

Historical Society of the Township of Chatham

Newsletter

September 2014

The Historical Society of the Township of Chatham was established to increase knowledge, awareness and preservation of Township history.

Officers and Trustees

Co-Presidents: Pat Wells & Martha Wells

Vice President: Sally Walker

Secretary: Linda Pitney

Treasurer: Ken Hetrick

Museum Director: Sue Moore

Trustees:

Debbie Bucuk

Donald Davidson & Sarah Stanley
(serving jointly)

Sheila Goggins

Trip von Hoffmann

Caroline Knott

Betsy Manning

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From our Co-Presidents:

Welcome back from the summer. We hope it was good. We have a great lineup of activities scheduled this fall, thanks to our excellent program committee. The first is a field trip to the Jacobus Vanderveer House in Bedminster. We hope you will come and that you will take advantage of carpooling by meeting at the Presbyterian Church. (See page 2 for details.)

Since several society members have had concerns about driving out in the swamp in the dark New Jersey night, we decided to rethink the Annual Meeting venue. Our events chairman, Anna Riker, did a lot of research and we think we have a solution. We also wanted to keep the price the same as in the past. The final plan is to still have it at the Meyersville Inn, but earlier in the day. We will meet at 3:00 PM on Sunday, October 12 and have the place to ourselves. Nicholas Platt will be speaking to us at 3:30 PM with an early dinner to follow. This arrangement should get us out by twilight. Watch the mail for your invitation and menu choices. (See page 3 for information.)

Our November meeting, at which Chatham resident William Style will speak on a Civil War topic, will be held at the Chatham Township Municipal Building. Why? Because, happily our recent audiences have overfilled the Red Brick Schoolhouse! What a wonderful problem to have—thanks to Sheila Goggins for her effective publicity work.

Jessie Cochran has resigned her position as Trustee so that she can spend more time with her family (read grandchild). She has served as a trustee since 2009. We want to express our gratitude for all that she has done as a trustee, as a member of the program committee, as a researcher, and as a presenter. Jessie, thanks so much, but don't think you're truly off the hook!

On a sad note, we send our sincere condolences to Nancy Vroom Johnson on the loss of her husband, Roland Johnson, on August 9th. Roland was a life member of the Historical Society and, in past years, was part of the program committee. Roland served in the Coast Guard during World War II and fought in the Battles of Okinawa and Iwo Jima. He had lived in Chatham since 1945. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to his family.

We hope to see all of you at the upcoming meetings.

Pat and Martha

SAVE THE DATE!

**Historical Society
Fund Raiser**

Sunday, November 23

Opening of our new
permanent historic photo
exhibit in the main hallway
of the Municipal Building.

PROGRAMS

Sunday, September 14

Field Trip to

Jacobus Vanderveer House & Museum and Pluckemin Artillery Cantonment

River Road Park, Bedminster Township

To carpool: At 2:00 PM, members and their guests can gather at the parking lot of the Chatham Township Presbyterian Church, 240 Southern Blvd. Or you can drive on your own. Program begins at 3:00 PM.

Please RSVP to Jessie Cockran at 973-635-7286 or jessiercochran@gmail.com. Jessie will email directions.

Directions also at www.jvanderveerhouse.com

The 1772 Dutch Colonial house was the home and headquarters of Revolutionary War General Henry Knox during the winter encampment of 1778-79. The surrounding area was the site of America's first military training academy,



Period Room in Jacobus Vanderveer House

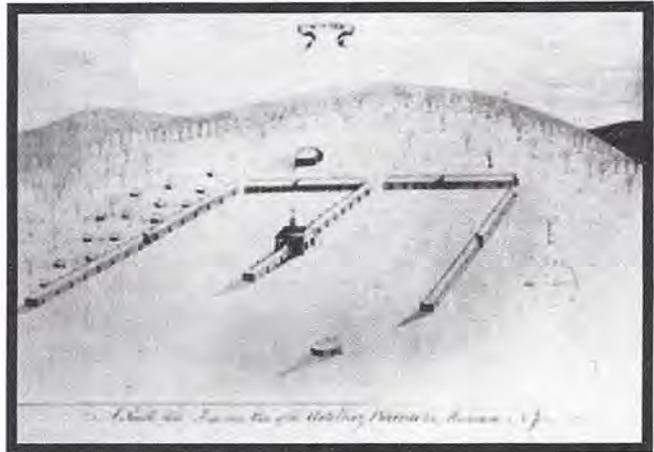
the Pluckemin Cantonment, which was established by the Continental Army during 1778-79.

