

BROADSIDE

SPRING 1998

THE VILLAGE OF PRINCETON JUNCTION: PART I

Princeton Junction's business district runs along the Princeton-Hightstown Road (Route 571) from the Washington Road railroad bridge to Alexander Road. West Windsor's township offices, library and police department are located in Princeton Junction. The "Junction" is probably the best known of all the villages of West Windsor. These statements are true in 1997, but none was true before the 1940s.

In the 1800s, the business district for Princeton Junction was located near the railroad tracks on Station Drive at the end of Washington Road. There was a level grade crossing at the tracks there, as well as at Alexander, Clarksville and Quaker Bridge Roads.

The Princeton Junction general store was located at the corner of Washington Road and Station Drive. Everything could be purchased in the general store: food, clothing and the tools of every trade. In the late 1930s, Michael Corio remembered high button shoes and other items from the 19th century hanging high on the rafters.

Woodward's "History of Burlington & Mercer Counties" of 1883 lists Princeton Junction general store owners from 1870 to 1883 as: Owen Sheridan, D.B. Applegate, and Baker Hutchinson.

Later in the 1880s the general store was owned and operated by Isaac Hey (pronounced "Hi") and then by his sons, Jacob and I. Voorhees Hey. The Hey family lived in the yellow house directly across Station Drive, now used for offices.



General store in Princeton Junction c1880s on Station Drive, now the "Good Friends" restaurant. Photo courtesy Charles Weingart of Dewey's Upholstery.

As was common in rural areas, the post office was also located in the general store. The postmaster was usually the general store owner. Woodward's lists Owen Sheridan and D. B. Applegate as postmasters in the 1870s. In the 1880s, Isaac Hey became postmaster. Later his sons took over the job. It is said that one brother was Republican; the other Democrat. Whichever party was in power, that brother was postmaster.



The general store continued in business until 1947 when Jacob Hey died. When the general store was closed, the building was eventually sold to Louis Tamaro, who ran a barber shop in the front portion of it and rented the rest of the building as apartments. Three restaurants have inhabited the building, beginning with Peking Express in the 1970s. Today, Good Friends restaurant fills this historic spot.

The Hey properties were inherited by Elizabeth Good, who had been brought over from Hungary by the family and seems to have been both a live-in helper and unofficial member of the family.

Long-time residents recall Elizabeth Good in the 1950s when she worked as a mail carrier. She delivered the mail on a motor scooter, which was adapted by having a platform attached to the front for the mail. Apparently this was quite a sight.



Former Hey Family home on corner of Washington Road and Station Drive. Building is used for offices at present.

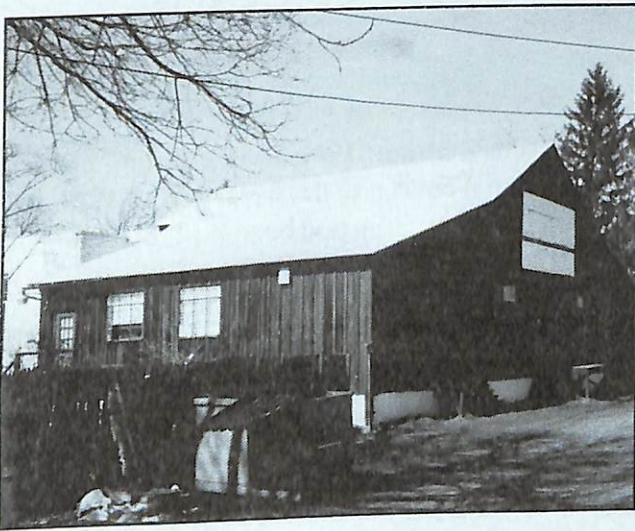
In the mid 1940s the Princeton Junction post office was moved briefly to the firehouse in "Berrien City" on Alexander Road, then to the store (now Brother's Pizza) next to the firehouse. In 1970 it was moved once again to a store in the strip mall on the Hightstown Road, where Domino's Pizza is located in 1998. Today the post office is temporarily located in a trailer on the Municipal Complex, waiting to move into the former library building.

