

26 Evergreen Avenue
New London, Connecticut

In 1890, a tract of land consisting of seventeen acres in New London and one acre in Waterford was purchased by Julia and Ludowick Leeds (1845-1908) from Sophia Crocker. Sophia was a sixth generation descendent of Thomas Crocker (b.1633 in England or Massachusetts) and Rachel Chappell. Thomas arrived in New London circa 1660 and was part of many land transactions, both buying and selling. He also became active in community affairs and received several political appointments. We can assume that this tract was part of land purchased earlier by the Crocker family, quite possibly by Thomas.

Ludovick Leeds came from an early New London family. With his brother and children, he had a building company in New London and was also a builder in other cities. It was the Leeds family who first developed Evergreen Avenue and who built #26.

Various mortgage deeds were recorded in the New London Land Records following the purchase of the land by the Leeds. It was subdivided, and the proposed new street (Evergreen) was laid out. Julia and Ludowick sold the lots and built houses on parcels measuring 50 x 170 feet on both sides of the new street running west from Ocean Avenue. However, in the early 1890s there was a "boom and bust" situation where owners of these lots were forced to sell back their land in payment to Ludowick Leeds for his contracting work done in building the new houses, and so, once again, he regained the land and buildings. Since water was connected to 26 Evergreen Avenue in October, 1891, it appears that Leeds built the house during this year. Charles A. Rockwell bought this lot with buildings that same month.

Charles Rockwell, a contractor and Union soldier in the 21st Infantry (1862-1863), along with a group of notable New London investors, retained ownership of 26 Evergreen Avenue from 1891 until 1893 when the Savings Bank of New London took possession of the property in a foreclosure deal. Included in this group were Captain Andrew Jackson Comstock (1828-1910), a famous sailing master for over half a century and part of an illustrious family of seamen, and George Thompson who was also well known in New London and engaged in the express business for many years. William Astheimer, a cigar manufacturer and dealer whose business was on Bank Street, was the last investor in this grouping. His name appeared in an article in 1902 in *The Day* connected to the schooner Mary H. Brockway, built in 1891, which was found totally wrecked during its voyage carrying coal to Nassau. Unfortunately, Astheimer had bought the schooner as a wreck and at considerable expense brought her back to first class condition. He was the owner along with its captain who survived the disaster. It is thought that the ship struck a submerged coral reef.

In 1893, a few months after its "purchase", the Savings Bank of New London sold the property to William H. Havens. It appears that Havens and his wife bought the home as an investment since they lived on 7 Evergreen Avenue. Havens was an agent with the White Sewing Machine Company, located on Bank Street. The company was founded in 1858 in Templeton, Massachusetts and won numerous awards at international expositions, including the 1889 Universelle Exposition in Paris in

the 1920s. By the 1930s, all Sears sewing machines were Whites rebadged as Kenmore and other house brands. Havens and his wife, Mary, sold the property to William Learned in 1900. Captain Havens died in 1908 at the age of 70. He is buried in Cedar Grove Cemetery.

Walter Learned, a native of New London and a well known financier, was descended from famous old families on both his mother's and father's side. He was president of the New London Gas and Electric Company, vice president and treasurer of the New London Savings Bank, and a member of the American Folklore Society. Besides being established in the financial field, Learned also authored and translated several works written by the French poet and novelist Francois Coppee, the most well known ("Coppee's Ten Tales") of which was published in 1892. He also published several treasuries of favorite poems and sent verse to the *NY Evening Post* as well as other literary publications. Learned never lived at 26 Evergreen, and quickly sold it back to Mary E. Havens, widow of William in 1900. Learned died on Dec.15,1915, at the age of 68 and is buried in Cedar Grove Cemetery.

During Mary's time of ownership, she became widowed and remarried Roswell Burrows. According to the 1920 census, she and Roswell actually lived at 26 Evergreen Avenue until 1940 when she sold the property to Mary K Jenner.

This short history was prepared by Janet Berggren for New London Landmarks. It is based on property/ deed information provided by Thomas Couser, plaque researcher, and on census, newspaper, and directory information available through Ancestry. com.