



**Charlotte Wilinski
1953**

551 Pequot Street, New London

Despite its relatively recent construction, 551 Pequot Avenue and the land it occupies have an intriguing history. The house only appears on the historical record in 1954, on the Sanborn fire map of New London. Neither the lot nor a house was visible in any prior maps. The “1 and 1a” lots were sold to Charlotte and Aurthur Wilinski in 1952, though water was only connected to the lot in the following year. Typically, water is connected as the house is built, so the building was presumably constructed in 1952.

The land was well situated, located by the intersection of Pequot and Gardner. It maintains its “superb view of the harbor”. Its location had made it a prime location for various major figures and organizations of New London. In the 1884 edition of the Sanborn map, the land is noted as belonging to “Tyler”. This “Tyler” was Colonel A.C. Tyler, a veteran of the Spanish American War. He and his wife were well liked figures of their community, and their house must have inspired some envy. The home was three stories, “with wide verandas and sun porches [and] was famous for elaborate furnishings, bric-a-brac and valuable paintings”. More than a house, “the Elms” as it was known, bordered on becoming a stately manor.¹

The Elms had caught fire 1897, though it was repaired with the Tylers’ wealth. The Colonel’s wife, Cornelia, was responsible for the sale of the home to the “Home Memorial Hospital” organization in 1923. “Home Memorial Hospital” was responding to the needs of the community.

There had been a hospital in New London, “Memorial Hospital”, but its facilities were thought to be inadequate. In the early 1900s, an extension of the Memorial Hospital was reported on positively. The “railroad and marine center” were cited as major sources of injury.² The increased need for a new hospital was met with the creation, in the 1920s, of the “Home Memorial Hospital”.

The Home Memorial Hospital was announced in 1920, supposedly to be “the modern cottage type” of hospital.³ The Home Memorial Hospital was to be a private hospital with its modern view of care and patient management. In this era, a slow change of opinion regarding hospitals was occurring. Formerly viewed largely as places of fear and pain, medical advancements had been slowly refocusing the public view. Home Memorial Hospital was in line with this vision, a modern hospital that presented a positive face as a place of peace and healing.

Unlike previous hospitals, Home Memorial was intended to create a comfortable atmosphere. In this vision, the Colonel’s expansive former home served as a solid base. The house had undergone multiple renovations, both internal and external, in preparation for its usage change.⁴ The function of the hospital was also impacted by this new vision, where the little details mattered, such as baskets of fruit to be distributed to patients on Christmastime.⁵

The hospital grounds served a nursing school as well as the hospital itself.⁶ The dorms for this school were situated on the same land as the hospital. The nurse's school was established in 1924 and gained accreditation two years later. This was but one of the extensions Home Memorial Hospital made. The other was the creation of two free clinics, a surgical outpatient and a public clinic.⁷

The hospital was met with public support, serving as the center of various fundraising drives. Despite its popularity, the hospital's presence in New London was short lived. On October 1, 1944, a fire broke out on the top floor of Home Memorial, quickly burning through the building. Thankfully, the hospital staff and fire department responded immediately and of the 49 patients in treatment, all of them were evacuated in under 10 minutes.⁸

Following the emergency, the hospital was deemed not fit to be repaired, partially due to the fire damage that had occurred when the house still belonged to the Tylers.⁹ Instead, the hospital had to be demolished and in its place the land was changed into residential lots.

Arthur and Charlotte Wilinski, in purchasing 551 Pequot, were part of the transformation of Pequot Avenue. The Wilinskis were a relatively successful family involved in the dry goods trade. Arthur Wilinski was president of the company "Marcus H & Co Dry Goods" at 46 North Bank Street. The Wilinskis were members of Beth El Synagogue, a center of Jewish community in New London.¹⁰

Marcus H & Co sold various items including dry goods, shoes, and clothing. Their specialization however was clothes for teens and juvenile wear. The floor above Marcus & Co's was at one point a bowling alley, creating a playful environment.¹¹

Arthur and Charlotte raised three daughters, Honey, Honore, and Gloria Wilinski. Honore was accepted into Emerson College in 1954 to major in speech therapy, being elected to the Kappa Gamma Chi sorority while attending.¹² Gloria became a real figure of political note in Connecticut, though it is unclear if her strong involvement with the Democratic party was shared by her other family members.

