Chester Historical Society's NEWS & VIEWS

November 2025

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Hello CHS Members and Friends, I hope you had a relaxing and tasty Thanksgiving. This newsletter features a diverse range of articles, as indicated in the Table of Contents. Enjoy this News & Views and have a wonderful holiday and year-end season.

A Fond but Scary Memory of Ed Hanington (1937 – 2025) by Ed Ng

It was a cloudy October day in 2023 when I received a call from Ed Hanington. I wasn't surprised by the call but was worried about what he wanted to do. Previously, we had discussed the planned repairs to the 150-year-old iron boom wooden carpenter gothic building, known as Chester's Rockefeller Center[1]. Ed was worried that we wouldn't be able to use our Morris County preservation grant soon enough to prevent further deterioration. He asked me to drive my truck to his house, take the ladders to the building, and help him do an inspection. After arriving at his house, we loaded up two ladders onto the truck bed. It was a short drive to Rockefeller Center. Ed wanted to inspect the gutter and the roof system for possible deterioration and leaks. I assured him I could go up and do the inspection, but he insisted on doing it himself. I pleaded with him, but I could not dissuade him. The 86-year-old Ed gingerly (and safely, thank goodness) climbed up the 8-foot ladder to inspect the west- and east-

[1] Ng, Edward. "Chester's 150-Year-Old *Rockefeller Center*", Chester Historical Society's News & Views, November 2020, 2-11.

facing sides of the building. Inside the building, he clambered up the 6-foot ladder to inspect the underside of the roof through an opening in the ceiling. Fortunately, the inspections were done safely. The only damage observed was that the gutter had separated from the roof.

Ed's dedication to preserving historic buildings was not a surprise to me. Upon reflection, it was a theme throughout his life in Chester. Ed and Elaine Hanington arrived in Chester in 1976. They bought the vernacular Italianate house built by Deacon Cramer in 1874. Their house, like Rockefeller Center, was built during Chester's iron boom (1867-1885). In fact, Cramer had sold his iron mine and previous house to fund the building of his new house[2].

In 1980, Ed joined the influential Chester Borough Planning Board. He would serve as chairman until 1991. In 1985, he received the Citizen of the Year Award from Borough Mayor Ted Eible. Over the nine years since moving to Chester, Ed stated that he had seen the Borough grow in a more orderly fashion, "I think it will continue, but everyone should participate. They should have some say in their destiny, and if they don't, they don't have the right to complain.[3]"

Ed and Elaine Hanington dressed as Deacon Cramer and his wife, Esther, for the 2014 celebration of the First Congregational Church of Chester's 275th Anniversary.

After resigning as chairman, Ed would continue to serve on the Chester Borough Planning Board. Ed was also a member of the Morris County Historic Preservation Trust Fund Board. He would also serve for many years on the Borough Historic Preservation Committee, which was more popularly known as the "Committee of Good Taste". The preservation of Chester's Main St. and neighborhoods' historic "look" should be credited to Ed's leadership of the Committee of Good Taste.

Ed and Elaine were long-time members and trustees of the Chester Historical Society. Elaine was the recording secretary, and Ed was the Borough Historian on the Board. Ed and Matt Koppinger spearheaded the architectural preservation and awards activities. Ed Hanington died on August 31, 2025, just two years after our ladder adventure at Chester's Rockefeller Center. I will always be grateful to Ed for his support of the Chester Historical Society and his personal support to me. After a tough Board meeting, he would give me a call with encouragement and understanding. I think he did that for all who knew him, and I am sure they were as grateful as I was. ◙

[2] Hanington, Elaine. "Jacob H. Cramer House–Our Home", Chester Historical Society News and Views, Fall 2015, Winter 2016, 8-9.
[3] Wiliams, Samuel. "Hanington Named Citizen of the Year". Observer Tribune, Feb. 21, 1985.

A Recap of the CHS Annual Meeting by Marla Jackson

The Annual Meeting was held on September 28, 2025, at Colonial Prospect Lodge #24, 370 Main Street, Chester, NJ. Before the business meeting, Steve Hobaugh (standing in the image to the right), from the Free and Accepted Masons Colonial Prospect Lodge #24, gave a thorough presentation and detailed tour of the meeting hall and lodge. A brief history of the Free Masons in Chester is the newsletter's following article.

President Ed Ng thanked Steve and called the business meeting to order. Ed Ng asked the Nominating Committee (Maureen Davidson, Peg Hill, and John Pfaff) for their report. Maureen Davidson reported the following nominations: Vice-President—Alison Dahl; Treasurer—Anita Rhodes; Corresponding secretary—Meg Sullivan; trustees Zinnia Cheetham and Peter Maddi. The slate was accepted by unanimous vote. Ed Ng thanked the Nominating Committee for its work. He thanked Lois Taylor for her many years of service to the society as Corresponding Secretary and for all her other help to the Society.

President's Report: Ed Ng highlighted activities that support the purpose of the Chester Historical Society, "keeping history alive to enrich our lives". The Newsletters are entertaining and a primary source of information that becomes a valuable resource for future research. The programs covered a wide range of historical topics. Four preservation and reuse efforts are ongoing: the Rockefeller Center building, Larison's Turkey Farm Inn building, the Glenlora barn and stables, and the Chester Furnace Historic Site.

