HISTORY OF KING NEPTUNE and the SCARLET FLIERS

Editor’s note: The first draft of this document was written 10/25/03 and has been updated 18 times, the most recent of which was 12/28/13. It is considered a work in progress as new sources of information come forward and ongoing research reveals further details. The basic premise of the genesis of the use of King Neptune and the Scarlet Flier nickname are rooted in the facts as presented below. Updates, corrections and suggestions should be sent to Bill King II at N56W39214 Lakeview Lane, Oconomowoc, WI 53066, by phone at 262-490-2455 (mobile), or via e-mail at: BillKing@wi.rr.com

The history of King Neptune and the Scarlet Fliers is steeped in tradition that dates back to the creation of Neptune Township and Neptune High School in the 1800’s. Neptune as a township was incorporated on February 26, 1879 by an act of the New Jersey Legislature. Concurrent with the incorporation, a rendition of King Neptune was chosen as the symbol for the community. Neptune High School opened in 1897 and immediately adopted a classic line drawing sketch featuring a robed King Neptune. Various renditions were developed over the years with King Neptune as the focal point. Other elements incorporated in those renditions include King Neptune’s Trident (three pronged spear), three cresting waves, fish and sea horses. King Neptune is the Roman god of the sea with Poseidon being his Greek counterpart. Except for a period beginning approximately 1994 and ending in 2005, King Neptune has been the sole trademark of Neptune High School. A red-tailed hawk, incorrectly identified as an esoteric name in some ornithological circles as a Scarlet Flier, was used as the school logo during that approximate eleven year span.

King Neptune provides the township and school system with one of the most uniquely identifiable symbols enjoyed by any community or high school. The symbol radiates power, strength, knowledge and benevolence. Professional sports teams, colleges and universities, and major corporations spend millions of dollars developing logos, designs and catchphrases. On the Jersey Shore, King Neptune is a natural.

The moniker “Scarlet Flyers” was coined in 1928 or 1929 by James Lawrence (Jim) Ogle (NHS ‘29). As a sports writer for the student newspaper (then called simply The Student, The Blazer appeared on the masthead some time after 1938), Ogle reported that the basketball team came out on the court wearing all red and was always the fastest team on the court. Thus Scarlet for red and Flyers because the team literally flew up and down the court. The nickname quickly caught on and was used to describe all the Neptune High School sports teams whose uniforms were also red and whose athletes equally speedy. Flyers morphed into the more modern spelling Fliers over the years.

According to anecdotal information, it is possible that Ogle’s coining of the moniker may have been more of a formalized nod to a phrase that was in use since the early 1920’s. At a banquet in 1996 celebrating the 1995 Neptune High School State Football Championship, Francis (Frank) Smith, a sophomore on the 1923 Neptune State Championship football team, told Rick Taylor (NHS ’66) that a newspaper account of a game from the 1923 championship season stated that the Neptune ends were going down the field like “scarlet flyers.” Research failed to uncover use of the nickname prior to Ogle’s 1928 reference.
What remains elusive is the identity of the artist and the exact time when the “classic” King Neptune logo was developed. The logo we refer to here is the one that came in vogue shortly after the dedication of the “new” Neptune High School in 1960.

Personal interviews with former students, staff and administrators lend credence to the notion that the classic logo was developed in the early 1960’s after dedication ceremonies of the new Neptune High School on what was then Springdale Avenue in 1960. The classic symbol was either hand-drawn or more likely assembled using clip art before the computer age when such symbols became known as “logos.”

In researching the history of the school, it was discovered that the classic King Neptune sketch had been lost over time. Thus the Neptune High School Class of ’72 took on the project of recreating the logo by employing the use of current computer graphics programs in 2002. Ellen Homb, a Milwaukee, Wisconsin based graphic designer who has worked on logos for professional sports teams and major corporations, was commissioned to recreate the logo. Charged with staying true to the original sketch or clip art, Homb scanned an original 1970’s school decal into a computer and then painstakingly plotted each line. Only subtle changes were made to correct for details lost over years of copying without benefit of an original. The result is the school system now owns perfect copies on computer discs of the classic King Neptune logo for school archives and future use.

