

Down Memory Lane (Part 1)

By Harriet Wentlandt Carmichael (1907-2000)

This article takes the reader on a journey through a section of Mountainside in the 1920s with long-time resident Harriet Wentlandt Carmichael who wrote her story in 1983.

Approaching the corner of New Providence Road, Mountain Avenue and Woodland Avenue. You know, people call this 'Bird's Corner'. As we came around the bend on Mountain Avenue, after passing Chestnut Street, I should have called your attention to the names on the mailboxes on the left. The names are Beaman, Palmer, Coles and O'Donnell (*present day locations of former Bank of America and Maxwell's shop*). The O'Donnells live nearest to New Providence Road across from the Maxwell house. The Maxwell house is the last house on the right before arriving at Woodland Avenue.

Now, before we start walking down New Providence Road, let's walk down Woodland Avenue for about 110 feet to the Hamilton Farm. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton (Henry & Minnie) live in that house back past the barns. I knew that when I saw most of the cows at the fence that Mrs. Hamilton would soon be out here. Here she comes wearing a long apron. Watch now, in a minute you will know why. See her untie the apron and put it over her head. Aren't those funny sounding hoots that she is making as she hops around? Now watch the cows. They know just what the hoots mean. See them scurrying back to the pasture. When it is milking time and the cows are slow in coming to be milked, Mrs. Hamilton makes different hooting sounds. Again, they know just what to do. They come quickly. Those children on their way here with milk cans are coming for their family's daily milk supply. They always come early. They like to see how the cows react to Mrs. Hamilton's hoots.

On the right, is the house that the Hamiltons rent to tenants. It was built in 1763. The family now occupying it is the Kellerman family, that is, occupying the front part of it. The side door at the back end of the house is the Hermanse entrance.

I think, because of the time, we'll forego sampling the very cold, refreshing water from the Hamilton's 'Old Oaken Bucket' well here. Before we leave, though I would like you to notice the large, long wooden trough by the well. The Hamiltons keep it filled with water all day long for the cows.

It was right here at Hamilton's Farm that Mary Pickford made two of her first moving pictures in 1910. I have seen the pictures, and this 'Old Oaken Bucket' well and this 1763 house are very identifiable in the pictures. The titles of the movies are 'Arcadian Maid' and 'Child of the Ghetto'.

And now, as we are about to leave the Hamilton Farm, there is an interesting fact that I must tell you about Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, Henry and Minnie. They gave ox teams to the city of Newark, New Jersey, before the Civil War. I believe this gift is recorded in the Newark, New Jersey historical archives. Who knows how the generosity of this noble Mountainside couple who live right here, Henry and Minnie Hamilton, may have changed the history of Newark, New Jersey, and or the progress of the Civil War. Mountainside can well be proud of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton.

See those children walking so slowly toward Mountain Avenue? There is a reason for their tarrying. The Clarks live in the white house next to us here. One of their daughters married into the Capone family. The children are hoping as they pass by to see Al Capone and his limousine. He visits here occasionally. Who knows? Maybe we'll see him!

Now that we are at the Clark house, let's stand and look at it for a few minutes. Notice how broad it is with open front porch running across it. Notice the tall windows downstairs. They go from the floor almost to the ceiling. The windows upstairs are quite low. At either end of the house are fireplaces. See the large chimneys. Notice too the wooden sidewalk that starts at Woodland Avenue and leads up to the house.

All the families who lived here during my childhood, the Ross Edwards, the Clarks and the Whalens, who ran a tavern here, have always been very proud that they lived here. It is said that his house, because of its nearness to Springfield Road, was used as a stagecoach stop in Colonial Days.

I see some of you looking at that large tent pitched in the field near Maxwell's house (across from Maxwell's shop). I'll bet you are wondering why it is there. An evangelist is conducting services there every night this week. Many people attend the services. *(The location of the Clark house later became the Hoff's gas station, then Friendly's, and now Valley Bank)*

Now as we cross Mountain Avenue, we pass on the right on the corner of the first house on New Providence Road. It was built in 1818. It is now the Edwards family (no relation to the Ross Edwards family). Because members of the Theodore Bird family formerly occupied this house at the intersection of Mountain Avenue, New Providence Road and Woodland Avenue, early Mountainsiders always referred to the corner as 'Bird's Corner'." *(This house is currently known as the Levi Cory House and was moved to Constitution Plaza in 2015 by the Mountainside Restoration Committee to save it from demolition).*

Down Memory Lane (Part 2)

By Harriet Wentlandt Carmichael (1907-2000)

We continue now walking down New Providence Road. Perhaps we will be surprised by whom we meet!

