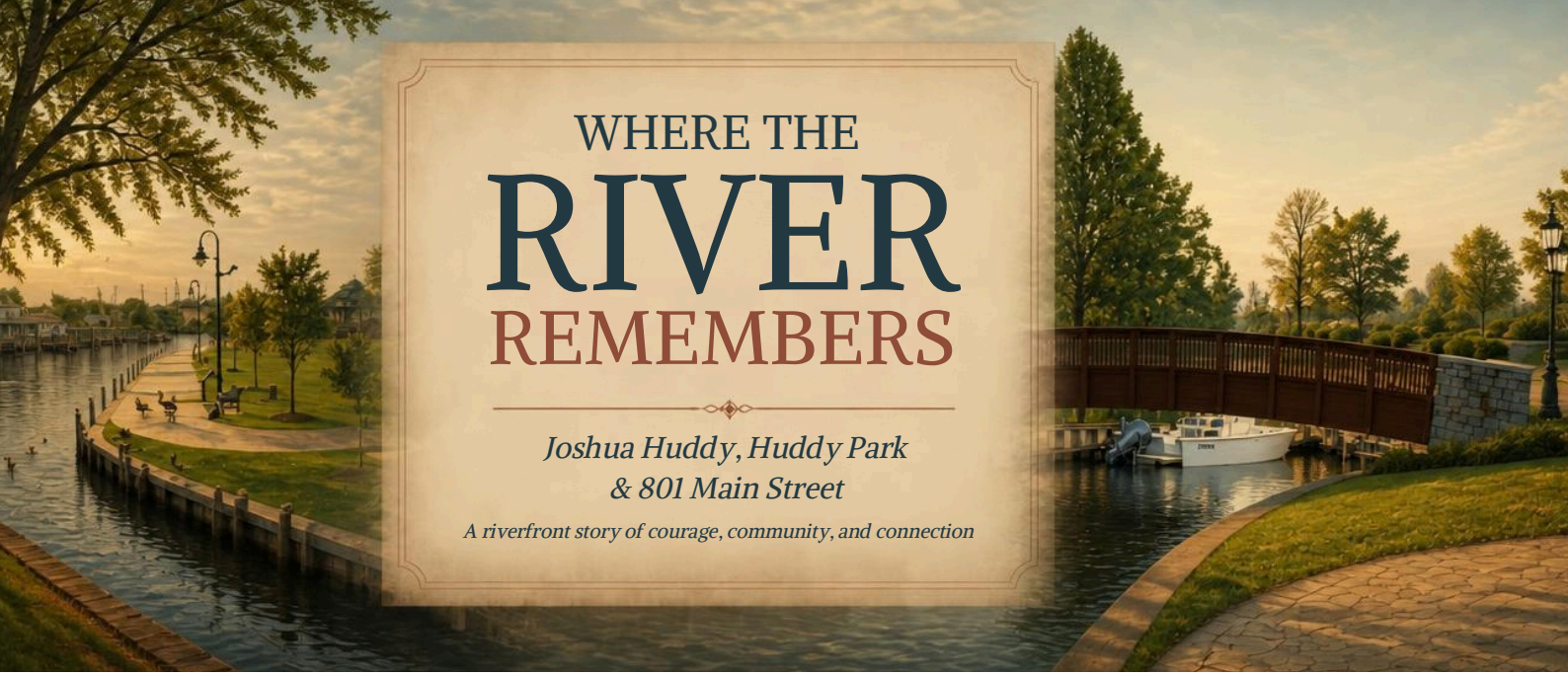

Where the River Remembers: Joshua Huddy, Huddy Park & 801 Main Street

A riverfront story of courage, community, and connection

The story of Toms River begins at the water. Along its riverfront, traces of the Revolutionary War, generations of local families, and the landmarks that preserve their memory come together.At the heart of that story are Captain Joshua Huddy, the community landmark that bears his name, and 801 Main Street. Together, Huddy Park and the historic house offer a welcoming way to explore how Toms River's people and places became part of a larger American story.

