

# Jersey Firsts

*Alum's book counts the ways New Jersey's Number 1*

By Harry Armstrong '79

New Jersey's often number one when it comes to jokes and derision from uppity east-coast neighbors, late-night comedians and supposedly witty screenplay writers. But thanks to the efforts of Harry Armstrong '79 and Tom Wilk who wrote a book on New Jersey's many firsts, our home state is anchored in the number one position with hundreds of notables from science to sports and American history to high-technology. So the next time someone ridicules the Garden State, recall some of these excerpts from *New Jersey Firsts* and let 'em know who's really number one.

## Canned Soup

Think of Campbell Soup and a line of successful products comes to mind. But the Joseph Campbell Preserve Co., as it was known in 1869 when it was founded, has more than a prominent place in our kitchen cabinets. It has a significant place in history. The company's turning point came in 1897 when Dr. John T.



Dorrance—then working for the company for \$7.50 per week in Camden—developed a formula for condensed soup. By halving the quantity of the heaviest ingredient in the soup (water) and producing a good-tasting, economically priced product, Dorrance laid the foundation for the company's success—canned, condensed soups.

## Golf Tee (1924)

Look back at the game of golf in the early 1920s and imagine golfers heading to the first hole. Once there, they wouldn't reach into their golf bag for a little wooden tee—such a low-tech contraption didn't exist. Instead, golfers of the day would dip their hand into a bucket of water and form their tee out of a mound of sand.



What is essentially today's golf tee—that little wooden or plastic spike that so neatly holds the golf ball for drives—is one of those inventions that surely would have left golfers of the 1920s muttering “Why didn't I think of that?”

William Lowell did think of that. A dentist from Maplewood, Essex County, Lowell wasn't quite satisfied with the hand-in-the-water-bucket, sand-mound tee. By using his dental tools, Lowell was able in 1921 to carve a golf tee out of wood and affix a small “cup” to hold the ball. Three years later, he held a patent on a simple, one-piece golf tee that would change the game.

## First Log Houses in North America (1638)



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**H**arry and Doris Rink are literally living in the past. The Gibbstown residents own the C.A. Nothnagle Log House, the last remaining log home built by Swedish settlers between 1638 and 1643. The Gloucester County homes were the first log cabins built in North America, making the Nothnagle Cabin the oldest log cabin still standing on the continent. The cabin has been placed on the National Register of Historic Sites and has been preserved to an extent that it could still be recognized by the original owners.

### School For Dog Guides For Blind People (1929)

**T**he Seeing Eye, Inc. is to dog guides what Kleenex is to the tissue business. In 1929, the Morristown, Morris County-based company opened North America's first dog guide school. And while the term "Seeing Eye" has since been used to describe dog guides in general, it is actually a registered trademark for canine graduates of The Seeing Eye.

Since its founding by Philadelphian Dorothy Harrison Eustis, The Seeing Eye has matched more than 11,000 dogs with blind men and women. It has placed dogs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Canada. Its 1,800 active canine graduates work with students, teachers, lawyers, homemakers, clergy, masseurs, musicians, factory workers, piano tuners, writers, vending stand operators and more.

About 80 percent of the dogs used by The Seeing Eye are German shepherds and Labrador retrievers. The Seeing Eye dogs generally work for about 8-10 years before retiring. After retirement, they may remain with their master as a pet or be placed with a new owner as a pet. New Jersey was the first state to pass legislation guaranteeing equal access to all public places and accommodations for blind people accompanied by dog guides, according to The Seeing Eye. This legislation was the direct result of lobbying by Morris

Frank and Buddy, the first Seeing Eye team.

The Seeing Eye's 60-acre campus has been at its present location since 1965 and features a 24-room student residence with exercise room, library/technology center and dining room; the Walker Dillard Kirby Canine Center, which houses 120 dogs in training; and a state-of-the-art veterinary facility.



### Most Complete Dinosaur Skeleton (1858)

**N**ew Jersey's role in the discovery of dinosaurs traces back to Haddonfield, Camden County, where in 1858 William Parker Foulke dug up the most complete dinosaur skeleton known at this time anywhere in the world. Indeed, the "Hadrosaurus foulkii," as Foulke's discovery was to become known, was the first dinosaur skeleton in the world to be mounted and publicly displayed.

As it turns out, though, one of the country's founding fathers, Ben Franklin, was presented in 1787 with a heavy, dark bone excavated from Woodbury, Gloucester County. Franklin, then serving as president of the American Philosophical Society, which was meeting in Philadelphia, was informed by prominent Philadelphia physician Caspar Wistar that the bone might be a thigh bone from a large man. Ultimately, however, the bone found its way to the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia where work by Dr. Donald Baird, formerly of Princeton University, led to the conclusion that the bone was the left metatarsal (foot) bone of a duck-billed dinosaur.

### The Band-Aid (1924)

**E**ven today, one product remains Johnson & Johnson Co.'s signature product—the Band Aid Brand Adhesive Bandage. The Band-Aid—the term itself a trademark of Johnson & Johnson — made its first appearance on the market in 1921. They were made by hand and were far from an instant success. In that first year, Johnson & Johnson sold just \$3,000 worth of Band-Aids. In 1924, however, Johnson & Johnson introduced a new and improved Band-Aid, this one being the first ever machine-made, mass produced self-adhesive bandage.

