

THISTLE



Millburn -
Short Hills
Historical Society

Vol. XI

April 1988

**"The Park at Short Hills -
Residential Architecture in New Jersey
in the American Renaissance"**

Annual Meeting

Tuesday, May 24, 1988 - 8:00 p.m.
Millburn Public Library

Following a short business meeting and election of officers and trustees,
our guest speaker will be Short Hills resident
BARBARA MITNICH, PhD, Architectural Historian,
who will speak on "Residential Architecture in New Jersey in the
American Renaissance: The Park at Short Hills."

Refreshments will be served.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES - The Nominating Committee, composed of Robert Pyle, Margaret Coffey, and Lynne Ranieri, will present a slate of officers for election at the annual meeting on May 24th. The proposed slate of officers and trustees for 1988-89 follows, with those to be voted upon to be preceded by an asterisk.

OFFICERS

- * President Virginia Borzner
- * Vice President Peggy Denise
- * Recording Secretary Mary McIntyre
- * Corresponding Secretary Joan Holmes
- * Treasurer Mary Doyle

TRUSTEES

Robert W. Pyle, Jr.	1989	Evelyn Hurlbut	1990
Jenks Schacter	1989	Lynne Ranieri	1990
* Pat Anderson	1989	* Ted Brewer	1991
Vacancy to be filled	1989	* Roldah Cameron	1991
Aline Coles-Bailey	1990	* Edel Livermore	1991
George Goffe	1990	* Bernadette Wagner	1991

W. Owen Lampe Past President, Ex-officio

ADVISORY (appointed) Howard Brahm

LAST YEAR'S OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES - Our appreciation and thanks go to last year's officers Owen Lampe, Ginny Borzner, Joan Holmes, Edel Livermore and Bernadette Wagner, all of whom will continue to offer their guidance and help, although in different board positions. Recognition is also extended to retiring trustees Barbara Horn, Ellen Goldstein, and John Arsi.

To all who have contributed to our programs and committees: Thank you for a job well done.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL - SOLICITATION OF NEW MEMBERS

This is the time of year when we solicit renewal of membership for our upcoming fiscal year beginning July 1st. Your dues support our programs and the ongoing projects of the society. A directory listing all members will be published next fall.

This Thistle is going to others whose names have been supplied to us by interested members. We invite you to our annual meeting and the interesting program on Short Hills Park. We urge you to join our society and thereby support our efforts to increase the awareness of the history of our community.

For all, a membership envelope is enclosed.

To those who would be interested in participating in the work of our organization, please return the interest survey tear-off on the next to the last page.

ABOUT OUR PROGRAM AND OUR SPEAKER

Barbara Mitnich received her PhD from Rutgers University in Art History, Sculpture, and Architectural History. In January, she was appointed to the new Historical Preservation Commission of Millburn Township. Her research on Short Hills Park was done for a symposium given at William Paterson College on April 29, 1988.

WALKING TOURS

Roldah Cameron and her committee are diligently working on five walking tours of the township. The tours will be published in map form, with a booklet describing the different architectural styles of interesting area homes. The cost of the booklets will be determined at the time of publication; completion is expected within a year.

The following letter to the new owners of 26 Crescent Place is printed with their permission and that of the writer, Mrs. Dorothy Whitbeck.

April 2, 1988

Dear Owners of No. 26,

This is a voice from the past. I understand you purchased "our" carriage house in the summer of '87.

I am a former owner; in fact my husband and I purchased the building in 1941 and converted it into a house. At that time it was being used as the estate office while the rest of the Hartshorn estate was being sold for houses and building lots. (The large house and barn having been torn down.)

I don't know how much you have known of the background, but thought you might be interested in what little I can contribute.

Stewart Hartshorn had the dream of an ideal village - persuading the Lackawana to have trains stop at his station - no streets had markers (a nightmare for delivery men.)

It was said he planted...trees all over...(I especially love the gingko on the next front lawn.)

The big house stood where Art Cooper's house now stands. It was very large, many bedrooms and an elevator. You may have discovered a circular brick-lined well with an iron ladder under your backyard conifers. It has an iron cover: it controlled the water power necessary to run the elevator. (I was always terrified the neighborhood children might shut up a child in it so we tried to keep it covered with moss and soil.) The main road to the house was in back passing the gazebo.

