

Teaneck's 1st Shaky Steps Formed Basis of Success

To truly understand the history of Teaneck for the past twenty-years under the manager form of government it is also necessary to study the background of the Township from its first Township Committee meeting in 1895. Although Paul Volcker found a floundering community when he arrived here in 1930, it was never-the-less an already well established one which reached its roots far back into the past.

Like many another municipality in the state, Teaneck became a separate corporate body because of dissatisfaction over the manner in which money raised by taxes was spent. Most of the Township was then a part of Englewood and "Englewood," says an old account, "had a drainage problem." The people of the Teaneck section, mostly farmers and such wealthy landowners as the Phelps, sympathized with the Englewood city Fathers, but they couldn't see their tax dollars going where they were receiving no benefit, so they decided to separate. The act of secession was finally passed by the Legislature on February 13, 1895.

According to the Bergen County Historical Society, Teaneck then had a total population of 1,895.

Elected As Independents

Teaneck's independence of regular parties in political manners seems to have had its beginning in that first election to select Township officers for they ran on Citizens ticket instead of the regular party designations of which there were several that year, and all of which were ignored in the local election.

The first meeting of the new government was held March 16, 1895 in Teaneck Chapel, now the VFW headquarters. According to the minutes kept by Frank S. DeRonde, first Township Clerk, the meeting was called to order by ex-Township Clerk Cornelius Terhune, at 11:00 a.m. and who then turned over to the new Township Clerk, the ballot box, certificate of election and poll clerk's affidavits.

The members of the Township committee were sworn in by Township Clerk DeRonde. William Bennett was unanimously elected chairman, Henry J. Brinkerhoff, treasurer, and Peter I. Ackerman, poor house trustee.

It was voted to bond Tunis Cole the collector for \$8000; Treasurer Brinkerhoff for \$5000; the overseer of the poor for \$1000, and a constable for the same amount. William Johnson of Hackensack was named as Township council at a retainer of \$50 annually.

Lights and Roads First Items

It was decided that a lighting committee should be appointed to ascertain the number of lights then in the Township and the number which would be needed. Ackerman was named to check on this in the section of the Township west of the West Shore Railroad and North of Cedar Lane, and Bennett the rest of the Township, each to act as a committee of one in his respective district. Bennett was also to ascertain the cost of gas and gasoline lamps.

To supervise roads, the Township was divided into three districts for which superintendents were appointed in the first two districts as follows: Number one—all roads south of, and including Cedar Lane from the railroad to Overpeck Creek, William P. DeGraw; Number two—the section north of Cedar Lane and east of the railroad, John H. Ackerman.

In the third district, Peter A. Ackerman was appointed a committee of one to inspect the condition of the roads and report back to the Committee.

Set Rent For Chapel

John Ackerman, representing the trustees of the Teaneck Chapel, stated that the trustees were willing to rent the building for Township meetings at \$150 per year including "fire and light," but they wished to stipulate the number of meetings. A formal contract for not more than thirty meetings per year was ordered drawn up.

The Township voted to borrow \$500 in anticipation of taxes, and the treasurer was named a committee of one to arrange the securing of monies on the most favorable terms possible for at least four months, and not more than six months. The meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m. having lasted almost six hours.

Thus the Township launched itself on a career of independence.

Dividing Township Assets

But the complete separation from Englewood and Ridgfield Townships had not been effected as yet. At the next meeting on March 22 the Township Committee passed a motion to send the following resolution to Englewood and Ridgfield: "You are hereby notified that you are required by law to meet with the Teaneck Township Committee and proceed to divide between said Townships all the properties real, and personal, monies

on hand or to become due, and ratable as assessed by the assessor within the limits of the respective Townships at last assessment."

The meeting with Englewood was set for March 27, and that with Ridgfield for the following day in the Lyceum in Leonia.

On April 4 the minutes show that progress has been made in this matter between Teaneck and Englewood, but that Ridgfield negotiations were "unsatisfactory." That Township showed, said Bennett, "no disposition to settle with Teaneck and allow it a fair share of the assets."

Meeting With Englewood

Englewood continued to show a co-operative spirit in the division of assets and on April 9, the two Townships had a joint meeting in the Englewood Lock-up. The net assessed taxable real and personal property as per the report of the collector in the Township of Englewood was at that time \$2,953,800 and that of Teaneck \$377,650.

The Englewood clerk read a report of the personal property of his Township. It consisted of the following: one hose cart valued at \$600; one hose cart \$75; 1000 feet of rubber hose, \$800; 500 feet of canvas hose, \$500; two sets of harness, \$240; one dozen chairs, \$18; one life net, \$60; six lanterns, \$9; nine nozzles, \$50. The whole coming to \$1,768.

The report also listed a lockup safe at \$375, a bookcase at \$33, which with the 25 percent depreciation came to \$306, or a grand total of \$2,074.50.

Added to this was the property in the emergency hospital which totaled in all \$1,348.

At the May 2 meeting things seemed

(Please Turn to Page S10)

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