

Chester Historical Society's *NEWS & VIEWS* May 2021

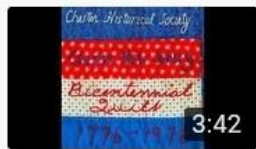
Hello Members and Friends, Happy Spring & Summer-to be! I hope 2021 is off to a good start for you, your family and friends. Masks, distancing, and vaccines have brought the infection rates in Chester to near zero after 14 months of Covid-19 shutdowns. The Chester Historical Society looks forward to hosting educational programs, re-opening and continuing work on the CHS archives, and striving to preserve Chester's historical buildings and sites, including Rockefeller Center and the Seward Barn at Glenlora. We will continue to add videos to the CHS YouTube Channel such as the recent ones on the two Chester Quilts and Historic Chester Stroll #1. We encourage you to print out the map, come to Chester and enjoy a pleasant stroll while guided by the map through our history. ☐

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Announcing Chester Historical Society's YouTube Channel

We have launched the CHS YouTube Channel and have nine videos available. Use this link <http://historicchesternj.com/youtubevideolinks.html> to our website to access the videos. The titles and the running times are shown below. More videos are being planned. ☐



**Chester's
Bicentennial
Quilt**
3:42



**Connolly and
Hickey Historic
Architects Analyze
Rockefeller Center
in a blizzard!**
2:09



**Part 1. Larry
Lowenthal
History of
Chester
Railroads**
37:15



**Chester
Historic and
Notable Sites
Quilt**
3:16



**Strolling Historic
Chester - Stroll #1
Covering W. Main St.,
Hillside Rd. and E.
Main St.**
5:01



**Part 2. Larry
Lowenthal
History of
Chester
Railroads**
31:15



**150 Year History
of Chester's
Rockefeller
Center**
9:47



**Preview of Strolling
Historic Chester
Stroll Number 1**
1:12



**AT&T Bell
Labs Chester
Outdoor Lab
Activities~1980**
13:37

The Chester Historic and Notable Places Quilt

By Marla Jackson – Chester Historical Society

The First Congregational Church was the home of an avid and talented group of quilters, the "Congregational Quilters and Friends". In the 1970s and 1980s they helped raise funds for the church. They designed and embroidered a quilt with depictions of important buildings in Chester. Dorothy and Merry Morton designed and made the drawings for the chosen buildings. The quilt would be sold by sealed bid at the 105th Annual Fair. An Observer-Tribune article (9/10/1981) stated that the minimum bid was \$500. The article also described the quilt: *This year's quilt commemorates historic homes and buildings in the Chesters. It is 80 by 96 inches and contains 30 12-inch squares of ivory background with buildings embroidered in brown outline stitch. The sash work is a salmon colored calico....On the back of the quilt is a small section detailing 24 persons who donated more than 700 hours of work to the project as artists, researchers, designers, embroiderers and quilters.*



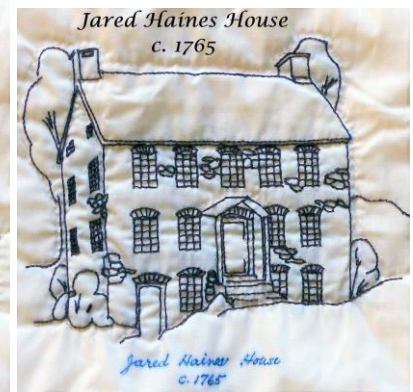
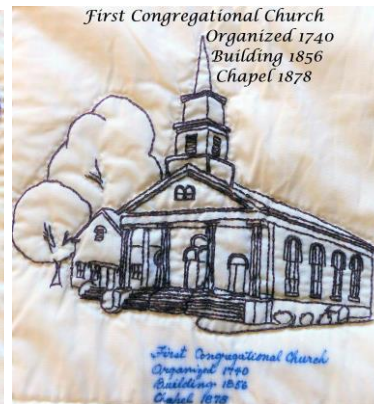
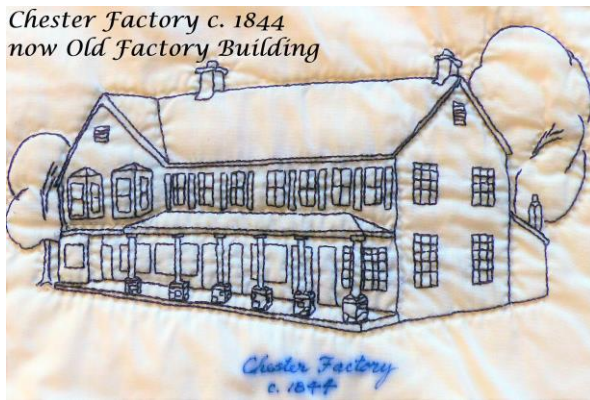
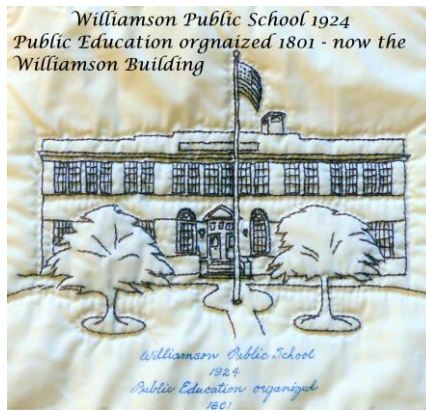
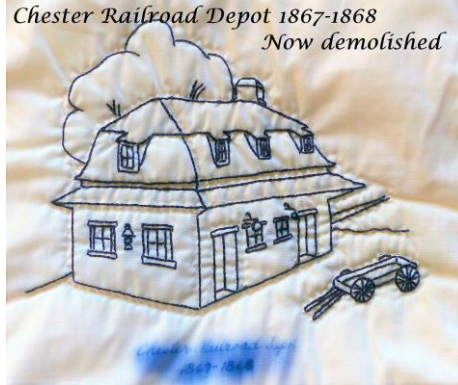
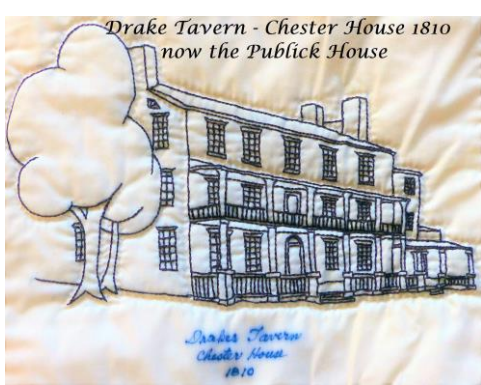
The winning bidders were Ann and Lou Bona. Some years later, Kathleen O'Connel (a former resident of Chester, who was living in New York City at the time) offered to purchase the quilt from the Bonas and donate it to the Congregational Church. The exchange occurred and the next time Mrs. O'Connel was in Chester, she gave the quilt to Scott Hoffman, then the pastor, asking that it be given to the church. She reported that it hung in the chapel for a time.

