



A Brief History (Story) of the Borough of Waldwick **By Richard T. Mennella**

Dedication

This overview offers a brief encapsulation of the history of the Borough of Waldwick and is dedicated to the "Original People" the Lenni-Lenape Indians who first occupied this area of Bergen County. Brave European settlers came to live in New Amsterdam, now known as New York. They crossed, what we know now as, the Hudson River to what was called New Netherland, now called New Jersey. Settlers' diverse backgrounds and skills were instrumental in the growth of the Borough area for almost 380 years; and to the current residents of the Borough who are, in my opinion, the most caring and friendly people in all of Bergen County. I started out to write a brief history of Waldwick, but in the process of writing it, the history became a story, a personal, wonderful story.

Acknowledgments

My research for this essay is derived from the book "Waldwick, Then & Now", compiled by the **Waldwick Historical Society** in 1994, in **honor** of the 75th anniversary of the Borough of Waldwick; "**Images of America, Waldwick**", written by **Michael Brunkhorst and Glenn P. Corbett**; from which historic information was compiled from Waldwick historian, **George Fredricks**, which is housed in the Waldwick Public Library, and from the County of Bergen Board of Chosen Freeholders' history compilation. Special thanks are given to my editor, **Andrea Mistretta**, for improving the accuracy of this tome, making it easier and enjoyable to read.

The Overview

In 1609, the Dutch East India Company employed Henry Hudson to explore Newark Bay. He anchored his ship at Weehawken Cove. Hudson's explorations resulted with The Dutch Republic claiming areas of Bergen and Hudson Counties and called it New Netherland. Adventurers from Holland came to the New World originally settling in New Amsterdam and then crossing the River and settling into New Netherland. In the 1660's, Bergen was established and became the first permanent European settlement in New Jersey. In 1664, New Amsterdam surrendered to the British Navy, and Dutch holdings in the New World were ceded to the British. The province of New Jersey was formed in 1674. In 1683, Bergen was officially recognized as an independent county. In 1693, Bergen County was divided into Bergen Township and Hackensack Township. In 1710, New Barbados Township separated from Essex County, greatly expanding the boundaries of Bergen County. As early as 1618, there were Dutch, Danish, and Norwegian farmers in the area later to be called New Barbados. During the late 1700s and 1800s, many townships were formed by breaking off from existing townships. In 1886, Orvil Township was formed from parts of Ho-Ho-Kus and Washington Townships. In 1919, Orvil Township became The Borough of Waldwick.

The Borough of Waldwick was primarily an agricultural area. The landscape was dotted with many farms. The farmers needed a way to get their produce to customers especially in New York City and Paterson. In the late 1880s, The Erie Railroad decided to build a train station in Orvil Township so that cotton from the mills in Ho-Ho-Kus and the farm produce from local farmers could get to the consumers and manufacturing sites in a more timely manner. The train station was paid for by the residents of Orvil Township, and not by the Erie Railroad. It became the hub of the community. The land where the original station resides was donated by a local farmer, Peter Bogert. The station has been restored to its original 1886-1887 splendor by the Waldwick Community Alliance. It also is home to the Waldwick Museum of Local History.

Once the station was built, Orvil Township began to thrive. At the time of the Station's inception, immigration to Waldwick had increased, bringing many craftsmen and tradesmen to our town. Their hard work and dedication to their crafts was instrumental in creating the vibrant community we have today. Many worked on the railroad. At one point in time, at least one person in 50 percent of the families worked for the railroad. Many of the immigrants worked for the railroad and commuted to jobs in the manufacturing industries of cotton bleaching, paper milling, and silk weaving. These businesses provided goods and services to the many new residents who called Orvil Township home.

Orvil Victor, for whom the township was named, headed a committee to decide on the name for the new station. They recommended Waldweck after Walwic Cottage which was the name of the Hermitage in 1886. With a change in spelling, Waldwick Station became a stop on the Erie Railroad. Wald meaning woods, and wick meaning light compounded became the name "Waldwick" a Light in the Woods. An appropriate name because the trains would have likely seen the light of the train station appear around the bend on the northbound approach from Ho-Ho-Kus' wooded landscape.

