

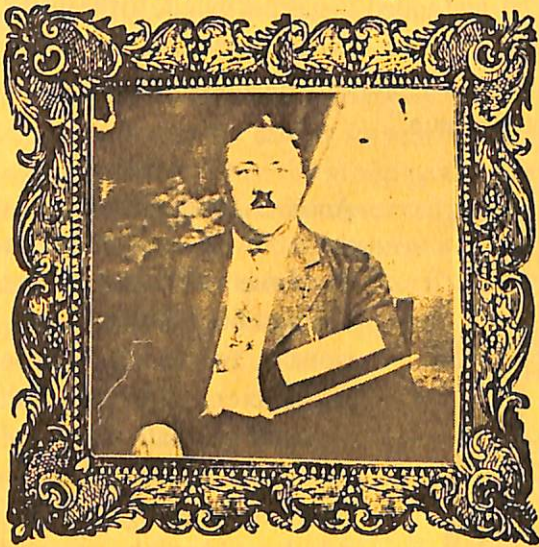
# BROADSIDE

Fall 1992

## BERRIEN CITY

*The article on Berrien City was written by Jeanette R. Flickinger, who has been a resident of Berrien City since 1964, with special thanks to Eleanor Dearborn, George Krebs and Francis Ward.*

Berrien City was the first planned community in West Windsor Township. It was laid out in 1924 by Alexander Lawrence Berrien, known as "Judge" to his friends.



Alexander L. Berrien. Photo from "A Genealogical History of the Berrien Family" by E. Renee Heiss, with special thanks to the West Windsor Library.

The Berrien Family had another presence in West Windsor. Scott Berrien owned the general store in Princeton Basin on the D&R Canal for about 40 years, which was the center of the Basin's activity. In addition to the general store, Berrien dealt in feed, coal, wood, agricultural products and masons' supplies. He owned a hay press and acted as freight collector for the canal.

Many of the Berrien family names ended up as street names: Harris Rd., Scott Ave., Wallace Rd., Lillie St., Montgomery St., Emil St. and of course Alexander Road and Berrien Ave. (Princeton's Alexander Street

was named for Dr. Archibald Alexander, who was the first professor (President) of the Princeton Theological Seminary, according to "Princeton - On the Streets Where We Live" by Randy Hobler and Jeanne Silvester.) Although named after Berrien family members, street signs did not go up until the 1950s.

The proposed Berrien City covered the area bordered on the north by Alexander Rd., south by property owned by Isaac V. Hey, general store owner in Princeton Junction, east and west by property owned by T. Cox and Elliot Nurseries. The community consisted of 114 lots, with 50 ft. frontages and depths ranging from 127 to 181 ft.

People bought only the land from Berrien. The houses themselves were the buyer's responsibility. Some owners chose professional builders. Many of the brick houses are credited to Charles Aversano, a builder, who lived on Scott Ave; the cement block/stucco houses to the Hall Family.

Several houses were built from modular home kits purchased from Sears, Roebuck and other companies. Alice Caples, told The Princeton Packet in January 25, 1985, that their house on Scott Avenue had been built from two such house kits which Martin Caples, her husband, designed into one house. Construction began July 4, 1949. Neighbors, friends from the railroad construction crews, even the neighborhood children helped with the actual construction. "It was an amazing example of neighbor helping neighbor. Something rare even mid-20th century. Nonexistent today," Mrs. Caples told The Packet.





Photos left to right: Examples of a brick construction home, a stucco home and a Weyerhaeuser Modular Home.

Another modular kit home (C236 Cape Cod) was built by George Krebs on Alexander Rd. Many different styles and variations were available from Weyerhaeuser Company.

In remodelling our house, which is a cement block/stucco structure, we found some boards in its construction that were originally packing crates from the Pennsylvania Railroad. We have learned from others in the community that the house was built after World War II when building materials were so hard to come by that any found materials were used. The windows in the older part of our house were made by migrant workers in their off season.

