



# Historical Society of the Township of Chatham

NEWSLETTER

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APRIL 2014



*A Message from our Co-Presidents:*

## **Happy spring, everyone!**

We were starting to feel that winter would never end. Though as bad as it was, our wonderful March speaker, Rob Shenk from Mount Vernon, reminded us that the winter of 1779-1780 was much worse. Thinking of the troops encamped at Jockey Hollow and all they suffered, as well as hearing about George Washington's travails, put things into perspective.

Now that the piles of snow have disappeared, it's time to look at the variety of historical sites in the township with renewed interest. The Historical Society has been asked to be the Chatham Township municipal representative for the Morris County Historic Sites Re-survey. In 1986 an inventory of the historic sites of Morris County was published. That list is now being reviewed and updated. It should be noted that being listed on the survey simply acknowledges the historical, architectural, and/or cultural value of a building or site. It does not restrict site changes or building demolition.

The primary criteria for the original inventory was that buildings or other sites had to be at least 50 years old. Nearly all of the Township buildings placed on the survey were from the 18th and 19th century. The 50

year requirement stands for this survey as well. That now means we can consider sites from before 1964. Yes, mid-century is now considered historic! So, how about the houses of the Chatham Colony? There are still several houses that are nearly unchanged since they were built in the 1920s and 1930s. Examples of the original Long Hill Country Club Estates models are still extant. (See the article on page 2 of this issue of the newsletter.) There are quite a few Sears houses in the Township. These groups of houses are typical of their period and represent the social desires of their time.

There is an amazing range of architecture in our town. We sometimes think a building has to be really old to be historic, but much of the 20th century now falls into that category. By recognizing the historic value of some of these more recent structures, we are reminded of the importance of the near past as well. How did houses and communities change in the early and mid-decades of the 20th century? Look around Chatham Township. It's all here.

While preparing for last year's talk on Township architecture, we drove nearly every street and road in the town. We found we often had to stop, and even get out and walk. That was the best, because you got a really good look. The weather is getting better and the leaves are not out yet, so it's a great time to go architecture gawking. Have fun looking, but drive and walk safely.

Got a favorite house in town? Send us an e-mail and tell us the address of the one you like best and why: [pandmwells@gmail.com](mailto:pandmwells@gmail.com).

*Martha and Pat*

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### **\*\* WISH LIST \*\***

#### **Artifacts and Photos:**

Please keep the Historical Society's museum in mind if you want to find a good home for your historic items or Chatham memorabilia. We can scan slides, photos, documents and return them to you. If you have a donation, please contact:

Pat or Martha Wells at:

- 973-635-8672;
- email: [pandmwells@gmail.com](mailto:pandmwells@gmail.com)

Sue Moore at:

- email: [svanm26@yahoo.com](mailto:svanm26@yahoo.com)

## Long Hill Country Club Estates

By Sheila Goggins

Long Hill Country Club Estates, Incorporated was established in 1933. The land, which was surveyed by Charles J. Leeds in March 1933, was located between the Great Swamp, Meyersville Road, Fairmount Avenue, and Pikers Lane (now Long Hill Lane). A company called Long Hill Country Club Estates Developers, with Nathan Wexler as its manager, sold the property lots. Company offices were located at 152 West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street in New York City.



*The Chatham: One of the three original designs shown in advertisements for the development.*

Buyers were able to purchase property by putting down a cash deposit and then making monthly payments which included interest, insurance, taxes, and amortization of mortgage over a 20-year period. The Federal Housing Administration offered loan insurance.

The Long Hill Country Club Estates was advertised as a “carefully restricted community” with a clubhouse and an outdoor swimming pool. Three models of houses were available: the Cape Cod priced at \$3990, the Chatham priced at \$4690, and the Mayfair priced at \$4990. A contractor, Robert Miele, built most of the houses. The houses were advertised as having large plots of land, full size rooms, high ceilings, insulation, brass plumbing, built-in tubs and Kohler & Kohler fixtures with chrome fittings. The floors were oak and the heating system was steam heat. The houses also had a separate hot water system for the summer, cross-ventilation, and windows finished with shades and copper screens. The kitchens had linoleum floors and handsome built-in cabinets. A porch and a garage were also included in the price as well as lawns graded and shrubbery planted. The houses were built with stairways to attics that contained two storage areas. It was noted that these areas could be finished as needed.

