

BROADSIDE

FALL 1996

WEST WINDSOR NEIGHBORHOODS: COLONIAL PARK (PART I)

The following article was written using information provided by: Linda & John D. Bowker, Nancy Denner, Carl & Maria B. Fogelin, Stefan & Frances Guzy, Jody Kendall, Dr. Jennifer Macleod, Diana & Michael Manduca, Angela Ryan, Charles & Frances Raleigh, Genevieve & Frank Stiefel, Janis Barondess Todd — all past or present residents of Colonial Park.

Readers of *Broadside* will know that the first "development" (subdivision, really) in West Windsor was Berrien City, built in the 1920s (Fall 1992 issue). Then Glen Acres, on Alexander Road west of Route One, was built around 1958 but was fairly small scale — just 20 houses (*Broadside*, Fall 1992).



1985 Aerial view of Colonial Park - Lent by Jody Kendall from John Bowker

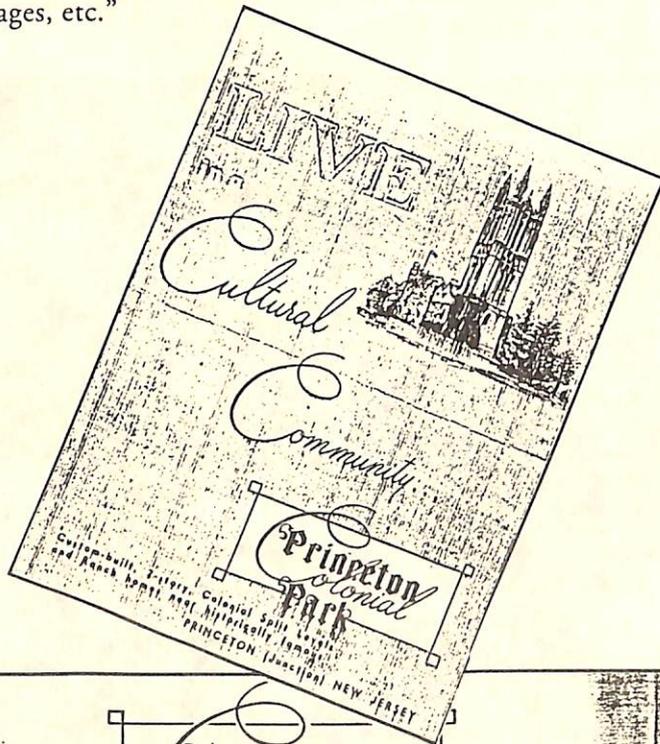
Another small development was Windsor Estates. This subdivision consisted of the first group of 16 houses running from the Princeton-Hightstown Road along Windsor Drive. The houses were built in 1958-59 by Boyce Harrison, who later served as West Windsor's Building Inspector.

In addition, eighteen houses were built in 1957-58 off North Mill Road by Werner-Ziff, who built Colonial Park. It was called Piedmont Drive after the Piedmont Nursery which had been located on the land. First home owners on the drive found rows of trees or bushes on their plot of land, the residue of the nursery.

However, Princeton Colonial Park was the first large-scale development (125 houses). Colonial Park is located behind the West Windsor-Plainsboro High School and has Penn Lyle Road as its western border, Quaker Road as its southern border, Canoe Brook Drive as its northern border and Nassau Place and University Way as its eastern border. Interior streets are: Princeton Place, Ziff Lane, Jeffrey Lane, and Colonial Avenue. The names of most of these street names are easily understood. So far we have been unable to identify the "Jeffrey" of Jeffrey Lane. He was undoubtedly someone related to the developers.

The farm upon which Colonial Park was built had been owned by the D.K. Voorhees Family. No photo of the farmhouse has been found.

According to Dr. Jennifer Macleod: "The original builder was Werner-Ziff. They built those few houses and then another builder took over the rest of the property. Werner-Ziff underpriced so they lost their shirts. They were amazingly well built houses. Some of the material in them was way better than you'd expect because they bought what was available. They are really solid houses and still doing well. Many people have added rooms out the back and second garages, etc."



