



Chatham Township Newsletter

Special Bicentennial Issue

Vol. 3 No. 1 Spring 2006

Historic Headlines

March 13, 1806

**“The Genius of Liberty” -
Morristown paper**

International

“Defeat of the French Fleet in the West Indies” British Fleet under the command of Admiral Cochrane defeated the French Fleet under command of Admiral Siegle on the 6th of February. “armistice concluded between their Majesties of France & Austria”

National

House resolved itself into a committee of the whole on the state of the union when a resolution was introduced for non-importation of British goods. Rep. Gregg for the resolution, Rep. Clay and Randolph against

State & Local

Proclamation to set off a new township from the townships of Hanover & Morris, in the County of Morris to be called Chatham Township.

March 13, 1856

“The Jerseyman”

International

“Speculation on the probable results of the Paris Conferences have usurped the place of actual facts. Little doubt seems to be entertained as to the conclusion of peace.”

National

“The American Party in Mass. will not support the nomination of Millard Fillmore and Andrew Jackson.”

State

“The Democratic members of the Legislature of the State have united in a Card, which is published, expressing their preference for James Buchanan as Democratic candidate for the Presidency.”

Local

“Mr. David L. Miller of Madison has
(Continued on page 3)

A Message from the Mayor

Dear Residents of Chatham,

Since its creation in February 1806 by an act of the New Jersey General Assembly, Chatham Township has always been a special place. Originally a farming community, the Township grew after the Morris and Essex railroad was completed in the 1830's. By the early 1900's, large farms were common, with roses a significant cash commodity. After World War II, the Township met the growing need for housing with substantial housing developments occurring from the 1950s-1970s. Today, Chatham Township is home to a diversified, dynamic population intent on maintaining the qualities that reflect our community and its mission statement to enhance the quality of life for all who live, work in or visit our outstanding community.

It is, therefore, with great pride that I write to all residents and visitors about the events which will occur during 2006 to celebrate and commemorate our 200 year Bicentennial. We will kick-off events on **February 16** with a re-enactment of the first Chatham Township annual meeting held in April 1806. The current Township Committee will assume the roles of our first committee members. This will be followed with a ball at the Twombly Mansion at Fairleigh Dickinson in Madison on **March 11**.

Beginning **June 11**, the Chatham Township Art League Summer Show will showcase the “historic homes” of Chatham. Also during our bicentennial year, the Chatham Community Band Concert / Ice Cream Social will occur on **July 6** at the Chatham Township gazebo.

All these activities will culminate in a daylong extravaganza on **September 9**, featuring a fireman's parade and old-fashioned country fair. Hot air balloon rides, an antique car show and fireworks will finish up a truly momentous bicentennial year for Chatham Township.

Chatham Township would not be the community it is without its churches, schools and the dedication, support and caring from countless volunteers who have been working on this bicentennial celebration over the last twelve months. These are the true unsung heroes who give the time, effort and financial support to allow all of us the opportunity to celebrate this fantastic occasion. I want to offer my personal thanks on behalf of the Township Committee and all our Township employees. We appreciate your outstanding work and offer our continued support.

In summation, to our residents and visitors, enjoy all that 2006 and our Bicentennial hold. Have a wonderful time.

Sincerely,

William P. O'Connor
Mayor, Chatham Township, N.J.

Township of Chatham

A History by Alice B. Lundt

Morris County was created in 1739, at which time the area was split into three townships, Morris, Hanover and Pequannock—with the dividing line between Morris and Hanover Townships the main street of what is now Chatham Borough. This created many problems in splitting an established community between two townships. In 1773 the community was officially called Chatham—after the Earl of Chatham (a village of cottages).

The confusion of the split community was relieved when the General Assembly of New Jersey in 1798 created Chatham Township—but to be effective in 1806. The Township of Chatham then included the present Borough of Chatham, Borough of Madison, and Florham Park. A total of 23 square miles.

The first settlers came, attracted by the fertility of the soil and the rich iron ore deposits. The entire area shared in the activity of the Morristown encampment.

The early records of the Township of Chatham reveal there was much concern regarding care for the poor. The Township Committee meetings were held at the Bottle Hill (now the location of Bank of America in Madison).

Transportation was needed, and private corporations built turnpikes and toll roads. Today's Shunpike Road was originally built by local residents to avoid paying tolls. The biggest transportation development, and one which influences property values to the present day, was the coming of the Morris and Essex Railroad in 1837.

In 1829 the first Township public school funds were appropriated. In 1860 the Little Red Brick Schoolhouse was built. It, as well as other schoolhouses, was used until a consolidated school was built in 1928 (Southern Boulevard School).

There was a minimum number of slave owners in the Township of Chatham, and in 1820, slavery in the township was abolished.

The Township Committee voted in 1864 to raise \$15,000 to procure thirty volunteers for the coming draft. (Civil War)

The Chatham Township area, known for its farms became a center of the rose growing industry in the 1870's and 1880's. The specialty of the Louis M. Noe greenhouses was the American Beauty Rose, serving such notables as European royalty, including the gift of 50 roses to Queen Victoria on her Golden Anniversary.

