

Paul and Mildred Shackelton interviewed by Jan Weisblatt.

Jan: This is November 22, 1976, and I am talking with Paul and Mildred Shackelton who moved to their home at 430 Wyoming Avenue in 1920 and have lived at the same address ever since.

Paul, you were talking a little bit about how you found out some of the details about your own house and about some of the experiences you'd had. Will you tell us something about it.

Paul: I would like to suggest that in working up the history many householders who have a tale to tell can reconstruct things back to the time when the original farm was made. For instance, on my abstract, which I looked into, it just happens that our lot is principally from the Hand farm but the back part came a little later from the Meeker farm. So there had to be separate deeds from the owners of the Hand farm and the Meeker farm.....the abstract of titles.

In looking over the abstract we find that the two farms, the Meeker and the Hand farms, are deeded to James A. Williamson & Associates on the 31st of October 18--, no I'm sorry, the abstract shows that the two farms and the particular part of the Township which were purchased by the developers was deeded on March 1, 1867. Some time between then and the time that our property was purchased from the developers on June 1, 1872, with related deeds on June 15th and June 25th, the developers had plotted out this part of the Wyoming section. After we purchased the place there was some question on title for the small portion of the rear of the lot which had come from the Meeker farm. This apparently was because the original deed to the plot in back of us had at some time between the deed to the developers and the time that we had our deed. That pushed me to look up the clearance of our title and I found that the present claim disregarded the division between the two farms, and we had to clear up our title. That alerted me, and I noticed a note in the abstract of title that a corrected deed was made by the owner of the Meeker farm and the Hand farm to the developers on the 31st of October 1872 (1872?). I think that a number of things like that will be brought up by looking over abstracts from various properties.

Jan: Where did you find the abstract?

Paul: It came with the purchase of the lot--of the house. We purchased it from Dr. Jewett. He had had abstracts made up. Some people

do not want to bother going back that far. But undoubtedly there will be some who will find interesting facts. For example, these two farms. The Meeker farm was east of Wyoming Avenue and the Hand farm included a little of the eastern part of the town but mostly west and this question of the division between the two farms was 166 feet east of Wyoming Avenue on Linden Street, but at Cedar Street it was 110 feet east of Wyoming.

Jan: That would cut right through the house on the corner there.

Paul: So that if the questionable title had been raised then it might have affected houses as well as just this part of our back yard. A point of interest in these farms was the deeds which gave title to the developers. The Meeker farm was identified by a starting point at the railroad and carried up through, whereas the Hand farm was identified from a landmark in the center of Springfield Avenue and it came along through and that deed described other farms which were bordered between the Hand farm and other property owners. It is to be noted that the limit of.....for the original developers stopped at Pine Street and Wyoming Avenue.

Jan: Where did Wyoming Avenue stop when you first came here?

Paul: When we first came Wyoming Avenue went up as far as Mountain Avenue.

Jan: I thought it was Clinton.

Paul:but it stopped there and from there on was a cow pasture with a big farm with a fence at the head of Wyoming Avenue at Mountain Avenue.

Jan: You said someone came to visit you and they couldn't sleep because it was too quiet. I think that's lovely. Mrs. Shackelton, what was the area like originally, what do you know about the history of the immediate plots around here.

Mildred: Well, when we moved here Wyoming Avenue was not cut through. Cows were pastured in South Mountain Estates and there was a large farm on upper Wyoming Avenue at what is now Clinton or perhaps Mountain Avenue. Many telephone people lived here at that time--AT&T people; the George Thomas', the Herbert Shrieves, John Mills, the Dunlops, Dr. Jewett from whom we had purchased our home. He had moved to Short Hill. This was a wonderful community, warm, friendly, quiet.

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There was no violent traffic at that time. Such wonderful friends and neighbors. Ameta Stoneall whose father was the first minister of Wyoming Church lived at the top of Cedar Street, at the head of Cedar Street. Emily Person and Rica Tepper, who later became Mrs. Roland French, lived on the corner of Cedar and Wyoming and were very near neighbors. Emily Person was a well-known water-color artist and Mr. Person, the father of Emily and Rica was the architect for our little Wyoming Church, a noted architect in New York City. He was known as one of the finest amateur violinists in the United States. An extremely cultured family. Margaret Fuller had been a guest in their home as had been the elder Damrosch, a close friend.

Where Lord & Taylor is now located was the lovely old home of the Whittinghams. It is said that a Civil War underground railway station was located in this old home.

