**180 Ocean Avenue**

**New London, CT**

It appears that 180 Ocean Avenue was built in 1922. It’s first owner occupant was 55-year-old Annie K. Shiels, who was a naturalized American citizen hailing from England. She resided on Ocean Avenue with her husband Walter, a native of Scotland, who was a floor walker and credit manager for the James A. Hislop Co. for more than 35 years. In 1924, Walter died suddenly at home. In 1930, Annie sold another house on Stuart Avenue, but she held onto 180 Ocean Avenue which was valued at $11,000 (approximately $208k in 2024 dollars). According to the 1930 U.S. Census, Annie let out rooms in 180 Ocean Avenue– in that year her roomers were a teacher and a WWI Veteran who was a real estate broker. Annie was sociable -- often winning prizes in local bridge tournaments, participating in the woman’s auxiliary of the Oswegatchie Community Chapel, and in 1936 a girls’ trip to Newport RI with her friends was noted in The Day. Annie would remain the owner of 180 Ocean Avenue until 1944, when she sold it to Israel M. Resnikoff.

Israel Milton Resnikoff, born on October 30, 1919, in New London, Connecticut. He graduated from the Bulkeley School in 1937. He attended Trinity College for a year before returning to New London to manage his family's business. The 25-year-old Israel bought the home to start his life with his soon-to-be wife, Joy Hellman, who he married in February 1945. The couple would welcome three children--Ina, Henry, and Laura – to their home. He initially ran the Prudential Clothing Store, a family-owned haberdashery on Bank Street in New London. Known for his innovative "suit club," he enabled many young men to purchase their first suits through affordable weekly payments – 1 dollar a week. In 1957, he closed the clothing store to establish Greg's Discount Department Store in Groton, followed by State Fair in Groton, located at the site of the current Wal-Mart. Transitioning into real estate development around 1960, Resnikoff partnered with David T. Chase of Hartford in 1968. Together, they developed shopping centers, apartments, residential projects, and hotels across Southern New England. Israel was able to do all this despite his long battle with glaucoma and associated eye problems. He was blind in one eye and had severely hampered sight in his remaining eye.

The family was active in New London's Jewish community. The Resnikoffs were members of Congregation Beth El. Joy was the President of B’Nai B’rith and she hosted several Junior B’nai B’rith socials at 180 Ocean Avenue, with The Day reporting on one of the programs -- its speakers, songs, humorous poem recital and the election of group officials followed by refreshments. Israel acted as Rabbi at Congregation Beth El in the 1960s, was the VP of New London Zionist District, and Chairman of the local chapter of Zionist Organization of America. He was also involved with the O'Have Shalom Cemetery Association Board for most of his life.

The Resnikoffs sell the house to Morris Bobick in April 1976. Morris, a Russian-born immigrant, was an electrician at General Dynamics Corp and Electric Boat Co. However, his service to the Jewish community was the focus of his life. He dedicated his life to Jewish liturgical music, serving as cantor and spiritual leader in five states. He found ways to serve globally– serving as a military cantor in Israel between 1975 and 1977, under the chief cantor in Tel Aviv. It appears that his tenure at 180 Ocean Avenue was a period time after his divorce from his first wife, Adrienne Moses, and his marriage to his second wife, Margarete Vogel, who he met while serving the **Kodimoh Synagogue in Springfield,** Massachusetts. Morris would sell 180 Ocean Avenue in May 1980.

The next stewards of 180 Ocean Avenue were William and Kathryn Saums. William was the District Manager at Allied Mills and then a District Manager for a 300-seat call center for AT&T. (He would remain in the call center profession, eventually owning his own call-center specialty company.) All while William was working in the New London area, he was also studying for his Masters of Business Administration degree – graduating from Northeastern University in 1985. Having bought 180 Ocean Avenue for $45,000 – the business savvy Saums sold the house for $99,500 just seven years later.

There is not much information on the next owners of 180 Ocean Avenue – Mitchel F. Corah and Caroline R. Plotke. Mitchel was a Coast Guard Chief Petty Officer at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. He was recently divorced and shared custody of his child with first wife, Amy. What is known about Mitchell and Caroline – they were the owners with the shortest tenancy at 180 Ocean Avenue – selling it 9 months after purchasing it.

In December 1987, 65-year-old Benjamin Deas would be the next owner and the owner with the longest tenure (over 30 years). He was a twice-divorced father of three adult daughters-- Patrecia, Carol Ann, and Mary Alice. He was a Navy veteran and retiree from General Dynamics after 27 years of service. He continued to work as a self-employed electrician and handyman. He was considered a great storyteller and conversationalist. When Benjamin was 85 years old, he put his grandson Aaemanuel Deas (eldest son of Patrecia) on the deed of the house. Benjamin would remain at 180 Ocean Avenue until his passing at age 96 in 2018 (he was preceded in death by his three daughters).

The house would remain in probate for a number of years, and then passed through non-profit organizations and real estate investors. In 2024, the house was remodeled and updated and eventually became the new home of the current owners, Steven and Debra Codd.

**Method: Our method of dating a building involves a title search that traces the title back in time until we find a transaction involving land only. That gives a date *after* which the structure was built; the next later transaction, which involves land and buildings, gives us a date *before* which it was built. We narrow the date down by using tax and/or water records and street directories. Generally, water is connected the year the structure is built, and tax assessments rise significantly. Alternatively, we can search directories until the address appears, which is the first year the house was occupied.**

**The narrative above starts with title information researched by Thomas Couser. From there we look at various primary and secondary sources, including census records, city directories, local and family histories, cemetery and military service records, and newspapers. This is by no means an exhaustive search but is meant to give an idea of the people and families involved in the early history of this home.**

**– Daniel Daley for New London Landmarks, December 2024**