

BROADSIDE

Fall 1999

WEST WINDSOR NEIGHBORHOODS: MEADOW ROAD

Meadow Road runs between Clarksville Road and Route #1, with an extension to Canal Pointe Road. Its configuration is fairly straight at both ends with a dangerous S-curve in the middle. Plans for an overpass at Meadow Rd. and Route #1 will eliminate the curve and change the configuration of this old country road.

The portion of Meadow Road between Route #1 and the woods was once the farm of the Friedrich-Gabel-Pierson Family. Mary Pierson Schenck tells about her family farm:

The Friedrich-Gabel-Pierson

Family Farm *by Mary Pierson Schenck*

In 1912, George and Mary Friedrich Gabel and their five children came by train to Princeton Junction from New York City. They then took the Princeton Shuttle train ("The Dinky") to its stop at Route #1 and walked to Meadow Road.

As the family walked alongside Route #1, they passed the one-room school house on the site of O'Neill's Kennels today. The children were at recess. Each group looked the others over. The

four younger children would attend that school (the Penns Neck one-room school house) and later the four-room school house built in 1917 at the corner of Alexander Road and Route #1, demolished in 1997.

The oldest daughter, my mother, Cecile Gabel, had already graduated from 8th Grade. She and her father would walk to the Shuttle each day: Cecile to Princeton High School; her father to commute to New York City and his job as manager of the Wissner Piano Factory.

George Gabel moved to the country because of his growing family. However, because of commuting and lack of experience, his farm-raised wife, Mary Friedrich Gabel, did most of the farming with the help of the children.

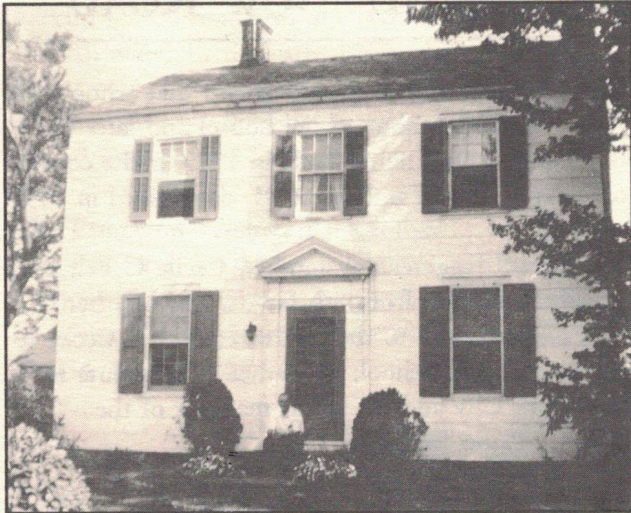
The farm on Meadow Road consisted of 55 acres and ran from Route #1 to the woods behind Meadow Lane Apartments. The farm had been owned by my Great-grandparents, Philip and Caroline Friedrich, who had come from Hesse in Germany in the early 1890s. Their farmhouse had been built in 1850 and had seven rooms. There was



Penns Neck School 1914: Teacher-Marcia Higgins; Standing-Norman Gabel; Front Row-Evelyn Flock, Ruth Servis, Russell G. Bush, Lester Reed, Stuart Reed, Oliver Gabel, Willie Saritsky; Second Row-Elmer Stout, Pauline Mount, Edna Servis, Marian Bush, Rudolph Wildermuth, Orville Flock, Russell Mount; Third Row-Madeline Gabel, Aleta Holmes, Dewitt Flock, Edwin Gabel, Osborn Stout, Earl Dansbury, Lloyd Holmes. Photo donated by Edna Bush via Mary P. Schenck.

also a barn and other outbuildings such as chicken coops and cow pens.

The farm also extended south along Route #1. A portion of this land was sold to George Piper and his family who operated a cinder block factory on the property. The family lived in a portion of the building, which made housekeeping difficult. Remains of the building are still visible from Route #1.



Farmhouse built in 1850 burned in 1992. Photo courtesy of Mary Pierson Schenck

In 1925, my grandparents (George and Mary Gabel) built an eleven room house close to Route #1 and rented out the farmhouse. In 1930 my parents, Arnold and Cecile Gabel Pierson, bought the farmhouse and several acres of land. My sister, Madeline Pierson Swinnerton, moved into the house with her seven children in the 1960s. The house burned in 1992.

