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## Some interesting bits of Bayonne history

In 1939, the Bayonne Historical Society published a booklet listing 14 pages of historic landmarks in our city. Many of those sites included in the booklet are now gone, while others are still with us.

Nevertheless, the publication, which is available in the reference room of the Bayonne Public Library, provides a lot of interesting information to those interested in the development of Bayonne from colonial times to 1939.

Most of the city's main avenue, Broadway, is laid out in a straight line. There is a westerly curve at 6th Street and Broadway, because the Du Ponts, a wealthy family, acquired the land there and decided to change the roadway. The curve was never straightened out.

Before the Bayonne Bridge was built and for some years after, the main transportation between Bayonne and Staten Island was the ferry. According to the Booklet, there were ferry stops at 1st Street and Avenue A in colonial times, at 1st Street and Broadway in the 1800's and at 1st Street and Avenue C in the mid 1800's.

Bayonne was actually connected to Staten Island by a shallow reef. However, it caused many shipping accidents and the federal government decided to blast it out of the water. By the way, Staten Island was a part of New Jersey until 1842.

False teeth, as we know them today, were developed by a Dr. Parmelee, who had a laboratory at 40 Avenue C. Nearby was the terminus of the city's trolley car system and before that the Dummy Railroad Line.

The Dummy Railroad ran between Avenue C and Broadway from 2nd Street to the present day 28th Street and then on to Greenville on a winding route through the northern peninsula.

One of the more popular stops along the Dummy Line was Bayonne Grove, a place for family picnics and outings. It is today's Grove Place, a small street right behind the Municipal Building on West 28th Street.

The publication reminds us that baseball's inventor Abner Doubleday lived at 110 West 8th Street.

At the foot of Oak Street, near the Atlas Yacht Club, was once the busiest coal port in the entire world. The Port Johnson Coal Docks, as they were known, were named for an engineer who became president of the Central New Jersey Railroad Company.

Today, the coal docks are little more than rotting piles, where ships were left to decay. The late maritime artist John Noble's studio houseboat was docked at the Atlas Yacht club and the old coal docks and ship graveyard were among his favorite subjects in art and conversation. This is one of the sites due to be cleaned by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Bayonne's first apartment building still stands at 201 Broadway at 7th Street. It was known as the Florence Flats and was considered "swanky" when first built.

Broadway once was known as the Plank Road, because it was "paved" with wood planks. At about 33rd Street the road wandered west and north to a bridge over the Morris Canal into Jersey City. Today, there are two blocks of the Plank Road between 47th and 49th Streets.

The Morris Canal was built between 1830 and 1836 as a short cut between Newark and New York Bays. The canal was part of a system that ran from the Great Lakes to New York Harbor.

In the mid 1800's the canal and surrounding Curries Woods were favorite lovers' lanes and family picnic areas. The last canal boat went through the Morris Canal in 1902. Today, its bed still serves as the boundary between Bayonne and Jersey City.

There is an historic marker on Avenue B and 52nd Street, describing Fort Delancey. Originally, it was an American fort in the Revolutionary War, which was later taken over by the British during the fall of New York Harbor.

Rebel troops and the British engaged in a number of fierce skirmishes around the fort, which was located on the highest part of the peninsula, 32 feet above sea level.

The booklet listed a number of outposts, which, at one time or another, were manned by the Americans or the British. They included 54th and 46th Street at Newark Bay, at the tip of

Constable Hook, at the Hook Road and 21st Street and along 1st Street at Ingham, Lord and Humphrey Avenues. From Lord Avenue, the Americans used to take pot shots at the British troops drilling on Staten Island.

Legend has it that George Washington stopped at either an estate at Humphrey Avenue or at Ingham Avenue. However, it is a fact that our first president sailed through the Kill Van Kull on his way to his inauguration.

The La Tourette Hotel was this city's most famous resort, when Bayonne was a resort town in the 1800's. Distinguished guests such as President Grant and Mark Twain stayed at the hotel, which was located between Broadway and Avenue C on Kill Van Kull.

At one time there was a Stone Hotel located on East 33rd Street and Avenue E. When the Central Railroad came through, the building had to be raised off its foundation and moved, stone by stone, so that it faced Avenue E, instead of the railroad. It was hailed as a great engineering feat.

They are some of the interesting bits of information in the 1939 booklet. In a future column, I would like to update that publication with some other interesting landmarks such as the First Federated Church, Our Lady Star of the Sea, and Bayonne Fire Museum, and Bayonne Bridge.