

The Chester Historical Society's



NEWS & VIEWS

We bring you four stories in our first CHS Newsletter of 2016. We lead off with excerpts from Jack Hyde's hilarious and poignant memoir from his school days in Chester in the mid 1950's. We build on last newsletter's story on the Chester Furnace with one about the nearby Hedges Mine that shows how advanced some mines were in Chester. We continue our series on notable houses in Chester with the early history of a house that dates from the late 1700's and has had at least one infamous owner (not counting the present one). Finally we continue our history series on the AT&T Bell Labs Chester Outdoor Research Facility by starting at the beginning in the 1930's.

Save the Date! CHS members are invited to attend the Annual Meeting and Picnic on **Sunday, September 25, 2016, noon to 4pm at the newly dedicated Barn at Highlands Ridge Park.** An invitation will be sent to members with RSVP information and a request to bring an appetizer or dessert. Not a member and want to join? Go to <http://historicchesternj.com/home/membership.html>.

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Jack Hyde in 1953 at the start of his memoirs.

Growing Up in Chester in the 1950's

By Meryl Carmel – Chester Historical Society

With another school year winding down bringing Chester students and teachers within striking distance of summer vacation and “freedom”, this is a good time to reflect upon Chester students and teachers of the past. In May of 1994, the Chester Township Board of Education received an interesting letter from Jack Hyde, a former Williamson School student—class of 1958. Mr. Hyde, a teacher, was planning his retirement. He lived in LaGrange Park, Illinois and having “begun to reflect” upon his

education, decided to write about his "very fond" memories of his fourth through eighth grade years in Chester schools. He stated that his motivation for writing a memoir of school life in Chester in the 1950s was strictly for the enjoyment of others and he said that no names were changed to protect the innocent (or otherwise!). His 45 page chronicle features passages of humor and pathos as well as an excellent description of his adopted town. Here, for your enjoyment, are a few introductory excerpts from the pen of Jack Hyde: *Chester Township Elementary School remained a country school long after it really had to. I was fortunate to be a student there during, for what I think, were its final years in this status.*



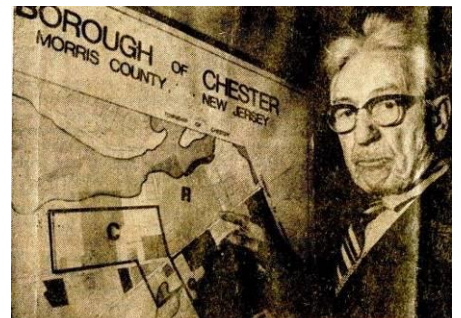
Chester Public School - Opened 1925 - renamed Williamson School - 245 Main St. - CHS archives

Near the front door entrance was the Principal's office. In the foyer outside the office was the lone telephone (other than the Principal's personal phone). Calls on the pay phone cost 5 cents. The basement held the cafeteria/multi-use room, nurse's office, band room and boiler room. The entire school was run by four people. The principal was Charles Williamson. He was an older man who always wore a three-piece suit. He had the demeanor of a bank president. The second most important person was LeRoy "Shorty" Nunn, the janitor. Everyone feared and respected Shorty just because of who he was and

what he did. Shorty had once been the guy to heat bricks in the fire and place them on the floorboards of the horse-drawn wagons that collected kids for school on cold winter mornings. Shorty was thought of as the school disciplinarian...he was rumored to have a paddle down in the boiler room. His wife ran the cafeteria which was known far and wide for its excellent cuisine. Every Thanksgiving, a miracle of religious proportions would take place there. The cafeteria ladies could make one turkey serve an entire school! The turkey was cooked, shredded and served in a gravy over mashed potatoes. Fourth, but not least, was the nurse, Virginia Truax. She was also the nutritionist, the social worker and mother confessor for all who had a tale to tell.

The two most veteran teachers were the former Dickerson girls—now Mrs. Hunt and Mrs. Koskow. The middle grades were anchored by Mr. Ray Goin. The true patriarch of the teaching staff was Dudley Bragg. He had a style, class, substance and a sure-fire teaching method. He had only a Normal School education. Dud was a bachelor and everyone figured that he had girlfriends all over the place. He played his personal life very privately. When Dud inherited our class at the eighth grade level, he had us straightened out in two weeks. He never had to raise his voice, he had a point system and a style of using it that made everyone sit up and take notice."

