

BUILDING-STRUCTURE INVENTORY FORM

DIVISION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
NEW YORK STATE PARKS AND RECREATION
ALBANY, NEW YORK (518) 474-0479

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
UNIQUE SITE NO. 103-05-0163
QUAD _____
SERIES _____
NEG. NO. _____

B-12
-004

YOUR NAME: Town of Islip DATE: 8/1/75
Town Hall 655 Main St.
YOUR ADDRESS: Islip, L.I., N.Y. 11751 TELEPHONE: 516-581-2000
ORGANIZATION (if any): Dept. of Planning, Housing, & Development

IDENTIFICATION

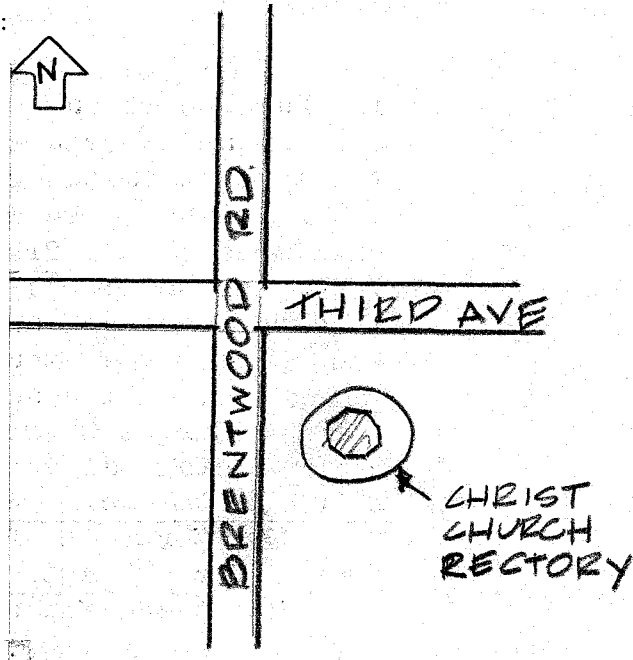
- 1. BUILDING NAME(S): Christ Church Rectory (Dame Octagon)
- 2. COUNTY: Suffolk TOWN/CITY: Islip VILLAGE: Brentwood
- 3. STREET LOCATION: #1769 Brentwood Rd.
- 4. OWNERSHIP: a. public b. private Brentwood Rd.
- 5. PRESENT OWNER: Christ Church ADDRESS: Third Ave. Brentwood
- 6. USE: Original: Residence Present: Rectory - Episcopal
- 7. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: Yes No
Interior accessible: Explain _____

DESCRIPTION

- 8. BUILDING MATERIAL: a. clapboard b. stone c. brick d. board and batten
e. cobblestone f. shingles g. stucco other: _____
- 9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM: (if known) a. wood frame with interlocking joints
b. wood frame with light members
c. masonry load bearing walls
d. metal (explain) _____
e. other _____
- 10. CONDITION: a. excellent b. good c. fair d. deteriorated
- 11. INTEGRITY: a. original site b. moved if so, when? _____
c. list major alterations and dates (if known):
Addition in mid 1960's.

12. PHOTO: Negative No. B-11A

13. MAP:



14. THREATS TO BUILDING: a. none known b. zoning c. roads
 d. developers e. deterioration
 f. other: _____
15. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS AND PROPERTY:
 a. barn b. carriage house c. garage
 d. privy e. shed f. greenhouse
 g. shop h. gardens
 i. landscape features: Huge trees in Front and around
 j. other: _____ house.
16. SURROUNDINGS OF THE BUILDING (check more than one if necessary):
 a. open land b. woodland
 c. scattered buildings
 d. densely built-up e. commercial
 f. industrial g. residential
 h. other: _____

17. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS:
 (Indicate if building or structure is in an historic district)

The Dame Octagon (Christ Church Rectory) is set back from the street on a treed lot. It is an important part of the Old Fifth Avenue (Brentwood Rd.) Streetscape.

18. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING AND SITE (including interior features if known):
 The length of one octagonal bay is sixteen feet. Original clapboard siding. Some original windows. Wide cornice line with frieze windows.

SIGNIFICANCE

19. DATE OF INITIAL CONSTRUCTION: _____
 ARCHITECT: _____
 BUILDER: _____

20. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

The Dame house was built in 1859 for William Upham Dame. Dame who was an important member of "Modern Times", the Utopian Community that lasted for fifteen years in Brentwood. The second floor of the house was used as an assembly room. In an article published in the Brooklyn Eagle of June 5, 1904 Mayor William J. Gaynor said: "I also visited Dame's house. It was octagonal in circumference and I asked him why he had built it that way and he responded that he had done so for economy of space, no space being lost in the acute angles." The octagonal house, now used for the Christ Church Rectory, is a very important archetype. The

21. SOURCES: Octagonal houses is a rare building type.
Atlas of the Ocean Shore of Suffolk County (Westerly Section)
 New York: E. Belcher Hyde, 1915, Plate 17.
 22. ~~THEME:~~ Dyson, Verne. A Century of Brentwood. Brentwood, N.Y.:
Brentwood Village Press, 1950.