No animals were ever kept in the carriage house and a caretaker lived in the second floor. We cut windows upstairs - new wiring - two bathrooms - the large living room and front room was the area used for carriages. We struggled with a coal furnace for several years due to restrictions in 1941.

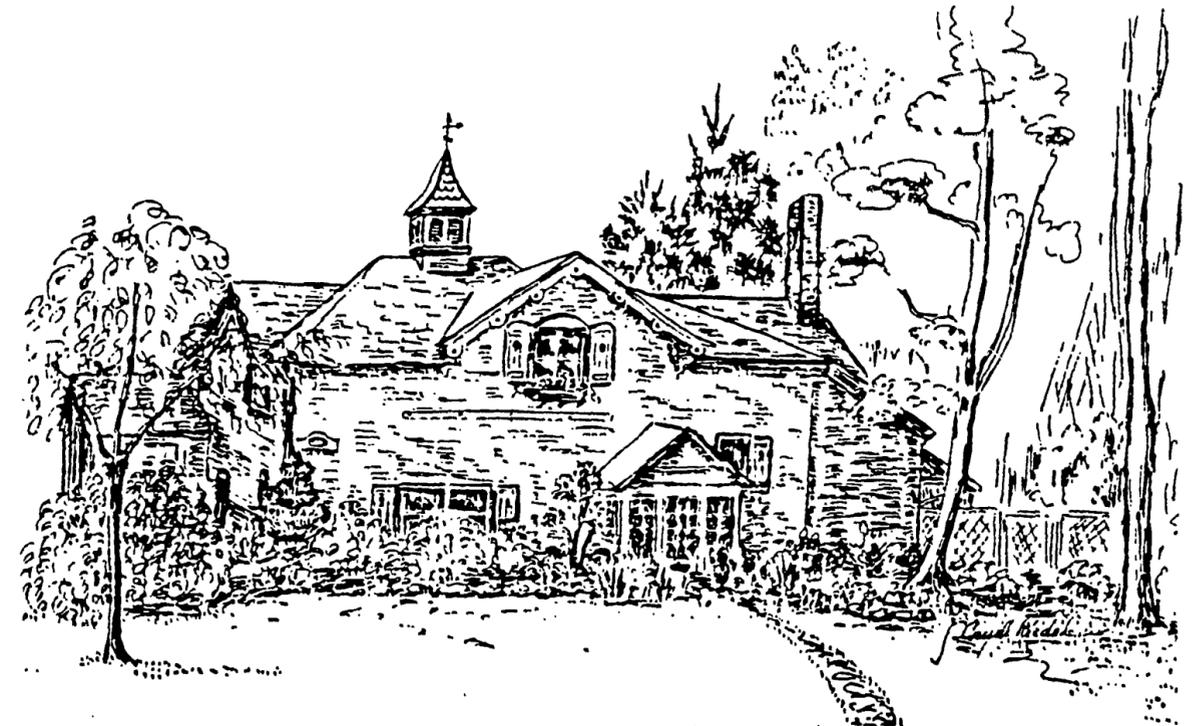
We lived there until '70 when my husband retired. I felt I could never leave it for we all so loved it.

I did not want to go back...but three years ago I did go in and met Mr. Tanquay. Of course it was completely changed (I had used Victorian big splashy rose wallpapers) but it made me very happy to see it cared for, loved and enjoyed again.

I am alone now in my eighties but have no regrets on our move to Boulder where I have a son and a daughter - grandchildren - a lovely life with a stunning view of Ragstaff Mt. I think of that happy time in Short Hills and wish you joy. I send you this to savour:

He who loves an old house
Never loves in vain
However an old house
Used to sun and rain
To lilac, rose bush and pine above
Never fails to answer the heart that gives it love.

P.S. Is the old wisteria still covering the back of the house? Our cat used to climb it to reach upstairs!



Drawing by Jane Coryell Reidel

Recent Acquisitions to Archives and Photo Collections:

An 1872 plat map of the Wyoming area, prepared for James Williamson & Company. The map lists, in pencil, the purchasers in the development.

