

35 Guthrie Place
William J. Brady
1932

The builder of 35 Guthrie Place was William Joseph Brady (abt 1892-1946), a local contractor, a member of the city council, and state representative from 1939 to 1944. From New York, William Brady was noted in the Norwich Bulletin for an early career as a stage actor (1911) in New York, but he soon put his thespian ambitions aside, served in World War I, and married Mary Kelly. The couple settled with relatives in New London, William working in building and masonry. Judging by the beautiful brick and quarried stone work at 35 Guthrie, William had a very good teacher.¹



Two houses where William Brady lived that he also likely built are at 59 Sherman (one-story brick bungalow)² and 125 Lower Boulevard, where he was living in 1929 when he purchased property at 35 Guthrie Place. He no doubt built other nearby houses too, yet to be documented. The Bradys had three children. Mr Brady probably built the house at 35 Guthrie for William J. Murray sometime around 1931 or 1932, when the address first turns up in city directories.

The street – Guthrie Place – first appears in the 1928 City Directory, when four unnumbered houses are listed (two “vacant”), all on the west side of the street.³ The 1934 Aerial Survey of New London shows the four houses on the west side of Guthrie

¹ The brick and very likely the stone at 35 Guthrie were probably recycled from old buildings. The 1920 Census shows William and Mary Brady living on Fowler Court with William’s sister and brother-in-law, Catherine and George Dolan. The latter was a brick mason.

² A building permit was issued for the Sherman Street house in August 1921 (Norwich Bulletin).

³ These houses must be Nos. 14 (1926) plaqued, 24 (1928) plaqued, 30, and 40. No. 24 Guthrie Place was the home of Francis “Frank” Gordon Allanach (1878-1965), another very fine New London builder, who may have built the others on this side of the street. Allanach built the beautiful colonial revival at 36 Jerome. Current owners (Ann and Reid Burdick) have Allanach’s architectural drawings for their house. Must be many others by Allanach as well as Brady in the vicinity.

and one on the east, the latter most certainly being No. 35.⁴ Long before the road was named, it was the main driveway to a summer estate named Meadow Court, familiarly known as the Guthrie place.

The first owner of the home at 35 Guthrie Place and for forty years thereafter was William John Murray (1896-1979), born and educated in New London. He was a graduate of Bulkeley High School and a graduate of the University of Maryland in dentistry. Dr Murray practiced his entire career in New London, with offices at 302 State Street. He was the husband of Anna M. Mallon, Connecticut College (1920). They had two sons: Robert M. Murray (1927-2016), an engineer, and Dr. William J. Murray, Jr (1923-2004), who was in medical practice in New London with Dr. Hilliard Spitz, Dr. Gilbert Leib, and others.

William and Anna Murray were married in 1921. Before moving to Guthrie Place, they owned a two-family home at 42 Williams Street. After her husband's death, Mrs Murray moved to the Harbour House apartments. She died in 1987.⁵

Before William Brady purchased the property, it had been owned by Clarence W. Thompson. Thompson bought it and perhaps other land from Pequot Realty in 1925, apparently as an investment.⁶ Thompson was a well-known personality in New London and worth a short detour. Clarence Washington "Doc" Thompson (1885-1968) first appears in New London as the chauffeur of O.A. Buzzell, local factory manager who lived in East Lyme (Flanders).

Doc Thompson was considered a genius when it came to engine mechanics. In 1911 he purchased and learned how to fly a Curtiss biplane, which made its maiden flight over New London in 1912, landing at the corner of Bentley Avenue near Ocean Beach. Thompson christened his so-called air ship, "Miss New London."

Though Doc Thompson had been in the "motor" business for some years already, it wasn't until the 1920s that he opened the Thompson Motor Company at 289 Bank Street, with Mr Buzzell as president of the company.⁷ Doc was also involved in

⁴ <https://cslib.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p4005coll10/id/1348%5C>

⁵ Connecticut College Alumni Magazine, Summer 1980.

⁶ It is interesting to note that Pequot Realty placed deed restrictions on the subdivision. Only single-family private residences were allowed, with minimum cost of \$7,000 and a ten-foot set-back from the street.

⁷ Thompson Motor Company was incorporated with capital stock of \$5,000, according to the Norwich Bulletin (3 Ap 1914). The President was Orin A. Buzzell and secretary/treasurer was his son, Leon C. Buzzell. In 1918, the Chappell Company built a one-story brick garage on Bank Street for Thompson Motors to occupy. It was

politics, was a well-known firefighter, and considered himself an advocate of workers' rights. He was a Democrat. He was also in the business of selling fire engines and paddy wagons to municipalities, and most likely, refurbishing such vehicles. By the 1940s his business was in retreading tires. He lived at various addresses including the Mohican Hotel and 20 Keeney Lane. Beating the stock market crash by a month, Doc Thompson sold the property at 35 Guthrie in September 1929 to William J. Brady.

