

OUR TOWN

RAHWAY'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

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Issue 183 • October 2025

MAYOR JOHN MARSH PASSES AWAY AT 97

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John C. Marsh, Sr., beloved husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, and a lifelong servant to his community, passed away on September 1, 2025 at the age of 97.

A proud veteran, John served in the United States Navy during World War II before returning home to begin his long career in public service and civic leadership.

He dedicated his life to the City of Rahway, serving for 25 years as both Councilman and Mayor (1964–1989). As Mayor, he was known for his vision, persistence, and collaborative spirit. During his tenure, he lowered city taxes each year, spearheaded the purchase of the former Rahway post office on Esterbrook Avenue to establish a senior citizen and youth center, and oversaw the construction and equipping of the JFK Center at no cost to the city through unprecedented cooperation with union leadership.

A passionate advocate for history and preservation, John saved the historic Girl Scout House, now the Merchants and Drovers Tavern, protecting it from commercial development. He founded the Rahway Historical Society, rallying both residents and businesses to raise nearly \$75,000 toward the property's preservation. His dedication to beautifying Rahway's downtown and his success in securing a \$1 million grant to expand and upgrade the city's water department remain hallmarks of his leadership.

Beyond his civic contributions, John served as a bank director and was a proud member of the Board of Directors for Northfield Bank (formerly Liberty Bank, formerly Axia Federal Savings Bank) for 50 years. His professional career also reflected his engineering background, as a graduate of the Rutgers State University College of Engineering, American College of Engineering and member of both the College of Engineers and the American Society for Hospital Engineers.

He was deeply committed to service organizations throughout his life, holding membership in the Rahway Kiwanis, Rahway Library Board, Fanwood-Scotch Plains Rotary Club, VFW, and American Legion. Within Rotary, he served on the Luminary, Meals on Wheels, and Membership Committees, and was honored with the prestigious Paul Harris Fellow award by Rotary International.

John also loved animals and found peace and joy in his time at Popham Beach, Maine, a place that brought him comfort and renewal throughout his life. He delighted in the holiday season. Christmas was especially dear to him - he was known for decorating the house with trains and a village around the Christmas tree, a tradition that brought wonder and joy to his family year after year.

He was endlessly sociable, making friends with everyone he met, and he loved telling stories, often captivating listeners for hours with his humor, warmth, and memories. John leaves behind a profound legacy of leadership, community spirit, and love for all. His efforts shaped the city of Rahway for generations to come, and his memory will be cherished by all who knew him.



(above) John C. Marsh, Sr., Served as a Rahway Councilman, and Mayor from 1964 to 1989.

**Obituary for John C. Marsh
by Lehrer-Gibilisco Funeral Home
Visit John's oneline guestbook at:
www.lehrergibilisco.com/obituary/john-marsh**

Born to the late Rolph and Verna Marsh, on September 27, 1927, John was predeceased by his sisters, Abbie and Verna, and his first wife, Marie Louise. He is survived by his devoted wife, Teri Malone and his children: John, Jr. and his wife, Anne; Joanna Vilim and her husband, Robert; Jim and his wife, Andrea; Bill and his wife, Dana; and Jonathan and his wife, Danielle. He leaves behind eleven grandchildren: Jesse, Lindsay, Sarah, Becky, Kelsey, Jamie, Collin, Emily, Will, Eliza, and Alex, and eighteen great-grandchildren.

A celebration of John's life took place at the Lehrer-Gibilisco Funeral Home located at 275 West Milton Avenue in Rahway, NJ, on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, with Military Honors.

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CHAMBER INVITES ALL TO RAHWAY DAY

The Rahway Chamber of Commerce is proud to present our annual Rahway Day - an event designed to showcase the businesses, government, schools, and non-profit organizations of Rahway and the surrounding areas to our diverse and growing population of families, professionals, and seniors. Rahway Day is one of the ways in which the Chamber encourages patronage in and around the Rahway Community.

This event is advertised to the 30,000 residents of Rahway and is a great way to interact with the community and local business owners, as well as potential and current customers.

Registration and set up is easy - you will work directly with a Rahway Day coordinator to ensure the correct marketing such as: event banner, website and social media signage.

On behalf of the Rahway Chamber of Commerce, we encourage you to reserve your table as this event has sold out in the past. To register, please fill out the enclosed form and or sign up on our website at www.rahwaychamberofcommerce.com.

We're looking forward to seeing you at Rahway Day!

Sincerely,

Heidi Loder-Rosal

Heidi Loder-Rosal, RCC President/Rahway Day Chair

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NATIONAL SENIOR HEALTH & FITNESS DAY® ON OCTOBER 29TH

The Gateway Family YMCA will join over 1,000 local groups nationwide to celebrate the 32nd Annual National Senior Health & Fitness Day (NSHFD) on Wednesday, October 29, 2025. As an official host site, The Gateway Family YMCA is providing a Community Open House with activities like Swimming, Group Exercise, Water Exercise, Blood Pressure Self-Monitoring, Health Screenings and Information at Y branches

FIND YOUR PASSION!

