such an artery, the die was cast.

East Orange greeted the idea with mixed feelings. Most people admitted that such a road would have to be built, if the east-west rush-hour traffic was not to choke the county. But the majority felt it was of more benefit to Newark and the western suburbs than to the corridor communities through which it passed. Also, it bid fair to erect still another midtown barrier in East Orange, dividing the town.

When the State Highway Department announced it was going to take the easiest and cheapest way out by erecting an elevated structure to carry the new freeway, popular opinion was outraged. A campaign was launched, under the leadership of Mayor McConnell, to educate the public and the U.S. Bureau of Roads to the damaging character such a road would have on the future of the city.

When the city's first Democratic mayor in 44 years, James W. Kelly Jr., was elected in 1958, Kelly's party affiliation had an even more stimulating effect on the fight. Knowledgeable about the ways of Trenton through his friendship with Gov. Robert B. Meyner and the members of the Democratic Assembly, Kelly mounted a political attack as well as encouraging a citizen's protest movement. Almost all the big newspapers and the entire State Highway Department were against the idea of depressing the road. With only the local East Orange Record as a voice, the anti-elevated roadway forces carried the fight all the way to Washington. The folly of an elevated road, causing property depreciation in areas where the federal government was going to spend money to rehabilitate older sections of the city, was brought home forcibly to the Urban Renewal Administration and the Federal Bureau of Roads in Washington.

At the same time, the Speaker of the State Assembly, LeRoy J. D'Aloia, was engaged as an ally in the city's battle. After public hearings, one of which lasted 13 hours and was attended by over 1,200 people, Speaker D'Aloia announced that he would keep any legislation from being enacted the rest of that session until the Highway Department agreed to depress the road through Newark and the Oranges. With this formidable foe arrayed against them, the engineers of the Highway Department retired from the battle in

disarray. Finally, they were given a face-saving device by the Garden State Parkway Authority. If the Legislature would agree to certain Parkway improvements, and if the Parkway could charge tolls on the heretofore free Essex County section, the Parkway Authority would be willing to issue bonds for enough money to pay for the depression of the east-west road. The day was carried. The people and a small local newspaper which had first raised the alarm, had won.

The victory of the people on the appearance of the Freeway eased the resentment over the way its coming was approached. Now the citizens and the business community began looking forward to ways of harnessing the road for the benefit of the city. The interchange between the Parkway and the Freeway in the vicinity of Main Street made the city the crossroads of the state, as far as travel time was concerned. It opened up access to New York and to the west, an access it already had north and south with the Parkway. It gave rise to a new slogan: "East Orange, the Crossroads of New Jersey." Business and commercial interests, sensing this advantage, began making more and more inquiries into the possibilities of relocating in the city. A new motel, the first downtown motel in the state of any size, was opened on Evergreen Place in 1963. Other motels are in the planning stage. Their appearance would add to the available hotel space, so necessary for sales meetings and conventions so popular with the insurance business. This gave encouragement to still more insurance companies to investigate the possibility of using East Orange as a headquarters. One large national insurance company which had looked into the possibilities of locating in the city in the late 40's and had decided to try Morris County instead, expressed regret at its hasty choice and even urged some allied businesses to try East Orange.

The city decided to keep pace with the rise in its commercial fortunes and the influx of privately financed luxury apartments by planning to lift its own face. Urban renewal, designed to aid municipalities remove blight, became a major part of the city plan. The first urban renewal project to be approved was one in Doddtown which would clear out outmoded, dilapidated homes and commercial areas and replace them with modern, middle income apartment houses and new commercial and industrial zones.

Another urban renewal project was approved for the Fourth ward, near the Newark line. This was designed to revive lower Main Street business, as well as provide lower income housing for many families displaced by the coming of the Freeway.

A third project was planned for the Brick Church business area. This one would lift the face of the city's oldest business area and erect tall business buildings as well as 20-story luxury apartment houses. At the same time, it would not displace established Main Street businessmen. Instead, it would serve to invigorate their business.

In addition, the city took cognizance of the fact that more than 15 per cent of its population was over 65 years of age. Rather than treat this statistic as something it should hide, the city recognized the fact that almost \$2,000,000 a year in social security checks was going to these people, all of whom were excellent customers. To ease the housing burdens on people living on limited, fixed incomes, plans were inaugurated for the

erection of a low income housing project, specially designed to house senior citizens. In September, 1963, Concord Towers, one of the first of its kind in the state, opened its doors to some 60-odd tenants. The new building was cleverly planned to eliminate any hazard for a person of advancing years.

