

Self Guided Tour through History!

This is a Girl Scout Gold Award project! I have developed a historic walking tour in the Tommy's Pond area of town! Which is this right here! This is an outside only tour so **please remain on the sidewalks** out of respect for the homeowners. **All photos are courtesy of the Metuchen- Edison Historical Society.** I chose to do this project because I love historic houses! I hope you are able to take something away from this! We are going to talk about a man named David Graham Thomas who has a lot to do with my project later, but I'll briefly tell you; David Graham Thomas was a wealthy landowner who owned a fully functioning farm right here in Metuchen! When he died, his relatives donated the western part of his property to Metuchen Borough which established Tommy's Pond that we see right here!

Franklyn Place

39 Franklyn- Colonial Revival. It was built 1920-1929

35 Franklyn- This house was built in 1929 and is an Italian/ Mediterranean eclectic. The roof is called a hipped roof and made of clay. Houses like this are most commonly symmetrical. The roof is very Mediterranean because of the tiled roof. The overhang on the roof is called wide overhanging eaves.

28 Franklyn- This is a Tudor Revival built in 1960. There are visible Gables on the house which are the Triangle shaped roofs. The house also has tall thin windows. Tudor houses typically have big chimneys. The base of this house's chimney is pretty large although the chimney splits into two. Most common to Tudors is the half timbering. This is the stucco with the crossing brown lines. In Tudor houses built a long time ago, it would have been actual logs running through the house. This is a revival though so it's just for decoration.

31 Franklyn- Modern Construction

23 Franklyn- Modern Construction. Built ca. 1970.

24 Franklyn- Queen Anne built 1903. It is a Queen Anne due to each floor having a different material. The bottom floor is brown brick, The middle is flat brick and the top is cedar shake. Note the Corinthian Columns. This house served as the headquarters for the

Edgar Clay Company until 1925 while the original office building was under construction (was located on Station Place by the Train Station). Charles S. Edgar's (of the Edgar Clay Company) home is located at 31 Graham Ave.

15 Franklyn- According to the homeowners, it was built in 1952 as a retirement home for Julia Bogart, a Metuchen librarian in the 1920s. The floor has a radiant in-floor heating system built into its concrete floor foundation. Alan Johnson, an architect, bought it and transformed the front two rooms into a living room with a cathedral ceiling and a lovely oak circular staircase leading to an unfinished attic. It was bought by the current homeowners in 1974 they added 3 bedrooms and a bath upstairs, enclose the porch and add a fireplace and expand the house by 6 feet to the south and 5 feet to the east.

Graham Avenue

28 Graham- Folk Victorian with Italianate Features built in 1890. The Triangular Roof shapes are quite common on Victorians. The wraparound porch is also common. Make sure to note the decorative detailing on the porch and the roof. The long skinny windows as well as the crown on top is more Italianate. The roofing is cross cable roofing or 2 or more roofs intersecting.

31 Graham- Queen Anne with added Greek Revival vibes built in 1890. The pillars are the giveaway that this is a Greek revival. Revival is showing that it is loosely based on Roman and Greek styles. Know its Queen Anne by siding layers. This was the former residence of the Edgar Family. Charles S. Edgar was fascinated by clay as a child and wanted to make a career out of it. He became co-partners to the Edgar Brothers Clay co. where they would mine clay and sell it. He became quite wealthy from it. He later donated about 5 acres of land to the Metuchen School District which would establish Edgar Middle School, named after him. His headquarters/ office is actually right next door at 24 Franklyn Place, but this house was where he actually lived. It later would be sold to a man named John Ciardi who was a famous poet and professor. Note the brick driveway that used to lead to a portchuce (covered thing to drop off people). Sunburst on the door window.



32 Graham- Victorian and Queen Anne built circa 1898. Note the beautiful tower on this house. The porch is original. The property was originally part of Charles S. Edgar's property!

36 Graham- Four Square built 1920. This has a hipped roof meaning the roof dips down but has 4 sides. Named foursquare because inside there are 4 square rooms on the first floor. The garage in the back was originally a stable and is now an apartment. The porch is original.

