

THISTLE



Vol. XIV

May 1991

ANNUAL MEETING

June 13, 1991

Millburn Library - 8 p.m.

"Memories of Old Short Hills"

Speaker Thomas J. Collins recalls the Hartshorn era

Historical Society members may recall Mr. Collins' delightful story in last year's Thistle: *Stewart Hartshorn's Little Store on Hobart Avenue*. Mr. Collins is the son of Stewart Hartshorn's chauffeur and has graciously agreed to once again share with Historical Society members memories of his life on the Hartshorn estate and growing up in Short Hills.

Please join us as Mr. Collins leads us back into our community's past and recreates for us a time when the Short Hills that Mr. Hartshorn planned and developed was young.

Fawn Dell Theater

In 1923 Stewart Hartshorn gave his daughter, Cora, the 16 1/2 acres in Short Hills known as the Arboretum in order that she may develop a wild flower and bird reservation. That wild and undeveloped woodland had been swept thousands of years ago by glaciers, as had the surrounding area. That glaciation left the topography of the "short hills" and huge blocks of ice that created dells in parts of Short Hills and, most notably, in the Arboretum. Miss Hartshorn christened one of those dells "the devil's punch bowl" and another next to it "Fawn Dell" ("...for three little fawns capering in it", she explains in her book *A Little History of Short Hills*).

Miss Hartshorn created Fawn Dell Theater, an open air theater, in this terminal moraine kettle hole and on May 7, 1938 Anita Zahn's 200 dancers officially christened it. It was thereafter used for dances, scout meetings and commencement exercises for Glenwood School until it lapsed into disuse as such events moved indoors in deference to the unpredictable nature of Mother Nature.

According to Arboretum chairwoman of trails and grounds, Patricia Thornton, in its heyday, the theater seated 600 people on long wooden benches. Nearby longtime resident F. Irwin Smith ("Smitty") recalls that those benches were in three tiers and that large rhododendrons behind the flat, grassy area at the base (the "stage" as it were) served as the "wings" - a somewhat bushy area that could conceal the performers much as the wings and curtains of the stage do now.

Thornton also noted that in 1948 a great deal of snow and ice, a hurricane and increased vandalism left the arboretum in poor condition. In 1958 Cora Hartshorn died and left the arboretum to the township. In 1961 concerned citizens met with the mayor and formed the Arboretum Association and decided that the township would be responsible for the property's maintenance and the association would develop educational and cultural programs. While these goals have been enthusiastically

and very ably met, Mother Nature took another swipe at the arboretum in 1985 when Hurricane Gloria did considerable damage and destroyed many of the open trails. "Trees fell into the Fawn Dell Theater. Now we are bringing it back", Thornton explains.

Pat Thornton has labored energetically to restore Fawn Dell and visitors to the area will note that long wooden benches have once again appeared in the dell. Although no fawns can be found capering there now, one can find many smaller animals enjoying the tranquil area, as well as many lovely birds and flowers, as Miss Cora wished. In addition, it is hoped that one will also soon find many human visitors once again enjoying special outdoor events there, including concerts, special speakers and theatrical productions, beginning in the spring. When completed, the new theater will seat about 100 to 150 adults, Thornton said. It is with great anticipation that many area residents await the revitalization of this gift from the glacier, Miss Hartshorn, the Arboretum Association, the township, and many dedicated volunteers.



If you would like more information about the Hartshorns, the history of Millburn/Short Hills and the Arboretum, you will likely be interested in the books listed below. They can be purchased at the library or through the M-SH Historical Society at PO Box 243, Short Hills, NJ 07078. In addition to these books, the Historical Society has recently published an acclaimed walking tour of the township. See the ad on the reverse side for more information about it.

Beginnings 1700-1800 - the colonial history and architecture of Millburn, NJ

Sticks, Shingles and Stones - the history and architecture of Stewart Hartshorn's ideal community at Short Hills, NJ from 1878 to 1937

Little History of Short Hills - a history of the Short Hills section of Millburn Township, developed by Stewart Hartshorn, as told by his daughter Cora Hartshorn in July of 1946.

WALKING TOURS of Millburn-Short Hills



137 Hobart Avenue, "The Lodge"

Walk at your leisure and enjoy the wonderful architectural heritage of Millburn and Short Hills. This unique publication includes easy to follow maps, illustrations and historical information.

Available for \$3.00 at:

Millburn Public Library	200 Glen Avenue, Millburn
The Station Stop	36 Chatham Road, Short Hills
Bever Books	327 Millburn Avenue, Millburn

*or mail \$4.00 to Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society,
P.O. Box 243 Short Hills NJ 07078*



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Can You HELP Us?

The Historical Society always needs help with history! You can discover how fascinating and how much fun it is to relive the history of Millburn-Short Hills by talking to residents and former residents who remember Stewart and Cora Hartshorn, or through the many pictures of the town as it used to be.

If you would like to help, please return the form below to:
Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society, PO Box 243, Short Hills, NJ
07078 and indicate in which of the following activities you are interested:

- **Archives** (assisting in indexing archival materials)
- **Item Indexing** (reading and indexing back issues of The Item)
- **Oral History** (interviewing long-time or famous residents)
- **Photo Inventory**
- **Slide Shows** (presenting the four Society slide shows to schools, etc.)

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 Indxg _____ Photos
_____ Oral History _____ Slide Shw _____ Program _____ Thistle

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

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

Is Your Membership History?

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 and special projects of the society. Among these projects are our exceptional walking tours of the township, the Thistle, archive acquisitions and photo collections and ongoing projects such as the slide shows and Item indexing.

We urge you to join our society and thereby support our efforts to increase the awareness of the history of our community. For your convenience, a membership envelope is enclosed and for members who are interested in participating in the work of our organization, please return the survey tear-off with your renewal.



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