In addition to Concord Towers, the Mayor's Senior Citizens Council pioneered yet another project-a middle income housing development for persons over 65 who do not qualify for public housing. This was located at the northern end of the city in Doddtown, on a plot in the urban renewal area.

And so we come to 1963-the 100th year of the city's existence. Mayor Kelly chose George E. Stringfellow, a distinguished resident, to be chairman of the Centennial Committee. Hundreds of citizens were mobilized by the Executive Committee to make this one of the biggest and happiest celebrations of them all. The celebrations started on March 16, the anniversary of the first Town Meeting in 1863. The Mayor and members of the City Council, dressed in appropriate Civil War costume, entered carriages for the parade which led them from the High School, in a roundabout fashion, to the City Hall. A ball was held. Parties were planned. A mammoth parade to "end all parades" was set for November 23, filled with more than a dozen bands, myriad floats and colorfully designed costumes.

Then came the tragic blow of November 22. The death of President John F. Kennedy halted all thoughts of celebration. Instead, the city went into shocked mourning. A grief so deep had not been seen by an entire people since the assassination of President Lincoln.

On the appointed Day of National Mourning, crowds assembled at City Hall at 10 a.m. for a period of silent prayer. As the National Anthem rang out, the crowd turned its face toward the silver pole as two Girl Scouts and two Boy Scouts quickly ran up the flag to full mast, then gently lowered it to half staff as the Anthem ended. Two members each of the East Orange and Clifford Scott High School bands blew Taps, the echo tearing at the silence. Then it was over, the wet-eyed crowd slowly filing away, most to go home and watch the President's funeral on television.

Schools were closed. Policemen wore black bands of mourning across their badges for 30 days. Most businesses, except for emergency services, closed their doors.

On Thanksgiving Day, Mayor James W. Kelly Jr. read the Thanksgiving Proclamation at the union services, the last proclamation issued by the departed President.

The city awoke to new resolve the following day. The work of building a better nation, as well as a better city, must go on. In this, East Orange takes a back seat to no community. Its first hundred years give ample evidence. It had simply arrived, as its Centennial slogan said, "At the Crossroads of an Honored Past and a Great Future."

# Chapter 4

## The School System

New Jersey's first school law was enacted as early as October, 1693. It provided for the payment of schoolmasters by a charge against each patron or proprietor, according to the number of pupils sent by him, the weeks attended and the subjects studied. Actually, it wasn't until 1820 that the first general act was passed, authorizing the inhabitants of any township to raise money by taxation for educational purposes. This act provided education only for the poor. Later modifications of this law finally resulted in education becoming free for all.

East Orange was divided into three school districts for public education in 1835—one in the eastern district on Main Street near Maple Avenue; one known as the “Doddtown School,” on Dodd Street near the present Girard Avenue and the third in the rear of the present Brick Church on Main Street, known as the “White House School.”

It is this latter school which is the direct descendant of the first schoolhouse in the city, erected in the waning years of the 18th century on land donated by Deacon Amos Baldwin. This building was used continuously until 1804, when a two-story, two-room frame schoolhouse was erected behind the original one, at the corner of Prospect and William. The lower floor of this schoolhouse was used for classes and the upper floors for religious services on Sundays. Desks were arranged around the room instead of in rows and the early seats were logs, split in two, with the flat side up.

This school was later designated as “Ashland School” when the three districts were set up. The name survives in the present school on Park Avenue and North Clinton Street. Its name has an interesting origin. One of the school trustees was an ardent admirer of Henry Clay, the old War Hawk, who was a candidate for the presidency at the time of the setting up of the three districts. Clay's home in Lexington, Kentucky, was known as “Ashland” and his local admirer had the same name adopted for the local school.

The Doddtown School was built in 1825 at a total cost of \$233.91. Just savor that on your tax-dried tongue. In 1835, a pretentious building was erected for the Eastern district. It was in this school that the famed naturalist, John Burroughs, taught from 1859 to 1861. What were these early schoolhouses like on the inside? They were good sized rooms, filled with long benches made of logs and desks. Each bench held two pupils. The desks were said to be solidly built, newly planed and painted, according to one account. A new teacher coming to town at this point was so informed and told he must keep them in that condition, even at the expense of a liberal use of the rod. Corporal punishment, at that time, was an integral part of the curriculum.

The teacher sat on a platform, where he could keep an eye on the entire class. The pupils ranged in age from six to 16 and the teacher taught all subjects from ABC to mathematics. Hours were from 9 a.m. to 12 and from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Recess was at the

discretion of the teacher and when that bell rang summoning all to class-you had better respond.

