



Historical Society of the Township of Chatham

NEWSLETTER

...

MARCH 2013

From our Co-Presidents:

I've been spending more time in the "magic closet". That is the little concrete room in the back of the Red Brick Schoolhouse that held the town records when the building held the town office. Now it holds "magic" – old photographs, files full of research, records of the museum's artifacts, and transcriptions of oral histories. These wonderful things just suck me in and I lose all track of time. If I ever disappear, my family knows where to find me.

The oral histories, in particular, are absolute treasures. They are the actual voices of the past, often of people who have passed on. They speak of everyday life, of special events, of a world very different from today. Much of the information about the cigar factory and the basket-making factory that are highlighted in this edition of the newsletter came from those oral histories. There has been a lull in collecting the histories, but thanks to Caroline Knott and her trusty soundman, Bob Knott, the recordings have begun again. If you would like to help with this project, please contact Caroline.

The website committee has been working away on our website design. It is getting closer and closer to fruition. It will be a project that will grow and change over time as we continue to develop our electronic vision.

The Program Committee has done its usual fantastic job of lining up diverse and interesting subjects. As in years past, the Historical Society is tapping into one of its most valuable resources, its own members. This group is so full of interesting people, with a wide range of interests, expertise, and passions, not to mention a love of historical research. It is such a pleasure for all of us to be able to share this with each other.

Pat Wells

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PROGRAMS



Sunday, March 24

2:00 PM

Architecture: A Look Around Chatham Township

Speakers: Martha and Pat Wells

With examples from four different centuries, our town is rich with a variety of architecture. Pre-revolutionary buildings, Sears houses, mid-century modern, Queen Anne, colonial revival, Colony cottages, two buildings on the National Historic Register, and a "McMansion" or two – it's all here and more in Chatham Township. Join us for a slide show look around.

Location: The Red Brick Schoolhouse

• Guests Welcome •

◆ *Programs continue on next page* ◆

PROGRAMS

continued



Sunday, April 7

2:00 PM

*Joint Meeting with the Chatham Borough
Historical Society*

Millionaires, Mansions and Maids in the Gilded Age

Speaker: Susan Orr

Curator, Morris County Historical Society

You probably know that Morristown was once the home of many of New York City's millionaires. Learn about the many opulent mansions, the domestics who kept things running smoothly, and about life in the "good old days".

Location: Presbyterian Church of Chatham Twp.
240 Southern Boulevard

• Guests Welcome •



Sunday, May 26

• **NEW DATE** •

2:00 PM

The Stanley Steam Car: Lecture & Demonstration

Historical Society members are invited to the home of Don Davidson and Sarah Stanley for a rare experience. Don and Sarah will present the history of the Stanley Steam Car and tell of its inventors, Francis E. Stanley and Freelan O. Stanley, and the Stanley connection to Chatham.

We will be treated to a demonstration of the "fire-up" and "running" of a 1913 Stanley Steam Car Roadster Model 64 followed by the "blow-down" of the Stanley Steam Car, a process done at the end of each steaming day.

Location: Home of Don Davidson & Sarah Stanley
48 Southern Boulevard
(Rain date: Sunday, May 26)

• Guests Welcome •

NOTE: This program will be held outdoors in their backyard. Parking is available at the Red Brick Schoolhouse and at the Church of Christ.



Sunday, June 2

5:00 PM

Annual Picnic

Join us for our annual indoor picnic with fellow historical society members. Members should bring either a salad or dessert to share. The Historical Society will provide Kentucky Fried Chicken, beverages and paper goods.

Location: The Red Brick Schoolhouse

• Guests Welcome •



Welcome to our new members!

Sally and Tom Abbott

Thank You!

The following members recently made monetary contributions to the Historic Marker Project as well as to the Historical Society.

Tom and Sally Abbott
Fred and Blanche Blumenfeld
George and Fran Boyer
Don Davidson and Sarah Stanley
John and Sheila Goggins
Gordon and Marilyn Granger
Nancy Hamilton
Nancy Heller
Elizabeth Keat
Lucky Lyons
Caroline and Bob Knott
Betsy Manning and Paul Wehn
Carl and Kathy Woodward

A Very Special Thank You to Sarah Stanley for the new look and printing of the Historical Society's newsletter and membership book.