"When the builder changed, the models also changed in a way that is visible. With the second builder, the houses were bigger, and although they built a few split levels like the old ones, they put a crawl space under the living areas so that you can see that the lines are a little different; the main floor is a little higher."

"Prospective buyers had a choice of three different style houses ready to be constructed on each lot. The styles available were: the Lafayette Ranch Home; the Hamilton Split Level and the Washington 2-story Colonial. Each model had variations, such as roof line, so houses would not look too uniform. The model houses were located at 54 Penn Lyle Road (ranch style), 56 Penn Lyle Road (split level) and 58 Penn Lyle Road (colonial)."

Dr. Macleod also recalls that split levels sold than the other two because they were a better buy, a better design and the most popular at that time. You got a lot more house for the money. The split level was initially \$17,690. The colonial was about \$1,000 more, and the ranch (smaller than the other two) about \$1,000 less.

John Bowker remembers that on the weekend of August 16-17, 1958 all closing costs were waived. Also, that there was a roofline rule that no adjacent homes could have the same roof line. The intent was to avoid making the tract look like a housing development. But within weeks, they abandoned that rule.

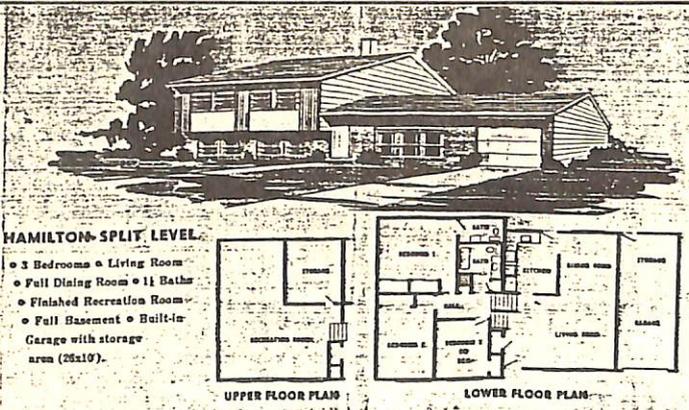


PRINCETON (JUNCTION) NEW JERSEY

OUTSTANDING FEATURES

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- General Electric gas-fired, hot-air heat.
- Oak hardwood floors.
- All wood windows.
- Landscaped lots with thornberry.
- 100 Amp. service.
- Macadam driveway.
- Full insulation.
- Ceramic tile baths with American Standard fixtures.
- All wooden cedar shakes.
- Built-in oven and range.
- Natural birch cabinets.

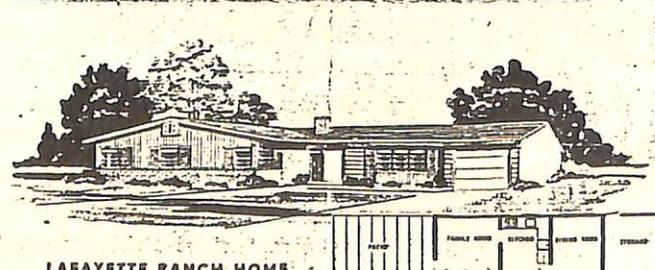
• ALL UTILITIES IN AND PAID FOR.



HAMILTON SPLIT LEVEL

- 3 Bedrooms • Living Room
- Full Dining Room • 1 1/2 Baths
- Finished Recreation Room
- Full Basement • Built-in Garage with storage area (25x10).

UPPER FLOOR PLAN LOWER FLOOR PLAN



LAFAYETTE RANCH HOME



WASHINGTON 2-STORY COLONIAL

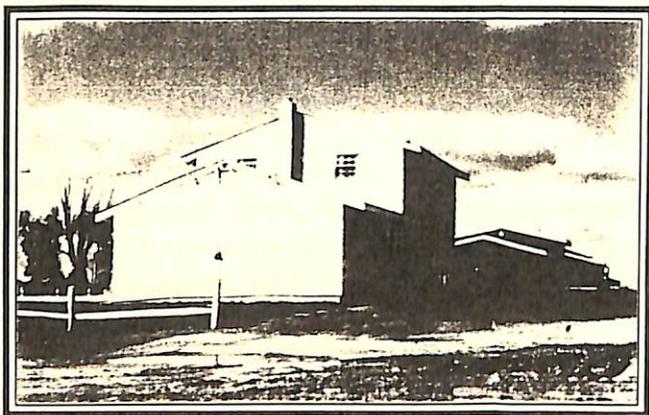
- 4 Bedrooms • 22' Living Room
- Large Dining Room • 1 1/2 Baths
- Built-in Garage • Finished Recreation Room and Utility Room.