Treasurer's Report: Anita Rhodes reported that the Society had a quiet year. Some of the highlights included increased investment income and higher donations to the Society. There was also an increase in the amount of membership dues received. Expenses were primarily for running costs and a new computer for the Archives. She thanked Betsy Regber, CPA, for reviewing the financial records and issuing the financial report.

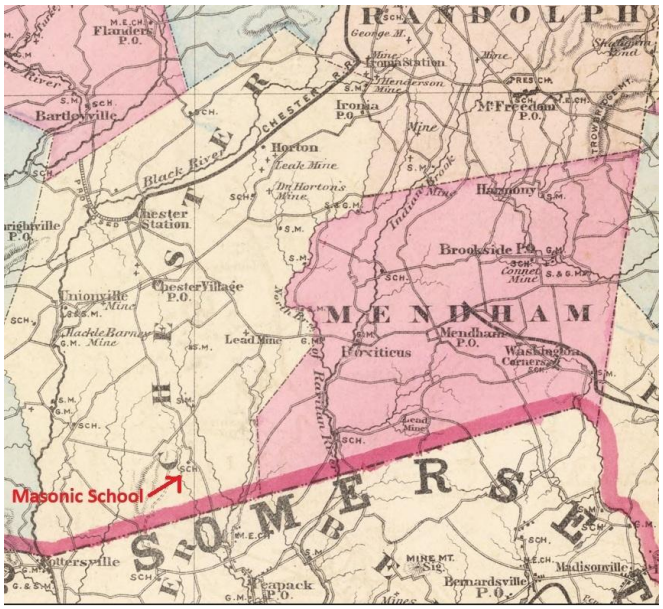
Programs Report: Meg Sullivan reported on the many programs the Society has offered, including Susan Simon's talk on finding Family History, Jon Felz's antiques and collectibles program, and the open house at Rockefeller Center (as part of the Pathways of History Tour).

Archives Report: Alison Dahl reported on the progress being made at the Archives. She thanked the Archivists for all their hard work and dedication to organizing the materials and updating the database. One of the acquisitions this year was a set of two poll books from the early 1900s. The Archives also received three scrapbooks from former Township Mayor Ken Caro, and many clippings about Chester from Nancy Gahtan. The oral histories have been reorganized and will be digitized.

Ed Ng thanked the Board for their hard work and said the Society is always grateful for volunteers. The business meeting was adjourned, and refreshments were served. ◙

The Free Masons and Chester in the 1800s by Edward Ng

The Masonic movement has a long history in Chester, and unbeknownst to many (like me), Masons played an important role in the political, commercial, and social history of Chester in the late 1880s and early 1900s. Quoting from Kero Noyle's Iron Era newspaper article (Jan. 13, 1905), "The first account of Free Masonry in Chester township is found in the Grand Lodge proceedings of the year 1831," when the Basking Ridge Lodge No. 56 moved to Chester. The Masons held their meetings on the second floor of the stone schoolhouse in the Mt. Rose School district. The school building became known as the "Masonic School". It was located on the Peapack Road, near the border with Somerset County. Ironically, the school's name lasted longer than its second-floor occupants. Lodge No. 56 moved back to Basking Ridge in 1855. At least as late as 1905, the schoolhouse continued to be called the Masonic School. That year, Miss Alice Zentner had 33 students in her class. The building was later demolished.

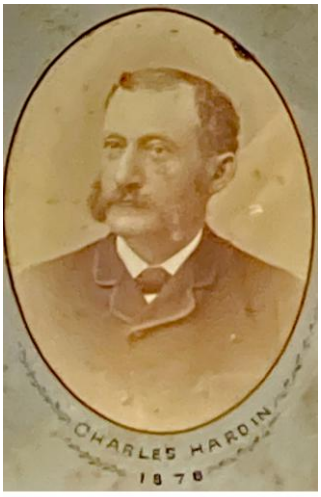


Masonic School in Chester, Morris County Map from F.W. Beers State Atlas of New Jersey 1872.

However, that was not the end of Freemasonry in Chester. Prospect Lodge No. 24 was formed in Mendham in 1853. However, it failed to send a report or representative to the Grand Lodge and was struck off the roll in 1862. It was revived in 1868, and on October 20, 1873, it was moved to Chester.

The 1870s were an exciting time in Chester's history. A large, rich iron ore deposit was found just north of Main St. in 1867, and soon dozens of mines opened. The iron ore changed Chester's economy. The population size increased by 35% and the wealth increased by thousands of dollars a week. A group of citizens gained approval from the New Jersey Legislature to form the Chester Savings Bank on March 3, 1873.

One of the group of citizens was Charles Hardin (1834-1902). According to the entry in the *Biographical and Genealogical History of Morris County* (Lewis Publishers, 1899), he arrived in Chester in 1854 to obtain additional schooling at the Chester Institute. After completing his studies, he became a clerk in Daniel Budd's general store at 105 Main Street (currently the Maple Shop at the northwest corner of Main Street and Hillside Road). In 1860, he purchased the Budd general store. Hardin was active in civil matters. He was elected to be the Chester assessor and a Freeholder. He was appointed as a lay judge for the common pleas court. He was a Master Mason of the Prospect Lodge No. 24. He was a successful businessman and farmer. The 1900 US Census lists his household as comprising his wife, son, daughter, two grandsons, a granddaughter, and seven servants. Hardin much preferred farming to commerce.



