

The Chester Historical Society's



NEWS & VIEWS

Hello CHS Members and Friends. The November 2017 CHS Newsletter diverges from past ones by only having only three articles rather than the usual five or six. The first recounts the history of the Cooper Mill over the last 800,000 years. The second is an article about our annual meeting, luncheon, and guided tour at the Cooper Mill. The third is an article mostly written by **you** as I have reprinted a number of your comments from the over 300 received from the SAVE SUNNYSIDE online petition. There are some good parallels between the Cooper Mill and Sunnyside. The Cooper Mill became obsolete and was closed for 50 years, before a nine-year project restored it as a working mill for education, demonstrations, and the centerpiece for a historic area. Sunnyside has been vacant for almost 20 years. The Chester Historical Society will endeavor to work with the property owners, Borough officials, and preservation organizations to promote an adaptive reuse solution to SAVE SUNNYSIDE.

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From Mastodons to Millstones: A HISTORY of the COOPER MILL

By Edward Ng – Chester Historical Society

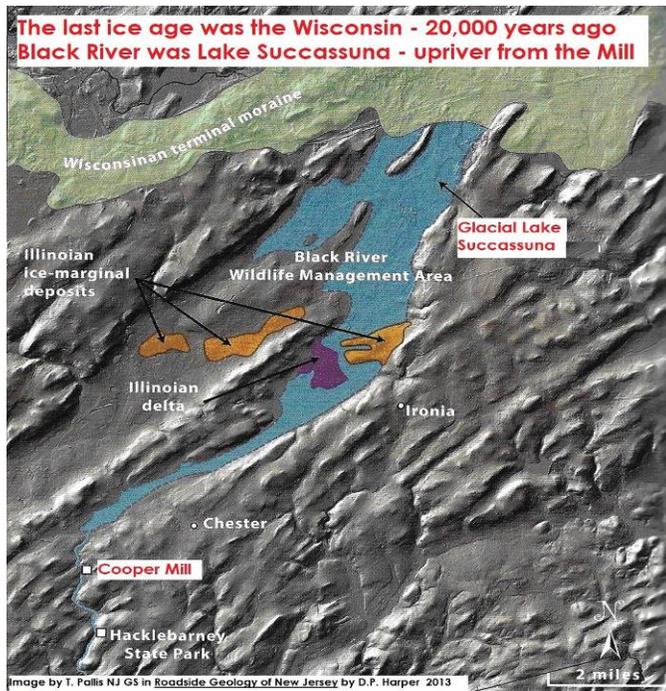


The last glacier to cover Chester occurred in the pre Illinoian Ice Age about 800,000 years ago. The last ice age was 20,000 years ago, the Wisconsin. Though probably not 100% accurate, this is what the Black River and marshland could have looked like, up river from the Cooper Mill, similar to the area where Route 206 crosses the Black River. But instead of cars and trucks there are Pleistocene mastodons and giant reindeer. Most of the Black River then was overlain by Glacial Lake Succasunna.¹

Before the Wisconsin ice age, the Black River flowed north – the opposite of today. The glacier and its terminal moraine blocked the northward flow of the river and Glacial Lake

¹ The Glacial Geology of New Jersey 2012 Environmental Stewards, Rutgers University, lecture notes.
Web: historicchesternj.com chester.historical.society@gmail.com phone: (908)866-6717

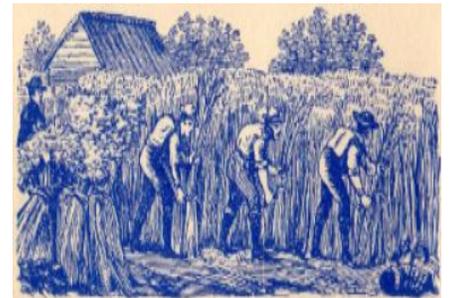
Succasunna was formed north of Chester. The area around the Cooper Mill was an outlet for the glacial lake. After the glacier receded, the Black River continued to flow south due to topographic changes: the south flowing river cut deeper at the current mill site and the



lands once beneath the glacier were uplifted as the thick ice receded. In modern times, this area became an ideal location for water driven mills. Upstream the meandering Black River and marshland allowed a large amount of water to pond. Downstream, the gorge is steep and narrow enough to allow the falling water to be harnessed by water wheels and turbines.

