



*25th Anniversary
Issue*

*The Lumberton
Campus Chronicle*

August 2024





The Coming to Be of Lumberton Leas Jim Alexander



1995 aerial view of the peach farm Lumberton Leas now occupies.

In 1970, a visiting reporter wrote: "Lumberton is a people drenched with tradition. It's an unhurried land of green and amber crops with herds of placid cattle. And it is open space where the burgeoning 20th Century has only lately found a fingerhold."

But when the first residents moved into the new Lumberton Leas in June 1999, the town of Lumberton was not what it once had been. Long gone was the lumber that gave the town its name, having been cut and floated down the Rancocas, to build Philadelphia homes. Gone

were the small shoe factories, the railroad, and the light industries that had provided jobs for local residents. Gone was the quiet, quaint downtown, which had once been a rural respite from the busy city. Even the municipal offices had been moved from Main Street to the newly dubbed Municipal Drive. No longer was Lumberton the head of navigation of the Rancocas Creek's South Branch.

The Main Street bridge over the creek had been replaced with a larger one, and Main Street's

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Coming to Be (continued from previous page)



The house at 72 Creek Rd., seen above, was built by John and Hannah Moore in 1775, on the large property that at the time included the land upon which Lumberton Leas exists today. It is currently owned by the Spotts family.

intersection with Landing Street, where once a solitary local police officer sometimes had directed traffic, now featured a traffic signal. What had earlier been called Buttonwood Road or Bulls Head Road was now uniformly named Creek Road. The Last Man's Club, which had included local residents who had been born and grown up in town and contributed labor and money to civic improvements, was down to just a few members.

The old downtown was about to be replaced by a shopping center and a series of businesses on the ever-busy Route 38, and the Mt. Holly Bypass was being planned. From 1970, when the reporter visited, Lumberton had grown from 3,945 residents to nearly 10,000.

The Lenni Lenape who had lived and hunted in the woods and slopes along the Rancocas had moved on centuries earlier. The property that Lumberton Leas was built upon had been part of much larger land parcels owned by families with names such as Fenimore, Moore, Stiles, and Sage, and over the decades had been

subdivided with the changing of generations.

The farms that had constituted the primary land use of the township were changing too. Campbell's Soup in Camden was shifting its supply sources to larger farms farther west, and developers were making

attractive offers to aging farmers so that new housing developments could be built to meet population pressures and changing living patterns.

As farms were replaced by homes, more children required the building of new schools, municipal services such as water and sewer lines had to be extended, and the small police force had expanded. All of this cost money, and the Township leaders were concerned, not only over the loss of traditional farmland, but the higher taxes that were needed to support the growing population.

One solution that held some promise was Transfer Development Rights (TDR), a process through which a farmer could sell the rights to build on their land to owners of other property in town where they could build denser housing. Two such Lumberton farms in particular, both of which were south of the current Lumberton Leas, entered into such TDR agreements. One was the Jones Farm, at Fostertown and Stacy-Haines Road; the other was the Prickett farm, at



Lumberton Leas today is often recalled as being built on a former peach farm, but the area had been farmed for various crops for generations. This 1938 photo shows a former barn on our site dating back to the 1700s.

of Medford Leas, had been involved in managing the peach growing, as he had done for crops at other farm locations.

Authorization was granted by the Township to build Lumberton Leas, with more focused building density, emphasizing the Arboretum concept that Medford Leas had so successfully employed, thus including a

Fostertown and Crispin Roads. These facilitated development north, including Lumberton Leas, Coventry Glenn and Powell Mills, while protecting substantial farmland south from being developed.

large central meadow, which also served as a retention area in case of heavy rains.

The peach orchards had been put in place starting in the 1970s by the late C. William Haines, who owned the property for 25 years. He was the last New Jersey State Senator who was also a farmer, famous for bringing baskets of peaches and apples to his colleagues in Trenton every year. Operation as a peach farm had ceased several years before the Estaugh purchased the property in May 1997. Tak Moriuchi, honored patriarch

The small tributaries and wooded trails that residents now enjoy on the slope down to the adjacent Rancocas Creek, which provide beautiful views of nature and canoeing access,

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As seen in this aerial view from 2002, the homes were in place after the land had been contoured, but many trees were yet to be planted.

