



A Tribute to New Jersey and Clinton

The state and town that raised me...

Janice Kovach, Mayor, Clinton Town; President, NJLM



As Mayor Janice Kovach prepares to step into her new role as League Immediate Past President, she shares a look at the hometown that has inspired her career of service.

I was born and raised in Jersey—never lived in any other state. As a kid I thought it was so cool when I met kids from other states and always thought “I wish I lived anywhere but Jersey.” I swore that when I graduated high school, I was leaving Jersey for good.

But guess what? I never left—not even for college. As I look back, I consider myself lucky. Jersey made me who I am today.

Although I lived in multiple locations while growing up, once we moved to Clinton that became home. So much so that when I had my children, I decided to raise them in Jersey and in Clinton.

More than an exit

Over the years, when I’ve told people I’m from Jersey, they usually ask, “What exit?” And when I tell them I don’t live off the Parkway or the Turnpike, I get, “Well then you can’t be from Jersey.” Jersey is so much more than the airport, refineries, and the Shore.

New Jersey is such an amazing state. You can experience everything from the beach to the mountains, from the rural rolling hill farms to the urban infrastructure of the city. And everything is within a couple of hours. I can drive from High Point in Sussex County to Cape May in Cape May County—the two furthest points in the state—in under 4 hours.

Jersey made me, but Clinton shaped me. It is where I learned about community and public service. And although I didn’t appreciate or understand those lessons as a kid, as an adult they are the reason that giving back to this community is so important to me.



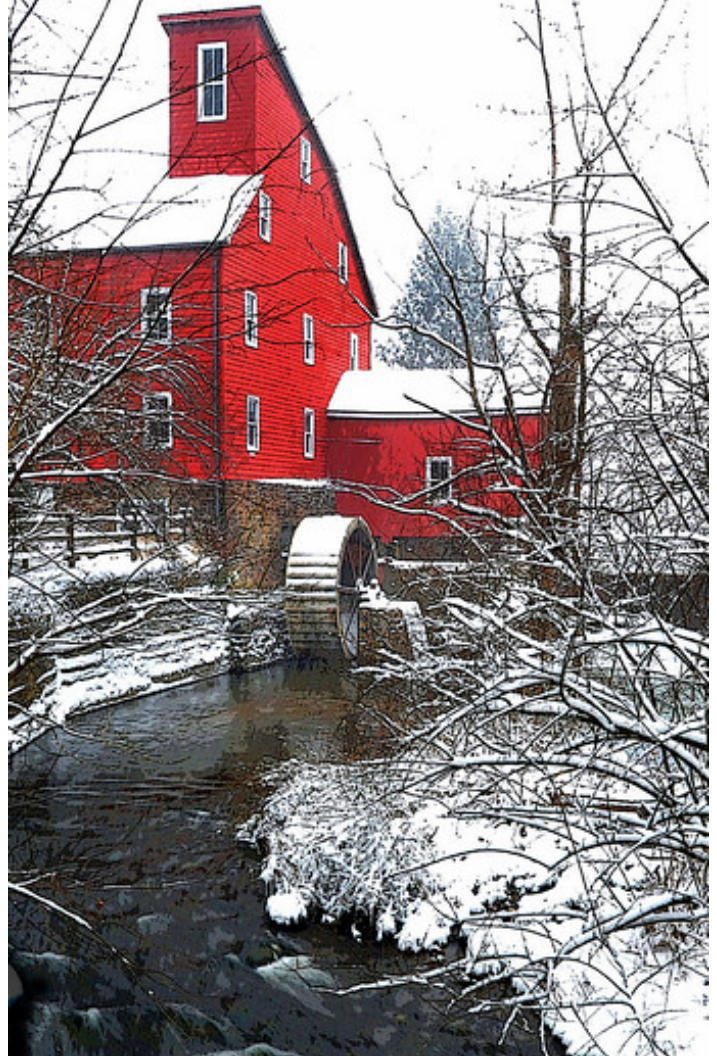
Photos courtesy of John Bohnel

About Clinton

It is a small 1.3 square mile town with a downtown that's a throwback to the mid-19th century. Just 50 miles from New York City, it is nestled in the farmland of Hunterdon County, exit 15 (See, I can get a "What exit?" in too!) off Route 78. In fact, when heading west out of Newark Airport, Clinton is listed on the highway sign. What many don't realize is that it is another 40 miles before you get to Clinton!

Our historic district chronicles the growth of a crossroads hamlet on a major turnpike that grew up in the early 1800s and continued into the post-Victorian era. Our Pony Truss Bridge, one of only a handful of iron bridges left in the US, was traveled daily by people moving between New York and Pennsylvania.

Clinton's Historic Red Mill, nestled against the South Branch of the Raritan River, is the most photographed scene in New Jersey. Photos of the Red Mill and falls are found throughout the country, in small off the beaten path diners and gift shops. Our charming downtown is often described as a scene straight from a Norman Rockwell painting. Enduring shops offer unique, eclectic gifts and apparel, and excellent restaurants aren't to be missed, including farm-to-table waterfront dining and New Jersey's finest cheese, and imported olive oil.



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Family community

Families like mine were attracted to the town by the many downtown activities that pepper the calendar, be it the Great Rubber Ducky Race over the falls in front of the Red Mill or Dickens Days when the downtown is dressed like “A Christmas Carol” to kick off the holiday season with horse drawn carriage rides, carolers and Father Christmas entertain shoppers.

The Red Mill Museum Village gives visitors a peek into history, while the Hunterdon Art Museum directly across the South Branch of the Raritan River presents changing exhibitions of contemporary art. Of course, there are plenty of options for outdoor activities, including hiking or biking the Landsdown Trail,

kayaking the South Branch of the Raritan River, fishing at Spruce Run Reservoir, and more.

Clinton has always been a family friendly community, with its parks and playgrounds, an active community center and public library, history and art museums, family centered community events, a top-rated school system, a walkable downtown, and much more.

As I describe the beauty that is my hometown and my state, it’s funny how as a kid, I didn’t appreciate all that Clinton was. I thought it was too rural and too far from the all-important mall (Remember, I grew up in the 1980s!). I was going to bigger and better places

to live. But when it was time to raise my children, I couldn’t wait to bring them back to Clinton so they could share in the experience I now cherish: the parades, Fourth of July fireworks, walking the falls, hanging out downtown—once we even had the Budweiser Clydesdales come through town while filming a commercial. Those are the memories that I wouldn’t trade for anything.

New Jersey and Clinton will always be my home. I love this state and all that it has to offer. I hope that each of you can look at your community and New Jersey and find the beauty that makes us unique. #AllRoadsLeadtoJersey 🇯🇵



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