

BROADSIDE

Spring 1984

Coward House, Rt. 571 and Clarksville Road



Little

Lost West Windsor

These are pictures of pre-World War I buildings in West Windsor that were demolished in the name of progress. As West Windsor developments go up, more of our historic buildings go down. Each new demolition brings protests from the surrounding community. Neighbors and friends of the doomed farmhouse go to Township meetings and state their objections. "The building will go down," they are told. Can anything be done about this?

In July 1983, members of the Historical Advisory Committee (founders of the Historical Society) spent several afternoons going through the 1970 Township Tax Records as a starting point for our Landmarks Directory. We listed all the buildings constructed before 1914. We were surprised to find 22 houses in the Township that had been built during the 1700s. When those 22 houses were checked against the 1983 tax records, we found only 15 are left. Almost one quarter of the houses built in the 1700s had been demolished during the past thirteen years. We found a similar situation on buildings dating between 1800 and 1830. Of 54 listed in 1970, only 44 were left in 1983. One fifth are now gone. (Six of the houses had been on land now part of Mercer County Central Park.)

If we continue at this rate, West Windsor will consist of Twentieth Century houses only. Is this what the Township wants?

We do not mean to say that every old building is worth preserving, nor do we equate old with good. The reverse, however, is also true. Old buildings are not

necessarily bad or inferior to new. Often the construction in older buildings is better. Houses were built by craftsmen with the time and interest in creating something long-lasting and unique. Many times a person would build the family home, adding to it and changing it over the years to reflect family needs and changes in style and taste.

When a development is planned on farmland, the original farmhouse is razed. New houses and streets are planned to utilize the land for the maximum profit of the developer. This is understandable. If the original buildings on the land are usable or restorable, however, why cannot they be left where they are and the streets and other houses be planned around them? Realtors will tell you that many people prefer older houses. They sell well—and for a good price. Cannot the developer sell the original farmhouse along with his latest model? If the house is in an impossible location and destroys the proportions of the development, perhaps the house can be moved or sold to someone who is willing to move it to another location.

In short, we should think first before destroying. Once the house is gone, we have no second chance to decide to preserve it.



Eugene and Anna Elgrim House, Old Trenton Road

The majority of people moving to the country do so because of the rural atmosphere. Why are we destroying this atmosphere? There soon will be no farms and hardly any open space in West Windsor.

(continued)

(from page one)

Land prices in the Township are soaring. Each farm bought for development must, in the end, pay its developer enough to enable them to continue constructing. Development is their livelihood and aids the economy by employing workers in the many fields of construction. This is a positive result. But it is a negative result if, in building, there is more DEstruction than CONstruction.

West Windsor must take a stand and make a policy of commitment to its history. Princeton Borough is working on a landmarks ordinance to protect its historic buildings. Hopewell is doing a landmarks survey of its historic buildings. Is West Windsor to be left behind?

The Historical Society is working on a landmarks survey, but a landmarks ordinance must come from the West Windsor government. The Township Committee, the Planning Board, the Zoning Board, the Environmental Commission—these and the other committees of the Township must decide on a policy toward its historic buildings once and for all.

Every time a developer appears before the Township for permission to build, history must be considered high on the list of concerns. Older buildings already on the land to be developed must be evaluated as to historic significance, usability, and restorability.

After all, who are we to say to future generations: "We didn't think these houses were important so we tore them down." It is a decision West Windsor will have to live with, as it is now living with seven less colonial houses and ten less Federal style houses.

Let's vote now for the Past before there is no Past left to save for the Future.

—Joan Parry

Sponsorship

This issue of Broadside is sponsored by Stephen N. Taksler, Vice President—Investments, Prudential-Bache Securities Inc., 104 Carnegie Center, Princeton, NJ. Mr. Taksler is a fellow member of the Historical Society of West Windsor. Broadside readers may contact him at (609) 987-0236 for a complimentary financial analysis.

We are looking for companies, organizations, and generous individuals to help us publish Broadside by sponsoring all or part of an issue. Sponsors will get a prominent mention in the issue and our heartfelt thanks.

Carl Schielke Remembers

Carl Schielke was born in the John Rogers House built in 1761 and located in Mercer County Central Park. Mr. Schielke attended school in West Windsor and spent most of his life in the Township. These are some of his memories about Life in Old West Windsor.

