



Chester Historical Society's *NEWS & VIEWS* November 2023

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Hello CHS Members and Friends, belated Thanksgiving greetings. The November 2023 newsletter is jam-packed with a diversity of articles on little-known and well-known aspects of Chester's history: Tall Tales, Shoddy Mills, and the first 100 years of history of what most of us know as the Publick House and now the PH Steakhouse. Plus a recap of the Annual Meeting, the Lenape Lifeways Program, and the humorous recounting of the Presbyterian Church's early history by Pastor Scrivens. Thank you for helping to keep Chester's history alive!

Tall Tales: The Hill, The Bunker, The Ship in the Meadow by Edward Ng

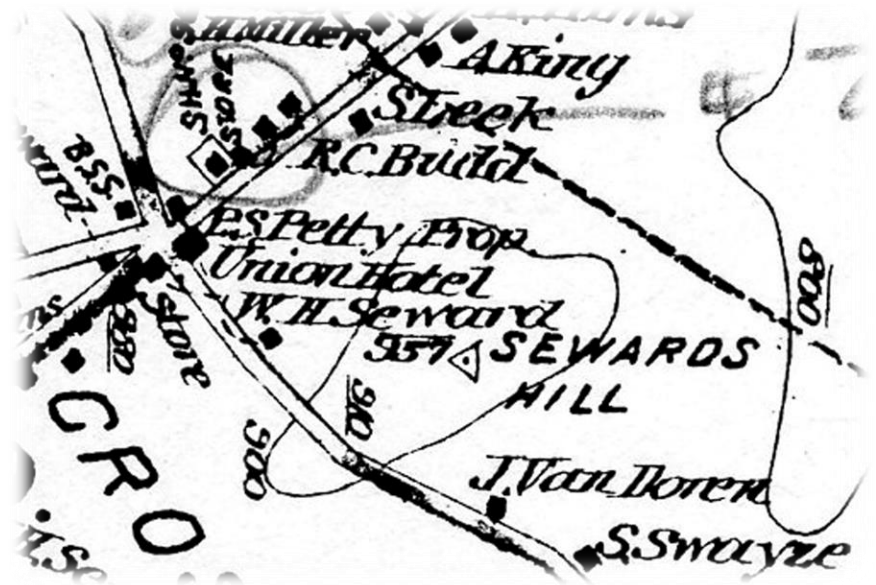


Seward Hill Summit View Looking North on 11-05-2016 by Ed Ng

Seward Hill has been the nexus of a number of Tall Tales. However, these aren't just flights of fancy. Some are misunderstandings. Some have deeper historical roots. Let's dig into them.

Tall Tale Number One: is that Seward Hill is the highest point in Morris County. Seward Hill is located at 40.7870° N, 74.6763°W, in Chester Borough, in the southern part of the New Jersey Highlands physiographic region. Seward Hill is prominent both physically and historically. There are no other nearby hills, it is treeless, so it “sticks out”. Seward Hill’s current elevation is 950 feet which makes it the 24th highest point in Morris County.¹ Seward Hill is the highest point in Chester Borough and the Township. During World War II Civil Defense set up an observation station at the summit. Chester Folks volunteered for station duty to identify potential enemy aircraft so an alert could be made. So, the bottom line is that Seward Hill is not the highest point in Morris County, but the highest in the Chesters.

Tall Tale Number Two: is that Seward Hill is manmade, supposedly by AT&T. The background starts in prehistory, but here are the more recent developments. American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T) was incorporated in 1899. Twenty-six years later, Bell Labs was formed to research and develop improvements in AT&T processes and equipment. In 1928 Bell Labs created the Chester Outdoor Laboratory to help test equipment under real-world conditions. Seward Hill was an important factor in the decision because it provided varied exposure and extreme weather conditions. Just right for torturing equipment. In 1929 the telephone pole test plots, the “Pole Farm” was established to help determine the



best way to treat inexpensive wood poles to make them resist decay and last longer. This was one of the many experiments that would be conducted at the Outdoor Laboratory for



the next 50 years. However, the 1887 Robinson’s Atlas of Morris County (image above), shows in this detail that Seward’s Hill was at 957 feet elevation even before AT&T was formed in 1899.

Seward Hill was sculpted more than 200,000 years ago by the Pre-Illinoian Ice sheet which extended further south than Chester. The ice reached a depth of up to 2 miles and wore away the softer stone, leaving Seward Hill. The

¹ “List of Peaks”, LoJ, <https://listsofjohn.com/searchres?c=2050>, Nov. 12, 2023. Note: The site lists “Morris County High Point” at 1395 feet elevation as the highest in Morris County. The coordinates are 41.0198°N, 74.5757°W. The next highest is Bowling Green Mountain at 1390 feet and is located at 41.0077°N, 74.5498°W.

Wisconsinan (~11,000 years ago) and Illinoian (~130,000 years ago) ice sheets didn't extend as far south as Seward Hill.² An artist's rendition of an ice sheet and a glacial lake with mammoths and giant caribou shows how the ice sheets may have looked (image pg. 2).

The bottom line is that Seward Hill is not manmade but carved out of the bedrock by glacial activity more than 200,000 years ago. Tall Tale number 2 is false.