Earlier History

The site of 35 Guthrie Place was part of a 12-acre summer estate known as Meadow Court (1902) – the main house now the Lighthouse Inn. Charles Strong Guthrie (abt. 1860-1906) was born in Zanesville, Ohio, and became president of the Republic Iron & Steel Corporation. In 1900 he married the wealthy widow of Frederick Lehman, Frances Amelia (Lamson) Lehman (1861-1957). Her children included Frederick Victor Lehman (1885-?); Alexander Hay Lehman (1889-1946) who married Dorothea Keasby at the Pequot Chapel in 1914; and Charles Lamson Lehman (1892-1954).

The Guthries lived in New York at the time they built Meadow Court. It was designed by William Ralph Emerson (1833-1917) of Boston in the Spanish or Mission Revival style. Emerson was more famous for his shingle-style summer cottages, thus making Meadow Court an important departure at the end of the architect's career. The landscape was planned by the Olmsted Brothers. The estate was famous for its six-acre wildflower meadow.

Greg Andrews, who wrote the National Register nomination for the building in 1996, concluded that Guthrie was “an archetypical industrial mogul of the age.” According to Andrews, Guthrie (and probably Frances Amelia) spent summers in the Pequot Colony in the 1890s before developing Meadow Court. Guthrie died at age 46 in 1906.

Frances Amelia had a number of other homes besides Meadow Court, including a Paris apartment in Rue de l'Université. By 1920 she was summering elsewhere and renting out Meadow Court. In 1925 she sold her New London properties to Pequot Realty for residential building lots. In 1927 the main house became the Lighthouse Inn and was for a period a very successful hotel and restaurant. Its height of popularity was in the 1940s when it was favored by a number of movie stars.

Frances Amelia Guthrie died at her home in New York City at 160 East 72 Street, aged 95.

to include “an auto safety house and repair shop” as well as an office and “show window.” (Norwich Bulletin 10 Feb. 1918.) I was not able to discover what make of auto, if any, the company sold or if they instead repaired and rebuilt engines.

In an earlier period, this property belonged to the Jerome family. The first of the family in New London was John Jerome around 1750. This John had many descendants, one of whom was Benjamin Jerome who married Desire Brown and farmed Great and Little Gull Islands, commuting from New London. Another was Jesse Jerome who married first Desire Rogers and then Harriet Loomis. Richard Jerome was yet another descendant. He was a sailor before 1812 until purchasing Plum Island, according to Hurd's *History of New London County*. This branch of the family lived on Plum Island, fattening cattle and sheep for export to the New York market. The family returned to New London in the mid-19th century. Richard Jerome's son, Richard M. Jerome, Jr. (1821 in Orient, N.Y. - 1900, New London) attended Bacon Academy in Colchester with Sebastian Lawrence (1823-1909) and married in 1850 Fannie J. Morgan (1828-1903), the daughter of James Morgan of Groton. Richard Jerome Jr's obituary in the *New Haven Morning Journal & Courier* (28 June 1900): "Died at his home on Ocean Avenue (2071 Ocean Ave.) after a very long illness. . . . One of the best known men in this section and the former owner of Plum Island," which he sold ten years ago when he moved to New London. He was a director of the National Whaling Bank. His fortune was left in trust for his widow, his son Benjamin, and to his daughter Ida, to be administered by Belton A. Copp (1854-1930).

Richard and Fannie's son, Benjamin Willis Jerome (1851-1906), married in 1891 Sarah Hathaway of Suffield, Connecticut.⁸ Benjamin was the owner of the old Jerome homestead (1705) [939 Pequot Avenue] and much other real estate even before his father left him more property. Before Benjamin W. Jerome's time, the colonial-era homestead had always been owned by some Benjamin Jerome or other. Benjamin Willis probably inherited it from his grandparents.⁹ This patrimony included what Benjamin Willis Jerome named Osprey Beach, which he developed as a public resort with the help of business partners. It was successful for a few years, much to the dismay of the Pequot colonists. In any event, Benjamin Willis Jerome did not stay long in New London. He gradually sold off his New London real estate and moved to Indian River, Florida, and grew oranges. Benjamin Willis and Sara Jerome reportedly spent winters in West Palm

⁸ After Benjamin Willis Jerome died, Sara Hathaway Jerome married E.H. Leath and lived in Wilson, N.C. Her childhood home in Suffield, CT, is a historic house museum, the Phelps-Hatheway House.

⁹ Benjamin Willis and Sara Jerome had no children. When Benjamin W. Jerome died, he specified in this will that the old homestead, which by then (1905) had only three acres, should go to a cousin, Henry G. Jerome of Montville in trust to said Henry's oldest living son with the request that this son take on the name "Benjamin." Many other relatives mentioned in the will. In 1914, Ben W. Jerome's trustees sought to sell the old house to James D. Lynch (developer) for \$27,500, but this was fought in court. Evidently the trustees lost because in 1919 they asked the court to release money to pay for the sewer assessment. Did the house ever go to a relative? The title of this house has not yet been traced!

Beach, long before it was a resort, and summers in New London. City Directories list him on Ocean Avenue, though he supposedly lived in the old homestead during the summer.

The narrative above starts with the title chain researched by Thomas Couser. From there we looked at 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 an exhaustive search but is meant to give an idea of the people involved in the earlier history of the home.

– Mary Beth Baker for New London Landmarks, October 31, 2022