



# MUSEUM OF EARLY TRADES & CRAFTS

Spring Newsletter 2020

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## *New Jersey COVID-19 History Project*

The Museum of Early Trades & Crafts is embarking on a new social project, **Share Your Story**. The purpose of the project is to collect stories from the community amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants will be able to document their personal experiences of living in New Jersey during this unprecedented crisis through a link on METC's website [www.metc.org/share-your-story](http://www.metc.org/share-your-story). Submissions can be in the form of written narrative, audio, video, drawings, or photography. These stories will then be available for the public to view on our website, sharing and preserving this important piece of history.

Everyone has a story to tell, and as a history museum we work at preserving and sharing the unique stories of the everyday people who lived in New Jersey in the past, helping people connect with each other through history. These stories are their testimonies that live on for future generations, helping us learn about who we were and who we are as a nation. COVID-19 has changed people's lives in so many ways, including how we work, socialize, care for and interact with each other. This is an important moment in history, and this is why METC wants to help document it for future generations, sharing the story of how the people of New Jersey were resilient, kind, creative, and generous. Documenting these times and expressing your personal feelings can be cathartic and healing and we hope you will join us in sharing your stories, and helping us capture a moment in history.



Learn about the story behind this photo by visiting our Share Your Story Page

## From the Director



I hope this spring newsletter finds you all safe and healthy and coping as best you can during this difficult time. We are all eager to return to work and school, and we are grateful for the health care professionals and others working on the front line.

At METC, we are struggling like all of you. We have shut our doors, cut back staff and halted projects. Our most reliable source of funding—educational programs and field trips—has disappeared and we are making every effort to curb expenses. However, as with many museums around the country, we have a responsibility as an educational institution to continue to serve our community. We are trying to remain positive and we're taking this time to continue to plan for the future of METC. And as you will read throughout this newsletter, there are many wonderful new initiatives on the horizon.

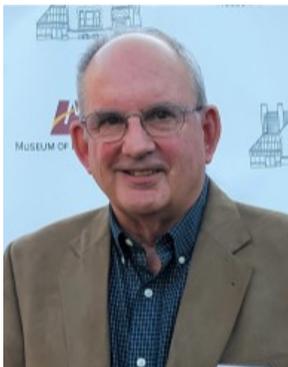
Right now we are re-directing most of our efforts to create as much digital content as we can to meet the needs of our teachers, parents and families; and we urge you to visit our website, particularly our METC at Home page to find activities, educational content and other ways to stay connected.

We are here for you, but we do need your support during these difficult times to help us navigate through this crisis, and we welcome any donations you can make. With your help, we will make it through this crisis, to once again have children exploring the exhibits, families participating in events and all visitors making their own personal connections to history.

Be safe, and please consider supporting METC with an on line donation. You can do this on our webpage at <https://www.metc.org/annual-appeal-and-giving-opportunities/>

- Deborah Farrar Starker

## The Outgoing Chairman's Letter



### Transitions

It has been an honor to have served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of METC for the past six years. I have written about how change has been a constant occurrence at our museum. Looking back over my term of office, change has been non-stop.

We received a substantial financial bequest. We completed the exterior renovation of our building. We renovated office space for our staff. We refreshed the METC 'brand' with a new logo, website and sign. We mounted a new permanent exhibit and updated our entrance area and Madison Visitor Center. We joined the Park Avenue Foundation, and opened our new Education Annex across Green Village Road.

Whew!! I claim little credit for all of this, but I did manage to keep the train on the tracks as we navigated all of this change. And now as I step down I welcome Martin Barbato as our new Chairman and wish him good fortune as we navigate the COVID-19 crisis.

We will eventually return to the new normal. When that happens, come visit us to enjoy our exhibits and programs. Perhaps you will see me looking around to see what's changing!

—Thomas H. Judd

## The Incoming Chairman's Letter



In the midst of this COVID-19 crisis, it may sound odd to say, but I am truly happy to be taking a leadership role on the METC Board as Chair at this unique time. Although we are facing challenges, there are certainly opportunities as well. In preparation for these opportunities, METC recently made two important decisions related to investment in the museum's future. First was to expand the museum's physical presence by entering into a lease for space across the street from the James Library Building that shares a history with the JLB, as its architecture indicates. This expansion will serve a number of purposes, including improved collection management and improved program presentation, and the staff is actively engaged in bringing this space online. This is a nice segue to a second decision. The Board has decided to retain as many staff as we can, notwithstanding that the museum industry is not among the essential businesses. This

decision flows from the belief that our people are assets for METC, in which investment should be made. METC is quite fortunate to have these dedicated people.

So what is next? As you know, we are currently experiencing life in a very virtual manner. Schools and offices have gone virtual; grocery shopping is taking place online; and even socializing is done remotely. So it is only fitting that museums explore how to reach their patrons through various digital platforms. Our new Education Annex will play an important role in this virtual expansion of the museum. It is quite exciting to consider the possibilities, and it will be fun to see how our future unfolds. We hope that you will pull up a chair and join us!