Tall Tale number three: is more of a mystery. Folks have noticed what looks like a concrete bunker carved into the north side of Seward Hill. A blue door barred entry. What is behind the door? Here is a picture of the bunker in the hillside that I took on June 20, 2023.

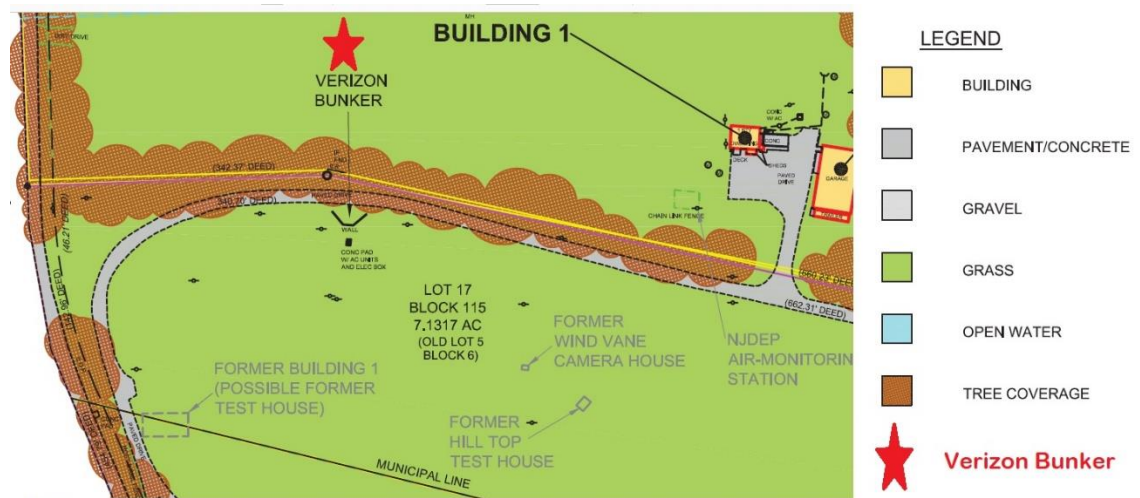


What's behind the door? A bomb shelter? A tunnel to another AT&T facility? A research laboratory for experiments that required earthen shielding?

To figure out an answer some historical information is useful. American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T) was founded in 1899. In 1925, Bell Labs was created to provide research and development capabilities. In 1928, Bell Labs set up

the Chester Outdoor Laboratory to field test their products. The next year the Chester telephone pole test site was inaugurated. AT&T, Bell Labs, and the Chester Outdoor Lab grew for the next 50 years. But in the early 1980s, the unthinkable happened – the AT&T telecommunications monopoly agreed to be broken up. During 1982-1984 AT&T spun off 7 regional 'Baby Bells'. In 1984 part of Bell Labs was also divested to create Bellcore to do R&D under the guidance of the Baby Bells. In 1996 Bell Labs became Lucent Technologies. In 1999 Bellcore became

Telcordia. In 2004 Chester Township purchased 113 acres that Telcordia owned in Chester. In 2008 Chester Borough bought the 64 acres of land that Lucent owned in Chester. In 2018 Chester Borough created Seward Hill Preserve from 40 of



Facility Site Plan from 2009 Kleinfelder Inc. Preliminary Assessment Report 50 North Rd.

² John Puffer, "The Pleistocene (Ice Age) of Chester, New Jersey", *Chester Historical Society News & Views Nov. 2021*, 5-8.

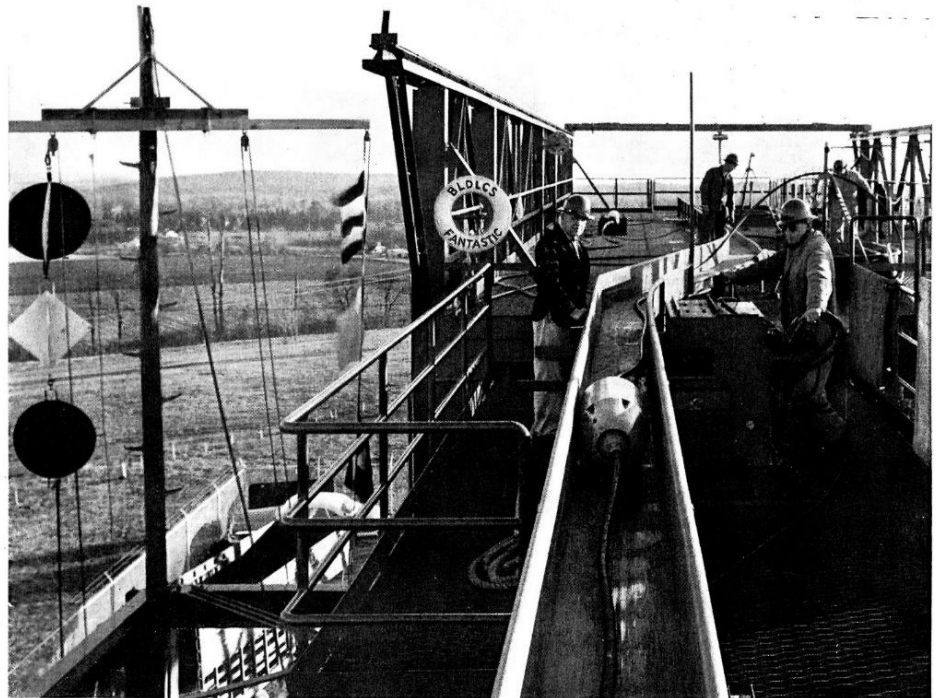
the 64 acres they bought from Lucent.

