



Oak Gables

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

THE ORIGINAL HOUSE appears on the 1881 map. It was built for Dr. John B. and Florence (Goodman) Hawes. John was born in New York City in 1844. He followed in his father's footsteps and became a dentist, with a practice in NYC. John and Florence came to Montclair in 1881 and had this house built at the corner of Llewellyn Rd. and Eagle Rock Way. It is now considered an Eagle Rock Way address but was considered a Llewellyn Rd. house for many years. John passed away in 1914. Florence moved to New York but held on to the property. Florence came from an old New England family. She was a member of the Society of New England Women. She was a Daughter of the American Revolution and a Daughter of 1812. Florence sold the house in 1918 to Otto G. and Jessie (Anderson) Meyer.

Otto Meyer was an importer of hides and skins. Otto and Jessie lived in this house for about 8 years. They hired well known architect, Lucian E. Smith, to design an addition. The (renovated) house appeared in an article in American Architect/Architectural Review, December 1924. In the article the architect explained that stucco was a good way to modernize old houses. When the house was put up for sale in 1926 the ad in the April 24, 1926, edition of the *Montclair Times* described the house as having, "9 bedrooms, 5 baths, a library, a solarium, a billiard room and a cedar room (meant to keep clothes safe from moth infestations)". The ad introduced the house as "Oak Gables". It has been known by that name ever since.

In 1928 Arthur J. and Elizabeth (Church) McComb owned the house. Arthur worked for the Otis Elevator Company for his entire career, ending up as a vice president of the company in Harrison, NJ. Elizabeth volunteered with several Montclair service organizations, especially Mountainside Hospital. She passed away in 1947. Later that year Arthur sold the house to W. Kent and Josephine (Murray) Schmid and moved to an

apartment building on Union St.

The Schmids only lived in the house for a few years. Kent grew up on Upper Mountain Ave. Josephine lived in Little Falls but went to the Kimberly School on Valley Rd. (now part of MKA). They married when Kent was in the Navy during WWII. He served as a gunnery officer aboard the destroyer, USS Young. The "Young" was commissioned in 1943 and was sent to the Aleutian Islands. She was reassigned to the South Pacific and took part in many of the Pacific battles and invasions at the end of the War. She was credited with shooting a number "Kamikaze" attack planes out of the sky. Kent came out of the Navy and became the advertising manager for the Fostner Chain Co. of Irvington, NJ. They made jewelry chains and necklaces. They became famous for the "Komfit" watch band which could be made to fit any size wrist. Kent and Josephine moved to Essex Fells and then to Josephine's family home on Mason's Island in Mystic Connecticut. Kent stayed in the Naval Reserves and retired as a captain in 1978.

Around 1953 the house became the home of Junior C. and Florence (Simpson) Buck. Junior and his first wife, Helen, had lived on Sutherland Rd. In 1933 The Associated Dry Goods Corp. (ADG) appointed Junior president and CEO of Hahne and Co., the famous Newark department store (one of several stores that ADG owned). Under Buck's guidance "Hahne's", as it popularly known, modernized their main store in Newark and opened branches in Montclair, Westfield and other locations in NJ. Their first store in Montclair was at 50 Church Street. In 1951 Junior oversaw the completion of a new store (the one that most Montclairians remember) across the street at 56 Church St. The original store became the Hahne's Budget Store. Many Montclairians have fond memories of Hahne's and were saddened when it closed in 1989; even more so when the building was torn down in 2004. Florence Buck had been a teacher and

was very interested in furthering education, especially when it involved enabling disadvantaged women. She was the president of the NJ chapter of the PEO (Philanthropic Education Organization). In memory of his stepmom, Leslie Buck (Junior and Helen's son) instituted an "Excellence in Teaching" award in Queen's County, MD. The Bucks remained in the house until 1989 when Junior passed away. Florence moved to California.

In 1990 Glenn W. and Kay (Kreisel) Marschel moved into the house. They owned it until 1997. At the time Glenn was a VP at the Automatic Data Processing Corp. in Roseland. After the Marschels moved away from Montclair he became the CEO of the Paging Network, a large wireless communication system based in Texas. Kay was better known locally as an interior designer. She had a shop under her own name (Kay E. Kreisel) on South Fullerton.

The next owners were George H. and Susan (Brock) Turner II. In 1948 George's dad, George "Harry" Turner Sr. partnered with Fred Schmitz and Arthur Schoenwald to form a chemical importing firm in Clifton, NJ, the SST Corp (named for the initials of their last names). George Jr. took over the leadership of the company when his father retired. Susan was the chairman of the board (of trustees) of *Turning Point* a large NJ drug and alcohol abuse rehabilitation organization which involved short term residency.

Turning Point has grown and moved several times. When Susan was on the board it was based in the Essex County Hospital at Hilltop in Cedar Grove. The hospital was torn down in 2006. The rehab center moved to Secaucus. ■

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.

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