

An Elm Street Link To The Past

CONTRIBUTED BY MIKE FARRELLY, MONTCLAIR TOWN HISTORIAN

THIS GOTHIC REVIVAL on Elm St. near the intersection of Elm, Orange Rd., and Llewellyn Ave. was built in 1877. It is not one of the oldest houses in Montclair, but it has connections to Montclair's oldest families. It was built by Joseph and Lydia (Munn) Baldwin for their daughter, Phoebe, and her husband, William J. Harris. The Baldwin family was among the settlers of Newark who came from the New Haven Colony (Connecticut) in 1666 and purchased a large tract of land on the Passaic River. They called the new settlement "Newark" which included Montclair at the time. The new settlement encompassed almost all of the land that makes up Essex County now. The Munns arrived in Newark in the 1750s and moved out to West Bloomfield (Montclair) around 1800. Montclair was part of Bloomfield when it split from Newark in 1812; then became an independent entity in 1868. The Harris family came to West Bloomfield (Montclair) in the 1850s and married into the Baldwin and Crane families. The Cranes were also settlers of Newark.

Joseph and Lydia Baldwin inherited a large lot at the intersection of Elm, Orange, and Llewellyn. It had been part of a much larger farm owned by the Baldwin family and this section of town was popularly known as the "Baldwin Neighborhood". Joseph and Lydia had a house at the corner of Orange and Elm. They built our featured house close to their house for their daughter, Phoebe L. Baldwin, when she and her husband, William J. Harris, moved back to Montclair. In a somewhat confusing turn of affairs, William J. Harris married a woman with almost the same name as his mother, Phoebe H. Baldwin. His wife was distantly related to his mother. The original Baldwin house was demolished quite some time ago. Our featured house remains.



William J. Harris, born in Newark, was educated as a mining engineer. His interest in mining caused him to move around a bit before he moved to Montclair. He and his brother, Fred (a Civil War hero and later prominent in Montclair affairs), began their careers working at their father's quarry in Little Falls. William J. and Phoebe L. lived in Aquackanonk, NJ when he was working for his father. Aquackanonk changed its name to Clifton in 1917.

In 1853 William H. Harris (the father), sold the quarry and bought 100 acres in Montclair because his wife, Phoebe H., a Crane granddaughter, had grown up here. William J's parents moved into the old Nathaniel Crane homestead on Myrtle Ave. (demolished) where his mother had been born. Fred built a house nearby. In the 1880s, after managing a coal mine in Hazelton, PA, William J., and Phoebe L. joined his mother and father and brother in Montclair. William J. was an incorporator of the Montclair Water Co., on the board of the YMCA, and ran for a spot on the Montclair Board of Education. He was a staunch Republican and was always involved in local politics. William J. passed away in 1904. Phoebe L. lived in the house until 1923.

Around 1924 Simeon and Marjorie (Grannis) Toby moved in.

Photograph courtesy Mike Farrelly

Simeon graduated from St. Paul's Academy, Garden City, Long Island in 1897. When he lived here, Simeon was a purchasing agent for the New York Air Brake Co. on Broadway in NYC. Marjorie was the daughter of Charles and Annie Grannis.

Charles was the mayor of Utica, NY. Marjorie was a member of the Montclair Athletic Club and held several championships in women's tennis at the Orange Lawn Tennis Club and Spring Lake Bathing and Tennis Club as well as Montclair. Marjorie passed away in 1926. Simeon lived here for a couple more years; then remarried and moved to Elizabeth.

In the early 1930s our featured house was owned by Miss Elizabeth Hill Newman. Elizabeth grew up in Missouri. She studied nursing at hospitals in San Francisco and went on to be an assistant superintendent of nursing at American hospitals in Honolulu (before Hawaii became a state) and Mexico City. She opened up a nursing home in her house and operated it until her death in 1945. The house

remained a nursing home for the next 20 years.