Before the Borough purchased their 64 acres, from Lucent, a Preliminary Assessment Report (PAR) by Kleinfelder Inc. was done to ascertain the conditions of the property. The Facility Site Plan Map (page 3) from the PAR shows a "Verizon Bunker" at the location. The notation on the map identifies the U-shaped structure as a "WALL". To the south of the WALL, there is a notation: "Conc. Pad W/ AC Units and ELEC BOX". The PAR provides further information. The date of construction of the Verizon Bunker was unknown. It was leased to NYNEX in 1987. NYNEX was one of the regional Baby Bells spun off from AT&T. The PAR also noted the Bunker was currently being leased to Verizon in 2009. There was no information about its use.



On November 1, 2012, while hiking across Seward Hill, I noticed the Bunker door was open. I looked in and took the image above right. The view inside the Bunker showed a sparsely finished room. No secret tunnel, no array of electronic equipment, and no ongoing research. Bell Labs and Verizon may have been testing cellular communications, but we don't know as far as I could tell. So, the Bottom Line is that the Bunker remains a mystery, but it is not the entrance to a tunnel or bomb shelter.

The fourth Tall Tale: is that a 200-foot long, 50-foot high ship was once moored to Seward Hill which is 28 miles from the nearest seawater. The background is that in the 1950's AT&T wanted to upgrade their undersea cables. The old cables could not keep up with the increasing communications traffic. New cables were designed. Whereas the old cables had relatively narrow and flexible repeaters or amplifiers, the new cables had metal-encased, rigid, repeaters that were three feet long and one foot wide. The previous system for laying undersea cables could not handle the new, larger, rigid repeaters.



Engineers study section of cable containing dummy amplifier being payed out. Inscription on life preserver stands for "Bell Laboratories Dry Land Cable Ship Fantastic."

Rather than try to engineer and test a new system to deploy the cable on an existing cable ship, AT&T decided it would be faster, cheaper, and easier to study the problem under controlled conditions – on land. A mock-up of a cable ship with cable tanks and working decks of an actual cable ship was built and anchored to the northern slope of

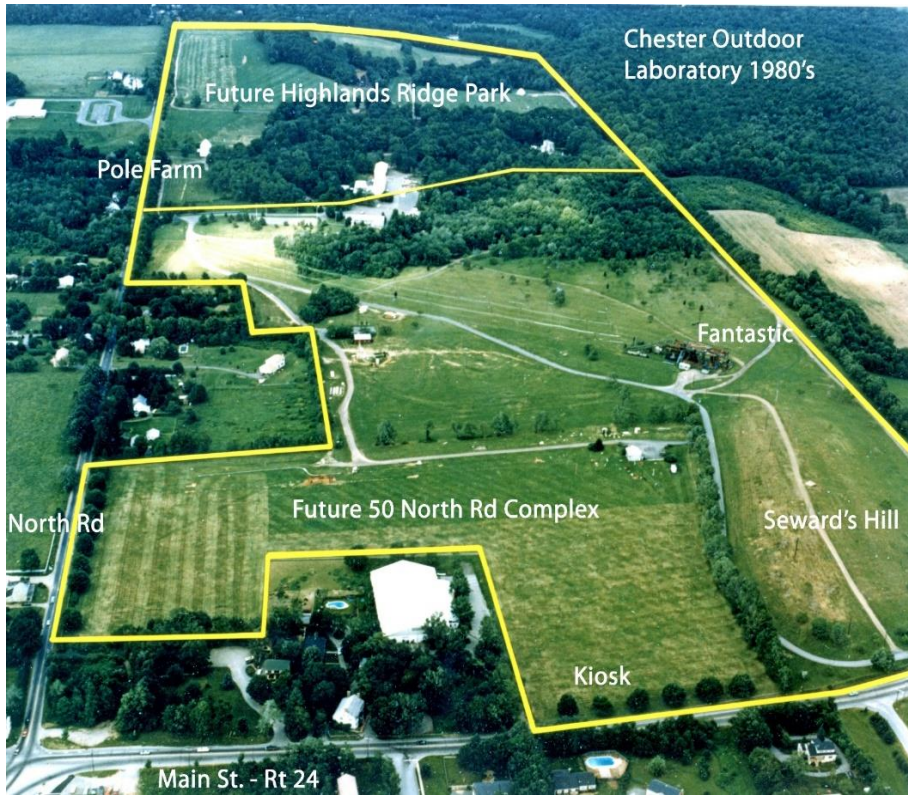
Seward Hill. The ship was the *Bell Labs Dry Land Cable Ship (BLDLC) Fantastic*, commissioned in 1959. The image on page 4 shows the Bell Labs engineers observing the cable with a dummy repeater being played out³. The *Fantastic* was 200 feet long and 50 feet tall. The “see-through” skeleton of the *Fantastic*, allowed engineers to observe and film the cable-laying process (see image right).⁴



The At&T Holmdel Art Studio Created the illustration of the *Fantastic* and a future cable ship in action. Starting in the upper left corner and going clockwise: The skeletal BLDLC *Fantastic*, a linear cable engine, the deck of the cable ship deploying the new repeater, a view of the compartment where repeaters are stored, and testing the cables in the Dryland Ocean Simulator facility at Chester.

