

BRICK HOUSE LEGENDS

Contributed by Liz Holle, Chatham Township Historical Society

Two ancient chestnut trees grace the front lawn of a vintage brick house at 49 Center Street, one of the early homes on Kelley's Elbow. An equally ancient slate walkway leads up to the front porch. Another smaller walkway veers off to a small, indented wing on the left-hand side of the house with its own little porch.

An elderly friend of mine, Theodore "Ted" Lindemann, a longtime resident of this house passed away in October 1984. During his family's estate sale, I wandered up to the attic and discovered old cavalry boots and a large key with a tag reading: "Major Theodore Lindemann" which probably unlocked a military footlocker somewhere in his distant past. Mr. Lindemann's life has unfolded to me over the years.

Born in 1900 in Chatham Township, Mr. Lindemann, his parents, and siblings resided at 49 Center Street from 1912 on. He was educated in the Chatham school system. Mr. Lindemann and a long list of other Chatham men were "mustered into service" in August 1917 becoming proud members of Chatham's Company B, 4th Battalion, N.J. State Militia. The N.J. Militia eventually became known as the NJ National Guard. The men of Chatham's Company B underwent intensive military training at Sea Girt, NJ. Faded photographs in the Chatham Historical Society archives show Mr. Lindemann and his fellow Company B soldiers in full, khaki uniform, living out of tents. Mr. Lindemann served as Company B's Supply Sergeant. On the night of October 4, 1918, a series of horrible explosions occurred at the Gillespie Co. Shell Loading Plant in Sayreville NJ. Martial law was declared. Company B was called on to help with rescue efforts in the Sayreville area.

In World War II, Mr. Lindemann entered regular Army service from the Essex Blackhorse Troop of Newark, NJ. Attaining the rank of Major with the 102nd Cavalry Regiment, Mr. Lindemann served on the staff of the Commander General in New Caledonia, three French islands in the South Pacific. After World War II, Mr.



Center Street in the early 1900s.
(Contributed by Chatham Historical Society)

Lindemann served in the Army Reserves until he retired in 1960. Eventually Mr. Lindemann and his wife, Fran, received 49 Center Street from his parents. Ted and Fran Lindemann had a son, Theodore, Jr. who passed away at a very young age. Their lovely daughter, Virginia Louise, arrived in the late 1940s, and grew up at 49 Center Street. Ginny Lindemann recalled that her father enjoyed listening to his John Philip Sousa records. The American flag was proudly displayed on the front porch every national holiday. Even towards the end of his life, when negotiating a walker down the sidewalk, Mr. Lindemann maintained his tall, military posture. He would share his war memories with me and his political views of the day. The small, indented wing on the left of the house, too, has an interesting past. Mary Dickinson Lum ran a school for very young local children from September 1892 to 1894. She had returned from a brief marriage to her childhood friend, Harry Lum. Harry had joined his father, Paul Lum, who worked as a builder for the Ligertwood Manufacturing coffee mills down in Brazil. Mary and Harry Lum married and lived in Brazil. Sadly, after losing Harry to yellow fever, Mrs. Lum returned to Chatham to teach and live at the Center Street home. She wrote an unpublished manuscript called "Brazilian Honeymoon" telling of her experiences living in the Rio de Janeiro area. In September 1895, she married Artemis Bissell and moved to Summit. There is some evidence that another school operated in the left wing during the early 1920s.

"We looked for cheat-sheets in that section of the house, but never found any," joked Pete Serbanica of 42 Center Street. Pete and his brother Stan spent most of 1985 renovating their newly acquired 49 Center Street property after Mr. Lindemann's death. The house was originally "double-bricked" with bricks made from the clay dug up from the late 1800s Lum brickyard, now the site of the athletic fields behind ECLC on Lum Avenue. Mr. Lindemann had reminisced to me about skating on the brickyard pond in his youth. Decades later, he and his wife did the research on the Lum/Kelley brick yard for "The Crossing of the Fishawack" by John Cunningham.

Unpretentious and sturdy this brick house stood on Center Street when it was a dirt road with wagons and carriages riding by. It has survived major world events and has hosted both the sad and happy events of its owners. The house also served as a haven of early education for young Chatham residents. We wish it a continued long life with remarkable personalities and experiences.



49 Center Street was built c. 1890 of bricks from the Lum/Kelley brickyard on Lum Avenue. It has existed as both a single and two-family dwelling. A section of it once served as a school. Contributed by The Chatham Township Historical Society