

## A Glimpse of Historic Ogdensburg

Nestled in the Wallkill Valley, in a 2.2 square mile area east and west of Route 517, the Borough of Ogdensburg is a diverse community of 2,800 residents. Although it was primarily developed because of its rich deposits of zinc ore within the town limits and the iron ore nearby, the lush green fields along the valley are witness to its earlier dependence on dairy farming. Driving through the area one senses the tranquility that residents experience here.

The conditions which influenced its early settlement, however, were not so tranquil. Fearful of imminent invasion at Elizabethtown by the British during the Revolutionary War, Robert Ogden II moved his family to property which he owned in Sussex County. He built a home at a location south of what is now the center of Ogdensburg and named it Sparta. Subsequently his properties became a part of Sparta Township. He began cultivating his several thousand acres of land on which he grew large numbers of apple and peach trees, built and operated an iron forge along the Wallkill River and made bar iron from the Ogden iron mine at the top of the mountain southeast of the town. It is interesting to note that this same mine was later acquired and operated by Thomas A. Edison, whose grandmother was an Ogden. Dr. Samuel Fowler, who married Rebecca Ogden, purchased additional land nearby and was a pioneer in the early development of the Sterling Hill Mine.



These iron and zinc mining interests attracted workers of many ethnic backgrounds; Eastern Europeans, Irish, Cornishmen, and Hispanics from Texas and Mexico. This increased population also spurred establishment of churches and businesses and set the stage for future growth. As the Sterling Hill mine became more productive the village leaders of Ogdensburg decided to separate from Sparta Township. In 1914 it was incorporated as a separate borough and P.J. Dolan was elected its first mayor.

The Sterling Hill zinc mine, the last operating mine in New Jersey, suspended operations in 1986; it is now a world-renowned museum which has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Its uniqueness has been recognized by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., which has replicated the mine in its latest building expansion. The Sterling Hill Mining Museum is open to the public and draws more than 40,000 visitors a year.

***The Sterling Hill Mining Museum extends the offer to all Ogdensburg residents to tour the mine FREE of charge every day the museum is open.***

## Ogdensburg Today

Currently, residents of Ogdensburg are offered services often associated with much larger communities. The K-8 grammar school promotes a varied and challenging curriculum, providing a solid background in preparation for high school. Interaction between the students and the town's senior citizens is encouraged, as is the study of the history and geology of the area. In ensuring a safe environment the police department has built an excellent rapport with the students and has instituted an education program emphasizing the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. In 2006 the borough celebrated 200 continuous years of public education in Ogdensburg which began in 1806 in a small log cabin near the location of the present school. This is the earliest recorded school in Sussex County.

The Ogdensburg Recreation Association oversees a full slate of sports activities for boys and girls, including softball, soccer and swimming. For three seasons of the year there is always some activity at the ball field, including the use of the small tennis court and play areas.

The borough has established a recycling center, and sponsors a weekly garbage collection, pickups of bulk material and recyclables monthly, as well as leaf and brush pickups in the spring and fall. The Road Department keeps the miles of roads in good repair and has responded superbly in clearing the streets after heavy snowfalls.

The volunteer Fire Department has an excellent record for rapid and efficient responses to fires and rescue emergencies. The volunteer First Aid Squad has built a reputation for quick professional service to those in need at all hours. The dedicated members of both organizations spend countless hours in training to carry out their missions.

The Old Schoolhouse and Firehouse Museum, located on the school grounds, was established by the Ogdensburg Historical Society to preserve the borough's heritage. The Historical Society meets there on the first Tuesday of March, June, September and December at 7:30p.m.

Two churches provide worship services: St. Thomas of Aquin Roman Catholic Church offers daily masses and four weekend masses. The First Presbyterian Church conducts Sunday services. Both are located on J.F. Kennedy Avenue.

Heater's Pond offers residents a pristine forested area for swimming and sunbathing. Lifeguards are on duty from late June to early September. A short walk across a causeway to the island leads to a shelter with picnic tables and benches for residents' use. In the fall the scenery around the lake makes it truly a "Golden Pond" and ice skating is popular in the winter.

The Borough of Ogdensburg is a delightful place to live and a good town in which to do business. The goal of the Mayor and Council, and the Board of Education, is to make all of the above services available at the lowest possible cost to the taxpayers.