From Mrs. G.W. Arnold

A 1936 hand-colored map of Short Hills on brown parchment from Mrs. Betty Burns of Wilton, New Hampshire. Mrs. Burns bought a frame and this map was on the inside; she decided to send the map to Short Hills for its historical interest to the community.

A short movie on 16mm film, transcribed onto video tape, entitled "Nimble Pupils Stage Gala Physical Drill"; also, 16 slides.

Photo album and records of Millburn New Jersey Tercentenary Committee.
From Mrs. Robert J. Cunliffe, daughter of former MHS principal and chairman of the NJ Tercentenary Committee of Millburn

Postcards: Millburn Avenue bridge at Maplewood Line (1907)
Redstone at Knollwood Road (1916)
Hemlock Valley, South Mountain Reservation
The Casino (1906) - By purchase

Postcards: Residence of A. Oakey Hall, Mayor of NY - From Dick Chapman
Millburn and Main - From Mrs. H.R. Applegate

Photographs: The crib at Short Hills Club (1938)
Short Hills Country Day School (1934) - From Edward J. Betteridge

Hand painted shaving mug of Wilbur Denman - From Ann Smith

It is through old photographs, written records, newspapers, and other materials that our knowledge of Millburn's past is increased. CHECK YOUR ATTICS! We will gladly copy and return.

Seems Like Only Yesterday

From the Millburn-Short Hills Item of May 2, 1941

HILLS HAD ST. SIGNS IN 80'S

In 1880 when chalk plate was the only method of newspaper adornments Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper was making the reading public of New York picture conscious of men places and affairs.

In an issue of November 13 of that year, a copy of which is owned by the First National Bank, an entire page was given over to hand drawn illustrations of Short Hills homes, scenes and public buildings sketched by Joseph Becker, staff artist. Shown are interiors and exteriors of the original John Dunn home, the "Music Hall", and the depot.

Hills children in sun bonnets gathering wild flowers in the fields and ladies in long skirts and bustles carrying pet dogs down ornate and elaborate stairways on their way to exercise them. Then as now there may have been a quarantine.

Of greatest present day interest is a picture of a Highland Avenue street sign and lamp post.

In the same issue a writer for the weekly devotes a column, all hand set in minion type, to a description of "Short Hills in the Springfield mountains". Residents interested in early Township history will find the paper on display in the lobby of the First National Bank of Millburn.

The Item reprints this story because of its historic interest, for purpose of comparison and that readers may themselves judge as to the merit of composition as practiced 60 years ago. The story follows:

Not twenty miles from the City of New York, on the Morris and Essex Railroad, lies a wooded park, such as one rarely meets with outside of Merrie England. The train, always ascending, passes through a country of marvelous natural beauty, rich in dimpled hills, clad with verdure to the sky line; in picturesque valleys, affording glimpses of vistas of billowy greenery stretching away to the horizon. The Orange Mountains, dappled with lordly mansions and coquettish villas, rise on the right and the great wooded plain that sweeps down to the bay, extends its carpet of foliage on the left. Villages nestle in the hills, and idyllic homesteads peep from coignes of vantage all along the route. As the train pantingly ascends to high latitudes, the

