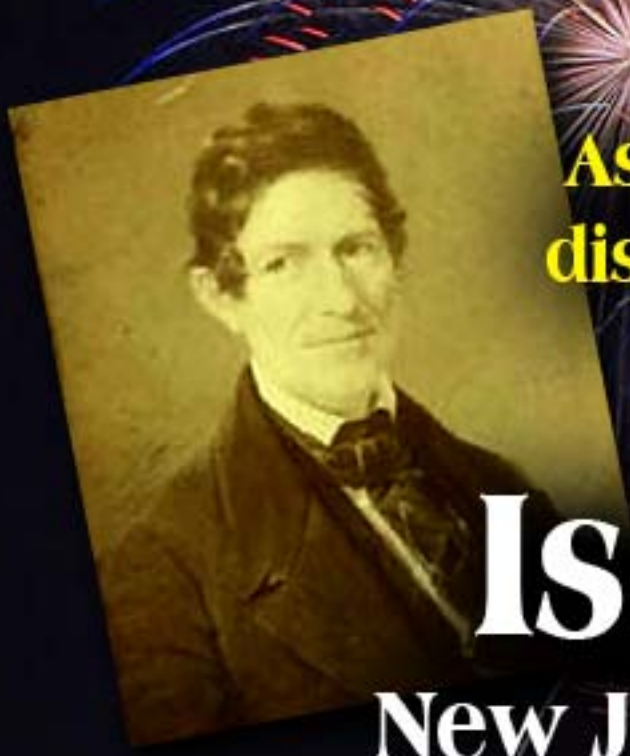


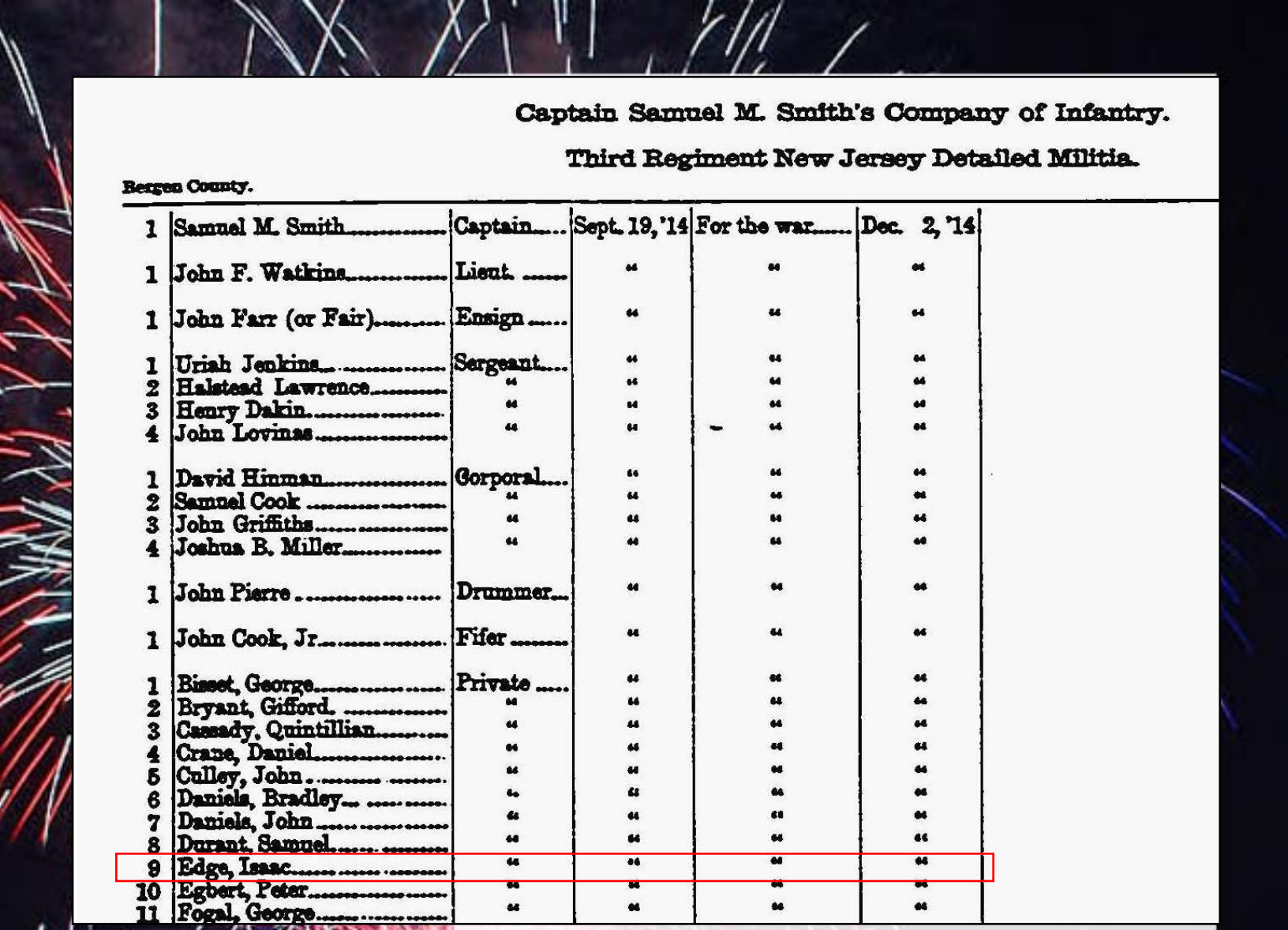
As you enjoy the fireworks displays this Fourth of July, give a thought to

