



HISTORIC BRIGHTON NEWS

VOLUME 6

SPRING 2005

NUMBER 2

COME CELEBRATE AT BRIGHTON TOWN HALL, APRIL 12, 7:15 PM

THE BICENTENNIAL OF EAST AVENUE, 1805-2005



Corinthian capital, George Eastman House. Clara Drescher Baird alights from a Cunningham limousine in front of the Drescher house at 2615 East Ave. in Brighton, 1920s.

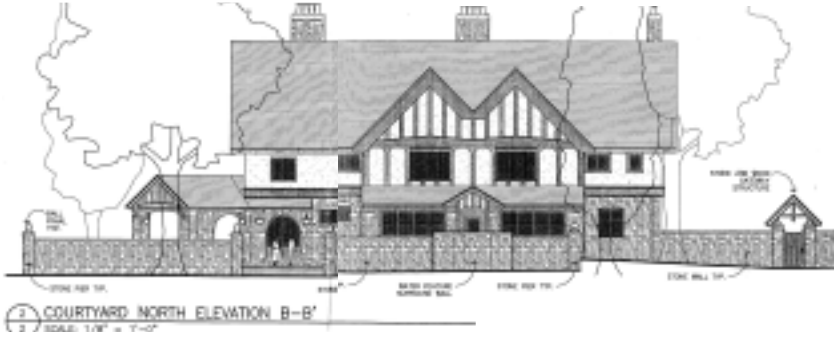
When the road that became East Ave. was blazed in 1805, it was called River Road and located entirely in the township of Northfield. By 1814, Northfield was divided into Brighton and Pittsford, and the road, now called Pittsford Street, was entirely in Brighton. With the building of the Erie Canal aqueduct and the canal reaching Rochester in 1823, the village crossed the Genesee River and annexed 157 acres of Brighton to Chestnut Street. In 1826, Rochester pressed deeper into Brighton to Union St. and in 1834, to Goodman St. By 1874, East Ave. (so

named in 1847) west of Culver Rd. had been annexed by the city. The final bite came a century ago as residents of Brighton Village, the town center at East Ave. and Winton Rd., voted to become part of the city sewer district. According to former city historian Joseph W. Barnes, "the Brighton cesspools had grown more obnoxious in direct proportion to the increase in population and threatened the quality of well water." After a bitter political battle, and a 85 to 84 vote, Cobbs Hill and Brighton Village became the 21st Ward of Rochester in 1905.



Brighton Hall on East Ave., Brighton Village in 1936, and Brighton Presbyterian Church backs up to the Erie Canal. These three photos courtesy of Jeff Vincent.

THE LANDMARK DRESCHER HOUSE WAS BUILT TO LAST



By Betsy Brayer

In 1910, when Leon Stern drew plans for a Tudor revival house at 2615 East Ave., he envisioned a structure as solid as the factory buildings that he was designing contemporaneously for Bausch & Lomb.

The first floor is laid over ten inches of poured concrete. “You could drive a truck in there,” says Dr. Ronald R. Reed, the current owner who is restoring the Brighton landmark to its original state. Reed describes the basement as a warren of little brick rooms that support this concrete floor.

The house is built on bedrock—the same layer of limestone and dolomite that is visible in the Can-of-Worms excavations. A steel skeleton rests on this bedrock (no footers required) surrounded by four-foot by eighteen-inch thick two-story brick columns on a two-foot-thick poured concrete foundation. Inside the brick columns are I-beams tied to the chimneys that also support suspended construction.

The plaster throughout is two-and-one-half inches thick. There are nine fireplaces and six bathrooms, a sunroom, conservatory, and butler’s office. Dr. Reed will use the room that once held a two-story pipe organ as an armory.

