



A mural depicting the purchase of the land... Mutual Trust Building.



The Byram River.



Early Industry in Port Chester. Post Office mural.

Acknowledgements

After hundreds of hours of research and discussion, the Eagle Project committee realizes it is impossible to document every historical "fact". We have strived to put forth an interesting and fun historical trail.

This Historical Trail has been made possible through the generosity and support from the following groups and individuals:

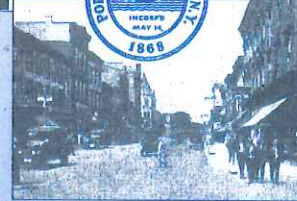
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 Port Chester Kiwanis
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 American Legion Post 93
 Judge John B. Colangelo
 Christine Teter
 Westmore News
 Rye Printing

This Historical Trail is the community service project of Eagle Scout, Danny Macri, Boy Scout Troop 6, Our Lady of Mercy Church, Port Chester, New York



Port Chester

Historical Trail



Historic Port Chester

I would like to welcome you to the Port Chester Historical Trail. This trail is designed to guide you through the significant historical sites that make Port Chester a unique place. The trail commences at Lyon Park and eventually finds its way back. The map on the following page will guide you on your journey through the history of Port Chester. The entire trail requires about three hours to complete. Port Chester truly has an immense history. I hope this Trail will help educate and inspire you to learn more about our town's past.



The first settlers of this area came from England in the 17th century. The land was purchased from a local Indian chief, "Peningo" for only eight coats, seven shirts, and ninety feet of wampum! When King George allowed people to settle here he issued a proclamation that declared the "Township of Rye" belonging to its owners except for the fir and pine trees "to be used for masts for the ships of the Royal Navy." The name "Sawpit" soon became associated with this area. The name is derived from the plank-making procedure of sawing a log laid across an open pit, while the sawyers cut the tree trunk while standing in the pit. During the Revolutionary War, ships from the Royal Navy docked in Port Chester's own harbor for repairs.

The "Rye-Oyster Bay Ferry" was established in 1739 which made trips loaded with farm produce from surrounding areas to Long Island and in return would come back with Imported goods and tools.



It is believed that during the early nineteenth century, like neighboring communities of Rye and Greenwich, Sawpit appropriated a name that still held the historical significance of "Sawpit," but with another English river-to-seacoast port: Chester. From March 11, 1837 to the present, despite the change in ethnicities, our village still holds the name of English origin: Port "Chester."

Over time, Port Chester developed from a farming community to an industrialized society, attracting immigrants from all over the world. Today we have a melting pot of ethnic backgrounds that weave our

village together. Citizens from Port Chester have served in every war since the Revolution.

As you make your way through town, you may wonder how each street got its name. The Boston Post Road was established in 1672 as the oldest toll road in America. North Main Street was a dirt road until 1900 where horse racing was common until the installation of the trolley lines (sometimes still visible through the pavement). During World War II Port Chester suffered the highest casualty rate for any community of its size in the U.S. One small street, Willow Street, in the then Italian section of town lost 8 servicemen. They are known as the "Willow Street Boys."

The Industrial Revolution opened new factories such as the Abendroth Foundry and Russell, Burdall and Ward. Thereafter the roaring 20's brought unprecedented growth to the Village. Up to the 1960's Port Chester was a shopping mecca for the surrounding areas. All stores were open late Thursday and Saturday nights. What was once a shoppers paradise has now become renowned for its wide variety of ethnic restaurants.



I have tried to incorporate as many details of Port Chester's history as possible. Unfortunately, they all could not fit into one pamphlet. More of Port Chester's history is waiting to be explored. As you walk the trail, I hope you sense evidence of history on every street and are challenged to learn more.

A Walk Through Time

1. Bush Lyon Homestead and adjoining Lyon Park

The first stop on our trail, the Bush Lyon Homestead, donated to the Village in 1928 by the Lyon family, along with the adjoining park, was built in the early 18th century. It reputedly served as headquarters to General Putnam in the American Revolution. Abraham Bush, a prominent New York City merchant used this homestead as a summer residence. His son, William, freed his slaves Jack and Harry in 1810 and 1812. The slaves are suspected to have lived in the two shacks opposite the house.