(Continued on attached page.)

Beers, F.W. Atlas of Long Island, N.Y.: Beers, Comstock & Cline, 1873.

RECTORY

Christ Church (Dame Octagon)

21. SOURCES: (cont'd)

L. I. Octagon Survey. Barbara F. Van Liew for S.P.L.I.A., 1974.

L. I. Landmarks. Metropolitan New York District Office of the State Office of Planning Coordination N.Y.: The Society for the Preservation of L.I. Antiquities, 1971.

MacFarlane, Janet R., Ed., "Octagon Buildings in New York State", New York History, 1952, Vol. XXXIII, New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown. Pages 326 & 331.

Town of Islip, Historic Landmark Preservation Commission.

Zwerling, Nancy. Conversation with Nancy Zwerling on 7/8/75.

was built between the Brooklyn Elevated line on Crescent St. and the surface tracks on Jamaica Ave. and on May 30, 1903, Broadway elevated trains started to run to Jamaica by that route. However, as there were so many accidents involving farm wagons and pedestrians, the service was discontinued on December 8, 1903. Finally, in 1916, the elevated line was extended from Crescent St. to 111th St. and a further extension was made to 168th St., Jamaica, in 1917. Also, the Fulton St. elevated line was extended from Grant Ave. to Lefferts Ave. in 1915. In recent years, the latter has been connected to the Independent Subway System. Then, too, the Independent subway in Queens Blvd. and Hillside Ave. came into the picture in the 1930s.

The extension of rapid transit lines into the Richmond Hill - Jamaica area had, of course, taken much passenger business away from the L I R R and the various improvement programs had taken away much freight business.

Brentwood

(continued from page 129)

Other societies were founded by men and women, each society having its own special philosophy of life. The male members of one society wore long hair and their wives went in for what today would be called boyish bobs. One society is said to have sponsored polygamy. In fact, before very long Josiah Warren's philosophy became lost in a conglomeration of conflicting cults, some of which cast undesirable shadows over the fair name of Modern Times. In

1864, therefore, the residents assembled and adopted a new name for the village. They chose Brentwood after a town in Essex, England, from which some of them hailed.

This change of name occurred in 1864, towards the close of the Civil War in which fifteen local residents served with the Union forces. One of them, George Baxter, was killed in battle. He was especially missed as he had belonged to the Modern Times Brass Band before the war, a group which toured the island and met with great public favor.

Among the leading residents of Modern Times were W. U. Dame, Peter I. Blacker,

Edward Linton, and Henry Edgar, an English lawyer who brought a large family, together with 300 books with which he founded a circulating library. He and James D. Blacker planted many arbor vitae hedges about the village.

Stephen Pearl Andrews, co-founder with Warren of the community, was a scientist and philologist, while Dr. Edward Newberry, the local dentist, went in for phrenology, chemistry, botany and geology. He and his wife were also successful artists. From Ohio came Isaac Gibson, a Quaker, bringing Mr. and Mrs. William Jenkins and their two children; also a Mr.

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MEMBER FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

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I. Harris and a Miss Jenny Frantz. This band, traveling east in covered wagons, brought many small evergreens, including pines, which years later inspired the name of Brentwood - in - the - pines. Many still flourish.

Gradually, as Brentwood grew in size and importance, Modern Times blended with the newcomers. By the turn of the century few people remembered Josiah Warren and his strange teachings. Scarcely any of the original settlers remained by then, having either passed to their reward or moved away. Today one finds little evidence of the community's fantastic beginning. W. N. Dame's octagonal residence stands on Brentwood road, between Third and Fourth avenues.

On the east side of Brentwood road, opposite the Presbyterian Church, stands the old Codman home. It was called the Hermitage of the Red Owl because of a legend that such a bird visited the place back in 1877 and held converse with Codman, who claimed that it had identified itself as the spirit of a Secatogue chief. The village's first schoolhouse, also octagonal, now stands on second street between Third and Fourth avenues, remodeled into a dwelling. It was built in 1857.

There may be other buildings of the early days still standing, but we know of none. Following the demise of the original colony, Brentwood became the home of large, attractive villas, and several mansions. When in 1896 the Sisters of St. Joseph acquired some 300 acres on which to found the Academy of St. Joseph, on the property was the former mansion of Robert W. Pearsall, completed in 1870 along the lines of a French chateau with lofty ceilings and inlaid hardwood floors. Pearsall engaged Frederick Law Olmstead, who had laid out New York's Central Park, to landscape his grounds.