For various reasons, Florham Park, Madison, and Chatham Borough were incorporated in the last decade of the 19th century, leaving the Township of Chatham 9.1 square miles of farm lands. In 1905 the population was 529.

There was considerable debate and decision making required for keeping the roads in first class condition for the seven districts into which the Township was divided for road maintenance.

In 1913, the Township Committee rejected the proposal of the Commonwealth Water and Light Company to electrify the township; however by 1917 the Township's resistance to electricity had crumbled.

World War I veterans were welcomed home and received a token of recognition with suitable badges.

Dogs running at large continued to be a problem and rabies inoculations became a requirement when in 1932 a rabid dog bit a woman who was forced to undergo the Pasteur Treatment.

The depression was here, and each year the budget was less than the previous year. Employees were asked to take a 10% pay decrease, and by 1935 there were not sufficient funds in the treasury to meet the demands of monies needed in the school account, and it was necessary to negotiate a loan. The Township established its own relief program.

Prohibition came to an end, and the rush was on to secure liquor licenses.

In 1940 one election district became two, and not until 1953 did we stretch to 4, and in 1969 divided into 8.

World War II deeply affected the Township as Mrs. Fountain and her Red Cross ladies used the Red Brick School House

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

for rolling bandages. Mr. Yuill, resigned the Township Committee to join the armed forces.

House hungry families, after five years of a war-enforced construction ban, invaded the Township, and the word “Hills” was heard over and over again as Rolling Hills, Highlands, Skytop, Wickham Wood developers competed to build larger and more luxurious homes. The Township now housed the commuter executive.

Former rose farms became two major shopping centers at the corner known as Hickory Tree, named for a hickory tree planted during President Madison’s term.

In honor of the Township’s 150 birthday, Mrs. Samuel Averett deeded the Red Brick School House to the Township for use as a Township Hall and other community organizations.

In 1959 the Port Authority zeroed in on the “Great Swamp” as the ideal location for a major metropolitan airport. The efforts of Chatham Township and neighboring municipalities in securing property for donation as a wilderness area are now history. The jetport was defeated!

The acceleration of building, coupled with water-consuming household appliances, forced the Township to negotiate a federal grant for the Township sewerage plant and a network of laterals. Contracts were awarded in 1966.

The decline in school enrollment required the abandonment of the Mountainview School. The Township Committee converted the school into the Municipal Building in order to consolidate Township functions, as well as create a Senior Center of the Chathams.

The direct rail service to Midtown New York continues to attract New York executives with the need for ever more elegant housing.

Now we celebrate the 200th birthday of the Township of Chatham. We have come a long way from our humble beginnings.

(Continued from page 1)

lately invented and put in operation for trial a Straw & Stalk Cutter”

March 16, 1906
“The Jerseyman”
National

“Senate protects Arizona from joint statehood—Bill amended for admission of Oklahoma & Indian Territories as the State of Oklahoma.

Government goes after Railroads & Sugar Trust.

State

Bill introduced to establish a state reformatory for women, with the site to be chosen by commission. Females between ages 16 & 20 convicted of crimes to be sentenced to reformatory.

Local

Morris County Board of Freeholders calls upon various municipalities for their portion of road money for roads built in 1898. Chatham Township owes \$18,893.97.

March 14, 1956

“The Daily Record”

International

“US prodding both sides to quit violence upon Cypress: Greeks and Britons prodded to put aside violence and return to negotiating table.”

National News

Nixon polls heavy NH write-in vote: VP’s backing amazing to GOP politicians, Sen. Estes

Kefauver had clear-cut victory for Democratic presidential nomination”

State

“Two big Trenton fires take three lives, 800 children safe; Heroic priest dies, St Mary’s Cathedral and Rectory gutted.”

Local

“Chatham Township addition ready by January” Announced by Township Board of Education at a meeting that the new 4 room addition at the Lafayette Avenue School would be completed and ready for occupancy by 1/1/57.

March 1956

“The Chatham Courier” Police Chief Rustem Bey, submitted his monthly report indicating that five complaints had been received, four dog complaints, two automobile accidents, one on Southern Boulevard, one on Loantaka Way. One Chatham Emergency Squad call and one plane crashed in the town during the past month, with the pilot being fatally injured.

Township Committee Chairman Louis Hinds conducted an open public meeting to propose a new municipal budget. The proposed amount to be collected by taxes will be \$381,081.



**Chatham Township
Historical Society**
to learn more about our history
Visit the Red Brick Schoolhouse Museum
24 Southern Boulevard
Open 1st Sunday-monthly 2-4

For more information & membership please call:
973-635-7156

Sponsorship Ad—
Become part of Chatham Township’s History
List your family or business in the Bicentennial Program Booklet with a personalized message.
Pages will be added through September.
1/8 page 8 lines, 15 characters each line -\$35.
1/4 Page, 8 lines, 40 characters each line—\$100
1/2 page—\$500
Proceeds will fund the Bicentennial Events.

To purchase an ad, contact Marge Gerba at 973-635-3215
Or email at bicentennial@chathamtownship.org