But back to businesses in Old Princeton Junction. At the end of Washington Road, where buildings housing a newspaper delivery service and a garage/repair shop stand today, Jacob R. Wyckoff operated a commodities business, dealing in crops such as grain, potatoes, coal and hay. The business had been located in Princeton Basin along the D&R Canal. When tracks were laid through Princeton Junction in 1865, Wyckoff moved his business to be near the faster railroad.

A hay scale was located in the yard to allow farmers to weigh their loads of hay by driving onto the scale without unloading. The hay would then be compressed by a hay press and baled. The wagon would then be unloaded, the empty wagon weighed and the amount of hay calculated by subtracting the weight of the full wagon against that of the empty wagon.



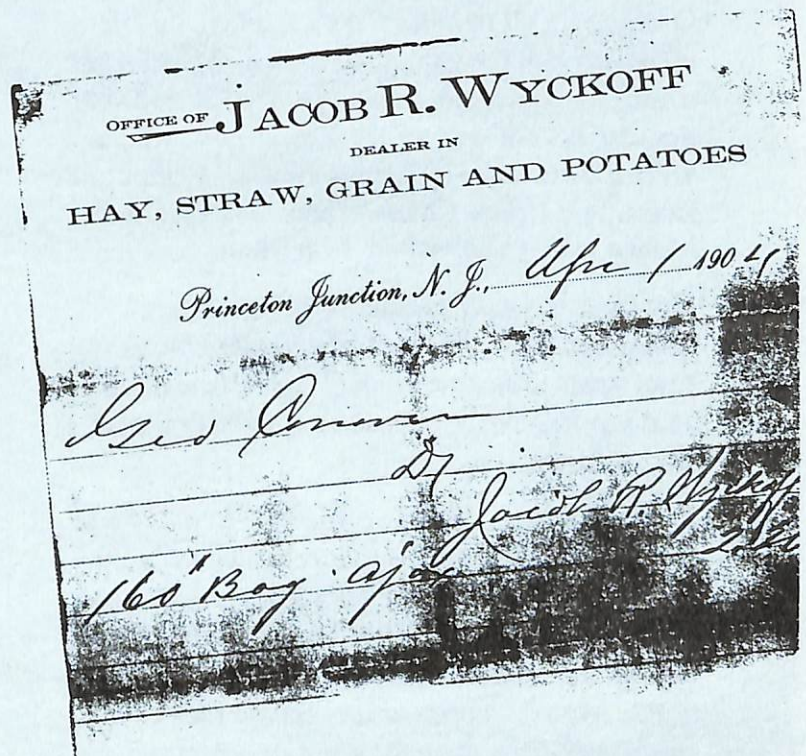
Station Drive, 1950: General store, Dewey's Upholstery Shop, and brick building once used to house Princeton Junction Fire Company's first fire engine can be seen along Station Drive. In foreground, L.C. Bowers property. Photo courtesy of Charles Weingart.



Building at rear of 37 Station Drive was once Jacob Wyckoff's feed mill.

