Chester Historical Society's
NEWS & VIEWS
May 2025

CONTENTS

CHS Beautification Work on Chester Day by Ed Ng 1
History of the "Pleasant Pools" Building at 110 Main St. by Ed Ng 2
Leck's Store 1942-1968 by Charlie Leck 3
The Iron Boom History of the Seward Stone Barn and Stables by Ed Ng 7
A Recap of Susan Simon's Talk "Researching Your Ancestors Can Be Interesting and Fun" by Marla Jackson 11
Morris County's Pathways of History at Rockefeller Center by Ed Ng 12
History of the Crossroads Stone Schoolhouse and Brass Bell by Ed Ng 13
The Antiques and Collectibles Show With Jon Felz 14
About the Chester Historical Society and Contact Information/Links 14
How to join or renew your membership online or US Postal Service 14

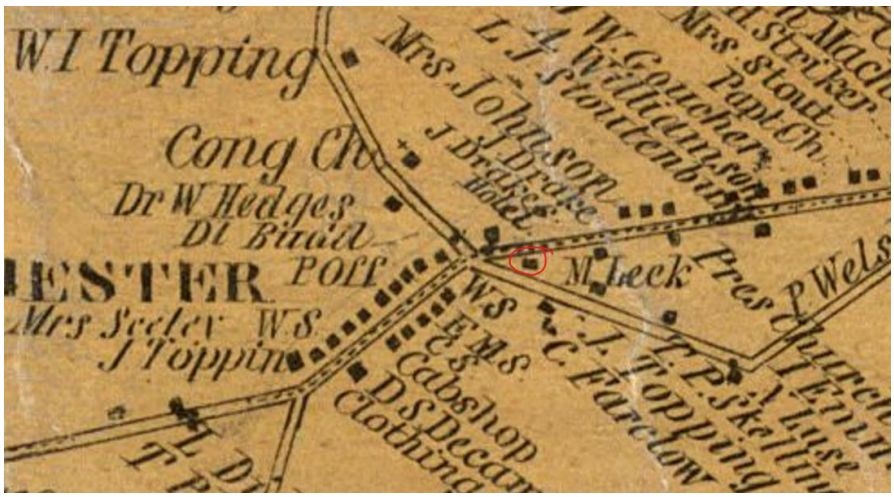
Hello CHS members and friends. I hope May is going well for you.
We would love your help! Please contact us at chester.historical.society@gmail.com if you would like to help with Archives, Oral History, Finance, Historic Sites, Membership, Publications, Programs, Publicity, or Social Media. Never done it before? We will train you. Do you have special skills or interests? Please let us know. If you haven't already PLEASE JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP. Don't forget, current members can give a one-year membership to a guest. Use the forms on pages 15 and 16.

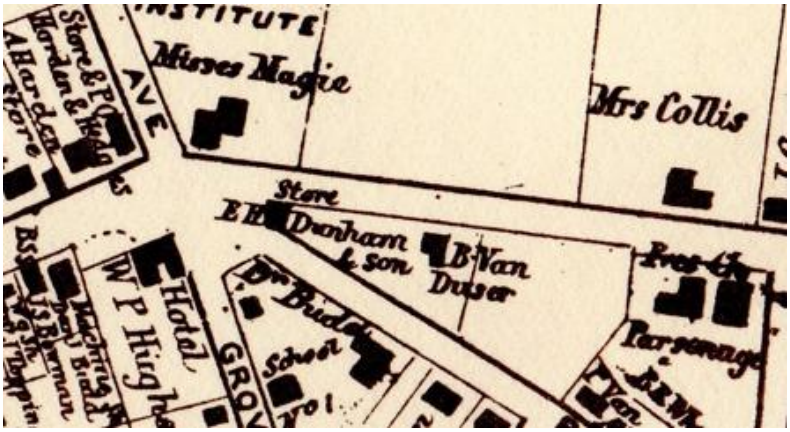
CHS Beautification Work on Chester Day by Ed Ng

On May 3, the Chester Historical Society had a project close to home, Chester's Rockefeller Center. With rockabilly music coming from the Food Truck Extravaganza in Municipal Field and a Latina chanteuse projecting from Fresco, Marla Jackson, Maureen Davidson, and Ed Ng. weeded, installed weed cloth, and mulched (200 pounds) the flower garden next to the building. Victory over the weeds was declared… at least for a few days. ☼

History of the "Pleasant Pools" Building at 110 Main St. by Ed Ng

I would like to provide some historical context for the next article, an engaging and heartwarming memoir by Charlie Leck. The locale of his story is 110 Main St., Chester, NJ. At the intersection of Main St., Hillside Rd., and Budd Ave. Most Chesterites recall that Pleasant Pools was there for many years. Before 1806, if you were traveling from German Valley (renamed Long Valley) to Morristown, on Main St. when you got to the building you had to make a diagonal right turn around the building onto Budd Ave. Main St. did not continue past that point until Isaiah Fairclo donated the strip of land to the Washington Turnpike so that Main St. could continue and intersect with Oakdale Rd. and North Rd. There has been a building there since at least 1853 as shown on the 1853 Shields Lightfoot Map of Chester (above).