No soft woods were used anywhere; 64 mahogany doors fill 64 cherry frames. Even the boxes of the dresser

drawers of built-in cupboards are cherry—not just the drawer fronts. This cherry grew in the southern tier of New York at a time when no one worried about a shortage of hardwoods. The original walnut was harvested from old slow-growth forty-inch trees; today’s rapidly grown walnut has a high sap content that when treated with steam, turns gray. So master carpenter Ed Marris is tracking down old piano cases for their walnut panels.

Chestnut was used for both floors and woodwork in the servant rooms. Floors in the public rooms and seven bedrooms are quarter-sawn white oak, parquet with book-matched veneer in the living room. The conservatory roof was originally glass but replaced (probably in the Drescher era) with copper. A full, unfinished attic keeps the house cool in summer and prevents the roof from icing.

The stained glass is in the Arts and Crafts style; original tile work throughout is unsigned but has a red and green phoenix motif. Comes that fix one piece of glass to the next in the “leaded” windows are not lead but zinc. Zinc is stronger and will last a century but is harder to repair than lead.

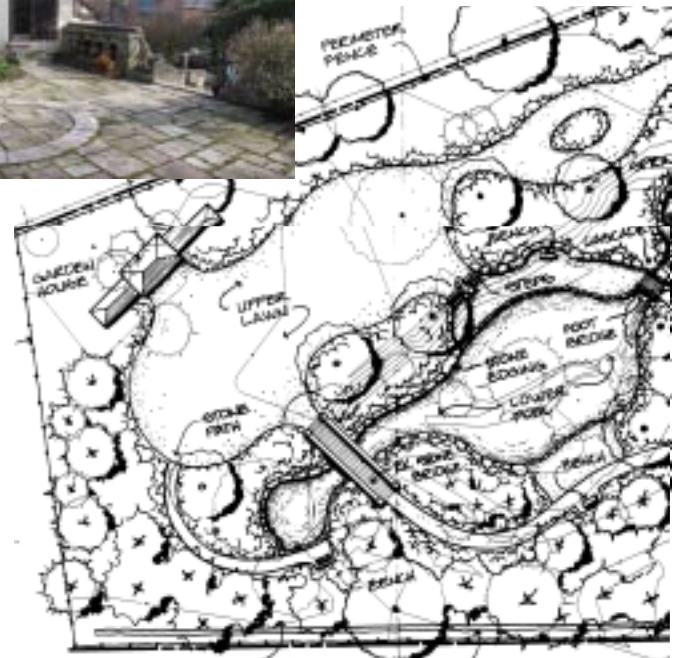
The Drescher house and its Alling DeForest garden has been designated a landmark by the Brighton Historic Preservation Commission.

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Beneath layers of white paint now covering cabinets, woodwork, and fireplaces are cherry and walnut hardwoods.

DRESCHER GARDEN BY ALLING DEFORREST BEING RESTORED



The following excerpts and paraphrases are from the design statement of Bayer Associates, Landscape Architecture and Planning, who prepared the master plan for improvement of the grounds at 2615 East Ave. Upon completion of the site master plan, the project immediately proceeded to the implementation phase, which is currently underway and will be completed by the end of the 2005 construction season.

“From the onset, this project has been viewed by both the homeowner and the design team as a restoration endeavor. The designers have made every effort to fully understand the character of the estate as it was originally conceived, and have tried to recreate this character through careful planning, design, and selection of materials. Traditional materials (such as stone and wood) and design styles have been employed for all new construction. Every effort has been made to design garden features which are stylistically compatible with the existing residence, and consistent with the garden’s historic character.”

The property when the Dreschers lived there was sixteen acres that has now been reduced to three acres. According to the original plans prepared by the renowned Rochester landscape architect Alling DeForest, a series of garden pools will fill the depressed area in the rear yard. Instead of a large pool that was never implemented, the Dreschers installed a garden stream that ran from the terrace to a stone bridge. The new garden pools will be components of a greater recirculating water system that will roughly follow the alignment of the existing stream channel and will include springs, cascades, rills, and other naturalized water features. The garden pools will become the focal point of the estate’s grounds, and will establish water as an important and recurring theme in the garden, as was originally envisioned by DeForest. The pools will give more meaning to the grand stone bridge, which currently seems somewhat overscaled

A section of the conceptual plan for site improvements to 2615 East Avenue by BAYER ASSOCIATES, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING

given the modest nature of the water course it currently spans.