Princeton Colonial Park: "First Group" brochure courtesy of Frank and Genevieve Stiefel

The Residents of Colonial Park

According to questionnaires, filled out by present and former residents of Colonial Park, most first-time buyers were professional people, who worked for nearby organizations such as the Sarnoff Labs of RCA, FMC, the Princeton Plasma Lab, New Jersey Bell etc. Some residents commuted to New York City or Philadelphia.

Most residents were families with school age children. Several children were born while living in the development. For example, Dan Bowker, Jeff and Judy Guzy. Pamela Macleod was born November 9, 1960. Her younger brother, Scott was born in 1962. Virginia Stiefel was born on August 23, 1960, and thus appears to be the first baby born in Colonial Park.



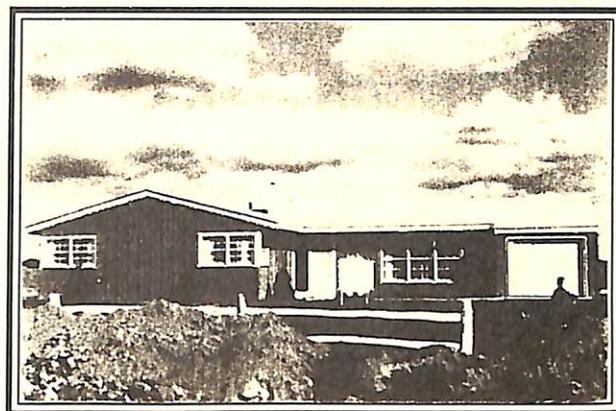
Looking north among the three original model homes for Colonial Park. Located on the east side of Penn Lyle Road, they are among the three most southerly houses on Penn Lyle Road that are part of Colonial Park (1958). Courtesy of John Bowker.

But enough background, let's hear directly from the residents of Colonial Park:

The Bowker Family

John D. and Linda Bowker, with daughter, Wendy and son, John S., moved into 14 Canoe Brook Drive the Tuesday before Thanksgiving 1959. We were about the fifth family to move into Princeton Colonial Park.

Stefan and Frances Guzy had already moved in on Election Day 1959. Stefan Guzy adds: "We had been living in the Clarksville Motel for six weeks with our sick children and decided to wait no longer to move into our new house. We got electricity from a neighbor's house and convinced others to turn on water and gas. We closed officially on our house in January 1960."



Original Ranch Style model home; may still be the most southerly Ranch house in Colonial Park on Penn Lyle Road (1958). Courtesy of John Bowker.

All occupied homes that first year were along Canoe Brook Drive. Other streets such as Princeton Place were laid out, but no houses were ready for occupancy, except possibly the house first occupied by State Trooper Jerry Dollar on the southeast corner of Canoe Brook-Princeton Place. (5 Canoe Brook Drive) That house was later sold to the Fogelins. It is owned today by Mike and Linda Kriebel.

We had purchased our house on August 17, 1958 and were told it would be ready by late spring 1959. It wasn't. The builders, Werner-Ziff, ran into one problem after another. Stefan Guzy adds: "Werner-Ziff never went bankrupt, to my knowledge. They had financial problems because of construction delays. Our house took 14 months to complete. Mrs. Ziff provided financial backing to complete the first section. The balance of the development was sold to Hilton Realty."