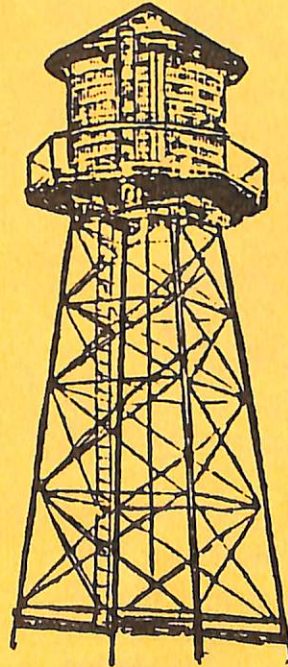
Another interesting find: while digging in the yard for various reasons, we came upon jars of preserved tomatoes, old bottles and pieces of colored glass and pottery. It seems residents buried their unburnable trash on their grounds in the days before West Windsor had a dump and trash collection. Berrien City could be a treasure trove of post-World War II artifacts.

Berrien City had its own water company. The Lions Club Newsletter (see Broadside, Summer-Fall 1989) mentions that in March 1955 residents of Princeton Junction joined together to provide capital (stock @\$40 a share) to drill a well on the Pennsylvania RR property at the foot of Scott Ave.

About 25ft. from there, a fresh water spring (now covered by Wallace Rd.) was accessed from an open spigot which ran into the pond. The water was pure and clean enough that the nearby residents filled jugs there

for drinking. The spring was traced back into Plainsboro and was capped in the 1970s when the water became polluted.

By May 1955, the Newsletter reported that the well was drilled to 312 ft. and added 20 gal. per minute to the water supply. "Until the new well is connected the Water Company plans to continue drawing on the spring at the foot of Scott Avenue."



Another well, with its own water tower, was drilled at the corner of Scott Ave. and Montgomery Streets. Occasionally, the supply became insufficient (during dish washing and bath time) and the water tower had to be filled by opening a valve, which could only be operated by Al Carson or George Krebs. Once the nightly ablutions were finished, the tower continued to fill and often overflowed. This resulted in beautiful ice sculptures when it happened in winter.

It was not until January 1968 that Township residents voted to sell the Princeton Jct. Water Co. to the Elizabethtown Water Company, "which will install water mains." The end of an era!

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## GLEN ACRES

*Our thanks to "a happy Glen Acres resident of eleven years" for the above article and the research for it. Thanks also to Bob Duncan for additional background information.*

You could drive by and see nothing unusual in nine small houses protected by tall pine trees as you maneuver the stretch of Alexander Road between Route One and the Canal. You might not even notice the signs marking Glenview Drive, two of them, one at each end of the horseshoe shaped drive. Should you turn there, you would see eleven small homes, and notice the peace and quiet.

The area called "Glen Acres" was begun around 1958 as a development for integrated housing, an innovative concept at that time. The idea developed in 1954 by a group from several Princeton churches who were concerned about the acute need for housing for black families. They formed The Princeton Housing Group.

