

BROADSIDE

SPRING 1999

WEST WINDSOR NEIGHBORHOODS: BEAR BROOK RD.

Bear Brook Road is easy to find on a map of West Windsor. The road's distinctive bow shape stands out as it runs between Alexander and Meadow Roads, vaguely paralleling Route 1. (See 1875 map of West Windsor at bottom of this page.)

The area had remained fairly rural until recently. Between 1988 and 1993 the 184 townhouse units of Windsor Haven were built on the farm once belonging to the LePrevost family.

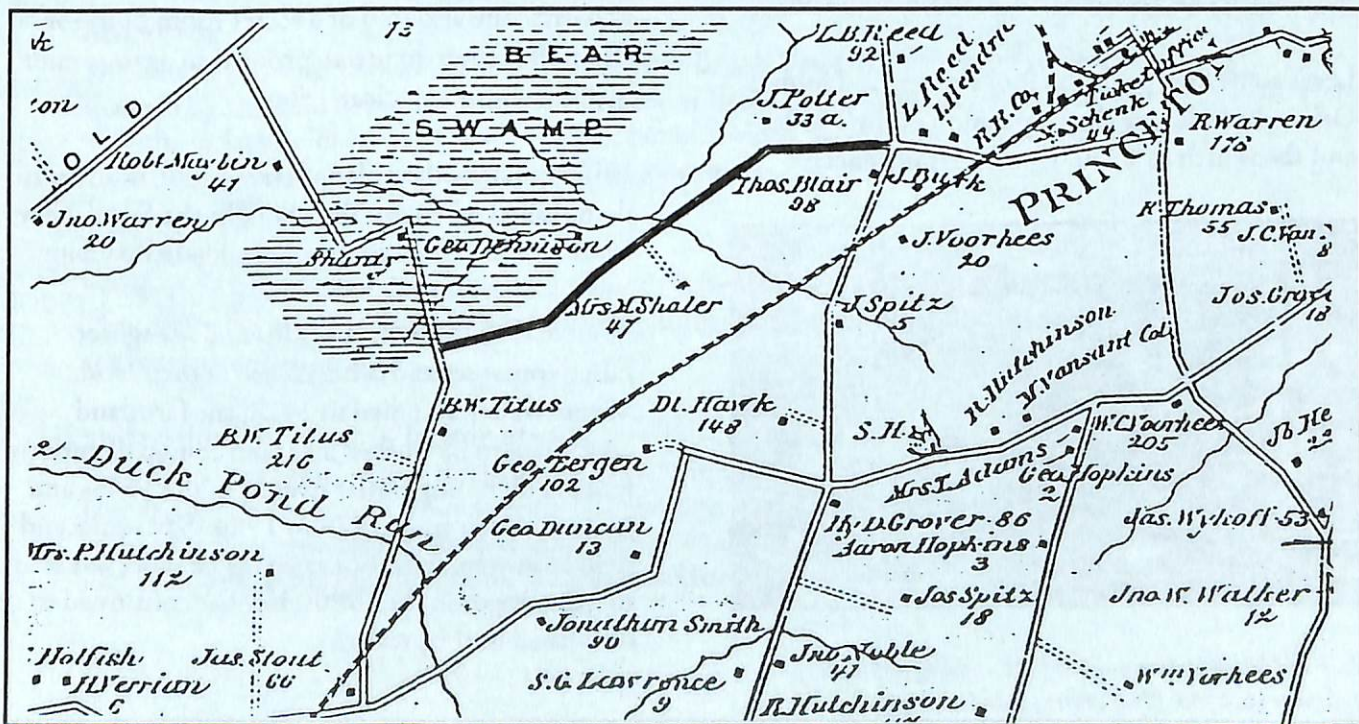
On two acres of the 13 acre Jewell Woods (now Walden Woods), sixteen homes are being constructed by their owners and Bootstraps, an organization which helps lower income families to own their own home.

Toll Brothers' "Estates at Princeton Junction" development is slated to bring 1165 units, including 400 single family detached houses, 635 multi-family units and 130 townhouses to replace 300 acres of farmland

With all these changes, a brief history of some of the families and farms of old Bear Brook Road should be put on record.

The Holmes Family Farm

Levi Clark Holmes owned and farmed the 88 acres on the east side of Bear Brook Road from Alexander Rd. to the ditch-easement at the beginning of the Tett farm, across from Tamarack Farms. Sweet potatoes and white potatoes were the primary crops.



