

Thistle



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South Mountain Estates... From Farm Land to Development



Early map of Millburn showing area that is now South Mountain neighborhood.

As we drive through the neighborhood today known as South Mountain, it is hard to picture rolling pasture land dotted with large walnut trees and meandering streams. But until the mid-1920's that is largely what the area held, along with vestiges of the industrial era: the familiar Fandango paper mill, as well as a billiard ball factory and eventually a rubber manufacturer (the product being used to cover rain coats).

The map shown above illustrates the mill and the bordering east and west branches of the Rahway River as well as the estates making up the area. The Whittingham family eventually bought out surrounding owners.

In an oral history of the area in the historical society's archives, Herbert Marshall recalls vividly cattle being driven to and from the pasture in South Mountain to the Collinwood Dairy on Collinwood Road in Maplewood, via Wyoming Avenue. "Could say it was almost a cattle drive that took place twice a year. They used to bring the cows up Myrtle Avenue,

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News and Upcoming Events

Friday, October 17, 2014

Maureen Ogden Day at Old Short Hills Park, 274 Old Short Hills Road.

In honor of the fiftieth anniversary of her commitment to public service.

9:45-11am - coffee and pastry, *weather permitting*
11am - tree planting and dedication, *rain or shine*

Wednesday, November 1, 2014

Dave Hogenhauer Presentation
Millburn Library

A presentation on the history of the South Mountain Reservation.

7-8:45pm, program to begin at 7:30
Light refreshments will be served.

Parcil House News

Much maintenance has been started at the house with removal of overgrown trees. A new roof is also slated to go on with more extensive repairs to follow.

Work is currently underway at the historic cemetery across from the Parcil House. Wall restoration has started, to be followed by headstone stabilization. Work is expected to be finished in the new year.



Stone work and wall repair at Parcil Cemetery.

which was another grade crossing, and up past our home up Chestnut Street to Wyoming Avenue and then up to the farm. This one particular day (early 1920's) they were driving the cows up and there was a calf being transported in a little buggy-in the back of the buggy-and the buggy was at the back of the herd. Apparently they were trying to drive the mother of the calf at the head of the herd. and that particular cow was constantly trying to turn and get back to the buggy driving the calf...probably around Cedar Street... stampeded the whole herd. So, people were playing tennis at the Wyoming Club and these cows all come tearing down!...they all ran over the porch of Martell's house on the corner of Wyoming Avenue...down across the tennis courts, down across our yard. Tennis players by this time were running after the cows, chasing them with tennis rackets...I couldn't have been more than twelve years old...the stampede was a scary thing...Oh, I was scared of cows the rest of my life!"



MILLBURN MOUNTAIN, Millburn, N. J.

Picture from the historical society museum archives thought to be a view of "Millburn Mountain" through South Mountain pasture.

Other amusing anecdotes from Mr. Marshall involve memories of the rubber factory, which was located approximately where South Mountain school is today. "I was very small when that place burned up...you could bounce up and down on these things (timbers) because underneath there was rubber. Then we'd take a pen knife and cut out erasers and use them in school...just take a knife and cut an eraser any size you wanted."

The Whittingham's, a prominent Millburn family, lived in a large, three storey mansion located on the corner of Millburn and Wyoming Avenues, where CVS is now. They purchased the home, known as

"Boxwood" from Herbert Marshall's family.

Naturally, there are many interesting stories surrounding the house and its occupants. For instance, it's said that it was part of the underground railroad during the Civil War. Also, according to Paul Shackleton, a neighbor, the house was so large that, "a team of oxen used to come through the front door with wood for the fireplace." That would have been something to see!

On file at the historical society museum is the record of Elizabeth Whittingham vs. the Township of Millburn, et al, 1916 proceedings, opposing the overpass on Wyoming Avenue. Apparently her opposition was due to the widening of the street and thus the taking of some of her estate. She was ruled against.

In the mid 1920's ownership of the Whittingham farm, which went from Main Street to Vaux Hall Road, passed to South Mountain Estates Tract, with Harry J. Stevens serving as developer and managing agent. And manage he did!

We are lucky to have in the museum archives correspondence between Millburn township officials and Mr. Stevens. The first correspondence in January 1926 indicates that nine houses were under construction on Parkview Drive (now Ridgewood Road) and by spring there would be twenty-six more on Whittingham Terrace and Mountain View. Mr. Stevens requested street lights be installed.

