

CHATHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

A Well Deserved Thank You to our Past President



The Chatham Historical Society wants to thank our departing President, Helen Ann Rosenfeld, for her many contributions to the Society. In 2010, Helen Ann was encouraged to join the Society because of her love of Victorian architecture and was made chair of House History. She was elected as President in 2015.

During her time serving on the board, Helen Ann's extensive research of homes led to unearthing many unknown facts about Chatham's growth, its residents and its architecture. This knowledge led to the creation of multiple programs which included "Chatham and the Great War," "George McDougal Retrospective," "Sights & People of Fairmount

Avenue," "Along the Tracks" and "When Did that Happen?" She spent many hours on discovery, creating and organizing of historic facts and then presentation of the programs, sometimes collaborating with past President Jackie Pindak.

Her background in design transformed the look of the CHS and can be seen in newsletters, website design, and logos including the History & Hops logos she created as a committee member for this popular event.

Her collaboration with the Borough of Chatham allowed us to be an integral part of many town celebrations which included the 2014 Train Centennial, the 2015 Tri-Centennial, Hot Chocolate with Santa and the upcoming unveiling of Shepard Kollock Park. When our lives return to normal, you can see the Historic Timeline of Chatham in Chatham's Borough Hall, also created by Helen Ann.

All of us on the Board of the Chatham Historical Society want to thank Helen Ann Rosenfeld for her leadership, the historic facts she shared with the society and her fulfillment of our Mission Statement, "dedication to discovering and sharing of the rich history of Chatham Borough, New Jersey." Thank you! We wish you the best!

Health and Safety First

The continuing concern about gathering safely has led us to decide not to host our Annual Holiday Party this year. This event has been a longstanding tradition of the society, and year after year we have enjoyed celebrating the joy of the season by sharing festive food and libations with our members. We are hopeful that we will celebrate in 2021 together once more.

In lieu of the celebration, the society has created a holiday keepsake for your tree. Please keep an eye out for the holiday greeting to arrive in your mailboxes. We wish you a happy, safe and healthy holiday season!



Photo: Centennial Clock and Gazebo in downtown Chatham Borough decorated for the Holidays

CHS Hosts Architecture Webinar with Janet Foster

As the pandemic continued to shutter the Library of the Chathams to gatherings and programs, we held our first ever Zoom program on Sunday, November 15th.

We were most fortunate to have **Janet Foster** as our speaker. Her program was entitled **“The Future in the Past: 20th Century Suburban Architecture focused on Chatham, NJ.”** Janet is a well-recognized local architectural historian, preservationist, and author who has served on many boards and commissions protecting the historical architecture of our state.

Over 70 guests logged on to hear and see Janet’s educational and inspirational program. She focused on how once rural areas in Chatham quickly evolved into diverse suburban communities. We learned that dwellings 50 years or older are now considered “historic,” and we were enlightened as to how Chatham modernized from 1900 to 1970.

We visited the turn of the century, a time when residents were imagining what the modern future would bring. For example, Gustav Stickley introduced an innovative yet simple design for housing and furniture. A visit to Craftsman Farms, his home in Parsippany, is a perfect example of “Lifestyle in Harmony with Nature.” His magazine illustrated “visions of what the future would hold.” Stickley’s plans initiated the emergence of “kit” or mail order homes which quickly became a suburban phenomenon, referred to as the “bungalow.” Many companies quickly followed suit. All construction supplies for a home would arrive in a train car – plan specs, wood, bricks, hardware, plumbing, electrical, even paint and wallpaper.

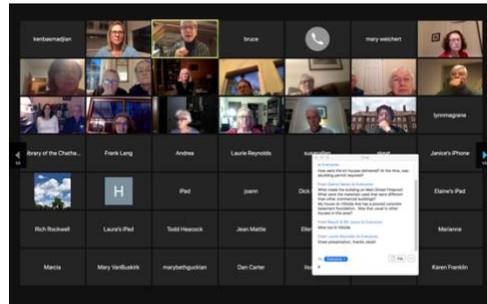
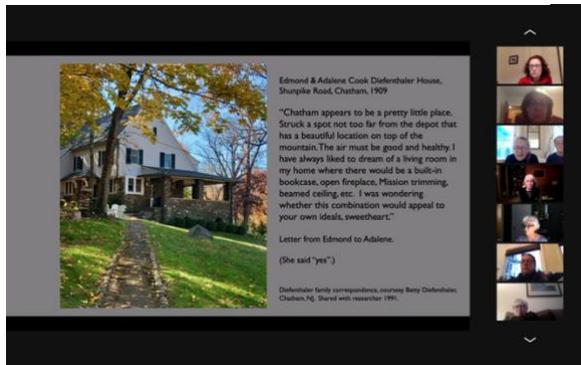
Janet elaborated on innovative housing plans such as Frank Lloyd Wright’s “Prairie House,” and the “Four-Square” which was very popular in Chatham

during the 1930’s – at the time considered to be modern, even futuristic. The 1920’s and ’30s also brought about a “colonial revival,” in popular kit homes, a perfect melding of both the colonial and bungalow designs, in a traditional and modern style.