Senior Health & Fitness Day
YMCA OPEN HOUSE
Wednesday, October 29

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The Gateway Family YMCA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening community.

in Elizabeth, Rahway and Union. For details on individual Y branch events, classes and times, visit tgfymca.org/events

During National Senior Health and Fitness Day, participants will join with an estimated 100,000 older adults across the country participating in local events to help promote active, healthy lifestyles through physical activity, good nutrition and preventative care. The Gateway Family YMCA, Shaping Elizabeth and Shaping Union County will be hosting this year's event, along with local community partners to participate in a YMCA Community Open House with information and activities provided free of charge.

A Virtual Open House is also available for individuals who cannot easily access the YMCA for Senior Health & Fitness Day on Wednesday, October 29th with a schedule of group exercise programs available through Zoom.

"Older adults at all levels of physical fitness are encouraged to participate in National Senior Health & Fitness Day," says Patricia Henze, National Senior Health & Fitness Day program manager. "Our event goals are to increase awareness of the benefits of regular exercise, and to encourage all older adults to take advantage of the many health and fitness activities offered in their communities, as well as online."

The Gateway Family YMCA also provides

chronic disease self-management programs open to the local community. Interested participants can register for the Blood Pressure Self-Monitoring Program (BPSM), Group Lifestyle Balance Diabetes Program, Diabetes Management Program, LiveSTRONG at the YMCA or the Veterans Wellness Initiative at tgfymca.org or contact 908-349-9622 or bpsm@tgfymca.org for additional information.

The Gateway Family YMCA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, health and community service organization of caring staff and volunteers dedicated to strengthening community and stands For Youth Development, For Healthy Living and For Social Responsibility.

Shaping Eastern Union County is committed to improving the health and well-being of county residents and creating strategies to support improved health, nutrition and physical activity for all. Shaping Elizabeth, Shaping Rahway and Shaping Union are also sponsoring this event.

National Senior Health & Fitness Day is the largest event of its kind, organized by the Mature Market Resource Center, a national clearinghouse for professionals who work with older adults. For more information about National Senior Health & Fitness Day, visit fitnessday.com.

For more information about The Gateway Family YMCA visit tgfymca.org or contact the Y at 908-349-9622.

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AMERICAN REPERTORY BALLET PRESENTS THE RETURN OF STIEFEL & KOBORG’S GISELLE

American Repertory Ballet (ARB) opens its 2025/26 season at the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center (NBPAC) with the highly anticipated return of Ethan Stiefel and Johan Kobborg’s acclaimed adaptation of the classic ballet Giselle. Presented Friday, October 10, 2025 through Sunday, October 12, 2025, Giselle tells the story of a young woman who dies of a broken heart—only to confront, and eventually forgive, her beloved from beyond the grave.

Originally choreographed in 2012 for the Royal New Zealand Ballet under Stiefel's artistic leadership, Giselle was initially restaged and partially redesigned specifically for ARB at NBPAC in 2022 by the award-winning team of Howard Jones (Scenic Designer), Natalia Stewart (Costume Designer), and Joseph R. Walls (Lighting Designer). Giselle is celebrated as being “[s]uperbly coached, curated, and danced,” says The Ballet Herald’s Nadia Vostrikov. “ARB’s Giselle is everything the original had and more.”

Featuring emotionally powerful and technically stunning performances, this moving production will no doubt get audiences in the Halloween spirit via this haunting tale of love, betrayal, and the supernatural.

TICKET AND VENUE INFORMATION

- New Brunswick Performing Art Center
New Brunswick, NJ
 - Friday, October 10, 2025 at 7:00 PM*
 - Saturday, October 11, 2025
at 2:00 PM & 7:00 PM
 - Sunday, October 12, 2025 at 2:00 PM**
- Tickets for Giselle range from \$42 to \$72, not including additional 4% NBPAC Ticket Fee.
- *Post-Show Reception** (\$50 add-on to ticket purchase) with ARB Dancers, artistic leadership, and VIPs immediately following the performance. Light bites and beverages will be served.
- **Come to the performance dressed in costume for a festive Halloween season kickoff!**
- Tall/wide hats, light up accessories, and weapons will not be permitted.
- The New Brunswick Performing Arts Center is located at 11 Livingston Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901.
- The venue can be reached by car or New Jersey Transit and has ample parking in its attached parking deck.
- For more information, contact Grant Jacoby, Director of Marketing, at gjacoby@arballet.org, or by calling 609-921-7758 x34

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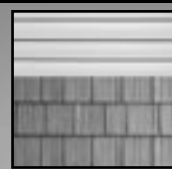
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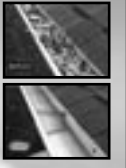
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Westfield will once again will play host to a remarkable art event - one unlike any other in the greater New York metro area.

