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**The Sayreville Historical Society Announces the Publication of:
A Cultural History of Sayreville by Jason J. Slesinski**

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It has been over fifty years since Joseph Karcher first published A Municipal History of Sayreville, during the height of the postwar housing boom. Since then Sayreville has continued to grow and change in ways Mr. Karcher never could have imagined. A Cultural History of Sayreville is an updated look back at what Sayreville means to its over 45,000 residents and how and why Sayreville became the sprawling suburb it is today. When James R. Sayre of Newark and Peter Fisher of New York first entered into a partnership in 1850 to form a clay mining and brick manufacturing enterprise, the section of South Amboy that would become Sayre's Village, then the Township and finally the Borough of Sayreville, was nothing more than a heavily wooded, sparsely populated stretch of pine barrens; colonial travelers called it the Barrens of Wickatunk. But along the south shore of the "Roundabout" of the Raritan River, stood a number of hills reaching eighty, even one hundred feet high. Thanks to the clay within, Sayre and Fisher's brickworks quickly grew to become the largest in the world, supplying bricks for such iconic American structures as the Brooklyn Bridge, the Empire State Building, and the base of the Statue of Liberty, in addition to thousands of other structures up and down the east coast. The prosperity of the Sayre and Fisher Brick Company brought with it an influx of immigrant laborers from Germany, Ireland, and Poland who were drawn directly from Ellis Island to this rural, yet industrial landscape in central New Jersey. Here, pedestrian village-like neighborhoods grew on the periphery of clay pits, small, dense, and remarkably self-sufficient yet at the same time, entirely dependent upon industry.

Such was the manner of life in Sayreville when the United States entered World War II, and 1,500 of Sayreville's men answered the call to serve, 20% of the town's total population. Women eagerly took their places in the factories that were by this time operating alongside the dozens of clay and brick companies, as DuPont and Hercules were then producing feverishly for the war effort. Then when the war ended, Sayreville's boys returned to their hometown's seven prewar neighborhoods, which were surrounded and separated by vast stretches of open space owned by the clay and brick industry. But within a few short years, their quiet, rural, highly pedestrian existence, where industry was paramount, was rapidly replaced by a new American ideal: suburbia. A Cultural History of Sayreville is the story of that transformation, how the reimagining of mined out clay pits into traditional suburban spaces impacted Sayreville's residents. In over two hundred glossy, full-color pages, this book shows the changing patterns of land-use in this place and how varied groups have interacted with its natural environment, from the Leni Lenape Indians and turn of the century European immigrants, to the white nuclear families who fled New Jersey's crowded urban north in the postwar years seeking the American Dream. Containing countless artifacts, maps, oral histories, and photographs from the archives of the Sayreville Historical Society Museum, most of which have never before been shown to the public, A Cultural History of Sayreville takes the reader on a journey through time in Sayreville's unique cultural landscape, one dominated by the seemingly conflicting designs of industry and suburbia.

Jason J. Slesinski is the 6th generation of his family to live in Sayreville. He earned a BA in History at Montclair State University and an MA in American Studies at Rutgers-Newark. His areas of interest include New Jersey History, Urban Environmental History, and American Consumer Culture. He currently serves as Vice-President of the Sayreville Historical Society.

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