

THISTLE



Millburn-
Short Hills
Historical Society

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October 1984

SWEET ROSE REVUE

Sunday, October 14--2:00 p.m.
Millburn Public Library

"Two girls, a banjo, guitar and bass plus a string of good numbers, that's Sweet Rose Revue." The girls are Janice Buckner and Anna Epstein, two young artists from Long Island who have performed together for seven years on several continents at festivals, schools and concert halls, on television, radio and records. From blues to ballads to minstrel songs, their American musical revue reflects the diversity of our musical heritage. Co-sponsored by Friends of the Millburn Library, this is another of the Society's programs designed to please the whole family. Sweet Rose Revue encourages audience participation. Please join us for this delightful opening of our Society season. Refreshments will be served following the program which is free and open to the public.

SOCIETY HISTORY PRIZE - The 1984 recipient of the history prize awarded by the Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society is Fritz Jonach, an Eagle Scout who is currently a junior at Millburn High School. Mary Jane Semcer, the Society's high school liason, presented Fritz with a commendatory certificate, a book and a check for \$100 during the awards ceremony last June at the High School. His history of Christ Church was undertaken as part of an Eagle

History Prize - con't.

Scout project, and it amply fulfilled our criteria as the best project by a student on the history of Millburn Township.

MEMBERSHIP - Chairman Carol Webster keeps track of our membership roll and reports the following new members since March:

- Mrs. Dominick Bufo (Michelina)
22 Willow Street, Millburn 376-6115
- Mrs. Donald Bufo (Alberta)
29 Bailey Road, Millburn 763-4963
- Peter A. Carell
448 Millburn Avenue, Millburn 379-5569
- Mrs. James W. Denton
125 Farley Road, S.H. 376-4998
- Mrs. R. Dolansky (Irene)
80 Cedar Street, Millburn 376-1785
- Mrs. James E. Howe (Judy)
33 Keats Road, S.H. 376-0037
- Mr. and Mrs. John Katz (Jane)
21 Myrtle Avenue, Millburn 763-3798
- Margaret Klotz
52 Myrtle Avenue, Millburn 763-3072
- Mr. and Mrs. Walter E. McGarvey (Julie)
43 Southern Boulevard, Chatham 635-2954
- Mr. and Mrs. Harry I. Miller, Jr. (Kay)
23 Thackeray Drive, S.H. 379-2868
- Mrs. Mary Louise Pittee
19-B Forest Drive, Springfield 376-6518

LEGISLATION REGARDING HISTORIC DISTRICT ORDINANCE - Assemblywoman Maureen Ogden has been working on legislation which would assist local municipalities in drafting historic district ordinances. The bill has passed the Assembly and will be introduced into the Senate this fall.

The Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society explored the concept of historic district ordinances with the Planning Board several years ago, but the members of the Planning Board were skeptical about the value of these ordinances to Millburn's two historic districts, Short Hills Park and Wyoming.

POTPOURRI

The Society played a part in the Township's Fourth of July celebration by presenting two of our slide shows at Bauer Community Center in Taylor Park. Owen Lampe, Colleen McCullough and Juli Towell showed the slides and gave the commentary on "Our Town" and "The Battle of Springfield" to a large audience.

The Morris Street Post Office in Morristown, built in 1916, has been placed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places. These Registers list properties or areas worthy of preservation for historical, architectural, cultural or archeological significance.

Again this year, a graphic design by Will Bradley may be found in the Christmas card collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Thistle readers may remember 1981 articles on Bradley who resided in houses on Hobart Avenue during much of his long career as a prominent graphic designer and artist.



BODWELL HOUSE - LOOKIN' GOOD

At a time when Township residents are concerned about the architecture in downtown areas, it is a joy to report on the refurbishment of the Bodwell House, 431-437 Millburn Avenue, across from the High School. The house, with its shingled well, is a local landmark but had fallen on hard times before a young couple, Mary and Tim Besbris, took it over in January 1983. Almost six months were needed to make it habitable for them and their son Jeremy, now two years old. Ashley, now eight months, has joined the family since then.

Tim and Mary met while they were students at Colorado State, but Tim had graduated from Columbia High School in Maplewood so he knows this area well. Although this is their first renovation project, they have approached it with commendable foresight and common sense. That is to say, they work hard on saving what can be saved, discard what is rotting and unsalvageable, and concentrate on making their old house a comfortable, 20th century home. After all, it was built as a home about 1820 (the records are not clear and portions of the house may be earlier), renovated in the late 1860's, and again about 1910. With loving care, the house will be viable in the 21st century.

The original structure probably consisted of the front three rooms. They were ingeniously insulated by walls of fired brick faced with plaster. A large addition after 1860 is evidenced by door knobs, hinges, a new staircase, etc. Dates on plumbing fixtures indicate more changes about 1910 when the house took on its present "footprint."

There are six fireplaces, some with 19th century marble facing. The cellar/basement is extensive and includes a large cooking fireplace with an adjacent baking oven. There is also a long gallery beneath the front porch that has windows, suggesting the space may have had a special use. Possibly it was a shop. Rough-hewn beams with Roman numerals seem to verify an early construction date, and wide pine floor boards have been overlaid with narrow oak ones characteristic of late 19th century taste. Several pharmaceutical bottles were found during renovation; these may help to date the "newer" parts of the house where they were found.

Tim has done almost all the renovation work himself which includes strengthening foundations, replacing plumbing lines, modernizing electrical wiring, adding insulation, re-plastering and painting. Mary

has concentrated on babies, designs and colors. The exterior has been painted cream with brown trim - appropriate for almost any time in the life of the house. Overgrown plantings have been removed and replaced with shrubs that allow the lines of the house to be seen. The large bedrooms on the second floor, almost certainly created from much smaller ones, have been papered and painted in styles that reflect today, not yesterday. The new kitchen features oak cabinets, white tiles and skylights in the ceiling. Where is the cook who would want to cope with a kitchen from the 19th century?

Mary and Tim have done a lot of architectural sleuthing and will be doing more as they put the finishing touches on a house that has been a Millburn fixture for over a century and a half. We would like to know more about the Bodwell whose name is associated with the house: he is variously described as the postmaster or a doctor. If you know anything more definitive about Bodwell or any events that illustrate the history of the house, call the Editor or Fran Land (379-3376).

In the meantime, pull your car over to the curb on Millburn Avenue and take a good look at what Mary and Tim Besbris have accomplished.

Frances E. Land



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UPDATE ON 41 MAIN STREET - The Township-owned structure, which was evaluated by architectural historian, Robert Guter, will be up for sale in early December. Bids can be made in four categories which range from demolishing the structure and putting up a new building of the same size to keeping the building and painting it.

Mr. Guter, who was retained by the Historical Society to evaluate 41 Main Street, estimated that the structure was built in the first half of the 19th century and praised its relationship to the street and the courtyard behind it.

Liz Howe

SAVE THE DATE - Society members and friends may inaugurate the holiday season on December 9 by going with us on a tour of a neighboring historic house. The Durand-Hedden House at 523 Ridgewood Road, Maplewood is part of a 1-3/4 acre passive park dedicated to the enjoyment of nature, history and the arts and crafts. The guided tour of the house will be followed by a Christmas tea there at which authentic recipes of old time fare will be available. Mark your calendar now as space is limited.

Membership Chairman - Carol Webster 467-0943

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