

Hammonton: *150 Years of Industry*

Hammonton: 150 Years of Industry is an exhibition based on the unique historical and cultural heritage of the town of Hammonton. The Noyes Museum of Art of Stockton University, in partnership with staff and faculty from Stockton University, the South Jersey Culture & History Center, and the town of Hammonton, presents two exhibitions celebrating the town's Sesquicentennial. This first exhibition highlights artifacts, documents, photographs and artists' interpretations related to the topic of industry and includes garments, shoes, textiles, glass, and more. Exhibiting artists include: Ron Ross Cohen, Jeanette DePiero, Dorrine Esposito, Yvonne Mucci, Marie Natale, Suzanne Reese Horvitz, April Schenk, Liz Wuillermin, and Mike Zambelli. These artists looked to the major industries and features of Hammonton as inspiration for work that spans a variety of media. Focuses include the garment industry, Hammonton Lake, the newspaper, trains, and historical photography.



Osgood-Smith Shoe Factory Photograph, Ca.1885-86
Hammonton History Project
Contributors: Kramer Hall, Hammonton Historical Society



Bernshouse's Mill Postcard, January 19, 1909
Hammonton History Project
Contributors: Kramer Hall, Angela Donio

Creek. This glasshouse remained in production until 1840, when it burned to the ground. The Coffin family relocated the factory to Winslow, Camden County, where production continued until 1892 (known as The Winslow Glass Factory,) although no longer in the hands of the Coffin family. Operating the sawmill until

Hammonton Sawmill

During the War of 1812, William Coffin formed a partnership with John Coates to build and operate a sawmill at the outlet of the mill pond, now known as Hammonton Lake, adjacent to today's White Horse Pike. Coffin handled operations at the mill for a few years before purchasing it outright, along with the "old Hammondtown" tract of land. Lumber from the sawmill formed the structure of many historical homes in the area including at the village of Batsto.

The sawmill remained Coffin's primary industry until 1817, when he built and began operations at a glass factory with Jonathan Haines across Hammonton

his death in 1844, Coffin left the property and business to his sons John Hammond Coffin and Edward Winslow Coffin. Hammonton was named for John Hammond, losing the “d” after settlement began.

Other mills cropped up along Hammonton Lake after the original sawmill found success. Among these mills was H.S. Wetherbee’s flour mill, J.P. Evans’ steam flour mill, and a planing mill begun in the 1850s, producing hay, cotton, and cider presses. The Whiffen Brothers shoe factory later moved into this building.

W. Skinner and Son Glass Factory

William Coffin and Jonathan Haines established a glassworks at old Hammonton, across the creek from the sawmill. The manufactory remained in production until 1840, when fire destroyed the building. Meanwhile, Coffin also established a glasshouse in Winslow Township, Camden County, which continued operations until 1892.

In July 1899, William Skinner arrived in Hammonton and erected a cut-glass factory across from the Hammonton Pennsylvania Railroad station. The company specialized in high-end cut crystal glass, manufacturing punchbowls, decanters, vases, pitchers, stemware, sugar and creamer sets, and other such products with great success, selling these goods to fashionable Philadelphia retailers like Bailey, Banks & Biddle, Caldwell’s, and Strawbridge & Clothier. The blank hollowware that Skinner produced was extraordinarily clear and heavy, described as “triple-X potash.”



W. Skinner and Son Glass Company Postcard, [n.d.]
Hammonton History Project
Contributors: Kramer Hall, Angela Donio

Most of the cutters hailed from the Hammonton area, which had a pool of ready talent due to the dozens of glass-cutting shops in New Jersey during the first two decades of the twentieth century. At the height of production, Skinner employed between 150 and 160 workers.

The market for high-quality cut glass markedly declined with the start of the First World War and cutters became scarce as the military drafted more and more men. During the 1920s, Skinner entered a new field: designing and manufacturing black plate-glass desk sets for fountain pen firms like Schaeffer and Waterman. The Skinner works also produced cut and mirrored picture frames and table plateaus. The changes in production proved very satisfactory for the firm and business remained brisk.

