

THE FRAZEE-LEE HOUSE, 11 Black Birch Road, #5*



The subject of many of last year's newspaper articles, the Frazee-Lee house was saved from destruction by Mr. and Mrs. William P. Elliott, and moved to its present site for restoration. The 80-foot long home represents the joining of the two pre-Revolutionary homes with a 1950 addition to which some enlargements have been made this year.

The largest older section has been moved twice. It was built by Thomas Lee, Sr., who we know was living in the area in January of 1694. The house was originally on the N.E. corner of Cooper and Terrill Roads, and was moved by Thomas' son, Samuel, in 1828 upon his marriage to Susan Woodruff. It was joined to the smaller center section

built by the 1760s by Moses Frazee, where it stood back in a lane on the first ridge of the left directly across Raritan Road on the future site of the Union County Technical Institute. The inter-marrying of the two homes exaggerates the jagged roof line so typical of the period. Note that the early period roof has a neat, quaint close finish which so aptly represents the simplicity of its time.

In native-born school teacher Anna Littell's map of the area inclusive of the years 1740 to 1800, she places a Sam Frazee in this home, which family legend makes the scene of many Revolutionary episodes. It was from this house that five-year-old Phoebe Terry was carried on the back of her grandfather to a place of safety in Ash Swamp to escape a party of Red Coats which plundered many farms in the locality. Phoebe's home with her father, Thomas Terry, a soldier in the Essex County Militia, and her mother, Susannah Frazee, was at the end of the present Clark's Lane, now the home of Charles Detwiller, Jr., who, ironically is the consulting architect on the Frazee-Lee restoration.

Mrs. Elliott, who is noted for her early American decorations and stenciling, plans to incorporate as much of the original homestead as possible on the new grounds. The hand-hewn pegged together timbers from the old barn are to be used in the cellar room. The present garage was the picturesque sow barn, and the old foundation rocks are being used for stepping stones and retaining walls.

The middle Frazee part of the house consists of five rooms. The first room on the main floor still retains the purposely slanted floors for easy cleaning. Fresh sand was sprinkled on the floors in the olden days and when soiled was swept downhill with hot water and soft soap following, the boards being scrubbed with a long handled corn-husk brush, or on the knees. Most of the children of the day learned their ABC's in the sand on their mother's kitchen floor. In this room are the original angled mantle and fireplace and exposed beams, where it was the custom to drive wooden pegs called "copstocks" to hold firearms and household utensils. The uneven streaks can be seen in the panes of glass, proving their early age. The back parlor also has the 18th century fireplace.

Sam and Susan Lee had their three children, Frazee Lee, Thomas the 2nd, and Ann, in the old doubled home. Ann married Aaron Hetfield. Frazee became a Captain in the war of 1812 serving in the United States artillery volunteers, while a resident of the homestead.

In the Lee section of the house, the large main room was expanded from two small rooms. The buttery and old hand-made brick of the kitchen fireplace remain. On the second floor is one bedroom which at one time was enlarged by six feet. The windows in this room, called eyebrow windows, are small in size as was customary at the time due to the glass tax, which was levied according to size of windows and the amount of glass used. The dormer windows are modern additions.

Upon Samuel Lee's death on December 22, 1857, Thomas Lee, 2nd, and his wife Susan F. Lee, resided in the house with their three children, Samuel F. Lee, Emma and Georgetta. None of the three married and continued to live in the old family home after the death of their father in 1903. Georgetta became a school teacher of the old Two Bridges School house, and has also left us an early map of the area. When Samuel F. died in 1944, the property was sold to a Robinson family. In the 50s the McCullums lived and farmed the 42 acres until the County bought the property in '62. The new wing started by the McCullums is being enlarged by a bigger window and a newly constructed fireplace, to blend with the early period. It will be the living room for the Elliotts.

Continue back to Raritan Road, turning RIGHT, and just past Terrill Road on the right is our sixth stop.