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Exploring our Town's history and educating our community about Brighton's past.

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THE MYSTERY OF JALNA HOUSE: THE INTERSECTION OF ARCHITECTURE AND LITERARY FICTION IN BRIGHTON



Original cover art for the 1927 issue of Jalna by Mazo de la Roche, the first book in the series of 16 novels



Original cover art for the 1944 issue of 'The Building of Jalna' by Mazo de la Roche, the ninth book in the series of 16 novels

To Historic Brighton Members:

The Board of Trustees hopes you are doing well during these difficult times. We look forward to when we will be able to meet in person. Meantime, enjoy the Fall Newsletter/Journal and visit our website and Facebook page often for more news items. Due to Covid 19 restrictions, Historic Brighton will hold their **2021 ANNUAL MEETING** virtually. It will be held on **Sunday January 31st, 2021 at 2:30 PM via Zoom**. You will receive an invitation prior to the meeting. The election of Trustees and Nominating Committee will take place by proxy only. A **Nominating Report and Proxy** form will be mailed to all members on or about January 2nd.

THE MYSTERY OF BRIGHTON'S JALNA HOUSE

By Elizabeth Doty

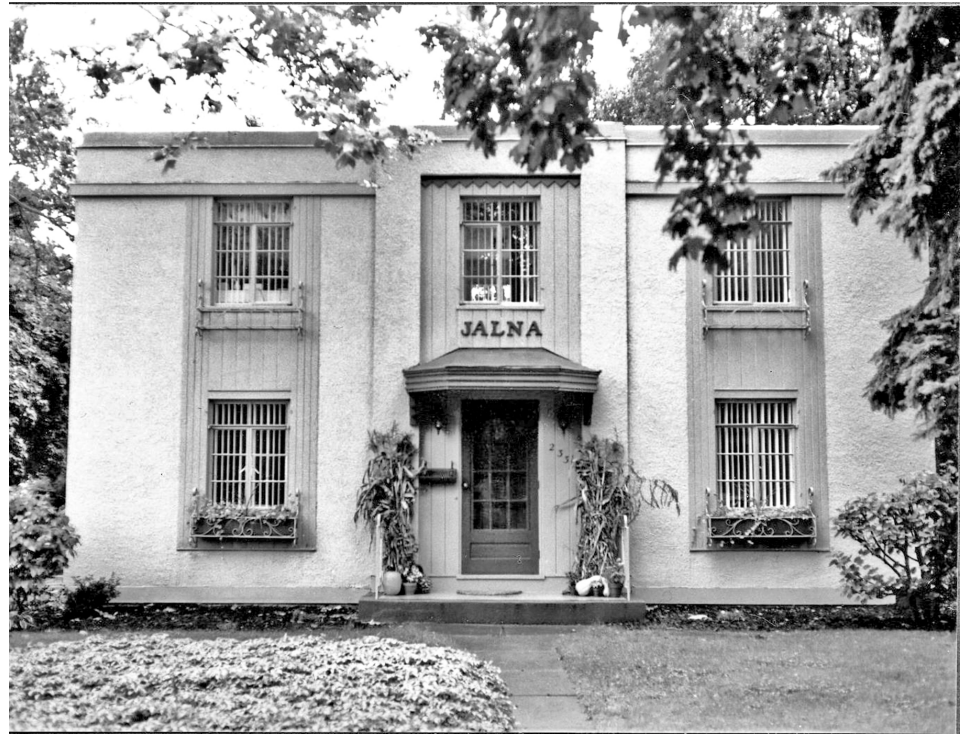
This is the story of two houses with the same name: the first appeared in a hugely popular series of novels by Canadian author Mazo de la Roche, and the second was constructed in the town of Brighton and served as a real-world tribute to the fictional first.

In 1927, the esteemed American literary magazine *The Atlantic Monthly* offered a \$10,000 prize “for the most interesting novel of any kind, sort, or description, submitted by any writer, whether born in London or Indianapolis.”¹ Eleven hundred manuscripts were entered by writers from all parts of the world. The prize, equal to about \$183,552.86 today, was won by Mazo de la Roche. The book was *Jalna*, a novel describing the life of a large family on a grand estate in the woods of Ontario, Canada. After that promising start, Mazo de la Roche produced 15 more novels—approximately one *Jalna* novel every two years—until her death in 1961. When she died, Canadian novelist Robertson Davies said “The creation of the *Jalna* books is the most protracted single feat of literary invention in the brief history of Canada’s literature.”²

BIOGRAPHY:

Mazo de la Roche was born in 1879 as Maisie Louise Roche in Newmarket, Ontario, the only child of William Roche and Alberta Lundy Roche. She had an uncle who signed himself as Francis J. de la Roche, claiming to have descended from Sir Richard de la Roche (1199-1283). De la Roche later adopted this styling as her professional surname.