Chatham, NJ – The Stanley Connection

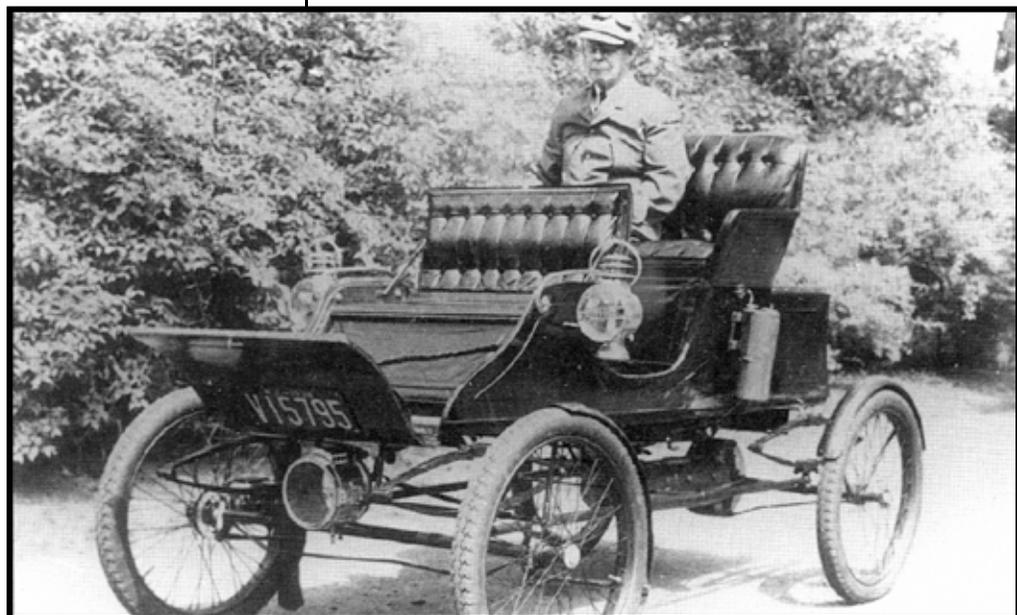
By Don Davidson

It seems that it is a small world when it comes to Stanley Steamers. I have lived in Chatham, New Jersey for almost twenty nine years. It was only six years ago that I learned that I actually lived in the Mount Stanley District of Chatham, and yes, there is a connection to Freelan Oscar (FO) Stanley and Francis Edgar (FE) Stanley (the identical twin brothers who were the inventors of the Stanley Steam Car). I suppose I was a little suspicious when early on I learned there was a Stanley Park, Stanley Terrace, and Stanley Congregational Church in town, but no one could tell me the origin of these names. I became even more suspicious when the Chatham Township Historical Society published a pictorial history of Chatham Township* and one of the first pictures in the book (p. 8) is an old photograph of a prominent town citizen perched on top of a 1903 Stanley Steamer. Later in the book there is also a picture (p. 83) of an unidentified 1907 Model F Stanley. I will get to these cars in a minute. At the time it seemed strange, but not impossible that these cars found a home so far away from there New England origin.

Then six years ago, an ambitious reporter for the local newspaper started to unravel the story and contacted my wife Sarah Stanley and me because of our Stanley family name and Stanley Steamer connections. It all started in 1867 when George Shepard Page left his home state of Maine and upon moving to Chatham purchased several hundred acres. He was 29 years old. His mother was a “Stanley” and his cousins were none other than FE and FO Stanley. George’s branch of the family was obviously quite prosperous as his father had a successful oil and tar business in Maine. George quickly set up a tar paper mill along the Passaic River. I found it clearly marked as the Stanley Felt Mill on a copy of an 1867 map. Sadly there is nothing left of this factory except the green

lawns of Stanley Park. Close by, Stanley Terrace still exists with its modest homes that were built for the workers. At one time Page employed more than 10 percent of all Chatham residents. In 1867 George also founded the outdoor Hillside Mission Sabbath School which became the Stanley Congregational Church of today.

George Page quickly became a man to reckon with as he had the southern part of Chatham renamed Stanley in honor of his mother’s maiden name. He also convinced the Government to establish the Stanley Post Office of which he served as the first Postmaster. Indeed, had Page had his way, all of Chatham would today be called Stanley. Although the Stanley Post Office has long since been torn down, currently, Stanley still remains listed as a postal hamlet in Chatham Borough. It is obvious George was especially proud of his mother, her family name, and their many accomplishments.



Albian Page in 1903 Stanley Steam Car. Picture from *Images of America Series: Chatham Township* by John T. Cunningham.

But what about the Stanley Steamers pictured in the Chatham Township history book? Here it gets even more interesting. The gentleman sitting in the photo (p.8) of the 1903 Stanley is Albian Page, George’s son. The photo was taken in 1938 presumably when the car was last run. How do I know all this? The reporter uncovering the story was excited to tell me that the car still existed and its present owner lives in New Jersey.

His name is Don Eckel! It is a small world when it comes to Stanleys.