Charles Hardin in 1876, photo courtesy of Prospect Lodge No. 24.

125 Main St. Oct. 7, 2025. Prospect Lodge #24 occupied the 2nd floor from 1873-1953. Ed Ng

In 1873, to house the new bank, Hardin erected an elegant vernacular Second Empire, three-story building at 125 Main Street (now Club Rince Irish Dance Club, just east of the PH Steakhouse). The building was intended for the Chester Savings Bank. However, on December 1, 1873, by legislative act, the Chester Savings Bank *(and others)* were declared "inoperative and void." Undaunted, Charles converted the bank building to Hardin's Clothing Store on the first floor and rented the second floor to Prospect Lodge No. 24. The Masons occupied the second floor from 1874 to 1953. The building became known as the "Masonic Hall" and hosted numerous social dances and parties in Chester during its long history.

In 1953, Prospect Lodge No. 24 relocated to its own newly built building at 370 Main St. A plaque at the Lodge provides the background. Adalene P. Searles donated the land to the Lodge on November 24, 1950, in honor of her deceased husband, who was a Mason. Another image from the Lodge records the cornerstone dedication in 1953.

Colonial Prospect Lodge No. 24, 370 Main St., Chester, NJ. 8/27/2025. Photo by Ed Ng

Image courtesy of Prospect Lodge No. 24

Charles Hardin was not the only notable historic Chester Freemason. In birth order, I'll highlight a few, but I've omitted some, such as James Case and William Sturzenegger.

- John M. Drinkwater (1830-1901) was the Master Mason in 1877, 1879, 1880, and 1881. Like Hardin, he owned and ran the general store at the corner of Main St. and Hillside Road.
- Harry Wyckoff Cyphers (1864-1938) had a long commercial and civic career. At the age of 18, he learned telegraphy and became the operator for the DL & W railways and agent for the US Express Company. He also ran a coal and lumber business. His civic contributions were many: he was on Chester's first school board, a Presbyterian

Church Trustee, and a Pleasant Hill Cemetery Association Trustee. Finally, he became the first mayor of Chester Borough when it separated from the Township in 1930.

- George E. Conover (1867-1942) ran a successful paint and wallpaper business in the front portion of the west side of the building at 87 Main St. That business expanded to sell more items so that by 1919 it was a general store. However, I would argue that his most historically impactful business was the Conover Press, his printing business. Many postcards with scenes of Chester were printed and sold by Conover and are one of the best resources for Chester's visual history. To promote his general store, he published the Conover Cash Store News monthly from December 1918 to November 1922. The News contained ads, household hints, kitchen tips, news of interest, and a Chester history column written by his son Herbert.

- Alonzo ("Lon") Pierson Green (1875-1942) graduated from the New York College of Pharmacy in 1895. He worked for two years in the Chester pharmacy of Fred Jenkins, then purchased the business in 1897. Green ran his popular pharmacy for 50 years. He is behind the counter in the image to the right. Also, he was Chester's postmaster for 25 years. Green's drugstore shared the same building with Conover's store (see photo below), and the two men established the first telephone service in Chester in 1901. Green became a director of the New Jersey Telephone Company in 1911. Green was elected the "Worshipful Master" (leader) of his lodge eight times. ◙

Memories of Larison's Turkey Farm Inn 1939-1980 from the CHS Archives by Edward Ng

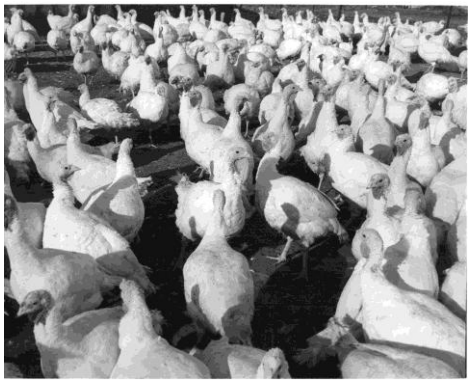
The Chester Historical Society has an extensive collection of documents, photos, ephemera, and an oral history relating to Larison's Turkey Farm Inn. We are grateful to the Larison family for donating much of the collection. We are happy and eager to share those memories with you. From 1947 to 2000, Larison's Turkey Farm Inn had a fortunate run of success. That cannot be said of the last 25 years, and the future of Larison's Turkey Farm Inn is still evolving. However, that story will have to wait. Enjoy the trip down memory lane for now. These images were part of an exhibition in the Chester Library in November 2025. If you missed it, or if you want to see it again, here it is!

Following World War II, Willis (1904-1998) and Ruth (1905-1989) Larison created and ran their Turkey Farm Inn. During the war, they were farmers selling turkeys to the government. Once the war ended and soldiers and sailors were discharged, the government stopped buying as many turkeys. Willis and Ruth were left with thousands of surplus turkeys. What to do? In 1945, they bought the rundown 150-year-old Corwin-Topping house and 42 acres of land at the corner of Main St. and Rt. 206. In 1947, after the construction of a large kitchen, dining room, and parlor, they opened a restaurant, Larison's Turkey Farm Inn.