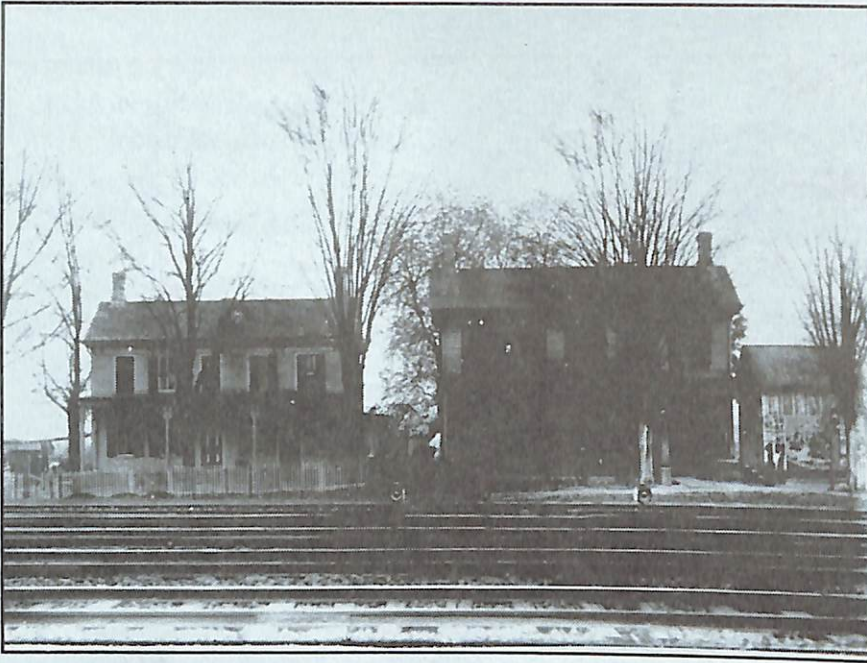
Wyckoff also had a feed mill farther along Station Drive in a barn that still exists at the rear of the office building at 37 Station Drive. The company was sold later to Swinger Company. They still had the hay press, bought and graded potatoes and bought hay and straw.

Swinger sold the portion of the property next to the overpass and Station Drive to L. C. Bowers in the 1930s. Bowers used the two-story barn for their



cabinet shop. This barn burned in the early 1950s. The area was also used as their storage yard.

Dewey's Upholstery shop, established in the 1950s by Charles Weingart, remains in a private house at 33 Station Drive. There were other family homes on Station Drive but they have been demolished.



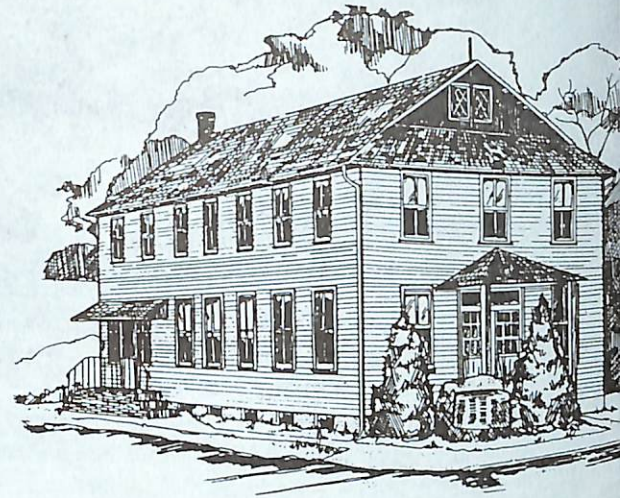
Edward W. Mahan's Princeton Junction Hotel around the turn of the century. Photo courtesy of the Historical Society of Princeton.

One house still remains, an abandoned, boarded-up building at the end of the road, just before the commuter parking lots begin. This was once a very popular tavern owned by Edward W. Mahan, whose namesake son was one of Princeton Borough's Police Chiefs. Tanis Cox recalls the Mahan family and visited them often.

The Cox family rented the building in the 1930s. When the Pennsylvania Railroad was converting from steam to electric trains, Tanis and her mother sold sandwiches, soup and beverages to the railway workers.