Her father was a salesman who had many jobs. Her mother suffered



Brighton's Westfall Road Jalna House c. 1998, Photo courtesy Cynthia Howk

from ill health. These difficulties forced the family to move frequently in southern Ontario: Newmarket, two separate addresses in Toronto, several places in Orillia, Galt, Orillia again, and Toronto again, all within a span of 21 years. One of the family's moves meant some years on a farm owned by a wealthy man who farmed as a hobby, which inspired her to develop her world of rural aristocracy that would become *Jalna*.

De la Roche was a lonely child who became an avid reader and developed her own fictional world, *The Play*, in which she created imaginary scenes and characters. When she was seven, her parents adopted her orphaned eight-year-old cousin Caroline Clement, who joined in the fantasy world game and would become her lifelong companion.

De la Roche's immense creativity began to show very early, when she wrote her first story at age nine. She



Mazo de la Roche, photo courtesy of Mississauga Museums, Mississauga, Ontario

furthered her education by studying at the Metropolitan School of Music, the University of Toronto, and the Ontario School of Art. When she was 23 years old, she had her first story published in 1902 in *Munsey's Magazine*. However, this achievement came at some cost, as she experienced a mental breakdown

during the next year. She continued to suffer from depression and insomnia for several years after that, and did not write again until 1911, when she began placing stories in American magazines.

In 1915, De la Roche's father died of cirrhosis as a result of his alcoholism, and her mother died five years later in 1920. Her father was bankrupt at his death, which added additional stress to the author and her family. After her father's death, De la Roche moved with her mother and sister Caroline back to Toronto. Caroline became the sole supporter of the family, working as a civil service clerk. She would eventually become the chief statistician of Ontario.

In 1922 De la Roche published her first book, *Explorers of the Dawn*. She then followed with two romantic novels, *Possession* (1923) and *Delight* (1926). During this period she also wrote plays and short stories. When she submitted her third novel, *Jalna*, to the *Atlantic Monthly* contest in 1927, she was 48 years old. At that point in time, it was highly unusual for a woman to win the prize, and was a first for a Canadian author. *Jalna* was an immediate sensation, with her public demanding sequels and prequels for the rest of her life. The novels were not written in historical order, and each can be read as an independent story.

The sudden fame of this prize and the pressure of the subsequent publicity caused her to suffer another emotional breakdown in 1928. She recovered, however, and published her second *Jalna* novel, *Whiteoaks of Jalna*, in 1929. At this point, there was enough income from the prize and the first two novels for De la Roche to allow for her sister

Caroline to accompany De la Roche on an extended journey to Europe in 1929, first living in Italy, then in the United Kingdom. These events in De la Roche's life are reflected in the experiences of her character Finch, who inherits his grandmother's wealth and embarks on a grand tour of Europe in her third novel *Finch's Fortune* (1932).

In addition to her work with the Canadian government, Caroline also helped De la Roche immensely with the creation of the novels. Caroline typed and edited De la Roche's longhand first drafts, and the two developed the incredible production schedule that kept the fans interested in the *Jalna* series. In 1931, the sisters adopted two orphaned children of friends, which was then an extraordinary move, as adoptions by single women were not allowed in the United Kingdom. Perhaps De la Roche's demonstrated ability to produce a regular income influenced the decision.

In 1936, De la Roche was the first Canadian author to have a play, *Whiteoaks: A Play*, adapted from her

novel *Whiteoaks of Jalna*, in London's West End. In 1938 De la Roche won the Lorne Pierce Medal awarded by the Royal Society of Canada, "to recognize achievement of special significance and conspicuous merit in imaginative or critical literature written in either English or French."³

Mazo de la Roche died in 1961, publishing her last novel, *Morning at Jalna*, in 1960. Caroline Clement died in 1972. The *Jalna* series has sold more than eleven million copies, 193 in English and 93 in foreign editions. In 1935, the film *Jalna*, based on the first novel, was released by RKO Radio pictures, and in 1972 a CBC television series was produced based on the series.

Benares House in Clarkson, Ontario is believed to be the inspiration for the *Jalna* house. Benares, like *Jalna*, was named after a city in India, and was built by a British officer who served in the Raj. Mazo de la Roche lived on what was part of the original Benares estate. The house is now maintained by the Museums of Mississauga. A nearby park is named *Whiteoaks* after the family in the series, as is a nearby



Benares House, believed to be the inspiration for Jalna, was built in 1857 (and restored in 1995), Clarkson, Ontario; photo courtesy of Mississauga Museums, Mississauga, Ontario

elementary school. In Newmarket, Ontario, there is a Mazo de la Roche public school honoring the author.

