

Milking It

BY JANE M. ELIASOF, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MONTCLAIR HISTORY CENTER

On May 19, the Montclair History Center will hold its second annual CheeseFest, an afternoon where it's all about cheese. In addition to all-you-can-eat cheese, thanks to our sponsor Schuman Cheese, there will be music by the Watchung Mountain Riders, food from local restaurants, and beverages from Montclair Brewery, Hoboken Brewery, and Ironbound Cider. But what does all this have to do with Montclair history?

MORE THAN A hundred years ago, before refrigeration, people who lived in Montclair kept cows on their property. Milk production—and ultimately cheese—was a homegrown affair. Once the trains came through and houses were built closer together, people no longer kept their own cows. Milk production, however, was still a local affair and Montclair had several dairies.

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Applegate Farms, run by the Sigler family in the early 19th century, was known for its Guernsey cows and the sweet milk they produced. Keeping cows on the property became problematic as the neighborhood developed, and the cows were moved to Hackettstown. Around World War II, Applegate Farms started serving ice cream under the direction of Donald Littlefield, and the rest is history.

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Carrie the Cow walked to Montclair from Brooklyn early every summer for years, returning to Brooklyn in the fall. According to the notes on the back of this photo taken in the late 1800s, Carrie's owner, Ezra DeForest, had a summer home in Montclair, then just a "country village," and a city home in Brooklyn where he kept a cow and chickens. One of Montclair's early amateur photographers, DeForest documented his homes, family, hired workers, and even Carrie.



The Fairfield Dairy maintained barns and their milk processing plant in Fairfield, but had their offices in Montclair. Stephen Francisco, the first president of the Fairfield Dairy, opened up his first office above the Montclair Trust Co., which now houses the Saxum Real Estate office on Bloomfield Avenue, and had labs nearby.



A cow grazes on the lawn of Decatur Sawyer's home on Llewellyn Avenue. The home, designed by prominent architect Alexander Jackson Davis, still stands today.



Alexander Avenue was home to several farms. In the late 1800s, William and Nellie Hamilton moved into Aaron Sigler's house at 86 Alexander. They ran a dairy farm from the house. William had grown up as a farmer in Acquackanonk, which is what Clifton was called until the early 20th century. In this photo, taken around 1910, Maurice Hamilton poses with one of his cows on Alexander Avenue.



Cows grazed throughout Montclair, including these girls, likely enjoying the shade by Toney's Brook on Claremont and Greenwood Avenue. Right around the corner on Greenwood Avenue and Glenridge Avenue, the New York Condensed Milk Company had their offices. It changed its name to the Borden Condensed Milk Company in 1899, expanded rapidly and opened a condensed milk plant near the Lackawanna railroad station.



The South End had several dairies. Myron and Willis Flint were famous for their butter and eggs, which they sold from their farm on Orange Road, where Canterbury Park is now. John and Wyatt Rudd originally started delivering milk on Gates Ave. They moved their business to 310 and 312 Orange Road and added an ice cream business, Rudd's Dairyland. Today, to honor Montclair's bovine past, Montclair Brewery offers "Rudd's Dairyland Milk Stout." Former Deputy Police Chief and former Deputy Mayor Roger Terry used to ride Rudd's Dairyland truck with his milkman father, delivering fresh milk to local residents.

Cobble Court Follow Up

BY MIKE FARRELLY,
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AFTER WRITING THE article about the house called "Cobble Court" on Upper Mountain

Ave. we were reminded by a couple of readers that the house was built by the O.A. Peterson Co. The company also built the companion home; the one that Curt Forstmann built for his mother in 1939. The company was founded by Oscar A. Peterson. It is still being run by the Peterson family and it is still in Montclair with their base of operations on North Willow Street. Oscar came from Sweden to Montclair around 1900. He married Laura Hallberg in 1912 and started his building company shortly after that, in 1914. Throughout their history, the Peterson company has built many homes and buildings in Montclair. One of the most notable is the Montclair National Bank and Trust building at Valley Rd. and Bellevue Ave. in Upper Montclair. It is now home to the Chase Bank. The Peterson Co. built Union Congregational Church on Cooper Ave. and the "new" St Cassian's Church on Bellevue Ave. ■

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