### Flight In The United States (1793)

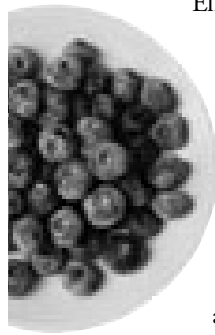
**J**ean-Pierre Blanchard was confident as he strode across Walnut Street in Philadelphia on the cool, wintry morning of January 9, 1793. Before him stood his aircraft: a green and yellow silk balloon decorated in spangled silver and with a blue basket. The balloon's colorful appearance would ensure that it be easily visible to the naked eye. Blanchard hoped to set an aviation milestone by successfully completing the first balloon flight in the history of the United



States. Amid much fanfare and the accompaniment of a band, Blanchard began his historic trip at 10:09 a.m., his balloon traveling southeast across the Delaware River toward New Jersey. It would land 45 minutes later in a farmer's field in Deptford Township, Gloucester County, about 15 miles from his starting point.

### **Cultivated Blueberries (1910)**

Think of your favorite blueberry-laden dessert, then say thank you to the undisputed “Blueberry Queen,” Elizabeth C. White (1871-1954). It was Elizabeth who in 1910 set out to turn the wild swamp huckleberry into the juicy, succulent blueberry to help supplement her father's thriving but seasonal cranberry business in the pine barrens in Burlington County. White enlisted the services of local huckleberry pickers and deer hunters to find only the biggest huckleberries for use as parent material for controlled growth. Ultimately, 100 bushes were found and named for their discoverers. Today all cultivated blueberries are essentially descendants of eight bushes.



### **Traffic Circle (1925)**

In the years after World War II, two words had the power to make New Jersey drivers break into a cold sweat: traffic circles. Built to facilitate a smooth flow of traffic where several busy roads meet, circles often had the opposite effect on drivers trying to negotiate the 360-degree nightmare during rush hour when it seemed all drivers had the right of way.

It seemed like a good idea when the first circle in the United States—the Airport Circle in Pennsauken, Camden County—opened in 1925. However, increases in population and Americans' love affair with the automobile would prove otherwise.

### **Salt Water Taffy (1870s)**

A visit to the New Jersey boardwalk would not be complete without a sampling of salt water taffy. Call it one of the great marketing efforts of the 20th century.

Taffy by itself is by no means a New Jersey first or unique to the state. Salt water taffy, on the other hand, is a New Jersey boardwalk invention, complete with reams of folklore and multiple claims of legendary marketing genius.

The truth of the matter is that ocean water has no place among the ingredients of salt water taffy. A pinch of salt is utilized, water is an ingredient—but the closest salt water gets to the process is a beachgoer's wet bathing suit.

### **The Birth Of Teflon (1938)**

When it comes to culinary achievements, Dr. Roy Plunkett can stand alongside such luminaries as Julia Child and James Beard.

Plunkett's discovery of a white, waxy substance, later

dubbed tetrafluoroethylene (PTFE), occurred by accident at Jackson Laboratory, a division of Du Pont's Chambers Works in Deepwater, Salem County, on April 6, 1938.

Known now by its trademark name of Teflon, Teflon-coated pots, pans and cookie sheets are found in kitchens around the world.

Teflon also helped advance other industries including aerospace, communications, electronics, industrial processes and architecture.

### **Miss America Pageant (1921)**

Sixteen-year-old Margaret Gorman stood just an inch over five feet tall, weighed in at 108 pounds and the tape measured her vital statistics at a less than curvaceous 30"-25"-32"—a long stroll on the Boardwalk from today's physical beauty standards. But there she was in Atlantic City, Atlantic County, in September 1921, the first Miss America Pageant winner.

That first pageant was intended only to be a small part of the multi-faceted “Fall Frolic” which local business owners concocted a year earlier to help Atlantic City extend its tourism season beyond the traditional end-of-summer Labor Day weekend. Ms. Gorman and six other “beauty maids” were selected by newspapers to compete in the non-professional beauty competition.

While the “Miss America” title had been coined as early as 1921 by pageant publicist Herb Test of the Atlantic City Press, it was seldom used until later years. Ms. Gorman was more commonly referred to as the “Inter-City Beauty Maid Contest” winner.

### **First Martian Attack (1938)**

On Mischief Night, Oct. 30, 1938, Mars launched its first attack on our planet, landing its warship in Grover's Mill near Princeton, Mercer County, and then peppering the state and New York City with poisonous gases.

The interplanetary conflict led to mass destruction, and incredible shock and hysteria throughout the country as events were reported live between 8:15 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. on WABC Radio and the Columbia Broadcasting System's coast-to-coast network.

Some 60 years later, the shock and hysteria are known to be real but the “news” broadcast is recognized as one of radio's great hoaxes—it was merely a radio adaptation of H.G. Wells' 1896 novel, “The War of the Worlds,” directed by up-and-coming movie giant Orson Welles, then just 23 years old. ■



*Miss New Jersey Mary D'Arcy Jurman 77 was first runner-up to Miss America.*