

# Montclair's Secret Paths And By-Ways

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**S**OME OF THE BLOCKS IN MONTCLAIR are quite large. Montclair citizens, especially in the days when everybody walked, have always looked for shortcuts to avoid having to walk all the way around the block. In the past, landowners were willing to let citizens use tiny bits of their property as paths to get to and from Montclair business and transportation centers. This was especially true when the path went between two properties, and it wasn't clear exactly whose land people were walking on.

A few of the paths were purchased by the town and still exist as official walkways.

Probably the oldest is Dikes Lane which goes from South Mountain Ave. to the intersection of Plymouth and Clinton.

It is named for Henry Dike who had a large estate on South Mountain Ave., directly across from the lane. It shows up on the 1890 map. One of the most notable features of Dike's Lane is that it passes the studio/workshop used by the famous Montclair artist, Thomas Manley. Manley rented a carriage house behind 22 Clinton Ave. to work in. It is not really visible from Clinton Ave., but you can catch glimpses of it if you peak over the wooden fence that borders the lane.



T.R. Manley's studio on Dikes Lane

Another lane, that had been in existence unofficially for decades but was developed by the town in 1928, is Essex Way which breaks up the long block between Chestnut St. and Watchung Ave. along Park St. The path runs between Park St. and North Fullerton. It traveled along the borders of property owned by Samuel Holmes (his house later became the Marlboro Inn) and property owned by Thomas McDonough, an inventor who owned two houses at the intersection of Christopher St. and McDonough St. (rumors say that the 2 houses were connected by a tunnel). The town made major improvements to Essex Way in 1946.

Mid-Park Lane almost meets Essex Way on Park St. Together they create a shortcut that runs between North Fullerton Ave. and Midland Ave which comes out on Midland at the entrance to Erwin Park. Mid-Park Lane crosses Toney's Brook. In the distant past Montclair citizens would have had to hop from stone to stone to get across the brook. Montclair was very proud of the rustic wooden bridge they put across the brook in 1944. It

has been replaced by a concrete and steel bridge. One of the main advocates for the pathway between Midland Ave. and Park St. was Town Commissioner, William J. Minsch, who was the commissioner for finance and revenue between 1942 and 1946. Minsch lived on Midland Ave. and probably used the path himself. Some people in town jokingly referred to Mid-Park Lane as "Minsch's Marvel".

In the late 1880s Christopher Andrew Hinck and his brother, Claus "Frederick" Hinck, came to Montclair. They started to buy up old farms, sub-divide them and sell the smaller plots. Most of their children went into the real estate business and continued to develop Montclair properties. At one time the Hinck family owned just about all of the land between Walnut St. and Watchung Ave. between the Glen Ridge border and Montclair Ave. Of course, they were never interested in holding on to the land.

Christopher and Johanna (Fliedner) Hinck bought a farm that had belonged to Edward and Mary Sadler in the 1860s and 70s. The farm featured a prominent house that faced Grove St. The house sat about 150 ft. back from the street. It was consid-

ered a Grove St. residence until the Hinck family developed Euclid Pl. It is now considered number 10 Euclid Pl., although some people wonder why the entrance doesn't face Euclid Pl. Frederick and Johanna (Haase) Hinck owned a house at 150 Montclair Ave. Christopher St. is named for Christopher Hinck and Frederick St. is named for Frederick Hinck. Hinck's Alley is the longest "secret" path in Montclair. It runs for 2 blocks between Grove St. and Montclair Ave. It follows what was the border between Frederick's land and the property of James McLaughlin. McLaughlin had a house at the corner of Grove St. and

Watchung Ave. It was moved and is now 363 Grove St.

One of the least well known "secret" paths in Montclair runs between Highland Ave. and Edgecliff Ave. just North of Bradford Ave. It is known simply as "the Walkway" and it follows the border between the (old) Osborne and Marsellis Quarry, and land that was owned by Frank Lord. The quarry existed from the 1880s until the 1930s. The NJ Audubon Society "Hawk Watch" observatory platform sits on top of the cliffs that they quarried. Frank Lord came to Montclair in 1888 and built several houses in that area. The Walkway is very narrow and doesn't involve much more than an asphalt path. It is barely noticeable from Highland Ave. However, there is a very substantial set of stairs to help people ascend the hill.

At the other end of town there is a sidewalk that skirts Rosedale Cemetery between Pleasant Way and Pleasant Ave.

Pleasant Ave used to extend as a street all the way to Pleasant Way. Motorists used the road to by-pass traffic in the South End Business District. In 1964 most of the people in the neighborhood asked the town to close off the connection to Pleasant Way the town obliged and put in a sidewalk. ■