The 1868 Beers Map, above, shows the Dunham and Sons Store at the Site. In 1876, Simpson and Case Co. opened a store there. The name is visible in the above-undated photograph. In 1913 James G. Case took over the store. In the 1920s and 1930s, George L. Ulrick's Luncheonette was in the front, and Fred L. DeHart Radio Repair Store was in the back of the building. As Charlie's memoir will recount Leck's Store started in 1942 but they did not own the building. In 1966 Burton Fleming

sold the property to Russell and Mary Yentema. The Fleming family owned and operated the Chester House across the street, from 1913 to 1938 where Burton Fleming was the proprietor.

On April 1, 1969, Raymond (1933-2008) and Catherine (1938-2023) McLaughlin opened Pleasant Pools. In April 1971, they bought the property from the Yentemas. Pleasant Pools was a Chester institution that operated for 50 years. It closed in 2019, but not without saying "Thank You". In October 2020, Catherine McLaughlin sold the property to Manjit Bajwa. He renovated the building and reopened it as Pleasant Market. ☼

Leck's Store 1942-1968 by Charlie Leck

In a remarkable change of lifestyle, Henry W. Leck (my father) moved our family, in 1942, from America's largest city, out to the small country town of Chester, New Jersey. I was the youngest of the family -just about to turn two years old. I'd been born in New York City as had my sister, Jean (who was ten years older than I), and my brothers, Frank and John (who were seven and six years older). Our uncles, cousins, and grandparents teased us about the move from the big city to a little town that they called "the sticks!" As a child, I was somehow the least impacted by the very extreme change of lifestyle. Jean, Frank, and John were leaving good friends and grandparents, uncles, and cousins behind. They were also leaving behind familiar, big-city schools with a thousand or more other kids for a small county in which everyone knew everyone else.

Charlie and brother Frank 1942

My dad had a good job in the city while my family lived there before I was born. He worked in a coffee production company and had a good position. He began work very early in the morning. The plant produced fresh, ground coffee that was delivered early almost every day of the week to various restaurants all over Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. Because he went to work so early, he got off early as well.

My dad was a huge fan of the NY Giants baseball team. Knowing this is an important part of our story. He loved baseball. He told us wonderful stories about how, while he lived in the city, he went to work very early at a coffee production company and finished up work quite

early in the afternoon. He often stopped on a hillside outside the Polo Grounds, in the Bronx, and watched the ball games to their conclusion before going home.

World War Two was raging when we arrived in Chester, and everything seemed topsy-turvy for everyone all across the face of the nation. From conversations I had with my family as I grew older, I learned that our move out of the city was made most necessary by the economic conditions of war. An uncle -a rather distant one --who knew Chester very well, told my dad about the town and also told him he would be able to take over a general store there in the town. My brothers and sister were students in good public schools. It was not an easy decision for them, but my parents decided to make the big move that they had been thinking about for months.

I don't remember those early years in Chester, but I do remember many of the stories my parents, sister, and brothers told me about them. The change in lifestyle was one of the biggest things with which all of my family had to deal. My sister, Jean, took the change the hardest because she left behind very good and close friends and a church that meant the world to her. She was the only Catholic in the family and there was no church in Chester in which she might worship. It devasted her!

Fortunately, she was soon told that there was a group of Catholics who gathered each Sunday up in the Walter Zerbe home on Main Street (almost right across the street from where the present Catholic Church stands). She made dear and close friends much more quickly than the rest of us, though we were eventually connected with the beautiful First Congregational Church that was just up the hill from where my father's store (and our home) stood. [There will be more about the impact this wonderful church had on me.] Let me also tell you that there is a lovely, framed photograph of First Congregational just in front of the desk where I am typing now. It is a constant reminder of my love for that church.

Uncle George owned the building into which my father and we would move and set up our business. We never owned the building, as quite a few folks thought, but we paid rent to Uncle George every single month that we lived there. I remember that my dad explained to me that the rent did not begin until we had gotten the building into shape as a general store and small restaurant serving breakfast and lunch. As a two-year-old, I, of course, don't remember much about those first years, but some photographs show me wandering around the place, sometimes with an old cat we owned and my dad told stories later in my life about me finding my way on to the laps of many of the gentlemen who came into our store to sit over coffee and chat about the state of the war.

Charlie with cat and dog at the store.