Small private schools also sprang up in each of the districts. One of these was Miss Ball's primary school, located on the west side of Grove Street, between the railroad and Main Street. Another was Miss Price's, built in the early 1850's on a lane east of the Maple Avenue Church. At Brick Church, a private school for young ladies was begun by a man named M. O. Halstead in 1847.

It wasn't until 1870 that the city had grown to the point where additional school space was deemed necessary. Each of the three school districts proceeded to erect substantial brick buildings. At the same time, a four-room building known then as South Ashland, was erected in the Elmwood Park district. This was merely a branch of the Ashland School, not a separate school.

The original brick Doddtown School, known as Franklin School by this time, had four classrooms and a small recitation room. Its entrance was a rather narrow lane leading up from Dodd Street. In 1880, it was enlarged by the addition of two small classrooms and an auditorium in the rear. This auditorium was later converted into two more classrooms. This complex now constitutes the rear wing and core of the present school.

The original brick building built for Ashland School at Park Avenue and North Clinton Street included the square front part now on North Clinton Street. In 1880, an office and an extra stairway were added to the rear. Later, a four-room addition was placed back of this, making it a 16-room building. The public library branch was added in the 1950's to round out the building.

Eastern School in 1870 was also a square building, with a small wing in the middle of each side. Later, an eight-room addition was built, plus a principal's office and stockrooms added on.

About 1870, too, the first popular resistance to school expenditures, now such a common practice in many of our municipalities, became an issue here in East Orange. The newly created township felt that the school population increase warranted larger quarters for the students, but the prosperous farmers of the eastern end were skeptical. It was at this point that Joseph L. Munn, whose farm was south of Main Street at Munn Avenue, stepped into the breach. He labored so long and so diligently, along with other school trustees, that he might well be called the "Father of Eastern School" He was subsequently elected a trustee of the school and became the first chairman of the Township Board of Education in 1889.

Up to that year, the four schools - Ashland, Eastern, Franklin and Elmwood - each had its own board of trustees. On May 18, 1889, the township consolidated these four school districts and elected a single Board of Education.

Eastern and Ashland each contained high school departments, covering three year curriculums; Franklin had a two year high school term. At the end of that first year of

consolidation, Vernon L. Davey became the first superintendent of schools. At the same time, the high school course was lengthened to cover a full four years and its activities transferred to the Ashland School building on North Clinton Street. Davey was also principal of the high school, as well as functioning as superintendent. At the end of the 1890-91 school year, the first three students were graduated from the high school. Immediately after the consolidation of the school districts, the town purchased a lot on Winans Street and the erection of a high school building was undertaken. It was finished in December, 1891, and contained 10 recitation rooms, two large study halls, a drawing room, a chemistry laboratory and a gymnasium.

By 1899, the rapid growth of the high school population induced the Board of Education to buy a piece of property on North Walnut Street, adjoining the high school, and shortly thereafter began erecting an addition. Joined to the 1891 building on the north side, the new edition was ready for occupancy in September, 1911, holding 750 boys and girls. Graduation exercises, held up to that time in Ashland School, were celebrated in the new high school auditorium for the first time in June, 1912.

During the tenure of Lewis B. Knight as principal, plans for another addition to the high school were put underway and brought to fruition by Robert B. Redman and the present principal, Morgan T. Loesch, when the new building opened its doors in September, 1960. Upon Redman's untimely death, just before he was to take office as superintendent of schools on the retirement of Dr. Henry E. Kentopp, the new wing's gymnasium was renamed the Robert B. Redman Memorial Gymnasium. The new library was named the Ralph E. Files Library, after Mr. Files, who served as principal of the high school for 30 years.

The city's other high school is largely the creation of the man whose name it bears, Clifford J. Scott. Dr. Scott was superintendent of schools from 1921 until his death in 1936. It was he who transformed the dream of building another high school to serve the students in the northern part of the city, into a reality. Construction plans for the new school were approved on July 6, 1936. The location chosen was a site on the corner of Renshaw Avenue and North Clinton Street. The style was colonial. In 1958, an addition to Scott, costing \$1,200,000, was completed. The rise in building costs is easy to judge by the fact that the addition, consisting of six new classrooms, a medical suite, a school office, a guidance suite, a multi-purpose band room and a gymnasium, cost twice as much as the entire original building, built 20 years earlier.

In the spring of 1958, the Archdiocese of Newark purchased several properties, including the old Panzer College building, on Glenwood Avenue. In the fall of that same year, East Orange Catholic High School opened its doors to 96 girls in its first freshman class. Under the principalship of Sister Grace Michaela, plans were laid immediately for the erection of a new building. On September 12, 1960, the new building was opened to admit 240 freshmen, bringing the enrollment to nearly 500 students.