THE *JALNA* SERIES:

Professor Ruth Panofsky, Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and Professor at Ryerson University, Toronto, has stated that “[De la Roche’s] success was exceptional, indisputable, and due primarily to her own ingenuity as a professional who understood fully the nature of her connections with readers and publishers alike. Throughout her career, for example, she retained her audience by writing precisely those books it wanted to read.”⁴

The novels portray the lives of the Whiteoaks, a large multi-generation family living in a great ancestral house on an estate in the wild countryside of Canada. They are wealthy, isolated, inter-related, insular, and outside of convention, yet constricted by family tradition and family ties and expectations. The first book, *Jalna*, describes the building of the house:

“A small army of men was employed to make the semblance of an English park in the forest, and to build a house that should overshadow all others in the country. When completed, decorated, and furnished, it was the wonder of the countryside. It was a square house of dark red brick, with a wide stone porch, a deep basement where the kitchens and servants quarters were situated, an immense drawing room, a library (called so, but more properly a sitting room, since few books lived there), a dining room, and a bedroom on the ground floor; and six large bedrooms on the floor above, topped by a long low attic divided into two bedrooms. The wainscoting and doors were of walnut. From five fireplaces the

smoke ascended through picturesque chimneys that rose among the treetops.”

“In a burst of romantic feeling, Philip and Adeline named the place Jalna, after the military station where they had first met. Everyone agreed that it was a pretty name, and Jalna became a place for gaiety. An atmosphere of impregnable well-being grew up around it. Under their clustering chimneys, in the midst of their unpretentious part with its short, curving drive, with all their thousand acres spread like a green mantle around them, the Whiteoaks were as happy as the sons of man can be.”⁵

Much of the popularity of the series is due to the strong characters in the Whiteoak family and the continuous drama of their lives: the romantic triangle of Renny, Alayne, and Eden; the artistic growth of Finch and Wakefield; and the cantankerous meddling of grandmother Adeline. The books explore 100 years at Jalna: names are passed down, personal characteristics are inherited—whether physical or emotional. The fortunes of the various characters rise, fall, and rise in the series—through luck, carelessness, and perseverance.

The books are alive with descriptive writing for the senses: the sight of the beautiful house nestled in its grand surroundings, the sounds of Finch’s musical development, the smells of the countryside in the changing seasons and Renny’s fox-like animal scent, the tastes of the lavish dinners enjoyed by the family, and the touch of fabrics like Adeline’s velvet robes, Alayne’s silk dresses, and Renny’s well-worn leather jacket. Many of the family members are artists or work in artistic fields—

poets, actors, musicians, painters, editors. Other family members have strong emotional connections or identifications with animals: dogs, horses, birds, and cats. There are lush descriptions of the landscape and the effects of the seasons, as the gorgeous beauty of nature supports and enhances the life experiences of the family. Strong, vivid colors are emphasized: blue, gold, purple, green, and especially red. The house becomes a character in the series, brightly cloaked in red brick and red Virginia creeper, and seems to exude emotion related to the seasons and the fortunes of the family. There is also a very memorable detail or motif that is repeated in several of the books. In the hallway of the house is a large stained glass window, which would typically be described as colors illuminated by the light on the outside. In *Jalna*, the light pours through the glass and paints family members with color, usually in moments of strong emotion, changing the perspective from outwards to inwards. It’s not clear in these situations whether the emotions of the characters are affected by the colored light, but the colors match their emotions: red for family arguments, pale green for sorrow and confusion.

LITERARY INFLUENCES:

De la Roche claimed to have gotten the names for her characters from a local churchyard, which may be true. Yet several character names evoke literary associations. Renny could remind us of the folkloric figure “Renardine”, who is fatally alluring to young women. Alayne can be traced to Elayne of Astolot, Tennyson’s Lady of Shalott, who falls deeply in love with Lancelot. Eden is the golden blond poet, loved by Alayne and lost. Piers is the plowman, the gentleman farmer whose singular

focus is on maintaining the Jalna estate.

Indeed, the *Jalna* series illustrates De la Roche's love of literature by developing various themes and plot devices that weave through the books. For example, both Finch and Wakefield have a rapturous sensitivity to nature, and Renny has strong animal qualities, as explored in D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* (1916) and *The Fox* (1924). Mazo was most likely aware of the Nobel prize-winning work of Sigrid Undset, whose three novels of *Kristen Lavransdatter* (1920, 1921, 1922) introduced the title character as a passionate woman with strong sexual desires. From Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) Mazo borrowed examinations of the interior thought processes of various characters, or stream of consciousness. A plot device used later in the series—the murderous wife literally coming out of the woodwork—appears in the works of Sheridan Le Fanu and Charlotte Brontë—*A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family* (1839), *The Wyvern Mystery* (1869), and *Jane Eyre* (1847). One of the final Jalna novels written in the late 1950s contains the horrifying concept of an evil child born of an evil mother, as in the contemporary novel *The Bad Seed* (1954) by William March.