I remember a few of the names of those everyday guys that stopped in the store for their morning coffee and toast and a lot of chatter and laughter - Dan McDonald and his son Ed, Arnold Nichols (who was Mayor of the town for a while), Mr. Meyer, the fellow who owned the big farm on North Road and always drove around in a Cadillac, and Art Thompson who was a wonderful storyteller.

Charlie's Dad, Henry W. Leck, behind the counter of the general store.

My dad told stories of his World War One years and there were constant stories that would be told by the folks who came in almost every single day to chat. They were stories about the Chester boys who were away and fighting in the war -on the ground, on the sea, and in the air. They were heroes to everyone in the town and fathers or mothers often pulled out a letter they had received from a son. The entire letter would be read to the gatherers. My mother would take time each day to write to one of the Chester boys who were in the army or navy. She would keep them up on what was going on in their town and she'd tell them how proud the whole town was of their service to us. Those letters were extremely important to her. She had never met many of those guys, but she learned plenty about them from their proud Chester parents.

Charlie in uniform in front of the store

During the war, someone gave me a navy uniform (in my size) and my parents told me, later on in life, that I would wear it constantly. Nine of Chester's finest boys died in the war, and it pained us all to hear about their deaths. To the right is a photo of me during the war, wearing my navy suit standing in front of the store, and the many photos of Chester boys serving in the armed forces.

How well I remember the joy and happiness that accompanied the end of the Second World War. Our town, like all towns, went wild with happiness, and joyful screaming, yelling and singing could be heard everywhere. The night of the war's end, the Chester House, across the street from our store and home, was the place to party. Far too young to party, I crawled out onto the porch over the front entrance to the store. I could look over at the Chester House and see the partying and the joyful singing... "When Johnny comes home again... hoorah, hoorah." It was a wild night of happiness. I, a five-year-old, sat out there on the roof of the porch and listened to the joy. Cars and trucks passed by on Main Street, between our store and the Chester House. Horns and sirens blew, and folks screamed and sang and cried their hearts out. The boys would be coming home again. Hoorah!

Undated image of Leck's Store - CHS Archives

Hoorah! From my bedroom, I could look to the park on Main Street and see the sign where the names of those who died in service were so carefully entered on the big board.

Leck's Store was open every day from 8 am to 9 pm. On Sundays we would always shut down at 1 p.m. and we'd have a family dinner together and then open up again at 2 o'clock. The traffic for newspapers was solid - customer after customer. Most newspaper customers also bought other things -like a box of sugar

doughnuts, a loaf of bread, or a box of candy for someone's birthday. We had work gloves and pens and pencils and every kind of chewing tobacco.

Newspapers were a big part of my father's business, and we sold an awful lot of them every day, but especially on Sunday mornings. The whole family would rise early on Sunday mornings, just after we heard the big bundles of this paper hitting the floor of the front porch – bam, bam, and bang. The New York Times, the Herald Tribune, The New York Daily News, and the Morristown paper. They all had to be put together with parts of each paper that had been delivered separately. Even after John and Frank married, they often came back over to the store to help with the Sunday morning papers.

I worked behind the ice cream counter for several years (probably my high school years). We sold a lot of ice cream cones, ice cream sandwiches, milkshakes, and malted milk. We had fountain cokes, and we sold tons of Pepsi and Coca-Cola bottles of soda. We also had a meat department and used it for making the lunchtime sandwiches that were ordered and for making packages of meat for folks to take home. The cigarette and cigar counter were big and so was our candy counter. Our penny candy counter was great fun for us. Smaller children would often come in and jump on a little stool we had by the case so they could see all the choices at the penny candy counter. We had greeting cards and pinball machines, and one could hear the tinging of those machines all through the evening. Oh yes, there was also the constantly blaring jukebox. We also sold every major magazine in production including *Playboy* and my mother would strenuously demand that I not go near them. But I had plenty of opportunities to peek at them. Naughty me!

In 1960, I left Chester - pretty much for good. I fell in love with the Midwest, where I went to college and, later, to Minneapolis where I went to seminary and then served my church the Fifth Avenue Congregational Church. I came home to Chester in 1966 to be ordained a minister in my lovely home church. I loved Chester. It was a wonderful place to grow up. I had great friends in my class at the Chester schools. I loved the Congregational Church - opened in 1878. Evelyn Beiser, a Sunday School Teacher, taught me so much and pointed the way to God and his son for me. She was there in the church on the day I was examined by the NJ United Church of Christ, and I remember asking if she could be included in the laying on of hands. She wept with tears of outrageous love as she placed her hand upon my head, and I accepted the call to Christ. I have many letters from Mrs. Beiser here on the shelves of my office and, when I was preaching, I would often include her and her thoughts in my sermons. For many years, I would come back to Chester just to meet up again with her. My last visits with her were in a nursing home.

