

## **Westfield Historic Preservation Commission Local Designation Nomination**

**Property:** Mills-Ferris-Pearsall House  
112 Ferris Place  
Westfield, NJ 07090

**Block/Lot:** Block 2504 / Lot 14

**Dates of Construction:** ca. 1750, ca. 1862

**Overview:** The Mills-Ferris-Pearsall House is one of the oldest houses in Westfield. It is situated on a 20,499 square foot (0.47 acres) lot set back approximately 30 feet from Ferris Place on the south. Flanked by other residential properties, the nearest cross street is Prospect Street to the east. The nearest street to the west is Clark Street. The original, smaller portion of the house (right side) was built circa 1750, and is now connected to a prominent early story-and-a-half section (left side) that was moved to its current location prior to 1862. The Downingesque Gothic Revival detailing was added at that time. The Mills-Ferris-Pearsall House is an excellent example of local antebellum vernacular architecture and adds to the significance of the still extant Colonial-era / pre-Civil War heritage remaining in Westfield. The house was built by one of the early settler families of the state and has been included in every town survey of important buildings. The home is significant at the local level for both its architecture and for its inhabitants.

**Prepared By:** Barton Ross, HPC Consultant  
December 2021

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**This report has been prepared in accordance with Historic Designation and Preservation Ordinance of the Town of Westfield Appendix III (5)(B) Procedures for Designation:**

For individual landmark designations, the report shall include one or more photographs, the tax lot and block number of the property as designated on the Official Tax Map of the Town and a physical description and statement of significance and proposed utilization of the landmark.



**The Mills-Ferris-Pearsall House**

## **I. Executive Summary**

**The Westfield Historic Preservation Commission was established to accomplish the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, improvements, and districts within the Town of Westfield, to implement the historic preservation element of the town's master plan and to advance the following public purposes:**

- A. To safeguard the heritage of the Town of Westfield by preserving resources which reflect elements of its archaeological, cultural, social, economic, architectural, and historical heritage;
- B. To encourage the continued use of historic landmarks and historic districts and to facilitate their appropriate use or reuse;
- C. To maintain and develop an appropriate and harmonious setting for the historically significant structures, sites, and districts located within the Town of Westfield;
- D. To identify, designate, and regulate historic landmarks and historic districts in order to preserve their historical significance;
- E. To foster civic pride in the history and architecture of the Town of Westfield;
- F. To promote appreciation of historic landmarks and historic districts for the education, pleasure and welfare of the local population;
- G. To encourage beautification and private reinvestment in historic landmarks and historic districts, and surrounding properties and landscapes;
- H. To encourage and manage appropriate alterations of historic sites and improvements within historic districts, and to prevent new construction which is not in keeping with the character of historic districts;
- I. To discourage the unnecessary total or partial demolition, removal, or destruction of historical resources; and
- J. To recognize the importance of historic landmarks and historic districts by assisting property owners and tenants to maintain their properties in keeping with the requirements and standards of the Historic Designation and Preservation Ordinance.

**The proposed historic landmark meets or exceeds certain qualifiers per Historic Designation and Preservation Ordinance of the Town of Westfield Appendix III (5)(A) Criteria for Designation.**

**The criteria for evaluating and designating historic landmarks and historic districts shall be guided by the National Register Criteria as currently published and amended from time to time. The commission or any person may recommend designation of historic landmarks or historic districts that are in accordance with the National Register Criteria or that possess one or more of the following attributes:**

- A. Character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural Identification characteristics of the Town, State, or Nation;
- B. with a person or persons who significantly enriched the Town, State, or Nation;
- C. Landmark of a historic event which had significant effect on the development of the Town, State, or Nation;
- D. Embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, architecture, or engineering;
- E. Identification with the work of a builder, designer, artist, architect, or landscape architect whose work has influenced the development of the Town, State, or Nation;
- F. Embodiment of elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship that render a landmark architecturally significant or structurally innovative;
- G. Unique location of singular physical characteristics that make a district or landmark an established or familiar visual feature; and
- H. Likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

## II. History of the Site and Physical Description

### Overview

The property overlooks Ferris Place – a residential street with other historic structures. The property sits on the eastern edge of a residential neighborhood and further east, the area transitions to mixed-use and non-residential uses (see **Figure 1**, **Figure 2**, and **Figure 3**).

There is Belgian block curbing, a grassed planting strip, and flagstone sidewalk slabs in the public right-of-way. There is one (1) street tree in the planting strip, and no overhead wires are present. There is a concrete driveway apron and sidewalk on the left (west) side of the house but no paved or gravel driveway (see **Figure 4**). The property is fairly flat with ample grass and plantings in the front and rear yards.

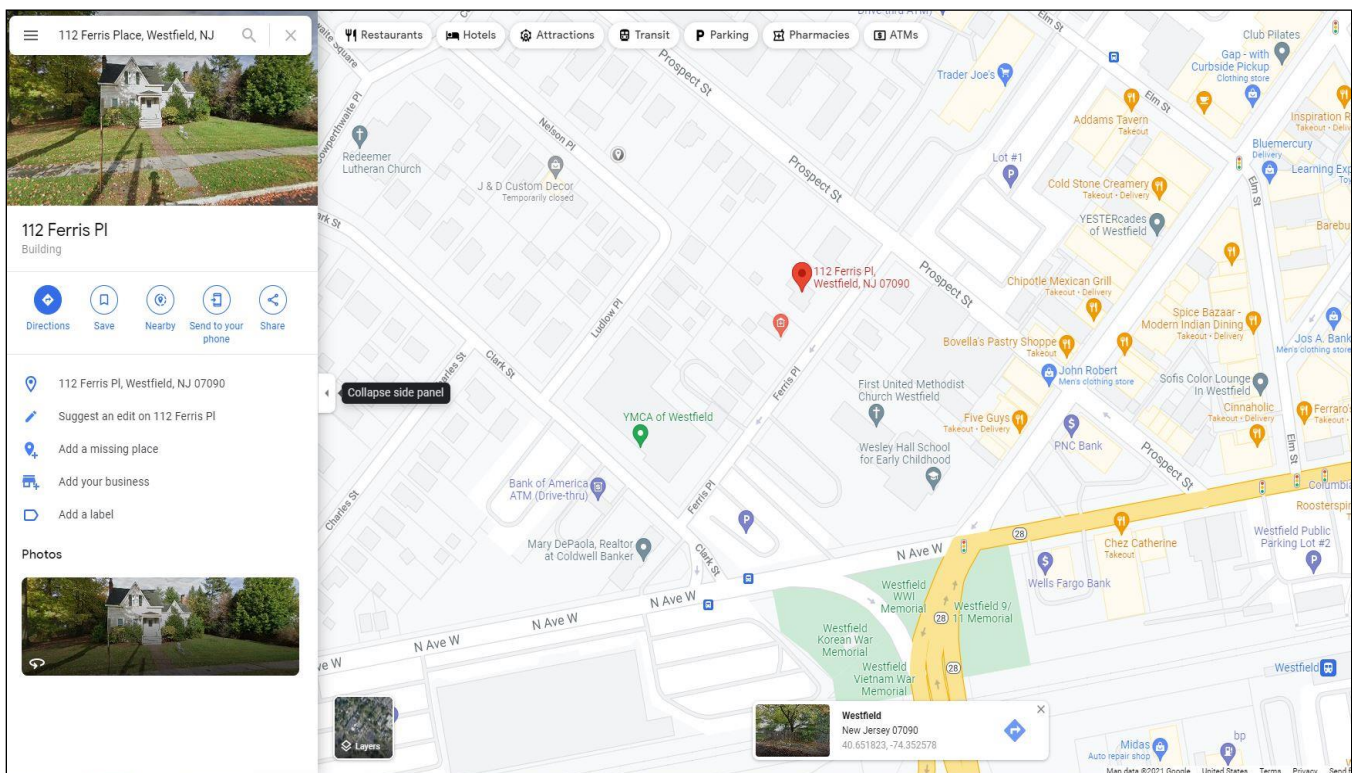


Figure 1. Location Map. Source: Google Maps, 2021.



