DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY:

**Creator:** West Orange Historic Preservation Commission

**Title:** West Orange Historic Preservation Commission Archives

**Dates [Inclusive]:** 1977-2019

**Dates [Bulk]:** 1991-2019

**Abstract:** The West Orange Historic Preservation Commission Archives consists primarily of records generated by the Commission since its establishment in 1991 including minutes of meetings, township historic preservation surveys, designation reports for individual properties, project files involving the maintenance of historic structures, requests for certificates of appropriateness, and secondary information about the history of West Orange.

**Quantity:** 6.7 linear feet (sixteen boxes) and some electronic records available on the Historic Preservation Commission website.

**Location:** Collection is housed in the Planning Board Office at the Municipal Building.
Several factors influenced the West Orange Township Council to draft a Historic Preservation Ordinance in 1990. On the state level, New Jersey amended its Municipal Land Use Law in 1986 to permit the identification and designation of historic sites and districts as part of municipal planning and zoning processes. The state encouraged municipalities to establish historic preservation commissions, as well as to develop historic preservation components to their master plans. New Jersey further provided some financial incentives by establishing a competitive grant program for municipalities that achieved Certified Local Government (CLG) status. A CLG municipality needed to formally pass a historic preservation ordinance and appoint an active commission that met state and National Park Service guidelines. On the local level, the demolition of the Condit House in 1989, one of the most significant federal-era structures in West Orange, galvanized local preservationists who pressured the township to better protect historical properties. West Orange had witnessed rapid commercial and residential development throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and many long-time residents worried about maintaining the historical character of the township.

The Township Council, after drafting a Historic Preservation Ordinance that met state guidelines in 1990, contracted with a preservation architect, Robert Guter, to prepare an extensive report concerning the history of the township and to assess the historical and architectural significance of individual structures older than fifty years. His massive report proved instrumental in setting priorities for the commission, which was established and appointed by Mayor Samuel Spina in August 1991. The commission began meeting monthly and soon began recommending the local designation of individual properties, the first being Pleasantdale Farm on Eagle Rock Avenue in 1994. Ten individual properties have received local historic designation since 1994, and the commission carefully monitors any proposed alterations to these structures. West Orange also received CLG status from the State of New Jersey in 1994 and since that time the commission has received several grants to survey particular neighborhoods: Main Street and Saint Cloud (2014), Lower Gregory (2017) and Upper Gregory (2019).
SCOPE AND CONTENTS

The West Orange Historic Preservation Commission was established in 1991 “to promote the cultural, economic, and general welfare of the Township through the preservation of historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts of historic interest as well as documenting and promoting their public enjoyment.” The Commission, which is appointed by the Mayor, meets monthly and consists of nine members (seven regulars who serve renewable four-year terms and two alternates who have renewable two-year terms). The duties of the commission, which have remained consistent since its founding, include surveying neighborhoods and inventorying buildings that have historical or architectural significance, recommending the establishment and designation of historic districts and landmarks, issuing Certificates of Appropriateness to property owners who seek to modify or alter historic structures, advising citizens on the proper ways to care for significant buildings, and promoting historic preservation throughout the township. The board acts in an advisory capacity since it cannot make final decisions involving the issuance or denial of permits, but rather refers its recommendations to the planning and zoning boards. Similarly, the commission may recommend historic site designations concerning individual properties, but the Township Council makes the final decision.

This collection documents the work of the commission over the course of its history. Minutes, correspondence, surveys, reports, and project files provide particularly rich insights into West Orange’s built environment and the role of preservation within the community. The collection is especially strong in documenting activities during the 1990s. Records from the early 2000s appear incomplete and spotty, though they become more thorough during the second decade of the twenty-first century.

ARRANGEMENT

The collection has been divided into ten series, organized by type of material: Statutes and Ordinances, Forms, Agendas and Minutes, Correspondence, Surveys and Reports, Publications and Brochures, Subject Files, Project Files, West Orange History, and Visual Materials. Surveys and Reports (Series 5) has been divided into five subseries: Town Surveys, Property Reports, Designation Reports, Annual Reports, and Miscellaneous Reports.

