

A Glimpse Into Old Montclair

CONTRIBUTED BY MIKE FARRELLY, MONTCLAIR TOWN HISTORIAN

THIS MONTH'S FEATURED RESIDENT, Rocco Giannetti, renovated the structure that was once the carriage house to this property on Llewellyn Road. The main house on Llewellyn Road was built around 1870 by William Lanman Bull and his wife, Sara (Worthington) and appears on the 1871 map. Montclair had just separated from Bloomfield a couple of years earlier and was still pretty rural. The architecture of the main house is somewhat unique; containing elements of Eastlake, Gothic and Queen Anne. Viewed from space you can see that the carriage house was directly behind the house on Llewellyn. In fact, there were 2 outbuildings behind the main house and Rocco's house may have incorporated parts of both.

Bull graduated from New York City College and went to work for Edward Sweet & Co. which dealt in government securities. In 1867, he became a senior partner and held that position for more than 40 years. Edward Sweet, the founder of the company, married William's sister and also lived in Montclair on Gates Avenue. Bull was a director of several banks and manufacturing concerns. He bought a seat on the New York Stock Exchange in 1869 for \$1,000. He served as president of the NYSE from 1888 to 1890.

Llewellyn Road was known as Park Avenue when it was new. It is now named for Llewellyn Haskell, a pharmaceutical manufacturer, who bought 1500 acres here in the 1850s. The property stretched from Orange Road all the way into West Orange. Haskell put in the road (Llewellyn Rd.) and started to build a house a little west of our featured house. He didn't finish it. Instead, he moved to West Orange and started a new community, which also referenced his first name, Llewellyn Park. The Haskell house was finished by subsequent occupants. One of the people who later lived in the Haskell house was Dorman T. Warren, who came to own quite a bit of property in the area. Warren Place is named for Dorman.

Around 1893 Frank A. and Mary R. Hall moved into the former Bull house on Llewellyn Road. Frank was the president of a specialty bedding company founded by his father in 1828, known for hospital bedding. Frank and his sons kept the family business



going under the name of Frank A. Hall & Sons. The Hall family lived in the main house for many years. Mary continued to live in the house after Frank passed away. Her son, Frank Jr., lived in the house until he passed away in 1949. The Hall family was very involved with Community Hospital which used to be on Harrison Avenue, not far from the Hall homestead. Frank Jr. was a trustee of the Homeopathic Society which founded the hospital in 1923. Ethel a daughter-in-law (wife of son, Howard) was the long-time treasurer. Community Hospital began small in a private house donated by Township engineer Samuel Wenck. The Homeopathic Society constantly enlarged the house and built what amounted to a new facility in 1953.

In 1960, Howard donated the money to build an entire operating suite in memory of his mom. The "modern" facility closed in 1999 and was torn down. Townhouses called The Heights at Montclair now occupy the site. The final occupants of the main house were Elwood R. and Dorothy Priesing who moved in around 1951 and lived in the main house for many years. They both taught music in Caldwell and later at Montclair State

College. Elwood was the president of the Music Educators Association of NJ and the president of the NJ Federation of Music Clubs. They both: played music, lectured about it, wrote about it and composed. Elwood was known for his Violin and Piano Sonata. Dorothy graduated from Julliard, got her Master's degree from Columbia and studied under Nadia Boulenger, the famous French conductor and teacher. Some of Boulenger's other students were: Aaron Copeland, Philip Glass and Quincy Jones. Dorothy played piano with the Llewellyn Trio.

In 1906, Montclair started to buy property for a new road that was to run by the carriage house. The Hall family fought the proposed road at first because it cut the depth of their homestead lot from over 700 ft. to 500 ft. and they believed that they would have to erect a large retaining wall to make the lots that fronted on the new road suitable for building. They eventually dropped their suit and sold that portion of their property to the township. The new road was completed about 1915. The Hall family retained ownership of the carriage house and several other lots along the road. Howard and Ethel built a house directly across from the carriage house on the other side of the new street. Dwight Hall built on a lot that was slightly to the west of the carriage house. There is evidence that various people lived in the carriage house from time to time, certainly the coachman Thomas Jackson did, but it remained a carriage house until 1955 when it was renovated and modernized by Richard Mockler Jr., who owned a hardware store in Watchung Plaza and a laundromat on Bloomfield Ave. ■

This month's Featured Homes section doesn't include photography from Andrew Wander's book *Stately Homes of Montclair* but rest assured Featured Homes will return next month with Andrew's wonderful photography.

A Library for All

CONTRIBUTED BY ANDREW NG

2020 HAS BEEN ANYTHING BUT NORMAL. We have all adapted quickly, switching most of our lives to a virtual environment and MPL had to as well. Over the past seven months, the Library:

- Expanded its collection of digital materials, including eBooks and streaming video
- Provided over 400 online programs and classes to over 6,000 participants of all ages
- Added new resources like Creativebug, Lynda.com, and Medici.tv
- Lent WiFi hotspots to Montclair residents without internet access
- Supported at-home learning with online research and homework help materials such as Tutor.com

In addition, caution and safety have guided our expansion of services:

- Curbside pickup, which has served over 5,000 customers who checked out over 50,000 items since June Bookmobile outreach to Nishuane Pool and South Park Street since July
- Outdoor socially distanced storytimes since September
- In-person browsing and self-checkout since October, which saw a 30% increase in Library use during its first week
- And more to come!

We are grateful to the Montclair Public Library Foundation during this challenging year. Their financial support has helped underwrite many of these activities as the Library faces a revenue shortfall due to the pandemic. With continued uncertainty as we move into 2021, we need your support more than ever. Donations will help us maintain and expand our services to meet the needs of our diverse community. Laptop and WiFi hotspot lending, delivery of materials to seniors who are at home, and our children's summer reading program are just a few of the valuable programs that Foundation funding helps support. Gifts to the Foundation can be made at montclairplf.org. ■

About the Montclair Public Library Foundation

The Montclair Public Library Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that develops philanthropic support for the Montclair Public Library. Established in 2002, the Foundation strives to increase funding for Library programs, collection enhancement, staff development, capital projects, and other critical needs that exceed municipal funding. Through the development of new financial resources, the Foundation seeks to ensure that the Library meets the needs of its diverse community and maintains its stature as one of the foremost libraries in the State of New Jersey.

The Montclair Public Library is located at 50 South Fullerton Avenue (Main Library) and 185 Bellevue Avenue (Bellevue Avenue Branch). The Library's mission is to change lives every day, through words, ideas, and community building. Its vision is to provide unlimited opportunities for lifelong learning, discovery, and community engagement. Visit montclairlibrary.org for current hours of operation and services.

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