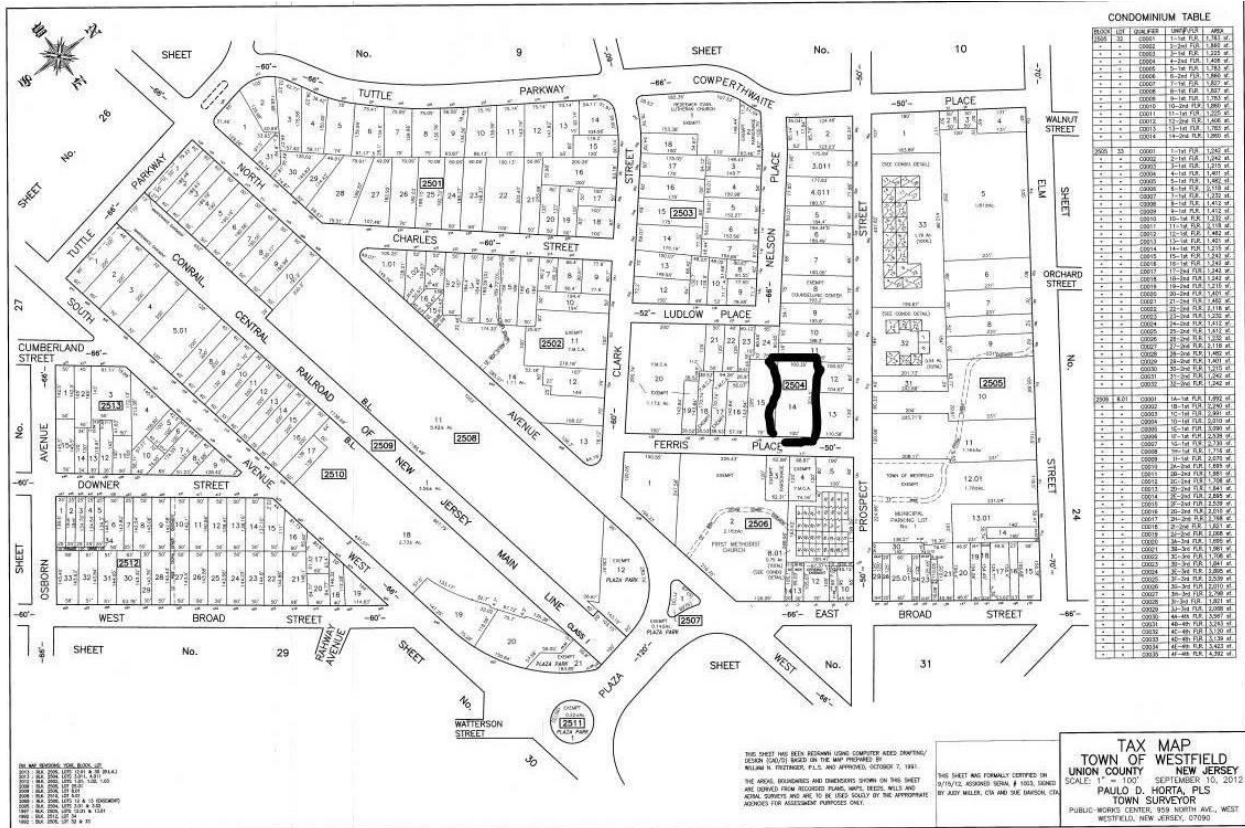


Figure 2. Block 2504, Lot 14: 112 Ferris Place. Source: Westfield Tax Map Sheet 25.

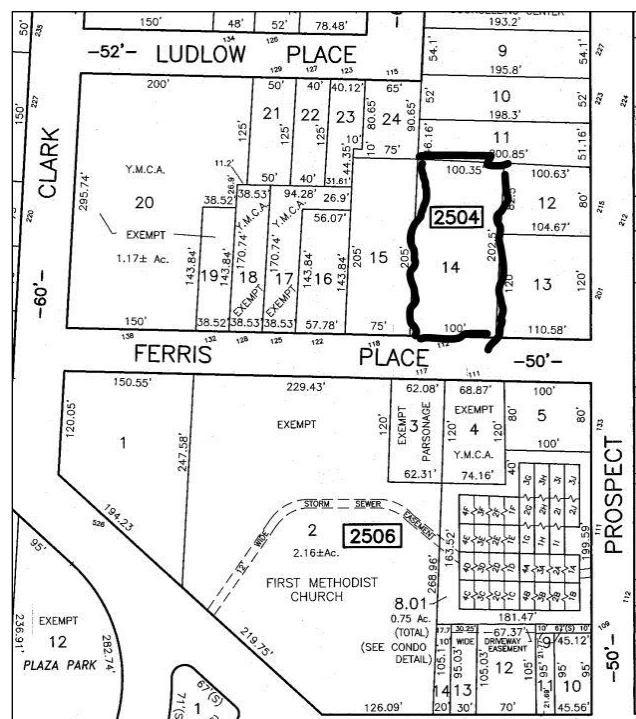


Figure 3. Block 2504, Lot 14: 112 Ferris Place. Source: Westfield Tax Map Sheet 25.





Figures 4 & 5. Street Views, October 2020.



### **III. Architectural Description**

#### **Summary Paragraph**

The Mills-Ferris-Pearsall House consists of four sections: (1. Westerly) a 2-story, 3-bay gabled, central block; (2. Easterly) a 1.5-story, 3-bay, gabled wing; (3. Northerly A) a 1-story, shed-roofed extension; and (4. Northerly B) a 1-story, cross-gabled extension. The overarching architectural style is vernacular Downingsque Gothic Revival. The mostly timber frame, clapboard house has approximately 2,021-square feet of floor area. The central block and wing were constructed circa 1750<sup>1</sup>. Notably, the larger central block was moved from Broad Street prior to 1862 to augment the small pre-existing house standing at this location. The joining of the two caused the pre-existing section to visually become a wing. Evidence suggests that at the time of the joining of these primary sections, the Downingsque Gothic Revival details were added. The two northerly extensions were added in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, other minor alterations were made. The property includes one outbuilding which possesses integrity from the mid-twentieth century and is therefore a contributing building.