Also on the Academy's 300 acres stood the fabulous Austral Hotel of 135 rooms, erected by a syndicate during

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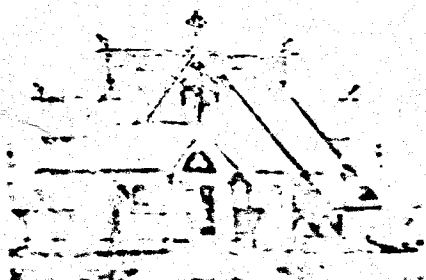
BOX 805, AMITYVILLE, N. Y.

Note: Bailey's 2-volume Island History and Historic Long Island in Pictures, Prose and Poetry are out of print.

design. The dwellings designed by Horace Gifford are recognizable by their pin-wheel configurations and wooden cylindrical shapes. Andrew Geller's designs, also fresh and inventive, make use of more familiar profiles.

A short walk east along the beach leads to Point O' Woods, an exclusive community which originated in the late nineteenth century as a Chautauqua assembly. Large late-Victorian shingled houses, "old-fashioned" in appearance but in reality—with their ample porches and broken silhouettes—close relatives of the contemporary idiom, elbow each other on the now-eroding sand dunes.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church (Main St. [Rte. 27A], Islip). William Kissam Vanderbilt, Sr., was the benefactor of this Stick-style church, designed in 1878-80 by Richard Morris Hunt, one of the family's favorite architects. Hunt's eclectic approach dictated the use of a variety of decorative devices—exposed framing, extravagant carvings, shingles, and varied surfaces—which were combined with sure skill. The sophistication of this country church is an agreeable contrast to the vernacular styling of the Shingle-style Methodist Church and the Italianate Presbyterian Church just a short distance west on Main St.



Brentwood

According to an observer of social mores in this community, "The arrangements of marriage were, of course, left entirely to the men and women themselves. They could be married formally or otherwise, live in the same or separate houses, and have their relationship known or unknown to the rest of the village. . . . It was not considered polite to inquire who might be the father of a new-born child, or who the husband or wife of any individual might be." The time: 1850. The community: Modern Times, founded by Josiah Warren, a reformer and anarchist. The utopian Modern Times lasted about ten years; in its place grew the more conventional community of Brentwood.

A few architectural survivals remain from the earlier era. Among them are the grid plan; Christ Church (Third Ave.), a tiny board-and-batten church with a steeply pitched roof and vigorous decoration; and Christ Church Rectory (1769 Brentwood Rd., off Third Ave.), a simple two-story, octagonal structure with a pitched roof. Across the street from the rectory is the News and Sentinel Company, with mid-nineteenth-century carpenter trim on its central gable and dormers.

Bayard Cutting Arboretum

Montauk Highway (Rte. 27A),
Great River
*OPEN: Wed-Sun, holidays,
10 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
PHONE: (516) 461-1002

William Bayard Cutting, a railroad engineer



Mill, South Side Sportsmen's Club

tive, began to develop 690 acres of woodland next to the Connetquot River in 1887, along the lines of the plan laid out for him by Frederick Law Olmsted. He hired architect Charles Haight, who specialized in city clubs and offices for the very rich, to design a suitable mansion for the lavishly landscaped setting. Westbrook is impressive, a freely massed Shingle-style structure with Tudor detailing.

Today the property belongs to the Long Island State Park Commission. Westbrook has refreshment facilities, and the grounds have been developed as five nature walks.

South Side Sportsmen's Club (Sunrise Highway, Connetquot State Park, Oakdale). Connetquot State Park now occupies the site of the South Side Sportsmen's Club, founded in 1864. But the spot was a favorite one for hunters and fishermen as early as 1816, when New York City Mayor Philip Hone recorded in his diary that "we went to Swatzenes after dinner, where we found the house so full that if we had not taken the precaution to order in advance for beds, we might have left for the hotel." Swatzenes is a name for the northern end of the island, and

much-added-to building. Diverse structures from other periods remain—masculine, utilitarian masses with weathered shingled surfaces. The earliest, a mill that was old even in Hone's time. The mill, which used three primitive water wheels, is currently being restored by the New York State Division for Historical Preservation.

Dowling College (Montauk Highway [Rte. 27A] and Idlehour Blvd., Oakdale). Idlehour, the country estate of William Kissam Vanderbilt, Sr., was designed about 1900 by architect Richard Howland Hunt. Though intended as a simple country retreat, the lavish brick-and-limestone mansion had flamboyantly curved gables and a grandiose palm court. The expansive plan was determined by the necessity to separate bachelor guests from married couples. Elaborate as it was, Idlehour was more modest than many such estates. The quality of a home was the goal; and, *Architectural Record* pronounced, "Despite the money spent on it, this is what is."