Arthur McGreevy Ruth Larison Willis Larison

In 1974, restaurant magnate Arthur McGreevy (1927-2011) purchased and ran the restaurant for another 25 years. Larison's Turkey Farm Inn was the iconic Chester landmark. It was known worldwide for its relaxed farm ambiance and its affordable, country-style turkey dinner. For many visitors, it was synonymous with Chester.

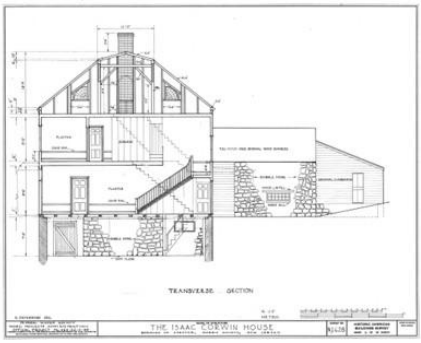
Larison's Turkey Farm Inn was an accurate description of Willis and Ruth Larison's restaurant. The small inaccuracy is that inns usually provide lodging for visitors, and they never (knowingly) did. However, the other aspects of an inn were accurate: rural, home-cooked meals, an intimate and charming environment, and often located in historic buildings.



The "Turkey Farm" part of the name was completely accurate. Willis and Ruth's headline and claim to fame was that "We raise our own turkeys". Several thousand turkeys a year are proof that it was their business model and not a boast. The turkeys were raised until they reached about 30 pounds and processed, sold, or eaten at the Turkey Farm.

This exhibition is the product of hard work from the Chester Historical Society's archives team, led by Alison Dahl. Other team members are Maureen Davidson, Bill Donahue, Elaine Hanington, Peg Hill, Marla Jackson, Peter Maddi, Edward Ng, Meg Sullivan, and Lois Taylor.

The Isaac Corwin – Topping House in 1939
(future Larison's Turkey Farm Inn)



The photograph of west side of house and drawings are from the Historic American Buildings Survey

West side of the Turkey Farm Inn building about 1950.

Willis & Ruth raised ~3000 turkeys/year, they were sold (whole or parts) or used in the restaurant.

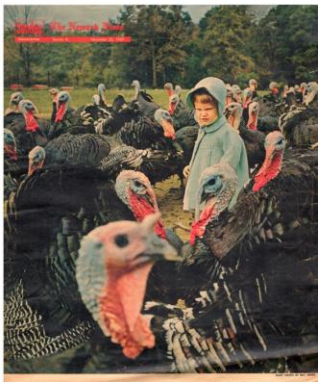
1961 aerial photo shows all the parking filled – a frequent occurrence. On Thanksgiving, 1200 and on Christmas 800 dinners were served.

Patrons often waited in line to enter. Later, a speaker system was used to call people to their tables. The calls were audible all over town.

1961 Dining Room showing off Ruth's chandelier collection which eventually numbered over 100.

Note the number of chandeliers has increased in this later dining room photo. Family style seating was a Larison's Turkey Farm Inn tradition.

The dining room was decorated for the holidays. Country style turkey dinners came with soup or appetizer, a drink, and dessert.



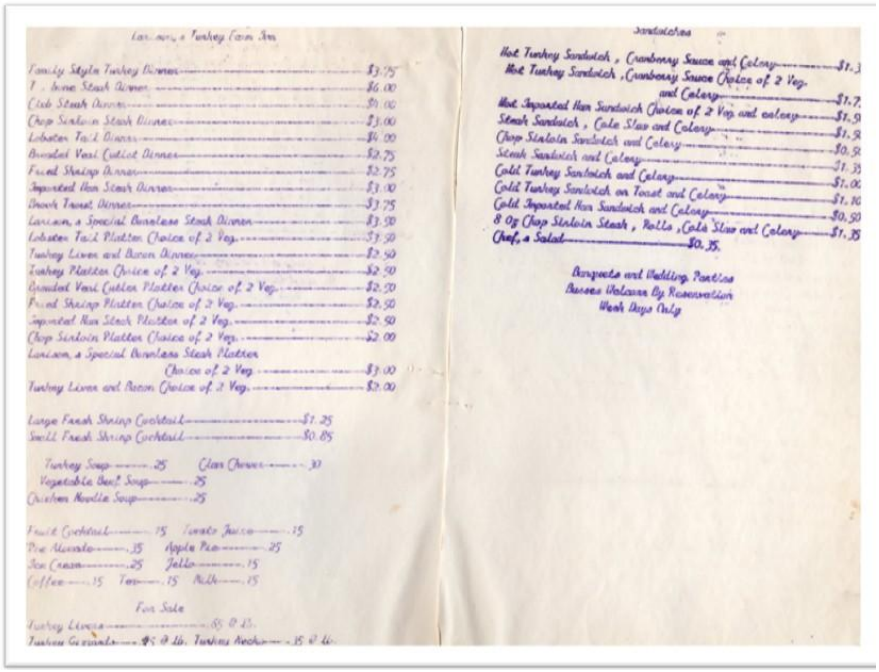
Each year about 3000 turkeys were raised. At 24 weeks, weighing about 30 pounds, they were processed.

Willis and Ruth with their dogs Pandora and Wendy in the Turkey House.

The Turkey Farm freezer could store 1000 processed turkeys. They were stored here until sold or used in the restaurant.

