THE KAPLAN HOME

28 HENDERSON ROAD

NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT

Built in 1941 for Benjamin and Bertha R. Kaplan, the land on which the house is sited has an extraordinary history that dates to the very beginnings of the 20th century. In 1901, Charles Strong Guthrie and his wife Frances Amelia Guthrie built their summer estate in New London. Mr. Guthrie, a native of Pittsburgh, began his career as a clerk and ultimately earned his way to the position of Chairman of the Board of the Republican Iron and Steel Company, (which was later acquired by U.S. Steel.) Their summer home, a palatial mansion near the booming summer houses of the Pequot Colony, had frontage that extended to the New London Harbor and was some thirty rooms, designed in a “Spanish” style. The estate included spacious landscaped grounds; greenhouses; a major fountain; multiple-car garage and stables, and was dubbed “Meadow Court.” The land included some five-hundred feet of beach on the Thames River for bathing and water sports. When Mr. Guthrie died in 1906 at the age of 46, after an operation for appendicitis, his widow later auctioned the land and the estate.

In 1925, the newly-formed Pequot Realty Company acquired the Guthrie Estate property (comprised of some 30 some home sites) and designed a new subdivision called “Guthrie Heights.” The plan was to build quality homes with the added bonus of the use the 500 feet of private beach formerly owned by the Guthrie’s. The beach access would run with the land and not the individual owners. In addition to controlling the lot sizes, improvements such as sidewalks, cul-de-sacs and landscape elements were designed to beautify and insure the development’s high-quality character. Their mansion became a prominent New London favorite, The Lighthouse Inn at 6 West Guthrie Place, which was converted into a popular eatery, tavern and guest house.

In 1941 following the Great Depression, the home at 28 Henderson Road was built for the Kaplan family. The extended Kaplan family were well known in New London because of their involvement in several businesses and their investment in the community. For decades, a fixture at 147 Bank Street, the Kaplan Furniture Company, owned by Bertha R. and Benjamin Kaplan, sold everything a home could need, from linoleum and other floor coverings to furniture and appliances.

In 1919, following his Army service in WW I, Bernard Kaplan began his first furniture sales on Bank Street but later moved as the building was demolished to make way for the Capitol Theater. Following that move, in January, 1927, Kaplan purchased the four-story “Fournier” building at 147 Bank Street, which continued to be improved and expanded over the years.

The Kaplan’s had three children, Harris, Leila and George. Both Benjamin and Bertha were involved in civic, religious and philanthropic ventures, particularly within the Jewish community. In 1955 the home was sold to Maurice ( aka Morris) and Elna Schneider. In 1996, the home was sold by the Morris Trust to Franklin and Nancy Jarvis.

The Colonial Revival home is striking in its simple plan and symmetry. A two-story, frame structure, the residence is distinguished by its front-facing gable roof; rectangular, multi-paned windows on the second story pierced by an ocular window in the center, and its central entrance on the first floor. The entrance is composed of a pedimented doorway flanked by sidelights. On either side of the entrance are tri-sided bay windows. The one-story, two-car garage is set well back and is parallel to the roadway featuring the same gable roof.