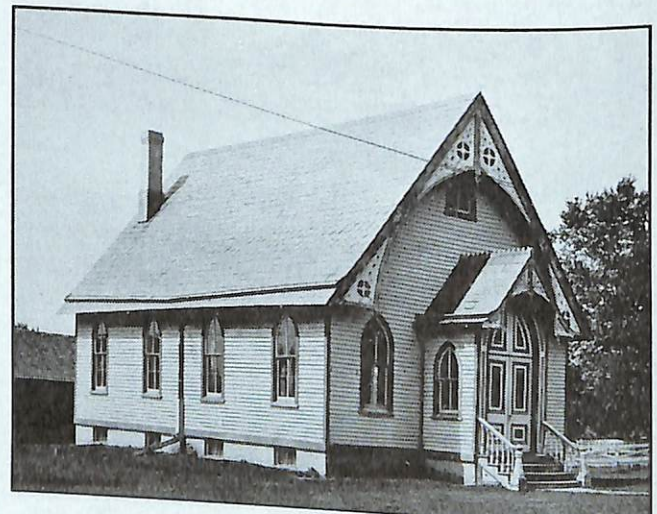
In the 1930s, an office of Railway Express was located near the general store on what is now the bed of the multiple-track railway. Any packages too large or bulky for the post office would be sent by train to be picked up at Railway Express. Many eagerly awaited items ordered from the Sears, Roebuck catalog arrived via Railway Express.

Until the 1980s, Dutch Neck was the municipal center of West Windsor. The government offices were located in Town Hall at the corner of South Mill and Village Roads, now a park. Town Hall was demolished in 1977 after the present Municipal Building opened in 1975-76.

