

# Ten Historic Spots in Westfield Worth Visiting Time and Time Again

By KIM KINTER  
Specially Written for This Is Westfield

## Mindowaskin Park

The area known today as Mindowaskin Park was actually a part of the original Elizabeth Town purchase from Native American Indians in 1664.

When a former owner of the property, Thomas Woodruff Clark, died,



Mindowaskin Park David B. Corbin for This Is Westfield

his widow — fondly known as Aunt Abby — excavated the land adjoining the brook, which ran through the area, to form what for years was known as Clark's Lake. It became a

popular ice skating spot in the late 1800s.

The Clark family sold the lake property in 1905 and shortly thereafter a public committee was formed to purchase the property and make it into a public park. The park was completed in the early summer of 1918 and was dedicated and opened to the public on June 2.

Mindowaskin Park, which is located on a stretch of land on East Broad Street next to the Westfield Municipal Building and The Presbyterian Church in Westfield, is now enjoyed mainly for its scenic beauty.

It has been years since there was winter skating there, but the park offers a colorful backdrop during spring, summer and fall for residents and visitors to enjoy slow walks and the weekly summer band concerts held at the bandstand.

## Westfield Train Station

Early travel in Westfield was mainly

done by coach until the Elizabethtown and Somerville Railroad company received a charter in 1831. By 1838, the company had laid track from Elizabethtown to Plainfield.

However, the railroad was experiencing difficult times and, in 1840, the owners had to sell the company to a group of New York businessmen who reorganized the path as the Central Railroad of New Jersey.

Over the years, the Westfield Train



Westfield Train Station David B. Corbin for This Is Westfield

Station has moved from Central Avenue to an area near Broad and Clark Streets to its present site.

The station is located on North Avenue and Elm Street and South Avenue and Boulevard and is accessible from either side. Both sides have public parking.

The Central Railroad of New Jersey built the northside station in 1892 and the southside station after the turn of the century.

Extensive renovations to the historic train station were completed in 1998 and include 18 tiled murals depicting Westfield history and early transportation within the Westfield area and to this area from New York.

The murals are located in the lighted underpass that connects the north and south sides of the station.

The station continues to be a focal point in the town and is used heavily by early morning and evening commuters traveling from the Westfield area to New York, and on the weekends and off hours by families venturing into Manhattan or Newark.

## The Presbyterian Church in Westfield

The Presbyterian Church in Westfield was founded in 1720 and is said to have been the only church in the area for years. The original church building was made of logs and stood on Elizabethtown Road, now Benson Place.

The present church, with its towering white steeple, is the third structure to be erected. Built in 1862, it's majestic simplicity and central location distinguish it as a local landmark in

Westfield.

The church has played an im-



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portant role in the history of Westfield, and many of its ministers have been

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civic leaders. The Revolutionary War Cemetery, located directly across the street, is one of the richest sources of local history and is a favorite spot for quiet visitation and reflection.

Although Westfield is now home to many denominations, The Presbyterian Church continues to be one of the most familiar among Westfield's houses of worship. Its bright and spacious sanctuary is the scene of many local events, and the church often plays host to the Westfield Symphony Orchestra. It is also a favorite venue for the annual First Night Westfield celebration.

On pleasant days, youngsters from The Westfield Day Care Center which



The Rialto Theatre

## Westfield Y

Costing \$350,000, the Westfield YMCA-YWCA building at Clark Street and Ferris Place was erected in 1925 through the contributions of 2,700 citizens. Previous attempts at maintaining an active YMCA and girls club had not been successful and the facilities were closed.

This new building, however, was much sought after by the community. More than 3,000 attended the formal opening of the YMCA on Sunday, February 10, 1929. The building resembles more a formal manse or elaborate public building than a YMCA.

The Y, as it is known in Westfield today, remains a magnet for adults, youth, senior citizens and families from all walks of life.

Varied programming and fitness classes for all age groups make it a popular spot on weeknights and particularly on weekends. Offerings of child care, after school care and summer camp programs also indicate an operation that is community con-



Miller-Cory House Museum

is housed there can be seen frolicking on the "green" in front of the church.

## Downtown Westfield

Downtown Westfield has a rich and vital history, serving as a vibrant center for merchants and as a gathering place for residents. One section in particular that turned into a central and thriving area was the corner of East Broad and Elm Streets.

With the construction of a train station along "bog land" on both sides of the railroad tracks, Elm Street was cut through from Broad Street to the railroad station, and the square between Elm and Prospect Streets and Broad Street and North Avenue became the center of local trade.

The downtown area was known not only for a successful and thriving merchant community but for successful banks. Circus troupes and traveling minstrel shows would set up shop in the area.

Today, the corner at Elm and East Broad, as well as the entire downtown, continues to be a prosperous area and an attraction for residents or those visiting or thinking of moving to Westfield.

Recent improvements and the addition of some new businesses have made it an even more appealing destination. Special fall and spring festivals downtown and special events during the summer still encourage people to flock to that "squared" area of the downtown at Elm, Broad and Prospect.



Administration Building of the Westfield Board of Education Michelle H. LaPoidevin for This Is Westfield

## Westfield Public Schools

Westfield has maintained a public school system since about the year 1750.

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## What Do You Like About Westfield?

"I like it, because it's commutable to New York City by train and good mixture of ethnicity." - Vaughn Buntain



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