Menus:

1967 Menu Cover and Mimeographed Price List – All you can eat turkey dinner was $3.75!



Larison,s Turkey Farm Inn

Family Style Turkey Dinner $3.75
T . bone Steak Dinner $6.00
Club Steak Dinner $4.00
Chop Sirloin Steak Dinner $3.00
Lobster Tail Dinner $4.00
Breaded Veal Cutlet Dinner $2.75
Fried Shrimp Dinner $2.75
Imported Ham Steak Dinner $3.00
Brook Trout Dinner $3.75
Larison, s Special Boneless Steak Dinner $3.50
Lobster Tail Platter Choice of 2 Veg. $3.50
Turkey Liver and Bacon Dinner $2.50
Turkey Platter Choice of 2 Veg. $2.50
Breaded Veal Cutlet Platter Choice of 2 Veg. $2.50
Fried Shrimp Platter Choice of 2 Veg. $2.50
Imported Ham Steak Platter of 2 Veg. $2.50
Chop Sirloin Platter Choice of 2 Veg. $2.00
Larison, s Special Boneless Steak Platter
Choice of 2 Veg $3.00
Turkey Liver and Bacon Choice of 2 Veg. $2.00

Large Fresh Shrimp Cocktail $1.25
Small Fresh Shrimp Cocktail $0.85

Turkey Soup ..... 25 Clam Chowder 30
Vegetable Beef Soup 25
Chicken Noodle Soup 25

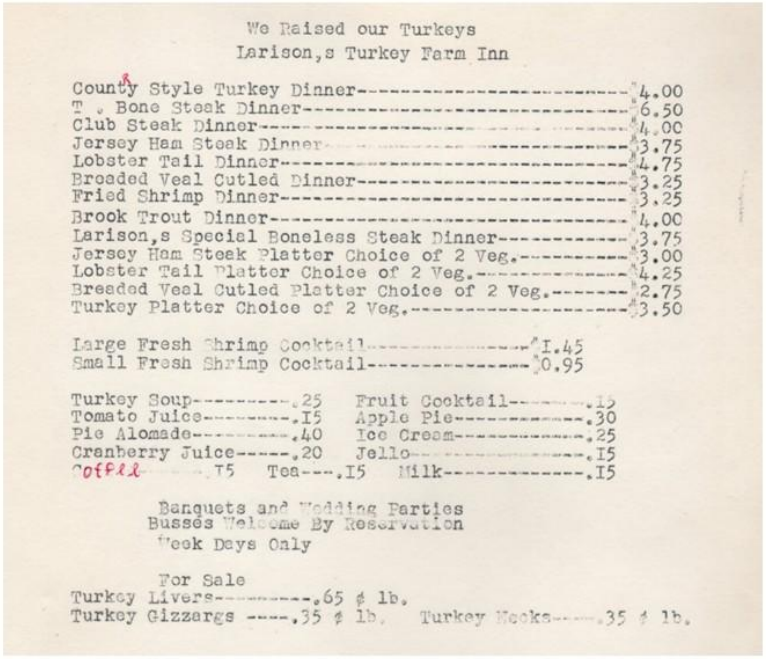
Fruit Cocktail ..... 15 Tomato Juice 15
Pie Alomode ..... 35 Apple Pie 25
Ice Cream ..... 25 Jello 15
Coffee ..... 15 Tea ..... 15 Milk 15

For Sale
Turkey Livers ..... 65 @ lb.
Turkey Gizzards ..... 35 @ lb. Turkey Necks ..... 35 @ lb.

Sandwiches

Hot Turkey Sandwich , Cranberry Sauce and Celery $1.3
Hot Turkey Sandwich ,Cranberry Sauce Choice of 2 Veg. and Celery $1.7
Hot Imported Ham Sandwich Choice of 2 Veg. and celery $1.7
Steak Sandwich , Cole Slaw and Celery $1.5
Chop Sirloin Sandwich and Celery $1.5
Steak Sandwich and Celery $0.5
Cold Turkey Sandwich and Celery $1.3
Cold Turkey Sandwich on Toast and Celery $1.00
Cold Imported Ham Sandwich and Celery $1.10
8 Oz Chop Sirloin Steak , Rolls ,Cole Slaw and Celery $0.50
Chef, a Salad $1.15

Banquets and Wedding Parties
Busses Welcome By Reservation
Week Days Only



We Raised our Turkeys
Larison,s Turkey Farm Inn

County Style Turkey Dinner $4.00
T . Bone Steak Dinner $6.50
Club Steak Dinner $4.00
Jersey Ham Steak Dinner $3.75
Lobster Tail Dinner $4.75
Breaded Veal Cutled Dinner $3.25
Fried Shrimp Dinner $3.25
Brook Trout Dinner $4.00
Larison,s Special Boneless Steak Dinner $3.75
Jersey Ham Steak Platter Choice of 2 Veg. $3.00
Lobster Tail Platter Choice of 2 Veg. $4.25
Breaded Veal Cutled Platter Choice of 2 Veg. $2.75
Turkey Platter Choice of 2 Veg. $3.50

Large Fresh Shrimp Cocktail $1.45
Small Fresh Shrimp Cocktail $0.95

Turkey Soup ..... .25 Fruit Cocktail ..... .15
Tomato Juice ..... .15 Apple Pie ..... .30
Pie Alomade ..... .40 Ice Cream ..... .25
Cranberry Juice ..... .20 Jello ..... .15
Coffee ..... .15 Tea ..... .15 Milk ..... .15

