

22 Neptune Court
1951
Morris Hyte
Neptune Park Survey, 2008

Morris Hyte bought a lot on Neptune Court in 1946 from a neighbor, Kathryn Neilan Bergen, and three years later sold it “with buildings” to his daughter.

Morris Chaitsofsky Hyte (1888-1966) was born in Balbieriskis (Balbirishok in Yiddish), Lithuania, and migrated to the United States in 1910. He married Anna Finkelstein (1889-1976) of Springfield, Massachusetts, where the couple made their home and raised three children: Sylvia, Estelle, and Charles.

If the Hytes were anything like their neighbors, they probably rented cottages in New London before deciding to build. It is likely that the family was part of the Park Street community next to Ocean Beach, where Morris served as an “auxiliary cantor” at Temple Israel, a diminutive temple built in 1917 to serve the Orthodox summer community. Many cottagers in the area came from Hartford and Springfield.

In Springfield, Morris Hyte was the owner of an auto-body shop and tire company. Another Springfield man, Edgar Helie, served as Hyte’s general contractor in the construction of 22 Neptune Court, according to newspaper reports. Hyte bought the property from Mrs. Kathryn Neilan Bergen, a kindergarten teacher, who lived at 20 Neptune Court and later at 14 Neptune Court.

When Morris and Anna Hyte sold the house at 22 Neptune Court in 1953, it was to their daughter, Estelle Roseman (1915-2006), of Springfield and later Bloomfield, Connecticut. Estelle was the wife of Murray E. Roseman. They had three children. The sale did not go smoothly as Estelle’s parents sued her for failing to abide by the conditions of the sale. What happened isn’t clear, but Estelle retained ownership until selling the house forty-odd years later, in 1996, for \$106,500.

Though hard to verify, it appears that Estelle retained the house as a rental property. Other names are listed in city directories for 22 Neptune Court throughout her ownership. Estelle and Murray Roseman, as well as her sister, Sylvia Himelstein Segner, retired to Florida.

Background

Starting in 1892, Ocean Beach and Neptune Park were developed by New London’s Post Hill Improvement Company as separate cottage colonies on land formerly owned by Augustus Brandegee, C.A. Williams, and others, with water and sewers completed by 1906. Connecticut’s former governor, Thomas Waller, the future owner of the property that came to be known as Waller’s Castle in Neptune Park, was instrumental in leading

Post Hill Improvement. Gov. Waller was nicknamed, "The Father of Ocean Beach."¹

As shown on an 1868 map in the title report by Tom Couser, there were not many homes in the vicinity before the development of Ocean Beach and Neptune Park. Three that did exist were owned by New Yorkers: William Stewart (or Stuart, alias O'Flaherty), theater manager and acerbic drama critic, whose estate overlooked Alewife Cove; and the families of two then-famous doctors: the Motts and the Elliotts, whose properties were located side-by-side in what today is Neptune Park. About a mile to the northeast, at the mouth of the Thames River, there was another community of summer cottages. Just after the Civil War, the Pequot Colony grew up around a popular resort hotel, drawing people from major metropolitan areas for summers of yachting, tennis, swimming, tea dances, and wholesome food with fresh farm produce. The whole south end of New London, extending to Ocean Avenue and west to Goshen Point, came to be called, The Pequot.

The Motts purchased additional land in 1871 from the Elliotts. They called their summer place, "Neptune's Nook." When the city agreed to lay out a road from the Lighthouse to Ocean Avenue, the part going by the Motts' property was called Neptune Avenue.² When the main section of Neptune Park was developed on the south side of Neptune Avenue, the old Mott cottages had to be moved out of the way, and they were shifted north to what today is 1110 Ocean Avenue, then located at the end of Neptune Court (originally called Neptune Avenue North). The old cottages were transformed by Bryon F. and Emma Hobart on land that went from Ocean Avenue through to Pequot Avenue, with water views on either side. Little remains of what was once a millionaire's grand estate, and today the main house is in poor repair, barely recognizable as the elegant villa it once was. After Mrs Hobart sold the estate in 1925, Neptune Court was developed with the building of the first three cottages: Nos. 10, 14, and 15. This group of homes shared parking and open space as well as beach rights with the Neptune Park cottagers.