## **Eastern School**

Eastern School, as one of the oldest, is rich in memory and lore. Among its more famous graduates were, in addition to former Mayor Julian Gregory, former Mayor Charles H. Martens, who held office for 34 years; Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, commander of the Central Pacific area during World War II and chief of staff under Admiral Chester W. Nimitz; Zane Grey, famed author of western novels and Admiral Frank W. Pennoyer Jr., who was present and accepted the surrender flag from the Japanese aboard the U.S.S. Missouri on V-J Day, September 2, 1945. This flag and a note from the admiral were sent back by him to Eastern School, where they now hang.

With the coming of the East-West Freeway, Eastern will have to come down after almost 100 years of faithful service to the city. But her memory will linger:

“Dear old Eastern is our favorite  
Best of schools, we know,  
We will join in joyful praises  
To the Gold and Blue.  
Lift the chorus, speed it onward,  
Loud her praises tell.  
We will e'er be true to her  
Wherever we may dwell.”

## **Ashland School**

Ashland School, to which the name “The White School House” clung for over half a century, stood originally on a plot in the rear of Brick Presbyterian Church on Prospect Street. In 1870, the school was moved to a piece of land on North Clinton Street, where the new building was dedicated on September 5, 1871. With 10 classrooms and an auditorium, it cost \$50,000.

In 1885, four rooms were added, but still the growth of population led to plans for a larger building. The old school was sold to the Archdiocese in 1906 to become a parochial school and on January 7, 1907, a new building was occupied, its present site on the north side of Park Avenue, near Clinton Street.

In 1921, another addition to the school was opened, comprising a gym, a locker room, eight classrooms, a faculty room and a medical office. A second addition was opened in September 1957, facing on Lincoln Street, with 10 classrooms, a small office and a faculty lounge. In addition, the East Orange Public Library opened a branch right in the old school building, facing on Park Avenue.



## **Franklin School**

In the halls of the present Franklin School in Doddtown are the original resolutions presented by Amzi T. Dodd, which mark the beginning of the school.

In the spring of 1825, a meeting was called at the home of Zebina Dodd in order to make plans for a day school, deemed a necessity by the residents of Doddtown. The original schoolhouse was measured out in these resolutions as being "20 feet deep by 34 in length and two stories high." Seven trustees were appointed to take care of the building and it was named the Franklin School of North Orange. It was located, actually, on Dodd and Girard Avenue. The cost of erecting the building was \$233.91. So fast did the population expand that, within a few years, a room in John Ray's hat factory across the street had to be used as an annex.

That simple frame building served Franklin School until 1873; ten years after East Orange had severed its connection with Orange. In that year, a new school was built on the south side of Dodd Street, east of Midland Avenue, on land bought from Josiah Dodd. It was a four-room building with a small office. In 1883 and 1884, four rooms were added to the rear. In 1892, the Assembly room was partitioned into two classrooms. So crowded did conditions become that even the principal's office had 27 desks for scholars in it.

By 1896, conditions had become so intolerable that Supt. of Schools Davey called Franklin the worst of the schools in East Orange. He moved the town to pass a bond issue for \$45,000 in July, 1897 and a third addition to the school was completed a year later. This gave the building 16 rooms.

In 1925-26, a survey of city schools resulted in a decision to add on to Franklin School. Its outside appearance was completely transformed and two new wings were added. New classrooms, new special rooms and new facilities were added to make Franklin School one of the finest in the city.

## **Elmwood School**

Elmwood School began as South Ashland, a part of the original three school districts. It was housed in the old Elmwood Presbyterian Chapel, serving all the children south of Central Avenue. In 1887, a lot was bought on the east side of Clinton Street, near Elmwood Avenue and a two-story brick building was erected. It contained four classrooms and served 40 pupils.

In 1890, eight additional classrooms were added and in 1902, six more and a third floor auditorium were built. This old building stood until 1955. By 1917, population on the south side had climbed to the point where a new building had to be added to old Elmwood to accommodate the children. This was a three-story brick building with 16 classrooms, a gym, a general shop unit and a household unit.

W. Hemans Smith was Elmwood's able principal during these years. In 1953, the Board of Education gave the green light to plan a new Elmwood School. Two wings were to be added to the 1917 building, which was to be renovated. A new gym and a new auditorium were also to be built. The 1902 building was to be razed. The new classrooms were of a revolutionary hexagonal design, studied and copied by school systems all over the nation. The new auditorium was dedicated in the name of Mrs. Elsie MacDonald Starr, who had been president of the Board of Education during the school system's greatest period of expansion. The auditorium also serves the city as the site of the East Orange Little Theatre, one of the best small theatres in appearance and equipment in the state.

