



Newsletter of the Middletown Township Historical Society

Vol VI No. 1

February 1990

THE NORTHERN MONMOUTH COUNTY COUNTRY HOUSE

Patron and Architect 1891 – 1935

Continued

Public Library. They won the commission in a competition, beating McKim, Mead & White among others. Hastings married the daughter of E.C. Benedict in 1900, for whom he designed in 1895-6 his first well-known country house, Indian Harbor, near Greenwich, Connecticut.

David Withers, nationally known horseman, began assembling Brookdale Farm in 1872. It was purchased by William Payne Thompson in 1893. Thompson hired Carrère & Hastings to build a large house around an existing structure. (Figure 14) The firm also designed some of the Thompson outbuildings and the restoration of major fire damage to the main house. The Thompson house is an infrequent example of a frame Carrère & Hastings country house. It is thought the house reflects the classical revival spurred by the 1893 Columbian Exposition. Carrère & Hastings is better known for masonry works such as the Murry Guggenheim house in West Long Branch (Figure 15) for which the firm received the 1906 Medal of Honor of the New York Chapter of the Architectural League of New York.

The Country estate begun by J. Amory Haskell was the Township's largest and one of its finest. Some of the grounds are used as the site of the annual October Hunt Meet, but



Figure 14. The William Payne Thompson house, now the Monmouth County Park System's headquarters in Thompson Park, Newman Springs Road, Lincroft.

two principal houses no longer stand. The Haskell Oak Hill Farm house was destroyed and his son Amory L. Haskell's house, Woodland Farm was demolished.

Jonathan Amory Haskell bought the Grover H. Lufburrow⁹ and Edward M. Cooper¹⁰ farms in 1907. He steadily bought additional property. One acquisition as the old mill near the pond on Whipporwill Valley Road that took Haskell's name. This property was purchased in 1915 from Oscar Hesse, gunpowder merchant.¹¹ The property included four powder magazines, some still visible though obscured by trees. Haskell knew powder. He was a vice president of DuPont and also General Motors. Family holdings reached nearly 500 acres.



Figure 15. The Murry Guggenheim house, Cedar Avenue, West Long Branch, now Monmouth College's Guggenheim Library.



Figure 16. The Haskell dairy, Cooper Road, Middletown.

Haskell built one of the Country's finest dairy's on Cooper Road in 1907. (Figure 16) He was an active official of the Monmouth County Fair Association and raised outstanding cows and horses. Haskell's showplace house was designed by York & Sawyer¹² and built in 1910-11. Edward Palmer York was a draftsman in the McKim, Mead & White office, gaining his early country house experience there. He



Figure 17. The J. Amory Haskell house at Oak Hill Farm.



Figure 18. Haskell's gardens.

formed a partnership with Philip Sawyer around the turn of the century. The firm is better known for office and institutional buildings. Their notable New York City works include the Federal Reserve Bank and the Greenwich, Bowery and Central Savings Banks. They also designed a number of hospitals.

Haskell spent time prior to construction improving the grounds without radically changing the landscape. His three story, 98 foot long house was located high on a hill north of Cooper Road. (Figure 17). An Italian garden with brick walls, swimming pool and a large terrace surrounded by a stone wall made the grounds enhance the house. (Figure 18). It burned in July 1966.

The grounds became a family compound. The family of Mrs. Haskell, the former Margaret Moore Riker, settled on Long Island in the 17th century. She was fond of a house built c. 1809 by her grandfather, John C. Jackson. It was disassembled, moved by barge from Long Island and re-erected on an Oak Hill Farm hill. It is still there, somewhat altered, but with its basic appearance faithful to the original.

Son Amory L. Haskell had a massive, less distinguished house on adjoining Woodland Farm that was demolished by developer-buyers in the 1970s to reduce taxes. Only fragments of the superlative Haskell operation remain, but it is remembered as arguably the finest country operation in the Township.

The *Red Bank Register* observed in 1912 that "Within the last few years Shrewsbury has changed greatly. No longer is it a small village or farming community, but a town of large country estates."¹³ The occasion was the expansion of Dr. Ernest Fahnestock's estate by purchase of an adjoining farm. His Shadow Brook Farm centered around a large 1909 colonial revival mansion designed by Harrie T. Lindeberg. (Figure 19). Lindeberg trained at the National Academy of



Figure 19. The Dr. Ernest Fahnestock house as a restaurant. The canopy was a later addition and side porches were enclosed.