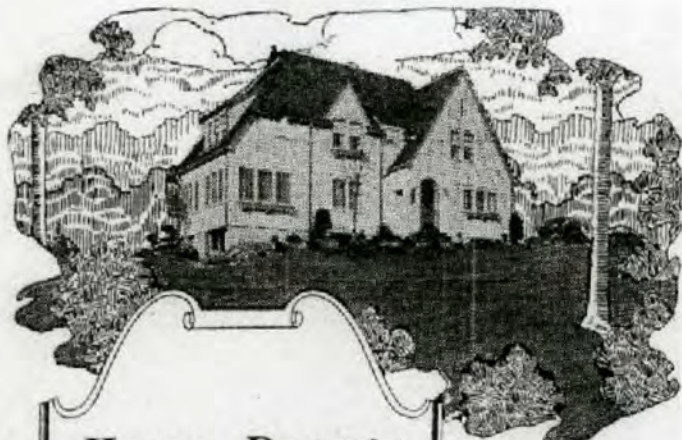
Through the ensuing five years Mr. Stevens' correspondence covered not only lighting but sewers, streets, stop signs (he did not want them placed on the "plazas" which we assume are the street islands which characterize the South Mountain neighborhood), weeds on the property owned by the board of education, weeds on the development's property and fire hydrants. Notably there was a lengthy exchange about the activities along Seven Bridges Road (Springfield Avenue today) involving odorous burning at the dump there and certain "Gypsies." It is not clear if the gypsies were actually nomadic people or what was known as scavengers (garbage collectors) burning refuse there. Since the property was located in Union, there was not much to be done to relieve the situation. Also problematic was the smell of burning rags and paper at the Fandango paper mill. No word on how this was resolved.

Another contentious issue concerned the East Branch of the Rahway River. Stevens alerted the

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LOCATION—Millburn avenue between Maplewood and Millburn; two minutes' walk from the Lackawanna station; five minutes' walk from Millburn Center.



South Mountain Estates
HARRY J. STEVENS
478 Central Ave., Newark Office on Property

Advertisement from New York Times
June 6, 1926.

township that over time, the rain-swollen river had undercut the banks and caused property to fall. He suggested that drains dumping into the river from surrounding communities had also increased the problem. The town promised to work on strengthening the channel of the river. In a letter from 1932, Stevens commends township employee Charles Moore for the work that was done on the river.

The letters from Mr. Stevens to the town in 1932 were a complaint to the Board of Health regarding The Nurses Grill, "the blare of the band and the general noise" (this being located on Seven Bridges Road) and then another about the noise coming from the pumping station at the Elizabethtown Water Reservation.

As time went along, sales were strong but as hard times started to fall and the depression deepened, business slackened and the developer hit lean times. He mentions in one of his letters that he could not pay \$1000 due the town. Herbert Marshall recollects that "most of the houses were built just before the crash and after the crash in '29 I bet you that two pages of the Millburn Item every week were sheriff's sales." Clearly these sales were not all related to South Mountain, but it was a struggle for the fledgling community.

For the transformation from farm and pasture land to thriving neighborhood, we can largely thank Mr. Harry J. Stevens, who did his part ensuring that South Mountain Estates would be a model community. In fact, he spoke at a realtors' convention in Atlantic City in December 1929 about South Mountain Estates and the development was touted nationally in the National Real Estate Journal "as rather a model of its class."



1941 view of the entrance to South Mountain Estates.
Note Mr. Stevens' sign on the right.

 **Millburn-
Short Hills
Historical Society**
P.O. Box 243
Short Hills, NJ 07078

Return Service Requested

Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society
Museum Hours: Tuesdays, 1-3
Wednesdays, 3:30-5:30
Thursdays, 5:30-7:30
1st Sunday of Month, 2-4
Curator, Lynne Ranieri

MSSH Board of Trustees, Officers
Debbie Frank, President
Michelle Miller, Treasurer
Carol Comes, Secretary

***Reminder: Please join us
October 17 in honoring
Maureen Ogden
and November 1 to hear
Dave Hogenhauer speak
on South Mountain Reservation.
All details inside.***



South Mountain Estates Model Home 1926.