

Madison Historical Society

Madison, N.J



February 2018

Newsletter

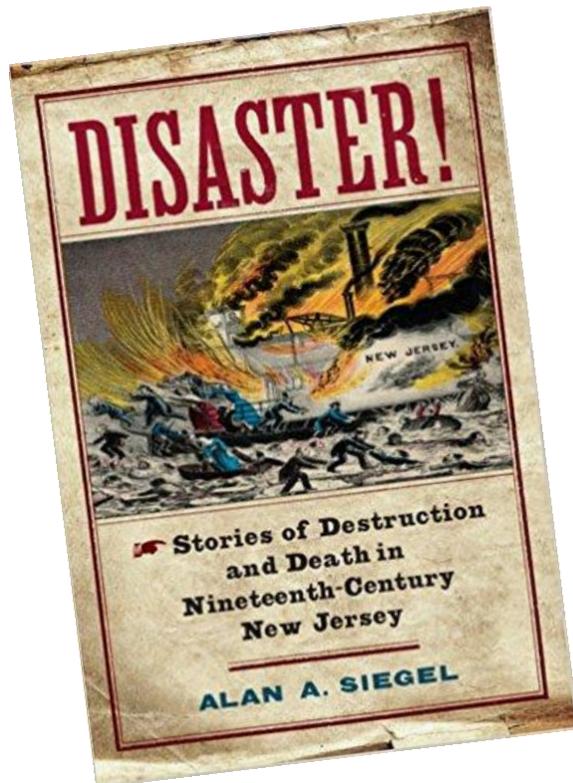
3rd edition 2017-2018

The Madison Historical Society Presents

Mr. Alan Siegel

Speaking On

”19th Century Disasters in New Jersey”



March 20 7:00 PM Chase Room
Madison Public Library

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Newsletter

Doug Simon

Message from President Susan Simon

The society's interest in oral history has grown in recent years and we are looking for people willing to be interviewed about their experience growing up and living in Madison. Were you involved in the Pine Wood Derby or the Soap Box Derby? Did you grow up in the houses built for WW II veterans and their families across from Lucy D. Anthony School? What was it like during the Korean War? Maybe you remember when greenhouses were taken down and ball fields and houses were put in their place. What was Madison like during the tumultuous 1960's? When President Kennedy was assassinated? Robert Kennedy? Martin Luther King Jr? Or when we landed on the moon. Were there anti-war demonstrations protesting the Vietnam war? There are so many stories to be told by the people who grew up and lived in the borough. If you would be willing to talk about an important event(s) you witnessed in Madison, email us at historicalsociety@rosenet.org or call us at 973-377-0722 ext 8. Be sure and include your name, phone number and what you would be willing to talk about. Or, if you like, drop by the office in the Madison Public Library on Tuesdays between 10:30 am and 3:30 pm.

Did You Know?

- That in the late 1800s there was a Madison Rim-Tire Club that regularly made a trip to Morristown on bicycles with a stop for an ice cream soda at Day's Drug Store. Price of the soda was 5 cents.
- That two dozen red roses were shipped from Madison as a gift to Queen Victoria. Each bud was encased in a raw potato and wrapped in moss and tin foil so that it would not get bruised. The journey took six days.
- That the original Morris & Essex Railroad that passed through Madison had rails made of wood, not iron. The top edge of the wooden rails was covered with thin strips of metal nailed to each rail. Branches were so close to the tracks that they often knocked off many of the passengers' hats.



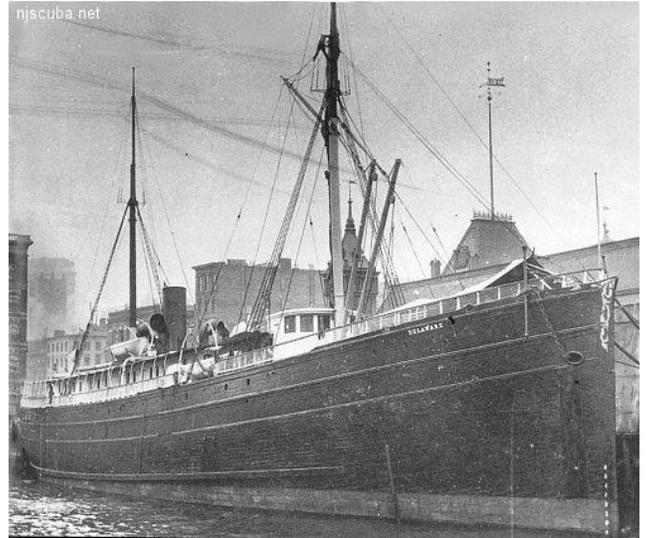
Early station on the Morris & Essex RR line.
Painting by Edward Henry

March 20th, New Jersey Disasters in the 19th Century

The following information is taken from the promotional flyer of Alan Siegel's book, *Disaster! Stories of Destruction and Death in Nineteenth-Century New Jersey*. Rutgers University Press, 2014.