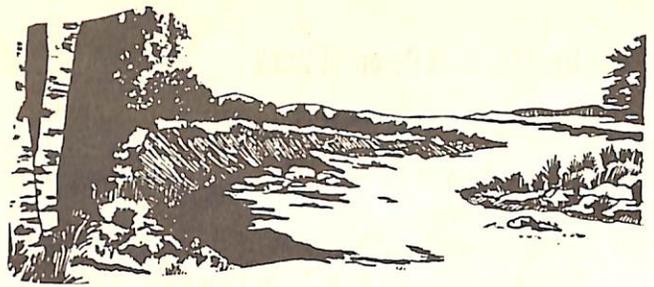
By late October 1959 several of the houses were substantially complete. We clearly recall that the houses on the south side of Canoe Brook, at least those from Penn Lyle Road as far east as 13 Canoe Brook (then and presently owned by Frances and Charles Raleigh) appeared ready for occupancy. Several on the north side, including ours, looked ready too. On a visit to the property the weekend before Thanksgiving, we noted that Jerry Dollar and the Guzys had moved in. Electricity had been turned on in the Dollar home. In order to have power, they had run an extension cord across Princeton Place to the Baker house at 3 Canoe Brook Drive.

Two days later we moved in...without closing or other notification to the builder. There had been so many hassles by then, the builder probably thought it best just to let people move in and rough it until the papers could be drawn up.

The first house owners along the south side of Canoe Brook Drive, starting with the house on the corner of Penn Lyle and Canoe Brook, were: Morgan, Baker, Dollar, Stoller, House, Guzy, Campbell, Naistadt and Larrick. The Campbells never moved in, and within a few weeks, that new house was sold to the Raleighs who still live there today.

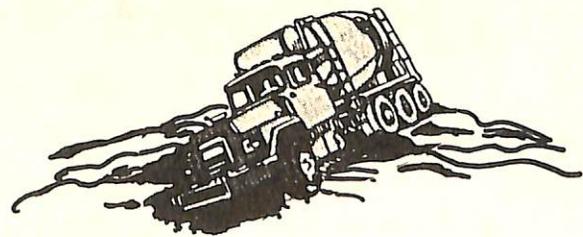
On the north side of Canoe Brook Drive, the family names taken in groups of three were, by coincidence, arranged alphabetically, again starting at Penn Lyle: Campbell/Macleod/O'Brien, Farrell/Kirchgessner/Pugh, Bowker/Froehlich/Lynch! Incidentally, this Campbell family is no relation to the Campbells who originally bought 13 Canoe Brook. However, the Campbells were not the original owners. They had been preceded by the Hunt family, who sold to the Campbells in 1962-63.

Diana and Michael Manduca recall a family, possibly named "Hunt," that lived on the corner of Canoe Brook Drive and Penn Lyle Road. They had a tall flagpole on their front lawn. When a flag flew at the top, all neighbors were welcome for drinks in the late afternoon. They were a colorful pair!



Canoe Brook was really a brook! Its path was rather straight and ran mostly along the line of its present course. Near the Pugh-Bowker line, the brook turned rather sharply south and made a sweeping U-shaped bend that cut the original Bowker property quite in half. At the eastern edge of the Bowker-Froehlich line, the routing was back to its present course. The builder straightened the brook out to its present alignment and gave a special warranty that a septic system would still work for the Bowker property even though a brook had flowed for many years across the position of all the new septic drain fields.

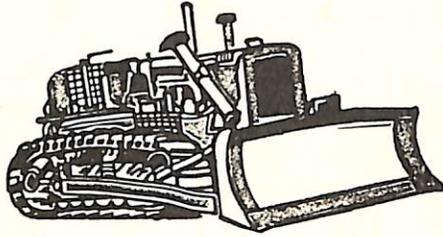
The day we bought the property in 1958, we walked all across the field that was to become the Canoe Brook Drive properties. It was basically flat with many, many small trees hither and yon. This indicated to me that the field had not been farmed for a couple of decades at least. There was a structure (I'm fuzzy about this) I believe it was a barn in terrible repair. It was used for the storage of lumber and machinery during the initial construction. It was located about half way along the present alignment of Ziff Lane. There were no roads at first, of course. The trucks hauling the pre-cut lumber stored in that barn simply took the most direct route in each case.