Until a recent fire, the mansion was used by Dowling College for classroom and administration, and it will be restored. The powerhouse is now used as a power



Richard Morris Hunt

William Bayard Cutting, a railroad engineer

1975

B-12

**MANSIONS, MILLS,
and MAIN STREETS**

Carole Rifkind and Carol Levine

SCHOCKEN BOOKS · NEW YORK

1975

B-12

42

103-05-0163-004

4651

NEW YORK STATE HISTORIC TRUST
STATEWIDE SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

- 1. Name (Common and Historic) OCTAGONAL RECTOR'S HOUSE
- Location 2. SUFFOLK County 3. ISLIP Town 4. BRENTWOOD Village or City
- 5. Address or Location EAST SIDE OF BRENTWOOD AVE. SOUTH OF SUFFOLK AVE. (1769 BRENTWOOD AVE.)
- 6. Type MID 19TH CENT. OCTAGON HOUSE 7. Subject or Theme ARCHITECTURE
- 8. Date of Construction 1850 9. Architect (If Known) _____
- 10. Builder (If known) WILLIAM U. DAME (?)
- 11. Original Owner _____
- 12. Original Use RESIDENCE & OFFICE
- 13. Present Owner CHRIST CHURCH (EPISCOPAL)
Name
BRENTWOOD, N.Y. 11717
Address
- 14. Present Use RECTOR'S HOUSE (RECTORY)
- 15. Physical Condition APPEARS GOOD. 8-SIDED WOOD FRAME HOUSE, 2-STORY + ATTIC UNDER PYRAMIDAL ROOF
- 16. Surveys O.P.C. LONG ISLAND SURVEY (1967)
- 17. Future Action EXPECTED CONTINUATION
- 18. Surveyed by Michael S. Allen Date Surveyed 3/69

L10-5

BUILDING-STRUCTURE INVENTORY FORM

DIVISION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
NEW YORK STATE PARKS AND RECREATION
ALBANY, NEW YORK (518) 474-0479

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

UNIQUE SITE NO. 103-05-0163-004
QUAD _____
SERIES _____
NEG. NO. _____

YOUR NAME: Kathleen Cummings DATE: August 22, 1973

Box 206-N. Country Rd.

YOUR ADDRESS: Setauket, NY TELEPHONE: 516-941-9444

ORGANIZATION (if any): Society for the Preservation of LI Antiquities

IDENTIFICATION

1. BUILDING NAME(S): Christ Church Rectory

2. COUNTY: Suffolk TOWN/CITY: Islip VILLAGE: Brentwood

3. STREET LOCATION: 1769 Brentwood Road

4. OWNERSHIP: a. public b. private

5. PRESENT OWNER: Christ Episcopal Church ADDRESS: 3rd Avenue-Brentwood

6. USE: Original: residence-store Present: Episcopal Rectory

7. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: Yes No

Interior accessible: Explain with minister's permission

DESCRIPTION

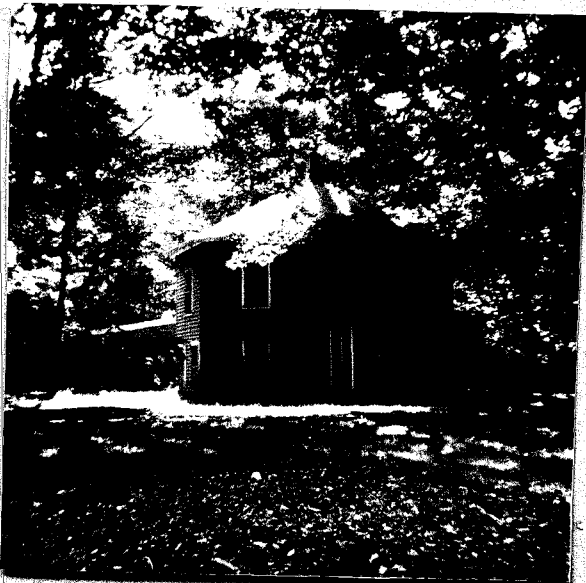
8. BUILDING MATERIAL: a. clapboard b. stone c. brick d. board and batten
e. cobblestone f. shingles g. stucco other: _____

9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM: (if known) a. wood frame with interlocking joints
b. wood frame with light members
c. masonry load bearing walls
d. metal (explain) _____
e. other _____

