

# A Sunny Corner Lot On Elm Street

CONTRIBUTED BY MIKE FARRELLY, MONTCLAIR TOWN HISTORIAN

**T**HIS BEAUTIFUL HOUSE with Gothic elements is on Midland Ave. near Erwin Park. When it was built in 1897 it had a carriage house which borrowed architectural elements from the main house (Mini-Me). Both were designed by the NY architects, McIlvaine & Tucker, and built by Peter and Emily (Hicks) Roberts. The carriage house became an independent residence in the early 1970s.

Moses Harrison came to Montclair about 1802, built a house and started a farm. At its height, the farm reached from Park St., crossed Valley Road, and continued to the top of the mountain. Edgemont Park was part of the farm. After a few generations, the Harrison family decided to develop bits of the farm.

They developed one section near Midland Ave. and called it Erwin Park after their father, Jared Harrison (Jared "Erwin" Harrison). Peter Roberts, a New York builder, was one of the early investors. He built most of the original Erwin Park homes, including this one, and the carriage house, then moved in. The Robert's original lot had 700 ft of frontage along Midland Ave. Peter built several more houses on the homestead lot. Peter and Emily's children lived in the other houses.

When Peter died in 1913 the homestead lot started to be broken up. Around 1920 Pierre and Suzanne Pozier bought the main house and carriage house. The Poziers were both born in France. Pierre's brother, Dr. Jean Noel Pozier, was associated with Madame Curie (Dr. Pozier also died from radiation poisoning). Pierre's uncle, Frederic Schumacher, brought Pierre to America when he was young. Pierre went back to France to fight in the



The main house

French Army during WWI; then returned to the United States after the war and went to work for his uncle at the F. Schumacher Co., one of the largest decorative fabric distribution companies in the world. Pierre eventually became Chairman of the Board. He designed fabric himself and was instrumental in bringing modernist Paul Poiret on as a designer. The Poziers moved to New York in 1946.

The next family to live in our featured house was the Dicke family: Allen and Amber (Neuman) Dicke. Allen graduated from Michigan University and studied law at the National University in Washington DC. He became a patent attorney who worked for several firms, such as Remington Firearms and the National Cash Register Co., and in private practice during his career. He held patents of his own in such diverse fields as: temperature regulating controls, cash registers, firearms, soldering tools and cameras. He often started businesses based on his patents. He and his brothers started the Pioneer Heat Regulating Co. in Bloomfield. That is what brought him to the area. He later started the Crown Controls Co. in Ohio. He was in private practice in New York when he and Amber lived in Montclair. They lived in our featured house until the early 1950s.



The carriage house

Around 1954 Ralph and Carolyn (Coons) Tanner bought the main house and carriage house. Ralph graduated from Brown University. He started his career in sales in the textile industry. He switched to public relations and advertising. When he lived in Montclair he was VP and account manager for the William Barton Marsh Co. (public relations and sales promotions). He later worked for Chirurg & Cairns, then McCann-Erickson, both advertising firms. Ralph was very active in the Montclair Red Cross and the Montclair Community Chest. Carolyn was born in Montclair when her father was working as an executive at US Steel. She graduated from Wheaton College. She was also very active in the Montclair Red Cross.

Around 1962 the main house and carriage house came into the possession of John M. and Martha (Dodds) Hall. John was born in Massachusetts when his father was at Harvard. His father, Dr. Lawrence P. Hall, was a chemist who studied half-lives of radiation. He made a name for himself in the 1930s when he discovered that the earth was over two billion years old. Scientists now think the earth is over 4 billion years old. John's family moved to the Camden area and John started working for the NY Shipbuilding Co. in Camden. During WWII John served as a staff sergeant with the 505th Bomb Group in the Pacific. He and Martha moved to Montclair after the War and lived on Champlain Terrace before moving to this house. He held a variety of jobs throughout his career. When he lived here he owned the United Rent-All franchise in Watchung Plaza. Mayor Osborne (1961 to 1964) appointed John to chair the Citizen's Advisory Committee on Community Improvement. Martha graduated from Brown University. She volunteered at the YMCA (Women's Division) for many years and was considered a master gardener at the Montclair Garden Club.

The Harvins bought the main house and carriage house around 1967. They continued to live in the main house for years but sold the carriage house to the Hakoshima family in 1971. James J. "Jim" Harvin had worked for the McGraw Hill publishing company in New York. When they lived in Montclair Jim and his wife, Barbara, opened up the Montclair Book Store which started out on South Fullerton and moved to Church St. They were assisted by a few part time employees. The Montclair Book Store

is not to be confused with the Montclair Book Center which currently stands on Glenridge Ave. The Harvins had another book store in Ridgewood.

The Hakoshimas who bought the carriage house were, of course, the world famous mime, Yass Hakoshima and his equally famous wife, Renate (Boué) Hakoshima, dancer, choreographer and dance instructor. Yass studied mime under Etienne Decroux, who also mentored Marcel Marceau. To improve his technique Yass studied dance under Erik Hawkins where he met Renate. Renate was one of Erik's most well known dancers and was his longtime assistant. Renate grew up in Germany. She studied dance there and then came to the United States so she could work with Martha Graham and Erik Hawkins. Renate taught dance at several places in New Jersey and New York. She founded several dance companies, most notably the Renate Boué Dance Company, the Montclair Modern Dance Center and the St. John Renaissance Dancers. The Hakoshimas moved to Sante Fe New Mexico in 2018. ■

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, and several local libraries.

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