

THISTLE



**Millburn-
Short Hills
Historical Society**

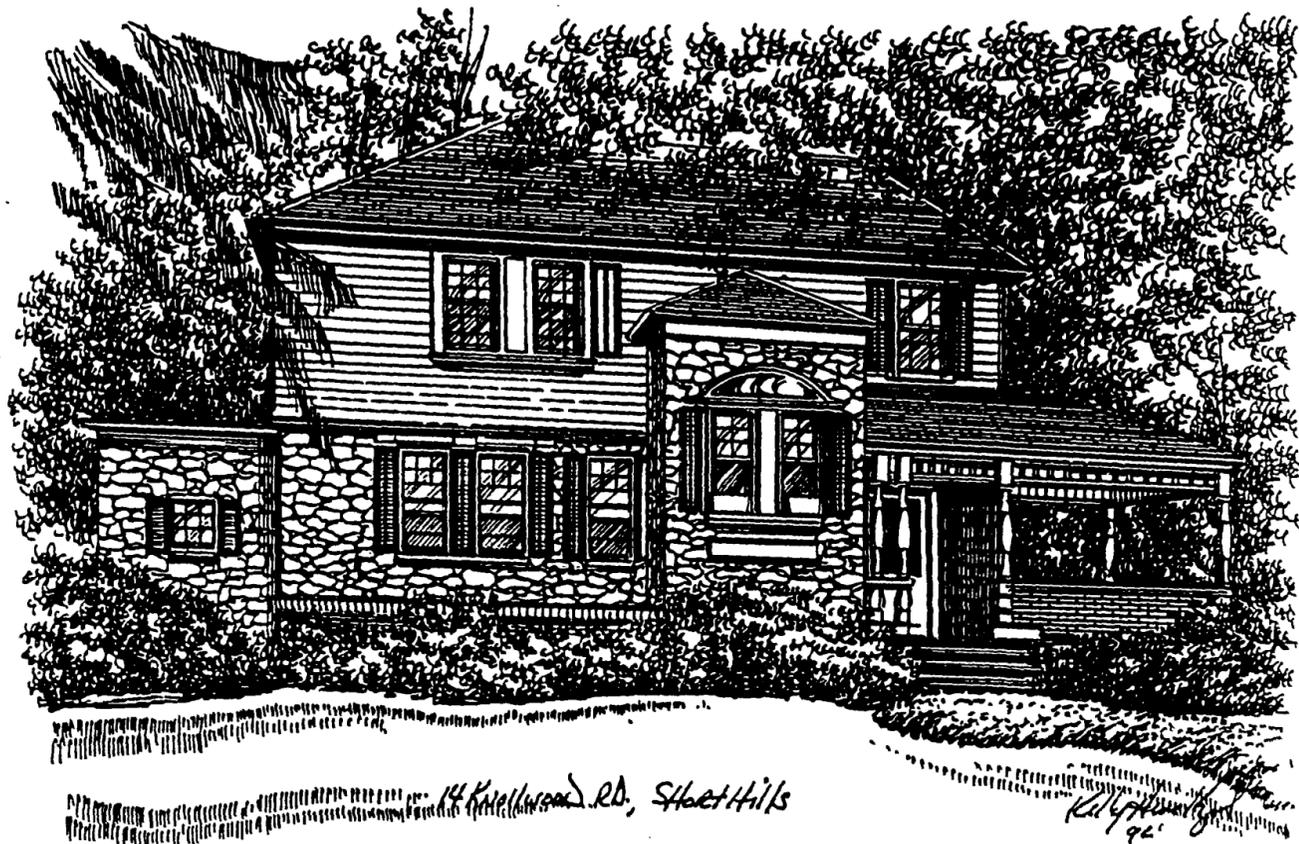
Vol. XVI

January 1993



7 PARSONAGE HILL ROAD
SHORT HILLS

Historical Society's Annual Reception Hosted at Three Area Homes



Members of the historical society were invited to the society's annual reception on Sunday, November 8th and over 100 guests visited the three lovely historic homes open to our members on that day. We would like to especially thank the gracious hosts and hostesses who opened their homes to the society. Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Morcheles of 11 Park Place first welcomed members to their beautiful and gracious Hartshorn house #47 (featured on our invitation) for light refreshments. From there members were invited to visit the homes of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Smith of 7 Parsonage Hill Road (see front page of *Thistle*) and Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Senchak of 14 Knollwood Rd (above).

The society would also like to thank the many board members who assisted with food contributions and set-up, especially the event coordinator, Madeline Ribaud.

In Search of the Condron Family

The author of this article, Mr. Joseph Ringers of Virginia, recently wrote to the historical society looking for information about his mother. Mr. Ringers is a retired assistant superintendent of schools for Arlington, Virginia. This two-part article was submitted to the Thistle in the hope that one of our readers may help Mr. Ringers in his quest. If any member has information that might be of interest, please contact Lynne Ranieri at 379-5032.