Now Gloria Schaffer, she ran on the state Democratic ticket for the position of State Senator in the 14th District.¹³ She won this seat in 1958 on the back of her various organizing strengths.¹⁴ This election was preceded by engagement with and membership of the "Young Democrats, Democratic Town Committee and League of Women Voters, United Fund, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Parent-Teacher associated, and the American Friends of the Hebrew University".¹⁵

Gloria's political career would continue to thrive. At the time of her election, she was the youngest woman state senator in the country. The 14th district, where she won repeatedly, had been Republican dominated up to that point.¹⁶ In 1970, she was elected to the position of Connecticut's Secretary of State.¹⁷ In 1976 she ran a campaign against sitting Senator Weicker. While she lost this bid, was one of only four women running for the United States Senate that year.¹⁸

By 1968, Arthur Wilinski was listed as retired and his former treasurer Samuel Rubenstein had taken over Marcus and Co.. Arthur and his wife had moved a year before, settling into 65 Westridge Road. The couple to whom the Wilinskis sold the house were Abraham and Bessie Kirshenbaum, another family involved with Beth El Synagogue.¹⁹

The Kirshenbaums were in many ways a mirror to the Wilinskis. They appear quite similar at first, with Abraham and Bessie working together in various successful clothing businesses. Much like the Wilinskis, they met with success, enough to raise two children, Robert and Anita, in comfort.

Before moving into 551 Pequot in 1967, the Kirshenbaums were already major figures in New London. Abraham had moved into New London from his home of Brooklyn and married Bessie.²⁰ The pair owned and operated various businesses within New London, all focused on the sale of clothing. Their first and primary business, called

the “Juvenile Shoppe” had succeeded despite the odds. The pair had opened the business in 1929, a few short months before the American economy hit a brick wall.²¹

The pair succeeded despite this, surviving the worst of the Great Depression to eventually expand in the post war years. The pair opened and operated “Kaye’s Junior Fashions” and “Kaye’s Shoe World” which included “Women’s World”.²² The pair worked together, with Bessie listed as the secretary for most of Abraham’s businesses. The pair were even depicted together on some of their advertisements.²³

Not all the Kirshenbaums’ retail undertakings were successful. In the early 1940s, they were forced to dissolve parts of their “Kaye’s” brand, which had at one point been profitable enough to earn them stock shares.²⁴ These setbacks did not stop the Kirshenbaums. Abraham himself found success as a business figure, becoming head of the Youth Fashion Guild.²⁵

Their two children, Robert and Anita, were both involved in the operation of the Kirshenbaums’ various businesses. Anita worked in her father’s shop and was remembered as a friendly and kind presence in their shops.²⁶ Robert’s career in retail was interrupted by his involvement in the Second World War as a navigator in the Naval Air Force.

Robert would use the surname “Kaye” as opposed to “Kirshenbaum”, to the point where his obituary would refer to him as “Kaye”.²⁷ Similarly, many of the Kirshenbaum’s businesses were under the same name. It is possible that Kaye was chosen as a shorthand for “Kirshenbaum” as it was more Anglicized, and its length could have made it easier to remember

The Kirshenbaums were, much like the Wilinskis, a politically involved family, though from the other side of the aisle. Abraham’s career as a businessman carried various incentives to become involved with politics. As early as 1959, he was interested in the ideas of urban renewal.²⁸ After his retirement from operating the Juvenile Shoppe, he was elected to the city council in 1975 on the Republican ticket. However, a supposed “distaste for political chicanery” lead him to retire before the completion of his term.²⁹