Jacobus Vanderveer Jr., son of Jacobus Vanderveer Sr., a wealthy Dutch miller, built a small Dutch frame-style farmhouse just west of the North Branch of the Raritan River on the northern outskirts of Pluckemin. In 1778, the Continental army established an artillery encamp-

ment and training academy on a hillside above the village of Pluckemin. Vanderveer lent his home to the commander of the academy, General Henry Knox, and his wife, Lucy.

The purpose of the academy was to train officers in engineering and artillery. Knox went on to establish The United States Military Academy at West Point, New York.

The Jacobus Vanderveer House and property were purchased by Bedminster Township in 1989 with the help of Green Acres funding. The house was listed in 1995 on the National and New Jersey Registers of Historic Places.



Drawing of Pluckemin Artillery Cantonment

According to The Messenger-Gazette: "The Friends of the Jacobus Vanderveer House is a nonprofit organization formed to restore and develop the historic site as an important educational and cultural resource. During the past decade, the Friends have restored the house, created historically accurate period room exhibitions, established historic collections, supported important research, and embarked on a program of education and interpretation to tell the stories of General Henry Knox, the Pluckemin military encampment, and the community's key role in the American Revolution."

Welcome to New Members!

Karen Brodsky
Todd Allen

PROGRAMS

Sunday, October 12
Annual Meeting and Dinner

**The Great Swamp &
the Battle to Stop a Jetport**

Speaker: Nicholas Platt

Meyersville Inn

Cash bar: 3:00 PM

Program: 3:30 PM

Dinner: 4:45 PM

Nicholas Platt is the current owner of Hartley Farms on Spring Valley Road and a descendant in the Hartley-Dodge family. The property was first developed as a farm in the early 1900s by Marcelus Hartley Dodge. Mr. Dodge played a prime role in the fight to preserve the Great Swamp and prevent the building of a jetport.

Watch the mail for your invitation
and menu choices.

CTHS Members & their Guests

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Sunday, November 9 2:00 PM

A Civil War Story

Speaker: William Style

Chatham Township Municipal Building

William Style, who is a resident of Chatham Twp., has held a life-long interest in NJ history and its role in the Civil War. He has authored more than two dozen books and documentaries and is currently working on a biography of General Philip Kearny.

Signed books will be available for purchase.

All Welcome

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Sunday, December 7 2:00 PM

Holiday Party

Red Brick Schoolhouse

CTHS Members & their Guests

FUN AT FISHAWACK

June 14 was a gorgeous day for Fishawack. We had a double wide space again this year, which gave us room for a big tent, plus Sarah Stanley's 1931 Model A Ford Pickup truck. An antique car really pulls people over to the booth. Once inside they found a fun guessing game. Seven objects from the museum were presented and both adults and children were encouraged to figure out what they were and how they were used. It was a hit with all age groups.

We also displayed a copy of Carl Riker's composite map of Chatham Township. It was a great draw. Several maps were sold, as well as several books, bringing in a total of \$84. The double booth cost \$80, so we made a profit of \$4. Many people were reminded that history is a lot of fun.

Thanks to everyone who helped make the day a success: Sheila Goggins, Caroline Knott, Betsy Manning, Sue Moore, Linda Pitney, Anna Riker, Sarah Stanley, Sally Walker, and Pat and Martha Wells.



In the photo are three young visitors to our tent.

FOURTH OF JULY PARADE

Thank you, Don Davidson, for representing the Historical Society in the 4th of July Parade. Don drove the family's 1913 Model T with Doug and Linda Pitney as passengers. (Sarah was right behind him in her Model A Ford Pickup truck representing the Community Garden.)

It was a great parade!

HISTORIC MARKERS

Our newest historic marker has been put up in Green Village. It is located on the Village Green and has, of course, attracted the attention of drivers, cyclists, motorcycle riders, and patrons of the deli across the street.