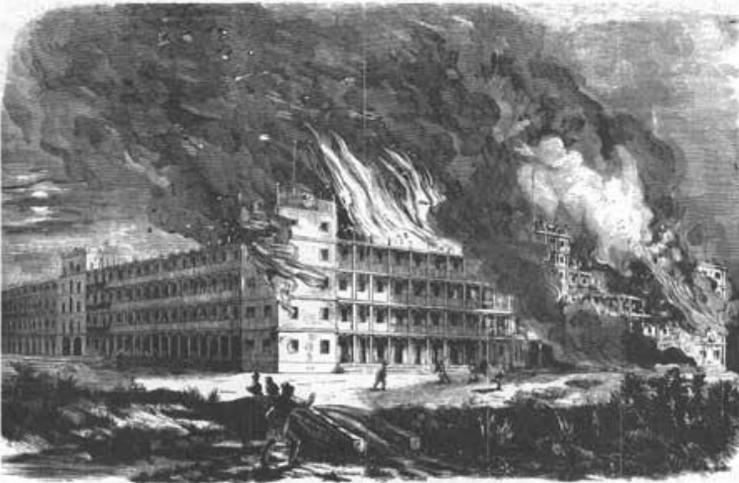
By every measure, Hurricane Sandy in 2012 was a disaster of epic proportions. It was the deadliest storm to strike the East Coast since Hurricane Diane in 1955. Sandy killed thirty-seven people and caused more than \$30 billion in damages to New Jersey alone. But earlier centuries experienced their own catastrophes.

In *Disaster!*, Alan A. Siegel brings readers face-to-face with twenty-eight of the deadliest natural and human-caused calamities to strike New Jersey between 1821 and 1906, ranging from horrific transportation accidents to uncontrolled fires of a kind rarely seen today. As Siegel writes in his introduction, "None of the stories end well—there are dead and injured by the thousands as well as millions in property lost." Accounts of these fires, steamboat explosions, shipwrecks, train wrecks, and storms are told in the words of the people who experienced the events firsthand, lending a sense of immediacy to each story.



USS Delaware was destroyed by fire in 1898 off the coast of New Jersey

Disasters bring out the worst as well as the best in people. Siegel focuses on the bravest individuals, including harbor pilot Thomas Freeborn who drowned while attempting to save fifty passengers and crew of a ship foundering on the Jersey Shore, and Warwicke Greene, a fourteen-year-old schoolboy who rescued the injured "like the hero of an epic poem" after a train wreck in the Hackensack Meadows. These and many other stories of forgotten acts of courage in the face of danger will make *Disaster!* an unforgettable read.



The Mount Vernon Hotel Fire of 1856 in Cape May. Andrew W. Cane, the lessee, with three of his children and Mrs. Albertson perished in the flames. Others saved themselves by leaping from the windows.

ALAN A. SIEGEL, a lawyer practicing in Chatham, New Jersey, has published numerous books, including *Smile: A Picture History of Olympic Park, 1887-1965*; *Beneath the Starry*

Flag: New Jersey's Civil War Experience (both Rutgers University Press); *Images of America: Irvington*; *Images of America: Warren Township*; and *Somerset County in Vintage Postcards*. He has served as president of the Warren and Irvington historical societies.

April 17th The Secret Life of the New Jersey Devil

On April 24, the Madison Historical Society will present Dr. Brian Regal professor of the history of science, technology, and medicine at Kean University speaking on the Jersey Devil. The Jersey Devil is a popular piece of North Eastern folklore. It is widely believed to have been the demonic offspring of an eighteenth century character known as ‘Mother Leeds.’ It continues to be sighted and searched for to this day, has inspired television productions, and is the mascot of the state’s hockey team. Unfortunately, there is no physical evidence for the creature’s existence or that it was originally based upon a monstrous birth.