Thomas Skinner III, the last heir of the family and a known racing enthusiast, repurposed parts of the factory for stock car work and ran the family business until his retirement in 1995. After his retirement, the factory closed and has remained shuttered for more than 20 years.

In 2011, a suspicious and fast-moving fire broke out, engulfing the building in flames before fire crews could respond. It took fire crews an hour and a half and a fleet of tankers from as far away as Gloucester and Burlington counties to subdue the blaze. In the light of day, the damage is clearly visible. Many community members have expressed the desire to see this piece of local history restored.

Efforts are underway for the city to take control of the W. Skinner and Son, Inc. building. Mayor Stephen DiDonato states that Hammonton officials have been trying to acquire the property through foreclosure, as the estate owes tens of thousands of dollars in back taxes. Ultimately, the city of Hammonton aims to restore the three-story building and surrounding property, clean the site of contaminants, and have an outside company transform it into a place of business once again.



Hammonton Shoe Company Factory Postcard, July 3, 1919
 Hammonton History Project
 Contributors: Kramer Hall, Angela Donio

Shoe and Garment Industry

Within ten years of Hammonton’s founding, shoe manufacturing became its first major industry, with both successful and ill-advised experiments. A number of companies found their success here, such as Whiffen Brothers & Company. They started a branch of their Philadelphia factory in Hammonton in 1884, and within a year, transferred all manufacturing interests to what was originally meant to be a satellite branch. C.F. Osgood & Company arrived in Hammonton in 1872 and established one of the best-equipped and most productive shoe factories of its time in 1885, producing up to 1,800 pairs of adult and 300 children’s shoes in a day. By 1930, Hammonton

hosted approximately a dozen different garment factories that employed thousands of workers. The town’s shoe industry began to wane with the arrival of the Great Depression. During the mid-twentieth century, Hammonton’s garment industry dominated the local economy, then all but vanished within 50 years. At its peak, four major clothing companies operated in town with the largest being Hammonton Park Clothes. The others included Crown Pants Company, Aggressive Coat Company, and Modern Clothing Company. Hammonton became well-known along the east coast, as well as internationally, for producing high-quality suits, coats, and shoes. By the early twenty-first century, only three tailor shops remained downtown.

Women comprised a majority of Hammonton’s garment industry workforce, along with many Italian and Hispanic immigrants. Most of these employees formerly served as field-workers, but they soon favored factory conditions, working as tailors or seamstresses, over picking crops in the hot fields.

Hammonton’s Railroads

Camden & Atlantic Railroad:

The Camden & Atlantic Railroad (C&A) completed a rail line between Camden and Atlantic City in 1854. Four years later, the railroad established a station in the nascent village of Hammonton. In 1883, the Pennsylvania Railroad acquired the C&A.

Philadelphia & Atlantic City Railway:

In 1877, disgruntled members of the C&A board resigned to build a competing railroad, the Philadelphia & Atlantic City Railway. Initially constructed as a narrow-gauge route, the line passed through Hammonton parallel to the C&A 650 feet to the southwest. In 1883, the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad purchased the line and standard-gauged it. Then began a period of intense competition between the two parent companies. In 1933, due to dropping ridership and the need to eliminate highway grade crossings, the State of New Jersey brokered a merger of the Pennsylvania Railroad routes and the Philadelphia & Reading routes in South Jersey to form the Pennsylvania-Reading Seashore Lines (PRSL). The PRSL retained the C&A, but tore up the Philadelphia & Atlantic City Railroad during the 1930s.



PRR Station Postcard, February 1, 1908
 Hammonton History Project
 Contributors: Kramer Hall, Angela Donio

The Vineland Railway:

Vineland founder Charles K. Landis incorporated the Vineland Railway in 1867 to build between Atsion, Vineland, and Bayside. Completed in 1871, the route became part of the New Jersey Southern Railway and then the Central Railroad of New Jersey in 1878. The railroad passed near the northern border of Hammonton, providing a direct route from the Delaware Bay area to New York City.