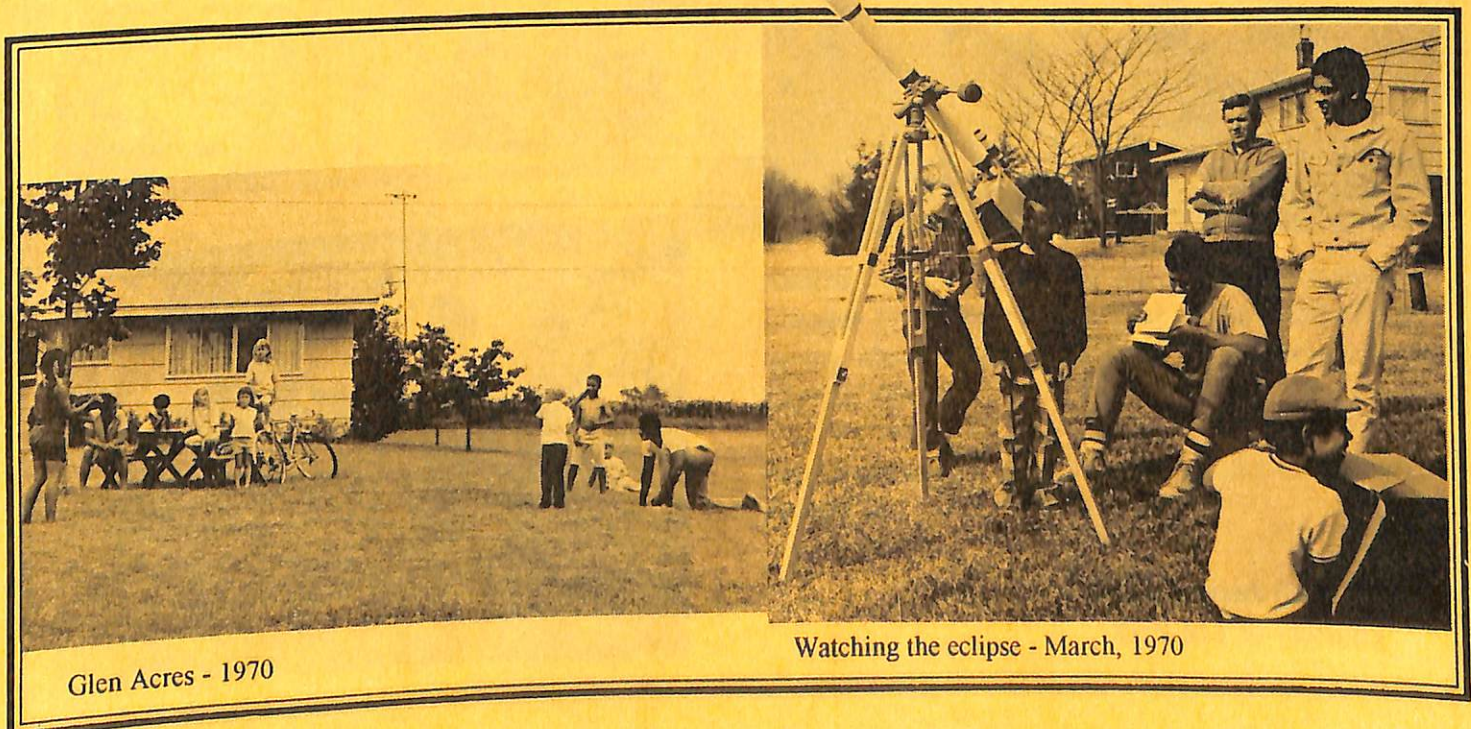
At first members of The Princeton Housing Group looked for houses for sale by someone willing to sell to a minority family. Then the group would talk to neighbors and sound out their feelings about having a minority family in their midst. If the response was favorable, the minority family was able to approach the seller, knowing the neighborhood would approve.

Later in the 1950s, the idea of building a development with an open occupancy philosophy was decided upon. Morris Milgrim, who had already built two interracial housing developments in Philadelphia, was invited to meet with the group to discuss a similar project in Princeton.

Meanwhile, PHG formed a corporation called Princeton Housing Associates. Shares in the corporation were offered. Interested Princeton residents and Mr. Milgrim's investors raised \$65,000. All stockholders gained a profit. It was not just charitable work. It was a commercial enterprise.

Milgrim built two projects in the Princeton area, "sister" developments: "Glen Acres" off Alexander Road and "Maplecrest" in the Ewing Street/Mt. Lucas Road area north of Princeton. Glen Acres was built on land upon which four houses had already been built along Alexander Road. The developer decided not to complete the project and sold to Princeton Housing Associates.

(cont)



Glen Acres - 1970

Watching the eclipse - March, 1970



## GLEN ACRES (con't)

Maplecrest was built on a 10-acre tract of 25 houses. The name has not survived. Although the area is still mixed, there is not the cohesiveness of Glen Acres.

Purchasers had a choice of several general styles of house: a ranch house, two split level styles, a combination of both with split level in the rear and ranch style in front. Through the years the houses have been remodelled according to the owner's needs so today no two houses look alike.

Glen Acres is presently a community of 20 homes. Five of the original homeowners still live there. In one case the original owners have returned to Glen Acres after years elsewhere. One original owner's son bought out his sisters to live in the family home.

A total of 93 children have been raised in the area so far, including four sets of twins. The children shared birth-

day parties and visits to the D&R Canal to canoe and fish. Many foreign students have lived with various families in the area. One of the first African-American exchange students lived with a Glen Acres family.