#### **Exterior Description**

1. Westerly, 2-story, 3-bay, gabled central block. The foundation is brick above grade and has been parged. The south (front) elevation features a portico first-floor entrance supported by square columns, one-over-one windows on the first floor, and paired-arched windows on the upper floor (with period shutters). The siding is narrow wood clapboard throughout. The roof is steeply pitched, with a cross gable on the front. The east gable has a fully extant multipaned arched window above (with period shutters), and a single double-hung window below. The west gable has an exterior chimney stack, five windows, and matching return details for the boxed gutters. On the rear there is roofed porch, and a shed roof dormer.
2. Easterly, 1.5-story, 3-bay, gabled wing. The foundation is rough ashlar coursed stone. The south (front) elevation features a portico first-floor entrance, flanking one-over-one windows on the first floor, and an arched window on the upper floor. The siding on the south is early wide clapboard, with narrow wood clapboard above on the added gable. The East gable has two windows above, and narrow wood clapboard that marries into the siding of Northerly section A.
3. Northerly section A, 1-story shed-roofed extension. The visible foundation is rough random coursed stone. The roof is a low-pitched shed. A three-sectioned mullion window assembly is on the east, and a door and window are on the west. The siding is narrow wood clapboard.
4. Northerly section B, 1-story cross-gabled extension. The foundation is concrete masonry units. On the east there are four paired sliding windows, and a half-round window on the

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<sup>1</sup> Date used from Mr. Detwiller's 1974 letter. More study is required. There was no historic map or other documentary evidence found to corroborate this date of construction, however the physical evidence does not disprove this. A dendrochronology study should be undertaken as part of a Historic Structure Report in order to definitively date the house.



cross gable. On the north there are three paired sliding windows, and a half-round window on the cross gable. On the west there are three paired sliding windows, a door with a roofed porch, and a half-round window on the cross gable.

### **Architectural Details**

*“Evidence of its early Colonial construction evident in the beams in the basement of the larger portion of the structure through the rafter pinning using wooden dowels as well as the hand wrought rose head-ed nails in the attic floor indicate a possible date as early as 1730-1750. The smaller structure on the right may be even earlier. Butter-milk paint and a series of fireplace crane mounts previous to the current fireplace crane indicates an earlier age. The mantel piece is a fine example of 1730-50’s work with hand planing both in the mantle and in the old doors flanking the fireplace.” Charles H. Detwiller, Jr. Architect Plainfield May 31, 1974*

### **Interior Description**

The interior was assessed by the HPC and consultant on July 8, 2021, and they concurred with the 1974 assessment by architect Charles Detwiller, noting: that the beams in the basement and rafter pinning as well as hand wrought rose headed nails in the attic floor - indicating an early building (with a date of possibly as early as 1750 +/-). The floor beams in both the east and west sections are hand-hewn timbers, with logs interspersed (see Figure 6). The rafters in both sections are also hand-hewn timbers, which are joined with pegs, and have unique maker marks. The visible front cross gable framing is vertical mill-sawn and indicates pre-Civil War alterations at the time of the moving of the westerly section. The mantel piece in the westerly section parlor, and the trim are all consistent with the pre-Civil War Gothic Revival alterations. In the east section, the brick fireplace, crane pintails, and pattern of the 2 windows, and door are typical of a very early farmhouse style. The mantel in the east section is a handsome Federal example – and represents the single fine flourish in what was otherwise a primitive house.

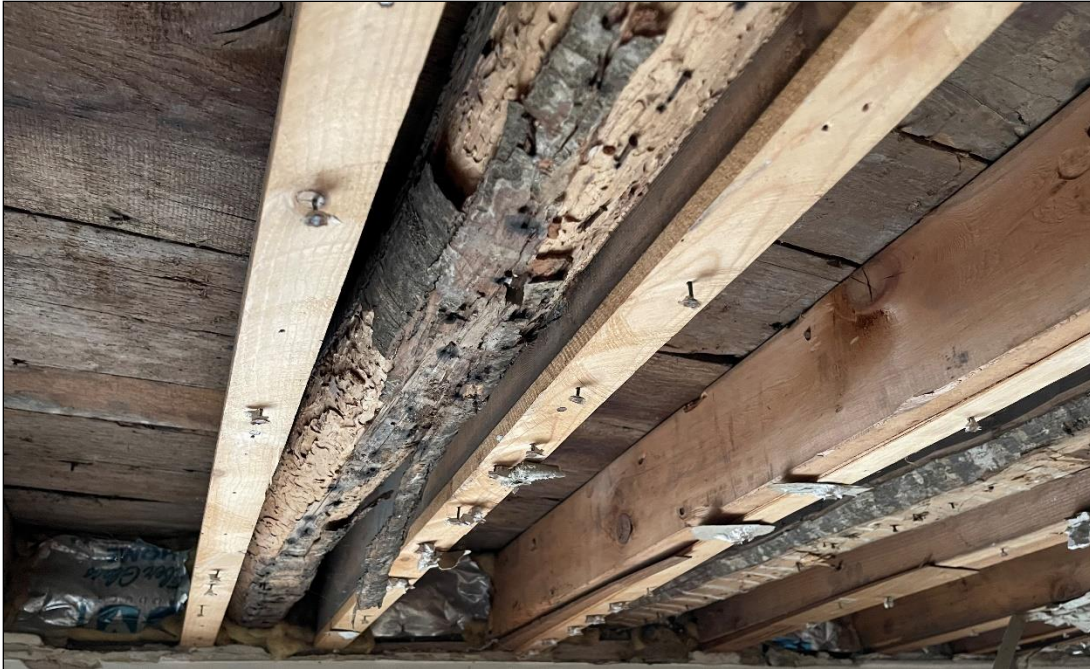


Figure 6. Basement beams, Barton Ross Architects, LLC. July, 2021

## Preserving the Mills / Ferris / Pearsall Home ca.1730-1750



### Architectural Detail:

"Evidence of its early Colonial construction evident in the beams in the basement of the larger portion of the structure through the rafter pinning using wooden dowels as well as the hand wrought rose headed nails in the attic floor indicate a possible date as early as 1730 - 1750. The smaller structure on the right may be even earlier. Butter-milk paint and a series of fireplace crane mounts previous to the current fireplace crane indicates an earlier age. The mantle piece is a fine example of 1730-50's work with hand planing both in the mantle and in the old doors flanking the fireplace."

Charles H. Detwiller, Jr. Architect Plainfield May 31, 1974

### History of Town & Home:

- Town of Westfield or the "West Fields of Elizabethtown" date back to 1720 and served as the agricultural breadbasket for Elizabethtown, established in 1664 by King Charles II. Westfield protected its history, until the last several years, when builders began targeting many of the remaining pre-revolutionary homes for new development.

Built circa 1730-1740, this early colonial home, built by Joseph & Elias Mills stands as an architectural remembrance to Westfield's Colonial past.

- As part of the 45 acres originally established by Joseph Mills extending from Broad Street to Dudley Avenue, the remaining farm was later purchased by James R. Ferris (1858). Ferris took two homes ca. 1730 and ca. 1750 and joined them together to create this farmhouse Gothic structure for his family in 1857. His daughter May Ferris Pearsall and her descendants continually lived in the home until Helen Pearsall, May's daughter, died at 94 years old.



Shown during Pearsall Family  
residence



Rear reflects newer addition



Pearsall Family

*Westfield is in the heart of New Jersey*



Figure 7. Poster advocating for the preservation of the subject property.



#### IV. Ownership and Development History

The joined historic sections of the house are the result of the marrying of two very early dwellings prior to the Civil War. The west section is the moved section, and the east section has always been at this location.

The first indication for the existence of the east section is the 1850 wall map *J. C. Sidney. 'Map of Essex County, New Jersey, with the Names of Property Owners &c. from Actual Surveys'* (Newark: Hiram A. Belding, 1850). This cadastral map (showing land ownership), like many others, was created by a publisher with the intent of selling numerous copies. The map publishers of the day would advertise that those who purchased advanced copies would have their names and houses shown. Research has proven that with some of these maps more houses were left off - than included. This is very likely the case here. The east section is extremely small and without great flourish – indicating a low social standing – and thus the owner was very unlikely willing to pay to show off the modest home. The map does oddly show a lane (an unofficial street) with no logical purpose other than to go to a farmstead. The lane was very likely there to access what is today part of 112 Ferris Place. Today, this lane is Prospect Street. This house, like many other early dwellings, faced south for solar light - and unlike our modern homes - did not always face a street or lane.