In talking to Don E. he confirmed that his grandfather, Earl, had purchased the car from Albion Page. Apparently there were several antique car enthusiasts that were pursuing this car, but Earl won it away when he drove down from Washington, NJ to Chatham in his 1914 Stanley and gave Albion a ride. Don E. also showed me a letter from FO Stanley to Albion answering some questions that Albion had about using the original boiler in 1938. FO's blatant response was "DON'T DO IT without a proper pressure test". Apparently FO had owned the car at one time.

How did Don E. get the original letter from FO to Albion? From Albion's granddaughter Betty May Filippo who still lives in New Providence, NJ. She recently gave Don E. this letter along with other original documents relating to the car. In the folder were pictures of the 1907 Model F Stanley also pictured in the Chatham Township history book. As I suspected, this Stanley was also owned by Albion. Where is this car today? If Don E. knows, he isn't talking!

As a perfect end to this story, on June 10, 2006 Chatham celebrated its biannual street festival Fishawack Day. Don E. and I both attended and showed our cars. He brought his 1903 Stanley, and I my 1913. Betty May Filippo, Albion's granddaughter, was also there. She remembers last riding in the 1903 Stanley in 1938 when she was a little girl. Don E. was happy to give her a ride, reuniting Betty and the car some 69 years later.

*Images of America Series: *Chatham Township* by John T. Cunningham (in collaboration with the Chatham Township Historical Society), Arcadia Publishing, 2001.

Copies of the book are available for purchase through the Chatham Township Historical Society and at the Library of the Chathams.



COMMUNITY EVENTS OF NOTE

- ▣ *The Thing's They Carried*
- ▣ *Morristown's Other Army*
- ▣ *Life in the Log Hut City*

The three programs listed above are a few of the programs offered by the National Park Service at Washington Headquarters Museum, Ford Mansion, Jockey Hollow Visitor Center and Wick House. www.nps.gov/morr for dates and details.

Note: April 21-29 are fee-free days at Morristown National Historical Park

▣ *Victorian New Jersey: Photographs by Guillermo Thorn from the Kean University Collection* on display at the Morris Museum through March 31st.

Free museum admission on Thursday evenings.
www.morrismuseum.org

▣ *A Fine Collection: Treasures from the Vault*
Exhibit of some of Macculloch Hall's most popular pieces as well as seldom seen treasures which have been in storage. Through June 30th at Macculloch Hall in Morristown.
www.maccullochhall.org

▣ *Stoddard, Durant & The Great Camps of the Gilded Age* at 6:00 p.m. on March 10.
Stickley Museum at Craftsman Farms
www.stickleymuseum.org



The Chatham Township Cigar Factory

By Pat Wells

with notes from Caroline Knott

In 1991, Milford Chester Totten of Green Village donated to the Chatham Township Historical Society a cigar box that his brother, Willam C. Totten, Jr., had found in his attic. The brothers believed that the box belonged to their father, William C. Totten, Sr. The senior William Totten had worked in the grocery business and raised his family in New Providence. The Totten family is long established in Green Village.

The cigar box had held Passaic Valley Cigars from "River Road, Chatham, N.J., Opp. New Providence". The box label says the cigars "are a Long Felt Need". The factory was located at 537 River Road, just west of the Chatham Township Fire Department. It was owned and operated by George Oertel of Newark, NJ., who purchased two tracts of land there in 1918.

A search on Ancestry.com revealed that George Oertel was born in Newark to German immigrant parents, George and Louisa Oertel. George and Louisa each arrived in the USA between 1852 and 1853, married in 1857, and, according to census reports, lived the rest of their lives in Newark. From 1848 through the 1850s, there was a large influx of German immigrants into Newark. Many were fleeing the disruptive effects of the 1848 German Revolution. According to the website "oldnewark.com", one third of Newark's population was German or of German extraction by 1865. George, Sr. is listed in the census as working in a hat shop. George and Louisa had at least seven children. George, Jr. was born in 1872 and appears to be the sixth child.

According to the website "cigarhistory.info" there were a large number of cigar factories in New York City, Newark, Hoboken and Jersey City. Although cigar making machinery had been introduced for large cigar makers, there were a very large number of small factories that still hand rolled cigars. These small operations often consisted of just a few people working in a work room within a dwelling or an outbuilding.

George, Jr. married Grace Emma Bayer in 1894, and their son, Nelson, was born in 1896. In the 1900 Federal Census the couple is living in Newark's 6th

Ward, and George's occupation is cigar-maker. In 1910, they are still in the 6th Ward, but both George and Grace are listed as musicians working at the Bode (?) Studio of Music. By the 1920 census, the family had relocated to Chatham, and George was again occupied as a cigar maker. Milford Totten remembered that Mr. Oertel was a violinist who, in addition to making cigars, taught violin.