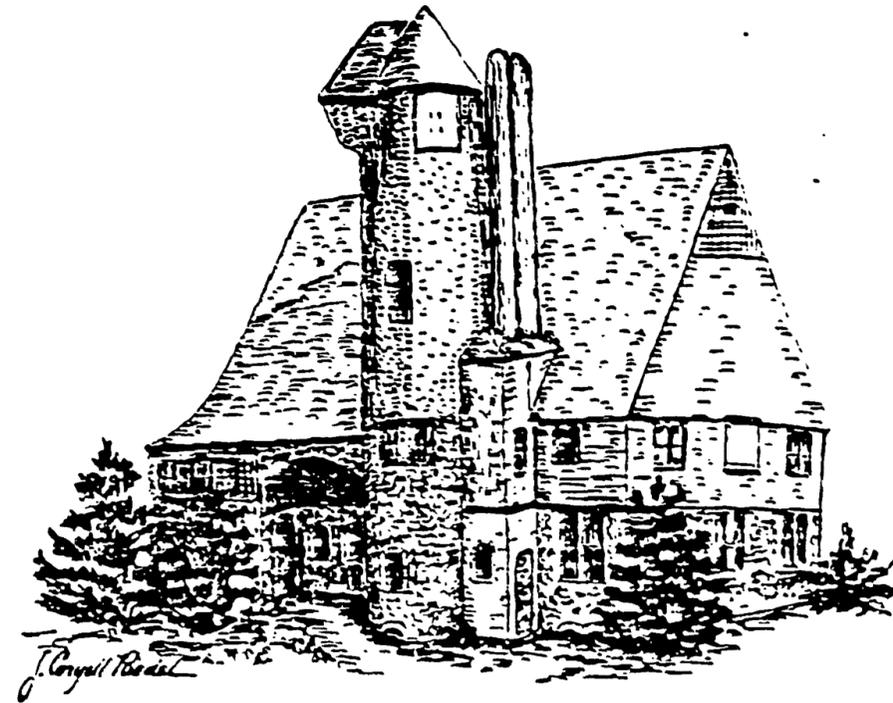
keen, buoyant mountain air fills the lungs till one quaffs it like wine.

Fifty minutes from New York and my eyes were attracted by a number of quaint and charming villas dotting a thickly-wooded hilly park on our right. Now it was a Swiss chalet, now a Norwegian satyr, now a bit of Brittany, now a cottage such as Will Shakespeare bought his bride, Anne Hathaway, to set up housekeeping in; now a specimen of the architecture when Marlborough was winning Blenheim for Queen Anne; now a bizarre building such as the burly burgomasters of Hamburg love to build on the banks of the green Elbe.

"What exquisite taste!" "How picturesque!" "What delightful homes!" "How I should like to have that one - no, that one!" "What a lovely location!" These, and kindred exclamations filled the car as it slowed up to a red-brick villa worthy of Twickenham when Pope was writing "The Rape of the Lock". This proved to be a railway station. This exquisite bit of Queen Anne, dedicated to time-tables and all the commercial routine of the iron road? Impossible! And yet it is. This is the Short Hills Station, built at a cost of \$3,500 for the accomodation of the dwellers in the pleasaunce.

I stepped from the train expecting to meet a station-master in a Ramillies wig, and with hi stockings rolled over the knees of his fustian inexpressibles. I entered the waiting room. The surroundings are perfect. Everything is in keeping with the exterior of the building, and so pleasing to the eye that the loss of a train in such a salle d'attente would absolutely count for nothing. Within bowshot of the station is a building having the picturesque stamp of Brittany upon its medieval tower, and adorned with wooden lattice-work, reminding me of the Traitor's Gate in the Tower of London.

As I stood gazing at this most antique specimen of architecture, I was joined by a gentleman, not yet to the forties, whom I discovered to be Stewart Hartshorn, the inventor of the patent roller shades that bear his name. Mr. Hartshorn, having amassed a considerable fortune, is now engaged in indulging his idea of what a perfect suburban place for homes should be, with a result both remunerative and aesthetic. For a considerable period Mr. Hartshorn was on the "look-out" for some picturesque location wherein to commence operations. He required hills and woods, an elevated, healthful situation, and one that would command an extensive prospect - this, too, within forty or fifty minutes of New York. He found it at last in Short Hills - the name is an old historical one and indicating most fittingly the topographical nature of the country - and having purchased several hundred acres, with the command of as many more, he commenced to thin the magnificent trees, to develop pictureque ravines, and to lay down winding and devious roadways, always having an eye to the aptitude of natural sites. This being done, he



Racquets Club--burned, February, 1978, as sketched by Jane Riedel.

cast about for eligible situations for the villas he proposed erecting, and then he built a deep-eaved cottage, just large enough for a married pair to gush through a honeymoon in. It was instantly pounced upon, and inhabited almost ere the Noah's Ark roof was shingled. A Swiss chalet followed, then a Norwegian satyr, then an early English domicile, all cross-beams and blood-red tiles; then a baronial Queen Anne, all corners and gables like an old cocked hat. Many more followed in rapid succession, all differing in shape, the designs for each being by different architects. Some stand on the crests of hills, some in hooded hollows, some in the breezy open; but each is backed by a natural ravine and protected by the extending arms of gaint forest trees. There are seventeen of these exquisite houses now adorning Short Hills, and Mr. Hartshorn is now building at a rapid rate, at least twelve being projected for this year. This is far below the demand, but he prefers to build carefully, and in this the element of time is necessary.