The low cost of transportation and close proximity to great centers of population promoted the growth of the farming and manufacturing industries. The town highlighted these features to attract new farmers and factory workers, claiming “Hammonton has advantages comparable, if not superior, to the great West.”

In the 19th and 20th centuries, Atlantic City became a major seaside vacation destination for the wealthy and working class living in the Philadelphia area. At its height in the 1920s, two railroad lines carried tourists from Philadelphia to Atlantic City. Passenger service through Hammonton continued into the 1980s. Federal and state officials held talks to revive the line as a direct route to the casinos.

The Atlantic City Line:

Currently, New Jersey Transit operates the Atlantic City Line (ACL) as the rail corridor that passes through Hammonton. The ACL is a line operated by New Jersey Transit (NJT) between Philadelphia and Atlantic City operating along the corridor of the White Horse Pike. It runs over a track that was controlled by both the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) and the Pennsylvania-Reading Seashore Lines.



Amatol Munitions Factory, *Loading 75 M/M Shell*, Ca. 1918
Excerpt from the book: *Shell Loading at Amatol, N.J.*
Courtesy ACCC website: <http://amatol.atlantic.edu/index.html>

Amatol Munitions Factory

Amatol is an abandoned munitions factory and associated company town, located just a few miles east of Hammonton. Constructed by the Atlantic Shell Loading Company, Amatol derives its name from the explosive loaded into the shell as an accelerant for the projectile.

In 1918, a year after the United States entered World War I, the government purchased 6,000 acres of land to build a munitions plant and town. The speedy design and extensive use of concrete construction at Amatol was a major urban planning achievement. In the span of nine months, the contractor completed houses, dormitories, bunk houses, schools, and other facilities to accommodate between 10,000-20,000 plant workers and their families. The

Amatol Railroad served to transport workers from their town to the factories located two miles away as well as make connections with the West Jersey & Seashore Railroad.

The plant closed down after the war ended and the federal government ordered a series of auctions for everything from the equipment in the manufacturing facilities to the buildings in the town between the years 1919 and 1924. Within five years, the town and plant became a virtual memory, with just remnants of concrete found throughout the site and the extant office building along the White Horse Pike, which later served as a New Jersey State Police barracks.

Amatol received a second chance when Charles Schwab bought the land in 1926 to construct a “wooden bowl” speedway. The wooden and oval track measured one and one-half miles long. Although it received high attendance at the opening, the racetrack only remained open for two years. Schwab leased the site as a test track to automobile companies after losing interest in racing.

Currently, the Mullica Township Recreation Association has taken over a portion of the site. Only one building remains intact from the facility. Remnants of the roads, homes, structures and racetrack can still be found and excavated on the site.

Newspapers Affiliated with Hammonton

1. Hammonton Farmer: 1858-1866

- Place of publication: Hammonton
- Geographic coverage: Hammonton
- Publisher: R.J. Byrnes

2. Atlantic Journal: 1859-1898

- Alternative Titles: Atlantic Journal, The Sunday Journal
- Place of publ.: Egg Harbor City
- Geo. cvg.: Atlantic City, Egg Harbor City, Hammtn., Mays Ldg.
- Publisher: M. Stutzbach & Sons

3. South Jersey Republican: 1863-1923

- Place of publication: Hammonton
- Geo. cvrg.: Absecon & Hammtn.
- Publisher: H.E. Bowles

4. Atlantic Democrat and

Cape May County Register: 1864-1865

- Alt. Title: Atlantic Democrat
- Place of publ.: Egg Harbor City
- Geographic coverage: Lower Burlington County villages
- Publisher: J. Gifford

5. Atlantic Democrat and

Cumberland County Patriot: 1866

- Place of publication: Absecon
- Geo. cvg.: Absecon & Cmbld. Cty.
- Publisher: O.A. Douglas

- Preceding Titles: The Atlantic Democrat & Cape May County Register (1862-1866)
- Succeeding Titles: The Atlantic Democrat. The Constitution & the Laws. (1866-?)