After Abraham’s death 1982,³⁰ his house passed on in his will to Bessie.³¹ She was, by all accounts, equally dedicated to their mutual career goals and involvement with the Jewish community. She also had an interesting relationship to New London politics. Originally born as Bessie Savin, she was sister to Mayor Moses A. Savin of New London. Bessie herself passed away in 1995, with her estate granted to Joan B. Costas of New Hartford in early 1996.³²

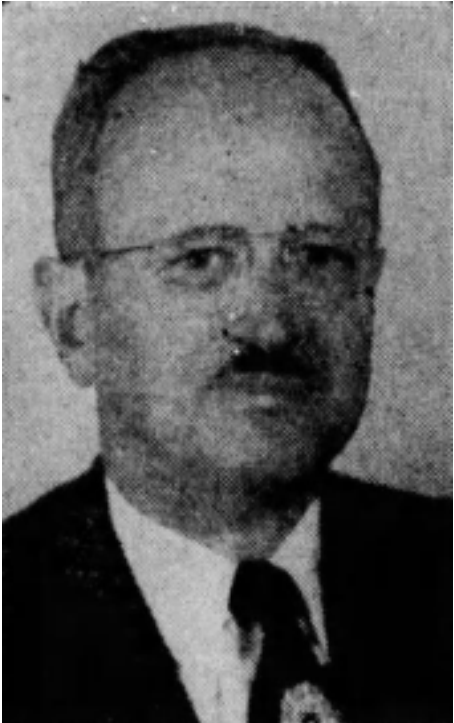
Joan and Peter Costas took possession of the home in 1996, already a successful couple. Peter Costas was a prominent lawyer in New London and army veteran. He had served in several positions throughout Connecticut’s legal system, including but not limited to Lindsey & Prutzman, Pepe & Hazard, and his own practice on Lewis Street.³³ During the Korean War, he served two years of active duty in Germany.

While the pair only settled into their home in New London during Peter’s retirement, they found themselves involved in the goings on of the city. Joan herself is notable in charitable work in the cause to fight AIDs as well as the project to redevelop Fort Trumbull.³⁴ The house on the water suited Peter Costas well, as in his personal life he had taken a great interest in sailing and seafaring.

Peter Costa passed away in 2017, survived by his wife and their three children George, Carol, and Barbara. The house, still in Joan’s name, remained in her possession until 2019.



35 Gloria Wilinski



36 A.L. Kirshenbaum

FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD, WE'VE GOT THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS. WE'VE GOT THE BEST OF THE BEST IN THE BEST OF THE BEST.

Kaye's and the JUVENILE SHOPPE
Celebrate 2 Decades of Progress With a Great
20th Anniversary SALE
Beginning Tomorrow, Wednesday, Feb. 1, 11.

THE SWEETEST PLACE IN THE WORLD
We've got the best of both worlds. We've got the best of the best in the best of the best.

BIG REDUCTIONS
We've got the best of both worlds. We've got the best of the best in the best of the best.

HERE AGAIN! OUR FAMOUS ANNUAL MONEY-SAVING EVENT WHEN ALL NEW LONDON SHOPS AND SAVES
here is the beginning of a series of sale events as we near the completion of our extensive alteration program...
VALUES PURCHASED FOR YOU
even before market price—rises, we were buying up values for this event
one of the many services our stores render is to save the people money

THE HERE TOMORROW WHEN THE DOORS OPEN
A clear party for many years to come. They will practically fly off our counters. It's a real party for every value each day.

CHANGES TOMORROW IS A REAL PARTY

WE'VE GOT THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

MR. KIRSHENBAUM IS THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

Leave it to him to smoke out a whopper of a value... Famous make *Knit Sleepers* (reg. \$1.89), at only \$1.20 while they last. Mrs. Kirshenbaum agrees they're a grand value... after all, who do YOU think is the boss!

Juvenile Shoppe ad, with details.



38 Bessie Kirshenbaum



39 Home Memorial Hospital on the day of the fire.

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