Another prominent figure in the life of Chester youth was Dr. Fry, the town dentist who resided next to the school and served as the school dentist. A large man with a prominent belly, he reduced an entire classroom to fear when a student



Editors Note: Dr. Hugh Fry was not only a dentist, but an important contributor to the formation of Chester Borough. He helped write the first zoning ordinance and served for 20 years on the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

was summoned for an examination. As Jack Hyde described it, *"All our knuckles would turn white. It was like the executioner visiting death row."* Even the school bully was not immune to the terror of an appointment with Fry; he was reduced to tears and kicked and screamed all the way to the doctor's office". There came a day when Jack, himself, was in need of Dr. Fry's services or as he wrote, with the *"dreaded Dr. Fry."* After some forty years Jack recalled the details of the dental office where, *"The furniture had flat, wooden arms that bore the scratched in expression of my classmates who had passed that way before. It reminded me of the Charlie Chan movie where the murderer's name was written in the blood of the victim beside the body."* Dr. Fry invited Jack in to his *"chamber of horrors"* wearing a *"blood and grass-stained shirt"* which stretched across his belly. There was no headrest for the patient, instead, Dr. Fry secured the patient's head to his belly with his left forearm while his right hand embraced the drill...a 1950s drill was the bane of many a patient's existence and Fry's drill apparently was a doozy. After a few sessions with Dr. Fry, Jack Hyde and his siblings convinced their mother to try a new dentist up in Dover where they sought dental services until Dr. Robert Praisner (whom Jack called *"a smart, young dentist"*) arrived in town.

Another memorable aspect of Hyde's years as a student in Chester was the school bus transportation: *"Getting there is half the fun, is often said and it was true at Chester Elementary. The rides to school were routine because if the weather was really bad, school would be called off. It was the rides home that provided great adventure! At least a few times each winter, we would be going home in a driving snowstorm. The excitement would build as we approached Old Mill Road...Dink (the bus driver) would gun the engine (the bus was an early 50s Dodge) and begin the ascent up the hill. We would get half-way up the hill, the engine would roar louder and louder... we could feel the rear wheels slipping under us...Dink would mutter things under his breath, stop the bus, throw it into reverse and begin backing down the hill. He'd look up into that broad mirror and bellow, "Alright! Everybody in the back!"—the battle cry of a man desperate not to spend the night with a bunch of little kids. We would excitedly cram into the back of the bus, adding more weight to drive the wheels...Such excitement! A cheer of victory would erupt as we crested the cursed hill."*

And so the saga of education in Chester in the 1950's through the eyes of former student Jack Hyde begins. To read Hyde's entire memoir and learn more about the people and antics of the day, email chester.historical.society@gmail.com or mail a note to CHS Box 376 Chester, NJ 07930. You just may recognize a bully or a saint from your own Chester past!!! ■

The Hedges Mine – Not Your Typical Iron Mine

By Edward Ng – Chester Historical Society

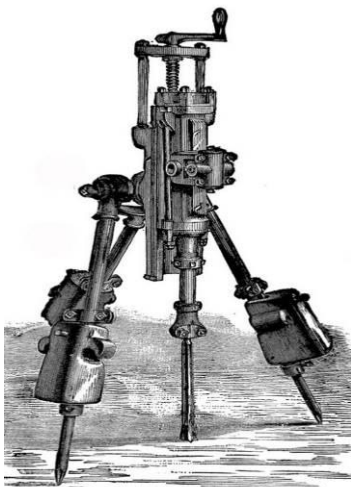
Editor's Note: When "mining and Chester" are mentioned, what images are conjured up? Disheveled, dirt crusted men wielding pick axes, shovels, and wheel barrows in dimly lit tunnels, illuminated by meager head lamps? Yes that could be accurate for some mines of the time, but not all Chester mines. In the January 2016 Newsletter, we featured the Chester Furnace and the engineering genius William J. Taylor (W.J.), highlighting the advanced nature of the furnace operations. Similarly mining in Chester also used the latest technology and none better than at the Hedges Mine which was owned (in part) and influenced by

W.J. We are fortunate to have an eyewitness account from the writer for the Iron Era newspaper (May 22, 1885). He interviewed Nelson H. Langdon, mine supervisor, who was also an assistant to W.J. at the Chester Furnace. Langdon helped save the Chester Furnace when a dynamite cleaning experiment went awry. The text is from the Iron Era writer, but I have added illustrations of some of the equipment mentioned.