Isaac Edge

New Jersey Pyrotechnist

by Maureen Wlodarczyk

This article originally appeared as a chapter in her new book, "Jersey! Then...Again" http://gardenstatelegacy.com/JerseyThenAgain.html



Captain Samuel M. Smith's Company of Infantry.

Third Regiment New Jersey Detailed Militia.

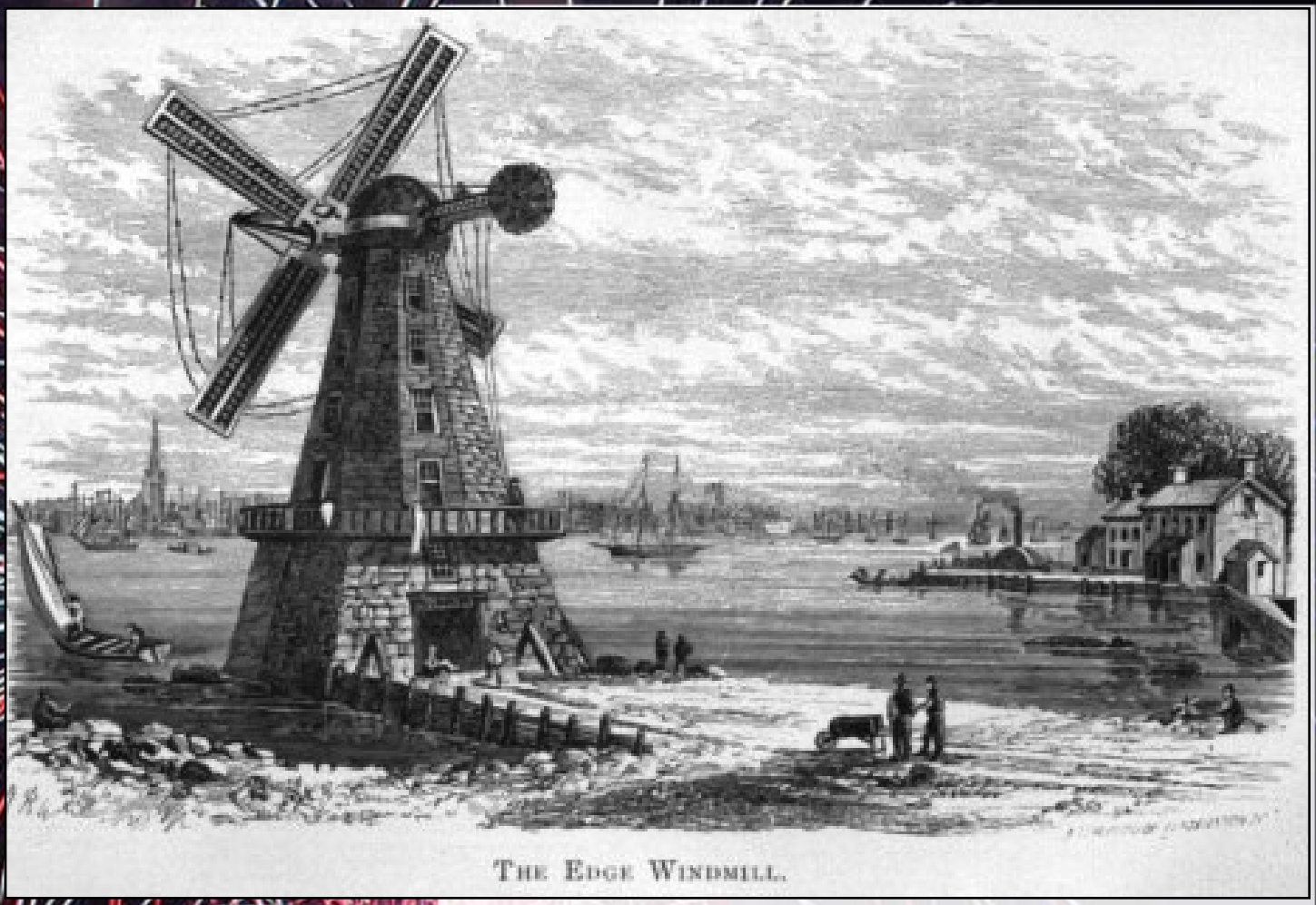
Bergen County.