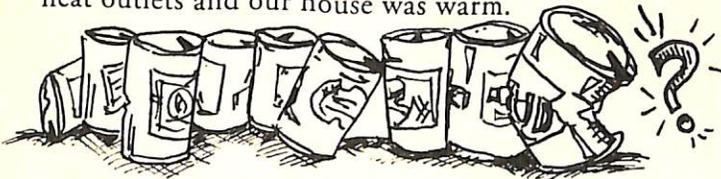
I recall that the sidewalks were poured before the streets were paved. This is a vivid recollection since a huge truck full of concrete rolled over directly in front of the Raleigh house while pouring the sidewalk. The street was so muddy, the wheels on one side just sank in. The driver was uninjured, but that truck stayed there several days until a wrecker could get enough of a firm footing to right it and then drag it away. Meantime, of course, the cement in the truck and in the trough leading down to the unfinished sidewalk hardened. We all watched it happen, totally helpless to lessen the mammoth problem.

Other things during construction were not always done in the right order either. We recall the day they put down the first layer of macadam on Canoe Brook Drive. We were not permitted to drive on it for a day or two. However, all of our macadam driveways had been put down a week earlier.

Boy, it was really beginning to take shape and we were delighted! That is until we watched that afternoon while a Caterpillar tractor rolled across all our front lawns, levelling them for eventual seeding. Naturally the tractor ran across our newly paved driveways, demolishing them completely. But why complain, we all got new driveways, twice as thick as the originals.



We moved in and loved it. For some reason the new furnace did not function well although we could feel that the pipes in our split level home warmed up nicely that first November evening of occupancy. Around midnight, I began to get really cold, so went over to the newly installed heat transom, took off the decorative cover, and found the pipe neatly stuffed with a beer can. It seems the workers wanted to keep scraps of wall board from falling into the heat pipes and the beer cans were just the right calibre. By one o'clock that next morning I had removed 9 beer cans from 9 heat outlets and our house was warm.



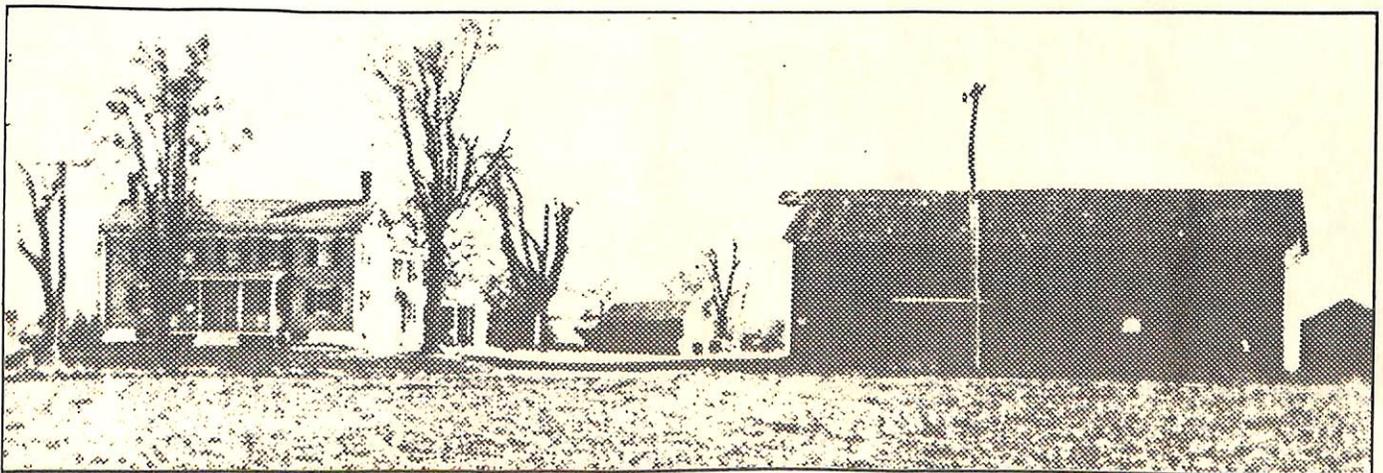
The view out our back window (looking north) was of open fields. The Coward Farm ran the whole length of Canoe Brook Drive across the brook and filled what is now the WW-P High School property. It was not uncommon to visit the Cowards to buy rhubarb and eggs.