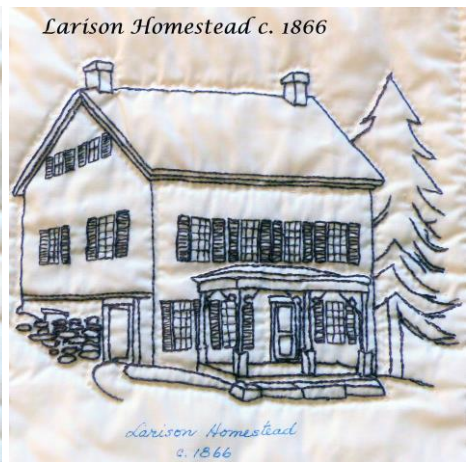
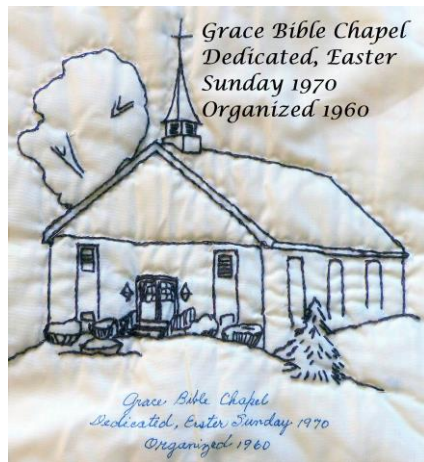
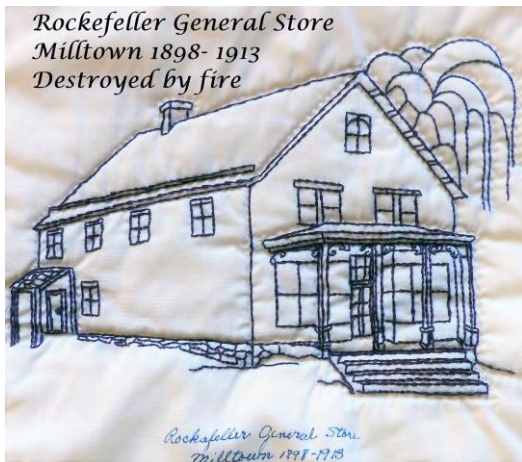
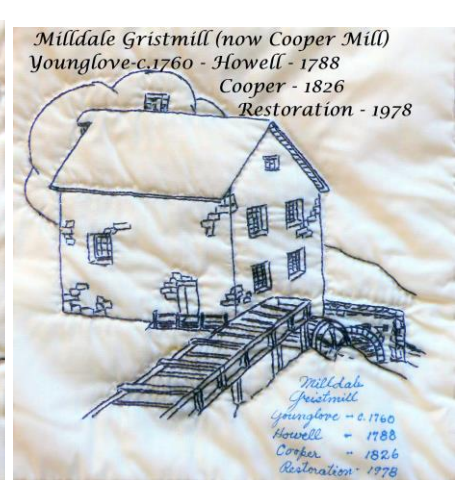
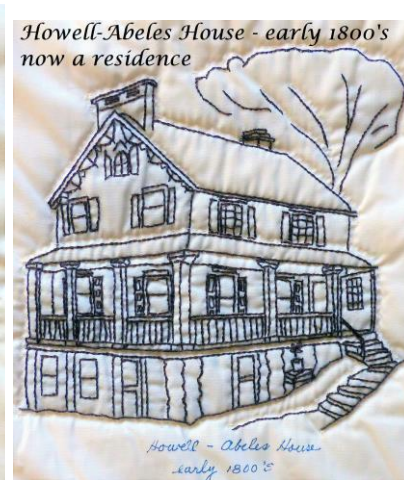
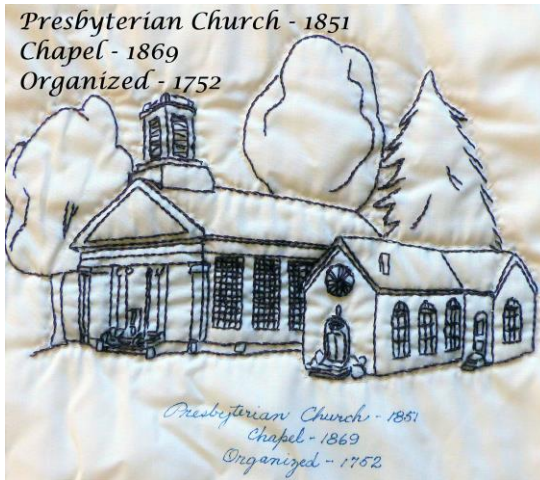
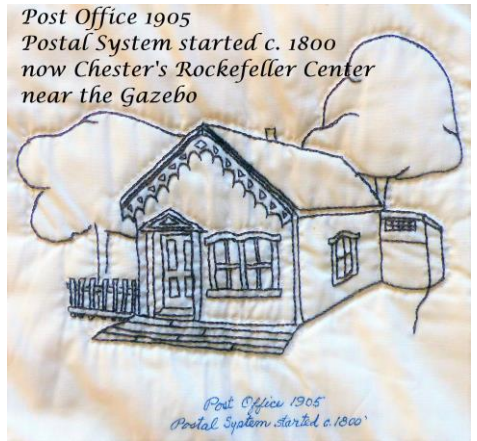
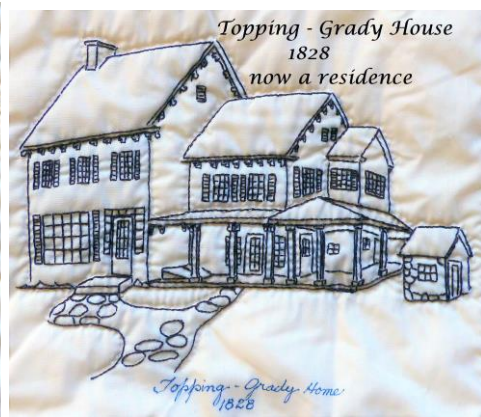
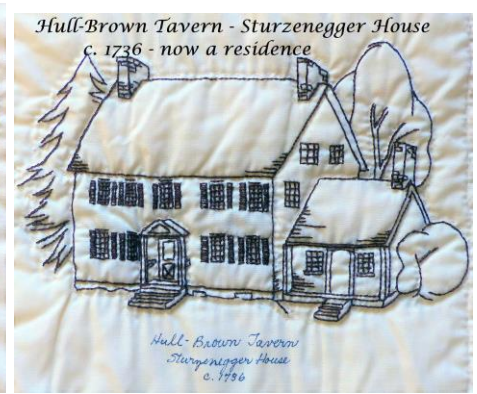
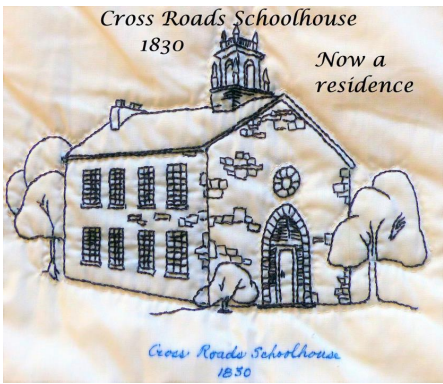
Then, in 2014, the Quilters were planning a display of quilts. Mrs. Ellen Blum called Mrs. O'Connel and asked to display her quilt, but she told the committee that she had donated it to the Congregational Church. Mrs. O'Connel called Pastor Scott Hoffman, now living in North Carolina, but he didn't know the whereabouts of the quilt. It turned out there was another, almost identical quilt. After the auction of the 1981 quilt, Norma and Carl Pereira contacted the Quilters and asked them to make another quilt for them, which the Quilters did. It was no coincidence because, at the time, the Pereiras lived in the building that was the "Cross Roads Schoolhouse" (7 North Road), one of the landmarks depicted on the quilt. This is the quilt that was displayed at the First Congregational Church during the quilt show in 2014 as "Exhibit #34, Chester N.J. Historical Quilt 1982." ■

