

# Golden Yew Acres

CONTRIBUTED BY MIKE FARRELLY, MONTCLAIR TOWN HISTORIAN



Photograph courtesy Mike Farrelly

**T**HIS LARGE, wood/stucco Classical Revival house on Prospect Ave. (on a large piece of property) was built in 1900 for James Turner. An article in the April 1905, *Scientific American* Building Monthly confirms that Frank Freeman was the architect. Freeman was a Canadian born architect who set up an office in Brooklyn. He was noted for neoclassical designs which often incorporated elements of other styles. Freeman passed away in Montclair in 1949.

A Feb. 3, 1900, article in the *Montclair Times* reveals that James Turner hired Fountain and Choat to be the general contractors

and that they expected the house to cost \$20,039. A March 3 article in the *Times* that same year shows that James hired local plumbers John H. Taylor & Brother (William Taylor) to do the plumbing. They subcontracted the heating out to William H. Hubbard of New York.

James Turner was an executive at Arbuckle Bros., then one of the largest coffee importing houses in the world. Arbuckle introduced packaged coffee to the marketplace. At first, they simply roasted the beans and put them into paper bags. Later they ground the beans as well. In order to preserve freshness, Arbuckle developed an egg and sugar coating to seal the coffee and prevent it from becoming stale. Because of the coating and the fact that most people took sugar with their coffee, Arbuckle also went into the sugar business, becoming one of the largest sugar refiners in the world. James convinced his uncle, James Jarvie, president of Arbuckle Bros. to come to Montclair where he (Jarvie) built one of Montclair's biggest ever houses on Upper Mountain Ave. (burned down in the 1930s). James Turner left a 1200-acre farm in Beemerville (Sussex County) to Rutgers, the state university, for dairy farm research.

James Turner never married. He lived in this huge house with his mother, Isabella (Jarvie) Turner, his sister, Isabella, and his brothers: Coll J. Jr., a stockbroker, Henry D., also a stockbroker and William, a New York dentist. Their father, Coll J. Turner Sr., who passed away in Brooklyn in 1897, had a seat on the New York Stock Exchange and started a brokerage on lower Broadway in New York. Coll Jr. took over the firm. Henry worked for the firm but retired shortly after the family moved to Montclair. Henry was the only child who married. He married May Totman in 1928. They initially lived in California but came back to Montclair. They split their time between this house and a house in La Jolla, CA; finally settling down in California in 1941. William and his sister, Isabella, were the last of the family to live in this house. In 1943 they sold the estate and moved to North Mountain Ave.

The next owners were Augustus C. Studer Jr. and his wife, Margot (Montgomery) Studer. They named the property *Golden Yew Acres*. Augustus Studer Sr. is a name that many Montclairians are familiar with because he was the first publisher of the *Montclair Times* (founded in 1877). Augustus Jr.

briefly took over the newspaper when his father passed away in 1922 but was much better known as a high-powered lawyer. He graduated from Princeton in 1908, went to New York University Law School and was admitted to the NJ bar in 1911. By 1919 he was partnered with Robert H. McCarter, George McCarter, Conover English and Arthur Egner. The well-known firm of McCarter and English became known as McCarter, English and Studer, one of the oldest and largest law firms in the country. No one in the Studer family is associated with the firm today, so the name reverted to McCarter and English which is still in operation; headquartered in Newark. Studer was president of the NJ Bar Association and was involved in several high-profile cases, such as the 1922 case where he successfully defended Frances Hall and two of her brothers, who were accused of murdering her husband, Rev. Edward Hall, and his mistress. They were acquitted and the case was never solved.

In 1949 Studer was asked to head a commission investigating the purchase of \$5 million in New York Housing Bonds by the NJ State Temporary Disability Benefit Fund. Two of the bond dealers were accused of making inordinate profits. The seven-month investigation resulted in new guidelines and a State Investment Council to ensure that the state invested more judiciously in the future. Because of his fairness in the 1949 investigation, Governor Robert Meyner, a Democrat, asked Studer, a Republican, to head an investigation into possible embezzlement and questionable activities by employees of the Division of Employment Security, headed by a former governor, Harold Hoffman (Republican) in 1954. Hoffman's term as governor was marked by controversy because he introduced a very unpopular sales tax and he attempted to interfere with the notorious Lindbergh Kidnapping case. Hoffman died during Studer's investigation. It is rumored that he confessed his crimes to his daughter just before he died.

Augustus and Margot were life-long Republicans. Margot was

chosen to be an elector for President Eisenhower. The Studers often held large political rallies and functions at the *Golden Yew Acres*. In 1954 well over 1,000 people came to hear Vice President, Richard Nixon, speak at their home in support of NJ Senator, Clifford P. Case. Some accounts say as many as 4,000 people attended. Augustus and Margot were in love with music. Margot studied music in Paris and Rome. Both became involved with the Metropolitan Opera Guild, the NY Philharmonic Symphony Guild and were trustees of the NJ Symphony.

In 1954, over 1,000 people came to hear Vice President Richard Nixon speak at Golden Yew Acres

Augustus became the vice president of the Opera Guild. Margot was co-chair of the Friends of Symphony Hall, a group which raised funds to acquire the former Mosque Theater in Newark for classical music events.

It is said that Augustus and Margot hold the record for most attendances of the opera Parsifal by Richard Wagner. It is said they saw the 4.5 hour long opera 168 times. It is also

said (by the *Montclair Times* on Jan 10, 1957) that they saw the opera Tristan and Isolde (also by Wagner) 135 times. They hosted the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra for several "Summer Pops" concerts. Golden Yew Acres and their house were big enough to accommodate the orchestra and the crowds. Margot was known for her charitable work. She was vice president of the NJ Society for the Blind. A partial list of what she was involved with includes volunteer work at the Veteran's Hospital in East Orange and at the United Hospital's Orthopedic Center in Newark. She was on the board at the Crippled Children's Hospital in Newark (now part of Beth Israel Medical Center) and the NJ Training School for the Mentally Retarded, in Vineland (now simply, the Vineland Training School). She raised funds for several organizations at Montclair State and was awarded an honorary doctorate of letters by the college in 1964. Augustus Studer Jr. passed away in 1957. Margot continued to live in the house until 1962. ■

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REAL ESTATE



Largest Sale: 147 Union Street  
\$4,500,000

SOURCE: GSMLS DATA

PRICE RANGE	HOMES SOLD
\$500,000—\$599,999	15
\$600,000—\$699,999	22
\$700,000—\$799,999	25
\$800,000—\$899,999	12
\$900,000—\$999,999	29
\$1,000,000—\$1,249,000	34
\$1,250,000—\$1,499,999	43
\$1,500,000—\$1,749,999	41
\$1,750,000—\$1,999,999	19
\$2,000,000—\$2,499,999	12
\$2,500,000—\$2,999,999	9
\$3,000,000 +	11

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