The Cowards leased their farmland for 2-3 years to the Campbell Soup Company for growing tomatoes. They were delicious too. All the neighbors agreed! Charles Raleigh adds, "West Windsor bought the 50 plus acre Coward Farm in 1971, the town's last real estate buy at \$100,000."

At night, we could clearly see the illuminated sign at Hall's Esso (now Exxon) station on the corner of Alexander Road and the Princeton-Hightstown Road. There was NO vegetation between us for the first year we lived there until our shrubs and trees took hold.

During our second year there, a number of us got the idea of starting a community swimming pool. True, there was a really terrific public outdoor pool, a big one with a deck where the adults could lie and sunbathe and chat while the kids were in the pool. It was located where the indoor tennis courts are now on Washington Road.

But with all our new neighbors we wanted to have one closer to Colonial Park. We formed a corporation. Then, three of us called on Mr. Coward to see about buying a couple of acres of his farmland along Penn Lyle Road near Canoe Brook. The best price he could quote us was \$2,000 an acre! That was so far above what we were prepared to discuss, we gave up without another meeting.



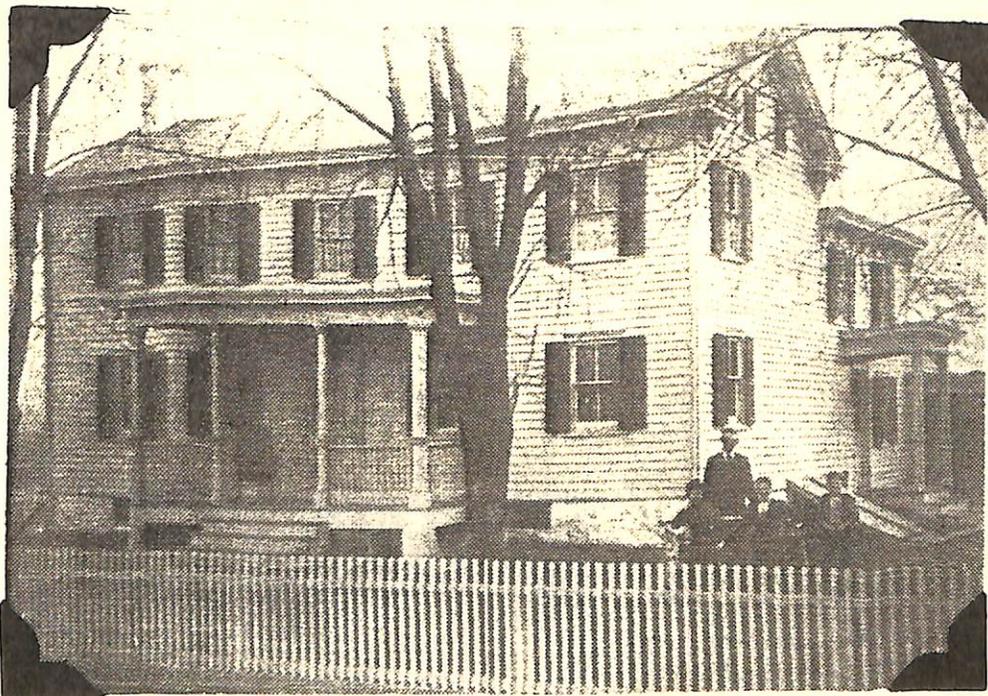
Coward Farm, Penn-Lyle Road & Rt. 571, c. 1917 (now site of West Windsor-Plainsboro High School). Photo courtesy of Herbert Coward.

On February 9, 1963, we awoke to the find the split-level house owned by Paul and Patty O'Brien had burned to the ground, and that Patty had been killed in the fire. Paul rebuilt that house a year or so later in a fresh architectural style. The rebuilt house is there today at 6 Canoe Brook Drive, a true colonial style.

I recall how some local events prompted Steve Guzy (perhaps among others, but I think he was first or among the very few) to invest in life-saving gear. There was no ambulance in the vicinity.

