October 2025

Chatham Historical Society Newsletter

CHS Scholarship Winner

CHS Scholarship Winner: Isabella Li
By Marianne Ivers

The Chatham Historical Society 2025 Margaret Keisler scholarship was awarded to Isabella Li.

The $1500 scholarship, presented at the commencement exercises of Chatham High School, is named in memory of "Peg" Keisler, a lifelong resident of Chatham who was the Borough's historian and dedicated educator. It is through the generosity of members and friends that make this scholarship possible.

As part of the scholarship process, students were asked to share their own stories about growing up in Chatham. The Historical Society received 15 essays all with a different focus.

In her essay, Isabella reflects her childhood as "a nomad" until her family settled in Chatham. She explained how she had not had a chance to cultivate friendships as her family moved often. However, she was determined to find a friend in Chatham.

Isabella and Laura met in a school bus and became friends almost instantly as they shared like interests in reading. Both girls were enrolled in individual learning programs and they were often in the same special education classes.

She noted that one of their most visited places was the Library of the Chathams where they spent countless hours reading and playing chess in a peaceful and quiet environment. Another of their favorite places in Chatham was the Esterney Field playground.

Laura inspired and helped Isabella get through challenges in school and in her personal life. Isabella explained that she will be eternally grateful to Chatham where she found herself and a lifelong friend.

"Now that I am going to graduate and leave the comfort of Chatham, I will always carry with me the memories of pure love and friendship I have from this special place," she wrote in her essay.

In this newsletter you can expect:

Historical Society 2025 Scholarship winner

Halloween event by Kevin Woyce

Jack's Playground dedication

CHS Holiday Party: Save the date!

Holiday Happenings at the Gazebo

250th Anniversary Committee

Jack's Playground

Jack's Playground at Shepard Kollock Park was dedicated during a lovely ceremony in June. This dedication marked a significant moment in Chatham's commitment to acknowledge its full history-- both its triumphs and its tragedies – and honoring the lives of those who were too long left out of the narrative.

Shepard Kollock, renowned as a Revolutionary War Hero, was also an enslaver and promoted the trafficking of Black Americans. We name this playground for Jack, a child he enslaved, to recognize our fuller history, and those enslaved people whose contributions to American independence in New Jersey have not been heralded. May the laughter of children playing here now honor Jack and the freedoms he never knew.
June 2025

Events

By Marianne Ivers

The Chatham Historical Society will host a free presentation on the history of Halloween at 3 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 26 in the Lundt Room of the Library of the Chathams, 214 Main Street.

Presenter Kevin Woyce will explain the strange history of Halloween – from Old World harvest festivals to a modern family holiday.

Discover the origins of seasonal traditions, including jack-o'lanterns and trick or treating, as well as revisit Orson Wells' 1928 "War of the Worlds" radio broadcast and the first monster movies. He will illustrate these spooky tales with original photographs, antique Halloween cards, historic images and classic movie posters.

Woyce is the author of several books, a photographer and musician, specializing in regional American history.

Holiday Happenings at the Gazebo

Chatham Historical Society will provide hot chocolate on
Fri., Dec. 5 from 5 p.m.-7 p.m. for the annual event when
Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus arrive at Reasoner Park

To help us commemorate the birth of our great nation, please consider joining the Historical Society's 250th Anniversary Committee to plan our celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. As we approach this significant milestone, we are hoping to create an unforgettable celebration that honors our rich heritage and looks forward to a promising future.

Whether you're passionate about history, arts, community engagement, or logistics, your ideas and talents will be invaluable in helping us shape this once-in-a-lifetime celebration! Together, we can make this anniversary a fitting tribute to our shared journey and future aspirations.

Please email chathamnjhistory@gmail.com to let us you know that you would like to join us. The first meeting is Mon., Oct. 27 at 7 p.m. in the Benigno Room downstairs at The Library of the Chathams.

We hope to see you there!