³ “Come aboard the FANTASTIC”, *Life Magazine.*, Feb. 1, 1960, 67.

⁴ “Queen of the Dry Land Ocean”. *Bell Labs Reporter*, Vol.9, No. 1-2, 1960, 15-17,.



The aerial image of the Chester Outdoor Lab from the 1980s shows the future 113-acre Highlands Ridge Park in Chester Township (top) and the future 64-acre 50 North Road Complex in Chester Borough. The Fantastic can be seen in the meadow and moored to the northern end of Seward Hill on the right side of the photo.

However, this is not the end of the story for the meadow. In 2022 the Chester Borough Environmental & Open Space Committee started a 10-year project to restore the meadow to be attractive to native birds, insects, and fauna.



The NJ Forest Service conducted a controlled burn on Feb. 21, 2022 (upper left and right images). Thirteen acres of the meadow were seeded with native species on Dec. 14, 2022 (lower left image). By August 7, 2023, the meadow was in flower and on its long journey to restoration (lower right image). The Bottom Line is the Tall Tale of the Ship in the Meadow is true. But now wildflowers rather than ships will berth in the meadow. ▣

In Search of Chester's Shoddy Mill: Part One by Zinnia Cheetham

Please Note: All Images in this article were taken by Zinnia Cheetham in January 2023.

My search for the ruins of the last operating mill in Chester began with the cryptic advice to "Follow the River".

While it sounded like the beginning of a mythical quest, these instructions were given to me by Ivins Smith, the passionate, longtime miller of the Cooper Mill in Chester, New Jersey.

Ivins and I had sat down together a few years after his retirement to discuss the Cooper Mill when I was researching the Cooper family. That was when he surprised me by telling me that there had been *another mill* along the stretch of Black River along State Park Road. Unlike the Cooper Mill which would grind grains and corn into flour, the other mill was a "shoddy mill" which was part of the textile industry. The mill would use a machine to turn used fabric, such as wool or cotton from old clothing, into a recycled material to be repurposed. Once the fabric had been shredded and compacted, it created a thick material that could be rolled up for shipment and used for household items such as the batting for quilts, stuffing for mattresses, and various types of clothing. By the time he told me this, I had already hiked the local trails and driven in the area plenty of times, but I had never seen any other mills besides the mill on Hacklebarney Road so I was surprised by his assertion. He added that he'd seen what was left of it himself back in the 1980's, but that I'd have to go looking for them myself now that he was older. He was sure I'd find them, just as long as I followed the river.

I decided to bring along a friend for the search, and we went off the trail into the swampy bramble to look for the ruins. We analyzed every grouping of rocks, looking for any signs of human development along the way. After what felt like an hour, I heard, "Found it!" up ahead. When I caught up, I saw that they were right. There in the center of the river was something clearly man-made, what appeared to be the undershot mill race Ivins had told me about.



A view of the dam where the undershot water wheel would have been located.

While the mill, known as the “Shoddy Mill” for the ‘shoddy’, or shredded cloth, it produced, had been the last operational mill in Chester, New Jersey, it had rapidly disappeared from sight and memory. Historical records at the Morris County Park Commission also inaccurately list the Cooper Mill as the last operating mill in Chester. The Cooper Mill closed in 1913, the same year that the Milltown General Store across the street (now the Old Mill Tavern) was destroyed in a fire. However, early in his career working at the Cooper Mill, Ivins recorded evidence to the contrary, by transcribing an interview with Gladys Dickerson Hunt in 1980 who was one of the last people to live at the Shoddy Mill site. Thanks to his foresight, these records bring the history of milling in Chester closer to the midpoint of the 20th century.



Another man-made stone wall is located downstream of the mill along the river.

The Shoddy Mill was operated by James “Jimmy” Hunt and his family starting in 1916, just three years after the Cooper Mill closed and he operated the mill until about 1940. In the early years, Jimmy Hunt and his wife lived down the road in the small stone house at 16 Parker Road, then they began renting the “little house over the river” beside the Shoddy Mill sometime before 1940. From 1940 to 1947, his son Jimmy, and his daughter-in-law Gladys,



A stone foundation at the Shoddy Mill ruins alongside State Park Road.

lived with them in a small two-story stone home placed between the Black River and the railroad tracks (these tracks have since become part of the Patriots Path trail system) which was accessed by a ‘raised concrete walk from the river’. According to Gladys, the accommodations were rustic. She said that “they carried their water from over under the mill” and got their heat from a wood-burning stove. The home did not have electricity until Jimmy Jr. insisted on having electricity put in the house when he and his wife moved in. The family also had a Sears & Roebucks ready-built garage “up on the road” and a barn with a cow nearby.