First launched in 1982 as the Westfield Craft Market, this event enjoyed a 20-year run, earning a reputation for quality and community spirit. Now, producers Richard & Joanna Rothbard - owners of An American Craftsman Galleries in NYC and Great Barrington, MA - return with fresh energy to reintroduce Westfield to a cultural tradition it once embraced.

Sharing the spotlight will be 80 gifted artists and designers including several nationally recognized for their award winning accomplishments; many traveling from across the U.S., from as far as California and Florida. Guests will enjoy work never before seen on the East Coast. The fair could be called a weekend "Off-Broadway production" - with a great cast, many stars, with several booths designed like stage sets.

HALLOWEEN EVE KICKOFF: ALL WEEKEND PASS FOR PARENTS AND KIDS FOR FREE.

The show opens Friday, October 31, with a family-friendly Trick-or-Treat Party. Kids can:

- Collect their treats while meeting the artists
- Create their own art on the famous Art Wall

Join a weekend-long Treasure Hunt. Great prizes made by the artists. And throughout the weekend, visitors can win original art prizes donated by An American Craftsman Gallery.

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

- Westfield Armory is Just 5 minutes from Exit 135 on the Garden State Parkway
- Free parking at the Armory or across the street at the High School.
- \$12 weekend pass covers all three days. SENIORS \$10. Under 10 Free

Show Hours

Trick or Treat party

Friday Oct. 31 - 3 pm-7 pm

Saturday Nov.1. - 10 am-6 pm

Sunday Nov. 2 - 10 am-5 pm

An incredible selection of ceramics, independent fashion artists, fine woodworking, jewelry, paintings, mixed media, Illustration, photography, and art glass - from \$25 keepsakes to Michael Alexander's \$10,000 masterpieces.

Overall, this will be the art weekend that Westfield and its surrounding communities will celebrate this first year - and for years to come. And please . . . don't forget your credit card.

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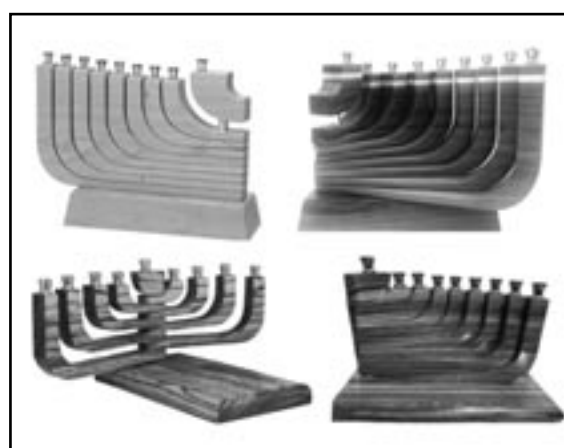
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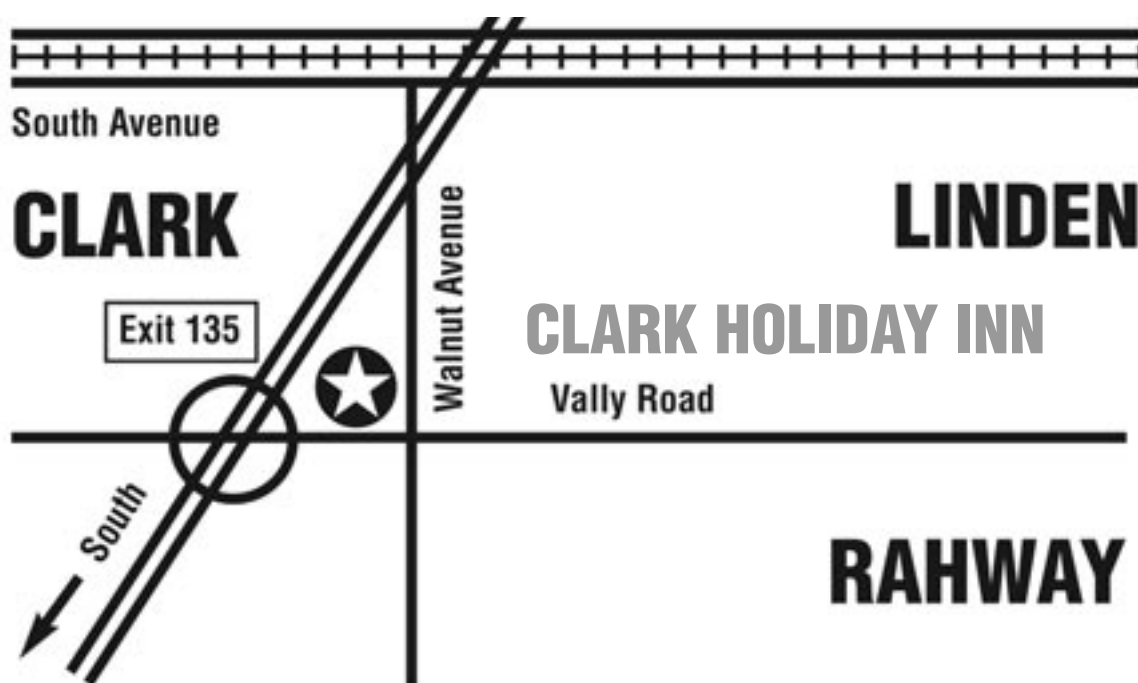
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NEW GYM FLOOR AT HIGH SCHOOL - RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY

