



James Buchanan “J. B.” Chambers – *Philanthropy*

James Buchanan Chambers, the son of Samuel and Nancy Chambers, was born Dec. 19, 1854, on the Taylor Farm in rural Ohio County, West Virginia. He attended the Buchanan School, West Alexander Academy, and Iron City College in Pittsburgh where he received his academic training for a successful career in business and banking.

In 1872, the Chambers family moved to a farm along National Road in the area that now is known as Elm Grove. A portion of that family farm, once called the Chambers Memorial Farm, currently is the site of the J.B. Chambers Family YMCA.

In 1876, Chambers married Arabelle May Whitham. They had two children, Hazel Geneva Chambers (1892–1966) and Alvin Brunel Chambers (1895–1912). In 1881, the couple moved to West Alexander, in adjacent Washington County, Pennsylvania, where he would reside throughout the remainder of his life. His first wife died in 1915, and in 1920 Chambers married Maude Armstrong.

While residing in West Alexander and managing the family farm, Chambers was employed as a sales representative for Dearling Implement Company of Cleveland; however, he spent the majority of his professional career in banking.

In 1893, he founded the Elm Grove Mining Company and managed it until he sold it in 1915. Chambers then headed up the organization of the First National Bank of West Alexander, which later would become Citizen’s National Bank, and played a prominent role in the formation of the First National Bank and Trust Company of Elm Grove. Later Chambers formed the People’s National Bank of West Alexander.

J.B. Chambers died at his home in West Alexander on May 6, 1933, at the age of 78. At the time of his death, he was president of the First National Bank and Trust of Elm Grove and vice president of the People’s National Bank of West Alexander.

In 1924, Chambers created the J.B. Chambers Memorial Foundation to carry on his life’s work after his passing. Since its initial founding, the original purpose of the foundation was to be used for the benefit of the children of Ohio County, West Virginia, and West Alexander, Pennsylvania. Since then, the J.B. Chambers Foundation has expanded greatly upon its original mission and purpose so that it now serves the youth of the greater Wheeling area, often partnering with other public and private organizations to make projects possible.

Through the generosity and vision of Chambers and his foundation, some of the more notable projects funded by his foundation include the J.B. Chambers Baseball and Softball Complex at I-470, the J.B. Chambers Performing Arts Center on the campus of Wheeling Park High School, the J.B. Chambers Family YMCA on the site of the original family farm in Elm Grove, the J.B. Chambers Memorial Recreation Park on Sixteenth Street in East Wheeling, the recently renovated ice rink at Wheeling Park, the J.B. Chambers Soccer Fields at Wheeling Park, the Miracle League Field at the I-470 complex, the weekend backpack nutrition program at Madison Elementary School, summer camp at the NASA Challenger Learning Center, children’s needs program at the Youth Services System, Kings Daughters Child Care Center, numerous children’s programs administered through the Community Foundation for the Ohio Valley, and youth scholarships for creative programs at Oglebay Institute.

That is not a complete list but is representative of the programs partnered and funded by the J.B. Chambers Memorial Foundation. Annually the J.B. Chambers Foundation makes charitable grants and contributions to achieve Chambers’ wishes for the youth of the greater Wheeling area.