1	Samuel M. Smith	Captain	Sept. 19, '14	For the war	Dec. 2, '14
1	John F. Watkins	Lieut.	"	"	"
1	John Farr (or Fair)	Ensign	"	"	"
1	Uriah Jenkins	Sergeant	"	"	"
2	Halstead Lawrence	"	"	"	"
3	Henry Dakin	"	"	"	"
4	John Lovinas	"	"	"	"
1	David Hinman	Corporal	"	"	"
2	Samuel Cook	"	"	"	"
3	John Griffiths	"	"	"	"
4	Joshua B. Miller	"	"	"	"
1	John Pierre	Drummer	"	"	"
1	John Cook, Jr.	Fifer	"	"	"
1	Bisset, George	Private	"	"	"
2	Bryant, Gifford	"	"	"	"
3	Cassady, Quintillian	"	"	"	"
4	Crane, Daniel	"	"	"	"
5	Culley, John	"	"	"	"
6	Daniels, Bradley	"	"	"	"
7	Daniels, John	"	"	"	"
8	Durant, Samuel	"	"	"	"
9	Edge, Isaac	"	"	"	"
10	Egbert, Peter	"	"	"	"
11	Fogal, George	"	"	"	"

Record of Isaac Edge's service inCaptain Samuel Smith's Infantry Company, part of the Third Regiment during the War of 1812.

The War of 1812, sometimes referred to as the second American war for independence, typically gets little attention and, for the general public, doesn't evoke the images or specifics that come to mind when the Civil War or Revolutionary War is mentioned. The next 700 or so words will recall the War of 1812 to mind as I share the story of a Hudson County veteran of that war, a windmill, and the family pyrotechnics enterprise.

The War of 1812 began with a declaration of war from the young United States government in response to Britain's interference with our trade with France and its impressments of naturalized American sailors into British military service by force. Early in the conflict, U.S. forces attacked Canada, a British colony. In 1814, British forces invaded the U.S., capturing Washington and burning the Capitol and White