- Martin F. Barbato

## METC's Education Annex

METC is excited to open our new Education Annex in the coming months. Located at 23 Main Street, this new space will consolidate all education programming including school field trips, workshops, lectures and special events to free up much needed space in the museum for exhibitions and collections. At the same time, the museum is in the final planning stages of creating a new, state of the art, viewable storage facility at their main site. The museum's current location, the historic James Library will continue to be the main hub for all exhibits, collections, administration, museum store and Madison's visitor center.



The new Education Annex will be able to accommodate larger school groups, provide workshop and lecture space and will be better able to serve the museum's growing constituency. METC will also regain additional exhibition space to showcase much more of its extraordinary collection.

Built by D. Willis James, The James Building opened in 1899 and was Madison's first town hall. James Hall, located on the second floor of the building was once the heart of Madison's social activities. Flower shows, dances, movie screenings and even a few of Madison High School's graduation ceremonies were held in the building. Today, private offices and apartments are located on the second and third floors. Using the income from the James Building, Mr. James built the James Library which housed the Madison Public Library from 1900 until 1967. In 1969, The James Library building became the Museum of Early Trades & Crafts.

METC is thrilled to be part of the James Building's history and look forward to working with the building's owners, the Solu family, who understand the unique connection between the museum and the James Building.

## Welcome to Our New Curator of Collections!



Shelley Cathcart, Curator of Collections & Exhibits, joined METC in March 2020. Shelley hails from a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia. Although she's a southerner, she has lived in Washington, D.C. and Massachusetts before joining METC. Shelley graduated from LaGrange College in 2011 with a bachelor's degree in history and art history. She is also a graduate of the Smithsonian Associates in partnership with George Mason University History of Decorative Arts program graduating with her master's degree in December 2013. Shelley has held a variety of roles at museums, historic houses, archives, and libraries. Most recently, she was the Assistant Curator at Old Sturbridge Village where she worked on exhibition development, research, collections management initiatives, and education programming.

Shelley is thrilled to start at METC. She notes, "It's quite the time to start at METC. With a new collections room on the horizon and the Education Annex, I'm excited to join the team at METC as we embark on our next 50 years!"

## Collection Highlight

The Museum's newest exhibit in the Main Gallery, *Surveying the New Jersey Landscape*, features objects dedicated to understanding the state's vast and varied landscape, and the countless ways citizens of the state have interacted with the environment over time. An apt time to feature an exhibit of this name as many New Jerseyans venture outside to survey their surroundings and escape (at a social distance of course) life indoors. Even though the Museum is closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak, a small sampling of the exhibit is available online – [www.metc.org/surveying-the-new-jersey-landscape](http://www.metc.org/surveying-the-new-jersey-landscape).

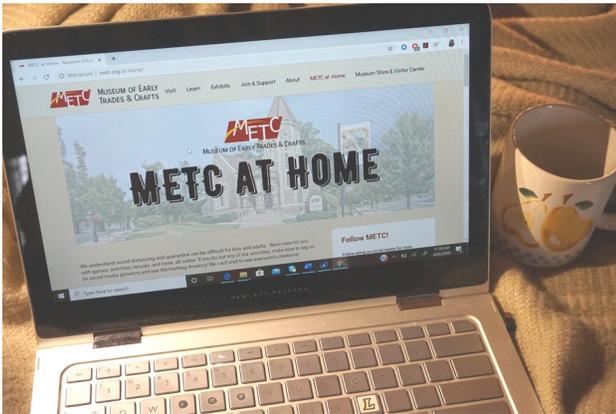


This object, a Theodolite, contains a rotating telescope to measure angles between designated visible points in the horizontal and vertical planes. These instruments provide precise measurements used to create a topographical map that illustrates the landscape's geographical features. More technologically advanced theodolites are employed by present-day surveyors.

An artistically-rendered label on the wood case invites the viewer to a different story, one of a German immigrant. Moving to New York in 1858, Frederick E. Brandis was involved in many trades, but eventually learned the profession of manufacturing surveying instruments from Stackpole & Brothers of New York City. In 1871, Brandis started a business manufacturing surveying, astronomical, nautical, and scientific instruments. Starting out on Fulton Street in Manhattan, Brandis eventually outgrew his facility and relocated to Brooklyn. The firm was known under many names during its tenure, F. Brandis & Co., F.E. Brandis, Sons & Co, and Brandis & Sons Mfg. Co. The company remained in business until 1922, and was then sold to Bendix Aviation Corporation in 1928. The manufacture of Brandis instruments ceased in 1932.



# Virtual METC: Explore the Museum Online!



Our museum may be closed right now, but the METC staff is working hard from home to continue providing engaging and educational activities, just in a different format than usual. This new “virtual METC” is manifested in various ways, as we try to serve all our “visitors.”

