

French Provincial #2 On South Mountain

CONTRIBUTED BY MIKE FARRELLY,
MONTCLAIR TOWNSHIP HISTORIAN,
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW WANDER

THERE ARE Two charming French Norman style houses right next to each other on South Mountain Ave. They are similar and one couldn't be blamed for thinking that they are a "Mother/Daughter" pair, especially because one is smaller and sits behind the other. There may have been some of that thinking behind their construction, but the two were never owned by the same person. We have talked about the smaller house in the past. Today we will look into the history of the bigger house. I borrowed a couple of sentences from the article on the smaller house to open today's reading.

The larger house was built about 1878 by John T. and Imogene Weeks. John Townsend Weeks was born in 1835 on Long Island. The Weeks family, the Townsends and the Frost family were neighbors in the Glen Cove area. John married Imogene Frost in 1862. John's paternal grandmother, Sarah, was a Frost. He ran a wholesale clothing business, Weeks and Gilder, in New York until it started to falter. In 1893 he joined the Union Square Savings Bank as their head cashier. He was with the bank until his death



in 1913. Imogene passed away in 1902. Work was probably secondary in John's mind. His true passion was St. Luke's Episcopal Church where he was involved in every activity and was a vestryman for 25 years. John and Imogene had 7 children: John Jr. died in infancy. Another son, Willet, passed away at 30, shortly after his mother died. Daughter, Clara married Percy Allen and moved to Plymouth Street; Elinor never married, but moved out of the house; Imogene, Charlotte, and Mary all continued to live in the house for a while after their parents passed away. All of the daughters, especially Imogene, Charlotte, and Mary, were active in Montclair social affairs.

Elinor was involved in the Altruist Society, with offices on Glenridge Ave. Their mission was not just to feed and shelter the poor. They trained the poor and prepared them to live a better life on their own. She became an invalid and was homebound in her final years. Imogene taught at Montclair High School (when it was on Orange Road). She became the principal of the Milton Academy (for girls) in Milton, Massachusetts. Mary was the town librarian at its first home on Church Street (the second floor of Dr. Love's office). Charlotte taught at Montclair Kimberly School. She went to France during WWI to serve the troops as a Red Cross canteen worker. She was also involved with the Altruist Society. She served on the board of Mountainside Hospital and on the board of the Montclair Art Museum. Charlotte was the last Weeks child to pass away. She died in 1949.

In the 1940s Richard D. and Adele Currier moved into the larger house. Richard was a lawyer, an educator and an author (mostly books about legal affairs). He got his undergrad degree

from Yale and his law degree from New York Law School. He later received a doctorate of law in 1937 from Newark University. He founded a small for-profit law school in Newark in 1908 (the NJ Law School). In 1930 he founded Dana College (named for Newark's renowned head librarian, John Cotton Dana). Richard also founded the Seth Boyden School of Business in 1930. Seth Boyden was one of Newark's greatest inventors and businessmen. Richard and Adele moved around in NJ political circles. In 1931 governor-elect, A. Harry Moore was honored by a reception at the Currier home. About 150 guests attended the reception. Moore was one of the longest serving governors of NJ. He was elected 3 (non-consecutive) times.

In the early 1930s, Richard began negotiations with his 3 colleges and 2 others to form a university in Newark. Negotiations were finalized in 1936. The NJ Law School, Dana College, the Seth Boyden School, the Newark Institute of Arts and Sciences, and the Mercer Beasley Law School combined to form Newark University. In 1945 the State made them part of Rutgers University. In 1934 Richard decided to start yet another school. He and Dr. T. Davis founded Stoneleigh College in Rye Beach New Hampshire, with Richard as president. He became sick during WWII. Stoneleigh closed and never reopened. He passed away in 1947. Somehow, he found the time to create the Dorset Investment Corp. in Montclair. The Curriers had a summer home in Dorset, Vermont.

In the 1960s and 1970s, another educator lived in the large house. Stanley and Helen Leavett moved in. They had lived in Rhode Island where Stanley worked for the American Bosch Co. (magnetos and other electric devices). He also ran an

employment agency. He started teaching as an adjunct professor at Road Island College. When he came here he got a job teaching at the City College of NY. He then became the Professor of Management at Hofstra University. In keeping with the tradition of eventful meetings in the house, Stanley and Helen hosted a lecture on "The Promises and Hazards of Genetic Engineering" given by Dr. Leah Koditscheck (Montclair State College) in 1977. ■

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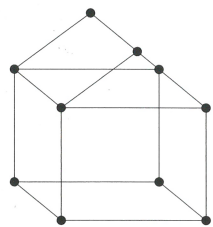
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