The mill itself was located on the Black River, closer to the road. While it was originally designed to be hydro-powered as the water ran below it, Gladys told Ivins that it was powered by gas during her time there. Jimmy Sr. was still producing shoddy from



Stone structures and old metal barrels are still located at the former shoddy mill site.

scrap cotton material and shipping rolls of it from the Muskrat station with the Lackawanna railroad (now near Bernie's Hillside Lounge, 125 Hillside Rd.). The mill was said to be made of stone on the lower level and wood on the upper level. Gladys remembered that the upper level was made of wood since "there was a time when the bees made a nest and that put honey in the wood". Gladys also shared that the mill "looked as if it was ready to fall apart then". This explains why the mill faded so quickly from memory. The home was said to have collapsed shortly after the death of Jimmy Sr. in 1951 and a survey in the 1960s noted that a "stone

heap" was found between the river and the old railroad tracks.

Even those "stone heaps" seem to have rapidly disappeared. We weren't able to find the stone heap where the house had been on the trail side of the river by visiting the site in the present day. Someone with archaeological tools may be able to find them once again, but we only took photos of the site. We also went hiking again on the other side of the river closer to the road, where more ruins were easily located.

After finding the ruins, and learning about the disappearance of the Shoddy Mill, I was curious to get a complete picture of the site. For those who are interested in a longer history of the Shoddy Mill, part two of this article will dive into the history of the various Chester families who built and worked at the Shoddy Mill! ▣



Ruins at the site of the shoddy mill.

The History of 111 Main Street – Part 1 - 1810-1905 by Alison Dahl, Meg Sullivan, Peg Hill, Lois Taylor, Kimberly Guyer, and Ed Ng

One of Chester, New Jersey's most important historic buildings is the brick structure on the corner of Main Street and Hillside Road in the heart of Chester Borough, 111 Main St. What follows is a brief history of this edifice, from the time it was planned as an inn and tavern in 1810, through its metamorphosis of restorations, ownership, and uses.

In May 1810, Isaiah (1760-1846) and Mehitable Fairclo sold land to Jacob Drake, Jr. at what is now 111 Main Street in Chester Borough, Morris County, New Jersey - for \$945.⁵ Jacob Drake, Jr., a local innkeeper, built a 3-story, 50' x 35.5' brick building on the site as a public accommodation and called it the Chester House Inn.⁶ Construction was probably completed in 1812.



“It was more elegant than earlier taverns, with rather fine mantels carved, it is said, by an itinerant craftsman for his board and lodging. The mahogany bar in the present cocktail lounge was in the original barroom which was entered from Hillside Road where the motel [sic] rooms now are.”⁷ The Chester House Inn is a fine example of New Jersey Federal-style architecture; especially when considering the building was constructed as a public building. The Inn is typical Federal Period rectangular form, except for the uncommon third floor which is compensated by the somewhat larger proportions otherwise.⁸

The fireplace mantels are exceptionally fine carved pieces. They are of the typical Adamesque style with rosettes, sunbursts, ellipses, and diamonds in the patterns. A local (Chester) craftsman named Schuyler probably did the carving for them as well as other work in the Inn...”⁹

⁵ Morris County Hall of Records: Mortgage G-231, May 12, 1810, \$945

⁶ National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form “Chester House Inn” 7/18/1974

⁷ Frances Greenidge, *Chester, New Jersey - A Scrapbook of History*, (Chester Historical Society, 1974), 44.

⁸ National Register of Historic Places Inventory, 5.

⁹ National Register of Historic Places Inventory, 3



**Front Living Room Mantel Detail - 1937
Historic American Buildings Survey**

A small group of men likely produced the more elaborate examples (of wooden carved chimneypieces. One of them must have been a certain Mr. Schuyler of Chester whose work does not seem to have been identified as yet in his hometown.¹⁰

In 1814, Drake's son Zephaniah Drake (1788-1836) purchased a half interest in the property for \$3500¹¹ and became the innkeeper at 24 years old. Zephaniah was also the proprietor of a stagecoach service that traveled the Washington Turnpike, now Route 24, running from Jersey City NJ to Easton PA. According to Frances Greenidge, "The coaches, in keeping with the elegance of the hotel, were gorgeous. They were painted scarlet with gold trimming, and were drawn by four horses." The hotel was "a favorite stop for refreshment and change of horses" and the place to purchase stagecoach tickets.¹² The stagecoaches also carried mail to Chester from Morristown and Easton.

The Drakes and other investors owned the property until 1821, then sold it back to Isaiah Fairclo for \$6000.¹³ Fairclo owned and operated it as the Chester Hotel for several years thereafter. According to research by historian Carmen Smith, "There is an advertisement in the Palladium of Liberty, Thursday, April 18, 1822, in which Daniel Woodruff informed the public that he had taken the Chester Hotel and furnished it for public accommodation, which suggests that the owner [Fairclo] did not manage the hotel himself."

In 1833, Isaiah and Sophia Fairclo sold the property to John J. and Elizabeth Cooper for \$3000, extending investment opportunity to James W. Todd in 1836 for \$3600 and William J. Dunn of New York in 1839 for \$7000. Unfortunately, both Todd and Dunn underwent foreclosure for these amounts, respectively, and the property was transferred back to John J. and Elizabeth Cooper on Jan. 21, 1841. On that same date, the brick hotel and 7.5 acres were sold by the Coopers to John Drake (1796-1854), brother of Zephaniah Drake, for \$3600.