### **Columbian School**

Columbian School derives its name from the fact that it was opened in the 400th year after the discovery of America by Columbus. Originally, it was an eight room building and was considered one of the most complete schools in the state on its opening. It was built at the corner of Springdale Avenue and Grove Street. Just 100 pupils occupied its spacious quarters on opening.

This spaciousness didn't last long. As the population in the Fifth Ward began increasing by leaps and bounds, the 7th and 8th grades had to be transferred to Eastern School. In 1902, four new rooms and an assembly hall were added. In 1912, it was necessary to use a portable building to accommodate two extra classes until another addition was completed a year later. At present, Columbian has 35 classrooms, two gyms, many special classrooms and a teaching staff of 46 members. It handles over 1,000 students.

### **Nassau School**

In 1896, there was only one school south of Main Street, Elmwood, which was only a six-classroom school. Since better school accommodations were obviously needed, especially in the area between Main Street and Central Avenue, the Board of Education sought a new site. Agreement was hard to reach, however. As a matter of fact, it took two years before the site on the corner of Arlington Avenue and Central was agreed upon. A 12-room building was planned, so arranged that two wings could be added at a later date. These were finished in 1909. The school was called Nassau. In 1927, a gym was added and in 1952, extensive renovations were made of the interior. A library was built in the school in 1934, with the aid of the WPA. It is still one of the oldest and best-equipped school libraries in the state.

No one is quite sure how Nassau got its name, but it is a fact that the school has had a long history of sending young men to Princeton. It might have been that the men who sat on the Board at the time of the school's dedication were partial to Old Nassau, at that.

### **Stockton School**

The south side of town kept growing around the turn of the century, and it soon became obvious that the Eastern and Columbian school districts needed some relief. Ground was purchased at William Street, extending north from 19th Street to Greenwood Avenue and the Stockton School was built, opening on February 13, 1905. The school was named in honor of Richard Stockton, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. His coat of arms is reproduced on the stained glass windows of the old auditorium.

### **Kentopp School**

Stockton was the first school serving the district between Park Avenue and the railroad and Newark and Grove Street. These lines, however, have been changed from time to time to take care of the exigencies of shifting population. In 1951, a new addition of revolutionary design was opened, offering special advantages to both pupils and teachers, extending the hexagonal pattern at Elmwood to its natural conclusion. As soon as the new wing was opened, it was apparent that the population growth was so fast, the school couldn't keep pace. A second addition was immediately placed in the planning stage and was erected across the street in 1957. It was called Stockton School West until the retirement of Dr. Henry Kentopp as Superintendent of Schools, at which time the school was separated as a unit and renamed Kentopp School, the newest in the city's system.

### **Lincoln School**

Also at the turn of the century, the Nassau and Eastern school districts began to feel the pressure of increasing population. The Board of Education bought a lot on the northeast corner of Central Avenue and South Maple for a new school. The new building was opened in September, 1908, but the formal dedication was delayed until February 12, 1909, marking the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth. Appropriately, the school was called Lincoln. His words, "we cannot succeed unless we try," are carved over the entrance.

An 18-room addition is already in the advanced planning stages and should be open in 1964. This will care for those children from Eastern School, which will be cut down by the coming of the Freeway.

### **Washington School**

The crowding of Nassau and Elmwood also produced another need, a school in the vicinity of Sanford Street and Kenwood Place. This school was ready for occupancy in February, 1912. It was named Washington School by the Orange Chapter, New Jersey Sons of the American Revolution.

## **Vernon L Davey**

In 1928, Dr. Clifford J. Scott, then Superintendent of Schools, cited the need for a junior high school in the southern section of the city because of the overcrowding at the grammar schools in that area, plus the crowded conditions at East Orange High. In May, 1929, the Board of Education agreed with him and authorized the construction of a school for the 7th, 8th and 9th grades.

The building, the first new school building in the city since the erection of Washington School in 1912, was built on a lot bound by Elmwood Avenue, Burnet Street, Rhode Island Avenue and Eppirt Street. Classes began in September, 1930. It was named for Vernon L. Davey, former supt. of schools.

In 1954, the school transferred its 9th grade students to East elementary schools of Elmwood, Nassau, Washington and Lincoln.

## **Parochial Schools**

The city's parochial schools had their beginning in 1883. In 1882, the Bishop of Newark authorized the Rev. Maurice P. O'Connor to organize the parish of Our Lady Help of Christians. In the spring of 1883, a school was established in the church building at Main Street and Ashland Avenue. There was no convent, so the Sisters of Charity came down each day from St. John's in Orange to instruct the children. The school grew and when the city vacated the old Ashland building for its new one on Park Avenue, the parish bought the building and established a complete eighth grade system. An annex was added later.

