

Roughly 50% of Merchantville's existing homes and businesses were constructed between 1910 and World War II. Accelerating the trend was the announcement in 1914 of plans to construct the Benjamin Franklin Bridge across the Delaware River.

By the time the bridge opened in 1926, new streets had been cut through on the south side of Maple Avenue (also known as the Camden-Moorestown Pike), numerous individual homes had been built, and the borough was rapidly growing toward its present population of about 4,000 people.

In many ways The Oaks was the jewel of the automobile age development in the borough. By the time the first few homes were completed there in the years before the First World War, it had become the borough's showcase. It served as a gateway for vehicular traffic entering the borough along Wellwood Avenue, later renamed Browning Road.

The Oaks was first envisioned by landscape architect George E. Rhedemeyer, who is best known for shaping the grounds of Harteigh Cemetery in Camden. The Oaks was developed by the Oaks Realty Company, which Rhedemeyer formed in 1910.

Rhedemeyer carved The Oaks out of a 38-acre triangular parcel of wooded land he acquired in 1909. He laid out 14 irregularly-sized and -shaped lots and sold them for approximately \$1,500 to \$3,500 each. He imposed a number of deed restrictions on the lots, including minimum dwelling costs, stringent setback requirements, and the prohibition of a long list of uses. These included saloons, blacksmiths, tanneries, livery stables and slaughterhouses. He also reserved the right of Oaks Realty Company to rear down any buildings that violated these deed restrictions.

The Oaks historic district includes fourteen single-family residences. Twelve are well-preserved houses from the early twentieth century. Two are modern and therefore are considered to be "non-contributing" to the historical significance of the district.

Although small, the district contains a variety of revival architectural styles including Neoclassical, Tudor, and Colonial. Architects have been documented for four of the homes. The first house to be built was Rhedemeyer's Italian Renaissance Revival style mansion on Maple Avenue, completed in 1910.

A Walking Tour of The Oaks Historic District



1. George H. Rhedemeyer House
320 W. Maple Avenue
Built 1910

This two-and-a-half story three-bay home was built of masonry construction in the Italian Renaissance Revival style and is finished with a stucco exterior. The original wraparound veranda has been in-filled at the front to expand the living space of the home. Massive end piers anchor the graceful Tuscan columns at the central bays. The original red painted hipped roof is punctuated by hipped dormers projecting from the front and the sides. In the garden, a swimming pool built mid-century is connected to the house by a masonry garden wall. A two-story garage built of similar stucco over masonry construction with a hipped panicle roof and dormer was built at the same time as the house. Rhedemeyer laid out his lot to provide access to the garage from the back off of Oak Terrace. He reserved for himself the largest home site by far, and with his house set the tone for the rest of the development.



2. Emeline G. Bender House
121 Browning Road
Built 1910

This two-and-a-half story, three-bay, symmetrical Neoclassical-style house is also stucco over masonry construction. The

deep overhang of the roof and its porticoed entry with square and fluted round columns lend great dignity to the house. Originally topped with a tile roof it is complementary to the style of the Rhedemeyer House around the corner. It has a glazed, multi-light front door with sidelights and a central arched window with a gothic sash at the second floor. A one-story sun porch runs along the north side of the house and is supported by columns that match the front portico. A brick chimney has been added to the north side of the house and is revealed by the unusual intersection with the original bay window. The garden is surrounded by a brick capped masonry wall. Behind the house on Oak Terrace is a period, one-story stuccoed masonry garage.



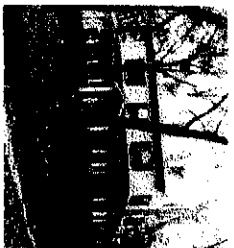
3. Harvey K. Partridge House
125 Browning Road
Circa 1916

This symmetrically-composed, two-and-a-half story, Tudor Revival style house is constructed of masonry but is faced with brick on the first floor and stucco and decorative half-timbering above. The formal composition contrasts with the picturesque Tudor style with the ground floor windows being the only break from the strict symmetry. It retains its original glazed and paneled front door in the central, side-lit entrance. The slate gabled roof is punctuated by half-timbered wall dormers and a central gabled dormer. A sun porch is located along the south side of the house, and the period one-story garage is brick with a slate gabled roof.



4. Harold S. Bottomly House
129 Browning Road
Built 1912

This two-and-a-half story Italian Renaissance Revival style house is attributed to architect Arnold H. Moses. Constructed of masonry with a stuccoed exterior, it follows the tone set by the Rhedemeyer House on Maple Avenue. It has a one-bay entrance and a porch supported by Tuscan columns and topped by a balustrade. A deep bracketed cornice sets off the red painted-hipped roof. The house was expanded with a one bay wide two story addition at the south side finished in a style consistent with the house. The period one-story garage is also stuccoed masonry with a bracketed hipped roof.

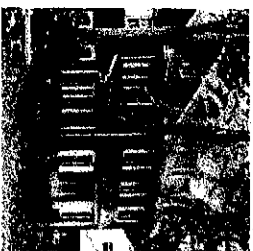


5. Harry Humphreys House
131 Browning Road
Built 1914

Like its neighbor, this two-and-a-half story, three bay masonry Colonial Revival style house is attributed to architect Arnold H. Moses. It has a coursed stone basement and first floor, with stucco above. Tuscan columns and pilasters, a leaded glass transom and sidelights frame its central front entrance. Three pedimented dormers with plastered surrounds and the stone chimneys at each end punctuate its slate roof. The house has a one-story sun porch on the north end and a rear deck/porch on the second floor. A period two-bay stuccoed masonry garage with hinged doors and a hipped roof is nearby.

