

**CHATHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY -MARGARET KEISLER MEMORIAL  
SCHOLARSHIP**

ESSAY: Chatham: My Town by a River. The history of our town is made up of individual, unique stories. Please share your own distinctive story about growing up in Chatham. Your story may become part of the Chatham Historical Society anecdotal history archive.

My Tata (Grandfather) was on an oil tanker for work where he was pretty lonely. Only a few years prior, he decided to leave his home in Hyderabad, India, taking his wife first to London, and then to a small house in Randolph New Jersey. The year was 1975, and while aboard the oil tanker in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, he met a man called Robert Berner who was building houses in Chatham. It sounded like a beautiful place to raise a family, far different from his own hometown growing up. Robert encouraged him to visit Chatham, and he, his young wife, and his 3 year old daughter, fell in love with it.

My Mom grew up in the same town, the same house, and the same bedroom as I am now. On a quiet street with a view of the Great Swamp. She attended Mountainview school from kindergarten to 5th Grade, making the same mile-long walk through the neighborhood each morning as I did with my Amama (my Grandmother) to visit the Senior Center in the now repurposed Chatham Municipal Building. She graduated from Chatham High School two years after the Township and Borough districts merged in the class of 1990 with a grand total of 80 people.

Sophomore year, for my US History final project, I found myself in the Red Brick Schoolhouse museum, just a little ways up the street and down Fairmount Ave. Open for only two hours each month, the two women who ran the tiny museum were surprised to see me, and excited to shower me with pamphlets and materials for my project. I wandered the museum, marveling at spearheads found in the woods, left by the Native Americans, and read plaque

after plaque of recorded bits of Chatham's settlement, town governments, and involvement in the Revolutionary War. I couldn't help but notice that this version of Chatham's history felt so far removed from my own experience here. My family has deep roots in Chatham, yet from the outside we have little in common with Chatham's settlers, rose farmers, and the Lenape tribe, because we are from an entirely different part of the world. However, although from a different perspective, 3 generations of my family have witnessed the town continue to grow and change.

Soon, 34 years after my Mom, I will be graduating from the same Chatham High School with a class of almost 400 students. Since my Amama and Tata decided to raise their family here in Chatham, hundreds more immigrants made the same decision, creating an even more diverse community of families.