In 1910, Doddtown welcomed the Holy Name School. Rev. Matthew J. Farley opened the parish school in a building on North Park Street that had once been a combination grocery and butcher shop. In 1927, a new church and a new school were built on Midland Avenue, presently housing some 16 classes.

The Church of Our Lady of All Souls was founded in the Ampere section in 1914. The Rev. John J. Murphy established the school, however, 14 years later. New facilities have been planned for 1964, including a new gymnasium and a library.

In May, 1920, the parishioners of Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament parish launched a campaign for a new school. The school was opened in September, 1922 and by 1924 was a complete eighth grade school.

# Chapter 5

## Public Safety

### Fire Dept.

It was November 9, 1874 that a group of citizens petitioned the Township Committee asking for the protection of a Fire Department. Nothing happened. Nothing, that is, until the winter of 1877-78, when some stables owned by Benjamin Cairns on the east side of Washington Street, near Main, were totally destroyed by fire. This blaze, which occurred about 1 o'clock in the morning, was the largest single loss by fire the town had ever sustained and the citizens' alarm spread. When a large fire later in that year led to loss of life, the Ashland Hook and Ladder Company was organized with 25 men, all volunteers. Their equipment consisted of a second-hand truck equipped with ladders, pikes and buckets. All alarms were sounded by the bell of the First Reformed Church on Main Street.

By 1882, water mains had been installed and the fire hydrants in the streets made possible the establishment of the Ashland Hose Company. On October 1, 1882, 1000 feet of hose were purchased. The following June, the two companies were accepted by the Township Committee and given official standing.

Eastern Hose Company No.2 was set up December 11, 1883 and Franklin Hose Company No.3 was accepted by the Township Committee on April 14, 1884. Prospect Hose Company No. 4, which came into being in 1886 lasted only nine years, being disbanded in 1895. Elmwood Company, the last to be created, was given recognition on September 12, 1887.

In October, 1887, the Bell system of sounding the alarm made way for the more modern Gamewell Fire Alarm System and the present paid firemen's system came into being in March, 1907, with the department consisting of five engine companies and two truck companies, all motor driven by the year 1920. On March 9, 1926, a Rescue Company was added and men assigned to it given the special intensive training which has resulted in the saving of so many lives in the years since.

Since 1934, East Orange has enjoyed a "Class A" rating from the National Board of Fire Underwriters, giving the city the lowest insurance rate generally obtainable.

### The Police

The need for a competent police force didn't make itself apparent in East Orange until a little later than the agitation began for a Fire Department. Previous to 1885, the Township had its police duties cared for by two constables alternating on day and night patrol. In that year, one of the constables, Henry Blaurock was named Chief of Police and the

other, George Snow, became desk sergeant. The original department consisted of these two, plus another desk man and four patrolmen. This small force was supposed to guard the lives and properties of 15,000 souls. In consequence, adequate protection was enjoyed mainly by the city's business sections.

In 1895, the force was augmented so that there was at least one patrolman for every ward. When you consider, for instance, that the Third ward alone is larger than the whole city of Orange, some of the magnitude of the police problem is apparent. Conditions were so primitive that it was the custom of the patrolman in the Third ward to go to Firehouse No.3 on Elmwood and South Clinton Street and stay there all day so that any citizen who needed him knew where to find him.

But the demands of a growing city could not be gainsaid. Today (1965), after steady growth throughout the years, the Police Department of East Orange is one of the most highly regarded municipal forces in the state. Besides the chief, five captains, eight lieutenants, 18 sergeants, there are 127 patrolmen, plus line and maintenance men, a record bureau, a lab, and a juvenile aid bureau comprise an outstanding force.

# Chapter 6

## A City of Service

East Orange residents have become accustomed to services which, to other municipalities, might seem the height of luxury. The citizen and the taxpayer has demanded the best, and he has been getting it. There is more to living in a city than getting police and fire protection, a fine school system and an excellent, alert Health Department. For East Orange residents these are not extras, but the amenities which good management, prudent expenditure and excellent personnel have made possible.

### Recreation Department

One department which has become nationally known for its imagination, resourcefulness and diversity of service is the Recreation Department.