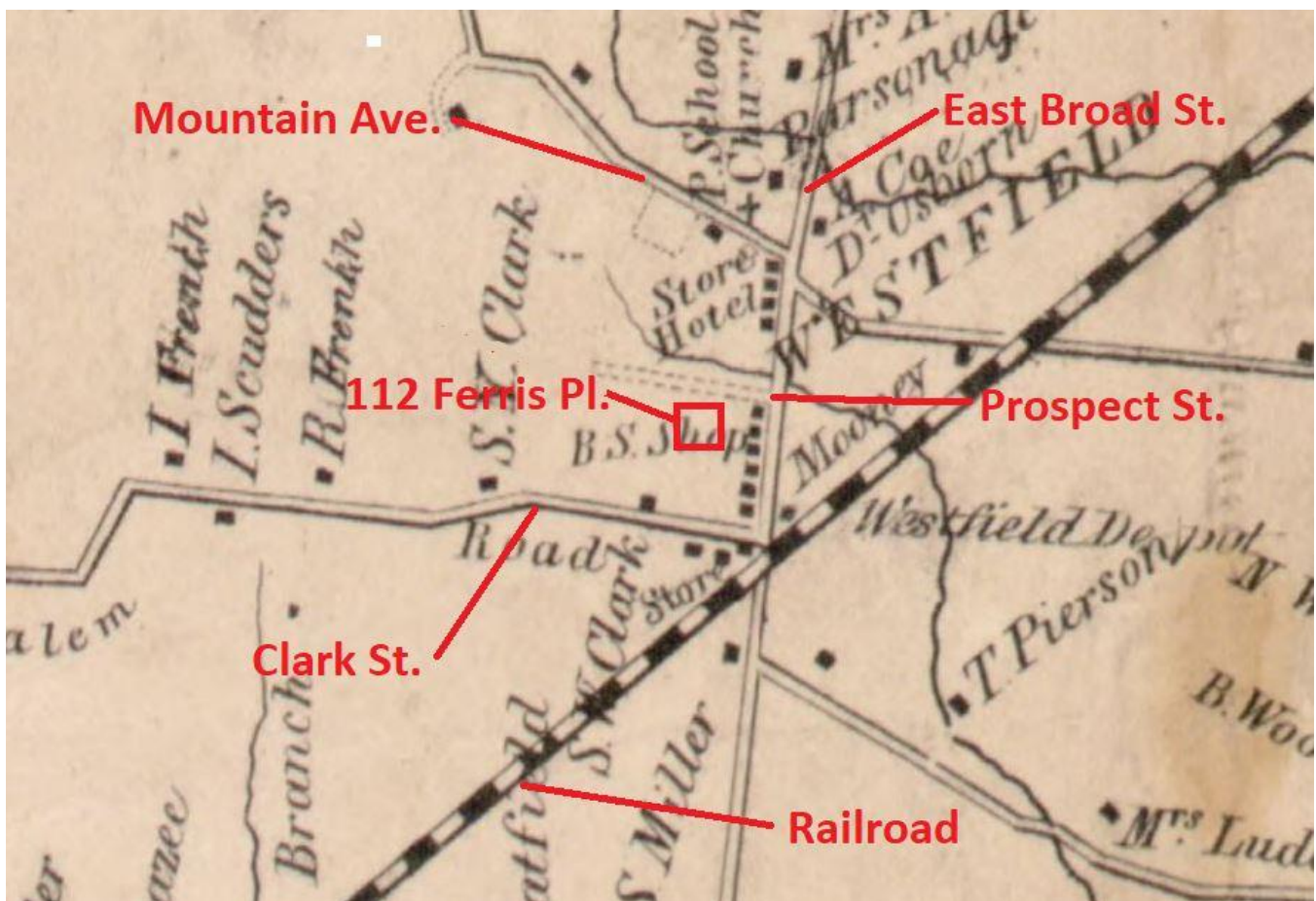


Figure 7. The 1850 map showing Prospect St. as a farm lane, and the location of 112 Ferris Pl.



What we know is that Josiah Seymour Ferris, Jr. operated a store in New York City, got married, started a family, and then moved to Westfield where in 1862 he is the owner of the house at 112 Ferris Place, and he works as a merchant. What we must surmise is that either the turmoil of the Civil War in New York City, or the general thought that the city is not a great place to raise a family causes him to move to Westfield. Perhaps it was an invitation to join his brother in business and be closer to his parents (who also were in Westfield). Nevertheless, we find Josiah, by 1862, is now in this then up and coming suburban town.

Consider the fact that Josiah is a merchant, his brother (and store) is on Broad Street – he would naturally want to own a house near his work. He purchases the very small house off Prospect Street, but it is not big enough (nor does it meet his standing in the community as a merchant). So, he acquires a dwelling that according to records stood on the north side of Broad Street and east of Prospect, built before the Revolution, and may have been built by Joseph Mills around 1750 or earlier. That dwelling is moved to the property he owns and joined to the existing structure – thus more than doubling the size of the original home.

This increase in size is not good enough for his social status, so in conjunction with simply joining the two houses – Josiah improves upon them by making the joined houses look as one in the then very popular Gothic Revival style. The house then remained in the Ferris family, transferring to a daughter who married into the Pearsall family where it stayed until the mid-1990's.

Figure 9. 1990 Newspaper photo of Helen Pearsall the last Ferris family member to own the house – thus ending over 130 years of ownership. The Westfield Record, Vol. 1, No. 11. Wednesday, November 21, 1990.





The earliest known clear image of the house is unfortunately, undated, and shows only a partial view of the west gable (see figure 10 below). The view is from the north looking south toward Ferris Place, and the house across the street (#115) is clearly in view – the subject house is at the left. This image, although however limited, is of great value, as it gives evidence of the early age of the west section and offers an architectural clue to a full-length veranda on the south façade.

In the image, in the upper left-hand corner (noted with an arrow), a nine-over-six pane window is evident. The nine-over-six pane window style was largely abandoned as unfashionable shortly after the Revolution, and in this case the early window was likely retained as it was not on the primary façade (and probably was simply still functional). The windows on the primary street façade were likely upgraded to be consistent with the then stylish Gothic Revival look that was created with the unification of the east and west sections.

In the upper center of the photo (noted with an arrow), one can see the west edge of the roof of a full-length veranda on the south façade of the west section. The existence of the veranda is confirmed on the 1901 Sanborn map (figure 12). Such a veranda is in keeping with the stylistic theme drawn from an extremely popular pattern book of the early-19<sup>th</sup> century (see figure 11).



Figure 10. Undated photo showing part of 112 Ferris Place, and members of the Pearsall family.

Before the days of a plethora of trained architects, homeowners who wanted to make their homes stylish – would simply hire a local builder. Those builders would have access to pattern books that were widely printed, and from which design themes were drawn. These builders would usually draw their own designs. And in doing so incorporate elements of the published style in a vernacular way that both meet the owner’s budget – and the builder’s range of talent (and limits).