Since our visit to this mine, nearly two years since, a great many improvements have been made. With their broad open cut and mechanical appliances, their mine is one of the easiest and cheapest to work in the State. This company has three veins of ore in this mine, separated by only thin horses¹ of rock, the latter being wedge-shaped and gradually narrowing as they go down. Although they are not working one of their veins, they have twenty feet width of ore in the other town in some places. The horse between the two veins worked is but from two to three feet wide at the

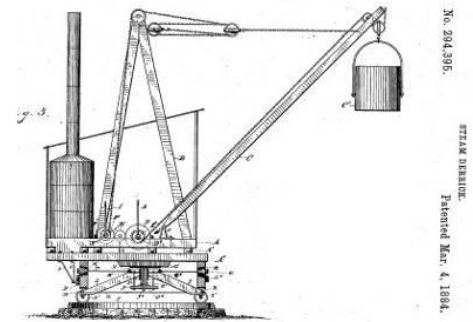


Ingersoll steam drill in action



Ingersoll Rock Drills were durable, simple, light weight and adjustable (1879)
<http://www.westernmininghistory.com/articles/5570/page1>

bottom whereas at the top it was eight feet wide, giving an indication that three veins will soon run together. This company are working three Ingersoll steam drills here, are using giant powder for blasting, and electric batteries for firing. With about thirty-five men at present they are doing about twice as much work as could be done with double the amount of men on the old system of mining. The machinery used in working this mine is perfection itself. Two ten-inch pumps constantly draw the water from the mine, the ore is raised from the open cut in large buckets by the aid of three steam derricks, except at the poppet-head, where a rotary engine raises a ton of ore every time it lifts its iron bucket. The ore is dumped upon platforms, from whence it is passed into the breakers, and from there



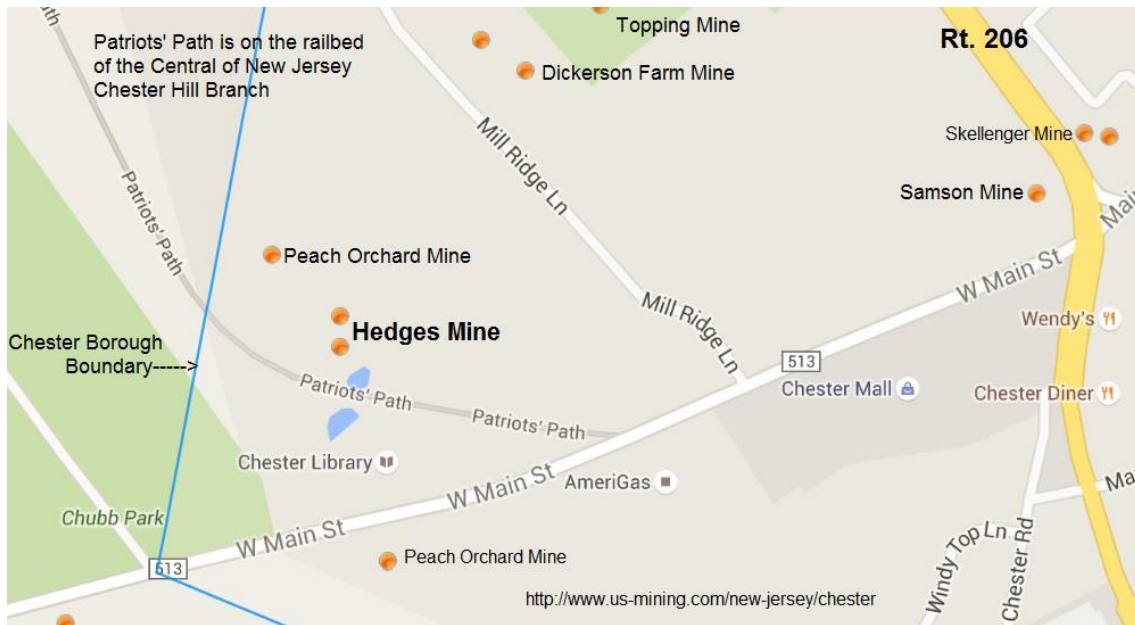
The drawing of a steam derrick from a patent by C.C. Lyman in 1884. We don't know what type was used at the Hedges Mine, but it may have looked similar.