10. CONDITION: a. excellent b. good c. fair d. deteriorated

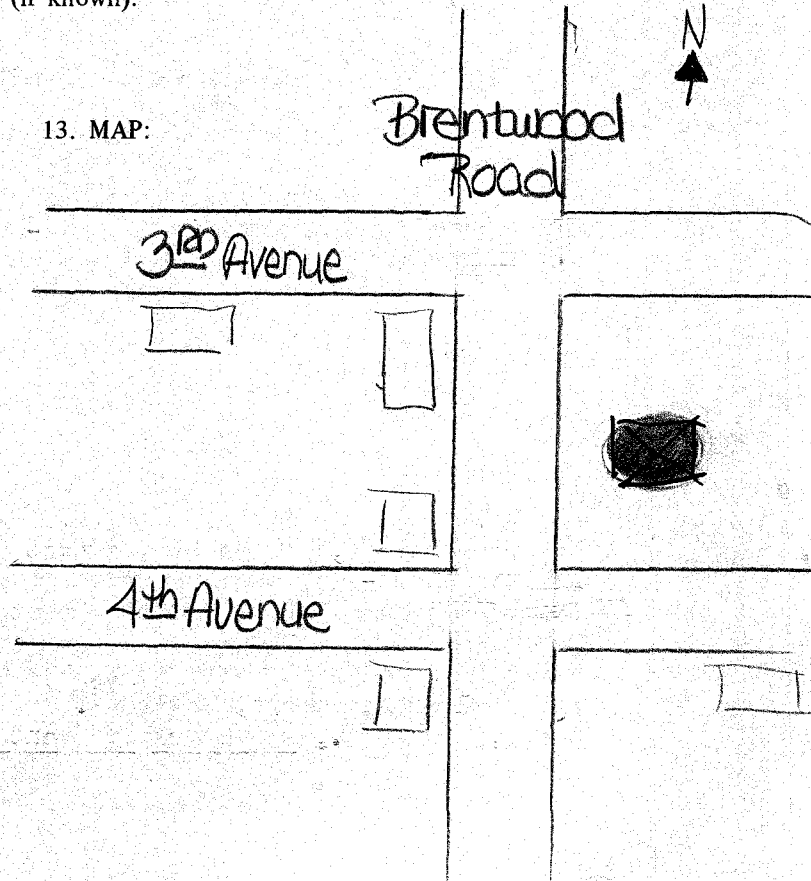
11. INTEGRITY: a. original site b. moved if so, when? _____
c. list major alterations and dates (if known): _____

12. PHOTO:



HP-1

13. MAP:





- a. none known b. zoning c. roads
d. developers e. deterioration
f. other: _____

S AND PROPERTY:

- a. barn b. carriage house c. garage
d. privy e. shed f. greenhouse
g. shop h. gardens
i. landscape features: huge trees in front and around house
j. other: _____

BUILDING (check more than one if necessary):

- a. open land b. woodland
c. scattered buildings
d. densely built-up e. commercial
f. industrial g. residential
h. other: _____

17. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS:

(Indicate if building or structure is in an historic district)

This house, while located on a busy road, is set back in a woodland setting. All the residences in the general area are very much surrounded by woods.

18. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING AND SITE (including interior features if known):

The length of one bay is 16 feet.

The interior is interesting in that there has been much space wasted due to a center core wall. As a result, on the 1st floor there are 3 long and irregular shaped rooms which wind around the core and upstairs there are just two bedrooms and a bathroom.

SIGNIFICANCE

19. DATE OF INITIAL CONSTRUCTION: 1850

ARCHITECT: _____

BUILDER: Josiah Warren

20. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

This building was built by members of Modern Times Colony, an utopian community which settled Brentwood in the mid-1800's. This was the center of activities for the community and also housed Josiah Warren's general store.

21. SOURCES:

Newsday article, "Echoes of the Past," by Kathleen Fullame, 9/28/1965, p.22.
Newsday photo-4/7/1966; LI Press photo-10/2/1966.
Van Liew's Register of Suffolk County

22. THEME:

"Brentwood in the Pines," by Paul Bailey in LI Forum, June 1961, Vol. XXIV, #6 p.129, 142.
Long Island Landmarks, Edward J. Smiths, Consultant; 1971, p.53 (with photo).
Dyson, Vernon A., A Century of Brentwood, 6/1950.

Octagonal house built in 1850 is the new rectory of Christ Church, Brentwood, and the home of the Rev. and Mrs. Edward R. Van Buren.

Houses We Live In

Utopian Legacy Has Many Sides

By Doris Herzig

Brentwood—An octagonal house that was once the hub of "the last utopia," has been turned into a latter-day haven for an Episcopalian minister and his wife.

The eight-sided house, built by an intellectual carpenter in 1850, is now the rectory of Christ Church. After only three weeks of living in the house, with its oddly-shaped, generally five-sided rooms, the Rev. and Mrs. Edward R. Van Buren have pronounced it a private utopia in a world of box-shaped rooms.