“In conjunction with the garden pools, planting, and other proposed garden improvements, a series of pathways within the rear yard will be developed. Three principal paths will emanate from the terrace. A southerly path will provide access to the existing stone bridge and new garden house, an easterly walk will connect to the garage and herb garden area, and a westerly walk will give way to the proposed upper pool and west garden areas.... The bridge will be given a stronger role in the landscape, both functionally and aesthetically, by the garden pool, reintroduction of the garden house, and the stone walkway between the bridge and the terrace.

“In order to provide a greater sense of destination in the rear yard, lend greater significance to the existing stone bridge, and reintroduce an important garden element, a garden house is under construction in the southwest corner of the property, near where the original garden house once stood. This structure will be attractively detailed to compliment the architecture of the residence, and will serve an important role as the visual terminus of views from the bridge.”

A HISTORY OF THE DRESCHER HOUSE



The Drescher house and garden was under construction in 1910 and is again 95 years later in 2005.

By Mary Jo Lanphear

The beautiful old house at 2615 East Ave. which served as the convent for St. Thomas More Parish was originally the home of the Drescher family. Mrs. Drescher was the former Anna Julia Bausch, daughter of John Jacob Bausch, founder of the optical company. On Tuesday evening, September 23, 1890, she married William A.E. Drescher at the home of her parents. Mr. Drescher, born in Germany in 1861, immigrated to the United States in 1873, completed his schooling in New York City, and joined the branch office of Bausch and Lomb there. In 1888 he was transferred to Rochester where he met Miss Bausch.

The Dreschers were living on St. Paul Street, not far from Bausch & Lomb when, in May of 1909, they purchased the East Avenue property from the heirs of Horace May. May had farmed the acreage and operated a lime kiln on the property. The land closest to East Avenue was devoted to a large apple orchard. Lewis B. Perrin sold the land to May in 1869. The white clapboard house that served as the first rectory for St. Thomas More Parish was the May farmhouse. This was demolished in the 1970s after the construction of the modern brick rectory.

The Dreschers moved into the Tudor Revival style house at 2615 East Ave. in 1911. The building combined modern fittings with the amenities of a fine house. Each of the six bedrooms had its own fireplace. The bathrooms, pantry, and kitchen were equipped with heated towel racks. The basement wine cellar had a safe door. Concealed in a wall panel in the dining room was a small safe. Italian tile

was used in the conservatory and parquet wood flooring elsewhere in the house. A circular stairway concealed in a closet led to the basement game room.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the property was the Japanese style garden with stone lanterns designed by Alling DeForest. A stone footbridge crossed a small creek that meandered across the garden. A dove cote stood near what is now the front door of the church. A Tree of Paradise grew near the chapel located in the house when it was a convent.

The Dreschers had three children: Theodore Bausch Drescher who died in 1953, Hilda Ardelle who married Joseph Taylor and who lived for many years on Clover Street, and Clara Louise who married Gordon Baird. In December of 1915 the Dreschers deeded a portion of their property to Clara and Gordon Baird who built the house next door at 2585 East Avenue. The family called it "the little house."

William Drescher died on December 30, 1936. He had been a member of the Bausch & Lomb Company for sixty years, over half that time as vice-president and assistant treasurer.

When the property was purchased in 1953 for St. Thomas More Parish, Mrs. Drescher reserved life use of the house. Other buildings on the site at that time were the May farmhouse, garage, caretaker's house, and barn. Mrs. Drescher died May 26, 1960. The pipe organ that graced the Drescher living room was moved to the church where it was used until 1977.