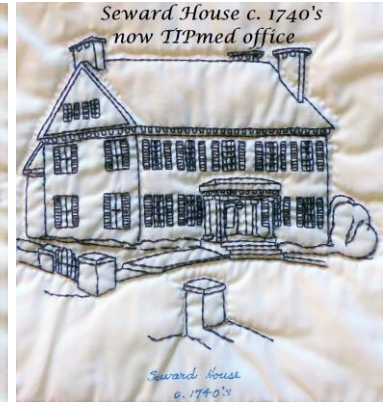
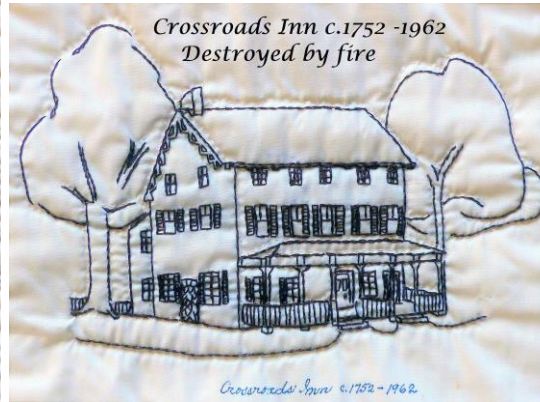
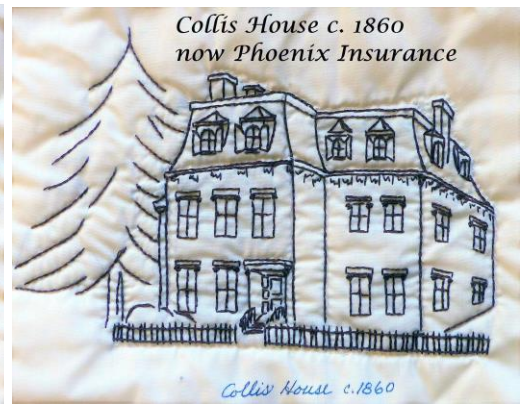
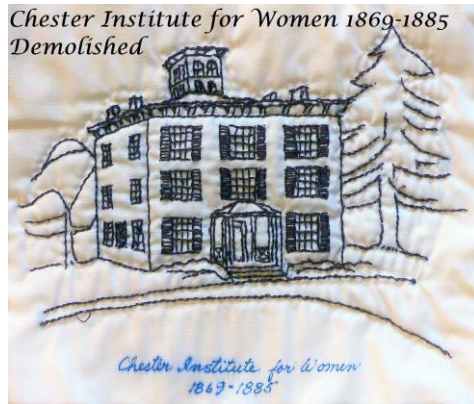
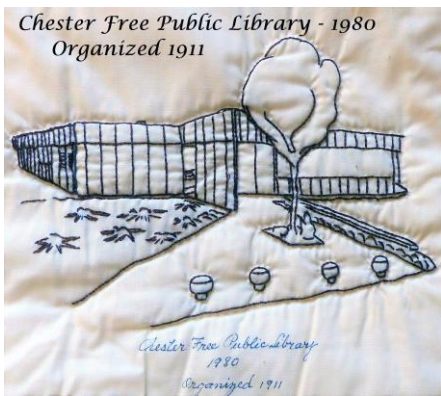
You can see a video of the Historic and Notable Places quilt on our website at:
<http://historicchesternj.com/youtubevideolinks.html>.

