



THE OLD BAPTIST PARSONAGE, 347 Park Avenue, #1*

A rare treasure of our early village is the beloved Parsonage, whose brown sandstones have remained fixed and unchanged for 178 years. Before entering, look at the second-story window on the Grand Street side, where the evenly cut diamond-shaped stone bearing the date of construction—1786, is seen, making this the first parsonage of the then Essex County.

Stone houses were unusual in the early American period, but when the wooden farmhouse of former owner William Darby II burned, the pastor of the time, Rev. William Van Horn, requested the present fine home to be made of stone. Tradition has it that the great sandstone boulders that were washed for centuries along Green Brook and deposited on the land of William Miller near Shepard Street were smoothed on one face to make the front house

walls. Notice that the facade has the finest rocks, where the side stones are smaller and uneven. The five room stone section cost \$1,250.00, and the necessary money was borrowed from the village financier Jedidiah Swan. Later in the early American period, or before 1820, the frame structure of five rooms was added.

The twenty-inch thickness of the walls is readily measured by the deep recesses of the windows, the sashes of which are of three different kinds causing the sections of glass to be of different sizes and shapes. Inside the house we see the simplicity of local craftsmen's work on the fireplace mantles—each one of different design. The early strap hinge and pintle hardware is still in evidence on the panelled doors. Some of the doors have one side flat, for a full panelled door was a very fancy addition in that day. About twenty years ago the incumbent of the parsonage found the original front Dutch door with separate upper and lower parts. If the top of the Dutch door happened to be opened, a passerby in the early 1800s could see what was then the town's first library—the books housed in a secretary on the second floor landing.

Home to twenty-one pastors and their families, the old stone house is presently the residence of the Church Sexton Horace Carkhuff, his wife and daughter. Some of the parsons had a strenuous life existing on what they could raise on the 15 acres of the parsonage farm, plus a small salary, which was first fixed to \$250 a year with firewood. Once a year the churchmen took a day to collect wood for the parson. In 1868 the Church trustees decided to sell off the parsonage farm in lots to help pay for the new church. It was during the active pastorate of Rev. Joseph C. Buchanan, D.D., that the present Gothic-styled brick church was completed in 1871.

In the mid-1930s modernization of the kitchen took place and before the 29 full years of Rev. Edward E. Peterson, D.D., were done, it was updated once more. The Reverend's son, "Pete," is presently Mayor of Scotch Plains, the head of the Township Committee.

As in many homes of that period the kitchen was a separate building and included the great chimney place where cooking was done from the large standing hearth. The two corner stones of the little structure are still visible in the back yard just out to the right of the back door.

"God's Acre," over near Park and Mountain deserves a visit on another day when time is more plentiful. Here the oldest readable gravestone of Sarah Frazee dates to 1754, although inscriptions on even earlier ones cannot now be copied.

Continuing down Grand Street two blocks to the corner of Union Avenue, you will pass the old Scotch Plains Baptist Church, built in 1817, now the YMCA. This is the second church of the community, whose first Baptist church, built in 1747, made Scotch Plains the mother of the Baptist Church of New York and other churches.

Turning RIGHT at the next corner, Stout Avenue, notice the house at number 356—the first school house of the village built in 1768, now camouflaged with brown and gray simulated shingles.

At Westfield Avenue, turn LEFT, passing the Parochial school of St. Bartholomew the Apostle, which opened its first fifteen room school in 1950. The Italian story in Scotch Plains is particularly interesting since 40 to 50 families from the same village of Montozzoli, Italy, settled here in the early 1900s. By 1945, nearly 50% of the population was comprised of their descendants. They often walked to Stoney Brook for their first services, before 1930 when School No. 1, and later the Junior School, served the congregation.

As you come the corner of Westfield Avenue and Westfield Road, turn RIGHT, but first take a glimpse of the early American farmhouse of John Cook at 2117 Westfield Avenue.

After turning RIGHT, continue on down Westfeld Road past the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, built in 1957, and between Old Farm and Redwood Roads, on the left directly across from Birchwood Terrace, you'll find the second stop of our tour. We prefer that you start at the back side door, entering the oldest section of the building first.

*Open April 7, 1964, only