Janet showed us several examples of Tudor Revival homes in Chatham, detailed to look older than their 1930’s construction. She touched on the clean lines of Mission Revival as a true statement of Modernity in the 20th Century. We learned about an ill-fated trend of concrete block homes, and metal and aluminum structures. Janet’s program concluded with our two lovely and unique examples of A-frame churches on Main Street exhibiting a post-war view of what modern churches should look like.

The Chatham Historical Society is most grateful to Janet Foster for preparing such an informative program and to the Library of the Chathams for facilitating our program! Please join us again soon.

Photos bottom left: slide from presentation showing Diefenthaler House on Shunpike Road. Bottom right: Janet Foster presenting our November program. Top right: gallery view of participants enjoying the presentation.



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Remembering Chatham Purple Heart Recipient John Westcott, Jr.

by Susan Allen

Veterans Day was November 11th and is the day designated in the United States to remember those who served our country in the military. While many think of Veterans Day in the context of past wars in which we participated, Veterans Day also recognizes those who represented the U.S. in military activities all over the world, including military actions involving our troops in foreign countries with no formally declared war.

John Westcott, Jr. grew up in Chatham and was the only child of John and Beatrice Westcott. After majoring in Humanities at Princeton, John Jr. taught school before enlisting in the U.S. Army. Commissioned in June of 1942, he traveled to England on the Queen Mary and was sent to North Africa. On January 4th, 1943, Second Lieutenant Westcott and two other men were sent to scout the



Photo: John Westcott, Jr.

location of the German front lines. While what occurred that night was not known at the time, John Westcott perished that evening and his remains were determined to be non-recoverable by the Army.

It was after the end of WWII that John's mother received a letter written by one of the young men who was by John's side on that fateful evening. The letter explained that, due to erroneous information provided prior to his scouting mission, John was killed by Germans, who were unexpectedly present at the time of his expedition. Due to his bravery and valor in sacrificing his life to serve his country, John Westcott, Jr. was subsequently awarded a Purple Heart.

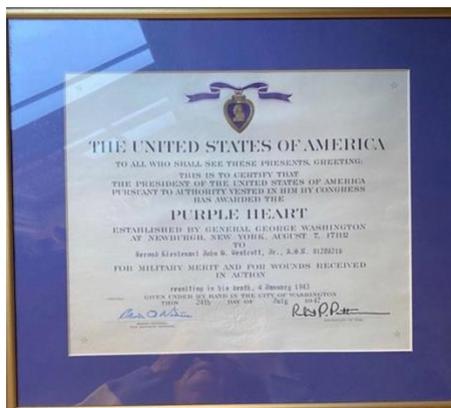
The Purple Heart's origins rest with George Washington, who wished to create a Badge of Military Merit to recognize

meritorious action or bravery. While very few such Badges were actually awarded for the Revolutionary War, an idea was born.

Military medals require official sanction by Congress, and in 1927 a bill was presented to revive the Badge of Military Merit. While this bill was later withdrawn, General Douglas MacArthur renewed an effort to restore the awarding of the Badge of Military Merit in 1931. A new design for the award was developed by "heraldic" specialist Elizabeth Will, representing the Purple Heart we know today. On February 22nd, 1932, the 200th anniversary of George Washington's birth, the awarding of this medal was officially revived in remembrance of Washington and his military achievements in leading our country.

The Westcott Family Trust, which originally held John's Purple Heart, two certificates of recognition (one signed by President Truman), and the young soldier's letter ultimately gave the materials to the Stanley Congregational Church of Christ for care and safekeeping. The pending dissolution of the church led them to pass these historical artifacts to the Chatham Historical Society.

The Chatham Historical Society is honored to be entrusted with such important historical information and documents telling the story of Chatham residents.



Photos Left column: purple heart medal. Middle column: John D. Westcott, Jr.'s official Purple Heart citation. Letter from President Truman thanking John for his service.

Happy Holiday Memories from Past Parties



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