A place where history meets the river

From a wartime blockhouse to a marsh island transformed into a public park, Toms River's past remains visible in the places that shape its downtown today.

Captain Joshua Huddy and the Battle of Toms River

In 1782, Toms River was an important coastal community. Its salt works supported food preservation, while the surrounding waterways helped sustain the area's coastal activity. To protect the community, a small blockhouse was built near present-day downtown Toms River, with Captain Joshua Huddy placed in command.

On March 24, 1782, Loyalist forces allied with the British attacked Toms River. Huddy and the other defenders were badly outnumbered. The attackers overwhelmed the blockhouse, captured Huddy and other men, and burned much of the village.

Huddy was later executed on April 12, 1782, in retaliation for the death of Loyalist Philip White. His killing caused outrage beyond New Jersey during the peace negotiations that would end the Revolutionary War, turning a local tragedy into an event with wider political consequences.

Today, Captain Joshua Huddy remains one of Toms River's best-known Revolutionary-era figures—a symbol of the courage and resilience remembered along the riverfront.

Huddy Park: From Marsh Island to Community Landmark

Before it became a public park, the site was a small marsh island known as Gowdy's Island. Beginning in the 1890s, owner Ralph B. Gowdy filled portions of the marshland, changing the shape of the site and preparing it for a new chapter in the community's history.

In 1905, Dover Township residents approved the purchase of the property for $3,000. The acquisition created the township's first municipal park. The site was initially called Gowdy's Island and was later renamed Huddy Park in honor of Captain Joshua Huddy.

Over time, the park developed with docks, pathways, landscaping, and an octagonal bandstand gazebo. These features helped establish it as a recognizable part of downtown Toms River while preserving its connection to the river and the community's past.

Today, Huddy Park is both a downtown gathering place and an outdoor history lesson. Interpretive signs share the stories of the Blockhouse fight, Joshua Huddy, the Luker Bridge, and the early history of the riverfront.

The Story of 801 Main Street

Known today as the Huddy House, 801 Main Street has a history that reaches beyond its association with Captain Joshua Huddy. Historical research associated with the property identifies the Applegate and Irons families—not the Huddy family—as the home's original owners.

The Applegate and Irons connection belongs to the early family and civic history of the Toms River area. Members of both longstanding local families were connected to the community's development, landholding, and Revolutionary-era story.

Local tradition also preserves the account of Garret Irons running through the cranberry bogs to warn Captain Huddy that an attack was approaching. This story should be understood as a preserved local account or tradition, rather than presented as a fully verified fact.

Whether encountered through documented research or remembered local tradition, the Applegate and Irons connection gives 801 Main Street a meaningful place in the history of Toms River.

A House Connected to a Larger Story

The history of 801 Main Street is part of a wider community story. The Applegate and Irons families, Captain Joshua Huddy, the defense of the blockhouse, and Huddy Park each represent a different thread in Toms River's past.

Together, those threads connect a historic house to the riverfront, the Revolutionary War, and the public places where local memory continues to be shared. The result is a story that is larger than any one building: it is the story of a community shaped by its people, waterways, and enduring landmarks.

Visitors can experience 801 Main Street as a doorway into Toms River's past—a place to begin exploring the families, events, and riverfront history that continue to define the community.

Research Note

Available research identifies the Applegate and Irons families as original owners of 801 Main Street. The exact construction date and the identity of the builder should be confirmed through primary records or local historical archives before being stated definitively.

Sources for Further Reading

The following sources provide additional historical context for Captain Joshua Huddy, Huddy Park, and the Applegate and Irons connection to 801 Main Street.

- Monmouth County Historical Association
- Toms River Township Historic Preservation Commission
- Jersey Shore Online: article about the historic bed and breakfast and the Applegate/Irons connection

Continue exploring: Visit the riverfront, spend time in Huddy Park, and learn more about the people and places that keep Toms River's history alive.