Oh, Pioneers?

Kathy Riley

2024 is the 25th anniversary of the founding of Lumberton Leas (now called Medford Leas at Lumberton). This is a unique opportunity to celebrate residents who did the groundwork of creating our present-day community. We have some forty Pioneers living on both campuses, eleven still in their original units. In addition to articles in both *Medford Leas Life* and *The Lumberton Campus Chronicle* that highlight important benchmarks, those pioneers' memories explain how many of the customs of the community evolved.

The term "pioneers" evokes Willa Cather's famous novel *O, Pioneers*, a story of Swedish immigrants to Nebraska at the turn of the 20th century. Its themes are immigration and the land. What was it like to move to this land we call the Lumberton Campus, and how were its first residents immigrants?

First, the land. Our pioneers were not literally sodbusters, but sod was being busted all around them. They agreed that dust, dirt, and mud defined their first few years.

Someone else would build the houses, but signing a contract for a unit that did not yet exist was a leap of faith. The Heinemans selected a cellar hole, believing that a 2-bedroom unit with a sunporch would materialize. Herb recalls, "The Harrisons saw Maggie and me wandering in the meadow and invited us in for cocktails, our very first in Lumberton, months before we moved in."

Art and Jean Hartwig chose one of two 2-bedroom homes that were a foundation and the beginning of walls. Both units had been under contract. The original buyers were friends who wanted a door between their units. When Medford Leas refused, they broke their contracts,

and the Hartwigs were glad to have a head start with the building.

Often builders did not break ground until the two or three units of a structure had all been sold. Joe Jordan selected his location and then negotiated a two-car garage (fine gold by Lumberton standards). The unpaved Woodside Drive was altered to make that possible. Joe remembers checking off everything that his unit could have finished basement, sunroom, and so on. He admits that he even asked for two fireplaces. Only that was denied him.

The first few years lacked the Community Building, swimming pool, and tennis courts, as well as significant landscaping. Told that they could plan their own activities, residents exercised, convened meetings, and partied in empty units, moving on whenever that venue was sold. After the Community Building was completed, they made it their headquarters for potlucks, entertainments, Council meetings, campus mail delivery, fitness, and a library. Fitness instructors came from Medford Leas at specified times, but residents exercised on their own, organized tennis games, and, it is rumored, may even have gone skinny dipping from time to time.

Residents wanted to walk in the surrounding woods, so they informally cleared and marked paths. A trails committee was formed to improve the paths and build several bridges in Soggy Bottom. When major repairs were needed, Medford Leas professionals did the heavy work.

Pioneers decided on a community garden, selected a spot, reached an agreement with the residents in the nearest unit to pay their summer water bill, and started growing vegetables. They initiated yearly community mugwort pulls, trying

to clear the catch-basin-turned-meadow of this invasive species. Some put in flower gardens to augment the landscaping Medford Leas provided.

How were these first residents immigrants? Granted, many came from close by geographically, but CCRCs were unfamiliar. And even if your parents or other elders had lived in Medford Leas, Lumberton was different. Independent Living on the main campus had access to food services, medical care, a 24-hour staff, many more activities, and services within walking distance. Not so in Lumberton. You did have a good-sized house and yard and an attached garage, possibly very much like your previous home. Grass mowing, snow shoveling, and maintenance all became someone else's problem—good news. The bad news—indiscriminate trimming that cut flowers as well

as grass, ruts from mowing when the ground was wet, piles of snow in front of mailboxes. And at first, there was an agreement that Lumberton Leas residents would pick up their mail in Mt. Holly, where Medford Leas still had a facility. The Pioneers revolted and confronted the US Post Office. Delivery in group mailboxes on Woodside Drive came to be.

Much has changed on the Lumberton Campus, but mailboxes, clusters, resident-organized activities, and our Lumberton Residents Council are still in place. Newcomers join in and suggest changes which we discuss, bring to the attention of the Medford Leas Administration, and implement as necessary. The community that the pioneers initiated has withstood twenty-five years and defines our culture. We are well prepared for the next twenty-five. ■

Coming to Be (continued from page 5)

were once used to move agricultural products to small boats and provide access to creek water to pump up to the growing fields.

