

**Local Spotlight: Repository Holdings**  
**Jefferson Township Historical Society**  
**315 Dover-Milton Road, Jefferson, New Jersey**  
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*by Carole Flatley & Mary-Jo Solomon*



Jefferson Township is located in the northwest corner of Morris County. It was founded in 1804 and is approximately 45 square miles. The Rockaway River flows through almost the length of the township.; and part of Lake Hopatcong is in the township. So there is a wide variety of opportunities for outdoor recreation. In addition there is the township's early iron forges, mills, and Milton Village which in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century contained stores, homes, shops and churches. While most of the original buildings were altered or replaced, the village is on the state and national historical places and Lake Hopatcong. The population in 1810 was about 1,000 and the 2010 population is about 21,000.

The Jefferson Township Historical Society was established in 1972 with the purpose of preserving and promoting the history of Jefferson Township and to maintain the George Chamberlain House, known as the Jefferson Township Museum, for future generations. The JTHS has hosted many township activities.



Situated on the Russia Brook and beautifully landscaped by the Museum Garden Club, the Chamberlain House is a must see treasure. It is representative of life in the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It is open the first Sunday of each month from 1 pm to 4 pm – April through November. The museum is also open upon request. Each season and holiday finds changes in decorations and many interesting



programs. The JTHS has participated in *The Pathways of History Tours* in October each year. Christine Williams, the JTHS President, took us on the tour of the recently refurbished Chamberlain House, pointing out the lovely Victorian pieces many of which were donated. The society has a unique program of docents who lead tours in period costumes. Carol Keppell, First Vice President, who organized the docent program explained that the costumes are handmade using authentic period patterns. There is a special group of 13-17 year olds who work as junior docents. In December there is a wonderful guided tour through the decorated House and adding a through Miss Elizabeth Shoppe is a treat!

The JTHS archive is housed off site, it contains family histories – Chamberlains, Riggs, Headleys and Davenports, postcard collections and photos of businesses. They also have historic records for churches and businesses. There is a series of videos of recollections by Jefferson Townships long time residents. You can contact the organization at [president@jthistoricalociety.org](mailto:president@jthistoricalociety.org), if you have genealogical questions. One of the officers will answer or direct you request.

The MAGS Indexing Group has done three local books: *The Development of Jefferson Township: A Record of the People, Events and Industry 1700 - 1900\**, *Important Families of Jefferson Township, NJ* and *Jefferson Township on Lake Hopatcong*. You can search for your ancestors in these books via the MAGS Public Website ->Search -> Books->. [\* Note in this book there are over 2,500 names. This was a 1976 project done by Jefferson High School students. It has biographical and genealogical information on the founding families.]

The 1907 book: *A Genealogical Record of the Descendants of Benjamin Chamberlain of Sussex County, New Jersey* by Rev. A.J. Fretz of Milton, N.J. is a treasure found in the local history section of the Jefferson Township Library at 1031 Weldon Road, Jefferson Township. There are additional reference books specific to the local there as well.

The Special Projects Group (SPG) members have been visiting local repositories to learn what genealogy related materials might be available for review by our members in researching their ancestors and/or gaining historical context to enhance their stories. In the series of articles we share the main features of our interviews with repository members spotlighting the information, collections and features available for research at each location. Visit the *Special Projects* page at <https://mags-public.weebly.com/> to read the twelve previous spotlight articles and to view the compiled inventories.

If you know of a local repository that the SPG should visit, or one that you wish to cover with us for a future article, please contact the Special Projects Group Committee at [maryjosolomon@gmail.com](mailto:maryjosolomon@gmail.com)