



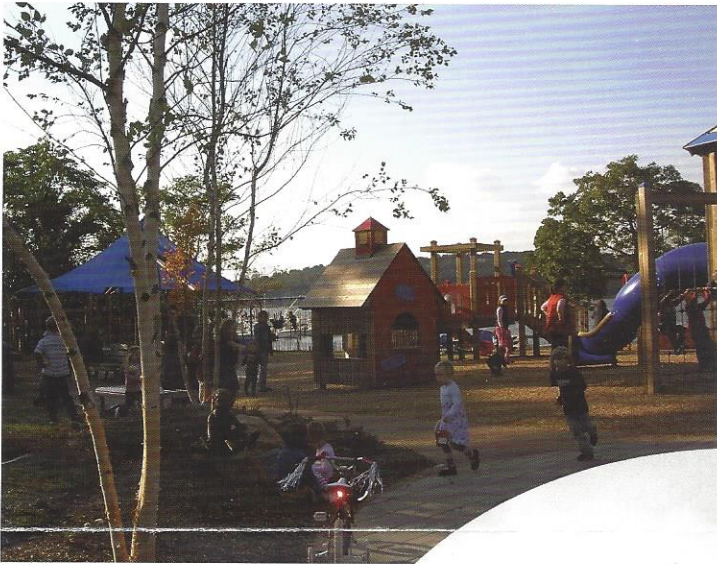
Settled in 1665

# RUMSON

## Borough Bulletin

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### PERKING UP OUR PARKS



VICTORY PARK



MEADOW RIDGE PARK

*Pre-1920 view of  
the site of Victory Park*



RIVERSIDE PARK (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)



ROGERS PARK

## ALL ABOUT RUMSON

### PERKING UP OUR PARKS

Rumson's first park was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Bertram H. Borden, who purchased the site of the former Oceanic Hotel from a Mr. Ligier. At the time, the land was being used as a campground and was covered with temporary cottages erected by the campers. Cleared of the hotel building and campsites, the Victory Memorial Park was created and dedicated on July 4, 1920 for the benefit of the community and in honor of the men who served during World War I, which had concluded less than two years before. The Victory Memorial Park Foundation was charged with the task of overseeing the park's maintenance and making additions funded by the interest on the endowment given by the Bordens. Additions included the tennis courts, a playground and bathhouses for those who utilized the riverfront beach. Instructors were hired by the Foundation to teach arts and crafts, and there were sports events ranging from foot races to a tennis tournament held in Victory Park each year on Labor Day.

There are many traditions that have been honored throughout the 85 years since Victory Park's creation. Many residents may not know that the Tree Lighting Ceremony in the park is more than a recent custom; it was designated, along with a concert by the high school band to be held on or about June 7th each year, as a requirement by the donor. According to the oldest Rumson history book, lyrics were projected onto a screen as "the community gathered at the living Christmas tree for Christmas carols, and the children were told that the tree was growing with them each year." Our enormous 'living Christmas tree' has long since outgrown any of those surviving 1920's era children.

The Victory Park Memorial Foundation has evolved into the Mary Owen Borden Memorial Foundation, and its philanthropy has been expanded far beyond the confines of Rumson.

Victory Park was in the news during the past year as major renovations were done by the Gmelich family in memory of their son. The transformation is complete. Where the 1920's era stark metal swings once stood, there is now a state of the art playground thoughtfully designed for small children and easily accessible to those with handicaps. The Gmelichs donated a new basketball court, gardens, walkways, a memorial area of inscribed paver stones and a new rest room facility. Rumson Recreation Commission provided state of the art sports lighting for the basketball court. Our new Veterans' Memorial, dedicated on Memorial Day, has become a spot to visit and reflect. The Borough will soon give the bandstand a new coat of paint and some sprucing up. A visit to Victory Park on any day of the week is a true pleasure. Nursery school classes and families picnic at the tables overlooking the spectacular river view; Seniors visit in the waterfront gazebo with their friends; children race from one exciting piece of playground equipment to another; plein aire painters strive to capture the beauty on their canvases; bocce ball and basketball are being played, and the overall atmosphere is one of peace and contentment...with the occasional screech of juvenile laughter. As Rumson has grown, the need for more tennis courts and athletic fields has also expanded, and the Borough has created more parks. Today we have a total of six parks, and a great deal has been going on in all of them during the past year.

Piping Rock Park has been in the news due to the kindness of two foundations funded by generous Rumson families and friends in honor of those lost to them on 9/11. Before these improvements, Piping Rock was a set of tennis courts and a dusty field used by Pop Warner and Rumson Recreation. Today, thanks to the McHeffey Foundation, the verdant green ballfield, amply supplied with water by underground sprinklers, makes the baseball/football field perfect for our young athletes and adult teams. Also provided were new fencing, walkways, a playground, flag pole, garden and a monument in honor of Rumson residents lost at the World Trade Center. The Martello Foundation extended the park's playing field capacity with new fields complete with sprinklers that will have multiple uses. Pavers were

added to connect with previously existing walkways; the parking lot off River Road was improved; lighting designed to disappear into the trees rather than glare into neighboring windows was installed, and gardens and benches were provided to make the park attractive to residents of all ages. Out of Borough funds and the Recreation Commission's budget came resurfacing, new fencing and newly repaired poles for the tennis court and other finishing details such as safety fencing around the Carton Street parking lot. The Pop Warner organization and many independent donors, including funding and services by Twin Industries, Inc., the company that carried out some of the renovations, also helped to make the entire project a reality.

Rogers Park is located on Church Street on the site of the former Lafayette Street School, once known as Oceanic High School. It has a tennis court, basketball court and playground. In the past year the Recreation Commission has installed benches for basketball players and a new picnic table. The playground was renewed about five years ago.

Meadow Ridge Park was purchased and developed through Green Acres funding in the early 1980's. It is on the site of the former Hance Nurseries, which dated back to the 1800's and were part of an estate that once spanned an area stretching from river to river. In 1665, John Hance contributed four pounds sterling to the fund to purchase Narumsunk and Pootapek, an area that included our community and Oceanport and much more. Mr. Hance became a prominent Colonial era figure who served as a magistrate, deputy and justice. He owned a plantation of about 500 acres west of Bingham Avenue. His great grandson, Asher Hance started the tree nursery business, which continued until the 1880's, at which time the property was divided and sold. The long rows of similar trees in Meadow Ridge Park are all that remains of the Hance Nursery. Our young athletes and their families spend a great deal of their time at games on the many playing fields, and most residents know and enjoy the nearly mile long walking trail that encircles the entire park and provides a beautiful place to exercise while enjoying the greenery and birdsong. During the past year, the Borough has replaced the fencing on the backstop poles and provided fencing for the Meadow Ridge sports fields.

Riverside Park is in the midst of being transformed. Green Acres funds have been procured for a much needed renovation of this very highly utilized park. Those who have played in or watched athletic events here in the past will remember the park as a cloud of dust from the unirrigated fields. All of that is now a distant memory, and two baseball fields and two to three soccer fields watered by underground sprinklers will be welcoming our baseball and soccer athletes in the spring. New clamshell shaped backstops and new fencing have appeared, and a new playground is planned. For those residents who love walking Meadow Ridge Park's trails, there is a new venue to explore. A pathway made of crushed stones will wind around the trees to the waterfront where the spectacular view of the river and beyond may dazzle them so much that they may happily stop to sit on the benches being provided. What a spot to bring a great book and have a rest!