All material has been transferred from blue binders and filing cabinets into acid-free boxes and folders. Multiple copies of documents, publications concerning the preservation movement, published newsletters and circulars from the State of New Jersey and the federal government, secondary material concerning historical matters that do not concern West Orange, and mass-produced documentation received by the commission also been discarded.
ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Access Restrictions: Historic Preservation Commission records are open to researchers, and the commission is in compliance with New Jersey’s Open Public Records Act.

Use Restrictions: The archives is available for use by appointment in the Planning Board office. Records are not permitted to leave the building. Researchers should make an appointment with the Commission Archivist, Peter J. Wosh, at the following email address: petewosh@gmail.com.
SERIES LIST

Series 1 – Statutes and Ordinances

Scope and Contents Note: New Jersey regulations concerning historic preservation are covered under Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A.40:55 D-1 through 136), which took effect in 1986. West Orange developed an historic preservation ordinance in 1990 and modified it several times since then in response to particular issues and controversies. This series documents those modifications and includes the current ordinance (2012), which also is available on the township website.

Box I

SERIES 1 – STATUTES AND ORDINANCES

FOLDER 1 – “Statutory Provisions Concerning Historic Preservation – New Jersey and West Orange” (n.d.)


FOLDER 3 – West Orange Ordinance (1990)

FOLDER 4 – West Orange Ordinance Amendment (1998)

FOLDER 5 – West Orange Ordinance Amendment (2000)

FOLDERS 6-7 – West Orange Ordinance Amendment (2012)

FOLDER 8 – West Orange Draft Ordinance (n.d.)

FOLDER 9 – “Rules and Regulations of the Historic Preservation Commission, Township of West Orange” (n.d.)

Series 2 – Forms

Scope and Content Note: The Historic Preservation Commission has developed and modified several documents over the years in order to carry out its work. This series includes the forms used by property owners to supply for the certificates of appropriateness that are required if they plan to modify the exterior structures of designated properties, landmarks designation forms, and one leaflet provided to property owners that promotes the value of historic preservation.

Box I

SERIES 2 – FORMS

FOLDER 10 – Certificates of Appropriateness (1993-2012)
Series 3 – Agendas and Minutes

**Scope and Content Note:** The first meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held on 8 August 1991. This series contains all extant minutes and agendas, but it is extremely spotty and incomplete for the decade of the 2000s especially. No minutes have been preserved for the years 2005-2008 and 2010, and they are incomplete for other years, especially between 2000 and 2015. Some meeting minutes include enclosures such as correspondence, informational handouts, and designation reports. A few consist of public hearings and transcripts. The series is particularly rich and detailed for the decade of the 1990s, and should be used in conjunction with both the “Correspondence” and “Surveys and Reports” series in order to reconstruct commission projects.

**BOX I**

**SERIES 3 – AGENDAS AND MINUTES**

FOLDER 13 – Agendas and Minutes (1991)
FOLDER 14 – Agendas and Minutes (1992)
FOLDER 15 – Agendas and Minutes (1993)
FOLDER 16 – Agendas and Minutes (1994)
FOLDER 17 – Agendas and Minutes (1995)

**BOX II**

**SERIES 3 – AGENDAS AND MINUTES**

FOLDER 1 – Agendas and Minutes (1996)
FOLDER 2 – Agendas and Minutes (1997)
FOLDER 3 – Agendas and Minutes (1998)
FOLDER 4 – Agendas and Minutes (1999)
FOLDER 5 – Agendas and Minutes (2000)
FOLDER 6 – Agendas and Minutes (2001)
Series 4 – Correspondence

Scope and Contents Note: The correspondence in this series, which is arranged chronologically, derives from several sources. It includes letters from Mayors Samuel Spina, John McKeon and Robert Parisi; Planning Director Susan Borg; various chairs and members of the Historic Preservation Commission; attorneys and property owners who challenged regulations and designations; and the general public. Topics include: appointments to the Historic Preservation Commission; controversies and public hearings surrounding such designations as the Schweinler Estate (also known as the Augustinian Monastery), Pleasantdale Farm, the Edison Battery Building, and St. Mark’s Church; revisions to the township statute concerning historic preservation; the histories and architectural significance of various West Orange properties; applications for Certificates of Appropriateness to conduct work on designated properties; commissioned surveys and reports; and historical matters in the Township.