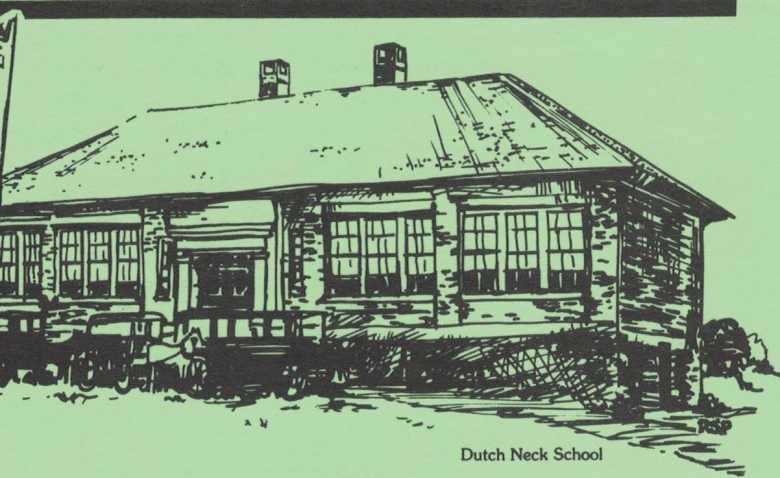
ABOUT FARMING We grew potatoes, which were sold in 150 pound bags. We had about the first motorized potato digger. It was a one-row digger, pulled by horses. Ours had a Cushman motor on it to run the elevator that spilled the potatoes out back of the machine. It was a child's job to follow and kick potatoes out of the wheel track.

We grew most every kind of field crop possible for this area: tomatoes, potatoes, corn, wheat, barley.... From 1902 when we got started, all work was done by hands and horses. About the time of World War I, motorizing of farm machinery started. I remember tractors named Titan with steel cleats on the wheels. I remember the Republic truck, Vim truck, Mack trucks. The early cars were Buick, Model A and T Ford, Willys Knight, Rickenbacker, Whippet, and Dodge.

During WWI, farmers took their tomatoes, red ripe, to Robbinsville, to put on the train to Campbell's in Camden. The tomatoes were shipped in crates, not in $\frac{5}{8}$ baskets. The baskets were used later when better trucks came along. Here, I am going to squeal on the cannery. The highest grade tomatoes went for juice; the lowest grade for ketchup. The government graded them.

Dairy farmers sent their milk to Trenton via the trolley line which ran where the Public Service high towers run now. The trolley stopped at every road crossing to collect the milk on the milk train trolley. Farm women used the trolley to take a large farm market basket full of eggs and home-made butter to peddle door-to-door. My mother did.

We farmers worked 10 and 12 hour days and 7-day weeks in season. When winter came, we had it easier but not easy. It was then the season to: deepen the drainage ditches; cut and chop wood; carry wood; care for the livestock; cart manure to the fields by wagon and fork it out; kill and dress hogs; feed and clean out chicken coops; milk the two cows; make butter and cheese; gather the eggs; listen at night for chicken thieves or weasels; fix, oil, and paint the machinery; and brush the animals. But when we felt like it, we would go out and shoot up the fields and woods after rabbits and pheasants. Gee, that was a day off.



Dutch Neck School

ABOUT SCHOOLING If my memory serves me right, before 1918 West Windsor had only one-room schools that you walked to: Dutch Neck, Edinburg, and probably one more, but I don't know where it was. (Ed. note: Penns Neck on Route One—now a kennel.) These one-room school houses were heated by a wood stove, fed by the bigger boys. In the yard was a boy and a girl outhouse, and a hand-operated pump to get out the well water. They all drank out of one tin cup.

In 1918 the one-room schools were abolished and the old original four-room stone schools were built in Dutch Neck and Penns Neck. (Ed. note: The Dutch Neck School has been added to enormously, but the four-room school is still visible. The Penns Neck School is still at the corner of Route One and Alexander Road and is now an office building.)

We used horse and wagon school buses. Too soon,

these wagons were changed over to Model T Ford school buses...and that spelled trouble. They were not reliable because they did not step over the snow like a horse could. It meant that the farmers had to go out in many teams and shovel the roads by hand. After I got out of school, around 1929, it was my turn to help shovel by hand. The Township paid us 20 cents per hour. It was winter pocket money for all of us.