One extremely popular pattern book was by Andrew Jackson Downing, the father of America’s Gothic Revival style. His 1842 book *Cottage residences, or, A series of designs for rural cottages and cottage villas, and their gardens and grounds: adapted to North America* was widely distributed. Countless adaptations of the designs in the book were built during the time of the style’s popularity (1840-1880). In the instance of 112 Ferris Place, we can see that the local builder was creating a variation of “Design II” (figure 9, page 50a in Downing’s “Cottage” book). The 112 Ferris Place house when it was upgraded into the Gothic Revival style, circa 1862, incorporated the prominent cross gable, the paired windows in the gable, and the veranda of the Downing design – albeit in a local vernacular capacity.



Figure 11. “Design II” from Andrew Jackson Downing’s 1842 “Cottage” book.



Prior to 1901, the house was enlarged with a third section, an extension to the north with a shed roof. This allowed more floor space in what was in essence - a two-room house on the main living floor. In addition, a rear porch was added across the rear of the west section. The no longer extant veranda across the front of the west section of the house is confirmed on this map.

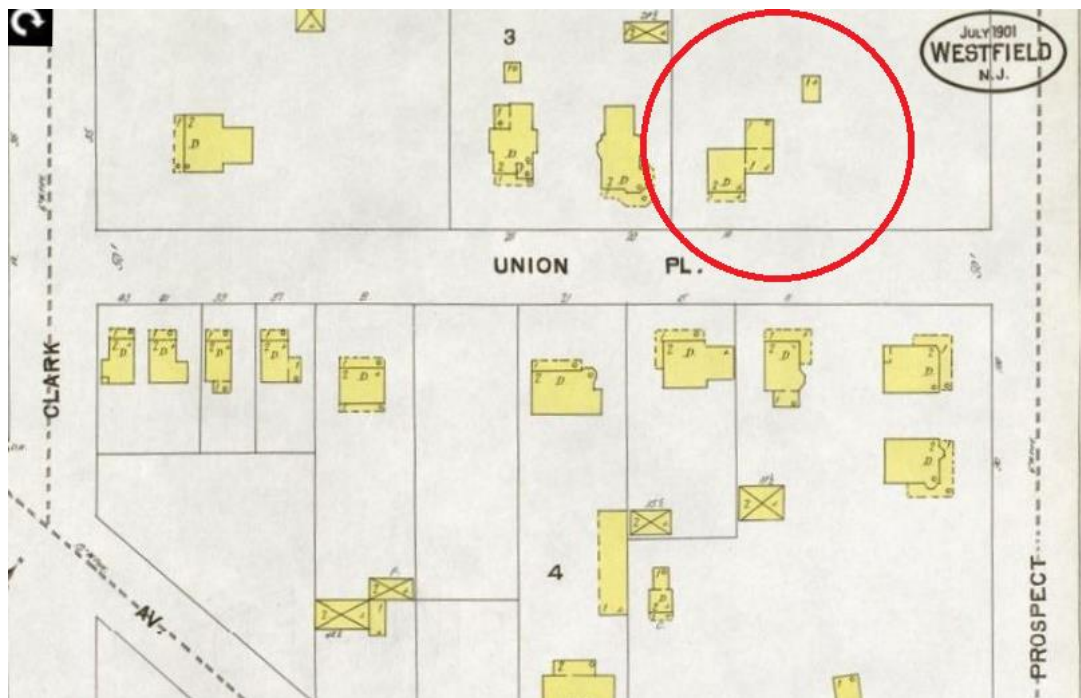


Figure 12. 1901 Sanborn Map



Figure 13. 1937 rear view of 112 Ferris Place. Photo by Lauren L. McMaster.



Between 1901 and 1916, a small addition was constructed to the north side of the north extension (it is no longer extant).

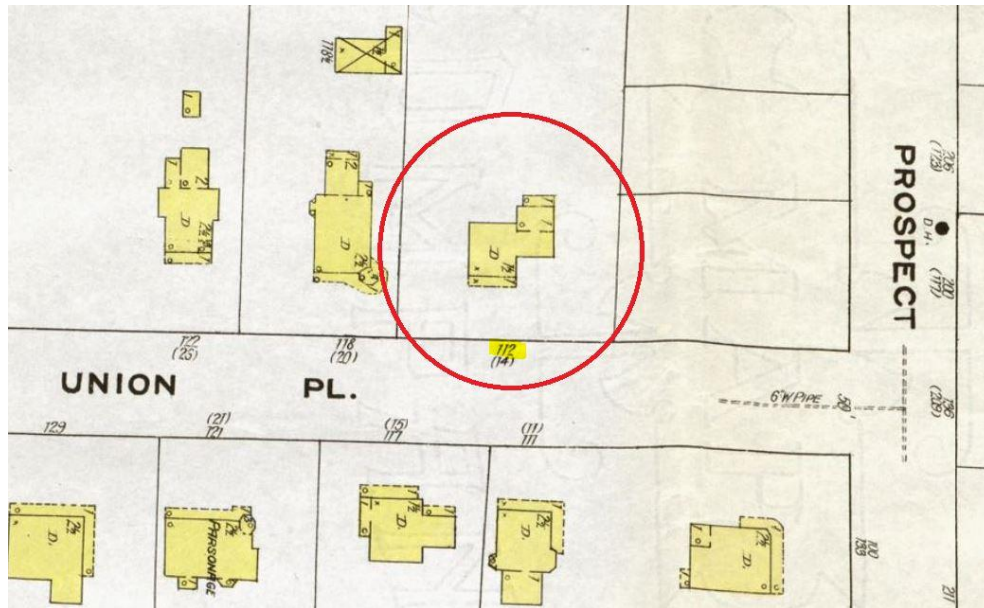


Figure 14. 1916 Sanborn Map.

Between 1916 and 1921 the porch across the front of the west section house was replaced with a portico, and a portico was added to the east section (both extant today). And the north extension was unified.