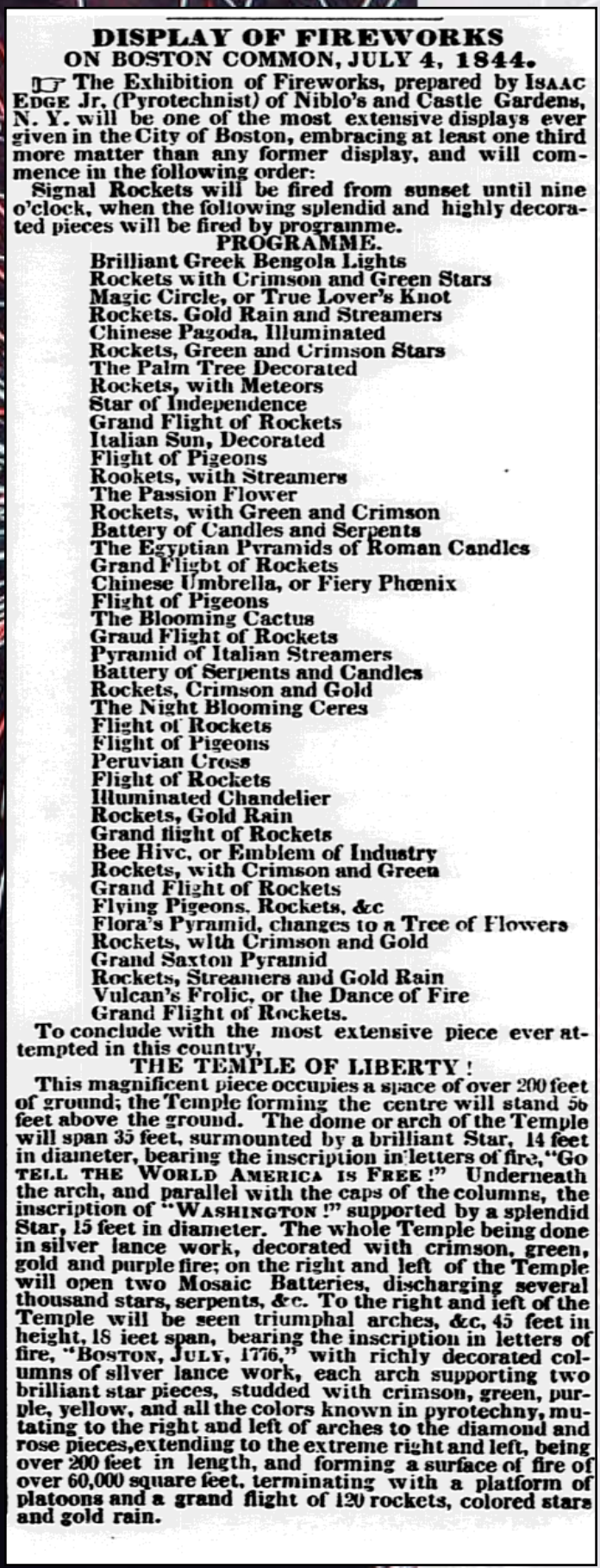
The Edge Windmill.

Isaac Edge, Sr. was a baker and miller by trade and constructed a windmill for grinding flour on the corner of Montgomery and Green Streets in Jersey City around 1815.

House. American troops repulsed British attacks on New York, Baltimore and New Orleans and, in early 1815, the war ended with the Treaty of Ghent. New Jersey Militia units fought in the War of 1812, including Captain Samuel Smith's Infantry Company, part of the Third Regiment. Young Isaac Edge Jr., born in 1800 in England, served in Smith's unit as the company drummer boy.

Isaac Edge Jr. was the namesake of his father, Isaac Sr., who immigrated from Derbyshire, England with his wife Frances and baby son in about 1801, settling in Paulus Hook by 1806. The elder Edge, a baker and miller by trade like his own father, built a large windmill on the corner of Montgomery and Green Streets in about 1815 and used it to produce high quality flour for locals and others who brought their grain for milling by ship.

Edge Jr., the teenage drummer boy, did not follow his father and grandfather into the milling business and all



DISPLAY OF FIREWORKS
ON BOSTON COMMON, JULY 4, 1844.

☞ The Exhibition of Fireworks, prepared by ISAAC EDGE Jr. (Pyrotechnist) of Niblo's and Castle Gardens, N. Y. will be one of the most extensive displays ever given in the City of Boston, embracing at least one third more matter than any former display, and will commence in the following order:

Signal Rockets will be fired from sunset until nine o'clock, when the following splendid and highly decorated pieces will be fired by programme.

PROGRAMME.