A feeling of community exists. For example, a picnic is held each year to welcome new neighbors and bid goodbye to those moving on.

Although an isolated area, many residents have been active participants in West Windsor community affairs: serving on committees, boards and involved in the schools.

The community can be summed up by the expression "generosity of spirit," as one resident put it. The families lived together harmoniously and upheld the mutual concerns of their neighbors.



**Play Ball!**



All Glen Acres photos  
courtesy of Ted Peck



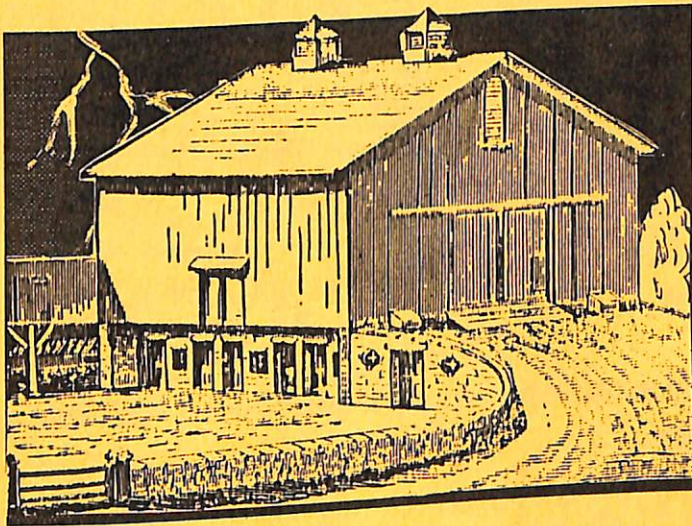
## FROM THE PAGES OF THE PRESS

Second in Carol Silvester's irregular series derived from indices of *The Princeton Press* (a forerunner of *The Princeton Packet*) dating from 1890-1900. Carol is Vice President & Secretary of the Society and one of its founders.

Summer and early fall are times of danger from one of humankind's oldest enemies - lightning! However, as often as lightning strikes, it doesn't really do much damage to people or their possessions. When damage is done, it's newsworthy, back in the 1800s as well as now. Our Princeton Press indices recorded quite a few such instances.

1890 - June 13: "Severe electrical storm in the evening. House of John Skillman on Canal Street (now Alexander St. in Princeton) struck."

Not even the holidays or churches were sacred. July 4: "Destruction by lightning of Joseph Ely's barn and outhouses at **Cranberry**." (There are always people who don't believe it's **Cranbury**.) July 10: "Reformed Church at Millstone considerably damaged by lightning."



There was only one incident recorded for 1891: "Barns & buildings of Hezekiah Rogers, near Hightstown, struck by lightning and burned."

Kinda makes you want to stay out of barns, doesn't it?

In 1893 people got hurt. On June 22nd: "Toler Waibel, operator at the signal station near the (Princeton) Junction, struck by lightning and stunned." Toler recovered enough to get married two years later to Lizzie Servis also of Princeton Junction.

On September 16th: "Lightning struck the flagpole, shattering it, on the top of A. L. Rowlands store building. Several people were stunned, one being made for some time unconscious."

1895 saw lightning once again attacking barns and other buildings. In July George Rule in Franklin Park lost his barn and Thos Davis's barn was struck. August lightning hit houses: Mrs. Degnans's and Prof. Hunt's. But September saw the largest amount of loss, "About sunset a large number of barns north and west of Princeton were burned through lightning strokes."

The only fatality recorded was that of May 5, 1896. "Charles B. Murphy of Trenton, struck by lightning, dies in Princeton, age 25." 1896 also saw the destruction of yet another barn, this one in Griggstown.

The barn of Martin Nevis of Blawenburg was destroyed in May of 1898 and the "Barn of Raganetta" in Rocky Hill in June of 1900.

For almost a century the New Jersey State Fair had permanent grounds in Mercerville. (UPS and other businesses are there now.) On July 7, 1900 several of the buildings were "struck by lightning and consumed." This didn't stop the Fair from going on in September. This was the last recorded lightning strike in our indices.