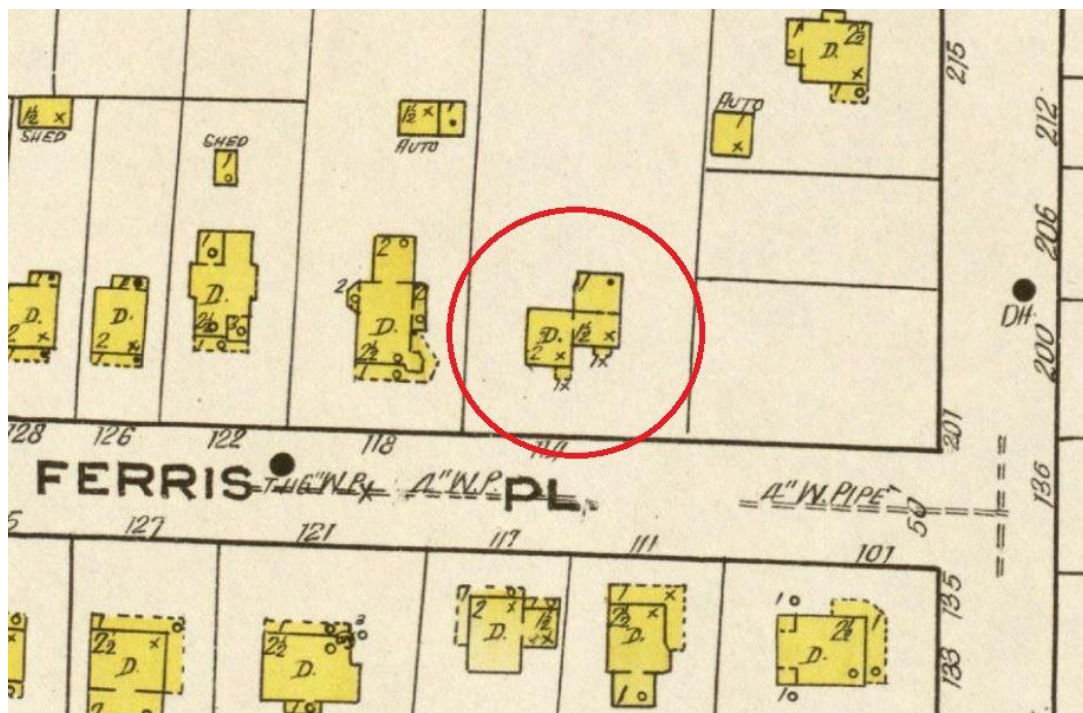
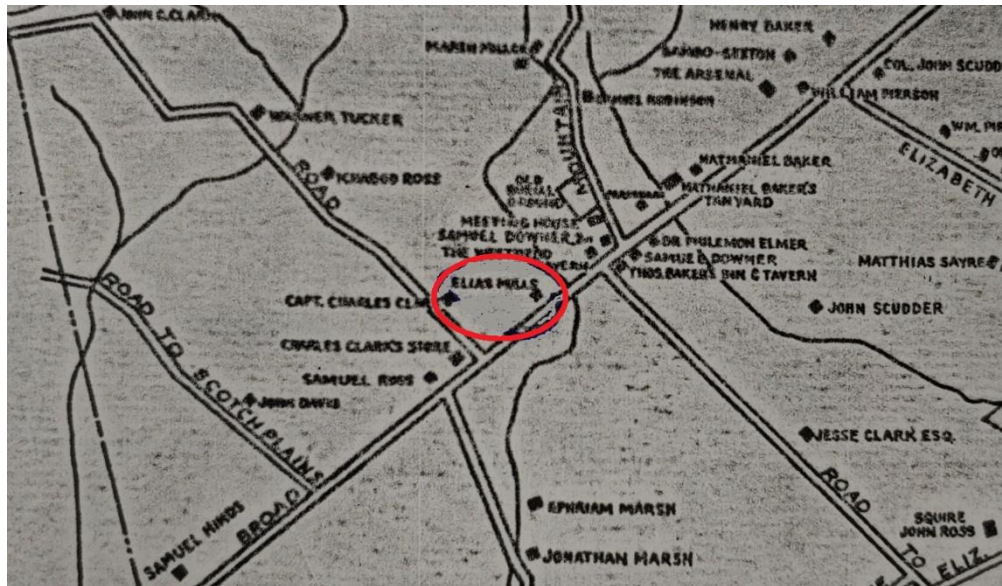
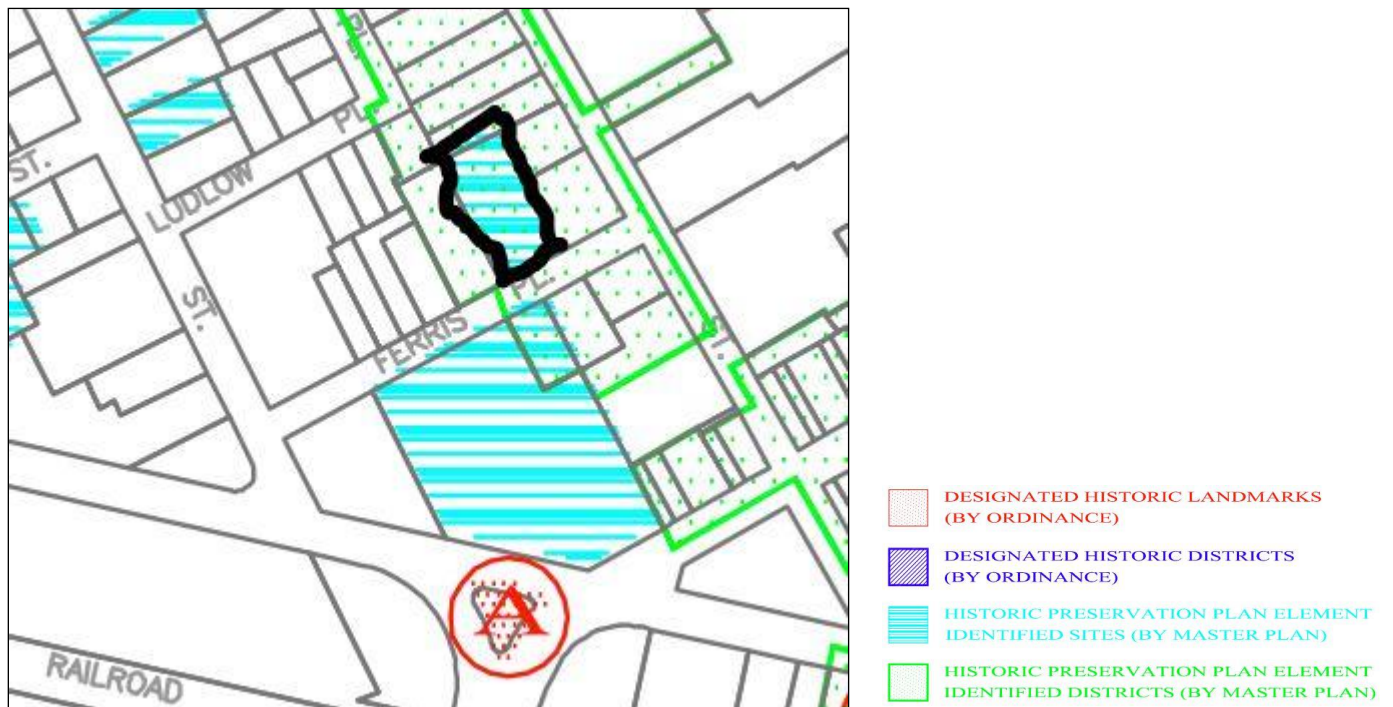


Figure 12. 1921 Sanborn Map.

## V. Historic Maps and Photographs



"The Olde Towne 1740-1800" Map prepared by Pearson Greaves, 1937 with the Elias Mills house noted. It is this early structure that evidence notes as the relocated west section of the house at 112 Ferris Place.



Historic Preservation Map, July 1, 2008, latest revision: September 10, 2020.