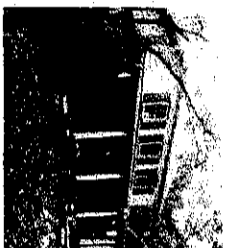
6. 201 Browning Road
Circa 1937

This two-story, five-bay Colonial Revival red brick-faced house has a central front entry with a paneled door and four-light sidelights. A steep, slate roof encompasses the entire second floor, which is fenestrated by two pedimented dormers. The house has a sun porch to the north and an attached, two-story two-bay garage to the south.



7. Charles S. & Susan M. Evans House
314 Volan Street
Circa 1922

This two-and-a-half story, three-bay Colonial Revival house has a two-story, single-bay increment, with a red tapestry brick, and a central pedimented entry framed by Tuscan columns. Its first floor windows are paneled, while those above are louvered. The house has a French door to the porch in the westerly bay and a slate gabled roof with an end chimney and a period, asbestos shingled garage.



8. Marcus E. & Florence Zane House
310 Volan Street
Built 1911

This two-and-a-half story three-bay symmetrical Colonial Revival style house is the third home in the district attributed to architect Arnold H. Moses. It has a stone first floor with even but shingles above and a central, sidelighted, glazed front entrance. Tuscan columns support the wraparound porch with the corners composed of a triple grouping of columns. It has a rear sun porch and a period clapboarded garage with asphalt hipped roof.

9. 308 Volan Street
Circa 1930

This is a two-and-a-half story, three-bay, aluminum-sided Colonial Revival style house with flanking one-story end bays. Tuscan columns support its central pedimented entrance with its paneled door and four-light sidelights. An asphalt shingled pent separates the first and second floors. It has asphalt roofing and an exterior brick chimney, along with a period, one-story garage.

10. John & Florence D. McFeley House
3 Oak Terrace
Circa 1915

This two-and-a-half story, three-bay stucco-over-masonry asymmetrical Colonial Revival style house has a brick basement and a central pedimented entrance supported by paired Tuscan columns and paired pilasters. It also has a slate gabled roof and a side screened-in porch supported by massive Ionic columns and exposed rafters. Its period one-story masonry garage is stuccoed with hinged doors and a slate gabled roof.



11. Charles Floyd & Helen Long Dickinson House
2 Oak Terrace
Circa 1916

This two-and-a-half story, five-bay aluminum-sided Colonial Revival style frame is attributed to architect Charles R. Peddle. The house has a central pedimented entry supported by two Tuscan columns and two pilasters and joins into the pent eave on the front of the house. The house is graced with two side porches, one with glazed windows and the other open. Nearby is a period, hip-roofed aluminum-sided garage.



12. F. Cooper & Martha W.S. Rogers House
1 Oak Terrace
Circa 1917

This two-story, three-bay stucco-over-masonry Neoclassical style house has a central projecting bay with a wood-paneled front door set in a recess framed by Tuscan columns. Its flanking bays have fenestrated French doors at the first floor. There are flanking one-story sun porches on either side of the main part of the house. The one on the south side is original, while the one on the north side of the house was enclosed with glazed windows at a later date. The house has a mid-1970s two-story stuccoed masonry addition in the rear, and a period two-story clapboard garage in back. The garage has a gambrel roof and upstairs living quarters.

Special thanks to Carol A. Benerson and her December 1996 Application to the National Register of Historic Places for the information included in this Tour Guide.

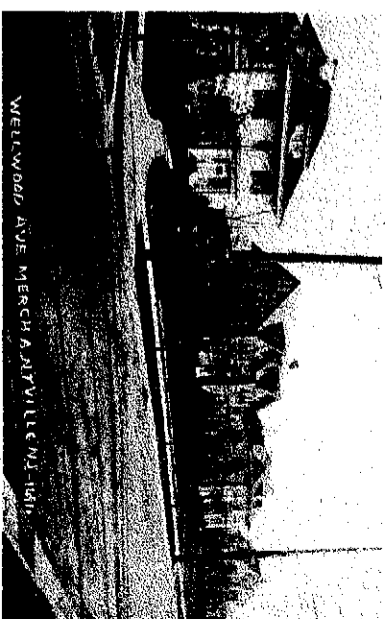


MERCHANTVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1 West Maple Avenue • Merchantville • New Jersey 08109

The Merchantville Historical Society Presents
A Walking Tour
of
The OAKS

A Nationally Registered Historic District



1920's view of Browning Road

A Brief History of the OAKS

Like many other communities outside major cities, the borough of Merchantville owes its existence to the advent of suburbanization in the 19th century. The suburbs were spawned as first the railroad and later the automobile gave people the chance to put some distance between their home and their workplace.

The Oaks, a planned neighborhood of up-scale homes built in the early 20th century, is a classic example of this type of suburban development.

The Oaks, however, was a relatively late arrival in Merchantville, where the first significant housing development came in the 1870s. Not coincidentally, this was not long after ground was broken in 1866 to construct the Camden and Burlington Railroad which ran from Philadelphia and Camden and Burlington and Mount Holly.

By 1910, the north end of the community near the railroad station, known as the Cartell tract, was almost completely developed and developers had begun turning their attention to the south and west ends of the borough. There, the dawning of the automobile age had triggered the beginning of what was to be the borough's most extensive residential and commercial development.