carried in buckets on an endless chain up to a considerable height, where the buckets empty themselves into elevated pockets. The ore is then dropped through chutes in the cars of the Chester Hill Branch, which pass under the pockets. A pair of cupola—one 50 and the other 60 horse power—furnish the steam for derricks, cracker, elevator, pumps and rotary engine. The cracker is a powerful one, and when running to its full extend will break 100 tons of ore per day. For the purposes of Bessemer pig the ore has to be prepared in the very best manner, and the company intend putting in a new cracker for the purpose of breaking it finer. About 1,000 tons of ore

¹ In mining the term "horse" refers to a block of country rock entirely encased within a mineral lode. Wikipedia.
 The "Ingersoll steam drill in action" image is from <http://www.constructionweekonline.com/article-3293-ingersoll-steam-drill/>.
 Web: historicchesternj.com chester.hsitorical.society@gmail.com phone: (908)866-6717

per month is raised from this mine and the quantity could be quadrupled if there was a demand for ore. At present there is about 8,000 tons of ore on the bank at this mine. Mr. N. H. Langdon, still superintendent with his well known efficiency the work of the mine, and to his kindness we are indebted for these particulars.

The Hedges Mine was north of the Chester Library. As described in the article, the mine was on the Central of New Jersey Chester Hill Branch rail line, which is now used as Patriots' Path. To the west, the Chester Hill Branch went to the Chester Furnace and to the east to the long-gone train station that was located at the defunct Sunoco gas station located on the south east corner of the intersection of Route 206 and Main St. ■



A Salacious Bit of House History- 10 Parker Road

By Matt Koppinger – Chester Historical Society



Matt Koppinger's house at 10 Parker Rd. whose original owners sparked this article (2016)

Editor's Note: We all have an innate curiosity about folks who originally lived in the house that we currently occupy. Due to the long passage of time, researching 18th century houses is challenging. However, sometimes the researcher hits the jackpot. In this article, another in the continuing series about notable houses in Chester, Matt Koppinger writes about his serendipitous research finding out not only who owned his house at 10 Parker Road, but finding out what he looked like (*Well-made*), his occupation (*counterfeiter*), his moral compass (*robber*), and his eventual fate (*abrupt end*). Here is Matt's story. Please note, he uses the

archaic spelling and miss-spellings of some words as he found them in his research documents. I have bolded some of the passages to bring them to the reader's attention. Matt lived in the house at 10 Parker Rd. for 25 years, so this back story did not deter him and in fact may have added to its allure. The right side of the house, finished in stone, dates from the 1770's. The left side, with the white-washed finish, was added after this story ended, sometime between 1790 and 1805.

Who were these people?

This is the question I asked myself when I bought my house and looked at the indentures (deeds) that the former owner had uncovered relevant to the sale of this house and surrounding property. One of these is the sale to Anthony Stile by Carleb Swezie Jur (and Mary his wife) "*on the fifth day of October in the year of our Loard one thousand and seven hundred and seventy eight for the sum of eighty pound prock money (proclamation or "lawful money")*".

Research to date has uncovered the fact that he, Caleb Sweezy Jur among others, broke out of the gaol (jail) on the 12th of September in the year 1780 and had a one thousand dollars ("not worth a continental dollar" – dollar) reward put on him by the Sheriff of Morris County, Richard Johnson, on September 19, 1780. The notice in the paper is extremely interesting because it contains a description of him as well as the others that broke gaol with him. The notice is as follows:

FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD

Broke out of the gaol of this county on the night of Monday the 4th instant, a certain Isaac Sweezy, about thirty years of age, five feet eight or nine inches high, sandy complexion, and had a scar of a bullet or swan shot in on one of his temples. Also on the night of Tuesday the 12th instant, Caleb Sweezy, jun., John Swan, Thomas Douglass, and Nathan Horton jun.