Submitted by David Brighthouse

Wednesday, September 3, was the first day of school in the Rahway Public Schools. It was also the day that the new gym floor was formally unveiled at Rahway High School (RHS). Prior to the start of the girls volleyball team's opening game against Union, a ribbon-cutting ceremony took place, celebrating the new gym floor.

The Rahway Board of Education's (BOE) Finance & Facilities Committee, working closely with Mr. Thomas Giglio, Buildings & Grounds Manager, helped ensure the successful completion of the project.

Board of Education members Carlos Garay and Tim Antisz, Chairperson of the Finance & Facilities Committee, were in attendance to mark the occasion.

Principal Dr. Michelle Panichi, Vice Principals Mr. Dawe Peralta and Dr. Michael Celoski, and Acting Athletic Director Tricia Volino-Reinoso joined the teams, coaches, and community members for the gathering.

Also in attendance were Mayor Raymond Giacobbe, Superintendent Dr. Aleya Shoieb, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Dr. Tiffany Beer, Director of Human Resources Roseann Walker, Rahway BOE President Joseph Toma, BOE member Shanna Raysick, faculty, staff, students, and supporters.

The RHS cheerleading squad even performed, setting a school-spirited mood for the activities to come.

The gym floor, which serves as the home court for both basketball and volleyball, features a new Rahway logo at the center, which Volino-Reinoso, in her welcoming remarks, addressed.

She noted, among other interesting features, that the logo, while adhering to the style and symbolic import of the district's previous emblems, was intentionally designed devoid of the traditional Lenni Lenape feathers, in consideration of the fact that the logo would be one, unlike those on walls or signs or letterhead, that would appear beneath the feet of the athletes as they practiced and competed.

Additionally, the logo is unique for its creative

blending of both basketball and volleyball in the design, with one half of each sport's ball forming an original whole.

Mayor Giacobbe also spoke briefly, expressing his pride in the newly finished floor, noting movingly that he himself is a "Volleyball Dad" because his late daughter, Bella, was a player and a coach.

President Toma wrapped up the formal speeches just prior to the much-anticipated ribbon-cutting itself.

Then it was time to bring out those traditional oversized scissors. Dr. Shoieb did the honors, as a who's who of Rahway notables from both the

schools and the city gathered around her.

The designers of the new logo are Kenneth Bell and Camara Edwards, of Halsey and Oak Design, both RHS graduates, who have worked on previous projects for the district.

They expressed pride in the design they came up with and were especially pleased that so many of their ideas and creative initiatives were accepted in the final product, as they worked collaboratively with Dr. Shoieb, Ms. Volino-Reinoso, and other members of the district.

"We were really taken aback when we saw the final product," they said. "It's great to see our work out there."



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FOOD FOR FRIENDS HEARTFELT THANK YOU

A Heartfelt Thank You to Our Partners in Service On behalf of Rahway Food For Friends and the community we proudly serve, I would like to extend our deepest and most sincere thanks to those who generously supported and partnered with us during our recent pantry distribution and bookbag giveaway event.

Your contributions made a meaningful impact—far beyond the essential donations and supplies. The school supplies you provided equipped children with the tools and confidence needed to start the school year on the right foot. Just as importantly, the time you devoted to taking blood pressures and engaging with our clients around their health and well-being reflected a level of compassion and care that truly elevated this event.

To Lakesha Corbitt, Rosalind Johnson, Irene Spruill, Deroju Adetutu, Ranier John Pastor, and Denise Aloe—your presence, energy, and dedication did not go unnoticed. Each of you brought something special to this effort, and we are deeply grateful for the love and commitment you poured into our community.

This partnership is not new—and we are incredibly thankful that it continues to grow stronger. From supporting our Thanksgiving turkey giveaways to helping us spread holiday cheer through Christmas gift distributions, you have consistently shown up for our neighbors in meaningful and compassionate ways. Each occasion has brought joy, hope, and dignity to those we serve, and your unwavering support has been a key part of making those moments possible.