To America!

Almost 5% of the total population of the U.S. in 1870 was born in Ireland - 1,856,000 of 38,558,000. Famine due to the potato famine, crop failures and religious persecution were among the reasons for emigration. Irish Catholics were prohibited from owning land; they were limited to small profits on the land they worked as tenants. The industries of the U.S. held the promise of jobs and better living for them as well as the opportunity for land ownership and freedom from religious persecution.

The trip from Ireland was not easy; it began at an Irish port in order to get to Liverpool. Emigrants were

often put on open decks and had to bring their own provisions for the trip of one or two days over the channel. In Liverpool they were beset with problems: exorbitant prices for lodging and food; being told they would require certain items for the trip (and for which they would pay high prices); and having their Irish money exchanged for U.S. currency at excessive discounts, as well as being exposed to thieves.

Money for the trip sometimes came from family members who sent those best able to earn money in the U.S.; they would send it back to bring other members of the family.

The trip over the Atlantic took two to six weeks. It was not expensive (about \$20-\$30), but it required much planning and time and was uncomfortable and dangerous. In 1847 Congress passed a law stipulating that each immigrant must have fourteen square feet of horizontal space. A law passed the following year decreed that if the ceiling was less than six feet high, there must be sixteen square feet and if less than five feet high, twenty-two square feet. Each berth had to be six feet long and eighteen inches wide; lower berths had to be six inches off the floor. Families must be separated by latticed partitions that could be opened and closed. Such tight quarters were unsanitary and led to the spread of disease and even death.

Condron, cont'd...

Congress did not exercise federal control over ports of entry until 1891; each state regulated its own. Captains avoided New York because of its "immigrant tax" and landed instead at Newark, Perth Amboy, or Philadelphia.

Mary Halpin, William Condron, and maybe his brother Phil came from Ireland in their late teens or early twenties. We do not know why or when they came, nor what port they entered.

Newark 1870-1900

When Mary Halpin and William Condron reached Newark from Ireland, it was just developing into a city and had many growing pains. It was attractive to the Irish who numbered about 12,500 of the 105,000 total population. They probably chose Newark because William was a tanner and there were about 30 tanneries in Newark employing more than 1,000 workers at about \$10 per week in the city. As late as 1890 leather was considered Newark's chief industry. By 1900 the population had more than doubled; the Italian, Jewish and German immigrants outnumbered the Irish population although it had grown to 30,000 or about 9% of the total.



During 1870-1900 when the Condrons lived in Newark, the Panic of 1873 was severe, depressing property values. Streets lay muddy and neglected; sewers fouled vacant lot and marshland; polluted water from the Passaic River ran in the city water pipes. Typhoid plagued Newark year after year. An 1885 survey showed 75% of all private wells in the city were polluted. The sanitary system was inadequate. The Condrons moved frequently. Health standards were low; most families could not afford doctors. Immigrants bartered for fresh vegetables on the streets. Milk was sold from open containers; the only refrigeration was by use of ice. The Newark City Hospital was formed in 1882 and was located in a wing of the Alms House. It was there that nine-year-old John Francis Condron died of meningitis in 1884. Life in the city was hard.

Condron, cont'd...

These were also years of great advances. Between 1876 and 1899 tuberculosis and cholera bacteria were discovered; diphtheria antitoxin was created; viruses were discovered. Aspirin and x-rays came into use. The first successful gasoline auto appeared and the telephone and incandescent electric bulbs were invented.

The Marriage

Mary Halpin and William Condron were married in the rectory of St. Columba's Church in Newark in 1874. It is believed that Mary Halpin was Catholic and William a Protestant. Julia said her parents were of different faiths and their families disowned them for being attracted to each other. She believed they came to the U.S. to marry and escape religious persecution.

They had eight children, but only three survived to "old ages". There may have been children who were stillborn since Newark had the highest death rate among the largest 28 cities in the U.S. according to the Census of 1890. Each Condron birth or death is recorded at a different address, so the family moved frequently, but always within a few blocks of the Passaic River or industrial section.

My mother, Julia Condron, was their last born; her mother, Mary, was 46 years old. Illness and

poverty pursued this marriage. Both Mary and William died of tuberculosis - Mary at age 51 and William at age 67. Because of their troubles there was little time to spend with their children. No information was passed down about the family or ancestors, their backgrounds, or their places of origin.

The Family Breaks Up

Mary Halpin died in 1904 leaving her husband William Condron and four children surviving - Phil, Mary Elizabeth, Anna Cecelia, and Julia. At some point (before or after her death?) the family was broken up. The reasons for this have not been discovered, nor was it known who or what agency made the arrangements.

Three of the children moved to Millburn and Anna Cecelia moved to Passaic (she must have been about 10 years old). According to his son Francis, Phil and two sisters (Julia and Mary) went to live with Felix and Elizabeth McGee in Millburn/Short Hills about 1899 (one year after Julia was born), but it is more likely that the children did not move there until after their mother's death in 1904.