In its first heyday, the house at 1769 Brentwood Rd. was only one of the unorthodox features of the Positivist settlement, Modern Times, which later became Brentwood. Free love, whole wheat bread and common ownership of property were widely espoused in the experimental socialistic community. The colony flourished briefly in an era when more than 50 idealistic settlements were established by social reformers in the hope of changing man and his possessive, money-grubbing way of life.

Modern Times, the last of these utopias, survived about 15 years. The money-grubbing way of life goes on,

but so does the octagonal house built by William Upham Dame, presumably to save space. The second story was used as a meeting room, and since the property held the first village well, it was a popular gathering place.

Whatever he may think about Positivist theories, Rev. Mr. Van Buren finds the octagonal house "tremendous to live in." For one thing, the almost round construction offers "more room to circulate in," and for another, he said, the shape of his study dictates the placement of chairs at cozy angles that encourage parishioners to unburden themselves of spiritual problems.

His wife, secretary and a trustee of the Brentwood Historical Society, has long had a preservationist's eye on the historical building. After the previous owner died, Christ Church bought the house and land for \$29,000, and spent more than \$45,000 for restoration and erection of a 20-by-50-foot extension.

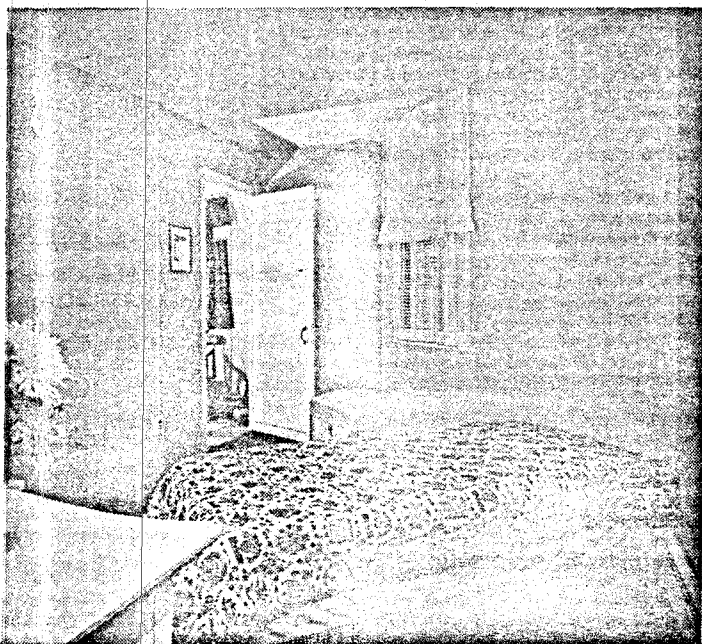
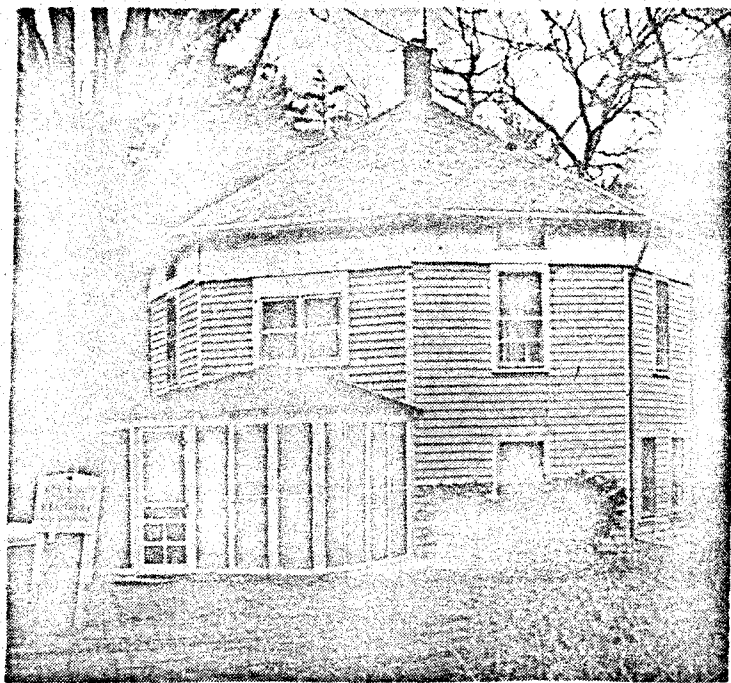
Although the interiors were completely revitalized, the original structure was kept intact. No changes were made in the pink clapboard exterior. Wherever possible, walls were patched up rather than replastered. The ex-

tension is free-standing, "so if we jacked it up and moved it away, the house would be exactly as we found it," Rev. Mr. Van Buren said. Well, not exactly, if you count the new wiring, new heating, new bathroom, new partitions, etc.