Lumberton Leas was especially attractive to the Township, because by its nature, there would be no children creating educational expenses, such as occurred in the large adjacent property north on Creek Road, just over the line in Hainesport, where a massive gravel pit had been replaced with major housing and lots of kids who had to go to that town's schools.

As is the case in most communities today, Lumberton Leas' residents tend to not get overly involved in town affairs, with a few exceptions; sometimes in support of local group activities and events, but most often in support of the key services that residents enjoy. When the viability of the Lumberton Emergency Squad, which so

responsively serves us, was threatened, residents mobilized and helped save the day. When the respectful officers of the Lumberton Police Department quickly respond to calls for help, they are appreciated, and when they sometimes walk on campus, friendly waves are exchanged. The fire engines respond with their volunteers to the thankfully very occasional need, and when they and Santa come through at Christmas, throwing out candy canes, appreciative residents sometimes regain their youth and run out to get one. They benefit from voluntary contributions that the Residents Association makes each year.

From the first Pioneers to move into Lumberton Leas in 1999 to the residents who have come since, all agree that Lumberton Leas is a very special place to live. ■

25th Anniversary for Lumberton Leas

John Sommi

Hard to believe, but here I am writing for the 25th Anniversary celebration of the opening of Lumberton Leas. Catherine and I moved to Lumberton in September 1999, the seventh unit to be occupied, just beyond Barbara Zimmerman, with Woodside Drive still nothing but a dirt road and all residents making certain to park their cars in the garages so their vehicles would not become covered in road dust.

We survived flooding when the dams collapsed in Medford Lakes just after the turn of the century. The town of Lumberton had flooding rise to the level of the second floor of the buildings in the center of town.

On the morning of July 13, 2004, 9.3 inches of rain fell over a five-hour period, the highest ever recorded. The meadow became two ponds until the water was able to drain into the creek beside the perimeter walking path the next day. In those days we had wild turkeys and a coyote sometimes come to visit our yards.

Two very happy events occurred during our early years as pioneers. We watched as a very large backhoe took several days excavating the site for the community building foundation. The machine operator dutifully stockpiled an impressive cone of soft earth as high as our second story windows. Trucks would come sometime in the future to cart away the soil as clean fill, probably for a very good price.

The weekend after the magnificent mound of loose soil was created a few of our children and approximately seven of our grandchildren

arrived to spend the day. With warm sunny weather beckoning we decided to take a walk after lunch to explore our emerging community. When we came to the pile of fresh earth the grandchildren looked up and were as impressed as I.

"That's quite a big pile of soil," I said.



"It sure is," one of the young boys replied. "How long did it take to make it so tall?" he asked. While waiting for an answer, he bent over and picked up a clod of earth and threw it against the hill. Several of his cousins did the same—great fun.

"Three days," I answered, looking at the upturned faces. I thought, "If I were his age, wouldn't I like to climb this oversized pile of soil?" I said aloud, "Does anyone think they can climb to the top of the hill?"

"Really, Grandpa?" the seven-year-old girl nearest me posed, eyes wide with hope and expectation.

Like Eve offering Adam the apple, "We can really climb it?" they asked, unwilling to believe they could be given permission.

"Sure," I said. "Grandpa gives you permission."

My children looked from their children to me and let their inner child win. "Grandpa said it was OK, so go ahead. Last one up is a monkey's uncle."

In flash they were clawing up the hill, their feet sinking deep into the loose earth. Some made it

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Jeremy Vickers Welcomes the Pioneers

Kathy Riley

At the June 8 Pioneers' Luncheon, CEO Jeremy Vickers recalled the accomplishments of the original residents of the Lumberton Campus (Lumberton Leas as it then was) and congratulated them for creating the community that some of them and the present residents are still supporting and enjoying. He remarked, "Today we gather to honor those pioneers, the founding members who laid the corner stone of this thriving community. Their passion, dedication, and relentless pursuit of a shared dream have sculpted a collective identity and set the stage for the residents who followed."