It is believed that Elizabeth McGee was William Condron's sister. She and Felix took in three of the Condron children.

(continued in the next Thistle)

Stewart Hartshorn's Essay on Short Hills

The following essay on the geology of Short Hills was donated by Mr. Hartshorn's granddaughter, Josie Dellenbaugh, for her mother Catherine J. Hartshorn, in the name of her children. It was found among his papers and was written by him in long hand, on letterhead stationery from the Hotel Traymore in Atlantic City, N.J.

The region where now stands the Town of Short Hills has often attracted the attention of students of geology. It forms a great part of the field of glacial action. The split in the Orange Mountain left a gap of about two miles in width which at some distant time was sentineled by the high abutments of the trap rock ridges on either side which formed the gateway for the flowage of interior waters towards the South and to the sea.

At the time this great glacier was at work, the material ground away from the shores of the stream and highlands was in great part deposited in this wide gap in the mountains. As this debris rose high and higher within the gap, the waters were held back so that gradually a big lake was formed behind the mountains to the North, so that easy transit was given to immense ice-bergs to the chanel-way until they were grounded upon the more shallow outlet.

We see them then disputing the free passage of the waters, while the fissures received the various material.

Thus was formed a gigantic barrier to the great lake beyond. This barrier grew higher and stronger as the ground out rock and earth was brought against it by the moving waters. Thus for a period the ancient lake Passaic existed.

Its restless nature however sought to break its bondage. Another outlet was found thirty miles away - near Little Falls so gradually this great body of water left its bed to the meandering stream now known as the upper passaic river.

The ice bergs baring the old gap finally melted and left the many curious hollows walled around by the various deposits of sand, gravel, and the boulders wrested from the rocky cliffs sharing the course of the glacier.

Many of these depressions are of extensive area. The bottoms are almost allways covered with a fine hard silt so that they hold water as in cemented basons. Therefore many lakelets are found throughout this jumbled area. Knolls and irregular hills prevail. Hence the name Short Hills has been given to this section.



Well - a region like this could only be given up to forest growth and was not conducive to prosperous farming. We owe to this miscellaneous make up of the soils the remarkable variety of trees which obtains here. This same variety may not be found elsewhere (in) the same area of our country.



SHORT HILLS ABOUT A HALF CENTURY AGO

A Weather Report From Camelot

(From the March 1881 issue of "The Arrow", a newspaper "Shot From Short Hills")

WEATHER REPORT.

The probabilities are that in the coming season, as during the past winter, the weather at Short Hills will present a remarkable and flattering contrast to that of its suburbs and the circumadjacent country generally. During the past three months all Short Hillites have kept their canaries out to pasture with ease and impunity, and every evening, while sitting on their verandas, have smiled pityingly to each other as they listened to the numerous blizzards that have howled through neighboring and less fortunate settlements. Short Hills robins and bluebirds are so worn out with singing that they talk of going for a rest up to Summit, where they don't have to open till the middle of May.

For the ensuing twenty-four hours the indications are that - but we must go out and use our lawn-mower. The grass is getting so long that it is really disgraceful.

Historical Society 1992-3 Officers

President - Valerie Bleier

Vice President - Lynne Ranieri

Vice President - Madeline Ribaud

Treasurer - George Goffe

Rec. Secretary - David Siegfried

Corres. Secretary - Joan Holmes

Author John Cunningham to Speak Here

Renowned New Jersey author, historian and railroad buff, John Cunningham will be the guest speaker at the historical society's annual meeting on Thursday, June 10th at the Millburn public library. More information will appear in the next Thistle.

Antiques Show

The historical society would like to thank Stephanie and David Siegfried for their help in arranging for the society to have a table at the Community Congregational Antiques Show recently.

Through their efforts, and those of the many board members who graciously manned

the table for the duration of the show, the society was able to sell many of their publications and to acquaint visitors with our organization and its work.

Do you have a piece of Millburn to share?

In the spring the historical society will set up an exhibit, at the library, of old township photographs and artifacts. If you have a bit of Millburn history to share (photos, maps, or a piece of the town), please contact society president Valerie Bleier at 376-7048 to arrange for its display. All items will, of course, be returned to their owner at the end of the exhibit!



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 Show _____ Program _____ Thistle

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

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

Township "Historical Meetings"

At the monthly board meetings of the Millburn-Short Hills historical society, someone is most likely to bring a bit of township history to share - an old map found at a local estate sale, postcards of historic homes found at the flea market, turn-of-the-century maps from the used book store, a bit of ephemera sent from far off by a relative of someone who used to live here, or even a letter reminiscing about growing up in the township.

Historical society members are always welcome to join the board at the meetings which are held monthly, usually on the third Thursday evening of the month. As a courtesy to the hostess, however, members who wish to attend are asked to call David Siegfried at 467-3064 with the number of people to attend and to confirm the meeting date, time, and location.



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