



# THE MEDFORD HISTORICAL RECALL

Meeting of the Medford Historical Society will be held  
on April 7, 1970 at the Community House at 8:15 P.M.  
The speaker will be Mr. Frank Atkinson.

It is due to the kind offices of Mr. E.J. Penberthy that a historical account of Medford's own Glass Factory has been taped and set down; we can do no better than quote almost verbatim his true telling of the story.

The Editor

#### MEDFORD GLASS FACTORY

The Medford Glass Factory was originally started in 1825 for the purpose of manufacturing window panes. That owner lived in the town of Medford and subsequently was forced to sell the business because a shipment of potash was lost and the owner did not have the funds to withstand the financial consequences.

The Glass Factory then went through several owners until about 1887 when it was taken over by twelve "Owner Workers."

The twelve owners took possession only about three years prior to the United States entering the 1890 financial depression. It was during this depression that customers were extremely hard to find and the Glass Factory could not make any money.

The men continued to work, with the glassware piling up in the yard in crates and in boxes for some future possible customer. Money was scarce, the workers were not taking home enough to adequately feed their families and dissatisfaction was rampant. Finally all but John Mingin decided to sell out. John apparently had faith in the future so he along with two outsiders that he brought in, Messrs. Sam Garwood and Frank Reilly, purchased the shares of the other eleven workers and the Glass Factory was continued under new ownership and under the name of the MEDFORD STAR GLASS COMPANY.

John Mingin, who was one of South Jersey's top glass manufacturers, was rated a genius by many people who knew him. Mr. Mingin never had any formal schooling but, he was a very well-educated man. He learned to read by studying the John Wanamaker ads that appeared in newspapers and it was through learning to read that he was able to continue his self-education. John Mingin was in charge of the factory inasmuch as he was a brilliant glass maker and a very excellent business man. Sam Garwood, who was a good retailer, was in charge of running the Philadelphia store. Frank Reilly, who was an expert salesman, was in charge of all outside selling.

The depression was still on as the new owners took possession and the difficulty of selling material continued. These men, with faith in the future, kept piling up glassware. They lived on little or nothing until finally the depression was over and with it there was a sudden demand for glass. Inasmuch as the Star Glass Company had bottles already made, crated, and ready for shipment they received orders at prices well in advance of the regular and going market price. It was this good fortune that put the Star Glass Factory on its financial feet.

The Star Glass Company prospered for thirty years with the owners making considerable money along with the workers. A good glass man back in those days could make as much as \$8.00 a day while other people in other occupations were earning about \$1.25 per day.



The Star Glass Company specialized in bottles. They made bottles for the liquor business, bottles for the beer business, bottles for the patent drug business as well as bottles for the prescription business.

One of their main fortes was in catering to small companies whose orders were small. They sold to individual drug stores and prescription houses and their specialty was to put the name of the individual druggist or particular drug store on the bottle. The Philadelphia store handled individual sales and of course Frank Reilly as the industry and street salesman sold many bottles as well.

About 1920 new machinery was introduced to the glass business with one of the Star Glass Company's competitors in Glassboro, New Jersey installing a semi-automatic glass blowing machine. Because of their reduced cost, they cut into the Star Glass Company's business and a decision had to be made. Should the Star Glass Company install machinery at a cost of well in excess of \$100,000.00, or should they begin to get out of the business.

By now the three men involved were advancing in age, the buildings were sadly in need of repair and they had made enough money for them and their families to live on, so the decision was made to gradually phase the business out. They had an obligation to the workers in Medford; therefore, they decided that they would keep the business going just as long as competition would permit.

It was about this time that the approximately one hundred workers in the Star Glass Company decided to unionize. The union organizers were contacted and a union was formed.

In the glass business it was necessary to rebuild the glass furnace every year to every two years maximum. Inasmuch as John Mingin was probably the best furnace builder in the glass business he always spent time working side by side with his men in rebuilding the glass furnace. Now that the people were organized they decided that he could no longer do this kind of work and said, "You're not a union man, John, therefore you cannot do union man's work". John Mingin, who was always accustomed to building his own furnace, replied, "No, I'm not a union man but I own the place". To this the union said, "It does not make any difference, you either quit or we will quit." Mr. Mingin said, "Well, by golly, you go ahead and quit and I'll do it myself". The workmen then left the job and Mr. Mingin went to Lumberton, obtained a good mason to assist him and returned to build the furnace himself.