Also, in the late 1930s, my Great-uncle George Friedrich built a small white house along Meadow Road. My parents, Arnold and Cecile Gabel Pierson, built a small, green house in the 1950s, next to Great-uncle George Friedrich's white house. Both houses were demolished in 1997.

In 1930 when two of my uncles left for homes of their own, there were several empty bedrooms and a five car garage at the white stucco house at the corner of Meadow Road and Route #1. Only my grandmother, my Aunt Madeline Gabel, and Uncle Oliver remained at home.

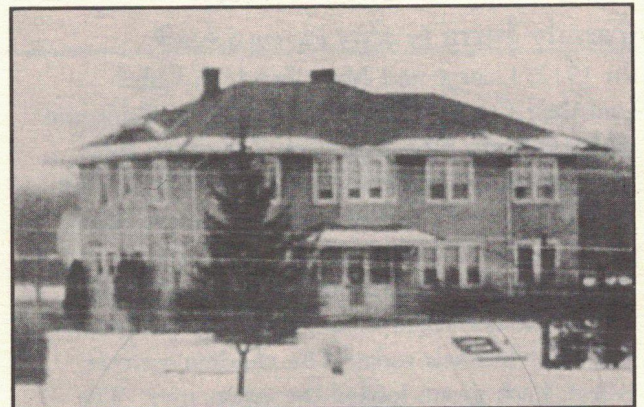
In April 1930, six State Police troopers moved in

and stayed until September 1946, with the exception of eighteen months between April 1938 and September 1940 when they moved to the corner of Alexander Road and Route #1. During all this time, Grandmother Gabel prepared three meals a day and did the usual housekeeping for the troopers as well as for her own family.

It was quite an adventure to be involved with the minor crimes in the area. Uncle Oliver was so impressed that he later became a State Trooper.

In 1946, the house close to Route #1 was sold. Grandmother Gabel moved to the small white house mentioned earlier. All three houses plus 51 acres, as well as the stucco house, were sold in 1965 to Anthony LaPlaca, who built Meadow Lane Apartments and a motel on the farmland.

I have many memories of my home, or I should say homes, on Meadow Road since I spent many hours with my Grandmother Gabel while my brother and sister were at school and my mother worked in Princeton. There was a well worn path between the two houses.



Route #1 and Meadow Road - State Troopers barracks during most of 1930-1946 -Gabel Family home. Photo courtesy of Mary Pierson Schenck

The Cella Family Farm

Only one house stands between the Clarksville Road railroad bridge and Bear Brook Road at 554 Meadow Road. That house was once a barn on the property once owned by Christopher and Elizabeth Cella. The Cellas used it as a weekend retreat and to raise game birds for their New York City restaurant "Christ Cella's" on East 46th Street.

During the 1930s Mr. and Mrs. Cella would bring guests such as Jack Dempsey, world heavyweight

The Historical Society of West Windsor

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

What's Happening at the Historical Society of West Windsor Fall-Winter 1999-2000

The Schenck Farmstead

Farmhouse -

Since spring, work has continued inside the farmhouse. The floor of the large bedroom on the second floor has been sanded and coated. The second floor lavatory is ready for sink and toilet to be installed. Bids are out to turn the first floor lavatory into a working kitchen.

Barn & Outbuildings -

The barn will be dismantled, frame will be repaired or replaced as needed and the barn will then be reassembled. Next, the new roof and walls will be installed.

Schoolhouse - Interior walls have been removed, returning the building to one room. We are collecting school desks of different periods, as well as old school textbooks, wall maps and globes to turn the clock back for visitors.

Exhibits - An exhibit on "School Days" is on display in the lobby display case at the Township offices. Many photos donated to the Society, as well as report cards, school bells, etc., are included in the exhibit.

Broadside - The attached article on Meadow Road was prepared with the assistance of: Georgina Cella, E. A. Downs, Jr., Beulah Faccini, Francoise and Irene Guillemin, Robert R. Piper and Mary P. Schenck. We greatly appreciate all their information and corrections to the article.