THE MYSTERY OF JALNA:

Mazo de la Roche lived a reclusive life, and expressed a need for privacy in interviews. She evaded questions from reporters by stating “Everything I am, I’ve put into my books.”⁶ But that is not entirely true. De la Roche did not have a large family, nor did they enjoy a wealthy existence. She also did not have, for her entire youth, a stable, secure place to call home. Her statement both shields

and reveals various truths about her life.

Why did she make the fate of Finch so harsh and turn him into such an unsympathetic parent, especially when he is the character that she called her “alter-ego”? Why would she have the hyper-masculine and clearly admired character of Renny force his daughter into a loveless marriage with her cousin? At the contemporary end of the series, Finch is the character whose life is beset with disappointments and tragedy, despite fame and achievement. Renny is the character who controls everything at Jalna, including the lives of others. He is also lucky --- winning at horse races, outwitting characters who plot to change or take over the Jalna estate.

There may be a clue in the film *The Mystery of Mazo de la Roche*, which was developed from various statements and interviews with the very private author. After the publication of the first novel, De la Roche had a nervous breakdown, and underwent electric shock therapy. As the actress playing the author remarks, “It didn’t work.” It’s a small, heart-breaking detail of mental and emotional suffering that may have colored her view of her life. Perhaps Renny was the character that De la Roche wanted to be, but Finch was the character she felt she was.

Another clue might come from the influential work of the poet Paul Verlaine who published a series of essays in 1884 on the Symbolist poets Arthur Rimbaud, Stéphane Mallarmé, Gérard de Nerval, and others. Verlaine described them the poètes maudits, or “accursed poets”, and argued that in their individual and very different ways, each of these hitherto neglected poets found genius a curse; it isolated them

from their contemporaries.⁷ They were also portrayed as at odds with society, having tragic lives, and often given to self-destructive tendencies. These traits were not hindrances but consequences of their literary gifts. As both the composer Finch and the poet Eden met with tragedy in the books, De la Roche struggled with the fame that her works brought her, and sought a life out of the public eye. As she shielded some of the truths in her public life, she revealed some truths in her emotional life.

BRIGHTON’S “JALNA” HOUSE:
The second house in this story looks nothing like the fictional “Jalna”.

Brighton’s “Jalna” was the first house built in the Monroe Avenue Estates neighborhood, and served as the model home in that new development. Designed by Herbert Williamson, it was built 1937-38 on a lot purchased from the Toschtritt Company by Walden and Gertrude Herdle Moore in 1936.⁸

The late Syracuse University Professor Emeritus and architect Paul Malo described the house as “streamlined Classical”, a “basic Colonial-style house with a modern costume applied to the exterior.”⁹ Other terms for the style are Art Deco, Art Moderne, and International.¹⁰ The house follows the basic structure of early 20th century Colonial Revival domestic architecture, with a center entrance, symmetrical windows, and exterior chimney. The decorative features that show the Art Moderne style include a flat roof, rounded corners, and a stucco exterior painted two shades of neutral beige. The center entrance has a concrete step, and wrought iron railings. The door is sheltered by a shed-roofed hood set on curved, wood brackets. The façade

is topped by a wide, stucco cornice with horizontal banding at the top and bottom. The center entrance and the second-story window above it are set in a slightly recessed bay with incised, vertical grooves and two, stucco-clad pilasters. Above the second-story window is a horizontal band of saw-tooth edged masonry molding.

The house was originally painted pink. When Gertrude owned it, and up until the late 1990s, the façade wall above the entrance hood contained the word JALNA, set in relief letters, painted a dark color to contrast them with the stucco exterior wall.

THE FIRST OWNER OF BRIGHTON'S "JALNA" HOUSE: Gertrude Herdle Moore was born in 1896, the eldest of the two daughters of Rochester artist George Herdle and Elizabeth Bachman Herdle.¹¹ When she was two years old, she went with her parents to the Netherlands, where her father studied painting for two years. After the family returned to Rochester, George became President



Gertrude Herdle Moore

of the Rochester Art Club, staying in that position for 22 years. In 1913, he became the first director of the Memorial Art Gallery. It is his painting of a boat in a canal lock that serves as the logo of Historic Brighton (see top left of *HB Newsletter & Journal* front cover).

Gertrude graduated from East High School in 1914, and graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Rochester in 1918, winning the Anderson prize in fine arts. In this same year, her father's secretary was called to the foreign service in World War I. Gertrude took over the open position at the Memorial Art Gallery, and quickly became her father's assistant. Upon his untimely death in 1922, Gertrude became the Acting Director of the Gallery at age 25, and was nominated several months later to Director, becoming the youngest museum director in the country. In 1923, she was also one of the first women to join the membership of the American Association of Art Museum Directors. Gertrude was the first woman to be presented with an honorary degree of Master of Arts from the University of Rochester in 1925 in recognition of her work.

