

Thistle



Vol. XXXII

Fall 2003

The Horse That Sold the House

By Jim Horn

In 1957, my parents were living in Livingston with four children and a fifth on the way, as my mother was pregnant with me. They had outgrown their Livingston home and asked a real estate agent for help in finding a bigger place. The agent had been looking in Essex Fells and West Orange, but called one day to say he had a property in Short Hills, at 293 Parsonage Hill Rd., that he would like to show them. My father declined, saying Short Hills was too far away, but the agent persuaded my father to look at it anyway.

Despite his initial reservations about Short Hills, my father had an immediate and enthusiastic change of heart when he saw that the house came with a horse and a corral on the side of the house. An enthusiasm for horses had grown in him since he used to ride with the West Orange Riding Group (across from the armory, which is next to Daughters of Israel, on Pleasant Valley Way in West Orange). My mother, on the other hand, took one look at the house and was in tears for a week. She said the house was too small "for all these kids" (there were eventually ten children). My father said "Don't worry about it ... we'll work it out." and they bought the house. My father made

good on his word and added to the house as the family grew.

After settling in, neighbor Phil Ross told my father that during the Civil War the main part of the house was the residence of a man who owned the land that encompassed what is now Gero Park. That land was the



(unidentified) original owner's farm at that time. There were apple and pear trees in the back yard of the house and, at one point, a carriage house on the property, too.

Kennedy Parkway now runs behind the property that was our home, but at the time we moved to the Short Hills home, there was no Kennedy Parkway, which was built in 1964.

(continued on page 3)

Recent Acquisitions

The historical society is very grateful for donations of local artifacts and memorabilia from generous residents and/or members. We are happy to be able to preserve, share, and use for reference these relics of Millburn-Short Hills history.

Because of the increasing number of donations, often made outside of the museum, we may have neglected to recognize every donation here. **Please** help us maintain accurate records on these donations, by alerting us if we neglected to include your donation here. In addition to making sure we don't forget to thank you, we need to confirm that the information is properly recorded in our database. Our sincerest thanks to the following people for enriching the lives of all residents by their donations:

From Janet Piszar and Bea Hoffman, MHS
Millburnaires record album (& tape conversion), photos of now-demolished Millburn houses

From Vic and Inge Benes, a new monitor and keyboard shelf for the society's computer

From Constance Brewer, MHS class of 1938
reunion memorabilia, trousseau hat

From Elaine Becker, two hardcover books, Remembering Essex and Paper Mill Playhouse

From Anonymous, MHS 1931 yearbook/class photo, 1905 Millburn postcard, ca. 1900 Pitcher & Manda (local nursery) advertising booklet, 1929 town hall postcard, Beginning to Garden book by Helen Wodell, Martha Woolsey 1900 autograph book, Canoe Brook CC mugs & 1957 newsletters, 1974 St. Rose of Lima cookbook

From Naneen Levine, Junior League of Oranges and SH memorabilia, 1968 and 1988 anniversary editions of the Item, Community Congregational Church memorabilia, NJ history books, NJ tercentenary magazine, Millburn Laundry bag

From the Township of Millburn Recreation Department, 1957 Millburn centennial book, photos, rec department scrapbooks

From Joan and Bob Boiles, iron cobbler's shoe last and stand

From Gloria Patrizio, Suburban Shop hanger

From Louise Gili, a promotion dish from the Millburn Theater, a dish from St. Stephen's Church, button hook and black tray from her mother, scans of photos

From Jane Saleski, a 1931 booklet about Millburn High School, early Friday Friends photo

From Gail Engelschjon, seven Millburnaires record albums, early local Girl Scout uniform, centennial book, ceramic tile of the Millburn station and Erie Lackawanna train, much paper memorabilia

From Allison Dantus, MHS 2001-2003 memorabilia

From David Siegfried, "Boxwood Bend" postcard

From Nancy Feigel, photo of Shapter house on Great Hills Rd

From Marylene Waranka (eBay seller), Mayflower Laundry metal measuring spoon

From Jim Morrison, two 1975 SH Club anniversary books, 1957 Millburn centennial book, two 1970 Mayfair calendars, 1968 NY Times SH-resident-related articles, framed 1936 map of SH

From John Murray, 1957 Millburn centennial committee envelope, photo of the Wittkop house, photos of the poor farm, "The Wonderful World of Children's Song" 1967 record album (Glenwood students on cover)

From Freeman Bunn, articles about 'The Close' on Western Dr

Note: Will the donor of the local-politics scrapbook please contact us! The scrapbook became separated from the donor paperwork and needs to be properly recorded.



