



Historical Society of the Township of Chatham

NEWSLETTER

...

NOVEMBER 2013



A Message from our Co-Presidents: Legacy

Our family has belonged to the Historical Society for quite awhile, but it is only recently that Martha and I have become actively involved. Because we are new, we do not have much knowledge of the nearly forty year history of the Society. I am somewhat embarrassed by how little I know of the long-time members who have formed, fostered and served this organization for so long.

When I browse through the old membership directories, I recognize so many names that appear year after year, and decade after decade, often as officers, trustees, and committee members. They are the names of the dedicated, talented people who have built the legacy that we have today. That legacy is clear to me when I look into the densely packed filing cabinet in the museum vault, review the long list of oral histories, and peruse the displays and art work throughout the museum. We have not had the pleasure of long relationships with the people who created the museum and its archives, but we now have a treasured relationship with the legacy.

At the end of last year, when **Don Engesser** retired as a trustee, we did not thank him here. We should have and we are correcting that now. Don has been one of those legacy

builders through years as a trustee and an officer, including many years as president, and as a long time member of the Monday morning research team. Because of his many volunteer hours, Don has provided the Society with significant donations from his old employer, Exxon. For all of this, Don, thank you.

After many, many years as a member of our excellent Programs Committee, **Nancy Vroom Johnson**, has retired from that position. This committee has arranged year after year of wonderful programs. People from other historical societies and service organizations are invariably astonished by the quantity of fine programs our Historical Society has each year. Nancy has been an essential part of this. Nancy, thank you.

As many of you know, **Fran Boyer** died in September. She and George had recently relocated to Jamestown, Rhodes Island. Both Fran and George contributed so much to the Society, arranging the annual dinner, working in the museum, and working on the archives on Monday mornings. Before heading off for RI, they made a significant donation to our new technology. And for all that, we thank them. Our hearts go out to George, their sons, and their grandchildren.

Last week the Museum was honored to be included on the Chatham Middle School PTO House Tour. In the days running up to the event, several of us spent quite a while dressing up the downstairs, and giving everything upstairs and down a serious dusting. In the process, I saw numerous things in the museum that I hadn't really paid attention to before, turning drudgery into discovery. During the tour, it was such a pleasure to point out or explain various artifacts or pictures to the people passing

through. So many of the visitors said they had never come to the museum before and were really taken in by it. It was so much fun to share the legacy and to see it embraced.

A legacy is not a static thing, especially when it's subject is history. Every decade that passes adds to the legacy, making it denser and richer. Every decade, we see the past a little differently, our filters changing with experience. We not only see the past, we see our own past becoming part of it. Most of us don't consciously set out to create a legacy, we simply live our lives. But by being part of this endeavor, the saving and sharing of history, we contribute to the ever evolving legacy.

We wish you all a happy holiday season and a good and prosperous New Year.

Pat and Martha Wells

Table of Contents	
From our Co-Presidents	1
Programs.....	2
Article: by Marta McDowell.....	3
Article: by Jessie Cochran.....	4
Landscaping	4
New Members	4
New Officers & Trustees	4
Historic Marker Installed	5
Thank You's.....	5
Membership Dues Time.....	5
Holiday Gift Ideas	6



PROGRAMS – Dec 2013 and 2014

★
Sunday – December 1, 2013 **2 PM**

Holiday Party

Come and join us to celebrate the season at our annual Holiday Party. Please bring an appetizer or dessert to share. Interesting libations will be provided.

Location: Red Brick Schoolhouse
 • Members & Their Guests •

★
Sunday – February 9, 2014 **2 PM**
Land Use in the Great Swamp Over Time
 Presenter: Chuck Whitmore

The Great Swamp in Morris and Somerset counties is a special place to many people. More than that, it has been a habitation for humans for thousands of years and the land has been used for many purposes. Chuck Whitmore has looked at a variety of land uses and will describe his impressions of this part of Great Swamp history.

Location: Red Brick Schoolhouse
 • All Welcome •

★
Sunday – March 2, 2014 **2 PM**
Program: George Washington's Mount Vernon

Joint Meeting with Chatham Historical Society.
 More information to follow.