Mary Jo Lanphear is Town of Brighton Historian

STERN, CASSEBEER AND DEFOREST DESIGNED ‘AVENUE OF PRESIDENTS’ HOUSES AND GARDENS, 1890-1930



Left, Leon Stern. Above, the Drescher/Reed house and the “little” Baird/Finucane house. Right, Alling Deforest..

By Betsy Brayer

Leon Stern (1867-1931) was one of East Avenue’s three most prolific architects during the period roughly 1890 to 1930, when it was known as “The Avenue of Presidents.” The other two were J. Foster Warner, architect of the avenue’s most baronial mansion, George Eastman House, and the firm of Gordon & Madden that became Gordon & Kaelber in 1918.

Rochesterian Stern graduated from Cornell and worked for several local firms before striking out on his own in 1897. He designed factory buildings for Bausch & Lomb, Taylor Instrument Co., Fashion Park and many of the city’s other clothing firms. Quite naturally, he also designed the East Ave. homes for the principals of those firms—Edward and William Bausch, Abram Katz, Chauncey Woodworth, Louis Ettenheimer, Frank Ritter, Albert Vogt, and of course, William Drescher.

This was the era of eclectic architecture for most general architecture firms. While the Ettenheimer house was quite modern, Leon Stern was generally known for his Tudor houses. Indeed, Stern designed three Tudor firehouses for Brighton, this being a period when public buildings and even gas stations were expected to conform to the surrounding residential architecture.

When in 1915 the Dreschers deeded a portion of their property to their daughter and son-in-law for “the little house,” they chose Walter Cassebeer, the first Rochester architect to be trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Cassebeer was also an artist noted for his pencil sketches and lithographs of Rochester scenes, a writer who specialized in architectural subjects, and a draftsman who recorded in measured drawings the post-colonial architecture of New York State.

Both the Drescher house and “the little house,” now the home of Frederick Finucane, and two adjacent East Ave. houses have been designated landmarks by the Brighton Historic Preservation Commission.

Alling Stephen Deforest (1875-1957) trained with the prestigious Olmsted Bros. of Brookline, MA. His East Ave. gardens include those for George Eastman, Walter Hubbell, George D. B. Bonbright, Carl Lomb, George Todd, and Alexander Lindsay. He also designed gardens for Frank Gannett, Sandringham Drive, Brighton, and William Bausch, Rock Beach Road, Rochester. Deforest drew up the original plans for the new River Campus of the University of Rochester, but his old boss, Frederick Olmsted Jr. consulted on the final plans. His out-of-town commissions include parks and gardens for Harvey and Raymond Firestone, Akron, Ohio.

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BRIGHTONIAN C. E. KENNETH MEES FOUNDED KODAK RESEARCH LABORATORY IN 1912



George Eastman, Charles Edward Kenneth Mees, and Thomas Edison at the Kodacolor party in the George Eastman House gardens in 1928.

By Betsy Brayer

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Charles Edward Kenneth Mees (1882-1960) of 1290 Clover St. in Brighton, founded the Kodak Research Laboratories in 1912 and shaped its destiny as director for four decades and beyond through the men and women he employed.

In 1906 the English-born Mees, smitten by science at age ten, approached the photographic firm of Wratten and Wainwright and was offered a partnership. In 1909, Mees journeyed to Rochester to meet the enigmatic great man of photography.

George Eastman was stung when the head of the German Bayer company, with its staff of several hundred research scientists, asked him how many research chemists Kodak employed. Eastman went to England in early 1912 and bought out Wratten and Wainwright in order to bring Dr. Mees to Kodak. Eastman also had a burning desire to market a color process and considered Mees, age 30, the foremost color authority in the world.