“Just a short distance now on the left is Mr. Beaman’s Blacksmith Shop (*Location today is the parking lot in the back of the Publick House*). We’ll just watch because Mr. Beaman has a customer, an elderly gentleman who brought one of his horses to be shod. He has his granddaughter with him.

Did you notice how that little girl’s eyes just danced when Mr. Beaman said, “I think I’ll put a horse nail in the hot embers”. Mr. Beaman always makes horseshoe and nail rings for all the little folks who come here with older members of the family. I must tell you, I am one of the little girls for whom Mr. Beaman made a horseshoe nail ring. That elderly gentleman could have been my grandfather, Mr. Karl Wentlandt.

Now that we are outside the Blacksmith Shop, let’s just stand here and keep our eyes on that barn across the street. (*Location today of the former “Book Barn” building which was destroyed by fire and demolished – now cleared for a future park*). The Peckhams keep their surrey in there. How lucky we are. Mr. Paul Peckham is leading his horse down the hill right now to hitch him to the surrey. We children have always wondered what Mr. Peckham would look like if he shaved off all that heavy black beard and goatee.

The horse is hitched to the surrey now. Mr. Peckham is probably going to his parents’ home which is way back in off Hillside Avenue. Their house is large with an enormous cathedral room. This room is used as a gallery where they display works of art and treasures obtained in their travels. Also, they encourage performers in many of the arts to give concerts here. The performers who accept invitations to giving concerts are then honored guests of the Peckhams at an elaborate reception after the concert. Yes, Mr Peckman is heading up Hillside Avenue in the direction of this parent’s home.

If you will look at the hill above the barn, you will see some houses. The Platt family live in one, the Peckhams live in one, the Ivanowskis in one, and the Lindbergs. If this were a weekend and you were standing near the Clark house and looking over at the hill, you might see Mr. Ivanowski. (*Sigismund Ivanowski, Polish nobleman, artist and statesman who lived in Mountainside 1908-1918 and returned in 1924*) and his long-time friend and occasional guest, Mr. Ignace Jan Paderewski walking around the property.

I remember once in the 1920’s, Mr. Paderewski, when he was a guest at the Ivanowski home, played an entire concert at the Roosevelt Junior High School in Westfield. I attended that concert. Mr. Paderewski received many standing ovations for this superb piano playing. He was much heralded in Westfield’s two weekly newspapers. “The Westfield Standard” and “The Westfield Leader”.

Let’s go along now to Children’s Country Home (*now Children’s Specialized Hospital*). We just don’t want to miss their yearly carnival and fair.

The only building on the right side of the street between Peckham’s barn and the Children’s Country Home is the house near the barn occupied by the Kackelreiss family. We are now approaching the house on the corner of Hillside Avenue and New Providence Road, the home of Mr. & Mrs. Rich. There are just

three more houses on this part of New Providence Road. They are across the street from Children's Country Home.

Mr. (Lousie H.) Kniffin is superintendent of the Children's Country Home. Oh, there she is now circulating among the people attending the fair. Do you see those children over there watching the **Punch and Judy** show? Would you believe it? They are all eating cotton candy. Oh, those wonderful squeals of delight coming from the children riding on the merry-go-round and from the children coming down the slide!

Folks, now is your chance if you like some lemonade. There aren't many people at the stand.

I see that some of you have purchased articles at the arts and crafts booth. The money realized at this fair does so much for the children in the Home. I know everyone is appreciative.

Down Memory Lane (Part 3)

By Harriet Wentlandt Carmichael (1907-2000)

We continue our "walk" through 1920 Mountainside with Mrs. Harriet Wentlandt Carmichael going down New Providence Road past Children's Country Home (now Children's Specialized Hospital).

Now, let's hike on down to Captain Cook's Farm. It is quite a walk, so let's establish another walking gait.

Again, with that good gait we have passed quite an area along New Providence Road without seeing any houses on either side of the road, and we are now ready to turn left onto Springfield Road (*now Route 22*).