Our present home was at one time a girl's school under the direction of a Miss Brown, I believe. Wyoming was such a lovely quiet place with wonderful trees -- so quiet in fact that friends from New York spending a weekend with us were unable to sleep. What a contrast to today.

Jan: You mentioned Mrs. Stoneall. Jane, her daughter, is living in the area. Do you know where?

Mildred: Jane lives in the area. She's a Mrs.

Jan: Does she live in Maplowood?

Mildred: No, she lives in Wyoming. I just don't remember--Clinton Avenue? No. Maple Street, I believe. I'm not sure, but Jane has been very active in the stores and very active in anything relating to theatre in the community. She is a wonderful girl. She was quite a violinist and is always ready to cooperate in anything that we have at the Church.

Jan: Another thing I wanted to ask you about--You mentioned Mr. Shrieve as being part of AT&T and having lived here originally.

Mildred: Yes, Mr. Shrieve lived on upper Linden Street and he was a well-known resident here. He and Emily Shrieve were very fine people. Emily was especially interested in gardening and in herbs.

Jan: It's a pity because the house which they left is all overgrown and its a real deserted house.

Mildred: It is too bad. I hope that something will come from this

because they were just wonderful wonderful neighbors and people. It was said that the first transcontinental telephone conversation was held at the Shrieve home with Mr. Shrieve and his wife and their son, Prescott.

Jan: Prescott was in California.....somebody called from California, right?

Mildred: Yes. Someone called from California. It was a transcontinental.....

Jan: This would be about.....?

Mildred: Before we came here. Around 1914 or 1915. We're not sure about that.

Jan: You also mentioned Dr. Jewett and when you were talking with me before, you said something about the Red Cross having had an early.....

Mildred: Oh, when I was getting ready a history of the Red Cross and had someone write it for us, I took her around to see Mrs. Skink (?) who was an early resident here and she gave us much information. There was a branch of Red Cross in the Wyoming section, where women gathered and worked diligently and Dr. Jewett gave them a sewing machine to help them in their work. They were a very active branch.

Jan: Was this during the first World War?

Mildred: Yes. This was during the first World War because we didn't become a Chapter until the second World War. We'd been a branch of Newark.

Jan: You also had another very interesting thing you were telling me about earlier. You thought of it because this summer in England you saw the stocks.

Mildred: Oh yes, a ducking stool in England this summer, down in Canterbury we saw the ducking stool which is quite an attraction there and it reminded me of something in our own community. When we first moved here, a family lived outside theroad. Her husband was an important telephone man in Europe during the war. Perhaps due to strain or what, she became known as a common scold and had difficulties with her neighbors and the case was brought to court and she was convicted as a common scold. The only penalty for this conviction was the ducking stool and that was still a law on the New Jersey books. But when her husband returned he was able to have the neighbors have this conviction to the ducking stool overturned. I believe that after that the law was removed from the books and we no longer have the duck-

ing stool in New Jersey.

Jan : That wasn't so long ago.

Mildred: No. In 1920.

Jan: Another thing you have often mentioned to me in talking about this neighborhood is another person, Jesse Dinnock.

Mildred: Jesse and Jeanette Dinnock were our very best friends. They lived next door to us in the house where the Houseman's? now live and which had been Dr. Jewett's home.

Jesse was the secretary-treasurer for a mining company in Pennsylvania. At this time there was difficulty in the mines, with the stores; there were strikes and so they decided to sell some of the property they had in Virginia, property that had some big forests where they obtained timber for the mines. So Jesse was sent down there to take care of this property and it developed that this property included Green Spring Plantation which had been the home of Governor Berkley. Jesse was very much interested in the history of Virginia. His mother was a Virginian. He began to do some excavations with some of the men he employed there and he unearthed the foundations of the original mansion of Governor Berkley. On the property was also a home that later belonged to the Lees, Ludwell Lees, I believe, and also the remnants of an old building where theBacon? rebellion had been imprisoned. We have pictures that we took of these excavations and they were very extensive. There's always been rivalry between Williamsburg and this area so that nothing was done and it was overgrown. But during the Jamestown celebration.....interest was taken in this property again and the government people went in and excavated and the ruins were all there. We were down there just about three years ago, and once again they were all grown over.

While Mr. Dinnock was there he bought Andler Plantation in Virginia, on the James River adjoining Jamestown Island and we went down there one weekend and he said, "Paul, come out here. I want to show you something." And he showed my husband where he had been digging and he had unearthed some pieces of glass and it later developed that this was the original first glass factory in America. There's a tablet there now to Jesse Dinnock for his work in bringing this to their attention.

Jan. Thank you very much.