



# Newsletter of the Middletown Township Historical Society

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## SHADOW BROOK FARM

### ITS HISTORY AND THE LIFE AND TIMES OF DR. ERNEST FAHNESTOCK

*Continued*

changes are fully completed only a small part of the farm is intended to be used for farm purposes."

The Register projected the effect of the sale on the real estate market and Shrewsbury's future. The benefit of hindsight permits appreciation of their foresight.

"The Stilwell farm, by reason of its location, has been coveted for many years by persons who realize its advantages a suburb of Red Bank. A number of offers have been made for the purchase of the farm, the prospective purchasers intending to develop the tract and lay it out in building lots..."

The purchase of the Stilwell farm by Dr. Fahnestock will effectually stop the growth of Red Bank in that direction. Some of the property owners whose places are south of the Stilwell farm have been hoping that in time their places would come within the radius of the Red Bank demand for building lots, but they say now that the purchase of the Stilwell farm by Dr. Fahnestock will set up a barrier which will make Red Bank grow in other directions than along the Red Bank and Shrewsbury road. Other property holders in the neighborhood believe that while the purchase of the Stilwell farm by Dr. Fahnestock and his conversion of the farm into a fine country estate will prevent the town of Red Bank growing in that direction, the beautifying of the Stilwell farm in the manner proposed will enhance the value of all other property in that neighborhood, and will make their properties available as villa sites."

The Fahnestock purchase had a stabilizing effect. The area was enhanced for quality estates. Construction on small plots in the manner of the west side of Red Bank and the Newman Springs Road area of Tinton Falls was avoided.

## THE ARCHITECTS

Ernest Fahnestock's architects were the New York firm of

Albro & Lindeberg. Shadow Brook was a major early commission of these country house specialists, whose partnership spanned the years 1906 to 1914. Lewis Colt Albro was born in 1876 in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, receiving his early education there. He attended New York's Metropolitan Art School for a year, then joined the office of McKim, Mead,