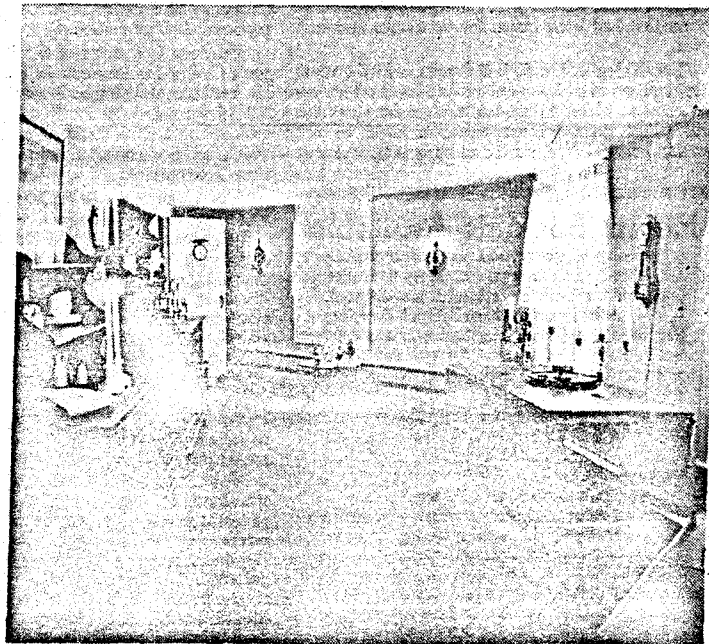
And there's lots of new color, especially in the bright red and gold carpeting, several red curtains and a red, white and blue "Yankee Doodle" guest room. The minister said he "dreamed it out in technicolor." John D. Hines Jr., the church treasurer who is a former builder, helped translate the dream into reality.

The Early American style furnishings that the couple bought, piece by piece, when they were married 33 years ago, seem made for the house. Even an unusual lounge chair from British Guiana blends right into the upstairs sitting room, for it has a maple finish.

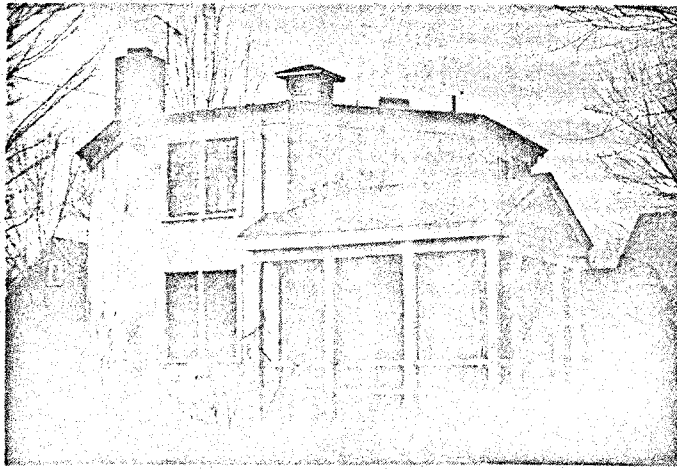
The couple's way of life blends right in, too. They have always dined by candle light, and here flames flicker from wall sconces, candelabra and candlesticks, seeking out and veiling the quaint contours of the narrow, many-angled dining room.



"Yankee Doodle" guest room decorated in red, white and blue, is awaiting a brass bed. An old trunk and dresser were found in the attic and repainted.