Gertrude married Walden Moore in 1932. In that same year, her sister Isabel became the assistant director of the Gallery, continuing the family's dedication to the arts in Rochester.

Throughout her 40-year directorship, Gertrude developed her vision and her exceptional fund-raising ability to build the Gallery as we know it today. She determined that the Gallery should belong to the people of Rochester, and devoted much of her energy to education for both children and adults. With the help of her sister Isabel, she developed a collection

spanning 5,000 years and representing many diverse cultures.

Gertrude retired as Gallery Director in 1962 and her sister Isabel Herdle took over the post as Associate Director and Curator until her retirement in 1972. In 1986, the two sisters received the Rochester Chamber of Commerce's Culture and Arts Civic Award, and in 1990 they received a special citation from Arts for Greater Rochester. Gertrude died in 1993.

THE SECOND OWNER OF BRIGHTON'S "JALNA" HOUSE:

Virginia Jeffrey Smith (1887-1987) was born in Rochester, N.Y. into a family of artists. She studied at Smith College with Dwight William Tryon, and at the Rochester Mechanics Institute, and also studied with Hugh Henry Breckenridge at his school in Gloucester, Massachusetts. Virginia was a watercolorist, and was a member of both the North Shore Art Association and Rochester Art Club. She painted in the Gloucester and Rochester regions and abroad during her many travels. The Memorial Art Gallery owns one of her paintings titled *Summer Home of Virginia Jeffrey Smith, Cape Ann, MA*. In addition, a number of her paintings can be seen on the lower level of Valley Manor on East Avenue.

In addition to her painting, Virginia was an art educator, teaching classes, delivering lectures, and running workshops. She also wrote several books on Rochester history, including the following titles: *A Century of Service: Rochester General Hospital, 1847-1947*; *St Luke's Church*; *Genesee Falls: Past and Future*; *Rochester History*; *Part of the Third Ward: known as the Ruffled Shirt Ward*; and *The Rochester Art Club, 1877-1959*. Virginia was the long-standing art critic for the *Rochester Times-Union*.

THE MYSTERY OF BRIGHTON'S "JALNA" HOUSE:

Popular literature has introduced houses as more than dwellings—sometimes as symbols embodying a concept or theme, or even as a separate character. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *House of Seven Gables* was "like a great human heart, with a life of its own."¹² Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* provides a valuable experience to the main character, which revises her fanciful perceptions brought on by reading too much gothic literature. More recently, houses have served as the evocative surroundings of a particular moment of a character's life that continues to exist in memory. Daphne du Maurier's novel *Rebecca* opens with this memorable line: "Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again."¹³

The character of Charles Ryder returns again and again to the titular estate in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, gaining new understanding of the glamorous family each time.

But why would Gertrude name her house "Jalna"? And why would Virginia continue the name? It's clear that the book or books were favorites. Gertrude may have loved the strong and passionate characters and the lush, descriptive writing. She

probably reveled in the repeated use of color and any interpretations of that usage. Perhaps it was a statement of a particular identity, like a contemporary bumper sticker or slogan t-shirt. The mysterious name also serves as a signifier for other readers of the massively popular series—identifying the home of a literate and artistic soul. But it could also become a reminder to Gertrude upon arriving home. It was not a small sign—it was a public declaration—but as she goes through the door, shutting it behind her, she enters into a private world of the imagination. Isabel Herdle said the name refers to a book she liked.¹⁴ I like to think Gertrude was both revealing and shielding herself, like Mazo de la Roche.

On the book jacket, a review of the first Jalna novel, Honore Willsie Morrow (wife of publisher William Morrow) said the novel had "an originality of thought and style---a wholesome raciness."¹⁵ As the series progressed and finished, the books shifted their focus to larger themes: the joys and struggles of love and family, and the achievements and sacrifices of the artistic life. Perhaps it was those greater themes that attracted and held the interest of Gertrude and Virginia,

and so many others at that time.

The letters are gone from above the doorway, probably removed sometime between 1998 and 2002. Gertrude sold the house to Virginia in June of 1956. Virginia lived in the house until 1974, and passed away in 1987. A couple who lived there briefly in the mid-eighties received a copy of one of the Jalna books from the previous owner, so perhaps there was some sort of tradition between successive residents.

But this tale may cause us to reflect on how we view our own homes, whether as a personal fortress, an emotional cocoon, or the fanciful realm of our possessions and our dreams.



Virginia Jeffrey Smith, Rochester Museum Director W. Stephen Thomas, and Isabel Herdle; photo courtesy Gannett Rochester Newspapers

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[1] Mazo De la Roche, *Jalna*. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1927) On dust jacket.