The traditional red “N” symbolizing Neptune dates back to at least 1903 with the inception of The Trident according to the December 1921 edition of the publication. At the time, The Trident was the official bi-monthly literary magazine/student newspaper published by students, supported by advertising and listing an Ocean Grove publication address. The 1903 version of the traditional “N” logo featured a stylized block “N” and incorporated a scroll type banner wrapped around the “N” with the word “Trident” written on the scroll. A three pronged spear (Neptune’s trident) was centered on the “N” and supported the scroll. The colors were “a bold and powerful” Red and Black.

By the early 1920’s, the Trident moniker was used to grace the cover of the official school yearbook as it does today. The archives make no mention of the name or year in which the switch was made. But eventually, the student newspaper became known as The Blazer, a title the masthead carries today. Students also published a variety of literary magazines in the early half of the last century. The magazines featured poetry, short stories and whimsical thoughts penned by students.

What the Trident yearbook did give us was a rendition of King Neptune that ultimately was adopted as the school seal. In 1960 a student contest was held to develop artwork for use on the yearbook cover. The winning entries were submitted by Merri L. Nelson and Daphne S. Earl, both Class of 1961. Nelson took the lead on the finished design which was a blend of the two winning entries. In it, a robed and bearded King Neptune is shown embracing his Trident in his right hand and a shield depicting two sea horses in his left focused towards three cresting waves. The artwork appears on the cover of the 1961 yearbook in a gold foil stamp. It was later adopted for use through the district on official publications, letterhead, awards, diplomas and subsequent yearbooks.

King Neptune was the official symbol of Neptune High School and the school district at large from 1897 until approximately 1994 when a visual symbol was attached to the nickname Scarlet Fliers. That 1994 logo, a rendition of a red-tailed hawk, was the result of an effort to boost school spirit by then-principal Rosalie Coleman. A search of the Internet apparently identified a Scarlet Flier as an esoteric name for a red-tailed hawk. An art contest between students rendered two winning designs a blend of which was adopted as the new logo. A professional painter who also develops logos was hired to further refine the red-tailed hawk logo and apply it to the basketball court in the high school.
The adoption of the red-tailed hawk as the school symbol was done without the approval of the Board of Education. Later research proved there was no connection between Scarlet Fliers and a red-tailed hawk. Thus, that particular logo had no basis in school history.

Then, in 2005 after an 11 year absence as the symbol for Neptune High School, King Neptune returned to his rightful throne as the official logo for the flagship school in the district. An official resolution by the Neptune Township Board of Education was passed in September of 2006 specifically denoting the “Forward for Neptune” logo as the official logo of Neptune High School. Individual schools in the district were to retain or adopt their own specific logos and mascots centered around a nautical theme. The Board of Education itself retained use of the school seal that was originally developed in 1960.

The 2005 version of the King Neptune logo is based upon the 11½' “Forward for Neptune” bronze statue that graces “The Commons at Neptune High School,” an area between the Michael T. Lake Theatre and the gymnasium. Dedication ceremonies for the “new new” Neptune High School were held October 14, 2006. The logo continues to use the Scarlet Red & Black color scheme. Typeface for “Neptune,” “Scarlet Fliers,” and “N” were developed with the result being a font unique to the Neptune School District.

The project to develop the 2005 logo was headed by Bill King II, a 1972 graduate of Neptune High School and an original inductee into the school’s Hall of Fame. After researching the history of King Neptune and the Scarlet Fliers, King developed a nine-point criteria upon which the new logo was based. He then screened several advertising agencies/graphic arts firms before selected E & Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin to develop the new logo.

Eric Dorgan of E & Company was the lead designer involved in producing the primary Neptune logo as well as five alternate logos. The primary logo features a silhouette of a young and muscular King Neptune in an aggressive stance pointing forward with his left hand while brandishing his signature Trident in his right hand. The silhouette drew its inspiration from the “Forward for Neptune” statue created by Chicago sculptor Ralph Greenhow for Neptune High School. The silhouette is flanked by panels of Red & Black and sits atop the word “Neptune” which appears in a unique typeface.