BOX III

SERIES 4 – CORRESPONDENCE

FOLDER 1 – Correspondence (1991)
FOLDER 2 – Correspondence (1992)
FOLDER 3 – Correspondence (1993)
FOLDER 4 – Correspondence (1994)
FOLDER 5 – Correspondence (1995)
FOLDER 6 – Correspondence (1996)
FOLDER 7 – Correspondence (1997)
FOLDER 8 – Correspondence (1998)

BOX XVII

SERIES 4 – CORRESPONDENCE

FOLDER 1 -- Correspondence (1999)
FOLDER 2 – Correspondence (2000)
FOLDER 3 – Correspondence (2001)
FOLDER 4 – Correspondence (2002)
FOLDER 5 – Correspondence (2003)
FOLDER 6 – Correspondence (2004)
FOLDER 7 – Correspondence (2005)
FOLDER 8 – Correspondence (2006)
FOLDER 9 – Correspondence (2007)
FOLDER 10 – Correspondence (2008)
FOLDER 11 – Correspondence (2009)
FOLDER 12 – Correspondence (2010)
FOLDER 13 – Correspondence (2011)
FOLDER 14 – Correspondence (2012)
FOLDER 15 – Correspondence (2013)
FOLDER 16 – Correspondence (2015)
Series 5 – Surveys and Reports

Scope and Contents Note: This series has been divided into five subseries: Town Surveys; Property Reports; Designation Reports; Annual Reports; and Miscellaneous Reports.

Town Surveys: The first survey of historic structures in West Orange was conducted by the consulting firm of Zakalak and Associates, working under the aegis of the New Jersey Office of Historical Heritage, located in the Department of Environmental Protection, in 1986. This survey identified sixty-seven properties in West Orange as historically or architecturally significant, part of a larger project to determine properties throughout New Jersey. The series contains Xerox copies of the West Orange report, which includes detailed descriptions and architectural assessments on each individual property. In April 1991, the West Orange Town Council contracted with Robert Guter, a noted preservation architect and principal in the firm of Acroterion Historic Preservation Consultants of Morristown, to prepare a comprehensive survey of the history and architecture of the town (see Box V, Folder 7 for the arrangements and scope of the project). Guter’s survey, which constitutes the entirety of Box IV, remains the most detailed historical and architectural description of neighborhoods and significant buildings in the township. He concentrated primarily on buildings that predated 1941 (fifty years prior to the awarding of his contract), so there is sparse information concerning post-World War II development. The report does contain an overall history of the township, photographs that document the buildings that he deemed most significant, and report forms similar to those used in the 1986 survey that highlight each building’s potential for historic designation and possible contribution to a larger historic district. In recent years, the commission has contracted with historic preservation firms to produce similar reports that focus on particular neighborhoods and districts. These include: Main Street Corridor/St. Cloud Neighborhood (2014); Lower Gregory Neighborhood (2017); and Upper Gregory Neighborhood (2019). The first two reports were prepared by Hunter Associates and the latter by Easton Architects. All three reports are available on the commission website at: https://www.westorange.org/93/Historic-Preservation-Commission and can be accessed there.