This is the first marker that has required different text on each side of the sign,. It was a difficult task to reduce all of the information to fit on the marker. Thank you, Caroline Knott, for all the research that went into the project.

Green Village Marker Text:

Side 1:

This 18th century unincorporated community located in Chatham and Harding Townships was settled by farmers and mill owners drawn to the resources of the Great Swamp. Revolutionary iron forges, multiple grain, grist and saw mills populated the area. Surrounding this Green, once the Village School playground, were Wm DeMott's Wagon Works (c 1892), Peach Basket Factory (c. 1917) and portable Saw Mill cutting railroad timbers.

Side 2:

Over the years, multiple establishments operated in and around this Green including a village school, Methodist Church, Post Office, Rawthorne's and Van Deusen's general stores, Eddy's Turning Mill, Blazier's Blacksmith. A garage, soap factory, meat packing company, dairies, local greenhouses, a sorghum mill making molasses and charcoal pits providing fuel to a nearby forge. Zander's Saw Mill operated in the Swamp until the 1960s.

- Erected 2014 Chatham Township Historical Society
- Gifted by the Woman's Club of Chatham



*Unveiling of the Green Village Historic Marker
Back row from left: Karen Swartz, Cindy Sullivan,
Debbie Bucuk, Carolann Miller, Jeannette Hinds Miller,
Bailey Brower, Terry Kandalajt, Mayor Kevin Sullivan,
Martha Wells
Front row: Caroline Knott, Dan Miller, Pat Wells*

Future Marker

Caroline Knott has been hard at work researching and drafting the text for the next marker. This one will be placed at the Hickory Square Shopping Center and will honor the greenhouse industry. Many current township residents have no knowledge of this important industry that filled much of the area for more than 100 years. This marker will need two sides of text as well!

THANK YOU CHATHAM JAYCEES

**Thanks to the Chatham Jaycees
for their generous gift of \$500 to
our historic marker project.**

THANK YOU WOMAN'S CLUB OF CHATHAM

**and Woman's Club President and CTHS member Terry Kandalajt
for donating the entire cost of the Green Village historic marker.**

New Donations: Madame Bey Press Photos

In July the Historical Society received a gift of two press photos of Madame Bey. Local resident, Todd Allen, had seen them for sale on E-bay and contacted Co-Presidents, Pat and Martha Wells, to see if the Society had them. Although we had newspaper and magazine articles that included the pictures, we did not have copies of the photos themselves. Todd offered to purchase the photos and donate them to the Society. His offer was happily accepted. The Historical Society now owns the two photos seen here.

Thank you, Todd, for your generous donation!



Madame Bey with Welsh heavyweight boxer, Tommy Farr. This press photo appeared on the cover of The Family Circle Magazine October 7, 1938.

Former Turkish Society Woman Now Mothers Ranking Boxers

By Dillon Graham
AP Feature Service Writer
(Mailed Jan. 14, 1938)

Summit, NJ – Madame Hranoush Bey hasn't been phased by anything since the time the French fighters demanded lobster salad for breakfast.

Madame Bey operates a boxers' training camp in the Jersey Hills west of Newark. For 18 years she's been mothering broods of bruised belters. She's had all nationalities and races, kindly gentlemen and surly brutes and she thinks it is interesting watching them condition to wallop the daylights out of their fellow man.



Madame Bey laughing ringside at the gym at her Boxing Camp on River Road, January 1938. This photo appeared in an AP feature article at the time.

Her life story is a fantastic tale.

She came from Constantinople in 1898, the bride of Sidky Bey, Turkish diplomat. Mme. Bey quickly captivated Washington society. She danced at the White House. She lived gaily in the capital's diplomatic whirl.

Mme. Bey had a strong and beautiful voice. She sang in concerts and her mezzo-soprano notes with their contralto range were heard in Carnegie Hall. Stately in her Paris gowns, she graced Fifth Avenue drawing rooms.

Then came the World War and her husband resigned rather than accept an appointment to Berlin. He flourished in business for several years, then disaster struck and the couple retired to their 30 acres in the Jersey highlands.