Location: Presbyterian Church of Chatham Township
 240 Southern Boulevard
 • All Welcome •

★
Sunday – April 13, 2014 **2 PM**
Program: Elias Boudinot and Lord Sterling
 Presenter: Jessie Cochran

Two East New Jersey Proprietors who were friends and leaders in the American Revolution.

Location: Red Brick Schoolhouse
 • All Welcome •

★
Sunday – May 4, 2013 **2 PM**
Memories of Green Village & Chatham Township

Description forthcoming.

Location: Green Village Firehouse
 • All Welcome •

★
Sunday – June 15, 2014 **5 PM**

Picnic

Location: Red Brick Schoolhouse
 • Members & Their Guests •

★
Sunday – September 14, 2014 **2 PM**

To Be Announced

★
October Date TBD **5 PM**

Annual Dinner

Location: To Be Announced
 • Members & Their Guests •

★
Sunday – November 9, 2014 **2 PM**
Civil War Program
 Presenter: William Stypke

Description forthcoming.

Location: Red Brick Schoolhouse
 • All Welcome •

★
Sunday – December 7, 2014 **2 PM**

Holiday Party

Come and join us to celebrate the season at our annual Holiday Party. Please bring an appetizer or dessert to share. Interesting libations will be provided.

Location: Red Brick Schoolhouse
 • Members & Their Guests •

You can find updated program information in our next newsletter & on our website.

CHATHAM ROCK

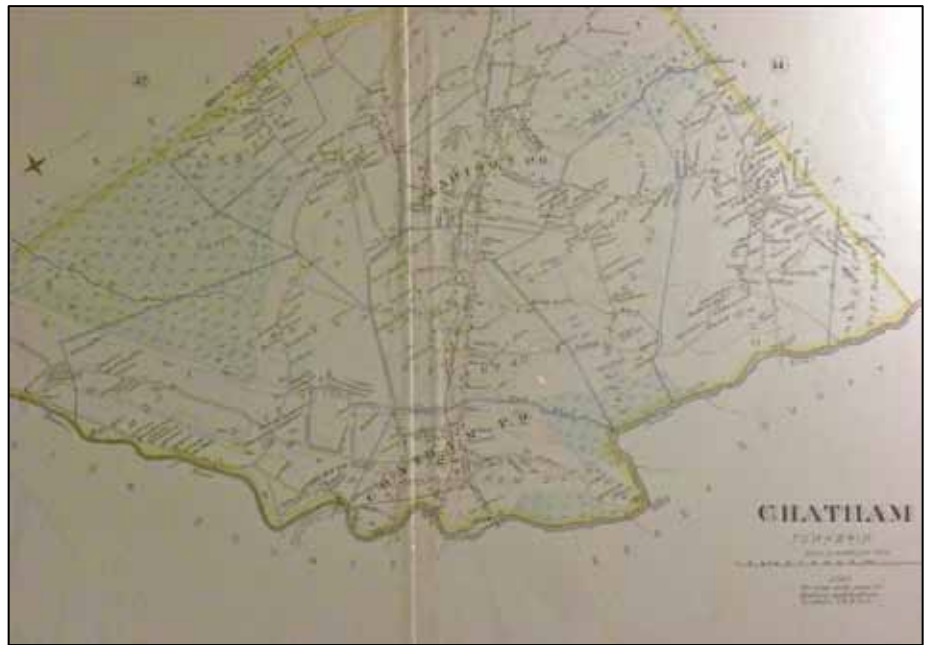
by Marta McDowell

For a gardener, geology is destiny. My little bit of earth is in a town surrounded on three sides by water. Chatham, New Jersey, sits at an elbow of the Passaic River that forms its northern and eastern boundaries. To the south, the so-called Great Swamp soaks vast acreage. Yet for all of its perimeter liquid, the town is built on rock.

The Passaic's riverbed is carved along the base of Long Hill, the third and last of the Watchung Ridges, a set of basaltic vertebrae that runs roughly north-south. Long Hill, christened "Fair Mount" by early Chathamites, forms the backbone of the town. From just three steep blocks uphill from my house, one can gaze over our little valley and imagine the waves of prehistoric Lake Passaic lapping up. A bit of the old lake still finds its way into my garden.