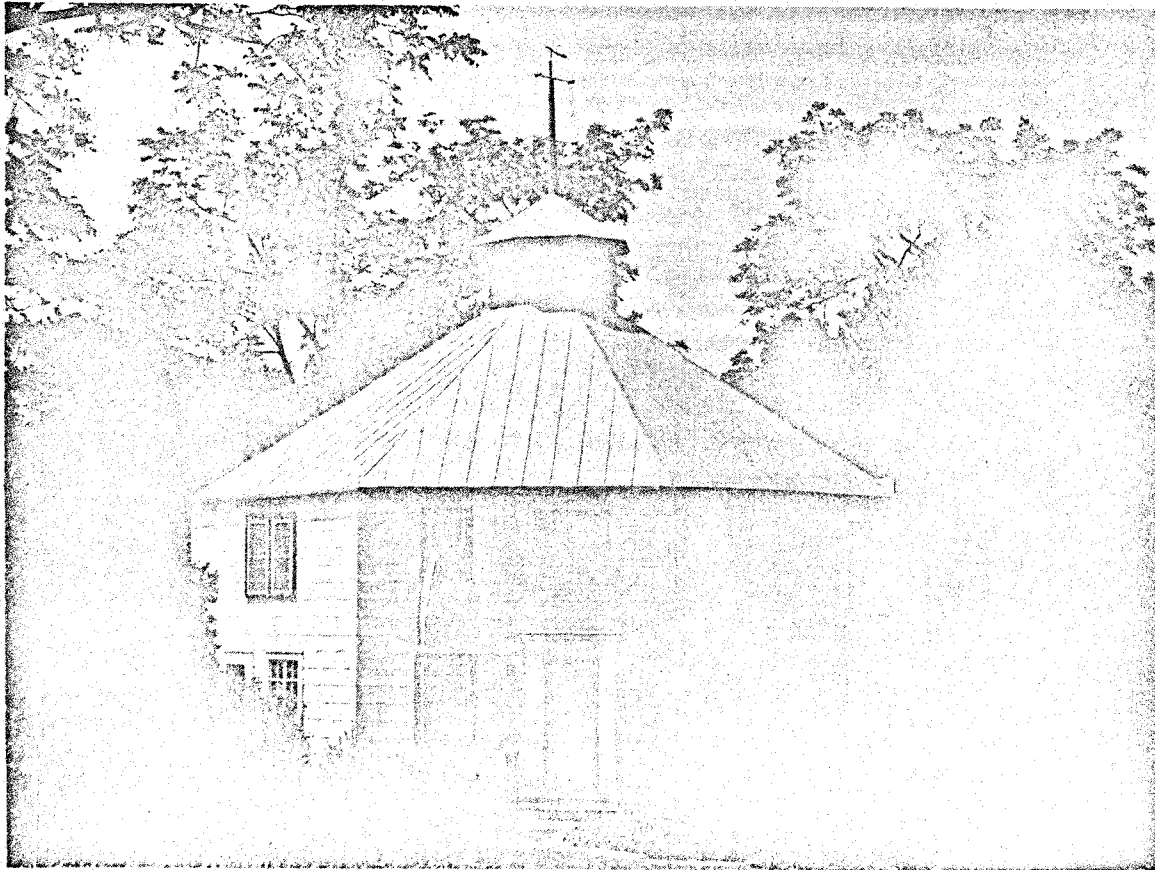
Irregularly shaped dining room, glowing in candle light, has red carpeting, white curtains and shutters, off-white walls and only one electric outlet.



Ezra Prime Home, 1859, Huntington



Modern Times House, 1850, Brentwood



Carriage House, 1850, Stony Brook

Three examples of the Fowler fad on Long Island are shown here. The two-story carriage house directly above is of ship-lap construction, held together with wooden pegs. It is built on the side of a hill with an entrance on each level. The Prime house copied a Fowler original in East Williamsburg and Modern Times house was headquarters for a Fowler anarchy movement.

Newsday
9/28/65

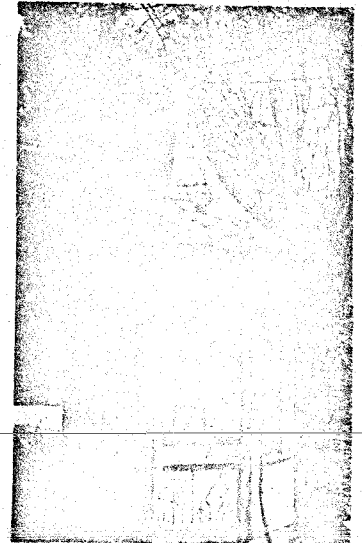
A sphere, said Orson Quire Fowler, is the most beautiful form of all. So, when he turned his interest toward architecture, he designed a building that was as close to a sphere as was practical and the octagonal house was created.

Eight sides, he believed, enclosed the maximum space with the least material, permitted the utmost admittance of sunlight, eliminated dark and useless corners, decreased the distances between objects and did away with unlovely angles. So in love with this idea was he that he wrote a book, "A Home for All; or, The Gravel Wall, And Octagonal Mode of Building." To illustrate it he built at Fishkill, N.Y., a five-story, 100-room octagonal house that measured 50 feet around. Unfortunately for Fowler and for quite a few others who dwelt in the house, the gravel walls allowed seepage from the cesspool into the well and typhoid invaded his eight walls. The house eventually was dynamited as a public danger and Fowler died discredited.

Part of Fowler's difficulty was the fact that he was not an architect. He was known as "The Prince of Phrenology" because, while a student at Amherst, he explored the possibility of reading character by the bumps on the head. He practiced on his fellow classmates, charging two cents a head, and for 40 years after he left school he was the leading exponent of the phrenology cult.

Along his bumpy path, Fowler picked up other pseudo-scientific ideas which enough people found interesting to cause a spread of Fowlerism, octagonal houses included, throughout the northeastern U.S. and parts of the Midwest. The fad lasted through the 1840s and 1850s. Some examples of Fowler architecture can still be found on Long Island and along the Hudson.

Newsday Photos by Weber



Armour Gazebo