This most recent event reminded us once again that service is not only about what is given—it's about how it's given. Through your kindness, professionalism, and heartfelt engagement, you offered our clients more than just supplies; you offered dignity, love, and connection.

From all of us at Rahway Food For Friends—and on behalf of every individual and family touched by your generosity—we extend our deepest and most heartfelt thanks. We are honored to walk alongside you in this important work and look forward to many more opportunities to serve together.

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MARINE CORPS TOYS FOR TOTS HONORS JOHN SARDINE

By David Brighthouse

Gunnery Sergeant John Sardine, of the Rahway High School Marine Corps Junior ROTC program, has been named the Marine Corps Toys for Tots National Coordinator of the Year for the 2024 campaign season. Out of 874 Toys for Tots campaigns last year, only two individuals were chosen for this prestigious recognition.

The Marine Corps Toys for Tots program works to “collect new unwrapped toys and distribute those toys to economically disadvantaged children at Christmas.”

Gunnery Sergeant Sardine has been at the forefront of the program since his time at RHS, organizing an annual toy drive at the high school each holiday season and other Toys for Tots drives throughout New Jersey.

The official letter formally recognizing Sardine as the National Coordinator of the Year called his efforts “nothing short of extraordinary.” It went on to say, “Through your dedication, your campaign was organized and executed with

remarkable precision and effectiveness, bringing the joy of Christmas and a message of hope to a record number of less fortunate children in your community.

Sardine was overwhelmed with appreciation and gratitude for the recognition, saying, “This award is not mine alone; it is a reflection of a truly collaborative community effort.”

He thanked the City of Rahway and the Rahway Public School District, Mayor Raymond Giacobbe, school district leaders, and his JROTC chain of command for their “Mentorship, guidance, and willingness to always assist when called upon.”

On Friday, September 12, Sardine flew to St. Louis, Missouri, where he was formally presented with the United States Naval Meritorious Public Service Award Medal for his contributions to the 2024 Toys for Tots campaign.

Congratulations, Gunnery Sergeant Sardine! The Rahway Public Schools and entire City of Rahway are very proud of you.



(above) Rahway's John Sardine has been named the 2024 Marine Corps Toys for Tots National Coordinator of the Year.

Courtesy Photo

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ACADEMY STUDENTS AND FACULTY REMEMBER 9/11

Rahway Public Schools

Students and faculty at The 7th & 8th Grade Rahway Academy took a moment to remember the events of September 11, 2001, with a moving tribute that highlighted student talent and historical reflection. The moment of silence and reflection via the morning announcements demonstrated a testament to the school's commitment to civic education. It featured performances by the school's choir and band, and a special address from the principal.

Principal Colon addressed the student body, offering a brief history of the events of 9/11. She emphasized the importance of understanding this day in American history, focusing on the themes of unity, resilience, and service that emerged from the tragedy. The goal was to ensure that a new generation understands the significance of 9/11 beyond just a date on the calendar.

The school's choir, led by Mrs. Lorenzetti, ended the tribute with a poignant rendition of "America the Beautiful", with the school band, led by Mrs. Van Wyk, providing accompaniment. The musical performance created a solemn and respectful atmosphere, allowing students to express their patriotism through song.

Additionally, many classroom classes used today as an opportunity to teach the history, humanity, and service that this day represents.

Ms. Macknowsky's class reviewed the timeline of events that happened on September 11th through a Google Slides presentation. Students learned about the heroism of Welles Crowther, known as the "Man in the Red Bandana," and engaged in activities that honored his courage, kindness, and leadership. After discussing his story, students answered comprehension questions and then drew a picture of Welles engaging in an act of kindness.

Mrs. Luniewski's classes also viewed the "Man in the Red Bandana" and then reflected on its message through a guided discussion. Before watching, she engaged students in a conversation about social responsibility, encouraging them to think about what it means to help others in

moments of crisis and in everyday life. After viewing the video, students connected Welles Crowther's actions to their own lives, considering how small acts of kindness and responsibility can create a ripple effect in their community. Many students shared personal examples, highlighting the importance of service, empathy, and leadership at every age.

Ms. Petti's class watched a short video called "Boatlift" that focused on civilians who chose to aid in the rescue, using their own boats. After discussion, she introduced the appropriately themed Elks Americanism Essay Contest: "What Does Service to Your Country Mean to You?"

Students started brainstorming ideas about what acts of service are most important in our world today. If you are interested in more information about this contest, check out the website. <https://www.elks.org/programs/americanism.cmf>

Some of the ideas they came up with about how to best serve our country are to be kind, follow laws, help people in need, join the military, and volunteer for those less fortunate.