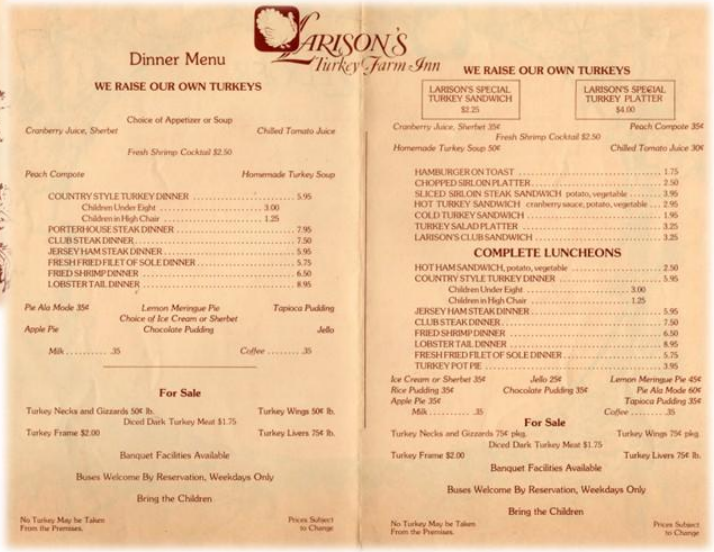
Banquets and Wedding Parties
Busses Welcome By Reservation
Week Days Only

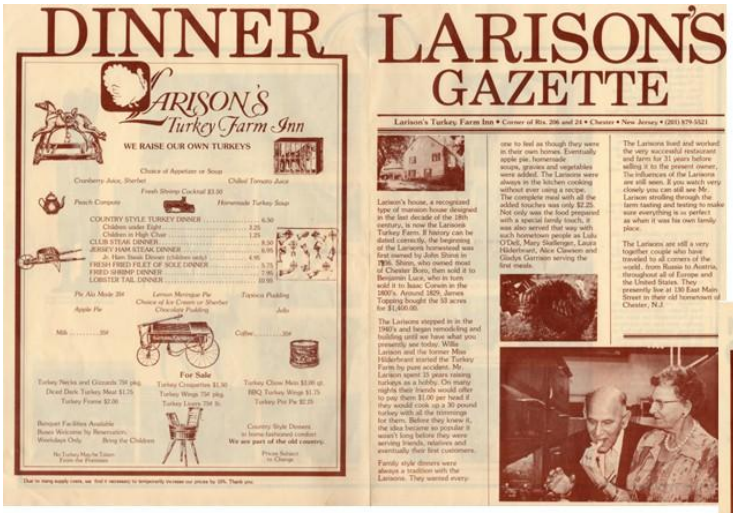
For Sale
Turkey Livers ..... .65 ¢ lb.
Turkey Gizzargs ..... .35 ¢ lb. Turkey Necks ..... .35 ¢ lb.

A year later in 1968, the Turkey Dinner increased 25 cents to $4.00 and added new mantra: “We raised our turkeys”.

This is the third menu in our series. The turkey "portrait menu cover" was replaced by a more informational and a sale promotional cover.

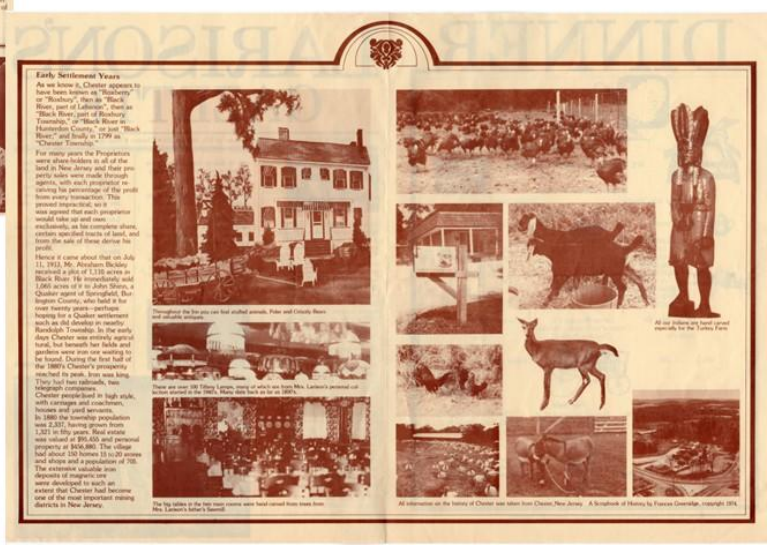
The Country Style Turkey Dinner increased to $5.95 but it was "all you can eat".





On Dec. 31, 1974, Larison's Turkey Farm Inn was sold to restauranteur Arthur McGreevy. The turkey dinner was not the only attraction, but history, antiques, memorabilia, and farm animals were also highlighted.

This menu shows that after 1974 the Country Style Turkey Dinner went up to $6.50.



Larison's Turkey Farm Inn used many forms of 2D advertising, like this placemat, but also newspaper ads, calendars, and greeting cards.
The nearby display case contains other 3D items like ash trays, ice scrapers, etc.

