

A Sunny Corner Lot On Elm Street

CONTRIBUTED BY MIKE FARRELLY, MONTCLAIR TOWN HISTORIAN

THIS HOUSE at the intersection of Elm St. and Orange Rd. doesn't appear on any map, or in any directory before 1929. However, the 1927 and 1928 directories seem to be missing, so it was probably built before 1929. The 1928 tax map shows that the lot was owned by W.I.L. Adams. There are articles in The Montclair Times that indicate that someone was living in the house as early as 1927. The first couple mentioned in the Times are: Robert P. and Alice (McGiffin) Kelsey. The 1930 Census says that they were renters, so they didn't build the house. Robert grew up in Massachusetts. He worked for the Boston offices of the W.L. Brann Co., a national advertising firm. He was temporarily assigned to their New York office when he lived in Montclair. He and Alice moved back to Boston in 1932. Robert finished up his career as a vice president of the John Hancock Insurance Co.

"W.I.L. Adams" is Washington Irving Lincoln Adams, a prominent citizen of Montclair, who had a house and owned a large lot at this intersection at the turn of the 20th Century. His father, Washington Irving Adams, lived nearby, on Llewellyn. After his father passed, W.I.L. tore down his father's house and erected a large brick house on his father's site (W.I.L. called the new house "Irvingcroft"). He started selling off bits of his property at Elm and Orange. This house was built on one of the last lots that he had owned there. Nearby Irving St. was so named to honor W.I.L. Adams and his family. His father was Washington Irving. He was Washington Irving Lincoln. He and his wife, Grace W. Adams, had sons named Washington Irving Lincoln Jr. and Wilson Irving.

Somewhat ironically, the next people to live in this house were Wilson Irving and Helen (Morrison) Adams. Although Wilson



Photo courtesy Mike Farrelly

Irving was the son of W.I.L. and Grace Adams, who had owned all the property at this intersection, the 1940 Census shows that Wilson and Helen were renters. They did not own or build the house. Wilson graduated from Dartmouth College and went into the printing business. He worked for Deutz Lithography and Engraving, a subsidiary of Styles and Cash which was a large printing concern run by his father. He married Helen in 1915 and they lived on Lincoln St. until 1933 when they moved to this house. Wilson was later the office manager for the Voight Carpet Co. in Newark. In 1960 (after he and Helen no longer lived in this house) Wilson moved to Reno, Nevada where he worked for the University of Nevada.

In 1941 Alfred Harrison "A. Harrison" Tate and his wife, Hortense (Ridley) Tate, moved into the house. Alfred worked for the post office, retired, and went into the real estate business. He was a long-time member of the Montclair branch of the NAACP and received a plaque honoring his "outstanding work" on the organization's 50th anniversary in 1967. Alfred was also a member of the Montclair Advisory Board on Housing. Hortense was a "force of nature" who shaped the lives of many young women (especially African American women) in Montclair for decades.

Hortense Ridley was born in Kansas to two teachers. Her mom left teaching to raise the family. Her father, Ezekiel Ridley, became the principal of an all-black school in Topeka. Because he was a respected member of the education community, Hortense was allowed to attend an all-white high school. She did well but was always put "in the back" and rarely called on. She got to experience segregation first-hand. Hortense graduated from Washburn University (Topeka, KS) in 1920. She was recruited by the National YWCA to work at the newly formed "Colored" branch (of the YWCA) in Montclair. She only worked for the YWCA for a few years, but volunteered for just about everything they did for the next 70 years. She taught at Glenfield and at The Robert Treat Junior High in Newark. She was a founder of the local branch of the National Council for Negro Women and on far too many committees to list here. She touched the lives of literally thousands of young women in Montclair. She passed away in 2003 at the age of 104.

A. Harrison Tate had been married before and had a son, Herbert H. Hortense helped raise him as her own. He received a BA and law degree from Rutgers. His work as counsel for the NJ NAACP pushed the NJ Supreme Court to overturn discriminatory

laws that were designed to keep African Americans separate but somehow equal. He took a break from Civil Service to serve as a second lieutenant in the Army Air Corps during WWII. He was appointed as a Superior Court judge to the Essex County Court of Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. President Truman appointed him to be the Cultural Affairs Attaché to the US Embassy in Karachi, Pakistan. In 1959 Herbert was elected to the NJ State Assembly where he worked hard to uphold civil rights. He served on the US Civil Rights Commission.

Around 1977 the Nashes, Robert "Bob" and Josephine (Jackson) Nash, moved into this house. Bob was born in Passaic and grew up in Clifton. He served in the 97th Signal Battalion (Army) in Germany. After his stint in the army Bob became an in-demand model who appeared regularly in Ebony. Bob even secured a minor role in the 1965 film The Pawnbroker. He became a sales manager for Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer but decided to go into business for himself. He negotiated the right to distribute Pabst and several other beverages and opened a distribution firm in a 10,000 ft warehouse in Newark: B.N. Distributors, Inc. Josephine grew up in Queens, NY. She raised their two daughters (Robin and Hillary) in this house and was the president of The Town and Country Women of Montclair, a social organization dedicated to raising money for a number of charitable causes. Josephine's mom and dad, Gladwell and Sylvia Jackson, lived with Bob and Josephine in their old age. ■

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Montclair Real Estate Statistics for First Half of 2023

SOURCE: GSMLS



LARGEST HOME SALE
\$9,500,000 349 Crestmont Road

PRICE RANGE	HOMES SOLD
\$500,000 - \$599,999	12
\$600,000 - \$699,999	22
\$700,000 - \$799,999	15
\$800,000 - \$899,999	10
\$900,000 - \$999,999	14
\$1,000,000 - \$1,249,999	12
\$1,250,000 - \$1,499,999	23
\$1,500,000 - \$1,749,999	17
\$1,750,000 - \$1,999,999	10
\$2,000,000 - \$2,499,999	8
\$2,500,000 +	10

Homes Currently for Sale (on June 30, 2023) **18**



LARGEST LISTING
\$2,600,000 85 Stonebridge Road

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