Images of the 30 Squares of the 1981 Chester Historic & Notable Places Quilt

By Edward Ng (who added the text above each building) – Chester Historical Society

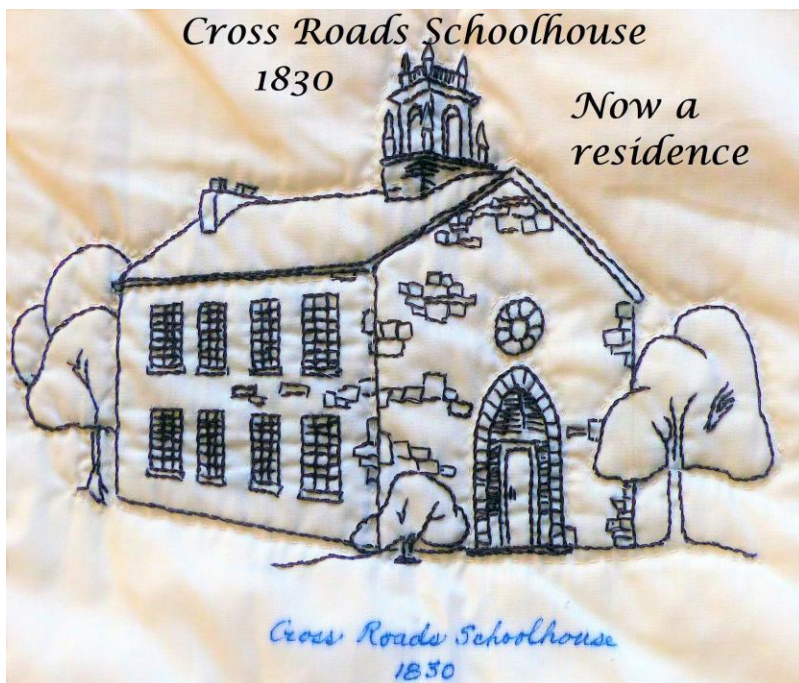






There is a small panel on the back of the quilt which gives credit to the Congregational Quilters and Friends, who did the art, research, design, embroidery, and quilting (right):

A close-up of the Cross Roads School square shows the detail of the sewing. The Pereiras who donated the 1982 quilt to the Chester Historical Society lived there.



Chester, New Jersey
The 1st Congregational Church 1981 Fair Quilt
Congregational Quilters and Friends
Art, research, design, embroidery and quilting
H. Evelyn Barber Beiser
Nilda Elwell Blum
Ellen Raich Blum
Carolyn Weber Brockman
Louisa Carr Call
Mai Rockefeller Conklin
Mabel Croot
Mabel Rockefeller Hoffman
Mabel Roberson Hopper
Ellen Watson Howell
Etta Campbell Huffman
Kathleen Bunderson Jones
Myrtle Dean Martinis
Lucille Butler Miller
Dorothy Cruse Morton
Merry Morton
Kathleen Erwin O'Connell
Sherley Corrigan Oliver
Jane Grady Smalley
Luella Corrigan Smith
Carmen Helmer Smith
Chester Historical Society
Jean Anderson Steinberg
C. Madeline Murphy Steinberg
Helen Ross Stone

