



### DECAMP HOUSE, Old Raritan Road, #3\*

A gem of Farmhouse Georgian architecture, the DeCamp home is of such puritan simplicity it is ornamented solely by dentils trimming the cornices. The present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Clinton D. Seaman, have kept the house in a miraculous state of preservation. Like so many old homesteads of the period, this is two houses joined together. The lean-to section of the older part, built by John DeCamp about 1735, falls below the roof of the other, and has no basement. The larger part has a basement of fieldstone re-inforcing the earth, where a cornerstone with the date 1739 was found. The stone has been placed outside by the well to be more easily seen. The well is the original one and was actively supplying water until six years ago.

One story has it that when the "big" second part was built on the hill, neighbors warned John that "it would blow over in the first storm." The clapboard sidings and brick-filled walls are still in excellent shape and do a fine job of insulating after 225 years. Much of the brick was made right on the property. Made of native clay, it was formed in rude, wooden boxes and left to dry and bake in the sun.

The "gate of the house," as door frames were called, is pure Georgian with just a suggestion of shelter. Notice the original glass in the three window lights above the 1739 double-Dutch door. Throughout the entire house the small doorway passages have been retained, and on all the remaining old doors, of which there are many, the house's first hardware is still functioning. Three of the fireplaces in the larger part join into one chimney. The fireplace in the back parlor has two small openings for the "Parson's Cupboards," or warming ovens. Some hearths with larger warming ovens were used as hiding places to escape the British during the Revolution.

Visible in the basement are the hand-hewn, oak beams, hand-cut nails and pegs. The early wide floor boards are being preserved by an "in-period," modern innovation—wall-to-wall braided rag carpeting. The rug-ging also protects the stair boards which are of unequal size. The glass in the typical stair window is easily seen to be the original pane. Although the early beams are plastered over on the first two floors, on the third they are exposed.

The modernization of the kitchen has still left a flavor of the past era. Still visible from the back of the house outside is the old chimney from the kitchen fireplace.

The large barn on the rear of the property is not the original one, but stands on the original foundations. The first barn was destroyed by fire about 1800 and the second one was built at that time. It was used as a stable, and the stalls and trunchions are still there. The old road to the barn was on the other side of the house.

After John DeCamp's death in 1782, the house was in the hands of Dr. Philomen Elmer, who sold it to John Marsh in 1798. Mr. Marsh also bought other land at Ash Swamp in 1799 from Dr. Gideon DeCamp, son of the first owner. Some of the lands were passed on to his son Randolph Marsh, and eventually the homelot was given to his grand-daughter, Julia. When Julia married William Hetfield Terry, (son of Lewis, son of Jonathan), in approximately 1836, the old homestead became known as the Terry Farm for the next 100 years. Sold to Howard M. Quimby in 1936, he retained New York architects Henry Otis Chapman, Jr. and Harold W. Beder to restore the home. Raymond J. Carter bought it in 1951, and then sold it to the present owners, who have kept it in beautiful condition for the last thirteen years.

No story of the DeCamp House would be complete without a description of their "family lott," wherein lie John and Deborah DeCamp; their son, Dr. Gideon DeCamp, and his sister, Freelove, who was the wife of David Dunham. Their four sandstone grave markers are visible from Lamberts Mill Road just past Buttonwood Lane on the property of Charles F. Buechler. They are in excellent condition and from appearances able to stand the elements for centuries. A very new gravestone has been added quite recently by the Disabled War Veterans with the inscription: Morris DeCamp, N. J. Sgt. 5th TRP, Col. Sheldon's Lt. Dragoons, 1750-1821. Apparently Morris is another son, or relative of John and Deborah DeCamp.



Continue down the Old Raritan Road to where the brook crosses the road. You may want to walk, if already parked up the road. On a rise on the left you'll see stop number four.