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# CHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## 93-year-old Chester Clock Given New Life



The clock in the Chester Elementary School was restored this past October, 93 years to the month when it was first installed. The clock itself is a testament to the hard work and perseverance of a 13 year old Chester schoolgirl, Geneva Burleigh. When the school was completed in 1908 it did not contain a clock but there was soon talk of adding one. A Chester Chronicle article written at the time made the case.

“The new school building as it stands is a credit to the town and its enterprise, but every one will agree that when a clock is added, its value will be greatly increased, just as the beauty of a common wooden pole is enhanced when “Old

Glory” is attached to the top.”

One student of the school, Geneva Burleigh, decided to take the task of raising the necessary funds upon herself and she very quickly had a long list of local donors. Again from the Chester Chronicle:

“An effort is being made to place a chime clock on the new school house and Miss Geneva Burleigh has been circulating a subscription paper this week to raise the money to buy one. A clock such as would be suitable for the building would cost in the vicinity of \$300.00. Miss Burleigh has met with a very enthusiastic response in her effort to secure money for the clock. Upward of \$100.00 has already been secured, making quite a nice amount for a young lady to raise. Miss Burleigh is entitled to praise for her success.”

Many out of town and former residents also



Geneva Burleigh

contributed to the fund and Geneva eventually raised \$345.00. The clock was purchased from the Howard Clock Company of Boston and installed with local labor. On October 23 1909, Geneva started the clock going as reported in the Chester Chronicle that week.

“The new clock was installed on the schoolhouse last week and on Saturday at 12 o’clock Miss Geneva Burleigh, who raised the money for the clock, started it going. The clock has a bell which when it strikes can be heard for a long distance. Miss Burleigh is certainly entitled to the thanks of the community for the new clock.”

The breakdown of the cost of the clock was as follows:

E. Howard Company	\$330.00
Springfield Lumber Co.	\$4.58
F. W. Quigley	\$6.10
Frank Curtis, lumber	\$3.56
D. M. Hallock	\$1.00

The recent restoration was initiated by Dominic Piergiovanni and Tino Cardarelli and was done by clocksmiths Ed Schmidt and Milton North, of Lee. In addition to the workings of the clock, one item that the clocksmiths carefully restored was the copper plate attached to the base, bearing the inscription:

*“A gift to the Town of Chester by public subscriptions raised by the unaided efforts of Geneva Burleigh, thirteen years old. A pupil of this school. October 1909”*

With the clock restored to it’s original condition, another generation of Chester residents will benefit from Geneva Burleighs perseverance.

NOTE: Funds are still needed to pay for the recent restoration (which totaled \$900.00) and ongoing maintenance. If you would like to contribute to this cause please send your donation to:

Chester Clock Fund  
c/o Chester Municipal Electric  
15 Middlefield Street  
Chester, MA 01011

## “The Mystery of the Old Mine”

Gertrude Rintala Whitcher, who grew up in Chester and taught for many years in the Chester Elementary School has written a mystery for children which features sites in Chester, including one of the old emery mines in town. Gertrude says that although the

locations in the story are real, the story itself is fictional.

The Historical Society has published the book and it is now available for purchase, see page 3 for details.

Are you a member of the Chester Historical Society? Join today for \$5.00 annual dues or a lifetime membership for \$25.00.

Use this form to purchase the following items available from the Chester Historical Society:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Price</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Qty</b>	<b>Total</b>
"Chester Folks - The Founders of the Town, Their Ancestors and Descendants" by William Mills	\$18.00			
"Memories of the Boston and Albany Railroad" by Norvel Parker	\$15.00			
"Gravestone Inscriptions for Chester" by Francis O'Leary	\$18.00			
"Gravestone Inscriptions for Huntington" by Francis O'Leary	\$20.00			
"Gateway District Towns - A Pictorial History"	\$16.99			
"Chester Cookbook" - A reproduction of a 1960's-era Chester PTA cookbook	\$8.50			
"Entering Chester" magnets - A miniature version of the state highway signs	\$1.00			
"The Mystery of the Old Mine" a mystery for children by Gertrude Whitcher	\$10.00			
Chester Historical Society pens	\$1.00			
Chester Tote bags - Over 40 illustrations of Chester scenes	\$15.00			
Chester T-Shirts - Over 40 illustrations of Chester scenes (S - XXL)	\$10.00			
Chester Sweatshirts - Over 40 illustrations of Chester scenes (S - XXL)	\$20.00			
	Shipping + handling			\$2.00
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>			
Annual Membership in the Chester Historical Society (fully tax deductible)	\$5.00			
Lifetime Membership in the Chester Historical Society (fully tax deductible)	\$25.00			
Additional tax deductible contribution				
	<b>TOTAL</b>			

Make check payable to the "Chester Historical Society" and send to:  
 Chester Historical Society  
 Town Hall  
 15 Middlefield Street  
 Chester, MA 01011

# Upcoming Events

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February 5	9:00am	Monthly meeting of the Chester Historical Society at the Old Jail
March 5	9:00am	Monthly meeting of the Chester Historical Society at the Old Jail
April 2	9:00am	Monthly meeting of the Chester Historical Society at the Old Jail
May 3	7:00pm	Historical Society Penny Social at the Railroad Depot

# Chester Historical Society contacts

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