Long before the first European settlers, the indigenous Lenape fished and hunted in the river they called Alamatunk which the settlers loosely translated to "Black River". Currently some portions of the Black River are named the Lamington River, which is derived from Alamatunk. Not surprisingly, European settlers would be attracted to this plentiful supply of motive power and in the first decades of the 1700's they settled in this area.

The Weldon brothers were mining men who arrived from England in 1739. They found iron ore at lower Hacklebarney. However poor roads and transportation made importation of coal from Pennsylvania uneconomical. So in the 1750's, they built a wooden gristmill "in order to exchange its products for the charcoal produced by the farmers." Isaiah Younglove bought out the Weldons in 1765 and operated the gristmill. In 1788, the next owner, Elias Howell, added a sawmill. The Weldon Brothers stopped mining in 1790, but the need to mill the local wheat, barley, and corn kept increasing. The gristmill became the center of the village, appropriately called "Milltown", but that is a story for a future newsletter.

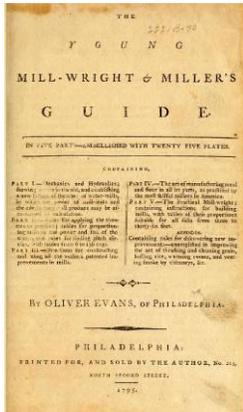
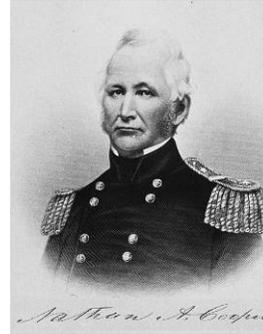


The 1800's would usher in a new era. After operating the mill for 30 years, Elias Howell died and his estate sold the property to Nathan Cooper for \$750. The property included 4.5 acres, a gristmill, a saw mill, a dam, and machinery. In 1826 Nathan Cooper built a new mill, the current stone mill, on the foundation of the wooden mill which was damaged by a fire. Nathan Cooper's new stone mill had 2 water wheels and 4 sets of grinding stones. In 1853 Nathan Cooper died and his nephew Nathan A. Cooper inherited the mill.

Nathan A. is not just another Cooper, but the most famous of all the Chester Coopers. He is arguably Chester's most colorful historic figure. He was boisterous, energetic and ambitious. When Gen. Lafayette made his celebratory last visit to Morristown in 1825, he was part of the honor guard at the ripe old age of 23. Only two Chester men had that honor, Nathan A. and Col. Benjamin McCourry. Forever after, Nathan A. would say "Shake the hand that

shook the hand of Lafayette". He rose to the rank of General in the New Jersey Cavalry in 1854, even though he never saw combat. However, from then on he was always addressed as "General Cooper".

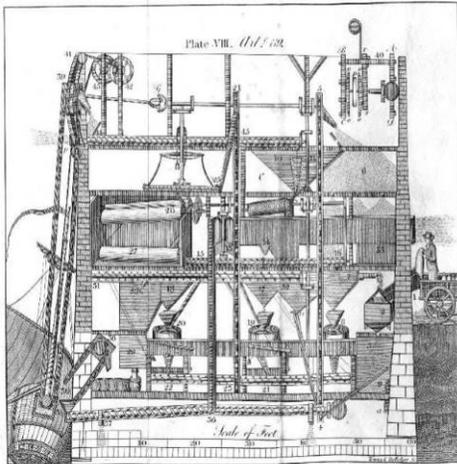
He was a lover of horses, hunting, and sports. One day, the General's wife, Mary Cooper, was riding in a carriage drawn by two horses from the Cooper mansion on east Main St. to the Crossroads (currently intersection of North Rd., Oakdale Rd., and Main St.) One of the horses shied and both horses bolted free of the carriage. Mary was thrown to the ground from the carriage. When Gen. Cooper heard of the accident, his first question was not about Mary's condition or injuries, but about which horse had made it first to the Crossroads.