The idea behind the Long Hill Country Club Estates development was to provide homes for people in a “carefully restricted community”. The area was scenic and offered people a nice suburban home at a moderate price. Another advertised advantage of the area was that it was close to Newark, the railway, and good local shopping.

During interviews with Bertha and Jimmy Kennedy (Mountainview Road), Walter and Margaret Cruz (Mountainview Road), Bev Kern (Mountainview Road), Ervin Hoag (Long Hill Lane), Otto Vopelius (Mountainview Road), and Helen Smith (Cedar Lane), members of the Chatham Township Historical Society learned firsthand about Long Hill Country Club Estates. Residents talked of the great storm of 1947. More than two feet of snow hit the area and everything shut down. All recalled how they collected their mail at Harry Harootunian’s store (presently called the Fairmount Country Store). Mary Pirrone Harootunian (his wife) served as postmistress. The store had a set of mailboxes, now located at the Red Brick Schoolhouse Museum, where residents of the Long Hill Country Club Estates and that portion of Chatham Township could collect their mail.

Harry Harootunian also maintained a shooting camp and hunting ground which he sold to the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge before he moved to Missouri.

Bertha and Jimmy Kennedy, Margaret and Walter Cruz, and Bev Kern remembered that people sometimes got water from the well and spring within the area before the water company laid down pipes. Residents recalled reopening the clubhouse pool that fell into disrepair after the Great Depression and then building a filter for the pool. They said that Fairmount Road got its name from the area once called Fair Mountain. This area was once part of the glacial moraine and quantities of blue stone were found when foundations for the homes were dug. They all recalled that dynamite was used to blast the land.



*The Chatham Model at 5 Woodlawn Drive. Built in 1943.*

Otto Vopelius recalled that he was asked to become road supervisor. At one point in time the potholes on private roads were filled with ashes from furnaces. Otto recalled that the town purchased more trucks and a front-end loader so the approximately thirty-eight miles of Township roads could be maintained. He also said that the streams that flowed through the Long Hill Country Club estates were piped by the Commonwealth Water Company into the Passaic River.

Ervin Hoag owned a poultry farm at the end of Long Hill Road, raising chickens and turkeys, and delivered eggs and

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other products to customers in the Chathams. Erv Hoag is well known in Chatham Township since he served on the Board of Education, as a member of the Township Committee, and as mayor. He was a firefighter as well as fire chief and also set up a memorial honoring the local residents that fought in the Korean Conflict. Erv donated four acres of his land to the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge before selling his property and moving to another residence in the Township. (A collection of his farm tools is now in the Red Brick Schoolhouse Museum.)

Early residents included Prudential Insurance Company (located in Newark) employees who either bought or rented property. Helen Smith, who moved to the Long Hill Country Club Estates with her husband, David, in 1936, recalled that Bob and Bernice Rowan were the first residents and lived at 2 Cedar Lane. She also remembered sewing pajamas at the Red Brick Schoolhouse for the wounded soldiers in World War II. Helen also remembered the time in the late 1950s and early 1960s when the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey wanted to build a jetport in Chatham Township where the Great Swamp and its surroundings now stand. The citizens of Harding Township, Madison, and the Chathams banded together and prevented the building of the jetport

The history of Long Hill Country Club Estates is interesting and shows how people brought to a town by a developer's idea also brought the gifts of themselves which they shared with the Township of Chatham.



### Can You Help?

During the week of June 2nd, a large number of second grade students from Southern Boulevard School will arrive at the Red Brick Schoolhouse Museum for their annual field trip.

Sue Moore, our Museum Director, will present "Now and Then" showing changes through the years to Chatham Township. Following that presentation, we need your help supervising the students with the scavenger hunt through history within the museum.

**Please email Sue** at [svanm26@yahoo.com](mailto:svanm26@yahoo.com) to offer your assistance!

### *Welcome to New Members!*

- Beverly DeGraaf
- Robin and Bruce Hoppe
- Marian Russell
- Marjorie Tompkins
- Barbara and Chuck Whitmore

## Red Brick Schoolhouse Landscape Restoration

Chatham Township and the Historical Society have long been privileged to have the Town and Country Garden Club maintain the grounds of the Red Brick Schoolhouse. For many years, the building and property sported window boxes and plants that had been installed in the 1960s by Garden Club members.