Brilliant Greek Bengola Lights
Rockets with Crimson and Green Stars
Magic Circle, or True Lover's Knot
Rockets. Gold Rain and Streamers
Chinese Pagoda, Illuminated
Rockets, Green and Crimson Stars
The Palm Tree Decorated
Rockets, with Meteors
Star of Independence
Grand Flight of Rockets
Italian Sun, Decorated
Flight of Pigeons
Rookets, with Streamers
The Passion Flower
Rockets, with Green and Crimson
Battery of Candles and Serpents
The Egyptian Pyramids of Roman Candles
Grand Flight of Rockets
Chinese Umbrella, or Fiery Phœnix
Flight of Pigeons
The Blooming Cactus
Graud Flight of Rockets
Pyramid of Italian Streamers
Battery of Serpents and Candles
Rockets, Crimson and Gold
The Night Blooming Ceres
Flight of Rockets
Flight of Pigeons
Peruvian Cross
Flight of Rockets
Illuminated Chandelier
Rockets, Gold Rain
Grand flight of Rockets
Bee Hive, or Emblem of Industry
Rockets, with Crimson and Green
Grand Flight of Rockets
Flying Pigeons. Rockets, &c
Flora's Pyramid, changes to a Tree of Flowers
Rockets, with Crimson and Gold
Grand Saxton Pyramid
Rockets, Streamers and Gold Rain
Vulcan's Frolic, or the Dance of Fire
Grand Flight of Rockets.

To conclude with the most extensive piece ever attempted in this country,

THE TEMPLE OF LIBERTY!

This magnificent piece occupies a space of over 200 feet of ground; the Temple forming the centre will stand 56 feet above the ground. The dome or arch of the Temple will span 35 feet, surmounted by a brilliant Star, 14 feet in diameter, bearing the inscription in letters of fire, "GO TELL THE WORLD AMERICA IS FREE!" Underneath the arch, and parallel with the caps of the columns, the inscription of "WASHINGTON!" supported by a splendid Star, 15 feet in diameter. The whole Temple being done in silver lance work, decorated with crimson, green, gold and purple fire; on the right and left of the Temple will open two Mosaic Batteries, discharging several thousand stars, serpents, &c. To the right and left of the Temple will be seen triumphal arches, &c, 45 feet in height, 18 feet span, bearing the inscription in letters of fire, "BOSTON, JULY, 1776," with richly decorated columns of silver lance work, each arch supporting two brilliant star pieces, studded with crimson, green, purple, yellow, and all the colors known in pyrotechny, mutating to the right and left of arches to the diamond and rose pieces, extending to the extreme right and left, being over 200 feet in length, and forming a surface of fire of over 60,000 square feet, terminating with a platform of platoons and a grand flight of 120 rockets, colored stars and gold rain.

indications are that he remained possessed of an independent and adventurous spirit. By the 1830s, he was the successful owner of a well-known pyrotechnics company located in Jersey City and was also a hobbyist hot air balloonist whose exploits were covered in newspapers of the day. In September 1837, Edge ascended in a balloon from Hoboken, reaching an altitude of 8,000 feet, drifting over New York City and landing on a farm in Flatbush.

Edge was also an inventor. In the late 1840s, he invented an "article of fire alarm," to be carried by police officers at night. Not the kind of fire alarm we would think of, this was carried in the pocket and could be taken out and struck against a hard surface to emit a bright light. He also developed a new form of portable rocket device that would propel a bomb a distance of up to two miles.

He was best known as an important "pyrotechnist." His Jersey City fireworks company was a premier provider of lavish fireworks displays in major U.S. cities including New York and Boston. The 4th of July fireworks program on Boston Common in 1846 was presented by Isaac Edge and his company. It closed with a fireworks depiction of the 16th century Castle of San Juan de Ulua (Veracruz, Mexico) measuring 100 feet in length and costing $2,000.

The descriptions of Edge's Boston fireworks program two years earlier were published in large newspaper advertisements (shown at left). Included were no less than 40 separate displays with exotic names like *Egyptian Pyramids of Roman Candles, Night*

JOSEPH G. & ISAAC EDGE, JR., 281

PREMIUM FIRE WORKS

JERSEY CITY, N. J.

The great superiority of the productions of this Laboratory has long been acknowledged, and from late increased facilities, the proprietors are now prepared to fill orders, either at home or abroad, to any required extent.

Their assortment consists of every kind of goods that come under the head of Pyrotechnics, and they are enabled to furnish extensive Exhibition Fires, of new design and motives, at 2 days notice.

Important to Underwriters and the Commercial and Mercantile Marine generally.

EDGE'S SAFETY PROJECTILE.