In 1912, not much was known of the fundamental photographic process. Dr. Mees and his staff set about to correct this—publishing their findings and becoming leaders in organic chemistry, polymer science, optics, physics and photographic science. During World War I the laboratories' resources aided the United States and its allies through aerial photography, camouflaging ships against German submarines, and work on colloidal fuels and synthetics organic chemicals.

After the war, Mees turned to color photography. Early results were the 1914 two-color Kodachrome process of John Capstaff and the three-color Kodacolor additive process introduced in 1928 as 16mm movies. Mees also hired Leopold Mannes and Leopold Godowsky Jr. whose long-lived Kodachrome process was first marketed in 1935.

When the George Eastman House was incorporated in 1947, Dr. C. E. Kenneth Mees was the first chairman of the board. The Mees Gallery there is named for him.

“THE BRITISH ARE COMING!”



Mees at Wratten and Wainwright, ca. 1910



THE NEW RESEARCH LABORATORY AT KODAK PARK

The Research Laboratory at Kodak Park under construction

In the spirit of Paul Revere, colleagues of Dr. CEK Mees made a movie in 1922, “Out of the Fog,” to celebrate the tenth anniversary of his invasion of “darkest America”—also known as the Kodak Research Laboratory. These are stills made during the filming of that movie.



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The Mees home on Clover St. in Brighton



Mees, 1950s Rt.: Out of the Fog cast



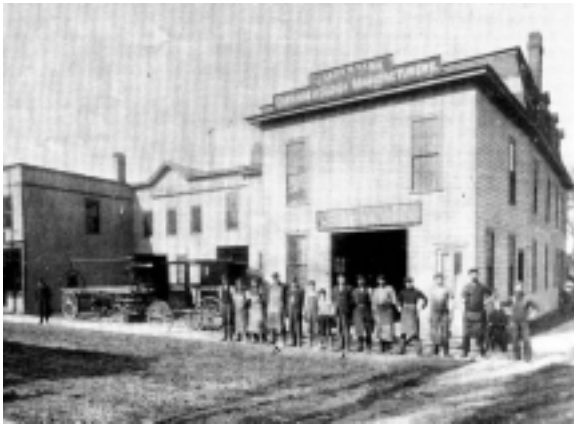
CALEY & NASH IN BRIGHTON VILLAGE OVER THE YEARS



1860



1880

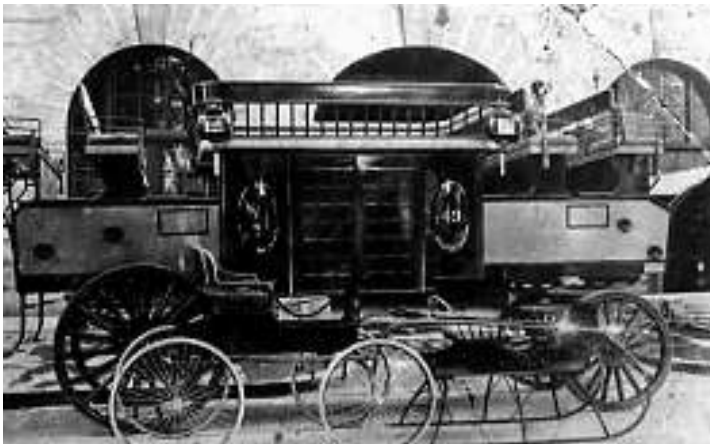


1891



1940

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The Tally Ho was used for many picnics including those at Durand Eastman Park

The Caley & Nash carriage factory was established in 1842 at the northwest corner of East Ave. and Winton Rd. (then called North Ave.). In 1905, Caley & Nash designed and manufactured the *Twentieth Century Tally Ho*, which claimed to be the largest horse-drawn vehicle in the world. It required a team of eight horses and could carry 65 people. Needless to say, it was much in demand. A black and white coach dog always rode with the driver. From a high seat in the rear, a bugler dressed in bright red coat and hat announced its approach with a long shrill blast on a bugle.

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