In a residential development project now dotting Long Hill, heavy equipment has uncovered a layer of sedimentary rock the color of New York City brownstones. Stone for those Italianate terrace houses of the mid-1800s was quarried here. Millennia earlier, dinosaurs waded in the lakeside mud that morphed, over time, into these rocks. My agreeable husband helped fill the back of the Subaru with several loads of this ochre-brown rock, which we turned into an edge and path for a new garden bed.

You wouldn't think that we'd need to import rocks into our garden: Stick a shovel anywhere in the backyard, and you'll be rewarded with a clang. Our property sits along the east-west moraine, the stopping of point of America's last glacier. A thin veneer of soil, mostly



reddish clay, covers the collection of stone that the ice sheet amassed in its trek southward through Canada and New England. Many of these stones are rounded, worn by the emery action of the moving ice.

My favorite of these glacial hitchhikers is Roxbury puddingstone, a purple conglomerate with a name like an English dessert. We constantly scout construction sites, numerous during the most recent teardown era of Chatham's geological time, and liberate any choice specimens unearthed during excavation. The best of these now provide structure for a collection of tiny hostas along the back walk.

Out of other rocks chosen for their squarish shoulders, we've built a low wall along the wooded back property line. It's homage to the colonial farmers who cleared this land for pasture and orchard and field. They would be horrified to see the reforestation that a few generations of suburbanites have managed to achieve. When Hurricane Sandy toppled a white oak in the back corner of the lot I mourned the loss of the tree, but I

rejoiced in finding a good-sized piece of sandstone among its massive roots to add to the wall.

The leaves from the trees on our property get composted every year, offsetting to a degree the heaviness of the clay soil. In the nineteenth-century, Chatham boasted a thriving brick industry, but the clay pit that was once a source of raw materials is now an astro-turfed athletic field. Still, clay laces the local soil, and clay and stone make for heavy digging. Each year when I plant the latest batch of daffodils with the inevitable clank of rock on tool, instead of cursing I smile the smile of a petrophile.



Marta McDowell is the author of *Emily Dickinson's Gardens*, published by McGraw-Hill in 2005, *Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life* published by Timber Press October 2013, copies can be purchased at [d.j. crater](http://d.j.crater.com) (www.djcrater.com) in Chatham.

www.martamcdowell.com

This essay was written for *The Common* (September 17, 2013 <http://www.thecommononline.org/features/chatham-rock>)

William Penn Marker



While walking on our favorite trail in Chatham Township, we noticed that an important landmark was dislodged and probably headed for oblivion. It had been in its spot for almost 300 years and was one of two Penn markers in the Great Swamp that had W P engraved on them. William Penn never came to the Chatham area, but after acquiring great tracts of land in Pennsylvania, he bought 1250 acres from the West New Jersey Board of Proprietors in 1715. Some of this was located in the western part of Chatham near Lafayette Ave. according to the late historian, John Cunningham.

We notified the Morris County Park Commission about the accident and they returned the marker to its original setting. The Commission looked up the history and found that the marker was the referral point for all the surveys in Morris County.

By Jessie Cochran

Historical Society members who helped in this undertaking were Caroline and Bob Knott and Kathy Havens.



Have You Noticed?

We have new landscape plantings at the Red Brick Schoolhouse. Thanks to the expertise of *The Town and Country Garden Club of the Chathams, Marta McDowell, and Tom and Debbie Bucuk of Green Path Land Care*, our wonderful building is being sent back in time. It is beginning to look the way it did when the school bell called students to the top of Snake Hill starting in 1860 to what was then known as the Mount Vernon School. There is a picture of the building from 1928, in the slide show on our website's home page. Join us in watching the transformation!

Welcome To New Members!

- ❖ Faye Molesphini
- ❖ Roz and Arnold Mytelka
- ❖ Fran Pollard

Welcome To Our New Officers and Trustees!

- Elected at the annual meeting last October,
- **Debbie Bucuk** will begin a three-year term as a trustee.
 - **Linda Pitney** and **Caroline Knott** have switched positions on the Board. Linda was elected as secretary for 2014. Caroline will complete the remaining two years of Linda's trustee term.
 - **Ken Hetrick** was re-elected to serve another term as treasurer.
 - **Don Davidson & Sarah Stanley** (serve jointly) were re-elected to a three-year trustee position.