On April 7, 1919, Orvil Township became Waldwick Borough due to the efforts by a local resident and state legislator, Edgar De Yoe. John W. Quackenbush was the borough's first mayor. During the 1920s, Waldwick's business district was thriving. It had Adler's, department store, Holly's Garage, Sussel's Drug Store, Maratene's Ice Cream Shop, Falconieri Shoe Repair, Cracas' Candy Store, Russo's Food Store, DeMartini's Lumber Yard, "Ma Bell's" Luncheonette, and the A&P. These businesses provided for the ever-growing population of the Borough became the foundation and building blocks for the today's local businesses.

For a list of the current local businesses, see the Waldwick Chamber of Commerce's website: <https://thewaldwickchamberofcommerce.com>

While Waldwick has many unique structures and businesses that make up the framework of Waldwick, the residents of the Borough make up its heart and soul.

Waldwick's citizens are remarkably diverse, in cultures, ages, and skill sets. Waldwick essentially feels like an extended family. Our neighbors watch over each other and our children when they are out playing with their friends. During this Covid 19 pandemic many of our younger neighbors ask if they can be of assistance to my wife and me and finalize any social-distanced conversation with "if you need anything just ask". I am sure that this is happening all over town. This is a community that comes together when crises arise.

Waldwick's exceptional school system with staff and teachers educate our children so that they can achieve their potential as individuals and to function as citizens in a democratic society. We have two elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. Traphagen School was awarded a National Blue-Ribbon School Award of Excellence by the U.S. Dept. of Education. This is the highest award an American school can achieve.

Waldwick's free public library is open six days a week providing more than just book for reading. One can borrow movie DVDs, music CDs and audio books. It is a member of BCCLS, which permit Waldwick Library members the ability to borrow at other libraries in the BCCLS network. It sponsors many programs in the afternoon and evenings that provide socialization, entertainment, and educational forums to the residents of Waldwick. The library staff is always willing to assist patrons with questions.

Waldwick has many volunteer organizations to better serve the residents of Waldwick. We have WALVAC (the Waldwick American Legion Volunteer Ambulance Corps), The Waldwick Volunteer Fire Department, and the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) to provide critical services to the community when needed.

Waldwick can boast of the many activities for children provided by the Borough and other civic organizations in town. Our sporting teams include baseball, softball, lacrosse, soccer, junior football, with cheer associations who are sponsored by the businesses in town with residents serving as managers and coaches. Associations for children's activities are the: Waldwick Baseball/Softball Association, Waldwick Junior Football, Waldwick Soccer Association. In our community, we have Girl Scouts, Boy Scout Troops and Cub Scouts for children to join and make a difference in our community and elsewhere.

The Golden Club of Waldwick offers many diverse events and activities for residents 55 and over. They sponsor exercise classes, bus trips when possible, and have guest speakers at their meetings. Luncheons are held around holiday times.

For adults we have organizations that offer residents the ability to share their skills with other members of the community, find others with the same common interests and to give back to the community. Some of these organizations are: The Italian American

Social Club of Waldwick, The Knights of Columbus Council, The Lions Club of Waldwick, The Waldwick Chamber of Commerce, The Waldwick Community Alliance, The Waldwick Community Band, The Waldwick Education Foundation, The Waldwick Club for Women, The Waldwick Rifle and Pistol Club, and The Waldwick Wildcats. I am sure that every organization would welcome new members.

These organizations provide the residents of the Borough with an opportunity to participate in recreational activities, social activities, charitable activities, and educational activities, making Waldwick a more vibrant community to live in and to raise a family. If any organizations were omitted or an incorrect organizational name was used or misspelled, and in I apologize. Please see link for a list of the organizations. [LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS](#)

Waldwick's neighborhoods are dotted with green space, parks, playgrounds, basketball, and tennis courts. Its public pool beside an amphitheater is cheerful. These are all just a stone's throw from Waldwick's special jewel, White's Pond, which is annually stocked for fishing. Kayakers may be seen gliding along its surface beside birdwatchers and walkers on its banks.

In a recent study based upon based crime metrics sourced by the FBI from 364 cities, Waldwick is among the 10 safest small towns in New Jersey.

Waldwick's historic path has led to a present that will engender a community with a promising future.