Design and was a draftsman at McKim, Mead & White. When Stanford White died in 1906, Lindeberg and another employee, Lewis Colt Albro, took a commission out of the office and established their firm.¹⁴

Lindeberg was a country house specialist. The colonial Fahnestock farm group fits well in a townscape changing from its agricultural origins to a residential character. Lindeberg's times, the "eclectic period" or period revival in American architecture, were characterized by architects drawing inspiration from many historical precedents, including styles not previously common in the United States. Lindeberg drew from varied sources, notably English, during his long career. An outstanding example of Elizabethan inspired design is the Rumson house built in 1918 for Thomas A. Viator. This house, 200 feet long when built, is brick, of fire-resistant construction, and has a slate roof. It is located at the southwest corner of Rumson Road and Bingham Avenue. (Figure 20)

Fahnestock was a surgeon, practicing in New York City and Monmouth County. He was a former president of Monmouth Memorial Hospital. He killed himself in 1937. The main house is now the Shadowbrook Restaurant. Farm buildings were converted to private residences and sold to



Figure 20. The Thomas A. Viator house, now the home of Lloyd and Sergie Christianson, 99 Rumson Road, Rumson.

separate owners. The carriage house has substance in its own right and is now an attractive 8,400 square foot dwelling.

Everett Brown's house is now named Blossom Cove. (Figure 21) It is located at the end of the street of the same name south of Navesink River Road. It is one of the state's



Figure 21. Blossom Cove, c. 1920s. The tile roof has been replaced with shingles.



Figure 22. The Russell Tierney remodeling is now the home of Ben and Agnes Palumbo, Spruce Drive, Middletown. Some remember it as the Oliver Holton home, site of the wolf attack tragedy.

most historic twentieth century buildings, a distinction stemming from litigation that now affects all New Jersey property owners. It was built in 1914, designed by Ernest A. Arend, a Monmouth County architect with a diverse practice. Arend designed schools, offices and other properties in addition to large houses. Everett was a New York broker with no known relationships to numerous other Browns of the area.

Arend started his career in Trenton before 1900. He had offices in Red Bank and Asbury Park. His early work was largely residential in Asbury Park, Allenhurst, Rumson, and Middletown. He designed the former North Asbury Park fire house by 1902. Educational commissions included high schools in Red Bank, Asbury Park and Long Branch and the Leonardo Elementary school. Other work includes the Ann May Memorial Hospital in Spring Lake and the Asbury Park Press building.

The Everett Brown house was a stucco over hollow tile with a tile roof. The roof was later replaced with shingles. Arend designed many houses in this popular Italian Renaissance style of the Eclectic Period. A notable example is a remodeling expansion for Russell Tierney at Spruce Drive and Crest Road in Middletown village on a former Hendrickson farm. (Figure 22)

Paul and Olivia Switz bought the Everett Brown house in 1949. They thought their tax assessment was disproportionately high and sued the Township in 1955. They won the landmark case of Switz vs. Middletown in 1957. It is

the origin of equalized valuation and periodic reassessments.

The relationships of William Adams Delano with Thatcher M. Brown reflects the movement of society architect in high-powered business circles. His father was with the bankers, Brown Brothers Company. Delano had the right education, Lawrenceville, Yale, architecture at Columbia, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and apprenticeship with Carrere and Hastings. Delano formed a partnership with Chester Aldrich in 1903. He met Henry Walters that year through his Yale classmate, Cornelius Vanderbilt IV, in Venice while on the grand tour with Arthur Brown Jr. The new firm began their practice with the substantial commission of Baltimore's Walters Art Gallery, finished in 1910. They quickly added a number of country houses, the firm becoming pre-eminent in the field. They had a reputation for matching house with client. Their society contacts also resulted in several private club commissions, including the Colony Club in New York.¹⁵

Thatcher Brown had summered at Locust Point for some years. He bought Guions Point in 1911, the land west of the mouth of McClees Creek at the Navesink River. The Delano design of English manor influence was for a three story, 145 foot long tile roofed house on a bluff overlooking the river. The house was finished in 1913. (Figure 23)

The Brown-Delano connection resulted in the firm's only commission for an office building at 59 Wall Street. Delano & Aldrich remodeled a stable for the firm's offices, a building still standing at 126 East 38th Street, New York.