In retaliation for this move the union called a strike and would not go back to work until their grievances were settled.

Mr. Mingin told them, "If you do not go back to work, I'm going to let the glass out, close the shop, and if I do, it will never restart".

The workers thought John Mingin was kidding and decided to call his bluff. They realized he was not kidding when they actually saw him run the glass out into the yard and let it stand there to cool.

Later the workers came to John Mingin and wanted to know when he was going to start the fires and put the Glass Factory back to work. Mr. Mingin told them, "When you quit I told you the shop was

going to close and we would never reopen it and I meant it".  
He did mean it, the Glass Factory never did reopen.

Needless to say this was a very severe blow to the economy of  
Medford, to the economic future of the Medford business man and  
of course to the glass workers and their families.

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The tapes applicable to Medford's older citizens are in my  
possession and if at any time a researcher would like to  
know more about Medford's history, I will be very glad to  
play any of those tapes for them.

E.J. Penberthy

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DUCK SUPPER of MEDFORD GRANGE

MENU

Roast Duck  
Sweet Potato Croquettes  
Gravey Mashed Potatoes  
Peas Cole Slaw Cranberry  
Rolls Butter Coffee  
Homemade Cake  
Ice Cream

Price of supper is 75¢ including everything and  
50¢ for children under 12 years of age.

The Central Record  
February 2, 1929

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Sullivan's Opera, "H.M.S. PINAFORE," is now becoming  
popular; from present indications the pretty fresh  
opera will be "the rage."

Godey's Lady's Book &  
Magazine, 1879



## The Moonligh Visitors

On a moonlit night, the wind whispering through the tall trees, silent shadows flicker along the edge of the stream. A break in the trees and the moonlight partly outlines a small group of Indians. They pause and look at the big farmhouse, dark and shuttered in the clearing. With a barely noticeable gesture the leader motions the others to follow. There is no alarm, the dogs never bark, the soft pad of the mocassin is a mere whisper in the grass. Without a sound the leader approaches the door of the farmhouse and pulls the leather latchstring, the door swings open and the Lenapes file in.

One of the Indians pulls a heavy flintlock pistol from his blouse. It is easy to see that the weapon was crudely cut down from an old trade musket. He aims carefully and pulls the trigger. There is a low hiss and flash as the priming powder burns and then a glow in the tinder of the big fireplace in the corner. A few moments later there is a fire in the matching fireplace in the other corner and a cheery glow spreads through the big room. Very shortly all but one of the Indians have rolled up in their robes or blankets on the floor. One old man fills a pipe and lights it with an ember from the fire, then gazes into the flames as he slowly puffs his pipe and perhaps dreams of hunts and deeds of long ago. Soon he taps the ashes from the pipe and rolls up in an old fur robe and presently all is silent except for the crackle of the fire and the gentle snores of the sleepers.

Before the first light of dawn the group are awake; robes are packed up. There is a short low voiced conference and a package is placed on the mantel. Then as silently as they came the little group leaves, closing the door behind them and as faint shadows against the morning light they may be seen walking eastward toward the seashore.

When the farmer comes down in the morning the only trace of his visitors is the dead embers in the fireplace and the gift left as a token of appreciation for the hospitality rendered. For many years this custom was followed in the end room of the old farmhouse until no more Indians were left to walk the seashore trail. And always the guests left a gift: a haunch of venison, fresh vegetables, fish, clams or possibly a newly woven reed basket.

The farmhouse until recently stood in Medford Township, to the north of Route 70 and was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Roy Mickle. It is Mrs. Mickle who tells the story as her aunt had told it to her when she was a child. At the time this took place there were less than a dozen farmhouses in the whole area and these visitors were the so called "Savages" of that era. What sort of visitors would you get in this civilized day if you left the latchstring out on your home every night? No story better illustrates the trust and mutual esteem of our early Quaker settlers and the gentle, friendly Lenape Indians.

As related to Bob Harrison