

TUNING IN CEDAR GROVE



JERRY McCREA/THE STAR-LEDGER

Philip Jaeger, a Cedar Grove historian, adjusts his 1947 DuMont television, named for the electronics pioneer who conducted research on cathode ray tubes in the garage of Jaeger's home in the early 1930s. Below, Jaeger walks at his home, once owned by DuMont.

Historian pens town's history

BY CARMEN JURI
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

Philip Edward Jaeger has always been a crossword puzzle buff. So when he began doing research for a book on his hometown of Cedar Grove, he was surprised to discover the crossword puzzle was invented there.

Jaeger, a frequent speaker on topics of local historical interest, discovered a lot about the Essex County community.

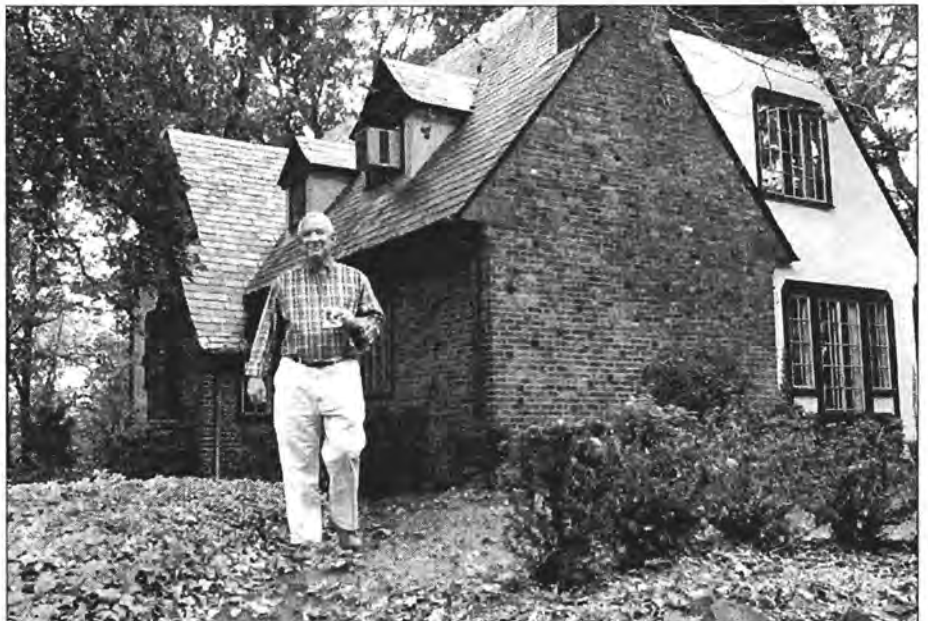
Like the fact that Allen B. DuMont, an electronics pioneer, conducted research on cathode ray tubes in the garage of Jaeger's home during the early 1930s and later created a television network bearing his name.

And that Frank Sinatra, the Dorsey brothers and Glenn Miller, among other stars, performed regularly at the Meadowbrook in the late 1930s and 1940s.

The club was so popular among young people that during World War II, a Japanese radio station broadcast a piece of propaganda to U.S. armed forces that the Meadowbrook had burned down, Jaeger said.

"It was a way of demoralizing troops," Jaeger said. "It was a testament to what the Meadowbrook meant."

"Images of America: Cedar Grove" isn't Jaeger's first historical book. The retired Millburn High School math and computer science teacher is also responsible for a similar book on Montclair, though that one consisted primarily of his collection of postcards.



Through the years, Jaeger collected hundreds of postcards, including 600 of Montclair. Then, at a postcard show four years ago, he came upon Arcadia Publishing, which was looking for potential authors to feature local towns.

Jaeger, vice president of the Cedar Grove Historical Society and a frequent speaker on

the Morris Canal, approached the book publisher and presented his postcards. By June 1998, the Montclair postcard book was published.

Arcadia Publishing, launched in Dover, N.H., in 1993 as a small publisher of local history, has published books on West Essex. [See **CEDAR GROVE**, Page 45]

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Historian tunes in to town's past

the Caldwells, Livingston, Maplewood, Verona and West Orange.

It now publishes a series of local histories in all states. In June, it published its 1,000th title.

The Cedar Grove book, which is a photographic essay, includes resident Arthur Wynne's first crossword puzzle, created in 1913.

When Wynne invented the puzzle, he called it a word-cross. The newspaper's typesetter at The New York World inadvertently reversed the words and it became known as the "crossword."

Jaeger said that in the beginning, the puzzle was not highly regarded, and one major New York newspaper said it was "a primitive form of mental exercise."

"Most of the papers didn't pay attention to it; they didn't think it was a worthwhile thing," said Chris Werndly, president of the Cedar Grove Historical Society. "It became very popular immediately. People looked for it in the Sunday paper."

Jaeger obtained some anecdotal stories from the personal writings of Ernest De Baun, who was born in 1898 and lived most of his life in Cedar Grove. He later resided at a nursing home in Maplewood in the early 1960s.

Over the course of many years, De Baun had written detailed notes on the evolution of the roads that today crisscross Cedar Grove, traced the history of the fire department, early homes and businesses, and many other aspects of the town's past.

He had donated his notes to the historical society, which had stored them for many years at a local bank. Jaeger said De Baun's writings provided the missing details, making his book richer.

Personally, he learned more details about his own house, once the residence of Allen Balcom Du Mont, who began his research in the garage of the home on Bradford Way in the 1930s.

"He found things we didn't know exist," said Werndly. "He went to extremes to get information, and he put a lot of time into it."

Werndly, who has lived in town for 60 years, said the society provided Jaeger with some information. He himself remembers a time when there were more cows than people.

"It's changed. It's very well populated," Werndly said. "There's 4½

Cedar Grove: Did you know?

■ The crossword puzzle was invented by Cedar Grove's own, Arthur Wynne, back in 1913.

■ Glenn Miller, The Dorseys, Guy Lombardo and Harry James were among the headliners at the Meadowbook in the 1930s and 1940s. The music was broadcast over the radio nationwide. On one night in 1940, you would have heard this: "Good evening ladies and gentlemen, the National Broadcasting Co. takes great pleasure in presenting the music of Glen Gray and his famous Casa Loma Orchestra playing for you this evening at Frank Dailey's Meadowbook, Route 23, the Newark-Pompton Turnpike in Cedar Grove, New Jersey." It closed in 1984 and was purchased a decade later by the St. Kiril and Medotij Macedonian Orthodox Church.

■ The Dutch House Restaurant, located in a two-story building on Pompton Avenue near Little Falls Road, was built in 1938. In 1952, it was bought by Francis Jacobs and renamed the Friar Tuck Inn. The name came easily; the Robin Hood Inn in Clifton had been started by Jacobs's father, Sonny Jacobs.

■ What's the recipe for an Awful Awful? It was one of the items buried in a time capsule on the grounds of the municipal complex for the town's 50th anniversary in 1958. The ice cream drink was sold by Bond's, which had locations in town and in Montclair.

■ Franklin C. Courter, Cedar Grove's preeminent artist, was born in 1854 and is known for his landscapes and portraits of Abraham Lincoln. He died at his home on Little Falls Road in 1947.

■ Allen B. Du Mont, an electronics pioneer, conducted research on cathode ray tubes in the garage of his Cedar Grove home during the early 1930s and later created a television network bearing his name.

SOURCE: Images of America: Cedar Grove, by Philip Edward Jaeger

square miles covered with homes."

For Jaeger, the project proved educationally rewarding.

"Jean and I go around to places in the photos and see what it's like today," Jaeger said of trips with his wife. "We call it 'rambles' in search of yesterday."