Caleb Sweezy, jun. is about six feet high, thirty-two or thirty-three years of age, has a clear skin and black beard, and altogether a well-made, good looking man. *John Swan is a small man, of a dark complexion, and about thirty-six years of age. Thomas Douglass is about six feet high has black hair and beard, is something ruddy in the cheeks, thick lips, is about twenty-eight years of age. Nathan Horton, jun. is about twenty-two years of age, quite a small man, rather slender, and of a light complexion. All of whom were confined on charges of felony for passing counterfeit money. Whoever takes up and secures the above described persons in any gaol of this state, or delivers them to the subscriber shall have the above reward; or ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS for either of them that shall be so apprehended or delivered to Richard Johnson, Sheriff of Morris County. Morris-Town, Sept. 9, 1780.*

The climax to the story was found in a History of Morris County and came from an old newspaper dated Sept. 18, 1782. When we left the story of Caleb Sweezy, jun. he had broken out of the jail in September, 1780 and one must assume that he had not been apprehended, for in 1781 the following proclamation was issued by the Governor. The amount of the reward would seem to have changed from one thousand to only two hundred, but not really. The Governors' reward, it should be noted was in dollars of the bills of credit issued on the State of New Jersey. This may be for Caleb Sweezy, as stated or for Caleb Sweezy, jun. as supported by the \$200 reward mentioned in the newspaper story.

BY HIS EXCELLENCY

WILLIAM LIVINGSTON, ESQUIRE

Governor, Captain-General and Commander in chief in and over the State of New Jersey, and Territories thereunto belonging, Chancellor and Ordinary in the same

A PROCLAMATION

Whereas it has been represented to me that the persons herein after mentioned have been guilty of atrocious offences, and have committed divers robberies, thefts and other felonies in this state:-- I have therefore thought fit, by and with the advice of the honourable Privey Council of this state, to issue this proclamation, hereby promising the rewards herein mentioned to any person or persons who shall apprehend and secure in any gaol of this state, any or either of the following persons or offenders, to wit, **Caleb Sweesy**, James O'Harra, John Moody, and Gilbert Gyberson, the sum of Two Hundred Dollars of the bills of credit issued on the faith of this state.

Given under my hand and seal at arms at Trenton, the third day of August in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-one, and in the fifth year of the independence of America.



Governor William Livingston

Papers of William Livingston by W. E.
Price. NJ Historical Commission

WIL. LIVINGSTON.

By His Excellency's Command,
BOWES REED, Sec'ry

The starring character in this story is about to meet his end, but a few comments first. The story of this fellow takes place during the American Revolution, or as it was thought of by many, a civil uprising. It is our glorious Revolution----ONLY BECAUSE WE WON----!

Had we lost, George Washington and all the signers of the Declaration of Independence would have been tried for insurrection and hanged!

The research into the people who lived in my house led to the conclusion that they were all probably standing on the side of the established government of their King, George the 3rd.

AND NOW -----THE REST OF THE STORY from the newspaper:

Sept. 18, 1782--Last Thursday morning, a person in the neighborhood of Bottle Hill (Madison), near the great swamp, being early up, discovered two armed men pass by, one of which he supposed to be Caleb Sweesy, jun. late an inhabitant of Black River, but who had joined the enemy, and, having many connections in this county who harbored him, was enabled by their information and assistance, to commit several atrocious robberies, which induced the governor to offer \$200 reward for apprehending him. This person who saw them pass gave information, when Capt. Carter and his officers with 10 of their men, took the necessary steps for the apprehending them, and, knowing the propinquity between Isaac Badgeley's wife and Sweesy, sent a person to lay in ambush, near said Badgeley's house, to be a spy on their conduct, and, if possible, find out their lurking-place, when he saw Badgeley's wife carry victuals into the swamp twice.

