

# **Brief History: Town of Chester**

## **Early Settlement**

Some years before the New York Legislature set off the Town of Chester on March 25, 1799, the area was already being considered for expansion. Ideally located between the east and west branches of the Hudson, it was possible to enter the virgin territory by boat, the pioneers' easiest method of transportation.

Much of the wilderness was already familiar to men who had fought in the colonial wars, and some of the families who first moved into the Gore area had already been given colonial grants prior to the revolution. After the revolution, many of the soldiers were given several hundred acres as payment for their services.

Clearing the virgin forest which these pioneers found brought in the first cash crop, and made the land suitable for cultivation. Settlers tried raising sheep to clothe and feed their families. Carding mills and tanneries were developed as the first manufacturing.

## **Nineteenth Century**

After the Civil war the town had grown to two main settlements, Chestertown and Pottersville, with several smaller ones such as Starbuckville, Darrowsville, Igerna and part of Riverside. Roads had been built and stage coaches brought in the mail and visitors. Very early on Chester became a mecca for summer visitors, and hotels and boarding houses sprung up to care for the influx.

With the development of the railroads, and the coming of the automobile the face of the summer business changed to the summer camp and the local hotels. Chester has kept pace with changing trends and now has recreational facilities for its visitors the year around.

## **Modern Times**

The last quarter century has seen significant advances in health, education and recreation facilities. A health center was opened in 1974 as part of the Hudson Headwaters Health Network serving communities throughout the Adirondacks. The Chestertown Emergency Squad moved into new quarters in 1997.

In 1973 Pottersville, Brant Lake and Chestertown created the consolidated North Warren School District; in 1999 the district opened a new central school, including all grades in the same building.

The Town of Chester opened its first public library in 1994, and its immediate success forced a move into new quarters twice the original library's size less than two years later. In that decade the town's landfill was closed, and replaced by a transfer and recycling facility.

Recreational opportunities were expanded by development of cross-country skiing and hiking trails, continued development of park land at Dynamite Hill, including construction of a hockey rink, and a joint effort with the state and and Warren and Essex counties to develop the former Scaroon Manor site along the shores of Schroon Lake.

The new Town Hall, which was formerly the Chestertown Central School, was dedicated as the Chester Municipal Center on July 7, 2001. In 2005 Hudson Headwaters Health Center opened a new facility in Chestertown, and a dedication was held the same year for the new firehouse in Chestertown.

*Compiled by Phyllis Bogle, former Town of Chester Historian. Used by permission of the author.*