The Chester Bicentennial Quilt

By Marla Jackson – Chester Historical Society

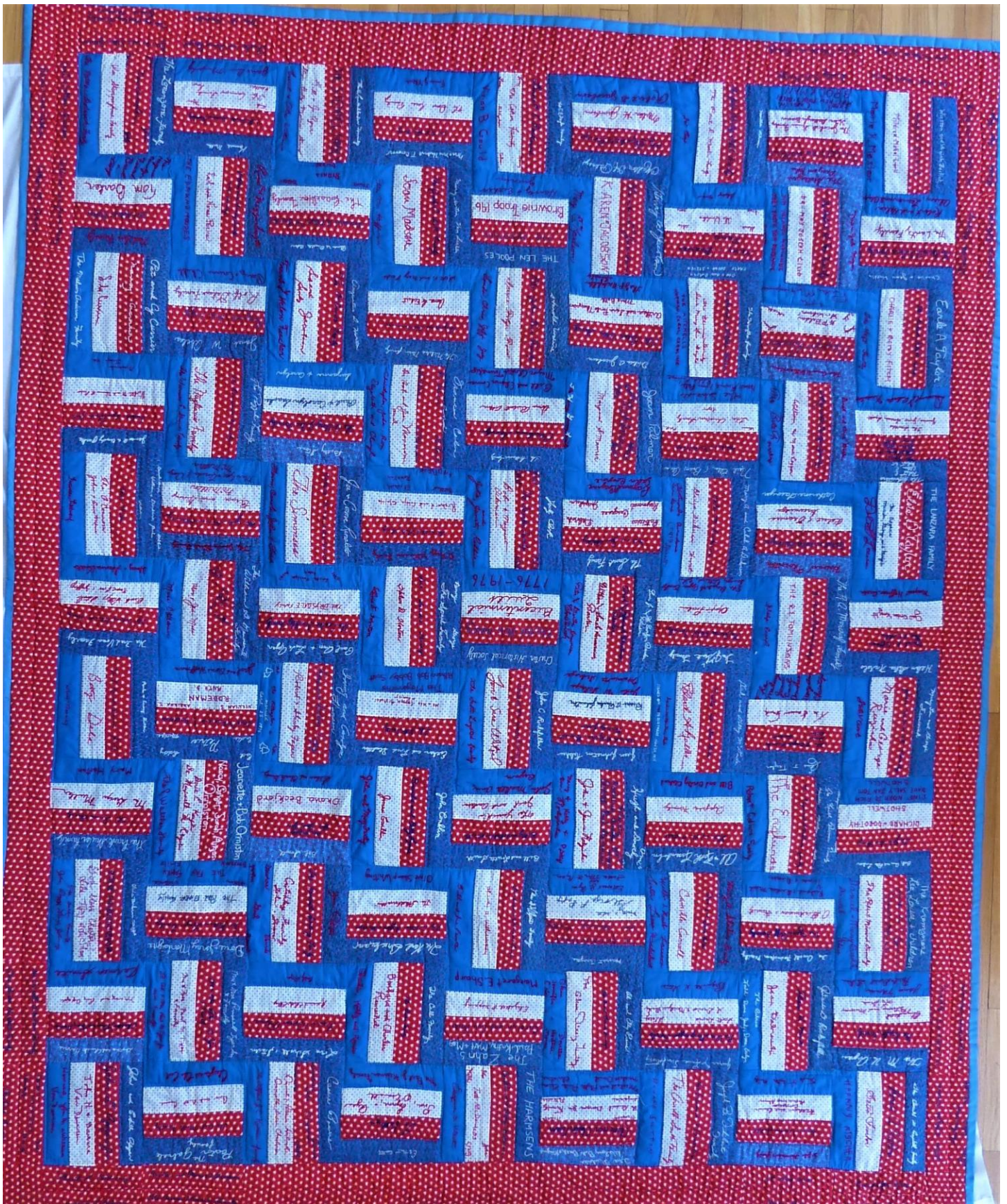
In 1975, many civic organizations were turning their attention to planning special events and activities for the Bicentennial of our nation. The Chester Historical Society (CHS) and Chester were no different. Chester would hold a parade. Penny Peniston suggested to the Executive Board of CHS “that we make plans to sew a Chester Town Quilt with community participation.” The Board thought it was a good idea. At the next meeting, in April of that year, planning began for a quilt. The CHS would sell cotton squares for Chester residents to sign, and members would embroider the names of the purchasers. Women from the membership and volunteers from the community, would sew the squares together and quilt it. The quilt raffle would raise money for the CHS.

At the General Meeting on June 18, 1975, Mrs. Peniston made a presentation to the membership. She stated that “two quilts will be made; they will each be exactly the same, embroidered with the names of Chester residents—present and former.” The idea at the time was that one quilt would remain in the museum (*the Society then owned and operated a museum at 55 Grove Street, now a private residence*) as a legacy of the bicentennial, with the other quilt to be raffled off as a fundraiser. Residents and families could purchase a set of two “squares,” really a rectangle, for \$1, one for each quilt. As far as we know, only one quilt was ultimately completed, the one we have today.

At the September General meeting, the Quilt Committee reported that they would hold a signing party at the museum on October 26th, with appropriate publicity for the event. Unfortunately, by the January 22, 1976 General Meeting, the committee report stated that they still needed 130 more names. The Board asked volunteers from the Society to canvass their neighborhoods to recruit more participants. In addition, CHS wanted to display the quilt on their 4th of July float. The theme of the float was the book, *Chester, New Jersey—A Scrapbook of History*, by Frances Greenidge. A 6' high mockup of the book cover would be the centerpiece of the float. Len Taylor volunteered to make the mockup (*you can see his handiwork in Rockefeller Center, near the gazebo, on Main Street*). The quilt would be displayed prominently along the side of the book cover. By February, the quilt was still short 55 names, and the committee reported the need for quilters and embroiderers. The call went out for volunteers. Unfortunately, we do not have a list of the volunteers.

