



Photo courtesy Mike Farrelly

“Irvingcroft” on Llewellyn Road

CONTRIBUTED BY MIKE FARRELLY, MONTCLAIR TOWN HISTORIAN

THIS VERY LARGE GEORGIAN BRICK HOUSE on Llewellyn Rd. was designed by Montclair architect, Frank E. Wallis, in 1906 for Major Washington Irving Lincoln “W.I.L.” Adams and his wife, Grace (Wilson) Adams. The house, known as Irvingcroft, sits on a 2.28 acre lot and is large enough to hold hundreds of guests. It was often used as a venue for concerts and wedding receptions in its early days. The major’s father, Washington Irving “W.I.” Adams had a house on the site. W.I. passed away in 1896. W.I.’s widow, Marion, (W.I.L.’s mom) moved to Park St. W.I.L. bought his parents’ property, tore their house down and built the existing house.

W.I.L. and his father were direct descendants of: Samuel Adams, the patriot, of John Adams, the second president of the United States and of John Quincy Adams, the 5th president. Grace counted James Wilson from Pennsylvania, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, as an ancestor. The father, W.I. Adams, was president of Scovill & Adams which manufactured photographic equipment. Although he wasn’t a photographer, W. I. started a magazine for photographers called

The Photographic Times. The son, W.I.L. Adams, an excellent amateur photographer, came on board to manage the magazine. W.I.L. eventually became the president of Scovill & Adams and ran it until 1901. W.I.L. then became the president of Styles & Cash, a large New York printing firm. A few years later he was asked to reorganize Sackett & Williams, a large printing and lithography concern. He became president of that company.

Meanwhile, he was a founder of the Montclair Trust Co. and became its president. He also helped form the Murray Hill Trust Co. and became chairman of the board. In addition, he was the president of the West Side Bank of New York. He was a director and/or treasurer of several other companies.

In 1916 W.I.L. completed training at the Plattsburg (NY) military base and was commissioned as a major in the Army Reserve. He served as an officer in charge of finance for the Eastern Division of the Quartermaster Corps during World War I. His son, Briggs K. Adams, flew with the Canadian Royal Air Force during that war and was killed in action. W.I.L. was active in local politics. He

Sitting on over two acres, the house can hold hundreds of guests. In its early days, it was often used as a venue for wedding receptions and concerts.

Yogi Berra Museum Awarded Grant For New Exhibition

BY EVE SCHAENEN



THE YOGI BERRA MUSEUM & LEARNING CENTER is one of 18 organizations statewide to receive a grant from the New Jersey Council for the Humanities. The \$15,000 Action grant, which helps organizations implement humanities-based programs, will go towards the creation of a technology-driven exhibition that uses data visualizations along with physical artifacts to capture the story of Major League Baseball and COVID-19 as a window into the greater societal and cultural impact of the pandemic.

“We are incredibly grateful for the NJCH’s generous financial support, which will allow us to develop this exciting exhibition,” said Eve Schaenen, the Museum’s Executive Director. “Data visualizations and the emerging technologies we’re using to bring them to life represent a brand new form of storytelling, not only for our visitors but for the Museum staff as well. Thanks to the NJCH, we can incorporate these innovative methods in our mission to engage and connect to the communities we serve.”

The funded exhibition, which is scheduled to open in 2024, will utilize data maps, economic data and baseball statistics to explore the spectrum of impact when our country’s national pastime goes remote. The focus of inquiry will be on Yankee Stadium, the New York City ballpark where Yogi Berra made his name, and which is situated in one of the urban areas that was hardest hit by the pandemic -- the Bronx. The interactive exhibition will meditate on what the pandemic took away, and celebrate what Baseball gives us back.

“We are committed to helping expand, diversify and build capacity for the humanities throughout the state,” said Dr. Carin Berkowitz, NJCH Executive Director. “We’re excited to see and support both new and growing efforts in the humanities at a time when they are as critical to our society as ever.” ■

ABOUT THE YOGI BERRA MUSEUM & LEARNING CENTER: The Yogi Berra Museum & Learning Center is a nonprofit sports education organization on the campus of Montclair State (NJ) University. The Museum’s mission is to preserve and promote the values of perseverance, respect, sportsmanship and excellence through inclusive, culturally diverse, sports-based educational exhibits and programs.

ran unsuccessfully for Congress in 1912. He was a Republican presidential elector from NJ in 1916. He was a delegate to several Republican conventions and served as a Town Commissioner from 1932 to 1936. He was also involved in several social organizations. He formed and was president of the local branch of the Sons of the American Revolution. Some of his titles: president of the Montclair Theater Guild, president of the Outlook Club, which involved itself in current civic affairs, a director of the local YMCA and a senior trustee of the First Congregational Church. Grace supported her husband in all his many activities and organized all the meetings, lectures, presentations and concerts that took place at the house. She was president of the local Homeopathic Society. Homeopathy takes the position that tiny amounts of substances that cause disease or deleterious symptoms can aid in the prevention and cure of those conditions. W.I.L. and Grace always had a summer house in Littleton, NH. They moved to Florida in 1926 but came back to

Montclair to live on Melrose Place. W.I.L. passed away in Littleton. Grace was a member of the Littleton Garden Club and a member of the Littleton branch of the Interrogation Club, a club dedicated to “mental improvement” where members took turns presenting studies on a wide variety of subjects.

In 1926 W.I.L. and Grace sold the house to Ralph M. Bollard and his second wife, Isabelle (Scott) Magrane, the widow of Robert Magrane. Isabell’s son, John Magrane (Ralph’s stepson), lived with them. Unfortunately, Isabelle passed away in 1942. Ralph married again in 1950. He married Martha (Frain) Baiocchi, the widow of Dr. Adolph Baiocchi. Ralph and Martha continued to live in the house until 1952 Ralph graduated from Harvard University in 1905 and went to work in finance. He became a partner at Dillon Read & Co. which underwrites large bond issues. On the social side, Ralph was president of the local Community Chest (a charity) in 1936. He chaired the local U.S.O. Citizen’s Committee in 1945. He moved to California where he got involved in raising horses and riding. He was still riding just days before his death in 1966.

Ralph’s step-son, John Magrane, took part in a bit of an adventure in 1935. He and a school buddy, Frank Peters, both students at Harvard, rowed a 28-foot racing shell from Dobbs Ferry on the Hudson, up the Hudson River, through various canals to Lake Ontario and on to Buffalo. They returned via Lake Ontario, the St Lawrence River, the Richelieu River, down through Lake Champlain and Lake George back to the Hudson River and back to Dobbs Ferry. The trip covered 1,500 miles and took 42 days.

The last people we are going to talk about today only lived in the house for a few years. They were Robert M. and Margaret (Helms) Browning. They bought our featured house in 1952. Robert had worked for General Electric in accounting and finance. He became a partner at Booz, Allen and Hamilton, the management consulting and intelligence firm. Margaret attended Wheaton College in Norton, MA and graduated from The Nursery Training School in Boston. The Brownings supported music, in particular the NJ Symphony Orchestra. Because they had an organ and a grand piano in their music room, they often held musicales in their home. In 1956 they asked for a zoning variance to convert their home into a guest home for paying guests. The application was denied. Shortly thereafter they moved to Vermont. ■

If you’d like to see more images of Montclair homes, they are featured in the book, *Stately Homes of Montclair*, which can be found at Montclair Booksellers, several local libraries and the Stately Homes of Montclair Facebook page.