He observed that the Estaugh Board and Medford Leas Administration decided to create a unique independent living facility separate from the Medford campus, located the land, and built the homes; but it was the first residents who imbued the community with the Estaugh values of stewardship, life balance, kindness, respect, and excellence.

The earliest residents got to know one another and organized themselves into clusters, headed by volunteer leaders who emphasized the principle of neighbor helping neighbor. This was especially prevalent during Covid. They shared the good times as well, with parties and activities. Productive pastimes included a wood-shop for beautiful carvings and household repairs, and shared maintenance of the creek, trails, woodlands, and the meadow. When the Community Building and pool were

completed, residents created rules for their use and continue to assist with upkeep. From the beginning, Woodside Drive residents developed a good relationship with the town of Lumberton, sharing their facilities and programs with the Boy Scouts and other groups as well as birders, trail walkers, and arborists. The community donates annually to first responders as well. Medford Leas residents also share space and programs. All these traditions continue to this day.

Jeremy concluded, "Let us raise our voices in gratitude to these trailblazers, whose legacy continues to inspire and guide us as we write the next chapter of our journey together. Cheers to the founders, the Pioneers of our flourishing community!" He then proceeded to help serve the lunch and socialize with the Pioneers. ■

25 Years at Home at Medford Leas Jack and Gini Mutschler

We moved into 44 Woodside Drive on August 6, 1999, and the move went smoothly, with one exception. After unpacking and deciding on the location of furniture, we were ready to turn in for the night. First, however, we gathered up plates, silverware, and other kitchen items we'd used during the move-in and placed them in our new dishwasher to wash overnight. We retired to our upstairs bedroom. When we awoke next morning, the kitchen floor was covered in water. The dishwasher's drain line had not been hooked up to the main drain line. Although the dishes were not clean, the floor was dazzling.

The community was far from complete at this time. Woodside Drive was a dirt-covered path. Each time a construction vehicle came by, it created a dust cloud that settled on everything. Today's swimming pool, tennis courts, walking trails, Community Building, and even mail delivery would all come later.

Residents began a system that assisted in neighbor introduction that is still in place today. The homes were divided into eight clusters of twelve to fourteen units, each with a resident volunteer leader. These leaders would welcome new residents, provide the names of others in the cluster, and review some basics about

the community. This played a significant role in getting the neighbors to share personal information such as whom to contact for unusual situations. Through this system, many of us got to know our neighbors' children or other family members.



All the Lumberton residents worked together to develop a wide variety of committees to promote our hobbies. We took responsibility for vegetable gardens, wood shop, tennis, birding, book club, games, and eventually a campus monthly newspaper. Group social activities were open to anyone interested in participating, and this brought neighbors together to achieve common goals for the community. Gradually the Lumberton campus developed into a community where residents can feel at home and

participate in the activities they enjoy, within a naturally beautiful location.

Gini and I were excited to move here twenty-five years ago, and to this day, we have never regretted our decision. If we could stop here for the 50th anniversary gathering, we would find all new faces, but I'm sure we would still feel the underlying community spirit that makes Medford Leas at Lumberton such a great place to spend your mature years. ■

Lumberton Social Committee Janet Holloway

Even with the dust and mud of unpaved roads and the constant sound of hammers and saws, the pioneers moving onto Woodside Drive wanted to get out and meet their neighbors. Social activities began right away with individuals opening their homes for parties. An annual New Year's Eve party started as early as 1999. The winter snows drew neighbors to the Meadow, where they cross-country skied, putting on a show for those who watched out their back windows. Silly fun with Flossy the Flamingo made people laugh. Blizzards meant spur-of-the-moment parties at 139.

The Community Center was the last building to be completed, so early meetings were held in 182 WSD. All the residents had a key to that house, and since it was unfurnished, the steps became chairs. These informal gatherings provided a chance to discuss issues and to plan social activities. A new resident always spurred a party which was held at someone's home. An early activity was a Y2K party on January 31, 1999, when the community gathered to watch the end of the world ☺. Surprise, surprise, electricity continued, the sun rose, and the world went on.