There was little money and society folks couldn't farm, so the Bey's accepted Freddie Welsh's offer to take over his nearby health farm. Welsh had been unable to attract customers.

Mme. Bey knew nothing about boxers or

(Madame Bey Press Photos continued on page 6)

(Madame Bey Press Photos continued from page 5)

cooking, but she read books on cooking, diets, and boxing. Finally, the fighters started coming, and when Welsh saw the success he wanted to take charge again. So Mme. Bey tramped back to her acres and behind her tramped all the boxers. They had decided to stick with her.

They bought lumber and built a training shack – 11 pugs including Champions Johnny Wilson and Joe Lynch. These fighters passed on the word that good food, good accommodations and fine treatment were waiting for fighters at Mme. Bey's and business prospered.

She had a large, unpretentious frame house, off the main highway. And up a short, steep hill sits a modern, well-equipped gymnasium. Her house is old-fashioned. Heavily-stuffed furniture crowds the rooms. Turkish ornaments are all about. On the walls hang pictures of Washington society, a White House reception, and of the group, including Mme. Bey, standing next to President McKinley a few moments before he was assassinated at Buffalo.

Sometimes she rocks in her room and reminisces over the glamorous old days when she was a part of society. But she doesn't yearn to return. She's never had regrets, she is happy and finds life attractive in her role of parent and disciplinarian to tough, hard-punching ringsters. The years and sorrow – her husband died not long ago – have taken toll of her beauty. She's still vivacious and her eyes sparkle but her back is hunched and her cheeks are wrinkled.

Sometimes she entertains the fighters with arias of operas she used to sing.

Because she speaks six languages, foreign boxers feel at home at her place.

Max Schmeling, Freddie Steele and Tommy Farr have trained with her in recent weeks. Through the years she has had most of the champions – Gene Tunney, Mickey Walker, Paul Berlenbach, Primo Carnera, Battling Siki, Lou Ambers.

Tunney, Walker, Steele and Schmeling are her favorites. Her eyes light up as she calls Gentleman Gene her "polished emerald".

She gets \$4.50 a day from the fighters. She is very fond of Mike Jacobs, the promoter, who has sent many fighters to her. She can accommodate 20 fighters.

THANK YOU TOWN & COUNTRY GARDEN CLUB

It was a beautiful spring at the Red Brick Schoolhouse with daffodils galore in the garden. The new plantings are having a good growing season, thanks to the garden club members who have volunteered to water. It's work!

The Club has received donations from the Woman's Club of Chatham as well as the Chatham Jaycees. In addition, the Club recently received an award from the Garden Club of New Jersey for the renovation.

WHAT IS IT?

This farm tool has a 19 inch wooden handle and a 10 inch blade. Do you know what it is?



Answer: Corn Knife. Before today's harvesting machines, crops were harvested by hand. When the corn was ripe (in August), using a knife, such as the one pictured, a worker would cut the corn stalk close to the ground with one hand and, at the same time, gather the stalks into a bundle in the other arm. Bundles were then stacked upright in the field into a circular form called "corn shocks" until dried (in October). In late fall, the corn was husked. A husking pin (on display in the Museum) would help to prevent sore and bloody thumbs. Shucked corn was fed to animals or ground into cornmeal.

Miss Belcher, Teacher

Excerpts from an Oral History with Margaret Belcher
Interviewed by Mabel Latham & Marion Stoll on November 6, 1978.

Miss Margaret Belcher taught at the Red Brick Schoolhouse from 1920 until it closed in 1928. She and the students then moved to the new Southern Boulevard School, where she continued to teach until her retirement in 1960.

"I have lived in Chatham all my life. I attended Newark State Normal School [now Kean University, in Union. A "Normal School" was a teachers' college.]. I started teaching in Chatham right after I finished school in 1920 and I taught at the Red Brick School. We had all eight grades at the time, and I taught the lower grades up to 4th grade."

"It was a very frightening experience to begin teaching. I had visited the school one day before I started teaching and there was a girl teaching there who really had no experience. She had gone for six weeks to Normal School in South Jersey and it was very funny because the children did anything they felt like doing. I felt sorry for this poor girl because I knew exactly how I would feel myself. It was difficult with four grades."