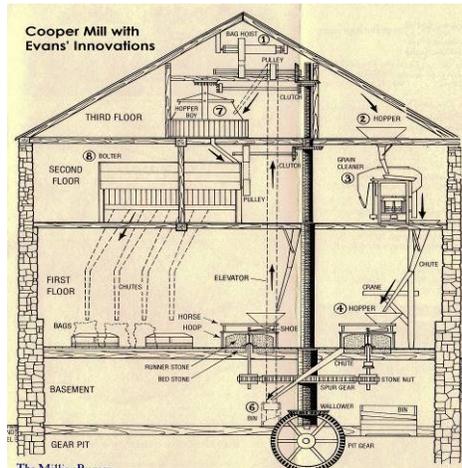
Oliver Evans 1755-1819

The 1800's ushered in a wide range of new milling technologies. Oliver Evans was an American inventor known initially for his innovations on wire making for textile cards and on steam engines. In 1783 two of his brothers started building a gristmill and asked Oliver to oversee it. He introduced a number of labor saving, materials handling, and quality improving inventions. He developed an automated mill that would continuously process grains. His ideas were eventually documented in his magnum opus, The Young Mill-Wright and Miller's Guide, published in Philadelphia in 1795. Adopters of his innovations

included George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and General Cooper. Adoption of Evans' ideas helped automate the milling process with the use of elevators, moving belts and screw conveyors. Similarities between Evans' "automated mill" (left) and the Cooper Mill (center) can be seen in the images.



Evans' design for an automated flour mill from Young Mill-Wright and Miller's Guide, 1795.

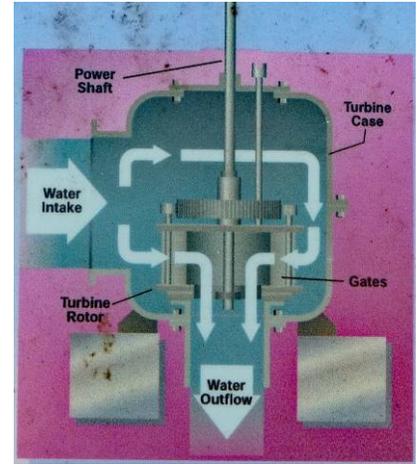


The Milling Process... Wheat was lifted into the mill by a water-powered bag hoist (1) where the bags were emptied into a hopper (2) leading which in turn fed the grain down to a hopper (3) mounted above the millstones (4). From the hopper the grain passed which directed the grain into the "eye" of the runner (top) stone. Ground flour fell through a chaff beneath the bed stone which an elevator carried it back up to the third floor where it was emptied into a hopper boy (5) which spread the flour



Another dramatic change occurred in the 1850's when the two waterwheels were replaced by a cast iron turbine. Cast iron turbines were less susceptible to freezing and required less

maintenance. Turbines provided more power, were more efficient and were compact. The Cooper Mill's Bartley turbine was made in nearby Mt. Olive. The following images show a turbine that was removed from the mill and the current, nearby explanatory placard.

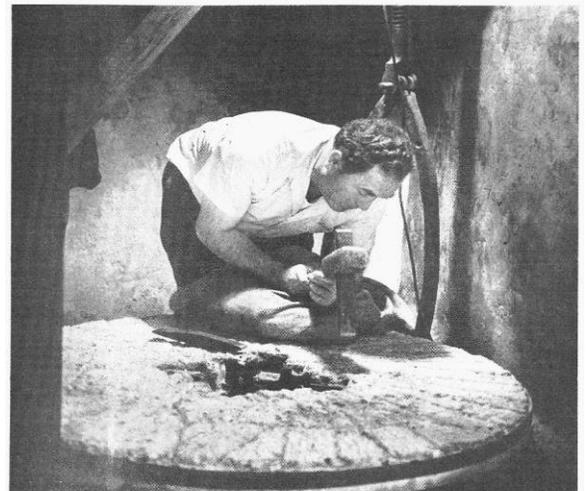


When General Cooper's surviving adult children married, he gave each of them either a house or a farm. The General died in 1879 and his son Abram inherited the mill and surrounding property. He lived in the house that is now the visitor's center. Even in death the General's legacy lives large. His monument in Pleasant Hill Cemetery is the heaviest and largest. It took six horses to pull the General's headstone up the hill to the cemetery.



The Cooper Mill continued operation until 1913. Improvements in grain transport and centralization of processing in giant mills made small, local mills obsolete. The Cooper Mill ceased operating, but was not forgotten.