Annually, this day serves as a crucial educational opportunity for middle school students, connecting them with a pivotal moment in the nation's past and fostering a sense of community and shared memory.



(above) Select Band Members and Orchestra Musicians prepared and performed a rendition of *America The Beautiful* immediately following the moment of silence.

DANIEL SHIFRIN ON DRUGSTORE DIALOGUE

Retired pharmacist Daniel Shifrin, a Rahway resident, was recently interviewed on "Drugstore Dialogue", a program on WHPC 90.3 FM, the voice of Nassau Community College. The episode will air on Sunday, October 26, 2025, at 6:30 a.m.

During the program, Shifrin shared insights from his career in pharmacy. Listeners interested in hearing the conversation may request a link to the recording.

Due to the success of the interview, Shifrin has been invited back to record a second episode of "Drugstore Dialogue". The upcoming interview will take place on Tuesday, October 7, 2025, at 9:00 p.m.

For more information or to request a copy of the interviews and a link to the program, please contact: Daniel Shifrin, Rpdanny627@gmail.com, 908-202-0448.

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WHAT I LEARNED IN MY GARDEN 2025

FROZEN TOMATO ROOTS

Now that the autumn is quickly approaching, this is a good time to look back at your garden and take a few notes.

What was your biggest success this spring and summer and what was your biggest disappointment?

If you remember back to this past spring, it was more rainy than most. Not only was it wet, it was a cold rain followed by chilly evenings that seemed like they would never end. So I and many other gardeners delayed planting our tomatoes until the ground warmed up. Finally I did plant in my Community Garden box. Then I covered the ground with a good layer of chopped oak leaves.

It didn't take long to notice my plants were stunted. Even after a feeding of fish emulsion which usually gives vegetables a good boost, there was no noticeable new healthy growth.

Finally I did what I've been advising gardeners to do in these articles regularly. I went to Rutgers Cooperative Extension Garden Helpline and asked what might be the problem. The answer, "Frozen roots." So I followed up with some research and learned this from Rutgers website.

Freezing temperatures will kill the roots of tomato plants. Tomatoes are warm-season annuals that are highly sensitive to cold and any temperature at or below 32°F will cause the plants cells to rupture and die.

Chilling injury (above freezing): Temperatures between 33–55°F (0.5 - 13°C) can cause chilling injury. This does not kill the plant outright but stunts its growth and damages fruit quality.

DAMAGE CAN INCLUDE:

- Reduced photosynthesis and pollen production.
- Wilting and browning of leaves.



(above) To prevent disease or other problems in the future, keep the ground clean. Toss sickly leaves and veggies in the trash, not the compost pile.

Courtesy Photo

- Deformed fruit with poor flavor and texture.
When the water inside the plants cells freezes, it expands and destroys the cell walls. This kills the foliage and any exposed roots, causing the plant to become mushy and dark brown or black.
To prevent tomato roots from freezing, gardeners typically use these methods:
 - For an unexpected frost, covering plants with a blanket, sheet, or other insulating material can trap warmth from the ground and protect the plant.
 - For a hard freeze, it is best to harvest any mature green tomatoes and ripen them indoors. Allowing them to freeze will make them mushy upon thawing.The most reliable method is to wait until the danger of frost has passed in your area before transplanting tomatoes outdoors. That is getting



(above) Past President of The Rahway Garden Club, James Keane, has been researching and answering garden questions since 1995. Visit 'Keane Gardener' blog at: keanegardener.blogspot.com

harder to do with shifting weather patterns.

People who know me will find this article weird because I have a lot of experience from volunteering on the Helpline myself for many years. Although I know about killing frost and tender root systems, I didn't know about 'chilling injury' that keeps the plants alive but not productive. As the old saying goes, "You learn something new every day".

My biggest success is a nice bed of Zinnias. By watering the ground and avoiding wetting the leaves the plants are flowering beautifully without the white fungus of 'powdery mildew'.

Penn State Extension recommends treating powdery mildew on zinnias with cultural controls like selecting resistant varieties, planting in full sun, ensuring good air circulation, and watering at the base of plants in the morning.

For severe cases, apply a fungicide and alternate between products with different modes of action. Removing infected leaves can also help improve airflow and control spread.

*Thanks for both Rutgers University and Penn State for control information in this article.