The Totten brothers remembered watching Mr. Oertel make cigars. The factory, they said, was actually a small setup in the corner of the barn that stood about 75 feet further west on River Road.

At this period of time, fine cigar tobacco was grown in many states, including Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Massachusetts, Ohio, Illinois, and Wisconsin. In addition many other types of cigar tobacco were imported from Cuba, Puerto Rico, and other countries. So good cigar tobacco was readily available to the small producer. The Totten brothers described how Mr. Oertel used a large board and a sharp knife, standard tools of the trade, to cut and roll the tobacco. He would sort and cut the leaves, using the best part of the leaves for the wrapper and the less desirable parts for the filler. After rolling the cigars they were placed in a little hand press to give them a uniform shape. A particular number of cigars were placed in the press and squeezed together.

Producing high quality hand rolled cigars is an art. Prior to the development of cigar molds, a roller would spend about three years as an apprentice. Once molds became standard tools, the training time dropped to about one year. Hence, Mr. Oertel would have been a highly trained craftsman.

The front edge of the cigar box carries a tax stamp that says "The cigars herein contained were manufactured to retail at not more than 5¢ each and are (illegible) tax paid". On the bottom of the box is a caution notice that says, "Factory 113 5th dist. N.J. The manufacturer of the cigars herein contained have complied with all the requirements of the law. Every person is cautioned not to use either this box for cigars again, or the stamp thereon again, or to remove the contents of this box without destroying said stamp, under the penalties provided by law in such cases." This caution notice was meant to assure that all required taxes were paid on tobacco products. There

is also a blue "Union Made" label, that shows that the cigars were produced by members of the Cigar Makers Independent Union of America. These labels are found only on cigars made without machines. Although cigar molds were at first considered machinery by the Union, they were eventually accepted as standard hand rolling equipment. So by the time Mr. Oertel was rolling his cigars in Chatham, his use of a mold was legitimate.

The word "Londres" is stamped on the front edge of the box. This term designates the size of the cigars in the box. This was a Cuban term for a cigar measuring 5" (126 mm) long and having a 40 ring gauge (the size of the paper ring that fits around the cigar).

The Totten brothers said Mr. Oertel sold the cigars himself, through various stores in Summit and New Providence, and also filled individual special orders. Milford Totten thought Mr. Oertel also sold his cigars further afield through his connections in Newark.

The Oertel's sold their property to the Gavin Family in 1928. James Clingan, who lived with the Gavins during his childhood, remembered the smell of the tobacco that still permeated the room in the barn where he did his homework. He had heard a story about Mr. Oertel hiring women to roll the cigars on the insides of their thighs. He did not know if there was any truth to the story. Mr. Oertel would have been a clever salesman if it was he who made the claim. Though it is more probably a fanciful story shared by adolescent boys.

The barn burned sometime after Oertel sold the property. It was later replaced by a grey shingled house.

The 1930 Federal Census shows George and Grace Oertel living in Summit where both were music teachers at "private facilities". In 1940 they had returned to Newark and were living with or visiting George's sister, Louisa, and her husband, August Spaeth. The census says they were living in Portland, Oregon in 1935. Their son Nelson was also living in Oregon then. George's occupation was again cigar maker. Both George and Grace died in Falls Church, VA around 1949.

Milford Totten also donated his father's cigar cutter to the museum. It is a lovely scissor device used to cut

the end off the cigar before it is lit. Both the box and the cigar cutter can be seen in the museum.

If you would like more information on the history of cigars, cigar boxes, cigar advertising, how cigars are made, and anything else related to tobacco, take a look at the website "cigarhistory.info". Tony Hyman has created the online Cigar History Museum on this website and it is simply amazing. Enjoy.



Can You Help?

We need assistance from members with our oral history project.

Did you enjoy reading the articles in this newsletter? These stories would not have been possible without the oral histories that were recorded by our members.

Additional accounts and stories of life in Chatham Township need to be preserved.

Contact Caroline Knott at 973-635-2387 or Knott2@aol.com if you can help with this important historic research project.



For Your Information...

Membership books were distributed at the February meeting. Members who did not attend should have received their copy in the mail.

Please telephone or e-mail corrections to Sally Walker: 973-377-9272 or sallybwalker@msn.com.