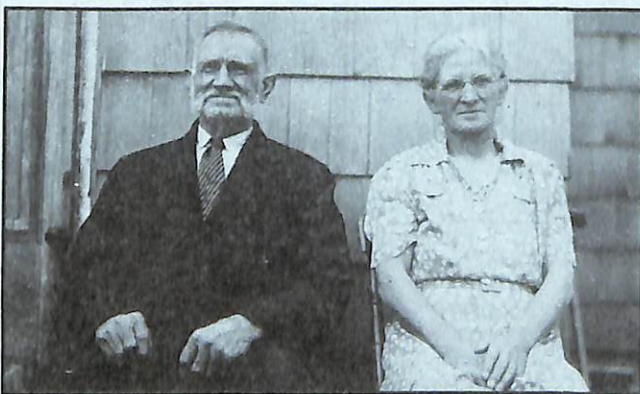


The Holmes Family: Back Row - Sam Bates, Roger Holmes, Carmelita Holmes Bates, Sarah D. Holmes, Lillian Ritterson, Helen Delaney, Lloyd Holmes. Front Row-Donald Holmes, Alma Ritterson, Joan Holmes Hall c1940. Photo courtesy of Joan Holmes Hall.

The farmhouse, demolished in the 1980s, had been built in 1858 and contained wide pine board floors, a gable roof and several fireplaces. It was located at the end of the little dead end road off Bear Brook Road nicknamed "Holmes Drive."

Levi Holmes was West Windsor's Head Constable and one of the founders of the Berrien City Fire Company (later the Princeton Junction Volunteer Fire Company). The highlight of his constabulary duties was to assist John D. Rockefeller by seeing that his train from Florida was halted at Princeton Junction, instead of Trenton, to enable Rockefeller to drive to his home in Lakewood, N.J. without the publicity his appearance in Trenton would cause.

Levi's son Lloyd built the four houses on Holmes Drive: three during the Depression in the 1930s and the fourth in 1956. It was a family enclave



Levi and Sarah Holmes on their 50th wedding anniversary, February 16, 1940. Photo courtesy Joan Holmes Hall.

with sister, Carmelita Holmes Bates, and son, Roger Holmes, in the two homes on the left side of the road; Lloyd Holmes on the right side. The fourth house on the right was built in 1956 for Lloyd's daughter, Joan Holmes Hall, and her husband Charles.

The Walter Tett Family Farm

Although the Tett family purchased 44 acres only in 1919, the land has a long history. The farmhouse is considered to be a very early Dutch house built, at least in part, during the early 18th century. The last of the family to live there, Fanny Tett, told stories of a fireplace large enough to fit a horse and cart. She also told of a secret room built for the early settlers to use as protection against raids by local native American tribes.

Unfortunately, the older portion of the house was demolished when the Tetts bought the farm. They left the 1808 Federal section and added a new wing.

Walter Tett, his wife, two sons and daughter raised tomatoes and other crops on their land. When Walter Tett died in 1928, the farmland continued to be worked and later rented to various farmers including Elmer Everett in the 1950s and James Golden from 1975 to 1984. Soy beans and field corn were the crops raised. The farm was sold to a developer in the 1980s, but has continued to be farmed to the present.

The Historical Society of West Windsor

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

What's Happening at The Historical Society of West Windsor Spring 1999

Our newsletter, *Broadside*, is mainly a series of articles on West Windsor. There is seldom room to talk about the Society's projects and their progress. It occurred to us that an insert dealing only with the Society might be useful. Let us know what you think of the idea.

The Schenck House

Good progress has been made this year. The upstairs rooms have been redone with new sheet rock in the upstairs bathroom, large bedroom, small future library room and the small room at the end of the hallway on the 1830 side of the house. Floors have been sanded and coated in the library room and the stairs leading to the kitchen. More work is in progress.

Downstairs the kitchen will be done in 1790s style with the aid of the West Windsor 200 Committee. The downstairs bathroom will be made into a small kitchen to be used for events. We still need to decorate the double parlor with wallpaper or paint with a border. The former dining room needs the floors redone. How this room will be used is still in question. It will definitely house the dining room furniture from the Doherty House, but may also be our reception area and gift shop when we open to the public.