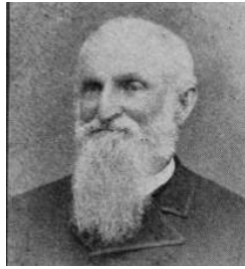
43 Graham- Rebuilt in about 1900. Right side of the house is original. Garage is not.

48 Graham- Folk Victorian with Italianate Features built in 1880. Take note of the decorative detailing on the roof and porch. There are overhanging eaves. The windows are all different. The shutters actually work unlike decorative shutters nowadays. Note the double door which is super pretty and an antique. The brackets along the porch are the Italianate Features. The house was built for David Graham Thomas Jr. by David Graham Thomas. DGT Jr. wasn't able to live there due to tuberculosis which eventually killed him.

51 Graham- A LaPorta Builders house built in 1997. It was designed to imitate a historic home. The house was built on top of what is believed to be the pool of David Graham Thomas's property!

59 Graham (Historic)- Built in 1850. Owned by David Graham Thomas, who as mentioned, was a wealthy and owned a functioning farm. Most of what is Graham Avenue today was part of his farm. David Graham Thomas "opened" Graham Ave. He donated the land for the First Reformed Church of Metuchen which was built in 1857. When he died in 1893, his relatives donated the land from the western part of his property to the Borough of Metuchen. This would establish Thomas Park or Tommy's Pond. He is very important to this project/ area of town because he once owned

everything here long ago. There's a lot of history in this area thanks to him. The house was knocked down in 2019.



59 Graham (New)- New Construction completed in 2020.

60 Graham- Colonial Revival built in 1939. This house is inspired by southern styling because of the 2 ending chimneys. In northern colonials it's more common for a big chimney in the middle or 1 on the end. Colonials often have smaller windows. Colonials are very symmetrical so they are often nicknamed 3 bays; 2 bay windows and then a door.

73 Graham- Modern Construction

79 Graham- Greek Revival, Colonial Revival with Italianate styles built in 1867. Had a front porch with square columns. There were no railings. It fell apart and changed to a current porch. Note the frenzies (the bar above window), the eyebrow windows (the small windows). This home was originally bought by Reverend Lord. It served as the parsonage for the reformed Church. His son Chester was the Managing Editor of the New York Sun for over 30 years. The property was then owned by the Easton and Amboy Railroad. This is the company that built the greenway. They split the property. The Dutch Reformed Church was the funeral home, this was the parsonage. The company went out of business in the 1880s. In the 1920s the property was owned by the Silzer Family. George Sebastian Silzer served as governor of New Jersey from 1923-1926. He was married at St. Luke's Episcopal Church right here in Metuchen! The house in the old photo has this beautiful porch and then it doesn't. They actually walled it off to add another room. Random Fact, George was a lawyer and one of his clients was the famous mobster Dutch Schultz.



Spring Street

48 Spring- Ranch, built 1955

52 Spring- Vernacular Victorian built in 1876 by G.A. Wabon. This was the first house to be built on the north side of the street. Mr. Wabon lived in it for a while but then moved out. The current homeowners found Mr. Wabon's signature on the outside wall above the entry door! During WWII, there was a housing shortage which led to this house being converted into a 2 family house for a while. The next homeowners then reconverted it into a 1 family.

57 Spring- LaPorta Builders built this home in 1997. It was designed to imitate a historic home. This house was part of David Graham Thomas's property. After he died, at some point, this house is believed to have been the tennis courts of the property!

61 Spring- Built 1954. This house was designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes who was a famous modernist architect! Edward also designed the IBM Building in NYC, the Dallas Museum of Art and many other famous buildings. It is believed the house was built for Hiram and Phyllis Van Blarigan who originally lived on Carlton Rd. Hiram was a very good scientist. It is rumored that Albert Einstein would stop by Metuchen on his way to Princeton around the Carlton/ Bissett area of town. Could it have been this family? That eventually would live in this house?