The sequence of menus is educational, but the kitchen was the heart of the restaurant.

Willis did most of the cooking and spent most of his time in the kitchen.

Ruth was also busy in the kitchen. She made the pies, including apple and lemon meringue. Pie à la mode was 35 cents extra.

She also had good knife skills!

Nine-year old Michael asks Willis: "HOW MUCH LONGER?"

John Bell took this photo for Ruth Emus' 11-21-77 Observer Tribune article "Larison's – Those Birds in Chester". In her interview, Willis noted "These turkeys never have a needle stuck in them ... our birds grow naturally." Editors note: I'm not sure this is a Larison's roasted turkey, but it looks delicious.

Willis' Thanksgiving Day Supplies List
50 lbs carrots - 60 lbs celery – 50 lbs onions
2000 slices bread – 800 lbs mashed potatoes
140 lbs beets – 123 lbs peas
165 lbs cranberry sauce – 20 gallons olives
60 turkeys (30-35 lbs each)
130 pumpkin, mince, or apple pies

Just in time for Thanksgiving: Willis' method for carving the turkey!

Willis Larison explains how the Turkey Farm Inn got started: with a 1000 extra turkeys, I decided to fatten up people rather than turkeys...

Ruth: we raise our turkeys from eggs to the frying pan.

Surprising Larison's Turkey Farm Inn Facts

- Willis was the 7th generation of Larisons in Chester.
- From 1947 – 1974, the restaurant was closed on Fridays.
- Ruth and Willis were avid bowling supporters and over the years sponsored12 teams in leagues involving 2000 "Turkey Farm" bowlers.
- Each year, over 3000 turkey eggs were shipped from California for their birds. They are hatched in Cranbury NJ then brought to Larison's Turkey Farm.
- For the restaurants 25th Anniversary, Willis and Ruth hosted the staff at the Playboy Club in McAfee, NJ.
- When Willis and Ruth bought the Isaac Corwin-Topping house it had NO indoor plumbing.
- Willis' recipe for roasting turkey included lots of salt, pepper, parsley, onions, and Accent powder (primarily made of monosodium glutamate, a flavor enhancer.)

It Was The Larisons Turn LastFriday To Go Out To Dinner

By NANCY K. PARKER

CHESTER — Last Friday it was turn-about-night at Larisons Turkey Farm here when Mr. and Mrs. Willis Larison found themselves guests of honor in the restaurant where for the past 30 years they have served as hosts.

The occasion was a farewell party for the couple given by the venerable landmark's new owner, Arthur McGreevy, and his staff from Llewellyn Farms in Morris Plains which he also owns. They did all the cooking and the organizing for the Larisons and the Turkey Farm's staff as well and saw to it that the party for the popular couple and their 150 guests was a memorable event.

The Larisons first ventured into the poultry business not too many years after they were married on Christmas Day, 1928, in the brick house in Hacklebarney where Mrs. Larison, the former Ruth Hildebrandt, was born. Larison, himself, is the second generation of Larisons born in Chester.

First in the turkey raising business they decided to "sell them over the table" at the close of World War II. "We though we would try fattening people up too," Larison laughingly recalled, and so they bought the old Topping homestead which is now about 180 years old right in the center of Chester. "That first Thanksgiving we served 125 people," Larison reminisced, adding that this past Thanksgiving 1200 dinners were prepared.

The new management is going to keep it just the same, Larison announced, with the exception that the restaurant will now be open on Fridays. "We always closed Friday," he said, "in order to market." Larison will also stay on part time helping to break in the new farmer and to help out in the restaurant but first he and his wife are planning a three week trip to Hawaii to be capped by a visit to Las Vegas for a week. They have been to both places before, being inveterate travellers. They have been around the world several times with visits to such countries as the Soviet Union, Japan and China.

Among the guests at Friday's party were Chester Mayor Janet Abeles and Mr. and Mrs. Peter Mastrobattista of Bernardsville; Mastrobattista's Somerset Grain and Feed business has been supplying the Farm for years. Also there were Mr. and Mrs. John Andrews of Cranbury from whom the Larisons have bought many a turkey pullet; Mr. and Mrs. Hubert Ashley of Flanders, who raise turkeys themselves, and Mr. and Mrs. William Sauer of Basking Ridge. Bill Sauers bowling column appears in this paper, and he has written much over the years on the numerous teams which have been sponsored by Larisons Turkey Farm. A former bowler himself, Larison has sponsored teams for the past 25 years.

But the restaurant operation has kept both Mr. and Mrs. Larison too busy to take on too many "extracurricular" and so now they are looking forward to more travel and a little time to themselves.

"But not too much," Larison laughed, "I still have to keep working you know."

WILLIS LARISON receives a bite of turkey from his wife, a sample of the produce that the couple have been raising and serving to customers at their Turkey Farm restaurant in Chester for the past 30 years.

MRS. LARISON says hello to long time friends Mr. and Mrs. Frank Longordo in Chester.

NEW OWNER ARTHUR McGREEVY is also the recipient of the Turkey Farm's stock in trade from former co-owner Mrs. Larison as Larison and Chef Ernest Hofer smile their appreciation for the product.

DUDLEY BRAGG, standing left, and McGreevy, right, greet guests Dr. and Mrs. Nicholas Migliaccio of Chester at the party. The Bragg School in Chester was named in Bragg's honor.