The only house on Springfield Road on the left is very near the corner, the Johanson house. The only house on the right is the Rinker's house. (*Today, the location of the traffic light intersection at New Providence Road and Route 22*).

As we walk along from the Rinker's house to Cook's Farm, both on the right, keep looking in among the trees. Peacocks could be there spreading their tail feathers into large, beautiful fans. The peacocks are allowed to roam around the farm, and they just don't wander away!

Take a good look at all the exotic birds in the large wired-in areas. See all the species of ducks swimming in the pond on the right side of the house. What always fascinates me are those little chickens who look as if they have feather dusters around the middle of their legs.

Everyone calls Mr. Cook "Captain Cook", but he really is not a captain. People call him "Captain Cook" because he is generally off sailing to some far place searching for exotic birds and plants and treasures. He brings so many interesting things home. He invites and encourages parents to bring their children to see the things he has on his farm and the treasures he has acquired. He is away right now, so there is no chance of our seeing him.

Because the Mountainside red brick public school (*currently part of the Borough Hall Building*) is on the other side of Springfield Road near New Providence Road, let's cross the street and head back there (*we are now heading East on today's Route 22*).

Mr. Cathers is both principal and teacher of the Mountainside Public School. If you peek in, you will see the older children helping the younger ones while Mr. Cathers is teaching the middle group. See if you can tell whether Mr. Cathers is wearing a wig or not. The girls and boys always say that he does!

As we leave the red schoolhouse and walk toward Bliwise General Store, we see on the right, set quite far back from Springfield Road, a little white building that looks like a church. It isn't a church. It is really a very early Mountainside school.

In the back of the school is the "Ole Swimming Hole" (*location today of the Mountainside Community School*). See, there are some boys swimming there now. It is absolutely off limits for girls.

Across the street from the little white school is a white house. Next to this house is the large Coles Memorial Home. If you listen, you can hear the children playing. They come here every summer from an orphans' home in Newark, New Jersey.

As we approach the Mountainside Borough Hall (*presently the Lord Building*), just before we come to Parkway, on the right, we pass three houses. I know that the Lyons family lives in one and the Herrick family lives in another. I do not know the name of the third family. The families who live on Parkway are the Herters, the Laings, the Edwards, the Messinas, the Longs, the Hansens, and the Fritzes.

After crossing Parkway, we are at the Mountainside Borough Hall. It houses business chambers both upstairs and down. Court proceedings are held in the large room on the second floor. All departments of borough government are conducted from the Borough Hall.

Hanging like a swing on the lawn on the west side of the building is a large iron hop. It looks like a large iron wheel rim without spokes. Always beneath it rests a sledgehammer. If while we are here someone rushes here and strikes the large iron rim many times with the sledgehammer, we will know that there is a fire in Mountainside. That signal which can be heard from quite a distance, calls the volunteer fireman to duty. Each fireman comes as quickly as possible. Those firemen in the neighborhood of the fire go directly to the fire. The fireman who arrives first at the Borough Hall, where the fire equipment is housed, mans the fire apparatus, driving equipment and firemen to the location of the fire. The volunteer firemen are truly faithful, dedicated people who perform the noble service for the community. (*This fire gong is now located in front of the present-day fire department building on New Providence Road*)

The business chamber upstairs is large enough for social functions. Each October the social season is started by the Volunteer Fire Department sponsoring a masquerade dance at the Borough Hall.

Down Memory Lane (Part 4 – Final Chapter)

By Harriet Wentlandt Carmichael (1907-2000)

We conclude our “walk” through 1920 Mountainside with Mrs. Harriet Wentlandt Carmichael as we are at the original Borough Hall on Springfield Road (now the Lord Building on Route 22).

On the other side of Springfield Road across from the old Borough Hall is the Mountainside Union Chapel (*later becoming the Mountainside Gospel Chapel on Spruce Drive*) the hub of Mountainside’s social life.

If today were Sunday, there would be a morning church service. Sunday School in the afternoon Christian Endeavor for young people early in the evening and an evening church service. The sound of the church bell calling Mountainsiders to the services is music to their ears. The sound of the bell can be heard at quite a distance.