Stefan Guzy adds: "In the summer of 1960, the Naistadt boy was hit by a car in front of his house on Canoe Brook Drive. A call to the State Police was relayed to the Princeton First Aid Squad. No one knew where Canoe Brook Drive was, and when the ambulance finally arrived, it was too late, the boy had died.

"Art Stoller and I decided to become local first aiders. We joined the Princeton First Aid Squad, trained and responded to calls with the Squad. When available, we were dispatched directly from our homes to West Windsor victims and provided the necessary first aid until an ambulance arrived. We resigned after two years, now assured that the Princeton First Aid Squad could be responsive." (West Windsor's Twin "W" First Aid Squad was founded in 1970. See the Summer and Fall 1988 Broadside.)



Coward House, Penn-Lyle Road & Rt. 571, c. 1917 (now site of West Windsor-Plainsboro High School). In bottom right of photo are shown (L-R): Estella Vorhees Coward, Major and Sarah Bergen Vorhees (parents of Estella), Herbert Coward. Photo courtesy of Herbert Coward.

Maria B. Fogelin

(We publish this letter in memory of Mrs. Fogelin, who died in spring 1996, with the permission of her husband, Carl Fogelin and her family.)

We lived in Colonial Park from 1961 until 1994. Here is what it was like to be in the first genuine development in West Windsor, and to watch the growth of the town from pure farming to the upscale community it now is.

We were not the original owners of the house at 5 Canoe Brook Drive. It was built a year before that for Jerry Dollar, who was a state trooper. The township at that point was too small to have its own police force. Therefore, the state police patrolled us.

My husband Carl, a chemical engineer, was transferred by American Cyanamid to its Agricultural Division from Lederle Laboratories, its Pharmaceutical Division. When we first began house-hunting, Cyanamid's facility was in the process of being built. The Quaker Bridge Mall which is now across the street wasn't even a dream yet. (It was built in 1976.)

Why did we pick the particular house we did? It was almost brand new, which was a relief after the old house we'd lived in previously. The Dollar's house had been furnished by his wife, who was a professional decorator, so it showed well.

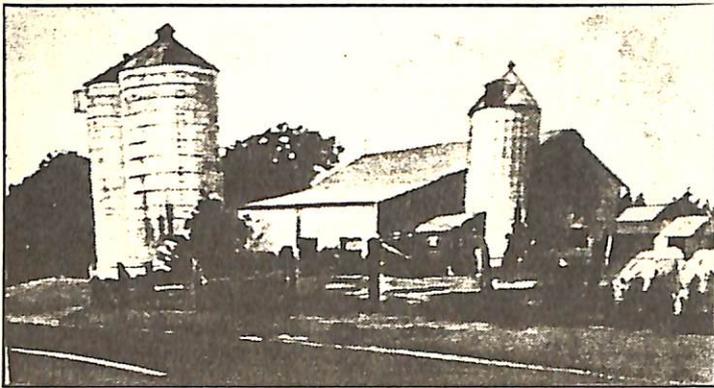
My husband likes to say that we bought it because, looking at it after a long period of rainfall, it was the only place we saw that didn't have water in the lower level. Jerry Dollar, an early Colonial Park resident, told us that when Colonial Park was being laid out, he'd paced the area to find the highest spot, and this was it. We also liked the 3/4 acre of land that came with the house, my husband being an avid gardener.

At the time we moved into Colonial Park, most of the houses on Canoe Brook Drive were already built, as were those on Princeton Place, which is perpendicular to it. In fact, we looked at three models that had just been finished at the east end of the street before picking ours. Ziff Lane, parallel to Canoe Brook Drive, was built later.

