

Happy birthday, Bayonne!

Our city's 125th birthday is April 8. That's the first of two calendar births and it represents the day New Jersey authorized township status. Eight years later, the state gave us official designation as a city.

Whatever. It's cause for celebration. A bugle call, perhaps, from the top of all public buildings — or school programs. This year the township birthday falls on Tuesday, and that nursery rhyme says "Tuesday's child is full of grace . . ."

There wasn't much grace in 1861 when the Civil War began and lasted four years. It happened that in the year of its birth Bayonne sent soldiers into Union and Confederate armies. **Abner Doubleday**, our noted inventor of baseball (as most historians claim) served in the Union forces. So did other members of the Van Buskirk family: **Col. Hiram Van Buskirk** and **Capt. Andrew Van Buskirk**.

The real rival Confederate troops had one officer from Bayonne: **Major Alexander Redwood**, who lived at 23 Schuyler Court.

History teachers may tell you that the first mayor of Bayonne was **Henry Meigs**. True. But he wasn't the first chief executive. That was **Hartman Vreeland**, chosen as the first township committee chairman, New England style. Even today in New England, a township committee chairman is equivalent to mayor. Some designate it as chairman of the selectmen. So while Meigs was first to hold the mayoral title, he didn't rule until eight years later.

Class dismissed.

History of Bayonne

W map 5/14/85 p36

If any Bayonne residents are displeased with the name of their city, they could have been faced instead with Salterville or Centerville. For when Bayonne became a township in 1861, the area consisted of five villages and real estate developments — Constable Hook, Bergen Point, Bayonne, Salterville and Centerville.

City fathers decided Constable Hook and Bergen Point were too confining geographically, and Salterville and Centerville were deemed too provincial sounding. Therefore, Bayonne, then a wealthy mid-town real estate development, won the title.

The name Bayonne, itself.

developed as a quirk of historic fate for the development between Newark and York Bays was originally referred to as Bayonia. However, a French surveyor in Jersey City, displaying chauvinism, urged developers to change the name to Bayonne, after a town in France's Basque country.

Bayonne's current system of lettered avenues and numbered streets provides an orderly layout of the city, but this wasn't always the case. For in 1854, surveyors laid out a planned development which instituted the lettered avenues and numbered streets. Avenues ranging from A through N were laid across from Newark Bay to Constable Hook, then a residential section.

Below present-day Fifth Street, the avenues continued O through W.

That plan was largely discarded until 1888 when serious efforts were underway to reorder city streets. Except for First through Fifth streets and 36th through 40th street every street had its name changed.

The area between 28th and 34th streets was originally 23rd through 29th streets and 41st through 56th streets were originally 48th through 63rd streets.

In the midtown Bayonne development, Chestnut became 30th Street, Maple became 31st Street, Oakland was renamed 32nd Street, Bayonne street became 33rd Street, and Huron was renamed 34th street.