Property Reports: The commission has been asked at various times to investigate the historical and architectural significance of individual properties, streets, and neighborhoods. In some instances, these reports have involved designated properties (Edison Storage Battery Company, Pleasantdale Farm) but in most instances they simply provide data and research that might be useful in future deliberations. This series also contains an extensive folder on the Condit House, the destruction of which in 1989 prompted a local outcry and stimulated the creation of the Historic Preservation Commission. The file concerning the Guter/Acroterion Survey Proposals provides good context for this significant report.
**Designation Reports:** The Historic Preservation Commission regularly contracts with an outside firm to provide designation reports on significant properties. Individual reports typically include detailed architectural descriptions, historical data, photographs, property maps, copies of primary sources used in compiling research, and bibliographies. The commission has prepared successful designation reports on the following local properties over the course of its existence: Tompkins House, 21 South Valley Road (1996); Condit House, 29 South Valley Road (1996); Anna Frost House, 7 Bloomfield Way (2011); Kimball House, 48 Fairview Avenue (2012); Llewellyn Park Gatehouse (2006); Nichols-McKim Cottage, 45 Park Way (2012); Pleasantdale Farm, 757 Eagle Rock Avenue (1994); Shrump House and Barn, 695-715 Eagle Rock Avenue (1997). Three properties on the National Register of Historic Places also exist within the township and are also protected under the aegis of the commission: St. Mark’s Church, Edison Battery Building, and the Thomas Edison National Historic Site. Llewellyn Park appears as an historic district on the National Register of Historic Places, and its report is contained herein. The series also contains several designation reports that proved unsuccessful, having either been rejected by the Town Council or never advanced beyond the commission.

**Annual Reports:** The chair occasionally and episodically prepared annual reports that documented the work of the commission for the mayor and the director of planning. Only a few years exist here.

**Miscellaneous Reports:** These include an explanation of the designation process by Jeffrey Barton Cahn, the first chair of the commission; several reports prepared by the Edison National Historic Site; a planning document developed by commission chair Alicia Skinner; and a list of outdoor historical markers in the township, which falls under the purview of the commission.

BOX IV

SERIES 5 – SURVEYS AND REPORTS

SUBSERIES 1 – TOWN SURVEYS

FOLDERS 1- -- Guter/Acroterion Survey (1992)

BOX V

SERIES 5 – SURVEYS AND REPORTS

SUBSERIES 1 – TOWN SURVEYS

FOLDER 1 -- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Survey (1986)
SUBSERIES 2 – PROPERTY REPORTS

FOLDER 2 – 55-57 Ridgeway Avenue (2013)
FOLDER 3 – 122 Main Street (1992)
FOLDER 4 – Condit House (1983-1997)
FOLDER 5 – Edison Storage Battery Company (2015)
FOLDER 6 – Gregory School (2014, 2016)
FOLDER 8 – Lafayette Street Hatting District (2019)
FOLDER 10 – Pleasantdale Farm (1992)
FOLDER 11 – Ridge Road (1992, 2007)
FOLDER 12 – St. Cloud Historic District (1999)

BOX VI

SERIES 5 – SURVEYS AND REPORTS

SUBSERIES 3 – DESIGNATION REPORTS

FOLDER 1 – 21 South Valley Road (1996)
FOLDER 2 – 29 South Valley Road (1996)
FOLDER 3 – 35/37 South Valley Road (1996)
FOLDER 4 – 57 Old Indian Road (2006)
FOLDER 5 – Anna Frost House, 7 Bloomfield Way (2011)
FOLDER 6 – Edison Storage Battery Building National Register (1995)
FOLDER 7 – Edison Storage Battery Building (1996)
FOLDER 8 – Kimball House, 48 Fairview Avenue (2012)
FOLDER 9 – Llewellyn Park (1994)
FOLDER 10 – Llewellyn Park Gatehouse (2006)
FOLDER 11 – Nichols-Mckim Cottage, 45 Park Way (2012)
FOLDER 12 – Pleasantdale Farm (1994)
FOLDER 14 – Shrimp House (1997)
FOLDER 15 – West Orange Hose Company #2 (1998)
FOLDER 16 – Glenmont Laboratory National Register (1986)
FOLDERS 17-18 – Llewellyn Park National Register (1986)
FOLDER 19 – St. Cloud Presbyterian Church (2006)
FOLDER 20 – St. Mark’s Episcopal Church National Register (1977)
FOLDER 21 – Schweinler Estate (1998)