[2] mazodelarochesociety.wordpress.com

[3] Wikipedia, "Lorne Pierce Medal"

[4] Ruth Panofsky, *The Literary Legacy of the Macmillan Company of Canada: Making Books and Mapping Culture*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012) Pg. 85

[5] Mazo De la Roche. *Jalna*, Pg.24

[6] "The Mystery of Mazo de la Roche". A Film by Maya Gallus. Red Queen Productions in co-production with the National Film Board of Canada. [Vimeo.com](https://vimeo.com)

[7] Wikipedia, "Symbolism."

[8] See *Historic Brighton Journal*, Volume 20, Winter 2019, No. 1 for more on developer Fred P. Tosch

[9] NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation Application for The Landmark Society of Western New York, Inc. 1998.

[10] Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986) Pp. 464-473

[11] See *Historic Brighton Journal*, Vol. 11, Fall 2010, No. 4 for more on George Herdle's art.

[12] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of Seven Gables, a Romance*. (New York: New American Library, 1961) Pg. 11

[13] Daphne du Maurier, *Rebecca*. (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1938) Pg. 7

[14] Email from Marie Via, Former Director of Exhibitions, Rochester Memorial Art Gallery, Sept. 2020

[15] Mazo de la Roche, *Jalna*. On dust jacket.

124 SUMMIT DRIVE: THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE IN BRIGHTON

By Marjorie B. Searl

In 1922, Ernest Wildhaber (1892-1979) became a naturalized American citizen, having left his native Switzerland in 1919. He was trained as a gear theoretician and would ultimately have 279 patents to his name, leading to his being considered the father of modern gear theory. He was hired by Gleason Works on University Avenue and there developed the hypoid gear in 1926 which revolutionized the design of rear-wheel drive vehicles.¹

In the 1930s, Mr. Wildhaber hired Howard Stone to design a home for him on the northeast side of Summit Drive, a small road accessed from Howland Avenue and dead-ending at the Colgate Rochester Divinity School on the West and Clinton Avenue South on the East. Unlike most Brighton residences, the architect's stucco and block structure drew on contemporary European aesthetics. Brighton was not Wildhaber's first Rochester address; he had lived on Wisner Road in Irondequoit, near the 1936 International Style home designed and built by Gustave Fassin, a mechanical engineer whose career encompassed teaching in the optics department at the University of Rochester, designing Argus cameras, and working at Bausch and Lomb, where he scavenged materials that he incorporated into his home.² Wildhaber's Summit Drive home was constructed a few years later, about 1939. Was Wildhaber influenced by the Irondequoit home, or was the International Style one that he admired in Europe and chose for his own home after he purchased the lot in Brighton? It's impossible to know, but we do know that very few houses were built in Rochester in this imported European style; those

that were built silently shout "1930s" to us in retrospect. One can only imagine what Wildhaber's Summit Drive neighbors in their traditional Colonial and Tudor-style homes thought as they watched a solitary example of European Modernism arise on the hilltop.

Architect Howard Stone (1898-1974), born in Clifton Springs, lived in Brighton in the 30s and 40s. He was best known for the Colonial and Tudor Revival homes he designed in the Rochester suburbs of Brighton and Irondequoit. They ranged in size from small, affordable "cottages" to more upscale residences, such as those on Sandringham Road and Bonnie Brae Avenue in Brighton. He appears to have worked closely with suburban developers, designing homes for entire neighborhoods like Stonybrook in Brighton.³ Thus far, Wildhaber's Summit Drive home is the only home known to have been designed by Stone in the International Style, pointing to the owner's influence rather than the architect's strength.

The post-World War I International

Style emerged in Europe and is described this way by the Getty Research Institute: "...an emphasis on volume over mass, the use of lightweight, mass-produced, industrial materials, rejection of all ornament and colour, repetitive modular forms, and the use of flat surfaces, typically alternating with areas of glass."⁴

Brighton has only a handful of homes in this style, although it is possible to see the International Style's influence in buildings built in the decades after the 20s and 30s, after the clean-lined style was at its peak in Europe. Architects whose names were associated with the International Style early on were Walter Gropius, Mies Van De Rohe, and Le Corbusier. Probably the style's most influential moment in American architectural history was the 1932 exhibition *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* at the Museum of Modern Art. 124 Summit most certainly has features that are consistent with the Getty description: curved lines inside and out; use of industrial materials like steel, iron pipe, glass block, and flat, white surfaces with minimal



2019 Photograph of 124 Summit Drive

ornament.

The house is perched at the top of a steep hill with a commanding view of the Rochester Skyline to the North and the Bristol Hills to the South. While not Wildhaber's native Alps, the hill is part of the Pinnacle Range, a glacial moraine formed at the end of the last ice age, nearly 12,000 years ago. The driveway and garage, no longer standing, were originally located down by the street; a neighborhood myth persisted about the garage and the house being linked by a tunnel and an elevator. Over 40 steps had to be climbed to get from the garage to the house, which would not have been a problem for a man who grew up in an Alpine country. A woman who knew Wildhaber and his relative and housemate, Joseph Gstyr, said that in winter the two men, in their black coats and hats, would link arms and slide down the hill to their car.

