

# Behind The White Picket Fence

## Part 1 of 2



CONTRIBUTED BY MIKE FARRELLY,  
MONTCLAIR TOWN HISTORIAN

**A**CCORDING TO DEED L2-372, Jacob and Peter Garrabrant bought 16 acres on Grove St., just north of Columbus Ave. for 96 NJ pounds, in 1796, next to property owned by Israel Crane (later by his son, James Crane). The property fronted on Grove St. and ran all the way back to the point where Forest St. intersects with the NJ Transit Boonton Line. Columbus Ave. didn't exist back then. It wasn't cut through until the turn of the 20th century. Forest St. and the railroad didn't exist then either. We are mentioning these things simply to use them as landmarks to explain approximately where the 16 acres was located.

The US had adopted a constitution and elected a president by 1796, but the first US Mint in Philadelphia (opened in 1793) hadn't had the chance to distribute US currency widely. Some states were still using the old (Colonial) money. Bloomfield and Montclair were still part of Newark in 1796. The deed refers to the 16 acres as being on Grove St. in "Newark". To further complicate things, Grove St. wasn't called Grove St. On the deed it was called the "Road to Stone House Plains", which was the old name for the area that is now in and around Brookdale Park. Later in 1796 Jacob Garrabrant married a distant cousin, Elizabeth Garrabrant. The couple found themselves needing a place to live and a place to grow their crops. In 1801 Jacob obtained a mortgage and built the front portion of our featured house. The Garrabrants farmed the land for decades thereafter. Jacob passed away in 1835. Elizabeth passed away in 1841.

John H. and Eliza Ann (Hinchman) Clearwater (an Anglicization of the Dutch word, *Klaarwater*) bought the land and featured house from the Garrabrant estate in 1844. John was born to a Dutch family in Paramus but lived in New York. He was the head of the carpentry department and an instructor of carpentry at the NY Institute of Instruction for the Deaf and Dumb on 163rd St. John and Eliza's son, Edward, took over the carpentry shop at the Institute after John retired. John and Eliza lived in Montclair for a couple of years then moved back to NYC. John and Eliza are shown as the owners of the house on the 1850 map.

In 1859, John sold the house and 16 acres to Richard and Elizabeth Green for \$5,600. Richard was not a farmer. He was the senior partner at Lincoln & Green which was primarily a men's clothing concern. They made dress shirts to order. They also sold hosiery and gloves for men, women and children. In

1855 Francis Lincoln retired from the business and Richard carried on in two stores under his own name: one on Broadway and one on Canal St.

Richard and Elizabeth were born in Winsone, England. They came over in 1850 and lived in NYC, where most of their children were born. They had five children: four sons and a daughter, who moved to New Jersey with them and most of them continued to live in the house after they passed. The Greens felt the need to expand the house and built the rear section. Henry Green, the oldest son, became an engineer and moved to Brazil. George, the next in line, became a wheat broker at the NY Produce Exchange which oversaw transactions between farmers and wholesalers, at their headquarters off Bowling Green in Lower Manhattan. George lived at the house until he passed away in 1918. Robert, the middle child, worked at his father's firm until his father passed away, then started his own linen business at 7 White St. in New York. Robert and his wife Anna Marie (Bellior) lived at the featured house until his death in 1918 (the same year his brother died). Then came Mary E. "Ethel" and the youngest, Thomas, who passed away in his twenties. Thomas, of course, grew up in the featured house but did not live long enough to be in the house after his mother passed away in 1906. Ethel stayed in the house until the early 1920s.

The town planned to cut roads through the 16 acres as early as the 1880s but they weren't built right away. Montclair Ave. was cut through around 1900. Christopher St. had existed south of the property but didn't get cut through the Green's property until 1904. The Green family still owned all the property between the roads. Because the estate no longer had any continuity, the family started selling off parcels of land. Frederick Hinck, a member of the Hinck family who bought and developed most of the farms that existed along Grove St. between Walnut St. and Watchung Ave., bought a large chunk of the Green's property. Ethel continued to sell off lots. She moved to Freehold sometime around 1922. She had planned to move to Freehold a few years earlier but a fire badly damaged the farm she intended to live in and major repairs had to be done to the house. Most of Ethel's property in Montclair had been sub-divided and sold off by the time she moved, except for the 170 ft. lot "homestead lot" that sat on Grove St. ■

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](#).