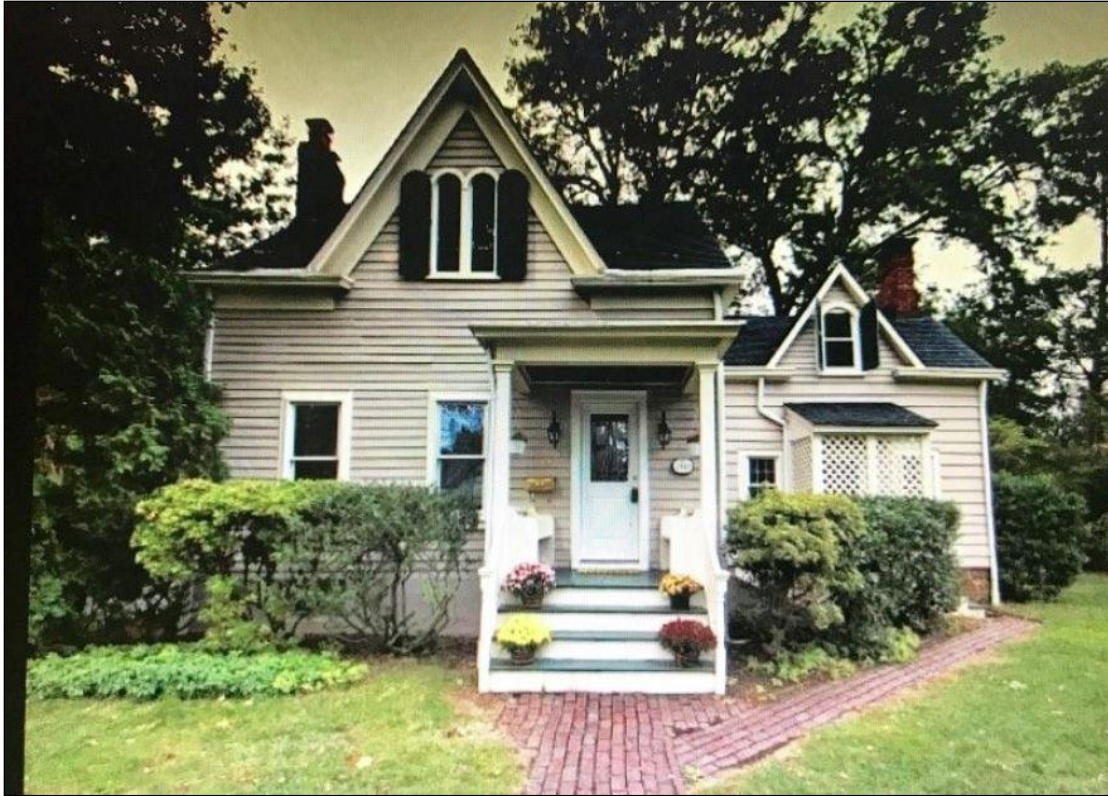


Unknown artist rendering, 1950.



Pearsall Family residence. Artist rendering by O'Neill, 1990.





Circa 2011 view of front façade from the south. Source: Realtor.com.



Circa 2011 three-quarter view from the southeast. Source: Realtor.com

## **VERY PRETTY HOME WEDDING**

**Miss Katherine Pearsall Be-  
comes the Bride of Dr.  
Lindley H. Leggett**

*Standard 11/15/18*

On Friday evening, November eighth, the home of Mrs. Edgar R. Pearsall, 112 Ferris place, was the scene of a very pretty wedding when her daughter Miss Katherine Morgan Pearsall was married to Dr. Lindley Hoag Leggett, son of Mr. and Mrs. Lindley H. Leggett, of Mountain avenue, this town. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. G. Franklin Ream, D. D., a former pastor of the First Methodist church of Westfield.

The bride was attractively attired in white crepe de chine with tulle veil and orange blossoms and carried a large bouquet of bride roses. The maid of honor, Miss Helen Pearsall, a sister of the bride, wore a gown of delicate pink georgette crepe with bead trimming, and carried a bouquet of lavender chrysanthemums. Little Jean Pearsall, the bride's niece, and little Charlotte Valentine, of Haddonfield, New Jersey, a cousin of the bridegroom, were the flower girls. Robed in dainty white organdie gowns with huge butterfly sashes and carrying tiny shower bouquets of pink rosebuds, fern and baby ribbon, they won the hearts and admiration of all present.

Lieutenant Chester B. Pearsall, a brother of the bride, was the best man.

The house was prettily decorated with green and autumn foliage, white chrysanthemums, and the national colors.

About ninety guests were present, consisting of relatives and a few intimate friends of the young couple from Virginia, Maryland, New York and nearby towns.

Many beautiful gifts bore evidence of the kind remembrance and esteem of their friends.

Amidst a shower of confetti and good wishes Dr. and Mrs. Leggett left at a late hour for a trip to southern points of interest.

Wedding Announcement. Union County Standard, November 15, 1918



1700

# The Olde Towne

1894

## A BROCHURE OF WESTFIELD, NEW JERSEY

SKETCHES of old Home Folks  
that disclose the character and  
traditions of an Anglo-Saxon Com-  
munity in Colonial times.

INCORPORATED in this volume  
is a map of The Olde Towne by  
Pearson Greaves, together with  
photographs by Lauren L. McMaster  
of houses built between 1740 and  
1800, churches, schools and other  
public buildings. The cover design  
and drawings were done by John  
J. Leiss.

PRICE \$2.00

ROBERT V. HOFFMAN

*Prepared and Published by*

• 592 Terrace Place •  
New York Office: 24 Stone Street

Westfield, N. J.

The Olde Towne 1700-1894, A Brochure of Westfield, New Jersey. 1937



## The Olde Towne

Littell in 1788, was the mother of fourteen children, and died, 1855, in her 85th year.

### The Collins House

The Collins house is said to be one of the oldest on the mountain top, within the limits of the old town. It stands on the New Providence Road, a short distance from the Badgley farm, where the Presbyterian Sunday School first met. Like most of the houses of the period, it was built in two sections: the first, or west side, about 1790, possibly by Jacob Clark, for his daughter Sarah, who married the Irish immigrant, John Collins. The East side was added by Noah Collins, a son, in 1831.

John Collins and his wife are buried in the old Presbyterian grave yard. She lived to be 101 years old. She was the grandmother of J. Hervey Townley, of Westfield, aged 91 (father of Isaac, William and Moreland Townley) and his sister, Mrs. Cornelia D. Johnson, of Elizabeth, aged 101. Another grandson, Andrew Jackson Collins, who was born and still lives in the old home, is eighty-nine years old. The late Edwin Ralph Collins, one time editor of the Westfield Leader, and father of County Engineer Roi. C. Collins, was also a grandson.

### The Ferris House

The home of Mrs. May Ferris Pearsall, on Ferris Place, first stood on the north side

of Broad Street, east of Prospect. It was doubtless built before the Revolution, though its builder is not known. Elias Mills owned 45 acres of land, extending from Broad Street to what is now Dudley Avenue, in 1800, and this may have been a house built by his father, Joseph Mills, the pioneer.

Mrs. Pearsall was born in the house in 1857, and, in the following year, her father, James R. Ferris, bought most of the land in the original Mills tract and built his residence on Broad Street next to the Methodist church. His property extended along the westerly side of Prospect Street (then a lane), as far north as the present Dudley Avenue. (Neither of these thoroughfares was completed until after the Civil War.)

Mr. Ferris' holdings also included the triangular block opposite his residence, and the Arcanum Building, on the southeast corner of Broad and Prospect Streets, which he built in the '70's. The second floor of this building contained the town's largest auditorium. On the ground floor, Broad Street side, was the dry goods store of Geo. L. Van Emburg & Son, and in the rear, on Prospect Street, the offices of The Westfield Leader, founded by Professor Edwin Francis, principal of schools, and rival of Editor Alfred E. Pearsall, of The Union County Standard. The building and both newspaper plants were destroyed in the great fire of January, '92.



Collins House on the mountain top.



The Ferris House, rear view.





## OLD FOLKS AND OLD HOUSES

### A Chip Off the Old Block

William H. Pierson Jr. followed in his Grandfather Downer's footsteps from the cradle to the grave. First, he took lessons at the general store and was such a great help in selling odd lots of mid-winter underwear to farmers in mid-summer that his grandfather turned the business over to him when he retired in '85. After that he succeeded his grandsire as postmaster, realtor, politician and office holder, and although he was not connected with a bank or railroad, as his grandfather had been, some years after the old gentleman's death, when steam engines could travel faster than Dave Miller's trotters, he sold a half-acre strip of land along the railroad tracks, west of Westfield Avenue, to the New Jersey Central for \$1000—which sum would have bought 200 acres of the best farm land in the Township in Samuel Downer's time.