This is the approximate Mountainside Union Chapel schedule: New Year’s Eve – a Watch Night Service; Palm Sunday – special planned service; Easter – special planned services; Children’s Day in June – each child performs; June (after school closes) – congregational picnic at Silver Lake (*now Surprise Lake*) including swimming; July or August – Sunday School excursion to Asbury Park by train from the Westfield Railroad Station – most of us take picnic lunches and bathing suits; September – Rally Day – each child performs; Thanksgiving – special services – families bring canned food, etc. to be given to needy people and the Children’s Homes in Mountainside; Christmas – special service; Children’s Christmas party – held on a weekday night between Christmas and New Year’s Day – each child performs and receives a gift.

Again, if it were Sunday, Police Officer George Boyton, or one of the force, would be out in the middle of Springfield Road operating the temporary removable turnstile stop-and-go signal. Traffic has to be halted in both directions for people to cross the street to get to church. Springfield Road is a two-lane road.

Let’s go into Schoonover’s (*present location of former Bliwise – now Vine Republic*) on the corner before we cross Mountain Avenue to get to Bliwise’s General Store (*then located at what is now the entrance to Echo Lake Park*). Schoonover’s building is part living quarters, part taxi business office, part quick check hardware store (handling small and light hardware items), and part sub-station of the post office.

If you do not live along the rural delivery mail route out of the Westfield Post Office, you have to come to Schoonover’s to pick up your mail. The Westfield Post Office leaves the mail here. Mr. Charles Roff, who lives with his wife and son Firman in the small house across from where Central Avenue meets Springfield Road, performs this service for the Westfield Post Office. Mr. Roff rides a bicycle to the Westfield Post office, picks up the designated mail, and brings it here to Schoonover’s sub-station at the corner of Mountain Avenue and Springfield Road.

You can see as we leave the post office sub-station that Mr Schoonover has his taxi parked on the Mountain Avenue side of the building. At train time in Westfield he is usually at the railroad station ready to serve folks who need a taxi. With so few people having automobiles, Mr. Schoonover has a very successful business.

The young lady who is picking up the small packages that have just been delivered to Bliwise's Store across the street is Mrs. Bliwise's sister, Eva. Eva works in the store during the week and goes home on weekends.

Before we mount the steps into Bliwise's Store, let's watch Mr. Bliwise hand crank the amount of gasoline his customer wants to put into his car.

Two steps up and we are inside the store. As you can see, the store contains a wide variety of merchandise. Its largest numbers of products are foods. The store is open 7 days a week. Quite often young folks meet and socialize outside the store.

We are on the last lap of our walking tour. We have to walk up Mountain Avenue to New Providence Road. As we leave Bliwise's Store, we'll pass one white house, Hodges' house, on our left and two houses on our right, the Hambackers' and the Warings' before we come to Parkway. After we cross Parkway, we pass Murphy's house on the right. On the left, where Parkway meets Mountain Avenue, is the Watts' home, another white house. As we start climbing the incline of Mountain Avenue, we pass Groths' house on the left.

Now we are at Nolte's Welding Shop, Bill Meyer's Store and the Nolte's residence.

Across from the welding shop, right over there, is an old house with a low white picket fence across the front of the property. I thought we would see Mr. Smith, the man who lives here. He is usually sitting outside in a Morris chair covered with a blanket. His is not a well man. He speaks with a British accent. He must have an income because he is unable to work, he seems to have everything he needs and can afford a full-time registered nurse. His nurse's name is Miss Naomi Ifill.

If I were on my way to Bliwise's Store now and Mis Ifill needed bread or milk or some other necessary item, she would call to me so that I could bring to her the things she has listed. Up a way, on the left, is the Doyle home, almost opposite the driveway leading up the hill to the Platt, Peckham, Ivanowski and Lindberg house. The piano sounds of Rachmaninoff's Prelude are coming from the Ivanowski home. Mr. Ivanowski's friend, Mr. Paderewski, is visiting again. As we hear this great artist's music, we are arriving at the place from whence we started, "Bird's Corner".

I hope you have enjoyed your 1920 walking tour. Perhaps we can tour more of Mountainside another time. And now, before we all disperse, I have one question I would like to ask you: Aren't you glad you wore your walking shoes?

As we recently celebrated the 125th Anniversary of Mountainside, may we suggest that you write a present day tour of your neighborhood to pass on to the future generations of Mountainside residents? The Mountainside Restoration Committee will happily make your "tour" a part of Mountainside's archives, just as Harriet's tour has helped you to learn about 1920 Mountainside.