At the meeting, Marie Ruzicka, one of the Society's most active members, reported that she would approach AT&T Bell Labs Chester Outdoor Laboratory to see if they would supply the flatbed truck necessary for the Parade. Mrs. Ruzicka also proposed to prepare a Bicentennial History of Chester, using newspaper clippings and newsletters from organizations in Chester. A copy would be given to the museum. Mrs. Ruzicka would visit “old timers” and well-known Chester residents to ask for their participation. It seems that no one she asked turned her down.

By June 1976, the Society had completed the quilt. It is 80 inches wide by 96 inches long and contains 422 family and individual names. The CHS minutes reported \$383.41 in income from the sale of squares. CHS applied for and received a raffle license from the State of New Jersey. CHS received a second-place trophy for “Best Appearing Original Float” at the 4th of July parade! After the 4th of July Parade, the quilt was displayed at the museum.



The quilt then went to Sentry Savings and Loan on Main Street (now Chase Bank), where it was prominently displayed, and raffle tickets were sold. The raffle was held at the Black River Middle School cafeteria. Girl Scout troops No. 225 and 616 made posters to advertise the

event. The program began with a candlelight concert by the Rose of Sharon Singers, an eighteenth-century style vocal chorus directed by Kitty Ferguson, a Juilliard-trained musician and writer living in Chester at the time. The drawing followed the program and was even more exciting than expected. The January 1977 CHS newsletter stated:

WOW THAT SUPER QUILT....If each and every one of us could win that quilt, who better – TO HAVE THEIR NAME PICKED OUT OF THAT GREAT BIG COPPER BOILER – than the name Smyth!? It simply was meant to be! They devote so much time and effort to the Society!

Rossney and Maggie Smyth were active members of the CHS and were very keen to win the quilt. At that time, Mr. Smyth was the chair of the CHS Finance committee and was designated to draw the winning ticket. I have it on the best authority that it took two “winning” tickets to win the Bicentennial quilt! The tickets were duly mixed, and Mr. Smyth reached in and drew...a ticket with his own name! Some discussion ensued and it was decided he should draw again, as it didn’t seem proper that he drew his own name. Again, mixing was done, and he reached in for another ticket...and the name on the ticket was his again! He really did win the quilt!

In total, the Chester Historical Society raised \$ 1,037.09 (the equivalent of about \$4,615 today) and produced a beautiful legacy of the country’s Bicentennial. The Smyths took loving care of the quilt, which looks almost like new today. Years after winning the quilt, the Smyths invited Lois and Len Taylor over for drinks and conversation, and the Taylors were presented with the quilt. Perhaps, Mrs. Smyth wondered, one of the Taylor children might like it? Instead, Lois Taylor thought it would be appropriate to donate the quilt to CHS, and Mrs. Smyth agreed. CHS produced the quilt as a remembrance of a very special 4th of July and is lucky to have received it back again for the CHS Archives, a homecoming of sorts, for the quilt. (My thanks to Lois Taylor for the explanation of the ticket drawing.) ■

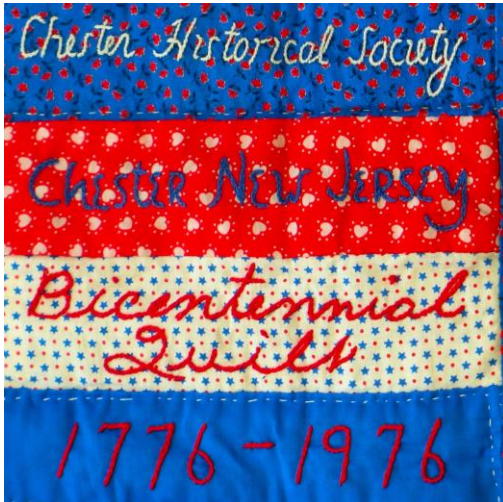
Editor’s Note: Anita Rhodes and Marla Jackson transcribed the 422 family and personal names from the Quilt to a spreadsheet. However, several names were hard to decipher. If you can confirm or correct any of the following names, please email us.

ROW 1	ROW 2	ROW 3	ROW 4	ROW 5
The Richard Schott Family	Harry H P Beldon Todd S. Welcen Heather	Martha Robsen	Al and Elly Preve	The Kohmain Family
Derwood and Roberta Kresslon	Marjory Keith The Keith Thomas Family Heather Matthew Holly	The Blevins Family Dave, Mary, Lois, Gayle	The Glenn Dilley Family	
Dal S. Lewis		A E Simonds Prudence Simonds Laura Simonds Craig Simonds	Glenn Dorella Jennifer Heather Eric Marc	
ROW 6	ROW 7	ROW 8	ROW 9	
The Nicholas Marine Family	Bill + Jo Agne Steve Billy Maria Danny	The Arnold Fothross Family	Ned Sen Family	
Richard and Evalyn Clarke			Carol, Willy Steel Karen, Eric & Jeffrey	
			Alida Barkman Deppe	

A Selection of Signatures from the Chester Bicentennial Quilt

By Edward Ng – Chester Historical Society

There are 422 family or individual names on the Bicentennial Quilt and there is not enough space in this article to show them all. So, I have selected some that attracted my attention. Apologies if I've haven't highlighted the ones you wanted to see, but you will be able to see a version of the Quilt and a table listing all the names on our website. There is also a video of the Bicentennial Quilt on our website at <http://historicchesternj.com/youtubevideolinks.html>.



CHS had the center title square.



Bill Conover was Township Mayor.



Frances Greenidge wrote Chester, New Jersey- A Scrapbook of History -1713-1971



Mabel and Mae were the famous twins. Margaret Ardin was a longtime CHS member.



Willis & Ruth Larison started, and ran Larison's Turkey Farm Inn for 29 years.