You hardly ever hear about barns being struck by lightning nowadays. But keep in mind, where those barns used to be, your house or office is now. Scary!

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Another thought to ponder during this election year: October 31, 1890: "Fiscal Year of the State of New Jersey closes with a balance in the treasury of \$2,005,222.16."

As the old saying goes: "That's when a dollar was a dollar!"

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## SECOND ANNUAL FLEA MARKET!

It's time to reserve **Saturday, September 26th** for our second annual flea market at the Zaitz-Schenck House. Whether you choose to be a vendor, shopper, or both is up to you. Either way we know you'll have fun.

Enclosed with this newsletter is a copy of the Space Reservation Form. Spaces reserved in advance are \$10/ space for non-members and \$7 for members. Checks must be received by Friday, September 11th. Day-of-show reservations must be paid in cash: \$15/space.

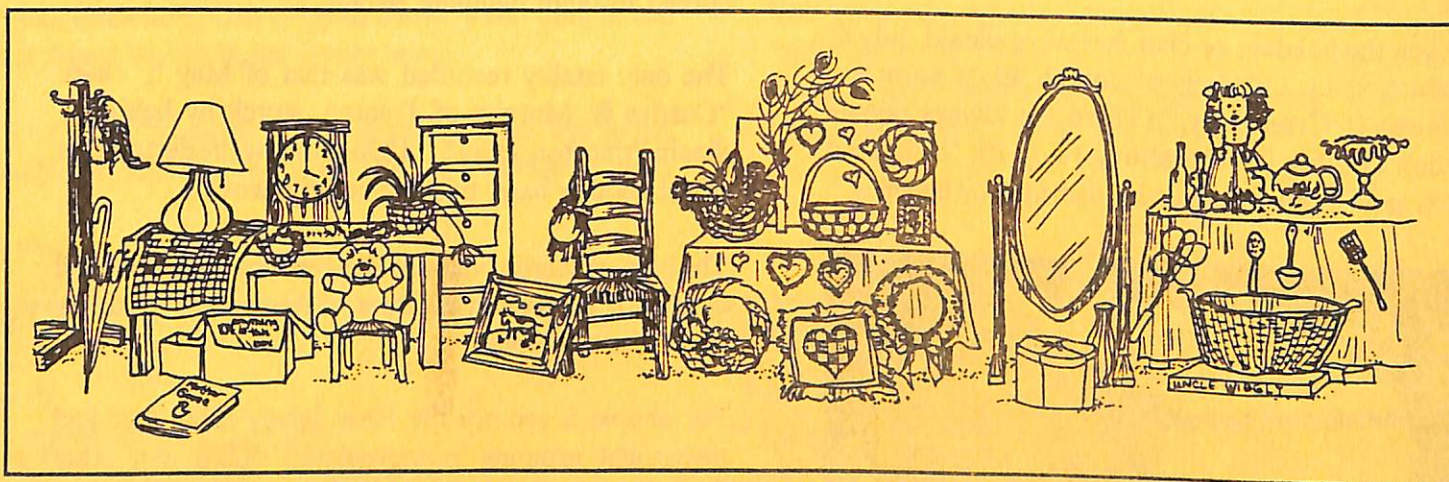
The flea market will be held rain or shine. We'll have it inside the house or barn if weather is unsettled, but we hope the day will be fine.

Refreshments will be available from coffee and bagels to soda and hot dogs for the true flea-marketer appetite.

The Zaitz-Schenck House will be open for a free tour. The 1790/1830 house has tremendous possibilities. We are moving ahead, as our finances allow, to restore the kitchen and double parlor and install a research library and permanent exhibit of West Windsor history. That's why these flea market revenues are so important.

The historical society will have a table of items both historical and hysterical. We hope you will drop by. Someone else's white elephant might be your treasure. By the way, if you have any of your own white elephants to add to our table, please phone Mary or Warren Schenck at 799-1278 to arrange to drop them off.

See you Saturday, September 26th from 9 a.m. on!



**CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:** Jeanette R. Flickinger, Bob Duncan, Carol Silvester, Ruth Strohl Palmer, Ted Peck, Joan Parry and Christiana Parry.

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