Two other Delano & Aldrich styles were English stucco, chosen for Delano's own house in Muttontown, Long Island, and a modest colonial revival. An example of the latter is reflected in their other Middletown commission, the Payne Thompson house, now a Monmouth County Parks office in Thompson Park, Lincroft. (Figure 24) The house likely fit the owner's taste, Southern, and certainly needs. It was a



Figure 23. The Thatcher Brown house is now named Red Gables. The south facade overlooking the Navesink River.

one-story, wide-doorway residence with office for wheelchair-user Dr. Thompson.

Andrew Varick Stout, New York stock broker and partner of Dominick & Dominick, was an early buyer of Middletown land for a country estate. His family had shore ties to Rumson and Stout was reported to have purchased fifty-two acres on the north side of Navesink River Road in 1906.¹⁶ His plans for a new country house were delayed until the 1916 purchase of ten acres on the south or waterfront side, and completion of World War 1 service in Paris as a YMCA executive at age 44. Stout was an astute judge of antiques and fond of early American furniture. He built Monmouth County's finest Georgian revival house, choosing architect John Russell Pope. (Figure 25) Stout was as



Figure 24. The Payne Thompson house is now Monmouth County Park System offices in Thompson Park.



Figure 25. The Andrew Varick Stout house, Navesink River Road, Middletown.



Figure 26. The Robert Collier house is now home of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Wickatunk, Marlboro.

farmer outings that were forerunners of the Hunt Meet at Haskell's. Pope was a classicist and favored the colonial revival. He believed that Georgian styles involved a spirit of patriotism. The Collier house is reminiscent of our most widely copied colonial icon, Mount Vernon.

The Andrew Varick Stout house was widely publicized in the architectural press. Royal Cortissoz, a leading critic, praised the plan of the typical Pope house, claiming they wasted no space and maximized circulation and light, while exactly balanced by simple facades. (Figure 27) The Stout house contains a magnificent example of another Pope feature, the spiral staircase. (Figure 28) A characteristic designed specifically for this site was a garden directly in front of the house's open porch. Mrs. Stout loved her garden, grew prize-winning dahlias and wanted it in closer proximity than the usual setting away from the house.¹⁸

Another outstanding Pope country house is Marshall Field III's Caumsett. It is publicly owned in Lloyd Neck, Long Island, in a state park of the same name.

One of Pope's greatest public buildings is the Scottish Rite Temple, now known as the George Washington National Masonic Memorial, in Alexandria, Virginia, for which he

Continued

9. Monmouth Deeds Book 798, page 269.
10. Monmouth Deeds Book 807 page 479.
11. Monmouth Deeds Book 1005, page 282.
12. Monmouth Building Contract Number 7158 dated March 9, 1910.
13. *Red Bank Register* April 10, 1912
14. Hewitt, op.cit, page 55.
15. Hewitt, op.cit, pages 48-51.
16. *Red Bank Register* December 5, 1906.
17. Conversation with Bayard and Ruth Stout, May 3, 1991.
18. *ibid*

shrewd as he was astute. Realizing the architect's fee, based on project cost, would be the same for a great designer as a lesser one, Stout aimed to get the best and succeeded.¹⁷

Country houses dominated the early career of John Russell Pope, an architect perhaps best known for his later monumental work including the National Gallery and Jefferson Memorial in Washington. Pope was born in New York in 1874. He studied architecture under professor William Ware. Pope won two important scholarships and studied at the American Academy in Rome where he was among its first students. Pope spent two years traveling in Italy, Greece and Sicily in serious study of monuments. He later studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.

Pope opened a New York City office in 1903. An early commission was the Marlboro Township house for Robert Collier. (Figure 26) It is an infrequent Pope frame example, the design simplified to reflect the agrarian surroundings. Collier's country life included polo and aviation activities. Many Monmouthites received their first airplane trip there in

P.O. BOX 434
MIDDLETOWN, NJ 07748
PHONE: 291-8739 during museum hours.
EDITOR: RANDALL GABRIELAN
DEDICATED TO RESEARCHING, COLLECTING AND EXHIBITING THE
HISTORY OF MIDDLETOWN TOWNSHIP.

Museum: In the main building at Croydon Hall on Leonardville Rd. between Chamone and Bellevue Aves. in the township's Leonardo section. Open Saturdays & Sundays.

Meetings: 8:00 PM at the museum, generally on the fourth Monday with occasional exceptions for major holidays.

Donations of historical materials: Please see a museum guide or write to the Society.



**MEMBERSHIP DUES
PER CALENDAR YR.**

Individual — \$5.00
Family — \$10.00

Dues for new members
joining after Oct. 1 in-
clude following year.