

350 Years of New Jersey History: From Stuyvesant to Sandy**Joseph G. Bilby, James M. Madden, and Harry Ziegler****The History Press, Charleston, 2014. 208 pp., 65+ illustrations, \$19.99 paperback.****DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14713/njs.v1i1.1>**

On June 22, 2014, New Jersey became 127,750 days old (give or take a few leap days). On each of those days something of significance happened to someone in what would eventually (perhaps in 1876) be called the Garden State. A baby born (Bruce Springsteen - 9/29/1949); a loved one dies (Hugh Mercer - 1/12/1777); a world changing invention created (the light bulb - 11/4/1879). So it is no surprise that the authors of *350 Years of New Jersey History* were able to put together an interesting and instructive list of facts chronicling the Garden State for every year of its existence.

While this book includes the many expected entries tracing the well-known arc of New Jersey history (Washington crossing the Delaware, the crash of the Hindenburg, corruption in New Jersey politics), there are also some lesser known particulars that help illustrate how much there is to learn about this state. For instance, 1687 brings the first free black landowners in North America to the Hackensack Valley. In 1793 we learn that Pierre L'Enfant, who famously laid out the city of Washington, D.C, was fired from his position as city planner for Paterson. In 1964, citizens of Teaneck became the first in the nation to voluntarily integrate their schools. A timeline of events could be dry, formless, and lacking any interpretation, but this little book delivers more. There are running themes (technology, invention, transportation, civil rights, exploding factories) that you quickly note as the decades go by. Also, the authors will start a story in one year and bring closure to it much later, as in recounting the 1943 tale of four brave WWII chaplains who were later memorialized (in 2013). A few editorial comments even sneak in, including references to Superfund sites in conjunction with 19th century industrial growth and

the noting that after a brief 1909 visit, the winged Jersey Devil never returned to Trenton, “at least not in that form (123).”

Choosing what events merit highlighting is ultimately subjective, so it might have been interesting to know how the authors went about their task. Regardless, either by design or happenstance, there is a certain balance in this diary of New Jersey that comes through. New Jersey began with and continues to have a diverse population and *350 Years* manages to pay tribute to the achievements and trials of all. The growth of commerce, industry, and yes, our sprawling road system, are followed, but equal time is given to the founding of colleges, universities, and cultural institutions. Wars fought for social justice – often with New Jersey leading the way – are recalled as well as those fought on the battlefield by New Jersey soldiers. This book is a fun read. It is by no means a comprehensive history of any era, nor is it meant to be. It provides a basic outline, taking us to the familiar and the unexpected, enticing us with vignettes, and leaving us wanting to know more.

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