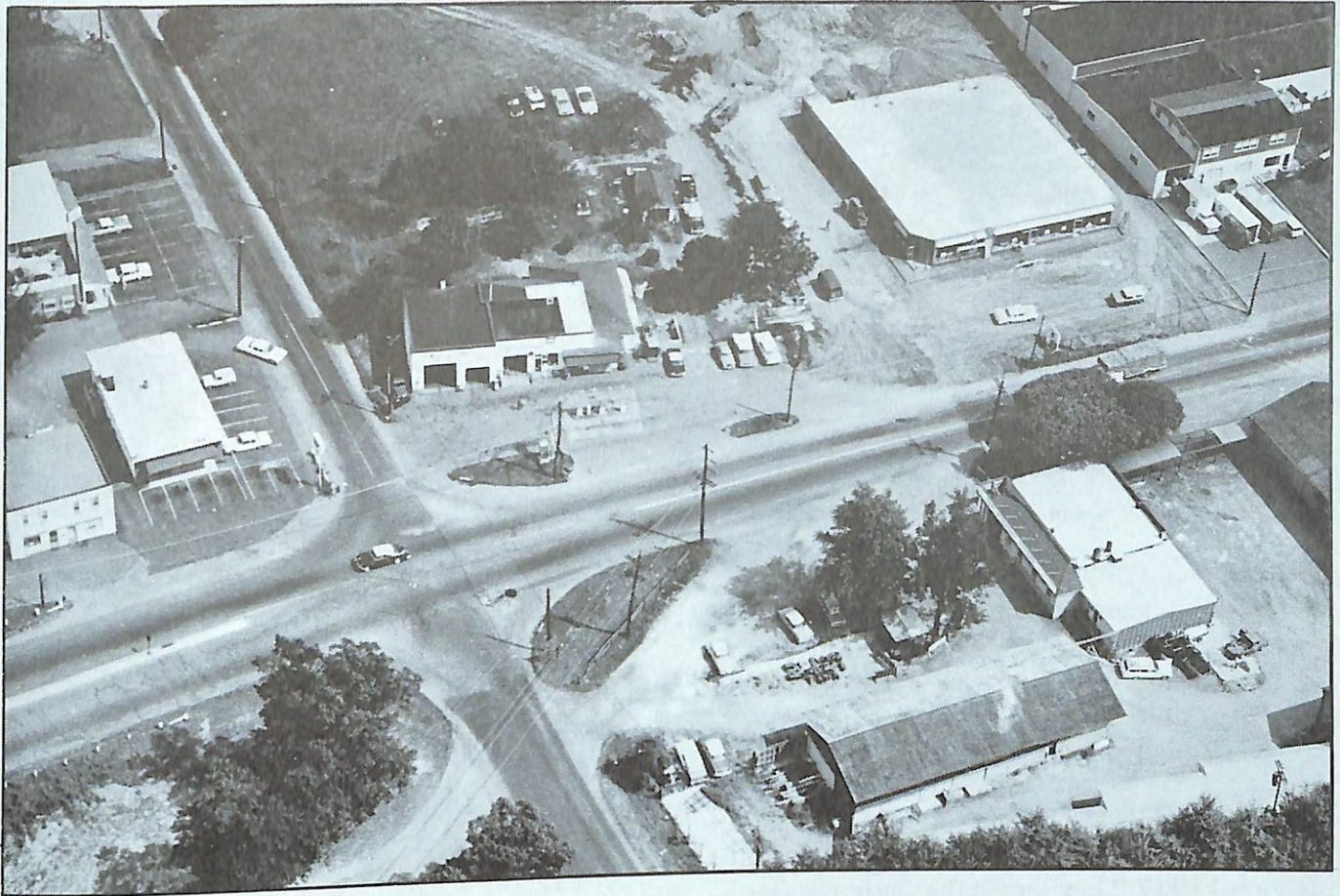


Drawing of Old Town Hall by Ruth Strohl Palmer.

The present Board of Education building housed the municipal court and the library from 1966 until 1983. That building had been built by "the men of the church" in 1882 as Sunday School and chapel for the Dutch Neck Presbyterian church across the street.



Chapel of the Dutch Neck Presbyterian Church. Now Board of Education building.



Aerial photo of Princeton Junction in 1963: Princeton Junction Liquors (now Ellsworth Center), Schafer's Service Station (now Al's Repairs); strip mall; Bohren's (now medical offices). In foreground: the Building Center (Conover & Emmons) which is Lucar Hardware today. Photo courtesy of Joan and Larry Schafer.

Princeton Junction developed last of all the West Windsor villages. It was only in 1865, when the Camden & Amboy Railroad built its tracks through the area that a village began to appear. Railroad workers built their own homes near the tracks. The first "development" in West Windsor (although lots, not houses were sold) was Berrien City, built in the 1920s on both sides of Alexander Road from the Princeton-Hightstown Road to the railroad bridge. (See Fall 1992 Broadside.)

When the first Washington Road railroad bridge was built around 1932, the business district began to move to the Princeton-Hightstown Road (571).

From 1939 until 1960, Conover & Emmons Lumber Company filled the area along the Princeton-Hightstown Road from Wallace Road to where Al's Sunoco stands. Conover & Emmons sold to S. Pillsbury and was then known as "The Building Center" from 1960-69.

Al Carson worked for Conover & Emmons and later started Lucar Hardware with Joe Luther in a store across the street in the strip mall, which was built in 1963. When the Building Center closed in 1969, Lucar bought half of the land for their hardware store. Jack Jannick, owner of Craft Cleaners, bought the other half.

Conrad Schafer opened the first Schafer's Service Station in the 1920s at 29 Washington Rd., now a private house. His son, Henry Schafer, moved the service station to the corner of 571 and Cranbury Road in 1940, a year after the second Washington Rd. railroad bridge was built. The station is now Al's Repairs.

Schafer's sold much more than gas and repairs. Newspapers, magazines, greeting cards, even jewelry and some household goods could be



Schafer's Service Station in 1962. Photo courtesy of West Windsor Township.

purchased. A display case full of wonderful penny candy was a magnet to local children who loved to spend their allowance there when they went with Daddy to buy the Sunday newspaper. Henry's wife, Mary, also sold lunch foods: sandwiches, cookies, snacks and Breyer's ice cream.

Henry Schafer turned the station over to his son Larry, who operated it, with his wife Joan, from 1968 until 1979. They rented the station to Dennis McClenahan for a short time. Al Swingle bought the station in 1987 and specializes in auto repairs there.

The Ellsworth Center started in 1950 when John Ellsworth built a two-story cinder block building on the corner of the Cranbury Road at the foot of the Washington Rd. bridge. John Ellsworth, father of Shawn, owned and operated the Princeton Junction Liquor Store in part of the building; a television repair shop was run by J. Nagy in the other part. There were apartments upstairs.