The five alternate logos share similar design features with the primary logo in that the typeface, when used, is the same. The alternate logos include: 1) The traditional “N” symbolizing Neptune which dates back to at least 1903. The new “N” is primarily Scarlet Red with a white and black border. Again the typeface is unique to Neptune. 2) The silhouette of King Neptune flanked by Red & Black panels sans “Neptune” lettering. 3) “Neptune” lettering including a Trident sans the silhouette. 4 & 5) Two versions, one horizontal and one stacked, of the nickname “Scarlet Fliers.” Both versions feature Neptune’s Trident but do not include the silhouette.

To protect the school district’s investment in the 2005 logo, the Board of Education will seek to copyright protect the primary and secondary logos, the nickname “Scarlet Fliers” and the Scarlet Red & Black “N.”
HISTORY OF KING NEPTUNE and the SCARLET FLIERS (Continued)

Editorial comment (circa 2004):

As the Neptune school system enjoys a renaissance as a result of the current massive building and renovation project that spans the district, it is our hope that King Neptune will be returned as the sole symbol representing Neptune High School and the district.

The red-tailed hawk has no basis in school or community history. In fact, alluding to a red-tailed hawk as a Scarlet Flier is esoteric at best. The use of any bird as a logo, be it a hawk, eagle, cardinal, robin, oriole, blackbird, red bird, and on and on is so prevalent as to be mundane.

In contrast, King Neptune provides the township and school system with one of the most uniquely identifiable symbols enjoyed by any community or high school. The symbol radiates power, strength, knowledge and benevolence.

The logo, whether it be the “classic” version as alluded to in research above, or a similar rendition, ought to grace center court of a new basketball court. It ought to be prominently displayed on the outside of the building, on flags, letterhead, uniforms of the sports teams, band, etc. As when the “new” high school was dedicated in 1960, consumer products (T-shirts, sweatshirts, golf shirts, jackets, shorts, gym bags, key chains, etc.) ought to be made available for purchase by students, staff, administrators, members of the community and alumni. The classic King Neptune logo is elegant in its simple design but would require a makeover to bring it into the 21st century. The better option would be to develop a new logo taken directly from the silhouette of Forward For Neptune, the statue of King Neptune that has been commissioned for the Commons at Neptune High School. Additionally, the use of Neptune’s Trident and stylized red “N” lends itself to the use of a secondary logos which is popular in the marketing world today. The King Neptune logo, Neptune’s Trident, the nickname Scarlet Fliers, and red “N” ought to be copyright protected and trademarked to safeguard the district’s rights.

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SCARLET FLIER FACTS

Ψ The original St. Paul’s Methodist Church of Ocean Grove stood on the property that became the first Neptune High School. The church planned a larger facility and abandoned the old location, including the church graveyard. The burials were all disinterred and taken to Mount Prospect Cemetery at the west end of Heck Avenue behind the original Neptune Junior High School which later became the Neptune Middle School. The re-interments were among the first burials in the then-new (1881) Mount Prospect Cemetery.
SCARLET Flier Facts

Ψ You could call November 22, 1897 the day the light went on because the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association introduced an electric light to the Ocean Grove School without charge to the Board of Education.

Ψ Miss Lida Doren became the first Principal of the school in 1897 and had the distinction of being the first woman Principal and the first Superintendent of a school system in the State of New Jersey.

Ψ Nine pupils were in the first high school graduating class of 1898. In 1972, 505 students graduated at the world famous Ocean Grove Auditorium.

Ψ The starting salary for teachers in May of 1898 was $450 per year. In 1972, young people out of college were hired in Neptune for $8,200 a year.

Ψ The first Neptune High School was erected at a cost of $91,000 and dedicated in September of 1898. The building won World’s Fair honors in 1906 as one of the most beautiful and architecturally unique schools in the state.