I love Chester. I always will. I loved the First Congregational Church, and I loved the Chester schools. Pastors Charles Friou and Ed Lincoln led me carefully toward my decision to be ordained. I still keep in touch with Charlie Friou to this day. I hope my little account about Leck's Store and my life in Chester was interesting to you. I should say that my great buddies, with whom I spent enormous amounts of time when I was a child, were Buddy Thompson Charlie Adams, and Toby Barkman. I'm 83 years of age now. The years go by so quickly. One of my daughters lives in New York City. We go back to visit her often. She's very involved in the art and process of learning. One time, we drove out to Chester so I could show her the store and church. If there are friends and mates still there in Chester, I send my greetings and my love. *Charlie Leck, (received Feb. 17, 2024. Thanks you for the Leck family photos)* ☼

The Iron Boom History of the Seward Stone Barn and Stables by Ed Ng

The confluence of the Seward family fortune, Chester's Iron Boom, and William H. Seward's agrarian extravagance resulted in a showpiece stone barn and stables. Later the buildings would be adaptively reused as the Boden family home, the Stanfield Nursing Home, and finally the Glenlora Nursing Home. Those histories will be recounted in future Newsletters.

1700-1800's

Abraham Bickley (1670-1726) was a prosperous Philadelphia merchant and a friend of William Penn[1]. Abraham was twice widowed and had fathered a dozen children, eight of whom survived after his second wife died. On July 11, 1713, in a windfall, Abraham acquired 1110 acres near the village of Black River (later named Chester). He immediately "flipped" 1065 acres in a sale to John Shinn. Shinn was a devout Quaker who hoped to establish a new Quaker settlement in New Jersey. However, after 20 years without realizing his dream of a Quaker settlement (and having logged the valuable walnut timber) Shinn decided to sell.

In 1737, Obadiah Seward (1702-1751), bought from Shinn, several hundred acres covering what is now Highlands Ridge Park (113 acres), Seward Hill Preserve (64 acres), the Chester Borough Municipal complex (22 acres), and the land encompassing Glenlora. Obadiah's most famous descendent was his great-grandson, William H. Seward (1801-1872). He was governor and senator from New York, Secretary of State in Abraham Lincoln's cabinet, and creator of "Seward's Folly". His land purchase was much larger than Obadiah's: he negotiated the purchase of 425 million acres of Alaska from Russia.

Obadiah built his farmhouse in 1740 which had 7 fireplaces. It survives today at 539 E. Main St. (photo from 2012).

Reverend Stephen Overton (1772-1830) purchased the Seward farm (including the land where Glenlora now sits) after Obadiah died in 1792 from his heirs. The property became known as "Parsonage Farm". He was a man "possessed of strong intellectual powers, a clear melodious voice, and thrilling elocution, and was endowed with a vigorous constitution. He traveled much, preaching more than once a day for weeks in succession".[2] He was installed as minister of the First Congregational Church of Chester in 1801. Rev. Overton preached and farmed for almost 30 years, but was dismissed in 1828 as the church suffered a prolonged decline in spirituality and prosperity. Reverend Overton died in 1830.

Henry Seward (1793-1871), great-grandson of Obadiah Seward, bought the family farm and land back from Reverend Overton's heir and son-in-law, Caleb Fairclo, in 1836. The

[1] History of the Pen-Ryn Mansion – The Pen Ryn School
www.penryn.org/about-us/Pen%20Ryn%20History%20-%20Ciccarelli.pdf

[2] Joan Case. *The History of the First Congregational Church – Chester, New Jersey – Celebrating Our 275th Anniversary 1740-2015.*

Parsonage Farm was appropriately renamed "Welcome Home Farm" and Obadiah's house was its crown jewel. The 1887 Robinson's Atlas of Chester shows the location of the Welcome Home Farm at "H. Seward" and the other landholdings around Chester.