BOX VII

SERIES 5 – SURVEYS AND REPORTS

SUBSERIES 4 – ANNUAL REPORTS
FOLDER 1 – Annual Report (1992)
FOLDER 2 – Annual Report (1993)
FOLDER 3 – Annual Report (1994)
FOLDER 7 – Annual Report (2017)
SUBSERIES 5 – MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS

FOLDER 2 – “Edison National Historic Site Master Plan” (1977)
FOLDER 3 – “Edison National Historic Site Statement for Management” (1990)
FOLDER 4 – “Edison’s Grand Laboratory: Planning and Building the West Orange Laboratory” (1987)
FOLDER 5 – “Historic Designation: What Does It Mean For West Orange Property Owners?” (n.d.)
FOLDER 6 – “Two Houses of Some Interest to a New-Comer to the Orange Valley” (1991)
FOLDER 7 – “Historic Tour of Downtown Main Street Corridor in West Orange, N.J.” (2006)
FOLDER 9 – “Outdoor Historical Markers” (1992)
FOLDER 10 – “School Site Surveys” (1991)

Series 6 – Publications and Brochures

Scope and Contents Note: The commission occasionally published informational brochures designed to promote its activities to the general public, which constitutes the focus of this series.

BOX VII

SERIES 6 – PUBLICATIONS AND BROCHURES

FOLDER 11 – Publications and Brochures (ca. 1992-2000s)

Series 7 – Subject Files

Scope and Contents Note: These files, maintained by the chair, document such activities as relationships with consultants, member recruitment, and contributions to the township master plan. The most significant items in the series involve the Certified Local Government (CLG) applications to the
New Jersey State Department of Environmental Protection, which administers the State Preservation Office. When West Orange received Certified Local Government status in 1994, it became eligible to apply for grants. These awards resulted in the completion of several neighborhood surveys. The commission is required to submit annual reports concerning its activities to the state in order to maintain its CLG status.

BOX VIII

SERIES 7 – SUBJECT FILES

FOLDER 1 – Certified Local Government Applications (1994-1997)

FOLDER 2 – Certified Local Government Application (2013)


FOLDER 4 – Master Plan Elements (n.d.)


Series 8 – Project Files

Scope and Contents Note: These files document four extensive projects that the commission has been involved with over the course of its history. The Schweinler Estate (also known as the Augustinian Monastery) on Ridgeway Avenue, was designated by the Historic Preservation Commission in 1998, but the designation was opposed by Augustinian and Archdiocesan officials. These files document the subsequent controversy, which resulted in the Town Council rejecting the designation. The St. Mark’s Church files document the history of this nineteenth-century Episcopal parish, its sale to a smaller congregation in the early twenty-first century, a fire that severely damaged the building on New Year’s Day 2016, and subsequent attempts by the congregation to rebuild the structure. The Pleasantdale Farm files include transcripts from town council hearings on the property’s designation as an historic site in 1994, controversies concerning the scope of the original designation, and efforts by the owners to make changes to the property in subsequent years.

SERIES 8 - PROJECT FILES

BOX VIII

FOLDER 6 – Schweinler Estate (1998-1999)

FOLDER 7 – Schweinler Estate (1998-1999)

FOLDER 8 – Schweinler Estate (1998-1999)
BOX IX

SERIES 8 – PROJECT FILES


BOX X

SERIES 8 -- PROJECT FILES

FOLDERS 1- -- Pleasantdale Farm (1980, 1994)

BOX XI

SERIES 8 – PROJECT FILES

FOLDERS 1-3 – Pleasantdale Farm Correspondence (1980-1984)
FOLDER 4 – Pleasantdale Farm Articles and Slides (1994-1995)
FOLDER 5 – Pleasantdale Farm Legal Filings (1980-1998)
FOLDER 6 – Pleasantdale Farm Photographs (n.d.)