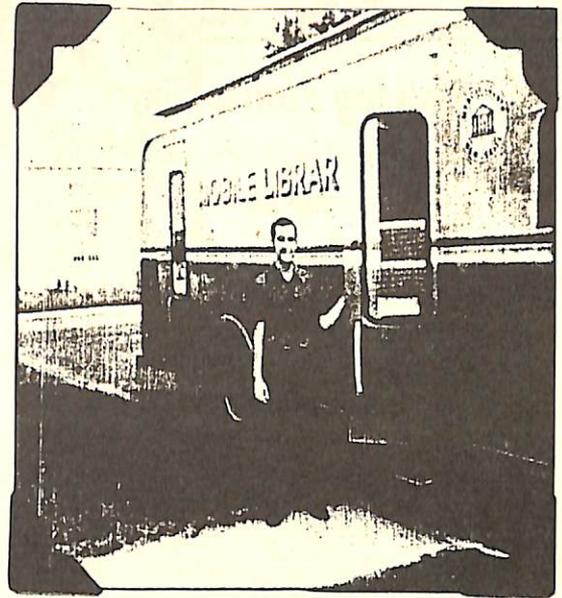
For quite some time after we moved to our house, we were surrounded by farms. In fact, when Carl was starting his garden, he dug up a plow blade. Our son dug up Indian arrowheads in the garden and found a number of sea fossils.

From our picture window we could see the working farm owned by the Charydzak Family on the far side of Penn Lyle Road. It was always a pleasure to watch the changing of the seasons by observing the farmer at work and the growth of the crops on the land.

We could also see a silo on the Mey Farm, which eventually burnt down. This vista was replaced by large houses as Wellington Estates and then Sunrise East I were built.



Barns and silo at Mey Farm. Watercolor by E. Little. Courtesy of Nora M. Werner.



The West Windsor "Bookmobile" — the Mercer County Mobile Library, 1971, Richard E. Dearborn, driver. Photo courtesy of Eleanor and Richard Dearborn.

A bookmobile would stop at the corner in front of our house once a week. It was while in it choosing some books that I learned that President Kennedy had been shot. As the township grew that level of library service became inadequate.

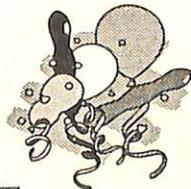
My husband served on the committee that purchased, not without controversy, the Chapel/Sunday School from the Dutch Neck Presbyterian Church in 1966, their new Christian Education Building having been completed in 1964. The building housed the library from 1966 to 1983, as well as the West Windsor court before they moved to new buildings in the Municipal Complex. The former Dutch Neck library now houses the Board of Education.

To be continued ... (next Broadside!)

1997 Meetings & Events

Meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. at the Castle, 96 Bear Brook Rd., Princeton Jct. (609/452-8598)

- January 6
- February 2 - Reception at Schenck House for West Windsor Bicentennial Celebration
- March 3
- May 5
- September 8
- November 3
- December 14 - Holiday House Tour



s s s s s s 1997 Dues s s s s s s

Don't miss an issue of the Broadside! Unless your mailing label is marked CM or RM 97, please send us your dues for 1997 as soon as possible. Your dues are crucial to the restoration efforts of the Schenck House, historical society headquarters.

Family - \$12
 Single - \$8
 Senior Citizen \$5
 Over 80 - Free

Please make checks payable to HS of WW.

Mail to: Kay Reed, Treasurer
 HS of WW
 P.O. Box 38
 Princeton Jct., NJ 08550



Holiday House Tour 1996

Saturday December 14th &

Sunday December 15th

from 1 to 4 p.m.

the Castle

Tamarack Farms, 96 Bear Brook Road

Princeton Junction, NJ

Whether you never miss a year, or are waiting to attend for the first time, round up the family and bring your holiday spirit to this traditional West Windsor Historical Society event! You will see the 26-room "Castle" in full Christmas splendor, including 17 Christmas trees of all styles and countless collections to fascinate kids from one to ninety-two! The theme this year will be Victorian.



Our gift shop will include dolls, dollhouse furniture, stocking stuffers and the popular HSofWW tee shirts. In honor of West Windsor's 200th anniversary of the division of East and West Windsor, we will also have items especially produced for the Bicentennial.

Entrance donations are the same as last year: Adults-\$6; Seniors, Members and Students (6-18)-\$4; Children under 6-\$1.

Victorian ladies "take tea" at the holiday house tour. Photo courtesy of US1 Newspaper.

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*the Historical Society
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