**2000 Meeting Dates: January 10; March 6; May 1; September 11;
November 6**

All meetings are held at the Schenck House, 50 Southfield Road, across from the golf course. Meetings begin at 7:30 p.m. and end by 9 p.m. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Election of Officers & Board of Trustees

At our November 2nd meeting, the following were elected as the Society's Officers and Board of Trustees: President - Joan S. Parry; Vice President & Secretary - Kathy Kapp; Treasurer - Kay T. Reed. Board of Trustees: Shirlee Bleacher, Anneliese Midland, Mary Schenck and Roberta Smith

Milestones

We regret to announce the passing of several of our members: Edna Bush; Ronald R. Rogers and Frances Wendt. We extend our deepest sympathy to their families.

Holiday House Tour

Our annual fund-raiser will be held Sunday, December 5th from 1 to 4 p.m. at Tamarack Farms, Bear Brook Road in Princeton Junction. The theme will be "The 20th Century." Exhibits on each decade will be mounted in some of the rooms in the house. Our mannequins will each be dressed in the clothing of a different decade.

Members of the Society are encouraged to volunteer to be Room Guides during the tour. We would also appreciate Members bringing a plate of cookies - homemade or store-bought - to the tour. Please phone Joan Parry at 452-8598 if you would like to be a guide this year.

Gifts to the Society

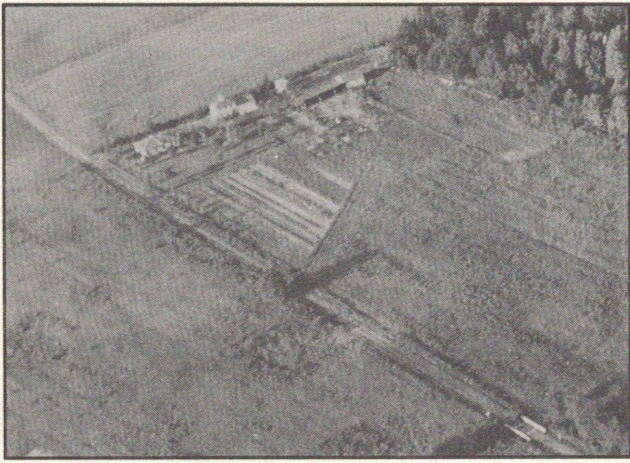
We have just received word that the Society has been left \$15,000 from the Estate of Frank and Molly Updike. The Updikes were Charter Members of the Society. Frank wrote several history books on Penns Neck, which were used in the Broadsides on the village and its church.. We are most grateful for this generous donation.

New acquisitions include: Corn sheller from Ruth Williams, Turkey crate, hand plow and wooden pulley from Justin Kodner; 7 ft. artificial Christmas tree from Doris and Walter Schenck, set of Little League programs from Bill and Shirlee Bleacher; two school desks from Walter Kozachek. These items will be used at the Schenck House.

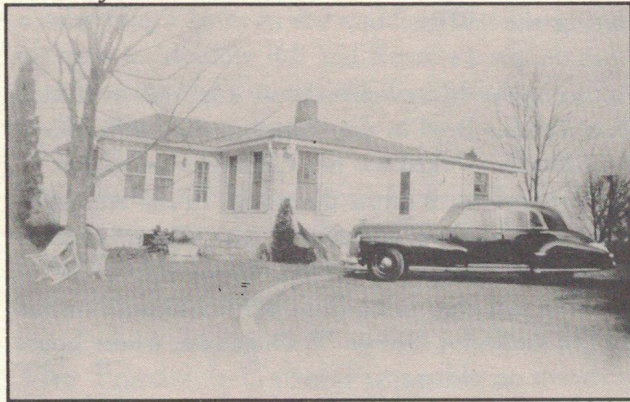
Memberships

Time to send in your annual membership dues for the year 2000! Look on your mailing label to see the date you paid dues last. Dues are: Family - \$12; Individual - \$8; Senior Citizen, Student - \$5; Over 80 - FREE. Don't miss an issue of Broadside or the Member's discount to our events.

Happy Holidays and the best to you all for the year 2000!



Aerial view of Cella Farm late 1950s Photo E. A. Downs, Jr.



Cella house, Meadow Road. Burned in 1967.

champion, and Jo Davidson, sculptor, for weekends in the country. Both the Cellas were chefs and would cook gourmet meals for their guests. The main house burned to the ground in 1967.

In 1983, Françoise and Irene Guillemin bought the property and renovated the barn into a home for their family.