Between 1820 and 1850 prosperity in Chester declined, partially evidenced by frequent owners of the property during that period. The Morris Canal and the railroads were the prime cause of this decline. These new and improved forms of transportation completely bypassed the village of Chester and travelers and freight became less common.¹⁴

¹⁰ The Mendham Township Committee, Brookside NJ, *The Mendhams*, 1964, 151.

¹¹ Morris County Hall of Records, D-2-58, November 13, 1814

¹² Greenidge, 45.

¹³ Morris County Hall of Records: L-2-12, March 10, 1821

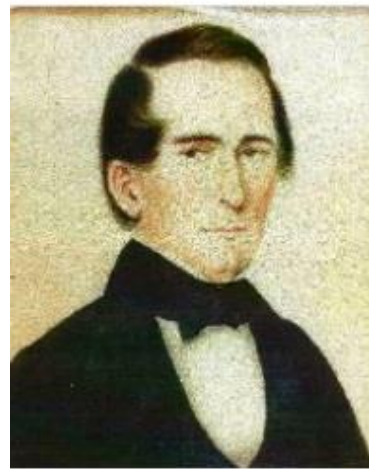
¹⁴ National Register of Historic Places Inventory, 3.

Probably as a result of the infeasibility of continuing to operate the tavern and lodge at a profit, it was again sold, in 1854, by John and Mary Drake to Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Budd who, on the same day, sold part of the property to William (1799-1876)

and Lydia D. Rankin (1814-1902) for \$2300.¹⁵ Daniel Budd... purchased the property

"...perhaps with a fine new school in mind – for "through the instrumentality of Daniel Budd, Spafford Dickerson, and the Rev. Luke Stoutenburgh, the renowned William Rankin came in 1854 from Deckertown (now Sussex,

NJ) to conduct the famous Chester Institute. Rankin started his school in the present French restaurant (also owned by Daniel Budd which in 2023 is Riposta Cassidy LLC, Counselors at Law at 98 Main St.), perhaps while waiting for the hotel to be enlarged and made ready.¹⁶



William and Lydia Rankin

The Rankins made big changes in 1854 when they bought the two tracts: the tavern lot of 1.8 acres and 2.39 acres adjacent. They added two wings to the brick hotel, which included classrooms and dormitories. It became The Chester Institute.

A one-time pupil of The Chester Institute told a Chester audience: I remember well when I first came to this old town, I rode over from Roxbury on horseback...and met for the first time, William Rankin, the principal of The Chester Institute. He was one of the greatest educators in this country...he founded the Institute in virtue, piety, and sound learning...I remember how the pupils used to ramble in the yard of this old (Congregational) church... The Institute "gave the village an atmosphere of culture."¹⁷

An 1859 advertisement for the Chester Institute glowingly noted: *This school is located ten miles per daily stage, west of Morristown. Its situation is noted for healthfulness, picturesqueness and delightful scenery. The Village of Chester, thinly scattered over a considerable extent of country, affords a safe retreat for the growth of intelligence and virtue in the youthful mind. It is sufficiently distant from railroads to avoid contact with the rubbish of immorality too apt to be drifted into country places by those thoroughfares. And parents will find more than a compensation for passing a few miles, per stage, over pleasant hill and dale with their children to reach this point of seclusion from temptation.*¹⁸

In 1854 William Rankin...purchased and enlarged the brick hotel and established a classical school. This school was liberally patronized by the surrounding community...Mr Rankin was an enthusiastic and successful teacher. While in Chester he had under his instruction nearly 500 scholars. He prepared 76 students for college and 150 for teachers. Fifty of his students

¹⁵ Morris County Hall of Records: M-3-427; U-2-228; W-3-486; W-3-489; D-5-228; B-6-568

