



Photo courtesy Mike Farrelly

# Queen Anne Gem on Van Vleck

CONTRIBUTED BY MIKE FARRELLY, MONTCLAIR TOWN HISTORIAN

**M**OST PEOPLE WHO GO BY THIS Victorian masterpiece on Van Vleck St. are immediately taken by its exquisite detail and the majestic cooper beech tree in the front yard. The house was started in 1882 when William H. and Abbie S. Jewett hired one of the most important architects of the day to design it for them. It was expected to cost a whopping \$12,000. The completed house was featured in the July 26, 1884 edition of American Architect and Building News. The builders were all from Montclair: Frank Smith was the carpenter, Amzi A. Sigler did the masonry, William Areson did the plumbing. The house did not have electricity when it was built. The architect was Alexander F. (Forbes) Oakley who was making quite a name for himself in New York. Oakley ran into a bit of trouble. According to contemporaneous newspapers he amassed a hefty personal debt and on September 24, 1885 he disappeared. A New York World reporter discovered him a few years later in Newark working under the name “Alexander Forbes”. He moved to San Francisco and continued his successful career as an architect under his full name.

William H. Jewett was a Civil War veteran who served in Company D of the NJ 21st Infantry Regiment. He became an insurance broker and ended up working for the American branch of the Commercial Union Assurance Company of

London, which was one of the largest insurance companies in the world at the time (and still is – now called CGU). They built a 6-story building at 58 William St. in New York to serve as their American headquarters. That building was replaced in 1915. Abbie Jewett was concerned with folks who were not as fortunate as she was and often hosted dinners and picnics for the disadvantaged under the aegis of the Montclair Altruist Society.

Edwin A. and Marianna Bradley, the next owners, had lived nearby at the corner of Van Vleck and Upper Mountain. The house they lived in was designed by famed architect, Henry Hudson Holly in 1877. There were three Henry Hudson Holly houses on Upper Mountain at one time. (one has been demolished). Edwin owned a building material company: Bradley and Currier at Hudson and Spring Streets In NYC. The Bradleys lived at the corner for a few years, moved into our featured house around 1905, lived there for a while and then, in 1908, moved into a huge house at the intersection of Upper Mountain Ave. and Edgewood. They lived in the house on Upper Mountain until about 1920 when they moved into an even bigger house on South Mountain. The South Mountain mansion has been demolished.

Around 1909 George F. and Jessie (Logan) Hewitt moved into the featured house. George was the youngest brother in the line of C.B. Hewitt and Brothers, Inc., a company that made

tar paper and other building materials. It was founded on Beekman St., NYC in 1868. Eventually, George became president and then Chairman of the Board. His son, George Jr. (who lived on South Mountain Ave.) became president when his father retired. George’s uncle (George Jr’s. grand uncle) was Abram Hewett, the iron magnate of Ringwood Manor. Abram was the son-in-law of the industrialist, Peter Cooper and quite wealthy in his own right. With his father-in-law, Abram helped to design and finance New York City’s first subway system. Together they founded the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, a private college in New York. Abram served 2 terms in Congress and was mayor of New York from 1887 to 1888. His daughters, Sarah and Eleanor, founded the Cooper Hewitt Museum at the Smithsonian. George Jr. used to ride his bicycle from this house to Ringwood to visit his aunts when he was young. Jessie was very active at the First Congregational Church on South Fullerton and the president of the Montclair chapter of the Packer Alumni Association. The Packer Collegiate Institute was a school for young women in Brooklyn where she grew up. The Hewitts lived in the featured house until Jessie passed away in 1942.

In 1942 Robert W. and Ruth (Osher) Schooley moved in. They both grew up in Iowa. Robert got a law degree from Cornell. He

served in the 4 th Provisional Battalion during WWI, then joined the Pinkerton Detective Agency and came east to manage the Insurance Claims office in New York when the Pinkertons branched out into risk management and insurance. Robert and Ruth lived in the featured house until approximately 1953 when the Kalts moved in. They are the last owners we are going to talk about.

Harold L. Kalt Jr. grew up in Pelham Manor, Westchester, NY. He studied at Princeton and went into the Naval Reserves. Lt. Kalt served as a staff aide to Capt. Robert Morris in the Mediterranean. After his military service he went into the insurance business. Dorothy (Pakas) Kalt studied acting and performed under the stage name of “Dorothy Emery”. She graduated from the Semple School (for women) in New York and continued her education in London. She appeared on both the London stage and Broadway. She played Meg in the 1946 TV film adaptation of Little Women. Dorothy passed away in 1971. Harold remarried and moved to South Mountain Ave. ■

If you’d like to see more images of Montclair homes, they are featured in the book, *Stately Homes of Montclair*, which can be found at Montclair Booksellers, several local libraries and the Stately Homes of Montclair Facebook page.

## SCHOLARSHIP

# The Montclair History Center welcomes graduating high school seniors to apply for the Hortense Tate Scholarship

BY ANGELICA DIGGS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE MONTCLAIR HISTORY CENTER

**F**OR OVER 50 YEARS, education has been a critical component of the Montclair History Center’s mission—embodied in its local history programs for school children and adults, and in its library which is a center for local historical research.

Furthermore, the inhabitants of the historic properties we maintain—particularly the the namesake for this \$1,000 scholarship—placed great emphasis on education.

This scholarship is awarded in memory of Hortense Ridley Tate. From 1921 and throughout the 20 th century, Mrs. Tate was a motivational staff figure at the Glenridge Avenue YWCA (which occupied the Crane House from 1920-1965; The building is now the Crane House & Historic YWCA Museum) who inspired countless young women by creating a positive environment, fostering cultural pride, and encouraging African American women to pursue higher educational degrees.

The Montclair History Center welcomes all young men and women from the high school graduating class of 2023 who live in Montclair to apply for the \$1,000 scholarship awarded in Mrs. Tate’s name. Scholarship application forms are available at [www.montclairhistory.org](http://www.montclairhistory.org) or by contacting The Montclair History Center at [mail@montclairhistory.org](mailto:mail@montclairhistory.org) or call 973-744-1796. Applications are due by April 21, 2023. ■

**ABOUT THE MONTCLAIR HISTORY CENTER:**  
The Montclair History Center, formerly the Montclair Historical Society, is an independent not-for-profit organization that has been dedicated to preserving, sharing, and educating others about Montclair’s history since 1965. For additional information, please visit the website [www.montclairhistory.org](http://www.montclairhistory.org) or contact the Montclair History Center at 973-744-1796 or [mail@montclairhistory.org](mailto:mail@montclairhistory.org). Follow us on Facebook and Instagram @montclairhistorycenter.

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