Being thus fully informed, the party entered the swamp some miles from Badgeley's house, to prevent the least alarm being given, and proceeded within a few rods of the house,

(placing sentinels, as they passed, at the avenues it was supposed they would endeavor to make their escape through,) when they suddenly came upon them; and being unprepared for defence, the flints being out of their pistols, they endeavored to make their escape by flight,—when Sweezy received the fire of one of the sentinels, which put a period to his existence in a few minutes. The other one, John Parr, who was concerned in the robbery of Mr. Stewart's house, at Hackettstown, was slightly wounded, and taken, and is now confined in the Morristown jail.

Bell Labs Chester Outdoor Laboratory

By Edward Ng – Chester Historical Society



Barn viewed from the Pole Farm test plots. 2016

The Barn, a new community center at Chester Township's Highlands Ridge Park, officially opened on May 25 with a ribbon cutting ceremony led by Mayor Bill Cogger. Many well-wishers, including members of CHS were there for the event. The Chester Historical Society shared in the inauguration by providing thirteen posters recounting the history of the Bell Labs Chester research facility from the 1930's to the mid 1980's, put together by Edward Ng. These posters now hang on the wall in the foyer of the Barn. Over the next dozen or so issues of the CHS Newsletter, each poster will be highlighted. The graphics and text will be reassembled in an article which will

proceed in approximate chronological order. The information sources for the posters came from the Chester Historical Archives, digitized versions of the Bell Labs Record from the library of the Telephone Collectors International, and material donated to the Chester Historical Society by past Bell Labs and Bellcore associates. Thank you very much.



Mayor Cogger leads the dedication of the Barn on May 25, 2016.

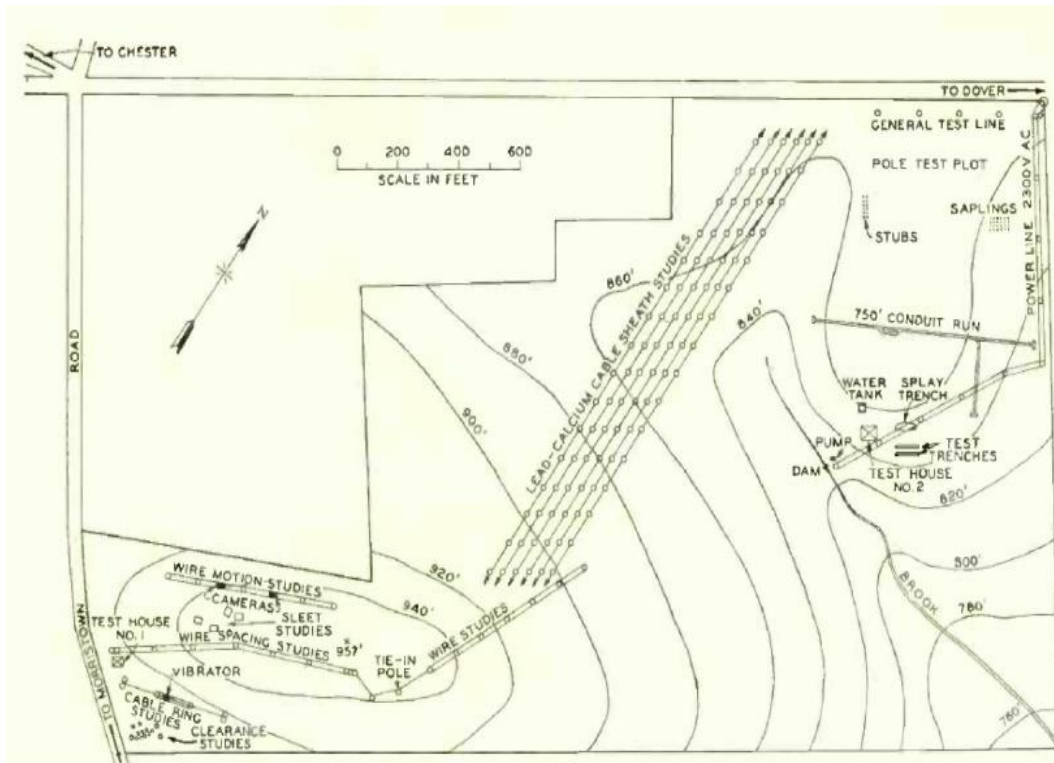


Bell Labs Chester Outdoor Research Facility history posters by CHS in the Barn foyer. Ten of the thirteen posters are shown. May 2016.