¹⁶ Greenidge, 64

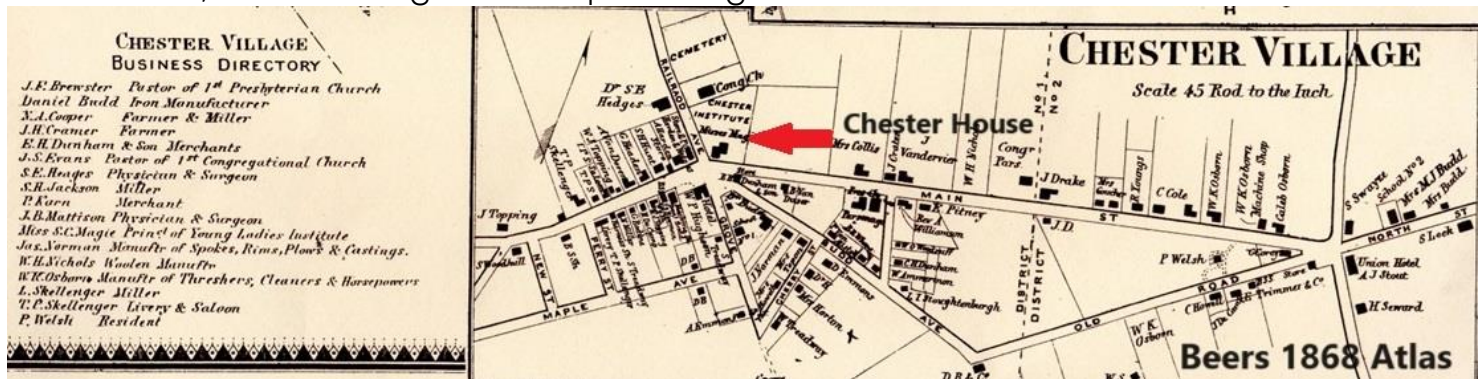
¹⁷ Greenidge, 64

¹⁸ Greenidge, 64

had become clergymen (two of whom were foreign missionaries), thirty lawyers, and twelve physicians. He probably taught more than 2000 youth in New Jersey.¹⁹

In 1856, a half acre was conveyed by the Rankins to their neighbor, the First Congregational Church of Chester. The Rankins also retained a plot of land as their private family cemetery - its location is undetermined. Sadly, the Rankins suffered the loss of two daughters – Mary Ellen Rankin, age 5, in 1856, and Lydia Jane, age 3, in 1857 – both died of illness. In the spring of 1862, the Rankins sold The Chester Institute to Daniel Budd (1809-1873) for \$6300.

From the Beers 1868 Atlas, we find that Chester could now boast two hotels - the Union Hotel at the Crossroads and P. W. Hughson's Chester Hotel at Main and Grove Streets...and one private school – Miss Magie's Chester Institute for Young Ladies. The Business Directory humbly lists Daniel Budd as "Iron Manufacturer", T.P. (Theodore Perry) Skellenger as "Livery and Saloon", and S.C. Magi as "Principal Young Ladies Institute".



Daniel Budd...a liberal supporter of the church and public enterprises...erected many buildings for manufacturing purposes and took the warmest interest in the cause of education.²⁰ Following the discovery of an iron ore vein along Main St., Daniel Budd decided in 1869 there were too many rough mining men loitering near the school for the good of the young ladies, so he built a stone 26-room house on what is now Seminary Avenue in which to relocate the school, and his family. He reconverted the old Chester Institute back into a hotel, renaming it the Chester Hotel.

The real estate market must have been red hot because in 1870 Daniel and Mary K. Budd (1818-1907) sold the property to Theodore Perry Skellenger (1826-1899) - the Budds held the \$17,000 mortgage.

George Dufford related a childhood memory, traveling from Middle Valley to Morristown with a wagon full of oats, corn, poultry, or pork at 4 AM: *I can still hear the screech of sled runners on the single-tracked snow-shoveled road, or if bare ground – can still hear the rumble of the big farm wagons as they crawled slowly towards Chester. To make the Crossroads (now the intersection of Main St., North Rd., and Oakdale Rd.) by sunrise was our objective, where teams were given a short rest, after which the downhill haul was usually made with horses at a trot. If light twinkled in the big brick Chester House...a stop was made*

¹⁹ W.W.Munsell *History of Morris County, New Jersey*, (W.W.Munsell & Co., New York), 1882, 214

²⁰ Munsell, 216

there where teams rested and drivers fortified inner man with libations tending to raise the normal temperature several degrees and seemed to shorten the long cold trip ahead.²¹

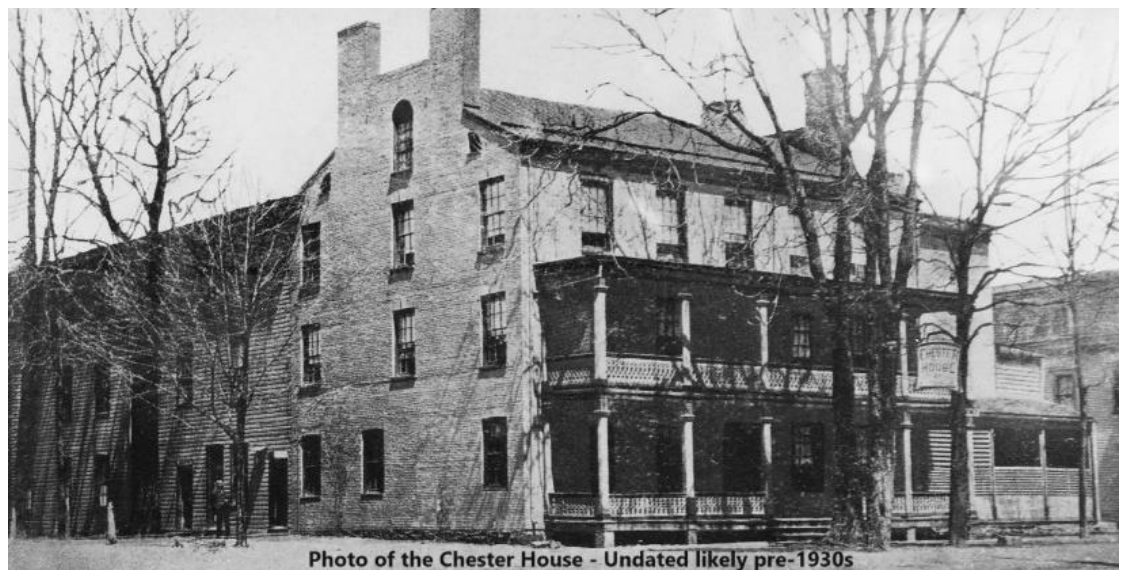
Of note, 1876 was America's Centennial year and celebrations were held throughout the land, including Chester. The Morris Republican reported: *On July 3rd, at midnight: The New Year of the nation was ushered in amidst the firing of cannon, giant powder, crackers, etc. And church bells were rung and whistles of engines blown and young Chester for once forgot to go to bed and became hoarse with shouting...at five in the morning all the stores were open, flags flying everywhere, and a hearty breakfast awaiting...at the Chester House...Every house was decorated. Quite a display of flags of all nations was made in front of the W. Osborne's (407 E Main St).*²²