The next owners, Meyer and Vera Cherry, did not live in our featured house but continued to operate the nursing home as the Casey Nursing Home. They ran the Casey Nursing Home with Vera's sister, Dorothy Kaplan. Meyer and Vera also had another nursing home on Gates Ave., the Cherry Nursing Home. In 1967 they tore that one down and built a bigger nursing home on the site, which is now the Montclair Care Center run by the Highbridge Co. In the early 1970s the Cherrys sold the Casey Nursing Home to Dr. Orlando and Rosemarie Ricciardelli. Dr. Ricciardelli and his brothers, Armand and Emmanuel, all doctors, were the third generation of physicians in the Ricciardelli family. Dr. Ricciardelli had a private practice in Bayonne and intended to continue running the Casey Nursing Home, but the state withdrew authorization from the nursing home in 1974. Dr. Ricciardelli then entered a lease/purchase agreement with the Essex County Youth and Economic Rehabilitation Commission to establish a halfway house for alcoholic women in the featured house, pending a variance from the Zoning Board. The house is located in an R2 zone (residential - single and double family only). The Casey Nursing Home was established before the Zoning Ordinance was passed. The news about the halfway house met with fierce local resistance. After an extended battle, when it became clear that the town would not allow a halfway house at the site, the Ricciardellis sold the house to Pedro and Andrea Navarro who promised that they would only use it as private residence. The Navarros needed space for their 10 children and 15 grandchildren, but they never moved in. They lived on James St. while they applied for a variance to convert the house from a two-family to a four-family. That application was denied in 1977 and Navarros sold the house which has been a single-family residence ever since. ■

CORRECTION:

In our September 2023 issue, our featured home had the wrong title. It should have been titled "Me and Mini-Me." The house and it's carriage house are on Midland Avenue, not Elm Street.

What are Montclairians Reading and Watching?

Below are the most borrowed titles from the Montclair Public Library in August 2023

CONTRIBUTED BY ANDREW NG

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>■ ADULT FICTION
<i>The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry</i>
by Gabrielle Charbonnet</p> <p>■ ADULT NONFICTION
<i>Crying in H Mart</i>
by Michelle Zauner</p> <p>■ ADULT MEDIA
<i>Avatar: The Way of Water</i>
(20th Century Studios)</p> | <p>■ TEEN FICTION
<i>The Hate U Give</i>
by Angie Thomas</p> <p>■ CHILDREN'S FICTION
<i>Dog Man: Fetch-22</i>
by Dav Pilkey</p> <p>■ CHILDREN'S NONFICTION
<i>Sea Horses</i> by Ann Herriges</p> <p>■ CHILDREN'S MEDIA
<i>The Vile Village</i>
by Lemony Snicket</p> |
|--|--|

ABOUT THE LIBRARY The Montclair Public Library is located at 50 South Fullerton Avenue (Main Library) and 185 Bellevue Avenue (Bellevue Avenue Branch). The Library's mission is to change lives every day, through words, ideas, and community building. Its vision is to provide unlimited opportunities for lifelong learning, discovery, and community engagement. Visit montclairlibrary.org for current hours of operation and services.

Suburban Essex
Best of Essex
READERS' CHOICE AWARDS

Montclair's Trusted Roofing And Siding Source Since 2002

AMERICAN ROOFING & SIDING

GAF Master Elite WEATHER STOPPER ROOFING CONTRACTOR

973-542-0710

AmericanRoofingandSiding.com

LRP LAWRENCE R. PAPPAS, CPA, P.C.

Accounting and Tax Services for Businesses and Individuals
Estate and Retirement Planning
Financial Advisory for Business Owners

300 Broadacres Drive, 4th Floor | Bloomfield, NJ 07003
Tel: 973-893-8077 | Fax: 973-893-8099

Accounting and Tax
lawrence@lpappascpa.com | www.lpappascpa.com

Lawrence R. Pappas, CPA, CFP®

Twitter Facebook LinkedIn