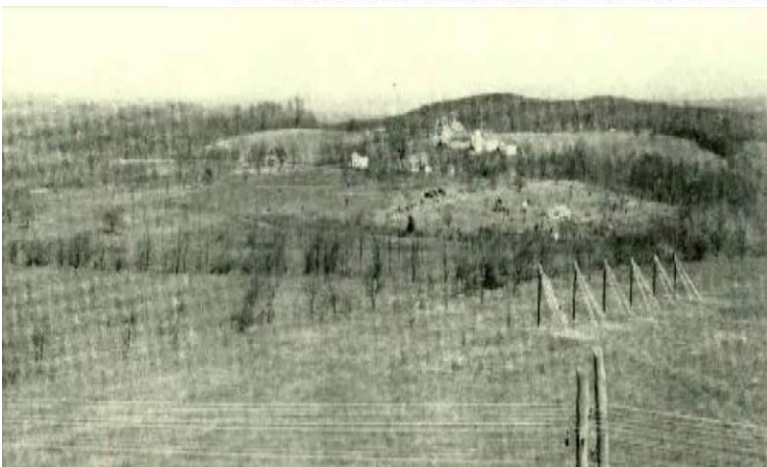
#1 -1930's Poster

Bell Labs Chester Outdoor Laboratory

In 1879 Alexander Graham Bell established The Bell Telephone Company which became AT&T one year later. In 1925 Bell Labs was founded to provide design and research support. The Labs acquired 15 acres in Chester in 1925 and added another 85 acres in 1930 to create the "Field Laboratory for Outside-Plant Studies". Eventually the Outdoor Laboratory would grow to 212 acres. The posters are part of the historical research that the Chester Historical Society is conducting on the Outdoor Laboratory. The posters cover the period from 1930 to the mid 1980's when AT&T was broken up. The research is ongoing and much is yet to be found and recounted. CHS would like to acknowledge and thank the Telephone Collectors International Library, Chuck Hensley, Loretta Keggan, Dave Gibson, and many other Bell Labs and Bellcore folks for their help, knowledge, and contributions.



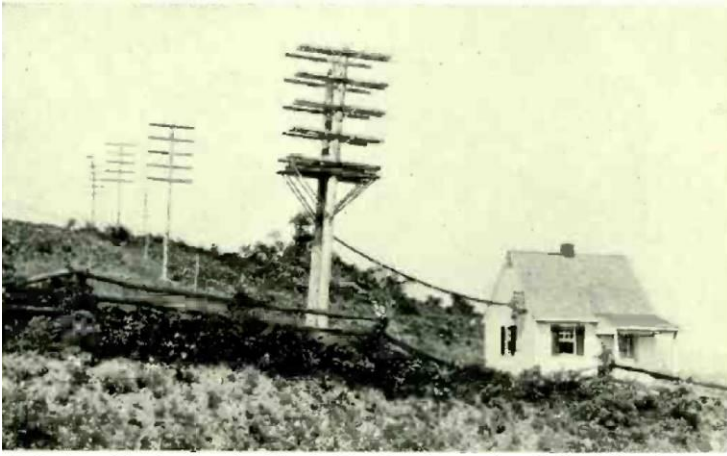
The Chester field laboratory, showing location of buildings and of the principal studies - 1931



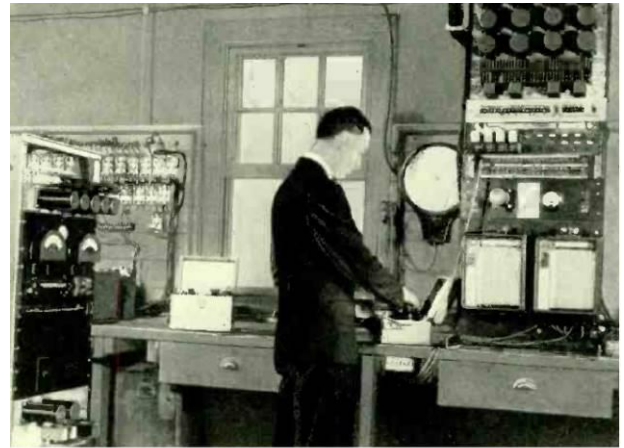
View of the Chester Field Laboratory buildings and studies from a pole in the south corner. 1931