Last fall the Garden Club, with the guidance of Marta McDowell, undertook a project to change the landscape design of the property with the goal of returning the landscape to one more in keeping with the historic period and function of the schoolhouse. A member of the Historical Society and Township resident, Marta lent her expertise in historic gardens and landscape design and developed a plan.

Green Path Land Care, owned by Historical Society members Tom and Debbie Bucuk, also participated in the project by rebuilding the deteriorating wall along Fairmount Avenue, removing overgrown shrubs, and installing new plantings.

Funding for the project came from a grant from the Woman's Club of Chatham, supplemented by funds from the Chatham Jaycees and the Garden Club.

Thank you to the Garden Club for their leadership and coordination of this project, to Marta McDowell for her expertise and advice, and to the Bucuk family for their skill and labor.

Check out the rebuilt wall at [greenpathlandcare.com](http://greenpathlandcare.com). Visit Marta McDowell's website: [martamcdowell.com](http://martamcdowell.com).



Members of the Town and Country Garden Club: Virginia Hofler (president), Mary Keselica (project chairman), Kathi Cullen, Sally Walker, Anne Noser. In the back is Pat Wells, Historical Society co-president.





## Chatham Township Historical Society Meetings & Programs

**Sunday, April 13 at 2 PM**

### ***Program: Local Leaders in the American Revolution***

Presenter: Jessie Cochran

The Elias Boudinot House is small in structure but large in historical importance. Two of the leading revolutionary men – Lord Stirling and Elias Boudinot – were both friends and proprietors of the house during the Revolutionary period. The property's unique location made it desirable for these men who were looking for profitable investments. Join us to learn more about this unique property and the great men who owned it.

**Location:** Red Brick Schoolhouse  
All Welcome



**Sunday, May 4 at 2 PM**

### ***Program: Memories of Green Village and Chatham Township***

Did you grow up in Chatham Township or Green Village? Did you raise your children in the area? Do you have special memories of our town from years ago? Bring photographs, stories, and recollections to share with other residents of Green Village and the Township.

**Location:** Green Village Firehouse  
(Second floor with elevator access)  
All Welcome



**Sunday, June 8 at 5 PM**

### ***Picnic***

Please bring a salad, side dish or finger dessert to share with others. The Historical Society will provide Kentucky Fried Chicken and drinks

**Location:** Red Brick Schoolhouse  
Members & their Guests



**Saturday, June 14**

### ***Fishawack Festival***

A fun day for Chatham residents! Stop by the Chatham Township Historical Society's location - Can you identify the use of antique tools and household items? - Inspect one of Don Davidson's antique cars.



## Land Use in the Great Swamp over Time

Presentation by Chuck Whitmore

February 9, 2014

Summarized by Pat Wells

On February 9, 2014, Chuck Whitmore, a long-time member of the Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, presented an informative and entertaining talk, "Land Use in the Great Swamp over Time". The time he included was about 10,000 years ago to the present. Chuck's knowledge of the swamp has been acquired by many years of walking its paths and straying beyond them, as well as research on subjects that appeal to his curiosity about the swamp and its inhabitants.

Chuck presented and elaborated on a list of ten land uses, that, he pointed out, could probably be applied to most areas of human habitation. At about 10,000 acres, the Great Swamp has provided space and resources for many purposes. At the conclusion of his talk, the audience was able to identify a few more uses.

Here are Chuck's land uses.

1. Space for living. For centuries before European colonists arrived in the area, Lenni Lenape Indians lived within the swamp, where game and water were abundant. Evidence of their occupation can be seen in our museum in the form of arrowheads found in the fields of Schwartz Dairy which used to lie between Southern Boulevard and the swamp. Starting in the 1700s English settlers began settling in and around the swamp, clearing land for agriculture. The number of inhabitants in the swamp increased significantly compared to the period of Indian habitation.

2. Support of the hunter/gatherer lifestyle. Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, the swamp provided the Lenapes with a wide range of food animals: fish, fowl, deer, small mammals, and turtles. In addition to planting corn, the Indians were also able to harvest many wild growing food plants. With the influx of Europeans, wildlife populations decreased markedly because of the land changes needed for agriculture and because of increased hunting and trapping. Chuck mentioned that harvesting of game and furs continued into our modern times. He spoke of an interview with Bert Abbazia in which Bert recounted how, in his youth, he and his friends, as well as boys from Green Village, set traps for fur bearing animals.