Fifty years after the millstones stopped turning, the Morris County Parks Commission bought the mill and property from the estate of John Kean. The long road to restoration started in 1969. The Cooper Mill became a living, operating museum, incorporating historic mill artifacts from several locations. The cast iron turbine was removed. It now sits in front of the mill on the walkway from the visitor's center. The 6.5 ton Fitz steel waterwheel was recycled from the Wortman (or Upper Mill) in Pottersville.



MILLSTONE DRESSING is an art that disappeared, for the most part, with the last century. Charles Howell, however, is an expert who performed the task last week at the Cooper Mill in Chester Township in preparation for the dedication ceremony to be held Sunday, Oct 22 at 3 p.m. Members of the Morris County Board of Freeholders, county Park Commission, and local officials will attend. There will be a tour of the mill for the public, and an opportunity to see the mill back in action after many years of lying idle. (Stahl)

Much of the machinery for milling came from the Lower Mill in Pottersville before it was demolished. The gearing came from the Catawissa Mill originally in Pennsylvania. The gear pattern was

copied from the Vail Mill in Speedwell Village, Morristown. Almost 150 years after it was built, the Cooper Mill reopened at a dedication ceremony on Oct. 22, 1978.

No mill restoration would be complete without a miller. Luckily L. Ivins Smith III was hired in 1979. Ivins grew up on a farm in New Hope, PA. After receiving a Bachelor of Science degree from the Delaware Valley College of Science and Agriculture, rather than returning to the farm, he started working at Washington Crossing State Park. His next stop was the Cooper Mill -- for the next 38 years. In 2003 Ivins received



the Chester Heritage Award from the Chester Historical Society. He is renowned for his teaching of kids and adults. He is synonymous with the Cooper Mill and has been its worldwide ambassador. Ivins is planning to retire at the end of 2017. We wish him a happy and healthy retirement. ■

Ivins Smith's Interesting Cooper Mill Facts (Morris County Parks Commission 3/82 brochure):

- The 16-foot diameter water wheel at the Cooper Mill weighs 6.2 tons, yet it takes as little as 1.5 to 2 cups of water in 24 of the wheel's 48 buckets to keep it turning (4 revolutions per minute).



- The water wheel normally turns at 8 to 10 revolutions per minute (8 rpm is most efficient) and can produce up to 45 horsepower.

- 41.1 cubic feet of water per minute pouring into the wheel produces 1 horsepower.



- When grinding fine wheat flour (at a rate of 400 pounds/hour) the water wheel receives 164.5 cubic feet (1230 gallons) of water per minute to produce the necessary 4 horsepower.

- The water wheel is 80 -90% efficient. Metal wheels are a little more efficient than wooden ones.

- Each set of two grinding stones weighs 3000 lbs. The top (runner) stone weighs 2000 lbs and the bottom (bed) stone is 1000 lbs.



- The two sets of grinding stones presently operating at Cooper Mill can produce up to 800 lbs. of flour or meal per hour. ■

Chester Historical Society's Annual Meeting and Picnic at the Cooper Mill

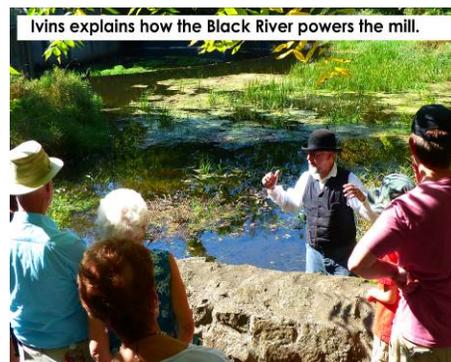
On Sep. 24, 2017, CHS' annual meeting was held at the Carriage House at the Cooper Mill. During the business meeting, the following were re-elected: John Pfaff as vice president, Anita Rhodes as treasurer, and Lois Taylor as corresponding secretary. Congratulations on your 2 year appointments. Following the business meeting a sumptuous lunch was served. Ed Ng gave a presentation on the history of the Cooper Mill which is reprinted in the previous article. Many of the members then walked over to the mill for a guided tour and lecture by the miller, Ivins Smith. The tour pictures start with Ivins at the pond that powers the water wheel. The subsequent pictures follow the course of grain from cleaning on the third floor, to grinding on the first floor, to size separation by the bolter on the second floor, then down chutes to the first floor. The tour ended at the magnificent 6.2 ton waterwheel. Many thanks to Ivins for a great tour and for being a dedicated and inspirational teacher. ■



The Annual Meeting and lunch were held in the Carriage House.