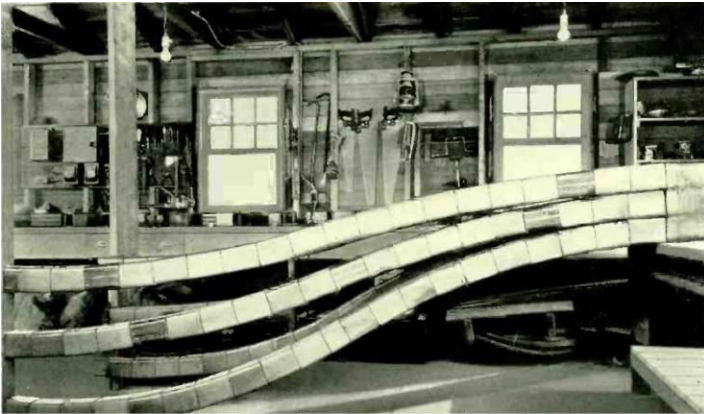
C.Q. Lumsden securing a sample from a creosoted pine post. 1931



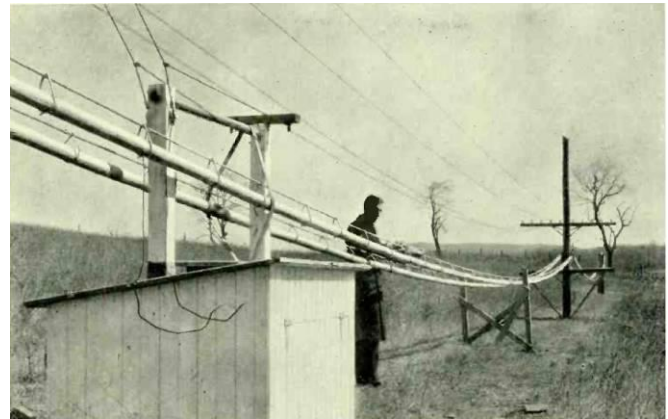
At the top of the fourth pole of the test line for wire spacing studies is the wind vane, and on the fifth is the anemometer. 1931



H.T. Cavanaugh with line-contact recording apparatus in the test house.



An interior view of the ceramics laboratory showing an experimental structure of splayed conduit. 1931



An automatic swinging apparatus swings two adjacent cables to obtain an accelerated test on various types of cable hangers.

Editor's Note. The new community enter at Highlands Ridge Park, was called the "Taylor Barn" by the Chester Bell Labs folks. That portion of the outdoor lab was part of the Earl A. Taylor farm. A 40 acre portion of the Taylor farm would later become the site for the Black River Middle School as reported in the Jan. 1, 1970 Observer Tribune.

Acknowledgements and Contact Information

CHS Officers: President – Edward Ng Vice President – John Pfaff
Treasurer – Anita Rhodes Programs – Alison Dahl Corresponding Secretary – Lois Taylor
Membership – Marla Jackson Recording Secretary- Elaine Hanington Archives – Edward Ng
Oral History – Helen Jones Borough Historian – Ed Hanington
Members at Large – Meryl Carmel & Helen Jones Newsletter Editor - Edward Ng

We thank Dr. John Tittle for providing the Dr. Fry newspaper article and Anita Rhodes for saving and sharing Matt Koppinger's research paper on 10 Parker Rd. Historical photos and maps are from the CHS archives. All other photos by Ed Ng except as noted.

If you would like to join CHS or if you have stories or pictures to share, please talk to a Board member or contact us at (908) 844-6717 or chester.historical.society@gmail.com, or CHS Box 376 Chester NJ 07930. Membership information and a downloadable membership form are available at <http://historicchesternj.com/home/membership.html> .