ABOUT SHOPPING The central big stores in Edinburg and Dutch Neck were General Stores. There was also a general store in Clarksville at Route One and Quaker Road. They sold just about anything any farm man or woman would want, from underwear to overshoes, from a box of stationery to a box of shells (for the farm guns), from ice cream to ice skates, from cough drops to horse liniment. The ice cream was hand-dipped for a nickel a dip, made without electric freezers, with only ice and salt to keep it frozen hard.

The Dutch Neck store had a post office service also. Hiram Cook had a farm machinery dealership across the street next to the old Library. Dutch Neck also had a blacksmith and a horse farrier shop. (A blacksmith works with red hot iron, bending and hammering it into the desired shape. A farrier shoes horses.)

The store in Edinburg was Mr. Hohenstein's. He delivered groceries to the farm families about three times a week. He was a very nice man who liked kids, and he gave them penny candy. When we were low on money, he took our eggs in trade. When our cow was with calf and she dried up on us, we would buy cans of milk from the delivery wagon. Bread, I think, was 10 cents a loaf. A pack of Tastykake chocolate cupcakes was a nickel before 1929. When the Depression worsened, the pack was made bigger from two to three in a pack, still for a nickel. Candy bars were much bigger and cost a nickel.

When we ran short on home-made butter we bought a solid pound block of margarine and colored it yellow with the dye that came with it.

The stores in Edinburg and Dutch Neck are still there, right on the main corners.

Join Us Today!

Historical Society of West Windsor
P.O. Box 38
Princeton Junction, NJ 08550
Attention: Kay Reed, Treasurer

Please check the appropriate box:

- FAMILY MEMBERSHIP—\$12. per year
- SINGLE MEMBERSHIP—\$8. per year
- FULL-TIME STUDENT MEMBERSHIP—\$5. per year
- SENIOR CITIZEN MEMBERSHIP—\$5. per year
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- ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP (One Vote/One Representative)—\$25 per year

NAME (INCLUDE ALL NAMES IF FAMILY MEMBERSHIP)

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Amount Enclosed _____

Donations

The Historical Society of West Windsor has begun a collection of historic or unusual items to use in permanent exhibits. We have received some old photographs, business receipts, maps, and memorabilia.

A recent donation, from Historical Society member Jeanette Flickinger, is a blueprint of the Berrien City section of West Windsor Township. Berrien City is what we now would refer to as "downtown Princeton Junction." The area is loosely bounded by Clarksville Road, Princeton-Hightstown Road, and North Post Road. Berrien City was West Windsor's first "development" or planned community, created in 1924 by Alexander Berrien.

Jeanette Flickinger was given the blueprint by long-time West Windsor resident Fanny Tett, who lived for many years on Bear Brook Road.

Russell Post donated a beautiful homespun bedspread to our collection. The navy and natural-colored spread was made on a loom by Mame Bergen Post, who lived, with her husband David, in the farmhouse on the corner of North Post and Village Roads.

An ingrain carpet, donated by the Ronald R. Rogers Family, was taken from the "Grandma" Rogers house on Clarksville Road in Grover's Mill. Ingrain carpet, also known as Kidderminster or Scotch, has a flat ribbed surface and is made with a worsted warp and a woollen weft. Such carpets are fairly heavy and seamless, usually bold and simple in color and design. The Rogers carpet will probably need restoration at some point; at present we are proud to own such an unusual antique.

Anyone who is interested in donating material to the Historical Society is asked to please contact either Society President Joan Parry at 452-8598 or Kay Reed at 799-2400.

The Historical Society of West Windsor
P.O. Box 38, Princeton Junction, NJ 08550

Charter Membership

We are proud to announce that the Historical Society has attained its quota of 100 Charter Memberships. We are, however, still accepting applications for Society memberships. All members receive our quarterly newsletter, Broadside, and will be able to vote at the general meetings.

Members are encouraged to participate in the many interesting projects undertaken by the Historical Society of West Windsor, such as creating the Landmarks Directory of older buildings and taping oral histories. If you are interested in joining, please fill out and mail the coupon in this issue.

Calendar

The meetings of the Historical Society of West Windsor are held at 7:30 pm in the Community Room of the West Windsor Library (located next to the Municipal Building). Our next meetings are July 11 and September 12.

On June 23 there will be a celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the Delaware and Raritan Canal. We have been invited to participate by the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission. Our plans are in the works—watch for details.

Broadside is a publication of the Historical Society of West Windsor.

Designed and Edited by Ruth Strohl Palmer.

Contributors to this issue: Joan Parry, Kay Reed, and Joanne Linda Waxman.

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