3. Land speculation. This refers to acquiring land by grant or by purchase at a low price, then selling it later at a higher price. One of the early land speculators was William Penn, whose property included large swathes of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. A marker located off the path by the Green Village Post Office bears his initials, suggesting that his property extended to that point. A map from this period shows his sons had deeds covering much of the Great Swamp.

4. Military related activities. With the Continental Army wintering over in Jockey Hollow, there is a good possibility that foragers ranged into the swamp in search of

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game for the soldiers who were in great need of food. "The Fishawack Papers"\* recount the legend that Shepard Kollock, the editor of the *New Jersey Journal*, the leading north Jersey newspaper at the time of the Battle of Springfield, took his printing press and disappeared into the Great Swamp until the coast was clear. Chuck remarked that this might actually be considered an eleventh land use - hide out.

5. Resource extraction activities. In this category Chuck included many resources: timber, minerals, clay for bricks, game, fruit and plants, furs, water energy for turning mills, and pond ice for summer refrigeration.

6. Pre-industrial agriculture. This covers the period from the arrival of Europeans who cleared land for crops to the end of the Great Depression, when farming methods shifted from predominantly small farms with horses and tractors to larger farms with large equipment such as combines. While researching this subject, Chuck studied the 1870 Federal Census of Agriculture for the area of the Great Swamp and found more than 400 farms listed. Some of these may have been wood lots rather than agricultural plots. During colonial times, small farms were able to provide a complete living for a family. Later farms provided surplus products that were sold. This lasted well into the 20th century with at least four dairy operations on the periphery of the swamp. Two were in Chatham Township: Schwartz Dairy and Noe Farm.

Chuck noted that the spread of agriculture and extraction of resources from the Great Swamp resulted in a drastic decrease in forest cover, especially in the western portion. However some areas were left wooded on purpose as designated wood lots.

7. Corridor for utility transmission lines and utility pipelines. The first electric transmission lines were strung in about 1920. A wooden elevated walkway, that tracked the overhead wires for at least part of their route through Great Swamp, was constructed at the time. It was a convenient highway for the kids from the Colony to get into and beyond the swamp. Remnants of it remain today. In the 1960s, maybe earlier, gas pipelines were laid through the same lanes in the swamp that were used by the power lines.

Chuck also added waste water effluence to this category. This is important as it actually reverses the flow of two streams in the swamp, Loantaka Brook and Black Brook. It also produces a more consistent release of water into these brooks than would have been provided by snow melt and rain.

8. Regional transportation facility. Happily this did not go beyond the planning phase. As a result of the proposal for this purpose, a regional jetport, we now have the subject of the next category.

9. Wildlife and environmental management. This is now the most widespread use of the swamp as a result of the creation of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. This entity has allowed the swamp to revert back to its wilderness state in large sections. In some areas, structures related to its agricultural history have been removed and the ditches that

drained arable land have been filled in. In other areas, ponds have been created for migrating waterfowl. Clean up of old homesteads and garbage removal by volunteers has been an important activity in restoring the swamp.

10. Educational and recreational activities. In addition to the Refuge, two county facilities also provide education and recreation: the Morris County Great Swamp Outdoor Education Center in Chatham Township and the Somerset County Environmental Education Center in Basking Ridge. Each of these entities has educational programs and maintains trails through the swamp.

Chuck pointed out that recreational use of the swamp is not new and related a story from the "Fishawack Papers" concerning the Minisink Indians. This was a club, rather than an actual tribe, that was founded by Rufus Keisler, a Newark banker. Keisler purchased 23 acres on a knoll of land in the swamp and erected an Adirondack lean-to. There the tribe of fellow commuters enjoyed cookouts, powwows, and an occasional outing that included the ladies.

Chuck summed up with this: "The broad take-away is there have been changes over time. The land was once heavily forested and then it was partially cleared for intensive agriculture use. It is now returning to undisturbed forest, at least in the wilderness area, and that is dictated by federal law."

"The land was once lightly populated and then fairly densely populated on the scale of rural agricultural living. And, now, again the land is very lightly populated. There are still some privately owned parcels, probably all with life rights within the boundaries of Great Swamp."