"I have given a good deal of attention to the sewerage, and my purpose is to have the place perfectly free from the evil that becomes the curse of thickly settled places. In this direction wells in the midst of the buildings are avoided, and a water supply by steam and wind has been established in the beginning", observed Mr. Hartshorn. "The natural drainage of the hills through yonder rocky ravine suggested to me the idea of having one main sewer to run down it, and to connect the drains of each house with it. That fall would carry away everything."

"Do you rent or sell?" I asked.

"Both. I find that people who rent the villas are anxious to buy. I make the rent low, hence every house is occupied. After I have shown you this hall I will take you through one of the villas in order to let you see what it is like."

The Hall, which is after the design of an old fortress in Brittany, is used for the purpose of amateur theatricals, concerts and lectures. It measures 70x50, and its stage is a perfect gem in its way, the drop being in sage-green, relieved by maroon velvet. The fittings are all Eastlake, and the walls and ceiling of stained pine. Some capital scenery, painted by a well-known theatrical artist (Thompson), was being set during our visit.

From the Hall we proceeded to one of the villas, passing en route a stone-crushing machine, by which Mr. Hartshorn crushes a hundred tons of stone per diem for the roads and walks, which are all telfordized as fast as built. The villa was as quaint in shape as an Old World bonnet. The steps were low and long, the piazza deep and covered, the hallway dadoed and paneled in varnished ash, the ceiling paneled in the same wood; the fireplace was open, ornamented with aesthetic tiles of vivid colors, mounted in brass, with fire-dogs and andirons. The staircase was of varnished ash, broken by a short flight of three steps, the balustrades being of ash, unusually thick and grotesquely carved. The dining room is dadoed, as is the parlor, while the fireplaces are such as one sees in the old baronial homes of England. The bedrooms are light and airy, and oh! so cheerful. The kitchen is fit for that Princess in the "Arabian Nights" who manufactured those celebrated cheese cakes. Hot and cold water are laid on, and every convenience at hand from bath to wash tub, and the rent for this perfect specimen of what can be done in the way of aestheticism combined with comfort, \$750 per annum. Hear that, ye dwellers in flats, ye renters of grim, gaunt brown-stone stoop houses, ye residents of Suburbia - \$750! Fifty minutes from Barclay Street Ferry! I was astounded. I live in Brooklyn and pay \$1,000 - for what? A three story brown-stone front, high stoop. I can't whip a cat in any of the rooms. The staircase is so narrow that after a square meal my mother-in-law takes them sideways, like a crab. The white-washed walls remind one of a penitentiary. I am cheek-by-jowl with the most disagreeable neighbors. I can hear Jones beating his wife and Mrs. Smith pitching moveables at her liege lord. I am forty-five minutes from my office, and I pay \$1,000 a year, when I could live in an idyllic mansion at Short Hills for \$750. My ever-punctual landlord shall hear from me on May 1st.

Can You Help Us?

To help the Society serve the interests of its membership and to involve them in its activities as well, won't you please complete the following questionnaire and return it to: M-SH Historical Society, P.O. Box 243, Short Hills, NJ 07078

Volunteers are urgently needed to aid in the following activities of the Society:

- Membership - help with maintaining records and printing the handbook
- Archives - assisting in indexing archival materials
- Item Indexing - reading and indexing back issues of The Item
- Oral History - interviewing long-time or famous residents
- Slide Shows - presenting the four Society slide shows to schools and organ.
- Program - assisting in presenting quarterly programs for members and the public
- The Thistle - helping with writing, editing, typing, printing, or mailing

OR

Do you have a collection of historical items? Would you be willing to speak about your collection at a Society meeting?

I would like to participate in the following activities:

_____ Membership _____ Archives _____ Item Indexing
_____ Oral History _____ Slide Shows _____ Program _____ Thistle

I have a collection of _____
which I'd be willing to display and/or speak about.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____



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