Ψ Asbury Park was a part of Neptune Township from 1879 until 1897 when it became a city. Other towns that eventually split off were Neptune City (1881), Bradley Beach (1893). Avon subdivided from Neptune City in 1900.

Ψ In January 1904, Principal Lida Doren reported that the senior class wanted the use of the high school to entertain the juniors with games and probably some dancing. The board approved the use of the school with Miss Doren as chaperone with the understanding there was to be no dancing.

Ψ Booker T. Washington delivered a lecture at the high school on March 15, 1906.

Ψ A “Tradition of Champions” was begun as early as 1907 when Neptune High School won the Rice Cup. The benefactor of the award was Mr. Melvin A. Rice of Atlantic Highlands. It was given to the East Jersey High School League school that sported the cumulative highest winning percentage for a three year period in all around athletics (football, basketball, baseball and track).

Ψ The 1919-20 Neptune High School basketball team completed the season with a 13-4-1 (yes, there were ties in those days).

Ψ The current Neptune High School building was originally dedicated on Sunday, Sept. 18, 1960 on what was then Springdale Ave., now Neptune Boulevard. The approximate cost for the “new” high school was $3,000,000. Following a complete makeover and expansion to the tune of +$60,000,000 that doubled the original square footage, the school was rededicated on Oct. 14, 2006.

Ψ A visual symbol was attached to the nickname Scarlet Fliers in approximately 1994. In an effort to boost school spirit principal Rosalie Coleman charged the school’s head librarian, Don Smith, with unearthing the identity of a Scarlet Flier. Research on the Internet supposedly revealed that a Scarlet Flier was an esoteric name for a red-tailed hawk. (Note: later research proved that theory to be incorrect.) An art contest between students rendered two winners a blend of which was adopted as the new logo for Neptune High School. The change in symbols was done without the blessing of the Board of Education. The hawk logo adorned center court at the high school, a flag outside the school and official Neptune publications until replaced in 2005 and 2006 with the “Forward for Neptune” logo.

Ψ Jim Ogle (NHS ’33) and the person credited with coining the phrase “Scarlet Flyers” went from being the sports editor of the student newspaper to being a sportswriter for the Newark Star Ledger. In addition he was the official scorekeeper for the New York Yankees for many years earning a World Championship ring for every one of his fingers.
If the nickname “Scarlet Flyers” didn’t come into existence until the late 1920’s, what were Neptune’s sports teams called before that? One notion advanced by Roger Allgor (NHS ’49 and member of the state championship basketball team that year) was the Sea Kings. If that were to be the case, then the name was picked up by a semi-pro basketball team after World War II that played games in Asbury Park’s Convention Hall and the original Neptune High School. Neptune graduates like Bob Davis Sr. (NHS ’44) and Hadford “Haddie” Catley (NHS ’40) played in the league that was either a Monmouth/Ocean County League or Asbury Park League. The logo on the jackets of the Sea Kings was very similar to the classic King Neptune logo of the 1960’s through the early 1990’s. Subsequent research revealed a reference in the January 1938 edition of The Student (the name of the NHS student newspaper before it became The Blazer) that Sea Kings was the nickname of South Amboy High School. Allgor goes on to recall that the classic King Neptune logo was not used by Neptune in 1949.

It seems Jim Ogle’s deft coinage of the phrase Scarlet Flyers back in the late 20’s spawned others to see red . . . literally. In addition to the Scarlet Flyers there was a semi-pro team called the Scarlet Raiders and their junior version counterparts who called themselves the Red Raiders. Both the Scarlet and Red Raiders competed in all sports (football, basketball and baseball). Home court for the basketball team was the original Neptune High School in Ocean Grove. Ray Palaia (NHS ’35), brother of New Jersey State Senator Joe Palaia (NHS ’45), played for the Scarlet Raiders. A picture of the 1937 Bi-County League Champion Scarlet Raiders basketball team appeared in the Neptune Museum on the second floor of the Neptune Library in the municipal building before the museum was closed in 2003. In addition, Keyport High School was and is known as the Red Raiders.