Carmen Smith was a Chester historian, weaver guru, and CHS President.



Joe Filiberto was Boro Mayor Janet Abeles was Boro Mayor. Tiger Family—>Tiger Brook Park



The Mennens were early CHS supporters. Lila Tyng was a philanthropist and socialite.

Sid led the WMRHS Board of Ed. and Sandy is an archivist and helps edit CHS newsletters.



Len was a CHS historian and Lois is an officer. Bill Cogger was a Township Mayor

Sadie Miller Van Fleet signed on her 100th birthday on November 24, 1975.



Penny Peniston suggested the Bicentennial Quilt

Bill Sturzenegger was a Bell Labs Chester engineer.

Rocky and Gert ran and named Chester's Rockefeller Center.



Marie recruited many Quilt signatories and was a CHS officer and stalwart for many years.



Gert Rockefeller was EMT dispatcher for 15 yrs. Jean Dabrowski was a Chester historian.



Mae Call was a high school drama teacher, author of a WWII morale-boosting publication, "The Honor Roll", an actress, a director, and a founder of the Chester Theater Group



Ross and Maggie Smyth won the Bicentennial Quilt in the raffle. They gave the Quilt to Lois Taylor who donated the Quilt to CHS. The Pereiras donated the Historic and Notable Places Quilt to CHS. Grateful thanks to them.



Tommy played women's professional baseball for the Grand Rapids MI Chicks. She was an inspiration for Chester baseball and softball players for many years.



Herman and his family are longtime Chester residents. Herman and wife Shirley recently passed away. Herman was active in the Chester Volunteer Fire Company.

Recent CHS Events: The Pathways of History and Library Quilts Display



The 150 Year history of Rockefeller Center, The 7 Notable Historic Chester Women, and The Historic Chester Stroll #1, were highlighted as part of Chester's stop on the *Pathways of History – Museum & Site Tours* on May 2. Ed Ng, Alison Dahl, and Marla Jackson greeted visitors and answered questions.



The Chester Historic and Notable Places Quilt (shown above) and the Chester Bicentennial Quilt were displayed in the Chester Library in April and May 2021. CHS members Anita Rhodes and Marla Jackson prepared and assembled the quilt exhibit. Thank you!

A Historic and Notable Places Quilt Quiz

Three buildings on the Chester Historic and Notable Places Quilt were destroyed by fire. Can you match the modern building shown below that is now on the site of the building that was destroyed by fire? Email us with your answers. No prizes but you will get bragging rights! 📧



Acknowledgments and Contact Information

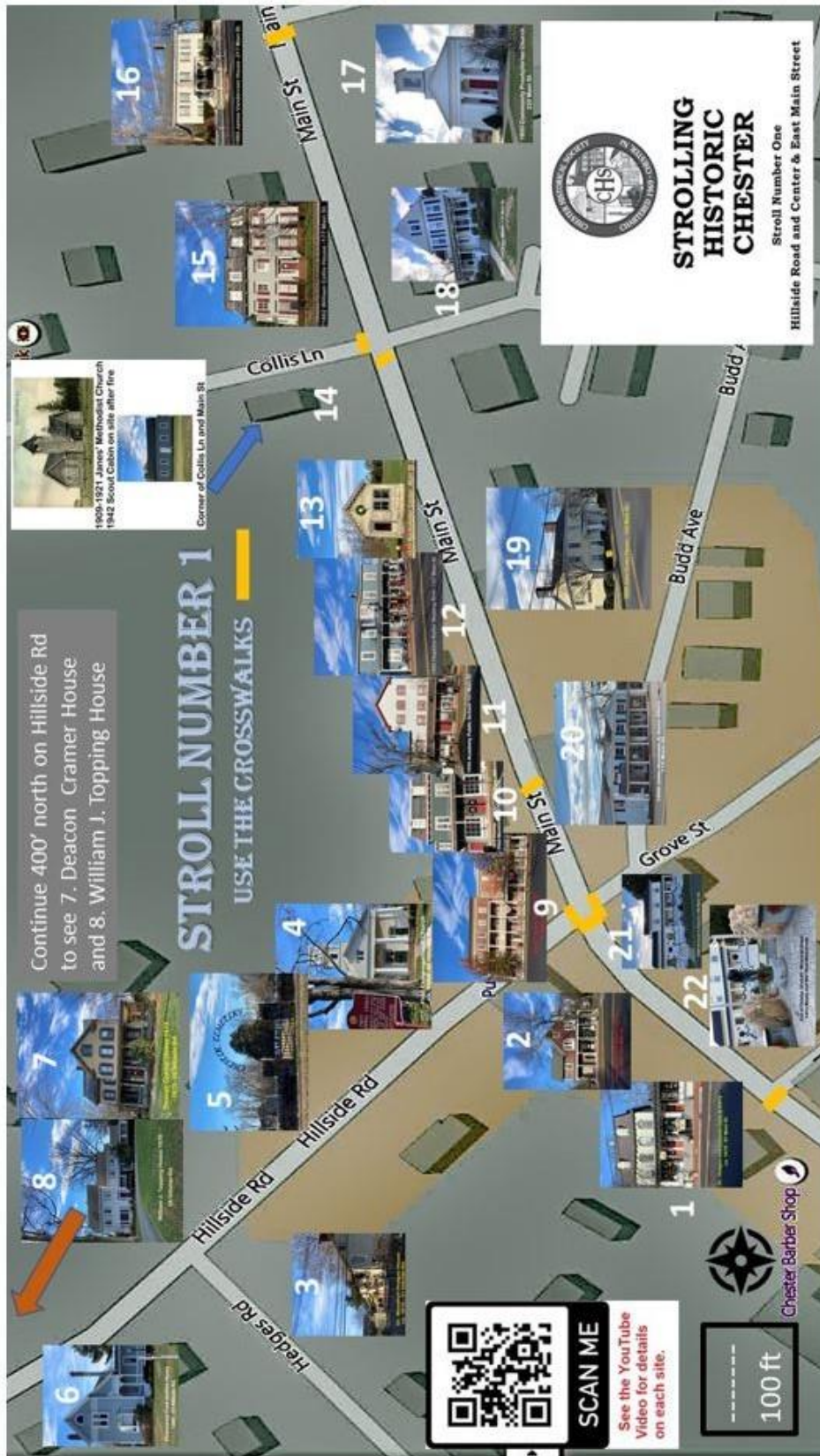
CHS Trustees and Officers: President – Ed Ng Vice President – John Pfaff Treasurer – Anita Rhodes
Corresponding Secretary – Lois Taylor Programs – Meryl Carmel Archives – Edward Ng
Membership – Alison Dahl Additional Trustees: Ed Hanington, Elaine Hanington and Marla Jackson
Recording Secretary- **vacant** If you are interested in becoming a Trustee, please contact CHS.