According to research by Carmen Smith, Theodore and Harriet Skellenger (1833-1899) sold the building with the mortgage to their daughter and her husband, Mary H. (1853-1906) and Franklin P. Eldred, in 1875.²³ In 1878, Mary K. Budd, who survived her husband Daniel, received the property through foreclosure²⁴. Mary K. Budd retained ownership for 27 years until 1905 when she conveyed it to her son and his wife, Joseph D. and Jennie N. Budd.

Throughout its history, the building served as an inn except for eight years, between 1854 and 1862, when it was a school, The Chester Institute. Originally named the Chester House Inn, the establishment was known as the Chester Hotel, the Chester Institute, the Chester House, the Brick Tavern, the Publick House, and most recently, the PH Steakhouse.

It is interesting to note that many people prominent in Chester history have owned the inn for remarkably long stretches, including the Drake Family (24 years), Isaiah and Mehitable Fairclo (12 years), William and Lydia Rankin (8 years as The Chester Institute), the Budd Family (51 years), and more recently, the Fleming Family (34 years) and Guy Gregg (27 years).

The saga of this brick building will be continued in the May 2024 News & Views Newsletter. Featured will be interior and exterior photos from the Historic American Buildings Survey; nomination to the National Register of Historic Places; a few famous folks and one dead body. ■



²¹ Greenidge, 90.

²² Greenidge, 93.

²³ Morris County Hall of Records, K-9-60, Aug 3, 1875

²⁴ Morris County Hall of Records, B-10-228, July 15, 1878

CHS Annual Meeting – Sep. 30, 2023

The CHS Annual Meeting was held on September 30, 2023, in the Atrium Gallery of the Chester Borough Municipal Offices. The Business Meeting consisted of updates from President Ed Ng, Treasurer Anita Rhodes, Archives Chair Alison Dahl



(see image), and Programs Chair Meg Sullivan. Thanks to the Nominating Committee, Sandy Jacobson, and Peg Hill. Congratulations to Alison Dahl on her election to be Vice President, to Anita Rhodes and Lois Taylor for their re-election to be Treasurer and Corresponding Secretary, respectively, and to Zinnia Cheetham and Peter Maddi on their election to be trustees. After the business meeting, Ed Ng gave a talk on the history of the area, “The Hill, The Bunker, The Ship in the Meadow” with illustrations on the Atrium Gallery wall (see image above). After the program, a fun ice cream social was enjoyed by the members. ▣

Carla Messinger Spoke on Lenape Lifeways – Oct. 4, 2023

On October 4, 2023, the Chester Historical Society hosted Carla Messinger at the Chester Library for her talk on Lenape Lifeways. She brought examples to illustrate the day-to-day life, tools, clothing, gourds, baskets, food, and skins of animals used by the Lenape. Her talk was thought-provoking, fascinating, and educational. ▣



Pastor Chris Scrivens Spoke on the Early History of the Community Presbyterian Church on Nov. 5, 2023

There was good participation by CHS members at Pastor Scrivens' talk on the early history of the Community Presbyterian Church. While standing in the Pleasant Hill Cemetery, not far from the original location of the church, Pastor Chris Scrivens (far left in the image below) humorously retells the story of the founding of the Community Presbyterian Church of Chester, N.J. in 1752. The first church building was lovingly called God's Barn since it had unfinished walls and was very drafty. Pastor Chris' retelling includes references to Paul Bunyan, heretical pastors, George Washington's spies, naughty boys, and many of the challenges that would ring true today. So join Pastor Chris on a windy November day as he recounts the early history of the Community Presbyterian Church. The video is available on the CHS YouTube channel at https://youtu.be/uCxCJIUez_8. You can also scan the QR Code on your smartphone to view. 📱



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Mystery Library Sculpture – Please help us identify it.

The Chester Library is asking the public to help identify this sculpture next to the Library. Leave a message at 908 866-6717 or email us at chester.historical.society@gmail.com if you have any information. 📱

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If you would like to join CHS or if you have stories or pictures to share, please talk to a Board member or contact us at (908) 866-6717 or chester.historical.society@gmail.com, or CHS Box 376 Chester NJ 07930. Membership info and a downloadable membership form are available at <http://historicchesternj.com/home/membership.html>.

Join and help keep Chester's History Alive to Enrich Our Lives!