Broadside

The attached Spring 1999 newsletter features Bear Brook Road, the area soon to be vastly changed by the Toll Brothers "Estates at Princeton Junction." Joan Parry wrote the article with the assistance of Mercy Corio Bruestle, James Golden, Joan Holmes Hall, Gay Hall Huber, and John Patterson. Many thanks for your help!

Exhibits

By the time you receive this newsletter, Senior Citizen's Day on May 18 will be a memory. This year's historical society exhibit featured photographs from our collection and some appropriate antiques.

Slide Show on West Windsor History

Joan Parry was asked to give a talk about West Windsor history before the Retiree's Club in January and at the Lion's Club meeting in February. A group of key photos from our collection was made into slides so that we can give talks of this type to any group that would like it, as well as for groups visiting the Schenck House in the future.

Donations and Acquisitions

West Windsor 200 Committee donated a portion of the profits from the Bicentennial events to us for use in restoring our 1790 kitchen. We were also given \$1,000 by the Prince of Peace Church from their Memorial Fund in memory of Bernt Midland. Further, notice was just received that we are to receive a donation from the Estate of Frank and Mary (Molly) Updike. We are very grateful for these donations. They will help finish the Schenck House sooner.

Historic Associations of Central Jersey (HaCenJer)

In March we celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the group West Windsor founded to bring historical associations together to share our projects and problems, as well as to "network." We met at the Victorian Museum of The Contemporary Club in Trenton and enjoyed a tour and tea there. Our next meeting will be in November at the History Center of the Cranbury Historical and Preservation Society.

Archives

We are in the process of coding, photographing and marking all of our furniture and artifacts. In addition, all our photographs are being listed and stored in archival envelopes. Joan Parry has visited Maureen Smythe at the Princeton Historical Society, Winona Nash, Lawrence Township historian, and Betty Wagner at the Cranbury History Center to see how other associations deal with their possessions. Anyone interested in assisting with this project, please contact Joan Parry at 452-8598.

Oral History Project

Kathy Kapp has taped and typed the memories of several of our long-time residents. She needs volunteers to help with this project. Phone her at: 890-2068 if you are interested.

Memberships

Thank you to all who have paid their dues for 1999. If you have not yet paid (Look on your label to know when you paid last.), please send your dues as soon as possible. Producing the Broadside costs about \$500, including printing and postage. With only 100 memberships, paying an average of \$5, each issue uses up our yearly income from dues. We feel the newsletter is a quality publication and would like to continue to send it to you without having to raise our dues.

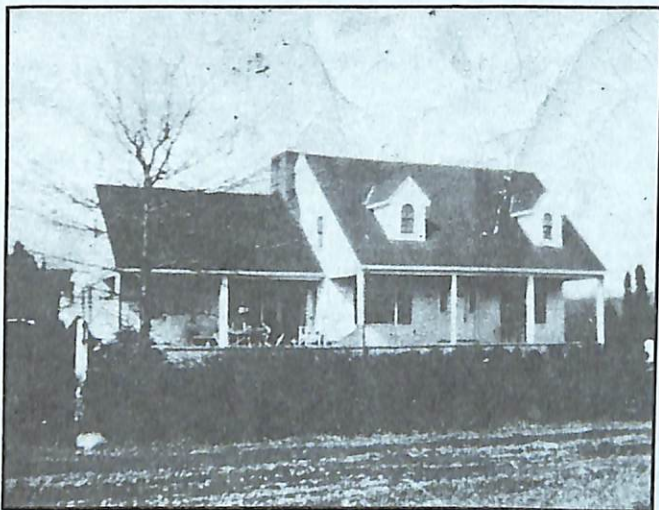
Holiday House Tour

Our tour will be held Sunday, December 5th this year. Mark your calendar. If you are available to be a Room Guide, please phone Joan Parry at 452-8598. She will start decorating in late October and would appreciate help from any member interested.

The Corio Family Farms

Once you pass Windsor Haven and Walden Woods (Bootstraps), you come to property owned by various members of the Corio family. Henry and Marion Corio moved to Bear Brook Road from East Orange, N.J. in 1937. Their land extended from the white house at 102 Bear Brook Rd. to and including the Bruestle property at 112 Bear Brook Road - a total of 27 acres.

During 1935-6, the Henry Corios built the house at 102 Bear Brook Road. They used a house shown in a Dutch Boy paint advertisement as a model. The present owners, Mireille and Farrell Delman, have added wings to the original house.