"And perhaps most importantly for us, the land was first quiet, the land was threatened, and now the land may stay quiet for a long time. We can enjoy that."

At the conclusion of Chuck's talk the audience was able to suggest additional uses. Erv Hoag reminded us of the multiple functions of Miele's dump that used to lie within the Green Village section of the Great Swamp. It was not only a dumping place, but also a trading center for used items and a social meeting place for the men of the town.



*Noe-Doremus Alcohol Still in the Great Swamp.  
Louis Noe and Leon Doremus were brothers-in-law.*

Lastly we were reminded of a photograph in the Society's collection that depicts the Noe-Doremus alcohol still that the men operated in the Great Swamp during Prohibition, so manufacturing can be added to the list as well.

\* "The Fishawack Papers", comprised of 14 volumes of Chatham historical records, are housed at the Library of the Chathams.

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## The Schwartz Family Farm

### One of the many farms that abutted the Great Swamp

*From Oral History recorded on August 24, 1990*

*Herman and Charlotte de Haan interviewed*

*George and Ann Schwartz*



*George J. Schwartz and his family came to Chatham Township in about 1890 and purchased about 40 acres of land on the south side of Southern Boulevard. George cleared the arable land and grew corn, strawberries, and five acres of asparagus. In an oral history recorded for the Historical Society, George's grandson, George, recalled that his grandfather developed his own strains of corn and strawberries. He remembered picking and bundling asparagus for hours.*

*When Grandfather George died in 1925, his son, George, took over the operation. He continued until 1938 when his sons, George and Donald, decided to establish a dairy farm on the site. The dairy operated until 1969. They sold the land to Mr. Kaplan, who developed it as Arrowhead Estates.*

*In the oral history, George, the dairyman, said that their family owned 15 acres in the swamp and that all the wood for the houses and several other buildings came from there. Oak and hickory were hauled out and taken down to Dan Pierson's sawmill on the western end of Southern Boulevard to be cut into planks.*

## George Washington's 1779-1780 Winter Encampment at Morristown

*Summarized by Pat Wells*

On Sunday, March 2, 2014, the Chatham Township Historical Society and the Chatham Historical Society hosted their annual joint meeting. The presenter was Rob Shenk, Senior Vice President of Visitor Engagement at Mount Vernon, Virginia. Rob brought copies of a number of letters that General Washington wrote while in residence at the Ford Mansion in Morristown during the Continental Armies winter encampment of 1779-1780.

The letters showed the breadth of responsibilities the General had during this time. Several of the letters centered on the procurement of supplies, especially food, for the troops billeted in Jockey Hollow. The letters showed the General's attempts to obtain food from nearby areas, trying to balance demand with diplomacy.

One of these letters involved plans for an over-the-ice raid on British-held Staten Island to steal food supplies. The letter was written to the officer in charge of the raid. At the beginning of the letter, Washington states that he would not assume to tell the officer how to undertake the mission, but then he writes in great detail how he wants the task done. He apparently did not have great faith in this officer. In the end the mission did not succeed.

Another letter was to Washington's farm manager at Mount Vernon. Rob stressed that the farm was where Washington's heart really was. His deepest desire was to be there. In the letter, Washington discusses crops, livestock, and the distillery. (During this time, Mount Vernon was the home of the largest whiskey distillery in the colonies.)

Rob noted that Washington wrote or dictated dozens of letters every day. Multiple copies of letters had to be made. Copies were kept as records. In addition, letters containing military orders had to be sent in multiples by different routes to assure that the message arrived.

The Mount Vernon library is the home of George Washington's diaries and papers. Many of these have been digitized and are available for viewing and research at [www.mountvernon.org/library](http://www.mountvernon.org/library).

Mount Vernon is run by the Mount Vernon Ladies Association. A member of both the Chatham Borough and Chatham Township Historical Societies, Betsy Holdsworth is the Vice Regent for New Jersey. We would like to thank her for bringing Rob here for this great talk.

This presentation, held at the Presbyterian Church of Chatham Township, was very well attended, with members of the Harding Township Historical Society and the North Jersey American Revolution Round Table also attending. Thanks to our publicity person, Sheila Goggins, the meeting also drew in members of the public.