A short walk to the Cooper Mill.



Ivins explains how the Black River powers the mill.



Grain is hoisted to & cleaned on 3rd floor



Grain falls into the hopper above the runner millstone.



Ivins engages water wheel to turn runner stone



Ivins explains how the bolter separates the milled grain



The bolter sifts the milled grain into different chutes by size from super fine to bran.



The end of the tour at the water wheel

SAVE SUNNYSIDE Update and Selected Petition Comments

The Chester Borough Land Use Board met on Nov. 9, 2017 to consider the application to demolish Sunnyside. The Board split 4 "yes" to 4 "no" with 1 "give more time to find a



Land Use Board Meeting Nov. 9, 2017 on the Sunnyside demolition application. L-R: Zoning Officer Kerry Brown, Russel Goodwin, Bill Devitt, Board Chairman Ken Kasper, Board Attorney Richard Marcickiewicz, Borough Mayor Janet Hoven, Anthony Arturi, Anita Rhodes, Jennifer Cooper, not shown Don Storms, and in the foreground Borough planner David Banisch. Photo by Observer Tribune Writer Mark Kitchins. Nov. 13, 2017 article: "Sun Won't Set Yet on Chester's Sunnyside House". Reprinted with permission of the Observer-Tribune/New Jersey Hills Media Group

compromise". Mark Kitchin, writer for the Observer Tribune, provides a description and partial video of the proceedings². Edward Ng, gave testimony on the historical and architectural significance of Sunnyside. He argued that the historic preservation ordinances should require the Board to reject the demolition application (see the May 2017 CHS Newsletter). The Board would not accept the online petition on procedural grounds. Petition signers who were present did make comments in support of Sunnyside's adaptive reuse. The Society has been asked to contact the owner to discuss possible preservation plans.

The next Board meeting to consider the demolition permit is scheduled for February 8, 2018.

The SAVE SUNNYSIDE online petition went public just after the 4th of July. To date (Nov. 16, 2017) over 875 people have signed the petition. I convey my grateful thanks to all the signees. Almost 300 people have left comments. Heartfelt thanks to you for taking time to make comments, many of which conveyed strong emotions. Yes the focus was Sunnyside, but the overwhelming feeling was a passion for Chester – as that special place that is getting rarer and rarer. I have selected a couple dozen of the comments to reprint verbatim. My apologies to those who wrote comments, but whose comments were not reprinted.

As the former Director of the Morris County Park Commission, I appreciate the historical significance of Chester as an important link on Patriots Path and as a critical element in the heritage tourism which benefitted Cooper Mill, the Kay Center, Willowwood and Bamboo Brook. Losing an important structure like Sunnyside would adversely impact the ability to promote heritage tourism in this significant area of Morris County. QS 7/6/17

The most charming part of Chester is its historical structures. Without these, it becomes just another intersection to blow thru on Rt. 206. My father was on the Boroughs Land Use board before his passing in 2012. He treasured Chester's unique history and would have done everything possible to prevent this demolition. Please reconsider. Once demolished you can never regain or replace this treasure. TS 7/7/17

² http://www.newjerseyhills.com/observer-tribune/news/sun-won-t-set-yet-on-chester-s-sunnyside-house/article_1f0ff639-7063-50d4-ac67-6d4477094f20.html Mark Kitchin, "The Sun Won't Set Yet on Chester's Sunnyside House", Observer Tribune, Nov. 13, 2017. A clarification: Sunnyside is on Main Street. The Larison's Property is on Main St. and Rt. 206.