62 Spring- Built in 1940 for the Kahn Family, this is an authenticated Sear House. It is a variation of the Glenn View model, and was a model home that you could literally buy out of a catalog. They would ship you the parts and you could hire someone to build it, or build it yourself, like a Lego set.

63 Spring- Built between 1876-1903. In 1932 William A. Crowell owned this. He supposedly had a feed store in town.

67 Spring- Dutch Colonial Revival built in 1920. Note the stucco.

64 Spring- Modern Construction. The twin house to 48 Graham Ave (the yellow red and green house on graham). It was the exact same looking house. It later burned.

71 Spring- Built 1930

73 Spring- Built ca. 1920 and is a Cape Cod style. The property was purchased in 1920 by Mildred Morris from David Graham Thomas. It was then sold to J. Kingsley Powell in 1922. Then sold to Emmie Crowell in 1923 then Edith Crowell in 1938. Julia and Joe Fater purchased the house in 1945. Joe Fater owned a local nursery and was active in Metuchen Little League thus the naming of Fater Field after him.

76 Spring- Built in 1900. In 1909 James A Barr, president of Metuchen Hardware, and his wife Mildred, a teacher at Edgar, lived there until 1919. Mr. Barr had a daughter who went to college and got a doctorate in Education. This was a big deal that a girl went to school. She became the principal of Moss School or known as Washington School at the time.

77 Spring- Built in 1910. A really rich person somewhere in Metuchen owned a house and this was the "out building". It was basically the 2 car garage of the time. It is said to have been able to store 2 carriages. During the house shortage in WW2, they moved the house to its current location. The foundation was built, but they just plopped the house here. If you notice, there's no door in the front of the house. That's because the door is on the other side. Spring street wasn't a "street" then, so they put the door facing the pond. It made sense at the time. Since the house was an out building, the person who payed for this added 2 bay windows and the sun room. The didn't measure correctly and they ran out of room for a door in the front. Some of the wood from the original building is exposed in the house and they have saw marks. Back then, there were no electrical machines; everything was done using a handheld saw. The current homeowner added the stucco.

82 Spring- Built 1925. A Fairweather design. Dr. Carlyle Morris (1896-1958) lived there. After serving in WWII he married in 1950. The house was sold by his widow in 1964.

83 Spring- Built in 1885. 3 generations of the Moss Family lived there. Mildred B Moss got Washington School named after her. It's now known as Moss School.

I recommend taking a detour to 207 Lake Avenue and then continuing onto Spring Street.

85 Spring- Cape Cod built in 1940

90 Spring- Built in 1940. Note that there's a second floor over the garage which is different from the original.

93 Spring- Bungalow built 1930.

95 Spring- Bungalow built in 1930

97 Spring- Bungalow built in 1930

98 Spring- Split level built in 1973

100 Spring- Variation of a Cape Cod built in 1936

104 Spring- Variation of a Cape Cod built in 1936

Cliffwood Place

Cliffwood used to be called Sylvan and wasn't really a street! There was nothing there in 1920. In 1927, the street was opened as Cliffwood Place and development began. By 1929, there were only 3 houses, but by the early 1930s, the entire street was filled.

For all the bungalows, notice little differences/ unique features in each house!

22 Cliffwood- The previous owners of this Arts and Crafts cottage built this home in December of 1929 and lived in it for over 45 years! The current owners bought it from the original owners. There have been no architectural changes recently. The front porch columns are original Arts and Crafts design.

20 Cliffwood-Bungalow built 1930

25 Cliffwood- Colonial Revival built ca. 1930

18 Cliffwood- Split Level built 1969

15 Cliffwood- Tudor Revival built 1930. Note the cool looking arches!

13 Cliffwood- Colonial Revival built 1930

12 Cliffwood- Built 1930

11 Cliffwood- Colonial Revival built 1930

10 Cliffwood- Dutch Colonial built ca. 1925

8 Cliffwood- Bungalow built ca. 1925

9 Cliffwood- Tudor Revival built 1930

7 Cliffwood- Craftsman Colonial built in 1930. The Craftsman Colonial detailing include the front columns, hipped roof, wide front porch, dormer bedrooms and roof rafters. The downstairs windows are original as well as the unpainted woodwork and hardwood flooring inside!

