
- EIGHT -
Colonial
- HOMES -



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Only a few of the colonial farmhouses which once dotted the Woodruff and Lyons Farms area today stand in recognizable form.

Several others have been altered and added to so many times that there is little resemblance between them today and 150 years ago, while most of them have been demolished to make room for more modern structures.

These dwellings differ from the others in the township in their construction. The cellar foundations were made from sandstone quarried locally and lay uniformly together.

Central brick fireplaces frequently served as major heating and cooking units. The siding was cut from logs and not tapered. Nails were made by hand and pegs were frequently employed. Floor boards were wide, windows were small and ceilings were low. Double insulation was given the dwellings by covering the sheathing applied to the outer siding by shingles.

THE WOODRUFF HOMESTEADS . . .

Three Woodruff dwellings still stand in the area known as Woodruff Farms, but only two of these may be considered colonial.

Oldest of these, according to George C. Woodruff, is believed to be the Jacob Woodruff house at 111 Conant Street. Mr. Woodruff believes that a portion of this dwelling may have been erected prior to 1700 and used as a shelter by members of the family working the fields here and still residing near Elizabethport.

Certainly the older section of the dwelling contains the brick-lined kitchen and 6 foot high ceilings, both samples of traditional construction of the period. Like many Revolutionary dwellings, this house has been added to to meet the expanding needs of its occupants and the two and a half story section was erected about 1806.

A country store was added to the front of the older section of the dwelling about 1900, becoming the first store in this section of the township. It was operated for a time by Charles T. Woodruff, then by a George C. Ryno and in 1910 the Gilbert Eaton family.

During excavations for new dwellings during the past 30 years, old silverware and coins have been found. George C. Woodruff believes that some silverware was buried by the Jacob Woodruff family to prevent their theft in forays by the Hessians during the Revolution.

The home of Enos Woodruff, brother of Jacob Woodruff, at 866 Salem Avenue is said to have been partially destroyed by fire in an attack by Hessian soldiers stationed on Staten Island. Mrs. Woodruff and her childred fled to the thick woods near the Elizabeth River until they felt it was safe to return.

The present higher addition for the nine-room dwelling at the bend of the road in Salem Avenue was erected a short time after the war to replace the damaged area. Both the Jacob and Enos

Woodruff dwellings are still owned by members of the families and are the only ones in the township still in the possession of the original families.

A third Woodruff house, while appearing to be the same vintage as the others, was erected about 1845. Now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Fred K. Halsey, in Conant Street at Revere Drive, it is frequently the subject of artists' paint brushes because of its picturesque setting.

It was built by Francis Woodruff, a descendant of Enos Woodruff. A letter from Mathias Woodruff in 1843 to his brother, another Enos Woodruff, comments that he is planning to return from Louisiana to help his cousin, Ezra Woodruff, erect a house for Frank.

The letter jokingly said in part: "Frank will want him to put up a house next summer. I have advised him to find out from the neighbors what kind of house he wants, sort of architecture, on which side to put the kitchen, dog house, pig pens. If all parties are satisfied, it will save a great deal of talk."

Oddly enough it was constructed sideways to the road, but when the Westminster section was developed by Edward Grassman in the 1930's, Revere Drive was placed in front of it, so today it faces a street.

THE TICHENOR HOUSE . . .

Another pre-Revolutionary dwelling is the former Tichenor house at 1230 North Broad Street, sold in 1944 by Richard H. Tichenor.

The house according to family records is believed to have been erected about 1752 about 30 years after an earlier dwelling and barn. The site selected in old Lyons Farms by the family was beside persimmon trees believed to have been a former camping site for the earlier inhabitants, the Lenni-Lenape Indians. The Indian village however for the area was located in today's Ogden Way.

The dwelling originally had 10 rooms, but four of these were removed when the property was divided in 1923, among his four sons following the death of Frederick F. Tichenor, and the four rooms extended into the property of one brother. This house was occupied by six generations of the family.

The Moses Baker house, known in recent years as the Casselmeyer house and now owned by David O. Evans in Conant Street is identical in architectural design with the Tichenor dwelling, but like the Francis Woodruff house does not face the street.

The Baker and the Woodruff families occupied the greater section of today's township. The Baker family property extended roughly between today's Lehigh Valley Railroad and into Union Township to the vicinity of Long Avenue. The Woodruff family area extended east of today's railroad along today's Coe Avenue into the Elizabeth area. The Lyons Farms area covered the entire North side, Weequahic Section of Newark and to Coe Avenue.

Another Baker dwelling still standing is the former farmhouse of Robert K. Bloy, on Liberty Avenue, near Bloy Street. When Mr. Bloy purchased it from William Baker, in 1898, he found that the house had not changed hands in 79 years. It is believed it had been erected before 1800.

The original grain miller's house on an island at Salem Dam has long since disappeared, but the most recent miller's house built shortly after the turn of the nineteenth century by Joseph S. Meeker is today occupied by the family of Chester Meisky in Conant Street near Liberty Avenue.

The Albert Baldwin house, another colonial dwelling in Long Avenue, today is a duplex. According to Arthur Dienst, who purchased it in 1927, the dwelling was occupied by the Stoveken family from about 1890 until 1927 and prior to that time by a Miss Amelia Baker, one of Hillside's first business women. It features several additions apparently made by adding sheds and has more than 11 rooms. The second floor has the small windows prevalent in the era it was built.

THE JONATHAN WINANS HOUSE . . .

Soon to be replaced by a modern Hebrew School is the Jonathan Winans house at 1504 Maple Avenue at the corner of Clark Street.

The dwelling was purchased seven years ago by the Sinai Congregation for a school. The house according to old records was built in 1767 by Jonathan Winans, who was born in Rahway in July 24, 1740, and died in Lyons Farms, January 16, 1816.

He is said to have painted the date "1767" high on the end of the building and the date can be seen on the house today.

It is said that during the Revolutionary War, Hessian soldiers possibly under the influence of liquor, entered the house and damaged and destroyed some of the furniture.

Jonathan Winans, Jr., who was born in 1808 and died in 1892, was best known for his apples. On May 24, 1883, the family and neighbors gathered at the house to watch the fireworks display at the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge on the East River. The elevation of the dwelling on the hillside gave it an excellent view.

The house was occupied by six generations of Winans family, and was sold by Walter J. Winans, in July, 1920, to the Compton Company.

The 39 acres excluding the 160 foot frontage in Maple Avenue and about 115 feet in Clark Street, retained for the house, was developed as Overlook Heights.

The dwelling was purchased by the late "Judge" William Yuill and conveyed to the late Ethan Allen Yuill in 1943. On his son's death, his widow received title in 1946 and sold it shortly afterward.

Several other dwellings like the Francis Woodruff house also were not erected until after 1840, but unlike the Woodruff dwelling changed their architecture to that of the period.

These include the Lewis family homestead at 88 Hillside Avenue and the home of Mrs. Sadie Doremus Johnson at 132 Hillside Avenue, for many years the family home of the Doremus family. Prior to its purchase by them more than 80 years ago it was a tavern, operated by a German immigrant. The entire house was raised a level to make room for the nine children in the Doremus family.

Another Winans dwelling known as "Doc Winans" house is located in Liberty Avenue at Shelton Terrace and today is the duplex occupied by the Frank Nineslings and John Lukashinskys.

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