For Your Information: The 2014 membership book will be distributed at the February meeting (or mailed to you if you cannot attend). In order for our book to be accurate, **please complete** the information requested on the enclosed membership/dues form. – And Thank You !



L-R: Bailey Brower, Chatham Township Committeeman; Nicole O'Connell, home owner; Caroline Knott, Secretary; Patricia Wells, Co-President; and Kenneth Hetrick, Treasurer.

The Cockrem Farm Historic Marker Installed

John Crockrem, a farmer and weaver, owned this farm. His son, Philip, was the second of three family generations to occupy the house. Philip was the second postmaster of Green Village 1863-1869. He was a wagon maker, farmer and major contributor to the building of the Green Village Methodist Church. From 1956 to 2000, the home was occupied by Helen and Arthur Fenske. Helen was instrumental in the fight to defeat the Great Swamp Jet Port.

Location: 486 Green Village Road, Green Village

Thank You's... To So Many

. . . **Woman's Club of Chatham** for their generous donation which made it possible for the Society to purchase another historic marker.

. . . **Sarah Stanley** for creating our awesome website.

. . . **Sue Moore**, our Museum Director, for keeping the museum running smoothly and continuing our education mission by conducting enrichment programs for students and Scout groups.

. . . **Val Heyl** for planning the annual dinner and for scheduling an outstanding program. More than 30 members enjoyed the evening.

. . . **Ken and Haide Hetrick** for opening their historic home for a tour by our members.

. . . **Anna Riker** for serving as trustee for 2 terms.

. . . **Department of Public Works** for ALL your support and work in and around the Red Brick Schoolhouse.



Chatham Township Historical Society Annual Dues & Membership Form

Due **before** January 15.

- *Please detach and complete this form & mail it with your check in the enclosed envelope.*

Make checks payable to *Chatham Township Historical Society* and mail it to:
Chatham Township Historical Society, PO Box 262, Chatham, NJ 07928

Please Check: \$15: Individual | \$20: Family | \$2: Student | \$_____ Additional Donation

Please Circle: Mr. & Mrs. | Mr. | Mrs. | Ms. | Miss

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please Check – *Tell us how you prefer to receive meeting reminders:* Email Telephone

We hope members will consider adding a tax deductible donation to the Historical Society to help continue funding the historic marker project. If you decide to make a contribution to this, please indicate the amount on this form.

–The Historical Society of Chatham Township is a 501(c)(3) organization.

Thank You For Your Support – We Look Forward To Seeing You Throughout The New Year!

– *Holiday Gift Ideas* –

- Membership to the Chatham Township Historical Society would make a nice gift for a neighbor or friend.
- Books & specialty items are available for sale at the Historical Society, at the Library of the Chatham’s, and on our website.
- Let us share an excerpt from Ruth Pierson Churchill’s charming book about an earlier Chatham, *Memories Entwined with Roses*:

“When the man from the water company comes to read my meter, I realize how far we have come since the day Grandfather Noe hired a dowser to find underground water.

“Dowsing is an ancient art where men used a traditional Y-rod to locate springs. Remember, there was no way to transport water in those days, and one had to rely on a good supply of natural water to fill up the wells!

“Grandfather wanted to build his house up the hill, which was all open countryside. There were no water mains and no electric lines at that time. Mother told us that he hired a dowser

to walk around the area with him to try to discover an underground vein of water. The story goes that at one point his Y-rod, which was made of witchhazel wood and which he held in front of him parallel to the ground, began to quiver and point down. Then and there Grandfather decided to locate his new home. Sure enough, an underground spring of fresh water was discovered at the very place the dowser had indicated.”

- *Memories Entwined with Roses* by Ruth Pierson Churchill \$20
- *Chatham Township* by John T. Cunningham \$25
- *Historical Society Tote Bag* \$15
- *Collage Map of Chatham: 1845/ 1867/ 1978* \$15

These & More Available At Our Website



Thank You For Your Support!

We Look Forward To Seeing You Throughout The New Year!