

THE COLLINS HOUSE

CHATHAM, NEW JERSEY



BUILT 1911



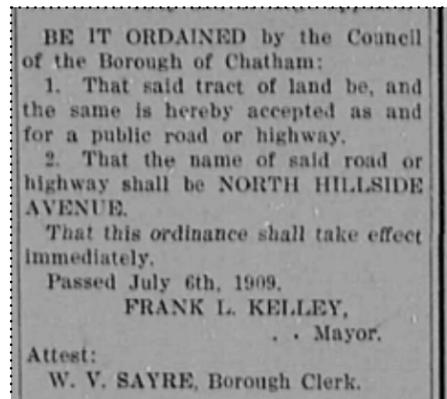
THE TIME LINE OF THE COLLINS HOUSE

1904 - DECEMBER 20

Henry C. and Susan A. McBrair purchased four plus acres of land on the east side of Hillside Avenue from John and Sarah Ellet for \$6,000.

1909 - JULY 6

For several months, the owners of property on the east and west side of what is now known as North Hillside Avenue, petition to have the lane splitting the property become a public road. The primary land owners, the McBairs and the Ellets, lead the cause. The town supports their efforts for development and on this day it is passed.



1910 - MAY 5

Lottie Mae and James B. Collins, a self-employed house painter, purchased a large parcel of land from Henry McBrair, on North Hillside Avenue. The year previous, their son George had purchased land and petitioned with McBrair and Ellet to have Hillside Avenue deemed a public road.

1910 - MAY 6

Lottie and James Collins deed a portion of their property, now known as 52 North Hillside Avenue, to their eldest son Charles and his wife, Jeanette.

1910 - NOVEMBER 24

Charles and Jeanette secured a loan for \$2,200 and hired Charles' brother, George, to erect a home on the property.



SPRING 1911

Construction of 52 North Hillside began

SUMMER 1911

Charles, Jeanette & baby Olive move into their new home.

1913 - APRIL 14

Charles and Jeanette moved to Chicago and on this date deeded their home back to his parents, Lottie and James Collins. The elder Collins' kept the home, they may have been renting it. After a short time in Chicago, Charles became ill. He was receiving treatment from Germany, but with the onset of World War I in Europe he could no longer receive the medicine. His condition grew worse and he and his family moved back to 52 North Hillside Avenue.

1917

In August of this year, Charles, aged 33, died of throat cancer. Six months later in November, his parents deeded 52 North Hillside Avenue back to Jeanette.

1918

After Charles death, Jeanette went back to work as a bank stenographer and her mother moved in with her to help with the children. There was a kitchen added to the second floor, adjacent to one of the bedrooms, to give Jeanette's mother some privacy and independence.

1920

Jeanette met her second husband, Daniel A. Benson, a New York City banker. They were married and Mr. Benson adopted Jeanette's two daughters and they had two sons. The new family continued to live at The Collins' House.

1928 - MARCH 28

At age 42, Daniel Benson died. For the second time Jeanette was left alone with her family. She took in boarders to generate income. She married one of her boarders, Mark Poindexter, and they lived at The Collins' House until 1952, when they moved to Florida.



These wonderful original photos are a gift from Bev Hilty, the granddaughter of Charles and Jeanette Collins and the daughter of Olive. Bev grew up in Chatham and now lives in Pittsburgh. She follows the local news through the *Chatham Courier* and recognized her mother's childhood home featured in a news story about it being awarded the second Chatham Historical Society Historical Home Plaque. She contacted the Society and graciously shared with us these beloved photographs.



George J. Collins (in the background wearing a black jacket) and his crew taking a break while working on building 52 North Hillside Avenue.



It was customary to build a shed on the property to house their tools during the building project, while a horse and wagon brought supplies.



THE BUILDER

GEORGE J. COLLINS (April 8, 1887 - December 27, 1968) was a life-long Chatham resident. He was hardworking and by the time he was twenty-three in 1910, he had already constructed several homes in Chatham including one in the Chatham Heights Section. This job, located on Red Road, earned Mr. Collins the reputation as a popular, “young progressive builder”, as reported in 1910 by the *Chatham Press*. He built homes using his own plans which he altered to suit the wants and needs of his clients. This allowed him to build homes of great quality, inexpensively and efficiently. Mr. Collins enjoyed a successful career and when he retired from building, he was Chatham building inspector for many years. He lived a long, productive life while contributing greatly to Chatham's neighborhood developments.

THE ORIGINAL OWNERS

CHARLES H. (c. 1884 - August 31, 1917) was born and raised in Chatham. He grew up on Summit Avenue with his parents and brother, George. He attended the public schools and for a time he was a clerk at Samuel E. D Doughery drug store located on the corner of Main Street and Passiac Avenue.

Early in 1910, Charles married **JEANETTE DENMAN** (October 9, 1887 - c. 1982) of Madison. She was a bank stenographer when they met. When first married, they lived in Newark, where he was a clerk in a box factory. In the summer of 1911, they moved into their new home with baby Olive. Soon after the completion of their home Charles, who was working in New York City was transferred to Chicago. While in Chicago, they had another daughter, Jeannette.



Jeanette and baby Olive on the front porch of their new home. The photo was taken looking towards Weston Avenue.