A new section of our website, METC at Home, is filled with fun activities for families stuck at home. There are detailed instructions for a wide range of crafts and activities, all using simple materials most people have at home. These offerings have already proved popular, as people try out everything

from making ice cream to historic games, from designing a mini exhibit to coffee filter tie-dye.

Teachers and students are perhaps the audience in greatest need of engaging content, as they attempt to recreate the classroom experience remotely. Many students also are facing the disappointment of cancelled field trips. To assist what is always our core audience, we are developing online lesson plans for teachers to do with their students. Like all our school programs, these are interactive, object-based and allow students to explore life in the past, even if they are doing so from their homes rather than the METC building.

And we haven’t forgotten about adults in need of engagement during this time. A virtual tour lets people explore one of our exhibits from the comfort of their couch and our adult-focused crafts encourage learning something new, like crocheting or quilting. Additionally, METC’s social media accounts offer daily distraction from life’s current challenges, with mystery objects to make you think, historic tools appearing in famous artworks, old Madison pictures and photos of METC staff pets.

We hope to see you all at the virtual METC until the time when we can welcome you back to the physical METC.

## Find METC Online

### METC at Home

[www.metc.org/at-home](http://www.metc.org/at-home)

### Free Online Lesson Plans

[www.metc.org/digital-lessons](http://www.metc.org/digital-lessons)

### Virtual Exhibit

[www.metc.org/virtual-exhibit](http://www.metc.org/virtual-exhibit)

### Share Your Story Project

[www.metc.org/share-your-story](http://www.metc.org/share-your-story)

### METC Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/metcnj/>

### METC Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/METCnj/>

### METC Twitter

<https://twitter.com/METCnj>

Make sure you let us know if you’ve been enjoying out content by tagging us @metcnj, we love seeing your photos!

## Shop Local, Shop METC



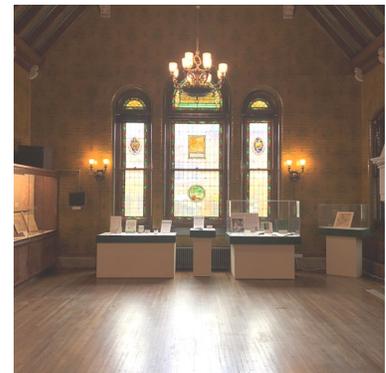
Although the museum is closed, our museum store online is open! Many of the products available in our online store are crafted by local artisans including, Anne Choi of Middle Brook Fiber Works, Copper Diem, Josie's Colorful Journey, and many more. By buying from our online store, you are not only supporting METC, you are supporting these local small businesses.

Many of our children's items are inspired by our exhibit, Surveying the New Jersey Landscape. As the weather begins to warm up, use our foldable binoculars or Map My Community books to explore the world around you!

Shop today at [www.metc.org](http://www.metc.org) — We ship directly to your home from the museum!

## Restoration Updates

In January, METC and Historic Building Architects concluded the investigation phase of the Interior Restoration Project for the James Library Building. To date, Historic Building Architects performed an extensive paint analysis, cleaning tests, a thorough review of needed repairs, and completed the construction documents to move the conservation project into the next phase of work. METC has applied for funding to the Morris County Historic Preservation Trust and the Borough of Madison's Open Space, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Fund to continue this project for the 2020 year. METC staff and Historic Building Architects plan to enable patrons to observe the progress of the interior work, creating an educational experience in conservation of the historic paint stenciling and masonry finishes. The phases of conservation work needed will take about two years to complete once funding is approved and work can begin.



**METC**  
**SAVE THE DATE**  
**BENEFIT DINNER FOR THE MUSEUM OF EARLY TRADES & CRAFTS**  
**OCTOBER 16 2020** | **6:30PM**  
**PARK AVENUE CLUB**  
**FORMAL INVITATION TO FOLLOW**

# Thank you for Your Support

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*\*From 2-1-20 through 4-29-20*

## Building Museums Symposium



In early March, METC Director, Deb Starker presented at the Mid Atlantic Association of Museum's international symposium Building Museums in Chicago with Annabelle Radcliffe-Trenner and Christina Burriss of Historic Building Architects. In their session, "Is Your Museum Building Part of Your Collection?" they discussed the challenges of caring for, restoring, and designing exhibits in a historic building.



9 Main Street  
Madison, NJ 07940

**Museum of Early Trades & Crafts**  
*founded by Edgar & Agnes Land in 1969 with their original collection of over 8,000 artifacts.*

**Our Vision**

Sharing the past, imagining the future.

**Our Mission**

To inspire a connection with New Jersey's history, culture, trades, and crafts.

**Acknowledgements**

METC gratefully acknowledges generous funding from: The Fred W. Bruehne Trust • Borough of Madison • The Charles L. Read Foundation • Hyde & Watson Foundation • Madison Rotary • Madison Downtown Development Commission • Investors Foundation • Morris County Historic Preservation Trust • New Jersey Council for the Humanities • Orange Orphan Society • PSE&G • The Park Avenue Foundation • The E.J. Grassmann Trust • Provident Bank

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