The first official gathering was organized by Medford Leas staff. They brought tables and chairs and food to 182 WSD. Once the Community Building was opened, a formal Social Activities Committee started planning potluck dinners. Themes varied from Wild, Wild West to Luau (complete with whole pig) to a Halloween Costume Party to a Winter Solstice Celebration. From the beginning, the Great Room tables were decorated, and the mantel festooned, based on the theme of each event. Most occasions had live entertainment.

This tradition of the Social Committee has continued unbroken until today when it is still alive and active. Events have broadened a little to include mix and mingle, show and tell, dancing, and indoor and outdoor concerts.

During Covid, gatherings were out of the question. The Social Committee sponsored a few alternatives. For the holidays the "Starry Night Stroll" brought people together for much needed interaction. Luminaria lit both sides of Woodside Drive, tables with music and treats appeared at various places along the way, and residents walked the circle, bundled in warm clothes and masks. Maintaining social distance didn't preclude greeting all our neighbors. The photograph contest came next. Organizing old photos was one of the things that could be done while sequestering. People submitted "Special Moments" in various categories. All were on display in the Great Room—some won ribbons. Belly Laugh Day (January 24) was celebrated in cluster driveways with Jimbo the Clown making the rounds of WSD on his bike. Two outdoor concerts with live singing and bands enticed residents to bring a lawn chair and sit outside the Community Center to hear first Bluegrass and then music from the 50s, 60s, and 70s.

Along the way, subcommittees of the Social Committee were created to sponsor weekly bridge, a monthly book club, Friday game nights, and most recently, movie nights.

Today the committee is still going strong and is key to the community social life here. Many thanks go to the early Pioneers who recognized how important this committee would be and to all of the individuals over the years who have brought enjoyment to the campus. ■

Barbara Lewis: A Pioneer Remembers

Marge Rodney

Pioneer Barbara Lewis recalls how she and her husband selected Lumberton Leas and what the move and early days were like:

"After 5 years of visiting CCRCs in several states, my husband Allen and I decided to invest in our future by retiring to Lumberton Leas in Lumberton, New Jersey. It was an experiment in senior living. We liked the plans for it. We walked the deer paths on the property and noted the pile of stumps that needed to be destroyed before starting the digging. (Lumberton Township had been using the former orchard property as a dump for them.) We attended regular monthly meetings where we future residents learned about the progress of the building. There were always lots of questions and answers.

In early December of 1999, we were told our place (one of a group of three connected homes), would be ready for move-in by December 23rd. My sister invited us to a New Year's celebration in Maine. Do you recall Y2K? The "ones in the know" said all computers and other work done by electricity would be ended on January 1, 2000, at the turn of the century. Well, as you know, that didn't happen. In the meantime, our move-in date was moved to January 7th. In addition, a hurricane was forecast for January 5 and 6, and it did arrive! One of our moving van drivers rushed to get his truck emptied because his home was in the area south of us that flooded. After the other two trucks came in and emptied our belongings, we were finally living in our new residence at 99 Woodside Drive. We had a good sleep in our own new home that night!

Unpacking took the month of January. In an unfamiliar area, we and other residents were helped immensely by *The Red Book*, a "go to"

publication provided by Medford Leas containing lists of services both on the main campus and in Lumberton." (Barbara still uses that resource today.)

It took some time, but by spring the Lewises were comfortably settled. As new neighbors moved in, Barbara realized that it was not so easy to meet everyone, so she developed what we now know as the clusters. The 99 homes were divided into eight groups of 12-15 units each. Within each cluster, residents would introduce themselves, welcome newcomers, and organize social gatherings.

In December 1999, Helen Vukasin began organizing a Liaison Committee to work with Medford Leas on issues like the US Mail delivery crisis. From this would come the Lumberton Leas Residents Council that oversees resident-sponsored activities and meets regularly with the Medford Leas Administration and the Estaugh Board. Barbara was president of the Council, once in 2004 and then again in 2022.

As a teacher for more than 30 years, Barbara realized that a book club would appeal to many residents and worked with others to found two, one meeting in the evening and the other in the afternoon. The latter is still meeting under Barbara's leadership, more than twenty years later.