Any number of theories abound as to how Neptune selected Red & Black as the school colors. The true genesis was printed in The Times, a local newspaper, in 1944. The article noted that Lida A. Doren, Neptune High School’s first principal, admired a red and black striped sweater worn by a student, Wallace “Brick” Reed, and then declared red and black to be the school colors. One unsubstantiated theory is that both the Red & Black color scheme and the use of the word Scarlet owe a debt to Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. Rutgers sports a Red & Black color scheme and their nickname is the Scarlet Knights. We do know that the “bold and powerful” Red & Black color scheme dates back to at least 1903 and likely earlier.

An alternate logo was developed in the mid-1990s for use by Neptune High School basketball team as a response to the red-tailed hawk logo. Wayne Warms (NHS ’71) theorized that a Scarlet Flier was a World War I airplane. Thus, Warms had a logo developed that placed King Neptune in an open-air propeller driven vintage airplane.

Bil (with one “l”) Canfield was one of two artists for a major New Jersey newspaper who developed logos, program covers and the like for Rutgers University and Princeton University from the 1950’s well into the 1990’s. Canfield plied his trade with the old Newark News and later the Newark Star Ledger. His counterpart was Bill King of the Asbury Park Press whose artwork of “Athlete of the Week” and sketches that accompanied editorials are known to generations of Press readers. Canfield, a long-time Monmouth County resident before retiring to Phoenix, has a theory about the “classic” King Neptune logo. It is Canfield’s educated position that the logo is a result of “clip art” that was popular in the 1960’s before modern computer graphics programs became the norm. Thus the identity of the original artist may never be known, as the logo is a compendium of artwork clipped from large books purchased for just such a purpose.
The Neptune basketball team coined the expression “A Tradition of Champions” in the early 1990’s. But the phrase is appropriate for all of Neptune’s sports champions. The Scarlet Fliers have won state titles in boy’s basketball in 1906, 1907, 1931, 1949, 1981, 1984, 2002, 2009 and 2011. The Lady Fliers basketball team won Group III state titles in 1983-84, 2009-10 and 2010-11. The girls basketball team also won the Tournament of Champions in the 2009-10 season. In football the Scarlet Fliers were crowned state champions in 1911, 1912, 1923, 1949, 1995, 1997, 1998 and 2011 (‘95, ‘97, ‘98 and ‘11 were NJSIAA CJIII Championships) and East Jersey Champs in 1921. Baseball won a state championship in 1923, golf in 1969, boy’s track in 1973-74 and 1975-76 and the girls in 1987, 1996, 2008, the indoor relay in 1993 and the team Group III Championship in 2012. Soccer took the Group IV title in 1980. The 1946 track team took first place at the Penn Relays, an accomplishment that was duplicated on two other occasions one of which was in the late 1930’s. In field hockey the girls won in 1987 and in wrestling in 1974-75 and 1979. A crowning achievement, and one of the most recent, was when the boy’s basketball team won the Group III New Jersey State Championship in 2002 and became the first team in the history of the Shore Conference to advance to the Championship game of the Tournament of Champions at the Meadowlands. In addition to these accomplishments on a statewide level, Neptune has countless titles earned in the Shore Conference and the precursors to the conference and numerous sectional and regional titles in statewide competition. Leading the way in the Shore Conference is the basketball team. Since the first game was played in 1937, Neptune has made it to the title game 33 times resulting in 21 championships (through the 2009-10 season). The roundballers hold the record for the most appearances and wins in the championship game including seven consecutive wins from 1961 to 1967. (Updated 6/4/12)

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NEPTUNE ATHLETES IN THE PROS

Jack Armstrong, Sr. – MLB with the Cincinnati Reds and other clubs. While with the Reds in 1990 he was the starting pitcher for the National League in the All-Star game.


Jacob L. (Jake) Jones ’67 – Only player in the history of Neptune High School to play in the National Basketball Association. A veteran of both the Philadelphia 76ers and Cincinnati Royals. Scholar athlete at Neptune and Assumption College. Taught English at Neptune, coached Junior Varsity and Freshman basketball in the ’70’s. Director of the Office of Community and Economic Development for the City of Long Branch and Director of the Urban Enterprise Zone Program.

