

# Jersey Shore Woman You Should Know...

## Lydia Wikoff

By Ruth Korn

The person that has been an inspiration to me is a member of my garden club, Garden Club R.F.D., in Middletown. As Publicity Chair, I came to learn that Lydia Wikoff, a member of the Club for 34 years, with much knowledge in the specialized area of historical preservation, was given the Jane G. Clayton Award for 2008 at Archives and History Day last October at the Manalapan Library. The Clayton Award, named after the Monmouth County Clerk who founded the Monmouth County Archives, is given annually to an individual for lifetime achievement in preserving and disseminating the history of Monmouth County. For many years, Lydia has been and continues to be the Manalapan Township Historian and has been actively involved in the preservation of the Old Tennent Church and the Village Inn. She recently retired as a founding member of the Monmouth County Historical Commission, for which she chaired the Essay Committee that encouraged thousands of school children to learn about Monmouth County's history. She is an officer of the Wyckoff House Association and has made numerous other significant contributions to history-related programs, such as arranging for the publication of Carl Woodward's, *Horse and Buggy Days*, about early agriculture in and around Manalapan.

Currently, she is attempting to save the home of Brigadier General David Forman, a site that is an important part of national, state and local history. And, this past November 14, 2009, Lydia was an honoree at the Mayor's Charity Ball at the Battleground Country Club in Manalapan. She once again was the recipient of an award for her work as Manalapan Township Historian. This is what was said of her efforts:

*"Lydia Wikoff is the township historian for more than twenty-five years. She has just completed writing, directing and performing in a documentary that takes the audience through the township and details points of historical interest and significance. This production serves to preserve the history of Manalapan Township and New Jersey through documents, locations and an oral history as recalled by the writer. Lydia Wikoff, an octogenarian, has lived in Manalapan all her life. She spent her youth on the Stillwell family farm at Gordon's Corner.....her memory and understanding of the town's history and genealogy of its inhabitants has been integral to preserving our past. The preservation of history is an art form that Lydia Wikoff respectfully strives to keep alive to share with current and future generation."*

In 1999, Lydia did an interview which became part of the "Remembering the 20th Century: An Oral History of Monmouth County". One of the questions asked of her was, "How would you describe Monmouth County in your childhood?" What follows is part of her answer.

"Well, it was so entirely different that it's hard for me to acquaint you with how it was. There were farms, blacksmith shops and mills. The present Route 9 was then (1924-1939) a dirt road called the Amboy Road. It was a seldom traveled road. Parallel to that road was a macadam road leading to Matawan and Keyport. Before my time it was called Patten Turnpike: a toll road owned by Patten. These roads had tollbooths. One hundred years ago all the "toll" roads were bought by the county. This road was important as it led to the Matawan and Keyport ports that ferried the farmers' grain, vegetables, poultry, etc. to New York. What is now called Highway 9 was built in 1939. As it was being built, and before it opened, we could ride our bikes for

miles.”

Thankfully, we have Lydia to help us realize what has come to pass in Monmouth County and to help preserve elements of that history that remain with us. The Garden Club R.F.D. is most proud to have her as a long-standing member and I, as a friend.

Attention Readers,

*Do you know a local woman that you feel our readers would enjoy reading about? Someone you feel has been an inspiration to others? Perhaps this woman made notable contributions to her community, overcome significant obstacles successfully or has accomplishments that have improved the lives of others.*

*If there is, then this is your chance to let others know about her. You can submit your own story and if it is chosen it will be published. You don't have to be a professional writer to submit the story.*

*Please keep your article to 600 words.*

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