Although Barbara is very modest about her role in organizing Lumberton's activities and helping them to flourish, her participation has been a key ingredient to their continued success. Barbara's excellent memory makes her a good source of our informal history as well, and her friends and neighbors continue to be delighted with the stories she shares. ■

Ann Naulty
Marge Rodney

Ann and Ed Naulty had lived in Medford Lakes for 32 years, with Ann working at the Medford Leas main campus since 1975. When they moved to Lumberton Leas on June 20, 2000, they transitioned smoothly into their new community.

Although Ann could no longer be a paid employee due to her new status as a resident, she remained actively involved. She initially co-lead an exercise program with another resident and after Medford Leas hired a fitness instructor for formal exercise classes, she organized summer water aerobics at the Lumberton pool.

Always energetic, Ann and Ed often walked from the Lumberton campus to the Diamond Diner on Route 38. It was a pleasant walk and in 2007, Ann, along with Medford Leas' Fitness

& Aquatics Instructor Rick Trandahl, developed a spring and fall walk for residents. The route started at the Lumberton Community Center and followed Bancroft Lane to the diner—a walk of about half an hour. Once at the diner, participants enjoyed a hearty breakfast before heading back. The walk became so popular that, for the past 15 years, it has been affectionately known as Ann's Diner Walk.

Although the Diamond Diner has changed name and ownership, negotiations are underway with the new owner to hopefully continue Ann's Diner Walk. In any case, Ann remains busy volunteering and helping in countless ways. Lumberton Leas would not be the same without her! ■

Sommi (continued from page 8)

easily to the peak, only to come tumbling down during the descent, more often by intent than accident. One of the more creative grandchildren found a large piece of cardboard nearby and fashioned a makeshift toboggan. Thanks to the steep angle of the slope, the ride was much like that achieved on a snow-covered hillside.

Luckily for them, after eight months in Lumberton, we had just about finished unpacking. Our basement contained a number of neatly folded large cardboard boxes. Three boxes quickly came from my basement, and with a few deft strokes of a sharp knife, every child had their own cardboard toboggan.

Needless to say, dirt and child became intertwined. Clothing and shoes were hopelessly covered. When the children had burned all their energy, we slowly walked home, a bedraggled but happy group with all wearing big smiles on their faces.

While they showered and toweled off, clothing went through the wash cycle and dryer. Shoes were clapped together to dislodge dirt, then brushed to remove the remaining soil.

After dinner it was time for the grandchildren, clean and dry again, to leave. As one six-year-old grandson said goodbye at my front door and gave me a big hug, he looked up at me and said, "Grandpa, when can we come again?" ■

From the Council
Ellen Kurtz and Suzan Preiksat

In April 2000, the first LCRA Council was elected at the Annual Meeting. The purpose of the Council was to ensure that the common areas of the community are maintained and to act as a liaison to the Medford Leas Residents Association and the Administration. Many Councils have followed that first one, and all have had the honor of serving our friends and

neighbors. But it is a special honor to serve on the Council during the 25th anniversary year of our community. It is on behalf of the 2023-2024 Council and the 2024-2025 Council that we extend congratulations and a big thank you to our residents (and especially to all those residents who have served on Council) for making this a wonderful community to live in.

List of Living Pioneers:

Ackerboom, Joyce	Immendorf, Marilyn	Rathje, Dorothy
Anderson, Helen	Jordan, Joseph & Jean	Reilly, Katherine
Cardona, George & Joanne	Lassen, Barbara	Saibel, Janice
Cebra, Ethel	LeConey, Lucia	Sanwald, Karin
Davis, Nancy	Lewis, Barbara	Sommi, John
DeMasse, Elaine	McConville, James & Eileen	Stiles, Barbara
Ferraro, Carol	Mikuta, Margaret	Swartz, Miriam
Gaylord, Linda	Morrow, Shirley	Thorp, Susan
Gyswyt, Elizabeth	Mutschler, John & Virginia	Tompkins, Louise
Harrison, Harry	Naulty, Ann	Yeomans, Talitha (Tali)
Hartwig, Arthur & Jean	Numata, Berta	Zimmerman, Barbara
Heineman, Herb & Maggie	Potts, Roy	

25th Anniversary *Chronicle*

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