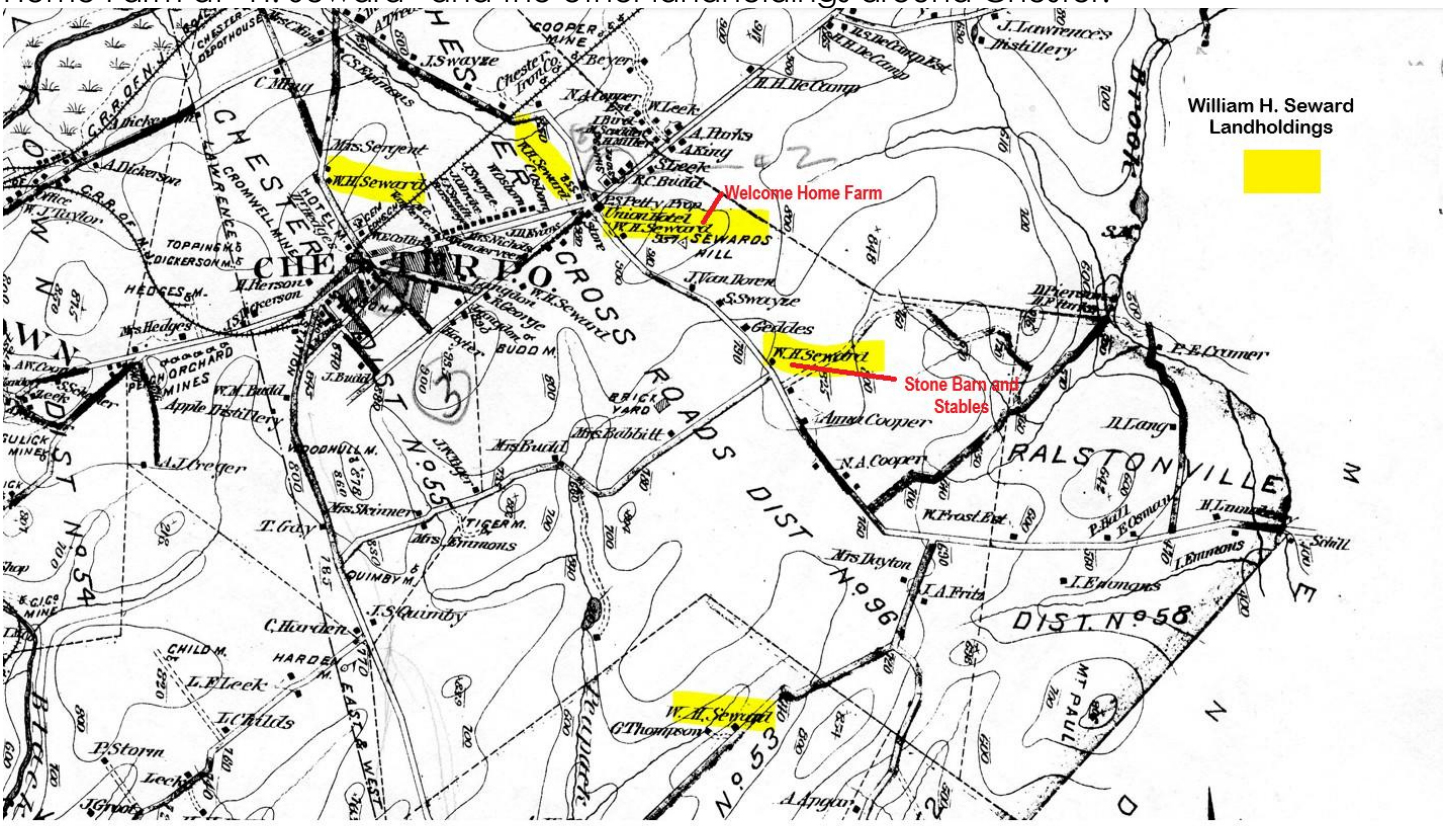


Plate 30 Chester - Robinson's Atlas of Morris County New Jersey. Compiled From Official Records Private Plans & Actual Surveys Under the Direction of E. Robinson. E. Robinson, Publisher, 1887

William H. Seward built his stone barn and stables in 1878 amid the prosperity of Chester's Iron Boom. Even though the boom lasted a relatively short period, from 1867 to 1886, it was the most consequential period of Chester's history. Over those 19 years, Chester's 33 mines raised 673,800 tons of iron ore.[3] Using an estimate of the average iron ore prices from 1870 to 1890 of $4 per ton, an estimate of $2.7 million in iron ore value ($84 million in 2025 dollars) came from Chester's mines. The iron ore wealth flowed into the local economy and helped Seward build his stone barn and stables.

In addition to Chester's mines, the success of William J. Taylor's Chester Furnace added to the wealth that was already brought by Chester's iron mines. The May 20, 1882, *The Iron Era* newspaper reported that "the large sum of $18,000 per month is expended in Chester for labor in the production and manufacture of iron." That is $557,000 per month in 2025 dollars. It is estimated that 600 men in Chester worked at the mines or the Furnace, so about a quarter of the population.[4] The iron wealth catalyzed the building of stores, workshops, offices, housing, and agricultural buildings like Seward's Stone Barn and Stables.

After a rich iron ore seam was discovered behind Main St. in 1867, Chester's population boomed to a peak of 2,510 in 1885, an increase of 34 percent from 1865. The village of

[3] Larry Lowenthal, *Chester's Iron Heyday (*Chester, N.J. Chester Historical Society, 1980), 61.

[4] Larry Lowenthal, *Chester's Iron Heyday*, 30.

Bedminster is located only 12 miles south of the village of Chester and like the rest of Somerset County did not have iron mines. Bedminster's population in 1865 was 2,463 and declined to 1,769 in 1885. With its iron economy, Chester's population increased significantly. Without an iron economy, Bedminster's population decreased by 39 percent. Chester's iron economy drove prosperity, and people came to pursue it.