Many thanks to the CHS Archives team for finding and highlighting many of the materials for this article and the November Chester Library exhibition. ◙

James Lewis's Genealogical Resources Presentation by Meg Sullivan

The Chester Historical Society was delighted to host James Lewis at the Chester Library on October 1, 2025, for an enlightening presentation on genealogy research. James, who serves as Head of the Caroline Rose Foster North Jersey History and Genealogy Center at the Morristown and Morris Township Library, shared his extensive knowledge and passion for uncovering family histories.

During his talk, James introduced a wealth of resources available for genealogical research and history and highlighted the remarkable variety of materials housed at the Center. While their primary focus is on New Jersey history, the collection also includes valuable references from New York, Pennsylvania, and several other states.

The Genealogy Center provides access to a wealth of resources, including books, maps, articles, newspapers, microfiche, digital archives, and online databases—a treasure trove for anyone tracing their family roots or researching New Jersey history. James also gave a helpful tip: before visiting, contact the library to inform the staff of your research plans. This

allows them to prepare relevant materials in advance, including special collections that are not directly accessible to the public but can be viewed with staff assistance.

The Caroline Rose Foster North Jersey History and Genealogy Center is located at 1 Miller Road, Morristown, NJ 07960. You can reach them at 973-538-3473 or visit MMTLibrary.org for more information.

If you have even the slightest interest in genealogy or general history, I highly recommend a visit to this exceptional local resource. We're truly fortunate to have such a rich center of history and expertise so close to home. ◙

Carla Messinger Presents Lenape Program for Kids by Meg Sullivan

On November 22, 2025, the program for children at the Chester Library with Carla Messinger and her Lenape Peoples presentation and craft went very well. Carla had her "treasures" out (furs, bones, plants, etc.) on several tables for everyone to touch and see. She spoke for about 20 minutes about the traditions of the Lenape People. She also demonstrated how the tribes used different horns, bones, claws, furs, and other animal by-products for tools, jewelry, and clothing. We then gathered at two tables to make the crafts: a shaker and a rain stick. Many thanks to the Chester Library, MaryAnn Burden, and Maureen Davidson for your support and help. ◙

Happy 80th Birthday Chester First Aid Squad by Edward Ng

In 2025, the Chester First Aid Squad celebrated its 80th anniversary. Greenidge[4] writes of the founding of the Squad in 1945 and its activities in 1954:

The First Aid Squad was sponsored by the firemen. All Squad members were firemen, but all firemen were not First Aiders. In 1954, 68 calls were answered, 30 of which were emergencies. The Squad traveled 2000 miles that first year, and gave 250-man man-hours. After using the converted station wagon for two years, a Cadillac ambulance was purchased in 1949.

The Squad and the Fire Company, indeed the entire community, owe a great debt of gratitude to "Gert" (Dean) Rockefeller who lived at 92 East Main Street, practically next door to the firehouse. For fourteen years, she answered telephone calls for emergency aid on a twenty-four-hour-a-day basis, "directing aid where needed, and standing by the telephone and the two-way radio (in contact with each fire truck) as long as needed."

Gert and husband, Rocky Rockefeller, established their card and gift store in the building to the left of the brick fire station in the image below, and named it "Rockefeller Center" as a jest to the new NYC skyscraper. That is the Chester building in the first story of this newsletter.

Chester First Aid Squad and Volunteer Fire Company in 1951. Gert Rockefeller is 5th from left in dark coat.

This photograph was taken in 1951, from left to right, as follows: (front row) Arnold Martenis, Paul Sutton, Reuben Thompson, George McFarren, Walt Patrie, Kenneth O'Dell, Herman Clausen, and Herman Rademacher; (middle row) unknown, Warren Kay, Gert Dean, Millie Barkman, unknown, unknown, Art Lee, unknown, Irvin Tredway, Leroy "Shorty" Nunn, and Charlie Williamson; (back row) Emile Ardin, Tom Dean, unknown, unknown, unknown, unknown, Lee Case, Jack Hoffman, unknown, Al O'Brien, and unknown. (Courtesy of the Chester Volunteer Fire Department.)

Founded in 1945, incorporated in 1987, and celebrated in 2025. Several ceremonies were held to honor the 80th anniversary of the Chester First Aid Squad.

[4] Greenidge, Frances. *CHESTER, NEW JERSEY – A Scrapbook of History.* Chester Historical Society, Second Printing 1991.

In August 2025, former Chester Township Mayor, now Assemblyman Michael Inganamort, presented the squad with a Joint Legislative Resolution. The co-sponsors were Senator Parker Space and Assemblywoman Dawn Fantasia.

The resolution was read by Assemblyman Inganamort: "Eighty years of volunteer service is an extraordinary achievement. The men and women of the Chester First Aid Squad have selflessly devoted their time, skills, and compassion to ensure the safety and well-being of their neighbors, which I've experienced firsthand. I am proud to recognize their enduring commitment to our community." The Chester Historical Society also expresses its thanks and gratitude. Good fortune in the next 80 years! ◙

In the image above, Assemblyman Michael Inganamort and Squad President Deb Johnson hold a copy of the resolution. (Image courtesy of Michael Inganamort).

About the Chester Historical Society and Contact Information/Links

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>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.