2. North Baptist Church

The first Baptist church was established on King Street (Old Kings Highway back then, named after King George) in 1773 and was used as a hospital for soldiers wounded in the Revolutionary War. Due to an expanding congregation, the present day Church was built in 1924. The beautiful Tiffany windows that you see were salvaged from a Manhattan church and donated by the Lesher family.



3. Summerfield Methodist Church

This first organized congregation of worship was established in 1828. The 2nd church on this site had a steeple that served as a beacon for sailors. The present church was built in 1901 and to many people, it resembles a castle.

4. Summerfield Park

The park now serves as the Spanish-American War Memorial. A war shell from the USS Maine is here because a local man, Newell Rising, served on the ship. The ship was destroyed while in Guantonomo Bay, Cuba. "Remember the Maine" became the battle cry of the war.

10. Post Office

Built in 1934, in the Federal style, the interior is famous for its murals painted as part of FDR's New Deal Works Project Administration. The murals romanticized labor and were considered by some to be inspired by the Communist movement. This building is a national landmark.

11. Our Lady of Mercy Church

Beginning in 1837, missionary priests from Harlem came to Port Chester to minister the spiritual needs of Roman Catholics. The present church, built in 1934, is Romanesque in style and has Runcom red sandstone imported from Scotland.

12. Knights of Columbus

Home to the Fr. John M. Grady Council, #503 since 1919, this fraternal organization supports Port Chester's Catholic churches and local charities.

13. Veterans Memorial

This 15 foot bronze statue before you carries no weapon, but a shield that is emblazoned with an eagle and 13 stars. She cradles the baton of leadership covered with an olive branch. The statue was designed by Thomas Hudson Jones who also designed the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

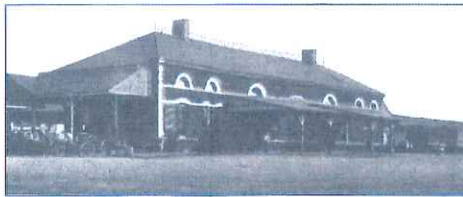


14. Bloomer Hill

William Street, commonly known as "Bloomer Hill," named after General Bloomer, held an encampment of American forces during the Revolutionary War. The hill afforded an excellent view of the entire surrounding area as well as the Long Island Sound. Messages about British movements were relayed to General Washington at his headquarters in White Plains from this area now known as Washington Park.

15. Civil War Monument

This Civil War statue, dedicated in 1900, is the depiction of Colonel Nelson B. Bartram, who served as commander of Company B, New York 17th Infantry. This company was known as the Port Chester 17th and nicknamed the "colligate boys" because of the many volunteers who came over from Byram and East Port Chester. Among them, Nick Fox was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for Valor during the siege of Fort Fisher, Louisiana.



16. Firehouse, South Main Street

This fire station established in 1888 housed the first organized municipal building in town including a courthouse and a jail.

17. Liberty Square

This is the area of our town where three main roads meet. Our Village, originally known as Sawpit, derived its name from lumber mills located in the square. This industry controlled by British law was needed to maintain the Royal Navy. Mustering of troops was held here for all wars until the draft was established. It is called Liberty Square because of a liberty pole erected to fly American banners during the Revolution. The flagpole is now dedicated to John F. Kennedy.



18. Pat's Hubba

Pat's Hubba, originally known as Texas Lunch, is famous for its chili that was reviewed by the New York Times in 1998. Since its establishment, it has had an adverse impact on the digestive system of the citizens of Port Chester.

19. Marina

Fifty years ago, before landfills, the marina came much closer to North Main Street. The marina evolved from a port that carried manufactured goods and raw materials made in Port Chester, to the recreational boat area it is today.

20. First Union

The present bank building stands on the site of the DeSoto House which served as a stage coach stop and inn during the Federal Period. General Lafayette stayed there in 1824.