Nate Ramsey – NFL with the Philadelphia Eagles

Joe M. Vetrano ’36 – Earned eight varsity letters and was an All-State selection in football for the Scarlet Fliers. Went on to garner All-American status at Mississippi Southern. Was an original member of the San Francisco 49ers and played halfback from 1946 to 1949. Was an assistant coach/chief scout from 1953-56. His nickname with the 49ers was “Joe the Toe”. Returned to his Neptune roots for the 1959 season where he coached Neptune High School to a 5-4 mark, their first winning record in several years. Returned to California after that one year stint. Passed away on May 12, 1995. Sports Illustrated article from March 15, 1999 on Joe DiMaggio went on for several paragraphs about the relationship between the two Joes. Neptune City native Jack Nicholson mentioned Vetrano in an Academy Award acceptance speech.
NEPTUNE – Named for the ROMAN GOD OF THE SEA

Act of Incorporation – Township of Neptune, February 26, 1879
(Excerpt from 1964 history book titled “Four score and five”)

“That all that part of the Township of Ocean contained within the following bounds, that is to say: Beginning at the Atlantic Ocean, where Great Pond empties into the same, and running thence westerly up the middle of said Great Pond and the south branch thereof, until it intersects a continuation of the center line of Asbury Avenue, in the Borough of Asbury Park, in said County; thence continuing the course of said centre line (as the magnetic needle now points), north sixty-seven degrees and fifty minutes west, until it intersects the division line between the Township of Ocean and the Township of Shrewsbury, in said County, in the middle of the public road leading from Eatontown to Squan, near Benjamin King’s storehouse; thence in a southerly direction along said line to Shark River brook; thence in an easterly direction along the centre of Shark River to the Atlantic Ocean; thence northerly along the same to the place of beginning, shall be, and hereby is set off from the said Township of Ocean, and made a separate Township, to be called and known as the Township of Neptune.” The north-south borders referred to are Deal Lake (the Great Pond) and the Shark River.

PARTING SHOTS

Kelly’s Bar, Route 35 and Laird Avenue in Neptune City, opened for business in June of 1949…Pete & Elda’s, at Woodland Avenue and Route 35 in Neptune City, opened for business in 1953…for the first time in 111 years, Ocean Grove had to let cars drive through the gates on Sundays in April of 1980 . . . Frank Smith, mentioned above as a member of the 1923 NHS State Championship Football Team when the phrase “scarlet flyers” may have been spawned, retold the story in 1996 how after practice the fastest players were able to take hot showers as they had to run back to the school from the practice field. The slower players took cold showers as the hot water was gone.
PARTING SHOTS (Continued)

Additional historical notes from the 1940’s:

* In 1940 the Neptune High School graduating class of 155 seniors was, to that point, the largest in school history.

* In 1942 gas rationing registration was conducted July 9, 10 and 11 in the Neptune High School gym.

* The Board of Education closed Neptune Schools for two weeks, starting January 22, 1943 due to the fuel oil shortage.

* In 1944, The Times, a local newspaper, noted that Lida A. Doren, Neptune High School’s first principal, admired a red and black striped sweater worn by a student, Wallace “Brick” Reed, and then declared red and black to be the school colors.

* In 1945 a night school for discharged veterans was opened in Neptune High School for studies in social, mechanical and electrical engineering.

* In 1946, Dan Cole, chairman of the Neptune High School Committee on Atomic Peace; Tyler Bills, Student Council president, and Albert Schneider, signed a letter composed by the student body appealing for international control of atomic energy. The letter was read before the U.S. House of Representatives by Congressman Jim Auchincloss. It was printed in the Congressional Record of March 18, 1946.

* In 1946 the salary schedule for Neptune teachers was $1,600 minimum and $2,800 maximum.

* In 1946, the Neptune track team took first place in the Penn Relays.

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List of contributors to this research:
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