Happy Autumn,

James

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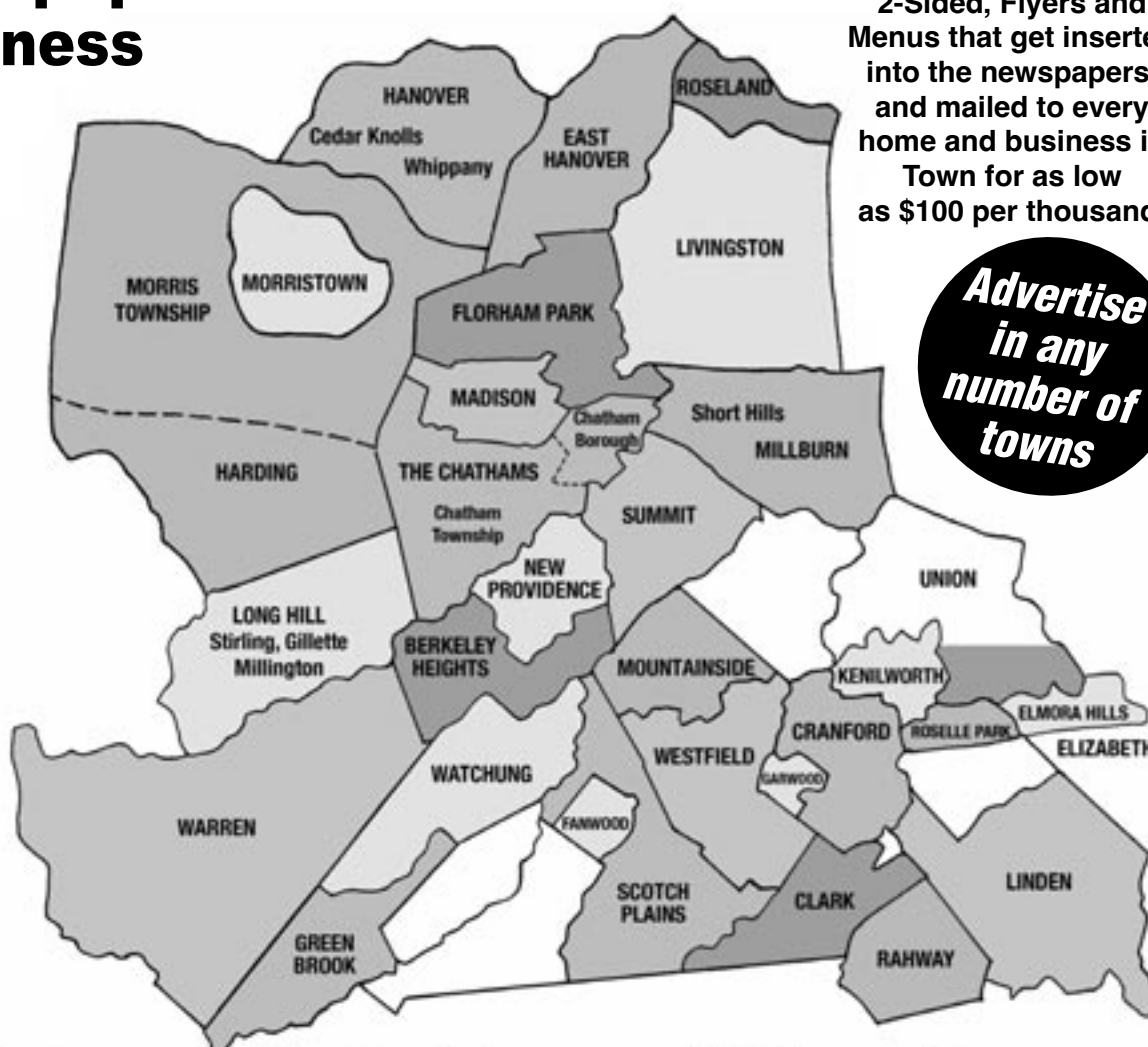
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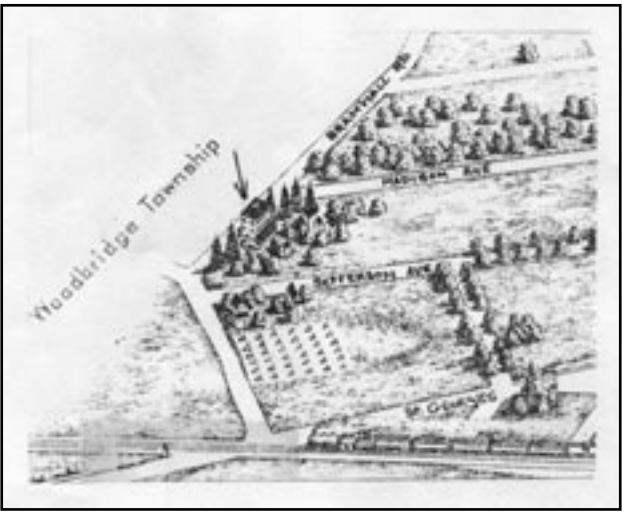


THE BRAMHALL MANSION – A HAUNTED HOUSE FROM THE PAST

Submitted by Al Shipley, City Historian and Rahway Library Research Consultanthh

There’s nothing like a good ghost story, especially if it’s set in one’s hometown. In the annals of Rahway history, one house stood above as the structure that was recognized by the locals as a genuine haunted house. This was the Bramhall mansion. The people who saw and heard strange things swore by their encounters, yet the authorities never found any hard proof. Even though the question of whether or not the mansion was actually haunted remains open to debate, the topic lends itself well to this Halloween offering.