Corio house at 102 Bear Brook Road in 1940s. Photo courtesy Mercy Corio Bruestle

When Henry Corio died in 1968, the remaining land was divided among their son, Michael, and daughters. (Mrs. Corio had died in 1966.) Mercy Corio Bruestle and her sister, Virginia Corio Wilkinson, were each left about half of the nine acres between the Bruestle and the Delman properties. The field is still farmed.

In 1958, Mercy and her husband, Glen Bruestle, had built their house at 112 Bear Brook Road and operate a boarding kennel there.

Michael Corio inherited six acres and the family home. Mike and his wife, Betty, already owned the adjoining 12 acres which they had purchased from Joseph Shorten in 1954. Mike and Betty

built the ranch house at 98 Bear Brook Rd., where they lived until 1968 when they inherited the family house next door and moved there.

They owned the property until 1973 when they sold 13 acres to Scott and Joan Parry, who named it Tamarack Farms. At the back of the property, the Parrys build the house nicknamed "West Windsor Castle." See photo below.



In 1964, Michael and Betty Corio had bought the remaining one acre and farmhouse at 94 Bear Brook Rd. from Joseph Shorten. The farmhouse, extremely close to the road, was built in two sections, the taller portion in the early 1900s, the shorter portion in the 1800s or earlier. One of the only existing outhouses in West Windsor is located on the farmhouse property.

In his later years, Joseph Shorten was confined to a wheelchair. Half of the farmhouse was rented out during this time. We assume the second floor was rented since the only bathroom in the house was on the second floor; therefore, the outhouse would have been more convenient for someone in a wheelchair. Long-time residents recall Joe Shorten wheeling to the Junction across the Alexander Rd. railroad bridge...and safely!

More about Bear Brook Road

Bear Brook Road, once called Totamy Swamp Road, was unpaved until the 1950s. Asphalt paving was laid then to keep school buses from getting stuck in the mud.

Electricity came to Bear Brook Road with the Federal Rural Electrification Administration of the 1930s. Until then electrical generators were used.

The poles were run only from Alexander Road to the end of what is now Windsor Haven. In 1937 the rest of Bear Brook Road received electricity.

Old maps of West Windsor show the name "Denison" in the area close to Bear Brook and a distance from the road. The foundations of a house and a corduroy road (logs and dirt) were found in the area. There are also remains of a blueberry farm, much overgrown.

It is possible that the "Denison" listed was George Denison, West Windsor Tax Collector during the 1870s. He was listed on West Windsor tax bills as being located "one mile southwest

from Princeton Junction." In those days, Tax Collectors went to a central location, the general store or hotel, in each village on a certain date and time to receive the taxes of residents in that area.

This peaceful, rural period on Bear Brook Road will soon be ended. It is hoped that the history of the area and its families will be remembered.

No. of Acres of Land.	Price per Acre.	Whole value of Real Estate.	Value of Personal Property.	Debts Deducted.	Taxable Amount.	grat. 10 percent	schools, 20	County, 34 1/2	Commis. 1/2 Fund, 5 1/2	Township 16	Dogs.	Poll.	Amount of Rate 85 Cents on \$100
22	60	1320	950	570	1100						1	1	

PLEASE BRING THIS BILL WITH YOU.

Dog taken off

Mr. Jacob L. Hendrickson

Your Tax in West Windsor Township for 1872 is \$10 96

Received Payment,

George Denison Collector.

ONLY BANKABLE FUNDS RECEIVED.

In consequence of the State Tax being required by December 1st, I will by present to receive Taxes, at the following Hotels: John W. Grigg's, Dutch Neck, on Tuesday, November 26th. Mr. J. B. Richardson's, Assanpink, November 27th. Mr. Wm. West's, Jr., Clarksville, November 28th. Mr. George W. Minard's, Penn's Neck, November 29th, from 10 o'clock, A. M. to 4 P. M., or at my residence, one mile Southwest of Princeton Junction Station, at any time previous.

The Commissioners of Appeal in cases of Taxation will meet at the house of John W. Griggs, Dutch Neck, November 26th, at 10 o'clock, A. M.

GEORGE DENISON, Collector.

The Historical Society of
West Windsor
P.O. Box 38
Princeton Jct., N. J. 08550

FIRST CLASS MAIL