Chester simply would not be Chester without its historic buildings. This part of NJ is the last of its kind in the state and even though progress is inevitable without the history this beautiful, quaint area will be lost forever. PB 7/7/17

Although I didn't grow up in Chester, I am disheartened anytime I hear of a historic building being neglected and then up for demolition. Having witnessed several historic homes left to ruin in my hometown of Piscataway, and as a regular visitor to Chester, I feel it would be in the community's best interest to find a way to repurpose the building as opposed to destroying it. WM 7/7/17

This is a very important Chester structure. It was also the model for a number of Currier & Ives lithographs (as were other Chester structures and farms). Nathaniel Currier used to stay at the Crossroads Tavern during weekend hunting trips, and drew studies of many Chester homes and shops. That was a primary reason our family originally chose Chester to be our home for many years. SC 7/7/17

Chester is a community that we moved into years ago because of its architecture and rural landscape. Seeing so many historical homes torn down and trees that have lasted for centuries is so disheartening. Please do not tear this integral part of Chester's history and beauty. KB 7/7/17

Tourism to the Chester area contributes a great deal to the revenue of the Chesters. By destroying historic buildings such as Sunnyside it not only hurts our bottom line but detracts from the historic nature of our town. TC 7/7/17

Please save this beauty in the rough. I went there many times in the 1970's. It was my big brothers best friend's home. It was spectacular. So sorry to see the state it is in now. MH 7/7/17

I fully agree that main street should not be left to go the way of the strip mall. The historical nature which makes the town loved and visited should be kept as a valuable incentive to grow the value of the town for coming generations. LP 7/7/17

DO NOT TEAR THIS DOWN!!!! By continually destroying our history and past, you are forever changing our future in negative ways. History and times gone by are what makes our town filled with wonderful stories, business opportunities to keep the town filled with visitors and most of all a place for the residents to call home. We like it the way it is..... historical !!! That's why we all moved here!!! You are doing a disservice to Chester and to those who carved the town's past. Disrespectful to present and past! MB 7/8/17

This house is not just a house but a constant reminder of where we came from and how we developed. It is a part of our history and is a necessary part of the community. It was an inspiration for me in my photography class and landed me a 4 on my AP 2D Art and Design test. It was a huge part of my successes and my junior year of high school. Please do not let it be forgotten and washed away from our community, it would be a tragedy. HB 7/12/17

Please don't allow another piece of Chester's history be destroyed..... the area was attractive enough to bring people here and now we seem willing to cast it aside for convenience. That is more than just a shame. JA 7/15/17

Learn from the past. When historic treasures are gone it is forever. There must be a Plan "B". Save Sunnyside! BS 7/15/17

Please preserve this landmark. Chester doesn't need another mall especially when there are vacant stores in town. AS 7/16/17

SAVE SUNNYSIDE - Stop the Demolition of a Historic and Architecturally Important Chester NJ House

87 signatures **Goal 1,000**

SIGN THIS PETITION

Name*

Email*

Comments

Show my name in the online signature list

Keep me informed on this and similar petitions.

SIGN PETITION

or

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Please sign and share this petition to help save Sunnyside. James Topping, the renowned cabinet maker, built Sunnyside in 1873 for his widowed daughter-in-law and grandchild, Leila. Sunnyside is the companion house to what would later become Larison's Turkey Farm Inn, a Chester landmark. Bolstered by the revenue from two nearby mines and Topping's craftsmanship, Sunnyside would become the "handsomest house" in Chester NJ at the turn of the century.

Help the Chester Historical Society Board stop the demolition of Sunnyside. Help us convince the Chester Borough Land Use Board and Governing Body to reject the application to demolish Sunnyside. It should not be demolished, but conserved and adaptively reused as many other Chester Main Street historic homes have been, to offices, restaurants, and shops. Under all four considerations of the Chester Borough historic preservation architectural review process, Sunnyside qualifies for preservation. Furthermore Sunnyside needs to be repaired and repurposed.

The complete story of Sunnyside is available on the Chester Historical Society's website at <http://www.historicchesternj.com/>

You can still sign the petition and add comments at the website: <http://ipetitions.com/petition/save-sunnyside-stop-the-demolition-of-a-historic>

Read more about the history of Sunnyside at: http://historicchesternj.com/images/Story_of_Sunnyside_-_Handsomest_House_in_Chester.pdf

Read more about Leila Topping at: http://historicchesternj.com/images/2015_Spring_CHS_Newsletter_compress_corr_add.pdf