21. Life Savers

Pleasingly aesthetic, the building combines art deco and Italianate features. The breezes carried the aroma of the "flavor of the day" to all parts of town. The "candy with the hole" carried the name of Port Chester on its wrappers around the world. Today it's home to trendy condos which allow easy commuting to Manhattan.

22. Police Station

For the first two centuries of our police history, part time constables handled law enforcement. Present day Police Headquarters, an art deco building, erected in 1939, now houses our police department and justice court.

23. Sea Captain's House

One of the few Port Chester houses that survived in its original design, was constructed in the Italianate Greek Revival style with a gothic porch and casement windows all around, for John Todd, a prominent sea captain around 1850. Contrary to popular belief, cupolas were not used as widows walks but as ventilation systems.

24. Byram Bridge

The Byram River got its name from the Indians during the 17th century when they came to "buy rum" from the white people. Soon the river took this name. This bridge was the site of a skirmish between the Continental Army and the British Redcoats. It was at this bridge, which you are standing, that the Americans forced the British to retreat to New York City.

5. New Haven Railroad

The New Haven Railroad (now Metro North) was established in 1849, the period of time Port Chester was transforming itself from an agricultural town into an industrial town. The railroad stimulated industry in this area since it connected to a trunk line allowing access to the entire national railroad network. The station now serves as a vital link for commuters to Manhattan.

6. Capitol Theater

Originally a vaudeville playhouse, this Renaissance style theater was built in 1926 by Thomas Lamb who also built the original Madison Square Garden. Now it serves as a concert hall, boxing arena and movie backdrop. During the 1960's and 1970's top rock groups performed here. Among them were The Grateful Dead, Joe Cocker, The Byrds, The Allman Brothers, Chicago, Janis Joplin, and Santana. Recently, MTV aired a David Bowie concert live from this cozy theatre.

7. Simons Building

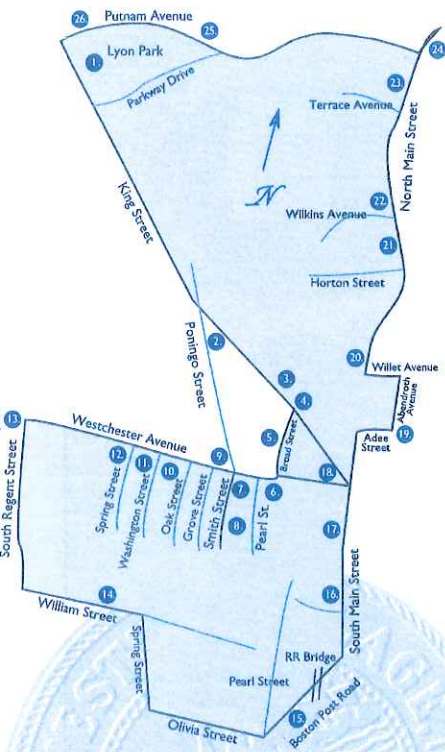
The Simons Building became home to the Fruit of the Loom Company and the first factory in the world to manufacture ready-made bed sheets and pillow cases. During World War II, women made parachutes for the soldiers to sneak behind enemy lines and win the war. Today, the once open factory space, has been turned into corridors filled with artists and manufacturing lofts.

8. St. Francis A.M.E. Zion Methodist Church

Established in 1848. The oldest African American congregation in this area, named for Francis Quintard, a white benefactor. This church served as a rest stop for the underground railroad which assisted runaway slaves on their journey to freedom.

9. Fire Headquarters

Built in Tuscon Villa style, this building now houses paid and volunteer firefighters. In 1823, volunteer companies were formed that replaced private subscription companies. Present day fire headquarters serves as command center for all fire and rescue emergencies in the fire district. Local artifacts are displayed on the second floor.



25. Horse Troughs

This flower pot originally served as a horse drinking trough circa 1850. It is made of one solid piece of local granite. There were four which were centrally located.

26. Welcome back to Lyon Park

On your left, notice the trees that are dedicated to fallen soldiers from World War II and Korea, as well as the Viet Nam Veterans memorial.