The Seward Barn and Stables represents the wealth and prosperity generated by Chester's Iron Boom, Chester's most consequential historic period. Agricultural, commercial, and residential buildings are the major remaining illustrations of the Iron Boom. All the mines are closed and unseen. The rails of the railroads have been taken up and rail trails for hiking and biking are the only evidence. The Taylor Chester Furnace was taken apart and transported to the Taylor Iron Works in High Bridge. The Seward Stone Barn and Stables are the most prominent agricultural buildings illustrating Chester's Iron Boom.

William H. Seward built his stone barn and stables in 1878 during the peak of the Iron Boom. The *Iron Era* newspaper (March 3, 1883) described him in an article "A Model Farmer - Those who have had the pleasure of visiting the place of Mr. William H. Seward near Chester, express the belief that it is one of the finest homesteads to be found in all this section. A mile from his pleasant residence his farm buildings are models in their external appearance and their internal conveniences. The modern appliances for storing and handling materials are used, and the arrangements for feeding and watering his fine stock are complete. His water is brought from a spring a quarter of a mile distant and distributed throughout his buildings." Seward applied the latest scientific and technological advances to increase the productivity of his farm and farm buildings.

He was the owner of hundreds of acres of farmland, and he benefited from the increase in population and wealth driven by Chester's Iron Boom. Helping to feed and house almost a thousand more people with good wages during the boom was profitable for farmers, like Seward. The 1887 Robinson's Atlas for Chester shows that Wm. H. Seward was a landowner in the village, including farmland, two buildings, and a store. Outside of the village, he owned at least three tracts of farmland and Sewards Hill. See the 1887 map on the previous page.

Evidence points to the fact that Seward wanted to make a statement with his stone barn and stables. First, he built the barn and stables using stone. Every other local barn of the period was built with wood so his barn would have stood out. Second, the date stone in the front of the barn is large enough to be read from ground level and it prominently displays **1878 ERECTED BY WM H. SEWARD. THOS B. KINGSLAND. ARCHT. JOS. HAMBLEY. MASON. WM AMERMAN. CARPENTER.** I think the plaque detail attests to the pride of the

builders and the importance of the barn and stables. Third, the stone barn and stables were placed to be visible from the major east-west road through Chester (old Route 24). He embellished the front of the stone barn with arches and ironwork, such as the S-shaped anchors (image right) to further distinguish his barn from others. I believe he wanted the barn and stables to demonstrate the prosperity and status of the Seward family but in a practical manner. A great deal of that prosperity was driven by Chester's Iron Boom and is symbolized in his barn and stables. The March 2025 image of the Stables (left) and Barn (right) demonstrates how "photogenic" the buildings still are.

The Stables are 58' long, 22.5' wide, 21/2 stories and 4 bays. The Barn is 49' long and 32' wide and 3 stories.

Emma Louise Haines Seward (1848-1910) married William, and they had four children: Anna Haines (1874-1943), Frederic Henry (1878-1956), Lulu (1879-1888), and Frances Cooper (1884-1960). Anna married Alonzo Green (1875-1942) in 1904[5] and after William died in 1925, the Greens inherited the Welcome Home Farm and other properties. William is buried at Pleasant Hill Cemetery where he was a trustee[6]. The ownership of the barn and stables later passed to the King family, but it appears they did not alter the buildings. However, the next chapter in the stone barn and stables' history took a radical turn. They were adapted into the Bolden home, then the Stanfield Nursing Home, and then the Glenlora Nursing Home. That story will be told in an upcoming newsletter. ☼

[5] *Iron Era* May 13, 1904 the article "Social Events of the Past Week" provides an in depth recounting of the wedding.
[6] *Iron Era* Nov. 14, 1902 "In Memoriam", W.H. Seward is listed as vice president of the Pleasant Hill Cemetery Association.

A Recap of Susan Simon's Talk "Researching Your Ancestors Can Be Interesting and Fun" by Marla Jackson

On February 22, 2025, after a week's delay due to snow, we were fortunate to have Susan Simon of the Morris Area Genealogy Society and Madison Historical Society present her program on researching your ancestors. Susan graduated from Willamette University (Salem, Oregon) with a BA in Mathematics, and received a Masters in Interdisciplinary Mathematics and Teaching from the University of Oregon. Before her involvement in genealogy, she taught math and computer science to seventh graders through college students for almost 40 years. I think those skills came in very handy after she retired and became more involved in researching her family.