### "Aunt Cecelia" Condit's House

The old house still standing on the south side of Ferris Place, on land which was once in James R. Ferris'

spacious backyard, was the home of Miss Cecelia Condit for fifty years. Miss Condit purchased it from William H. Pierson in 1866. It was one of the first houses in the Mills' tract, and once stood in the field back of Captain Clark's, probably facing south.

### Grandma Pearsall's House

The house—or what appears to be two story-and-a-half cottages joined together—facing south on Ferris Place, is very old. Judging from the differences in materials and construction—the smaller cottage was built in Colonial days; its larger counterpart, the west wing, probably after 1700, when the windows in the roof were added. The plot of ground (100 x 200) on which it stands was in the center of the Elias Mills farm which James R. Ferris bought from Aaron Ball in 1855. Mrs. Ferris conveyed it to her daughter, Mary (Mrs. Edgar R. Pearsall) in 1880, and it was "Grandma" Pearsall's home until her recent death at the age of 93. It is now owned and occupied by her daughter, Helen.

## THE WESTFIELD TRUST COMPANY



1892

ASSETS EXCEED  
\$18,000,000

1950

THE OLDEST BANKING INSTITUTION IN WESTFIELD

Broad and Elm Sts.

Westfield, N. J.



Member Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation

ROBERT V. RUFFMAN

9/7/50

"Old Folks and Old Houses, September 7, 1950

3  
CHARLES H. DETWILLER, JR.—ARCHITECT  
120 DEPOT PARK PLAINFIELD, N. J. 07060

May 31, 1974

Mrs. Joseph Pate  
546 Boulevard  
Westfield, N. J.

Dear Betty:

Mrs. Helen Pearsall of 112 Ferris Place asked me to take a look at her house to see about what age it might be. It is beautifully maintained and in an attractive setting. It was evidently moved from Broad Street about 1850 to its present location. The "lean-to" on East end removed at that time.

Main part of house has been altered on first floor around 1820<sup>±</sup>. Greek Revival traces. However, the beams in basement and rafter pinning as well as hand wrought rose headed nails in attic floor would indicate it much earlier possibly 1740<sup>±</sup>.

The little low wing appears to be even earlier, altho impossible to check beams because of no access to crawl sapce. Rafters are smaller and nailed nearest main part of house, but this could have been replaced.

The brick fireplace, crane and pattern of the 2 windows and door are typical of very early farm house style. Mantle piece is fine example of circa 1730-50 mantle. Ceiling beams covered, so can't tell if planed (batten) old doors flanking fireplace. Early hand planing marks quite plain.

Main part of house:

- Living room - some window panes of old glass
- Bedroom - Buttermilk paint
- Attic - Old floor boards
- Roof beams on main part, put together with pegs.

Mrs. Pearsall calls the following other items to our attention:

In Dining Room old floor boards were beveled down about 1/2", where worn. New floor was put directly over old one.

Fireplace in Living room had 2 mounts for crane before the present one was put in.

Thought this should be added to your old house file and Westfield listing.

Regards,

*Charles H. Detwiller, Jr.*  
Charles H. Detwiller, Jr.

CHD/vm

Letter from Architect Charles H. Detwiller, Jr., May 31, 1974





W. B. Shafer  
233-4383

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

11/13/90

PRE-REVOLUTIONARY HOMESTEAD RECOGNIZED

Commissioned by the Westfield Historical Society, Warren Township artist, William T. Halsey, has designed and crafted a plaque designating this residence on Ferris Place as a pre-revolutionary landmark. Presentation of the plaque to Miss Helen Pearsall, owner of the house, was made on Tuesday, November 13, with officers of the Society and the artist in attendance.

This 18th-century house is yet another pre-revolutionary homestead still standing in Westfield. It is believed that the structure, originally situated on the north side of Broad Street and east of Prospect, may have been built by Joseph Mills around 1750 or perhaps somewhat earlier. In 1857 Mrs. May Ferris Pearsall was born here; the following year her father, James R. Ferris, bought most of the original Mills tract (45 acres of land extending from Broad Street to what is now Dudley Avenue). Mr. Ferris's holdings also included the triangular block opposite his residence, now the site of 1st Nationwide Bank. The original Arcanum Building was located there on the southeast corner of Broad and Prospect Streets. The second floor of the Arcanum contained Westfield's largest auditorium and the ground floor housed the offices of The Westfield Leader, founded by Professor

WESTFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY · BOX 613, WESTFIELD, NJ 07091

Westfield Historical Society Press Release. November 13, 1990



PRE-REVOLUTIONARY HOMESTEAD RECOGNIZED - cont'd

Edwin Francis, Principal of Schools and rival of Alfred E. Pearsall, Editor of The Union County Standard. That building and both newspaper plants were destroyed in the great fire of January 1892.

The Ferris House, which was moved to its present location around 1900, is beautifully maintained and furnished. Early hand-planing marks are visible on basement beams; rafter pinning (with pegs) and hand-wrought rose-headed nails in the attic flooring are further evidence attesting to the age of this house. In the dining room a brick fireplace with its crane and its fine mantelpiece is typical of very early farmhouse style. Some of the window panes in the living room are of the old glass.

The plaque, an original design by Mr. Halsey, complements the antiquity of the house, featuring "CIRCA 1750" embellished on a slab of wood salvaged from the flooring of an old farmhouse, and believed to be long-leaf yellow pine.

WBS





Photo by Daryl Stone

**FERRIS HOUSE:** where Miss Helen Pearsall lives has a rich history and has been beautifully maintained and furnished. She sits in her favorite room. Pre-revolutionary structure was recognized by Westfield Historical Society. Related photo on page A-1.

## This old house

(Continued from page A-1)

Society curator William B. Shafer reports that the structure may have been built by Joseph Mills around 1750 or perhaps somewhat earlier. In 1857 Mrs. May Ferris Pearsall was born in it and the following year her father bought most of the original Mills tract of 45 acres which extended from Broad to what is now Dudley Avenue.

Ferris's holdings also included the triangular block opposite his residence, now the site of 1st Nationwide Bank. The original Arcanum Building was located there on the southeast corner of Broad and Prospect streets. The second floor of the Arcanum contained Westfield's largest auditorium and the ground floor housed the offices of the Westfield Leader, founded by professor Edwin

Francis, principal of schools and rival of Alfred E. Pearsall, editor of the Union County Standard. That building and both newspaper plants were destroyed in the great fire of January 1892.

The Ferris House is beautifully maintained and furnished. Early hand-planing marks are visible on basement beams. Rafter pinning with pegs and hand-wrought rose-headed nails in the attic flooring are further evidence attesting to the age of the house, Shafer reported. In the dining room a brick fireplace with its crane and its fine mantel piece is typical of very early farmhouse style. Some of the window panes in the living room are of the old glass.

Halsey, who designed and crafted the plaque, is a Westfield native who now lives in Warren Township.

*W' parking expansion plan*

The Westfield Record, Vol. 1, No. 11. Wednesday, November 21, 1990 (continued)





Aero-view of Westfield, N.J. 1929, showing an artist rendering of 112 Ferris Place (note the artist made the house a full two stories).