The Faccini Farm *by Beulah H. Faccini*

The Faccini Family farm included land on Meadow Road, from Bear Brook Road to the Cella Farm on one side, from Clarksville Road to the Princeton Presbyterian Church on the other side. The Faccini brothers came from Parma, Italy. Before 1920 they bought the George O. Vanderbilt farm of about 200 acres.

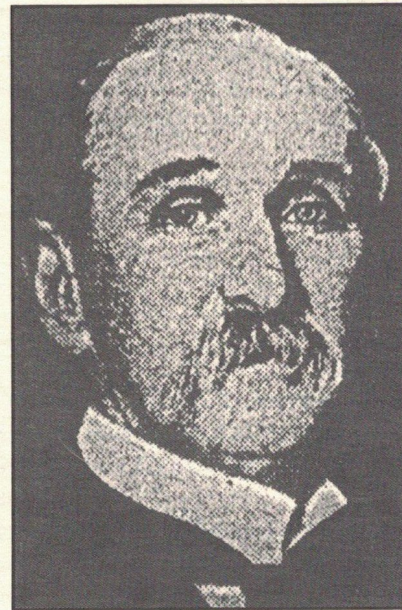
George O. Vanderbilt was a New Jersey State Senator from 1873 to 1876 and again from 1886 to 1923. It is not certain if he ever lived on the farm, as his main residence was at 36 University Place in Princeton. He did visit the farm often to see how the Faccini Brothers were doing.

Senator Vanderbilt's biography in Woodward's 1883 "History of Burlington and Mercer County" states that he lived on a farm for his first twenty years so there is the possibility that the farm had been his home.

The Faccinis raised tomatoes, fruit, poultry and had dairy cows. (In fact Mary Pierson Schenck recalls receiving bottled milk delivered daily to their home in a basket. It was one of the Pierson children's chores to leave the clean empties in the same basket for pickup the next day.)

Most of the tomatoes went to the the Garden State Canning Company in Hightstown, which canned under the "Farm Fresh" label, as well as for Stokely. In addition to tomatoes, the factory canned potatoes and blueberries. During World War II they canned water for the military! In 1961, Coca Cola bought the factory and processes Minute Maid orange juice and Hi-C there.

After the brothers retired and returned to Italy in the 1950s, Jess Coleman farmed the property. In the late 1950s the Faccini family sold all but 13 acres of their farm to Amico Sand and Gravel. It was the sand deposit that interested the company. They dug several large, deep exploratory pits on the farm, which were dangerous and unsightly. Although the company promised to make the excavated area into a lake and park when they had finished quarrying, the Township disapproved of the project and it was cancelled.



*George O. Vanderbilt, N.J. State Senator.
Photo Trenton Times January 11, 1927.*

However, earlier in the century, Liscomb B. Reed owned a gravel pit at the site of the present township landfill, as well as a white sand pit on Bear Brook Rd. According to the 1964 Tercentenary booklet on West Windsor, many buildings in Princeton used this sand during construction.

Back to the Faccini Family - In 1957, Daniel Faccini built a house on one acre of the family's thirettn acres. In the early 1960s the remaining twelve acres were sold to Jerry Ford, the architect. The property was sold twice more and is now owned by Joan and Scott Parry.

The Princeton Presbyterian Church

The Princeton Presbyterian Church was built in 1981 on 7.12 acres. In addition to the sanctuary, an annex has housed the West Windsor Family YMCA since 1994.

Miscellaneous

After it passes the entrance to Bear Brook Rd., Meadow Road follows an S-shaped curve as it heads toward Route #1. At the curve stands a house shown on West Windsor maps of 1860 and 1875 as a "shanty."

When the road was paved in the 1960s, the curve was flattened slightly, taking most of the front yard of the house presently located there. The "shanty" was renovated by the Amabile family, then was rented to several tenants and was headquarters of the Policemen's Benevolent Association for a period during the 1970s.

According to Mary Schenck, an Englishman named Tom Perkins lived in the shanty in the 1930s. He occasionally worked for her Grandmother Gabel. Perkins seemed to know the woods in the area well. He would bring blueberries to Mrs. Gabel, which he found in the woods off Bear Brook Rd. It is possible that they came from the house once owned by Tax Collector George W. Dennison, whose house is shown on old maps.

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