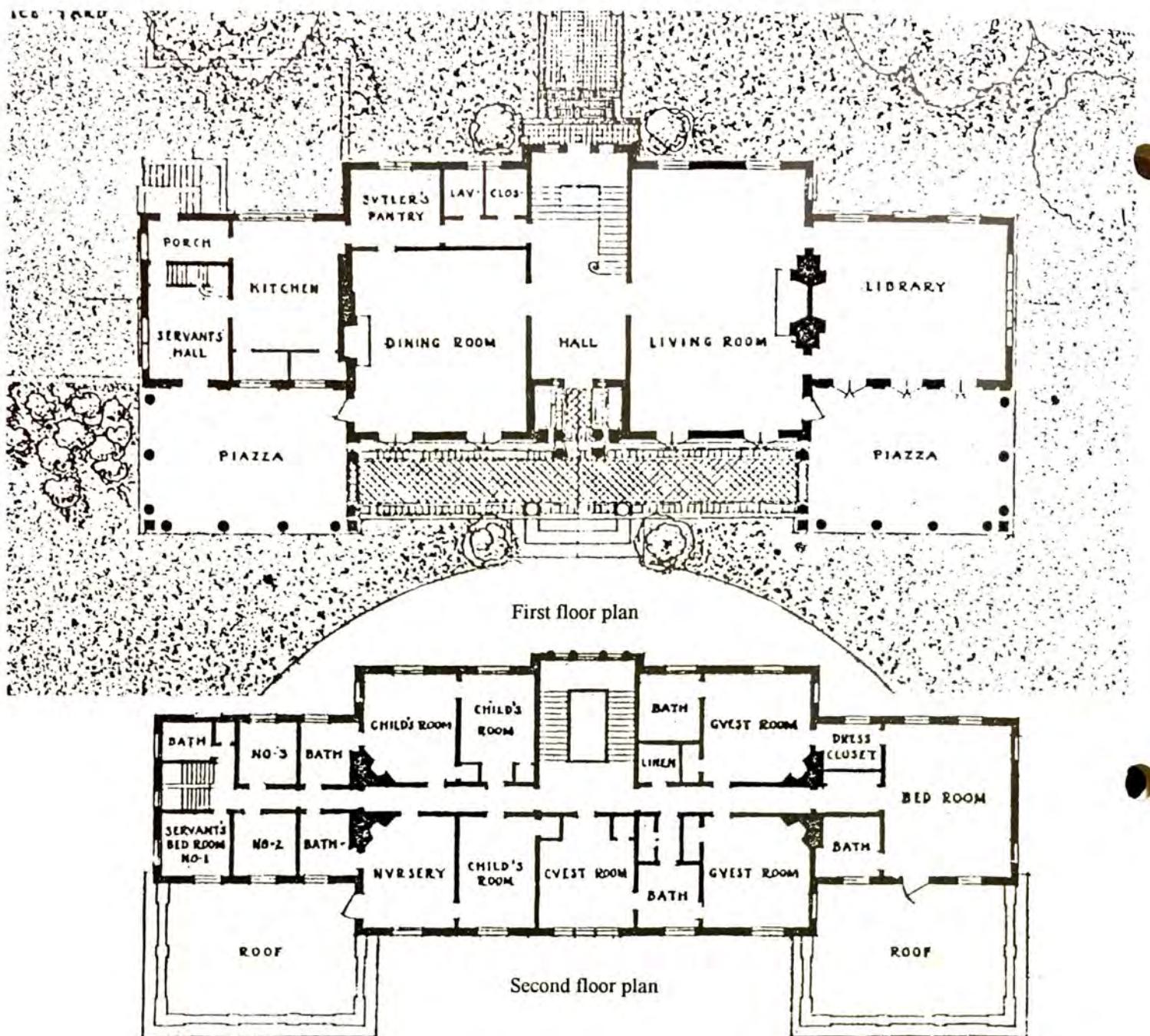


Front door - as house

& White. He held a succession of drafting and design positions there for nine years.<sup>11</sup>

Harrie Thomas Lindeberg was born in 1879 in Bayonne, New Jersey, receiving his primary education in the state.<sup>12</sup> He concealed information about his early life, even misstating his birth by a year.<sup>13</sup> He studied architecture at the McKim, Mead, & White firm. When Stanford White died in 1906, Albro & Lindeberg took a commission from the office and established their own firm. The work was apparently the Newport, Rhode Island house of Charles Dana Gibson, an Albro contact, as he worked on Gibson's New York City house while at McKim, Mead, & White.<sup>14</sup>

Distinguishing the collaborative efforts of architectural partners is often fraught with difficulty. The Fahnestock house has been attributed to Lindeberg, the better known partner



whose career exceeded Albro's by over thirty years. A contemporary writer claimed, "...Mr. Lindeberg has always been the designer in the firm...", implying that Albro was the business partner.<sup>15</sup> Recent evidence determined Albro had the Fahnestock family client tie and a major role in the design of Shadow Brook.

Edward Ritzema Perry, Dr. Fahnestock's step son and an architect himself, recalls clearly that it was Albro who was the regular visitor to Shadow Brook.<sup>16</sup> Documentary evidence is provided by a project at Shadow Brook after the partnership dissolved. The wall fountain terminal to the rose garden, was published in Albro's office monograph.<sup>17</sup> Albro also designed a farm group for Clarence Fahnestock at Carmel, New York,<sup>18</sup> which Dr. Fahnestock gave to the State of New York for use as a park.<sup>19</sup> Clarence died of pneumonia in France during World War I.<sup>20</sup> He willed his country estate to his brother, Ernest.<sup>21</sup>

Architecture during the decades surrounding the turn of the century examined and revived early American motifs and

materials. The resultant colonial revival has been a major influence which in some respects, has been continuous from late nineteenth century origins to the present. Early Albro & Lindeberg work included a few classic, colonial, or Georgian influenced designs, although they were better known for picturesque works of English origin. Albro's farm group for Clarence, reportedly his favorite work, was also picturesque, but of French Norman influence. Shadow Brook is similar in early American spirit to an earlier work, the house and farm group for Tracy Dows in Rhinebeck, New York. This client has a likely Lindeberg tie, further complicating the effort to distinguish between the partners work.<sup>22</sup>

### THE SHADOW BROOK, HOUSE

The Shadow Brook house is five bays with a center half and hipped roof. Two wings adjoin the main block. Piazzas, since closed, fronted each wing.

Three large rooms made up the first floor living quarters:



The Garden Fountain

the living room on the east of the main block, the library in the east wing, and a dining room in the west front of the hall. A butler's pantry was behind the dining room while a kitchen and servant's hall were in the west wing. The plan was published in the November 1912 number of *Architecture*. The dimensions were 125 feet by 42 feet.

Bedrooms and guest rooms made up the second story. The east wing contained the master's bedroom, taking advantage of eastern, northern, and southern exposures. Guest rooms were at the head of the stairs and the eastern section of the main block. The western section contained a nursery, children's bedrooms, and three small staff bedrooms. Additional staff rooms and storage space occupied the upper half-story.