Professor Regal’s research focus is on the development of evolution theory and its relationship to politics, culture and religion. His first book, the noted biography of Henry Fairfield Osborn (Ashgate, 2002) examined the early 20th century conflict over



Brian Regal



The Jersey Devil. Artist unknown.

teaching evolution. His *Searching for Sasquatch: Crackpots, Eggheads, and Cryptozoology* (Palgrave, 2013) looks at the relationship between professional scientists and amateur naturalists in the field of monster hunting. He is a Fellow of the Linnaean Society of London, and the Kean University Center for History, Politics and Policy. His latest book along with Dr. Frank J. Esposito, *The Secret History of the Jersey Devil*, is a complete re-examination of the origins of the legend of the Jersey Devil.



Spotlight on History

The Great Madison Disaster of 1877

- **Doug Simon**

While there were many challenging aspects to life in the nineteenth century, there was nothing more terrifying than fire. This is understandable. Open flames, hot stovepipes, the prevalence of wood construction and primitive electrical systems were a formula for disaster. The ravages of fire had been seen in communities across the country throughout the century. Two of the most famous were the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 that leveled three square miles of property and claimed 300 lives and the Great Boston Fire of 1872 that consumed about 65 acres of Boston's downtown, 776 buildings including much of the financial district, and caused \$73.5 million in damage.¹

Though obviously on a somewhat smaller scale than Chicago or Boston, 19th century Madison was not immune from this kind of disaster. On November 5, 1872 James Bryce's stables on Rosedale Avenue were completely destroyed by fire. On October 28, 1875 Van Wagners Drug Store on Waverly Place caught fire and with *the* heroic work of bucket crews, was prevented from spreading to F. J. Harman's confectionery store.² But it was on October 21,



The first "truck house" for Madison's fire department on the corner of Central and Elmer.

1877 that perhaps the most famous and impactful fire befell

Madison. The fire started at I.J. Ayers grocery store in the Allen Building on Waverly Place. The building was completely destroyed and also took out the YMCA that was housed on the upper two floors. A number of other buildings were razed including a house and confectionary store owned by George P. Cook as well as Solomon Sam's Cigar Store. As reported by Dr. Frank Esposito in his book, *The Madison Heritage Trail*, "When the fire was over, a good part of Madison's downtown section lay in ashes. Even the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad depot, on the northwest corner at Kings Road, was burned to the ground." Unfortunately, there was some looting that took place from several of the destroyed and damaged stores.³



There is no known image of the fire of 1877. However, in 1914 another significant fire occurred on Waverly Place, known as the Fagan Hall fire in the Flanagan Building.

At the time Madison did not have what would be called a professional, well equipped fire department. There were some volunteers and while they did what they could to confront the flames, the Morristown Fire Department had to be called upon to respond. This had also been the case in previous fires like those in 1872 and 1875. But so severe was the 1877 fire that it stirred a movement for Madison to form its own fire department and in 1881 the Madison Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 was incorporated. Roughly a year later the first ladder truck was purchased and in June of 1882, the first "truck house" was occupied on the corner of Central and Elmer.⁴

¹ The Great Chicago Fire, Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Chicago_Fire and The Great Boston Fire of 1872, Wikipedia. https://wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Boston_Fire_of_1872

² Madison Fire Department History Timeline, Rosenet. www.rosenet.org/201/1872---1939

³ Frank Esposito, *The Madison Heritage Trail*, The Madison Bicentennial Heritage Committee, 1985, pp. 87-88.

⁴ Ibid, pp. 90-91.



Looking Back In Time

The Eightieth Anniversary of Friends of the Madison Public Library

In the Fall of 1938, Mrs. Haskell Hewson of Woodcliff Drive wrote a letter to prominent members of the Madison community asking them to attend a meeting to become charter members of the “Friends of the Library Group,” the founding of which was being sponsored by the Thursday Morning Club. The meeting was to take place at the Madison Library on December 16, 1938. Looking back on the invitation, the assistance requested from invited members seems modest. The letter reads:

“The help which we want from FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY is twofold. First money: one dollar a year to be used to buy books on any subject in which there is a strong Interest, but where publications are too expensive for the regular library budget; second, Your interest and influence, which will enable the library to extend its service through the publicity that you will be able to give its work, when you are familiar with it.”

In an undated memorandum, Harriet Hewson recounted the dire circumstances that led her to establish the Friends organization:

“The library was privately endowed by the James family who had given it to the town. Its source of income was mainly from the rents of the James Building across the street...As the James building grew older and less in popular demand for dances, concerts, etc., its rents decreased; and this, combined with the depression years of the 1930s placed the income of the library on an extremely low level.