DeMott Peach Basket Factory

By Pat Wells

In 1881, William DeMott of Somerset County, arrived in Green Village and established a lumber mill. He was 24 years old and already had a number of years of experience working in the woodlands. For many years he had been a charcoal burner, cutting wood, burning it into charcoal, and selling his product. He had earned himself enough money in this business through hard work and "roughing it" (i.e. living in the woods wherever he was working), that he was able to lease a portable sawmill. His success with that venture allowed him to establish the lumber mill in Green Village. DeMott continued to use the portable mill to harvest various wood from woodlots in the swamp and areas in other counties as well. Oak and chestnut were used for railroad ties, pine, white oak, and hickory for wagon parts, and "off woods", such as poplar, sweet gum, birch, and maple were used for making peach baskets.

The peach basket factory developed as a side line to the lumber mill because it could use the "off woods". William DeMott, Jr. said his father purchased the basket making machinery from an old friend who had retired from the business. He then hired Frank Anderson from Hunterdon County to supervise the manufacture of the baskets. The business started in about 1883.

Silas and Wilbur Hinds, who helped out in the factory as kids, described how the basket lumber was prepared. They explained that logs would be cut to four foot lengths and placed in a room to be steamed. They would then be fed into a machine that would slice them into long, thin sheets. The sheets would go into another machine that would cut them into staves and also into long strips that would be used for fastening the staves. The basket bottoms were also cut out. Silas and Wilbur recalled that they and some of the other local kids would sort the newly cut staves into bundles of 100, then the men would take the bundles upstairs to the assembly room and make the baskets by hand.

In an interview for the Madison Eagle, William Schick described how he and the other basket makers did their job. They had a form on which they assembled the basket. "A hoop was first put on the form, then the staves, then a bottom hoop, and finally three outside hoops." Mr. Schick said the men made about one basket per minute, and that they worked from 8 in the morning, through the day, and sometimes returned to work in the evening. The men could produce 300-400 baskets a day. Mr. Schick noted that he made baskets for four or five years, then decided he needed to do something else and learned to be carpenter.



DeMott Peach Basket Factory. The baskets were assembled on the second floor, then carried across the elevated walkway to the drying shed on the right. Photo donated to the Chatham Township Historical Society by Erwin Smith.

Silas and Wilbur said that the finished baskets were taken across a walkway to a building where the baskets air dried. Behind the building was a pond that supplied the factory with its water for the steam power that ran the machinery.

William DeMott, Jr., wrote that 25 men worked in the basket factory. He said "They were experts and were paid 60¢ per hundred."

According to DeMott, the finished baskets were stacked in bundles of 25, which were loaded in rigging about 14 feet long and 6 feet high. These rigs were then laid down horizontally on a wagon, so there were 3000 per load. They were then transported by horse team to the Madison Railway Station. The factory kept 20 teams of horses busy, each making two trips per day.

DeMott wrote that there was a good market for peach baskets from New England to Georgia.

The factory remained in production until it burned in 1928. Mr. Schick claimed the fire was of suspicious origin. He said a former employee who had been dismissed the previous day for being intoxicated was supposedly seen in the area before the fire. When questioned by the police about whether or not he had set the fire, he replied, "Maybe I did and maybe I didn't, but you can't prove a thing." The cause of the fire went undiscovered.

The mill and basket factory had been located on the village green. Mr. DeMott did not rebuild. He donated a portion of the land to the Green Village Fire Department and a fire station was built where the basket factory used to stand. Next to the station, also on factory land, is a small building that was once the post office and later a realty office.

There is a peach basket in the Red Brick Schoolhouse Museum. Although it was not made in the DeMott factory, it is an example of what the DeMott peach baskets would have looked like.

References:

The Biographical and Genealogical History of Morris County, N.J., Vol. 2. Chicago: Lewick Publishing Co, 1899; page 635. (Recorded by Ruth Churchill.)

DeMott, Jr., William F. Letter to Mrs. Hand concerning Basket Factory; Date not recorded.

Hinds, Wilbur & Silas; Oral history provided to Chatham Township Historical Society. Undated, 1990s.

Hutchinson, Julie. "Long Time Green Village Resident Recalls Working at Old Basket Factory" in *Madison Eagle*, August 21, 1969. (Interview with William Schick).



From The Archive



This is a picture of the **T. Rawsthorne Grocery Store** (undated) which stood next to the Green Village School. The school became today's Green Village Deli. The grocery store, which is no longer standing, would have been in the Deli's parking lot. By zooming in on the right side of the porch, one can see a lovely big baby carriage, with bicycle-size wheels at the handle end and smaller wheels at the hood end. On the ground next to the hitching post is a young boy in what appears to be a pedal car. It has fine wheels and a very aerodynamic wedge shaped front end. The boy is holding the steering wheel, ready to go. Perhaps he and the baby were waiting for their mother, who was in the grocery store.