BOX XII

SERIES 8 – PROJECT FILES

FOLDER 3 – Pleasantdale Farm Market Study (1994)
FOLDER 4 – Pleasantdale Farm Traffic Impact Study (1994)
FOLDERS 5-6 – Pleasantdale Farm Traffic Access Study (1994)
Series 9 – West Orange History

Scope and Contents Note: The commission retained a variety of reports and informational files concerning individuals, institutions, and topics relating to local history. These range in scope from a B.A. thesis at George Washington University to two file folders primarily clipped from the *West Orange Chronicle* local newspaper to documents generated by the Thomas Edison Historic Site. They have been arranged alphabetically by topic.

BOX XIII

SERIES 9 – WEST ORANGE HISTORY


BOX XIV

SERIES 9 – WEST ORANGE HISTORY

FOLDER 1 – Bicentennial Publication (1976)

FOLDER 2 – Community House (1973)

FOLDER 3 – Crystal Lake Amusement Park (1996)

FOLDER 4 – Edison Laboratory (1987)

FOLDER 5 – Edison Laboratory (1994-1995)

FOLDER 6 – Edison National Historic Site (1990-1991)

FOLDER 7 – Eyrie (1925) (xerox copies of newspaper clippings)

FOLDER 8 – Hat Factories (1995)

FOLDER 9 – Highlawn Pavilion (1990)

FOLDER 10 – Hillside Terrace (n.d.)


FOLDER 12 – Historical Sketch of the Growth and Development of West Orange by Samuel Crane Williams (1937) (xerox copy of book)
FOLDER 13 – Holy Innocents Church (1992)
FOLDER 14 – Newspaper Clippings (1992-2011)
FOLDER 15 – Newspaper Clippings (1992-2001)
FOLDER 16 – Pal’s Cabin (2002)
FOLDER 17 – Rock Spring Country Club (1990)
FOLDER 18 – Roosevelt Family (n.d.)
FOLDER 19 – Schweinler Estate (n.d.)
FOLDER 20 – Tennis (n.d.)
FOLDER 21 – Tory Corner (1976)

**Series 10 – Visual Materials**

**Scope and Contents Note:** The series contains two boxes of photographs, slides, and negatives that document homes, houses of worship, and commercial establishments in West Orange. Unfortunately, the items contain virtually no individual identification. The photographs are numbered on the back and contain multiple views of 171 homes, maintained in seven file folders. These appear to be from Llewellyn Park, though the numbers are not keyed to any identifiers and more detailed examination may reveal that they also document other buildings. An additional file folder contains unnumbered photographs, which also appear to be from Llewellyn Park. Three file folders of photographs (labelled C1-35, H1-35, and I1-13) correspond to the numbering system used in the Guter/Acroterion survey that was completed in 1992, and likely document buildings throughout the town that were photographed as part of that survey. One file folder contains negatives in sleeves, with each sleeve containing a letter identifier (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I). These also correspond to the system used in the Guter/Acroterion report (1992) and likely produced the prints used throughout that report. Additional negatives and boxes of slides are not identified or numbered.

BOX XV

**SERIES 10 – VISUAL MATERIALS**

FOLDER 1 – Photographs, #1-21
FOLDER 2 – Photographs, #23-45
FOLDER 3 – Photographs, # 46-65
FOLDER 4 – Photographs, #66-84
FOLDER 5 – Photographs, #85-106
FOLDER 6 – Photographs, #107-132
FOLDER 7 – Photographs, #133-171

BOX XVI

SERIES 10 – VISUAL MATERIALS

FOLDER 1 – Photographs, not numbered
FOLDER 2 – Photographs, C1-C35
FOLDER 3 – Photographs, H1-H35
FOLDER 4 – Photographs, I1-I13
FOLDER 5 – Negatives, labelled A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I
FOLDER 6 – Negatives, labelled “unknown” along with handwritten notes
FOLDER 7 – Negatives, no labels

BOXES – 6 BOXES AND ONE LOOSE STRIP OF SLIDES