

511 Alewife Parkway
New London, Connecticut

The Cape Cod style house built at 511 Alewife Parkway overlooking Alewife Cove has an unbroken view toward Ocean Beach and Long Island Sound and across the cove to Waterford. The house, which now has a front-facing deck to take advantage of the scenic view, is situated at the bottom of the hill formed by the long high ridgeline that defines Ocean Avenue and then slopes westward down to Alewife Cove. This part of south New London, once the site of farms, large estates and other land in its natural state, was one of the last areas of the city to be developed for residential housing. By 1929 the land had been subdivided and Herbert Browning Prentice bought the tract known as Woodlawn Terrace from the estate of Gilbert Lehmer.¹ It was perhaps not the most auspicious time to invest in real estate.

Herbert Prentice (1876-1945) was a contracting carpenter born in Stonington to a family that had lived there since colonial times working as sailors and as farmers. He built the house that now stands at 511 Alewife Parkway although he never lived there. Despite his investments in real estate, Herbert Prentice does not seem to have died a wealthy man. Over the years until his death in 1945, he and his family, including wife Maude (Ladley) and two children, lived in rented houses near Connecticut College. According to newspaper accounts, Mr. and Mrs. Prentice were well known locally as contract bridge players. They are buried together in Union Cemetery, Waterford.

The first actual occupants of the house were William Charles Stuart, his wife Ruth (Miner) and daughter Shirley who attended the Williams Memorial Institute High School. The Stuarts bought the house from Prentice in 1933 and lived there until 1955 when they moved to Waterford. William Stuart was born in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1899 and had two years of college education. He worked as an engineer for the telephone company (SNET), including a stint as hurricane and disaster chief at the time of the big storm of September 1954. He was also active in local politics as a member of the Republican party and served on the New London board of education. William Stuart retired from SNET in 1960 and died in 1968.

Joseph Irving Burnstein (1921-2003), his wife Mildred (Peck) Burnstein and their two sons, Robert and Daniel were the next occupants of 511. They lived there for 16 years. Joe Burnstein served his country in the second World War from 1943 to 1946 and later was active in the Jewish War Veterans of the USA. When he returned from his war service he spent his working

¹ As described in contemporary newspaper accounts, what later was called Woodlawn Terrace was once part of the complicated litigation between various landowners, land speculators and the city involving much of the land in the southern end of town, taking into account the "improvements" such as filling in marshes, ponds and wetlands that had already been made. The Lynch-Lehmer-Johnson case to decide the partition of the land was heard in 1885 before an appointed board of commissioners in a "decision...likely to affect the development of the city in that direction for many years to come." Prentice bought the land from the estate of Gilbert Lehmer who in turn had inherited it from the estate of his father, J. D. Lehmer of Cincinnati and frequent summer resident of New London.

career in haberdashery and at one time owned Mantown, a store in Groton specializing in male apparel. In fact, one article in *The Day* refers to him as “Mr. B” known for his great knowledge of the men’s clothing world. Other newspaper articles mention the participation by both Joe and Mildred in local theatrical productions put on by Temple Beth El. Mrs. Burnstein was also an active contract bridge player. According to his epitaph on the Find a Grave website, *Joe was an artist, with many paintings of sea and landscapes, noted for his versatility in the various media of oil, watercolor and pastels. He loved his family and treasured every moment with them. He spent his life in retailing, but loved the arts- the opera, theater, and read every waking free minute. He was a strong, caring, loving man and is missed by all who knew him.* Unfortunately, the marriage of Joe and Mildred ended in divorce in 1970. Their home was sold in 1971 to Bernard and Rita (Schwartz) Zionts.

Bernard (1926-1996) and Rita Zionts were from the Hartford area where he was the president of the Bervic Supply Company, a family business that sold garage and service station equipment. Bernard was a veteran who had served his country in the Navy from 1944 to 1946. They had four children. It is quite probable that Mr. and Mrs. Zionts used 511 as a second residence and lived primarily in the Hartford area. According to Connecticut newspaper accounts, they were avid bridge players who participated in tournaments around the state. They eventually moved to Delray Beach, Florida.

In 1987, 511 Alewife Parkway was sold to Bruce Branchini, professor of chemistry at Connecticut College, and his wife Ann Zievers Branchini, Ph.D. in nursing. The Branchinis lived there until 1994 when they sold the house to the current owner, Barbara A. Nawrocki.

This short history was prepared by Laurie M. Deredita 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 and on other information sources publicly available on the Internet and in print. September 2024