It all began back on June 28, 1907, when the first Recreation Commission, then called the Playground Commission, was named by Mayor Cardwell. The first law in the state permitting expenditures for public recreation had been passed by the 1907 Legislature on May 7. The city was among the first in the state to take advantage of this law and one of the first in the nation to conduct playgrounds at public expense. This alacrity to take advantage of the new for the benefit of the many carries on to this day. East Orange was among the first to take advantage of the recent Green Acres legislation to replace playgrounds consumed by the path of the East-West Freeway. It was THE first in the nation to secure surplus military equipment for its playgrounds. The present director, Graham M. Skea, asked the Navy for a surplus fighter plane. It was granted, if he could remove it from the depot in Philadelphia. He secured a truck and, with the aid of some of the department's maintenance men, brought the plane to Soverel Field, where it became the cynosure of eyes all over the United States.

But back to 1907. The first Board consisted of Thomas R. Creede, Paltiel R. Bomeisler and Horace A. Bonnell. Lincoln E. Rowley was general secretary. The East Orange Oval was bought in 1907, being dedicated on Labor Day in the presence of 8,000 citizens. The festivities were enlivened by a baseball game between members of the State Senate and the General Assembly.

Elmwood, all nine acres of the park, was turned over to the Commission on March 27, 1916 and improved in 1919 by Alden Freeman in memory of his father, Joel Francis Freeman, at a cost of over \$100,000. The Commission improved the park even further by extensive landscaping and building of a field house.

Columbian Field, four acres in size, came next. It was bought in April 1919 and dedicated in September 1922 after extensive improvement. Columbian is run in cooperation with the school of the same name, with interchange of facilities.

The six-acre Soverel Field was purchased December 22, 1922 and used as the city dump for several years before its improvement into an excellent facility. It was opened to the public as a recreation facility in the spring of 1929.

Memorial Field was bought June 1, 1926 and allowed to stand until 1929, when its four acres were developed as a park principally for smaller children and adults as a memorial to the dead of the first World War. Its putting and bowling greens, justly famous, will be removed with loving care and replaced at the new Rowley Park in North Arlington Avenue, as Memorial Field loses almost half its acreage to the coming Freeway.

During the first 25 years of its existence, the Recreation Commission held fast to its objective of building functional, as well as attractive parks and playgrounds. The appointment of Frances H. Haire as the first full-time recreation director in 1925 marked the beginning of an expanded, year-round program of activities for people of all ages. Through Miss Haire's efforts, high standards of leadership qualification and numerous special programs were initiated and organized. Before her retirement in 1956, Miss Haire saw the development of the city's sixth playground, Washington. This area was developed in conjunction with the Board of Education and marked the beginning of closer cooperation between the two boards. Miss Haire's successor, Graham Skea, continued her policies.

The city's seventh playground, adjacent to Lincoln School, became a reality in 1958 and was named, appropriately enough, the Frances H. Haire Playground. Its construction introduced creative and imaginative play equipment. A horse and wagon, a fort and tree climber were blended with the more traditional play swings and slides. Later, a real boat, a lighthouse, dock and jetty were installed to stimulate the children at Memorial and Columbian playgrounds. The Navy jet installation at Soverel followed, plus an observation tower to carry out the aviation theme.

Further joint planning between the recreation people and the school board resulted in the construction of Martens Playground, near the city stadium in the rear of Ashland School. To many, Martens is known as the Wild West City, because of its theme created by a western town facade, complete with wooden horses, tepee, store fronts and covered wagon.

Scott High School's athletic facilities were also utilized for neighborhood play purposes in 1962.

### **The Library**

The East Orange Public Library officially went into business on January 22, 1903, mainly because a boyhood friend of Andrew Carnegie lived in East Orange. Carnegie had made funds available at that time for the development of library facilities in communities which had none. His boyhood chum, Alexander King, was a resident here and was instrumental in getting an initial grant from Carnegie to build the Main Library. In its first five months,



the library justified Mr. King's acumen by having 4,344 registered card holders. The circulation reached 43,815 volumes.

Since that period, and as a result of generous grants from the Carnegie Corporation, which enabled the city to build Franklin and Elmwood branches in 1909 and 1912 respectively, plus enlarge the main building, the library has continued to serve the city and promote its services in every section of East Orange.

In 1923, the Ampere branch opened in two rented stores and in 1931, it moved into a building of its own in a converted firehouse. In 1939, Franklin branch was more than doubled in size through funds from the Public Works Administration.

The library now circulates more than 1,200,000 books a year, answers some 60,000 reference questions and has taken the leadership in the state in encouraging and promoting the public library as an educational institution in conjunction with its neighboring libraries in Essex County. The library's experimental services, with support from the Friends of the Library, provide record collections, youth services, framed pictures and other artistic developments. Its business and insurance collection have been a growing asset to the firms moving into the city in such numbers in recent years.

In addition, the library has pioneered in new fields, such as providing a special service for shut-ins, for senior citizens in their new housing development, for the Community Day Nursery, East Orange General Hospital School of Nursing and other cultural, social and educational agencies in the community.