The first Madison Library. Now the Museum of Early Trades and Crafts.

The library itself was founded by D. Willis James, opening its doors on May 31, 1900 in what is now the Museum of Early Trades and Crafts. The building was stunning, but by the late 1950s it was proving far too small to meet the needs of the growing community, Led by Robert W. Nicholas and Burr L. Chase, a movement for a new facility was initiated and the new library building on Keep Street was dedicated in May of 1969.

This year The Friends of the Madison Public Library celebrates its 80th anniversary. Throughout the library’s history, the organization has contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars in support of the institution. Among other things the group sponsors the annual Summer Seminar Series and Co-Sponsors the Drew Minicourse program. It raises thousands of dollars towards the acquisition of books, periodicals, technical equipment and furniture. It sponsors the library’s Newsletter, the Museum Pass Program, the Summer Reading Program as well as landscaping on the library’s grounds. Congratulations and thank you for all the fine work over the past eight decades.

NOTE: A big thank you to Sylvia Luber who did most of the research for this article and an additional thank you to her for sharing the results of her work with the Madison Historical Society.

MADISON HISTORICAL SOCIETY – ITEMS FOR SALE

Books:

ALWAYS WITH US	\$15.00
BOTTLE HILL AND MADISON by William Parkhurst Tuttle	\$30.00
CARING FOR YOUR HISTORIC HOUSE by Heritage Preservation & NPS	\$15.00
CIVIL WAR JOURNAL OF PRIVATE HEYWARD EMMELL by Jim Malcolm	\$20.00
COLLEGE OF SAINT ELIZABETH by Sister Mary Ellen Gleason, et al.	\$20.00
CROSSROADS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: A Guide to New Jersey's American Revolutionary War Sites	\$ 5.00
DREW UNIVERSITY by John T Cunningham & Regina Deverio	\$20.00
GROWING UP IN THE ROSE CITY by William F. Redmond, II	\$10.00
HIDDEN NEW JERSEY by Linda Barth -	Soft= \$ 8.95 / Hard = \$17.95
HISTORY OF INVENTING IN NEW JERSEY by Linda Barth	\$20.00
IMAGES OF AMERICA –	\$20.00
CHATHAM & CHATHAM TOWNSHIP by John T. Cunningham	
CRAFTSMAN FARM by Heather V. Stivison	
FLORHAM PARK by John T. Cunningham	
MADISON by John T. Cunningham	
MANSIONS OF MORRIS COUNTY by John Rae	
MORRISTOWN by Joan M. Williams	
SUMMIT by Patricia E. Meola	
LINCOLN'S WHITE HOUSE SECRETARY edited by Harold Holzer	\$39.95
MEMORIES ENTWINED WITH ROSES by Ruth Churchill	\$15.00
NEW JERSEY GOES TO WAR: Biographies of 150 New Jerseyans Caught Up in the Civil War edited by Joseph G. Bilby	\$20.00
ST. VINCENT MARTYR PARISH, 200 YEARS OF HISTORY by Michael P. Riccards	\$25.00
THE UNCERTAIN REVOLUTION by John T. Cunningham	\$27.00

Maps:

1910 ATLAS OF MORRIS COUNTY by A.H. Mueller	Members \$115 each
MADISON PLATES 3, 4, 5: Approximate size 22" x 31"	Non Members \$125 each

Miscellaneous:

Calendars, Madison: 2008, 2009, 2012 by Joseph Mezzacca, Jr.	\$ 1.00
Christmas Ornament: Historic Sayre House or Luke Miller House	2 for \$15.00 \$10.00
Note Cards: Hartley Dodge Memorial (Pack of 4)	\$ 3.00
Photo Prints: Historic Madison, 7 different views	\$30.00
Postcards: Historic Madison	\$1.00 each or Set of 4 for \$ 3.75
Tote Bag: Rose City	\$10.00

Madison Historical Society DVD's

\$10.00 each

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|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| * Black Church History | * Luke Miller, Forging History |
| * History of Roses | * Transportation |
| * Italian History in Madison | * Vietnam Oral History Project (with booklet) |
| | * The War Years, On the Home Front 1940-1955 |

USED BOOKS: VARIOUS TITLES, ALSO FOR SALE AT DISCOUNTED PRICES.

The Madison Historical Society

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 148, Madison, 07940. Office located in the
Local History Center of the Madison Library

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