Maria Donata and Prospero Marcantonio, grandparents of Millburn resident Louise Gill

(Horse That Sold the House, cont'd from pg. 1)

Before that it was nothing but dirt trails where the parkway is now, and my father and Phil Ross would ride their horses along those trails.

My mother remembered my father driving home from his restaurant, Pal's Cabin in West Orange, before Kennedy Parkway was opened. With no noise from the parkway, it was very peaceful there at night. Our favorite German shepherd, Sam, lived inside and when my father's car would turn onto Great Hills at about 1:00 in the morning, Sam's ears would perk up at the sound. From the time Sam perked his ears up, until the car pulled into the driveway, it would be about five minutes, so we were able to guesstimate how far from home the car was when Sam could hear it.

I remember that when I was in the middle school, my father purchased three German shepherd dogs from Mr. Blanchard at the former Day estate on Old Short Hills Road; Mr. Blanchard bred them as a hobby.

Our family was growing in many ways, and at one time we also had 13 cats -- at the same time. Eleven of those cats were in two litters of kittens, and lived in the barn with their mothers.

When we moved to our Short Hills 'farm' there was no Farmstead Road either ... no houses ... nothing but woods. I remember deer coming to graze, in hordes of 10-20, to the fence that used to be where Farmstead is now.

The horse that sold the Short Hills house was a black beauty named Midnight. He was born in 1950, grew up with all of us, and died in 1976. He also helped us grow up, as I have lifelong memories of being awakened every

morning – at 6:30 sharp – by Midnight’s neighing, which could be heard throughout the property. My brothers and I would fall out of bed and go out to give Midnight his breakfast bales of hay, which came from Pierson’s Mill in Maplewood. Once a month or so, Stanley from Pierson’s would deliver bales of hay and bags of green pellets.

If I was not moving quickly enough for the hungry horse, and if I turned my back on Midnight before he had his hay, he might spur me on with a bite to my back – a real incentive to move faster.

In addition to the breakfast of hay and pellets, I had to give Midnight fresh water every day, but in the winter the leftover frozen water in the pail had to be thawed first, by first bringing it into the house and pouring boiling water over it. The last chore was to use a big broom to sweep out the manure that accumulated overnight. While Midnight was happily engrossed in his breakfast, I could quickly sweep the manure out from under the horse, then pitchfork it into a huge pile outside of the barn door. That manure was used as fertilizer in the vegetable garden – and for anybody else who wanted some.

The whole procedure was repeated at 6:00 p.m. ... seven days a week ... 365 days a year and if I lingered in bed in the morning on a school day, my mother would come in and say “Jimmy, somebody’s calling you.” There was no rest for the weary.

In 1969, a Millburn police officer named Harold Brown asked to board his horse Buck there. The only charge to the officer was to help me with the horse-related chores. Buck and Midnight became friends, but Buck was there for only about a year.

In 1970, my father bought a pony to keep Midnight company and to provide another pet

for all of us. The stable had three stalls, so Midnight, Buck and Pony Boy each had a place of their own. Midnight and Buck, however, harassed their new companion, Pony Boy, by chasing the pony endlessly around the corral. Invariably the panicked pony would leap over the corral fence – and sometimes wound up in the middle of Little League games at Gero Park or galloping down Parsonage Hill Rd. In order to get the pony safely back home, he would have to be corralled by a group of us, who would go to the park and shoo the pony back to the barn. Someone would usually stand in the road and stop traffic on Parsonage Hill Rd until the pony was safely back in the barn. This problem was ameliorated when Officer Brown was told that Buck had to find new quarters because of his unruly behavior. Midnight tolerated the pony after that, but there was one rule – Midnight ate first and the pony had to wait until he was finished, after which he ate ‘the seconds.’

Midnight never tried to escape, but the pony always made a game of getting out to that enticing grass or the fallen apples. When Pony Boy got out, though, everyone knew it, because Midnight would go crazy neighing and whinnying until the pony was back.