"I thought it was going to be very easy school because I understood there would only be about 20 children (there were 19), but it was an almost impossible chore for me to include all the things we were supposed to cover in four grades. I think if it had not been for Miss Conger, who taught there, that I would have given up. She found me weeping because I had managed to carry out only about a third of my wonderful plans for the students, and I didn't see how it was at all possible to teach all four grades. She sat down and helped me work it all out; she was a great help all during that first year."

"At the time there was supposed to have been a man upstairs who had taught there for three or four years. He was from Pennsylvania and just three weeks before school was to begin he contacted the Board of Education and told them he would not return unless he was paid more money. They let him know that it wasn't necessary for him to come back at all. So Miss Conger

came. She lived in a large house on Southern Blvd [208 on the corner of Robert Drive]. Mr. Conger, her brother, was the Vice President of the Board of Education at that time. Miss Conger had been a teacher in Newark for a number of years, so she just stepped in and filled the breach for the entire year. It was good for me to have her there. We were wonderful friends. I don't think I could have stuck it out without her."

"I lived in Chatham, across from the William Pitt, and walked to school and back each day. I had to leave home at 7:30 each morning and it was quite a walk, but I was used to it and didn't mind. However, after the first year I was able to put a down payment on a car. My salary was \$1000."

"When I started teaching this was definitely a farm area. We had children who came great distances to school. There were five or six families who lived just over the line into Passaic Township and their children came by bus. The bus they rode in had tires of hard rubber and you could hear it coming at least half a mile away, with the curtains flapping. They were the only children transported. All the other children had to walk. There was a little girl named Thelma Reinfelder from Watchung Avenue who had to walk almost four miles. We didn't have any days off because of weather. Once in a while when there was a heavy snow or rain, Thelma's mother would call and ask me what time I was starting out, and then I would meet Thelma at the



(Miss Belcher, Teacher continued on page 8)

(Miss Belcher, Teacher continued from page 7)

corner of Fairmount and Watchung and we would trudge up the hill together. She was five years old at the time.”

“I don't think I missed many days either. I think I missed something like 20 days during the forty years I taught.”

“I taught at the Red Brick School until 1928 when I went on to the Southern Boulevard School, and there I had only two grades.”

Notes:

There is a photograph in the Red Brick Schoolhouse Museum of Miss Belcher with her class of students (1st - 4th grades) in 1928. There are 40 students, twice as many as she had her first year!

Margaret Belcher was one of six children of Benjamin and Georgeanna Belcher of Chatham Borough. Benjamin was a house painter. Miss Belcher lived with her parents until they died in the 1930s, then shared a home with her sister, Olive, on Kings Road, Chatham. She retired from Southern Boulevard School in 1960, then filled her time volunteering at Overlook Hospital, her church, and various organizations. She died in the early 1980s.

Southern Blvd. School Students in 2014

This spring the Red Brick Schoolhouse was once again filled with the sound of children's voices as the second graders from Southern Boulevard School came for their annual field trip.

As the children arrived from their walk up the hill, they were greeted by Sue Moore, our Museum Director. Students were treated to a presentation of “Now and Then” showing changes through the years to Chatham Township and participated in a scavenger hunt through history on the second floor of the museum.

Sue has organized this enrichment program for Township children for many years. Assisting her this year were: Pat Wells, Martha Wells, Sheila Goggins, Edie Tato, Val Heyl, Jessie Cochran, Anna Riker, Kathy Havens, and Caroline Knott.

Today's Southern Boulevard School students discovered lots of interesting things about our town. Miss Belcher would have been proud!

FROM THE ARCHIVES

These wonderful pictures are from an album of early 1940s photos from the Southern Boulevard School. Most do not have names connected with them.

The pictures highlight class projects. The class in the top picture appears to have been studying transportation. Look at the art work on the chalk boards.



The second photo shows older students that were apparently studying the pioneer movement. The sign on the prairie schooner says “California or Bust”. A note with the photo identifies Herman Norman (third from left) and Delbert Engle (far right). CTHS member Bert Abbazia thinks the girl on the left is Nancy Martin.



Do you recognize anyone?
We'd love to hear from you if you do.