Her program was an interesting story of her family, as well as hints about how to get past roadblocks in your own research. She explained that her research of her family also encompassed stories of American history. Simon was fortunate to receive three items from her family that helped her. These were two portraits (a man and a woman) and a Bible. She said you must know what was going on at that time in history to understand where or what your ancestors might be doing. The portraits were of her great, great, grandparents and the story was that there were horse thieves in the family. No, she didn't find horse thieves, but she did find cattle ranchers! The family had the woman's name, but no name for the man. She checked historical timelines and realized he lived during the Civil War. Knowing this, led her to discover he was in the Confederate army, contracted tuberculosis, and died very young. Subsequently, she was able to find his name.

Another family member had served under General Sherman and had two children, which she discovered when his wife applied (twice) for a military pension. He had died after the war of injuries suffered during the war, but the wife could not prove his death was due to the injuries he received. These pension applications were very helpful, as they listed the children as well as their names and ages. This allowed her to continue her search, now that she had their names. Military records and pension requests can be a treasure trove of information. From the other side of her family, she received a bible from an aunt. Not only did the bible include a list of births, it also included where the children were born and stories about the family. This was valuable because Simon could trace where the families lived. She had several interesting stories about her Connecticut family—several generations of the Bissell family ran the longest continually operating ferry in the country (until 1917) and the family home is still there. Another story revolved around another ancestor's involvement in the

Salem witch trials, in 1692-1693. Simon said she was able to tell this complicated family story to her granddaughter after the granddaughter learned about the witch trials. Telling family stories, especially those involving historical events, are great way to get young people interested in history, especially family history.

My favorite story she told was about her growing up in the Pacific Northwest and not understanding the connection to her families in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Another aunt had researched a family member named "Vance" and thought the family was related to a notable Confederate colonel, US representative, and US senator of that name from South Carolina. DNA testing proved they were not related. But with more research, Simon found another "Vance" who married in San Francisco, had a daughter, and then divorced.

She noted that the census records frequently refrained from labeling women as "divorced" because of the stigma. They would be listed as "widow" or "married"). She was able to track this man through his seaman's certificate, first from San Francisco and then from Portland Oregon, which also listed his wife and children. It turned out that this seaman was involved in a duel in South Carolina after dueling was made illegal. He fled the area and changed his surname to "Vance," thus explaining the confusion. However, even with all her efforts, Simon is still left with a nine-year gap in the seaman's history. So, no matter what you think you know about your family, it is worth double-checking!

Simon also mentioned some resources to help in tracing your ancestors, including the Morris Area Genealogical Society, the Morristown and Township Library's genealogical research room (basement of the library), government libraries, newspapers.com, familysearch.org, americanancestors.org (for New England families), and fold3.com (for military records). She also found archives.gov a good source for copies of military records. You must request copies since the records are not online. ☼

Morris County's Pathways of History at Rockefeller Center by Ed Ng

Chester's Rockefeller Center was one of the sites on May 4 for history buffs on Morris County's Pathways of History tours. Marla Jackson and Ed Ng welcomed visitors interested in the Iron Boom era, a 155-year-old, carpenter gothic, wooden, one-room building all afternoon. The panorama image of the interior shows the exhibits L to R: history of Rockefeller Center, CHS information and books for sale, architectural plans for the repairs and restoration, and information, images, and maps of the Chester Furnace Historic Site. ☼

History of the Crossroads Stone Schoolhouse and Brass Bell by Ed Ng

The Crossroads Stone Schoolhouse, at 7 North Rd. Chester, NJ, was built by Chester notables, Benjamin McCourry and Nathan Cooper and dedicated on September 15, 1830. Both were men of means and influence. They were the only Chester men to be invited to Morristown to have dinner with the Marquis de Lafayette when he returned for a celebratory visit on July 14, 1825.

The upper room was originally used as a Congregational meeting house or chapel. The lower floor was used as the schoolhouse. On the 1886 Beer's Atlas, it appears as "School No. 2". In 1876 it was "School 96", and Josephine Langdon was the teacher. Later, the teachers were Louise DeCamp and Carrie Fritts. At an unknown date, the entire building became the property of the Congregational Church. On April 18, 1914, the Congregational Church membership voted to sell the building to Billy Dee (curveball inventor) for $200.