In 1957 John Ellsworth built a new brick building to house Princeton Junction Liquors. It was later

moved onto Ellsworth's shopping center and houses JEM Cleaners today.

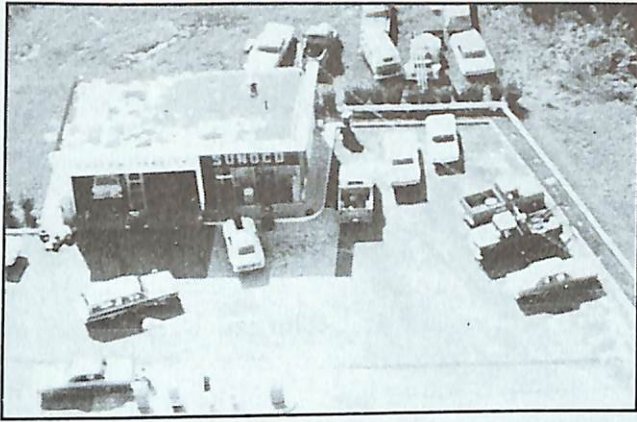
Shawn Ellsworth joined his father in the 1970s. In 1979, Ellsworth's wine and liquor business was expanded and moved into the current, larger building. Several other shops and services were added in the 1990s.

On Cranbury Road, near the front portion of Ellsworth Center, stands a two story building, which was built in the 1950s by the Janicks for their Craft Cleaners. The building also held a small restaurant, and Thorne's Pharmacy. Thorne's moved to the strip mall on the Hightstown Road in 1963. In 1965 the Janicks swapped the building for George Warren's Nassau Street building, where Craft Cleaners remains today.

In 1973 the Ellsworths bought the Cranbury Road building and rented it to West Windsor Township until the Municipal Building was opened in 1976. The Township used the building for various municipal offices, such as the Tax Collector, Tax Assessor and Building Departments.



Junction Liquor Store owned by John Ellsworth at the corner of Route 571 and Cranbury Road in 1962. Photo courtesy of West Windsor Township.



Aerial view of Al's Sunoco in the 1970s. Photo courtesy of Patti and Al Swingle.

Al and Patti Swingle operate Al's Sunoco and Al's Repair Shop, both on the Hightstown Road. Al has been in business since the 1970s. The service station was upgraded in 1991 to an Ultra Service Center.



Hall's Service Station in 1962. Section at right side of the building was rented as an apartment. Service window in center of the building was used to sell frozen custard. Photo courtesy of West Windsor Township.

Hall's Exxon Station on the corner of Alexander Rd. and the Hightstown Road has been there since 1943 when Fred Hall bought the land from C. Lawrence Dey. It was a Texaco station first and became an Esso station when Joe Hall took over in the 1960s.

In addition to providing gas and repairs, Hall's had a soda fountain and luncheonette, furnished with red upholstered booths, in the large room at the front of the station. Frozen custard was also available at a service window shown at the front of the building in the photo. The portion of the building at the right side, with two bay windows,

was rented as an apartment. Some long time residents may also remember a basement room in the station where a pool table provided entertainment to friends.

The strip mall (across the street from Lucar) was built in 1963. The original tenants when the mall opened were: The Thorne Pharmacy, Gourmet

Opening

at
Hightstown Road, Princeton Junction
Shopping Center

<p style="text-align: center;">THE THORNE PHARMACY <small>your drugstore pharmacy</small></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Grand Opening in New Quarters September 26</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>presently continuing to serve you from Cranbury Road store</small></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Free Delivery SW 9-1222 Daily 9 to 9 — Sundays 10:30 to 2:30</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">GOURMET DELICATESSEN and BAKERY</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Opening On or About October 1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Hours: 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. — Fri. & Sat. to 10 p.m. Closed Mondays</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">WINDSOR TOY and HOBBY SHOP</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>Toys and Games for All Ages School and Artist Supplies Sporting Goods — Hobbies Allen and Ruth Schenck SW 9-0449 Evenings until 9 p.m.</small></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">LUCAR HARDWARE CO. <small>The Complete Hardware — Household — Plumbing and Electrical Supply Store Joseph A. Luther — T. Alvin Caruso Grand Opening — September 26 Informally Open to Serve You Now SW 9-0599 open evenings until 9</small></p>