The blacksmith came about once every six months, from Sussex County, to shoe the horses, a process that they apparently enjoyed as much as we do when shopping for new shoes at Nordstrom’s. They would come right over when the blacksmith arrived, to have their feet cleaned, then the old shoes pried off. The blacksmith fitted the new shoe to the horse and nailed it into the hoof -- a service Nordstrom’s doesn’t offer, thank goodness.

Midnight died in 1976 and two farmers came and dragged him out of the pen. As they placed Midnight on their flatbed truck, Pony Boy, who had never showed any emotion about Midnight up to that point, went crazy. That was the first time anyone ever heard Pony Boy neigh.

Pony Boy lived to be almost 30 years of age and died in about 1986. He was suffering greatly and a farmer from Sussex County, who specialized in this, came with his shotgun and put him out of his misery, then took the pony away - all for \$15.

My mother died in 1995 and my father sold the house in 1997. My father always noted that if he wanted to stay there and buy other horses he could, because it was grandfathered into the rights with that property.

After my father sold the house, the new owners tore down the house and barn and a proud new house stands where Midnight, Pony Boy, Buck, Sam, dogs, cats and children happily played for 40 years ... in the days before Kennedy Parkway, Farmstead Road, and Hartshorn School ... and when you might find a pony in the middle of your Little League game.

(Township resident Jim Horn works with his father and brother at Pal's Cabin and Mayfair Farms, the businesses started by his grandfather)



Whittingham is Opposed to Library; "Breeds Reds," He Says



W. R. WHITTINGHAM

(From an article in the April 9, 1931 Item)

Addresses Trade Body Members; They Applaud His Library Views

"As to this library question, I don't think we want a public library in Millburn. They are nothing but hotbeds of Anarchism and Communism," W.R. Whittingham, former president, declared at last Thursday night's meeting of the Millburn Board of Trade.

"Go into any large city and you'll see these Reds sneaking out of the libraries with books under their arms. You stand there as a hundred percent American and wonder what this country is coming to."

Members present applauded Mr. Whittingham's statement. He had been asked by Robert E. Marshall, president, to address the board. During the course of the meeting the action of the civic associations was discussed and members present felt that a public library was not as pressing in importance as new headquarters for the police department.

MOVING TO THE COUNTRY, PART II

(The Fall 2002 issue of the Thistle introduced the first half of a 1982 oral history interview, by society member Jenks Schachter, with Dr. Irving Alper of Rawley Place in Millburn. In part one of the interview, Dr. Alper described his parents' move "to the country" that was Millburn, from Hoboken, in 1930. His father bought "a nice stationery store" on Main Street and called it Alper's Stationery Store; it eventually became Schnipper's, then Millburn Stationers. Dr. Alper soon discovered the "country" in the reservation and the joys of swimming, paddle tennis, basketball, and more, that Taylor Park provided for young Millburn residents. This last part of the story continues with selected excerpts from Dr. Alper's reminiscences.)

Dr. A.: ... and then there was an undeveloped lot and then the schoolyard which is now where Murray Weill built that Schoolhouse Plaza, and then there was the Washington School, which ... let's see ... there was the Short Hills School and the Millburn High and Junior High, which (was what is now) the present junior high school building. And that was it. There was no South Mountain School ... no Glenwood School.

Jenks: Glenwood School was later, too?

Dr. A.: Even Glenwood School was later. It was early on, but not in 1930. It was after 1930 (Editor's note: Glenwood was built in 1939). And then, as you would walk up Millburn Avenue, towards the Chanticleer, on that side you had the Baptist Church and, with the exception of one or two little new buildings, those old wooden frame houses were very much the same. But the bank, where it is now (Editor's note: I believe Dr. Alper was referring to the bank that was then in front of the present police station), that was an open field where Hearsh the florist had their hothouses and they also had open fields where they grew flowers. They owned all the land. Oh, and I must mention that Millburn center in one respect was quite different (from what it is) now. You had Millburn

Avenue and Main Street, but Essex Street did not exist. From Marsh's up to Main Street, where you walk down Essex Street now did not exist. That whole area was just woodland. Essex Street, where Mario's was (Editor's note: Mario's was where Charlie Brown's is now), ran along towards the bank, but did not go all the way to the bank. It ended about at Rimback's.