4 Cliffwood- Foursquare style built ca. 1925

3 Cliffwood- Bungalow built 1930

2 Cliffwood- Built ca. 1930

High Street

114 High- Cape Cod built in 1948 by Frank N. and Mrs. Frances Strusz who raised their son in the home. Mr. Strusz was a contractor known for building a good, sound house although without many frills. The current owners have lived in their home for over 36 years!

100 High- Modern Construction built 1969

High (New on right side of street)- All houses were built after the burning of the Towers Estate. All built around 2001.

The Towers Estate (Historic on right side of street)- The Towers Estate was located on the block of Lake Ave, High St, and a little of Sylvan Ave and built ca. 1868. It is nicknamed the "Towers" Estate because of the central tower in the enter that is rather grand looking. The house was a classic three-story Second Empire building, complete with a dormered Mansard slate roof, roof line cresting, cupola/tower. It was built by a banker named Benjamin Cross Paddock who built it for his family. He lived in New York City but wanted to establish a "country" home. He later went broke and lost the estate. Supposedly, the estate was a girls school for a while. Then during the World War 2 house shortage, it housed military officers. This was also around the time of the Spanish flu so many people died... some in the house. The house was abandoned for a while. Whether it was haunted or not, that's up to you! The house then burned in 1970. Legend has it, the person that owned Mary Wilkins Freeman's mansion after she passed, also owned a house on Durham Ave, next to the Ayers Allen House (next to Campbell School), and this property. All of the houses burned around the same time. Coincidence? Who knows?



Lake Avenue

207 Lake- Italianate built in 1868. This house is on the National Register of Historic Places or as more known the National Registry. That means it is on the federal government's list of buildings that must be preserved for their historical significance. This house was owned by Mary Wilkens Freeman (New England Nuns and Other Stories, The Revolt of Mother, Pembroke). Mark Twain (Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn) actually visited this house! The former owners spent a lot of time and money restoring the place back to what Mary Wilkens Freeman had it like after some renovations had taken place. The interior of this house looks almost identical to that of Mary's time. Mary Wilkens Freeman was a very famous author hence why she would have been friends with Mark Twain. She had so much money that she built a huge mansion next door! More on that later! You may not have heard of her because she did not have any children to carry on her legacy. Whereas Mark Twain had many people who would carry on her legacy, hers

ended abruptly when she died. She simply disappeared from the public eye. She grew up in Vermont. There, they have a day on the calendar dedicated to her. However, in Metuchen where she lived for most of her life, most people don't remember her! She was one of the authors that led to the "Brainy Borough".

143 Lake- This house is an English Tudor Revival built in 1930 by John C. Stockel for his wife Margaret. They lived there with their son until they later died, passing the house onto their son. He then sold it to the Leenhout family in the early 1990s. The Leenhouts then lived there for approximately two years before a work relocation took them to Chicago! Then it was purchased by the current owners in 1996.

145 Lake- Built circa 1929. Note the cool colors of the brick and the green roof! The roof has almost all original tiles, made by the Ludowici Roof Tile company, which is still in business today!

149 Lake- Cape Cod built in 1940.

153 Lake- Dutch Colonial built in 1920. Note the Gables!

Mary Wilkens Freeman Mansion- Mary Wilkens Freeman was a very wealthy author. She built herself a super fancy mansion located on the properties of all the current houses. There was a tragic fire in 1971 leading to the whole place burning to the ground. The current properties are on top of where a famous author used to hold parties!



Lake Avenue (New)- Most of these houses were built ca. 1972, after the burning of the Mary Wilkens Freeman Mansion.

Thank you so much for taking my tour! I really hope that you enjoyed it!