Nothing much is known about the family of M.



(above) A 1911 birds-eye view ap shows the large Bramhall estate and property.



(above) This stretch of the Bramhall residence was depicted on a 1856 map of Rahway.

Courtesy Photos



(above) Photo off the Bramhall mansion t aken circa 1900.

B. Bramhall except that in 1848 they had a stately mansion built on a yet to be marked rural road that by 1880 would be named Bramhall Road. The estate was located in the remote south-western end of the city across from the Woodbridge Township boarder. Set on a hill between Jefferson Avenue and Madison Avenue, Bramhall owned much of the land that extended all the way back to Plainfield Avenue.

The home was certainly built for a country gentleman with all the features of an Italianate villa. Three stories tall, the massive stone building had multi-level porches in front and back, large bay windows with balconies on both sides, and ornate decorative trim throughout. A handsome lantern with windowed walls was centered on the roof where one could overlook the countryside. The interior featured a large ballroom to the left of a center hall that ran the entire length of the house. Stables for horses and carriages and a servants’ building were behind the main house. The estate was beautifully landscaped with well-kept lawns and shrubs across the property.

Few locals ever ventured near the mansion, but stories did reach the town concerning the grand parties and society events that were held there. It was believed that socialites from New York City often visited Bramhall’s estate to enjoy summer gatherings in the country and sleighing parties in the winter.

The Bramhall family lived in the home for nearly 25 years. A few other families would take ownership until the early 1890s when the mansion became too costly to maintain and modernize. With no one coming forward to buy the estate, it was eventually abandoned.

The once elegant mansion quickly fell into disrepair. The wooden porches rotted, loose bricks fell from the chimneys, the roof sagged, and the stone exterior that once had exhibited a grand sheen, began to crumble. Many of the grime covered windows were broken. Behind the house, the once solid stables were deserted and dilapidated and the servant’s quarters fell into a state of decay. The grounds became overgrown with weeds and wild shrubbery. Fields of wild blueberries had taken over portions of the property. The trees were no longer trimmed and the big house was almost completely hidden from the road. The forlorn setting had become a perfect tableau for tales of ghosts.

Stories of strange happenings at the deserted Bramhall mansion started in the summer of 1916

after two Italian laborers reported experiencing unusual occurrences at the site. Self-proclaimed wine connoisseurs with knowledge of the fermentation process, the two had hiked to the far-off property after learning the untended fields were covered with wild blueberries. Once there, the men, with thoughts of the tasty desert wine they would produce, set out to fill their baskets. Working under a calm, blue sky, it was a perfect day for picking. After an hour of bending over to gather berries, one of the pickers stood up to stretch his tired back and was surprised to find he had worked his way to within 20 feet of the creepy old house. According to the story he later retold throughout Rahway, it was at that spot where he was startled by a sudden gust of wind that pelted him with stinging debris as the gale increased. Confused, he yelled to his friend who arrived just as the turbulence became even stronger. As the two stood frozen in place, with hands covering their eyes for protection, the wind mysteriously stopped just as it had started. All became strangely quiet. Before the pair could regain their composure, the stillness was broken by a terrific crash of shattering glass. Thinking only of their safety, they dropped their fruit-filled baskets, and ran back to town as fast as their legs could carry them.

The story of the weird incident spread quickly and the house came to be considered haunted. Other alleged encounters would follow. A group of young couples returning from an evening party in Woodbridge swore they saw lights on in the building and heard eerie sounds. A postman who was biking on the far end of his route reported seeing a face looking out from one of the broken windows. Several mischievous young boys bragged that they slept in the house and heard strange noises coming from the trees, unusual creaking of the shutters and hollow whistling through the halls. A report was even filed that someone had been murdered in the mansion back in the 1880s.

Like most stories of this ilk, they soon became “fact” amongst the locals. The police investigated many of the reports but were unable to discover anything. Rahway’s Police Chief concluded, “These stories are only to be expected. Wouldn’t you actually look for ghosts when going past that old abandoned house?”

The Bramhall mansion was razed in 1920, but the stories of it being haunted remained well into the 40s. Although gone for over 100 years, it remains Rahway’s most famous haunted house.

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Ciroc (all types)	1.75L	\$57.99
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Sobieski	1.75L	\$19.99
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Tanqueray Sterling	1.75L	\$30.99
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Malibu	1.75L	\$27.99

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