Jenks: And what was beyond that?

Dr. A.: Fields ... just fields.

Jenks: It was built up only on one side?

Dr. A.: Well, no ... it was on both sides.

Jenks: And then there was nothing?

Dr. A.: I'm trying to think what other changes took place. One of the early changes was the building of the Five and Dime Store (Editor's note: The store to which Dr. Alper refers was where Bagel Chateau is now.). That was the old hotel, Wittkop's Hotel, and Jack Stein's Suburban Dress Shop is what ...

Jenks: There was a stable around there, too, wasn't there?

Dr. A.: I'll tell you about the stables. They were right next ... Mr. Kemmer's (Editor's note:

Perhaps he meant Mr. Kemmerer?) stables were right next to the synagogue (Editor's note: The first synagogue of B'nai Israel was on the corner diagonally across from the present Millburn Diner). But where Jack Stein's Suburban Dress Shop was, that was the old Ford agency. I forget who owned that ... But that was one of the early changes, when they tore down the old hotel ...

Dr. A.: There was no Essex Street, on either side, where the diner is. On your right hand, towards the synagogue (which was later the library), from Millburn Avenue, if you walked towards the synagogue, on the left hand side they had stores on the corner, where the Clothes Horse is and immediately behind that was a stable owned by Mr. Kemmer and he kept his horses there. In fact, he built the apartment buildings that are right across the street from the post office. One is called Oakatree and the other is called Penn Forest. If my

memory serves me, he had two horses by the same names.

Jenks: So you were the first Jewish child here in the school?

Dr. A.: Oh, no. There were people here before me. The Buncher boys and the Silverstein family were here and Milton Freeman was here. There were older Jewish families in this community. The Marks family was here many years before. We are here 50 years, but I would say the first Jewish family settled in Millburn probably 75-80 years ago.

Jenks: The 1900s. I had those written down in the synagogue history, but I don't remember off-hand. So did you feel comfortable in school?

Dr. A.: I don't remember being made to feel uncomfortable. The one time in the year that I felt very markedly different was during the Christmas season, because in those days Christmas was a very big holiday in the Millburn school system and it wasn't simply a folklorish kind of holiday, but it was religious because there was a crèche in the school, and especially in the high school they would paint the windows to look like stained glass windows. Now, being a Jew and not participating in all that, I felt lost. I felt "Gee, I don't fit into this thing." It was like being in a parochial school and I had nobody to talk to about this. I couldn't talk to the other students ... they simply wouldn't understand and I wouldn't take them into my confidence. So, I would talk to my father and he would explain that this is a Christian country. The year I was in the fourth grade the Short Hills School was entirely Christian (*except for me*). The same was true of the Wyoming School and ... there was I, Irving Alper. In the entire system they had to concern themselves with a single student, so it was hardly a problem.

Jenks: It occurred to me, while you were talking, that the Depression didn't seem to hit the people here, and I think it may be because it didn't hit the people in Short Hills. They were not affected and the trades people lived on servicing the people in Short Hills.

Dr. A.: I think the best example of that is Dave Fern. You know, during the Depression years Dave had about four delivery trucks. Imagine! Delivering food to Short Hills day in and day out. And Dave provided all these luxuries for these people because they could afford it, even during the Depression.

Dr. A.: Yes. We had a good school system.

Jenks: I understand that they divided the classes. Some went to Wyoming and some ... maybe that was before your time?

Dr. A.: Not if you lived in the South Mountain section.

Jenks: I wonder if they will dispose of the Wyoming School. I hope not.

Dr. A.: It was my hope that one of the schools would be given over to the recreation department so that (*they can use*) the facilities of the gym, the shop which could be used for painting and crafts work, and some of the classrooms for meeting rooms. You could bring in local colleges to give courses here.

Jenks: Well, I understand it is quite a problem. I can understand if they would use one for the purpose you say, but the schools are in areas zoned as residential. And you close a school and what do you do with it?

Dr. A.: I certainly don't think they should be rented for commercial use.

Jenks: Well, that's the problem. Are they going to tear them down? But, of course, all communities are having this problem now, so there must be some lessons that could be learned from ... Well, I'm sure they'll do something. I hope they don't close the South Mountain School because that is an area that is very good for kids. You can walk anywhere and you don't have to chauffeur them.