#### SHADOW BROOK'S GROUNDS AND FARM

Transformation of the grounds was a project as great as the erection of the mansion. Dr. Fahnestock quickly turned part of his farm's high, rolling land into a woods. Within three years, "...about 150 evergreen and shade trees have been set out. All of them were transplanted. A great deal of grading has been done and more of this work will be carried on in the fall. A brook runs through the farm and advantage of this water supply will be taken for aquatic planting."<sup>23</sup>

There were three gardens. One was a cutting garden with hardy plants and flowers designed in the English style. A 100 feet by 100 feet rose garden with a reported 100 varieties was planned to bloom from early spring until frost. A vegetable and fruit garden was 125 feet by 250 feet. Plans for the gardens were drawn by Lester C. Lovett of Lovett's Nursery in Little Silver.<sup>24</sup> The landscape architect is not known. The pergola behind the house was built of white pine at the same time.

Dr. Fahnestock's plantings probably underlie the coining of the name "Shadow Brook". The house was published twice in the architectural press. The aforementioned *Architecture*, and the *American Architect & Building News* of November 16, 1910, identified it as the Dr. Ernest Fahnestock residence. The name Shadow Brook appears to have first been published in *Domestic Architecture*, a monograph of their office's work published in 1912 for private distribution by Lewis Colt Albro



Superintendents residence - after remodeling

and Harrie T. Lindeberg. The shadows newly created by the recent plantings apparently gave rise to the Shadow Brook name.

New farm buildings were built after the completion of the house in the summer of 1910. A plan of the farm was published in the Red Bank Sanborn insurance map. A tracing is illustrated herein.

The Stilwell farm house was remodeled by Albro & Lindeberg. It was occupied by Fahnestock's farmer. A garage with chauffeur's living quarters was built west of the farm house. The major farm structure was a U-shaped carriage house/stable, built north of the garage. The ground floor consisted of a main block, with two massive rooms used for carriage storage, flanked by two wings.<sup>25</sup> Farm horses were housed in one wing with saddle horses in the other.<sup>26</sup> The second story had living space for the coachman and an extensive storage loft for hay and feed.

The dairy barn was built by local contractor Harry Borden. It was "provided with every facility known to these times for the care of cattle. In this respect, about the only cow farm in the country that will compare with it is the building on J. A. Haskell's place in Middletown Township."<sup>27</sup>

The farm also included hay barns, a brooder house, a corn building, and ice house.



Carriage house



Carriage house - as residence



Garage



Garage as residence

## LIFE AT SHADOW BROOK

Shadow Brook was always a summer house, generally occupied for the months of June, July, and August. Dr. Fahnestock was a respected surgeon. He usually took a one month's vacation and commuted to the city during summer work time. The family lived in an elaborate white stone town house at 954 Fifth Avenue, New York City. Both houses required a staff of some size. Many moved to Shadow Brook for the summer months.

Shadow Brook was some distance from the center of Monmouth social life. This may have suited the Fahnestock's preferences. For instance, Dr. Fahnestock liked to ride horses, but was not interested in hunt-type activities.<sup>28</sup>

*Continued*

<sup>11</sup> Dictionary of American Biography, Volume I, p. 137

<sup>12</sup> National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, Volume 47, P. 527, New York, James T. White & Co., 1965

<sup>13</sup> Hewitt, Mark Alan, telephone conversation January 31, 1992

<sup>14</sup> Albro's D.A.B. entry, cited as 11. Albro's biographical material takes note of his early partnership. Lindeberg, however, often omitted mention of it.

<sup>15</sup> Price, C. Matlack, "The Recent Work of Albro & Lindeberg", Architecture Volume XXXI, No. 1, January 1915

<sup>16</sup> Perry, Edward Ritzema, telephone conversation February 23, 1992. Mr. Perry reinforced his personal recollections by remembering his mother's complaint that "Albro never put enough closets in."

<sup>17</sup> (no author), Selections from Work Designed and Erected During the Last Ten Years, Lewis Colt Albro, Architect, Lovett Rice, Associate, New York, Architectural Catalog Company, 1924

<sup>18</sup> IBID.

<sup>19</sup> *New York Times*, August 29, 1929

<sup>20</sup> *New York Times*, October 9, 1918

<sup>21</sup> *New York Times*, May 18, 1919

<sup>22</sup> Hewitt, Mark Alan, op.c it.

<sup>23</sup> *Red Bank Register*, August 30, 1911

<sup>24</sup> IBID.

<sup>25</sup> *Red Bank Register*, June 6, 1910

<sup>26</sup> Perry, op. cit.

<sup>27</sup> *Red Bank Register*, August 30, 1911

<sup>28</sup> Perry, op. cit.

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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.



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