“This WAS Fairfield”

Stories of Fairfield’s Past, Inspired by History Columnist Adelia Van Ness Collerd (1903-1984), Written by her Grandson Paul Pollio
INTRODUCTION

Did you know Fairfield had the World’s most famous Naval Rifle Range, Dairy and Milk Processing Operation, and Mineral Water Well? Yes, the World, not just New Jersey or the United States. The World’s greatest. In addition, Fairfield was the first settlement in today’s Western Essex County and later the first Religious Congregation was organized here. The local Airport is considered one of New Jersey’s finest and was once part of the great Curtiss-Wright Corporation.

And to think New Jersey considered flooding the entire township to make a reservoir that would have prevented or destroyed all of the above. Hard to imagine that only the Beverly Road Area would be above the water’s surface.

Yes, Fairfield has a rich history that I wrote about in several articles to my Friends at the Fairfield Historical Society ( 2018-19 ). Some of these are stories about our Family Farm and also some about my ancestors who date back ten generations here. All are intended to encourage further reading and many related books are suggested. Many links to online articles are also embedded in the text for additional detail. A local history bibliography is included and nearly every book listed is available in the Fairfield Library.

I’m sure you’ll find my writing style a little unpolished as I like to poke fun and add a few smiley faces when the puns and sarcasm arise. My capitalization is one of a kind, but I only do that to annoy my Oldest Sister Martha :- ) :- ) See what I mean? Sincere apologies in advance.

Almost every piece is dedicated, as is this collection to my Grandmother Adelia Van Ness Collerd who wrote the Fairfield Chronicle Column “This WAS Fairfield”. I certainly can’t say I’m the most qualified ‘Fairfield Historian’, but I have Van Ness DNA, a B.A. in History, and was Editor-in-Chief on my College Newspaper ‘Veritas’ ( truth ). But most importantly, I was born to the last true Fairfield Farming Generation. My Uncle Pat ( Pasquale Pollio ), a Professional Farmer, was one of Fairfield’s greatest men. Never a politician, what he did for the Community will probably never be matched. So give him a wink when you pass the Fairfield Fire House on Fairfield Road that was named in his honor.

And also a wink to Brianne Columbo, Fairfield Library Director, who secured many local history books, helped organize the Historical Society, and tolerated the undersigned History Nut.

................Paul Pollio ( pollios@optonline.net ) January 2, 2020

A brief description of each numbered article follows.
1.) Cover, introduction, and numbered brief article descriptions.

2.) Bibliography listing local history books and suggested reading with Fairfield Public Library call numbers.

3.) Glacial Lake Passaic and the formation of the Passaic River. 1905 proposal to create a 35,000 square acre ‘Passaic Lake’ Reservoir covering Fairfield and a few surrounding towns.

4.) The Passaic River and the other river tributaries that all meet at Fairfield’s borders.

5.) An example of a local arrowhead collection and how these indian ‘points’ were found.

6.) Why did early ‘Holland Immigrants’ choose to settle in the Fairfield Area. Was it possibly because it reminded them of their former homelands? Or, was it that it had much more to offer frontier Settlers than the surrounding areas?

7.) Fairfield’s Dey Inn, the first commercial center of town. Tavern, Inn, then General Store, Post Office, Barbershop, and even a School Room. Known for their Guinea Hen Soup.

8.) Horseneck land riots revisited. Fairfield’s 1740’s era and a few conclusions reexamined.

9.) The ‘Dutch Line’ and the Horseneck ‘Tract’ vs. Horseneck ‘Section’ boundaries.

10.) The Deepavaal Brook draining Fairfield’s Long Meadow that was greatly improved in the late 1800’s at landowners expense.

11.) ‘Dutch’ Francisco’s Fairfield Dairy and Certified Milk operation. Once considered the best dairy farm and bottling plant in the world. Rise and decline.

12.) The formal Fairfield Dairy Agreement with the Essex County Medical Milk Commission (1893). This was the most stringent self regulation in the world at the time. It predated all federal food, drug, and agricultural regulations by twenty years.

13.) Historical biography of Adelia Van Ness Collerd, columnist for the Fairfield Chronicle’s ‘This WAS Fairfield’. Primary focus is how Adelia accumulated her vast knowledge of Fairfield Families and their stories. All of these articles are dedicated to her memory.

14.) Township Constables were the law officers in Fairfield before the Police Department was formally organized.

15.) Early days of the Fairfield Fire Department.

16.) Early Aviation and the first Fairfield airport. Over 30,000 people attended the grand opening airshow.
17.) First State Highway through Fairfield. It’s not the number you’re thinking of.

18.) The Munkacsy Red Cross Mineral Well and its water winning first prize at the 1939 World’s Fair.

19.) The Jersey City Water line runs through Fairfield. This story is about how the Boonton Reservoir Source became the first public water supply to be chlorinated.

20.) Chemical waste disposal and pollution that we didn’t understand in the ‘early days’.

21.) Origin of the local School Bus Company ‘Kevah Konner’ and some 1960’s era stories.

22.) The James Caldwell Navy Rifle Range in the Great Piece Meadow (1918-19) was the world’s premier ‘shooting university’ and host of the 1919 National Matches. The entire Campus was the size of North Caldwell, with thousands of participants and hundreds of teams in competition.


24.) Migrant workers from Puerto Rico on the farm.

25.) Fairfield Death Quiz