Dr. A.: It's a marvelous area for young families to get started.

Jenks: I don't know if they can afford it now! Someone was telling me that on Undercliff Road \$128,000 is being asked for a very ordinary home.

Dr. A.: That's outrageous! But whatever the situation is it is something that has to be dealt with.

Ahhh, So THAT'S How You Do It ...

Millburn resident Jane Saleski recently donated to the society a 1931 booklet about Millburn High School, which was then in what is now the middle school building. These two photos were scanned from that booklet ...



Making Men in the Metal Shop

"Making Men
in Metal Shop"
at MHS

and making women by ...

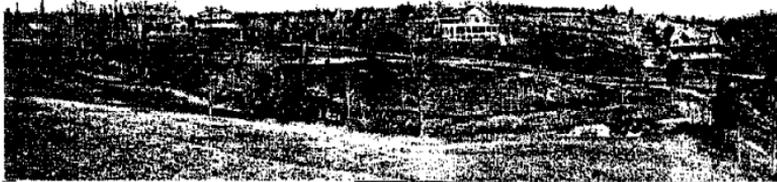
"The Charm of School-
Made Coats and Gowns"



The Charm of School-Made Coats and Gowns

STEWART HARTSHORN'S PARK AT SHORT HILLS

Panoramic view of Hobart and Highland Avenues in 1878 looking toward Washington Rock.



Among the items in the fascinating archives of the historical society are handwritten notes by Stewart Hartshorn, delineating his vision for his "park" in Short Hills. His notes primarily focus on the landscape and the houses, of course. To enable the homeowner of 2003 to better understand the nature of this "ideal community" that Mr. Hartshorn built, excerpts from those notes will be included in this and future Thistles. The first of this series looks at Mr. Hartshorn's suggestions for landscaping the properties in the Short Hills park:

"One of the things to contend with in many places is the tendency of owners to overcrowd their plots with too profuse plantings. Frequently, after a place is laid out with a view to future growth, the nurseryman is sure to tempt the owner of a little lot to purchase and plant young trees and plants enough for five or more times the space then he possesses. In a little time, instead of there being a pretty lawn with its fair proportion of ornamentation, there is a thicket of all kinds of shrubby and trees, killing each other in their struggle for existence. The air and ventilation is closed out. The grass dies out and the ground becomes sour and unwholesome. Not only this, but pleasant views are shut out and not only the owner, but his neighbors suffer from this cause. These people are lovers of trees, but forget the evil effect of having too many. Indirectly, they are frequently the cause of the destruction of a nobler growth that should be preserved, for it sometimes happens that they, in their selfishness, have obstructed the air, ventilation, and views to their neighbors in the rear. Other lines of view are sought and openings are sought. The result is ..."

Unfortunately, the next page is not among the papers, but this page from his notes provides us with an 'unobstructed view' of his passion for open spaces in his park.

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2003-2004

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Note: Museum hours are:
Tuesdays from 5:30-7:30,
Wednesdays from 3:30-5:30
& the first Sunday of the month,
from 2:00-4:00

Local History
Through the Internet

For a couple of years, the historical society has been the grateful recipient of a free Web page, provided to all New Jersey non-profit organizations. Unfortunately that free service will be discontinued as of October. The society is preparing a Web presence to replace that and when it is available the address will be announced in the Item and in society publications.

Researchers, readers, and residents may continue to contact the society with their questions through the society's e-mail address at:

MSHHS2002@cs.com

If you have questions or are just curious about the history of Millburn and Short Hills, did you know that Marian Meisner's exhaustive study on the subject is now online at the Millburn library's Web site? To read the book, go to:

[http://www.millburn.lib.nj.us/
about.htm](http://www.millburn.lib.nj.us/about.htm)

and click on:

"View the eBook!"

Dues Renewals

If you have not yet renewed your membership in the historical society, please use this form to do so and send your check to, and made payable to, the **Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society** at PO Box 243, Short Hills, NJ 07078, with the form below.

If you aren't sure if your dues need to be renewed, you will find the renewal date on your mailing label on this Thistle, or you can call the museum at 973-564-9519 and leave a message. We will look it up for you when we are next there. Don't forget to leave your telephone number or e-mail address if you call.

.....

DUES RENEWAL FORM

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ANNUAL DUES

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