### **Shade Trees**

The Shade Tree Commission was established by resolution on December 14, 1903. Its first secretary and superintendent was William Solotaroff.

In 1904, the city had a population of 25,000, with 11,000 trees lining 73 miles of streets. Today (1965), with a population of almost 90,000, there are 30,000 graceful trees on the city streets. A conservative value of \$100 per tree has been made, giving the city an asset worth \$3,000,000, all cared for by the Shade Tree Commission and the city forester.

During his years on the commission, which he served until 1911, Solotaroff wrote a book, "Shade Trees in Towns and Cities" which is still a standard text and reference book for tree men. The present city forester, Harry F. Turner, a veteran of almost 40 years of city service, was transferred to his post as City Forester from the Engineering Department in 1943. In that same year, the Commission began its own nursery on a piece of land on Everett Street adjoining the municipal yard. Young trees are purchased from nurseries and planted in rich soil. With proper care, these young trees grow rapidly into a size suitable for street planting. This year, over 500 have replaced older trees riddled with disease or damaged by severe storms.

The work of the department is divided according to the seasons under four major headings: planting, spraying, pruning and removing. Its care and its planting program on traffic islands all over the city have earned it commendations from national organizations, as well as the delightful, surprised approbation of newcomers first hitting the city's borders or riding through in trains and busses. Though the city stretches skyward in its new garb, the graceful, old, stately shade trees retain an air of charm and courtliness that has caused more than one company president with a choice to say: "I like this city. Let's locate here."

## **Health**

The first Board of Health was organized May 30, 1881, consisting of the Township Committee and the Township Assessor. The first Health Inspector was appointed May 15, 1885.

On January 1, 1909, under the terms of the new city charter, the Mayor appointed a new Board of Health consisting of five members. Early in its career, the Board's activities took on the cloak of prevention and in 1914, it engaged its first full-time, trained health officer from the School of Public Health at MIT, which has since supplied other health officers to the city.

East Orange led the way for a combination of all the Oranges to control milk supply, as well as venereal diseases, in one of the first clinics for that purpose ever established. Its child hygiene program was launched, followed by a system of quarantine regulations.

In 1924, a full-time bacteriologist was employed for the lab and a diphtheria program was begun which virtually eliminated that disease from the city. A program of examining food handlers was instituted that is a requisite for all licensed establishments in the city.

So effective did these services become that in 1929, the city won first prize for the character of its public health facilities in a contest initiated by the United States Chamber of Commerce and the American Public Health Association. Since that day to this, the department first under Frank Osborne, then under J. Robert Lackey, has ever been alert to the latest in preventive public health care, involving the citizens in testing and care programs which have the citizens of East Orange one of the best cared for groups of city dwellers in the nation.

# Chapter 7

## The Churches

Inextricably bound up with the history of East Orange is the story of its churches. From its earliest orientation, as part of Newark, with the Puritan founders, the city has followed along the path of worship, branching out into various denominations as the years sped by. Always tolerant, always ready to make a place for any religious body, the community has been solidified behind its common desire to initiate, sustain and help expand religious facilities for its citizens.

The early founders were led, of course, by a religious man, Rev. Abraham Pierson, who was pastor of the Branford Church in the New Haven colony and came with the early settlers to the town on the Pesayak. The Mountain Society, which led eventually to the separation of the Oranges from Newark, were oriented around their own church, the First Presbyterian.

The Second Presbyterian Church at Main Street and Washington had most of its members living in Orange when the separation came in 1863. The First Baptist Church was already established in its building on North Maple Avenue. The congregation later built on Main Street and Hawthorne Avenue and changed its name to the First Baptist Church of East Orange. In June, 1863, the Presbyterians in the eastern section were meeting in Eastern School to consider the organization of their own congregation. Finally, a church building was erected on Main Street and Munn Avenue, becoming the Munn Avenue Presbyterian Church in popular parlance.

The period between 1863 and 1873 saw the establishments of six new congregations. One of these was the Grove Street Congregational Church, which was destroyed by fire in 1952 and merged with the Trinity Congregational Church to form the Congregational Christian Church still standing. Christ Episcopal Church was founded in 1866; Calvary Methodist in 1869; Bethel Presbyterian in 1870; Trinity Congregational in 1872 and the Ferry Methodist in 1872. The first Roman Catholic Church, Our Lady Help of Christians, had its cornerstone laid on August 20, 1882.

Today (1965), there are more than 40 churches of all denominations in the city, including a Bahai temple and Temple Sharey Tefilo, a Jewish congregation serving almost 1,000 member families in the area.