In the 1970s, the home was purchased by Richard Storms, owner of the Record Archive. Marjorie and

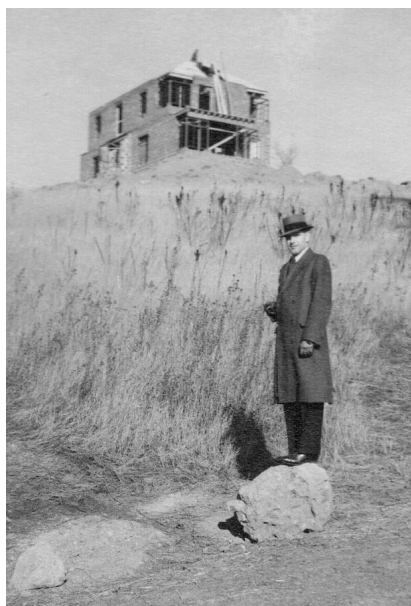
Scott Searl, with their three children, became the third owners, and their first change was to add a driveway to the top of the hill. Marjorie worked at the Memorial Art Gallery for 25 years, and Scott practiced ophthalmology in Brighton and was one of the founders of OcuSight. Their son James continued the music connection established by Storms as a founder of the reggae band Giant Panda Guerrilla Dub Squad. The Searls acquired the house with the understanding that they would be adding space to the east side of the structure; however, they were very committed to remaining sympathetic to the International Style aesthetic. The interior retains the original linoleum in the front hall, a cast stone and Carrara glass fireplace, and a number of curved features that suggest the aerodynamic motif commonly seen in International Style structures.

The architect who designed the home's 1987 addition was Martha Gates, an innovative solar architect in Pittsford. Nearly ten years later,

the Searls hired James Durfee, then a partner in the Durfee + Bridges firm, to expand on Gates' two story east wing and add another two story addition to the North. With landscape architect Mark Bayer, Durfee proposed a distinctive vision that incorporated elements of the original building, such as glass blocks and curved elements, but that did not try to mimic the original home, per historic preservation guidelines. Bayer designed a series of outdoor "rooms" using deep red bricks, Medina stone, and curved block and stucco walls connected by brick paths and steps that wind all the way around the house. A number of the plantings are the same as those in Highland Park - paperbark maples, a ginkgo, and Scott's pride and joy, his lilac collection, resulting in the intentional feel of living in an extension of the Park.

The house was designated a Brighton Landmark in 2013.

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Above: Probably Mr. Wildhaber standing on boulder at the foot of the 124 Summit Drive property with unfinished house in the background



Left: Two men (identity unknown) looking out west bay window



Right: Unfinished east side of 124 Summit Drive

Right: Southwest corner
of 124 Summit Drive in
progress

Below: View toward the
former Colgate Rochester
Crozer Divinity School
campus from 124
Summit Drive property



Above: Newly finished house and garage at 124 Summit Drive, 1939

[1] Dr. Hermann J. Stadtfeld, "Why Are Today's Hypoids the Perfect Crossed Axes Gear Pairs," *Gear Solutions*, accessed September 4, 2020. <https://gearsolutions.com/features/why-are-todays-hypoids-the-perfect-crossed-axes-gear-pairs/>.

[2] Mike Connealy, "Gustave Fassin Time Line," *Photography and Vintage Film Cameras (blog)*, September 5, 2009, <https://connealy.blogspot.com/2009/09/gustave-fassin-time-line-name-of.html>. Thanks to Christopher Brandt, architect at Bero Architecture, for pointing me to this article and others.

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[4] *Art and Architecture Thesaurus Online*, <http://www.getty.edu/vow/AATFullDisplay?find=international+style&logic=AND¬e=&page=1&subjectid=300021472>. Accessed September 4, 2020.

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MERCHANTS OF MONROE CONTINUED: CHARLES & GEORGE CRITICOS

By Raymond Tierney III

It seems that Twelve Corners Plaza had a period of time when it was known by another name. For a period of years in the 1980's and 90's it was known as Crossroads Plaza. That would explain, I think, the name of the restaurant featured in this installment of the Merchants of Monroe. This restaurant may have been one of the only restaurants to have a plaza re-named recognizing their tenancy. The name was changed back again to Twelve Corners Plaza during the major remodel of the plaza in 2007 when the current distinctive brick front was constructed.

Charles Criticos and his son George operated the Crossroads Restaurant for over 30 years. Situated in the middle of the plaza, it fulfilled a need together with Howard Johnson's for good food and for a great place to gather in the heart of Brighton.