Post Hill Improvement sold the area of the future Neptune Court to Dr. Emanuel A. Henkle in 1913, and Henkle subdivided it and held on to the lots for years. Meanwhile, Henkle developed many other homes in the vicinity, no doubt more than we have yet documented. According to the *Hartford Courant* (17 May 1922), "Jewish people

¹ *The Hartford Courant*, 24 July 1921.

² R.B. Wall writes in 1910 that the Motts bought Elliotts' 1858 cottage in 1864 and additional land in 1871. See, *The Day*, 9/26/1910. See also, *Albany Evening Journal*, Feb. 6, 1852. Henry A. Mott (1852-1896) was author of *Was Man Created?* Undated notes in vertical files, New London Landmarks: Dr. Mott & the Wetmore [Whittemore] family of N.Y., houses moved and remodeled, now part of Hobart estate on Ocean Avenue. The Mott real estate and buildings were sold for nearly \$70,000. Bryon F. Hobart is listed in 1915 city directory at 1110 Ocean Avenue, with adjoining property on 967 Pequot housing 11 servants. Bryon Franklin Hobart (b. abt 1847-1923, San Diego), m. Emma Longwell. He was a zinc importer, banker, financier, railroad developer, etc.

have during the past two or three years become among the heaviest of the property owners and many have built new and attractive cottages [at Ocean Beach] during the past year.” Henkle had one or more cottages at Ocean Beach before the Hurricane of 1938.³ So far, we also have documented 21 Elliott Avenue built in 1912, plus 1128, 1132, and 1136 Ocean Avenue, built in the 1920s.

Henkle was born in Russia around 1875 and immigrated to the U.S. as a child in 1887. As early as 1901 he is recorded as a physician living at 12 Tilley Street, New London. In 1910 he was living at 51 Federal Street with his wife Sophie, 30, and their children – Dorothy S. (9), Robert T. (3), and Edward R. (2) – as well as Micheal Moshni (35), Bridget O’Connor (21), and Jennie Beckwith (16). By 1912 or earlier, he was investing in real state in the area of Neptune Park and Ocean Beach. Neptune Court was slow to develop compared to the waterfront cottages to the south. In 1940 Dr. Henkle was living (and practicing) at the Mohican Hotel on State Street with Sophie (60) and son Robert T. (33). He died in New London in 1948, when his home was listed as 51 Federal Street.

In his obituary in *The Day* (26 Feb. 1948), Dr. Henkle is said to have delivered 6,600 infants since settling in New London in 1900. At one time or another, h served on the staffs of all four of the city’s hospitals, and he was instrumental in organizing the Home Memorial Hospital on Pequot Avenue until a fire ended its existence in 1944. After that, he has joined the Lawrence & Memorial hospital. In addition to professional and religious organizations (first president of B’nai B’rith), he served on the Board of Education and on the Lyman Allyn Museum. He was the father of City Manager Edward A. Henkle and of Dr. Robert T. Henkle, among other children.

Dr. Henkle was one of a mass migration of Eastern European Jews who came to the U.S. in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was his generation that founded the Jewish community in New London, laying the groundwork for many businesses and civic organizations. With his respected medical profession and real estate dealings, his was a success story.

The lot on which the house at 22 Neptune Court was built was owned by Emanuel Henkle for 22 years before passing through a number of hands, including Kathryn Bergen’s, to Morris Hyte, who finally built on it in 1951.

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, newspaper accounts, local and family histories, cemetery and military service records. This is by no means exhaustive research but is meant to give an idea of the people involved in the early history of the home.

– Mary Beth Baker for New London Landmarks, September 9, 2024.

³ *Norwich Bulletin*, 23 June 1913.