The image above shows the Schoolhouse had a bell tower where the pictured brass bell would have called students or worshippers from town. We don't know when the bell tower and bell were removed. The building later became a private residence. The brass bell was eventually donated to Chester Borough. The Borough DPW carpenter made a stand and mounted the bell. According to the markings on the bell, it was made in 1834 by E. Force, a foundry located on the east side of Lower Manhattan, New York City. The brass bell still has a tone that would make you hurry to school or church. ☼

The Antiques and Collectibles Show With Jon Felz

On March 3, 2025, CHS hosted our second Antiques and Collectibles Show with appraiser extraordinaire Jon Felz at the Highlands Ridge Community Barn. Watches, paintings, globes, furniture, silverware, steins, pottery, coins, bills, armaments, dolls, flasks, and many other items were appraised. Jon's words of advice to those wanting to sell their "treasures" is that categories fluctuate in value. What was hot 10 years ago is dead cold today. Do your research and don't be shy about selling now. ☼

About the Chester Historical Society and Contact Information/Links

>CHS Trustees and Officers: President – Edward Ng Vice President – Alison Dahl Treasurer – Anita Rhodes Corresponding Secretary – Lois Taylor Recording Secretary- Marla Jackson Archives – Alison Dahl Programs – Meg Sullivan Social Media – Zinnia Cheetham Membership – Vacant Trustees - Elaine Hanington, Ed Hanington, and Peter Maddi
>CHS Newsletter Editor: - Edward Ng
>CHS Archives Team – Alison Dahl (captain), Lois Taylor, Peg Hill, Elaine Hanington, Maureen Davidson, Meg Sullivan, Marla Jackson, Bill Donahue, and Peter Maddi.
>Historical photos and maps are usually from the CHS archives except as noted. Modern photos are by Ed Ng.

If you have stories or pictures to share, please talk to a Board member or leave a message at (908) 866-6717, or email chester.historical.society@gmail.com, or mail a note to CHS Box 376 Chester NJ 07930.

How to join or renew your membership online or US Postal Service

Thanks to those who have already renewed their membership or recently joined CHS. If you have not done so, please act now. The membership dues for an individual is $15, a family is $25, a business is $100, and a Life Membership is $200. There are two ways to renew or join.
Online: We have set up SignUp Genius to record contact information and allow you to pay the membership dues using a credit card. Click on the link:
https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C084FA8AE29A5F8CF8-52650915-renew
Follow the directions on the SignUp Genius webpage. CHS will not share your information with third parties. In addition to the membership dues, there is a 50 cent plus 5% handling fee which is paid to Stripe, the payments platform handling the transaction. That translates to a $1.25 fee for individual membership and a $1.75 fee for a family membership. Once your transaction is complete, a receipt will be emailed to you.
By Mail, please use the form on the next page. Thanks!

CHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P. O. BOX 376
Chester, NJ 07930
Membership Application & Renewal Form

(Membership year runs from Oct. 1 through Sept. 30 of the following year)

New____ Renewal_____ Today's date_____

Name:_____
First Name(s) Last Name(s)

Street Address/P.O.Box_____Apt. No.____
Town_____State_____ZIP_____
Telephone_____
Email address_____

Schedule of Annual Membership Dues

Individual ..... $15.00/person x No._____ = $_____

Family (includes children under 18)..... $ 25.00/family _____ = $_____

Business..... $100.00/person x No._____ = $_____

Life Membership ..... $200.00/person x No._____ = $_____

Voluntary Additional Donations (thank you for your generosity) _____ = $_____
(The Chester Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Donations may be tax deductible.)

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED.....$_____
(Please make checks payable to **Chester Historical Society** and mail to the above address)

THANK YOU FOR HELPING TO KEEP CHESTER'S HISTORY ALIVE!

We would love your help! Please circle your choice and we will contact you: Archives, Oral History, Finance and Legal, Historic Sites, Membership, Publications, Programs, and Publicity. Do you have special skills or interests that you would like to share? Let us know by indicating your interest on the reverse side.

Would you like your newsletter delivered by email ____ or U.S. Postal Service _____ ?

Announcements of programs and events are usually sent by email. Please provide your email below. We will not sell or share your email with third parties.

_____

Questions? Please contact us by phone: 908 866-6717 or email: chester.historical.society@gmail.com
Additional information and past newsletters are available at the CHS website www.historicchesternj.com

CHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P. O. BOX 376
Chester, NJ 07930

GUEST Membership Contact Form

Current members can give an annual guest membership to a new member for free! CHS is offering each current life member, individual member, or family membership, the opportunity to give one free guest membership to a new member. The guest membership would be non-voting, but the guest would be able to attend all meetings, including the Annual Meeting, and receive digital copies of the newsletter.

If you are a member as of 5/1 of the current year and would like to give a free membership to a new member, please fill out this form and email it to **chester.historical.society@gmail.com** or mail it to CHS, Box 376, Chester, NJ 07930. We will follow up with a note letting the new member(s) know they are part of the Chester Historical Society!!

Name of Current Member: _____ Date_____

Guest Member:_____
First Name Last Name

Street Address/P.O.Box_____Apt. No.____

Town_____State_____ZIP_____

Telephone_____

Announcements of programs and events are usually sent by email. If you have it, please provide the new member's email below. We will not sell or share email addresses with third parties.

Email Address: _____

Questions?
Please contact us by phone: 908 866-6717 or
email: chester.historical.society@gmail.com
More information on the CHS website: www.historicchesternj.com