

Large House On The Hillside

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

THERE IS NO MENTION of this house on Lloyd Rd. in the 1923 Directory or the directories before that. However, William Dear applied for a permit to “alter” the building in 1923. An article in the April 26, 1924, issue of the *Montclair Times* mentions that it was “home to the Dears of Lloyd Rd.” That puts the building date at the end of 1923. It has been altered many times over the course of its life and may have a different configuration now, but it was described by the *Montclair Times* in 1982 as being 17,200 sq ft with “13 bedrooms 5 baths and 10 fireplaces”.

William Y. and Mary (Burgett) Dear came here from the Interlaken Boro of Asbury Park in 1923. They kept the shore house as a summer residence. They bought a house on South Mountain Ave. called “Eastview”, which has since been demolished. By 1924 they were living at the featured house on Lloyd Rd. and calling it “Eastview”.

William Dear’s father was the publisher of the *Jersey City Evening Journal* which later became the *Jersey Journal*. His father also started a small printing company, the *Jersey City Printing Co.* in 1893. William took over as president of *Jersey City Printing* and, during his sixty-year association with the company, he oversaw its growth into a large corporation. *Jersey City Printing* became one of the world’s largest printers of telephone books. William passed away in 1952. Mary passed away in 1955.

The next owners were Frank J. and Gemma (Mancusi-Ungaro) Aiello. Frank started college in Pennsylvania and transferred to Rutgers where he graduated with a law degree. He served in the Pacific as a sergeant in the Army Air Corps during WWII. He was admitted to the New Jersey Bar in 1949 and started the private practice in which he engaged for the rest of his career. He was certified to argue cases before the NJ Supreme Court and the US



The house was described by the *Montclair Times* as being 17,200 sq ft with “13 bedrooms 5 baths and 10 fireplaces.”

Supreme Court. He and Gemma moved to New England, then to Montclair in 1957. He was concerned about fair housing and was a founder and chairperson of the *Montclair Fair Housing Group*. The Group met in Madonna Hall at Immaculate Conception Church on North Fullerton Ave. Their stated goal was “To formulate and promote plans and programs for insuring equality of access to housing for all ...” To advertise those ideas a number of Montclair clergy issued a “Declaration of Conscience” under the auspices of the *Fair Housing Group*, signed by 700 citizens in 1963. In 1965 “Another Declaration of Conscience” was issued by the group, signed by 1200 citizens. Frank and Gemma’s daughter, Nancy, was a popular actress and singer. At least, ➤➤

she was popular in this area, although, she won several competitions in New York City. She graduated Cum Laude from *New York University* with a combined BS in Educational Theater and Investment Banking.

In the 1970s, 80s, and 90s Harold and Barbara (Holmes) Martin lived in our featured house. Harold's parents came north during the Great Migration. Harold's dad, Lewis, became a coal miner in PA. He was injured in the mines and moved his family to New York City where it was possible for a person of color to find work. Harold was trained as a watchmaker. He started working in small plastic firms and got a feel for the business. He enlisted in the *New York National Guard* during the Korean Conflict but the unit was not deployed. In 1966 Harold went into business for himself and founded *Glopak*, a polyethylene extrusion firm, in Brooklyn. They specialize in bags, tubing, sheeting and films. Customers are often other businesses that custom make their own bags from the films. *Glopak* moved to Passaic, then to Newark and finally built a 120,000 sq ft, solar powered plant in South Plainfield in 2011. Harold and Barbara shared their blessings with the less fortunate and started a charitable foundation. Beneficiaries included: the Hale House, First Class Championship an organization that promotes athletic education in Newark and Newark's Beth Israel Hospital. The Martins moved to South Plainfield, then to Morganville, NJ. Harold passed away in 2012. Barbara passed away in 2015. Their daughter, Cydnee, assumed leadership of the plastics plant.

Around 2001 Michael Strahan, the all-pro defensive linebacker for the New York Giants and show business celebrity, bought the house. Michael and his wife, Jean (Muggli) Strahan, bought a house on Upper Mountain Ave. in 1999. They just weren't happy with it and started looking around for another house. They fell in love with this house and the 2.3 acre lot, moved in and immediately started working on it. One of the improvements they made was a huge but relatively unobtrusive garage, which is largely built into the hill. It has a rooftop garden and seems to be more like a terrace than a garage when viewed from the street. Neighbors in the back see more of a building.

In 2003 the Strahans let the *Junior League* use the house as their "show house" for the year, a tremendous annual fund raiser for the organization. The *Junior League* invites various architects and designers to come in, each take a room, and lets them showcase their talents in that room. The house is then open to the public for viewing. Michael immediately involved himself in local civic affairs. He participated in a number of fund raisers and even considered running for the town council in 2004. He withdrew from the race shortly thereafter, possibly realizing that his football schedule would interfere with his duties as a councilman. Unfortunately, Michael and Jean split up in 2007. The house was transferred to her. She sold it in 2010. ■

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.

The **EXPERT** Contributor

Montclair Neighbors magazine
is looking for Expert Contributors
in the following specialties:

DENTAL

General, Orthodontist

MEDICAL

Family Care, Pediatric Care,
Eye Care, Audiology

PHYSICAL THERAPY

LEGAL

Personal Injury, Family Law

LANDSCAPING

HOME IMPROVEMENT/ REMODELING

MORTGAGES

FITNESS/NUTRITION

BEAUTY

To learn more about becoming an
EXCLUSIVE Expert Contributor,
contact Michael Stefanelli,
Publisher at **973-277-7301** or
mstefanelli@bestversionmedia.com



Best Version Media®