Charles, who emigrated from Greece when he was 15, opened Critics Restaurant on West Main Street in the Bulls Head section of Rochester in 1938. In 1958 he decided to do as many merchants were doing at the time and expanded into the growing suburbs. Brighton's Crossroads Restaurant opened in the Twelve Corners Plaza in 1958 followed by a Greece location in Northgate Plaza in 1964. In addition to contributions to many causes in Brighton, Charles was also a leader in his church. The Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation recognized Charles Criticos at the church's 50th anniversary as its "godfather" for all of his long and loyal support.

According to a guest essay in the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle in 2005, Herb and Terri Ross, in remembering their many years in Brighton, included the Crossroads Restaurant in their list of iconic Twelve Corners businesses. In an earlier article in the *De&C*, George Criticos who took over the operation in 1975, summed it up as follows: "We've had some customers come in since the first week that we opened ...it's like seeing friends." As the Town of Brighton school complex was right across the street, Crossroads was a logical place for students to gather.

It certainly was in my rotation of places to catch lunch during my days as a stock boy at Super Duper in the mid 1960's. My favorite sandwich was a tuna with lettuce and mayonnaise. A quick stop at Neisner's to play pinball on my way back to work filled out my lunch hour.

After the closing of the restaurant in the early 1990's, George went on to have a successful career with Nothnagle Realtors. Incidentally, Nothnagle's home office was just up Monroe Avenue near Highland Ave. It was during this time that he became more heavily involved in his alumni group from Syracuse University. George was known by many as "Syracuse George" for his passion for his alma mater. He could be heard occasionally on the local sports radio station supporting the Orange. He was also known to include ample orange into his wardrobe on game days.

Spending their working lifetimes as Merchants of Monroe, George Criticos and his dad, Charles, have left our community richer for their many contributions. Restaurants are often the soul of a community - this one certainly was.

—HB—



Twelve Corners Crossroads Plaza, as it was then known, in the 1980s

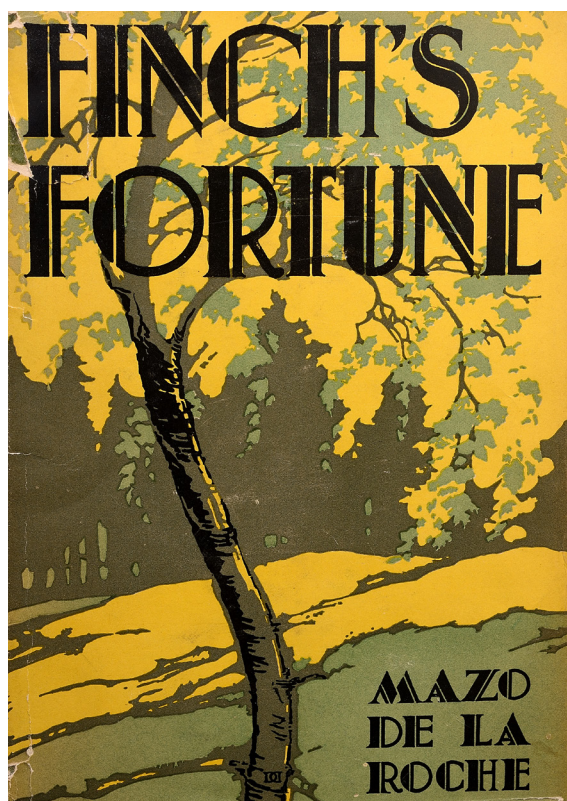
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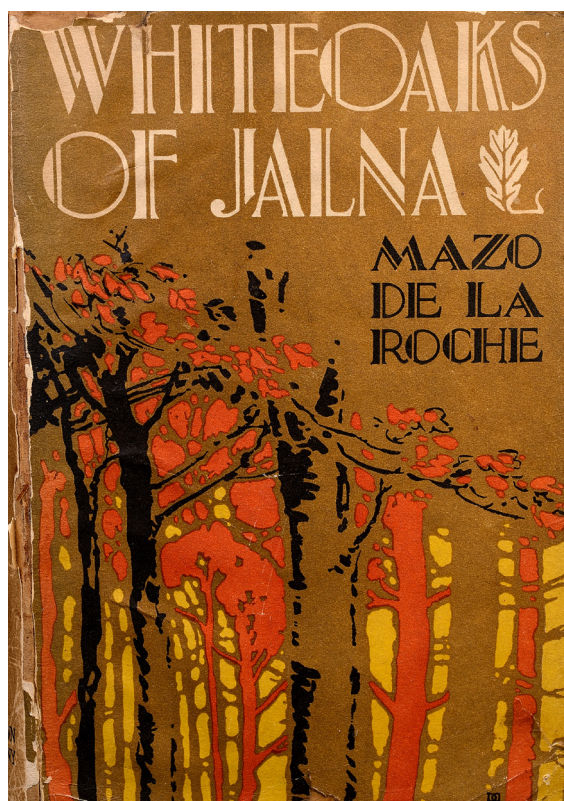
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