What a beautiful example of architecture of that period! I was the house chair of an 1875 house in Franklin that we now use for educational talks, meetings, house tours and even rent it out for weddings, etc. Sunnyside would be a valuable addition to the architecturally significant buildings in Central NJ. Once these beauties are gone, they're gone forever. TT 7/17/17

Please listen to the voice of Chester's residents and reject the developer's application to demolish Sunnyside! We are lucky to live in a community that has -- in general -- approached development thoughtfully and from a long-term perspective, and we can't let that slip away. Each of us can point to dozens of neighboring NJ towns that haven't been so fortunate and have lost their distinctiveness (important for tourism!), connection to history, and invaluable open space as a result. Once a place is developed, there's little that can be done to "un-develop" it, so we have to be very careful about what we

say "yes" to (just look at the Chester Springs shopping center and sprawling parking lot right across the street - it houses some great small businesses but is unsightly and underutilized). The Larison's property is iconic, as are the key buildings that sit on it, Sunnyside included. I genuinely appreciate the developer's desire to generate a reasonable income from the property, but there are far better, more distinctive, and more historically and environmentally sensible alternatives to the current proposal (some of which have been discussed at the Borough Council meetings I've attended in the last several years). As Chester residents, we have to hold firm and insist that whatever is done with the property respects the values that we hold so dear. Thanks, in advance, for saying no to the developer's proposal. KC 7/19/17

So much of what makes a community what it is, is the history of the community. It is our duty to share the history with the local residents who may not have any link with the history. What better place to save history than in a history rich home such as Sunnyside! Please listen to the community and hold on to the history of Chester! Do not allow the developer to change the landscape so drastically. Thanks SA 7/20/17

Sunnyside is an irreplaceable Chester treasure. People visit Chester in large part for the historic ambiance. Do not let this asset be destroyed. KK 7/27/17

I am a 35 year resident of Chester & expect to continue living & working in this beautiful, historically preserved community. It was the reason I moved here so many years ago. It is a haven in the "scrub" that surrounds it. Just look at what has happened to "historic Flanders", the housing developments are a major disturbance to the environment and the scraping of the land to put up McMansions very telling of what our town will soon look like if we don't think ahead. Once these roots to our history are destroyed, there is no getting them back. As you travel in Europe its wonderful it is to see the modern blended with the historic, they have been doing this for centuries. The constant tearing down of stone to put up plastic really should stop; as the song goes "we paved paradise and put up a parking lot" does not have to be our theme. I want my property values & the integrity of our beautiful community to be maintained; we can have growth without destruction. My family & I have always been proud to say where we live, and when we say we're from Chester to people far outside of the community the feed back is "you mean where the Turkey Farm is? It is so nice there. How many times have you heard this & smiled? So do I think we should preserve Sunnyside, yes without a doubt. CW 7/28/17

Once lost to demolition an historic treasure cannot be re-built. Save the character of the area. People are spending money on experiences not things. Save this landmark for people to experience their heritage. LC 8/30/17

In preserving our historical landmarks we are preserving the significance of the architecture of that period, the people that lived at that time and the accomplishments they achieved to contribute to our understanding of our past and our hope for our future. We need to secure this home for the splendor of Chester! DMV 9/18/17

Growing up in Chester and seeing the changes that have taken place has dramatically changed the landscape of Chester. We have become not much of a town anymore, but a Block of Mall stores that do nothing to the character or charm of a town. With Amazon on the coat tails of Brick & Mortar, Chester will become a boarded up town of Mall buildings with For Rent signs posted on 206. People will leave and the 4 corners will just be a stop light with Gas and fast food! Not a Town. The residents of Chester have to stand up and take back their town! Turn Sunnyside into a museum. GS 11/9/17

Acknowledgments and Contact Information

CHS Trustees and Officers: President – Edward Ng Vice President – John Pfaff Treasurer – Anita Rhodes
Corresponding Secretary – Lois Taylor Recording Secretary- Elaine Hanington Archives – Edward Ng
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and Jim Whelpley. **CHS Newsletter Editor:** - Edward Ng

Historical information, photos, and maps are from the CHS archives. Current photos are by Ed Ng except as noted. Thanks to Ivins Smith for providing past Morris County Parks Commission brochures on the Cooper Mill.

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>.

Web: historicchesternj.com chester.historical.society@gmail.com phone: (908)866-6717