6. Atlantic Democrat: 1861-62; 1866-89

- Place of publ.: Egg Harbor City
- Geo. coverage: Egg Harbor City
- Publisher: O.A. Douglas

7. The Hammonton Culturist: 1867-?

- Place of pub.: Phila. & Hammtn.
- Geo. cvg.: Hammtn. & Phila.
- Publisher: E. Matlack

8. Hammonton Item: 1872-1878

- Place of publication: Hammonton
- Geographic coverage: Hammonton
- Publisher: H.E. Bowles

9. Mays Landing Record: 1877-1908

- Place of publication: Mays Ldg.
- Succdg. title: Atlantic Cty. Record

10. Atlantic County Record: 1908-1950

11. South Jersey Star: 1902-1923

- Place of publication: Hammonton

12. The Hammonton Gazette: 1997-Present

- Place of publication: Hammonton
- Geographic coverage: Hammonton
- Publ.: Gabriel Donio & Gina Rullo
- www.hammontongazette.com



Ice Fishing on Hammonton Lake Photo Postcard, [n.d.]
Hammonton History Project
Contributors: Kramer Hall, Hammonton Historical Society

Hammonton Lake

Hammonton Lake was created when Coffin and Coates constructed a dam on Hammonton Creek to power their sawmill. It is a 70-acre basin spanning from Egg Harbor Road to the White Horse Pike. A tributary of the Mullica River, Hammonton Creek drains 2.71 square miles in its watershed. Functioning primarily as a wildlife habitat, deciduous woods surround the lake and white cedar swamp exists at the lake's upper reaches. Springtime is a peak season for the lake, when its population of painted and red-bellied turtles and songbirds such as orioles and warblers become most active.

In times past, Hammonton Lake became a choice location for wealthy residents to build their homes and mansions, as well as the site of various mills and restaurants. Many locals would canoe and swim there during the summer months, but health officials closed the lake to swimmers in the early 1990s due to

unsafe water quality. Town officials are working to improve the water quality, with measures to decrease pollution, cull the goose population, and install water filters to diffuse harmful pathogens.

PROGRAMS - Hammonton: 150 Years of Industry *Programs made possible by Stockton University*

Opening Reception at Kramer Hall

Thursday, March 17: 6:00 - 9:00pm (Third Thursday)

Join us to celebrate the opening of the *Hammonton: 150 Years of Industry* exhibition, during Hammonton's Third Thursday. This event is free and open to the public.

Four Part Lecture Series: Women's March Towards Equity

1. New Jersey Women in World War II

Friday, March 4, 12:00pm - 1:30 pm

Discussion with Author Patricia Chappine, Adjunct Professor, Stockton University

2. Organize, Agitate, Educate: Vineland and the Women's Suffrage Movement

Friday March 11, 3:00pm - 4:30pm

Patricia Martinelli, Curator of Vineland Historical & Antiquarian Society

3. Winning the Vote: Postcards and other Images from the American Woman Suffrage Movement - Thursday March 24, 3:00pm - 4:30pm

Linda J. Wharton, Professor of Political Science, Stockton University

4. I Joined the W.A.V.E.S.: My Service to God & My Country

Wed., March 30, 12:00 - 1:30pm

Paul Schopp, Assistant Director of South Jersey Culture & History Center, Stockton University
An Oral History of the Contributions of a World War II Veteran

Digitization Event: Archive Your Treasures - A Digital Record of Hammonton History

Saturday, April 2, 10:00am – 2:00pm

Bring your historical Hammonton artifacts to Kramer Hall. We will scan or photograph your items, returning them to you with digital copies. Contact Christina Birchler: 609-626-3840 or christina.birchler@stockton.edu

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The South
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