with BEST WISHES from

<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Cooper & Schuler</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>Roofing — Sheet Metal Work — Heating 62 Maran Ave., Princeton WA 6-2043</small></p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Schuler's Service Center</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>Tidewater Flying A Service</small></p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Princeton Junction Package Store</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>Hightstown & Cranbury Roads SW 9-0330 Free Delivery</small></p>
<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Carol Electric Service Co.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>Specialists in All Types of Wiring 9 Hariman Dr., Trenton NJ 7-1946</small></p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Hightstown & Cranbury Roads</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>SW 9-9838</small></p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">The Building Center</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>Princeton Hightstown Road Princeton Junction SW 9-1500</small></p>

16 — From Today's Thursday, September 19, 1963 — 16

Delicatessen and Bakery, Lucar Hardware Co. and Windsor Toy and Hobby Shop.

The Gourmet Deli/Bakery was owned by Albert ("Shine") and Dorothy Ellsworth from 1963 to 1968. They sold to Elvin and Doris Bowers, who operated a luncheonette for a year. Al Macli, Sr. started the Gourmet Deli in 1969. His son, Al Macli, Jr., took over from 1971 through 1988 when he sold it. Unfortunately, the new management failed so Al Macli took it over in 1995. In 1998, the business has new management again with owners Robert Nini and Greg Costas.

The Windsor Toy and Hobby Shop was owned by Ruth and Allen Schenck until 1970 when they sold to Michael Burak. In 1978 when the Windsor Plaza Shopping Center and Acme Supermarket expanded, the toy and hobby shop moved there. Michael Burak closed his business in 1995 because of competition from the superstores on Route One.

TO BE CONTINUED ...

AMERICAN CYANAMID DONATES DOHERTY FURNITURE

We are pleased to announce that American Cyanamid has donated to the Schenck House most of the furniture and contents of the house on Quaker Bridge Road once owned by the Doherty Family. Amelia Doherty, who died in 1994 at 86 years of age, was the last family member to live in the house.

The furniture includes an Eastlake parlor set, part of which was on display during our Bicentennial Reception in February 1997; an oak dining room set, including hanging Tiffany lamp; two sets of bedroom furniture; and several wooden dressers and cabinets.

From last February until June, Roberta Smith, Kathy Kapp, Joan Parry and Ed DiPolvere packed over 30 cartons of household items, both antique treasures and flea market items.

In June, Bohren's Moving and Storage donated the moving and storage of all the furniture and household items, which they will store until the Schenck House interior is ready to receive them.

We are most grateful to both American Cyanamid and Bohren's for their generosity and community spirit.

Historical Society of West Windsor

P.O. Box 38
Princeton Jct., NJ 08550

\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$

1998 DUES: A REMINDER

If you have not yet paid dues for 1998, please send your check as soon as possible to Kay Reed, Treasurer, HSofWW, P.O. Box 38, Princeton Junction, NJ 08550. Your mailing label will tell you when you last paid dues, so if your label does NOT say 1998, you owe: Family - \$12; Individual - \$8; Senior Citizen (55+) - \$5; over 80 -FREE. Of course, additional donations are always welcome. If you are not yet a member, please consider joining us. There are exciting days just ahead with the Schenck House nearing completion. Come join us now!

1998 MEETINGS:

March 2, May 4, September 14, November 2

HSofWW meetings are now held at the Schenck House, 50 Southfield Road (across from the Cranbury golf course) on Monday evenings as listed above. We begin at 7:30 p.m. and rarely go beyond 9 p.m. **Everyone is welcome!**

Broadside is the publication of the Historical Society of West Windsor. Design/layout by C.C. Parry.

FIRST CLASS MAIL