JOSEPH G. & ISAAC EDGE, JR., JERSEY CITY,

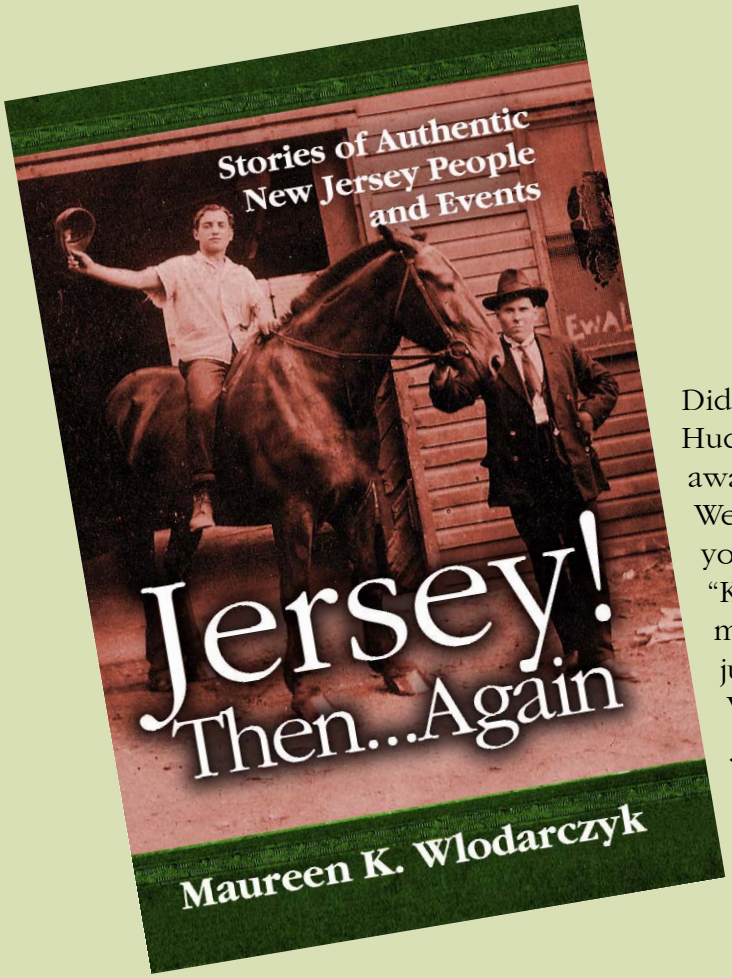
Or to DUNKIN & ROBBINS, Sole Agents, 10 Maiden Lane, N. Y.

D. & R. are also Importers of German, French and English Toys and Fancy Goods and Dealers in every variety of Domestic and Foreign Fire Works.

Edge made a name for himself as a manufacturer of fireworks and "safety projectiles."

Blooming Ceres, Peruvian Cross, Vulcan's Frolic—Dance of Fire, and *Chinese Pagoda.* The finale was titled *The Temple of Liberty,* described as being 200 feet long, the center standing 56 feet off the ground and including a 14-foot star bearing the inscription "Go Tell the World America is Free!" In total, the display was to cover over 60,000 square feet and finish with a "grand flight of 120 rockets, colored stars and gold rain."

Isaac Edge Jr. died at age 58 in March, 1859 in Jersey City and is interred at the Jersey City Harsimus Cemetery. His fireworks firm remained in business for many years under the management of his son. In 1917, nearly 60 years after Edge passed away, a local newspaper ran a story titled "Where Dad Got His Fireworks," recounting the Edge pyrotechnics story as originally reported in the *Jersey City Advertiser* in 1838.



This article is a chapter from Maureen's latest book,

"Jersey! Then...Again"

Did you know that a 6-year-old Fred Astaire graced Hudson County stages with his sister, Adele? Where you aware that the first demonstration of a parachute in the Western World thrilled spectators over Jersey City? Have you heard of Weehawken's political kingpin, Simon "King" Kelly, or the Jersey City patent medicine con-man "Dr." O. Phelps Brown? These are the subjects of just a few of the short essays collected in Maureen Wlodarczyk's new book, "Jersey! Then…Again." New Jersey historian and author Thomas Fleming says "this book is a ticket to a magical time machine that will make you the best storyteller in your family overnight!"

http://gardenstatelegacy.com/JerseyThenAgain.html