CHS Newsletter Editor: Ed Ng Grateful thanks to Sandy Jacobson and Alison Dahl for editing help.
Modern images are by Ed Ng and others from the CHS Archives and other cited sources.

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> .

Strolling Historic Chester – Stroll #1 Map

Print page 13 and 14 double sided to make a map to carry with you while Strolling.



You can start at any site #. **Use sidewalks on both sides of Main St. and cross using crosswalks.** For example, if you start at #13 (Rockefeller Center), walk on the north side of Main St. to #16, cross Main St. at the crosswalk at Church St. Walk on the sidewalk on the south side of Main St. to #17 (Community Presbyterian Church) then to #22 (Memorial Island). Cross Main St. at Warren St. (just past the firehouse) and turn right and use the north side sidewalk to see #1 and #2. Cross Hillside Rd. and turn left and walk on the sidewalk on the east side of Hillside Rd. to see #4 (Congregational Church) to #8 and look across Hillside Rd. to see #3 and #6. Walk back to Main St. on the sidewalk to #9 (Public House) turn left and walk east on Main St. to see sites #10 to #12. End at #13 (Rockefeller Center). More information and videos available at www.historicchesternj.com. Questions? Suggestions? Email us: chester.historical.society@gmail.com. Map and text by Ed Ng – Chester Historical Society - April 2021.

STROLLING HISTORIC CHESTER – STROLL NUMBER ONE

# on map	Address	Year of Construction and Name(s)	Currently:
1	87 Main St.	1878 - Dr. Hedges - Conover Cash & Carry	Fizzle Creations and Atom Age Again Glass
2	105 Main St.	1868 – Luse Tavern then General Stores	The Maple Shop
3	31 Hillside Rd.	1810 - Dr. Woodhull Hedges House	Residence
4	30 Hillside Rd.	1856 –First Congregational Church	Pastor Layne A. Mersheimer
5		Chester Cemetery	Many Chester notables interred here.
6	47 Hillside Rd.	1890 – Pharmacist Fred Jenkins House	Residence
7	50 Hillside Rd.	1873 - Deacon Cramer House	Residence
8	56 Hillside Rd.	1870 – William J. Topping House	Residence
9	111 Main St.	1810-1812 – Brick Tavern	Publick House (for sale)
10	123-125 Main St.	1873 – Charles Hardin Clothing Store	Club Rince Irish Dance School
11	127 Main St.	1856 – Academy Public School and Library	Chester Monument Co. and Sub Pub
12	137 Main St.	1880 - Hopkins Roller Skating Rink	Fresco Mexican Restaurant, Boutique, and Bodyheart Therapy Center
13	50' east of 137 Main St. and 100' west of the Gazebo	1868 – Small commercial building Barber, Gravestones, Livestock Sales Office, Cards, Gifts, Bikes, Antiques	Owned by Chester Borough and called Rockefeller Center since 1960's. Historic Preservation Plan completed and Morris County Grants in progress.
14	Corner of Collis Lane and Main St.	1909-1921 - Janes' Methodist Church 1942 – Scout Cabin	The Church was destroyed by fire in 1921. Boy Scout Troop 9 Center
15	177 Main St.	1862 – William Collis House	Phoenix Insurance Group
16	217 Main St.	1860 – James Vanderveer House	Residence
17	220 Main St.	1850 – Community Presbyterian Church	Pastor Chris Scrivens
18	170 Main St.	1882 – Dr. Levi Case House	Lavin and Associates Law Offices
19	142 Main St.	1830 – John Drake House	Weichert Realty
20	110 Main St.	1868 - John Dunham & Sons Store	New owner after Pleasant Pools closed.
21	98 Main St.	1800 - Drover's Tavern	Riposta Law Offices
22	Memorial Island	Larry Masey and Chester War Monuments (Revolutionary War to present)	Honoring those who “gave the last full measure of devotion”

View the YouTube video to get more information about each site. You need a QR Code reader and best to have the YouTube app on your Smart Phone. Scan the QR code to the right, a webpage opens, touch the OPEN APP button and the *Strolling Historic Chester* video will open in the YouTube app. Turn the screen to landscape mode. You can navigate through the video by using pause (||) or start (▶) or use the slider (◀—▶) at the bottom to go forward and backward.

